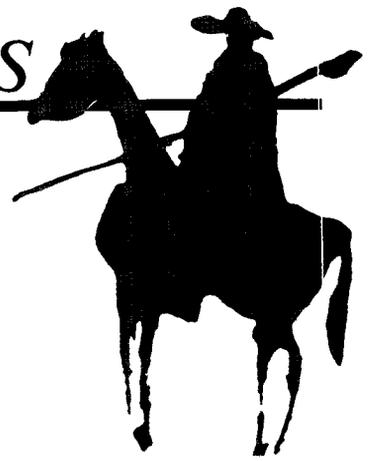


TILTING AT WINDMILLS



When Florida police finally caught up with a speeding Audi, they found an attractive 32-year-old woman in the driver's seat. Beside her was a 27-year-old man who was married to the car's owner. What's unusual, you ask? Well, for one thing, the owner and the driver were not the same person. For another, the driver was nude below the waist. Finally, both the driver and the passenger were assistant state's attorneys. . . .

Since the 1967-68 school year, the number of pupils in the schools of Kanawha County, West Virginia, has declined 40 percent. During

the same period the number of administrators has increased by 400 percent. . . .

Whenever political columnists fret about the possibility of a convention that will not be decided by the primaries, they say it will be a "brokered" convention. Why does it have to be brokered, with all the cynical deal-making that word implies? Delegates can simply vote for the person they think will make the best president. After all, that was the original idea of conventions. And it can produce the best candidate and a lot of excitement to boot. Remember Wendell

Willkie. He was the only Republican candidate in 1940 with enough sense to realize that the Nazis posed a bit of a problem for the rest of us on this planet. And his come-from-behind victory, from just a handful of votes on the first ballot to a majority on the fifth, produced the most fascinating convention of my lifetime.

My fantasy is that the public will awaken to Bruce Babbitt's superiority and there will be chants from the gallery like the "We-Want-Willkie" of 1940—I can hear people shouting "Br-u-u-u-ce," the way the kids do at a Springsteen concert.

There is doubtless some amalgam of the best qualities of Dukakis, Gore, and Jackson that would make a preferable candidate, but in a world where we have to choose one human being, Babbitt is still my man. . . .

Maury Maverick, the son of the great liberal congressman and a columnist for the *San Antonio Express-News*, became curious about the religious composition of the 220 marines killed in the bombing of their barracks in Beirut in 1983. The list he got from the Navy shows 78 Catholics and 64 Baptists. No other faith's representation was greater than 16. What is depressing is that it was much less for the groups that tend to be most affluent—there were no Unitarians, Quakers, or Jews, and only two Presbyterians and two Episcopalians. For the Quaker, the avoidance of military service may be a matter of conscience. For the others, I fear it represents further proof that the affluent are not doing their part in the defense of their country. . . .

There are occasional exceptions to the truth embodied in Big is Bad and Small is Beautiful, but the takeover of PSA, the California commuter airline, by USAir does not appear to be one of them. For years the PSA flight attendants have tried to relieve the burden of air travel by spicing their routine announcements with humor. The jokes may not be the greatest—as the plane for Los Angeles taxis toward the runway, the attendant might say, "Welcome to Flight 302

to Seattle," and as a gasp arises from the passengers, quickly confess she's only kidding—but they do relieve the tedium of being trapped in the cabin. There have been only a handful of complaints and thousands of grateful compliments. So what's USAir doing? It's abolishing the jokes. . . .

P at Robertson's libel suit against Paul McCloskey, the former congressman, demonstrates how libel law can be used to persecute those who tell the truth. Robertson sued McCloskey for having alleged that Robertson used his father's political influence to avoid combat in Korea. Robertson, however, did not let the case

come to trial, dropping the suit at the last minute. But by then he had forced McCloskey to incur \$400,000 in legal fees. If McCloskey was telling the truth—and knowing him, it is hard for me to imagine that he was not—he did nothing wrong. Yet he's being punished by this whopping financial loss.

There is a simple solution to this injustice. In libel suits—and for that matter, in all other civil cases—the loser, or the person who drops his suit, like Robertson did, should pay the legal fees of the other party. This is the rule in England and should be the law here. Then there would be no more nuisance suits. People would go to court only if they are confident that they are in the right. Unfortunately, the American Bar Association is

How To Stop Inflation



When times are good, speculators hold land out of full use, hoping for a price rise. Also, buildings are depreciating in value while land is appreciating; thus more and more sites become inefficiently used. This causes an artificial land scarcity, pushing land prices up. This boosts the cost of goods and services sold in the marketplace. If the money supply remains unchanged, then a depression results because some of the higher-priced goods and services will remain unbought.

Of course, if we boost the money supply to fund the higher-priced goods and services, that's — inflation.

There's only one way to stop the increasing under-use of land, and that's by taxing land heavily, instead of taxing labor and capital. Remove the cause and you stop inflation. Remember, land rent is at least 24% on national income.

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sure to oppose such a triumph of common sense because its members know it would cut the amount of litigation in half, which means we wouldn't need so many lawyers and those who were left wouldn't get as rich. . . .

I can't believe it! In the midst of a severe nursing shortage, the Immigration and Naturalization Service is going to deport qualified and experienced foreign nurses. They, by the way, are people who came here legally—with visas. We're throwing them out—just because their visas are expiring—at the same time we have a program of amnesty for illegal aliens. . . .

Suppose war breaks out and the Russians want to halt our missile production. What do they have to do? Launch a thousand nuclear missiles to destroy our factories? No. All they have to do is send a few tanks 30 miles from Czechoslovakia to a small plant in West Germany. It just happens to make all of the high-purity silicon we use in our missile guidance systems. . . .

Two years ago a municipal court judge in Sacramento, California, depressed by the carnage caused by drunk drivers, decided to require them to visit the morgue to view the bloody remains of victims of drunk driving. The result has been that of the 300 offenders who have made the court-ordered visits, only one has been arrested again.

I recall hearing a few years

ago about a similar success with a program of service in hospital emergency rooms as an alternative to jail for drunk drivers. Now California has enacted a law to encourage morgue visits or emergency-room service throughout the state. If this kind of thing continues, we're going to have to open a Good News Branch for our Only in California Department. . . .

One of the more troubling developments in the civil service movement during this century has been its increasing preoccupation with the interests of the employee as opposed to those of the public. Consider the case of Clarence Ferguson, an employee of the National Marine Fisheries Service in St. Petersburg, Florida. Ferguson, according to the *St. Petersburg Times*, drank a pint of gin a day. During the years 1980-83, he missed 389 days of work. Finally he was fired. Now a federal judge has given him the right to get his job back and has awarded him \$150,000 in back pay. The judge reasoned that all federal agencies should make reasonable accommodation for their "handicapped" workers, including alcohol and drug addicts.

An alcoholic who misses 389 days of work deserves our sympathy and our help in overcoming his addiction, but he does not deserve a government job. The only standard that should govern the retention of such employees is performance, performance that demonstrates competence and dedication to the public interest. . . .

Sophisticated political writers have taken to describing the electoral power of the southern white male as "the Bubba vote." What would be their reaction if a similar derogatory term were applied to black males? It can be argued that some of the whites describe themselves as Bubbas, but that is no better excuse than Richard Pryor finally concluded that he had for using the term *nigger* just because some blacks applied it to other blacks. . . .

Washington's permanent government—the bureaucrats, congressional staff, lobbyists, and journalists who stay as the politicians come and go—usually is skilled at taking care of its own interests. Few laws are enacted or enforced that violate the mutual interests of these members of the permanent party. But they slipped up in the case of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which, while kinder to the poor and the rich, is wicked in its impact on the two-wage-earner family with incomes of \$120,000 or so. Washington is filled with such couples, in which the wife might work at Commerce or Justice and her husband on the Hill or for a trade association or a newsweekly.

They're all moaning. Their taxes have gone up, and by substantial amounts, almost doubling in many cases. "We're really getting creamed," one congressional aide told *The Washington Post*.

But lest you shed too many

tears, consider what the aide said next: "This means we'll have to borrow the money for our trip to Europe." . . .

If you weren't quite persuaded by Judge Lois Forer's article last month on the need for orphanages to care for children in cases where the parents are an undesirable alternative, consider the children of James Lutgen of East Dubuque, Illinois. Three years ago Lutgen strangled his wife in front of his two daughters. After he was released from prison, he was awarded custody of the girls. . . .

The acceptance rate for Harvard's undergraduate college is one applicant in six. For the law school it's one in nine, for the medical school, it's one in 18. But the school of education accepts two out of three applicants.

"When one thinks of the hierarchy of a university," Alexander W. Astin, a professor of education at UCLA, recently told the *Los Angeles Times*, "there might be some dispute over what to put at the top: law, medicine, physics. But there is little dispute over what goes at the bottom: nursing and education."

This is in part because of the quality of people who are attending education schools, or teachers colleges, as they are sometimes called. A survey by the American Council of Education found that this year's college freshmen who planned to become teachers were the

least likely of all college students to have been "A" students in high school.

The low status of the education school is also explained by the quality of its faculty and curriculum. Ann Roark of the *Times* reports this conversation between two former education students:

"Social Foundations of Education," said one graduate from Cal State Dominquez Hills, reading from a list of courses that she had taken one year before. "What's that? That's a good question," she said, laughing. "I've taken it and I'm not sure."

"Oh, you know," chimed in one of her former classmates. "Remember that old geezer with his audio-visual displays?"

"Which audio-visual displays? And which old geezer?" a second classmate asked, also laughing. "That would describe most of them."

I see no hope for quick reform of the teachers colleges—major change will take decades because of all those tenured geezers with their audio-visual displays. If we are going to save the public schools we must stop hiring teachers from the teachers colleges and instead hire bright liberal arts graduates. Their professional training could be supplied by apprenticeship with the best of the experienced teachers for classroom practice and instruction in methodology.

Are such graduates willing to teach? They are indeed—just ask the people who do the hiring at the best private schools. Then why don't they apply to the public schools?

Because most public schools require degrees in education. . . .

"2 Drug Users Rejected For Help Try Suicide"

That was a headline in a recent edition of *The Washington Post*. Two cocaine abusers had sought help in kicking their habit but had been refused admission by the city's drug treatment facilities and by St. Elizabeth's Hospital, after which they both tried to kill themselves. There is now a waiting list of more than one thousand people who want to enter the detoxification and rehabilitation programs operated by the District. Why waste billions of dollars in futile efforts to keep drugs out when the money could be spent on programs to prevent and cure addiction? . . .

Last month, James Fallows wrote in these pages about the tendency of American anticommunists, like Pat Buchanan, to see the world in terms of who is Red and who is not and to ignore the differences caused by tribe, race, religion, and nationality. Ironically the communists have the same problem. The Russians and the Chinese are now having to face the fact that their troubles with the Armenians and the Tibetans are not caused by the capitalist imperialists but by the same forces the Pat Buchanans ignore. . . .

Speaking of Bruce Babbitt, my son, Christian, who campaigned for him in Iowa, has two explanations for his defeat that do not involve blaming the public or Babbitt's awkwardness on the

tube. One is that Babbitt's moment in the media sun in January, having been predicted and impliedly discounted by David Broder and Paul Taylor of *The Washington Post*, was then subjected to self-conscious put-down even by reporters who liked Babbitt. The result was that Iowa voters, instead of being impressed by the favorable publicity, were knowingly telling one another that it was nothing more than the expected media boomlet.

(While journalists often provide us with after-the-fact interpretations, heretofore it has been only the candidates and their aides who have attempted to control the media "spin" to be put on a *coming* political event. This may be the first time journalists themselves have provided the advance spin control for their colleagues.)

The other explanation is that Babbitt tried to take advantage of his reputation with the media for being courageous while failing to repeat and explain to the public the positions that had gained him the reputation. He would take stands on the need for worker ownership and new taxes, and for reducing social security payments to the affluent, prompting a spate of articles saying how brave he was. But his television commercials would quote only the praise for his courage and not explain his stands, which needed explaining if the voters were going to rally to his cause.

Gary Hart did something similar in 1984. He wanted to be praised for his position papers but not explain his

positions. When Walter Mondale asked, "Where's the beef?", Hart kept pulling out a book he had recently written and saying, "Here it is." But the details of "it" were seldom explored either in his campaign commercials or in his debates with the other candidates. . . .

Polly Toynbee, in her article on Margaret Thatcher in this issue, argues that men and women are more alike than different. I agree, but here is one difference that has been true at least of the women I have known best, those of my own generation, and that I think is important. Although some of them were real dragons, on the whole they were much less likely than men to have chips on their shoulders or to indulge in other such macho nonsense. I wish the sexual revolution had consisted of men imitating women in this respect instead of women becoming Margaret Thatchers. . . .

If Uncle George is in a coma and you're in the hospital room with him, don't start talking about how you never could stand the old bastard or about that Mediterranean cruise you're going to take when he kicks the bucket and you inherit his fortune. According to a recent study by the University of Chicago, there is a good chance that the old boy can hear everything you're saying.

This finding has a serious side. It is important that we keep talking to patients who are in comas. Recovery rates

are dramatically better in such cases than when the patient is ignored. . . .

In my continuing search for any indication that Americans are at last beginning to free themselves from the greed that has dominated the past two decades, I have become skilled at extracting hopeful signs from the slimmest evidence. The latest example is the spring travel section in *The New York Times* of March 6 with headlines such as "More With Less: Putting Off the Ritz" and "The Grand Hotel goes out and the station buffet comes in."

What happened during the 1970s and 1980s is that Americans came to view travel as a way to prove their taste by patronizing the glitziest hotels and restaurants. It wasn't enough to go to London to see the city, you had to stay at Claridges and dine at the Connaught Grill. This meant vacations, like most of the things that prove your good taste back home, were costing lots of money. And it was the need for all that money that inspired all that greed.

But in the 1950s and 1960s, people traveled with Arthur Frommer's *Europe on \$5 a Day* under their arms. You proved you were clever by finding the bistro or small hotel on the Left Bank that was good *and* cheap. Cheap meant you didn't have to be greedy. So that's why I'm hopeful again. Maybe if people will begin putting off the Ritz, they'll stop thinking they have to make big bucks and stop respecting only those who do. . . .

—Charles Peters

Hurts So Good

At POW school the Navy locked me in a box. Here's why I'm grateful.

by Scott Shuger

This box I was locked in made me more uncomfortable than I'd ever been. Its dimensions had been calculated to prevent the average-sized man from lying down or sitting up. Instead of either of those luxurious postures, the box forced you into a miserable muscle-straining compromise that made sleep impossible. Even when I was lucky enough to daydream—about my family or food or some other good thing—I was cut short by the periodic pounding of a rifle butt on my door.

In mid-afternoon, when I was stripped down to my underwear and put in the box, it had been in the mid-eighties and the cool darkness was welcome. But it had been forever since the slit in front of me had gone black—near midnight I bet—and I had been shivering for hours. The shakes started soon after a guard yanked open my door and then slammed it just as suddenly, spilling my piss-pot all over me.

This was one of those situations where what you *knew* didn't matter much in light of what you *felt*. I knew I was in a school, on an American military base, that my snarling captors were fellow members of the U.S. Navy, and that this whole thing would be over a day from now. But none of that was worth a thing to me shaking in the dark.

Scott Shuger is writing a book on the Navy.

As a navy aviation officer, the last special training I attended before I got ready to deploy overseas with my squadron in 1980 was Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape—SERE—school. That's where the boxes were. The acronym is pronounced "sear," and for me it always conjures up an image of being shoved on a spit and slowly turned over an open flame.

The existence of such a school probably strikes life-long civilians as intolerably barbaric—yet another proof that the U.S. military has gone stone haywire. But my reaction is more typical of SERE graduates: it was the best war training I got. If more of our military preparation were this focused and effective, our readiness would be improved exponentially.

The at-sea scenario exercises that the Navy depends on to ready its forces tend to lack realism. For one thing, they don't involve much live weapons firing (too expensive—the F-14's chief weapon, the Phoenix missile, goes for \$1 million a copy). For another, aboard a ship underway, there is no safe way to set off explosives, fill compartments with smoke and sparks, or set up catastrophic power failures. As a result, what is supposed to simulate an all-out war at sea with the Red Navy all too often ends up as just more routine. But SERE school was an example of how the mayhem of combat can be re-created on land.