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The New Yorker

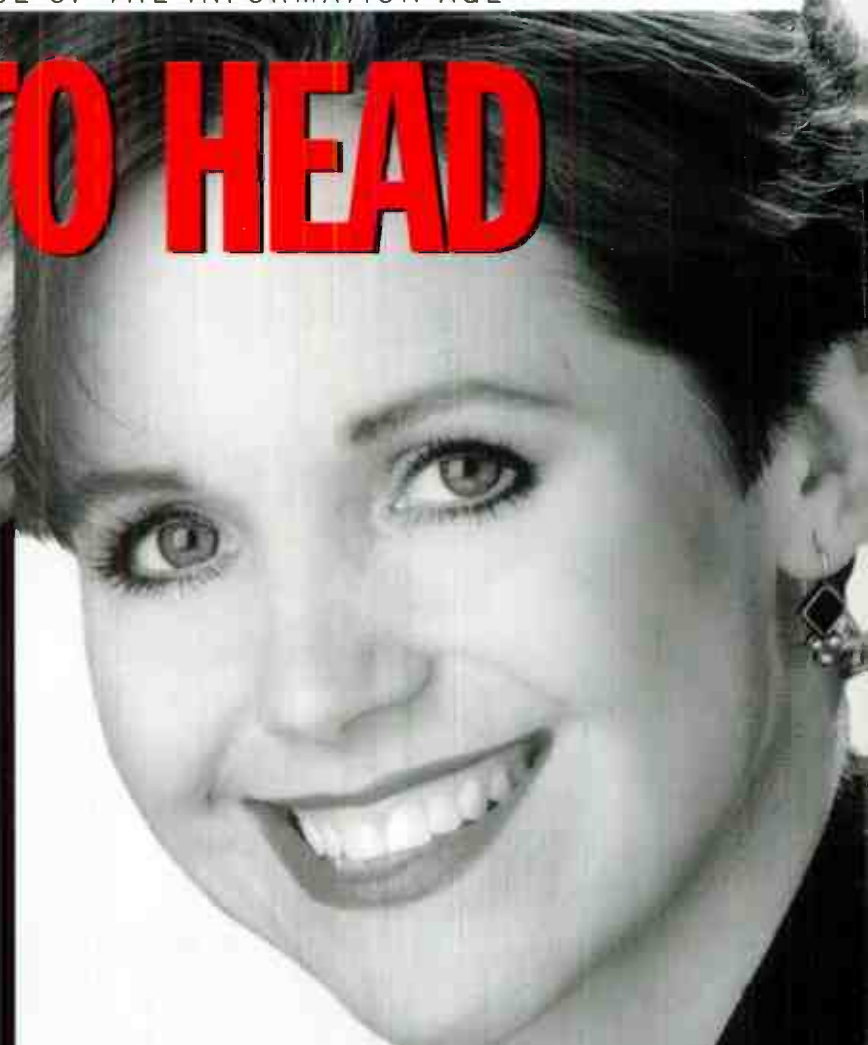
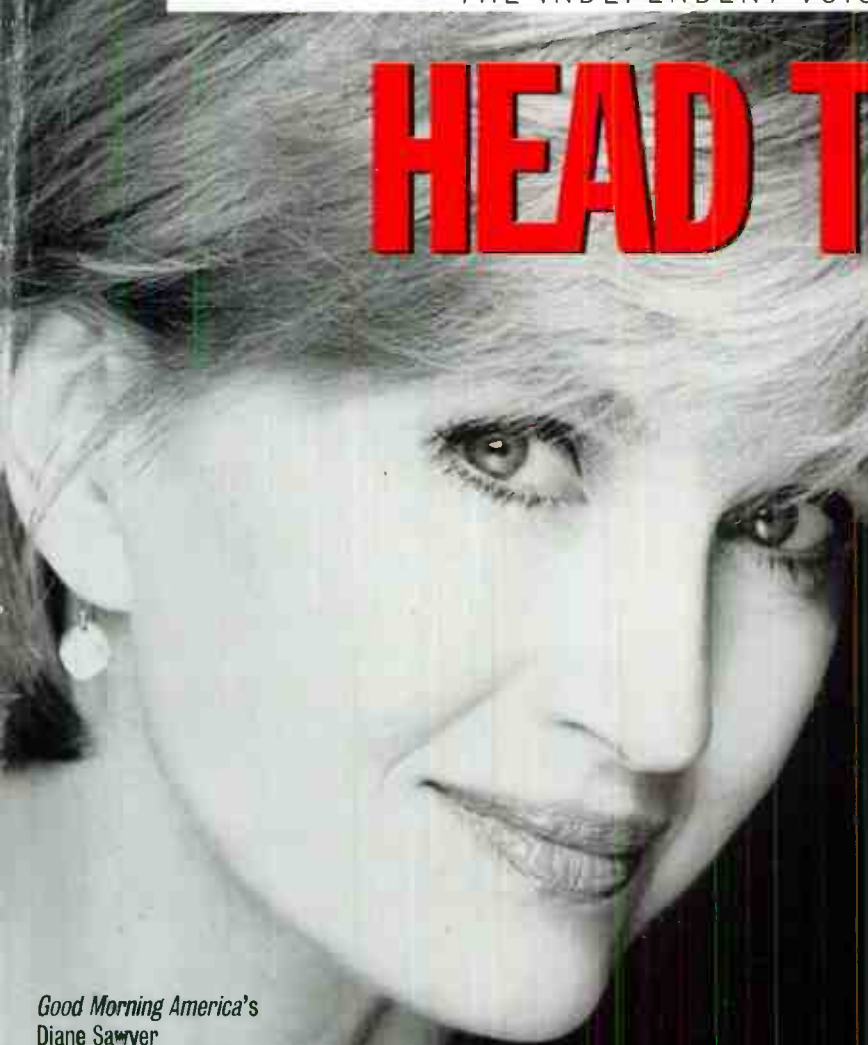
Pick Of The Web 1999: Money, News, The Best And Worst
Travel, Health, Sports, And More White House Reporters

BRILL'S

CONTENT

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

HEAD TO HEAD



Good Morning America's
Diane Sawyer

Today's
Katie Couric

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Their fight for your morning

BY ABIGAIL POGREBIN, p. 108

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BOSTON • THURSDAY

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Teen gambling Studies show family members and luring video games contribute to growing trend. **3**

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Ideas Giant booksellers create a new way to go buy the book - megadistribution centers. **15**

HYBRID HYPE



CARLOS

MOTOR SHOW: A Chrysler Cruiser unveiled in Detroit.

Smaller, gentler SUVs appeal to practical era

By Eric C. Everts and Abraham McLaughlin
Staff writers of

Terrorism's Trend Lines

■ Friday's blasts in two African capitals show terrorists are forced to evolve in their tactics.

By Scott Peterson
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

AMMAN, JORDAN - Just after the US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, a call was placed to a newspaper in Cairo to claim responsibility.

Playing out a script well rehearsed in the Mideast for decades, the caller said he was from the Liberation Army of the Islamic Sanctuaries, a previously unheard of group.

Even the journalist who took the call doubts it was genuine, and - except for a threat received from Egypt's Islamic Jihad and published by the pan-Arab newspaper Al-Jihad - investigators have few clues yet.

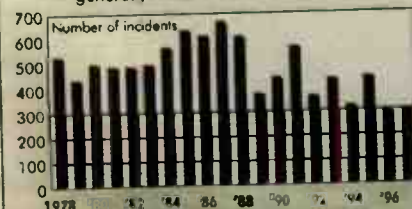
packed with high explosives in the basement sheared the building in two, the message was sent around the world that a new nation was about to be born.

Menachem Begin, who masterminded the King David attack, and later prime minister of Israel, described in his book "The Revolt" the thinking behind such acts of terrorists. "There are times when everything in you cries out: your very self-respect as a human being lies in your resistance to evil," Mr. Begin wrote. Then, playing on Descartes' words, he added: "We fight, therefore we are."

But the creation of Israel left a losing side too. To the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians dispossessed of their land in 1948, that event is still called "the Catastrophe." It sowed the

Global Terrorism, 1978-97

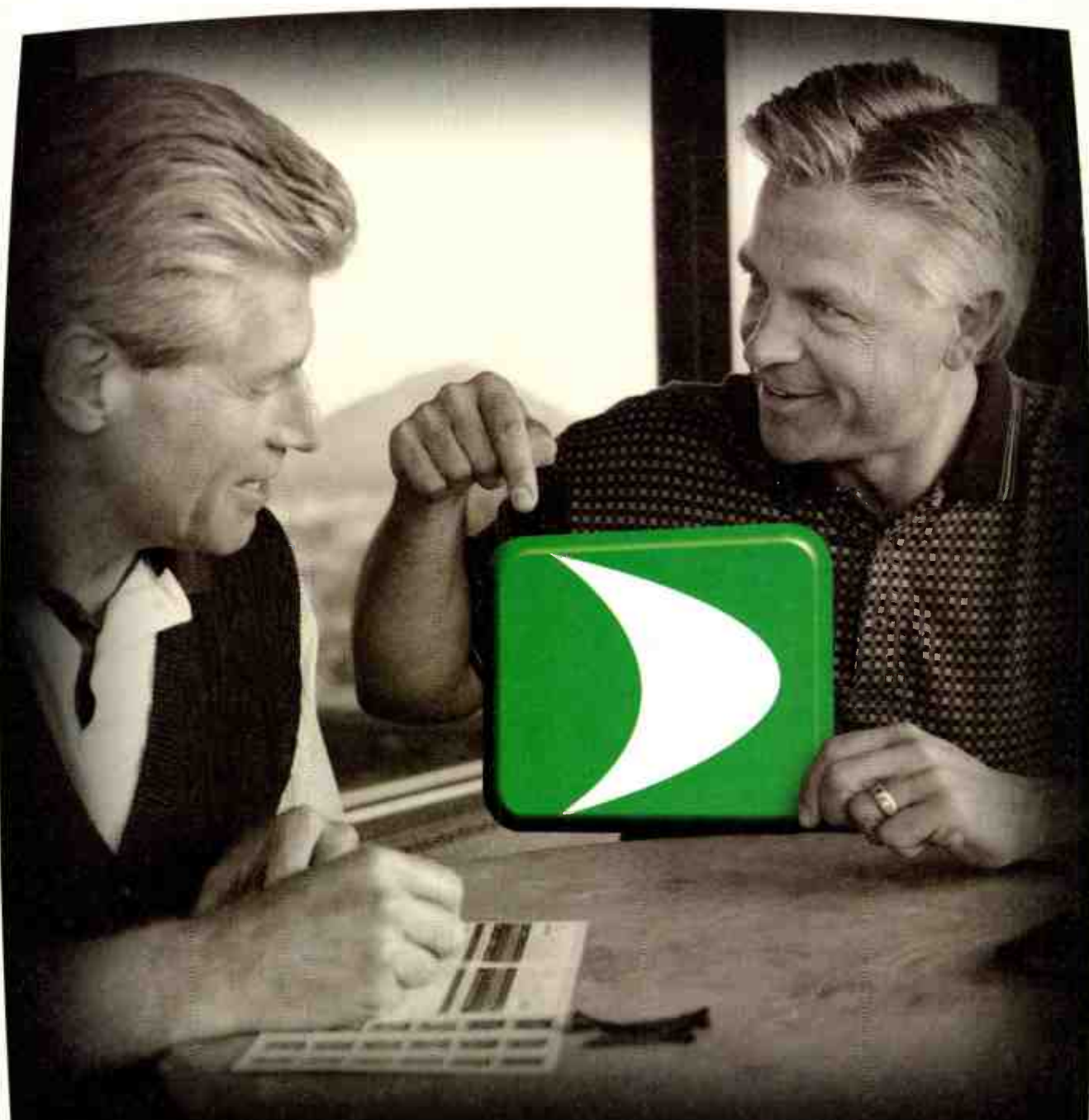
Despite high-profile attacks such as last week's at US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the number of terrorist incidents around the world has not generally increased in recent years.



Source: April 1998 US State Department Report on Global Terrorism

holds true of terrorists today, for whom it is "more of a calling than a state of mind."

As one youth described terrorism in Mr. Hirst's book: "It cannot be pinpointed,



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[LETTER FROM THE EDITOR]

YOU NO DOUBT HAVE READ ABOUT THE “DUMBEST” members of Congress, the best- and worst-run companies, the “sexiest” stars. These sorts of features, in which magazines and other media rate or rank subjects they deem of interest to their audience, can be informative and entertaining—or arbitrary and useless—depending on the execution.

We were mindful of these pitfalls when we decided a few months ago to try to identify the best and worst White House reporters for national news organizations and, perhaps more importantly, to figure out what makes the great ones great. Washington, D.C.-based senior writer Robert Schmidt interviewed journalists and officials, sifted through mounds of reports, and probed reporters’ work habits and styles.

Our 12-page report, which begins on page 88, names the five White House reporters we think do the best job of informing their readers, viewers, or listeners. We also name four whom we found the most lacking. Our purpose is not to ridicule anyone; we hope that by pointing out what, in our judgment, makes a reporter great—or not—our readers will be better armed to make their own judgments.

The simple idea behind this report—and, in fact, the simple idea behind this magazine—is that we are all consumers of information, and as such should know a lot more than we do about what we’re taking in.

Another special feature in this issue applies this impulse to another part of the information marketplace—the World Wide Web. In “The Best of the Web 1999,” an ambitious project overseen by editorial director Amy Bernstein, we catalogue what insiders and experts in a variety of fields—from travel and finance, to family and sports—say are the best sources in their areas. We also give you some informed pointers on how to approach and navigate the Web,

where the quantity, variety, and dynamism of information is both exciting and confounding. The report begins on page 64.

It may be that many of us are only now coming to think of ourselves as information consumers, but the companies trying to lure and keep us as customers have seen us this way for quite awhile. Our cover story about the ongoing battle between two networks’ morning-news shows provides a lively case study in how companies market-test their products, think hard about their packaging, and constantly fiddle with their formulas—all in an effort to develop a product we’ll buy.

The high-priced stars and changing casts are part of this dynamic, of course. But to gain a different perspective on this battle for our mornings, we convened our own focus group—just like the networks do. The resulting story by senior writer Abigail Pogrebin (page 108) not only includes some surprising insights into how people actually watch these shows, but also pulls back the curtain to reveal some of the subtle, sophisticated, and, at times, silly things producers do to get us to watch.

Finally, a brief note about this magazine’s growth and your role in it. Last month, *Brill’s Content* passed a milestone, hitting a circulation rate-base mark of 225,000 (the number of subscribers and newsstand buyers that we promise to advertisers). That’s up 50 percent from the fall, and industry people will tell you that for an eight-month-old independent start-up, that’s pretty good. Without your support, encouragement, and feedback, this wouldn’t have been possible.



ERIC EFFRON
EDITOR

WHAT WE STAND FOR

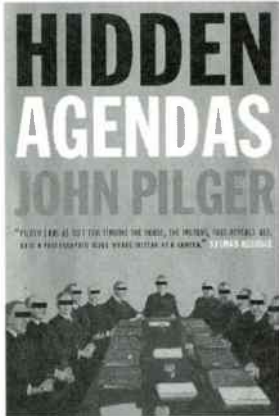
1. ACCURACY: *Brill’s Content* is about all that purports to be non-fiction. So it should be no surprise that our first principle is that anything that purports to be nonfiction should be true. Which means it should be accurate in fact and in context.

2. LABELING AND SOURCING: Similarly, if a publisher is not certain that something is accurate, the publisher should either not publish it, or should make that uncertainty plain by clearly stating the source of his information and its possible limits and pitfalls. To take another example of making the quality of information clear, we believe that if unnamed sources must be used, they should be labeled in a way that sheds light on the limits and biases of the information they offer.

3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: We believe that the content of anything that sells itself as journalism should be free of any motive other than informing its consumers. In other words, it should not be motivated, for example, by the desire to curry favor with an advertiser or to advance a particular political interest.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY: We believe that journalists should hold themselves as accountable as any of the subjects they write about. They should be eager to receive complaints about their work, to investigate complaints diligently, and to correct mistakes of fact, context, and fairness prominently and clearly.

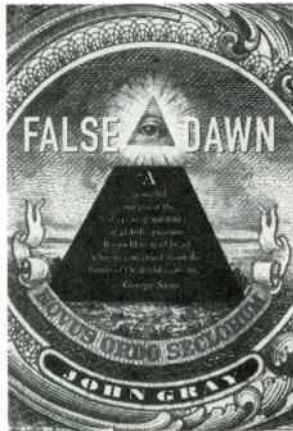
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APRIL 1999 • VOLUME TWO • NUMBER THREE

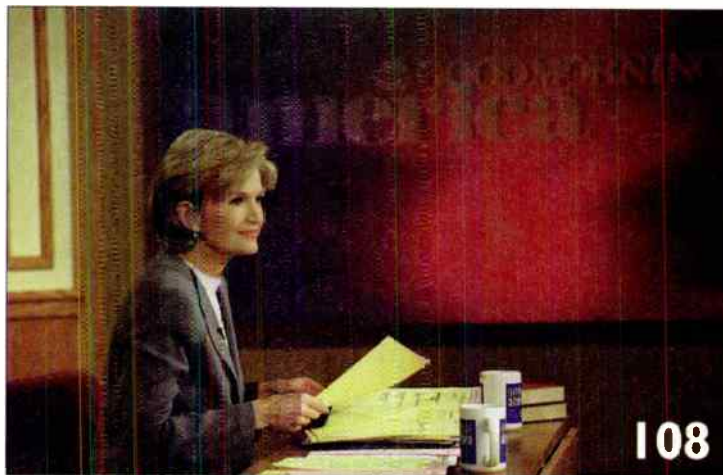
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Photograph of Diane Sawyer by Michael Daks/Outline; Photograph of Katie Couric, courtesy of NBC.

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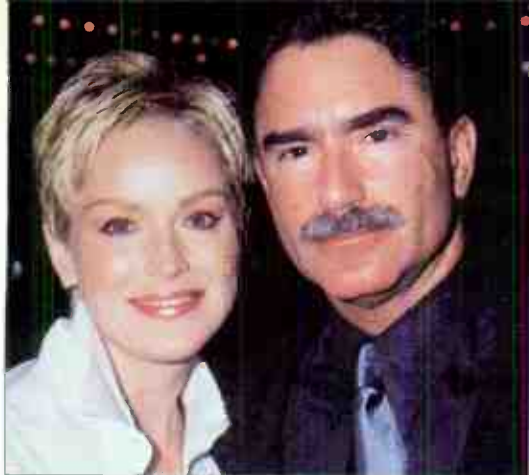
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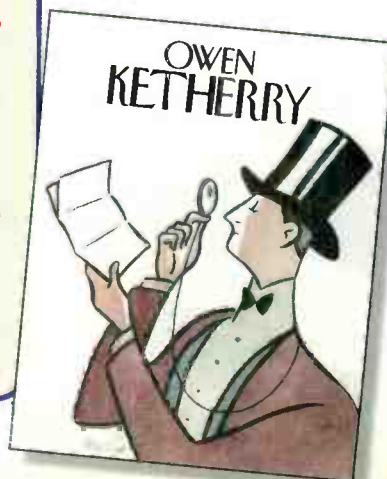
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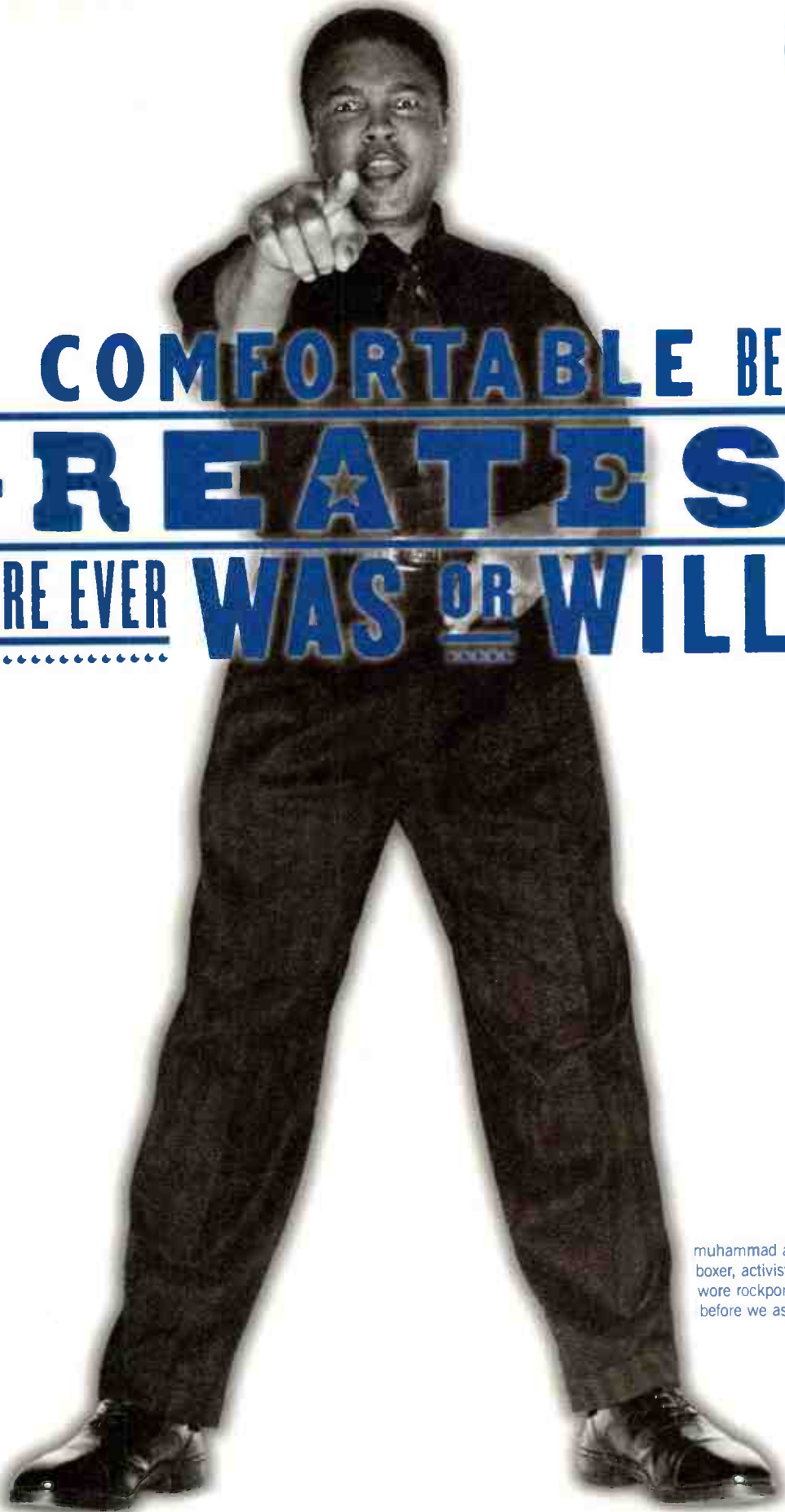
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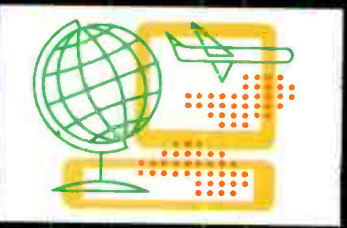
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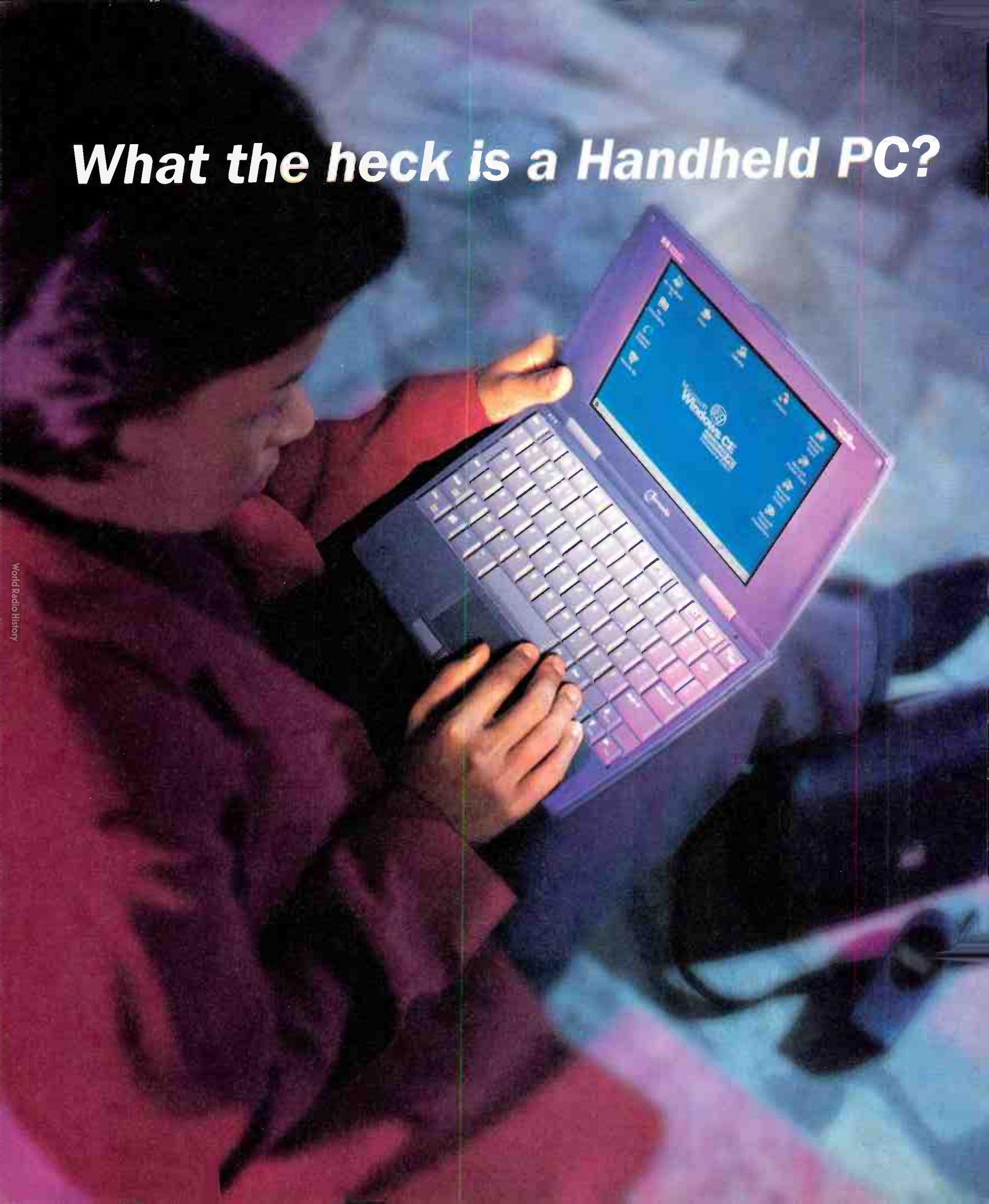
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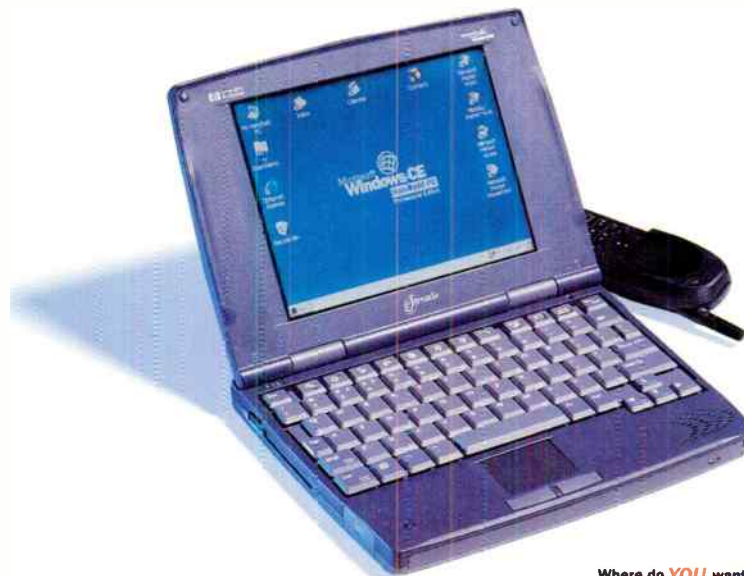
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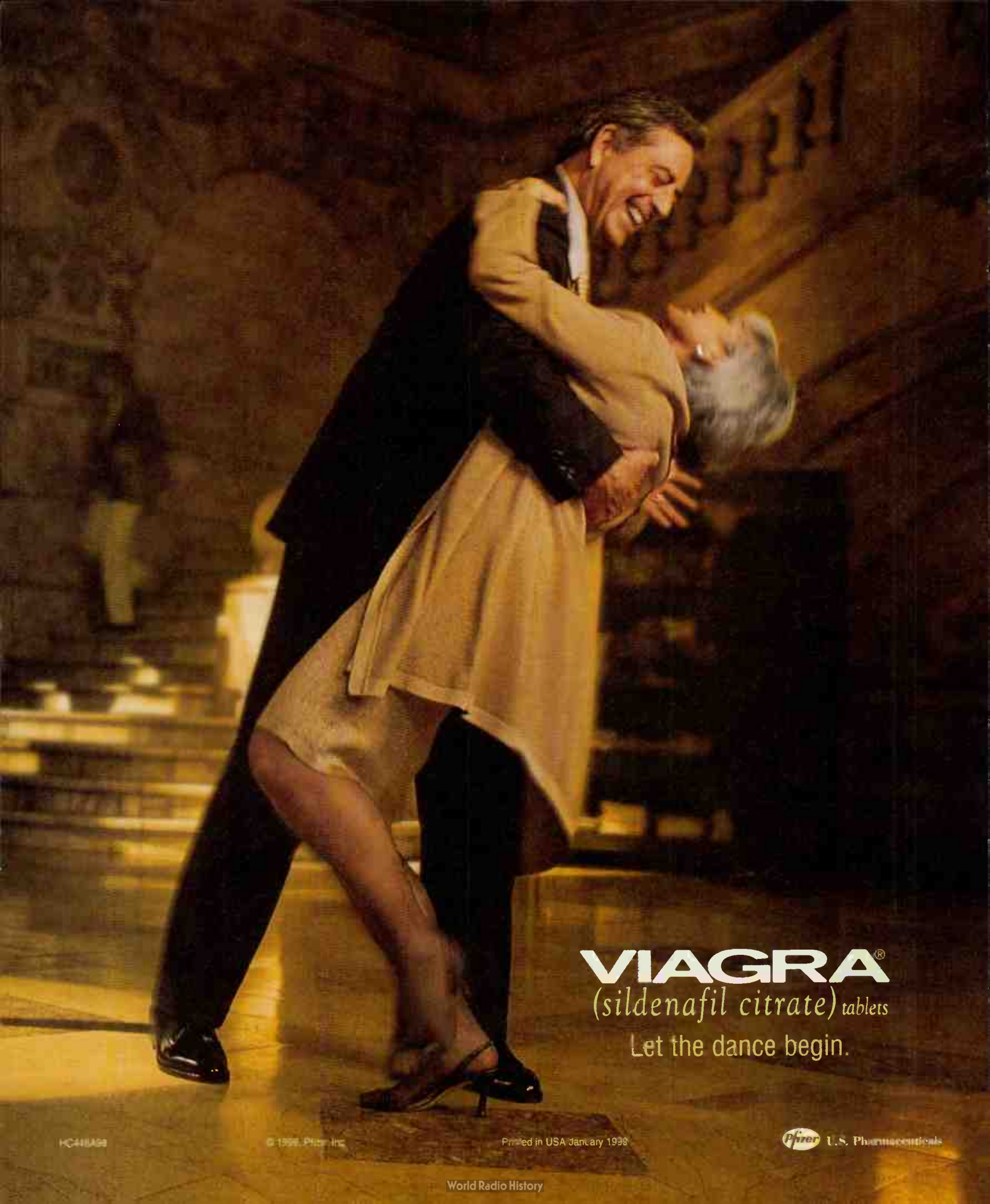
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ON MERGERS, BLURRING, AND GRODIN'S SERIOUS SIDE

READERS WERE SPLIT ON THE TELEVISION-NEWS MERGER OUTLINED BY EDITOR in chief Steven Brill in his February cover story. Some blanched at the prospect; others welcomed it wholeheartedly. Elsewhere, editor Eric Effron's "The Big Blur" attracted some reader examples of this Information Age phenomenon, and several readers wrote to defend MSNBC's Charles Grodin as a credible newsman (not just an actor). Letters published with an asterisk have been edited for space. The full text appears at our website (www.brillcontent.com), as do other letters not published below.



LEFT AT THE ALTAR

*Before I joined the CBS board of directors in 1983, [the company] had sent representatives to Atlanta to meet [CNN founder] Ted Turner and to explore ways for CBS and CNN to get together. CBS sent the wrong people and the meeting went badly. If [former CBS chairman] Bill Paley and [former CBS president] Frank Stanton had met with Ted Turner, somehow CBS and CNN would have found creative ideas to join forces. Nothing happened until years later. I was on the board when Turner launched a hostile tender offer for CBS on financial terms that were properly rejected. So twice CBS and CNN failed to marry, once for personality reasons and once for financial reasons. Your imaginative suggestion in the February issue ["Must Merge TV"] ought to prompt some new thinking and approaches. The viewer would benefit every day.

NEWTON N. MINOW
Chicago, IL
(via e-mail)

Editor's note: The writer served as Federal Communications Commission chairman

CORRECTION

DUE TO AN ERROR IN THE EDITING process, Calvin Trillin's "The Wry Side" column in the February issue contained the incorrect title for a Sunday morning political talk show. That show is *The McLaughlin Group*, not *The McLaughlin Report*. We regret the error.

from 1961–1963 and on the CBS board of directors from 1983–1991.

BUM DEAL

*The idea of CBS News combining with CNN bothers me. There is no news team, in my opinion, better than the CBS News team. They are fair, accurate, and reliable. What's more, CBS is the most erudite, learned news



outfit on TV. CNN is good, but is given to reporting rumors as facts. It jumps on the story of the minute and fills the airwaves with overblown puff. Combining the last bastion of real, hard news with the gossip maven of cable news is sickening. If the buyout that Steven Brill floated comes to be, [long-time CBS newsman] Charles Kuralt will surely roll over in his grave.

STEVE RAPPOPORT
Philadelphia, PA
(via e-mail)

ON THE RADIO

*As I read "Must Merge TV" in the February issue, I fortified my sense of

the plausibility of a merger of the CNN and CBS television-news operations by recalling what has already happened in radio news. CNN has its own radio-news service, but also provides services that we hear on the CBS Radio Network, as well as on the NBC and Mutual networks. This situation allows an enhanced analysis of the operational aspects of the merger, so why was it not mentioned?

DAVID MARSTON
Manchester, NH
(via e-mail)

CASH TALKS

*Thank you for publishing "Must Merge TV." It confirmed a belief/concern I have held for quite some time that this business is about money and not too

much else. I know economic forces play a huge role in the business that I would very much like to work in when I am older, but I really didn't realize that unstoppable economic factors are what drives this industry.

Nevertheless, I would love to see CBS News and CNN unite. I am readily waiting for the day when this becomes a reality.

BERT E. KAUFMAN
Baton Rouge, LA
(via e-mail)

EXPLORE ALTERNATIVES

*Your cover story about why CBS News and CNN should merge didn't



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cover the real reason that CNN's ratings have dropped so badly.

Many people like myself have seen CNN for what it really is—a liberal action network, not a news organization. Alternative news sources like specialized papers, magazines, and radio shows are growing. Any wonder?

TIM KELLOGG
Lodi, CA

SHARE THE BLAME

*According to Abigail Pogrebin, Tom Brokaw sometimes questions what NBC News president Andrew Lack considers to be news ["Lack Attack," February]. Does Mr. Brokaw believe the special on "The Greatest Generation" that he [hosted on *Dateline NBC*] in January was news? As inspirational and heartwarming as his stories were, it would be disingenuous to call it news. In fact, a cynic might look at that [report] as nothing more than a shameless plug for Mr. Brokaw's best-selling book [*The Greatest Generation*]. Mr. Brokaw and the other network anchors and reporters must share responsibility for the unfortunate blending of news, entertainment, irrelevancies, and trash.

MATTHEW PETTIGREW
Philadelphia, PA
(via e-mail)



AMAZING DISPLAY

*My esteem for the magazine jumped to an entirely new level after reading the February issue. On page 38 ["Synergy Watch," *The Notebook*] writer Dimitra Kessenides wrote a short report concerning *Entertainment Weekly* that opened with the words, "Sure,

Entertainment Weekly did tout Warner Bros.' flick *You've Got Mail* on its next-to-last cover of 1998."

Since *EW* is owned by Time Warner, Inc., I was sure that I was about to hear how corporate influence had poisoned the cover-selection process at *EW*. To my surprise, the report actually said that no such influence appeared to exist. A news outlet reporting that it had taken the time to investigate something and turned up nothing? Amazing.

JUSTIN BACON
Minneapolis, MN
(via e-mail)

HOW BIZARRE

*Your comment that the potential for content corruption may be greater with PBS than with commercial networks ["The Big Blur," February] is bizarre. No one whores more effectively for their advertisers than corporate journalists and the commercial networks.

JACK CONSTANCE
Blanco, TX

TRUTH IS OUT WHERE?

*I just read your column ["The Big Blur"] in February's issue of *Brill's Content* and it brought to mind an episode of [Fox's] *X-Files*. The show started out with what at first appeared to be a breaking story on the Fox news [network] involving a high-speed car pursuit. If I remember correctly, the shot then jumped into the Fox news helicopter, which was also following the car. For a couple of seconds that is exactly what it looked like, until it cut into the actual *X-Files* episode. I am not a big Fox viewer, but I do know that its news [network] has not been around for very long. I would imagine that it would be striving for some respectability and authenticity, but this does not appear to be the case.

JASON RICE
Bloomsburg, PA
(via e-mail)

BLURRY CREDIT

*The fine print accompanying *Wired*'s photo of "Bill Gates" ["The Big Blur," February] might also have credited the photographer Irving Penn, whose

photograph, "George Grosz, New York, 1948," bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Wired* photo. Penn did a series of such "corner" portraits of famous people in the forties; looking back over them, I cannot believe the *Wired* photographer wasn't consciously aware of them—as she or he should be—as they're some of the most remarkable portraits I know of.

It seems that the "blur" effaces not only factual truth, but artistic credit as well.

HARRY SADDLER
Berkeley, CA
(via e-mail)

GOOD QUESTION

I appreciated your piece about the editor behind the *New York Times* crossword puzzles. Over the years, the various editors and their products have given me much pleasure and relaxation.

I believe Will Shortz, the current crossword editor for the *Times*, may have been responsible for a memorable clue and answer some years back. The puzzle theme was based on dining; the clue given was "name of the sole surviving Japanese Kamikazi pilot." The wonderful answer was "CHICKEN TERIYAKI."

I've often wondered how many letters of outrage to the *Times* that may have generated.

EDWARD KIRK WEBB
Charleston, SC

ONE LESS VIEWER

*I cannot believe that ABC's *PrimeTime Live* can get away with ruining Carolyn and John Devaraj's lives and not be held accountable ["Lab Scam," *The Investigators*, February]. The show is on the same list as Linda Tripp as a betrayer of decency and fairness. I and my family will never watch another *PrimeTime* show again and will make sure that many more [people] will be aware of their despicable actions. Shame on ABC, Diane Sawyer, producer Robbie Gordon, and the rest of their motley crew.

KATHLEEN BIEN
Laceyville, PA
(via e-mail)

(continued on page 122)

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NATURE'S LITTLE SECRETS

World Radio History

REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

■ BY BILL KOVACH

ALITTLE MORE DETAIL. THEODORE L. GLASSER, professor and director of the Graduate Program in Journalism at Stanford University, writes:

“What could have been an informed and interesting account of the questions raised when academics take the stand as expert witnesses in lawsuits involving journalists [“The Dean Takes A Stand,” *The Notebook*, February] turned out to be an unfair and unfounded attack on Tom Goldstein, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

“...It’s fine, of course, for *Brill’s Content* to define participation in trials or hearings as an issue worthy of its readers’ attention. But issues deserve discussion, not condemnation.”

For those of you who don’t remember it, the article was a less-than-600 word item that asked whether Mr. Goldstein should testify against news organizations in lawsuits. Now you may wonder why this is even a question. Would it be asked about a school teacher or a truck driver? Probably not. But there is a debate as old as the free press about just how far members of the press should go in any process that might result in rules that restrain or undermine their freedom. And it is this debate that informs the item in question.

I’m not sure “unfair and unfounded” is itself a fair characterization of the item written by Robert Schmidt. He went to the two most obvious people for comment on the issue—the dean who succeeded Mr. Goldstein at Berkeley and the dean whom Mr. Goldstein succeeded at Columbia—for their judgment and comment. He also recorded Mr. Goldstein’s own argument about the value to journalism of his willingness to testify in cases involving journalistic standards.

But I do agree with Mr. Glasser’s second point, that a publication such as *Brill’s Content* should have dealt with the issue in more depth and detail. The stated purpose of this magazine

is that the consumers of news should know how much they can rely on what is presented to them as news. One way to achieve that goal is to help consumers understand the standards by which news organizations obtain, develop, and present their news and how those standards are established. What’s all the argument about whether or not Matt Drudge is a journalist and whether what he produces is journalism if it’s not about these standards? The article about Mr. Goldstein provided an opportunity to let readers in on some of the thinking in a very

important debate among journalists and journalism educators on this issue.

The nature of that debate was spelled out in some detail in a special issue of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* (vol. 12, no. 2, 1997) titled “Where Ethics and Law Converge.” In the interest of letting you in on it, some of the high-

lights from the *Journal* follow.

The editors set the stage by pointing out that “Courts are inquiring into media malpractice, hanging their cases on the degree to which the press adheres to or deviates from its self-professed professional standards....[And] journalists and journalism educators are being called upon to explain to the court...how reporting and editing are done and how they should be done, what standards of care are normally employed, and what constitutes deviance from the standards.”

Michael Perkins, media law and ethics professor at Drake University, argued that the tendency of journalists to resist testifying in these cases amounts to a “conspiracy of silence” among those best qualified as experts because of “an unexamined loyalty to the notion that free-press rights must be defended absolutely against any affront, real or imagined.”

They hold this position, Mr. Perkins wrote, even though, “as cases proliferate, judges are effectively writing a code of press performance on a case-by-case basis.” He argued that if an article was a “genuinely defamatory statement” and the story was not journalistically responsible, then the ethical burden is on the expert to testify.

Historically, journalists have argued that the remedy for irresponsible or damaging speech is not restrictions on speech

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Bill Kovach, creator of Harvard’s Nieman Foundation for Journalism, was formerly editor of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and a New York Times editor.

but a reliance on more speech. This is based on the belief that, given enough freedom of speech, the truth will out. Mr. Perkins finds that position naive.

Elsewhere in the *Journal*, Philip Patterson, press ethics professor at Oklahoma Christian University, compares the position to slogans such as "My country, right or wrong," or "My mother, drunk or sober."

"Those of us who teach media ethics do so to help the profession," Mr. Patterson continued. "We justify our place in academe by claiming that an ethical press is a better press and ultimately a freer press...[and the courtroom] became an extension of my classroom where I use my expertise to teach...ethical and reasonable journalism."

Roy L. Moore, of the University of Kentucky, asked and answered what most media academics consider the bottom-line question: "[D]o journalism educators have an ethical obligation to defend the First Amendment and the press when...behavior is reprehensible or unconscionable? The guiding principle in reaching a solution to this dilemma should be whether freedom of speech and freedom of the press will be strengthened or weakened by a decision against the press."

ONE FINAL POINT ON THIS TOPIC MADE BY A former journalist who champions the "more speech is the solution" position is that, as head of the school that publishes the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Mr. Goldstein has the ability to write directly to practicing journalists, which may give him a better forum to affect journalism standards than testifying in court.

As you can see, this is a debate that is far from resolved, but there are few better questions you can ask of your news provider than what are the standards by which they organize their work.

There Is A Difference. "Does *Brill's Content* have a public statement about the clear distinction between editorial content and advertising in the magazine?" reads Marianne Ford's e-mail, which I forwarded to Steven Brill, who answered:

"Here is our clear statement:

"Advertising, which must always be clearly displayed in design and typeface so as to distinguish it from editorial content, is a message paid for by outside parties trying to sell something to our readers. Its message is the responsibility of the advertiser, but *Brill's Content* will not knowingly publish any advertisement that is false.

"Editorial is the content of the magazine that readers pay for with their subscriptions or newsstand purchases. It is motivated only by the editors' attempt to offer news, information, and ideas that they think will interest and inform the readers. The editor in chief is solely responsible for its content, and it is never influenced in any way by advertisers." ■

WHO GETS PAID WHAT?

A Media Salary Scorecard.

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BRILL'S CONTENT
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how they got that SHOT

DANGER IS NOT USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHY, BUT it was a key element of this photo, which shows an Angolan de-miner delicately probing for the silvery, hair-like trigger wire that must be cut to defuse a landmine. The bomb could explode at any moment, yet the man's only protection is a flak jacket and Plexiglas face mask. Standing just one meter away from the de-miner and the unexploded bomb was photographer Antonin Kratochvil.

The landmine, found at Huambo airport in central Angola, is one of countless mines planted throughout the country by UNITA rebel forces, who have been fighting the government for more than 22 years. As a result, there are nearly 32,000 Angolan amputees, whose injuries resulted from landmines.

In his thick Czech accent, Kratochvil explains how he got this photo: "I go close. I was concentrating on the de-miner. The [de-miner's] movement is slow. They go up over their heads like a symphonic director to draw out the long trigger wire and clip it. Their fingernails are painted red so they see their hands better." He adds, "As much caution as they take, an ambulance is always standing by."

Kratochvil took this photo on assignment for *CHOICES*, a magazine published by the United Nations Development Programme in January 1998, for a story about how people are coping with the prospects of peace in Angola after two decades of civil war. Art director Jurek Wajdowicz says he chose Kratochvil because "he takes chances with me, he pushes the envelope." Adds Wajdowicz: "He is willing to go to the unpopular places [that] don't make headlines anymore."

Like many of his subjects in Angola and Bosnia, which he has also covered, Kratochvil is a refugee. In the fall of 1967, he fled Prague's Communist regime, escaping across the Czech border on foot. "I'm interested in the human condition, in suffering and on family conditions throughout the world. What motivates me is my past. I feel I owe it to them." —Miriam Hsia





PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTONIN KRATOCHVIL/SABA



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World Radio History

An interview based on nothing.....We're not done with Monica yet....."Respectable" companies and the company they keep.....Anchors as enjoyment.....

A SALON "INTERVIEW"

I know Internet journalism is supposed to be so fast-paced, so new-millennium, that traditionalists like me might not get it. But an interview I recently gave to *Salon*, the Internet magazine, seemed loosey-goosey even by I-standards. One afternoon in January, I was called by Susan Lehman, who says she is in charge of covering media for *Salon* out of its New York office (and who once worked for me at Court TV). She wanted my comment about an editorial criticizing our magazine that had appeared that morning in *The New York Observer*, a local weekly. "I haven't seen it," I told her, nor had I heard about it.

"I haven't seen it either," said Lehman, whose job description as a media reporter for a hot Internet magazine apparently does not include walking to a newsstand, "but I hear it's really critical and I need your comment now for a story I'm filing in a few minutes." Intrigued as I was about the New Age prospect of doing a Q&A about something that neither the questioner nor the questioned had ever laid eyes on, I nonetheless decided not to comment on it. Which, of course, did not stop Lehman from filing her "report" that afternoon, entitled "Brill bashing on the rise," which said I "claimed" I hadn't read the piece, but didn't mention that she hadn't either when we talked.

MONICA REDUX

So what's MSNBC going to do once Monica is really over? Sure, CNN and Fox News Channel will also be bereft of their biggest story, but they're more dedicated to providing a mix of real news all day, as opposed to MSNBC's routine of assembling troupes of blond former prosecutors and other assorted screamers to argue one story to death. The people at MSNBC must be suicidal.

Well, there's hope.

Just 18 months from now, we'll be only a few months away from the end of President Bill Clinton's term. This means that if MSNBC can just hold on for awhile, with a JonBenét trial indictment here and an adulterous presidential candidate there ("How youthful must a youthful indiscretion be to be youthful?"), they'll be ready soon enough to roll out all the shows and bumpers and graphics about whether Ken Starr will/should/can indict the soon-to-be-ex-president for

perjury and obstruction. Then we'll have the indictment and pre-trial motions to fight about ("Busting The Chief: Is it dignified to handcuff a president when he's arrested?"), followed by the trial and the acquittal and the jurors' pre-book-deal appearances.

In fact, in a move that had to have had the people at MSNBC almost ready to pop the champagne corks, in late January "several associates" of Starr told *The New York Times* that the independent counsel is considering indicting the president while he's still in office. It was the leak from heaven, unleashing several nights worth of new talk-show debate. Indeed, even without an indictment (why are we so sure that that grand jury really would indict the president or that a judge would allow it?), the mere courtesy of continuing to let these kinds of leaks of Starr's "should I/can I?" deliberations drip out steadily enough could keep the blond former prosecutors screaming on MSNBC right through this year and next.

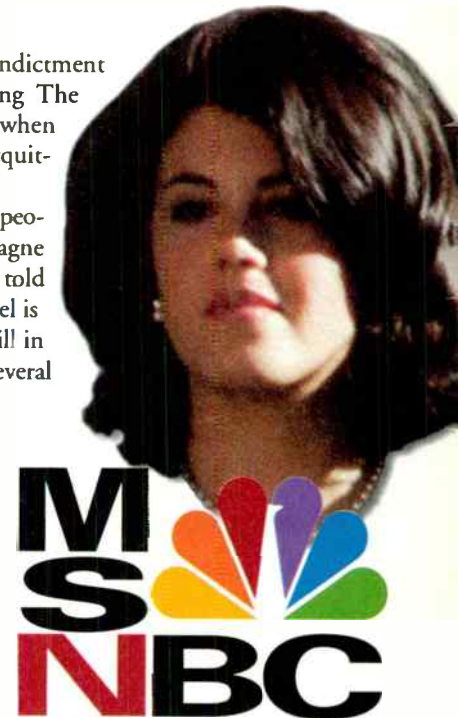
WHERE GOSSIP = NEWS

Local television probably has the highest profit margins of any media business—indeed, maybe any business of any kind. And local station managers are dead set on keeping it that way, in large part by making deals for syndicated shows—any syndicated shows—that can drive the highest possible ratings.

Yet many of these local stations are run by media conglomerates that began life as newspaper companies and still own the kind of "respectable" newspapers that allow their CEOs to be the kind of big-deal civic leaders who sit on upper-crust local charities, go to City Hall or White House conferences on the future of our children, and generally cut a do-gooder swath through the local and national community.

All of which is why the recent ads in industry trade publications for a new syndicated show produced by the *National Enquirer* are such fun. The kicker for the ads, which promise killer ratings for a show sporting the tabloid newspaper's logo and hosted by its top scandal writer, is "Gossip Is Just Another Word For News."

The ads are aimed at getting local station managers to buy



Don't expect the Monica Lewinsky saga to disappear from MSNBC.

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ADVERTISER-SUPPORTED HALF-HOUR SHOW

ENQUIRER

GOSSIP IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR NEWS

Presented by **Boydor Wyler**

An ad for the *National Enquirer's* new show (above) touts the participation of the Tribune Company, among others.

the show, which debuts next fall. One way to encourage such sign-ups is to impress the managers with who has already jumped on the bandwagon; in the case of the *National Enquirer*, the latest ads proudly announce that among the early buys is the Tribune TV station group. That's Tribune as in the venerable *Chicago Tribune*.

The Tribune Company owns not only the *Chicago Tribune* but also *The Orlando Sentinel* and the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*. They're all well-regarded newspapers whose editors presumably don't regard the *Enquirer* as a good candidate for adopted corporate cousinhood. But the Tribune Company also owns 18 major-market television stations and, according to a company spokeswoman, three of them have indeed bought the *National Enquirer's* TV show.

Asked if Tribune Company CEO John Madigan, who sits on the boards of Northwestern University, The Museum of Television & Radio, and the Illinois Institute of Technology, agrees that "gossip is just another word for news," the spokeswoman said Madigan would be unavailable for comment.

IT'S THE ENJOYMENT, STUPID

While we're on the subject of big newspaper companies owning television stations, in late January, a Hartford, Connecticut, jury awarded former television anchor Janet Peckinpugh \$8.3 million in her federal suit against The Washington Post Company's television-station division. To oversimplify, the jury seems to have found that the station, a CBS affiliate owned at the time Peckinpugh was fired by the Post company, dismissed her because it had three anchorwomen and two anchormen and wanted to pair a woman and man in each shift because audiences generally like that kind of pairing. This meant that one woman had to go. While not conceding a strict male-female pairing rule, the company's defense, in a nutshell, is simply that Peckinpugh was the least ratings-friendly choice among all the anchors. (Note: One of the Post company defendants in the case is the brother of *Brill's Content* editor Eric Effron.)

This case raises all kinds of fascinating legal questions (some of which have been litigated before with unclear results) about the extent to which audience tastes can trump our sex-, race-, and age-discrimination laws. For example, it presumably would not be okay to fire or not hire an African-American anchorperson if surveys showed that in a particular community, audiences liked white anchors more, because that's a preference we find so repugnant that we cannot explicitly endorse it. But what about the unspoken but real-world rule of thumb that seems to have been at work in this case,



Joe DiMaggio's death was wrongly announced by an overeager NBC.

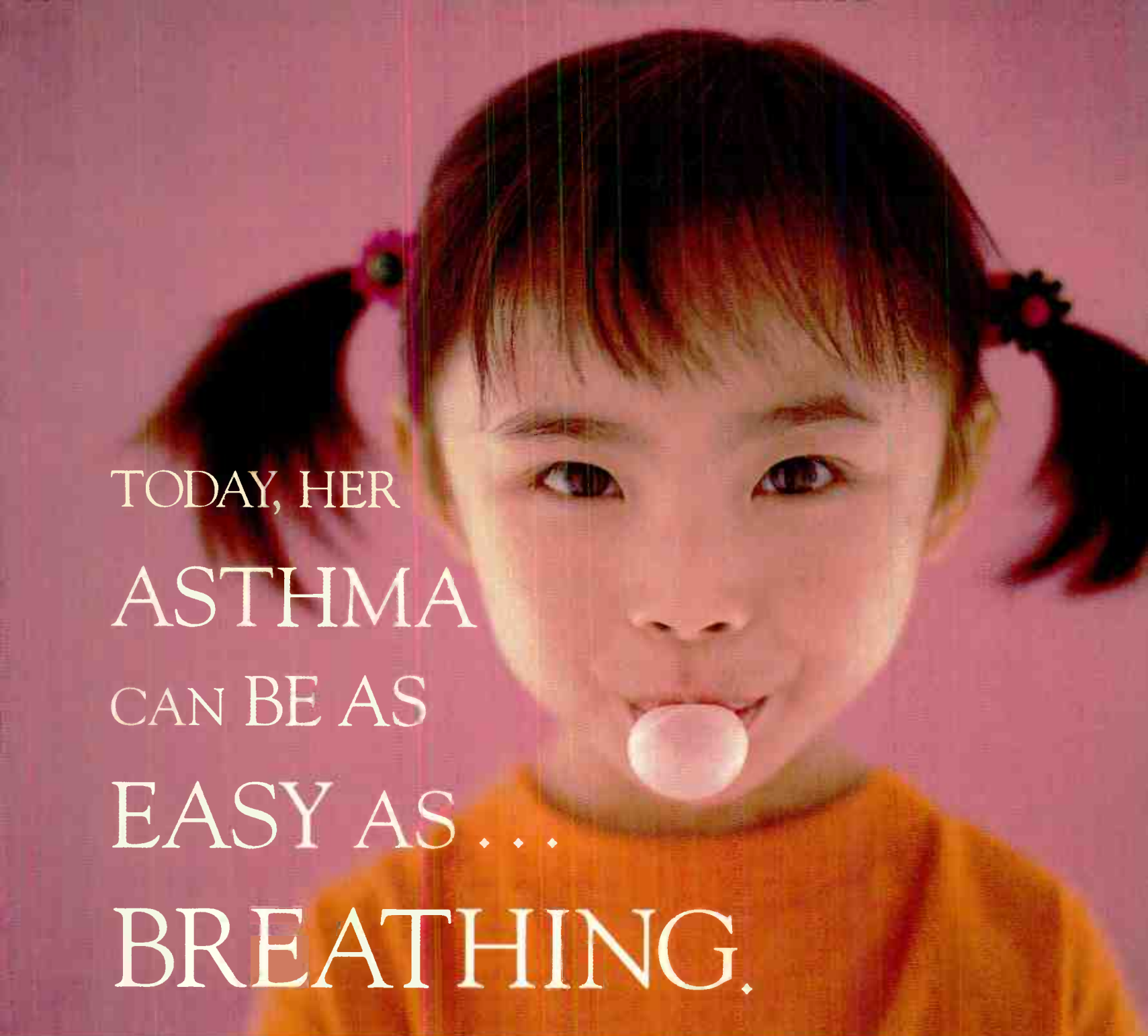
which says that a male anchor should be paired with a female and that most audiences prefer younger faces when it comes to women anchors?

Beyond that, what I found interesting in scanning the trial record is that the subject of the anchors' journalism skills was not at all an issue. Indeed, the research that the company used in its defense had to do with focus groups conducted among 300 people at shopping centers that measured, according to the trial record, a "net enjoyment rating" after the shoppers watched a video clip of each anchor.

DEATH SCOOPS

You've probably read a bit about how NBC flashed a bulletin during *Dateline NBC* on January 24 announcing Joe DiMaggio's death, when in fact the Yankee hero had not died. The accident was attributed to a careless staffer who pushed a button that sent the death bulletin streaming across television screens. The message had been loaded so that it would be ready instantly when the ailing slugger finally succumbed to what had been reported to be his terminal illness.

That's understandable enough. But it raises the larger question of why television-news operations, often so lax at applying real resources to cover real news, are so obsessed with being first with news like this. It shows, I think, the ultimate insular thinking of many news people—the way they're keeping score in the wrong game. Is cleverly loading up a headline in advance announcing the inevitable really their idea of enterprise journalism? Who's better off getting that news faster, or for that matter, getting any of the sad and privacy-invading details of DiMaggio's illness that were featured all over various newspapers and television stations in January? Is somebody at NBC really going to go up to his boss the next morning and get a big pat on the back when he announces triumphantly that the Yankee Clipper died at 9:08 and we had it on the air at 9:10? ■

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair styled in two pigtails with black bows. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile, blowing a large, translucent pink bubble. She is wearing an orange sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pinkish-purple.

TODAY, HER
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World Radio History

the notebook

FOX News Channel Comes ON STRONG

As coverage of President Clinton's impeachment trial peaked in January, a surprise winner—at least in the war of expectations—emerged in the competition for viewers among the three cable news channels. Although generally considered the weak sister compared to MSNBC and category leader CNN, relative newcomer Fox News Channel proved itself a serious contender.

A look at the Nielsen ratings for Wednesday, January 20, shows that Fox fared particularly well during the prime-time hours; its Nielsen rating of 1.3 between 8 P.M. and 9 P.M. put Fox's *The O'Reilly Factor* ahead of CNN's *The World Today* and MSNBC's *Hockenberry*. The ratings represent the percentage of actual households watching a channel relative to the number of potential households that can get it through their cable systems.

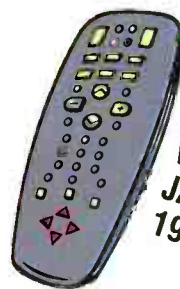
Because Fox is available on fewer cable systems than MSNBC or CNN, fewer actual households tuned in to Fox even when it was scoring a higher rating. But comparing ratings rather than overall viewers is fair because each channel's viewer appeal can only be measured by looking at the viewers who can actually receive the channel.

During prime-time that Wednesday, Fox consistently beat MSNBC. In addition to *The O'Reilly Factor's* lead from 8 P.M. until 9 P.M., Fox's *Hannity & Colmes* at 9 P.M. beat out *The News with Brian Williams* on MSNBC, and Fox's *The Crier Report* at 10 P.M. topped MSNBC's *White House in Crisis*. "It's been driving everyone crazy that Fox has kicked our butts," says one NBC on-air person. Which explains why MSNBC recently made some sudden switches in its prime-time line-up, adding a show hosted by John McLaughlin and one co-hosted by Oliver North.

Even during the day's live coverage of the trial—from 1 P.M. to 5 P.M.—Fox's rating was usually close to MSNBC's, while CNN still proved itself to be the category leader.

The chart at right shows just how surprisingly well Fox fared.

—Bridget Samburg



CABLE RATINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1999

4 P.M. TO 5 P.M.

Impeachment trial (CNN) – 1.9 rating
Impeachment trial (MSNBC) – .7 rating
Impeachment trial (Fox) – .6 rating

1 P.M. TO 2 P.M.

Impeachment trial (CNN) – 1.6 rating
Impeachment trial (MSNBC) – .6 rating
Impeachment trial (Fox) – .5 rating

8 P.M. TO 9 P.M.

The O'Reilly Factor (Fox) – 1.3 rating
The World Today (CNN) – 1.1 rating
Hockenberry (MSNBC) – .6 rating

2 P.M. TO 3 P.M.

Impeachment trial (CNN) – 1.6 rating
Impeachment trial (MSNBC) – .6 rating
Impeachment trial (Fox) – .4 rating

9 P.M. TO 10 P.M.

Larry King Live (CNN) – 1.6 rating
Hannity & Colmes (Fox) – .8 rating
The News with Brian Williams (MSNBC) – .3 rating

3 P.M. TO 4 P.M.

Impeachment trial (CNN) – 1.8 rating
Impeachment trial (MSNBC) – .6 rating
Impeachment trial (Fox) – .5 rating

10 P.M. TO 11 P.M.

Trial of the President (CNN) – 1.2 rating
The Crier Report (Fox) – .7 rating
White House in Crisis (MSNBC) – .4 rating

SUPER BOWL HYPE: *IT WORKS!*

In our February issue, we posed the question: Why would anyone spend \$2 million on a 30-second ad during the Super Bowl? We profiled the efforts of Hotjobs.com Ltd., a tiny Internet company, to use the most-watched event on television as a launching pad to the big leagues.

The results? "We went from being a small Internet company to being a brand overnight," says Richard Johnson, founder, president, and CEO of Hotjobs. The online job board, which logged 1.2 million visitors in January, got between 4 million and 6 million users in the two days following the January 31 game, estimates Johnson. As planned, Hotjobs is now racing to capitalize on its new-found fame in the investment community.

But Johnson attributes the response less to the ad itself than to the media blitz that surrounded it. Fox, which broadcast the Super Bowl,

had rejected the first ad the company submitted because the network found it tasteless. The final ad, which featured a security guard fantasizing about glamorous jobs that he finds through Hotjobs, received mixed reviews from critics and viewers, but the publicity that surrounded the company's bumpy trip to the game was an unquestionable hit.

By Johnson's count, some 450 publications and 182 broadcast outlets did stories about the ad in the weeks surrounding the game. Violating protocol, Johnson released the ad itself ten days before the Super Bowl, and he estimates that CNN alone aired the spot a dozen times, free of charge. On the day after the game, either Johnson or the ad was featured on CNBC's *Power Lunch*, ABC's *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, and the *NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*. "It's ridiculous what happened to us," says Johnson. "If we would've just run the ad, we would've done okay," he adds. "The media drove it over the top."
—Rifka Rosenwein

Not Here At *The New Yorker*

OWEN KETHERRY IS ONE ELUSIVE character. At *The New Yorker*, where he works, he responds to reader letters—answering several hundred of them each year. But when *Brill's Content* called to talk to him, the *New Yorker's* receptionist sounded puzzled. "You have to write him care of *The New Yorker*," she answered after a few moments of silence. "You can't get to him by phone." The reason: Owen Ketherry does not exist.

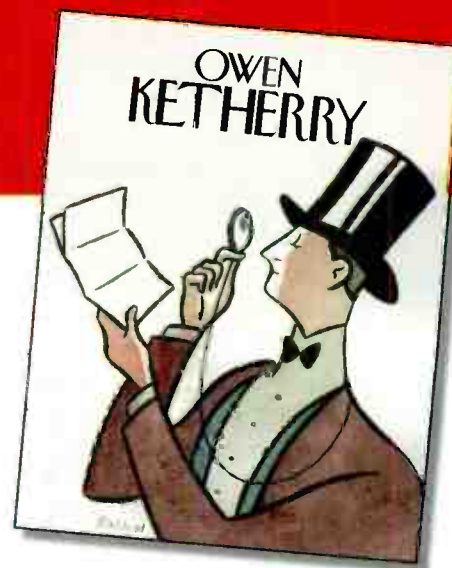
We wanted to ask Ketherry about a letter he sent to reader Richard Gallagher. Last October, Gallagher noticed what he believed to be an error in a piece by E.L. Doctorow. In the story, Doctorow charged that President Lyndon Johnson "fabricated a North Vietnamese gunboat attack in the Gulf of Tonkin to justify his escalation of the Vietnam War." In an e-mail to *The New Yorker*, Gallagher disagreed. Three months later, he received a response. "You are correct," the letter began, "we should not have said that President Johnson 'fabricated' the

Gulf of Tonkin incident." The letter was signed "Owen Ketherry."

If Gallagher was right, we wondered, why didn't *The New Yorker* print a correction? That's when we stumbled upon the Owen Ketherry mystery.

Reader correspondence is routed through the letters editor, the fact-checking department, and occasionally the writer and editor of a story—all before it reaches "Ketherry's" desk, explains deputy editor Pamela McCarthy. And Owen Ketherry—an anagram for *The New Yorker*—represents the magazine's collective response. Because "so many people are involved" in responding to reader corrections, McCarthy continues, "it does seem appropriate that the response come from the magazine rather than one person." The pseudonym has remained constant "for at least 25 years," according to one *New Yorker* staffer.

Asked if he thought it appropriate that *The New Yorker* lies whenever it sends a written response to readers, editor David Rennick says, "I don't think it's a lie; it's an institutional rubric." Calling the Owen Ketherry tradi-



tion "harmless," he continues, "the key thing here is that letters are answered institutionally. The editor of the magazine cannot personally answer hundreds and hundreds of letters."

In Gallagher's case, Owen Ketherry—or the "institution"—went too far in stating the *New Yorker's* error in "an attempt to be polite," explains Peter Canby, the magazine's head of fact checking. While "the fact checker on that piece had queried the use of *fabrication*" to describe the Gulf of Tonkin incident before the article went to press, he explains, Doctorow had convinced the editor that its use was warranted. And because the *New Yorker* relies on "subjective editorial judgment" to determine which mistakes necessitate a correction, says Canby, Gallagher's concern merited only an Owen Ketherry response—not a real correction in the real magazine.

Informed that Ketherry is a pseudonym, Gallagher asks, "Why don't they sign it 'The Editors' or something?" —Rachel Taylor

PAYDAY



As inspirational and motivational speakers become more popular in corporate boardrooms and elementary schools, their fees are rising. We asked some motivators and their agents just how much money they ask for to make their speeches. Here's what they told us.

—Bridget Samburg



1. Anthony Robbins: Renowned personal and professional peak-performance coach—\$125,000

2. Stephen Covey: Best-selling author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* helps companies improve their corporate culture and performance—\$50,000 – \$60,000*

3. Zig Ziglar: Best-selling author who offers techniques for personal achievement and successful careers—\$50,000 – \$60,000*

4. Deepak Chopra: Founder of The Chopra Center for Well Being, he combines Western medicine with ancient Indian traditions of healing—\$30,000 – \$35,000*



5. Danny and Marie Lena: Sexual assault victims, this husband and wife team shares their experiences as a means of teaching others how to protect themselves, build self-esteem, and resolve conflict—\$7,500 – \$12,500



6. Roger Crawford: The author of *How High Can You Bounce?* talks about how he conquered his physical disabilities and became a tennis champion—\$6,500

*Price quoted from the Greater Talent Network, Inc., a New York booking agent for speakers. The speaker receives between 60 percent and 80 percent of the actual fee.

Who Called THE SHOTS?

WHEN PRESIDENT BILL Clinton delivered his State of the Union speech in January, there seemed to be a concerted effort among the TV networks to focus on unhappy-looking Republican lawmakers. In fact, there *was* a concerted effort. CBS News, which produced the live coverage for all the major networks, chose to show House majority leader Dick Armey and majority whip Tom DeLay sitting stone-faced as other legislators clapped. This let viewers see that some members of Congress were not thrilled that the president was conducting business as usual while being tried on impeachment charges. "I think everyone knew there would be some tension there and obviously the American public knows the faces of the leadership, and who better to cut to during certain moments than the leadership," says Andrew Elias, an assistant director at the House Radio-Television Correspondents' Gallery, who helped CBS with the coverage.

Viewers also saw the grim faces of the "House managers"—the congressmen responsible for prosecuting the president. CBS decided before the broadcast to cut away to the managers during the speech, but the network doesn't control how the lawmakers look. Three managers looked bored or angry, but when the network cut to manager Lindsey Graham, he was applauding one of the president's proposals. Another planned shot showed empty seats in the House chamber, underscoring the fact that some lawmakers boycotted the speech. "All we're trying to do is cover the event," says Sandy Genelius, vice-president for CBS News communications. "Would you disagree that one of the story lines going into the State of the Union was what is going on in Capitol Hill?"

Behind the scenes, network producers and directors make editorial judgments about what to show while the president speaks. The goal is partly to entertain viewers, and partly to provide editorial context.

So who decides which pictures to use? Because the networks share the TV feed con-

ing from the House (the arrangement is called a "pool"), the overall responsibility for the broadcast rotates among the pool's members: ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, and NBC. On January 19, CBS producer-director Arlene Dillon was in charge.

While the president spoke, Dillon worked in a production truck outside the Capitol, picking among the shots coming from ten different cameras. During the speech, producers from all the networks were connected on a conference call and, through the CBS producer, asked Dillon to pick certain shots. The pool hired Elias, who can identify every member of Congress, to be the "spotter." He sat in the press gallery above the House floor and stayed in contact with Dillon via headset.

The White House provided a seating chart of the first lady's box and an advance copy of the speech. That's why viewers saw Sammy Sosa sitting next to Mrs. Clinton just as the president was introducing the Chicago Cubs home-run king. Dillon and the pool producers were able to plan many shots before the broadcast. Thus, when the president discussed defense spending, it was no coincidence that viewers saw Defense Secretary William Cohen and Senator John Warner, who chairs the Armed Services Committee. "You try to get reaction shots that make sense," says ABC's Doherty. "The subtleties are sometimes lost on the public, but sometimes not."

The subtleties are not lost on the lawmakers. This year an aide to New York Democrat Charles Rangel passed word through Elias to the producers that the congressman had sponsored a school-construction bill. "He knew the president would speak about school construction," says Elias. "He was there to sell Rangel for that shot." Sure enough, Rangel was shown more than once during the broadcast.

Most viewers saw almost the same picture, no matter which network they watched. CBS



Some of the shots from the pool coverage: GOP Representatives Tom DeLay and Dick Armey look glum (top); Representative Charles Rangel got the notice he wanted (left); some legislators boycotted the speech (below).

sent out an edited, or "switched" feed of the speech, but it also provided the networks with an "isolated" feed that just showed the president. Occasionally one or more of the networks might have gone back to the president while the switched feed lingered on a reaction shot—probably because another of the networks had asked CBS for a few extra seconds so it could put up a graphic identifying whoever was shown.

Viewers watching C-SPAN, however, saw entirely different coverage. The nonprofit cable channel chose to take its feed directly from the House, which has six cameras and employs its own director. C-SPAN opted out of the pool mainly to save money, says Terry Murphy, director of programming. But that could change next year, Murphy says, because the House's feed was not as good as the pool's. "You have a journalist making the decisions about what shots get on the air, not a government employee," says Murphy. "It's more objective."

—Robert Schmidt

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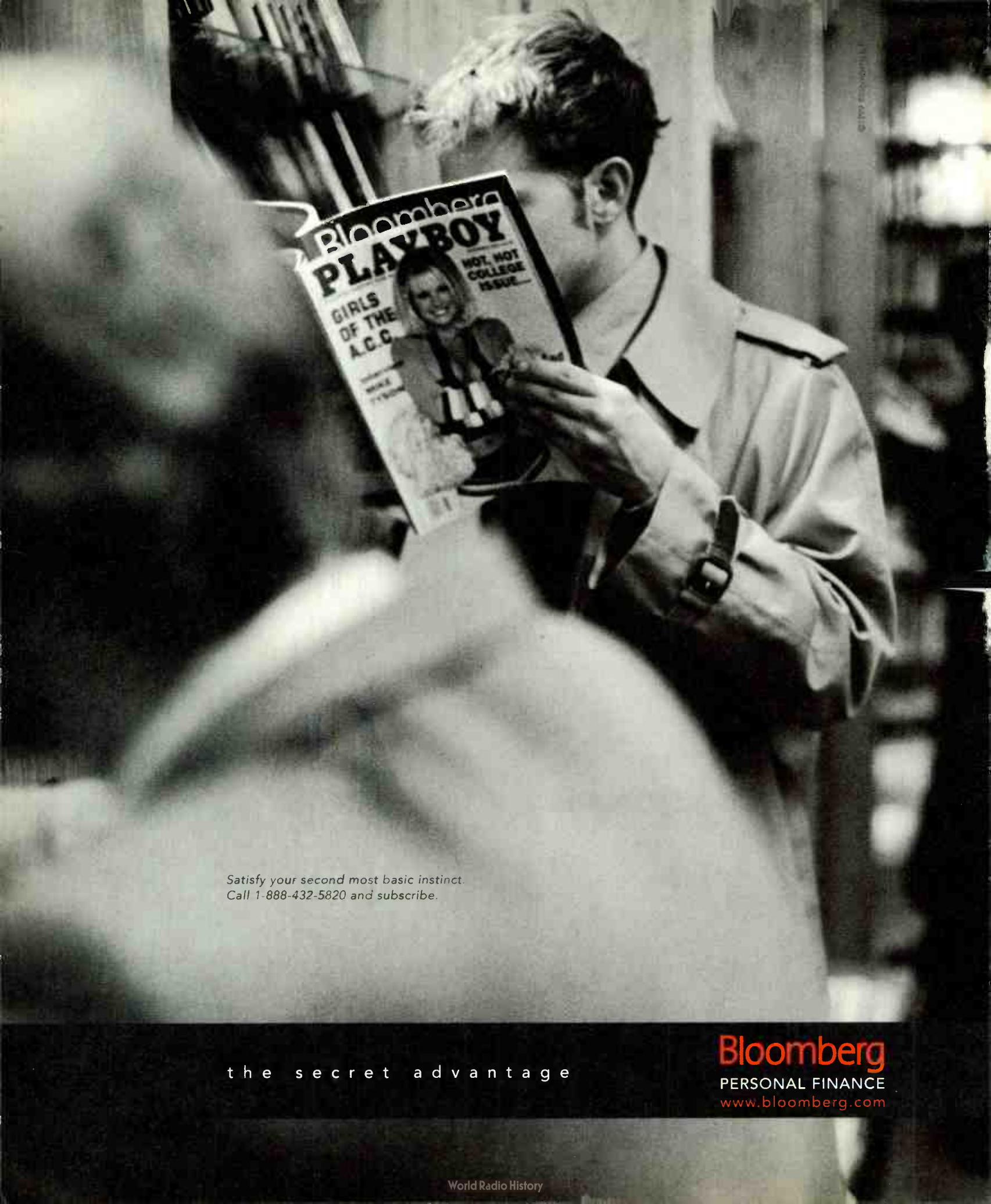
And *that*, after all, may really be the most old-fashioned thing about it. © 1999 Lands' End, Inc.



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Pundit Scorecard: THE CAPITAL GANG'S ALL HERE

Our third round of gauging the accuracy of TV soothsayers adds CNN's *The Capital Gang*. Once again, we've verified the results of every prediction the pundits made—this time between August 1 and January 1—and calculated a percentage that reflects how often their calls are correct. Below are updated tallies for *The McLaughlin Group* (MG) and ABC's *This Week with Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts* (TW).

—Matthew Reed Baker

- Tony Blankley, MG (25 of 42)..... .595
- Eleanor Clift, MG (27 of 48)..... .563
- Cokie Roberts, TW (8 of 15)..... .533
- Michael Barone, MG (17 of 33)..... .515
- Bill Kristol, TW (21 of 42)..... .500
- Patrick Buchanan, MG (22 of 45)..... .489
- George Stephanopoulos, TW (19 of 41).. .463
- Sam Donaldson, TW (6 of 13)..... .462
- John McLaughlin, MG (16 of 42)..... .381
- George Will, TW (1 of 9)..... .111



Margaret Carlson

Bats left
Average: .630 (17 of 27)

Columnist and senior writer, *Time*

HOME RUN

Correctly predicts that independent counsel Kenneth Starr will indict Julie Hiatt Steele, the flip-flopping former confidante of presidential accuser Kathleen Willey (November 28).

STRIKEOUT

Asserts that Starr won't testify at House impeachment hearings (October 17). Two days after he testifies, Carlson notes, "I don't want to speak too soon, but...our worst national nightmare might be over" (November 21). Unless she was referring to further Starr testimony, the national nightmare was far from over.



Al Hunt

Bats left
Average: .578 (26 of 45)

Executive Washington editor, *The Wall Street Journal*; panelist, *Evans, Novak, Hunt & Shields*

HOME RUN

Predicts that Henry Hyde infidelity revelation will not "be the last one" (September 19).

STRIKEOUT

Argues that "if two thirds of the public continues to say [President Clinton] should not be impeached, I think elected officials probably will not do it..." (September 26). One week before the vote, he reverses course and acknowledges, "there's no doubt impeachment would carry" the day (December 12). At least it didn't take him until after the vote to figure that out.



Mark Shields

Bats left
Average: .550 (11 of 20)

Syndicated columnist; panelist, *Evans, Novak, Hunt & Shields*; analyst, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*

HOME RUN

Virtually alone in anticipating a "wash" in Senate elections (October 31). That wins him something even rarer: a pundit's apology. "I said you were crazy," Robert Novak concedes on November 7, "and I was wrong and you were right."

STRIKEOUT

Predicts impeachment will help Republicans in congressional elections (September 26). Unless you count new House Speaker Dennis Hastert, not too many Republicans were helped.



Robert Novak

Bats right
Average: .540 (27 of 50)

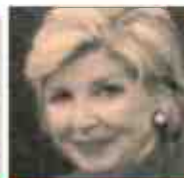
Syndicated columnist; cohost, *Evans, Novak, Hunt & Shields*; cohost, *Crossfire*; political analyst, *Inside Politics*

HOME RUN

Nails key impeachment calls: that Henry Hyde will refuse to consider censure and the House Judiciary Committee will vote on party lines (November 7).

STRIKEOUT

Stumbles out of the gate in 1999. Picks Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone as the leading challenger to Vice-President Al Gore for the 2000 Democratic presidential nomination (December 26). Two weeks later, Novak becomes possibly the first pundit to blow a call on the 2000 election as Wellstone pulls out of the contest.



Kate O'Beirne

Bats right
Average: .478 (11 of 23)

Washington editor, *National Review*

HOME RUN

During the summer's stock market slump, accurately foresees that people are "willing to ride out the market," which she says will bolster the case for privatizing Social Security (September 5).

STRIKEOUT

Insists that the Republicans don't have "much appetite" for impeachment, unless there is "a lot of new evidence or something startling" (November 3). There wasn't any new evidence or any startling developments—but there was plenty of appetite for impeachment.

Credit For *The Nation*

FOR OVER A CENTURY, *THE Nation* magazine has been awash in pinko ideals—and red ink. Now, Victor Navasky, the magazine's publisher and editorial director, is determined to make the magazine a success in nakedly capitalist terms.

That's what inspired the magazine's bally-hooded Caribbean cruise in December [see "The Wry Side," page 44]. But without much notice *The Nation* has embraced another unlikely moneymaking venture: *The Nation* credit card. Last September, the haven for

lefty criticism began profiting from the consumerism of its subscribers.

The vanity card of the proletariat magazine features cartoonist Edward Sorel's depiction of Uncle Sam reading the magazine and the line, "*The Nation*. Politically Charged Since 1865." The opinion weekly's partner in this venture is the resolutely apolitical First USA Bank. (First USA's Jeffrey Unkle notes that the bank issues a "Republican Victory Fund" card, too.) Every time someone signs up for the card or makes a purchase, First USA shares the revenues with the magazine. Navasky says he hopes to raise between



\$50,000 and \$100,000 in the first year that will be used to reduce an annual deficit of roughly \$500,000.

Navasky says he has received only a handful of letters about the card, but the magazine's notoriously outspoken readership has already tied up the phone line of magazine president Teresa Stack. "Some of them get angry," she says. "Others appreciate the irony." —*Ted Rose*

QUIZ

See if you can match the TV newsmagazine segments, all of which appeared in 1998 or 1999, to the shows that aired them.

—*Matthew Reed Baker*

THE SHOWS

A

Dateline NBC (NBC)



B

Hard Copy (Synd.)



C

Inside Edition (Synd.)



D

60 Minutes (CBS)



E

20/20 (ABC)



THE SEGMENTS

① **"FAKING IT"**
—German journalist tells how he sold fake documentaries to German TV.

② **"BUSTING OUT"**
—A look at a supposedly all-natural breast-enhancement pill.

③ **"A RARE BREED"**
—A policeman loses his canine partner in the line of duty.

④ **"DESIGNING WOMAN"**
—Profile of Donatella Versace, who leads her late brother's fashion empire.

⑤ **"BALLPARK BOOZE"**
—Stadium beer vendors serve underage drinkers.

⑥ **"RFK BOOK"**
—Robert Kennedy's sister

denounces a book that says he and Jacqueline Kennedy had an affair.

⑦ **"BOUNTY HUNTER"**
—Behind the scenes with private citizens who are bounty hunters for bail bondsmen.

⑧ **"CRAMMING"**
—Nationwide scam in which small phone companies add hidden charges to consumers' bills.

⑨ **"TEACHER'S PET?"**
—A college professor advocates sex between students and teachers.

⑩ **"PRAYING OFF THE POUNDS"**
—A popular diet says you should grab the Bible instead of that piece of cake.

⑪ **"THE COLOR OF MONEY"**
—Hidden camera reveals racism as retail employees help customers.

⑫ **"A LEAGUE OF HER OWN"**
—Profile of the first woman ever to pitch in men's professional baseball.

⑬ **"LITTLE WAITER/NACHO MAMA"**
—A 4-foot-4-inch restaurant employee serves chips and salsa from his sombrero.

⑭ **"SMOKE BUT NO FIRE"**
—Evidence that smoking causes impotence.

⑮ **"THE UNWANTED CHILDREN OF RUSSIA"**
—Children who are abandoned by their parents.

⑯ **"POISON PAINKILLERS"**
—Acetaminophen may be linked to liver complications.

⑰ **"LESLEY STAHL ON THE RUN"**
—Profile of the *60 Minutes* correspondent.

⑱ **"LOVING STEFANI"**
—A Guatemalan woman who sent her baby to the U.S. for burn treatment is reunited with the child ten years later.

⑲ **"I'VE GOT A SECRET"**
—Plastic surgery is all the rage among Brazilians.

⑳ **"TEEN DRAG RACERS"**
—Profile of two sisters who are national drag-racing champions.

㉑ **"SONNY'S SON"**
—Sonny Bono's illegitimate son meets his paternal grandmother.

㉒ **"RESCUE: 911"**
—Faults in Chicago's emergency-response system lead to death.

㉓ **"PAULA JONES"**
—An interview with President Clinton's accuser.

㉔ **"A SEA OF ALCOHOL"**
—Investigation into binge drinking and fraternity hazing in college.

㉕ **"MONTREAL AMNESIA"**
—A schizophrenic found on the streets of Montreal can't remember who he is.



Sometimes we
find ourselves here on
SUNDAY MORNING.

Somehow we think
the **REVEREND** will understand.



One place.

One whisky.

World Radio History

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SYNERGY WATCH

Every three weeks, Book-of-the-Month Club sends members its catalog, which highlights two or three "main selections." Though BOMC is a division of Time Inc., which has five book divisions besides Book-of-the-Month-Club, Inc. (Warner Books; Little, Brown and Company; Time Life Inc.; Oxmoor House; Sunset Books), there's no apparent favoritism in the club's choice of main selections. Of the 106 main selections in 1997 and 1998, only 13 were published by Time Inc. publishers other than BOMC. By comparison, 13 were published by Putnam, an imprint of Penguin Putnam Inc. Other imprints and publishers accounted for 63 books. BOMC itself published 17 main selections exclusively for members—most of them public-domain classics, such as *Winnie the Pooh*. —Matthew Reed Baker

CHARLIE ROSE TALK METER



We viewed five random late-January installments of Charlie Rose's late-night interview show to see how much he talked compared with his guests. For the first time in its three-month history, the meter dropped, with Rose taking up just 21 percent of the time, down two percentage points from last month. Why the drop? Strength in numbers. This month's sample featured four multiple-guest panels whose collective chatter left the host in relative silence. Tune in next month to see if the trend continues. —Matthew Heimer

GLOSSARY DIPLOMATIC COVERAGE



THIS MONTH'S EDITION reveals that in foreign policy journalism, buzz phrases—especially those favored by "official sources"—often confuse matters. With the help of *Time* magazine's Bruce W. Nelan, *Foreign Affairs*'s Warren Bass,

The Washington Post's Thomas W. Lippman, and *The New York Times*'s Philip Shenon, we put together a glossary of the most overused phrases, complete with their true definitions. —compiled by Matthew Reed Baker

- **"AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE"**: Essentially meaningless, because, as we all know, the devil is in the details.
- **"ALL OPTIONS ARE STILL ON THE TABLE"**: This, in the U.S. context, means that the decision makers involved are unable or unwilling to make a decision.
- **"DEGRADE"**: To bomb a lot, probably to little effect. It's the term the Pentagon uses when it wants to downplay civilian expectations about how much damage force can really do. When the U.S. degrades the effectiveness of the Iraqi army, it could be that we didn't do a bit of harm to Saddam.
- **"EMERGING MARKETS"**: Poor countries. The great euphemism of the Asian financial meltdown. Investors got much more excited when they thought they could invest in up-and-comers than when they heard that they could invest in the Third World.
- **"A FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS"**: Negotiations stopped just short of shouting and table-banging.
- **"INSTABILITY"**: The word used to describe a vague, complicated, or undefinable post-Cold War threat to American interests anywhere.
- **"INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY"**: The West. Used routinely by the White House—especially by an administration that is supposedly committed to multilateralism—to invoke global resolve. Actually camouflage for a U.S. initiative. The whole point of being a superpower is that you can ignore what, say, France thinks.
- **"MAKING PROGRESS, BUT NO BREAKTHROUGH"**: Still talking at cross-purposes.
- A **"MERCURIAL," "COLORFUL,"** or **"CONTROVERSIAL"** official is an off-the-wall wacko.
- **"MOST-FAVORED-NATION STATUS"**: Not in that tiny category of sanction-riddled rogue states. Just about every country has MFN trade status.
- **"MULTILATERAL"**: The United States plus Great Britain.
- **"REGRET"**: To care, but not enough to condemn. ("We regret the loss of life in Sierra Leone. We have no intention of doing anything to stop it, mind you, but we regret that it happened.")
- **"REFUSES TO SPECULATE"**: Is unwilling to go beyond a bland statement of general policy, often because the specifics would be embarrassing.
- **"A SENIOR WESTERN DIPLOMAT"**: Usually the American ambassador in the capital from which the dispatch comes. If it's filed by a correspondent accompanying the secretary of state on an overseas trip, it's usually the secretary.
- **"STABILITY"**: The situation in an area where the U.S. feels it is securely in charge.
- **"UNCONFIRMED REPORTS"**: Still in the rumor stage. Hearing the same rumor from three different people doesn't make it true.
- When an official says, **"WE'RE NOT RULING ANYTHING OUT,"** he means: "We're a long way from deciding anything, and we're not going to tell you—and thus reveal to the bad guys—what we're doing."

ANTHONY RUSSO (ILLUSTRATION); KATE KUNZ/COURTESY OF ROSE COMMUNICATIONS

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A Paper War Over Sharon Stone

WHEN THE SULTRIEST OF MOVIE stars wed a San Francisco newspaper editor, the celebrity magazines purred, the tabloids roared, and the city's *other* newspaper got downright nasty. One snipe led to another, and a year later, the battle of witticisms is still raging.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* launched its first salvo right at the lucky groom—Phil Bronstein, executive editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*—days after he exchanged wedding vows on Valentine's Day 1998 with Sharon Stone. Ken Garcia's snippy column lambasted the *Examiner* for not writing about the oh-so-secret nuptials, and accused Bronstein—referred to as “Mr. Stone”—of instructing his staff to ignore the event. (Bronstein says he did no such thing.) [For more on Bronstein, see “Talk Back,” page 61.]

Though the column purported to address the fact that neither paper reported much on the wedding—the *Chronicle* had made a few brief mentions—it aimed all of its barbs at Bronstein, and managed to weave in a litany of unflattering, years-old tales about him and a reference to Sharon Stone's infamous leg-crossing scene in *Basic Instinct*. Three days later, the *Examiner's* Rob Morse struck back at the competition for printing “boys' room jokes about our editor's wife's underwear.”

The fun hasn't let up. In October, the *Chronicle's* Garcia took another jab at Stone, mocking her for praising her husband's newspaper—and gently knocking its competitor—in an interview with

Elle. Not one to miss an opportunity, Garcia also worked in a dig at Stone's latest movie, crowing that “early word on... *The Mighty* is that it's mighty bad.”

The barbs are the latest exchange in an age-old newspaper rivalry that has taken on Cain-and-Abel overtones. The newspapers have a joint operating agreement under which they use the same circulation and advertising staffs, put out the Sunday paper together, and work in the same building. (The editorial staffs, however, are separate.) The agreement ends in 2005, at which point “one will buy out the other,” says Ben Bagdikian, a former journalism dean at the University of California at Berkeley.

Until then, the jabs keep coming—and at least one innocent bystander has felt the sting. In January, the *Chronicle's* Scott Ostler penned a short piece headlined “A Dame, A Jag, A Wreck—But Did it Happen?” The story coyly recounted how “a very famous and beautiful woman... [the] wife of very powerful local newspaper guy” had been involved in a car accident being kept under wraps by the cops. Only in the next-to-last paragraph did he reveal that the woman driving the Jaguar was not Sharon Stone but “a look-alike, a high-class hooker.” In fact, the look-alike was Mimi Eddy, a vice-president for sales and marketing at an entertainment company, which the *Examiner's* Morse noted in a retaliatory column a few days later.

Ostler concedes the source who identified the woman as a hooker was misinformed. Eddy says she has no plans to sue. She's just hoping the notoriety will wane. And just for the record—which paper does Eddy read? *The New York Times*. —Jennifer Greenstein

Schwab's REAL Reality

BY NOW HOWARD, HOLLY, AND a couple named Marion and Rick are familiar faces. They're the investors featured in schwab.com's widely praised TV and print advertisements. The company hopes that upon hearing their lively accounts of how Charles Schwab & Co., Inc.'s online service helped them master the art of finance, you too will guide your mouse in Schwab's direction. If the ads are convincing, it may be because their stories are real.

Don Easdon and Jeff Billig of the Boston-based Partners & Simons advertising agency came up with the idea to show how schwab.com opens up investing to “normal people,” according to Billig. He says that the agency launched a search for Schwab customers who represent different kinds of investors, ranging from novices to active traders.

Howard was chosen to represent active

traders. He says he was approached by his Schwab branch manager, who told him that she received an e-mail from headquarters about the search. (Howard spoke to us on the condition that we not use his full name. According to Schwab spokeswoman Tracy Gordon, Marion and Rick were traveling and Holly declined to be interviewed). After Howard expressed interest, Schwab checked his records to make sure that his account was active and in good standing. Casting director Maryclaire Sweeters then videotaped Howard in his home answering questions about how he uses Schwab. Commercial director Tony Kaye chose Howard—as well as Holly, Marion, and Rick—from more than 300 candidates.

The result: six 30-second spots in which images of Schwab's website in action are intercut with Howard, Holly, and Marion and Rick talking about their investing experiences and philosophies. Howard explains that dur-



Howard, an investor, in a scene from his Schwab commercial.

ing the two-day shoot at his home, Kaye asked him to show how he uses schwab.com to makes trades and do research. Howard says that every word he said came off the top of his head; there was no script. He adds that the TV and print ads faithfully reflect what he said.

Howard says he has become something of an investment guru. “The other night,” he says, “my rabbi called me... and he said, ‘Howard, I just saw... you on TV. You're doing trading. Can you look at my investment portfolio?’” Howard referred him to Schwab. —Leslie Heilbrunn

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MAGAZINES:

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RADIO:

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TELEVISION:

ESPN, Fox Sports Net—"I get most of my news and sports on TV...I vary from channel to channel, I just scan. I watch *Larry King*, I enjoy that."

BOOKS:

Values of the Game by Bill Bradley

WEB:

"I missed the computer cycle by a little, now I'm just getting into it."

COMMENTS:

"Anything that relates to our industry is on my desk...I'm kind of inundated with information."

—Michael Kadish

BOOKING PLUGS ON amazon.com

ON THE FRONT PAGE OF ITS February 8 edition, *The New York Times* broke news about Amazon.com: The online bookseller, which publishes short reviews of the thousands of books it offers its 6.2 million customers and recommends many more, isn't making its choices entirely on the merits. The *Times* revealed that Amazon has been offering publishers deals that guarantee a book's specific placement on Amazon's website. Charging for good placement—like on the front table of a bookstore—is standard practice for retailers. But Amazon has always presented its recommendations as editorial content.

"January–June 1999 Merchandising Program," a confidential document that Amazon distributed to publishers, spells out the blurring of lines between editorial content and marketing promotion. Here are some examples:

- If a publisher has a new children's book to market, Amazon will sell it the "Destined to be Classic" package—including placement on the bestsellers page—for between \$2,000 and \$5,000.
- \$2,000 buys "Top Placement Kids Superstore Home Page."
- For \$5,000, a title can get "Coverage in Destined for Greatness on the Bestsellers Page."
- For \$2,000, Amazon will list a title under a homepage heading called "What We're Reading" for about two days, and then for another five days, it will move the title down the same page to another category like "Our Customers Recommend." The brochure illustrates the program with the book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*; the brochure also quotes a "customer" saying the book "should become a classic."

According to Amazon spokesman Bill Curry, a publisher cannot secure good placement unless "Our editors say, 'We think this book is of significance enough to our readers in all of their varied tastes that we think it should be called out for a

feature.'" Each blurb that is labeled "Amazon.com Review," Curry says, has been written by an editor. "Contrary to what some headlines have said, our recommendations are not for sale." Every day, he

Destined for Greatness

Rice Returns



Anne Rice has whipped up a whole new batch of lively undead beauties in her latest book, *Vittorio the Vampire: New Tales of the Vampires*. Her hero is the gorgeous, well-born Vittorio, made immortal in the romantic days of Florence, Italy, under the Medicis. Rice once described the tale as her vampire version of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Pre-order now for delivery as soon as it's published on March 16. More [not-yet-published bestsellers](#)

For a fee, Amazon.com will deem a book "Destined for Greatness," although an Amazon spokesman says that the novel shown here was *not* part of such an arrangement.

stresses, books are rejected for these plugs because they don't meet Amazon's editorial standards. When asked to name one such title, he declined.

Amazon's customers don't like to feel they've been taken for a ride, says Peter Osnos, publisher of PublicAffairs books, but he adds, "It doesn't surprise me that a commercial enterprise looks for ways to make money." "Amazon.com is a bookstore like any other," agrees an executive at publishing giant Random House. That the *Times* singled out Amazon without investigating similar plans of its competitor, [barnesandnoble.com](#), is "ludicrous," says one executive at a major publishing house. In fact, [barnesandnoble.com](#) has offered promotional deals since early 1998, says the company's spokesman, though he adds that such promotions are placed in "boutiques," separate from the website's editorial content.

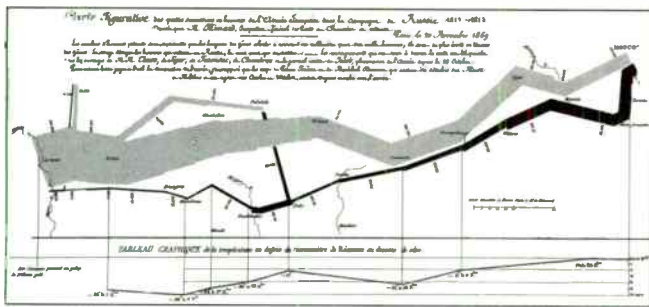
Amazon's proposal made front-page news only because this standard commercial agreement "violates the spirit of the Web," according to the publishing executive. Using cyberspace as a commercial vehicle, she says, is "anathema to people who still want to hang onto the notion that on the Internet, cowboys roam free." Amazon's customers needn't long for the range, though. On the heels of the controversy over the *Times* story, the site began disclosing placements that were secured with money, according to Curry. —Katherine Rosman

COURTESY OF THE ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

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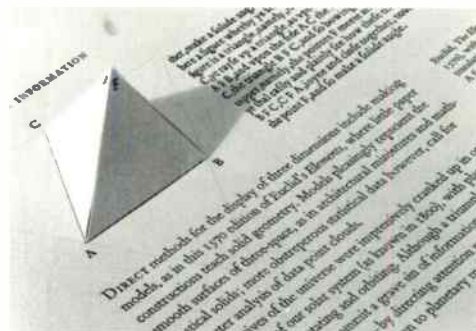


This map portrays the losses suffered by Napoleon's army in the Russian campaign of 1812. Beginning at the left on the Polish-Russian border near the Niemen, the thick band shows the size of the army (422,000 men) as it invaded Russia. The width of the band indicates the size of the army at each position. The army reached Moscow with 100,000 men. The path of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in the bitterly cold winter is depicted by the dark lower band, tied to a temperature/time scale. The Grande Armée struggled out of Russia with only 10,000 men. Six dimensions of data are displayed on the flat surface of the paper.

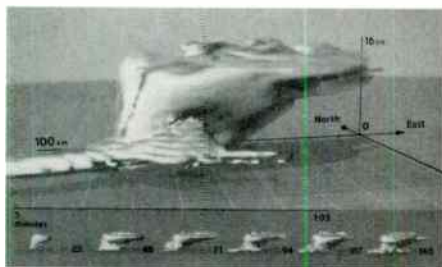
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Man Overboard

Adrift in the Caribbean, the author deep-sixes some long-held beliefs about just what kind of reader *The Nation* attracts.

I'LL ADMIT THAT IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO GET USED TO the idea that the Caribbean cruise sponsored by *The Nation* magazine this winter had been inspired by the *National Review*. Apparently, the *National Review* has used cruises for years to raise money and rally the faithful. Journals of opinion are, of course, chronically underfunded, unless they're owned by Rupert Murdoch. No

progress has been made in expanding the custom, already observed in some circles, of arranging to have such publications edited by men with enormously rich wives, even though I once pointed out why such a funding arrangement is ideal: Someone allowed to pontificate every week can become pretty full of himself, and a wife who underwrites his entire enterprise is in a position to say, "Get off your high horse, Harry, or I'll take away your little magazine and give it to the cook."

Last spring, the subject of the cruise came up while I was at dinner with Victor Navasky, the publisher and editorial director of *The Nation*, who became known as "the wily and parsimonious Victor S. Navasky" in the days when he was the magazine's editor and I was an innocent he'd talked into doing a column for the sort of wages customarily associated with fast-food establishments. As the W & P began to wax enthusiastic about the advantages of transforming *Nation* readers into cruise-ship passengers, I asked what made him think that people who had demonstrated a serious interest in progressive politics would go in for such bourgeois fripperies as a cruise in the Caribbean.

"Oh, judging from just the initial response to our first ad," the wily one said, "the guy who handles the *National Review* cruises told me..."

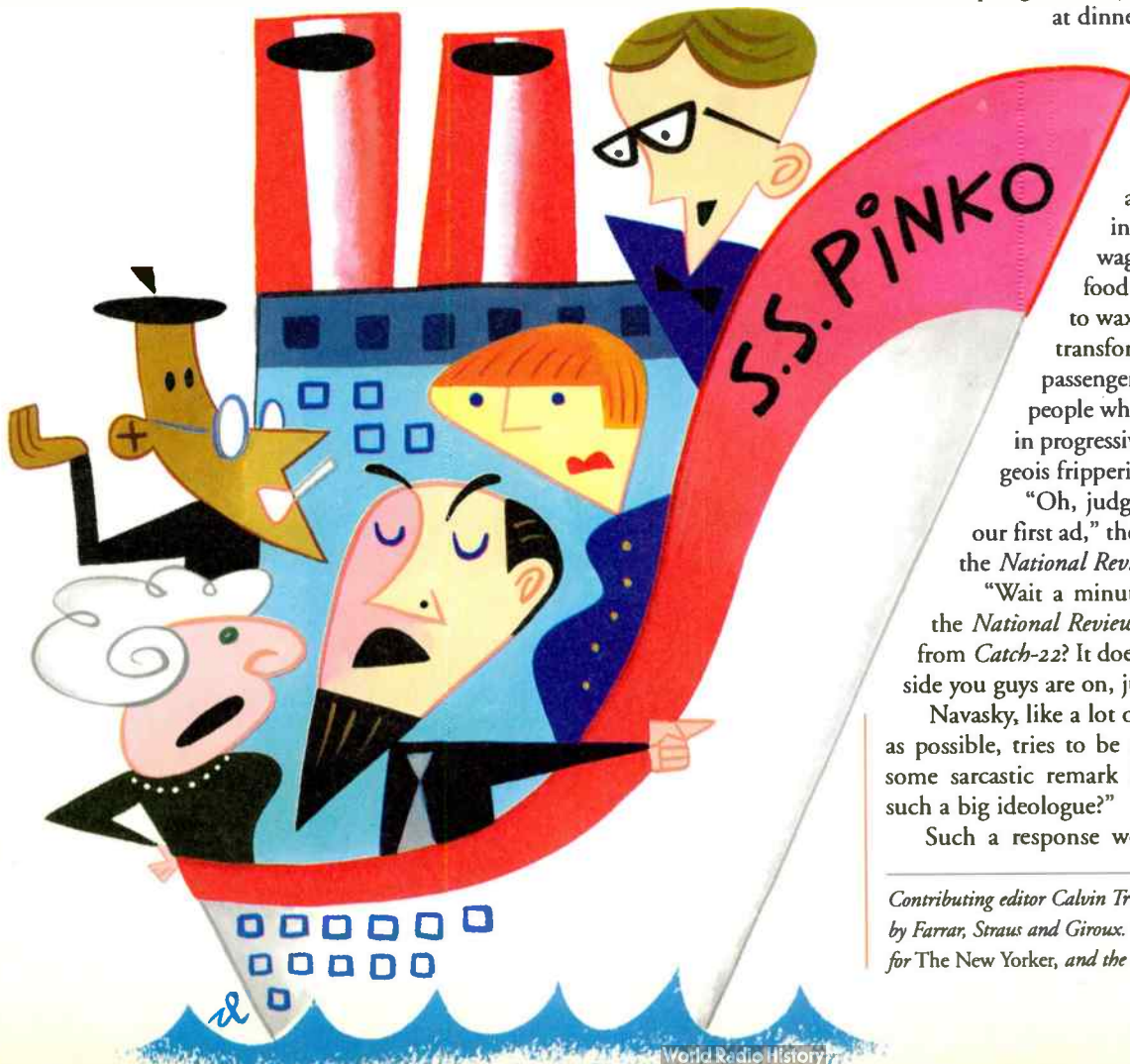
"Wait a minute!" I said. "You're cooperating with the *National Review*? What is this—Milo Minderbinder from *Catch-22*? It doesn't make any difference about which side you guys are on, just so the cash keeps rolling in!"

Navasky, like a lot of publishers who pay writers as little as possible, tries to be amiable. He refrained from making some sarcastic remark like, "Since when did you become such a big ideologue?"

Such a response would have been fully justified. For

Contributing editor Calvin Trillin is the author of Family Man, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He is also a columnist for Time, a staff writer for The New Yorker, and the contributor of a weekly verse to The Nation.

ROBERT DE MICHELL



years I answered questions about why I wrote for *The Nation* by saying, "It's the closest magazine to my house." In my column, I pointed out that *The Nation* is published only every other week during the summer months even though the downtrodden are oppressed every day of the year. On a television talk show once, I recalled an exchange I'd had with a newspaper reporter who, during the promotional tour for a collection of my *Nation* columns, had asked me to describe the magazine:

"Pinko," I said, after some reflection.

"Surely you have more to say about it than that," he said.

"Yes," I said. "It's a pinko magazine printed on very cheap paper—the sort of magazine where if you Xerox one of your pieces the Xerox is a lot better than the original."

A week or so later, I got a ferocious letter from a *Nation* reader outraged that I would say something on national television that gave comfort to the enemy. I wasn't surprised. I'd always taken it for granted that one portion of the *Nation's* readership was troubled not only by my smart-aleck remarks but also by the suspicion that I was the sort of person who had let the agony of the Scottsboro Boys fade from his memory. As a stand-in for those readers, I included a character in my column called Harold the Committed, who was always asking me whether I'd like to see the world as we know it destroyed in a nuclear holocaust ("No, not really, Harold") or suggesting that one of my daughters go to the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade as "the dangers posed to our society by the military-industrial complex" ("Harold, we don't have anybody at home who can sew that well").

BUT THE 400 PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY went on the first *Nation* cruise—a cruise I attended as one of the panelists—did not appear to be at all angry with me, except for a woman who was livid over my failure to call on her when, as the moderator of a panel, I asked for questions from the floor. If the cruise-boat passengers Navasky snared were a fair sampling, *Nation* readers are nowhere near as solemn as Harold the Committed.

They laughed when another panelist, Molly Ivins, who has always been jolly enough to cause Harold some concern, referred casually to the comfortable group gathered before her amid the faux luxury of the cruise ship's

theater as "the vanguard of the proletariat." They at least chuckled politely when I said that in speeches around the country I used to describe the circulation of *The Nation* as "six hundred librarians and eight unreconstructed old Trotskyites"—although afterward a considerate fellow panelist took me aside to explain that the reason some people in the audience might have seemed puzzled rather than entertained by my remark was that in the sectarian disputes of the thirties, *The Nation* and the Trotskyites had, in fact, been bitter enemies. (I was grateful for that information, although I've since begun to wonder about the identity of all those codgers who approached me after speeches and explained their loyalty to *The Nation* by saying, in the friendliest sort of way, "I'm one of those eight unreconstructed old Trotskyites you mentioned.")

The audience did not seem offended when I said, as a way of taking note of the chest congestion I was contending with while trying to moderate a panel, "I want to reassure everyone on one point: When someone gets a respiratory ailment in a closed, air-conditioned environment, the first thing that comes to mind, of course, is Legionnaires' disease. I want you to know that I phoned the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis this morning, and they informed me that this crowd would not be *allowed* to have Legionnaires' disease. Maybe Abraham Lincoln Brigade disease." That evening, by chance, I sat at dinner with a man who had actually fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

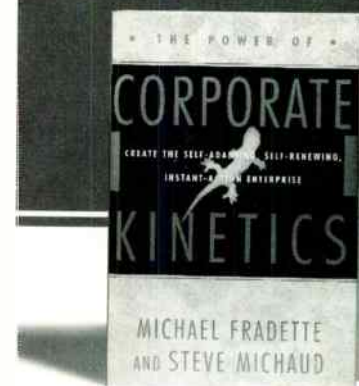
He turned out to be someone who had some good stories and some strongly held political views—a description that fit a lot of the people I met on the cruise. Shyness and reticence were not rampant among them. When the time came for questions and comments from the floor, just about every hand in the room seemed to go up—that was my excuse, feeble as it sounded, for not calling on the woman who upbraided me—and the arguments over issues and strategies extended from the theater to the lounges. The level of contention was so energizing that it nearly cured my cold. In fact, I've told Navasky that the possibility of holding a bi-ideological cruise should be discussed the next time he and the fellow from the *National Review* have one of their fund-raising pow-wows. For the panels, we'd first rule out jokes about which group was assigned the portside cabins and which the starboard, and then open it up for comments from the floor. ■

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JUST BETWEEN US

The line between conversation and “publishing” is getting harder to find. Plus: NBC’s interest in Brokaw’s book is financial as well as journalistic.

IT WAS JUST A CONVERSATION AMONG COLLEAGUES and friends. One of us had heard a delicious rumor about one of those supposedly cheatin’ Republicans that Larry Flynt has been threatening to expose, and, being human, we couldn’t help but pass it along. Okay, I’m the guilty party. But in telling my associates about what I had heard—from somebody who had heard it from somebody who had heard it from somebody who may or may not have known what they were talking about—I emphasized that I had absolutely no basis for judging the truth of this rumor. But, I said earnestly, the fact that this particular rumor is swirling around political and media circles is pretty interesting, no? Everyone agreed.

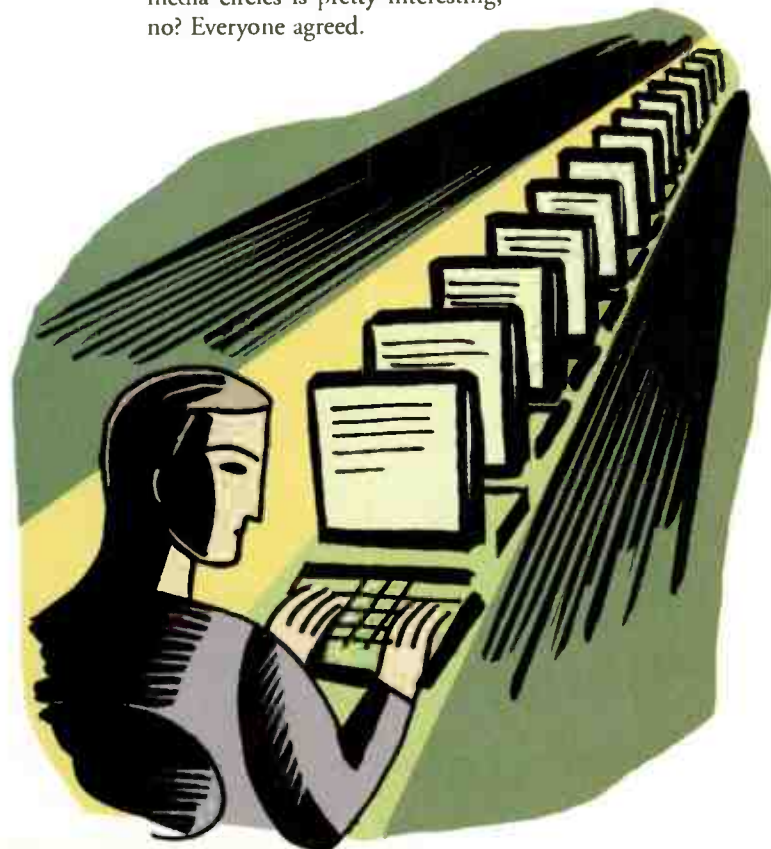
Did I commit some sort of breach? I didn’t think so. But then I started to wonder. What if instead of sharing this unsubstantiated piece of probably false gossip with three colleagues, I had simply e-mailed it to them, and, say, eight other buddies? Same gossip, same disclosure about its (un)reliability. Or, let’s say I e-mailed it to the 100 or so names that are in my e-mail address book (knowing full well that a lot of them would press a few buttons and pass it along to the names in their address books)? Or how about if I simply posted it on my personal website? (I don’t have one, but it takes only a few minutes to set one up.)

Most of us would probably agree that it would be wholly irresponsible of me to report this rumor in this column right now. As I said, I have no reason to think it’s true. But the other cases are trickier, and they point to a profound transformation taking place in our information culture right now. It’s another blur, this one between communication and publishing, or, put another way, between conversation and media.

At some point in the continuum of scenarios I just laid out, my private conversation becomes transformed into something else, something public. I can’t tell you exactly where and when that transformation takes place, and I don’t think anyone else can either. That’s why this is such an interesting and difficult question, one that not only challenges journalists but information-consumers as well. And like so many media issues confronting us right now, this one starts with the Internet—but it ends with a consideration of standards.

Lawyers and legislators are grappling with how the Internet has changed, or should change, the legal standards for slander, libel, and defamation; how these issues are settled will have an impact on this changing information marketplace. Similarly, fundamental questions about how constitutional protections afforded to the press should apply on the Web remain to be resolved, as do the Web’s awesome privacy implications.

But the law is playing catch-up here. This new information marketplace already exists, and the most important standards, I think, won’t ultimately be the legal variety. I may choose not to publish the sex rumor about the politician on



my website, but other people no doubt will make different choices, and for them and their customers, maybe that's the right choice. Cyber-gossip Matt Drudge, in defending his publishing of rumors, says he is only passing along to a wider audience the sort of inside dope and speculation political insiders and journalists pass among themselves. Isn't it elitist to argue that some of us can handle this stuff in its most raw, unsubstantiated form (I certainly felt my colleagues could handle it), but everyone else can't?

The answer isn't "anything goes," however. The answer is that in the new marketplace, responsible people need to be careful about what they say, no matter the medium. Information providers more than ever need to articulate their standards and their missions, and consumers need to hold them accountable. The good news, if I can call it that, is that we are learning to discount and even ignore a lot of what we read and hear because we gather from experience who's reliable, who's lazy, who is grinding a political ax, who is just filling space, and who is wasting our time (or satisfying a guilty pleasure) by passing along baseless rumors.

Which brings me back to that conversation with my colleagues: It was a small gathering. I knew exactly who was hearing what I was saying. And I was able, I believe, to communicate my doubts about the rumor's basis. Therefore, I don't feel too sleazy about it. But I'm glad I didn't take that next step and transmit it electronically, even to just a select group of acquaintances. Because once you hit that "send" button, you've entered that strange new world where the line between private conversation and public media has suddenly become hard to define—and even harder to find.

HOW IS THE NEWS WE SEE AND READ affected by the financial interests of the companies that bring us the news? That's a big question, obviously, and there's no shortage of critics in academia and interest groups convinced that the system is utterly corrupt. Judging by your letters, a fair number of this column's readers are healthily skeptical about our most powerful news providers.

Some of that skepticism greeted the publicity explosion that accompanied the release late last year of Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*, a warm and original appreciation of the men and women who endured the Depression, won World War II, and created much of what is great about our nation. Many of you took note of how Brokaw, who anchors

the *NBC Nightly News*, seems to have been all over NBC promoting the book, which rocketed to best-seller status. I like the book, too, and my first reaction to the complaints about the NBC promotional blitz was similar to that of Thomas Rosenstiel, director of a media watchdog group called the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Rosenstiel was asked by a *New York Times* reporter whether all the exposure of Brokaw on NBC raised ethical questions about news shows being used by networks or anchors to promote their own books. "If you're able to communicate things of substance to people,"

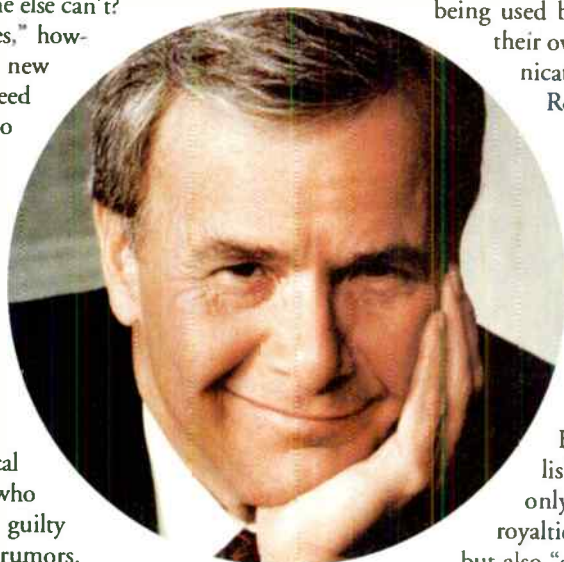
Rosenstiel said, "and that dribbles into *Dateline* [NBC] instead of the newest celebrity book on one-liners or 'How I Got to Be a Sitcom Star,' then I think the culture is better off."

I agreed with Rosenstiel, that is, until I learned from a *Wall Street Journal* article that in a highly unusual deal, NBC owns a just under 25 percent interest in Brokaw's book, which was published by Random House. This not only gives the network a piece of the royalties, the *Journal* article pointed out, but also "a huge incentive to gear up the network's in-house publicity machine to pitch the title."

I don't normally think of solid programs like the *NBC Nightly News* with Tom Brokaw or *Hardball* with Chris Matthews as part of anyone's publicity machine, but when you add up Brokaw's many book-related appearances, it does make you wonder. In addition to the segments on Brokaw's own newscast, which featured some of the heroes profiled in his book and promoted a special edition of *Dateline NBC* that was a documentary based on his book, Brokaw appeared on *Today* on December 4, December 7, January 1, and January 15. (During that last one, he again promoted the documentary.) He showed up on Tim Russert's show on CNBC on December 5, chatted with Chris Matthews on his CNBC show on December 21 and again on December 23, did the *Hockenberry* show on MSNBC on January 12, and participated in an online chat on MSNBC on January 15.

This is a newsworthy book, and Brokaw is a newsworthy author. An NBC spokeswoman said, "We are confident in the way we handled the situation." But to me, NBC went overboard, its news judgment apparently warped by its ties to Brokaw. And the network erred by not disclosing its interest in the book. Imagine how awkward it would have been if every time Brokaw or one of his network pals did a piece on *The Greatest Generation*, they included a disclosure about NBC's direct financial stake in the book. That awkwardness is proof enough that such a disclosure would have been appropriate. ■

Keep those blurry messages coming. E-mail me at ceffron@brillcontent.com.



NBC kept quiet about its financial stake in Tom Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*.

STUFF we LIKE

PREMIERE
THE MOVIE MAGAZINE



A Critic Who Knows What Matters

If Woody Allen married your favorite gossipy aunt, their baby might grow up to be the homemaker-turned-film-critic **Libby Gelman-Waxner**.

Libby, an Upper East Side orthodontist's wife with high-culture pretensions, is a pseudonym used by playwright and screenwriter Paul Rudnick (*In & Out*, *Jeffrey*), whose scathingly funny column "If You Ask Me" has run in *Premiere* since 1988. Writing in breathless, catching-up-over-decaf-latté prose, Libby entwines her movie reviews with tales of such adventures as a family outing to see *There's Something About Mary* ("a warmhearted romantic comedy about stalking") and her daughter's *Titanic*-themed bat mitzvah. The reviews themselves showcase Libby's unerring sense of what really matters in a film—the fame of its stars and the fabulousness of their wardrobes. Ultimately, Libby writes less about the movies than about the way audiences react to them, and that makes her one of the entertainment world's sharpest, funniest reads.

—Matthew Heimer

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Mix *America's Most Wanted* with *Cops*, add in breaking crime news and some smart investigative reporting, and you begin to get a picture of **APB Online** (www.apbonline.com). This website—the brainchild of two investment bankers and a former investigative reporter from the TV tabloid show *Inside Edition*—

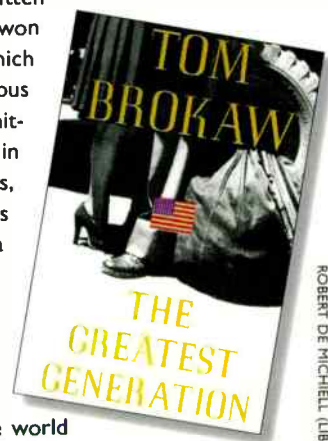
combines crime news and features such as the "celebrity mug shot gallery" and "G-files," where you can read the FBI files of Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, and John Wayne, among others. And it may be the only publication with a reporter devoted full time to the serial-killer beat. Plus, you can tune to police scanners from ten cities as you scan the crime stories.

—Robert Schmidt

TALES OF GLORY

SURE, TOM BROKAW IS A STAR AND ANY BOOK HE WRITES is bound to be hyped and become a best-seller. But *The Greatest Generation* (Random House) is the kind of book that every baby boomer—and every baby boomer's kid—should read. It's a simply constructed, unpretentiously written story of the generation that won the Second World War. Which means it's a simple but glorious and dramatic story of commitment and sacrifice, except that in the case of Brokaw's subjects, they weren't missing dinners and pulling all-nighters to get a deal done or an IPO launched or to get into an Ivy League school. They did what they did to save the world as we know it and—because of them—as we now assume the world will always be.

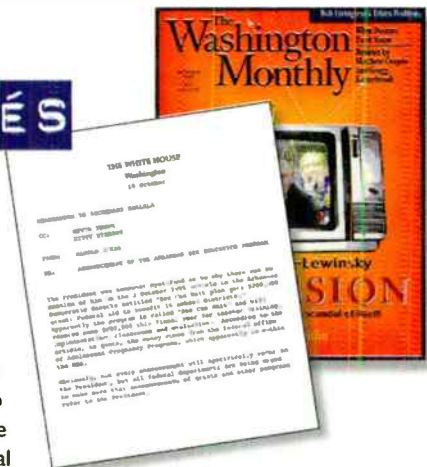
—Steven Brill



ROBERT DE MICHELL (LIBBY)

SELF-EXPOSÉS

The *Washington Monthly* is probably best known for its alumni (Michael Kinsley, James Fallows, etc.) and for the quirky, good-hearted, good-government philosophy of editor in chief Charles Peters. But I always turn first to the understated feature called "Memo of the Month." Each month, the magazine reprints, with no editorial comment, a memo—usually excavated from deep within the federal bureaucracy—that inadvertently exposes banality, absurdity, vanity, verbosity, or just plain idiocy. One offering was a memo from Rep. Bill Goodling to members of his House education committee that laid out its schedule for the week. ("Monday, May 25, 1998: The committee offices are closed in remembrance of Memorial Day. Tuesday May 26, 1998: Nothing is scheduled. Wednesday, May 27, 1998: Nothing is scheduled. Thursday, May 28, 1998: Nothing is scheduled. Friday, May 29, 1998: Nothing is scheduled.") The picture of our government that emerges from these missives is that a lot of self-important people are spending a lot of time writing a lot of memos—but not much is actually happening. —Eric Effron



WAR ZONES TO PUNK ROCK

New Yorker staff writer **William Finnegan** combines complex characters, vivid reporting, and clear historical context to create one engrossing story after another. First known for his reports from war zones like Somalia and South Africa, he gained wider fame last year with his book *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder*

Country (Random House), a look at lost American youth, from drug dealers in New Haven to neo-Nazis in southern

California. Since then, his magazine pieces have ranged from an examination of the Sudanese civil war to a laugh-out-loud funny epic about a punk band's tour across the High Plains. No matter what his subject, Finnegan always fascinates, educates, and resonates.

—Matthew Reed Baker

Sanity Amid The Hysteria

Literate, funny, and unflinching perceptive, **Jeff Greenfield** of CNN is a beacon of intelligence in the unintelligible morass known as political commentary in the Era of Monica. Like so few of his colleagues, he knows what happened before 1960 and provides viewers with badly needed perspective on our current crises. He can be glib, jocular and self-effacing, all in the service of telling it like it is. Best of all, Greenfield makes liberal use of one of television's least-used answers: "I don't know." —Jennifer Greenstein

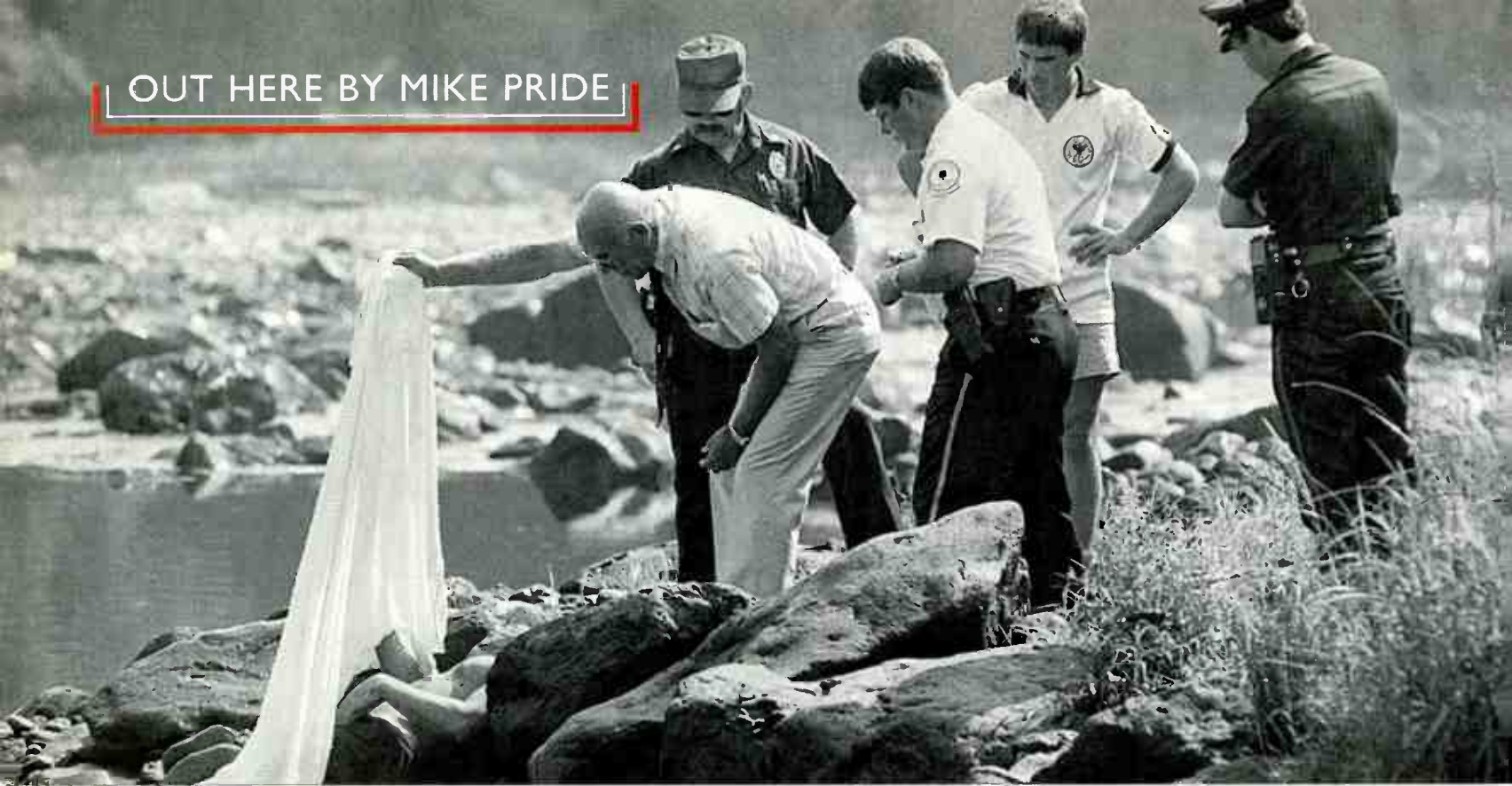
THE ICONOCLAST

If you respect movie stars or venerate figures such as Walter Cronkite, don't read **Joe Queenan**, whose columns for *Movieline* and *The Wall Street Journal* savage American icons. Wrote Queenan: "If Mr. Cronkite had had to rely on his journalistic ingenuity to survive, he'd still be in Texas covering college football." Elsewhere, Queenan riffed on a press trend: comparing mutual-fund managers to rock stars. He spun outlandish tales of fund managers trashing hotel rooms, engaging in gunfights, urinating on Quotron machines, and eating the heads off live chickens. The article was so deadpan that a *New York Observer* columnist actually believed it and published a warning of the threat posed by these "cowboys." Even when made up, though, Queenan's humor isn't just pointed—it has a point. —Nicholas Varchaver

A World Rediscovered

A 79-year-old beekeeper who is the last surviving Jew in the Belarussian town of Amdur (now called Indura). A 93-year-old atheist and former Soviet revolutionary who still speaks in Yiddish. A 70-year-old house painter whose father was the last of "Stalin's rabbis," who operated secretly during Stalin's time. These treasures are lovingly described in an ongoing series appearing in the *Forward*, a New York-based Jewish weekly. With a keen awareness of both the Holocaust and Soviet history, Dovid Katz's "Belarus Diary"—in which the correspondent roams this former Soviet province—brings back to life the last remnants of what were once some of the most vibrant Jewish communities in the world. —Rifka Rosenwein





Pursuing The Dark Side

A local newspaper must hold up a mirror to its community. Sometimes, that means showing what's ugly.

When a young man drowned in a New Hampshire river, the *Concord Monitor* published this photo instead of one that more graphically—and accurately—showed the dead body.

NOT LONG AGO, A REPORTER AT THE *CONCORD Monitor* set out to do that most routine of journalistic tasks, reporting and writing the police log. But this reporter, Sarah Koenig, resists routine—she finds human stories everywhere. Thus, instead of a dry account of DWI charges and domestic assaults, our police log consisted of items like this:

“[Paula X], 43, of Bow, was stopped after she drove the wrong way down Chandler Street in downtown Concord. When an officer explained the walk and turn test, part of a series of tests used to gauge whether a person is too drunk to drive, she informed him ‘that she could perform this test with her eyes closed, because she used to be a runway model,’ according to the police report....Despite her training, [X] failed the test and was charged with aggravated DWI, the police said.”

And this: “[Wayne Y], 23, of Concord was arrested Dec. 16 and charged with domestic simple assault after he became violent during an argument with his 22-year-old fiancée....The victim told the police [Y] threw a cardboard box at her, which broke part of her nativity scene and hit her in the head. While her 4-year-old child watched, [Y] knocked her to the floor, choked her, cut her neck with a stove lighter and hit her in the face....”

Public reaction to this new and improved police log was

unpredictable; there was both praise and dissent. One woman wrote, “[W]hy must we know the dialogue or details you are now adding....Have you not read the polls? We are sick of hearing about the darker sides of people’s private lives. Stick to the essential facts.”

The longer I have been editor of the *Monitor*, the more I have been tempted to take the course of least resistance. I suppose this comes with aging, with my own identification with the community, and with more than two decades of dealing with the local public. How much easier my life would be if the *Monitor* simply yielded on points like this and stuck to safe ground—the high ground, as the letter writer quoted above would no doubt call it.

And how much less useful our newspaper would be.

By pursuing and publishing the details, a local newspaper can help the community see its problems more clearly. It can show readers why shelters for abused women and alcohol-treatment programs are necessary. Above all, it can slay the myth that terrible things happen only somewhere else. A local paper should go out of its way to celebrate what is good in the community it serves, but it must work just as hard not to sugarcoat the dark side of the human condition.

Nothing is harder in community journalism than carrying out the duty to show things as they are. This duty is the core of our business, and readers have a right to expect it of us. And yet, all manner of obstacles and pressures stand against it.

Mike Pride is the editor of the Concord Monitor, in Concord, New Hampshire. His column on editing a daily local newspaper appears regularly.

Some of these counterforces are self-imposed. While we abhor the idea of censorship, the truth is that local journalists regularly censor their newspapers for the good of their communities. One example that jolted me into a greater awareness of my role as a censor was a workshop years ago on journalism ethics. During one session, a *Monitor* photographer named Garo Lachinian showed a photograph that had caused us a few complaints. The subject was the search for the body of a young man who had drowned in the river. We ran two pictures, one of the search and the other of the coroner examining the body. The body was concealed by a large rock and a white sheet in the second picture. Lachinian showed the journalists at the workshop his outtakes, including the photographs he had shot of the bloated body being pulled from the river. No editor or photojournalist would even consider using these pictures in the paper, and yet they showed things as they were far more fully and accurately than the photos we did run.

I am not suggesting that an editor force newspaper readers to look at photographs of the bodies of local drowning victims, but it is easy to take this censoring impulse too far.

Veteran newspaper editors like me have always been sensitive to the charge that we make content decisions just to sell papers. Usually, these charges are groundless and easily put down, and yet I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't consider what the top half of the front page is going to look like to impulse buyers at newsstands. "Flames above the fold" always sell papers, as our circulation director reminds us. But my inner voice, seasoned by years of decision making and by the idealism of the younger editors around me, is ever ready to instruct: *Don't pander. Don't sensationalize.*

At the moment, external voices are pressuring us to bur-nish the facts. Like the letter writers who wanted us to tone down the police log, some readers are prone to see telling details in the *Monitor's* reporting as part of some new trend. We have, they think, caught a virus that is sweeping the nation. The origins of the virus are clear: the tabloid takeover of journalism standards, the flood of trash TV, the fragmented and increasingly competitive media marketplace, and the emergence of the Internet, a near-anarchy when it comes to the dissemination of information.

In fact, these changes in the big picture have had little effect on how we cover local news at the *Monitor*, and I suspect other local editors would tell you the same thing. There is nothing new about our penchant for providing the gory details. Newspapers have a long, proud tradition of this. Murders, executions, disasters, wars—these are our stock in trade.

A colleague and I are writing a book on a New Hampshire Civil War regiment, and our research has taken us into many newspapers from the 1860s. The level of detail in the news columns is horrifying—especially when you consider that the accounts may have been the first news the loved ones of the deceased and maimed heard from a distant battlefield. Alonzo Allen wrote in his local paper in 1862 about the fate of the men from his hometown during the Battle of Fair Oaks: "Frank Hersey was shot through the head and died instantly. The bullet

entered his eye and passed through, the blood spirting in jets. Henry Stockwell was also shot through the head and lived a day or two—even after his brains partly run out." Corporal Charles Hale told in another newspaper account of falling asleep exhausted and parched on the battlefield. What awoke him was a half-crazed man pulling on his canteen. "I looked at him closely and saw that he had received a terrible wound," Hale wrote. "A bullet had struck him in the cheek, carrying away nearly the whole

By publishing the gory details, a local newspaper can slay the myth that terrible things happen only somewhere else.

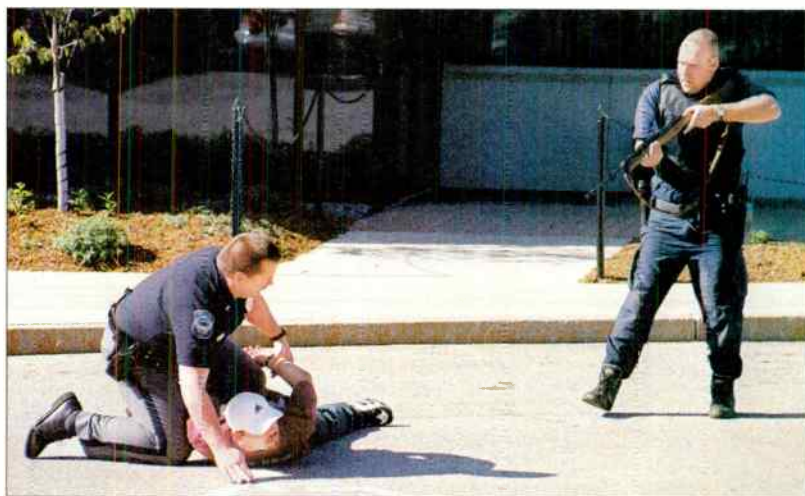
lower part of his face and most of his nose."

Perhaps it is easier to make a case for the social usefulness of such graphic accounts in time of war. But public safety has become a battleground in our country. Even in relatively safe New Hampshire, something unnerving has happened in the realm of human behavior. In mid-1997, we had a police officer shot and killed on a routine call. Last year, a distraught man came into our newsroom with two loaded pistols. In October, someone planted a pipe bomb in our public library. In January, a 15-year-old boy was caught in a Concord school with a loaded pistol, 400 rounds of ammunition, and a hit list.

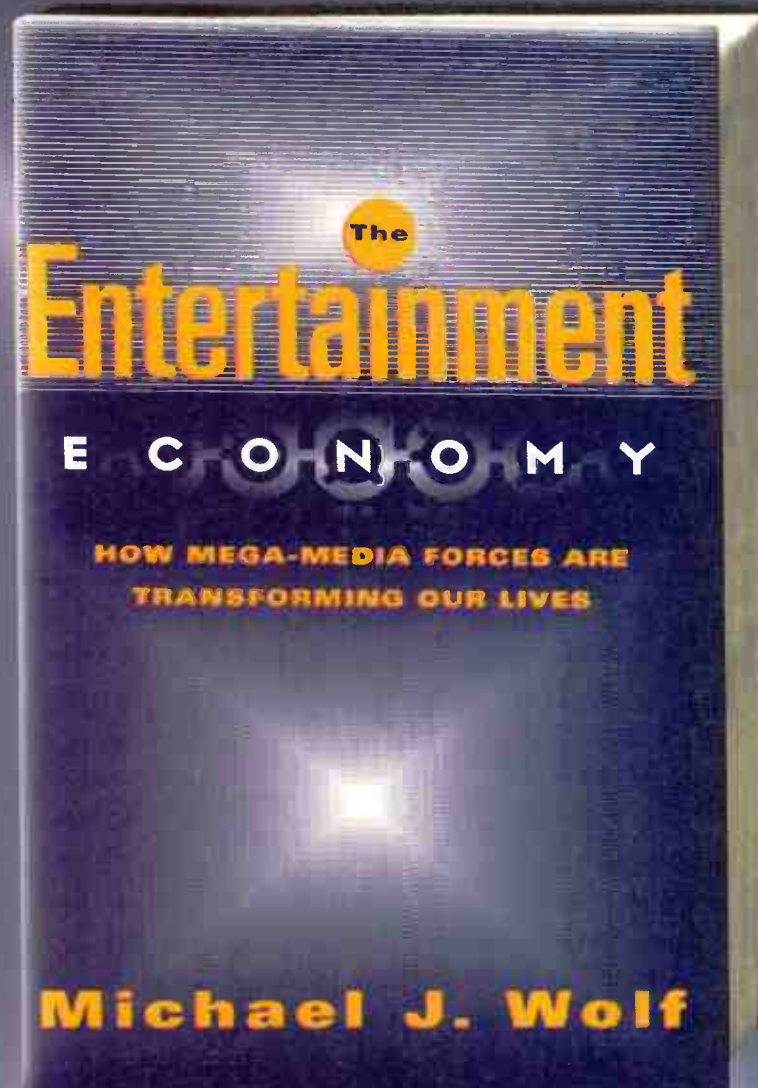
No one is more exposed in this dangerous world than the local police. That makes the specifics of their exposure—the kinds of situations they must respond to—more newsworthy than ever. The level of detail that began showing up in the police log when reporter Sarah Koenig took it over is something I wish we'd always provided. Our job is to hold up a mirror to the community, and that means offering a vivid reflection of its dirty laundry, too.

I once heard a speaker refer to a newspaper in Kansas that had a motto that stuck in my head. It went like this: "If you don't want to read about it in the *Gazette*, don't do it." A certain moral rigidity in this motto troubles me, but whenever I get letters encouraging the *Monitor* to spare readers the details, the *Gazette* standard crosses my mind. So does another, more personal standard: The more details, the more truth. ■

In the parking lot of the *Concord Monitor*, a police lieutenant handcuffs a man who had entered the newsroom with loaded guns in April 1998.



Every business is show business.



In the tradition of *Future Shock* and *Being Digital*, *The Entertainment Economy* shatters conventional views of our culture and economy, revealing that words like "image" and "celebrity" aren't just for actors and rock stars anymore.

Michael J. Wolf shows how everything in our world—from the airlines we fly to the malls we visit—is being transformed by ideas that come from the entertainment world. Exposing how the principles of MTV are used by companies like McDonald's and Citibank, Wolf shows how in our media-saturated society, corporations don't just sell products—they vie for our attention.

 TIMES BUSINESS

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The Talk Of Two Towns

Tina Brown's nascent multimedia project has a new investor. Does that mean her Hollywood backers are getting cold feet?

IN LEAFING THROUGH THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY'S 1998 annual report, the head-scratching realization soon strikes that something important is missing. Despite all the media attention showered on former *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown's new venture with Disney's Miramax Films—the prominent coverage of Talk Media's planned magazine as well as its movie, TV, and book offshoots—no mention is made of the synergistic dynamo.

There's room in the glossy report for the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster debuting this summer at Disney-MGM Studios, and for the upcoming christening of a Disney cruise ship. There's even a paragraph devoted to 1999 movies from Miramax, a 100 percent-owned subsidiary of Disney. But nothing about *Talk*.

The curious lack of corporate cheerleading may shed some light on why Miramax is offloading half of the magazine's equity and a chunk of its costs onto The Hearst Corporation. "Michael Eisner [Disney's chief executive] didn't want to spend a lot of money on this," says a senior Disney executive, whose comments were confirmed by two other high-ranking Disney sources.

Adds one of the latter sources: "The deal [between Brown and Miramax cochairman Harvey Weinstein] caught him by surprise, and no CEO likes to be caught by surprise. Particularly someone like Michael Eisner." (A Disney spokesman says he is "unaware" of such a reaction, but declined to ask Eisner specifically.)

The negotiations took place in a matter of days last July, and the budgetary projections were little more than educated guesses. So when the launch's price tag started moving past \$50 million, Eisner was not about to put Disney corporate funds into the project, says a source familiar with the studio's finances. If Miramax wanted to bankroll Talk Media on its own it was free to do so. The company did not. (Brown and Weinstein declined to comment for this story, while the Disney spokesman says that Eisner "is very supportive of the project.")

While the party line is plausible—that a stand-alone magazine needs help with circulation and manufacturing to launch this August at 500,000 copies—it does not explain Disney's willingness to surrender its equity. Miramax could buy those services from magazine giants such as Time Inc. But discussions there never progressed past a single meeting with editor in chief Norman Pearlstine, because Time Inc. had no desire to be an investor. Still more logically, the venture could get help from the other three divisions elsewhere within the Disney empire

that publish consumer magazines. (One other big company may not be much help. Condé Nast Publications, whose *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker* are the most natural targets for potential subscribers, is unlikely to rent their mailing lists to a fledgling competitor.)

But if the need is financing, then an outside partner is required and an equity stake must be sacrificed. The Disney spokesman argues that cofinancing deals are commonplace in the entertainment business.

And a source close to the Hearst-Miramax deal notes: "The difference between having someone doing those circulation and manufacturing functions and doing those...as a partner is commitment. And that's important."

It also didn't hurt that Frank Bennack Jr., Hearst's chief executive, is a fan of Brown's and had previously courted her for a job, says a friend of Brown's. Her talent has always made her an object of attraction, to Time Inc.'s Pearlstine, to Barry Diller, chairman of USA Networks Inc. (and an investor in *Brill's Content*), to Eisner himself.

Last year Harvey Weinstein became the one to lure her away from Condé Nast, satisfying a longtime desire in the process. Weinstein, says *New Yorker* staff writer Kurt Andersen, "has always wanted to run or start a magazine." In 1994, when Andersen was editing *New York*, Weinstein offered to trade jobs for a week. Andersen would get to greenlight movies under \$5 million, while Weinstein would edit the weekly. Andersen's boss vetoed the switch.

Weinstein then got approval to publish a culture and entertainment magazine. The project lagged, and when Weinstein heard Brown was



unhappy at *The New Yorker*, he pounced.

Brown already liked Weinstein and was comfortable with his showman style. And Brown loved the idea of equity, says a friend, even if she gets her stake and profit participation only after the entire investment is recouped.

There remained the not-so-small problem of just what this magazine and its offshoots would be. "I think this was a case of them getting married before they had a date," says a source who's worked with Weinstein. Eight months later, the particulars—in public, at least—are hardly more defined.

Prospective job candidates and industry peers have come away from meetings with Brown unsure what the focus of the magazine will be beyond a mix of politics, celebrity, and culture. Some specifics can be gleaned from interviews with people knowledgeable about the project. *Talk* will begin life as a ten-time-a-year magazine, and is expected to be oversized, which would provide more oomph for the less staged, European-style photojournalism Brown is planning to use. Brown also is searching for writers to explore women's issues beyond the canned "50 Ways to Leave Him Panting for More" stories that crowd most women's magazines.

While Brown has hired a number of talented editors, her luck at lassoing big-name writers has been mixed. Don Van Natta Jr., a *New York Times* Washington correspondent, and Jeffrey Goldberg, a contributing writer for the paper's Sunday magazine, turned down staff jobs. But Tucker Carlson, of *The Weekly Standard* and CNN, will contribute political stories from Washington, D.C., and George Plimpton is working on an oral history on society bandleaders.

Meanwhile, the rhetoric about synergy has cooled. The Miramax-Hearst deal announcement makes no reference to *Talk* movie offshots. Brown realizes that assigning stories based on the film possibilities would not work for the magazine. But Miramax is exploring other tie-ins. Trailers hyping the magazine may be attached to Miramax home videos. And TV is what the Talk Media team is concentrating on. Four specials are planned and Brown may have an on-air presence. "Synergy has always been the TV thing," says a senior Disney executive. "She always wanted the magazine to be a launching pad to TV....That's where the money [ultimately] is."

THE PULITZER MOUNTAIN

Think you have trouble finding time to read more than a few books a year? Consider the plight of the jurors for the Pulitzer Prizes. Thanks to the legacy of founder Joseph Pulitzer—whose newspapers in St. Louis and New York a century ago played to populist passions—anyone, including the authors themselves, can place a book in the running for a Pulitzer Prize in letters. All it takes is a completed entry form, four copies of the book, and \$50. Forget about a vetting process. If a book meets those criteria, it's got to go to a Pulitzer judge. "We're not happy dumping books on jurors, but that's the way it works," says Seymour Topping, the administrator of the 83-year-old awards, which are announced each April.

In a typical year, about 800 volumes of history, biography, general nonfiction, fiction, and poetry arrive in the Pulitzer Prize offices at Columbia University. So just how do the three

jurors in each category manage to get through all that reading?

"You can't," concedes *New Yorker* writer Ken Auletta, who as a juror for the 1997 general nonfiction Pulitzer Prize (the category with the most submissions) took delivery of 280 books. "What you do is skim and set aside those dozens of books you're really going to read." Even then, jurors aren't exactly slacking. Auletta still closely read about 80 titles, he says. "I spent from August to December reading books. That literally consumed my life." For his efforts, Auletta received \$1,000. (Beginning this year jurors will receive \$2,000 each.)

Michael Skube, a juror in last year's general nonfiction category, says he read the 241 books that came his way. Of course, it helps that his day job is book critic for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. But there are other survival tactics jurors use to cope with the onslaught. "If you have a 300-page book and you're halfway through it and it's so bad that however much chance this book has to improve in the next 150 pages, it's unlikely it's going to make your shortlist," Skube says, "you might start reading somewhat faster."

Some books lack any literary flair. Others, such as an 80-page work of nonfiction or a self-indulgent memoir, just don't possess the necessary intellectual heft. And some of the entries aren't even bound, as Skube discovered while opening the boxes that continually arrived from the Pulitzer Prize offices.

Then there are the real warning signs—the books that bear a sticker touting themselves as Pulitzer Prize nominees, as happened with a self-published tome Auletta received. That's a Pulitzer no-no. Just because an entry is submitted doesn't mean it's nominated. Only the two finalists announced alongside each winner can claim such a pedigree.

With the deluge of books, the jurors in the nonfiction categories have little time to ascertain the entries' accuracy, some figuring that the Pulitzer board will closely examine the three books on its shortlist. But Topping says the board doesn't do that. "We really trust the jurors," he says.

If a question does arise about a book's factual consistency, Topping himself will investigate. In his six years on the job, he's done that once. Though he declines to divulge the book's name, Topping says, "The upshot was the book did not receive a prize."

ALL THE ART THAT'S FIT TO SAVE

Artworld denizens howled in protest in January when the board of New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts announced that it was considering selling Jasper Johns's only public artwork. And when the board reversed itself only two weeks later, *The New York Times* offered a host of reasons why the home to the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Ballet suddenly was willing to forego more than \$15 million.

Famed architect Philip Johnson, who had commissioned the nine-foot by seven-foot *Numbers, 1964* 35 years ago, had called the possible sale "appalling." Leaders of cultural institutions in town had voiced their outrage. And Johns himself, best known for his paintings of American flags, had deemed the move shortsighted and irresponsible.

But one crucial player was missing from the *Times*'s list: the newspaper itself. "If the *Times* hadn't given it the play they did, that painting would be gone," says Hilton Kramer,

The New Criterion and a former *Times* editor and publisher, usually quick to castigate his old paper. In the *Times* ran three news stories, including one on the front page; an analysis piece; and most surprisingly, longly worded editorials calling on the board to make a mistake that would haunt the institution for years." *Times*'s influence was key. Lincoln Center executives and board members had already known that some art-world luminaries were upset with the idea. Johnson and Johns had informed them of their opposition. And Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator of painting and sculpture at New York's Museum of Modern Art, had warned of the inevitable public relations disaster in a letter last August. But Lincoln Center chairman Beverly Sills, president Nathan Leventhal, and the board members were tone-deaf to the warnings.

When the story broke, that same opposition went public. The stream of stories and editorials in the *Times* intensified the dissenting cries. "That kind of publicity can scare away donors," says art critic Deborah Solomon. Sure enough, one major foundation threatened to shut off its spigot.

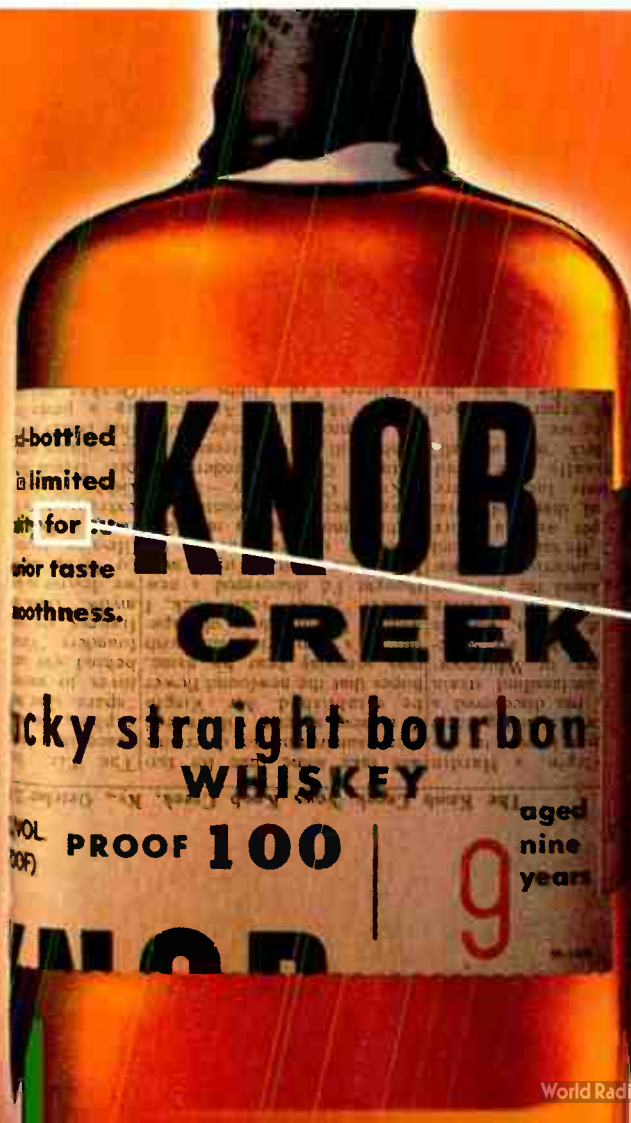
The story tapped such a nerve because it's an issue bound to come up increasingly for cultural institutions. "Here was the capital of culture in the U.S. selling off a major asset to

foot the electricity bill," says *Times* culture editor John Darnton. Even critics who are not fans of Johns's work were appalled. "[T]he principle is horrible," says *The New Criterion*'s Kramer. "[It would mean that] when public institutions need to raise money and they're too lazy to go out and do vigorous fund-raising, they can go out and sell their assets."

And the issue dovetailed with the general desire of *Times* editorial page editor Howell Raines, who has an "absolute determination to make the *Times* editorial page a voice of consequence in the city's cultural life," says a member of the editorial board. (Raines himself declined to comment.)

Lincoln Center's Leventhal also opted not to comment, but two board members complain that the *Times* coverage portrayed them as philistines rather than as fulfilling their fiduciary duties. Darnton, however, says he viewed the set-to as a clash of ideas, rather than a tale of good versus evil: "These are not guys with wax mustaches and black hats doing something venal and devious. They had the interests of Lincoln Center at heart."

Nevertheless, the consensus that emerged among critics, curators, and collectors was a rare occurrence. "This was really a great instance of public opinion changing the course of events," says art critic Solomon. Thanks, in large part, to the catalyst of the *Times*. ■



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A SOURCE OF CONFLICT

When a columnist and an editor at *Barron's* lashed out at their own colleagues, a private disagreement quickly went public. ● BY MATTHEW HEIMER

IT WASN'T THE KIND OF LANGUAGE you typically hear at a *Barron's* investment roundtable. The speaker was blasting a recent column in the financial weekly, lambasting it as "a gratuitous, unfounded smear," a piece of "adolescent posturing" motivated by "a consuming envy." As for *Barron's* itself, the speaker added, its decision to run the column showed that it "doesn't know the difference between spittle and substance."

The tirade may have been a surprise to the gathering of Wall Street strategists and *Barron's* editorial staffers—but its source was downright shocking. The speaker was Kathryn Welling, the *Barron's* associate editor hosting the roundtable. And she was reading aloud from a letter written by *Barron's* best-known columnist, Alan Abelson, who wasn't able to attend the January 11 conference. When the *New York Post* broke the story a week later, Abelson's venomous criticism of his coworkers became a matter of public record—and a serious embarrassment to *Barron's*.

Abelson's screed posed a dilemma for his bosses. Abelson and Welling had committed an almost unprecedented breach of professional etiquette, ripping one of their colleagues—and their own publication—in front of some of the top figures in the industry they cover. One *Barron's* staffer calls Welling's actions "worthy of firing [her]." But would the magazine dare to discipline Abelson, a

33-year veteran and the person most closely identified with the magazine?

At press time, *Barron's* editor Edwin Finn had not yet discussed the incident with either Abelson or Welling due to the fact that first Finn and then Welling were traveling. Finn says he has "no premeditated response." Whether or not Finn ultimately disciplines his staffers, the episode provides a glimpse into a classic journalistic conflict. Depending on which side you believe, it's either a case of courageous journalists refusing to toe the company line as they seek to redress a wrong—or of reporters unleashing pent-up frustration against their colleagues while sucking up to a prestigious source.

TO MANY, ABELSON, 73, is synonymous with *Barron's*. He has written "Up & Down Wall Street" for the magazine since 1966, becoming one of the financial world's best-known columnists. Along the way, he's earned a reputation for his eloquent sarcasm and his knack for deflating overhyped stocks.

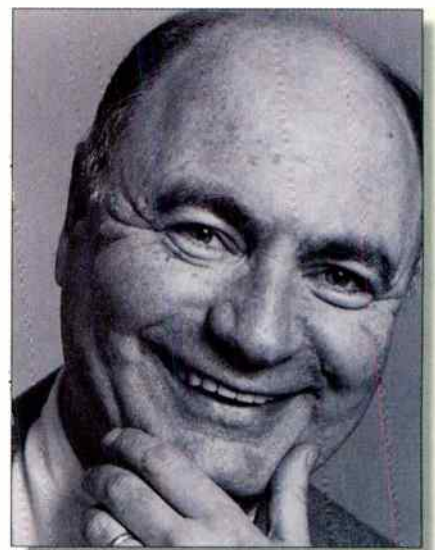
Abelson was the top editor of *Barron's* between 1981 and 1993, with Welling serving as his managing editor. And even when Abelson was asked to

step down—which also resulted in a lesser title for Welling—*Barron's* urged him to stay on and write his column.

Abelson was chastising his colleagues on behalf of another Wall Street icon, Barton Biggs, the chairman of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter Investment Management. A well-known market pundit, Biggs is frequently quoted in the press. He and Abelson have never hidden their mutual respect: Words such as "sagacious" and "our old friend" typically accompany the appearance of Biggs's name in Abelson's column.

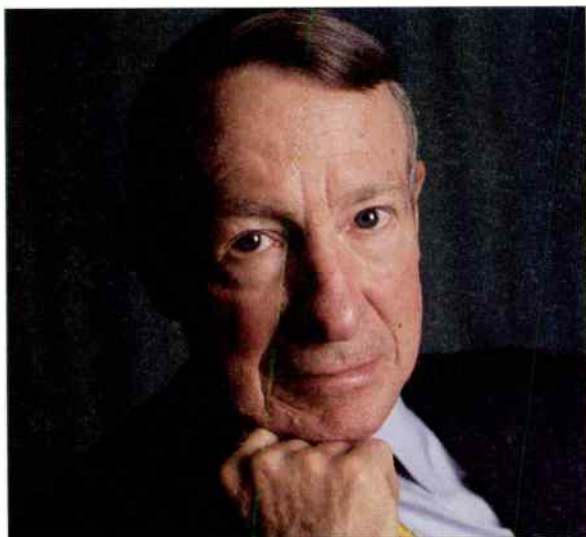
That's not how Biggs was described in the December 28 column by Sandra Ward, 42, *Barron's* mutual-funds editor. Ward's somewhat murky article seemed to imply nothing worse than hypocrisy on Biggs's part. Biggs had recently sold his personal holdings in several Morgan Stanley emerging-market funds, suggesting that he didn't think much of

Airing the magazine's dirty laundry? *Barron's* Kathryn Welling and Alan Abelson



their prospects. But Morgan Stanley—and in one case Biggs himself—had subsequently taken bullish public stands on those same funds. Ward asserted that Biggs's decisions to sell had "raised eyebrows" among investors and "evoke[d] a 'what did you know and when did you know it?' reaction."

When they read the published article, Abelson and Welling grew irate. Abelson calls it "an attack on [Biggs's] ethical behavior" that was "totally unfounded and irresponsible." Welling is more explicit: The column is "clearly



A guest insulted? Morgan Stanley market guru Barton Biggs

inferring insider trading, but not addressing it head-on. It's a very cowardly piece of writing" and, she adds without further explanation, "not all that atypical" of Ward's work.

For her part, Ward says the article highlights Biggs's potential conflict of interest but does not suggest that he broke the law. She and managing editor Richard Rescigno note that no one has challenged the facts in the story. And, they add, neither Biggs nor Morgan Stanley contacted them to complain.

But Biggs did call Welling—"more in sorrow than in anger," she says—and found a sympathetic ear. (Biggs declined to be interviewed for this article.) In Welling and Abelson's view, *Barron's* had treated a trusted source shabbily. Worse, the piece had appeared just two weeks before the *Barron's* roundtable, an annual forum on investment issues that Abelson has hosted for 30 years. As he does most years, Biggs

was to attend this year's gathering. "You've invited someone into your house, in a sense," says Abelson, "and then someone writes something so derogatory—they deserve an apology."

Welling and Abelson agreed on that point. But they didn't seriously consider complaining to management; Welling says she had been told that Rescigno supported Ward's article. Moreover, she adds with a sardonic edge, it's a "mistake" to "think that we have any control" over the editorial process. "It's called, 'out of the loop.'"

In Abelson's mind, a behind-the-scenes mea culpa wouldn't do. "I'm tired of people in journalism pissing on people in public and apologizing in private," he says. So Abelson planned to apologize to Biggs in front of the roundtable's participants. But one day before the event, Abelson's wife passed away after a long battle with cancer. Realizing that he couldn't attend the roundtable, Abelson put his apology in writing and passed it on to Welling to deliver.

The next day, Biggs and eight other leading Wall Street strategists gathered with eight top *Barron's* staffers for their annual marathon bull-and-bear session. To everyone's surprise, Welling kicked things off by reading the angry letter. Ward's column, Abelson wrote, was "witless malevolent graffiti" and the editors lacked "the taste to refrain from reprinting" it. Abelson's letter concluded with an elegiac tribute to Biggs's great qualities. "Everyone knows we're old buddies," he acknowledged.

The panelists and writers were stunned into silence. Even Biggs seemed surprised. When Welling finished reading and added her own two cents, saying that she thought Ward's column was "excrement," Biggs interjected that he thought it "wasn't really that bad." Welling retorted: "It was pretty bad." (Ward, on vacation at the time, couldn't offer her own rebuttal.)

After an awkward pause, the roundtable began. Neither these uncomfortable moments nor Abelson's letter appeared in *Barron's* published excerpts from the roundtable, which were edited by Welling. And the drama might have been forgotten, had news of the incident not been leaked to the *Post*.

BOTH ABELSON AND Welling defend their actions. They insist they never intended the rebuke to become fully public. "I felt I ought to apologize [to Biggs] in front of his peers," Abelson asserts. "I didn't rent out Lincoln Center." Abelson and Welling say that because of confidentiality agreements involved in the roundtable, their criticism of Ward should have stopped at the meeting-room door.

Outsiders and *Barron's* staffers find that claim disingenuous. Says one *Barron's* editor: "It's very naive to think that you can get up and deliver such a harangue to a group of nine outsiders" and *Barron's* staffers, and not expect it to be leaked.

Once the story went public, other financial writers took notice. To many, Ward's piece hadn't overstepped any boundaries of etiquette. "I've written meaner things," says one columnist at a major business magazine. "Hell, I've written meaner things about Barton." Ward herself is respected by peers who know her work.

Four financial writers and editors say they were horrified by Abelson's dressing-down of Ward. If he were in Ward's shoes, says one magazine columnist, "I don't know if I'd punch [Abelson] or go straight to see the CEO" to get him fired.

Some of the writers and editors—including Ward—say that Abelson showed excessive loyalty to a source at the expense of loyalty to a colleague. Abelson counters that Biggs is "an old source and a valued one; but [he] isn't a particularly close source." Noting that they don't socialize together, Abelson says, "I would have done this for anyone who was an old friend of the magazine and was unjustly pilloried."

Most striking, perhaps, was Abelson's attack on his successors (and current bosses)—the editors who can't tell "the difference between spittle and substance." Given Abelson's clout at the magazine, one former *Barron's* writer compared his actions to those of college deans who vilify their successors from the security of their tenured chairs. In the business world, including in journalism, that just doesn't happen. ■

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We could have gotten the people who stake out extreme positions – the teachers union and the anti-tax forces – but we included people who had mixed feelings. That got us away from this notion of living at the extremes.

Historically, newspapers are not very good at reporting on ambivalence. But struggling with an issue is far more common than having everything figured out.

I wouldn't want to take the credit or the blame for the fact that the bond issue passed. But I will say that series caused people to think differently about the schools in our community – not simply, "Should we pay more taxes or not?"

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N. Christian Anderson III
Publisher and CEO
The Orange County Register

The Pew Center for Civic Journalism is pleased to present this message, another in a series on how journalists are working to improve news coverage by involving citizens and improve the community through their journalism. For more information, call 202-331-3200.



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BOTH SIDES OF THE MEDIA LENS

I'm the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*, but to most people who read about me in the press, I'm Mr. Sharon Stone. • BY PHIL BRONSTEIN

YES, IT'S TRUE. I'M THE ONE, THE GUY they call... "El Macho." The only thing is, I don't know who "they" are. I know who I am, more or less, but I don't know these people who claim to know me, or that guy they describe in print who has my name and face.

Of course, it's not really about me, is it? I'd love it if people in supermarket checkout lines were interested in me because I'm the executive editor of the *San Francisco Examiner* and our newspaper publishes great investigative pieces that have profound impact, or because we hold the feet of public officials and powerful institutions to the fire of responsibility. We do, but that's not why people care.

My predecessor at the *Examiner*, Larry Kramer, just went public with his Internet company and made millions. Our former "Style" section editor, David Talbot, founded the popular web magazine *Salon*. That makes them newsworthy.

Me? I married a movie star. That's it. That's why I get to be completely reconceived into each successive writer's own idea of me. On the world stage, I'm Mr. Sharon Stone. (At home, I'm also...Mr. Sharon Stone.)

When you're both in the news and of the news, you realize pretty fast that celebrity griping is not just the passive-aggressive whining of notables, like the old joke about the man whose wife thinks she's a hen but won't get her help because he needs the eggs.

There really is a scorching white heat of the celebrity-media spotlight, that bizarre world where Franz Kafka and

Lewis Carroll meet, where nothing is recognizable and everything is out of proportion, and it's all public and inescapable.

On one level, I understand the obsession. We run celebrity stories, even gossip, in the *Examiner*. Entertainment is one of many things we try to provide for our readers. But being in the middle of it still makes me wonder: *Where the hell does this stuff about me come from?*

The *New York Post* first said, simply, that I'm "nicknamed 'El Macho.'" By whom? They never tell you. Later, that morphed into "known around the newsroom as 'El Macho.'" Then it became a standard piece of usable data, made true by its repetition in countless stories over the last 18 months in the tabloids, mainstream newspapers, magazines, and on television.

I've been called a lot of gamy things at the *San Francisco Examiner*, but no one here has ever heard me referred to that way. Now even my wife calls me that.

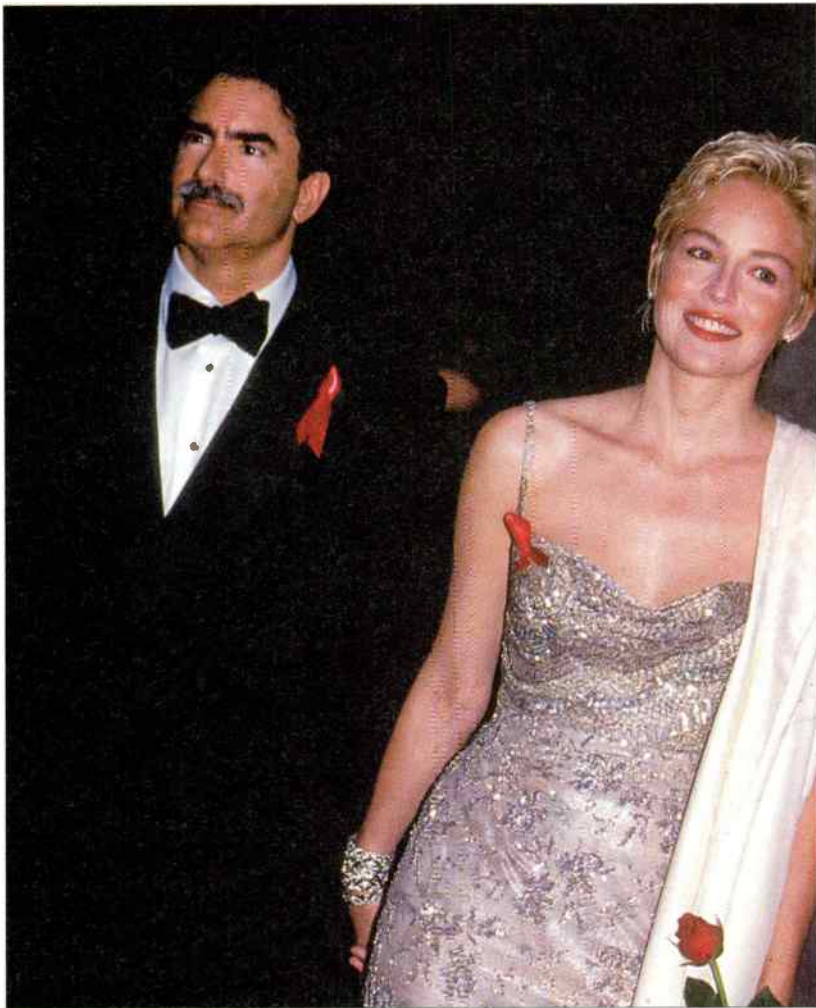
My best guess is that "El Macho" got pulled out of someone's imagination, probably from the same fanciful well as the "friends" used in the phrase "Bronstein told friends that..." And what I usually seem to be telling them is something pretty unflattering, highly personal, and always untrue.

"Friends" and the various "they" have been responsible for other puzzles:

- Saying people were at my wedding whom I have yet to meet.
- Insisting my wife was pregnant at our wedding.
- Claiming I'm running for mayor of San Francisco.
- Running a big story my wife and I saw on the stands the day

Phil Bronstein is the executive editor of the San Francisco Examiner.

Phil Bronstein and Sharon Stone allowed a photographer to take this picture while they strolled in Manhattan in October 1998.



Bronstein with Stone at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1998.

we got back from a lovely Mexican vacation that said we had broken up.

- Writing that we indulged in trips, hotel stays, events, and even, according to the *Globe*, voodoo rituals involving “clover flowers, raspberry leaves, unicorn root powder” and “rain forest herb muira puama” (What the hell is that?) that never happened.
- Printing direct quotes from me that I never said, would never say, never thought, and don’t agree with, usually about things that never occurred, and always told to “friends.”
- And, my own personal favorite: A story in a mainstream newspaper, the *Irish Independent*, describing my wife’s purchase of an Irish home, including where she searched before she found the home, her five visits to Ireland while she was looking, the sale price, her flight paths, the hotels she stayed in, the presence of her (nonexistent) business manager at the purchase, the bar she stopped in where she made up her mind to buy the place, and the specific events of Irish history she’s “fascinated with.”

Great, rich detail. Not a single piece of it true. Wolfgang Pauli, the quantum physics pioneer, once said of a colleague’s appallingly off-base theory, “It’s not even wrong.” That’s the zone we’re in here.

How do I handle this? It’s good to try for the Zen approach: Observe the experience. Or ignore it. Laugh when friends from around the country call to ask if you’ve really been barricaded in the Beverly Hills Four Seasons with a blow gun and a quart of Jack Daniels. Sometimes you’re the windshield, sometimes the bug. I love my wife and that’s worth what also gets scraped in on the carpet from the shoe of celebrity.

But sometimes these stories are hard to ignore. Things like

the patently false defenestration of our marriage—which ignores easily knowable facts—start to get a little nasty. Then there was the New York tabloid reporter who called my wife’s publicist with the big question: Is Sharon pregnant? No, the publicist said, emphatically and accurately. When was her last period? the writer wanted to know. *I don’t know and none of your business*, the publicist said. Well, the reporter answered, then we’re going with the story. Which they did.

It’s not as if we’re talking about an embryo that’s inheriting the throne in a functioning monarchy. My wife’s view is that the bounds of privacy at the very least begin somewhere outside of the uterus. For me, personally, this kind of incessant stalking and these speculative stories every week are horribly invasive. As an editor, I’d have to say that newsworthiness and accuracy would enter into my own decision to publish a story about someone being pregnant.

I don’t wish this kind of experience on anyone. But everyone in journalism ought to have it just so we understand what consequences our actions have. Then, when we write about real people, we don’t do it in a vacuum of journalistic concepts and principles.

When we put together a profile of Denise DeBartolo York after she took control of the San Francisco 49ers in 1997, she objected to us mentioning where her kids went to school. We were accurate, but I agreed with her that this detail was an unnecessary intrusion into her family’s life and had no real revelatory value. We’ve written about Chelsea Clinton at Stanford—taking the position that you won’t publish a word in deference to her privacy strikes me as excessively pious—but I view the pieces with a heightened sensitivity.

That doesn’t mean we should be driven or intimidated by the consequences of what we publish, just aware. More than once a reluctant subject of one of our stories has called me, expecting that I might sympathetically spike the piece or keep out certain details. The phrase “I know you’ll understand” is usually part of their rap. I explain that what I understand is that people in the public eye will be written about, and should be written about, including me.

A woman called recently to complain about an editorial we wrote about Israel. “How would you like it if there was a negative editorial about Sharon Stone?” she demanded to know. Huh?

What I do offer are assurances that the story will be as full, fair, and accurate as possible. Appropriate detail can be a key to that, to making someone real, so long as it’s also true. There’s nothing like being on the other side of the lens to teach you quickly that celebrities are actual, complex people, not just the accumulation of tabloid scandal, magazine fluff, and the work of press agents.

Most editors of newspapers grapple with these issues in their own lives because anyone who runs an aggressive or controversial or great or even really bad paper will get written about by someone else. They know how scary and infuriating it can be.

But local attention is only a glimpse into the window of public figuredom. Taking that toboggan ride to another level of notoriety forces you to learn some lessons.

The most potent is that you really can’t prevent papers from writing pretty much what they want; mostly, they have a right, which is a right I defend conceptually as an editor. But you also have rights as a subject, including the right not to par-

ticipate in the story about you. If the subjects of our news stories all had that attitude, we'd be in trouble. I'm just telling you the truth. And truth is the clue to the second lesson I've learned.

There is a distinction between what we think of as tabloid journalism and the "mainstream" press. Reading about myself in respectable dailies, however, convinces me that the difference is not always determined by the shape of the sheet, where it's sold, how often it comes out, what it's called, or even whether it gets things wrong. Tabs can seek the truth, and some of the biggest papers in the country have run stories they know aren't accurate.

It's a state of mind, not broadsheet versus tab. It's all about intent.

Lying is lying. Just because it's published on paper doesn't make it something else. We can and should debate things like the use of unnamed sources, when a story is ready for print, competitive and deadline pressures. But trying to get it right is the one, immutable, goal-line standard.

I understand the principal of the ACLU defending neo-Nazi free speech in Skokie, Illinois, 21 years ago. But I still don't think we ought to defend made-up stories with the same vigor and by the same rules as we do, say, investigative reporting. They're two different animals who only happen to inhabit the same planet.

We need to make that distinction loudly and often—oth-

When you're both in the news and of the news, you realize that celebrity griping about the press is not just the passive-aggressive whining of notables.

erwise, we're well past halfway down a slippery slope. If we don't, as Pat Conroy so brilliantly described it, "[lie] in wait for the truth, a shining thing, [and stalk] the lie, a dark one," and point out that those who court the lie have a different mission altogether, our readers will always have trouble making the distinction themselves.

This is not about snobbery or stereotyping. It's about intent. I love the tabs, or at least the ones that are filled with the alien-triplets-born-to-Omaha-man kinds of stories. They're wildly entertaining and help define our culture by dancing along its outer, lunatic edges. But most people understand these are fantasies.

The mainstream press wants to get at some kind of truth, whether we do it through facts or satire or even gossip. My own experience with the tabloid state of mind is: If you have a tip or a theory and can't get facts to support it, you make it up. Knowingly, intentionally.

There's a reason the legal definition of malice includes knowingly printing false information or information you strongly suspect is false. It's not about lapses of skill or honest mistakes; it's about presenting yourself as one thing and actually being another. The malice concept is just a good way to distinguish between two different intentions, not different kinds of newspapers. Another clue is whether someone gets promoted for making up a "good" story, or fired.

Finally, what's the mission? The tabloid mentality is to entertain and sell papers. The mainstream press wants to sell



papers and entertain, too. But we also comfort the afflicted, act as watchdogs, reflect and inform our communities, and the rest of those fine objectives taught in journalism school. The tabs' mentality makes them like carrion birds. They pick at the corpse. That's what they do. That's what they are.

In November, I brought my wife to a Committee to Protect Journalists dinner honoring truly heroic writers reporting under threat in dangerous countries. This was a big contrast with her experience navigating through paparazzi and the tab world. Now she likes to say that tabloids are to journalism what the World Wrestling Federation is to sports. Only the wrestlers get padded mats.

I love to watch wrestling sometimes. I just don't confuse it with professional golf.

There's one other lesson I've learned from being the object: We can never really make the distinction between what we do and the tabloid sensibility unless we tell the truth about our own profession.

The fact is, sometimes we get things wrong. And we often don't get the full context of a story—not just all the details, but the essence. Readers know this. They understand that even the best reporters and writers can never fully capture The Whole Truth. Clarence Barron, former owner of *The Wall Street Journal*, said it best: "Facts aren't the truth. They only indicate where the truth may lie." If we try to pretend we're more, or that we have secret sources of wisdom too complicated for them to understand, we're just lying, and that makes us the same as the folks who make up stories.

As long as we know what we are, what our intent is, and what our mission is, and we present ourselves to our readers as what we say we are, they will understand the difference between the search for the truth and the intentional publication of bullshit.

Straddling the two sides has taught me to worry less about the soul of journalism, not more, because it brings into sharper focus the bottom line of what divides "responsible" work from the other kind.

I've met the enemy. But, hey, it's not us. It's not even the tabloids. It's only the journalists who aren't aiming at the truth. ■

Bronstein and Stone allow photographers to take their picture outside their hotel in New York, but only on the condition that the paparazzi agree not to follow the couple on their outing.

BRILL'S

CONTENT

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Health.com (www.intelihealth.com) A top site for medical news, condition-specific information, drug data, and an "Ask the Doc" forum, which allows users to submit questions to doctors at Johns Hopkins University Hospital.

Mayo Clinic Health Oasis (www.mayohealth.org) News and links that are organized into nine categories, including cancer, medicine, and nutrition. Visitors can e-mail questions to Mayo doctors.

National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov) A gateway to clinical-trial databases, consumer-health publications, and an index of health conditions being investigated by the federal government.

National Library of Medicine (www.nlm.nih.gov) The centerpiece here is MedLine, a free database of citations and abstracts from 3,900 medical journals.

Oncolink (www.oncolink.com) A portal for information about specific cancers and treatments, clinical trials, and support groups. Information ranges from the basic to the highly technical.

purpose, easy-to-use site that is useful for airfare price-checking.

Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Online (www.frommers.com) Finds and lists the best travel deals available online and off.

Preview Travel (www.previewtravel.com) An all-purpose site that features Fodor's Gold Guides to 86 cities.

Rough Guides (www.roughguides.com) Includes information that the all-purpose websites sometimes omit, such as hotel and restaurant reviews.

Travel & Leisure (www.travelandleisure.com) This site features "Hot Deals!" an e-mail newsletter that regularly spotlights a half-dozen vacation bargains.



KIDS/FAMILY

BabyCenter.com (www.babycenter.com) For parents-to-be and new parents, this site is a compendium of expert baby advice.

Best of the Pediatric Internet (www.aap.org/bpi) A gateway of links geared primarily to pediatricians, this site also features valuable information for parents.

Family.com (www.family.com) How to entertain your child. The travel guide highlights activities for kids in every region of the country.

Family Education Network (www.familyeducation.com) A leading site for parents of school-age children.

Parents.com (www.parents.com) Advice from experts and news updates of interest to parents.

Parent Soup (www.parentsoup.com) A parent-to-parent support community, with chat rooms, experts, and service pieces for parents of children in every age group.

ParentsPlace (www.parentsplace.com) Articles and experts on such subjects as breastfeeding, organic food, and natural remedies.

ParentTime (www.parenttime.com) Articles from *Parenting* and *BabyTalk* magazines, as well as original material. Users can e-mail questions to experts.

Mothers Who Think (www.salonmagazine.com/mwt) A column from *Salon Magazine* with little practical advice, but plenty of wisdom, insight, and humor.



PORTALS/SEARCH SITES

AltaVista (www.altavista.com) Comprehensive yet easy-to-use commands make this a great search tool for new and advanced web users.

AOL.COM (www.aol.com) Quality content highlights a selection of headlines, sports scores, weather updates, and other information.

Google! (www.google.com) This search tool tends to be more accurate than others because it rates every website based on the number of other sites that link to it, thus creating a kind of reference check for each result.

MetaCrawler (www.metacrawler.com) Simultaneously enters your query into at least ten search engines and ranks the results from each.

Snap (www.snap.com) The usual portal content—news, sports scores, weather, etc.—plus information from content providers that don't have commercial partnerships with Snap.

Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) The original web directory is still among the best search tools available. Its staff of web surfers, who weed out stale sites and add fresh ones, helps ensure that the entries stay up-to-date. And if Yahoo! doesn't find the site you're looking for in its directory, it automatically enters the search term into the AltaVista search engine.

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BEST OF THE WEB

CITY SITES

CitySearch (www.citysearch.com) The best overall guides, with comprehensive, easy-to-use restaurant, movie, and event listings. In the nine cities it serves, CitySearch has formed partnerships with leading newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *The Dallas Morning News*.

Sidewalk (www.sidewalk.com) Excellent arts and entertainment listings, including restaurant reviews from the Zagat Survey. Good tourist guides. Sidewalk's e-mail notices offer weekend activity suggestions and tips on ticket availability.

Yahoo! Metro (www.yahoo.com/promotions/metros/) A directory of websites for 12 cities. Although the number of options can be overwhelming, Yahoo! Metro often leads to great bits of event information not included in any other guide.

OTHER HELPFUL GUIDES

MapQuest (www.mapquest.com) Driving directions and maps for the entire country, as well as for 300 metropolitan areas around the world.

MovieFone (www.moviefone.com) A quick and easy way to find local movie theaters and showtimes.

Zagat Survey (www.zagat.com) By early April, the entire Zagat restaurant survey database will be available on the Web.

TECHNOLOGY

NEWS AND INFORMATION SITES

Red Herring Online (www.redherring.com) The focus is on tech business, with articles on such topics as venture capital and technology investing.

Slashdot (www.slashdot.org) A mecca for the "open source" movement, which seeks to replace commercial software—the Windows NT operating system, for example—with free programs like Linux.

TheStandard.com (www.thestandard.com) TheStandard.com is the leading site for analysis of Internet business. Don't miss "Media Grok," a daily roundup and critique of tech-news coverage.

HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, AND WEB DESIGN

CNET (www.cnet.com) A one-stop site for tech news and resources, with sections devoted to gaming, product reviews, hardware, and software. CNET's "Download.com" area wins praise for its searchability and comprehensiveness.

TechWeb (www.techweb.com) Geared toward information-technology professionals as well as consumers, with product reviews, web tools, software downloads, and a calendar of tech-trade events.

Webmonkey (www.hotwired.com/webmonkey) A collection of valuable and well-organized tutorials and articles on web-page building.

ZDNet (www.zdnet.com) Features include news, product reviews, a software-download section, a Y2K survival guide, and "GameSpot," for computer-game enthusiasts.

FOOD/NUTRITION

CyberDiet (www.cyberdiet.com) Customized nutritional profiles, meal planner, and a tracking system that tallies calories and fat grams.

Digital Chef (www.digitalchef.com) The leading shopping-oriented site, offering hard-to-find ingredients and professional cookware.

Epicurious (food.epicurious.com) The Rolls Royce of food websites, with a searchable database of more than 8,000 recipes and an archive of articles from *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit* magazines.

Food & Wine Online (www.pathfinder.com/FoodWine) An archive of articles from *Food & Wine* magazine, detailed recipes, and a searchable wine guide.

The Global Gourmet (www.globalgourmet.com) A strong all-around site, with inventive recipes, cookbook reviews, and a conversion calculator.

The Kitchen Link (www.kitchenlink.com) Perhaps the Web's most exhaustive compendium of food-related links.

Meals For You (www.mealsforyou.com) Nutritional analysis, printable shopping lists, and recipes that adjust measurements for the number of servings.

StarChefs (www.starchefs.com) An unabashed shrine to celebrity chefdom with skillfully packaged bios, interviews, and recipes from such luminaries as Julia Child and Emeril Lagasse.

Tufts University Nutrition Navigator (navigator.tufts.edu) A clearinghouse for all things nutrition-related, with ratings and links to sites that promise healthy counsel.

Veggies Unite! (www.vegweb.com) A vegetarian haven complete with 2,900 vegan recipes, a customized meal planner, and a glossary.

HEALTH

Ask Dr. Weil (www.drweil.com) Advice on vitamins and natural remedies from the leading alternative-medicine guru, Dr. Andrew Weil. Answer a questionnaire to find out which vitamins and supplements Dr. Weil recommends for you.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) Information from the federal government on disease outbreaks. Don't miss the useful tips for travelers.

Dr. Koop's Community (www.drkoop.com) Backgrounders on diseases and treatments, a prescription-refill service, and a medical insurance guide. Dr. C. Everett Koop, the former Surgeon General, helps choose the site's selections but does not himself contribute material.

Healthfinder (www.healthfinder.gov) A gateway to medical journals, news, databases, libraries, state agencies, organizations, and support groups.

HealthGate (www.healthgate.com) Basics on more than 100 illnesses and conditions along with resources on healthy living, parenting, and more.

NEWS

Chicago Tribune Internet Edition (www.chicagotribune.com) Admired for its innovative use of the medium, this site is a well-organized presentation of articles and resources from the *Chicago Tribune*.

CNN Interactive (www.cnn.com) The site for quick news updates, it is also unusually comprehensive, offering a full list of the day's stories on its main page.

MSNBC (www.msnbc.com) An easy-to-navigate site that makes good use of NBC's news resources—plus local news, sports, and weather.

The New York Times on the Web (www.nytimes.com) Everything contained in the print version, plus updates and access to the paper's archives, though sometimes for a fee.

Slate (www.slate.com) The insight and wit of a great magazine combined with the interactivity of the Web.

washingtonpost.com (www.washingtonpost.com) The full text of the day's *Washington Post* plus a linked archive of Associated Press articles.

Yahoo! News (daily.news.yahoo.com/headlines/) Yahoo! News wins fans for its efficiency and ease of use. The customizable page "My Yahoo!" (my.yahoo.com) allows users to choose what kinds of stories they see.

FINANCE

NEWS AND INFORMATION SITES

CBS MarketWatch (cbs.marketwatch.com) A free, real-time service for individual investors, with tools such as quotes, charts, portfolios, and indexes.

CNNfn.com (www.cnnfn.com) A free news and information service with sections on small business, world business, and personal finance. Features include a technology-news showcase and information on specific industries and companies.

The Motley Fool (www.fool.com) Known for its free-for-all, rumor-slinging message boards, the site offers an array of financial reference tools.

TheStreet.com (www.thestreet.com) Free offerings include market news, stock and fund quotes and charts, and access to SEC filings. For \$9.95 per month, subscribers can tap into commentaries and more in-depth coverage.

Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition (www.wsj.com) The beefiest services—including the archive, personalized news and stock portfolios, a library of articles from more than 6,000 business-news sources, and more than 10,000 company reports—cost \$59 per year. Free offerings include some news, stock quotes, corporate annual reports, fund prospectuses, and the Dow Jones Business Directory.

Yahoo! Finance (quote.yahoo.com) An excellent collection of links to financial and personal-business sites.

TRADING SITES

Charles Schwab (www.schwab.com) Trades cost \$29.95 for up to 1,000 shares. Resources include news, charts, analysts' reports, company and industry reports, and earnings estimates. Reports from investment banks are available at a premium price.

Datek Online (www.datek.com) Trades cost \$9.99 for up to 5,000 shares. Resources include news, BigCharts, and stock and fund reports.

PERSONAL FINANCE SITES

The Digital Daily (www.irs.gov) The Internal Revenue Service's showcase of filing tips, bulletins, fact sheets, statistics, frequently asked questions, and downloadable tax forms.

Quicken.com (www.quicken.com) Tools, resources, and information for making decisions about major financial undertakings including home buying, investing, paying taxes, owning a small business, retirement planning, even having a baby.

MSN MoneyCentral (www.moneycentral.com) Investor tools and guides to topics like "Money & Banking," "Retirement & Wills," "Taxes," "Real Estate," "Family Finance," "Smart Buying," and "Insurance," with calculators, and other resources.

SPORTS

CNNSI.com (www.cnnsi.com) News, stats, scores, and more, with contributions from *Sports Illustrated* staffers.

CBS SportsLine (www.sportline.com) The usual sports coverage, plus official web pages of such sports stars as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. Columnists include Ray Buck and Dennis Dodd. Fee-based services include column archives, and fantasy leagues.

ESPN.com (www.espn.com) Scores, stats, news, and commentary from Dick Vitale, Peter Gammons, and Joe Theismann.

GOLFOonline (www.golfonline.com) News, a database of course profiles, player rankings, equipment information, instruction, and more.

NASCAR Online (www.nascar.com) News, statistics, race results, and track information for stock-car fans.

NFL.com (www.nfl.com) Packed with league news, stats, standings, polls, and the latest information about teams and players.

The Sporting News (www.sportingnews.com) Covers all the major sports, although some fans say baseball is its strong suit.

Total Baseball Online (www.totalbaseball.com) News, player profiles, history, and records for baseball aficionados.

TRAVEL

Biztravel.com (www.biztravel.com) One of the first travel websites to arrange rental cars or hotel reservations automatically to maximize frequent-flyer benefits.

Cheap Tickets (www.cheaptickets.com) One of the Web's best sources for bargain airfares.

Epicurious Travel (travel.epicurious.com) A great resource for vacation planning.

Expedia (expedia.com) A good all-



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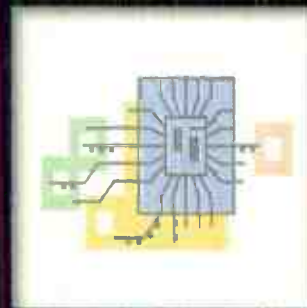
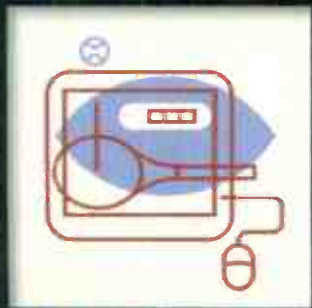
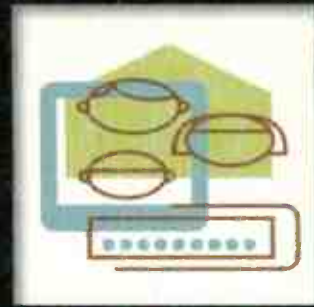
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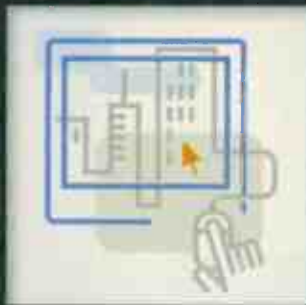
Finding information on the World Wide Web can be daunting. After all, millions of sites offering untold volumes of news, information, and advice are vying for your attention. How do you know where to find the most comprehensive, honest source of material or that one fact you might need? It's the classic needle-in-a-haystack problem. Our Best of the Web 1999 package collects the premier information sites in ten categories: city sites, finance, food and nutrition, health, kids and family, news, portals and search engines, sports, technology, and travel. To select the sites, we talked to experts in each of these fields and factored in our own judgment after spending lots of time at these and competing sites. We believe that each of the sites we name provides the best, most honest information in its field.

To help you figure out how to use general sites to answer specific questions, each category also includes a section called "Drilling Down" that takes you step-by-step through the process of answering one or two possible queries.

Rounding out our package is a what-it-all-means essay by David Johnson.



CITY SITES



THE OVERVIEW

Visitors to New York's Carlyle hotel can always call concierge John Neary for tips on where to go in the big city. Or they can visit **CitySearch**, the online city guide that Neary uses to find museum openings, concerts, and other events. Such guides also feature restaurant, movie, and shopping listings.



CitySearch is the best overall city guide.

CitySearch (www.citysearch.com)

The best overall city guides are from CitySearch, which is backed by Intel, AT&T Ventures, and USA Networks (whose chairman, Barry Diller, is an investor in this magazine). This is probably because in each of the nine cities it serves, CitySearch partners with leading newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Dallas Morning News*. The restaurant and movie databases are comprehensive and easy to use, as is the daily event finder.

Sidewalk (www.sidewalk.com)

Microsoft's Sidewalk was solely an arts and entertainment guide until it expanded to include a shopping guide last October. The move seemed like an attempt to attract advertising, but has created an excellent resource for sample-sale hunters. Sidewalk's editorial content is created mostly by its own staff and is often as good or better than the content offered by competing guides in the 76 cities it covers. Don't miss Sidewalk's e-mail notices, which offer weekend event picks and tips on ticket availability.

Yahoo! Metro (www.yahoo.com/promotions/metros/)

Taking the Yahoo! approach, these guides provide a categorical directory of web-sites for each of 12 cities. Although the number of options can be overwhelming, Yahoo! Metro will often lead to a great bit of information not included in any other guide, like a former University of Southern California librarian's virtual guided tour of Los Angeles architecture designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

OTHER HELPFUL GUIDES:

MapQuest (www.mapquest.com)

Need directions? MapQuest, which has been in the cartography business since 1967, supplies driving directions and maps for the entire country, as well as for 300 metropolitan areas around the world.

MovieFone (www.moviefone.com)

This site provides a quick and easy way to find local theaters and showtimes. MovieFone pioneered movie listings and ticket-buying by telephone. The company announced in February that it would be acquired by America Online.

Zagat Survey (www.zagat.com)

Some people swear by the Zagat method of restaurant selection—since 1979 the husband and wife team of Tim and Nina Zagat have asked thousand of customers to fill out surveys—and by early April the entire Zagat database will be available on the Web.

While most major cities have locally published web guides, six publishers—**Sidewalk**, **CitySearch**, **Digital City** (www.digitalcity.com), **CIMNet Local** (www.cimedia.com/sites.html), **Yahoo! Metro**, and **Real Cities** (www.realcities.com)—are creating national networks of guides and competing head-to-head in major cities.



San Francisco mayor Willie Brown likes Microsoft's Sidewalk site.

San Francisco mayor Willie Brown says he chooses Microsoft's **Sidewalk** because it features a visitors section along with good shopping, event, entertainment, and restaurant listings. Not all city guides provide information for tourists.

Sidewalk doesn't cover local news. Other guides—including Knight-Ridder's **Real Cities** and Cox Interactive Media's **CIMNet**—do, by partnering with local papers. **CitySearch**, whose investors include Intel, AT&T Ventures, and USA Networks (whose chairman, Barry Diller, is an investor in this magazine), also teams with local news outlets, notably *The Washington Post*, for arts and entertainment content.

A city guide's greatest value lies in those searchable arts, entertainment, and shopping listings. The Greater Minneapolis Convention & Visitors Association relies on **Sidewalk** to advise tourists on what to do in the city. "**Sidewalk** has much more detail" than the association's own site, says Karyn Gruenberg, the group's vice-president of marketing.

Almost all city guides feature a restaurant database that can be searched by cuisine, price, or location. Reviews that accompany such listings are not always useful. **Sidewalk** stands out not only for its own reviews but for its entries from the **Zagat Survey**. AOL's **Digital Cities** sites feature reviews from professional restaurant critics, but only in such major cities as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Drilling Down

How can you use a city site to answer a specific question? Suppose you're going to Los Angeles and want to find a good jazz club: The **CitySearch Los Angeles** front page features a list of topics, including "Clubs & Bars." Click there for news and reviews. Scroll down the right side of the page to "Today's Jazz Events," which lists about three days worth of gigs. We chose the link to pianist Dave Mackay, and were led to a page with the name and address of the venue. Clicking on the venue's name led to a page with the phone number, cover charge, and a review.

—Noah Robischon

DAVID STRICKOUTLINE

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THE OVERVIEW

Investors who ditch traditional brokerages in favor of the Web's online trading posts will find a wealth of information and tools, including instant stock quotes, analysis, interactive forums, company information, commentary, charts, tips, and projections. Some financial sites are free, but the better ones tend to charge for their information and services.

NEWS AND INFORMATION SITES

CBS MarketWatch (cbs.marketwatch.com)

A free, real-time financial news service for individual investors, CBS MarketWatch boasts a staff of 30 full-time journalists and 15 part-timers who post 40 to 50 news stories a day. Although CBS owns 38 percent of MarketWatch, no CBS news content is used. The site also features data and tools such as quotes, charts, portfolios, and industry and market indexes.

CNNfn.com (www.cnnfn.com)

This free financial news and information service affiliated with the CNNfn cable network offers sections on small business, world business, and personal finance. News articles consist of staff and wire reports. Other content includes repackaged pieces from the site's cable sister. One popular feature is "Digital Jam," a technology-news showcase that includes updates on major technology stocks and indexes. The "IndustryWatch" section offers news and information on specific industries and companies.

The Motley Fool (www.fool.com)

Known for its free-for-all, rumor-slinging message boards, The Motley Fool first appeared on AOL and later moved to the Web. Silly hats and puns aside, brothers Tom and David Gardner, who created The Motley Fool, are not out to trifle with your money. The site offers the usual financial reference tools such as news, stock quotes, charts, and personal-portfolio tracking. "Fool's School" includes guidance for beginning investors, including "The 13 Steps to Investing" and a series of articles on how to value stocks.

TheStreet.com (www.thestreet.com)

An exclusively online publication, TheStreet.com has won praise for its financial insight and commentaries. Free offerings include approximately 20 articles each day covering the financial markets, along with stock and fund quotes and charts, and access to SEC filings. For \$9.95 per month (or \$99.95 per year), subscribers can tap into commentaries and in-depth coverage from notables such as TheStreet.com's cofounder James J. Cramer and Herb Greenberg.

The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition (www.wsj.com)

At this premier site, the beefiest services—including the *Journal's* news archive, personalized news and stock portfolios, a library of articles from 6,000 business-news sources, and more than 10,000 detailed company reports—are available for a fee of \$59 per year. (Subscribers to the print version of *The Wall Street Journal* or *Barron's* pay \$29 per year.) Free offerings include some news, stock quotes, corporate annual reports, fund prospectuses, and the Dow Jones Business Directory, which reviews business websites.

Yahoo! Finance (quote.yahoo.com)

This is an excellent collection of links to financial and personal-business sites.



TheStreet.com is almost universally regarded as one of the Web's best sources of information for investors.

Among the free sites, **CBS MarketWatch** and **CNNfn.com** are standouts. Both deliver timely, reliable news and market information, along with stock quotes, charts, and other data. Investors can use tools on either site to track their personal portfolios. At **CBS MarketWatch**, which is 38 percent owned by CBS but gets none of its content from the network, a staff of financial reporters writes the news and commentary. **CNNfn.com** features content repackaged from its TV

arm, and also posts stories from staff and wire reports. Its "Digital Jam" section offers articles from sources such as *Red Herring* magazine. "For someone who never gets to actually watch the news or read an entire newspaper, those sites tell me what I need to know," says U.S. Securities and Exchange Commissioner Laura S. Unger.

The Motley Fool, another free site that specializes in financial news and opinion, has drawn a devoted following

to its message boards, which are notorious for their rumor-slinging. Investors can pick up good tips here, but they need to remember that much of the information on the boards is hearsay and unverified.

The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition, one of the oldest and best sites for financial information, is fee-based, but offers a limited selection of free resources, including top news stories and access to annual reports and mutual-fund prospectuses. Subscribers have access to more substantial tools for tracking markets, researching companies and industries, and reading personalized news. "There's simply no better site for breaking business news," says Wired News business editor Kourosh Karimkhany. "It's my tip sheet, benchmark, and scariest rival."

The financial news connoisseurs we interviewed cited **TheStreet.com** as one of the Web's best information source for investors. Some of the site's news is free, but its uncannily sharp insights and commentaries cost \$9.95 per month or \$99.95 per year. "It's what *The Wall Street Journal's* 'C' section [about the daily doings of the stock market] would be if it had a brain," says *Fortune* editor at large Joseph Nocera (who, it should be noted, is an old friend of TheStreet.com cofounder James J. Cramer).

Investors who want to trade stocks online will find that e-trading is inexpensive and no-frills. Online brokers do not provide individualized investment advice, and commissions—approximately \$7.95 to \$29.95 per trade, depending on the

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THE OVERVIEW

broker—reflect that. **Schwab.com**, the online arm of Charles Schwab & Co., Inc., which charges the most among online brokerages (\$29.95 per trade of up to 1,000 shares), stands out for its excellent tools and resources, which are well-organized and presented to help account holders follow markets and track their favorite industries and stocks. **Schwab.com** also features news, quotes,

charts, and access to a range of on-site (rather than linked from outside sources) financial reports and information.

Datek Online charges just \$9.99 for trades of up to 5,000 shares and features a selection of news and reports from outside sources such as BigCharts; the offerings are not as extensive as **schwab.com**'s.

Keep in mind that electronic trading carries the risk that a technological glitch can prevent a broker from executing trades or may block access to accounts for hours or longer. In early February, an in-house tech snafu took **E*TRADE** out of service for parts of three consecutive days as account holders tried in vain to log on and transact their business.



The SEC's Laura Unger uses CBS MarketWatch and CNNfn.com

Topics include taxes, insurance, financial news, U.S. markets, world markets, and loans. The stock engine delivers quotes, charts, and even the numbers of brokers recommending a stock. Reuters's market news wire rounds out the site.

TRADING SITES

Schwab.com (www.schwab.com)

The biggest online broker charges \$29.95 for trades of up to 1,000 shares and packs its service with investment information and tools, including news, charts, analysts' reports, company reports, earnings estimates, and industry reports. The site, the online service of Charles Schwab & Co., Inc., provides links to news and charts for each customer's stocks. A stock-screening feature enables investors to find particular stocks that meet their trading requirements. Schwab.com also posts financial information in the form of "Weekly Briefings" and "Industry Closeups." Reports from investment banks such as Credit Suisse are available at a premium price.

Datek Online (www.datek.com)

Datek charges only \$9.99 for trades of up to 5,000 shares and the policy posted on the site says "your commission is waived if your marketable order is not executed within sixty seconds." Research resources provided by Datek include news, BigCharts, and stock and fund reports from Thomson Investors Network.

PERSONAL FINANCE SITES

The Digital Daily (www.irs.gov)

This is the surprisingly appealing and navigable homepage of the Internal Revenue Service. The site is a taxpayer-friendly showcase filled with tips on filing, information on IRS "e-file" and electronic payment options, news releases, bulletins, fact sheets, filing addresses, tax regulations, tips and advice for business filing, statistics, frequently asked questions and answers, and of course, downloadable 1999 tax forms.

Quicken.com (www.quicken.com)

This site from Intuit, the folks who sell Quicken personal-finance software, is free and open to everyone, regardless of whether they use that software. Quicken.com is a collection of tools, resources, and information for making decisions about major financial undertakings including home buying, investing, paying taxes, owning a small business, retirement planning, even having a baby. Menus are jammed with calculators, mortgage rates, articles, commentary, links, and more.

MSN MoneyCentral (www.moneycentral.com)

It's all about your money. Microsoft presents a nicely laid out compilation of investor tools and guides under the menus "Money & Banking," "Retirement & Wills," "Taxes," "Real Estate," "Family Finance," "Smart Buying," and "Insurance," with calculators, tools, and resources.

Drilling Down

Suppose you want to invest in the stock market and are looking for an online broker. Go to **TheStreet.com** and click on "Basics." Then, scroll down to the "Reference Library" and select "Online Brokers Survey." Here you will find rankings of online brokers and information about each broker's performance drawn from a survey of 3,300 readers. For example, if you are thinking about opening an account with **Datek**, click on the "category breakdown" buttons (there are two) to see how **Datek** compares to its competition in the following categories: reliability, order execution, commission price, speed of order confirmation, ease of use, and customer service.

You can also conduct your own company or industry research. Suppose you are thinking about investing in a particular company, but first want to find out how it's doing. Go to CNNfn.com and from the menu bar on the left, select "IndustryWatch." Then, choose the tab (located under the main banner) labeled "Companies." In the blank search box, type in the name or the ticker symbol of the company you have in mind. For example, we typed in Starbucks, then clicked on "Find Company." The search engine delivered a "Starbucks Corporation" link. Clicking on that brought up a listing of recent news articles and press releases about the company, along with a menu bar offering a comprehensive range of financial and other information about Starbucks including a company overview, key competitors, key executives, quarterly and annual financial reports, stock quote, intraday price graph, and a price history graph.

—Jesse London

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FOOD/NUTRITION



THE OVERVIEW

The Web is a boon for foodies, with a wealth of sites devoted to cooking, eating, understanding, and appreciating cuisine. But not all food and nutrition websites are created equal. The Web's staggering diversity of food- and nutrition-related sites defies direct comparison. But standouts do emerge,

and we've highlighted the best of these.

All-around food sites promise the most, and the top pages deliver, offering a blend of searchable recipe databases, regular columns, and crack kitchen staffs to answer queries. Though short on nutritional data, such sites are the best bet for the amateur chef. They feature photo-rich cooking primers and cookbook reviews. Of these, Condé Nast's **Epicurious** is universally extolled by our experts as the premium one-stop site.

Those looking to shed pounds and count calories, however, are better off elsewhere, at pages designed for the nutrition-conscious. The most useful exploit the Internet's interactivity, creating customized meal-tracking and detailed nutritional breakdowns. **CyberDiet**, run by a registered dietician, is the most innovative of the bunch.

Other sites sell exotic cookware and ingredients, extending the reach of the "geographically challenged," says Sarah Esterling, vice-president for merchandising at **Digital Chef**. "If you live in Fargo or somewhere in Alaska, it's really hard to get your hands on ingredients."

Pages devoted to massive recipe databases, culled from news groups and visitor submissions, are popular but less reliable; none of these made our list. "You know that recipes in food magazines are tested three or four times," says freelance food critic Irene Sax. "Like anywhere else on the Internet, you gotta know who you're talking to." Seasoned veterans can weed out the bad apples; for the rest of us, free-wheeling web democracy means relying on sites that test their recipes, like **Food & Wine Online**.

Drilling Down

Here's an example of how to use the Web to solve a specific culinary crisis: We assumed that we had volunteered to host relatives visiting from Spain and that they're partial to their native cuisine. First, we logged on to **Epicurious** and entered "Spanish" in the "Recipe File" window. We selected "Arroz Con Pollo," printed out the recipe, and inspected the ingredient list. Bell peppers and garlic cloves seemed easy enough to come by, but not Arborio rice. So we paid a visit to **Digital Chef**, the online food market. There, we did a keyword search for "Arborio rice" and found it for \$5.25 a bag, ready for delivery in two days, with a shipping surcharge.

Then, to complicate matters, we pretended that one of our guests had informed us that he suffers from gastroesophageal reflux disease, and we had no idea what that is. First stop was the **Tufts University Nutrition Navigator**, whose search engine recommends the American College of Gastroenterology's site. There we learned that gastroesophageal reflux disease is the formal name for heartburn.

—Jeff Pooley

CyberDiet (www.cyberdiet.com)

The health-conscious flock to CyberDiet for its customized nutritional profiles, meal planner, and a tracking system that tallies calories and fat grams.

Digital Chef (www.digitalchef.com)

Affiliated with The Culinary Institute of America, Digital Chef is the leading shopping-oriented site, offering hard-to-find ingredients and professional cookware.

Epicurious (food.epicurious.com)

Condé Nast's Epicurious is the Rolls Royce of food websites, with a searchable database of more than 8,000 recipes, articles from *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit* magazines, abundant kitchen advice, and lively forums like "Fooding Around."

Food & Wine Online (www.pathfinder.com/FoodWine)

The web edition of *Food & Wine* magazine serves the gastronomically insecure with detailed recipes, archived articles, and a searchable version of its famous wine guide, which helps you pick the right wine for any meal.

The Global Gourmet (www.globalgourmet.com)

The Global Gourmet is a strong all-around site, with inventive recipes, cookbook reviews, a nifty conversion calculator, and eight regular columns (including the monthly "I Love Chocolate").

The Kitchen Link (www.kitchenlink.com)

There are few bells and whistles on The Kitchen Link, but the husband-and-wife team who put the site together have compiled what may be the Web's most exhaustive compendium of food-related links.

Meals For You (www.mealsforyou.com)

Meals For You boasts detailed nutritional breakdowns, printable shopping lists, and recipes that adjust measurements for the number of servings.

StarChefs (www.starchefs.com)

StarChefs is a shrine to culinary celebrity worship. The site unabashedly celebrates the big names of cheldom—Julia Child and Emeril Lagasse, for example—with skillfully packaged bios, interviews, and recipes.

Tufts University Nutrition Navigator (navigator.tufts.edu)

The Tufts Navigator is the cyber-clearinghouse for all things nutrition-related, with ratings and links to sites that promise healthy counsel.

Veggies Unite! (www.vegweb.com)

This is a vegetarian haven, complete with more than 2,900 vegan recipes, a customized meal planner, and an extensive glossary.



Epicurious is universally praised as the Web's premier one-stop food site.

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— April 27th issue, pg. 39.

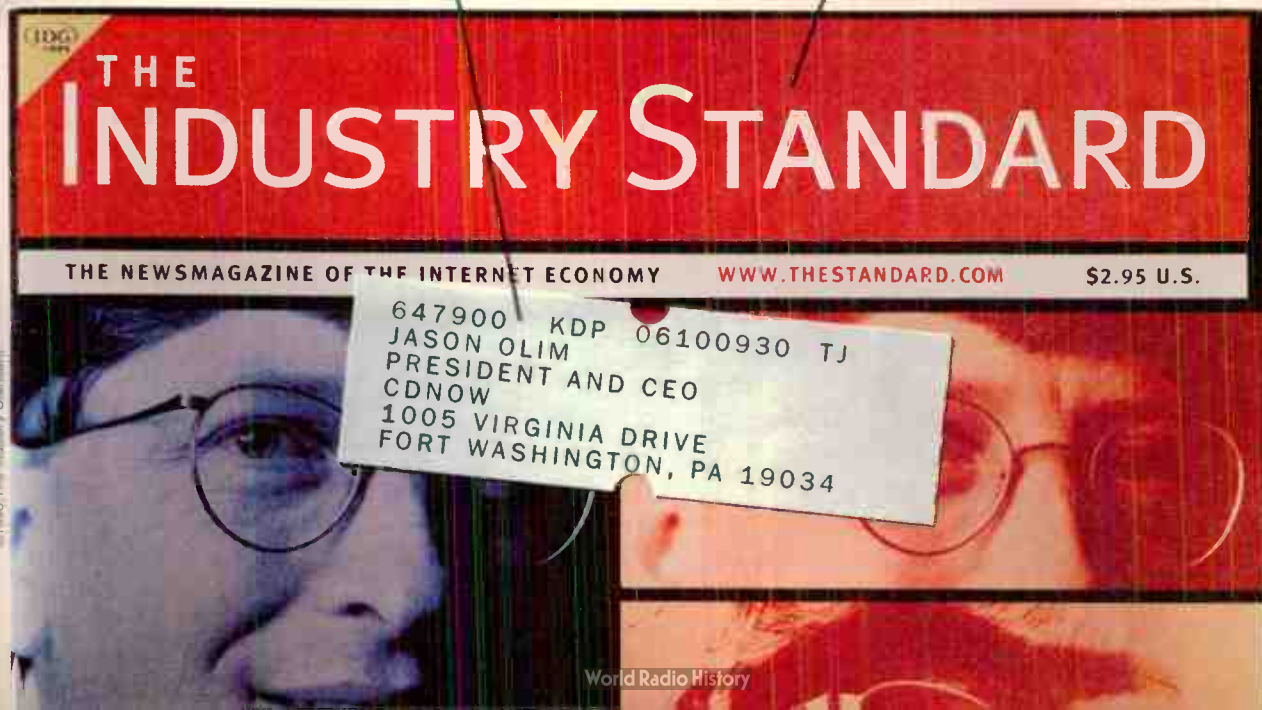
Bought a customized CD.

— May 11th

Bought the company.

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THE OVERVIEW

When one of his patients wanted to discuss “the most current statistics regarding peripheral stem-cell transplant compared with conventional dose chemotherapy for breast cancer,” Dr. Jeremy Geffen, founder and executive director of the Geffen Cancer

Center and Research Institute, was not surprised. “Where did she get that information? On the Internet,” he says.

Interactive health sites for non-doctors, such as **HealthGate**, **InteliHealth**, **Mayo Clinic Health Oasis**, and **Dr. Koop’s Community**, are changing the way people learn about medicine and disease prevention, and how they cope with illness.



Surgeon General David Satcher warns that it’s not always easy to tell which online information is trustworthy.

The most widely respected health sites come from the federal government. According to Dr. Jeremy Lipsman, executive director of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, government health information is trustworthy “because it has been reviewed carefully before being posted.” **Healthfinder** is the government’s no-frills gateway to a wide array of health-information resources from a range of governmental, academic, and private sites. Other excellent starting points for getting federal information include the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, which specializes in public-health and infectious-disease data, and the **National Institutes of Health**, whose resources include consumer-health publications and clinical-trial studies.

Government pages typically deliver only traditionally accepted health information, but the Web is home to a range of alternative health sites, some more credible than others. The best is **Ask Dr. Weil**, a popular destination for information about vitamins and counterculture healing, hosted by natural-healing author and guru Dr. Andrew Weil.

U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, while a fan of the Web, sounds a note of caution: It “is not always easy to distinguish between health information on the Internet that is based in science and information that is intended to help sell a product,” he warns.

Drilling Down

How can you use the Web to answer specific health questions? Suppose you’ve just been told you have type II diabetes and you want more information than your doctor has given you. We started at **healthfinder**. Using the search engine at the top of the main page, we typed “diabetes” into the search engine. This called up 111 links to websites and organizations offering information about diabetes. The link that looked most promising was labeled “Noninsulin-Dependent Diabetes.” Sure enough, when we clicked on it, we found a site full of resources that dealt with type II diabetes, including information on causes, medications, diet, complications, glucose levels, and diabetes-related organizations.

—Jesse Lordin

Ask Dr. Weil (www.drweil.com)

The alternative medicine guru offers advice on vitamins and natural remedies. Answer a questionnaire to find out which vitamins and supplements Weil recommends for you. The Vitamin Shoppe, a retailer, is the site’s exclusive sponsor.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Visit this site if you want information on food-borne illnesses or if you’re going to Kenya and want to learn about recent outbreaks of Rift Valley fever.

Dr. Koop’s Community (www.drkoop.com)

Produced by Empower Health Corp., a consumer-information company with former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop as its chairman, this service presents information on diseases and medications, along with a section on medical insurance, and an online prescription-refill service. Koop helps choose the site’s offerings, but does not contribute material.

healthfinder (www.healthfinder.gov)

This is the Department of Health and Human Services’ no-frills gateway to medical journals, news, databases, libraries, state agencies, educational sites, organizations, and support groups.

HealthGate (www.healthgate.com)

Basics on more than 100 illnesses and conditions, along with resources on healthy living, parenting, and more. Sponsored by HealthGate Data Corp., this site charges fees for premium databases, drug information, and more in-depth information.

InteliHealth (www.intelihealth.com)

Johns Hopkins University Hospital and Aetna U.S. Healthcare produce this top site for medical news, condition-specific information, drug data, and an “Ask the Doc” forum.

Mayo Clinic Health Oasis (www.mayohealth.org)

The Mayo Clinic’s site features news and links that are organized into nine categories, including cancer, medicine, nutrition, and children’s health. Visitors can e-mail questions to Mayo doctors.

National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov)

Another good jumping-off point for federal health-information resources. Stop here for clinical-trial databases, consumer-health publications, and an index of health conditions being investigated by the government.

National Library of Medicine (www.nlm.nih.gov)

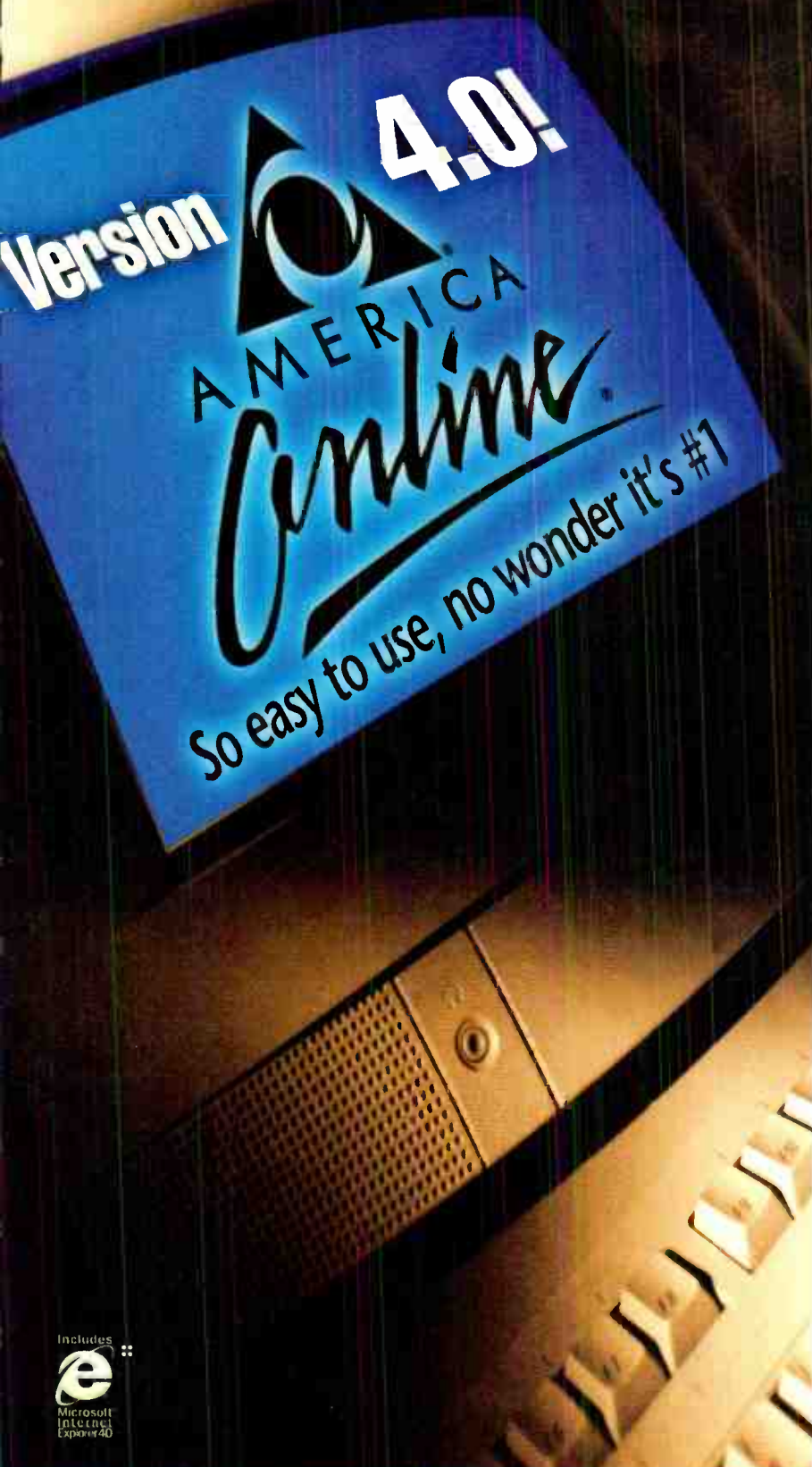
The centerpiece here is MedLine, a free database of citations and abstracts from 3,900 medical journals.

OncoLink (www.oncolink.com)

The University of Pennsylvania Cancer Center’s portal for information about various cancers and related treatments, clinical trials, and support groups. Information ranges from very basic to highly technical.

The best website for alternative medicine, vitamins, and supplements is Ask Dr. Weil, hosted by Dr. Andrew Weil.





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KIDS/FAMILY



THE OVERVIEW

For parents, the Web has become “a support network, which is also an information network and a reassurance network,” says Dr. Lawrence Kutner, a clinical psychologist at Harvard Medical School and a contributor to **Parents.com**. It is also “an easy-access place at three A.M. for the mother of a three-month-

old,” says Dr. Paula Elbirt, a New York pediatrician who runs her own website and contributes to other sites. Sometimes, a parent needs “someone to tell her that she’s not insane for feeling insane.”

General parenting sites are particularly good at meeting this need. iVillage, Inc.’s **Parent Soup**, perhaps the most wide-ranging site, is known as “a great chat community,” says Sally Lee, editor in chief of *Parents* magazine, which also runs **Parents.com**. This and other general sites—**ParentsPlace**, **ParentTime**, and **Parents.com**, among them—feature chats on everything from **Parent Soup**’s “Child-Care Providers” to **ParentsPlace**’s “Homeschooling Support Group.”

Besides community, these sites also offer access to experts such as Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. And this, says Jonathan Carson, chairman and CEO of the Family Education Network, a developer of educational tools for schools and parents, is where the future lies. “It’s all about time,” says Carson, who also runs **familyeducation.com**. His company’s market research shows that most people “want to go in, ask the expert, and get out.” He has refocused his site on providing articles and expert information

in his niche, education and learning. Carson and Kutner also see a trend toward specialization, with new sites focusing on specific parenting issues, such as adoption or disabled children.

BabyCenter.com (www.babycenter.com)

Focused on the pregnancy-through-age-three group, this site offers a great compendium of expert baby advice, including summaries of previously published material from Dr. Penelope Leach and Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, among others. Pregnant mothers who send in their due dates get personalized calendars detailing what physical changes they can expect. Owned by BabyCenter, Inc.

Best of the Pediatric Internet (www.aap.org/bpi)

Produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics, this gateway lists categories with links to dozens of other sites. Though designed primarily for pediatricians, the site includes a category called “Reference Materials for Parents” and one called “Genetics,” which lists sites for parents of children with genetic diseases.

Family.com (www.family.com)

This Disney-owned site places its emphasis on entertaining your child. The “Go Local!” guide highlights activities for kids in every region of the country.

Family Education Network (www.familyeducation.com)

Family Education Network picks up where many parenting sites leave off—just as a child enters school—and offers information on subjects ranging from “Mathematics in Second Grade” to “Getting a Grip on Furby.” Produced by the Family Education Company, it also features links to local school districts.

Parents.com (www.parents.com)

An outgrowth of stalwart *Parents* magazine, the site combines the best of the print publication with advice from top-notch experts and news updates of interest to parents. It also posts articles from other Gruner+Jahr publications, such as *Child* magazine and *Family Circle*.

Parent Soup (www.parentsoup.com)

Parent Soup, owned by iVillage, is a parent-to-parent support community with separate chat rooms, experts, and service pieces for parents of children in every age group.

ParentsPlace (www.parentsplace.com)

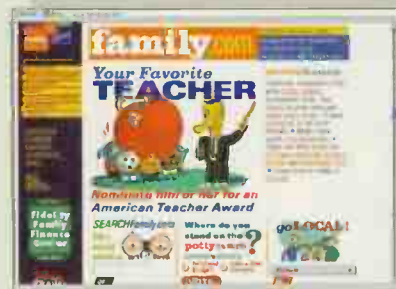
Also from iVillage, ParentsPlace includes articles and experts on such subjects as breastfeeding, organic food, and natural remedies that appeal to “the crunchy, granola, back-to-nature crowd,” says Sally Lee, editor in chief of *Parents* magazine.

ParentTime (www.parenttime.com)

This site offers articles from *Parenting* and *BabyTalk* magazines, as well as original material. Users can e-mail questions to experts such as sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer. ParentTime is co-owned by Time Warner Inc. and Procter & Gamble.

Mothers Who Think (www.salonmagazine.com/mwt)

This weekly *Salon* magazine column offers little practical advice. Instead, writers such as Anne Lamott and Sallie Tisdale muse on subjects from hating the Berenstain Bears to telling your child about death.



Disney’s Family.com is an ideal source of ideas for entertaining your kids.

Drilling Down

So how do you use the Web to address a specific parenting crisis? We assumed it was 2 A.M., and our six-month-old, who had been sleeping through the night, is up screaming for the third night in a row. He could be teething, but we wanted an expert opinion. First, we tried **BabyCenter.com**. On the left-hand side of the homepage are six categories. We clicked on “Baby” to see “The Baby Page.” Then we typed “teething” into the search engine on the left side of the page and got a list of 71 articles. The second, by Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, seemed promising. When we clicked on that choice, we saw a page with two general paragraphs about teething, followed by a host of commonly asked questions, including ours—“Whenever he gets a fever or wakes at night everyone says he is teething. How do I know?” The answer: You may never know for sure if the crying is caused by teething, but give the baby some aspirin substitute, and “if it’s teeth, that’s likely to help.” —Rifka Rosenwein

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THE OVERVIEW

For daily news coverage on the Web, the people we interviewed turned most often to three kinds of sites. The first category includes **MSNBC** and **CNN Interactive**, which have full staffs supplemented by the vast resources of their parent news organizations, to cover and update the news. The second category includes sites

such as **Yahoo! News**, which use wire material and no original content. In the third category are websites produced by newspapers that basically publish the day's paper online and update stories with wire reports; **The New York Times on the Web** is a leading example.



Slate's Michael Kinsley uses The New York Times on the Web.

The best sites allow visitors to find what they want easily and quickly, says Christopher Feola, director of the Media Center at the American Press Institute; he names **MSNBC** and **Yahoo! News** as good examples.

Branding seems to count for a lot in this category; some old-media web spinoffs command respect because of the strength of their parent companies. Among these stalwarts, **The New York Times on the Web** and **washingtonpost.com** were mentioned repeatedly, especially by those who live where it's hard to find the print editions. The better sites offer a lot more than just that day's news. Michael Kinsley, editor of *Slate*, gets the *Times* on paper every day, but uses the web version for its extensive archives. Likewise, he uses **CNN Interactive** for its full-length transcripts of hearings and press conferences.

David Talbot, editor of *Salon Magazine*, says he looks to the Web for news sites not available in print form, most notably *Slate*. This is a fourth type of news website: Its strength is analysis and commentary and it does not function like a wire service.

Drilling Down

How can you use these sites to find something specific? Suppose it's February 5 and we want to know what's going on that day with President Clinton's impeachment trial. We've heard that Senator Robert Byrd gave a stirring speech a few weeks earlier announcing that he would offer a motion to end the trial. How can we get that day's coverage and the text of Byrd's speech? We went to MSNBC and on the homepage we found the headline, "No live testimony in impeachment trial." We click on the story, and find ourselves on a page that says "The Clinton Crisis" on top; the story about the rejection of live testimony is directly below. After the first paragraph of the story is a list of related stories and packages. The first item says, "Special Report: 'The Clinton Crisis'—Complete Coverage." We click on that. On this page, there is a list of today's headlines, but also a list of related and background articles. We scroll down and find "The text of Senator Robert Byrd's announcement Friday that he will offer a motion to end President Clinton's impeachment trial," dated January 22, 1999.

—Rifka Rosenwein



Salon Magazine editor David Talbot reads *Slate*.

Chicago Tribune Internet Edition (www.chicagotribune.com)

Cited for its innovative use of the medium. Click on a category such as "Business," and a menu of sub-categories appears. Click again and a more expanded list appears, with the lead paragraph of top stories running down the middle of the page, additional headlines on the right, and related *Tribune* investigative projects on the left.

CNN Interactive (www.cnn.com)

Named consistently as the site for quick updates, it is also unusually comprehensive, offering a full list of

the day's stories on its main page, audio and video clips, and transcripts of press conferences and hearings.

MSNBC (www.msnbc.com)

The site is easy to navigate and makes great use of the resources—including audio and video clips—of NBC News and its affiliates. You can enter your zip code on the homepage to get local news, sports, and weather, usually from the local NBC-TV affiliate.

The New York Times on the Web (www.nytimes.com)

Everything contained in the print version, plus updates (usually via The Associated Press) and access to the paper's extensive archives, though sometimes for a fee.

Slate (www.slate.com)

The insight, punch, and wit of a great magazine combined with the interactivity of the Web. Readers cited favorite columnists, including editor Michael Kinsley and Scott Shuger, author of "Today's Papers," a roundup with attitude. Owned by Microsoft, *Slate* charges a \$19.95 yearly fee for its e-mail newsletters, weekly print edition, and access to its archive and bulletin boards.

washingtonpost.com (www.washingtonpost.com)

This site is best loved by ex-Washingtonians and other news junkies who cannot get through the day without the *Post*'s preeminent coverage of the capital and the paper's terrific "Style" section. The site is easy to navigate and provides a linked archive of Associated Press articles, many of which were never published in the *Post*.

Yahoo! News (dailynews.yahoo.com/headlines/)

Yahoo! News, which depends exclusively on The Associated Press, Reuters, and other wire services, wins fans for its efficiency and ease of use. The customizable page "My Yahoo!" (my.yahoo.com) allows users to choose what kinds of stories they see. "My Yahoo! is my most efficient editor," says Fox News anchor Paula Zahn. "Within a couple of minutes, I am read into the day's top stories, I've got today's stock quotes, and I even know what to wear that day, whether I'm in New York or London."



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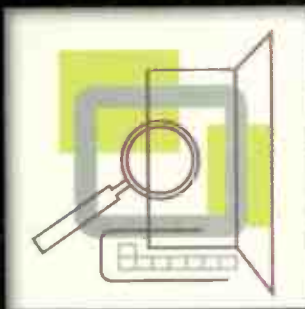
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PORTALS/SEARCH SITES



THE OVERVIEW

Portals are the most popular sites on the Web, in large part because they make sense of the chaos. Many started as search engines, sending users out onto the Internet to find whatever information they sought. Additionally, sites like **Yahoo!** organized the Web's offerings into directories with broad categories

and subcategories, which made burrowing down to a desired website much easier. Lately, the sites have evolved into one-stop information sources.

One reason search sites turned into portals was to solve a common problem: Too often, entering a search term—"taxes," for



Yahoo! is the choice of *The Wall Street Journal's* Walter Mossberg

example—would generate a list of thousands of links, most of them useless to someone who just wanted to learn about changes in this year's tax laws. Now, some portals like **AOL.COM** feature on-site channels of cleanly organized tax information. One caveat: A portal's content may look as if it was independently gathered, but much of it is supplied by companies that have paid for the privilege. That's why **AOL.COM's** sports channel, for example, includes articles from CBS SportsLine but not from *Sports Illustrated* or ESPN.

Portals remain useful for searching the Web. **Yahoo!**, which has an extensive web directory in addition to a search engine, is the search site of choice for *Wall Street Journal* technology columnist Walter Mossberg because "it's edited by humans, and most often gets to the point." **Yahoo!**'s staff includes about 80 web editors who gather new entries and weed old ones from the site's approximately 1 million listings.

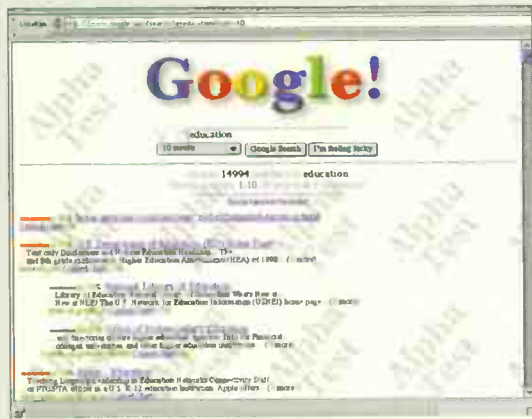
Recent deals like America Online, Inc.'s announcement that it will join forces with Netscape Communications Corp. have consolidated the portals' status as the Web's superpowers. What's more, traditional media companies have jumped into the arena: Snap is part-owned by NBC; and GO Network is jointly run by Infoseek Corp. and The Walt Disney Company. A downside of all these partnerships: The Web could begin to look like network TV, with a handful of sites providing most of the programming. The upside is that we could be searching from the TV set instead of the computer a bit sooner than expected.

AltaVista (www.altavista.com)

This search site, owned by Compaq Computer Corp., is great for new web users because of its simple interface. It also offers a remarkably comprehensive, yet easy-to-use, set of complex search commands that make it a favorite of advanced users as well.

AOL.COM (www.aol.com)

America Online, Inc.'s portal offers a typical portal selection of headlines, sports scores, weather updates, and other information. Like most portals, AOL.COM sells some of its prime real estate to media companies either outright or through barter deals; in the process, it has attracted some high-quality content providers. Its business news offerings, for example, include selections from CBS MarketWatch and Bloomberg. The site also features the Excite search engine.



Google! (www.google.com)

Created by Stanford graduate students (just like Yahoo!), this search tool tends to be more accurate than others because it rates every website based on the number of other sites that link to it, thus creating a kind of reference check for each result.

MetaCrawler (www.metacrawler.com)

Can't decide which search site to use? MetaCrawler, owned by Seattle-based Go2Net, Inc., simultaneously enters your query into at least ten search engines—including Lycos, Infoseek, WebCrawler, Excite, and AltaVista—and ranks the results from each. Since each search engine can return different results based on its speed or the quality of its database, MetaCrawler saves the time of checking each one individually.

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Snap (www.snap.com)

This portal, a marriage of San Francisco's CNET, Inc., and NBC provides the usual content, but also points to other news and information providers that have no commercial partnerships with the site.

Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com)

The original web directory is still among the best search tools available, and its staff of web surfers, who weed out old sites and add new ones, helps ensure that the entries don't get stale. Other search sites depend solely on computer technology to update their entries. If Yahoo! doesn't find your search term in its directory, it automatically enters it into the AltaVista search engine.

Drilling Down

How can you use portals to find specific information? Suppose you just bought a puppy. How can you find out how to train it? We started at **Yahoo!** and typed "puppy training" into the directory search window. Up came 66 sites, mostly for dog kennels and training schools, but the top listing, "Canines in Training," offered training advice. We then conducted a more comprehensive search for "puppy training" on **AltaVista** and got back 1,387 web pages; the first was a course on "The Three 'S's of Puppy Training."

—Noah Robischon

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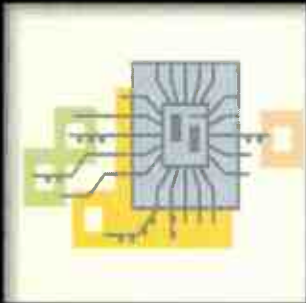
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THE OVERVIEW

Keeping up with the world of technology—everything from the latest gadgets, hardware, and software to industry news—is like trying to outrun a meteor. The Web makes technology more manageable, with sites that help users learn how to spiff up homepages, figure out the newest Palm Pilots, or

find out which tech companies are merging.

For coverage of Internet companies and the impact of new technologies on media, finance, telecommunications, and other industries, it's hard to beat **TheStandard.com**, the web version of *The Industry Standard* magazine. The site is a favorite of Marc Andreessen, cofounder of Netscape Communications Corp., who says it offers "great Internet industry insight." The experts we talked to also singled out **Red Herring Online** for its knack at spotting trends.



Netscape cofounder Marc Andreessen looks to **TheStandard.com** for insight.

Among techies, few topics arouse as much passion as the "open source" debate over the development of free software (think Linux) to replace commercial software (think Microsoft Corp.'s Windows NT). **Slashdot.org** is the premier site for programmers interested in open source and other hot tech topics.

Among the megasites devoted to technology resources, **CNET**, **TechWeb**, and **ZDNet** are the leaders. All three combine technology news with such features as software downloads, e-newsletters, online shopping, and reviews of products and gadgets that are changing your world. Of the three, **ZDNet** and **CNET** are geared more toward consumers; **TechWeb** caters more to information technology professionals.

Meanwhile, anybody with a computer and an Internet connection can publish on the Web. But building a fancy web page can be complicated. **Webmonkey** is a great source for lessons in web-page design.

NEWS AND INFORMATION SITES

Red Herring Online (www.redherring.com)

The web home of *Red Herring*, the monthly magazine that covers technology business and trends, this site features current articles on topics such as venture capital and technology investing as well as an archive of back issues.

Slashdot (www.slashdot.org)

This site is a mecca for the "open source" movement, which seeks to replace commercial software—the Windows NT operating system, for example—with free programs such as Linux. Privately owned and maintained, Slashdot's lively message boards also cover subjects from network security to nanotechnology.

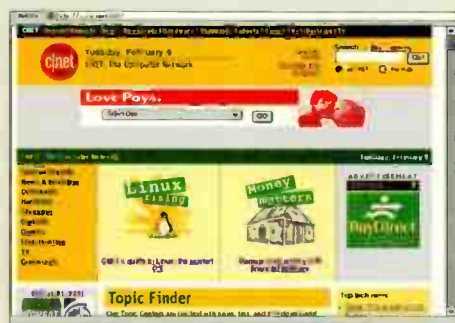
TheStandard.com (www.thestandard.com)

TheStandard.com is the free, online companion to *The Industry Standard*, the weekly Internet business magazine. All articles from the magazine are posted here, along with daily features exclusive to the site. Dip into "Metrics" for analyses of data on Net traffic, user trends, money spent, and so on. The site's "Media Grok" is a daily roundup and critique of tech-news coverage.

HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, AND WEB DESIGN

CNET (www.cnet.com)

CNET, Inc., a San Francisco-based technology media company, presents this one-stop site for tech news and resources, with sections devoted to gaming, product reviews, hardware, and software (CNET's "Download.com" area wins praise for its comprehensiveness and searchability).



CNET is a comprehensive one-stop site.

TechWeb (www.techweb.com)

TechWeb, from CMP Media Inc., is geared toward information-technology professionals as well as consumers, which is why news topics include "Chips," "Networking," "Storage," and "Telecom." The "Quick Hits" section offers short summaries of selected news stories. The "Week's Headlines" section lets you catch up on a week's worth of reading. Resources include product reviews, web tools, a software download center, and a calendar of tech-trade events.

Webmonkey (www.hotwired.com/webmonkey)

This is the place for valuable and well-organized tutorials and articles on web-page building. Topics include "Design," "HTML," "Dynamic HTML," "Graphics and Fonts," "Multimedia," and "Java." Webmonkey is a service of Wired Digital Inc.

ZDNet (www.zdnet.com)

Features include news, product reviews, a software download section, a Y2K survival guide, and "GameSpot," for computer-game enthusiasts. There is a section called "Help!" where ZDNet offers assistance with "any computing problem." ZDNet is the online incarnation of Ziff-Davis Inc.

Drilling Down

Suppose you are in the market for a personal computer. Before you buy, you want to do a little research to make sure you know the difference between RAM and spam. Go to **TechWeb**, and in the "Resources" menu on the left side of the screen, click on "Product Reviews." This will take you to "TechShopper," where you will immediately see the banner "Research & Buy." Select "Desktops/Servers." Then skip the first selections and hit the little link that reads, "Get desktop PC buying advice." Here you will find a primer on everything from processing speed to memory to disk space, with definitions, comparisons, and links to product reviews and related articles.

—Jesse London



Travel websites often serve dual purposes: They help people decide where to go and help them book tickets to get there. Sites that emphasize the latter tend to attract more users, and it's easy to see why. They often give travelers easy access to low airfares they wouldn't have found otherwise.

NBC Today travel editor Peter Greenberg uses the Web to comparison shop for cheap flights. He prefers **Travelocity** because it lets him enter the names of multiple airports along a route and returns flight times and fares for each possible stop in one query. Other travel sites require the user to enter one destination at a time, wait for the results of the query, and then enter the next leg of the trip. In addition to ticket buying, **Travelocity**—along with **Expedia**, **Preview Travel**, and **Biztravel.com**—offers rental car, hotel, and cruise bookings, as well as interactive features like currency converters and frequent-flyer mileage trackers.

One valuable source for bargain hunters is **Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Online**. Each day, the budget-travel guru and his staff collect and publish the latest information on discount airfares, hotel rates, dining, cruise packages, and so forth.

Buying a ticket is only one part of planning a trip; a good travel site should also include editorial content about popular destinations. The Web is teeming with advice on where, when, and how to vacation. Too many travel sites offer uncritical reviews of travel destinations or official tourist propaganda. "These are people who are just gatherers of published information and are not giving you with their own eyes what happened," says Frommer. A site should explain in detail why one destination is better than others. Websites that use content from well-known travel guidebook publishers, or those of respectable travel magazines, are usually reliable.



Arthur Frommer's site is a good source for travel bargain tips.

Drilling Down

How do you find a cheap Paris vacation package? We started at **Travelocity's** homepage and entered the departure and arrival cities, dates, and times (you'll have to register first). The search returned six flights, ranging in price from \$341–\$947 roundtrip. Next we clicked the "Home" button at the bottom of the page, and from the homepage clicked

on "Reserve a Hotel." On the page that came up, we entered the city, Paris, and the dates, then selected which part of town we wanted to stay in. The search returned three hotels with room prices ranging from \$92–\$259 per night. With these prices in mind, we checked the "Special Deals" option on the homepage. The "Hot Deals!" logo on the following page led to a half-dozen European vacation packages, including a six-night "Paris Winter Special" for \$718. —Noah Robischon

Biztravel.com (www.biztravel.com)

Business travelers will find this site indispensable for booking tickets online, mainly because it pioneered the process of automatically arranging a rental car or hotel reservation that will maximize frequent-flyer benefits. And the site's columnists offer excellent advice for road warriors.

Cheap Tickets (www.cheaptickets.com)

This independent site is one of the Web's best sources for bargain airfares. Competitors, including **Lowestfare.com** (lowestfare.com), **Council Travel** (counciltravel.com), and **Priceline.com** (priceline.com), sometimes have better bargains, but Cheap Tickets is a good place to start because specials are highlighted on the opening page, while the competition often requires you to plug in destinations.

Epicurious Travel (travel.epicurious.com)

With material from *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine and original content prepared by the site's own staff, this is a great resource for vacation planning. Don't miss the "Deal of the Week," which picks one special vacation package and explains why it can't be beat.

Expedia (expedia.com)

Microsoft's all-purpose travel site is great for airfare price-checking because it's so easy to use; its designers actually tracked users of the site and then cut down the number of pages required to find the most popular information.

Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Online (www.frommers.com)

Arthur Frommer, the budget-travel master, searches out the best travel deals available online and off and summarizes them on his website, which is a treasure trove of information for serious travelers.

Preview Travel (www.previewtravel.com)

This all-purpose site, run by an independent company that has produced travel segments for TV since 1985, lets travelers book a flight, car, hotel room, or complete vacation package via the Web, but is distinguished from its competitors for offering Fodor's Gold Guides to 86 cities.

Rough Guides (www.roughguides.com)

This site, like others created by guidebook publishers, includes information that the all-purpose websites sometimes omit, such as hotel and restaurant reviews. Rough Guides also provides a "Journal" for travelers to swap information or give their own updates on destinations.

Travel & Leisure (www.travelandleisure.com)

In addition to content from the magazine, this site features Hot Deals!, an e-mail newsletter that regularly features a half-dozen vacation bargains.



All-purpose Expedia is well-designed and easy-to-use.

COMMUNITY VS.

The Internet was conceived as a means of connecting people with shared interests. **That's still the very best of the Web.**

IT'S COMMONPLACE TO SAY THAT THE INTERNET HAS produced a collision between commerce and community. Conceived as a means of communication for technical and professional colleagues, the Internet was transformed by the World Wide Web protocols that allowed everyone to click their way around the globe, whether or not they spoke Unix. The graphics and ease of use attracted, well, users. And countless

commercial sites tried to find new advertising-based or transaction-based business models.

Those who envisioned a "networked nation" of individuals—reaching out to one another and forming online communities—have sometimes been dismayed at the new portals and all-inclusive online environments that seek to be "sticky" websites drawing "captive" eyeballs. Those sites build on convenience (your homepage, your stock portfolio, your free e-mail) to bring everyone to one-stop-shopping locations—and keep them there. But the creators' vision was that the Web would encourage connections among diverse sites and collaboration among distributed communities, not draw a growing mass audience into ever fewer high-traffic sites.

The real conflict is not between commerce and community. It is between the traditional architecture of commerce (hierarchical systems of well-capitalized sources, distributors, and customers) and the traditional architecture of community (networks of one-to-one and few-to-few communications that create a sense of belonging and shared values). A website can serve as a storefront, but it remains, literally, part of a web in which each link might take you out of the store, away from the otherwise highly publicized distribution chain. The nodes in a true network have roughly equal value, though some nodes are more connected than others and these are the most valuable. But the information flow along a network or web is disbursed, with any given communication finding an unpredictable path through an unpredictable set of intermediaries, whereas the "star" architecture of broadcast sends most signals out from a few "central" points, with few return signals and few exchanges among the "leaves" of the resulting hierarchical tree structure. Commerce and community have distinct shapes—as different as the shape of a tree is from the shape of a city's streets.

When a traditional business takes its wares online, it faces a dilemma. Because links are cheap, it could provide great convenience to its customers by including pointers to similar or competing locations. But the customer might choose to follow one of those links, leaving the store. Limiting a site to internal links may deter exit but inevitably leads to disappointment. No store can stock everything. No business can satisfy its customers' every need. Besides, there is always some nut out there who, for irritatingly noncommercial reasons, will publish a list of links to all the other interesting, competing sites.

Content-based sites face a further dilemma. For any given



ROBERT NEUBECKER

COMMERCE

boundary established around a substantive topic (law, cats, news, quilting), there will be subsidiary topics (securities law, cat foods, news about the shoe business, Amish quilting). Trying to be the “best” site at one level implies reasonable coverage of the whole defined range. But the same resources, devoted to a narrower subtopic, will likely create a better site. As online authors focus on narrower and narrower niches, we’ll be drawn back toward the original idea of the Net—in which the best online locations are the works of individuals or small groups with world-class expertise in very narrow areas. But don’t try to tell that to the portals or the big online magazine operations and print-based publications—including this one—that try to find a short list of 10 or 50 or 100 locations everyone should want to visit.

The deeper clash is between the model of broadcast and narrowcast. For our purposes, “broadcast” refers to any business in which substantial capital is expended to send out the “best product” from one source to many consumers or users. “Narrowcast” refers to interactions—such as conversations—in which little or no capital is used to supply your best thoughts to the person with whom you are conversing, who will pass it along to others in society’s conversational net. In a broadcast world, the consumer is well-advised to read “best of” surveys and to choose among a finite set of alternative incoming sources. After all, with large enterprises trying to create and rate good products, why not read the reviews and go to the site (or movie) that seems to receive the highest popular acclaim (at least among those whose judgment you trust). This nineteenth-century, top-down model works well for mass-produced goods and mass audiences.

In contrast, in the narrowcast-linked world, you decide where to go (and whom to talk to) based on the recommendations of friends. And they listen to you. The link a friend sends by e-mail is just as easy to click on as one found on a portal site—and more likely to be valuable. And, thanks to the convenience of e-mail, your best friend can recommend an online location more often than she might be able to mention a good book at a dinner party. You may not get much traffic on the website you set up to share your own lists of favorite articles or theories—but those who know you can browse your contributions at any time and pass them along to others. It’s a web—a World Wide Web. Get it?

Somewhere along the line, the very notion of a “homepage” has been subtly modified by the growth of the commercial model. The original concept was that an individual could set the browser to come up first at a collection of links of personal interest. Then he

David Johnson's column on Netscape's "What's Related" button appeared in the February issue. He heads the Internet practice at Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, a Washington, D.C., law firm, and is a founder of the Cyberspace Law Institute.

might publish this page to the outside world as a way of sharing his experience of the Web with others. (It’s easy to create a purely “local” homepage that stays on your machine without appearing on the Web and that collects links of interest to you. So privacy is an option.) More recently, we’ve been told our homepage should be a personalized version of a portal site—filled mostly with news, stock quotes, and other items that the portal sends to us based on filtering criteria we select. That kind of page may be “personalized” in some sense—but it’s not a “home.” You can’t invite your friends to share it. It doesn’t provide a space for community-building dialogue.

W

WE ARE WITNESSING A CONTEST between publishing and conversation. And the stakes are high. When television came along, we lost most conversation and began to spend unconscionable hours passively receiving the “best” product produced by a hierarchically nested system of producers and network executives and advertising interests. Conversation has a nonhierarchical architecture—and a different substantive outcome. Ideas and references pass from friend to friend and, in the end, as a society, we have had a collective conversation. The ideas change along the way (as in a game of “telephone”), often for the better. And everyone builds and follows his own path to enlightenment and entertainment.

So the next time you are tempted to adopt a portal site that offers the convenience of comprehensive, personalized content, think about whether you are using the Web as a web—or merely as a replacement for the other devices that have allowed you to find your favorite place as a passive consumer in a broadcast system. Is the portal site really your friend? Will lists of links rated by editors, or even those ranked with reference to the choices of all other users of the Net, really produce the benefits of multiple, spreading bilateral conversations? Does the search engine give you the opportunity to tell someone you know why you think they might enjoy a particular online location? Does your personalized homepage allow you to create a new collection of materials that some few others might find to be “best” from their point of view? Is your use of the Net letting you connect with those around the world who will thank you for being “world class” in some area that matters a lot to them? Your homepage will never make the “best of the Net” section of a major magazine. But it might make a big difference to the new friends who find you—and your best thoughts—there.

The best thing about the Web is that it is a web—and that a part of it is really yours, capable of being shared with your friends. ■





THE
BEST &
WORST
WHITE HOUSE
REPORTERS

LAST JULY 24, SHORTLY BEFORE 2 P.M., CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT JOHN King nailed down a story he had been pursuing for weeks: President Bill Clinton's lawyer was trying to make a deal with independent counsel Kenneth Starr for the president's grand jury testimony. "[S]ources outside the White House [are] telling us that after six months of rebuffing the independent counsel's request, Clinton private attorney David Kendall [is] now trying to reach an arrangement, according to one of our sources, so, quote, 'the grand jury gets the testimony it needs,'" King reported. The details of how the president would testify were still being worked out, King noted. "We do know from our sources that Mr. Kendall does not want the president to personally go into the grand jury room."

More than four hours later, when ABC White House correspondent Sam Donaldson appeared on the network's *World News Tonight*, it was clear that he had no information of his own. Answering a question from anchor Peter Jennings about the negotiations, Donaldson said, "Well, David Kendall, the president's lawyer, is out of town so nothing happened today. But early next week, they're going to sit down. And...the scenario is pretty obvious." Continued Donaldson: "The president either comes forward voluntarily, or there will be a subpoena, if one hasn't been issued already. What the president would clearly like to do, Peter, we're told, is if he's going to give testimony, give it here at the White House." Jennings then asked Donaldson if he got the sense that the White House was feeling pressure. "Well, for a long time, the question has been will the president testify at all," Donaldson replied. "There has been some view that perhaps he would say in the final analysis, 'I won't.' But I think today pretty well clears that up," he concluded, inexplicably contradicting his initial comment that "nothing happened today."

These two stories show the difference between a great White House reporter and

BY ROBERT SCHMIDT

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DENNIS BRACK/BLACK STAR

one who is lacking. King broke this story through hard work. He simply overwhelmed people with phone calls. The question of whether the president would testify had been floating around Washington for weeks, and King made no bones about telling his sources that he wanted to be the first to know when the answer came. He made sure those sources had his pager number and told them, *Beep me if you hear anything*. It worked. King got the call. But even after breaking the grand jury story, he kept pounding away at it throughout the day. By CNN's 8 P.M. *The World Today* show, King was able to add more details—that Starr, in a meeting the week before, had made it clear that he would subpoena the president if he had to.

Because Hunt is a wire reporter, his work is distributed early and often, and affects other reporters' stories. *Washington Post* reporter John Harris is a gifted writer whose analysis of policy and politics may be unparalleled. He has great White House sources off whom he can bounce ideas, sources who won't steer him away from stories that may reflect poorly on the president.

On the flip side, the reporters cited here as the "worst" are those who seem to be skating along, producing work that is often mediocre. There probably are no terrible reporters on the White House beat. White House correspondents—particularly those at national news organizations, who are the ones we focused on—have risen to the top of their profession. And competition for stories keeps most from slacking off.

Still, the peculiarities of White House coverage—the daily briefings and constant stream of official events—make it easy for reporters to get too comfortable. "There's a group of reporters that are sort of part of the old guard who I would describe as resting on their laurels, people to the best of my knowledge who haven't broken a story in

twenty years," says one former Clinton press aide.

USA Today's Susan Page has access to the White House, but her stories don't often seem to take full advantage of her talents and platform. Kenneth Walsh, of *U.S. News & World Report*, has been covering the White House for more than 12 years, but his stories are often lackluster. As a reporter for a top newsmagazine, Walsh gets better treatment than many reporters, including a private weekly briefing with the president's press secretary. Yet he rarely breaks news, and his analytical pieces do not stand out.

In a report filed in March 1998 shortly before President Clinton's 12-day trip to Africa, Walsh wrote a story that mostly laid out the president's schedule, country by country. Much of the information had been given to Walsh before the president landed in Africa, in a background briefing written by *USA Today* reporter Mimi Hall (who had traveled ahead of time to the continent). Such briefings, traditional for long foreign trips, provide detailed accounts of all upcoming presidential events, a short history of each country, and travel logistics. Chunks of Walsh's story appeared to come straight from that briefing, almost verbatim in places. For example, Walsh wrote that the final stop on President Clinton's trip, Senegal, "could be the most poignant. He will visit the fortress at Goree Island, port of departure for millions of Africans being shipped to the New World as slaves." Hillary Clinton, Walsh noted, had visited the fortress one year earlier. Here's the background briefing: "Goree Island was a shipping point for the slave trade, mostly to the Americas....Visiting the Slave House is a very powerful experience ([Hillary Clinton] visited last year)." Walsh says he doesn't remember seeing the briefing and says he believes he got the information from colleagues who picked it up from another source and contributed to the story.

Two network television correspondents are on our list for different reasons. Their reporting often focuses more on spin than it does on substance. ABC's Sam Donaldson seems to think that his job is to shout questions—a trait for which he is famous—not to dig for answers. NBC's David Bloom, although known for putting in long hours, does not provide viewers with the sort of depth and context that comes from deep digging and thinking.

Some important notes about this report. We do not present

Sam Donaldson doesn't do a lot of reporting. With his other network duties, he just doesn't have the time.

Donaldson on the other hand just doesn't do a lot of reporting. Along with his White House duties, Donaldson coanchors ABC's *20/20* and cohosts the network's *This Week with Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts* on Sundays. He simply doesn't have time to check in with, or develop, sources the way King does. As the July 24 news reports show, Donaldson wasn't able to confirm the details of King's dispatch, leaving Donaldson to report conventional political wisdom and depriving his viewers of much real news.

AS WITH ANY BEAT, HARD WORK IS A GREAT White House reporter's most important trait. The five we name here as the best work in different media and each have their own strengths. But all were cited by their fellow reporters as among the hardest workers on the beat. By making extra phone calls and by being at the White House late and on weekends, they develop sources who can point them to stories and provide regular reality checks. These reporters also love their jobs, and it shows.

CBS radio correspondent Mark Knoller, for example, keeps a daily log of all the president's activities that shows with whom the president has met, where he has traveled, even his golf score. Knoller, who files about six radio reports a day, does not need to keep so much information—after all, he only has 30 to 45 seconds for most of his dispatches. But the recordkeeping allows him to add context and color to his stories that reporters with more time or space don't provide. After O.J. Simpson was arrested on murder charges, Knoller looked back in his log and found that the star had played a round of golf with President Clinton. That wasn't important when it happened, but it made for a surprising report when the Simpson story broke.

All the best reporters work hard, but other traits help propel them ahead of their colleagues. *Washington Post* reporter Peter Baker is notable for his persistence—he just calls and calls and calls. Associated Press reporter Terence Hunt shines in part because of his ability to report news straight down the middle.

Senior writer Robert Schmidt wrote about online coverage of the Microsoft federal antitrust trial in the March issue.

this as an objective study, but have tried to make it as broad-based as possible. We began by interviewing journalists and officials to determine who among the White House press corps' 40-odd regulars stands out in a positive or negative way. We also consulted people who know a good story when they see one—including outside journalists, adversaries of the president, and others who often serve as sources for White House reporters. (We reached out to Democrats and Republicans, though because Bill Clinton has been in office for six years, many more Democrats could speak authoritatively about the current crop of White House reporters.) We interviewed 19 current White House reporters, 5 former White House reporters, 9 White House aides who talk to the press on a regular basis, 11 former White House officials, and 14 people who pay close attention to White House coverage. We then examined these reporters' work over the past year, focusing on some of 1998's biggest stories: The White House's budget battle with Congress, President Clinton's China trip, and, of course, the Lewinsky scandal.

While we gave great weight to what these people said, this is not a poll. Most people—whether they are White House staffers who don't like a reporter's hard-hitting coverage or journalists covering up for a friend past his prime or jealous of a competitor—have biases. We did our best to take these biases into account. For example, White House aides did not name *The Washington Post's* Baker as one of the best, but he made our list because almost all the White House

reporters we talked to said he belongs there.

One difficulty we encountered in making these judgments is that reporters working in different media have different concerns and priorities. A daily newspaper report is obviously going to be different than a weekly newsmagazine story; cable television reporters usually have more airtime to tell a story than a network reporter does. That said, all reporters, regardless of which medium they work in, have a similar responsibility to get things right, be fair, and give their audience an understanding of what is really happening at the White House. That's what we looked for.

Many journalists not pegged as our five best were singled out by their peers and White House aides as formidable. On the television side, CBS's Bill Plante and CNN's Wolf Blitzer drew wide praise. *New York Times* reporter James Bennet would have been sixth on our list. And Bill Nichols of *USA Today*, Mara Liasson of National Public Radio, and Laurence McQuillan of Reuters were also in the running.

As for the four we singled out on the negative side of the ledger, we're not saying their work is useless, just that it is wanting. It is common to read in the press about the "dumbest members of Congress," "the best- and worst-run companies," and so on. We've chosen to apply this journalistic formula to the press itself. Our purpose is not to ridicule. By pointing out who in our view is doing the best and worst work on this important beat—backed up with specific examples and comparisons—we hope to provide readers with a basis for making their own judgments.

PETER BAKER: *THE WASHINGTON POST*

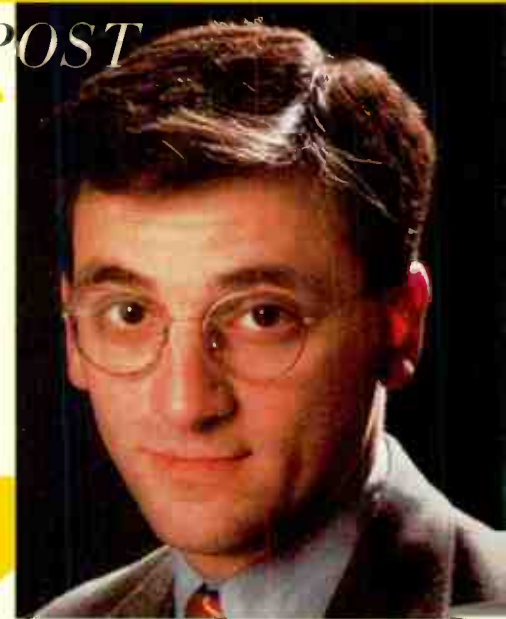
YOUNG AND AGGRESSIVE, PETER BAKER began covering the White House for *The Washington Post* in the summer of 1996 and quickly earned respect from his peers for his relentlessness and hard-hitting coverage. Unlike most White House reporters, Baker, 31, has been assigned mainly to the scandal beat—the Paula Jones suit, Monica Lewinsky, the impeachment—and over the past year has rarely traveled with the president or spent much time at the White House.

Covering such a narrow beat is a luxury for a White House reporter and Baker has seized the opportunity by breaking some big stories. He shared a byline with two other *Post* reporters—Susan Schmidt and Toni Locy—on the initial Lewinsky story. Baker's stories have not endeared him to the White House; only 1 of the 20 current and former White House aides interviewed for this article ranked Baker among the best. "I think some of his stuff has been fair and good," says one former White House staffer who had regular contact with the press corps. "I am troubled by the *Post's* coverage, I feel it was overly influenced by the Ken Starr people, so I can't put him on my list."

But Baker, who declined to comment about himself, is widely hailed by almost everyone else. Call him the journalists' journalist. Notes a Washington reporter who covers the president: "Baker, on some of the really heavy news...always has the most authoritative stories." Says Reuters senior White House correspondent Laurence McQuillan: "Baker...particularly in the Lewinsky scandal, has established himself as a real force. In some cases it's a tribute to him and it's also a tribute to his

sources. He had some very solid exclusives."

Baker's biggest scoop was the Lewinsky affair itself. The story he, Schmidt, and Locy wrote on January 21, 1998, revealed that independent counsel Kenneth Starr was expanding his probe into allegations that President Clinton, while attempting to cover up his affair with the former intern, obstructed justice and suborned perjury in the Jones case. The other big exclusive Baker hauled in came on March 5, 1998, when he wrote the first extensive report on President Clinton's sealed deposition in the Jones case. The story noted the surprising number of questions the president was asked about Lewinsky, and gave readers enough detail to make them feel they were sitting in with the president. "The president's mood seemed generally sober, but as the hours wore on there were moments of pique as well," Baker wrote. "His voice was so low at times that he was asked repeatedly to speak up. At a couple of points, Clinton seemed agitated, once complaining about conservative attacks on him and later seeming to dare the Jones lawyers to throw any question at him that they could come up with." The story was not sourced; Baker noted in his opening paragraph that it was based on "a detailed account of [the president's] sealed deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case." Even today, people in Washington argue over who leaked Baker the story. The one thing people don't argue about, since



the bulk of the deposition was released, is the story's accuracy.

One reason Baker is considered a great reporter is that he never takes no for an answer. Ultimately, somebody did leak Baker the deposition story, but it did not just get dropped in his lap. As soon as the president finished his deposition in January, Baker started making calls. As a few details leaked out to the *Post* and other publications, Baker intensified his search, calling people back, pleading with them. He got the story.

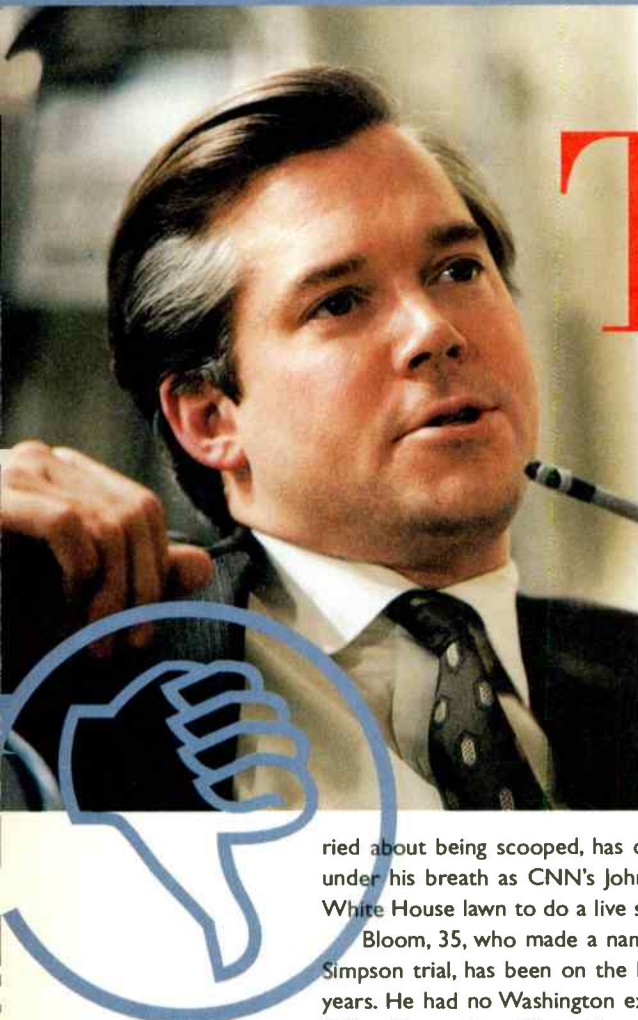
According to two reporters, Baker gets his big scoops partly by writing smaller stories. He just wants to get in the paper. Along the way, Baker gets to know the people he's writing about and builds relationships with them. They learn to trust him; he learns whether they have agendas. Many reporters brood a little before starting a story, notes Baker's *Post* colleague John Harris. They go to the water fountain, think things through. Baker "just picks up the phone and starts calling," Harris says. "He is always supremely confident the story can get done."

Baker is also praised by other reporters for having what journalists call a "good bulls--- detector," something that keeps some

of the most blatant White House spin out of his stories. Note Baker's description of President Clinton after the president's six-hour deposition in the Jones case (and remember that a surprised President Clinton had been asked repeatedly that day about Monica Lewinsky—a name not yet known by reporters). "As soon as it was over, he returned to the White House and headed immediately for the Oval Office, where he conferred briefly with Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles about the Asian economic crisis and received the latest draft of his upcoming State of the Union speech. Yet, plans to go out for dinner or a show with Hillary Rodham Clinton were scrapped at the last minute because the president had 'a long day,' an aide said," Baker wrote in his January 18, 1998, article, published the day after the deposition.

Compare that to *Time* magazine's account in its January 26, 1998, issue: "[A]t the end of six hours of questioning by Jones's attorneys, Clinton departed in what sources close to him say was an ecstatic mood. The President felt that the deposition had gone smashing for him."

DAVID BLOOM: NBC



THE PROBLEM WITH NBC White House correspondent David Bloom's coverage is that much of it appears on the wires long before he appears on the evening news. He just doesn't provide much original reporting. Nor does Bloom break as much news as his competitors; for instance, CBS's Scott Pelley was ahead of NBC on key scandal stories such as the revelation that Monica Lewinsky told the grand jury she wrote the infamous talking points. Two NBC sources say it seems to them that Pelley often leaves Bloom behind. A White House journalist notes that Bloom, worried about being scooped, has on occasion muttered "oh s---" under his breath as CNN's John King walked past him on the White House lawn to do a live shot.

Bloom, 35, who made a name for himself covering the O.J. Simpson trial, has been on the beat for a little more than two years. He had no Washington experience before landing at the White House. One White House reporter says Bloom hasn't yet developed the right sources to push his reporting ahead of the curve. "On happy things [the White House] wants out, you can develop sources pretty quickly, but on the sensitive stuff they have to trust you and it takes time."

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Some White House officials like him. "He's actually smarter and more hard-working than I thought," says one senior White House official. David Leavy, a White House spokesman on foreign policy, says Bloom is the most "aggressive" of the television reporters on foreign policy stories. NBC News is thrilled with him. "David Bloom is often ahead of the pack and has broken many stories over the last year," says Barbara Levin, NBC News's director of communications.

To be fair, Bloom works hard, can be aggressive, and has produced some scoops. NBC's Levin says Bloom was the first reporter to get on the air the with word that air strikes against Iraq had begun last December and to report later that the U.S. was ending the strikes. He also landed the first televised interview with a Chinese dissident arrested during President Clinton's trip to China last summer, Levin says. In general, though, Bloom's nightly reports lack depth and context.

A good example: Bloom's piece for the evening news the night of February 3 about criticism of the president's plan to fix Medicare. His story used a short sound bite from a presidential event and a sound bite from a Democratic senator critical of the plan. Bloom also reported that "a bipartisan budget watchdog group, The Concord Coalition, calls Mr. Clinton's plan, quote, 'little more than a trust-fund shell game which makes no attempt to reduce the long-term growth in senior benefits.'"

Where did Bloom find that criticism? It was from a statement available through U.S. News Wire, a service that notifies reporters and editors about upcoming events and distributes press releases. The Concord Coalition had held a Capitol Hill forum earlier that day, but Bloom did not need to attend because the coalition sent out an "alert" the night before. Bloom apparently pieced together the quote he used in the broadcast from two separate sentences in the press release. Such "tricks of the trade" are used fairly often by Washington reporters, though the best ones tend to avoid them.

JOHN HARRIS: *THE WASHINGTON POST*

WHEN WHITE HOUSE REPORTERS TALK about their jobs, they often describe themselves as short-order cooks. One day it's a budget story, the next foreign policy, and, of course, for those who cover President Bill Clinton, there's always the scandal-du-jour. With so much on the front burner, White House reporters complain, it's difficult to step back and survey the kitchen. *The Washington Post's* John Harris is one of the few reporters on the beat able to move beyond the daily story and look at the big picture consistently. When Harris has the time—and sometimes when he doesn't—he writes articles that give readers a glimpse into how the White House works, how a policy is developed, or how the president governs. “He tries hard to transcend the story-of-the-day matrix that the White House sets up,” says one former White House reporter and Harris admirer.

It's not Harris's contacts or his work habits that make him a great reporter, although both certainly help. It's his mind. The stories that his fellow White House correspondents say Harris, 35, does best are analysis pieces in which he frames issues in a broad context. “He's an intuitive journalist, he has theories and thoughts and insights on his own,” says Peter Baker, Harris's colleague at the *Post*. “He bounces [his ideas] off sources who can tell him that he's full of s--- [or that] his analysis is on target. They help guide and shape the thinking of his article.”

Harris's story last October about how President Clinton's negative character traits actually helped him negotiate the Wye River peace accord between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is one example of a smart analysis piece that lets readers see the president in a fresh light. Harris began the article by looking at the president's handling of a last-minute demand by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the United States release convicted spy Jonathan Pollard. With the talks about to collapse, President Clinton used his famed skill for telling everybody what they want to hear to give Netanyahu the impression that he would release Pollard. U.S. officials at the meeting, however, thought the opposite. “President Clinton had not exactly said yes, but he had not decisively said no,” wrote Harris. “What was remarkable in the shower of hosannas that Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and Jordan's King Hussein poured on [President] Clinton at a White House signing ceremony later that same day was that they were describing in a positive light many of the same traits about the president that critics find maddening and deplorable in other contexts.” Harris gave other examples in the October 25 article: “Clinton, after a lifetime of getting himself out of jams with last-minute heroics, is chronically disorganized and crisis-prone, say the critics. But the Wye River summit, with its all-night sessions and constant brushes with disaster, was a setting in which Clinton's penchant for keeping all the balls in the air at once seemed to thrive.”

“He's very plugged in,” says one former White House staffer, who says the fact that Harris works at the *Post* helps him get his calls returned. That's true, but others say Harris works hard to build relationships, mostly by being an easygoing guy and by treating the people he deals with fairly.

Even with his daily deadlines, Harris manages to cram small and often interesting details into his stories. While covering President Clinton's trip to the Middle East last December, he applied his writing and reporting skills to a story about a joint press conference held by President Clinton and Netanyahu in a way that transported readers to Israel for a moment. “His face weary and his voice subdued, President Clinton stood here today and took all the expected questions one by one,” Harris began in his December 14 story. A few paragraphs later, Harris homed in on why the news conference was actually newsworthy. “What was most striking about the thirty-minute news conference...was not [President] Clinton's choice of words but the emotions behind them: He scarcely showed any at all,” Harris wrote. “His voice was flat, his expression stony, save for an occasional narrowing of the eyes. He did not bristle, or snap, when pressed twice about resignation. His jaw did not clench visibly the way it often does when he is seeking to hold back fury.”

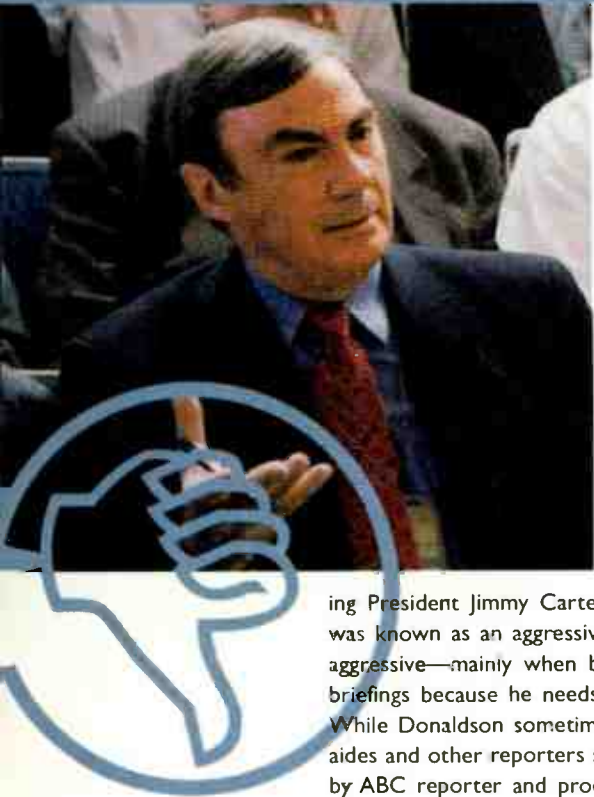
Harris shows his reporting skills in his deft handling of news features. These stories take the hard news of the day and then go behind the scenes to explain what happened and why. Along with top-notch writing talents, which Harris has, what makes a news feature work on the White House beat is having reliable sources at the top echelons who can provide crucial details. Last year, in the space of four days as the president's impending impeachment collided with his decision to bomb Iraq, Harris hammered out three such stories, giving his readers rare insight into the White House's inner workings.

Consider this December 17 article, put together quickly after the president launched the airstrikes: “[S]omewhere over Europe, two hours into a 12-hour flight on Air Force One from Israel to Washington, [President] Clinton... decided to go to war.” Harris then brought his readers deep into the decision-making process that night and the following day. Harris also detailed President Clinton's



schedule the day of the bombing. “[President] Clinton, who aides say is not usually an effective morning person, was nonetheless on the job early yesterday,” Harris wrote, noting that he dropped in on a 7:30 A.M. meeting in the White House situation room. “Then he took the unusual

step of stopping in at the daily senior staff meeting, thanking aides for their hard work and urging them to stay focused in the days ahead. Most of the aides, not yet privy to the impending attack, assumed he was talking about the impeachment.”



SAM DONALDSON: ABC

SAM DONALDSON may be a great Washington personality, but the same cannot be said about his role as a White House correspondent. The 65-year-old veteran newsman is more of a talking head who stands on the White House lawn each night than a reporter giving his viewers the news of what goes on inside. Donaldson's heyday as a White House correspondent came during

President Jimmy Carter's administration, when Donaldson was known as an aggressive and fair reporter. Today, he is still aggressive—mainly when barking questions at the daily press briefings because he needs the shot for his nightly broadcast. While Donaldson sometimes works the phones, White House aides and other reporters say that much of his legwork is done by ABC reporter and producer Josh Gerstein. That's not surprising considering Donaldson's busy schedule, which includes serving as a coanchor and reporter on the newsmagazine *20/20* and as coanchor of Sunday morning's *This Week with Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*.

“I think he's a man that is currently stretched entirely too thin,” says White House correspondent Laurence McQuillan of Reuters News Service, who covered the Carter and Reagan administrations along with Donaldson and thinks it is unfair to brand him one of the worst reporters on the beat. “Sam brings the same energy that he did before, but he's not as hungry to prove himself because he doesn't have to.” Adds McQuillan: “He's still as hyperactive as ever, but when he was here before with Jimmy Carter, he was desperately trying to make a name for himself. Now he's kind of established and I think maybe, hopefully for him, that gives him some peace of mind.”

ABC returned Donaldson to the White House in January 1998, a move widely seen as an effort to boost lagging ratings on the network's evening newscast. Donaldson landed at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue days before the Monica Lewinsky story broke, and the sex scandal seemed to energize him at first. But coming to grips with his transition from pundit and anchor back to reporter was not easy, and Donaldson suffered some embarrassing gaffes, especially when he said on his Sunday show in January 1998 that President Clinton would be out of office “perhaps this week” if the allegations proved true.

After more than a year back on the beat, Donaldson is still faulted for not keeping his opinions out of his stories. However,

one observer blames ABC more than Donaldson. “You bring in somebody who is a personality, who is used to, on a regular basis, giving his opinion, and you end up with a guy on the lawn who is willing to render his judgments mixed up with the news,” says this source. “It's hard for him to weed out his different roles.” Donaldson is probably the only White House correspondent to publicly brand Clinton a “loser” and offer up the prediction, as he did on a 1998 year-in-review show with Cokie Roberts, that Clinton would be bounced from office this year.

Donaldson declined to comment for this story through ABC spokeswoman Su-Lin Nichols. “Sam Donaldson has been covering news events since John Kennedy was president,” says Nichols. “He brings a world of experience to the table and he's doing an outstanding job of reporting on the White House for ABC News,” as well as in his other roles.

Donaldson initially worked hard to stay on top of the White House beat. “In the beginning you saw him every place and he took pool duty,” says one White House reporter who asked not to be identified. “As the months have gone on he's just virtually disappeared. In terms of actual reporting I can't remember the last time Sam broke a story.” Donaldson was given credit for being the first reporter to confirm that President Clinton had admitted to the grand jury that he had had “an improper relationship” with Lewinsky. However, Donaldson's stories over the past year have broken little new ground. His reports not related to the Lewinsky scandal, such as those dealing with the budget battle and the president's trip to China, have tended to be light on substance and heavy on highlighting White House political motivations.

Take a piece Donaldson did for the evening news in October 1998, as the budget battle was coming to a head and the president was pushing for more education spending. Donaldson began his report by telling viewers that “[T]he president's eleventh-hour battle over education is about both money and votes—money for the schools, yes, but votes for the Democrats this November.” Donaldson briefly described what the president was asking for: “\$1.1 billion to hire an additional 100,000 elementary school teachers and a trigger to free up \$21.8 billion in bond money for new school construction.” He then showed clips of two Republicans criticizing the president's plan. While the story centered on a presidential speech at a Maryland elementary school, Donaldson's segment showed viewers only one sound bite from the president's speech: “We are shouting loudly to the heavens.” Instead, Donaldson billed the event as a “Democratic White House pep rally” and stressed that the speech was scheduled at the last moment—trying to drive home that it was political theater. “This school [was] chosen because of the good TV visuals of classes held in trailers, a perfect backdrop for presidential passion,” Donaldson said.

CNN's John King handled the same speech quite differently. While noting that the budget battle had produced “public postur-

ing," King's story let the president have his say with a five-sentence video clip of the speech and then gave about the same amount of time to a Republican congressman. King also spoke more substantively about the president's education-spending plan.

The best reporters generally try to pack their stories with interesting facts, but Donaldson's reports often are filled with conjecture, or even more often, common political wisdom. This from Donaldson's State of the Union address preview on *Good Morning America* on January 19, 1999: "For several days now, the president has been practicing his speech. He probably won't actually use the old Ronald Reagan line, 'Are you better off today than you were'—in this case—'six years ago?' But that will be his central theme, as he points to a prosperous country and outlines a laundry list of things still to be done in the fields of education, crime, medical care, child care, military preparedness, and on and on. He will be calling on Congress to act, but his press secretary, Joe Lockhart, acknowledges that's not the main audience." Lockhart was then

shown saying that President Clinton would also be addressing the American people.

At about the same time, CNN reporter Chris Black gave a similar preview. After laying out the general reasons for the speech, Black provided the specifics: "He will propose that the Social Security program be put on better footing. We're expecting some sort of a surprise in connection with Social Security, we're not quite sure what. But the president may suggest that Americans be allowed to invest in private investment accounts. He's also going to propose a new round of trade talks aimed at liberalizing trade policies throughout the world."

Donaldson does have some fans in the White House press corps, reporters who praise him for his ability to ask probing questions in hopes of prompting the press secretary to stray from his script. Says Bob Deans, the White House reporter for *Cox Newspapers*: "Sam is a showman, he's a personality, but often his questions go right to the heart of the matter."

TERENCE HUNT: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ASSOCIATED PRESS WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT Terence Hunt's articles appear in newspapers across the country, but you may not know his name because he does not always get a byline. Hunt has been filing stories for the AP, often more than one a day, from the White House since 1981; he is a master of writing straight-down-the-middle news. Hunt's copy never seems biased, and he is skilled at giving readers the full story, usually with context, thanks to his impressive institutional knowledge. "What Terry is great at doing are these summary stories that tell you exactly what you need to know," says one White House reporter. Other reporters who work with Hunt, as well as the officials he covers, say he is one of the smartest and hardest-working reporters on the beat. He's known informally as the dean of the White House press corps.

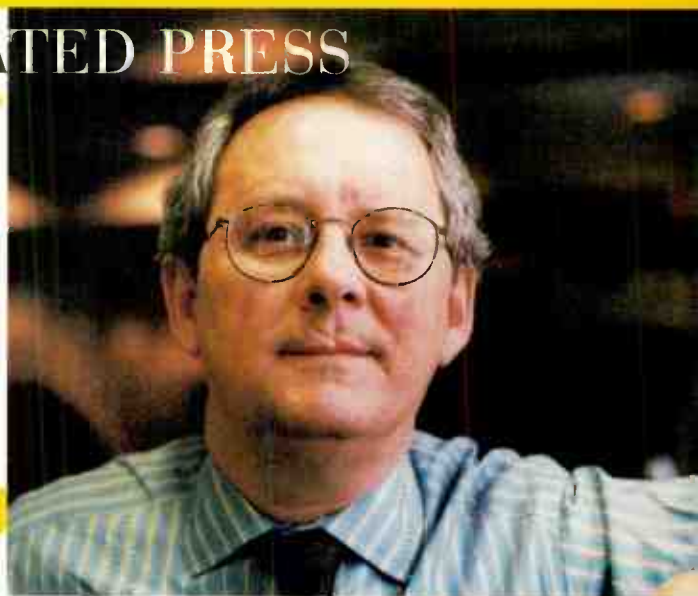
Hunt, 53, can set the tone for what the rest of the press corps writes. Because his pieces run earlier on the wire, other reporters—and their editors—read his copy before writing their own. One reporter recalls filing a straight news story after a presidential event when he was still relatively new to the beat. When this reporter checked in with the newsroom, his managing editor had seen Hunt's piece come over the wire and asked the reporter if Hunt's story might have a better angle. It did. Another reporter says he reads Hunt's stories sometimes to gauge the weight Hunt gives a certain line in a speech or a quote from a presidential event—basically to see what the lead is. While this reporter says he doesn't change his copy if Hunt has a different angle, he does reexamine his story if he has come to wholly different conclusions.

Here's an example of a Hunt lead from January 22 that typifies his straight news approach: "Warning that terrorists are seeking new ways to strike, President Clinton said Friday 'we must be ready' for attacks against computer networks and ...chemical and germ warfare. He urged spending \$2.8 billion more to safeguard the nation." Hunt's take on the news was followed by other papers the next day, including *The Baltimore Sun*. One of its reporters wrote: "Warning that terrorists will increasingly try to target America with cyber virus-

es and chemical and biological weapons, President Clinton proposed a budget increase of \$2.8 billion yesterday to protect computer networks, stockpile medicines, and train emergency workers."

While Hunt does not have time to do many enterprise stories, not all his articles are about speeches and news events. Hunt writes credible analysis

pieces and is good at packing his copy with lots of detail. While wire reporters are not generally known for their writing skills, Hunt is thought to be one of the better writers on the beat. Take this story Hunt filed from Jordan in February while the president attended King Hussein's funeral. "A sorrowful trip to the Middle East brought together an extraordinary assembly of four American presidents who flew through the night on Air Force One to today's funeral of King Hussein," Hunt began. "President Clinton and predecessors Jimmy Carter, George Bush, and Gerald Ford, two Democrats, two Republicans, turned the plane into an airborne seminar, comparing notes on the leading international problems they faced in the Oval Office: the Middle East, Russia, North Korea and Kosovo, the latest trouble spot in Europe." Clinton, Hunt reported, talked with the former presidents for almost two hours. "After the discussions, Ford and Bush slept on pull-down bunks in a medical annex on the jumbo jet. Carter wound up on an air mattress and sleeping bag in senior staff quarters," Hunt continued. "Clinton claimed the spacious presidential suite at the front of the plane, although he had offered the other presidents room there on pullout couches." Hunt went on to deliver the news of what happened that day.



Hunt, who did not return calls for an interview, is well-sourced at the White House. On top of his computer sit five small address books in which he keeps sources' phone numbers.

In one way, it's a lot easier for wire reporters to get along with White House officials because their stories are usually straightforward and rarely anger anybody. But wire reporters also need to build good relationships because their calls must be returned quickly if they're going to be on top of things. Hunt develops sources, say other reporters, by being a nice guy and a

gentleman. "He spends a lot of time getting to know people on a personal level," says AP reporter Sandra Sobieraj. "He brought in Valentine's Day cookies for the kids who answer the phones."

Sobieraj also says Hunt is a great gossip and that people call him all the time just to find out what's up. "Just the fact that you have former White House officials still calling in just to shoot the s---" can't hurt, Sobieraj says. "Plus, it gives him something to trade when he goes and sits down in [press secretary Joe] Lockhart's office...it's sort of like anteing up in a poker game."

SUSAN PAGE: *USA TODAY*



US *USA TODAY'S* WHITE HOUSE BUREAU CHIEF SUSAN Page is more a case study in missed opportunities and unused talent than in lack of talent. People who read her stories do get the news, and when she writes longer pieces, those readers sometimes get a good sense of the president or how the White House works. But Page does not use her platform at one of the nation's largest newspapers to do important journalism.

The White House loves *USA Today*—it often gives the paper, among others, a heads-up on policy pronouncements—and its reporters regularly get interviews with top officials. Page's stories, however, don't often take advantage of this access. Page shares the beat with two other reporters, rotating daily coverage. She devotes a good portion of her time to appearing on television and radio as a regular commentator on CNN and a regular guest and fill-in host for *The Diane Rehm Show* on National Public Radio. On these shows, Page is frequently called on to talk about the impeachment and the Monica Lewinsky scandal, although she did not cover these stories on a daily—or even regular—basis.

Page has won prestigious journalism awards and is the incoming president of the White House Correspondents' Association. "Susan is very smart, very organized, and a good writer," says

George Condon Jr. of Copley News Service. However, another reporter says Page has become more of a pundit than a full-time White House reporter. "It's always very uplifting when you see journalists who have enlisted in the ranks of Saturday and Sunday talk-show punditry make it to pool duty," says this White House reporter. "Susan Page is very lucky to have [*USA Today* White House reporters] Bill Nichols and Mimi Hall in the rotation with her."

Bob Dubill, *USA Today's* executive editor, sharply disputes the notion that Page doesn't hold her own. "She's just terrific, she's tenacious, she's a quick writer," Dubill says. "She does not shortchange this operation one iota."

But there often is not much evidence of real digging in Page's stories. Take a report she filed in January on a tax credit the president was set to propose. The White House had tipped off a group of reporters, including Page, to the proposal. "President Clinton will unveil today a five-year, \$6.2 billion proposal to provide \$1,000 annual tax credits for people who need long-term medical care or the family members who provide it," was how Page began her January 4 story. "White House officials say the initiative, which requires congressional approval, will be the biggest tax break and most significant health-care proposal in Clinton's fiscal 2000 budget." Page did the requisite reporting for the story, talking to the head of the Office of Management and Budget and quoting a spokesman for the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which handles tax legislation. But the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* got the same heads-up, and their reporters did more comprehensive stories—which included quotes from advocacy groups for the elderly and a former Clinton administration health-care adviser. In fairness, *USA Today* articles tend to be on the short side, which can cut into a reporter's ability to provide depth and context.

Page has devoted much of her time to writing longer analytical stories and profiles. Last July, Page wrote an interesting story about how Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Hillary Clinton were quietly pushing some women's issues into the mainstream of foreign policy. But more often, Page gives her readers conventional wisdom. Take one story Page wrote in January about the toll the Lewinsky scandal has taken on the Clinton presidency. In this overview piece, Page quoted six people, only one of whom had been affiliated with the White House; she didn't quote a single person currently at the White House and arguably could best speak to that toll. "For those closest to President Clinton, the humiliating Senate impeachment trial and the prospect of ouster or censure seem almost beside the point when the consequences of the Monica Lewinsky scandal are tallied," Page wrote in the January 15 front-page story. "One year after it erupted into pub-

lic view, the controversy already has exacted a toll more damaging for [President] Clinton than anything except being ejected from office, a prospect that at the moment seems remote. His marriage has become noticeably frosty at times, his ability to enact legislation undercut, his reputation as a rake cemented."

On February 1, Page wrote a story about Vice-President Al Gore gearing up to run for president. The piece gave readers some nice details about the vice-president holding private seminars to help develop broad themes to offer voters, but the article again was based mostly on conventional wisdom. Page's thesis: "As he intensifies his methodical, disciplined campaign for president, Gore and his advisers are calculating how to get credit for the economic and other achievements of the Clinton administration while

avoiding the taint of scandal that has surrounded the president and combating the image of second banana."

But Page tried to prove this mainly by laying out a schedule of events that saw Gore announcing policy proposals. Page also secured an interview with the vice-president. However, all Page quoted from the interview was this: "[President Clinton] and I are close friends. We have offered the agenda of this administration together. He has made me a full partner and asked me to take on more responsibilities and challenges than any other person in my position. It's been a very productive relationship. We've been able to get a lot done for the American people." Page then asked, "Will the Monica Lewinsky scandal affect his political future?" Replied Gore: "That's for others to determine."

JOHN KING: CNN

SOME SIMPLE FACTS ABOUT CNN'S JOHN KING that illustrate why he stands out from most of his fellow White House correspondents: He has the highest cell-phone bills among members of CNN's White House unit; White House staffers often call *him* to find out tidbits of news; and his sources range so far beyond the White House that his own CNN colleagues working other beats sometimes complain that King encroaches on "their" turf. King is a great reporter mainly because, by all accounts, he really loves reporting. His enthusiasm for his beat, coupled with his desire to know what is going on, drives him to report constantly. For the 35-year-old number-two CNN White House correspondent, who works alongside Wolf Blitzer, that means making many phone calls, sometimes 100 a day.

In Washington, King usually starts work at about 6:30 A.M. In his car on the way to work, he checks in with his regular sources—White House aides, congressional staffers, and key players in the various scandals that have swirled around President Bill Clinton throughout his two terms. Some of King's calls last ten seconds: "Hey, this is King, anything going on?" he will ask. If the answer is *no*, he moves on to his next source. Some people aren't so lucky. As one White House staffer notes: "He gets you on the phone and doesn't let you off until he gets something, but he does it in a very classy way." One of his secrets: King knows his sources' car-phone numbers, so he can get them while they're stuck in traffic with nothing to do but talk.

By the time he gets to the CNN booth in the White House basement, the calls have paid off and King—who joined the network after 12 years as an Associated Press correspondent—often has something to report right away. Here is King's 7 A.M. report from January 11, the day President Clinton's lawyers were required to file with the Senate a formal answer to the impeachment charges. "We're told by our sources not to expect any blockbusters," King said. "There had been plans for the White House to try to dismiss the case at the outset. We're now told [that is] subject to change. The White House does not plan to do that." King also explained why the White House legal team had changed its plans: "Democrats [are] saying [that] asking for a motion to dismiss before the opening presentations are made might antagonize too many senators, so

the White House [is] now expected to wait until after those opening presentations to try to dismiss the case."

While King was on the air, ABC White House reporter Ann Compton was on *Good Morning America*, discussing the same subject. But all she told viewers about the president's defense that day was the schedule. "At twelve o'clock noon, a document will be taken from the counsel's office here to Capitol Hill. This is the official response of the White House to the charges against the president, charges that the White House has long said do not warrant either ... conviction or his removal from office," Compton reported. "It is by close of business today that we [will] see whether the White House will file any pretrial motions. And it is expected at some point that the White House will move to dismiss all of this."

King gets many of his stories by picking up a bit of information from each person he talks to. He is well-known for checking in with somebody at each of the bureaucracy's many layers. "He knows people deep in the White House," says one staffer there. "We used to joke a lot that he had some hidden camera outside the chief of staff's office because he always knew who was going in there." King says he wishes it was that easy. Instead, he checks in with two or three people and starts piecing together who has been in the office. Then he circles back to find out what was going on. "The best stories come from ten to fifteen conversations, and the last two or three is where it all clicks in your head," he explains. "You just keep at it."

Mostly, King says, he gets stories by calling a wide range of people and reminding them that he is interested in an



issue and wants to know when things will come to a head. This is how he has also gotten some of his biggest scoops over the past year. King's biggest newsbreak in the Monica Lewinsky scandal came last July, when he reported, according to "sources outside the White House," that President Clinton was negotiating to testify before the grand jury being run by independent counsel Kenneth Starr. King also broke the news in October 1998 that the Clinton administration had reached a budget deal with congressional negotiators, citing "sources on all sides."

Another story on which King did superior reporting, though not a White House story, was last July's shooting of two Capitol police officers by a lone gunman. CNN congressional correspondent Candy Crowley actually broke the story, but was trapped inside the building. With no reporter to go on air at the scene, CNN tapped King, who continued to break news from his spot on the White House lawn. He erred by reporting early on that there were two gunmen in the Capitol (the information was given to him by an aide locked in an office), but corrected himself a few minutes later.

KENNETH WALSH: *U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT*



U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT senior writer Kenneth Walsh seems, well, tired. Although he works on a weekly cycle, Walsh's stories are not packed with nearly the kind of detail and color that spice up the copy of his competitors at *Time* and *Newsweek*. Walsh's stories also display less reporting than do his competitors'. One simple but telling measure: Walsh usually quotes fewer people.

Walsh, 51, does have fans in Washington, and he has won three prestigious awards. "I find Ken is someone that if he's saying it, it is true. And he works hard," says Laurence McQuillan of Reuters. But, offers another observer, "He seemed to be more interested in his position in the White House Correspondents' Association than he was in the level of his work as a White House correspondent." Walsh, by his own acknowledgement, does not spend much time at the White House. And he usually only travels on the foreign trips. "He doesn't tend to travel as much as some of the rest of us....He doesn't do domestic trips with [President] Clinton," says one reporter. "The temptation is to say he's not covering the president."

In response, Walsh says he is covering the presidency, not just the president or what goes on in the building. He says he rarely goes to the White House because daily press briefings don't help him with his weekly deadline and that he doesn't like to work in the press room because competitors can overhear his calls. As for traveling domestically with the president, Walsh says, "I feel like a lot of it is so scripted [and] so rushed that you more or less end up babysitting" the president. Walsh also points to his work on *U.S. News's* "Washington Whispers" column, to which he does contribute some gossipy items and newsbreaks on policy initiatives.

Walsh's stories are usually adequate, but rarely offer much that is distinctive. Walsh knows how to cover the White House—he's been doing it for 12 years—and that can give him an advantage. He wrote an excellent story in the beginning of the Monica Lewinsky scandal showing that many places in and around the Oval Office offer the president enough privacy to conduct an

affair—contradicting the official White House spin at the time.

Among the press corps, newsmagazine reporters get some of the best treatment from the White House. The press secretary, for instance, reserves time each Thursday for a private meeting with each of the three newsmagazines. Simply by virtue of which publication he works for, Walsh has sources at the ready. The question is, are they reliable or do they simply spin?

The best way to answer this is to check Walsh's stories. Over the past year, Walsh, often citing White House aides as sources, has delivered some faulty information. (One caveat: Newsmagazines often combine several subjects and stories into longer pieces, and Walsh usually shares a byline with other reporters. However, because Walsh is his magazine's White House correspondent, we are evaluating him on the information in the articles from or about the White House.)

In the magazine's August 31, 1998, issue, Walsh's story noted: "Many White House aides are still smarting over what some call [President] Clinton's 'betrayal' of them and what others say is a deep disappointment in their boss. But few, if any, plan to leave because of the scandal. Perhaps the leading candidate for a departure in disgust is Communications Director Ann Lewis. 'She has gone far out on a limb defending the president, and she's very unhappy with all this,' says a friend. 'I'm not sure she thinks it's worth it to stay on.'" Walsh was partly right; aides did not leave. But Lewis remains at the White House and is still one of the president's most ardent defenders.

Walsh's stories often lack rich details, because he seems to talk to fewer people. Compare, for example, *Time* and *U.S. News's* stories on this year's State of the Union address. The *U.S. News* article quoted three sources on the White House side—"a senior Clinton adviser"; Paul Begala, a senior aide to the president; and "a senior Democratic strategist." The *Time* article cited at least six sources.

Consider this from Walsh's piece: "All this reveals a president who is still playing varsity politics....And now a president who is embarking, with typical vigor, on his last campaign—not just for survival but for vindication." The *U.S. News* piece focused on how President Clinton's latest initiatives were designed to provoke a fight with the Republican Congress because "Clinton believes that ratifying his years in office will require two things: the election of his protégé, Al Gore, as president, and the return of one or both houses of Congress to Democratic control." Although the article quoted one "senior Clinton adviser" agreeing with that theory, there was little White House reporting in the piece. Readers got no sense of how President Clinton or

his administration were going to ensure his survival.

Here is how *Time* handled its story: "Bill Clinton is now waging the last campaign—a multifront war to keep his job by appearing to do his job, a war in which he has enlisted lawyers, pollsters, policy advisers, Democratic lawmakers, and celebrities." The *Time* article had lots of White House reporting on President Clinton's campaign to stop his impeachment and energize his base. "Clinton carries upstairs to the residence the fat folder of policy questions and decision memos that

accumulate in his In box every day, but the rest of his life is up there waiting for him. He channel surfs among news, sports, and nonstop talk shows, thinks through the twisted case again and again, calls friends and supporters to gauge reaction to the day's events and, most important, checks in with his friends in the Senate," *Time* noted. "Every morning the cycle starts again, with his focus back tightly on his job, the fat folder in chief of staff John Podesta's hands, with Clinton's scribbling on every page."

MARK KNOLLER: CBS

CBS NEWS RADIO CORRESPONDENT MARK Knoller is one of those reporters whose success can be explained largely by the simple fact that he loves his job. He is also skilled at communicating a lot of information succinctly—a must for radio. And he knows an awful lot about President Clinton.

Knoller typically files six or more radio reports—most of them less than a minute long—each day, which leaves him little time for much enterprise reporting. Knoller also does some television work, giving a weekly wrap-up of White House news on Saturday mornings on CBS. The arrangement allows him to expand on some of his reporting, but it also ensures that he works six days a week. "I'm not in a position to break Watergate on a daily basis," says Knoller. "My job is to report what is going on at the White House on an hour-by-hour-basis. That's what radio news is."

The job is not as easy as it might sound. Knoller has to boil down complicated topics—the federal budget, for example—into a few sentences. Print reporters who hear Knoller dictating his reports say he is amazing. "I cannot tell you how many times I've sat there and heard Mark's lead, looked down at mine, and said, 'Damn, he synthesized that so perfectly,'" says George Condon Jr., who covers the White House for Copley News Service.

"Sometimes I think of it as if I was just phoning up a good friend, and he said, 'What are you up to today?'" Knoller says of how he comes up with his reports. Knoller's story on the federal budget on February 1 provides one example of this skill: "With considerable fanfare, the president formally sent Congress his budget proposal for the federal fiscal year that begins October first. It calls for record spending of \$1.8 trillion—39 billion more than this year. But it also projects a \$117 billion dollar surplus—another record."

Knoller observes the president closely, but he doesn't just watch. He arms himself with lots of information so he can put speeches and other presidential actions into context. Knoller keeps a running log of what the president does each day. He doesn't necessarily need all this information for his 30- to 45-second radio reports, but it often comes in handy. For example, Knoller records the number of times President Clinton visits each state. When the 1996 election was in gear, Knoller could tell listeners how many times the president had been to California, the state with the most electoral votes.

Knoller also uses his log to check up on the White House, making sure that an aide's claims are true. The joke

around the White House is that if Knoller remembers something one way and an official has a different recollection, Knoller is probably right. Former White House press aides say that if they did not know offhand a detail that a reporter was asking them about, they would sometimes call Knoller for the answer. Knoller's log, remembers one aide, was at times "more complete than the White House scheduling office, and certainly better organized."

For most of his radio broadcasts, Knoller simply cannot sum up the president's day—the time is too short. So he picks one or two things to talk about. Knoller relies mainly on his news sense, honed from working in radio since 1975 and covering the White House on and off since 1976. Knoller is also well-read, which helps when he's required on a typical day to report on Kosovo, saving welfare, and impeachment.

On February 2, Knoller traveled to Boston, where the president mixed in a speech at a local school with a fund-raising lunch. The president also made a short hop to New York for an evening fund-raiser. "Much to the delight and relief of Democratic Party officials, the impeachment and trial of the president does not appear to be a drag on his fund-raising ability. On his first out-of-town political fund-raising trip of the new year, the president is generating upwards of two million dollars for the Democratic National Committee," Knoller reported in one of his hourly broadcasts.

To put his story together, Knoller first decided to focus on the president's fund-raising and not on the speech at the Boston school. The speech, Knoller points out, was standard fare. Plus, Knoller reasoned that many of his listeners had heard the president talk about his education plans at length two weeks before in the State of the Union address. The real news, Knoller decided, was that the president was still beloved by the party faithful, despite the scandal and impeachment. Knoller also noted that the president seemed to be having a great time—which is significant since he was at that time on trial in the Senate.



“We Loved It!”

How critical are Hollywood critics?

•BY KIMBERLY CONNIFF

YOU’VE SEEN THEIR words blazoned across many a movie ad. And even if you’ve never read their actual reviews, you probably try to decode their blurbs when you’re thinking about seeing a movie. Everyone knows that a studio can dredge up a critic to hail even the sorriest clunker. The question is, how much weight should you give their opinions? If a reviewer loves every movie, how much is their praise worth?

We decided to see how often key critics give the big thumbs-up. We tallied the number of times their names appeared in two months of movie ads in the *Los Angeles Times*—intentionally selecting the people whose blurbs you’re most likely to see. Eliminating the second-string reviewers for any publication, we came up with a list of the 14 most-often quoted (there was a three-way tie for 15th place).

We then went through their reviews for the three-month period between October 20 and January 20 and assigned each a score: 4 for *loved it*, 3 for *liked it*, 2 for *slightly disliked it*, and 1 for *strongly disliked it*. The chart at right lists the results. On the facing page, we look at the five softest touches—those with the highest percentage of positive reviews (3s and 4s). We also chose one of the year’s most

uniformly panned films, *Godzilla*, as a “litmus test” so that you can compare how the most uncritical critics rated it. (Turns out that one was bad enough to annoy even some of *them*.)

No wonder these reviewers appear in so many ads. Of course, maybe we should be lauding them for their manners. As our mothers always taught us, if you can’t say something nice... ■

THE BLURBMASTERS

A tally of the 14 most “blurbed” critics shows the results of their reviews for the three months ending January 20.

CRITIC (TOTAL REVIEWS)	FAVORABLE REVIEWS
Gene Shalit (12), <i>Today</i> (NBC)	84 %
Richard Corliss (12), <i>Time</i>	75 %
Joel Siegel (28), <i>Good Morning America</i> (ABC)	72 %
Peter Travers (47), <i>Rolling Stone</i>	68 %
Jay Carr (44), <i>The Boston Globe</i>	66 %
Jeffrey Lyons (44), WNBC-TV and <i>The Lyon’s Den</i> (radio)	61 %
Michael O’Sullivan (34), <i>The Washington Post</i>	56 %
Gene Siskel (46), <i>Chicago Tribune</i>	56 %
Janet Maslin (34), <i>The New York Times</i>	56 %
Jack Mathews (38), <i>Newsday</i> (now at the <i>Daily News</i>)	55 %
Roger Ebert (53), <i>Chicago Sun-Times</i>	53 %
Kenneth Turan (27), <i>Los Angeles Times</i>	52 %
David Ansen (14), <i>Newsweek</i>	50 %
Owen Gleiberman (22), <i>Entertainment Weekly</i>	45 %

Editorial interns Demetra Kasimis and Rachel Gans provided research assistance for this story.

The Fawning Five



GENE SHALIT TODAY (NBC)

THE KING OF SCHMALTZ If it's on celluloid, chances are this feel-good "critic" loves it. Favors painfully cheesy puns: "[I]f you feel blue going in, you're likely to be in the pink coming out, because *Pleasantville* makes the fuchsia look bright."

DUBIOUS CALLS: *Jack Frost* ("doesn't try to melt your heart; there's never any slush"); *The Siege* ("the truest thriller I have seen in years"); *Meet Joe Black* ("elegant"); and *Patch Adams* ("many people will leave the theater with tears of joy on their cheek. In my case, both cheeks....If you don't feel wonderful after seeing this, perhaps you need to make an appointment with Dr. Patch Adams.")

LITMUS TEST: Shalit loved *Godzilla's* "impressive" special effects, and called it "fun to watch." He did bemoan the fact that the beast's acting skills didn't measure up to those of King Kong.

COMMENT: Shalit argues that his high percentage of raves is an anomaly, reflecting the time of year when "all of the good movies" came out. "I think most of my reviews are negative," he says.



JOEL SIEGEL

GOOD MORNING AMERICA (ABC)

THE MASTER OF THE OBVIOUS Siegel revealed that *The Waterboy* was "silly" and that "being five helps" if you were going to see *The Rugrats Movie*. A thesaurus might do him some good. He said Nick Nolte was "great" in *Affliction*, and the star of *Waking Ned Devine* "did a great job." Tom Hanks in *You've Got Mail*? "Truly great." Number of times he used "great" in 30-second review of *You've Got Mail*: 9.

DUBIOUS CALLS: *The Waterboy* ("a good film for fathers and sons"); *Meet Joe Black* ("I like this movie an awful lot"); and *Jack Frost* ("made me warm all over").

LITMUS TEST: "[I]f you're looking for a terrific popcorn movie that'll blast you out of your seat," Siegel said of *Godzilla*, "have I got a 10,000-ton lizard for you!" He was willing to concede, however, that it was not a "great movie."

COMMENT: Siegel says he uses "editorial judgment" when selecting which films to review. Because of his limited air time, there are "a lot" of movies he sees—both good and bad—that he doesn't review.



RICHARD CORLISS TIME

THE EQUIVOCATOR With his poetic sensibility and endless irresolution, Corliss is the thinking man's softy. He called *The Thin Red Line* "a gorgeous garland on an unknown soldier's grave." Corliss managed to reverse course four times in his 870-word review of *Pleasantville*. And he can suffer from bad-pun disease, praising *A Bug's Life* as "antastic."

DUBIOUS CALLS: Difficult to find for Corliss, whose mealy mouthed style—and safe choices—

stop him from touting the worst dogs.

LITMUS TEST: In his preview of *Godzilla*, Corliss wrote, "[N]o icon is safe from the big green guy. And he breeds! (Sequels, we bet)....*Godzilla* could be the first \$100 million weekend movie." The film made \$55 million the first weekend, and everything went downhill from there. Maybe he should've waited to see it first.

COMMENT: "I call most of my reviews mixed," says Corliss, who points out that people may differ in their opinions of what's positive or negative in a review. "Movie reviews, like the movies themselves, are open to interpretation."



PETER TRAVERS ROLLING STONE

THE SUNDANCE KID If the film has even the most tenuous indie connection or any art-house aspirations, Travers will gush. The more obscure and pretentious it is, the more likely he is to lavish it with praise. But Travers can—and does—turn his pen into a machete for big-budget productions.

DUBIOUS CALLS: *Celebrity* (a "keenly observant spoof of the fame game"); *Velvet Goldmine* ("a feast of sight and sound... [Writer/director Todd] Haynes celebrates the art of the possible"); *Hurlyburly* ("toxic but powerhouse filmmaking").

LITMUS TEST: He ripped *Godzilla* as "\$120 million worth of special effects, silliness, dumb dialogue, and blatant product plugs."

COMMENT: Travers readily acknowledges that he's a "champion of independent film and the independent spirit of film." He says he'd rather use his column to point "sophisticated" readers to those films than "spend eight hundred words being funny about how bad *Message in a Bottle* is."



JAY CARR THE BOSTON GLOBE

THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVER When Carr falls head over heels for a movie, he has a hard time getting back up. Nearly half of his reviews bestowed a "4" rating, meaning Carr offered virtually boundless approval for the film. He also has a penchant for art-house cinema.

DUBIOUS CALLS: *American History X* ("spotlights real social ills with heightened urgency"); *Hurlyburly* ("What seemed like a few hours of nihilistic self-destructiveness...on stage emerges on screen with new clarity and purpose"); *Ten Benny* ("fresh, urgent ways to treat familiar material and remind the world that there are mean streets in New Jersey as well as in Little Italy").

LITMUS TEST: Praised *Godzilla*, but was disappointed that it lacked the emotional depth he craves in a monster movie: "As sheer spectacle, this reptilian spree outdoes *Independence Day*, the last big-but-empty event movie....But the ride it delivers is a virtual ride, not the kind we take with our nerve endings."

COMMENT: Carr declines to comment, beyond saying that the survey results should speak for themselves.



Kenneth Lipper (left) and James Atlas toil in adjoining offices in the unusual publishing environment of Lipper's investment-management and banking firm. The two are determined to make a success of their series of short books, Penguin Lives. "When I was younger, I was much more motivated by trying to prove myself," Lipper says. "Now I just want to do things I want to do."

Nonfiction book series have a long history of small returns in the marketplace. Two new imprints, helmed by men passionate about their ventures, are fighting to succeed where others have not. • BY LORNE MANLY

Short Books, Big Ideas

TO REACH THE OFFICE OF JAMES Atlas, general editor of the new Penguin Lives series of short biographies, a visitor must navigate through a setup never before seen in a hallowed publishing house. Atlas, noted literary critic, staff writer for *The New Yorker*,

lauded author of a biography of poet Delmore Schwartz—in other words, the quintessential intellectual—now toils on a trading floor. Just round the bend from his midtown Manhattan office work 70 employees of Lipper & Company, Inc., an investment-management and banking firm. Traders in dress shirts and ties bark out orders to sell and buy securities as they try to increase the \$5 billion in assets the company manages.

In this atypical publishing house, Kenneth Lipper, chairman of the eponymously named firm, has set up a unique imprint with Viking Penguin parent Penguin

Putnam Inc., a subsidiary of the London-based Pearson PLC. The Lipper/Viking joint venture plans to publish six biographies a year about famous people from the past and present, written by well-known authors such as Larry McMurtry (on Crazy Horse) and Jane Smiley (on Charles Dickens). "We're just trying to cut through the reverent, tedious sense of homage and duty that encrusts biography," says Atlas.

Two miles south, in the heart of Greenwich Village, a similar publishing experiment is under way. The 14-month-old Library of Contemporary Thought is the brainchild of Peter Gethers, an editor at large at Random House, Inc., the country's biggest publisher. Gethers is the main force overseeing this boutique operation. He does almost all of his work in his spacious apartment bordering Washington Square Park, alone with his computer, phone, fax machine, and Scottish Fold cat; he ventures into corporate headquarters as rarely as he can. He uses the resources of The Ballantine Publishing Group, a Random House division, to produce, market, and distribute the books, but the small

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK VERONSKY

The creators of both series hope that their brand names will stick in our minds. If there's anything that can break through the white noise of media oversaturation, the brand name will be it.

scale is by design. For the series, which consisted of nine books last year and is to have at least six in 1999, Gethers hires well-known authors such as Carl Hiaasen, Seymour Hersh, and Susan Isaacs, and usually gives them 100 to 150 pages to vent their spleens on any current topic that motivates them. Gethers then packages the voices in inexpensive volumes.

The creators of both series hope that eventually Penguin Lives and the Library of Contemporary Thought—the brand names—will be labels that stick in our minds. The authors may not be as recognizable or the subjects as personally compelling with every book, but the comfort level the brand instills will spur the purchase. If there's anything that can break through the white noise of media oversaturation, the series name will be it.

The concept of a serious nonfiction series is not new. And if history is any guide, there could be a brief American life for these brief books. "Historically, after the initial burst of excitement, after you've marshalled your big guns, these things tend to have diminishing returns," says Steve Wasserman, who spent 15 years in publishing before becoming editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*.

The Viking Press published 40 volumes in the Modern Masters series (a venture with English publisher Collins Fontana) during the 1970s and 1980s. And that was the most successful. The Oxford University Press published an American run of its Brief Lives series. Collier Books published Men in History, while Mentor, the paperback arm of the New American Library, put out the Mentor Philosopher series. Earlier this decade, media entrepreneur Chris Whittle created the Larger Agenda series, handing big-name writers healthy advances to write short books about social issues.

None of these series exists today. The executives behind Penguin Lives and the Library of Contemporary Thought aim to change that sorry history, and each has a rationale for why he will succeed where the others have failed.

IRONICALLY, JAMES ATLAS DREAMED UP THE concept that became Penguin Lives just as he neared completion of his own 800-page biography of novelist Saul Bellow. As he slogged through a new, overly long biography about literary critic Cyril Connolly that he was reviewing, he revisited David Pryce-Jones's memoir, which in 118 pages did an infinitely better job, he thought, of capturing Connolly and his work. Atlas then had his

"Eureka" moment: Why not brief biographies that cut through the verbiage and solipsistic tone of too many books?

"I never had a business plan or wrote a letter," says the 49-year-old, bow-tied Atlas. "I just had the idea of short books by famous writers on significant figures in

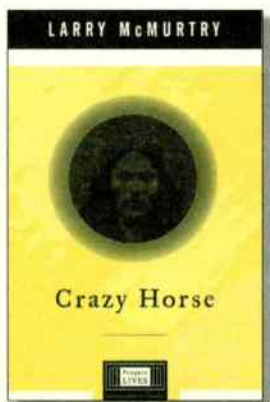
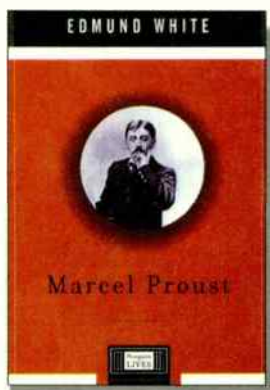
the culture. [Viking Penguin] called me up right away and said, 'Why don't I [edit] four books for them and they'd give me a stipend?' I was going to do this, and then Ken and I had lunch—a social lunch—on New Year's Day [1996]....At that point, Ken said, 'Don't give away your idea. Do it right.' And then he entered the picture big time."

Lipper, 57, is not your typical Wall Street wheeler-dealer. Yes, his firm manages assets for some of the wealthiest people and institutions in the country. But he spent three years as a New York City deputy mayor during the 1980s. He wrote the book *Wall Street*, and served as the chief technical adviser for Oliver Stone's cautionary film of the same name. He wrote the original screenplay for *City Hall*, which starred Al Pacino and John Cusack, composing three pages a weekend over three years. And he produced the play *The Winter Guest* and the subsequent film version, which starred Emma Thompson. Posters for each of the films and photographs of Lipper with the assorted casts and crews hang on the walls of his glass-fronted office that looks onto the trading floor. Mementos of his work producing *The Last Days*, an Academy Award-nominated Holocaust documentary, have not yet been added.

Publishing, then, is simply Lipper's latest excursion away from Wall Street. Friendly with Atlas since he wrote a piece for him ten years ago at *The New York Times Magazine*, Lipper saw the idea as an opportunity to realize a publishing endeavor after two previous false starts. And if the pair makes some money in the process, so much the better. "I don't care about making huge amounts of money going into [these offshoots of his main business]," Lipper says, laughing. "But I don't want to lose a lot of money. Because that takes all the fun out of it."

Atlas's seeming desire for a better payday was displayed one year ago in a *New Yorker* article that chronicled his envious struggle with the much greater earnings of his friends and peers. *New York* magazine media critic Michael Wolff recently painted Atlas as a money-grubbing opportunist, a characterization that stung the editor. But Atlas's ironic self-awareness takes the edge off his striving: A "Show Me the Money" plaque, a gag gift from one of his editors, easily coexists next to the books and manuscripts that cram the desk, coffee table, and window sills of his office. At bottom, Atlas and Lipper share an earnest desire to improve the lot of the culture, no matter the sniping they'll receive for their efforts. If they were doing it for the money, they'd pick a different business, one with margins that aren't so small, or at least choose more mainstream fare. "I'm not publishing Kitty Kelley on Frank Sinatra," Atlas says. "I'm publishing Edmund White [author of *A Boy's Own Story* and a Jean Genet biography] on Marcel Proust."

Following the New Year's lunch, Lipper decided to invest



several million dollars of his own for a 50 percent stake in the business. ("Remember, I can lose more money on a single trade out here, literally, than I can lose in this whole venture," says Lipper, gesturing toward his investment-bank operation.) Lipper and Viking Penguin would split the joint venture's costs down the middle, as well as the profits (if they come). Atlas would act as general editor, working with editors employed by Lipper Publications, as well as editors, marketing, and sales people from Viking Penguin.

The first two \$19.95 books came out in January—*Crazy Horse* by McMurtry, author of *Lonesome Dove* and *Terms of Endearment*, and *Marcel Proust*, by White. Both received strong reviews and, as of early February, had gone into fourth and third printings, respectively. Next up, in June: *Saint Augustine* by Garry Wills (author of *Nixon Agonistes*) and *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* by Peter Gay (author of *The Enlightenment*). In October, Lipper/Viking plans to release China expert Jonathan Spence's take on Mao Zedong and Irish novelist Edna O'Brien's reckoning of James Joyce.

The choosing of the series' subjects is, in the words of Viking Penguin senior vice-president and publisher Barbara Grossman, "very loosey-goosey." Both sides can suggest subjects and authors, but unless a consensus prevails, nothing goes forward. Lipper himself has gotten involved in the editorial process, suggesting Elvis Presley (being written by Bobbie Ann Mason, author of *In Country*) and Robert E. Lee (by *First Hubby* author Roy Blount Jr.). "I have ideas, mostly lowbrow," says Lipper, self-deprecatingly, to which Atlas chimes in good-naturedly, "He broadens the list."

To prevent the series from devolving into biography-lite, a 200-page compendium of facts better suited to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, the editors encourage authors to approach their work with a strong point of view or authorial connection, much the way Edmund White's open homosexuality informs his summing up of the closeted Proust. "They're kind of a distillation down to the soul of what one ends up taking away from any 900-page biography," says Viking Penguin's Grossman. "You don't remember what [the subject's] Hungarian grandmother's maiden name was. What you do remember is a feeling, a sensibility, a point of view, and an idea."

ECLECTICISM ALSO RULES THE LIST OF Gethers's Library of Contemporary Thought. "It's strictly gut instinct on my part," says Gethers. Carl Hiaasen's poleaxing of Disney; Anna Quindlen's description of how reading changed her life; Susan Isaacs's dissection of the media's portrayal of women. There's little cohesiveness to this group of books, unlike the more obvious biographical connection that defines the Penguin Lives series. But for Gethers, the disparate titles coalesce around one defining characteristic: All are written by authors passionately expounding on their views in a form that can be digested in one sitting.

The genesis of the Library of Contemporary Thought "was extremely simple-minded and purely selfish," Gethers says. "I was looking for things to read, and I couldn't find what I was looking for....In the old days, you could read Norman Mailer

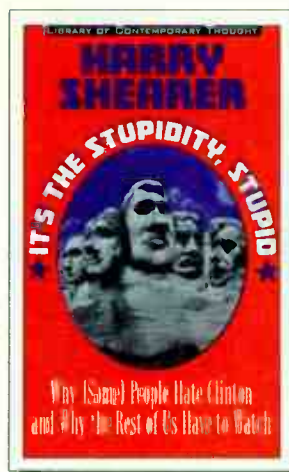
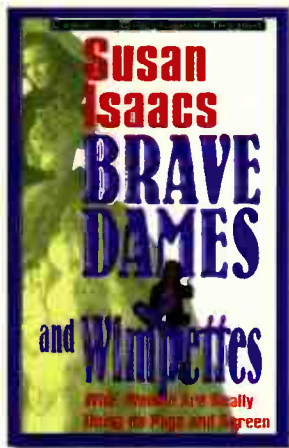


and trust him that he would write a short book or a really long magazine piece on a subject and you would read it and you would talk about it with your friends for weeks and weeks and it would stimulate all sorts of things. And it just didn't seem to be there, either in magazines or books."

The 45-year-old Gethers, sitting in his apartment, clad in jeans, a casual shirt, and suede slip-on shoes, may sound like a wistful New York intellectual, pining for days long gone. But in many ways, he's found his dream job. He started at Random House in 1980, rising to become the head of Villard, an imprint he cofounded, by 1986. Six years later, sick of the corporate life, he became an editor at large across different imprints, working almost exclusively out of his home. When he came up with the idea of the Library of Contemporary Thought, Ballantine bit.

Authors have been similarly intrigued, lured in part by the bully pulpit and the better money than magazines can offer. Former President Jimmy Carter says he had never heard of Gethers or the the Library of Contemporary Thought when his agent, Lynn Nesbit, asked how he'd like to take a shot at this shorter form. Taking a break from a novel he's writing on the Revolutionary War, Carter spent parts of six months working on a book that "could give me a chance to put in the nation's consciousness my thoughts about the aging process."

No fan of corporate life, Peter Gethers chooses to work out of his Greenwich Village apartment rather than Ballantine's midtown Manhattan offices.



The money, which Carter confirms was in the \$100,000 range, didn't hurt.

Carl Hiaasen, a columnist for the *Miami Herald* and a novelist specializing in exposing the corruption of Florida politicians and real-estate developers, jumped at the chance to make a case for sleaze in our culture while ranting about Disney and its plastic reality. "They're so big and arrogant," he says, adding that "it's important to say something on behalf of the 'Peep Lands' of America," and that "it's nice that anyone in publishing in 1999 is willing to take any kind of chance," particularly when another Random House imprint was publishing the autobiography of Disney chief executive Michael Eisner.

ONE REASON PUBLISHERS KEEP RETURNING TO series publishing is backlisting, the Holy Grail in publishing, in which a book keeps selling long after its debut. "The concept of these books—and what to me is the most exciting aspect of them—is they will backlist forever in this...hard-cover backlist format," says Viking Penguin's Grossman of the Penguin Lives series. The lure of building some sort of stability in a business where each book is a different product, created from scratch, can be tempting. Penguin Lives's titles, given their more historical tenor, are likely to backlist better than those of the Library of Contemporary Thought.

Executives at Lipper/Viking and Ballantine point to the success of serious nonfiction such as Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* as proof that there's a hunger for substantial works. "I happen to be of the school that thinks the public [audience] for serious literature is colossally underestimated," says Atlas. "After working at the *Times Magazine* and reaching two million incredibly sophisticated, educated readers every Sunday for a decade, I began to think that those same people read [books], too. I just think that publishing in a way hasn't gone after this much-wider readership."

But few publishers have gotten rich overestimating the desire for highbrow works of culture in a series format. The most recent high-profile attempt at series publishing came earlier this decade. Riding high from his resuscitation of *Esquire* and the success of advertiser-sponsored publications, Chris Whittle devised the Larger Agenda series; he and his editor, former Time Inc. veteran William Rukeyser, handed out \$60,000 advances to authors such as David Halberstam, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Atlas himself. The 100-page books, however, bore one revolutionary distinction: 20 pages of each book were devoted to advertising. Federal Express signed up as sponsor, and 150,000 "opinion makers" were sent free copies. The unheard-of commercialization promptly evinced scorn from the publishing establishment. "I think the inclusion of advertising was unseemly," says literary agent Andrew Wylie.

That sort of snide dismissal rankled, according to *An Empire Undone*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Vance Trimble's book about the rise and fall of Whittle's media starburst. Whittle and editor in chief Rukeyser hooked up with W.W. Norton &

Company to distribute to the general public the first six books from the Larger Agenda series—without the ads, of course. One title, *The Disuniting of America*, by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., stayed on *The New York Times's* best-seller list for nine weeks.

In the fall of 1992, Penguin agreed to a joint venture with Whittle that would publish a minimum of four books a year. A year and a half later, with the parent company's costs escalating, revenue sinking, and investors becoming increasingly restless, Whittle Communications L.P. started pulling back on its ventures. The book division was among the first to go. "I always thought the concept was great if they could have held on longer," says Constance Sayre, a principal at Market Partners International, a publishing consulting firm that was helping Whittle.

But a hard truth seems to prevail in nonfiction series publishing. "All series end after a while," says Elisabeth Sifton, senior vice-president at Farrar, Straus and Giroux and the American editor of the Modern Masters while at Viking. The newness of the series dissipates, the editor loses interest, or the media stop hyping each new arrival. Or a good plan produces cynical books, with writers tossing off uninspired efforts for the money. Or the supply of topics simply begins to dwindle. "Then are you getting down to the bottom of the barrel?" asks Sifton. And then the question becomes, *Why do I need a series anyway? Why not just publish the three books that will do well?*

T

HE FOLKS AT LIPPER/VIKING AND Ballantine believe they can avoid the ultimate fate of their predecessors. These ventures are well-capitalized and should have no problem finding subjects. "Supply and demand of compelling historical figures is not a problem," Atlas says. Adds Gethers: "What will

save these from the fate of those [other series is if] each individual book stands on its own."

Ken Lipper also believes he can thrive by adapting his firm's rules of engagement from the financial markets to the publishing world. He doesn't let his traders take big gambles, and neither will he let Atlas or his partners at Viking. "Even if someone came in here...and was 100 percent sure he could double the money in a day on something that would go beyond the structure of what we normally do, I wouldn't do it," says Lipper. "Same with this. If someone came in here and said 'I have a book that's going to sell five million copies, but we've got to pay \$10 million for it,' I wouldn't do it."

Big publishers may spend \$4 million acquiring the latest tell-all, but if the book bombs, there goes the bottom line for the year. "They're playing a game of picking fourteen red and putting a big pile of chips on it. Me, I'd rather put one chip around the whole table," says Lipper, tapping the table in different spots as if it were a roulette wheel. "Look at our portfolios [at Lipper & Co.]. When someone is a client here...they have three hundred or four hundred different securities, in bonds and stocks and Euro [securities]. Why? So nothing can sink you."

The approach is the same with writers. "Every single one of these writers has a long, lifelong track record," says Atlas. "They are seasoned writers....They can deliver. They're rea-

sonably conservative choices." Call it risk management, publishing-style.

With the Penguin Lives series, Lipper/Viking demands world rights so it can sell the series overseas. (It's already sold the series to four countries, although, embarrassingly, Penguin in the United Kingdom balked.) The joint venture also gets performance rights, as it is developing a TV program based on the volumes, to be hosted by Glenn Close. And holding the line on advances is a point of principle—and pride. No author has cracked the \$100,000 barrier, although one writer received \$99,999. Most of the writers' advances fall in the \$40,000 to \$75,000 range. But it's too early to gauge the series' profitability.

Gethers doesn't have any such rules; his publishing program is more of a passion play. That's not to say he's not trying to be fiscally responsible. Writers should no longer expect to see the \$100,000 paydays the Library of Contemporary Thought handed out at the beginning. "Part of it was to launch something, to entice some really big-name authors and to start this with a bang, which is what we did," says Gethers. Now writers usually receive less than half of that figure.

The high advances were part of the reason for the Library of Contemporary Thought's mixed first-year results, which were still good enough to encourage Ballantine executives to offer up another full slate for 1999. (Executives declined to say whether the line is profitable.) Three of last year's nine titles made best-seller lists. And another, *Boomernomics: The Future of Your Money in the Upcoming Generational Warfare*, found a home in the special sales market not tracked by best-seller lists; institutions such as Merrill Lynch & Co. bought more than 100,000 copies, says Gethers.

Strangely, the books not obviously tied to specific news events have been the most successful, none more so than former President Carter's *The Virtues of Aging*. The public appetite for the former president's homilies about aging and prescriptions for Social Security have resulted in six printings of the hardcover (putting 84,500 copies in print) and eight printings (161,500 copies) of the paperback version. Ballantine has done five paperback printings of Hiaasen's *Team Rodent*, totaling 77,500 copies, and six paperback printings (72,500) of Quindlen's book, *How Reading Changed My Life*. Nearly all of these books in print have been bought, Gethers say. Improving judgement in predicting reader demand helps cut down on bookseller returns, a cost publishers must swallow.

One book that did not live up to expectations was the first—Vincent Bugliosi's *No Island of Sanity*, the lawyer's scathing attack on the Supreme Court's decision to allow the Paula Jones suit to proceed against the sitting president. The presidential scandal dominated the news last year, and Gethers had hoped for sales of more than 150,000 copies. Although Bugliosi's book caused a media stir, it only sold about 75,000.

As the series progresses, Gethers has tinkered with other aspects of the line. He's no longer publishing every month, giving himself more time to edit, and the books more time to have the spotlight to themselves. After discovering that some

Strangely, the Library of Contemporary Thought books not obviously tied to specific news events have been the most successful, none more so than former President Carter's *The Virtues of Aging*.

publications (such as *The Wall Street Journal*) refuse to review paperbacks, more titles in the series will be published in hardcover even though that could double their price. Each book will have a distinct cover instead of the first year's more serialized approach, as book stores felt an individualized look would sell better. And Gethers plans to add voices that differ from his (liberal) politics, which have dominated the series so far. "I'm not publishing Henry Hyde, although I'd like to find some people I don't necessarily agree with," he says. "It would be better for the list, and it would be more interesting."

Nonetheless, buyers for bookstores seem pleased with the series so far. "We're, as a group, bullish," says Ron Stefanski, Borders Books and Music's director of marketing. And Amazon.com is finding that the books are selling months after they were released, a sign of backlist viability, according to Marilyn Dahl, a buying manager for the online bookseller.

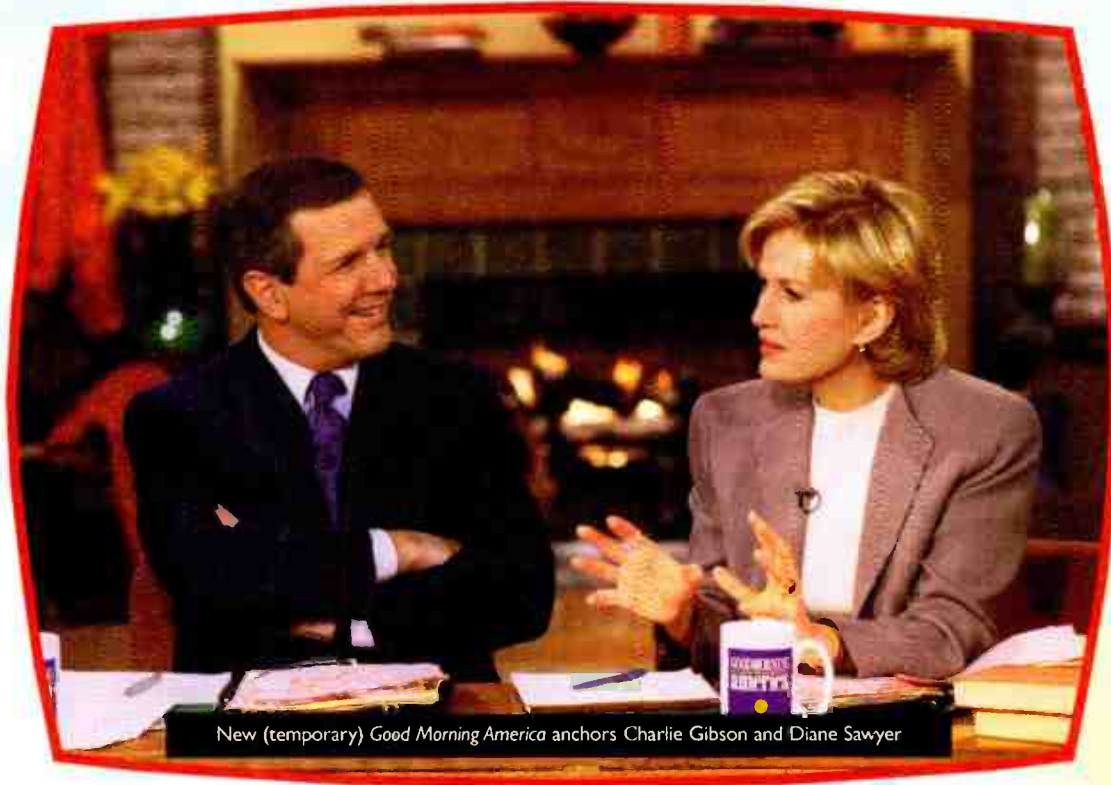
STILL, THERE'S LITTLE EVIDENCE A BRAND awareness is being cultivated among book buyers around the country. Buyers of the Library of Contemporary Thought's latest by Anna Quindlen don't seem to be flocking to the imprint's John Feinstein tale of Tiger Woods, which has 75,000 copies in print. (Sales figures were not forthcoming.) And Penguin Lives will face the same problem: What will drive a reader interested in the life of Buddha to a biography of Elvis? "[I]t's very hard to brand something that is new," says Gethers.

The Lipper/Viking executives believe they have a leg up because of the Penguin brand. Although nowhere near as powerful as in England, Penguin Classics does conjure up an image in this country of quality books at inexpensive prices. "I'm not so naive to believe that people aren't going to a book to find a specific author or subject," says the Penguin Group's CEO Michael Lynton. "But it would be nice that when in doubt, you choose a Penguin."

And Gethers remains convinced the Library of Contemporary Thought name can be established. "If [the Library of Contemporary Thought] works for the future, it's partly because it's a kind of personality-driven imprint—meaning that I'm extremely passionate about it, and it reflects my tastes, for better or for worse," says Gethers. "If you're going to keep doing things that are interesting and fun as well as profitable," he concludes, "you have to search out the passion." ■

Senior editor Lorne Manly is the culture columnist for Brill's Content; he examined the book empire of Bertelsmann A.G. in the October 1998 issue.

GOOD MORNING America



New (temporary) *Good Morning America* anchors Charlie Gibson and Diane Sawyer

Their fight for

ABC knows it will take more than Diane Sawyer to make *Good Morning*

ABC'S *GOOD MORNING AMERICA* IS DESPERATE—so desperate that the network recently coaxed one of its prime-time luminaries, Diane Sawyer, into hosting the show for an indefinite period. That's the obvious Band-Aid. What's not so obvious is everything else that ABC is doing—and that *NBC Today* has been doing—to get people to watch.

The *GMA* you now see every day is, by Sawyer's own on-air admission, "a work in progress." The new regime has stopped the ratings plunge, but has only just begun to define the broadcast, and has no choice

but to tinker and to try things in front of its audience every day. To a great extent, the show will be relying on viewers to decide whether or not it's working.

Can Diane Sawyer lute people in the morning the way she does at night (and once did in the morning for CBS)? Do we prefer her purr to Katie Couric's chirp? Is *GMA*'s new fireplace comforting or silly? Do Sawyer and her cohost, Charlie Gibson, really get along? Do we care that they're both over 50? Do we like the way the show covers news? Do we want more humor, more celebrity interviews?

There are endless theories about what makes a



The team to beat: NBC Today's Katie Couric and Matt Lauer

your morning

America a hit again. But NBC's formula will be hard to beat.

morning show sail or sink, but one thing is clear: *Today* has the formula figured out. The key is simple, according to its executive producer, Jeff Zucker, who has skippered *Today* during its five-year winning streak and has become something of a sage on morning television, despite being only 34. "I think what doesn't work is lack of continuity," Zucker says, "both in front of the camera and behind the camera. I think what doesn't work either is a hard news program for two hours or a softer news program for two hours; I think you have to have a mix. It obviously doesn't work when the people presenting the program don't have a

degree of comfort with one another. You can see it right away. I think those are the things that have plagued our competitors."

GMA needs a resurrection. After all, morning shows can make a lot of money—*Today* earned more than \$100 million for NBC last year, according to *The New York Times*. That's dramatically more than ABC took home from *GMA*, based on published reports (although ABC declines to give a figure).

The morning is the only television time block whose audience is still growing. But until Sawyer's arrival, *GMA*'s viewership had been shrinking,

Set Appeal: *GMA*'s new home is consciously cozy.

The flag recalls *GMA*'s heyday, when it also hung on the set. It says patriotism, apple pie, and *GMA*.



The books conjure a cozy, library atmosphere and communicate intelligence: *These hosts read.*



The red jacket, slung casually on the coat rack, could be in any viewer's hallway.



The roaring fire, a throwback to *GMA*'s best days, shouts warmth, hearth, and home. *GMA* is inviting us in.



The apples offer a Martha Stewart touch. The flawless fruit communicates freshness, crispness, and again, a return to basics—the All-American show.



coiffed. They get enthusiastic without gushing, they show sensitivity without getting soppy. Most important, they seem to genuinely like each other. When they're outside the *Today* studio shmoozing with tourists, they often create a sense that they're where the party's happening: *Come and join us.* "The *Today* show is interesting in that it does not have weak links," says former *Today* host Jane Pauley. "And evidently it's really hard to cast a program like that. Really hard."

GMA'S RATINGS started to drop in late 1994 after five years on top with hosts Gibson and Joan Lunden. Panic seemed to set in almost immediately at ABC. Its news division took over and made too many changes in too short a time—making the show news-heavy one minute, fluffy the next. The show lost its identity and the loyalty of its viewers. ABC seemed to install a new anchor team every five minutes. Lunden was booted for unknown Los Angeles local anchor Lisa McCree, then Gibson stepped aside for Kevin Newman, a largely unfamiliar face. The new

declining to its lowest ratings ever in the fourth quarter of 1998, when the show briefly fell to third place behind the anemic CBS morning show for the first time in two decades.

So what's ABC's plan? The network all but announced it the first day Sawyer and Gibson—back in his anchor seat after being kicked off the show eight months earlier—came on the air on January 18. "We want to take this program back to the future," said Gibson, "and reinforce the sense of family that has been so important to this broadcast." So that's it: Family. Pals. *GMA* knows it's up against the best TV buddies in morning network history—*Today*'s Couric, Lauer, weatherman Al Roker, and news anchor Ann Curry. It's a tough quartet to match, but *GMA* has to try.

Picking a morning show basically comes down to whom you want to wake up with. And *Today* has a gang that viewers want to be a part of. They're smart, attractive, not overly

pair lacked any rhythm or rapport, and they were viewed as rookies by some *GMA* veterans. Devotees of the show began to stray.

Loyalty is hard to depend on—or even gauge—in the age of remote control. To get a feel for how regular morning viewers think about the current contenders, *Brill's Content* hired Langer Associates, Inc., a market research firm. Langer gathered 12 morning-show watchers—including four stay-at-home mothers, an attorney, a financial analyst, a parking attendant, and a self-employed landscaper—in New Jersey one February evening and asked them to compare *GMA* and *Today* without explaining what we were looking for.

For network producers, whose mantra is that choosing a morning show is as habitual as choosing a toothpaste, it would have been an enlightening evening. These viewers were fickle. They confessed to switching channels constantly in the morning depending on what interests them at a given moment. "I watch the *Today* show when I'm surfing," said Anthony, 52, somewhat indifferently. "And sometimes there's something that's interest-

Senior writer Abigail Pogrebin, a former producer at CBS News's 60 Minutes, wrote about George magazine in the March issue.

ing, I'll stick with it." That's actually encouraging news for *GMA*: If these viewers are typical, it means there's a sizable audience open to being wooed. But they make up their minds in an instant and, with a punch of the clicker, they're gone.

Our group gave the new *GMA* high marks so far for its hosts, referring to Sawyer and Gibson as if they've been a team for years instead of just weeks. "They're a good combination," said Susan, 42, "very experienced." Anthony was not a fan of Sawyer's: "\$7 million a year," he scowled, referring to her widely reported salary, "I don't think she's worth it." But the group almost uniformly liked her, calling her "professional" and "warm." "She has a very good stare," said Bill, the landscaper. "Whoever she's talking to, it looks like she's looking right in their eyes." Gibson was praised for his intelligence and ease on the air—exactly the qualities that prompted ABC to do an about-face and ask him to return to his old anchor seat. Sue, 32, called him "friendly and to the point." But Barry, a 40-year-old bachelor attorney, said "he's more reserved" than Sawyer. "There's something being held back. [He's] the Peter Jennings of the morning; a little stiff." Susan, 42, worried that Gibson is "starting to look haggard or worn out."

That comment reflects a potential hurdle for *GMA*: middle age. According to current ratings data from Nielsen Media Research, most of the viewers who Sawyer, 53, and Gibson, 55, have brought back to the fold are 50 or older. Helpful as they are, these folks do not make a hit morning show. *GMA* needs to cut into *Today*'s younger audience—the 18–49 demographic advertisers look for—to really compete. The youth and dash of Matt Lauer, 42—who has lately gained more respect as a journalist—has given *Today* a hipper, sexier edge. The women in our group said he was "cute" and "well-dressed." Similarly, Couric, also 42, was perceived as more youthful than Sawyer, though some of our focus-group members said that's not necessarily a plus. To them, Sawyer's and Gibson's ages bespeak wisdom, not stodginess. That plays right into *GMA*'s latest ad campaign, "Start Smarter." ABC is betting viewers want adults instead of NBC's kids.

"Warmth is a major word that you use in morning television," explains Phyllis McGrady, *GMA*'s new executive in charge, who also ran the show in its heyday in the mid-eighties. "Everything has to be smart, it has to be comfortable, it has to be warm. Those are strange words to put together, but that's what morning programming is: smart with a heart."

It's no accident that the new set is festooned with flowers, apples, books, lamps, candles, a piano with framed photographs, and a coat rack with a jacket hanging from it. *This is a home*, the producers are saying. In fact, it's hyper-homey. The subliminal message: *We're inviting you over to our house because we want to be invited into yours*. The American flag painting over the mantle couldn't be less subtle. It echoes the program's title and is a familiar sight, having hung on the show's set years ago. The flag says, *This is your national program*. Apple pie and *GMA*. "We're a show that really represents America," says McGrady. "That's why we've always done a lot of live remotes, shown faces from across the country."

GMA seemed to lose sight of that idea during the years it was floundering. Weatherman Spencer Christian, who recently got axed from *GMA* after 12 years, says one of management's many miscues came when they stopped sending him on the road to broadcast from community festivals and fairs. Those trips were important for viewers, Christian says, because they showed him out in the country, listening to America. "That was the case of the viewers becoming more disconnected, disenfranchised, feeling less a part of the program," he says. "[Management] took something that wasn't broken and broke it."

The role of the weatherman on morning television is as calculated as everything else. He doesn't just give us the wind-chill factor, he's a key player in the orchestrated "family." "The role of Spencer Christian or Al Roker [*Today*'s weatherman]," says Christian, "is to give people something to smile about, to feel good about, to reassure them that, although a lot is happening in the world that is disturbing, you can still walk out the door to work or to school with a smile on your face. It's much easier for a person doing the weather to do

"The seven o'clock half hour has to be quick," says *Today* producer Jeff Zucker, "remembering that people are scattering around, brushing their teeth, drinking their coffee, getting ready to walk out the door by seven-twenty."

THE RELATIVE APPEAL OF EACH MORNING TEAM CAN be debated forever. The reality is that ABC's stars are a temporary life raft for the network. So what is the show doing to build a program that people will still choose after Sawyer and Gibson have moved on? Sawyer and Gibson declined to be interviewed. ("This is not yet our show," Sawyer stresses. "It's still developing.") But look closely and ABC's strategy is actually right in front of you, every morning. The fireplace, discarded for a few years, has been reinstated for a reason. It shouts "warmth," which *GMA* had been lacking in the recent past after the set was given a bluer, cooler look.

that than for the hosts, who are coming out of a serious segment. If you have another person, you can accept the change of tone, the smile, the upbeat tone."

Those transitions—the ability to go from grilling a senator to grilling a steak—are the coin of the realm in morning television. McGrady says *GMA*'s interim hosts do that effortlessly, and *Today*'s Zucker says it's Couric and Lauer's rare gift. "It's the real flexibility of our hosts to be able to scoot from the impeachment trial to cooking with Sophia Loren that makes both the show what it is and the hosts who they are," says Zucker. "The key to this show is the variety and the ability of our hosts to do that variety."

11 12

But even that smorgasbord is highly structured. The two-hour live broadcast from 7 A.M. to 9 A.M. is designed so that each half hour will appeal to those most likely to be watching. That's the reason the first half hour block goes heavy on hard news when most working people are trying to get informed before leaving the house, and the reason each subsequent half hour gets softer—with segments on health, gardening, exercise—when their research tells them breadwinners are gone and moms and older viewers are still tuned in.

"Pacing is key to the show," says Zucker. "And if you'll notice, our seven o'clock half hour will be paced differently than our eight o'clock. The seven o'clock half hour has to be quick, remembering that people are scattering around, brushing their teeth, drinking their coffee, getting ready to walk out the door by seven-twenty. And we have to make sure we get them everything they need to know before they leave."

Zucker pioneered the idea of letting the show's opening 22-minute news block run uninterrupted by commercials. It's "the most important twenty-two minutes of the day in terms of television news," says Zucker, who points out that fewer people are getting home in time to watch the evening newscasts today. "So," he says, "if you can only watch twenty-two minutes of news a day, you should watch the first half hour of the *Today* show."

ABC's McGrady confirms that men generally stop watching by 7:50. After that, she says, "You try to do stories that are information that women are going to be interested in and learning from." For example, *GMA* has launched two regular series, "Lose Weight with *Good Morning America*," a galvanizing call to join ABC's staff in getting slimmer by summer, and "Get Married with *Good Morning America*," which offers

"wedding tips, trends, and fashions." ("We'll even drop in on a bachelor party," Gibson promised on air.)

Then there's chat time. Sawyer's and Gibson's banter may look like it's just filling space, but it's actually scheduled half minute by half minute—repatee meant to offer us a glimpse of the hosts as real people viewers can relate to. You can't fake friendship and fun on the air, but they are essential, and you have to build in time for them. Christian says ABC News made a fatal error when it eliminated that spontaneous chat time a few years ago. "Just taking a minute away is a big deal," he says.

Restoring a sense of personal intimacy is clearly a goal for *GMA*'s producers. It's telling that even the members of our focus group who like Sawyer didn't feel they *know* her—a factor one senior NBC producer says may prove to be a problem for *GMA*. Our viewers said Sawyer and Gibson seem very private and reveal little ("You never really hear anything about her," said Susan). By contrast, they knew that Lauer recently got married ("I give his marriage about a year," declared Barry), and they talked about the death of Couric's husband.

Former CBS morning anchor Paula Zahn says walking this line of personal disclosure is always tricky. "In addition to being a smart journalist," says Zahn, "you're also hoping you're the kind of person the audience gets to like personally. There is a more personal component to the job that doesn't exist in other parts of the broadcast day. I was always stunned by the level of knowledge that viewers had of my life. I had to draw my own lines about what I was comfortable sharing."

Interestingly, our viewers betrayed a contradictory desire to know the hosts, but not too well. They admired the way Couric handled her recent loss, for instance, but felt that former *GMA* host Joan Lunden began to wear thin when her divorce travails became too public. "I've got my own personal baggage," says Susan. "I just felt she got boring...with her personal stuff." Susan and Bill actually hit on something ABC insiders mention when analyzing *GMA*'s downturn. Former *GMA* producer Jackie Leo speculates that Lunden's personal life began to encroach on her image. "You have to have someone who's not going to threaten women who, when they wake up in the morning, do not look their best. They shouldn't be overly polished, threatening. When you had Joan as the housewife in the early days, slightly overweight and having kids, it sat well with American viewers. She wasn't the perfect specimen. It was that change in her personal life—her divorce and reemergence as a single

woman—that began to cause problems."

Sawyer offsets her remote prime-time persona by letting her hair down a little on *GMA* with self-deprecating humor. When she mocked the way she clutched Gibson's football pass—"it was a girlie catch"—or asked the camera operators to shoot her "through the



Lauer (above) has brought *Today* sex appeal in addition to his solid anchor skills. In our focus group, Cathy (right) was not the only woman smitten with Lauer's style and good looks.



towel” so she would look less tired, it was endearing.

Former *GMA* producer Leo, who knows Sawyer, thinks her goofy moments are genuine. “I think in some ways for Diane, morning television is a relief from the evening pace, which is perhaps a little starchier,” Leo says. “I think she’s far more herself. I think she’s enjoying it. The bigger question is, is it so exhausting she’ll want a change?”

A morning show doesn’t just mean 4 A.M. wake-up calls. It chews up the rest of the day and night as the team tries to ensure that the next day’s show is up-to-the-minute. One junior staffer says Sawyer and Gibson have been tireless, despite having to juggle their prime-time obligations to *20/20*.

THE FIRST PROGRAM, ON JANUARY 18, WAS NOT a sterling debut. Almost all of Sawyer’s interview subjects marooned her with monosyllabic answers or, in the case of an audio glitch from Kosovo, no answers at all. Gibson’s two segments on whether young people agree with President Clinton’s definition of sex might as well have been rated NC-17—a strange choice for a morning audience. Sawyer warned that parents might want “children to do something else for the next half hour.” (Presumably, that didn’t mean flipping to NBC.)

Reviews were mixed. New York’s *Daily News* credited the new incarnation as “more competitive, much more watchable, and, from the very outset, more casual and candid.” And Tom Shales of *The Washington Post* called Sawyer “charming,” “quick-witted,” and “wonderfully relaxed.” But *USA Today* said that Sawyer seemed uncomfortable—“rather like a classy cabaret singer who suddenly finds herself working the breakfast shift at Denny’s.”

Each show gets smoother. Sawyer is her familiar earnest self in serious news segments but manages to segue easily into the softer stuff. (“If we’re doing the news the way we dream of,” she told *The New York Times* in January, “I’m not above frying a hamburger.”) Gibson is also in his groove, doing unflashy but smart interviews and looking happy to be back. (“It feels much more comfortable than I thought it would,” he told *USA Today*. “I haven’t spilled gravy on my lapels or her lapels in six days.”)

We decided to ask our focus group to compare excerpts from *Today* and *GMA* on a big news day, January 20, the morning after the president’s State of the Union address. We began with the first seven minutes from each show. After Sawyer and Gibson previewed the day’s lineup, they turned it over to recently hired news anchor Antonio Mora, who introduced Sam Donaldson at the White House, who in turn summarized the president’s speech. Correspondent Karla Davis was next, reporting on the GOP rebuttal, and finally correspondent Linda Douglass on Capitol Hill updated the Senate trial of the president.

NBC, meanwhile, moved from Couric and Lauer’s greeting to White House correspondent Claire Shipman, who reported on both the president’s address and the GOP response. Couric then came back on camera to talk to senior political analyst and Washington bureau chief Tim Russert about how the president had performed.

Our viewers were split as to which network they preferred, but were unanimous in their indifference to ABC’s Mora—in fact, few could remember, just minutes after the excerpts, who

he was. In addition to finding Mora “blah,” our viewers were bothered that in the January 20 clip, when the hosts turned the show over to Mora, they didn’t return for awhile. By contrast, *Today* came back to Couric immediately after Shipman’s report. “[ABC] probably showed six different news correspondents,” said Bill. “The two hosts aren’t involved at all. [ABC was] out of the studio. They’re gone,” whereas Couric “was there when they came back.” (McGrady says it’s unfair to judge the new *GMA* based on its third day on the air, and says there have already been times when either Sawyer or Gibson was more involved in the news segment. Indeed, they were very hands-on the morning of King Hussein’s funeral on February 8.)

But when it came to the broadcast the morning after the State of the Union, Susan preferred ABC’s roundup to NBC’s because it had more interesting clips and because she was bored by NBC’s Russert. “Too much talking,” she groaned. “I was really sitting there saying ‘Okay, keep your eyes open.’”

We moved on to two segments from the 8 o’clock block. Couric interviewed writer Gail Sheehy about President Clinton’s reference to the first lady during his speech, and how it supposedly revealed the state of the couple’s union. On ABC, meanwhile, Gibson talked with new House Speaker Dennis Hastert in what was the Speaker’s first network interview. Our viewers preferred Couric’s segment by far. Hillary Clinton, they said, is a more interesting story, and Gibson’s piece seemed “edited” (it was), “scripted,” and “boring.” McGrady, in response, says Hastert is clearly someone viewers should meet. “This is a profile of a man who most of us didn’t know and of whom you will be hearing a lot,” she says.

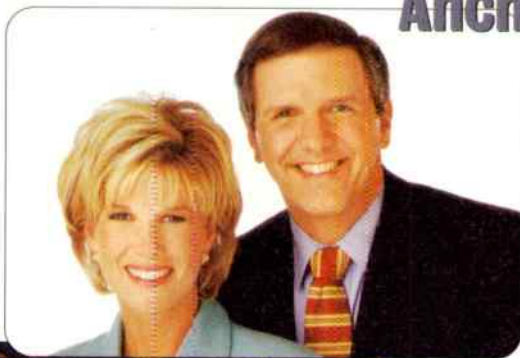
In our final content comparison, ABC won hands-down. Sawyer interviewed an adopted woman who had just discovered her birth mother, while on NBC Lauer interviewed a couple who had named a website after their daughter, Veronica, only to be threatened with a copyright infringement lawsuit by Archie Comics. Our viewers thought NBC’s story was “absurd” and “just filler.” Sherry saw one benefit. “I like those boring things,” she said. “They give me a chance to brush my teeth.”

But Sherry loved Sawyer’s piece. “I was almost in tears,” she said. Others were also touched. “That was her kind of story,” said Bill. “And she did that stare thing—you could see those eyes. That works. She leans in.” Said Anthony: “It was like a



Our 12-person focus group (top) confessed to switching channels more than NBC and ABC might like. Sherry (middle) loved the “warm” Matt Lauer. She tolerates boring segments, such as one from NBC, because “they give me a chance to brush my teeth.” Bill (bottom) liked Diane Sawyer’s “very good stare.”

Anchors Away



GMA's Joan Lunden and Gibson were the top morning team until viewers seemed to tire of them.



Lunden was bumped for Lisa McCree—ten years younger, but otherwise Lunden's TV twin. GMA producers say Gibson began to lose interest in the show he'd been devoted to for so long.



Then Gibson was asked to step aside for younger face Kevin Newman, who didn't have any better rhythm or rapport with cohost McCree.

20/20 segment. It's one of her type of stories: warm reunions."

It's interesting that Anthony brought up Sawyer's prime-time show, because competitors have suggested Sawyer's prime-time sensibility could be discordant in the morning. Zucker cautions against using the standard prime-time tactic of alarming viewers to entice them to tune in. "What's interesting," he says, "is she [Sawyer] has brought a lot of that language to the morning. I think it's a combination both of her [newly appointed] producer, Shelley Ross, who comes from prime-time, and her. There's a prime-time magazine language—*We're going to tell you a story that will shock you. Or We're going to tell you information that could be really dangerous to you.* You notice that with the women's health thing that we did today, what we tried to say in reverse is, *We're going to try to give you some information that could help improve your odds of not having heart disease....* You can't scare people in the morning."

Indeed, on January 19, Sawyer previewed one story this way: "Coming up, it's a startling story we saw on the wires: 24 emergency-room patients have died after being treated with an experimental blood substitute, and—this is the shocker—without their consent." On that same show, she introduced a segment on schoolyard bullies this way: "Being bullied can have consequences far more serious than just an unpleasant childhood memory. We want to warn you, some of the pictures you're about to see may be disturbing."

And before a February 4 interview with retired Chicago Bears running back Walter Payton, Gibson's grave language

about the athlete's liver condition was remarked upon by Payton himself. "You guys make it sound a little bit more dramatic than the doctors do," said Payton.

GMA chief McGrady disputes the notion that the show has ratcheted up its scare rhetoric. "If it's happened, I haven't noticed," she says, adding that GMA is not going to shy away from important stories just because they might be unsettling. "There are things sometimes that shock you in the morning," she says. "Zucker's doing more crime stories at seven-thirty than I was doing in prime-time."

For what it's worth, Zucker's admonition didn't hold up in our focus group, where 2 of the 12 people singled out GMA's segment on bullies (which we had not mentioned or showed them) as being powerful and memorable—an example of GMA's best since the new team arrived.

IF WE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM THE FOCUS GROUP, IT'S that the morning race is fundamentally a guessing game. No one knows what captures viewers, and producers realize people are rarely rapt in the morning—they're juggling showers, kids, and breakfast, while the TV set is on. "On my evening broadcast," says Steve Friedman, who ran the *Today* show for ten years and is now the station manager of New York's WCBS-TV, "I tell producers: 'If you've got a good picture and a good sound bite, use the picture.' Morning television you don't say that. A lot of people are *listening*, not watching. You use the good sound before the good picture."

McGrady adds that it's tougher to surprise people now than it was when she first produced GMA. "It was a lot easier for me in the eighties to tell you something you hadn't heard," says McGrady, who says the mandate is always "tell me something I don't know."

Jane Pauley says morning content has to skip along. Viewers won't tolerate the leisurely segments she, and, before her, Barbara Walters used to do on *Today*—nine-minute interviews, chamber music, and poetry. She says Zucker whips up a "three-ring circus" every morning, adhering to his basic formula but always playing with the elements. He's been known to extend an interview that's going well, skip commercial breaks, and add magazine-length pieces. He also created *Today*'s weekly summer outdoor concerts, which our focus group singled out, unsolicited, as a highlight.

Former *Today* chief Friedman, reported to be advising CBS on how to jump-start its lifeless morning program, says Zucker has a keen radar. "Some days they may do all news," Friedman says, "and you feel when they do, it's important. And when they don't do much hard news, that's okay; I don't mind seeing the concert in the street, because I've gotten all the news I've had to by then."

Friedman says Zucker's skill consists of hitting the right balance and trusting his gut in the control room. "That's when Jeff earns his money," says Friedman. "He doesn't do it making the rundown [the segment line up]; a monkey can do that. You need a guy like Jeff in that control room who has that feel of the mosaic. It's a living organism—when to skip the commercial, when to cut the segment, what questions to ask, when to put the artwork up. It's a movement."

Zucker says his greatest asset is his anchors. "The two biggest finds in all of network television news in the last decade both walked through NBC's door: Katie and Matt," he says.

GMA's Phyllis McGrady throws up her hands when asked how ABC plans to deal with the eventual (though unscheduled) departures of Sawyer and Gibson. "I honestly don't know," she laughs. "Even if you stick pins in my fingernails."

Friedman tries to deconstruct what makes an effective team: "You want an actor and reactor as your two main hosts. You don't want two actors. Charlie's a reactor, Diane is an actor. Jane [Pauley]'s a reactor, Bryant [Gumbel]'s an actor. Katie's an actor, Matt's a reactor. Then you need some fun—the Al Rokers, the Gene Shalits. Morning's a grumpy time." He says when you hit it right, it looks effortless, but when it's not working, it looks impossible to fix. "It's hard to achieve and easy to lose," says Friedman.

"Charlie and Diane really like each other," says McGrady. "That's been the easy part for us." She admits *GMA* swapped too many faces in too short a time. Indeed, our focus group struggled to remind each other who was who on *GMA* in the last few years, and who left when.

NBC has made subtle substitutions a cornerstone of its strategy. When the network tripped up with Deborah Norville's disastrous takeover from Pauley in 1990, its executives vowed never to repeat the mistake. When Lauer took Gumbel's seat, he'd been filling in as an anchor for almost a third of the previous year's programs. When Roker replaced Willard Scott, he was already familiar to viewers from doing weekend weather. "That is how smart NBC is and the *Today* show is," says Friedman. "They never introduce someone whom you don't know."

Friedman has some more free advice for *GMA*: Don't hire a news reader or substitute anchor who isn't your best bet for the next generation. "You have to use those positions to train your hosts for the future," he insists. "If Mora is going to replace Gibson, great. If not, he shouldn't be there."

Friedman also warns that *GMA's* next big dazzler—the planned Times Square studio—is misguided in its scope. (Friedman was responsible for *Today's* popular return to a studio with a window onto the street.) "Big is not beautiful in the morning," he says. "Small is right. People want intimacy in the morning." He says *Today's* set is designed to create intimate corners of conversation. "You don't want two-level studios," he scolds. "Remember, nobody ever leaves a Broadway musical humming the set."

MCGRADY KNOWS BETTER THAN ANYONE THAT *GMA* has a long road ahead. "I think you do move viewers," she says, "but I think it does take longer. They leave gradually and they come back gradually and we have a lot of work to do to say, *This is a program you can depend on and is comfortable to watch.*" She offers no insights into how ABC expects to solve the planned but unscheduled departures of Sawyer and Gibson. "I honestly don't know," she says. "Even if you stick pins in my fingernails," she laughs, insisting that she's been focused entirely on getting the show off its deathbed. "The show had been in a free fall and we are trying to stabilize a show that has been

important to the network for a long time," she says. "It's not a situation you want to be in, but we were in it...You can make a decision to do nothing, or you can make a decision to do something. We decided to do something."

Sawyer told *USA Today* her aim is to right the ship, not to beat Couric and Lauer: "I don't think that way...I know you don't believe me." Sawyer told the paper she agreed to pitch in "because everyone at ABC News has a stake in what happens...and we have to show we believe in it."

If our focus group confirmed anything, it's that ABC made a strong short-term move in asking Sawyer to stand in. Most people already like and trust her. "It was the right thing to do," affirms Pauley. "The right thing to do is to book a billboard the size of the moon to say, *We've got something different over here! Check us out, you've been gone a long time! We're not a hole in the ground any more!*" But Pauley says she



doesn't see how it solves *GMA's* future. "To stabilize the program they're setting up a situation that is by definition unstable the second Diane and Charlie defer to...who?"

In the short term, the strategy is working. *GMA's* ratings have cut into *Today's*. *GMA* has picked up an average of 510,000 daily viewers since the Sawyer Solution went into effect, while *Today* has lost a similar number. As of mid-February, some 6 million homes still watched *Today*, compared to 4 million for *GMA*.

That success could create pressure to keep Sawyer on *GMA*. When asked if she'd be doing this in a year, Sawyer joked to *USA Today*, "You would have to see me hospitalized maybe." But Spencer Christian thinks success may box her in: "We are told that it's temporary, but don't you think that six months down the road, if there's a thirty percent increase in the ratings, that it might not be so temporary?" ■

Today's four musketeers, appearing on the Rosie O'Donnell Show. From left, weatherman Al Roker, news anchor Ann Curry, Couric, and Lauer: Who wouldn't want to be friends with a gang like this?

A ONE-WOMAN BAND

Armed only with a hand-held video camera, Nancy Durham travels to remote ports of war to find compelling stories of survival.

FOR THIS MISSION, NANCY DURHAM WORE HER BATTLE FATIGUES, A UNIFORM SHE SAYS IS MADE OF A THIN sweater, a heavy sweater, a khaki vest, a bulky brown parka, leggings, cashmere socks, a black beret, and gloves. In one hand, she cradled her ammunition, a portable video camera. She'd been preparing for this trip to Kosovo for two months, and nothing—not brutal cold, not impending nightfall, not raging civil war—was going to stop her from getting what she had come for.

Durham, 46, is a video journalist who contributes regularly to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Newsworld (a 24-hour news-channel affiliate of the CBC), and her beat—"ordinary people in a mess," she says—has brought her to the Balkans ten times in the past five years.

In December, she went to the region to locate Ramonda, an 18-year-old ethnic Albanian whom Durham introduced to Canadian viewers in October after Ramonda had just seen her sister killed by Serbian forces. About six weeks after that, a source informed the reporter that Ramonda had joined the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Durham says she needed to find a way to reach the KLA headquarters. The site was high atop a mountain, miles up an unpaved trail from Pristina, the regional capital, deep in the heart of the war-torn area. Luckily, as a videotape of her excursion shows, a one-eyed farmer agreed to give her a lift in his

tractor, a beat-up machine that comfortably seats one.

Durham climbed on the tractor with the driver and a doctor (two nurses and her interpreter hopped on the back), and they bounced up the rocky path to find Ramonda, a girl politicized, militarized, and irrevocably shaped by the horrors of ethnic cleansing. After two hours, Durham reached the top. With only about a half hour of dusk remaining to provide light for her shot, she got her story.

A tractor ride up a remote mountain couldn't work for a traditional TV reporter because TV reporting is a largely collaborative effort of reporters, pro-

ducers, and camera and lighting technicians; foreign news bureaus balk at the expense of sending these kinds of crews into the field. But Durham is a "one-man band," as she calls herself, and this gives her—and her viewers in Canada—cheap entrée into hard-to-reach ports of war.

David Feingold, a former CNN London bureau chief and one-time executive editor for Reuters Television, says "journalists in big organizations are in a very difficult position" because of budget concessions. So "packaging from London"—the piecing together of wire reports and sound bites by a desk-bound reporter to produce a foreign news



In the Kosovo village of Drenica, video journalist Nancy Durham surveys the damage inflicted by ethnic hatred. When other journalists race to get the picture of guns afire, she heads in a different direction. "I'm not sure we get the story at the front line," she says.



Durham films Fiza Shurdhiqui and her grandson as they stand outside their Kosovo home, which was partially destroyed by fighting.

story—has become increasingly common. When a live report *is* filed from abroad, a highly paid correspondent is often parachuted into the troubled spot to read a story for the camera after producers have compiled data from secondary sources. It's this type of reporting, Feingold adds, that makes foreign news so "stale." Durham is proving that compelling, primary foreign reporting can be cost-effective. "She's pretty much what the future of broadcast journalism is," says NBC's London bureau chief, Karen Curry.

TV journalism requires both high-quality visual images and solid reporting, and Durham provides both, according to Tony Burman, the head of *Newsworld*. Visually, Durham's videos reveal a certain "grittiness," which Burman says heightens the "reality" of war. Also, Durham boasts a 23-year reporting career, the bulk of which she spent with CBC radio. Those radio days, she says, taught her to "use sound," whether the whistle of a homeless man hailing her a taxi or the angst in the voice of a dissident in Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia. "Putting pictures on the radio," she explains, taught her how to let characters tell a story for her.

Accordingly, Durham limits the time she spends in front of the camera. "I'm aware of the appetite to see a reporter," she admits, but prefers to make her presence a part of her stories by building an intimacy

with her subjects that transposes itself onto the screen. When she sees a correspondent speaking before the camera, "I stop and immediately start to think about the reporters, what they're wearing, what they look like." Durham says. "If you're thinking about a correspondent's appearance, you're missing important things."

Durham doesn't look like a glam-queen network correspondent or a rough-and-tumble war reporter. Rather, she looks like both. She dresses stylishly, yet she also has a rugged air about her—like someone who's flown in an MiG29 jet fighter (which she has). In the London bureau of the CBC where she works, she's known to be singularly focused—at least once she's headed toward the "on-air" corner of the bureau to give a live report to Toronto, curlers still ensnared in her hair.

She's also noticeably driven—not by stardom or financial success but by curiosity and awe inspired by her "ordinary" subjects, of which Ramonda, the soldier, is just one. There's also Claude, the nine-year-old Hutu boy who was held in jail accused of genocide in Rwanda, and Shpetim Robaj, the ethnic Albanian doctor who lost his life bringing medical care to people who had retreated to the forest after being pushed out of their Kosovo villages by Serbs. Durham engages her story subjects in conversations, just two people talking about war and survival. And with tenacity, fearlessness, and a video camera in her hand, Durham compels nearly a million viewers to join that conversation. ■

In March, staff writer Katherine Rosman profiled sportswriter Ron Lemasters.

EHRENREICH GOES UNDERCOVER AS LOW-WAGE WORKER

HARPER'S MAGAZINE contributing editor Barbara Ehrenreich met with the magazine's editor, Lewis Lapham, in early 1998 to pitch a story about sports mania. Somehow, the topics of welfare reform and the working poor arose, and Ehrenreich says she blurted out a question about how people can be expected to live on the salaries available to low-wage workers. Then, "not knowing what I was getting into," she explains, "I sputtered, 'Somebody has to go out there and do the old-fashioned type of journalism, and try it themselves.'" Lapham quickly retorted, "You!"

The sports-mania story idea was set aside, and in June 1998, Ehrenreich, 57, took a month-long journey into the world of the Florida Keys's low-wage workers. Realizing that she could never duplicate the psychological experience of living in poverty—and that she was not the typical welfare mother with two small children to care for—Ehrenreich set a different goal for herself: After working at a low-wage job for one month, would she make enough money to pay rent and basic living costs?

In the guise of a divorced homemaker whose sole work experience was housecleaning, Ehrenreich moved into a \$500-a-month efficiency 30 miles from Key West. After three days of scouring help-wanted ads and filling out applications for various low-level jobs in the "hospitality industry," she accepted a job as a waitress in a major hotel-chain restaurant, earning about \$5.15 an hour, including tips. At the restaurant, Ehrenreich learned how utterly draining—both mentally and physically—such work is. She also confronted the humiliating treatment she



Writer Barbara Ehrenreich forced herself to live as a low-wage worker for one month to see if she could survive. Her story for *Harper's* January issue detailed her experience.

and her coworkers experienced from management. Getting in trouble for sitting down for a moment or giving a customer more than one roll was just the beginning. Threats of drug tests, locker searches, and the loss of a staff break room rounded out the program. As she noted in her article, "I haven't been treated this way—lined up in the corridor, threatened with locker searches, peppered with carelessly aimed accusations—since junior high school."

Ehrenreich also witnessed the extra costs that come with being poor. "If you can't put up two months' rent you need to secure an apartment, you end up paying through the nose for a room by the week. If you have only a room, with a hot plate at best, you can't save by cooking...You eat fast food, or the hot dogs and styrofoam cups of soup that can be microwaved in a convenience store." Her coworkers lived in flop houses, vans, trailers, and apartments overstuffed with people.

After two weeks, Ehrenreich realized she needed to get a second job and move if she was going to make ends meet. Physically unable to keep up with the rigors of two jobs, it was no time until she was back down to one. Despite her valiant effort, Ehrenreich ultimately was forced to short-circuit her own experiment, knowing she would not be able to pay her rent.

Her vibrant account of the experience in the January issue of *Harper's* elucidated the life of the working poor by providing concrete evidence of how brutalizing their daily life is. As Clara Jeffery, Ehrenreich's editor at *Harper's*, points out, "To approach [this issue] from the bottom up rather than the top down is something that takes a lot of stamina and courage." —Leslie Heilbrunn

ARAX AND GLADSTONE EXPOSE TRUTH BEHIND PRISON KILLINGS

OVER THE LAST DECADE, guards in California prisons have killed 39 inmates engaged in fistfights and melees, a practice unheard of in other states." That startling fact is at the core of a *Los Angeles Times* series that began last July.

Mark Arax, 42, first reported on central California's Corcoran prison in 1996, when he revealed that guards had staged "gladiator days"—releasing inmates from rival gangs into small prison yards where they resumed the blood feuds they had fought out on the streets. Eighteen months later, federal officials announced indictments of eight Corcoran guards, and Arax revisited the story, this time teaming up with Sacramento-based Mark Gladstone, 50.

While Gladstone sought to ferret out information from state officials responsible for overseeing the facility, Arax circumvented a California law that bars reporters from prisons by developing "pen-pal relationships with inmates" and by cultivating sources among guards. "I had a lot of one- and two-in-the-morning conversations," Arax says. "What made these stories so difficult was getting corroboration."

Then, in mid-1998, a prison source gave Arax a trove of source material: 10,000 pages of internal documents suggesting that Corcoran's gladiator days had evolved into something far more sinister. As Arax and Gladstone reported in a page-one story last July, guards had not only set up fights but had also shot combatants.

The leaked documents strongly suggested that an investigation into inmate deaths ordered by then-Governor Pete Wilson had been "a whitewash," Arax says. Adds Gladstone: "The state was condoning all this brutality and violence by turning the other way."

Wilson's office fiercely challenged the

Times's accounts, both in complaints to editors and in a lengthy letter that the paper published in August. But public hearings held by state legislators last fall justified the *Times's* investigative work. "The hearings, which in some ways were intended to cast doubt on the reports, instead absolutely confirmed them," notes *Times* managing editor for news, Leo Wolinsky.

Indeed, an independent panel subsequently concluded that the use of deadly force was unjustified in 24 incidents, including five fatal shootings. Those findings prompted prison officials to revise their use-of-force policy, and in January state attorney general Bill Lockyer launched a criminal investigation. "The hearings," says a Lockyer spokesman, "put a more official face on the *Times* series." —D.M. Osborne

When Mark Gladstone (below, top) and Mark Arax (below, bottom) investigated California's Corcoran prison, they found that guards had killed inmates needlessly.



CATCHING THAT TEEN SPIRIT

After only one year on newsstands, *Teen People* is a hit—thanks to a group of teenage trendspotters who know what's hot and what's not. ● BY RACHEL TAYLOR

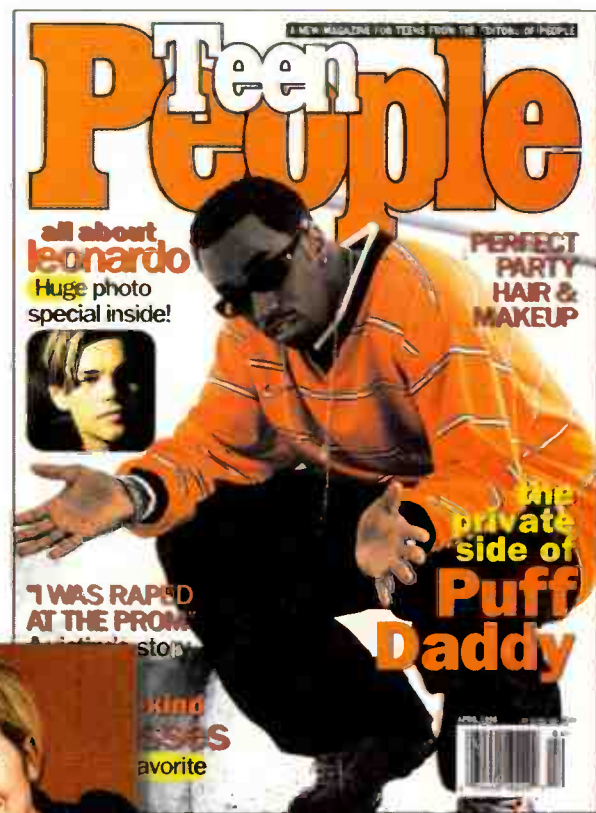
IN JANUARY 1998, 14-YEAR-OLD Kira Stoops of Idaho Falls, Idaho, noticed an interesting solicitation in her local paper, *The Post Register*. *Teen People*, a new magazine set to launch the following month, was looking for “trendspotters”—kids around the country who could keep the magazine’s New York-based editors, writers, and business executives apprised of the ins and outs of teen life. Stoops drafted a letter: “Kira Stoops’s uncanny ability to predict fads before they hit the market would definitely define her as a trendspotter,” it began. “Her singular style allows her to take a nifty, spiffy, positive perspective and write hysterically witty reviews on subjects ranging from edible clothing to platform tennis shoes....Please consider this aspiring journalist for your Trendspotter staff. Respectfully, Kira Fjeseth Stoops.”

In October, Stoops was called to duty. *Teen People* was sending a photographer to Idaho Falls and wanted Stoops to help him tap into the local teen scene. When the photographer arrived the next month, “I took him around town and showed him all the hot spots,” Stoops says. “We took pictures of all the people we thought looked interesting.”

Photos of Stoops’s peers, featured in *Teen People*’s February issue, reached roughly 350,000 more readers than the magazine’s business plan predicted when it debuted one year ago, according to publisher Anne Zehren. Entering a marketplace already saturated with power-

houses *Seventeen* (rate base 2.35 million), *YM* (2.2 million), and *Teen* (2 million), this *People* magazine spin-off has—after just ten issues—raised its rate base from 500,000 to 1.2 million. The magazine now outsells both *Teen* and *YM* on newsstands and has been able to lure advertisers who never before targeted the teen-magazine market. In large part, it is kids like Stoops who have helped build *Teen People* into such a force.

It was more than ten years ago that Time Inc. first tossed around the notion of a teen-oriented *People*. But it wasn’t until last year that the growth of the “echo-boom generation”—the kids of baby boomers—reached a point at which, marketing experts thought, the idea would thrive. Michael Wood, director of syndicated research at Teenage Research Unlimited, a teen-focused market research company, says the number of American echo boomers is growing and will continue to do so until 2010, when “there will be more teens in the U.S. than ever before.” These teens, Wood says, spent \$140 billion last year—up from \$122 billion in 1997. What’s more, according to Wood’s polling results, 42 percent of teen girls say they have bought a magazine in the last 90 days; 34 percent of boys have done the same. Time Inc. marketers saw this trend and decided it was time to act.



Teen People managing editor Christina Ferrari looks to teens to help shape her magazine.

What they couldn’t have predicted was how wildly the number of hot teen stars such as heartthrob Leonardo DiCaprio would surge last year. “What usually happens,” explains Dan Capell, editor of industry newsletter *Capell’s Circulation Report*, is “a particular group is hot or a particular star is hot, and that drives newsstand sales a lot in teen magazines.”

When teens said they liked Puff Daddy, *Teen People* editors put him on the cover.

Staff writer Rachel Taylor wrote about the launch of CNN’s *Student Bureau* in the February issue.

Teen People managing editor Christina Ferrari recognizes that she is dependent on her readers to tell her who the hot stars are. "I'm a thirty-four-year-old married magazine editor, and I can't have my finger on the pulse of every single teenager," she explains. "Instead of me sitting there and guessing what they are interested in, it makes it more realistic if we have actual teens telling us." So, Ferrari recruited nearly 5,000 trendspotters whose observations help to shape the magazine and show advertisers what kids are interested in.

Michael Bevan, national advertising manager for Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc., says *Teen People* is the first teen magazine his company has advertised in. One draw, he says, is trendspotter access. Last fall, Toyota executives met with a group of trendspotters in Las Vegas to talk about today's teen world. This direct link, coupled with bargain advertising rates—*Teen People* recently raised its rates from \$36,000 to \$48,000 for a full-page, four-color ad, while *YM* charges \$86,691 for the same ad—have helped push *Teen People* into second place in the number of ad pages sold last year (*Seventeen* was first) for the teen-magazine market.

Editorially, *Teen People's* trendspotters are supplemented by a 35-member "news team," which is made up of high school and college journalists who are paid freelance writing rates to produce articles. In a four-page feature published in February, 18-year-old Melissa Harris reported on European attitudes toward sexuality—a subject she researched on a 14-day tour abroad. Another February feature, 13

celebrity and entertainment stories. But it's the news about real teens that sets it apart. Articles—such as "Hate in America" about last October's fatal attack on gay college student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming—are timely and hard-hitting, and they address the issues teens are talking about. "Every other teen magazine you pick up is going to be like *Top 10 ways to find out if he likes you* or *Find out more about yourself that you didn't really know in the first place*," explains Stoops. "I hate those questions. *Teen People* doesn't really have any of those. It has real stuff."

Real stuff means in-depth news and profiles that raise the bar of editorial quality for the teen-magazine market. And *Teen People* is uniquely positioned to do these insider-type pieces, thanks to *People* magazine's nationwide network of correspondents—to which the teen version has complete access. These stories are written with a mature audience in mind; slang, so common in other teen monthlies, is never used. Asked to compare the quality of writing in her magazine to that of *YM*, where she worked for three years, Ferrari responds: "I can't compare a relationship story in *YM* to a story about hate



dence to take risks. Unlike the other teen monthlies—which, with articles like "Can you read his body lingo," write about boys as they relate to girls—*Teen People* recognizes guys as an independent audience. By picturing boys in their fashion and beauty spreads and developing a "Hot Stuff: Guys" department that features new clothes and accessories for boys, *Teen People's* male readership has grown, by internal calculations, to nearly 20 percent of its total circulation.

Teen People celebrated its first anniversary on January 6 with a party at the trendy Key Club on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. There, teen groups 'N Sync and 98° crowded in alongside celebrities like Keri Russell (*Felicity*), Andrew Keegan (*7th Heaven*), and Vincent Young (*Beverly Hills, 90210*) to honor *Teen People's* success. But perhaps *Teen People* should have invited real teens—like Kira Stoops—to welcome in year two. After all, it's regular kids who have given the magazine something to celebrate.

Teen People offers stories that interest both boys and girls. Readers are attracted to the magazine's hard-hitting stories.

Teen People offers in-depth news and profiles that raise the bar of editorial quality for the teen-magazine market.

pages long and titled "20 Teens Who Will Change the World," was also reported by news-team members. By comparison, neither *Teen* nor *Seventeen* published any teen-reported features in their February issues; *YM* published one teen story "as told to" a professional writer.

Like its competitors, *Teen People* devotes space to relationship, beauty, and fashion advice and runs *People*-style

crimes in *Teen People*....The real difference is that we just don't do those boy-crazy articles."

And unlike *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen*, *Teen People's* policy dictates that professional models never be used. In the magazine's February issue, 32 pages are filled with photos of "real" teens.

Teen People's ability to tap into teen culture has given its editors the confi-

(continued from page 20)

STANDARD PRACTICE?

*I was particularly disturbed by the truth of the "Lab Scam" piece, but writer D.M. Osborne left out one basic, perhaps crucial point of evidence, probably to her—and the civil plaintiffs'—advantage: What does ABC News's own in-house editorial-standards book say about producers/employees lying to gain entry or access to sources? A follow-up here might prove fascinating.

MARK WALLACE
New York, NY
(via e-mail)

D.M. Osborne responds: I did review the ABC standards and policies book, as well as internal memoranda updating those policies. ABC requires that a news employee obtain specific management approval before posing as someone other than a journalist. In the *PrimeTime Live* segment I wrote about, the producer had such approvals, in writing, from ABC's news-practices division.

LAST CALL

*Intel's investments in media content and development are worrisome ["Intel Faces Its Paranoia," Next, February]. But the media is already

widely corrupted by the likes of Time Warner and Disney, celebrity journalism and infotainment, gossip-as-news and Matt Drudge—all the stuff that *Brill's Content* documents so well. Intel seems like the guy who shows up at a bachelor party after the strippers have left and the booze is gone.

DAVID WOODWORTH
Sunnyvale, CA
(via e-mail)

GROW UP

I used to think my colleagues, lawyers, were excessively contentious and unpleasant. However, the letters you print from journalists make lawyers look good. Ceaseless bickering over minutiae and Tarzanian chest-beating do not advance rational discourse. There's nothing wrong with spirited debate, but how about acting mature in the process?

RALPH A. HUMMEL
Huntington, NY

LIBERALS CAN LAUGH

You have said that liberals lack humor ["Stuff We Like," February]. I do not know how you can say that. I know of many very humorous liberals. Molly Ivins, Al Franken, Michael Moore, Kate Clinton, Will Durst, and Lydia Sargent are all liberals.

JOHN MULLIGAN
Alpharetta, GA
(via e-mail)

POTENT SHOT

*Thank you for your selection of [Alan Chin's] photograph ["How They Got That Shot," The Notebook, February]. It is very powerful. I hope to see more photojournalism in future issues.

MICHAEL BERGER
New York, NY
(via e-mail)

WRONG IMPRESSION

*For someone who has been following the recent events in the Serbian province of Kosovo, I, like many readers, was shocked beyond belief when I saw Alan Chin's photo of 19-year-old Ali Paqarizi, who had been killed by a booby trap, in

The New York Times. Surrounded by grieving family and friends, I could not comprehend how and why Mr. Chin could photograph such a private moment. It almost appeared to be exploitative.

After reading Miriam Hsia's account and background of the photo and Mr. Chin, I felt guilty about my original impression. I wish to thank not only Mr. Chin but also Ms. Hsia and *Brill's Content* for giving readers insight into a profession that is often misjudged and truly underappreciated by the general public.

MARY LITKOVICH
New York, NY
(via e-mail)



DEMYTHOLOGY

Ben Stein's column on the media myth versus the reality of the 1950s ["Those Fabulous Fifties," The Debunker, February] was, overall, insightful and well-written. However, I think he failed to note some important points.

First, [the movie] *Pleasantville* is a fiction that tries to duplicate a fictional 1950s in the setting of a typical situation comedy of the era. This brings up the second point: The 1950s portrayed in the film is indeed a media myth, one created by the media of that time and perpetuated by ordinary citizens and media-types today. That this image has supplanted the turbulence Mr. Stein refers to is a potent example of the need for critical examination of the media.

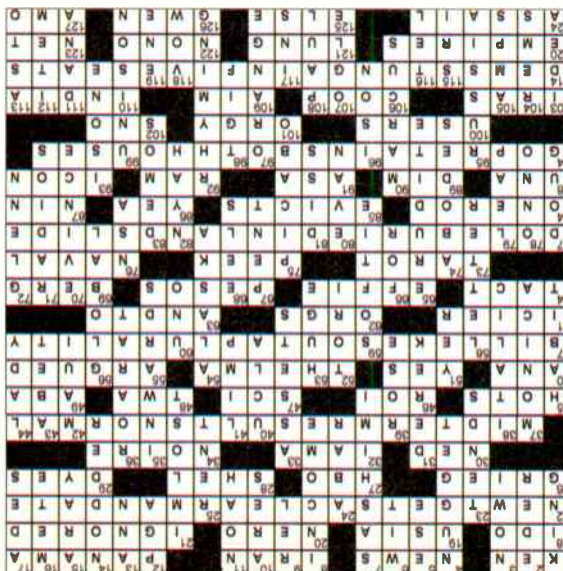
BILL KENT
Rochester, NY
(via e-mail)

CAR TALK

*Realizing you've probably already heard from others about this, in "Those Fabulous Fifties," shame on your brilliant team for including an obvious picture, circa 1962 or 1963, as

Crossword Puzzle solution

see puzzle page 127



illustrating the 1950s. The grill of the car is a giveaway and the pillbox hat is Kennedy-esque.

DARRYL BEESON
Dallas, TX
(via e-mail)



Editor's note: We asked the folks at the trade publication *Automotive News* to take a look at the picture in question. They informed us that the bit of grill visible is consistent with that of a 1960 Chevrolet. We regret the error.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*I was surprised to see that your February list of "best" sources of information on diet and nutrition ["Sources," February] was so mainstream. Because most nutrition research involves single nutrients or foods rather than harder-to-study dietary patterns, results are often subject to interpretation. That's why the biases of experts matter so much. Apparently, your reporter never actually examined the sources recommended by the 15 unnamed experts. The article fails to note that each of the American Dietetic Association's website fact sheets has its very own corporate sponsor. Similarly, the International Food Information Council may be an unusually reliable trade association, but it represents leading food and beverage companies and can hardly be considered unbiased.

MARION NESTLE
Professor and chair
Dept. of Nutrition and Food Studies
New York University
New York, NY
(via e-mail)

NARROW-MINDED

The "media diet" of Carl Bernstein [The Notebook, February] is pretty thin gruel. The spectrum of political,

economic, and social thought is so narrow that I would question his analysis of events. Unfortunately, Mr. Bernstein is not unique among our "pundits."

L.S. ANDERSON
Seattle, WA
(via e-mail)

LINE CROSSED BEFORE

Regarding Steven Brill's uneasiness with the possibility of former actor Charles Grodin being pressed into service anchoring MSNBC's Iraq coverage ["Rewind," February]: I am sympathetic to this concern. After all, 31 years ago I felt the same uneasiness when CBS News hired a former game-show host [Mike Wallace] to coanchor its *60 Minutes* newsmagazine.

MIKE GOLD
Norwalk, CT
(via e-mail)

GRODIN'S OKAY

I disagree with you that Charles Grodin was miscast. He has demonstrated his ability as an astute analyst of current events. Mr. Grodin is a former actor who has shown his outstanding ability as a newscaster. I find *Brill's Content* very stimulating, but I am disappointed in your judgment of Charles Grodin.

SYLVIA ROSENTHAL
Swarthmore, PA

THE HEARTBREAK KID

*Regarding your piece on Charles Grodin's "miscast role" in anchoring MSNBC during one of the ongoing crises with Iraq, your prejudices are showing. You say you "try not to be a snob about politicians or even showbiz people becoming television journalists," but that's what you appear to be.

You repeatedly refer to Charles Grodin as an actor and ignore the fact that he is in his fifth year working as a journalist-commentator who has covered every breaking story for the network in that period, earning four Cable ACE [award nominations]. Your assessment is just the kind of journalism I thought it was your intention to criticize.

JOHN GABRIEL
Producer
Charles Grodin show
Secaucus, NJ

CHELSEA NOT HYDE

*In the "Rewind" column in the February issue, you compare the invasion of Chelsea Clinton's privacy with the coverage of Henry Hyde's "long-ago affair." The two cases aren't remotely connected. Chelsea Clinton is not part of the public story of [President Clinton's impeachment], while Congressman Hyde has demonstrated an amount of hypocrisy that can only be called monumental.

LEIDA SNOW
New York, NY

WHY MARCIA, INDEED

*At last! At long last! Your article ["Rewind," February] under the heading of "Fame," gave me, but only to a certain extent, the question—but not the answer—I've waited these many months to hear or to read: Why has Marcia Clark been elevated—as she had no other way to go but up—to legal analyst and substitute for [Geraldo] Rivera's show on CNBC? Ironic, isn't it?

GLORIA LAMARCHE
Burlington, VT

MEAT ON THE TABLE

*Your February story on ZapMe ["A for Effort, F for Editorial," PG Watch, February] exemplifies two troubling trends in *Brill's Content*.

First is your lack of concern about the expansion of advertising, overt and covert, to overwhelm all other forms of content. When others criticized ZapMe's force-feeding of ads to kids, your author sneered at their comments as "predictable." Your magazine should fight, not accept, ad-saturation.

Second—and perhaps related—is your tendency to "find" media bias against established corporate interests. Your defense of tobacco companies was bad enough. ["Warning: Secondhand Smoke May Not Kill You," December/January]. But now the worst thing about ZapMe—judging by your article and its accompanying graphic—is its bias in favor of vegetarianism. The sole "evidence" of such a "bias" is that an article on ZapMe included the indisputable fact that meat eaters prefer not to know much about the meat industry's practices.



You risk trivializing your magazine when you fail to challenge the larger assumptions of the media culture, spending your energies instead on narrow quarrels about particular articles in obscure media sources.

SAM HELDMAN
Washington, DC
(via e-mail)

LOOK AT THE MERITS

*Because I was the reference for one of the three cases in which Tom Goldstein, dean of the Columbia Journalism School, is an expert witness, and because I am an academic who has been an expert witness, I have been trying to understand what it is about Tom's modest expert work that you think warrants criticism ["The Dean Takes A Stand," *The Notebook*, February].

Is it that Tom's expert testimony is inconsistent with his status as an academic? Perhaps it is the fact that Tom is a dean and, therefore, may be seen to speak for the school itself. Or maybe what bothers you is that Tom's three cases are all for plaintiffs, and against a news medium. But three cases do not establish a pattern.

Each of us who testifies as an expert is open to criticism for the content of what we say, but you make no effort to evaluate the merits of Tom's opinions. In fact, you ignore the justice of the three cases entirely.

STEPHEN GILLERS
Professor
New York University School of Law
New York, NY

THE DEAN DEFENDED

*As the attorney representing the plaintiff in the case against *Hard Copy*

mentioned in your article "The Dean Takes A Stand" [*The Notebook*, February], I am obviously grateful to [Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism dean] Tom Goldstein for agreeing to give his expert opinion concerning the journalistic practices at issue in our case. His willingness to serve as an expert enhances the process for all of us because it allow us to have the benefit of his expert knowledge in evaluating the conduct at issue.

It is ironic that after I read this article, which implicitly and, I believe, unfairly criticizes Mr. Goldstein for serving as a witness in cases against the media, I arrived home to find a letter soliciting me to subscribe to *Brill's Content* with this message on the envelope: "Isn't it time someone held the media accountable?"

KATHRYN EMMETT
Stamford, CT

CHECK YOURSELF

*Your February item on dean Tom Goldstein of Columbia Journalism School and his testimony against media defendants demonstrates journalists' reflexive objection to any breach in professional self-protection. Your article described three cases in which Mr. Goldstein testified for the plaintiffs. Your descriptions aren't enough to make a fully informed judgment, but all are substandard journalistic practice. Two of the pieces were from tabloid-news organizations that seem to me more likely to hide behind the First Amendment than to worry much about preserving its values and purposes.

Your magazine is among the "stuff I like" because you make a highly responsible effort to seriously and objectively challenge weak journalism as well as to recognize and defend the best. So why can't a knowledgeable scholar and practitioner of journalism challenge weak journalism in a courtroom? Is the objection to taking money for the criticism? Surely not, because more and more journalists seem to be hiring themselves out as pundits on the media. Is the objection to appearing in court for pay?

Surely not, because defense lawyers routinely hire journalism experts to defend media practices against lawsuits. A few pages later in your own magazine ["Implausible Deniability," *Talk Back*], we find eminent First Amendment defender Floyd Abrams leading the abject penitence of CNN over [its Tailwind story]—for pay, we presume.

NEIL SKENE
Great Falls, VA
(via e-mail)

THE FULL STORY

*Mike Pride's "Out Here" column in the February issue ["Live Free Or Die"] about the state senate candidate being "outed" by *The Union Leader* of Manchester, New Hampshire, raised an important point, but Mr. Pride didn't really address it. He stated that "[Candidate Rick] Trombly's sexual orientation had no relevance in the campaign..."

I'd agree that his sexual orientation has no relevance to the office [Trombly] was seeking. But to the campaign? I don't know anything about the voters in Mr. Pride's part of the country, but I do know that in my remote part of southwestern Oregon, if I had known that a candidate was the contact person for a gay organization and didn't tell



my readers that fact, they would believe I had tried to cook the election.

FREDERICK TAYLOR
Publisher
The Coquille Valley Sentinel
Coquille, OR

THE NAME FITS

*Mike Pride seems to be aptly named, at least as reflected in the column "Live Free Or Die." I trust he did not permanently injure his arm patting

himself on the back. Even though I agree with the privacy issue discussed in the column, the self-congratulatory tone was more than I could stomach. Someone else should have reported the story, then Mr. Pride could have proudly basked in the glow of approval that would have ensued.

WARREN MCFARLAND
Winter Springs, FL
(via e-mail)

LIVE FREE OR PRY

*The subject of Mike Pride's most recent article ["Live Free or Die," Out Here, February], dealt with how the *Monitor* and the rival *Union Leader* handled information concerning a state senate candidate's sexual orientation.

Mr. Pride and his cohorts opted not to run a story dealing with the candidate being a lawyer for a gay organization; the conservative *Union Leader* ran the story. According to Mr. Pride, a candidate's sexual orientation has no place in political dialogue. Ah, but it does for the *Monitor*. Stay with me.

On December 31, 1998, the *Monitor* ran a page-one, above-the-fold story about a lesbian couple in New Hampshire that through artificial insemination had brought a child into their relationship. The couple was challenging the state's law banning gay couples from being the legal parents of a child. This article read as a gay-rights rallying cry.

About four days later I read a letter to the editor praising the article for giving light to an issue that lawmakers must change. The writer found New Hampshire's law terribly unfair, almost sinful to gay couples. Also that day, the editorial was about how New Hampshire's law prohibiting gay couples from adopting or both partners being the legal parents was tantamount to the persecution of blacks.

Here is the connection: the *Monitor* may not have published any reports about the candidate's association to the gay club for fear that it would lose a powerful gay activist in

the state senate. Mr. Pride's article [in *Brill's Content*] stated that school funding is the most important issue the state faces. The aforementioned editorial said the second most important legislative issue was gay parenting. If it is such a crucial legislative issue to the *Monitor*, would it not benefit the *Monitor's* cause to have a powerful gay activist in the senate? If a gay-rights issue is number two on the paper's political list, then is not a candidate's sexual orientation of some value?

I read page 8 of *Brill's Content* under "What We Stand For, number 3, Conflicts of Interest": "it [journalism] should not be motivated, for example, by the desire to...advance a particular political interest." I then looked at page 50, on which Mr. Pride stated, "Life offers few opportunities to face and strike back at overt prejudice in your own backyard, a newspaper needs to seize them when they come."

God bless page 8, goddamn page 50.

JAMES MCMAHON
New Hampton, NH

Mike Pride responds: State Senator Rick Trombly is not "a powerful gay activist." He has said nothing publicly about his sexual orientation, and, although he favors the gay-parenting legislation, he has not been a prime mover behind it. The story Mr. McMahon cites as "a gay-rights rallying cry" was a straightforward news feature laying out the issue in human terms; it reflected the views of both opponents and supporters. The *Monitor's* editorial favoring the gay-parenting bill did not say it was the second most important issue facing the legislature.

Given the context of the situation, I'm not sure Mr. McMahon would have published a story saying candidate Trombly was "the contact person for a gay organization." This assertion was clearly part of an anonymous last-minute smear campaign. Before running for the senate, Mr. Trombly served 16 years in the state House of Representatives, rising to a leadership position. Neither his sexual orientation—whatever it may be—nor his private behavior was ever an issue.

OLD FAITHFUL

*Thank you for illuminating upon constitutional scholar of the hour, Jonathan Turley ["A Pundit's Rise And Fall," *The Notebook*, February]. I found it most interesting that a luminary of Mr. Turley's magnitude would return a stranger's phone call in five minutes.

Mr. Turley is perhaps the epitome of what is spawned when prosecutors seduce all-too-willing members of the media.

BARRY SUSSMAN
Fort Lee, NJ
(via e-mail)



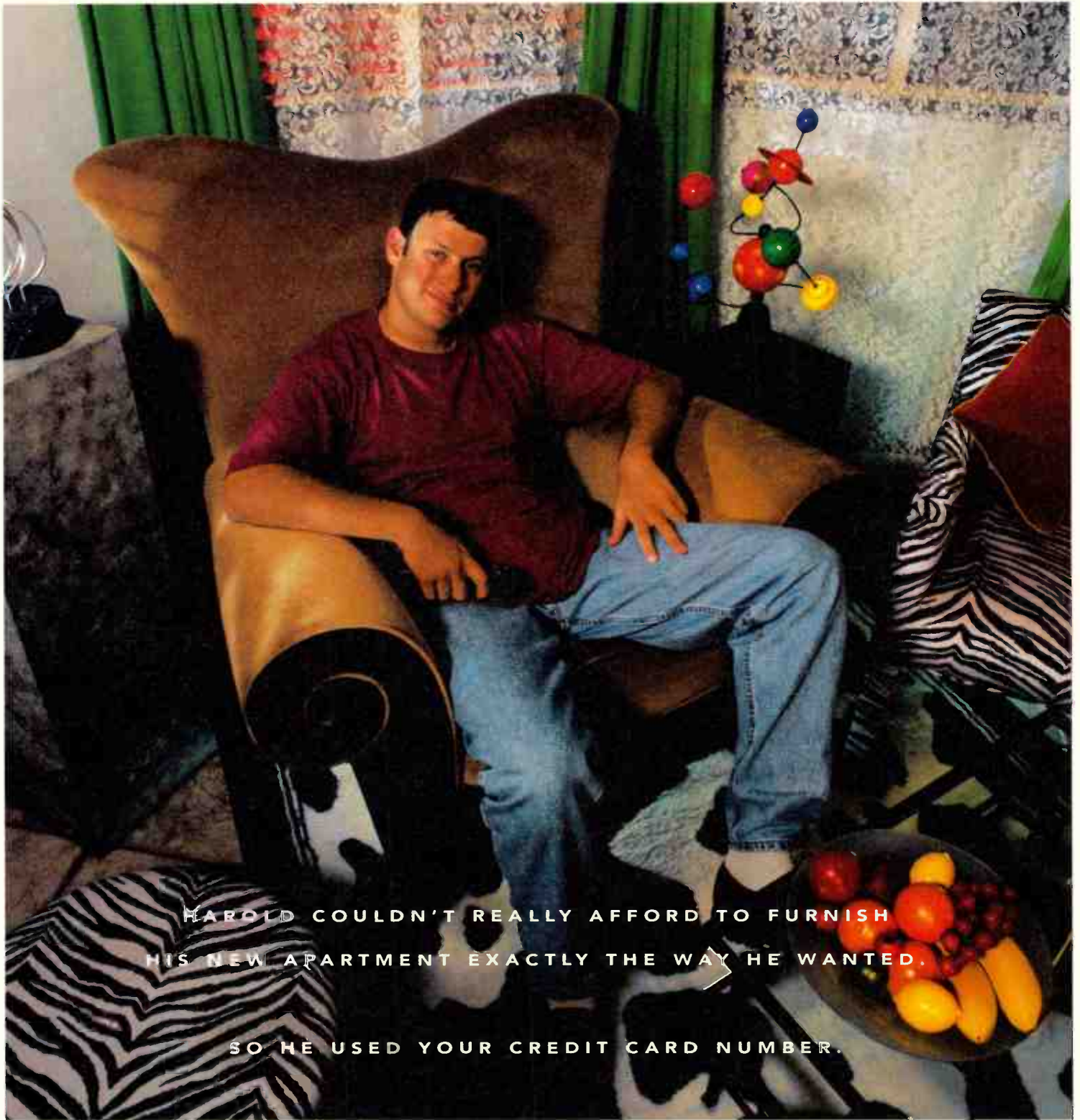
Jonathan Turley

KEEP ON PUSHING

*Thank the stars for *Brill's Content*. As your detractors are fond of pointing out, perhaps you don't get everything right. But the point is, you're trying harder than most anyone out there.

People love to criticize the flaws of idealists, because idealists dare to do what others dare not dream. My two-year subscription is one of the most pleasant consumer decisions I've made in ages.

JOHN TYNES
Seattle, WA
(via e-mail)



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“He Said, She Said”

When receiving your news, be sure to consider the source.

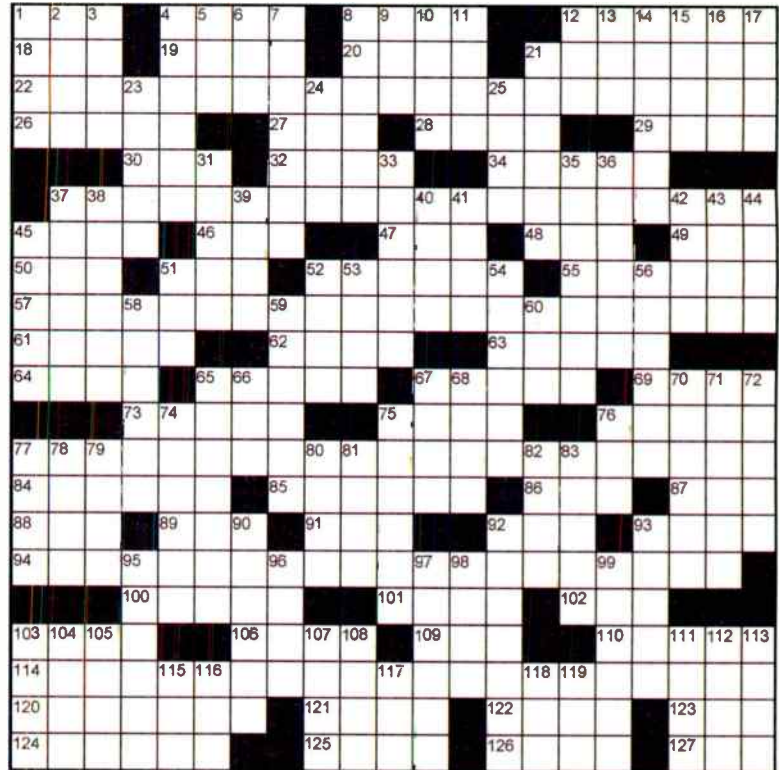
ACROSS

- 1 ABC News correspondent Kashiwahara
- 4 What's going on
- 8 Prefix with “gate”
- 12 Headline word of December 1989
- 18 Bonding words
- 19 VOA is part of it
- 20 Historical fiddler
- 21 Like many of John McLaughlin's guests
- 22 Headline Pat Buchanan might have written about 1994 congressional elections
- 26 *Peer Gynt* composer
- 27 Movie venue
- 28 Poet Silverstein
- 29 Turns red, perhaps
- 30 One of Homer's neighbors
- 32 “___ Rock”
- 34 Black, in Bordeaux
- 37 Headline Eleanor Clift might have written about 1994 congressional elections
- 45 Have the ___ for (want)
- 46 King of France
- 47 Robert Bazell's field (abbr.)
- 48 American rival
- 49 An atty. may belong to it
- 50 Santa ___, Calif.
- 51 Ury/Fisher title word
- 52 Geena Davis role
- 55 Made use of *Meet the Press*
- 57 Headline Pat Buchanan might have written about 1996 presidential election
- 61 Less friendly
- 62 Assns.
- 63 Dr. Seuss's ___ *Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*
- 64 Sam Donaldson's lack, often
- 65 Clio award cousin
- 67 Mexican bread
- 69 *Mad* cartoonist Dave
- 73 Eerie deck
- 75 It may be snuck
- 76 Annapolitan adjective
- 77 Headline Eleanor Clift might have written about 1996 presidential election
- 84 5.03 meters
- 85 Solves a flat problem?
- 86 House choice
- 87 Noted diarist
- 88 A as in Argentina
- 89 Not real quick

- 91 Congressman Hutchinson
- 92 It's measured in MB
- 93 Bill Gates, or something his software uses
- 94 Headline Pat Buchanan might have written about 1998 congressional elections
- 100 Computer owners
- 101 Frenzy
- 102 ___-cone
- 103 Magaziner and Levin
- 106 Henhouse
- 109 Get ready to fire
- 110 It has 21 TVs per 1,000 people
- 114 Headline Eleanor Clift might have written about 1998 congressional elections
- 120 Murdoch and Turner have them
- 121 It likes a breath of fresh air
- 122 Taboo
- 123 Alternative to “com” or “edu”
- 124 Take potshots at
- 125 Other
- 126 Ifill of NBC
- 127 Congressman Houghton

DOWN

- 1 *Live* man
- 2 *L.A. Times* critic who won an '87 Pulitzer
- 3 “___ get it!”
- 4 Gold piece
- 5 Ending for journal
- 6 Dave Barry, e.g.
- 7 Sushi cousin
- 8 Made money
- 9 Jud., e.g.
- 10 Mars, to the Greeks
- 11 First zookeeper
- 12 Swingers' group (abbr.)
- 13 Richards or Compton
- 14 Sleepy fellow
- 15 See ___ of hope
- 16 Dole (out)
- 17 Fruit drinks
- 21 Clueless phrase
- 23 Watches
- 24 “This guy walks into ___.”
- 25 Tony winner of 1996
- 31 1992 literature Nobelist Walcott
- 33 Plus-column entries
- 35 Self-directed
- 36 Chew out
- 37 Prefix with “gate”
- 38 Type type
- 39 Serious Charlie
- 40 1985 NIT champs



- 41 Less than energetic
- 42 Puunene is there
- 43 Help hoods
- 44 Hillary's the first one
- 45 Powerful force
- 51 The Beatles' “___ Blues”
- 52 Spelling on television
- 53 Monstrous
- 54 Its motto is “North to the future”
- 56 Like CNN's reach
- 58 Feedback form, frequently
- 59 Not exactly Mike Wallace
- 60 Popular card game
- 65 George Will-esque
- 66 Pro
- 67 ___-up (suppressed)
- 68 Slippery folk
- 70 Prove
- 71 Stern media
- 72 Name in '98 news
- 74 They may be humble
- 75 Skier Street
- 76 “Our electronic eavesdropping enterprise,” according to Colin Powell
- 77 Pulitzer-winner Marlette
- 78 ___ occasion (never)
- 79 It follows a look
- 80 Commentator Thomas
- 81 Badmouth, slangily
- 82 Teaser's taunt
- 83 Crude tapes
- 90 *Newsweek* writer Mabry
- 92 Jesse Jackson speech feature
- 93 “Lo, she ___ of this confederacy!”: Shak.
- 95 Subject of a recent David Remnick book
- 96 “The Heat ___”
- 97 California county
- 98 End-of-week cry
- 99 Lack of partisanship
- 103 Producer's output
- 104 Sleep phenomena
- 105 Current numbers
- 107 Watch and watch
- 108 Harvey on the waves
- 111 Political impersonator Carvey
- 112 AP wire component
- 113 Regarding
- 115 Part of an Asian nation
- 116 Business card abbr.
- 117 Connections
- 118 Promise
- 119 Compass pt.

27 Number of hours of local television news coverage of the 1998 California gubernatorial race in the 90 days leading up to the election (measured in the following markets: Los Angeles, Fresno/Bakersfield, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Diego)

190 Number of hours of campaign advertising for the same race that aired on local television stations during the same period (measured in the same five California markets)¹

2.5 Percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds who watch network news

2.6 Percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds who watch the *Jerry Springer Show*²

1 in 5 Chance that a local television station has a written policy for handling complaints about inaccurate reporting³

118 Number of journalists imprisoned worldwide in 1998 by governments seeking to quash press freedom

0 Number of those journalists who are U.S. citizens⁴

21.2 Percentage of 1977 *Time* cover stories about foreign affairs

5.8 Percentage of 1997 *Time* cover stories about foreign affairs

7.7 Percentage of 1977 *Time* cover stories about entertainment or celebrities

15.4 Percentage of 1997 *Time* cover stories about entertainment or celebrities⁵

13 Percentage of foreign correspondents reporting for American media outlets during the 1970s who were freelancers

30 Percentage of foreign correspondents reporting for American media outlets during the early 1990s who were freelancers⁶

14 Number of times "sex" or some derivation of the word appeared on the cover of *Glamour's* 12 1998 issues

26 Number of times "sex" or some derivation of the word appeared on the cover of *Cosmopolitan's* 12 1998 issues⁷

2.1 billion Average number of e-mail messages sent daily in the United States in 1998

630 million Number of pieces of mail handled daily by the United States Postal Service, as of May 1998⁸

9.2 Number of hours the average American spends each day using consumer media⁹

18 Percentage decline in the circulation rate base of *Reader's Digest* between June 1992 and January 1999

47 Percentage decline in the per-share price of Reader's Digest Association stock since 1992¹⁰

2.1 million Average circulation for *USA Today's* Friday edition

1.6 million Average circulation for *The New York Times's* Sunday edition¹¹

NOTES: 1. *Political Finance & Lobby Reporter*; Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California; Alliance for Better Campaigns; Competitive Media Reporting / 2. Nielsen Media Research; U.S. Census Bureau / 3. "Legal Concerns in TV Newsrooms," The Center for the Advancement of Modern Media, University of Miami / 4. Committee to Protect Journalists / 5. Committee of Concerned Journalists news subject survey / 6. *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, Stephen Hess, 1996 / 7. *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan* / 8. *The New York Times*; International Data Corporation; United States Postal Service / 9. Veronis, Suhler & Associates, Inc. 12th annual *Communications Industry Forecast* / 10. Audit Bureau of Circulations; Reader's Digest Association; New York Stock Exchange / 11. Audit Bureau of Circulations, U.S. daily newspapers report for the six months ending September 30, 1998

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