

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

# It Takes an Einstein



*Time* magazine's meretricious choice of Albert Einstein as "Person of the Century" is but another reminder of the essential phonicness of much mainstream American journalism. It is another example of a publication drawing attention to itself while feasting off someone else's achievement. It is also an example of journalists making a bold response to a stupid question. "Person of the Century," indeed. How about Lenin, Stalin, or Hitler? They certainly shook things up. Or how about the inventor of the bikini or of no-fault divorce or the century's first serial murderer? How clever it would have been for *Time's* savants to come up with one of these grim candidates. Everyone would notice.

One of the thoughts that struck me about *Time's* choice was how it differs from those of two avowedly political magazines, the *Weekly Standard* and *Human Events*. Both admit to being conservative. Their choices for "Person of the Century" are Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan, respectively. *Time* is a liberal magazine, though in keeping with American journalism's phony standards it denies any political bias whatsoever. It did, of course, choose a political leader as "runner-up." That would be Franklin Roosevelt, and what writer did *Time* choose to introduce President Roosevelt? Why President Bill Clinton, who is, incidentally, not a writer. Moreover, he is today, as was once said of President Richard Nixon, "the disgraced." As president, Clinton dimin-

ished the presidency as much as FDR enlarged it. Here is how *Time* identifies the only elected president ever to be impeached and thereafter cited for contempt of court: "One of President Bill Clinton's accomplishments has been to restore the strength of Franklin Roosevelt's legacy by reforming welfare and conquering runaway deficits while still showing how government could help average citizens. He's written a fascinating piece...." Has he really? Or did one of his spectacularly undistinguished speech writers extrude the blah that appears under his name? Actually, as for "reforming welfare," he at first refused reforms suggested by Republicans and only swallowed them after Republicans gained the majority in Congress. As for "conquering runaway deficits," as recently as 1995 he envisaged \$200 billion deficits for, as the *Washington Post* editorialized, "as far as the eye can see." Only his cooperation with a Republican budget vanquished deficits. And precisely how has Clinton in this historic economic boom, originating in Paul Volcker's strangulation of inflation and Reagan's revival of productivity, shown "how government could help average citizens"? Has he set up a government dating service or sex therapy clinic? *Time's* deviousness vaults from the realm of the mendacious to that of the preposterous.

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Einstein was a very great scientist and science has made inestimable contributions to the twentieth century. So has engineering contributed, and medicine. But the twentieth century, like most centuries, has been burned and brightened by politics. It was Aristotle who 2,300 years ago noted the centrality of politics to mankind's life. If we have to address such a stupid matter as the identity of the "Person of the Century," surely some political figure should be nominated. At the beginning of the century the political figure would be

Lenin, the model for all the disturbed dictators who followed.

Those dictators established tyrannies that threatened not merely our freedom but our civilization in all its manifestations.



The political figures who at first thwarted and then finished off those dictatorships are certainly the most important figures of the century. The *Weekly Standard* is correct to record Churchill's incomparable role in challenging totalitarianism's onslaught, though without Roosevelt's perspicacity, Winston would have been a dead duck. *Human Events* is also on sound ground to record Reagan's singular place in bankrupting the Soviet Union. Heaped in obloquy by his tormentors Reagan stood almost alone in pushing his arms buildup and a strategic defense initiative that is still widely derided.

Yet let us not fall for *Time's* foolishness in honoring but one person for such a momentous deed. Readers of *The American Spectator Online* accorded the honor "Person of the Century" to Reagan and

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—Ralph Raico  
"A Libertarian's Basic Repertoire:  
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Churchill in a dead heat. The Pope came in third and Roosevelt got his due, though mainly for his domestic leadership.

Reagan and Churchill somehow appeal to conservatives' sense of political greatness. Both were brave and resolute in pursuing strategic insights that others could not see. Churchill possessed grander talents. Reagan was a simpler man, though no average man. As Martin Gilbert demonstrates in an absorbing book he wrote several years ago, *In Search of Churchill*, the major actor through seven

decades of British history was a distinguished soldier and strategist, journalist and historian, statesman, wit, and even an accomplished painter—the painter Sir John Lavery is quoted as saying Churchill could “have been a great master with the brush.” It is easy to acknowledge his greatness. He was half-American and from his American mother's blood, one-sixteenth Iroquois. If *Time's* politically correct editors had known that he might have overtaken Einstein. Moreover he had at least one disability. ❧

and government began in the Clinton-Gore fundraising efforts.” Hesto presto, Bradley had raised what will be one of the most important issues in Campaign 2000, the issue of political corruption. On this occasion he brought up only campaign finance, but he would provide a service to the Republic if he reviewed wider instances of corruption by Clinton-Gore. He might even enhance his chances for gaining the nomination. Many Democrats must know that Clinton-Gore's record of corruption is deplorable and a natural target for Republicans.

Beyond the question of Clinton-Gore's shady 1996 fundraising (dismissed by Gore with the flavorful alibi, “No controlling legal authority”) there are other looming ethical questions. There is the question of illegal technology transfers to the Chinese. There is the question of illegal foreign contributions. There is the politicization of the Justice Department. No administration has attracted so many independent counsels. The president lied under oath before a judge and to a grand jury. He has been found in contempt of court and appears to have attempted to obstruct justice. Bradley's present opponent responded by calling this shameless rogue “one of our greatest presidents.”

Now Gore is engaged in what *Wall Street Journal* columnist Paul Gigot calls “daily strafing of” Bradley. But even the strafing smacks of corrupt campaigning. Gore and his aides have accused this life-long liberal of suggesting policy reforms that are “anti-black” and intended “to destroy Medicare.” This is the very “politics of personal destruction” that Clinton and Gore have claimed to be above but have used against all opponents, both political opponents and private citizens. If Bradley takes up the wide array of corruption that Clinton-Gore engaged in he will beat the historians to the punch. He will also beat the Republicans and make the primaries far less laughable. ❧

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# Grotesqueries

**A**t this stage of the presidential campaigns thoughtful Americans might begin to wonder why we have primaries. Is it to give the press a chance to raise chimerical questions about candidates that would never be raised in polite company? Take the questions regarding John McCain's emotional fitness for office. What decent person would raise such a barbarous question about a man who has demonstrated his emotional fitness in a public career spanning two decades and following a career spent in military service that was exemplary and even heroic? No, rude questions cannot be the reason for having primary campaigns.

Well, then, do we hold primary campaigns so that candidates can travel the country engauding improbable autobiographies? They tell us of their first summer jobs, of their favorite good deeds perpetrated during adolescence, of their military records or their records as civic volunteers. We hear how they suffered as children when called fatties by the local bullies, how they are related to every ethnic voting bloc and to most religions. For some reason candidates campaigning for the presidency reveal themselves to be such fantastic creatures of ego and id that the voter might well ask, would I want this improbable megalomaniac as my neighbor? Why would I want him as my president?

Presidential candidates tell us things about themselves that in another era polite voters would rather not know. Vice President Al Gore is the most embarrassing. He tells us about the suffering of his family. The unsurpassed intelligence of himself, his inexhaustible ardor for every form of culture, every leisure pursuit, every virtue and noble thought. Mr. Gore's distending autobiography is rapidly becoming a work of the most grotesque fiction since Rabelais. Now he has added new revelations to his invention of the Internet, his life as a farm boy, and his days as a role model for *Love Story*. Recently he told New Hampshire audiences of his devotion to the cartoon series “The Simpsons,” his exploits as a builder of suburbia, and “I found a little place in upstate New York called Love Canal.” The press snickered.

Obviously democratic primaries have to play a more exalted role in public life than this. Now Mr. Gore's opponent for his party's nomination, Bill Bradley, is demonstrating the true value of primaries. Primary campaigns are a way to ventilate issues worthy of the electorate's concern. Bradley has brought up the ethically questionable way Gore and his boss financed their 1996 re-election.

“Let's go back to 1996,” Bradley urged a New Hampshire audience in late November. “At that time, there were questions about where politics ended

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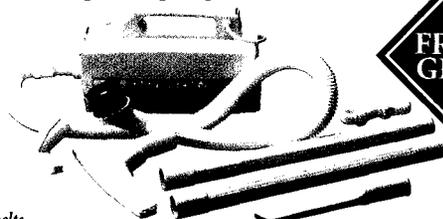
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# Raising McCain

## Why all the liberal interest in a “conservative”?

A few words on the news media's incessant doting on John McCain. George Will called it the “third great love affair in history, after Abelard and Heloise, and Romeo and Juliet.” I have not seen anything like it in my nearly 25 years in Washington. Howard Kurtz, the media reporter for the *Washington Post*, has commented on it more than once. But the Scribal Collective remains unabashed. They are blatantly trying to secure the GOP nomination for their friend and ally, who has been flying under the false flag of “conservative Republican.” There's a quid pro quo, too. McCain has been urging, and the media have been trumpeting, a policy change (campaign finance reform) that is calculated to enhance the influence of the press. If enacted, it would restrict alternative sources of political information. The conservative columnist Ann Coulter has described the dozens of pro-McCain editorials in the *New York Times* this past year as in-kind campaign contributions worth at least \$2.2 million. Actually, a great deal more than that, as Grover Norquist noted last issue.

The media always love it when a nominal Republican adopts their preferred policies. This allows them to disavow the pro-Democratic bias of which they are sometimes accused. McCain makes just about every issue “bipartisan.” He aids the Democrats in many ways. His assault on the tobacco companies has done wonders for plaintiffs' trial lawyers, who in turn are major contributors to the Demo-

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cratic Party. In a series evaluating the accuracy of political ads, Howard Kurtz reported that McCain, in a New Hampshire ad, “is all but declaring war on a Republican Congress.” I agree with Donald Lambro of the *Washington Times*, who has described McCain as “left-leaning.” The truth is that the (left-leaning) media are perpetrating a hoax by uncritically accepting McCain's own self-description.

Journalists don't normally fall in love with someone whom they call “right wing.” Clearly, they don't really believe that he is. Richard Cohen wrote in the *Washington Post* recently that his journalist friends “are forever declaring their admiration for [McCain].” He, too, hastened to reassure us, in the approved style, that, yes, McCain really is a right-winger. Still, he couldn't conceal his admiration for the man. So do those on the campaign trail know something that we don't? Yes. Cohen added this: “McCain's people whisper, Don't worry, he's not really so anti-abortion, he'll come around on gay rights, gun control and almost anything else you can name.”

Thanks for the tip-off, Richard. We had already guessed at the backstage whispering, but the confirmation was appreciated. You were the first to break radio silence. Cohen's column was headlined “The Very Authentic McCain.” It was to Cohen's credit that he showed just how inauthentic—insincere—the war hero turned media hero really is.

McCain has said he “absolutely” supports the appointment of gay and lesbian Cabinet members, and he wants basic training in the military to stay co-ed. He told Reuters that he saw no reason why an open homosexual should not become

president. Elaine Donnelly of the Center for Military Readiness notes that McCain's well-known criticism of special interests does not extend to the agenda of feminist and homosexual activists.

We are indebted to the gay journalist, Andrew Sullivan, for reporting in the London *Sunday Times* that McCain has gay staffers, plural, on his team. This is something the *New York Times* has not seen fit to print, despite (or because of) its propaganda campaign on behalf of the homosexual agenda. (When *New York Times* columnist and former Executive Editor Abe Rosenthal was given the push a couple of months ago, he said that his *New York Times* epitaph should read: “He kept the paper straight.”)

What will happen in the unlikely event that McCain gets the nomination? No doubt a media Big Foot council will be informally convened, and they will concede that yes, they have been a little easy on their hero. Someone will add that in 1992, their comparable neglect of Bill Clinton's peccadilloes may have, in the end, caused the nation needless grief. So let the chips fall, etc. Then the investigative bloodhounds will be given free rein, and Gore or Bradley will win in November. (Others think the love affair is so intense that it will continue until the election.)

On nominations to the Supreme Court: Warren Rudman was on TV the other day, lavishing praise on McCain. That was one more reason to be suspicious. Four of the most liberal justices to serve on the Court—Earl Warren, William Brennan, Harry Blackmun, David Souter—were appointed by Republicans, and Rudman is the genius who gave us Justice Souter. McCain promises only that he will have “no litmus test” for judges. But that is reassuring to liberals, not conservatives. And don't forget what McCain said in August. He promised to