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TO: Joshua S. Gottheimer (CN=Joshua S. Gottheimer/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

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(Your copy of today's SLATE ON PAPER is attached to this mail. It may be at the bottom.)

July 23, 1999

Dear Reader:

In this week's issue:

In Frame Game, William Saletan critiques the commentators who lionize or demonize John F. Kennedy Jr.: "Why does this keep happening to the Kennedys? Some say the whole family is 'reckless.' Others argue that the Kennedys are admirably bold and that it's unseemly to criticize them. Each camp oversimplifies the truth. There are two Kennedy traditions: courage, gravity, and martyrdom on one side; recklessness, frivolity, and mayhem on the other."

http://www.slate.com/framegame/entries/99-07-20_32290.asp

In the debut of Ballot Box, Jacob Weisberg points out how Bill Bradley and Al Gore are both dull-but in their own unique ways: "You might say that Gore is actually a bore, while Bradley is merely boring. The vice president's dullness starts with his fascination with difficult, technical subjects such as ballistic missiles and global warming. Convinced that such topics are beyond lesser intellects, and that it is virtuous to care about them, Gore discusses them in a way that is at once pedantic and condescending, as if instructing a young child or training a dog. ? Bradley, on the other hand, simply fails to capture attention."
<http://www.slate.com/code/BallotBox/BallotBox.asp?Show=7/20/99&idMessage=3250>

David Plotz's Assessment draws a bead on JFK Jr.'s most prolific mourner: "Douglas Brinkley is the William Ginsburg of the Kennedy death circus. Before the crash, the boyish, gap-toothed Brinkley was known primarily as a Michael Beschloss-in-waiting, a telegenic historian fielding calls from the cable news networks. Now the University of New Orleans professor has parlayed a contributing editorship at George and a friendship with Kennedy into a job as a necropublicist."
<http://www.slate.com/assessment/99-07-23/assessment.asp>

Paul Krugman's Dismal Science explains what the Argentina crisis reveals about monetary policy: "Argentina has been sliding into a moderately

severe recession and with it a growing budget deficit, just as a presidential election approaches. And in apparent desperation over his lag in the polls, Eduardo Duhalde, the Peronist candidate ... startled everyone by announcing his intention to discuss possible debt relief for Argentina. Not with the banks, mind you, but with the pope."
<http://www.slate.com/Dismal/99-07-20/Dismal.asp>

David Greenberg's History Lesson remembers the only time a president's son has also been elected president: "Except for political junkies, most people can tell you precisely one thing about George W. Bush: His father used to be president. ? [I]t would be impossible for anyone in Bush's shoes not to bear an especially heavy Oedipal burden. The life of the only son of a president to become president--John Quincy Adams--illustrates why. ... 'JQA' (as he was called to distinguish him from Dad) had the more daunting task of succeeding his father. ? If W. were to learn even a little about JQA's unhappy plight, he might well realize the virtues of psychological self-analysis."
<http://www.slate.com/HistoryLesson/99-07-21/HistoryLesson.asp>

Also: James Fallows explains why he would never have made a night flight to Martha's Vineyard in *Winging It*; in *Florida Juice*, Ellen McGarrah recalls the ugly history of the electric chair in the Sunshine State; Jeffery Goldberg's *Shopping Avenger* takes on Southwest, U-Haul, and Circuit City, Masha Gessen finds Siberia a modern "Inferno" in *Dispatches*; Timothy Noah reveals what the regional foodies think about "Broasted" chicken, in *Chatterbox*; William Saletan on the president's budget fudging, in *Frame Game*; James Surowiecki makes sense of the Wall Street sell-off, in *Moneybox*; Michael Kinsley reads the Gospel according to George W.; David Edelstein's *Movies* reviews the horror genre; and much more.

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News Quiz;
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Dear Prudence: Get answers to your questions on morals and manners;
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and The Fray: Slate's reader forum.
<http://www.slate.com/Code/fray/fray.asp>

Sincerely,
Eve Gerber

P.S. If you have friends (or, for that matter, enemies) who might be interested in Slate, please forward this announcement to them.

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Slate

ON PAPER

July 23, 1999

www.slate.com



Super-Mourner: John Kennedy's Necropublicist
Clinton Spins the Tax-Cut Debate
Blockbuster Ruined *Eyes Wide Shut*
Gore vs. Bradley: Who's Duller?

Slate on Paper

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John Kennedy Jr.'s most prolific mourner.			
By David Plotz			

This edition of *Slate on Paper* includes most of what has appeared in *Slate* online (www.slate.com) during the past week. The following have been omitted for space reasons: "Slate Links," the sidebars from "News Quiz," and "The Fray," *Slate*'s reader forum.

Illustration by Charlie Powell.

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TODAY'S PAPERS

By Scott Shuger

Trillion Dollar Man

Posted Saturday, July 17, 1999, at 2:40 a.m. PT

The *Washington Post* lead reports that a federal district court struck down Virginia's ban on partial-birth abortion because the law imposed an "undue burden" on the right to choose. The *Los Angeles Times* lead reveals that many California businesses plan to drop or freeze enrollment in HMOs that hike prices without improving care. The *New York Times* goes with the House's decision to cut off funds for the production of F-22 fighters.

The Appropriations Committee unanimously approved a military spending bill that would deny the Air Force money for the first six F-22s (the planes cost \$200 million apiece). Congress almost never kills major weapons systems. The *Post* points out that \$1.2 billion for research into the fighter is still budgeted, but Air Force officials claim a pause in development will make it too expensive to resume. Defense Secretary Cohen wrote a letter of protest, calling the F-22s "the cornerstone of our nation's global air power in the 21st century." The *Times* says the fighter program is under attack because the Pentagon was misleading about the aircraft's cost and capability.

The *Post* fronts an analysis of the leading presidential contenders' campaign spending habits, subtitled "Bush Hoards Cash; Gore Spends Heavily." The governor served peanuts to contributors, while the vice president headlined ballroom benefits. Overall, Gore spent \$400,000 more to dun donors. Bush depleted about 19 percent of the \$37 million he raised, while Gore exhausted 47 percent of his \$17.5 million. According to Today's Papers' calculations, this makes about \$7 million for George and \$8 million for Al. The difference is not peanuts, but it does suggest a less sensationalistic disparity than the article's headline and anecdotes portray. The piece does not explain how the governor's decision to stay in Texas until after the end of the state's legislative session might have impacted his spending record.

The paper's fourth page undermines the front's conclusions: the *Post* reports that Bush "spent heavily" to trounce his opponents in next month's Iowa straw poll. George W. accepted checks of \$5,000 and \$10,000, amounting to at least 50,000, even though presidential campaigns are not allowed to take donations over \$1,000. Bush claims money spent on the straw poll supports the state party and therefore does not qualify as a campaign expenditure. But federal election law defines campaign expenditures as any money spent "for the purposes of influencing any election for federal office."

The *NYT* fronts the only report on the passage of a House bill that offers Sub-Saharan African nations trade benefits and the opportunity to export goods to America duty-free. Southeastern senators who fear for the textile workers are expected to oppose the bill. Half the House Democrats voted no because of the bill's purportedly inadequate protections against worker and environmental abuse.

A federal district court jury found Microsoft not guilty in an antitrust dispute with a small software maker, according to the *NYT* front. The company alleged that Microsoft demanded exorbitant fees for access to the new Windows code, which is necessary to the plaintiff's business. The *Post* points out that the court loss could dissuade other software manufacturer from suing Microsoft.

Bouyed by news of the verdict and rumors that the software giant will spin off its Internet properties, the papers report that Microsoft became the first company to top \$500 billion in market value. Bill Gates saw his paper wealth rise by \$4,703,551,336. According to the *Post*, assuming a 10-hour day, Bill earned \$1 million a second. He is now worth almost \$100 billion. The *NYT* notes that if Microsoft stock keeps soaring at the same rate, in five years Gates will be worth a trillion dollars.

The *Post* fronts good news for budding Bill Gateses. Kids can now attend entrepreneur camp in the Pacific Northwest. "In2Biz" teaches teen-agers the basics, such as "What a Good Business Plan Can Do for You." As the paper notes, "there is no time for teen angst when high-tech bounties await." But In2Biz might not last to see its campers prosper. Like a Web startup, it has high hopes, but is "highly unprofitable."

—This item was written by Eve Gerber.

Princes Die

Posted Saturday, July 17, 1999, at 11:36 p.m. PT

The papers print an early, unofficial round of eulogies for John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and her sister Lauren Bessette, presumably downed in a single-engine aircraft Friday night en route to a family wedding at the Kennedy family compound. As the papers went to press, the Coast Guard had confirmed the discovery of airplane debris near Martha's Vineyard, as well as luggage bearing Lauren Bessette's name. The *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* feature aggressively elegiac front pages, each with full-stretch headlines and three Kennedy-related stories. The *New York Times* is more restrained, printing only one front-pager and leading instead with upward revisions of the death toll in Kosovo.

The *NYT* story is relatively light on Kennedy lore but heavier on flight details, including the observation that he performed his pre-flight checks in the parking lot instead of on the runway as usual. Meanwhile, the *WP* and the *LAT* meditate on the Kennedy propensity for tragedy. "This family's saga is the story of the whole American Century," which is "like all human life, a path slatted with gloom and sunlight," intones the *WP*. Both papers tick off each and every Kennedy scandal, from Chappaquiddick to William Kennedy Smith's rape charges. But they portray JFK Jr. as more honorable and responsible than many of his clan, citing his clean-cut athleticism, dedication to public service, and criticism of his cousins as "poster boys for bad behavior" in *George* magazine. The papers don't make the explicit comparison (yet), but their coverage is uncannily reminiscent of that of the death of Princess Diana two summers ago, emphasizing the deceased's royalty, physical attractiveness, common touch, public

following, and alternate attempts to embrace and flee the spotlight.

Both the *LAT* and *WP* note recent speculation that Kennedy's magazine, *George*, won't be renewed by its current publisher. *WP* media critic Howard Kurtz predicts that without its founder and main figurehead, the magazine will flounder even more quickly.

The *NYT* leads instead with the fluctuating tally of victims of Serbian killing in Kosovo. Working together for the first time, war crimes investigators, NATO troops, and NGOs put the number at 10,000, more than double the U.S. State Department's May count of 4,600 victims. The piece notes that some American and NATO officials had quietly disagreed with the State Department tally at the time, also producing estimates around the 10,000 mark. While noting that hard numbers are elusive—many bodies were burned, reburied, or simply lost—the report doesn't explain the State Department's apparent lowballing (did they use different methodology? Were they just being conservative?) or consider its implications (if more deaths had been confirmed, would the U.S. have escalated the war?). Two stories inside the *WP* describe the body counting process in arresting detail. One visits a makeshift U.N. autopsy lab, where doctors tear through one patient per hour; another describes a truck mounted with cameras that wheels through Kosovo, looking for evidence to use in war crime trials.

A *NYT* front-pager reports that Rep. Michael Forbes, a Republican from Long Island and a virtual party outcast, will jump ship to the Democratic Party. Democratic leaders Dick Gephardt and Charles Rangel courted him assiduously and will probably award Forbes a leadership position for his pains. The story wonders how his conservative views—Forbes is anti-abortion and anti-gun control—will square with the rest of the party. "This is one that would be done holding our noses," says an unnamed New York Democratic honcho. But a *WP* insider says that Gephardt is spinning the move as ideological: "he feels a moderate in the Republican party has no place." The *WP* also notes that this is the first defection since the Republicans assumed control of Congress five years ago.

Two days after the opening of the copulation-choked film *Eyes Wide Shut*, the *LAT* explains how the Motion Picture Association of America actually assigns film ratings: It pays a secret 12-person jury to watch and rate every film released in America. The seven women and five men vary by age, race, and level of education, but all are parents. Instead of adhering to hard and fast guidelines, they are encouraged to react subjectively to what they see on screen. The creators of *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* suggest that the board's sensibilities may be less than current. The ratings board dinged their original title, *South Park: All Hell Breaks Loose*, because it contained the word hell, but approved the blatant penis joke the filmmakers proposed instead. "They just didn't get it," chuckled the directors.

A *NYT* "Week in Review" piece prints samples of an award-winning advertising campaign commissioned by an anonymous Floridian. Over 10,000 billboards and bus stations across the country display one-line quips such as "Need Directions?" and "We need to talk." The sponsor must think well of himself, because each of the statements is signed "God."

—This item was written by Jodi Kantor.

The Plane Truth

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 4:06 a.m. PT

U*SA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* lead with the nearly nil prospects for John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife, and her sister. The *New York Times*, as it did Sunday, chooses to lead with something else: this time, it's Israeli P.M. Ehud Barak's announcement of a 15-month deadline for peace in the Middle East. The *Times* notes that Barak's time horizon for simultaneous talks with the Palestinians, the Syrians, and the Lebanese was chosen in part to accomplish something substantial before the height of the American presidential campaign, when Americans will be focused on domestic politics and it will also be harder for President Clinton to actively influence negotiations. The *Times* by the way, is alone in running formal obituaries of JFK Jr. and his wife.

The papers report that by last night the odds are that the Kennedy party's time in the water alone would have been a cause of death, and therefore the Coast Guard was moving from survivor rescue to body recovery. (The early edition of the *WP* said that a signal from the missing plane's emergency locator beacon had been received, but the paper's later edition and the rest of the coverage report that this was a misinterpretation by searchers.) The *WP* reports that on Friday evening at the time of JFK Jr.'s approach to the Martha's Vineyard airport, haze would have significantly reduced visibility. Everybody reports that radar tracking information indicates that his plane made a rapid descent shortly before disappearing.

The papers turn over considerable front and inside space to the apparent tragedy, not without some hyperbole. One *USAT* headline says, "IN A LIFE FRAMED BY TRAGEDY, JOHN HAD ELUDED THE CURSE," and one on the *LAT* front refers to him as a "nation's icon." A *WP* inside effort seems to be rummaging aimlessly in saying, "The Kennedys' first child, a daughter, was stillborn 15 months before Caroline was born. What if she had lived? Caroline's little brother Patrick, born premature, died when she was 5, three months before their father was assassinated. What would he have become if he had lived?"

USAT fills in an important hole regarding JFK Jr.'s aviation background: Private pilots like him need only be age 17, fluent in English, and have logged 40 hours of flying time. (The *WP* says JFK Jr. had around 100 hours when he tested for his license in April 1998.) But nobody explains why you can legally fly at night and over water with only a basic "visual flight rules" rating.

A front-page *WP* story reports that according to World Health Organization figures, of the 170 people killed or injured over the past month in Kosovo from ordnance, just over half were due to Serb mines, with nearly as many caused by unexploded NATO bombs. Many of the victims were children attracted to bright yellow cluster bombs.

The *LAT*, continuing a year-plus of Pulitzer-caliber whistleblowing on the California state correctional system, fronts the news that last week a bill that would have put the state attorney general in charge of prison guard brutality cases (instead of the local prosecutors in the prison's jurisdiction) was defeated by intense lobbying by the guards' union. The blandishments

included, says the paper, \$105,000 in campaign contributions to one legislator.

The *WP* and *NYT* run an AP item stating that violent crime in the United States dropped 7 percent last year, its lowest level since the statistic was first collected 26 years ago, and the continuation of a downward trend that started in 1994.

The *Wall Street Journal* and *NYT* report that Israel has closed a deal for 50 F-16 fighter planes. The *Journal* stresses that the deal was a triumph for Lockheed over Boeing, whose F-15 was passed over. The *NYT* has that information down low, but emphasizes instead that the purchase will be Israel's biggest arms deal ever. (Is that in inflation-adjusted or nominal dollars?)

The Sunday column by the *LAT* "readers' representative," Narda Zacchino, addresses the "hundreds" of reader complaints about the paper's story about the Air National Guard service of George W. Bush. Zacchino concludes that the story was legitimate but probably was not worthy of being played so prominently (front-page, above-the-fold) or at such length. And, she wonders, why didn't any reporter on the story ask Bush "the obvious question: If he wanted to be a combat pilot, why didn't he join the Air Force?"

The *WP* reports inside that during the first six months of this year, White House employees—nine in all—gave \$8,250 to the Gore campaign. The list of donors includes several presidential advisers and Hillary's chief of staff. However, it does not include Bill and Hillary.

No Spin Control

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 3:53 a.m. PT

U*SA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* lead with fresh radar data from JFK Jr.'s last flight, which indicates that his plane lost altitude at a much faster rate than had been thought previously. The *New York Times* fronts the flight update but goes instead with the completion of the Bill Clinton/Ehud Barak talks in Washington, placing particular emphasis on Clinton's pledge to encourage Syria's Hafez Assad to take advantage of Barak's willingness to hammer out a comprehensive Middle East peace deal.

USAT, the *WP*, and both *Times* go high with the new information that just before disappearing, Kennedy's plane lost 1,400 feet in 14 seconds, a descent rate far faster than his aircraft's safety specifications. The *Post* points out that at this speed, the plane could have begun breaking up even before hitting the ocean surface. And the *NYT* says this could explain why only small pieces of it have been found. The *Post* and both *Times* note that although private planes don't have flight data recorders, the missing plane reportedly had a manual cockpit voice recorder, which, if recovered, could provide some insight into the flight's last moments.

The *LAT* is alone in beginning its story by mentioning pilot error as the most likely cause of the crash. High up, it quotes a flight safety consultant as saying that the accident data is of the sort that often indicates the pilot lost control because of disorientation or vertigo. The explanatory value of the coverage varies widely. A nonaviator would be hard-pressed to make sense

of the mentions in the *WP* and *LAT* of a possible "graveyard spiral." And the *WP* discusses a possible "stall" and the Kennedy plane's "stall speed," without tarrying to explain, probably leaving the lay reader with the mistaken impression that it's the engine performance that's at issue. It's not—"stall" here refers to a plane's loss of lift, which can occur while the engine's working just fine, if the nose is too high or if the angle of bank in a turn is too steep. It seems that the papers could have made good use of a graphic or two here. (Yesterday's *USAT* had a good definition of a graveyard spiral—it's when the pilot, usually relying on his senses instead of his instruments, overcorrects with stick and rudder for a spin—the virtually liftless helical descent that follows a stall—thereby inducing another perhaps even more vicious one in the other direction.) The *NYT* does best in connecting vertigo with stalling, with its citation of an expert's account: "[T]he pilot might have begun a normal turn but lost sight of the horizon, then made the turn too tight, banking the plane too far over and losing lift."

Everybody notes that deteriorating weather limited yesterday's search. The *NYT* notes some public questioning of the extensiveness of the recovery effort as well as the Coast Guard's response that it conducts many such efforts every year. It also reports that President Clinton said the search should continue.

Besides reporting that Clinton will probably contact Syria's Assad within days, the *NYT* lead also sees evidence of the re-energized U.S.-Israel relationship that Clinton and Barak are presiding over: new promises of increased military assistance to Israel, and the inclusion of Israel on a NASA flight next year.

The fronts at the *WP*, *LAT*, and *USAT* carry word that a 40-year-old drug costing just pennies a day shows promise in new research of being able to save the lives of tens of thousands of sufferers of congestive heart failure, which is when the heart can't pump blood well. The drug, spironolactone, is currently used to counteract water retention. The results were so good that the experiment was cut off early on the grounds that it would be unethical to continue giving half the 1,600 patients in the sample placebos.

The fronts at the *WP* and *LAT* feature Hewlett-Packard's announcement that its new CEO will be Carleton Fiorina, a Lucent Technologies exec, who thereby becomes the first female head of a company included in the Dow Jones Industrials, and only one of three in the Fortune 500. The *Wall Street Journal* says she's the first woman to head one of the nation's 20 biggest public corporations. The *WP* subhead suggests transvestitism: "Woman Crosses Gender Barrier to be Hewlett-Packard CEO."

Giving Us Too Much Grief

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 4:13 a.m. PT

The *Washington Post* and *New York Times* lead with dissension among House Republicans over the House leadership's advocacy of a 10-year, \$792 billion tax cut, which is likely to come to a vote today. The *Los Angeles Times* leads with a story on nobody else's front: that fully normalized trade relations between the U.S. and Vietnam could be just days away. *USA Today* also goes with a story that isn't on the other fronts:

After a two-year study, federal investigators have criticized the way U.S. hospitals are inspected, finding that the system is too lenient and too apt to miss poor care. The biggest problem seems to be not enough surprise inspections. Also, the paper explains, currently only 20 percent of the nation's hospitals are inspected by the states; the other 80 percent are checked out by a single private accrediting group, which, critics say, is too close to the hospital industry. Pass rate under the status quo? Ninety-nine percent.

The *WP* says the proposed tax bill would cut rates across the board by 10 percent, give tax relief to married couples (although the *NYT* lead and a piece on the *LAT* front note that House conservatives don't think the proposed relief of the "marriage penalty" goes far enough), cut the capital gains tax, and gradually phase out the estate tax. And although President Clinton and the overwhelming majority of House Democrats reject using so much of the budget surplus to fund tax cuts, according to the *WP*, the House Republican leadership still has hopes that advocacy of such big tax relief would serve to define the party for the 2000 election. And, the papers report, in closed-door sessions with the membership yesterday, the GOP leaders made their case. But with about a dozen Republican moderates opposed, even this symbolic goal seems in doubt. As the *NYT* explains, the situation illustrates how the votes of as few as five Republicans can deprive the party of a majority.

The *LAT* lead explains that the U.S.-Vietnam trade agreement would remove the last economic vestiges of the war. Under the status quo, says the paper, the U.S. is not a player in such Vietnam markets as bicycles (controlled by China and Taiwan), hotels (France, Singapore, South Korea, and other Asian countries), oil (Russia), cars (South Korea and Japan), meat (Australia and New Zealand), and airliners (France). The agreement would sharply lower tariffs and could, for instance, mean that Nike could considerably add to the 20 million pairs of shoes it now makes in Vietnam.

The *WP* off-lead gets at a growing problem in biotechnology: genetic tests—especially those that can predict a person's medical future by measuring his or her predispositions to various conditions—are growing phenomenally (last count: 400), but are not regulated by the FDA, which says it lacks the resources. Which means the companies offering the tests are free to decide on their own just how accurate they need to be. Which means stand by for a whole lotta folks thinking they're not gonna get ovarian cancer when they are and vice versa.

The JFK Jr. crash recedes in the coverage a bit, with the stories mostly nailing down the idea that he became disoriented and inadvertently put his plane into a spin he couldn't get out of. The *WP* front goes in big for "want-of-a-nail" reasoning with this syllogism: "If only Kennedy had waited until Monday to see his orthopedist [to get a cast removed from his leg], he likely would have taken along a copilot, if grudgingly, and perhaps his wife, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and his sister-in-law, Lauren Bessette, might be alive today." Please.

The *NYT* and *WP* report inside that surging imports to the U.S. driven by the continued strength of America's economy pushed the U.S. trade deficit for May to another record. It's apparent from the figures, remarks the *Times*, that China is continuing to increase its exports to support its lagging economy.

The U.S. exports in greatest decline are autos, auto parts, and machinery. They are also among the products being imported in increasing numbers.

The *WP* reports inside that Russia's Far East nuclear strike force was left without electrical power this week because it didn't pay its utility bill. Believe it or not, this has happened before.

The *NYT* reports in an inside story that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Tuesday copped to the practice of stations giving their donor lists to organizations affiliated with either or both political parties, a story broken recently by the *Boston Globe*. The revelations have prompted some Republican members of Congress to call for revoking CPB's tax-exempt status and canceling its public funding.

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that multinational corporations are finding filing their taxes inordinately complex and expensive. Citigroup's 1998 return, for instance, took up 30,000 pages and was prepared with the help of 200 tax professionals.

A letter writer to the *NYT* points out a flaw in a story in the *Times* and elsewhere about how Microsoft's market capitalization of \$500 billion is so large that if it were a country its gross national product would rank right behind Spain's, the ninth-largest in the world. The problem is that GNP is a measure of output of goods and services, and as such is more like gross sales than market value. Therefore, the correct comparison, says the letter writer, is between a country's GNP and Microsoft's \$20 billion in sales.

The *LAT* op-ed page features a call for the entertainment industry to begin meaningful self-limitation of what sorts of TV, movies, music, videos, and Web sites it makes available to kids. The piece appears over nearly 60 signatures, including those of Jimmy Carter, Gens. Powell and Schwarzkopf, Steve Allen, and Naomi Judd.

The *WP*'s "Reliable Source" notes that *George* contributing editors and JFK Jr. acquaintances Carl Sferrazza Anthony and Douglas Brinkley are apparently tragically stuck in the first stage of grief: going on television. In recent days, says the story, Anthony has done Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, the Sunday *Today* show, Monday's *CBS This Morning*, and *Larry King Live*. Brinkley has been on CNN; MSNBC; NBC's *Today*, *Dateline*, and *Meet the Press*; and ABC's *Good Morning America* and has penned essays in the latest *Newsweek* and last Monday's *NYT*.

Department of Defiance?

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 4:06 a.m. PT

The *New York Times* leads with an exclusive: A new congressional report charges that the Pentagon illegally spent hundreds of millions of dollars on military projects not authorized by Congress. The *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today* go with a story the *NYT* fronts, the discovery of the Kennedy death plane and the recovery of all three bodies it contained. The *Washington Post* fronts that too, but leads instead with the House Republican leadership's attempt to retain GOP moderate votes for its big tax cut by stipulating that a 10 percent across-the-board reduction in income tax rates will be phased in only if the debt and the

government's cost of borrowing continue to decline. The move, says the *Post*, appears to clear the way for House passage of the bill. If so, this will, says the paper, be a sweet victory for Speaker Dennis Hastert, who jawboned many reluctant Republican members. The tax story makes everybody else's front.

The *NYT* lead, by Tim Weiner, concerns an area that Weiner has long covered: the "black" military budget funding the Pentagon's most secret projects. The story reports on the latest instance of the historical problem with the black budget: It's not only kept secret from spies and the media, but often from Congress too. A just-released House Appropriations report expressed anger and astonishment at the Pentagon for what it says are illegal acts: The Air Force starting a still-secret project last year without informing Congress, and trying to buy an \$800 million satellite without authorization, and diverting hundreds of millions of dollars from an unspecified program in order to finance updates for its C-5 transport plane. (The *Times* might have noted that 30 years ago, the scandal over the initial procurement of this same plane popularized the terms "cost overrun" and "whistleblower.") The report also says that the Pentagon spent millions on a "Star Wars" program previously canceled by Congress. Other fiscal legerdemain is charged in connection with trucks, missiles, and tanks. The *Times* says the DOD spokesman officially conceded that military "redirecting" of funds had occurred, but characterized it as mistaken, not defiant.

The papers report that the Kennedy plane and the bodies were found in 116 feet of water 7.5 miles southwest of Martha's Vineyard. JFK Jr. will, the coverage reports, be buried at sea from a Navy ship very soon. Plans for his wife and her sister were still unresolved at press time. At his press conference yesterday, the papers report, President Clinton took full responsibility for the extensive multi-service search for the bodies. The *LAT* notes that Clinton also claimed to have hosted JFK Jr. on his first trip back to the White House since JFK was assassinated. But the *WP*'s "The Reliable Source" disagrees, saying that JFK Jr. made the trek with his sister and mother to the Nixon White House in 1971.

Yesterday's *NYT* reported the arrest of leaders of China's burgeoning spiritual and physical well-being group, the Falun Gong, apparently not so much because of its amorphous doctrines but because of its ability to quickly put large animated crowds on the streets of Beijing. Today's *WP* front reports that protests ensued. Today's *NYT* and *LAT* report that the Chinese government has now decided to ban the organization.

USAT and the *WP* front, and the *NYT* carries inside, word of a finding coming out today in the *New England Journal of Medicine*: Before the age of 50, women who suffer heart attacks are twice as likely to die as men who have one. The less aggressive care that many women receive does not fully explain this difference, which is still being investigated.

The *WP* and *NYT* run inside stories covering the Air Force's struggle this week to save its pet fighter project, the F-22, which, on the verge of production, is suddenly under assault in Congress, not from anti-defense types, but from Congress members who would like to see the plane's production kick-off money of \$1.8 billion spent instead on other already-existing planes. The paper reports that President Clinton has endorsed the plane, while Speaker Hastert yesterday switched from nay to yea on it. A *NYT* editorial today basically calls for killing the plane, although not in

so many words, while the historian of the Air Force pens a *WP* op-ed going—surprise—the other way.

In a *NYT* op-ed, Edward Tenner, an academic expert on technology's unintended consequences, serves up some reasons why society shouldn't become completely wired. First, if there were no more growth in users possible, then for incremental revenues, providers would have to turn to higher access charges or more intrusive forms of advertising. Second, if access became universal, book and CD markets would suffer. And then there's the energy angle. Computers are getting hotter and hotter, says Tenner, literally. He quotes a recent *Forbes* stat: It takes about one pound of coal to create, package, store and move 2 megabytes of data. So a completely wired society would add to the global greenhouse effect.

According to the *WP*, the saga of professional JFK Jr. friend Douglas Brinkley continues. The *Post* says he shook hands with ABC News to be the net's JFK Jr. go-to guy, but then at the last minute jumped to NBC News for the same money, \$10,000. The folks at JFK Jr.'s magazine, *George*, not amused, have dropped Brinkley from the masthead.

Not a Denny Less

Posted Friday, July 23, 1999, at 12:57 a.m. PT

The *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *New York Times* lead with a story that's been cooking for days: passage of a \$792 billion tax cut by the House of Representatives. The bill would pare personal income tax rates by 10 percent over the next ten years, reduce the "marriage penalty" and the highest rate on capital gains from 20 percent to 15 percent, and repeal the tax on health insurance and large inheritances. The papers concur that the plan has zilch chance of actually becoming law—President Clinton has already promised not to sign it—and that it merely represents an opening gambit in the upcoming back-and-forth over what to do with the surplus.

The reports agree that this a key victory for House Speaker Denny Hastert, who cajoled his fractious and narrow majority—including a cadre of moderates skittish about using so much of the surplus for tax cuts—into supporting the legislation. Hastert wooed party moderates by agreeing to postpone the tax cut if the government's interest rate on the national debt climbs (the papers call this stipulation a sham; no one understands how it would actually work, and it is unlikely to survive in the Senate). The *WP*'s ticktock account of Hastert's vote campaign proposes that the bill ultimately passed because "just about every Republican wants Hastert to succeed." After the bill scored enough votes to win, GOP members cheered, "Coach! Coach! Coach!"

The *Wall Street Journal*'s "Washington Wire" column ticks off the legislation's many concessions to special interest groups. Investmentmeister Warren Buffett persuaded Sen. Bob Kerrey to up the limit on how many bequeathed publicly traded shares a private foundation can own in a single company, while Rep. Jennifer Dunn worked on behalf of retail outlets to ensure that their incentives to build in shopping malls wouldn't be taxed heavily.

All papers front the Chinese government's ban of the spiritual organization Falun Gong (sometimes known as Falun Dafa). Followers are, says the *NYT*, largely "middle-aged people who practice a form of Chinese breathing exercises and meditation," but they are organized enough to engineer what the *WSJ* calls "the largest expression of public discontent with the government since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests." The *NYT* waits until the 22nd paragraph of its story to explain why Beijing is so spooked by the mystics: Similar groups destabilized the last imperial dynasty, and China fears that Falun Gong could organize China's huge numbers of newly laid-off state employees. The *WSJ* points out that Falun Gong's estimated 40 million members make it a close second in membership to the Chinese Communist Party's 55 million.

The other unanimously fronted story is the House's denial of funding for the Air Force's super-pricey F-22 fighters, already being prepped for production at a Lockheed Martin warehouse. Each plane cost \$200 million, and Lockheed Martin is reeling from the loss of the sale. The *WP* attributes the decision to cost worries, as well as tension between the White House and Capitol Hill on all matters military.

A *NYT* front-pager and a *WP* inside piece report on George W. Bush's first significant policy speech, which laid out a scheme to fund social services through private charity. Bush proposed spending \$8 billion—or, as the *WP* reminds, 10 percent of the non-Social Security budget surplus—on tax incentives designed to stimulate contributions to nonprofits and religious groups. The *WP* calls Bush's proposals the first real glimpse of the face of "compassionate conservatism" and an unmistakable rejection of Republican "free-market libertarian orthodoxy." His programs surely would work if other citizens are as generous as his supporters: Despite his speaking in ground zero of Quayle territory, Bush carted home a one-night haul of at least \$600,000.

The *WSJ* reports that despite Al Gore's avid technophilia, Bill Bradley is outpacing him in Silicon Valley contributors, with George W. Bush a close second. High-tech titans admire Bradley's nuanced grasp of financial esoterica and support for free trade. Meanwhile, Gore's stock suffers from his tight associations with tort lawyers, who often bring stockholder suits against startups when their stock tanks.

Need a mate? A *WSJ* piece quotes friendly sounding singles ads, complete with descriptions like "Looking for a playmate?" "full of energy and spunk," and "a real ladies man." But don't respond unless you're ready to get down on four legs; the ads feature dogs in need of a home.

—This item was written by Jodi Kantor.

Scott Shuger is a *Slate* senior writer.

THE WEEK/THE SPIN

A Great and Gross Festival

By Jodi Kantor

John F. Kennedy Jr. was laid to rest. The ashes of Kennedy, his wife, and sister-in-law were scattered at sea. The

Los Angeles Times attributed the crash to a piloting error by Kennedy, but a tidal wave of eulogies (including this one from the *Washington Post*) blamed a curse on the Kennedy clan. Other explanations: The *New York Times* cited hazy flying conditions, James Fallows explained the obvious danger of the flight in *Slate*, the *New York Post* reported that Kennedy had been obliged to schedule the Vineyard landing by his wife, and *Fortune* says that Wall Street is blaming Morgan Stanley for making JFK Jr.'s sister-in-law work late. The *Jerusalem Post* pointed to a "novelty-seeking and risk-taking gene discovered in Israel" (see "International Papers" for more). Michael Kelly asks *Washington Post* readers why "we lard up the sorrow with this great and gross festival of national media blah-blah about Camelot and royalty and The Kennedy Curse." *Slate*'s William Saletan examines the debate over whether the Kennedys are reckless.

Republicans gathered support for a \$792 billion tax-cut plan. GOP leaders appeased moderates by agreeing to condition the cuts on yearly reductions in the federal debt. In the *Washington Post*, House Ways and Means chairman Bill Archer, R-Texas, accuses Democrats of supporting "big government on autopilot" and argues that the cuts epitomize compassionate conservatism. But deficit-hawk ex-Sens. Sam Nunn and Warren Rudman assert in the same pages that the surplus should be used to pay down the deficit. President Clinton warned, "I will not allow a risky plan to become law."

The Pentagon spent hundreds of millions of dollars on projects unapproved by Congress. According to the *New York Times*, a congressional report accuses the Pentagon of funding a top-secret Air Force program, an \$800 million satellite, a high-tech missile defense system previously rejected by Congress, and other unapproved purchases. The report expresses shock at the flagrant illegality of the expenditures. "Do we get it right 100 percent of the time? Of course not," the Pentagon responded.

Ehud Barak pledged to strike peace deals with Syria and the Palestinians within 15 months. Syria responded by asking radical Palestinian groups in Damascus to end their attacks on Israel. His meetings last week with President Clinton and Yasser Arafat were roundly applauded for rebuilding relationships former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had soured, but David Plotz explains in *Slate* why Israelis less than optimistic. In the *Washington Post*, Henry Kissinger warned Israelis not to leave the United States out of the peace process, while an op-ed piece in the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* cautioned that congressional Republicans, under the sway of the right-wing Israeli Likud Party, will "throw spikes into the newly energized peace train."

Security forces quelled student protests in Iran. Young people in 18 cities had staged protests, thrown stones, and set police vehicles on fire. Pro-government conservatives rallied right back. "International Papers" compares the uprising to civil war and the fall of the Iron Curtain, but the Iranian newspaper *Neshat* argues that revolution is "neither possible nor desirable." The *New York Times'* Thomas Friedman calls them both wrong, saying Iranians simply want the government "to get out of their

lives so they can freely partake of the prosperity, cultural options, and opportunities that today's world-without-walls offers."

U.S. diplomats will try to soothe tension between Taiwan and China. The island abandoned its "one China" policy, which implied China's sovereignty over and eventual reunification with Taiwan. "Don't underestimate the Chinese government's firm determination to uphold national sovereignty, dignity, and territorial integrity," warned the Chinese Foreign Ministry in response. An editorial from the Chinese Xinhua news agency vilified Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui for venturing down "a dead alley" and swimming against the "historical tide" of unification. The *Weekly Standard* argues that America should back Lee with words now and, if necessary, military force later, but the *Washington Post* reports that the U.S. envoys will pressure him to back down. The *Wall Street Journal* predicted that the spat will blow over when Lee steps down in eight months.

The Senate agreed that a new agency should supervise nuclear weapons research. The agency would report directly to the secretary of energy. Sponsors of the plan said it would institute accountability for security breaches, but the House reportedly prefers an even stronger independent agency.

California enacted the country's strictest ban on assault weapons. It eliminates loopholes that previously allowed gun manufacturers to evade restrictions by renaming or slightly altering their weapons. Another new law restricts gun buyers to one weapon purchase per month. The *Los Angeles Times* gives its blessing, and the *New York Times* reports that the ban bodes well for tighter gun control in other states.

Rep. Michael Forbes, R-N.Y., defected to the Democratic Party. The *Washington Post* reports that Democratic leaders courted Forbes, a conservative who opposes abortion and gun control, in a drive to claim the six seats they need for a majority. National Republican Congressional Committee Chair Tom Davis denigrated Forbes' decision by likening it to "many of his past actions, inconsistent and erratic." Jodi Kantor explains in *Slate* how Forbes made the move, and David Brooks explains in the *New York Times* why: "party loyalty and gratitude are never allowed to get in the way of the epic personal drama that exists in a politician's own mind."

The Senate passed compromise patients' rights legislation. Republicans defeated a plan to let patients sue their HMOs but approved more access to emergency care and specialists. Democrats protested that the reforms would apply to fewer than one-third of the 161 million Americans with private insurance. The *Washington Post* awards the GOP "a clean win on an issue of prime importance to the American public" but foresees an election-time brawl. "Today we saw what 'compassionate conservatism' pretends to be," harrumphed Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md. *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert asserts that managed care has bought Republican votes and that patients will die as a result.

Cigars will carry warnings similar to those on cigarettes. The Federal Trade Commission said the current absence of labels

implies "that cigars are a safe alternative to cigarettes." Industry honchos protested that "cigar smokers are mature, well-informed adults who smoke on an occasional basis."

Ohio Democrats want Jerry Springer to run for Congress. Democratic officials in the Columbus area have discussed the idea with Springer and the state party. Politics has become entertainment, a political consultant shrugged to the Associated Press.

A generic drug may prevent death by heart failure. Researchers announced that Spironolactone, a 40-year-old, inexpensive medication used to treat water retention, cut death from congestive heart failure by 30 percent in experimental trials. Twenty million people suffer from this heart condition worldwide. Half of them die within five years of diagnosis. The *New England Journal of Medicine* rushed the story to press.

Apple introduced iMac laptops. The iBook, pictured here, can function like a cordless phone, allowing users to connect to the Internet while roaming up to 150 feet from a telephone jack. Analysts predict it will fuel sales of laptops to the home market in general and Apple's turnaround in particular.

Hewlett-Packard chose a female president and CEO. Carleton S. Fiorina will be the first female CEO among the country's 20 biggest publicly held companies and the third among the Fortune 500. The *Wall Street Journal* says the choice proves that H-P "is serious about continuing to revamp its stodgy image," while a *New York Times* editorial calls it evidence that the glass ceiling "is at least cracking."

David Cone of the New York Yankees pitched a perfect game. It was the 16th perfect game in Major League Baseball history. The *New York Daily News* boasted of "Yankee magic," fueled by Yogi Berra and Don Larsen's presence at the game. Even the Canadian *Globe and Mail* agreed.

Paul Lawrie won golf's British Open. Lawrie, ranked 159th in the world, began the final round 10 strokes back but advanced to a three-way playoff when tournament leader Jean Van de Velde choked away a three-stroke lead on the final hole. The Associated Press effused that "the most stunning collapse in golf gave way to the greatest comeback in the history of major championships." The *Scottish Press and Journal* celebrated the triumph of its native son.

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IN OTHER MAGAZINES

Why It's Not So Bad To Be Canadian

By Eve Gerber and Jodi Kantor

Economist, July 24

The cover story concludes that technology has probably given birth to a "new economy," though there is no statistical proof of it. Although America's productivity growth spurt has been concentrated in the computer industry, anecdotal evidence

suggests that technology increases the flexibility of capital in all industries. (Click here for Paul Krugman's assessment of "new paradigm" economics in *Slate*.) ... A survey postulates that it is not necessarily bad to be Canadian. Canada has universal health care, low inflation, low interest rates, and strong economic growth. On the downside, Canada's economy is weaker than the United States', and Canadians have an inferiority complex about their southern neighbor

***New Republic*, Aug. 9**

The cover package debates how to divide the surplus. One article argues for public investment in research, infrastructure, and education, based on the premise that the information revolution, not deficit reduction and low interest rates, undergirds our prosperity. Another piece, which embraces the notion that smaller deficits and lower interest rates have midwived prosperity, proposes shoring up Social Security and Medicare, and saving the surplus. Some minor tax relief, such as an increase in the earned income tax credit, is also appropriate, as is boosting education and infrastructure investment. A final article calls for "monumental tax cuts" to restore faith in individualism, abolish the tax code's dispiriting progressivity, and pare government down so it can't do much.

***George*, August 1999**

The jokes in the unfortunately timed "political humor issue" fall hideously flat. Guest editor Ben Stiller joshes about banishing John F. Kennedy Jr. and is photographed making off with John-John's sports equipment. ... A mock interview with Ricky Martin suggests that he is a secret policy wonk: He reads the *New Republic* and loves to expostulate on Puerto Rican sugar-cane subsidies and "la domestic policy loca." ... In a real profile, Rep. Mary Bono, R-Cal., defends herself from charges of promiscuity. "If I had had an affair with Newt Gingrich, I would have ended up on the Ways and Means Committee," she retorts.

***New York Times Magazine*, July 25**

The cover story worries about the implications of a gender-selection technology. The experimental "Microsort" process separates sperm carrying X chromosomes (which create girls) from those carrying Y chromosomes. Doctors impregnate women with embryos of the favored gender. Ethicists fear that the technique will further institutionalize sex discrimination. ... An article warns that all computer networks are unsafe and that the plaintiff's bar will reap millions from lawsuits prompted by network fiascoes.

***Atlantic Monthly*, August 1999**

The cover story maps a political agenda to engage the apathetic Generation X: fiscal restraint, investment in education and training, and class-based affirmative action. ... An article recommends a cup of "shade coffee." "Sun coffee," grown in high-yield rows, doesn't taste as good. "Sustainable coffee," grown in the shade amid other vegetation, is better for the environment and a great way to differentiate java in an overcrowded market. ... A piece claims world population will fall in the next 50 years. In the past two decades, global fertility has dropped by 1.5 children per woman and industrialized nations have fallen below the 2.1 children-per-woman replacement rate.

***Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Newsweek*, July 26**

Special editions mourn the passing of JFK Jr. (*U.S. News* junked copies of its original edition to put out the Kennedy special.) All are packed with full-page photos of John in various stages of his public life. *Time* has fresh shots of an anguished Ethel and a plaintive Rory Kennedy. The weeklies embrace the myth of the Kennedy curse. *Time* calls the clan "the first family of pain." *U.S. News* says the death of JFK Jr. "seemed almost ordained."

The cookie-cutter profiles note that Kennedy was a mediocre student but had a perfect 6-0 conviction record as a prosecutor. He became a devoted editor of *George*, which seems likely to founder in his absence. *U.S. News* says he met Carolyn Bessette jogging in the park, *Newsweek* says they met at a charity ball, but all agree it was a storybook romance. *Newsweek* reports that JFK Jr. actively explored a Senate run before Hillary Clinton expressed interest. His wife was afraid to fly with him, preferring to travel with a professional pilot or drive herself. *U.S. News* and *Newsweek* both declare JFK Jr. was not reckless like his cousins, but *Time* questions whether it was foolhardy for Kennedy to fly solo over the ocean. (See the July 19 "Chatterbox" to find out why *Slate* recommends against flying to Martha's Vineyard at night.)

A *Newsweek* article reassesses what turned the tide in Kosovo. Though NATO damaged civil infrastructure, the Serb army remained basically intact. Only the belief that ground war was imminent led Slobodan Milosevic to cave.

A *U.S. News* report distinguishes among different types of memory loss. Forgetting names is not a cause for alarm, but forgetting how to prepare dinner indicates loss of "executive functioning," which signals the onset of dementia.

A *Time* article dismisses the hysteria over rationed health care. Ninety-seven percent of treatment decisions by doctors are approved by managed-care plans and 40 states already offer patients some protections against insurance plans.

***Weekly Standard*, July 26**

The cover story chastises the "ideological ax-grinders" for exploiting the U.S. victory in the Women's World Cup. "Blowhards" falsely claimed that the game demonstrated women are the same as men. Since female players are weaker and slower their play is more offense-oriented and therefore more exciting to watch. (Read William Saletan's "Frame Game" on soccer politics here.) ... An article salutes the 30th anniversary of the first moon walk by calling the space shuttle program a flop and the international space station a disaster. These programs have produced no significant scientific discoveries. Congress should cut NASA funding and let free enterprise flourish in space.

***The New Yorker*, July 26**

A profile of *New York Times* Publisher and Chairman Arthur Sulzberger Jr. concludes that he has shepherded the company through profound changes while maintaining its integrity. Sulzberger created new sections, introduced color to the front page, enlivened the editorial page, and promoted minority viewpoints. His greatest challenge: bringing the *Times* to the Internet without sacrificing quality. ... A dispatch mocks Herb Allen's summer camp for moguls in Sun Valley. The media elite

socialize during raft trips and water fights and vie for a place in the annual Annie Leibovitz portrait. ... An item reveals that although an independent counsel deputy proposed indicting Hillary Clinton, most Starr staffers, including former ethics adviser Sam Dash, dismissed the idea as meritless.

Eve Gerber is a Slate editorial assistant.

SUMMARY JUDGMENT

Stanley Steamed

By Josh Daniel

Movies

Eyes Wide Shut (Warner Bros.). Thumbs go up, down, and every which way for the final film by director Stanley Kubrick, who died shortly after wrapping the movie. Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman star as a married couple entangled in sexual jealousy, but the critics focus largely on Kubrick's work. Roger Ebert (the *Chicago Sun-Times*) labels it "a worthy final chapter to a great director's career," and Janet Maslin (the *New York Times*) raves that it's his riskiest film and "a spellbinding addition to the Kubrick canon." Michiko Kakutani (the *New York Times*) begs to differ, complaining that the director's "meticulous, detail-oriented approach has sucked all spontaneity and passion from the picture." Most reviewers pillory the film's highly publicized group-sex scene, in which human figures were digitally inserted to avoid an NC-17 rating: "the most pompous orgy in the history of the movies" (David Denby, *The New Yorker*), and "one of the least erotic orgies ever filmed" (Kenneth Turan, the *Los Angeles Times*). (Click here for *Slate* critic David Edelstein's review [www.slate.com/MovieReview/99-07-16/MovieReview.asp] and here for an "Explainer" on Arthur Schnitzler, who wrote the novella that *Eyes Wide Shut* is based on [www.slate.com/Code/explainer/explainer.asp?Show=7/20/99&id=Message=3245]. Click here to see the trailers [eyeswideshut.com/].)

The Blair Witch Project (Artisan Entertainment). A big hit at this year's Sundance Film Festival, this first feature produced by five film-school graduates from Florida steals some of Kubrick's opening-weekend thunder. Its mockumentary premise: Three young filmmakers disappear while trekking through the woods of Maryland in search of a local witch; a year later, their footage is found and presented as *The Blair Witch Project*. The trio get increasingly suspicious of each other as they hear eerie sounds in the night and find mysterious bundles of sticks hanging from trees, and by the end they're running for their lives. With its tiny budget of \$75,000, the film cleverly keeps the evil off-screen: "Most of the time, it's what the three witch-searchers don't see—but fear—that gets our petrified juices flowing or curdling. This is low-tech inventiveness at its best" (Desson Howe, the *Washington Post*). *BWP* is "the new face of movie horror" (Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*), and it ends with "as heart-stopping a climax as any the genre has seen in years" (Jay Carr, the *Boston Globe*). The *Los Angeles Times*' Kevin Thomas demurs, knocking it as "a clever, entertaining stunt, no more, no less," but Joe

Morgenstern (the *Wall Street Journal*) advises, "Don't see this ingenious first feature if you believe in ghosts." (Click here to see the movie's official Web site, with more back-story on the mockumentary [www.blairwitch.com/].)

Lake Placid (20th Century Fox). Neither Kubrick nor the first-time filmmakers from *Blair Witch Project* have much to fear in the way of competition from this flaccid creature feature, written by David E. Kelley (*The Practice*, *Ally McBeal*). At a fictional lake in Maine—not the real Lake Placid in New York—Bridget Fonda and Bill Pullman take on a 30-foot migrant crocodile from Asia. (Movie critics seem to have a hard time telling a crocodile from an alligator.) Maslin (the *New York Times*) does find bright spots in the dialogue, the "divinely cheesy" special effects, and the supporting cast, which includes Oliver Platt and *The General*'s Brendan Gleeson. But "since even the gator horror satire is old hat (remember *Alligator*?), there's no remaining way to make this interesting." Or, as Harry Knowles (Ain't It Cool News) neatly puts it: *Placid* is "the worst giant alligator movie known to man." (Click here to play the official site's wacky Croc Drop game [www.foxmovies.com/lakeplacid/html/crocdrop/index.html].)

Book

A Short History of Rudeness: Manners, Morals, and Misbehavior in Modern America, by Mark Caldwell (Picador). No one argues that Caldwell is the first historian to survey the origin and use of manners, but whether he adds much to the discussion is another question. David Bowman (the *Village Voice*) calls *Short History* "an amusing but lightweight read" and notes that "even Mick Jagger had a more rigorous take on the subject ... in 'Sympathy for the Devil.'" The *NYT*'s Richard Eder takes a harsher line: "These broader subjects are treated in books and magazines and the slow sections of newspapers." Most reviewers notice Caldwell's positive spin on the much-maligned Martha Stewart—that she democratizes civilized living by making it not a matter of class, but simply of good habits, which anyone can learn. "It's difficult to recall a single book in which [manners] are discussed as comprehensively and intelligently as in this one ... the definitive book on the subject—at least for now" (Jonathan Yardley, the *Washington Post*).

Music

Significant Other, by Limp Bizkit (Flip-Interscope). The notoriously potty-mouthed rap/metal quintet matures a bit on the follow-up to its 1997 debut, *Three Dollar Bill, Y'All\$*. The band occasionally departs from its hard-core speed metal and ventures into "melodic interludes, user-friendly grooves, and actual harmonious vocals" (Lorraine Ali, *Rolling Stone*). The lyrics, by singer Fred Durst (who clammers out of a toilet during the band's stage act), are "still the stuff of monochromatic dude talk," but sometimes they hint at something deeper—like when "the formerly promiscuous singer confesses his shame for past recreational nookie sessions" (Ali). "The unholy matrimony of metal and rap celebrates another victory on this superb sophomore effort" (Amy Sciarretto, *College Music Journal*).

Snap Judgment: Book

Inside the Oval Office: White House Tapes From FDR to Clinton, by William Doyle (Kodansha International). Doyle's look at the audio-taping practices of 10 presidents is a "valuable history and comparative survey" (Ron Rosenbaum, the *New York Times Book Review*). Doyle, a "master of crackling prose" (Richard R. Roberts, the *Indianapolis Star*), provides insightful transcripts from key moments, such as the Cuban missile crisis and the final days of the Nixon administration.

Josh Daniel is *Slate's* managing editor.

EXPLAINER

Something in the news you'd like explained? Send e-mail to explainer@slate.com.

The FBI's Top 10 List

Posted Friday, July 16, 1999, at 9:19 a.m. PT

When suspected serial killer Rafael Resendez-Ramirez turned himself in on July 12, he had been on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List for four weeks. What is the Most Wanted list?

The list is designed to focus the public's attention and the bureau's resources on accused criminals who have proved particularly elusive. A wire service reporter sparked the idea for the program in late 1949, when he asked the FBI for names and descriptions of the 10 men it most wanted to arrest. The resulting story generated so much interest that in 1950 Director J. Edgar Hoover implemented an ongoing list.

FBI headquarters takes nominations for the list from its 56 field offices, and the deputy director approves the final version. Ideal candidates have a long record of serious crimes—such as murder, kidnapping, or assault—or pose an extraordinary menace to society. While the list is supposedly limited to suspects who aren't already well known, in fact it often includes notorious fugitives. James Earl Ray, who was convicted of killing Martin Luther King Jr., is one of six men who have appeared on the list twice: after King's murder and again after he escaped from prison in the mid-'70s. Only seven women have been listed, the first in 1968.

Notices describing the fugitives are posted in police stations and post offices around the country, as well as on the FBI's Web site. The average suspect is 37-years-old and spends 316 days on the list. They've been caught as far away as Vietnam and Pakistan. Fugitives are removed if the charges against them are dismissed or if the bureau decides that they are no longer a threat (or, naturally, if they're captured). There's no regular schedule of updates; the bureau simply adds suspects as others are removed.

Although cop killers are perennials, the Top 10 list has changed with the times. In the '50s, it was filled with bank robbers. Political radicals took over in the '60s and '70s, and drug lords dominated in the '80s. Today's list includes terrorist Usama Bin Laden and abortion foes Eric Robert Rudolph and James Charles Kopp.

The Top 10 list has a 94 percent success rate—of its 457 suspects, 134 have been captured as a result of tips from the public, and 295 have been found through other means. Most die

in prison or land on death row. Nine have been killed during capture, and the charges against 15 were dropped.

Next question?

Explainer thanks Rex Skelton Tomb, acting chief of the FBI's Fugitive Publicity Unit.

—Eve Gerber

How To Quit the Republican Party

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 9:16 a.m. PT

Rep. Michael Forbes, R-N.Y., and Sen. Bob Smith, R-N.H., are quitting the Republican Party—Forbes to be a Democrat, Smith to be an independent. Nevertheless, Smith insisted that he should retain membership in the Senate's Republican caucus and his chairmanship of the Ethics Committee and two subcommittees. What are the rules for joining or leaving a political party?

For voters and politicians alike, party "membership" is a surprisingly fuzzy concept in the U.S. political system. Basically, you are what you say you are.

Forbes and Smith nominally switched their affiliations by filing new state voter registration forms—the same ones used by regular citizens. But Forbes' form will remain in a lockbox until the first Tuesday after the general election in November (New York state instituted this delay in the 1940s to deter voters from switching parties right before the primary). Smith's move awaits rubber-stamping by a panel of state-appointed supervisors who meet every few months to review batches of registration changes.

The only purpose of the party designation on voter registration forms is to determine which party's primary you vote in. Half the states don't even ask for a party affiliation when you register and allow you to choose when you go to vote. And there is technically nothing to prevent someone registered, say, as a Democrat, from running as an independent—or even as a Republican.

In Congress, the majority party gets to appoint all the leaders, and defectors risk losing their committee chairmanships. But political expediency may allow some to preserve their status. The Republican leadership, fearful of alienating Smith's fellow conservatives, will reportedly allow Smith to retain his positions until the next election. Choice committee assignments and chairmanships are often used as enticements for politicians to switch from the minority party to the majority—as several Democrats did after Congress went Republican in 1994. The Democrats can't offer chairmanships, but they reportedly have promised that Forbes at least will be able to keep his seat on the Appropriations Committee.

Next question?

—Jodi Kantor

Who Is Arthur Schnitzler?

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 9:33 a.m. PT

The final film of director Stanley Kubrick, *Eyes Wide Shut*, was based on a novella called *Traumnovelle* (*Rhapsody: A Dream Novel*) by a *fin de siècle* Austrian writer named Arthur Schnitzler, whose name seems vaguely familiar to many but whose major works could be named by few. Who, exactly, is he?

Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931) lived in Vienna all his life, first as a physician and then, after the death of his father, who was also a doctor, as a writer. His body of work—4,000 pages in the German edition—includes plays, fiction, and poetry. His most celebrated plays are *Anatol* (1893), a series of seven one-act plays chronicling the affairs of a melancholy playboy; *Leibelei* (1896), about a sweet, sexually available girl; *Reigen* (1903), consisting of 10 dialogues, nine of which center on acts of sexual intercourse; and *Professor Bernhadi* (1912), which addresses anti-Semitism in Viennese society. The most popular of Schnitzler's novels, *The Road Into the Open* (1908), is another study of anti-Semitism and its effect on Vienna's youth. Anti-Semitism aside (Schnitzler was Jewish), his main themes—love, sex, and death—were informed by his study of psychology and his own capacious sexual appetite. He once wrote in his diary that he longed to have his own harem. In real life, Schnitzler had numerous affairs, as well as orgasms, every one of which he cataloged for years. His work reflects his belief in a key principle: Everything that can go wrong between lovers, will.

Schnitzler's writing was perceived as immoral and scandalized critics in both Europe and the United States. In 1902, Leon Trotsky called him "an esthete and nothing but an esthete!" However, some of the hostility toward the writer was clearly due to anti-Semitism. During the obscenity trial for Schnitzler's most controversial play, *Reigen* (*Round Dance*), which portrayed infidelity and casual couplings, the court transcript states, "For the defense it is important to state that this trial is indeed not a battle against *Reigen* but one against the Jews, that *Reigen* was only used in order to bring about an anti-Semitic action." The directors and cast were acquitted of the charges, but *Reigen* still earned Schnitzler a reputation as a pornographer, and subsequent performances of the play sparked riots. In 1938, after Hitler annexed Vienna, that city's most prestigious theater pledged to purge from its stage all "Jewish filth" such as Schnitzler.

Americans first came into contact with Schnitzler's plays in 1912, when John Barrymore mounted a production of *Anatol*. Tom Stoppard adapted two Schnitzler plays: *Liebeleil*, which he called *Dalliance*, and *Das Weite Land* (1911), which he called *Undiscovered Country*. David Hare's *The Blue Room*, in which Nicole Kidman was first glimpsed naked (though she took off a lot more clothing in *Eyes Wide Shut*) was based on *Reigen*, as was Max Ophüls' film adaptation, *La Ronde* (1950).

Schnitzler's *Rhapsody: A Dream Novel* (1926), out of print for many years, is being reissued with the release of *Eyes Wide Shut*. Collections of plays and stories are also finding their way back into print, and Schnitzler criticism has been collected in a centennial volume due out in 2000. Germanists consider him an indispensable part of their syllabuses, though generalists have until recently given him short shrift. Critics interviewed by *Slate* agree that Schnitzler is worth revisiting because of his wit, his insight into men and women, and his grasp of the way sex, love, and hate intersect. As Sigmund Freud once put it in an admiring letter to Schnitzler: "I have gained the impression that you have learned through intuition—though actually as a result of sensitive introspection—everything that I have had to unearth by laborious work on other persons."

Next question?

—Barrett Broutas

What Did Martin Frankel Do?

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 9:33 a.m. PT

The newspapers are filled with long and confusing stories about an alleged financial scoundrel named Martin Frankel. Here is the gist of the allegations:

Frankel was a small-time money manager. In 1991, he helped establish an investment fund called the Thunor Trust. Over the next four years, Thunor spent \$71 million buying insurance companies—mostly small, financially troubled companies specializing in burial coverage for the poor. Investigators don't yet know where the \$71 million came from.

Insurance companies collect premiums from customers and invest the money until it has to be paid out. Buying the company gives you control of a pile of money often larger than the purchase price (since that price reflects the fact that benefits will ultimately have to be paid). Thunor's publicly stated strategy was to make these companies more successful by improving the return on their portfolios. Frankel is believed to have directed all the companies' funds to Liberty National Securities, an unregistered brokerage he ran from the living room of his Connecticut mansion. Frankel kept the companies happy with apparently bogus statements that showed market-beating returns. By this spring, Frankel was managing \$335 million or more through Liberty National.

Investigators now suggest that little of this money was ever invested on behalf of clients. An FBI affidavit alleges that Frankel diverted the assets "into accounts in and outside this country under his control and for his use ..."

Last year, ownership of Thunor Trust was transferred to an entity called the Saint Francis of Assisi Foundation. After convincing two Vatican officials to vouch for the organization, Frankel lobbied Lee Iacocca (whom he flew to Italy on a private plane) and Walter Cronkite to serve on its board of directors. Though both eventually declined, Frankel allegedly continued to use their names in publicity. This March, accountants valued the foundation's assets—some of which were managed by Liberty National—at \$1.98 billion.

Frankel's purported scheme began to unravel earlier this year as state regulators grew suspicious of the concentration of funds at Liberty National and ordered that hundreds of millions be returned to the insurers. Unable or unwilling to comply, Frankel fled the country in May and, the FBI suspects, set fire to his mansion to conceal evidence. (He is believed to be hiding somewhere in Europe.) Several of Thunor's insurance companies are now in receivership. As for the St. Francis Foundation's \$1.98 billion, investigators say the money is gone and may never have even existed.

Next question?

—Matt Alsdorf

In the Event of a Water Landing

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 5:45 p.m. PT

Unlike JFK Jr., most of us rarely if ever fly in private airplanes. Many people, though, fly often in commercial planes and are familiar with instructions on what to do in case of what is

euphemistically called a "water landing." Is there such a thing as a water landing, and what are your chances of surviving one?

If you define a water landing as a controlled, if unplanned, descent onto water, as opposed to a simple crash, this is what aviators call a "ditching." And, yes, according to the U.S. Coast Guard, there is one ditching every day in United States waters. This includes helicopters and all fixed-wing aircraft—military, air carrier, corporate, and general aviation (a group that includes private planes like the one Kennedy was flying). But there has never been a single ditching by a U.S.-flag commercial airline. Several non-U.S. airlines have experienced ditchings, with mixed results: some passengers died and some survived.

The Aviation Consumer Action Project, a Ralph Nader group, says that in an attempted water landing, a wide body jet would "shatter like a raw egg dropped on pavement, killing most if not all passengers on impact, even in calm seas with well-trained pilots and good landing trajectories." Possibly because ditchings are both virtually nonexistent and virtually nonsurvivable, the Federal Aviation Administration does not require commercial pilots to train for them. Instead, it has various rules about how close planes must be to an airfield on land.

Any benefit from the procedures and precautions associated with the phrase, "in the event of a water landing" are, at this point, purely theoretical.

Next question?

—Michael Brus

PUNDIT CENTRAL

Missed the weekend TV talk shows? *Slate* didn't. Go online to www.slate.com Sunday night to see what the commentariat had to say.

Death Dirges and Peace Proposals

By Michael Brus

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 3:46 a.m. PT

The all-but-certain death of John F. Kennedy Jr. is, natch, Issue 1. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's plans for Middle East peace is Issue 2. Campaign 2000 is Issue 3.

The pundits' comments on Kennedy are glowing. Most remark how friendly and decent he was, despite his celebrity. ("He was a very nice man," said Bill Kristol of ABC's *This Week*. "Did you find him personable?" asks Sam Donaldson. "Yes, very nice ...") Most of the commentary takes the form of recycled biographical information, family history, and what amounts to eulogies. Some pundits emphasize the generational contrast between the tough, idealistic father and the easygoing, nonideological son (Michael Bechloss, *This Week*; Doris Kearns Goodwin, NBC's *Meet the Press*). George Stephanopoulos calls Kennedy "the coolest kid in the class." Many programs dip into their archives and run excerpts of their own interviews with Kennedy. ("I'm here for a good long time," he told *Meet the Press* in 1997.)

Most pundits don't know whether to refer to Kennedy in the present or past tense. "He makes a real point of introducing himself," says George Stephanopoulos (*This Week*), who then says of sister Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg: "Now she's lost her entire immediate family." CNN's Bernard Shaw has to remind *Newsweek*'s Evan Thomas to refer to Kennedy in the present tense. Tim Russert (*Meet the Press*) talks fondly of Kennedy's "38 years" on the planet, then promises continuing coverage of "the search for John F. Kennedy."

Some shows run news-making interviews with Barak. On CNN's *Late Edition*, Barak says he would like to see Jonathan Pollard released, and he challenges Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to be as bold in negotiations as slain Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was 20 years ago. He tells *Meet the Press* that the peace process will succeed or fail in the next 15 months.

Many pundits, such as the *McLaughlin Group*'s Tony Blankley, think Barak is aiming too high and is bound to fail. A few optimists, such as Eleanor Clift (*McLaughlin*) think Barak's electoral mandate will enable him to make it work. Almost everyone agrees that, with most of the players getting old (Arafat, al-Assad) or near the end of their term (Clinton), it's now or never for Middle East peace.

The big campaign issue this week is the recent FEC filings by presidential candidates which revealed, among other things, that Gore spends vastly more money per dollar raised than Bush or Bradley. Pat Oliphant, of the *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*, calls Gore's fundraising inefficiency "the biggest embarrassment of all by a country mile." And many pundits see his failure to dust Bradley in fund-raising as a bad omen. (Bradley has won the "first primary, which is the money primary," says the *NewsHour*'s Paul Gigot.)

Hillary and Realpolitik: When Tony Blankley (*This Week*) cites Hillary's putative opposition to welfare reform as evidence that she's out of touch with working-class New Yorkers, Eleanor Clift responds that Hillary "encouraged her husband to sign [the welfare bill]. She is a realist. ... There are people out there who understand reality, and she is one."

A Dream and a Shoeshine: "Bush can get \$1,000 from a guy for a glass of ice water and a handshake," remarks Tom Oliphant (*NewsHour*). "Gore is—you know—arranging dinners with dishes I've never heard of before."

Michael Brus is a *Slate* editorial assistant.

INTERNATIONAL PAPERS

By Alexander Chancellor

It's in the Genes

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999

The world press ran out of new things to say about Kennedy tragedies many years ago, and all the old clichés were revived Monday in the massive coverage of the tragic loss of John F. Kennedy Jr. in a plane crash Friday—the "curse" on the family, its love of adventure, the "end of a dynasty," etc. But the *Jerusalem Post* peddled a new theory. The Kennedys are not

“star-crossed, cursed, or unlucky,” it said in a front-page report. “They undoubtedly bear the novelty-seeking and risk-taking gene discovered in Israel that makes members impulsive, adventurous, and tend to take chances with drugs, sex, speed, and other potentially dangerous activities.” The paper was quoting Dr. Richard Ebstein, a molecular geneticist at Jerusalem’s Herzog Memorial Hospital, who headed the team that discovered the gene. “If I were a Kennedy, I would consult the best psychological experts in the US to discuss what normal personalities are and how to control their risk-taking urge,” he told the paper. Ebstein discovered “the D-4 receptor and serotonin transporter promoter gene” in 1996, the paper said. “He more recently found that it increases the bearer’s risk of getting addicted to hard drugs (although several genes are probably involved), can cause adults to seek sensation, and makes newborns as young as two weeks more alert and curious about the outside world.”

There was widespread reluctance in Kennedy-obsessed European newspapers to write off the future of the family dynasty. *Corriere della Sera* of Milan pegged John Jr.’s cousin Kathleen Kennedy Townsend on its front page as the heir to his “sceptre.” “It would be good if Camelot, the mythical realm of King Arthur, were to end in the hands of a woman above suspicion,” it said. “It would be poetic if the first American woman president were to be called not Hillary but Kathleen.” *Corriere* also carried an interview with Gay Talese, “the troubadour of today’s America and yesterday’s Italy,” dismissing the idea of a Kennedy curse. “I think, on the contrary, that there burns inside them a feeling of invincibility, an obsession with challenge, an arrogance of power that drive them to take risks all the time,” he was quoted as saying. Asked if he thought John Jr. had been different from the others, Talese replied: “Different in the sense that he wasn’t a sexual predator, like his father, uncle and grandfather, nor addicted to drugs or alcohol, like other members of his family. ... But otherwise he was a Kennedy—sure of himself and convinced of his immortality.”

La Repubblica of Rome, on the other hand, said John Jr.’s problem was that he knew he wasn’t a Kennedy at heart and that he had crashed his plane because he wanted to be one. “He didn’t manage to live like a Kennedy, but fate allowed him at least to leave this world as one,” it concluded. (But what does *La Repubblica* know about it? Another characteristic of the Kennedys is that they invite reckless psychological examination.) *La Repubblica* led its front page with a headline saying that John Jr. shouldn’t have flown at night because he wasn’t certified to do so. In Britain, the tabloid *Express* announced in huge letters that he had “had a death wish.” In Paris, *Le Figaro*’s headline was “The Accursed Kings” (“*Les Rois Maudits*”), and its front-page editorial compared John Jr. to the late Princess of Wales. “Like Lady Di,” it said, “fate struck because, according to one of those Elizabethan poets of whom President Kennedy always kept a quotation in reserve [not Elizabethan actually: James Shirley, 1596–1666], ‘There is no armor against fate; Death lays his icy hand on kings.’”

In an editorial, the *Times* of London said John Jr.’s fate recalled another myth—that of Oedipus, who fulfilled a prophecy by killing his father and marrying his mother without knowing who they were. The Oedipus story survives, the paper said,

“because it embodies the deep human sense that free will is a fragile thing, and no inheritance, however noble, frees one from the mark of sin. ... The fate of John Kennedy Jr reinforces in every mind that melancholy truth.” The *Independent* of London also made the Princess Diana comparison, saying that her myth, like that of the Kennedys, was not solely the property of one country. “It would be a fitting legacy if John Junior’s death reminded America and the world of the high ideal of public service and liberal values than run through the Kennedy rhetoric,” it said in an editorial. “It is the Kennedy greatness to call us to a higher moral purpose, and the Kennedy tragedy that none of the family could fulfil that promise.”

The *Guardian* of London commented in its editorial Monday that if John Jr.’s death “helps slow down the US trend toward a new kind of dynastic democracy, then some good will have come from this grim news.” The paper also quoted Col. Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, as reported by the BBC, on its front page. While expressing his “deepest regret” about the tragedy, Qaddafi said he was “even more sad” that the United States has been unable to locate his plane. “America claims to know how to find a mustard seed, either on earth or in space, thanks to its extraordinary capabilities,” he said. “Or perhaps the US is negligent and not serious in searching for its citizens from the Kennedy dynasty?”

Middle East Peace Hopes

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999

As Ehud Barak met Tony Blair in London Wednesday on his way back to Israel from Washington, Middle East peace hopes sprang afresh in the European press. “The sky brightens,” declared the *Guardian* of London over an editorial saying that “after the negativity of Binyamin Netanyahu, Barak is a confidence-building measure all by himself.” It said peace, if it comes, will be “a peace of the pragmatists” with “no outright winners—but, just possibly, a collective victory.” The *Independent* of London proposed that European troops—including British forces—patrol the new peace lines if the Golan Heights are returned by Israel to Syria.

Le Monde of Paris said that Barak’s “calm realism”—as shown in his admission that the Palestinians already have a de facto state—is a good omen for the future. Describing Barak as a man in a hurry, under pressure from the United States to produce results, the paper pointed out that “nothing would delight Mr. Clinton more than a beautiful ending to his second term with a diplomatic success in this part of the world where he has invested so much.” The *Times* of London was rather less cheerful. “The outlook is too complicated to permit of excessive expectations,” it said. For example, an entente with Syria would make Barak’s life more difficult elsewhere. “The paradox of the Arab-Israeli dispute is that it has often served as a distraction from several inter-Arab differences of scarcely less intensity,” it said.

In Israel, *Ha’aretz* supported Barak’s plan to speed up the peace negotiations. “Fifteen more months are more than enough,” it said in an editorial. “The disputed points have been debated to death, the conditions for compromise are known, and many of

them have already been agreed upon. ... Since the inception of the peace process, no peace-seeking prime minister has had such a rare opportunity to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. The combination of a solid mandate at home with ripe regional conditions, and now also the renewed and energetic support of senior American and international leaders, creates a diplomatic and security base that must not be wasted." Elsewhere, *Ha'aretz* reported mixed reactions in Israel to Syria's reported turnaround on terrorism. It said there was optimism among Israeli diplomats, who hadn't expected President Hafez Assad to make such a pro-Israel gesture before the Golan Heights were returned to Syria, but skepticism among others who saw it as a psychological tactic to soften up Israeli public opinion into accepting territorial concessions.

Two themes preoccupying the Arab press Tuesday were America's air raid on southern Iraq Sunday, in which 14 Iraqi civilians reportedly died, and Turkey's recent airstrike on Kurdish rebel bases close to its border with Iran. The London-based daily *al-'Arab* deplored the lack of Arab response to the U.S. action, which it said was an indication of the utter subservience of Arab rulers to the United States. "If the American air raids that killed and injured tens of people near Najaf cannot arouse the Arab conscience from its ten-year slumber, it would be best to consider that conscience dead," the paper said. *Al-Khaleej*, a United Arab Emirates daily, said the Turkish attack, which Iran claimed was within its territory, "underlines the increasingly aggressive and militaristic attitude Ankara has adopted toward its neighbors since it forged its American-sponsored strategic alliance with Israel." The Turkish daily *Hurriyet* said Iran fabricated the incident to divert attention from its student unrest.

In Italy, *La Repubblica* of Rome ran an interview Wednesday with Manouchehr Mohammadi, president of the Iranian national students' association, who said that although the students' revolt was "bloodily repressed in the name of Islam and of so-called national interests which were really only those of a corrupt clergy," the days of the Islamic Republic of Iran were numbered. Mohammadi also disowned Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, whom the students originally supported, saying he listened less and less to the people who voted him in and was now only concerned with hanging on to power. "He no longer represents his electors of two years ago and therefore ought to resign," Mohammadi said.

Corriere della Sera of Milan reported a hardening of the Italian government's line toward illegal immigrants from Kosovo, now that the war is over. It said recent immigrants are mainly gypsies fleeing persecution by the Albanian Kosovars, who claim they collaborated with the Serbian regime (541 gypsies landed in Apulia Tuesday). They will be expelled from Italy, the paper said, because the government's guarantees of food and lodging for Kosovo refugees were conditional upon there being a war in the province.

China is keeping up its pressure on Taiwan, with the official *China Daily* reporting Wednesday that the Central Committee of the Communist Party once again strongly condemned Taiwan's abandonment of the "one China" policy. The paper also had foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue vaguely hinting at the possibility of military action by saying that the People's Liberation Army "shoulders the sacred mission of safeguarding

national sovereignty and territorial integrity." In Hong Kong Tuesday, the Beijing-backed newspaper *Wen Wei Po* reported troop movements in Chinese provinces facing Taiwan, but this was later denied by Chinese military authorities.

In Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported a little victory for Beijing—a decision by the new prime minister of Papua New Guinea to withdraw diplomatic recognition from Taiwan. In Hong Kong, the *South China Morning Post* reported that the Chinese Communist Party has decided to speed up privatization of the textile, electrical, electronic, and construction industries by giving up majority control of them. "The state—through various holding companies—holds 60 to 70 per cent of shares in the bulk of mainland listed companies, making it hard for minority shareholders to ease out ineffective managers and enforce strict corporate governance," the paper said. In Russia, where the government has announced plans to cut spending on social welfare programs, which are largely notional anyway, *Segodnya* published an upbeat interview with First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko predicting that the country will get its promised loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank "if nothing political happens again."

On the Kennedy front, the *Times* of London's New York columnist, Joanna Coles, wrote Wednesday that Americans are surprisingly dry-eyed about the tragedy. "The real mystery of John F. Kennedy Jr's death is why it hasn't unleashed the national hysteria that greeted Princess Diana's fatal car crash two years ago. Notwithstanding cable TV's frenetic electronic vigil, with station editors clearly hoping for a Di-like bounty of extra viewers, the attempts by a series of anchors to launch a national wave of emotion has failed. Not even CNN's Christiane Amanpour sobbing on air (she once roomed with him) was able to shake the nation's uncharacteristic stoicism."

China's Spiritual Void

Posted Friday, July 23, 1999

China's banning of the Falun Gong (Buddhist Law) religious sect was strongly condemned Friday by the *South China Morning Post* of Hong Kong. The paper said in an editorial that China is facing more than enough crises already, from the economy to relations with Taiwan, and it should focus on these problems rather than "launch a massive crackdown against a group which has never done anything more harmful than organise peaceful protests." The rise of Falun Gong is a byproduct of China's new materialism, it said. "The collapse of the ideological basis for communist rule in the rush towards a free-market economy has left a spiritual void. It is inevitable that people thrown out of work or otherwise unsettled by the sweeping changes on the mainland should seek solace in some form of religious-like activity. ... Beijing should consider itself fortunate that the popular desire for spiritual inspiration took such a benign form." Falun Gong's only sin was to build a mass organization independent of the Communist Party. "This is something the leadership is still not prepared to tolerate. For all the changes that have taken place in recent years, yesterday's arrests were a reminder of how far freedom of expression remains curtailed on

the mainland." The paper reported that more than 70 Falun Gong leaders were arrested in China this week, including Ji Liewu, a mainland businessman in his 40s who was responsible for bringing the sect to Hong Kong.

Announcing the ban Friday, the official *China Daily* said the sect had engaged in illegal activities: advocating superstition and spreading fallacies, hoodwinking people, inciting and creating disturbances, and jeopardizing social stability. The paper also quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue as saying that Falun Gong had been banned because it had not been registered in the manner required by law. She also claimed that the sect had a declining membership of about 2 million, while other estimates have put it as high as 100 million.

In Israel, *Ha'aretz* led Friday with the United States urgently pressing Prime Minister Ehud Barak to make implementation of the Wye River accord his top priority and to carry out agreed Israeli pullbacks from the West Bank. Meanwhile, the U.S. administration decided to go easy on Syria, with President Bill Clinton postponing a planned telephone conversation with Syrian President Hafez Assad. Barak told *Ha'aretz* that "an air of suspicion is clouding the whole issue of Wye" and that "before this suspicion becomes mythology, it must be dispelled and understanding must be reached."

Friday's *Guardian* featured an interview with former Chilean President Gen. Augusto Pinochet, who has been under house arrest for several months awaiting the outcome of Spain's request that he be extradited and tried there for murder, torture, and other human rights violations. This is the second interview Pinochet has given since his arrest in London last year. The first, last weekend, was with the conservative *Sunday Telegraph*, which opposes his extradition. The liberal *Guardian*, by contrast, wants to see him tried, and its reporter, a former human rights activist, noted that his fingers are "flat and meaty like those of a butcher." The general's answers in both interviews were almost identical. He categorically denied all charges against him and complained about Britain's treatment of him. "I wasn't in England as a common bandit," he said, in reference to his arrest. "I was here as a diplomatic figure and had been welcomed as such."

In Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* led Friday on a UNICEF report that more children are now born in poverty than ever before, and the paper discussed the growing AIDS catastrophe in Africa, where 21 million people are infected with the disease. *Die Welt* led on a new birth control patch, developed by Johnson & Johnson, which it said would offer strong competition to the pill when it is put on the market next year. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of Munich led on a new drive by the German government to get Turkey admitted to the European Union, provided its human rights record is acceptable.

Alexander Chancellor is a columnist for the Guardian. He is filing from London. His most recent book, Some Times in America, the story of his stint as editor of The New Yorker's "Talk of the Town" section, was recently published in the United Kingdom.

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BALLOT BOX

By Jacob Weisberg

Styles of Stiff

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 12:27 p.m. PT

A Gore and Bill Bradley have a lot in common. In addition to being centrist Democrats, former colleagues in the Senate, and policy mavens who agree on almost every known issue, the two contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination are both—as one or two close observers have already noted—somewhat dull. To be more specific, they're both physically stiff, wooden public speakers, who lack spontaneity or humor in public. They share the kind of inverted charisma that can suck energy from a room and reduce a cheering convention throng to stupor. Starbucks, I imagine, will contribute heavily to both candidates.

How did they both get that way? The explanation may have something to do with a shared lack of personal misery. Both men grew up in prosperous, loving homes. Gore's father was a senator; Bradley's owned a bank near St. Louis. Both matured into wildly successful adulthoods without encountering any real travail, and both appear to have happy family lives. The absence of buried pain distinguishes them from the likes of Bob Dole, who grew up in the Depression and suffered a catastrophic war injury, or Bill Clinton, who survived a dysfunctional and broken family. Gore and Bradley have no chips on their shoulders, no dark sides, and not much to prove to the world.

Yet there are differences. Happy families may be all alike, but boring politicians are all boring in their own way.

You might say that Gore is actually a bore, while Bradley is merely boring. The vice president's dullness starts with his fascination with difficult, technical subjects like ballistic missiles and global warming. Convinced that such topics are beyond lesser intellects, and that it is virtuous to care about them, Gore discusses them in a way that is at once pedantic and condescending, as if instructing a young child or training a dog. When he speaks about chlorofluorocarbons, Gore pulls off the impressive trick of making you feel guilty, insulted, and bored, all at once.

Bradley, on the other hand, simply fails to capture attention. He shares Gore's taste for the arcane—though his specialties in the Senate were economic topics like tax policy, Third World debt, and complicated water rights disputes. He masters these subjects with a plodding diligence that he learned from his basketball training. But unlike Gore, Bradley doesn't preach the urgent necessity that everyone else share his enlightenment. His attitude is more that he did the hard work so we don't have to.

Gore and Bradley are both numbing public speakers, but again in different ways. Bradley is a technically poor orator, who

lacks the basic tools of the trade. He cannot communicate passion or excitement. He fails to make eye contact and trips over words uttered in a low-pitched monotone that makes him sound as if dosed with Benadryl. He is self-conscious and can't wait to get off the stage. In his book, Bradley says he tried for years to become a better speaker, absorbing all sorts of advice. After a while, he concluded it was hopeless and gave up.

Gore, by contrast, has most of the ingredients of public-speaking skill: He can thump the tub, lead a chant, and tell a joke with plausible timing. He looks the camera in the eye, and bites off his words crisply, without mumbling or hesitating. Still, the soufflé doesn't rise. What he lacks is the talent for creating a bond. Gore's technique has a studied, rote quality, like an 8-year-old prodigy playing Bach. He follows Clinton's steps, but never captivates his audience the way Clinton does so effortlessly.

Part of the problem for both Bradley and Gore is that they talk too slowly. But even this they do in different ways. Bradley's delivery seems lethargic because of the speed at which his mind works. Though intelligent, he's not quick. When Bradley was first elected to the Senate in 1978, colleagues wondered whether there might actually be something wrong with him. Gore, on the other hand, thinks quickly but talks slowly because he assumes his audience can't keep up with him.

You might say that Gore's dullness stems from his insecurities, which lead him to be alternately boastful and falsely self-deprecating, as when he brags about pioneering the Internet or joshes about his stiffness. Trying too hard to compensate for his flaws, he comes across as a bit fake and a bit pompous. People who know him are always insisting that his real personality is more appealing, and you suspect that must be true.

Bradley, on the other hand, is dull precisely because he is so secure. Comfortable with who he is and what he has accomplished in life, he scorns the notion that pleasing the crowd is a worthwhile goal. He wants to serve the public, but he isn't sure that what the public wants is what he has to deliver. As a result, he self-consciously observes himself running for president, instead of just running for president. This approach runs the risk of making Bradley's campaign more interesting to him than it is to us.

These qualities show themselves in books written by both men. Gore's is called *Earth in the Balance*. Bradley's is called *Time Past, Time Present*. Both are impressively dull titles. But Gore's writing is pervaded by the same, "Here, Fido," tone as his lectures. "Bear with me: although complicated, Relativity Theory can easily be explained with the help of a picture showing how time and space are shaped by mass," he writes. Gore worries that if he doesn't give himself credit, no one will. He lets us know that his "comprehensive approach" to the nuclear-arms race "was actually adopted as the centerpiece of our nuclear strategy" and that he's busy thinking "about the course of our nation and our civilization."

Bradley's book has a more modest tone, but no real subject. It's a little autobiography, a little political manifesto, and a lot of starry-night meditations about the country and our place in the cosmos. "Are possibilities for renewal and wonder gone?" he wonders. "Are we left with just our minds and our bodies in a duel for dominance over our personalities? Or can we see beyond ourselves? Can we give thanks for those who commit their lives

to make things better for urban poor, coal miners' wives, Native American children? ... Can we respect the deep time of canyon walls or the timelessness of rivers like the Mississippi? Can we appreciate the rituals of the Sioux or imagine the awe of the Spanish Conquistadors and the plainsmen who first encountered the vastness and beauty of our land?" Are we sleeping yet?

These two books suggest a final distinction that may prove significant when we get closer to the first primaries. Al Gore unsuccessfully resists being boring. Bill Bradley runs with it.

Jacob Weisberg is a Slate senior writer.

MONEYBOX

By James Surowiecki

A Slow Leak in the Net Bubble

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 3:42 p.m. PT

The signs are subtle, but it looks as if some measure of sanity is emerging in the market for Internet stocks. Of course, with many Net stocks still trading at historically unprecedented price-to-revenue (let alone price-to-cash-flow) ratios, "sanity" is a relative term. But the events of last week suggest that two important things are happening to Net stocks. First, Net companies are recognizing that they can't remain profitless forever. Second, paying an audacious premium when you acquire a Net company is no longer automatic. And together, these two things suggest that at least when it comes to the third- and fourth-tier Net companies, the days of living in the future may be done.

There were two key Internet mergers last week that speak to these points. The first, and most striking, was electronics retailer and auctioneer Onsale.com's "acquisition" of software and hardware retailer Egghead.com for \$400 million. I put "acquisition" in quotes because the company's operations are actually going to continue under the Egghead name, since its brand is supposedly stronger, even though Onsale is actually doing the buying.

Regardless, the deal was striking. Egghead shareholders received essentially no premium for their stock, and in the days since the deal was announced Egghead's shares have plummeted more than 20 percent. Onsale's shareholders, meanwhile, were no more happy about the news; their shares have fallen 15 percent since the announcement.

That's because the merger basically looks like what it is: a desperate attempt by two online retailers to avoid the irresistible price pressures of both the computer industry and e-commerce. There don't appear to be any real synergies here, other than the fact that the deal removes one online retailer from the field. And the underlying economics of these businesses are not going to improve anytime soon. I've always been happy to buy from Onsale, which appears to sell goods at a price as close to wholesale as you're going to find. But I've never understood how the company expected to turn a profit.

At one time, that seemed not to matter. Onsale's stock has been as high as \$108 a share in the past year. It's now at \$18. Egghead's reached \$40 a share. It's now below \$10. Investors' patience with money-losing operations, at least those that do not

have a clear growth strategy, has run out. Which is, needless to say, a good thing.

The other important merger last week was online ad buyer and seller Doubleclick's \$530 million acquisition of Netgravity, a provider of software that helps companies enter the Internet ad business. Since the two companies' businesses appear to be complementary rather than competitive, this is one deal in which actual synergies might exist. Yet Doubleclick's offer valued Netgravity at slightly less than the market did. Instead of the kinds of premiums that Yahoo paid for GeoCities or @Home paid for Excite, we're starting to see deals with no premiums at all, which is presumably a comment on the potential upside of the acquired companies' fates if they had chosen to stand alone.

Neither Doubleclick nor Netgravity is profitable, but this deal wasn't, like the Onsale-Egghead merger, provoked by the thought of permanent losses. At the same time, Doubleclick's stock is down more than 50 percent from its 52-week high, and Netgravity's shares have also been cut by more than half. What we seem to be witnessing is a gradual deflation of the Net bubble, a deflation in which bad companies are going to be bought or go out of business and in which good companies will acquire assets on the cheap.

Front-Running the Pre-Earnings Sell-Off

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 3:17 p.m. PT

Let's accept that attempts to analyze the short-term fluctuations of the stock market are futile, because they try to reduce an incredibly complex set of causes and effects to one or two simple answers. But let's also admit that a lot of people are wondering right now: Why would the Dow fall 191 and the Nasdaq 98 points in a single day? So take this as a futile, but well-intentioned, attempt to do some reducing.

One of the hoariest clichés on Wall Street is "Buy the rumor, sell the news." It's a cliché, but (or perhaps because) it captures something important about markets, which is that they are fundamentally forward-looking. In theory, although not always in practice, what a company did last quarter is immaterial to its current value, except insofar as its recent performance gives you some sense of what its future will look like. So you buy the rumor, which tells you what will happen (ideally), and sell the news, because it tells you what has happened.

Earnings reports, which are flooding the market this week, are one of the occasions when you can see this rule obeyed. Often stocks will enjoy tremendous run-ups in advance of their earnings reports, only to sell off once the report actually occurs. And this often happens even if companies beat expectations, and sometimes (though more rarely) even if companies paint remarkably rosy scenarios of the quarters ahead. The point is that the most excellent performance has already been priced into the stock, so there's nowhere for it to go in the short term. Look at what shares of Microsoft (which I own shares in) have done since announcing blowout earnings yesterday, or the similar drop in IBM. Some companies, like Lucent, saw their shares sell off today despite huge earnings increases because they suggested that the next couple of quarters might not be as strong. But in general the selling on good news was fairly consistent.

That much is fairly obvious. What perhaps isn't quite as obvious is that what the market considers "news" as opposed to "rumor" appears to be changing. In other words, instead of waiting for the actual earnings report to sell off, investors seem to be treating the report itself as a kind of given, and selling off in advance of it. Look at the Internet sector, and at a company like Amazon.com, which reports earnings tomorrow. Its stock had a sharp run-up in the past few weeks, rising more than 30 percent, but in the past two days it's tumbled, even though the "news" has yet to arrive.

The truth is that this makes perfect sense. Companies now do such a good job of managing earnings, and of making sure analysts have reasonable expectations, and analysts themselves tend to be such creatures of the herd, that huge earnings surprises are relatively rare. And with prices as rich as they are, it would have to be a *really* huge surprise to send a stock skyrocketing. Given all that, treating the earnings report as a foregone conclusion is understandable. The sell-offs that traditionally occurred after earnings came out, then, are happening before.

This doesn't happen in all cases (Microsoft's shares sold off only mildly before its report), and there are no long-term consequences to the sell-offs. (Companies that report excellent earnings growth and excellent prospects eventually see their stocks rise.) But it does suggest that the market is becoming increasingly efficient, in the sense that it's becoming increasingly faster at processing information. It also shows why the market eventually eradicates any simple rule of thumb that seems to offer the chance at easy profits. Once enough people recognize that sell-offs are occurring after earnings, they start to front-run that sell-off, and then other investors try to front-run the front-runners. Who knows? Eventually maybe we'll do away with the pre-earnings run-up entirely.

Europe Says, "No Coke: Pepsi! (or Anything Else)"

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 3:27 p.m. PT

At this point, Coke executives have to be wondering if there's a way to make all of Europe disappear. First, the company's planned acquisition of Orangina from Pernod-Ricard was blocked by French officials on antitrust grounds. Then, Coke's attempt to buy Cadbury Schweppes' soft-drink brands outside the United States and Japan was blocked by EU officials, who essentially made Coke write off all of Europe. ("I'd like to buy Asia, Africa, and South America a Schweppes" lacks something as a slogan, doesn't it?)

That was followed by the removal of Coke products from supermarket shelves across the continent after a bout of mass hysteria—as Malcolm Gladwell argues convincingly in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*—over supposedly bad soda. And today Coke said that European Commission officials had raided the offices of Coke and its bottlers in Denmark, Austria, and Germany, looking for evidence that the company had violated competition rules.

It has been a very bad few months, which underscores the fact that globalization is not a smooth process. In particular, the EC's activist antitrust stance has complicated the picture for Coke in ways that don't appear to have easy solutions. And what's ironic is that that stance depends upon a picture of Coca-Cola that

recent events have suggested is outdated at best and completely misconceived at worst.

The raids on the Coke offices, for instance, are apparently intended to document a pattern of anti-competitive behavior in the form of rebates and other incentives to distributors and retailers. Because these incentives are meant to encourage distributors to stock Coke instead of its competitors, the argument goes, they constitute an unfair attempt to corner the market.

On the face of it, this seems absurd. Companies from Philip Morris to Kellogg's offer rebates and discounts of various kinds, and these sorts of incentives are easily duplicable. If the rebate works as a corporate strategy, then someone will fund Coke's competitors to engage in that strategy in order to attain or at least defend its competitive advantage. If it doesn't work, then all Coke is doing is shooting itself in the foot.

To the EC, Coke is not like other companies. Rather, in an argument analogous to the one the Department of Justice has been making about Microsoft, the EC contends that Coke is the dominant player in the soft-drink market, and that therefore its behavior has to be judged by different criteria than that of its competitors. What would be legal for Pepsi is illegal for Coke.

This theory—that different rules apply to monopolists—makes sense in certain contexts (the Baby Bells do have a unique obligation to provide their competitors with access to people's phone lines), but is nonsensical in others. More to the point, the idea that Coke has a monopoly or even a stranglehold on the European market is simply absurd. Did the French go without soda when Coke was removed from the shelves? Are there really not other drinks that consumers might choose instead of Coke? If Coke did have a monopoly, it would presumably have meaningful pricing power, which is to say that it could raise prices without fear of losing business. But the company's most recent results demonstrated that when Coke raises prices, its case volume and its market share drop. Coke remains a global powerhouse, and its brand strength has not been meaningfully imperiled. But it's not a monopoly.

The EC's vigilance when it comes to Coke, in fact, seems more symptomatic of a reflexive distrust of U.S. incursions into the European market than a well-considered antitrust stance. That doesn't mean that this vigilance is any less costly for Coke. And it also suggests that before we start thinking about what will happen when every person in China is drinking Coke, we should start wondering about what will happen when most of the people in Europe aren't.

Weekend Cocktail Chatter

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 2:10 p.m. PT

Rather perplexing that on a day when Lord Greenspan spooked the bond market with talk of a possible—though still only possible—rate hike, bank stocks were doing so well. (If inflation and interest rates are on the way up, that's usually a bad thing for banks.) On the other hand, maybe it's not so perplexing, just an indication that bond traders and stock traders aren't hearing the same news, believing the same things, or expecting the same future. Of course, *most* stock traders apparently were hearing the same news today, as tech stocks got battered again.

What an odd week. The earnings numbers could not have been better. With the rare exception, just about every tech bellwether that's reported has come in ahead of expectations, and those were expectations that were about as high as any reasonable person could put them. But, again with the rare exception, all these bellwethers have seen their stock prices get crunched. This only goes to show you one thing, which happens to be the most important thing to know about investing: Trying to game the market in the short term is the definition of foolishness. Dump your money into an index fund, and you won't have to worry about any of these anxieties disrupting your weekend barbecues. And so, chat on. (By the way, this will be the last weekend chatter for a couple of weeks, since *Slate's* running a short schedule next week. But we will return.)

1. "Sometimes, apparently, the *Wall Street Journal* forgets itself. Consider this description of a small Christian sect: 'Bruderhofs live communally and **don't engage in violence, private-property ownership or gossip.**' I can just see it now. 'Jack's a brawler and he's always talking behind people's backs. But he doesn't own any property, so at least he's got that going for him.' "

2. "Online music retailer ... no, that's not exactly right. Online music digitizer ... no. **Online music something MP3.com** went public to much anticipation Wednesday, and saw its shares leap from \$28 to \$105 in a matter of minutes. Of course, the stock is now down around \$61. So you can say that MP3.com's shares **nearly quadrupled** on their first day and that they were **cut almost in half** on their first day. Ain't the Net wonderful?"

3. "Best thing a CEO has said in a long time: **Time Warner's Gerald Levin** to *Daily Variety* about possible successors to Bob Daly and Terry Semel, 'All current candidates are speculation and **unless you talk to me it's all bullshit.**' Of course, you wonder if the reporter then said, 'But I am talking to you.' "

4. "At long last, **UPS is becoming a public company.** Now the next time UPS workers go on strike, management will have another club to bludgeon them with. 'Our shareholders demand that we hold the line on part-time labor and wage increases!' Music to my ears."

5. "Despite the fact that **Mexican taxpayers are on the hook for \$71 billion** to bail out a host of banks that the Mexican government has been propping up for most of this decade, the government continues to insist that no public official did anything wrong and that no one should be punished. '**Not one single Mexican lost a peso** in their bank accounts,' a spokesman for the Finance Ministry said. Apparently the pesos that taxpayers are sending to the government to bail out the banks don't count."

6. "French oil company **Elf Aquitaine made a \$51 billion counterbid** this week to acquire competitor TotalFina, which had previously announced a hostile takeover attempt on Elf. 'You see, the problem isn't the merging part,' you can almost hear the Elf executives saying. 'The problem is the us-losing-our-jobs part.' "

7. "From the most recent issue of the *Atlantic*: 'When they envision their future, Xers don't just see a government **drifting toward the political equivalent of Chapter 11**; they also see a crippled social structure, a dwindling middle class, and a

despoiled natural habitat.' Wow. Who knew that Xers lived in 1974?"

James Surowiecki is a contributing editor at Fortune and a staff writer at Talk. You can e-mail him at moneybox@slate.com.

CHATTERBOX

By Timothy Noah

Too Funny for Brill's Content

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 9:19 a.m. PT

Kudos to Alex Kuczynski of the *New York Times* for identifying the author of the unkind and extremely funny Web parody of Tina Brown's forthcoming *Talk* magazine. Turns out it's Michael Colton, a senior writer at *Brill's Content*. His site was briefly shut down by Earthlink after some humorless Disney attorney complained that the spoof (which uses the *Talk* logo) was violating Miramax copyright, etc., etc. But Brown, to her credit, told Disney to back off; Earthlink apologized to Colton and credited his account for two months of free service; and the parody went back up.

When Chatterbox read the brief *Times* item to Mrs. Chatterbox at this morning's nonvirtual breakfast table, Mrs. Chatterbox had two interesting observations. The first was that Tina Brown knows buzz when she sees it. The second was that it speaks ill of *Brill's Content* that this bit of creative writing by one of its staffers was deemed a bad fit for that earnest journal of media criticism. The latter point, however, is perhaps slightly unfair because Colton just inaugurated a monthly humor column on the *Brill's* back page that we had both managed to miss. When Chatterbox phoned Colton to congratulate him on the *Talk* parody and find out why he didn't publish it in *Brill's Content*, Colton's first response seemed kind of lame: "*Brill's Content* has a purpose and a mission and this is something completely different." But then Colton pointed out, rightly, that the parody would have lost its prank value if had been presented as a formal humor piece in a magazine. "I think it works better as a freestanding thing," he said. Chatterbox decided, on reflection, that to beat up *Brill's Content* for letting a good humor piece get away is, perhaps, the sort of tiresome nit-picking you'd expect from ... well, *Brill's Content*. But when Chatterbox raised this point with Mrs. Chatterbox, she suggested to him that he was engaging in the same literal-mindedness that has hampered ... well, *Brill's Content*.

Winging It

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 9:44 a.m. PT

I got a private pilot's license about the same time John Kennedy did last year. I take the flight test for an instrument rating this week. My first reaction to the news on Saturday was, like everyone's, heartbreak about the loss of such vitality and charm. But my second reaction was like that of most people who have any experience with small planes: Why so many risks?

The lore of pilot training emphasizes that a disaster can happen to anyone, through sheer bad luck (like the explosion that apparently brought down TWA flight 800). But disaster usually

involves a compounding series of risks and errors, which in theory could have been broken at any point. In this case the links of the chain seem to have been a) a night flight, b) over water, c) without a flight plan, and d) by a pilot without an instrument rating or a lot of experience in a fast plane.

Night flight is easy in one way, since you can see the lights of other planes for miles. But having the right depth perception for landing is harder, and any emergency is terrifying, since you can't scour the ground for a place to land. Flights over water, like flights over mountains, greatly compound the risk in a single-engine plane, because there is no handy field or road to land on if the engine fails.

When driving away from small airports, you often see signs asking: "Have you closed your flight plan?" The reason is that if a pilot has filed a plan but has not reported a safe arrival within 30 minutes of the expected time, search and rescue efforts begin automatically. Even without a flight plan, pilots can request "flight following," which allows controllers to keep a watchful eye on their altitude and heading (direction) on the radar screen—and talk to them immediately if trouble occurs. Only a tiny part of instrument training involves learning to follow navigation signals. Most of the training is simulating emergencies—loss of guidance systems, sudden descents or disorientation in clouds—again and again, so you won't panic or "get behind the airplane" if it happens for real. It is as if driver's ed involved dozens of blowouts and practice brake failures.

John Kennedy knew all this—he would have had to, to pass his tests. He was also no doubt aware of the weird inconsistency in how the Federal Aviation Administration regulates flight. In many ways the FAA is unbelievably picky—a plane cannot legally take off if it is one hour past its scheduled inspection time. Any aspect of flight that involves carrying passengers for pay has regulations by the ton. But a private pilot's license (which allows you to carry friends and family members, though not anyone for pay) is amazingly broad. The FAA examiner routinely tells those who have just passed the private-license test that it is a "license to learn." But it is also legal permission to get into situations far beyond a new pilot's ability to cope. Once you are "pilot in command," you—not some bureaucrat in Washington—are the ultimate authority on whether a given trip is too risky to undertake. The FAA's underlying assumption seems to be that, with his own life at stake, the pilot himself will have the greatest incentive to break the chain of risks. Sometimes that incentive is not enough.

—This item was written by James Fallows.

Death or Taxes

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999, at 11:14 a.m. PT

Recently in this column, Jodie Allen argued that Republican proposals to cut inheritance (a.k.a. death) taxes suggest that the GOP believes the supply of death is too low. "When you wish to encourage something," Allen noted, "you lower the tax on it." Because American death taxes are a confiscatory 55 percent on large estates, "it's no wonder that most well-heeled Americans spend so much time and money avoiding the meeting with their Maker."

This got Chatterbox wondering: Do death taxes bear any relationship to life expectancy? Do folks who live in countries with high death taxes actually live longer, fighting off the Grim Reaper in order to fend off the tax man? Do those who live in countries with low death taxes give up the ghost young, secure that they can pass everything on to their heirs?

So Chatterbox obtained a chart of worldwide death-tax rates from the American Council for Capital Formation, grabbed life-expectancy data from Overpopulation.com, and got to work (go online to www.slate.com to see the chart). Death tax rates in the 24 sampled nations ranged from 0 percent (Indonesia, China, India, and others) to 70 percent (Japan). Average life expectancy varied from 62 years in Indonesia to 80 years in Japan. After much calculation and graphing, the amazing truth emerged: Low death taxes correlate with low life expectancy, and high death taxes correlate with high life expectancy.

There are outliers, of course: Australia has a 0 percent tax rate and an 80-year life expectancy, while Koreans pay 45 percent taxes and live only 74 years. But the conclusion is evident: Taxes save lives. (Skeptics will undoubtedly carp that this is a small sample, that a dozen other variables could explain this correlation, and that the graph was cooked to make it look more dramatic. To which I respond: Well, yes, but bear with me.)

This discovery, which I will modestly call Plotz's Theorem™, has staggering implications for public policy. Death and taxes are no longer the inevitabilities of the human condition. In fact, Plotz's Theorem™ demonstrates that mankind can now choose death or taxes. As the chart suggests, the United States could raise its average life expectancy to 100 years with a stroke of the pen: Simply hike inheritance taxes to 245 percent. (That is, you would not only give your entire estate to the feds, your heirs would also pay 145 percent of its value to the government.) Want an average life span of 150 years? Boost inheritance taxes to 700 percent!

Plotz's Theorem™ has even more dramatic implications for the world's overpopulation crisis. India, for example, currently has no inheritance taxes and a life expectancy of 63 years. This is a fine start at encouraging death, but now imagine if India offered a 500 percent inheritance subsidy: Every time someone dies, the government would pay the heirs 500 percent of the value of the deceased's estate. According to Plotz's Theorem™, the average Indian would then die at age 7, solving the overpopulation problem in a generation. And if the inheritance subsidy were 570 percent, the average Indian would not even bother to be born.

—This item was written by David Plotz.

Is Lou Dobbs (Cyber)Spaced Out?

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 11:12 a.m. PT

Does Lou Dobbs, the trusted longtime president of CNN Financial News and former host of CNN's *Moneyline*, believe in flying saucers?

Dobbs, you'll recall, quit CNN last month to launch a Web site, Space.com, which debuted on the Web today. When Chatterbox—misty with memories of sitting cross-legged in the auditorium at Camp Arcady in Hague, N.Y., 30 years ago, and watching mankind walk on the moon for the very first time—logged onto Dobbs' site today, he expected something stately and dignified, like Washington, D.C.'s, Air and Space Museum. But

on the home page, he saw that along with the links to "news," "science," "business," "space imagined" (i.e., science fiction), "message boards," "chat," and "space.shop" (a stainless steel travel mug with the space.com logo retails for \$12.50), was a link called "Area 51." Its contents are:

- a Reuters report from last week that said 100 members of the reputedly UFO-obsessed Stella Marris Church were missing in the mountains of northern Colombia
- a disappointing review of a new book called *The Abduction Enigma*, which dares to suggest that people spreading stories of UFO abduction are frauds
- a portal to various loony Web sites about UFOs, including one that says Werner Von Braun cavorted with space aliens at (where else?) Roswell, N.M.;
- a guide to space-alien-related TV fare for the coming week
- a noncommittal movie review of *Muppets in Space*
- a feature called "Tab Wrap" summarizing space-alien news in the tabloids. This last is an apparent ripoff of *Slate*'s "Keeping Tabs" column, without anything like the *Slate* version's skepticism and irony. (The link beckons those who are "interested in tabloid reports on aliens and asteroids," but "don't want to have to wade through stories on celebrities and psychics." Chatterbox was previously unaware that believers in UFOs look down their noses at believers in psychics.)

Chatterbox tried to phone Dobbs to ascertain whether he believes in little green men, as his Web site appears to. But he got a recording saying all circuits were busy. (Hmm. Are space aliens interfering with the phone company's satellites?) Chatterbox will keep trying. Meanwhile, he leaves it to his *Slate* colleague, James Surowiecki of "Moneybox," to sort out whether Dobbs' newly discovered interest in Area 51 played a role in the stock market's precipitous rise.

Broasted Chicken: A Chatterbox Investigation

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 10:59 a.m. PT

Chatterbox, while travelling earlier this month through Iowa, wrote an item ("Did a White Iowan Invent Rap Music?") that mentioned, in passing, tasting a Midwestern delicacy called "Broasted" chicken, which Chatterbox found something less than delicious. Chatterbox called it "a kind of deep-fried chicken." To be honest, though, Chatterbox wasn't entirely clear *what* Broasted chicken is. Now he knows a bit more.

Broasted chicken is the invention of the Broaster Co., headquartered in Beloit, Wis., which since 1954 has manufactured the special kind of pressure fryer used to make Broasted chicken. (The Broaster Co. owns the trademark to the words "Broaster" and "Broasted," and no restaurateur can call his product Broasted chicken without purchasing the Broaster Co. pressure fryer and receiving training in its use from a Broaster Co. distributor. He must also use the Broaster Co.'s specially designated marinade, Chickite, and breading, Slo-Bro. The company refers to this arrangement as "a franchise without the franchise fee.") Chatterbox asked Renee Rudolph, a marketing assistant at the Broaster Co., how *Broasted* chicken differs from *fried* chicken. "When you pressure-fry chicken the way we teach

them to make it," she said, "as soon as the meat hits the oil it kind of like sears it and keeps the juices inside." It's the juices that cook the meat, she explained—not the oil. So Broasted chicken is "not as oily as fried chicken."

Broasted chicken is found mainly in the Midwestern states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, but it's also found as far afield as California. About 5,000 restaurants nationwide are licensed Broaster operators. "The VA canteens are a big customer," Rudolph said. One reader informed Chatterbox that there's even a deli, now closed, across Amsterdam Ave. from Barney Greengrass on Manhattan's Upper West Side, that boasts on its still-posted sign that it served Broasted chicken. (Apparently there was greater consumer demand for Barney Greengrass' chopped liver and sable, much-praised by Ron Rosenbaum in the *New York Observer*.)

Since Broasted chicken is supposed to taste the same no matter where you eat it, Chatterbox figured the unexceptionable sample he had in Iowa was probably representative. But two questions haunted him. The first was: *Did Chatterbox get real Broasted chicken?* According to Rudolph, the Broaster Co. does what it can to crack down on restaurants that pass off as Broasted mere fried chicken, and to make sure any chicken used in its pressure cooker is properly smothered in Chickite and Slo-Bro. But she conceded that Broaster piracy happens "more often than we want it to." Chatterbox's second question was: *Had the rigors of travel and campaign reporting made Chatterbox so tired that he was unable to appreciate Broasted chicken?* To ameliorate both concerns, Chatterbox decided to seek out expert opinion.

Chatterbox went first to Calvin Trillin, the justly celebrated author of three volumes on offbeat regional foods (*American Fried, Alice, Let's Eat, and Third Helpings*), which a few years back were packaged in one volume as *The Tummy Trilogy*. "I am not an expert on Broasted chicken," Trillin told Chatterbox, though he did recall it was "done by some machine." When Chatterbox explained that Broasted chicken is supposed to taste the same everywhere, Trillin interjected, "Anything that tastes the same wherever you find it is not good. Things are not supposed to taste the same." Trillin advised Chatterbox to sample what he called the *real* specialty of Iowa, a pork tenderloin sandwich.

"Not a pig snout sandwich. A pork tenderloin sandwich." If I couldn't get that, he said, try corn.

Next, Chatterbox queried Jane and Michael Stern, authors of *Eat Your Way Across the U.S.A.*, about whether Broasted chicken was "a synthetic form of folk culture." By e-mail, Michael Stern answered:

I would have to say that most folk culture—especially food folk culture—is at least slightly synthetic. Corporate character has been a significant part of real folk food for at least this century, from Jell-O to Aunt Jemima and Betty Crocker. ... It's really only elitist food writers who can afford to think of vernacular culinary culture as some earthy farm wife somewhere milking her cow and tending free-range chickens. By comparison to the HUGE corporate presence of, for instance, the Taco Bell Chihuahua, Broasted chicken seems almost quaint.

But, Stern confessed,

I'm only speaking image-wise here, as I am a sort of a purist about fried chicken, really only going for skillet-fried. Even though I grew up in the Midwest and have certainly seen my share of Broasted chicken in our travels, I don't believe I've ever eaten any.

Chatterbox next checked in with Alison Cook, food writer for *House and Garden* and Houston Sidewalk. She e-mailed that she'd never eaten Broasted chicken:

Mormon scones, yes; Great Lakes whitefish livers, yes; Panhandle carrot coins marinated in condensed tomato soup, even. But no Broasted chicken. Frankly, I never really believed there was such a dish. The name has such a wonderfully silly, fence-sitting, made-up quality to it. Sort of like "brunch."

Chatterbox also consulted Jeffrey Steingarten, food critic for *Vogue* and author of *The Man Who Ate Everything*, the legitimacy of whose title must now be called into question because he has never eaten Broasted chicken. "I've heard of it," he said, "but I've never known what it was."

Trillin had suggested that Chatterbox contact Michael Gartner, the former president of NBC News, who actually lives in Iowa (where he edits the *Ames Tribune* and owns the Iowa Cubs). Gartner confirmed that he *had* eaten Broasted chicken.

What did he think of it?

"You know how," Gartner said, "if you order fish somewhere and you say 'I've never had this kind of fish before,' and you're kind of a picky eater, and they say, 'You'll like it, it tastes just like chicken'? And you think, 'If I wanted chicken, I'd just order chicken?' Broasted chicken tastes just like chicken."

Finding this response somewhat evasive, Chatterbox phoned David Shribman, a former colleague of Chatterbox's in the Washington bureau of the *Wall Street Journal* who is now Washington bureau chief for the *Boston Globe*. Shribman had written a memorable piece for the *Journal*'s editorial page several years back praising the regional cooking of Iowa. It hadn't mentioned Broasted chicken. Had Shribman eaten any?

Yes.

What did he think?

"The phrase I would use would be 'utterly forgettable,'" he said. "I've completely forgotten what it tastes like."

Finally, Chatterbox consulted Jason Vest, Washington correspondent for the *Village Voice* and a onetime colleague of Chatterbox's at *U.S. News & World Report*, who has spent a lot of time in the Midwest. Vest said that not only had he eaten Broasted chicken; for a brief period three years ago he had eaten it *every week!* Not in the Midwest, but in Arlington, Va., *just outside Washington!* "I usually went to Whitey's in Arlington on Tuesdays," he explained, "to listen to Bill Kirchen (lead guitarist for Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen) and get beers and Broasted chicken. I always wondered why they called it Broasted chicken because it seemed like fried chicken to me."

And? And?

"I've had better fried chicken. ... It's not that I dislike it. But if you are a true connoisseur of fried chicken, Broasted chicken is just not top of the list."

Chatterbox Goes Soft on Clinton*Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 11:25 a.m. PT*

Watching a C-SPAN replay last night of President Clinton's press conference, Chatterbox was struck by the chief executive's comfort and ease. Here's a sample exchange:

Q: Another question about the presidential race. Aside from asking George W. Bush to come forward and give specifics on the issues that you mentioned, could you tell us what you find objectionable about his trying to present a new moderate face for his party just like you did for the Democrats? And could you tell us whether you're worried whether he will figure out how the Republicans can occupy the center of American politics?

A: No.

Q: Do you have any hints?

A: No, no, I don't think I'll answer those questions.

[Laughter.]

I will say. I will—no, look, let me say again I wouldn't even agree with the characterization you gave of my first answer. When I ran for president in 1991, the first thing I did was tell the American people what I thought was going on in our country and what I would do. And if you remember, the late Senator Paul Tsongas and I were actually almost ridiculed at the time because we both put out these very detailed plans of what we would do. If you go back and get one of those plans now, you'll see that virtually everything we said we'd do, we did do, except for the things we tried to do and were defeated on.

Clinton's relaxed press posture seemed strikingly reminiscent of President John F. Kennedy, whose image has been all over the tube these last few days in the sad aftermath of his son's death. Chatterbox, who's had trouble looking at Bill Clinton on television for at least a year, found himself ... *liking* the president. What's that all about?

Chatterbox has a hypothesis: President Clinton is easier to like when his popularity ratings go down.

According to the Roper Center's Presidential Job Performance Web site, Clinton enjoyed his highest-ever job approval—73 percent—during December of last year and January and February of this year. This, of course, was the time of Clinton's impeachment and Senate trial. Clinton's bad behavior throughout the Flytrap scandal—especially his smug refusal to confess to perjury during the impeachment proceedings—made him easy to despise. And yet (no doubt largely because congressional Republicans were overplaying their hand), the public gave Clinton more support than had *ever* been enjoyed by Richard Nixon (personal best: 67 percent) or even Ronald Reagan (personal best: 68 percent—mass adulation of Ronald Reagan being a largely retrospective phenomenon). Clinton also hit 73 percent early in 1998, right after Flytrap broke. In that instance, the public was probably expressing disapproval of the press.

As the impeachment drama dissipated, though, and Congress and the press started to lay off, Clinton's approval rating dropped.

Since May, it's been between 50 percent and 60 percent. That isn't bad, and it certainly isn't Clinton's absolute *lowest* approval rating as president—that would be 1993 and 1994, when Clinton's popularity dropped on several occasions to 37 percent. Interestingly, this was a period when Chatterbox felt *more enthusiastic* about Clinton's presidency than he has ever felt since. Still, in the vast sweep of history, a 50 percent to 60 percent approval rating isn't particularly great—it's about where President Kennedy's *lowest* job-approval rating sat. And Clinton's approval rating is higher than the rating for his *policies* (an ass-backward situation, in Chatterbox's view, since Clinton-the-person is usually much easier to hate than Clinton-the-policy-maker). Clinton's explanation for this at yesterday's press conference, which seemed a bit of a reach, was: "People think things are going well, but they want a change in policy ... particularly in a dynamic time where things are changing, you should want continued change."

But back to Clinton's newfound likability. Chatterbox knows what you're thinking: Chatterbox is a reporter. Reporters always like to take popular people down, and they're trained to sympathize with underdogs ("afflict the comfortable, comfort the afflicted"). Chatterbox will grant that some of this crude psychology may be at work.

But part of it was also Clinton's performance. He just *seemed* more relaxed yesterday—less of a snake-oil salesman, less apt to be pissed-off by rude questions, more willing to hit back, but in a good-natured way, and more confident about his own achievements. Clinton's primary message—don't let the Republicans spend the surplus on tax cuts—didn't seem all that urgent, since it's not clear that even the *House* Republicans have a majority to do that. But for the first time since Flytrap, Chatterbox felt himself thinking, possibly against his better judgment, that maybe Clinton wasn't such a bad guy after all.

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CULTUREBOX

By David Edelstein

Blame Blockbuster, Not the MPAA

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 12:47 p.m. PT

Earlier this week, members of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association condemned the Motion Picture Academy of America for refusing to grant Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* an R rating without a bunch of ludicrous digital alterations during a ritualized orgy. Yippee: another occasion for bashing the ratings board. I saw the picture before the fig leaves were applied and the sequence in question was no more erotic than dental surgery—but that's neither here nor there.

My point is that the film critics are blaming the wrong party. The villains in this scenario are not the anonymous fuddy-duddies who sit on the ratings board but the sanctimonious hypocrites who preside over some of the country's largest video and media chains. These are the people who treat any film rated NC-17 as leprous. NC-17 was originally meant to eliminate the porn-related

stigma that came with the earlier X rating. But the very same chains that refused to carry ads for X films refuse to carry ads for NC-17 films. With a film held hostage by Blockbuster et al., any studio with, say, \$50 million to \$100 million on the line feels compelled to hack at their movie and play footsie with the MPAA until they get their R.

Take Blockbuster, which prides itself on being a "family video store." A stroll through the aisles will take you past displays of such wholesome fare as *Meat Cleaver Massacre*, as well as innumerable soft-core made-for-video serial-killer-stalking-models-in-lingerie flicks. You have to wonder *whose* family the store caters to—the Mansons? But Blockbuster and other such outfits have, with the help of the MPAA, given themselves a veneer of righteousness while trafficking in the same kind of sleaze as every other entertainment conglomerate. That's capitalism.

In a column for *Daily Variety*, Roger Ebert argues that a new rating, A—something between R and NC-17—would allow audiences to see the original cuts of movies such as *Eyes Wide Shut* and would "provide a category for adult films that would be acceptable to theater owners and advertising outlets." He goes on: "Theaters would not shun them. Everybody understands the concept of an adults-only category. And because NC-17 would remain in business, newspapers, TV stations, and theaters would remain free to discriminate against it."

I wish I could support Ebert's suggestion but I'm not so sure that A would work. Wasn't that the purpose of NC-17 to begin with? And does Ebert really trust the MPAA to distinguish between films that have artistic merit and those that don't? *Eyes Wide Shut* might be a no-brainer because of the Kubrick imprimatur, but what about *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (a title whose second meaning allegedly passed straight over the MPAA's heads)? Before cuts for its R, there were allegedly lines about sex with the Almighty. A or NC-17? How long before Blockbuster and those big newspaper chains announce that they won't be carrying ads for A films?

The larger issue is what the MPAA's distinctions say about our culture. In its press release, the Los Angeles Critics Association note the disturbing "double standard the MPAA continues to maintain when it comes to sexual and violent movie content ... The PG-13 rated movie, *Wild Wild West*, for example, opens with a 'humorous' decapitation, and the PG rated movie, *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, contains numerous violent deaths." I'm fond of citing Albert Brooks' experience in 1985 with *Lost in America* because it so gorgeously encapsulates the issue. The MPAA gave the film an R rating because of a scene in which Brooks' protagonist babbles to his wife (Julie Hagerty) that he wants to "fuck" her over her office desk. That's unacceptable, said the ratings board, because "fuck" is used in a "sexual context." Brooks pointed out that if the character, instead of saying, "I want to fuck you over this desk" had said, "I want to fuck you over *with* this desk," the film could have gone out with a PG-13.

But if the MPAA is puritanically intolerant of sex, it also has peculiar notions of "acceptable" violence. A director who frequently tangled with the ratings board told me an instructive story. He did some research on fistfights and discovered that a lot of them last one punch: In real life, one person's nose gets broken

and the other person's hand gets broken. There's a lot of blood. I once watched a friend get his nose broken in a (brief) fistfight, and it remains one of the most ghastly things I've ever seen. Now, let's pretend I want to film such a fight for the purposes of making violence realistically horrible—so that anyone who sees it will think twice about getting into a fight. I put in the sound of cartilage being crunched and show the bright red blood pouring out of someone's nose, and I give you a close up of the other person's broken fingers beginning to swell. Agony, right? And very likely—if I do my job correctly—an NC-17. Too explicit for children. Now let's pretend I decide to restage that fight and make it painless—10 punches back and forth, Popeye-style, with no blood and both guys walking away unblemished. That's a G, folks. The lesson for kids is that violence is funny and bloodless and without real consequences.

It really won't matter if it's PG-13, R, NC-17, or even A until we figure out just what it is that we wish to protect children *from*. The next step is to ask ourselves what's wrong with a cinema exclusively for adults—and why we can't seem to keep from stigmatizing it.

David Edelstein is *Slate's* film critic. You can e-mail him at dbe59@aol.com.

README

Go to Hell

The Gospel according to George W.

By Michael Kinsley

In his current *Slate* "History Lesson" column, David Greenberg compares George W. Bush and John Quincy Adams. John Q.—as he was not known—is the only president's son so far to become president himself. Historian Greenberg finds many parallels but some differences. For example, Q. suffered a "lifelong case of clinical depression," whereas W. has come to "believe that all Jews are bound for hell." While the parallel is unclear, these are certainly two different things. As someone who has long suspected he might be Jewish (based on circumstantial evidence such as his bar mitzvah), I found this latter datum especially interesting. And, of course, it is remarkable to learn that George W. has actual opinions on any subject, let alone strong and controversial ones.

Unless you're a political junkie, or live in Texas, you may have missed this story. The press have reported it, but not with the neurotic intensity you might expect. Why not? Conservative press critics often complain that the media ignore the importance of religion. This may be a case in point, though not one those critics are likely to complain about. Second, there is the inoculation phenomenon: Once a story has "been done," editors and producers don't want to do it again. So, getting it done small is protection against finding it done big. Finally, there may be a feeling among journalists that the whole thing's a bum rap. Which it is and it isn't.

There's no evidence that George W. is an anti-Semite. After college he was even engaged briefly to a half-Jewish woman.

Some have suggested that Bush may have dumped her because her father was Jewish, but there's no reason to think he didn't know that all along, if he cared, so the episode weighs in against the anti-Semitism charge, not for it. Bush has had many Jewish business partners and friends. If he believes they're all going to hell, he hasn't held it against them in this life.

So what does he believe? Like the Gospel tales themselves, the story of Bush's views on Jews has several variants. In 1993, discussing his decision around age 40 to accept Christ as his personal savior, Bush told a *Houston Post* reporter that—as the reporter paraphrased it—“heaven is open only to those who accept Jesus Christ.” So at worst, Bush never condemned Jews specifically to hell specifically, but rather condemned most of humanity (anyone who doesn't accept Christ) to what may be, depending on your point of view, a wider geographical area (anywhere outside heaven). I'm not sure if that's better or worse.

Here's where the gospels differ. According to Fred Barnes of the *Weekly Standard*, Bush says his mother then called Billy Graham to straighten him out. Graham advised him to “never play God” by ruling on who gets into heaven. But according to Sam Howe Verhovek of the *New York Times*, Bush says Graham's intervention occurred earlier, during an informal theological discussion at the Bush Sr. White House. And according to Ken Herman of the *Austin American-Statesman*, Bush actually made his 1993 comment in the course of recounting the Graham episode. In this version, the evangelist's advice was slightly different: “Graham generally agreed with the theory but cautioned against spending much time worrying about it, Bush said.”

So, where does this leave us? If Billy Graham actually convinced Bush long beforehand that we don't know who gets into heaven, then the *Houston Post* report of 1993 was flat-out wrong and Bush didn't believe Jews were shut out of heaven even at the time. But Bush has never denied the accuracy of the reporter's paraphrase. Nor, needless to say, has he adopted Version 2 of Graham's advice by declaring that Jews won't get into heaven, but he's too busy to care. Bush now answers all questions on the subject of heaven and its admission requirements with this catechistic formulation: “It is not the governor's role to decide who goes to heaven. I believe that God decides who goes to heaven, not George W. Bush.”

This won't do, I'm afraid. It was good enough to get him a kosher certification from the Anti-Defamation League, but it makes no sense. No one is asking Bush to “decide” or “rule on” who gets into heaven. We can stipulate that God decides. (Some people—most Jews, for example—believe in God, but not in heaven. Few, if any, people believe in heaven, but not in God.) The issue is whether God has an admissions policy that excludes Jews and whether George W. has an opinion about what that policy might be.

Surely he does. “My faith tells me that acceptance of Jesus Christ as my savior is my salvation, and I believe that,” Bush says. Does he think that this principle only applies to him? Does he think that it's possible for others to achieve salvation without accepting Christ? Even nonrecruiting religions such as Judaism claim to be more than just a personal taste or preference. Born-again Christianity claims to be the right answer to the most fundamental questions. So how can Jews possibly get into heaven without converting? Only two ways that I can see. One is if God

allows exemptions. But to avoid offending any religious or nonreligious group, the exception would have to be that anyone who does not accept Christ need not accept Christ, which would destroy the rule. The other way out would be if the entire belief system permits doubt about itself—for example, if it's only 50–50 that accepting Christ is mandatory for salvation for anybody, including George W. himself. Neither of these conditions applies to George W.'s faith, as he describes it.

And so what? Why should anyone care whether he or she will achieve salvation by the terms of someone else's religion? What difference does it make if you can't get into a heaven you don't believe in? As a nonbeliever, I find the conventions of ecumenism baffling. I don't want to tell you people how to run your religions. And obviously we want to avoid an outbreak of religious war, or even lesser forms of intolerance, if possible. But why does tolerance require people to pretend they don't believe what they do? Wouldn't tolerance be easier if it only required agreement to disagree peacefully rather than demanding actual sharing of religious doctrines at some level of abstraction? After all, if Bush really believes that accepting Jesus is the only path to salvation, he is pulling a pretty dirty trick on Jews by telling them otherwise. Putting votes before souls: Talk about political expediency!

George W. is lying either when he professes his faith or when he denies its implications. Or he hasn't really thought it through, which itself would cast doubt on the depth of his faith. But I doubt this particular dishonesty will keep him out of heaven, since it is imposed on every politician—and even every clergyman with ambitions.

To be sure, there is a certain joy in watching a pol caught in pandering gridlock. Bush plays up his born-again faith to the religious right. He uses it even more than bona fide Christian-right pols do, as Fred Barnes points out, in order to allay suspicions that he may be moderate or indifferent on social issues. Then he has to fudge his faith so that people who don't share it won't take it seriously.

And if he gets this balancing act wrong, he must pander even more furiously to make it up. Going for a twofer a couple of years ago, Bush “confided” to Washington political columnist Andrew Glass that “he enjoys hanging out with country music singer [can you guess? well, obviously ...] Kinky Friedman, who wrote [uh-oh] ‘They Ain't Making Jews Like Jesus Anymore.’ ” Does W. agree with this sentiment? Does he have some problem with the quality of Jews being produced in America today?

Michael Kinsley is editor of Slate.

FRAME GAME

By William Saletan

Dead Kennedys

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Drawn by the scent of blood in the water, the media have swarmed the crash site of John F. Kennedy Jr. While pedestrian reporters investigate the disaster, pundits debate the

more entertaining question: Why does this keep happening to the Kennedys? Some say the whole family is “reckless.” Others argue that the Kennedys are admirably bold and that it’s unseemly to criticize them. Each camp oversimplifies the truth. There are two Kennedy traditions: courage, gravity, and martyrdom on one side; recklessness, frivolity, and mayhem on the other.

The “recklessness” spin, fueled by talk radio and the Internet, says the Kennedys seek “adventure,” “live close to the edge,” are “wild” and “addicted to risk,” and have a “dangerous streak.” This spin laughably equates all dangerous behavior. “Taking physical risks is a Kennedy family tradition,” says *Newsweek*. “During World War II, the oldest son, Joe Jr., ... died on a virtual suicide mission. ... Jack Kennedy chose PT boats, rickety crafts whose crews boasted that ‘they were expendable.’ Bobby Kennedy’s children always seemed to be falling out of trees.”

To prove that young John Kennedy was reckless, these spinners paste together weak bits of evidence. As a boy, he used to evade his Secret Service agents. He once took a survival course. Another time, he went to Africa and was charged by a rhinoceros. “He learned through all these experiences to make light of danger,” asserts *Newsweek*. Later, he enjoyed rock climbing, paragliding, scuba diving, kayaking, and Rollerblading. He asked permission to rappel down Mount Rushmore. He launched a magazine—demonstrating, according to Reuters, that “like other members of his legendary family, Kennedy had a taste for danger and took risks.” He invited Larry Flynt to a black-tie dinner. He even lived “in an edgy warehouse district.”

The “courage” spin puts an equally simplistic gloss of nobility on the family’s escapades. As questions about recklessness bounced around the Sunday talk shows, Kennedy pal Douglas Brinkley argued that “John Jr. and the Kennedy family [are] ‘in the arena,’ and they’re living a vigorous life.” “They’re bold,” agreed Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn. “They have always had courage. They’ve always wanted to live to the fullest.” *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen admonished critics, “It is an active family, an achieving family, and so its members have taken some chances.” The *New York Times* boasted that “the Kennedys have always been risk-takers, in play, politics and war. At its best, there is a certain nobility to the Kennedys’ refusal to let life intimidate them.”

But not all the family’s risk-taking has been “bold” or “wild.” Some Kennedys have been far more reckless than others. Was John Kennedy’s death reckless? Let’s consider the criteria.

1. Who caused the tragedy? Most of the coverage depicts John as the victim of a family “curse.” The Kennedys are “stalked by tragedy,” suffering “bad luck” or a “near-biblical blight” that has been inflicted, according to Mario Cuomo, by “gods.” Not only were Jack and Bobby assassinated, but “the younger generation of Kennedys has been haunted by bad news as well,” says the *Post*—“as if fate were picking them off,” laments *Time*.

This passive language obscures an important distinction. Whereas Jack and Bobby were murdered, the “younger generation,” far from being “haunted” or “picked off,” caused its own grief. Joe overturned a jeep, leaving his brother’s girlfriend paralyzed. Bobby Jr. introduced mescaline to his 13-year-old brother David, who eventually died of a drug overdose. Michael slept with his kids’ teen-age baby sitter and later skied into a tree. William Kennedy Smith, their cousin, went out on the town with

Uncle Teddy, brought home a woman, and ended up being tried unsuccessfully for rape.

Which of these traditions does John Kennedy belong to? The *Times* argued that like Jack and Bobby, John was “cut down far too early.” Again, passive language distorts the facts. John was at the controls when his vehicle crashed—just like Cousin Joe and Uncle Teddy.

2. Who’s the victim? On *Meet the Press*, Tim Russert played the 30-year-old video clip in which Ted Kennedy tried to explain to the nation why, having driven his car off a bridge after a party on Chappaquiddick Island—and having swum to safety while his young campaign aide, Mary Jo Kopechne, drowned in the car—he had failed to report the accident to police. In the clip, Kennedy raised the question “whether some awful curse did actually hang over all the Kennedys, whether there was some justifiable reason for me to doubt what had happened and to delay my report.”

Russert offered the clip as an omen of the “curse” that would strike John Kennedy 30 years later. Russert’s guest, columnist Mike Barnicle, heaped praise and sympathy on Ted Kennedy for having “borne so many” family tragedies. Nobody pointed out that at Chappaquiddick, unlike Dallas and Los Angeles, the person most responsible for the tragedy was a Kennedy, whereas the victim was not—and that Ted Kennedy’s invocation of the family “curse” was a clever way of papering over these differences. Thanks to this blurring of the victim-perpetrator distinction, Ted’s nephew Joe was able to get elected to Congress despite his own car accident, which likewise devastated his passenger, four years after Chappaquiddick.

Which tradition does John Kennedy belong to? Most pundits, recalling Jack’s and Bobby’s assassinations, have cast his family as the ultimate victim of his crash. “Stop blaming John. It is enough that tragedy once again punished the Kennedys,” wrote Cohen. But attention is gradually shifting to the Bessette family, whose daughters were passengers on John’s plane. The Chappaquiddick analogies can’t be far behind.

3. For what purpose was the risk taken? To illustrate the Kennedys’ penchant for “adventure,” “recklessness,” and “disaster,” the *Post* compares John’s crash to the death of Joe Kennedy Jr., in a World War II bombing mission and to Michael Kennedy’s fatal “crash” into a tree while playing football on skis. *Newsweek*’s Jonathan Alter likens John’s flying to his father’s piloting of a PT boat in the war: “They both grabbed life by the lapels.” These comparisons obscure the difference between risking one’s life in war, as Jack and Joe did, and risking it playing football. Which tradition does John belong to? He was flying to a wedding—a more commendable pursuit than the one that killed Michael, but nothing like the war that killed Uncle Joe.

4. What precautions were taken? Critics point out that John Kennedy was an inexperienced pilot, took off after sunset, wasn’t licensed to fly in the poor visibility he encountered Friday, flew the more dangerous route over water, and never contacted air traffic controllers for assistance. His defenders point out that he was trained at a top-flight facility and usually brought along a flight instructor but that Friday’s weather reports offered no warning of poor visibility. Barnicle, like Cohen, argued that to accuse Kennedy of “poor judgment is way out of bounds,” because “he could just as well have been killed in a subway accident.”

By enumerating Kennedy's usual precautions, his defenders show that he was more careful than many of his cousins. But against that background—and comments from other pilots who say they decided the weather was too dangerous for flying—his decisions last Friday appear all the more unwise. John Kennedy would be alive today if he had taken his usual precautions—and certainly if he had taken a train instead.

5. Was the protagonist morally reckless? Recklessness theorists associate John Kennedy's "lack of judgment" with his cousins' debauchery. According to the *Post*, the family's "fearless adventurism has sometimes played out in scandal: for example, the drug problems of Robert Jr., Patrick and David ... or Michael's notorious involvement with his teenage babysitter." *Time* says of John, "If he was less reckless than his cousins, it was not saying much; there were friends who turned down the invitation to take to the skies with him." The magazine quotes one family member who said, "The Kennedy story is really about karma, about people who broke the rules and were ultimately broken by them."

This critique confuses different dimensions of "judgment" and "breaking the rules." To err in assessing the weather is human; to pork the baby sitter is depraved. John Kennedy knew the difference: In 1997, he observed in *George* that his cousin Michael had "surrendered his judgment." Recklessness theorists such as *Newsweek*—which casually associated John's "succession of stunning girlfriends" as a bachelor with his father's "sexual snacking" as a married man—show far worse judgment than John ever did.

Barnicle and other Kennedy defenders, however, gloss over the same moral differences when they demand that the nation stand with Uncle Teddy and mourn the loss of "another Kennedy" instead of "assessing judgment." Judgment is precisely what should be assessed. John Kennedy should never have taken off last Friday. The risk was unnecessary, and two people who entrusted him with their lives are dead because he screwed up. But let's not confuse one catastrophic misjudgment with a pattern of decadence. John Kennedy's death was far less noble than the tragedies suffered by the best men in his family—and far less blameworthy than the tragedies wrought by the worst.

Budget Fudging

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999

President Clinton opened his hourlong news conference Thursday with a defense of his budget proposals and a critique of Republican tax-cut plans. Newspapers duly reported his quarrels with the GOP over revenue projections and the cost of new Medicare benefits. Which side will prevail on these matters remains to be seen. But the underlying struggle to shape the terms of the debate remains invisible to the media. And Clinton is winning that struggle hands down.

1. Whose money is it? President Reagan used to argue constantly that federal money belonged to taxpayers, not "bureaucrats." Later, House Speaker Newt Gingrich took up this theme. But now both men are gone, and nobody in the GOP seems capable of battling Clinton's counterspin. Clinton chooses

words that oblige the media and the public to look at every financial question from the standpoint of the government rather than the taxpayer. The Republican tax cut plan will "cost" too much and cause "an enormous loss to the American people," Clinton argued Thursday. This obscures the alternative point of view—that taxes themselves impose "costs" and "losses" on everyone who has to pay the Internal Revenue Service.

Likewise, Clinton shrewdly portrays tax cuts as a kind of "spending." At his news conference, he questioned how Republicans could "finance" their tax cuts. Words such as these dissolve the moral difference between giving money "back" to the people it came from, as Reagan and Gingrich used to put it, and passing it on to others instead. Once the question is framed as how to "finance" tax cuts—implying that the government owns the money and gets to decide who should receive it—conservatives can't win.

2. Who can spend it more wisely? Conservatives used to frame this question as a choice between government "spending" and private "investment." "Investment" meant the money was working and growing. "Spending" meant it was being wasted. Clinton has turned this language on its head. "We must decide whether to invest the surplus, to strengthen America over the long-term, or to squander it for the short-term," he argued Thursday. To "squander" the money, in Clinton's language, is to "spend" it on tax cuts. To "invest" it is to allocate it to "long-term goals," which used to be called government programs.

Clinton constantly borrows capitalist terminology to make federal budget decisions appear as productive as corporate budget decisions. At his news conference, he made clear that allocating money to poverty-stricken parts of the country isn't subsidizing the poor; it's "investing in America's new markets." Adding prescription drug coverage to Medicare isn't additional spending; it's "modernizing" the program to meet future needs.

3. Who deserves it most? Reagan used to dominate the moral dimension of budget debates by posing a choice between hard-working taxpayers and irresponsible beneficiaries of government programs. Clinton's greatest feat has been to reverse this hierarchy. The question, as he put it Thursday, is no longer whether to spend more money on programs but whether "to meet our basic responsibilities in education, defense, the environment," and other commitments.

What about the government's responsibility to taxpayers? Clinton explained that in contrast to the GOP's "risky" tax-relief plan, he favors only "tax cuts we can afford," since we must maintain "fiscal discipline." "We" refers, of course, to the government. "Afford" makes clear that it's the government's money and that tax cuts are a secondary and purely elective consideration. Our "responsibilities" come first, and to forsake "fiscal discipline" by cutting taxes would be immoral as well as imprudent. This spin keeps the alternative interpretation of fiscal discipline—cutting taxes first, and then cutting spending accordingly—conveniently out of the picture.

Good spin wins the issue of the day, but great spin goes further. It wins the war invisibly, by skewing the debate at such a deep level that the media can't see it. And it so permeates public discourse that even the opposition helplessly or unwittingly succumbs. Four months ago, when George W. Bush launched his presidential exploratory committee, he declared that tax cuts were

“compassionate” because they “give people more money.” That’s not a challenge to Bill Clinton. That’s a tribute.

William Saletan is a Slate senior writer.

ASSESSMENT

Douglas Brinkley

John Kennedy Jr.’s most prolific mourner.

By David Plotz

Douglas Brinkley is the William Ginsburg of the Kennedy death circus. Before the crash, the boyish, gap-toothed Brinkley was known primarily as a Michael Beschloss-in-waiting, a telegenic historian fielding calls from the cable news networks. Now the University of New Orleans professor has parlayed a contributing editorship at *George* and a friendship with Kennedy into a job as a necropublicist. Between Saturday and Tuesday, Brinkley appeared on MSNBC, *Late Edition*, *Meet the Press*, *Good Morning America*, *Dateline*, *Today* (twice), and NPR (twice). He also penned columns about his relationship with Kennedy for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, and was quoted everywhere else ink touches paper.

According to the *Washington Post*, Brinkley cut a \$10,000 deal with NBC for a week of exclusive Kennedy commentary, but then agreed to provide it pro bono. (Brinkley broke an identical handshake deal with ABC to sign with the rival network, alleges the *Post*.) Editors at *George* are reportedly so annoyed about Brinkley’s death punditry that they have dropped him from the masthead.

Even amid this week’s staggering hyperbole, Brinkley’s emotional profligacy has distinguished him. He is, as he rarely fails to remind his audience, 38 years old like Kennedy, a vegetarian like Kennedy, and a Sagittarius like Kennedy. That identification with Kennedy accounts in part for Brinkley’s tenuous proposition: that Kennedy’s death is the signal event of his generation, the moment Gen X lost its innocence. In the opening paragraph of his *New York Times* op-ed, Brinkley opined: “It’s as if suddenly, an entire generation’s optimism is deflated, and all that is left is the limp reality of growing old.” Kennedy’s death may have affected his friend Brinkley this way. I am not sure anyone else outside Kennedy’s circle was so moved.

Brinkley has also mounted his thanatic pulpit to tell and retell anecdotes about Kennedy’s decency: how he declined an honorary doctorate because he felt he didn’t deserve it, how his racial compassion sparked him to visit Mike Tyson in jail. (Brinkley has grown comfortable enough with Kennedy-family talk that he no longer limits himself to John Kennedy. In his second *Today* jaunt, he opined about would-be bride Rory Kennedy: “It’s the activist and the feminist in Rory Kennedy that I think is her greatest contribution to American life.”)

It’s a historical truth, handed down from Mark Antony to Jesse Jackson to Earl Spencer, that celebrity death is a fabulous marketing opportunity, but Brinkley is not cynical about his prolific Kennedy comments. “I have been in a deep, deep depression, and my way of responding was to be proactive,” he

says. “I could have shut up about this and not done anything, but I really believe that this is *someone who matters*.”

Brinkley’s belief that Kennedy is someone who matters—matters enough for two op-eds and countless TV gigs, in fact—is a good starting point for understanding the young prof. He is an appropriate eulogist for Kennedy because they shared a vision of American culture and politics. Kennedy’s worthy democratic instincts inspired him to use entertainment to teach politics. Brinkley’s worthy democratic instincts inspire him to use entertainment to teach history. In Brinkley’s case, as in Kennedy’s, the results have been both inspiring and awkward.

Brinkley (who is not David Brinkley’s son—that’s Columbia history prof Alan Brinkley) stands at the intersection of academia, serious journalism, and TV punditry. He is striving for a place in the pantheon of popular historians such as Stephen Ambrose and Arthur Schlesinger. Brinkley abhors the narrow academic history that has dominated universities. He scorns scholarly monographs and favors a democratic, populist history. As history grew more and more abstruse in the ’60s and ’70s, historians ceded the role of public intellectual to journalists. Brinkley wants to take it back. (Kennedy himself admired Brinkley’s approach enough that, according to Brinkley, he had been trying to land Brinkley an appointment at Harvard’s Kennedy School.)

Brinkley first came to prominence as America’s leading neo-beatnik, a believer that the best way to learn history is on the road. In 1992, he led 17 students from Hofstra University (where he then taught) on a six-week history road trip, from the Grand Canyon to Route 66, from Ken Kesey’s farm to Jack London’s ranch. He turned this “Majic Bus” trip into a popular book. He now guides a civil-rights bus journey for inner-city high-school kids every spring. The Majic Bus also inspired C-SPAN to start sending its own buses around the country.

The Majic Bus illustrates both the charms and flaws of Brinkley’s notion of public history. Brinkley is the kind of professor freshmen love, because he is a kind of *Über*-freshman himself, wildly enthusiastic and infatuated with popular culture. He believes Jack Kerouac and Hunter S. Thompson are the giants of American literature. He quotes Ramones lyrics. He loves the word “troubadour.” He refers to Lou Reed as “poet Lou Reed.” *The Majic Bus* is full of passages like this:

“How could I be a great bop wanderer, a mystic in search of ecstasy, a hobo scribbler of haiku and jazz poems, somehow discovering, in Kerouacian terms, how to ‘dig’ life in the divine world to the fullest?”

Brinkley is a cheerleader for American history. Everything is a celebration. He likes to cite Kerouac’s “I am not anti-anything” (except “racists” and certain big corporations). The civil rights movement was great. The Beats were cool. Dylan is amazing. He even wrote a kindly biography of Jimmy Carter. Brinkley skirts the arguments against his rosy vision. When his Majic Bus students encountered a couple of belligerent Buchananites spouting nativist claptrap, Brinkley’s immediate reaction was to treat the pair as loonies and hustle his students back onto the bus. His America is conflict-free. Here, too, he resembles Kennedy, who was a cheerleader for politics, publishing a magazine that detached politics from ideology.

The Majic Bus brought Brinkley minor fame. Blessed with preternatural gregariousness, good humor, and a love of attention, he's been tireless about pursuing both celebrity and the cause of popular history ever since. "The word that is used around Doug is 'operator.' That is said scornfully or dismissively," says historian and Brinkley mentor Ambrose, who tapped Brinkley to succeed him as director of University of New Orleans' Eisenhower Center. "He *is* an operator, and I think that's wonderful. He's entrepreneurial and enthusiastic. It's very American."

It's hard to find anyone who knows Brinkley and dislikes him. It's also hard to find anyone who knows Brinkley and doesn't worry about his obsession with fame. "His name-dropping is almost pathological," says one friend. In my conversation with Brinkley, he touched on a dozen famous politicians and artists he knows. His writing is full of sentences that begin something like, "As John Cage once asked me ..."

Brinkley worked assiduously to join Beschloss and Doris Kearns Goodwin on the air. "TV is the most important medium for conveying history. For historians not to reach out smacks of elitism," he says. He will happily decorate any TV or radio story with a veneer of American history. Recent months have seen him comment on the Kosovo bombing, ground troops, Rosa Parks, Independence Day, impeachment, and Al Gore's military service, to name a few topics.

Meanwhile, he has pursued a writing career that would fell a less industrious man. On the same day his *Newsweek* and *New York Times* Kennedy pieces appeared, Brinkley published a sweet article in *The New Yorker* about a 50-year correspondence between Ronald Reagan and a member of his fan club. Brinkley publishes in the *Atlantic*, *Newsweek*, *American Heritage*, and *George*. His work ranges from routine commentaries on the day's political news to celebrity puff profiles. He writes more journalism than most hacks, and certainly a lot more *good* journalism than most hacks. At the same time, he has managed to write or co-write eight books in the past seven years, including three full-scale biographies and a lively 600-page history of the United States. (Brinkley's *oeuvre* demonstrates his genius for endearing himself to all kinds of people: He has done books with the widow of Dean Acheson, the ultimate establishment figure; with Hunter S. Thompson; and with Carter.) He is currently working on a profile of Gore, a biography of Rosa Parks, and a biography of Henry Ford.

Brinkley's sunniness and ardor are appealing, but his public history has its shortcomings. His idols, Ambrose and Schlesinger, have won the admiration of the academy and the public. Brinkley has won the public but has not wowed the academy. Some of his colleagues' dismay is simply jealousy of his entrepreneurship, but some is more substantive. His books read like good journalism—and that's no insult—but they are not great history. "He has made no analytical contribution at all," says one Ivy League historian who professes to like Brinkley.

Arthur Schlesinger went on television to mourn the death of President John Kennedy. Douglas Brinkley goes on television to mourn the death of celebrity magazine editor John Kennedy Jr. This is why his ambition to be a public intellectual may falter. A public intellectual resists the frivolous. Brinkley does not resist the frivolous. As his mentor Ambrose says, "I wish he would spend less time on John Kennedy and more time on Henry Ford."

Visit the Eisenhower Center here (www.uno.edu/~eice/). Read Brinkley's *Newsweek* essay on JFK Jr (newsweek.com/nw-srv/printed/us/na/na1404_1.htm). Tag along on Doug's Majic Bus tours of American history (www.uno.edu/~eice/majic.html) or digest his thoughts on travel writing (www2.ihs1830.org/ihs1830/holiday.htm). Find out more about his recent Carter biography (www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/067088006X/qid=932585510/sr=1-12/002-4623164-9790835) and read *Time's* take on it (cgi.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/1998/dom/980511/the_arts_books_the_live17.html).

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Florida Juice

The Sunshine State's love affair with the electric chair.

By Ellen McGarrah

I still have my notes from that morning, May 4, 1990, in the Q Wing of Florida State Prison: steak, broccoli, hot Lipton tea for the last meal. The lights go off, throwing the prison into darkness, as the prison switches to its own generator. At 7 a.m., the door in the back of the death chamber opens, and there's Jesse Tafero—slender, bald, white—standing between two guards and looking at the chair like he can't believe it's real. I'm attending his execution as a witness and covering it for my employer, the *Miami Herald*. The guards make Tafero sit down and tie him to the chair with leather straps. He says his last words and then stares out at each of us, one by one, as the guards stuff a gag into his mouth. "He is defiant," my notes say, as if I can read his mind. The guards slip a black leather hood over his face and screw the head electrode, with its circular sponge, down onto the top of his skull. Ready, set, go. At six minutes past 7, the electricity hits Jesse Tafero and his head bursts into flame.

Some things you can't escape—can't burn them, can't box them up, can't run far enough or fast enough away. I thought of Jesse Tafero earlier this month when I read about the execution of Bud Davis in the Florida electric chair. Davis started to bleed when the electricity hit him, soaking his shirt bright red, scaring the assembled witnesses. "The chair functioned as it was designed to function," is what Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's press secretary said.

And in a way, that's absolutely true. If tidy executions were the point, Florida could have switched over to lethal injection a long time ago. Pretty much all the states have. But Florida has been insistent about keeping its lethal furniture, even though three times in the last nine years, beginning with Jesse Tafero, the chair has gone awry. Fire in 1990, fire in 1997, and now blood. Meanwhile, Florida continues to fend off legal challenges to its right to electrocute, behaving as if death itself weren't punishment enough.

It's no coincidence that modern Florida was born of electricity—without air conditioning, none of it would be

possible, not those golf course condos or tall beach hotels or trailer parks or malls spreading across the shallow limestone shelf that separates Florida soil from the sea. Down there, more than in other places, electricity is power, the fine bright line between life and no life, which is the same thing as between life and death.

The electric chair came to the state in the middle of the first great Florida land boom, when Florida was conjuring itself up out of the sea of grass. Back then, Florida executed by hanging, which wasn't a foolproof way to kill people either. Some of the noosed choked to death in those dusty jailhouse courtyards, but that wasn't what bugged Florida about the method. The problem was that hangings were popular and sometimes drew huge, raucous, picnicking crowds, an image that didn't quite mesh with the orange-blossom gentility the land barons were trying to create. In 1924, the Florida legislature moved death indoors to the chair, away from the curious and the mayonnaise-smeared.

Somehow, the electric throne made death seem civilized. But those carefree days when frying someone was a sign of progress are long gone. The chair has become an anachronism, an unpleasant physical reminder that the death penalty involves *death*. One by one, starting in Texas in 1982, states switched to lethal injection. Only four states still electrocute, and of them, Florida is by far the most enthusiastic.

You see, Florida *likes* the chair. Its collective blood-thirst hasn't changed much since the days of public hangings. Following Davis' bloody demise, Gov. Bush proclaimed that the execution let everyone know that Florida was against the murder of innocent people. After the chair misfired in 1997, Attorney General Bob Butterworth similarly explained that if people didn't want to burn up while being electrocuted, then they should commit their capital offenses somewhere else. Burn 'em up and warn 'em off: The only thing unusual about the chair, Florida thinks, is that it isn't used often enough.

Outsiders think the Florida executioners are sadistic morons. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, they're frustrated home economists. Consider for a moment the "science" of electrocution at Florida State Prison. When flames erupted from Jesse Tafero during the execution I witnessed, prison officials blamed the fire on the water-filled sponge attached to his head that was placed there to conduct electricity from the electrode. The sponge, purchased by maintenance workers at the local five-and-dime, was highly flammable because it was *synthetic*, they determined. To demonstrate their theory, they bought another synthetic sponge and stuck it in a kitchen toaster, where it caught on fire. A simulated execution was conducted with a fire-resistant sea sponge: a tub of water standing in for a human body and a colander for a human head. After that, only sea sponges could enter the death chamber.

But when Pedro Medina's head caught fire during his March 1997 execution, the Florida Supreme Court ordered the Department of Corrections to write down its electric chair protocol, previously just a folksy word-of-mouth operation in Q Wing. The ruling came out of a 1997 lawsuit filed by condemned inmate Leo Alexander Jones, who argued that the electric chair was cruel and unusual punishment. The state, by way of saying thank you, ordered Jones to watch the chair's next trial run. This time, a metal salad bowl played the role of the human head.

In 1997, the Florida Supreme Court ruled 4-3 to keep the chair, with the dissenting justices comparing the chair to the guillotine. Since then, three justices have left the court, two of them from the pro-chair side. It's hard to imagine that this latest "incident" won't have an impact on the court, which is currently reviewing another legal challenge to the chair.

Heavy use of the chair—43 executions in the last 20 years—has put some wear and tear on the device. In 1999, the Department of Corrections, which had previously told the court that the chair was in good shape, up and called a structural engineer and paid him \$4,000 to inspect the chair. The inspector reported that the chair itself, the wooden part, needed replacement. It just so happened that the Department of Corrections had another electric chair, a full-size replica that it had had manufactured and then placed on display at the department's tiny and strange museum in Tallahassee. While still in the death chamber, the inspector had snapped a few quick pictures of himself sitting in the chair, and he is planning to use them as Christmas cards this year. According to the inspector, the state's concern wasn't the condemned: The guards were worried that if the chair broke apart during an electrocution, the thick, black, high-voltage wires screwed to the inmate might rip loose and electrocute everybody in the room.

Flames, my notes say, about Tafero's execution. *Flames and smoke*. It is impossible to put into words. What does it look like when someone catches fire while strapped to a piece of wood? The flames are nearly a foot high, they arc out from underneath the black leather hood; there is smoke, the huge buzzing sound of the electricity, there are white walls and Venetian blinds and linoleum underfoot. There's ash falling on Tafero's shirt and he's nodding his head, he's heaving his chest in and out, tied down with those thick leather straps. The executioner turns the power on and off, three times in all, and in between the jolts Tafero is moving, he's nodding, his chest rises and falls. He looks like he's still alive. Then the electricity hits him again, and the fire rises from his head, from the black leather mask, and he shudders forward and is slammed back against the chair. It takes seven minutes before the prison doctor pronounces him dead, seven minutes of heaving, nodding, flame, and smoke. You can't see his face because the mask covers it, but as you walk past him on your way out you notice his hands there. There's a sore on his right pinky finger, a raw spot, flesh rubbed off to blood against the oak, from where he was clawing the chair.

Despite the controversy surrounding capital punishment, many government agencies are not shying away from the issue. The Supreme Court reviewed 38 death penalty cases between 1990 and 1995 (law.fsu.edu/lawtech/deathpen/sct_dp.html). Equally unabashed, the Florida Department of Corrections is more than happy to tell people about its executions, with a death row roster (www.dc.state.fl.us/activeinmates/deathrowroster.asp) and death row fact sheet on the Web (www.dc.state.fl.us/security/deathrow.html).

Ellen McGarrah is a private detective.

THE SHOPPING AVENGER

Got a consumer score you want settled? Send e-mail to shoppingavenger@slate.com.

It's Time To Keelhaul U-Haul!

The caped consumer crusader finds enlightenment but fails to right marketplace wrongs.

By Jeffrey Goldberg

Like all superheroes worthy of the title, the Shopping Avenger has an Achilles' heel. In the case of the Shopping Avenger, his Achilles' heel is not animal, vegetable, or mineral but something less tangible.

An explanation: Last week, the magazine you are currently reading forced the Shopping Avenger at gunpoint to read a series of treacle-filled self-help books, and then to dissect them online together with a partner. The Shopping Avenger, who can withstand radiation, extreme heat and cold, hail, bear attacks, and *Eyes Wide Shut*, almost succumbed to terminal jejuneness after reading these books. Except for one thing: One of the books, *The Art of Happiness*, which collects and simplifies the Dalai Lama's philosophy, got the Shopping Avenger to thinking. This, in a way, is the Shopping Avenger's Achilles' heel: thinking. Perhaps it is wrong, the Shopping Avenger thought, to complain about the petty insults and inconveniences of life in the materialistic '90s. The Shopping Avenger felt that perhaps he should counsel those who write seeking help to meditate, to accept bad service the way one accepts the change of seasons, and to extend a compassionate hand of forgiveness to those who provide poor customer care.

But then the Shopping Avenger sat down, and the feeling passed.

The Shopping Avenger does not make light of the Dalai Lama or of the notion that there is more to life than the impatient acquisition of material goods. If the Shopping Avenger were not, for a superhero, extremely nonjudgmental—as opposed to his alter ego, who is considered insufferably judgmental by his alter ego's wife—the Shopping Avenger would tell the occasional correspondent to let go of his petty grievance and get a life.

But the Shopping Avenger also believes that the Dalai Lama has never tried to rent a truck from U-Haul. If he had tried to rent from U-Haul, he never would have escaped from Tibet. (For the complete back story, see this "Shopping Avenger" column and this one.)

The complaints about U-Haul's nonreservation reservation policy continue to pour in through the electronic mail. One correspondent, B.R., wrote in with this cautionary tale: "Last weekend, I went to San Francisco to help my brother and his family move into their first house. My brother had reserved a moving truck with U-Haul for the big day. I warned my brother about U-Haul's 'not really a reservation per se' policy that I learned from the Shopping Avenger. He didn't believe such a thing would happen to him, so he didn't act on my warning."

B.R. continues—as if you don't know what happened already—"I went to U-Haul with my brother to get our 'reserved' truck. The store had many customers standing around looking

frustrated. When we got to the front of the line, the clerk informed us that our 'reserved' truck had not yet been returned. We asked if we could rent one of the many trucks sitting idle in the parking lot. The clerk laughed and said the keys to those trucks were lost."

B.R. and his chastened brother—the Shopping Avenger is resisting the urge to gloat—went to Ryder. "Ryder had a truck available for us. The gentleman who helped us at Ryder said Ryder prides itself on being everything U-Haul is not."

The Shopping Avenger has still not received a call from U-Haul spokeswoman Johna Burke explaining why U-Haul refuses to provide trucks to people who reserve trucks, but the Shopping Avenger is pleased to note that several correspondents have written in over the past month saying that, based on what they have read in this column, they will be taking their business to Ryder or Budget or elsewhere.

The Shopping Avenger will undoubtedly return to the sorry state of affairs at U-Haul in the next episode, but now on to this month's airline debacle.

Before we begin, though, the Shopping Avenger nearly forgot to announce the winner of last month's contest, in which readers were asked to answer the question, "What's the difference between pests and airlines?"

The winner is one Tom Morgan, who wrote, "You can hire someone to kill pests." Tom is the winner of a year's supply of Turtle Wax, and he will receive his prize just as soon as the Shopping Avenger figures out how much Turtle Wax actually constitutes a year's supply. The new contest question: How much Turtle Wax comprises a year's supply of Turtle Wax?

This month's airline in the spotlight is Southwest. Loyal readers will recall that last month the Shopping Avenger praised Southwest Airlines for its "sterling" customer service. This brought forth a small number of articulate dissensions. The most articulate, and the most troubling, came from M., who wrote, "Last year, flying from Baltimore to Chicago with my entire family (two really little kids included), we set down at Midway in a rainstorm. And waited for our bags. And waited for bags. And waited for bags."

An hour later, M. says, the bags showed up, "soaked through. We took them to baggage services at SW and were faced with the most complicated, unclear, and confusing mechanism for filing a claim we experienced flyers have ever seen."

When they arrived at their destination, M. and her family made a terrible discovery, "We discovered that our clothes were soaked through—the top clothes were so wet that the dye had bled through down to the lower levels, destroying lots of other clothes. Obviously, our bags had just been sitting out on the runway in the rain. To this day, I've never heard a thing from SW, despite calls and letters."

This, of course, is where Shopping Avenger steps in. Shopping Avenger knows that Southwest is different from the average airline, in that it doesn't go out of its way to infuriate its paying customers (see: Northwest), so I expected a quick and generous resolution to M.'s problem.

What I got at first, though, was a load of corporate hoo-ha.

"The airline's policy, which is consistent with all contracts of carriage at all airlines, requires that passengers file a report in person for lost or damaged luggage within four hours of arrival at

their destination," a Southwest spokeswoman, Linda Rutherford, e-mailed me. "[M.] indicates she called for a few days, but did not file a report in person until April 12—three days later.

Southwest, as a courtesy, took her report anyway and asked for follow up information and written inventory of the damage."

Rutherford said that M. should have submitted detailed receipts and photographs of the damage in order to make a claim.

Harrumph, the Shopping Avenger says. It is a bad hair day at Southwest when its officials defend themselves by comparing their airline to other airlines. I forwarded this message to M., who replied:

"Wow. Well, of course I didn't file it at the airport on the 9th because I didn't know the clothes were ruined at the airport. I didn't know until I opened the baggage at my hotel and saw the ruined stuff. (And it's worth noting that we had already waited for about an hour for our luggage with two little kids and impatient in-laws nipping at our heels.)"

She goes on, "I did call that evening ... and was told that that sufficed. This is the first time I've been told that I had to file a complaint in person within four hours. ... When I filed on the 12th, I was never told that I needed any receipts or photos or other type of documentation. The baggage folks seemed pretty uninterested in all of this. ... They know that the type of 'evidence' they want is impossible to obtain. They also know that on April 9 they screwed up the luggage retrieval and left bags out in the rain a long time."

Southwest's response actually served to anger M. more than the original problem. "Before, they had a mildly annoyed but loyal customer (who would have been placated by an apology and thrilled with some modest token of their regret). Now they have a pissed-off customer."

Things do look bad for Southwest, don't they? The Shopping Avenger sent M.'s response to Rutherford, who e-mailed back saying she thought the Shopping Avenger was asking for "policy information." The Shopping Avenger e-mailed back again, stressing to Rutherford that the Great Court of Consumer Justice would, if this case were brought to trial, undoubtedly find for the plaintiff (the Shopping Avenger serves as prosecutor, judge, and jury in the Great Court of Consumer Justice—defendants are represented by the president of U-Haul), and that Southwest was precipitously close to feeling the sword of retribution at its neck.

But then she came through, provisionally, "Yep, you can be sure if [M.] will call me we will get everything squared away. I'm sorry it's taken this long for her to get someone who can help, but we will take care of it from here."

Stay tuned, shoppers, to hear whether Southwest makes good its promise to compensate M. and apologize to her for her troubles.

The story of M. reminds the Shopping Avenger of a central truth of consumer service: It's not the crime, it's the cover-up.

Take the case of K., who found himself waiting in vain for Circuit City to repair his television. Televisions break, even 1-year-old televisions, as is the case with K.'s. But Circuit City, where he bought the television, gave him a terrible runaround. The Shopping Avenger dispatched his sidekick, Tad the Deputy Avenger, to get to the bottom of K.'s story. This is what he found: K. grew concerned, Tad the Deputy Avenger reports, after his television had been in the Circuit City shop for a week. When

he called, he was told to "check back next week." When he asked if someone from the store could call him with more information, he was refused. Weeks went by. When K. told one Circuit City employee that he really would like to get his television back, the employee, K. says, asked him, "Don't you have another television in your house?"

More than a month later—after hours and hours and hours of telephone calls and days missed at work—K. received his television back.

Mistakes happen, but not, Tad the Deputy Avenger found out, at Circuit City. The case, K. was told by a Circuit City official, was "handled perfectly." Another official, Morgan Stewart in public relations, assured Deputy Avenger Tad that "We got to be a big and successful company by treating customers better than the other guy." The Shopping Avenger and his loyal sidekick would like to hear from other Circuit City customers: Does Circuit City, in fact, treat its customers better than the other guy?

Stay tuned for answers. And next month, a Shopping Avenger clergy special: TWA screws with a Hasidic rabbi's travel plans, leaving the rabbi's wife crying at the airport. Find out if the Shopping Avenger can save TWA from certain heavenly punishment, in the next episode.

Jeffrey Goldberg, a regular contributor to Slate, is a contributing writer to the New York Times Magazine.

HISTORY LESSON

Daddys' Boys

JQA and W., the presidents' sons running for president.

By David Greenberg

Except for political junkies, most people can tell you precisely one thing about George W. Bush: His father used to be president. No wonder he's in major-league denial when asked about matching Poppy's achievements. "These are the kind of psychological analyses that I'm not really thrilled about talking about," he told the *New York Times*, revealing, in a classic Freudian protestation, more than he realized.

But it would be impossible for anyone in Bush's shoes not to bear an especially heavy Oedipal burden. The life of the only son of a president to become president—John Quincy Adams—illustrates why. W. has followed in his father's footsteps by attending Phillips Academy and Yale, getting into the oil business, running for Congress, and now, seeking the presidency. "JQA" (as he was called to distinguish him from Dad) had the more daunting task of succeeding his father—the nation's first vice president and second president, and an eminent political theorist—as one of the great statesmen of the early republic. If W. were to learn even a little about JQA's unhappy plight, he might well realize the virtues of psychological self-analysis.

The senior John Adams was a leader in the American Revolution and wrote the influential tracts *Thoughts on Government* and *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. He saw no reason his eldest son,

born in 1767, shouldn't attain equal greatness. Adams set a rigorous course of study for young John, assigning him, for example, to read Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* in the original Greek, at age 10. Morally stern, Adams also admonished his son to make "a good account" of himself, and continued to hector him well into his adulthood. "You come into life with advantages which will disgrace you if your success is mediocre," Adams wrote to the 27-year-old JQA in 1794. "If you do not rise to the head not only of your profession but of your country, it will be owing to your own Laziness, Slovenliness and Obstnacy."

JQA didn't need his father's entreaties to work hard. He had internalized them fully, and his copious diary entries reveal neurotically high ambitions and an obsessional level of self-reproach for not meeting them. "Indolence, indolence, I fear, will be my ruin," he wrote at age 20, voicing a refrain he repeated throughout his hard-working life. At that same young age, he awoke one morning with a hangover after a night spent caroling with friends, during which, he recorded, "the bottle went round with an unusual rapidity." Yet for all his self-flagellation, JQA learned self-control early. It took George W. Bush 39 years and many more hangovers before he learned the same. Of course, JQA's paternally instilled perfectionism sparked a lifelong case of clinical depression. W.'s growing-up experiences sparked a born-again Christianity that has led him to believe all Jews are bound for hell.

JQA benefited as well as suffered from his father's position. Where George Herbert Walker Bush furnished his son with contacts in politics and in the oil business, John Adams extended to his son equally rare opportunities. As a boy, JQA accompanied Adams on a diplomatic mission to Paris and, through that experience, won the assignment, at age 14, to be secretary and interpreter on another assignment in St. Petersburg. These jobs primed JQA for his later diplomatic career. And, just as the intellectually undistinguished George W. doubtless got into Yale as a "legacy," JQA, though he had mastered Thucydides, surely wasn't penalized for his father's name when he was admitted to Harvard.

For JQA's earliest intellectual triumphs, too, Adams senior was at least inadvertently responsible. At age 24, JQA wrote his first major work of political philosophy, in the manner of many works then, under a classical pseudonym, "Publicola." A rejoinder to Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, "Letters From Publicola" emphasized the role of passion, not reason, in governing men's political behavior. Its conservative tone and polished style—compared admiringly to Edmund Burke—led many to assume that John Adams had authored it. The case of mistaken identity fed its popularity and launched JQA's career as a political essayist. The episode stands as yet another eerie precursor to George W.'s life: As a much-overlooked *New York Times* story noted last spring, W. became the GOP front-runner largely because many people who told pollsters they favored Bush were "actually thinking of the father"; the confusion triggered a virtuous cycle of high poll numbers, improved fund-raising, and endorsements that has lifted W. above the pack.

Naturally, JQA came both to revere and to recoil from the magnitude of his father's accomplishments. In a 1793 address, JQA vowed that while "the copious treasures" of fame and

achievement "have already been gathered by the hands of genius," he and his generation would still stay true to "the precious memory of the sages." Though he was ostensibly paying tribute to the Constitution, it was not hard to hear the deep filiopietism beneath the surface.

On the other hand, JQA struggled to stake out his own terrain as a lawyer or, his ultimate fantasy, a poet. Naturally awed by his father's achievements, he swore he didn't want a career in politics (again, not unlike the way W. pursued business after failing to get elected to Congress at age 31). Yet no sooner had Adams undertaken his pursuits as an attorney than his father, recently elected as the nation's first vice president, informed him that George Washington had named the young man minister to the Netherlands. The news dashed JQA's hopes for independence from Dad. "I wish I could have been consulted before it was irrevocably made," he said of the appointment. "I rather wish it had not been made at all." The senior Adams, meanwhile, took the occasion to chide his son to start paying attention to how he dressed.

When John Adams became president in 1797, he appointed his son to the even more prestigious post of minister to Prussia. In both diplomatic missions, JQA received laudatory reviews, and he was marked as an important leader in his own right. It could only have served as a painful reminder of his father's still-greater fame, then, when, after losing the election of 1800 to Thomas Jefferson, Adams recalled his son so as not to give his rival the satisfaction of deciding whether JQA should continue in his post.

Following his career as a diplomat, John Quincy went on to ascend ever higher in politics. He served as a Massachusetts state senator and a U.S. senator, and then, during James Monroe's presidency, as secretary of state, where he was largely responsible for formulating the principles behind the Monroe Doctrine. Enscornced in what was then clearly the No. 2 position in government, JQA was the presumptive front-runner in the 1824 presidential race, though it was Andrew Jackson who won a plurality (yet not the necessary majority) of electoral votes. Adams won the presidency only because Henry Clay backed him in the run-off in the House of Representatives, but Adams never lived down (false) rumors that he and Clay had cut a "Corrupt Bargain." He unwisely fed the rumors and harmed his own reputation by naming Clay his secretary of state.

Despite Adams' relatively unremarkable presidency, however, he rebounded as no other ex-president ever has. He ran for Congress from Massachusetts and, revitalized, served for 18 years—notably helping to overturn the shameful "gag rule" that forbade the reading of anti-slavery petitions on the floor of the House. It takes little imagination to speculate that JQA felt liberated to enjoy this second career only because on July 4, 1826, midway through JQA's presidency, his venerated old man passed away.

The tragedy of JQA's life is that, for all his spectacular achievements, he was doomed to feel inadequate next to his larger-than-life father. W. should only have such problems.

Besides being his father's son, John Quincy Adams is now famous for his heroic role in the story told in Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*. Will George W. find a way to break out from his father's shadow? David Plotz compares the

achievements of W. and H.W. in "Strange Bedfellow." My main source for JQA's life is the recent biography by historian Paul C. Nagel *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life* (click here to buy the book [shop.barnesandnoble.com/BookSearch/isbnInquiry.asp?sourceid=00004129950186334410&ISBN=0674479408&bdate=07-20-1999+16:20:10]). The White House offers the usual introduction on its site about JQA: "The only President who was the son of a President" (www.whitehouse.gov/WH/glimpse/presidents/html/ja6.html). The group Forerunner describes the childhood of JQA as an example of the ideal Christian education, free of public school influence (www.forerunner.com/mandate/X0069_The_Education_of_Joh.html). Get a sense of where it all took place with this picture of the humble Adams National Historic Site (ci.quincy.ma.us/jpg/adamhssm.jpg).

David Greenberg writes *Slate's* "History Lesson" column and is working on a book about Richard Nixon's place in American politics and culture.

THE DISMAL SCIENCE

Don't Laugh at Me, Argentina

Serious lessons from a silly crisis.

By Paul Krugman

Argentina used to be a place of legendary political irresponsibility, where generals in funny hats declared war on Margaret Thatcher, and populist politicians who promised paradise consistently delivered hyperinflation instead. But over the past 10 years President Carlos Menem has steadily turned the country's reputation around. Inflation has been eliminated, with the peso securely pegged to the dollar. An absurdly inefficient system of protected markets and money-losing public corporations has been liberalized and privatized, producing a fair bit of unemployment but a huge surge in productivity. And as recently as five or six months ago the country was the darling of the business press, praised for its success in riding out the world's financial storms.

As usual, however, good press was the sign that things were about to take a turn for the worse. For a variety of reasons, including the devaluation in neighboring Brazil, Argentina has been sliding into a moderately severe recession and with it a growing budget deficit, just as a presidential election approaches. And in apparent desperation over his lag in the polls, Eduardo Duhalde, the Peronist candidate—the candidate, in other words, of Menem's party, which brought Argentina its unaccustomed stability—startled everyone by announcing his intention to discuss possible debt relief for Argentina. Not with the banks, mind you, but with the pope. (The pope has recently joined the call for debt forgiveness for poor nations, but he was surely talking about Fourth World economies such as Mozambique, not relatively well-off places such as Argentina.)

You have to admit that it is pretty funny. Surely the Monty Python cast is about to leap into view, shouting "*Nobody* expects

the Spanish Inquisition!" But somehow, the markets didn't appreciate the humor: The Buenos Aires stock market plunged, and the interest rate on Argentine bonds soared.

The odds are that this whole affair will soon blow over. But even assuming that the peso holds and that things don't fall apart, there is still a serious lesson in Argentina's current travails—namely, that you can scratch one more supposed economic panacea off your list. For Argentina has been the role model for those who believe that a credibly stable currency is all you need to promote prosperity. And its troubles—especially the contrast with the unexpectedly good news from Brazil—are therefore a reminder that, as John Maynard Keynes pointed out way back in the 1920s, a strong currency and a strong economy are by no means the same thing.

Now, Argentina does, by law (the so-called "convertibility law"), have an undeniably strong currency. A peso is worth a U.S. dollar, and that promise is made credible by the legal requirement that every peso in circulation be backed by a dollar's worth of foreign exchange reserves. In other words, short of actually abandoning its own currency in favor of the U.S. dollar—a measure that has been discussed quite a bit lately—Argentina has done everything possible to make that currency credible and secure. This "currency board" system was introduced in 1991, when hyperinflation was a recent memory and most people expected it to return in due course, and you can make a reasonable case that Argentina should stick with its currency board for some time to come. (Domingo Cavallo, who as finance minister was the architect of the board, suggested a few months back that it should endure for a decade or so.) But you can no longer brush off the argument that the system is a sort of economic straitjacket, one that is becoming increasingly onerous.

The problem, you see, is that the same rules that prevent Argentina from printing money for bad reasons—to pay for populist schemes or foolish wars—also prevent it from printing money for good reasons such as fighting recessions or rescuing the financial system. Argentina came very close to financial collapse in 1995 when it turned out that the convertibility law left no leeway to rush cash to troubled banks. It has since established various safety nets to prevent a repeat of that crisis, but some observers doubt whether those nets are really strong enough. And now the country faces what is basically a garden-variety recession, the sort of thing that happens to every economy now and then—except that unlike the United States, or even a similar-sized First World country such as Australia, it cannot try to cushion the slump by lowering interest rates and pushing more money into the system.

Now, these problems with a rigidly fixed exchange rate are not news. But for a while, currency-board enthusiasts managed to convince themselves that they weren't significant (see the **note** at the end of this article). They argued that as long as governments themselves followed stable policies—and as long as the economy was sufficiently "flexible" (the all-purpose answer to economic difficulties)—there would be few serious recessions.

But it turns out that history does not stop just because the currency is stable. And faced with a politically inconvenient recession, the Peronists find that there is nothing they can do. They cannot print money. They cannot even borrow money for some employment-generating public spending, because fiscal

indiscipline would undermine the peso's hard-won credibility. You can understand why Duhalde might be tempted to appeal to a higher authority.

Of course, Argentina's economic team still believes that its system is better than the alternatives. The more sensible advocates of currency boards and, if necessary, dollarization, have always based their views less on hope than on fear—fear that any attempt to fight a recession by devaluing would lead instead to a surge in inflation and a financial collapse. But, as it turns out, their fears may have been almost as overstated as their hopes. When Brazil—whose economic history is nearly as dismal as Argentina's—finally devalued in January, the predicted hyperinflation never arrived and neither did the financial meltdown. Indeed, it is starting to look as if the collapse of the real was just what the doctor ordered.

The serious lesson of the antics in Argentina, then, is that the big issues of monetary economics—fixed vs. flexible exchange rates, whether countries should have independent currencies at all—are still wide open. It's an eternal controversy, and not even the pope can resolve it.

Note

The most enthusiastic advocates of currency boards—the people who believe that currency boards promote economic stability, full employment, rapid growth, and weight loss without dieting—tend to come from the VoodooLand circuit: the same cluster of institutions, funded in the end by wealthy cranks, that has in the past pushed for supply-side economics and a restoration of the gold standard (see my old *Slate* pieces "Supply-Side Virus Strikes Again" and "The Gold Bug Variations"). But there are also more moderate, even sensible, people who believe that a currency board is appropriate in some circumstances.

In case you missed them in the sidebar, see Paul Krugman's old *Slate* pieces on the gold standard ("The Gold Bug Variations" [www.slate.com/Dismal/96-11-22/Dismal.asp]) and "voodoo economics" ("Supply-Side Virus Strikes Again" [www.slate.com/Dismal/96-08-15/Dismal.asp]). In a previous "Dismal Science," Krugman explains the usefulness of multiple currencies (www.slate.com/Dismal/99-04-15/Dismal.asp). Argentina's central bank provides details on its financial system (www.bcra.gov.ar/english/enoraaaa.htm) as well as a section depicting every Argentine bill and coin (www.bcra.gov.ar/english/tesoro/etesbym.htm).

Paul Krugman is a professor of economics at MIT and the author, most recently, of The Return of Depression Economics. His home page contains links to many of his other articles and essays.

NEWS QUIZ

By Randy Cohen

No. 276: "Circuit Breaker"

Posted Monday, July 19, 1999

Fill in the blank as ACLU lawyer Pamela Summers disdains an opinion handed down by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the

11th Circuit: "The courts are saying 'We'll just have a local option on the Constitution, and you people down there in Alabama can go ahead and _____ all you want.' "

"Name your children 'Fob.' "—*Charlie Glassenberg* (*Molly Shearer Gabel* had a similar answer.)

"Sign eighth-grade football players to letters of intent."—*Mark Greenberg*

"Buy all the slaves you can afford."—*Leslie Goodman-Malamuth* (similarly, *Bjorn "I Want a Malcolm X Beard" Larsen*, *Michael S. Gilman*, and *Andrew Staples*)

"I don't know, but I heard screamin' and bullwhips crackin'."—*Barbara Lippert* (similarly, *Peter Carlin* and *Dwayne Hitt*)

" '@#\$%^#@#!' There, I masked it. Now give me a goddamned R rating."—*Greg Diamond*

Click here for more answers.

Randy's Wrap-Up

The French mock the British, the British mock the French, the Serbs kill the Albanians, the Albanians kill the Serbs—ah, that crazy regional humor. But our anti-Southern jabs, above, are more than the ordinary scorn of neighbor vs. neighbor, more than urban vs. rural. Most of our jibes work a rich vein of educated vs. uneducated, which is another way of saying rich vs. poor. It's class warfare played out as a barnyard bestiality joke. What those dumb hicks really lack is the wherewithal for a fine university education that will lead to a job in the go-go tech sector.

There is one detail of Southern japes that has inverted its class associations. Several centuries ago, incestuous liaisons were for the aristocracy, now they're farmyard fun. In the former case, incest was a symptom of decadence, in the latter it's just rural isolation and the lack of dating opportunities. Them folks don't need loftier morals, they need a Starbucks.

Southern Fried Answer

"You people down there in Alabama can go ahead and pray over the intercom all you want."

An opinion from a three-judge panel from the 11th Circuit allows students to conduct organized prayers in school as long as they don't actively proselytize, and as long as school personnel have no direct role.

School officials said one change will be that pre-game prayers will now be conducted without the coach.

Chandler called the decision, allowing students to use state facilities to foster religion, "hideously unprincipled." The ACLU is expected to appeal.

Sean Fitzpatrick's Ichthys Follow-Up

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says:

Among the symbols employed by the primitive Christians, that of the fish ranks probably first in importance. Its popularity was due principally to the famous acrostic consisting of the initial letters of five Greek words forming the word for fish (Ichthys), which briefly but clearly described the character of Christ and His claim to the worship of believers: Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, i.e., Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

You've probably seen the bumper stickers of the fish symbol inscribed with Greek letters IX(TH)YS (iota chi theta upsilon sigma). Lately there have been stickers in which the fish has sprouted feet and eyes and is inscribed "Darwin." A couple of months ago in Atlanta, I saw the Darwinian whatever being swallowed by a larger fish, inscribed "TRUTH." And the beat goes on.

Domain Name Availability Extra

Many a company about to launch its Web site discovers to its dismay that its name is already taken, part of the speculative frenzy in domain names. In that case, they can either buy the name from its owner or, with ingenuity, devise an alternative.

Which of the following is taken, and which is still available?

1. GeorgeWBush.com
2. ClarenceThomas.com
3. RudolphGiuliani.com
4. SchoolPrayer.com
5. SchoolShooting.com
6. EnormousPenis.com
7. TinyPenis.com
8. NicoleKidmanNude.com
9. NewsQuiz.com

Answers

1. GeorgeWBush.com is registered by the Governor Bush Committee.
DrunkOnMoney.com is available.
2. ClarenceThomas.com is registered by OneNetNow.
Scalia'sPuppet.com is available.
3. RudolphGiuliani.com is registered by Steven G. Mautner, D.D.S., P.A.
RudyGiuliani.com is registered by Fernstrom Inc.
Heartless.com is registered by SFHS.
ColdAndHeartless.com is registered by Carroll Inc.
MoreCops.com is available.
4. SchoolPrayer.com is registered by Log In Productions.
5. SchoolShooting.com is registered by Nolex.
SchoolSpittingAndCursing.com is available.
6. EnormousPenis.com is registered by Donnie Grossman.
7. TinyPenis.com registered by Tiny Penis Ltd.
TinyLimpPenis.com is available. Act quickly. Too quickly.
8. NicoleKidmanNude.com is registered by Cupcake Party.
TrentLottNude.com is available. And scary.
9. NewsQuiz.com is registered by the mysterious Adam A. Corelli.

But StromThurmond'sAss.com is, as News Quiz regulars know, very available.

Ongoing Domain Name Extra

Participants are invited to submit a pair, similar to the examples above, of a domain name that is already taken along with an amusing and available alternative.

You can check the availability of domain names at www.eHost.com/domain_reg/index.html.

Replies due by noon ET Thursday.

Common Denominator

Rural incest.

No. 277: "Summerize"

Posted Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Trent Lott, Ronald Reagan, and Steve Martin did it when they were young, and this summer more than 400,000 people will attend camps to learn how to do it better. Do what?

"Let's just say that somewhere Dr. Joycelyn Elders is smiling."—*Tim Carvell (Daniel Krause, Chris Thomas, and Norman Oder had similar answers.)*

"Liven up a crowd, or a Klan rally in the senator's case, with the smooth, lilting sound of a banjo."—*Brooke Saucier*

"Flirt with Larry King."—*Barbara Lippert*

"Ronald Reagan was young?"—*Alison Rogers*

"If I remember camp correctly, surrendering completely to an arbitrary and irrational authority under the threat of violence."—*Charles Star*

[Click here for more answers.](#)

Randy's Wrap-Up

Largely ignoring Trent Lott—good advice for all—many News Quiz participants assumed that shorthand for Ronald Reagan is senility, and shorthand for Steve Martin is the old arrow through the head bit, which he performed back when he was still—oh, cruel, cruel participants!—funny. Martin has indeed been in many bad movies recently, and he certainly benefited from Tina Brown's editorial policy of publishing anything at all if it was written—or dictated over the phone—by a celebrity. But there is another reason, more tragic and ironic, why this gifted and imaginative guy seems less funny lately. Comedy relies on surprise. A joke sets up a chain of logic, and then subverts it in a surprising and delightful way; that's the punch line. A comic persona embodies an unexpected way of seeing the world. But the more successfully a comic does this, the more familiar his point of view becomes. And finally, after years of exposure to even the liveliest comic mind—and Martin certainly has one—we can all make up our own Steve Martin gag or Trent Lott denial or Ronald Reagan unworkable budget policy. His way of seeing things is too familiar to surprise us, too predictable to be funny. And so a comedian's success creates his failure. That, and appearing with Chevy Chase.

Give Me an "A," Give Me an "N," Give Me ... Oh, Just Give the Damn Answer

All three men were cheerleaders.

There are more than 3.3 million active cheerleaders in America—if they weren't active, they wouldn't deserve to be called cheerleaders—97 percent of them are women.

The network of training camps, competitions, and uniform manufacturers that make up the "spirit industry" is described as "a virtual circle of cross-marketing," by Jeffrey Webb, CEO of Varsity Spirit Corp., a company big in all three areas.

Maintaining a single cheerleader can run \$5,000 a year in equipment, travel, and entry fees—tough on a parent, but far cheaper than the high-priced world of NASCAR racing, where the cars can't even talk, let alone spell out mood-boosting words letter by letter while leaping into the air. On the other hand, some spectators are disappointed that cheerleading contests include so few fiery collisions.

It's an Orderly and Predictable Universe Extra

"I think I also have an obligation to deal with the hurt and the harm done to these police officers who were put in a position where they had to kill your son."—*Rudy Giuliani, on the radio, hectoring Margarita Rosario, the mother of an 18-year-old, who was one of two men lying face down when the cops shot them 22 times*

"Quite sensitive and quite honest."—*Rudy Giuliani, evaluating his comments to the dead boy's mother*

"There's no point in moralizing whether this is a good or bad thing."—*Gene DeWitt, advertising executive, on a whole other subject*

Ongoing Domain Name Extra

The domain name WebInvest.com is already registered by Kenneth L. Riffle, but OneBornEveryMinute.com is still available.

Participants are invited to submit a similar pair—a domain name that is already taken along with an amusing and available alternative.

You can check the availability of domain names at www.eHost.com/domain_reg/index.html.

Replies due by noon ET Thursday.

Common Denominator

The old arrow through the head bit, the old autoeroticism thing.

No. 278: "Interest Rate"

Posted Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Fill in the blank as Carleton S. Fiorina, 44, the newly announced CEO of the \$50 billion Hewlett-Packard company, meets the press: "My _____ is interesting but really not the subject of the story here."

"Ability to play soccer."—*Jennifer "Damned One-Note Media!" Miller*

"Inability to distinguish 'profits' from 'losses.'"—*Paul Tullis*

"Dinner with Andre."—*Erich Van Dussen*

"Sexual discrimination lawsuit against Hewlett-Packard."—*Richard Nikonovich-Kahn*

"Nike Inner Actives sports bra, which will go on sale at major sporting goods retailers Monday, July 26, with a suggested retail price of \$40."—*Doug Welty (Daniel Radosh and Kate Wing had similar answers.)*

[Click here for more answers.](#)

Randy's Wrap-Up

But of course it's not for Carleton Fiorina to say what the subject of the story is; that's the job of the reporter. Or, if the reporter works for *Vanity Fair*, of the celebrity's press agent. You'll find your experience with the newspapers less frustrating if you accept the idea that the reporter is there to tell not your story but his or hers. It is, no doubt, irritating to be misquoted, but at least you retain the moral high ground and a sense of yourself as wise and well-spoken, albeit misunderstood. What's completely intolerable is to be accurately quoted and seen—even by yourself—to be no better than you actually are. It is a deeply demoralizing experience for anyone who lacks adequate powers of self-deception and photo approval.

Egalitarian Utopia Answer

"My **gender** is interesting but really not the subject of the story here."

"I hope that we are at a point that everyone has figured out that there is not a glass ceiling," Fiorina added. Well, maybe. But, while she is undoubtedly a terrifically capable and successful executive, her new job will make her the only woman ever to head a company included in the Dow Jones industrial average and one of only three to run a company listed on the S&P 500.

The former president of the \$20 billion global service provider division of Lucent Technologies, Fiorina is a surprising choice in other ways, too. She is young, she is an outsider in a company that has traditionally found its leaders in-house, she brings a marketing and sales background to the engineering culture of H-P, and her first name seems utterly unrelated to her surname.

"Carly was quite simply the best person to lead H-P into the next century," said Lewis Platt, the company's current chief. "And to look fabulous doing it," he did not add.

Brooke Saucier's Pom-Pom-Shaking Follow-Up

How ironic. I was a cheerleader in high school, and Jeff Webb was the announcer on ESPN as we won the national championship in 1987.

Gooooooooooooooooo, News Quiz!!

Good News—Or Not, Depending—Extra

"An investigation into the size of male sex organs reveals that homosexuals are generally better endowed than heterosexuals. ... Researchers say they surveyed data gathered on 5,172 men and found penis sizes to be larger in homosexuals than heterosexuals based on five measurement standards. ... Researchers say an earlier study also shows that homosexuals differ, on average, from heterosexuals in genital size. A survey of 126 homosexual men had larger penises on the average than a similar group of 86 heterosexuals."—from *The List*, a service of Wired Strategies.

Subscribe free by e-mailing join-THELIST@wiredstrategies.com.
(Thanks to Katha Pollitt.)

Ongoing Domain Name Extra

GlobalEconomy.com is already registered by SatelliteTV.

Dollar-A-Day.com is already registered by Execulink Internet Services. FiftyCents-A-Day.com is available.

Participants are invited to submit a similar set (a pair will do)—a domain name that is already taken along with an amusing and available alternative.

You can check the availability of domain names at www.eHost.com/domain_reg/index.html.

Replies due by noon ET Thursday.

Common Denominator

Ambiguous name, attractive ass.

No. 279: "When Worlds Collide"

Posted Thursday, July 22, 1999

Federal attorneys in the Eastern District of New York arrested and indicted seven people in a case that touched on Holland, Hasidim, and squirrels. What's the connection?

"Burrow Park."—*David Feige*

"I don't know the connection, but I did hear the Disney Channel has optioned it for development."—*Cliff Schoenberg*

"Aha—that's what Carleton Fiorina didn't want to talk about! Well, I ain't saying anything either."—*David Ballard*

"You know, I thought this question was hilarious when I first read it, and then I realized that I'd misread 'Hasidim' as 'Hinduism.' Now I think it's offensive."—*Greg Diamond*

"OK, OK, I think I know this one. A priest, a rabbi, and a squirrel are on a flight to Holland ..."—*Bill McDermott*

[Click here for more answers.](#)

Randy's Wrap-Up

There was much grumbling in the ranks about this question but, if imperfect, it does rest on a solid theoretical foundation. Odd juxtapositions can produce comic results or former Republicans who now stand among the Democrats. Squirrels are funny. Indeed, many small and furry animals tend to be funny and, if you squint, resemble genitalia taken disturbingly out of context and scampering about the place. The ultra-orthodox tend to be funny, particularly when they wear unusual hats and when they're not pelting you with stones. A small, furry, ultra-observant Dutchman in a big black hat is funny if he's not Peter Stuyvesant, who, were he alive today, would probably stick with the Republican Party, but could perhaps become funny if a Jewish squirrel bit him on the ass. At least that was the theory. But with these things, you never know.

Partying the Nights Away at So-Called "Raves" Answer

Dutch drug dealers enlisted young Hasidic men flying from Europe to New York to smuggle MDMA (Ecstasy), a drug shown to cause brain damage in squirrels.

Those arrested were dealers from Amsterdam and New York. One Israeli is still a fugitive. No courier has yet been arrested.

Each Hasid—most of those involved are from Williamsburg—was given a plane ticket and around \$1,500 to carry up to 45,000 tablets. Best excuse from a Hasidic courier: Drugs?! We thought we were smuggling diamonds! (I swear.)

Each squirrel—the research was conducted at Johns Hopkins—may have shown that MDMA damages parts of the brain critical for thought and memory, many people's favorite parts. This work is presumably as definitive as the LSD chromosome damage studies much published in *Life* magazine in 1967 and 1968. No squirrel has yet been arrested.

It's an Orderly and Predictable Universe Extra

Actual dialogue on CNN Wednesday morning:

SOME ANCHOR GUY (to a remote correspondent): "Thank you for not speculating. We are not going to do that here on CNN. Now, do you have any thoughts on what the Coast Guard will do next?"

(*Courtesy of Kate Wing.*)

Domain Name Extra

A company about to launch its Web site may find to its dismay that its name is taken—part of the speculative frenzy in domain names. In that case, the company must devise something new. Participants were invited to submit examples of a claimed domain name along with an amusing and available alternative.

"davidduke.com is registered by the David Duke Report. hatefultnosejobbedpsycho.com is, surprisingly, available."—*Brooke Saucier*

"borisyeltsin.com is registered to the Friend to Friend Foundation (and man, am I curious about what that is). worldofcirrhosis.com is available."—*Alex Balk*

"kevincostner.com is taken by Tig Films Inc. bigbudgetbomb.com is available."—*William York*

"scylla.com is already registered. charybdis.com is available!"—*Marc Cenedella*

"princessdi.com has been registered. princessdead.com is available."—*Floyd Elliot*

"getalife.com is registered by Up at Night Productions. screwaroundonline.com is available."—*Roger Hipp*

"masteroftheuniverse.com is registered by Paul Cooper. rulerofmysqualidhovel.com and nonentity.com are both available."—*Jim O'Grady*

"beer.com, chips.com, pretzels.com, and football.com are all taken. asleeponthesofa.com is still available."—*Bruce Brown*

"democrats2000.com is taken. dullandduller.com is available!"—*Prabu Muthu*

"fatbastard.com is taken by New Millennium Publishing. eatingbabies.com is available."—*Francis Heaney*

"hillaryclinton.com is taken. carpetbagger.com is taken. awomanscorned.com is available!"—*Raphael Laufer*

"sexfarm.com is already registered by Zarix Graphics. farmsex.com is already registered by FarmSex.Com. farmcowsex.com is available."—*Jacob Stohler*

"armageddon.com is registered by Armageddon Industries. apocalypse.com is registered by Apocalypse Software Inc. doom.com is registered by Doom Gaming Connections. mildennui.com is still available."—*Jennifer Miller*

"seanfitzpatrick.com is registered by Sean Fitzpatrick. kathapollitt.com is available."—*Greg Diamond*

"randy.com is secured by Randy Ambrose. hotandrandy.com is available."—*Matthew Singer*

"contradiction.com is registered to CES Marketing Group. newsquizandtheethicist.com is still available."—*Tom Williams*
highlycultivatedsenseofirony.com is also available. (*Randy*)

Common Denominator

Rocky the flying squirrel, Richard the acting Gere.

Randy Cohen writes "News Quiz" for Slate.

RECYCLED

Periodically, *Slate* recycles from its archives old articles that are given new life by the news. There were no entries this week.

THE BOOK CLUB

Wendy Kaminer is a Fellow at Radcliffe Institute of Public Policy. Her forthcoming book, Sleeping With Extra-Terrestrials: The Rise of Irrationalism and Perils of Piety will be published in October 1999.

Cullen Murphy is the Atlantic's managing editor. His most recent book is The Word According to Eve: Women and the Bible in Ancient Times and Our Own. This week they are discussing A.N. Wilson's God's Funeral.

From: Cullen Murphy
To: Wendy Kaminer
Subject: The Agnostic Gospel
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 8:55 a.m. PT

Bertrand Russell's name comes up only occasionally in *God's Funeral*, but the book brought to mind a story Russell once told. It has to do with the time he was jailed for pacifism during the First World War. As Russell sat in his cell a warder came to ask him a few bureaucratic questions. "Religion?" the warder asked. "Agnostic," Russell replied. The warder looked up quizzically for

a moment, then smiled. "That's all right, I guess," he said. "We all believe in the same God, don't we?"

When it comes to the subject of religion, intellectuals and ordinary people have a long history of talking past one another—or, more to the point, of being unaware of one another's presence. A.N. Wilson, whose previous books include biographies of Tolstoy, C.S. Lewis, Jesus, and Paul, begins his study of the loss of religious faith among the elites in Victorian England with a nod to this very issue: "No sooner have the intelligentsia of one generation confined the Almighty to the history books than popular opinion rises against them." But he rarely comes back to it again. And as a result, the book exists in something of a social vacuum.

Wilson, of course, might respond: "Please! You're taking me to task for failing at what I never set out to accomplish. My subject was a narrower one: how intellectuals—mainly in England, mainly in the 19th century—came to embrace a disbelief in any sort of God. I thought I pulled that off rather well." On those terms, he has. Wilson presents deft mini-biographies of such diverse characters as Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and George Eliot, Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley. (It was Huxley who coined the term "agnostic.") Wilson has a knack for the genre. He is adept at explaining philosophy. He is a master of the quick sketch, whether of personality or prose. (Thomas Carlyle's writing style is described as "an extraordinary cocktail of bombast and jokes, half-Scotch, half-German in its blend of allusiveness, puns, hilarity, and savagery.") Small historical oddities enliven the narratives. (George Bernard Shaw, we learn, was responsible for the first women's public toilet.) He can be very funny, though at times the humor curdles. ("Ever since [George Henry Lewes] and George Eliot moved into The Priory, St. John's Wood, one feels, ugly female novelists have been setting up house in North London with pushy liberal-minded journalists.")

In its broadest outline, the story Wilson recounts is a familiar one. Beginning with the Enlightenment, traditional Christianity suffers a succession of body blows. The first ones come from the philosophers, who call into question the necessity of any concept of God. The second come from the biblical critics, who demonstrate that scriptural testimony is contradictory, unreliable, even preposterous. The third come from scientists, whose discoveries demand an alternative explanation of how our planet and our species came to be.

But Wilson isn't writing this book just to recount—however skillfully—the old 19th-century saga of Victorian unbelief. He has other things on his mind, though he never comes right out and tells us what they are. One subtext is surely personal: Wilson's own gradual evolution from a more or less traditional Anglican to a sympathetic but confirmed agnostic. *God's Funeral* can be read as the public record of a private journey.

A second subtext has to do with our own age. Wilson is writing at a moment when religious fervor—often deeply disquieting—seems to be gaining momentum all around the world. (A good, recent journalistic overview of this phenomenon by the French writer Gilles Kepel bears a title that complements Wilson's: *The Revenge of God*.) Wilson is a little perplexed by this. The arguments wielded by the best of the thinkers Wilson writes about have proved persuasive to him. Why don't they seem

to matter to so many others? This goes back to the point raised above, about intellectuals and ordinary folk talking past one another. Wilson doesn't mention it, but in the 19th century the demise of God among the intellectuals coincided with an upsurge of evangelicalism among the population at large. Wilson has taken the title of his book from a haunting Thomas Hardy poem, written around 1910, that imagines the cortege bearing God to the grave. But like Willy Loman's wife at the cemetery, one is tempted to ask, "Where were all the people?"

Opacity about his agenda; ambivalence about his subject—I suppose these are flaws, but they make Wilson's book more inviting. He admires the Victorian skeptics—but understands that many of their debates look silly in retrospect. He is respectful of science—but wonders why there wasn't more scrutiny of its own limitations. He is permanently in the camp of Doubt—but emotionally sensitized to the seductions of Belief.

So, Wendy—over to you. And a question: If you could revive any one of the people Wilson discusses as a voice we could hear right now, which would it be? Very few of them make good time travelers. (My own choice: William James.)

From: Wendy Kaminer
To: Cullen Murphy
Subject: Intellectuals Need God, Too
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 2:31 p.m. PT

Maybe intellectuals and ordinary people "talk past" each other when they talk about religion as you suggest; but intellectuals are ordinary people when confronted with their own needs and desires for God. That, I think, is one of Wilson's points. He captures the pathos of the Victorian crisis of faith, evoked in Thomas Hardy's elegy for God.

Generally, the writers and philosophers he portrays (quite deftly, I agree) don't "embrace" disbelief. Most resign themselves to it, and many seek alternate sources of order and authority. Carlyle longed for "Moral Absolutes," even as he acknowledged that "Christianity was not true." Herbert Spencer turned to science (or his view of it) and put his faith in Social Darwinism and crackpot theories like phrenology (the belief that character is revealed by the shape of the skull). Freud made himself into a kind of deity, creating the pseudo-science of psychoanalysis out of his own imaginings. Marx (whom Wilson abhors), following Hegel, substituted the "movement of history" for God.

The human need to worship is fundamental and inextinguishable, Wilson stresses. Only the objects of worship change. He is preoccupied with the "tragedy" that, in his view, obsessed Carlyle: "Human beings are natural adorers. Religion is basic to human character. How it is directed, that is the question." Wilson knows it is simplistic to blame the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century on the 19th-century loss of religious faith, but he is occasionally tempted to do so. He makes the point by backing away from it: "It would be a bold historian who claimed that Lenin, Stalin, Hitler came about because of the nihilistic atheism of the decades in which they were born," he says; and you sense his attraction to such boldly reductive analyses.

Of course, Wilson is right, I suspect, that the impulse to worship will always be with us, but he neglects to point out that religion is sometimes as dangerous an outlet for it as politics. Considering the ravages of religious faith today and throughout history, you can hardly consider it an unmitigated good. (It makes little sense to talk about religion in the singular, John Dewey noted. We can only talk about "religions.")

So, I was actually a little surprised when you told me that Wilson has recently experienced (and publicized) his own crisis of faith. He is much warier of atheism than of religious belief, however false it may seem. Indeed, he is a bit contemptuous of atheism, especially when it is marked by an inability to understand and sympathize with the profound emotional need to believe in God. Wilson greatly prefers agnostics, especially those who've agonized over their own loss of faith (as I presume he has). Remember his disdain for Matthew Arnold? He portrays Arnold as an intellectual snob content to dispense with superstition in his own life but worried that the "masses" might not fare well without it. (Actually, Wilson's own concern that the vacuum left by God will be filled with demagogues is not all that different.) But what Wilson misses most in Arnold is an understanding that religious belief is, after all, a passion, for intellectuals and ordinary folk alike: "Arnold showed not the smallest glimmering of understanding of religious emotion detached from morality or 'uplift'."

Dispassion is what makes deism so unsatisfactory, from this perspective. It's hard to imagine the notion of God as clockmaker inspiring many people to attend churches, or even build them. As Wilson suggests, the deists didn't kill God, but they did make him irrelevant.

Wilson seems to mourn, most of all, a sense of engagement with God. He is less concerned, I think, with loss of virtue conventionally associated with disbelief than with the loss of love and, once again, passion—which brings us back to William James. James explored the religious temperament and religious experiences incisively but most sympathetically without ever condescending to them.

I'll join you (and, I bet, Wilson) in reviving William James, if we ever get the chance to revive anyone one from this book (with apologies to John Stuart Mill). Although, I'm not sure James needs reviving. He still feels quite present in his work; reading him always feels to me like a conversation (maybe in part because so much of his work, including *Varieties of Religious Experience* comprises his lectures).

I often come back to William James, especially to *Varieties*—one of the great books. His observations about 19th-century mind-cure movements have helped me understand and contextualize contemporary personal development and spirituality movements. The grace and kindness of his criticism reminds me to be judicious. James combined empathy for believers with unyielding skepticism. He found passion in strife: "Not the absence of vice, but vice there, and virtue holding her by the throat seems to be the ideal human state," he wrote. But he understood the need for rest and resolution. James was a compassionate intellectual, who decisively disproved the popular notion that a life of the mind is unfeeling.

From: Cullen Murphy
To: Wendy Kaminer
Subject: Habits of the Heart
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 9:57 a.m. PT

I certainly don't disagree that intellectuals are ordinary people when they are confronted, as you say, "with their own needs and desires for God." And many of the writers, artists, and intellectuals Wilson writes about acknowledge the erosion of faith with grim reluctance. Wilson applies the word "bereavement" to their experience, and observes that if the Victorians were good at anything, it was at articulating this sense of loss. John Ruskin bowed thusly before the assault of science:

My faith, which was never strong, is being beaten into mere gold leaf, and flutters in weak rags from the letter of its old forms. If only the geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses.

Still, what I find myself wondering about—as does Wilson himself, though he addresses the matter unsatisfactorily—is the relationship between skeptical intellectuals, on the one hand, and the habits of the heart among people at large, on the other. Or is there much of a relationship at all? In the Victorian era, as now, the intellectual world and the popular world seem confined to segregated spheres—tectonic plates that slip by one another, albeit with a certain amount of friction, sometimes greater and sometimes lesser.

Each side, understandably, evinces a degree of wariness toward the other. One theme that runs through *God's Funeral* is the question of whether common folk can be trusted with the truth about religion, as the intellectuals see it. Such concern is sometimes well-meaning, sometimes deeply cynical. Hume, the philosopher who seems closest to Wilson's heart, believed that frankness on the matter would serve little purpose: "It is putting too great a respect on the vulgar, and on their superstitions, to pique oneself on sincerity with regard to them." (Wilson's paraphrase is blunter: "There was no virtue in 'sincerity' if that meant spilling the beans to stupid people.") Matthew Arnold and others, as you note, emphasize the "social utility" of religion, regardless of whether religion is true or false. Arnold maintains this stance with excruciating sincerity, but some of his heirs venture into appalling territory. Wilson cites the example of Randolph Churchill, who opposed the seating of an atheist in Parliament on the grounds, in effect, that religious belief was an essential linchpin of social control. Churchill, in his own words, could not

contemplate without alarm the revulsion that such an Act might occasion among those masses of the people who, with some hope of a happier state hereafter, were toiling their weary way through the world, content to tolerate, for a time, their less fortunate lot.

Nowadays, of course, the social-utility-of-religion argument is heard mostly from the social conservatives, on issues ranging from unwed motherhood to school violence; but the latent distrust of "those masses" is the same.

The masses do keep confounding the elites. In a lecture earlier this year, the theologian Harvey Cox noted that a century ago, educated opinion was of the view that modernity and religion constituted a zero-sum game—the more we had of the one, the less we would have of the other. Cox's own celebrated book, *The Secular City* (1965), sought to explore some of the theological implications of that transformation. But today, Cox observed, "this zero-sum construction seems entirely implausible. Religion has not only survived, it has even thrived in some of the most modernized areas of the world." Many of those religious manifestations have been Pentecostal or charismatic—that is, existential, not reliant on doctrines or texts that are objectively falsifiable. A.N. Wilson, asked in a recent interview about the present-day surge in religious activity, despite everything the philosophers and scientists have had to say, more or less threw up his hands: "People have just said, 'To hell with Darwin or Nietzsche or Freud ... They've said, 'I need it.'"

At any rate, Wilson's eminent Victorians of 1900 would be surprised, I think, by the state of affairs a century later, and would shake their heads at the "facts on the ground," to use a lately popular locution. Here and there, though, you do see signs of Belief and Unbelief engaging one another in unexpected ways. (I'll leave aside the quasi-theological commentary that followed David Cone's perfect game last Sunday—a game that began with perfect-game pitcher Don Larsen throwing out the first ball.) The most notable example is the proliferation of so-called "S&R" (science and religion) courses in American colleges and universities. You spend more time in academe than I do. Have you run into one of these?

From: Wendy Kaminer
To: Cullen Murphy
Subject: Smart People; Stupid Books
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 1:35 p.m. PT

Cullen, asking about the relationship between skeptical intellectuals and the "people at large" begs the question: What skeptical intellectuals? Today, with nearly everyone celebrating the virtues of religious belief or "spirituality" (whatever that is), skeptical intellectuals seem as endangered as liberal democrats. We're living in the age of the populist intellectual. Think Camille Paglia, or Cornell West.

Of course, I'm making a generalization. You can find exceptions and countervailing trends; intellectuals are not monolithic. But, it's fair to say that in general, populism is in vogue and skepticism a bit passé. Consider recent trends:

The academic study of popular culture is old news (as old as Madonna), and postmodern academic fashions reflect the subjectivism—the deference to personal experience and personal testimony—that defines popular therapeutic culture. The political correctness that has characterized campus life for the past decade, giving rise to highly repressive speech codes, is symptomatic of

the widely and justly criticized victimization of popular culture and its nostrums about self-esteem. Cyberculture has made intellectual life less elitist, for better and worse. Religiosity has been on the rise among elite educated professionals (if publications like *Time* and *Newsweek* are to be believed). And, for what it's worth, last year, the *Radcliffe College Quarterly* published a special issue on spirituality that would be at home in any dentist's office.

So I don't think the "masses are confounding the elites" with their religiosity, as you suggest. I might say that the masses have co-opted the elites, or that the elites have been co-opted by mass culture, or that, in many ways, elites are the masses. (Blame it on TV, or Barnes & Noble.)

I have stopped being surprised by the number of highly intelligent, accomplished people who read utterly moronic spirituality books like *The Celestine Prophecy*, *Conversations With God*, or *Talking to Heaven*. Think about Bill and Hillary Clinton consulting with New Age gurus such as Marianne Williamson and Steven Covey, who traffic in banalities that are at least 100 years old and write books accessible to literate 12-year-olds. You don't have to talk to God to write a spirituality book that smart people will consume; you only have to read other best-selling books and recycle them.

Well, the ways of God are supposed to be a mystery. I've stopped wondering why smart people read stupid books. Virtually everyone is afraid to die and vulnerable to dreams of immortality. Intelligence, even intellectualism, is no defense against existential terror. (If it were, there would be no theology.) A.N. Wilson reports that even Herbert Spencer began considering the possibility of an afterlife as death approached. Most people seem to put their faith in it. According to a recent *Time* survey, 81 percent of all Americans believe that people live with God in heaven when they die. Eighty-one percent of Americans can be wrong, but they're not all stupid. The pope is a pretty smart guy—an intellectual even—and he believes in miracles.

Some distinguish between New Age beliefs and established religions, but that is mostly snobbery. One set of supernaturalisms is no sillier or more fantastic than another. And all can be equally comforting, to smart and stupid people alike. Whatever form it takes, the "single function" of religion (that "ancient and curious thing") is "to give man access to the powers which seem to control his destiny ... (and) induce those powers to be friendly to him," H.L. Mencken wrote. Now that's skeptical intellectualism, but it did not survive this century.

Even scientists are seeking salvation, according to the popular media. "Science Finds God," *Newsweek* recently declared. And, as you say, science-and-religion courses are proliferating. (No, I haven't run into them.) I don't doubt that many scientists believe in God, but that doesn't mean science is marrying, or even dating religion. Empirical questions will always require empirical proof.

It would be more accurate to report on the alliance between pseudo-science and pop spirituality, which dates back more than 100 years. In the 19th century, spiritualists talked about communicating with the dead through a wireless telegraph. Today, Deepak Chopra makes nonsensical references to quantum physics. (Read his books, and you will travel "beyond the quantum.")

Advocates of established religions, who often disdain New Age and view it as a competitor, might take note of this. Pop spirituality movements thrive on ignorance of science, much more than established faiths do. Creationists aside, many religious people have made their peace with science. It occupies a different realm; it asks and tries to answer empirical rather than existential questions. New Age, however, purports to be a kind of science. Sales of the Bible would probably be unaffected by improved science education, but Chopra and his cohorts should fear it like bad karma.

From: Cullen Murphy
To: Wendy Kaminer
Subject: The Disenchantment With Disenchantment
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 9:27 a.m. PT

Is that really true that "81 percent of all Americans believe that people live with God in heaven when they die"? What self-delusion! They must be forgetting about the ones who go to hell.

Wendy, you're mixing apples and oranges in your discussion of what I said about "people at large" vs. intellectuals. My point—taking the long view, not gazing at the current scene—was that from Max Weber onward the basic dynamic of social evolution was thought to operate as follows: The more people become educated, urbanized, technologically savvy, and otherwise "modernized," then the less religion will play a role in their lives. (Conversely, the more religious a society, the less likelihood that modernization will gain a secure foothold.) One of the lessons of the 20th century is that this basic template of secularization has turned out to be wrong, and it is a development that has taken intellectuals by surprise. A city like Colorado Springs must really give them pause—it's one of the high-tech capitals of the world *and* Ground Zero for some of the most conservative Christianity you will find. Similarly, Harvey Cox has taken note of the growing prevalence, among the "educated-technical classes" in France, of the practice of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. (And the French thought the invasion of English loanwords was a problem.)

Moreover, when I wonder about the relationship (whatever it is) between popular attitudes and elite opinion down through the years, it's because elite opinion—again, taking the long view—has been largely secular. Let's leave aside the politicians, who may be moved by expediency to mouth platitudes. Since the 19th century, American colleges and universities by the hundreds have shed their religious affiliations. Outside theology departments, religious sensibilities have no legitimate place. Study after study reveals academics (and journalists) to be pretty much indifferent to religion. Believe me, I'm not complaining about any of this—just asking that it be noted, to point up the contrast with long-term trends in the surrounding society.

That said, I'll go along with many elements of your present-day snapshot. Yes, there's more of an appetite, lately, among *all* types of people in modern America, including opinion-makers and what's left of the class of public intellectuals, for some kind of spirituality; not surprisingly, there's also more of an incentive,

at the newsstand and the bookstore, to take advantage of that appetite. William James wrote about religion having “cash value,” and the James Redfields and Deepak Chopras have discovered this to be true in a sense that James hardly intended. (James was appropriating the language of economics to describe the utility of religious belief as a tool for living.) And, yes, you make a good point about the sometimes facile distinctions drawn between established religions and New Age spirituality—all religious impulses arise from common hopes and terrors. Populist, commercialized spirituality of any kind makes me squirm. But dismissing its more lurid or kitschy manifestations as “utterly moronic” (as they are) doesn’t offer any insight into the underlying texture. The Catholic theologian David Tracy has argued that a modernized, Western nation such as ours, having passed through the stages of enchantment with religion and then disenchantment with religion (A.N. Wilson’s topic), is now in the throes of “disenchantment with disenchantment.” That’s worth paying attention to.

Your last point, about pop spirituality’s heavy reliance on pseudo-science, and therefore its extreme vulnerability as compared with established religions, is right on the mark. A.N. Wilson quotes Tolstoy as *welcoming* the critical assault on the “outerworks” of traditional religion—that is, on the outmoded mythologies, the false cosmologies, the tinted history. Tolstoy’s point was that, once all this was gone, what remained would be strangely impregnable. But when the outerworks of Deepak Chopra are gone ... ?

Incidentally, turning back to Wilson for that Tolstoy reference reminded me of something I’d meant to bring up earlier: just how puny the spokespeople for Belief and Unbelief seem to be these days, compared with yesteryear. I read Wilson’s book with a sense of almost geologic grandeur—everything comes giant size: the stakes, the prose, the wit. When some future A.N. Wilson writes about our own time, what will he or she have to work with? Am I missing something?

From: Wendy Kaminer
To: Cullen Murphy
Subject: Is Religion Compatible With Modernity?
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 1:41 p.m. PT

Cullen, I wonder how different this conversation would be if we were face to face, because we’re not disagreeing so much as talking past each other, like Bertrand Russell and his warder. I don’t know about Max Weber, but I don’t think I’ve ever really expected that education and modernization would exorcise the religious impulse, although they might ensure that it would be expressed differently. And, of course, you’re right that modernization is anathema to many traditional religious beliefs: People who believe that God wants women to remain subordinate to men will not exactly welcome feminism. A.N. Wilson notes that the liberal reforms championed in 19th-century England by John Stuart Mill “would not have made much progress in a religious society.”

Wilson is probably right, but only if by religious society he means an implacably traditional religious society. America’s 19th- and early 20th-century progressives, for example, included many God-fearing Protestants, and as defenders of religion never fail to point out, the civil rights movement was nurtured in church and infused with religiosity. So the relationship between religion and modernization, or social reform, is complicated. Whether religious belief is a catalyst for change or an obstacle to it, religions are variable and adaptable. (Would it be fair to call them Darwinian?) Despite their absolutisms, they do evolve, while the fundamental emotional need for them remains, I suspect, rather constant.

So I don’t expect that the more people know the less they will believe (although many will believe differently, as the impact of Darwinism on religion shows). I’ve never viewed religion as an intellectual exercise, although I realize that it has been one historically. Smart people have studied the sacred, while great artists have painted it. Here I am at Harvard, which began as a divinity school. But speaking for myself, a city like Colorado Springs, in which high technology and conservative Christianity thrive, does not “give me pause.”

I’m not a believer, but I’ve always considered my own lack of belief a function of temperament or sensibility, not intelligence or education. What makes people interesting are their inconsistencies; they can combine great intellectual sophistication with emotional or political naivete, or intuitive interpersonal finesse with intellectual clumsiness. The variations seem endless. (I may not believe in God, but I do harbor my share of stupid superstitions.) So I’ve never found it strange that people believed in Gods (why not believe in them if you can?), but I have always marveled at efforts to rationalize those beliefs. Theology seems much more bizarre to me than faith.

Perhaps religions are threatened by knowledge and modernization when, like New Age movements, they pretend to offer empirical truths, when they pretend to occupy the realm of reason, as well as faith. Then they resist the progress of knowledge, labeling it heresy, and alienate knowledgeable people. But if, for example, they don’t present the Book of Genesis as a literal account of the origin of the species, they needn’t be shaken by Darwin.

Historically, religions have alternately promoted learning and opposed it; and their opposition to it, along with the viciousness of sectarian rivalries, helped create the secular world. Secularism is, in part, a response to the ravages of religion and the limits on free inquiry demanded by some religious beliefs. It’s not surprising that many colleges and universities gradually “shed their religious affiliations” as you point out. Consider current controversies over increased church control of America’s Catholic schools, such as Boston College.

But while academic institutions have become secularized, thank God, I don’t think it’s fair to say that academics and journalists are indifferent to religion (although I don’t know what studies you’re relying on). Perhaps they’re indifferent to religion in their professional lives, but I’d be surprised if they were less inclined to believe in God, an afterlife, or other supernatural phenomena, than say, middle managers and soccer moms. And I bet some are included in that reported 81 percent of all Americans who believe in heaven. According to Gallup, by the way, a little

over three quarters of all Americans actually expect to go to heaven; only 4 percent expect to go to hell.

What's funny is how domesticated people's visions of heaven can be. A card left with a bouquet at Kensington Palace on the first anniversary of Princess Diana's death read: "I hope the gym facilities are as good in heaven as they are at the Harbor Club, Fondly remembered, Your friend Mary." We may look puny to historians 100 years from now, but at least we'll be good for a laugh.

From: Cullen Murphy
To: Wendy Kaminer
Subject: A Nation of Indians Run by Swedes?
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 9:25 a.m. PT

You asked about the studies I referred to, and I'll mention several in just a moment. I was using the word "indifference" advisedly, though. One sometimes hears the charge that people in academe and the media are actively "hostile" to religion, which is a straw man for the most part. In any event, you might look at George Marsden's book *The Soul of the American University* for a general overview of religious faith, or the lack of it, in university faculties. For the beliefs of scientists specifically, see Edward Larson and Larry Witham's 1997 survey in *Nature*. (This was an updating of surveys conducted in 1914 and in 1933, and shows a remarkable constancy over the decades.) As for journalism and religion, various aspects (volume of coverage; nature of coverage; characteristics of reporters) have been examined, even if survey data are sometimes difficult to compare. Reports worth looking at include those by Columbia's Freedom Forum Media Center; Vanderbilt's Freedom Forum First Amendment Center; and the Center for Media and Public Affairs, in Washington.

I'm a little surprised that the subject of politics has scarcely come up in our discussion. Of course, this is in part because politics comes up hardly at all in *God's Funeral*: The debates in England over the question of faith occur very much in public, and yield vast amounts of vituperative heat, but at least in Wilson's telling, politics doesn't figure the way late-20th-century Americans would expect. The one big exception is the Bradlaugh case—I alluded to it a few days ago in citing that quotation from Randolph Churchill.

For those not familiar with this Victorian cause célèbre: Charles Bradlaugh, a working-class radical and atheist, was elected to Parliament in 1880 but refused to swear by Almighty God that he would be a loyal servant of Her Majesty. (Bradlaugh was willing to affirm his intentions, just not to invoke divinity as his witness.) Faced with Bradlaugh's obstinacy, Parliament refused to seat him. In 1883 Bradlaugh was elected again, and again refused to take the oath. Parliament again refused to seat him. Bradlaugh would eventually win the right to "affirm" rather than to "swear"—but only after eight years of contentious political posturing whose rhetoric sounds surprisingly contemporary. Conservatives invoked the specter of a slippery slope: If God were to be removed from Parliament, what would

be next? Christmas? The man who most eloquently opposed the conservatives, and ultimately prevailed, was not the person one might have predicted: It was the prime minister himself, William Gladstone, whose own religious convictions were deeply held, to put it mildly. Gladstone was simply affronted by all the humbug, and found preposterous the notion that Bradlaugh's position posed any threat to God. "I have no fear of Atheism in this House," he declared.

Are there any potential Gladstones on the horizon as we begin the long march to the next round of elections? Larson and Witham, mentioned above, call attention to a remark by the sociologist Peter Berger, who observed that if the people of Sweden were the least religious people on earth, and the people of India were the most religious, then America was a country of Indians led by Swedes. Berger was obviously thinking of cultural leadership—the "chattering classes"—and not to leadership offered by politicians, who are perfectly willing to play the role of Indians. Millions of words get written every election cycle about religion and politics, lots of them lamenting the "intrusion" of religion into political debate. The complaint, or perhaps the emphasis, is misplaced. America's diverse and messy assortment of religious opinion will make what noises it wishes—and, with Jefferson, I welcome contending beliefs into the open arena. No, the regrettable aspect involves the other side of the equation—the habit of pandering and vote-grubbing by people running for office. And, as a practical matter, I wonder if the politicians achieve anything at all for their efforts. It isn't easy to "align" yourself with groups that are as internally variegated as are American Catholics (my denomination), Jews, evangelical Protestants, Muslims, even Mormons. The term "religious right" is in some ways politically pointless, given the deeply conflicting world views it unwittingly rolls into one.

Finally, Wendy, you ask whether our conversation would be different if we were face to face. We should give it a try sometime. Do you think we'll still need the 800-word limit per sound bite?

From: Wendy Kaminer
To: Cullen Murphy
Subject: Gotta Keep 'Em Separated
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 1:50 p.m. PT

It's difficult to imagine a working-class radical and avowed atheist even being elected to Congress in late-20th-century America, much less sworn in. I guess we're not quite as modern as some Victorians, although we are as primitive as others. Remember Tom DeLay's recent tirade against the teaching of evolution, which he blamed for the shootings in Littleton? Not to mention the bill passed by the House last month mandating the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools. The House recently defeated a resolution calling for all Americans to abase themselves before God, but not before some 140 members voted for it. Maybe we should replace the Capitol with a revival tent.

You can dismiss someone like DeLay as an extremist, but, in the wake of Littleton, many moderate pundits and politicians who disdain creationism joined him in decrying the nihilism

supposedly engendered by our secular culture. You and I disagree about the alleged skepticism of the chattering classes. From my perspective, most professional chatterers today tend to be almost as deferential to religion as politicians. They may occasionally ponder the appropriate place of religion in public life, but they rarely, if ever, express any irreverence toward established religions (although they feel free to mock New Age). If Gladstones are scarce today, so are Menckens.

We do agree that the pandering and preaching of politicians is especially loathsome. I'm afraid, however, that they do find it effective. DeLay and his comrades on the far right aren't playing to the variegated denominations you mention; they're playing to their base. People such as Al Gore who aim to please all of us, or as many as possible, traffic mostly in ecumenical banalities about the virtue and values of Godliness: Gore talks nonsensically about parents who "struggle to pass on the right values" to their children. And he confirms his own religiosity, deploring the "hollow secularism" that supposedly afflicts the unenlightened. That's probably about the most fire and brimstone that we'll hear from him. And while it may be foolish to deride secularism as hollow, it's not particularly risky—not in a nation of Indians.

You don't need a crystal ball to know that we are likely to see more preaching and pandering, not less, as the 2000 election approaches. Having successfully embraced a Republican agenda on crime control, Democrats are adopting Republicanesque rhetoric and policies on religion. Indeed, religion is presented by both parties as an antidote to crime. Al Gore has recently declared his support for faith-based social services—publicly funded social-service programs delivered by sectarian institutions—where were championed by conservative Republican Senator John Ashcroft three years ago and expressly authorized by the Clinton welfare bill.

Faith-based social services are all the rage; they're apt to be implemented widely in the next few years, along with school-voucher programs. So, we're likely to see an unprecedented diversion of tax dollars to churches, mosques, and synagogues. I can't wait for Rev. Moon or the next David Koresh to establish a religious school seeking voucher students or apply for government funds under a charitable choice provision. Do you think an organization like the American Center for Law and Justice, which fights for the rights of Christians, will take on the anti-discrimination suit of a New Age guru denied a government grant? I suspect that most people support faith-based services only so long as they support the particular faith delivering the service.

The challenge for the dwindling ranks of secularists is to convince people that the separation of church and state is not hostile to religion; it serves religion, or rather it serves religions. Religious leaders who enjoy tax exemptions should surely understand that. (And I should make clear that separationism does not require religious people and religious leaders to withdraw from the political sphere; it requires government to withhold support from sectarian activities and keeps government free of sectarian structures.) Anyway, it should be obvious that secularism makes pluralism possible. That prohibitions on establishing religion ensure free exercise is such a simple concept, and yet it's so widely ignored. Sometimes I'm amused

by all the religious posturing, and sometimes I'm quite discouraged.

Sometimes I put my faith in sectarian rivalries, which helped derail the most recent proposed school-prayer amendment to the Constitution. Last year, an organization in Arkansas, Put God Back in Public School, decided not to press for the introduction of official school prayers in Arkansas (instead, they demanded state funding for special Christian schools). The group reconsidered the value of school prayer after its founder, Kathy Smith, consulted with God: "I asked God, 'Do you want me to change the law to put prayer in the schools?' He said no. If you do that, kids would have the right to pray to other Gods too. They could pray to Buddha. God doesn't want that. There is only one God."

What more can I say but "Amen."

P.S.: I'm easy Cullen, anytime you want to have a face to face conversation, just give me a call.

MOVIES

The Blair Witch Project

Directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez
Artisan Entertainment

The Haunting

Directed by Jan De Bont
DreamWorks SKG

Bare Bones

The Blair Witch Project flays the horror genre—and the viewer; *The Haunting* is all flab.

By David Edelstein

The *Blair Witch Project* demonstrates that there's nothing scarier than nothing. The movie has no ghosts or witches on display, and its lone bit of gore is a piece of cloth containing a mottle of indeterminate organic material. It has no surprises, either, since you know going in that the ending won't be happy. The movie opens with a placard declaring that three film students went into the woods near "Burkittsville, Maryland" to make a documentary and were never heard from again, and that their footage was discovered a year after their disappearance. The placard doesn't mention who *edited* the footage—the ghost of Hitchcock? Cassavetes?—but that's a minor point. I could tell you the story—give away every detail—and *The Blair Witch Project* would still freeze your blood. Working on a budget that's chump change and a script that's little more than a framework for actors' improvisations, directors Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez have harnessed the most irrational fears of every human alive. They have reanimated the genre not by adding to it but subtracting from it—by cooking it down to its bare bones and then rattling those bones like fiends.

The first thing they've done is remove the omniscient point of view. With the important exception of that opening title card, there is no larger perspective. The film students—a woman, Heather Donahue, and two men, Michael Williams and Joshua

Leonard (the characters bear the actors' names)—tote their own video and movie cameras, so that we see what they see and no more. Actually, we see even less, since we lack their peripheral vision and are cruelly limited to whatever passes through their lenses. Thanks to first-rate sound equipment, though, we hear everything they hear—especially a snapping of branches in the dark outside their tent that escalates into an omnidirectional clatter. When they yell into the darkness (“Hello?”), the darkness remains dark. A light illuminates the foreground, but the blackness beyond that pool seems, if anything, blacker. There might be no more irrationally terrifying shot in the annals of film than the one in which the camera hurtles behind Heather—a hazy white streak in the center of the screen—amid crackling sounds as she throws a look into the trees and shrieks: “What is that? *What the fuck is that?*” We never see what the fuck that is. If we did, some part of us would probably relax, because it would look like a special effect. But no part of us is allowed to relax. Ever.

Is *The Blair Witch Project* a work of “art”? Not by my definition. Art rarely tortures you so single-mindedly. After the first half-hour, in which the students interview Burkittsville residents about the history of the Blair Witch (one Elly Kedward, found guilty of sorcery in 1785 and lashed to a tree during a harsh winter), the remainder of the movie is their increasingly desperate odyssey through the woods. They trudge one way, double back, pore over maps and compasses, whine, trudge some more, come upon mysterious piles of rocks or bundled twigs, and whine even louder. The action unfolds in a season halfway between autumn and winter, and the washed-out tones suggest that the Blair Witch took the forest's colors with her when she died. The grueling monotony is broken only at night, when the students go into their tents and the sounds come again and the very celluloid seems to shiver with cold and fear. The camera twitches incessantly: The lone stationary shot is when Heather sobs an apology to her parents for having dreamed up the project, and the way she's framed and half-lighted she looks like Lon Chaney's Phantom of the Opera with nostril hair. I don't apply the adjective “visceral” casually: The shaky camera summons up our fight-or-flight responses. Leaving the screening, my wife was convinced she had food poisoning from an earlier meal; when we stopped and analyzed her symptoms, we realized that she had motion sickness. The movie had literally made her sick.

The power of that can't be slighted, however. I love horror pictures and am a tough scare, but I started having nightmares about *The Blair Witch Project* before I even saw it—solely on the basis of its preview. I slept even less after I did see it. When I caught an interview with the superbly nervy Heather Donahue on television, the first thing I thought was, “Thank God, she's alive.” Then she said, “This movie must be working because people come up to me all the time and say, ‘Thank God, you're alive.’” The other day an envelope arrived at my door with a bunch of sticks lashed together in the familiar form of the Blair Witch talisman. I rushed to the phone and called the movie's publicists to make sure this was a promotional gimmick. When they said yes, I started breathing again; otherwise, I might have called the police—or an exorcist.

What is it about *The Blair Witch Project* that taps into such primal emotions? Consider its antithesis. The remake of *The Haunting* has the bad fortune to open in the same month, and

what might have been dismissed as just a lame, overstuffed big-studio scare picture will now be held up as a counterexample. Robert Wise's 1963 original, based on Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, is overrated, but it manages to evoke the eeriest aspect of Jackson's fiction: the way the characters' neuroses acquire an inexorable life of their own and threaten to eat them alive. Nothing much happens in the empty mansion, but when something does—for instance, a thunderous pounding on a pair of big doors, as if all the characters' accumulated nervous energies had been focused on one spot—the movie's reticence pays off like gangbusters (or ghostbusters). In the new version, directed by Jan De Bont (*Speed*, 1994; *Twister*, 1996), that pounding comes early and serves as an overture for a bunch of computer-generated special effects: ghosties that swirl around like Tinkerbell, statues that spring to life and grab people. Everything is exasperatingly, often laughably, overexplicit, and once a dread becomes material, a ghost story becomes a monster movie—a different, far less terrifying beast.

Here are sound effects so hammy that they might have been borrowed from one of those old haunted-house party albums. Doors don't creak, they CRRRREEEEAAKKK and then close with a reverberant KER-CHUNGGGGGG. From the second Liam Neeson and his subjects—Catherine Zeta-Jones, Lili Taylor, and Owen Wilson—set foot in the farcically garish Hill House, it's clear that Something Evil is watching them: You can tell because Something Evil respires so loudly that he's either Darth Vader or an asthmatic. By the time poor Taylor stands up to the big, bad ghost on behalf of a lot of little, good ghosts, people in the audience are holding onto their stomachs to keep from retching with laughter. Writing, directing, acting—this is one of the most maladroitness ghost movies ever made.

But even if the script weren't so tin-eared and the direction so clunky, *The Haunting* still wouldn't come within screaming distance of *The Blair Witch Project*. The reason is philosophical. De Bont, a lavish materialist who thinks that movies can do anything if you throw enough money around, wants to scare you by showing you stuff. Myrick and Sanchez want to scare you by not showing you stuff—and by reminding you how much you can't see and will never know. With all those cameras onscreen, they've liberated horror from the realm of movies—from the realm of the light—and nestled it back into the dark where it was born.

The Blair Witch Project has generated some of the best and tightest Web promotion out there: in the official home page (www.blairwitch.com/), Artisan Entertainment's site (www.artisanent.com/blairwitch/splash.html), and that of its production company, Haxan (www.haxan.com/). Visit links to “*The Blair Witch Project* Fanatic's Guide” (tbwp.freesevers.com/main.html); the personal Web pages of Dan Myrick (home.earthlink.net/~stickman7/) and Eduardo Sanchez (www.haxan.com/FREEBUS/freebusmilken.htm), the film's co-writers and directors; and the Sci-Fi Channel's accompanying mock investigation (www.scifi.com/blairwitch/h_index.html). A hilarious parody of the film's mythology and timeline, “*The Blair Warner Project*,” features links to the journal of Blair Warner's fellow *Facts of Life* character Tootie (www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Lounge/3027/Blair.html). For

everything you ever wanted to know about indie-film goddess and *Haunting* star Lili Taylor, visit this Web ring (www.lilitaylor.com/lilis.html). Click here for information on the 1963 production of *The Haunting* (www.reel.com/Content/moviepage.asp?mmid=539). To buy Shirley Jackson's 1959 novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*, reissued in a Penguin official movie tie-in edition, click here (bn.bfast.com/booklink/click?sourceid=412995&ISBN=0140287434).

POEM

You can hear the poet read this poem at www.slate.com.

Fugue

By Daniel Halpern

A child asks endlessly about dying,
not death, but some fixed point,
not the state and estate of death.

It's about the invisible net
of infinity cast over
so small a frame of reference.

For the rest of us the net fills gradually in,
like an image coming up coyly but decisively
in a darkroom tray of chemicals.

We took a trip to the House of Reptiles
where I looked into the humorless eyes
of the albino reticulated python

set in their cold skull like precious, unpolished stones—
eyes like the precipice that invites
the wary to leap, pulled over by reverse phobia.

For three dollars we were allowed the chance
to face death eye to eye, inches
and a thickness of glass away,

the reptile simultaneously metaphor
and pathway out of this life,
coiled, patient, solemnly inquisitive.

Not the act of dying,
but the estate of limbo—
the days run out, no longer oneself.

Daniel Halpern's newest collection of poems, Something Shining, will be published this fall.

DEAR PRUDENCE

Dysfunctional Dole

Please send your questions for publication to prudence@slate.com.

Dear Prudence,

This is a political concern, not personal. Each time I see the erectile dysfunction ad with Bob Dole, I cringe. What happened to his statesmanlike demeanor? Is it entirely a coincidence that we have a president who can get it up (for each and every one who asks), instead of a president who can't? Do we need to know about Bob's penile trouble in order to go forward? Must we be a party to all his witherings? Surely someone agrees with me.

—Ricespring

Dear Rice,

Prudie guesses Mrs. Dole and her campaign aides agree with you. And Prudie is reminded of the old vaudeville joke about an older gentleman who tells a friend that he finds sex at his age terrific. Especially the one in the winter.

—Prudie, neutrally

Dear Prudie,

Your advice to the woman pondering breast implants seemed fair and balanced. How rare. I thought, however, I might take the opportunity to chime in and mention that I have got wind of the existence of an herb, indigenous to Thailand, which reportedly stimulates the actual growth of existing breasts. I've heard only scattered reports about it, and those mostly relating to the Thai government's efforts to quell its export. Your readers who are currently considering artificial augmentation (which as a man I find repugnant) may just want to wait a while. I'm sure a fistful of American money will have the Thai people throwing seeds over the border in no time.

—Ameer

Dear Am,

After an inquiry regarding Bob Dole's ... well, anyway, your letter is most interesting. Prudie has heard nothing of the Thai herb. It is hard to imagine, though, why any government would embargo such a product, unless the plastic surgeons' lobby has already got to them. Prudie hopes your information is correct—if only so some health food company can market a product called Ginkgo Bilbooba.

—Prudie, naturally

Dear Prudence,

I grew up being taught that people should not make loud noises when eating in public. I am quite bothered by co-workers who eat loudly at their desks, which are very near to mine. (It is common practice in our office to eat at one's desk, since there's no nice place to eat on the premises.) One person in particular always comes over to talk while loudly snacking on potato chips and other items. Trouble is, I can't think of any remotely acceptable way to convey my unhappiness with this behavior. I'd be very grateful if you could.

—J.W. in Massachusetts

Dear J.,

You are correct that you cannot come right out and say, "It is gauche to come over and serenade me with your potato chips, so please go away." Here are a few options that are not confrontational. You might have something to read during lunch,

sort of a de facto "Do Not Disturb" sign. You could hook up to Walkman earphones. You might inform everyone that you are meditating, or simply say you'd love to visit during a coffee break, but lunch is when you've decided to catch up on your checkbook/Italian lessons/letter to Mom/fill in the blank. Prudie sees no reason to be held prisoner to a potato chip. As for the sounds from other desks, use earplugs or the above-mentioned Walkman to drown out the sounds of celery.

—Prudie, tactfully

Dear Prudence,

My wife and I are gearing up for our daughter's third birthday party. We had a blowout (45 people) for her first, a pretty large to-do for her second (35 people), and have decided that this party will be for 3-year-olds and close relatives only, thank you. Many of our friends are relieved, I think, not to have to give up a summer Sunday afternoon. But, of course, there are those who expect to be invited, and I don't know how to break it to them that they are not welcome. To make things worse, they have already told me about the ridiculously expensive gifts they have purchased for our irresistible little birthday girl. I am looking for a delicate way to get the gifts but stand firm on the invitations.

—Not Entirely Unselfishly,
Daddy

Dear Dad,

Prudie will try not to be too judgmental about your delicacy, though your wish to grab the gifts with no party attached leaves something to be desired. In addition to looking askance at your rather material approach, Prudie has long disapproved of elaborate birthday parties for tykes ... going back years ago to a celebration for a 1-year-old child, where the parents engaged a chimp and a trainer, and the animal bit the birthday girl. But back to your deal: Since people have already mentioned their gifts and their plans to launch your darling into year No. 3, you may be stuck for one more over-the-top party. Prudie suggests, therefore, that you say on the invitations, "Shirley Ann's Last Birthday Party With Grown-ups." The inference will be clear that next year, when the child is 4, she will have her own circle of friends from ... well, somewhere. If you are absolutely not up to having dozens of chums this year, tell them that it's just playmates from now on—and be prepared to forgo some loot.

—Prudie, directly

Dear Prudence,

My daughter recently graduated from high school after a successful year of captaining the winning softball team. During the softball season my husband and I got to know many of the team parents and were particularly taken with the extended family of a ninth-grader, a new player on the team. At the end of the school year, I called to invite this family, their young daughter, and her older brother—also a graduating senior—to our house for a cookout with the softball coaches before our daughter left for summer study abroad. I did not intend this party to be a graduation or a bon voyage party for our daughter. We were quite taken aback when various members of this other

family brought gifts and graduation cards for our daughter ... including cash totaling about \$200! We had prepared no graduation gift for their son, whom my husband and I do not know well. My daughter expressed gratitude and is writing thank-you notes and plans to bring the family a gift from France. I wonder if I should have done things differently—perhaps whipped up a card and cash between serving courses? Should we send a gift as the son prepares to go to college? Should I have anticipated the interpretation of my invitation as a gift solicitation, given the timing? Or should I just relax and consider their gifts a generous expression of their appreciation for my daughter's leadership and mentoring of the younger player throughout the year?

—Julie

Dear Julie,

Prudie votes for "relax." Your motives were pure and a good time was had by all. It may be a personal bias, but Prudie has long wished the tit for tat principle would fall by the wayside. The giving of gifts simply to even things up is just another version of "You look lovely!" "So do you." Your daughter's present from France will be very meaningful, and the timing will be perfect.

—Prudie, genuinely

Dear Prudie,

You missed something important about the problem of "Slurred off in Melbourne, Australia." Vague or unintelligible phone messages, with a clear reply number, are now a tool of telemarketers. Some of them do this just to get the victim to call an expensive toll number. Many refer to correcting a credit problem, which is fictitious.

Of course, Slurred Off could have had a simple garbled message, I suppose. How boring.

—Jim S.

Dear Jim,

What an interesting take you have offered. Because Prudie harbors hostility toward intrusive telemarketers, she is most happy to pass the word. And she does not want one letter from the offending telephone pests arguing with her. She knows it's a tough way to make a living, but unsolicited pitches are just junk mail delivered by a human voice.

—Prudie, feistily

DIARY

By Vickie Leonard

Vickie Leonard is a Realtor and loan officer at Edmonds Home and Loan in greater Seattle.

Monday, July 19, 1999

Working the weekend always reminds me of the Washington, D.C., lawyer joke. "Why do lawyers like Fridays? Because they have only two more workdays until Monday." For much of America, weekends are a time of socializing and relaxing. Weekends to Realtors are when we get to meet the housing needs

of America! Or when we simplify the complexities and ease the anxieties of new friends as they make their largest purchases.

Today (Sunday), I was watering the flowers in the container by the neighbor's yard. She saw me and asked why I was dressed up. I replied, "I'm off to work. I'm a Realtor." She asked if I liked it. The question always gives me pause. Salespeople are supposed to wax ecstatic about their work. My style is to be more honest. "It's great helping good people find the right house. However, I would prefer working for a progressive nonprofit. But how many people get to do exactly what they want?" We shared a laugh about real life and went our separate ways.

It was my turn at the office to do "floor time." The task is to answer all phone calls including ones about home ads in the newspaper. These calls can provide a pleasant, well-informed agent with new clients who want to buy or sell. The phone rang several times. Agents were calling asking about houses that my company has for sale. Finally, a caller asked about our ad house. She seemed to be a nice woman who was in her car with her cell phone, wanting to view houses today. I suggested she could stop by our office and I would provide her with some addresses.

I liked W. the minute she arrived. She and her husband, B., are pleasant, easygoing people with kids about 6 and 4. We discussed their finances, and I offered to provide mortgage services. They liked the idea of one-stop shopping. Later in the week, I will review their W-2's and bank statements and complete their loan application.

Today was perfect weather for house hunting, sunny and in the 70s. First, we began with a computer search in the Northwest Multiple Listing Service database. The database allows licensed real estate agents to review all available homes selected by location, price, bedrooms, bathrooms, and some 80 other parameters. The database is impressive. We agents can find homes with hot tubs, "needing TLC," or "offering owner financing." I (VickieGL@aol.com) often e-mail my clients color photos and descriptions.

Today, for W. and B., I keyed in the desired area, their price range, four bedrooms, and one and three quarter baths. They looked at the photos while I read the descriptions. They selected the most attractive three to see first. With map in hand, we were off.

The first house charmed her. It had a pretty front yard, a deck, huge backyard, and swing set. The house is a split entry—i.e., from the front door one can either walk up a level or down a level. In the Seattle suburbs, the upper floor usually holds the living room, kitchen, and bedrooms while the lower level has an extra bathroom, rec room, and possibly a bedroom. B. did not like the proximity of the master bathroom to the living room—it's really the primary bathroom. He had hoped for a little more distance from the home's epicenter.

At the second, B. said that he was willing to finish the lower-level rooms' ceilings and baseboards. W. was put off by the new cheap gold carpet. At the third home, all three of us attempted to unlock the door, but it would not budge. The patio cracks, the broken sliding door, and the moss on the roof led them to suspect the inside would require a good deal of work, too.

I suggested a fourth house close by. Only 10 years old, the house has nice touches, an open kitchen facing the family room

and a living room with a cathedral ceiling. They adored it, but B. didn't like the nearby busy roads.

I now had a good sense of the kinds of houses they would want to see, houses that I would need to find for them. The kids were clearly tired, while we adults were subtler about our house-hunting fatigue. It seemed like a good time to stop. I reassured them that we absolutely would find the right house. We said goodbyes. As I drove away, I dialed my cell phone to pick up my messages.

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Monday, I joined two women Realtors to view the "Street of Dreams" homes. It's a Seattle tradition of new homes decorated with lovely furnishings. This year's homes were pricey—\$1 million to \$3 million.

The homes were large, 6,600-plus square feet, almost tastefully gargantuan. They spread sideways with no basements or third stories. Energy conservation was not a theme. Windows overlooking stands of evergreens and earth tones prevailed.

As I show homes, I am often cognizant of how a house's fixtures and layout scream or whisper its age. The distinctive bubbled yellow glass of the 1970s, the delightful wood-framed glass-front cabinets of the 1920s, and the white-with-green-accent vinyl flooring of two years ago. Looking at these luxurious new homes, I noticed changes. The bathrooms had one sink, one tub, and one shower, no two-sink bathrooms. The huge master bedroom had become a mid-size bedroom. Children's bedrooms were no larger than bedrooms in modest 1950s homes.

Where was the space going in these massive houses? The master bathroom grows ever more spacious. There is its mate, a similarly large dressing/closet area, no longer merely a walk-in closet. (Think two-car garage for each.) The open, hall-like kitchen melds into the massive family room, fit for family reunions. Tucked upstairs were wall-TV-viewing rooms. The requisite living room and dining room, though near the front door, are considered as useless as the formal parlors of yesterday.

I couldn't help thinking that next time homebuyers grumble about a smallish master bedroom, I can reassure them that this is the coming style, as are small bedrooms for children. Should they lament that there is no two-sink bathroom, I can murmur, "It's a bathroom ahead of its time—only the *children's* baths in the Street of Dreams homes held two sinks."

What is easily glossed over during the tour is the bottom line. Exacerbated by population growth pressures on land prices, housing prices in many cities have become wildly high. A recent survey of prices nationwide for a 2,200-square-foot, four-bedroom, 2.5-bath house found ridiculous prices. In Boston, it costs \$421,000, while in Worcester, Mass., it was \$211,000. In southern Virginia's Lynchburg, it was \$196,600, but \$289,000 in D.C.'s Virginia suburbs. Seattle's price is \$263,000, while Bellevue, Wash.'s price is \$344,000. Should Hillary Clinton buy in New York, she should choose Westchester County, where it will cost \$353,000, considering that in Manhattan the home would be \$1.1 million!

In the heartland (not the flyovers), prices are more reasonable. Suburban Kansas City's price is \$159,000; in Rochester, Minn., it's \$156,000; and in Springfield, Ill., it's \$135,000.

Was it the publicity from *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* that pushed Savannah prices to \$163,000, past Charleston's, Lafayette's, and Lexington's? Meanwhile, California recovered from its slump and again has high prices, with San Mateo at \$671,000, San Jose at \$456,000, and even Davis at \$255,000.

While there are many smaller, less costly homes, the fact remains that huge amounts of our dollars are going into home purchases. John G., a homebuyer, told me that if he were going to pay \$325,000 for a home, he would expect the house to serve him breakfast in bed.

In the meantime, builders create ever larger, costlier homes, leaving those with moderate incomes behind. I think fondly of a wonderful builder who has shifted from building custom homes at half a million dollars to townhouses at \$175,000. To afford this three-bedroom, 1,500-square-foot townhouse, a family's income should be at least \$65,000. That's an income beyond many schoolteachers, service workers, and bus drivers.

On the lighter side of our Realtors tour, we often seemed like the Marx brothers. One of our pagers would vibrate, then we would scramble for an immediately reliable phone. Mine is temperamental, disliking many locations, including my office and the Street of Dreams. Joan had triggered her phone's security system. It stubbornly refused her access until she could remember the special supersecret code. Was it merely coincidence that the agent who had played women's soccer had the most useful cell phone? You be the judge.

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Tuesday was filled with tiresome real estate agent tasks, which led to wonderful results. (We're not there yet, though.) First, to accommodate my clients' request to speed up their loan, I had a meeting with the processor. I had brought the requisite papers, evidence of funds, final pay stub, and latest bank statement. An hour later, that phase seemed completed, but there are two more phases before the loan is ready.

As the loan officer, I am the one who must be sure every condition is resolved. I realized that for the entire day I would be on standby. In other words, I must be ready to drive loan papers across town to the underwriting lender whenever I received the phone call.

A quick mental summary of my most pressing work obligations included computer searching and previewing for three buyers, finding and calling homeowners attempting to sell their own homes, answering e-mail (VickieGL@aol.com), and picking up gift baskets. With this thrilling schedule ahead of me, I took off.

I was driving my "Realtor car" wearing my "Realtor clothes." The car, a gold 1995 Nissan Maxima, has plenty of legroom in the backseat. We can't have the spouse feeling cramped. Sometimes, buyers are in my car for three hours at a stretch. I can't make the house prices go down, but I can offer a cozy car and chocolate.

My "Realtor wardrobe" consists of conservative dark slacks with jackets in bright or muted colors. The strategy is to look professional seven days a week with little thought and less effort. "Realtor shoes" must tolerate anything, mud, basements, soggy

backyards, construction sites, the request "remove shoes before entering." Most of us prefer slip-on, low-heeled shoes that clean up nicely.

Having carefully selected the best homes from the database, my previewing began. I called the owners requesting to visit their home in the next two hours. The first home had a view of Puget Sound, a teeny moat with bridge, and the world's largest koi (goldfish). There were at least three, weighing eight pounds apiece, and a live turtle!

At the second house, the owner arrived right after I did. He was a delightful retired newspaperman from the *Seattle Times*. Instead of a brief solo visit, I spent 40 minutes on his detailed tour. He enjoyed my company but made it clear that he was not going to believe anything I said. His views reminded me that Realtors are often perceived to be superficial, greedy, say-anything salespeople. Somehow defending myself by saying that I was a newspaper subscriber seemed inadequate. He would have distrusted any testimonials to my integrity.

Back in the car, I'm near the florist's. They are happy to see me. I pick up the gift baskets with the crystal wineglasses for my homebuyers. Then I ask the florist to deliver a large showy flower arrangement to a construction site on Friday afternoon. My buyer has made numerous special requests of the builder, and the builder, atypically, has been very accommodating. The least I can do is send flowers, matching the color scheme of the furnished model home with a highly visible card reading, "For the Most Wonderful Builder." It will be a testimonial that has credibility.

Again, I'm on the road. The third previewed home had no key box to allow my entry. The house appears to be perfect for a demanding, prickly client. She deserves my patience. She's almost 70, worked hard all her life, and as she tells me, "nothing's been given to me."

The fourth house had no backyard and the fifth no reason for its \$225,000 price tag.

I passed three houses being sold by their owners. I jotted down the phone numbers. Possibly, I can find a way to help them. They may be ready to let an agent handle their home and simply haven't met the right agent.

I called on the loan's progress to learn that a bank VOD, verification of deposit, is needed. The bank had refused to fax it. I drove through heavy traffic to the office for the blank VOD and signed information release, then to the bank and back to the office.

From lengthy car phone conversations with my clients and the underwriter, it's clear that I can't go to the Internet & Real Estate Seminar tomorrow. Instead, I will begin my day by picking up my buyers' newest contribution to their loan file, a letter in which they attest that despite a credit-bureau red flag, they did *not* open any new credit lines. Then I will drive across town with the loan file, every fact double-checked, every condition met. This is the file that will be bundled with other loans and sold, time and again, during the next 30 years. My borrowers and their home will age, only the interest rate stays the same.

Thursday, July 22, 1999

This afternoon I made a few quick calls to buyers to see if they might be interested in properties for sale. J., whose

expectations from a \$325,000 house (it serves breakfast in bed to the owner) made me chuckle, confides that his wife's company's stock is going public in a few months and that could change their home-buying price range considerably. I concur and we both laugh. Could we be talking about a \$400,000 breakfast-serving house with view?

My demanding 70-year-old says forget the house, let's look at condos after her trip, and I agree that it's a much better idea and quickly describe a few that are available. She's told me that her elderly husband can't handle the stairs very well and they must move. When she returns, she is determined to get the housing matter resolved, even if he's still dragging his feet.

People may love each other but have very different ideas about what is the right house. One client loves their wooded suburban yard, while her husband describes their outlying location as "north of bumf**k." Couples can have terrible fights about the right house. H. adored the brand new townhouse with the lovely windows, but her husband always saw the seedy homes behind the new development. D. loved the sweeping view of Puget Sound, but his wife didn't like the condo's pet restrictions. E. loathed the long, narrow living room, while his wife saw the perfect newer house. G. said no because of wear in the deck, though his wife loved its woody stream setting. T. really liked the spacious layout of the split-level, but his wife insisted the price was out of their range. Two people, two opinions but only one house.

Home buying and selling are extremely stressful. It takes its toll on the relationship and the individuals. One agent lost two sales this year because couples ended their marriages just as they were buying new homes. Even my sunniest buyer told me today that she was dreaming about house-hunting every night. "It attacks every aspect of your life," she said blithely.

My graduate training in social work comes in handy. Clients share their dreams and fears about their finances, their obligations, and their futures. The new house will reflect who they are, who they want to be, and whom they will welcome. How much space is needed for future children, visiting relatives, grandchildren?

While working with B. and W. on their loan last night, she asked if I would abandon them if they couldn't get a mortgage right away. I could genuinely reassure her that I would stick by them. I was mortified when a minister client said that his agent had dumped him because he had an FHA loan.

In Seattle we get lots of immigrants and mixed-race couples. I held my breath last week when the Minnesota blonde wife and her African husband were looking at a home directly across from a suburban high school. Fortunately, they agreed that the yard was too small. I was beginning to devise how I would find out about the school's reputation for tolerance. Each time D., a Hong Kong-born programmer, and his American wife explored a different neighborhood, she raised the issue of their acceptance outside of his hearing. Two women in their 40s who own a house in a lovely urban neighborhood are considering a move to the suburbs. They aren't lesbians and don't want neighbors who would fixate on the absence of men as a reason to value them less as neighbors. In my experience, the suburbs are less tolerant than the city of Seattle. I reassured them that, in my opinion, it took an avant-garde perspective to see two single women automatically as lesbians.

Reporting this conversation to friends, I was taken to task for being naive. Malinee lives in a small affluent town in California. She's a wonderfully attractive, smart professional naturalist who wears cowboy boots and tight jeans. (The two men present concurred that she does not seem at all gay—that's their code for "naturally, incredibly appealing.") She was rumored to be a lesbian, because at 40 she has a close woman friend and no husband. Her local boyfriend complained that he didn't like the rumors that he was dating a lesbian! Strong, smart single women, clearly a threat to any decent community. Where is Janet Reno when we need her?

Friday, July 23, 1999

The A.s signed their mortgage papers and will get keys to their elegant new home Friday. The sale of their home closes next week. Agents who had never seen the grand house decided that it sat too close to apartments and never told their buyers about it. A wise broker once said: "Agents don't decide for the buyers. Let them see the house. They will make the decision. People who insist they need a garage buy garageless homes every day." My Kansas City brother always insisted that he would never buy a house without a screened porch, then did.

W. and B. are on their way to preapproval on a VA mortgage. One of the two Seattle women, B. and G., who are buying a second home together, saw the house with the koi pond and loved it. She figured out the turtle was fake. Friday, I'll take both to see it.

A New Yorker asked me what I, as a Realtor, thought of *Independence Day*, which has a Realtor as its key character. Aghast that I not even heard of, let alone read, the book by Richard Ford, a Pulitzer Prize winner, I ordered it immediately. I pride myself on being well read, even if most of my reading falls in the category currently called "literature."

Realtors get no respect. Almost no one portrays us as competent service providers except wonderful Margaret Atwood in *The Robber Bride*. She wrote one very favorable line. Consider Joe Pesci in the *Lethal Weapon* movies or Marian Colby on the TV soap *All My Children*. Realtors are greedy, superficial, and opportunistic. That's not me or my office. But I certainly meet agents who see the dollar first, last, and always, overlooking the people, clients, and co-workers.

Independence Day did reflect some realty reality. Ford knew that a Realtor's car trunk is always loaded with signs. His character, Bascombe, invests in property. Ford captured the indecisive, unpleasant client.

But Bascombe's approach felt wrong. He says to homebuyers, "Shop around for a mortgage. Get a foundation inspection. Don't budget more than you can pay. Buy low sell high. The rest isn't really my business." It's an accurate summary of Real Estate 101. We agents, however, help clients understand how that information actually affects people's own situation.

Bascombe didn't return clients' phone calls (resulting in a lost sale!), put his homebuyers in a rental (wrong!), and seriously lacked the requisite motivation. As a parent, Bascombe was also a failure. Disconnected from his daughter, he didn't insist his teenage son wear protective gear in the batting cage (resulting in a serious eye injury).

Thinking of *Independence Day* always reminds me of my dear friend Tim. In the book, Curtain Call is a group that provides theater tickets for people with fatal diseases. See, a fatal disease means the ending of life, and the end of the play is the curtain call. The sophomoric theater joke arises when Ford cavalierly writes about Curtain Call's director taking the Lou Gehrig patients to the theater. Lou Gehrig's, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is the muscular degenerative disease that eats at Tim and in its own way at his children, his wife, and his sister-in-law, who put her life on hold to come and care for the children.

Tim was 48 and jogging regularly when his ALS began. Tim and Ana were the golden couple with three great kids. They made time to help everyone. Tim changed diapers, loaded the dishwasher, and was the kind of father every kid should have. When Ana's soccer team played on Mother's Day, the team members asked their husbands to provide food. Other husbands brought doughnuts; Tim baked a quiche from scratch. Now, with his good hand, he moves about in his nifty, computerized wheelchair.

The Realtors' reality may be misunderstood. That pales, though, in comparison to the distorted reality of caregivers and the miniaturization of their burden by our culture. Insurers avoid paying for in-home care. And caretaking is relentless. Getting Tim ready every morning requires an hour of hard physical work; he resembles a human-sized bag of potatoes. He can't be left alone, because his breathing could go awry. Sometimes he awakens three times a night needing to be moved. A theater excursion with an ALS group would be a major undertaking.

Reading *Independence Day* made me quietly fume about what passes for literature today. Being at my friends' house, however, easing their burden, makes me happy. If only more friends would provide dinners, take a child on an excursion, or help another caregiver, they would become less scared of death and more appreciative of life. Tim still teases me relentlessly, even with his breathing mask. I advise him, as his personal Realtor, to buy at least one condo for each of his three school-age kids. In fact, I point out, I just happen to know what's available.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE

Cynthia Gorney, a reporter for the Washington Post from 1975 to 1991, will join the faculty at U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism this fall. She is the author of Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars. Stephen Harrigan is an occasional columnist for Slate, as well as a screenwriter and novelist. His recent books include Water and Light: A Diver's Journey to a Coral Reef.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: The Hold of the Kennedy Myth
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 8:11 a.m. PT

I'm sure you've spent most of your weekend, along with the rest of the country, watching aerial footage of the Martha's Vineyard shoreline and listening to every pundit on the planet

grappling with the "Kennedy curse"—or, as Jack Valenti described it to Larry King, "a dark satanic star." I don't know about you, but I found myself both annoyed by this rampant mythification and somehow soothed by it. There's no Kennedy curse. With the exception of two world-shaking assassinations, which would recalibrate any scale of suffering, there are the same diseases, hazards of war, accidents, and episodes of fatal bad judgment that might attend three generations of any other highly populated and high-spirited family. But there is a Kennedy allure, of course, and I for one can't quite purge myself of it. Musing about John F. Kennedy Jr.'s all-but-certain death today led me to memories of 1960, when I was a 12-year-old Catholic boy in Corpus Christi, Texas, giddily pressing JFK bumper stickers into the hands of strangers. My "campaigning" had no substance behind it. I had no notion of, nor really the slightest interest in, Kennedy's politics. It was the fact that he was a Catholic that was so galvanizing for me and everyone I knew. It's almost impossible now to remember how bizarre and unsettling the idea of a Catholic president once was—"What?" said an old woman I tried to hand a bumper sticker to, "Vote for Kennedy? And have the pope in the White House? No thank you." What was most significant about Kennedy to me, however, was not that he would be the first Catholic president, but that he had already achieved something that no other Catholic in the history of the world had—he was suave.

Any thoughts on the Kennedy myth and how strongly we should resist it? Or shall we move from the grim headlines to your editorial today in the *New York Times*, in which you call for—as I understand it—some sort of de-escalation of girls' sports so that the whole system is not set up for super-competitors but for the average soccer klutz? Fine in theory, but whenever people start talking about putting the brakes on sports competition, I get a creepy flashback to the '70s. Remember the "New Games"? As I recall, we were all supposed to go out into the park and pass a giant inflated ball from one pair of hands to the next in a spirit of loving cooperation and common purpose. But anything that runs so counter to human nature can't last for long, and you can bet that the hippies who used to play the New Games are now engaged in cutthroat rounds of Frisbee golf.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: Casseroles, Sighs, and Embraces
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 11:47 a.m. PT

We heard about it on Saturday from the lady up the street, who was weeding out front, and stood up to tell us as we passed by. My husband and I know this lady only to say hello to, and this is of course one of the ways all of us instantly sort ordinary bad news from a certain kind of exceptional, communally shared bad news—strangers turning to one another to say "Did you hear—?" The neighbor lady was smoothing something absently in her hands as she told us, and I thought, somewhat startled to think it: Oh, I will remember this, won't I, the sorrowful look on her face, this will become one of those moments, and why exactly will it? The last such moment I remember was the death of Diana—the

teen-age lemonade vendor at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk turning stricken to us from the radio and blurring out the news—and there was then that same rush of bewildered, personally felt loss. I think there are aspects of monarchy that appeal deeply to Americans, and one of them is that collective, covetous, adoring, quarrelsome attachment to particular families of privilege, the private conviction that they belong to us. JFK Jr. was as close as we will come to a crown prince. We had a complicated weekend here, a cousin's wedding followed by big barbecue, and it wasn't The Topic—now that I think of it, nobody mentioned it at *all*, as though everybody was determined not to cast a pall—but I kept stealing away to turn on the all-news station. What was I looking for? Not information, really; I think it was more the way people come over with casseroles after a death in the family. Nobody has anything significant or useful to say; it's just that people need to embrace in the doorway, sit side by side on the living room couch, look out the window together and sigh and say, Oh God, what an awful thing.

Which is why I felt so sorry for those poor guys on the radio when I wasn't busy shouting *You idiots!* at them. They've had to assume the role of the people with the casseroles—well, let's be straight, they've been ordered to do that by somebody upstairs—but because they can't look out the window with us, the only thing they can do is keep talking, which is hard to do when there's no new information and nobody really wants to hear the entire Camelot thing re-pundited one more time. Last night I heard the following question asked on CBS News, in what I can only assume was a moment of deep desperation to fill air time: The in-studio reporter, querying the in-field reporter, said the Coast Guard searchers had pointed out that the water was 68 degrees and that “they have exceeded the time one would be expected to survive. What exactly did they mean by that, Bob?” I stared at the radio with my mouth open for a minute and then thought, Cast no stones, Gorney, you've been there yourself, one of the occupational hazards of reporting is having your flashes of extraordinary stupidity shared with large numbers of people. Maybe the in-studio reporter hadn't gotten much sleep, eh? Maybe he'd pleaded to be allowed to go home or talk about the Yankees game or switch to the commodities report, but the suits in the executive offices said, No, women in California are washing post-barbecue dishes right now and thinking about poor John and poor Carolyn and poor Rory who already watched her brother die on that ski slope, and so whatever you say this night must contain the word “Kennedy” every 30 seconds lest she switch stations and cause our Arbitron ratings to sag.

This will be with us all week, I fear; yesterday's *San Francisco Examiner* filled its entire Sunday front section with Kennedy news. I mean this literally; I suppose there must have been an ad or two, but every single news article was a plane-crash sidebar. They ran a second section for Other News. Did it play as massively in Austin? Yeah, I do want to talk about girls and soccer and the apparent impenetrability of the traditional male survival-of-the-fittest model in American sports. And I also want you to go dig out your *New York Times* and look at the front of today's “Business Day” section so we can talk about the small photo at the top of the third column from the left. It's pretty remarkable. I want to know whether it set off fights in the newsroom. It's a pie, but ... You'll see what I mean.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: Sympathy for the Pontificators
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 2:13 p.m. PT

Well, I'm casting no stones either, since you and I seem to have been drafted into the pundit corps ourselves this week. And I have to say that when I first heard the news—via, uncharacteristically for me, an Internet headline—I rushed to the nearest television and turned it on, craving the overblown marathon coverage that I usually pretend to decry. And I stayed on the couch pretty much all afternoon, feeling more sympathy than exasperation for all those presidential advisors, aviation authorities, gossip columnists, and aging Kennedy hands whose pontifications, in this impossible instance, seemed almost like a public service. Here in Austin, the local paper covered the story fairly judiciously—nothing like the overkill you describe in the *Examiner*—but on the other hand, the people I spoke to on the phone or ran into on the street were talking of little else.

You started out on the topic of casseroles and switched to pies. Yes, I did as you instructed and turned to the picture of the apple pie with the hole in it on the cover of the business section of the *New York Times*. But here's my challenge to you, Cynthia: Don't just look at a photograph, go see the movie. I did, and I admit it: I'm still cringing. What's fascinating to me is that *American Pie*—with its gags about sperm in the beer, atomic bowel movements, and pastrypophilia—seems to be the ultimate date movie. What ever happened to queasy self-consciousness? But don't get me started on the grossification of American culture, or I might morph into my secret self: a reactionary gasbag who's still having trouble with the decommissioning of the word “butt.”

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: Shut Your Pie Hole!
Posted: Monday, July 19, 1999, at 3:22 p.m. PT

First of all, I want a verbatim transcript of the newsroom discussion that preceded the decision to print that pie on that page. “Come on, we put pies in the food section all the time.” “Not pies with three-inch holes in the top crust.” “What if it were a piece about achieving the perfect pie crust?” “But it's not, is it?” Yeah, we are becoming fogeys in our dotage; I was interested to discover that I was appalled by that pie picture, which I suppose was the intent of the layout people, since the story was about the vast quantities of appalling material—“gross-out comedy” seems to be the term of the moment—now finding its way into movies and prime-time television. Has the Great Gray Lady ever before run a photograph of the, ah, how shall we phrase this, aperture left behind by a young man's occasion of self-stimulation? I am reminded of a fascinating and heated can-we-run-this argument that took place some years ago at the *Washington Post*, where I was working; I had written a profile of

an abortion doctor who was a beautiful white-haired woman by then in her 70s, and the photographer had made a wonderful picture of the doctor's face, a mass of fine wrinkles and concentration, as she performed a routine aspiration abortion. The picture showed a curve of foot, indicating that the photographer was shooting from somewhere near the patient's head, but nothing in the picture itself displayed body parts or anything that might be thought of as offensive; nonetheless, one faction argued heatedly against running it in the usual large-format place below the headline because the very image of the doctor's face, given the context of the story, instantly summoned for the reader the thing she was looking at: the visual we would not have put in the newspaper. What we were keeping off the page, in other words, was not the image in the photo but the image the photo conjured by association in the reader's mind. Back then I was sorry when the keep-it-out faction won that argument (they found another less arresting and controversial picture to use), but boy, would I have switched sides on this one.

What I want to know: Did you see *American Pie* with any of your daughters? And if so, what on earth did you do when, you know, things of a certain nature took place on the screen? Put a bag over your head? Excuse yourself to move to another row? I still have an excruciating memory of sitting in some avant-garde San Francisco movie theater with my parents, I must have been 13 or 14 years old, and suddenly realizing that the trailer we were viewing was for an X-rated foreign movie in which people performed Acts in a naked conga line. I recall being so horrified, not at what was on the screen but at the fact that my mother and father were sitting beside me, that I covered my face with my hands and sort of folded up sideways into the seatwell. You said *American Pie* was the ultimate date movie: Was the theater full of teenagers laughing themselves sick, or people like us, old enough to be parents of teenagers, or what? Was anybody just looking sour and queasy and stomping up the aisle muttering, "This is terrible, what we're doing, the endless spiraling cycle of it-makes-money-so-we-do-it, somebody needs to throw a spoke in this wheel *now*"?

I guess that would have been me, the house curmudgeon. I spent the first four months of this year on a reporting job that required me to learn about what is currently referred to in the law as "student-on-student sex harassment," and one of the laments I heard from nearly everybody involved was: It's so much worse now, what teenagers and children say and do to each other on a regular basis, that it staggers the imagination. And why shouldn't it be? When I listened to the radio in my hotel room, on one of those reporting trips, the morning DJs were having a jolly conversation about circle jerks; in the drugstore where I bought my tape-recorder batteries, one of the kid's-eye-level magazine covers led with "Bed-Rattling, Teeth-Clenching, Curl-Your-Toes Orgasms"; the sweet-looking 10-year-old boys hanging out by the lakefront were laughing uproariously, as I passed them, about "really big hairy balls." They can't escape this stuff, unless they're Amish or somehow shielded from the culture by exceptional parental tenacity, and the person I want to hit over the head this afternoon is Mr. Gene DeWitt, identified in the *Times* article as "chairman of DeWitt Media, a firm that buys advertising time on television," who delivers the closing remark: "There's no point in moralizing whether this is a good thing or a

bad thing. Television is a business whose purpose is gathering audiences." You bet there's a point in moralizing, Mr. DeWitt, and it is a bad thing, and I have to work so hard to keep trying to shoulder you guys out of the way so my own daughter can get through her 13th year without being assaulted from all sides by flying sperm.

You're probably right; as soon as we let "butt" out, we were on that slippery slope to ... oh. Slippery. Gross. Never mind.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: Mooning Over the Moon Shot
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 8:28 a.m. PT

No, no, no, no. I didn't see *American Pie* with my daughters. How could you even think such a thing of me? Or, being the mother of a 13-year-old yourself, how could you imagine for one moment that any teen-ager would willingly accompany her parent out in public at all? But my wife and I did go to the movie out of prurient parental duty, as a way of gauging the current level of cultural swill through which our kids so cheerfully wade. And, to answer your question, we were the oldest people there. I'd say everyone else was 25 or younger, most of them couples, and after the movie was over they walked sweetly hand-in-hand out of the theater as if they'd just seen *You've Got Mail*. Can you imagine going to this movie on a first date? What could you possibly say to each other afterwards? "Wasn't it hilarious when that guy prematurely ejaculated in his shorts? What about the scene where he had explosive diarrhea in the girls' restroom? Hey, want to grab some coffee?"

Are you susceptible to moon-landing nostalgia? I am. It's fascinating to me that humankind's most futuristic moment now seems like a quaint enthusiasm of our past. My mother lives just across the street from the Johnson Space Center in Clear Lake City (a few miles south of Houston) and whenever I go to visit her I drive past the Saturn V rocket lying on its side out in front. This rocket, which took us to the moon, has every bit of the historical significance and even some of the grandeur of, say, the pyramids, but to most of the drivers zooming by on NASA Road One it might as well be an old water heater. There was a small little story in the science section of the *New York Times* today about a lunar geologist named Eugene M. Shoemaker who died in 1997 and is being honored by having a portion of his ashes put aboard a spacecraft that is designed to crash-land into the moon's surface. It's kind of emblematic that 30 years after we first made our way gently onto the moon with a live human crew, we are now crashing into it and burying one of the people who helped get us there.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: Moon Pie
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 11:34 a.m. PT

I was thinking about your moonwalk nostalgia this morning, as I drove my daughter to her day camp in the redwoods. It was a good Bay Area summer morning, which is to say gray and thick, the fog some hours from lifting, the moon—which was a such brilliant white crescent the other night, before the fog had rolled in—nowhere to be seen, and for nonastronomically-inclined persons like myself, hard even to conjure up in imagination. What a sobering, sad, unsettling week, for people old enough to remember back 30 years ago. Was it even a color television set we were watching? I guess it must have been, 1969, but the images seem preserved in black and white, the first sight of that weirdly shadowed rocky landscape, and then Armstrong's voice, which somehow in my memory sounds exactly like Walter Cronkite's. It seemed that sort of event at the time, a grand American moment that would have to be Cronkite-narrated start to finish, and I do remember that we looked at each other and said, *Can you believe it? He's actually walking on the moon.* But it didn't last (not in San Francisco, anyway, not in 1969—far too much by way of more tangible and immediate distraction), and I sometimes wonder if there was anything NASA and the working scientists might have done to draw the rest of us more vigorously into their midst. I take huge pleasure, natch, from the front-page photos today of this no-nonsense-looking woman in the aviator glasses, Col. Eileen Collins, the first woman to command a shuttle mission. But like most us, I'll wager, I'm still not entirely clear about what she's doing up there, both the immediate and larger sense. In relative degrees of general alertness and suspicion I think I'm a pretty ordinary American citizen, and they've had three decades to persuade me that these ventures into the sky are as valuable a use of public and private capital than, say, the equivalent investment in inner-city schools. They haven't done it yet.

Did you see that provocative and thoughtful message from Nanobah Becker, the woman who identified herself as being a "tail end" member of generation-X and who wondered, irritably and with considerable justification, how former Free Love advocates could be carrying on so crankily about *American Pie* and other offerings of the current gross-out culture? Let's throw that one at each other for a minute. Putting aside briefly the most obvious and probably most correct answer—I was an idiot then, OK, and now I have teen-age children and the world seems a vastly different place—I think what pushed me over the wall yesterday morning was the baldness of the profit motive in what I see now as the multiple assault on young sensibilities. (I should hasten to add that my 13-year-old daughter finds me quite ridiculous on this topic; she told me this morning, even though she hasn't seen it, that the point about *American Pie* is *humor*: Mom, it's funny, we think it's hilarious, we don't find it offensive, we just laugh ourselves sick.) What really fries my hair, to use a charming if slightly bewildering metaphor that turned up in one of these articles yesterday, is the spectacle of

businesspeople shrugging their collective shoulders and saying, Yeah, we know it's sick; yeah, we don't particularly want our kids watching it; yeah, we know there's probably some dim connection between this product and the wild coarsening of kid behavior in the halls of their own schools—but we don't care, because it such a very lovely way to make a lot of money fast.

And finally, to end with another exploration to unlikely destinations: remind me this afternoon to tell you about *Genghis Blues*, the documentary my husband and I saw last Friday, in which an extraordinary person finds himself through extraordinary circumstances in a very odd place on the other side of the world. Wild applause and laughter in the audience, along with regular audible cries of, "No! Not really! They did *that*?" Details to come.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: Gross-Outs From Around the World
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 1:13 p.m. PT

I know what you mean about the ever-elusive point of the space program, but along with a lot of other Americans I still wistfully support it. Maybe we're no longer bounding around on the moon, and maybe there was not all that much reason to be doing so in the first place, but it just makes me feel better to know that as a country we're at least still interested. The space program will always be less successful in its quantifiable results than it is as an ongoing expression of national curiosity and yearning. If nothing else, it's theater. And, as our *American Pie* discussion has demonstrated, theater counts.

Yes, I did see the e-mail from Nanobah Becker, which takes us to task for our baby-boomer hypocrisy on the matter of sex; also the one from Sean Fitzpatrick, that declares that all our tsk-tsking is merely the "conscience-salving pose of yuppie pseudo-morality." (Ouch, Cynthia, that one hurt.) America, Ms. (Mr.?) Becker says, is a "culture terrified by sex. Movies such as the ones you refer to couldn't come out of another." I disagree. A few nights ago, I entered the parental code on my remote control to unlock HBO, hoping to catch an episode of *The Sopranos*, and found myself lasciviously lingering on a show called *Shock Video*. This is one of those shows that—along with *Real Sex*, *Loveline*, *Howard Stern*, et al.—proves beyond any doubt that American culture has entered a period of hyperactive unembarrassment. What was really striking, however, was that *Shock Video* was a catalogue of cheesy game shows from around the world that were even more disgusting, and even more cravenly lurid. I always thought Italy, for instance, was supposed to be a world leader in urbane and guilt-free sexuality, but you wouldn't know it from watching a giggly strip-tease game show.

So why didn't I immediately turn off the TV, cancel HBO, and sign up for Gary Bauer's campaign? Because I'm a hypocrite, and because I genuinely don't know how upset to be. I grew up in a highly repressive sexual culture (the Catholic Church) and came of age—as our critic points out—during the salad days of the sexual revolution, and I wouldn't wish either of those polarities on my kids. Is it possible for a culture to have an "authentic"

sexual expression? What culture ever has? If I could wave a magic wand and make *American Pie* go away, you bet I would, but I don't know that I would want to wave away, say, *South Park*, which strikes me as a gross-out movie of beneficially subversive intent.

OK, you are hereby reminded to tell me about *Genghis Blues*.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: The Sublime and the Disgusting
Posted: Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at 3:30 p.m. PT

You make an excellent and perversely reassuring point—that we Americans aren't alone in our capacity to create a public culture that is at once idiotic, sniggering, demeaning, venal, and gross—and I wonder whether our counterparts in Brussels or Kyoto sometimes feel as stymied and queasy as we do. So let me tell you about this *Genghis Blues* movies, which since it's a low-budget documentary is probably going to be seen by 48 people even if it did win its category at Sundance: If you concocted some scale with Profitable and Awful on one side and Unprofitable and Wonderful at the other, *Genghis Blues* would be hanging off the U&W end.

Here's the story line—very improbable but true: A blind, widowed, overweight, depressed, gifted Cape Verdean blues singer, widely respected in his line of work but nonetheless somewhat obscure in the big world and living in what appears to be semi-poverty in a small San Francisco apartment, is distracting himself one day by listening to short-wave radio when he comes upon a music apparently produced by the human voice but quite unlike anything he has ever heard before. The sound is at once deep, raw, multi-toned, mysterious, and beautiful, and through some detective work he learns that the music is "throat singing," the native music of Tuva, which is a small nation of fierce climate (subzero winters, above 100-degree summers) just north of Mongolia. Our blues singer, whose name is Paul Pena, teaches himself to speak some Tuvan—the guy is blind, remember, not that there are a lot of printed Tuvan-English lexicons around anyway, so he has to translate in Braille through Russian and then into English—and through some sort of internal musical genius also teaches himself how to throat-sing, whereupon he happens to be part of the crowd hailing a famous Tuvan throat-singer who has come to perform in San Francisco, whereupon Pena astonishes the Tuvan throat-singer by opening his very own Cape Verdean mouth and having this wondrous weird multi-toned sound come out, whereupon the Tuvan throat-singer invites Pena to come fly halfway around the world to sing at the annual Tuvan throat-singing competition, whereupon two young filmmakers and some itinerant sound engineers and an elderly L.A. radio producer and the Nobel laureate Richard Feynman and Aeroflot get into the act ... and by this time in the theater the handful of us who are watching this film are just laughing our butts off (see, there you go, I've let the standards slip again) because the entire tale is so wild and unlikely and great, it's like a Monty Python episode except that it's real and there's a part also that makes you cry. I can't figure out whether to spoil it for you by telling you

how it comes out, or to resign myself to the probability that *Genghis Blues* may not make it to the big screen in Austin and thus keep you from eternal suspense.

American Pie will make nine zillion dollars, and *Genghis Blues* will maybe make enough money to pay back the filmmakers' mom, who was evidently their principal financier for a while, which could make a person either despair at the savage maw of crass commercialism or exult at the occasional triumph of the sublime. I think I'll go with the latter.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: Our Movie Is Better Than Your Movie
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 8:52 a.m. PT

Genghis Blues hasn't turned up here yet, but it will. Austin is a documentary town. In fact, the pride of Austin these days—along with Lance Armstrong, George W. Bush, Kelly Willis, and the seemingly late and only somewhat lamented Madalyn Murray O'Hair (whose caustic atheism might be a good topic for us this week)—is a guy named S.R. Bindler, the auteur of *Hands on a Hard Body*, which is the greatest documentary ever made. Have you heard of this movie in Oakland? I know it's been shown in New York and other supposed cultural capitals, but only Austin seems to have really clasped it to its bosom. It's been showing for a year solid, to packed houses, at the Dobie theater here. *Hands* is the story of an annual contest held at a car dealership in Longview, Texas, in which the prize is a brand-new Nissan "hard-body" pickup. How do you win it? By standing around longer than anybody else without taking your hands off the truck. I know, I know, a movie about a bunch of people standing around and touching a truck sounds, in the mere telling, as boring as a documentary about paint scraping, but trust me on this one, Cynthia. Those Tuvan throat-singers have nothing on these Longview pickup contestants. If it's not showing in Oakland, catch a plane to Austin. We can put you up in the spare bedroom.

There were a lot of things in the paper we could talk about today: Cuban refugees being bombarded by fire hoses and pepper spray to prevent them from planting a foot on the Florida coastline; the statement of Carleton S. Fiorina, the new female CEO of Hewlett-Packard, that there is no "glass ceiling" after all; the tragic failure of Olestra to perform as hoped in the marketplace (remember that *American Pie*-style neologism Olestra gave rise to last year—"anal leakage"?); Natalie Angier's story in the *New York Times* today about why she hates vacations.

But let's turn our attention for a moment to mother crocodiles. I was watching a documentary about the domestic lives of saltwater crocodiles on *Animal Planet* last night and was deeply struck by the image of a mother crocodile rescuing her newly hatched offspring from some threat or other (I think it was rising water, but I tuned in too late to know for sure). It was an amazing thing to see: the mother "salty" clawing at the mound of the nest to release the hatchlings, then patiently, hour by hour, seizing each baby crocodile in her mouth, trudging back down to the shoreline and gently releasing it into the water. What was so

remarkable to me was that this seemed to be not an act of instinct on her part but a conscious decision—that she was “aware” in much the same way that a human mother might be in removing her own children from a scene of danger. This documentary, along with other recent discoveries about animals—that dolphins, for instance, engage in undolphinly activities such as rape, kidnapping, and wanton brutality—led me to ponder how defiantly we humans have always refused to believe in the interior lives of other creatures, and how we are only now slowly beginning to understand that those lives may be as complex and—in some cosmic sense—as worthy as our own.

To which the only proper response, during the high holy days of the Woodstock anniversary, is “far out.”

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: Minivan Mysteries
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 9:13 a.m. PT

Oh, geez, Texas, you are awake today! Here I am clutching my morning teacup in the first-light fog, having been happily roused out early by a 6 a.m. international phone call from my 17-year-old son in Costa Rica (spending the summer in a 300-person inland village, living with a farming family and helping build the town *salón comunal*—he’s a little homesick but elated, says he went swimming where white-faced monkeys studied him from the shore, caught a ride over to the next town this morning to make use of the only working telephone in the region), and I am now obliged to visualize, what was it, an entire documentary in which grown men place their hands on a pickup truck. I must tell you I am filled with intrigue here. How long does the winning contestant keep his hands on the truck? Overnight? Are we talking, like, relieving self off to one side while maintaining constant truck contact, and if the rules require two-handed contact, how exactly is this accomplished? Are there women among the truck-touchers? What are relations like between the male and female truck-touchers? And does the trophy somehow morph from the truck itself to something grander and more fundamentally American: the idea of truck, the domination over other truck-touchers, the victory in the hunt? And what are we to make of the fact that the prize truck is made by a Japanese company?

Which leads me to another automotive mystery that perhaps you can explain by calling upon some Y chromosomes—although I guess this has more to do with the mysterious doings of smalltime bad guys than with actual automobiles. The car I drive, a hardy and beat-up 1989 Toyota van, is slowly being cannibalized for parts by people who seem to have no interest either in the van itself or in more conventional forms of car burglary. Nobody ever goes after the radio or my grocery bags or even the occasional bicycle left inside overnight; God knows nobody ever tries to steal the whole van, which has been dinged fore and aft in various road mishaps, once by a distraught elderly lady who backed her Mercedes into me and whispered in a convincingly quavering voice, as I wrote down her telephone number, “I’ve been driving for 60 years and this never happened

to me before.” (I couldn’t bring myself to turn her in. Suckered, I’ll bet.) Anyway, a year ago somebody stole my license plates. This was startling but made a modicum of sense to me when I tried to parse it out: Let’s see, the guys either have an old Toyota van or rip one off somewhere, they use it to do the bad thing, they’re hauling the booty from one place to the next, they plan to dump the vehicle someplace and make themselves scarce, they want to make sure that when the cops spot them and run a plate check that the number traces back to a nice clean address in North Oakland.

So I got new license plates. Then somebody stole the little black back-end strip that reads “Toyota.” Quite neatly managed, too: just the little bolt holes left behind. Now I was stumped. Black Toyota strip, plastic, 10 inches long, one inch high: what do they want with it? Exotic jewelry, maybe? Why would a chop shop send out an order for a single scratched-up Toyota label? Don’t they want more practical items, like axels and steering wheels? A Lexus label I could understand; you want to give your stolen vehicle a little class, sort of like sticking an Armani tag on the Kmart jacket, but why advertise your handiwork as a third-tier soccer-mom car? And then last week I walked out to get my morning paper and saw that somebody had taken off the *front* Toyota label, the bigger one, so that the poor van now has an odd three-foot dent of emptiness where its name used to be. It looks like a frostbitten face that lost its nose. I thought of leaving a sign on the windshield, sort of like those “No Radio” stickers desperate New Yorkers use, reading: “Yo! Guys! I appreciate the delicacy of the removal operations, really! I just want to know what you’re *doing* with this stuff!”

But somehow I don’t see them as overly literate sorts. Maybe you can elucidate. Maybe you’re right to wonder about the interior and underappreciated lives of nonhuman animals; maybe the neighborhood raccoons and opossums have grown restive and decided to add a little action to the slow summer nights. Let’s do a children’s story: “The Midnight Chop Shop of Angus McPossum.” Harry Potter’s got nothing on us.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: The Greatness of *Teletubbies*
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 10:32 a.m. PT

The old Y chromosome has yielded no insights into why mysterious strangers would want to steal your Toyota insignia. Have you checked to see if your air bags are missing? There was an article in the paper recently about air bags being the most valuable component of stolen cars. What you need to do, after the vandals take the handles, is come down to Texas and win yourself a little pickup. Yes, there are women in *Hands on a Hard Body*—half the participants, if I recall correctly. The rules are that you have to keep at least one hand on the truck at all times, and there are bathroom breaks every hour. The big problem is lack of sleep. I think the winner in the movie triumphed after something like 84 hours.

Speaking of Harry Potter and children’s books, isn’t there a childrens’ bookstore somewhere in the Bay Area where the entire

room of *Goodnight Moon* is reproduced in three dimensions? I read about that years ago and thought it would be a truly freaky and wonderful place to bring a child. To me, the haunted grogginess of *Goodnight Moon* is one of the great benchmarks of American literature. And while I'm at it, let me just put in a word here for *Teletubbies*, which I had never seen until recently and whose true worth has probably been terminally distorted by the recent Tinky Winky-is-gay controversy. But this is an awesome show—full of mysterious precognitive longueurs and an empty, gently swelling landscape presided over by a gurgling sun baby. This show is so exquisitely slow it makes Mr. Rogers seem like he's ramped up on crystal meth.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: Sir, I Knew Winnie the Pooh ...
Posted: Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at 1:12 p.m. PT

Yes, there is a three-dimensional life-size *Goodnight Moon* room around here; it's in a tony children's bookshop in San Francisco, or was the last time I checked. (The store may by now have been eaten, *You've Got Mail*-fashion, by one of the chain gorillas.) And it seems to me that I've seen the idea replicated elsewhere: the whole bed-and-moon-and-mouse-and-light-and-red-balloon arrangement, elevated on a platform in the children's wing of a bookshop. By the time I came across one of these setups, my children were long past the *Goodnight Moon* stage, so I can't give you a direct report on the response from the little guys, but my own first reaction was one of deep distrust. I don't think I approve of hauling the the great landscapes of childrens' fiction out of the imagination and into three dimensions, especially when the core intent is commercial. It's not actually the moneymaking aspect of the enterprise that bothers me the most (A.A. Milne and Roald Dahl didn't give their books away for free, now did they); it's rather the startled, violated sensation that somebody has snatched from me certain voices and images that I cherished precisely because a writer and an illustrator had made them live inside my own head. The first time I happened upon one of the Disney versions of Winnie the Pooh, I nearly lost my lunch. Tigger, with a doofus American accent! Eeyore, sanitized from a dour misanthrope into a squishy cartoon character! What could they have been *thinking*? I knew what Pooh's voice was supposed to sound like, just as I knew the voices of Mr. Toad and Johnny Tremain and the Moffitt family and the English children in *Swallows and Amazons*; that is the splendor of good children's literature, to make a kid see and hear invented people and places with nothing but the printed page for cues, and it irritates me when somebody with good intentions and a cash register shows up to take over that work.

I'm trying to think whether I have ever seen a movie version of a great kids' book that didn't affect me this way, but nothing comes immediately to mind; a few of the audiotope renditions have been pretty creditable, I suppose, especially Claire Bloom reading *The Secret Garden* in her gorgeous low voice, doing all the Yorkshire accents perfectly. But I have more pressing worries just now about the state of children's literature, having watched

in my household the summer efforts of the 13-year-old girl who loves to read: it's impressive, these days, how little is out there once you weed out the badly written (like many of her contemporaries, she tends to hold everybody to a high standard, generally set by Dahl and lived up to by a very few), the morbid, the condescending, and the unrelievedly grim. I found this even more true when my son was an adolescent and was looking around for books that might appeal: especially for boys in the 11-to-15 range, nearly every writer seems so beset with themes of Loss and Turbulence and Overcoming Adversity that my son used to ask me in despair, "What if I don't *want* to read about alcoholism or violence or peer pressure or divorced parents? What if I just want to read about kids who have a good time doing funny things?"

We're shorter on those than we ought to be, which I'm sure helps account for the Harry Potter phenomenon: I gather that they really are very good stories—my daughter read the first volume nonstop, and then before I could borrow it from her to see what the hoopla was about, asked whether I would mind waiting until she read the whole book again. But more to the point, they appear from what I've heard to be good children's stories, satisfyingly entertaining fantasy that pits good guys against bad guys without forcing an adolescent kid into the cold square corners of Relevance. And, as my son put it astutely one night when the opening round of the Potter-goes-international stories had just come out, these books are about what every kid would like to be: secretly the child of persons far cooler and more powerful than the adults professing to be his own parents, and endowed with powerful magic that has yet to be fully understood or appreciated by the world. Add that to an adroit execution and what seems to be a rather brilliant marketing campaign, and presto, transatlantic best seller. Now, why didn't you and I think of that first, eh?

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: Bad Hit Songs; Bad E-Mail Valedictions
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 8:23 a.m. PT

Our discussion about childrens' books yesterday reminded me to check out a new book I'd seen reviewed in the *New York Times* recently, a meditation by Ellen Handler Spitz titled *Inside Picture Books*. I've just skimmed through it, but it's pretty provocative. Spitz observes frankly that for very young children, facing their nightly solo voyage into uncharted sleep, "bedtime is hard" and that one of a picture book's primary functions is to "tame the darkness." And, confirming your son's distaste for childrens' books with trendily dysfunctional themes, she takes careful note of the unwanted titles she once encountered on a bookstore's sale table: *My Big Sister Takes Drugs*; *I Wish Daddy Didn't Drink So Much*; *I'll Never Love Anything Again*; *She's Not My Real Mother*; *Mommy and Me by Ourselves Again*; *At Daddy's on Saturdays*; and *Our Teacher's in a Wheelchair*.

Speaking of lists of stomach-churning things, the *Austin American-Statesman* today features a compilation by Michael Corcoran of the 100 worst hit singles of the millennium.

Corcoran's tastes are, to say the least, bracingly singular—in 1985, he reveals elsewhere in the paper today, he had an image of a saluting John-John tattooed on his forearm—and his Top-20 picks include titles as various as “Achy Breaky Heart,” “I Am Woman,” and “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.” As far as I can tell, the only important song not on his list is America’s “Horse With No Name.” Any suggestions of your own? Before you respond, you should know Corcoran’s ground rules: nothing by Pat Boone, the Osmonds, New Kids on the Block, Loverboy, or Milli Vanilli. Too easy. Can you believe there was once a time in our nation’s history when Sonny and Cher had a hit song called “A Cowboy’s Work Is Never Done”?

And finally, in the “Circuits” section of the *New York Times* today, there’s an interesting piece by Tina Kelley on an issue that’s been plaguing me all week during our e-mail badinage: how to sign off. I’m glad to see other people are wrestling with this. “Yr obedient s’rvnt” just doesn’t cut it as an e-mail valediction, and the other staid alternatives—“Sincerely,” “Best,” etc.—seem like lazy holdovers from the golden age of penmanship. The alternatives aren’t much better—BFN (Bye for Now) and FYB (Follow Your Bliss). My own attempts at a personal envoy have been inconclusive. I’ve tried out “*zut alors*,” “*vaya con queso*” and an all-purpose word of my own invention, “pluh.” But I’m still looking, and so I leave you today with the closing words of William Barrett Travis’ famous letter from the Alamo,

Victory or Death.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: E-Pistolary Confusion
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 11:02 a.m. PT

Pues vaya con queso y ponga manteca en su bolsillo, I say, which of course translates to “go with cheese and place lard in your pocket.” That’s a far better sentiment for the close of the millennium than FYB, a signoff that I’m afraid would immediately make me suspicious of everything that preceded it. (Actually, I would have gone along happily unclear as to what FYB stood for and would have studied it for a while, thinking: Fragile Yak Burial? Forever Yellow-Bellied? Fumigate Your Bathroom?)

But I’m glad you brought this up. Perhaps our *Slate* over-the-shoulder readers can help us out here: I don’t understand online epistolary protocol at all. Grammar-school English teachers drummed into me the correct beginning, middle, and end to every piece of written correspondence; I was taught to recoil when someone indents in the wrong place or puts a semicolon after the salutation. But so many of these online messages, especially those to people I don’t know, seem more in the nature of a “Hey, you!” yelled down the street, and the conventions of formality just look silly. I had to make an e-mail interview request last month to a flack I’d never met, and with whom for various reasons I wanted to maintain particular propriety. I decided to fall back on the familiar, commencing with the once-obligatory:

- **Return street address** (stupid, right? He is neither going to visit me nor write back to it)
- **Date** (redundant; appears automatically on the email prompt)
- **Proper two-line spacing** (may or may not translate to e-mail format)
- **Flack’s name** (see redundancy note above)
- **Flack’s address** (see stupid note above)
- **More proper spacing** (see uncertainty note above)
- **Dear Mr. Flack:** (see initial redundancy note, now in itself made redundant)

... all of which looked so foolish, by the time I had composed my little message, that I might as well have had my interview request delivered by liveried footman. But I had no Rules. That was what was so useful about “Sincerely,”—long-honored Rules had stripped it of any actual meaning, everybody understood there was no genuine sincerity implied whatsoever. Are we now supposed to replace those nice vacant adornments with expressions of some honest sentiment? What is the e-mail-era shorthand for Signing Off Briskly, Do Not Wish To Make Myself Appear Charming to You, Do Not in Fact Wish To Think About This Signoff at All?

Now with regard to your second assignment, compiling a roster of the worst singles of the millennium: I had an animated discussion about this with my younger brother, who at 37 has always felt that one of the great burdens of his slightly post-boomer generation was being forced to survive adolescence to the music of the mid-to-late 1970s. He mentioned the song “Afternoon Delight” with particular vehemence and began singing the warbly high notes, “aaaafternoon deliight,” before making finger-down-the-throat gestures. He swears there was also a hit song called “Convoy,” about truckers with CB radios, which he reproduced for me in this manner: (in falsetto voice) “c’mon join our convoy duh duh duh duh,” (in deep trucker voice) “join our convoy duh duh duh,” and this reminded both of us of “Mill Valley,” a wretched Romper Room-y soprano number that I think did regrettably make it out of Northern California and onto the national airwaves, and then I burst into the bass line for “Inna-gadda-da-vida,” which my brother maintains was supposed to be “In the Garden of Eden” but the band guys were too loaded at the time to mouth the words correctly, and we also offer “Incense and Peppermints,” “Crimson and Clover,” “The Green Berets,” “They’re Coming to Take Me Away, Ha-Ha,” anything recorded by both John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and “MacArthur Park,” a song whose words I have never, ever understood. (Why was the cake left in the rain? Why can’t the poor guy get the recipe, or at least one like it? He could write to the food section of his local paper, maybe.)

We saw *The Hi-Lo Country* on video last night, having heard *Eyes Wide Shut* denounced with more enthusiasm than anything that’s shown up in a while (one *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist today devoted her entire column to contemplating all the worthwhile things she might have done with the two and a half hours she’d wasted in the theater the night before). Woody Harrelson is a genius.

I remain, yr obedient & faithful Western colleague, most humbly & sincerely, bowing & scraping upon the page, & with all due salutations of respect & consideration.

From: Stephen Harrigan
To: Cynthia Gorney
Subject: In a Graveyard Spiral of Whimsy
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 1:10 p.m. PT

As long as we're talking about cyber protocol, allow me to grouse about why computers constantly have to tell us more about their own internal activities than anybody wants to know. Just signing on to check my e-mail gives me the impression I might be inadvertently launching a nuclear missile: "Dialing", "Communicating at 28,800 bauds," "Starting PPP," "Authenticating," all of this ending up in an inscrutable "Status" box with graphs and blinking lights and various pronouncements whose urgent meanings no human could ever know.

I'm with you on "MacArthur Park"; I'm with you on "Crimson and Clover"; but "Convoy" is one of those songs, like "The Battle of New Orleans," "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport," "Please Mister Custer," and Walter Brennan's unforgettable talking rendition of "The Epic Ride of John H. Glenn" (it's on the flip side of "Old Rivers"), that I'm just going to give a pass to.

This is our last exchange for the week, right? From this distance, our discussions seem to have started out on a suitably high and somber note with the death of John Kennedy Jr., but our ephemeral natures soon got the better of us. Before we could move on to the Republican tax cut, the Mexican banking crisis, or the fate of Taiwan, we found ourselves—to use a phrase from this unfortunate week—in a "graveyard spiral" of whimsy. And it is only with a great effort of will that I now refrain from referring you to my new favorite publication, Beer Frame: The Journal of Inconspicuous Consumption, and its article on the superiority of the Hydrox to the Oreo, its salute to products with "edible spokescharacters" like the Pillsbury Doughboy, Charlie the Tuna, and Slim Jim, and finally its definitive history of the styptic pencil ("styptic," proclaims the editors, "is such an excellent word"). If you can top that for meaninglessness, you are welcome to try. In the meantime, it should be stated for the record that your own book on the history of the abortion wars is a marvel of substance and you should not necessarily be judged by the lowbrow online company you've been keeping all week.

From: Cynthia Gorney
To: Stephen Harrigan
Subject: You Can Lead a Kid to Bacon ...
Posted: Thursday, July 22, 1999, at 3:21 p.m. PT

You're right, we began somber and became silly, which is a fair representation of my breakfast table—I'm thinking of the morning trajectory from stumbling glumly downstairs to fighting over the comics, except that around my table the only audible dialogue is generally, "You done with those yet?" punctuated by the clank of spoon against cereal bowl. There was a phase a while back when I filled with resolve, for reasons then unclear to myself but transparent to any female who has ever cracked the pages of a *McCall's* or *Family Circle*, to cook hot meals at breakfast. I had

in mind the sort that appeared in magazines, with the little wisps of steam visible as the plates were lowered to the table. I made muffins, or scrambled eggs with green chiles and cheddar cheese, or crepes rolled around blackberry jam, or whole-wheat pancakes with peanut-butter chips (I know, this sort of fits into the category of *manteca en su bolsillo*, but they're actually pretty good). There was a lot of bacon, too. Something elemental about bacon: the smell, I think. Also good sound effects. My kids looked startled at first, large plates of steaming food at 7 a.m.—What is going on around here? Is Mom OK? Maybe better not ask. Then there was a Mom's Cafe phase: "Oh, look, it's breakfast at the Mom's Cafe."

Then my daughter got up the nerve to say: Um, this is nice but you know I really *like* Crispix. My son, who had rattled both of his deeply secular parents a few years earlier by requesting a bar mitzvah (for which, to our astonishment, he studied intently for two years, delivering himself of a whumping cantor-led performance and bar mitzvah speech in which he discussed in serious 13-year-old voice his intense feeling about carrying on a tradition his father's family had let lapse), told me kindly one day that he had stopped eating pork so maybe I could cut back on the bacon. My husband, in the interests of middle-aged guy health, dropped eggs and muffins from his diet. So that was that for the wisps of steam at our breakfast table. The Crispix came back in force; in fact, the last time I was at the supermarket, the checker gazed at my overflowing cart and said: "Lot of cereal eaters in your house, are there?"

I do have one more somber thought, though, because I really am troubled about this, even though I can see no way to let off even a tiny rant without personally contributing to the very problem of which I speak: I do believe the press, and in particular the broadcast press, took leave of its collective senses last weekend when that little plane disappeared—surely not the first time such a thing has happened, but I am afraid that the net result, following day after day of relentless, nonstop, overblown, breathless, self-referential, nearly entirely content-free coverage, has been the transformation of a single publicly shared tragedy into something venomous. I think people are just furious at the coverage. I think fury at the coverage has in some measure replaced what might have been a brief period of honorable, modestly-proportioned mourning for some famous people who died. I think we'll be hearing about this for quite a while, and that the demonstrably low public regard for reporters and commentators will dip still lower in the wake of this past week. I know, we do this all the time, we did it when Diana died, and we will surely do it again—but it seems mysterious to me that in the first year post-Monica, when so many reporters looked back in embarrassment and agreed that events and group-think had sucked us into dreadful vacuous coverage from which we felt unable to extricate ourselves, the same blind terror of losing audience share could have overtaken assignment editors again.

So that is my closing rant. I'm afraid the only journal in our house that for interest factor can be rated anywhere near your *Journal of Inconspicuous Consumption* is our full-color glossy monthly called *Lowrider*, which was given to my son—no, not himself a lowrider, his only available vehicle is the denuded Toyota van—as a Christmas present last year. I have actually become quite fascinated by this magazine and was going to dig

out the latest issue to report on exactly which babes in bikini tops and *pachuco* pants were jutting their hips out beside which gleaming, curvaceous, cherried-out 20-ton American car. But it seems I was overcome by feminist bile one morning and tossed it. Pity. I bet *Lowrider* is a hit in Austin. And is now the time to say I can hardly wait for your impending new novel about the Alamo?

It's been swell, Steve, but do something about that lard in your pocket, OK?

DISPATCHES

Dispatches From Hell

Masha Gessen is the chief correspondent of Itogi, the Russian partner of Newsweek. This is the first entry in this thread.

From: Masha Gessen
Sent: July 20, 1999
To: Slate - dispatch
Subject: Dispatches From Hell, Message 1

If this landscape looks like anything on Earth, it looks like Yellowstone, multiplied hundreds of times and shaved. Black and bare, the land rolls and juts and goes on forever. It has beauty in the sense that it has a magnificence that stems from magnitude; but naked, it also seems helpless. Perhaps this is why people have been cutting it and gutting it since the first European expedition landed here in 1928.

This is the Kolyma Range, Russia's greatest deposit of mineral wealth: silver, uranium, tin, coal, and, most important, gold. The first miners here were Stalin's labor-camp inmates. They traveled for 45 days in unheated cattle cars from central Russia to the Pacific Ocean port of Vladivostok, then another five days by sea to Magadan, the Okhotsk Sea port that celebrated its 60th birthday this past weekend, and then on to the mines by foot, for weeks or months. Thousands perished during this last leg of the journey; it is believed, for example, that the poet Osip Mandelstam did.

Now it's an eight-hour flight from Moscow, then another couple of hours by small plane or helicopter. The roads, if you can call them that, are traversable only about three months out of the year, when the ice on the mountain rivers is thick enough to support a near-constant flow of trucks. The rest of the time, you can only fly, though you can't fly very often, the weather being harsh and unpredictable in the extreme. That's why people customarily refer to Magadan and lands west of it as "the mainland": You can't really get there from here.

My photographer, Sasha, and I are nonetheless trying to get there because, like many Russians, we are fascinated with what we call the Extreme North: the country's ultimate frontier, once a place of relative privilege, now one of unthinkable desperation. With the price of gold plummeting, the region's last hope for survival seems about to wither away. We're here to do stories for our Moscow magazine, *Itogi*, about the few people here who persevere because they live to mine for gold. We also want to interview those who have no hope left, though this doesn't seem

to require much of a search. And we want to see what remains of the Soviet Union's terrible legacy to this region: the camps that once covered it.

A helicopter mechanic tells us, "Sometimes I go out at night, especially in winter, look around, and think, 'This is like a prison. Mountains all around and no place to run.'" Thin, gray, and wizened at 45 or so, he is leaning against the open helicopter door. We have just landed on a flat spot by a river, and the rest of the crew has gone fishing. He slouches, gesticulates nervously, and punctuates his speech with an unfunny laugh. Camps aside, Kolyma is a prison: The tens of thousands of people who came here in the '60s and '70s are trapped. They voluntarily gave up their health to mine for gold, and in return received high salaries, early retirement, and apartments on the mainland. But now their lungs are full of dust and their strength sapped by the vibration of their mining equipment and the heat, light, and oxygen deprivation, and economic reform has swallowed their savings, canceled their benefits, and annulled their future. Unlike the vast majority of Soviet citizens, the people on Kolyma actually once *had* a future, in that they were among the few to believe they would have one and that it would be relatively good.

Of course, not all of Kolyma is a modern *Inferno*. After flying a couple of hundred miles over black, naked mountaintops, our small plane ducked under a black rain cloud with a yellow underbelly and we suddenly saw green mountains made of a different kind of rock, one that accommodates a swampy surface covered with green moss and low shrubs. Since arriving here a couple of days ago, we have discovered that in the narrow valleys, nature is as lush as it is absent on top: There are giant moose, foxes, and sables, meadows covered with flowers of the brightest pink and blue, and fast and shallow mountain rivers so thick with fish that the local helicopter pilots spot schools from above, swoop in, climb out with their fishing rods, and emerge with backpacks heavy with grayling a quarter of an hour later. Fishing and mushroom picking are the two hobbies available to the mineworkers.

On the other hand, they say the mushrooms are taller than the trees, and they are telling the truth: Trees here are mostly tiny shrubs, often less than half a foot tall, that are the distant relatives of birch trees and pines. Actual upright pines are no taller than a person—which makes them shorter than the wheels of trucks used in the mines—and also skinny and set wide apart from one another, as though planted by man. Which they are not, of course, because man does not come here to plant trees—and if he had, why would he stick those pathetic creatures in what some of the workers here call "the cyanide pond"?

It is not a pond, exactly, and not exactly cyanide. It is the top level of the waste reservoirs. Gold here is found in ore, which is scooped out of the mountain by Caterpillar excavators and transported to the mill in 50-ton trucks. Each ton contains, on average, 16 grams of gold—an extraordinarily high proportion, by world standards. The rocks are tossed into a series of giant rotating barrels where they are ground into finer and finer pulp, which is then dehydrated and mixed with various agents, including cyanide, which separates gold and silver from the rest of the stuff. The gold is then absorbed onto charcoal, separated from it again, and then, finally, melted into blocks that are half gold and half silver. Silver is a side product. The rest—all that

used to be rock—is waste, which gets dehydrated, and decyanided and spat out into a series of three “ponds,” of which the top two are reservoirs of pulp that, save for the lonely pine trees, look like the bottom of a dried-up sea. The third is a pond of water that is then used again to feed the mill. The mill works at night, filling the gray air (it never quite gets dark this time of year) with fine quartz dust and the smell of lye and the sound of grinding rock, which is overwhelmed for a few seconds every night by the explosion that loosens another portion of ore at the quarry.

The quarry at the Kubaka mine, the largest producer in the region, was said to harbor upward of 80 tons of gold. The actual gold-containing ore hides in the middle of the mountain, which is eaten away by Caterpillars methodically, in regular steps that make the quarry mountain look, from the air, like an Egyptian pyramid, except, of course, that this is a feat of destruction. The rest of the Kubaka mine is a triumph of construction, a model development by a U.S.-Russian joint venture called the Omolon Goldmining Co., whose claim to fame in these parts is that it has built a mine and mining village that resembles hell less than any other place in the region. It is a state within a state, with its own customs controls (designed to keep vodka out and gold in), its own rules of conduct and safety standards (which are enforced—a rarity in this country), and its own cuisine (American-school-cafeteria-style food served in an American-school-cafeteria-type space, complete with the brown laminate tables and the trays and bug-juice dispensers, six times a day, to workers who make, on average, \$450 a month). In a region where many people have not seen their nominal \$20 salary in months, few people live such good and regular lives as the Kubaka workers, who fly in for three-week shifts, with three weeks off in between.

From: Masha Gessen
Sent: July 22, 1999
To: Slate - dispatch
Subject: Dispatches From Hell, Message 2

Evensk, the administrative center of this area, has two streets, of a sort. They are paved in parts but mostly covered with gravel. One leads from the shore of Okhotsk Sea, which is covered with rusted ships that look like beached whales, to the administrative building, a two-story oversimplified colonial with a freshly painted Lenin monument in front, yellow on a blue pediment. The other street, which runs just parallel, is the main one. My photographer and I chartered an AN-2, one of those dawn-of-aviation-era planes with double wings and a propeller engine in front, to get here. We flew again over endless mountains, through patches of rain and patches of snow and, over and over, rainbows that formed to our right, then ripped apart and floated away in shreds.

Most of the local officials were on hand to greet us. Andrei Mikhailov, the deputy administration head for finance, seems to be an authority to whom everyone yields. We asked about the history of the place, and the six men and lone woman in the room looked to Mikhailov. “The first Comsomol unit in the North was here,” he said earnestly. “Chubarov came through from Kamchatka and demolished the White Guard here.” It seemed we

were supposed to know who Chubarov was; we didn’t. Mikhailov seemed intent to go on with the history-of-local-communism lecture, and I tried to get him on a different track by asking how long Evensk itself has been around.

The histories of most large northern villages are similarly tragic in their absurdity. Under Nikita Khrushchev, native settlements throughout the Russian North were systematically annihilated in the name of what was called “enlargement.” Khrushchev indulged his love of civilization by erecting “city-type villages” of identical five-story concrete apartment blocks all around the country and moving natives, through coercion and force, from their small villages. The native people of the North—the Eskimos, Chukchi, Koryaks, Evens, and others—are traditionally fishermen and reindeer herders. Moved away from their fishing spots and the tundra, they generally took to the bottle. Here in Evensk, there were two twists to the story: Some small villages in the district were allowed to remain where they were, and Evensk had been moved in 1936 because of a flood. Now it consists mostly of those five-story blocks, dilapidated and lost-looking.

“Well, this is what the old-timers say anyway,” Mikhailov said of the flood story. Like virtually all officials in these parts, he is not a native but an ethnic Russian, even though the area is designated as “ethnic” under a federal law that grants certain benefits to areas of compact settlements of native peoples. Out of the district’s 5,000 residents, about 1,500 are Evens and Koryaks. “By their nature, they are not particularly inclined to work,” says Mikhailov. What he means is, they are not inclined to do anything besides fishing and reindeer herding. Until the early 1990s, what rural population remained was allowed to get on with those activities within the framework of collective farms; in Evensk, most residents were employed by a state geological agency. In 1992, the geological agency shut down, and in short order 3,000 people moved away. At the same time, the federal Extreme North Supply Program collapsed. Food and fuel for the entire year had been delivered by sea during the short summer months when navigation was possible; but after the state backed out, private entrepreneurs began to bring food by air, driving prices out of reach. To survive, the herders began to slaughter and sell off their newly privatized reindeer. In a couple of years, the reindeer population in the district declined from 52,000 to about 20,000. So, in 1996, the local administration re-nationalized the reindeer, in the process breaking a number of laws and depriving the herders of their livelihood.

“They are good people, the natives,” says Mikhailov. “It’s just that after they have 100 grams or 150 [of vodka], they can no longer control themselves and can sell a deer to some visiting businessman for kopecks. We had to save the deer.” Mikhailov is a short bald man in his 60s who wears a cheap, ill-fitting gray suit and a blue tie that reaches to the middle of his belly, with the long end tucked inside his shirt and peeking out from between the bottom two buttons. There are things in town of which he is very proud and things he really does not want us to see. Like the dorms.

The dorms are two of those five-story blocks, cold and dark and with standing water in the hallways as high up as the second floor, stuffed with people who have flooded here from the dying villages. Sveta is a 20-year-old Even who shares her room with

her daughter, Yana, 13 months old. The room, which has a baby cot and a fold-out couch, is bare, decorated only with a magazine cut-out of a male model and seven empty cardboard tea boxes. Sveta seems to own nothing else besides two or three enamel bowls and one plate, which are stacked on the floor. She came here 11 months ago from a fishing village.

"Why did you come?"

"Because of the baby."

"You mean there weren't proper conditions in the village?"

"No heat, no light, no food."

Sveta gets a child-care allowance of about \$12 a month and pays about \$5 for the dorm room. Food prices here are comparable to New York's. "I can still afford milk for the baby. You know, some of the mothers here—well, there is a special commission to give up your baby to if you have no money. My friend, she is also 20, she's got two children, 5 years and 10 months old, and she just gave away the young one."

"Have you thought about it?"

"What? Who would give away this kind of baby? The reason I left the village is, I got scared because my nephew died at three months, he was just a month older than Yana."

"What did he die of?"

"I don't know. The milk must have been bad, the powder milk."

"Your sister didn't breast-feed?"

"We don't. We can't. We have nothing to eat ourselves. The powdered milk, where it came from, there was a barge that overturned near the village and people went there and picked up the food."

The places Mikhailov did want us to see were the fish-processing plant, where a woman in a rubber apron and rubber boots was kicking three kinds of salmon—a couple of tons in all—down a sloping wooden tray to two other women, who removed the caviar; the fish-refrigerating station; and the big TV satellite dish up on the hill, there since 1980. None of it made for very impressive viewing because the electricity was off in the entire town for lack of diesel fuel. Still, the reason Mikhailov was eager to show these things to us is that the Evensk District and Evensk itself are much better off than the rest of Magadan Region. The entire district budget of \$4 million comes from taxes paid by the Omolon Gold Co., which keeps the heat on in the winter and the lights on several hours every day. The rest of the region cannot boast that. As one Evensk official said, "We are sitting on a gold mine."

E-MAIL TO THE EDITORS

Address your e-mail to the editors to letters@slate.com. You must include your address and daytime phone number (for confirmation only).

Brandi's Bra

What's the Goal?

Normally, I find William Saletan to be one of the more intelligent journalists on the mainstream beat. However, his analysis ("Cups, Bras, and Athletic Supporters") of the "controversy" surrounding Brandi Chastain's removal of her

jersey after clinching the World Cup trophy is indulgent, quixotic, and utterly aggravating.

He dismisses the "men do it" explanation as superficial, when it's the only one that makes any real sense. Does anyone, on either side of this absurd debate, really believe that an athlete, upon scoring the winning goal in an international championship game, was actually trying to stage some kind of cultural coup? With adrenaline pumping, in the moment of realizing the dream of being a hero, with memories of the soccer greats running through her head, she did what soccer players do when they can't contain themselves. Are the pundits of the world so conceited that they really believe that she was acting to supply them with more fodder?

I think it was the game against North Korea when, in celebration of a goal, one of the players did a running flip-flop-flip, a common soccer-player's celebration. The announcer called it gymnastics. Apparently, to him, the only sports against which women would be measured were gymnastics and figure skating. Regardless of which side of the sports bra debate Saletan supports, or anyone else who considers Chastain's behavior in light of its social commentary rather than its expression of athletic competition and pride, it's the same kind of sexism.

Soccer in America, for the moment, is a woman's sport. That means that the culture of soccer, with all its grace and skill, brutality and bravado, will be exhibited by female American athletes. It makes me wonder what people would be saying if women's baseball became popular, and the commentariat was forced to watch women chewing tobacco and grabbing their crotches.

—Chad Levinson
New York

Don't Devalue Now

Paul Krugman has been for a long time a very critical observer of Argentina's currency board; he has suggested a devaluation many times in the past. Almost at the end of his article ("Don't Laugh at Me, Argentina"), he says that given that the Brazilian devaluation didn't bring hyperinflation, it could be expected that an Argentinian devaluation wouldn't bring hyperinflation. He concludes that from the fact that the two countries have dismal economic histories, but dismal doesn't mean the same. On the surface both countries might look quite alike, but people's reaction to inflation and economic measures has proved to be very different, so we shouldn't expect to see both countries reacting the same way.

I deeply admire Krugman, but if he wants to write about Argentina or any Latin American country, he should dedicate some time to trying to understand what each country is like. They all might look the same, but they are different; people are very different and react in different ways. Historically, what has been good for Chile (Argentina's neighbor) has been a disaster for Argentina, and this works the other way around. If he had dedicated time to studying Argentina, he would have found out that Eduardo Duhalde is desperately trying to gain votes, relying on old clichés that he expects will still be appealing to Argentinians, and trying to show how different he is from Carlos Menem—in part because he is different and in part to avoid the

opposition attack. Krugman would also have found out that the Buenos Aires Stock Exchange is not representative of the way things are: Bonds *are* important, and what businessmen are doing is important.

I agree that we have a regular recession and that the currency board prevents us from applying the usual recipe, but it's not clear that it would work, and at this point breaking the peso commitment would be extremely onerous. Right now we have a recession and an increasing fiscal deficit (a comment on the virtues of keeping balanced accounts would be very appropriate); if we devalue, chances are we would also have an inflation outburst, a rush against the banking system, and a capital flight. When analyzing Argentina, it's important to keep in mind that since we've been cheated many times, we have learned how to beat the system.

—*María Laura Segura*
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Paul Krugman replies: *I was, of course, aware of the politics that led to Duhalde's remark. And in case this wasn't clear, the article did NOT claim that Argentina's currency board is necessarily a foolish idea—only that its downside could not be ignored. But I will say this: One should always be suspicious of arguments that claim that one country is utterly different from others. Yes, every country is unique—but not all that unique. Anyway, only a few months ago many people—including Argentine economists—were claiming that the contrast between Argentine success and Brazilian crisis meant that Brazil must emulate Argentina's currency board; you can't take that position and then claim that the role reversal that has taken place since doesn't teach a contrary lesson.*

Pilot Error

I agree with James Fallows' warning ("Winging It") to inexperienced pilots who may know how to fly under good weather conditions, but who haven't much under the belt on a hazy night. We all mourn the death of John F. Kennedy Jr., but at the same time, I will go beyond Fallows' opinion and say that Kennedy's decision to fly on a hazy night in a new one-engine plane over water is not risky—it's down right *reckless*. I have two daughters, and if I knew that my two daughters were going up in a one-engine plane with a husband who lacked sufficient experience, on a hazy night over the sea, I'd do everything in my power to prevent it from happening. If the pilot wants to take that chance alone, fine, but once he allows passengers, he has to be responsible enough to make the right decision for not only himself but for those two girls as well.

My daughters' safety is the primary concern. Unfortunately, John Kennedy wasted his own life and the lives of two young and beautiful girls without thinking, *This isn't worth the risk*, when he knew it could be dangerous under such conditions.

—*Sandy Shapiro*
Woodside, Calif.

Governor Bush, in Deed

Regarding "Mister Bush's Neighborhood": I have been in the title insurance business for 27 years, and prior to that did my master's thesis on the field at Wharton.

It is not true that a person must include a prior set of restrictions in a deed when he sells his property. He may simply refuse to include them. It is up to the buyer—and the buyer's title company—to discover them in the "chain of title" and to determine if they have any legal force or effect.

Bush did not have to do anything except direct that the restrictions be omitted or stricken from the deed he granted to his buyer. (The only circumstance in which he would need to seek the consent of other landowners in the development would be if he wanted to petition to change the restrictions or permit an exception to them.)

As a lawyer, Bush should have been fully aware of the language in this instrument, which both he and his wife had to sign, and of his legal prerogatives. As the governor of his state, he should have had the decency, fortitude, and sensitivity to recognize the importance of refusing to include these restrictions in his deed.

Incidentally, in Pennsylvania, the presence of a racial restriction in a set of deed restrictions makes all the rest of that set of restrictions (e.g., as to the maximum height of fences, the prohibition of nonsingle-family residences, etc.) null and void. (This was a result of a case involving the will of Steven Girard and Girard College in Philadelphia that went to the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1960s and resulted in a landmark decision.)

—*Robert C. Dean*
Lancaster, Penn.

THE FRAY

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RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Maureen A. Hudson (CN=Maureen A. Hudson/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 11:13:49.00

SUBJECT: Proposed Message to RADM Fields

TO: Anne W. Bovaird (CN=Anne W. Bovaird/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

Here's the draft for your edits/approval. I'm also faxing over the background that I got off of NOAA's web page. I tried to keep it kind of short and simple, but see what you think:

"RADM Evelyn Fields
Director
Commissioned Corps
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Sivler Sproing, Maryland 20910

Dear Admiral Fields:

I am pleased to join your family, friends, and colleagues in congratulating you as you assume your new duties as Director of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Commissioned Corps.

This assignment is just the latest in a series of challenging responsibilities you have fulfilled in your distinguished 26-year career with NOAA. With skill, vision, and exceptional leadership, you have made outstanding contributions to NOAA's mission of scientific inquiry and environmental study, particularly in the fields of hydrographic survey operations and oceanographic and fisheries research.

The crucial role of the NOAA ships Rude and Whiting in last week's search efforts for John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s, missing aircraft underscored for all Americans the dedication and technological skill that NOAA personnel bring to their varied and demanding operations. I know you take great pride in the NOAA Corps' history of achievement, and you can rightfully be proud of adding to that history with your assumption of command as Director of the Corps.

Best wishes for a memorable ceremony and continued success in the years to come.

Sincerely,"

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Tom Seem <TSX@cbsnews.com> (Tom Seem <TSX@cbsnews.com> [UNKNOWN])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 17:25:24.00

SUBJECT: Re: The next thing -Reply

TO: Karen C. Burchard (CN=Karen C. Burchard/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

Yep, I was pretty dead on Sunday...after I heard about the problems in the morning, obsessed over them, while realizing all the time that there wasn't a damn thing I could do about them. Then Arlene called and said they'd all been fixed.

So after that, I chilled.

On the Vineyard front...

EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) - Just when Vineyarders got their island back from the journalists who swarmed their beaches, lawns and parking lots during the search for John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane, they heard the media horde would return.

President Clinton, the first lady, and their daughter Chelsea announced Friday they plan to spend 10 days on Martha's Vineyard in late August, bringing with them hundreds of reporters who will clog the island's already congested towns.

But residents of this island resort - home to both wealthy celebrities and obscure working families - plan to take the fifth Clinton family visit more in stride than they did the Kennedy tragedy.

"It's the unplanned things that are difficult," said West Tisbury

Police

Chief Beth Toomey. "Is it a burden? I wouldn't call it a burden. At this time

of year it's an added challenge and I would call it exciting."

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Tesspooner@aol.com (Tesspooner@aol.com [UNKNOWN])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 15:30:18.00

SUBJECT: Re: President to attend Memorial Service for JFK, Jr. and Carolyn Bessette

TO: Jena V. Roscoe (CN=Jena V. Roscoe/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

Hi Jena,

I know it is later this afternoon and the President just return from the funeral. Any word on the status of the letter and photo? We are out of time

as of tomorrow am.

Please let me know or give me a call,

Thanks

TESS

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Robin J. Bachman (CN=Robin J. Bachman/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 12:35:39.00

SUBJECT: Re: press guidance requests

TO: Erica S. Lepping (CN=Erica S. Lepping/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

CC: Martha Foley (CN=Martha Foley/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

CC: Linda Ricci (CN=Linda Ricci/OU=OMB/O=EOP@EOP [OMB])
READ:UNKNOWN

CC: Karen Tramontano (CN=Karen Tramontano/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:
OK'd by Tramontano and Foley.

Erica S. Lepping
07/26/99 10:27:15 AM
Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc: Barry J. Toiv/WHO/EOP@EOP, Richard L. Siewert/WHO/EOP@EOP
Subject: press guidance requests

please, by 12:30 p.m., on:

- * Tax Cuts...NYT/WSJ/WP...we will veto? our stance...NEC/OMB
- * Vietnam Trade...NEC...thank you...I received
- * Census...emergency spending...our position...House vote...WP
ed....Bachman
- * Budget...OMB...riders...
- * JFK, Jr.... justification for why burial at sea happened within one day
when in other cases it can take weeks...which agency handles this?
Cabinet Affairs
- * China WTO... NSC/NEC... please consult.. House vote Tuesday on normal
trade relations...

Thanks

Message Sent

To:

Patrick M. Dorton/OPD/EOP@EOP
Robin J. Bachman/WHO/EOP@EOP
Karen Tramontano/WHO/EOP@EOP
Carolyn T. Wu/WHO/EOP@EOP
Linda Ricci/OMB/EOP@EOP
David Vandivier/OMB/EOP@EOP
Jonathan A. Kaplan/OPD/EOP@EOP
Natalie S. Wozniak/NSC/EOP@EOP
LEAVY_D@A1@CD@VAXGTWY@EOP
Michael A. Hammer/NSC/EOP@EOP
Setti D. Warren/WHO/EOP@EOP
Sean P. O'Shea/WHO/EOP@EOP
Kris M Balderston/WHO/EOP@EOP

===== ATTACHMENT 1 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:

Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D66]ARMS24598070X.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 1 =====

Census Guidance – 7/26/99

Last Thursday (7/22), the House Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee approved \$35.8 billion in FY 2000 spending, designating the President's entire \$4.5 billion Census 2000 budget request as emergency spending.

In a Washington Post editorial today, the Post notes that "To keep up the pretense of living within the necessary spending limits, [Congress] is resorting to gimmicks. The latest is to designate the census as an emergency. Never mind that the decennial head count is among the most routine of governmental functions, required by the Constitution, performed at 10-year intervals since 1790."

Q: Where are you on funding Census 2000 as an emergency?

A: On February 1, 1999, the Administration released its FY 2000 budget, including \$2.8 billion for next year's census. Our budget was fully paid for.

In light of the Supreme Court ruling on the House's lawsuit, we had to send up a budget amendment -- which included offsets -- to cover the additional costs required by the Court's ruling. [We sent the budget amendment to Congress during the first week of June.]

Q: Will you support the entire \$4.5 billion as an emergency?

A: [If pushed...] As the Post editorial noted, it is hard to consider the census as an emergency. OMB Director Jack Lew also said this morning at the National Press Club: "It's ironic that they are requesting emergency spending for an event which takes place on schedule every ten years. It does stretch the definition of an emergency."

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Maureen A. Hudson (CN=Maureen A. Hudson/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 14:44:27.00

SUBJECT: Re: JFK photo

TO: Debra S. Wood (CN=Debra S. Wood/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

I think the caption you've written is fine. It seems a bit strange to say "the late JFK Jr." when everyone else in the photo (and other photos in the newsletter also) is also deceased.

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Erica S. Lepping (CN=Erica S. Lepping/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 16:36:22.00

SUBJECT: Re: JFK Jr. Burial

TO: Anne W. Bovaird (CN=Anne W. Bovaird/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

Thanks - Joe actually didn't brief today (after getting back in the middle in the night from Morocco)...

But this Q&A was sent to all our other spokespeople -- I will let you know if anyone thought they needed anything else -- I haven't heard that they did, and thought what you got was sufficient...

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Julia M. Payne (CN=Julia M. Payne/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 16:18:20.00

SUBJECT: Press Schedule #2 Trip of the President to New York, Ohio, and Colorado

TO: Nanda Chitre (CN=Nanda Chitre/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

----- Forwarded by Julia M. Payne/WHO/EOP on 07/26/99
04:17 PM -----

From: Julia M. Payne on 07/22/99 07:50:39 PM
Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: Press Schedule #2 Trip of the President to New York, Ohio,
and Colorado

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

PAGE 29

Press Schedule #2

TRIP OF THE PRESIDENT

TO

NEW YORK, OHIO AND COLORADO

Friday) Sunday
July 23-25, 1999

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

For news planning only

Times are tentative and subject to change

Weather in New York: Showers; High 91, Low 72

Weather/Cincinnati: Partly cloudy; High 91, Low 71

Weather/Aspen: Partly cloudy; High 82, Low 50

THERE WILL NOT BE A PRESS CHARTER TO NEW YORK
ON FRIDAY MORNING OR TO OHIO. THE PRESS CHARTER WILL DEPART AT 1:00 PM TO
COLORADO.

See Page 8 and 9 for press departure times to Colorado.

NOTE: AF One departs Andrews AFB at 8:50 am.

8:00 am EDT AF ONE Pool #1 check-in at Andrews AFB. Please deliver your bags to the Press File in the Passenger terminal.

FILING FACILITIES AND HOTELS

FILING FACILITIES) New York, NY

Press Advance: Settie Warren

POOL HOLD: At St. David,s School (faculty room), near St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church.
A few phones, work space with electric

There will not be a filing center in New York.

FILING FACILITIES) Cincinnati, Ohio

Press Advance: Kelly Amico (lead), Josh Klugman

TV Pool at:

Vernon Manor Hotel
400 Oak Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219
(513) 281-3300

Transmission Pool: Continental A

POOL HOLD: At private residence for DNC Dinner,
A few phones, work space with electric

ASPEN, CO (Friday) Sunday)

Press Advance: Lars Erickson, Ashley Herneich

Travel Office: Guhan Kalambur

Filing Facilities:

WH Press Office, Filing Center and TV Pool all in Roof Garden Tent at:

Snowmass Village Conference Center
76 Elbert Lane

Snowmass, Colorado 81615
(970) 923-2000
(970) 923-6785 - Fax

POOL HOLD: At private residence for DNC Picnic
Saturday morning event: A few phones,
work space with electric

POOL HOLD: At private residence for DNC Dinner
Saturday late evening event:
A few phones, work space with electric

POOL HOLD: DNC Brunch Sunday morning
A few phones, work space with electric

POOL HOLD: At overnight Private residence,
A few phones, work space with electric

OVERNIGHT HOTELS for Aspen, CO:

RON, The President Private Residence
Aspen, CO

RON, Tight Pool The Inn at Aspen
38750 Highway 82
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-1500
(970) 925-9037 - Fax

RON, Rest of Traveling Press The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood
Lodge
100 Elbert Lane
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
(970) 923-3520
(970) 923-5192 - Fax

NOTE: The Silvertree Hotel is located at Snowmass Village which is
approximately 20 minutes from downtown Aspen, CO.

THE WHITE HOUSE/ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE

8:10 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards the motorcade and departs
The White House en route the Reflecting Pool.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies in motorcade

8:15 am EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives the Reflecting Pool and boards MARINE ONE.

8:25 am EDT MARINE ONE departs the Reflecting Pool en route Andrews Air Force Base.
OPEN PRESS

8:35 am EDT MARINE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base and the PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

8:50 am EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Andrews Air Force Base en route John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York.
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 55 min.]
[Time change: None]

9:45 am EDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York
OPEN PRESS

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

10:00 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards MARINE ONE and departs John F. Kennedy International Airport en route Wall Street Landing Zone.
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on pool helo

10:20 am EDT MARINE ONE arrives Wall Street Landing Zone.
OPEN PRESS

10:30 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church, New York.
AF One Pool #1 accompanies

10:50 am EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church and proceeds to

11:00 am EDT THE PRESIDENT attends the private
Memorial Service for John F. Kennedy, Jr.
and Caroline Bessette Kennedy,
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church, New York

Note: AF1 Travel Pool #1 will hold in the motorcade until the
President is inside the Church. Travel Pool will then proceed to St. David,
s School Pool Hold with access to phones, work space w/electric.
There will no audio or coverage of the Memorial Service.

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

1:10 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church en route
Wall Street Landing Zone.
AF One Pool #1 accompanies.

1:30 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Wall Street Landing
Zone and boards MARINE ONE.

1:40 pm EDT MARINE ONE departs Wall Street Landing Zone en
route John F. Kennedy International Airport,
Jamaica, New York
OPEN PRESS
AF1 Travel Pool #1 accompanies on pool helo

1:55 pm EDT MARINE ONE arrives John F. Kennedy
International Airport, Jamaica, New York
and THE PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

2:10 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs John F. Kennedy
International Airport, Jamaica, New York
en route Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Travel Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying Time: 1 hr.]
[Time Change: None]

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

PRESS CHARTER check-in for departure to Colorado:

NOTE: AF One will depart to Cincinnati at 5:25 pm EDT

11:30 am EDT Baggage call, gear call and passenger check-in begin at Andrews AFB.

12:00noon EDT Gear call ends.

12:15 pm EDT Baggage call ends.

12:30 pm EDT Final check-in for passengers with carry on luggage only.

1:00 pm EDT Press charter departs Andrews AFB
en route Grand Junction, CO
[Flying time: 4 hour, 20 minutes]
[Time change: -2 hours]

AIR FORCE ONE RETURN FROM NEW YORK:

3:10 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base.
OPEN PRESS

3:25 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards MARINE ONE and departs Andrews Air Force Base en route the Reflecting Pool.

3:35 pm EDT MARINE ONE arrives the Reflecting Pool.
OPEN PRESS

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

3:45 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs the Reflecting Pool en route The White House.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies

3:50 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House.

4:15 pm AF ONE Pool #1 Check-in for Ohio and Colorado

Departure of the President for Ohio and Colorado
4:45 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs The White House en route the Reflecting Pool.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies

4:50 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives the Reflecting Pool and boards MARINE ONE.

5:00 pm EDT MARINE ONE departs the Reflecting Pool en route
 Andrews Air Force Base.
 OPEN PRESS

PRESS CHARTER ARRIVAL IN GRAND JUNCTION, CO

3:20 pm MDT Press charter arrives Walker Field Airport
5:20 pm EDT Grand Junction, CO

3:40 pm MDT Press buses depart Walker Field Airport
5:40 pm EDT Grand Junction, CO en route Snowmass
Village, CO (press hotel and filing center)
[Drive time: 2 hrs.]

5:40 pm MDT Press buses arrive Snowmass Village, CO
7:40 pm EDT

Friday, July 23, 1999
Cincinnati, OH

5:10 pm EDT MARINE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base and
 THE PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE.

5:25 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Andrews Air Force Base
en route Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport, Hebron, OH
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 1 hour, 20 min.]
[Time Change: None]

6:45 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport, Hebron, OH
OPEN PRESS

7:00 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT departs Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport en route Private
Residence, Cincinnati, Ohio
WH Travel Pool #1 accompanies in motorcade.

7:50 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
proceeds to private time.

8:30 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT address Democratic
National Committee Dinner,
Private Residence, Living Room
Cincinnati, OH
Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #2 for remarks only
Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.

9:30 pm EDT Remarks end.

9:35 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
Private Residence en route Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport, Cincinnati, OH
AF1 Travel Pool #1 accompanies

10:25 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport and boards
AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

10:40 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport en route
Denver International Airport, Denver, CO
OPEN PRESS
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 2 hrs. 30 min.]
[Time change: Minus 2 hrs. to MDT]

11:10 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Denver International
1:10 am EDT Airport, Denver, CO and the PRESIDENT
boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

PRESS NOTE: The President will board a C20 (Air Force One)
immediately upon his arrival at Denver International Airport. The press
corps will board a C20 (nine seats) and a Lear Jet (four seats) and depart
after the C20. Only the C20 lands ahead of Air Force One in Aspen.
The Lear Jet will depart at 11:35 pm en route
Eagle/Vail Airport arriving at 12:05 am. Press will then be taken (45
mins) to press hotel.

11:25 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Denver International
1:25 am EDT Airport, Denver, CO, en route Aspen Pitkin County
Airport, Aspen, CO
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on C130 aircraft
[Flying time: 55 min. w/interchange]
[Time change: None]

12:20 am MDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Aspen Pitkin County
2:20 am EDT Airport, Aspen, CO
OPEN PRESS

12:35 am MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade
2:35 am EDT and departs Aspen Pitkin County Airport,
Aspen, CO en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO.
WH Travel Pool #1 accompanies in motorcade

12:55 am MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence,
2:55 am EDT Aspen, CO and remains overnight.
WH Travel Pool #1 goes on protective standby
until it receives a goodnight.

Friday, July 23, 1999
Aspen, CO (overnight locations):

RON, The President Private Residence
Aspen, CO

RON, Tight Pool The Inn at Aspen
38750 Highway 82
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-1500
(970) 925-9037 - Fax

RON, Rest of Traveling Press The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood
Lodge
100 Elbert Lane
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
(970) 923-3520
(970) 923-5192 - Fax

Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO/Snowmass Village, CO

POOL CALL, Saturday morning at the Inn at Aspen (pool hotel):

8:30 am MDT WH Travel Pool #2 gathers in the
10:30 am EDT Buttermilk Room (pool hold) at the
Inn at Aspen..

Please bring your bags at this time and
check-out if you are moving to the
press hotel.

9:15 am MDT WH Travel Pool #2 departs en route
11:15 am EDT Private Residence.

9:45 am MDT WH Travel Pool #2 arrives Private
11:45 am EDT Residence and remains on protective
standby.

10:15 am MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
12:15 pm EDT Private Residence en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #2 accompanies

10:30 am MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
12:30 pm EDT proceeds to private time.

Note: WH Travel Pool #2 will hold in the
garage at
the Private Residence w/access to phones,
work space w/electric.

Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

10:50 am MDT THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic
12:50 pm EDT National Committee Picnic,
Private Residence, Backyard, Aspen, CO
Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #2 for remarks only
Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.

11:40 am MDT Remarks conclude.
1:40 pm EDT

11:45 am MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
1:45 pm EDT Private Residence en route Private Schedule Location,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #2 accompanies

12:00 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Schedule Location
2:00 pm EDT and proceeds to private time, Aspen, CO

Note: WH Travel Pool #2 holds in the
Aerobics Room
with access to phones, work space
w/electric.

POOL SWITCH OUT:

1:00 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #3 gathers in WH Filing 3:00 pm
EDT Center at Snowmass Village Conference
Center and departs to Private Schedule location to switch out w/WH Travel
Pool #2.

1:30 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #3 arrives
Private Schedule
3:30 pm EDT Location and switches out w/WH
Travel Pool #2.
WH Travel Pool #2 will depart to
Snowmass
Village immediately upon switch
out.

Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

POOL SWITCH OUT:

6:00 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #4 gathers in WH Filing 8:00 pm
EDT Center at Snowmass Village Conference
Center and departs to Private Residence to switch out w/WH Travel Pool #3.

6:00 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
8:00 pm EDT Private Schedule Location en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #3 accompanies

6:15 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
8:15 pm EDT proceeds to private time.

Note: WH Travel Pool #4 holds in the grounds
keepers, office
w/access to phones, work space w/electric.

6:30 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #4 arrives
Private Residence
8:30 pm EDT and switches out w/WH Travel
Pool #3.

WH Travel Pool #3 will depart to
Snowmass
Village immediately upon switch
out.

7:10 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
9:10 pm EDT Private Residence en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #4 accompanies

Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

7:25 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
9:25 pm EDT proceeds to private time, Aspen, CO.

Note: WH Travel Pool #4 will hold in the guest
apartment
at this private residence, w/access to phones,
work space w/electric.

8:05 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic
10:05 pm EDT National Committee Dinner
Private Residence, Outdoor Tent, Aspen, CO
Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #4 for remarks only
Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.

9:05 pm MDT Remarks conclude and THE PRESIDENT proceeds to
11:05 pm EDT private time.

10:35 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
12:35 am EDT Private Residence en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #4 accompanies

10:55 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
12:55 am EDT remains overnight.

WH Travel Pool #4 remains on protective standby
until it receives a goodnight.

Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO (overnight locations):

RON, The President Private Residence
Aspen, CO

RON, Tight Pool The Inn at Aspen
38750 Highway 82
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-1500
(970) 925-9037 - Fax

RON, Rest of Traveling Press The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood
Lodge
100 Elbert Lane
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
(970) 923-3520
(970) 923-5192 - Fax

Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO/Snowmass Village, CO

BAGGAGE CALLS for Sunday morning:

PRESS HOTEL:

The Silvertree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge
(Press hotel at Snowmass Village, CO):

Baggage Call Location: Roof Garden Tent) Press File
Baggage Call Time: 9:00 am MDT

POOL HOTEL:

The Inn at Aspen (Pool Hotel):

Baggage Call Location: Buttermilk Room- Pool Hold
Baggage Call Time: 9:00 am MDT) at pool call time

POOL CALL, Sunday morning in Aspen, CO:

8:15 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 gathers in the
10:15 am EDT Buttermilk Room (pool hold) at the
Inn at Aspen..
Please bring your bags at this time and
Check-out prior to departing the hotel this
morning. You will not have time to check
out later upon your return to the WH File
this afternoon.

8:30 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 departs en route
10:30 am EDT Private Residence.

9:00 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 arrives Private
11:00 am EDT Residence and remains on protective
standby.

Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO

10:05 am MDT The PRESIDENT boards motorcade and
12:05 pm EDT departs Private Residence en route
Private Residence, Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #5 accompanies

10:25 am MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence
12:25 pm EDT and proceeds inside to private time.
WH Travel Pool #5 will hold in the caretaker's apartment
w/access to phones, work space w/electric.

11:00 am MDT THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic
1:00 pm EDT National Committee Brunch
Private residence, Piano Room, Aspen, CO
Brief remarks by the PRESIDENT
Print Reporter for remarks only
Audio on mult and PA of WH Filing Center and to
Pool hold.

POOL SWITCH OUT:

11:30 am MDT AF1 Travel Pool #6 gathers in WH Filing
1:30 pm EDT Center and departs to Aspen Pitkin
Airport for switch out with WH Travel
Pool #5.

11:50 am MDT Remarks conclude.
1:50 pm EDT

Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO

12:00 pm MDT AF1 Travel Pool #6 arrives at Aspen
Pitkin Airport and switches out
w/WH Travel Pool #5 upon arrival
of the motorcade. WH Travel Pool

#5

should depart immediately, you

will
board buses to the airport
immediately
upon arrival at the WH File.

12:00 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and
2:00 pm EDT departs Private Residence en route Aspen
Pitkin Airport, Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #6 accompanies

12:15 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Aspen Pitkin County
2:15 pm EDT Airport, Aspen, CO and boards AIR FORCE ONE
OPEN PRESS

12:30 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Aspen Pitkin County
2:30 pm EDT Airport, Aspen, CO en route Denver International
Airport, Denver, CO
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Travel Pool #6 accompanies on C130
[Flying time: 55 min. w/interchange]
[Time change: None]

PRESS NOTE: The President will board a C20 at Aspen
Pitkin Airport en route Denver International
Airport. The press corps will board a C130 and depart after the C20, but
will land ahead of the C20 in Denver [INTERCHANGE]

Sunday, July 25, 1999
Denver, CO

PRESS CHARTER DEPARTURE from Aspen, CO:

12:45 pm MDT Press board buses at WH Filing Center
2:45 pm EDT (Snowmass Village). These buses
will depart upon arrival of WH Travel
Pool #5 from Aspen Pitkin Airport
(following switch out).

1:25 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Denver International
3:25 pm EDT Airport, Denver, CO and the PRESIDENT
boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

1:40 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Denver International
3:40 pm EDT Airport, Denver, CO, en route Andrews Air

[Time change: Plus 2 hrs.]

Forms at: 8:00 am EDT at Andrews AFB and 4:15 pm EDT at Andrews AFB

Does: AF One, Andrews to New York; Pool helo Wall
Street LZ;
M ,cade to St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church; Protective Standby at Pool
Hold; M ,cade to LZ; Pool helo to JFK Airport. AF One to Andrews; M ,cade to
Private Residence; M ,cade to Cincinnati Northern KY Airport; AF One to
Denver International Airport; M ,cade to Private Residence; Protective
standby
Ends: Upon Goodnight in Aspen,
CO

Members of AF1 Pool #1:

Wire Corr AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo USNWR
Mag Corr Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew ABC
*Radio ABC Radio/AP Radio for Ohio and Colorado
Print LA Times

Members of AF1 Pool traveling on C20 into Aspen

Wire Corr AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo AP
TV Corr/Crew ABC
Radio AP Radio
Print LA Times

Members of AF1 Pool traveling on Lear Jet to Vail/Beaver

Airport

Wire Photo Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo USNWR
Mag Corr Newsweek

POOL #2 Saturday morning, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 8:30 am local in pool hold at Inn at Aspen (Buttermilk
Room);

Does: Protective Standby Private Residence; M ,cade to
Private Residence; Hold at Private Residence; M ,cade to Private
Residence; Hold at Private Schedule Location
Ends: Approx. 1:30 pm local; switch out w/WH Travel Pool #3
at
Private Schedule Location and departing to Snowmass Village.

Members of AF1/WH Travel Pool #2:

Wire Corr AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo Newsweek
Mag Corr Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew CBS

Radio ABC Radio
Print NY Times

POOL #3 Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 1:00 pm local at WH Filing Center at Snowmass
Village for departure for switchout with Pool #2 at Private Schedule
Location
Does: M ,cade to Private Residence; Hold at Private
Residence
Ends: Approx. 6:30 pm local) switchout with Pool
#4 at
Pool Hold at Private Residence for departure to Snowmass Village

Members of Pool #3:

Wire Corr AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo Newsweek
Mag Corr Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew CBS
Radio AP Radio
Print Wall St. Journal

POOL #4 Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 6:00 pm local; at WH Filing Center for departure
to Private Residence for switchout;
Does: M ,cade to Private Residence; Hold at Private
Residence;M ,cade to Private Residence; Protective standby at Private
Residence
Ends: With goodnight at Private Residence

Members of Pool #4:

Wire Corr AP, Reuters, UP*
Wire Photo AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo Newsweek
Mag Corr Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew CBS
Radio ABC Radio
Print LA Times

POOL #5 Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 8:15 am local at pool hold at the Inn at Aspen
(Buttermilk Room);

Does: Protective standby at Private Residence; M ,cade
to Private Residence; Pool Hold at Private Residence;
M ,cade to Aspen Pitkin Airport;
Ends: Approx. 12:15 pm local at Aspen Pitkin Airport

Members of Pool #5:

Wire Corr	AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo	AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo	Time
Mag Corr	Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew	CNN
Radio	ABC Radio
Print	NY Times

POOL #6 Sunday, July 25, 1999
AF One, Aspen to Andrews

Forms at: 12:15 pm local at Aspen Pitkin Airport;
Does: AF1 to Andrews
Ends: Approx. 6:35 pm local upon arrival at
Andrews;

Members of AF1 Pool #6:

Wire Corr	AP, Reuters, UPI
Wire Photo	AP, Reuters, AFP
Mag Photo	Time
Mag Corr	Newsweek
TV Corr/Crew	CNN
Radio	ABC Radio
Print	Wall St. Journal

Message Sent

To:

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Anne M. Edwards/WHO/EOP@EOP
Brenda M. Anders/WHO/EOP@EOP
Megan C. Moloney/WHO/EOP@EOP
Elizabeth R. Newman/WHO/EOP@EOP
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Denver_R._Peacock@who.eop.gov @ inet
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winmc@aol.com@inet
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mhall@usatoday.com@inet
steve.holland@reuters.com@inet
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===== ATTACHMENT 1 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:

Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D54]ARMS296244703.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 1 =====

***Press Schedule #2
TRIP OF THE PRESIDENT
TO
NEW YORK, OHIO AND COLORADO***

***Friday – Sunday
July 23-25, 1999***

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

For news planning only

Times are tentative and subject to change

Weather in New York: Showers; High 91, Low 72

Weather/Cincinnati: Partly cloudy; High 91, Low 71

Weather/Aspen: Partly cloudy; High 82, Low 50

***THERE WILL NOT BE A PRESS CHARTER TO NEW YORK
ON FRIDAY MORNING OR TO OHIO. THE PRESS
CHARTER WILL DEPART AT 1:00 PM TO COLORADO.***

See Page 8 and 9 for press departure times to Colorado.

NOTE: AF One departs Andrews AFB at 8:50 am.

***8:00 am EDT AF ONE Pool #1 check-in at
Andrews AFB. Please deliver your
bags to the Press File in the Passenger
terminal.***

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

PAGE 2

FILING FACILITIES AND HOTELS

FILING FACILITIES – New York, NY

Press Advance: Settie Warren

POOL HOLD: *At St. David's School (faculty room), near St.
Thomas Moore Catholic Church.
A few phones, work space with electric*

There will not be a filing center in New York.

FILING FACILITIES – Cincinnati, Ohio

Press Advance: Kelly Amico (lead), Josh Klugman

TV Pool at:

Vernon Manor Hotel
*400 Oak Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219
(513) 281-3300*

Transmission Pool: *Continental A*

POOL HOLD: *At private residence for DNC Dinner,
A few phones, work space with electric*

ASPEN, CO (Friday – Sunday)

Press Advance: *Lars Erickson, Ashley Herneich*

Travel Office: *Guhan Kalambur*

Filing Facilities:

WH Press Office, Filing Center and TV Pool all in Roof Garden Tent at:

Snowmass Village Conference Center
76 Elbert Lane
Snowmass, Colorado 81615
(970) 923-2000
(970) 923-6785 - Fax

POOL HOLD: *At private residence for DNC Picnic*
Saturday morning event: A few phones,
work space with electric

POOL HOLD: *At private residence for DNC Dinner*
Saturday late evening event:
A few phones, work space with electric

POOL HOLD: *DNC Brunch Sunday morning*
A few phones, work space with electric

POOL HOLD: *At overnight Private residence,*
A few phones, work space with electric

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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OVERNIGHT HOTELS for Aspen, CO:

RON, The President

*Private Residence
Aspen, CO*

RON, Tight Pool

*The Inn at Aspen
38750 Highway 82
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-1500
(970) 925-9037 - Fax*

RON, Rest of Traveling Press

*The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge
100 Elbert Lane
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
(970) 923-3520
(970) 923-5192 - Fax*

NOTE:

***The Silvertree Hotel is located at Snowmass Village
which is approximately 20 minutes from downtown
Aspen, CO.***

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE/ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE

8:10 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards the motorcade and departs
The White House en route the Reflecting Pool.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies in motorcade

8:15 am EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives the Reflecting Pool and
boards MARINE ONE.

8:25 am EDT MARINE ONE departs the Reflecting Pool en route
Andrews Air Force Base.
OPEN PRESS

8:35 am EDT MARINE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base
and the PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

8:50 am EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Andrews Air Force Base
en route John F. Kennedy International Airport,
Jamaica, New York.
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 55 min.]
[Time change: None]

9:45 am EDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives John F. Kennedy
International Airport, Jamaica, New York
OPEN PRESS

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TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO
NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

PAGE 6

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

10:00 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards MARINE ONE and departs
John F. Kennedy International Airport en route
Wall Street Landing Zone.
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on pool helo

10:20 am EDT MARINE ONE arrives Wall Street Landing Zone.
OPEN PRESS

10:30 am EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and
departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church, New York.
AF One Pool #1 accompanies

10:50 am EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives St. Thomas
Moore Catholic Church and proceeds to

11:00 am EDT THE PRESIDENT attends the private
Memorial Service for John F. Kennedy, Jr.
and Caroline Bessette Kennedy,
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church, New York

*Note: AF1 Travel Pool #1 will hold in the motorcade until
the President is inside the Church. Travel Pool will then
proceed to St. David's School Pool Hold with access to
phones, work space w/electric. There will no audio or
coverage of the Memorial Service.*

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99
TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO
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Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

1:10 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church en route Wall Street Landing Zone. <i>AF One Pool #1 accompanies.</i>
1:30 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT arrives Wall Street Landing Zone and boards MARINE ONE.
1:40 pm EDT	MARINE ONE departs Wall Street Landing Zone en route John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York <i>OPEN PRESS</i> <i>AF1 Travel Pool #1 accompanies on pool helo</i>
1:55 pm EDT	MARINE ONE arrives John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York and THE PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE. <i>OPEN PRESS</i>
2:10 pm EDT	AIR FORCE ONE departs John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York en route Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland <i>OPEN PRESS of departure</i> <i>AF One Travel Pool #1 accompanies on board</i> <i>[Flying Time: 1 hr.]</i> <i>[Time Change: None]</i>

Friday, July 23, 1999
New York, NY

PRESS CHARTER check-in for departure to Colorado:

NOTE: AF One will depart to Cincinnati at 5:25 pm EDT

11:30 am EDT Baggage call, gear call and passenger check-in begin at Andrews AFB.

12:00noon EDT Gear call ends.

12:15 pm EDT Baggage call ends.

12:30 pm EDT Final check-in for passengers with carry on luggage only.

1:00 pm EDT Press charter departs Andrews AFB en route Grand Junction, CO
[Flying time: 4 hour, 20 minutes]
[Time change: -2 hours]

AIR FORCE ONE RETURN FROM NEW YORK:

3:10 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base.
OPEN PRESS

3:25 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards MARINE ONE and departs Andrews Air Force Base en route the Reflecting Pool.

3:35 pm EDT MARINE ONE arrives the Reflecting Pool.
OPEN PRESS

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TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

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Friday, July 23, 1999

New York, NY

3:45 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
the Reflecting Pool en route The White House.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies

3:50 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House.

4:15 pm AF ONE Pool #1 Check-in for Ohio and Colorado

Departure of the President for Ohio and Colorado

4:45 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
The White House en route the Reflecting Pool.
Intown Travel Pool accompanies

4:50 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives the Reflecting Pool and
boards MARINE ONE.

5:00 pm EDT MARINE ONE departs the Reflecting Pool en route
Andrews Air Force Base.
OPEN PRESS

PRESS CHARTER ARRIVAL IN GRAND JUNCTION, CO

3:20 pm MDT *Press charter arrives Walker Field Airport*
5:20 pm EDT *Grand Junction, CO*

3:40 pm MDT *Press buses depart Walker Field Airport*
5:40 pm EDT *Grand Junction, CO en route Snowmass*
Village, CO (press hotel and filing center)
[Drive time: 2 hrs.]

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TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

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5:40 pm MDT

Press buses arrive Snowmass Village, CO

7:40 pm EDT

Friday, July 23, 1999

Cincinnati, OH

5:10 pm EDT

**MARINE ONE arrives Andrews Air Force Base and
THE PRESIDENT boards AIR FORCE ONE.**

5:25 pm EDT

**AIR FORCE ONE departs Andrews Air Force Base
en route Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International
Airport, Hebron, OH
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 1 hour, 20 min.]
*[Time Change: None]***

6:45 pm EDT

**AIR FORCE ONE arrives Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport, Hebron, OH
*OPEN PRESS***

7:00 pm EDT

**THE PRESIDENT departs Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport en route Private
Residence, Cincinnati, Ohio
*WH Travel Pool #1 accompanies in motorcade.***

7:50 pm EDT

**THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
proceeds to private time.**

8:30 pm EDT **THE PRESIDENT address Democratic
National Committee Dinner,
Private Residence, Living Room
Cincinnati, OH**
*Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #2 for remarks only
Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.*

9:30 pm EDT Remarks end.

9:35 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
Private Residence en route Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport, Cincinnati, OH
AF1 Travel Pool #1 accompanies

10:25 pm EDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport and boards
AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

10:40 pm EDT AIR FORCE ONE departs Cincinnati Northern
Kentucky International Airport en route
Denver International Airport, Denver, CO
*OPEN PRESS
AF One Pool #1 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 2 hrs. 30 min.]
[Time change: Minus 2 hrs. to MDT]*

11:10 pm MDT AIR FORCE ONE arrives Denver International
1:10 am EDT Airport, Denver, CO and the PRESIDENT
boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

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PRESS NOTE: The President will board a C20 (Air Force One) immediately upon his arrival at Denver International Airport. The press corps will board a C20 (nine seats) and a Lear Jet (four seats) and depart after the C20. Only the C20 lands ahead of Air Force One in Aspen. The Lear Jet will depart at 11:35 pm en route Eagle/Vail Airport arriving at 12:05 am. Press will then be taken (45 mins) to press hotel.

11:25 pm MDT 1:25 am EDT	AIR FORCE ONE departs Denver International Airport, Denver, CO, en route Aspen Pitkin County Airport, Aspen, CO <i>OPEN PRESS of departure</i> <i>AF One Pool #1 accompanies on C130 aircraft</i> <i>[Flying time: 55 min. w/interchange]</i> <i>[Time change: None]</i>
12:20 am MDT 2:20 am EDT	AIR FORCE ONE arrives Aspen Pitkin County Airport, Aspen, CO <i>OPEN PRESS</i>
12:35 am MDT 2:35 am EDT	THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs Aspen Pitkin County Airport, Aspen, CO en route Private Residence, Aspen, CO. <i>WH Travel Pool #1 accompanies in motorcade</i>
12:55 am MDT 2:55 am EDT	THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence, Aspen, CO and remains overnight. <i>WH Travel Pool #1 goes on protective standby until it receives a goodnight.</i>

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Friday, July 23, 1999

Aspen, CO (overnight locations):

RON, The President

*Private Residence
Aspen, CO*

RON, Tight Pool

*The Inn at Aspen
38750 Highway 82
Aspen, CO 81611
(970) 925-1500
(970) 925-9037 - Fax*

RON, Rest of Traveling Press

*The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge
100 Elbert Lane
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
(970) 923-3520
(970) 923-5192 - Fax*

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

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Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO/Snowmass Village, CO

POOL CALL, Saturday morning at the Inn at Aspen (pool hotel):

8:30 am MDT ***WH Travel Pool #2 gathers in the***
10:30 am EDT ***Buttermilk Room (pool hold) at the***
 Inn at Aspen..
 Please bring your bags at this time and
 check-out if you are moving to the
 press hotel.

9:15 am MDT ***WH Travel Pool #2 departs en route***
11:15 am EDT ***Private Residence.***

9:45 am MDT ***WH Travel Pool #2 arrives Private***
11:45 am EDT ***Residence and remains on protective***
 standby.

10:15 am MDT ***THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs***
12:15 pm EDT ***Private Residence en route Private Residence,***
 Aspen, CO
 WH Travel Pool #2 accompanies

10:30 am MDT ***THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and***
12:30 pm EDT ***proceeds to private time.***

Note: WH Travel Pool #2 will hold in the garage at
the Private Residence w/access to phones,
work space w/electric.

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO

10:50 am MDT **THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic**
12:50 pm EDT **National Committee Picnic,**
 Private Residence, Backyard, Aspen, CO
 Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #2 for remarks only
 Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.

11:40 am MDT **Remarks conclude.**
1:40 pm EDT

11:45 am MDT **THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs**
1:45 pm EDT **Private Residence en route Private Schedule Location,**
 Aspen, CO
 WH Travel Pool #2 accompanies

12:00 pm MDT **THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Schedule Location**
2:00 pm EDT **and proceeds to private time, Aspen, CO**

*Note: WH Travel Pool #2 holds in the Aerobics Room
with access to phones, work space w/electric.*

POOL SWITCH OUT:

1:00 pm MDT *WH Travel Pool #3 gathers in WH Filing*
3:00 pm EDT *Center at Snowmass Village Conference*
 Center and departs to Private Schedule
 location to switch out w/WH Travel Pool #2.

1:30 pm MDT *WH Travel Pool #3 arrives Private Schedule*
3:30 pm EDT *Location and switches out w/WH Travel Pool #2.*
 WH Travel Pool #2 will depart to Snowmass
 Village immediately upon switch out.

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO

POOL SWITCH OUT:

*6:00 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #4 gathers in WH Filing
8:00 pm EDT Center at Snowmass Village Conference
Center and departs to Private Residence to
switch out w/WH Travel Pool #3.*

*6:00 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
8:00 pm EDT Private Schedule Location en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #3 accompanies*

*6:15 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
8:15 pm EDT proceeds to private time.*

*Note: WH Travel Pool #4 holds in the grounds keepers' office
w/access to phones, work space w/electric.*

*6:30 pm MDT WH Travel Pool #4 arrives Private Residence
8:30 pm EDT and switches out w/WH Travel Pool #3.
WH Travel Pool #3 will depart to Snowmass
Village immediately upon switch out.*

*7:10 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
9:10 pm EDT Private Residence en route Private Residence,
Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #4 accompanies*

Press Schedule#1 as of 07-22-99

TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO

7:25 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
9:25 pm EDT proceeds to private time, Aspen, CO.

*Note: WH Travel Pool #4 will hold in the guest apartment
at this private residence, w/access to phones,
work space w/electric.*

8:05 pm MDT **THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic**
10:05 pm EDT **National Committee Dinner**
 Private Residence, Outdoor Tent, Aspen, CO
 Print reporter of WH Travel Pool #4 for remarks only
 Audio on mult/ PA of the WH Filing Ctr. and to pool hold.

9:05 pm MDT Remarks conclude and THE PRESIDENT proceeds to
11:05 pm EDT private time.

10:35 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs
12:35 am EDT Private Residence en route Private Residence,
 Aspen, CO
 WH Travel Pool #4 accompanies

10:55 pm MDT THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and
12:55 am EDT remains overnight.

*WH Travel Pool #4 remains on protective standby
until it receives a goodnight.*

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Saturday, July 24, 1999

Aspen, CO (overnight locations):

RON, The President

Private Residence

Aspen, CO

RON, Tight Pool

The Inn at Aspen

38750 Highway 82

Aspen, CO 81611

(970) 925-1500

(970) 925-9037 - Fax

RON, Rest of Traveling Press

The Silver Tree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge

100 Elbert Lane

Snowmass Village, CO 81615

(970) 923-3520

(970) 923-5192 - Fax

Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO/Snowmass Village, CO

BAGGAGE CALLS for Sunday morning:

PRESS HOTEL:

The Silvertree Hotel and Wildwood Lodge
(Press hotel at Snowmass Village, CO):

Baggage Call Location: Roof Garden Tent – Press File
Baggage Call Time: 9:00 am MDT

POOL HOTEL:

The Inn at Aspen (Pool Hotel):

Baggage Call Location: Buttermilk Room- Pool Hold
Baggage Call Time: 9:00 am MDT – at pool call time

POOL CALL, Sunday morning in Aspen, CO:

8:15 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 gathers in the
10:15 am EDT Buttermilk Room (pool hold) at the
Inn at Aspen..
Please bring your bags at this time and
Check-out prior to departing the hotel this
morning. You will not have time to check
out later upon your return to the WH File
this afternoon.

8:30 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 departs en route
10:30 am EDT Private Residence.

9:00 am MDT WH Travel Pool #5 arrives Private
11:00 am EDT Residence and remains on protective
standby.

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TRIP TO NY, OH, and CO

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR RELEASE

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Sunday, July 25, 1999

Aspen, CO

10:05 am MDT 12:05 pm EDT	The PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs Private Residence en route Private Residence, Aspen, CO <i>WH Travel Pool #5 accompanies</i>
10:25 am MDT 12:25 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT arrives Private Residence and proceeds inside to private time. <i>WH Travel Pool #5 will hold in the caretaker's apartment w/access to phones, work space w/electric.</i>
11:00 am MDT 1:00 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT addresses Democratic National Committee Brunch Private residence, Piano Room, Aspen, CO <i>Brief remarks by the PRESIDENT Print Reporter for remarks only Audio on mult and PA of WH Filing Center and to Pool hold.</i>

POOL SWITCH OUT:

11:30 am MDT 1:30 pm EDT	<i>AF1 Travel Pool #6 gathers in WH Filing Center and departs to Aspen Pitkin Airport for switch out with WH Travel Pool #5.</i>
11:50 am MDT 1:50 pm EDT	Remarks conclude.

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Sunday, July 25, 1999

Aspen, CO

12:00 pm MDT

AF1 Travel Pool #6 arrives at Aspen Pitkin Airport and switches out w/WH Travel Pool #5 upon arrival of the motorcade. WH Travel Pool #5 should depart immediately, you will board buses to the airport immediately upon arrival at the WH File.

*12:00 pm MDT
2:00 pm EDT*

*THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs Private Residence en route Aspen Pitkin Airport, Aspen, CO
WH Travel Pool #6 accompanies*

*12:15 pm MDT
2:15 pm EDT*

*THE PRESIDENT arrives Aspen Pitkin County Airport, Aspen, CO and boards AIR FORCE ONE
OPEN PRESS*

*12:30 pm MDT
2:30 pm EDT*

*AIR FORCE ONE departs Aspen Pitkin County Airport, Aspen, CO en route Denver International Airport, Denver, CO
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Travel Pool #6 accompanies on C130
[Flying time: 55 min. w/interchange]
[Time change: None]*

PRESS NOTE:

The President will board a C20 at Aspen Pitkin Airport en route Denver International Airport. The press corps will board a C130 and depart after the C20, but will land ahead of the C20 in Denver [INTERCHANGE]

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Denver, CO

PRESS CHARTER DEPARTURE from Aspen, CO:

12:45 pm MDT *Press board buses at WH Filing Center*
2:45 pm EDT *(Snowmass Village). These buses*
will depart upon arrival of WH Travel
Pool #5 from Aspen Pitkin Airport
(following switch out).

1:25 pm MDT *AIR FORCE ONE arrives Denver International*
3:25 pm EDT *Airport, Denver, CO and the PRESIDENT*
boards AIR FORCE ONE.
OPEN PRESS

1:40 pm MDT *AIR FORCE ONE departs Denver International*
3:40 pm EDT *Airport, Denver, CO, en route Andrews Air*
Force Base
OPEN PRESS of departure
AF One Pool #6 accompanies on board
[Flying time: 2 hrs. 55 min.]
[Time change: Plus 2 hrs.]

2:45 pm MDT *Press buses arrive Walker Field Airport,*
4:45 pm EDT *Grand Junction, CO*

3:10 pm MDT *Press charter departs Grand Junction, CO*
5:10 pm EDT *en route Andrews Air Force Base.*
[Flying time: 3 hours, 20 min]
[Time change: Plus 2 hrs.]

ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE/THE WHITE HOUSE

6:35 pm EDT	AIR FORCE ONE arrives Andrews AFB. <i>OPEN PRESS</i>
6:50 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT boards MARINE ONE and departs Andrews Air Force Base en route the Reflecting Pool.
7:00 pm EDT	MARINE ONE arrives the Reflecting Pool.
7:10 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT boards motorcade and departs the Reflecting Pool en route The White House. <i>Intown Travel accompanies</i>
7:15 pm EDT	THE PRESIDENT arrives The White House.
8:30 pm EDT	<i>Press charter arrives Andrews AFB.</i>

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POOL #1 Friday, July 23, 1999

AF One, Andrews to New York; Helo;

AF One, New York to Andrews; Andrews to Cincinnati,

Cincinnati to Denver, C20 from Denver to Aspen

Forms at: 8:00 am EDT at Andrews AFB and 4:15 pm EDT at Andrews AFB

Does: AF One, Andrews to New York; Pool helo Wall Street LZ; M'cade to St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church; Protective Standby at Pool Hold; M'cade to LZ; Pool helo to JFK Airport. AF One to Andrews; M'cade to Private Residence; M'cade to Cincinnati Northern KY Airport; AF One to Denver International Airport; M'cade to Private Residence; Protective standby

Ends: Upon Goodnight in Aspen, CO

Members of AF1 Pool #1:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>USNWR</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>ABC</i>
<i>*Radio</i>	<i>ABC Radio/AP Radio for Ohio and Colorado</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>LA Times</i>

Members of AF1 Pool traveling on C20 into Aspen

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>ABC</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>AP Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>LA Times</i>

Members of AF1 Pool traveling on Lear Jet to Vail/Beaver Airport

<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>USNWR</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>

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***POOL #2 Saturday morning, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO***

Forms at: 8:30 am local in pool hold at Inn at Aspen (Buttermilk Room);
Does: Protective Standby Private Residence; M'cade to Private Residence;
 Hold at Private Residence; M'cade to Private Residence; Hold at
 Private Schedule Location
Ends: Approx. 1:30 pm local; switch out w/WH Travel Pool #3 at
 Private Schedule Location and departing to Snowmass Village.

Members of AF1/WH Travel Pool #2:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>CBS</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>ABC Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>NY Times</i>

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POOL #3 Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 1:00 pm local at WH Filing Center at Snowmass Village for
departure for switchout with Pool #2 at Private Schedule
Location
Does: M'cade to Private Residence; Hold at Private Residence
Ends: Approx. 6:30 pm local – switchout with Pool #4 at
Pool Hold at Private Residence for departure to Snowmass
Village

Members of Pool #3:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>CBS</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>AP Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>Wall St. Journal</i>

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POOL #4 Saturday, July 24, 1999
Aspen, CO

Forms at: 6:00 pm local; at WH Filing Center for departure to Private
Residence for switchout;
Does: M'cade to Private Residence; Hold at Private Residence; M'cade
to Private Residence; Protective standby at Private Residence
Ends: With goodnight at Private Residence

Members of Pool #4:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UP*</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>CBS</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>ABC Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>LA Times</i>

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***POOL #5 Sunday, July 25, 1999
Aspen, CO***

Forms at: 8:15 am local at pool hold at the Inn at Aspen
(Buttermilk Room);

Does: Protective standby at Private Residence; M'cade
to Private Residence; Pool Hold at Private Residence;
M'cade to Aspen Pitkin Airport;

Ends: Approx. 12:15 pm local at Aspen Pitkin Airport

Members of Pool #5:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>Time</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>CNN</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>ABC Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>NY Times</i>

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POOL #6 ***Sunday, July 25, 1999***
 AF One, Aspen to Andrews

Forms at: 12:15 pm local at Aspen Pitkin Airport;
Does: AF1 to Andrews
Ends: Approx. 6:35 pm local upon arrival at Andrews;

Members of AF1 Pool #6:

<i>Wire Corr</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, UPI</i>
<i>Wire Photo</i>	<i>AP, Reuters, AFP</i>
<i>Mag Photo</i>	<i>Time</i>
<i>Mag Corr</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>TV Corr/Crew</i>	<i>CNN</i>
<i>Radio</i>	<i>ABC Radio</i>
<i>Print</i>	<i>Wall St. Journal</i>

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Daniel W. Burkhardt (CN=Daniel W. Burkhardt/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 10:03:04.00

SUBJECT: NOAA Event: Evelyn Fields Assumption of Command ceremony

TO: Maureen A. Hudson (CN=Maureen A. Hudson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

see me. thanks.

----- Forwarded by Daniel W. Burkhardt/WHO/EOP on
07/26/99 10:02 AM -----

Sean P. Maloney

07/24/99 06:16:02 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Daniel W. Burkhardt/WHO/EOP@EOP, Maureen A. Hudson/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: NOAA Event: Evelyn Fields Assumption of Command ceremony

see attached

----- Forwarded by Sean P. Maloney/WHO/EOP on 07/24/99
06:15 PM -----

Maria Echaveste

07/23/99 06:42:01 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Sean P. Maloney/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Marjorie Tarmey/WHO/EOP@EOP

Subject: NOAA Event: Evelyn Fields Assumption of Command ceremony

Sean-we wanted to see if you could accomodate the request below given the tremendous work that NOAA did on the Kennedy search--I really hope that we can do it.

----- Forwarded by Maria Echaveste/WHO/EOP on 07/23/99
06:15 PM -----

Anne W. Bovaird

07/23/99 06:00:50 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Maria Echaveste/WHO/EOP@EOP, Marjorie Tarmey/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: Thurgood Marshall Jr/WHO/EOP@EOP, Kris M
Balderston/WHO/EOP@EOP, Anne E. McGuire/WHO/EOP@EOP, Richard L.
Siewert/WHO/EOP@EOP
Subject: NOAA Event: Evelyn Fields Assumption of Command ceremony

While Thurgood realizes that this is short notice, he hoped that we would be able to do a presidential message to commemorate the formal Assumption of Command ceremony for Rear Admiral Evelyn Fields as she assumes the position of director of the NOAA Commissioned Corps and the Office of NOAA Corps Operations on Tuesday, July 27 at 9:30am at the Washington Navy Yard. As you know, the NOAA Corps was an integral part of the search and rescue/recovery operation which successfully located the wreckage from the aircraft piloted by John F. Kennedy, Jr. and enabled the Navy divers to recover the victims. In fact, one of the two NOAA hydrographic survey ships which participated in that search, the Whiting, will play a role in the Assumption ceremony. Thurgood feels that this would be an important and timely opportunity for the President to again publicly thank the NOAA Corps for their great efforts in the search for the Kennedy plane.

Since we only learned of this ceremony in the midst of the past week's efforts to recover the Kennedy aircraft, we realize that we have not allowed the proper amount of advance notice required for a presidential message, but we hope that you will be able to assist in securing a letter for this important event.

FURTHER BACKGROUND:

RADM Evelyn Fields was confirmed by the Senate on May 6 as director of the NOAA Commissioned Corps and the Office of NOAA Corps Operations, which is composed of officers and civilians. Adm. Fields is the first woman, and first African-American, to be named director. She began her career at NOAA as a civilian hydrographer at the Atlantic Marine Center in 1972 and became a commissioned officer in 1973 - the first African-American woman to do so. She was also the first woman to command a NOAA ship, McArthur, as well as the first woman to command an ocean-going federal ship for an extended period.

On Saturday, July 17, NOAA was called upon by the U.S. Coast Guard to provide its hydrographic capabilities and expertise and assist in the search for JFK Jr.'s missing aircraft, and diverted two ships - the Rude and the Whiting - to search the seafloor. It was the Rude that located the position of the wreckage, enabling Navy divers to find and recover the fuselage and bodies.

Please note that Secretary Daley and Deputy Secretary Mallett will both participate in the assumption ceremony, and we hope to have Thurgood attend as the White House representative as well.

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Debra S. Wood (CN=Debra S. Wood/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 14:39:42.00

SUBJECT: JFK photo

TO: Maureen A. Hudson (CN=Maureen A. Hudson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

The photo from the JFK Library came today. Do you remember what this looks like? It's very famous??? Jr. is sort of pecking on the typewriter keyboard, JFK is on the phone, and the sec. is looking at Jr. I don't know what to do about the fact that Jr. just died???

How about?

Evelyn Lincoln, President Kennedy's personal secretary, looks on while the President takes an important phone call, and his son, John F. Kennedy, Jr., plays with her typewriter.

?????

Dunno...help!

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Mindy E. Myers (CN=Mindy E. Myers/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 13:24:40.00

SUBJECT: today's press guidance

TO: Brooke B. Livingston (CN=Brooke B. Livingston/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Erica R. Morris (CN=Erica R. Morris/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Matthew J. Bianco (CN=Matthew J. Bianco/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Dario J. Gomez (CN=Dario J. Gomez/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Mindy E. Myers (CN=Mindy E. Myers/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Joshua J. Ackil (CN=Joshua J. Ackil/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Caroline R. Fredrickson (CN=Caroline R. Fredrickson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Lisa M. Kountoupes (CN=Lisa M. Kountoupes/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Broderick Johnson (CN=Broderick Johnson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Charles M. Brain (CN=Charles M. Brain/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Devanshu Patel (CN=Devanshu Patel/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Hildy Kuryk (CN=Hildy Kuryk/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Courtney C. Crouch (CN=Courtney C. Crouch/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Marty J. Hoffmann (CN=Marty J. Hoffmann/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Janelle E. Erickson (CN=Janelle E. Erickson/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Virginia N. Rustique (CN=Virginia N. Rustique/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Joel K. Wiginton (CN=Joel K. Wiginton/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Alphonse J. Maldon (CN=Alphonse J. Maldon/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Martha Foley (CN=Martha Foley/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Tracey E. Thornton (CN=Tracey E. Thornton/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TO: Janet Murguia (CN=Janet Murguia/OU=WHO/O=EOP@EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

----- Forwarded by Mindy E. Myers/WHO/EOP on 07/26/99
01:24 PM -----

Erica S. Lepping
07/26/99 01:23:05 PM
Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc:
Subject: today's press guidance

Press Guidance
Monday, July 26, 1999

Domestic/Economic

1. Budget - to follow
2. Census
3. JFK, Jr.
4. Tax Cuts
5. Veterans
6. Vietnam Trade

Foreign

1. Sarajevo Conference
2. Kosovo (updated)
KLA Activities
3. Northern Ireland (updated)
4. Russia / Gore-Stepashin (new)

5. China - US Relationship (new)
6. Vietnam Trade Arrangement (new)) just statement
7. Colombia / Us Counter-Drug Plane Missing (new)
8. Venezuela / Constituent Assembly Elections (new)
9. National Missile Defense Legislation (new)

Message Sent

To:

Karen C. Burchard/WHO/EOP@EOP
David W. Beier/OVP@OVP
Marsha E. Berry/WHO/EOP@EOP
David Vandivier/OMB/EOP@EOP
Melissa B. Ratcliff/OVP@OVP
Denver R. Peacock/WHO/EOP@EOP
Jenni R. Engebretsen/WHO/EOP@EOP
Lindsey E. Huff/NSC/EOP@EOP
Jennifer M. Palmieri/WHO/EOP@EOP
Barry J. Toiv/WHO/EOP@EOP
Dag Vega/WHO/EOP@EOP
Anne M. Edwards/WHO/EOP@EOP
Brenda M. Anders/WHO/EOP@EOP
Megan C. Moloney/WHO/EOP@EOP
WOZNIAK_N@A1 @ CD @ LNGTWY
Elizabeth R. Newman/WHO/EOP@EOP
Julia M. Payne/WHO/EOP@EOP
CROWLEY_P@A1 @ CD @ LNGTWY
Mark D. Neschis/WHO/EOP@EOP
Nanda Chitre/WHO/EOP@EOP
Beverly J. Barnes/WHO/EOP@EOP
Mark A. Kitchens/WHO/EOP@EOP
Jason H. Schechter/WHO/EOP@EOP
Dorinda A. Salcido/WHO/EOP@EOP
Sarah E. Gegenheimer/WHO/EOP@EOP
Julie B. Goldberg/WHO/EOP@EOP
Julie E. Mason/WHO/EOP@EOP
BERNSTEIN_MJ@A1@CD@VAXGTWY
Nathan B. Naylor/OVP@OVP
Patrick E. Briggs/WHO/EOP@EOP
LEAVY_D@A1@CD@VAXGTWY@EOP
SUNTUM_M@A1@CD@VAXGTWY @ VAXGTWY
OLCOTT_E@A1 @ CD @ VAXGTWY
Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP@EOP
Toby C. Graff/WHO/EOP@EOP
Heather M. Riley/WHO/EOP@EOP
Richard L. Siewert/WHO/EOP@EOP
Michael A. Hammer/NSC/EOP@EOP
Victoria L. Valentine/WHO/EOP@EOP
Erica S. Lepping/WHO/EOP@EOP
Linda Ricci/OMB/EOP@EOP
Mark C. Sheppard/WHO/EOP@EOP

Anne W. Bovaird/WHO/EOP@EOP
Patrick M. Dorton/OPD/EOP@EOP
Stephanie A. Cutter/WHO/EOP@EOP
Michele Ballantyne/WHO/EOP@EOP
Justin L. Coleman/WHO/EOP@EOP
Joel Johnson/WHO/EOP@EOP
Thurgood Marshall Jr/WHO/EOP@EOP
Courtney M. Manning/WHO/EOP@EOP
Audrey Choi/CEA/EOP@EOP
Melissa M. Murray/WHO/EOP@EOP
Sara M. Latham/WHO/EOP@EOP
Brenda B. Costello/WHO/EOP@EOP
Thomas D. Janenda/WHO/EOP@EOP
Lynn G. Cutler/WHO/EOP@EOP
Fred DuVal/WHO/EOP@EOP
Jim Kohlenberger/OVP@OVP
Neal Lane/OSTP/EOP@EOP
Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP@EOP
Marsha E. Berry/WHO/EOP@EOP
Aprill N. Springfield/WHO/EOP@EOP
Mckenzie K. Davis/WHO/EOP@EOP
Ann C. Hertelendy/WHO/EOP@EOP
Rebecca L. Walldorff/WHO/EOP@EOP
Dominique L. Cano/WHO/EOP@EOP
Leslie Bernstein/WHO/EOP@EOP
Mindy E. Myers/WHO/EOP@EOP
Maria E. Soto/WHO/EOP@EOP
Clay Reed/WHO/EOP@EOP
Jocelyn A. Bucaro/WHO/EOP@EOP
Cathy R. Mays/OPD/EOP@EOP
Melissa G. Green/OPD/EOP@EOP

===== ATTACHMENT 1 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:

Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS295831700.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 1 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 2 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:

Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS206831701.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 2 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 3 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS206831702.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 3 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 4 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS216831703.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 4 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 5 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS226831704.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 5 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 6 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS246831705.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 6 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 7 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS256831706.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

===== END ATTACHMENT 7 =====

===== ATTACHMENT 8 =====

ATT CREATION TIME/DATE: 0 00:00:00.00

TEXT:
Unable to convert ARMS_EXT:[ATTACH.D89]ARMS266831707.236 to ASCII,
The following is a HEX DUMP:

Census Guidance
July 26, 1999

Context: Last Thursday (7/22), the House Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee approved \$35.8 billion in FY 2000 spending, designating the President's entire \$4.5 billion Census 2000 budget request as emergency spending.

In a Washington Post editorial today, the Post notes that "To keep up the pretense of living within the necessary spending limits, [Congress] is resorting to gimmicks. The latest is to designate the census as an emergency. Never mind that the decennial head count is among the most routine of governmental functions, required by the Constitution, performed at 10-year intervals since 1790."

Q: Where are you on funding Census 2000 as an emergency?

A: On February 1, 1999, the Administration released its FY 2000 budget, including \$2.8 billion for next year's census. Our budget was fully paid for.

In light of the Supreme Court ruling on the House's lawsuit, we had to send up a budget amendment -- which included offsets -- to cover the additional costs required by the Court's ruling. [We sent the budget amendment to Congress during the first week of June.]

Q: Will you support the entire \$4.5 billion as an emergency?

A: [If pushed...] As the Post editorial noted, it is hard to consider the census as an emergency. OMB Director Jack Lew also said this morning at the National Press Club: "It's ironic that they are requesting emergency spending for an event which takes place on schedule every ten years. It does stretch the definition of an emergency."

Kennedy Burial at Sea
July 26, 1999

Issue:

Is it fair that the Kennedy Burial at Sea happened within 24 hours, while many other families of deceased military members are currently backlogged for months for a ceremony at sea?

Main point (via DoD):

Kennedy's ceremony was NOT a Navy military ceremony. His remains were committed by his family members aboard a Navy ship, but it was not a military burial at sea ceremony.

The backlog issue, while not a satisfactory situation, is separate from the Kennedy burial. Questions about the backlog should be directed to the Navy, which is currently evaluating the situation.

Q: Why did John F. Kennedy, Jr. qualify for burial at sea from aboard a Navy ship?

A: When granted permission by the Navy, the following individuals are accorded disposition from a ship of casketed or inurned remains:

- Members of the uniformed services.
- Retired members of the uniformed services.
- Members discharged under honorable conditions.
- U.S. civilian marine personnel of the Military Sealift Command.
- Dependents of members and former members of the uniformed services.
- Other U.S. citizens who are determined eligible by the Chief of Naval Operations due to notable service or outstanding contributions to the United States.

Clearly, John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s contributions to his country are both notable and outstanding. These include heading up Reaching Up, a nonprofit group that provides educational and other opportunities for workers who help people with disabilities. Mr. Kennedy, along with his sister, also established the Profile in Courage Award. This award recognizes and promotes the quality of political courage and leadership valued by President Kennedy. Additionally, Mr. Kennedy was a member of the President's Commission on Mental Retardation and spent much of his life in public service, working for underprivileged youth, the homeless and the disabled.

Additionally, as the son of a former President of the United States who was a World War II Navy hero, the CNO determined that it is proper for the family to inter the remains of their loved one from the deck of a Navy ship.

Mr. Kennedy's burial at sea was not conducted with a military ceremony. Rather, his remains were committed to the sea by the family in a very simple, but dignified manner, from aboard a Navy ship.

Q: How many sets of cremains are at the Naval Hospital at Portsmouth awaiting burial at sea currently?

A: There are currently 49 cremains awaiting burial at sea. Of those, 22 have been scheduled for ships that will soon be underway. The remaining 27 will be scheduled as soon as ships are identified.

Q: How long have the cremains been there at Portsmouth?

A: Some of these cremains have been at the NMC Portsmouth since March and are awaiting burial at sea.

Q: Why the delay for these cremains?

A: There is typically a one to three month wait between the time cremains are received and the time the burial at sea occurs. Continuous efforts are made to conduct the burial at sea as quickly as possible, as soon as ships are available to perform the appropriate ceremony. Occasionally, families request a certain type of ship and that may cause additional delay as the Navy works to accommodate the request.

Q: What is the Navy doing to address this situation?

A: Admiral Paul Reason, Atlantic Fleet Commander, is personally engaged and has directed that the backlog be cleared as quickly as possible. He has also directed that current procedures be reviewed to determine if the amount of time cremains are held by the Navy prior to interment can be reduced. The Navy continues to conduct burials at sea as quickly as possible, in an effort to assist in the closure process for families of the deceased.

Tax Cuts
July 26, 1999

1. **Yesterday, members of your Administration threatened to veto a tax cut of \$500 billion. Why? And doesn't that show that the Administration doesn't really want a deal?**

The President has clearly articulated his goal of doing First Things First. That means providing for our long-term commitments to Social Security, Medicare, providing a long-overdue prescription drug benefit and meeting the needs of the future in domestic programs, by funding education, the environment, law enforcement and everything else the American people expect from their government.

A \$500 billion tax cut that fails to pay down the debt and threatens our ability to strengthen Social Security, Medicare, and education would be vetoed by the President. [Background: A non-Social Security surplus of roughly \$1 trillion would leave, after the \$500 billion tax cut, resources of roughly \$500 billion. Interest costs would be higher than the Administration's because the funds are going to a tax cut; they would run about \$150 billion for 10 years, leaving you with a remainder of \$350 billion. Now here are the needs you have to meet over 10 years: 1) Medicare spending of \$328 billion; 2) Discretionary Spending of \$328 billion and 3) \$46 billion for prescription drug benefits. You can't fit all of those needs into resources of \$350 billion.]

This is no about "splitting the difference," it is about meeting the principles put forth by the President about the need to provide resources for Social Security, Medicare, the prescription drug benefit and domestic programs like education, the environment and law enforcement.

2. **But doesn't this suggest the President is being inflexible and does not want a deal?**

No. There is plenty to discuss, but the President is not going to embrace the approach of "splitting the difference" when splitting the difference means he would have to abandon First Things First, and his principles for Social Security, Medicare and basic government funding.

3. **Is there room between \$300 billion tax cut, which you've said you'd sign and a \$500 billion tax cut?**

The burden is on anyone who puts forth a proposal on tax cuts to show how they would fund Social Security, Medicare and the basic functions of government, like education, the environment and law enforcement.

(FROM 7-23)

- 4. The Tax cut the House passed included a measure that would make debt reduction a condition for the tax cut. Does this make the Republican tax cut more acceptable to you.**

What the Republicans did was to come up with a gimmick get the votes they needed to pass this tax cut. If you have any doubt, check today's New York Times today which quotes Republicans calling it a "gimmick." The fundamental facts are unchanged: the tax cut is a mistake; it would not provide a single penny to extend the life of Medicare and Social Security, and it would force deep cuts -- roughly 50% in the by 2009 --- in the broad range of domestic discretionary programs that are a basic part of our government -- including education, the environment and law enforcement.

In testimony before the House Banking Committee Thursday, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve said that debt reduction related to the surplus is "an extraordinarily effective force for good in this economy.....I have argued that we ought to allow the surplus to run the debt down. "

(IF ASKED: But CBO says the Republican plan has more debt reduction than Administration plan, pls refer to CBO guidance.)

BIASED CBO “ANALYSIS” DISTORTS DEBT REDUCTION

- **CBO Uses Partisan and Distorted Analysis to Legitimize an Exploding Tax Cut Plan as Pro-Debt Reduction.** The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), in its July 21 testimony on the President’s Mid-Session Budget, has broken with a long tradition of nonpartisanship and fabricated its own new policy in place of the President’s budget. Even though the Republican tax cuts consume nearly the entire non-Social Security surplus and cost over \$3 trillion in the second ten years, CBO portrays the Republican tax cut plan as contributing to debt reduction by assuming a budget that would require roughly 50 percent cuts on all domestic programs. At the same time, CBO rewrites the President’s budget – by ignoring over \$300 billion in debt reduction saved to extend Medicare solvency.
- **CBO Creates a Rosy View of Debt Reduction by Assuming Domestic Cuts of Roughly Fifty Percent.** In order to make room for the Republican \$800 billion tax cut Republicans would have to cut roughly 50 percent from all domestic government programs from education, to health care, to fighting crime, to air safety, to veteran affairs and agriculture. If any of these areas were to be protected, the necessary cuts in the remaining priorities would have to be even deeper. A budget framework that assumes that every program from the FBI to Head Start to NIH can be cut nearly in half is a sham. Nonetheless, CBO seeks to legitimize this untenable political chart that claims more debt reduction for the Republican plan than the President’s plan.
- **The House Republican Tax Cut Plan Explodes to \$3 Trillion in the Second 10 Years – Yet CBO Presents Their Plan as Fiscally Responsible.** The House Republican tax cut plan clearly explodes to \$3 trillion in the second ten years -- and an additional \$1.5 trillion lost in interest savings – an amount that would consume all of the non-Social Security savings over the second 10 years. Despite this, CBO’s charts are designed to present the Republican tax cut as saving part of the surplus.
- **CBO Ignores Over \$300 Billion in Debt Reduction in the President’s Budget Proposal.** The President’s budget provides for debt reduction to extend Medicare solvency. After accounting for Medicare prescription drug expenditures, this means that \$328 billion in resources will be used to pay down the debt. CBO chooses to resolve baseline differences by simply not counting the debt reduction.
- **Just Make the Common Sense Comparison.** Compare a tax cut of roughly \$800 billion, which the Republicans propose, with a plan that pays down \$300 billion in debt reduction for Medicare and a tax cut of \$250 billion which the President proposes. Simple common sense will tell you it is simply not logical to get **more** debt reduction with a \$800 billion tax cut than with a tax cut that is more than half a trillion dollars smaller.

THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN TAX BILL: COMMENTS FROM EDITORIAL BOARDS, ECONOMISTS, REPUBLICANS & OTHERS

July 23, 1999

RECENTLY, A LARGE NUMBER OF ECONOMISTS, LEADING EDITORIAL PAGES, AND EVEN REPUBLICAN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE EXPRESSED SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT THE REPUBLICAN TAX CUT BILL.

ECONOMISTS AND OPINION LEADERS

- **Fifty leading economists, including six Nobel laureates, said in a letter on July 21, 1999 that big tax cuts were bad economic policy.** The letter stated, *"In contrast, a massive tax cut that encourages consumption would not be good economic policy. With the unemployment rate at its lowest point in a generation, now is the wrong time to stimulate the economy through tax cuts. Moreover, an ever growing tax cut would drain government resources just when the aging of the population starts to put substantial stress on Social Security and Medicare. Further, the projections assume substantial undesirable reductions in real spending for non-entitlement programs, including important public investments. Given the uncertainty of long-term budget projections, committing a large tax cut would create significant risks to the budget and the economy."*
- **Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, told the House Banking Committee on July 22, 1999,** *"I remain where I was last time I was here and the time before. I think that the reduction that is occurring in the Federal debt at this stage as a consequence of the ongoing surplus is an extraordinarily effective force for good in this economy. I think it has moved interest rates lower than they otherwise would have been. I think the cost of capital is lower. And for a number of other reasons, I think it has been a major factor in expansion of economic growth."*

Greenspan added, *"As I have said before I would therefore prefer, because we are being confronted with a very large demographic change down the road which means the ratio of retirees to workers is going to go up very dramatically, that our emphasis needs to be on national savings which creates capital investment which creates increasing productivity and therefore the capacity when finally the baby boomers retire, that their standard of living will be kept high without creating problems in growing standards of living for our working population. Therefore as I have said, my first priority, if I were given such a priority, is to let the surpluses run."* (Humphrey-Hawkins Testimony of Chairman Greenspan, Before the House Banking Committee, July 22, 1999).

- **Robert D. Reischauer, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, stated in his July 12, 1999, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Briefing:** *"...were there to be a tax cut, even of the House of Representatives proportions, \$800-and-something over ten years, the amount of relief that would actually be distributed in the next year or so would be pretty modest. And so, the impact on the economy would be really quite small but inevitably in the wrong direction to the extent that it stimulated consumption and therefore boosted aggregate demand in an economy that is already straining against its capacity limits."*
- **Former U.S. Senators Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Warren Rudman (R-NH) stated in their July 12, 1999 op-ed in The Washington Post:** *"If spending is increased or taxes are cut based on the expectation of huge surpluses and the projection turns out to be wrong, deficits easily could reappear where surpluses are now forecast."*
- **Edward Gramlich, a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, told The New York Times** (Louis Uchitelle, The New York Times, July 14, 1999.) *"If taxes were cut while the nation's resources are highly employed, that would put more pressure on monetary policy."* The New York Times added, *"He suggested, in effect, that the Fed might have to raise interest rates to prevent the extra spending that would over stimulate the economy. Others worried that the higher rates might reduce investment or bring down inflated stock prices, damaging the economy through these avenues."*

(ECONOMISTS & OPINION LEADERS CONT.)

- **Alan Blinder, a Princeton University Economist** who served as Fed vice chairman from 1994 to 1996 said a tax cut offset by higher interest rates today *"would reverse the policy mix that we have followed in the 1990s with such splended effect: low interest rates and high corporate investment."*
- **Sandra Shaber, an economist at the WEFA Group in Philadelphia**, told USA Today (Owen Ullman, July 13, 1999) that *"Tax cuts would be a good idea if the economy were to slow significantly. But things look like they're going pretty well."*
- **Iris Lav of the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities** told the Economist (July 17, 1999) that the annual cost of the Archer plan jumps from \$152 billion in 2008 to \$203 billion in 2009; thereafter the costs "explode" to \$2.8 trillion between 2010 and 2019, *"at the same period of time when the baby-boom generation will begin to retire and non-Social Security surpluses are expected to level off and ultimately to decline."*
- **Joel Slemrod**, director of the Office of Tax Policy Research at the University of Michigan, was quoted in The New York Times (Michael Weinstein, July 15, 1999), as saying the *"idea of cutting capital gains tax to move the economy significantly is implausible"* The amount of taxes involved which in typical years hovers between \$20 billion and \$50 billion, *"is too small to shift an \$8 trillion economy"*

MANY LEADING NEWSPAPERS IN THEIR EDITORIAL PAGES OR IN NEW ANALYSIS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERNS REGARDING THE REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN.

LEADING NEWSPAPERS

- **The New York Times** (July 22, 1999) said of the Republican tax cuts: *"The biggest damage to Federal revenues would come just as the baby boomers begin to retire, driving up the costs of Social Security and Medicare. To make the numbers work, the House Republicans are using rosy forecasts of a continued strong economy and unrealistic assumptions about the level of spending cuts that they are likely to make. We hope the economic predictions prove accurate, but there is a good chance they will not."*
- **The Washington Post** (July 23, 1999) criticized the Republican tax cut: *"The true cost of the tax cuts in the Republicans' bills would also be much greater than the surplus. The bills were carefully written in such a way as to mask their cost by delaying the full effect."*
- **The Wall Street Journal** (Gregg Hitt, July 16, 1999) in news analysis called the House bill *"a budget buster built around a 10% cut in each of five individual income-tax brackets... While spreading tax benefits to almost every GOP constituency, it soaks up most of the projected surplus, excluding Social Security... fiscal conservatives in both parties wring their hands over whether the huge tax cut envisioned by GOP leaders will crimp the Treasury's ability to reduce the federal debt. It could also pose a long-term threat to Social Security."*
- **USAToday** (July 23, 1999) stated in an editorial entitled "Tax Cut May Look Appetizing, But It's Loaded With Hidden Costs." *"The latest poster child for political excess is the whopping \$792 billion, 10-year tax cut passed by House Republicans. It has something for almost everyone—a 10% reduction in income tax rates...But no matter what you may think of the package, it is built on fanciful accounting."*

SEVERAL HOUSE REPUBLICANS VOTED AGAINST THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN TAX BILL.

HOUSE REPUBLICANS

- **Rep. Michael Castle (R-NY):** *"To have no latitude whatsoever, I think, is an error. We need to have a smaller tax cut."* [Associated Press 7/20/99]

Castle also said, *"We already have a very large tax cut... We're struggling to increase all our appropriations bills for education, health, the welfare of the country. ... My own personal vote is we should not increase the tax cut at all."* [Associated Press, 7/1/99]

- **Rep. Connie Morella (R-MD):** *"I want debt retirement and [putting money into] Medicare and Social Security. I think the tax bill will be better coming next session, after proving what we can do with the budget."* [The Washington Times, 7/22/99]
- **Rep. Greg Ganske (R-IA):** *"I cannot support an \$870 billion tax cut... I think it would be much more reasonable for us to sit down, reach across the aisle, reach down Pennsylvania Avenue, and come to an agreement."* [The Wall Street Journal, 7/15/99]

Ganske, criticizing the Republican tax cut tactics, also said, *"They just figured they could bulldoze everyone, twist arms and break off legs. Do my Republican colleagues want to see a campaign ad of Bill Gates and the billions and billions of dollars he is saving from this?"* [The Wall Street Journal, 7/22/99]

SEVERAL ECONOMIC OPINION MAKERS HAVE SPOKEN OUT AGAINST THE REPUBLICAN "GIMMICK" AS IT WAS TERMED BY AN ANONYMOUS GOP CONGRESSMAN THAT PERSUADED SOME MODERATE HOUSE REPUBLICANS TO SUPPORT THE TAX BILL

STATEMENTS

- **Robert D. Reischauer**, a budget expert and former CBO director was quoted in The Washington Post (Eric Pianin, July 23, 1999) saying yesterday that the compromise measure *"appears to provide some modest safety valve, but I wouldn't bet a nickel on its effectiveness."*
- **Reischauer** told The New York Times (David Rosenbaum, 7/23/99) that *"It doesn't make a whole lot of sense."*
- **Stephen Entin**, an economist at the Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation, who was a Treasury official during the Reagan Administration and is a devotee of deep tax reductions, said of the Republicans new tax cut measure: *"It's just a dumb idea."* [The New York Times, 7/23/99]
- **A Senior Republican Congressman**, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told The New York Times that *"It was a gimmick, a smear of grease to get us past a sticky spot last night."* [The New York Times, 7/23/99]

Veteran's Affairs
ORIGINAL MEDICAL CARE BUDGET PROPOSAL
July 26, 1999

Question: **How did your original budget submission rationalize almost no growth in VA health care while U.S. health costs escalate?**

Answer: The VA health care system is changing dramatically. Only two years ago, VA received authority to treat all patients on an outpatient basis. Prior to this, there were significant numbers of veterans in VA hospital beds that the private sector would have more economically treated on an outpatient basis. As VA continues to shift from hospital to outpatient care, savings are generated that, along with increased medical collections, made an increase in appropriated resources unnecessary, even with increasing numbers of veterans.

Background: When the new authority passed two years ago, VA anticipated reducing the cost per patient by 30%, increasing the number of patients served by 20%, and increasing non-appropriated funding to 10% of total funding over 5 years. The available data indicated that we were on target. While medical collections were growing, the FY 2000 increase of \$124 million is insignificant in the context of the total Medical Care budget of \$18.1 billion.

In an October 1998 letter to the President, 74 Members of Congress from Northeastern States requested a \$1.7B funding increase for VA Medical Care in FY 2000 – later reflected in the Budget Resolution. The budget, however, would fund Medical Care at the FY 1999 enacted level. The Members request reflects concerns about the patient-based resource allocation methodology - known as VERA - which VA implemented in 1997. VERA addresses long-standing regional funding imbalances by gradually shifting dollars from the Northeast to the West and Southeast. GAO reviewed VERA in 1997, and concluded that it is making resource allocation more equitable in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

WAS THE BUDGET A MISTAKE? WHY INCREASE NOW?

Question: What has changed in six months that has lead you to believe that VA needs additional funds now?

Answer: As VA has improved access to care through newly-opened community clinics, and provided continuity of care through primary care teams, additional veterans have sought care in VA. While the net cost of these new users is not fully understood yet, they have stressed parts of the system where management and operational flexibility is minimal, e.g., waiting times in primary care have increased in several geographic areas.

Background: As of April 30, we have provided treatment to almost 2.7 million veterans, 0.4 million of whom are new users of the system. VA's ability to see these patients in a timely manner is much more difficult than had been anticipated when the FY 2000 budget was prepared. The creation of the primary care team/veteran relationships has resulted in better quality, but delays in the scheduling of visits.

WHY ARE YOU NOT PROVIDING \$3 B REQUESTED BY VETERAN GROUPS?

Question: Why would the Administration not match the request made by veterans groups in the Independent Budget prepared by Veteran Service Organizations?

Answer: The Independent Budget does not account for the changes VA has made in areas such as the delivery of care, changing demographics, large savings due to national buying and procurement, savings due to sharing agreements and consolidations, and information technology advancements.

Background: The Independent Budget (IB) is a document prepared by a group of advocates. The amount that the IB believes should be requested is always several billion dollars higher than the President's Budget.

PLEASE EXPLAIN THE FACILITY CLOSURE IN TENNESSEE?

Question: What are VA's plans for the Murfreesboro Medical Center?

Answer: There are no plans to close this facility. VA is considering integrating this facility with the Nashville Medical Center to improve the overall quality of care to veterans in Tennessee. Under the proposed plan, inpatient and outpatient care would be retained in Murfreesboro.

Background: Under consideration at the local level, is a plan to integrate the Murfreesboro and Nashville medical centers. Veterans in the Murfreesboro area are concerned about the future of the Murfreesboro facility under such an integration plan, specifically the elimination of inpatient care at Murfreesboro. VA has given local veterans assurance that: the inpatient and outpatient care will continue to be available, a newly introduced shuttle between the two facilities will be maintained, and the network business office. Under the plan, less than 20 beds in total, would be closed at both facilities.

**WHAT GOOD THINGS HAVE OCCURRED LATELY TO IMPROVE CARE FOR
TENNESSEE VETERANS?**

Question: **How has care been improved to Tennessee veterans lately?**

Answer: The VISN has received \$7 million in supplemental FY 1999 funding from the VA national reserve fund to improve patient care.

Background: VA retains a national reserve fund to meet unexpected needs. This network requested additional funding in FY 1999 to address additional care needs in its transplant and long-term care programs.

HOW DOES THE AMENDMENT AFFECT UPPER INCOME NON-DISABLED VETS?

Question: How would higher income non-service disabled (Priority 7) veterans be effected by the budget amendment?

Answer: As of April, there are almost 600,000 Priority 7 veterans enrolled in the VA health care system (half have used the benefit to date). This is more than twice the number of veterans in this category that VA had traditionally served in any one year. These veterans will continue to receive health care benefits. However, enrollment of Priority 7 veterans after the end of FY 1999 will be restricted until the consequences on service-disabled and lower-income veterans can be assessed.

Background: The appropriation has only traditionally funded the care for these veterans on a space-available basis. The budget amendment would fund the care of Priority 7 veterans currently enrolled. However, would stop the enrollment of additional Priority 7 veterans in FY 2000. The influx of new patients, many of whom are Priority 7, combined with the changes in the delivery of care (inpatient to outpatient), and the method of care (from individual health problems to coordinating all of a veterans care), have led to stresses in the system (waiting times).

WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS AMENDMENT AND HOW?

Question: What is the direct benefit to veterans?

Answer: This amendment will enable VA to address the waiting time problems nationwide for all veterans. It will make available additional home and community-based long-term care, and direct more resources to spinal cord injury and homeless programs.

Background: The amendment provides an additional \$800 million to fund medical personnel to provide direct care to veterans and alleviate the time it take a veterans to get an appointment with a doctor; \$100 million for construction of more clinics/examination rooms and planning for long-term structural needs; and \$100 million for home and community-based long-term care to allow veterans to remain at home or in the community rather than enter nursing homes.

WHAT DOES THIS AMENDMENT DO FOR VETERANS LONG-TERM CARE?

Question: How will veterans benefit from the additional long-term care funds?

Answer: The President's FY 2000 increased VA long-term care spending 10% in FY 2000, over the FY 1999 level, including a 54% increase in home and community-based care and an increase in the level of VA-provided ongoing support for state veteran nursing homes. This amendment provides an additional \$100 million in funding for additional home and community-based care, and will more than double FY 1999 expenditures in this area (108% increase).

Background: While the percentage of elderly veterans within the veteran population will continue to increase, the total number of veterans needing long-term care will peak in FY 2000. Adequately meeting this temporary increase in demand requires VA to shift its LTC focus from inpatient nursing home care to home and community based care. VA offers a wide array of home and community-based long-term care services. In the past, much of VA's focus had been on institutional nursing care. The President's FY 2000 Budget took a major initial step forward in providing home and community-based care to veterans. This \$100 million in this amendment will allow VA to take another significant step forward in this area. This additional funding will allow VA to build upon technological changes allowing for the delivery of care at home.

WHAT DOES THIS AMENDMENT DO FOR SPINAL CORD INJURY AND HOMELESSNESS?

Question: **How do spinal cord injured and homeless veterans benefit from the amendment?**

Answer: We are specifically targeting these two programs for increases and VA will provide the Congress within a week a summary of how much and how these funds will be directed.

Background: Spinal cord injury (SCI) programs have been a special emphasis, high priority program in the VA system. Recent broad changes in the way care is delivered in the VA system has led to criticism by veterans service organizations that SCI programs were diminishing in importance to VA. While there is no evidence to support this assertion, will allow VA to improve the quality of this program.

The President's FY 2000 Budget included \$50 million in initiatives to help homeless veterans. This additional funding will allow VA to care for more homeless.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR BENEFITS PROCESSING?

- Question:** Why does the amendment not provide any additional funding for benefits processing?
- Answer:** The President's FY 2000 Budget addresses this problem aggressively. It provides \$50 million over the FY 1999 enacted level to ensure the smooth delivery of compensation, pension, housing and education benefits to veterans. This includes an additional 440 FTE (a 10% increase in staff) devoted to adjudicating benefit claims.
- Background:** The President's Budget provided \$860 million for benefits processing.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR VA CEMETERIES?

Question: Why does the amendment not provide any additional funding for new cemeteries or cemetery operations?

Answer: The President's FY 2000 Budget provides \$5 million over the FY 1999 enacted level to operate the National Cemetery Administration enabling VA to finish opening and begin opening five new nation cemeteries. This represents an expansion of the cemetery system that is unprecedented since the Civil War.

Background: The President's FY 2000 Budget requests \$97 million for the National Cemetery Administration.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR HEPATITIS C TREATMENT?

Question: Why does the amendment not provide any additional funding for Hepatitis C?

Answer: The President's FY 2000 Budget provides sufficient funds (\$250 million) for the testing and treatment of Hepatitis C. This assumes a prevalence rate of almost 6% -- three times that of the general population.

Background: Original VA estimates assumed a prevalence of 12.3% (requiring about \$700 million) but were based on a biased sample of San Francisco veterans only. VA recently did a nationwide sampling and arrived at a prevalence rate close to our current budget assumption. No new funds are needed.

Vietnam Trade Talking Points

July 26, 1999; 10:00 AM

Note: Be sure to call this an “**agreement in principle**”

Q. Was an agreement initialized or signed?

A. We have an agreement in principle.

Q. What does that mean?

A. Today’s understanding marks Vietnam’s agreement in principle to address a range of issues which will assist access of the Vietnamese markets to US goods, services, agriculture and intellectual property rights.

Q. What exactly does this cover?

A. Today’s understanding marks Vietnam’s agreement in principle to address such things as import quotas, import bans, and high tariffs, as well as the general liberalization of financial services, telecommunications, distribution, and other matters relevant to access to the Vietnamese markets of U.S. goods, services, agriculture, and intellectual property rights. Vietnam also agreed to a series of measures to ensure transparency in rules and regulations effecting trade.

Q. Have you reached a basic agreement?

A. Yes, an agreement in principle but a great deal of work still needs to be done.

Q. What are the next steps?

A. United States Government and the Government of Vietnam will continue consultations through the summer: United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky will be meeting with her counterpart in the fall at the APEC Ministerial.

Q. Does Congress have a role in this?

A. Of course. We will now consult with Congress. Once an agreement is finalized, it will be formally submitted to Congress. Congress would have to approve the agreement by Joint Resolution, after which the President would then be able to make effective Normal Trade Relations with Vietnam. This would be subject to annual renewal under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS GUIDANCE

July 26, 1999

EUROPE / RUSSIA

Sarajevo Conference

**Kosovo (updated)
KLA Activities**

Northern Ireland (updated)

Russia / Gore-Stepashin (new)

ASIA

China - US Relationship (new)

Vietnam Trade Arrangement (new)

INTERAMERICAN

Colombia / Us Counter-Drug Plane Missing (new)

Venezuela / Constituent Assembly Elections (new)

NONPROLIFERATION

National Missile Defense Legislation (new)

SARAJEVO CONFERENCE
July 20, 1999

CONTEXT: The President will attend a Summit in Sarajevo on July 30, accompanied by Secretary Albright and other senior Administration officials. The President and German Chancellor Schroeder announced on June 21 at the U.S.-EU Summit their desire to convene such a conference to give "strong dynamism" to the Stability Pact and to "get the people of the region to work together to define their own future." The conference is scheduled to begin July 29 with preliminary sessions for the countries of the region.

What do you hope to accomplish in Sarajevo?

The Sarajevo Summit should:

launch Stability Pact in highly visible and symbolic way;

promote vision of region founded on cooperation and integration with Europe;

encourage SEE countries to cooperate in developing shared strategy for stability and growth;

demonstrate Serbia's isolation under Milosevic;

advance Dayton implementation.

The nations of southeast Europe have expressed their commitment to leave behind a century filled with violence and division to join a stable, democratic Europe with the hope of enduring peace and prosperity in the new millennium. Last month, the European Union adopted a Stability Pact for Southeast Europe to assist them with that commitment. Along with the leaders of the European Union and the G-8, the President will meet with regional leaders in Sarajevo later this month to show concrete support for these initiatives.

We have emphasized that NATO's success in Kosovo is a first step towards creating a Europe that is undivided and at peace, one that is founded on democracy and cooperation and that rejects nationalism and strife. The President is going to encourage this shared vision of Europe united and free.

The Balkans conferences of Europe's past led to "Balkanization". By contrast, this conference will respond to the climate of cooperation and to the initiatives the countries of the region themselves bring to the table. For that reason, the U.S., EU and G-8 leaders will come to the table to hear what the countries of southeast Europe plan in order to improve the climate for outside investment, strengthen democracy, and bring about true cooperation in the region.

Milosevic shares none of these goals and for that reason Serbia cannot participate.

Are you still determined that Serbia won't get a dime of aid until Milosevic resigns?

No aid for reconstruction.

We have always said that Serbia will receive humanitarian aid but not "one red cent" for reconstruction.

Looking at ways to support democratic opposition, including at the local level.

KOSOVO
July 26, 1999

What do you have to say about the Gracko (GRATZ-ko) massacre?

This is a sad tragedy.

Welcome Thaci's condemnation.

KFOR is investigating and ICTY personnel have visited the scene.

This violence is not the same as the massive, systematic campaign that was unleashed by Milosevic. But it is profoundly wrong. We will work against it. Those in the region who wish to be our partners must work against it as well.

UNMIK is undertaking several measures -- including the transitional council -- with the goal of healing wounds between peoples as Serb and Albanian leadership have promised to do.

What is the status on deployment?

KFOR in Kosovo totaled over 35,000, including 5500 Americans. Additionally, there are 7500 more troops in FYROM under General Jackson's command, including 1560 Americans.

KLA ACTIVITIES

CONTEXT: The KLA had a July 20-21 deadline to deposit prohibited arms. KLA Chief of Staff Ceku requested a postponement of his meeting with General Jackson in order to complete assessment. The WP and NYT today publish articles reporting compliance failure.

Why did the KLA fail to comply?

General Jackson does not regard the KLA's request as non-compliance, but rather as an indication of the seriousness with which General Ceku is taking this important issue.

We are encouraged by the large number of weapons handed over in recent days.

What is needed now is time to ensure that a proper assessment is made of deadline compliance.

Jackson and Ceku will address these issues when they meet on Saturday.

What is the status of KLA demilitarization?

Disarmament is generally proceeding smoothly. Compliance with July 21 deadline generally satisfactory but still under assessment.

COMKFOR is generally content with KLA intentions to comply with the undertaking.

A number of illegal KLA stations have been discovered by KFOR and shut down.

NORTHERN IRELAND

July 26, 1999

CONTEXT: Sinn Fein met over the weekend in Dublin and its vice president, Pat Doherty, is quoted as saying there is no chance of IRA decommissioning before May 2000. Martin Ferris, an elected SF councillor in the Republic of Ireland, warns people not to underestimate the extent of the "crisis." On the heels of last week's IRA statement -- which gave no ground on decommissioning -- there is a sense that the SF position is hardening, reflecting grassroots frustration. However, this comes as no surprise, and to some extent Adams is letting the party "vent." Both Doherty and the IRA statement refer to "the current political context," implying that there is still room for progress if the unionists will agree to establish a power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland. The bottom line is that negotiating positions are being staked out loud and clear in the lead-up to Senator Mitchell's review in September (Trimble's negotiating position is equally clear -- he's on vacation).

Sinn Fein is saying there will be no decommissioning before May 2000, as required by the Good Friday Agreement -- isn't the peace process finished?

We are not underestimating the extent of the difficulties facing Senator Mitchell, the governments and the parties as they consider how to implement the Good Friday Agreement. But there is no question the GFA is the best and only deal on the table. The parties have come a long way toward each other's positions, and we are convinced it is possible to overcome the latest hurdle. We urge the parties to talk to each other over the coming weeks and to cooperate with Senator Mitchell when the review resumes in early September.

RUSSIA: GORE-STEPASHIN MEETING
July 26, 1999

CONTEXT: Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin will meet with Vice President Gore on Tuesday, July 27 for an executive session of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission. The Prime Minister will also meet with President Clinton. The Prime Minister and Vice President will close their meetings with a brief press availability in Room 450 of the OEOB.

Why is Stepashin coming to town?

The Vice President and Prime Minister will meet in a small-format "executive session" of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission. This session will not include the usual complement of committee meetings, but will center on discussions between the two principals. The primary aim is to set Commission priorities for the coming year, and discuss other issues in U.S.-Russian relations.

What's the schedule?

The Prime Minister will arrive Monday afternoon at Andrews, and will be met by a welcoming committee led by Strobe Talbott and Leon Fuerth. (The Vice President and Secretary of State are both out of town). On Tuesday morning, the Prime Minister and Vice President will have a breakfast meeting at the Vice President's home. The two will meet again for an executive session on security-related issues at about 2:00 at Blair House, to be followed by another executive session on economic issues. There is a planned meeting between the Prime Minister and President Clinton sometime after 4 pm, which the Vice President will also join, and the Vice President and Prime Minister will conclude their session with a press availability at about 5 pm in room 450 in the OEOB.

What's on the agenda?

The two will talk about a range of bilateral and international issues, including Russia's economic reform agenda, trade and investment, arms control, non-proliferation, and commercial space cooperation. The two will also work to set priorities for the Commission over the coming year.

What results do you expect?

The primary purpose of the meeting is for the Vice President and Prime Minister to meet, discuss the U.S.-Russia relationship, and set Commission priorities for the coming year. The two sides will issue a joint statement Tuesday afternoon.

What else is Stepashin doing in town?

On Monday night, the Prime Minister will make remarks to the U.S.-Russia Business Council.

On Tuesday, in addition to meeting with the President and Vice President, he will have meetings on Capitol Hill and at the World Bank. Following the White House sessions, the Prime Minister will meet with American Jewish leaders at Blair House.

CHINA – US RELATIONSHIP
July 26, 1999

What is your evaluation of the Secretary of State's meeting with Chinese FM Tang in Singapore? Is the U.S.-China relationship back on track?

Constructive meeting.

Good discussion of global and regional issues. Important to the national interests of both countries that we continue to share views and consult on developments in Korean peninsula, South Asia.

Touched on full range of bilateral issues as you have seen.

Urged dialogue with Taipei to resolve differences in cross-Strait dialogue, recalled the importance we attach to peaceful resolution and reiterated no change in our "one China" policy.

Noted that State Department delegation will travel to China this week to pursue discussion of our humanitarian payments to victims of the accidental bombing. Two sides' respective claims regarding property damage also are under discussion.

Both sides looking forward to meeting between two Presidents in New Zealand in September.

Why didn't Albright raise the prospect of talks with the China on its accession to the WTO?

We have on numerous occasions indicated our desire to advance bilateral dialogue with China, including our WTO discussions.

Beijing knows that we remain prepared to resume our talks when the Chinese are prepared to do so.

No change in our position. We believe China's entry into the WTO on strong commercial terms is in both countries' interest.

VIETNAM TRADE ARRANGEMENT

July 26, 1999

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

(Rabat, Morocco)

For Immediate Release

July 25, 1999

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to announce that the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the Vietnamese Trade Ministry reached an understanding in principle on the terms of a broad commercial agreement between the United States and Vietnam. This provisional arrangement is a major step forward for both countries, and I congratulate our American negotiators and those of Vietnam on their work. I will review the agreement carefully and consult further with the Congress and the government of Vietnam in the hope that we will be able to move on to finalization, formal signature, and the establishment of normal trade relations very soon.

In addition to promoting American commercial interests, enhancing our economic relations with Vietnam will also help advance cooperation with Vietnam on other issues of importance to our nation. These include obtaining the fullest possible accounting of our missing from the war, encouraging continued progress in the freedom of emigration, and seeking improvements in the human rights situation in Vietnam. Since the United States normalized relations with Vietnam in 1995, we have made steady progress in each of those areas. A bilateral trade agreement with Vietnam constitutes one more positive step in that process.

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COLOMBIA: US COUNTER-DRUG PLANE MISSING

July 26, 1999

CONTEXT: *A U.S. Army Airborne Reconnaissance Low (ARL-1) aircraft disappeared during a routine counter-drug mission in southern Colombia last Friday. Five Americans and two Colombians are reported missing. An intensive search and rescue effort is being conducted, but has been hampered by weather conditions.*

NMCC called today to say weather is still impeding SAR. Cloud coverage is between 6,000 and 12,000 ft., and the recovery site is at 8800 ft. One OV-10, accompanied by a P-3, in the vicinity but not able to view the site. They will be pre-deploying helicopters to a launch site 30 miles from the recovery site beginning at 1140 EDT, however no time has been determined for when cloud coverage will break or when they will be able to reach the recovery site.

Any update on the disappearance of a U.S. military aircraft in Colombia last Friday?

The U.S. military aircraft has been missing in Colombia since contact was lost during a routine counter-drug flight Friday morning. A combined counter-drug team of five Americans and two Colombians were on board.

An intense search and rescue operation is being conducted jointly by the U.S. and Colombia, including more than 25 airplanes and helicopters from the United States and Colombia.

U.S.-Colombian counter-drug cooperation is an essential element in our overall counter-drug strategy, particularly our efforts to curtail the supply of illicit drugs from the Andean region.

What about reports that U.S. support for Colombia has moved beyond counter-drug cooperation to assistance for the counter-insurgency effort?

Recent intimations that U.S. policy has shifted from cooperating with the Colombians on the regional counter-drug fight to assisting their counter-insurgency efforts are ill-informed. As President Clinton has stated clearly, our policy in Colombia is to support President Pastrana's efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the country's longstanding civil conflict and to work with the Colombians – along with our other regional partners – on fighting illicit drugs.

A military solution is simply not possible for Colombia. We call on the FARC to honor its commitments and enter into good faith negotiations with the Colombian Government.

[If asked specifically about the plane's mission...]

The plane was conducting a routine counter-drug flight in support of ongoing U.S.-Colombian efforts to counter drug trafficking activities in the region.

The primary focus of the mission was assessing remote jungle sites where U.S. and Colombian authorities believed illicit drug labs may have been located.

[If asked about whether the FARC or ELN was responsible for bringing the plane down...]

We have no information at this time on the reason for the plane's disappearance. We note that the major guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), has denied responsibility, but we have no information at this time that corroborates their denial.

VENEZUELA: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

July 26, 1999

CONTEXT: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's political alliance won an overwhelming majority of seats in Sunday's Constituent Assembly elections. The 131-member assembly will write a new constitution for Venezuela. With over 90 percent of the vote counted, Chavez's alliance is projected to win 120 seats (92 percent of the Assembly). Voter turnout was approximately 47 percent, up from the April referendum's 40 percent turnout, but still below the 62 percent turnout for the December 1998 presidential election.

Some observers are concerned that Chavez will use this mandate to dissolve the current Congress and impose authoritarian rule through the Constituent Assembly. Chavez has argued that the Assembly would have such power, and has recommended such action in several speeches. Until the Assembly convenes and defines its agenda and role, Venezuela will be in a period of heightened political expectation and anxiety.

Any comment on Venezuela's Constituent Assembly elections?

Yesterday's Constituent Assembly elections in Venezuela were another important step in that country's process to re-write its constitution.

We congratulate the Venezuelan people and the Venezuelan government—especially those institutions responsible for the administration and security of the vote—for a clean, transparent election.

President Hugo Chavez's political alliance won over 90 percent of the Assembly seats. What does this mean?

President Chavez's political alliance won a dramatic and overwhelming victory. This outpouring of support is evidence of the Venezuelan peoples' desire for profound and significant political change.

Any comments on allegations that Chavez will use his control of the Assembly to dissolve the Congress and the Supreme Court and impose authoritarian rule in Venezuela?

The Venezuelan government has channeled its efforts at significant political change through democratic and constitutional practices and institutions.

We have supported this effort, and we will continue to do so. We trust that this effort will continue to take place within a democratic, constitutional, and legal framework, that it will guarantee the continuity of democratic institutions, and all the freedoms that Venezuelans so jealously guard, and that it will be the product of negotiation, compromise, and, if possible, consensus.

NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE LEGISLATION

July 26, 1999

CONTEXT: *On Thursday (July 22), the President signed legislation stating “It is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system ...”. The bill includes two important amendments that were supported by the Administration: one stating that funding for the NMD will be “subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for National Missile defense,” and the other stating “It is the policy of the United States to seek continued negotiated reductions in Russian nuclear forces.” The President issued a signing statement noting the importance of these two provisions: the first underscores that any NMD deployment must be subject to the authorization and appropriations process, making clear that no decision on deployment has been made; and the second puts the Congress on record as continuing to support negotiated reductions in strategic nuclear arms, reaffirming that our missile defense policy must take into account our arms control objectives.*

POLICY

U.S. is committed to the development of a limited NMD system. The system is designed primarily to counter the threat posed by emerging rogue state missile threats.

No decision has been taken on whether to proceed with deployment: a decision on whether to deploy a limited NMD will not be made until the year 2000 or later.

The ABM Treaty remains a cornerstone of strategic stability and the U.S. is committed to continued efforts to strengthen the Treaty and to enhance its viability and effectiveness.

Why did the President agree to sign the NMD bill?

The original legislation introduced in the Senate – which we had strongly opposed – was modified on a bipartisan basis to include two amendments.

First, the law now specifies that any NMD deployment must be subject to the authorization and appropriations process, where, beginning in the year 2000, we will address the question of if, when and what to deploy.

Second, the law puts the Congress on record as continuing to support negotiated reductions in nuclear forces, reaffirming that our missile defense policy cannot be divorced from our arms control objectives.

Cologne meeting between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin made clear we are committed to pursuing discussions on START III and ABM later this summer, while pushing for START II ratification. Want to work cooperatively with Russia on possible amendments to ABM Treaty.

What is your response to those who charge that these amendments were meaningless?

The changes are significant, not just to the Administration, but to a number of Senators and Members of the House who supported the final bill.

Without those changes, it is very unlikely that missile defense legislation could have been signed into law this year.

Does the Administration interpret this legislation as a “decision to deploy” an NMD?

No.

By specifying that any decision to deploy a limited missile defense must be subject to the annual authorization and appropriations bills – which the President can accept or reject – the bill makes clear that no decision has yet been made.

We intend to address the deployment question next year, when we will review the results of the flight tests, refine our cost estimates, review how the threat has matured, and consider the state of play on arms control.

If the legislation is not a decision to deploy, then why does it matter?

Legislation is a step forward in the debate over missile defense.

Consistent with the Administration’s view that the threat posed by rogue state ballistic missile programs is real and growing; that we should move as quickly as we can to develop a limited NMD system; and that we should engage Russia on further reductions in nuclear arms and discussions on future of ABM Treaty.

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Jena V. Roscoe (CN=Jena V. Roscoe/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

CREATION DATE/TIME:26-JUL-1999 15:33:45.00

SUBJECT: Re: President to attend Memorial Service for JFK, Jr. and Carolyn Bessette

TO: Tesspooner@aol.com (Tesspooner@aol.com [UNKNOWN])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

they may have it by close of business today. i will call you before i
leave today.