

an ozone hole would develop in the Northern hemisphere by the turn of the century, and Dumanoski wanted to get the story on the front page. Her editor, however, didn't think a "probability" merited page one, and told her if it wasn't a sure thing, the story would go inside. So she called the scientist and "negotiated something that really wasn't accurate . . . something much balder than was true," as she told Shaw. She got her piece on page one, and it said there would be an

ozone hole. Meanwhile, a Northern hemisphere ozone hole remains to be seen (and few expect to see one).

At a conference in 1990, Dumanoski said, "There is no such thing as objective reporting. I've become even more crafty about finding the voices to say the things I think are true. That's my subversive mission." Yet, ironically, the Ehrlichs praise Dumanoski in *The Betrayal of Science and Reason* as one of the "responsible electronic and print journalists who regularly offer

Who's Who

BY SUSAN THREADGILL

For those who hoped that women in Congress would set a good example of how to balance work and family, **Clara Bingham's** new book, *Women on The Hill*, is not brimming with glad tidings. **Rep. Cynthia McKinney** left her nine-year-old son behind in Georgia. It's hard to squeeze quality time from the crowded schedule of her weekends in the congressional district or his four or five visits a year to Washington. "He doesn't like me in this job," McKinney tells Bingham. "He would rather have a regular, average, ordinary mother." **Patty Murray's** family has gone back home. Murray, who had pioneered in letting **Pam Norick**, a staffer who is also a mother, work a four-day week, has told Norick the family-friendly schedule has to stop and that she has to leave if she can't work every day.

Of course, if you're in the camp that thinks women should adapt to congressional culture rather

than try to change it, you won't be troubled by those stories. And you'll be heartened by Bingham's characterization of **Pat Schroeder** as turf-obsessed—a trait the men in Congress have spent decades perfecting.

Former White House lawyers **Mark Fabiani** and **Jane Sherburne** are said to have been dissatisfied with **Bruce Lindsey's** "social visit" description of Riady-Huang meetings with the President. Is this why they have left the White House? Insiders tell us no. Fabiani has an inner-city revival project in San Diego that he is reported to be excited about. And Sherburne had other problems besides Lindsey. She didn't get along with White House counsel **Jack Quinn**. And the person to whom she reported, **Harold Ickes**, is leaving soon. But so (as we learn just as we go to press) is Quinn. Maybe Sherburne should reconsider.

After CNN's **Mark Feldstein** exposed the Hoffa gang's attempt to regain control of the Teamsters, **Jimmy Hoffa Jr.'s** aides, according to Feldstein, "Threatened to investigate me and smear me in Washington. I even have a tape of a Hoffa lawyer saying I will 'burn in hell' for the story."

The recent appointment of **Lanny**

Davis, a former law partner of **Ron Brown's** and of the legendary lobbyist **Tommy Boggs**, to replace **Mark Fabiani** on the President's special counsel on Whitewater shows the White House is willing to forgive mistakes by a friend. Davis, who has known Hillary **Clinton** since their Yale Law School days, subsequently played a role in selecting both **Zoe Baird** and **Janet Reno** to be attorney general. Few of today's White House insiders regard either choice as brilliant. Baird's nannygate problems cost the President dearly in the administration's early days, and Reno, who is thought by most White House insiders not to be tough enough on any crimes—except those possibly committed by the Clintons—is said to survive only because she is widely admired among the general public.

The financial troubles of **Joseph E. Cosby**, one of Washington's more prominent bookers of speaking engagements has left a lot of his prominent clients feeling stiffed. Among those aggrieved are **David Broder**, **Cal Thomas**, **Arthur Schlesinger Jr.**, **George Plimpton**, and **David Brinkley**. The biggest loser—to the tune of \$50,557—appears to be **Jesse Jackson**.

Why was **Tony Lake** replaced by **Sandy Berger** as National

dependable information to the public on the environmental situation." If that's the standard of excellence, it should come as no surprise to find that, as the Ehrlichs disappointedly cite in their book, a 1995 poll found that "51 percent of those polled believed the media's coverage of environmental issues was biased and 35 percent thought the media made environmental issues seem worse than they really are." The Ehrlichs blame the brownlash: "To our distress and

that of many of our colleagues, brownlash messages seem to be having a measurable effect on the general public." Might it be that the public is right?

Compounding the irony, one of two examples the Ehrlichs cite of "what a superb job a good journalist can do with a complex scientific topic when backed up by careful technical reviewing," is *Our Stolen Future*, a 1996 book co-authored by Dumanoski that has been widely attacked for ignoring studies that

Security Adviser? "The President had known for a long time that he had to get Tony out of this job," one of Lake's rivals told *The Washington Post*. "No one wanted him to stay. People as different as **Vernon Jordan** and **Hillary Clinton** respected and admired his personal loyalty to the President, but did not like the fact that he created so many problems with everyone else." If the rival is right, one has to wonder if the CIA is being used as a turkey farm. Isn't it already overstocked?

Congressional Democrats are livid with the White House for its failure to do a better job of handling the illegal contributions story as it was helping them lose their chance to become a majority in the House and Senate. Days passed with no response. Finally **Mary Ellen Glynn**, a deputy of **Mike McCurry**, was assigned to deal with the problem, but she was relieved of the responsibility after one day. And a crucial press briefing was left to **B.J. Thornberry**, a Democratic National Committee functionary who had only recently come to the committee from the Department of Interior.

Some observers detect **Al Gore's** hand in the selection of **Madeline Albright**. One, **Martin Sieff** of the *Washington Times*, reports that Gore "strongly

opposed" **Sam Nunn** and **George Mitchell** because he saw them as "prospective rivals for the presidential nomination in the year 2000 if they had the powerful base of secretary of state for the next four years." Certainly it is



true that *The New Republic*, which is owned by the Vice-President's close pal and enthusiastic supporter, **Martin Peretz**, published two articles in the weeks before the appointment that generously praised Albright.

Another factor in **George Mitchell's** losing after having seemed the early leader in the race for the top post at State is that the

White House began to hear reports from Capitol Hill about how Mitchell plays closer-to-the-vest than even **Bob Dole**—hardly a promising characteristic for an administrator who needs to communicate with thousands of subordinates.

Here's how **Susan McDougal** says her former husband, **James McDougal**, is being won over by Whitewater prosecutor **Kenneth Starr** and his staff: "They drive Jim wherever he wants to go. They bring him candy. Jim told me they treat him like a king," she said in an interview with a *Reuters* correspondent. "When you're sick and you've lost everything and you're looking at an 84-year prison sentence, being treated like a king has to feel pretty good."

The modern mania for celebrities—to which this column is, of course, absolutely 100 percent immune—has a perverse knack for rewarding wrongdoers, observes our old friend **Matthew Miller**. He asks, "Do you think, for example, that in his heart of hearts, **Oliver North** wishes the Iran-Contra scandal had never happened and that he remained an obscure functionary who retired on a military pension after his days running rogue operations out of the White House were over?"

don't support the authors' hypothesis and for not representing the full breadth of scientific evidence.

Our Stolen Future posits that synthetic chemicals that mimic estrogen and other human hormones—"endocrine disruptors"—may be impeding human sexual development and sending male sperm counts worldwide into a downward spiral. The book has plenty of defenders as well as detractors, and, to their credit, the authors are careful to admit that the evidence is not entirely conclusive, and that there are a number of "mights" and "maybes" involved. Unfortunately, many of the caveats have been lost in the translation, and some of it is the authors' fault: A blurb on the book cover states as fact that sperm counts are down 50 percent across the globe, when in fact the main study asserting that has been widely criticized and contradicted; and one of the authors, Theo Colborn of the World Wildlife Fund, has been somewhat, shall we say, excited in her media statements. She told CBS's "Eye to Eye with Connie Chung" that "The ultimate test for chemicals today, we realize now, has to be whether the chemicals affect reproductive capability, and if we don't do this, we are headed for extinction."

But the media are also at fault here, as they often are when it comes to potentially alarming environmental, health-and-safety, and crime stories. In the CBS story in which Colborn appears, much of the nuance of the book's argument is lost, and the segment veers quickly from egregious to comic. The piece's opening illustration is a man with a low sperm count who can't impregnate his wife. We get the full treatment: the couple's sad vignette, the scientist with the microscope looking at the man's deformed sperm, the quick switch to the contentious Danish study alleging the 50 percent global sperm count drop, and finally the transition to the allegations that endocrine disruptors are a probable cause. There's no indication of the very likely possibility that this is just one of those unfortunate guys who shoot blanks, as any number of men have since time immemorial.

But here's the real kicker: We're introduced to a man, a mortician who can't be identified, who mysteriously started growing breasts, losing libido, and suffering sperm count drop. After a biochemist identified a hand cream that mimicked estrogen as the culprit and the mortician stopped using it, we are told, his condition "improved dramatically."

"The mortician went on to father two more children," the reporter says, triumphantly, before plunging into a panoply of "expert opinions" that, yes, the hand cream was definitely at fault, and that things like plastic-lined soup cans could be dangerous too.

Cut to final scene:

REPORTER (voiceover): We decided to track down that mortician only to find that he most definitely has not returned to full manhood.

(Footage of reporter and the mortician, in a dress, walking down the beach.)

MORTICIAN: "I . . . I was feeling like a half-and-half person, and I didn't know who I was because of what had happened with this chemical stuff."

REPORTER (voiceover): Today the mortician is living as a woman and taking estrogen by prescription. She told us a troubled childhood contributed to a lifelong struggle with her gender identity, and yet . . .

REPORTER: "If you had not been exposed to that estrogen-like cream at work, do you think that you would be living your life as a woman today?"

MORTICIAN: "No, I think I would have been living as a man, and that answers the question right there."

You almost expect the mortician to yell "LIVE FROM NEW YORK . . ." but this is the real deal—CBS news. The reporter does go on to say, "The mortician's doctor is extremely skeptical that the cream would cause that dramatic an effect. He believes that other factors are clearly at work here." But that's obvious and doesn't do much to soften the alarmist tenor of the story.

The media have their reasons for pushing scare stories. First, drama sells. An ozone hole is a big story; fifty thousand kidnapped kids is a big story; AIDS threatening you and your neighbor and your children is a big story; the human race on a path to chemically-induced sterility is a big story. Stick to the confirmed statistics and the established science, with all the caveats and maybes, and the stories atrophy in urgency. Second, journalists are just as vulnerable to the "good guy syndrome" as everyone else. When they believe in a cause, they are less apt to judge its particulars critically. *Time's* science editor Charles Alexander said in 1990, "I would freely admit that on this issue [of environmentalism] we have crossed the boundary from news reporting to advocacy."

It's true that there is no such thing as objectivity, and that dispassion is not necessarily an ideal goal. But the press should try, if not to be objective, to be accurate. We risk living in an age where all facts are fluid, debatable, and thus irrelevant. The press should not increase that risk. We—the press and the public—need to hold our sources of information accountable, to insist that they not mislead us in the service of a good cause or, worse, "for our own good." ●

Tidbits & Outrages

Looks Like Four More Years of Cold Showers

Aspiring Pennsylvania state legislator Mark Althouse told voters before the election that he would take a victory as a mandate—to marry his girlfriend and lose his virginity. The 24-year-old Republican lost.

No More Noon Reveille Either

The Dutch army is tightening up: Soldiers are no longer allowed to smoke marijuana and hashish while in the service. Ponytails and earrings are still OK.

And What Do You Think the Question Says About Bryant Gumbel?

In an interview with Jimmy Carter, Bryant Gumbel noted the fact that Carter both prayed more than usual as president and was "one of the more ineffective presidents of modern times." Gumbel asked, "What do you think, if anything, that says about the power of prayer?"

She Was Also a Suspected Midol Dealer

In October, an 11-year-old honor student in South Carolina was suspended from school and arrested by police for bringing a steak knife to school to cut her chicken lunch.

Dennis Rodman Day Has School Officials Divided

Indiana's Supreme Court recently upheld an elementary school's suspension of a boy for wearing an earring. The school had prohibited boys from wearing earrings for fear they would be the first step towards cults, gangs, drugs, and homosexuality. The school found nothing wrong, however, with its "opposite sex day," in which boys come to school in dresses, nylons, high heels, and padded bras.



His Follow-Up CD is Called "Madman in Pain"

In October, the same month that he lunched with Lorena Bobbitt and described it as an "extremely high honor," Ecuadorian president Abdala Bucarem released his first CD, entitled "Madman in Love."

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