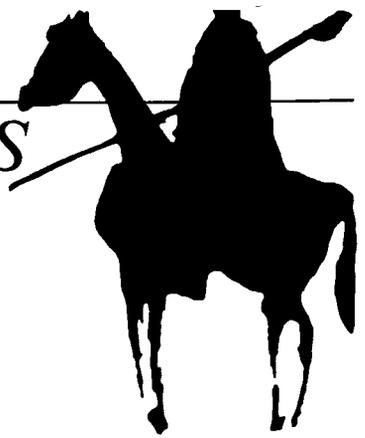


# TILTING AT WINDMILLS



**I**t's time to revive our Only in California Department. Why? The California Supreme Court recently decided that it was not moral turpitude per se for a lawyer to hire a hit man. Although the lawyer admitted that it was his intent to have a former client "seriously injured," the court ruled that he can regain his license in two years by passing a written exam on professional responsibility. . . .

Did you know that the U.S. Army is developing "brave pills" for soldiers to use in combat? I agree with the serviceman who, when told about the pill by Fred Francis of NBC News, said, "Sometimes it's good to be afraid, good to keep your head down, instead of being the brave John Wayne, running up the hill". . .

But if the Army wants to find an immediate market for these pills it might try the

pilots who fly NATO planes. According to *Jane's Defense Weekly*, NATO lost more than 100 jet fighters in crashes during just the one year ending October 31, 1988. . . .

This raises the question of what the hundreds of billions Ronald Reagan spent on defense actually bought us. News of fighters crashing in Europe is accompanied by this report by Molly Moore in *The Washington Post*: "The nation's B-1 bomber force today may not fly as far as intended, carry as heavy a load, or properly use all the weapons required to perform its full mission, and new estimates show the strategic bombers could cost \$400 million each."

Then there are the stories in *Newsweek* and *The New York Times* about the B-2 Stealth bomber. The latter, by Jeffrey A. Merkeley, is entitled "The Stealth Fiasco," while *Newsweek's* article by Gregg

Easterbrook runs under the head: "Sticker Shock: The Stealth Is a Bomb."

And then there's all the money the Navy has squandered on the wrong weapons—see Scott Shuger's article on page 10. Incredibly, the principal villain behind the Navy's extravagance, John Lehman, the man who never saw an aircraft carrier he didn't love, recently wrote an article for *The Washington Post's* Outlook section entitled, "Pentagon Rx: Cut the Fat, Build the Services' Muscle". . .

**W**hat's wrong with baseball is suggested by the fact that Claudell Washington recently signed a contract with his *seventh* major league team. How can fans have a sense of loyalty to a team as they did, say, with the Brooklyn Dodgers that Roger Kahn described in *The Boys of Summer*? The problem of

course is free agency. But under the old system players were often radically underpaid. Consider the case of one of the most skilled of those boys of summer, Carl Furillo, who played right field for the Dodgers of the fifties, and who recently died in poverty. Under the current system he would probably be overpaid. We need some genius to find a formula that will encourage players to stick with one team but make sure they are compensated fairly. . . .

Speaking of sports scandals, one is that there still has not been a black head coach in the National Football League even though the applicant pool is not exactly limited. The owners should look at professional basketball, where three black coaches—Lenny Wilkens, K.C. Jones, and Al Attles—have led their teams to championships. . . .

**I**n this issue you will find a debate between me and Michael Kinsley (see pages 26 and 52) on a national service draft, which he opposes and I favor. As I have advocated this idea I have found considerable support among older people who served under the democratic draft of the forties, fifties, and early sixties, and at least some openness on the part of the young. But there is almost total opposition from the people who reached their mid-twenties after 1964 and did not serve in the military or the Peace Corps or VISTA or something similar. I think I have finally figured out why. Because these people chose not to serve, once they reached a point—usually around their mid-twenties—where career and family considerations begin to make service difficult if not

impossible, they then, to protect themselves from guilt, had a self-interest in believing that there is no such thing as a duty to serve. Since the group now includes the people who for the next 30 years will increasingly control the positions of power in this country, it's clearly going to take a moral revolution to put the national service idea across.

The Democratic Leadership Council's national service proposal, which is receiving considerable favorable attention in Congress, contains a financial incentive—government help with the cost of college—to attract the poor and the middle class to service. But there is still nothing to inspire the rich to do their part or, for that matter, the meritocratic elite, who know they can get high-salaried jobs that will pay off their student loans and spare them the tiresome demands of national service. . . .

I should note that the foregoing is in no way an ad hominem attack on Kinsley. He and James Fallows, Taylor Branch, and Jonathan Rowe, among *Monthly* alumni, more than saved their souls by working at slave wages for both Ralph Nader and *The Washington Monthly*. I should also note that both Nicholas Lemann and Matthew Cooper have devoted many hours to the Big Brother program, and I'm sure other of our alumni have done other worthy work in addition to their stint at the *Monthly*. But the fact remains that community service agencies have not been overwhelmed by volunteers from the rich and the intelligentsia and that almost no one from these groups serves

## “STOP THEM DAMN PICTURES”

That's what "Boss" Tweed demanded when he saw the handwriting on the Hall (Tammany, that is).

But the pictures didn't stop. "Boss" Tweed

met his maker in

the Ludlow Street Jail and Thomas Nast put bitingly eloquent political cartoons squarely and permanently in the middle of American political life. Tweed aside,



we think Emerson had it right when he said, "Caricatures are often the truest history of the times."

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in the military. . . .

A 19-year-old Washington woman, Mona Shiferaw, broke up with her boyfriend not long ago. He began threatening her. He broke the windshield on her brother's car. Police arrested him, but the court let him go. Then he called Mona and said, according to a police affidavit: "This time you're really going to get it. It's a perfect time to get a shotgun because I just got my last paycheck." She called the police, who again arrested the ex-boyfriend, who was again released by the court. Two days later he shot and killed Mona.

We wrote about many similar cases in May 1987 (see "Battered Justice," Joan Meier). When are the courts going to wake up? . . .

We're glad to report at least some progress has been made with another campaign—the one against all those ads that glamorize speeding cars. *Adweek* recently recognized as one of the worst ads of the year the commercial with the Mercedes gliding along at 125 miles per hour: "A practice that we've come to associate with reckless teenagers suddenly gets an upscale gloss, thus legitimizing a particularly dangerous form of anti-social behavior." . . .

**W**e were so eager to see another of our causes triumph that we proclaimed somewhat prematurely in 1979 that the Me Decade was over and that The New Idealism would replace it. Eight years later Paul Taylor, writing in *The Washington Post*, was similarly optimistic when he proclaimed the arrival of "The We

Decade." Now the *Post's* David Broder is telling us "The Self-Interest Decade Is Over." Let's hope that this time the optimism is justified. . . .

There are some signs that it is. George Bush's inaugural address was certainly a step in the right direction:

"My friends, we are not the sum of our possessions. They are not the measure of our lives. In our hearts we know what matters. We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend, a loving parent, a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood and town better than he found it."

Amen—except I can't help wondering why a man who loyally served the greedy for eight years as Ronald Reagan's lap-dog is suddenly coming on like Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*. . . .

If you are a Democrat who lost a close race in November, you will not be thrilled to learn that your national committee had \$3 million that it chose not to spend on the party's candidates last fall. The money will be used to pay salaries and other expenses of Democratic National Committee officials. This is further proof of a rule well known to everyone who has ever worked in the field for a government agency: "The fellows in Washington always take care of themselves first."

The Democrats lost four Senate seats—in Florida, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming—by narrow margins. John Vinich, who lost Wyoming by just 1,165 votes, told Peter A. Brown of Scripps-Howard that the DNC money "could have made the difference." . . .

The Peace Corps has been around 28 years. More than a hundred thousand people have been members of the organization. So it is odd that not one of them has been named Peace Corps director. The latest appointee, George Bush's choice, is Paul L.D. Coverdell, the Republican leader of the Georgia state senate, whose sole exposure to the hardships of the tropics has been the hot air of his colleagues in the legislature. . . .

**A**mong all the people who have been criticized by the *Monthly* over the years, it has seemed to me that our fellow journalists are the most unforgiving. Their distaste for taking what they dish out was illustrated again recently by the flap over whether reporters admitted to the congressional press gallery should have to disclose their sources of income. The reasoning behind the request is that the public has just as much interest in knowing a reporter is on the take from a lobbyist as it does in knowing whether a congressman is the recipient of similar beneficence. The gallery's executive committee, which voted 4 to 3 for the requirement, was up for reelection last month. Their fellow journalists voted so resoundingly in favor of the noble principle of nondisclosure that the committee is now stacked 6 to 1 against the requirement. . . .

Of the many villains in the savings and loan scandal—weak regulation, deregulation, and crooked S&L executives—one that I had not known until it was pointed out by Warren Brookes, one of the handful of

columnists who feel some obligation to do reporting as well as pontificating, is that when the FSLIC was first established in 1934, Congress required savings institutions to pay a fee of 25 cents per \$100 on deposit to finance the insurance system. If that fee had not been twice lowered thereafter at the behest of the savings institutions, the FSLIC would now have a surplus of \$5 billion. . . .

I am delighted to see that the government is going after another guilty party in the S&L mess that few people are aware of—the accounting firms that kept certifying that the situation was A-OK at institutions that were already gurgling as they were about to go under. . . .

One hopeful sign on the international front is the recent recommendation of a group of U.S. and Soviet terrorism experts that the two superpowers set up a joint group to combat terrorism, including joint action to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear or chemical and biological weapons. A good way to start would be for the Russians to cut off aid to the Syrians and Libyans. . . .

**W**hile all of us at the *Monthly* are delighted by the success of Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters* (see Annual Book Award, page 23), it has caused me to reflect on how much the right choice of name can help. Taylor's full name is Franklin Taylor Branch. Suppose he had decided to go by Frank. His accomplishments would still be impossible to ignore, but I can't imagine Frank Branch

rolling off the tongue at literary cocktail parties with nearly the ease of the name he chose. . . .

**A** judicial racket you may not be aware of is that federal judges do not have to resign when they step down from full-time duty. Resignation means their retirement pay will be the same salary they received during their last year on the bench. But they can instead choose, as most do, to be "senior judges." This status permits them to hear cases if they are needed and if they want to. But they don't have to do anything. One, for example, has performed no judicial duties since 1978. The important thing about being a "senior judge" is that you keep on getting those salary increases that active judges receive. If the increase scheduled for February had not been derailed, Warren Burger, who took senior judge status when he stepped down from the Supreme Court, would be getting \$69,500 more than he would have if he had simply resigned. . . .

Speaking of rackets, the American Bar Association is not only holding its tax-deductible annual meeting in Hawaii this year—it has also arranged follow-up seminars in Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, and Japan, in case the members would like to extend their tax-deductible trip to include the Far East. . . .

But for real connoisseurs of this scam, I recommend the Kenyan-American Surgical Nursing Conference, which will be held at such centers of advanced medicine as the Samburu Game Reserve, the

Masai Mara Game Reserve, and the Mt. Kenya Safari Club. The brochure states, "Tax deductibility benefits guaranteed." And lest our friends at the bar are afraid they'll be left out, the sponsors are also holding a Kenyan-American Legal Conference with the same guarantee. . . .

As you may have read, they've had a hard time assembling a jury for the trial of Oliver North because so many people saw his televised testimony before Congress, which, having been immunized, cannot be used against him. So what did Tim O'Brien of ABC News do? He goes on "World News Tonight" with tapes of the North testimony. Then he says to the viewers, "If you paid close attention to this report, you are ineligible to serve as a juror." There was a legitimate reason for the original televising of North's testimony. But all O'Brien's report did was make it that much harder to assemble a jury. . . .

In the renewed concern about chemical and biological weapons, which I mostly applaud, I hope people won't forget that not all such weapons are necessarily evil. My favorite example is one that to the best of my knowledge has so far appeared only in the James Bond film, *Goldfinger*—a 24-hour nerve gas that knocks the enemy out for a day but leaves them otherwise unharmed. Since I favor winning international disputes without killing people, as we did with the Berlin Airlift and the Cuban Missile Crisis, it seems to me that the 24-hour nerve gas would be a dandy weapon indeed. . . .

—Charles Peters

# The Navy We Need

## And the one we got

by Scott Shuger

Photo by Charles Kennedy

The current political and economic climate dictates that something like \$300 billion worth of military programs will have to be canceled during the new administration. And of all the services, the Navy is the most likely to be deeply cut. Over the past eight years, it is the only service that has actually grown. While the number of Army divisions has remained the same and the number of planes in the Air Force's tactical wings has actually shrunk, the Navy's fleet has swelled by more than 100 ships to 587, and its senior enlisted ranks have almost doubled since 1981. Moreover, the Navy's proposals for new programs—those not already underway—total around \$80 billion.

Among the items the Navy is plumping for:

- ▶ Two more *Nimitz*-class nuclear supercarriers, for a total of eight vessels of that class, bringing fleet strength to 15 flattops, up from 12 in 1981.
- ▶ Smaller ships. The Navy wants 26 *Burke*-class guided-missile destroyers to go with the three already under construction and the 27 larger, *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruisers already funded.
- ▶ Subs anyone? The Navy wants up to 30 *Seawolf*-

class attack submarines—subs designed to sink other subs—producing a fleet of 100 nuclear-powered attack subs. The Navy also wants money to complete the *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered submarines with their long-range Trident D5 missiles, for a total of 16-20 boats of that class.

▶ Don't forget the planes. The Navy wants to continue purchasing the carrier-based F/A-18 strike fighter, for a total of more than 1,000. It also wants to buy a new version of the carrier-based F-14 fighter, and to fund improvements for the older models already in the inventory, for a total of nearly 600.

To understand which weapons belong on the Navy's shopping list and which ones don't, you have to understand the scenarios the Navy is likely to encounter. While it's impossible to know just what our military needs will be next year, let alone 5, 10, 15 years from now, we can be certain that we'll need conventional weapons and nuclear weapons to keep the peace with the Soviets; we'll need to be ready to fight in limited, "tactical" engagements; and we should have the capacity to fight "strategic" battles on a global scale.

Many of the items on the Navy's budget request aren't what we need for any of these scenarios. And

Scott Shuger is writing a book on the Navy.