*The Eleventh Man* is about ordinary people entangled in a war not of their making, a story that never goes away.

So, it has the commonalities of war--characters who are always up against the fact that someone gives an order and people die--and within that, specifics of World War II that aren't well-known:

--women pilots. About a thousand women flew as WASPS--Women's Air Force Service Pilots--a lot of them ferrying aircraft, particularly fighter planes, from the factory to air bases around the country. My female lead character is Captain Cass Standish, a squadron commander, who tells her pilots:

"Flying is the second greatest thrill a woman can know. The first is *landing!*"

- Night Witch (Nachthexen)

--People ask me if there's any Montana in this book and I tell them Yes, it's set in Montana and other theaters of combat. And that's surprisingly true. Great Falls was a primary base for Lend-Lease aircraft being shipped to Russia (the Soviet Union). The planes would be ferried from the factory to Great Falls, then up through Canada to Fairbanks or Nome, where Russian crews would take over. About eight thousand aircraft went that route.

--A couple of other World War II settings I don't think you get from Stephen Ambrose or the Greatest Generation treatment:

The Coast Guard patrolled the coastline of Oregon and Washington and down into California with dogs.

And the buzz bomb siege of Antwerp, late in the war, which at its worst was as bad as the London blitz; the Americans and British had twenty thousand anti-aircraft troops ringed around Antwerp, shooting down V-1 rockets with ack-ack.

I was one of the lowliest soldiers in the Cold War--an Airman in basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas:, on Black Saturday (Oct. 27, 1962)--The most precarious day of the Cuban missile crisis, when a U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba, and another U-2 wandered hundreds of miles into Soviet airspace over Siberia, and the U.S. and the Soviet Union came very close to nuclear war. In a military decision so bizarre I wouldn't dare use it in a novel, our commander let us go off the base that morning on a bus tour of San Antonio that included the Alamo.

That afternoon I wrote a letter home saying, "I have to admit this whole base has been a bit tense this past week. We have been in "condition 3" since Wednesday; condition 4 is "normal," 3 is "a grave situation," 2 is "war," and 1 is "every man for himself."

One Minute to Midnight — Michael Dobbs

Ben: "nervous in the service"

So, it's not only about World War II, but about how people's lives get utterly changed through no fault of their own.

Ultimately, about trying to hold onto your life when war has stacked the deck against you.

*The Eleventh Man* gives readers a fresh take on two big eternal questions:

--During a time of war, how do you hold your own life together?

--What do you do when love sneaks up on you inconveniently?

It's about the consequences of war on people whose luck has changed. Ben and his teammates have grown up during the Depression, their lives seem more promising than their parents' experience had been, and on Dec. 7, 1941, that all turns around.

For Cass Standish, the war is a chance at the cockpit, male territory only until then. Cass and the others in her WASP squadron are the temporary beneficiaries of luck, in terms of flying.

"History writes the best yarns."

Marian Hodgson, Winning My Wings
Air Transport Command Ferrying Division

**One of the most intriguing characters in the novel is Captain Cass Standish, the squadron commander of the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) ferrying fighter planes in the book. How did she enter your imagination?**

Cass Standish won my heart, as she does military war correspondent Ben Reinking's, as soon as I began to bring her to life on the page.

As a fiction writer, I must ask myself the one big question all the time: what if? With Cass, it was one of those classic Shakespearean and Conradian "what ifs," but with a woman soldier as the hero, so to speak: what if a great intuitive leader is less in command, even of herself, when away from duty?

I think it's no coincidence that the wonderfully beckoning word "story" is contained within that most generous other word, "history," and so I had the advantage, in Cass's role, of the intrinsic but little-known drama of the actual WASPs ferrying notoriously dangerous P-39 fighter planes to northern U.S. air bases for Lend-Lease transport onward to the Soviet Union. Probably my favorite part of the book is when Cass addresses her squadron about a new batch of unproven aircraft they are to pilot:

> "Friends and officers," her voice dropped, "flying is the second greatest thrill a woman can know."
>
> She paused, taking in the expressions on her audience, patently quizzical on some, borderline lewd on others.
>
> "The first, you goofs, is *landing!*"

During the war more than a thousand women completed military flight training, and by the time the WASPs were "inactivated" in December 1944, thirty-eight women pilots had lost their lives in the course of duty. Cass Standish when she came to me on the page seemed to fit right in with that tough role of being a woman serving in men's war--wiry, salty, at home in the cockpit and up against a lot when on the ground.

***The Eleventh Man* is a sweeping story of World War Two, from a Montana aircraft-ferrying base to theaters of combat in Europe and the Pacific, and its characters serving in various military branches. How do you research such a book?**

Where Google doesn't go. The tragicomic episode of Ben Reinking and bomber pilot Jake Eisman trying to limp an aged floatplane home from Alaska across the Canadian wilderness, for instance, was inspired by a couple of oral history interviews, on old fading typescript, that I dug out in an archive. In other stories of the eleven teammates caught in the world of war, I sometimes used only a kernel of history, such as the fact that the Coast Guard patroled remote American beaches with dogs, to imagine from.

On a larger scale, I take great care that my characters and their circumstances are subject to the laws of historical gravity--in this novel, many soldiers from where I grew up did serve in the long and terrible jungle fighting in New Guinea and the Philippines, and in the book's other little-known epic of combat, Antwerp in the last autumn and winter of the war did suffer attacks from Germany's V-1, and later V-2, flying bombs of a severity reminiscent of the Luftwaffe's earlier bombing blitz of London.

All said and done, though, delving into oral history accounts, memoirs, military unit histories and the like is just that for a novelist, delving. The constant is the crafting of the language, the telling of a story in a way no one has ever heard told before. That, and the making of characters who are beguiling but valid--for the reader, a memory waiting to happen, there in the interiorly lit pages of a book.

**The novel is set in the 1940s and World War II. Can you compare that historical era with ours today?**

Yes, in just two words: Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now as then, we are not at peace nor anywhere near it, are we. American soldiers, men and women both, are again getting killed. This novel tackles the gap between what those soldiers experience and what we at home comprehend of the war, or for that matter, are permitted to comprehend. It has been said that the first casualty of war is truth, and we have recently had the instance of the Pentagon being caught at coaching many of the so-called "military analysts" who delineate the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts for us on TV. In *The Eleventh Man*, Ben Reinking constantly has to contend with the mostly hidden but heavy hand of the wartime propaganda outfit he is assigned to, the Threshold Press War Project--TPWP, naturally known in military jargon as "Tepee Weepy"--by trying to tell the truth between the lines of his combat correspondence.

**Do you have any military experience yourself?**

Just enough, I like to think. My own military service as Sergeant Doig was not in combat, but at the edge of war's dice-throw: as an Air Force reservist on active duty during the Cuban missile crisis, and later narrowly missing assignment to Vietnam. So, some of the book's inflections of life in uniform are drawn from my own watching and waiting as earth-shaking B-52 bombers regularly roared off from our Texas air base, within range of those Russian missiles in Cuba.

More vitally for *The Eleventh Man*, though, I grew up around men, and a few women, of World War II in our rural county in Montana; by the count of the weekly newspaper there, 273 served in that war, out of a population of 2,237 in the 1940 census. One of my uncles had been a torpedoman on a destroyer in the Pacific, another was in the Montana National Guard contingent sent to New Guinea, and in the saloons where my father did the hiring for his ranch crews were regular barstool patrons who had been in the thick of the war; and of course, there were the gaps in families and the community left by those killed in the war.

The military version of fate, then, has been part of my own life and naturally works its powers in my writing. Having said that, there is nothing even remotely autobiographical in the novel nor much of me in any of the characters; I count myself present in the pages only in leading the reader to that magical jumping-off place, fiction.

**Are you working on another novel right now?**

Joyously, yes. Morrie Morgan, the teacher at the one-room school in my previous book, *The Whistling Season*, and the character I have been quizzed about more than any other in my nine novels, makes his return. Morrie for his own inimitable reasons alights in Butte, Montana, the rowdy mining city that is home to the Richest Hill on Earth, in 1919 after, as he puts it, "Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in that prairie teacherage in that prior time." One of Morrie's pupils from that Marias Coulee school also will sassily show up, and I leave it to readers to guess which one.

27 April 11

Dear Joan,

While I know you are quite capable of perusing the NY Times yourself, I couldn't resist clipping this to send to you; it was the Easter issue so perhaps you were busy and missed it —

I thought of The Eleventh Man as I read this story of Violet Cowden and her amazing life — I think you brought the WASPs to life for legions of readers. For all of your stories, I thank you. I feel my NW friends represent how I see myself. While CA is a climate Camelot (truly — I heard "peepers" last night, and the jasmine is heavy in the air) the East Bay culture is different....

Bookstore job gives me access to books and Readers, but it's not my "community." Our home & yard are lovely and a great place to enjoy my many hours of free time! My very best to you and Carol — Warmly, Cheryl McKeon

*Pioneering pilots of WWII get a belated honor*

# 'These women opened the doors to aviation'



ELLEN M. BANNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

*Dorothy Olsen, 94, tries on her old pilot's uniform from World War II as she stands with a painting of herself as one of a thousand WASPs, Women Airforce Service Pilots, in 1943 and 1944. She's being honored with a Congressional Gold Medal in March.*

BY NANCY BARTLEY
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

They were mavericks of their day, taking to the skies when the nation was at war and most women were at home caring for families. At a ceremony this spring, 11 Washington women will join the 200-some surviving Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) in receiving Congressional Gold Medals for service during World War II.

Sixteen more medals will be given to local WASPs posthumously.

Congressional Gold Medals have been awarded nearly 150 times since the nation was born in 1776. The women join polio-vaccine inventor Dr. Jonas Salk and poet Robert Frost, as well as two other World War II groups honored since 2000: the Navajo Marine Corps Radio Operators, known as the "Code Talkers," who developed a code using their Native language to communicate military messages, and the Tuskegee Airmen.

Congress and President Obama approved the honor for the WASPs last year.

WASPs ferried planes across the country, hauled targets for shooting practice and performed other stateside flying duties. They not

See > PILOTS, A6




*Dorothy Olsen, hanging out with the boys. But some male colleagues resented the WASPs.*




PHOTOS COURTSY OF OLSEN FAMILY

*Olsen with a P-38 Lightning. She ferried planes all over the U.S. during World War II.*

< Pilots
FROM A1

## WORLD WAR II FEMALE PILOTS

## Women to receive Congressional Gold Medal

only provided a valuable wartime service when male pilots were in demand on the front, but historians say they made it possible for women to be military pilots today.

Ever since she was 5, Maj. Nicole Malachowski, 35, an Air Force fighter pilot, was inspired by the WASPs.

"These women opened the doors to aviation," she said. After Malachowski was asked to speak at a WASP convention, she took on the project of starting the legislation so the WASPs could be honored. She enlisted the support of U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, and in June, Congress approved the bill.

For the WASPs, now in their 80s and 90s, it's a recognition that comes after what some feel was decades of rejection from the country they served. At many of the bases where they were stationed, there was intense prejudice.

Barbara London, a native of Washington who now lives in California, was awarded the Air Medal, which recognizes achievement by pilots. But WASP historian Deb Jennings says the military received protest letters from male pilots who said if the medals were given to women, they would send theirs back.

"They told us: Go home. Go back to the kitchen and keep your mouths shut," said Mary Jean Sturdevant, of Spanaway, who started working as a ground-school instructor at 21 and taught thousands of men to fly. When she joined the WASPs, she finally got the flying time she coveted.

Not only were the WASPs not paid the same as male pilots, say historians, but they were denied veteran status until 1977.

Some 25,000 women signed up, but only 1,074 completed the training. Thirty-eight WASPs died in service.



COURTESY OF MARY JEAN STURDEVANT

*Mary Jean Sturdevant worked as a ground-school instructor at 21 and taught thousands of men to fly. When she joined the WASPs, she finally got the flying time she coveted.*

### *"Personal challenge"*

Mary Call, of Mount Vernon, was in the fall of her senior year at the University of Washington majoring in sociology, and she had just earned her civilian pilot license when she joined the WASPs.

After Pearl Harbor, "every adult felt a personal challenge," she said.

Many of the WASPs were "extremely patriotic women who were there because we felt we could do something that assisted the men in combat," Call said.

She was sent to Sweetwater, Texas, where Jacqueline Cochran's WASP program, started in 1942, was based.

"Our four hours a day on the flight line were ... filled with flying. The other half of the day, we were in ground school studying map reading, meteorology, radio codes, aerodynamics, engines — all subjects totally foreign to us — so we spent the evening hours studying.

"Social life almost didn't exist. The place was called Cochran's Convent for good reason."



ELLEN M. BANNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

*Sturdevant in her Spanaway home, where she's lived for 40 years. She survived a near-fatal air crash.*

And there were many risks. Nancy Dunnam, from Bellevue, had to bail out of a plane when an engine caught fire. Sturdevant survived a near fatal air crash when a BT-13's engine quit on takeoff near Merced, Calif.

But for them, it was worth it.

"The most wonderful thing was the freedom of getting into the air," Sturdevant said. "Most of the time, I flew solo. I loved the sound of the engines, the smell of aviation fuel."

### *A dream of flying*

Dorothy Olsen grew up in rural Oregon, reading books about WWI flying aces.

At the state fair in Salem during the Great Depression, she saw a biplane and spent every cent of the money she had earned picking hops to pay for a ride. The first time she soared above the mountains, it was a feeling unequal to anything she had experienced, she said.

She was a Portland dance instructor when she began taking flying lessons. Joining the WASPs was her opportunity of a lifetime. In no time, she said, she was flying fighters cross-country at night, just to see what it would be like to navigate by the moon, doing extra takeoffs and landings for the thrill of it, and waking up annoyed airfield managers at 3 a.m.

Once at Cherry Point, N.C., she decided to hold a P-51 on the runway during takeoff, pulling the nose up only when she ran out of airfield.

"I wondered what it would feel like," she said. "I pushed it hard, and then I pulled the stick back and climbed fast."

A voice from the tower came over the radio, and she feared it would be a reprimand.

"Come back soon," the control-tower dispatcher said.

Her daredevil stunts once caused damage to a plane's front-wheel cowling.

"I suppose I had been hanging upside down at the time," she said. When she landed, the 7-inch piece of metal fell off on the airfield. The ground crew handed it to her, knowing she would be reprimanded if damage to the plane was found.

She hid the evidence in her footlocker, where it's been for nearly 55 years, a small reminder of the glory days when anything was possible.

*Nancy Bartley: 206-464-8522 or nbartley@seattletimes.com*

### WASPs from Washington

**These women will receive the Congressional Gold Medal:** Dorothy Olsen, University Place; Mary Jean Sturdevant, Tacoma; Josephine Swift, Seattle; Alta Thomas, Sequim; Elizabeth Munoz, Pomeroy; Margaret Martin, Oak Harbor; Enid Fisher, Olympia; Elizabeth Dybbro, Des Moines; Nancy Dunnam, Bellevue; Mary Call, Mount Vernon; and Lois Auchterlonie, Anacortes.

**Medals will be posthumously awarded to:** Arlene Baker, of Shelton; Blanch Osborn Bross, Vancouver, Wash.; Lora Jane Cunningham, Edmonds; Penelope Garrett, Friday Harbor; Patricia Gibson, DuPont; Helen Marie Hansen, Graham; Betty LeFevre, Wauna, Pierce County; Jean Howard, Marjory Munn, Carolyn Saas and Gail Sigford, all of Seattle; Jennie Reiman, Fall City; Dorothy Scott, Oroville; June Ida Stevens, Anacortes; Martha Volkomener, Bellevue; and Rita Ronstad Webster, Shoreline.

*Source: Women in Military Service for America*

### Congressional Gold Medal

The Congressional Gold Medal — Congress' highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions — honors individuals, institutions or events.

The first recipients included citizens who participated in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War.

Congress later broadened the scope of the medal to include authors, entertainers, pioneers in aeronautics and space, explorers, lifesavers, notables in science and medicine, athletes, humanitarians, public servants and foreign recipients. See a complete list of honorees at *seattletimes.com*.

*Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives*

# Beautician found career in sky

## Marjory Munn flew noncombat missions in WWII, trained others

**OBITUARY |**

BY NANCY BARTLEY
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

Marjory Munn was a West Virginia-born beautician when she won a contest that would change her life. The prize was flying lessons, and they opened a world Mrs. Munn had never experienced and for the first time made her feel totally free, she said in 1993.

Mrs. Munn, who in 1943 became a Women's Air Force Service Pilot, or WASP, continued flying and became one of a group of women who flew noncombat missions in the U.S. during World War II. She died July 25 of cancer. She was 88.

In early July, President Obama signed an order giving the more than 1,000 WASPs the Congressional Gold Medal for their service. Mrs. Munn will receive hers posthumously in January.

"She was a very remarkable woman and a great lady," said Dr. Bonnie J. Dunbar, chief executive officer of the Museum of Flight, in which Mrs. Munn was deeply involved for years. "If you look back in history, women started flying not long after the Wright Brothers but never flew in combat. The WASPs were put together to train other pilots and test airplanes, and they did it before the era of good navigation. Their performance opened the door to many ... in aviation and space."



MUNN FAMILY

*Marjory Munn received a three-year appointment in 1983 to the Defense Advisory Committee On Women in the Services, the equivalent of being a lieutenant general when visiting bases for inspections.*

Mrs. Munn endowed the WASP exhibit at the Museum of Flight and also gave presentations at the museum about her experiences during the war.

As a WASP, Mrs. Munn was sent to Alabama to test Beechcraft AT-6s, planes used to train fighter pilots, and to fly them to Great Falls, Mont., where male pilots picked them up.

She was also qualified to fly the P-39 pursuit plane and B-25 bomber.

After WWII, Mrs. Munn became a flight attendant with Pan American World Airways, and in 1951 became an active-duty member of the Air Force.

She married her husband, Jim Munn, on Okinawa in 1953 and several years later moved to Spokane, where he went to law school at Gonzaga University. They moved to Seattle in 1962 and settled on Queen Anne Hill.

She graduated from the University of Washington in 1965. In 1983, she was selected by the Secretary of Defense for a three-year appointment to the Defense Advisory Committee On Women in the Services (DACOWITS). This appointment was the equivalent of being a lieutenant general when visiting bases for inspections.

But to her three sons — Kirk, Rob and John — Mrs. Munn was simply mom. It didn't really sink in how accomplished his mother was until recently, Rob Munn said. "She always said they just did what they had to do. Later I thought, 'This is really a big deal.' "

Mrs. Munn was preceded in death by her husband, who died in 2002. She is survived by her sons who all live in the Seattle area, and eight grandchildren.

A memorial service is scheduled for 11 a.m. Aug. 8 at First Free Methodist Church, 3200 Third Ave. W., Seattle. Remembrances may be made to Pacific Medical Center, 1200 12th Ave., Seattle, WA 98144, (Attn: Karyn Becker), for use by the infusion suite in memory of Marjory Munn.

*Nancy Bartley: 206-464-8522 or nbartley@seattletimes.com*

## Deaths,

**Andrew (Andy) L. BARONE**
8/13/1930 ~ 7/20/2009

A resident of the San Franci Area, Andy attended th schools where he gradua Balboa High School and Sa co Junior College. He volu service in the US Arm shown a potential for le was chosen to attend C School at Fort Belvoir, lowing graduation and ment in the US, he wa Engineer Aviation B as a part of the Army with Air Fo

Andy returned t Upon release f attended Healc where he ma Engineering and marrie he took em Californ Depart drafts for th posit Mai De U

The New York Times
# Book Review
June 22, 2008
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OFFICE OF PAUL SAHRE

# Real W.M.D.'s

*By Richard Holbrooke*

**ONE MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT** Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War. *By Michael Dobbs. Illustrated. 426 pp. Alfred. A. Knopf. $28.95.*

Any new entry in the crowded field of books on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis must pass an immediate test: Is it just another recapitulation, or does it increase our net understanding of this seminal cold war event? By focusing on the activities of the American, Soviet and Cuban militaries during those tense October days, Michael Dobbs's "One Minute to Midnight" passes this test with flying colors. The result is a book with sobering new information about the world's only superpower nuclear confrontation — as well as contemporary relevance.

Dobbs, a reporter for The Washington Post, states his central thesis concisely in a description of the state of play on Oct. 25, the 10th day of the crisis: "The initial reactions of both leaders had been bellicose. Kennedy had favored an air strike; Khrushchev thought seriously about giving his commanders in Cuba

*Continued on Page 8*

LEAH HAGER COHEN: ROXANA ROBINSON'S 'COST' **PAGE 5** | JAY McINERNEY: ANDRE DUBUS III'S 'GARDEN OF LAST DAYS' **PAGE 7**

The new novel from the bestselling author of

SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS

"an absorbing meditation on what it means to grow up, sell out, and lead an honest life"
—ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY ("A")

DAVID GUTERSON

THE OTHER

THE NEW YORK TIMES says
"Guterson's books keep getting better
...*The Other* is a moving portrait of male friendship [and] a finely observed rumination on the necessary imperfection of life—on how hypocrisy, compromise and acceptance creep into our lives and turn strident idealists into kind, loving, fully human adults."
—BRUCE BARCOTT, N.Y. TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"Mesmerizing, even heartbreaking"
—MARY ANN GWINN, THE SEATTLE TIMES

"His most brilliant and provocative novel yet"
—BILL DUNCAN, THE OREGON NEWS-REVIEW

"An excellent novel...as humane as it is compelling"
—SUSAN BALÉE, PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

"It asks, and helps answer, two of life's most perplexing questions: how do we live in an imperfect world, and what are our obligations to those we love?"
—OUTSIDE

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## Up Front



Richard Holbrooke, an assistant secretary of state in the Clinton administration, brings his first-hand diplomatic experience to our cover review of "One Minute to Midnight," an account of the Cuban missile crisis.

We asked Holbrooke what lessons that event, which occurred in 1962, can still teach us. "Today we face a world with a bewildering array of new players and new issues, so complex that it can overwhelm almost any negotiator," Holbrooke noted in an e-mail message. But, he pointed out, "the fundamental nature of diplomacy has not changed. It is a bit like jazz — improvisation on a theme."

And at least one cold-war motif, nuclear peril, remains with us. "Against the backdrop of Kennedy's direct negotiations with Khrushchev, the current administration's position on talks with Iran — that they will talk only through European Union intermediaries until the Iranians stop their nuclear program — is particularly strange," Holbrooke told us. "Kennedy knew (and for that matter, so did Reagan, Eisenhower and the senior President Bush) that direct contacts with adversaries, if handled with firmness, enhance the negotiating value of American power." *The Editors*

## Online



**PODCAST:** *Scheduled to appear this week are Joe Nocera, the author of "Good Guys and Bad Guys"; Marie Winn, the author of "Central Park in the Dark"; Rachel Donadio with notes from the field; and Dwight Garner with best-seller news. Sam Tanenhaus, the editor of the Book Review, is the host.*

**PAPER CUTS:** *The Book Review's blog covers books and other forms of printed matter.*

**FIRST CHAPTERS:** *Excerpts from "Notes on a Life," by Eleanor Coppola; "The Pixar Touch," by David A. Price; and other books.*

**BOOKS UPDATE E-MAIL:** *Receive a selective overview of new book reviews and features every Friday.*

**nytimes.com/books**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE CIARDIELLO (TOP) AND CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

# Real W.M.D.'s

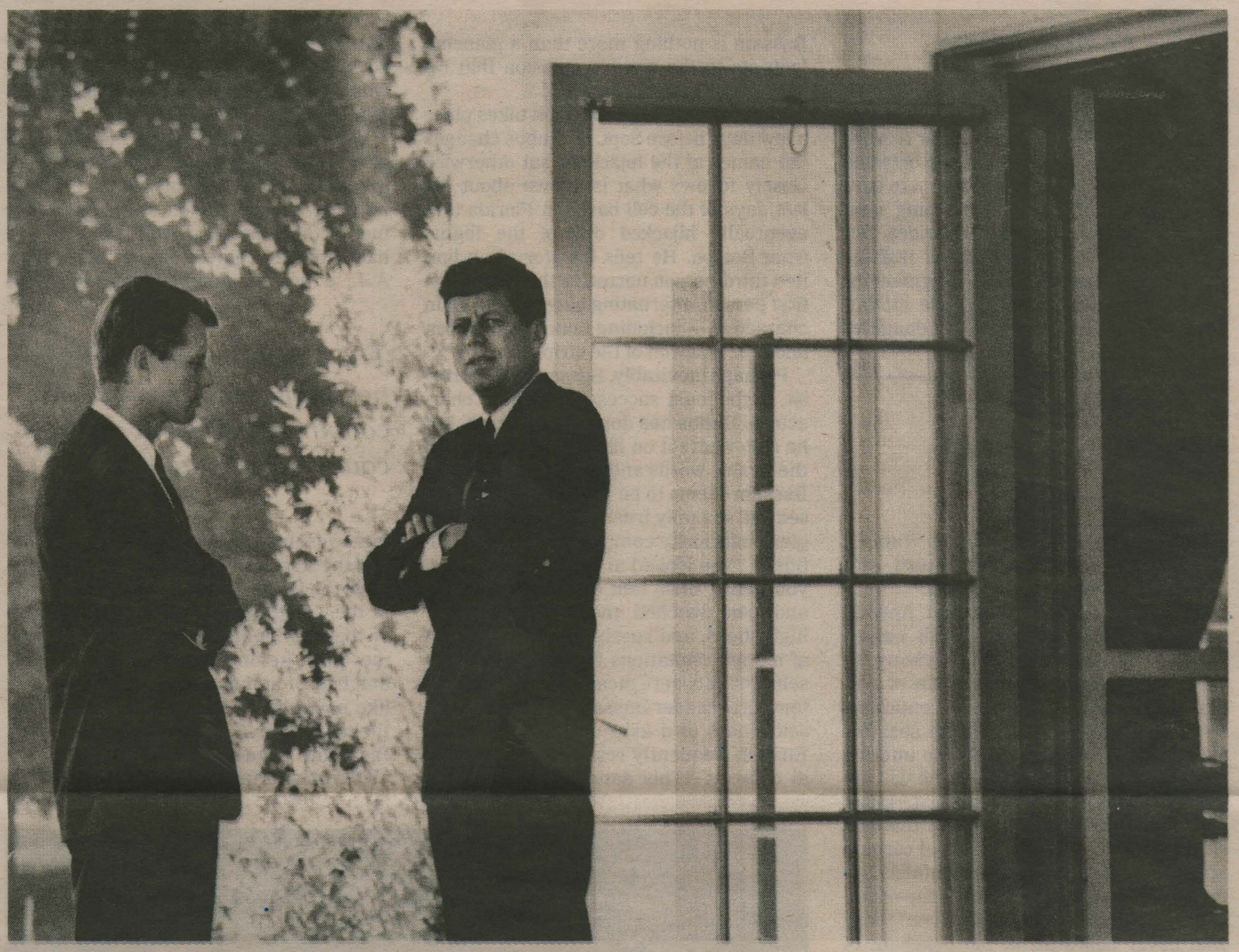
*Continued from Page 1*

authority to use nuclear weapons. After much agonizing, both were now determined to find a way out that would not involve armed conflict. The problem was that it was practically impossible for them to communicate frankly with one another. Each knew very little about the intentions and motivations of the other side, and tended to assume the worst. Messages took half a day to deliver. ... The question was no longer whether the leaders of the two superpowers wanted war — but whether they had the power to prevent it."

Ten days earlier, a U-2 spy plane had produced photographic evidence that the Soviets were sneaking nuclear missiles into Cuba. In "High Noon in the Cold War," published four years ago, Max Frankel described this reckless action as "worthy of the horse at Troy." Within hours of the discovery, Kennedy made a decision: the United States would not tolerate the missiles remaining in Cuba. During the next week, a small group of officials who would go down in history as the Executive Committee, or ExComm, deliberated in total secrecy. Most narratives focus on the dramatic debates in the Cabinet Room, during which America's leaders changed their positions frequently as they searched desperately for the proper mix of diplomatic and military pressure.

Dobbs gives relatively short shrift to that first week, covering it in only 54 pages. His focus — extending over almost half the book — is Oct. 27, "Black Saturday," the darkest day of the cold war. On that day a Soviet missile team in Cuba shot down a U-2, killing its pilot; the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended immediate military retaliation; Castro sent Khrushchev a wildly emotional letter saying that he was facing an imminent American invasion, and Khrushchev sent a second letter to Kennedy, far tougher than an earlier one. That night men in Washington went to sleep not knowing (as Dean Rusk told me later) if they would awake in the morning, and wives debated whether to stay in Washington with their husbands or go to safer rural hideaways. (Almost all stayed, including Jackie Kennedy.)

By Black Saturday, the two leaders seem to have been transformed by the magnitude of this crisis. But as they searched for a peaceful, face-saving way out, their military machines kept preparing for war. Dobbs is at his best in reconstructing the near misses, misunderstandings and unauthorized activities that could have led to an accidental war. He follows secret C.I.A. infiltration teams deep into the swamps of Cuba as they try to carry out a previously authorized plan to sabotage a copper mine. He traces the flight of a U-2 pilot, Chuck Maultsby, who, confused by the Northern Lights, wanders hundreds of miles into Soviet airspace and somehow escapes without triggering a Soviet reaction. ("There's always some sonofabitch who doesn't get the word," Kennedy notes with characteristic irony.) Dobbs also finds Soviet missile unit commanders in Cuba who, uninstructed by Moscow, prepare to fire missiles at the United States on their own authority if they feel threatened. And all the while, some military leaders in each country agitate for military action.



*Robert and John Kennedy confer at the White House in October 1962.*

*'We're going to have to make certain decisions within the next 12, or possibly 24 hours,' Bobby Kennedy said.*

In Washington, the Joint Chiefs, whose members include several World War II giants, push for action. Gen. Curtis LeMay, the brutal, cigar-chomping Air Force chief of staff, with 3,000 nuclear weapons under his command, barks at Kennedy that his blockade of Cuba is "almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich." In a dramatic confrontation in a Pentagon war room, the chief of naval operations tells Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara that the Navy will handle any engagement with the Soviets in accordance with long-standing Navy procedures and tradition, and needs no supervision from civilians. Furious, McNamara puts new procedures into place that give him and the president greater direct operational control — or so they think.

More than 40 years later, there is no longer any dispute about the most critical meeting of the crisis. It started at 8:05 p.m. on Black Saturday, when, at Kennedy's instruction, his brother Bobby summoned the Soviet ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin, to his cavernous office in the Justice Department, and told him that the crisis had reached its moment of truth. "We're going to have to make certain decisions within the next 12, or possibly 24 hours," he declared. With the downing of the American U-2 that day, Bobby Kennedy said the American military, and not only the generals, were demanding that the president "respond to fire with fire." This meeting, coupled with a letter to Khrushchev skillfully drafted by Bobby Kennedy, Ted Sorensen and others, led to the Soviet announcement the next day that the missiles would be removed from Cuba.

But threats were only part of Kennedy's brilliantly calibrated approach. He also offered Khrushchev a public pledge that the United States would not invade Cuba again, a virtually meaningless offer from Washington but politically valuable for Khrushchev with Castro. And there was one more thing — a secret both sides obscured for years — the story of the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. The Soviets had suggested they would remove their missiles from Cuba if the United States withdrew its 15 medium-range Jupiter missiles from Turkey. By the time these missiles had been deployed in early 1962, they were already obsolete; Kennedy had asked that they be removed before the missile crisis, but no action had been taken.

Kennedy was more than willing to dismantle them, but he was determined not to leave a public impression that he had made any sort of deal or "trade" with Moscow. Asked by Dobrynin about the

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***Richard Holbrooke,*** *a former American ambassador to the United Nations, is the author of "To End a War."*



PHOTOGRAPH FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

# The Devil Wears Nada

In Andre Dubus's new novel, a 9/11 hijacker gives in to the 'temptations from Shaytan' at a Florida strip club.

BY JAY McINERNEY

ON the first page of "The Garden of Last Days," a young stripper named April drives her car to work with a scalding hot cup of coffee between her legs. Even if she weren't about to bare her thighs, along with everything else, this wouldn't seem to be a great idea. But it's all too indicative of how her night is going to go — and of April's judgment, or lack thereof. She's also a single mother who has strapped her 3-year-old daughter into the car to take her to work. Within a couple of pages, April pulls a U-turn, with predictable results for her thighs.

**THE GARDEN OF LAST DAYS**
*By Andre Dubus III.*
*537 pp. W. W. Norton & Company.*
*$24.95.*

At about the same time that April is burning herself, a young Saudi named Mansoor Bassam al-Jizani is driving toward the Puma Club, her place of employment, with an envelope containing 160 hundred-dollar bills on the seat beside him. He has decided to "go into the evil place one last time where he will appear harmless." This sentiment, along with such predictions as "Soon this will change, Allah willing" and lots of carping about "whores" and "kafir" (infidels), is the verbal equivalent of April's cup of coffee, or Chekhov's loaded gun. Even those who never heard about the penchant of some of the 9/11 hijackers for strip clubs will probably find themselves engaged in some pretty serious racial profiling.

Very few readers will be unaware that "The Garden of Last Days" is the follow-up to "House of Sand and Fog," Andre Dubus III's critically acclaimed best seller, which was an Oprah Book Club selection and the basis for a 2003 movie starring Jennifer Connelly and Ben Kingsley. In that novel, a recovering drug addict named Kathy Nicolo loses, through a bureaucratic error, the house she inherited from her father; the house is subsquently sold at auction to a former Iranian Army colonel, Massoud Amir Behrani, who is struggling for his little slice of the American pie. Dubus masterly orchestrated the inexorable collision of these two, humanizing both even as he made their stories seem as preordained as Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon. "The Garden of Last Days" makes use of a similar strangers-on-a-collision-course structure, but the new novel unreels in slow motion, and ultimately April's encounter with Bassam is nothing more than a glancing footnote to the terrible collision that reverberated around the world.

The main action of the book takes place a few days before Sept. 11. Dubus changes the names of the hijackers but otherwise closely follows what is known about the last days of the cell based in Florida that eventually hijacked one of the flights from Boston. He tells his story in a limited third-person narrative that verges on first person, alternating between the main characters — including Lonnie, a bouncer, and A.J., a patron of the strip club.

Perhaps inevitably, Bassam, the terrorist, is the least successful of these characters. Dubus has done his research, but he also wears it on his sleeve, and for all the Arabic words and phrases he deploys Bassam seems to be the stereotypical resentful, sexually frustrated fanatic with a giant inferiority complex vis-à-vis the infidels. "You looked at their ... backsides, you heard their talk and their laughter and you watched them walk in their high shoes, and surely this was the first of many temptations from Shaytan himself. But you were steadfast." Dubus's attempts to render Bassam's stream of consciousness in a kind of Arabic-inflected English frequently result in unintentional comedy. "This dancing woman upon the stage wears nothing but the hat of cowboys." "This David Lee Roth, if there was time Bassam would find him and kill him."

What Bassam shares with his American counterparts is a sense of victimhood; all seem like hapless pawns. April feels victimized by her stoner ex-husband, her mother and the strip club boss. No one has a bigger chip on his shoulder than A.J., a heavy-equipment operator who feels misunderstood by his boss, his wife and the stripper whom he obsessively visits at the Puma Club. A.J. dreams of living in the Everglades with his son, "the two of them swinging in a hammock behind mosquito netting, eating roasted gator and bobcat and manatee. Lounge around like naked warriors. And no women." In the meantime, A.J. is visiting the club on the night in question. Unhappy that the object of his affections won't see him after work, A.J. makes the mistake of touching her arm — a violation of club rules. One of the bouncers is instantly upon him, breaking his wrist before ejecting him. After buying a pint of Wild Turkey ("That and his F-150 were his only companions tonight, the only ones he could count on"), the enraged and intoxicated A.J. returns to the club to exact some kind of revenge and ends up discovering April's 3-year-old daughter unattended in a back room. His first instinct is to protect her. Next thing he knows, he's got the girl in the back of his pickup. At some point his brain engages with reality long enough to realize that no one is going to believe he was just trying to help.

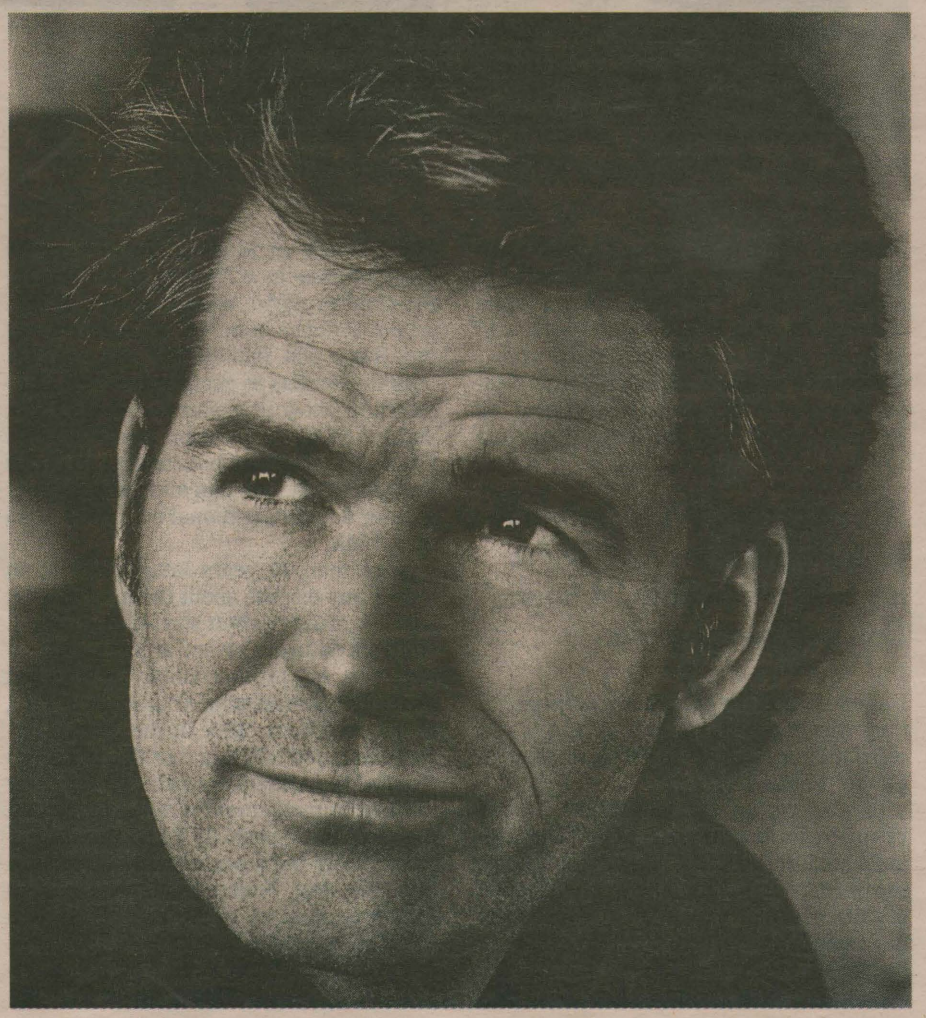
*The hijacker wants what he's not supposed to want, and convinces himself it doesn't count with an infidel.*

While A.J. is carrying off her daughter, April is dancing in the V.I.P. room for Bassam. If April's motives are transparent, Bassam's are only slightly less so. He wants what he's not supposed to want and convinces himself that it doesn't count with an infidel. (Later, the night before the hijacking, he and his friend hire a hooker.) He wants to know April's real name, but he also wants to humiliate her. Like A.J., Bassam fears and resents the power of women.

DUBUS certainly tries to make April a sympathetic figure, but for all the time we spend inside her head, watching her preparing for her shift and following her through her night and the early morning hours, she remains a generic figure — a mother, a beauty, an unloved daughter. The rich specificity of the prose in Dubus's previous novel is seldom on display. In fact, the writing here frequently degenerates into cliché. "Her nipples stiffened and she felt strange; she felt shy. She felt naked." Reading this, it's hard to suppress the urge to yell — she *is* naked. Yes, I know, he means emotionally naked. I just wish he hadn't felt obliged to tell me.

Her grief and guilt when she discovers her child missing are plausible and moving, but Franny is discovered unharmed the next day, almost before April has had time to register the event. After all the foreshadowing and the omens, after the meticulously chronicled minutiae of April's working environment and A.J.'s unhappy marriage, the resolution of the abduction seems anticlimactic. It's as if in trying to develop the two story lines — Bassam's and A.J.'s — Dubus can't quite commit fully to either.

April's encounter with Bassam ultimately has no great resonance in her life. When she hears the news a few days after her encounter with Bassam, April is as shocked and baffled by the events of 9/11 as any of us. She quits stripping, but her close encounter with one of the terrorists seems finally random and meaningless. Journalism needs only to tell us what happened; fiction, which deals in hypotheticals, has a higher threshold of truth. □



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARION ETTLINGER

*__Jay McInerney__ is the author of seven novels, including "Bright Lights, Big City" and "The Good Life." "How It Ended," a story collection, will be published in January.*

Jupiters, Bobby Kennedy said they were not an "insurmountable obstacle" but that they could not be linked — ever — to the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles. Bobby Kennedy also said that there would have to be a time lag of several months before their removal. It was this "non-deal deal" that opened the door for a resolution. In "Thirteen Days," his posthumously published chronicle of the crisis, Bobby Kennedy carefully edited his account of the Dobrynin meeting to remove any hint of a deal on Turkey. But almost from the beginning, many people suspected the truth, and looking back on it today, it may seem surprising to see how hard the Kennedys sought to conceal it. But in 1962, with the midterm elections days away, Kennedy did not want to appear weak.

Dobbs's research uncovers some juicy nuggets for history buffs. My favorite is the debunking of the once-famous "back-channel" between the ABC reporter John Scali and Aleksandr Feklisov, a K.G.B. station chief. The Kennedy administration attached great importance to this connection, and spent much time drafting a message for Scali to give to Feklisov. But on the basis of extensive analysis and interviews, Dobbs believes that the so-called back channel was a self-generated effort by an ambitious spy to send some information to his bosses in Moscow, as well as self-promotion by an ambitious journalist, who parlayed his meetings with the K.G.B. agent into a public legend that eventually led to his becoming the American ambassador to the United Nations. Dobbs, one of the most thorough journalists in Washington, concludes that "there is no evidence" the K.G.B. cable containing Scali's message "played any role in Kremlin decision-making on the crisis, or was even read by Khrushchev." He calls it "a classic example of miscommunication." Nonetheless, Dobbs adds wryly, "the Scali-Feklisov meeting would become part of the mythology of the Cuban missile crisis."

"One Minute to Midnight" is filled with similar insights that will change the views of experts and help inform a new generation of readers. For those not versed in the full story, I would recommend reading this book in conjunction with Frankel's short and elegant overview. For those already familiar with the crisis, Dobbs's account more than stands on its own.

IT is hard to read this book without thinking about what would have happened if the current administration had faced such a situation — real weapons of mass destruction only 90 miles from Florida; the Pentagon urging "surgical" air attacks followed by an invasion; threatening letters from the leader of a real superpower and senators calling the president "weak" just weeks before a midterm Congressional election.

Life does not offer us a chance to play out alternative history, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the team that invaded Iraq would have attacked Cuba. And if Dobbs is right, Cuba and the Soviet Union would have fought back, perhaps launching some of the missiles already in place. One can only conclude that our nation was extremely fortunate to have had John F. Kennedy as president in October 1962. Like all presidents, he made his share of mistakes, but when the stakes were the highest imaginable, he rose to the occasion like no other president in the last 60 years — defining his goal clearly and then, against the demands of hawks within his administration, searching skillfully for a peaceful way to achieve it. □

# Night Moves

Marie Winn reports on how Central Park's animals spend their evenings.

**BY ELIZABETH ROYTE**

IS it dangerous to lark in Central Park at night? Not really, Marie Winn says in "Central Park in the Dark." The "precinct enjoys the city's lowest crime rate," she writes. This may be true on a per acre basis (not per capita), but still, it wasn't until the author came to know the park extremely well that her fear of the night receded, "though it never disappeared completely. Familiarity breeds content."

**CENTRAL PARK IN THE DARK**
More Mysteries of Urban Wildlife.
*By Marie Winn.*
*Illustrated. 304 pp.*
*Farrar, Straus & Giroux $25.*

And content (emphasis on the first syllable) too: wonderful nocturnal content that spans copulating slugs, silver-haired bats, co-sleeping robins, murdering wasps, sap-sucking moths and cannibalistic owls. What drew Winn, a longtime birder and the author of "Red-Tails in Love," about the hawks Pale Male and Lola, to such obscure subjects? The same thing that motivates any good scientist. "Curiosity, the desire to know and understand," she writes, and a natural "eagerness to learn."

Lurking in the woods of Central Park with a like-minded cohort, Winn invites passing strangers to peer through her binoculars at sleeping birds and proudly supplies the names of moths that alight on a bed sheet illuminated by black light: "We were showing off a bit of course, but our urge to include others had a deeper reason: we were in on an amazing secret, and we couldn't bear to keep it to ourselves."

Such giddiness permeates "Central Park in the Dark." "It was huge!" she writes of a barred owl. "Double wow!" Naked enthusiasm is rare in science writing, perhaps because it's considered unprofessional, or anathema to intellectual rigor. E. O. Wilson has said that field biologists have a lot more gee whiz, or sense of wonder at nature, than other types of scientists, and that's certainly in evidence here.

Like most serious birders, Winn does have scientific aspirations. She diligently notes the time and light conditions of owl fly-outs (the moment the birds leave for night hunting); she analyzes the contents of long-eared owl pellets (a regurgitated bolus of indigestible animal parts, including fur, feathers, bones and teeth); and she laboriously keys out the names of moths. Like real scientists, she and her pals are competitive, jargon-happy, a little nerdy and possessive of their turf. That's the flip side of the sharing impulse — while happy to point out a roost to a neophyte, Winn gloats when a card-carrying "Ecologist" can't find it without her help.

While conducting basic science, Winn makes some real discoveries. For example, white-footed mice, not previously known to inhabit Central Park, are actually superabundant there. How did she find out? She spent several evenings with a stereoscopic microscope studying the tiny bones teased from those pellets. "Take apart a large number of owl pellets to find a predominance of *Peromyscus leucopus* skulls," Winn writes, "and you've surmounted the shortcomings of human vision. You've penetrated the darkness with the help of an owl's digestive system." To pinpoint the screech owl's moment of fly-out, she realized, after several years of blinking and missing, listen for the escalation in robin chatter.

The work of field biology isn't all eureka moments, of course: Winn logs countless hours, year after year, in bitter cold, stifling heat, rain and snow. Uncomplaining, she rises hours before dawn, conducts extracurricular research (on the mortality statistics of Eastern screech owls, for example, or the history of automobile traffic in Central Park) and risks becoming a statistic herself. Only twice was she truly frightened by potential predators: once by some regular guys pretending to be undercover cops ("like the guys on '21 Jump Street,'" they told her) and once by undercover cops pretending they were regular guys. The payoff for her labors isn't a Ph.D. thesis or a peer-reviewed publication but the pure pleasure of poking around. (That, and sometimes the opportunity to say "I told you so" to park officials and credentialed scientists.)

WINN proves that citizen naturalists have an important role to play in conservation and stewardship. But her ceaseless anthropocentrism and a fixation with "love" sometimes made me cringe. "All our senses quickened at the thought of owl romance," she writes. Nothing would please this ornithological yenta more than an owl hookup and babies. Winn reads love poems to long-eared owls on Valentine's Day and claims to hear them "murmuring sweet nothings to each other."

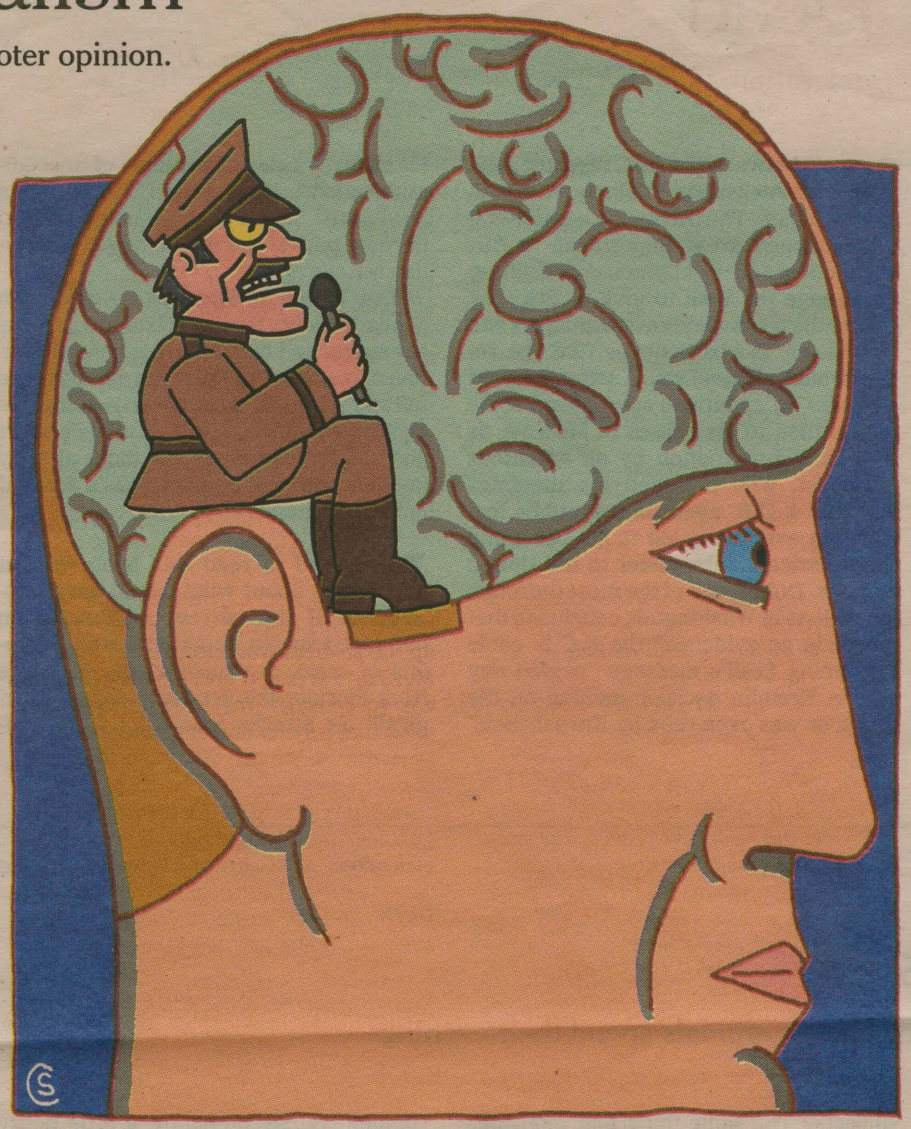
If this kind of thing made you quit "Red-Tails in Love," you may feel a similar impulse with this book. I did, but Winn's subject matter, her easeful writing ("We were in that tiresome lull between spring migration and fall migration otherwise known as summer"), her humor, emotional honesty and exuberance quashed my quibbles. On the whole, "Central Park in the Dark" is a delight; I'd follow Winn into the park at any hour. □

*Elizabeth Royte, a frequent contributor to the Book Review, is the author of "Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash" and "Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It."*

# Neuro-Liberalism

## On politics and reprogramming voter opinion.

BY WILLIAM SALETAN



GEORGE LAKOFF wants to save his country. In a series of books, Lakoff, a linguist and cognitive scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, has explained how the right wins and keeps power: by framing issues and controlling minds. His latest book, "The Political Mind," grounds his critique and his agenda in neuroscience. Lakoff proposes to beat conservatives at their own game. "Democracy is too important to leave the shaping of the brains of Americans to authoritarians," he argues. But shaping brains is a treacherous business. It's hard to manipulate voters and still be a democrat.

**THE POLITICAL MIND**
Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century Politics With an 18th-Century Brain.
*By George Lakoff.*
*292 pp. Viking. $25.95.*

Lakoff blames "neoliberals" and their "Old Enlightenment" mentality for the Democratic Party's weakness. They think they can win elections by citing facts and offering programs that serve voters' interests. When they lose, they conclude that they need to move farther to the right, where the voters are.

This is all wrong, Lakoff explains. Neuroscience shows that pure facts are a myth and that self-interest is a conservative idea. In a "New Enlightenment," progressives will exploit these discoveries. They'll present frames instead of raw facts. They'll train the public to think less about self-interest and more about serving others. It's not the platform that needs to be changed. It's the voters.

The basis of Lakoff's theory is simple: the mind is the brain. Any connection that forms between your thoughts also forms between your neurons. As you internalize a metaphor, a circuit in your brain "physically constitutes the metaphor." This parallel development continues as mental complexity increases. "Narratives are brain structures," he proposes.

The general idea makes sense: brain and mind are dual aspects of the same thing. But Lakoff seems to forget that the language of mental construction is itself a metaphor. He describes how synapses are strengthened, neurons "wire together," "neural binding" fuses "permanent circuits" and a worldview solidifies through "long-term bindings to the core." With these elaborations, he mechanizes the brain-mind relationship. The brain's structure and dynamics don't just embody thought, he says; they physically constrain it.

To Lakoff, this explains why conservatives win elections. They manipulate us more effectively. They've been "preparing the seedbed of our brains with their high-level general principles so that when 'tax relief' was planted, their framing could take root and sprout." And "as a result, progressive messages don't take root."

Worse, conservatives planted their war-on-terror metaphor in our brains during a moment of "national trauma," when our synapses were vulnerable. The fear they've cultivated has combined with widespread overwork and health care anxiety to "activate the norepinephrine system," causing a "reduced capacity to notice" President Bush's misdeeds. We keep voting the wrong way because our brains are "physically affected by stress" and "neurally shaped by past conservative framing."

From this, Lakoff's agenda follows. In place of neoliberalism, he offers neuroliberalism. Since voters' opinions are neither logical nor self-made, they should be altered, not obeyed. Politicians should "not follow polls but use them to see how they can change public opinion to their moral worldview." And since persuasion is mechanical, progressives should rely less on facts and more on images and drama, "casting progressives as heroes, and by implication, conservatives as villains." The key is to "say things not once, but over and over. Brains change when ideas are repeatedly activated."

What should progressives say? That conservatism is "fundamentally anti-democratic." It "tells us to save your own skin and not to care about your neighbor," so "conservatives don't pay that much attention to injured veterans." As an exemplar of conservatism, Lakoff cites the CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer.

*Why have conservatives been winning elections? Because, Lakoff says, they manipulate us more effectively.*

It's hard to take all this seriously if you know any conservatives, just as it's hard to take Lakoff's neurodeterminism seriously if you know any science. As he acknowledges, current brain-imaging technology is far too crude to see specific neural activity. Cores? Narrative structures? Issue-to-worldview binding? It's all speculation.

Lakoff's historical claims are easier to assess. They're demonstrably false. In his quest to explain the 21st century, he seems to have forgotten the 20th. He writes that progressives have opposed presidential power, that Roe v. Wade "seemed settled" in the early 1970s and that Democrats have neglected to preach responsibility, community and empowerment through government. It's as though the New Deal, the Roe backlash and the Clinton administration never happened.

When you fancy yourself a scientist of humanity, it's easy to mistake the patterns of your era for natural laws. In Lakoff's taxonomy, conservatives exalt "obedience to authority," insulate leaders from accountability, oppose checks and balances against the president and rely on fear. The myth of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, he writes, was "invented by the Bush administration to strike terror into the hearts of Americans and to justify the invasion."

Except it wasn't. President Clinton, Senator John Kerry and other Democrats warned of such Iraqi weapons in 1998. It's easy to forget this, since conservatives spent that year impeaching the president for lying under oath. Then Clinton pardoned Susan McDougal, who had refused to testify about his role in the Whitewater affair. Lakoff ignores this, even as he attributes Bush's commutation of Lewis Libby's jail sentence to authoritarianism. And what about conservative suspicion of government? Isn't that anti-authoritarian? Lakoff quotes Senator Bob Dole's mockery of the idea that "Washington knows best," but he never draws the connection.

Lakoff is a puzzle. No one has more brilliantly dissected conservative spin. "My goal as a scientist and a citizen is to make the cognitive unconscious as conscious as possible," he writes. But each time Lakoff the scientist exposes a right-wing frame, Lakoff the citizen substitutes a left-wing frame. First he shreds Bush's depiction of Iraq as a "war" that can end in "victory" over a united "enemy." Then he repeats each of Bush's fallacies, oversimplifying the conflict as an "occupation" in which the United States is "losing" to a united "resistance." It's as though Lakoff were lobotomized.

But he isn't. To dismiss his politics as a brain defect would do him no more justice than he's done voters. His proposal to reengineer our heads is neither democratic nor scientifically warranted. It defies public accountability, the very principle he purports to serve. It also underestimates our intelligence. The fact that brain formation materializes mind formation doesn't simplify their relationship. To the extent that the brain is the mind's recorder, physical laws constrain the writing process. But maybe the power of rationality isn't in the writing. Maybe it's in the editing. The mind, through the brain, revises itself.

We're capable of changing our minds. Just give us a good reason. □

***William Saletan** writes the Human Nature column for Slate and is the author of "Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War."*

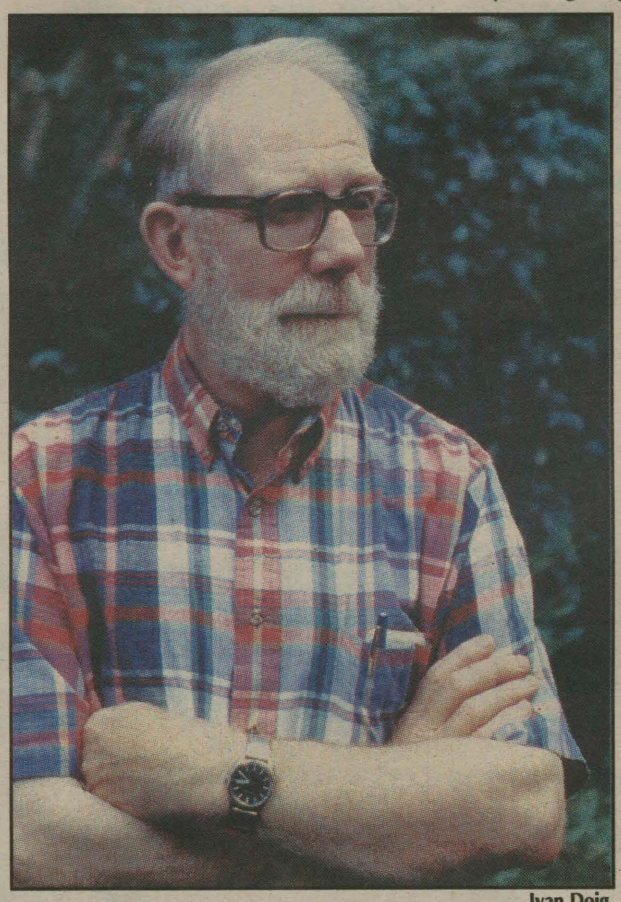
ILLUSTRATION BY SEYMOUR CHWAST

# Culture

by tanya ignacio

# Death of the Lariat Proletariat
## An Interview with Author Ivan Doig

**the Source: Do you think of yourself as a "Western" writer?**
Ivan Doig: Actually, I don't. I've always loved a quote by Paul Horgan. When he was asked about being a Southern writer, he replied, "Everyone is a regionalist." That's what I think everybody who tries to be a good writer is. The classic is the local realized. Great works know their locales and use it. I don't mind being seen as someone from the West. But I'm a writer, no adjective before it.


Ivan Doig

**tS: What have you strived for in your writing?**
Doig: The one thing I have tried to do has been to get at the authenticity of language. I've spent an inordinate part of my life trying to get language true to place. *My Two Medicine Country* trilogy encompasses about a hundred years in Montana and follows four generations in about a thousand pages. Their language changes as they do. They start out as Scottish lowlanders toasting each other with Scottish toasts. The last generation is found in small town bars saying things like, "Here's lead in your pencil." The evolution of language was part of the theory of the books. It was a conscious part of what I was doing.

**tS: How did you prepare for this?**
Doig: I raided books of slang. I started each day by reading ten pages of the book of American Regional Slang to get in the mood for the glide of language and dialect. I also eavesdropped shamelessly from Tucson to Sitka. Anywhere people worked on ranches or in the outdoors, I'd find the geezer table at the local diner and sit with my notebook. None of it was my imagination. I became a scholar of language.

**tS: Where did you grow up in Montana?**
Doig: I was born in southern Montana and spent my high school years in northern Montana in a town of about a hundred people called Dupuyer. It was within sight, some mornings you'd swear it was within arm's reach of the Rockies. There was about a hundred miles of Rocky Mountains always in front of us. My father and grandmother raised me. We were Western sharecroppers with sheep.

**tS: Do you miss it?**
Doig: Yes. The big sky is mighty there and I miss those mountains. But I can't live two places at once. I left, as many did at that time, to find a job. I've only been back to work with the landscape and people for the sake of these books.

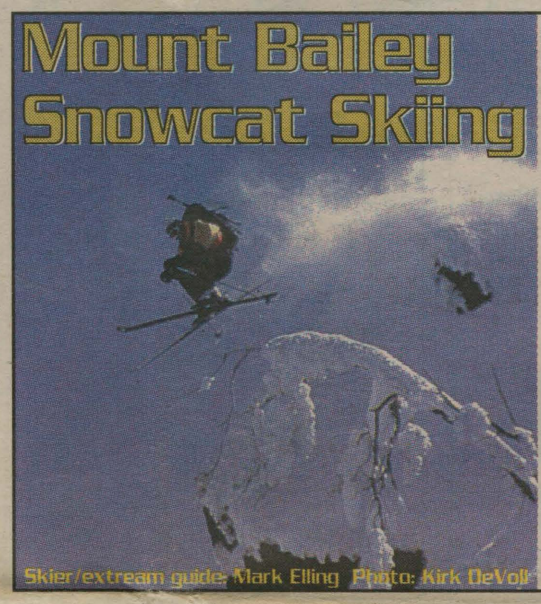
**tS: Montana has certainly changed a lot since you grew up there. How do you feel about that change?**
Doig: I'm a bit of a contrarian about the change. People point to the Hollywood-ization of the West, especially places like Montana, and complain about the celebrities. This is not a new story in the West. People with big money from the entertainment sector have always constructed playgrounds for themselves there. My grandparents milked cows for one of the Ringling Brothers, who would be the equivalent of movie makers today. The county I was born into was a county of barons, livestock barons. It was a county of a couple thousand square miles with the bulk being owned by a few landowners. Money always made itself prominently known. This is part of the story of the entire West, not just Montana.

**tS: You write about something you call the "lariat proletariat." What do you mean by that term?**
Doig: That term came out of my book *Heart Earth*. What I meant by that term is the stratum of people, working people, who have been done in by mechanization and technology. My father made his life as a sheepherder. My grandparents were ranch cooks. As a youth, I drove grain trucks and baled hay. We were the lariat proletariat and made a living with our muscles. The ranches and farms of that time needed our muscles and skills. Machinery changed all that. When I was on a hay crew in the early 60s, you could see that change. We hand-baled hay one summer and the next, at much expense, and we were replaced by a hay baler that didn't do the job nearly as well or as quickly as we did. We continue to see this destruction all the time. With technology and computerization, the investment is made for greater productivity at the expense of a human being.

**tS: There was no hope then for these people who worked the land to get any stake in it.**
Doig: Right. People moved or got stuck in hybrid jobs. I have cousins who live in town and work on ranches. They have to handle their own health care and have no chance to accumulate capital or belongings. This is the brute glory of capitalism.

**tS: How did you avoid this fate?**
Doig: I turned to the typewriter in my third year of high school after the third weather induced disaster with the sheep. We were working on shares. We sheared them in early June. Sheep are susceptible to the cold after the wool is off of them. The middle of July there was a freezing rain out of the Rockies. Some of the sheep stampeded off Buffalo Jump and some just died in their tracks. It was the third incident of that kind. After that, I consciously turned away from that kind of economic uncertainty. I quit Future Farmers of America and took typing and Latin. I tried to get what are basically office skills.

**tS: Even without your meaning to, some people read your books and romanticize the West. How do you respond to this?**
Doig: I'm in the camp of such writers as Bill Kittridge, who write against the grain, against the myth. I've always felt that the popular culture mythology of the West is cultural rat poison. I think it is truly destructive that gunslinging and rampant individualism should be the story of the West. It is tragic that's what has been perpetuated. The actuality is very different. The West, the success of the West, came out of cooperative efforts. The Oregon Trail, community building, homesteading, and the extent that different populations, such as Hispanics, have found a hold here has been due to cooperative efforts. The Louis L'Amour, John Wayne shoot-em-up cultural image is one I am happy to spend my life writing against.

Skier/extream guide: Mark Elling Photo: Kirk DeVoll

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**Ivan Doig reflects on the lariat proletariat by Tanya Ignacio**

**Mel Gibson is Extra Dry in Payback by Barry J. Crow**

# the SOURCE

*Central Oregon's Independent Weekly Newspaper*

## Gas, Oil, Smoke, Speed:

### Snowmobiling At Diamond Lake

NYT 1/18/07

# Thomas Lyson, 58, Cornell Sociologist Who Studied Rural Towns

By JEREMY PEARCE

Thomas A. Lyson, an influential sociologist at Cornell who argued that rural towns and small farms could survive economically by selling locally produced goods to regional markets, died on Dec. 28 in Ithaca, N.Y. He was 58.

The cause was cancer, his family said.

Dr. Lyson explored his idea in a book, "Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food and Community" (2004), in which he made a case for rural communities to rethink their traditional crops and instead produce organic ones, plus cheeses, wines and other niche goods.

He criticized what he saw as an increasingly globalized approach to agricultural production and its withering influence on independent family farms, which he believed form the social underpinnings of countless rural American towns.

At the same time, he argued that small country schools in New York State and elsewhere should not be consolidated into suburban school systems, but kept open to educate rural children where they live. Without rural schools to anchor communities, he said, a migration to larger towns would ultimately empty the countryside.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Lyson wrote about similar issues facing the South. In a 1988 book, he examined social and economic innovations in developing cities like Atlanta and Houston and a corresponding failure of some of the region's rural towns to thrive. The book, "High Tech, Low Tech, No Tech: Recent Occupational and Industrial Change in the South," was written with William W. Falk, now a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland.

Thomas Anthony Lyson was born in Oak Park, Ill. After receiving undergraduate and master's degrees from West Virginia University, he earned his doctorate in sociology from Michigan State in 1976.

Dr. Lyson taught at Clemson before joining Cornell in 1987. He was named a professor of development sociology at Cornell in 1992. Since 1998, he had also been a research associate at the federal Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies.

Dr. Lyson is survived by his wife of 28 years, Loretta Carrillo, a senior lecturer in Romance and Latino studies at Cornell. The couple lived in Freeville, N.Y., where Dr. Lyson was mayor from 2000 to 2004 and was involved in a successful effort to retain the village's elementary school.

He is also survived by two daughters, Helena and Mercedes, both of Chicago.

What's Sunday without The Times?

# Rural schools struggle as populations dwindle

S. Turner 1/21/09

BY NATE JENKINS
*The Associated Press*

BASSETT, Neb. – Twenty-five miles off the main highway, deep in a cradle of sand dunes bound together by prairie grass, a one-lane ribbon of asphalt southeast of town ends abruptly at a barbed-wire fence.

Cattle roam on one side, and on the other sits a school that's in danger of becoming a relic in this wide-open, north-central Nebraska region that is among the most sparsely populated in the country.

In teacher Nickie Ebert's classroom, she tells a second-grade boy: "Treat people the way you'd want to be treated." She doesn't fight for his attention; only two other pupils are in her class — a kindergartner and a third-grader. Teacher Staci Shafer, working in the school's other classroom, also has perfect attendance on this fall day: two girls — an eighth-grader and a fourth-grader.

Those five children make up the total student body at the 120-year-old Pony Lake School.

Class photos in an album chronicle the school's past and may give a clue to the future.

In 1988, there were 23 faces; 16 three years later; 14 in 1995.

"There's always concern we're going to close," Shafer said.

Shafer and many rural Nebraskans for years have watched people leave, businesses dry up and the number of farms and ranches dwindle. In some places, small schools are among the few remaining symbols of vitality and community identity. An anomaly in some states, they remain a pillar of education systems in some, like Nebraska and Montana, that have remote regions where cattle have long outnumbered people.

But populations in rural areas of those and other states are dipping to levels where there are few — sometimes no — students to teach. A school in the same county as Pony Lake shut down last year when its attendance dropped to a lone student.

In Montana, small country schools are drying up like the state's drought-plagued pastures. About a hundred schools have closed over the last decade and "the rate of decrease has accelerated," said Claudette Morton, director of the Montana Small Schools Alliance.

### *Closing always a concern*

When Kim Olind attended Alzada school in southeastern Montana in the late 1970s, there were about 20 kids. This year, for the first time, the school didn't open.

"It's sad," said Olind, president of the school board.

Montana has more one-room schools than any other state in the country, according to Neenah Ellis, an author and radio producer who spent a year researching one-room schools. Nebraska is second.

"Everywhere I went," Ellis said of her cross-country trip visiting small schools, "[closing] was either of great concern or was definitely on people's radar."

About 24,000 one-room schools existed in 1959; 840 in 1984. Ellis estimates about 300 remain.

### *Mergers stir controversy*

Some small schools are fighting more than a dwindling population.

After years of debate about their plight, the Nebraska Legislature last year voted to dissolve Pony Lake and other elementary-only districts and merge them with adjoining K-12 districts. The law didn't close the schools, but instead gave the boards of the larger districts that absorbed the elementary-only districts the choice of whether they should close.

Supporters of the schools reacted emotionally to passage of the law, and voters repealed it Nov. 7. But whether the districts — which were dissolved months before the election — will come back is in limbo.

> **"As long as there are two or more students, they'll keep them open as long as possible."**
>
> DAVID WADE
> *Superintendent, Rock County School District*

Supporters of the merger argued the schools were too expensive and inefficient, and K-12 boards should decide their fates. In some places, where such schools exist closer to towns, some alleged that white families used them to segregate their children from Hispanics.

Supporters tout the attention children get in the tiny schools. But the attention can be expensive.

The average, per-pupil cost of educating students in Nebraska is roughly $8,500, according to the state education department. By comparison, the per-pupil cost at Pony Lake was nearly $13,300 last year.

Trudy Nolles, whose daughter Katie is a fourth-grader at Pony Lake, is among a group of parents who are convinced their children excel because of the intimate learning environments. Students are exposed to lessons for higher grade levels and sometimes help younger children learn.

"I don't mean to brag, but [Katie] is a fourth-grader reading on a ninth-grade level," Nolles said.

Whatever lawmakers do, the demographics for Pony Lake and similar schools are inescapable. The population of Rock County has declined about 25 percent over the past 15 years, and now sits at roughly 1,510 — fewer than two people per square mile. It's expected to drop by another 200 people over the next five years.

Similar declines have occurred throughout much of western Nebraska and Montana.

David Wade, superintendent of the Rock County district, said the K-12 board that now oversees the country schools is in no hurry to shutter them. And Both Ebert and Shafer said they actually like being part of a K-12 district because it fosters more communication and sharing with the larger district.

"As long as there are two or more students, they'll keep them open as long as possible," Wade said.

That criterion, however, is becoming increasingly difficult to meet.

# farmers' impact

GF Trib Dec. 3, '89

By T.J. GILLES
Tribune Agriculture Editor

Cowboys may always be heroes to Willie Nelson and others, but the farmers who settled and transformed Montana during the early part of this century have no such legendary image.

Speaking last week following a Montana Grain Growers Association banquet, historian William Lang noted that most of the farmers in the audience had donned cowboy boots for the occasion, although those who actually owned livestock were in a distinct minority.

Lang, former editor of "Montana: the Magazine of Western History," said that the cowboy era in Montana had a brief but colorful history, yet the myth and legend of the cowboy remains a dominant and heroic part of Montana's culture and mind-set.

Farmers who came to the state during the first 20 years of this century, on the other hand, had a monumental role in hemispheric history and created a civilization out of nothing. And stayed.

Yet Lang said that the concept of the Montana farmer as a hero is "almost laughable. It really is.

"Do you know what historians say about farmers? Have you read it? It's horrible."

In those rare instances where historians actually mention farmers and their role in settling the West, he said, the typical description says "they came out to exploit" free land and make big money selling wheat as war profiteers during World War I.

"They say that farmers in Montana are complainers," he said.

That stems back to crises during the late 19th century, when the Populist movement included farmers as well as labor and free-silver advocates, he said. When farm policies were enacted as a result of political pressure, they usually were "half-assed laws" administered by Eastern bureaucrats who knew nothing about conditions of the West and set up programs which often backfired, Lang contended.

So, Lang concluded, the Montana farmer's image has become one of "asking for help and then complaining about the help they get."

"Is this a symbolic anti-hero? Is this a mythological figure, the Montana farmer?"

Not quite.

Montana farmers of the early part of this century had a unique role in world history. There was some farming, much of it prosperous, in the state's irrigated valleys before the homestead era, he said, but no political base. Until relaxed and expanded homestead laws came into effect, Lang said, "Montana was, agriculturally speaking, a vacant lot waiting to be developed."

> "What came out of this homestead experiment wasn't just the farming. On this frontier these people created a society that's never been created before or since. They created a civilization, a society out of thin air."
>
> — *Historian William Lang*

Boosted by the government's free land and the railroads' promise of a great future that would involve supplies and home furnishings arriving in boxcars and grain being loaded in those same cars, Montana got settled but quick, Lang said.

Between 1905 and 1920, he said, some 300,000 people established 80,000 new farms.

"It was the largest single agricultural migration in North American history," Lang said. "It was the single largest five-year movement of people in United States history," including not just gold rushes but the mass migration of Southern blacks to northern states during the 1870s and 19-teens.

Lang said: "What came out of this homestead experiment wasn't just the farming ... On this frontier these people created a society that's never been created before or since ... They created a civilization, a society out of thin air."

The mass migration might also be viewed as one of the most impressive mass hallucinations in global history, although Lang didn't say that.

People believed.

"Homestead locators got a bad rap ... They were upright folks trying to sell something they believed in, which is Montana land," he said. When people started to "prove up" and erected or moved their little 12-by-16 or 16-by-24 tarpaper shacks, he added, "They weren't going to live like that very long. They came with the idea that they were going to make it."

By 1920, Lang said, Montana was "the largest purchaser of power agricultural equipment in the world."

A post-war collapse in prices and

See HISTORY, 3H

## History

### Farmers overlooked

FROM 1H

years of drought in the 1920s spelled doom for many of the highly leveraged newcomers.

Between 1920 and 1925 the eastern plains economy centered around the grain elevator, the railroad and its towns suffered "the worst economic downturn in the state's history," Lang said, as more than half the state's banks failed and "whole towns' financial base was taken and destroyed."

A slower Montana migration, this one outward, began and many would say the process continues today.

In his interviews with old-timers about the Depression, Lang said, he has to be careful to be sure which depression his sources are talking about. The Great Depression of the 1930s that allegedly began with the stock market crash of '29 almost was unnoticed by some Montanans after what had happened in the early 1920s, he said.

The big Depression was unfathomable to many Montana farmers.

"There's less wheat and the price keeps dropping ... there's less of it and we get less for it. It made less sense than the first depression, which everybody understood," Lang said.

In 1935, 23 percent of Montana families on relief, he said, most rural families rustled for work in town or attempted to go crops and went on and off relief year after year depending on how they had fared, he said.

Lang theorized that although many Montanans may lack an image — a symbol of the Montana agriculturalist — the image exists.

"The symbol is endurance," Lang said, "and the myth — that's the story we tell ourselves because we need stories — is that that's all we need."

# BESTSELLERS • 6/1/06

1. **Digging to America**
   Anne Tyler, Knopf, $24.95
2. **Blue Shoes and Happiness**
   Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, $21.95
3. **At Risk**
   Patricia D. Cornwell, Putnam, $21.95
4. **Suite Francaise**
   Irene Nemirovsky, Knopf, $25
5. **Everyman**
   Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin, $24
6. **Beach Road**
   James Patterson, Peter de Jonge, Little Brown, $27.95
7. **The Hard Way**
   Lee Child, Delacorte, $25
8. **The Whole World Over**
   Julia Glass, Pantheon, $25.95
9. **Dead Watch**
   John Sandford, Putnam, $26.95
10. **Promise Me**
    Harlan Coben, Dutton, $26.95
11. **The Man of My Dreams**
    Curtis Sittenfeld, Random House, $22.95
12. **Water for Elephants**
    Sara Gruen, Algonquin, $23.95
13. **Telegraph Days**
    Larry McMurtry, S&S, $25
14. **Theft**
    Peter Carey, Knopf, $24
15. **The Whistling Season**
    Ivan Doig, Harcourt, $25
17. **The Poe Shadow**
    Matthew Pearl, Random House, $24.95
    The odd circumstances surrounding the death of Edgar Allan Poe provide the basis for this historical mystery from the author of *The Dante Club*.

Staff Recommend

**The Body of David Hayes**, by Ridley Pearson (Hyperion, $23.95) "Watching Detective Lou Boldt's sleight of hand in foiling both his own department and the bad guys is like watching a master magician at the top of his game."—**George Rishel, The Sly Fox, Virden, IL**

1. **Marley & Me**
   John Grogan, Morrow, $21.95
2. **Wisdom of Our Fathers:** Lessons and Letters From Daughters and Sons
   Tim Russert, Random House, $22.95
3. **Dispatches From the Edge:** A Memoir of War, Disasters, and Survival
   Anderson Cooper, HarperCollins, $24.95
4. **Cesar's Way**
   Cesar Millan, Melissa Jo Peltier, Harmony, $24.95
5. **Mayflower**
   Nathaniel Philbrick, Viking, $29.95
6. **The Omnivore's Dilemma**
   Michael Pollan, Penguin Press, $26.95
7. **The World Is Flat** (Updated and Expanded)
   Thomas L. Friedman, FSG, $30
8. **Freakonomics**
   Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner, Morrow, $25.95
9. **The Mighty and the Almighty**
   Madeleine Albright, HarperCollins, $25.95
10. **My Life in France**
    Julia Child, Alex Prud'homme, Knopf, $25.95
11. **Possible Side Effects**
    Augusten Burroughs, St. Martin's, $23.95
12. **The Year of Magical Thinking**
    Joan Didion, Knopf, $23.95
13. **Stumbling on Happiness**
    Daniel Gilbert, Knopf, $24.95
14. **American Theocracy**
    Kevin Phillips, Viking, $26.95
15. **An Inconvenient Truth**
    Al Gore, Rodale Press, $21.95
19. **The Nasty Bits:** Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones
    Anthony Bourdain, Bloomsbury, $24.95
    The truthful bits: tasty anecdotes and more from the salty author of *Kitchen Confidential*.

Staff Recommend

**Hooked**: Pirates, Poaching, and the Perfect Fish, by G. Bruce Knecht (Rodale, $24.95, 1594861102) "Much more than a fish story! It was hard to put down this contemporary, true account of how our culinary tastes and greed can deplete a fish population. This fast-paced adventure chronicles events that lead up to an exciting chase on the high seas to capture a vessel of poached Patagonian toothfish (known to gourmands as Chilean sea bass). This one will appeal to many interests."—**Laurie Krushenisky, MacDonald Book Shop, Estes Park, CO**

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Dear Ivan,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the interview, which will appear on HarcourtBooks.com in June. If you can return your responses to me by or before May 12, it would be greatly appreciated. I have included a FedEx return label for your convenience.

I will soon be sending you copies of *The Whistling Season* for your autograph.

Please let me know if you have any questions or have any difficulty meeting the deadline.

Warm Regards,

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**ON LANGUAGE BY WILLIAM SAFIRE**

# jonesing

## Have you met Miss Crave?

Preoccupied of late with war words, I have not kept up with the *jonesing*.

"*Jonesing* for Joni" was listed in Entertainment Weekly, describing a PBS documentary on the folk singer Joni Mitchell.

"For those of you who have been *jonesing* for an interactive theater fix" was the lead of a recent film review by Michael Gallucci in The Cleveland Scene.

"Love Is the Drug, and I'm *Jonesing* for a Hit" was the headline in The New York Observer over an article last month by Susan Shapiro kvetching about her husband's lack of sexual aggressiveness.

This is obviously a participle in play, presumably the latest, hot, with-it usage. On digging into the Times archives, however, I found this Oct. 19, 1970, citation in a profile of Alva V. John, a Harlem broadcaster: "That food may not be the most delicious in the world, but it's not nearly so dangerous as these *jones* you've been having." The reporter, now Charlayne Hunter-Gault of PBS, explained in parenthesis: "A *jones* is a craving brought on by drug usage."

The root is a proper noun: for a reason I cannot fathom, Jones — a family name held in my estimation by nearly 18 million Americans — was applied in the early 1960's to heroin addiction. J. E. Lighter's Historical Dictionary of American Slang speculates about another possible origin: the male sex organ. In the 1970's, the noun — no longer capitalized — most often referred to withdrawal symptoms, and made the transition to verb: *jonesing* out. In 1984, I noted that *jonesin'* was extended to mean "doin' nothin'," as addicts often do, but it was not until this millennium that the participle made the leap into popular speech as a generalized "craving."

"When I was little," says my colleague Maureen Dowd (meaning when she was growing up in Washington), "we used to say *jone-ing*, which meant 'picking on.' When you were *jone-ing* on someone, you were mocking them." This local usage was overwhelmed by the national underground popularity of *jonesing*, in its postnarcotics sense of "lusting for."

On Gawker Stalker, a Web site that observes, and leers and snickers at, personalities in the news, a notably slim fashion editor was spotted "*zeta-jonesing* on a McVeggie at the gaudy, fou-fou McDonald's on 42nd btw 8th & b'way."

Thus does the language come full circle. The allusion is to the actress Catherine Zeta-Jones, cattily scolded for adding a few pounds since her Oscar-winning performance in "Chicago." Cruelly but creatively, the blogger applies her hyphenated last name to the lusting after a tasty burger by the hungry editor. To take the meaning of this nonce variation from the context, *zeta-jonesing* is "indulging in a craving for (meatless) food." This specialized usage returns *jonesing* to its original state of a proper noun in participle form.

In current slang use, *jonesing* has evolved from its narcotics-addiction base to a general lusting, craving or yearning. It seems to have shouldered aside *to have the hots for*.

### HARM'S WAY

As GW2 effectively ended, President Bush said, "We continue to pray for all who serve in our military and those who remain *in harm's way*." Next day, Secretary of State Colin Powell protested Russia's aid to Iraq, which "put our young men and women *in harm's way*."

"In danger" and "at risk" are seldom heard; we will now delve into the etymology of the operative phrase for potential trouble.

It did not start as the title of a 1965 movie starring John Wayne and Kirk Douglas. Rather, both *in* and *out* of *harm's way* popped up in the mid-17th century. Thomas Manton, chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, delivered a sermon arguing that man's "duty is to run *in harm's way*" because "there are none so much harmed, maligned and opposed in the world, as those that follow that which is good, as those that will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

The phrase was immortalized in the Revolutionary War by Commodore John Paul Jones. The Scottish-born sailor is best known for his stirring "I have not yet begun to fight," uttered in 1779 aboard his sinking Bonhomme Richard (a salute to Benjamin Franklin's "Poor Richard"), after which Jones gained the surrender of the more powerful H.M.S. Serapis. As Evan Thomas points out in his coming biography, "John Paul Jones: Sailor, Hero, Father of the American Navy," the year before, in 1778, the feisty captain specified in a letter what kind of ship he wanted to command: "I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail *fast*," he wrote, "for I intend to go *in harm's way*." Commodore Jones underlined both *fast* and the phrase now on everyone's lips: *in harm's way*.

### SECDEF

The Pentagon loves initialese; few Pentagonians realize that the word *initialese* was coined by the fourth secretary of defense, Robert Lovett, at a Waldorf-Astoria dinner in New York in 1952.

As a cub reporter, I interviewed Lovett about that time for a profile in The New York Herald-Tribune. He was amused by what he called the rampant shortenings: initialese like J.C.S. for Joint Chiefs of Staff and half-acronyms like Cincpac for Commander in Chief, Pacific, and Cincaflant for Commander in Chief, Air Forces, Atlantic. (That last strikes me as too close to *sycophant*. The acronym for Commander in Chief, United States, was never adopted because naval people in the White House thought it sounded suicidal.)

I asked Lovett about the initialese for his job as secretary of defense. The chief of Naval Operations was the C.N.O.; the Department of Defense was D.O.D. — would he be known as the SOD?

"No," he replied, deadpan. "I have an ulcer. Rarely drink." I didn't get it then, but my British-born wife has since explained that one English slang meaning of *sod* (probably short for *sodden*, "soaked") is "drunk."

Which is why all secretaries of defense ever since, including today's Donald Rumsfeld, are known in Washington not by the acronym drawn from the abbreviation of their office, SOD, but as the *SecDef*. ■

The Washington Post

BOOK WORLD

JANUARY 18-24, 2004

# THE WRITING LIFE

*By Ivan Doig*

## A novelist tinkers in his workshop, layering characters with this and that.

When I was about as tall as my father's elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine taverns of our town in Montana, I saw a lot of character on display. Among his distinctive Western aspects—he'd been a homestead kid, bronc buster, sheepherder, short-order cook—he was a haymaker: a haying contractor, a kind of freelance foreman, who would hire his own crew and put up ranchers' hay crops.

Those small-town saloons where I was lucky enough to sit with him were his hiring halls, and, as he would sound out a hayhand on whether he had ever handled the reins of workhorses, quite a sizing-up ritual went on. So it was back there, as I subversively hoped that my elder would make a rare bad guess and hire some breezy faker whose team of horses would run away with him the instant he climbed onto the hay rake (instead of the solid, silent type invariably named Swede), that I developed an abiding interest in the trait called character and its even more seductive flowering into a plural form, characters.

But nothing beats the imagination like the real world. I shall always envy the advantages my dad had by operating there in barstool reality. There was the time he could not resist hiring a guy known as Raw Bacon Slim, a moniker no editor will ever let me invent. Nonetheless, the realm of each novel I attempt has to be populated from somewhere. By rough count, I figure I've now employed 360 characters in seven works of fiction. I grant that there are scenes in *War and Peace* and *Moby-Dick* in which a cast that size occupies a single page (and that doesn't count the armies and the whales), but my bunch have been sorting themselves out, down through their generations and across landscapes from New Zealand to Sitka to Harlem, as steadily as I've been able to herd them for the past quarter-century. Fathering and, for that matter, mothering entire populations of books probably is beyond reasonable explanation even by someone who earns a living by making it all up, but now that I am starting the process for the ninth time, I can say, at the very least, that I begin by handing out three things: names, noises and noses.

First names first. Or as I go about it, first names before last—way before.

What to call each of them, the sudden citizens who need passports onto my pages? The literary slate is not blank. "Ishmael" of course is taken, "Emma" the shared property of the long-established firm of Austen and Flaubert, and so on, up to the perils of trespassing into the spooky Kingdom of "Carrie." The mouth magic, though, that identifies each of us to the rest of humankind can constantly be renewed in the inexhaustible prop shop called language. And so, to an extent that startles my academic questioners, my characters' names tend to be determined more by linguistic chimings than, say, mythological implications or the nearest phone book.

"America. Montana. Those words with their ends open." Thus mused my narrator, Angus McCaskill, in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* as he and a lifelong chum set forth from Scotland in 1889 to take up homesteads in the American West. Not accidentally, that same aspirated final vowel representing promise, hope and boundless opportunity also characterizes the romantic prospects whom Angus and other yearning hearts meet in that book and its successors: Anna, Marcella, Leona, Lexa and, to add a slightly chestier note of unconformity, Mariah. The men of these women's lives tend to come with final consonants: Isaac, Jick, Alec, Mitch and, in another round of unconformity, Riley.

Naturally, chronological attention must be paid. The lovestruck young couple I married off beside the splashy waterfall in the lobby of the Holiday Inn in Billings, in the course of the 1989 doings of *Ride With Me, Mariah Montana*, had to be named Darcy and Jason—not, say, Anna and Isaac.

Except for Jick McCaskill, who narrates two of my novels and fairly cheerfully accepts having been "dubbed for the off card . . . the jack that shares only the color of the jack of trumps," nicknames are a spice cabinet in my fiction rather than a raw-bacon larder. Mostly I sprinkle them on minor characters. Good Help Hebner, whom you may bet isn't. Birdie Hinch, reputed chicken thief. But who knows? There may yet be a story in a Borgesian fact observed while hanging around my dad's hayhands: that in a crew of eight to 10 men, two or three are likely to have the same first name and nicknames therefore become primary. Waiting somewhere is that Double W ranch crew I long ago created in *English Creek* which boasts Mike the Mower, Long Mike, and Plain Mike.

> My characters' names tend to be determined more by linguistic chimings than, say, mythological implications or the nearest phone book.

So, name affixed, what noise in the world must a character make not only to march, cavort and sing rowdily on the page but to stand up over time? Which is to say, what is the voice, the characteristic sound or memorable mannerism, of the person?

Please meet, as I am only now doing, Oliver, widower father of three in my next book. All I know of him so far is what my narrator tells me on the second page of manuscript: "Father had a short sniffing way of laughing, as if anything funny had to prove it to his nose first." That's a start in giving readers something to remember Oliver by.

Occasionally, all the organ stops can be pulled out: The aforementioned Good Help Hebner has a bray that "would blow a crowbar out of your hand." But generally small auditory touches count most effectively toward larger character dimension, I believe. Perhaps a word that a character owns, unobtrusively but consistently, throughout the story. Monty Rathbun in *Prairie Nocturne* still says "piana," bunkhouse-style, when he is standing next to the swank instrument in Carnegie Hall. And to all practitioners of fiction, there is forever the example of that first draft of *A Christmas Carol* in which Scrooge scoffs at the holiday with a mere "Humbug!" and then Dickens reconsiders and dabs on the single-syllable bit of voice polish that has kept his crotchety naysayer alive and unforgettable for 160 years, "Bah!"

If mien comes out on the page as vocals, physical appearance presents the melody line. As the example of Oliver indicates, noses—problematic as they are for the novelist who has already reached into a bin for several books' worth of them—have to be faced. Also eyes, ears, hairline, the whole physiognomy and beyond that, lo, the soul.

Sheer economy is sometimes best. In *Typhoon*, all we ever know or need to know about the waiting wife of the magnificently phlegmatic sea skipper, MacWhirr, is the little that Joseph Conrad tells us: "The only secret of her life was her abject terror of the time when her husband would come home to stay for good."

Conversely, in *The All of It*, Jeannette Haien's compact marvel of storytelling, the fullness of description is glorious: "Kevin: with his straight, light, soft hair (the merest breeze would randomly part it); his blue eyes that tended easily to water over; the mould of his features expressive more of determination than of intelligence; his nimble-jointed body (he could go up a ladder and come down it with a crazy ease that drew smiles)." That's only half of the descriptive paragraph, but already you feel you've known this loose-made Irish farmer for, well, half your life.

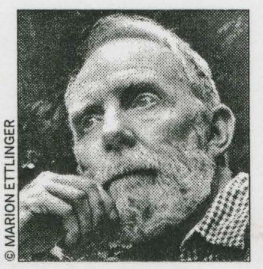
Call me analog, but I believe memorable fiction is best served by physical magnitudes rather than minimalist digits of dis and data. Archival photos, turns of phrase ("slim as a clarinet") that simply pop to mind, revelatory glimpses across a room—the supply of characteristics leading toward character is as broad as a writer's experience and as deep as he cares to delve. Of course, some rules, or at least strictures of common sense, apply: I never use my friends; and relatives, I say, are best saved for memoirs. Nor, except in minor roles, do I employ actual historical personalities—in most cases, they carry too many awkward truths to wear a fictional guise convincingly. But virtually all else is fair game. Case in point: Recently I was in a Montana establishment not unlike those my father frequented on his hiring forays, when in came a startlingly long-faced leathery rancher. As soon as I was decently out of sight of him, that face entered my notebook: "long thin nose, wrinkles running down cheeks; like a copper coin a bit melted." Oliver, could you come here for a moment? ■

## IVAN DOIG | *Prairie Rhapsodist*

Put Ivan Doig's name to his own test of "linguistic chimings" and you get two wailing diphthongs (Ai! Oy!) perched on high barstools, mourning a world gone by. Doig writes about the Old West—about hard men, rude fate and a landscape as boundless as sky.

He is the author of 10 books: a memoir of his boyhood in Montana, *This House of Sky*, which was a 1979 nonfiction finalist for the National Book Award; *Winter Brothers*, a narrative of the Pacific Northwest; and eight novels about the West—among them, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* (1987), *Heart Earth* (1994) and, most recently, *Prairie Nocturne* (2003).

He was born 64 years ago in White Sulphur Springs, Montana. His father was a ranch hand; his mother, a cook. For three generations before them, his forebears worked in other people's sheds and kitchens. "My parents worked their way up to the equivalent of sharecroppers," he says. "They would run a herd of livestock for a year, see them through the lambing and the shearing, and then get a small cut of the profits. But they never had capital, never owned anything." He was an only child in a land that was unkind to children: His mother died when he was 6.



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**Ivan Doig**

But, growing up, he had two things a writer needs most: words and people who care about them. His aunt read him stories: "She had asthma—she couldn't do much else." His teenage uncles read him newspapers: "It was winter—they needed to pass the time." And so it was that he listened to whatever his relatives could get their eyes on: local papers, Life magazine, Collier's, the Saturday Evening Post. By kindergarten, he was reading on his own.

It was a high-school teacher who made the difference. She taught him English for all four years; Latin, for three. She ran the school paper, put on the plays. "Any time I felt myself going verbal, I had Mrs. Tidyman, a force of nature, to tell me what I needed to know. Whether it was Edwin Arlington Robinson or Coleridge or Shakespeare, she would recite it all freely, over her great billowing bosom."

A scholarship and a dishwashing job got him to Northwestern University, and, after that, there was the army, a newspaper job, radio. "Writing for radio taught me everything I need to know about a strong lead, a pressing story, a deadline. As for writing prose, life had already taught me the biggest lesson: You have to set it all up; do your chores."

In the end, he says, it is all about language—about phrases (as Yeats so famously said about poems) that click shut like well-made boxes. "Poetry under my prose is what I'm after. For me, that's the alpha and omega." In other words: Is the noise right? Does it sound real? Is a name telling you all you need to know?

**—Marie Arana**

possibilities. The more optimistic one was that he would return to his Texas roots and try to work closely with moderates in his own party and Democrats to forge bipartisan reform modeled after Ronald Reagan's 1986 tax success.

This path was clearly the one selected by the tax panel, which put forward two plans attractive to Democrats and Republicans alike. It was also the path this humbled columnist discussed as a possibility three weeks ago.

Failing that, the risk has always been that Bush would continue to lead a party locked in a bitter struggle with Democrats over every inch of policy ground. Bad will, mistrust and venom would replace collegial cooperation.

Abandoning tax reform suggests that the president has resigned himself to the latter course. If you accidentally flip your remote control from the Ultimate Fighting Championships to C-Span over the next three years, you might not notice the difference.

Why did he do it?

The first reason is that it's possible, despite his election-year stumping, that he was never very seriously committed to tax reform in the first place. Indeed, his first major tax victory, the 2001 tax bill, was all about reducing marginal tax rates, with little attention paid to the changes in the tax base that are the core of tax reform. If he were a tax reformer at heart, he could have designed a bill with more substantive changes then.

But a second consideration must be included. Washington is divided today in a manner seldom seen in U.S. history. The two sides genuinely appear to hate each other.

Now it seems it's even worse. Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean said he believed the war in Iraq was lost while Sen. John Kerry appeared to accuse U.S. soldiers of "terrorizing" Iraqi citizens.

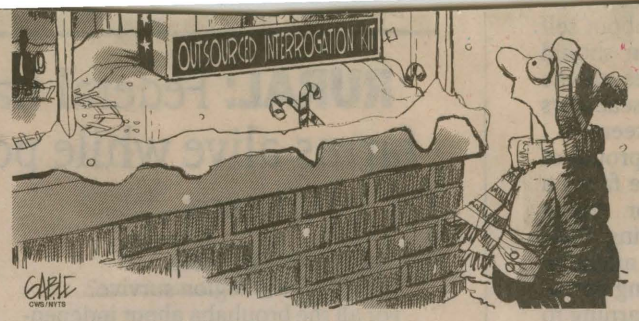
The outbursts led the Republican party to produce an advertisement that superimposed a white surrender flag over Dean's face and repeated the offending Kerry quote. The message from the Republicans: "Democrats have a plan for Iraq: Retreat and defeat."

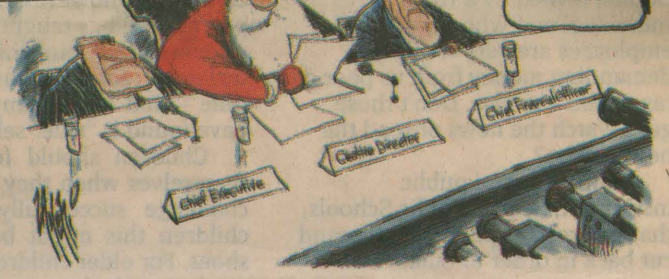
Kerry, who may regret his statement, is nonetheless highly regarded by many of his Democratic (and moderate Republican) peers in the Senate. Striking him as hard as Republicans did in the advertisement extinguishes the option of collegial cooperation. The president's supporters would claim that he turned partisan because the Democrats were so unreasonable. I wonder if Democrats might not feel the same way.

Policy wonks spent the first half of this year debating the merits of Social Security. By the summer, it was obvious that no

SEE REFORM, F5

Kevin Hassett writes for Bloomberg News; khassett@aei.org.




RI Dec. 18 '05

# Denial's the name of the game on these plains

## THE ECONOMIST

In 1859, a young schoolteacher in Illinois who would later become a famous explorer, John Wesley Powell, used to make his students sing: "Our lands are broad enough. Have no alarm. For Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm."

Uncle Sam indeed obliged. In a series of Homestead Acts, pioneers staked 270 million acres of land. Even after the fertile ground had been snapped up, the settlers still kept coming.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, they poured into the less productive areas – eastern Montana, the western Dakotas and western Nebraska. They endured the hardships of Job. Most were driven away, but the obstinant stayed. And, alas, they have struggled ever since.

No place so demonstrates the shaky economic state of rural America as the northern Rockies and western Great Plains. Virtually all of the 20 poorest counties in America, in terms of wages, are on the eastern flank of the Rockies or on the western Great Plains. Not one of the 10 poorest counties in this region issued a housing permit in 2002.

A couple of years ago, Lester Thurow, a Montana-born economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, observed that when he got his doctorate in the mid-1960s, he associated regional poverty with the South. But he was now certain that, before he retired, "regional poverty will be a phenomenon of the northern Great Plains."

There are two unusual things about the deprivation in this region. First, it is largely white. The area does include several pockets of wretched Native-American poverty, but in most areas the poor are as white as a prairie snowstorm.

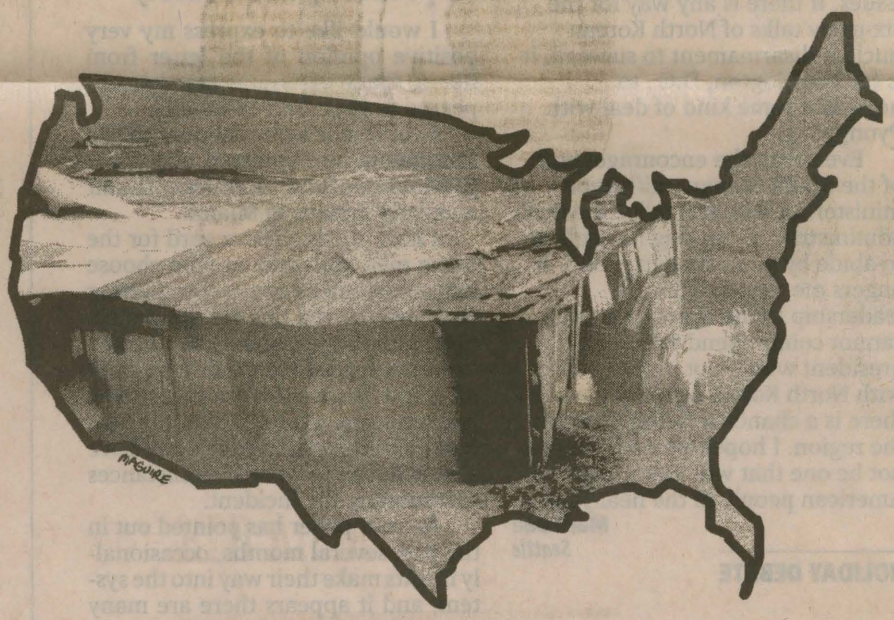
Second, most people do not think of themselves as poor. The landscape certainly does not cry scarcity. Judith Basin, for instance, is a county of tidy ranches and vast vistas. Cumulus clouds project great shadows that sweep over patchwork fields planted with alfalfa and wheat. To the west, the Little Belt Mountains glow blueish-green. It might almost be paradise for those who want no hills to climb.

It is only when you turn off the main road and come upon a pattern of deserted homesteads that the reality sinks in.

In 2003 nearly a sixth of the residents in Judith Basin, Mont., lived below the federal poverty level for a family of four of $18,400. The median household income was $26,900 (against $43,300 nationally). Crime is low (meth, the scourge of many rural counties, has made only minimal incursions here), but it is still a community in decline.

Judith Basin County has lost about 6 percent of its population in the past four years. Around 10 pupils graduate from its three high schools each year. The population of the county seat, Stanford, reached its zenith of 615 in 1960. Now it is 430, and "that's if everyone is home," as one county commissioner puts it.

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Larry Swanson, a University of Montana economist who has spent years studying Great Plains and Northern Rockies demography, says the picture is dire. "We are seeing a re-accelerating of the population decline. After the kids left in the 1980s and 1990s, things sort of leveled off. Now, it's just plain attrition. People are dying."

It is fairly common nowadays for rural counties across America to lose people: roughly one in four did in the 1990s. What is unusual about this region is that the downturn has not inspired much zeal for invention. Granted, this region suffers from "the curse of flat counties." It lacks the mountains, rivers or dramatic geography that attract wealthy retirees or budding software entrepreneurs.

Not having a vital urban area also hurts. The northern Great Plains, which covers roughly 280,000 square miles, includes only one decent-sized city – Billings, Mont. (whose population is 97,000), though Lincoln and Omaha, Neb., and Sioux Falls, S.D., are on its eastern edge.

Yet even if you look only at agriculture, the region has plainly failed to adapt to a world in which grain and cattle are cheap. Pioneer mythology has a good deal to do with this.

The walls of the Museum of the Northern Great Plains in Fort Benton, Mont., carry biblical phrases ("They shall beat their swords into ploughshares") or Thomas Jefferson's maxim of divine preference ("Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God"). But this mythology has led to a paralyzing respect for antiquity.

There are a few signs of innovation. Montana and North Dakota are both trying to grow more organic crops, for which margins are higher, and state coffers are swelling because of the energy boom. But little effort has been made to process foods rather than just grow them.

For instance, both North and South Dakota are leading producers of wheat and soybeans. Yet, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the two states have less than 1 percent of their population employed in the food-processing industry. The crops go out by the truckload

SEE RURAL, F5

It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own, by Richard White

RING THE LAND

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CHAPTER 6

# Distributing the Land

THE government expeditions that explored the West were, in effect, sophisticated scouting parties. Advancing relentlessly, if somewhat erratically and ineptly, behind them was a phalanx of government surveyors whose duty it was to divide up the land into the giant checkerboard pattern of townships, sections, and quarter-sections that remains so apparent over the prairies and plains today. This division and distribution formed one of the central activities of government in the nineteenth-century West: transforming public lands into private lands.

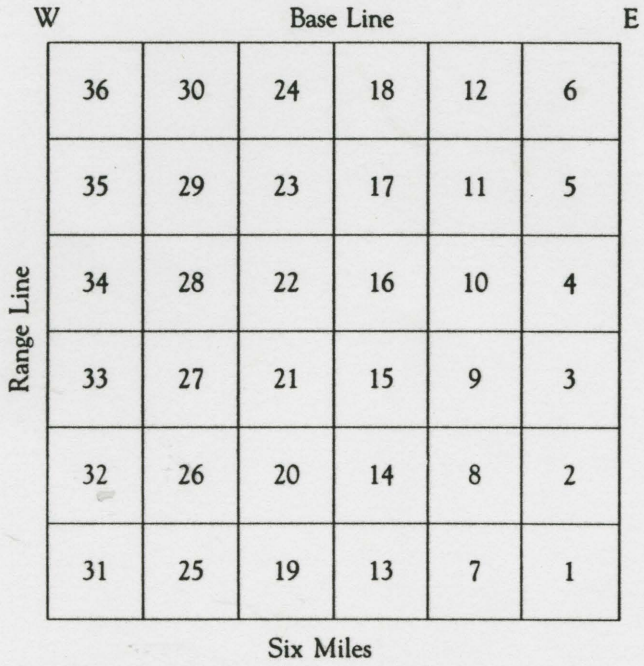
The federal government's role in distributing lands meant that American citizens in the West felt the presence of the federal government far more directly than did citizens elsewhere. That presence was supposed to be temporary, because the public domain, it was thought, would in time become entirely private property. But that did not turn out to be true. The federal government did not distribute all the public lands in the West. The government retained so much land that western states would stand in a different relationship to the central government than would those of the East.

In the West the same basic land system created earlier in the East yielded different results. The differences were not intentional. Congress wanted to replicate existing landholding patterns, agricultural systems, and republican institutions in the West. The federal bureaucracies of the land office and the territorial system were only to be a giant administrative scaffolding from which officials and citizens together would build models of the older states. When they were finished, the scaffolding would come down and the new states would stand as duplicates of the old.

Much of the scaffolding did eventually come down, but other sections of this administrative framework remained, and in fact the government began elaborating and adding to the framework until the scaffolding, in altered form, became a permanent fixture in the West. The portion of the scaffolding that remained and grew surrounded the public lands, which became a permanent responsibility of the federal government.

## American Land Policy

As originally conceived, there was an impressive coherence to American land policy. The Land Ordinance of 1785 created simple procedures for the acquisition and distribution of public lands. After Indians ceded title to their lands to the federal government, surveyors would mark the land off into giant squares six miles on a side and then subdivide them into sections of one square mile. Each section,




The township numbering system set up under the Ordinance of 1785.

in turn, would contain four quarter-sections of 160 acres each. The government would then sell this land, a tier of townships at a time, at public auction. Any land left unsold after the auction could be purchased at the land office at a minimum price originally set at $2.00 an acre but reduced to $1.25 an acre in 1820.

The basic premise of this system, one not questioned until the end of the nineteenth century, was that the land system could best serve the country's interests by putting public land into private hands. The federal government would, in effect, serve as a real estate agent instead of a landlord. The orderly sale of public lands and their transformation into small farms would ensure a prosperous republican future for the United States. With public lands readily available, the United States would not imitate Europe and become a country of wealthy landlords and poor tenants. Small freeholders, eager to develop their own land, would "improve" the land and thus create the wealth that would spur the economic development of the country as a whole.

Not only would the land system promote the creation of a prosperous republican society, but it would also endow that society with a basic public infrastructure of schools, roads, and canals. Under the Ordinance of 1785, the government reserved one section (number 16) in each township to provide income for the public schools. After 1848, Congress added a second section (number 36) for the support of schools. Territories and states sometimes leased these lands and used the income for schools, but more often they sold them with congressional permission. In 1875, Congress decided that the states must charge a minimum price, originally set at $2.50 an acre, for school lands. They were then to invest the proceeds in

a permanent interest-bearing school fund. Congress later applied this technique of granting lands to other social purposes. Congress granted lands to the states to fund the building of canals, the dredging and clearing of rivers, and the building of wagon roads.

On paper this was an elegant system. As Americans imposed it on the lands across the Appalachians, they created the checkerboard landscape so visible from the air today. But the system took on a Rube Goldberg quality as Congress repeatedly tinkered with it. Between 1789 and 1834, Congress passed 375 different land laws. It changed the minimum purchase, offered credit, and then decided against credit sales.

Even as modified, however, the land system never fully conformed to the actual way that Americans took up the lands in the trans-Appalachian region. Settlers moved faster than surveyors, and so when surveyors arrived in a region, they often found settlers already in place. These settlers were squatters, and what they were doing was illegal, for they lived on land to which they had no title. The existence of large numbers of squatters—people who openly defied the laws governing land distribution—created a political problem not easily evaded.

Early-nineteenth-century politicians took sharply contrasting views of these illegal settlers. Some portrayed them as a group of lawless vagabonds. In the view of many eastern and southern Whigs before the Civil War, squatters not only used property to which they had no title, but they also subverted the civilized communities that the law intended the land system to create. Antisquatter congressmen feared that if squatting continued, the West would become a region of thinly scattered barbarians who took their livings off the richest lands but who were unable to support the basic institutions of the republic. To oppose squatting was, in this view, to halt the descent of the West into anarchy.

Other politicians, particularly westerners and most Democrats, saw squatters differently. To them, squatters were not criminals or barbarians; they were noble pioneers. They were securing the rapid growth and development of the country. If they broke the letter of the law, they fulfilled its intent. The law intended to create a nation of small commercial farmers. And in the eyes of their supporters, squatters were simply capital-poor farmers who used the land to produce the very revenue necessary to buy the land. A squatter who settled, raised crops, and sold them was only "borrowing" the land in order to produce the income necessary to purchase it. This cost the government nothing, allowed people to acquire property, and prevented the growth of a landholding elite. How could anyone monopolize the land or force people into tenancy when the people always had unrestricted access to the public domain? Squatters, their supporters argued, were actually maintaining the social equality of the country.

In the battle over squatting, the prosquatter faction won. To protect squatters, Democrats in Congress, led by Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, succeeded in passing temporary preemption acts in the 1830s and then a permanent preemption act in 1841. Preemption was simply legalized squatting. Under these acts, squatters had first right to buy up to 160 acres of land on which they had made improvements. When the government was ready to offer the land for sale, a squatter had to appear at the land office and pay the minimum price before the auction.

As the debate over squatting shows, fights over land law were often arguments

about the very nature of American society and how it should replicate itself in new territories. To forge a workable land policy, therefore, Congress on some level had to agree on a common vision of American society. Land served as a sort of seal of approval for social consensus. When Americans agreed that soldiers were needed for war, they gave them land grants to encourage enlistment. When they agreed that veterans should be rewarded, they gave them land grants. When Congress agreed that the government should make rivers navigable or aid the states in building the canals in order to facilitate commerce, it gave the states grants of lands that could be sold to pay for the improvement.

In what was a capital-short and land-rich country, Congress used land instead of money to secure agreed-upon public goals. It did so by issuing land scrip. Land scrip was the nineteenth-century equivalent of food stamps. Issued by the government, it could be redeemed in exchange for a specific commodity: land. Unlike food stamps, however, scrip could legally be traded and sold. When Congress distributed scrip to veterans, few of them actually took up land on the public domain. Most sold it to others. A regular market in land scrip developed, and speculators interested in western lands purchased scrip and then used it to buy lands. Speculators preferred scrip because it sold at less than the $1.25 an acre the law mandated as the minimum price for federal land.

Because Americans believed that how they distributed the public domain determined the kind of society they were creating, fundamental differences over the nature of American society and America's future deadlocked land policies. When the North and South struggled for dominance in the Union, they clashed over the distribution of land in the West. Southern congressmen in the 1850s opposed any attempts at homestead legislation that would give free land to small farmers. "Better for us," declared a Mississippian, "that these territories should remain a waste, a howling wilderness, trod only by red hunters than be so settled." A homestead policy would, southerners believed, only increase the number of "free farms with Yankees and foreigners pre-committed to resist the participancy of slaveholders in the public domain." In the 1850s proposals for homestead acts, land grants for a Pacific railroad, and grants to establish agricultural and mechanical colleges all fell victim to sectional divisions. All three measures promised to benefit the North at the expense of the South.

### Land Policy in Operation

For all their differences, northerners and southerners usually agreed that land could go to actual settlers; speculation in land was an evil that ought to be prevented. Land speculators were people who bought land at auction from the government, using cash or land scrip, and then held the land until they could sell it to others at a profit. Such people were popularly perceived as economic parasites who added to the burden borne by the honest farmer.

This rhetorical agreement on the evils of speculation found, however, little reflection in the operation of the law. Speculators could buy virtually unlimited amounts of land at any U.S. land office, usually at the minimum price. Congress did little to prevent speculation, in part because without it the land system might not have worked at all. Once the federal government stopped offering credit, speculation in one form or another offered the easiest access to the cash necessary for purchase.

Iowa in the 1850s and 1860s can serve as an example of how the land system had come to depend on speculation. In 1862 speculators owned two-thirds of the privately held land in Iowa. Between 1850 and 1860 from 50 percent to 75 percent of those buying farms in Iowa obtained their entire holding either from speculators or from lands that the federal government had granted to the state. In all, 80 percent to 90 percent of Iowa farmers had bought at least part of their holdings from parties other than the federal government.

When looked at more closely, such figures do not present a picture of farmers being fleeced by speculators. The two were not always adversaries. Farmers and speculators not only cooperated, but on many occasions they were also the same person. Probably the most common form of cooperation between the speculator and the farmer occurred in the so-called time entry system. "Time entry" evolved because preemption could only work if squatters actually had the cash to pay for their land when it came up for sale. Very often settlers who had preempted land still lacked the funds to pay for it. To get the money, farmers went to a land agent, who advanced them the purchase price at 40 percent interest. As security for the loan the farmer put the title to the land in the land agent's name. At such high interest rates, the speculator obtained a handsome profit, but the farmer still acquired the land relatively cheaply. The total cost of the land to the settler (the purchase price plus interest) came to only $2 to $3 per acre, usually far less than the real market value of the land at the time of sale. The time-entry system probably accounted for about 70 percent of the speculation that took place not only in Iowa but also later on the prairies and plains west of the Missouri River.

The remaining speculative transactions did involve direct purchase and subsequent resale of tracts of land by speculators. Despite charges to the contrary, however, speculators could not afford to sit on lands until the price rose. Instead, they sought to resell the land quickly and thus avoid the burden of taxes. In the early years of settlement, rapid resale was not difficult, and profits were large. Speculators in central Iowa who used scrip to buy land beneath the minimum price could reap returns of from 30 percent to 120 percent annually on their investment at a time when other investments usually brought returns of only 5 percent to 10 percent.

With these kinds of profits possible, farmers themselves also speculated in lands. They formed claims clubs, which ostensibly existed to protect the rights of settlers against speculators or claim jumpers. Members of the clubs, usually the squatters who first took up land in an area, agreed not to bid against each other at land auctions and to prevent others from bidding against club members. If nonmembers ignored a club's warnings against competitive bidding, members of the club evicted them from the auction. Members of these claims clubs denounced large speculators, but they themselves were small-scale speculators. Actual settlers interested only in 160 acres of land did not need claims clubs. The Preemption Act already protected a 160-acre claim. The major reason people had for joining a claims club was to secure more than the 160-acre maximum guaranteed by the Preemption Act. They could then sell the land and used the proceeds to pay off or develop their home farm.

Claims clubs, the time-entry system, and the market in land scrip were all extralegal modifications of the system that made it more flexible and more suited to local conditions. Such extralegal modifications changed the system more

effectively than legal changes could have done. Before the land system began to distribute lands in the West, there was thus a long tradition of extralegal and illegal modifications of the law.

### Legal Changes to the Land System

Extralegal changes in the system were, in effect, all that could take place as long as the sectional crisis between the North and the South persisted. Only when the secession of the South left Congress in the hands of northern Republicans did changes in the land system proceed. Socially and economically, the Republican party of the 1860s aspired to be the voice of a united homogeneous North. The party embodied a utopian capitalist vision of a world wherein labor was rewarded, individual opportunity prevented class distinctions from arising, and progress and growth were the national destiny. Although this vision would yield to a much harsher reality after the war, it shaped Republican land policy. Republican congressmen, who spoke for northern farmers and artisans as much as for northern capitalists, modified the land system to insure the replication of a society of modern commercial farmers in the West.

During the Civil War the Republican land program revolved around three bills: the Homestead Act, the Pacific Railroad Grant, and the Morrill Act. These three laws, all passed by Congress in 1862, were supposed to complement each other. The centerpiece was the Homestead Act, which granted 160 acres of the public domain to citizens and noncitizens alike who would live upon the land and farm it. Northern farmers and those labor reformers who followed the theories of George Henry Evans had long urged such a proposal for free grants of land to actual settlers. Ideally, the law would allow unemployed northern workers and the children of northern farmers to begin lives as independent landowners in the West. By draining off unemployed laborers, the law would simultaneously increase the wages of eastern workingmen.

Accompanying the Homestead Act was an act providing a land grant for a Pacific railroad. The immediate goal of the railroad act was to tie the Pacific Coast to the Union, but Congress also recognized that railroads were necessary to give the farms provided by the Homestead Act access to markets. Congress approved land grants and loans to the first transcontinental railroad in 1862 and made similar grants to other railroads in the ensuing years.

The final part of the Republican triumvirate was the Morrill Act, which provided land grants to the states to create a public system of higher education designed to serve farmers and skilled workingmen. The lands granted by Congress lay almost exclusively in the West, and the states could sell them to fund state universities that would give their citizens access to the education necessary for progress and advancement. A common vision of a prosperous, progressive, economically expansive, and harmonious West inspired all three acts. There was little anticipation of the conflicts and contradictions their application would involve.

In the Homestead Act, Congress above all expected the American future to duplicate the American past. Congress embedded the ideal of a 160-acre farm in the Homestead Act. It was an ideal more suited to the East than to the West and more appropriate for the American past than the American future. Without irrigation, a quarter-section farm in the middle of the Great Plains or the Utah

desert was not a ticket to independence but to starvation. Congress presumed, too, that all that land would be farmed. It made no special provisions for acquiring land for mining or logging or grazing. As in the East, actual settlers introduced extralegal improvisations to reconcile the various contradictions between the conditions they confronted and the conditions the law envisioned, but these improvisations did not solve the basic problems of what became an increasingly contradictory land system.

### The Homestead Act and Distribution of the Public Domain

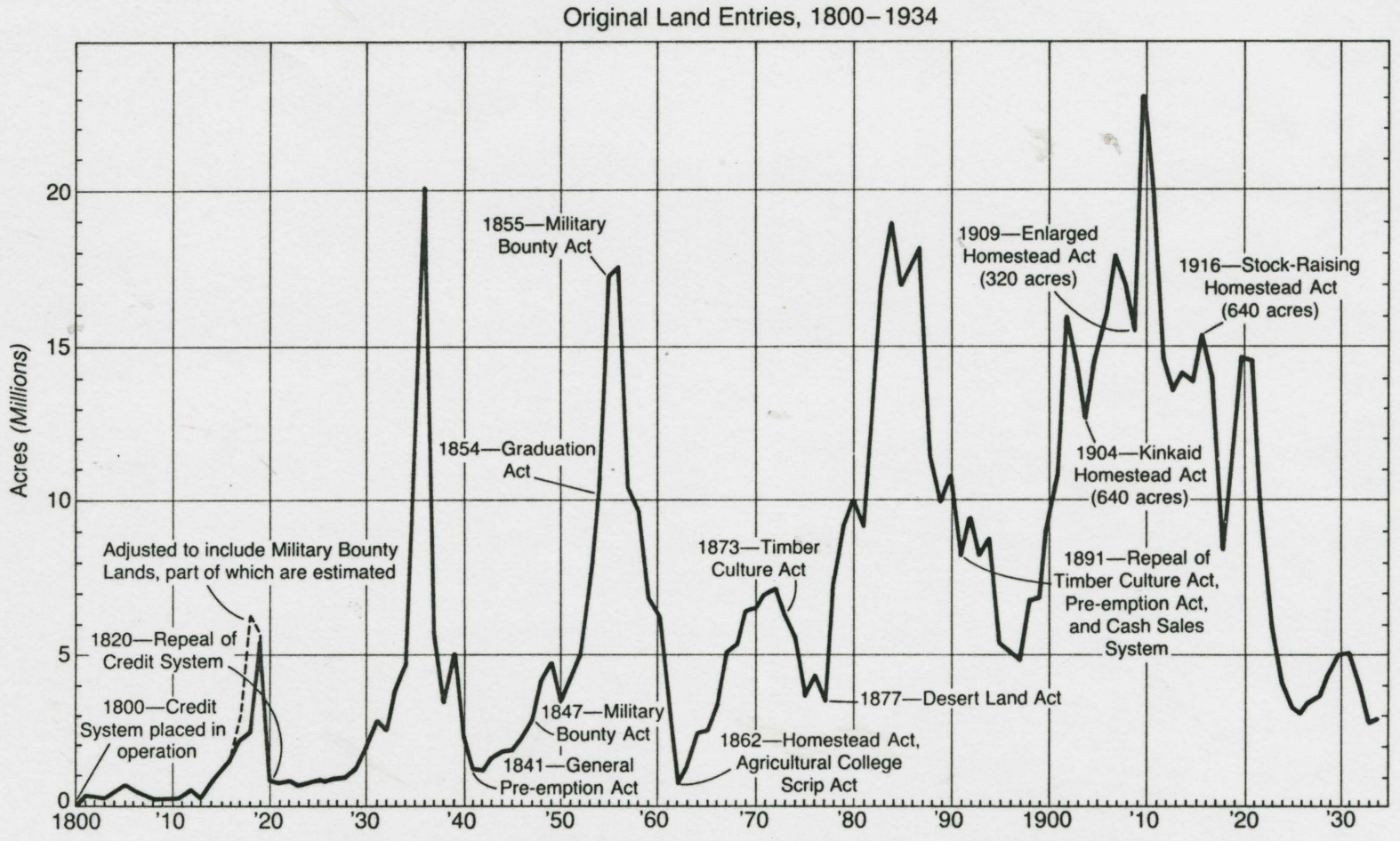
No laws revealed more about the difficulties of implementing in the West the Republican vision of a capitalist agricultural society based on smallholdings than the Homestead Act and the railroad land grants. In many ways these laws were tremendously successful, but they also involved conflicts and failures that Congress had not envisioned.

The terms of the Homestead Act were generous and straightforward. The law provided 160 acres of free land to any settler who paid a small filing fee and resided on and improved the land for five years. If after six months of residency the settler wished to buy the land for $1.25 an acre, he or she could do so. Purchasing the land was appealing to those settlers interested in rapid development, because once a settler obtained title, the farm could be mortgaged and the money then used either to improve the homestead or to buy more land. Originally, settlers could only homestead surveyed land, but in 1880, Congress extended the act to the unsurveyed public domain.

Advocates of the Homestead Act had grandiose hopes for the reform. Horace Greeley, the leading Republican editor of the period, wrote in the *New York Tribune* that the act embodied "one of the most beneficent and vital reforms ever attempted in any age or clime—a reform calculated to diminish sensibly the number of paupers and idlers and increase the proportion of working, independent, self-subsisting farmers in the land evermore."

According to its supporters, the Homestead Act ensured the final realization of the old paired goals that had inspired the land system: a class of prosperous small farmers whose own prosperity fed the economic development of the nation. But the Homestead Act never came remotely close to achieving the grandiose expectations of its advocates. In certain areas of the West, such as the eastern Dakotas and Nebraska, the law did work fairly well. In those places the federal government distributed 56.5 percent of the public domain through the Homestead Act, and numerous farmers established prosperous farms. But elsewhere the law was a disappointment. Certainly it did not drain excess population west and thus relocate the poor on the land. Between 1862 and 1890 the American population grew by 32 million people, but only approximately 2 million people settled on the 372,659 farms claimed through the Homestead Act.

The creation of nearly 400,000 farms and the distribution of millions of acres of land to farming families represented by any standard a formidable success, but it was nonetheless only a limited success in terms of the promises made for the act. Much of the reason for such partial success lies in the arid land that many farmers settled. They could not succeed in farming it with techniques suited to humid lands. That the homestead grant of 160 acres of land simply was not an appropriate unit for agriculture in much of the West was only one aspect of the




Original land entries, 1800–1934. From Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).



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problem. The limited success of the Homestead Act in distributing land also arose because there existed so many other ways of obtaining title to the public domain.

If we think of the American land system as a warehouse containing the nation's resources, then it was coming by the 1860s to be a warehouse that consisted almost entirely of doors. If the Homestead Act had been the only doorway to the public domain, then it probably would have distributed far more land than it did. But the Homestead Act was not the only doorway, and when farmers filed through it and reached the public domain, they found much of the land already gone. Those who took it had entered through other doors.

Congress did not have complete control over western lands. Texas, which had come into the Union with title to its public lands, operated its own state system. Nor, originally, did the federal system extend into Indian Territory, where the immigrant Indians maintained their own communal landholding patterns. Nor did federal laws apply to areas in the Southwest and California that Spain and Mexico had previously granted to private owners.

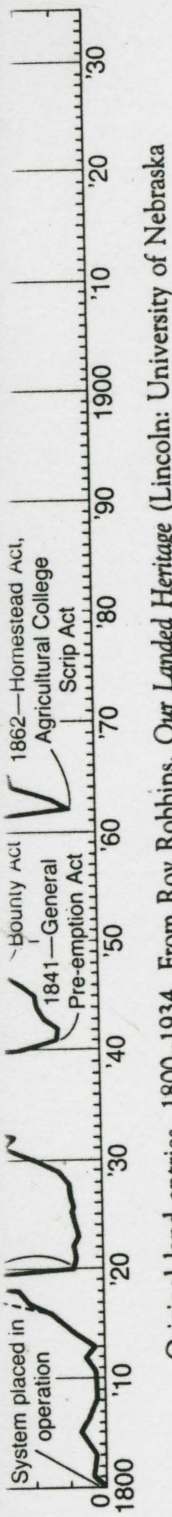
Over the rest of the West the federal system did hold sway, but laws that predated the Homestead Act continued to grant access to land. The public land offices continued to sell land, and a thriving market in scrip allowed speculators to buy it at less than the minimum price of $1.25 an acre. Congress continued to grant lands to the states which the states then sold to finance public improvements. Such grants, located largely on public lands west of the Mississippi, totaled roughly 100 million acres after the passage of the Homestead Act. In addition, Congress granted land to western states on their admission to the Union, and the Morrill Act gave each state 30,000 acres of land for each senator and congressman. Congress gave those eastern states that no longer had public lands within their boundaries land scrip, which they then sold. The purchasers used the scrip to claim public lands in the West.

Congress meanwhile continued enthusiastically to hammer away at the few remaining walls holding in the public lands. They created yet more doorways. The Senate ratified Indian treaties that specifically designated land to be sold to the railroads or to be sold by the government in the Indians' behalf instead of being opened up for homesteading. In time, the sales of Indian lands that were closed to homesteading would mount to well over 100 million acres. This figure alone is nearly half as great as that of all the lands granted under the Homestead Act.

### Railroad Land Grants

The biggest new gateway to the public lands was, however, large enough to drive a train through. Congress had long made land grants for the development of transportation systems, and even before the Civil War it had made grants to aid railroads east of the Mississippi. Between 1862 and 1872, Congress extended this system of land grants to the West by giving more than 125 million acres of land to aid in the construction of the railroads. In toto, the railroads eventually received from the states and federal government more than 223 million acres of land, 35 million acres of which they later forfeited.

The greatest grants went to the transcontinental railroads. The Union Pacific and Central Pacific—the two companies that shared the first transcontinental route—received 20 odd-numbered sections of land for each mile of track they




Original land entries, 1800–1934. From Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).

constructed. In addition, Congress loaned the railroads from $16,000 to $48,000 per mile, depending on the nature of the terrain through which the railroad passed. These loans were in the form of 30-year first-mortgage bonds that paid 6 percent interest. After various mergers, the Union Pacific received a little over 19.1 million acres from the federal government; the Central Pacific about 7.3 million. The largest grant, however, went to the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1864 the Northern Pacific received 20 sections per mile when building through states and 40 sections per mile when building through the territories. The grant to the Northern Pacific gave that railroad about 40 million acres, or an area roughly the size of New England.

In theory this massive distribution of land was to cost the federal government nothing. Railroads received only every other section of land along their routes, thus creating a checkerboard pattern of alternating railroad and government sections. Congress correctly assumed that the nearer land was to the railroad, the more valuable it would be, and so the laws limited homesteaders to 80 instead of 160 acres within the alternating sections of the railroad grant. By the same logic, purchasers of land within those sections had to pay twice the price of land elsewhere on the public domain. Thus, in theory the United States would earn just as much revenue from railroad lands as if the grants had never been given. In fact, the government seems only to have derived a fraction of the revenue this plan promised, as many of the government sections had already been claimed and others were entered in ways that brought the government less than $2.50 an acre.

Congress obviously realized that in giving lands to the railroads it was closing these lands to free entry under the Homestead Act, but it believed that railroads would sell their own lands quickly and cheaply and thus facilitate settlement. In terms of total agricultural settlement, the railroads did accelerate the rate of settlement. Because railroads provided the cheapest corridor to market, farmers either settled along railroad routes or sought to attract railroads to areas where they had already settled. Western farmers desired railroads and offered incentives to get railroads to come to areas the roads had not yet reached.

Railroads, in turn, desired farmers. Congress gave land grants because not enough people lived in the trans-Missouri West to support a railroad, and so other incentives for building a railroad had to be made available. It was theoretically in the railroads' interest to sell the land they obtained from the government as quickly as possible. They obtained money from the sales to pay the construction costs of the railroad, and by building up population, the railroads insured their own future profits. The settlers would develop farms and ship goods on the completed line. Congress tried not to take chances on rapid sales. Although precise terms varied under individual land grants, the railroads had from three to five years after the completion of their tracks to sell or mortgage the land. At the end of that time the unsold lands would be open for purchase at $1.25 to $2.50 an acre. Thus, although the granting of huge areas of the public domain to the railroads might appear to enrich large private corporations, the Republicans thought that, in fact, the grants would quickly open up new and valuable land to small farmers.

In many places the railroad grants did promote rapid settlement, but in other places things did not work out as Congress had anticipated. The railroad land grants sometimes actually delayed the migration of Anglo American farmers into

large areas of the West. Congress had not anticipated how slow some railroad companies would be in selecting their routes and laying their tracks. And until the railroads decided on their actual routes, the government closed all the land along the potential routes to settlement. By various estimates the railroads received from 7 percent to 10 percent of all the land in the United States, but they restricted settlement, for varying amounts of time, on nearly 30 percent of the land. Even when they knew their ultimate routes, the railroad operators often sought to delay making their land selections because land given to the railroads could not be taxed until the companies received their title.

Many western farmers who had initially applauded both the Homestead Act and the railroad grants quickly became frustrated with the new land policy. The railroad grants certainly had fueled national growth, but they had also delayed settlement on millions of acres of the best lands and had closed them to acquisition under the Homestead Act. Western opposition to the railroads, coupled with the consequences of financial irregularities in their management, led Congress to end grants to western railroads after 1871.

Thus, although in theory the Homestead Act opened a vast public domain to western settlers, in fact the act applied on only a fraction of the land. A settler entering Kansas in the late 1860s and early 1870s, for example, would find one-third of that state closed to homesteading. Railroad grants alone tied up 20 percent of the state. And much of the land open to acquisition under the Homestead Act was arid or distant from the railroads. As a result, settlers during every year between 1862 and 1873 purchased more western land than they obtained through the Homestead Act. Only a minority of those who attempted to use the act ever acquired free land under it. Even in a prime agricultural state like Kansas, only 41 percent of the settlers filing between 1862 and 1873 proved up their claims. Another 10 percent of those who filed commuted their entries to cash purchase and bought the land, but 49 percent failed to last five years on their land and thus never secured title. For the Homestead Act as a whole, only one-third of those who filed a claim finally proved it up and obtained title.

The end of railroad land grants still left other contradictions in western land policy. The numerous failed homesteaders who abandoned unworkable claims on the arid lands of western Kansas were one sign of the poor fit between a land policy designed to create small farms and a western landscape not particularly hospitable to small, unirrigated farms. Congress legally and westerners extralegally began to struggle with ways to make the land laws more congruent with western environmental and economic realities. Neither Congress nor western settlers fully succeeded.

### The Extralegal Land System

In the West the improvisation of local changes in the federal land system began with the California Gold Rush of 1849. Gold seekers flooding into California discovered that the United States had no law to provide for the sale or lease of lands containing precious minerals. The laws covering claims for lands containing base minerals were clearly inappropriate. Congress was unable to agree on how to solve the problem, and so between 1851 and 1866 the federal government followed a policy of "noninterference." It left the regulation of mining claims to the miners themselves. In the camps miners developed a system of recording

claims that had nothing to do with the official land system's provisions for the leasing and sale of mineral lands. Although Congress did pass a law to cover the sale of coal lands in 1864, not until 1866 did Congress finally passed a mining act for precious metals. The act essentially confirmed local practices developed in western mining regions. Only with the Mining Act of 1872 did Congress provide for the sale of mineral lands in the West.

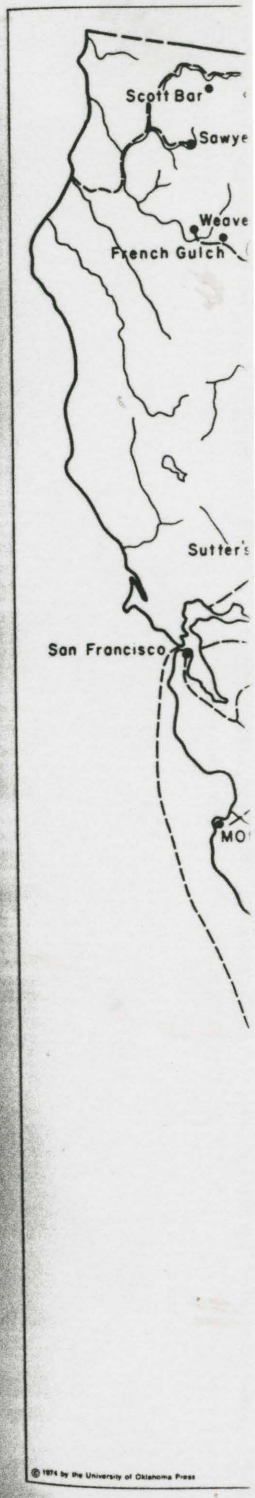
Loggers and livestock raisers confronted a problem similar to that of miners: there was no practical way for them to pursue their occupations on the western public domain. They, too, began to develop a set of extralegal practices to appropriate necessary resources from the public lands. As it did with the miners, the federal government initially tolerated the illegal practices of western loggers, cattlemen, and sheep raisers.

At the root of these land problems was the supposition that agriculture was the highest use for all lands. The law treated other activities as inferior; they must in time yield to farming. The architects of the federal land system had presumed, for example, that lumbering was but an initial stage in the preparation of the land for agriculture. This idea of lumbering as a natural prelude to farming ran into difficulty before lumbermen ever turned to western forests. In Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota awesome pine forests grew on lands that, once put under the plow, only yielded crops of misery. There, lumbering was not a preparation for farming; it was the major use Americans made of the land. Yet the land system contained no provisions for permanently timbered land.

The realization that timber was also the major resource of lands along the northern California, Oregon, and Washington coasts dawned slowly. Farmers proved unwilling to settle those lands, and although lumbermen sought to log them, no legal provision existed for the sale of timber alone. The temptation for loggers to steal timber or to acquire land by fraud and then abandon it became nearly irresistible. For most loggers, obeying the law meant going out of business.

Initially, loggers simply stole logs off the public domain, but in Washington the federal attorney for the territory moved to control the practice. He, and the officials who followed, however, were not unreasonable men. They were overworked and overextended, and they had no desire to spend their days in damp woods searching for timber thieves. They were willing to work out a modus vivendi with the lumbermen. If the timbermen agreed to report how much lumber they had stolen, the agents agreed to fine them at a prearranged rate. In effect, the government treated lumbermen the way most western cities treated prostitutes. They tolerated crimes they could not prevent in order to fine the criminals and gain public revenues.

This compromise with corruption proved unacceptable to Carl Schurz, the secretary of the interior from 1877 to 1881, but most of all it proved unacceptable to the Northern Pacific Railroad, whose officials hoped eventually to gain the land and timber. Federal officials and railroad attorneys began to force lumbermen to acquire the land. One way was to use their employees, or people recruited for the purpose, to claim land under the Homestead Act. The employees never intended to prove up their claims. After filing the claims, these so-called dummy entrymen simply accepted payment from the timbermen and allowed the loggers to cut the timber. The fraud became so open and widespread that lumber companies advertised for dummy entrymen in Seattle newspapers.




From Warren A
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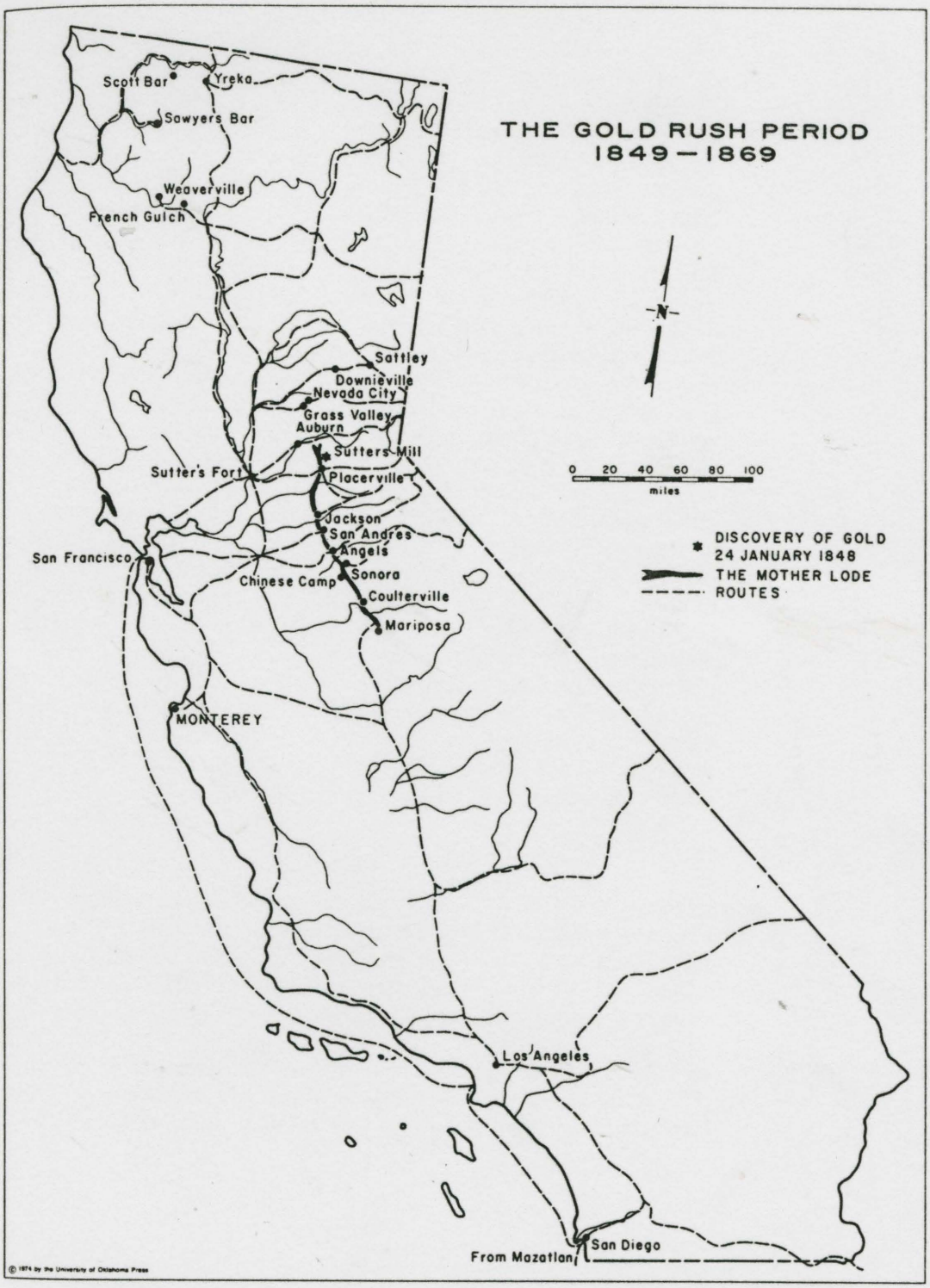
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From Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, *Historical Atlas of California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), map 50.

The passage of the Timber and Stone Act of 1878 allowed these fraudulent entrymen to double their take. The Timber and Stone Act permitted actual settlers to purchase 160 acres of nonagricultural land for $2.50 an acre, but settlers could only use the timber and stone they obtained from the land for their own fuel or construction needs. They could not sell it. Lumbermen, seeing their opportunity, had proxies file claims under the act. They then stripped the claims of timber in defiance of the law's intent. Not until the creation of the national forest system by the federal government and the wholesale purchase of timberlands from the railroads by the timber companies would the federal government be able to develop a realistic way to reconcile logging and the federal land system. By then the nineteenth century had ended.

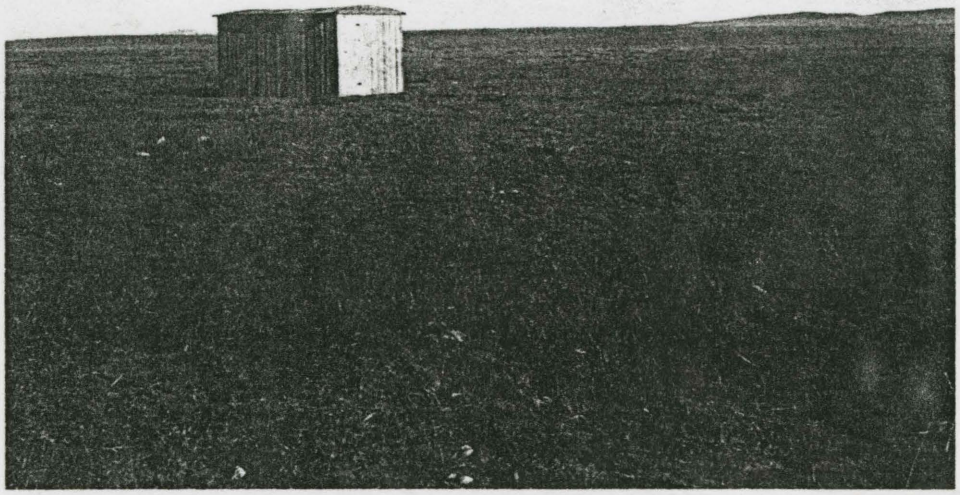
Ranching proved no more amenable to the requirements of the federal land system than did logging. Cattle and sheep raisers, like loggers and miners, depended on harvesting the existing products of the land rather than cultivating crops. Instead of trees or minerals, livestock raisers sought grass for their livestock. Most could not afford to purchase the huge amounts of land necessary to sustain cattle under a free-grazing system and saw no reason to do so. Nor were there provisions in the law for leasing the public domain. So, like miners and loggers, livestock raisers appropriated the land they needed. They did so by using their employees to file homestead claims on lands bordering water sources. By claiming water sources, they made the surrounding public lands worthless to anyone else. On other occasions cattle ranchers simply fenced in public lands. In any given area the stockmen tried to work out extralegal means to regulate land use among themselves. The failure of such agreements would, as we shall see, lead to violence and range wars.

In a fundamental way, however, livestock raisers differed from loggers and miners; ranchers were often in direct competition with farmers. The extralegal appropriation of the public domain by ranchers—particularly on the plains—seemed a direct threat to the effort to turn the land into farms. Although ranchers contended that the lands they used were unsuitable for farming, the federal government would in the 1880s begin to move against many large ranchers who had fenced public lands for their own use. Given the presumption that farming was the highest use to which land could be put, nothing was to be allowed to bar its progress. The government encouraged the farmers' advance, and by the 1880s farmers had moved out of the prairies and into the arid plains country. There they and the land system faced the challenge presented by the arid environment of so much of the West.

### Adapting Land Policy to the West

In the late nineteenth century Congress attempted to face up to the problems that the West presented to farmers. Congressmen introduced and Congress passed a series of land measures designed to allow farmers to produce crops successfully on the Great Plains, on western deserts, and on the heavily timbered lands of the Far West. All of these acts proved to be instructive failures, each revealing western environmental realities.

Congress passed the first of these laws, the Timber Culture Act, in 1873. The act was intended "to encourage the growth of timber on the western prairies." It provided a single quarter-section of land to any head of a family who planted and



Claim shacks such as this one fulfilled the letter, if not the spirit, of the Homestead Act's requirements for improvements on the land.

maintained 40 acres of trees for ten years. This attempt to forest the prairies recognized a practical problem—the lack of timber on the prairies and plains—but it attempted to solve that problem by accepting the dubious scientific theory that rain follows the plow. Rain-follows-the-plow theorists recognized that adequate rainfall was necessary for the growth of trees, but they also believed that trees also encouraged increased rainfall. By planting trees under the Timber Culture Act, farmers could, in effect, alter the climate and make it more humid.

The law, however, did not transform the climate; instead, the climate transformed the law. Drought, the destruction of young seedlings by grasshoppers, and the inability of settlers to care for 40 acres of saplings in a region unsuited to their growth convinced Congress to reduce the required planting to 10 acres in 1878. By 1882 the commissioner of the General Land Office was urging the repeal of the act. A law designed to promote the growth of trees had been put to more lucrative purposes. Claimants used the act to hold likely land from settlement until someone agreed to pay them to relinquish their claim. In Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado, ranchers had their cowboys file false timber culture claims on regions near rivers and streams to prevent them from being settled by farmers. Not until 1891 did Congress give in and repeal the act.

Failing to change arid climates, Congress more realistically passed laws intended to enable settlers to adapt their farming to the land. In 1877, Congress passed legislation designed to encourage the irrigation of arid land. Under this first Desert Land Act a person could obtain 640 acres of land, a full section, in any of eleven

western states and territories for $1.25 an acre if he or she agreed to irrigate it within three years of filing. The law reflected the general American ignorance of irrigation. No settler could bring 640 acres into irrigation within three years. Instead of helping settlers, the law was a boon to speculators. A speculator now had only to pay $0.25 an acre to hold potentially valuable land off the market for three years, when the remainder of the price was due.

At the end of three years, speculators easily avoided the intent of the law and completed their claim. The original Desert Land Act of 1876 called for adequate irrigation, but it did not specify how officials of the land office could determine what was adequate. This omission created vast opportunities for fraud. Speculators paid people to make claims and plow a few furrows. The speculators then claimed the furrows were irrigation ditches. To counter such fraud, Congress in 1890 detailed the necessary improvements and the amount of irrigation, but because the act continued to underestimate the costs of irrigation and did not close off all the avenues for fraud, opposition to the Desert Land Act continued.

The Desert Land Act at least indicated a willingness to recognize the need for irrigation on much western land, but Congress continued to think of farm development as largely an individual effort. Proponents of the legislation remained confident that once given a larger grant by the government, settlers would find some way to irrigate the land. They believed western farmers, aided by government land grants, would subdue the West as earlier farmers had subdued the East.

By the 1880s, however, it began to appear that individual settlement may have reached its limits. Congressional reforms seemed only to worsen the problems of a land system already ill-adapted to the West. To many late-nineteenth-century reformers, particularly to John Wesley Powell, the public domain had become a circus of inefficiency and corruption. In one ring ranchers illegally fenced off huge areas of the public domain; in another, loggers flagrantly stole timber from the public lands. In the third ring, speculators used the Desert Land Act and other legislation to derive profits that the framers of the law had never intended to make available. And through it all, or so it seemed, wandered the small farmers, transformed from hearty yeomen into perennial suckers, trying to establish 160-acre farms on a land that could not sustain them.

Powell's criticism of the land system emerged in an 1878 document entitled *A Report on the Lands of the Arid Regions of the United States*. Settlers could not occupy most of the western United States, Powell asserted, by following the methods developed in the more humid regions of the country. Instead, what Powell proposed amounted to zoning on a massive scale. The government surveys would map the region, discover its resources, and classify the lands according to their best use: mining, logging, grazing, agriculture, and so on. To exploit the land effectively, Powell proposed organizing settlers into irrigation and pasturage districts. In the irrigation districts the farms would be 80 acres, not the 160 acres granted under the Homestead Act. In the grazing districts, settlers could obtain 2,560 acres. In both districts the law would attach water rights to the land. Without rights to water, Powell wrote, western lands were commercially worthless. In both kinds of districts the government would require farmers and ranchers to form cooperatives to manage irrigation systems and to govern grazing on unfenced lands.

Water, Powell recognized, was the key to western development, and western

water would have to be developed and controlled by the federal government, the state governments, or large corporations. No one else had the resources to do it. Powell's preference was clear. Water, he proclaimed, must be federally developed through dams, canals, and ditches, but control of its use must rest at the local level in democratically organized irrigation and grazing districts consisting only of small landholders. Powell blended an idealized view of communal control of water in the small Mormon villages of Utah with his memories of his own midwestern youth to foresee a rural, democratic, decentralized West. There, people would develop resources with federal aid and then cooperatively manage them. Federal development would supposedly yield a rural West of small farmers.

Powell's report was a challenge to the normal procedures of Anglo American settlement. Recognizing its implications, opponents united to kill it. Settlers rejected the notion that government experts would tell them the best use for land and restrict the size of their farms. The report, they thought, served the interests of large cattlemen. The big cattlemen, who knew that the control of water sources meant de facto control of huge areas of surrounding land, feared that Powell's irrigation districts would threaten their monopoly on water. Speculators feared that the report would deny them the opportunity to grow rich from buying and selling lands. Boomers thought it would restrict western growth, because a 2,500-acre ranch would support only one family, whereas 160-acre farms on the same tract would support 15. Boosters preferred to put their faith in the theory that rain would follow the plow. Knowing little of the wet and dry cycles of the plains, they cited contemporary statistics that seemed to show that the West was growing more moist.

Powell's report was not an argument against development. Instead, Powell was arguing for planning instead of chance, for conducting settlement according to the realities of the West instead of people's hopes about what the West would be. Cooperative, not individualistic, settlement, Powell contended, was best suited to the West. Although they often reached a pitch of hysteria, Powell's opponents did, in a sense, go to the heart of the matter. Basically they were asking, Whose interests would such reforms serve? What, when settlement began with 2,500-acre purchases, was to prevent the proposal from becoming not a democratic reform but a tool of large landowners or of big cattlemen? Would local people or large capitalists with access to Washington and Congress have the most influence with the distant federal bureaucracy that planned the use of the land? Westerners asked these questions repeatedly over the next 100 years as other federal plans to govern land use took shape. Development per se was not the issue. Americans would not question western development until the late twentieth century. The quarrel over development evolved over how it would proceed and whose interests it would serve. This was a question of politics and power.

Politics killed Powell's larger aims. Powell's vision of the West alienated too many powerful constituencies. Congress referred the whole matter of western lands and the western surveys to the same committee of experts from the National Academy of Sciences that recommended the creation of the U.S. Geological Survey. Those scientists recommended a restructuring of land laws in the West to provide the kind of land classification Powell had suggested, but their proposals met intense opposition from western congressmen, who succeeded in blocking reform.

Powell's attempts to reform the land system failed, but they would not be the last. Despite the scale, lavishness, and rapidity of the government's disbursements of the public lands, an immense domain—much of it desert and mountains—remained under federal ownership at the close of the nineteenth century. Continued efforts to bring coherence and efficiency to the use of that land would bring a fundamental change in the land system itself. By the end of the century a consensus emerged that perhaps the federal government should not distribute the entire public domain. The government should retain ownership of this land. This consensus would shape the western landscape in the twentieth century; it would give the federal government a lasting presence in the region.

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Table 3. Homestead Entries in Montana, 1905-1919*

| Year | Number | Year | Number |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1905 | 2,386 | 1913 | 17,844 |
| 1906 | 3,398 | 1914 | 20,662 |
| 1907 | 3,347 | 1915 | 16,146 |
| 1908 | 5,328 | 1916 | 14,486 |
| 1909 | 7,484 | 1917 | 15,197 |
| 1910 | 21,982 | 1918 | 9,429 |
| 1911 | 15,399 | 1919 | 5,462 |
| 1912 | 12,597 | | |

*Source: Ralph H. Farmer, "Analytical Survey and Study of the Agricultural Conditions and the Mortgage Loan Experience of the Federal Land Bank of Spokane in the State of Montana, 1917-1927" (unpublished typescript, University of Idaho, Moscow, n. d.), p. 6.

Table 4. Development of Montana Population, 1900-1920*

| | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 243,000 | 376,000 | 549,000 |
| Eastern Section | 93,000 | 177,000 | 314,000 |
| Rural Population | 159,000 | 243,000 | 377,000 |
| Eastern Section | 72,000 | 132,000 | 241,000 |
| Number of Farms | 13,000 | 26,000 | 58,000 |
| Eastern Section | 7,000 | 18,000 | 46,000 |

*Source: Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 441.

# Unable to Forget

## The remarkable story of a woman who remembers every day of her life.

*By* JERRY ADLER

WITH EIGHT MONTHS LEFT in 2008, it might be premature to choose the weirdest book of the year, but "The Woman Who Can't Forget," the memoir of a 42-year-old California woman named Jill Price, will be hard to beat. It poses a thought-provoking question—what would it be like to recall almost every day of your life since childhood?—and then unintentionally answers: it's like being stuck on an airplane watching an endless loop of security-camera video.

Oddly, in this era of luridly factitious memoirs, Price's comes with unimpeachable credentials. She first came to public attention in 2006 as "AJ," the pseudonymous subject of a paper in the journal Neurocase entitled "A Case of Unusual Autobiographical Remembering." The lead author, James L. McGaugh, a professor of neurobiology at the University of California, Irvine, spent five years bombarding Price with psychological, neurological and physiological tests to investigate what was going on inside her otherwise quite ordinary mind. He coined a new term for her condition, "hyperthymestic syndrome." It means "overdeveloped memory," but of a very particular kind. Price has no special aptitude for memorizing lists of words or numbers, or for facts or stories or languages. She was an average student. What Price does remember—obsessively, uncontrollably and with remarkable accuracy—is stuff that *happened to her.*

Price's memory, which she describes as "shockingly complete" beginning in 1974, when she was 8, and "near perfect" from 1980 on, appears to be organized like a diary. Given a date from the last 30 years, she can instantly summon up the day of the week, and usually at least some tidbit of biographical trivia. "On Friday afternoon, October 19, 1979," she writes, "I came home from school and had some soup because it was unusually cold that day." Oprah, take note: Oct. 19, 1979, was, in fact, a Friday, and it was cloudy with a high of 67 in Los Angeles, well below normal. As for the soup, we can only take her word for it, but McGaugh—who checked Price's recollections against whatever documentation was available, including some 50,000 pages of her own written diaries—believes her abilities are real. "She doesn't make it up or fake it," McGaugh says. "If she doesn't know, she says so. She may say, 'I just hung out.' A lot of our days are like that." McGaugh points out that Price has extraordinary recall for news events, if they were important enough to attract her notice at the time. Does Aug. 16, 1977, mean anything to you? It did to Price, who instantly recognized that as the date Elvis Presley died.



**ALL IN THE MIND:** *Price has a 'shockingly complete' memory*

Although Price was unique in the scientific literature when McGaugh first encountered her, he has now found two other subjects with similar abilities. One of them is a radio announcer named Brad Williams, who is 51 and whose autobiographical memory extends back to the age of 4. McGaugh is a long way from understanding what gives them these exceptional powers, although brain scans on Price do reveal some significant departu[re] from the norm. (He won't say what the[y] since he hasn't published his data yet.) adds that Price's obsessive collecting memorabilia (including Beanie Babies, "Flintstones" paraphernalia and every record she's ever owned) is a trait his other subjects share. "We think there might be a key there," he muses.

Price herself seems unable to decide if her ability is a blessing or a curse. On the one hand, she writes, "I hate the notion of forgetting. I'm happy that I can remember so many episodes of so many TV shows I've loved through the years, that I can revisit any given day [and] know what really happened to me that day." Her abilities came in handy when she had a job as an administrative assistant at a law firm. But often her memories arise unbidden, chaotic and unwelcome. "Imagine being able to remember every fight you ever had with a friend, every time someone let you down, all the stupid mistakes you've ever made." And she could only have been the world's biggest pain to grow up with. From an early age, she writes, "I was always correcting my parents about things they claimed I had said, or that they had said to me, which, as you can imagine, didn't go over very well."

But the sobering thing about Price's book is how banal most of her memories are. The days go by, lunch follows breakfast, 10th grade turns inexorably into 11th and a lot of the time, as McGaugh says, you just hang out. Her life was not without excitement—her father was a talent agent and television executive, and she used to ride the swings on the set for "The Waltons"—or drama of a conventional sort: her parents separate and get back together; her mother survives a tumor; she marries a man she met online, and he dies suddenly. No one should gainsay her feelings, but knowing what was playing on the TV during these events doesn't add much to our understanding of them, or of her. I hate to admit it, but confronted with a memoir that is guaranteed to be completely accurate, I can't help thinking that, with the same material, a writer with a little imagination could have written a much better book. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILLIP TOLEDANO FOR NEWSWEEK

IT'S IN THE P-I
Seattle Post-Intelligencer

SAVE

# LIFE AND ARTS

SECTION C
CONTACT LIFE AND ARTS AT 206-448-8330

## TOP MOVIES

**'Caspian' grounds 'Iron Man':** "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian" dethroned Marvel Studios' "Iron Man" as ruler at the box office, pulling down $56.6 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. The Walt Disney Co.'s action sequel took in less domestically in its opening weekend than "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe," which sold $65.6 million in North America in its debut weekend in December 2005. "Caspian" also raked in $20.7 million overseas. Rounding out the weekend's top five movies were, in order, "What Happens in Vegas," "Speed Racer" and "Baby Mama."

## TELEVISION

**Making the cut:** Dr. Charles L. Wilson, operator of The Vasectomy Clinic in Seattle, is scheduled to appear Tuesday on NBC's "Today" show with a Seattle couple who were filmed during the husband's male sterilization procedure in February. Todd Maschmedt, accompanied by his wife, Leslie, was one of the 12,000 men who have had Wilson perform their vasectomies. Seattle men ages 40-64 undergo vasectomies at three times the national average, and Wilson's specialized practice has earned him the nickname "Dr. Snip." The segment on "Today" is scheduled to air between 8 and 9 a.m. (KING/5).



## COMING UP

**Harrison Ford talks about playing Indiana Jones again after more than two decades away from the action/adventure franchise.**

**TUESDAY**

BLE

RGETTA

# Wow, a perfect memory. But for Jill Price, it is a special kind of hell

BY CECELIA GOODNOW
*P-I reporter*

If you've ever lamented the slow fade of treasured memories, consider Jill Price a cautionary tale.

Price remembers every day of her life from age 14 with encyclopedia clarity and can tick off the details by date.

"Today is May 9," she said recently, "and I can tell you that 27 years ago I went on my first date, and it was a Saturday. And May 9 the next year I was in a dance marathon and I could barely walk that night. I see it – yep – I see the whole day. And I can feel it. I get the warm-fuzzies."

It sounds delightful until you hear the flip side.

Price's brain also swirls with every childhood trauma, every hurtful argument, every embarrassment, every loss – all as fresh and emotional as the day they happened.

She is, in a real sense, haunted by her past and she has the emotional scars, including youthful bouts of depression, to prove it.

"I've been through hell in my life," she said.

Price, 42, has the first diagnosed case of hyperthymestic syndrome, a term that was coined after researchers at the University of California-Irvine began studying the Los Angeles woman eight years ago

can recite the phone book to "S," a Russian journalist-turned entertainer whose feats of memory were studied for 30 years by psychologist Alexander Luria.

Price is different. Her memories are spontaneous and autobiographical. Give her a date, and she'll tell you what day of the week it fell on



UNFO

They published her case in the scientific journal Neurocase two years ago, identifying her as "AJ" to protect her anonymity.

Price said she came forward in hopes her unusual memory will help researchers unlock the mysteries of Alzheimer's disease and other brain disorders. Now, with writer Bart Davis, she tells her story in a memoir titled "The Woman Who Can't Forget" (Free Press, $26), which became a media sensation the moment it hit the shelves.

History has turned up other cases of remarkable memory, from autistic savants who what she did that day and what else was happening in the world, as long as she was aware of it at the time. Likewise, give her an event and she'll tell you when it occurred.

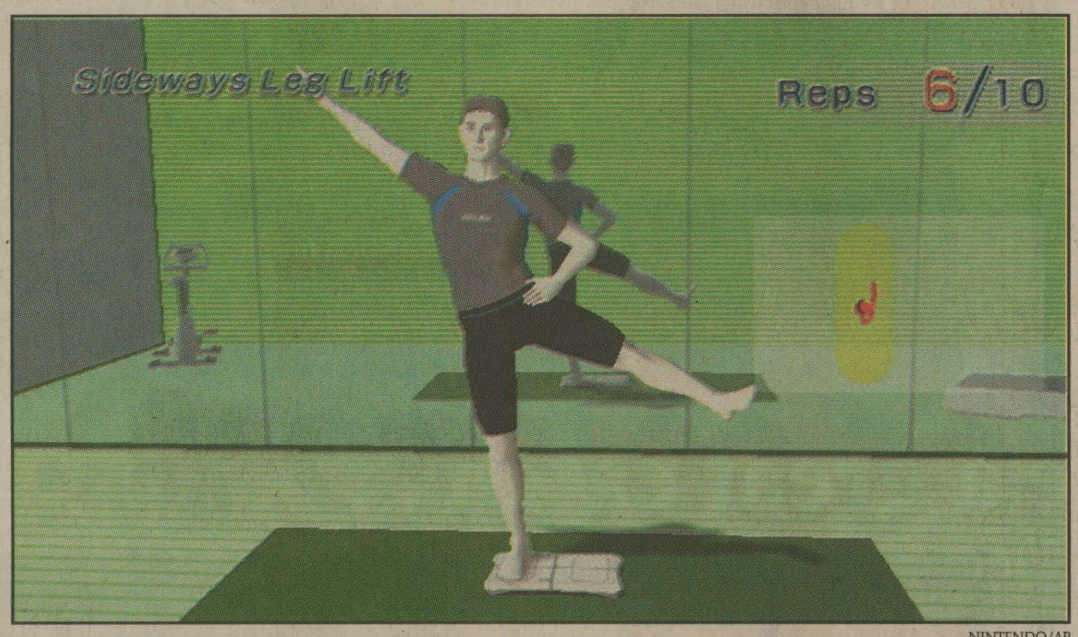
Yet Price has below-average memorization skills – don't ask her to recite a poem or a math theorem – and like most of us she relies on shopping lists and Post-It notes to jog her memory.

"When I first went to the doctors," Price said, "they were like, 'Oh, you must have been really good in school.' I

SEE MEMORY, C2



ANDREW SAEGER / P-I




NINTENDO/AP

**Our tester is not convinced that the Wii Fit would encourage regular workouts.**

# Wii pitches its Fit

## The workouts are fun, if not entirely motivational

**BY WINDA BENEDETTI**
*Special to the P-I*

**VIDEO GAME REVIEW**

**WII FIT**

**Rated:** E

**Platform:** Wii (Nintendo)

Anything that gets people up off their couches and moving probably is a good thing. And it seems Nintendo is hoping to do exactly that with its much-publicized Wii Fit – a new game for the Wii that insists we get off our keisters if we want to join in.

Acting like a cross between a personal trainer and a video game, Wii Fit provides about 40 activities to help players get in shape. It comes packaged with a Wii Balance Board, which senses weight and movement and looks like an oversize bathroom scale.

Wii Fit basically offers two ways to exercise. You can follow a realistic-looking personal trainer through various yoga poses and strength exercises. As your trainer walks you through the warrior pose and the half-moon pose, you stand on the board and it keeps track of your center of balance. You can do lunges, push-ups and rowing squats, earning points based on how well you execute the moves.

Alternatively, there are a multitude of video-gamey activities that supposedly help you work on your aerobic fortitude and balance. Here you get your cardio pumping with a hula-hooping minigame that requires you to swivel your hips at high speed, or a step class that has you stepping on and off the board to the beat of a song. To work on your balance, you can take your Mii av-

SEE FIT, C3

# Skipping lunch sets you up for a fall later, so fill up on a healthy meal

LIVING WELL

**BOB CONDOR**



LUNCH IS PART of what Ami Karnosh calls her self-care plan. She estimates she packs her own lunch about 75 to 90 percent of the time.

"I almost always bring lunch with me," said Karnosh, who operates the Seattle-based Karma Nutrition counseling service (karmanutrition.com). "It's a commitment. But I think lunch is critical to give you energy for the rest of your day. We are trained that dinner be the biggest meal of the day, when it definitely should be lunch."

**INSIDE**

Find additional health related content on **C3**

Sheri K. Mar, a nutritionist with offices in the Belltown and Ballard neighborhoods, puts it this way for clients: "I talk about putting fuel in the car before you go. You are more likely to burn calories from lunch than dinner."

Another reason to fortify your lunch: Mar said people who consider not eating midday as a healthy weight-control measure are in fact setting up for "out of control eating" during the evening hours.

Deciding to eat lunch more regularly? Easy enough. Making sure it is both filling and healthy? Harder, but far from impossible.

"You can even eat a healthy lunch at a fast-food stand if you focus on the right choices," Karnosh said.

Those choices should focus on getting enough fiber into your midday meal. That means plant foods – vegetables, fruits, grains, beans, nuts, seeds.

"People are getting better at making sure they have protein in their lunch," Karnosh said. "But there is no fiber in animal foods. And there is basically no fiber in processed grains and other processed foods, either."

Some fiber-rich suggestions from Karnosh: Three-bean or vegetarian chili, minestrone or lentil soup, black bean burritos with whole wheat tortilla (fish and chicken too), rice and beans with "tons of veggies."

If you choose a lettuce salad, Karnosh recommends at least two cups of greens plus other vegetables, then adding almonds, cashews or tuna for the protein and healthy fats to balance out the fiber. You will feel satisfied without feeling too full.

Some of us get hungry long before the appointed lunch time. Mar said that if you're hungry at 11 a.m. or even as early as 10, then dipping into your lunch bag (reusable, please) is more than OK.

SEE CONDOR, C3

New York Times

National Edition

Northwest: Snow showers in the mountains. Rain showers along the coast. Highs mainly in 40s, but 20s and 30s in mountains. Weather map is in SportsSunday, Page 12.

SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2008 Printed in Seattle $5.00

# Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand




**A PENTAGON CAMPAIGN** Retired officers have been used to shape terrorism coverage from inside the TV and radio networks.

# Courting Ex-Officers Tied to Military Contractors

By DAVID BARSTOW

In the summer of 2005, the Bush administration confronted a fresh wave of criticism over Guantánamo Bay. The detention center had just been branded "the gulag of our times" by Amnesty International, there were new allegations of abuse from United Nations human rights experts and calls were mounting for its closure.

The administration's communications experts responded swiftly. Early one Friday morning, they put a group of retired military officers on one of the jets normally used by Vice President Dick Cheney and flew them to Cuba for a carefully orchestrated tour of Guantánamo.

To the public, these men are members of a familiar fraternity, presented tens of thousands of times on television and radio as "military analysts" whose long service has equipped them to give authoritative and unfettered judgments about the most pressing issues of the post-Sept. 11 world.

**MESSAGE MACHINE**
*The Media Battleground*



Hidden behind that appearance of objectivity, though, is a Pentagon information apparatus that has used those analysts in a campaign to generate favorable news coverage of the administration's wartime performance, an examination by The New York Times has found.

The effort, which began with the buildup to the Iraq war and continues to this day, has sought to exploit ideological and military allegiances, and also a powerful financial dynamic: Most of the analysts have ties to military contractors vested in the very war policies they are asked to assess on air.

Those business relationships are hardly ever disclosed to the viewers, and sometimes not even to the networks themselves. But collectively, the men on the plane and several dozen other military analysts represent more than 150 military contractors either as lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants. The companies include defense heavyweights, but also scores of smaller companies, all part of a vast assemblage of contractors scrambling for hundreds of billions in military business generated by the administration's war on terror. It is a furious competition, one in which inside information and easy access to senior officials are highly prized.

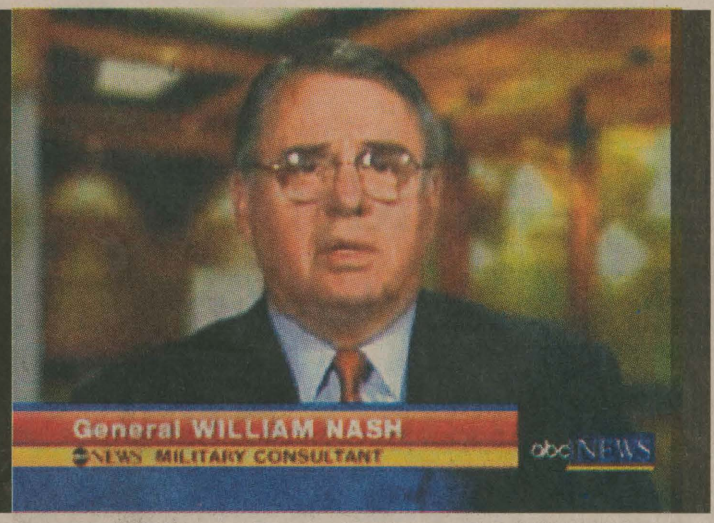
Records and interviews show how the Bush administration has used its control over access and information in an effort to transform the analysts into a kind of media Trojan horse — an instrument intended to

*Continued on Page 24*










*'We were able to click on every single station and every one of our folks were up there delivering our message. You'd look at them and say, "This is working." '* **BRENT T. KRUEGER**

**ONLINE: THE MESSAGE MACHINE**

*David Barstow narrates a look at primary source documents and video that detail how the military's talking points were disseminated:*

**nytimes.com/us**

ists, such as Dr. McCausland, who works at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney, a major lobbying firm where he is director of a national security team that represents several military contractors. "We offer clients access to key decision makers," Dr. McCausland's team promised on the firm's Web site.

Dr. McCausland was not the only analyst making this pledge. Another was Joseph W. Ralston, a retired Air Force general. Soon after signing on with CBS, General Ralston was named vice chairman of the Cohen Group, a consulting firm headed by a former defense secretary, William Cohen, himself now a "world affairs" analyst for CNN. "The Cohen Group knows that getting to 'yes' in the aerospace and defense market — whether in the United States or abroad — requires that companies have a thorough, up-to-date understanding of the thinking of government decision makers," the company tells prospective clients on its Web site.

There were also ideological ties.

Two of NBC's most prominent analysts, Barry R. McCaffrey and the late Wayne A. Downing, were on the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, an advocacy group created with White House encouragement in 2002 to help make the case for ousting Saddam Hussein. Both men also had their own consulting firms and sat on the boards of major military contractors.

Many also shared with Mr. Bush's national security team a belief that pessimistic war coverage broke the nation's

click on every single station and every one of our folks were up there delivering our message. You'd look at them and say, 'This is working.'"

On April 12, 2003, with major combat almost over, Mr. Rumsfeld drafted a memorandum to Ms. Clarke. "Let's think about having some of the folks who did such a good job as talking heads in after this thing is over," he wrote.

By summer, though, the first signs of the insurgency had emerged. Reports from journalists based in Baghdad were increasingly suffused with the imagery of mayhem.

The Pentagon did not have to search far for a counterweight.

It was time, an internal Pentagon strategy memorandum urged, to "re-energize surrogates and message-force multipliers," starting with the military analysts.

The memorandum led to a proposal to take analysts on a tour of Iraq in September 2003, timed to help overcome the sticker shock from Mr. Bush's request for $87 billion in emergency war financing.

The group included four analysts from Fox News, one each from CNN and ABC, and several research-group luminaries whose opinion articles appear regularly in the nation's op-ed pages.

The trip invitation promised a look at "the real situation on the ground in Iraq."

The situation, as described in scores of books, was deteriorating. L. Paul Bremer III, then the American viceroy in Iraq, wrote in his memoir, "My Year in Iraq," that he had privately warned the White House that

## Working to Shape Opinion

E-mail messages from some of the military analysts illustrate how closely they work with the Defense Department. Key passages are highlighted by The Times.

In e-mail messages in September 2006, a military analyst responds to criticism of then-Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and urges the Pentagon to arrange a meeting

**To:** Lawrence, Dallas Mr OSD PA; (b)(6) CIV, OASD-PA
**Subject:** Simmons

I am disgusted at what I saw on the news(?) tonight. I would strongly suggest that you arrange a meeting with SECDEF asap. Those in attendance should be those like me who, without question, SUPPORT his leadership for President Bush and America. Thanks.
Wayne

**Subject:** Re: Simmons

Hi (b)(6)
Hope you're doing well. Would love to back hand some of these low lifes that critisize the SECDEF. Never hurts to have supporters reassure him of his value and leadership. Look forward to seeing you soon.
Take care.

## A Priority Program

The program was important at the highest levels of the Defense Department and the White House.

From an e-mail message dated June 23, 2006

**Subject:** RE: analyst trip

COL,

Any muscle you folks can offer to at least let the folks in Kuwait and Iraq know that this is a priority mission for secdef and General casey would be extremely helpful. Our goal is to get these guys in and out prior to the Big Bosses visit so they can be back here on tv talking about their experiences as he lands and as all us media is focused on it.

Dallas B. Lawrence
Director, Office of Community Relations & Public Liaison
United States Department of Defense

From an e-mail message dated Nov. 17, 2005, from the director of press operations at the Defense Department about trips to the war zones for the military analysts

nctp.

I know these trips are a PITHA, but they have the highest levels of visibility not only here at DoD, but also at the White House. Currently, Eric Ruff is planning to also join the trip, but I expect him to drop off at the last [illegible] with the country clearance issue (a copy is attached to this email).

pleased," Mr. Cowan told Greta Van Susteren of Fox News. There was barely a word about armor shortages or corrupt Iraqi security forces. And on the key strategic question of the moment — whether to send more troops — the analysts were unanimous.

"I am so much against adding more troops," General Shepperd said on CNN.

### Access and Influence

Inside the Pentagon and at the White House, the trip was viewed as a masterpiece in the management of perceptions, not least because it gave fuel to complaints that "mainstream" journalists were ignoring the good news in Iraq.

"We're hitting a home run on this trip," a senior Pentagon official wrote in an e-mail message to Richard B. Myers and Peter Pace, then chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Its success only intensified the Pentagon's campaign. The pace of briefings accelerated. More trips were organized. Eventually the effort involved officials from Washington to Baghdad to Kabul to Guantánamo and back to Tampa, Fla., the headquarters of United States Central Command.

The scale reflected strong support from the top. When officials in Iraq were slow to organize another trip for analysts, a Pentagon official fired off an e-mail message warning that the trips "have the highest levels of visibility" at the White House and urging them to get moving before Lawrence Di Rita, one of Mr. Rumsfeld's closest aides, "picks up the phone

will to win in Vietnam, and there was a mutual resolve not to let that happen with this war.

This was a major theme, for example, with Paul E. Vallely, a Fox News analyst from 2001 to 2007. A retired Army general who had specialized in psychological warfare, Mr. Vallely co-authored a paper in 1980 that accused American news organizations of failing to defend the nation from "enemy" propaganda during Vietnam.

"We lost the war — not because we were outfought, but because we were out Psyoped," he wrote. He urged a radically new approach to psychological operations in future wars — taking aim at not just foreign adversaries but domestic audiences, too. He called his approach "MindWar" — using network TV and radio to "strengthen our national will to victory."

## The Selling of the War

From their earliest sessions with the military analysts, Mr. Rumsfeld and his aides spoke as if they were all part of the same team.

In interviews, participants described a powerfully seductive environment — the uniformed escorts to Mr. Rumsfeld's private conference room, the best government china laid out, the embossed name cards, the blizzard of PowerPoints, the solicitations of advice and counsel, the appeals to duty and country, the warm thank you notes from the secretary himself.

"Oh, you have no idea," Mr. Allard said, describing the effect. "You're back. They listen to you. They listen to what you say on TV." It was, he said, "psyops on steroids" — a nuanced exercise in influence through flattery and proximity. "It's not like it's, 'We'll pay you $500 to get our story out,' " he said. "It's more subtle."

The access came with a condition. Participants were instructed not to quote their briefers directly or otherwise describe their contacts with the Pentagon.

In the fall and winter leading up to the invasion, the Pentagon armed its analysts with talking points portraying Iraq as an urgent threat. The basic case became a familiar mantra: Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, was developing nuclear weapons, and might one day slip some to Al Qaeda; an invasion would be a relatively quick and inexpensive "war of liberation."

At the Pentagon, members of Ms. Clarke's staff marveled at the way the analysts seamlessly incorporated material from talking points and briefings as if it was their own.

"You could see that they were messaging," Mr. Krueger said. "You could see they were taking verbatim what the secretary was saying or what the technical specialists were saying. And they were saying it over and over and over." Some days, he added, "We were able to half the number of soldiers we needed here."

"We're up against a growing and sophisticated threat," Mr. Bremer recalled telling the president during a private White House dinner.

That dinner took place on Sept. 24, while the analysts were touring Iraq.

Yet these harsh realities were elided, or flatly contradicted, during the official presentations for the analysts, records show. The itinerary, scripted to the minute, featured brief visits to a model school, a few refurbished government buildings, a center for women's rights, a mass grave and even the gardens of Babylon.

Mostly the analysts attended briefings. These sessions, records show, spooled out an alternative narrative, depicting an Iraq bursting with political and economic energy, its security forces blossoming. On the crucial question of troop levels, the briefings echoed the White House line: No reinforcements were needed. The "growing and sophisticated threat" described by Mr. Bremer was instead depicted as degraded, isolated and on the run.

"We're winning," a briefing document proclaimed.

One trip participant, General Nash of ABC, said some briefings were so clearly "artificial" that he joked to another group member that they were on "the George Romney memorial trip to Iraq," a reference to Mr. Romney's infamous claim that American officials had "brainwashed" him into supporting the Vietnam War during a tour there in 1965, while he was governor of Michigan.

But if the trip pounded the message of progress, it also represented a business opportunity: direct access to the most senior civilian and military leaders in Iraq and Kuwait, including many with a say in how the president's $87 billion would be spent. It also was a chance to gather inside information about the most pressing needs confronting the American mission: the acute shortages of "up-armored" Humvees; the billions to be spent building military bases; the urgent need for interpreters; and the ambitious plans to train Iraq's security forces.

Information and access of this nature had undeniable value for trip participants like William V. Cowan and Carlton A. Sherwood.

Mr. Cowan, a Fox analyst and retired Marine colonel, was the chief executive of a new military firm, the wvc3 Group. Mr. Sherwood was its executive vice president. At the time, the company was seeking contracts worth tens of millions to supply body armor and counterintelligence services in Iraq. In addition, wvc3 Group had a written agreement to use its influence and connections to help tribal leaders in Al Anbar Province win reconstruction contracts from the coalition.

"Those sheiks wanted access to the C.P.A.," Mr. Cowan recalled in an interview, referring to the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Mr. Cowan said he pleaded their cause during the trip. "I tried to push hard with some of Bremer's people to engage these people of Al Anbar," he said.

Back in Washington, Pentagon officials kept a nervous eye on how the trip translated on the airwaves. Uncomfortable facts had bubbled up during the trip. One briefer, for example, mentioned that the Army was resorting to packing inadequately armored Humvees with sandbags and Kevlar blankets. Descriptions of the Iraqi security forces were withering. "They can't shoot, but then again, they don't," one officer told them, according to one participant's notes.

"I saw immediately in 2003 that things were going south," General Vallely, one of the Fox analysts on the trip, recalled in an interview with The Times.

The Pentagon, though, need not have worried.

"You can't believe the progress," General Vallely told Alan Colmes of Fox News upon his return. He predicted the insurgency would be "down to a few numbers" within months.

"We could not be more excited, more

Let me know the status when you get a chance.

## Evaluating the Analysts

The Defense Department kept detailed records of what the military analysts said on television and in other media.

From a report on how some military analysts performed on broadcast media after a meeting with Mr. Rumsfeld

**Military Analysts in Coverage Regarding Their Meeting With The Secretary April 18 – 19 (as of noon on the 19th)**

**Summary**

Retired Major General Donald W. Shepperd received the most airtime of the 15 attending military analysts, generating about 13 minutes of clips on CNN and Headline News on the 18th. Shepperd was followed by:

- Robert H. Scales appeared on NPR for roughly four minutes
- Robert Maginnis, who appeared on MSNBC for approximately three minutes
- Thomas McInerney, who appeared on Fox News for roughly three minutes

Some biographical information on the analysts highlighted above

| | MILITARY BACKGROUND | MEDIA AFFILIATION | BUSINESS TIES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Donald W. Shepperd | Retired Air Force general | CNN | President of the Shepperd Group, a firm that consults with defense contractors. |
| Robert H. Scales Jr. | Retired Army general | Fox News, NPR | Co-founder of Colgen, a defense consulting firm whose clients have included the Army, Marine Corps, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman. |
| Robert L. Maginnis | Retired Army lieutenant colonel | Appears mostly on radio | An executive with BCP International, a military contractor. |
| Thomas G. McInerney | Retired Air Force general | Fox News | Founder of Government Reform Through Technology, a consulting firm. On boards of several military contractors. |

and starts calling the 4-stars.

Mr. Di Rita, no longer at th Defense Department, said in a interview that a "conscious de cision" was made to rely on th military analysts to counterac "the increasingly negative vie of the war" coming from jou nalists in Iraq. The analysts, h said, generally had "a mor supportive view" of the admi istration and the war, and th combination of their TV pla forms and military cachet mad them ideal for rebutting critic coverage of issues like troo morale, treatment of detainee inadequate equipment or poorl trained Iraqi security force "On those issues, they wer more likely to be seen as cred ible spokesmen," he said.

For analysts with military i dustry ties, the attentio brought access to a widenin circle of influential officials b yond the contacts they had a cumulated over the course their careers.

Charles T. Nash, a Fox mi itary analyst and retired Nav captain, is a consultant wh helps small companies brea into the military market. Su denly, he had entree to a host senior military leaders, many whom he had never met. It wa he said, like being embedde with the Pentagon leadershi "You start to recognize what most important to them," h said, adding, "There's nothin like seeing stuff firsthand."

Some Pentagon officials sa they were well aware that som analysts viewed their speci access as a business advantag "Of course we realized that Mr. Krueger said. "We weren naïve about that."

They also understood the nancial relationship betwe the networks and their analyst Many analysts were being paid by t "hit," the number of times they a peared on TV. The more an analy could boast of fresh inside informati from high-level Pentagon "sources," t more hits he could expect. The mo hits, the greater his potential influen in the military marketplace, where se eral analysts prominently advertis their network roles.

"They have taken lobbying and t search for contracts to a far higher le el," Mr. Krueger said. "This has be highly honed."

Mr. Di Rita, though, said it never curred to him that analysts might u their access to curry favor. Nor, he sa did the Pentagon try to exploit this namic. "That's not something that ev crossed my mind," he said. In a

*Continued on Following Page*

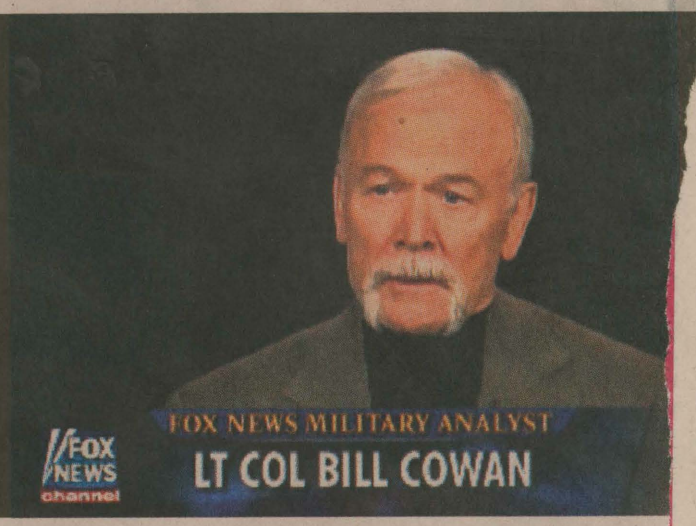
37 years in the making. Pike Place Roast, our new daily brew.












# Hidden Hand of Pentagon Helps Steer Military Analysts

*From Page 1*

shape terrorism coverage from inside the major TV and radio networks.

Analysts have been wooed in hundreds of private briefings with senior military leaders, including officials with significant influence over contracting and budget matters, records show. They have been taken on tours of Iraq and given access to classified intelligence. They have been briefed by officials from the White House, State Department and Justice Department, including Mr. Cheney, Alberto R. Gonzales and Stephen J. Hadley.

In turn, members of this group have echoed administration talking points, sometimes even when they suspected the information was false or inflated. Some analysts acknowledge they suppressed doubts because they feared jeopardizing their access.

A few expressed regret for participating in what they regarded as an effort to dupe the American public with propaganda dressed as independent military analysis.

"It was them saying, 'We need to stick our hands up your back and move your mouth for you,'" Robert S. Bevelacqua, a retired Green Beret and former Fox News analyst, said.

Kenneth Allard, a former NBC military analyst who has taught information warfare at the National Defense University, said the campaign amounted to a sophisticated information operation. "This was a coherent, active policy," he said.

tives. Many — although certainly not all — faithfully echoed talking points intended to counter critics.

"Good work," Thomas G. McInerney, a retired Air Force general, consultant and Fox News analyst, wrote to the Pentagon after receiving fresh talking points in late 2006. "We will use it."

Again and again, records show, the administration has enlisted analysts as a rapid reaction force to rebut what it viewed as critical news coverage, some of it by the networks' own Pentagon correspondents. For example, when news articles revealed that troops in Iraq were dying because of inadequate body armor, a senior Pentagon official wrote to his colleagues: "I think our analysts — properly armed — can push back in that arena."

The documents released by the Pentagon do not show any quid pro quo between commentary and contracts. But some analysts said they had used the special access as a marketing and networking opportunity or as a window into future business possibilities.

John C. Garrett is a retired Army colonel and unpaid analyst for Fox News TV and radio. He is also a lobbyist at Patton Boggs who helps firms win

## Describing the Program

In memorandums and e-mail messages obtained by The Times, Defense Department officials describe the goals and mission of a program to shape public opinion about the Iraq war through retired military officers who are media analysts. Key passages are highlighted by The Times.

From a Nov. 1, 2006, e-mail message about "media experts visit proposal"

(b)(6)

This request came from (b)(6) who is the military analyst program coordinator for the Department of Defense Public Affairs outreach team.
They stay in close contact with a group of retired US military officers who have been contracted by media outlets as consultants and often provide them with background briefs so that they may provide informed discussions of ongoing operations. They are often in positions to either act as surrogates or at least provide proper context on various issues that is helpful to our communication efforts. This trip would provide some benefit in communicating our challenges, as well as, progress to this group who has influence with some key US audiences.

They would keep their group to no more than eight to maintain a small footprint. During

From a May 16, 2006, e-mail message about "Taking groups to Iraq/Afghanistan"

transportation so she will keep hunting some solutions for us.

"This position would lead our Global War on Terror "Key Influencer Engagement Strategy". This person will lead and develop the Department of Defense's efforts to boost our communications strategies by tapping into the influencer audience and reducing our reliance on mass communications. By deliberately building relationships between senior DoD/military leaders and key influencers like media analysts and think tanks, it increases our ability to quickly and credibly disseminate strategy messages. This position needs to be of sufficient rank (SES) to engage with flag officers and policy-level decision-makers and successfully leverage assets to manage a program that requires international travel into key war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to being able to secure the appropriate high-level briefings from top GWOT leaders, this individual would also need to have sufficient seniority levels for securing dedicated inter-theater airlift and billeting."

From a Sept. 14, 2006, memorandum titled "Itinerary for Defense Analysts"

The Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs invited civilian military analysts and national veterans organization leaders to the Iraq AOR to show them, first-

influential" — authoritative, most of them decorated war heroes, all reaching mass audiences.

The analysts, they noticed, often got more airtime than network reporters, and they were not merely explaining the capabilities of Apache helicopters. They were framing how viewers ought to interpret events. What is more, while the analysts were in the news media, they were not of the news media. They were military men, many of them ideologically in sync with the administration's neoconservative brain trust, many of them important players in a military industry anticipating large budget increases to pay for an Iraq war.

Even analysts with no defense industry ties, and no fondness for the administration, were reluctant to be critical of military leaders, many of whom were friends. "It is very hard for me to criticize the United States Army," said William L. Nash, a retired Army general and ABC analyst. "It is my life."

Other administrations had made sporadic, small-scale attempts to build relationships with the occasional military analyst. But these were trifling compared with what Ms. Clarke's team had

Mr. Allard recalled, he saw a yawning gap between what analysts were told in private briefings and what subsequent inquiries and books later revealed.

"Night and day," Mr. Allard said, "I felt we'd been hosed."

The Pentagon defended its relationship with military analysts, saying they had been given only factual information about the war. "The intent and purpose of this is nothing other than an earnest attempt to inform the American people," Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, said.

It was, Mr. Whitman added, "a bit incredible" to think retired military officers could be "wound up" and turned into "puppets of the Defense Department."

Many analysts strongly denied that they had either been co-opted or had allowed outside business interests to affect their on-air comments, and some have used their platforms to criticize the conduct of the war. Several, like Jeffrey D. McCausland, a CBS military analyst and defense industry lobbyist, said they kept their networks informed of their outside work and recused themselves from coverage that touched on business interests.

"I'm not here representing the administration," Dr. McCausland said.

Some network officials, meanwhile, acknowledged only a limited understanding of their analysts' interactions with the administration. They said that while they were sensitive to potential conflicts of interest, they did not hold their analysts to the same ethical standards as their news employees regarding outside financial interests. The onus is on their analysts to disclose conflicts, they said. And whatever the contributions of military analysts, they also noted the many network journalists who have covered the war for years in all its complexity.

Five years into the Iraq war, most details of the architecture and execution of the Pentagon's campaign have never been disclosed. But The Times successfully sued the Defense Department to gain access to 8,000 pages of e-mail messages, transcripts and records describing years of private briefings, trips to Iraq and Guantánamo and an extensive Pentagon talking points operation.

These records reveal a symbiotic relationship where the usual dividing lines between government and journalism have been obliterated.

Internal Pentagon documents repeatedly refer to the military analysts as "message force multipliers" or "surrogates" who could be counted on to deliver administration "themes and messages" to millions of Americans "in the form of their own opinions."

Though many analysts are paid network consultants, making $500 to $1,000 per appearance, in Pentagon meetings they sometimes spoke as if they were operating behind enemy lines, interviews and transcripts show. Some offered the Pentagon tips on how to outmaneuver the networks, or as one analyst put it to Donald H. Rumsfeld, then the defense secretary, "the Chris Matthewses and the Wolf Blitzers of the world." Some warned of planned stories or sent the Pentagon copies of their correspondence with network news executives, cited as evidence of progress in the battle for hearts and minds at home.

Pentagon contracts, including in Iraq. In promotional materials, he states that as a military analyst he "is privy to weekly access and briefings with the secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other high level policy makers in the administration." One client told investors that Mr. Garrett's special access and decades of experience helped him "to know in advance — and in detail — how best to meet the needs" of the Defense Department and other agencies.

In interviews Mr. Garrett said there was an inevitable overlap between his dual roles. He said he had gotten "information you just otherwise would not get," from the briefings and three Pentagon-sponsored trips to Iraq. He also acknowledged using this access and information to identify opportunities for clients. "You can't help but look for that," he said, adding, "If you know a capability that would fill a niche or need, you try to fill it. "That's good for everybody."

At the same time, in e-mail messages to the Pentagon, Mr. Garrett displayed an eagerness to be supportive with his television and radio commentary. "Please let me know if you have any specific points you want covered or that you would prefer to downplay," he wrote in January 2007, before President Bush went on TV to describe the surge strategy in Iraq.

Conversely, the administration has demonstrated that there is a price for sustained criticism, many analysts said. "You'll lose all access," Dr. McCausland said.

With a majority of Americans calling the war a mistake despite all administration attempts to sway public opinion, the Pentagon has focused in the last couple of years on cultivating in particular military analysts frequently seen and heard in conservative news outlets, records and interviews show.

Some of these analysts were on the mission to Cuba on June 24, 2005 — the first of six such Guantánamo trips — which was designed to mobilize analysts against the growing perception of Guantánamo as an international symbol of inhumane treatment. On the flight to Cuba, for much of the day at Guantánamo and on the flight home that night, Pentagon officials briefed the 10 or so analysts on their key messages — how much had been spent improving the facility, the abuse endured by guards, the extensive rights afforded detainees.

The results came quickly. The analysts went on TV and radio, decrying Amnesty International, criticizing calls to close the facility and asserting that all detainees were treated humanely.

"The impressions that you're getting from the media and from the various pronouncements being made by people who have not been here in my opinion are totally false," Donald W. Shepperd, a retired Air Force general, reported live on CNN by phone from Guantánamo that same afternoon.

The next morning, Montgomery Meigs, a retired Army general and NBC analyst, appeared on "Today." "There's been over $100 million of new construction," he reported. "The place is very professionally run."

Within days, transcripts of the analysts' appearances were circulated to

retired senior officials provide MNF-I a unique capability to accurately communicate with global audiences regarding current operations, as well as showcase the progress MNF-I is making in Iraq. As former U.S. Government or Department of Defense employees, DVs have first-hand experience with military doctrine and operations. They are educated, informed and ready to engage the national and international media on current issues to help deliver themes and messages, and counter enemy propaganda. The group should see the degree to which Coalition Forces and Iraqi leaders are working together. Engaging with these DVs will help the global audience understand the current situation on the ground and the progress being made in Iraq, which will increase public

## Molding the Message

The Defense Department has supplied military analysts with thousands of talking points since 2002. Many were echoed on TV.

Talking points issued in December 2002 and February 2003

**Department of Defense Themes and Talking Points on Iraq**

*December 9, 2002*

*The war on terrorism is a global war, and one that must be pursued everywhere. We cannot allow one of the world's worst dictators to continue developing the world's worst weapons. We cannot allow one of the world's most murderous dictators to provide terrorists a sanctuary in Iraq (Wolfowitz, Dec. 6, 2002).*

**Saddam Hussein – A Global Threat**

- One of the questions that has been asked frequently, is "whether disarming Iraq would distract the United States from the global war on terror." The answer to that is simple and powerful: disarming Iraq and fighting the war on terror are not merely related. Disarming Iraq's arsenal of terror is a crucial part of winning the war on terror. If we can disarm or defeat a terrorist regime in Baghdad it will be a defeat [illegible] globally. (Spurce: Wolfowitz, 12/6/02)

US Department of Defense
Talking Points on The Case for Military Action in Iraq

***The Global War on Terrorism***

- **The global war on terrorism is just that – a war against terrorists and those who harbor and sponsor them.** It is not a war against any people, race, or religion. It is a war against terrorists.
- **Terrorism is multinational.** Al Qaeda alone operates in more than 60 countries across the globe.

US Department of Defense
Talking Points on Iraqi and Weapons of Mass Destruction

- **Hostile Regimes, Terrorists and WMD (threat must be eliminated)**
  - Saddam Hussein stands at the nexus of hostile regimes, terrorist groups and weapons of mass destruction.
  - The Iraq regime is determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction – to blackmail and terrorize the world; and to realize Saddam Hussein's ambitions of regional domination.
  - The United States is acting to defend itself, its friends, and its allies against the threat posed by these weapons in the hands of a dictator like Saddam Hussein.
- **We know that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction. Unaccounted for are:**
  - More than 3,000 tons of chemicals used for weapons.
  - More than 30,000 special munitions for chemical and biological agent delivery.
  - 26,500 artillery rockets used for delivering nerve gas.
  - [illegible]

## Charting the Campaign

By early 2002, detailed planning for a possible Iraq invasion was under way, yet an obstacle loomed. Many Americans, polls showed, were uneasy about invading a country with no clear connection to the Sept. 11 attacks. Pentagon and White House officials believed the military analysts could play a crucial role in helping overcome this resistance.

Torie Clarke, the former public relations executive who oversaw the Pentagon's dealings with the analysts as assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, had come to her job with distinct ideas about achieving what she called "information dominance." In a spin-saturated news culture, she argued, opinion is swayed most by voices perceived as authoritative and utterly independent.

And so even before Sept. 11, she built a system within the Pentagon to recruit "key influentials" — movers and shakers from all walks who with the proper ministrations might be counted on to generate support for Mr. Rumsfeld's priorities.

In the months after Sept. 11, as every network rushed to retain its own all-star squad of retired military officers, Ms. Clarke and her staff sensed a new opportunity. To Ms. Clarke's team, the military analysts were the ultimate "key

in mind. Don Meyer, an aide to Ms. Clarke, said a strategic decision was made in 2002 to make the analysts the main focus of the public relations push to construct a case for war. Journalists were secondary. "We didn't want to rely on them to be our primary vehicle to get information out," Mr. Meyer said.

The Pentagon's regular press office would be kept separate from the military analysts. The analysts would instead be catered to by a small group of political appointees, with the point person being Brent T. Krueger, another senior aide to Ms. Clarke. The decision recalled other administration tactics that subverted traditional journalism. Federal agencies, for example, have paid columnists to write favorably about the administration. They have distributed to local TV stations hundreds of fake news segments with fawning accounts of administration accomplishments. The Pentagon itself has made covert payments to Iraqi newspapers to publish coalition propaganda.

Rather than complain about the "media filter," each of these techniques simply converted the filter into an amplifier. This time, Mr. Krueger said, the military analysts would in effect be "writing the op-ed" for the war.

## Assembling the Team

From the start, interviews show, the White House took a keen interest in which analysts had been identified by the Pentagon, requesting lists of potential recruits, and suggesting names. Ms. Clarke's team wrote summaries describing their backgrounds, business affiliations and where they stood on the war.

"Rumsfeld ultimately cleared off on all invitees," said Mr. Krueger, who left the Pentagon in 2004. (Through a spokesman, Mr. Rumsfeld declined to comment for this article.)

Over time, the Pentagon recruited more than 75 retired officers, although some participated only briefly or sporadically. The largest contingent was affiliated with Fox News, followed by NBC and CNN, the other networks with 24-hour cable outlets. But analysts from CBS and ABC were included, too. Some recruits, though not on any network payroll, were influential in other ways — either because they were sought out by radio hosts, or because they often published op-ed articles or were quoted in magazines, Web sites and newspapers. At least nine of them have written op-ed articles for The Times.

The group was heavily represented by men involved in the business of helping companies win military contracts. Several held senior positions with contractors that gave them direct responsibility for winning new Pentagon business. James Marks, a retired Army general and analyst for CNN from 2004 to 2007, pursued military and intelligence contracts as a senior executive with McNeil Technologies. Still others held board positions with military firms that gave them responsibility for government business. General McInerney, the Fox analyst, for example, sits on the boards of several military contractors, including Nortel Government Solutions, a supplier of communication networks.

Several were defense industry lobby-

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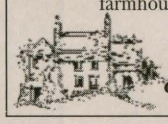

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

# THE BACK OF THE WORLD

*The troubling genius of G. K. Chesterton.*

BY ADAM GOPNIK

This year is the hundredth anniversary of G. K. Chesterton's "The Man Who Was Thursday," and it has come out in at least two new editions on the occasion. "The Man Who Was Thursday" is one of the hidden hinges of twentieth-century writing, the place where, before our eyes, the nonsense-fantastical tradition of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear pivots and becomes the nightmare-fantastical tradition of Kafka and Borges. It is also, along with Chesterton's "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," the nearest thing that this masterly writer wrote to a masterpiece.

Chesterton is an easy writer to love—a brilliant sentence-maker, a humorist, a journalist of endless appetite and invention. His aphorisms alone are worth the price of admission, better than any but Wilde's. Even his standard-issue zingers are first-class—"Americans are the people who describe their use of alcohol and tobacco as vices"; "There is more simplicity in the man who eats caviar on impulse than in the man who eats grape-nuts on principle"; " 'My country, right or wrong,' is a thing that no true patriot would think of saying. . . . It is like saying, 'My mother, drunk or sober' "—while the deeper ones are genuine Catholic koans, pregnant and profound: "Blasphemy depends on belief, and is fading with it. If anyone doubts this, let him sit down seriously and try to think blasphemous thoughts about Thor." Or: "The function of the imagination is not to make strange things settled, so much as to make settled things strange." Or: "A key has no logic to its shape. Its logic is: it turns the lock."

But he is a difficult writer to defend. Those of us who are used to pressing his writing on friends have the hard job of protecting him from his detractors, who think he was a nasty anti-Semite and medievalizing reactionary, and the still harder one of protecting him from his admirers, who pretend that he was not. His Catholic devotees are legion and fanatic—the small Ignatius Press has taken on the heroic job of publishing everything he wrote in a uniform edition, and is already up to the thirty-fifth volume—but not always helpful to his non-cult reputation, especially when they insist on treating his gassy Church apologetics as though they were as interesting as his funny and suggestively mystical Christian allegories. He has a loving following among liberal Catholics, like Garry Wills and Wilfrid Sheed, and even nonbelievers, like Martin Gardner. But his most strenuous advocates are mainly conservative pre-Vatican II types who are indignant about his neglect without stopping to reflect how much their own uncritical enthusiasm may have contributed to it.

Chesterton is one of that company of writers whom we call Edwardian (though they stretch back to the last years of Victoria), a golden generation that emerged in the eighteen-nineties with personas seeming as fully formed as the silent comedians of the Mack Sennett studio, complete with style, costume, and gesture. Writing in London at a time when hundreds of morning newspapers and as many magazines competed for copy, and where mass literacy had created a mass audience without yet entirely removing respect for intellect, they made themselves as much as they made their sentences. We see them as we read them: Shaw all crinkled, beaming rationality, Kipling beetle-browed, bespectacled imperial intensity. Chesterton embodied the hearty side of mysticism, cape thrown across his shoulders, broad-brimmed hat on his head and sword-stick at his side, a hungry Catholic Pantagruel in London. (The last generation of writers who had anything like the same signature presence were the Americans who first encountered television, in the fifties—Mailer and Capote and Vidal—and for the same reason: they lent prestige to a new mass medium that hadn't yet learned how easily it could get along without them.)

HOWARD COSTER/MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Chesterton's autobiography, begun in the late twenties and published just after his death, in 1936, tells his early story more or less accurately. Born into a conventional and unreligious family in suburban London in 1874, he had an extraordinary sensitivity to the secret life of things. In a chapter titled "The Man with the Golden Key," perfect in its delicate unwinding of the tension between truth and play in a child's life, he explains that the transforming event of his early life was watching puppet shows in a toy theatre that his father had made for him. (The man with the golden key was a prince whose purpose he can no longer recall in a play whose plot he can no longer remember; but the purposefulness and romance of the figure stay with him.) Chesterton's point is that childhood is not a time of illusion but a time when illusion and fact exist (as they should) at the same level of consciousness, when the story and the world are equally numinous:

> If this were a ruthless realistic modern story, I should of course give a most heart-rending account of how my spirit was broken with disappointment, on discovering that the prince was only a painted figure. But this is not a ruthless realistic modern story. On the contrary, it is a true story. And the truth is that I do not remember that I was in any way deceived or in any way undeceived. The whole point is that I did like the toy theatre even when I knew it was a toy theatre. I did like the cardboard figures, even when I found they were of cardboard. The white light of wonder that shone on the whole business was not any sort of trick. . . . It seems to me that when I came out of the house and stood on the hill of houses, where the roads sank steeply towards Holland Park, and terraces of new red houses could look out across a vast hollow and see far away the sparkle of the Crystal Palace (and seeing it was juvenile sport in those parts), I was subconsciously certain then, as I am consciously certain now, that there was the white and solid road and the worthy beginning of the life of man; and that it is man who afterwards darkens it with dreams or goes astray from it in self-deception. It is only the grown man who lives a life of make-believe and pretending; and it is he who has his head in a cloud.

The other epiphany concerned limits, localism. "All my life I have loved edges; and the boundary line that brings one thing sharply against another," he writes. "All my life I have loved frames and limits; and I will maintain that the largest wilderness looks larger seen through a window. To the grief of all grave dramatic critics, I will still assert that the perfect drama must strive to rise to the higher ecstasy of the peepshow." The two central insights of his work are here. First, the quarrel between storytelling, fiction, and reality is misdrawn as a series of illusions that we outgrow, or myths that we deny, when it is a sequence of stories that we inhabit. The second is not that small is beautiful but that the beautiful is always small, that we cannot have a clear picture in white light of abstractions, but only of a row of houses at a certain time of day, and that we go wrong when we extend our loyalties to things much larger than a puppet theatre. (And this, in turn, is fine, because the puppet theatre contains the world.)



*Chesterton is the great critic of homogenization, but his localism had an ugly side.*

This vision, not yet specifically religious, though determinedly anti-materialist, helped launch Chesterton into the world that he went out to conquer. After a failed attempt at art school and a flirtation with politics, he began, at the turn of the century, writing pop journalism. He was an immediate hit. (He wrote a regular column for the *Illustrated London News* for more than a quarter century.) He was a big man: six feet four, and constantly expanding outward, from too much food and ale. Bernard Shaw liked to refer to Chesterton and his close friend the Catholic poet and philosopher Hilaire Belloc as if they were a single right-wing Carrollian monster, the Chesterbelloc. (Appearance is the great sorter-out of literary fame; it is hard to become an iconic writer without first looking like an icon.)

A certain kind of fatuous materialist progressivism was ascendant—the progressivism of Shaw and Wells and Beatrice and Sidney Webb, which envisaged a future of unending technological advance. The illusions of faith would be dispelled in an empire of slow-chewed spinach, rational spelling, and workers' reading circles. Against this, the young Chesterton's themes, the superiority of the local and the primacy of the imaginary, were irresistible. As he recognized, the papers wanted what they always want: the pas-

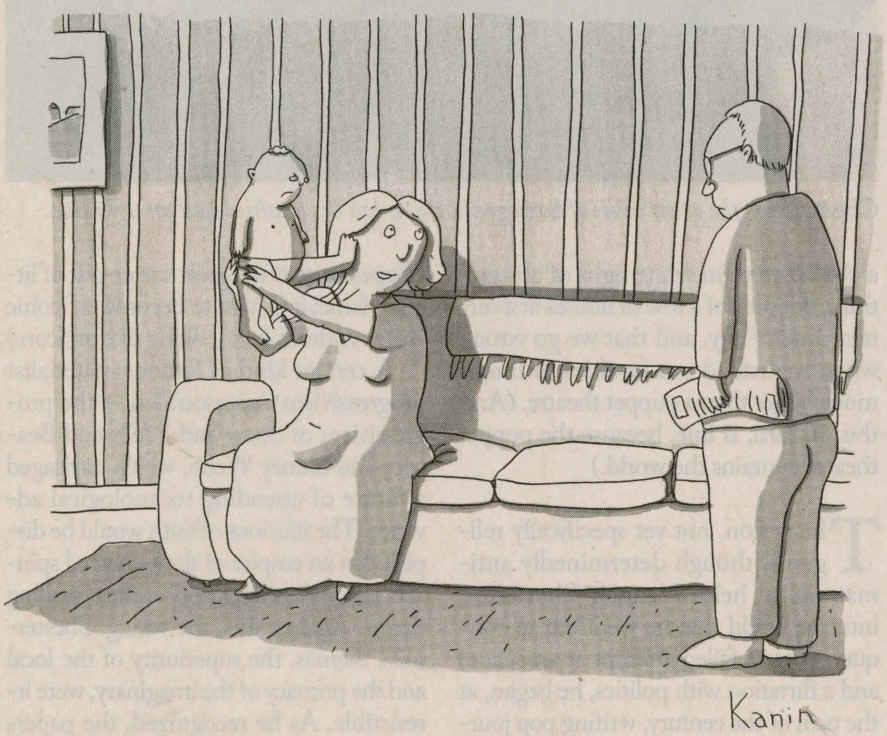
sionate assertion of the opposing point, the unexpected view in clown makeup, the contrarian as comedian. And that he gave, understanding perfectly the role he was to play. He could appeal to heaven, but he never put on airs. Discussing the "mystery" of his Fleet Street success, he wrote, "I have a notion that the real advice I could give to a young journalist, now that I am myself an old journalist, is simply this: to write an article for the *Sporting Times* and another for the *Church Times,* and put them into the wrong envelopes."

What he had to say came pouring out in essays, poems, and books. (His first book, called "Robert Browning," had, as he knew, things to say about almost every subject under the sun save the poet. A later book on Dickens, though a little less absent-minded, is really about "The Pickwick Papers" and bits of "Martin Chuzzlewit" and "Nicholas Nickleby.") He wrote an essay nearly every week, perhaps the best and most characteristic of them, "On Running After One's Hat," making the case for the romance of everyday existence:

> Most of the inconveniences that make men swear or women cry are really sentimental or imaginative inconveniences—things altogether of the mind. For instance, we often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train. Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No; for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter. They also serve who only stand and wait for the two fifteen.

Chesterton's mysticism always resolves in the close at hand: in a signal light at Paddington station, not in a sunrise over a beach in Tahiti. With a comic touch, he goes on to make a serious point, elevating stories over situations:

> A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevass. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English."... I have no doubt that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring. ... An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered.




*"I can feel the baby kicking."*

Chesterton liked to pair himself, congenially, with Shaw, as his opposite, and he was right to do so, for they were the two most perceptive critics of capitalism in their decade. The chief bourgeois vices are hypocrisy and homogenization. Mercantile capitalist societies profess values that their own appetites destroy; calls for public morality come from the same people who use prostitutes. Meanwhile, the workings of capital turn the local artisan into a maker of mass-produced objects and every high street into an identical strip mall. Shaw is the great critic of the hypocrisy of bourgeois society—its inconsistencies and absurdities, the way it robs the poor and then demands that they be "deserving." Chesterton is the great critic of its homogenization, the levelling of difference in the pursuit of cash. He is the grandfather of Slow Food, of local eating, of real ale, the first strong mind that saw something evil in the levelling of little pleasures.

The idea for Chesterton's first novel, "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," published in 1904, is an illustration of the principle: Chesterton imagines a future London where medieval clan identity has reasserted itself, so that Notting Hill proudly distinguishes itself from Kensington, and the good yeomen of Chelsea guard their traditions against the interlopers from Battersea. The joy of the book lies in the marriage of Chesterton's love of feudal romance with his love of the density and mystery of the modern city. And London does bring out his strongest and most eloquent emotions: "A city is, properly speaking, more poetic even than a countryside, for while nature is a chaos of unconscious forces, a city is a chaos of conscious ones. The crest of the flower or the pattern of the lichen may or may not be significant symbols. But there is no stone in the street and no brick in the wall that is not actually a deliberate symbol—a message from some man, as much as if it were a telegram or a post card." Chesterton's preference for the small state made him a vehement and, for the time, courageous anti-imperialist. His was one of the leading voices against the Boer War. "The two great movements during my youth and early manhood were Imperialism and Socialism," he recalled. "Both believed in unification and centralization

on a large scale. Neither could have seen any meaning in my own fancy for having things on a smaller and smaller scale."

"The Napoleon of Notting Hill," after establishing its beautiful conceit, fritters away some of its energy in frantic plot-turning. Four years later, in "The Man Who Was Thursday," his other principle, the necessity of the imagination, got fully dramatized. The novel tells the story, in a mood deliberately feverish and overlit—snowstorms over St. Paul's and prismatic sunsets in the suburbs—of a young poet, Syme, who becomes a policeman in order to pursue an international circle of anarchists who have embarked on a nihilistic war against civilization. The anarchists' leaders, following Poe's principle of the purloined letter—that no one notices the obvious—meet openly on a balcony overlooking Leicester Square. Each has taken as a code name a day of the week. Syme, after infiltrating the group, becomes Thursday; its chief is the dreadful Sunday. Syme discovers that the group is plotting a bombing in Paris, and sets off to stop it. As he races through England and across the Channel, he discovers that the entire circle of anarchists is really made up of undercover policemen, including the sinister-seraphic Sunday, who is, somewhat mystically, both the ultimate anarchist and the leading cop—the two faces of the deity, as Chesterton seems to have imagined him then.



At times wonderfully funny, at times frightening, the book is filled with what we would now call existential panic, rendered not in an intuitive, dreamlike way, as in Carroll's "Jabberwocky" or "The Hunting of the Snark," but made to disturb through the invocation of a world almost but not quite like our own. It is a Surrealist atmosphere, in the sense that the awful and the extraordinary don't intrude on the normal but rise from the normal—are the normal in another dimension. (Here Kafka and Borges are implicit; Chesterton must have influenced both.) In "The Man Who Was Thursday," he recaptures a childhood sense of what it feels like to be frightened by a nothing that is still a something, and by the sense that ordinary things hold intimations of another world, that the crack in the teacup opens a lane to the land of the dead so easily that the dead are already in the living room, pouring out of the broken porcelain. The book is also stippled with small epigrammatic moments, as when Syme comes upon an anarchist poet, Gregory, standing by a street lamp ("whose gleam gilded the leaves of the tree that bent out over the fence behind him") on a silent, starlit street:

> "I was waiting for you," said Gregory. "Might I have a moment's conversation?"
>
> "Certainly. About what?" asked Syme in a sort of weak wonder.
>
> Gregory struck out with his stick at the lamp-post, and then at the tree.
>
> "About *this* and *this*," he cried; "about order and anarchy. There is your precious order, that lean, iron lamp, ugly and barren; and there is anarchy, rich, living, reproducing itself—there is anarchy, splendid in green and gold."
>
> "All the same," replied Syme patiently, "just at present you only see the tree by the light of the lamp. I wonder when you would ever see the lamp by the light of the tree."

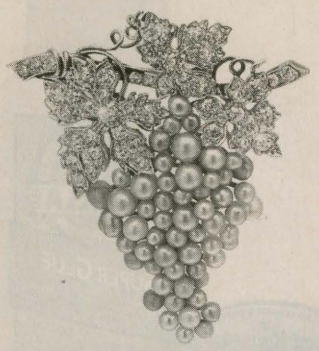
The really startling thing in the book is Chesterton's imagining of the anarchists as philosopher-demons. It's easy to forget just how scary anarchists could seem at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the previous quarter century, they had killed a French President, an American President, and the Russian Tsar, and had bombed the Royal Greenwich Observatory, near London. (The same score now—Sarkozy, Bush, Putin, and the London Eye—and we'd all be under martial law.) "Anarchism," for Chesterton, has the same resonance that "terrorism" has for English writers like Amis and Hitchens exactly a century later: it represents a kind of vengeful, all-devouring nihilism that is assumed to be pervasive and—this is the crucial thing—profoundly seductive, sweeping through whole classes, of intellectuals, or immigrants, or, especially, immigrant intellectuals. Chesterton's portrait of Syme could be a portrait of the "awakened" post-9/11 liberal: "He did not regard anarchists, as most of us do, as a handful of morbid men, combining ignorance with intellectualism. He regarded them as a huge and pitiless peril, like a Chinese invasion. He poured perpetually into newspapers and their wastepaper baskets a torrent of tales,


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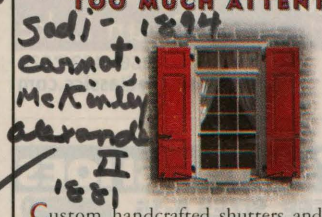


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verses and violent articles, warning men of this deluge of barbaric denial. . . . There was no anarchist with a bomb in his pocket so savage and solitary as he."

Chesterton thinks the anarchist's hatred of bourgeois materialism is so obviously attractive, comes so near to the divine, that it is the truest evil. Only an act of strong will can resist it. Where the ordinary liberal scoffs at the idea that apocalyptic terror represents a real threat to his society, the awakened humanist, like Syme the poet-policeman or Chesterton himself, believes that everyone else has missed the reality, by refusing to accept how plausible and alluring the argument for destruction is. To anyone "awakened" in this way, people who hold the alternative normal view—that there is nothing much to be frightened of—are literally insane. They cannot see what is in front of their noses even as it blows up their cities. The nightmarish intensity of "The Man Who Was Thursday" derives from this conviction. Only cops and criminals are really alive.

Yet Chesterton still had his wits about him, and recognizes, at the end of his book, that the demon-terrorists are largely a projection of the policeman's mind. Or is it, perhaps, that the anarchists, who are really policemen, secretly wish to be anarchists? This double vision, where the appetite for romantic violence is imagined as the flip side of the desire for absolute order, gives the book its permanence. It ends with a powerful and strange image of reality itself as two-sided:

> "Listen to me," cried Syme with extraordinary emphasis. "Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world? It is that we have only known the back of the world. We see everything from behind and it looks brutal. That is not a tree, but the back of a tree. That is not a cloud, but the back of a cloud. Cannot you see that everything is stopping and hiding a face? If we could only get round in front—"

Given that longing, it was as obvious that Chesterton was headed to Rome as it was that Wilde was headed to Reading jail. If you want a solution, at once authoritarian and poetic, to the threat of moral anarchism, then Catholicism, which built Chartres and inspired Dante, looks a lot better than Scotland Yard. If you want stability allied to imagination, Catholicism has everything else beat. Although Chesterton did not officially convert until 1922, well after the war, his drift toward what he called "Orthodoxy" was apparent in the years just after the publication of "The Man Who Was Thursday."

And right around here is where the Jew-hating comes in. A reader with a casual interest in Chesterton's life may have a reassuring sense, from his fans and friendly biographers, that his anti-Semitism really isn't all that bad: that there's not much of it; that a lot of it came from loyalty to his younger brother Cecil, a polemical journalist in the pre-war years, and to his anti-Dreyfusard friend Belloc; that he had flushed it out of his system by the mid-twenties; and, anyway, that it was part of the time he lived in, a time when pretty much everyone, from Kipling to T. S. Eliot, mistrusted Jews—when even the philo-Semites (give them a home!) were really anti-Semites (get them out of here!).

Unfortunately, a little reading shows that there's a lot of it, that it comes all the time, and that the more Chesterton tries to justify it the worse it gets. The ugliness really began in 1912, when he joined his brother in a crusade against the corruption of the Liberal Government, using a scandal that involved Rufus Isaacs, a Cabinet minister, and his brother Godfrey, a businessman. The affair, then called the Marconi Scandal (it had to do with what would now be called insider trading in a wireless-telegraph company), implicated non-Jews, too—David Lloyd George, for one—but the nasty heart of the accusations was directed by the Chestertons against the Isaacs brothers, who were not only corrupt but alien. Eventually, Godfrey Isaacs sued Cecil Chesterton, successfully, for libel.

This campaign—and, perhaps, the courtroom loss as well—set off something horrible in the older brother, and, after Cecil died, in 1918, in the war, Chesterton's hatreds became ugly and obsessive. There had been mild Jew-bashing in his work before, based on the ethnic generalities that everyone engaged in—the Jews are all alike in his stories, but then the French and the Italians are all alike, too. From then on, however, Chesterton hammers relentlessly at the idea that there is "a Jewish problem," the problem being that Jews are foreigners, innately alien to the nations into which they've insinuated themselves. Writing in 1920, he tells us that Jews are regarded, by the Arabs in Palestine, as "parasites

that feed on a community by a thousand methods of financial intrigue and economic exploitation." Chesterton then adds that this charge may not be entirely true but needs to be addressed by the Jews—as though they were compelled to consider themselves permanently on trial by their persecutors. Later in the decade, writing about a journey to America, he says, in defense of Henry Ford, "No extravagance of hatred merely following on *experience* of Jews can properly be called a prejudice. . . . These people of the plains have found the Jewish problem exactly as they might have struck oil; because it is *there*, and not even because they were looking for it."

It's a deeply racial, not merely religious, bigotry; it's not the Jews' cupidity or their class role—it's *them*. In his autobiography, Chesterton tries to defend himself by explaining what it is that makes people naturally mistrust Jews. All schoolboys recognized Jews as Jews, he says, and when they did so "what they saw was not Semites or Schismatics or capitalists or revolutionists, but foreigners, only foreigners that were not called foreigners." Even a seemingly assimilated Jew, in Chesterton's world, remains a foreigner. No one born a Jew can become a good Englishman: if England had sunk into the Atlantic, he says, Disraeli would have run off to America. The more he tries to excuse himself, the worse it gets. In his autobiography, he writes of how he appreciates that "one of the great Jewish virtues is gratitude," and explains that he knows this because as a kid at school "I was criticized in early days for quixotry and priggishness in protecting Jews; and I remember once extricating a strange swarthy little creature with a hooked nose from being bullied, or rather being teased."

The insistence that Chesterton's anti-Semitism needs to be understood "in the context of his time" defines the problem, because his time—from the end of the Great War to the mid-thirties—was the time that led to the extermination of the European Jews. In that context, his jocose stuff is even more sinister than his serious stuff. He claims that he can tolerate Jews in England, but only if they are compelled to wear "Arab" clothing, to show that they are an alien nation. Hitler made a simpler demand for Jewish dress, but the idea was the same. Of course, there were, tragically and ironically, points of contact between Chesterton and Zionism. He went to Jerusalem in 1920 and reported back on what he found among the nascent Zionists, whom he liked: he wanted them out of Europe and so did they; he wanted Jews to be turned from rootless cosmopolitans into rooted yeomen, and so did they.




*"I need it yesterday."*

Chesterton wasn't a fascist, and he certainly wasn't in favor of genocide, but that is about the best that can be said for him—and is surely less of a moral accomplishment than his admirers would like. He did speak out, toward the end of his life, against the persecution in Nazi Germany, writing that he was "appalled by the Hitlerite atrocities," that "they have absolutely no reason or logic behind them," that "I am quite ready to believe now that Belloc and I will die defending the last Jew in Europe." Yet he insisted, "I still think there is a Jewish problem," and he denounced Hitler in the context of a wacky argument that Nazism is really a form of "Prussianism," which is really a form of Judaism; that is, a belief in a chosen, specially exalted people. (For what it's worth, although he mistrusts Judaism, he *detests* Islam; Judaism is merely pre-Christian but Islam is a kind of parody Christianity. All the favorite historical arguments for Jesus—that he had to be either crazy or right, and he doesn't seem crazy; that he changed the world with a suddenness not plausible in an ordinary human; that the scale of the edifice he inspired is proof of divine inspiration—apply just as well to Muhammad, and they can't both be the guy.)

The trouble for those of us who love Chesterton's writing is that the anti-Semitism is not incidental: it rises from the logic of his poetic position. The anti-Semitism is easy to excise from his arguments when it's explicit. It's harder to excise the spirit that leads to it—the suspicion of the alien, the extreme localism, the favoring of national instinct over rational argument, the distaste for "parasitic" middlemen, and the preference for the simple organ-grinding music of the folk.

His defenders insist that, whatever harm he did to himself and his reputation by his prejudices, the often long, always didactic, and specifically Catholic books to which he devoted himself after his conversion more than make up for it, since they are both profound and genuinely universal, insisting on a pan-national commonality in the true faith. I have had these books—"The Everlasting Man," a study of Jesus and Christianity; his life of St. Francis; his defense of Thomas Aquinas—pressed on me by Catholic friends with something like the same enthusiasm with which I have proselytized for the

pre-Catholic Chesterton. It is hard for a nonbeliever to evaluate this kind of writing, which, despite its evangelical exhortations, is really written to comfort and encourage the already convinced. We choose a religion, when we do, not for the tenets of a creed but for the totality of a circumstance, for a tone and a practice and an encompassing condition: "It feels like home" (or "like my father's puppet theatre") is about the truest thing that the convert can say about his new faith. As Chesterton would have been the first to admit, nobody has to argue so strenuously for what he actually believes. Nobody gets up on a soapbox and shouts about the comfort of his sofa and chairs. He just invites other people to sit in them.

In these books, Chesterton becomes a Pangloss of the parish; anything Roman is right. It is hard to credit that even a convinced Catholic can feel equally strongly about St. Francis's intuitive mysticism and St. Thomas's pedantic religiosity, as Chesterton seems to. His writing suffers from conversion sickness. Converts tend to see the faith they were raised in as an exasperatingly makeshift and jury-rigged system: Anglican converts to Catholicism are relieved not to have to defend Henry VIII's divorces; Jewish converts to Christianity are relieved to get out from under the weight of all those strange Levitical laws on animal hooves. The newly adopted faith, they imagine, is a shining, perfectly balanced system, an intricately worked clock where the cosmos turns to tell the time and the cuckoo comes out singing every Sunday. An outsider sees the Church as a dreamy compound of incense and impossibility, and, overglamorizing its pretensions, underrates its adaptability. A Frenchman or an Italian, even a devout one, can see the Catholic Church as a normally bureaucratic human institution, the way patriotic Americans see the post office, recognizing the frailty and even the occasional psychosis of its employees without doubting its necessity or its ability to deliver the message. Chesterton writing about the Church is like someone who has just made his first trip to the post office. Look, it delivers letters for the tiny price of a stamp! You write an address on a label, and they will send it anywhere, literally anywhere you like, across a continent and an ocean, in any weather! The fact that the post office attracts timeservers, or has produced an occasional gun massacre, is only proof of the mystical enthusiasm that the post office alone provides! Glorifying the postman beyond what the postman can bear is what you do only if you're new to mail.



The books became narrower as they got bigger. The problem of how you reconcile a love of the particular with a set of universal values seemed easy; the Catholic Church was large enough to provide a universal code and ritual for life with plenty of room for variation among lives within it. The trouble is that Catholic universalism is not so convincing to those whose idea of local variation involves a variation on the Catholic ritual, or wanting some other ritual, or wanting no ritual at all. Chesterton's vision has no room in it for tolerance, except as a likable personal whim or an idiosyncratic national trait. (That he was personally tolerant, on this basis, no one can doubt.) The history of persecution, of Albigensians and Inquisitions, is constantly defended in the inevitable "though it can only be regretted/still it must always be remembered" manner.

The wonderful spirit of early Chesterton—who is equally religious but not so neatly dogmatic—got channelled into the Father Brown detective stories, which he wrote for money and from increasingly flagging inspiration, and into the torrent of weekly journalism, which he kept up right until his death. The later essays are often as brilliant as those of the early nineteen-hundreds. Chesterton on the virtues of the newly invented cartoon, on the absurdities of Prohibition in America, on social manners within New York skyscrapers is still wonderful. (Musing on how an American always takes off his hat in an elevator, he writes that the very word "elevator" "expresses a great deal of his vague but idealistic religion," and he goes on, "Perhaps a brief religious service will be held in the elevator as it ascends; in a few well-chosen words touching the Utmost for the Highest. . . . The tall building is itself artistically akin to the tall story. The very word skyscraper is an admirable example of an American lie.") But often one has the sense of a man chained to a paradox assembly line in a prose factory. Too much journalism does drain a writer; turns his tics into tocks, dully marking the time until the next check.

And then he seemed very dated very soon. There are two great tectonic shifts in English writing. One occurs in the early eighteenth century, when Addison and Steele begin *The Spectator* and the stop-and-start Elizabethan-Stuart prose becomes the smooth, Latinate, elegantly wrought ironic style that dominated English writing for two centuries. Gibbon made it sly and ornate; Johnson gave it sinew and muscle; Dickens mocked it at elaborate comic length. But the style—formal address, long windups, balance sought for and achieved—was still a sort of default, the voice in which leader pages more or less wrote themselves.

The second big shift occurred just after the First World War, when, under American and Irish pressure, and thanks to the French (Flaubert doing his work through early Joyce and Hemingway), a new form of aerodynamic prose came into being. The new style could be as limpid as Waugh or as blunt as Orwell or as funny as White and Benchley, but it dethroned the old orotundity as surely as Addison had killed off the old asymmetry. Chestertonian mannerisms—beginning sentences with "I wish to conclude" or "I should say, therefore" or "Moreover," using the first person plural unself-consciously ("What we have to ask ourselves . . ."), making sure that every sentence was crafted like a sword and loaded like a cannon—appeared to have come from some other universe. Writers like Shaw and Chesterton depended on a kind of comic and complicit hyperbole: every statement is an overstatement, and understood as such by readers. The new style prized understatement, to be filled in by the reader. What had seemed charming and obviously theatrical twenty years before now could sound like puff and noise. Human nature didn't change in 1910, but English writing did. (For Virginia Woolf, they were the same thing.) The few writers of the nineties who were still writing a couple of decades later were as dazed as the last dinosaurs, post-comet. They didn't know what had hit them, and went on roaring anyway.

In the late twenties, many people lost their bearings, and Chesterton began to drift farther right than he had before. Though he never fully embraced Mussolini, he was in spirit as good a Falang-

ist as you could find: he dreamed of an anti-capitalist agricultural state overseen by the Catholic Church and governed by a military for whom medieval ideas of honor still resonated, a place where Jews would not be persecuted or killed, certainly, but hived off and always marked as foreigners. All anti-utopians cherish a secret utopia, an Eden of their own, and his, ironically, was achieved: his ideal order was ascendant over the whole Iberian Peninsula for half a century. And a bleak place it was, too, with a fearful ruling class running a frightened population in an atmosphere of poverty-stricken uniformity and terrified stasis—a lot more like the actual medieval condition than like the Victorian fantasy. (Just as William Morris's or Ruskin's medieval guilds were the leisure activities of a Victorian moneyed and altruistic class projected backward in time, Chesterton's medieval London was really a nostalgic vision of late-Victorian London suburbs, small craftsmen gathered around the village green.)

He died, at the age of sixty-two, in his beloved country town of Beaconsfield (Disraeli had previously been its most illustrious resident), worse for wear after decades of non-stop writing, editing, and lecture-touring. His coffin was too big to be carried down the stairs, and had to be taken through a window. But even in his final years the sinuosity of his mind and the beauty of his line remained strong. (Besides, if obviously great writers were allowed onto the reading list only when they conform to the current consensus of liberal good will—voices of tolerance and liberal democracy—we would probably be down to George Eliot.)

Chesterton's conundrums of imagination and fact retain their grip on us, because they remind us that we know two things. We know that we have our experience of a limited world, Surbiton or Notting Hill or Telegraph Hill. We also know that this experience doesn't *feel* limited, that it includes far more—all of myth and religion and meaning, as the children's puppet theatre does. The desire for mystery and romance can't be argued out of importance, but it can't be willed into existence, either. It is a mistake to believe that the man with the golden key is "only" a puppet when he acts out a story that alters the inside of your head; it is also a mistake to cover your eyes and wish away the strings.

We can take the belief in that puppet to be a delusion, as the rationalists did. Or we can take it to be an intimation, as Chesterton did, of the existence of another world, in which the things that we sense as shadows will become real, and we will see ourselves as puppets that have come alive in the hand of God. Or we can believe that the credit we give the puppet show is the credit it deserves, that the wonder of it cannot be explained, up or down, but only experienced; that the side we see is the side there is to look at, and that the white radiance of wonder shines from inside, which is where the light is. ♦


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# Violet Cowden, 94; Flew Military Planes for War Effort

By MARGALIT FOX

The problem was simple, but would have disastrous consequences if left unsolved. The United States had entered World War II, and military aircraft were barreling off the assembly lines. But with many military pilots deployed overseas, or soon to be, there was no way to transport the planes from the factories to the airfields where they were urgently needed.

Then someone remembered an untapped source of aeronautic talent: the thousands of American women who were licensed pilots. And so, in 1942, the Women Airforce Service Pilots — as the contingent of more than a thousand would be named — was born, freeing the men for service overseas.

Attached to the Army Air Forces, the WASPs, as they were known, were the first women to serve as United States military pilots. They performed duties formerly done by men: some ferried new planes to their destinations, others towed targets for aerial gunnery practice, still others were flight instructors.

By all accounts, the women did their jobs capably and ardently — until the men came home and suddenly the Army had no need of them. Then, unable to work as peacetime pilots, they faded into the 1950s, receiving recognition as military veterans only decades after the war ended.

Violet Cowden, who died at 94 on April 10, was one of those women. In 1943 and 1944, assigned to the Army's Air Transport Command, she flew some of the country's most sophisticated planes, transporting them from factories to domestic airfields or to coastal debarkation points for shipment to foreign theaters.

She was the subject of a documentary, "Wings of Silver: The Vi Cowden Story," released last year.

A past president of the national WASP veterans' group, Mrs. Cowden was among about 200 WASPs (fewer than 300 are now living) presented in 2010 with the Congressional Gold Medal, one of the country's two highest civilian awards.

Mrs. Cowden, who flew a plane as recently as last year, lived in Huntington Beach, Calif. Her death, in nearby Newport Beach, was confirmed by her daughter, Kim Ruiz.

Ever since she was a child, watching hawks swoop over the family farm, Mrs. Cowden had yearned to fly. She was not quite sure how one went about it, until she discovered a marvelous thing called the airplane.

Violet Clara Thurn was born on Oct. 1, 1916, in a sod house in Bowdle, S.D. In 1936, she earned a teaching certificate from what was then the Spearfish Normal School, in Spearfish, S.D., and stayed in Spearfish to teach first grade. There, she rode her bicycle six miles each way to a local airfield for her first flying lessons. (She had no driver's license.)



U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES

Violet Cowden became the subject of a documentary, "Wings of Silver: The Vi Cowden Story," which was released last year.

She knew immediately that she had found her calling. "The air is such a comfortable place for me," Mrs. Cowden said in a 2007 interview with the Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. "I feel so in oneness with life and with the world and everything when I'm in the air."

After Pearl Harbor was attacked, Mrs. Cowden, by then a licensed pilot, asked to join the Civil Air Patrol but got no reply. "Everybody was joining something," she said in the interview. "So I joined the Navy, because I liked their hats."

***Female pilots who freed male pilots for duty overseas.***

She soon heard about the Women's Flying Training Detachment, an early incarnation of the WASPs. Of the 25,000 women who applied, she was one of 1,830 accepted. She had lived for a week on a diet rich in bananas and malted milk to raise her weight from 92 pounds to 100, the required minimum.

She reported to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Tex., then a place of dust, desolation and rattlesnakes, for six months of rigorous training.

The women banded together through shared ritual. "They'd have picnics in the sky," Mark C. Bonn, who with his wife, Christine, directed "Wings of Silver," said in an interview. "If there was a group of girls picking up two or three planes from the same factory, they would have their lunch on their long trip at the same time. And so they would talk on the radio. 'O.K., I'm having my apple.' 'I'm having my sandwich.'"

Because they were civil service employees and not military personnel, the WASPs had to pay for their own food, lodging and often capacious attire. There were no flight suits for women then, and Mrs. Cowden, barely more than 5 feet tall, was installed in a men's Size 44 for the duration.

Mrs. Cowden, one of 1,074 women to complete training, was assigned to Love Field in Dallas. She logged hundreds of thousands of miles in a variety of planes, including the P-51 Mustang, the swift single-seat fighter she called "the love of my life."

She once delivered a P-51 to the Tuskegee Airmen, the black military squadron. (There were also black women who had graduated from the Tuskegee Institute's pilot training program; they were denied admission to the WASPs.)

Mrs. Cowden worked seven days a week, sleeping on commercial flights that ferried her to and from assignments. She flew in all weather, came down on runways without lights and sometimes took the controls of planes so fresh from the factory that they had never been tested. To fly such a plane, she often said, was like making footprints in soft virgin snow.

Her plane once caught fire on landing; thinking quickly, Mrs. Cowden saved her important papers and her makeup.

Thirty-eight WASPs died in accidents during training or while on duty; others were injured, some seriously.

By late 1944, male pilots began coming home, and they wanted their jobs back.

"We had defeated the Luftwaffe by then, and so our pilots were not dying at the rate that they had been," said Katherine Landdeck, a historian at Texas Woman's University who is an authority on the WASPs. "The whole purpose of the WASP program was to release male pilots for combat duty. By December of '44, the WASPs were no longer releasing them, they were replacing them. And that was the argument that was used against them."

That December, on a day Mrs. Cowden recalled as one of the worst in her life, the Army dissolved the WASPs.

Few airlines would hire a woman as a commercial pilot then. Mrs. Cowden went to work in New York in the only aviation job she could get — behind the ticket counter at Trans World Airlines. It was painful, she later said, to be so close to planes yet so far from the cockpit, and she soon left.

She became a partner in a California ceramics studio, married and had a child. She let her pilot's license lapse, though friends who took her aloft over the years gladly ceded her the controls.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a bill granting the WASPs recognition as veterans, which allowed them limited benefits.

Besides her daughter, Mrs. Cowden is survived by two sisters, Betty Niese and Lillian Riede, and three grandchildren. Her husband, Warren William Cowden, known as Scott, whom she married in 1955, died in 2009.

Though Mrs. Cowden and her colleagues were consigned to the recesses of history, during the war their work was considered so vital that the airlines were ordered to displace any passenger if a WASP needed to be shuttled to an assignment.

This status was brought home to Mrs. Cowden one day after a place was made for her on a commercial flight to Memphis. Disembarking, she faced a throng of women huddled on the tarmac, looking unaccountably disappointed.

Mrs. Cowden had bumped Frank Sinatra.