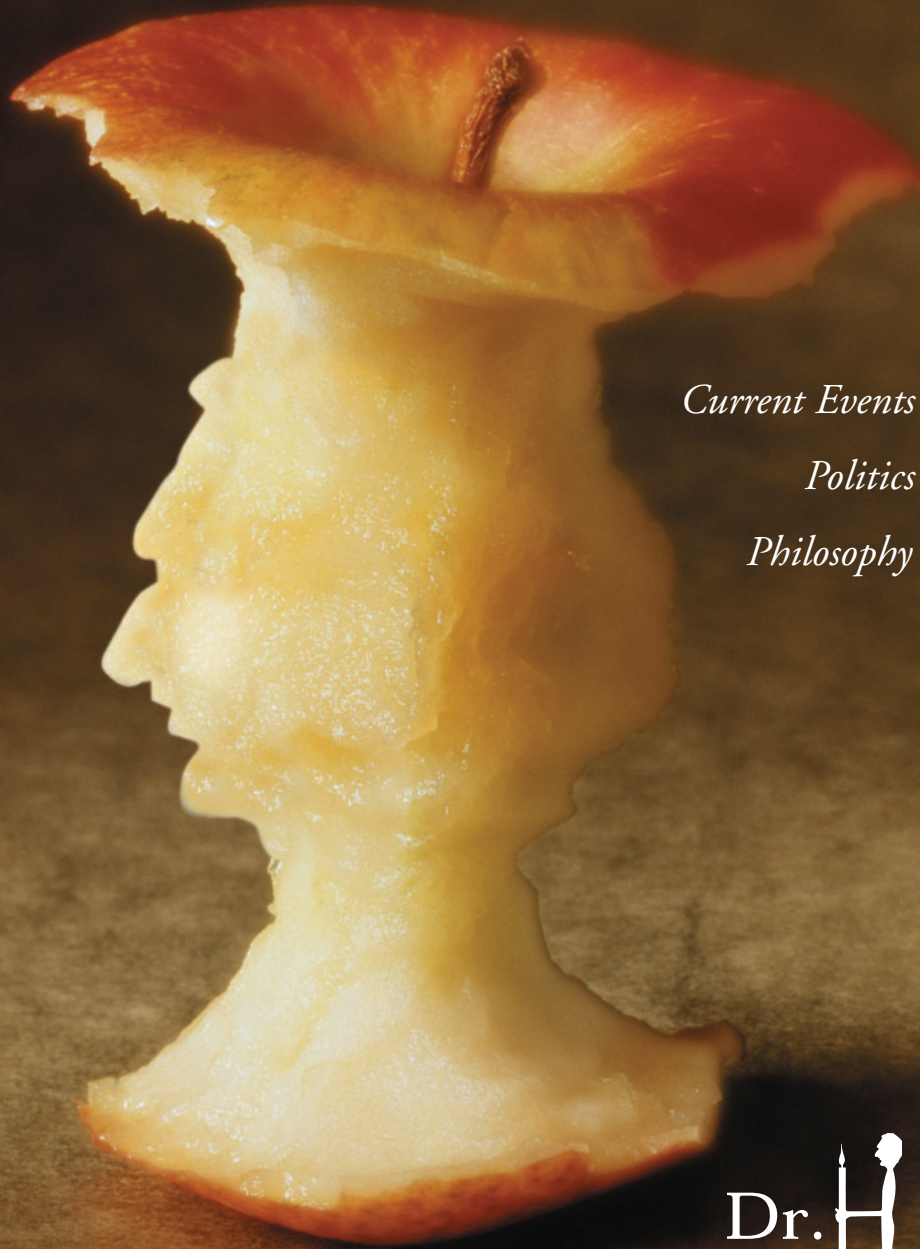


*the best of*  
**SCHLAGBYTES**  
*volume one*



*Current Events*

*Politics*

*Philosophy*



DR. CARL A. HAMMERSCHLAG

# WELCOME TO SCHLAGBYTES

Schlagbyte's are the random musings of my rational mind and intuitive soul. For the last six years these weekly ramblings have sustained me. They have allowed me to get out whatever pain and suffering were stealing my spirit, and also allow me to celebrate the awe, wonder and joy in my life.

These are my opinions, you may or may not share them. Over the years many of you have posted responses to these Bytes, some laudatory others confrontative. We have become a readership, who respond to each others' opinions. Some bless me, others curse me and more than a handful, think I'm hopelessly irrelevant.

Schlagbyte's fall into five categories:

- Current events (politics, philosophy)
- Spirituality (values, beliefs, Native Americans, awe)
- Healthcare (policy, practice, ministry/industry)
- Lifestyle (movies, television, sex, romance, humor)
- Family (kids, grandkids, vacations)

After perusing the archives I've decided to put together "The Best of Schlagbytes." They are the perfect reading during your morning toilet trek. They're brief, they'll make you think, and if they piss you off you can wipe yourself with them.

Welcome to my world and enjoy the journey.

Carl A. Hammerschlag, M.D.

THE BEST OF SCHLAGBYES  
CURRENT EVENTS › POLITICS › PHILOSOPHY

REI – 9/10/96 .....	5
Roberto Alomar – 10/2/96 .....	6
Euro Right Wing – 12/1/96 .....	7
Drug War – 2/28/97 .....	8
Written Laws – 5/11/97 .....	9
Memorial Day – 5/30/97 .....	10
Clintonesque – 6/22/97 .....	11
Teachers – 6/29/97 .....	12
Mike Tyson – 7/20/97 .....	13
Blame and Responsibility – 10/13/97 .....	14
Cheating – 12/24/97 .....	15
Ignorance Is Bliss! – 2/2/98 .....	16
Olympic Snowboarding – 2/18/98 .....	17
The Shot Show – 2/23/98 .....	18
The Survivor Tree – 3/30/98 .....	19
The Terminator – 4/6/98 .....	20
Anniversaries and Other Remembrances – 5/4/98 .....	22
Public Urinal Syndrome – 11/2/98 .....	23
The Pause that Refreshes – 11/16/98 .....	24
Jason Crowe – 12/28/98 .....	25
New Year Blessings – 1/5/99 .....	26
Patch Adams – 1/11/99 .....	27
President Acquitted – 2/22/99 .....	28
Spanking Could Be a Crime in Oakland – 3/8/99 .....	29
Whales, Dolphins, and Chimps R' Us – 3/29/99 .....	30
The Littleton Massacre – 4/22/99 .....	31
The Secrets of Life – 6/14/99 .....	32
Color Me Red, White & Blue – 7/12/99 .....	33

Let Your Fingers Do the Walking, and Your Clergyman Will Do the Talking – 7/19/99 .....	34
I'll Take New York – 8/26/99 .....	35
A Labor Day of Love – 9/5/99 .....	37
Three Smart Mice, Three Smart Mice, See How They Run – 9/27/99 .....	38
Neo-Nazis in the Mist – 10/4/99 .....	39
Dump Trump – 10/25/99 .....	40
Barbie Lays an Egg – 11/8/99 .....	41
Football Rivalries and Other Rituals of Healing – 12/6/99 .....	42
When Sharing Blessings Is a Crime – 12/20/99 .....	43
Old Drivers Can Cripple You – 2/7/00 .....	44
Jörg Haider – 2/14/00 .....	45
Mechanic's Bills Paid – 3/6/00 .....	46
Little Big Bang – 4/10/00 .....	47
Star Tames Ego – 4/17/00 .....	48
We Have Met the Enemy and It Is Us – 5/29/00 .....	49
Stroke Victims Recognize the Emperor Has No Clothes? – 6/12/00 .....	50
My New Political Hero — 6/12/00 .....	51
Nibblin' in New Orleans – 7/10/00 .....	52
Who Gets the Golden Egg? – 7/31/00 .....	53
Dow Jones Measures Soul – 8/21/00 .....	54
The Rear-View Mirror – 8/28/00 .....	55
Ram Dass Is Still Here – 9/1/00 .....	56
Dying Well – 10/16/00 .....	57
Presidential Bullshit – 10/30/00 .....	58
Can Arafat and Barak Say Hello Before Clinton Says Goodbye? – 11/13/00 .....	59
Veterans Day – 11/20/00 .....	60
A 100th Monkey New Year's Resolution – 1/8/01 .....	61
Listen When Gabriel Blows His Horn – 1/22/01 .....	62
More Hugging, Less Mugging – 3/19/01 .....	63
When Times Are Bear, Prepare for Bull – 4/2/01 .....	64
Nice Rice Comes with Price – 4/30/01 .....	65
Safe Haven – 5/7/01 .....	66

Prometheus Visits Animal Farm – 6/4/01 .....	67
Time to Reflect – 6/25/01 .....	68
Going the Extra Mile – 7/9/01 .....	69
We Have No Bird in Hand Because Dubya Sold the Bush – 8/6/01 .....	70
Great Plains Obituary – 8/13/01 .....	71
Spiderwoman Lives – 8/20/01 .....	72
Surviving in Rapidly Changing Cultures – 8/27/01 .....	73
Johnnie Walker Black – 9/3/01 .....	74
World Conference against Racism – 9/24/01 .....	75
Gas Masks, Anthrax, Not the Way to Go – 10/08/01 .....	76
Ground Zero – 10/22/01 .....	77
Paralyzing Panic – 10/29/01 .....	79
Investigate Bugs, not Bombs – 11/05/01 .....	80
Canaries and Trout – 11/19/01 .....	81
Make Music – 12/17/01 .....	82
The Fighting Whites – 4/1/02 .....	83
Tel Aviv and Thomas Road – 4/22/02 .....	84
Our Posthuman Future – 5/20/02 .....	85
Hope, Not Dope - 6/17/02.....	86
Rocky Mountain Highs and Lows – 7/22/02 .....	87
Burning Man – 9/2/02 .....	89
9/11 Anniversary – 9/16/02 .....	90
Warmongering – 10/7/02 .....	93
Holier Than Thou – 11/18/02 .....	94
Homeland Security and Halloween – 12/02/01 .....	95

## REI – 9/10/96

I just got back from Seattle, Washington, where Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) opened its new flagship store. REI is a 58-year-old outdoor gear and clothing cooperative with nearly one and a half million members, the largest in the nation. The new store encompasses 100,000 square feet; the bicycle section alone spans 12,000 square feet. There is an outdoor courtyard which includes a 470-foot track for testing mountain bikes on actual inclines, jumps, and bumps. There are a host of interactive displays; the biggest by far is a pinnacle, which at 65 feet is the tallest free-standing climbing structure in the world. The pinnacle weighs 100 tons, contains more than four miles of steel reinforcing rod, and can accommodate up to 15 climbers at a time. The glass-walled enclosure features programmed theatrical lighting that simulates the sun's arc across the sky.

I find myself thinking, "More and more people are going to want to explore the new store rather than doing it in the great outdoors." You can do it all inside now, even programming the amount of sunlight in this artificial environment. Are we moving ever closer to leisure lives of simulated reality followed by a cappuccino in the coffee shop?

## ROBERTO ALOMAR – 10/2/96

Roberto Alomar, the second baseman for the Baltimore Orioles, spit in the face of Umpire John Hirschbeck after getting ejected for arguing a called third strike. Then he added insult to injury by suggesting that the umpire had some kind of personality change since the death of his child from a rare brain tumor (one from which another son also suffers). But the aftermath of this ugly incident bothers me more.

Roberto Alomar did not stand up and tell the umpire he was sorry. Instead the spin doctors and PR people from the baseball commissioner's office composed a letter that Alomar signed. In part the letter said, "While I understand that this gesture in no way excuses or mitigates my conduct, I do hope that it demonstrates my honest concern and complete remorse for what has happened and my hope that some good can emerge from this unfortunate and, for me, most regrettable happening."

This is not how Alomar speaks, and this is not an apology; it is a press release. There isn't a baseball player dead or alive who talks like that. Alomar's actions were disgusting, and the league was right in giving him a five-day suspension, but Alomar appealed the ruling, so during the appeal process, he was now eligible to participate in the playoffs. You do something that's childish and disgusting; you get punished. Can you imagine a mother telling a child that his spitting in the teacher's face is unacceptable, but he'll be punished next year when school is over?

## EURO RIGHT WING – 12/1/96

Just returned from Europe where there is a growing legion of right-wing supporters. In Austria, Joerg Hider, a charismatic neo-Fascist, recently captured 28 percent of the Austrian vote in October, nearly overtaking the Social Democratic party who has held power in Vienna for the past decade. Hider doesn't like welfare states, unchecked global markets, or illegal immigrants. Underneath those populist platitudes, he promotes ethnic intolerance and is a xenophobic hate-monger. This kind of hatred breeds an escalating response. In London a black member of Parliament railed out against a hospital who she said hired too many "blue-eyed Finnish nurses." The MP said they could surely find enough nurses of color in the inner city and didn't have to import them from Finland. The quality of the Finns' nursing care was never questioned nor their commitment to patients--only that they were blond and blue-eyed. It turned out that only two of the 20 Finns were blonde and blue-eyed; racism, no matter where it arises, steals the potential for our humanity.



## DRUG WAR – 2/28/97

The U.S. Intelligence Agency acknowledges that sensitive information may have been leaked to drug lords through corrupt Mexican officials. Members of Congress are holding hearings to look at a report that the General Accounting Office released which is highly critical of the United States' international efforts to staunch the flow of illegal drugs. All in all, it comes down to the fact that many lives could have been jeopardized and that national security has been breached. DEA Chief, Tom Constantine, said that the damage done to Mexico's anti-drug efforts by this scandal are worse than what U.S. spy Aldridge Ames did to America's foreign spy network. Drug czar Barry McCaffrey said, "We are reviewing the system." He was aware of the corrosive power of 30 billion dollars in drug money on democratic institutions, saying he was not naïve.

I look at this, and I think of the rhetoric we've been hearing these last weeks about how we must suppress the legalization of marijuana for medical use in Arizona and California because it will turn large numbers of young adults into abusing addicts. Smoking a joint will not create an addictive population. Greed at the highest levels will. Sixty-five million Americans have smoked pot, and three million Americans are regular users of harder drugs. Even if you assume that every hard drug user once smoked a joint, it means 95 percent of the marijuana users do not become habitués of hard drugs and 85 percent don't even continue using pot. The real crisis of adult drug abuse and its attendant violence is the result of poverty, racism, and immorality at the very highest levels of government.

## WRITTEN LAWS – 5/11/97

A couple of weeks ago, Kevin Gillson and his 15-year-old girlfriend found themselves in a situation that lots of teenagers find themselves in; she was pregnant. Kevin, 18 years old, wanted to take responsibility and marry the girl, get a job, and raise their child, but the police found out about it and arrested Kevin on a charge of sexual assault which was later boosted to sexual assault of a child.

Despite assurances from Kevin's girlfriend that the sex was consensual, a long-standing law in the state of Wisconsin says that nobody younger than 16 can consent to a sexual relationship. Few of the 10,000 people in this town, just 30 miles north of Milwaukee, thought that Kevin Gillson should be prosecuted, but the district attorney filed suit.

Even the jurors who decided this case were upset with the verdict, but the district attorney told them that they had only one choice. They had a copy of the law, both teens said that they did it, and, because of that, this was the only choice. So they convicted Kevin Gillson, and now that he is a registered sex offender, he faces a sentence that ranges from probation to 40 years in prison, and I'm thinking, "This is where we have come."

As a society, we no longer can agree on some moral code so we have to depend on the written law; as soon as you have a written law, somebody tells us how to interpret it so that the community can no longer decide for itself what's right or wrong.

We have abandoned our ability to share a moral code and agree on a certain standard, so we have to depend on lawyers to write down the laws. Nobody in this case thinks Kevin Gillson ought to go to jail or that he should even be convicted and now carry on his record the imprint 'sexual offender,' but they convicted him anyway. They didn't stand up and say, "Here's a young man who made a mistake." There sit all of our children.

It could be any of them, and they are willing to look at the mistake and make a decision about the rest of their lives and make some commitments to each other and feel that it's been a profound teaching.

But the best way to deal with this is not to incarcerate this young man or even hold him up to this kind of ridicule. It gives the jury and--if not the jury, then the community, the state, the nation--an opportunity to say this is not right and we agree as a town, as a community, a state or a nation, that this is what we think is right.

It would be good to come together and walk such an ethical path because then we depend less on attorneys to tell us what's right and wrong; you have to admit that in the current court system in America, the way decisions are reached makes the whole system seem puny and untrustworthy.

## MEMORIAL DAY – 5/30/97

Memorial Day used to be just a long weekend for me. I'd try to get out of the heat, maybe fish, relax, drink some wine. Celebrating war in any of its manifestations has always seemed a little bit like celebrating the flu epidemic of 1918; there are some memories that one ought to leave behind.

I had strong anti-war sentiments during the Vietnam era and served my military obligation with the USPHS, Division of Indian Health. In Indian Country I saw, up close and personal, the psychological devastation the Vietnam War wrought among Indian veterans. Only then did I begin to understand that I had confused the war with the warrior.

Indians have a long history as warriors; they fight for honor; their leaders speak for their nation, but these warriors returned to a nation that did not welcome them as heroes. Many of these men became addicted, violent, self-mutilating, and suicidal; I ached for them.

I made my own pilgrimage to the Vietnam Memorial to ask forgiveness for my arrogance and certainty. I went in the quiet hours after midnight, when no one else was there, put on my prayer shawl, and recited the lament for the dead. Then I walked up that stark incline with my lips touching the names on the black wall so I could feel the presence of their sacrifice.

I remember Memorial Day every year now; I remember warriors who were as committed to an ideal as I was. I'd like to get back to those ideals-- to beliefs in an American dream worth dying for such as honor, equality, and justice. We need more ceremonial times to remind us of these values; they help us refocus on what's really important.

## CLINTONESQUE – 6/22/97

Tony Blair, the newly elected British prime minister, has been called Clintonesque; why does this scare me? It's not that Clinton isn't intelligent; it's just that I wonder whether he is a man of principles. More and more, my feeling is that he is an influence peddler who has a unique talent for putting a positive spin on virtually everything. Even if half of what we read about him has a shred of truth, we get a sense of him as a master manipulator.

What we need in America--and in the world--is the resurgence of visionary leaders with moral philosophies. The leader that I think comes closest is Vaclav Havel who rose from prison cell to the presidency of the Czech Republic. Havel said that even since Czechoslovakia's liberation from communist control, his people still view the government as an entity to be cheated. "We learned for so long, that government could not be trusted," he said, "that even when it's been changed, people still see nothing wrong in cheating it. We cannot build a society on that kind of moral pollution. What we need most is a moral resurgence."

I happen to agree, and I believe the United States has the capacity to be a potent voice in any global moral resurgence. My fear, however, is that if Tony Blair is Clintonesque, the only thing American leadership has to export is manipulative sleaze.

## TEACHERS – 6/29/97

Jonathan Levin was a dedicated high school English teacher in the Bronx, New York. Part of his dedication was his availability to students at times other than classroom hours. Jonathan would take a student out to eat or to a ball game. A former student of Levin's was indicted four weeks ago on charges that he stabbed and shot Jonathan in his apartment and then stole his bank card.

Since the killing, there has been lots of talk that Levin was at fault for making himself so available and therefore vulnerable to such an attack. Should teachers be available to students? How do we draw the lines between teacher, advisor, and friend? Should teachers say to the students, "If you're in trouble, I want you to feel that you can come to me, but only during school hours."?

Some lines need to be drawn, but it's clear that a teacher's job is not just about the subject; it's about teaching values, fostering dreams, and leading by example. I hope that teachers will not use this as more justification to withdraw from their students. I hope that high schools will not build more metal detectors for students to pass through in order to enter the campuses or hire more armed guards. Rather let us find more teachers who truly love kids and understand that to teach means to be involved.

Finally, I hope that Jonathan Levin's students at Taft High School will still write to his parents in the years to come and tell them how he touched their lives. This would be a living memorial to his legacy as the caring, committed teacher he was.

## MIKE TYSON – 7/20/97

Mike Tyson is a convicted rapist and cannibal, and he has just had his boxing license revoked by the State of Nevada. The former heavyweight champ who bit off Evander Holyfield's ear last month reminds us that he is a prisoner of uncontrollable appetites. The rules to which he adheres are those that he himself creates. This inability to conform his behavior to societal standards we used to call sociopathy; nowadays we call it an inside track to making money. Mike Tyson will join OJ Simpson in selling his talents to a public audience.

The executive producer for Showtime Boxing said that the cable network is considering hiring Tyson to help deliver the blow-by-blow color commentary for boxing matches. The executive producer did say that maybe now was not the right time to throw him in front of a camera, but "at the right time it's something we would do." This is an interesting commentary on our time. Anything can be sold; whether pornography or violence, it can be packaged into a salable commodity. Is it any wonder that our kids are having an increasingly difficult time understanding what's right from wrong when these kinds of perversions are rewarded?

## BLAME AND RESPONSIBILITY – 10/13/97

Today's ethic--if something bad happens to you, blame someone else. Even for those things you know you are clearly responsible for, you can still externalize responsibility. You can always find a lawyer who will represent you and further convince you that your finger pointing is not only valid but righteous.

Do you remember Jessica Dubroff? This little girl was supposed to be the youngest pilot to fly across the country. Everyone knew the real pilot was her instructor, who one morning took the plane off in a driving rainstorm in the thin air of Colorado. The fuel/air mixture was improperly set, the plane was almost 100 pounds over its certified weight--the pilot took off anyway and never reached safe air speed. The instructor made a climbing right turn into rough air, lost control of the plane, and plunged to the ground. Jessica, her father, and the pilot were all killed instantly.

The official investigation found no evidence of any problem with the plane or its engine; this was clearly a case of pilot error. The surviving Dubroff family, however, chose to sue Cessna Aviation--not because they believed that the fault lay any place other than with the instructor, but because the law makes it possible. If it has become obligatory in our culture to blame someone else for any untoward consequences in our lives, it is especially so if they have deep pockets.

We are moving toward the idea that individuals are not responsible for the choices they make. We want to absolve ourselves of any responsibility for our actions, the result of which is that we can now get away with anything.

## CHEATING – 12/24/97

I cheated a couple of times in high school. I don't tell you this with pride. The first time I wrote a math formula on the palm of my hand. I got away with it. The second time Mrs. Brody, my social studies teacher, saw me look at a crib sheet in the bottom of my book bag. She was staring at me but didn't come over. I felt so ashamed and guilty. I felt sick to my stomach. She never confronted me, but I felt forever compromised in her eyes. I didn't do it again. The thought of my mother or father having to come to school filled me with horror. My father would say he was responsible for not having taught me better. He would say I dishonored the ashes of my relatives who gave their lives while I lived. Remember them; do not dishonor them.

I tell you this because we are finding that cheating is now commonplace. Who's Who Among American High School Students surveyed 3,177 students nationally and discovered that over the last 30 years, the number of high school kids who have cheated has doubled. Eighty percent of the kids said that cheating was common at their school. What constitutes cheating? Anymore it's not clear; it depends on who was asked. Students said that telling friends what was on a test isn't cheating. Everybody agreed that cheating is stealing a test for a classmate or hiding the answers in a book. Students said they need to cheat, that the fast pace of their lives--sports and clubs and part-time jobs--doesn't allow them much study time. When asked if they thought cheating was bad, the students said it depends on whether you get caught. If you don't get caught, you get a good gpa and into college; then it isn't bad.

Does this mean kids no longer have a sense of morality or shame? Nonsense! It's not the kids; it's the adults. Parents allow children to believe that whatever the behavior, it's okay by not imposing any consequences. Parents avoid their responsibilities because they want to avoid looking at their own choices. Latrel Spreewell is not responsible, nor is Tanya Harding or Charlie Keating. Jimmy Baker says the devil made him do it; President Clinton says he doesn't even know Paula Jones; Hillary has no recollection of Whitewater. We find an attorney to represent us and figure out some way to help us get away with it.

Getting away with it is what governs today's morality. When we lower the standards, our children remind us of ourselves.

This is the dawning of a new year; let us pledge to come to it with a greater sense of honor.



## IGNORANCE IS BLISS! – 2/2/98

Ignorance is bliss! A study just published in the February American Demographics magazine interviewed 10,000 Americans over the last decade and reported that if you have a graduate degree, you are less likely to have sex than if you've only finished high school. What does this mean? That book smarts have become a substitute for sex? I think not, but I do believe that we spend so much time educating our heads that we begin to think it holds all the answers for us. Too much thinking reduces the whole of the human experience to a single dimension of knowledge. We spend too little time feeling and educating our hearts. In this technological age, we attribute our successes and failures to scientific explanations and reduce what we feel to some simple biochemical reaction that takes place at the neuronal endplate.

When we train our heads to explain the why of things, we don't often spend a lot of time experiencing the now of things. Head learning cannot be our only measure of success; the pursuit of certainty is just a tribute to arrogance. Most importantly, it keeps us from feeling more with our hearts until we no longer even make love.

## OLYMPIC SNOWBOARDING – 2/18/98

For the first time in Olympic history, snowboarding is a competitive event. The International Olympic Committee was, for a long time, reluctant to give snowboarding its due because the International Ski Federation saw snowboarders as undisciplined, irreverent, irresponsible, discourteous denizens of the slopes.

This year's gold medal went to a 26-year-old Canadian snowboarder, Ross Rebagliati. When they tested Ross's urine, they found it contained marijuana residue so the International Olympic Committee repossessed his medal. Ross insisted that he hadn't smoked grass in months, but that he did attend a recent going-away party where the air was thick with marijuana smoke. Unable to hold his breath for hours and because the quality of marijuana in B.C. is so potent, he said he passively inhaled the smoke that set off this alarm.

Ross and the Canadian Olympic Committee appealed the decision, and the appeals panel overturned the test results and gave him back his medal because of some technicality.

I have trouble with that decision, and it has nothing to do with whether or not Ross chooses to smoke marijuana. It has to do with whether participating athletes can come together as a community and agree on some values and principles such as "We will not cheat or use drugs (either performance-enhancing or mind-altering). If athletes can't make such decisions, then lawyers and courts will, and that's no way to participate in the glory of sport.

Ross knew he was going to compete, he chose to suck the smoke in, and that violates the spirit by which these games endure. Snowboarders wanted to be taken seriously by the Olympics; let them take seriously how they come to it.

## THE SHOT SHOW – 2/23/98

The Shot Show was recently held in Las Vegas, Nevada. This is the biggest international firearms show with exhibitors from the United States and 85 other countries.

This year's big hit was a sniper rifle which could put a group of bullets in a space smaller than one inch in diameter at a distance of 100 yards. An industry executive said that its popularity was because "it is every middle-aged guy's fantasy to be a sniper."

I'm a little more than middle-aged, but even ten years ago the idea of planting a red dot laser beam on somebody's forehead at 100 yards away and shooting him was not my fantasy. Yesterday's playing soldiers with paint bullet guns is today's sniper rifle.

We are becoming more violent. It is estimated that the average ten-year old has seen 10,000 acts of murder, rape, mayhem, and mutilation in movies, video games, and news reports. Explosions, drive-by shootings, and road rage are daily reports.

The most recent issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine reported that 90 percent of the internists and surgeons in this country believe that gunshot wounds are a public health epidemic akin to AIDS, alcoholism, and tobacco use. Within five years, they predict bullets will kill more people than automobile accidents.

What is going on? We are getting used to violence in all its forms, and our technology is getting better at letting us express it. The distinguished psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton calls this phenomenon psychic numbing. The more you see violence, the less significance it has until you no longer even appreciate its cost to your soul. Is this where the genius of our technology is leading us?

## THE SURVIVOR TREE – 3/30/98

Until recently, when I thought of Oklahoma, I thought of flat prairies with thundering herds of buffalo and Indians on horseback. Now when I think of Oklahoma, I immediately think Oklahoma City and the greatest act of terrorism in the history of this nation.

I was in Oklahoma City recently and got into town early, so I could visit the bomb site. I'm not the only one who visits either, because local hotels give out printed directions on how to get there.

Where the Alfred Murrah Federal Building stood is now flat ground covered with winter grass stubble. The empty lot is surrounded by a chain link fence. On this fence are pictures of victims, floral wreaths, poems, remembrances, baseball caps, and baby rattles among other things. The fence brings alive the victims of this senseless act of fanaticism, this craziness of killing innocent people as payback for some perceived injustice.

I am as moved by this chain link monument as I was by the Vietnam Memorial. It's because the names of those people who died came alive with their pictures and stories. Every victim had family and friends who came here to offer testimony to someone they loved. It brought tears to my eyes. As I turned around, I found myself looking at a tree. It is the only thing that still lives at the site. It is called the Survivor Tree. Some of its limbs are broken and its bark is scarred, but it's almost springtime today, and green buds are flourishing everywhere...a survivor tree.

This makes sense to me. This tree survived because it was firmly grounded in something other than itself. This is the way we all survive, nurtured and supported by something other than ourselves. When you don't stand alone, it nourishes hope. This little tree is living testimony to the healing miracle of connections. Standing under this tree, I'm thinking about my kids and grandkids; the tears come again as I watch the mementoes blowing in the wind.

## THE TERMINATOR – 4/6/98

Last week I spoke to 6,000 operating room nurses in Orlando, Florida, more than 80 percent of whom were women--the fulfillment of this young man's fantasy. I married an OR/surgical nurse 38 years ago; they are an exciting, bright, creative group who can also tolerate an enormous amount of deviance. Following my opening address at Universal Studios, this wonderfully responsive group spent the evening together. I happily traipsed along and was treated to an astounding 3-D theatrical experience called Terminator 2.

Terminator 2 is a multimedia extravaganza featuring the annihilation of the universe by an army of robots developed by nefarious conspirators who developed the ultimate fighting machine, robotic creatures who kill on command. The only one who can save the few remaining souls on the planet is the good robot, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the terminator.

This 3-D feast for the eyes features full size robots shooting laser cannons, horrid spider-like creatures reaching out of the screen to attack you, a cloud of smoke enveloping you, the chair in which you are sitting shaking; in short, you are engulfed by this mayhem.

I don't make a habit of seeing violent films, but I do know that my kids and my grandkids will see an estimated 10,000 acts of brutal violence by the time they are ten years old. We are becoming a nation that is imprinted with violence. Exposure to rape, murder, and mutilation is so commonplace as to be ordinary. The more ordinary it becomes, the psychically number we become to its impact.

It used to be that a child could say, "I hate you." or "I wish you were dead." but nobody ever imagined the fantasy would become a reality. The combination of chronic exposure to violence and the absence of values or ethic of morality makes fantasy become more real because there are no limits or prohibitions to murderous fantasies. There is, in fact, a new trend toward juvenile mass murders. Last week in Jonesboro, Arkansas, we saw four girls and their teacher mowed down by two boys, 11 and 13 years old. This is only the latest spree involving school children. In December 1997, a 14-year-old boy opened fire on students in Paducah, Kentucky. A few months earlier, a 16-year-old boy in Mississippi killed his mother and then went to school and shot nine students. Last February, a 14-year-old student turned an assault rifle on his algebra class in Moses Lake, Washington.

Last week in Jonesboro, these two boys, dressed in camouflage, lay in waiting and fired on their classmates and teachers as they came out of school during a false fire alarm which the boys apparently staged. What is going on?

It seems pretty clear that children are not learning some basic modeling of how to behave. However, it

would be a gross over-simplification to suggest that it's only parents who are not doing the jobs they used to in terms of transmitting values to their children. That may be part of the problem, but it's difficult to transmit any believable ethic of morality when our children see the leadership of this nation--its financiers, legislators, religious leaders--doing things that they tell the rest of us not to. Who is picking up the slack in the education of values? The entertainment industry: television, movies, video games, and rap music. When our morality is transmitted in this way, we become disconnected from those values that once sustained us. The big screen version of life teaches us how to annihilate the enemy, and then the show ends. The Terminator 2 audience gets up and is told, "Please exit through the doors on the left," but in real life when the show is over, no one gets up.

## ANNIVERSARIES AND OTHER REMEMBRANCES – 5/4/98

Last weekend Israel celebrated its 50th anniversary. On the same day, a synagogue in Phoenix was defaced with swastikas and anti-Semitic slurs. This vandalism was attributed to ignorant, prejudiced people and reported to the police; it will certainly be investigated. The likelihood of finding the perpetrators, however, is quite small, and soon this incident will fade from our awareness. Also this weekend, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his party suffered a plummeting loss in an East German election. His Christian Democratic Union garnered only 22 percent of the vote. The big winner was the German People's Party, an extreme right-wing group that wants to get rid of all foreigners.

I admit to having a special sensitivity to this issue. I'm the son of Holocaust survivors whose family escaped from Germany. Manifestations of this kind of thinking in Germany always raise for me the specter of Nazi resurgence. Could it happen again?

By conservative estimates, the hard-core extreme right-wingers in Germany number about 75,000. That number would triple if you included the soft supporters. If you think that's not many people, remember the Nazis had less than 5,000 when they led the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.

I believe the Germans would never tolerate another Nazi party or anything like it. The great majority of the Germans are wiser and more sensitive. I also understand that whenever the economy gets tighter, you always see the rise of right-wing extremism. Ever since the reunification of Germany, jobs have become scarcer. Germans now want those jobs once only held by foreign workers. Most of these foreigners were imported over 40 years ago to do the menial labor because nobody else wanted to do it. Most of these people have raised two generations of children in Germany. These people see themselves as Germans, as well as Turks, Pakistanis, Indians, Chinese, and-- once upon a time--Jews. So it sounds vaguely familiar to me when 'foreigners' are burned, threatened, and hurt.

I admit I am sensitive to these issues, whether they are acts of vandalism in Phoenix or German voters showing their dissatisfactions as support for an extreme right-wing party. It leaves me queasy deep inside.

## PUBLIC URINAL SYNDROME – 11/2/98

I'm at Symphony Hall, Atlanta, Georgia, listening to the incredible pianist Emanuel Axe. During intermission, the lobby is crowded with conversation, coffee, mixed drinks. I slowly wend my way to the bathroom where the silence is deafening compared to the cacophony outside.

I'm standing with a dozen men at a urinal where there is not a word spoken. This is one of the rarer known biological reflexes that distinguishes us as a species. You are already familiar with the more common biological imperatives. For example, as creatures we are unable to breathe and swallow simultaneously; it is impossible for us to do aerobic exercise without also raising our pulse and respiration rates. Here are some lesser-known examples. It is impossible to pick your nose without your eyelids drooping; to flatulate without also imperceptibly holding your breath and savoring the moment; and then the communal urinal syndrome--whenever men urinate together they don't talk. Whenever a man holds his penis while standing next to another man who is holding his, they cannot speak. This stance triggers some central inhibitory reflex where you stare blank-faced at the wall in front of you. The psychodynamics of this reflex are clear. A man holding onto his most precious possession does not want to look into the urinal next to him because he's terrified that his toilet mate may be pulling his out with two hands. This overwhelming competitive terror stimulates the apoplectic stare. Men are biologically engineered to be competitive. Not wanting to be crippled by my biology, I turned to the guy next to me, "Great concert, huh?" Without batting an eye, he flushed and walked out.



## THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES – 11/16/98

I'm sitting in the bathtub. My nose is just above the jacuzzi jets so I can feel them massage my aching back. The telephone rings. I jump to get it and then stop, annoyed at the intrusion. What is a phone doing here next to the toilet? It is impossible to get away from them. People carry phones into movies, concerts, dance performances, at lunch tables when they're eating with somebody. Now, even in bathrooms, we can't relieve ourselves without also being available to somebody. Telephones everywhere remind us of our indispensability and that we might like to be someplace other than where we are. Potentially there is something out there that could hold greater interest than whatever it is we are doing in the moment.

We no longer go into the bathroom for a pause that refreshes, a place to relax, to read poetry, look at picture books, to read a Chicken Soup vignette.

When we let other business into the toilet, civilization as we know it will surely come to an end.

## JASON CROWE – 12/28/98

These are the days we celebrate the birth of new possibilities...times to reflect on our children who represent the hopes of tomorrow. I have railed on in recent months about the destructive influences of media (television, computer games and movies) and our disappearing values. So, when I meet kids out there who, in spite of these distractions, do incredible acts of goodness, I am reminded that the hope of tomorrow is here today.

I met Jason Crowe, a 12-year-old young man from Indiana, at this year's National Caring Awards where he won the award for young people. At age ten after the death of his grandmother, Jason created a neighborhood newspaper written by kids for kids. His paper has become so popular that it has found readers in 25 states and four foreign countries.

Last year Jason read about the 1992 Sarajevo Breadline Massacre in which 22 innocent men, women, and children were killed as they waited in line for food when a mortar shell fell on them. Aside from the horror of the event itself, Jason was struck by one man's response to the tragedy. Vedran Smailovic, principal cellist with the Sarajevo Opera Company, witnessed the massacre from his apartment window and decided to act. Ignoring the war being waged around him, Smailovic sat in the place where the innocent people died and played his cello for 22 consecutive days in honor of each person who perished. He became known as the Cellist of Sarajevo. Jason was so moved by Smailovic's story that he wanted to share it with others and "show the world what a difference one person can make through harmony."

Jason is raising money to create a statue of the Cellist of Sarajevo to be built and shipped to the people of Bosnia as a gift from Americans.

This is the season in which we appreciate that one man can make a difference in the world, even a child. Happy Holidays to you all!

## NEW YEAR BLESSINGS – 1/5/99

A very happy, happy New Year to all of you relatives. Just back from Thailand last night after a three-week vacation. I thought I'd arrive a day earlier when I crossed the International Date Line, and you would receive this Schlag Byte in time. Actually, I lost all track of time without television or newspapers. I was reduced to listening to ocean waves, walking on beaches, riding elephants, and visiting exotic tribes in the golden triangle--all of which I will tell you about in subsequent musings.

Thailand is an extraordinary country where you could live on 30 dollars a month (if you can tolerate eating noodles and taking cold showers). It boasts the longest reigning monarch in the world, and the king is beloved. Unlike Indonesia, which has recently slaughtered its ethnic Chinese population, it couldn't happen in Thailand because when the king says he doesn't like something, people stop doing it. The king says we do not need to be an economic tiger; we need only to sustain ourselves as a nation with a sense of family which is how I felt here--part of a friendly family.

Only once when I passed a storefront advertising e-mail did I think about the office. I went in only to discover that my marginal computer skills never allowed me to get connected, and I left feeling frustrated. Across the street was a traditional massage establishment which I entered and immediately forgot my helpless ineptitude in 21st Century technology.

A two-hour traditional Thai massage for six dollars is like a trip to Nirvana. You leave your shoes outside, change into a pair of cotton pants and blouse, and then lie down on a mattress where my 6'6" frame leaks over by a foot. The masseuse laughs and calls her friends to observe this phenomenon. I'm lying next to several other people in a room perhaps ten feet by 15 feet. The only English the masseuse speaks is "Mr., Sit up, and Turn over." She kneads, stretches, pulls, hammers, twists, walks on my back and legs. It's an indescribably delicious feast for the whole body. While she is doing this, she is yammering away with her colleagues working on either side of her. Meanwhile, outside the room in an open courtyard, a woman is doing the laundry. What I hear in my altered consciousness is a waterfall outside and tropical birds making music.

It turns out that heaven is a back street in northern Thailand. My wish for all is good blessings on your journey to Nirvana.

## PATCH ADAMS – 1/11/99

For the last three weeks, Patch Adams, the movie, has been the #1 box office success, and it has received two Golden Globe nominations. Audiences love it, but the critics have panned it. This is a movie about a young man who is institutionalized in adolescence for a mental breakdown and subsequently decides to become a doctor. He graduates from medical school--not without some difficulties. This is a story about ten years of a young man's life and how he becomes a loving healer.

What is it the critics don't like? Here is Bob Fenster's review from the Arizona Republic: "This couldn't be a story about a real person...he is smarmy and self-righteous...he couldn't heal anybody." Let me tell you about my friend Patch Adams, Bob. He is a real medical doctor who, since medical school graduation, has spent his life living his message. He downs with doctors and patients all over the world. In orphanages and old age homes. . .in schools and hospices, he has healed the sick even when they could not be cured. With compassion and humor, he has helped people find an inner peace that eases their journeys.

Patch Adams is now 53 years old. After a lifetime of loving service, he is finally seeing his dream come true: The Gesundheit Institute, a hospital in West Virginia that will provide free healthcare to all comers. No payment of any form will be accepted, not even insurance payments. Patch Adams says this hospital will be sustained by love offerings. He already has physicians, therapists of every kind, gardeners, musicians, chefs, and poets who have donated their services.

This "smarmy and self-righteous clown" that Fenster described is a real doctor, who has received the Templeton Award for Creative Altruism and who walks his talk.

The public feels the movie's underlying sincerity even if the critics can't. I hope Patch makes his dream a reality. Patch ennobles my profession. He reminds me of the doctor I would most like to be--a loving healer.

## PRESIDENT ACQUITTED – 2/22/99

The three-inch headline announced, PRESIDENT ACQUITTED! The highest office in the land is still intact, but its leader's honor has been sullied. Pundits and columnists are expounding on its long-term implications. Some say that, as a nation, we're becoming more pessimistic, that it's eroding our belief in anything other than ourselves. I read a mental health professional's commentary that this whole President/Monica Lewinsky thing has rendered us all "less mentally healthy."

I'm hoping the opposite is true. I believe this whole sordid episode has so disgusted us that it can serve as the impetus for re-connecting to better values. We will rise up as citizens and say we need less Bulworth and more support for a nation that honors justice and fair play, provides the atmosphere for parents to love their children and to teach them right from wrong, and gives equal opportunity to all its citizens. If we can reconnect with those basic values upon which this nation was founded, we may be able to restore ourselves to mental health. I pray for a resurgence of such a cultural ethic as we move into the millennium.

Do you think Bill Clinton would agree with Lord Chesterfield's take on human sexuality: "The pleasure is momentary, the position ridiculous, and the expense damnable."?

## SPANKING COULD BE A CRIME IN OAKLAND – 3/8/99

Child and adolescent psychiatrists support a proposal to make Oakland, California, the country's first No Spanking Zone. That's how the headline story started. Psychiatrists argued that outlawing spanking would help discourage violence toward children. I am also a psychiatrist, a community psychiatrist, and I understand the hope behind this recommendation. But even if I believed that such legislation applied some moral persuasion and helped stop people from abusing children, I still would not support it.

I would not support it because the legislation also encourages bystanders to step in when they believe disciplinary measures seem abusive. Is spanking abusive? Who is going to decide? Ultimately, the courts will decide, lawyers will argue, and experts will testify. They will say a couple of swats are okay, but 15 are abusive. Others will say using a belt is abusive; others argue only if you use the buckle and draw blood. Some people will get away with murder. Others won't because they can't afford good attorneys.

Laws cannot enforce ethics and values. Teaching morality by legislation forces us to depend on lawyers to interpret what's moral and ethical. I don't know about you, but I'm not confident they can do it better than the common folk. We need to come together as a world community and say, "We don't beat and abuse children," but a spank on the butt never destroyed anyone. I got a couple, and I gave a couple. It got my attention. Want to discourage violence toward children? Declare No TV zones, No Violent Movie or Computer Game zones. Or let's enact legislation that rewards children for reading. That makes more sense to me.

For more information on the effects of the media and violence on children, check out [www.medi-family.org](http://www.medi-family.org).

## WHALES, DOLPHINS, AND CHIMPS R' US – 3/29/99

I've rambled endlessly in the Schlag Bytes about the importance of telling better stories--stories that emphasize values such as selflessness, caring, and cooperation. I believe we survive from generation to generation because our tribes and parents were able to transmit to their children those stories and experiences that inspire a sustaining ethic of morality.

You will be pleased to hear that nature has been teaching family values long before men and apes went their separate ways. Now there is scientific evidence about the importance of transmitting an ethic of morality. Every mammal on the face of the earth teaches its young positive social behavior. From an evolutionary perspective, this makes perfect sense because creatures that get along with each other are more likely to reproduce.

Frans de Waal, a zoologist who has studied primate behavior for 20 years, writes in his new book, *Good Natured: the Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Harvard University Press), that higher mammals are biologically endowed with a capacity for genuine love, sympathy, and care.

Whales and dolphins come to the rescue of their companions. Elephants mourn their dead. Horses form a protective ring against wolves. Chimps share food, comfort the injured, protect the weak, celebrate births, and grieve deaths.

Doing something for somebody else and not putting oneself first, even aiding others at the cost of a risk to oneself, is widespread in the animal world, according to de Waal. Caring and unselfishness have survival value. Because we are social creatures, we need to touch and be touched. It's part of our humanity. Solitary creatures who only look out for themselves have no evolutionary value. We are hardwired to reach out and touch someone other than ourselves in a good way. Let's do it more.

## THE LITTLETON MASSACRE – 4/22/99

Another horrific schoolyard shooting--this time the deadliest school massacre in our nation's history. Another pristine all-American neighborhood shattered, rendering every single one of us feeling vulnerable...like it could happen in our hometowns too.

The knee jerk reaction--let's get more 1) detection devices, 2) spot searches of lockers, 3) armed security guards, or 4) fences around school grounds...maybe topped with razor wire. The NRA will undoubtedly clamor for teachers and administrators to be able to carry concealed weapons so they can shoot the suckers first. None of these solutions will make any difference because they all address the problem after the proverbial horse has escaped from the barn. Turning the schools into demilitarized zones by stringent enforcement and external controls only increases paranoia and fear which actually makes violence more likely.

As far as the perpetrators, what happened in Littleton contained few surprises. The two Trench Coat Mafias gave plenty of warning. They were outcasts who spent their entire adolescence in a morose subculture of violent fantasies. They publicly declared their hatred of minorities, of athletes, and of government. They were preoccupied with guns and had an over-inflated sense of their own importance. These kids fit the profile of all the other schoolyard shooters from Pearl to Paducah to Springfield. They are social outcasts with low self-esteem. When these kids are rejected, they are dangerous. This personality, combined with a culture that tolerates and exploits violence where every murderous/torturous fantasy has already been acted out on the screen, is a dangerous mix. What to do?

We have to make help available, whether it be school counselors, peer counselors or Army General volunteers. Getting professional help in today's healthcare environment is hard. As a psychiatrist, for me to treat patients regularly who have not yet acted out is virtually impossible. We need to make getting help easier.

We can't wait until late adolescence to intervene. We have to start with children, and we must limit exposure of these young children to the hemorrhage of violence on tv, movies, and computer screens. This means setting limits on how much they watch and the games they play and what they can see. Having limits set is an ego-corrective experience for children. It's important to learn early that you can't always have or do what you want.

We need to be spending more time with our kids and grandkids, telling them stories that transmit values that build quality character.

This is how we will survive this onslaught.



## THE SECRETS OF LIFE – 6/14/99

The downside to the traveling life is things like airplane food, impersonal hotels, tight schedules, and mattresses far too soft. Every once in a while though, you get to go to a place of such exquisite beauty with uncommon amenities that it makes the other hassles seem inconsequential.

The Homestead Resort in the heart of Virginia's Allegheny Mountains is one of those places. It has the genius to provide its own trout stream for the exclusive use of fly fishermen. I love this place, a passion intensified by the fact that my fishing guide always shares a special treat with me. We begin the day by toasting the fishing gods with a home-brewed brandy.

Franklin County, Virginia, is the moonshine capital of the world. For about \$36 a gallon, you can get great 140 proof whiskey that will make your tongue sizzle and eyeballs vibrate. How can you tell good moonshine whiskey? By pouring a little into a spoon or bottle cap and lighting it. If it burns blue, it's drinkable. If it burns orange, don't even taste it.

Moonshine's true magnificence, however, comes from the fruit brandy you can make from it. Take a Mason jar, fill it \_ full with blackberries (peaches, apricots and raspberries work fine too), add moonshine to the rim, seal it, and let it sit for six months. The brandy is out of this world, but the best part is the fruit on the bottom, which you can eat straight up or pour over ice cream--a five star epicurean delight!

We start and finish our fishing day sampling it. Today it was raining, so it was particularly warming from lips to belly.

I walked through the woods, surrounded by every shade of green. Honeysuckle vines hung 70 feet from towering oak trees that seemed to issue an invitation to swing like Tarzan. The thought of this senior citizen screaming ape calls and thumping his chest made me giggle. Beaver dams created fishing ponds that held rainbow trout as big as my forearm.

When I took a break, I sat under a tree, lit a cigar, and said a thank-you for the magic of this moment. When I got up to let my waders down to relieve myself, I discovered that the fingers of my left hand were unable to unbutton my fly. I could not grasp the buttons. My initial thought was that perhaps I was having a mini-stroke and wondered if I would drop dead in this gorgeous place (which actually brought a smile as I thought, "What a wonderful place to go--holding my favorite rods in either hand.") My momentary paralysis turned out to be a result of the cold, which stiffened my fingers. When I told this story to my family at brunch the following Sunday, my children shook their heads and rolled their eyes. Afterwards, I was getting ready to take my grandkids out for a walk in the 'jungle,' which is what they call the desert arroyos around our house. My daughter called out after us, "Don't be telling those kids any funny stories," by which she meant, how to tell good moonshine or make the best blackberries in the world. But she knows I will because, as far as I'm concerned, those are the secrets of life.

## COLOR ME RED, WHITE & BLUE – 7/12/99

I'm standing at the foot of the Yavapai County courthouse steps in Prescott--Arizona's capital during territorial times. I am overlooking Whiskey Row, an infamous strip of saloons and brothels in those old days.

The biggest event in Prescott is the annual Fourth of July celebration. This extravaganza lasts three days. Starting Saturday night, they have water gun fights up and down the main street. People splash each other with water cannons, hoses, and buckets. You get wet. On Sunday morning they hold the traditional parade, and the community turns out in force. The city council and state assemblymen are on display on horseback and in buggies. Waving to the cheers of tattooed motorcyclists and senior citizens, rodeo queens ride side by side with the Bawdy Ladies of the West in their oozing flesh splendor.

Marching bands, jug bands, country bands, Mrs. Brown's School of Gymnastics' tumblers, the Arizona Pioneer Home residents on the back of a flatbed truck, shaking rattles and tambourines--half of them breathing through oxygen tubes--all parade participants.

This is Old West Americana in Prescott. When the colors go by, people stand up. Flags are applauded, and veterans salute them as they march by. In this small town, Americans stand together and get excited on this day that recalls the prideful history of a nation. I have never been really big on public expressions of loyalties. As a second-generation son of Holocaust survivors, I don't trust government and big organizations to save me. But today, I'm standing here with my grandson sitting on my shoulders, waving an American flag, and singing "God Bless America" along with the marching veterans. I sing along with him with tears welling, which is usually where I hold them, but this morning they roll. I feel grateful to this nation of freedom whose independence has allowed me to live in peace with my dependents.

## LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING, AND YOUR CLERGYMAN WILL DO THE TALKING – 7/19/99

I can do three things at one time in my car--I can drive, drink coffee, and change radio stations. I have drawn the line at having a telephone in my car. I wish others would too because accidents have increased significantly and tempers have flared since car phones have become standard issue.

Twice this week I am assaulted by car phone venom. The first time, a guy pulls up to a gas pump, gets out with his phone glued to his ear, and proceeds to babble but not pump any gas. I'm behind him waiting. Finally I roll down my window, point to the gas pump, and then to his car. He gets feisty. I tell him he's inconsiderate. He says he'll show me 'inconsiderate' and proceeds to sit on his trunk and talk longer. It's 110 degrees, and I want to kill him, gouge his eyes out, rip his arm from the socket, shove the phone down his throat--you get the picture. I finally move to another pump.

Later, a guy in front of me is bopping to some unseen music, eating Cheetos, and talking on his cell phone. The light turns green. He's still bopping but not moving. I beep. He looks up to see that the light's changed but discovers he doesn't have a free hand with which to grab the wheel. In his exasperation, he flips me off with a Cheeto before dropping the bag and driving off.

Today was the final indignity. I received in the mail the Driver's Edition of the Yellow Pages, complete with a flash card for your dash for on-the-go-numbers. Now you can eat, bop, talk on the phone, and also read while driving.

Am I missing something here? Is anybody driving to get some place any more, or are we just suicidal maniacs going to hell?

## I'LL TAKE NEW YORK – 8/26/99

The Dutch bought Manhattan for \$24, which may set the record for exploitation, but there's still a lot of land to be exploited. U.S., Asian, and European pharmaceutical companies looking for cures for AIDS, cancer, and a host of other diseases are finding their way into the Amazon. They hire native boatmen to take them deep into the rainforest and to isolated Indian villages. With tweezers, jars, and suitcases, they carry out specimens, including the blood of native people. Once they get the specimens out of the country, they have ownership, and they may develop them.

If I say the Amazon, you immediately conjure up an image of moist, lush rainforest vegetation--a jungle canopy covering a million flowers and providing home to more creatures than we even know. There are plants here with healing powers. As a matter of fact, this is the last great biologic repository of new genetic material on the planet. This fact makes the Amazon an entrepreneur's paradise.

This is nothing new for Brazil. At the turn of the century, industrial spies smuggled out rubber tree seeds and took the stolen genetic material to other equatorial rainforests in Southeast Asia. Rubber plantations in Southeast Asia destroyed Brazil's economy.

Today we are stealing different seeds. Biopiracy is more sophisticated now. All that's needed today is one fungus, one spider, one bromeliad, and a single red blood cell. They could all produce a product worth billions of dollars. Bioengineering companies are taking lots of material from the Amazon to see who can patent and profit from it first. You can be sure they will find something and equally sure that Brazil and native people will get nothing.

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 150 countries signed the Biodiversity Convention. It said that nations who serve as repositories for diversity should be rewarded for the use of their resources. The United States was one of only a few nations who refused to sign the Biodiversity Treaty. The U.S. feared it would weaken patent protection laws and thus threaten the biotech companies. America's view was that genetic material was owned by the patrimony of humanity; it belongs to the whole family of man. One U.S. trade official said, "Anybody who thinks they should get a profit because they happen to be squatting on the forest is laughable."

This reflects a peculiarly Western value. Take anything you can get, and accumulate more and more. The entire history of civilization reveals that conquering nations took what they wanted and figured that, because they won, they not only deserved it, but that those they vanquished had nothing to teach them. What Native people have always known is that, if you take whatever you want, there will be nothing left to take. You have to replenish as much as you take. For generations Native people have been telling us to take only what we need and leave the rest for the unborn generations. Share everything you have; return

whatever you take from the Earth Mother, with all things and beings as with relatives. This is not an ethic of morality that has been improved. We need to be learning this lesson. Currently, drug companies--with governmental protection--are not obligated to share a dime with Brazil.

The U.S. still refuses to join the rest of the world in acknowledging its debt to our native brethren. It is they who have kept the jungle intact for 100 million years. In so doing, they have allowed the rest of us to breathe easily. The Amazon provides 40 percent of the earth's oxygen, and we survived because Native people did not exploit it. The jungle is disappearing at a rate of one percent a year.

If we don't change our attitudes about what we take and what we leave, we will betray our grandchildren and threaten the harmony of the world. Either we pay attention to what Native people have been telling us, or there will be no place for our grandchildren to see.

I am writing my congressmen and senators, urging them to support all the provisions of the Rio Biodiversity Convention. I urge you to do the same.

## A LABOR DAY OF LOVE – 9/5/99

The stock market is booming, and internet stocks are creating instant millionaires.

One such wildly successful new website created three months ago ([www.hungersite.com](http://www.hungersite.com)) has already generated \$60,000, but its creator hasn't taken a dime. Creator John Breen is a 42-year-old philanthropist who is collecting money for the hungry. So far he has been responsible for two million servings of food distributed by the UN World Food Program. The UN estimates 24,000 people die daily of hunger related causes. You go to John's website and click on the donate free-form icon; for every hit sponsors divide the cost of a three-cent meal to the World Food Bank. A meal is 1 1/3 cup of oats, wheat, maize, or other staples.

The sponsors, whose names are flagged on screen, are happy to make this contribution. They call it eco-marketing. They want to make a statement of principle and hope to find customers who share their ethic.

Not only is this good business; it is an antidote to avarice, disrespect, and despair. John Breen neither takes a salary nor does he accept donations. If a contributor mails money to him, he pays the postage to forward it to the World Food Program. He takes no credit. He says, "It's not me; I just created the site. People choose whether or not to come; they are the ones who make a difference." I click on it every day and hope you will too. You have to love the genius of computers when they are combined with acts of charity. John's labor of love makes me want to sing.

## THREE SMART MICE, THREE SMART MICE, SEE HOW THEY RUN – 9/27/99

Nature magazine just reported this discovery! By manipulating a single gene, scientists have been able to improve a mouse's performance on a wide range of learning and memory tasks. Mouse embryos were injected with the gene NR2B and then found to have what neurobiologists call long-term potentiation. This means that facts and behavior once learned are not easily forgotten. This kind of long-term memory yields more intelligent mice.

No sooner had the report been released than the newspapers picked it up, and spin-doctors everywhere began to weave this web of possibility. Perhaps this technology could also work on people.

There is no question that we can genetically alter embryos which means we will soon be able to eliminate diseases such as juvenile diabetes and muscular dystrophy as well as treat everything from diabetes to breast cancer to Alzheimer's. The downside--we can create designer children. We will find ways to manipulate genes to increase the human capacity while at the same time to eliminate those manifestations we might find defective. Shall we perform abortions on women in their first trimester of pregnancy because they don't want a child who is blind or has no limbs? What about eliminating criminality, impulsivity, homosexuality, etc., etc.? Should we be doing social engineering through genetic and cultural manipulation? Isn't this just modern eugenics whose history of such manipulations has always proven disastrous? We will soon be able to genetically profile humans on the planet. Everything about you can be known down to the genetic level. You and your genetic proclivities are identifiable. Health insurers will surely want to know that information before they write high-risk policies; who else?

Drug companies are competing at break-neck speed to patent their genetic findings in order to later make them commercially applicable. This kind of marketplace atmosphere is going to determine the limits of our morality. When profit is the motive, morality will become subordinate to expediency.

Progress in our technology has not been mirrored by similar progress in our humanity. We seem to still be annihilating one another, albeit now on a grand scale. As a community of nations, we must decide how far we are willing to go in altering the fundamental features of human nature. I think we have to put some limits on the genie. Is there a limit to our willingness to alter the uniqueness of our humanity? If we do not decide ourselves, market values--not human values--will determine the limits. Kind of like three smart mice, who all ran after the doctor's wife who cut off their heads with a carving knife.

## NEO-NAZIS IN THE MIST – 10/4/99

Last week I was in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, addressing the Western Regional Rural Health Conference. As a mental health break, I took an extra day to do some fly-fishing. My fishing day began with strong winds and the threat of impending rain; I went out anyway. The Coeur d'Alene River is one of the great blue ribbon streams in America, chock full of native trout and salmon. There was no way I was going to let weather intervene.

On this pristine river, the wind is blowing...leaves are falling...the rain is pelting my windshield, so while waiting for the weather to break, I took out some reading material. For some reason, I kept looking up into the woods, and then I thought I saw someone moving behind a tree. What was going on? Then the unconscious became conscious, and I remembered how close I was to the headquarters of the Aryan Nation. I am sitting here in the heart of neo-Nazi country, and I feel my old childhood paranoia. Is that some Hermann Goering clone behind that giant spruce?

I am 60 years old and can still feel that shiver of fear I felt as a little boy, when I wondered how I might have responded if I'd been led away to the ovens. I know I am being paranoid, but remember--just eight weeks before, two dozen members of the Aryan Nations paraded through downtown Coeur d'Alene, greeting their supporters with the Nazi straight arm salute. City officials had urged people to ignore the march, but thousands of opponents gathered along the parade route chanting, "No Nazis! No KKK! No Fascists! USA!" This fills me with pride in Idahoans. So I pledge to myself and to the people of Idaho to return to the days when I associated Idaho with potatoes and not neo-Nazis.

Just then the sun came out, there was a huge insect hatch, and the fish started to rise. I'm wading into the river whistling "Let the Sun Shine" and thinking the dawning of the Age of Aquarius will not be ushered in by a trumpet blast from the prophet Isaiah but by the whistle of a fly rod.



## DUMP TRUMP – 10/25/99

Donald Trump has just formed an exploratory committee to help him decide if he wants to run for the presidency. He says he "hates seeing this country go to hell." His entrepreneurial successes, he believes, are justification enough to be the leader of this country. I can't be the only one who would rather vote for Miss Piggy than this elitist with the emotional maturity of a sand flea.

Donald Trump, gazillionaire real estate mogul, is used to a lot of money. Raised by a mere millionaire real estate developer who racked up a fortune building low-priced homes in Brooklyn and Queens, New York, he was born to wealth. The Donald, as he likes to be called, was shipped off to the New York Military Academy in Cornwall-on Hudson where some say he developed his militaristic flare. I once shared the platform with him at an international meeting of meeting planners where he told the audience that, other than his own, the best book he'd ever read to ensure success is *The Leadership Skills of Attila the Hun*. Others say military school forever instilled in him a gnawing sense of inadequacy that fueled his ambition.

The Donald describes himself in his book *Trump the Art of the Comeback* as "I can't do anything wrong. I'm invincible." He admires rich people because they are survivors. His feelings about women are, "They have one of the great acts of all time. The smart ones act very feminine and needy, but inside they are real killers."

Unlike Leona Helmsley (another billionaire hotelier), he says he appreciates all human beings and treats them with respect as evidenced by an "I get along great with porters and maids at the Plaza and the Grand Hyatt." (Of course, he wouldn't shake their hands for fear of contamination.)

No one can deny his real estate success, and his skills at persuasion are remarkable. He has convinced bankers to lend him \$80,000,000 and politicians to award him a \$120,000,000 tax reduction. His name adorns a city, tower, airline, blimp, billboards, books, and tabloids. There is no question that he has persuasion, hype, and chutzpah down to a science, but President? Has celebrity become sufficient criteria for defining leadership? Tell me this is a millennial joke.

## BARBIE LAYS AN EGG – 11/8/99

Twenty-five years ago, Christopher Lasch, the distinguished social philosopher, described our civilization as "a culture of narcissism." The watchwords for this generation, he said, were "me, mine and now." If that was true a generation ago, then I believe we are now ushering in the final phase. Humankind has within its grasp the ultimate narcissistic creation, the duplication of us.

We don't even have to wait until scientists take the step from cloning sheep to people because toy makers have already discovered their own cloning application. A doll manufacturer has discovered a way to create a doll in your exact image. Your clone doll can be constructed from a photograph--your exact face, skin shade, hair color, eye color, full lips, narrow lips, wide ears, etc., etc. You just know every kid is going to want one. Marketers will sell this just like Beanie Babies, Cabbage Patch dolls, or Pokemon cards except these clone dolls sell for \$140.00. Those who can afford it will pay the price. Those who can't will spend long, nagging moments explaining to their children why they can't have the doll that every other kid has.

This is certainly not new. What is new is elevating appearance and designing yourself to the pinnacle of life's achievements. Beautiful models are now offering their eggs for sale on the internet. On a website run by a fashion photographer (who also breeds horses) are photographs of beautiful models who will auction their eggs to people who want good-looking babies. The auction will last several months. At last check somebody had already bid \$42,000.

Will this be our culture's legacy: how you look is more important than who you are?

## FOOTBALL RIVALRIES AND OTHER RITUALS OF HEALING – 12/6/99

Thanksgiving is the football weekend of traditional rivalries: Army-Navy, Georgia-Georgia Tech, and Arizona State versus Arizona. The Arizona rivalry is so intense that it sometimes gets nasty. Fights break out on the field and in the stands. The practices the week before become so intense that teammates begin fighting with each other.

This Thanksgiving Day game made absolutely no difference in the national rankings. It has been a disappointing season for both teams. But that doesn't mean anything because this game fuels an uncivil war that announces the king of the Arizona hill.

It's also the weekend that the Texas Longhorns played the Texas A & M Aggies. Texas A & M suffered an enormous tragedy in preparing for this game. Their traditional huge bonfire, which signals the beginning of this rabid rivalry, did not happen this year. A four-story, many-ton pile of logs collapsed, and twelve people died. Several more were injured; many are still hospitalized.

This tragedy brought Texas together with prayers, vigils, and support from every corner of the state. Longhorn fans traveling from the University of Texas could not miss the signs everywhere, "Horns, thanks for your care and support."

Before the game, F-16 fighters thundered over the stadium in the symbolic missing man formation. Then the Aggies came onto the field, wearing ceremonial patches affixed to their helmets. At halftime, the Longhorn band played "Amazing Grace," then removed their hats, and, carrying Texas A & M banners, silently left the field.

This may have been the most difficult game ever played by these traditional rivals. For the first time, however, winning meant less than healing. The shared loss and grief overshadowed the divisive rivalry. The highlight of this game showed the power of rituals and ceremonies. They allow us to express our feelings in community which always promotes healing.

## WHEN SHARING BLESSINGS IS A CRIME – 12/20/99

In San Bernadino County, a Cal State accounting professor has been feeding hungry people for years. Now he is being cited by the police department for distributing food in a public park without obtaining a permit. It costs \$1000 a month to buy the insurance in order to get the permit that will protect the city from lawsuits.

Professor Sung-Kyoo Huh is the father of three and already spending \$100 a week from his own pocket to buy the doughnuts, orange juice, and lunch meat that he hands out to the needy every Saturday morning in the downtown park. Huh and his family do this because when they came to the United States, "We had nothing, we couldn't afford McDonald's...we've got so many blessings, we think we ought to help others." Isn't this what the spirit of giving is all about, Americans coming together to share their blessings?

Unfortunately, we are becoming a litigious nation. The potential for lawsuits takes precedence over values. The atmosphere out there is "Don't get involved," "Protect yourself," "Take care of your own business." We can ignore the homeless as long as we don't have to look at them on our streets.

Now comes an American who reminds us of the ideals of our forebears. He sees an unmet need out there and does something about it. The City of San Bernadino doesn't like it. They make feeding the hungry a criminal offense. They, like many cities, don't want to encourage the homeless downtown. They want them out of town. This is the NIMBY syndrome (not in my backyard) of which we are all guilty.

Professor Huh and his family are thinking of paying the insurance if they have to. We ought to help him and also do something in our own neighborhoods. Sharing blessings can not become a crime in America.

## OLD DRIVERS CAN CRIPPLE YOU – 2/7/00

Is there something you just can't do? Like I can't whistle through my fingers or look down from a high place without tingling, and I can't do a headstand. I never thought this last failing caused me any problems, but something happened last week that made me see it differently.

A couple of times a week, I go to a yoga studio. There are a lot of yoga asanas or poses that I can't do, but last week the instructor challenged me to try a headstand by saying, "All it takes to do this is to find the courage to get beyond your fear."

There are only a few old 'drivers' (learned behaviors) embedded in my psyche that are as intense for me as this one. "Have courage; do not be afraid." To me that means, "Be strong and make us proud." Not to be courageous is to be faint-hearted and weak. I know this early-learned preconception has crippled me, but it's hard to give up. You'd think, as a well-trained psychiatrist, this old tape would not play so loudly in my brain. But, as I increasingly become aware, it's hard to dump some old drivers.

When the instructor issued the challenge, don't you know that I got down to try to do the headstand. As always, I couldn't keep my legs straight so they crashed to the floor. I tried to get up again and then again, the last time landing painfully on my toe.

As you might have guessed, I didn't complain to the instructor nor did I want to give up, so instead I tried half a headstand. I brought my knees to my chest but didn't lift my legs at all, and I discovered that I could do that. I could do half a headstand. It comes to me, upside down like that, that courage has more to do with how we respond to the challenge than with blind acceptance.

## JÖRG HAIDER – 2/14/00

Everybody knows that Austria just elected the most right-wing European government to take power in 60 years. The extreme right-wing Freedom Party came in second in the national elections and is led by the shrewd, charismatic, and telegenic Jörg Haider.

Jörg is the son of a former Nazi who owns an estate stolen from Jews during the Holocaust. He believes foreign workers, their children, and grandchildren are not Austrians and should return to where they came from. He calls Nazi concentration camps 'punishment camps' and praises Adolph Hitler.

In a letter he sent to Ariel Muzicant, President of the Austrian Jewish community who spoke out against Haider's electoral success, he wrote, "Mr. Muzicant, you rude, Jewish creature. You have the cheek to criticize the Austrian government as well as the decent respectable Austrian people as Nazis and war criminals! You cowardly, underhanded Jewish yellow belly."

Lest you think he speaks for a small group of radicals, be assured he is creating a huge following. A retired Austrian shopkeeper said, "You should see him addressing large halls of supporters. It's incredibly moving with all the flag waving and people standing on the benches just to get a glimpse of him. It's nothing I've ever experienced." Well, it's something a lot of people have experienced, and many of us remember.

The United States and Israel withdrew their ambassadors from Vienna, and Austria's European Union partners froze relationships with the new government. These moves filled me with joy because it demands our attention now, not later. Ten percent of Austria's 7.8 million people are foreigners, mostly from East European countries, the Balkans, and Africa. All of these people are afraid. It scares me too.

I have faith that the majority of Austrians will not be affected by these germs of racism and fascism. I have faith that they will stand individually and together like A.J. Muste did during the Vietnam War when he stood in front of the White House holding a candle. A reporter interviewed him one evening as he stood there in the rain. "Mr. Muste," the reporter said "do you really think you're going to change the policies of this country by standing out here alone all night with a candle?" A.J. responded, "I don't do this to change the country. I do this so the country won't change me."

## MECHANIC'S BILLS PAID – 3/6/00

Gary Tredway was a 52-year-old businessman, active in a local food cooperative. He helped write a liberal newspaper, lobbied for clean government, and was running for a seat on the Scottsdale City Council. But Gary Tredway was a lie. He was really Howard Mechanic-- a former student radical who demonstrated at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and was actively involved in the anti-war movement.

On May 5, 1970, a day after the infamous Kent State killings, Howard Mechanic hurled a cherry bomb firecracker at some firefighters. Nobody was injured, but a newly passed federal law specifically designed to quell civil disorder on campuses resulted in Mechanic's conviction and maximum sentence of five years in prison. Howard jumped bail, screwing a lot of friends in the process, and spent the next 30 years becoming Gary Tredway.

Tredway was a model citizen for that entire time. He got married, had a son, was divorced, and generally did good work. When he tried to enter the political arena, his story unraveled.

Howard Mechanic was a young idealist; it's a history that many of us have known. It took me 30 years to unlearn some of my old certainties and ask forgiveness for the excesses of my youth. Howard made a terrible mistake, one which admittedly could have caused serious damage but didn't. They sent him away for five years, and now he faces ten more because a federal grand jury just indicted him for using an illegally obtained Social Security number.

Let's get real. This isn't murder; this case hardly calls for screams of vengeance. Let's not re-fight Vietnam. Howard Mechanic was buried 28 years ago; let's not bury him twice.

## LITTLE BIG BANG – 4/10/00

Scientists in Switzerland have just reported that they have re-created a primordial form of matter that was created when the universe was an exploding fire ball only a fraction of a second old.

This primordial material is a highly compressed gas of particles consisting of quarks and gluons. These are the building blocks of which protons and neutrons are made. The creation of this new state of matter has been hailed as an achievement comparable to the first splitting of the atom.

Scientists believe this new state was created ten microseconds after the Big Bang, that colossal explosion most cosmologists believe created our universe. They are calling this discovery the Little Bang.

So now we have, with scientific certainty, an explanation of how we got here. The universe was created by a big bang followed by a little bang which is pretty much what Freud told us in his own way. We got here with a big bang, and we've been doing a little banging ever since.



## STAR TAMES EGO – 4/17/00

It doesn't matter your intelligence or station in life; sooner or later you will feel fear and anxiety (health, job, relationships, money, kids, whatever). How do you deal with it? My style is to get angry and work harder at figuring how I got into this and how I can get out. This is a psychological defense mechanism called intellectualization (one of my favorites). Thinking about my problems rarely makes me feel better, but it does give me something to do. Doing something makes me feel that at least I have some control over my fate.

I would like to give up my need for control and have greater faith, to believe that even without my fine hand in it, good things could happen to me. Taming the ego continues to be my greatest challenge.

If I've been miserable long enough, I go to the diploma wall in my office; amongst the testaments to my intellectual achievements is one that certifies I have a star named after me. My star was a birthday present from a beloved sister who gave it to me almost 20 years ago. The International Star Registry has my records in its vaults in Switzerland, and it's duly recorded in the Library of Congress that the star Cepheus RA20h34md61"50' has been redesignated Carl Hammerschlag. Nobody has actually seen Carl Hammerschlag, but it is somewhere out there in the great Milky Way.

The certificate reminds me to get out of my head and spend the night out under the stars. Alone under that awesome canopy of billions upon billions of stars, looking deeper...further...higher into a galaxy without conceivable limits, I find it impossible to take myself seriously. This awesomeness makes whatever my preoccupation was less worrisome.

When I come out and look at this big picture, I sometimes see a twinkle in the Milky Way that reaches out to me. I feel the presence of the Great Spirit who has a voice like Humphrey Bogart and who says, "Here's looking at you, kid." Awe is the mechanism by which we tame the ego.

## WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND IT IS US – 5/29/00

Once again the Middle East is roiled in violence, as Jews and Palestinians are locked in bitter struggle. The two sides are working on a final peace, addressing what will be the Palestinian state and what the future of Jerusalem is. Prime Minister Ehud Barak postponed his planned trip to Washington last week because of continuous demonstrations, clashes, and gun battles and called back his envoys to peace talks in Sweden. This is the longest family feud in history. Arabs and Jews are brothers; the patriarch Abraham is father to them both. This fact is now corroborated by new discoveries in the human genome.

A study just published in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found a biological link between Jews and Palestinians. Y chromosome characteristics point to the same common pool of Middle Eastern ancestors. Even more specifically, a genetic marker was discovered that identifies Jewish men who are descendants of the priestly class or Cohanim.

If you take a stroll down your own DNA, you'll find ancient messages that define who you are and where you came from. For example, Finnish boys carry the genes of Asian invaders who invaded Finland thousands of years ago and killed the men off and settled down to have babies with local women.

Every one of us carries not only our mother's and father's genes but also the remnants of all our bloodlines into antiquity. It bothers me enormously to believe that we are genetically destined to express our greatest rages within the family. Makes Pogo a genius even before the genomic revolution; "We have met the enemy and it is us."

## STROKE VICTIMS RECOGNIZE THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES? – 6/12/00

The May issue of the journal Nature reported a study done at Massachusetts General Hospital in which they examined brain injury victims who were aphasic (unable to understand speech). These patients developed an uncanny ability to tell if someone was lying. Researchers showed aphasic patients two videos of a woman describing a pleasant scene. In one video the woman was actually looking at the pleasant scene, while in the other version, she was describing the scene while watching images of burn victims and amputees.

People who did not have damage to the speech recognition area of the brain had only a 50-50 chance of detecting whether the woman was lying. The aphasic patients, however, spotted liars with 75 percent accuracy. Aphasics are human lie detectors because to them it's not the words that make sense, but a person's unconscious moves and expressions.

Does this say something about how as healthy people we have become immune to bullshit? In real life it's hard to tell if what people are telling you is real or make-believe. From pulpits to political platforms, bullshit has reached such epidemic proportions that we no longer recognize it or call it for what it is.

George W. Bush reads a children's book in an elementary school classroom; when he's done, he tells them it was his favorite book as a kid. The book was not published until 1969, the year he graduated from college. Al Gore wanted us to believe he invented the internet.

We are in the midst of a presidential campaign; let's not wait until we lose a piece of our minds before we activate our bullshit meters and recognize when the emperor has no clothes.

## MY NEW POLITICAL HERO --- 6/12/00

The New York Times Magazine (8-20-00) featured a story about New Mexico's Republican governor, Gary Johnson. In it he said, "Our current policy on drugs is the biggest problem this country has." He publicly announced that half of what we spend on law enforcement, courts, and prisons is drug-related. We are arresting 1.5 million people a year for drug-related crimes, and half of those are for marijuana. By criminalizing marijuana, we will brand half of this year's graduating high school class as felons. Last year 150,000 people died from alcohol, 100,000 from prescription drugs. How many people have died from marijuana? Few, if any.

Governor Johnson is the highest-ranking official to call for rethinking our strategies for conducting the drug wars, including the legalization of marijuana.

When the White House found out about it, they flew in drug czar Barry McCaffrey to condemn Governor Johnson. Then Johnson's chief law enforcement official quit in protest, and Johnson's approval ratings dropped from 54 percent to 35 percent.

I'm reading this and shouting hooray; I can't believe this is a twice-elected Republican governor. A politician with the courage to say, "It's a costly and counterproductive drug war."

My joy was short-lived, however, when the Supreme Court just voted 7-1 to grant the Clinton administration's request that using marijuana, even if it's prescribed as a medical necessity, is not a defense to a charge of violating federal law. The only dissenter was the aging Justice John Paul Stevens. Justice Stevens said that the government "failed to demonstrate how the denial of necessary medicine to seriously ill and dying patients will advance the public interest." The court action immediately stopped the Oakland Cannabis Buyers cooperative from supplying it to their 2,200 sick and dying members.

We must change our strategy in addressing the Drug War. If Governor Johnson can be heard, I'm hoping it will make it safer for other politicians to stand up and say, "No more."

## NIBBLIN' IN NEW ORLEANS – 7/10/00

Last week I spoke in New Orleans, a town that I happen to love...a sybaritic paradise with a year-round carnival atmosphere. It is a gastronomic wonderland--blackened red fish, gumbo, etouffe', and mouth-watering fresh shucked oysters on every corner. You can walk on the streets of the French Quarter with a plastic cup filled with your favorite brew and watch normal people, riotously primed, bare their breasts and bottoms for strings of beads dropped from ornate balcony balustrades by cheering throngs. Dixieland, Zydeco, and Cajun music play all night, and there is a 24-hour coffee stand that serves a deep fried donut smothered in powdered sugar called a beignet. One order consists of three dough balls that go directly from your lips to your coronary arteries. It surprises me there is no EMT or ambulance on every corner to treat the hyperglycemic, hyperlipidemic, post-prandial stupor that is the trademark look of this city.

If I'm still ambulatory, I like to end the evening at Preservation Hall. This national historic landmark is a small room on St. Peter Street, where jazz musicians have played old-time Dixieland for generations. The ensemble is backed up against the louvered windows while the patrons (maybe 150, crammed in belly to belly) sit on the few wooden benches or the floor or stand up in the back. The band always includes at least one ancient musical mariner who has played with old time greats. Last week it was Waldren Clement Joseph, an 80-year-old trombonist.

I happened to sit down on the chair right next to him during a set break. Waldren was the only band member who hung around so we started a conversation. Not quite a conversation because after he asked me where I was from, he rolled on solo. Over the next 15 minutes, I learned that Waldren had polio as a kid, played in swing bands before World War II, was the third generation musician in his family, had a son who was continuing the tradition, and was married to the same lady for 60 years.

I like listening to old people and gathering their pearls of aged wisdom, so I asked Waldren to what he attributed his energy and lust for life. He paused for a moment and said, "Seafood." "Seafood?" I asked incredulously. "Yes," he says, " if it looks or smells like fish, eat it." I'm actually thinking about it, when he bursts out laughing and says, "I'm just bullshitting you," and after a pause says, "It's rice and red beans." Now I'm laughing too. As the band reconvened, he leaned over and in a conspiratorial whisper said, "The reason I'm all here is because I'm not all there." Then he picked up his trombone as the band played "Down by the Riverside."

I'm not sure I heard it right, but I take out a matchbook and write it down on the cover. I've been thinking about it ever since, thinking this may be the secret of life.

## WHO GETS THE GOLDEN EGG? – 7/31/00

In late May, the Hopi Indians go to their ancestral hunting grounds to capture a baby golden eagle. This is a religious requirement to complete the summer ceremonial cycle. This is the Ni'man ceremony when the Kachinas go home to the sacred peaks carrying the prayers of the Hopi people to sustain life on the planet. At the conclusion of the Ni'man ceremony, that grown eagle is sacrificed, and every part of the bird is used. The Hopi have been doing this since the beginning of time when they first emerged from a hole in the ground at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

Without this ceremony, the ceremonial cycle could not be completed; to the Hopi that is a matter of life and death. This is the week of the Ni'man ceremony, but on Third Mesa the clan responsible for the gathering of the eaglet was denied a permit to enter Wupatki National Monument, their traditional hunting grounds. The National Park Service said no because the rules says no hunting or killing of animals whatsoever in national parks. Of course, all the national parks in the western United States are ancestral Indian lands.

The National Park Service's decision is clearly in conflict with First Amendment rights as well as the American Indian Religious Freedoms Act. What is this confrontation all about? It's about our country's concern that Native people pushing for their traditional rights are dangerous. There is a lot of federal land; who else is going to lay claim and where will it stop? The Hopi have lived, hunted, and prayed for thousands of years on this exact land. Their religious life is based on their ability to keep doing so; indeed the survival of the earth and everything on it depends on it.

Surely we can make a distinction between protection and infringement.

## DOW JONES MEASURES SOUL – 8/21/00

I visited Santa Fe on my way home from the Sun Dance; it's a place we used to live and still love. My wife and I stayed with a friend who had a delightful dinner party. It was an intimate gathering that included the editor of a business journal, a Fortune 100 corporate branding expert, a television producer, and the director of a healing center.

The substance of that extraordinary evening's conversation included this shared belief: Consumers want to support businesses with whose values they identify. Given the choice, people will choose a product from a company with whose values they identify because it makes them feel good about themselves. People have a strong vote and business recognizes it. The demonstrations at the WTO meetings in Seattle a few months ago were evidence that lots of people can come together and share their views. Professionals, union members, clergy, and even grunge students spoke out on exploitation of foreign labor and the impact of international trade on the environment as well as on indigenous people.

The internet and streaming media has changed the way people communicate and allows for new coalitions. The days are gone when business could target homogeneous populations; the Internet is reorganizing the way people interact publicly and privately. Dow Jones has a new index called the SGI or Sustainability Group Index, which measures a company's social consciousness. This takes into account whether a company's management takes a leadership role in addressing environmental and cultural issues and how profits are shared. I learned about a copper company CEO who wanted to know what it would take to get investors interested in his company's expansion into Mexico. The branding expert went to both the investors and the brokers to inquire what it would take to interest buyers in this company. They all said the company would have to be not only profitable, but they would also have to target specific sites, not blow away mountains. The company would also have to set some business standards for giving back a piece of the profit.

The evening's discussion actually made me tingle with excitement. Business may be able to do what governments have been unable to do--bring people together through cooperative sharing and building trust. The Dow Jones measures soul, and it lives in Santa Fe.

## THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR – 8/28/00

We were driving on a gravel road outside Taos, New Mexico, when the four-wheel-drive Explorer skidded and we ended up in a ditch. It was a minor car scrape, the only significant damage was a sheared off rear-view mirror on the passenger side where I happened to be sitting. We got out to inspect the damage, and, while rummaging around, I came upon a piece of the mirror. It was that piece that was inscribed, "Objects in mirror are closer than they appear."

The accident happened on my way up to the Sun Dance, a spiritual gathering where I separated from my ordinary reality to look at my life and what I wanted to be doing with it. This broken piece of mirror felt like a Tarot card I'd been dealt. Here was something that deserved closer scrutiny, so I took it with me to Sun Dance.

After a couple of days at Sun Dance when my ordinary self was quiet enough to be able to hear my soul, I took out the mirror. "Objects in mirror are closer than they appear." I've been spending too much time lately looking over my shoulder. Getting older raises some interesting issues such as business and retirement plans. These are not my favorite preoccupations; as a matter of fact, they steal my joy. Looking at the mirror in this sacred place reminded me I was making that stuff bigger than it is. My business always seems to get taken care of--not so my spirit. Looking at what's creeping up on me keeps me from looking forward to what's still ahead. Spend too much time looking in the rear view mirror, and whatever is there always appears bigger than it is.



## RAM DASS IS STILL HERE – 9/1/00

Richard Alpert was a psychology professor who, along with his colleague Timothy Leary, was ousted from Harvard in 1963 for experimenting with LSD. He went to India where he became Ram Dass, a devotee of Eastern wisdom. Ram Dass is a great storyteller, a born teacher, an author, a leader in promoting environmental issues, and a founder of organizations to help the dying, aged, and imprisoned.

Three years ago, at the age of 65, he had a stroke that left him paralyzed and aphasic (unable to move his right side, speak, or understand words). Doctors gave him a ten percent chance of living. He survived this catastrophe and not only improved, but wrote a new book, *Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying*. This book is a continuation of his 1971 classic *Be Here Now*.

Ram Dass is certainly 'still here' and traveling through the world of experience, telling his story. This is a wonderful book about the great teacher called Silence. Silence allows us to listen to our intuitive wisdom, which helps us get in touch and deal with what's happening to us right now. The stroke taught him to let go of old certainties. Becoming crippled gave him a chance to free his mind, a chance to look at his life as if it were a movie. His body and lips were paralyzed, but his spirit was still talking to him, and he looked at himself as if he were watching an actor on the silver screen of his mind.

Ram Dass tells us that he is still in pain, sometimes afraid, but always learning. He acknowledges his loss of power but also recognizes that this changing role has given him new purpose. Like all debilities, it has taught him not to get caught up in how other people see him. Those who see him as a stroke victim see only an immobilized old man. Ram Dass sees himself as someone who has been given a chance to sit silently and bear witness to his soul. That he is not the man he was, but the man he is, inspires me. I pay attention to someone who is able to look out his window every day and see brightness. Bless you, my brother, on your healing journey.

## DYING WELL – 10/16/00

If you didn't see the recent Bill Moyer's special on PBS about death and dying, you missed a real gem. Bill interviewed dying patients, hospice workers, and doctors who specialize in end of life or palliative care. Everybody he interviewed spoke of how important it was that dying people know they will be cared for, listened to, and relieved of pain. How important it is to be surrounded by people they love and to whom they are able to talk about anything.

The following week I spoke to the Hospice of the Western Reserve in Cleveland on the subject "Sustaining the Healing Spirit in End of Life Care." In a wonderful, spirited exchange, we talked about the importance of saying what needs to be said while there is still time. We created ceremonies to bring families together every week to break bread, drink ceremonial wine, listen to music, and still laugh. We reminded ourselves that our work is our spiritual path.

After the presentation, I went fishing with my friend and brother Jim Castle, CEO of Ohio Hospital Association and an avid fly fisherman. The salmon were running on the Pere Marquette River in Northern Michigan where Jim belongs to a Rod and Gun Club.

He has told me stories about 30-pound salmon being taken on a lightweight fly rod, the action so thrilling the adrenaline rush would resuscitate a dying heart. I didn't want to wait that long to experience it. It's an easy wadeable stream that follows an untrammelled wilderness in its early autumn colors. I can see deer on the banks and lots of salmon in the water. This is a fisherman's heaven to be able to spot fish and cast your fly to drift by their mouths. When they take one, they become torpedoes accelerating, leaping, and snapping the line in seconds; one bent the hook 90 degrees.

My heart was pumping a mile a minute, and I was running up and down the stream holding on to these monsters. I lost lots of them but did finally beach a 35-pounder, snapped a picture, and released him...a beautiful king salmon male released to fulfill his instinctual drive. He would continue to go upstream until a female laid her eggs, and he'd fertilize them. He'd just fought me to the death for the privilege of being enveloped in his immortality, and I'm thinking this is how we die well, surrounded by our children.

## PRESIDENTIAL BULLSHIT – 10/30/00

I've been desperately trying to avoid writing about the recent Presidential debates, but they have been impossible to ignore either on screen or in the press. My response to that incredible performance of statistical manipulation and exaggeration made me feel like I was drowning in bullshit. To become President of the United States today means you have to be a combination of Mother Theresa, a Hollywood love story, Davy Crockett, and Thomas Edison.

The leader of the free world is a cartoon caricature who inhabits the West Wing and has the strength of an American gladiator. In today's world, bullshit has become elevated to an art form. I'm not blaming the candidates who, after all, only mirror our own expectations. Do we really believe these are the qualities that make for good leadership? Have we become so sucked in by media hype that we can no longer tell what's real from what's make-believe?

Do you have an idea who Gore and Bush really are? I do get a sense of how they respond to their 'handlers.' I can see how coachable they are, how well they've learned their lines and their smiles and how to be less aggressive, more assertive and knowledgeable but without being condescending. I feel like a statistic in a targeted media market manipulated by advertisers and spin-doctors.

Tell me that we are still a vibrant civilization out there and have not become brain dead from sitting in front of our television screens too long. Let's all stand and shout, "I'm not going to take it anymore!" Less bullshit...more substance.

## CAN ARAFAT AND BARAK SAY HELLO BEFORE CLINTON SAYS GOODBYE? – 11/13/00

This week President Clinton is bringing in Arafat and Barak for another last ditch effort to settle this escalating Middle East craziness. This is an ancient struggle of brothers fighting brothers over who has the right to his father's inheritance (and the protagonists are still using stones and sling shots). David and Goliath may be standing in the other's shoes, but this story has no end, and I am despairing. Do we keep playing out this violence because we are mythological archetypes acting out some universal collective unconscious?

We are brothers bearing the same genetic imprint. Consider this interesting tidbit; the Lemba tribe, a Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa, have a tradition that they were led out of Judea by a man named Buba. They practice circumcision, keep one day a week holy, and avoid eating pork or pork-like animals such as the hippopotamus. The Lemba traveled down the Arabian Peninsula to Yemen and probably sailed to South Africa. A team of geneticists have found that many Lemba men carry in their male chromosome a distinctive DNA sequence shared by the Cohanim, the Jewish priests descended from Aaron. This distinctive genetic code is most common in those Lemba men who belong to the most senior group, the Buba clan.

The Y-chromosomes in the priestly classes of the two major branches of the Jewish population, the fair Ashkenazim and the darker Sephardim, are the same. It doesn't matter how long brethren are separated; black, white, Moslem, or Jew, the legacy of our ancestors is carried in our genetic fingerprints. The same is true for 80 percent of those with European ancestry. The Journal Science reported this week that Y chromosomes taken from 1,007 men from 25 different locations in Europe revealed a pattern that suggested four out of five men shared a common male ancestor about 40,000 years ago.

We are all brothers; you'd think we could sit at the same table without fighting like Cain and Abel.

Good luck, Mr. President.

P.S. Yasser Arafat said that peace will not come to the Middle East without a million strong prayers. Go to [emissaryoflight.com](http://emissaryoflight.com) and write your own one-line prayer. James Twyman, author and peace troubadour, will travel to Israel with a scroll that contains all the prayers and present it to Arafat and Barak.

## VETERANS DAY – 11/20/00

I stand up for the National Anthem, I don't cover my heart, and I rarely sing. It has nothing to do with my pride in being an American. I love this country which encourages openness and cheers for the underdog, but flag-waving chauvinism always leaves me queasy. This is a Jewish thing for me, but I have a feeling it's also true for gypsies, homosexuals, Mayans, Armenians, etc., etc., all of whom have experienced the horror of national pride turned against its own citizenry.

I am most uncomfortable at military parades. But this year I took my grandkids to the Veterans Day parade. It was a beautiful day, and their parents were moving into a new house so we had a day to ourselves. As we sat on the curb before the parade began, the VFW auxiliary were handing out little flags. We all got one, but instead of conspicuously holding onto mine, I stuck it in my hat.

The parade was led by the 108th Army band playing "The Caissons Go Rolling Along," followed by Silvestre Herrera, a WWII Medal of Honor winner. The kids were waving their flags, and I flashed back to a moment at the end of the Second World War...I'm standing with my father in Fort Washington Park after VE day, watching the victorious American Navy armada sail around Manhattan Island. My father, a Holocaust survivor who was only in this country for a few years at this time, sings "God bless America" in his heavily accented English.

I feel the tears rise as I watch the Pearl Harbor survivors march by. They are followed by paralyzed veterans, blinded veterans, code talkers, Buffalo soldiers, and Vietnam vets. By the time the Frank Borman Middle Schoolers come by playing "God Bless America," I stand up and feel the presence of my old man and the honor of this country where freedom still marches on, even when it hobbles.

## A 100TH MONKEY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION – 1/8/01

It's almost New Years, and I am sitting in a hot tub at the Rancho la Puerta in Tecate, Mexico. This is an exquisite health spa about forty miles from San Diego that pampers body and soul. I'm sipping lemonade and waiting to have my body rubbed with aromatic oils and hot stones. This self-indulgence sometimes elicits a twinge of guilt in me (like how can I feel so good in the presence of so much suffering in the world), but I'm learning to tame such self-flagellation.

Sitting here in this trance-inducing, bubbling aquatic massage, my reverie takes me into the stratosphere and musings about the real beginning of the new millennium.

Can history and human consciousness find us living together more peacefully? I believe it is our purpose to reflect and bear witness. Each one of us, working through our own issues, finds some fragment of wisdom that has made a difference in our lives. We need to be sharing that message with others. We can change the world, but we do it one person at a time. This is the 100th Monkey theory of evolutionary change.

The 100th Monkey is a learning experiment about group transformation. Observers looked at two colonies of identical monkeys living on separate islands divided by an impassable body of water. Whether it was washing yams or learning how to open coconuts in a revolutionary new way, one monkey discovered the secret and then taught those close to him how to do it. Soon every monkey on the island knew the trick. Suddenly, on the neighboring island, monkeys started doing it too, even though there was no contact between the two islands.

This is how the biologist Rupert Sheldrake explains the phenomenon. When enough members of a species (a so-called critical mass) have learned a new, valuable piece of information, it enters a shared layer of consciousness he calls the morphogenetic field. By entering this field, the information becomes resident in the consciousness of each and every individual member without any requirement to 'learn' the behavior.

This is my new millennium hot tub dream. May we each become the 100th monkey that ushers in an age of harmony. May we finally become an interconnected species whose personal dreams are indistinguishable from our common goals.

Happy New Year.

## LISTEN WHEN GABRIEL BLOWS HIS HORN – 1/22/01

After I read Gabriel Garcia Marquez' 100 Years of Solitude, I thought I'd never read another novel. That book told a story about life, death, magic, and mystery that could not be improved. Garcia Marquez, a Colombian, won the Nobel Prize; it was worldly recognition for a literary genius, a true master. He has dropped from public view because Garcia Marquez has a cancer of the lymphatic system that is getting worse.

As a final gift to his friends, he sent this farewell letter. Through the ubiquity of the internet, it has found its way to others. This is a reflection whose wisdom will inspire you to live and relish your life. It would be a sin for me to abbreviate this astounding blessing.

If for an instant God were to forget that I am a rag doll and gifted me with a piece of life, possibly I wouldn't say all that I think, but rather I would think of all that I say. I would value things, not for their worth but for what they mean. I would sleep little, dream more, understanding that for each minute we close our eyes we lose sixty seconds of light.

I would walk when others hold back; I would wake when others sleep. I would listen when others talk, and how I would enjoy a good chocolate ice cream! If God were to give me a piece of life, I would dress simply, throw myself face first into the sun, baring not only my body but also my soul. My God, if I had a heart, I would write my hate on ice and wait for the sun to show. Over the stars I would paint with a Van Gogh dream a Benedetti poem, and a Serrat song would be the serenade I'd offer to the moon. With my tears I would water roses, to feel the pain of their thorns, and the red kiss of their petals...

My god, if I had a piece of life...I wouldn't let a single day pass without telling the people I love that I love them. I would convince each woman and each man that they are my favorites, and I would live in love with love. I would show men how very wrong they are to think that they cease to be in love when they grow old, not knowing that they grow old when they cease to be in love! To a child I shall give wings, but I shall let him learn to fly on his own. I would teach the old that death does not come with old age, but with forgetting. So much have I learned from you, oh men...

I have learned that everyone wants to live on the peak of the mountain, without knowing that real happiness is in how it is scaled. I have learned that when a newborn child squeezes for the first time with his tiny fist his father's finger, he has him trapped forever. I have learned that a man has the right to look down on another only when he has to help the other get to his feet. From you I have learned so many things, but in truth they won't be of much use, for when I keep them within this suitcase, unhappily shall I be dying." GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

## MORE HUGGING, LESS MUGGING – 3/19/01

There has been another school shooting; it's almost getting ho-hum now. When I first heard about the Santana High School shootings, I didn't run to turn on the news for details, figuring I'd hear about it on the evening news. That night I learned that Andy Williams fit the profile of all the other schoolyard shooters--a disaffected, rejected, isolated, angry boy who wanted to get even.

But this is not another polemic about escalating violence in children or about how we are desensitizing them by tv, video games, and violence in families. This is about how we are now promoting isolation and rejection even in our schools.

In Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, the standard greeting at the junior high school for most of the girls and some of the boys in seventh and eighth grades is to hug each other. Last month, the middle school principal clamped down on this behavior by issuing disciplinary checks to students who hugged each other. Three checks in one day or four checks in a week meant an hour's detention after school. The principal said that it was unnecessary behavior and had a tendency to change the atmosphere in school.

Ashley Bennett, age 12, who received disciplinary checks, said, "They think it's sexual and inappropriate, but that's just how people express their feelings. It makes them feel better."

Hello, America! Am I missing something here? The antidote for the current epidemic of violent, disaffected, isolated children is for them to hug each other less?

We've already legislated that teachers can't hug their students for fear of being accused of harassment or sexual improprieties. I lament this! I loved being held by my third grade teacher, Mrs. Oestreicher. There were even occasions when I slipped and called her Mom. We need to be holding more children, not fewer.

I say more hugging means less mugging!



## WHEN TIMES ARE BEAR, PREPARE FOR BULL – 4/2/01

You thought the bull exited the White House when Clinton closed the door; alas, presidential persiflage continues unabated. Dubya said he wanted to change the atmosphere in Washington. He would promote a national character in which trust would triumph over cynicism, or so he promised.

Dubya also promised voters that he was not hopeless on environmental issues. In a speech to Congress in February, Dubya promised to regulate power plants and reduce the threat of carbon dioxide emission. The energy industries who were big contributors got nervous when they heard this and exercised their claim to his ear. In March, Dubya decided the threat of global warming was not that serious and therefore decided he would not regulate corporate emissions of carbon dioxides as promised. He said he made a mistake.

There is no mistake! Global warming is a crisis happening. UN reports, the Kyoto Treaty, impeccable worldwide research, and now in a March issue of Nature magazine, satellite photos reveal the significant buildup of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere that are trapping heat.

Americans represent only five percent of the world's population, but we produce 25 percent of the greenhouse gases on the planet. The world is looking to us for leadership in environmental consciousness, and we feed them bull.

Dubya, want to be my President? Then stand and deliver; remind me that keeping your word and honor are still a virtue. Then you can lead a nation in which trust triumphs over cynicism.

## NICE RICE COMES WITH PRICE – 4/30/01

The biotech industry has now given us a genetically engineered food that promises to usher in a world without hunger. Using a daffodil gene that produces beta-carotene, a nutrient the body can convert into Vitamin A, a new rice has been created. The press releases on this Golden Rice say it will help prevent blindness and infection in millions of starving children suffering from Vitamin A deficiencies. Golden Rice has been a public relations triumph for the biotech companies (even made the cover of Newsweek), and the companies needed it too because the genetic alteration of food has not met with happy customers clamoring to buy the food they are selling. The companies spent \$100 million developing Golden Rice. Another \$50 million has been budgeted for advertisements touting the technology's future benefits, but will it cure the starving children? No, because the body only converts beta-carotene into Vitamin A when fat and protein are present in the diet; starving malnourished kids can't metabolize it.

For \$150 million we could have distributed Vitamin A supplements to children all over the world, taught people how to grow green vegetables on the edges of their rice fields, and provided all the seeds to do this. Aid groups working in third-world countries say these low-tech ideas really work. All we need for these ideas to work better is political will and money. For even half that sum, we could have taught future generations to better feed themselves, but then it wouldn't have garnered so much PR for the future bio-engineered products the companies want to sell.

No question bioengineered products are happening, and they will find a market. I'm hoping some of their profitability will be shared to support grass roots, low-tech ideas to make nations nutritionally independent for generations to come.

## SAFE HAVEN – 5/7/01

Arizona is becoming another state where mothers can leave their unwanted newborns at fire stations, hospitals, and other safe havens without any fear of questions being asked. This is being done to discourage desperate mothers from abandoning their babies in trash bins. Thirteen other states have already passed safe haven laws. The result of these statutes, however, has not been that lots of babies are turned in; as a matter of fact, very few have been.

I am concerned about whether this kind of legislation promotes a culture that makes it easier to give up kids. We already seem to be moving in that direction. In the last several weeks, there has been a firestorm of news reports about a study that correlated an increase in aggressive behaviors among children who spent at least 30 hours a week in childcare. Of the 1,100 children studied, researchers found that 16 percent of the four and a half year-olds and 17 percent of the kindergartners showed significantly higher levels of aggression. The detailed results have not yet been published nor have the results been subjected to scientific peer review, but whatever their conclusions, at least this much is clear: if you can take care of your children at home, they get a better foundation.

The ways to address the problems of bullying, aggression, and violence in children is not to pass more laws or give them up but to teach better values. Families, tribes, and nations from generation to generation need to be transmitting some ethic of morality. One must be that if you are going to have children, take care of them which means spending time together, sitting around dinner tables, reading bedtime books, stoking campfires under the night sky while telling stories about your ancestors, etc. etc.

The best safe havens are homes and family.

## PROMETHEUS VISITS ANIMAL FARM – 6/4/01

Genetic manipulation has given us the capacity to alter the biology of what it means to be human. As a result, we have become more godlike; we are re-visiting the myth of Prometheus.

Prometheus was a Titan, something less than a god but more than human. Prometheus was asked by Jupiter to make humankind out of mud and water. Out of pity for the creatures he created, Prometheus also gave them fire which he stole from the gods. The gods were angered by Prometheus' act of hubris; they feared that with this knowledge man would feel himself more godlike. As punishment the gods chained Prometheus to a rock. Every night a carnivorous raptor ate away at his liver. By morning his liver miraculously regenerated, and the cycle started all over.

We have been given new fire, fire that allows us to manipulate our genetics in such a way that we can regenerate livers from stem-cell cultures that are augmented by growth hormones and cell accelerators. We will also be able to grow hearts, kidneys, lungs, and maybe even brains. This is good for those with diseased organs, but--let us not forget--only for those who can afford them. Does this mean that the wealthy will continue to become stronger and longer-lived and the poor, sicker and dying young? The fire of our technological genius is making us more godlike. Will we use these qualities to further separate us into two species? Does this sound a little Orwellian to you? Animal Farm is now truly being visited upon us. We have the capacity to create a new species of pig with two legs that thinks it's better than a pig with four. I think we are playing with fire, and if we succumb to its hubris, we will become chained to a rock.

## TIME TO REFLECT – 6/25/01

A recent cover story in Newsweek magazine announced the birth of the wireless world. Our technology has ushered in a new culture of perpetual communication. This wireless society has provided the opportunity to have dinner with a lover while holding a conference call sales meeting. You can place a bet on the fifth race at Belmont while rafting the Colorado River from the bottom of the Grand Canyon; watching a baseball game with your daughter, you can check on your stock portfolio. This new culture invites us to always be someplace other than where we are.

Immediate access to information can inhibit the experience of life. Our wireless world gives us time for everything except time to reflect. Time to reflect is how humans recharge their wireless battery. Reflection allows us to appreciate life, not just hear about it.

Enough wireless multi-tasking! Be where you are! Leave your wireless instruments at home when you walk through the autumn New England woods...canoe the boundary waters...fly fish on the Yellowstone stream. Patronize restaurants that prohibit the use of cell phones in their dining rooms...support wilderness areas without gasoline engines...take an hour a day without any interruptions and do something for yourself.

Why am I foaming at the mouth about this? I am going on my annual fishing trip with my sons-in-law (with whom I bond in this ritual of forgiveness for stealing my babies). They say they're bringing computers and DVDs. I am pleading with them to disconnect so that they can re-connect. They hear an old man ranting.

## GOING THE EXTRA MILE – 7/9/01

My wife meets a friend of hers for a shopping expedition. Afterwards, they get into one car for lunch at a restaurant about a mile away. After lunch they return to the car and discover the right front tire flat. They call AAA, and while waiting, my wife decides to ask some people leaving the restaurant if they could give her a lift. This is Phoenix, Arizona, in the summer, and it's 110 degrees in the shade.

Two young women emerge, and Elaine points out the flat tire and asks if they could give her a ride to her car a mile away. They say, "Sorry, we're going in the other direction." A middle-aged man emerges with his wife and ignores her request entirely. A man in his 20's is also going the other way. Is this indifference or fear? Were they afraid that this well-dressed, well-spoken older woman with a clearly credible story was a threat to them? A clever scam by two sweating women who were up to something nefarious? I think not.

It's about inconvenience, a growing unwillingness of people to see beyond their own needs. Discourtesy is endemic in our culture, from simple thank-you's or helping an old lady across the street to not cursing publicly, we are becoming so calloused to each other. When self-interest renders us indifferent to the needs of others, we sow the seeds that steal our humanity. Indifference creates a society in which people learn to eat one another or be eaten themselves.

I'm thinking about this today because it's the season of Yom Hashoah, a time of remembrance for victims of the Holocaust. This time has become a memorial for all people who have experienced genocide. Genocide is the mountain that is built from pebbles of indifference. Indifference creates the climate that unleashes the potential for our own barbarity.

Cast the pebbles of indifference aside. Reach out and help somebody; go the extra mile and sow some seeds of humanity.

## WE HAVE NO BIRD IN HAND BECAUSE DUBYA SOLD THE BUSH – 8/6/01

Several weeks ago the 180 nation, Climate Change Conference, reached a historic compromise to reduce the planet's greenhouse gases. Only the U.S. was opposed to its adoption. The chief American delegate, Paula Dobriansky, said, 'The Bush administration takes the issue of climate change very seriously,' but she felt the Kyoto Protocol was unsound and would hurt the U.S. economy.

It doesn't matter that we are already the richest nation on earth and produce a quarter of the planet's pollution. It doesn't matter that the President, who made a campaign pledge to reduce those emissions, reneged on his promise, saying his original assessment was a bad mistake. Dubya listened to his contributors and used California's rolling blackouts to spread fear to urge support of his new energy plan.

What is the President's plan? He champions the use of coal. Texas consumes more coal than any state in the Union, and Vice-President Dick Cheney comes from the largest coal-producing state. American coal-powered plants pump three billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the air every year. They pump 18 million tons of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the air--the major cause of acid rain. To absorb all that pollution, we would need a forest the size of Jupiter.

Why did the U.S. not sign the Kyoto protocol? The Bush administration wants us to believe that by voluntarily agreeing to limit our nation's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, our economy would collapse.

On the same day this historic compromise was forged, the Bush administration also refused to vote for the 1972 ban on biological weapons.

In 1942 along with 143 other nations, the U.S. ratified the ban which outlawed the use of germ weapons. Donald Mahley, the U.S. representative to the Geneva talks, didn't sign the treaty; he said, "More work needed to be done to strengthen the ban," and then added, "In our assessment this puts national security and confidential business information at risk."

We didn't sign either treaty because they are not good for business; it doesn't matter if we get booed by the whole world or get richer at the expense of others. This new principle takes precedence over the old ones upon which this nation was founded--a nation that held a torch of hope to the poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free and committed to the principles of respect, equality and justice. We can still be a beacon to the world if we give up the idea that the earth is our ballpark and we own the ball. We are all inhabitants of this planet, and if we separate ourselves and persist in our arrogance, we will be brought down.

## GREAT PLAINS OBITUARY – 8/13/01

Social historians are writing the obituary of the Great Plains, (NYT, 5/27/01). Looking at abandoned ranches, collapsed homesteads, and dying towns, scholars see an epic failure. More than 60 percent of the counties of the Plains lost population in the last ten years.

Interestingly, however, the same all-White counties of the Great Plains that cleared out saw new people coming in. American Indians were coming home, moving back to or near their reservations. Indians now gather around campfires on their ancestral homelands surrounded by buffalo, listening to the drumbeat and retelling the stories of their people. One of those stories was that if they kept the faith and held onto their traditions, the land would return to them. There are more Native Americans on the prairie now than at any time since the 1870's. Public land and conservancies have created more than four million acres of national grasslands that will never again be disturbed.

From the Badlands of South Dakota to the Tall Grass National Monument of Oklahoma, there has been a restoration of a lost landscape. The Great Plains has been reawakened with all its native species--tall grasses, buffalo herds so thick they darken the sky, singers, drummers, and dancers. Doesn't look like an epic failure to me.



## SPIDERWOMAN LIVES – 8/20/01

In late July and August, I make some time to go on spiritual retreat. Soon I will go to a Jewish Renewal gathering in upstate New York. Before that I will go up to the Hopi Reservation to celebrate the Home Dance.

This is the time the Kachinas return to their home in the San Francisco peaks. From the top of Mount Humphrey, these holy intermediaries between man and God will rise up and carry prayers of their people into the spirit world. They will carry them along with corn pollen, spruce boughs, and tobacco pouches; wearing turtle-shell rattles on their legs, holding eagle feathers in their hands, they deliver the hopes of an entire people to touch the ear of the Great Spirit. This ceremony is so awesome in its beauty it always fills me with tears.

Fifty dancers fill the Plaza; accompanied by drums and gourds, they dance in absolute synchrony. They have been doing this since the beginning of time...ever since their ancestors first emerged onto the planet by climbing out of a hole in the bottom of the Grand Canyon. They have been dancing ever since they emerged on a web-ladder woven by Spiderwoman. She instructed them on the sacred ceremonies and told them if they continued to practice these sacred ways, they would survive. The Hopi have thrived in the oldest continuously inhabited villages on the North American continent. They still dance, speak their native tongue, and initiate their young men and women into Kachina societies. In their kivas, the ceremonial heart of the Hopi spiritual world, they tell stories of their ancestors. They still prophesize that when it is time for the next world, it will again be Spiderwoman who leads them on the journey.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that I recently read a report that said, "Micron for micron, the silk of the Golden Orb spider is stronger than steel and more elastic than rubber. Scientists at Cornell University have taken an important step in unlocking its secret. Using an MRI scanner, they have singled out the silks' key amino acids and constructed a model of its molecular structure. Their research has the potential to replace synthetic materials with naturally produced fibers for the high tech industry."

Think about it: the web of a spider could provide the material that builds the spaceships that would carry us into new worlds. The Hopi know Spiderwoman lives; the rest of us just have to marvel at the ancient prophecies.

## SURVIVING IN RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURES – 8/27/01

Just released records from Japan reveal that in the first six months of 2001, the Japanese crime rate has risen to record highs, most of it juvenile related. This small island nation with a thousand year code of honor and mutual respect has seen a huge increase in juvenile delinquency. There has been an uproar in Japan with parents saying these problems are due to the breakdown in values and traditions. Commentators cite the rapidly changing culture which has transformed the structure of families and the entire educational system.

No one denies the Japanese have experienced a radical change in their culture. An emperor once considered divine was declared ordinary. A nation defeated arose from the ashes of annihilation to become a world power of free-market capitalism.

Clearly what it takes to survive economically is different from what it takes to survive emotionally and spiritually. Survival of a rapidly changing culture in the physical world is predicated on its ability to adapt quickly and for its constituents' ability to apply unencumbered, logical thinking to make them change. Those not bound by preconceptions can think more expansively. J. Paul Getty once said that, in times of rapid change, experience can be your worst enemy. He is alluding to the fact that old judgments can inhibit creativity. On the other hand, disconnecting from old traditions also separates us from credible values of our soul. Tradition provides the structure that lifts our spirit during the hard times. Survival in the emotional world requires more than our analytic minds; it requires connections to something other than our selves-- something we trust and believe in.

It is not just the Japanese who are in the process of rapid cultural change. We are all sitting in the frying pan amidst the fires of a rapidly changing technology. That technology has provided us with some enormous benefits, but it has not yet provided us with better answers for dealing with the catastrophes we face or just the ordinary ups and downs in our lives.

Juvenile crime is a worldwide problem, and I believe it is a reflection of our disconnections. Survival in rapidly changing cultures is ensured by allowing the mind to think nontraditionally, but the heart has to stay connected to a traditional ethic of morality. Strong families build character and teach values that help us survive emotionally.

The ratio between good and evil has remained constant throughout the ages; if we lose touch with these values that once sustained us, we will lose our balance.

## JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK – 9/3/01

Mr. and Mrs. Jason Black gave birth to their second child, a son whom they chose not to name. Instead they posted a proposal on Internet auction sites to sell their son's naming rights to the highest bidder. They imagined they could buy a house and put away money for his college education. Perhaps a corporate sponsor would pay big bucks for the opportunity of a living billboard. Maybe a distillery would name him Johnnie Walker Black or Velvet Black. Or a white supremacist organization could buy him and name him No Black. The insurance industry could name him Blue Black; the shoe manufacturers-Shoe Black; the printing industry-Ink Black; the anthracite miners- Coal Black; the Oakland Raiders-Silver Black. The possibilities are endless.

Tell me this is not a pornographic market morality in which everything and everyone can be bought and sold. We have already bought sports stadiums and Bowl games; soon our financially-strapped national parks could bear names like Microsoft-Yellowstone National Park or Dole-Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Now the offer to sell the name of your son, marking him for life as a logo! What were those parents thinking?

I congratulate corporate America for choosing to pass on this latest manifestation of unbelievable commercialism. Because of the paucity of bidders and because of time limitations imposed by New York state law, the parents were persuaded to go the noncommercial route. They christened their new son Zane...I hope Zane won't end up feeling that Johnnie Walker might not have been so bad.

## WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM – 9/24/01

The World Conference against Racism was supposed to be last week's Byte, and then the Twin Towers happened. Looking at it again has helped me refocus on how we will win this attack and war. We all know this will not be a short-term war where we drop bombs, invade enemy territory, and eliminate those who breed evil. The war against hatred is a long-term commitment won by the will of a people who honor the principles of freedom. It will be won if we have the will to teach our children not to hate a turbaned man with a beard, a black-frocked man in a fur hat, or a homosexual. It will be won if we have the courage not to be seduced by the quick fix of retribution. The UN World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, several weeks ago failed because it could not get beyond finger pointing, retribution, and vitriolic hatred.

The UN conference was intended to express a global commitment to end discrimination, hatred, and slavery. What began as an idea to eliminate racism evolved instead into a meeting that intensified it. The participants could never get beyond the wording. They wanted to point the finger of blame at governments they thought were the most racist--specifically at Israel for "perpetuating a Holocaust of ethnic cleansing against Palestinians."

The United States and Israel walked out, saying they would not be part of any resolution that preached hatred and singled out some while absolving others. I applaud that decision.

There is hardly a nation on earth untouched by social and political hierarchy based on race...or a nation where chauvinism, judgmentalism, or fanaticism has not sometimes enslaved others...nor one whose people have not internalized racist stereotypes. There are few nations in the world who have not sought dominance over others. As a species, we have not treated each other well, and we are still raising generations of children who are taught to hate the enemy.

The Durban conference failed because none of the participants were willing to take off their own masks and own their failures. The only way to achieve the Durban dream is if we--as a community of nations--acknowledge our complicity in perpetuating racism and recognize that it is all of us who must make the changes that will allow us to live in harmony.

## GAS MASKS, ANTHRAX, NOT THE WAY TO GO – 10/08/01

Since the September 11 horror, there is an alarming sense that things are out of our control. This week's media blitz on the potential for bioterrorism has had a profound psychological impact; people are scared. I'm getting calls about whether to buy gas masks and stock up on Cipro as a preventative against anthrax. In Phoenix you can't even find a gas mask in any Army surplus stores.

Fear is stealing our zest for living from us. An isolated case of anthrax in Florida last week has prompted a panicky round of demands for protective antibiotics. There is no question that global bioterrorism is a threat, but it's hard to pull off. Far more likely than deadly spores disseminated by bombs is that a single case of botulism, plague, or cholera will cause a transcontinental hysteria in this environment. We can't defend ourselves against every deadly disease by stockpiling pills, body suits, self-contained breathing apparatus, or chemical detectors. Those objects do not mitigate crippling fear--they actually intensify and perpetuate it. Crippling fear, like every other disease, is best treated not by medicines but by finding preventatives.

Bin Laden and Company will win if they spread fear which steals our spirit. They will lose if it inspires our strengths. That is exactly what New Yorkers did for us; they mobilized a nation who stood together united as a nation indivisible--a country in which people of every color and creed locked arms to recommit themselves to those fundamentals upon which this nation was founded.

This is how we protect ourselves against the fear monster:

Recognize we have it; it doesn't have us.

Stop running and focus on something we can do now. (We gave blood, sent teddy bears and pharmaceuticals, supported relief funds.)

Set goals and take some action. We've been through difficult times before (Civil War, Pearl Harbor, WWII)--remember how we overcame them. Teach our children that not all Muslims are terrorists; introduce them to your neighbors.

Understand we are never alone; we're connected to something other than ourselves. Build a community of support that inspires our trust and faith.

## GROUND ZERO – 10/22/01

This has been an extraordinary couple of weeks for me. I have been to Ground Zero in New York City and to the ground zero of bioterrorism , South Florida. During this time, I have seen the suffering and the glory of human survival.

I went to upstate New York to participate in a candlelight healing ceremony for the Hospital Association of New York which honored the Ground Zero hospitals for their work and sacrifice. They told stories of heart-wrenching sadness and others that made the human spirit soar. It was a living testimony to the fact that healthcare is not an industry but a sacred ministry. It was an incredibly moving experience.

The next morning I took the train from Albany into New York City. The ride was spectacular--accompanied the whole way by the flaming autumn colors of the Hudson River Valley. Then I saw the gothic stone walls of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and the splendor was dimmed by the reality that we are at war. It is impossible for me to get away from the September 11 horror for any extended period of time. (I need a vacation.)

When I arrived at Penn Station, I was greeted by the haunting wail of bagpipes. Following the sound, I came to a memorial honoring the Port Authority personnel who were lost. A continuously repeating videotape showed pictures of dozens of victims and told their stories. I stood mesmerized, looking over and over at these mothers and fathers whose families will never again see them. I wrote something in a memorial book, but I couldn't see the words through the teary mist.

Then I took the subway to Ground Zero--got out at the Fulton Street station which is a couple of blocks from the site. When I emerged onto the street, the incomparable aroma of hot pastrami wafted out from a N.Y. deli. I ordered a sandwich to go, figuring I could walk and eat and still get to my appointment on time. As I got closer, the delicatessen smell was overpowered by smoke which became increasingly acrid. Suddenly I became immobilized by the awareness that this was the smell of a crematorium. I cannot swallow my sandwich.

I see the remnants of the World Trade Center; its metal skeleton that I have repeatedly seen televised now seems sculpted into a soaring memorial. Smoke and dust cover the buildings, stain windows, and cover the shelves of shops. A window washer is on a scaffold hanging from a skyscraper above me; the droplets that fall on me feel like holy water.

On every street corner there is some kind of shrine--candles, pictures, poems, prayers, and letters from parents, relatives, and friends pleading for information about their loved ones:

"John P. was my hero. He taught me how to play ball. I was just a kid, but he never talked down to me.

He taught me right from wrong. He was on the 101st floor, and I need to talk to anybody who saw him. Please call me."

"My only son Aron is all I have left. I come here from Russia. Please someone tell me where is my son."

A first grade student from California wrote, "I hope everybody still has their Mommy and Daddy."

The street is crowded with onlookers; there is a feeling of palpable sadness. I am not prepared for the enormity of this scene.

I ride uptown to address the staff of New York-Presbyterian hospital, the major burn center in New York City. They lost three EMT's. In the faces of the audience, I see reminders of their ongoing struggle. Every American knows that we can no longer hide from the certainty of our vulnerability. Fear threatens to steal our spirit. There isn't a person in the room who didn't know somebody or treat somebody who was in those towers, and now I feel like I know those victims too.

When I finish my presentation, I ask everybody to stand, hold hands, and join me in singing "Amazing Grace." We stand--people of every color, nationality, and creed--and in that moment I feel the power of awe. It is that vision that I carry with me; it helps me see what's possible even in the darkness.

## PARALYZING PANIC – 10/29/01

The bugs are everywhere; there are now two reported anthrax deaths in Washington, D.C. There is no place to hide from our fears and uncertainties. Every day we are treated to more stories about the threat of bioterrorism and exhortations by Taliban terrorists that many more Americans will be slaughtered. Every cold and flu symptom has now become a potential exposure to Anthrax.

I am speaking in South Florida, 'ground zero' for Anthrax exposure. The pharmacies down here can't keep enough antibiotics in stock. The internet has become the primary venue for dealing drugs. It doesn't matter that taking these drugs can cause serious side effects or that their indiscriminate use will cause the development of new drug-resistant strains.

When the Israelis stockpiled gas masks and injectable antidotes to chemical agents after the Gulf War, it resulted in more people being injured because of the improper use of drugs and devices than were hurt by any kind of attack.

I am not suggesting we do not have great cause for concern. The public health response to this threat has been woefully inadequate. However, fear escalating to panic is a far bigger concern. This new war of terror has far greater psychological impact than old wars did. Old wars were conducted between opposing armies. Modern warfare sees civilians as collateral distractions that can be wiped away like numbers on a blackboard.

Every American has learned about our vulnerability to biological attack. We've become aware that there are super bugs that can kill you in a day. We have learned that rogue states have stockpiled enough deadly germs to obliterate all of humanity. This awareness has resulted in emergency rooms becoming overrun. A package of Sweet 'n Low accidentally spilled on a restaurant table makes the manager call in a Hazardous Materials Squad. Laboratories are backed up for months, analyzing nasal swabs. People are microwaving their mail; the Postal Service has now recommended that people wash their hands after opening their mail to make sure that--if anything was on the envelope--the hands are now clean. Deborah Willhite, a senior vice president of the Postal Service, said, "We have no reason to believe that there would be anything on them, but what's the problem with clean hands?"

The problem is it creates an atmosphere that is more dangerous than the real problem. The fear it inspires creates paralyzing panic. It elevates rumors to the status of myths and triggers false alarms. It is difficult enough to deal with the current reality when we see danger everywhere. We cannot let the fear monster eat us alive.

I was in South Florida last week, and I didn't get anthrax, but my rental car was broken into. This is a living testimony to the fact that it is far more likely that you'll get nailed in your car rather than by a super bug.



## INVESTIGATE BUGS, NOT BOMBS – 11/05/01

The United States and the World are confronting an epidemic of terrorism. Our newfound vulnerability to bioterrorism has caused an investigative scramble with health investigators looking to find ways to treat and prevent outbreaks of disease. In the midst of these critically important public health investigations, we are also investigating a doctor in Portland, Oregon, who prescribes marijuana to sick people.

Dr. Philip Leveque is a 77-year-old physician, who has signed 40 percent of the 935 medical marijuana applications that have been approved by the State of Oregon. Healthcare investigators are looking at Dr. Leveque because they want to tighten the guidelines for patient use. Oregon is currently holding up 800 applications because Dr. Leveque has signed most of them. His patients have glaucoma, cancer, multiple sclerosis, and AIDS. One of the protesters was Pamela Snowwhite-Day who smokes marijuana because it alleviates her spasms from multiple sclerosis, helps the pain of her degenerative spine disease, and enables her to eat.

The ACLU joined Pamela and many others in picketing the Oregon legislature, pleading with them not to make it harder than it already is to get medical marijuana and not to punish doctors who are practicing within the letter and spirit of the law.

Dr. Leveque is a competent physician who devotes his life to helping people in need to obtain medicinal marijuana. His patients have found some relief in this powerful medicine that, until only recently, was a standard prescription in every medical pharmacopoeia. Dr. Leveque has helped hundreds of sick people, and none of them are complaining about him; indeed his patients love and respect him.

We may be in the midst of the biggest public health crisis we have ever faced. We are threatened by deadly infections that can be massively disseminated, and we are investigating an old doctor whose treatment is indicated and that has been helpful. I think this guy is a hero.

## CANARIES AND TROUT – 11/19/01

The threat of bioterrorism has caused the stockpiling of antibiotics such as Cipro in every medicine cabinet and enough bottled water to fill a swimming pool. Add to this armamentarium canaries--that's right; our small feathered friends are the latest defense against terrorist attacks.

Manhattan pet shop owners are reporting that since the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, canaries are selling like hotcakes. Customers believe the birds may be able to warn them in case of a poison gas attack. This hope is based on the history of the use of canaries by coal miners, who took the birds deep into the tunnels as an early warning system to detect deadly methane gas. The fact that those canaries were in a closed space is, of course, different than a canary in your living room. The likelihood that a canary in New York City will die from a terrorist gas attack rather than breathing exhaust fumes or old age is about the same as catching a warm polar bear dropping on the Arctic tundra.

It will no longer be enough that every spilled packet of Sweet and Low on a restaurant table is seen as a potential anthrax exposure. Now every dead canary will be the messenger of our impending demise. You can't buy enough canaries to defend yourselves against your fears, and the sentiment that drives such a purchase actually intensifies the fear. The antidote to fear is not canaries; it's trout. To distance yourself from fear, separate yourself from your ordinary reality and see things from a new perspective.

In the midst of my recent travels, I took a break from the bludgeoning of catastrophic reality and visited a trout stream. This is one of my sacred places, a place I go to experience peace, joy, and awe.

I am in the Appalachian mountains of Virginia, alone on a stream full of trout, in the last days of autumn's splendor...the trees alive in color...the forest floor a bed of leaves like golden coins. There are shallow pools below the swift ripples where a Parachute Adams fly proves irresistible. Downstream in a big pond created by a beaver dam, a chartreuse Woolly Bugger wreaks havoc. This is a catch and release stream, so I gently place the trout back in the water.

Eating a sandwich at lunch, I realize that catch and release is really a metaphor about fear. If you catch it, find a way to release it. Go to your sacred place--that place where you are reminded that you are only a small part of what happens in the universe, a place where you see the world through a new lens. The antidote to sCared is saCred; it's just another way of C-ing.

See trout, not canaries.

## MAKE MUSIC – 12/17/01

I have two beloved friends who have recently been diagnosed with metastatic cancer. Requiring lots of pain medication, complaining, and angry, one of them is virtually bedridden. It fills me with sorrow. The other is going to work with an oxygen tube in his nose, wearing a pain patch, and saying that as long as he can do good work, he's going to keep on. He is living whatever time he has left.

Reminds me of a story I received a while back through the e-mail grapevine about how important it is to keep making music with the instrument you have left.

On November 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. If you have ever been to a Perlman concert, you know that getting on stage is no small achievement for him. He was stricken with polio as a child, and so he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches.

To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is an unforgettable sight. He walks painfully—yet majestically—until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, slowly puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, tucks one foot behind and the other forward. Then he bends down and picks up the violin, puts it under his chin, nods to the conductor, and proceeds to play.

But this time something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap—it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do.

People who were there that night thought to themselves: “We figured that he would have to get up, put on his clasps again, pick up the crutches, and limp his way off stage—to either find another violin or find another string for this one.”

But he didn't; instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes, and then signaled the conductor to begin again. The orchestra began, and he played where he left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity as they had never heard before. Of course, anyone knows it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. I know that, and you know that, but that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, recomposing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was de-tuning the strings to get the new sounds from them that they never made before.

When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then people rose and cheered. There was an extraordinary outburst of applause from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said—not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, reverent tone, “You know, sometimes the task is to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.”

## THE FIGHTING WHITES – 4/1/02

It seems that members of the Native American Students Association at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley weren't enthusiastic about the local high school's nickname. The school calls itself the Fighting Reds, and its emblem is a caricature of an American Indian. The Native students tried to persuade the school district superintendent that the name and image were insulting. The superintendent said that not only was it not derogatory, but that he found their criticism insulting.

The natives got restless and organized an intramural basketball team they named the Fighting Whites. On their jerseys was their mascot, a 1950's caricature of a middle-aged white man wearing a jacket and tie with their slogan, "Every thang's going to be all white."

I laughed out loud when I read this, but there were some people who were quite upset. They said that the Native's mascot, team name, and slogan were no better than what they ridiculed.

Lighten up; it's April Fools' Day--our Native relatives have provided us a creative way to help us see what it feels like to be in their shoes. As far as them being no better than what they ridiculed--come on! The Indians did not seize our land, send our children away to white schools, cut our hair, forbid us from speaking our language, or reduce our culture to a Hollywood caricature.

## TEL AVIV AND THOMAS ROAD – 4/22/02

Another Palestinian teenage suicide bomber just killed herself, taking with her dozens of Israeli men, women, and children. In response the Israelis eliminated nests of Palestinian terrorists by leveling the towns of Ramallah, Jenin, and Nablus.

Doesn't it seem like only a short time ago that Israelis and Palestinians were talking about Peace Accords and reconciliation? Now such talk has ended, and Israelis and Palestinians are locked in a cycle of reciprocal violence. I despair at this eating away of the dream of peace.

In the afternoon of one such homicidal bombing day, I walked into a friend's place of business. He is a Syrian, a Shiite Muslim, and an engineer by training. He operates a printing business now and in the evenings plays keyboard in a local band. We've known each other and done business together for many years.

When I walked in that afternoon, he was saying goodbye to a well-dressed man in suit and tie on whose lapel was pinned a green ribbon (folded in that breast cancer awareness way) next to which was a tiny Palestinian flag. My immediate reaction was defensive and suspicious: "What was he doing here?" I hate this feeling of mistrust. I asked my friend who the man was, and he told me he was a Palestinian, the Imam of a local mosque, and the publisher of a newsletter for the Muslim community. He must have sensed my disquietude because he added that he himself used to be a member of that mosque but was asked to leave when, after a fiery sermon, he inquired where in the Koran it was written that suicide was a holy act.

The great majority of Muslim Americans do not support terrorism as an expression of national policy. They do, however, identify with what they see as the trampling of their co-religionists. My friend thought America had to speak out more strongly about promoting a more balanced policy in the Middle East.

I would also like balance and an evenhanded approach if that would mean living together in peace. Like most Jews, however, hearing those terms makes me queasy. Jews remember the 1947 UN partition plan that created the state of Israel and which also would have created a Palestinian state right alongside it. The Arabs screamed, "No! This is war, and we will drive you into the sea!" That goal has never been repudiated. Jews have survived for millennia as the world's enemy; perhaps as a tribe, we have become culturally--even genetically--suspicious that evenhandedness is a prelude for elimination.

I want to give up that suspiciousness and fear. I want to believe the ancient prophecy that two tribes sired by the same father can both live in greatness. So I said to my friend, "At least between the two of us let us demonstrate what is possible--that cousins are relatives who can live in peace in Tel Aviv and on Thomas Road.

## OUR POSTHUMAN FUTURE – 5/20/02

Dr. Francis Fukuyama is a social philosopher and professor of International Economics at Johns Hopkins University, and he has just written a book called *Our Posthuman Future*. In it he discusses the consequences of the biotechnology revolution and talks about things like cloning, genetic engineering, stem cell research, and anti-aging medicine. He also shares his concern about the profound consequences that could arise from this new biotechnology if we do not establish criteria that will limit its future.

How far will we go in designing babies to become stronger, faster, smarter, and longer-lived? Will we create strapping nonagenarians or interspecies hybrids? These potential modifications in our species will change global politics and upend existing social hierarchies. Dr. Fukuyama clearly comes down on the side of not fooling around too much with human nature. He says that the essence of what it means to be human is our capacity to make moral choices. Our innate humanity endows us with the capacity to be greedy, cruel, and violent, but these same human qualities that inspire us to be compassionate, courageous, and sympathetic...to stand in solidarity.

The most important moral decision we now face as a civilization is to what extent we are willing to meddle with human nature. Our technology can conquer the body's flaws, imperfections, and inherent shortcomings, but what does it do for the soul? The essence of our humanity is not defined by how well we perfect our machinery, but by how well we nurture our spirit.

A culture is defined by those who tell its stories. A culture that worships technology tells its stories through its machinery. They are stories of escalating mayhem told in videogames, movies, and computer graphics with special effects that have elevated violence to an art form. I believe a culture that worships its technology worships death. A culture that worships art, music, myths, and ceremonies worships life because those are the instruments through which the human soul finds a way to walk a life filled with meaning.

The future of biotechnology mixes great potential benefits with overt threats to our physical being and subtle threats to our spiritual being. We must use our powers as an international community to set some limits. I'm pleased that Dr. Fukuyama is a member of President Bush's Council on Bioethics, and I think we ought to elevate that powerless committee to cabinet level.

## HOPE, NOT DOPE - 6/17/02

Brain researchers have discovered that gambling activates the same regions of the brain as does getting high on cocaine. Sophisticated imaging techniques at Massachusetts General Hospital revealed that the same small regions deep within the brain light up during these activities.

Isn't it interesting that the same areas of the brain are stimulated in addictive behaviors? After morning coffee, gambling is rapidly becoming the most common addiction in America. In even the most isolated towns, you can still get to a lottery game or slot machine within 100 miles. Ours is a culture of the quick hit and the easy fix. Are you feeling down? Then we have a pill that will take it away. As a species, we are no different than apes who--when rewarded--will push the lever to get the stuff that gets us high. We all like the feeling that occurs when our brains are flooded with the neurotransmitters that turn us on.

Except that the high you get from a quick fix makes you dependent on it. Nothing compares to the ease of pulling a slot machine handle or snorting nose candy. But that easy high is so seductive, it makes us believe that without it we can no longer get by.

I have spent much of my professional life working with addictions because they have been such a profound affliction in Indian country. In my experience I've seen how hard it is to cure them. Those chemical rushes are so incredibly powerful that most people will not give them up because they do not believe anything else exists that can make them feel as good. Addicts will not give up something for nothing. Is there something that can make them feel as good? It turns out that there is; the Mass General researchers discovered that hope lights up the same regions in the brain.

Having hope...believing that your dreams can come true causes the same outpouring of neurotransmitters. Hope triggers a natural high. Hope is the opiate of the masses, and it comes free of charge, which does not mean it comes without a price. Sustaining hope means you have to work at finding ways to keep your dream alive. Pursuing dreams always comes with sacrifice. It's never easy; you have to work at it, practice, take risks, fall and fail--but when you achieve them, it really means something.

Traditional Native American wisdom taught that to live a life of meaning one had to pursue vision and have faith. The power of belief and hard work are how dreams become actualized; it's about hope, not dope.

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGHS AND LOWS – 7/22/02

I am in Keystone, Colorado, nestled in the Snake River Valley 9,000 feet up in the Rockies. Snow still covers some of the peaks, but for the most part, this is a verdant carpet of green. Mountain flowers bloom, hummingbirds and eagles in the sky fly, and forest streams are abundant with wildlife.

Keystone Mountain towers above the village at 12,000 feet. It has world-class ski runs, which in the summer become meccas for mountain bikers. I have never mountain biked, but I've watched it and it looks exciting so I thought, "Why not rent a bike, take the ski lift to the top, and bike down?" With a dear friend of similar aging decrepitude, we decide to rent bikes.

Mountain bikes are not ordinary bicycles; they have shock absorbers on both front and rear wheels. The brakes can stop a biker so fast it can flip you over the handlebars. I begin to get queasy when the staff encourages us to buy bike insurance. They say the accident rate is about 30 percent, and when I ask him what it is for senior citizens, he assures me it's even higher. He hands us a color-coded trail map and says, "Some trails are easier than others; you guys should make it down in a couple of hours."

Before getting on the chair-lift, we pick up some gourmet sandwiches at a local deli. In anticipation of this gorgeous extravaganza, I get a sandwich with prosciutto ham, provolone cheese smothered with marinated peppers, pesto, on pannini bread. I have no idea what this indulgence will later cost me.

The great shock absorbers may be a great technological innovation, but mountain biking terrain is rutted, obstructed, and difficult. Sitting on a little banana-peel seat--which has not yet been improved upon--causes your bottom to wear exceedingly thin. You learn to get your butt off the saddle, but that's hard on your thighs and forearms which then carry the tension. If you grip the handlebars too tightly and hit a big bump, your hand automatically squeezes the brakes, whose efficiency can stop you before you are ready to stop. The prosciutto, provolone, peppers, and pesto don't taste as good the second time around.

The trail is so narrow in parts you can't deviate an inch from the path without scraping your elbows. The ear-popping straight-aways are an unbelievable exhilaration. We take many breaks to breathe in this awesomeness and feel this Rocky Mountain high. We cap the experience with a celebratory beer in a pub at the bottom.

I woke up sore the next morning, but nothing compared to what I felt when I read the morning paper. (I have to break that habit!) Turns out that the Bush administration decided to scale back the Superfund program. You remember the Superfund, the decontamination program that cleans up industrial wastes and pollutants. The Superfund is currently hundreds of millions of dollars short of what it needs to remain on schedule. The Administration has decided not to pay to continue the cleanup. This means



deteriorating drums of Agent Orange are leaking into the soil, and industrial wastes continue to pollute streams and rivers.

The administration bowed to corporate interests by refusing to renew the corporate taxes that support the fund. In doing so, the administration effectively abandoned the fundamental precept of the Superfund--the polluter pays.

Better get out and ride a bike now because in the not --so-distant future, Rocky Mountain highs could become lows.

PS: Want to hear some really feel good stories? One of mine is included in the just released Chicken Soup for the Volunteer's Soul.

## BURNING MAN – 9/2/02

My world-traveling daughter is back at the Burning Man Festival this year. In her magical and mysterious ways, she scored a round-trip plane ticket from Kauai to San Francisco and then managed to find a ride to the remote Nevada desert where it's held. Burning Man happens in late August every year in Black Rock City which is built in a week in this wind-blown flat moonscape and then disappears even more quickly than it goes up.

It's 110 degrees here with no shade, water, or escape from dust. Still, it brings out a huge group of artists, musicians, dancers, engineers, architects, yogis, environmentalists, exhibitionists, and dreamers. Last year 26,000 people came from at least 40 states and 12 countries; they come to Burning Man to interact, learn, create, and revel.

The August 2001 issue of National Geographic featured the picture of a red-haired woman dressed in body paint and riding a unicycle while playing a sousaphone. In the background was a picture of a reveler's home: an old school bus converted into a twin-masted schooner complete with sails. Last year one group built a huge wooden pagoda as a temple in honor of multiple sclerosis sufferers which they burned in a purging ceremony.

To travel throughout the 'city,' you hop on a caterpillar train pulled by a scooter. There is no money exchanged; nothing is for sale here except ice. If you take a ride or enter someone's creation, you make an offering--for example, sing a song, compose a poem, share some candy, surrender your brassiere or underwear, etc. There are no spectators here, only participants.

Openness, creativity and joy are encouraged; violence is not. The center of this nonviolent city is a 75 foot sculpture of a man made out of neon and wood which dominates this desert kingdom. Burning Man's subjects burn him in a spectacular pyrotechnic display that is the festival's final catharsis.

The Burning Man festival began in the mid-1970s when an artist named Larry Harvey burned a wooden man on a California beach. So many people showed up for this pseudo-ritual that he made it a yearly thing. Then the crowds became so large he had to find another spot which is how it came to this isolated Nevada desert. Each year it grows.

Dressed like a fairy princess in a tutu, my daughter again taught yoga in a geodesic dome. She was one among a multitude that included extraterrestrials, ninjas, nude bicyclists, belly-dancers, and a cast of thousands. If you want to see it all, go to [www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com).

I love the idea of a place where nothing is sold, but instead you exchange something that is uniquely you--a place where amazement and joy are the rule. It delights me so I'm thinking about going next year.

## WIRED FOR COOPERATION – 9/14/02

If we accept Darwinian theory about natural selection which is based primarily on competitive survival and reproductive success, you'd think that, as a species, we'd be scrambling to get ahead at someone else's expense. So evolutionary biologists have long wondered why people cooperate, support, and even sacrifice themselves for others. It turns out that cooperation and altruism are pervasive in all human cultures. Scientists conclude that social cooperation must be an adaptive survival mechanism. This is something our ancestors also knew; the foundation of human life is based on interdependence.

Researchers at Emory University's Department of Psychiatry have now found a neurobiological explanation for this behavior. They recently reported in *Neuron* (Vol.35,395-405, 2002), that when you scan the brains of people who cooperate with each other, who chose trust over cynicism and generosity over selfishness, their brains light up with excitement and joy.

The researchers hooked up 36 women to brain scanning machines while they were playing a game called "The Iterated Prisoners Dilemma Game." This game has been used for many years as a test for social cooperation by a wide range of investigators. In this game, two players independently decide whether they want to cooperate with each other, while playing the game. Each player is then rewarded with money depending on whether their interactions accurately reflect their choice.

The brain scans of those players who decide to cooperate with each other activate the reward centers in the brain far more often than those players who are antagonists. Darwin's theory about survival must, therefore, include the recognition that we are hard wired to support each other. Social cooperation creates an outpouring of neurotransmitters that flood the brain with joy.

Now I'm wondering (in the midst of today's beating war drums) whether these results are just because all the subjects were women. Maybe the brains of men get lit up by competition and violence rather than cooperation. Isn't it time for a woman President?

## 9/11 ANNIVERSARY – 9/16/02

When the day of the first anniversary of the September 11th tragedy finally arrived, it felt like an unbri-dled media extravaganza to me. A patriotic Hollywood production number that transformed sacred ceremony into theatrical hype. By the time the day was over, I had changed my tune. That night I took my wife to a baseball game to watch the league-leading Arizona Diamondbacks.

Sport is perhaps the most visible manifestation of nationalism; it affirms our identity as citizens in community, who--in spite of differences in race, creed or color--come together with common goals and vision. When we entered the BOB (Bank One Ballpark) that night, each of us was given a white t-shirt with "We will not forget!" written over the heart. My initial reaction was that this is going to be another manufactured spectacle, but I put it on anyway. Most everybody else did too so when I sat down and looked around, I was greeted by a sea of white. It had a ghostly quality, and in that moment, it felt as if the incinerated ashes of the victims had sprinkled down to cover us. It gave me goose bumps. Then from one corner of the outfield, I heard the haunting wail of a single bagpiper playing "America the Beautiful," and then the entire Pipe and Drum Corps of the Mesa Fire Department marched across the field. The crowd stood up, and I was not the only one in tears.

The pre-game ceremonies continued, and the announcer told us that the ceremonial first ball would not be thrown out; instead it would be placed on the pitcher's mound. Then they ushered in a New York policeman and firefighter as well as local families who had lost relatives in the September 11 horror. They handed the ball from one to another until it ended up in the hands of the fireman who walked over and placed it on the pitcher's mound. Four F-16 fighter planes from Luke Air Force Base flew overhead in a tight formation; the crowd roared and only became silent when a solo trumpeter played the National Anthem.

Whatever my morning misgivings were, this felt like sacred ceremony to me. All the elements were here: people coming together in common purpose, wearing special clothes and eating traditional foods, feeling hopeful. It was a magical moment. At exactly 9:11 pm, the public address announcer asked us to stand for a moment of silence. The silence was deafening; the only sounds were those of people rising out of their seats and at that moment, those "ashes" I had previously seen came to life again.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, the home team was down by a run. The crowd was quiet but hopeful. The leadoff batter hit a home run, and the crowd went delirious. The score was now tied and the crowd on its feet. The next batter hit a triple, and now a pinch-hitter came to the plate. This is a kid who had just been elevated from the minor leagues and had never batted a run in. He got up and lined the ball into the outfield and scored the winning run. The fans went apoplectic with joy!

Seems better than any Hollywood spectacle: people coming together in remembrance and hope. This is living testimony to the principle that the losses we suffer in life do not last; they are reborn in families and communities who come together to revitalize their spirit.

## WARMONGERING – 10/7/02

The 'Invade Iraq!' chant is getting louder and louder. A few days ago, I heard a priest say on a talk-radio program that we ought to invade Iraq, reasoning that we were obligated to get the enemy before the enemy got us. I wondered what Jesus and the Old Testament prophets would have said about that; if you think somebody is threatening, get them first. The President is also saying we are obligated to get them first in order to save the free world. Dubya claims he has the right to strike first (even with nuclear weapons) and to also launch secret attacks.

At whistle-stops on the current political campaign trail, he is rallying the American people to his world view. He is reinforcing our fear and prejudices, arguing that we must not take 9/11 sitting down; we will not be bullied--and furthermore, they tried to kill his father. Let's invade Iraq because Saddam Hussein is responsible for the Age of Terror. What the rest of the world thinks about this is irrelevant because we already dominate the world so we don't have to pay attention to what anybody else thinks.

Does anybody really believe that by invading Iraq we will win the war on terror? That if we beat our enemy into submission once and for all, it'll be over? If anything, war with Iraq will escalate terror everywhere. It will play into the hands of fanatics in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, who will recruit volunteers willing to blow themselves up, poison reservoirs, and fly into buildings because it is the only means available to the little man who fights a Goliath. Fanatics will promote such tactics as acts of virtue and a sure path to martyrdom.

Hateful vengeance cannot become our plan; I'm not sure what the plan is--perhaps something like the old Marshall Plan. You remember the Marshall Plan; it is widely considered the greatest triumph in foreign policy in the last hundred years. Using economic diplomacy to promote the American ideal of democracy and prosperity, the plan brought the world together after World War II.

I do know that we do not need to be killing people and bombing their cities (maybe even nuking them) in order to make ours safer. It is far more likely that our economic strength, not our military dominance, will ensure our safety and the survival of the world.

## HOLIER THAN THOU – 11/18/02

A reformist Iranian scholar and professor, Hadhem Aghajari was recently condemned to death on charges of heresy. Aghajari was convicted of insulting the prophet Mohammed and questioning the hard-line clergy's interpretation of Islam. His lawyer said his client never insulted Islam's prophet and only said that each generation should be able to interpret the faith on its own. The same sentiments that Aghajari voiced were spoken a thousand years ago by the revered 12th Century Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman who said (introduction to the Sefer Ha Mitzvot L' Ha Ramban):

I will not be for them like a donkey, eternally hauling their books. I will explain their teachings and study their ways, but when my vision does not correspond with theirs, I will then decide according to what my own eyes behold, and with legal certainty. For God grants wisdom in every generation and in every period, and will not deny goodness to those who are sincere.

Unfortunately, Moslems and Jews (and of course others) continue to be crippled by hard-line certainties; at the same time Aghajari was sentenced, Great Britain's chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, was called a heretic by ultra-orthodox rabbis because of his "grave deviation from the pathways of traditional and authentic Judaism." They want him to repudiate his views that "God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims. No one creed has a monopoly on spiritual truth; no one civilization encompasses all the spiritual, ethical, and artistic expressions of mankind. In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths. God is greater than religion; he is only partially comprehended by any faith."

The hard-liners said Rabbi Sacks' view is irreconcilable with traditional Jewish thinking: "Any contention that Judaism does not contain absolute truth represents a grave deviation."

When will we no longer be blinded by rigidity and see that all believers speak the language of God?

## HOMELAND SECURITY AND HALLOWEEN – 12/02/01

On Halloween my nine-year-old grandson went trick-or-treating in his other grandparents' kid-friendly neighborhood where the houses are close together. The next day I asked him how it went, and he said he had a great time except that they "brought Hispanics in by the truckload."

At first I thought I didn't hear him right so I asked with some disbelief, "What did you say?" "They brought in Hispanics from outside the neighborhood and the people were running out of candy," he lamented. I know he doesn't hear this stuff at home; it's something he heard on the street that night, and it struck a chord with him: outsiders were invading his territory and taking something from him. He wondered why they didn't stay in their own neighborhoods, and I told him it was because this is where there is lots of candy, and it's safe to walk the streets at night. I railed on about how we ought to open up our neighborhoods more, and he heard whatever he wanted to and was off doing something else.

I am a psychiatrist and not unaware of how isolated events can imprint our thinking. It still amazes me how quickly we can learn prejudices. What my grandson heard on the street was simply another reflection of our national mood. We're becoming mistrustful of strangers, isolationistic, and self-protective to the point of paranoia in response to the Age of Terror.

This week President Dubya signed the Homeland Security Bill, creating the largest government reorganization since 1947. This new agency comprises the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Coast Guard, Customs, Secret Service and Transportation Security Administration among others. Signing the bill, the President said, "In a free and open society, no department of government can completely guarantee our safety against ruthless killers who move and plot in shadows." He then cautioned that he was doing what he could by creating this new cabinet-level department but acknowledged that it would not eliminate the continuing threat of terror. It was up to us as individuals to band together to prevent domestic terrorism. Such exhortations--to look suspiciously at those around us and to be on guard--stimulate racial profiling.

Our fear is causing us to separate ourselves from each other. If we continue to do this, it will succeed in doing what no terrorists can--destroy ourselves from within. We cannot allow an uncertain future to so terrify us that we perceive our neighbors as potential enemies. If that is the result of Homeland Security, it will prove to be a Halloween trick that steals our spirit as a nation.

Founded on the principles of liberty and justice, our country cannot allow prejudices to etch away at our unity. Let us instead treat ourselves to looking around in freedom, counting our blessings, and hoping we can transmit to our grandchildren the legacy that was left to us--to love one's neighbor.