

craft. Strap on a small gun, some cruise and anti-air missiles and you have something that in reasonable numbers can cause some real trouble. Just ask the U.S. carrier pilots who tried, without much luck, to sink Vietnamese and Cambodian gunboats. Or the navy investigators who found that the *Vincennes's* troubles with Iranian gunboats contributed to its miscalculations about the Airbus. Most of the navies of the world have good stocks of these craft. The Soviets have more than 500 of them. We have seven. There is no reason why the U.S. Navy has a crappier small-boat fleet than your average Colombian drug dealer.

In his just-published book on his years as Reagan's secretary of the Navy, John Lehman defends his opposition to what he describes as the "whole trendy

school of military reform . . . [built] around the ideas that complexity and technology were bad and that simplicity and cheapness were good." He argues: "The tremendous American edge in technology is an inherent advantage provided by our culture and our economic system. We must build to this advantage, not trade it away for cheaper, smaller, less capable ships and aircraft and weapons built in greater numbers, which is the forte of a totalitarian, centralized, Gosplan economy." This reference to the Soviets is the worst kind of fallacy—like saying that because the Nazis introduced jets and rockets, we shouldn't have them. In light of the raft of technotroubles bedeviling the Navy that Lehman bought us, we need to think much more carefully about the Navy his successors want to buy us next. □

The Worst City Government

If you thought the government of the Virgin Islands was unwise to hire personnel consultants from the D.C. government, think about China. In 1987, the People's Republic hosted Gwynne Washington, an assistant director of D.C.'s Department of Corrections, which last year allowed 18 escapes. Asking the District for advice on prison security is like asking Mother Teresa for tips on birth control.

The first lesson that D.O.C. officials might have offered is semantics. On the night of January 19, inmates at Lorton prison burned down the administration building. Many of us might call this a riot. Not Hallem Williams. "It was not a riot," said the director of corrections. "It was a fire with opportunistic vandalism and a murder. . . ."

"Our management is sound," said Williams. But a 1987 report by the National Institute of Corrections, a federal agency, found that Lorton guards had a habit of forgetting to lock the doors. It's no surprise, then, that three of the 18 escapees simply walked out.

Our favorite: the armed robber who strolled out with his family as visiting hours ended. . . .

Nor does "sound management" leap to mind to describe the D.O.C.'s early release program to ease overcrowding. The delicate task of deciding which 800 inmates to return to the streets fell to low-level clerks with little training. "Nobody gave [us] any specific guidelines," one worker told *The Washington Post*. "It was catch-as-catch-can." Or can't.

It might have seemed logical for the parole board to make decisions about early release, but it was busy running a special rehabilitation program for ex-cons—well, for one ex-con anyway: Mayor Marion Barry's ex-wife, who served time for defrauding tenants of a D.C. housing project. She was paid \$28,000 for a three-month study of the needs of women inmates. . . .

The security at Lorton might seem impressive compared to that at Oak Hill, the District's maximum security facility for young offenders, run by the city's Youth Services Administration. In 1987,

25 percent of the inmates escaped, including two convicted of murder. Investigators from the U.S. Department of Education found that a \$200,000 education program was "almost nonexistent." And this winter, a court-appointed monitor found the prison infested with rats and snakes and the inmates "entirely out of underwear."

Meanwhile, more than 6,000 city employees—roughly one in seven—make more than \$40,000 a year, according to David Clarke, chairman of the D.C. city council. "Like those of us on perpetual diets know so well," he said, "obesity is often reflected by a bulging middle". . . .

Second place this month goes to Chicago, where, the *Chicago Tribune* reports, about \$70 million in parking fines remain uncollected because the 11 city agencies that control them can't coordinate. But not to worry. Several city council members have proposed a new system—complete with a provision to grant themselves immunity from parking fines. . . .

—Katherine Boo

The Impossible Life of a College President

You think it's a life of oak panels and big ideas. It's more like being a PAC fundraiser.

by Julie Rose

It's the kind of fantasy that might creep through the cabin of the Eastern Shuttle just after take-off. As harried professionals unlock leather briefcases, pour Canadian Club, and gaze sternly at ledger sheets and legal briefs, minds begin to wander. *It's 8:30 p.m.—puts me in at National at 10:00, the Hilton at 10:45, it'll take two more hours to pull the presentation together, and, Jesus, I've got to be sharp at that 7:30 breakfast when I make my pitch. ("Another Canadian Club, please.") Why do I live like this?*

As bankers, lawyers, and bureaucratic brass ponder their overworked bodies and underfed souls, The Fantasy takes shape: *If only I were president. . .*

Of a college, that is.

It's not that spending ten hours a day with the tax code has lost its appeal, exactly. It's just that after a few decades of power and money, it's time for something more, well, cerebral. *Soulful*. A college presidency seems like a dream job. It's a life of books. A world of libraries, quadrangles, and faculty clubs; of robes, ceremonies, and honorary degrees. A chance to ask the big questions, like what was Proust trying to say with the *madeleine* anyway? But the city lights rising up below push the fantasy aside, for now at least, and the life of briefcases and 15-minute billable bytes returns.

Now meet Mary Maples Dunn, president of Smith College and no stranger to the billable time-byte herself. She's got the robes and the degrees, but in substance her life seems little different than those the harried professionals dream about fleeing. She's on her own time now, away from the campus on holiday, visiting a friend of a friend when the Jasper Johns catches her eye. It's just one of a number of

the home's striking works of contemporary art, and Dunn listens attentively as her hostess describes her collection. Then, for Dunn, her hostess gets to the most important part: her one great ambition left in life is to finish her baccalaureate. Dunn leaves the conversation with the impression that this woman had even attended Smith for a year. It is all she needs to hear.

Back at her desk a few weeks later, Dunn is meeting with Smith's new museum director, Ed Nygren. It is a day in early December in which Dunn has let me sit in on her many meetings on campus. At the moment, Dunn is a little flustered. She is trying to describe to Nygren her hostess's collection. The whole house had a feeling of, mmm, the minimalist to it. No, no, she says, shaking her head. Realizing her description can't convey what she saw, she admits that she knows very little about art.

She knows quite a bit more, however, about fundraising, and she reaches quickly for the book to her right, a thick, thumbed volume: the Smith College alumni directory. She glances for the woman's last name and does not find it. Maybe it's under her maiden name, Dunn muses. More important, maybe she feels enough fondness for Smith to donate a painting or two, perhaps even some cash (a prospect that would grow more likely were the woman, with a little encouragement, to return to finish her degree). Completing the background check, however, is someone else's job. For the moment, Dunn has done her work—she went off for a drink with a few friends and unearthed a prospective donor.

She and Nygren press on to another subject—gifts already given. There is the presentation of the painting by George Inness that should be arriving soon. It is an important work; better yet, it arrived with