THE NEW YORK TIMES CHINESE MISSILE SPY SCOOP: READY, FIRE, AIM

BRILL'S CONTENT™

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

THE INFLUENCE LIST

25

PEOPLE WHOSE BEHIND-THE-SCENES DECISIONS SHAPE OUR MEDIA

AND YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF MOST OF THEM

PLUS:

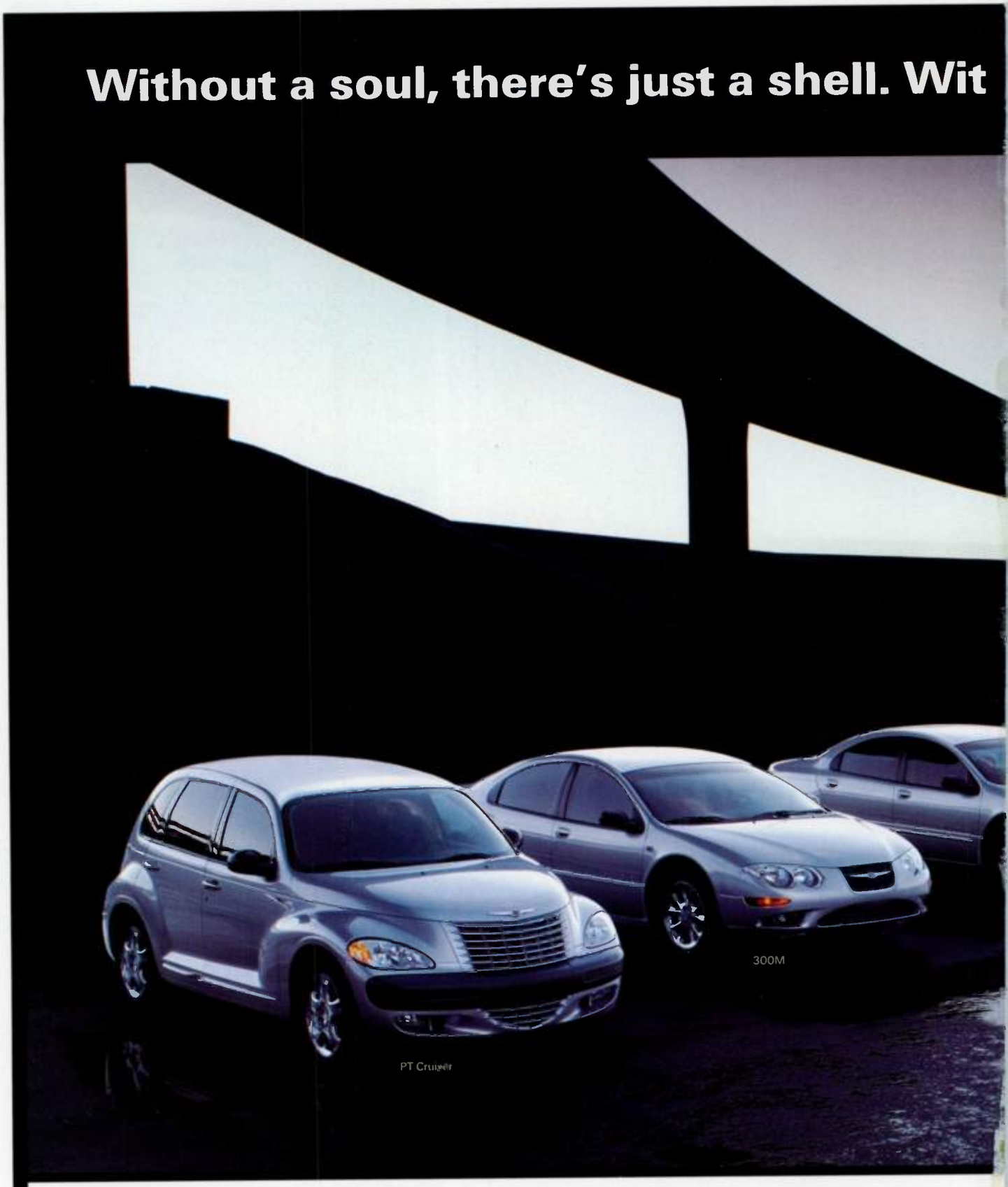
WOODWARD DEFENDS HIS *SHADOW*

SHOULD YOU BUY AN E-BOOK GADGET?

HOW PRIVATE SHOULD POLS' LIVES BE?

TAKING THE SIN OUT OF BIG-MEDIA SYNERGY

Without a soul, there's just a shell. Wit



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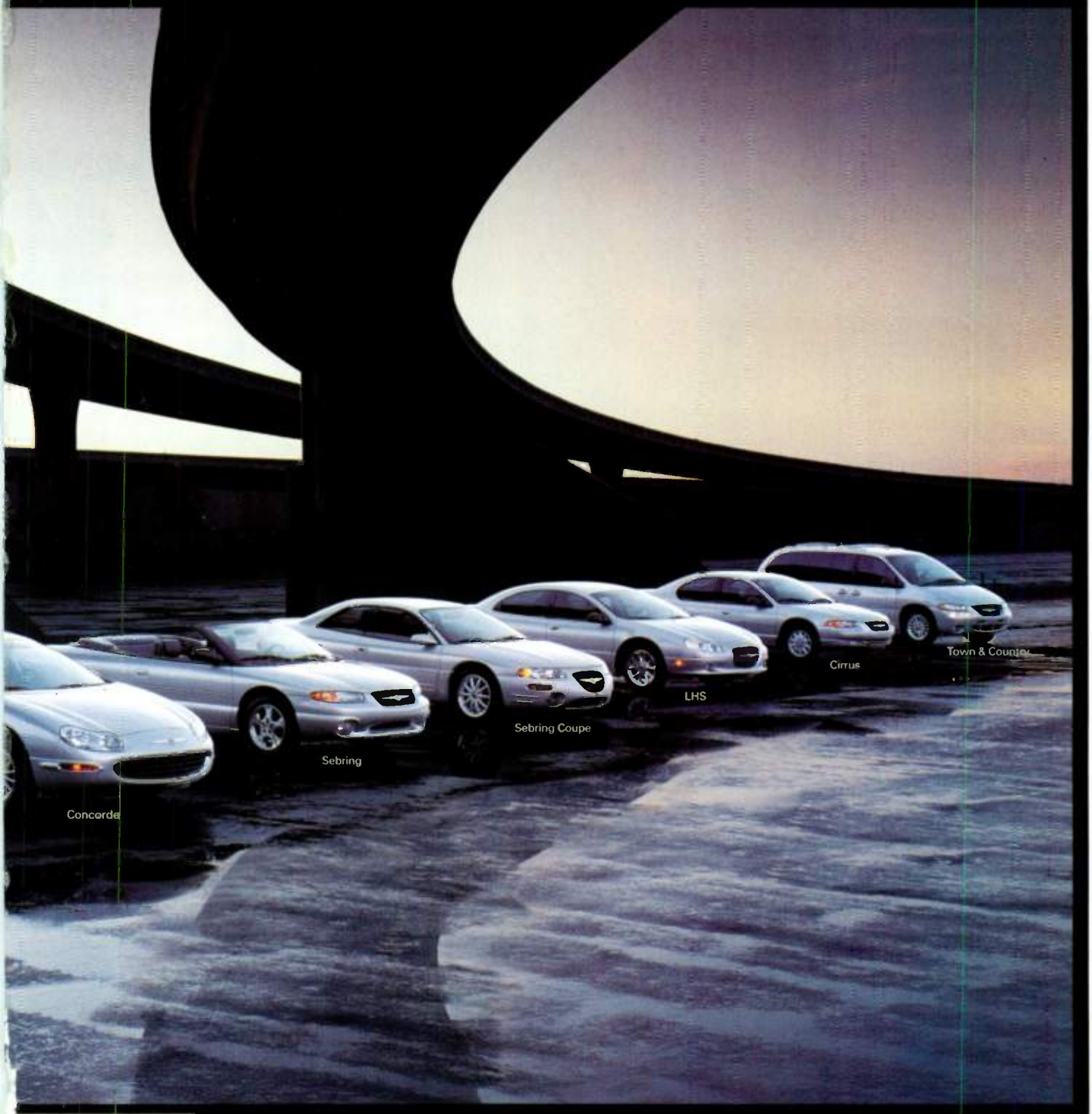

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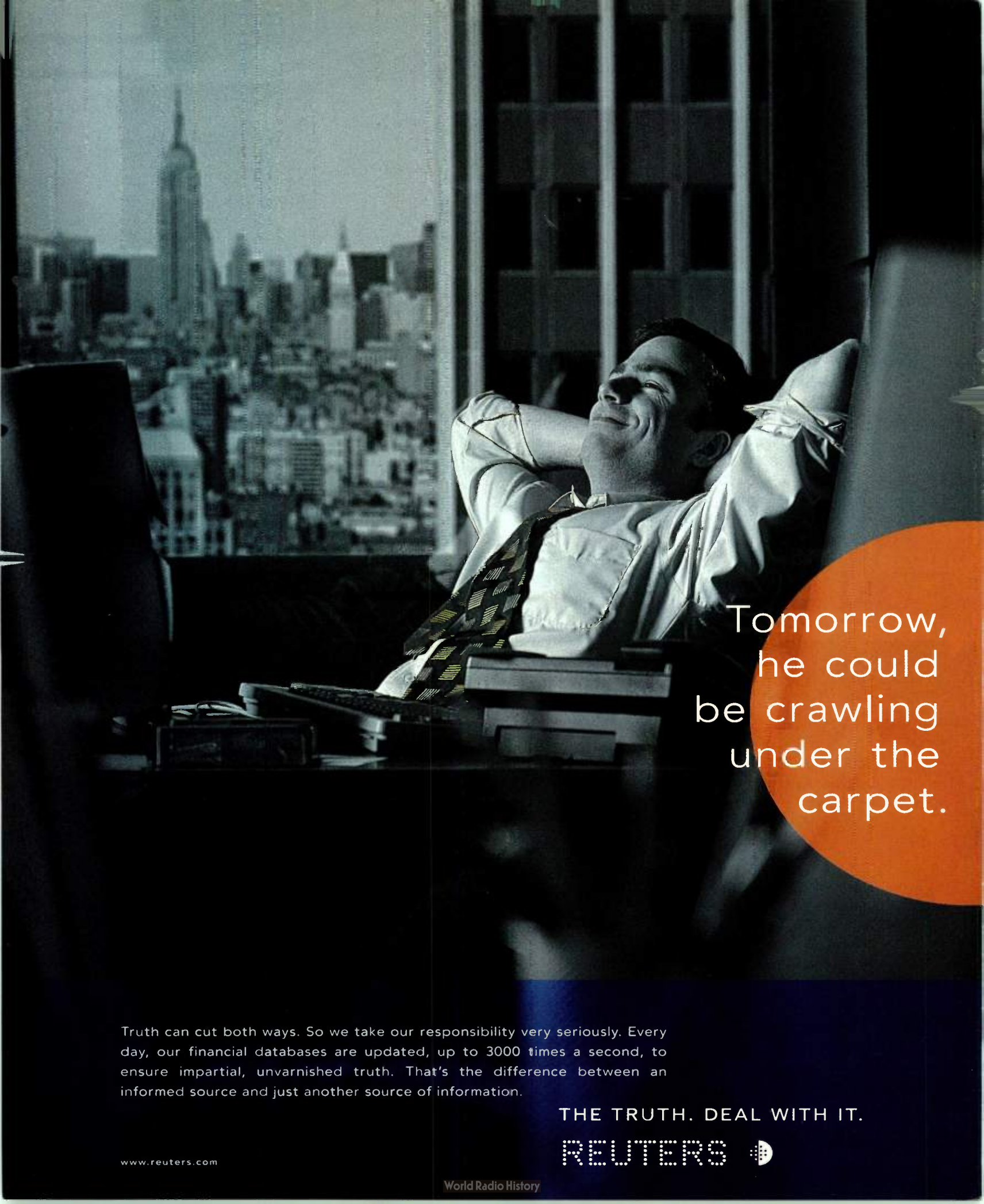

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THE TRUTH. DEAL WITH IT.

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THE MEDIA SPEND A LOT OF TIME AND resources monitoring and reporting on those with power and influence. This magazine is no different, except that our beat *is* the media, so our special report—*The Influence List*—is unlike any such effort you've seen elsewhere.

We know who the most famous people in media are, obviously. We know who owns or runs the most powerful media companies. But whose *day-to-day decisions* do the most to determine what we read, what we watch, even what we think about our culture and our country? That's the question we set out to answer when we deployed our reporters and editors to scan the nonfiction media landscape to question insiders, experts, and observers in a broad range of fields.

The results are fascinating—and surprising. Yes, the executive editor of *The New York Times*, Joseph Lelyveld, made the list, but not simply because the newspaper he helps run is so powerful. He's on the list because his decisions, his interests, his values, have a huge impact on what is covered and how it is played. On the other end of the spectrum, there's Felix Dennis—the creator and hands-on owner of the hugely successful British import magazine *Maxim*, which has spawned a frat-boy revival that not only has infected the magazine business but has left its titillating mark on movie and television fare as well. Then there's Adrian Lurssen, who has a job that didn't exist a few years ago. He's the managing editor of the surfing department at Yahoo! Inc., which means he's in charge of picking the websites highlighted in the search engine's popular "What's New...On the Web" feature.

It's hard to imagine many lists that encompass Lelyveld, Dennis, and Lurssen, as well as the 22 others profiled in our special section. (I don't want to give away too many here.) But their decisions matter, and we ought to get to know them better. *The Influence List*, which was overseen by senior editor Lorne Manly, starts on page 74.

Speaking of influence, after a series of articles in *The New York Times* made the explosive charge earlier this year that the Chinese government had obtained sensitive nuclear secrets from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, allegedly from a Taiwanese-American scientist there, a political firestorm erupted as the scientist, Wen Ho Lee, lost his job under a cloud of suspicion. However, as more evidence has come in, those initial *Times* accounts appear overblown and unfair; in fact, even the *Times* itself has implicitly backtracked. In "Crash Landing," on page 66, senior writer Robert Schmidt gets underneath an important, unfolding story with a subtext that has as much to do with the power of the *Times* to set the national agenda as it does with national security.

And then there are those agendas that have nothing to do with the *Times* or mainstream media. Which author out there do you think can boast of having 450 million copies of his work in print? If you didn't answer (or have never heard of) Jack Chick, don't feel too bad. We hadn't either until recently. Chick is the man behind those fundamentalist Christian comic books you may have noticed on park benches, in telephone booths, and elsewhere. In this month's Creators department, on page 50, senior writer Michael Colton explores Chick's unusual media empire and finds a man who is as zealous as he is prolific—one of those fringe characters who operate below the radar screens of conventional media, yet reach a large and eager audience.

ERIC EFFRON
EDITOR

WHAT WE STAND FOR

1. ACCURACY: *Brill's Content* is about all that purports to be nonfiction. 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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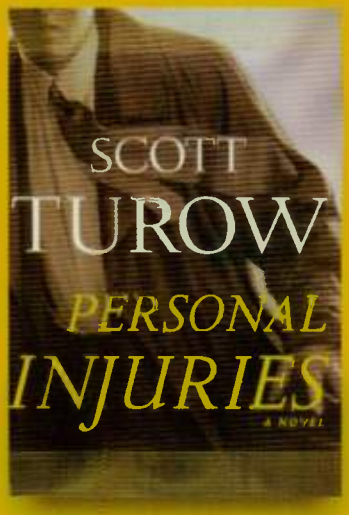

so cheap it hurts.

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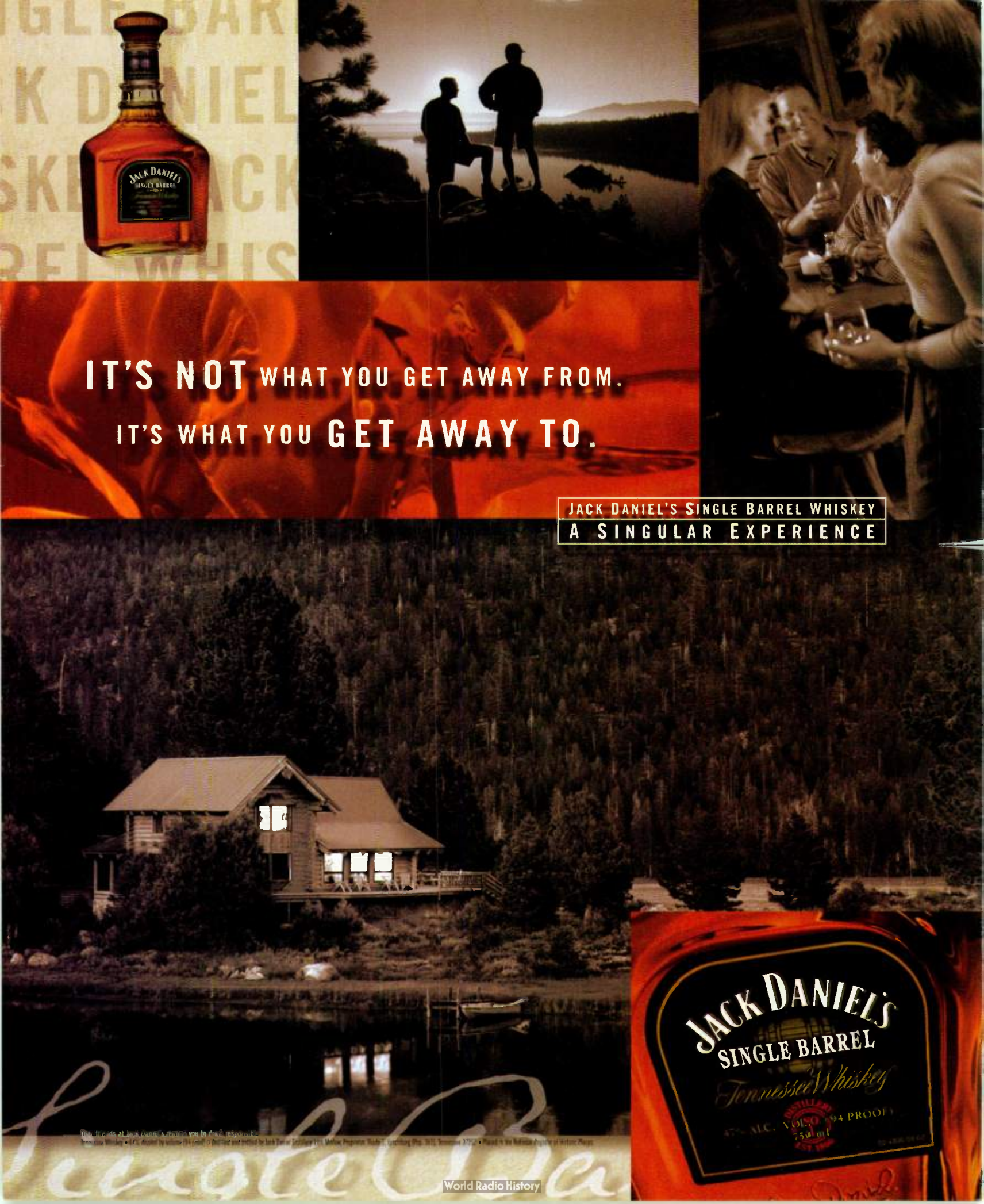

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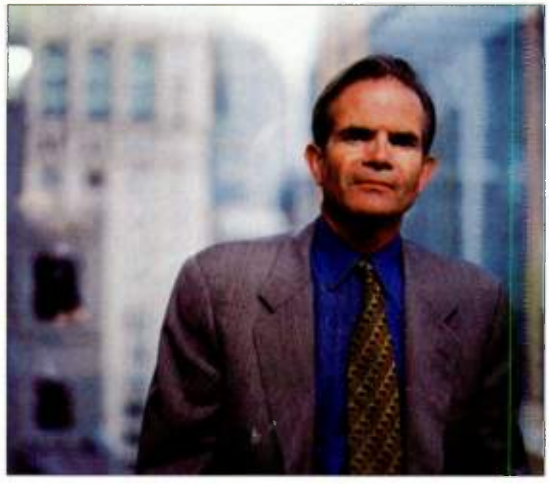
NOVEMBER 1999 • VOLUME 2 • NUMBER NINE

FEATURES

COVER STORY



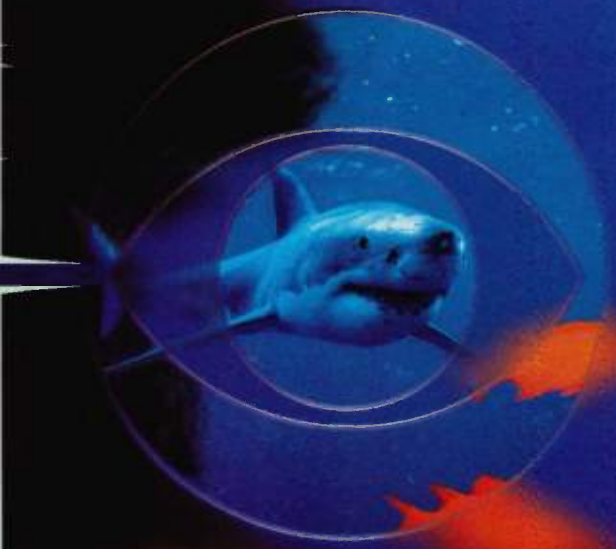
74 Wall Street Journal *managing editor Paul Steiger, one of the 25 decision makers to earn a spot on our Influence List*

66 The New York Times *created a furor with its stories on Chinese nuclear espionage.*

96 *Where E. Jean Carroll goes, madcap mayhem follows.*

ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD (STEIGER); ILLUSTRATION BY TOM NICK COCOTOS; RAFAEL FUCHS (CARROLL)

Know what you're getting into.



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COLUMNS

REWIND

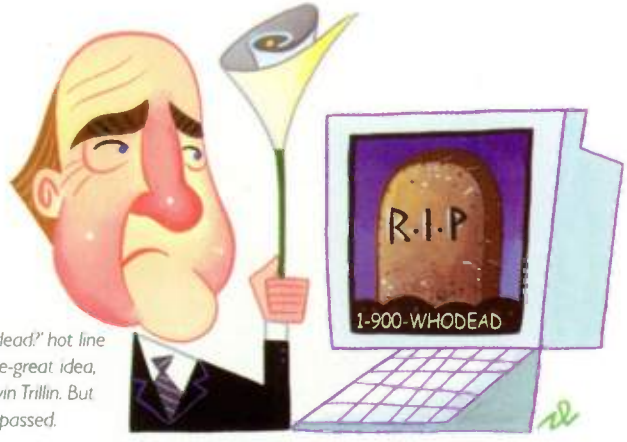
In our September issue, Steven Brill raised some serious questions about Bob Woodward's new book. Woodward now has some serious questions about Brill's critique. Here, they fight it out.

REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

An independent review of questions and complaints about *Brill's Content*.

47

In the rapidly consolidating world of big media, it's hard to keep track of who owns what.



40

A 'Who's dead?' hot line was a once-great idea, writes Calvin Trillin. But it too has passed.

THE WRY SIDE

The author mourns the death of a seemingly good idea: a 900 number that both dispenses information on who's dead and offers "certainty of deceasement."

FACE-OFF

When is a politician's private life fair game for media scrutiny? Our two press critics (one from the right, one from the left) argue the question.

THE BIG BLUR

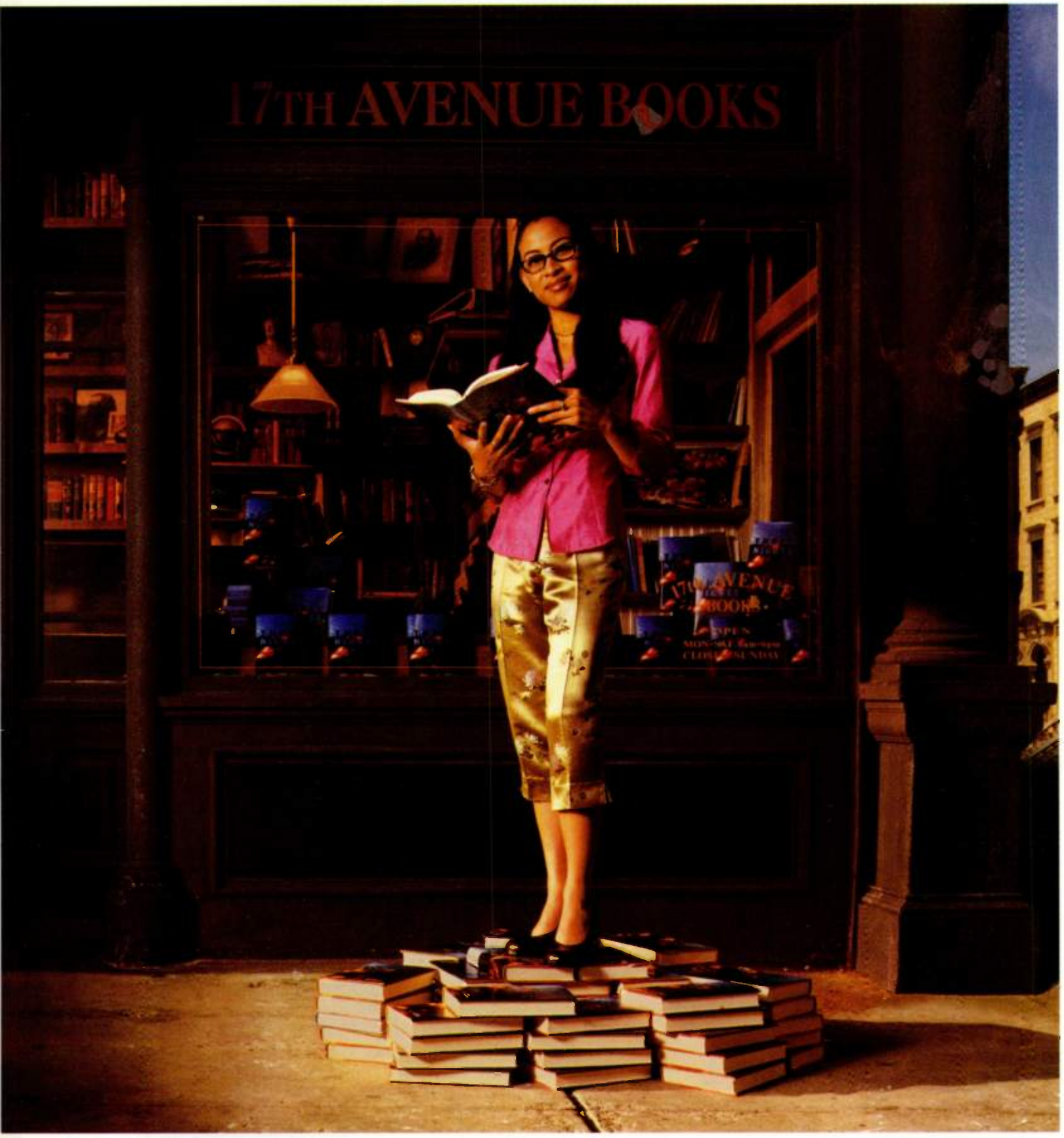
A modest proposal for confronting the conflicts and compromises that stem from media consolidation.

THE NOTEBOOK 32

Will Chippy move up or down on our Pundit Scorecard?

(continued on page 15)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GINA TRIPLETT (OCTOPUS); ROBERT DE MICHIELL (TRILLIN)



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More comfort. Refined lines. A bigger story. The new Saturn L-Series.
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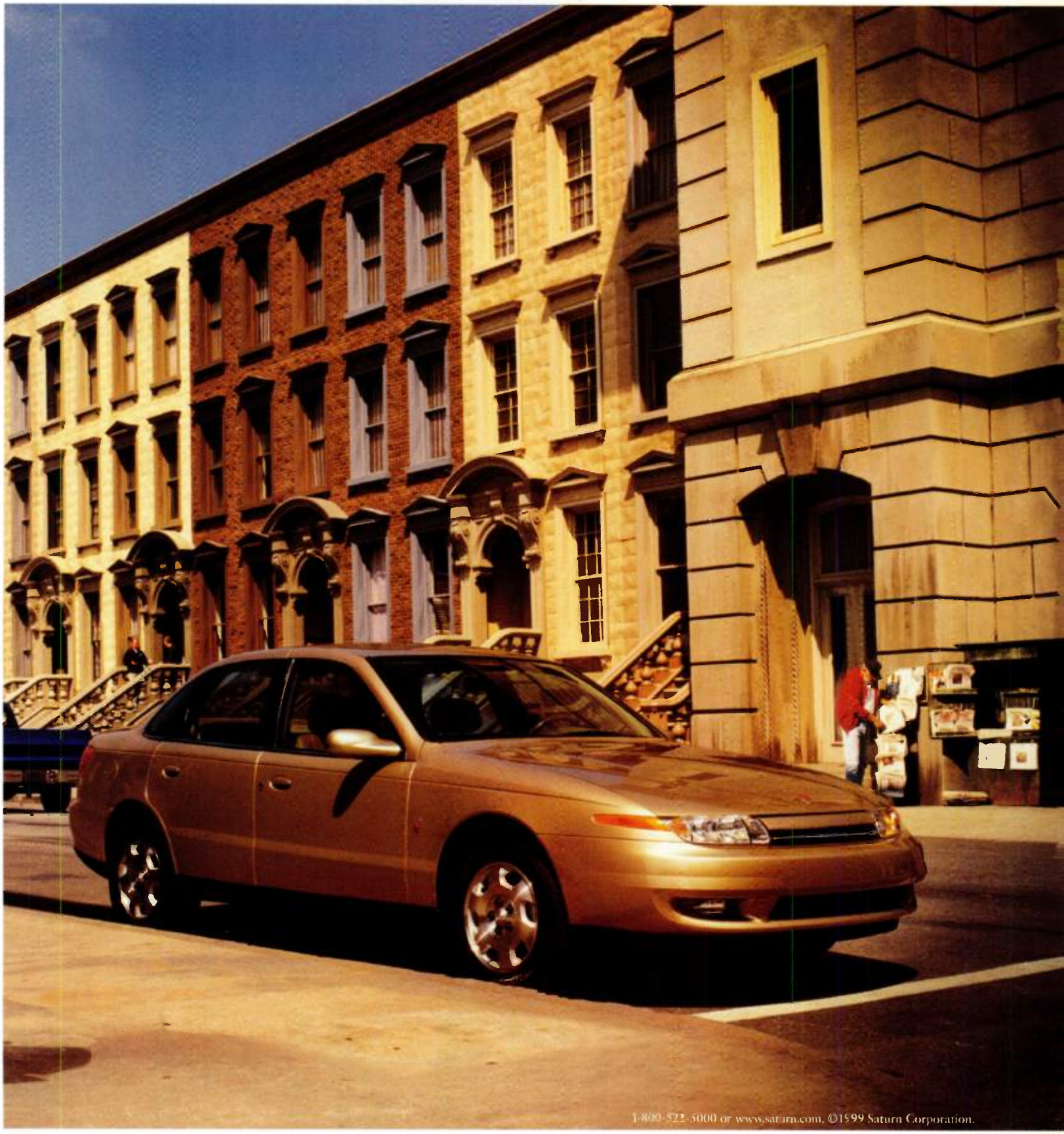

LS. The next big thing from Saturn.

3Com
More connected.

Kate Hunter
Dancer

Address Book

Three choreographers I'd kill to work with; Paris # for Francois.

Date Book

Ballet class 10:00 am; physical therapy at 4:00 pm; dinner w/Mark, 7:30 pm.

Memo Pad

The Times review of my performance; notes on Balanchine bio.

To Do List

Buy another half-dozen leg warmers; roses to Katya for premiere (hey, who's jealous).

HotSync

Synchronize and back up my Palm V™ organizer with my PC. With just one touch.

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(continued from page 11)

DEPARTMENTS

50 *Bathroom stalls, phone booths, taxi cabs... Jack Chick's Christian comics are everywhere.*

110 *Craig Crawford's Hotline has become a must-read inside—and beyond—the Beltway.*

NEXT 54

How useful are electronic books?

CORRECTIONS POLICY

1. We always publish corrections at least as prominently as the original mistake was published.

2. We are eager to make corrections quickly and candidly.

3. Although we welcome letters to the editor that are critical of our work, an aggrieved party need not have a letter to the editor published for us to correct a mistake. We will publish corrections on our own and in our own voice as soon as we are told about a mistake by anyone—our staff, an uninvolved reader, or an aggrieved reader—and can confirm the correct information.

4. Our corrections policy should not be mistaken for a policy of accommodating readers who are simply unhappy about a story that has been published.

5. Information about corrections or complaints should be directed to editor in chief Steven Brill. He may be reached by mail at 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10175; by fax at 212-824-1950; or by e-mail at comments@brillscontent.com.

6. Separately or in addition, readers are invited to contact our outside ombudsman, Bill Kovach, who will investigate and report on specific complaints about the work of the magazine. He may be reached by voice mail at 212-824-1981; by fax at 212-824-1940; by e-mail at bkovach@brillscontent.com; or by mail at 1 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02138.

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ON GORE AS A "GET," HILLARY HELP, AND *AUSTIN*'S POWER

JOAN KONNER'S SEPTEMBER DISSECTION OF DIANE SAWYER'S INTERVIEW WITH Vice-President Al Gore on *20/20* clearly struck a chord among readers. We know because the mail about the article keeps pouring in. Another September story continuing to attract correspondents (many of them writing in rather strong language): our take on *Consumer Reports*. Meanwhile, folks at the *Boston Herald*, the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, and *Entertainment Weekly* checked in with their thoughts on how their publications were covered in our pages. Letters published with an asterisk below have been edited for space. The full text appears at our website (www.brillscontent.com).

ONE-MAN SHOW

*It's a mystery why CNBC doles out so much money for cameramen, producers, floor directors, sound technicians, and lighting people for *Hardball* ["Chris Matthews Won't Shut Up," September]. CNBC should allow Matthews to do what he seems to prefer—talk nonstop for an hour, less commercial breaks, with his favorite expert: himself.

PAT MURPHY
Ketchum, ID

COURTESY OF HENDRIK HERTZBERG

A president and his men, 1980 (clockwise from middle): President Jimmy Carter, press secretary Jody Powell, speechwriters Chris Matthews and Hendrik Hertzberg, and a military aide

PUNCTURED

*Bravo, *Brill's Content*! Your September issue has successfully punctured the credibility and possibly the egos of several of my pet-peeve pundits ["Scream TV"]. It is just so great to see some of these people having to take what they love to dish out.

JACQUELINE A. COSTELLO
Fayetteville, AR

MARGIN CALL

*Your September issue ["Scream TV"] brought to mind the story of a preacher whose marginal note on his sermon read as follows: "Argument weak here—shout like hell!"

REDDING OGLESBY
Overland Park, KS

OVERLOOKED?

*Perhaps it's your magazine's bias, perhaps it's bias on the part of the writers, or perhaps it's just plain sloppiness, but your features on the evolution of the talk show overlooked a couple of important figures.

You completely ignored CNBC's Geraldo Rivera (because he was a defender of President Clinton and spent scores of hours of TV time attacking independent counsel Ken Starr?). His show is among the worst of this genre, for his habit of getting not one person on each side of the issue, but as many as five or six—leading to shoutfests that Chris Matthews couldn't hope to match.

But first and foremost, you failed to give credit to the godfather of this type of verbal slugfest: *Nightline*'s Ted Koppel. Talk about "All Monica All the Time." How about "All Hostages All the Time" (or *America Held Hostage*, as *Nightline* was called initially)?

THOMAS BURNETT
Medina, OH

FAN OF THE FAT MAN

*I loved Jack Germond's reminiscences about his stint with *The McLaughlin Group* ["Confessions of a McLaughlin Group Escapee," September]. I'm so delighted he's maintained that sense of self-deprecation, something missing from 90 percent of the Washington, D.C., pundit crowd. Jack always had the ability to detach from that. As a young PR man in Washington many years ago, I recall having lunch with him and whatever energy-industry pooh-bah I was escorting around at the time. My lasting impression was of a journalist who actually wanted to understand the issues at hand before he wrote about them. I can't wait to read the rest of his book [*Fat Man In A Middle Seat: Forty Years Of Covering Politics*].

BILL ADAMS
Plantation, FL

HILLARY'S HELPERS

*I'm wondering how a magazine that professes to "not be motivated...to advance a particular political interest" ["What We Stand For," page 5] comes to write an article whose purpose is to "help" Hillary Clinton identify and curry favor with influential New York political reporters ["Can Hillary Win Them Over?" Gatekeepers, September]. I look forward to next month's issue, when, in the interest of your nonpartisan political agenda, you will no doubt publish an article advising [New York City Mayor] Rudolph Giuliani on which Hollywood celebrities to hit up for campaign contributions.

STUART NOVICK
Larchmont, NY

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USE YOUR PEERS

*In his letter printed in the September issue of *Brill's Content*, *Publishers Weekly* contributing editor Joseph Barbato takes issue with Steven Brill's argument that nonfiction-book reviewers should make serious efforts to verify the veracity of the books they review. Barbato calls the proposal "laudable" but "utter fantasy": "There is not a publisher in the country—much less a reviewer—with the resources to fully verify the accuracy of nonfiction books."

Barbato is wrong when he suggests that the publishers of these volumes do not have the resources to verify them. The scientific community uses a process of peer review. I think it is a process that *any* purveyor of fact should use in order to guarantee that the material they are presenting is as truthful as possible.

JUSTIN BACON
Minneapolis, MN


Real-life parents don't really know their teens

BOSTON Herald

Bidding wars

It was 'hateful'

Hub lieutenant recalls horror of cop harassment

Insiders say $70M bill likely to keep Pats in Foxboro

INCOMPLETE PICTURE

Your September issue's analysis of the coverage of the hanging of a noose over a black [Boston] police officer's motorcycle by a fellow officer was, unfortunately, substantially incomplete ["Boston Newspapers Split On Race," The Notebook].

What was missing—or actually what assistant editor Michael Freedman elected to omit—was an important quote from a police spokeswoman when the story first broke.

"Why is that news? I don't get it. If they are having petty squabbles and disagreements over [at the officers' unit], why is that news?" she said.

It was this first response from the police department that prompted the *Boston Herald* to pursue this story so aggressively, not some subjective notion that the police department is racist.

The police department's view from the outset, that this incident was merely a "petty squabble" and worthy of neither a full inquiry nor public scrutiny, became the larger story that, upon review, Mr. Freedman either missed or chose to ignore.

Thank you for this opportunity to set the record straight.

JOE SCIACCA
Deputy Managing Editor for
Politics/Investigations
The *Boston Herald*
Boston, MA

NO FAVORITISM

I am writing to clarify a possible misconception suggested in your September story by [senior writer] Michael Colton regarding the marketing of New Line Cinema's film *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* ["Welcome To My Hype-Industrial Complex, Baby!"].

Mr. Colton suggests that New Line benefited from Time Warner corporate synergy in its marketing efforts and implied that the movie received some kind of favorable treatment ("promotions") in *Entertainment Weekly*.

Was is it a surprise to Mr. Colton that *Austin Powers* was the cover subject of our June 11 issue? Your article was illustrated with [*Austin Powers* star] Mike Myers's photo on the covers of two other national magazines (*Rolling Stone* and *GQ*), so the reader could certainly surmise that this was the kind of story *Entertainment Weekly* would feature.

What exactly is Mr. Colton's evidence that New Line received special promotion from *Entertainment Weekly* for *Austin Powers*? There is none.

JOHN SQUIRES
President
Entertainment Weekly
New York, NY

Michael Colton responds: In an interview, an executive at New Line Cinema, which is owned by Time Warner, said that the *Austin Powers* film benefited from synergy through promotion in several Time Warner outlets, including *Entertainment Weekly*. We understood "promotion" to mean advertising, not editorial coverage. We apologize if the opposite was implied.


welcome to my hype-industrial complex, baby!

By Michael Colton

BACKFIRE

*According to your article on *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, the movie's box-office results were closely connected to the hype that preceded the film. Could be, but it was quite the opposite for me. By the time I had seen a half-dozen articles and advertisements for the film I had come to the conclusion it was a stupid movie. That conclusion, added to the fact that I found the term *shagged* completely lacking in taste, led to my total lack of interest in the production. I am surprised more people did not react as I did.

JOHN C. ATKESON
Clayton, NC

GETS NO KICKS

*Thanks to Michael Hirschorn for his look at international soccer on TV [TV Picks, September]. Although [Fox Sports Net's] Lionel Bienvenu often elicits cringes from myself and my fellow die-hard soccer followers, we watch because there is nothing else *to* watch.

Hirschorn also touches upon the fact that *Fox Sports World* is received by few people in the U.S. Editors of *Brill's Content*, I implore you, please

(continued on page 120)

ABSOLUT JERSEY.

how they got that SHOT

AFTER A SUMMER-LONG DROUGHT IN THE EAST, THE late-August rain revealed itself as a refreshing photo opportunity for Mary Calvert, a staff photographer for *The Washington Times*. Calvert, who happened to be in Annapolis, Maryland, on her way to the newspaper's Washington, D.C., office decided to use the United States Naval Academy as a backdrop for a few wet shots. "It was a very rainy morning, and I knew that I would have to look for a weather picture," she recalls.

Rather than resort to a standard photo of an umbrella-bearing commuter, Calvert visited the academy's campus. Her attention was drawn to a brilliant reflection in a large puddle near the middle of the Annapolis grounds. Calvert parked her car nearby and waited until students—with their spit-shined shoes and crisp white uniforms—passed by the pool of water. She shot a few rolls worth of reflections with her Nikon F5—some of groups, others of only one midshipman. The image shown here, one of her best, ran the following day on the front page of the August 25, 1999, *Times*.

Calvert, 41, has been at the *Times* for a year and photographed much of the brouhaha surrounding President Clinton's impeachment trial. Before coming to Washington, she was assigned to document earthquake wreckage while working at *The Oakland Tribune* in Oakland, California, for five years as a general-assignment photographer. "We had natural disasters out there instead of political disasters," laughs Calvert.

—*Bridget Samburg*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARY F. CALVERT/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Steven Brill raised some serious questions about Bob Woodward's new book. Woodward has some serious questions about Brill's critique. Here, they fight it out.

In the September issue, my column, "How Woodward Goes Wayward," took issue with some of Bob Woodward's methods in the writing of his new best-seller, Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate.

Soon after the column appeared, Woodward called me and said that rather than writing a letter complaining about the article, to which I would presumably respond, he wished we could have a live, public dialogue in which he could challenge me with questions and, as he put it, "put you on the spot." I replied that I knew a good way to do that: We'd get together for just that kind of conversation with tape recorders going, and then the magazine would publish an excerpted transcript. To protect against what he might consider to be unfair excerpting, I also promised that we would publish the entire transcript on our website and, moreover, that he could review our proposed edits for the excerpt to be published in the magazine, and that if he objected to any specific cuts we were making in the excerpt we would put them back in.

Woodward accepted and we set the day he would come to New York for the discussion.

On that day, Woodward called and said he could not get to New York but wanted to have the conversation by phone two days later.

About an hour before the beginning of that scheduled conversation, Woodward faxed me a nine-page letter replying to my column. He then called and said that he wanted to have his letter published in full in the magazine and that the conversation we were about to have would have to be based on the letter. I told him that as a simple matter of space I did not think that publishing both the entire letter and the edited transcript of the conversation was feasible. I suggested that we publish the letter on our website with any reply I might have, but that we go on with the conversation as planned, at which time he could go into whatever was in the letter.

Woodward refused to go forward with the conversation unless I promised to publish his letter in full. So I told him we would publish most of the letter (we are actually publishing it in full) and my reply. In the hope of preserving some semblance of the dialogue he had originally suggested, I also said that I would then give him a chance to reply to my reply in half the space taken by my reply, whereupon I could reply, and then he could do so again.

What you are about to read is the imperfect result, then, of this aborted attempt at a lively, face-to-face discussion.

WOODWARD RESPONDS

Near the end of his column, "How Woodward Goes Wayward" [Rewind, September], Steven Brill declares, "I think Woodward is a conscientious guy who really does do exhaustive research, and I could find no one to come forward and contest a major substantive aspect of his basic reporting in *Shadow*." But in the earlier three pages Brill makes serious accusations, claiming that I intentionally stretched, used other reporters as sources, filled in facts, and apparently planned not to seek comment from those involved in various scenes in my book *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate*.

What a strange and unfair contradiction. Brill is right when he says that I do exhaustive research and attempt to be conscientious. He is flat wrong in his assertions that I stretched anything.

The column cites examples in which Brill says three lawyers outright dispute parts of *Shadow*.

In the first example, Brill questions the veracity of a scene from my book in which President Clinton and Robert S. Bennett, Clinton's attorney in the Paula Jones sexual-harassment case, stroll on the White House grounds with cigars and discuss Clinton's alleged extramarital sex life. "I'm retired," Clinton is quoted as saying on the subject of other women. I do not disclose the source for this scene in the book because those were the ground rules with the source, and I would not do so to Brill. When the source is eventually revealed, Brill and others will see the sound basis for what I wrote.

There were two participants in the scene—Bennett and President Clinton. In the days after the book was published, Bennett did not dispute a single incident reported in the book. In

STEVE BRODNER

"Brill is right when he says that I do exhaustive research and attempt to be conscientious. He is flat wrong in his assertions that I stretched anything." —*Woodward*

the June 16 edition of *The Washington Post*, for example, Bennett was given a chance but only said, "I have never breached the attorney-client privilege in my entire life and I do not know who Woodward's sources are—period." To my knowledge, Bennett said nothing to any reporter other than Brill disputing what is in the book.

At the time of publication I was told authoritatively that Bennett had no problem with the substance as reported in *Shadow*, which includes a new and detailed history of the Paula Jones lawsuit. Bennett appears on 49 pages in the book involving dozens of scenes. He has not requested any corrections or modifications in the book.

The Wall Street Journal reported on its front page on June 18, 1999, that the Clintons were "appalled" by the disclosure of details of the president's confidential talks with Bennett. "They are very much taken aback that these kinds of things were discussed outside the bounds of the attorney-client privilege," the *Journal* quoted a friend of the Clintons as saying. This is not a denial and at least in part a confirmation.

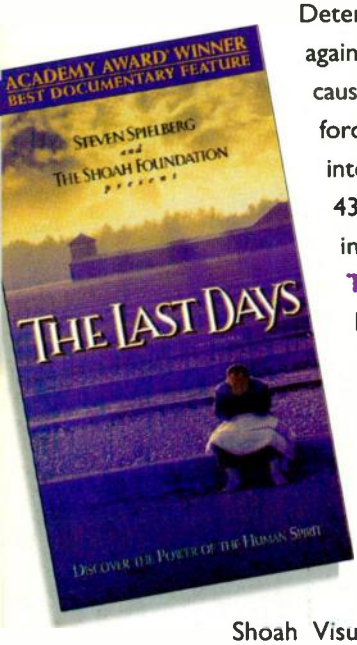
There was more than a month of silence. Neither the Clintons nor Bennett issued a denial, something they routinely have done

(continued on page 122)

STUFF we LIKE

Lived To Tell

IN THE LAST YEAR OF WORLD WAR II, WITH AN Allied victory all but certain, Adolf Hitler intensified his efforts to wipe out European Jewry. Determined not to "lose the war against the Jews," as one Holocaust survivor puts it, Hitler forced more and more Jews into death camps, sending over 438,000 people to Auschwitz in less than six weeks. **The Last Days** (PolyGram Home Video) is a tribute to five Hungarian survivors of this last stage of the Holocaust. The Academy Award–winning documentary, whose producers include Steven Spielberg and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, is composed of interviews with the five survivors, as well as with a former Nazi doctor, a Jewish crematorium guard, and three U.S. Army veterans who helped liberate the Nazi death camps. Director James Moll also includes stories of the survivors' lives today (all five currently live in the U.S.). Their stories put a human face on the Holocaust that numbers alone cannot. *The Last Days*'s stunning footage, particularly of the skeletal concentration camp victims in the wake of their liberation, is a heart-wrenching visual accompaniment. —*Jane Manners*



Washington Press Watchdog

The *City Paper*'s David Carr

IN A CITY WHERE LOCAL JOURNALISM IS SOMETIMES as thrilling as loafers and a Brooks Brothers suit, David Carr plays the role of a zealous cynic. In **Paper Trail**, Carr's column in the *Washington City Paper* (and online at www.washingtoncitypaper.com), the editor of this Washington, D.C., alternative newsweekly harpoons the lapses made by both the local and national media. Carr often bemoans *The Washington Post*'s metro coverage, charging the paper with failing to follow up on its own investigative pieces. "[A] paper can only play the sniper so much," he wrote in late March, "parachuting in, taking out the hard target, and then getting the hell out of Dodge." But Carr's pen isn't always poisoned. In February, he lauded the *Post*'s coverage when Mayor Anthony Williams accepted the resignation of a city employee for using the word "niggardly" (Williams later rehired the employee): "For years...the paper tamped down any hint that one of the most racially divided cities in America was one of the most racially divided cities in America," wrote Carr. "These are different times, apparently." —*Kimberly Conniff*

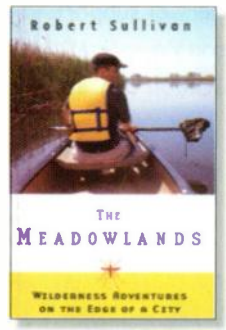
Games Without Frontiers

ESPN's Bob Ley

CRIME, DEATH, GREED, AND PERSONAL struggles make for hot copy, especially when concerning athletes. But ESPN's **Outside the Lines** goes beyond superstars and individual sports scandals to examine larger issues with a sober eye. The show, accompanied by web pages on ESPN.com, is unafraid to explore tough topics—eating disorders, gang-affiliated athletes, homophobia—that are taboo at a time when the image of sports is carefully guarded for purposes of endorsements and merchandising. The business of sports does not escape scrutiny either, with episodes focusing on the power of agents and the pressures on local governments to build new stadiums. Hosted by Bob Ley, one of the all-sports network's original anchors, the nine-year-old *Outside the Lines* airs a new episode about every six weeks. Even non-sports fans should keep a look out for its coverage of sensitive issues that avoids sensationalism. —*Matthew Reed Baker*

Jersey, Junk & Jimmy Hoffa

THEY MAY BE THE MOST INFAMOUS MARSHES IN THE COUNTRY. MILLIONS of people have driven through northern New Jersey's Meadowlands and grimaced at the polluted wasteland that lies within view of the New York City skyline. But in Robert Sullivan's **The Meadowlands: Wilderness Adventures on the Edge of a City** (Anchor Books, paperback edition, July 1999), the world among those endless reeds and "garbage hills" is much more complex than what one sees in a superficial glance from the interstate. With a spare style and wry humor, Sullivan details both the region's history and his own surreal Meadowlands exploits, which include canoeing through foul muck, touring dumps that once burned for years, interviewing locals, and finding the remains of the old Penn Station. (Sullivan also tried—but failed—to turn up the remains of the elder Jimmy Hoffa.) Upon finishing this fascinating book, you'll want to take that Secaucus exit off I-95 and go exploring. *—Matthew Reed Baker*



Match Wits With The Smart Alecks

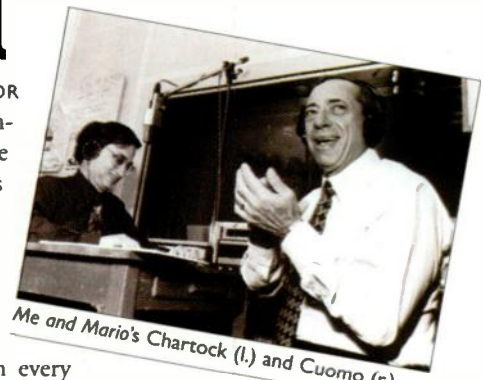
"I couldn't do my current job without them," Justice Antonin Scalia recently said as he waved something in the air.
Q: What was he waving?
Correct Answer: His glasses.
Winning Answer: "The various remote controls for Clarence Thomas."

Thus unfolds another installment of **News Quiz.** For current-events junkies, there's no better way to procrastinate than visiting this humor column-game show hybrid, which appears in the online magazine *Slate.* Four times a week, host Randy Cohen poses a question based on a recent news story. Cohen's subsequent column includes the best and most biting reader responses, along with his own free-associating commentary (and the correct answer).

Cohen, a *New York Times Magazine* columnist and a former writer for David Letterman, is an infinitely entertaining emcee. But *News Quiz* gets its best material from the readers vying to make Cohen's top five. Contributors (this reporter is a repeat offender) turn their one-line responses into gems of cultural commentary, making every column required satiric reading. *—Matthew Heimer*

Left Of The Dial

FOR MANY, FORMER NEW YORK GOVERNOR Mario Cuomo is in the coulda-been-a-contender category of national politics. In the early 1990s, Cuomo was at the top of his game, on the short lists of potential presidential candidates and Supreme Court justices. Though he has now largely disappeared from the national spotlight, people still interested in his passionate defense of liberal ideas can listen to him every week on **Me and Mario,** a half-hour radio show produced by Northeast Public Radio (WAMC) and distributed around the country. Alan Chartock, the "me" in the title and Cuomo's longtime radio foil, says the program offers "exposure to one of the most interesting men in all politics. I could count on the fingers on my hands [the times] that he started a sentence by saying '[W]hen I was governor....' I'm astounded by his willingness to take chances." *—Martin Johnson*


Me and Mario's Chartock (l.) and Cuomo (r.)

20/20 Sets Itself Apart

ALTHOUGH MOST SEGMENTS OF THE PROLIFERATING network magazine shows seem to have a sameness about them, I keep finding myself unable to turn off ABC's **20/20** because its topics are often different, important, and have what seems to be original reporting. For example, a few months ago Diane Sawyer did a terrific report about what, if anything, little kids got out of a National Rifle Association program to teach gun safety in the schools. (ABC used hidden cameras, with the parents' permission, and planted unloaded guns at a day care center to see if the kids would avoid playing with them after watching an NRA video on the subject; they mostly didn't.) Then there was one night in September where I happened on to a *20/20* hour featuring two previously broadcast segments—one with Sam Donaldson about mistakes in textbooks, the second with John Stossel about high school girls wrestling on previously all-male teams. Both were truly eye-opening. *20/20* clearly has a bunch of producers who are successfully reaching higher than the competition. *—Steven Brill*

Dissidents Speak Here

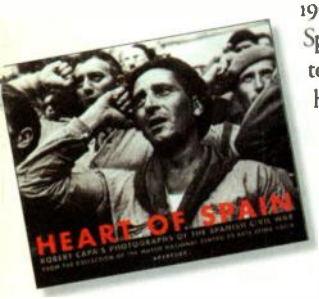
THE DIGITAL FREEDOM NETWORK (WWW.DFN.ORG) IS MAKING ITS MARK IN THE SPHERE OF online human rights activism. Launched in May 1998 with the financial backing of telecommunications multimillionaire Howard Jonas, the well-designed site publishes the words of imprisoned dissidents and censored journalists. DFN's offerings of suppressed works include everything from fiction to editorial cartoons. In August, the network posted poems by Albanian political and women's rights activist Flora Brovina, who has been detained in a Serbian prison since April. DFN also solicits and directs letters of support to jailed dissidents. As of this writing, according to DFN executive director Bobson Wong, hundreds of letters have been sent to four Cubans jailed since 1997 for the seditious publication of a document titled "The Homeland Belongs to Us All." —*Ron Klein*

Men Behind Bars

A scene from *The Farm*

CRIME, PUNISHMENT, AND REDEMPTION ARE THE themes in directors Jonathan Stack, Liz Garbus, and Wilbert Rideau's harrowing and heartbreaking look at prison life in **The Farm: Life Inside Angola Prison** (A&E Home Video). The 90-minute documentary, a chronicle of one year at the notorious Louisiana state penitentiary, serves as a sober reminder of the world that exists today in America's prisons. *The Farm* focuses on six inmates, from one who has just entered Angola to others who have been inside for as many as 38 years. Rideau is one such inmate. He's spent most of his 30-plus years behind bars writing and editing the award-winning prison news magazine *The Angolite*, and, like his fellow inmates, striving to maintain some level of dignity and humanity. —*Dimitra Kessenides*

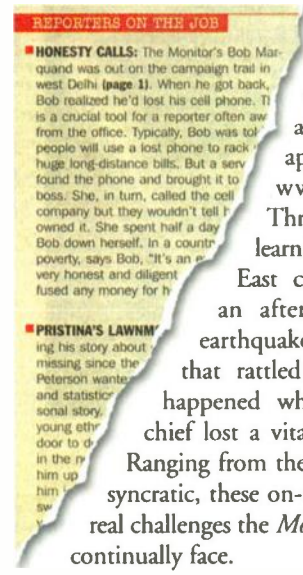
Shot Between The Bullets



ONCE DESCRIBED AS THE WORLD'S GREATEST WAR PHOTOGRAPHER, ROBERT CAPA is well known for his work covering the Spanish Civil War. **Heart of Spain** (Aperture, 1999) is a collection of Capa's finest images from that bloody period in Spain's history (the war lasted from 1936–39). Unlike the other photographers of his time, Capa (an ardent antifascist) ventured across the home front and onto battlefields alongside the warring soldiers. With his camera he captured the experiences and suffering of the Spanish people. Capa's moving photos, including one of two women running for shelter during an air raid in the city of Bilbao and another of a soldier falling to the ground as he is struck by a bullet, are enduring symbols of the human cost of war. —*Kendra Ammann*

A Day In The Life

WHILE HOLLYWOOD HAS presented many versions of the scrappy newspaper reporter, few people have any real idea about the daily grind of the job. *The Christian Science Monitor* changes all that with **Reporters On The Job.** The paper features a daily behind-the-scenes experience from a reporter who wrote one of that day's articles (the feature also appears online at www.csmonitor.com). Through these snippets we learn how the paper's Middle East correspondent handled an aftershock of the recent earthquake in Istanbul, Turkey that rattled his hotel, and what happened when the India bureau chief lost a vital tool, his cell phone. Ranging from the mundane to the idiosyncratic, these on-the-job tales depict the real challenges the *Monitor*'s roving reporters continually face. —*Leslie Heilbrunn*


REPORTERS ON THE JOB

HONESTY CALLS: The Monitor's Bob Marquand was out on the campaign trail in west Delhi (page 1). When he got back, Bob realized he'd lost his cell phone. Th is a crucial tool for a reporter often aw from the office. Typically, Bob was tol people will use a lost phone to rack huge long-distance bills. But a serv found the phone and brought it to boss. She, in turn, called the cell company but they wouldn't tell h owned it. She spent half a day Bob down herself. In a countr poverty, says Bob, "It's an e very honest and diligent fused any money for h

PRISTINA'S LAWNM ing his story about missing since the Peterson wante and statistic sonal story. young ethn door to d in the n him up him sw

Stirring Up A *Bitch*'s Brew

THEY CALL IT **BITCH** BECAUSE, SO OFTEN, WOMEN who are outspoken and opinionated are slammed with that label. And, relative to America's glut of women's publications, this is one raw and bitchin' magazine. Tagged as the "feminist response to pop culture," *Bitch* is a cauldron bubbling with feminist musings. Its take on pop culture is featured in articles like "Ten Things to Hate About *Jane*" and "Life Ain't Nothin' but Boobs & Parkas: Men's Magazines Spawn A New Crop of Clones." Editors and writers pick and pan portrayals of women in the media in the "Love It, Shove It" column. And the 'zine is full of book, TV, movie, and magazine reviews. The biannual publication is available in book and record stores in the U.S., Canada, and the UK (and on the Web at www.bitchmagazine.com). —*Stephanie Bleyer*

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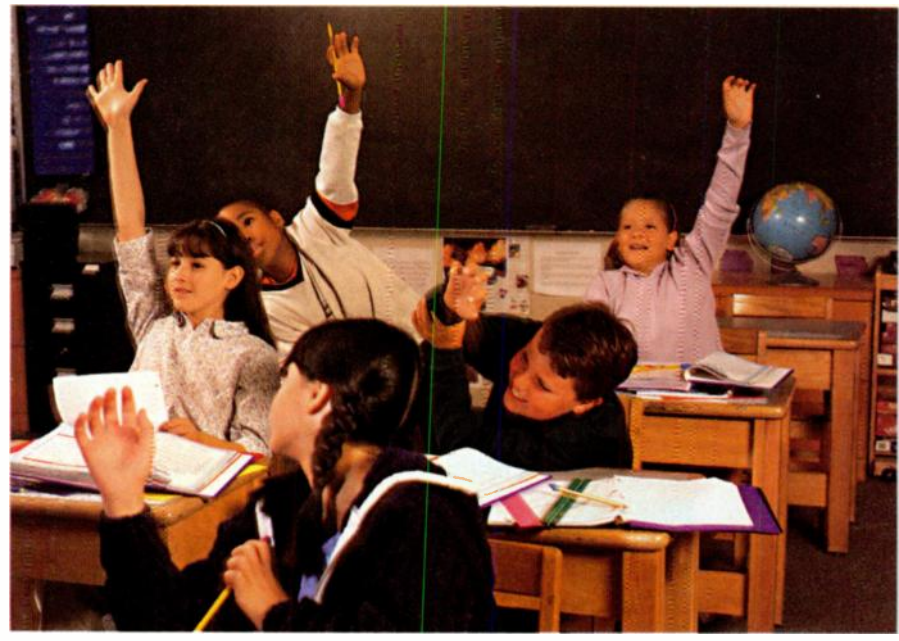

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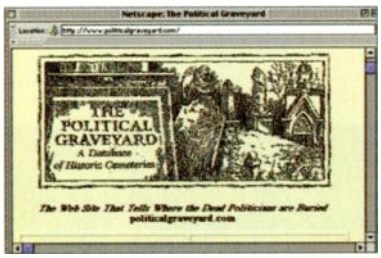
Bill Of Last Rites

DESPITE ITS NAME, THE POLITICAL GRAVEYARD (**www.politicalgraveyard.com**) is not morbid. Log on to this site to see, as the motto proclaims, "where the dead politicians are buried." Creator Lawrence Kestenbaum, a senior research specialist at the University of Michigan, is a self-proclaimed database fanatic who launched *The Political Graveyard* as an extension of some of his interests: historic preservation, politics, and history. Plus, he thinks graveyards are cool.

The site features the final resting places of about 13,000 politicians and government officials, including presidents, members of Congress, and Supreme Court justices. Users can search the site by name, office, or geographic location. Check out the page that features 12 politicians who died in duels.



—Robert Schmidt

What's Your Sign?

FORTUNE-TELLING CAN BE DISMISSED AS MERE hocus-pocus. But modern-day sage Rob Brezsny has taken astrology to new heights. In his weekly syndicated column, **RealAstrology**, Brezsny dispenses what he calls "predictions of the present."

the village VOICE

This smart, amusing column (which runs in 111 publications, including the *Village Voice*, *Metro Santa Cruz*, and the *Tucson Weekly*, and is available online at www.realastrology.com) is full of heavy metaphors and random allusions. Consider this July 8 horoscope for those born under the sign of Taurus:

"...Visualize yourself scaling an icy cliff in Patagonia while carrying Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head in your backpack. Picture an anarchist skateboarder sitting down and playing an impeccable version of a piano concerto by Chopin. Now contemplate the possibility that these scenes are metaphors for the state of your inner reality...." Brezsny's brand of poetic prophecy sometimes leaves readers clueless, but upon closer examination it all sinks in. It's no wonder he's been dubbed the "thinking person's astrologer."

—Stephanie Bleyer

A San Francisco Fix

NEWSPAPER WEBSITES ARE NOT FUN. They're useful, yes, but rarely entertaining. SF Gate (www.sfgate.com) is an exception. The online home of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the site is an oasis of attitude in the often straitlaced world of mainstream newspapers. Rather than the usual "Greenspan Comments Affect Markets" headlines, SF Gate casts a critical eye on the news. "Dig My Platitudes. Fall: When all good presidential candidates tackle the issues using their very best equivocal bromides," read the link to one recent article. Even better: the SF Gate Morning Fix, a cheeky e-mail newsletter of selected links accompanied by a San Francisco factoid, an obscure word of the day, an offbeat news story, and "Notes & Errata," a brief, erudite rant.

—Jesse Oxfeld

STUFF you LIKE

Readers share their favorite sources for news and information.

Dave Meltzer

Michael Iong, a management consultant from New York City, writes:

ONE OF MY FAVORITE RESOURCES IS THE **WRESTLING OBSERVER Newsletter**, a weekly publication written by Dave Meltzer of Campbell, California (call 408-244-2455 for subscription information). Meltzer is a wrestling-industry insider who analyzes this crazy world with the eye of an intelligent and seasoned reporter. His newsletter is all about content. There are no pictures, graphics, or color, just hard information on all aspects of professional wrestling, from the profitable TV ratings to the death rate among grapplers. Meltzer's coverage of Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura's participation in a World Wrestling Federation pay-per-view event was one recent standout. He wrote several stories questioning the undisclosed fees from the WWF that Ventura planned to keep for his own personal use (in addition to the $100,000 he will donate to charity, it's been reported that he will take home $1 million). Fake as it is, pro wrestling is a world full of real people, real injuries, and real money. Meltzer's newsletter covers it from all of these angles.

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It's the face of Laurie Stollery, gardener, golfer and someone who walks at least 12 miles a week. Arthritis used to slow her down, but it doesn't anymore. A new medicine developed by America's pharmaceutical company researchers helps to alleviate pain and swelling in a remarkable new way. Now Laurie can plant flowers and go for long evening walks whenever she wants to. Today, there isn't a cure for arthritis, but pharmaceutical researchers get closer every day. So people like Laurie Stollery can move and stretch, and live their lives to the fullest.

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REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

■ BY BILL KOVACH

RHODA H. KARPATKIN, PRESIDENT OF Consumers Union, which publishes *Consumer Reports* magazine, has raised a number of concerns about an article that ran in the September issue of *Brill's Content* ["Testing *Consumer Reports*," by Jennifer Greenstein]. I'd like to examine some of the points she raises.

LABELS: "The *Content* article begins by calling CU a 'self-proclaimed bastion of unbiased testing.' 'Self-proclaimed' makes it appear that only we state this claim." That's how Ms. Karpatkin begins a litany of points "for your consideration" in her letter addressed to me. She wrote another that appears in the letters column of the October issue, but she asks me to look into a number of other issues raised in the article. So why not start at the beginning with the way this hyphenated word, which appeared in the subhead, introduced the article to readers of *Brill's Content*.

I agree with Ms. Karpatkin but not because it is not essentially true. *Consumer Reports*, like anyone with access to a printing press, can describe themselves any way they want. In time others may accept and repeat the self-designation. But "self-proclaimed" is, in my experience, almost always used as a dismissive label. I doubt, for example, that an article calling *Brill's Content* the "self-proclaimed Independent Voice of the Information Age," would go into this magazine unchallenged. For good reason this magazine discourages the use of question marks in headlines because it indicates indecision, doubt. The way the label is used here is little different than using a question mark. It suggests the reader can take this claim with a grain of salt.

The author of the *Consumer Reports* article, Jennifer Greenstein, says the article was designed "to raise questions about whether the magazine is unbiased." Nothing wrong with that as a starting point. The beginning of good journalism is all about raising questions. But the purpose of the best journalism should be about answering those questions with facts presented, not by using suggestive labels.

DISCLOSURE: A number of the concerns Ms. Karpatkin raises cluster around the section that examines the extent to which the public is aware of the dual role played by Consumers Union. In the article, Consumers Union is accurately described as one that holds itself out to be an "impartial scientific tester on the one hand" but also an "outspoken advocate on the other." The article then goes on to examine the potential for conflicts of interest when the Consumers Union role "isn't always fully revealed to the readers" of *Consumer Reports* magazine.

The example used to support this contention is an article that ran in *Consumer Reports* warning of potential dangers to children eating produce on which certain pesticides have been used. The article was the result of a Consumers Union study funded by three well-known nonprofit foundations that support, among many other things, the reduction of pesticide use.

Ms. Karpatkin believes that the example was unfair because it did not point out that the purpose of the grants was "to study implementation of a federal law whose stated goal is limiting pesticides that may be harmful to children...." It is true the *Brill's Content* article did not include that information. But the point raised was the degree to which readers of *Consumer Reports* were aware of the funding that supported both the research and *CR*'s story.

Ms. Karpatkin's letter argues that readers were referred "to our website, where the full study is posted, with its funding sources listed on the cover page," and then asks: "Is this not disclosure?"

Insufficient, I think. I don't think it is the kind of answer CU would accept. We are talking about the appearance of a conflict of interest. The question CU should ask itself is why this information is not a routine part of the package available to all readers. Why expect readers of *Consumer Reports* to go to the Web to find that information?

PUT TO THE TEST: Ms. Karpatkin's letter also deplores the fact that "Ms. Greenstein never examines the arguments made by our critics that CU's cautions about pesticide use are unwarranted."

Ms. Greenstein replies: "This is not a scientific journal, and I wasn't about to engage in an in-depth analysis of the technical grounds on which CU's pesticide study was criticized. For instance, CU was criticized for using the 'chronic' reference level for pesticide exposure instead of the 'acute' one, a debate that I felt was too scientifically detailed for our magazine."

Rather than engage in that analysis herself, Ms.

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

Greenstein decided she would rely on the critical comments of the Society of Toxicology, which CU's own director of technical policy and public service, Edward Groth, agrees is "a professional society with no ax to grind." In the example cited there is a continuous debate among experts that could be cited on either side of the issue. I think Ms. Greenstein's decision to rely on a reputable scientific organization's judgment is a logical decision.

But I also believe *Brill's Content* set itself up for this sort of challenge, not so much by its reporting, which was extensive, but by overpromising in the way the article was advertised. The article clearly does not test the validity of *Consumer Reports* articles, so why bill it as doing so? "We Put *Consumer Reports* Through Our Test Lab" is the way the story is billed on the magazine's cover. The article's headline continues the promise: "Testing *Consumer Reports*." There are any number of ways to test something. But I think any fair reading of the words *test* and *testing* in this context would be a search for truth. I think most people reading the article would agree that what it did instead was present a discussion of questions that have been raised about some of the work of *Consumer Reports*.

MISSING THE POINT: Ms. Karpatkin, I believe, misreads the article when she says, "...*Brill's Content* appears to contend that it is the role of an independent watchdog to be concerned about the sales figures of the products it evaluates."

"I never suggested they show concern for sales," Ms. Greenstein replies in her response to my inquiry. "I suggested they show an interest in fairness. *CR* knew how powerful their allegations would be in the marketplace, and I suggested that it was unfair that *CR* did not advise the companies of the allegations being brought against them until a few hours before their release."

It is often a shock to see ourselves as others do, especially those of us in the business of commenting on the behavior of others. But this insight on the question of fairness, I think, is one of those insights CU should take seriously.

FREE SPEECH: A final point I'd like to deal with is Ms. Karpatkin's reaction to the way *Brill's Content* recounted details of suits filed against *Consumer Reports* by Isuzu Motors Limited and Suzuki Motor Corporation.

"Finally," she writes, "it's impossible to ignore the fact that *Content*'s version of these conflicts between manufacturers and *Consumer Reports* has been published just prior to judicial proceedings about two major First Amendment cases. These cases may have sweeping implications for *Consumer Reports*, all U.S. news media, and independent citizen groups.

"We don't suggest that *Content* show any undue concern for CU's defense. But it should certainly be concerned about the impact of Suzuki's and Isuzu's suits on the First Amendment rights of all media."

Here I wholeheartedly agree with the response of Jennifer Greenstein when the question was put to her:

"The lawsuits by Suzuki and Isuzu may raise First Amendment issues that could affect the entire news media, including our magazine," Ms. Greenstein says, "but that is not something we would let sway our judgment of a dispute between *Consumer Reports* and two car companies."

To sum up, I think both Consumers Union and *Brill's Content* have something to learn from this exchange and it has to do with how carefully and how openly you deal with your readers. Readers should never be promised more than can be delivered but they should always be given the information to which they are entitled, especially if there is any question that a conflict of interest may be at issue.

In this vein let me state what might appear to some to be my own conflict of interest. I am currently a subscriber of *Consumer Reports*, and my wife or I have long gone to the local library to consult the magazine before making important purchases.

REWIND: Johanna Berkman, who reviewed a book called *Black and White on Wall Street*, by Joseph Jett, for *The New York Times Book Review*, has a bone to pick with Steven Brill's "Rewind" column in the August issue.

Ms. Berkman argues that Mr. Brill sets up what she calls a "false dichotomy" by implying that a reviewer who had not read the Securities and Exchange Commission's report on the case around which the book revolves missed details of importance to any review of the book. Ms. Berkman admitted to Mr. Brill she had not read the SEC report.

But Ms. Berkman writes: "The clear implication: because I did not read the decision, the specifics of the SEC decision in paragraph 10 [of "Rewind"] are all news to me.

"Well that, as anyone who has read the book would know, is untrue. Those specifics are in the book."

Ms. Berkman is right. She may not have read the SEC report but she did read the book. The three specifics Mr. Brill refers to are contained in the book on pages 364, 365, and 367, as Ms. Berkman points out.

Whatever fault may be found in Ms. Berkman's review of the book can't be predicated on the notion that she was unaware of these specific details from the SEC report.

Editor in chief Steven Brill replies: I disagree with Bill completely. My point was that Ms. Berkman should have done more than accept Jett's description of this important SEC decision. Had she done more than read his spin on it, she would never have stated in her review of his book simply that he was "cleared of fraud." She would have seen from the tone and the scope of the whole decision that the judge considered Jett to be a crook. Bill can't really believe that reading the accused's handful of selective quotes from a key judicial decision that went against Jett is the same as reading the whole thing.

Kovach responds: Steve may say he disagrees with me "completely" but that's not possible. The fact remains that all three of the specific points from the SEC report on which he bases his review of the reviewer were contained in the book itself.

Steve's opinion as to whether that was sufficient knowledge for a book reviewer to have is just that, his opinion. I don't necessarily disagree with that opinion but in order to convince me, as a reader, that it is based on facts the reviewer did not have, then noting those specific facts is crucial or Steve is left open to my kind of second-guessing. ■

Prime-time CLUTTER

WITH ABC, CBS, AND FOX reportedly set to cram even more commercials into prime time this fall, we decided to take a look at the state of this "clutter," which also includes public-service announcements, network and station promos, and program credits. If clutter isn't your thing, you may want to watch more TNT (and less MTV).—*Julie Scelfo*

Source: American Association of Advertising Agencies and Association of National Advertisers, Inc.'s 1998 Television Commercial Monitoring Report. Figures are for November 1998. The report defines prime time as 9–10 P.M. for cable networks and 8–11 P.M. for broadcast networks (except on Sunday, when it's 7–11 P.M.).

Filling The Glass Slipper

WHEN CBS WENT HUNTING this summer for a cohost to join Bryant Gumbel on *The Early Show*, its new weekday morning program, the network made it clear that the winning candidate would be a woman. CBS News president Andrew Heyward called the project "Operation Glass Slipper," evoking images of a dainty Cinderella. Steve Friedman, the show's senior executive producer, called his mystery cohost "Madame X."

It's no surprise that CBS would want to pair Gumbel with a woman: Male-female host duos have been the norm on TV for two decades. (CBS announced its Cinderella selection, ABC correspondent Jane Clayson, on September 8. *The Early Show* debuts November 1.) What's surprising is that CBS was so open about the notion that only a woman could fit the slot—and that the media didn't question that notion, particularly in light of a sex discrimination verdict last January that called into question the legitimacy of casting news jobs by gender.

CBS's new "reactor": Jane Clayson

In that case, a federal jury found that WFSB, a Hartford CBS affiliate, had discriminated against anchor Janet Peckinpaugh when it refused to renew her contract in 1994. Among other things, the jury concluded that, because WFSB had three anchorwomen and only two men, Peckinpaugh had been sacked so that the staff would fit more easily into mixed hosting pairs. WFSB's owners contended that male-female pairs are the industry standard.

Indeed, most executives believe the mixed-anchor teams help both male and female viewers feel that a broadcast is relevant to them. And male-female pairings certainly improve on the nearly all-male-anchor TV news landscape that once prevailed.

But gender-based hiring clashes with antidiscrimination law, which demands that a person's sex, race, or age not play a role in a hiring decision. Imagine the outcry that would have followed if CBS had searched for a cohost for Gumbel, a black man, by launching "Operation White Person."

A news organization that stated explicitly that a job was open only to a woman would clearly violate the law, says employment lawyer Nancy Erika Smith. (Of course, news directors can find what they want without asking for it.) But CBS didn't cross that line: *The Early Show* never explicitly ruled out hiring a man.

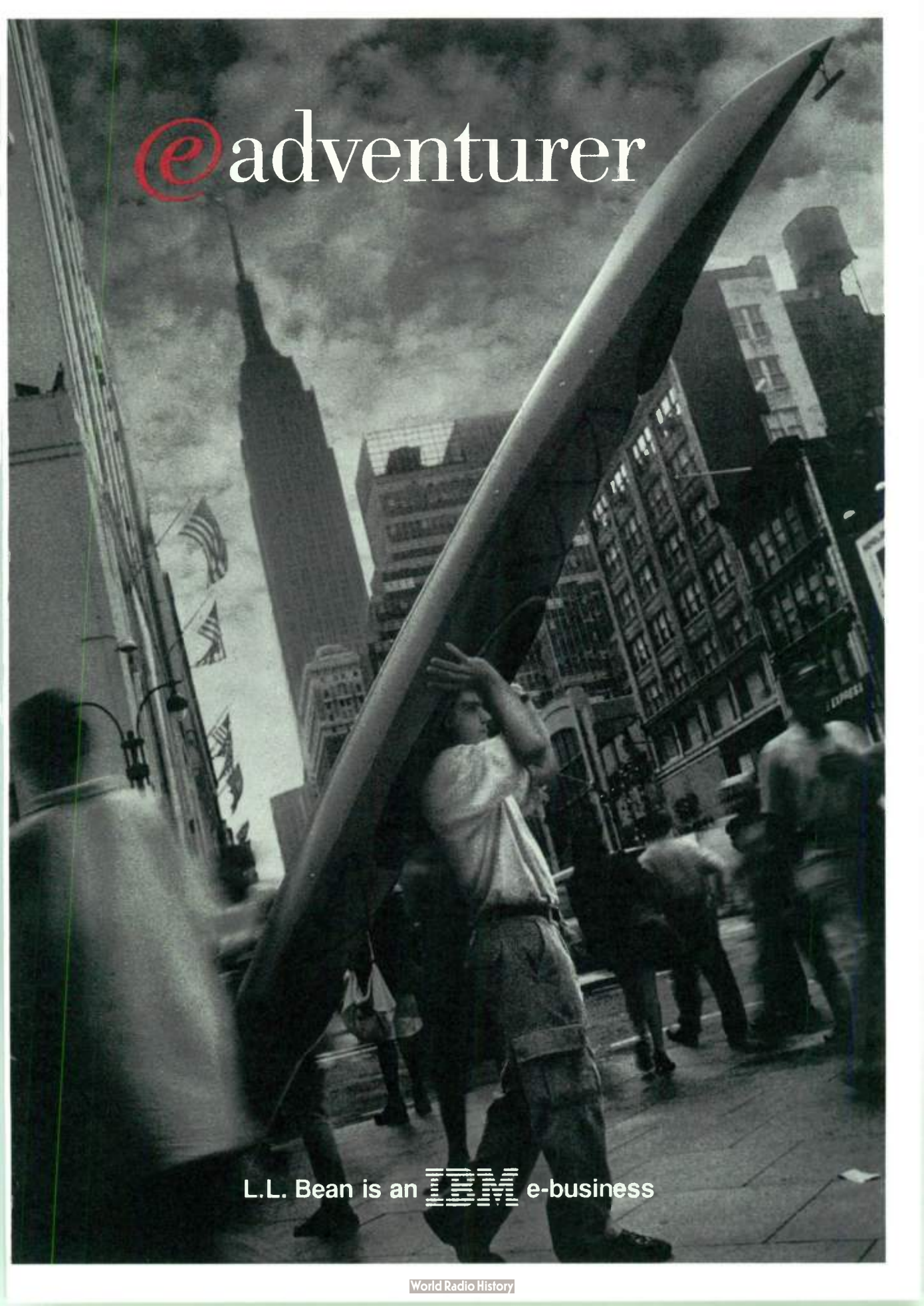
"What you look for is an actor and a reactor," says *The Early Show*'s Friedman, who headed the *Today* show in the 1980s. Gumbel is a blunt actor who needs a reactor, Friedman says, adding that *reactor* isn't a code word for *woman*. For example, he says, *Today*'s Katie Couric played the reactor role for Gumbel in the early 90s but is now the actor opposite cohost Matt Lauer.

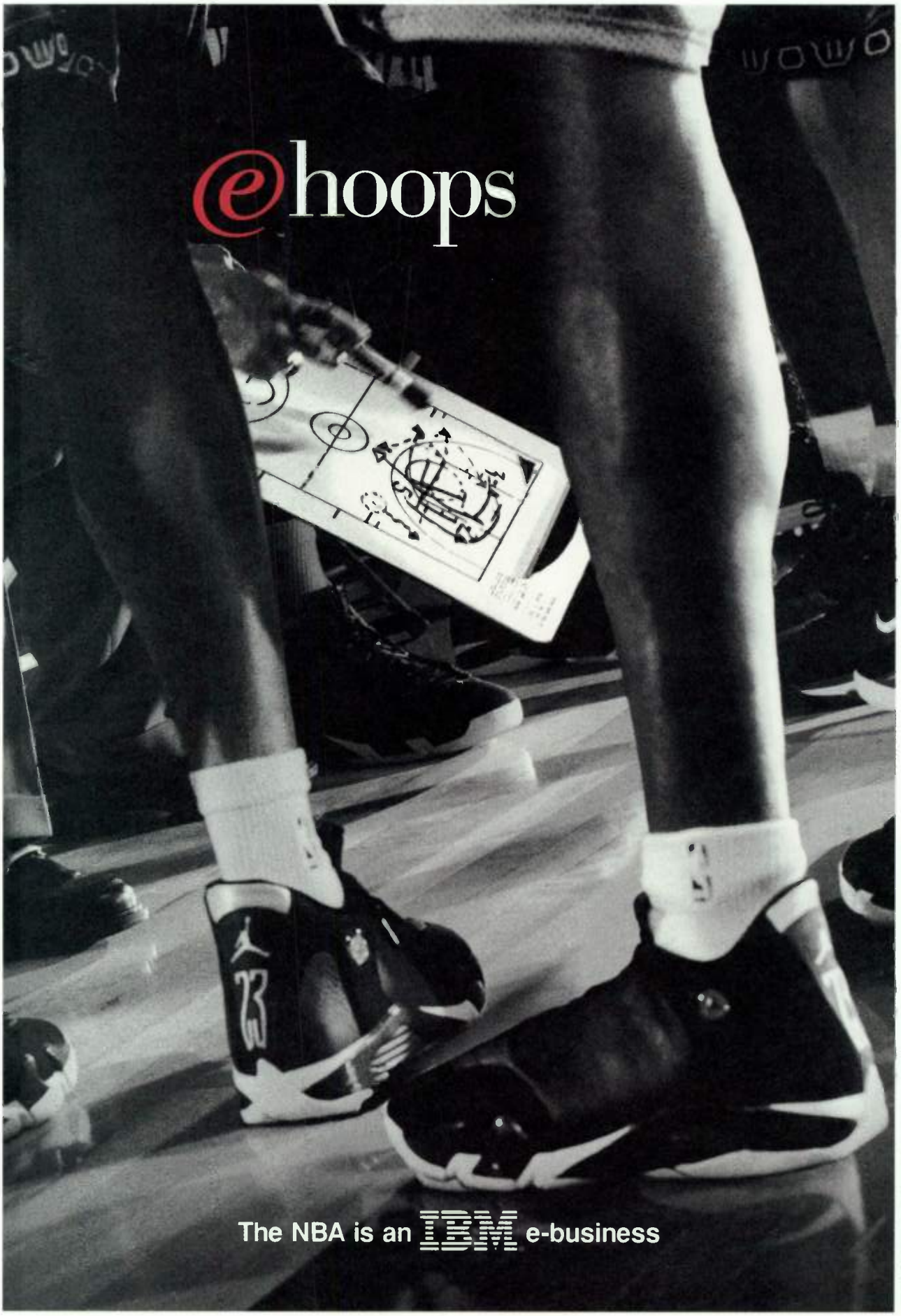
Of the nearly 300 people who submitted audition tapes for the cohost role, Friedman says, "ten or twelve" were men. He attributes the disparity to the fact that women now significantly outnumber men among on-air personalities. Casting a man "would have been an interesting decision," says Friedman. "Ultimately, Jane [Clayson] was the one that worked best."

Despite the potential legal issues, a suit against CBS is unlikely, says lawyer Smith, who represented a former anchorwoman in a successful recent suit against a New Jersey TV station. "The media loves to cover itself; it would be all over the story," says Smith. "Then what happens to your career? Who will hire you? You're labeled as a troublemaker."

—*Matthew Heimer*

TINY ESPARZA/CBS





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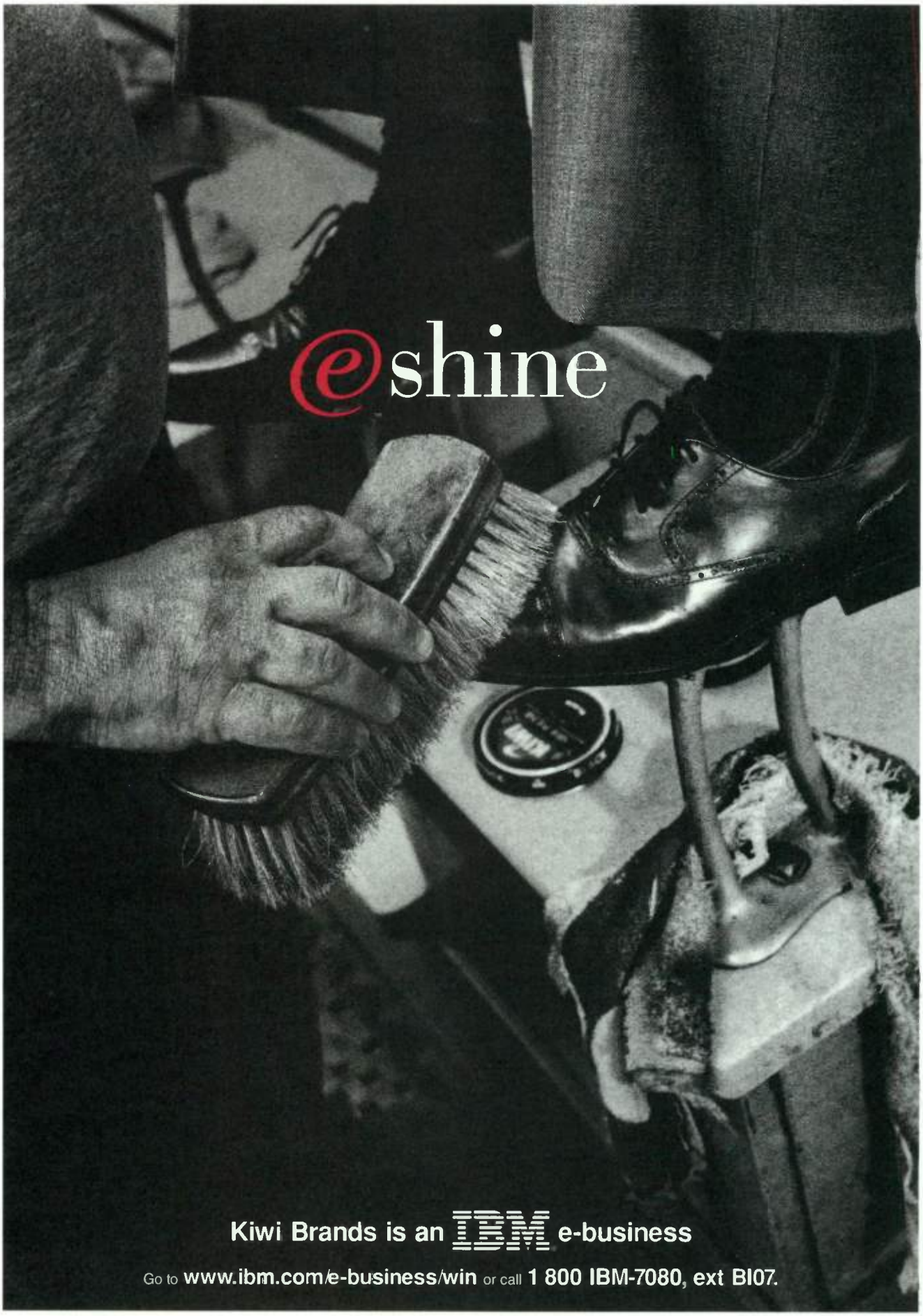

Uncovering The News

SOME MEN SAY THEY DINE AT Hooters for the ribs and buy *Playboy* for the articles. A media entrepreneur hopes that, come January, those same men will tune in to *Bare Essentials News*, a nightly newscast featuring bikini-clad anchors.

The program is the brainchild of Tom Kennington, head of program development at TMR Multimedia/Kaplan Video Productions, who claims credit for *Senior Prom*, a dating game for adults 50 and older that he says is syndicated in 35 markets. *Bare Essentials News* is ostensibly intended to point out the absurdities in broadcast-news values. Kennington argues that TV stations select and market news anchors and reporters more like models than like journalists. *Bare Essentials News* will take that practice to the extreme by dressing anchors, weather people, and reporters in swimwear (bikinis for women; Speedos for men).

Kennington says his team will deliver the news "straight" and claims the near-nudity won't distract viewers. "Once people get past the packaging," he says, "they will watch *Bare Essentials* for its excellent, unbiased content." Right—just as viewers now watch *Baywatch* for its excellent, Shakespearean acting.

According to Kennington, as of mid-September he was in "final negotiations" with an undisclosed "major cable network" to air *Bare Essentials News*. The broadcast is slated to debut in January, from Miami's South Beach.

Of course, January can get chilly in places other than South Beach. Reporters could suffer while reporting in, say, wintry Chicago. No problem, says Kennington, he's got the solution: special flesh-colored garb that makes wearers appear naked under their swimsuits.

If all goes as planned, *Bare Essentials News* will deliver the national news in a half-hour time slot between 5 P.M. and 7 P.M. every weeknight. Maybe it's a blessing: no more bad toupees or tubby weathermen, just babes in bikinis and studs in Speedos, delivering serious news. Seriously. —*Stephanie Bleyer*

PAUL GILLIGAN

A $980 Million Turnaround

Three days after making the shocking front-page claim that up to $1 billion in international aid to Bosnia had been stolen through Bosnian fraud and corruption, on August 20 *The New York Times* ran a correction: In fact, that number was closer to $20 million. The balance was uncollected taxes or money stolen from Bosnian public funds. How did other news outlets, which often follow the *Times*, cover the story?

ABC World News Tonight

August 17 story: Correspondent Hillary Brown reported that $1 billion in aid "has gone straight into the pockets of Bosnian officials or their friends and relatives." Brown reported denials from Bosnian officials but didn't mention uncollected taxes or missing Bosnian funds.

Follow-up: No correction. Through a spokeswoman, executive producer Paul Friedman says he has exchanged letters with the State Department "expressing my viewpoint that whatever *The New York Times* had said about its reporting, our reporting on the fact that a lot of aid money was being wasted—some of it American—stood up."

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

August 17 story: Cited the *Times* article, but quoted a U.N. official who explained that most of the missing money came from Bosnian public funds.

Follow-up: None.

Austin American-Statesman

August 17 story: Ran a version of the *Times* story on its front page.

Follow-up: National and foreign news editor Juan Castillo asserts the paper ran a correction, though he couldn't locate a copy of it; an electronic database search yielded no evidence of a correction.

The Buffalo News

August 17 story: Ran a 150-word wire brief on the *Times* story.

Follow-up: On September 1, the paper ran a "Viewpoints" piece by State Department deputy spokesman James Foley with the headline "U.S. tax dollars have not been lost [or] stolen in Bosnia." No correction was printed.

The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal

August 17 story: Ran a version of the *Times* story.

Follow-up: A correction noted the article "overstated" the lost international aid.

NBC Nightly News

August 17 story: Correspondent Andrea Mitchell reported "more than $1 billion in international aid, some from the U.S....pocketed by officials...and billions more...wasted." Two sources were quoted in dissent, including a State Department spokesman who asserted that it was mostly Bosnian state funds.

Follow-up: No correction. "[W]e did our own reporting and our story contained a fair and accurate summary of what we learned," says NBC News spokeswoman Barbara Levin. "We stand by our report one hundred percent."

New York Post

August 17 story: Ran an article based on the *Times* story.

Follow-up: A database search revealed no correction, and a *Post* spokesman could not confirm whether one was published.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

August 17 story: Ran a version of the *Times* story on the front page.

Follow-up: Ran a short Reuters report on the *Times* correction but didn't specify the revised $20 million figure, nor that most of the missing funds were not international aid. —*Jesse Oxfeld*

Tale Of A Tape

THE STORY WAS BRIEF BUT PACKED AN EXPLOSIVE PUNCH. AT THE height of the debate over whether or not President Clinton should have offered clemency to 16 Puerto Rican nationalists (which he did on the condition that they renounce violence), *Newsweek* reported in a 264-word piece in its September 6 edition that the Federal Bureau of Prisons had taped some of the nationalists saying they would return to their violent ways should they win their freedom. It was these tapes, the story claimed, that had led the bureau to oppose clemency.

The article made waves: It was picked up by dozens of news organizations, including *USA Today*, The Associated Press, and CBS News. When both the Senate and the House passed resolutions condemning the president's actions, representatives used the *Newsweek* item to bolster their arguments.

But did *Newsweek* have enough information to run with the story in the first place? The magazine published no quotations from the tape and the incendiary charges were attributed to only one unnamed "law-enforcement official."

And when *Newsweek* actually quoted from the tapes, in a 517-word follow-up two issues later, the magazine didn't deliver the vows of violence that its first story had promised. Nationalist Adolfo Matos was quoted saying that his desire for Puerto Rican independence "has gotten stronger" and that he doesn't "have to ask for forgiveness from anybody." The article went on to quote an official as saying the tape was "full of revolutionary rhetoric." But where was the talk about violence that *Newsweek* had so boldly announced? "There's nothing in the second article that would preclude the first article from being true," says *Newsweek* managing editor and Washington bureau chief Ann McDaniel. "It's apparent now that some readers believe that the second story was somehow a rollback of the first story...but we stand by our information and sources for both stories."

To some, *Newsweek*'s failure to quote the supposedly violent rhetoric suggests that the magazine never had the goods. Michael Deutsch, a lawyer representing the nationalists, thinks there was no such tape, so "someone scurried around to see if they could find something to back up the story." An administration spokesman, meanwhile, asserts that the White House knew nothing about *any* alleged tapes before the *Newsweek* story appeared and says the Bureau of Prisons could not confirm the tapes even existed. (A Bureau of Prisons spokesman declined to comment.)

The truth about the allegedly damning tapes was still murky as of mid-September (especially after President Clinton declined to release materials about his decision to Congress, claiming executive privilege). Says *Newsweek*'s McDaniel: "There are a number of questions that remain about the tapes and we continue to report in an effort to answer those questions."

—Kimberly Conniff

PUNDIT SCORECARD: CHIPPY HITS THE SKIDS

A YEAR AGO, TV PUNDITS WERE PREDICTING the demise of a president. He's still here, of course, and so are they—only now, they're anointing his successor. The weekend-TV prophets have reached a milestone of sorts: Our tracking and tabulation of their predictive accuracy now covers the 12 months between August 1998 and August 1999. Eleanor Clift returned to the top of the class, closely followed by Tony Blankley and Margaret Carlson. But even they'd be flunking out of school if these accuracy percentages were test scores. Sadly, one of the few bright lights in this business of reading political tea leaves—our simian soothsayer, Chippy the chimp—continues his downward slide (despite an astute prediction that the people of East Timor would vote for independence). Chippy does have at least one consolation: He's still doing better than George Will.

Eleanor Clift, MG (68 of 107)	.636	Sam Donaldson, TW (21 of 36)	.583
Tony Blankley, MG (49 of 78)	.628	Michael Barone, MG (33 of 57)	.579
Margaret Carlson, CG (30 of 48)	.625	Cokie Roberts, TW (16 of 29)	.552
Mark Shields, CG (18 of 29)	.621	Kate O'Beirne, CG (19 of 35)	.543
Al Hunt, CG (45 of 74)	.608	Chippy the chimp, unaffiliated (23 of 43)	.535
Robert Novak, CG (45 of 74)	.608	John McLaughlin, MG (44 of 90)	.489
Patrick Buchanan, MG (37 of 62)	.597	Morton Kondracke, BB (43 out of 95)	.453
George Stephanopoulos, TW (58 of 98)	.592	George Will, TW (17 of 41)	.415
Bill Kristol, TW (55 of 94)	.585	Fred Barnes, BB (39 out of 106)	.368

"BB": *The Beltway Boys*; "CG": *The Capital Gang*; "MG": *The McLaughlin Group*; "TW": *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*

Chippy predicts Hillary Clinton will be New York's next U.S. Senator

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A Wandering Eye On Newt

Why the press did—or didn't—cover the former House Speaker's private life.

ARE POLITICIANS' LOVE AFFAIRS NEWS? YOU MIGHT think that, in the age of Monica Lewinsky, that question is a dead issue and that the last vestiges of privacy have gone the way of chastity belts and arranged marriages. But coverage this summer of the news that former House speaker Newt Gingrich would divorce his second wife and was romantically involved with a woman reportedly 23 years his junior showed the uncertainty that still reigns when it comes to reporting on the private lives of public figures.

Newspapers took a variety of positions. Some, like *The Wall Street Journal*, stayed silent about Gingrich's marital status; others, such as *The Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and *The Washington Post*, published only brief wire stories or relegated the intrigue to their "light news" sections. Others still, including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Omaha World-Herald*, ran op-ed columns ruminating on the affair's political and ethical implications, while mostly or completely ignoring the subject in their news pages. Among the TV networks, there was a day/night divide. None of the broadcast networks' evening news programs covered the matter, but NBC's *Today* and ABC's *Good Morning America* did. Most of the media outlets that gave news coverage to Gingrich's romantic life used the legal proceedings—a traditional news peg—as an excuse to discuss the existence of the ex-speaker's mistress.

Like many such recent stories, this one originated in a tabloid. The *Star* led the way with an article that appeared on August 12. (The tabloid also released parts of its article in advance to the *New York Post*, New York's *Daily News*, and the Drudge Report, all of which published items within a day.) The *Star* story accused Gingrich of leaving his wife for Callista Bisek, a House staffer with whom he had begun the relationship while he was still speaker. In less than a week, the affair found its way into the op-ed and light-news pages of such papers as *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

But many news outlets kept mum. (One notable exception: *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Gingrich's home-state paper, which focused on the reactions of the Georgia Republican's former constituents.) Given Gingrich's focus on "family values" while in Congress—and his prominent role in arguing for President Clinton's impeachment in the wake of the Lewinsky matter—his affair appeared to signal, at minimum, a newsworthy hypocrisy. During the president's impeachment trial, for example, Gingrich once pledged never again to make a speech as speaker without mentioning the Lewinsky issue. And then there was the timing of Gingrich's resignation last November, a little more than a month before his designated successor, Robert Livingston, decided to resign because of his own extramarital affair.

Why did so many press outlets shy away? "He's out of office. It's not relevant," says Gerald Seib, deputy chief of *The Wall Street Journal*'s Washington, D.C., bureau. Similar reasons were offered by editors at *The Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Adds the *Chronicle*'s Washington, D.C., bureau chief Marc Sandalow: It wasn't "a matter of illegal behavior or violating the public trust—just a matter of his own personal life in disarray."

New York Times national editor Dean Baquet echoes Seib's explanation that Gingrich is no longer a public figure—the *Times* ran only a 50-word Associated Press item on the divorce, without mentioning Gingrich's affair—and notes that the *Times*'s editorial and news sections are independent. (*Times* columnists such as Maureen Dowd and Frank Rich were thus free to—and did—write about the affair.) But *Star* senior editor Richard Gooding, who broke the story, argues that such a distinction seems curious: "If it's relevant for [*New York Times*] columns, it's relevant for their news."

Moreover, Dowd claimed in her column that the affair had been an "open secret" in Washington throughout President Clinton's impeachment trial. That raises another question: If it's inappropriate to cover Gingrich's private life now that he's no longer in politics, why wasn't it covered a few years ago when Gingrich *was* in politics?

Some editors, like Baquet and *The Boston Globe*'s David Shribman, deny knowing about the affair before this summer. A few, though, such as *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*'s John Walter, admit to having had suspicions. "Were there rumors of his affair? Yes. Did we know them? Yes," says Walter. "Our reporters were watching [Gingrich's] public statements during [the impeachment trial] pretty carefully," Walter recalls, but heard Gingrich say nothing that made him a hypocrite.

Those editors that did suspect an extramarital relationship by and large chose to sit on their stories until the rumors were confirmed. "[We had] a sense of 'Let's wait until somebody legitimate reports this so we're not going out digging up dirt on people,'" explains Darryl Levings, assistant managing editor for national news at *The Kansas City Star*. "We were waiting for the AP."

—*Jane Manners*

No longer a public figure? Former House speaker Newt Gingrich

AXEL KOESTER/CORBIS-SYGMA

Quiz

Family Planning

When chief executive officers Mel Karmazin and Sumner Redstone announced, in early September, a deal to merge their respective companies—CBS Corporation and Viacom Inc.—they may not have realized the array of subsidiaries nestled inside the soon-to-be-combined entity. See if you can identify which properties belong to the corporate bride and groom, and which belong to someone else. *—Julie Scelfo*

1. MTV New Guinea
2. HarperCollins Publishers
3. Roadshow Advertising Ltd
4. World Skating League
5. Central Fidelity Insurance Company
6. Fried Worms Productions (film production)
7. Def Jam Records
8. Mighty Ducks of Anaheim
9. Spelling Entertainment Group
10. country.com
11. Noggin (educational cable channel/website for kids)
12. Miss Universe Pageant
13. Blockbuster
14. Imagine Radio

Answers: Only HarperCollins (The News Corporation Limited), Def Jam Records (The Seagram Company Ltd.), and The Mighty Ducks (The Walt Disney Company) don't belong to CBS or Viacom. CBS owns the entities numbered 3, 4 (50%), 10, and 12 (50%); Viacom owns 1, 6, 9, 11 (50%), and 14 (53%).

Jesse Pins The Press

TO SOME, JESSE VENTURA REMAINS a buffoonish ex-professional wrestler, even after a year as governor of Minnesota. But the hulking chief executive has proved to be a deft press critic, embarrassing the state's two major daily newspapers after opinion writers criticized his ethics.

In mid-August, watchdog groups complained that Ventura had created a potential conflict of interest when he agreed to take what could turn out to be more than $1 million in royalties to guest-referee a pro wrestling championship while holding the state's highest elective office. Sports columnists from the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* gleefully mocked the "Jesse Ventura Foundation for Lining My Own Pockets."

Ventura immediately counterpunched. Sportswriters, he charged, had their own conflict: taking free game-day meals from the teams they cover. As it turned out, sports reporters from the *Star Tribune* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* have been gobbling away for years. (Many other local journalists do, too, including this writer.) Pam Fine, the *Star Tribune*'s managing editor, pegged the freebies' annual worth at $1,500 (which doesn't include another $1,000 in meals from the Minnesota Twins that the paper *did* pay for). Fine says that sportswriters can't be bought off with a few Salisbury steaks. But she admits the practice was wrong. "The governor uncovered something that was valuable," she says.

Although *Pioneer Press* officials acknowledged similar sins, they received a second helping of Ventura's wrath the next week. The paper's editorialists had savaged Ventura for participating in a wrestling event that drew kids to "raw language, violence, [and] sex." Ventura promptly dubbed the paper "the St. Paul Pioneer Porn," noting that it places strip-club and X-rated video ads next to sports-section copy.

For the next two days, the debate was suddenly about the newspaper's ethics rather than about Ventura's. *Pioneer Press* editor Walker Lundy, who defended his paper's sex ads, was reduced to asking Minnesotans whether they regarded his paper or pro wrestling as more pornographic; *Pioneer Press* columnist Nick Coleman begrudgingly wrote, "Mr. Governor, despite everything—your political posturing, your bullying, your name-calling, your [hypocrisy] on the matter, you're right. Dang it." —*David Brauer*

Governor Ventura (center) with two former colleagues, before he refereed a wrestling match.

ANDY KING/CORBIS-SYGMA

In Short

SOOTHING ABC'S IRE... Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., is a professional association that promotes quality journalism. But the IRE recently had to admit that its own publication didn't live up to its beliefs. In the November/December 1998 issue of *The IRE Journal*, Sandra Davidson, an associate professor at the University of Missouri's School of Journalism and an attorney, castigated ABC News for shoddy journalism in its controversial *PrimeTime Live* exposé seven years ago on unsafe food handling practices at Food Lion supermarkets. The problem: Davidson relied solely on Food Lion PR materials (which Food Lion defends as accurate). Even now, she defends not contacting ABC, which is involved in litigation with Food Lion: "As an attorney, I would have felt uncomfortable saying, 'I know your attorney said you shouldn't talk, but I'd like to talk to you anyway.'" The *IRE Journal* disagreed and ran a two-page, nine-point abject apology in its August issue. "We'd prefer it never happened," says ABC News spokeswoman Eileen Murphy. "But we're glad they set the record straight." —*Jesse Oxfeld*

UPDATE... Looks like Joseph Jett is heading back to court. The disgraced former bond trader, whose shady trades helped bring down Kidder, Peabody & Co., Inc., portrayed himself as a victim of racial injustice in *Black And White On Wall Street*. The book's factual misstatements led us to wonder how publishers factcheck their books ["What Book Reviews Don't Review," Rewind, July/August]. On August 25, Jett's former supervisor, Edward Cerullo, filed notice of a $10 million defamation suit against Jett and his publishers. Cerullo's attorney, Andrew Hayes, charges that Jett's book makes numerous false claims, in particular that his client is a racist and that he approved of Jett's dubious financial dealings. A spokeswoman for both publisher William Morrow & Company, Inc., and HarperCollins Publishers (which owns Morrow) declined to comment, citing the company's policy against discussing pending litigation. —*Matthew Reed Baker*

Working Her Way Up, One Envelope At A Time

Sarah Morrison
assistant to the editor in chief, *Mademoiselle*

SITTING AT HER CUBICLE JUST OUTside her boss's airy office, Sarah Morrison stuffs an envelope. And another. And then another. "Sometimes it's disturbing," laughs Morrison, 25. "You're like, wow, I went to college for *this*?"

Morrison, a 1998 University of Texas graduate, works in the media. But she's not a much-photographed editor about town. She's the assistant to the editor in chief of *Mademoiselle*, the fashion magazine for twentysomething women. In that role, the San Antonio native—who moved to the Big City to become a Big-Time Writer—answers phones, grabs coffee, routes articles, and orders town cars to shuttle her boss to and from work.

It's not exactly her dream job, but Morrison understands that she has to pay her dues. And at glossies like *Mademoiselle*, that means being an editorial assistant. "A good assistant," says Elizabeth Crow, Morrison's boss, "will learn a lot. There's nothing that goes on...that is beyond her earshot." If you're lucky, you land a boss who considers an assistant an apprentice. If you're not so lucky, you may be walking the boss's dog. "Elizabeth is remarkably low-maintenance," says Morrison. "I know assistants who are on our staff who have to do [personal errands] for other editors. And I've never had to do it. I'm spoiled."

Actually, Morrison's not spoiled at all (though she does enjoy the endless free beauty products lavished on the magazine by cosmetic purveyors hoping for coverage). She makes less than $30,000 a year, and until recently, shared a two-bedroom apartment with three other women. Morrison's most glamorous moments have consisted of meeting U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman and seeing actress Alicia Silverstone at a *Mademoiselle* party. (Morrison spent half her time manning the coat check.)

Most frustrating to Morrison is the perception of fashion-magazine employees: "The idea that you're just bubbleheaded and that all you care about is shopping, that kind of thing is really upsetting....I worry about the next job and being stereotyped as the 'fashion girl.' That's just not who I am." Rather, Morrison is an ambitious woman willing to bide her time and answer the phone if that's what it takes to earn the opportunity to write. "You've got to keep the big picture in mind," she reasons. "This is how it's always worked. So, suck it up." —*Katherine Rosman*

ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

He Could Have Made A Killing

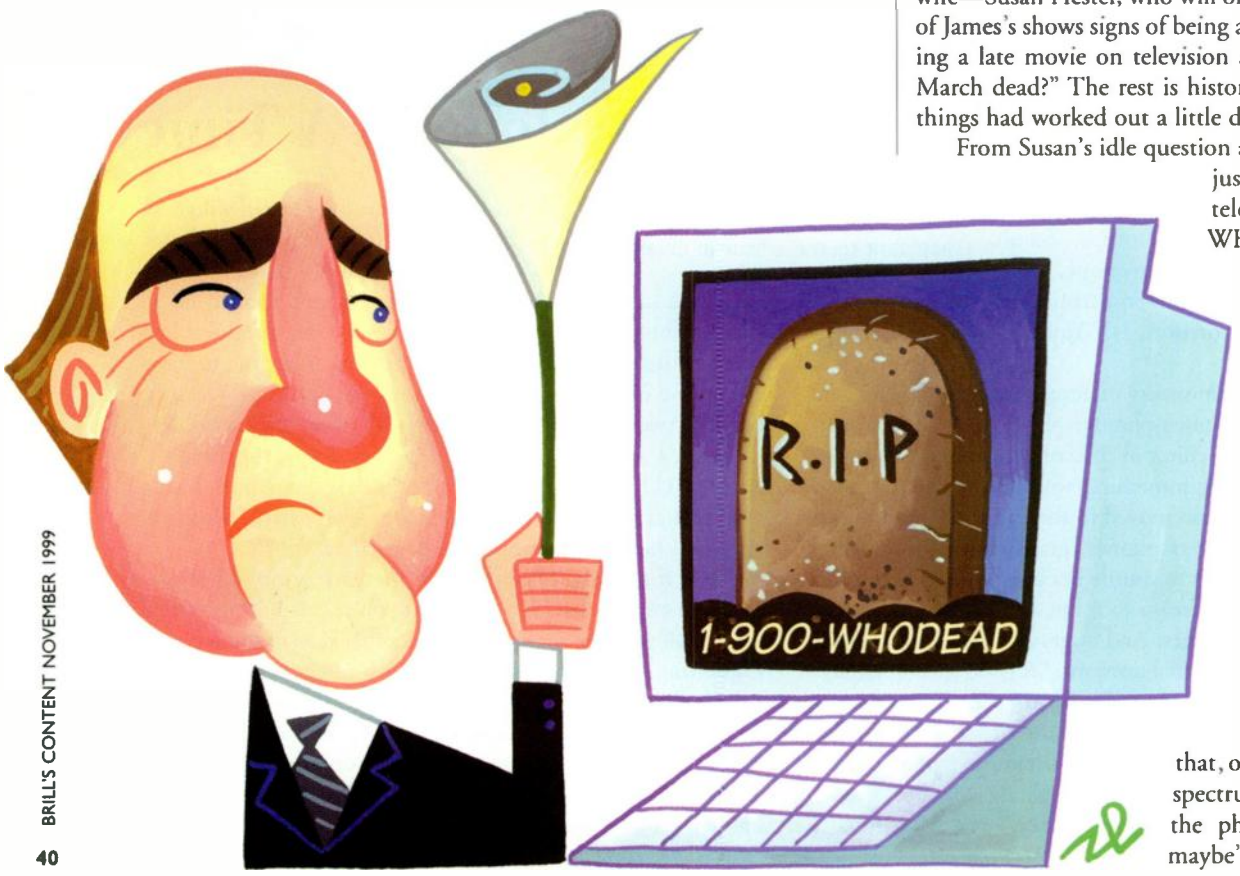
The author mourns the passing of what seemed like a lucrative, if morbid, idea: a number to call to check in on who has checked out.

IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GIVE UP ON THE SCHEME to launch a 900 number that would tell you who's dead. The person who actually thought of the scheme was my friend James Edmunds—he introduced what he called the National Deadline to the public in a column that appeared in *The Times of Acadiana*, in Lafayette, Louisiana, about ten years ago—but I was in on the ground floor. I think it's fair to say that this was the only time I was in on the ground floor, which is one reason I'm so distressed at indications that the National Deadline is, well, dead.

A real estate shark I know once said to me, as a way of explaining the relative poverty of his friends in the scribbling trades, "The trouble with writers is that you're labor in a labor-intensive industry." Too true. Writing an article or a book is roughly the equivalent of making a chair—or, even worse, making one chair at a time. In the chair industry, the moneymaker is the guy who presides over the manufacture of chairs or the guy who sells a chair company short or the guy who buys a chair company and folds it into the hosiery company he's about to spin off or—and here's the richest of them all—the guy who gets in on the ground floor of a chair-selling scheme. That guy doesn't waste his time sanding.

The National Deadline looked like the sort of enterprise that could transform some humble artisans into entrepreneurs. According to National Deadline lore, the idea for the project had come to James one evening after he and his wife—Susan Hester, who will often pitch in when a scheme of James's shows signs of being a real gem—finished watching a late movie on television and Susan said, "Is Fredric March dead?" The rest is history—or would have been, if things had worked out a little differently.

From Susan's idle question about Fredric March, it was just one step to the name, a telephone number (1-900-WHODEAD), and a method of calibrating what you might call certainty of deceasement. Susan works at the public library in New Iberia, so she and James had a leg up on doing the research. It was around that time that I came on board as sort of an informal consultant. Without wanting to claim too much credit for shaping the National Deadline in those early days, I should point out for the record that, on one end of the calibration spectrum, I suggested replacing the phrase "He could be dead, maybe" with the phrase "If he's



ROBERT DE MICHIELL

not dead, he sure is quiet," and, on the other end, I counseled against the terms "extremely dead" and "dead as a doornail." If that isn't being in on the ground floor, I don't know what is.

My own experience with late movies on television is limited by a tendency to fall asleep before the first commercial break. What got me excited about the prospect of a National Deadline was libel. Yes, that's right. Everybody in the trade knows that you can't libel the dead—it's what they teach in journalism school just after they let you in on the inverted pyramid—and I was looking forward to a central registry that could tell you if someone you were about to mention in an unflattering way was, not to put too fine a point on it, safely under the ground.

Around the time of James's brainstorm, I'd been reminded of that need by Major General Edwin A. Walker. One Sunday, while working on a newspaper column due the next morning, I thought about mentioning Edwin Walker as a pivotal figure—someone who represented a sort of tip point after which what was actually happening in this country was weirder than anything anyone could make up. In 1957, Walker was on the cover of *Time* as the general in charge of escorting black students into Central High School in Little Rock. Four years later, he resigned from the Army after being relieved of his command for distributing John Birch Society literature to his troops. Not long after that, with a run for governor of Texas under his belt, he showed up at The University of Mississippi during the disturbances that followed its court-ordered integration and, according to some accounts, rallied the assembled heroes of the Confederacy for a charge on one of the Ole Miss buildings. Somewhere along the way, it was later discovered, he had been shot at by Lee Harvey Oswald as a sort of warm-up for the assassination of John F. Kennedy. I could tell you some other things about Major General Edwin A. Walker, but the fact that you've taken in what I've told you so far without interrupting with "Gimme a break!" is proof enough of the post-Walker novelization of American history.

As it turned out, my column that Sunday veered off in a different direction, but I later remembered that Walker had sued The Associated Press and a dozen newspapers for writing that he led the charge at Ole Miss. Writing on a Sunday afternoon, before the wonders of news paper archives on the Internet, I almost certainly wouldn't have been able to satisfy myself that he was dead. As it turned out, I wasn't certain about his demise until a few years later, in 1993, when I read in *The Washington Post* that he had just died, at 84, in Dallas. I felt that it was finally safe to write about him, although I wouldn't claim that going down there and driving a stake through his heart, just to make sure, didn't occur to me.

James and Susan and I talked about the National Deadline for a number of years; you might say that we were tweaking it here and there to make sure that there were no kinks in the operation. Yes, I suppose you could also say that we got so caught up in the fine-tuning that we never got around to the start-up. Writers tend to be better at tweaking than at entrepreneurial pursuits. I suppose we should have been talking about capitalization and stock options and what model private jets we were going to buy.

A month or so ago, James sent me an e-mail that said, "Do you know about this: dpsinfo.com? Dead People Server. Pretty much what the National Deadline was meant to be." A website! We had fallen so far behind that we were no longer even working in the right medium. When I got on to Dead People Server, just about the first thing I saw was a description of how it solved those nagging questions about whether someone who played in an old movie was still alive. I went to the alphabetical listing. Fredric March was there. He died April 4, 1975. Yes, poor Fredric March is in his grave, and the people who provide information of that sort on the Internet are probably receiving so many hits that they're about ready to sell out to Amazon.com, Inc., for four or five hundred million dollars. Meanwhile, James and I are still sanding. ■

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

Private Matters

When is a politician's private life fair game for media scrutiny? From the right, Jonah Goldberg says "Always." Jeff Cohen, from the left, disagrees.

BY JEFF COHEN

LONG BEFORE HE BECAME A COMEDY Central game-show host, Ben Stein was a prominent conservative media critic. On CNN's *Crossfire* in 1987, Stein praised the news media's exposure of extramarital activity involving then-Democratic presidential front-runner Gary Hart as "one of the highest moments of the press's utility."

CROSSFIRE *HOST: "How far would you have the press go? Would you say that a candidate should be asked if he's ever had a homosexual experience?"*

BEN STEIN: "Absolutely, as far as I'm concerned. Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely."

Stein appeared again on *Crossfire* a year later, as reporters were pursuing an alleged dalliance between vice-presidential candidate Dan Quayle and a female lobbyist. With a Republican being probed, Stein remained "absolute" in his convictions, only they'd rotated precisely 180 degrees.

CROSSFIRE *HOST: Do you think the media was fair in going after Senator Quayle on the subject of Paula Parkinson?*

BEN STEIN: Absolutely not. I think that if they started going after all the presidential candidates on the subject of their sex lives, they could really talk about very little else. I think it's a very dangerous subject for the Democrats to open, or for anyone to open, and it's a complete irrelevancy as well.

The moral here is that the continuous carping from conservatives about media unfairness toward their candidates has long been more of a tactic (to intimidate reporters) than a statement of consistent principle or fact.

Today, one hears the absurd claim that President Bill Clinton—with the most scrutinized personal life in presidential history—has gotten off easy compared to Texas Governor George W. Bush. Cyberpundit Matt Drudge, for example, recently complained about a *Los Angeles Times* story that explored Bush's Vietnam War–era draft avoidance: "I don't ever remember the *Los Angeles Times* doing full exposés on Clinton dodging the draft," said Drudge. In fact, the *L.A. Times* repeatedly probed Clinton's draft evasion, and its page-one exposé on September 2, 1992, reignited the story.

It should be possible to apply a single standard to the issue of reporting on the private lives *(continued on next page)*

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

IN 1991, ARKANSAS GOVERNOR BILL Clinton knew that if he was going to make a serious bid for the presidency, he would have to address rumors about his infidelities. In a now legendary meeting with kingmaker journalists, he waited a half hour for someone to finally ask him about his, ahem, wandering eye. "I thought you'd never ask," he said. Then he lowered his voice and addressed his tendency to lower his pants. When a journalist yelled, "Can't hear!" the governor joked, "This is the sort of thing they were interested in when Rome was in decline, too."

Putting aside the essential Clintonism of the joke—scolding others for their decadent interest in his decadence—he had a point. It has always been natural for people to crave information about the private lives of politicians. The question for non-Roman societies in general and journalists in particular is: When is a public figure's private life fair game for the press? The short answer is: *Always.*

But "fair" has nothing to do with it. First, life ain't fair. Second, as a practical matter, any politician who thinks his personal life will remain private simply because it should remain private is either a fool, an egomaniac, or a very odd breed of utopian. Anything really interesting—read: salacious—is going to find its way into print if even a remote case can be made for its relevance. My friend Matt Drudge couldn't care a wit what Bernard Kalb, the cohost of CNN's *Reliable Sources* and the wide-tied Church Lady of press bluenoses, thinks is a legitimate story.

And if Drudge doesn't get the hot stuff out there, one can almost as often count on Kalb's *Reliable Sources* partner and *Washington Post* media cop Howard Kurtz to put the story in play. Throughout the Lewinsky scandal, Kurtz would brilliantly write about how the press was handling a story, allegation, or rumor that was not quite ready for page one but that was driving coverage behind the scenes. "Rumor Mill Grinds Out a New, Shadowy Intern" ran one Kurtz headline. It began, "The Monica Lewinsky frenzy has produced yet another bizarre media development: public speculation about an alleged article about a sexual rumor that no journalist has confirmed." But *(continued on page 44)*

TOM BACHTELL

of politicians. Call me old-fashioned, even "conservative," but I like the traditional rules: Except where private conduct strongly connects to public office, a politician's personal life is not news. Nor is gossip about such.

These rules have been shattered in recent years as tabloid values and a ratings-above-all-else mentality have taken over much of the corporate-owned mainstream media, especially television. In 1991, NBC devoted a five-month investigation to "The Senator's Secrets," a segment focusing on whether a Democratic U.S. senator had, years earlier, attended parties where drugs were used and whether he'd received sex—or just a massage—from a beauty queen. With a political press corps that seems to have long ago grown bored covering politicians who aren't celebrities, personal gossip wins out over public issues, and probes of "the character issue" are reduced to sex, drugs, and draft dodging.

Pundits more readily find a character flaw when politicians partake of consensual sex than when they partake of policies that comfort the comfortable and afflict the afflicted. During the journalistic jihad of 1998, it was telling to see national news outlets become ferocious watchdogs chasing President Clinton's evasions about his private life when these same outlets acted more like toothless lapdogs as the president dissembled about major public issues from welfare to NAFTA to overseas bombings.

On the slippery slope into politicians' private lives, mainstream journalists have offered various excuses for abandoning old rules.

If Monica Lewinsky coverage wasn't about sex, why did *Newsweek* quote a real estate agent on how Lewinsky kept condoms by her bedside?

THE "NEW MEDIA" MADE ME DO IT: Once, only tabloid newspapers trafficked in gossip about public figures. Now there's the World Wide Web, which feeds talk radio, which feeds "all-news" cable. If we don't publish what millions of people have already heard or read, we're acting as censors, or people will think we missed the story. And if we hold back to check the facts ourselves, we'll be beaten by the competition.

Yes, there are new pressures, perhaps none more significant than conglomerate ownership that prods news outlets toward quick ratings. But mainstream journalistic values themselves have eroded. Take the Gary Hart case. In 1987, there was no Web, and CNN, with little clout, was all that existed in all-news cable. It was "old media" journalists who stalked Hart: The *Miami Herald* set up a stakeout at his Washington, D.C., home, and a *Washington Post* reporter asked, "Have you ever committed adultery?"

IT'S NOT ABOUT SEX: What we're covering isn't sex, it's his judgment (Hart). It's the journalistic ethics of covering politicians' sex lives (Gennifer Flowers). It's the misuse of government employees (Troopergate). It's perjury and obstruction (Monicagate). It's not the sex, it's the lying and covering up (all the above).

If Monica Lewinsky coverage wasn't about sex, why did *Newsweek*'s original exposé quote a real estate agent on how Lewinsky kept condoms by her bedside? Why did Peter Jennings interview a sex columnist about oral sex? Why did Fox News air the poll question: Is Lewinsky an "average girl...or a young tramp looking for thrills?"

As for the issue of whether George W. Bush ever used cocaine, it was journalists who made that the central campaign question of the summer, although some outlets tried to obscure their role (NBC kept calling it "the question that won't go away"). Bush became the victim of a media in heat.

Initially, only a few journalists, including columnist Molly Ivins and *Newsweek*'s Stuart Taylor Jr., bothered to point toward the relevant policy issue: Bush's signing of the Texas law that made even first-time possession of small amounts of drugs punishable by prison time. The appropriate questions target not private peccadilloes but public policy—should people less fortunate than Bush be learning from their youthful mistakes inside a jail cell?

No one championed the media's right to pursue the personal drug-use question more insistently than Gary Bauer, the Bush rival most identified with the Religious Right. During the Lewinsky furor, religious conservatives also defended the questioning of politicians about adultery. At times, media outlets and the Religious Right seem to operate as a tag team, both driven by a definition of "character" reduced to personal behavior.

In other (perhaps subconscious) teamwork, media have accommodated conservatives by exempting leading right-wing politicians from the sex-prying to which Democrats have been subjected. Although Maureen Dowd has referred to Newt Gingrich's extramarital affair during the impeachment crisis as "an open secret," the story was widely deemed off-limits. When Representative Henry Hyde admitted to a long-term extramarital relationship, reporters became instant libertarians and buried the story beneath Hyde's reference to a "youthful indiscretion." Hyde was in his late 40s when his affair ended; Clinton was 50 when he broke off with Lewinsky.

Unfortunately, it's unlikely we'll see across-the-board journalistic restraint until somehow the tables are dramatically turned and top media professionals and owners—many with political influence greater than most public officials—find themselves being asked the same personal questions their outlets are increasingly willing to ask politicians. Privacy limits might seem worthy again if media figures themselves had to answer questions now deemed so enlightening on "character" or "judgment" or "integrity."

Mr. Mogul, have you ever committed adultery? Ever lied about it, Mr. Anchor? Ever snorted cocaine, Ms. Editor? ■

Jeff Cohen founded Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting. His latest book is Wizards of Media Oz: Behind the Curtain of Mainstream News.

GOLDBERG *(continued from page 42)*

then Kurtz commenced to give new legs to the still unproven rumor that there was another intern playing baron-and-the-milkmaid in the Oval Office.

One need not single out Kurtz, who is probably the best daily media reporter in America. The point is, we live in an age in which the story not written is almost as newsworthy as the one that is. Fair or not, if you're doing odd things with a goat, don't plan to keep it a secret for long.

But more important, is it so bad that we know about the private lives of our elected leaders? Justice Louis Brandeis once observed that "the right to be let alone is the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued in civilized man." Doesn't that apply to public figures, too? In most cases, no. Politicians run for the right to protect the rights of others. That makes their integrity and character an issue. And it often turns out that asking questions about a seemingly minor thing reveals something unexpectedly major about a candidate. In 1992, President Clinton's strategy wasn't to answer "It's none of your business" to questions about marital fidelity, draft evading, pot smoking, or any of the other items allegedly within his zone of privacy. Instead, he offered brilliantly crafted lies and half-truths that have come back to haunt us all. As David Frum of *The Weekly Standard* has pointed out, the issue that dogged candidate Clinton the most then was his incapacity to tell the truth. That's still the issue. Alas, in some quarters, due to my mom's role as a conservative provocateur (and my defense of her and Linda Tripp's actions), I'm considered too deep in the anti-Clinton bunker to talk about the guy. So let's forget about him for the moment.

A history of mental illness may not be disqualifying for a candidate, but who could argue that it is unequivocally irrelevant?

The watershed for the press's prying is 1972, when then–U.S. Senator Thomas Eagleton was driven from the Democratic national ticket after it was disclosed that he had been hospitalized for mental illness and had undergone electroshock therapy. As Meg Greenfield recollected in *Newsweek* in May 1987, the press focused on Eagleton's lack of candor—a common dodge for journalists wary of tackling the substance of a charge. But what about the substance? The country was at war, and riots were frequent occurrences, as were assassinations. A history of mental illness may not be disqualifying for a vice-president, but who could argue that it is unequivocally irrelevant?

Indeed, when you look at most of the cases that people often remember as violating a politician's privacy, it isn't at all clear that the supposedly personal wasn't legitimately political. Senator Paul Tsongas, during his run for the White House, tried to prove his history of cancer wasn't an issue by going to great pains to show he was healthy. By the way, had Tsongas been elected, he would have died a few days shy of the end of his term. Tragic, yes, but that sort of confirms the legitimacy of the health issue.

But there is another realm of a politician's life that is often mislabeled as personal: his or her past. The past and the personal are not the same thing. For example, Dan Quayle, his defenders, and even the press painted his military record as a "personal" issue. These people thought, it seemed, that because the issue was old, it was immaterial.

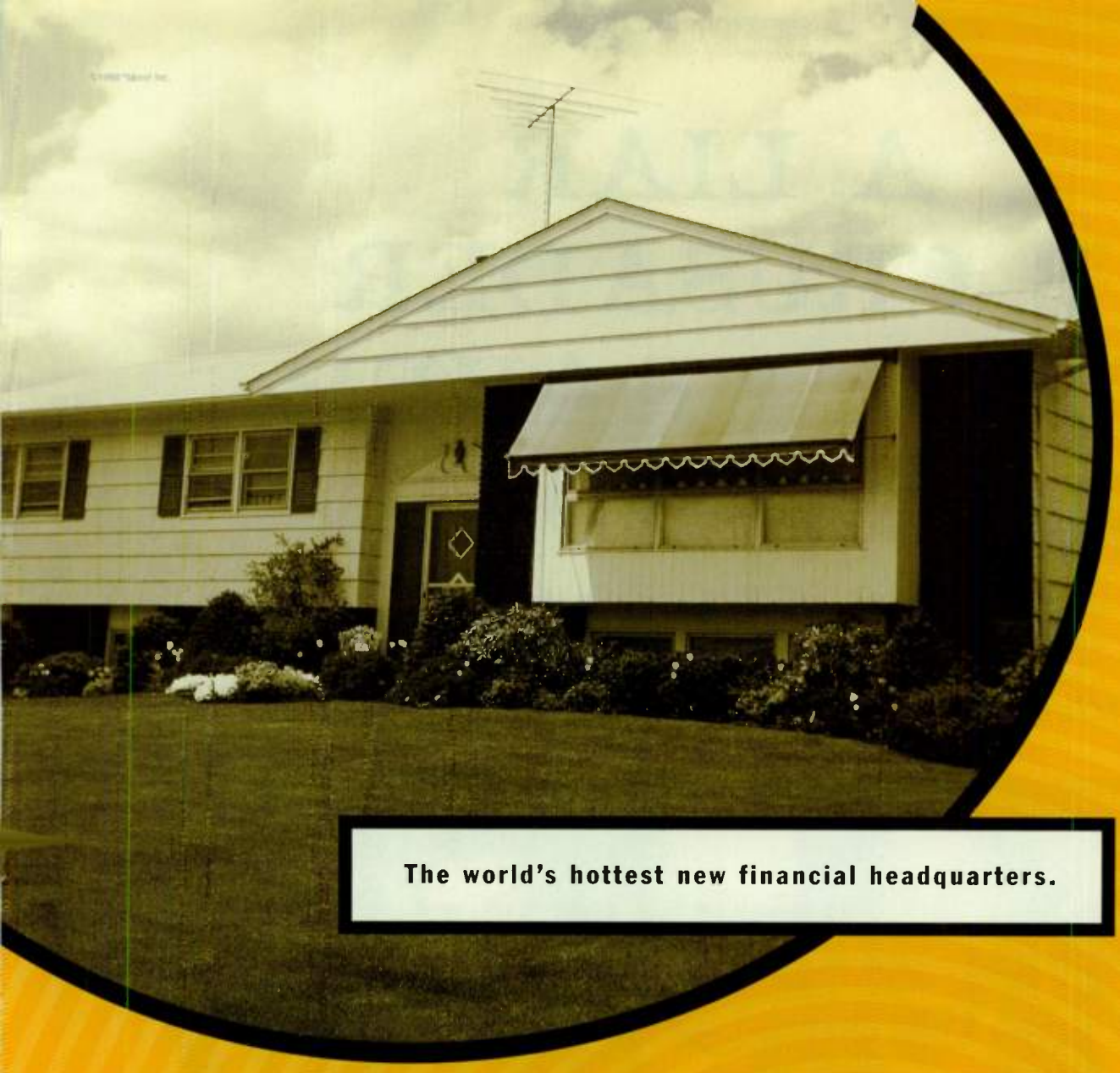
The champion of the past-doesn't-matter school is, of course, President Bill Clinton. He and his automatons have perfected the art of saying that the shelf-life relevancy of any act, utterance, or decision is a few hours. The leading contender for the title, however, is Texas Governor George W. Bush. As charming as "When I was young and irresponsible, I did some things that were young and irresponsible" is, few assertions could be more ridiculous. "Your past" is shorthand for "those deeds and decisions that make you who you are." Saying something is in the past and therefore irrelevant is a con. If the past didn't matter, why would we care that George Washington couldn't tell a lie, that Abe Lincoln grew up in a log cabin, that T.R. was a Rough Rider, that President Bush was a war hero, that John McCain spent those years in the Hanoi Hilton, that Al Gore invented the Internet?

In fact, the past is so important that politicians spend vast amounts of time embellishing it or lying about it. That's why Senator Joseph Biden Jr. was shown the door in his run for president. He borrowed someone else's past when he plagiarized British Labor Party leader Neil Kinnock's speeches.

What's past may be of vague and remote importance, but that is not to say it is unimportant—despite the claims of some defenders of Biden, the former pot smoker and unsuccessful Supreme Court nominee Douglas Ginsburg, and George W. Bush. Bush managed to fend off questions about cocaine use until Sam Attlesey of *The Dallas Morning News* brilliantly asked the governor if he could pass a standard FBI background check. Remember: Cocaine use is a crime, and there is no right to private law-breaking. If so many people think drug use is a private and irrelevant issue for politicians, then it needs to be for everybody.

Rules are hard to come by these days, but there is one that's been violated that is a bit troubling: Journalists should wait for this thing called "evidence." Nobody has accused Bush of using cocaine. Reporters regularly refer to "allegations" that Bush used coke. Well, that's not true, as far as anybody knows. *The Wall Street Journal* even ran a story in May saying coke use couldn't be proved. These are rumors. Attlesey's question was still a good one, but it would be nice if we had someone pointing a finger before we launched a feeding frenzy. Even the Roman empire had that rule. ■

Jonah Goldberg is the editor of National Review Online, for which he writes a daily column called "The Goldberg File."



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You can't, can you? Journalism attracts all kinds — the good, the bad and the in-between. And sometimes newspeople are a little of each. Walter Duranty, for example, was not one of the shining stars of the fourth estate. In 1932 he got a Pulitzer Prize for predicting Stalin's rise to power. A year later, in a special report in which he purposely lied, he denied the existence of a government-engineered famine that the dictator used to kill 9 million people. He wrote the story in order to preserve his reputation as a reporter and his access to Soviet officials.

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Taking The Sin Out Of Synergy

A modest (well, not that modest) proposal for confronting the conflicts and compromises that stem from media consolidation.

QUICK, WHICH BIG MEDIA COMPANY OWNS ESPN: Disney or Time Warner? Who owns the publisher Little, Brown and Company: Time Warner or News Corporation? And which outfit owns *Entertainment Weekly*, and which owns *TV Guide*?

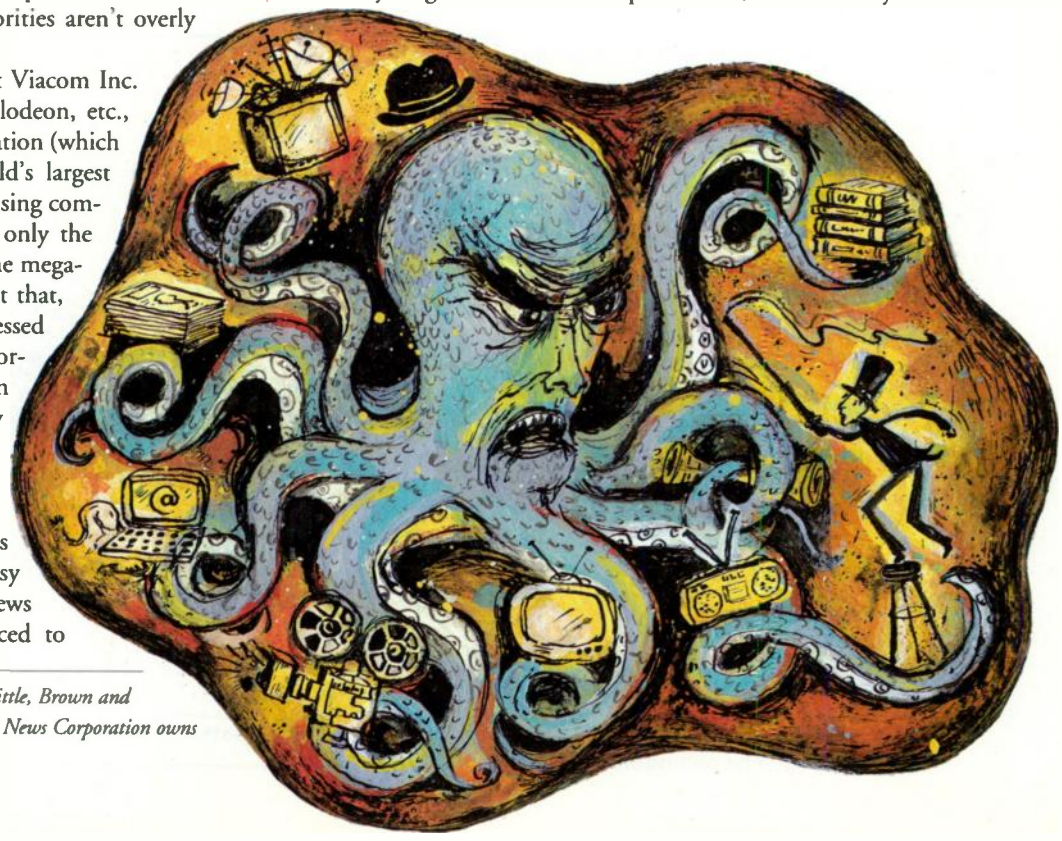
Casual media consumers can be forgiven if they can't keep track of who owns what in the rapidly consolidating world of big media.* Indeed, it's been my experience that even media insiders are having a hard time keeping it all straight.

And no wonder. In the last decade or so, it has seemed that a year doesn't go by without a startling announcement about one already unfathomably large and multifaceted media company taking over another, creating an entity that is even more multifaceted and unfathomable. Each time, the news is greeted with concern in some quarters that this conglomeration of media power threatens the free flow of ideas and creativity. But for the most part, the stockholders like what they see, antitrust authorities aren't overly troubled, and life goes on.

The recent announcement that Viacom Inc. (the parent of MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, etc., etc.) would be buying CBS Corporation (which owns not only CBS but the world's largest radio network and billboard advertising company) for around $37 billion was only the latest—as well as the biggest—of the mega-media deals. It seems almost quaint that, way back in 1995, we were so impressed when Westinghouse Electric Corporation bought CBS for $5.4 billion (remember that?), or when Disney shelled out $19 billion for Capital Cities/ABC in 1996.

What this all means to consumers of news and information is still a question that defies easy answers. We can joke about ABC News anchor Peter Jennings's being forced to wear Mickey Mouse ears or, now, CBS's Dan Rather's being drafted to host the MTV *Video Music Awards*. But those far-fetched images of synergy-run-amok mask the subtler and potentially far more serious consequences of this consolidation of power: the story not told, the questions not asked, the power not challenged. Think of it this way: In an era when our culture is saturated with media-generated images and personalities, our greatest news organizations may be compromised because they're part of the very phenomenon that is defining our age. When *Entertainment Weekly* raves about a Warner Bros. movie, or when *TV Guide* touts a Fox show on its cover—or, more important, when ABC News decides to take a pass on a hard-hitting story about problems at Disney's theme parks [see "mouse•ke•fear," December 1998/January 1999]—is what we're seeing (or not seeing) journalism, self-interest, or some hard-to-define hybrid?

And when virtually all the major news outlets are controlled by huge multimedia companies that, while fiercely



GINA TRIPLETT

* *Disney owns ESPN; Time Warner owns Little, Brown and Company and* Entertainment Weekly*; and News Corporation owns an interest in TV Guide.*

competitive with one another in many arenas, also share many common interests (on issues ranging from tax and telecommunications policy to intellectual property and trade), can we really be sure that an abuse of power by one company will be vigorously pursued and exposed by another?

Where does this all leave editorial independence and journalistic integrity? Sure, the argument is made that any news organization's main asset is its credibility, and that this provides a financial incentive for the parent company to uphold and even strengthen its editorial integrity. But that's too easy an answer, because, blatant corruption aside, any news operation makes countless choices about what to cover, how to cover it, and what to ignore—choices easily, if invisibly, affected by the interests of corporate parents or siblings.

There's hope, however, and it's found in the fact that most media giants still pay homage to the notion that news organizations *should* be fearless and independent. Indeed, many media executives are downright insulted if you even suggest that their news organizations have been hobbled in any way by their ownership structure.

So, here's a simple, if radical, idea to help the companies keep their word to their customers. Big media companies have always been able to overcome their differences when it suits them. For instance, they band together in Washington to lobby over issues like foreign pirating of their products, or to oppose the notion of providing political candidates with free airtime.

How about they get together and declare their support for two simple policies that have gotten a little less simple in this age of synergy? First, that they will aspire to make news judgments independent of any corporate interest; and second, that they will disclose to readers, viewers, or listeners any possible conflicts of interest—or appearances of conflicts—stemming from their company ties.

Pretty tame, so far, but now it gets a little harder. What I'm proposing is that the five or ten major media companies with the most tentacles should band together for the sole purpose of funding a common ombudsman organization that would be empowered to investigate complaints about "abuse of synergy" and to monitor enforcement of the agreed-upon standards about disclosure and conflicts.

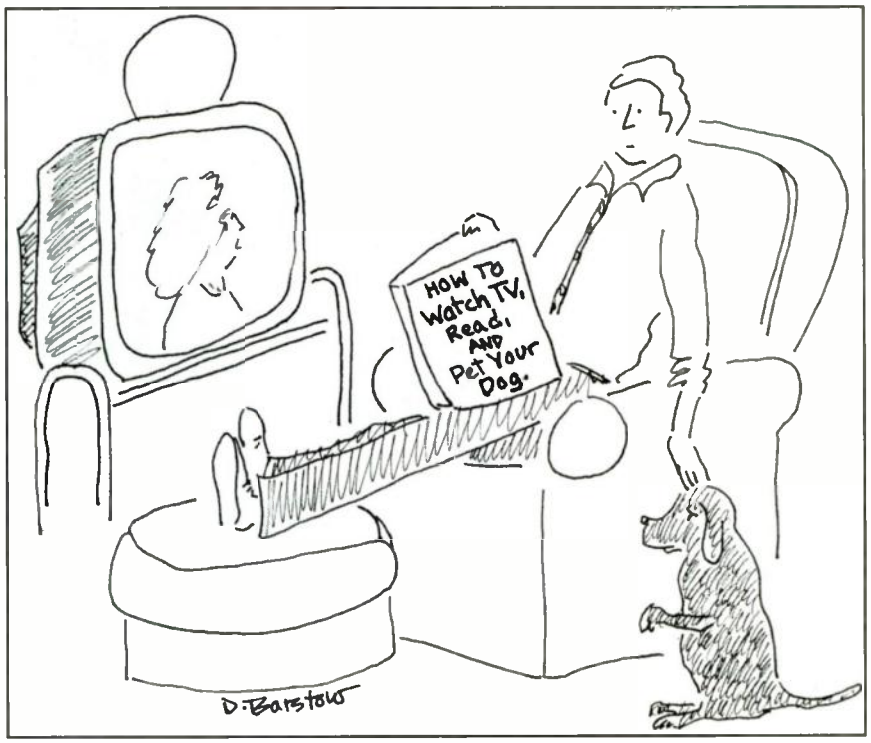
Suspect that NBC News shied away from covering a defense-contractor scandal involving its owner, General Electric Company? Or that *TV Guide* has too many Fox TV stars features on its cover? Tell it to the ombudsman. Complaints could come in from consumers, from within the media organizations, or even from rivals. The ombudsman would be a journalist of stature, paid by a small fund set up by all of these large companies. He or she and a staff must have the resources necessary to do the job and the contractual protection enabling him or her to call 'em as they see 'em.

This would not be some lone voice writing internal memos to corporate leaders, but rather a vigorous investigator who would get to the bottom of the complaints. And he or she would publish the findings, for better or for worse, on a well-publicized (by the member media organizations) website.

Media conglomerates have a real incentive to try to create such an institution. Assuming that the integrity and credibility of their news and information outlets are, in fact, valuable assets, then what better way to enhance those assets than to subject it to this sort of vetting? Plus, it's a way to separate themselves in the marketplace from organizations unwilling to articulate and stand by such standards. And it just might help battle the festering cynicism (as opposed to healthy skepticism) that increasingly is directed toward big media.

Fact is, the public smells a rat—even if there isn't one. That's obvious from the countless complaints and tips we get at this magazine from consumers who are certain that some story was told a certain way—or that a story was killed—because of nefarious corporate interests. We check out many such tips, and we tell as many of those sorts of stories as we can nail down. But it's also true that in most instances so far, the complaints don't hold up. An ombudsman with real voice and authority could end up doing as much to assure a cynical public as embarrass a compromised news organization. ■

Keep those blurry messages coming. E-mail me at eeffron@brillscontent.com.



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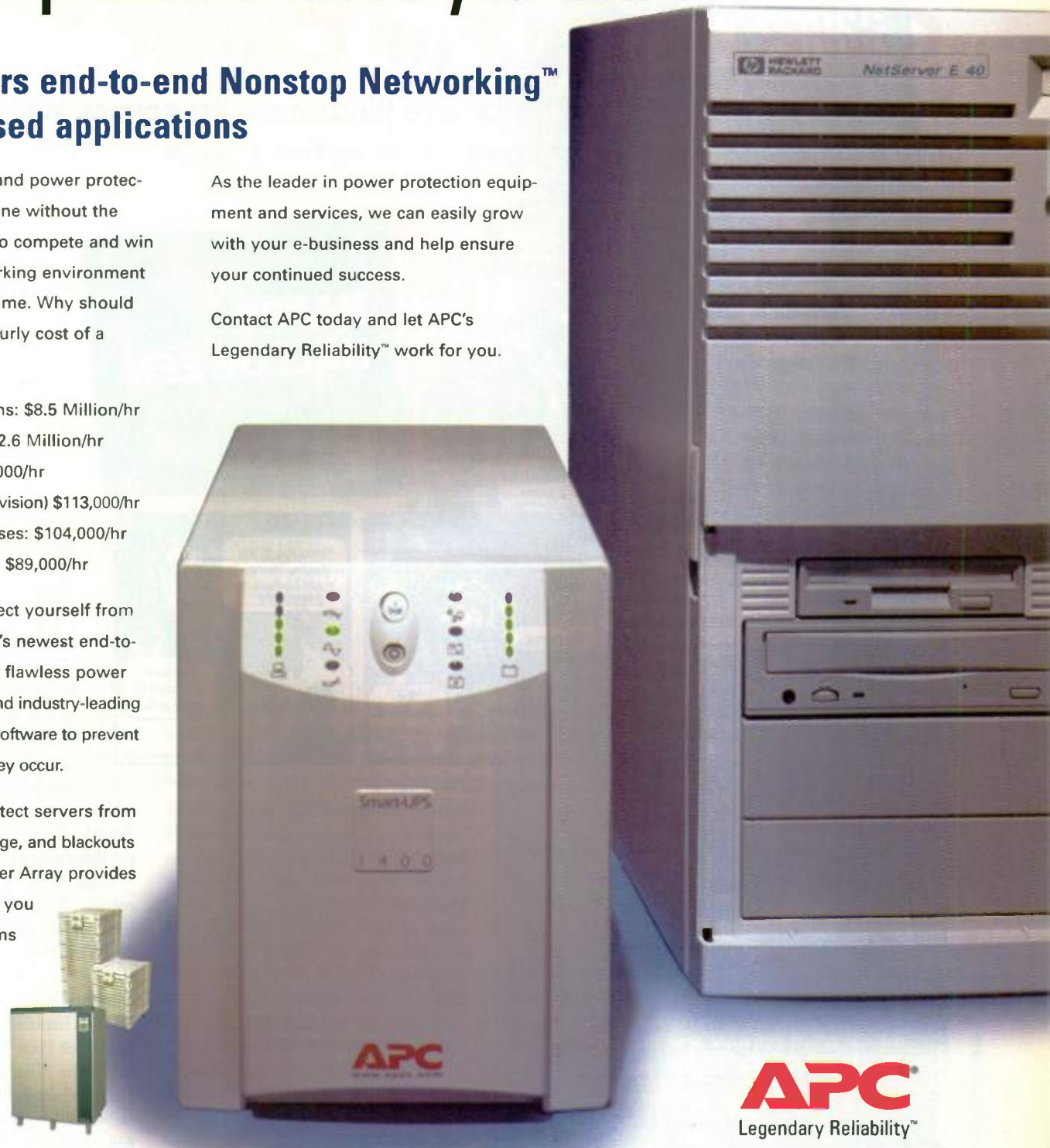

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wealthy owner. With Otis's financial backing in 1960, Chick distributed *This Was Your Life!*, which remains his most famous tract, with 60 million copies in over 60 languages, including Amharic, Chichewa, and Tagalog.

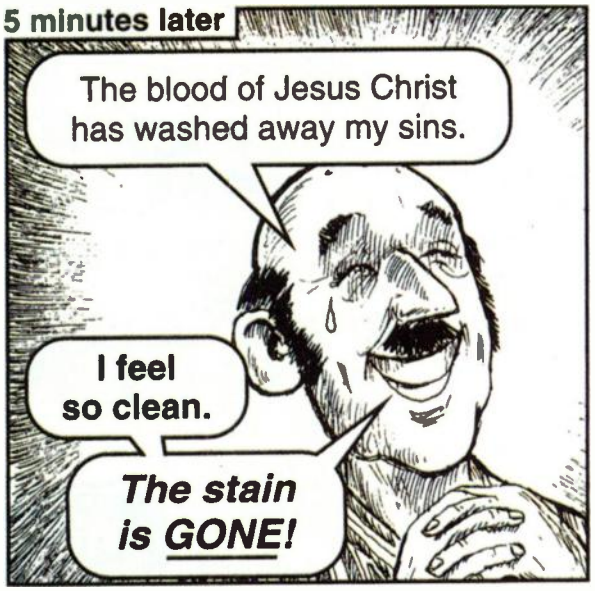
Over the next few years, Chick continued churning out tracts and formed his company. He drew most of them himself in his juvenile, *MAD Magazine* style, but many were drawn by Fred Carter, a more realistic artist from the Prince Valiant school of cartooning. "I don't collaborate, I'm just involved in the artwork," says Carter, now 61 and living in Pomona, California. "He gives me the words and some thumbnail sketches, and I go from there."

Though oft-ignored, Chick tracts have been a constant presence around the world for almost 40 years. Daniel Raeburn, publisher of *The Imp*, a 'zine about comic artists, says that he has heard that tracts found their way to Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Several parodies have also appeared over the years, including one by P.J. O'Rourke in a 1974 issue of the *National Lampoon*. Like that other J.C., Jack Chick is forgiving of his critics: "Brother Chick is grateful that people look at the tracts," says Chick Publications staffer Chapman. "These people that started out to mock us, they also need Christ."

Some tracts have been retired or updated, and many of the foreign-language tracts are completely redrawn to reflect different ethnicities, such as *Yakinje Impilo Yakho!*, the Zulu version of *This Was Your Life!*, in which the characters are all African. But Chick has also gotten lazy in his old age. *The Superstar*, a new tract about a soccer player, is virtually identical to an older tract, *The Slugger*, about a baseball player. Only the names, and three panels of artwork, have been changed.

Despite imparting the knowledge that most of us are damned for eternity, Chick's tracts are often bewilderingly funny. His characters never behave quite like people do in the real world. His dialogue is stilted, and the recurring exclamation "Haw Haw" has become a Chick trademark. Like a hapless high school teacher, Chick also uses slang to stay hip with the kids: "When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, Satan freaked out," he writes in *That Old Devil*. And the inside back cover of many of the tracts offer this interactive feature, as if beckoning the reader into some sort of spiritual sweepstakes:

"Did you accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour? Yes ___ No ___Date_____"



Chick promises his readers that they can save their souls just by believing.

According to Chick, it's never too late to accept Jesus. For example, in *Gun Slinger*, "Terrible Tom," a cold-blooded killer, comes to an old western town to murder a preacher. But sitting in church, Terrible Tom is transformed by the preacher's words and turns to Jesus. Terrible Tom is caught by the sheriff for past murders and hanged, and ascends to heaven. After the execution, the preacher asks the sheriff, "Won't YOU trust the Lord Jesus as YOUR Savior?" The sheriff replies, "Reverend, I'm the most honest, law-[a]biding man in this whole territory! If I'M not good enough for heaven, then NO ONE is." Hours later, the sheriff is bitten by a snake and dragged to hell. The moral is a traditional fundamentalist one: "Going to heaven is not a matter of GOOD or BAD. It's a matter of SAVED or LOST."

Though Chick professes to preach love, his tracts promote homophobia and anti-Catholicism. *Doom Town*, for instance, tells the story of Sodom and depicts homosexuals as "swearing, clawing perverts." He also rails against a grab bag of villains, such as Satanists, Masons, and rock musicians. Chick refers to the Vatican as a "whore," and Chick Publications's Chapman explains that in Chick's view, the entire Catholic Church is a cult.

In 1979, Chick began publishing a story line in the Crusaders series about Alberto Rivera, purportedly a former Jesuit priest who "revealed" that the Catholic Church was in cahoots with Communism, Nazism, the massacre at Jonestown, homosexuality, Free masonry, drug use, and torture. Soon after, several publications, including *Christianity Today*, reported that Rivera had never been a Jesuit priest. Canada banned the series. Under pressure, Chick Publications withdrew from the Christian Booksellers Association, a trade organization.

Chick's anti-Catholic stance continues to earn enemies. A few years ago, a Rochester, New York, history teacher made Chick tracts available to his students. Mike Gallagher, the father of one of the students, thought the tracts misrepresented Catholic teachings, and created a website, "Don't Be Fooled By Jack T. Chick Tracts."

Chick may not care if he offends the mainstream Christian community, or if people within his own fundamentalist school ignore him. They're not his target audience. A clue to Chick's intended readership can be found in the small bookstore in the front of Chick Publications in Rancho Cucamonga. On the walls hang several Chick paintings with depictions of Jesus and angels. But one painting is different.

It shows a trucker in the woods, his "Acme Trucking" big rig parked in the distant shadows. He wears a cowboy hat and boots and a big ol' belt buckle, and his face is sad, downtrodden. All around him it is dark, yet he stands in a telephone booth—in the middle of nowhere—underneath a bright, almost blinding light. In his hand is Chick's classic tract *This Was Your Life!* Running down his cheek is a single tear. ■

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Preserving The Web's Digital History

The Internet Archive aims to be the ultimate library of the Web. • BY MICHAEL COLTON

WHAT DOES THE World Wide Web look like? The question is not an existential riddle, like the one about the tree falling in the forest. It actually has an answer: The World Wide Web looks like four red computer monitors stacked on top of one another, standing next to 44 digital tapes stacked 63 inches high, and it lives in Washington, D.C.

The digital sculpture, by artist Alan Rath, resides at the Library of Congress. It is a gift from the Internet Archive, a nonprofit organization that periodically records snapshots of the 300 million or so pages that make up the World Wide Web: the slick corporate sites, the personal embarrassments, even the pornography. The sculpture holds two terabytes of information that constituted the Web in early 1997. But the digital sculpture, like the rest of the Internet Archive, currently remains unsearchable online for the average web user. The Library of Congress sculpture just randomly flashes preserved websites on those four monitors.

Librarians fret about the digital preservation of history, the transformation of analog information—say, *The Federalist Papers*—to such digital formats as CD-ROMs. But what about the digital preservation of digital history, of content that never existed outside of the Web? As Internet Archive founder Brewster Kahle puts it, "How do we leverage the stuff that's born in digital form and dies in digital form?"

Kahle thinks he's found an answer by creating a unique institution somewhat modeled after the National Archives. "This is a fundamental resource for sociologists, anthropologists, media historians—anyone trying to predict the future based on what has come before," he says. "The Web is locked in the present—we can't see what the Web looked like a year ago or get an idea of how a particular market segment uses the Net. For instance, when did Italy begin to catch hold on the Net? When did biology make inroads?"

This sculpture at the Library of Congress flashes web pages collected by the Internet Archive in 1997.

MCI WorldCom senior vice-president Vinton Cerf, who developed the Internet's communication language, notes that the archive is valuable for preserving "the style and substance of our online culture." To purists like Cerf and Kahle, everything from the J. Crew corporate site to a Yasmine Bleeth fan page is worth saving because everything contributes to our cultural mosaic.

"You can't tell what is important [now]," observes Nathan Myhrvold, Microsoft's chief technology officer, who proposed the preservation of the Internet around the same time that Kahle independently created his archive. "The odds are pretty good that the president of the U.S. has a personal website right now—I don't mean [President] Clinton, I mean the man or woman who will be elected in, say, 2032. We don't know who that is, but he or she is out there."

Myhrvold was struck by this quandary two years ago when he spoke at a conference at which historians debated the value of an Internet archive. "The perspective of many of the historians was interesting because they come from a tradition where you cannot help but throw things away as you go," Myhrvold says. "In the analog world you cannot save every record and every scrap of paper. They thought that the Internet should be archived, but only the 'important' part. My perspective, and that of Brewster [Kahle],

is that you should save *everything.*"

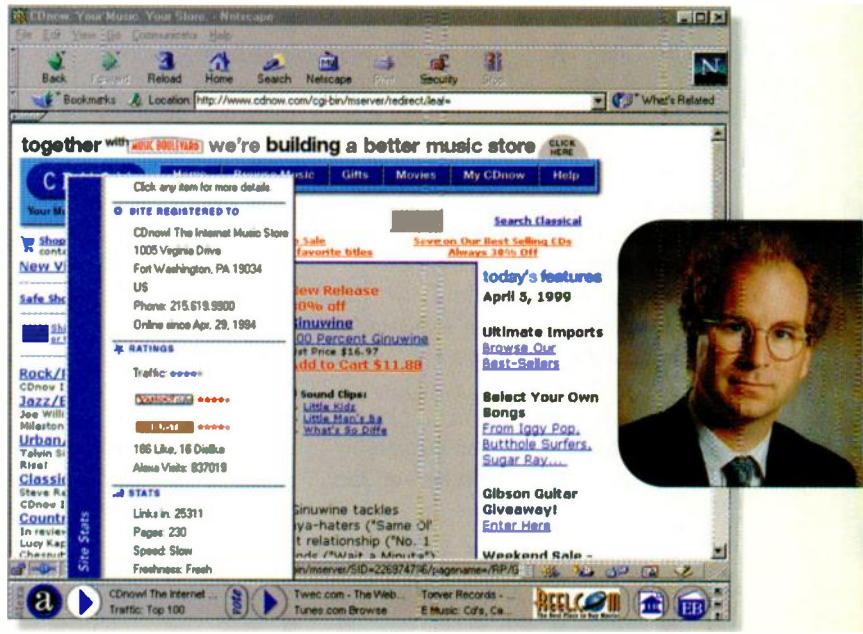
Kahle's archive, begun in 1996, missed the Web's beginnings as a popular medium in the early nineties, and he doesn't want to continue losing this digital content, the way some of the early programs of television and radio were lost to history. Web pages are short-lived; one study that Kahle cites identifies the average lifespan of a web page as 77 days. This stuff, no matter how ephemeral, may one day have immense value if it is preserved, Kahle says. "Every institution, company and college student is building a shadow portrait of themselves in the web world. That's fantastically valuable!"

And the World Wide Web is not the only quickly changing digital culture worth saving. A movement has arisen to preserve early video games [see sidebar] and private and public collectors alike are searching for old computers and programs. "We have some gifts from IBM and Lotus of early forms of computer programs, in code forms and actual disks," says Winston Tabb, the associate librarian of Congress. "But no one has kept a lot of these programs, of the 1.0 versions for things that are now 6.0."

BREWSTER KAHLE, THE PREeminent Internet librarian, lives and works in The Presidio, the sprawling San Francisco park and former military base. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate who designed computers at Thinking Machines Corp. and who created the Wide Area Information Server (a popular archive search tool), Kahle was an Internet pioneer long before he created the archive.

With his frizzy pate and his nerdy-cool green-pattern shirts, Kahle, 39, is the epitome of the Internet entrepreneur-philosopher. He and his wife, Mary Austin, host a weekly dinner at which guests must answer questions in the form of stories (for example, "What does it take to build your dream?"). He becomes giddy when discussing his own ideas, of which there are many.

In 1995, Kahle sold WAIS to America Online Inc. for $15 million, and used that money to launch both the nonprofit Internet Archive and its for-profit cousin, Alexa Internet. Kahle has since sold Alexa Internet to Amazon.com for about $250 million in stock. Alexa takes up his time these days; he's letting someone else run the Internet Archive.



Alexa, a service created by Brewster Kahle (inset), is a box that discloses background information about whichever website you happen to be viewing. Alexa also recommends other relevant sites to visit.

Alexa—ambitiously named after the Library of Alexandria, the last attempt to collect all the world's information—is a tour guide to the Web. In glowing terms, *Feed* magazine editor in chief Steven Johnson recently compared the long-term impact of Alexa to that of "the canonical great inventions of history—the steam engine, the incandescent bulb, the telegraph." The advertising-supported Alexa runs a thin strip of information alongside a Web browser that provides the name and location of a website's owner, the relative popularity of the site, the date the site came online, and ratings and reviews of the site. Next to that, Alexa also offers a "What's Related" button that suggests relevant sites a user might want to visit based on the anonymous usage paths of all Alexa users. (Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer have incorporated this feature into their browsers.)

Alexa's most innovative feature is its archive button; when a web page is no longer available, the archive button can command Alexa to unearth the most recent archived version of that page. "We're trying to be an 'out-of-print' web service," Kahle says. But users who want earlier versions of a page—not just the most recent one—cannot get them from Alexa; one would have to physically visit the Internet Archive in San Francisco in order to poke around in its 18 trillion bytes of data. (For comparison, Kahle often says, the Library of Congress contains 20 terabytes, or 20 trillion bytes, of printed data, but Guy Lamolinara, a library spokesman, estimates that the library's entire collection actually comprises 15 quadrillion bytes of data.)

Alexa relies on a farm of more than 50 rack-mounted servers and data-mining machines near San Jose that continually crawl the entire Web, recording information that is used to calculate site statistics and the "What's Related" links. It also makes a copy of every site it encounters and sends it to the Internet Archive. The crawls are searchable only for publicly available web pages, so that sites that demand credit-card information or passwords are not included. In addition, any webmaster who does not want his or her site included in a web crawl can bar Alexa's robots from visiting. Many large news sites such as

CNN.com exclude such robots.

With the Web doubling in size approximately every eight months, Kahle admits that his task is Sisyphean, and that he's been forced to scale back his original ambitions. "You can't win at this," he says. "Text is relatively small. But when everyone has a camcorder pointed at their kid's crib, then we have a problem. We have started being selective, trying to figure out what's most useful."

The Internet Archive has already made two significant donations: to the Library of Congress and to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, which received all the websites related to the 1996 presidential campaign. Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center also recently purchased a full snapshot of the Web for research purposes.

Kahle hasn't managed with either of his creations to construct a time machine. That is, its web pages are not linked together into an organic entity like the real Web. "I think there'd be a great graduate student project, making a 'way-back machine,'" says Kahle, referring to the device used by the 1960s cartoon duo Sherman and Mr. Peabody. "Alexa is not a way-back machine; you can't catapult and live in the world of 1997. I think there are people interested in going back and looking at what sites for the Gap looked like, and would want an idea of how they change over time. We have no way of describing that." Kahle says that there is currently not enough demand among Alexa's users to develop such a program.

Yet it may well be desirable in the future. "I'd be willing to pay for that service. I'd love to see the Web in 1995, if I was doing a book [on] Silicon Alley, or a weird screenplay about the early days of the Net," says Steve Baldwin, a freelance writer and digital archaeologist in Yonkers, New York, who since 1996 has run a website called Ghost Sites that collects abandoned, out-of-date sites and other detritus of the Web. "I believe in a philosophical way that what we've created on the Web is a medium with no necessary memory."

The web page for Kahle's Internet Archive, Baldwin notes, has not been updated in quite a while. In fact, a journalist attempting recently to visit Kahle arrived late because the directions on the page were out of date. It seems the Internet Archive's own web page has become a ghost site. But if Kahle has forgotten to update it, at least he can be certain it won't be lost to history. ■

LONG LIVE MS. PAC-MAN!

IN DETERMINING THE CULTURAL ARTIFACTS WORTH PRESERVING for the ages, scholars might ignore Q*bert and Dig Dug. But Nicola Salmoria hasn't. About three years ago, the Italian graduate student took the microchips from several nearly forgotten arcade video games (Mr. Do!, Pengo) and developed a program that allowed the games to be played on his computer—not as redesigned re-creations, but as precise emulations. The user was even required to feed the game virtual quarters to proceed.

Salmoria then created the Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator (MAME), which has since been used by a global network of programmers to recreate about 1,300 different games (think Donkey Kong, Tempest, Berzerk), saving many of them from obscurity and destruction. "Right now there are movie preservation societies preserving old black-and-white movies, because no one took care of them at the time," says Michael Balfour, a MAME programmer in Florida. "This is the same thing. We don't want to wait until it's too late."

Many of these games are still fun to play, or at least to evoke eighties nostalgia. But as Balfour says, "A lot of these aren't really cool games. It's about preserving as many arcade games as we can at this point."

The emulator movement has advanced beyond early coin-op games to home video-game systems and their software, including Atari, ColecoVision, and Nintendo. (And there are plenty of emulators for nongame material, such as the popular Virtual PC, which allows a Macintosh to run PC software.) The widespread use of emulators for currently commercially available games may do to the game industry what MP3 has done to the music industry: threaten its consumer stronghold and force it to alter its business model. Why would someone buy new Nintendo hardware when its games will be available through an emulator in a few months?

Naturally, the game industry has taken action. In January, the Connectix Corporation unveiled its Virtual Game Station, a hardware system that allows Sony PlayStation games to run on a Mac; Sony promptly filed suit for copyright infringement and trademark dilution, and a U.S. district court judge granted a preliminary injunction against Connectix. However, in August Sony was denied a preliminary injunction against bleem, llc., which sells a similar emulator.

Online, the distribution of the ROMs, the software necessary to make the emulators work, is illegal, according to Kathlene Karg, the director of intellectual property and public policy for the Interactive Digital Software Association, the trade association that represents the nation's entertainment software industry. The IDSA has launched an antipiracy crackdown. "If you're posting ROMs without asking the permission of the rights holder, that's illegal activity and can be actionable," she says. Even the classic games that are out of commission still have copyright protection, she says. "Somebody posting classic games on the Internet is actually harming the future market for those games and robbing the rights holders. [Because of emulators,] some companies may be tabling plans to bring classic games back on the market on new platforms."

—MC

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The Age Of The E-Book

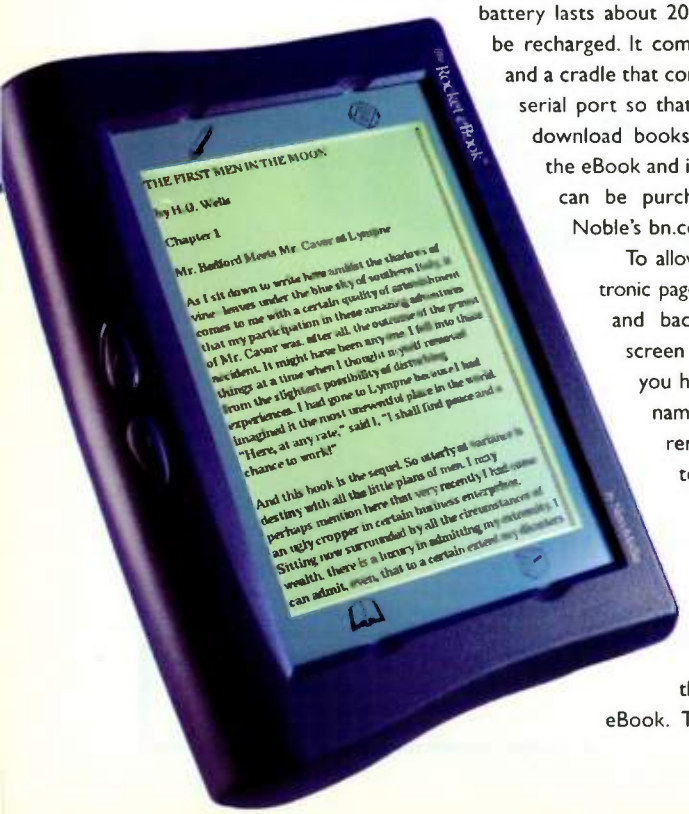
Electronic books make it easy to tote a dozen books in one lightweight package. But do you need yet another little plastic rectangle in your life? • BY JOHN R. QUAIN

TO ME, THE IDEA OF AN ELECTRONIC BOOK HAS ALWAYS SOUNDED DUMB. No computer display, no matter how sharp, can match the legibility of words printed on paper. Electronic books are heavy and expensive—you wouldn't toss one on the floor for fear of damaging several hundreds of dollars worth of hardware. And paper books are more than reading material—they are decoration. A well-chosen library testifies to the owner's intelligence and personality. So who would want to see all that supplanted by an antiseptic, plastic box?

But after using two electronic books for several weeks, I have to acknowledge that there may indeed be a place for these devices in our not-too-distant future. Although neither of the models reviewed here provide the level of reading comfort afforded by a traditional book, the convenience of being able to tote a dozen volumes around in a single handheld computer is definitely attractive. What's more, the future promises other great innovations for the written word, as huge digital libraries are assembled that will allow you to download any book you want from the Web. So while my library of dusty hardcovers is safe for now, I may have to make room for an electronic book.

Rocket eBook

About the size and heft of a hardcover book, NuvoMedia's $329 Rocket eBook sits comfortably in your hand. It has a smallish, monochrome, 5.5-inch liquid crystal display (LCD) screen and can hold about a dozen books (roughly 4,000 pages). The eBook's battery lasts about 20 hours before needing to be recharged. It comes with a power adapter and a cradle that connects to your computer's serial port so that you can use your PC to download books from the Internet. Both the eBook and individual electronic books can be purchased through Barnes & Noble's bn.com.



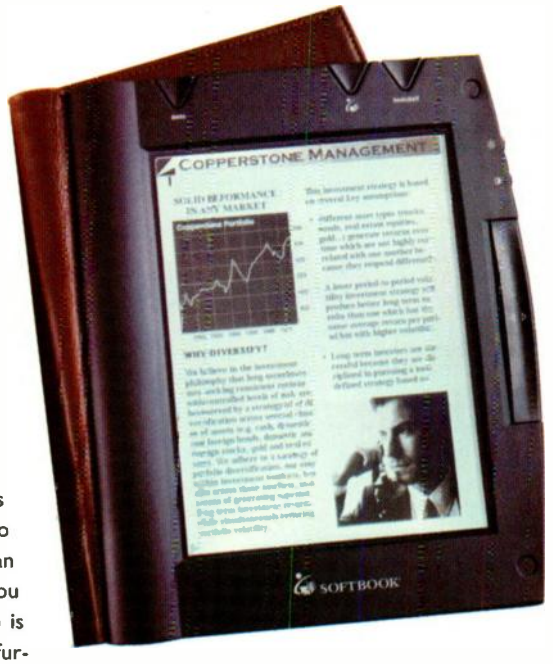
To allow you to flip through electronic pages, the eBook has forward and backward buttons. A touch screen and built-in software let you highlight phrases, search for names (helpful when you can't remember when a character last appeared), and consult the device's built-in dictionary. The company's website is www.rocket-ebook.com.

There are currently 1,100 titles that can be read using the eBook. The cost of these titles ranges from free (for public-domain classics) to full price (for hardcover best-sellers). For recent titles, a reader pays the cover price, but not shipping charges, because the books are downloaded directly to your computer. Electronic delivery also means that in some cases, such as with Martin Dugard's *Knockdown*, a narrative of the 1998 Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race disaster, the electronic version was released online weeks before the hardcover version appeared in stores.

The eBook's software includes a digital librarian that keeps track of the books you have on your PC and a downloadable program called RocketWriter that lets you create your own electronic texts. The RocketWriter software enables you to convert company documents into the eBook format or to grab web pages—such as a newspaper article—and put them into the eBook to read later. Already, scores of eBook owners have converted public-domain titles into the Rocket format. Even a pokey 14.4 Kbps modem can download an entire novel in a few minutes.

While perusing Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* on the eBook, I found its backlit screen let me read outdoors without squinting and in bed without disturbing my spouse. However, the fonts are not as smooth as those you'll find on this printed page, so I found that I had to use the larger of the two type sizes available. Consequently, fewer words fit onto a digital page, which means frequently pressing the forward button to turn to the next page. In general, though, the eBook is a comfortable electronic reading device. Its curved back fits snugly in your hand and the option of changing the orientation of pages to horizontal or vertical positions means it can accommodate various reading positions.

SoftBook Reader



Bigger and heavier than the Rocket eBook, SoftBook Press's SoftBook Reader is a digital tablet roughly the size of a magazine. Its large, 9.5-inch, monochrome, backlit LCD screen allows it to display more text per page, and you don't need a computer to download books onto it. The SoftBook Reader has a built-in 33.6 Kbps modem that connects it directly to SoftBook's network when you want to buy more books. You can buy the SoftBook Reader directly from the company (www.softbook.com) for $599, or pay $299 and promise to spend at least $19.95 per month on books and magazines from SoftBook for two years.

Though it has many of the same bookmarking, highlighting, and search features as the Rocket eBook, I was still less impressed with this model. The SoftBook Reader holds text equivalent to as many as 20 books, but it runs out of power after only five hours of reading. It's also heavier than the Rocket eBook. Furthermore, its screen seems more sensitive to glare, so it has to be propped up at a legible angle. And the Reader's lack of a dictionary is a big drawback.

All that said, however, it does offer some features not included in the Rocket eBook. A larger touch-sensitive screen means you don't have to push a button as often to get to the next page. While reading Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*, for example, I found the larger page size more comfortable than the eBook's, even though, I once again had to resort to the large font size to keep from squinting. Though I had some trouble getting connected to the company's online bookstore, the ability to use the SoftBook Reader to download books (you don't need to use your PC as an intermediary, as you do with the eBook) is a definite plus. To further entice readers, SoftBook offers over a thousand books online and gives you 100 classic titles, such as *Little Women* and *Wuthering Heights*, free when you sign on.

Ultimately, though, few bookworms will be attracted to the SoftBook Reader. It's simply too uncomfortable to use for hours-long reading. Even with deals in place to offer magazines such as *Time* and *PC Magazine* on the SoftBook electronic format, consumers will find that being limited to logging onto SoftBook's own network is like being forced to shop at a single bookstore.

E-books For Sale

With the popularity of personal digital assistants (PDAs) and electronic organizers, one might question the need for another computing device solely dedicated to displaying electronic books, which is all the Rocket and SoftBook models do. Hence, some electronic-book makers have abandoned the idea of manufacturing their own hardware and instead are concentrating on distributing the books electronically to gadgets like the PDAs that millions of consumers already own. Librius.com is the best known of these companies.

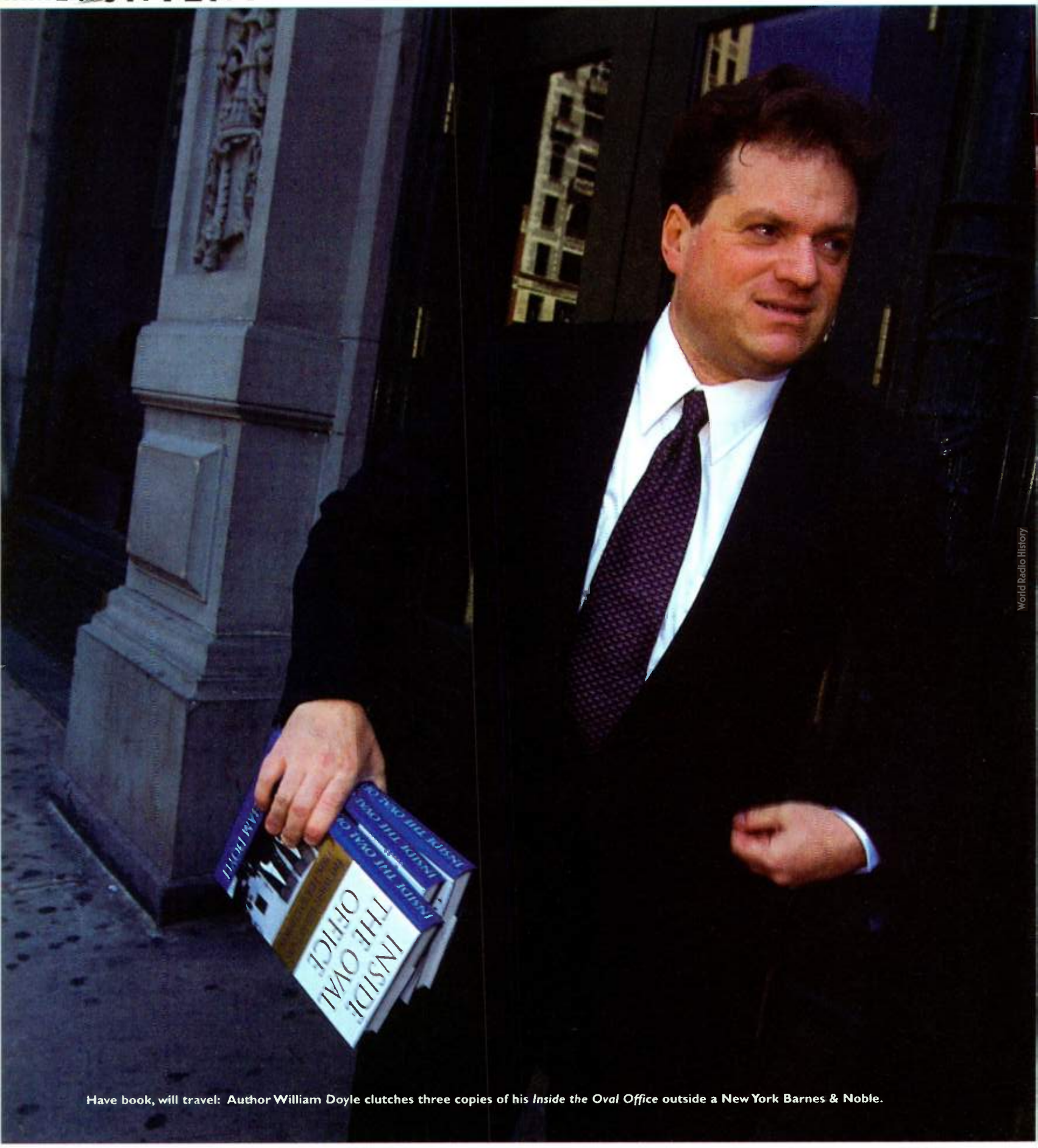
By downloading the company's free software, registered Librius users can choose titles from the company's web library (www.books2read.com) and pay for them directly online. The process, however, is a little convoluted. Users must download the Librius.com reader software directly onto a PDA connected to a PC. Once the reader software is installed in the PDA, the customer can go back to the Librius.com site to buy books online. But after testing the pre-release software, I had some misgivings. The small screens on most PDAs are designed for looking up addresses, not for reading *Ulysses*. Also, the number of steps required to make everything work made me want to run to a bookstore.

Furthermore, the publishing industry and technology companies have to work out a few kinks before electronic books can really take off. The Rocket eBook, SoftBook, and Librius.com formats are not compatible with one another. For now, publishers interested in releasing titles electronically have to commit to just one of the distribution methods. That means eBook owners can't buy or read titles formatted for the SoftBook Reader. And there are new formats to come: The new Microsoft Reader software is expected to be available next year.

Currently, a consortium of companies that includes NuvoMedia (maker of the Rocket eBook) and Microsoft is trying to establish a common electronic-publishing format standard. But any sweeping change seems far off. For now, Gutenberg has nothing to fear. ■

The Librius.com website lets you download books, such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (above) onto your Personal Digital Assistant.

John R. Quain is a contributing editor to Fast Company *magazine and* PC Magazine. *He also appears regularly on CBS and MSNBC.*



Have book, will travel: Author William Doyle clutches three copies of his *Inside the Oval Office* outside a New York Barnes & Noble.

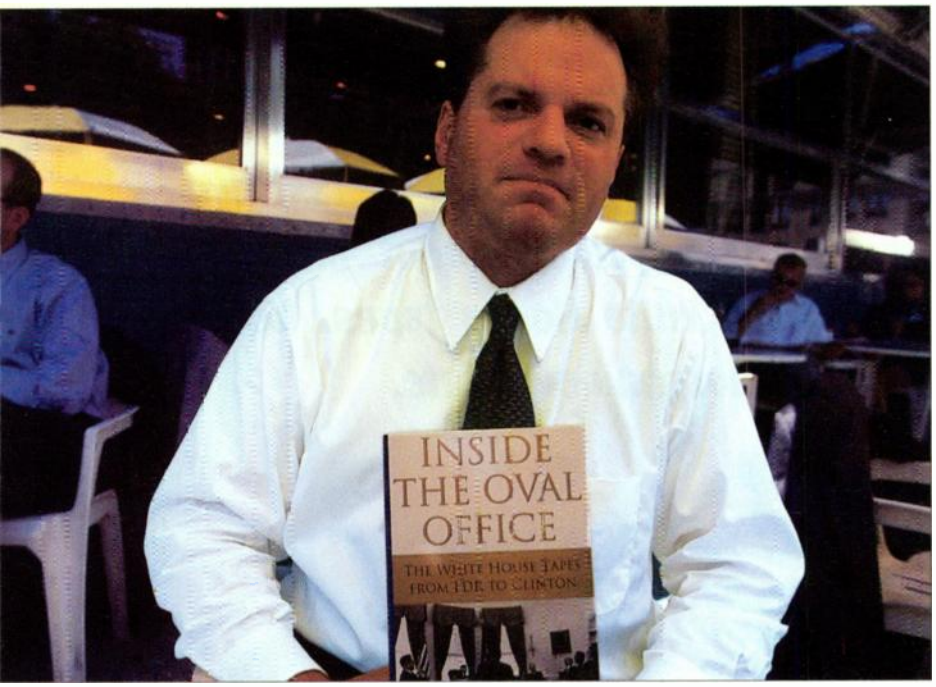
Unsung author William Doyle spent the last five years slaving over his book about modern presidents and their White House tapes. Now he's got five days to determine its fate.

Publicize Or Perish

It's nearly midnight on a muggy June evening, and author William Doyle has been selling himself since 9 A.M. That's the hour when he emerged from his Washington, D.C., hotel dressed in a starched white shirt and his one good suit. Since then Doyle has hustled from studio to studio, taping four radio and television appearances, all to drum up sales for *Inside the Oval Office*, the 419-page opus that he spent the last five years producing. Now, standing on an eerily quiet sidewalk in front of an office building in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington, he waits to be admitted for his final sales call of the day.

A harried radio producer appears at the locked glass doors and whisks Doyle into the Westwood One studio where Jim Bohannon earns his keep chatting with authors, politicians, sports figures, and insomniacs from 10 P.M. to 1 A.M. five nights a week. Guest and host talk briefly about a mutual acquaintance, then sink into silence. Doyle knows nothing about how the nationally broadcast show will go—and he doesn't ask. Finally, the "bop bop" of the introductory music fills the room. "Welcome back to *The Jim Bohannon Show*, at 1-800-998-5462, 1-800-998-JIMBO....And with us now is the man who has written *Inside the Oval Office: The White House Tapes from FDR to Clinton*. And welcome to *The Jim Bohannon Show*. The publisher—can you pronounce that please?"

By Jennifer Greenstein • **Photographs by Andrew Lichtenstein**



Doyle takes a break from a post tour strategy meeting (above), and signs books at a New York City Barnes & Noble (right).

Doyle: "That's a Japanese word known as Kodansha."

Bohannon: "Kodansha. Gesundheit."

And so it begins. Bohannon poses questions in his sonorous radio voice; Doyle comes back with quick, fluid answers, moving effortlessly from Presidents Truman to Nixon to Clinton. Doyle succeeds at introducing the book's best, most dramatic material, regardless of what the question is.

Bohannon: "Do you find many instances in which it is quite clear by the context that the president knew the tape was running but the other person did not?"

Doyle sidesteps the question, opting instead for a dramatic description of a Nixon tape: "In 1971, you can hear Richard Nixon clearly ordering a break-in....You hear him say, 'Break into The Brookings Institution, clear out the files, go in at eight or nine o'clock.' And his aides are spluttering in confusion, and he repeats the order over and over, and he is virtually shouting. Now if that tape came out, ordering an impeachable offense and a felony, think about how history would have been different."

To every question that comes his way for the next 40 minutes, Doyle replies with enthusiasm, his eyes fixed on his host. But Bohannon spends much of his time peering at his computer screen, thumbing through his notes, even applying lip balm.

As a tape plays of President Ronald Reagan addressing his cabinet on the morning that U.S. troops invaded Grenada, Bohannon pulls a silver nail clipper from his pocket. "At 5:15 this morning"—clip—"the joint force landed"—clip—"at two spots on Grenada: Paratroopers in the south"—clip—"the marines and this other multiple force in the north"—clip—"secured both airports...."

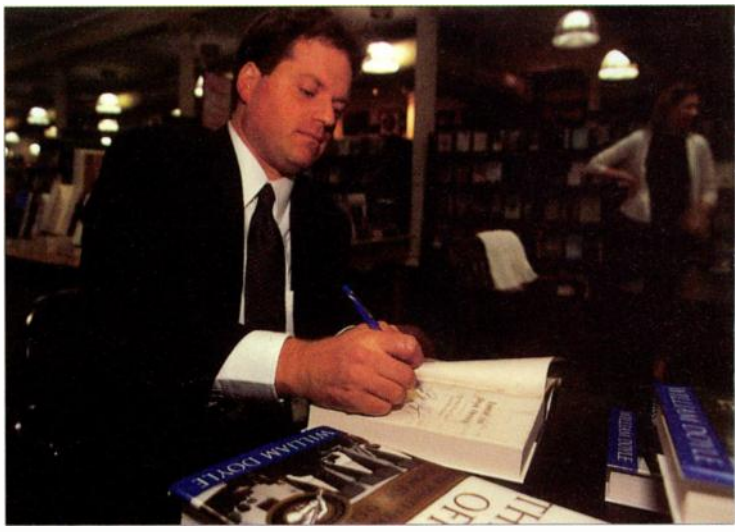
If his host's foray into personal grooming distresses Doyle, the author doesn't let on. Riding back to his hotel a few minutes before 1 A.M.—his media escort, Christopher De Young, is at the wheel—Doyle is asked how the interview went. His reply: "I enjoyed it immensely."

THERE'S A SAYING IN PUBLISHING CIRCLES THAT'S truer today than ever: "Books are sold, not bought." If you're an unsung author like William Doyle, and you've written an interesting, historical book that lacks a startling thesis or a clear audience, getting people to fork over $28 for the privilege of owning the complete collection of your 120,000 well-chosen words isn't all that easy.

But there is one relatively cheap commodity at your disposal: the media. Radio and TV shows are ever more desperate for engaging interview subjects, and you must become a performer if you hope to survive in a publishing world that spits out thousands of new titles every year.

Enter the book tour. Though not a new phenomenon, it has taken on increased importance in recent years. Such a tour gives the media their first chance to glimpse the author's performance. If the act earns accolades, the author's reward will be more media interviews, perhaps more reviews, and, if all goes well, more sales.

Doyle's publicist, Maria Carola, scored a few national TV bookings for Doyle in addition to the usual run of radio talk shows—*The Crier Report* on the Fox News Channel



and a three-and-a-half-minute interview (at 5 A.M.) on ABC News. She also landed one coup in the world of radio: a two-hour interview with Chicago radio host Milt Rosenberg, dubbed the nation's leading author interviewer this year by *Talkers* magazine, a trade publication.

And a somewhat unanticipated gift turned up in *USA Today* on May 24: Larry King trumpeted Doyle's book in his column, calling it "a fascinating account" and adding, "I couldn't put it down." (Carola had sent him a copy.) All the signs indicated that the book had the potential to break out of the pack and become more than one of those nonfiction books you find in the back of the third floor of a Barnes & Noble, right next to a 500-page tome about farming in colonial times.

Now it was up to Doyle. So, for five days, starting on June 14, he hustled from Washington, D.C., to Chicago, to Boston, and then to New York, battling his TV and radio hosts' indifference, ignorance, and nail clipping. Doyle's mission: to keep his book, and his fledgling literary career, from being remaindered.

ALL PHOTOS: ANDREW UCHTENSTEIN/SYGMA

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE START OF HIS BOOK TOUR, Bill Doyle lies in a hotel bed in Washington, D.C. Sleep, however, eludes him. Twenty thousand copies of his book are in bookstores around the country, and the next day's round of interviews dances in his head: A five-minute spot on a local cable TV show; appearances on two national radio shows, clocking in at a total of one hour; a half-hour on Voice of America, which is heard in more than 120 countries; and 53 consecutive minutes—no breaks allowed, no bloopers edited out—of taping for C-SPAN 2's Book TV.

Doyle's mind fixates on what could go wrong. "Mutilating myself shaving—that's what you worry about," he says the next morning over a breakfast of sliced bananas and a toasted cinnamon raisin bagel. Thankfully, the worst has not happened—his broad, ruddy face is nick free, and his crisp white shirt is pristine. He's been up since 6 A.M., reading—of all things—his own book. "I needed to remember what the hell I wrote," he explains.

Bill Doyle is a gracious, likable, and almost excessively unassuming man. After growing up in the New York area and attending college in Washington, D.C., Doyle worked in advertising at J. Walter Thompson Company and Home Box Office before becoming infatuated with writing. He'd never fantasized about being a journalist or a historian—though he's always been a voracious reader—but after he and a friend hatched a plan to edit a book of essays by top American business executives, he was hooked.

buttering his bagel, he considers what he needs to accomplish in the next five days. "I damn well better be interesting and entertaining during this period, or what's the point?" he says. These interviews, in fact, will either get the ball rolling—more interview requests, editors commissioning reviews, readers asking for the book in stores, the publisher investing in more publicity—or they will halt the momentum from his first interview on National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* two weeks before.

"IT'S THE FIRST LIVE TELEVISION I THINK I've ever done," Doyle remarks to his media escort, De Young, as the pair weave through Washington's midday traffic on day one of the book tour. Doyle's previous (taped) TV experience had been pretty laid back. "The [previous guest] came in in his bathing trunks," Doyle recalls. "He had a shirt and tie and a jacket, but when he stood up and walked away, he had floral bathing trunks on."

Doyle is not as relaxed for this appearance, though his interviewers are far from intimidating. "They're really enthusiastic," De Young says a bit snidely of Newschannel 8's Dave Lucas and Jane Karlen. "They're always, 'Wow, you've had phenomenal success with your book.' And these people will not have read your book at all." (Karlen says the two usually spend about 30 minutes with a book prior to interviews.)

Bill Doyle raced through four cities in five days on his book tour, battling his TV and radio hosts' indifference, ignorance, and nail clipping. His mission: to keep his book, and fledgling career as an author, from being remaindered.

The idea for *Inside the Oval Office* gelled gradually after Doyle read a magazine article about the discovery of secret recordings made by President Roosevelt. But his first book proposal, which pitched an analysis of various presidents' management styles, was greeted with a distinct lack of enthusiasm. Doyle then reworked the book into a narrative heavily informed by the recordings made by nearly every president from FDR to President Clinton. In 1996 Doyle continued his research by cowriting and coproducing a program for the A&E network called *The Secret White House Tapes*, which won the 1998 Annual Writers Guild Award for best documentary (other than current events). Finally, the American division of one of Japan's largest publishers, Kodansha, bought the book in 1998. Doyle received an advance of less than $50,000.

Despite his lack of any credentials as a historian, Doyle interviewed major figures—Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, and Dan Quayle among them—while researching the book. *Inside the Oval Office* paints an enlightening picture of how 11 presidents conducted business from behind that grand desk, mixing charming details (President Nixon ate a slice of canned pineapple and a scoop of cottage cheese for lunch every day) with close analysis of the presidents' decision-making and management styles.

As Doyle sits in The Westin Grand Hotel in Washington

Doyle is summoned to the set and perches next to Karlen. A small microphone is fastened to his lapel, the cameras roll, and Lucas and Karlen begin asking irrelevant questions in their melodious TV voices. They are struggling to sound knowledgeable, but are leading Doyle astray. Doyle refuses to follow.

When Karlen asks if presidents have ever been taped without their knowledge—a topic the book barely addresses—Doyle skillfully negotiates his way out of trouble. "I assume and I think the presidents assumed that when they were overseas [that there was electronic surveillance by other governments]....But the book concerns White House taping *sanctioned* by the presidents. In some cases they built the microphones into the lampshade—FDR did that—so you wouldn't know you were talking directly into a recorder. John Kennedy built an on/off switch into the pen-and-pencil set, right on the Oval Office desk. It was almost like James Bond.... "

Doyle is on a roll, countering the anchors' ignorance with deft diversions. And then Karlen hits him with a gut punch: "What do you think here is really, truly groundbreaking?" she asks. It is a question De Young had posed as they were getting out of the car en route to the first interview of the day. Doyle didn't have a succinct answer then, and he doesn't have much of one now.

"Well, I never knew that so many presidents did this, number one, a lot of fragmentary recordings have been heard. Secondly, it's that, this is a, I also interviewed many Oval Office insiders...." For the first time that day, Doyle stumbles.

After Doyle is thanked and praised and politely guided off the set, he steps back into the hot sun and immediately asks his media handler for reassurance. "Did it go okay, more or less? What should I do better? Sit up straighter? Talk slower?"

De Young homes right in on Doyle's weakest moment: "I think you need a better answer to, Jane asked you, 'What's groundbreaking?'" he says. "It's a difficult question to answer. You didn't answer. You answered a different question."

DOYLE WAKES UP IN HIS CHICAGO hotel room on day three of the tour at 5:45 A.M. Forty-five minutes later, he's ready for his first interview—this one with a radio network based in Massachusetts. These tours aren't all about authors charming their hosts with in-person interviews; often they end up sitting in a hotel room doing interviews over the phone. Doyle does two on this morning, for *America, Good Morning*, the national talk show out of Canton, Massachusetts, and for Wisconsin Public Radio. "You want to take every opportunity that you have," says Elizabeth Bennett, Kodansha America's director of sales and marketing, of the hotel room "phoners." "If you can do it, why not?"

Tailoring his material to his hosts' styles and interests, Doyle becomes the perfect radio guest: well-spoken and full of catchy anecdotes, with the added bonus of a cache of made-for-radio tape excerpts.

The personal marketing push continues with "the drop-in," during which authors visit bookstores to sign copies. That's what Doyle finds himself doing with a few midday hours to kill until his 9 P.M. appearance with Milt Rosenberg. Doyle is game. "If [you're] not George Stephanopoulos, and you don't have that kind of automatic firepower, you really do have to help," he says.

But as eager as Doyle is to put in long hours on the book's behalf, he struggles with the drop-ins. They require a measure of self-promotion that clearly makes him uncomfortable. He is so reluctant to bother the clerks at two independent stores near the University of Chicago that he passes up prime opportunities to deliver his sales pitch.

"My mission in a situation like that is to get out of their way as fast as possible, and let them get back to selling books," he says after one drop-in. But the unfortunate result of Doyle's hesitancy is a blown marketing opportunity. For an unknown author, a bookstore employee's recommendation—known as hand-selling—is one of the most effective ways to get a midlist book to catch on.

At the huge chain stores, however, getting a clerk or a manager excited about a book is exceedingly difficult. The hope is that an "autographed copy sticker" will do the trick and trigger sales. So a few minutes before 6 P.M., Doyle, and his local media escort, Bill Young, pull up at Borders Books and Music's four-story store on North Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile, Chicago's busiest shopping district. There's no parking, so Young sends Doyle in alone. Entering the bustling store, Doyle heads to the back counter and offers to sign copies of his book. They're nowhere to be found, even though Young had pulled copies off a top shelf earlier that day and handed them to a clerk. As the clerk runs downstairs to round up the copies in stock, Young materializes (he parked illegally and persuaded the store's security guard to watch the car). He is miffed. "I went up on the ladder myself," Young says. "It's the only way to get them. This is a store run by kids, and I don't mean smart kids." Finally, a clerk appears with six books and news that sounds good, if it's true. "Looks like we sold some."

Doyle pulls a blue Flair pen from his pocket and quickly signs. Then he thanks one of the clerks, adding, "I could even slap on the stickers if you wanted." She assures him that is not necessary.

All Doyle's efforts at self-promotion lay bare the incongruity of achieving the status of author. "It's the only situation where you can be an elitist and an underdog at the same time," observes Young. "On the one hand, you've done something that's very difficult to do," namely, writing a book. "You have an agent, you have a publisher, you have a designer, you have a publicist. You've done all that, you're at a very elite level, and then you start running around town signing two copies."

On top of that, the autographed copy itself is of dubious value. Andre Schiffrin, director of The New Press, a not-for-profit publishing house, doesn't think signed copies do much for sales. "I think most people couldn't care less unless it's a well-known author," he says. But because stores can return books to the publisher for a full refund, there is an upside to signings. "In the business the joke is that they can't send it back if it's autographed, so you should sign as many as you can."

IT'S 5:17 A.M. ON DAY FOUR, AND WAKING UP EARLY TO talk, and staying up late to talk, and catching planes to get somewhere to talk, is taking its toll on the yes-I'll-do-anything author. "My eyes are like little volcanoes," he offers as he waits in the hotel lobby for his taxi to the airport, where he'll board a plane for Boston. Breakfast? "Bufferin and Pepto-Bismol."

There's only one interview today, a taping of *The Smoki Bacon and Dick Concannon Show*, a public-access cable program that's probably the most unusual stop on the book circuit. The hosts are a wealthy Beacon Hill couple in their

70s—fixtures on the Boston social scene—who delight in intellectual banter. Doyle arrives to find Bacon, impeccably attired in an elegant red suit, heavy gold jewelry, and owlish tortoise shell eyeglasses, peering into the viewfinder of a tiny Sony camcorder that's perched on a tripod. Her husband, clad in a seersucker suit and bowtie, is interviewing the consul of Monaco. After lunch is served, the couple switch roles: Concannon mans the camera while Bacon chats with Doyle. In her hands, the book sounds more like a juicy tell-all than a scholarly treatise on the presidency.

Doyle returns to the hotel exhausted. He goes to sleep at 8 P.M.

DAY FIVE'S STARTING TIME: 7 A.M.

Assignment: *Katz and McCarthy.*

Lowdown on the radio hosts: "Let's see," says Lynn Cannici, Doyle's Boston media escort. "They're fast-talking, shallow people. But they have a huge audience and they're pretty irreverent."

Host Jeff Katz calls himself a libertarian; his cohost, Darlene McCarthy, considers herself "a realist." Together, they produce a combustible show every weekday from 5:30 A.M. to 9 A.M. that dwells on politics, current events, and whatever else comes to mind.

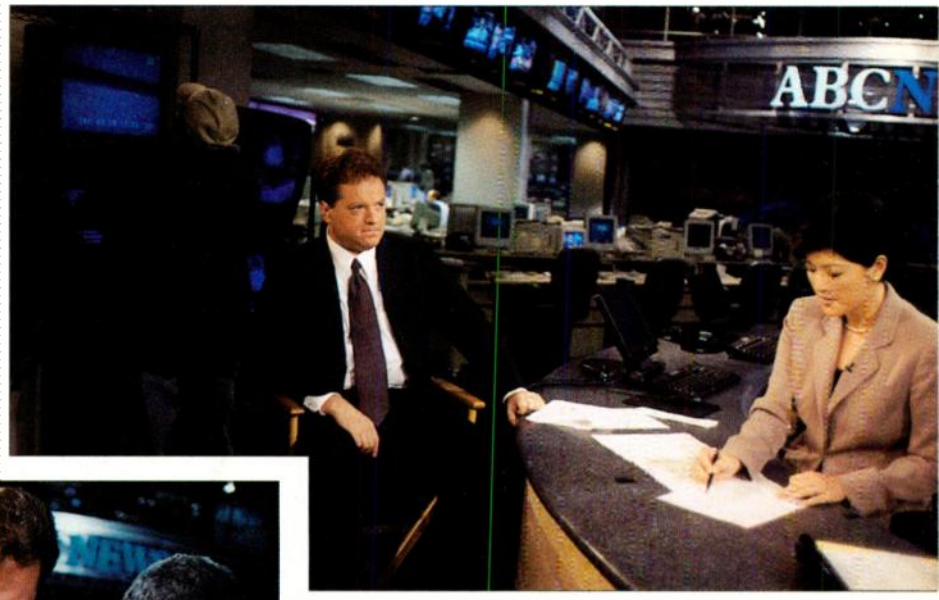
Almost as soon as Doyle takes his seat in the studio across from the grinning, garrulous Katz, the program resumes. The host (sans McCarthy that day) dives right in. "So—let's get to the dirt. What'd you hear? What'd you hear? What'd you hear?"

Doyle wastes no time adapting to his host's brash, brusque, tabloid style. The tapes, he replies, show 11 presidents "if not with their pants down exactly, with their guard down."

At that, Katz's eyes light up. And with Katz egging him on for the rest of his appearance, Doyle launches into his most derogatory anecdotes about each president, peppering his retellings with snarky assessments. President Nixon: "He was a Walter Mitty, sloppy, dysfunctional, bizarre executive." President Carter: "One of his own men said the Carter White House was like a Marx Brothers movie—only instead of four brothers, there were about a dozen." President Clinton: "A bogus, invalidated president…[and] the most flawed man of the century."

Doyle is hip, loose, funny, a little outrageous, and he leaps at the invitation to ridicule presidents for the delight of his interviewer. Katz—no slouch when it comes to yapping—barely gets a word in. Sure, Doyle had told many of these same anecdotes before—and even used some of the same phrases in assessing these men—but he'd never told all these disparaging stories on one show in such a short period.

THE TOUR IS OVER, AND DOYLE IS BEAT. BUT HIS PERformances are working. Tailoring his material to his hosts' styles and interests, he became the perfect radio guest: well-spoken and full of catchy anecdotes, with the added bonus of made-for-radio tape excerpts. "He's A-level material as far as interview guests go," says Austin Hill, host of his own show on KTKP radio in Phoenix, who's had Doyle on three times. "He's stellar at extemporaneous discussion on any one of the presidents, [and] he's very witty and has a good sense of humor. It's always important for a radio guest, as scholarly as he can be, if he jokes around. That certainly makes him more palatable."



Doyle's first network TV appearance came at the ungodly hour of 5 A.M. But he looked and sounded great talking with ABC anchor Juju Chang (top), thanks to the help of a hair stylist (bottom) and a technician (inset).

Doyle's successful appearances begat more media interest. In the two months following the book tour, Doyle did another 21 radio interviews. And although only four U.S. newspapers and *The Nation* ran full reviews of the book (including a mixed critique from *The New York Times Book Review*), sales boomed. By the end of August, Kodansha estimated that nearly 16,000 of the 20,000 copies in stores had been sold, and the publisher was poised to order a second printing of between 6,000 and 10,000 copies.

Doyle has also been lifted out of the realm of the unknown author. When Doubleday executive editor Gerald Howard saw a proposal in his in box in June from a writer named William Doyle, the name was immediately familiar to him. Within a week Howard had made Doyle an offer that, with bonuses, could reach the low six figures—about double what the author got for *Inside the Oval Office*. Doyle is now at work on research for the new book, an hour-by-hour examination of the civil insurrection that erupted when James Meredith integrated the University of Mississippi.

How did the Doubleday editor recognize Doyle's name? He'd heard him interviewed on the radio. ■

Crash LANDING

The New York Times shook the government with its articles on Chinese nuclear-missile espionage. But six months after fingering Wen Ho Lee as a spy, the paper said, in effect, *never mind*.

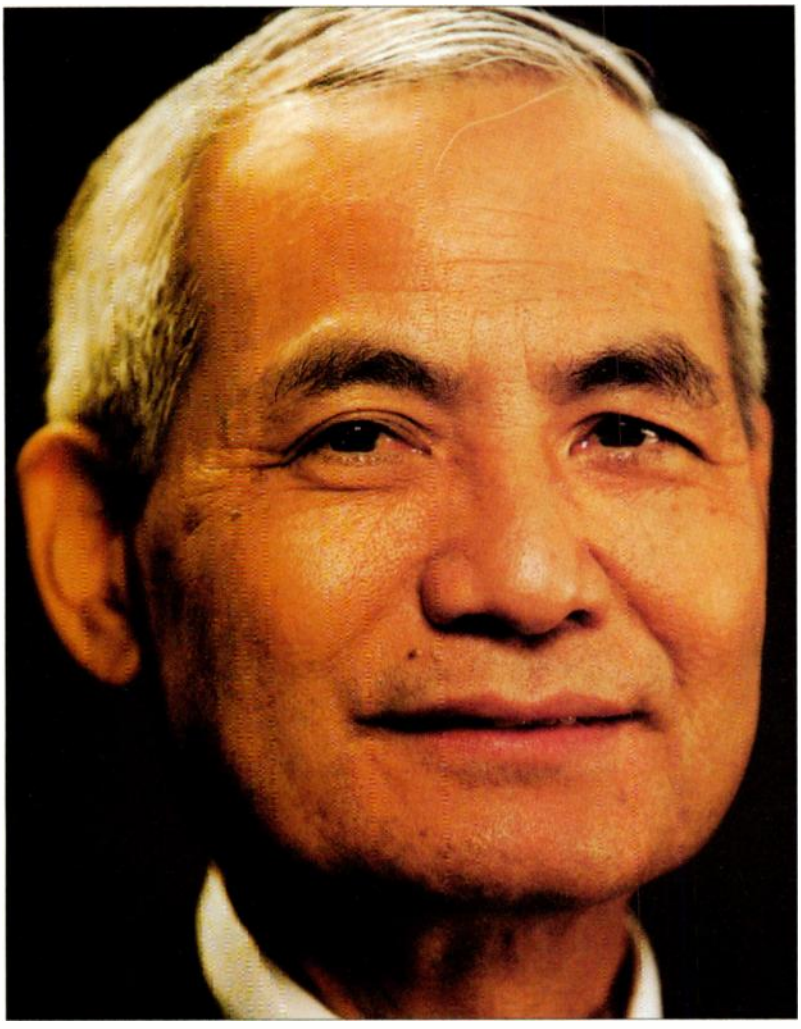
In early March, Alberta Lee was sitting in a library in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, reading a front-page article in *The New York Times*. The March 6 story's headline proclaimed an explosive espionage case: "Breach at Los Alamos: A Special Report; China Stole Nuclear Secrets For Bombs, U.S. Aides Say." The article asserted that investigators had identified a suspect in the theft of missile secrets that had allowed China to make "a leap in the development of [its] nuclear weapons."

The paper didn't name the spy. But the details made it quite clear to Alberta that the suspect was her father, Wen Ho Lee, a computer scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. "I can't tell you how mortifying it was," says Alberta, 25. "They had all these incredibly horrible things—so many lies."

Still, certain elements matched her parents. Her mother had once worked at Los Alamos, and, like the couple discussed in the *Times* article, her parents had traveled to China and Hong Kong. Although the Lees are Taiwan-born American citizens and the paper referred to the suspect as Chinese-American, the description was close enough. Worse, the man was essentially being accused of espionage—being a traitor to his country—in the pages of the country's most influential newspaper. Alberta was troubled, also, that the paper quoted somebody as saying that the case was "going to be just as bad as the Rosenbergs."

BY ROBERT SCHMIDT

TOM NICK COCOTOS



Wen Ho Lee (above) was fired days after the *Times* raised questions about him.

Alberta was too young to remember the case, but had a vague sense that it had been extraordinarily high profile. She decided to look it up and was jolted with fear as she read the details of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's case: Convicted of giving Los Alamos nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union at the dawn of the nuclear age, the Rosenbergs were executed in the electric chair at New York state's Sing Sing prison in 1953.

"They decided who was guilty, how they were guilty, and what the consequences were," says Dr. Sidney Drell, a Stanford professor, of the *Times*'s early coverage.

"It scared the hell out of me," remembers Alberta. "I was terrified."

The *Times* story sparked an immediate firestorm—in the media, in Congress, and in the White House. Within two days Lee was fired from his job at Los Alamos for security violations. And his identity was no longer a secret: The nightly news broadcast it the evening of his firing.

For the next two weeks the media set up camp outside Lee's modest, three-bedroom suburban house in Los Alamos. Lee and his wife became prisoners in their own home. When he needed to visit his lawyer, Lee had to sneak away at 4 A.M. to elude the waiting throng of reporters.

The couple had previously enjoyed a quiet life. Lee liked to read pre-twentieth-century French and British novels and listen to classical music. Now, trapped inside his house, he couldn't even tend to his prized garden—where he had cultivated soy beans, snow peas, asparagus, and bok choy—the way he normally did. A passionate cook, Lee used his vegetables to blend Sante Fe and Asian cuisines. He would bring home-cooked food to neighbors when they were going through hard times. Now it was Lee who needed that kind of treatment.

The *Times* onslaught continued for five months. Lee, who had once paid little attention to political news, now watched his fate unfold in the media. In a series of front-page articles written mostly by Jeff Gerth and James Risen, the *Times* pressed the case against Lee, insinuating that he was guilty of various nefarious deeds. Along the way, the *Times* drew an ever-tightening noose around the Clinton administration, accusing it of minimizing and downplaying the alleged espionage.

That changed, however, in early September, when the *Times* published an article by science reporter William Broad. The article cast doubt, not only on the case against Lee, but also on the entire spy scandal as laid out by the *Times*. Broad's 5,400-word, front-page story concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prove that espionage was the main reason China had been able to advance its nuclear-weapons program. And Broad reported that the federal investigation had focused too quickly on Lee. "The lost secrets," Broad wrote, "were available to hundreds and perhaps thousands" of people.

The Broad article came on the heels of a *Times* editorial in late August that called for an independent investigation of charges made both by Lee, in a *60 Minutes* interview, and by a former head of counterintelligence at Los Alamos, that Lee had been unfairly singled out because of his ethnicity.

Broad's story was meticulously reported. But it left out one salient fact: *The New York Times* itself had been largely responsible for fueling the scandal and portraying Wen Ho Lee as a traitor.

THE *TIMES* DESERVES CREDIT FOR assigning and running Broad's piece—and for doing so on the paper's front page. The problem is that the *Times* ran Broad's story after it had published dozens of articles by Gerth and Risen—articles that downplayed dissenting views like the ones aired in the Broad piece, when they mentioned them at all. As one reporter who has covered the scandal notes, "Given the amount of front-page, above-the-fold display that newspaper gave the Chinese espionage story, there should have been nothing left to say."

Times editors vociferously deny that Broad's piece represents a retreat. Stephen Engelberg, assistant to the managing editor—who edited all of Gerth and Risen's stories as well as Broad's—says Broad was simply continuing to follow the story as new evidence became available. "First of all, [Broad's story] is in no way a correction, and anybody who

MARTIN SIMON/SABA (LEE)

says that didn't read it," Engelberg says. "I think if you look at our first story, we advanced the ball from there and Broad's [story] advanced the ball on our [other] stories. That's the way daily newspapers work."

But a comparison of Broad's September 7 article with Gerth and Risen's March 6 report shows that the *Times* has backed off some assertions. Consider these excerpts:

Gerth and Risen: "Working with nuclear secrets stolen from an American Government laboratory, China has made a leap in the development of nuclear weapons: the miniaturization of its bombs, according to Administration officials."

Broad: "Experts agree that spying occurred, but clash violently on how much was stolen and what impact it had on Beijing's advance, if any."

Gerth and Risen: "The Los Alamos laboratory...quickly emerged as the most likely source of the leak....This suspect 'stuck out like a sore thumb,' said one official."

Broad: There is "emerging agreement among feuding experts: that the Federal investigation focused too soon on the Los Alamos National Laboratory and one worker there, Wen Ho Lee, who was fired for security violations. The lost secrets, it now appears, were available to hundreds and perhaps thousands of individuals scattered throughout the nation's arms complex."

Gerth and Risen: "In June 1995...a Chinese official gave Central Intelligence analysts what appeared to be a 1988 Chinese Government document describing the country's nuclear weapons program. The document, a senior official said, specifically mentioned the [U.S.] W-88 [warhead] and described some of the warhead's key design features."

Broad: "Several critics familiar with the Chinese document obtained by the CIA said that its description of the American warhead was not by itself sufficient to build a miniaturized warhead."

Gerth and Risen: The government's "response to the nuclear theft was plagued by delays, inaction and skepticism—even though senior intelligence officials regarded it as one of the most damaging spy cases in recent history."

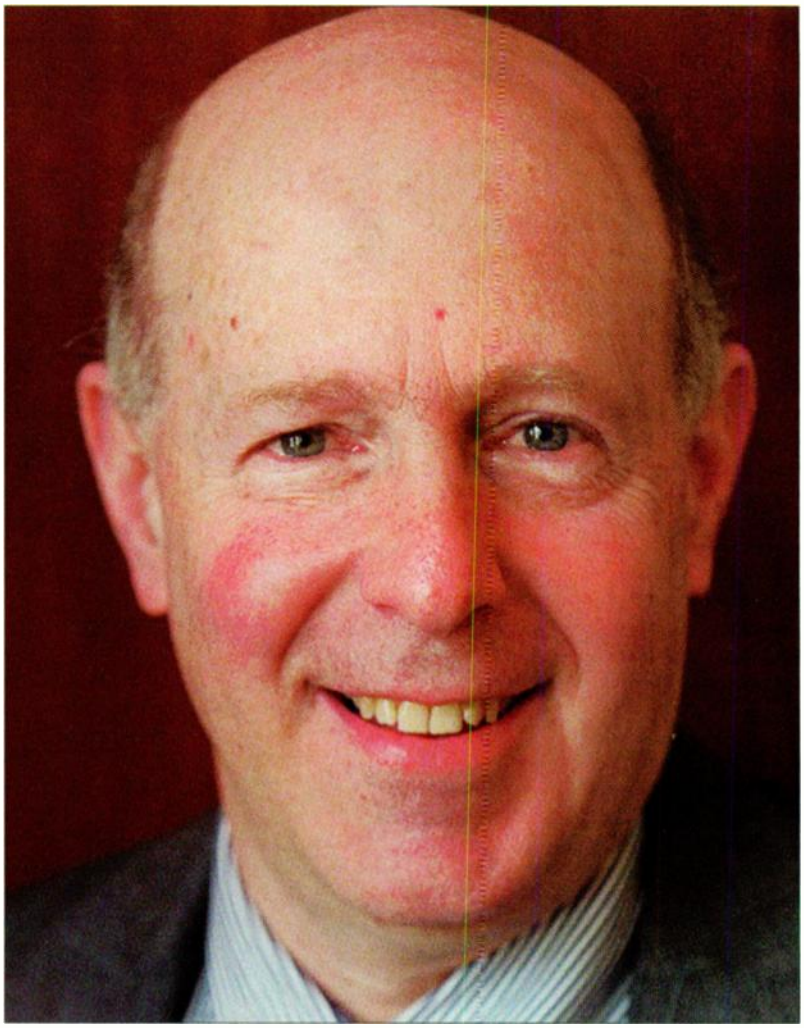
Broad: "Deconstructing the damage wrought by espionage is an imprecise art that mixes inference, evidence and deduction. In the vacuum between what is known and what is suspected, personal, partisan or institutional bias often rushes in....As in most spy cases, the evidence is open to interpretation."

In many respects, these last two excerpts encapsulate the difference between Broad's reporting and that of Gerth and Risen. Unlike his colleagues, Broad clearly acknowledged the ambiguities inherent in reporting in the murky, secretive area of espionage, in which it's virtually impossible to find a source with no ax to grind. The fact is, to this day nobody in the media knows for sure how much espionage aided the Chinese. Nor do they know if Lee passed secrets to the Chinese.

Gerth and Risen are furious, say colleagues, with the *Times*'s decision to publish Broad's story. As one Washington reporter outside the *Times* puts it, Gerth and Risen "were apparently in a state of intense anger." Once they found out Broad's piece would question some of their reporting, this source says, they complained vehemently to Engelberg that Broad's story was slanted and underreported.

Asked specifically about their reactions to Broad's reporting—and whether they complained about it—both Gerth and Risen declined to comment. Gerth was interviewed briefly on the record for this story, before he decided he did not want to be quoted. He did note that "it's a very complicated subject that is not black and white...it's tough when it is based on anonymous sources." Risen would say only, "I'm proud of our stories and I think they speak for themselves." Engelberg won't comment directly on Gerth and Risen's reaction to Broad's story, but notes that, on important stories "like this, we allow everybody who knows something about it to read it and offer suggestions. And it would have been foolish to put a major story on this subject [in the paper] and not invite the two people with the most experience in this story to react to it and assess it." (Broad declined to be interviewed, as did Wen Ho Lee. Lee's lawyer Mark Holscher denies his client is involved in espionage.)

Meanwhile, Broad's story resonated in Washington's political and media circles. Clinton administration officials admitted feeling a large measure of vindication. And reporters were shocked by the reversal. "I've read the *Times* for half a century," says Lars-Erik Nelson, a New York *Daily News* columnist, who has written critically of Gerth and Risen's stories, "and I've never seen a correction this long."



Critics accuse the *Times*'s Jeff Gerth (below) of one-sided, prosecutorial reporting.

JAMES ESTRIN/NYT PICTURES (GERTH); TOM NICK COCOTOS (ILLUSTRATION)

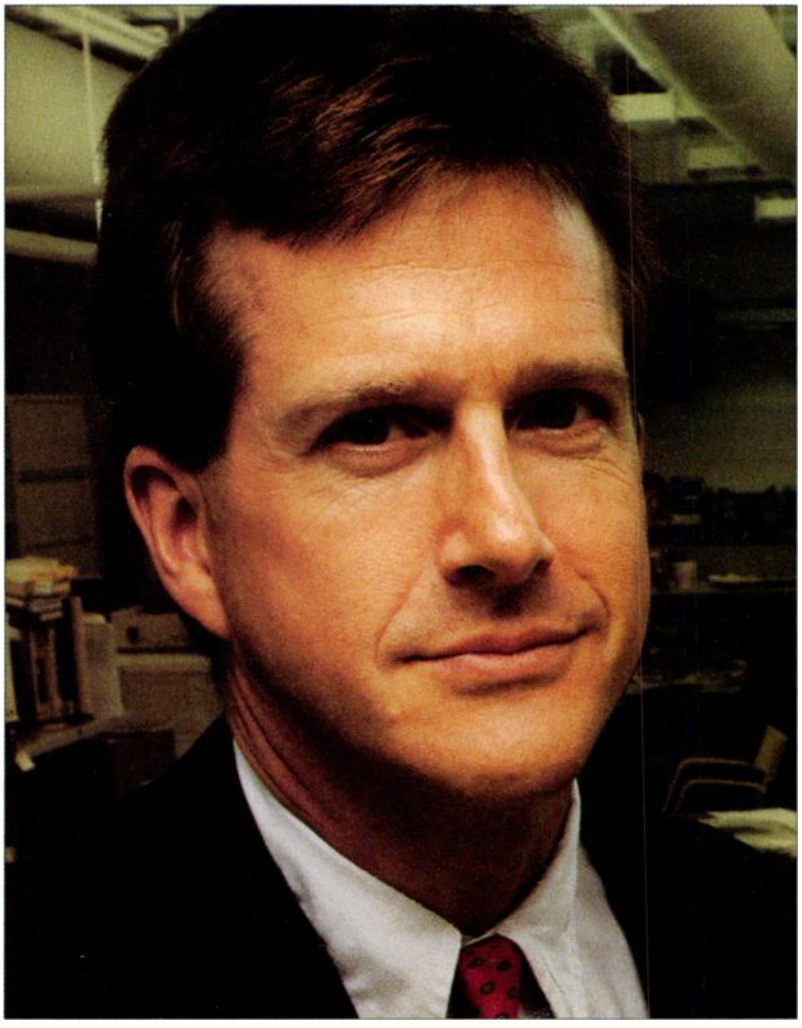
ON MAY 25 THE MEDIA HORDES DESCENDED ON CAPITOL Hill for a ritual of the scandal culture: the gala release of an official report on the latest alleged governmental misdeeds. In this case, the Cox committee, a House panel headed by U.S. Representative Christopher Cox, a California Republican, was issuing findings on the China espionage scandal, among other things. Expecting the frenzy, committee staffers had reserved one of the largest rooms in the Cannon House Office Building.

Broad cited experts—none of whom were quoted by Gerth and Risen—whose views and knowledge call the entire China Spy Scandal into question.

More than 100 reporters queued up as aides wheeled in copies of the 872-page report. Gerth, bald and intense, waited along with the lanky and amiable Risen. As they stood there, according to a reporter in the same line, Risen, puffed up with pride, turned to Gerth and said, *Look at what we started.*

In fact, Gerth's reporting on another scandal had helped give birth to the Cox committee itself. The reporter's high-profile articles on the alleged transfer of satellite technology to China by major U.S. defense contractors Loral Space & Communications Ltd. and Hughes Electronics Corporation caused a furor [see sidebar, page 71] and, ultimately, won the *Times* a Pulitzer Prize this year. But by the time the Cox committee released its report, it was apparently more energized by the more recent alleged espionage scandal. "Even though the nuclear labs thing makes up only a fraction of the overall report," says one Washington reporter who covered the issue, "make no mistake that [the espionage] was what the Cox people were talking up."

The fact that the Cox committee investigated a satellite-technology-transfer "scandal" uncovered by Gerth and the *Times* testifies to the influence the *Times* wields in Washington. But perhaps the most telling evidence of the *Times*'s power is Gerth and Risen's China espionage story. And, paradoxically, the proof consists of the fact that Gerth and Risen didn't even break the story; other papers did. But it didn't explode until the *Times* got involved.



Unlike his colleagues, *Times* reporter William Broad (below) has expertise in nuclear weapons.

The Wall Street Journal had actually broken the story with a January 7 report that the Chinese had "received secret design information for the most modern U.S. nuclear warhead, and U.S. officials say the top suspect is an American scientist working at...Los Alamos National Laboratory...." The story, by reporter Carla Anne Robbins, appeared on page A3, the spot the *Journal* reserves for its lead news story. But no other major news outlets picked up on the story, and it disappeared without a trace. (The *Journal* itself serves as a humorous, but revealing, example of the *Times*'s prominence on this story: When the *Journal*'s editorial page published an editorial on the China espionage scandal in March, it wrongly credited the *Times* with breaking the story. After the error was pointed out, the chagrined editorial page printed a correction.)

In February, *Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus added more details: The spy investigation was launched after the United States got hold of a Chinese document in 1995 that detailed secrets from America's nuclear-weapons program. The document, Pincus reported, led intelligence analysts to believe China might have learned how to miniaturize its nuclear weaponry. Pincus's story also ran inside the paper and garnered little attention.

Once the *Times* published its front-page investigation on March 6, however, the climate changed. From the Saturday that the story appeared, the China "spy scandal" rocketed to the Sunday morning talk shows to the floors of Congress to the front pages of newspapers across the country. At least nine congressional committees have since looked into various aspects of the scandal.

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT GERTH WOULD BE THE *TIMES* reporter on this story. He is the paper's most prominent investigative reporter. In addition to his Pulitzer Prize, Gerth gets the credit—or the blame, depending on your point of view—for breaking the Whitewater story seven years ago.

Gerth, 55, boasts an outstanding reporting pedigree. After studying business administration and briefly working

DARRYL ESTRINE (BROAD)

as a freelance journalist and a researcher for George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign, he joined the *Times* on a contract basis in 1976, assisting legendary reporter Seymour Hersh on organized-crime stories. In 1977, Gerth signed on full-time, doing investigative business stories in New York, before moving to Washington in 1980.

Though he has the bland appearance of an accountant, Gerth has the intensity and zeal of a prosecutor and can pummel government officials with rapid-fire questions. And though he's known as an aggressive reporter who rarely makes factual errors, other reporters say Gerth often adopts his favorite sources' points of view. As a result his stories often become akin to a prosecutor's brief; they ignore or bury facts favorable to the other side. "I believe that Jeff Gerth is one of the most brilliant investigative reporters in America and I am in awe of him," says one Washington reporter, "but in this episode he has allowed himself to be used by certain sources with an agenda."

Meanwhile, Risen, 44, is a relative *Times* neophyte. A specialist in intelligence and national security reporting, he spent 14 years at the *Los Angeles Times*, and broke the story that the Clinton administration had approved arms shipments from Iran to Bosnia. Though he is driven in his own way, Risen has a friendlier mien and has managed to remain well liked even by White House officials who have felt the sting of his articles.

Even if they weren't the first out of the gate, Gerth and Risen soon made the Wen Ho Lee story their own. It wasn't just their reporting, though, that set them apart. It was also their tone.

Even in the early frenzy, such publications as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* managed to put the scandal in context. These publications had no need to publish a story like Broad's later, simply because they presented other sides of the issue from day one. Ironically, Broad's story ended up including much that had previously been reported by these other publications.

From the beginning, some of what the *Times* presented as evidence of espionage should have given its editors pause. For example, Gerth and Risen reported that "the suspect's wife was invited to address a Chinese conference on sophisticated computer topics even though she was only a secretary at Los Alamos." Other publications later explained that Lee's wife, Sylvia, had actually been working for the FBI, which had asked her to keep her eyes and ears open at the event.

In the same article Gerth and Risen reported that Lee had


Spies vs. Sweat: The Debate Over China's Nuclear Advance

By WILLIAM J. BROAD

WEAPONS SECRETS

A special report

When American bomb makers began visiting China in 1979, they were startled by increasingly pointed questions that suggested their Chinese peers were hot on the trail of the secret to building a modern nuclear arsenal. It allows H-bombs to be made so small that many can fit atop a single missile or be fired from trucks, submarines and other mobile platforms.

China succeeded on Sept. 25, 1992, the news coming from a spy who told his American handlers that Beijing had exploded a bomb based on the miniaturization secret.

A team of scientists at the Los Alamos weapons laboratory in New Mexico set to work on a whodunit with huge implications: Was China's advance the result of espionage, hard work or some mix of the two?

Today, the debate rages on. Experts agree that spying occurred, but clash violently on how much was stolen and what impact it had on Beijing's advance, if any.

The Los Alamos team concluded in 1988 that China's stride was probably based on espionage. A report this year by a Congressional committee that made the case public went further, claiming that it would have been "virtually impossible" for China to have made small warheads "without the nuclear secrets stolen from the United States."

The Congressional report unleashed criticism from scientists inside and outside the Government who said the importance of the espionage was overstated, and that China could well have achieved the breakthrough on its own, as it insists publicly.

A review of the dispute, based on months of interviews and disclosures of weapons and intelligence secrets, suggests that the Congressional report went beyond the evidence in asserting that stolen secrets were the main reason for China's breakthrough.

The review also bolsters a point of emerging agreement among leading experts: that the Federal investigation focused too soon on the Los Alamos National Laboratory and one worker there, Wen Ho Lee, who was fired for security violations. The lost secrets, it now appears, were available to hundreds and perhaps thousands of individuals scattered throughout the nation's arms complex.

Federal officials asked in recent days that some details about weapons design and intelligence sources not be published, and The New York Times agreed to withhold them.

For the Los Alamos team of detectives, the overall spy theory was supported strongly in 1995 when the Central Intelligence

Continued on Page A14

Some secret specifications of the W-88, an American miniature hydrogen bomb, that were found in a Chinese document

SHAPE OF ATOMIC BOMB TRIGGER Described as not spherical

SHAPE OF HYDROGEN BOMB FUEL Described as spherical

W-88

Atomic bomb

Hydrogen bomb

SIZES OF CASINGS

BOMB PLACEMENT

Atomic bomb trigger is placed above the hydrogen bomb fuel

Gerth and Risen were reportedly furious about William Broad's September 7 article in the *Times* (above).

Ragged Glory: Gerth's *Other* China Scandal

Led by Jeff Gerth, the *Times* won a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the alleged transfer of satellite technology to the Chinese. The story helped pave the way for Gerth's reporting on Chinese espionage. As with the spying stories, what began with front-page articles suggesting scandal and dangerously compromised national security seemed to have ended with a relative whimper.

The articles centered on Loral and Hughes's use of a Chinese company to launch their satellites. Because of U.S. sanctions against China, American companies must get a presidential waiver to launch there. In April 1998, under the front-page headline, "Companies Are Investigated For Aid To China On Rockets," Gerth and a second reporter wrote that Loral and Hughes were under investigation for improperly giving the Chinese "space expertise that significantly advanced Beijing's ballistic missile program."

After a Chinese rocket carrying a Loral satellite blew up, Gerth reported, Loral gave Chinese engineers a report on the incident. And, Gerth charged, President Clinton had "dealt a serious blow" to the criminal inquiry by "quietly" giving Loral a waiver to launch another satellite. Gerth implied that Loral chairman Bernard Schwartz's contributions to the Democratic Party earned his company special treatment, possibly against national-security interests.

Critics saw Gerth's articles as unbalanced. One Loral official says they "left erroneous impressions." Indeed, Gerth's first story omitted key facts. First, the report was given to the Chinese by an employee who didn't realize he was violating company policy. And before doing so, the employee stripped out any information he thought was sensitive. Lastly, a White House official asserts that the story exaggerated the Justice Department's resistance to issuing a new waiver. And Gerth did not note that four other government agencies recommended issuing the waiver.

Gerth responds that Loral has never complained about his stories and says the company's vice-president for government relations, Thomas Ross, left him a message after his first story, "thanking me for my fairness and my professionalism." (Ross confirms the message, but adds, "Overall, however, the *Times*'s coverage proved to be highly unbalanced, tilted toward the obvious bias of his sources, and giving short shrift to our side of the story.")

Gerth did break significant news. The White House official says Loral and Hughes shouldn't have handed over some of the information to the Chinese without approval. But he says Gerth wrongly implied a campaign-contribution scandal and overstated the damage to national security.

Gerth's stories prompted the creation of the Cox committee, whose 872-page report effectively endorsed his reporting, rebuking both companies for putting their interests above national security. (Both companies dispute the findings.) The report, however, didn't make any findings on the issue of campaign contributions. Still, the committee shifted gears and ended up touting its findings on Chinese espionage. The Loral-Hughes case quickly faded from view. —*RS*

TOM NICK COCOTOS (ILLUSTRATION)

obtained $700 from an American Express office while on a trip to Hong Kong (which he did not disclose, as he was required to do). "Investigators suspect that he used it to buy an airline ticket to Shanghai," Gerth and Risen wrote ominously. The money, it turned out later, had paid for his daughter Alberta to take day trips outside Hong Kong with a tour group.

It got worse. In another article, under a subhead reading "Suspicions Raised By Congratulatory Hug," Gerth and Risen wrote that Lee was seen by another Los Alamos scientist being hugged by a visiting Chinese scientist "in a manner that seemed suspiciously congratulatory." The scientist, Gerth and Risen reported, told the FBI about the encounter. Even a quick hug was being held out as evidence of Lee's spying. The article didn't note, however, that Lee's gesture was made at an official event, in front of Los Alamos officials.

Another piece of evidence against Lee reported in the *Times* was his "missing" research assistant. The March 24 article, written only by Risen, noted that Lee was given a job running a sensitive new nuclear-weapons program in 1997 at a time in which he was already under suspicion for spying. Lee then hired a research assistant who was a Chinese citizen. "And the research assistant has disappeared," Risen reported. "Even as the [FBI] tries to find him to question him, Government officials say they are wondering whether he played a role in a Chinese intelligence operation at the heart of America's nuclear weapons program." However, seven paragraphs later, Risen noted that the FBI had earlier concluded that the assistant had no connection to Chinese intelligence. And, it turned out that the assistant, who the *Times* did not name, had not even disappeared. He was publicly listed as being affiliated with Pennsylvania State University. (A few days later the *Times* reported that the FBI had "found" the assistant.)

Gerth and Risen reported suspicions that Lee used $700 on airfare to Shanghai. In fact, he used the money to send his daughter on day trips outside Hong Kong.

Even Gerth and Risen's word choices seemed freighted with guilty connotations. They referred to Lee as a "scientist" or "computer scientist," but never made it clear that Lee was not a nuclear-weapons designer. By contrast, Broad made that point explicitly. Of course, that doesn't mean Lee *isn't* a spy. But whenever possible, it seemed, Gerth and Risen emphasized the information that seemed consistent with Lee's guilt.

EVEN BEFORE BROAD WEIGHED IN, THERE WAS SOME INDEpendent assessment of the espionage scandal and it didn't bode well for Gerth and Risen's reporting. In particular, two separate government entities, both with access to classified information, made findings that go against what the *Times* first reported. And two U.S. Senators, Republican Fred Thompson of Tennessee and Joseph Lieberman, a Democrat from Connecticut, also issued a long statement, after holding hearings, in which they concluded that the hunt for a spy focused too quickly on Wen Ho Lee.

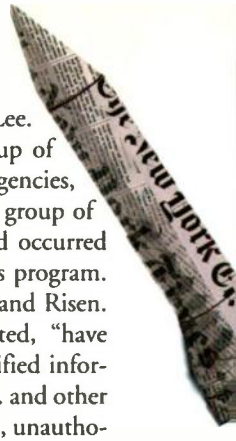
The first report, in April, came from a group of intelligence officials from various government agencies, and was reviewed by an independent, bipartisan group of experts. They found that Chinese espionage had occurred and had "probably accelerated" China's weapons program. But they were much less categorical than Gerth and Risen. "China's technical advances," the findings stated, "have been made on the basis of classified and unclassified information derived from espionage, contact with U.S. and other countries' scientists, conferences and publications, unauthorized media disclosures, declassified U.S. weapons information, and Chinese indigenous development. The relative contribution of each cannot be determined." The report also noted: "To date, the aggressive Chinese collection effort has not resulted in any apparent modernization of their deployed strategic force or any new nuclear weapons deployment."

Next, the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board conducted a study. Chaired by former U.S. Senator Warren Rudman, a New Hampshire Republican, the board concluded in June that spying had occurred, but that it was probably not as dramatic as "widely publicized assertions of wholesale losses of nuclear weapons technology from specific laboratories to particular nations...."

One advisory-board member takes a dim view of Gerth and Risen's reporting. "They decided who was guilty, how they were guilty, and what the consequences were," says Dr. Sidney Drell, emeritus professor of theoretical physics at Stanford University. "They had a very specific twist on the story and it's clearly not the one of our report." Rudman declined to comment about the *Times* but says the paper deserves "great credit" for bringing this issue into the public eye. Indeed, some hail Gerth and Risen's work. Says Paul Redmond, a former CIA head of counterintelligence who oversaw the capture of spy Aldrich Ames and who had compared the Lee case to the Rosenbergs: the *Times* has "done a great service to the country."

While these panels were effectively raising questions about Gerth and Risen's work, a number of scientific journals, and nonscientific publications such as *The New York Review of Books*, had begun to question both the Cox committee's findings and the *Times*'s reporting. Engelberg says he asked Gerth to write an assessment of the criticism. After reading that, Engelberg says, "We then decided to have Bill Broad take a look at the scientific critique of Cox; why were so many eminent physicists saying that Cox was off base." So, in mid-July, Broad dug into the same story that his colleagues had been covering.

FROM THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF GERTH AND RISEN'S FIRST story, the *Times* gave the impression that China's espionage had caused great harm to the United States and that China's weapons program had "made a leap" forward. The second paragraph continued: "Until recently, China's nuclear weapons designs were a generation behind those of the United States, largely because Beijing was unable to produce



TOM NICK COCOTOS (ILLUSTRATION)

small warheads that could be launched from a single missile at multiple targets and form the backbone of a modern nuclear force." Only in the twenty-fourth paragraph of the story did the reader learn that "a debate rages within the government" over the significance of the espionage.

Broad, however, addressed the same debate in the third paragraph of his story. "Was China's [nuclear] advance the result of espionage, hard work or some mix of the two?" Broad wrote. "Today, the debate rages on. Experts agree that spying occurred, but clash violently on how much was stolen and what impact it had on Beijing's advance, if any."

Times editor Engelberg points out that Gerth and Risen did mention the government debate, but concedes that maybe they should have mentioned it earlier in the story. "In the first story, very honestly," Engelberg says, "the people who were telling us about the debate were making it less prominent than we subsequently thought it should be."

Gerth and Risen's decision to downplay the intragovernment disagreements supported their assertion that the Clinton administration was intentionally downplaying the spying allegations. But if "experts clashed violently" on the extent of the espionage, as Broad reported, perhaps the administration was not dragging its feet, but sorting out the differing options.

Indeed, a White House official argues that the president took action on nuclear spying long before Gerth and Risen began writing on the subject. In February 1998—more than a year before Gerth and Risen's first article—President Clinton directed the U.S. Energy Department to institute wide-ranging counterintelligence reforms. Two months later, the department appointed a respected FBI spy hunter to head up a new, independent counterintelligence office in the department. And in November 1998, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson endorsed reforms to make 5,000 nuclear scientists take regular polygraph tests.

Where Broad's story really began to show the holes in Gerth and Risen's reporting was in its grasp of nuclear-weapons science. "Whoever was leaking this to them, [Gerth and Risen] would just sort of repeat it without analyzing it...but clearly they didn't understand it," says Robert Norris, a research analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the coauthor of a book titled *British, French, and Chinese Nuclear Weapons.* Norris asserts that Gerth and Risen's articles did not explain the realities of the modern Chinese nuclear-weapons program.

Gerth and Risen consistently gave readers the impression that the Chinese have a cutting-edge nuclear force, or are about to develop one. Norris takes issue with that view. "Going through the modernization process and researching, developing, testing, first deploying, then fully deploying takes years," says Norris of the Chinese nuclear program. "They are more than a generation behind."

Broad, who has written two books on nuclear-weapons development, made a point of talking to and quoting scientists, as well as experts on nuclear arms. When these experts—none of whom were quoted by Gerth and Risen—gave their views and knowledge, the bottom began to fall out of the China spy scandal.

Broad's story, which gave a detailed history of China's deployment of nuclear weapons, presented facts that rarely made it into Gerth and Risen's articles. First, Broad reported that the information apparently given to China was not enough to build a nuclear weapon. And Broad noted that the real difficulty in creating nuclear weapons is not the design, which was allegedly stolen, but the actual building of the weapon. In fact, Broad reported that physics dictates that weapons designers generally follow the same paths when trying to miniaturize bombs. Finally, Broad reported that China had tested a miniaturized warhead in 1992. But, according to one official Broad cited, the bomb was "anything but an exact copy" of the U.S.'s W-88 miniature bomb.

TODAY, THE MEDIA STAKEOUT IS GONE FROM IN FRONT OF the Lees' home. But the effects of the story linger on. Wen Ho Lee has received death threats, his daughter says, and reams of hate mail, much of it filled with ethnic slurs. One note told the Taiwan-born Lee to go back to China and to bring his children with him. Another said, "once Chinese, always Chinese." The pressure has taken its toll on Lee, says his daughter. He sleeps poorly and, slender to begin with, has dropped a significant amount of weight. Whether or not Wen Ho Lee is ever charged with any crime, his life has been changed forever.

The *Times*'s Engelberg denies that the paper unfairly singled out Lee, pointing out that the scientist has failed one polygraph test, failed to report foreign trips, and that the FBI found that Lee had downloaded classified codes onto an unclassified computer. Lee later deleted them, the FBI discovered. "If you look at what we have said so far about Wen Ho Lee, I think there is ample evidence for you to wonder what he was up to," says Engelberg. "It does suggest he's a perfectly good espionage suspect."

Meanwhile, the espionage scandal continues to be played out in Washington, where congressional committees are still studying the issue. As an intelligence-beat reporter, Risen has continued to cover it. Gerth, however, is no longer reporting on the scandal; his job is to dig for stories and the spy story has moved into the territory of the *Times*'s beat reporters.

It remains to be seen how official Washington will treat Gerth's next big scoop. "One of the things that struck me," says the *Daily News*'s Nelson, referring to questions raised about Gerth's reporting on the Whitewater, satellite transfer, and China espionage stories, "is that Gerth has been involved in three long stories that don't hold water."

In the end, perhaps, the unparalleled influence of the *Times* imposes a special responsibility on the paper. Its errors cause more damage than those of other publications because the paper has such credibility. And this case is a reminder to the rest of the media that they should approach even the *Times*'s reporting with caution. "The problem here that is unique is that when *The New York Times* breaks news in Washington, Congress and the political establishment react as if it were the gospel truth rather than as if *The New York Times* were a distinguished and superlative but fallible newspaper," says Doyle McManus, Washington bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times.* "So to a degree that doesn't happen when *The* [*Washington*] *Post* breaks something or *The Wall Street Journal* or we break something, a *New York Times* scoop forms the national agenda. That's not the fault of *The New York Times,* it's the fault of those who treat it as if it were infallible." ■

the INFLU

The three network anchors. The editors of a handful of major daily newspapers, plus *Time* and *Newsweek*. The editor of either *Vogue* or *Cosmopolitan* (probably *Cosmo*). A key documentary producer, perhaps.

How different a list of the most influential people in media would have been if we embarked on this exercise a few short decades ago. It sure would have been simpler. No CNN. No Internet. A few dominant magazines.

Consider this: When he anchored the *CBS Evening News*, Walter Cronkite was routinely named the "most trusted man in America." In 1972, about 75 percent of television viewers on a typical night watched the evening newscast on one of the three broadcast networks. Now, fewer than half do so, and it's hard to imagine any journalist claiming the "most trusted" mantle.

Today, of course, we're bombarded with an unprecedented number of media choices, and as consumers we navigate among them depending on our interests and even our moods. In this environment, assembling an informed list of influential players is tricky business and an inexact science. We could not automatically assume the main anchors of the three networks would be on the list, and in the end they didn't make it.

Instead, we have an eclectic, surprising array of men and women—a few famous, many not—several of whom work at jobs or in genres that didn't exist a few years ago. For instance, not too long ago, when it came to

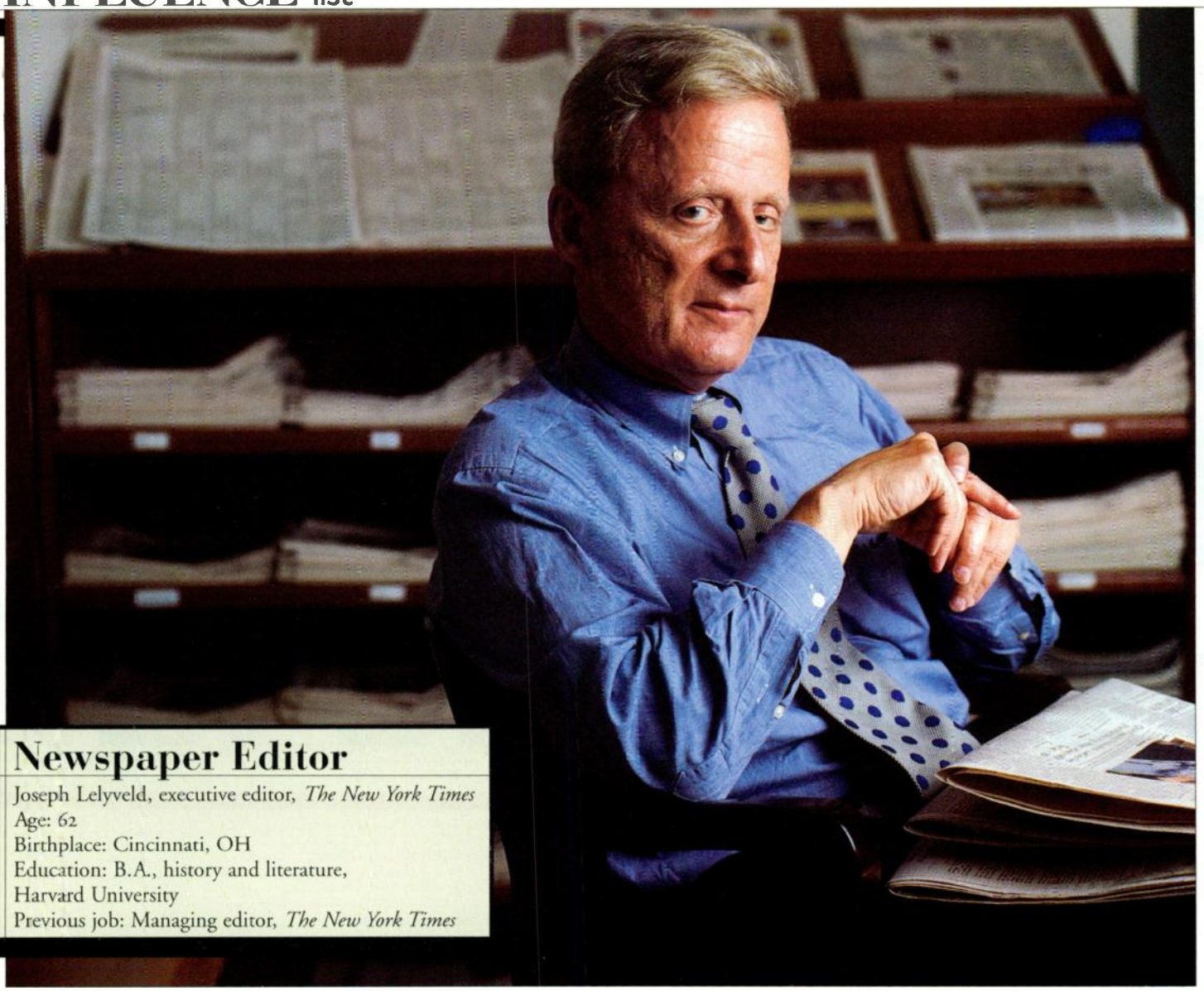
ENCE list

books, *The New York Times Book Review* was dominant. Today, daytime talk-show host Oprah Winfrey makes a recommendation on her televised book club and that title inevitably shoots up the best-seller list. Winfrey, therefore, is our "literary tastemaker"—and she operates in a new marketplace in which throngs of people make click-through book purchases that in turn make up the minute-by-minute Amazon.com best-seller list.

Influence in media takes many forms: the power to shape content that is consumed by millions; the authority to make decisions that are emulated by other media; the ability to affect our tastes and priorities by dint of reputation and reach. In assembling this package, we purposefully sought out people whose *day-to-day decisions* determine the content of nonfiction media—for better or worse.

In the TV news-producer category, for example, we have selected Neal Shapiro of *Dateline NBC*. Shapiro reigns over five hours a week of prime-time programming, and he has taken the newsmagazine genre in a tabloid direction that is hardly universally cheered. But he makes his mark every day. Tim Russert of NBC's *Meet the Press* is here in the talk-show host category not simply because his show is a ratings leader and agenda setter but because Russert is the show's hands-on guiding force.

These, then, are people who shape what we know, what we buy, even what we think. And at the speed things are changing, we expect next year's version to be quite different—but also full of surprises.



Newspaper Editor

Joseph Lelyveld, executive editor, *The New York Times*
Age: 62
Birthplace: Cincinnati, OH
Education: B.A., history and literature, Harvard University
Previous job: Managing editor, *The New York Times*

When the *New York Times* newsroom was redesigned two years ago, executive editor Joseph Lelyveld moved his office to a less prominent spot, one where it would no longer be visible to most of his reporters. But no one should think he's any less involved.

In five years as executive editor of the nation's most influential paper, Lelyveld has placed his stamp on everything from coverage of drug corruption in Mexico to the design of the logo for the revamped "Dining In/Dining Out" section. And he's done it by wielding his power less conspicuously than did some of his more menacing predecessors. Lelyveld vacates his seat at the afternoon editors meeting before the other participants decide which stories will go on page one of the following day's paper—although two or three times a week he changes the lineup after that decision has been made. "If I vote last, I really hear what they think," Lelyveld says. The result, says *Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr., is that unlike under past regimes, Lelyveld's newsroom is "not a newsroom in turmoil."

Lelyveld started at the *Times* as a copyboy in 1962, and has never left the paper. He worked as a foreign correspondent in London, South Africa, New Delhi, and Hong Kong before returning to New York to serve as foreign editor and then managing editor. Colleagues gush over Lelyveld's sweeping intelligence. He will sit in a meeting and "ask the question that everyone wished they'd asked," says former *Times* man Michael Kaufman. Lelyveld's manner is utterly unpretentious, but his restless nature is sometimes interpreted as aloofness. (The description irks Lelyveld.)

As custodian of the most important newspaper in the country, Lelyveld faces a unique challenge. "The trick about the *Times*," explains longtime colleague John Darnton, the paper's culture editor, "is to change it and yet to not mess with the essential character of the paper."

Lelyveld pushed for more coverage of Mexico when he took the reins of the paper, recognizing that the big story in the region was there, not in Central America, says Sam Dillon, the *Times*'s Mexico City bureau chief. "He put the emphasis [on], 'Stay in Mexico. Report there,'" Dillon says. "At the time I was dismayed. I thought, *There won't be enough news*." Dillon and his team ended up winning a Pulitzer Prize for their reporting about the links between Mexican drug traffickers and government officials.

While the paper has increased the number of its softer-news sections (the advertising-friendly "Circuits" and a revamped "House & Home," for example) under Lelyveld's watch, he has resisted the obsession with celebrity evinced by much of the media. In July, he refused to lead the paper with the disappearance of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane. "*The Washington Post* treated it as if the president had died," says Lelyveld. "We played it big, but we also preserved the meaning of our lead story." Even in hindsight, he thinks it was the right decision. "He's asking good, judicious questions," says Kaufman, "while everyone else is running amok."

—Jennifer Greenstein

SUZANNE OPTON

Foreign Affairs Reporter

Christiane Amanpour, chief international correspondent, CNN
Age: 41
Birthplace: London, England
Education: B.A., journalism, University of Rhode Island
Previous job: graphics designer, WJAR-TV, Providence, RI

There are people in Yugoslavia who hate Christiane Amanpour. When NATO began bombing Belgrade last March, a few of them showed up at her hotel carrying guns. When she couldn't be found, they trashed her room. Still her reports aired on CNN.

Although it is impossible to prove who sent the menacing thugs, Amanpour is convinced that the viewer feedback was arranged by some of the Serb paramilitary commanders whom she has spent much of the past decade covering. Her reporting on CNN, which can reach 225 million households around the world and is closely watched by the international political elite, has helped make the Milosevic regime a pariah among nations. In June 1997, for example, Amanpour presented a blistering journalistic indictment of the Serb paramilitary leader known as Arkan. Four months later, a war crimes tribunal issued a formal criminal indictment.

Amanpour's influence extends well beyond Serbia. When Jordan's new monarch, King Abdullah, was ready for prime time in May, he sat down for his first television interview with Amanpour. And when Hillary Clinton granted her first one-on-one interview following months of silence during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, she spoke to Amanpour.

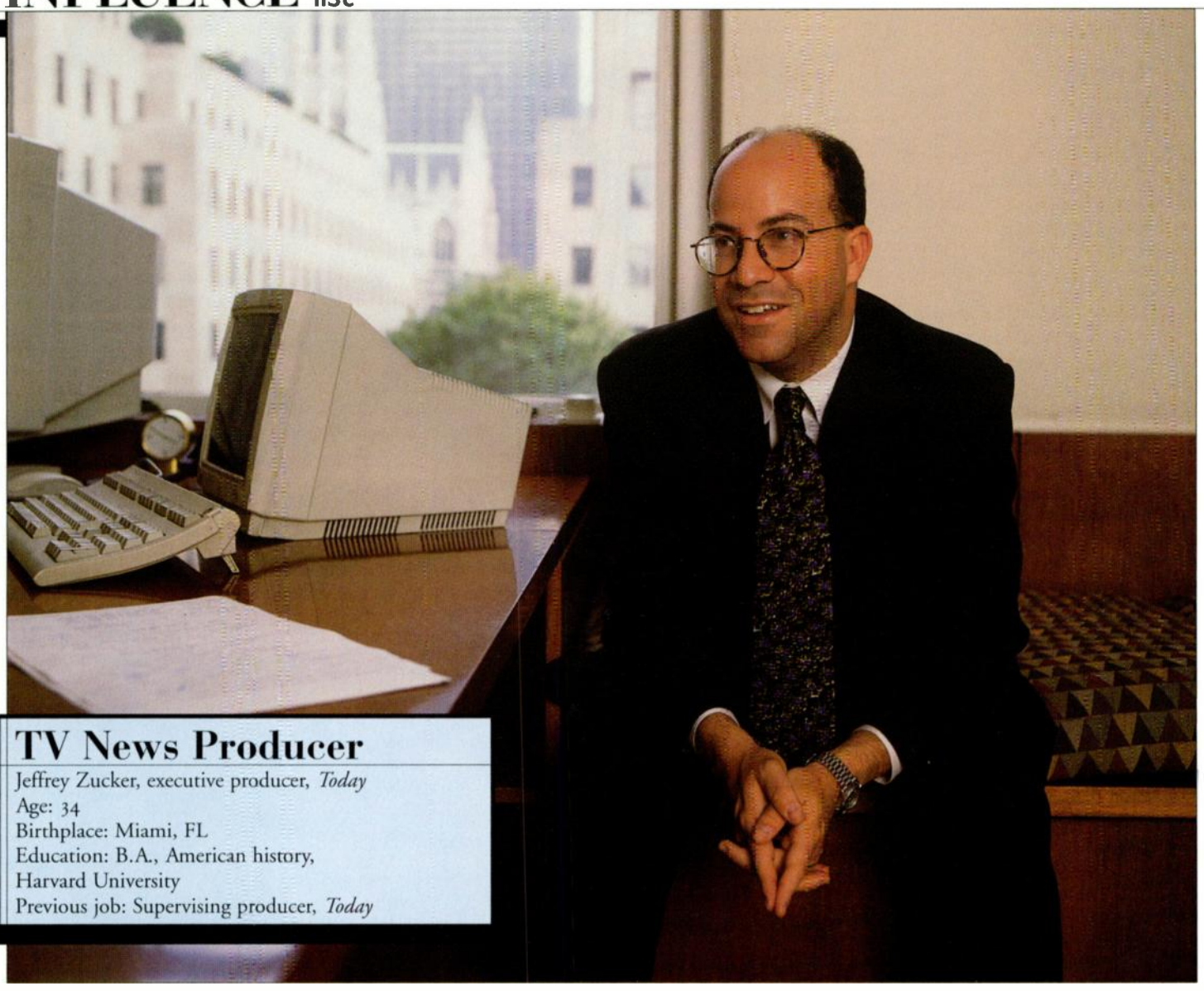
Amanpour, who spent much of her childhood in Iran, began her career at CNN in 1983 serving coffee and performing other menial tasks for the international desk in Atlanta. "I guess you could say she was a flunky," remembers Eason Jordan, president of global newsgathering and international networks. "But from the day she walked in she made it absolutely clear that it was her intention to be a big-time international correspondent."

Amanpour made it to the front lines on camera almost a decade ago when she joined CNN's coverage of the Persian Gulf War. But it was her extensive coverage of the neglected Bosnian war in the mid-1990s that set her apart from the pack. Long before the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords, Amanpour was delivering stories and pictures that kept the brutal conflict on America's television sets. "Most of her time [in Bosnia] was spent there at her initiative," says Jordan.

A well-respected foreign beat reporter such as Seth Mydans, who covers southeast Asia for *The New York Times*, may be able to define the news in his corner of the world, but Amanpour has wide latitude to take her camera anywhere she chooses. Three years ago, Amanpour began reporting investigative pieces for CBS's *60 Minutes*. The show won three Emmys this year for news coverage, and two were for stories reported by Amanpour: a piece on child soldiers in Uganda and another on an Algerian massacre.

"To have information is a basic right of every individual," says Amanpour. "I don't agree that we should allow ourselves to be swayed by those who are concerned by money and who say, 'Who cares about foreign news? Who cares about serious news?' This dumbing down, trivializing kind of trend, I think it denies people [their] basic rights. And...that's what motivates me." —*Ted Rose*

ANDREW ECCLES/CORBIS-OUTLINE



TV News Producer

Jeffrey Zucker, executive producer, *Today*
Age: 34
Birthplace: Miami, FL
Education: B.A., American history, Harvard University
Previous job: Supervising producer, *Today*

I've only got ten minutes to talk to you," Jeff Zucker says upon a reporter's arrival for an interview in his third-floor Rockefeller Center office. He says that before "Hello."

Still, Zucker, the executive producer of *Today* and the executive in charge of the fledgling *Later Today*, can pack more into ten minutes than most. In fact, that's the skill he brings to his job programming *Today*. His quick-spit words and short attention span have shaped *Today* into the most copied morning program in the country. "Jeff Zucker reinvented the wheel, and ABC and CBS are eating his dust," says Andrew Tyndall, publisher of the TV industry-watching *Tyndall Report*.

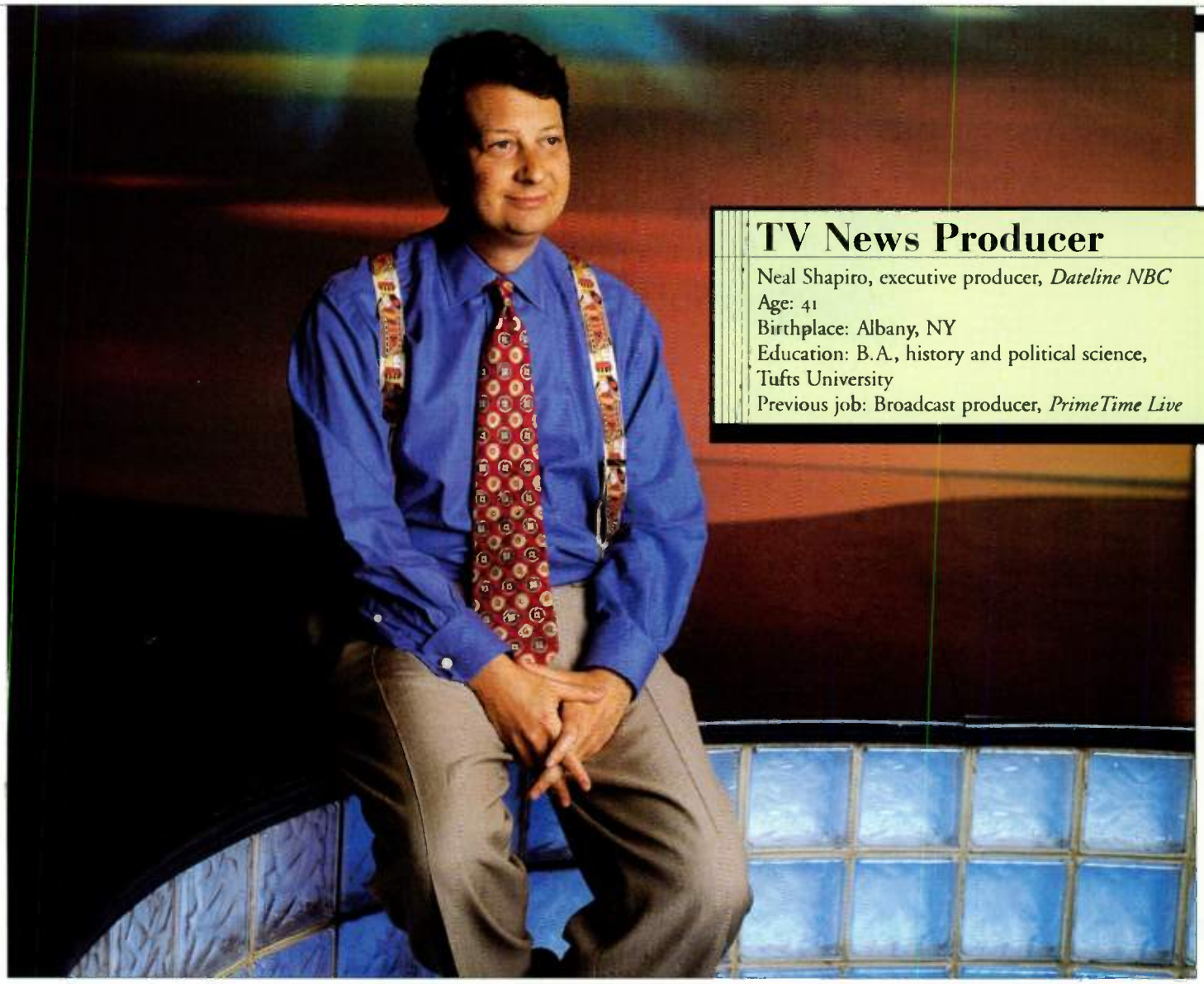
Not only are both ABC and CBS's morning shows moving into street-level studios just like *Today*'s, but copies of innovations that have flourished under Zucker's watch—like the Summer Concert Series and the "Where in the World is Matt Lauer?" travel feature—are proliferating. And what's been copied the most is Zucker's fast-paced approach to news delivery. "We went to a very fast-paced first half hour that encompasses a lot of news," says Zucker. "I like to think of it as the best twenty-two minutes of news on television."

While Zucker's preference for rat-a-tat news may reflect his personality, it also serves busy viewers. Two-income families need a source that fills them in on the day's news before they head to the office, and rely on television to inform them while they get the kids off to school, says Peter Johnson, *USA Today*'s television columnist. With the other networks following its lead, *Today*'s news presentation has literally changed the face of morning television. That's not a shabby legacy for a man who is only 34.

"Without a doubt, hands down, Zucker is the most influential producer" in setting the morning's news agenda, says Johnson, not just because Zucker has forced other news outlets to reconfigure their programs but also because of the sheer number of people *Today* reaches. Since 1995, *Today* has been television's most-watched morning program, drawing a daily average of 5.7 million viewers, according to Nielsen Media Research. And if other news organizations are duplicating Zucker's handiwork, so be it. He'd rather innovate and be copied than suffer the alternative. "Part of the way you stay on top and stay ahead is to be energized by the way the others are trying to take your head off," he says. "That does provide great incentive." Trial and error rules Zucker's judgment; he's known for latching on to a new idea late in the day, and then scrapping and reshaping the next day's show at 7:30 in the evening. "It's easier to try new things when you're number two," he says. "But you're smarter if you try them when you're number one."

But five consecutive years at *Today* is making Zucker antsy. What the next job will be, he doesn't know or won't say. But he doesn't have time to talk about tomorrow. Right now, it's all about *Today*. —*Katherine Rosman*

NATHANIEL WELCH/SABA



TV News Producer

Neal Shapiro, executive producer, *Dateline NBC*
Age: 41
Birthplace: Albany, NY
Education: B.A., history and political science, Tufts University
Previous job: Broadcast producer, *PrimeTime Live*

NATHANIEL WELCH/SABA

Ever flip through the channels and wonder why television's prime-time lineup serves up an endless parade of docudramas that feel like made-for-TV movies?

Neal Shapiro, the executive producer of *Dateline NBC*, is why. Shapiro—whose reign over five hours a week of prime-time programming makes him a significant decision maker in television—has taken the newsmagazine genre and given it a shiny new face. Using spiffy packaging and dramatic storytelling, Shapiro has made *Dateline* a potent brand name. During the 1998–1999 season, *Dateline* was seen in an average of 8.6 million households, five nights a week; its Monday, Tuesday, and Friday broadcasts ranked among the season's top 25 shows.

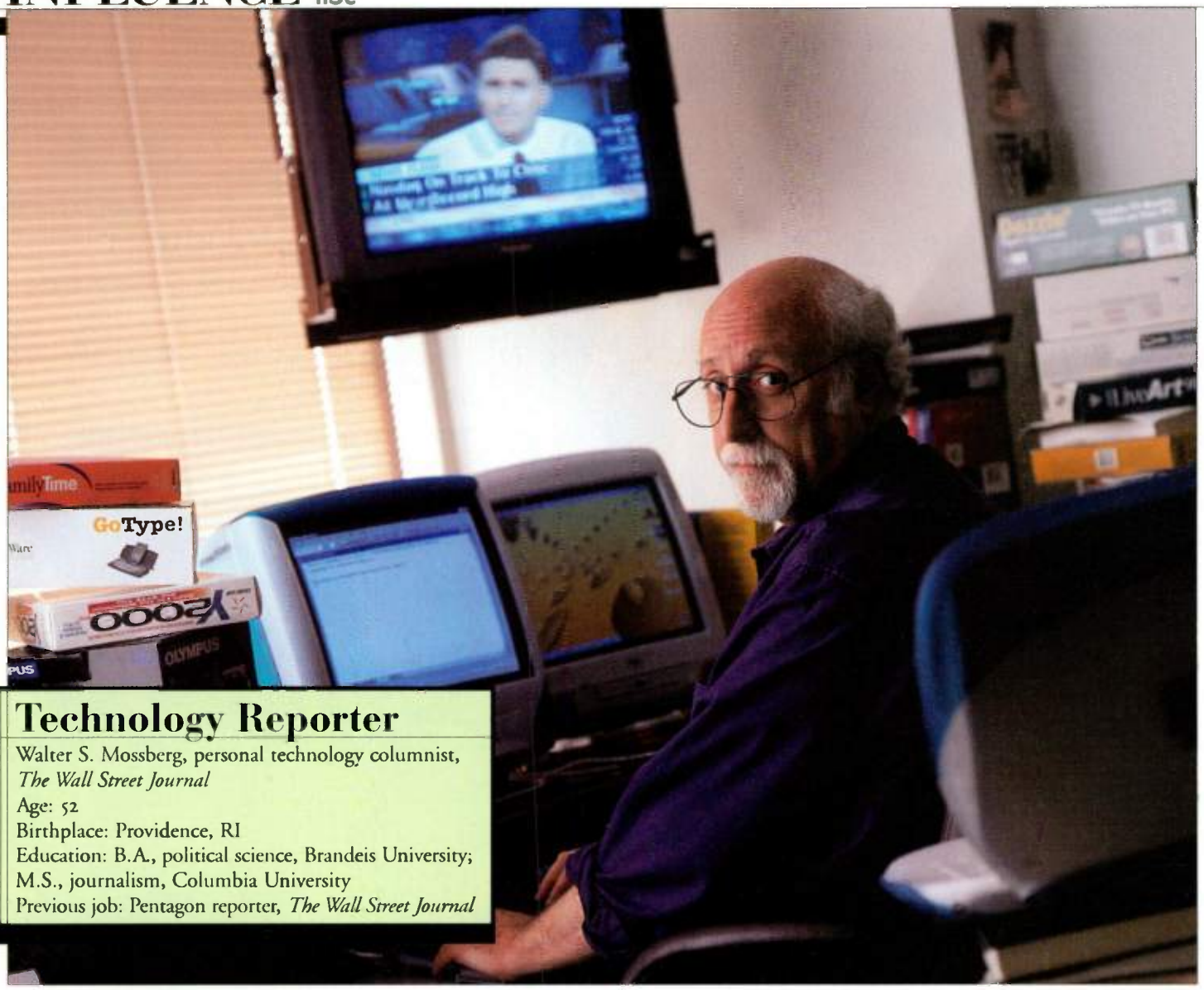
Dateline's branding success has spurred the other broadcast networks to follow NBC's lead. ABC has folded *PrimeTime Live* into the *20/20* franchise in an effort to achieve a brand recognition similar to *Dateline*'s, and even the venerable *60 Minutes* expanded to another night—a move long discouraged by *60 Minutes* executive producer Don Hewitt.

It's an outcome few would have predicted in 1993, when Shapiro took over a show reeling from the disclosure that staffers had rigged the supposedly spontaneous on-air explosion of a General Motors pickup truck. But his canny storytelling ideas and segment choices have fit perfectly with the news and branding plans of NBC News president Andrew Lack.

Shapiro, who says he screens most *Dateline* segments at least twice before they air, wants his viewers to keep asking what will happen next. He has dispensed with the *60 Minutes* format of airing entire stories without commercial interruptions, instead running pieces that sometimes last for the entire length of the one-hour show. And hyped-up drama can be seen in all types of *Dateline* segments, from hidden-camera investigations to health-and-fitness updates.

Despite its sometimes news-lite feel, *Dateline* does tackle serious topics. "Children of the Harvest," which explored child labor among migrant farm workers, won an Emmy in September for coverage of a continuing news story. The plight of migrant farm workers is hardly a surefire ratings hit. Still, says *Dateline*'s Andy Court, who coproduced the story, "Neal gave it his full support from the very beginning," and then gave it a full hour of network airtime.

Shapiro's formula is radically altering the face of prime-time television. "You could argue that aside from David Kelley," says Bill Carter, a television reporter for *The New York Times*, referring to the executive producer of *Ally McBeal* and *The Practice*, "[Shapiro] might be the most influential producer in television." On its face, it's an odd comparison—Shapiro's a journalist, while Kelley creates fictional characters and flights of fancy. Still, watching Shapiro work in his Rockefeller Center office filled with decorations (such as posters for films like *Broadcast News*) that celebrate the collision of journalism and drama, it's a comparison that rings true. —*KR*



Technology Reporter

Walter S. Mossberg, personal technology columnist, *The Wall Street Journal*
Age: 52
Birthplace: Providence, RI
Education: B.A., political science, Brandeis University; M.S., journalism, Columbia University
Previous job: Pentagon reporter, *The Wall Street Journal*

So what does it feel like when Walter Mossberg, *The Wall Street Journal*'s personal technology columnist, singles out your obscure company for lavish praise? A month after MusicMatch, Inc. found itself on the receiving end of Mossberg's kind words, chief executive Dennis Mudd says he "still gets goose bumps just talking about it. It had to be one of the most exciting, happiest moments of my life."

Mossberg, in an August column that evaluated the new jukebox programs that allow personal computer users to download and play MP3 music files off of the Internet, had dismissed the more heavily hyped offerings from America Online, Inc., and RealNetworks, Inc. According to Mossberg, MusicMatch was "the most powerful jukebox program and the easiest to use." In the next week, MusicMatch's sales jumped 40 percent.

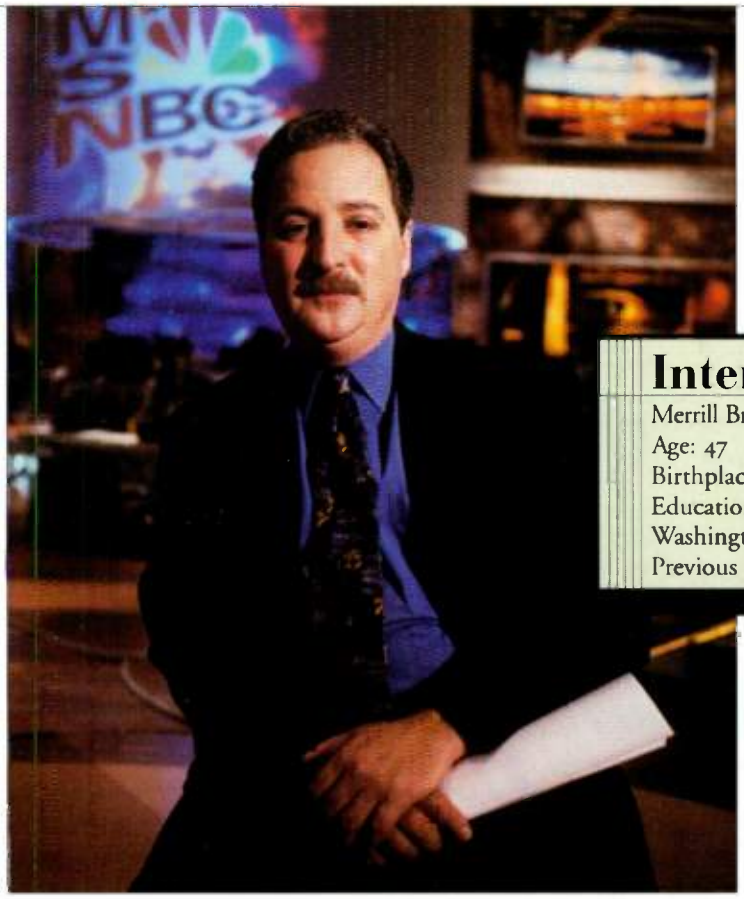
Business and technology executives take cues from Mossberg, too. Mudd says that Mossberg's column gave MusicMatch's credibility and profile such a boost that the company is better able to strike crucial deals and partnerships.

Though his Thursday column is now a much-touted feature of the *Journal*, there was some resistance within the newspaper to the idea when Mossberg first proposed it in 1990. *Journal* reporters were not supposed to offer their naked opinions on the news pages. But in his first column, Mossberg tartly criticized the computer industry for making poorly designed, undependable products that most people didn't have the time to figure out. "My loyalty is to consumers, not to different forces in the industry," he says. That kind of common sense and unwavering focus on the technological needs of regular folks powers Mossberg's influence.

"Walter is a brand at this point," says Time Inc. editor in chief Norman Pearlstine, who was the *Journal*'s executive editor when Mossberg began writing his column. Recognizing Mossberg's wide appeal, Pearlstine admits he "tried desperately" three years ago to lure the columnist to Time Inc. to write for *Fortune*, *Money*, and *Time*. Mossberg stayed put because the *Journal* offered him the better platform (in addition to a sweetened compensation package). "The column he writes and the audience he writes it for are what [make Mossberg] extraordinarily powerful," says Pearlstine. "The *Wall Street Journal* audience still, even in this era of niche publications, is the broadest possible business audience in the U.S."

At a time when technology is among the hottest, most glamorous subjects for a journalist to cover, Mossberg is admirably able to maintain his distance from the industry. He's even based in Washington, D.C., rather than in Silicon Valley or Seattle. "One of the advantages of not living there is that I'm not culturally part of the industry," Mossberg says. "I'm in another warped, bizarre city, but [Washington is not] warped about what I write about. I'm in the real America." —*Elizabeth Lesly Stevens*

RHODA BAER



Internet Editor

Merrill Brown, editor in chief, MSNBC.com
Age: 47
Birthplace: Philadelphia, PA
Education: B.A., political science, Washington University
Previous job: President, Kagan Information Services

Merrill Brown has been the top dog at MSNBC.com ever since the Microsoft Corporation–NBC News all-news joint venture was launched in 1996. The former *Washington Post* reporter oversees a crew of reporters known for breaking news, including technology reporter Brock Meeks, gossip maven Jeannette Walls, and London-based Preston Mendenhall (who convinced the Serb paramilitary leader known as Arkan to do a live online chat during the Balkans war). Those scoops and the site's powerful links and ties to NBC News and other Microsoft Internet properties have made the well-packaged MSNBC.com the most-visited freestanding news website, beating out competitors like CNN.com, according to Media Metrix ratings.

MSNBC.com tries to be "aggressive, sometimes ironic, even a little tabloidy" to attract readers, says Brown (who worked at the Courtroom Television Network for *Brill's Content* chairman and editor in chief Steven Brill). At the website's headquarters on the sprawling Microsoft campus in Redmond, Washington, Brown oversees the 9 A.M. daily planning meeting and conference call with editors and producers in Seattle, the East Coast offices, London, and Burbank, California. That's when Brown and his managers map out how the staff, which totals 100 editorial employees, will dovetail with MSNBC's cable programming and NBC's network news programs. The cross-promotions have been "incredibly important" in drawing more than 1 million weekday daily users, says Brown. "This is about the beginnings of the whole convergence thing." —*Jessica Seigel*

Web Tastemaker

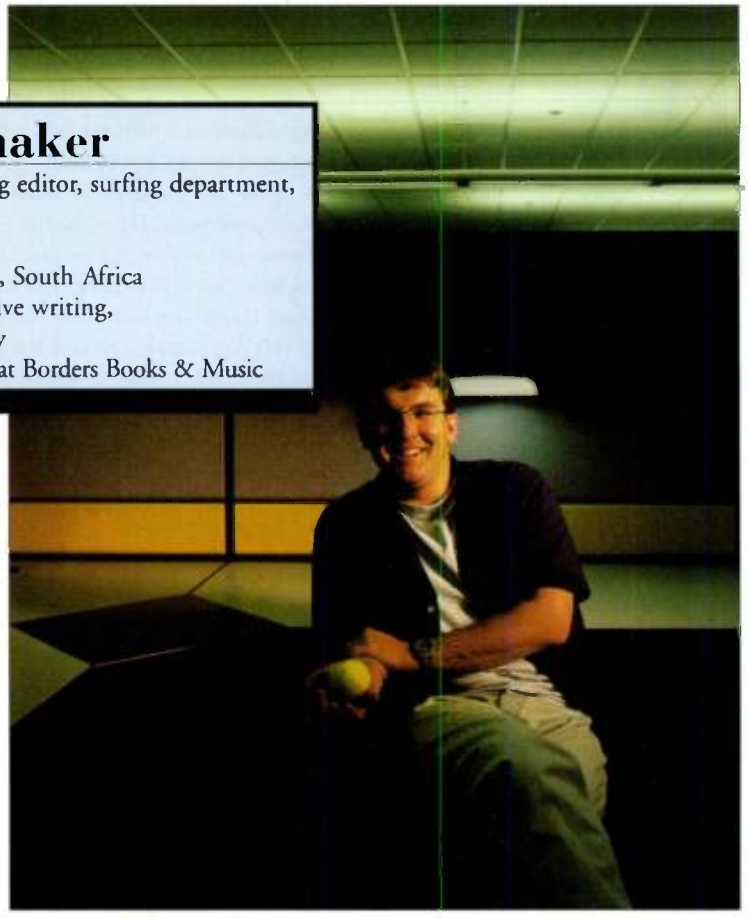
Adrian Lurssen, managing editor, surfing department, Yahoo! Inc.
Age: 30
Birthplace: Johannesburg, South Africa
Education: M.F.A., creative writing, George Mason University
Previous job: Staff trainer at Borders Books & Music

He's the most influential person working in cyberspace of whom you've never heard. Profiled only once (in his college alumni magazine), Adrian Lurssen has real pull as the brain behind the "What's New" button at Yahoo.com.

To colleagues at the web guide, he's just a 30-year-old "with a punny sense of humor," he says. But Lurssen transformed his job as a Net surfer into creating and now leading the team responsible for the eclectic and witty roundups that appear daily and weekly in Yahoo!'s "What's New...On the Web."

Located in the upper left corner of the Yahoo! homepage, the "What's New" icon hardly looks like a tastemaking power center. Lurssen's team is equally low-key, selecting its picks from user e-mail, news stories, and the surfing department's nominations in an informal, democratic process that continues throughout the day. But because Yahoo!'s Internet guide attracts millions of users, the choices for "What's New" can trigger a massive web rush.

"It just amazes me the influence that Yahoo! has," says Mink Stole, an actress who has appeared in director John Waters's films, who saw her site's number of weekly visitors climb to 95,000 from 25,000 after being named a "What's New" pick of the week in September. Draganfly Innovations Inc. catalog (www.rctoys.com), which sells mini-helicopters and indoor remote-control airships, even got a call from an Israeli government official asking about its surveillance devices after being tapped by Lurssen's team, says company president Zenon Dragan. The "What's New" roundup quickly connects the "lowest common denominator" to a smorgasbord of information, says Lurssen, proudly explaining Yahoo!'s mass-access philosophy. "We're reflecting the Web itself. The Web is just a place where humanity expresses itself." —*JS*



ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD (BROWN); WILLIAM MERCER MCLEOD (LURSSEN)

Talk-Show Producer

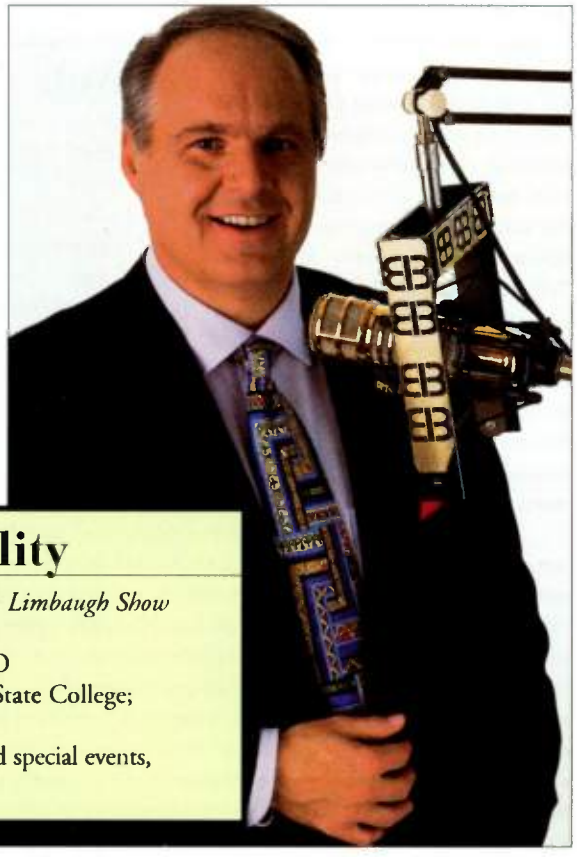
Wendy Walker Whitworth, senior vice-president and executive producer, *Larry King Live* and *Larry King Weekend*
Age: 46
Birthplace: Bronxville, NY
Education: B.A., art, Hollins College
Previous job: executive producer/White House, CNN

Wendy Walker Whitworth, the woman who shapes the evening's most important prime-time talk show, has a morning ritual. She plays with her two children, has several cups of coffee, and then consults her "bible:" a mountain of news clips.

Her bible, however, would mean nothing without her Rolodex, which contains several thousand telephone numbers for such people as Ellen DeGeneres, former president George Bush, and Linda Tripp. In the end, it is the far-flung range of guests that King's shows can attract that sets it apart. And, more often than not, even the most elusive call back. "It took us years to get Madonna, but we finally did," says Whitworth, who is responsible for the show's overall planning and production, including lining up the guests. "In my job, I am surgically attached to the telephone," says Whitworth, who for the most part works out of a studio in Rancho Sante Fe, California.

After ten years of producing CNN's White House coverage, she joined King's show in 1993. Since then, Whitworth and her crew of six bookers have landed interviews with such guests as Barbra Streisand, the Dalai Lama, and Yasser Arafat. She also engineered the NAFTA debate between Vice-President Al Gore and billionaire populist H. Ross Perot. "There is no question that Wendy is the heartbeat of that show," comments litigation consultant Jo-Ellan Dimitrius, a frequent guest. "Larry doesn't breathe without consulting Wendy." Adds King: "She has a very clear view of what the show is, and she is dogged."

Interestingly enough, one of Whitworth's favorite programs did not showcase a household name. In July, King interviewed U.S. Senator Max Cleland, a Georgia Democrat, who lost both legs and an arm in Vietnam. During the hour, Cleland revealed the inner life and outward challenges of an amputee. "We got a letter from a woman who said that show saved her life, literally," says Whitworth, adding, "If only every show could be that profound." *—Gay Jervey*



BRAD HINES (WHITWORTH)

Radio Personality

Rush Limbaugh, host, *The Rush Limbaugh Show*
Age: 48
Birthplace: Cape Girardeau, MO
Education: Southeast Missouri State College; didn't graduate
Previous job: Director of sales and special events, Kansas City Royals

Howard Stern may grab more headlines and young listeners, Dr. Laura Schlessinger's ratings may be ballooning, and Don Imus may be chummy with the media and political elite. But for tangible, everyday influence on both the talk-radio industry and on 18.7 million weekly listeners, Rush Limbaugh is still the guy to beat.

"He's a giant," says Michael Harrison, the editor and publisher of *Talkers* magazine, which covers the talk-radio industry. "He sets the standards...and embodies the conservative position that has had such a dynamic life on radio in America this decade."

Every weekday, broadcasting either from New York City or Palm Beach, Florida, Limbaugh launches a three-hour diatribe against "anti-smoking Nazis," "environmental wackos," and all sorts of other liberals. Heard on approximately 600 radio stations around the country, he attracts more listeners than any other host, as he has for most of his 11 years on the air.

Limbaugh is widely credited with helping to resuscitate AM radio in the early 1990s. Such hosts as Oliver North, G. Gordon Liddy, Sean Hannity, and Michael Reagan are viewed by industry observers as having benefited from the tone and format Limbaugh perfected. What's more, his opinions sway listeners. "He's made people far more politically aware than they were ten years ago," says Al Peterson, the news/talk editor at *Radio and Records*, a trade journal. "He's a strong voice for the populist movement in America."

To illustrate his effectiveness, Limbaugh cites a series of shows he aired two years ago, during a period that saw a wave of layoffs of white-collar workers. "I did shows that featured nothing but laid-off, middle-age callers who had managed to prosper from their downsizing. Those three shows are routinely cited as some of the most important that my listeners have heard. One of our new advertisers on the program said he was so inspired, he quit his mailman job to follow his dream of making board games." *—Michael Colton*

Talk-Show Host

Tim Russert, moderator, *Meet the Press*; senior vice-president and Washington bureau chief, NBC News; political analyst, *NBC Nightly News*
Age: 49
Birthplace: Buffalo, NY
Education: B.A., political science, John Carroll University; J.D., Cleveland-Marshall College of Law
Previous job: Counselor to former New York governor Mario Cuomo

KATHERINE LAMBERT

There are lots of Washington talk shows, but one sets the agenda more than others: *Meet the Press*. And Tim Russert shapes this show with his personal imprint. That's a lesson Paul Begala learned while he served as counselor to President Bill Clinton. Russert's was a name he wanted on his speed dial.

"Russert is enormously influential," comments Begala. "In fact, he might have crossed from the realm of influence into that of power. When I was at the White House...there wasn't a day that would go by without my contacting him."

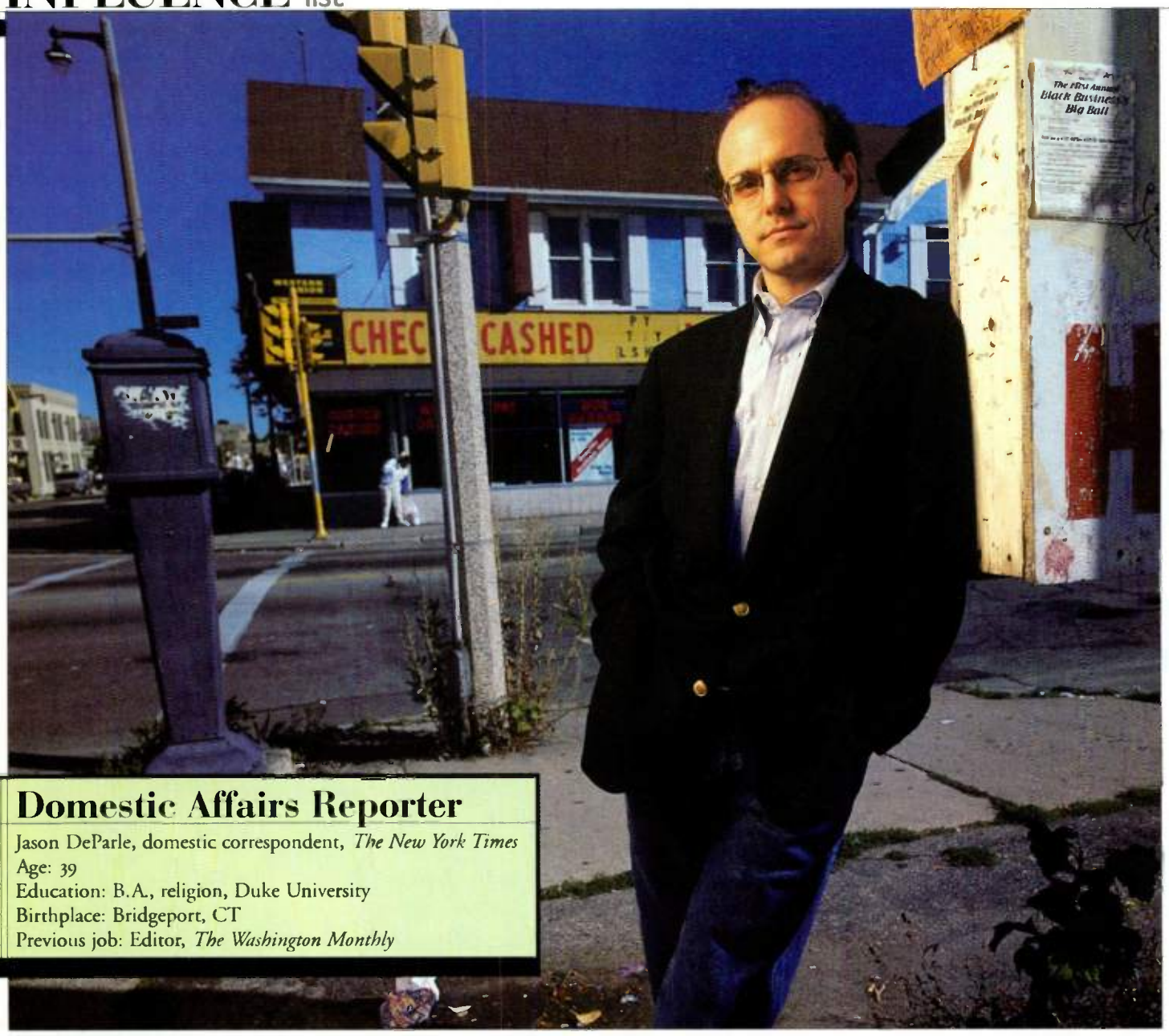
One reason is simple: ratings. According to Nielsen Media Research, Inc., of the best-known Sunday morning talk shows—ABC's *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*, CBS's *Face the Nation* and NBC's *Meet the Press*—Russert's consistently sports the highest numbers, reaching on average 3,560,000 households between September 21, 1998, and August 29, 1999.

Russert makes more than his fair share of news on *Meet the Press*. Recently, Republican presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan revealed, under probing by the host, that he was contemplating a switch to the Reform Party. Like many of Russert's scoops, this one quickly found its way into other media. On Monday, September 13, *The Washington Post* repeated Russert's Buchanan revelation. And that same day, the *New York Post* ran a story about Russert's discussion with Ricardo Jimenez, one of the Puerto Rican nationalists who had recently been granted clemency by President Clinton. When repeatedly asked by Russert whether or not he wanted to apologize to the victims, Jimenez refused to do so.

Russert is considered a tough, astute, and enormously prepared interviewer who personally recruits some of his guests. "Tim Russert is influential because he does his homework," comments former U.S. Senator Bob Dole. "His style of humor, hard work, and sense of fair play make him one of the most trusted journalists in the nation's capital."

Those who have observed him over the years also suggest that Russert understands the political process far better than most—in no small part because he's lived it. Prior to joining NBC, Russert served as chief of staff and special counsel to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and later as counselor to then–New York governor Mario Cuomo. "He understands the political mentality, and that is key," stresses *George* contributor Tony Blankley, who served as press secretary to former House speaker Newt Gingrich from 1990 to 1997.

Russert's frequent appearances on various NBC outlets, such as *Today* and MSNBC, boost his visibility. "I can't tell you how many times I will be on the phone with a [Capitol] Hill staffer, and they will all but hang up on me, saying 'I've got to go. Russert is on MSNBC,'" relates Adam Levine, a former aide to Moynihan and the senior producer for CNBC's *Hardball With Chris Matthews*. Adds Levine: "Put it this way: I would rather go to work in my pajamas or forget my wedding anniversary than miss *Meet the Press*." —*GJ*



Domestic Affairs Reporter

Jason DeParle, domestic correspondent, *The New York Times*
Age: 39
Education: B.A., religion, Duke University
Birthplace: Bridgeport, CT
Previous job: Editor, *The Washington Monthly*

It's the story about the gambling tax that Wendell Primus remembers best. Primus was a deputy assistant secretary in the Department of Health and Human Services in 1994, one of the policy wonks charged with translating President Clinton's broad promise to "end welfare as we know it" into legislation. Jason DeParle was covering the task force's efforts to find funding for antipoverty initiatives when a source told him that the panel might recommend a tax on gambling earnings. DeParle broke the story, and Nevada politicians began protesting the next day. The gambling tax never was proposed, and most of the antipoverty initiatives were long gone by the time the president signed the Republican-sponsored welfare bill of 1996. "These were ideas, not proposals," says Primus. "He was following the story so closely, he really did influence our policy-making process."

DeParle's attention to such intricacies of the welfare debate has allowed him to not just create a poverty beat but to dominate it. During President Clinton's first term, most of the welfare-reform action was in Washington, D.C., where federal policy was being hammered out; DeParle's reporting on the evolution of the president's welfare plan was unrivaled. "Nothing got the attention of the White House faster than something Jason said," says Primus.

When the president went along with the Republican plan to dismantle welfare in 1996, the story shifted out to the states and DeParle followed. This year, DeParle is spending most of his time in Wisconsin tracking the evolution of the country's most dynamic post-welfare state system. "When he comments, it's important news," says Jean Rogers, who's responsible for the operation of Wisconsin's workfare program.

DeParle's interest in poverty issues predates his journalism career. He spent his earliest years in Bridgeport, Connecticut, at that time a sad example of urban decay. When his working-class father moved his window-blind shop and family to Jacksonville, Florida, the 12-year-old DeParle witnessed class boundaries for the first time as a scholarship student at a private school.

DeParle once thought his reporting could play a direct role in promoting obvious solutions that would end poverty, but now believes the issues are more complicated and that his work's effect is more indirect. "Part of being a journalist is having a measure of detachment," he says. "People can come away with their own interpretation about why people are poor and what's to be done about it. That's okay with me." —*TR*

JAMES SCHNEPF

Newsmagazine Editor

Walter Isaacson, managing editor, *Time*
Age: 47
Born: New Orleans, LA
Education: B.A., history and literature, Harvard University; M.A., philosophy and politics, Oxford University (Rhodes scholar)
Previous job: Editor, new media, Time Inc.

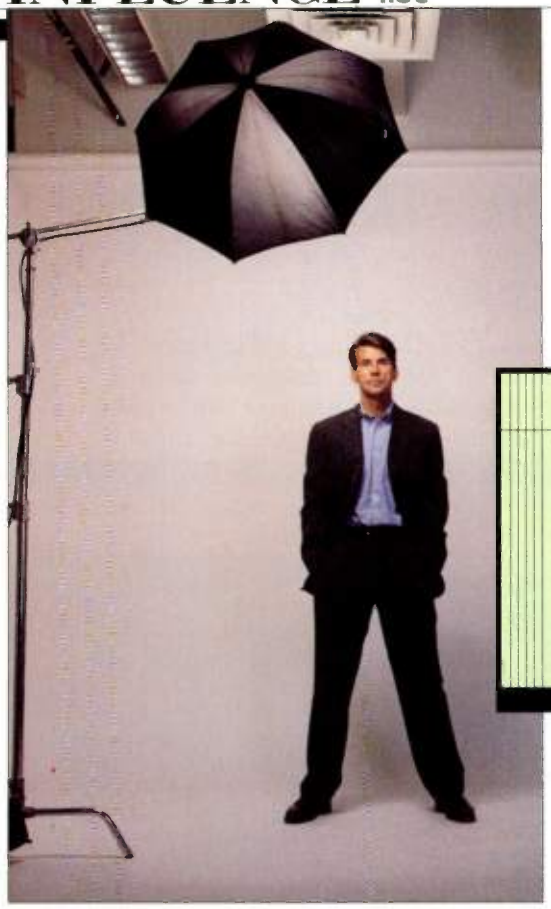
ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD

Walter Isaacson *loves* a party. Last year, Isaacson threw a splashy 75th anniversary bash for *Time* that drew everyone from President Bill Clinton to Bill Gates to Sharon Stone and celebrated the magazine's place as the premier chronicler and interpreter of American life. *Time*'s selection of its Man of the Year still makes headlines in other media, and CBS has already committed an hour of prime-time television at the end of December to honor *Time*'s choice for its Person of the Century. The gregarious Isaacson also throws pool parties for *Time* staffers in his suburban backyard and is famed among some staff members for his culinary facility with red beans and rice. "Some people feel the need to be by themselves. Walter, no," says *New Yorker* writer Nicholas Lemann, who has known Isaacson since both were children in New Orleans. "He likes the agora, the public square, a lot."

Each week, Isaacson and his team of editors and writers throw a party, albeit a sometimes seriously themed one, for the 4 million people who buy *Time* (compared to the 3.1 million who buy *Newsweek*). To pull it off, Isaacson, who personally comes up with about 20 percent of the ideas for the magazine's covers, has to strike an artful balance between heavy cover topics ("Kosovo: The Awful Truth") and lighter fare ("What a Kick!," about the U.S. women's soccer team). Whatever *Time* puts on its cover jumps to the forefront of what much of America is thinking about. Months after *Time*'s May 24 cover story on Ricky Martin and the Latin music explosion that's leaving its mark on pop culture, *Newsweek* and *New York* ran similar cover stories.

Time was once known for bringing foreign affairs and big stories on forbiddingly important topics to coffee tables across America. But the relevance of the magazine, and indeed of all newsmagazines, seemed to be waning in the early 1990s as the number of news outlets exploded. Isaacson cannily refocused *Time* on the journalism of the personal. Even stories about distant events, like a recent one about war in Sierra Leone, focused on the effect that event was having on individual people's lives—in this case, the lives of one girl and one man whose limbs had been gruesomely chopped off by a particularly brutal military faction. "You have to make it very interesting and striking to get people engaged," Isaacson explains. "If you start treating a magazine as some pulpit [from which you] command from on high, you'll never connect."

To help *Time* connect, Isaacson draws on what interests him and the people close to him. His emphasis on education and child-rearing issues springs in part from his and his wife's personal experiences raising their nine-year-old daughter. "I consider myself the perfect consumer of *Time* magazine," he says. "More than almost anybody, I just happen to be really fascinated in a lot of topics, from politics to technology to music. What are people actually talking about? That's what drives the magazine." —*ELS*



In early January of 1981, journalist Patrick McCarthy took off on a weekend jaunt to the south of France to escape the stress of *Women's Wear Daily*'s Paris bureau, then located on the Rue Cambon, two doors from the venerable Chanel boutique.

Upon his return, McCarthy was awakened by an early-morning phone call. His boss at the time, John Fairchild, was on the line. "'Are you aware,'" McCarthy recalls Fairchild asking, "'that the Chanel boutique was *bombed* last night?'" In fact, McCarthy was not aware. "The Guadeloupean Liberation [Army]—never before heard of—had bombed the Chanel boutique," says McCarthy, exasperation still noticeable in his voice years later. "And we missed the story!"

Missing the scoop doesn't happen too often at Fairchild Publications, where McCarthy sets the agenda for the fashion business through *Women's Wear Daily*, for industry insiders, and the consumer monthly *W*. Fairchild's—and McCarthy's—clout grew even more when the parent company of the Condé Nast magazine empire bought Fairchild in August.

Style Arbiter

Patrick McCarthy, chairman and editorial director, Fairchild Publications, Inc.
Age: 47
Birthplace: Boston, MA
Education: B.A., history, Boston University; A.M., communication, Stanford University
Previous job: executive editor, *Women's Wear Daily* and *W*

The birth of Daryl K, a designer label, speaks to the apparel-world power of McCarthy's pen. Grudgingly attending the fledgling line's spring 1997 show, McCarthy was so impressed with the clothes that he ordered that plans to highlight major fashion houses' shows in the next paper be scrapped. "We read about Daryl K" in *WWD*, says Kal Ruttenstein of Bloomingdale's, "and we immediately rushed down there [to the showroom], and we bought her out."

The gregarious McCarthy is not so much interested in moving markets as he is in telling stories. "I love the personalities," he coos. "They're outsized personalities. There's that temperament of being extremely tough and extremely fragile in the same human being....It's a story that kind of sits there and writes itself." —*KR*

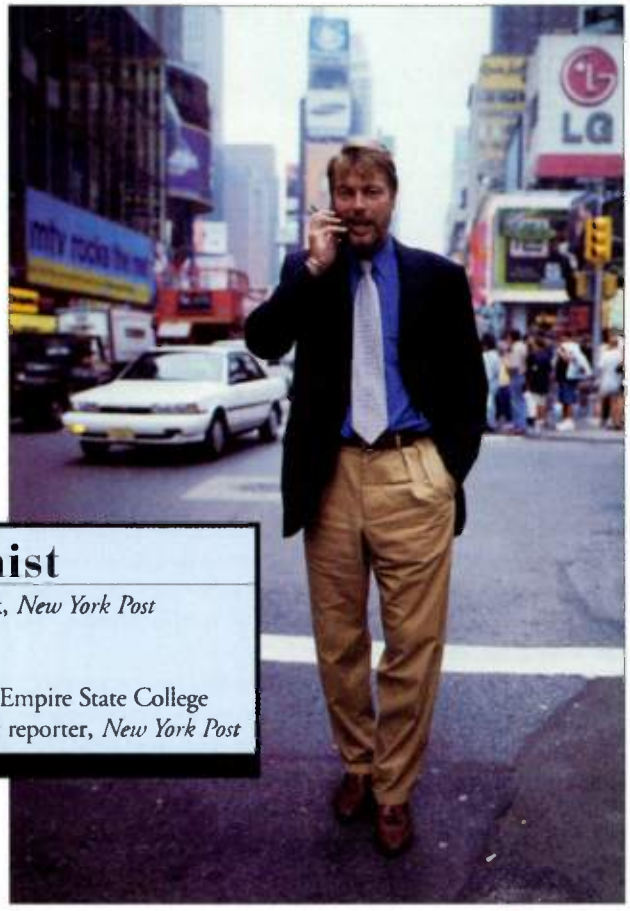
On September 10, Richard Johnson and his staff landed what he considered one of his biggest scoops. Citing "a source close to the doctor," the *New York Post* reported that first lady (and all-but-announced U.S Senate candidate) Hillary Clinton had apparently sought medical consultation about getting a face-lift. For Johnson, the editor of the *Post*'s flagship gossip column, Page Six, reporting that a politician will potentially go under the knife is a lip-smacking, palm-rubbing coup. *Post* editors certainly agreed. They splashed the story on the front page. But what really shows Johnson's clout (for better or worse) is the story's ripple effect. Despite a denial from the first lady's spokeswoman, the *Associated Press*, New York's *Daily News*, and *The Times-Picayune* of New Orleans quickly picked up on the story. The "news" (which is still being denied and for which the *Post* has yet to offer any evidence) then spread to papers as far away as England and Singapore. Even Jay Leno commented on Page Six's handiwork.

It's not exactly Edward Murrow–type news, but just the same, gossip has filtered into the mainstream. And Johnson reigns as the nation's grand purveyor of New York-Washington-Hollywood dish. His real influence comes not just from Page Six but from the politicians, showbiz biggies, and media honchos who read his every word every day and then spread it. "Page Six is seen by everybody, and talked about by everybody," says Lew Harris, editor in chief of *E! Online*, the entertainment-news and gossip website. Thanks to the Page Six crew, such stories as the then-pending engagement of the late Carolyn Bessette and John F. Kennedy Jr. have become conversational fodder.

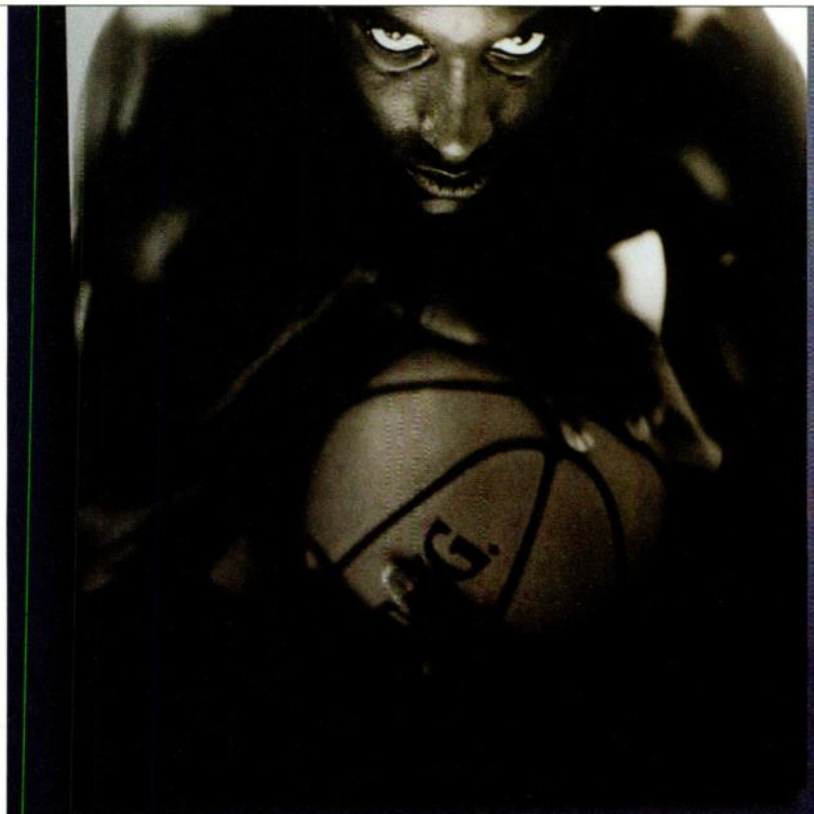
Johnson, who was born and raised in Manhattan, has spent his working life learning about, reporting on, and hobnobbing with the rich and fabulous. His first job in journalism was at a Manhattan community newspaper called, prophetically, *The Chelsea Clinton News*. In 1978, he moved to the *Post*'s city desk, and from there, it was a straight shot to The Page Heard 'Round The World. —*KR*

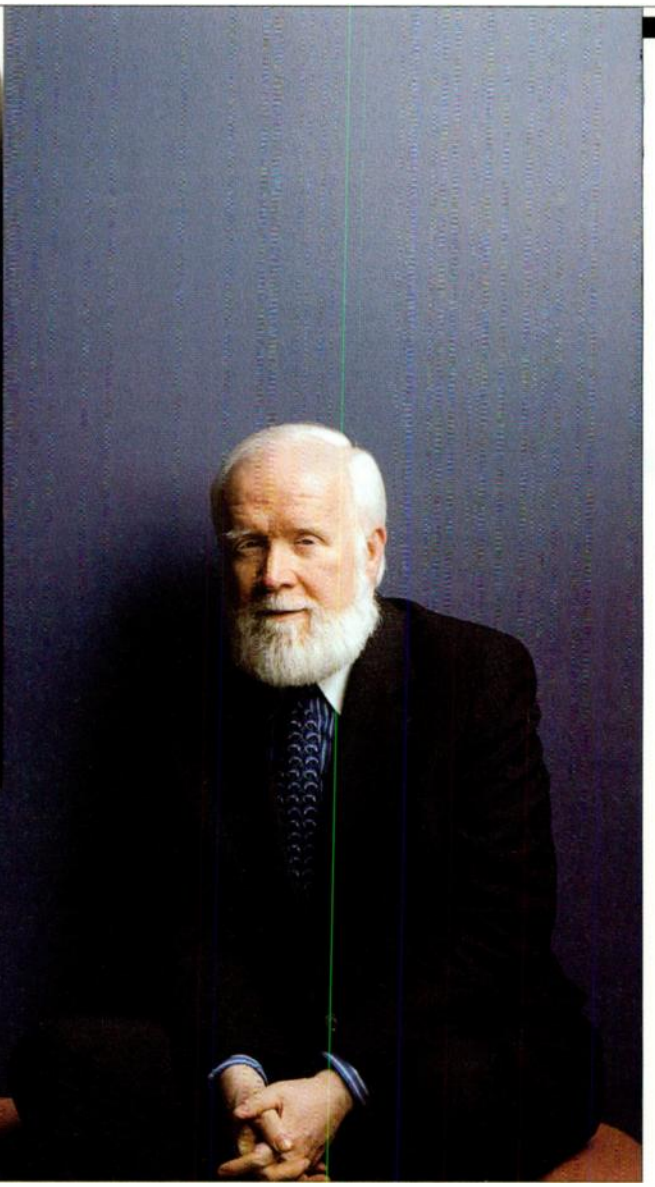
Gossip Columnist

Richard Johnson, editor, Page Six, *New York Post*
Age: 45
Birthplace: New York, NY
Education: B.S., cultural studies, Empire State College
Previous job: General assignment reporter, *New York Post*



NATHANIEL WELCH/SABA (MCCARTHY); ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN (JOHNSON)





Sports Editor

John A. Walsh, senior vice-president and executive editor, ESPN
Age: 54
Birthplace: Scranton, PA
Education: B.A., English, The University of Scranton; M.A., journalism, University of Missouri-Columbia
Previous job: Managing editor, *U.S. News & World Report*

The basketball season was in full swing in February 1998, but ESPN anchor Bob Ley was far from the network's studios in Bristol, Connecticut. Ley was in Vietnam, on assignment for the network.

This is *SportsCenter*? Actually it is John A. Walsh's ESPN. Ley was traveling with a producer and crew to examine the working conditions at factories that produced shoes for Nike, Inc., and Reebok International Ltd. The story took aim at two of the sports network's longtime advertisers, and Walsh supported the story from concept to air. "He can nudge, prod, and lift an idea," explains Ley. The subsequent one-hour special—"Made in Vietnam: The American Sneaker Controversy"—was one of a series of stories that helped push Nike to announce new health and safety standards in its Asian operation six weeks later.

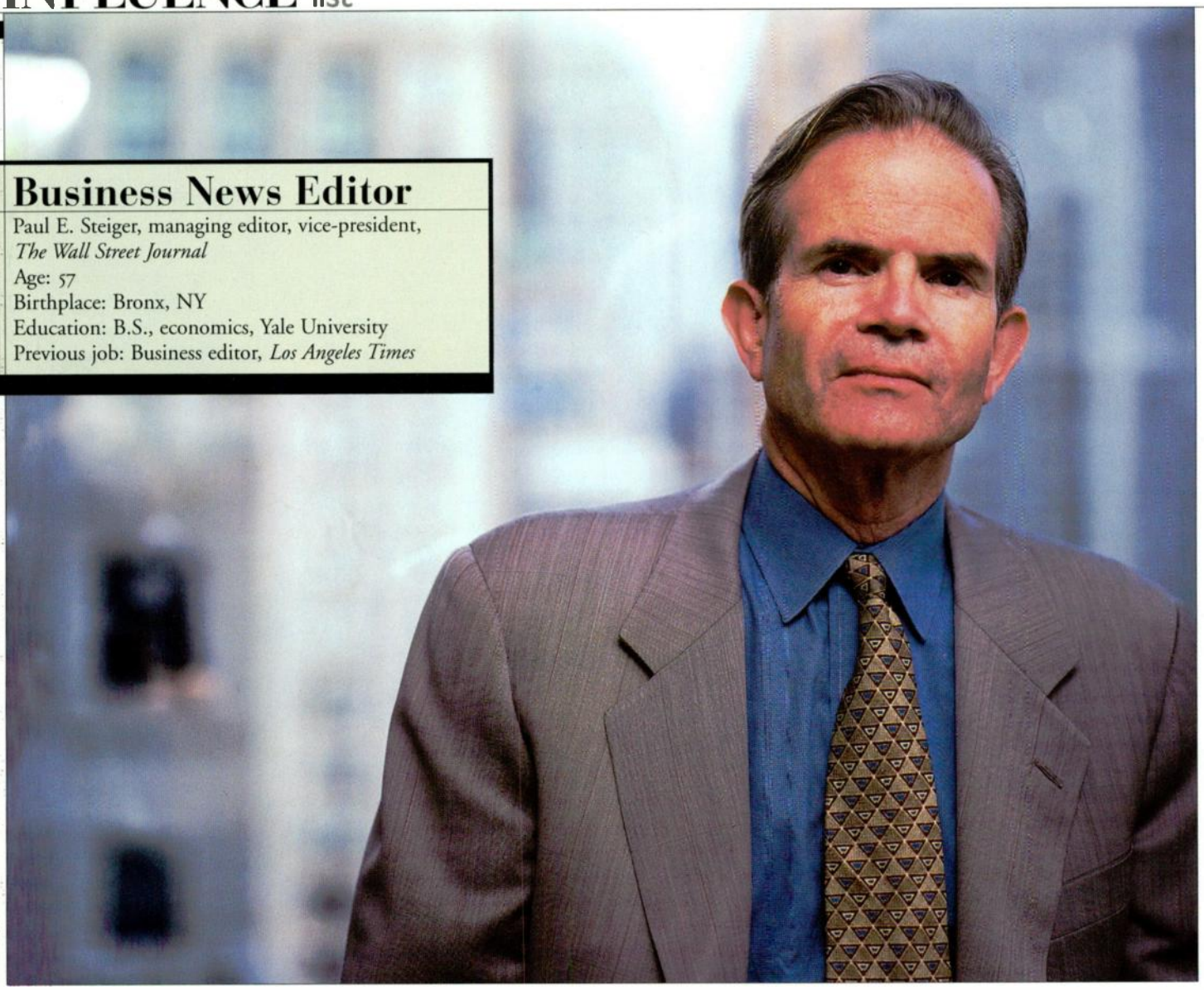
It was just one report from the network's *Outside the Lines* series, which was conceived by Walsh to examine sports issues off the playing field. The series has won eight Sports Emmy Awards while tackling such issues as violence in sports, the relationship between agents and athletes, and homophobia in the locker room. "For all the 'Back, back, back!' and the 'Boo-yah!' " says Ley, referring to the ESPN anchors' proclivity for colorful catchphrases, "substance is the crux of what we are about."

Walsh spent 20 years knocking around in print journalism before arriving in Bristol, working at publications as diverse as *U.S. News & World Report* and *Rolling Stone*. He rarely stayed anywhere more than a few years, always enticed by a fresh challenge like the one he accepted to invigorate the stagnant *SportsCenter* franchise in 1988. Once on board, Walsh set out to build a news organization. He instituted script reviews and daily editorial meetings, hired such respected journalists as Jimmy Roberts and Robin Roberts (no relation), and assigned reporters to cover beats.

On the air, Walsh transformed *SportsCenter* into a newscast, abandoning the TV-sports tradition that dictates "Thou shalt report all the scores from each sport in a row." Under Walsh, highlights from the best game of the day—or the best sports news story—led the broadcast; the second best followed. Walsh also made sure that the final score was announced at the *end* of the highlights, creating a little drama for the viewer at home. He also hired anchors who excelled at writing their own scripts, and wordsmiths like Dan Patrick and Keith Olbermann thrived. For any sports junkie, the product was revolutionary.

While someone like *Sports Illustrated* managing editor Bill Colson may control a single influential publication, Walsh sits atop a giant multimedia sports journalism empire. He oversaw the launch of the ESPN Radio Network in 1992 and *ESPN The Magazine* last year, infusing the new ventures with his old ethic of diligent reporting. Add those to his ever-proliferating ESPN cable channels and you understand how Walsh controls more sports-news reporting than anyone in the business. —*TR*

NATHANIEL WELCH/SABA



Business News Editor

Paul E. Steiger, managing editor, vice-president, *The Wall Street Journal*
Age: 57
Birthplace: Bronx, NY
Education: B.S., economics, Yale University
Previous job: Business editor, *Los Angeles Times*

Public relations consultant John Scanlon—whose clients have ranged from CBS Corporation to tobacco company Brown & Williamson Corporation—has this to say about *The Wall Street Journal*: "It is the most powerful business news organization in the world. [It] moves markets at a mere mention. It is just everyday and everywhere."

Scanlon ought to know. At the height of the paper's scrutiny of the tobacco industry earlier this decade, the *Journal* published a front-page exposé detailing Brown & Williamson's overzealous attempts to discredit whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand. "In many ways, the *Journal* can make or break you," notes Scanlon. "A long, detailed investigative piece can kill you."

The man at the helm of this financial force of nature is Paul Steiger, who was named to the paper's top job in 1991. Since then, the *Journal* has won seven Pulitzer Prizes, bringing its total to 21. Steiger gave his blessing to the *Journal*'s groundbreaking tobacco-industry coverage throughout the mid-1990s. One of those projects—a 1995 story that revealed that some manufacturers were converting their tobacco into a more potent form—earned the paper one of those Pulitzers.

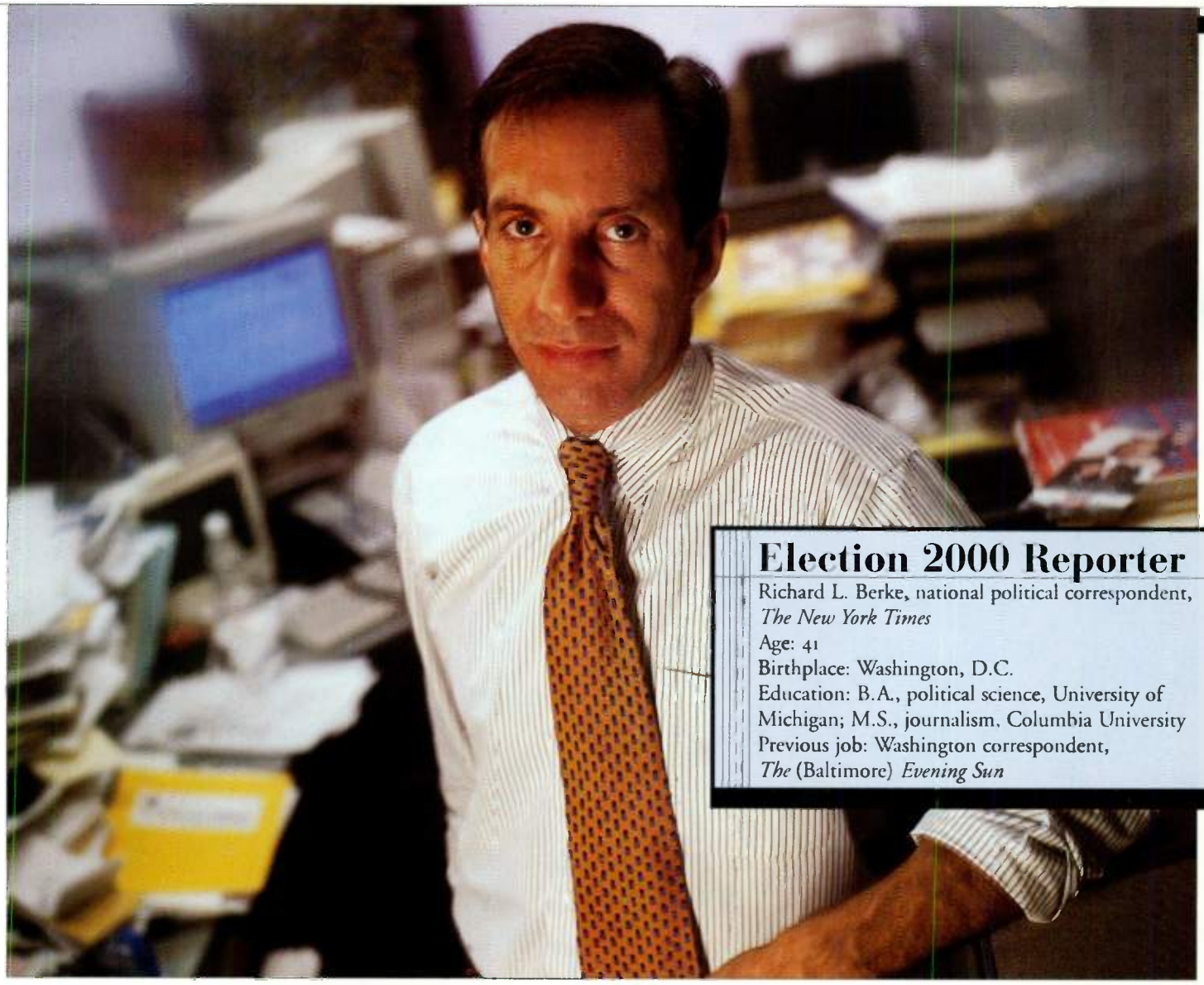
"The paper's coverage effected change and was watched carefully by everybody," notes one Washington source who closely follows the tobacco business. "There were many days when people would say, 'Have you seen the *Journal* today?' " adds this source.

Steiger joined the paper as its assistant managing editor in 1983 and became the deputy managing editor in 1985. Today, he concedes that he is less hands-on with individual stories than he used to be. His colleagues stress, however, that his ability to delegate and give projects time and resources has fueled the paper's success. In addition, under Steiger's steady, self-effacing aegis, the *Journal* has beefed up its technology and international coverage.

Despite the Pulitzers and the expansion, there is a perception in some media circles that the *Journal* has lost the zip and the buzz it generated under the leadership of the more charismatic Norman Pearlstine, who is now the editor in chief of Time Inc. For his part, Pearlstine says that wooing Steiger away from the *Los Angeles Times* was one of the smartest moves he made as managing editor of the *Journal*.

Investigative projects editor Alix Freedman, who wrote the *Journal*'s Pulitzer-winning tobacco story in 1995, says that Steiger's values provide a journalistic petri dish of sorts for truly important stories. Freedman recalls a day when she pitched a story to Steiger about a subject that lacked the gravitas of the tobacco controversy. She says he briefly paused, looked her in the eye, and said, "That story lacks moral force." Freedman then adds: "I don't know too many editors these days who are talking about moral force." —*GJ*

ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD



Election 2000 Reporter

Richard L. Berke, national political correspondent, *The New York Times*
Age: 41
Birthplace: Washington, D.C.
Education: B.A., political science, University of Michigan; M.S., journalism, Columbia University
Previous job: Washington correspondent, *The* (Baltimore) *Evening Sun*

KATHERINE LAMBERT

For *New York Times* national political correspondent Richard Berke, the past year has brought some surprising twists. Berke created something of a stir in May when, working on a story about the travails of Vice-President Al Gore's presidential bid, he got a call from President Bill Clinton. During a chat about Gore's lackluster campaign, the president told Berke that his second in command needed to "go out and have a good time."

Shortly thereafter, when Berke reported that former U.S. Senator Bob Dole was "by no means certain [Elizabeth Dole] would even stay in the race," the press had another field day. Not surprisingly, Elizabeth Dole was none too pleased and said that her husband was doing time "in the family woodshed." Over the next two weeks, Berke's Dole revelations were discussed in at least 17 publications, from the *National Journal* to the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.

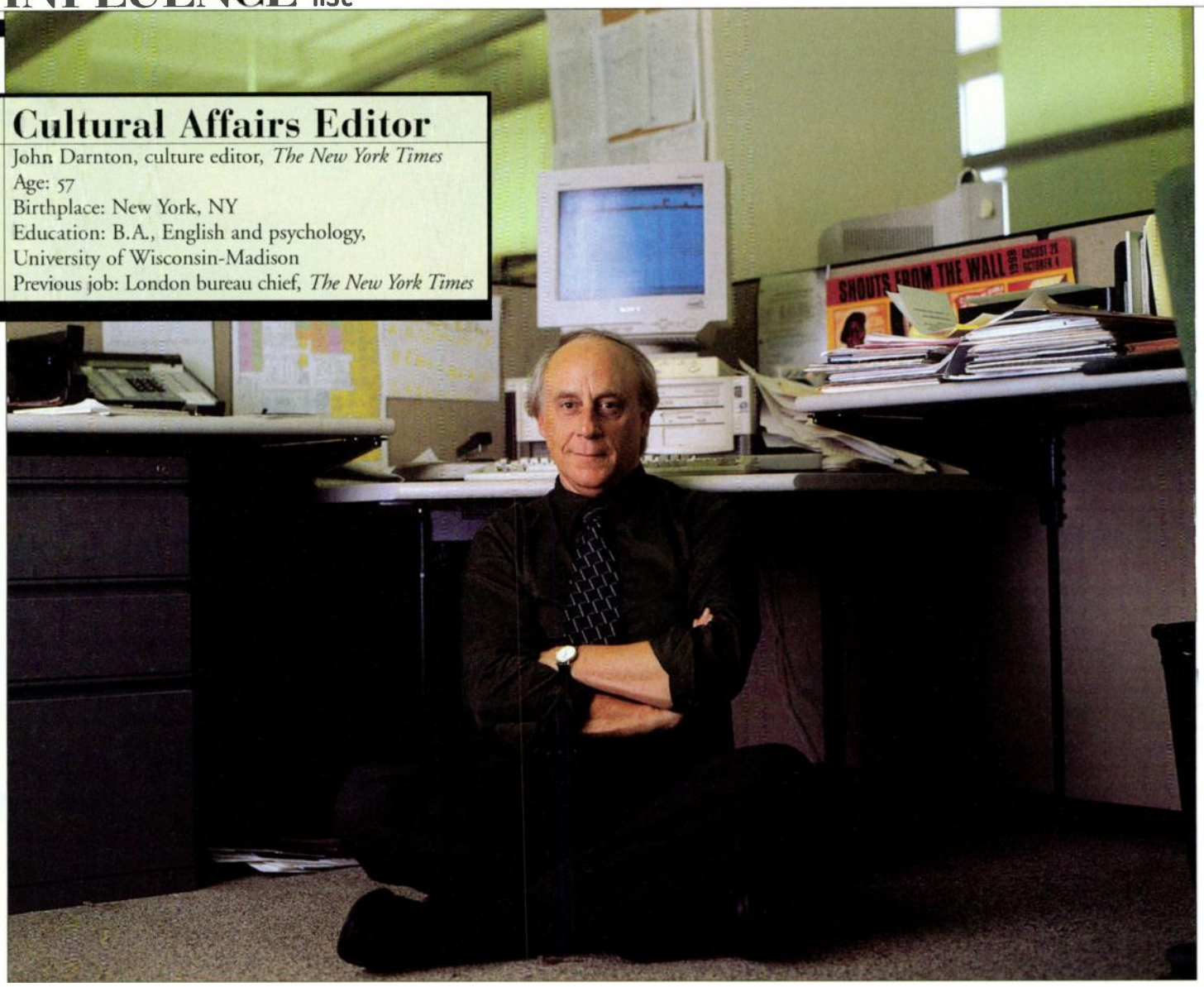
More recently, MSNBC's Brian Williams was interviewing Berke, on assignment in Austin, when Texas Governor George W. Bush sidled up, all but grabbed Berke by the lapels, and engaged in rapid-fire banter with the somewhat startled *Times* reporter and Williams. MSNBC replayed the exchange several times over the next few days.

Berke does have a knack for being at the right place at the right time. But there is far more than serendipity—and Berke's status as *Times* reporter—at work here. "Rick really works stories. I never put a Rick Berke story in the paper without him saying, 'You know, I could make two more phone calls,'" offers Michael Oreskes, the paper's Washington bureau chief.

Interviews with several political strategists point to Berke's apparent imperviousness to manipulation. "He has a spin-free zone," says one of George W. Bush's consultants. Likewise, those whom Berke has covered believe him to be fair. "He is not a 'gotcha' reporter," says Doug Sosnik, a senior adviser to President Clinton. "But if he gets a good story, he will write it with as much edge as he thinks he can get away with."

Berke is known for a persistent, approachable, somewhat disarming, and Columboesque style. And he appears to have been born with newspapers in his blood. With the help of the local library's copying machine, Berke started *Berke Life* when he was in elementary school in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. He even made a splash as a high school senior when he and a partner reported in the Walt Whitman High School school paper that President Richard Nixon had been exposed to microwave radiation during the 1959 kitchen debates in Moscow. "The wire services interviewed us after that story broke," Berke notes. "They were calling us the young Woodward and Bernstein."

Since joining the *Times*, Berke has covered the 1988, 1992, and 1996 presidential campaigns, and his beats have included Congress, the White House, and money and politics. "Rick has worked all of the pieces of the political story," observes Oreskes. "He knows it inside and out....He has prepared himself for years and has earned a right to this. This really is his moment." —*GJ*



Cultural Affairs Editor

John Darnton, culture editor, *The New York Times*
Age: 57
Birthplace: New York, NY
Education: B.A., English and psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Previous job: London bureau chief, *The New York Times*

John Darnton is a child of *The New York Times*. His father, a war correspondent for the paper, was killed in New Guinea in 1942 while covering World War II. His mother served as the paper's women's-news editor. Today, 33 years after joining the *Times* as a copyboy, he is the head of its culture department. Under Darnton's watch, the daily arts section has grown by 50 percent. And, in an ever more fractured media environment where other news organizations have come to view cultural stories as too highbrow for their customers, the *Times* has become a more influential player than ever.

Darnton's hard-news background—he won a 1982 Pulitzer Prize for the dispatches he smuggled out of Poland about the Solidarity movement and the government's subsequent martial-law crackdown—drove him to infuse the culture section with news about the arts. He made enterprise reporting the centerpiece. In 1997, for instance, Darnton decided to publish a page-one arts section story about a Nazi-seized Egon Schiele painting, then on view at the Museum of Modern Art. The article prompted the Manhattan district attorney to block the painting, on loan from overseas, from leaving the country.

While individual *Times* critics wield tremendous influence in their respective disciplines, Darnton is the ultimate arbiter of which reviews make it into the paper, as well as of their placement within the section. And a *Times* review has impact. "I see the attendance numbers spike after a *Times* story appears," says Morgan Library spokeswoman Glory Jones.

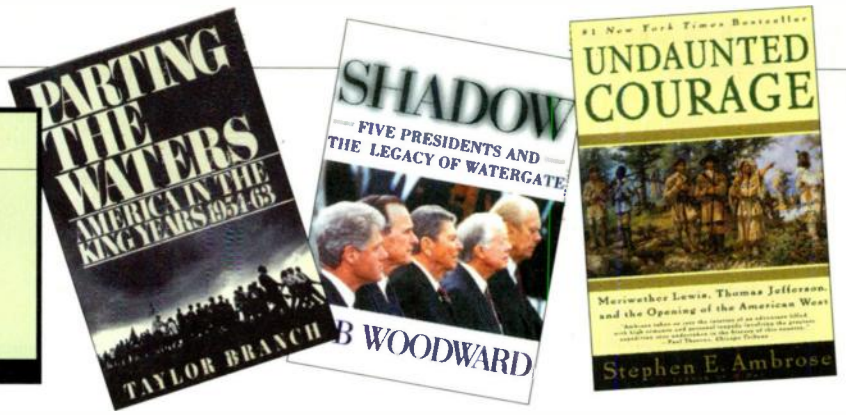
During his three-year tenure, Darnton has extended both the volume and breadth of the *Times*'s cultural coverage. When the paper decided to create a freestanding daily arts section with a minimum of eight pages (the previous section floated around the paper and often had fewer pages), executive editor Joseph Lelyveld tapped Darnton. Darnton also oversaw the expansion of Friday's "Weekend" section, the redesign of Sunday's "Arts & Leisure" section, and the creation of Saturday's "Arts & Ideas" pages. "He's a very civilized and urbane and witty fellow who has a terrific manner with people and is fun to be around, and had a lot of experience editing," explains Lelyveld. To give the coverage a more national flavor, Darnton added staff to the West Coast bureau and hired the paper's first national cultural correspondent. The paper now has a stable of 19 full-time critics, compared to *The Washington Post*'s eight and the *Los Angeles Times*'s ten, and runs more reviews than ever. According to Michael Kimmelman, the *Times*'s chief art critic, there are now about 50 art reviews per week, up from about a dozen under the old format.

Darnton still finds time to write fiction. His first novel, the science-fiction thriller *Neanderthal*, climbed to number seven on the paper's best-seller list despite two pans from the *Times*. His second book, *The Experiment*, was published in August. Darnton says his experience as a fiction writer has only helped him in his full-time job. "When people call to complain [about a review]," he explains, "I can say, 'I know *exactly* how you're feeling.'" —*Leslie Heilbrunn*

NATHANIEL WELCH/SABA

Book Editor

Alice Mayhew, vice-president and editorial director, Simon & Schuster, Inc.
Age: 62
Birthplace: New York, NY
Education: Unavailable
Previous job: Editor, Random House, Inc.



An examination of nineteenth-century explorers Lewis and Clark. The first installment of a three-volume history of the civil-rights movement in the United States. A 798-page book on the Federal Reserve.

These books don't sound like they would be hardcover best-sellers. But *Undaunted Courage,* by Stephen Ambrose, and *Parting the Waters,* by Taylor Branch, were. The third, *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country,* by William Greider, has sold a quarter million copies.

That's Alice Mayhew's talent—shaping and editing serious books about politics and American history in a way that makes them sell and become part of the national dialogue. She did it with *All the President's Men* 25 years ago. And if you perused the *New York Times* best-seller list this fall, you would have found two more of her books—Bob Woodward's *Shadow* and James Stewart's *Blind Eye.* (Disclosure: Mayhew was the editor on editor in chief Steven Brill's 1978 book, *The Teamsters.*) While such editors as Robert Loomis at Random House have edited major nonfiction books, no one's done so as well as Mayhew has. Her success has demonstrated that serious nonfiction "didn't need to be somebody's luxury," says Peter Osnos, CEO and publisher of PublicAffairs, which primarily produces contemporary nonfiction.

Mayhew has been at Simon & Schuster for 28 years, and acquires 18 to 20 books a year. An intensely private person, she declined to be interviewed for this story or to allow her photograph to be taken. She preferred to laud her authors in a seven-page handwritten fax. "There's no way to make it not sound corny to say that I find the company of writers exciting," she writes.

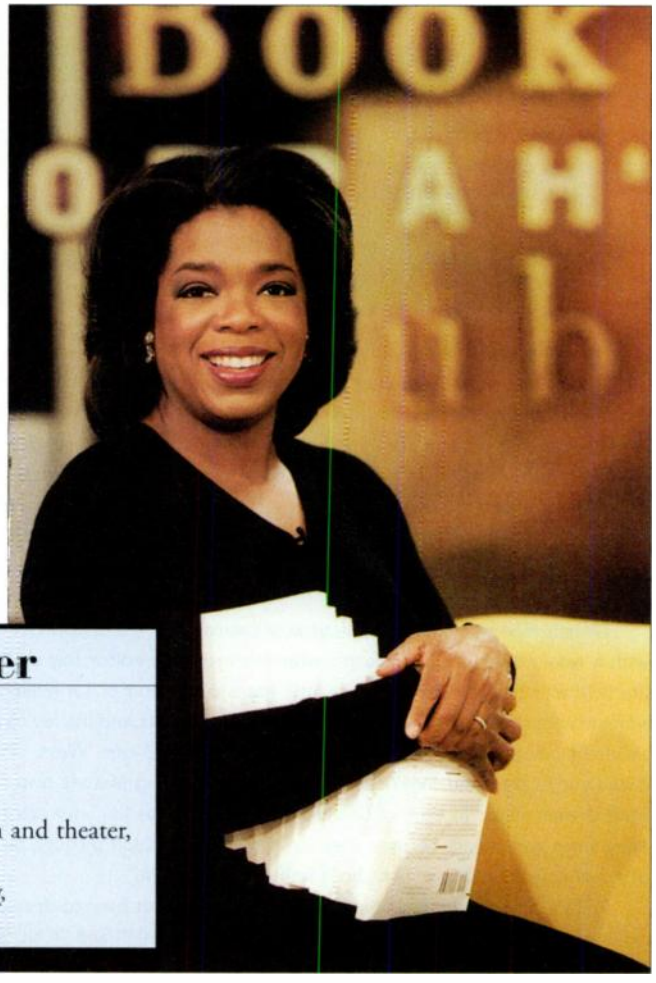
That fondness for writers, however, doesn't mean she can't be blunt. Ambrose was astonished when Mayhew told him she wanted to change the title he'd proposed for his book about Lewis and Clark. "I wanted to call it *Of Courage Undaunted,*" says Ambrose (President Thomas Jefferson used those words to praise Lewis). Mayhew switched the title to *Undaunted Courage.* "I told her, 'Alice, you are the only woman in the whole world who would dare to edit Thomas Jefferson.' " —*JG*

For Kara Welsh, associate publisher of Simon & Schuster, Inc.'s Pocket Books, the news on that January day was akin to learning she held a winning lottery ticket. Oprah Winfrey had just called to inform Welsh that one of her imprint's books, *Jewel,* by Bret Lott, had just been chosen as an "Oprah's Book Club" selection. If history was any guide, the modestly selling novel (30,000 copies since being published in 1991) was destined for best-sellerdom.

Since the book club began in September 1996, Winfrey has chosen 26 titles; 25 have zoomed on to *USA Today*'s best-seller list. (The lone exception, Anna Quindlen's *Black and Blue,* was already on the list.) Sure enough, Winfrey's anointing of *Jewel* meant skyrocketing sales. The book has now sold more than 900,000 copies.

Winfrey has become the most important force in book publishing. After she personally chooses a book, the author and selected fans of the book chat about the plot and characters on a special "Book Club" episode of her show. And viewers (22 million a week) respond. *Oprah*-certified books account for 11 percent of all of Barnes & Noble's fiction sales, says a company spokeswoman. Winfrey's reach may even grow wider with the launches of the Oxygen Media, Inc., women's cable network (Winfrey's partners are Geraldine Laybourne and Carsey-Werner-Mandabach) in February 2000, and Winfrey's lifestyle magazine (copublished with Hearst Magazines), set to debut in the spring.

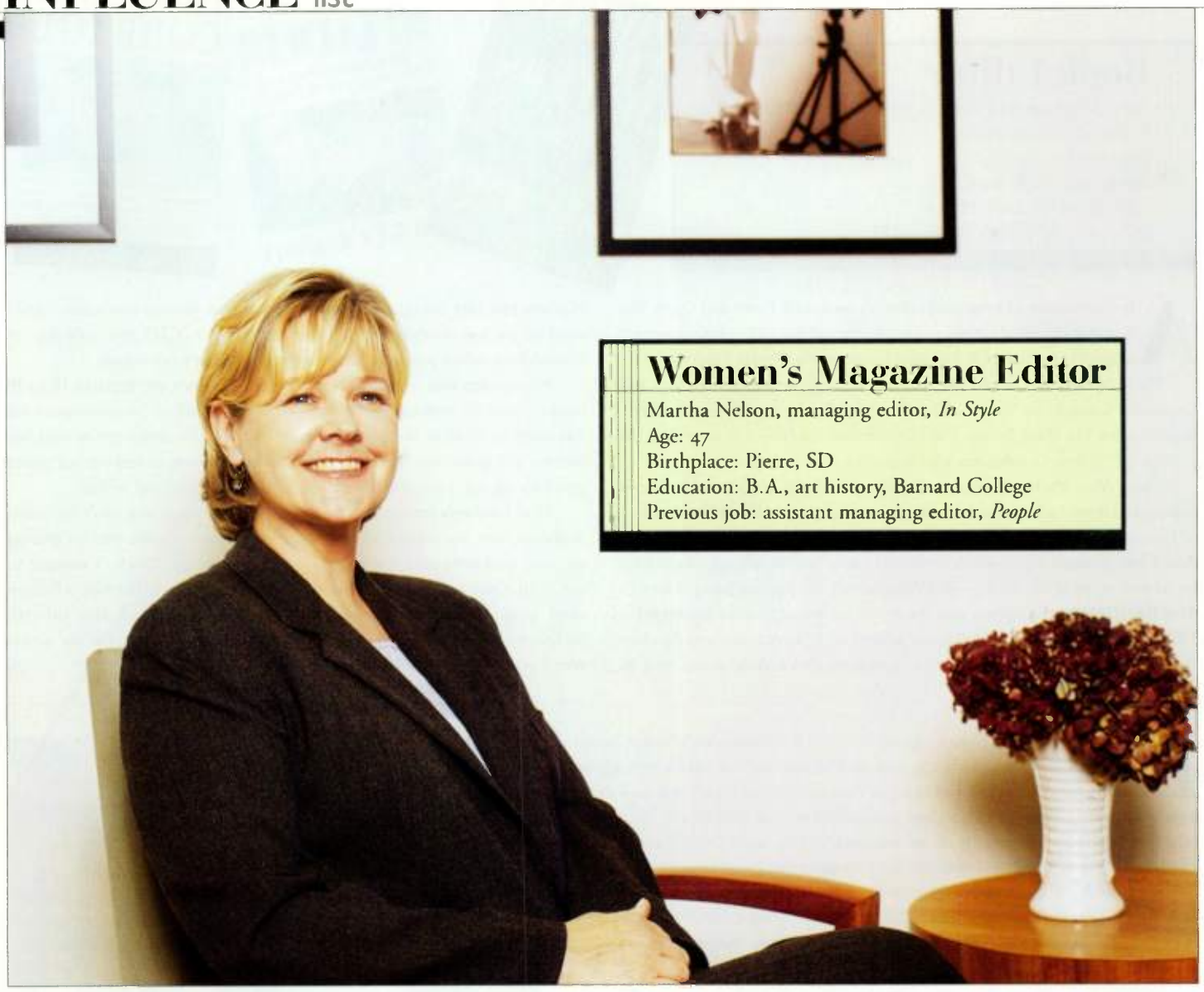
In November, the National Book Foundation is to honor Winfrey for promoting the "joys and benefits of reading," says the foundation's executive director, Neil Baldwin. Baldwin suspects that viewers drawn to Winfrey's self-actualizing messages know they will find similar themes in the books she recommends. But no one can adequately explain her power to push people to buy books. As Baldwin says, "It really is a phenomenon." —*KR*



GEORGE BURNS (WINFREY)

Literary Tastemaker

Oprah Winfrey, producer and host, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*
Age: 45
Birthplace: Kosciusko, MS
Education: B.S., speech communication and theater, Tennessee State University
Previous job: Cohost, *People Are Talking,* WJZ-TV Baltimore



Women's Magazine Editor

Martha Nelson, managing editor, *In Style*
Age: 47
Birthplace: Pierre, SD
Education: B.A., art history, Barnard College
Previous job: assistant managing editor, *People*

Six years ago, when Time Inc. tested a celebrity-lifestyle offshoot of *People* magazine, observers were skeptical. The company, home to the award-winning journalism of *Time* and *Fortune*, had never done a fashion and beauty magazine like *In Style* before. The clothing label of choice for Time Inc. executives "was more likely irregular than Versace," jokes Patrice Adcroft, *Seventeen*'s editor in chief and a former *In Style* deputy editor. But thanks to managing editor Martha Nelson, *In Style*—a magazine built around celebrity voyeurism and feel-good-about-yourself advice—is Time Inc.'s biggest success story of the nineties.

Despite Bonnie Fuller's revitalization of *Cosmopolitan*—and now *Glamour*—with a sex-and-service formula, no women's magazine editor has shaken up the field as much as Nelson has. *In Style* has a circulation of 1.4 million, sells almost twice the number of newsstand copies *Vogue* sells, and has led to a cavalcade of clones, from *McCall's StarStyle* to a revamped *Allure*. "We're celebrity dazed and crazed, and they're the ultimate celebrity and lifestyle book," says Ellen Levine, editor in chief of *Good Housekeeping*. "It has fun with celebrities. They were very smart because they have looked at fashion through the eyes of a real consumer. So it's not about fashion as a dictum."

In Style offers clear and abundant information about how to dress, apply makeup, and buy shoes in sections such as "Fashion 101" and "Chic Simple Solutions." And the magazine wraps all this advice around photos of celebrities, their homes, even their weddings. "It really has become a personal shopper," says Ann Moore, president of The People Magazine Group.

Nelson is involved in every aspect of the editorial process, from pairing writers and photographers to devising such special annual issues as "What's Sexy Now." Although her previous career stops include time at the feminist magazine *Ms.* and the women's business magazine *Savvy*, Nelson is not apologetic about the naked commercialism of *In Style* or about its dearth of traditional journalism. "You can never underestimate the power of fun," she says in her New York office, which is decorated with shots of Jodie Foster and Tom Cruise.

But Nelson and her staff's fun choices truly have impact with *In Style*'s readers. After Breukelen's Stella Pace bracelets were featured in the August issue's "Style File" section, the store matched its 1998 Christmas sales figures in the next six weeks. When *In Style* suggested the TomGirl's Beauty Parlor Night Kit last December as a great gift under $50, the company got its product featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *Live with Regis & Kathie Lee*. And once *In Style* dubbed Rapax gray satin slides a "must have" this past April, New York's Rapax Shoe quickly sold 100 pairs of the $165-a-pair shoes; the Rapax store manager says 90 percent of the callers mentioned the magazine's rave. *In Style*'s imprimatur is so powerful that Time Inc. now wants some of that money for itself. So next year, *In Style* will test an e-commerce gift service, selling fashion and beauty accessories, including those mentioned in the magazine. —*Lorne Manly*

ANNE KATRINE SENSTAD

Men's Magazine Editor

Felix Dennis, owner, *Maxim*
Age: 52
Birthplace: South London, England
Education: Did not finish high school
Previous job: worked on countercultural magazine *Oz*

PAUL RIDER/SHOOT

It's penning the coverlines for *Maxim* that proprietor Felix Dennis enjoys the most. The sybaritic English publishing mogul is particularly partial to "Wham! Bam! Brand New Pam!," the blurb he wrote for September's cover story about the now implant-free Pamela Anderson Lee. But he's also proud of his "Sabrina: Your Favorite Witch Without a Stitch!" to accompany a come-hither shot of Melissa Joan Hart, the star of TV's *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch*. And don't forget "Expert Sex! Order That Replacement Headboard Today!"

"I take covers very seriously," says Dennis, who made his fortune publishing kung fu and computer magazines. "I don't think they're an editor's sole province. I think they're a marketing exercise as much as anything....Magazines should make sure that in three seconds people have a clear understanding of what the magazine is about."

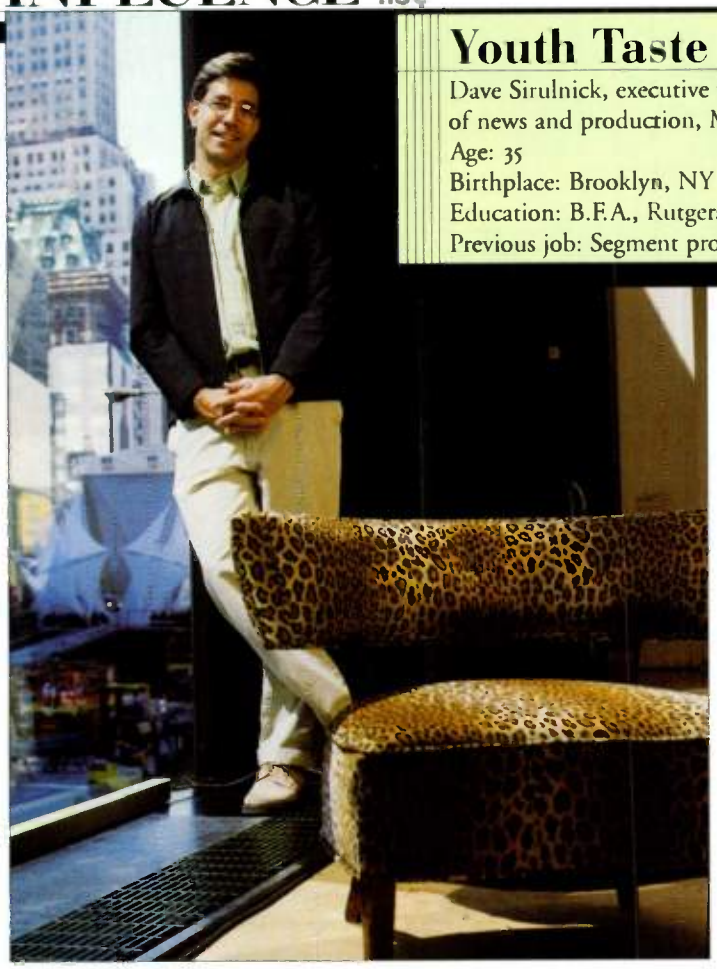
That's not a problem with *Maxim*. Since bringing the English magazine stateside two and a half years ago, Dennis has parlayed *Maxim*'s bosom-heaving cover girls and leering, boys-will-be-boys editorial package into a circulation of greater than 1 million, larger than that of *GQ* and *Esquire*. Besides inspiring such imitators as *Gear* and causing Condé Nast Publications to poach *Maxim*'s previous editor for its *Details*, the magazine's mix of sex and service—shot through with cheeky frat-boy humor—has also spawned such TV shows as Comedy Central's *The Man Show* and FX's *The X Show*. The established men's magazines no longer have that sort of cultural juice.

Because Dennis is already working on his third editor, he has a more hands-on role in the magazine's production than does a typical owner. "The older I get, the less time I spend in boozing and wenching," he says. "It's probably a good thing, but I'm not so sure."

When Dennis is in the U.S. he esconces himself in his modest corner office in Manhattan, smokes vast quantities of Silk Cut cigarettes, and sometimes blasts a CD featuring himself singing vocals on "Johnny B. Goode" at the Mustique Blues Festival. When he's back in the U.K., he's in touch by phone and fax. "It's his baby," says new editor in chief Mike Soutar. "It's his monument."

Dennis, whose love for the opposite sex is such that he'll take a half dozen or so of his girlfriends on vacation along with his dear mum, insists that the "women's point of view" be represented. Hence *Maxim*'s "Says Her" column. He pays particular attention to the magazine's design and photography, and has pushed for more serious (relatively, that is) stories such as "Your Father's Dead. Now What?"

Dennis has spent $15 million on the U.S. *Maxim*, and the magazine began making money on an issue-by-issue basis in May. That financial success has convinced the owners of *FHM*, the leading English "lad" magazine, which *Maxim* aped in England, to launch an American edition next year. *FHM* is seen as real competition, but Dennis remains unfazed. "We would have to make grave errors for us not to break two million circulation." —*LM*



Youth Taste Maker

Dave Sirulnick, executive vice-president in charge of news and production, MTV
Age: 35
Birthplace: Brooklyn, NY
Education: B.F.A., Rutgers University
Previous job: Segment producer, CNN

In one year on the air, Dave Sirulnick's *Total Request Live* has become must-see TV for the zit-cream set, one of the main engines behind the Great Entertainment Youthquake of 1999. "A year ago, most people didn't know who Britney Spears, 98 Degrees, Limp Bizkit, Kid Rock, or Christina Aguilera were," says Sirulnick, one of the show's creators, naming some of this year's best-selling (thanks to MTV) acts. Sirulnick brought all of them to *TRL*, repeatedly.

Calling *TRL* a hit maker is not an idle boast. On May 18, the day the Backstreet Boys released their album "*Millennium*," the pop quintet appeared on *TRL*. Almost 10 million viewers tuned in to *TRL* that week. And *Millennium*? The album sold 1.13 million copies in its first week of release, shattering the previous record, which was held by Garth Brooks's *Double Live*. "It was like having a national release party for all of America on television," says Janet Kleinbaum, the vice-president of artist marketing at Jive Records, the Backstreet Boys' label.

Sirulnick, who joined MTV's news department in 1987 after a stint at CNN, now oversees every news broadcast, studio-based program, and special event on the network. In September, the *Video Music Awards* ceremony he produced became the most-watched entertainment program in the history of cable television, attracting 8.1 million viewers.

"I still think of him as a journalist," says Tabitha Soren, a contributing correspondent for MTV News. "I think that Dave is the levelheaded one, of which there aren't many at MTV. He's very creative, but he's also one of those guys you get the feeling was an adult even in elementary school."

Though about two decades older than MTV's target viewer, Sirulnick manages to keep ahead of the curve. "He has excellent instincts, and is genuinely in tune with what people in the culture want," says MTV president Judy McGrath. That was the case even before he became a journalist; Sirulnick produced rap concerts during hip-hop's formative years. —*MC*

Advertising Creator

Lisa Prisco, vice-president and creative director, Gap
Birthplace: Unavailable
Education: Unavailable
Previous Job: Production artist, Gap

Thanks to Lisa Prisco, we know that khakis swing and that everybody wears cords. But we don't know much about Lisa Prisco.

Responsible for the Gap's effective series of recent ad campaigns, Prisco is quite shy. She would not pose for a photo nor grant an interview for this story. "We prefer to highlight the work, not the individual," says a company spokeswoman.

Building upon the successful khakis campaigns of the last two years—which featured energetic dancers in styles ranging from soul to country to go-go—the current Gap campaign stars motionless young singers modeling vests, corduroys, and leather jackets and pants. The spots are "advertising as an independent form of entertainment," says Randall Rothenberg, an *Advertising Age* columnist. And they've also sold a lot of clothes: Gap's net income for the six months ending July 31, 1999, was about $400 million, up 46 percent from the same period in 1998.

There are other creative geniuses with industrywide influence—such as TBWA/Chiat/Day's Lee Clow, who gave us Apple Computer's "Think different" campaign and the Taco Bell chihuahua. *Advertising Age* editor Scott Donaton describes Clow as a "mythical figure." But as Donny Deutsch, chairman and CEO of the Deutsch advertising agency, says, the Gap's is "the campaign of the moment."

Proving the power of Prisco's creative foresight, virtually everything involved with recent Gap ads has been bestowed with coolness. The 1998 "Khakis Swing" ad is often credited with advancing the swing-dancing craze and promoting a new stop-motion special visual effect, and the unknown singer Macy Gray lent her distinctive voice to a Gap ad nearly a year before being dubbed the Next Big Thing by *The New Yorker*. Billy Poveda, president of Oil Factory Inc., a production company employed by the Gap, says that the intimate nature of the Gap's in-house ad agency—where Prisco serves only one client—is crucial to her success. "I think the closer [that] artists can get to each other, the better the product will be," says Poveda. "And Lisa's an artist." —*MC*

NATHANIEL WELCH (SIRULNICK)

Personal Brand

Martha Stewart, chairman and CEO, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, LLC
Age: 58
Birthplace: Jersey City, NJ
Education: B.A., history, Barnard College
Previous job: Caterer

MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH/CORBIS-OUTLINE

For a company owned by someone who's steadily wrapping her manicured fingers around every media form in existence, the name—Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, LLC—is appropriately portentous. The doyenne of the do-it-yourself domestic arts, Martha Stewart boasts an empire that has grown to include two magazines, a television program, 26 books, a radio program, a newspaper column, and a website.

Like few others toiling in the media, Stewart—who, anticipating an initial public stock offering, declined to comment for this article—exerts a tangible influence on the way those in her target audience live their lives and idealize their kitchens, gardens, and weddings. Her flagship magazine, *Martha Stewart Living*, has a circulation of nearly 2.3 million; her books have sold 8.5 million copies; and, in 1998, paints, furniture, garden tools, and other household products bearing her name brought in $763 million in revenue.

"When *Martha Stewart Living* first came along, with Martha's creative vision behind it, it touched and reached a whole generation of [baby] boomer women in a way that other media brands were not doing successfully, if at all," says Eric Thorkilsen, the founding publisher of *Martha Stewart Living* magazine and now the president of This Old House Ventures.

"It wasn't just the substance of the content, it was the look, the originality, the uniqueness," Thorkilsen adds. "It was the way in which Martha would combine the teaching and information of her ideas with the style and packaging of the approach, whether for television, books, print or the Web."

The Martha Stewart personal brand has developed to the point that it is so recognizable—the soft-focus photography, the lovingly historical prose ("Turn-of-the-century metal wastepaper baskets were frequently hand painted with delicate designs to coexist with Edwardian interiors")—that Martha Stewart herself is becoming increasingly irrelevant. "If a brand is successful, ultimately it stands apart from the person, so that the brand won't die if they retire," says Thorkilsen. "If you do the job right, the person becomes less important."

The legions of Stewart wanna-bes follow the same model. In October, American Express Publishing Corporation began publishing *B. Smith Style* magazine, the latest outlet for the personal brand known as Barbara Smith (a.k.a. "the black Martha Stewart"). Stewart's influence can also be seen in Lifetime Television's *Next Door With Katie Brown* [see Sources, page 116], starring a "lifestyles expert" who "gives you the tools and the courage to develop your own personal style." And Stewart's stylistic imprint is evident in a wide variety of women's magazines, which have followed her vision of achieving the perfect lifestyle.

"She showed the publishing world that you can have a personality magazine," says Rich Fairfield, the chief financial officer/vice-president, strategic planning and new media at American Express Publishing. "She invented that."—*MC*

From her home office, Carroll dishes out advice amid a pictoral hodgepodge of iconic women from Mona Lisa to Grace Kelly.

Photograph by Rafael Fuchs

Method To Her Madness

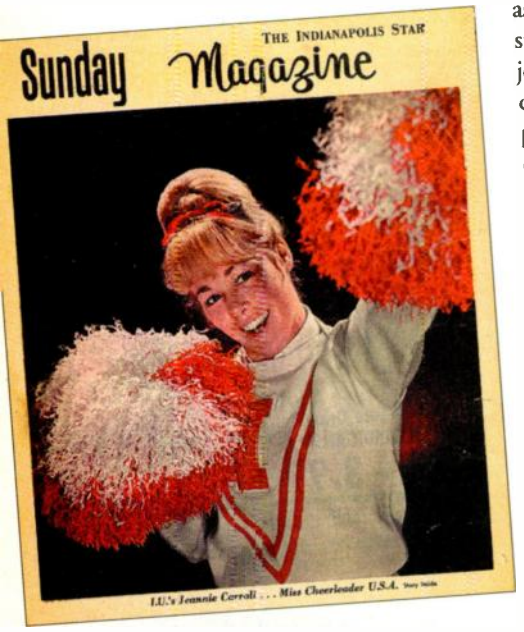
As a journalist and advice columnist, E. Jean Carroll prods her story subjects into bad behavior and then gleefully reports on their antics. Wherever this brash, eccentric, beauty-queen-turned-gonzo reporter turns up, mischief—and hilarity—follow.

By Katherine Rosman

"I SMELL GOLD!" bellows E. Jean Carroll, who tends to speak in capital letters and exclamation points. "I KNOW YOU'RE PUKING IN YOUR HAND RIGHT NOW, BUT I DO!" Carroll, the divaesque advice columnist for *Elle* magazine, the onetime contributing editor for *Playboy*, *Outside*, and *Esquire* (Carroll recently left *Esquire* for *New York* magazine), the Hunter S. Thompson biographer, and the burgeoning television presence, leads me down a woodsy path behind her yellow cottage near the Hudson River an hour north of New York City. As her two dogs, Marquis de Sade and Fuzzy de Farquar, gallop ahead, Carroll describes the fame and fortune that await me—if I write my intended profile of her according to *her* master plan. "This," she proclaims, "is a movie....Don't laugh. We've got a story here. If you write it this way, someone will buy it."

Ever the entrepreneur, Carroll uses her entire life—her divorces, her reigns as Miss Cheerleader U.S.A. and Miss Indiana University, her days as a self-described "rah-rah" sorority girl—as fodder for her mini-media empire. "I AM SOOOOO HAPPENING," Carroll belts out, and indeed, she is popping up all over the place. The "Ask E. Jean" column, which has run in *Elle* 11 times a year for more than six years, routinely rates as one of the best-read features among the magazine's 4 million readers, according to reader surveys. "Ask E. Jean" gave birth to a TV talk show in 1995 on the ill-fated America's Talking network. (A *TV Guide* critic wrote, "Nothing on [America's Talking] stood up and demanded my attention except E. Jean Carroll, a woman who can't sit still.") A similar program is being developed for syndication by Tribune Entertainment. Carroll has sat in for Charles Grodin on his CNBC talk show, and is a special correspondent for *Good Morning America*. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has funded a pilot that's tentatively titled *Chicks On Flicks*, a female version of *Siskel & Ebert* costarring Carroll and *The Official Preppy Handbook*'s Lisa Birnbach, according to Sandra Pedlow, CPB's senior program officer. Carroll says she earns about $150,000 from print articles and can make more than twice that when engaged in her various TV gigs. (With her Tribune deal, Carroll claims, she may make so much money, "I won't be able to spend it all. It will be fabulous!") It's not a bad living for an eccentric who works out of a tiny house crammed with dogs, cats, birds, yellowed newspaper clippings, and nineteenth-century novels.

More than a reporter or a TV personality, Carroll is a performance artist whose stories are



as much about her as they are about her subjects. She has become known as a journalist whose greatest attribute is her quirkiness. "She will never do a straight piece. That's the one thing you can count on." says Marilyn Johnson, a senior writer at *Life*, who, as an editor at *Esquire*, "discovered" Carroll in the late 1970s. "She can do all the reporting, get all the facts...but it is absolutely her piece and every paragraph says that." In short, her style doesn't lack for substance.

Consider, for example, "The Return of the White Negro," a 1994 piece Carroll wrote for *Esquire*:

Fifty miles south of Gary and a hundred miles west of Fort Wayne, running down Highway 41 at about 23 miles an hour through one of your thick north-Indiana fogs—thank God it obliterates the view—is a rented Tracer bearing me into...nowhere. The middle of nowhere. Oh, not the middle of nowhere like the rest of Indiana, but a nowhere so flat and ugly you want to lie down in a ditch and never get up again. A shriveled, worn-out, beat-up cornstalk nowhere, the kind of place where the cream of society is the owner of the IGA grocery mart. The sort of spot where a girl is said to have "made it big" when she ascends to the position of lap-counter for Mario Andretti. Where the men strive in the Hammond steel mills or strain in the barley fields in which they were born to die. This is the sticks, honey.

Carroll reports not by watching from the sidelines as most journalists do, but by thrusting herself into the lives of her subjects—often misbehaving with them and then reporting on how they react to her antics. "All of Jean's stories are pretty much the same thing," says Bill Tonelli, an editor at *Rolling Stone* who edited Carroll at *Esquire*, "which is, *What is this person like when he or she is in a room with E. Jean?*

"She's institutionally incapable of being uninteresting," says Tonelli. "She really is nuts. It's not just a figure of speech with her. I think her whole life is a life of an eccentric. In other words, she's not selectively interesting or eccentric for the purpose of an article or an interview. She's really nuts."

Carroll is hardly your typical magazine columnist, let alone standard fare for ABC or PBS. There does not appear to be a linear thought in her head. Ask her a question and you get a complete answer, but you get it over a period of days. Carroll's stories, her ideas, her strange monologue-like responses to the simplest questions—are scattered.

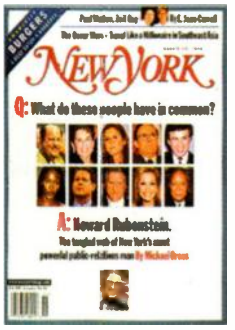
Carroll yammers on about her movie idea even as I prod her for basic information, revealing the only two predictable elements of her personality: She processes all stimuli as potential fodder for her career, and she sees the world in theatrical scenes. Call it *reportage verité*. Or, journalism à la E. Jean.

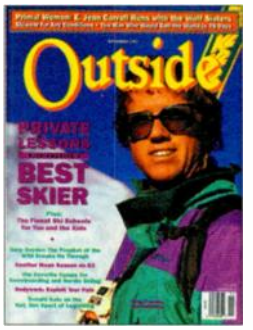
SITTING ON A PORCH SWING, WEARING A KHAKI jumper that's reminiscent of Katharine Hepburn's in *The African Queen*, Carroll reflects on a story she wrote in 1983 about William Hurt, in which she followed the actor on a bar crawl. "He just got drunker and drunker," Carroll says, "and of course I ran *everything*. I just ran *everything*. That's questionable. But he was fascinating when he had had too many drinks. *Fascinating*. But was that the real William Hurt? I don't know." She now says she has abandoned this tactic of plying a subject with drinks and printing their slurred ramblings.

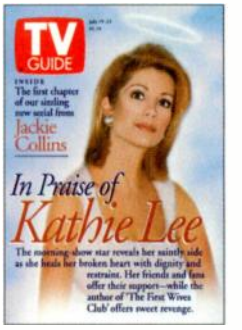
Still, she insists, "the main thing is, you want someone to act up. You want the person you're talking to to act up. Right? If I went into the house and got a shotgun and ran out of the house and shot my neighbor, YOU WOULD BE OVERJOYED! YOU WOULD BE LOVING THAT! YOU WOULD BE CALLING [YOUR EDITOR] ON THE PHONE [TO SAY], 'OH MY GOD! I GOT THE GREATEST F--KING STORY! SHE JUST SHOT HER GODDAMN NEIGHBOR!'"

Suddenly, as if the scene really were scripted, Carroll's white-haired neighbor ventures down her driveway to pick up her mail. "Oh, hi, Helen!" Carroll calls out. "I was thinking of taking a shotgun and shooting one of my neighbors!" Helen, who appears not to have heard Carroll's comment, cheerfully waves. Barely missing a beat, Carroll continues: "So you want them to act up and misbehave. I was always waiting for them to misbehave. And I would, frankly, just hang with the story until they started to misbehave."

By her own admission, that's how Carroll reported her 1993 biography, *Hunter: The Strange and Savage Life of Hunter S. Thompson*. She showed up in Woody Creek, Colorado, told Thompson she was in town to report his life story, and moved onto his ranch for 12 days. While there, Carroll says, she recorded every move made by Thompson (who didn't respond to faxes and letters seeking his comment for this article), including his almost nonstop consumption of Chivas Regal, cocaine, and LSD. Rather than just record the story, as the standards of conventional journalism would dictate, Carroll lived Thompson's decadence alongside him. In fact,







As a coed, Carroll sported wholesome, corn-fed looks on the cover of *The Indianapolis Star* (top), but the reporter is known to be brash and biting in her books and in the articles she writes for such magazines as *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Elle*, and the others pictured above.

she exuberantly admits that in addition to twice snorting cocaine with him, she became *intimately involved* with her subject. (What exactly does "intimately involved" mean? Let's just say that, according to the *Jones* v. *Clinton* definition, Carroll did not have sexual relations with that man, Dr. Thompson.) To those who would scoff at her tactics, Carroll says, "If you are going to go to the feast, then eat from the table," reasoning that you can only write well about what you actually experience. ("Oh, *please*," responds Amy Gross, the former *Elle* editor who conceived of the "Ask E. Jean" column, when told of Carroll's rationalization. "How do you interview a murderer!? Don't buy that, *please*.")

When Carroll's subjects do not act up on their own, she tries to incite them to. Take, for example, her 1994 *Esquire* cover story on Lyle Lovett. In the piece, Carroll described how she tried to shock the unflappable country crooner:

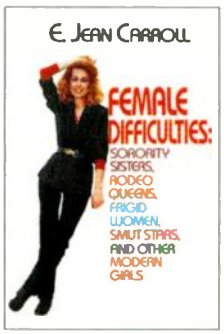
"I have...done my research....The only difficulty remaining is how to spring it on Lyle.

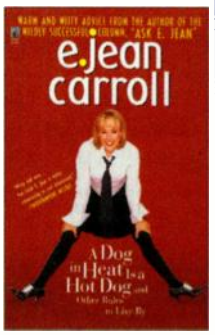
Time is running out. The senior vice-president of public relations at MCA records...Paula Batson, is leaving for the airport. I am catching a ride with her....Lyle and Paula are having a quiet last word. It's now or never.

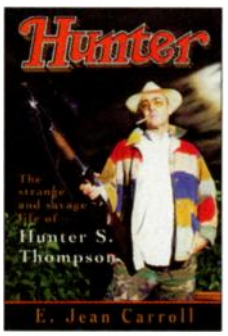
'Oh, Lyle!' I say....'I've heard on the girl vine that you're one of the most well-endowed fellows in show business.' Suitcases drop to the pavement like rotten plums. Pause. 'What?' *says Lyle...."*

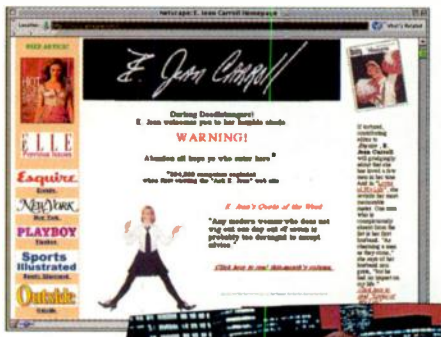
It's classic Carroll—she doesn't just look for an *answer*, she seeks an *event*. "I waited for just the right moment..." she explains in her throaty voice, "right at the very end while his publicist is standing right next to him so she could absolutely lose her mind. So I could have a scene." (Batson declined to comment. Lovett did not return four calls seeking comment.)

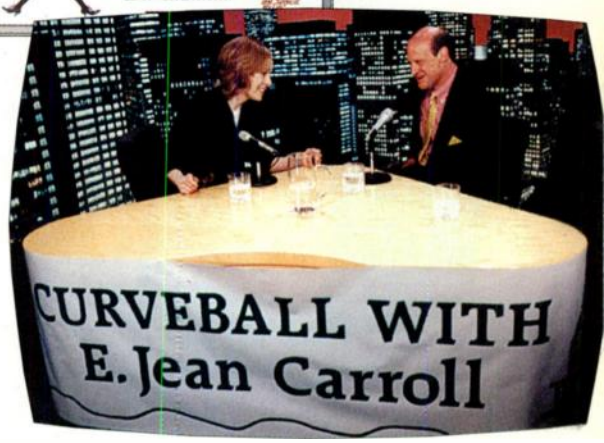
"Let's not forget that this is someone who was a cheerleader and a beauty queen," laughs David Hirshey, the former deputy editor at *Esquire*, now an executive editor at HarperCollins Publishers. "She knows how to rev up a crowd."











When Carroll starred as herself on Showtime's *Linc's*, she fought her impulse to holler out E. Jean-esque ad-libs and stuck to the script.

DOUG HYUN/SHOWTIME NETWORKS

A REV-UP-YOUR-ENGINE WRITER WAS JUST WHAT Amy Gross wanted in 1993 when she set out to jump-start the then-faltering *Elle*. "I wanted there to be wild-woman voices in the magazine," she recalls. And after meeting Carroll at a party, Gross believed she'd hit the jackpot. "I had this idea for [Carroll] that she should write an advice column because she's wild but also because she has a great heart and great common sense." From the get-go, Gross recalls, Carroll's column "was like this yowl. It was as though we had put her on a bucking bronco and her answers were the cheers and whoops and hollers of a fearless woman having a good ol' time."

Carroll has been whooping it up ever since. She constantly goads her readers into grabbing life by the throat—just the way she does. She gets beneath readers' written questions to the subtext and tells them what they really want to hear.

DEAR E. JEAN: *I realize that tons of women go through this every year; but how do you deal with turning* thirty *in a society that looks down on a woman who isn't part of a couple? I'm sick of defending myself for being single! Okay, okay. I know (intellectually speaking, that is) it's all right to be single; but it's* hard....*So what do I do now that I'm heading toward thirty with no prospects in sight? Help!*—Turning the Corner

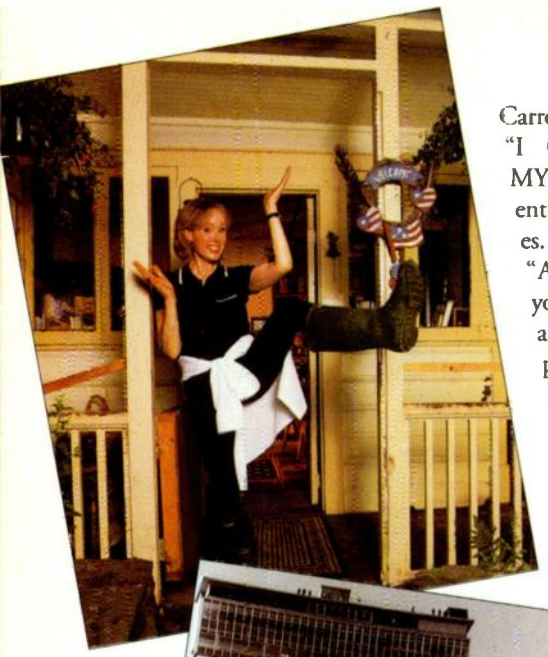
DEAR TURNING: *You crazy old hairball....Thirty! Yeeeeee Wrinkled Gods! It's* over *for you, babe! Never write to me again. I only answer letters from women who are "part of a couple." Cordially yours, A member of "Society."*

Oooops, how'd that dingbat's answer get in here? Lord! See what happens when I leave the column for two minutes and dash out to the kitchen for an apple, a plate of spinach fettuccine with Alfredo sauce, a bowl of oatmeal, three bananas, a Tootsie Roll, and a half dozen slices of peanut-butter toast? Well. At least we single women know we're not totally paranoid. "Society" does *want to beat us with big 180-pound bags of wedding rice....Meanwhile, the old hag Mother Nature wants us mated up early (the better to multiply us); and as for the gentlemen of the species—well, there's always the TMCF to consider (Total Male Crap Factor... the chaps thought up the idea of marriage back in the caveman days so they could divvy up the sexual "property" and deliver the bride's assets to the groom. Yes, men invented marriage, and frankly, they can keep it).*

So what can you *do, dear Turning? Stop panicking. This is a new era. Chicks are taking over the universe....*

With the "Ask E. Jean" column, Carroll has transformed a genre long associated with flinty dowagers like Ann Landers and Dear Abby, and in the process, has found a platform for her unique brand of feminism.

Make no mistake: Carroll considers herself an ardent feminist. And if there's irony in that, it's lost on her. She's a use-what-ya-got, anti-PC feminist who encourages her readers not only to glory in their beauty and sensuality, but to use those feminine charms to get ahead in the world. And



Carroll kicks up her heels outside her house in Nyack, N.Y. (top). The reporter's stint as a cheerleader at Indiana University (middle) and her crowning as Miss Indiana University (bottom) provided fodder for her 1983 book, *Female Difficulties*.

RAFAEL FUCHS (TOP)

Carroll—who in midconversation shouts, "I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF MYSELF! I AM SO BEAUTIFUL!"—enthusiastically practices what she preaches. "We worship beauty," she explains. "And I'm just saying that it's an arrow in your quiver, and it opens up the gate, and it pulls down the shields of the people you're talking to. Because beauty is truth....I know. I know. Stone me. STONE ME. But—I said it's a great arrow in your quiver? *Uh uh.* A *cannon* in your *arsenal.*"

CARROLL GREW UP in Indiana, attended Indiana University where she pledged Pi Beta Phi sorority, won the Miss Indiana University crown, won the Miss Cheerleader U.S.A. crown, got married and divorced, and got married and divorced a second time.

Carroll's most memorable stories are about Indiana, Indiana University, Indiana University's chapter of Pi Beta Phi, beauty pageants, cheerleading tryouts, husbands, and ex-husbands—not surprising for someone who considers nothing off the record (except her age, which *The New York Times* puts at 55). Consider "Cheerleaders," a story included in Carroll's 1983 book, *Female Difficulties: Sorority Sisters, Rodeo Queens, Frigid Women, Smut Stars, and Other Modern Girls*, in which Carroll followed a few wanna-be U.C.L.A. cheerleaders—one of them named Chrissy—at tryouts:

Cheerleaders are goddesses at UCLA. Cheerleaders are goddesses everywhere, says Chrissy; cheerleading is status, *cheerleading is the Ultimate American Experience....Then she tells me that the UCLA tryouts are like the talent portion of a beauty contest....'I won a Miss Tush contest once,' says Chrissy. 'How do you enter a Miss Tush?' I say. "You fill out a form?' 'I didn't enter,' cries Chrissy, 'somebody entered* this, *' and she slaps her rump and the rich, full gluteal whack of her palm throbs in the air. This strikes Chrissy as funny. It could be that it is funny, and Chrissy is giggling in the high, soft way young girls with taut buttocks giggle, but it makes me feel old suddenly—and it makes me feel old again as I sit here reworking this passage with my thighs spreading over the chair like waffle batter.*

"You ever won anything?" says Chrissy.

"Nevermind," I say.

Senior writer Katherine Rosman used to work at Elle and once helped edit an "Ask E. Jean" column.

Of course, Carroll has won a title that might make even Chrissy jealous: Miss Cheerleader U.S.A. That honor was bestowed upon Carroll when, while an Indiana University cheerleader, she represented her school at a national competition in Orlando, Florida. After watching other contestants hoot and holler about their respective universities before the bored audience, Carroll says she employed a little ingenuity. "The whole crowd was from Florida. So instead of spelling out *Indiana* or doing one of those pathetic cheers, I did all cheers about Florida and I won!" she brags. "I was wearing my big 'I,' wearing my very short skirt and my red sweater and my big 'I.' What does 'Beat 'Bama' mean to somebody who lives in Florida? They don't care about 'beating 'Bama.' I WON THE CROWD," she shrieks, "AND THEN I WON THE CROWN!"

That Carroll uses her beauty to aid her career as a journalist but used her brain to capture a cheerleading title represents just one paradox in a life full of them. Carroll's life has been both outrageous (consider her brief stint *chez* Thompson) and conventional (reared in what she calls "bucolic bliss," she now lives quietly among her books and her pets). When she reports on what are essentially the stories of her life, Carroll brings both exuberance and wholesomeness to the pages.

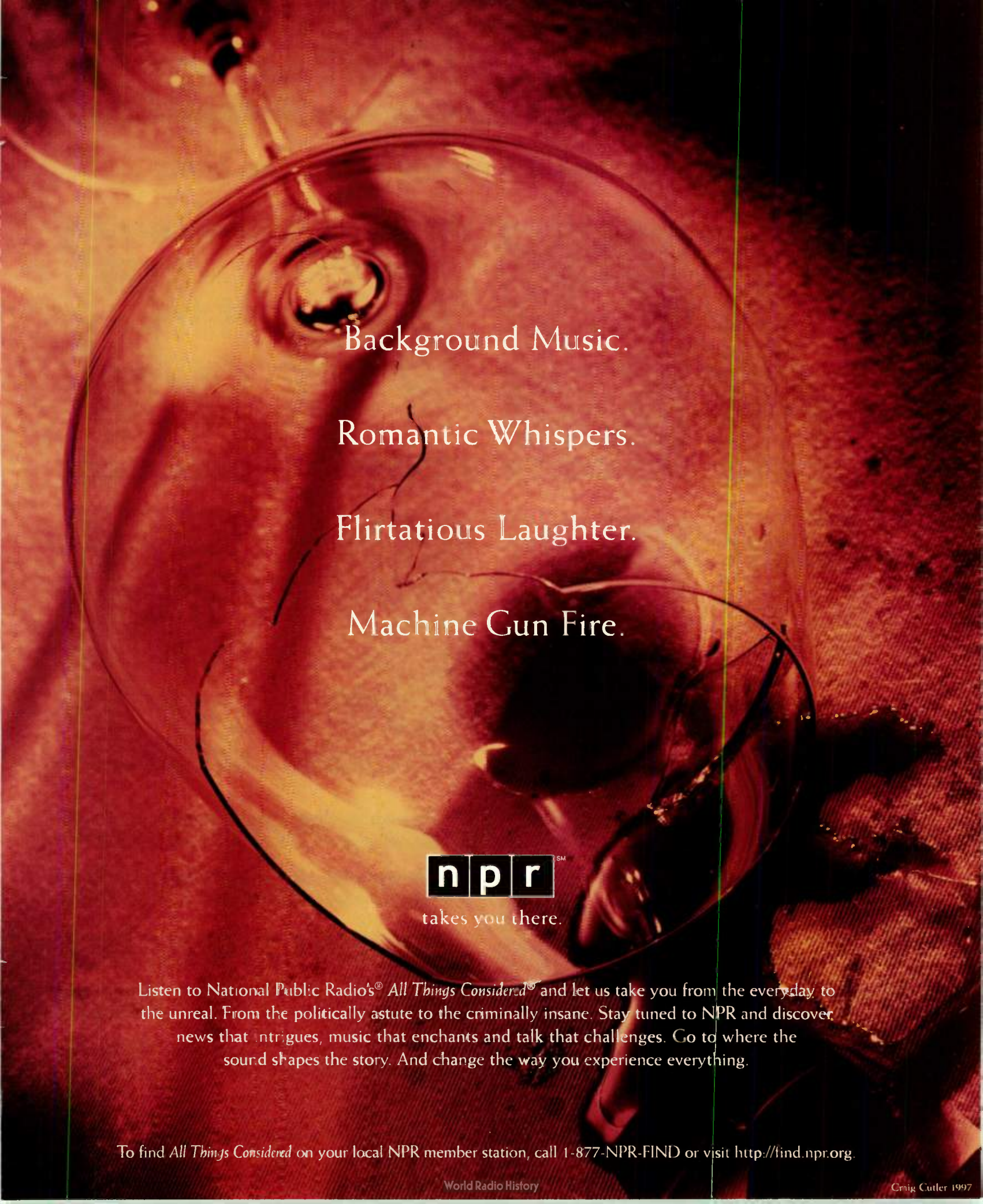
It's the key to her franchise: In a serious world filled with self-important people, Carroll makes fun of her subjects, makes fun of herself, and in the end, transports her readers to a world in which they themselves will never live—*hers.*

E. JEAN CARROLL HAS BEEN ASKED TO GUEST star as herself on *Linc's*, a Showtime sitcom starring Pam Grier. The set looks like *Larry King Live*, with a rounded desk emblazoned with the words, "Curveball with E. Jean Carroll." This episode revolves around regular series character, Senator Harlan Hubbard, a Southern good ol' boy who—after learning his maternal grandmother was black—appears on *Curveball* to announce his new identity as a black man.

During the taping at Paramount Studio's Stage One in Los Angeles, E. Jean as E. Jean has to follow a script that stifles her from-the-belly hollers and ad-libs, and she's having trouble delivering the goods.

"Will you be giving up your country club memberships? Joining the Congressional Black Caucus? Will we be seeing you at NAACP conferences?" the script calls for Carroll to ask. But she flubs the lines. Not once. Not twice. On five separate takes, Carroll stammers, sputters, and stutters. After the fifth take, frustration sets in. "BEAT ME! BEAT ME! FLOG ME!" she screams.

"Take Six!" shouts the director, and with the catharsis behind her, Carroll nails the line. As the director calls, "Cut!" Carroll blasts out of her seat and dances about the soundstage in her Manolo Blahnik five-inch stilettos, pumping her fists in the air like Deion Sanders after running a punt into the end zone. The stage manager turns to the crowd of 40-odd crew members and extends his hand toward the guest star. "Ladies and gentlemen," he says, "Miss E. Jean Carroll." ■



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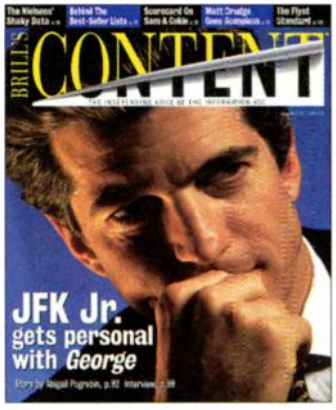

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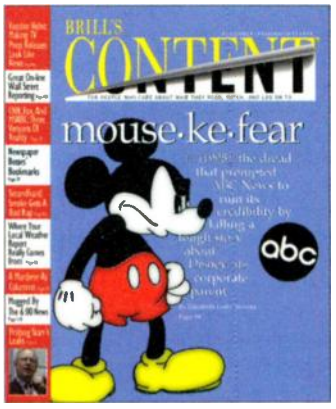

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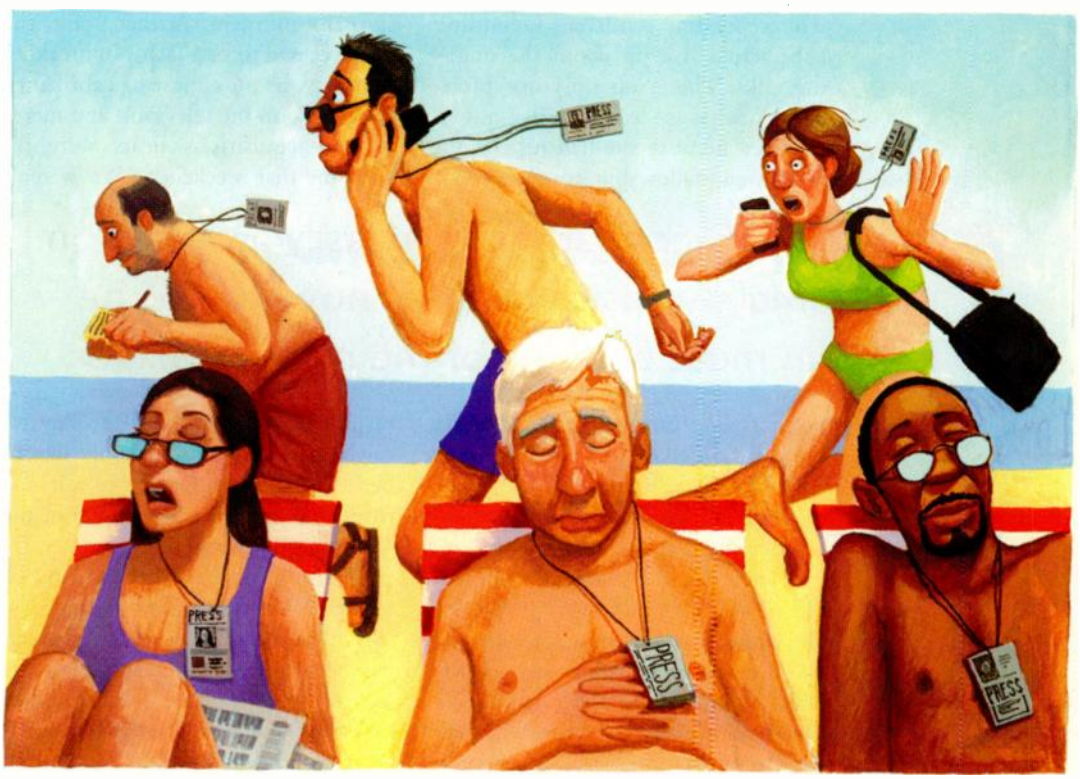
Getting The CBS-Viacom Scoop

While some prominent business reporters were relaxing over Labor Day, others broke the news of the biggest media deal ever. • BY RIFKA ROSENWEIN



JONATHAN KEEGAN

IF YOU TURNED ON YOUR radio or television on the morning of Tuesday, September 7, you were no doubt greeted with a major news story: the $37 billion merger of media giants CBS Corporation and Viacom Inc.

For news junkies, though, a curious phenomenon was at work. While many news outlets credited the story to that morning's *Wall Street Journal*, most *Journal* readers couldn't find it in their paper. The story appeared only in the *Journal*'s online edition and in its final print edition, which reached about 20 percent of its 1.9 million readers.

The *Journal*, like most of its competitors, had been caught off guard, at least in part because the largest media merger ever had been consummated over the Labor Day weekend. Many of the best business reporters in the country were on vacation and not sniffing around for scoops.

In fact, only *The Wall Street Journal* and *Daily Variety* were able to break the news that Tuesday morning. That morning's editions of business heavyweights *The New York Times* and the *Financial Times* didn't even get out of the starting gate.

CBS AND VIACOM, WHICH BEGAN LIFE 29 years ago as an offshoot of CBS, had been rumored to be in talks on and off for years. But nothing had ever come of those rumors. The catalyst this time around was the Federal Communications Commission's so-called duopoly decision on August 5, which opened the door for companies to own more than one television station in a single market.

"Once the FCC passed the duopoly rules," says reporter John Higgins of *Broadcasting & Cable*, "everyone around here went on full-blown deal alert." The weekly was so sure that the ruling would create sea changes within the media industry that it immediately started a new column called "Duopoly." Sure enough, in the second "Duopoly" column, on August 23, reporter Steve McClellan delivered the first nugget that there was "talk of a CBS-Viacom merger of some sort" floating about.

Higgins then picked up the trail in a longer piece for the August 30 issue that described the CBS-Viacom negotiations as "narrowly focused," with CBS looking to buy all or some of Viacom's local television stations. Higgins's story preceded articles in *USA Today*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Los Angeles Times* (the latter two cited *Broadcasting & Cable*). *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times* also mentioned a potential CBS-Viacom deal the same day as the August 30 *Broadcasting & Cable* story, but both buried that little piece of news in long stories that focused on other television companies.

With those few exceptions, none of the big guns in the financial press had weighed in on the story as of the end of August. It's not that the deal wasn't in the works: According to a subsequent account in *The New York Times*, Viacom chairman Sumner Redstone and CBS chief executive Mel Karmazin had agreed to go ahead with the merger on August 24. The companies were waiting only for approval from their respective boards of directors.

Then, on the evening of Wednesday, September 1, veteran *New York Times* media reporter Geraldine Fabrikant got a tip about the ongoing talks. There was only one problem: She was temporarily not a reporter, because she had just begun a one-year fellowship to study economics and business at Columbia University. Fellowship rules prohibit Fabrikant from writing for the *Times* during her leave.

The CBS-Viacom story was easily available on the *Journal*'s website but was nowhere to be found in most editions of the morning paper.

But the day after she got the tip, Fabrikant called a fellowship program official to get permission to write a single story. On Friday, September 3, Fabrikant came out with an article headlined, "Viacom and CBS Reportedly Discuss Station Deal." Like the earlier story by *Broadcasting & Cable*'s Higgins, Fabrikant focused on the possibility that CBS and Viacom would swap or merge some of their TV stations. However, in the ninth paragraph, Fabrikant noted "speculation that merger talks have gone beyond simply the television station business to include the two companies over all."

This, as far as Fabrikant is concerned, broke the story and put it into play. "Was mine the first ball? Yes," Fabrikant says. "As it goes along, everyone breaks another piece." She says she hadn't noticed the earlier stories in trade publications including *Broadcasting & Cable* and *Daily Variety*. "I don't look at the trades very often."

After writing the story, Fabrikant left for the holiday weekend. Clearly, she did not realize the players would move as swiftly as they did. "If I would've known [the deal] was imminent," she says, "I would've written it."

The deal *was* imminent. On Labor Day, Viacom's directors agreed to the merger. When Fabrikant returned home that night, she says she made some follow-up calls but "couldn't nail it." She also decided that she really couldn't pursue the story any longer because of her fellowship commitment. At that point, the *Times* ceased to be a factor in breaking the story, because most of Fabrikant's colleagues on the television and mergers-and-acquisitions beats were on vacation that weekend. "We weren't on this over the weekend the way we might normally be and would like to be," concedes Tim Race, who edits the media-focused Monday edition of the *Times* business section.

Staffing glitches also contributed to the *Financial Times*'s missing the story. The London-based daily, which has been aggressively challenging the *Journal* since starting a U.S. edition two years ago, does have a well-regarded New York–based M&A reporter, William Lewis. But he was on a five-week leave when the story broke.

Meanwhile, sometime during Labor Day weekend, *Journal* reporters got wind of the deal. Ace M&A reporter Steven Lipin and media reporters Kyle Pope and Martin Peers joined forces to file a story around 11 on Monday night.

The story missed the usual 10 P.M. deadline for the paper's late edition, but managed to make it into 400,000 papers—out of a total of 1.9 million—according to Dow Jones & Company spokesman Richard Tofel. The *Journal* posted its story on *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition* at 4 A.M. (late enough to prevent its U.S. print competitors from poaching the story). By 4:59, The Associated Press was already crediting *The Wall Street Journal* with the scoop. (The reporters involved did not wish to speak about their pursuit of the story.)

In his column that afternoon on TheStreet.com, early-rising James Cramer—who clearly was not among the lucky 400,000 to get a copy of the *Journal* with news of the merger—declared the end of the newspaper era and the advent of the Internet news era, citing the fact that the CBS-Viacom story was easily available on the *Journal*'s website but was nowhere to be found in the morning paper. (TheStreet.com itself first mentioned the deal in its "Wake-Up Call" column at 9:24 A.M.)

If it was a morning paper that Cramer wanted, he should have turned to that day's *Daily Variety*, which carried as its lead a story on the deal by business editor Jill Goldsmith. Goldsmith, who has been on the job only since July, emerges as the unsung hero of this tale. She had the story (albeit without some of the final details found in the *Journal*'s version) on Labor Day, in time for her paper's 8 P.M. close, which made her publication the only one to deliver the news to all of its readers that morning.

Like the dealmakers she was covering, Goldsmith spent a good part of the holiday weekend working. She had written two earlier pieces about a possible deal—one in the August 26 *Daily Variety*, and one in the weekly *Variety* that appeared on September 6. "Something was clearly building," she recalls. "It seemed prudent to put in some calls Saturday. People were in their offices, which seemed significant since it was a holiday weekend."

On Monday, she decided to go into her office and make some more calls. "I got lucky," she says. "I made a lot of phone calls. By late afternoon, I had it."

She'd gotten the story. But what she *didn't* get, ultimately, was the credit. On Tuesday night, after the deal was officially announced, it was the *Times*'s Fabrikant who was invited to share her insights on PBS's *Charlie Rose* show. Rose introduced her as "the reporter who broke the story." ■

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TV newsrooms are often told to keep stories short and that it's about pacing, pacing, pacing. But if we're going to tackle these issues, we need depth. That makes sense to viewers. It's not about boring TV news, it's about compelling TV news that demonstrates the impact of stories on viewers. Those are the stories that are going to set us apart. It's going to drive viewership up because the issues are so intensely local and of such impact and relevance to viewers, they are going to say, "There's a reason to watch this station."

Ramon Escobar

News Director

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Katherine Boo's haunting tales of abuse give voice to those abandoned by the public agencies charged with protecting them.

NO LONGER SILENT

BY KIMBERLY CONNIFF

IT IS LATE AUGUST, AND A SUDDEN DOWNPOUR covers the Washington, D.C., area in a thick gauze of rain, as Katherine Boo bends over a plot at the Glenwood Cemetery in Northeast D.C. Rubbing away a layer of silt, Boo reveals a gravesite marked simply with a number: 192. But she already knows who is buried here. For more than five months, Boo has been researching the cases of 160 people who died in the District's group homes for the mentally retarded—at least some because of poor care. She has pored over documents and interviewed the victims' family members and friends and former group-home workers until she finally found enough information to come here on this wet summer day and confirm what she already suspected: These people, marginalized in life, are remembered in death with only a number.

Over at the District of Columbia's Department of Human Services, which oversees the group homes, staffers are bracing themselves for the series that will soon appear in *The Washington Post*. "We hate to see her coming," admits Madelyn Andrews, a spokeswoman for DHS. "She always asks for information that is [indeed] public, but invariably shows up weaknesses in any system or program."

Why such anxiety? Because this is not the first time that Boo, a reporter with the *Post*'s investigative team, has held the District government's feet to the fire. In 1997, her series on welfare reform demonstrated the inadequacies of a system that pushed people into work but not necessarily out of poverty. One of the pieces exposed the horrors of the day-care centers serving the city's poor, where conditions were so bad that children sometimes played with cockroaches in rooms soiled with mouse droppings. Within days, then-Mayor Marion Barry called for increased funding to hire more government inspectors. Just last spring, Boo's first series on group homes for the mentally retarded revealed that more than 350 incidents of abuse, neglect, molestation, and stealing have plagued homes and day programs since 1990. Two days after the series appeared, the city shut down two group homes; within two months, the head of the Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities Administration was fired, and the U.S. Department of Justice and FBI had launched full scale investigations. "She pushed people...to see what's going on here," says Joseph Tulman, a professor at the University of the District of Columbia's school of law and a lawyer who represents people with mental retardation. Lisa Greenman, an attorney with the mental health division at the city's public defender's office, agrees: "The facts themselves are an indictment," she says.

The real potency of Boo's stories, however, lies in their ability to pull people from the fabric of government systems unraveling at the seams: "These days, reconciled to living, Elroy has fashioned ways to cope," she wrote about one mentally retarded man. "He keeps private amulets against a misery he doesn't fully grasp. There's the leatherette Bible he can't read; the Norman Rockwell calendar of family scenes he hasn't known."

Jeff Leen, the *Post*'s investigations editor, says Boo has "the eyes and ears of a poet, but the soul and heart of an investigative reporter." Boo says she's simply honest with her readers. "I think one way to make people care about a story is to make them feel...that I'm not seeing it through a Vaseline-smeared lens," she says. "I'm trying to tell you both the good and the bad."

This approach has led Boo, 35, to places fewer and fewer reporters venture these days: to a janitorial school with people struggling to get off welfare, to a manor farm where a group-home owner was using mentally retarded people as forced laborers, to a motel with a pimp at 3 A.M. to learn about the world of a crack-addicted prostitute.

At barely 5 feet 4 inches, with what one editor calls a "Botticelli face," the wispy, strawberry blonde Boo doesn't fit the grizzled image of an investigative reporter. But looks can be deceiving. "She may be delicate, but she's steely underneath," says Leen. She was raised in a large Irish Catholic family in modest neighborhoods of Washington and Alexandria, Virginia, not far from many of the areas she writes about now. As a result, she's comfortable in places some reporters might feel uneasy. "I never had or felt any reason not to be," she says. "So much alienation and tension between classes and races has to do with fear."

Perhaps because of this openness, the people Boo profiles emerge as both troubled and inspiring. In 1998, Jennifer Talley, an ambitious 21-year-old whom Boo had been following through her first post welfare job, was charged with helping her boyfriend scald and kill her friend's daughter. Without downplaying the crime, Boo rendered a complex portrait of a woman whose "arduous climb toward white-collar stability had turned to free fall." Even Talley says Boo's depiction was right on. "She knew me as a person," says Talley, speaking from prison. "She wasn't just going by what other people told her." Explains Boo: "All my friends are complicated. I'm complicated. The people I write about are complicated. I guess that's what [I'm] trying to get at: not to tell the story in monochrome."

After high school, Boo worked for more than four years as a clerk and secretary and attended night school in Washington before graduating from Columbia University with a degree in philosophy and literature. She never thought seriously about being a journalist until she worked as an intern at *The Washington Monthly*, a small glossy where many a muckraking

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON/*THE WASHINGTON POST*

Katherine Boo's vivid profiles of people ignored or injured by public agencies have captured the rapt attention of both readers and government officials. "One way to make people care about a story is to make them feel...that I'm not seeing it through a Vaseline-smeared lens," she says.

intellectual has gotten his or her start. "I thought, this is not a bad way to spend your life," she says. She went on to the *Washington City Paper*, an alternative weekly where she wrote about everything from a capital bombing suspect to a group of gay Christians committed to "healing" themselves into heterosexuality. Boo claims she was terrified of reporting at first, but former *City Paper* editor Jack Shafer (now the deputy editor of *Slate* magazine) says she's "the most rawly talented journalist" with whom he's ever worked.

After *City Paper*, Boo returned to the *Monthly* as an editor—in fact, she was the magazine's first woman editor in nearly 20 years. She wrote the first articles to put her on the national radar screen—including a daring piece that chastised Anita Hill for waiting ten years to allege Clarence Thomas's sexual harassment.

It wasn't long before *The Washington Post* called, and, at 28, Boo was hired as an editor and writer for the paper's Sunday "Outlook" section. After work, she spent her nights reporting on such stories as a sorely neglected housing project called Sheridan Terrace, interviewing residents and crawling around an abandoned building looking for the source of a untended leak. After the piece was pubished, the project was slowly shut down. It was the first time Boo realized that her work could generate tangible results. "I wanted to do more," she says. About a year later, after a brief stint on the metro desk, editor Steven Luxenberg tapped her for the *Post*'s renowned investigative team.

"Oftentimes the minute no one's looking, things go back to just the way they are," Boo cautions. "[Sometimes it's] zero-sum journalism." But instead of growing cynical, Boo turns to the people she profiles for inspiration—whether it's Elizabeth Jones, the former welfare mother who defied all circumstances to become a D.C. police officer, or Elroy, the mentally retarded man who was sexually abused but says you "[g]otta not let the worries pluck your nerves." And despite some disappointments, she does realize that what she's written has affected people's lives. "Small good things happen," she allows. "Not large, transcendent reforms, but little tiny things."

Perhaps that's what ultimately makes Boo's stories so potent: She infuses them with the people who have become more to her than proof of systems gone awry. When others see only numbers on a grave, Katherine Boo sees people with lives—and deaths—important enough to make the paper. ■

MECKLER DIAGNOSES ILLS OF DONOR SYSTEM

BY JANE MANNERS

A WOMAN SLUMPS IN A hospital waiting-room chair, having recently learned that her husband and daughter died in a car accident less than 24 hours before. A stranger at her feet is asking her permission to remove her daughter's artificially sustained heart, kidneys, pancreas, and liver to put them in someone else's body.

An awkward question, to say the least, but a potentially lifesaving one that's heard all too infrequently in hospital waiting rooms across the United States. As Associated Press writer Laura Meckler has reported in more than 60 stories over the past year and a half, the national system of organ distribution needs major reform. In 1998, more than 4,000 people died waiting for new hearts, livers, lungs, and kidneys—deaths that were largely the result of flaws in the country's donor system. Those flaws, according to Meckler, range from hospitals that fail to notify organ banks of potential donors to organ banks that fail to seek permission from the families of potential donors.

Despite the obvious need for change, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' reform attempts have been halting at best, stymied by protests from transplant surgeons and donation centers and bogged down by unorganized data and red tape. In March 1998, HHS issued new regulations governing organ distribution, but implementation has been delayed until October 1999. Opponents of the changes worry that the new rules, which will allocate organs according to need rather than proximity, will create "logistical nightmares" and force smaller banks to close.

Meckler, 31, has done much to inform the public about the debate, writing everything from plain-language analysis of complicated computerized data to sensitive explorations of particular cases. For one of her most trenchant stories, Meckler followed organ transplant coordinator Jane Hibbler around a Philadelphia hospital for two days in May of last year. And last September, in perhaps her most significant contribution to reform attempts, Meckler compiled a chart of 61 of the U.S.'s 63 organ banks (two were omitted because of a lack of data), ranked in order from most to least effective.

Sandra Johnson, the AP bureau chief of the Washington, D.C., bureau, credits this ranking with helping to spur the Clinton administration's ongoing analysis of the donation system. "Government is a slow-moving animal," says Johnson, who points out that after Meckler published her ranking, "[HHS] put out their own report [on the organ banks] and, lo and behold, it looked like ours."

In June, Meckler received the prestigious Livingston Award for national reporting, given to journalists under 35, for seven of her stories on organ transplantation. ■

Laura Meckler's reports have revealed fatal flaws in the nation's organ-distribution system.

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HOTLINE'S HEAT

How a newsletter with a small circulation and little original reporting helps set the agenda for politicians, pundits, and Jay Leno. • BY ROBERT SCHMIDT

IN WASHINGTON, D.C., 11:40 A.M. is *Hotline* Time. That's when the capital's most popular political newsletter becomes available online. All over the city, people log on to the Internet to read it or wait at their desks for someone, usually an intern, to stop by with a printed copy.

The Hotline, which just marked its 12th anniversary, summarizes political news coverage from across the country; it is in essence a news service for political junkies. Like a drug, readers say, *The Hotline* is addictive; when they can't get it, they get nervous. In May a computer glitch stopped delivery of *The Hotline* for a few hours—just enough time for anxious subscribers to flood *Hotline*'s customer-service phone line. The concerned callers, many pleading for a faxed copy, were a who's who of the political and media elite—from congressional offices to the Washington bureau of *The New York Times.* More than one call came in from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno,* across the country in Los Angeles.

And like a drug, *The Hotline* (found at www.cloakroom.com) is expensive; an annual subscription to the National Journal Group–owned publication is $4,800-$12,000, depending on the number of readers per subscription. Why are people willing to pay so much? They need it to do their jobs. Politicos use *The Hotline,* published five days a week, to see what the competition is up to or to find out how their spin is playing in newspapers across the country. Pundits need *The Hotline* to make sure they are prepared for their next TV appearance. Reporters use it to get story ideas and keep up on the news (and are not above faxing their own work to *The Hotline,* hoping for a mention in its next edition).

Jay Leno's staff of 18 writers read *The Hotline* in search of material for the comedian's nightly monologue. The newsletter is also read carefully each day by writers and producers for ABC's *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher.* The show's executive producer, Scott Carter, says *Hotline* provides a quick and thorough synopsis of the different political viewpoints being expressed throughout punditland. Carter also reads *The Hotline* to find topics for Maher and his guests to talk about, and sometimes to find guests for the show. "If we read about some legislator in Maryland or Mississippi who's got what we consider to be some off-the-wall idea, we'll say, 'Let's get them on the show,'" he says.

In short, *The Hotline* is required reading for those who really care about politics. Albert Hunt, executive Washington editor of *The Wall Street Journal* and a frequent television pundit, calls *The Hotline* his "Bible," and he's not alone. "I think there are very few people who are either in politics or who cover politics that don't read *The Hotline,*" explains Hunt. "It's a partial tip sheet, partial background sheet, and it's a partial compendium for what's happening."

As *The Hotline*'s 43-year-old editor in chief, Craig Crawford—who was chief national correspondent for *The Orlando Sentinel* for eight years—is fond of saying, *Hotline* "covers the coverage." The newsletter, which runs about 30 pages, is a full-service web-based magazine complete with links, databases, and search options. But, as a concession to *Hotline*'s more technologically challenged readers (or those who have been taking it to lunch with them for years), it can be printed out to look like a standard newsletter. (A weekly version is also available for America Online users.) Roughly half

Hotline editor in chief Craig Crawford runs an unusual publication that, by summarizing news from other sources, has become a must-read itself.

RHODA BAER

the pages are devoted to hard news: paragraph-long summaries of stories culled from close to 500 news sources. A typical item begins like this: "*Boston Globe*'s Zuckman writes, 'just two days after' George W. Bush 'swept into town to cheering Republican crowds,' Al Gore 'blew in to a slightly less frenzied reception.'" *Hotline* also reprints the results of almost every political poll its staffers can get their hands on. The second half of the newsletter is devoted to lighter fare: people news; a roundup of sound bites from such talk shows as CNBC's *Hardball With Chris Matthews,* Fox's *The O'Reilly Factor,* and CNN's *Inside Politics*; and a recap of late-night television jokes.

Average Americans can be forgiven if they haven't read (or even heard of) *The Hotline.* Not only is there that whopping subscription price, but often the news coverage is so "inside baseball" that it may be too tedious for readers who don't care about the latest poll numbers in, say, the Rhode Island Senate race, or what *Time* magazine's Margaret Carlson talked about on CNN yesterday. *The Hotline*'s shorthand writing style can also be confusing. Pundits often are referred to by last name only. When *The Hotline* refers to "FNC's Barnes," for example, it is talking about *The Weekly Standard* executive editor and Fox News Channel's *The Beltway Boys* cohost Fred Barnes.

THE SECRET TO *THE Hotline* is not necessarily its writing style, or even its journalism, but its readers. "I think it's the Washington daily town meeting, it's how we talk to each other," says Jim Jordan, political director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and an avid *Hotline* reader. While *The Hotline* only has 450 subscribers—a misleading number, because the publication counts the entire House of Representatives as one subscriber, the Senate as another, and the White House as a third—its readers are the ones who make the decisions about what legislation to introduce, what to write about in the next day's paper, or how to spin an issue on television. *Hotline* estimates it has a readership of 25,000 to 30,000—90 percent of whom work in Washington. As Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's press secretary, John Czwartacki, says, "Anything that is as widely read in such a small gene pool as *The Hotline* in this town is going to have an impact."

The Hotline's impact is subtle, and not always easy to gauge. People use it for different reasons. One Washington lobbyist reads it to keep up on her issues, but she'll also scan *The Hotline* before running out to a congressional fund-raiser. That way, if there is any local news in the lawmaker's district, she'll be able to talk about it. Congressional aides read *The Hotline* to see if their bosses are getting their messages out effectively. One Capitol Hill staffer who used to work for an up-and-coming House member says he made it a point to fax information about his boss's activities to *The Hotline.* The newsletter's subsequent coverage, says this aide, "gave the perception that he needed to be paid attention to."

At *The Tonight Show,* Jay Leno's writers receive a printed copy of *The Hotline* every day. "What you're always looking for is as many stories and sources as possible, and [with *The Hotline*] you've got 45 potential sources of information," says *Tonight Show* writer Jon Macks, referring to the roughly 45 articles *The Hotline* carries each day. "I went through it today and probably did 18 jokes from today's *Hotline.*" Macks refuses to point out specific jokes that make it on their air from *The Hotline,* but the newsletter's writers and editors often can tell what the late-night host uses from their publication. One Leno joke that likely came from a *Hotline* story on Attorney General Janet Reno being offered a law professorship at Florida State University: "Attorney General Janet Reno has been offered a job as a law professor at Florida State University, and, if she wants it, a full football scholarship." Before Leno told the joke, the Reno story (minus the joke about the scholarship, of course) had appeared in the *Tallahassee Democrat,* which had the scoop, and in *The Hotline,* which reprinted it.

One group that really knows *The Hotline*'s power is journalists. Reporters say they get some story ideas from *The Hotline,* but that mainly they use it to keep track of news and political trends from the hinterland. "I read it for the stuff that I wouldn't necessarily see that is outside the Beltway....That is still, to me, its best use," says *Newsweek* chief political correspondent Howard Fineman. But for many Washington reporters, reading *The Hotline* is less important than getting their stories summarized in it. A write-up of a story in *The Hotline* gives most Washington reporters a chance to be seen by a much wider audience, especially if their papers are not one of Washington's Big Three—*The Wash-*

The Hotline is available online in daily and weekly versions, though some readers prefer the old-fashioned print version.

ington Post, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

As a result, *Hotline* editors and writers get the opportunity to see journalists turn into the very people they disparage most in private—publicists. More than 20 newspapers fax or e-mail *The Hotline* advance copies of all of their political stories. Those papers range in size from the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Boston Globe* to *The Telegraph* in Nashua, New Hampshire, and the *Omaha World-Herald*. *The New York Times Magazine*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Fortune*, and *Business Week* also send in advance copies of their political stories for *The Hotline* to check out.

In June, Long Island–based *Newsday* sent some of its public relations staffers to its Washington bureau in an effort to get ideas for publicizing the paper. *Newsday*'s Washington reporters were quick to suggest sending their stuff to *The Hotline*, says Stuart Vincent, communications manager at the daily. "In a town like Washington, where you have so many media outlets competing, it's tough to stand out," says Vincent. "It's partly a way of getting our stuff noticed by the other media and it's partly a way of getting our stuff noticed by the people who count in Washington, the newsmakers."

Hotline editor in chief Crawford says he invites news organizations, pollsters, and campaign workers to "abuse our fax machine." On a typical day recently, the newsletter received about 300 faxes overnight—roughly 50 percent from candidates, lawmakers, and advocacy groups; 30 percent were stories from the news media; and 20 percent were the latest polling results from pollsters (also eager to hype their handiwork).

Despite all the helpful suggestions, putting the *Hotline* together is not a simple enterprise. Each morning the newsletter's 20 staffers—most of them budding young journalists or aspiring campaign managers on their first job—arrive at work at 5 A.M. and begin combing newspapers and websites, and watching tapes of the previous night's political talkfest television shows. As most Washingtonians are heading into work, *The Hotline* staffers, buoyed by caffeine and awash in paper, are choosing what to put in that day's edition.

"Our mission statement is to be a window on the public mind for decision makers in Washington," Crawford says. Toward that end, Crawford uses a few rules of thumb to pick stories. First, he tries to emphasize the news that comes from outside Washington. That means finding news that did not appear that morning in the D.C. papers, as well as excerpting stories from news outlets across the country. A story about Texas Governor—and Republican presidential candidate—George W. Bush's campaign swing through Iowa, for example, will usually come from *The Des Moines Register*, not from *The Washington Post*.

Second, *The Hotline* aggressively covers political chatter in the mass media—whether it comes from Bill Maher on *Politically Incorrect* or from *The Simpsons*. When radio talk-show host Don Imus featured a segment last June calling first lady Hillary Clinton a lesbian, it made the pages of *The Hotline*. Almost every day *Hotline*'s readers get a reprint of David Letterman's top-ten list and the political jokes from Leno's monologue. Jokes from Conan O'Brien, Maher, and Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, among others, also are printed in *The Hotline*. "I'm personally of the view that a good joke goes further in the public arena than the most finely crafted policy speech," says Crawford. Even if the joke is crass, like the Hillary Clinton lesbian parody, Crawford says he will print it. "We have a pretty light screen for tastelessness compared to, say, a mainstream newspaper," says Crawford. "If the first lady is getting trashed by a major radio personality in that way, I think that the first lady's staff and Democrats and Republicans in Washington...need to know."

The Hotline also takes pride in documenting, almost ad nauseam, the words of Washington's pundit class. It's the one part of the newsletter that seems to glorify the Washington lifestyle, rather than providing a window for people inside the Beltway to see what is going on outside. The coverage of pundits' TV appearances is also what longtime *Hotline* readers complain most often about—even those that regularly make the talk-show rounds themselves. "To me, [*The Hotline*] focuses all too much on what was on television last night," says *Newsweek*'s Fineman, who also does work for NBC. "Even though I'm one of them, and even though I always look to see if my sound bite made *The Hotline*, I do think they overdo it some."

Crawford says the television coverage is not just part of the Beltway echo chamber. "A lot of our subscribers go on television, many of them want and need to know what kind of stories are on cable TV," Crawford says. "Those cable channels are driving a lot of dialogue in Washington. Like it or not, there is no escaping their impact on the buzz in Washington."

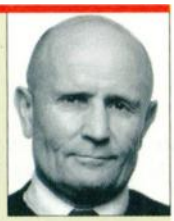
There probably is no escaping the buzz in Washington anyway, as long as *The Hotline* is around. But that is just how *Hotline* readers like it. "It's not a microcosm of America, it's a microcosm of the Beltway," says Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Governmental Studies and the author of *Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics*. Still, Sabato says he never misses an issue, and he has his students read *The Hotline*. "Why do you go to a zoo? To look at the animals. Why do you read *The Hotline*? To find out what the Beltway folks are thinking," Sabato notes. "Unfortunately, they have a disproportionate amount of power over our lives." ■

"I went through it...and probably did 18 jokes from today's *Hotline*," says *Tonight Show* writer Jon Macks.

ORDER IN THEIR COURTS

How the TV judges earned their robes. • BY CHIPP WINSTON

JUDGE MILLS LANE (syndicated)



Mills Lane

Presiding judge, 1998–

B.S., business administration, University of Nevada–Reno, 1963; J.D., University of Nevada–Reno College of Law, 1970

Nevada State Athletic Commission, boxing referee, 1963–present; Washoe County (Nevada), deputy district attorney, 1971–79; Washoe County, chief deputy sheriff, 1979–83; Washoe County, district attorney, 1983–91; Nevada District Court (Reno), judge, 1991–98

Can you take Judge Judy in the ring? Well, hell yeah. I was a fighter...that's where I made my living. But she's a tough girl, maybe too tough....I have a great deal of respect for her.

Judge Mills Lane *Fact:* *Lane was the referee who disqualified boxer Mike Tyson for biting Evander Holyfield's ear during a bout on June 28, 1997.*

DIVORCE COURT (syndicated)

Mablean Ephriam

Presiding judge, 1999–

B.A., political studies, Pitzer College (Claremont, California), 1971; J.D., Whittier College School of Law (Los Angeles, California), 1978

Federal Bureau of Prisons, correctional officer, Terminal Island, California, 1971–73; Los Angeles, deputy city attorney (criminal branch), 1978–82; private practitioner, 1982–present

What separates you from the other TV judges? What separates [me] is personality, the freshness that I will carry. I'm not a Hollywood type....I don't think I am. I have a real sense of fairness.

Divorce Court *Fact:* *Previous versions of the show featured actors playing the parts of litigants; the new* Divorce Court *has real-life spouses.*

JUDGE GREG MATHIS (syndicated)

Greg E. Mathis

Presiding judge, 1999–

B.S., public administration, Eastern Michigan University, 1982; J.D., University of Detroit School of Law, 1988

Coleman Young mayoral campaign (Detroit), citywide coordinator, 1989; mayoral assistant, 1989–93; private practitioner, Detroit, 1993–95; Michigan District Court (Detroit), judge, 1995–98

Are you heavy on the gavel? I think I'm a tough but compassionate judge. I run a tight courtroom and I lay on that gavel when I need to.

JUDGE JUDY (syndicated)

Judith Sheindlin

Presiding judge, 1996–

B.A., government, American University, 1963; L.L.B., New York Law School, 1965

New York City Corporation Counsel, Family Court division, prosecuting attorney,1972–82; New York City Family Court, judge, 1982–86; supervising judge (Manhattan), 1986–96

Declined to comment.

THE PEOPLE'S COURT (syndicated)

Gerald Sheindlin

Presiding judge, 1999–

B.S., speech, Long Island University, 1956; J.D., Brooklyn Law School, 1959

Adlerberg & Sheindlin, partner, 1959–80; United States administrative law judge, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1980–83; New York City Criminal Court, judge, 1983–86; New York State Supreme Court, judge, 1986–99

Who's more of a* People's Court *role model, Joseph Wapner or [your immediate predecessor] Ed Koch? My role model would probably have to be [my wife] Judge Judy.

JUDGE JOE BROWN (syndicated)

Joe Brown

Presiding judge, 1998–

B.A., political science, University of California–Los Angeles, 1970; J.D., UCLA, 1973

Memphis, City Attorney's Office, city prosecutor, 1976–77; City Public Defender's Office, chief public defender, 1977–78; private practitioner, 1978–90; Criminal Court of Tennessee (Memphis), judge, 1990–present

Do you carry a gun in the Memphis courtroom? When you walk through the valley of death, it doesn't hurt to be on the same level with someone in there who may be somebody you should worry about.

You are the only active judge on TV. Do you have any ethical issues with this? Nope....[The jobs] cross-germinate and they help each other out.

JUDGE WAPNER'S ANIMAL COURT (on Animal Planet)

Joseph A. Wapner

Presiding judge, 1998–

B.A., philosophy, University of Southern California, 1941; L.L.B., USC, 1948

Private practitioner, 1949–59; Los Angeles Municipal Court, judge, 1959–61; Los Angeles County Superior Court, judge, 1961–79; private judge arbitrator, 1979–85; *The People's Court*, presiding judge, 1981–93

What's it like presiding over pets? It's small claims court. It's the same thing that I've always done except that people bring their pets into the courts. People love their pets.

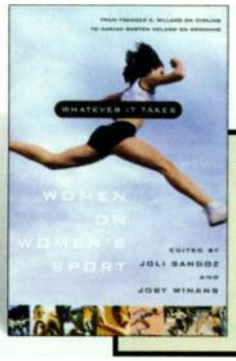
Animal Court *Fact:* *Rusty the bailiff also served as bailiff on* The People's Court *during Judge Wapner's tenure on that show.*

HOOP DREAMS

An anthology of essays by champion athletes, Pulitzer Prize winners, and weekend warriors celebrates women's love of sport. Also: Harley-Davidson's bad-boy fame.

NEARLY 40 PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL athletes and 37 percent of college athletes are women. However, only one in ten sports articles or TV sportscasts focuses on women's efforts. Why, in an era of such robust participation, are women still considered the "second sex" on the field and on the court?

This is what two lifelong athletes, Joli Sandoz and Joby Winans, set out to examine; the result should serve as a rallying cry for female competitors. *Whatever It Takes: Women On Women's Sport* is a collection of 56 essays and poems by championship athletes, weekend warriors, and Pulitzer Prize–winning writers. The pieces range from the story of a young girl wowing boys and earning their respect on the baseball field in the late 1950s to a woman who plays squash for the first time at age 56 and quickly reaches the women's national championships.



WHATEVER IT TAKES: Women On Women's Sport
Edited by Joli Sandoz & Joby Winans
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
August 1999

Some of the essays are reflections on the evolving role of women in sports: Megan McNamer writes about her childhood obsession with basketball—as a spectator relegated to the sidelines because of her gender. She returns to the bleachers more than 20 years later to watch women excelling in the sport she could only dream of playing.

But mostly these pieces celebrate strong women who have found both power and beauty in the swing of a bat, the arc of a throw, and the brute force of bench-pressing 215 pounds. In an essay called "Pulling No Punches," Rene Denfield explains what draws her to compete as a boxer: "People unfamiliar with boxing often see a fight as a flurry of emotion, a sport of bloody conquest," she writes. "But emotion is the boxer's enemy. Fights are calculated, impersonal....The aim may be to pummel your opponent, but this goal coexists with a profound respect." —*Kimberly Conniff*

THESE DAYS, THE EAGLE CREST OF Harley-Davidson's logo is as much an American icon as the Golden Arches or the Nike Swoosh, but it wasn't always so. In this exuberant paean to the motorcycle, *Car and Driver* editor at large Brock Yates examines how Harley-Davidson, Inc., has fluctuated between dubious and triumphant business decisions since its incorporation in 1907.

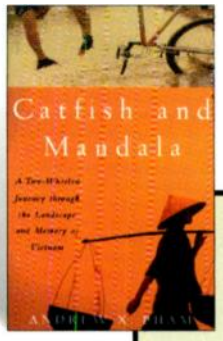
The grand irony, according to Yates, is that after decades of being pummeled by foreign competitors who made sleeker machines, Harley's reputation for making big, loud "hogs" eventually became its greatest marketing asset: "If there is a simple reason for the appeal of the Harley-Davidson on a worldwide basis, it lies in its perceived power and its trappings of Yankee insolence."

Yates tracks two parallel histories: the motorcycle giant's bumpy economic ride and the emergence of a renegade but distinctly patriotic biker culture. For most of its history, Harley rejected its outlaw image as bad for business, but, when threatened with financial ruin, the company finally understood that hard-core, "live-free-or-die" bikers were its saving grace. While Yates alleges some unseemly sides of the company—the founding Davidson brothers' anti-Semitism, the bullying of dealerships, early attempts to bend antitrust laws—he also celebrates its flinty determination and hallmark adherence to tradition. Now Harley-Davidson is a merchandising behemoth, with clothing lines, theme restaurants, and a hearty brand that is truly nonpareil in its appeal to adventurous yuppies.

Some of these developments cause Yates to worry for Harley's precious individualistic character. But one can only cheer when its executives celebrate its listing on the New York Stock Exchange in July 1987—a mere two years after facing bankruptcy—by taking a victory ride to Wall Street.
—*Matthew Reed Baker*

OUTLAW MACHINE
By Brock Yates
Little, Brown and Company
June 1999

BOTH A MEMOIR AND TRAVELOGUE, *Catfish and Mandala* tells the story of one man's ambitious bicycle trip through Mexico, Japan, and picturesque Vietnam in a quest to understand his identity as a Vietnamese-American. In search of a kinship with his birth country, Andrew Pham wards off beggars and robbers while befriending those willing to share their homeland with him. Meanwhile, Pham is haunted by the memories of the life he left behind as a child in Vietnam.



CATFISH AND MANDALA
By Andrew Pham
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
October 1999

Along his way, Pham returns home and recalls his father's brutal cane whippings and the sweet-tasting star fruits he and his sister ate while perched atop their grandmother's roof. He is shocked by the reality he finds in his hometown, which was once a serene village. This hamlet is now an impoverished, overcrowded community full of people desperate for a way to get to the United States and bitter that Pham will not sponsor their trips there. Confronted with this animosity, Pham becomes cynical about the relationship he has with both Vietnam and the U.S. He feels shunned by Americans for being a foreigner, and rejected by Vietnamese for being a *Viet-kieu*—a derogatory term for a Vietnamese-American.

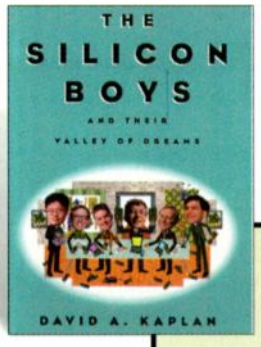
Catfish and Mandala explores the public and personal impact of the Vietnam War as the author returns to a country he left when he was ten years old. Pham's bike and memories guide him and his readers along a trek toward his identity and an attempt to make peace with his past.

—Bridget Samburg

"HE DISCOVERED VEGETARIANISM, meditation, and Eastern religion; then picked apples on a commune...and then headed off to India, barefoot, to find spiritualism...." This is hardly what you'd expect from the man who cofounded the first company to make personal computers, but it's the true tale of Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple Computer, Inc. He and the other quirky characters of Silicon Valley are the focus of *Newsweek* senior writer David Kaplan's *The Silicon Boys And Their Valley Of Dreams*—a history of the place with "the largest legal creation of wealth in the history of the planet."

The Silicon Boys follows the valley's high-tech stars, ranging from Bill Hewlett and David Packard to the two Stanford University graduate students who casually made the list of websites that turned into the multibillion company known as Yahoo! Inc. Details about the great inventions and inventors of the last half century, the race for functional PC operating systems, and such valley excesses as $18-a-pound ostrich salami and $1,500-a-bottle balsamic vinegar are all included.

The story of Oracle Corporation, the second-largest software company in the world, is made all the more interesting when one learns about founder Larry Ellison—whose "mating" habits and various cars, homes, and planes are as fascinating as his business sense. When asked if Ellison lies, a cofounder of Oracle says, "We prefer to say Larry has a problem with tenses. For example, 'Our product is available now' might mean it'll be available in a few months or that Larry was thinking about maybe one day developing the product." Kaplan concludes, "It was precisely that kind of delusion that allowed him to start Oracle. One man's prevaricator is another man's visionary."

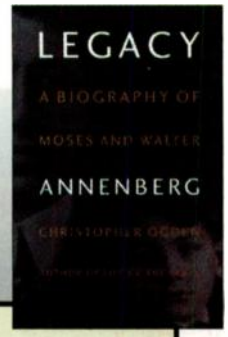


THE SILICON BOYS
By David Kaplan
William Morrow
June 1999

—Amy DiTullio

THE CLASSIC MOVIE *CITIZEN KANE* features a publishing tycoon modeled after William Randolph Hearst, who never forgets his "Rosebud"—a symbol of personal traumas that goad his struggle for power, money, and respect. Though never mythologized in cinema, Moses Annenberg was a bullying potentate cut from similar cloth—he began as a soldier in Hearst's dirty circulation wars of the early 1900s, rose to fortune, then died broke and dishonored. His shy, stuttering son was left to redeem the family, eventually pioneering magazine powerhouses *TV Guide* and *Seventeen*.

Today, the Annenberg name, stamped on family-endowed journalism schools at the University of Pennsylvania and University of Southern California, connotes media ethics and policy reform. But it was once associated with shady dealings and yellow journalism. *Legacy: A Biography Of Moses And Walter Annenberg* tells how the son's business smarts, social climbing, and multibillion philanthropy cleansed the Annenberg reputation.



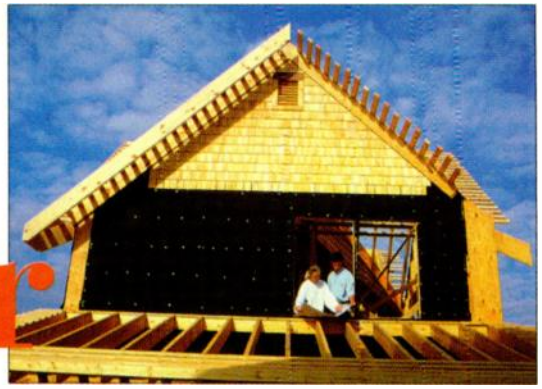
LEGACY:
A Biography Of Moses And Walter Annenberg
By Christopher Ogden
Little, Brown and Company
June 1999

The father, Moses, built his own publishing empire, including a virtual monopoly on the horse-racing information used by bookies. Through a more legitimate property, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Moses led shrill attacks against Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal that sparked a vengeful federal prosecution for large-scale tax evasion, according to author Christopher Ogden.

After his father's death, Walter, once a do-nothing fixture of café society, shaped up and rebuilt the Annenberg empire. Among his successes were the World War II-era launch of *Seventeen*. And in 1953, he took over *TV Guide*, creating its now-standard formula of city editions with local listings combined with a national articles package.

Despite heavy reliance on family sources, *Legacy* casts a critical eye, though perhaps treading lightly on the son's clashes with the striking *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper guild.

—Jessica Seigel



Making Your House Beautiful

Whether you use an interior designer or go it alone, these resources will help you get down to brass tacks. • BY LESLIE HEILBRUNN

on television:

▲ *Design Basics* host Sherry Ruggieri.

DESIGN BASICS

(HGTV, Wednesdays at 9:30 P.M. and 12:30 A.M. ET, 6:30 P.M. and 9:30 P.M. PT): Sit back and learn the key principles of design with host Sherry Ruggieri. Focusing on a single theme per episode, Ruggieri lays out the basic rules that should guide decorating decisions, such as where to place lights and furniture. She then proceeds to show the audience through trial and error how to put the principles into practice.

▶ *Designing For The Sexes* host Michael Payne (right) counsels a couple shopping for tile.

DESIGNING FOR THE SEXES

(HGTV, Thursdays at 8 P.M. ET, 5 P.M. PT): Men are from Mars and women are from Venus—even when it comes to home decorating. Michael Payne comes to the rescue of couples who have reached a decorating impasse. By defining the issues that separate a couple and by looking for common ground, Payne offers a design strategy that, in theory, leaves the cohabitating pair feeling uncompromised and ecstatic about the result.

▲ *Next Door*'s Katie Brown hangs wallpaper trim.

NEXT DOOR WITH KATIE BROWN

(Lifetime Television, Monday through Friday at 9 A.M. ET/PT and Saturdays at 1 P.M. and 1:30 P.M. ET/PT): Katie Brown is a thirtysomething Michigan girl-next-door whose lifestyle show is geared to a youngish audience. "Every 'how-to' show should be as accessible, friendly, and simple as this one," explains Leslie Eades, vice-president of advertising for Pier 1 Imports, Inc. Brown inspires you to be more creative in your home by showing you stylish yet quick and cheap things to do.

▶ *This Old House*'s Steve Thomas (left) and Norm Abram (right) talk over rebuilding a burnt house with contractor Tom Silva (center).

THIS OLD HOUSE

(PBS, check local listing for times): Host Steve Thomas, master carpenter Norm Abram, and the rest of the gang have been helping Americans improve their homes for more than a decade. While the show is geared toward fixer-uppers, "they have interesting techniques that they come up with, like how to deal with rotted wood or something wrong with the furnace," says Beth Baronbaum, a New York City architect.

RON CHAPPLE/FPG

in the magazines:

ELLE DECOR

(Hachette Filipacchi Magazines, Inc., $29 annually): *Elle Decor* tends to be "more of a leader and more forward with their stuff," says John Heilmann, owner of Homenature furniture store in Amagansett, New York. Readers learn about design principles and the latest trends in features like "Solutions," in which decorators tackle problems like a tiny kitchen, and "Truth In Decorating," which shows ten designs of a particular item, such as a chair.

HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

(Hearst Communications, Inc., $19.97 annually): Gail Schultz, co-owner of the Totem design store in New York City, says that *House Beautiful* is great because it's "more about really giving you directions on how to do things." The magazine's "Design Star" section, for example, profiles designers and their work and then explains how to achieve similar looks. The products featured by the magazine, adds Schultz, are accessible to the general public: "They make sure that a lot of stores in your area carry the products."

HOUSE & GARDEN

(Condé Nast Publications, Inc., $18 annually): Marty Marston of IKEA North America likes this magazine because "it's a little aspirational but not so far out that you can't reach it." While it's not a how-to magazine, sections like "Hunting & Gathering" tell you how to put the latest designs into action. For example, the August issue focused on pink fabrics and modern-shaped wicker furniture (and even showed how to combine the two). Also, "Trade Secrets" tells you where to find some of the pieces that enlivened a house featured in the magazine.

METROPOLITAN HOME

(Hachette Filipacchi Magazines, Inc., $19.94 annually): Dedicated to contemporary and modern design, this bimonthly is for "the regular customer who has good taste, knows what they like, and knows what's going on," says Gail Schultz. The magazine's "Take Note" section highlights the latest basic design objects ranging from magnets to sleek dumbbells to stackable furnishings. "Editors' Choice" picks out the best designs of particular items, such as outdoor furniture, and "Ask David" is a home-furnishing and design Q&A built from readers' questions.

nest

(Nest LLC, $34 annually): This quirky quarterly magazine works well because "it's a much broader, all-encompassing view of what a home is," explains John Heilmann. "They go over design trends…but they're not following the hottest architect or interior decorator." Instead, it seeks out the creative, voyeuristic pleasure of home design. Subjects covered in the summer 1999 issue included an architect's seaside shack constructed almost entirely of found recycled material, fashion designer Todd Oldham's design for The Hotel in Miami Beach, and a visit to the country's only surviving Shaker community.

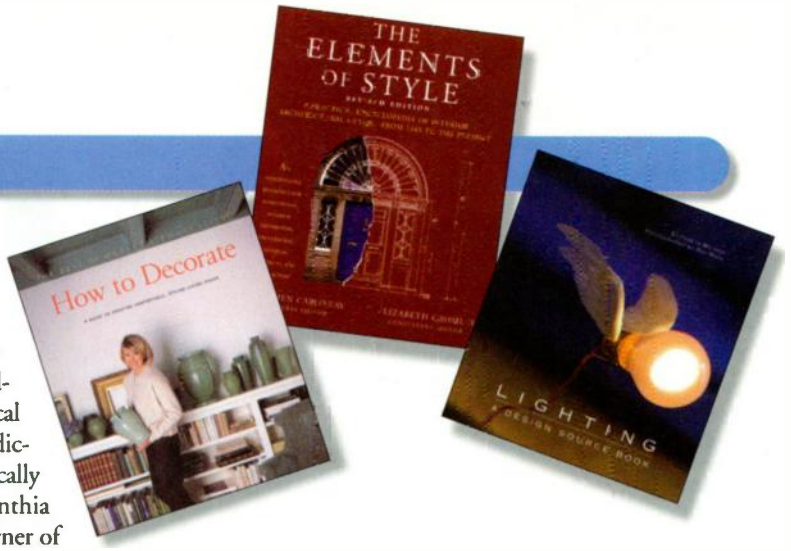
THIS OLD HOUSE

(Time Publishing Ventures, Inc. $19.95 annually): A companion to the eponymous TV show, readers can "Ask Norm," about problems like how to dampen household noise or how to build a countertop. If your kitchen or bathroom has room for improvement, check out "House Calls with Steve" to see his renovation plans for problematic spaces. In addition to showing actual renovation projects, *This Old House* has regular articles on financing home improvements and on which materials to use when undertaking those improvements.

THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

(The Condé Nast Publications Ltd., $7.95 an issue/$161 annually by air-mail): This British import is unlike anything in the U.S., says *Metropolitan Home* editor Donna Warner. "They show a great range of locations, and especially well-chosen product from fabrics to rugs." In the September issue the magazine featured a Moroccan-inspired house in Tangier, a futuristic home on the Welsh coast, and a medieval house in Rhodes, Greece. The "Antennae" section reviews the latest in style, decoration, and design while "Inspiration" shows how to re-create the design ideas presented in the magazine.

in the bookstores:



HOW TO DECORATE

(Clarkson Potter, 1996, $20): You too can live just like author Martha Stewart. Through photos of her own East Hampton home—as well as the homes of her daughter and other associates—Stewart shows how to create a stylish, welcoming, and functional environment in every room of the house. What's more, the doyenne of domesticity provides instructions for such decorating basics as painting a room, paneling a wall, and making decoratively stitched blankets.

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE

(Simon & Schuster, 1997, $70): If you think you want a neoclassical living room, but aren't exactly sure what that means, this encyclopedia of interior design is for you. Arranged by style, the book takes you from Tudor and Jacobean (both 1485–1625) all the way to "Beyond Modern" (1950 to the present). With intricate photos and diagrams of everything from door, ceiling, and staircase details to metalwork and woodwork of each historical period, "It's a visual dictionary that's historically accurate," says Cynthia Conigliaro, the co-owner of Archivia: The Decorative Arts Book Shop in New York City. "It has the pictures and the words that can help you talk to your decorator."

CURTAINS: A Design Source Book (1997); FLOORS: A Design Source Book (1997); LIGHTING: A Design Source Book (1998)

(Stewart, Tabori & Chang, $40 each): Often an afterthought when it comes to home decorating, floors, curtains, and lighting are essential to creating a complete, finished look in any room. These books are "very well organized," explains Cynthia Conigliaro. "They have great illustrations, and they're organized by style." If you know you want hard tile floors, you can skip right to that section of the book. On the other hand, if you're clueless about which type of floor will perfectly accent your living room, leaf through the book to figure out which combination of colors, textures, and finishes is appropriate. Each book includes a "Practicalities" section that explains how to assess your needs and shows you how to do renovations yourself. There is also a directory of suppliers.

on the web:

EBAY.COM

For miscellaneous online antiquing, this is *the* place to go. "You might find something on eBay that somebody wants to unload," says Robert Verdi, personal shopper at ABC Carpet & Home in New York City. "[I]f you're lucky, it's the thing you've been looking for your whole life."

HOMEPORTFOLIO.COM

An extensive catalog of home-decorating products, this site can help you with anything from plumbing fixtures and doorknobs to furniture, tile, and cabinetry. "It's a really good, user-friendly site," says Wid Chapman, chairman of the interior design department at Parsons School of Design. "It's one of those sites that I might access as a designer to find items for a client, but a client might access it as well." The site also offers profiles of the companies it features, with locations and phone numbers.

IMPROVENET.COM

If you're looking for a contractor, architect, or designer, this site has compiled a database that highlights those who have passed improvenet.com's five-part screening test. The site also provides online galleries to help you design the rooms and exterior of your home and has tips for starting out, designing, and hiring expert help.

NYTIMES.COM

(www.nytimes.com) Marianne Rohrlich is "the Nancy Drew of the home industry," says Robert Verdi. Every Thursday, Rohrlich's "Personal Shopper" column reveals her style—as well as her reportorial skills—by touting the latest cool trends and providing source information for design needs ranging from upholsterers to ergonomic desk chairs. If you get the *Times*, you can turn to her column in the actual pages of Thursday's "House & Home" section, but if you're not a regular reader, it's available for free online each week from Thursday until midnight the following Wednesday.

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(continued from page 18)

expose the absurdity of the U.S. cable systems. Why do I live in a world where I can listen to live English Premier League games over the Internet, but can't receive more than 15 channels of marginally interesting cable programming when there are dozens of channels I am not being given access to?

RICK LIEBLING
New York, NY

LUDICROUS

[Senior writer] Robert Schmidt's attack on the Pulitzer Prize awarded to the New York *Daily News* ["For *This* They Get A Pulitzer?" The Investigators, September] makes no sense, unless you accept Schmidt's dubious hypothesis, and his ludicrous interpretation of the law.

The hypothesis is that [U.S. Representative] Charles Rangel and [Harlem businessman] Percy Sutton—two of the savviest power brokers ever to roam the canyons of Manhattan—mistakenly signed a contract that required Sutton to pay more than he intended to for the use of the Apollo Theatre, because Sutton wasn't sharp enough to understand what 25 percent of gross revenues meant.

Schmidt also buys the bizarre argument that anyone who signs a contract that he doesn't understand is automatically free to ignore its contents. It's obvious why Rangel and Sutton would promote such novel notions; the mystery is what made *Brill's Content* gullible enough to accept them.

CHARLES KAISER
New York, NY

ANOTHER CHANCE

*I missed Diane Sawyer's *20/20* interview with Vice-President Al Gore after his June 16 announcement of his candidacy for president. Joan Konner's Talk Back article in the September issue ["Diane 'Got' Gore. But What Did We Get?"] made me relieved to have done so. It also made me impressed by Mr. Gore's calm professionalism. I know Diane Sawyer is capable of superb journalism. Perhaps, if she is lucky, Mr. Gore will give her another opportunity to demonstrate her own professionalism.

PRUE BEIDLER
Lake Forest, IL

SANDBAGGER

*Thank you for finally nailing Diane Sawyer. She has been sandbagging people in the name of exposé journalism long enough. If Joan Konner's critique did not give her pause, she's hopeless.

BILL WILLIAMS
High Point, NC

ABC's Diane Sawyer (right) "got" the Gores.

JUST BUSINESS

*Don't you think the premise of Joan Konner's piece—that Diane Sawyer's interview with Al Gore was "...not well researched, not informative, not revealing...," etc.— was a trifle ridiculous? The whole point of the interview was a straightforward business deal between *20/20* and the vice-president: Sawyer got to one-up the tabloids, and Gore got to pursue his [former presidential adviser] Dick Morris–inspired tactic of "triangulation" and launching his presidential campaign by disowning [President Bill Clinton].

DANIEL PLATT
Los Angeles, CA

ON GORE'S GORING

*Joan Konner exposed Diane Sawyer's goring of Al Gore in an interview that looked and felt more like the contact sport of character assassination than a content-centric search for the truth.

DOV HOCH
Atlit, Israel

NO SPACE WASTED

*At last, someone has the courage to question *Consumer Reports* ["Testing *Consumer Reports*," September]. As a longtime reader of *Consumer Reports* (over 45 years) and onetime supporter, I find the present-day *Consumer Reports* no longer useful for objective consumer information. In times past they used to publish more details of their testing procedures, so that even if one did not agree with their judgments, one had the information upon which one could draw one's own conclusions. In more recent times they rarely "waste" the space on such "boring" information and substitute instead merely a description of the tests and their final judgments.

DAVE BRIDGER
St. Louis, MO

WHERE'S THE LAB?

*Your attempted hatchet job on *Consumer Reports* gets an unsatisfactory rating for both its quality and its effectiveness. Despite eight pages of unsubstantiated rumor spreading, [staff writer] Jennifer Greenstein came up with nothing of substance to dim the reputation of *Consumer Reports.*

You conducted no independent verification of *Consumer Reports*'s tests. The only mistake you could find: the pet-food error, which the magazine widely admitted. As for the complaint that "the correction was never flagged on the cover," perhaps *Brill's Content* will make a correction on its cover: You can't claim to put *Consumer Reports* "through our test lab" when the "test lab" doesn't exist.

JOHN K. WILSON
Chicago, IL

Editor's note: For more on the *Consumer Reports* story, see "Report From The Ombudsman," page 30.

COVER STORY

*I have an observation concerning the article "Testing *Consumer Reports*," by Jennifer Greenstein. In the section of the article that has to do with Iams pet food, Ms. Greenstein seems to suggest that *Consumer Reports* should have announced the correction of that story on the cover of its magazine. Is this standard practice? I notice your correc-

tions appear on the [first] letters page, similar to the policy of *Consumer Reports*. It seems Ms. Greenstein expected *Consumer Reports* to redefine journalism standards by announcing the correction on the cover. I don't recall seeing another magazine or newspaper do this.

JOHN BITTLE
Columbia, SC

Editor in chief Steven Brill responds: Our policy is to publish corrections at least as prominently as the mistake was published. Thus, if we made a mistake on the first page, we'd have to correct it there.

SET IT STRAIGHT

As *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reporters involved in the coverage of the Columbine High School tragedy, we cannot let Mark Obmascik's exercise in sour grapes go unchallenged [Letters, September]. Obmascik, a *Denver Post* reporter, chides *Brill's Content* for its "puffy" piece on the *News*'s handling of the story, given what he claims are major errors in the paper's coverage. Primarily, he contends the *News* "fell for a hoax, leading its April 24 paper with a long story about a web-posted suicide note" apparently written by gunman Eric Harris. Wrong.

Our banner headline that day [said] that funerals began. The report on the investigation of the cyberspace note was [near] the bottom of page one.

The facts are that a source close to the investigation leaked the note to a *News* reporter and lead investigator John Kiekbusch confirmed that they had launched an investigation because the writing style matched Harris's missives.

That's exactly how we reported it: "Police are investigating a note purportedly written by Columbine High School gunman Eric Harris that blames Tuesday's murderous assault on parents, teachers, and 'your children who have ridiculed me.'"

The story went on to say that the note also threatened future violence, particularly on April 26. By the next afternoon, police said their exhaustive review of the note now led them to believe Harris had not written it—and the *News* reported that.

Telling the public what police are investigating is not falling for a hoax; it's reporting the news. Falling for a hoax is telling readers that Broncos quarterback John Elway has a nipple ring (*Denver Post*, September 22, 1997).

When we recently told Kiekbusch about Obmascik's claim, he responded: "You weren't suckered. We were all holding our breath on April 26."

KEVIN VAUGHAN, LYNN BARTELS
Denver Rocky Mountain News
Denver, CO

> "I stand by the reporting I did....It was done in a professional, direct manner. It was not 'pieced' together or 'constructed'; fragments from different scenes were not used." —*Woodward*

(continued from page 23)

when they dispute published accounts. Then along comes Brill, who says he interviewed Bennett. Only then did Bennett apparently dispute for the first time two paragraphs in a scene on page 259.

When Brill interviewed me for his column on July 29, he was initially vague about exactly how Bennett made this alleged denial to him. I found his approach slippery and indirect. So I asked Brill for permission to tape the conversation. He was taping it himself, and he readily agreed. I pressed on what Bennett was denying.

Brill said: "I called him [Bennett] and basically the way I approached him was, 'How could you have allowed yourself to be quoted? How could you allow information to be—.' You know, the obvious question: 'How could you allow there to be information about a conversation that only you and the president could know about? If one assumes just for a minute, just for argument's sake, that Clinton is not the source of that conversation, you must be the source of that conversation, and it seems to me that you're, you know, this isn't the first time you've been interviewed by a reporter, you know, my experience is that smart lawyers usually won't let that happen. Did that happen?'"

It is remarkable that Brill would so candidly disclose his technique. To me, it borders on intimidation. The "How could you have allowed yourself" formulation and the "Smart lawyers usually won't let that happen" declaration hardly suggests neutral inquiry. It also tends to invite a quibble or a denial. Further, Brill told me explicitly that he was trying to determine if any of the lawyers had violated attorney-client privilege—a sensitive subject with attorneys, who could be disciplined for infractions. Brill said such attorney-client violations would be an even better story. He made it clear he was waving around the possibility with several of the attorneys he interviewed.

So what did Bennett say? Brill told me but unfortunately didn't publish it in his column. According to Brill, "He said, 'It is true they went for a stroll on the White House grounds. It is true that they walked around with cigars. It is not true that that conversation happened during one of those strolls.'"

But Brill said Bennett indicated that conversation took place elsewhere.

"Yeah," Brill said to me. "And in fact, I vaguely remember him quoted elsewhere or telling—. I've seen that written. That is not a surprising thing to have heard attributed to him."

Until *Shadow* was published, as best I can tell, Clinton was never quoted saying, "I'm retired." But the "I'm retired" quote attributed to Clinton appears twice in the book. First, on page 259 during the cigar stroll, and a second time in a December 1997 meeting with Bennett on page 361. When I pointed this out to Brill, he acknowledged it.

So at most Bennett, under Brill's interrogation technique, seems to be denying not the quote or interchange but the venue in which it took place. My careful reporting, done closer in time to the events, places Clinton's "I'm retired" line in those two places.

Brill in his column made no attempt to sort out the two references. The cigar stroll took on particular significance, Brill told me, because he and Bennett determined that it was the only time in *Shadow* when no one else was present in a sensitive Clinton-Bennett discussion.

I stand by the reporting I did and have the fullest confidence in it. It was done in a professional, direct manner. It was not "pieced" together or "constructed"; fragments from different scenes were not used. There were no combinations of "almost-facts," as Brill alleged in his crude attempt at parody.

Brill's further assertion that somehow Alice Mayhew, my editor at Simon & Schuster for 25 years, egged me on to dramatize the book because 21 years ago she attempted to tell Brill about the value of a narrative story in a long book is preposterous and wrong. Nothing of the kind happened.

In the second example cited by Brill, Sydney Hoffmann, one of Monica Lewinsky's lawyers, has complained that she never worried that Lewinsky might be delusional with an alleged "Clara Bow syndrome." Brill said Hoffmann maintained the paragraph is, in Brill's words, "pure fiction." The mistake in it is that "Clara Bow syndrome" should have been called "Clérambault's syndrome." As William Safire explained in his August 1, 1999, *New York Times Magazine* column, this is an example of a "mishearing, or passed-along garble, of another's spoken communication." *The Weekly Standard* noted in a subsequent August 23 editorial, "In flat, unaccented American English—but for the barely vocalized 'm' between its second and third syllables—'Clérambault's syndrome' is, phonically, 'Clara Bow syndrome.'"

The substance of the paragraph is correct. Hoffmann thought that Lewinsky might have erotomania, which was first described by the French psychiatrist G.G. de Clérambault, and involves the romantic and sexual delusions of a woman about a man in a position of power. It is thus misleading for Hoffmann to create the impression that the substance of the paragraph is false.

The third example Brill used involves the Jane Sherburne controversy, which has now been discussed in the pages of *Brill's Content* and other newspapers. Sherburne, a White House lawyer who dealt with scandals, complained in a deposition taken by a conservative legal watchdog group that I "made up" the dialogue in a scene between her and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

I responded strongly in defending my account, but we have recently exchanged friendly letters. On July 29, Sherburne wrote me, "Let me be clear with you: the gist of this particular account is essentially right. This event happened; it was not fabricated. I have never suggested otherwise. Had I been asked in my deposition—

"The whole point of my piece...was that he adds those details when he isn't sure of them, thus giving him the ability to lard up his book with the stuff of great dramatic narrative." —*Brill*

and I was not—whether you got it right, I would have given that answer." Sherburne also wrote, "I did not recall at the time of my testimony, nor do I now recall, purporting to recite actual dialogue during our interviews...."

In a letter to Sherburne, I responded, "...I did not mean to suggest that you deliberately gave false testimony, and I have no basis for believing that you did. However, having reviewed my transcripts and notes of my interviews with you as well as with others, I stand by my account and the quotations in the book."

Sherburne concluded her letter by writing, "I hope we can put this controversy behind us." We have.

Despite what Sherburne implied in her deposition, the seven hours of tapes of our interviews make it clear that she realized our discussions were on background for use in the book. The other details of her role in the Clinton White House in 1995 and 1996, covering dozens of scenes and 56 pages, are unchallenged because I was careful. Those details include the behind-the-scenes White House handling of the travel-office investigation, the discovery of the FBI files, and Hillary Clinton's Rose Law Firm billing records.

Brill's greatest offense is his blanket claim that he "...talked to 12 people who could have been sources for specific scenes in this book but claim either that they weren't asked, or that they were asked but gave Woodward conflicting information that did not make it into the book." Brill claims that "most" of these alleged dozen people insisted on anonymity so he could not name them. He names none. But what is it I didn't ask about? Or what was I told that was not used in the book? Brill offers not a hint. This allegation is akin to me writing that 12 people said someone is a scoundrel without providing any reasons for that conclusion. It is a most basic rule of journalism that anonymous declarations of character defects without specifics should not be published. There is a reason for this rule. How can the person labeled or criticized respond? "Joe is a bum, said one source" or "12 people" has no place in journalism, let alone a publication that purports to believe in accountability.

Given Brill's assertion that he found no one who disputed "a major substantive aspect" of my reporting, what non-substantive aspect is he talking about? The color of the walls? Something earlier reliably reported to have been said on a White House stroll but also said later? The mishearing of a French psychiatrist that sounds like "Clara Bow"?

Brill alleges that my method renders my reporting "utterly unaccountable" on the dramatic details. But it is the specificity—dates, places, named participants—that has allowed him to attempt to check. In doing so, he and others may have found some flaws. I have always said I have yet to write a perfect book.

What I resent deeply is Brill's tone that somehow any part of this book is fiction or what he calls the "novelization, or even the Hollywoodization," that I want to entertain at the expense of the full story. Brill has got that completely wrong. The subheadline of his column says, "...Bob Woodward doesn't let pesky facts or contradictory evidence get in the way of the story." In all the column, Brill does not cite one fact or piece of contradictory evidence that was available to me at the time I wrote the book. But that is the story line he has chosen to construct. It's sad. The main responsibility of accountability reporting such as Brill attempts to do is to separate the quibble from the distortion and misrepresentation. The whole cast of his column shows that he fails to distinguish the basic differences. There is no excuse for getting anything wrong. But many of my books unfortunately have contained a handful of minor errors that in no way reflect on the substantive reporting. In 1994, for example, after I published my book *The Agenda*, about the making of economic policy in the Clinton White House, James Carville, the president's chief political strategist, called me about the depiction of his extensive role in the book. "I could quibble, but you got it right."

Brill should relax and focus on his own methods. The book was carefully done. Again, it is not perfect, but when a young Steve Brill equivalent checks what is checkable years from now, he will find that *Shadow* is "right on the money," just as it was in the two Watergate books I coauthored that Brill says he checked in 1983.

BRILL ANSWERS BACK

Let's take Bob Woodward's points, one by one.

I. I thought I'd made it clear that Mr. Bennett was denying that the cigar-walk conversation with President Clinton (in which the president says he's "retired" from philandering) ever took place. But Woodward has chosen to parse my words to imply that I'm simply saying that it did not take place during that walk. So, I'll make it clearer: Bennett told me that a conversation with that dialogue did not take place, period.

Also, note Woodward's argument that "at most, Bennett...seems to be denying not the quote...but the venue...." In other words, he's implying that it doesn't matter if the conversation happened but did not happen during one of those intimate walks on the White House grounds. A fair point, if I had said that Woodward doesn't get the gist of his books right when, in fact, I said the

> "I hope in Bob's reply he'll tell us whether he thinks he should have mentioned contradictory accounts of events...rather than simply having narrated as fact the one side of a story he decided to go with...." —*Brill*

opposite. Given the type of book Woodward has written, there are two reasons that this is an important detail. First, the whole point of my piece about Woodward was that he adds those details when he isn't sure of them, thus giving him the ability to lard up his book with the stuff of great dramatic narrative—as in this ditty from the passage in question: "Perhaps it was the intimacy of the walk, the perfectly tended White House grounds or the male...communion suggested by the cigars...." Second, by having the conversation happen in this venue, Woodward places Bennett alone with the president. This means that Bennett must be the source (unless Woodward wants to tell us that he puts secondhand stuff between quote marks) and that Bennett must have violated his obligation to his client to keep this kind of conversation confidential. To accuse a lawyer of that is no small matter.

2. Woodward's characterization of my opening paragraphs as an "assertion" that his editor "egged [him] on to dramatize the book" is deceptive. Readers may remember that I opened the piece using this notion of his editor egging him on as a parody of Woodward's fill-in-the-blanks technique, and then told readers that that's exactly what I had done. That's hardly an "assertion" that he did it.

3. Woodward's handling of his Sydney Hoffmann problem proves the point of my column better than his defense of the Bob Bennett passage. Here he says that he simply misheard a medical term and that it is "misleading for Hoffmann to create the impression that" because of this simple error, "the substance of the paragraph is false."

Here's what Hoffmann had to say when I read her the part of Woodward's response related to her: "The entire paragraph, not just the name of the supposed syndrome, is bull---t....Woodward says I thought Monica Lewinsky had Clara Bow syndrome or erotomania and that I consulted psychiatrists about it. I never thought that. I never consulted any psychiatrists about Monica, period....I did mention to him as an aside that the entire country thought she was delusional, even though I didn't, and I mentioned I had read a book, as part of a book club I belong to, that had mentioned this Clérambault's syndrome....But that was it. And he took that and turned it into me believing she had it, and that I had consulted shrinks about it....Then he made up a description for it with poor Clara Bow [being an actress who "couldn't say no"]....He, of course, couldn't come back and check any of it with me because he had promised me that our talks would be off the record....It's not like this all wasn't interesting enough without adding this crazy stuff. But it makes me out to be someone who violated a client's confidences, and I didn't, and that's extremely damaging."

4. As for Jane Sherburne, Woodward again proves my point. Sure, he got the gist right. But in quoting Sherburne's letter to him he leaves out a key a sentence, in which she states, "...the back and forth of the actual dialogue you quoted of my conversation with Mrs. Clinton did not and does not sound like what I recalled of it."

According to Sherburne, Woodward put into quote marks dialogue that just plain didn't happen, according to her memory of it. And, again, it's his stretching to include that dramatic detail that was the point of what I wrote. As I pointed out, these are important details, not just because they make his books sell when others on the same subject don't, but because "[t]hey tarnish or polish people's reputations and offer indelible lessons, even parables, for history."

5. Woodward says that my greatest offense is quoting anonymously 12 people who claim that they could have been sources for his book but either weren't asked or that they were asked but gave Woodward conflicting information that did not make it into the book. He neglects to mention that right after quoting them I added that this problem of people not being willing to attach their names to such assertions is what should make readers trust them less, and that this is exactly the kind of problem that pervades Woodward's book—and that the difference is that "...I've just told you what I know, why I think I know it, and what I don't know. Woodward mostly doesn't do that...."

That, in fact, is the central point of what I wrote—that Woodward Hollywoodizes his great journalistic talents by preferring an always clear-cut narrative to the ambiguities that any good reporter should acknowledge.

So I hope in Bob's reply below he'll tell us whether he thinks he should have mentioned contradictory accounts of events (such as Nancy Reagan's denial of the story of her vetoing a press conference because of an astrologist's report, or my denial of Ken Starr's account of our interview) rather than simply having narrated as fact the one side of a story that he decided to go with but can't really be sure of. I also hope he'll tell us in his reply below whether future printings of the book will include Sydney Hoffmann's denial, or whether he'll keep the Jane Sherburne stuff in quote marks now that he's been told by her that she doesn't remember it that way. Indeed, I hope Bob will answer one basic question: Is his job as a journalist, especially when he has the

"Brill has been had. A few people are having second thoughts....Bob Bennett has apparently offered Brill his account...and Brill has bought it."—*Woodward*

space that a book provides, to tell us as best he can (without violating sources) how he knows what he knows and what the limits on that information might be, or is his job to piece together the smoothest, most dramatic narrative possible, even if material ends up in quotes that no journalist writing for a newspaper would ever put in quotes?

MORE WOODWARD

The core of Brill's argument is in the sentence, "...the whole point of my piece about Woodward was that he adds those details when he isn't sure of them...." This is a reckless and totally unsupported charge. If I got something wrong or someone disputes what I have written, it does not mean that I added details about which I wasn't sure. The details, the ideas, and the quotes come from sources that Brill, if he knew their identity, would find authoritative and impressive.

Brill has been had. A few people are having second thoughts—either genuine or conveniently altered recollections. Bob Bennett has apparently offered Brill his account of how I might have reconstructed the White House stroll scene, and Brill has bought it. Brill offers no evidence that I got or used information from other reporters, as he seems to allege. I am not accusing Bennett of anything. I am accusing Brill of trying to build a case on Bennett's and his own supposition. He does not know where I received the information and he is shocked that a reporter may have found out, in detail, what transpired between the president and one of his attorneys.

Sydney Hoffmann has so hopelessly contradicted herself to Brill and to me, misstated what is in the book and the ground rules, that I am not sure what to make of it. For example, she apparently asserts to you that our conversations were "off the record." In three letters (dated June 17, July 2, and July 26, 1999) she insists that the ground rules were "deep background." There is a significant difference.

Hoffmann has decided to go public with her version of what she maintains she told me. It is with some discomfort that I must respond. Allow me to quote from my contemporaneous notes of one of our interviews. On October 9, 1998, at her home, Hoffmann began with a chilling insight: "She [Hoffmann] said people lie all the time. Lies are part of lawyering." On her first meeting with Monica Lewinsky on June 8 for five hours, Hoffmann said: "I thought she was wacko. She seemed delusional. The rush of details was just unreal. Hoffman[n] checked with some shrinks, because she was worried that Monica might have what's called," which I now know is Clérambault's syndrome..."that she might have erotomania....Everyone was so impressed with Monica's detail, but actually it was a bizarre reconstruction and reflected an obsession." After publication of the book, Hoffmann wanted the two paragraphs reflecting these remarks removed from the book. I asked her why on June 30. Hoffmann said, "You don't have to field calls from the family and Monica."

Jane Sherburne has gone from saying that dialogue was "made up" to now saying that I have it "right," though she—at the time of her sworn deposition and now—does not remember the exact dialogue. She did when I interviewed her last year. I stand by it. Brill still insists that "...Woodward put into quote marks dialogue that just plain didn't happen...." It may fit Brill's thesis, but it's the kind of distortion and concoction that laced his discredited "Pressgate" piece in the inaugural issue of this magazine. Brill seems unwilling to concede anything, even when presented with Sherburne's letter. Has Brill never had someone tell him something and then a year later or less say they didn't recall saying it? Sherburne wants to put this controversy in the past, and she has not suggested or requested that the book be changed.

Brill insists in his column and again in his response that Nancy Reagan's memoir includes a "denial" of former White House chief of staff Don Regan's assertion, in his memoir, that President Reagan would not have a press conference in early 1987 because the astrological charts predicted danger for the president. In her memoir, Nancy Reagan wrote there was no press conference because her husband feared being contradicted as new facts emerged. If Brill took a moment to examine the two memoirs he would see that this is not a denial. Donald Regan had the records showing that Nancy's astrologer had warned of a "possible attempt" on the president's life at this time. In her book, Nancy Reagan says she turned to astrology in part "to try to keep Ronnie from getting shot again—and to keep me from going mad with worry." Mrs. Reagan's point is not a dispute or contradiction or denial. It is supplementary, which was why I included it in a footnote in the book, where it will remain.

Finally, some of the disputed material and quotes in *Shadow* did appear in *The Washington Post* in June. This is because the editors knew about the sourcing and careful reporting.

MORE BRILL

None of us has any way of knowing what's in Bob Woodward's notes or with whom he spoke to get his details. That's the problem with his kind of trust-me journalism. The fact is that I do trust Woodward on the basics; I just worry that he gets tempted to fill in the

"Is his job to piece together the smoothest, most dramatic narrative possible, even if material ends up in quote marks that no journalist writing for a newspaper would ever put in quotes?" —*Brill*

blanks to advance the drama of his narrative, and in doing so he crosses a line that a great journalist shouldn't cross. How, for example, did he come up with the explanation in his book that "Clara Bow syndrome"—which he now concedes is "Clérambault's syndrome"—is "named after the famous silent film actress who couldn't say no"? No one could have told him that. He filled in the blanks.

My point was, simply, that when I checked with three obvious sources for particularly dramatic narrative scenes in the book, they contradicted Woodward's accounts. I call them obvious sources because thoughts are attributed to them or they are described in situations that only they (or the president or first lady) could know about in the detail in which they are presented in the book.

Woodward now implies that he "found out" about that Bennett-Clinton conversation from someone other than Bennett (and other than President Clinton, since Woodward states in the book that he did not interview the president). How, then, could he have put that purported conversation in quote marks? Journalists reserve quote marks for actual quotes of what they know people really said.

In a nutshell, then, this is our disagreement. Bob Woodward constructs narratives that include all kinds of finely detailed statements of facts and even include real quotes within quote marks when it seems clear that he can't be sure of those facts. I don't think that means he shouldn't write his narratives. It does mean he should be more honest with his readers about what he knows for sure and what he just thinks he knows based on a second- or third-hand anonymous source or even on the account of one named person with an ax to grind.

Which brings us to the Nancy Reagan astrologer example. Mrs. Reagan has said that she canceled a presidential press conference because she didn't want the president to be contradicted as new facts emerged. But former Reagan chief of staff Donald Regan—who is well known to have detested Mrs. Reagan—says she canceled it because of the astrologer. Woodward in his book offers the Donald Regan version as simple, narrative fact.

Similarly, there's Woodward's acceptance as fact of the anonymous (but apparently Ken Starr) version of the interview I had with Starr. It's not a significant aspect of the book, but it is the one point Woodward refuses, still, to address. And that may be because it's the one place where we have a rare window on his reporting. For here he can't cite the need to protect anonymous sources while saying that he was exhaustive and talked to everyone involved and got no conflicting accounts. Because we can know for sure that he didn't talk to one of the two participants in that conversation—me.

Which brings us back to the question I ended with last time (see above) which he still hasn't answered.

WOODWARD GETS THE FINAL WORD

The handful of people who might have followed the tiresome exchange will see that Brill, having failed to come up with any "pesky facts or contradictory evidence" available to me when *Shadow* was written, now accuses me of filling in the blanks. He cites the unfortunate issue of Clara Bow and my description of Bow as "the famous silent film actress who couldn't say no." That description of Bow comes from a number of standard reference books and was "filled in" for the benefit of anyone who might not have known the popular "It" girl of the Roaring Twenties. I concede again that I misheard Clara Bow for Clérambault. Had my mishearing been, say, "the Steve Brill syndrome," I would probably have taken the liberty of filling in for those who were unfamiliar with Brill something along the lines of "named after Brill, the 'It' boy of the confusing nineties who couldn't often enough say yes to good, honest reporting."

I might have continued: "Brill, perhaps overly obsessed with himself, couldn't get over the fact that Woodward reported a scene in his book involving lawyers in Ken Starr's office. Starr and an aide made references to the infamous Brill interview, but the scene in the book was not about Brill. It was about how Starr apologized to his staff. Woodward acknowledges he should have talked to Brill and has apologized to Brill. The knowledgeable sources cited in the book stick by their version."

Brill has not come up with a mouse or even mouse hair. His latest reply uses such terms as "now implies" and "it seems clear." He doesn't know what he is talking about and accordingly he is reduced to this kind of conjecture. The dramatic detail and quotes in the book are all reported detail. Brill has forgotten that people involved in important moments of their lives or in history remember detail, and often write it down. To answer Brill's last question; I would put this information and quotes in a newspaper and I have.

I have been willing to engage in this exchange because I believe in accountability—mine and Brill's. As Brill wrote in his initial column: "...I could find no one to come forward and contest a major substantive aspect of his basic reporting in *Shadow*." Not that he didn't try. ■

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[TICKER]

70+ Number of pages in the September 1999 issue of *Vogue*

212 Number of pages in the September issue of *Vogue* that are not advertisements[1]

87 Percentage of parents who believe that advertisements aimed at children make children too materialistic

78 Percentage of parents who believe that advertisements put too much pressure on children to buy things that are unnecessary, unhealthy, or too expensive

63 Percentage of parents who say their children define their self-worth by possessions more than the parents themselves did when they were children[2]

64 Percentage of North American teenagers who have TV sets in their bedrooms[3]

32 Total time, in minutes, that the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly newscasts devoted in July 1999 to a scientist in Antarctica who has breast cancer, including coverage of the military operation that delivered medical supplies to her

28 Total time, in minutes, that the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly newscasts devoted in July 1999 to coverage of health maintenance organization reforms[4]

$30,004 Median annual salary earned by 1998 recipients of bachelor's degrees in journalism or mass communication with full-time jobs in web publishing

$22,568 Median annual salary earned by 1998 recipients of bachelor's degrees in journalism or mass communication with full-time jobs at daily newspapers

$18,200 Median annual salary earned by 1998 recipients of bachelor's degrees in journalism or mass communication with full-time jobs in broadcast TV[5]

$606 million Amount spent by political candidates, parties, and interest groups to purchase advertising in 1998

$505 million Amount of that money spent on television advertising[6]

49 Percentage of Americans unable to name any of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment[7]

36 Percentage of American men, ages 18–34, who spent at least 30 minutes a day reading (any material) in 1992–93

22 Percentage of American men, ages 18–34, who spent at least 30 minutes a day reading (any material) in 1998–99[8]

23 Percentage increase in sales of wrestling-related video games from January through May this year, as compared to sales of such games during the same period in 1998[9]

48 Percentage of child-related stories involving crime and violence that aired on the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly newscasts in 1993

10 Percentage of child-related stories involving crime and violence that aired on those newscasts in 1998

11 Percentage of child-related stories involving health that aired on the ABC, CBS, and NBC nightly newscasts in 1993

40 Percentage of child-related stories involving health that aired on those newscasts in 1998[10]

1 Number of months' worth of wages it costs the average American to buy a personal computer

8 Number of years' worth of wages it costs the average Bangladeshi to buy a personal computer[11]

1) *Vogue* 2) The Center for a New American Dream (a nonprofit organization that describes itself as promoting responsible consumption) 3) Forrester Research, Inc. 4) Center for Media and Public Affairs 5) 1998 Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates, University of Georgia 6) Competitive Media Reporting 7) First Amendment Center; The Center for Survey Research and Analysis, University of Connecticut 8) NPD Group, Inc. (a consumer-research and information company) 9) NPD Group, Inc. 10) Children Now (a children's advocacy organization) 11) Human Development Report 1999, United Nations Development Programme

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Subject: Shopping with Amazin.com
Date: November 14, 1999
From: Walt Thomas,<wthomas@amazin.com>
To: James Smith,<thejimster@aol.com>

Dear Amazin.com customer,

Your book order has been processed and will ship immediately. In the meantime, we have some excellent news. As part of our commitment to customer satisfaction, we have recently launched a Personalized Valued Customer(TM) program, and you have been automatically enrolled FREE OF CHARGE!

As a Personalized Valued Customer(TM), you take your shopping seriously. That's why our team of E-analysts is poring over pages of *YOUR* personal information, aggregating the data, then applying a Patented Complicated Algorithm(TM) to ensure you the most personalized shopping experience anywhere. Amazin.com has the World's Largest Selection(TM) of products, and it's our mission to provide you with the products you need *before you even know you need them!*

Let's get started!

We are pleased that you regularly browse FoodNow.com, our affiliated Internet grocery-shopping and delivery website, and that you've increased your purchases of low-fat, low-carbohydrate foods. This should help offset the fact that you've let your health-club membership lapse after a meager four months. We also recommend the Tae-Bo Does Tap video, which can be purchased at SportsStuff.com, our online sporting goods company. We're sure it will work wonders on those love handles of yours. (Don't forget to join Billy Blanks and Amazin.com for a live Chasing the Chubs Chat tonight at 8 P.M. EST!)

Thanks to the health and lifestyle questionnaire you filled out at DrugsOrama.com, our affiliated one-stop E-pharmacy, we know that you are a Gemini who fears commitment. But at 47, you aren't getting any younger. And we recognize your need for a loving wife and family. Although we are not qualified to consult on the use of Propecia in meeting these goals, we do recommend this product to treat your swiftly accelerating male pattern baldness.

Meanwhile, we were sorry to find that you purchased a new collar for your Chihuahua, Little Ricky Martin, at your neighborhood Pet Alley store. PetMe.com has the World's Largest Selection(TM) of pet supplies on the Internet. It's no wonder that 10 million people have made PetMe.com their exclusive pet destination. (By the way, Little Ricky's dog license is due for renewal next month!)

Amazin.com is here for you, and it's never been better. As a special promotion, we are offering our new Personalized Valued Customers(TM) their first personalized purchase at a savings of 40%! Just click on the link below for your personalized purchase at your personalized price.

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Walt Thomas
Director of Product Development
Amazin.com, World's Largest Selection(TM)

P.S. Our records confirm that your $20,000 contribution to the Dan Quayle campaign might have been better spent paying off part of your second mortgage.

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