

[World](#) | [USA](#) | [Commentary](#) | [Work & Money](#) |  
[Learning](#) | [Living](#)  
[Sci/Tech](#) | [Arts & Entertainment](#) | [Books](#) | [The Home](#)  
[Forum](#)

Thursday, November 2, 2006

---

## WORLD

### Iraqi prime minister asserts independence, gains stature

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki ordered the dismantling of US checkpoints in Baghdad, prompting boasts from Shiite militants.

### Evangelicals flex growing clout in Nicaragua's election

Once outcasts, they have now become a sought-after constituency.

### Atop Azerbaijan's oil boom: Mr. Aliyev

The country's president is overseeing an unprecedented influx of wealth in one of the world's most corrupt countries.

### In China, a dog's life comes into vogue

A new type of dissident emerges: the dog owner.

### Fiji faces possible coup

This week's leadership conflict adds the island nation to Australia's growing list of unstable neighbors.

### Reporters on the Job

---

## **USA**

### Is GOP confidence for real?

Countering public polls, top Republicans forecast holding both the House and Senate.

### Republicans in uphill slog in Colorado

National parties are shifting resources as once-safe GOP districts come into play.

### Why economy is key in Indiana election

The loss of jobs and high property taxes are among voters' concerns.

### In turbulent times, a new Episcopal leader

For the first time, a woman takes the helm of the American church.

---

# COMMENTARY

## Those bulging campaign coffers

It's a record-setting year for midterm spending. The issue is less the amount than the influence.

## Using the North Korea crisis to stop nuclear proliferation

President Bush was right to resist bilateral talks with Pyongyang.

## Reagan and the 1994 GOP sweep

His personal revelation at the end of the 1994 campaign is politically intriguing and merits speculation.

## Letters to the Editor

---

# WORK & MONEY

## When workers turn into 'turkers'

Amazon.com's 'Mechanical Turk' Web service pays people to perform simple tasks computers cannot do.

## The truth behind women 'opting out'

Two reports show a weak labor market and inflexible work policies as the main reasons women are staying home.

A dog walker's wages might have a tight leash

Our personal-finance expert tracks down the answers you need.

A Week's Worth

Work & Money news briefs.

A rethink on shunning sin

A major fund company initiative would repeal bans on gambling and alcohol investments.

Do estate-tax reductions apply to foreigners living in the US?

Our personal-finance expert tracks down the answers you need.

---

## LEARNING

Backstory: The Texas gear leaders

A team of small-town girls who didn't know a flywheel from a pinwheel restores a tractor in national competition.

Move to single-sex classes fans debate

New federal rules let US public schools split up boys and girls. Research on the practice is inconclusive.

Crisis in civics ed? Revival is under way.

In the face of a culture that promotes individualism, more high schools encourage debate and service.

Backstory: They doff their beanies to tradition

Is there a good side of hazing? A mild – and ancient – form of humiliation makes a popular comeback at Wabash College.

---

## LIVING

Charity knitters stitch up the world

A group in Massachusetts is helping the needy stay warm.

Backstory: Extinction of an American icon?

The Massachusetts plant that hatched 20 million plastic flamingos shut its doors this week.

Matters of faith

Monitoring world religion.

Chowders: America's first 'melting pot'

A simple, rustic dish sprung from necessity has become a cultural tradition in clams and corn.

Backstory: Halloween goes to the dogs, and lizards

More people are dressing up their pets to attend parties or go door to door. Seriously.

### Backstory: Max to the rescue

An energetic German shepherd and his handler team up to become one of the nation's most effective K–9 units.

---

## **SCI/TECH**

### Satellites seek global hot spots

A new study shows where the world's highest temperatures are.

### Do you really need that latest gadget?

Some gadgets improve the quality of your life. Others sit in your attic.

### What to know before you sign up for a cellphone plan

Experts suggest shopping around, keeping usage habits in mind, and shying away from unneeded bells and whistles.

### Rise of the boutique carmaker

Twenty–five years after John DeLorean's gull–winged gas–burner arrived, small, private–label carmakers are decidedly in drive.

### Why coastal Florida may have northern Africa to thank

Hurricane season has been much milder than forecast. Dust from the Sahara Desert could explain why.

### Backstory: Cage diving for a cause

A conservationist uses tourists – in cages – to pay for his research on great white sharks.

### On the horizon

News from the frontiers of science.

### Penguins get a helping home

A South African program provides fiberglass 'igloos' to protect the nests of endangered African penguins.

---

## **ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

### Complex justice in a Nazi-looting case

Next week's auction of modernist masterworks ends a long chapter, but won't close the book on wartime art thefts.

### After 24 years, bliss for St. Louis fans

The Cardinals defeated the Detroit Tigers, bringing home a 10th championship – a tally second only to the Yankees.

### Backstory: Dean of the gridiron

The legacy of the winningest high school coach in US history extends beyond the field, into a Carolina town.

### Lofty 'Babel' is a tower of hot air

A mash-up of stories gets lost in translation in this film from

director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu.

In 'Sing,' a trio whistles Dixie

Dixie Chick Natalie Maines holds court in this documentary about the aftermath of her anti-Bush remark.

Movie Guide

Capsule reviews of new releases.

As NBA season starts, eight key questions

Can the Heat repeat? Is this a new golden era? What's to become of Mark Cuban's Mavs?

Monitor picks

Five things we think you'll really like.

New on DVD: Monster House

The animated spooky story about a house that comes to life is best for kids over age 8.

Tubegazing: Paul McCartney: The Space Within Us

Sir Paul sends fans into orbit with his latest tour movie, now showing on TV.

Into it: Barry Pepper

We asked the 'Flags of Our Fathers' star what he's watching, reading, and listening to.

---



# BOOKS

## All the faerie young ladies

A short story collection ideal for readers hungry for fairy tales for grown-ups.

## At home in the big city

For Adam Gopnik, as both writer and dad, there is no better spot than New York.

## Oh, how sweet it was!

Bill Bryson hilariously recalls a 1950s childhood in Iowa, 'the most peaceful place on earth.'

## The Republican Party: an incredible knack for winning

How the GOP turned the art of electioneering into a science.

## Book bits

A occasional literary roundup.

## Readers' picks

What are you reading?

## A timely tome darkens the White House door

Woodward's latest: packed with inside-the-Beltway detail and in bookstores just in time for midterm elections.

Stephen King turns a page

His latest novel, 'Lisey's Story,' is a macabre valentine to married life.

How did we ever live without the iPod?

A Newsweek writer considers how Apple's digital music player stole consumer hearts and shuffled the music industry.

A painful tale of race relations

Joyce Carol Oates tackles the ache of white liberal guilt.

---

## THE HOME FORUM

Court painter with an eye for royalty – and reality

An exhibition at the National Gallery in London, until Jan. 21, 2007, explores a myriad of works by Diego Velazquez.

Short stuff

For kids: Here's what's making news in November – from berries that bounce to the Top 10 pet-friendly cities.

Ideas fuel solutions

Everyone has the capacity to commune with God and gain insights that lead to solutions.

---

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p01s03-woiq.html>

# Iraqi prime minister asserts independence, gains stature

**Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki ordered the dismantling of US checkpoints in Baghdad, prompting boasts from Shiite militants.**

**By Scott Peterson** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## BAGHDAD

Shiites from the crowded Baghdad district of Sadr City are reveling in what they deem their "victory" over American forces after Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Tuesday ordered the dismantling of US and Iraqi checkpoints surrounding the area.

The checkpoints – manned by US and Iraqi troops for a week in an effort to find a kidnapped US military translator of Iraqi descent as well as snare an alleged death-squad leader – had snarled traffic and bred growing anger in the slum.

They also provided Mr. Maliki with a chance to further assert his independence after weeks of friction between

Washington and Baghdad – just days before US midterm elections, in which the Iraq war has become a defining issue.

Aides to the premier have said that they want to take advantage of the vote, and the unpopularity of Mr. Bush and the Iraq war, to expand Maliki's authority. The new assertive tack is boosting the portrayal of Maliki as commander in chief.

The US pullback is being seen in Sadr City as a loss for the Americans, even as Maliki has shown that he can issue orders and deliver – though he has yet to follow through on vows to stanch sectarian killings.

At the same time, anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, whose Mahdi Army militia has been accused of playing a key role in sectarian murders, has also gained from a careful marshalling of his loyalists. Militiamen enforced a general strike on Tuesday to protest the US "siege," shutting down shops, offices, and schools.

Maliki's decision caught US commanders off guard, but was nonetheless carried out on the ground. The US Embassy insisted later that a joint Iraqi-US decision had been made.

Some Sadr City residents said the growing threat of unrest prompted the US acceptance of the checkpoint dismantling.

"The Americans agreed with Maliki's decision to leave Sadr City because of the US elections," says a driver with the nickname Abu Haidar. "If they let [the unrest] continue, it will spread. Moqtada [al-Sadr] and Maliki played it very well."

"It's a tactical loss for the Americans," says a jobless resident nicknamed Abu Ali, who says the decision to pull back was wise. "Because if they stayed [and violence flared], they would lose much more, not just in Iraq, but in the US."

A primary complaint echoing in Sadr City is that the US-Iraqi checkpoints did little to stop the violence: 26 laborers died in a market blast on Sunday. In the nearby district of Ur, also apparently subject to checkpoint control, a wedding party was hit with a car bomb Tuesday, leaving 23 dead, among them nine children.

Across Iraq Wednesday, police searched for at least 40 Shiites suspected to have been abducted by Sunni gunmen along a dangerous highway north of Baghdad. At least 27 Iraqis died in a spate of attacks.

Under fire by critics for not authorizing enough troops in Iraq, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that he had agreed to expand the size of Iraqi forces beyond the current 310,000 listed on the books as trained, and the previous goal of 325,000.

In Baghdad, an increasing number of Shiites believe that the US is more to blame for violence in Baghdad than Sunni insurgents – a once–common accusation that largely disappeared last February, when sectarian bloodletting surged after destruction of a key Shiite shrine. Some even accuse US forces of deliberately planting bombs to stoke more violence.

"The bombs came after the Americans came. When they are there, they are controlling security, so who is to blame?" says Ali al–Saidi, an Internet cafe owner. "When [US forces] entered Sadr City, we were worried. When they leave, we feel safer."

"The Americans are trying to make trouble in Sadr City," asserts Abu Ali. "They want to return Sadr City and the Mahdi Army to a war situation."

US forces fought pitched battles with the Mahdi Army in the holy city of Najaf and in Sadr City in April and August 2004. Sadr has since ordered his fighters not to attack US forces, and his support of Maliki's fragile Shiite coalition ended a months–long deadlock earlier this year.

After Maliki's order to remove the checkpoints, Sadr's office crowed in a statement to supporters: "Your patience and unity brought victory."

US forces have rubbed increasingly against Sadr's militia in recent months, with friction turning to gunfights at times. And the Mahdi Army, while winning kudos among many Shiites for defending them against Sunni insurgent attack, is also believed to be behind some sectarian killings that are leaving more than 2,500 Iraqis dead each month.

A second purpose of the US–Iraqi checkpoints was to snare a Shiite man alleged to be a death–squad leader. Residents and Sadr supporters jump to Abu Deraa's defense, countering that he is a simple man with a penchant for helping hostages get released from kidnapping gangs.

"One man gave him a camel for helping free his son," says Abu Kumail, a money changer who has seven children. "He saved a Sunni man from a gang – does that mean he is a leader of the death squads?"

"We are feeling that whenever [Americans] raid in Sadr City, they leave many bombs and IEDs [roadside bombs]," says Abu Kumail. "Who is the terrorist? We didn't know terrorism in our country before the [2003] US invasion."

Coming after one of the bloodiest months for US troops since the 2003 Iraq campaign began – 105 Americans died in October – some say US commanders preferred not to push harder on Sadr City now.



"It's a victory for the Iraqi people," says Abu Kumail. "They obeyed the cleric's order [for a strike], and they proved to the government and American soldiers they are peaceful people, and civilized.

"It's a victory, too, for the government," he adds. "They proved their power with a decision, a small justice that is fair to the people."

In a suburb that is home to an estimated 2.5 million Iraqis, Maliki's decision is resounding widely.

But so, too, do rumors that US troops are behind some of the blasts. Among the most common reasons cited here for a US interest in more war: Iraqi Shiites and militias have grown too powerful, both in government and outside of it; and even more conflict would justify a longer US presence, according to this perception.

"The Americans have different ways to make these blasts," charges Abu Ali, the jobless young man. "Sometimes they do it, and plant these bombs. Sometimes they create the good environment for bombs."

"We are not seeing [bombs being planted], but the Americans control the night," he adds, making a deductive leap. "All IEDs and bombs are planted at night, in the curfew."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p01s02-woam.html>

# Evangelicals flex growing clout in Nicaragua's election

**By Sara Miller Llana** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

When Nicaragua passed one of the strictest abortion laws in the hemisphere last week, critics charged the Catholic Church with flexing political muscle ahead of next week's presidential election.

Yet, to lobby for the bill, Catholics invited evangelical Protestants to join a massive protest last month – a rare act of collaboration and a window into evangelicals' growing political sway in this predominantly Catholic country.

Evangelicals in Nicaragua were once overlooked as outcasts. Now no political contender can afford to alienate them. All but one of the leading presidential candidates, including Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega, supported their bid to ban all forms of abortion, even if a mother's life is in danger.

Their ascent has been among the most dramatic in Latin America. At the end of the 1970s, only five percent of Nicaraguans were evangelicals. Now they account for more than 20 percent – some say more than 30 percent – of the population. Their political clout is mounting as fast as the cavernous churches popping up along Managua's highways. They are running for office, partnering with Catholics, and forcing social change – which could augur a new exercise of power among evangelicals throughout the region.

"You can't talk about Nicaraguan society or politics now without talking about evangelicals," says Benjamin Cortes, rector of the Nicaraguan Evangelical University, a 12-year-old private university that sits in the shadow of Managua's Cathedral.

Evangelicals in Guatemala and Brazil also possess notable political influence. But Mr. Cortes says he believes that evangelicals in Nicaragua, one of the poorest nations in the Western hemisphere, have had success in politics because American missionaries overlooked this country throughout the 20th century.

That left Nicaraguans to hold leadership positions within churches big and small, he says, which naturally segued into politics.

## Evangelicals' rise in Nicaragua

The first major sign of evangelicals' ascent here came in 1996, when Guillermo Osorno, a Pentecostal pastor, formed the Christian Path Party and ran for president, finishing in a remarkable third place. His party also earned four seats in the legislature.

Today 21 members are running for the legislature and Mr. Osorno says his presidential hopes still flicker.

They are just a few of the nation's evangelicals seeking political office. "We've always had power in numbers, but we've not always used it," says Roberto Rojas, the vice president for the National Council of Evangelical Pastors of Nicaragua. Two years ago his wife, Elizabeth de Rojas, made a bid to become mayor of Managua. She dropped out before the race was over, but seeking office "gave us all hope" for the possibilities, Rev. Rojas says.

In the past year, Osorno has traveled to Peru and Ecuador to help evangelicals create political parties modeled after his own. He says he is planning a trip to Bolivia and hopes that evangelicals will increase their political clout across the region. "It's the only way Latin America is going to really change," he says.

That could mean a more conservative tide on social issues. Evangelicals across the region do not vote as a block, and many, such as Cortes, were against the ban on abortion under any circumstances. Some say their divisions have limited their political influence.

But Doug Petersen, who was area director for the Pentecostal Assemblies of God of Central America based in Costa Rica for 15 years starting in the mid-80s, says that on moral issues, such as abortion, they could come together. "I think the one area evangelicals do have huge impact [in Latin America] is where they feel threatened," he says.

No presidential candidate could afford to lose that vote, including Mr. Ortega, the revolutionary leader and archrival of the US during the Reagan administration. "For a lot of people in the West, it is surprising to learn that [the Sandinistas] would have such a conservative position on abortion," says Timothy Shah, a senior fellow in religion and world affairs at the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. "They are partly trying to attract conservative Catholics, but there is no doubt they are trying to attract the growing number of evangelicals, too."

**Key constituency now**

Cortes estimates that about a third of the nation's evangelicals sympathize with Ortega, whose power coincided with expansive growth of evangelicals in Nicaragua. Mr. Petersen says he witnessed an attitude change toward minority religions throughout the 1980s.

"[Ortega] had an absolute major shift in the way he treated evangelicals," says Petersen, who says he was generously given permits to hold megaceremonies in Revolution Plaza. "To listen to Ortega he says he got to know [evangelicals], that they were among the poor.... And then there are others who say he found this to be a fertile political field," he says.

If anything, the ground is even more fertile today.

At a recent service at Comunidad Hosanna, a Pentecostal church in Managua, congregants lifted bibles into the air as rain thundered against the metal roof and 34 fans whirled. The vast space, which could easily accommodate two soccer fields, filled up as a 12-piece band livened up the crowd.

Many, such as Guillermo Lopez, say they feel more a part of the mainstream every day. "We are growing and that impacts behavior and society," says Mr. Lopez, a car salesman from Managua, who converted from Catholicism over six years ago.

For the presidential election this Sunday, a group of evangelical leaders will act as electoral observers across the country. "I think it's a historical moment in Nicaragua," says Sixto Ulloa, a Baptist pastor and an ombudsman for the government's human rights department. "It's the first time evangelical leaders have been trained to participate in the electoral process."

## **Challenging Catholic dominance**

It is a tectonic shift in a country long ruled by Catholicism. Protestants and Catholics have suffered a tense relationship, perhaps best illustrated by the late Pope John Paul II in 1992 comparing Protestant "sects" to "ravenous wolves."

So when the Catholic Church reached out to evangelical leaders in Nicaragua for the abortion bill, Rojas was not without doubts. He says he didn't believe Nicaragua's evangelical community was ready to join forces with the Catholic Church.

So for their public protest, Rojas, who helped mobilize congregants, suggested that the two groups march from separate locations, converging only before reaching the National Assembly.



In the end, the march drew 20,000 evangelicals and 50,000 Catholics, he says. "It was extraordinary, to be standing there with us and all the bishops," says Rojas. "It made us realize how much power we have together."

The endeavor could inspire future movements, both in Nicaragua and across Latin America.

"If you look at the social values of evangelicals and devout Catholics, there's all kinds of overlap. Working together on them is what's new," says Petersen. "But throughout Latin America there is some real common ground, which will make it easier to cooperate in the future."

• *Ms. Llana is Latin America correspondent for the Monitor and USA Today.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |

- [Corrections](#)
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p06s01-wosc.html>

# Atop Azerbaijan's oil boom: Mr. Aliyev

**The country's president is overseeing an unprecedented influx of wealth in one of the world's most corrupt countries.**

By **Fred Weir** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

## BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

British Petroleum's gleaming, ultramodern Sangachal oil terminal is the face of Azerbaijan that President Ilham Aliyev wants the world to see.

Surrounded by a jumble of derelict Soviet-era oil rigs, the sprawling \$350 million facility is an oasis of computerized efficiency. Soon, it will be pumping up to 1 million barrels of Caspian crude daily to thirsty Western markets through the new Baku–Ceyhan pipeline.

Thanks to the gusher of profits as Azerbaijan's new oil and gas fields come onstream, this Caucasus country of 8 million has rocketed in just three years from near-stagnation to become the world's hottest economy. GDP growth will be a dazzling 32 percent this year,

according to Economics Minister Heydar Babayev.

"We need to use this unique opportunity to solve our social and economic problems," says Aliyev, speaking to a group of visiting journalists in his office. "We aim to build a strong, independent, economically self-sufficient, politically free state."

But the Moscow-educated, multilingual president has his work cut out for him: Azerbaijan is rated one of the world's most corrupt countries, and critics have voiced concern that the government is ill-prepared to preside over such a massive influx of wealth. But Aliyev, who's seen his state budget quadruple since 2004, insists the expected \$150 billion in oil revenues over the next two decades will be put to good use, slashing poverty and unemployment, rebuilding Azerbaijan's crumbling infrastructure, and creating a sustainable, diversified economy.

Aliyev was parachuted into the presidency after the 2003 death of his father, Azerbaijan's longtime strongman Gaydar Aliyev, in polls that few international observers ratified as free or fair. Many experts doubted the former Soviet Union's first political dynasty would last. But the junior Aliyev appears to have successfully held his father's fractious administration together, maintained the friendship of both Russia and the West – while presiding over an exploding oil boom. Last spring, he was invited to the White House for a

visit.

The view of Baku from Aliyev's desk is a forest of construction cranes and choking traffic jams, with giant oil platforms hulking on the distant Caspian horizon. But beyond the bustling capital is another face of Azerbaijan: impoverished villagers living in shacks with no indoor plumbing, sporadic gas and electricity supplies, and connected to the world by deeply rutted dirt roads.

"Azerbaijan has so much oil and gas, but people can't even get light on a regular basis," says Kamran, a worker from the northern town of Quba, who asked that his last name not be used. He adds that people have little chance to address their grievances through political action. "There will never be an uprising here because people are too afraid. The minute the police find out that someone is starting to complain or organize others, that person will be jailed or beaten," he says.

Many international NGOs that study Azerbaijan appear to share such concerns. "Our authorities are absolutely corrupt, and we can expect nothing good from them," says Leila Yunes, director of the independent Institute for Peace and Democracy in Baku. "Any attempt to assert popular control over the state, through the political process or the media, is immediately crushed."

The New York-based Human Rights Watch says that "Azerbaijan's government has a long-standing record of pressuring opposition parties and civil society groups and limiting critical expression."

Transparency International, which monitors global corruption, places Azerbaijan 137th in a list of 159 countries, while the world media-rights watchdog Reporters Without Borders describes Azerbaijan's situation as "difficult." The Washington-based Freedom House, which rates political openness, this year demoted Azerbaijan from "partly free" to "not free."

But Aliyev questions the accuracy of such judgments.

"I treat these kind of ratings with a high degree of skepticism," says Aliyev. And, like many Azeri officials, he suggests that the negative views of their country originate with Azerbaijan's beleaguered but still highly vocal opposition, which was nearly wiped out in parliamentary polls a year ago, and then violently crushed by police when it tried to protest the election results in the streets of Baku. "We see a complete fiasco of those who pretend to call themselves the opposition in Azerbaijan," says Aliyev. "They've done nothing but criticize, while the government has done a lot. It's the end of their history."

Though international monitors were sharply critical of the 2005 elections, most Western governments, including the US, offered Aliyev only mild reproaches. Opposition leaders accuse them of selling out Azerbaijan's freedom for oil. "Why did the West support the (pro–democracy) revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia but they did not support us here, when we had the chance?" says Sardar Djalai–ogly, deputy chair of the opposition Democratic Party. "Now, we have no democracy at all here."

But that doesn't seem to have affected investor confidence. British Petroleum, which has managed most of Azerbaijan's oil and gas projects since the mid–1990s, gives Aliyev high marks for maintaining stability in a dangerous neighborhood. "BP has stayed here through very difficult times," says Rashid Javanshir, vice president of BP–Azerbaijan. "The desire of the government to make this work has been key to our decision to stay. Conditions are very favorable to foreign investors here."

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |

- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p15s01-woap.html>

# In China, a dog's life comes into vogue

**By Simon Montlake** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

## BEIJING

In most cities, taking your dog for a walk in the dead of night could be seen as a personal quirk or a byproduct of insomnia. But in Beijing, it's a sure sign that the city's dogcatchers are on the prowl for illicit mutts. If you don't want your pet to end up in the pen or as protein on someone's plate, it's best to keep a low profile.

Once shunned by communist ideologues as capitalist vermin, dogs have become a firm favorite among China's fast-growing middle class and a status symbol among the well-heeled. A generation raised in one-child families is eager to bond with household pets. In Beijing, the number of registered dogs is up 16 percent this year, to 530,000, but the true dog population is likely far higher, as many animals are unregistered.

The reason is not only to avoid paying a \$75 to \$125 registration fee. Big dogs – those with a shoulder height of

more than 35 centimeters (about 13 inches) – are banned in central Beijing. If you want to own a Labrador or Husky, two popular breeds in China, you run the risk of your prized pet being detained as an illegal breed. But regulations being what they are, some dog owners were prepared to flout them, betting that law enforcers had bigger fish to fry.

All that changed in September, when Beijing declared it was stepping up the fight against rabies, a disease that officials say killed more than 2,500 people last year in China. In July, officials in a rural county in Yunnan Province slaughtered 50,000 dogs to contain an outbreak of rabies. Pet dogs were snatched off the street and clubbed to death or hung. Jining City in Shandong Province followed suit after reported deaths from rabies.

Suddenly, nocturnal walks are all the rage in Beijing. So are extended stays at private kennels and training schools, as owners wait for the canine crackdown to run its course. But even registered dogs that have had rabies shots are said to be at risk, as police stations need to fill their weekly quotas for dog exterminations.

For Frank Fan, it's a familiar sense of dread. As a child growing up in Beijing in the austere 1960s, he befriended a mongrel that a neighbor had brought from the countryside. When dogcatchers prowled the streets with sticks, he sneaked the mutt into the basket of his bicycle and fled. A

friend built a secret basement in his house, and Mr. Fan kept the dog as a pet at a time when such decadent frivolities were forbidden.

Earlier this year, after business school and a career as a fund manager on Wall Street, Fan returned to Beijing, together with his two dogs, to open an upscale pet hospital to cater to an expanding market. He says China has changed, and so have attitudes toward animals. "Humans are humans. They need animals as pets, to support them," he says.

That attachment can be short-lived, however. Dogs are often abandoned by owners that tire of looking after them or decide they prefer the latest in-vogue breed. "People buy dogs so they can show off. Whichever dog is the most popular, that's what people will go for," says Zhang Luping, who runs a private animal rescue center outside Beijing.

Ms. Zhang, a real-estate developer, takes care of nearly 500 dogs and 200 cats that have been dumped on the streets or rescued from abusive owners. Dog arrivals have surged since news broke of the antirabies campaign, she says. Like many pet lovers, she's skeptical of official tallies of the disease and the justification for canine culls.

The campaign has generated strong online reactions, too, including barbed comments on the political logic at work. "Is

there no justice in this world when those poor dogs have to be killed only because of rabies, even if they've already been vaccinated? There are no human rights in China! There are no dog rights, either!" wrote one contributor to Chinapet.com, a website for pet owners .

In additional efforts to curb the spread of rabies in China – which reports a 30 percent increase in cases over last year's figures – 65,000 dogs in Shanghai have been implanted with digital chips. The ID chips contain information about the dog, including its owner's address and the date of its last inoculation.

At a dog market in Liyuan, a suburb of Beijing, breeders say that business has slackened somewhat since the start of the rabies crackdown. But buyers continue to visit the sprawling outdoor market, especially on weekends when thousands of dogs, big and small, pedigreed and mongrel, are paraded for sale in cages or on leashes.

Not all are destined to become household pets, however. In the back of a red pickup truck, a pack of mottled brown dogs are roped together inside a cage. Three men pick one, and agree upon a price with the owners. The dog is leashed and led to a waiting car to be taken to a restaurant and slaughtered for its meat, a common practice in parts of China.

It's a fate that Ms. Yang, who declined to give her first name, is determined won't befall her two small dogs. After anxious weeks of hiding them at home, she has decided to sell them, rather than risk their capture by the authorities. So with a dog scooped in her arms and another on a leash, she waits by the roadside near the market for potential buyers.

Ms. Yang says that the dogcatchers are selling carcasses in her hometown of Tianjin, a coastal city near Beijing. She hugs her 2-month old puppy tight. "I'll feel relieved when they go to a good family, It's better than being beaten to death," she says.

• *Material from Reuters was used in this report.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p07s02-woap.html>

## Fiji faces possible coup

**This week's leadership conflict adds the island nation to Australia's growing list of unstable neighbors.**

**By Nick Squires** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

### **SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

Fiji's Army brazenly defied the country's police force by seizing thousands of rounds of ammunition Wednesday, increasing concerns about a fourth military coup on the island nation in less than 20 years.

Australia was readying warships Wednesday to evacuate 7,000 of its citizens. Australia's foreign minister, Alexander Downer, said he was "very concerned" about the possibility of a coup.

A series of crises over the past two months has plunged relations between Australia's capital Canberra and its South Pacific neighbors to a new low. In addition to the tension in Fiji, Australia is struggling to manage standoffs with the Solomon Islands, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea amid

accusations that it bullies its smaller, poorer island neighbors.

The recent spat of diplomatic scuffles could be seen as a trial period for what some are calling Australia's "tough love" policy toward its neighbors.

Opposition members of Parliament have accused the government of committing troops to Iraq and Afghanistan at the expense of its responsibilities closer to home. Recent events in the South Pacific have raised fears here that the Australian Army is overstretched by too many deployments.

Australia has taken a more robust approach to its immediate region since the Sept. 11 attacks on the US, fearful that failing states could be exploited by terrorists or international crime syndicates.

It has invested money and manpower throughout the region but is seen by some countries as a bully.

Australia's prime minister, John Howard, has warned that South Pacific states must stamp out corruption and improve economic management if aid is to continue.

"It's not arrogant to want Australia's money to be spent wisely," Mr. Howard said, noting that Australia had spent \$800 million (US \$620 million) since 2003 helping the



Solomon Islands recover from a bloody ethnic insurgency.

In what amounts to the latest regional crisis, Fijian troops seized a consignment of ammunition recently shipped in from South Korea from a wharf in the capital, Suva.

The seizure of the 7.5 tons of ammunition was in direct contravention of orders issued by the country's Australian police chief, Andrew Hughes, who said it was too dangerous to release it until the political situation calmed down.

The head of the armed forces, Frank Bainimarama, has threatened to topple Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase unless he drops a contentious bill which would offer amnesty to the plotters of the last coup, which was in 2000.

On Tuesday, the government failed in an attempt to replace the outspoken military commander, who is visiting Fijian troops in the Middle East – a move that infuriated the maverick officer.

"I'll be back to see that Qarase and his cronies step down," Commander Bainimarama told the Fiji Sun newspaper. "Now that they have failed to remove me, all that needs to be done is for the government to resign gracefully."

But Mr. Qarase said there was "no question" of him or his cabinet stepping down, increasing the prospects of an explosive confrontation.

The political instability in Fiji is only the latest challenge for the Australian government.

In East Timor, Australian peacekeeping troops who were sent to the country in May to quell street violence have been accused of human rights abuses and of failing to stem gang warfare – charges the Army vehemently denies.

Canberra's relations with Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands reached a crisis point after the two countries resisted Australian attempts to extradite the Solomons' attorney general on child sex charges.

As the investigation into the attorney general escalated, Australian police eventually raided the office of the Solomons' prime minister, Manasseh Sogavare, and arrested his immigration minister. A furious Mr. Sogavare then threatened to expel more than 460 Australian peacekeepers and advisers from his impoverished country.

At last week's Pacific Islands Forum, a summit of 16 regional leaders in Fiji, Australia was accused of heavy-handed tactics. The forum's outgoing chairman, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare,

said that Australia treated leaders in the region with contempt.

• *Wire service reports were used in this story.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p06s02-wogn.html>

## Reporters on the Job

• **Interviewing Aliyev** : Correspondent Fred Weir has been to Azerbaijan more than half a dozen times. This trip was the first time, since President Ilham Aliyev was elected in 2003, that Fred has spoken to him directly.

"He's a very impressive, very charismatic individual," says Fred, who met with the president in Baku with about 10 other journalists in a trip organized by the Foreign Correspondents' Association of Moscow. "Aliyev answered every question, and switched easily back and forth between Russian and English – neither of which are his native tongue. Not many world leaders can do that.

"You really want to believe him," says Fred. "Baku, the capital, is greatly transformed by the new oil wealth. But outside of Baku, almost nothing has changed. And Azerbaijan ranks at the bottom of most NGO lists of corruption and human rights."

During previous visits, Fred found the US officials in Baku solidly pro-Aliyev. But this time, the tone had changed. Fred says it may have to do Aliyev's support of Iran. "He

told us that he won't cooperate with sanctions on Iran or allow US troops to be staged in the country."

## **Follow-up on a story**

• **Blind Lawyer Wins Appeal:** A Chinese court, citing inadequate evidence, overturned the guilty verdict of a blind activist who was sentenced to four years in prison after documenting claims of forced abortions, his lawyer told the Associated Press.

Chen Guangcheng's case has drawn international attention, including a July 28 Monitor article, as an example of what human rights groups say is official retaliation against dissidents.

Mr. Chen's supporters said officials fabricated the charges against him in retaliation after he documented complaints that officials enforcing China's birth-control regulations forced villagers to have abortions and sterilizations.

**David Clark Scott**

*World editor*

Let us hear from you. Mail to: One Norway Street, Boston, MA 02115 via e-mail: [World editor](#)

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p01s01-uspo.html>

# Is GOP confidence for real?

**Countering public polls, top Republicans forecast holding both House and Senate.**

By **Linda Feldmann** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## WASHINGTON

"We're going to win," President Bush asserted confidently in his latest press conference, when asked about the midterm elections.

Vice President Dick Cheney tells interviewers he is "optimistic" about the Republican Party's ability to hold on to control of both the House and the Senate.

But the voice that gives Democrats the biggest chills – days before an election that by most public indications favors the Democrats in their quest to win their first House majority in 12 years – is that of Karl Rove, the architect of GOP victories in the past three elections. Mr. Rove has seen the private polls from individual races, he tells interviewers, and the data point "strongly" in one direction: a Republican

House and a Republican Senate.

Is this a classic bluff, designed to psych out the opposition and energize demoralized Republicans who might be tempted to sit out the Nov. 7 vote? Or do Rove and his bosses really know something that's not knowable by the rest of us?

"No matter what the polls say or the mood of the country, no president rolls over and plays dead in midterm elections and lays himself open to the charge of surrender to the opposition," says John Gizzi, political editor of the conservative weekly Human Events.

The rock-solid pronouncements of Rove, who cites not just internal polls but also the GOP's advantage in fund-raising and organization, buttress the predictable positive outlook from the president and vice president, and feed into a reputation for success running campaigns built over decades.

"Rove is relying on the Rove mystique," says John Pitney, a political scientist at Claremont-McKenna College in Claremont, Calif. "A lot of Democrats are paranoid about it. ... Conversely, Republicans also have the same belief, and that's what gives them hope and confidence and keeps them working. If they thought they were surely going to lose, they wouldn't work as hard."



The idea that there are polls suggesting an outcome wildly different from what most political analysts – including many Republican strategists – are saying may not be such a big stretch, Mr. Pitney says. The difference may be in interpretation: It's possible, he says, someone looking at the same numbers might come to a different conclusion.

The answer on who was right, it can be argued, will be known only after the actual votes are cast – but even then, if the Democrats do manage to take over at least the House, Bush's advisers could still say that a week or two earlier, the data pointed in the Republicans' favor.

Among those who make a living looking at each race with as nonpartisan an eye as possible and predicting the outcome, the Democrats do appear on track to retake control of the House, maybe by just a few seats. In the 435-seat House, the Democrats need to make a net gain of just 15 seats. As of Oct. 30, one such prognosticator, Charlie Cook, sees "no ebb in the wave" favoring the Democrats and predicts that, barring a dramatic event, the GOP will lose at least 20 to 35 seats in the House and at least four in the Senate, with "five or six most likely." For the Democrats to retake the 100-seat Senate, a bigger leap than retaking the House, they need a net gain of six seats.

Stuart Rothenberg, another nonpartisan handicapper, projects Democratic gains in the House of 18 to 28 seats –

or more. For the Senate, he projects Democratic gains of four to seven seats. Larry Sabato, political scientist at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, says the Democrats will gain well more than the 15 seats needed for the House and is on the edge of taking over the Senate.

Still, no pundit makes predictions without a caveat. The latest bump for the Democrats came Monday with a comment by John Kerry, the Democrats' 2004 presidential nominee, that was interpreted as a slight against US troops in Iraq. Sen. Kerry said, "Education, if you make the most of it, you study hard, you do your homework and you make an effort to be smart, you can do well. And if you don't, you get stuck in Iraq." Kerry called it a botched joke.

The controversy has put Kerry back in the middle of GOP campaign rhetoric at a time when Democrats would rather be focusing on Republicans vulnerabilities. But at least, some Democrats say, it keeps the focus on Iraq – the No. 1 issue for voters and a net negative for Republican candidates.

Ultimately, Republicans point to several factors that could make the difference on election day: The Democratic "wave" has been a long time in building, and no Republican incumbent can be caught off guard – unlike in 1994, when the Democrats were swept out of power in Congress in a wave they did not see coming. Republicans maintain a

funding advantage. At the end of August, in 30 of the most competitive races, Republicans had \$33 million cash on hand versus \$14 million for the Democrats, says Rove. The Republicans also tout their so-called 72-hour turnout operation. There have been reports of greater early-voting turnout by Republicans than by Democrats.

"Those are all the strengths of a Republican team," says GOP pollster Whit Ayres. "They have not said the climate is favorable or that the odds favor them or that there's not a bigger challenge ahead." But, he adds, if the Democrats don't retake the House next Tuesday, "they should hang it up as a political party. If they can't win in this climate, when can they win?"

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p01s04-uspo.html>

# Republicans in uphill slog in Colorado

**National parties are shifting resources as once-safe GOP districts come into play.**

**By Gail Russell Chaddock** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## WHEAT RIDGE, COLO.

In an unmarked suite around the corner from Rick O'Donnell's campaign headquarters here in suburban Denver, the Republican National Committee has had its get-out-the vote "victory office" in operation since March. Volunteers man phone banks. The foyer showcases a wall of unflattering photos of Democrats in line to head key congressional committees should that party take back the House. A banner reads: "In case you need another reason to volunteer!"

In a normal year, the fabled GOP operation might be enough to tip the balance in a congressional race that, until September, was billed as one of the nation's most competitive. But with an unpopular war, an unpopular

president, and corruption scandals, the GOP has seen Mr. O'Donnell's Democratic opponent take a double-digit lead in the polls.

So last week, the national party confirmed that it had shifted resources from this race in Colorado's Seventh District to help shore up Republicans in two other districts once considered safe: incumbent Rep. Marilyn Musgrave in Colorado's Fourth and conservative Doug Lamborn in the Fifth, where Republicans have an advantage of up to 14 percentage points in voter registration. Cautiously optimistic, Democrats now aim to pick up in Colorado as many as three of the 15 seats they need to take back the House.

"Colorado is more Republican than the nation but tends to follow national politics closely," says Bob Loevy, a political scientist at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. "If the national Democratic tide continues to run right through Election Day, it will affect Colorado and should put both the Fourth and Fifth districts in play."

The shift of resources means more money for TV ad buys and a get-out-the-vote drive in a fast-breaking political environment.

"From the vantage point of today, it looks good for the Democrats, but the situation is very fluid," says pollster

John Zogby.

Democrats, too, are shifting resources to take advantage of new opportunities. After a Denver Post poll showed Musgrave leading by 10 points last month, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) pulled some \$630,000 it had reserved for her Democratic rival, Angie Paccione, although it still includes her in a program for its most competitive candidates. A political-issue group picked up the slack.

Both Republicans are getting high-profile help from the top. On Friday, Vice President Cheney flies into Colorado Springs to stump for state Senator Lamborn. On Saturday, President Bush will be in Greeley, Colo., with two-term Representative Musgrave as well as GOP gubernatorial candidate Bob Beauprez.

Best known nationally as the lead sponsor on the constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in 2003, Musgrave faces strong competition from Democratic state Representative Paccione. A former professional basketball player and teacher, she says that Musgrave is out of the mainstream and too conservative for the district.

In a race driven by negative ads from both camps, Paccione got a recent boost from some \$750,000 in issue ads by Coloradans for Life, a nonprofit political-issue group (known

as a "527" because of its tax-code category). The group is funded largely by Fort Collins heiress and Democratic activist Pat Stryker. The Musgrave campaign calls the ads "malicious," and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) has already spent some \$1.7 million to counter them.

"The liberal 527s went after Marilyn in 2004, and they're doing it again. When you have outside groups spending literally millions of dollars trying to knock out a Republican member, then the committee has to step in to level the playing field," says NRCC spokesman Jonathan Collegio.

Democrats are bringing in their own heavy hitters like former President Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois.

It's time to "knock off bedroom slippers and put on marching shoes," the senator told a fist-pumping crowd in Aurora, Colo., last week. Not that Democrats need much firing up in the Seventh District.

Early on, this race in the inner Denver suburbs was considered wide open because the incumbent, Mr. Beauprez, opted to run for governor. Now, former state Sen. Ed Perlmutter (D) has built a strong lead in the polls. "Sometimes it's better to be lucky than to be smart, and we're at a time when people want a change," Mr. Perlmutter told the crowd in Aurora.



His GOP rival, O'Donnell, makes a similar point in an interview. "I picked a hell of a year to run as a Republican," says the former higher education commissioner.

While it's rarely clear how much big names like Obama or Mr. Bush actually contribute to turnout, it is a sign that unlike most midterm elections, this one is being slugged out on national themes.

"The fact that these national figures are going around the country shows that it's a nationalized race," says Rhodes Cook, a political analyst in Annandale, Va. "There are some 80 [congressional] races still on the radar screen, that's double or triple the number we had two and four years ago, and races had to be nationalized to produce that great an expansion of the field."

O'Donnell says his biggest liability is the perception that he walks in lock step with Bush and the national Republican Party. "I made a strategic mistake: I flew back [to Denver] on Air Force One," he adds. That photo was Exhibit A for a flood of negative ads, "all of the president getting off the plane with me and waving." An ad sponsored by the DCCC uses that scene for an ad that ends with the line: "Rick O'Donnell: Radical ideas and another vote for George Bush's agenda." The DCCC has spent more than \$1.3 million for Perlmutter in this race.

In fact, O'Donnell says there's a lot he doesn't like about Republican politics in Washington, such as big spending and all those pork projects added to bills in the dead of the night. A policy wonk who wrote his own platform, O'Donnell says that he also disagrees with the president on immigration and thinks the House GOP is "out to lunch" on healthcare. "It's not enough to beat up on trial lawyers or create new health savings accounts. That in itself doesn't tackle our problems," he says.

Mr. Collegio, the NRCC spokesman, says that the transfer of get-out-the-vote resources to other districts does not mean that the GOP has given up on the Seventh District. But analysts say that this fabled micro-targeting operation may be swamped by a national Democratic tide in this election. A recent Zogby poll gives the Democrat Perlmutter a 14-point lead. Another puts it at 6.

"In a year when you had a motivated base on each side and the race is one or two points either way, that [ground game] matters a lot. But that's not what the Colorado 7 race is about now," says Amy Walter, who handicaps House races for the Cook Political Report. "There's a less motivated Republican base, a more motivated Democratic base, and independents are increasingly negative [toward the GOP]," she adds.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p02s01-uspo.html>

# Why economy is key in Indiana election

**The GOP incumbent trails by 3 points here. The loss of jobs and high property taxes are among voters' concerns.**

By **Mark Trumbull** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## **SOUTH BEND, IND.**

Evelyn Salyer is the kind of voter Republicans desperately need to hang onto this fall.

In 2004, her vote helped push a Republican House member toward a narrow reelection win in this northern Indiana district. Now, with a new election just days away, she hasn't made up her mind.

The candidates are the same two men who ran last time. Their battle for blue-collar voters is lug-wrench tight. And Ms. Salyer cites economic concerns among the mix of issues that make her reluctant to commit her vote.

Although Iraq comes first, immigration and her own cost of living are close behind.

"We should be taking care of our people here" rather than spending abroad, says Salyer, who worked for years at a local bank and lives mostly on Social Security.

It's a refrain echoed by many voters in this region where bedrock jobs in heavy industry are being shaken anew by the current downsizing of US automakers.

"People who live in the Midwest are more negative about the economy" than voters in other regions are, says Scott Keeter, who directs voter surveys at the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in Washington. Tight races in the region "could certainly be affected by this."

Nationwide, voters who are concerned about the economy are likely to vote Democratic in this election, says Mr. Keeter.

Their ranks are sizable. In a late-October Pew survey, 20 percent of registered voters said the economy is the most important issue in their vote for Congress, second only to the 27 percent who cited the situation in Iraq.

Indiana's Second Congressional District, anchored by the city of South Bend, exemplifies how economic concerns have emerged as significant in some races. It is among a relative handful of contests on which control of the House of Representatives could hinge. Democrats need a gain of 15

seats, out of 435 total, for control.

In the Second District, Democratic challenger Joe Donnelly is leading GOP Rep. Chris Chocola 48 percent to 45 percent, according to a poll from RT Strategies released last week.

"Bad and getting worse," is how Juli Tate, who works as an administrative assistant University of Notre Dame, describes the local economy. "We're losing jobs," she says. "Young people are dropping out of school."

As she walks near the campus's gold dome, she says she'll vote for Mr. Donnelly. Representative Chocola is "not doing anything for Indiana as far as I can see," she says.

South Bend has more than its share of boarded-up storefronts, and the city's jobless rate is 5.1 percent, above the national rate of 4.6 percent. The city has been adapting to the loss of automotive jobs since the 1960s, when Studebaker closed an assembly line here.

But conditions aren't all bleak. Several medical centers, and Notre Dame just north of the city, have provided service sector jobs.

Indiana's automotive sector is doing better than Michigan's. The state has had success luring foreign manufacturers

such as Honda. The AM General plant next door to South Bend, in Mishawaka, continues to crank out Humvees for the US military, even though \$2-a-gallon gasoline has crimped demand for the civilian Hummer.

Still, this area feels the pressure of pocketbook issues. People complain about a spike in property taxes. And at a time of concern about global competition, they're angry that the state recently moved to lease a key toll road to a foreign consortium. Mr. Chocola had no direct say on either of those matters, but that doesn't mean he can escape voter frustration.

In the nearby city of Kokomo, at the southern edge of this district, auto-parts giant Delphi plans to shed hundreds of workers soon. To emerge from bankruptcy, the company says it will have to cut worker pay.

Such challenges make the economy a big issue for Dale Cooper, who retired from a union job at Bendix, a brake manufacturer, which was once one of South Bend's biggest employers.

"You have many people working, but they're making less money," he says. "It's almost a necessity for both [spouses] to work."

Similar worries are common in industrial centers throughout the Midwest. The economy isn't the only issue, or even the main issue but every bit of pessimism weighs against Republicans. "It's a sour mood that is driven in part by Iraq, that's driven in part by economic anxiety," says Robert Schmuhl, a political analyst at Notre Dame.

In Ohio, these concerns are helping Democrat Sherrod Brown in his challenge to Sen. Mike DeWine (R). In Michigan, Republican Dick DeVos has tried to use it in his bid to unseat Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D), but still trails in polls.

In this election, the economy provides fodder for both parties. The GOP record on tax cuts appeals to many here. "I'm a big anti-liberal.... I vote Chocola," says Travis Hessey, who runs his own plumbing business in town.

He says times are pretty tight. His gasoline bill has soared even as local customers can't afford to pay big fees. But to him, the best way to keep the economy going is to keep taxes low and for US workers to keep boosting their skills. "I don't look for ways that the government can help," he says.

Nationwide, many Republican candidates hope to reap some tailwind from a good job market, low taxes, and a recent dip in gasoline prices. But a housing slowdown and rising personal debt weigh against those positives.



"It's hard for voters to make sense of the economy," says Elizabeth Bennion, a political scientist at Indiana University's branch campus here.

Only 35 percent of Americans rate the current economy as "excellent" or "good," according to the Pew survey, and just 25 percent of Midwesterners feel that way.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)



from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p04s01-ussc.html>

# In turbulent times, a new Episcopal leader

**For the first time, a woman takes the helm of the American church.**

**By Jane Lampman** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

This week, the US Episcopal Church installs a woman as "chief pastor" – the first to lead a national church in the five-century history of the global Anglican denomination.

Katharine Jefferts Schori – oceanographer, pilot, professor, mother, priest – will be invested as presiding bishop in a stately ceremony at Washington National Cathedral on Nov. 4.

Although most Episcopalians are eagerly anticipating the upcoming ceremony, it comes as the church grapples with history of another sort – the most troubled moment in Anglicanism. A rift over actions of the US church, especially in regard to homosexuality, has grown into a genuine threat of schism.

And the new leader herself faces predicaments:

• Seven US bishops have requested that the leader of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, provide them with "alternative oversight" to that of the new pastor.

• Leaders of some "provinces" in the developing world recently said they cannot sit down with her at a scheduled February meeting of the denomination's 38 "primates" (Latin for "leader").

Seventeen years after the first woman bishop in the United States was consecrated, female leadership remains controversial in most of the Anglican Communion. Archbishop Williams said after Ms. Jefferts Schori's election in June that it "will undoubtedly have an impact on the collegial life of the Anglican primates."

The strong reactions stem primarily from the ongoing theological dispute over biblical authority and church teachings on homosexuality.

Many Anglicans, including some in the US, say that the Episcopal Church has put itself outside the fold by taking actions contrary to Christian teaching. The church convention in 2003 approved selection of a gay bishop and allowed for the blessing of same-sex couples. In June 2006, the convention did not respond fully to official requests for it to repent and to commit to a moratorium on

such actions.

Episcopalians have ordained gays for some time, saying all are welcome at God's table, and the convention agonized over its resolutions this year, which simply called for "restraint." Some dioceses continue to bless same-sex unions.

National churches (called "provinces") in the Anglican Communion are autonomous. But at a 1998 global conference, a large majority of Anglican bishops passed a resolution reiterating the faith's stand on homosexual practice as incompatible with Christian teachings.

Since her election in June, Jefferts Schori has affirmed her support for full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the church.

"She has gone out of her way to say that she's strongly in favor of the new position the church staked out in 2003," says the Rev. Kendall Harmon, of the South Carolina diocese. South Carolina is among a small group of dioceses and parishes in the US that has formed an Anglican Communion Network opposed to the convention's actions.

Last month, 20 of the 38 primates – those of the developing world where 70 percent of members live – met in Kigali, Rwanda. Their communiqué stated their intent to help build a new structure of Anglicanism within the US,

acknowledging the "serious implications of this determination." Anglican rules preclude bishops from interfering in other jurisdictions, but some US parishes are allying with leaders in Africa and elsewhere. Recently, one of the largest US parishes – Christ Church in Plano, Texas – separated from the Dallas Diocese, paying it \$1.2 million for the property. The church informally put itself under oversight of the bishop of Peru.

The Kigali communiqué also said some leaders would not sit at the table with Jefferts Schori in February, and called for another bishop acceptable to US traditionalists to be invited to the meeting.

This puts the Archbishop of Canterbury "between a rock and a hard place," Dr. Harmon says.

Williams is looking to a Communion-wide process involving prayer, communication, and careful listening – to fellow members and the Holy Spirit – to bring about reconciliation. The "Windsor process" also calls for developing an Anglican Covenant to provide a common confession of faith and mutual accountability. Developing-world leaders are working on a draft covenant, which would be discussed at global meetings in 2008.

Episcopalians on both sides of the divide express admiration of the capabilities of the new "chief pastor," who

has been bishop of Nevada for five years.

"She is fearless in many ways," says the Rev. Ian Douglas, who has worked closely with Jefferts Schori on matters relating to the Anglican Communion. "She's an incredible listener and able to take in conflicting positions and information and not be shaken one way or the other."

During the ceremony on Saturday, the several thousand present will, by tradition, be asked to give her their full support. Jefferts Schori will preach on what it means to truly live the gospel.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |

- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com) | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p08s01-comv.html>

# Those bulging campaign coffers

## The Monitor's View

America's midterm elections this year are a study in the wrong superlatives. Can negative ads get any worse? And what of the millions of dollars to pay for them? Campaign spending is setting a record for any midterm election – up 18 percent from 2002.

The nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics estimates that total campaign spending on federal races this year will be \$2.6 billion. The growth beats the rate of inflation since the last nonpresidential election, and seems to fly in the face of campaign-finance reform, which took effect following the 2002 midterms.

It's important to make this distinction, though: The concern is less the total amount of money shelled out and far more its possible corrupting influence on the winners.

We're speaking proportionally here, of course. One has to lament the ever higher amounts a congressional candidate must spend in order to win a race (at least \$1 million to win

a House seat, and millions more for the Senate). But the greater concern of campaign-finance reformers has always been those politicians who are wide open to donor influence due to unlimited contributions (called "soft money").

In the 2002 election cycle, just before the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act went into effect, about half of the money raised by the national committees of the two political parties was soft money – the majority arriving in \$100,000 batches from corporations, wealthy individuals, and unions. The reform act outlawed soft-money donations, allowing only limited, though increased, contributions.

This has forced the parties to turn much more to individual donors. As of the end of September, small donations of \$200 or less accounted for nearly 40 percent of funds raised by the national committees of both parties. That's a significant improvement over 2002 in terms of empowering average Americans and a dramatic change in reducing the potential for big-money influence. Much money, mostly corporate, has actually exited the fundraising system.

There are other, completely legal ways for corporations, rich folks, and unions to throw their weight around. These include political action committees (or PACs) and nonprofit organizations, known as "527" groups. But while spending by PACs and by 527s is up compared with 2002, the increase is not extraordinary. This midterm is also the most

financially competitive. At least in many of the close races, challengers actually have the cash to compete.

Still, several trends are worrisome. Incumbents generally maintain a competition–discouraging advantage in the size of campaign chests (4–to–1 in the Senate; 7–to–2 in the House). Also, the Federal Election Commission is handling more complaints from employees who say they're being coerced to donate to corporate PACs, and unions still use dues for political contributions despite some members' wishes not to.

And as recent high–profile scandals show, lawmakers can still be influenced by money–toting lobbyists and donors. The new Congress must be vigilant about transparency and other reforms.

But it does appear that fundraising in 2006 is less hospitable to big–money influence – a message that's easily overlooked in yet another record–setting spending cycle.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |

- [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p09s02-coop.html>

# Using the North Korea crisis to stop nuclear proliferation

**President Bush was right to resist bilateral talks with Pyongyang.**

**By Pat M. Holt**

**ARLINGTON, VA.**

North Korea has become the last member of President Bush's three-nation axis of evil to cause trouble in the world. The president is handling this crisis better than those with Iraq and Iran.

There were two mistakes with respect to Iraq. One had to do with intelligence. Either he believed unreliable intelligence that was fed to him by intelligence officers anxious to tell the boss what he wanted to hear, or he made up what he wanted to believe. The other mistake had to do with the United Nations and our allies there. He lost patience while they were deciding what to do and invaded Iraq with limited support, mostly from Great Britain. That support has cost Prime Minister Tony Blair dearly; his Labour Party may lose its parliamentary majority.

Mr. Bush has shown more patience in the Iranian case, both with Tehran's government and our allies in the UN. But he has been no less imperious about what he will tolerate.

With North Korea, the president was right to resist bilateral negotiations in favor of reviving the long stalled six-party talks that included China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea along with the United States and North Korea. In a diplomatic breakthrough, China announced Tuesday that the talks would reconvene shortly.

One of North Korea's objectives might be to split the US from the other parties. This is to be avoided if at all possible. The other parties, especially China, might well have more influence with North Korea than we do. They might also have better ideas on how to get to where we want to go. Where we want to go is a position of reliable assurance that North Korea will not use nuclear weapons and will use its nuclear program only for peaceful purposes – electrical power generation, for example. President Clinton thought he had reached this position, but he had not.

On a broader scale, the current crisis could be a turning point in nuclear policy generally. Sooner or later – sooner is better – the US is going to have to recognize that its nuclear nonproliferation policy has been a failure. Third-world countries view becoming a nuclear power as a mark of national prestige. They resent being told by the rich and

powerful that this will not be allowed.

In the aftermath of America's atomic bombing of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the US government sought to internationalize development and control of nuclear energy. A plan put forward by David Lilienthal, then a director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, would have put all atomic research and development under the control of an "atomic development authority." National programs, including America's, would be banned. Alas, this was an early victim of the cold war.

Now, 60 years later, the nuclear genie is so far out of the bottle that it probably cannot be put back. With its test last month, North Korea has apparently joined the US, Russia, China, France, Britain, Israel, Pakistan, and India in the nuclear club. Libya's bid to join ended under US pressure in 2003. Many suspect that Iran is hard at work developing a nuclear weapon.

It can reasonably be argued that nuclear weapons in the hands of the superpowers – the US and the Soviet Union – kept the peace during the cold war. Both sides accepted the doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD). The expectation that the first use of a nuclear weapon would surely destroy the country using it formed a potent deterrent. But MAD may not deter the leaders of some of today's nuclear powers.

Meanwhile, US policy has turned pragmatic (some might say inconsistent). We looked the other way when China and Israel got the bomb. For decades, the US imposed aid sanctions against Pakistan to prevent nuclear development there. It added further sanctions against it and India in 1998 after their successful nuclear tests.

Things are different today. Bush lifted the remaining restrictions on both countries soon after 9/11, when the United States desperately needed their help in the war on terror. Bush flew all the way to New Delhi this spring to negotiate an agreement for the US to help India develop peaceful nuclear energy. A powerful American motive might have been to reduce competition for world oil supplies from an industrializing India.

This is the current state of play. So where do we go from here? Everybody is better off with no, or at least no more, nuclear weapons. It is a paradox of international relations that the less a country can afford a nuclear weapon, the more it wants one.

So what to do? The United Nations, for all its shortcomings, is the appropriate, possibly the indispensable institution. The problem now is how to keep proliferation from becoming a global nuclear arms race.



A Nobel Peace Prize awaits the person who has the answer.

• *Pat M. Holt is former chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p09s01-coop.html>

# Reagan and the 1994 GOP sweep

By Robert Schmuhl

## **SOUTH BEND, IND.**

Following the ins and outs of this year's midterm elections can make a voter feel trapped in a time warp.

Parallels to 1994 abound with great frequency: dissatisfaction with one-party control in Washington, anemic approval marks for Congress and the president, nagging worry about the country's direction, and generally a foul mood.

It's almost as though, come Nov. 8, the political landscape for Democrats might change as dramatically as it did for Republicans in that earlier contest.

What always seems to be missing in remembering 1994 is a story that broke the weekend before Americans went to the polls that year. Its precise impact on the GOP landslide – gaining 52 House, 8 Senate, and 10 gubernatorial seats – was never measured by opinion researchers and will

forever be a mystery. But as a historical footnote to a momentous time, the revelation is so politically intriguing it merits speculation.

On Nov. 5, 1994, the Saturday prior to Election Day, former President Ronald Reagan announced in a handwritten letter that he was "one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer's disease." By using the future tense in the first sentence and later saying "At the moment I feel just fine," the hero of Republicans, then just hours away from their stunning victory, was characteristically upbeat – and deliberately keeping future darkness at bay.

Near the end of his letter, the words are vintage Reagan, a combination of personal humility and national reverence: "When the Lord calls me home, whenever that may be, I will leave with the greatest love for this country of ours and eternal optimism for its future. I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life. I know that for America there will always be a bright dawn ahead."

The letter, with its sympathy–provoking individual disclosure and stirringly sunny larger sentiments, became big news instantaneously. Television networks either led weekend broadcasts with the announcement or carried reports near the top of their programs. What Reagan revealed and wrote appeared on the front pages of Sunday's newspapers across the country.

Despite the 1994 campaign's cacophonous climax, Reagan's letter wasn't a one-day story. Numerous follow-up dispatches applauded his candor and his ability, through the sensitivity of his prose, to acquaint Americans with the cruelty of Alzheimer's.

Indeed, on Election Day itself, newspaper editorials commented on what one called "Mr. Reagan's Revelation." David Broder began his syndicated column for The Washington Post: "The simple, poignant words of President Reagan, disclosing that he has Alzheimer's disease, would have brought tears at any time. Coming as they did, at the end of a midterm campaign distinguished mainly by its ugliness and tawdry dishonesty, Reagan's words were a needed reminder that generosity of spirit is not incompatible with political success."

The newsworthiness of the disclosure was indisputable. It was a compelling human-interest story about a prominent figure, who departed the White House in 1989 with an approval rating of 63 percent.

Looking back to 1994, one wonders how much of a boost Republican candidates got from the sympathy Americans felt for this respected, even beloved figure.

Timing is critical in two pursuits in which Reagan excelled: acting and politics. Twelve years ago, a former movie

star-turned-politician performed a curtain-closing role in that midterm's democratic drama.

To call the Republican takeover of 1994 the Gipper's last win would be an overstatement. But Reagan played a part – and left the nation's political stage with his country clapping.

• *Robert Schmuhl is a professor of American studies and journalism at the University of Notre Dame. His collection of essays, "In So Many Words: Arguments and Adventures," has just been published.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |

- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com) | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p08s02-cole.html>

## Letters

### **After the wars, are Africans ready to forgive one another?**

While I appreciate the focus on African countries in transition from violence to peace in the Oct. 23–26 series, "Africa After War: Paths to Forgiveness," I am troubled that "forgiveness" was employed to characterize these transitions. Both during and after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, the TRC was taken to task for its reliance on an overwhelmingly Christian view of forgiveness and its willingness to shape victims' and survivors' stories into narratives of forgiveness. To see the Monitor do the same in an in-depth set of stories such as this is disappointing.

Transitional justice mechanisms – and their outcomes – are incredibly complex. To characterize the postconflict landscape that transitional societies face as a simple choice between "forgiveness" and "punishment" is sloppy shorthand, and to assume a link between forgiveness and reconciliation is deeply misinformed.

**Courtney E. Cole**

## **Athens, Ohio**

Kudos to the writer and photographer of the wonderful Oct. 23–26 series about four African countries working toward peace. In a time of high–profile conflict and violence, the series is a welcome reminder of alternative ways to peace and reconciliation.

I would especially like to compliment the photographer for her pictures in the Oct. 24 article, "Why Jeannette employs her family's killers." The shot of Jeannette Nyirabaganwa shaking hands but not making eye contact with Anastaz Turimubakunzi perfectly captures the ambivalence with which she has forgiven the man who killed members of her family. The close–ups of Mr. Turimubakunzi show his remorse so plainly, and they remind us that violence has a negative effect on the perpetrator as well as the victim. If a picture says a thousand words, I marvel at how many words these pictures are saying.

**David Keyes**

**Takoma Park, Md.**

Thank you for the Oct. 23–26 Paths to Forgiveness series, especially the Oct. 24 article on Rwanda. After reading Immaculee Ilibagiza's book, "Left To Tell," describing her survival as a Tutsi and her forgiveness of the Hutus, I had often wondered how the Hutus could live with the mind–boggling atrocities they had committed. The pictures



of the Rwandan Hutu faces showed it all – such pain, dejection, and despair. I felt a great deal of encouragement that these particular Hutus regretted their actions.

**Ellen White**

**Cherrylog, Ga.**

## **Don't proselytize to kids on Halloween**

Regarding the Oct. 30 article, "As 'goblins' knock, evangelicals answer the door": I wonder what the response would be to an atheist who handed out skeptical literature to trick-or-treaters? Atheists usually don't believe in any supernatural phenomena, so they would have as much reason to do this as a Christian. As an atheist myself, I would agree with anyone who says that this kind of evangelism is out of line. I don't think adults should take advantage of children, who just want to have fun, in an effort to spread their own opinions or beliefs.

I wish the people who are doing this kind of evangelism would take a moment and try to see their actions more objectively. Their religion is only true to them because they believe it to be. But people who have other philosophies are just as certain that theirs are correct. We should all have a bit more tolerance and not try to push our beliefs on others unsolicited – especially when it comes to impressionable children. If it's not OK for one group to do it, it's not OK for anyone.

**The Monitor welcomes your letters and opinion articles.**

Because of the volume of mail we receive, we can neither acknowledge nor return unpublished submissions. All submissions are subject to editing. Letters must be signed and include your mailing address and telephone number. Any letter accepted will appear in print and on our website, [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com).

Mail letters to '**Readers Write,**' and opinion articles to Opinion Page, One Norway St., Boston, MA 02115, or fax to (617) 450-2317, or e-mail to [Letters](#).

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p13s02-wmgn.html>

## When workers turn into 'turkers'

**Amazon.com's 'Mechanical Turk' Web service pays people to perform simple tasks computers cannot do.**

**By Gregory M. Lamb** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Some day, your boss could be a faceless Mechanical Turk who doles out tasks over the Internet. For nearly a year, Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk ([mturk.com](http://mturk.com)) has paid amounts ranging from one cent to several dollars for tasks that take a few seconds to a few minutes to complete. The jobs include taking surveys, contributing to a restaurant guide, transcribing audio clips, and looking at photos on the Web to identify colors, street addresses, or human faces.

Curtis Taylor has made about \$1,400 since last December just "fooling around with" Mechanical Turk while he watched TV at night. The technical instructor, who lives near Louisville, Ky., used the extra income to buy a new computer and wireless headsets for his and his wife's cellphones.

Chuck Freiman, a paralegal in Charlotte, N.C., spends two or three hours a week on the Turk. To him it's a hobby, not a job. "It's not like I have to get dressed up and go to work or anything," says Mr. Freiman, who brought in about \$25 last month. As long as he can make a little money, he says, "I'll be doing it."

The Mechanical Turk has given a 21st-century twist to the centuries-old concepts of "cottage industry" and "piece work." People work in their homes and are paid based on how much they produce instead of an hourly wage, using the Internet connections that have become a standard feature in most homes.

While some worry that the Turk could become another work-at-home scheme with low pay and no benefits that exploits workers, others suggest that if the concept took off, it could allow anyone – a college student, a shut-in, the newly unemployed – to quickly earn an income. The Turk could be the employer of last resort.

Though most jobs assigned by the Turk are simple (many could be done by children), they have something else in common: They can't be done by computers – at least not very well. It turns out, artificial intelligence (AI) still needs a little help from human intelligence.

The "Mechanical Turk" refers to an 18th-century hoax involving a mechanical chess-playing automaton. Outfitted with whirling gears and a head topped with a turban, the Turk toured Europe, defeating human opponents. But the impressive-looking robot was a fake: A human chess master was hidden inside.

More than two centuries later, online retailing giant Amazon.com found its AI programs were struggling to solve a number of problems, such as telling whether two similar but slightly different Web pages displaying products were really duplicates. The story of the Turk led the company to a counterintuitive solution: Use humans to work behind the computer screen.

"There are so many things in the world where human judgment can so simply come up with the right answer and where with a computer, there's no way for it to understand that problem," says Peter Cohen, the director of Amazon's Web Services software unit, which includes the Mechanical Turk.

Last November, Amazon began to post tasks it needed done. The company also opened up the website to what it calls "requesters," outside companies looking to use the Turk to find workers.

"This has huge potential because it's really tapping the connectivity that's created by the Internet," says Jesse Heitler, an entrepreneur in Ann Arbor, Mich., who's been developing services to take advantage of the Mechanical Turk and its ready supply of workers (sometimes called "Turkers"). One of Mr. Heitler's first projects, AskforCents.com, promised inquirers two quick answers to any question they wanted to pose, from the specific ("Where in the Seattle area is the next showing of that new World War II movie by Clint Eastwood?") to open-ended advice ("What shall I have for dinner?").

The questions were answered in secret by Turkers, who received a few cents if they provided a helpful reply. He planned to charge question askers a few cents to receive their answers.

But Heitler shut down AskForCents after learning that Amazon is testing its own question-answering businesses. Amazon's move left him "frustrated," because its test sites – [nownow.com](#) and [askville.com](#) – appear to be doing almost exactly the same thing Heitler's site had been. Heitler says that he has more ideas for using the Turker workforce, but he's keeping them under wraps for now.

The Mechanical Turk is just one form of what has been called "crowdsourcing," the ability of the Web to harness amateurs to use their spare time to create content or solve

problems. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia created by volunteers, and YouTube, the website that serves up homemade videos, are two prominent examples of online content created by amateurs working from their own computers.

Since last December, Yahoo Answers ([answers.yahoo.com](http://answers.yahoo.com)) has provided some 100 million free answers provided by volunteers to questions from "What is a good first sewing project?" to "Where in Europe should we go on our honeymoon in October?" The quality of the answers is graded by the inquirer, and past answers are kept and can be found by searching an ever-growing database.

"We have shied away from a paid model [such as Mechanical Turk]," says Tomi Poutanen, product manager of Yahoo's social search businesses. Money is not the only motivator, he says.

"People want to share their knowledge, their opinion, and have a voice," he says. They can also use their answers to establish a reputation in an area of knowledge that they might later turn into a business. A person who has built a following as a Yahoo gardening expert, for example, might develop that into a gardening business.

But some think the paid Mechanical Turk-style model will prove more durable. "In my mind, there's going to be a real



movement away from this Wikipedia, YouTube kind of social networking or crowdsourcing to actually paying people for the work," Heitler says. It'd be amazing, he says, if at any time anyone could log on and earn \$5 or \$10 in an hour. "If this really takes off, that's where it's going to go."

One challenge for Mechanical Turk is to provide enough work to keep a enough Turkers interested so that it has a ready labor pool available when companies come looking.

"It looks as though there are about 5,000 to 10,000 people registered" at Mechanical Turk and about 500 are online looking for assignments at any given time, says Sherwood Stranieri, a search engine marketing consultant who has posted work on the Turk and writes a Web log about Turking at [www.paylancers.blogspot.com](http://www.paylancers.blogspot.com).

Though not huge, that's already a pretty useful number of Turkers to draw on, he says.

Mr. Stranieri posted an advertising copy-writing assignment on the Turk and was impressed by the quality of work returned.

"There obviously are some very educated people floating around in that system," he says. "The vocabulary they used was pretty impressive."

Though requesters aren't supposed to communicate directly with individual Turkers, they can devise online tests Turkers must pass before they can work on a request. That's especially important for jobs that require specialized skills, such as translating a document between two languages.

"It becomes a lot more intriguing because you no longer have this anonymous, unskilled workforce," Stranieri says. "You can start to build up ... almost a private workforce of qualified workers."

But much still has to be worked out. For one thing, Amazon requires Turkers to be paid with US dollars deposited into an American bank account. Though Amazon's Mr. Cohen says Turkers already come from 100 countries, the vast majority are in the US. The true impact on wages of large numbers of, say, Indians or Chinese becoming Turkers has yet to be felt. And though working for the Turk is completely voluntary, it's not clear how the concept would affect labor markets if it were adopted on a large scale.

The Turk's tasks previously would have been performed by an employee or a direct contractor, observes Jeff Howe, a writer at Wired magazine who helped coin the term "crowdsourcing" in an article earlier this year. He now tracks the trend at [crowdsourcing.com](http://crowdsourcing.com), his Web log.

Mechanical Turk is a "rather depressing" aspect of crowdsourcing, he concedes, largely because the tasks often seem so monotonous.

A few more interesting uses of the Turk have begun to appear. Aaron Koblin at UCLA used it to pay 1,000 people two cents to draw a picture of a sheep, which he turned into an online art project called The Sheep Market ([users.design.ucla.edu/~akoblin/work/thesheepmarket/index.html](http://users.design.ucla.edu/~akoblin/work/thesheepmarket/index.html)).

Another project asked 1,000 people to answer the question "Why are you here right now?" for a penny. A month later, the answers have been collected into a book; part of the proceeds will be donated to children affected by hurricane Katrina (see [YRUHRN.com](http://YRUHRN.com)).

But perhaps the Turk's best news is that even its simplest tasks show that human intelligence will be needed for a long time to come. Despite the Turk's drawbacks, "I think it's rather brilliant," Mr. Howe says.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |

- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 30, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p13s02-wmgn.html>

# The truth behind women 'opting out'

**Two reports show a weak labor market and inflexible work policies as the main reasons women are staying home.**

**By Marilyn Gardner** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

When New York Times reporter Lisa Belkin coined the phrase "the opt-out revolution" in 2003 to describe a supposed exodus of mothers from the workforce, her article sparked a media flurry. Other journalists rushed to find their own examples of women heading home for family reasons.

But don't think of it as a trend. Much of the talk about women "opting out" to care for their families is a myth, two studies report. "Women are not increasingly dropping out of the labor force because of their kids," says Heather Boushey, an economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C. In a study titled "Are Women Opting Out? Debunking the Myth," she finds that although there was a drop in women's work participation rates between 2001 and 2005, it was largely because of a weak labor market. Men's labor rates also dropped during this time period.

"Higher job losses in the recession of the early 2000s have had the effect of making it appear that women – and especially women with children – are opting out of employment," Ms. Boushey says. Yet mothers today are only half as likely to leave the workforce because of their children as they were in 1984, she finds.

"Most mothers do not opt out," says Joan Williams, director of the Center for WorkLife Law at the University of California, Hastings. "They are pushed out by workplace inflexibility, the lack of supports, and a workplace bias against mothers." In one recent survey, 86 percent of women cited obstacles such as inflexible jobs as a key reason behind their decision to leave.

Ms. Williams is coauthor of a report released last week, "'Opt Out' or Pushed Out?: How the Press Covers Work/Family Conflicts." The study finds that press coverage of these issues typically focuses on highly educated professional women who account for just 8 percent of American women. Ms. Belkin's now-famous "opt-out" article, for example, profiled eight women who were graduates of Princeton, her alma mater. Such articles also give the impression that women's departure from work is a matter of choice.

These rarefied portrayals do not feature workers like Michelle Lee of Norfolk, Va. She has never heard the term

"opt out." And she never intended to leave her job as an administrative assistant at a pharmaceutical company. But when she needed time off to take her three sons to various appointments for chronic conditions, her boss was unbending.

"I was willing to come in early, leave late, and eat at my desk to make up the time," Ms. Lee says. "They gave me an ultimatum: I could not miss any more days. I told them it would be better for me to resign right now."

Ellen Bravo, former executive director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women, describes the challenge many workers face. "Low-wage women don't have the option of opting out," she says. "We have to guarantee that being a good family member won't cost you your job."

Asked what would have enabled her to keep her job, Lee sighs and says, "Flexibility. Just mere flexibility. I'm not a slothful person."

"Opting out" also hardly describes Jennifer Marx's departure from a Seattle radio station. Three weeks ago Ms. Marx, the mother of a 9-month-old son, was laid off from her job as a producer during a company downsizing. Now, as she looks for another job, she wonders if she can find comparable flexibility. "I was in an incredible situation where my boss told me, 'I don't care when you're here as long as you get

your job done,' " she says.

Yet Williams cautions that situations like this can lead to "deskilling," a downward career path that can occur when women are driven out of good jobs into lesser ones by inflexible workplaces.

"The misportrayal of professional women as cheerfully dropping out with very little discussion of the difficulties of getting back in misleads younger women into thinking that they have options that very often do not pan out," Williams says.

Glossy opt-out stories also typically ignore the economic vulnerability of women who leave, Williams notes. In addition to losing paychecks now, they are no longer contributing to pensions and Social Security for the future.

Gillian Pommerehn understands the tradeoffs involved in leaving. "There's a loss monetarily, but there's also a loss in your career track," she says. "To take five or six years off at that age, typically in your 30s, does affect your career track."

As vice president of Stanton Communications, a public relations firm in Baltimore, Ms. Pommerehn says, "I'm committed to staying as long as my firm is committed to having me. We both understand that means flexibility." As



the mother of a 2-1/2-year-old daughter, she works at home one day a week.

She also emphasizes her husband's role. "We share the load when it comes to child care and household duties," she says. "Without his willingness to be a partner and even sometimes take on 80 percent when I'm taking on 20 percent, I would not be able to work full time."

Yet marital status is routinely ignored in stories about opting out. In an age of high divorce rates, that is unrealistic, Williams says.

Misleading portrayals of work-family issues, gearing them largely to professional women, have other costs. "They make it much more difficult to generate public policy on this issue," Williams says. Boushey adds, "People on the Hill tend to think work is a choice for women."

Similarly, Williams says, "Unions often, although not invariably, still have the impression these are professional women's issues. Unions do not receive the message that work-family issues are core union issues."

The pressing need for all working families, she says, involves such social supports as paid leave, paid sick days, limits on mandatory overtime, quality affordable child care, and workplace flexibility.

Even when companies offer traditional family-friendly policies, some are not that friendly, says Sherry Sullivan, coauthor of the new book "The Opt-Out Revolt." "They might have a child-care center that's open 9 to 5, but they [still] ask their workers to work overtime or on weekends when the child-care center isn't open."

In other cases, employees are afraid to use existing programs. Ms. Sullivan interviewed some women who took the shortest possible maternity leave. "They feared that taking the full leave would make them seem less committed, less able. And men were afraid that if they used paternity leave they'd be taken off the fast track. Some men told us that if they talked about taking a paternity leave, their colleagues made fun of them and said, 'That's what you have a wife for.' "

Sullivan adds, "Some companies have found that when they introduce more flexible policies, it has a positive effect on the bottom line, and they're more likely to attract and retain high-quality talent."

Pommerehn poses this rhetorical question to employers: "Why would you lose a really good employee instead of figuring out a compromise or a flexible schedule where everybody could win?"

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 30, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p17s02-wmgn.html>

# A dog walker's wages might have a tight leash

**By Steve Dinnen**

**Q:** What's the pay limit for domestic help before one has pay Social Security taxes? I'm trying to figure out how many times I can have a dog walker visit before I have to pay her Social Security taxes. I pay this tax for my housekeeper, and I'd like to avoid another set.

**F.K., Washington, D.C.**

**A:** Hope that your dog walker charges very, very low rates. According to W. Thomas Curtis, a certified financial planner in Gaithersburg, Md., domestic service performed in the private home of an employer (or, in this case, out on the sidewalk) by an individual isn't a FICA wage if it's less than \$1,500 during the entire calendar year. The limit was \$1,400 in 2005.

**Q:** Can you tell me how to invest in tax lien certificates?

**M.N., via e-mail**

**A:** A tax lien is a legal encumbrance placed on a property for failure to pay taxes. Investors who buy the lien either become owners of the property or, more likely, receive a fee when the property owner comes up with the back taxes plus penalties to be paid to the government and the investor.

To learn the basics, we turned to Michael Williams, coauthor of [www.rogueinvestor.com](http://www.rogueinvestor.com), a website devoted to tax lien investments. Periodically, he says, a county has an auction to raise taxes that weren't paid on property in its jurisdiction. To entice investors, a mandated interest rate is added. The rate varies from state to state, but usually ranges from 10 to 24 percent per year. The state then creates what is called a tax lien certificate. This is the physical piece of paper that gives the investor a legal claim to the investment.

An investor who buys the tax lien certificate issued for the property is essentially paying off the tax debt. The property owner now owes the tax lien investor all the back taxes plus the interest due.

In about 95 percent of the cases, the property owner eventually comes up with the money, including any interest due. Sometimes, however, the owner can't come up with the money during the required period of time. In most states, the property is then forfeited to the investor. The investor then forecloses on the property and, in return for

paying all remaining liens, taxes, and penalties due, receives the entire property, often for a fraction of what it's worth.

Mr. Williams likes tax liens because they offer a high return – 10 percent to 24 percent is not uncommon, and 100 percent is sometimes possible – and are relatively low risk because they are tied to real estate. The sales are run by local governments, so they're typically well documented and regulated.

These are not liquid investments, however. "You don't know exactly when you will be paid, and in the case of deeds, you're buying real estate, which must be sold or rented to realize income or capital gains," he says.

Plus, title companies sometimes won't issue title insurance for some time on any property bought at a tax deed sale. And purchasing tax liens and deeds requires cash. Although you can buy liens for as little as \$25, Williams says, to really get started, you should plan to invest at least \$5,000 to \$10,000.

&bull; Questions about finances? We're prepared to help you find answers. Write: Work & Money Q&A The Christian Science Monitor 1 Norway Street Boston, MA 02115  
E-mail: [Work & Money](#)

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 30, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p14s01-wmgn.html>

## A Week's Worth

By Robert Kilborn

• **On the heels of another decision by the Federal Reserve not to raise interest rates, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.7 percent** last week, extending the longest rally by US stocks in 11 months.

• **Planning to fly to Grandmother's house for Thanksgiving?** The average round-trip ticket will cost you \$20 to \$60 more than it did a year ago, according to priceline.com, the online reservation service. And if you wait 'til Christmas, expect to pay between \$50 and \$100 more. Reason: fewer available seats.

• **Working overtime tends to be less noticed if one arrives early rather than staying late,** the Spherion recruiting/staffing agency of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., says. But there are some tricks you can use to help level the playing field. Such as? For one, make a point of asking whether you'll need a special key or security code to open the office. For another, shoot an occasional time-stamped e-mail to the boss before he or she arrives as a reminder that you've



been on the job ahead of everyone else.

• **"Sick days," also known as unscheduled absences, are at a seven-year high**, a new study by human resources provider CCH says. Another uncomfortable find for employers: Two of every three staffers calling to say they don't feel up to working do so "for reasons other than personal illness" – such as a sense of entitlement. Unscheduled absenteeism is "significantly higher" at companies with low overall staff morale, the CCH study found.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |

- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 23, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1023/p14s02-wmgn.html>

# A rethink on shunning sin

**A major fund company initiative would repeal bans on gambling and alcohol investments.**

**By G. Jeffrey MacDonald** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

For as long as investors have been bringing moral concerns to bear on the stock market, two industries have loomed large as societal scourges to be avoided: alcohol and gambling.

But as the universe of socially responsible investing (SRI) expands and matures, debate is brewing as to whether traditional rationales for these age-old taboos still pass muster. As a result, the future of these bedrock criteria, embraced for decades by conservative and liberal investors alike, is increasingly uncertain.

"Alcohol and gambling have remained – until this year – standard SRI exclusionary screens across the industry," writes Peter Kinder, president of KLD Research & Analytics, in an e-mail.

But changes are afoot, he observes, as screens seem to be evolving away from categorical bans on these industries to what Mr. Kinder terms a "more normal appraisal" in which vice peddlers are held to largely the same standards as other businesses.

Later this week, Pax World Funds is expected to announce whether shareholders have repealed a 35-year ban on alcohol and gambling-related investments. The initiative stems from management's request for "flexibility to make decisions based on a company's entire social responsibility profile" with a goal of making "the social screens more relevant and meaningful in a changing world."

Observers say the Pax initiative, which could overhaul the oldest social screen used in mutual-fund investing, has kicked off some lively discussion within SRI circles about how to engage so-called "sin stocks." What remains open to debate, however, is whether investors' moral standards have shifted – perhaps amid pressure to earn bigger returns – or if strategies to influence corporate behavior are simply keeping up with the times.

Pax's initiative may not be unique for long. Although Calvert Social Investments has no immediate plans to review its sin screens, "the exact [screening] language that we've been living by for a number of years isn't necessarily carved in stone for eternity," says Bennett Freeman, the company's

vice president for social research and policy.

Just as Calvert broadened its screen for weapons manufacturers last month to make it more flexible, Mr. Bennett says, "legacy commitments" on alcohol and gambling could potentially be revamped as part of a probable review of all social screens in the next two or three years. Meanwhile, other issues such as climate change and human rights enjoy priority.

"Alcohol and gambling are just not what we're looking at and working on every day here," Bennett says. "The significance of those issues has diminished as the whole universe of issues that we examine has expanded."

To be sure, alcohol and gambling still incur serious social costs. About 3 percent of Americans display signs of a gambling addiction, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling. Nearly 5 percent struggle with alcohol abuse, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Even so, more SRI funds are likely to follow Pax's lead by reconsidering whether a hands-off approach to alcohol and gambling stocks still makes sense, according to David Vogel, a business ethicist at the University of California at Berkeley, and author of "The Market for Virtue." In his view, these screens reflect a value system that no longer

resonates with most ethical investors.

Bans on "gambling and alcohol come out of more of those early religious roots," Vogel says. In the 1920s, Methodists began shunning firms whose stock in trade was to market one vice or another. In 1971, two Methodist ministers institutionalized those concerns (among others) when they founded Pax, the first publicly available SRI mutual fund.

"I can't imagine that there are many social investors now who believe that a company engaged in those two things is inherently irresponsible," Vogel says. If Pax drops its ban, "I think it might lead other funds to rethink their negative screens."

But others read a different message. Moves to make screens more flexible allow for more thoughtful analysis and better assessment of a company's overall social impact than a simple formula or industry ban could deliver, according to Timothy Smith, president of the Social Investment Forum, a network of socially responsible investment companies.

"The moral concerns about alcohol and gambling are as strong as ever," Mr. Smith says. "These aren't products that make a positive social impact." In revising its screen, he continues, Pax "is actually looking at the complexity rather than making a narrow moral judgment."

For Pax's part, CEO Joe Keefe declined to comment because the issue is currently under shareholder review. He did, however, address the rationale for a screen review in an August interview with Pax's newsletter, "Connection."

"In 1971, SRI was largely a negative strategy that individuals used to avoid certain so-called 'sin' stocks [e.g., alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and weapons]," Mr. Keefe told the newsletter. "Today, 35 years after Pax World was founded, SRI has evolved and is more focused on impacting corporate behavior and promoting social change through a variety of investment strategies."

Finances could also be a factor. Pax's three funds have largely failed to keep pace with average mutual-fund industry returns over intervals of one, three, or five years, according to data from fund-tracker Morningstar. In one particularly painful episode, Pax last year reluctantly divested its profitable stake in Starbucks when the coffee giant struck a deal with Bourbon distiller Jim Beam and triggered a requisite "sell" in accordance with a zero-tolerance policy for companies that make alcoholic products.

Meanwhile, vices are paying dividends. The Vice Fund, which seeks out alcohol, gambling, tobacco, and defense stocks, has beaten the market with returns in excess of 18 percent on average over the past three years.

Still, observers doubt that pressure for higher returns is driving Pax's initiative. The reason: Alcohol and gambling are small sectors when compared with sectors such as oil. Though SRI funds have paid a price for their social standards in recent years, those lower returns can be traced to underweighted plays in the energy sector where booming oil stocks have given unscreened funds a leg up, says Jay Falk, president of SRI World, a Brattleboro, Vt., research firm.

In Mr. Falk's view, the driver for rethinking these traditional screens is a set of shifting moral values among ethical investors. Although outright avoidance is still an approach that investors appreciate on tobacco stocks, he says, investors are now likely to tolerate alcohol and gambling producers in their portfolios as long as the companies model responsible conduct.

"The alcohol screen as it has been applied in the past should really be reconsidered," Falk says. "There's nothing wrong with the production of alcohol. It has everything to do with the use of it." He says a company that sponsors anti-drunk-driving programs, for instance, would be more acceptable than one that doesn't, and instead markets aggressively to youth.

Some mutual funds, however, still regard alcohol and gambling as inherently troublesome products. The socially



conservative Timothy Plan promises, for instance, "to screen out investments in cultural and moral pollution," including alcohol and gambling stocks. Similarly, the more liberal Citizens Funds also screens out all alcoholic beverage producers as well as companies for whom gambling is "a main line of business."

Another fund family, Domini Social Investments, makes sure none of its holdings derive "significant revenues" from alcohol or gambling.

"When you look at alcohol, tobacco, and gambling, you can see there is a fundamental problem there," says Jeff MacDonagh, SRI portfolio manager at Domini. "A corporation sells products to the customers ... and then the customers pay for it. They give this company money, and they get harmed in return."

Sin screens aren't on the verge of disappearing altogether. "There are enough investors who feel strongly about alcohol," Kinder says, "that I don't see a major move into such securities by mutual funds relaxing their screens."

Still, times are certainly changing when Calvert, the nation's largest SRI fund family, praises a beer company's wastewater disposal practices. Based on this environmental plus and workplace considerations, Bennett says, "One could think it would not be socially irresponsible to be

investing in Anheuser–Busch."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 23, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1023/p17s02-wmgn.html>

# Do estate–tax reductions apply to foreigners living in the US?

**By Steve Dinnen**

**Q:** Under former estate–tax laws, foreigners living in the United States didn't have the right to pass on large sums tax free to their spouse. Congress assumed that surviving spouses would skip the country to escape the tax bill. But does the new law that increased estate–tax exemptions on assets passed on to nonspouse US citizens apply to foreigners, too?

**R.F., Boston**

**A:** The rules regarding noncitizen spouses have not changed, says Gary Altman, a certified financial planner in Rockville, Md. The only thing the 2001 tax act did was increase the amount that passes free of federal estate tax.

Every resident or citizen of this country has the right to pass that amount (currently \$2 million) free of estate taxes to anyone they want. If a person has more than that, he or she can give what is leftover to their spouse estate–tax free,

because of the unlimited marital deduction. But if that spouse is not a US citizen, the estate is subject to tax on everything above \$2 million, Mr. Altman says. So the noncitizen spouse, in this case, is treated as not being a spouse.

Congress has allowed for a special form of trust, called a qualified domestic trust, that will defer the estate tax on the assets over \$2 million until the noncitizen spouse later dies, no matter where he or she ends up living.

Many individuals with noncitizen spouses are confused about these rules, says Altman. That makes it very important for people who live or own real estate in the US to plan their financial affairs to avoid estate taxes.

**Q:** How do you compare Treasury Bills with TIPS and Series I Savings Bonds for earned interest, tax treatment, and safety?

**J.F., via e-mail**

**A:** T-Bills, TIPS, and Series I Bonds are all subject to federal taxes. But they're exempt from state and local levies, says Doug Bender, managing director at McQueen, Ball & Associates in Bethlehem, Pa. Earned interest may be calculated differently for each type of security. All are guaranteed by Uncle Sam, so safety is not an issue.

As Mr. Bender explains, Treasury Bills are short-term instruments (less than one year) that are issued at a discount from maturity value. The difference between the purchase price and the maturity value is your income. For example, a \$1,000 face value T-Bill purchased for \$950 will generate \$50 in interest if held to maturity. T-Bills are very liquid, with yields that are comparable to and sometimes superior to money-market rates.

Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS) pay a rate of interest that's set when they're sold. The interest is paid on the principal of the security, which will vary with the rate of inflation. The principal is adjusted monthly based upon changes to the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U), as issued by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. As the principal is adjusted, interest payments may rise with inflation or fall with deflation. The fixed rate of interest is paid semi-annually and based upon the original principal or the inflation-adjusted principal, whichever is greater. TIPS are issued at regularly scheduled auctions in maturities of 5, 10, or 20 years and are available in minimum denominations of \$1,000. A longer-term investment, TIPS are ideal for tax-deferred accounts or Roth IRAs, Bender says.

I-Bonds are sold at face value with a minimum investment of just \$25. Earned income is the combination of a rate that's fixed for the life of the bond, plus a variable rate,

which is based on changes in the CPI-U and is adjusted semiannually. Interest on I-Bonds may be earned for up to 30 years from their issue date, and it's paid out when they're cashed in. But there's a one-year required holding period, and if you redeem them within five years of issue, you forfeit the most recent three months of interest. I-Bonds have inflation-protection aspects similar to TIPS. You can buy no more than \$30,000 worth of them in any given year.

Bender believes that I-Bonds are well suited to smaller accounts. Their tax-deferral feature – taxes need not be paid until they're cashed in – is attractive. But their penalties for early withdrawal and lack of transferability makes them inappropriate for investors who need flexibility. For more information on all of these investments visit [www.treasurydirect.gov](http://www.treasurydirect.gov).

• Questions about finances? We're prepared to help you find answers. Write: Work & Money Q&A The Christian Science Monitor 1 Norway Street Boston, MA 02115  
E-mail: [Work & Money](mailto:Work & Money)

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |

- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 01, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1101/p20s01-legn.html>

## Backstory: The Texas gear leaders

**A team of small-town girls who didn't know a flywheel from a pinwheel restores a tractor in national competition.**

**By Michael Rubino** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

### INDIANAPOLIS

A girl? Working on a 71-year-old tractor? Wearing a cheerleader outfit? Kayla White and her teammates, bubbling with know-how and nerve, turned the tables on a five-man panel of judges with a tale that raised a series of seemingly absurd rhetorical questions.

"I bet y'all never seen anything like that," challenged Kayla, a high school senior.

No, judging from the awkward laughter, they hadn't. And that was the thing: In the short history of the Chevron Delo Tractor Restoration Competition, a contest open to mechanically inclined high school students from across the country, no one had ever seen a team quite like the one from tiny Cotton Center, Texas.



A year ago, the team of seven girls started at the very beginning. Of the seven seniors, only Ashley Swoap had even an elementary knowledge of basic tools, while others struggled with the simple maxim, "righty-tighty, lefty-loosey." Last week during the finals, which were held in conjunction with the 79th annual National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, the Cotton Center group sounded like a bunch of bona fide gearheads. During the question-and-answer portion of their PowerPoint presentation, the girls fielded questions about the properties of magnetos, proper flywheel placement, and acid baths for carburetors.

"Very impressive," confided a contest official. "Those were some tough questions. I couldn't believe how well they handled them."

However, unlike many of the other nine finalists, the girls were unable to bring the 1935 McCormick-Deering Farmall F-20 completely back from the dead and finished out of the running. "We just ran out of time, that's all," grumbled David Howell, the Cotton Center group's adviser. "Another eight hours, and we'd have this thing running."

Pretty confident for the guy who was once convinced the only way that tractor would ever leave his garage would be if it were carried out in a box. Like a funeral. And just as expensive.

Students spend thousands of hours and dollars on their projects. The object of the competition, which has both an individual and team division, is to restore an antique tractor to mint condition. The entire project is budgeted, bankrolled, and documented by the contestants, who submit detailed accounts to a board that whittles the entrants to 10 finalists.

\*\*\*

Cotton Center, 30 minutes north of Lubbock, fields a six-man football team but is known for its prowess with a wrench. Since the competition began in 1995, Mr. Howell has guided seven teams to the finals and won back-to-back titles in 2004 and 2005. Last year a victory celebration drew 150 people from the town of about 174. There are 45 students in high school there, and 13 in the class of 2007.

Because of Cotton Center's size, the seven girls had little choice but to take Howell's ag-science course, which revolves around a tractor restoration project. "We weren't trying to make any kind of political statement, that's just the way the cards fell," he says. "But I've got to be honest, when we first started this, my whole deal was trying not to go insane."

Howell taught them safety, how to use the right tools for the job, and then slowly unlocked the mysteries of the crusty

tractor that had been donated by a Cotton Center resident. The girls' confidence grew with their knowledge. Eventually, they even became a little cocky, calling themselves "Howell's Angels" to the chagrin of their adviser. "I think all of that just pushed him over the edge," says team member Randi Cates.

Howell, though, found a way to get his revenge.

"One day he told us he was taking us to [JC] Penney's to buy new clothes because so many of us had ruined ours working on the tractor," says Ashley. "We thought we were buying jeans. Instead, he took us to a store where we got these big ol' spacesuit-looking things to paint in."

In the past, when it came to engines and grime, if there was a girl to be found in the garage, she was usually wearing a bikini and holding a quart of motor oil on a glossy calendar that hung from the wall. That image, though, is history. In 2003, Tabetha Salsbury, from Pueblo, Colo., became the first girl to win the individual tractor-restoration competition, and, in 2004, the first individual to win two years in a row. Her story garnered significant media attention, helped her win a college scholarship, and procured a pending made-for-TV movie. Last year, the first all-girls team to compete, a group from Decatur, Texas, took second place.

In an age of "Pimp My Ride" and "Trick My Truck" TV shows, "Restore My Tractor" might not conjure the same cachet, but interest in antique farm implements is at an all-time high.

"The hobby has experienced phenomenal growth," says Dave Mowitz, an editor at Successful Farming magazine and past judge at the restoration competition. "Not only are the vast majority of the people involved nonfarmers, the hobby is attracting people who don't have anything to do with farming at all."

Mr. Mowitz has been involved with the hobby since 1991, when his magazine began running a standing feature called Ageless Iron, which is dedicated to covering tractor collecting and restoration. (According to Mowitz, several dozen magazines and newsletters cover the hobby.) He recalled in 1995 predicting the plateau of antique tractor restoration, but since then he's seen the number of tractor restoration shows jump from the "hundreds to the thousands." On any given weekend anywhere in the United States, he says, there's a show going on somewhere near you.

"It's a larger metaphor for kinder, gentler times," he explains. "Go to a show, talk with the people involved, and you'll be hooked. It's one of the few places you can take your kids to and turn them loose without being concerned."

The only thing you need to be worried about are the surrogate grandmothers who'll treat your kids like their own and stuff them with too many cookies and pies."

\*\*\*

After working together and fighting together, the girls from Cotton Center began to feel like a family, too. There were times when it wasn't easy, but that was part of the learning curve.

"There was a point when everyone wanted to do everything by themselves," says Sasha Castilleja, team member and reigning homecoming queen. "But there was so much to do that we had to learn to trust others to help get the job done. We're all about to graduate, so that was a good lesson for when we get out in the real world."

All of the girls plan some kind of postsecondary education. None wants to be a mechanic, but if nothing else they had a great time – especially needling their adviser.

"Mr. Howell quit about a million times," teases Kayla. "At least twice a day," concurs Randi, piling it on with an impression.

And Howell? What did he learn? "Their version of the truth and mine isn't the same."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 26, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1026/p02s01-legn.html>

# Move to single–sex classes fans debate

**New federal rules let US public schools split up boys and girls.  
Research on the practice is inconclusive.**

By **Amanda Paulson** and **Stacy A. Teicher** | Staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor

## CHICAGO AND BOSTON

Controversial new regulations give educators far more latitude to establish schools and classes strictly for a single gender, even as research on the practice is scarce and inconclusive.

The regulations, released Wednesday by the Department of Education, mark a major shift in the interpretation of Title IX, approved 34 years ago to bar sex discrimination in schools.

It's a change that has intensified a long–running debate over whether boys and girls learn better in a single–sex environment, with critics warning the regulations may roll back years of hard–won ground.

Even the Department of Education, in announcing the rules, acknowledged research is mixed and backed away from endorsing single–sex classrooms.

"The research, though it's ongoing and shows mixed results, suggests that single–sex education can provide benefits to some students under certain circumstances," said Assistant Secretary of Education Stephanie Monroe, in a news briefing. She emphasized any single–sex environment would be voluntary, and an equivalent coeducational option would be available.

Research on the practice has been controversial. Theories that each gender has different learning styles or brain growth, or that boys are losing ground in traditional schools, have caught on in the media and popular imagination.

However critics say little of it stands up to scrutiny, and there are far more similarities between genders – and differences among individuals – than there are broad general differences between the sexes.

"Race and class are the two biggest predictors [of achievement] in every single study I've looked at," says Rosalind Barnett, a senior scientist at the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, in Waltham, Mass. "Of all the things you could think about doing to improve educational outcomes, separating kids by gender is really



low on the list."

Dr. Barnett questions using resources for something with so little scientific basis, and she worries there could be negative consequences if girls and boys start to believe what she says are myths of gender differences – that girls are challenged in math and science, and boys have a harder time with reading and verbal skills.

Nonetheless, single–sex classrooms are catching on among many parents and educators who feel they see a difference in kids and believe it might help them focus.

Public school districts have held off on doing much that's separated by gender for fear of legal challenges, but a few single–sex schools have opened in recent years as pilot programs or if the district could show a compelling reason for doing so.

Some 241 public schools now offer some single–sex classrooms, up from three in 1995, according to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE). Of those 51 are completely single–gender schools.

The Minneapolis Academy, a small charter school in Minnesota that opened two years ago, offers only single–sex classes for its seventh– and eighth–graders.

Academy director Leon Cooper says he set out to create a school with high expectations for inner-city kids who typically start out behind grade level. He added the single-sex classes "on gut instinct" after seeing how the practice worked at private schools he visited.

The school has had success at bringing kids back up to grade level, he says.

"This separation is not segregation," Mr. Cooper says. "These kids have all kinds of social interaction, but during the day the reason to be here is not to interact socially, it's to learn to read and write."

Some advocates, aware of the scanty research, are pushing for the option for reasons of social justice and parental choice, more than because of differences in learning styles or brain development.

"Parents with lots of money can choose single-sex schools, so why can't parents who don't have a lot of money have the same kind of choice?" asks Leonard Sax, director of the NASSPE.

Critics dismiss that quickly.

"You could say that parents could choose to send their kids to racially segregated schools as well, but that isn't

something we'd want to have in the public school system," says Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization for Women.

Other advocates say even if the focus on gender differences in learning is not reason enough for change, there may be social reasons.

"For disadvantaged students, they don't necessarily identify with academic achievement, and for many families, the choice of a single-sex school is a very pro-academic choice," says Rosemary Salomone, a law professor at St. John's University in New York and author of "Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling."

"You're saying, particularly to teenagers, school is a very serious business," she says. "It frees them from the social distractions of the other sex."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |

- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 26, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1026/p14s01-legn.html>

## Crisis in civics ed? Revival is under way.

**In the face of a culture that promotes individualism, more high schools encourage debate and service.**

**By Stacy A. Teicher** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

If Todd Letimore ever thought the founding documents of the United States of America were simply pieces of history, he's long since left that notion behind.

At the "Constitutional Convention" for Philadelphia's new Constitution High School, Todd and the rest of the inaugural ninth-grade class argued passionately as they set up the school's government. ("The only stipulation was they could not vote me out of office," Principal Thomas Davidson says with a laugh.)

His social studies class is like no class he's had before, Todd says. "We're actually interacting and learning – we actually get a chance to debate and say if we disagree, instead of just sitting there and writing all day."

Part of a growing network of history–focused high schools around the country, it's just one of the creative initiatives under way to equip young people to engage more effectively in American democracy.

Particularly with today's influx of immigrants, "it's important ... to provide some kind of unifying thread, so that students don't simply stay in their own ethnic enclaves ... but understand that there's a similarity among all groups and a shared knowledge of America's past," says Michael Serber, education coordinator at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York, a partner with Constitution High School. Improving history education is also a critical citizenship requirement, he says. "If you're going to deal with issues today, how can you not understand the issues from yesterday?"

According to a recent report, the lack of knowledge about US history, politics, and economics among college students amounts to a "crisis." That alarm sounds periodically, and it's spurring a wide range of responses – some of which simply give better opportunities to students whose civic impulses already run deep. For example:

- Legislation introduced recently in the US House and Senate would establish the nation's first Public Service Academy. Students at the college would have their education subsidized by the federal government in

exchange for five years of service in government or nonprofit jobs after graduation. The idea came from former Teach for America participants Chris Myers Asch and Shawn Raymond.

- Texas Christian University in Fort Worth has established a Center for Civic Literacy, which brings together students, faculty, and community members to shape local public policy.

- The School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, recently joined a number of elite law schools by expanding its loan–forgiveness program for graduates who take public–service or advocacy jobs. The program covers up to \$100,000 in debts for qualifying students.

- The New School, a university in New York City, just launched the Riggio Writing and Democracy Program. Undergraduate students in one of the courses next semester will write constitutional amendments and argue their merits before the class.

The latest group to examine college students' grasp of civics is the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), a nonprofit in Wilmington, Del., that promotes education about the nation's "founding principles." In a test of 14,000 college students, freshmen and seniors on average answered only half of the 60 multiple–choice questions correctly. The

report recommends that more universities require such core courses as American history, political science, and economics. And it notes that students who take such courses are more likely to vote, volunteer, or join political campaigns.

"The study of the practice of democracy in our country ... is a foundational study that needs to be assured for every [college] student," says ISI senior vice president Michael Ratliff, a retired US Navy Rear Admiral. "We don't want a federal fiat that requires 'X' course ... but colleges and universities need to engage and ensure a balanced education."

Some educators, however, argue that the focus shouldn't be on multiple-choice tests, but on what citizenship skills students are taught that will last a lifetime. "There's nothing inherently wrong or right with core courses; it just depends on how they're conceived. If it's just simply throwing names and dates at them, most of that's going to disappear by the time they graduate," says Robert Polito, director of the Writing and Democracy Program at The New School.

One skill at the center of the program Mr. Polito directs is "close reading," which teaches students the importance of keeping certain questions in mind when reading everything from historical documents to financial news. For example: What's the author's purpose and context? What's the



significance of specific words?

It's empowering for students to discover texts this way, Polito says. "Poems, stories, speeches, and documents like the Constitution are all examples of rhetoric. And students need to know how to engage and respond to those different rhetorics."

Zia Jaffrey, a writer with experience around the world, is currently teaching a nonfiction workshop in the program. As she strives to have her students incorporate broader political themes into their writing, she's finding that some resist, and some don't know where to start. "My thing with students is for them to get out of themselves," she says. But it's difficult, she adds, because she's up against a culture that emphasizes celebrity and narcissism.

The course lit a fire under Chiara Fudge, a junior at The New School and an aspiring novelist. She says her parents' service in the military (including her father's duty in the 1991 Gulf War) left her with mixed emotions about US policies. "I kind of stepped away from really getting involved with politics, but now I know that I have to," she says. "We don't live in a bubble.... Everything that happens to your neighbor ... affects all of us."

When she talks to friends outside of New York, she's frustrated that they seem to be absorbing a message from

society that she sums up as: "Make money, look great, and you'll rise to the top." But in the Writing and Democracy Program, she says, she feels better equipped to effect change. "It's important for someone like myself who's passionate to say something and maybe inspire someone else to get involved."

Turning away from rote learning is also the approach at Constitution High School. With 90-minute classes there's time for regular local field trips, says principal Davidson. Partners such as the National Constitution Center provide unique learning opportunities, and each year the students will engage in a public service project.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute provides lesson plans and brings some of its 60,000 primary documents to schools. On its website ([www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org)), students can read and compare wartime letters from the Revolutionary War all the way up to the current conflict in Iraq.

"The goal is not to have the teacher just cover history," Mr. Serber says, "but to help the students discover history."

## **How well do you grasp civics?**

On a recent test designed to measure knowledge of American history, civics, and economics, college freshmen and seniors scored an average of 51.7 percent and 53.2

percent respectively – failing grades. Here are a few of the multiple-choice questions. We have permission to show you the correct answers, but not all the choices, as some students are still being tested.

**Question:** In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed a series of government programs that became known as ...

**Answer:** the New Deal.

**Comment:** Freshmen and seniors scored highest on this: 83.4 percent of the seniors and 80.7 percent of freshmen got it right.

**Q:** During which period was the American Constitution amended to guarantee women the right to vote?

**A:** 1901–1925.

**Comment:** Seniors scored 58.4 percent, freshmen 59.4 percent.

**Q:** According to 'just war' theory, a just war requires which of the following?

**A:** the authority of a legitimate sovereign.

**Comment:** Only 15.6 percent of students answered this one right – the lowest score.

**Q:** Which of the following was an alliance to resist Soviet expansion?

**A:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

**Comment:** The combined total percent who answered correctly was 45.5.

**Q:** Which of the following is the best measure of production or output of an economy?

**A:** Gross Domestic Product.

**Comment:** Freshmen scored 68.9 percent and seniors scored 74.4 percent.

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |

- [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 25, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1025/p20s01-legn.html>

# Backstory: They doff their beanies to tradition

**Is there a good side of hazing? A mild – and ancient – form of humiliation makes a popular comeback at Wabash College.**

**By Michael Rubino** | Contributor to The Christian Science Monitor

## **CRAWFORDSVILLE, IND.**

My college experience was like yours, except my homecoming queen probably had a lot more stubble. And, at my alma mater, if you didn't know the school song – one of the longest in the nation – someone gave you a friendly reminder by shaving a scarlet letter into your head. And, finally, there's this distinction: I wore a freshman beanie.

Recently the club got a little more inclusive at all-male Wabash College. This fall, the beanie reappeared on freshman heads here, breathing life into a tradition dead for almost 40 years.

Whether the evolution of a mild form of hazing drawn from centuries-old rites can survive in today's politically correct

climate remains a question, but what better proving ground? Wabash, one of the handful of men's colleges left in the nation, has always been ahead of the curve by keeping behind the times.

"Students here have this powerful sense of connection to the past of our college," explained Tom Bambree, dean of students and a 1968 Wabash graduate who doesn't think the pressure to wear beanies is hazing. "This is a manifestation of that – a way for students to do something as a whole class and take part in the richness of a school tradition."

Wabash, 45 miles northwest of Indianapolis, was founded in 1832. The liberal arts college sits on a wooded 60 acres, anchored by red-brick Georgian halls. The school wears its old-school charm like a letterman sweater on a crisp, autumn afternoon, making the freshman beanie appropriate attire.

The beanie – called a "pot" – is a miniature green cap with a scarlet visor and button. It dates back to 1920 when it was the visible centerpiece of "freshman indoctrination" that required freshmen to tip their pots to upperclassmen, among others. Freshmen wore the beanies until they were able to steal one that sat atop a greased utility pole in a class scrap – called "pole fight" – between freshmen seeking emancipation and sophomores eager to keep the

status quo. The tradition ended in 1966 – the requirement to wear a beanie was dropped in 1968, though one fraternity, Phi Delta Theta, continued the tradition alone. At homecoming, earlier this month, a pair of pledges from that fraternity got a taste of Old Wabash as they spent their Saturday catering to the whims of upperclassmen and visiting parents and alums.

"As much as it kind of sometimes sucks wearing a pot, I'm glad to take part in this tradition," said Rob Harvey, a freshman from Sherborn, Mass. "I've had guys from the Class of '52 and what not come up to me today telling me about their pot and how great it is to see us wear ours. It makes me glad to know they went through the same thing we're going through right now. I think that's kind of cool."

Added Brandon Cornett, a freshman from Valparaiso, Ind.: "Wearing a pot is like being part of a family tree that branches out all over."

That sense of unity created by a shared tradition was being put to a tougher test by the other Wabash freshmen at half time, when the fairest among them competed in an annual queen-crowning contest that evoked an equator crossing, replete with Sons of Neptune cheering on reluctant polliwogs in drag.



The revival of the beanie was the inspiration of senior Ross Dillard, who, like many fellow students, had admired his school's past but felt removed from it. For the past two years Mr. Dillard worked in the Wabash archives reading up on old traditions and a campus that seemed more unified than today's, segregated by fraternities and clubs. The campus, he decided, needed a shared experience.

Through the school bookstore, Dillard made an initial order of 150 pots, then sold the idea to the fraternities. Through his efforts, all freshman fraternity pledges are wearing pots, and some independents, too. The bookstore was cleaned out of the \$10 pots in the first two weeks of school this fall and had to restock what is now the bestselling clothing item in the store.

"I want to see this succeed by custom, not whip," says Dillard. "I'd like this to be a social construct where everyone wears a pot when they're freshmen because that's just what you do."

"I have mixed feelings," admitted Mike Bachner, bookstore manager and a 1970 Wabash graduate. "I have a hard time separating the pot as a symbol of humiliation from the fun of it. In some respects it's a great old tradition, but I was there at the demise of the pot."

There is an uneasy tension over hazing – in any form. But if there's anything positive to be said for it, it would probably be the beanie tradition, suggests Hank Nuwer, a professor at Indiana's Franklin College, who wrote "Wrongs of Passage: Fraternities, Sororities, Hazing, and Binge Drinking."

"No one ever died from a beanie," he says, drawing a distinction between criminal hazing and the beanie custom that began in grand universities of Europe during the Middle Ages and continued at the dawn of the American collegiate system.

At Wabash, Professor Nuwer says, "There's got to be a lot of pride in being the last of a breed. We like the last of anything. I think at Wabash there's a determination that it not die out – and that's pretty good for creating solidarity."

Beanie-wearing continues at several small colleges around the US during orientation, though Wabash freshmen wear theirs for a semester. But, cautions Nuwer, the dynamic at Wabash might make freshmen prone to hazing and this should be watched carefully.

David Blix, an associate professor of religion at Wabash, used the occasion of a recent chapel talk – a speech given by invitation of the student body – to spotlight the positive aspects of the pot. The 1970 graduate of the college also

taught the freshmen how to tip.

A proper tip is like a solemn bow, and requires eye contact and humility in equal measure. The one-on-one tip is simple: The tipper addresses the tpee with the proper salutation (such as "good morning"), direct address, and arm outstretched, hat in hand.

"This is a way that freshmen are ... showing, in my mind, respect and courtesy to the community they've entered," says Mr. Blix. "This is a tradition I've always liked and was glad to see it circulate more widely."

And while Professor Blix is unsure the practice is back for good, he seems confident moderation will win out in the current climate because of the school's "Gentleman's Rule," which asks the Wabash man to conduct himself "as a gentleman and a responsible citizen." The strength of the Jeffersonian rule is its ambiguity: There are the adult confinements of personal responsibility and consequence, but enough wiggle room for the pursuit of boys-will-be-boys fun.

School administrators haven't taken an official position on the matter – though they haven't prevented booming bookstore beanie sales.

"Do I think it's hazing? No, I don't," says Mr. Bambree, the dean of students.

Besides, there are more demeaning things in the life of a freshman at a men's college. You could be elected homecoming queen.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)



from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p13s01-lign.html>

# Charity knitters stitch up the world

**In providing warm clothing to soldiers, third-world infants, and the needy, they comfort themselves as well.**

**By Marilyn Gardner** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## **NEEDHAM, MASS.**

Laura Payson has always enjoyed knitting for others. As a college student, she made argyle socks for boyfriends. Later she turned her talents to baby clothes for relatives. Now she has a different focus: knitting for those in need. Every Saturday morning at 10, Mrs. Payson joins more than a dozen residents of the North Hill retirement community in Needham, Mass., for an hour of charity knitting. The women, known as the North Hill Knitters, stitch caps, mittens, scarves, and blankets for families who are homeless or struggling.

"I love to knit, and to know that I'm doing it for something worthwhile is really nice," Payson says as she knits and purls her way through rows of a yellow baby blanket bordered in white.

Across the country, groups like this are finding pleasure in what is sometimes called community knitting. Other knitters, including men, stitch at home and during lunch hours. Collectively they form an invisible army, creating afghans, caps for newborns, security blankets for ill or troubled children, and clothing to provide warmth and comfort.

"There's a huge population of socially minded people," says Betty Christiansen, author of a new book, "Knitting for Peace: Make the World a Better Place One Stitch at a Time." "They have this gift and want to share it."

Charity knitting has an illustrious history. During the Revolutionary War, Ms. Christiansen says, farm women stuffed saddlebags with hand-knit socks, breeches, and shirts, then rode to the battlefield to deliver them. Martha Washington even organized officers' wives into a war knitting group.

Knitting needles flew again during the Civil War as women in the North and the South made socks, gloves, mufflers, and blankets. During World War I, John D. Rockefeller welcomed knitters into his Fifth Avenue mansion. President Wilson allowed sheep to graze on the White House lawn. Their shorn wool brought \$1,000 a pound at a Red Cross auction. During World War II, Eleanor Roosevelt set an example by knitting for soldiers.

Today, Jeanne Dykstra continues the tradition at Elegant Stitches, the yarn shop she owns in Miami. Customers gather on Wednesday mornings to knit for American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Every week she ships boxes filled with thin beanie hats, warm hats that troops can wear while sleeping, and thick knitted socks. As one soldier commented in a thank-you note, "It's nice to have something on your feet. A sleeping bag doesn't keep them warm."

Ms. Dykstra devotes a wall in her shop to a sampling of the thousands of letters, e-mails, and pictures she has received from troops. "It's quite heartening to make friends with these people, and to realize that you're making their lives a little bit better," she says.

One American nurse in Afghanistan thanked Dykstra for the children's socks, sweaters, and caps she has been sending. "It really helps the camaraderie," the nurse wrote. "If we give them warm clothing, their uncle is not so likely to shoot us."

Another charity-knitting program, afghans for Afghans, is collecting 900 wool sweaters and vests for schoolchildren between the ages of 7 and 18. Contributions are due in San Francisco Friday for a shipment that will arrive in time for Afghanistan's harsh winter. The group also collects hats, mittens, socks, and blankets.



"People feel really grateful to have the chance to do something constructive and tangible in response to the news of such violence and deprivation and need in Afghanistan," says founder Ann Rubin. Donors range from third-graders who produce "superb" woolen hats to people in their 90s. Men also knit for the group.

"They're giving sweaters that they would be proud to have their own children wear," Ms. Rubin says. "It's a sign of respect and friendship for the Afghan people." One woman, a sailor heading to Iraq, just sent a beautiful hand-knit Aran sweater.

Another effort, a nationwide grass-roots program called Warm Up America!, has, over the years, distributed more than 250,000 afghan blankets to people in need, says Mary Colucci, executive director. Some donors contribute knitted and crocheted squares, each seven by nine inches. Volunteers then sew 49 squares together to make each afghan.

On Nov. 12, Michael's craft stores across the country will host "joining parties" for volunteers to assemble afghans. Warm Up America! will give the finished afghans to charities.

In another effort, called Caps to the Capital, Warm Up America! is collecting knitted caps for newborns in

developing nations. These often are credited with saving infants' lives, according to "State of the World's Mothers 2006," issued by Save the Children. The caps will be distributed through Save the Children programs.

"We felt we could, through our network of volunteers and our long association of guilds nationally, all work together to help them," Ms. Colucci says. She adds, "I'm amazed at the generosity of knitters and crocheters. You see it in the way they share their talents."

That generosity is evident on a rainy autumn Saturday at North Hill as Payson and 15 other women gather around a long table. Their projects range from a white cable-knit sweater for a child to a red cap, a turquoise scarf, and a blue-and-white cap. As they knit and purl, hands and needles move in quiet, rhythmic arcs. In a corner of the room, the fruits of their labors fill boxes and shopping bags with a rainbow of goods for area shelters and social-service programs.

"This group has turned into a factory," coordinator Donna Kent says with a laugh. She notes that a local shop, Black Sheep Knitting, donates 90 percent of the yarn. The rest comes from individuals.

Donated supplies are common – and often essential – to these groups. Some knitters contribute leftover skeins,

Christiansen says. "Or someone's grandmother will die and leave behind her stash. It often ends up with charity knitting groups."

Some charity knitting takes place in unlikely settings – prisons. At Redgranite Correctional Institution in Redgranite, Wis., about 20 men crochet hats, mittens, scarves, and blankets. They meet daily and also stitch in their cells.

"A lot of the guys like the program because it lets them give back to the community," says Mark Hess, recreation leader. Most items go to local schools, charity events, and state-sanctioned auctions that donate money to charities.

Even pets become beneficiaries of knitters' generosity, says Rae French, founder of Hugs for Homeless Animals in Franklin, Wis. As part of an international program called Snuggles, people knit, crochet, or sew blankets for animal shelters.

"The 'snuggle' gives the animal psychological and physical comfort," she says. "When they come into the shelter, they're pretty frightened. As soon as they have something tactile, it calms them down." Blankets also make the cages homier and more attractive. Pets are more likely to be adopted if there is a blanket in the cage.

The stories that warm Christiansen's heart the most involve nursing-home residents. "They've got no one left to knit for, but they keep on knitting for others. Sometimes it's the thing that keeps them going."

She suggests that those wishing to get involved in charity knitting check with local shelters, transitional housing groups, and nursing homes to see if they accept knitted items. Yarn shops and local branches of the Salvation Army, YMCA, or Red Cross can suggest places to donate. Churches and schools are also aware of those in need in the community.

Summing up the benefits of charity knitting, Christiansen says, "The things that tend to divide our country so much don't matter when you're knitting for others. You're all working for a common cause. In a world where there's so much division, knitting for others is pulling people together in a way that transcends their differences."

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |

- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p20s01-lihc.html>

# Backstory: Extinction of an American icon?

**The Massachusetts plant that hatched 20 million plastic flamingos shut its doors this week.**

By **Clayton Collins** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## **LEOMINSTER, MASS.**

For connoisseurs of seascape paintings there is J.M.W. Turner's "The Fighting Temeraire." For motorcycle mavens, the Ducati Desmosedici RR. For wry lawn ornamentarians there is the Featherstone Flamingo.

Plenty of the kitschy pink birds, in "feeding," "standing," and "flying" poses (the latter with propeller wings), will be around for as long as it takes molded plastic resin to degrade. An estimated 20 million have been sold.

But there could quite possibly be no new fledglings – at least not of the authentic strain that flocked, incongruously, from this red-brick, northeastern industrial city for nearly half a century.

Union Products, the flamingo manufacturer since a young designer named Don Featherstone rendered it in 1957 and tapped into a national fascination with all things Floridian, stopped producing the birds in June and officially closed here Wednesday. Dennis Plante, the company's president, has reportedly said three firms have expressed interest in acquiring the mold, so *phoenicopteris ruber plasticus*, as its creator once called it, could be spared from extinction.

Still, a rueful murmuring has spread as the ironic icon gets its due. The ubiquitous pop-culture commentator Robert Thompson of Syracuse University told the Los Angeles Times: "[T]here are two pillars of cheesy, campiness in the American pantheon. One is the velvet Elvis. The other is the pink flamingo."

Somewhere along the way to becoming "notorious" kitsch – a moment crystallized by the 1972 John Waters film, "Pink Flamingos" – the birds "became an emblem for crossing boundaries of art and taste, [and then] an emblem for crossing boundaries," says Jenny Price, a Los Angeles writer who decoded the plastic flamingo and other phenomena in her 1999 book, "Flight Maps."

Some might call it a suburban scourge. But this bird also has defenders.

"I think it beats the heck out of a silver 'gazing ball,' " says the genial Mr. Featherstone. "Although when you combine them it's kind of nice."

The Union Products website depicts the three-foot-tall birds wading in a marsh. Featherstone – who rose through the firm to serve as president from 1996 to 2000, when he retired – has known buyers to deploy plastic flamingos in plausible settings. But he concedes that most go for a different effect.

"I always said if you put six of them around a tractor tire painted red, white, and blue and put petunias in it, in front of a nice house, it looks pretty tacky," Featherstone says with a laugh. He keeps 57 flamingos on the lawn of his Fitchburg, Mass., home in the summer, to commemorate the year he crafted it, fresh from art school. (He would eventually sculpt 700 "character" ornaments for the firm.)

Flamingo fanatics often end up mounting big-scale tributes of their own. Susan Cutter, a geography professor at the University of South Carolina, bought her first pair when she lived in New Jersey in 1983. She quickly assembled a flock that, she says, "migrated" with her to South Carolina 10 years later.

She now keeps 40, ceremoniously retiring ones that fade.



"They're whimsical, tacky, just plain fun," says Professor Cutter, who says she also dabbles in other flamingo collectibles, including stuffed Beanie Babies. "I love the color. You know, they bring a smile to your face. And I think that's the appeal." She calls the plant closure "a very sad day. It's such an American institution."

Jane Powell, who runs a jewelry and pawn shop with her husband in Rockledge, Fla., says an online flamingo-fan forum she visits has been abuzz about the flamingo's apparent demise. "Some of the ladies use them as reindeer replacements at Christmas," she says.

"The gold ones are going for outrageous prices on eBay," says Ms. Powell. "I wish I could get a pair, but I'm not sure I want to spend \$80. I really need to get to Wal-Mart and buy a few pairs of the pink ones...."

Until recently, the birds could be bought in bulk by retailers at 16 for \$42 from the factory, with minimum orders of \$500. Last week a pair could be found for \$12.95 at Amazon.com.

Plastic injection molding has long been big business here in Leominster, the "Pioneer Plastics City" as well as the "home of Johnny Appleseed."

DuPont had a presence here for decades. Foster Grant sunglasses were made here, several residents proudly

note, along with Hula Hoops and other toys. Fosta–Tek still operates here, making helmet visors for the military, says a receptionist at the reverently quiet National Plastics Center and Museum on Derwin Street. A nearby firm called Nypro makes covers for cellphones.

In its hard–working hometown, the pink flamingo actually seems a little underrepresented, given its cult status. At Union Products, buttoned up behind a "For Sale" sign, President Plante's old assigned parking space bears his name framed by flamingo silhouettes. The only other specimens easily seen on a recent afternoon were the duo in the corner of the museum lobby.

"The craze seems to be outside of Leominster," says Bob Macdonald, a retired dental technician who is helping out as a handyman at the First Baptist Church, just off Monument Square. "But for some strange reason that little bird has had an impact.... No matter what state you visit, you see them."

"In the summer this town is loaded with flamingos," insists Anne Le'Cuyer, working the register at the Tails A Waggin pet store just down the street. She doesn't own a flamingo herself. (Mr. Macdonald says he thinks he's probably had a specimen or two, over the years.)

Here, more than anything it's about a loss of industry.

"It was a big deal when we reported that they were going out of business," says Jeff McMenemy, editor of the Sentinel and Enterprise newspaper here. "It's not like there are people crying in the streets or anything. But I think it's kind of one more thing, a lost tradition for the area."

Union Products, which could not be reached for comment, has cited simple economics for its closure. Featherstone recalls a sales spike of about 8 percent in 1997 at the 30th anniversary, when he says nostalgia began to lift the flamingo. He regrets that his old firm won't have the bird for its 50th.

Others are incredulous. "Most companies would kill to have something the world knows about and likes," says Marc Abrahamson, editor of the Annals of Improbable Research in Cambridge, Mass., a magazine that awarded Featherstone its Ig-Nobel Award, celebrating the unusual and imaginative, in 1996. In 2001 Mr. Abrahamson helped organize a boycott of flamingos produced for a few years by Union Products without Featherstone's signature, which had been a mainstay since 1986. Abrahamson saw that move as part of a failure to promote a winning product.

"I tried phoning them and literally could get nobody to talk to me," he says. "It started to feel a little bit like the old days [when] you read about people trying to deal with the Nixon White House during its final days."

Featherstone shrugs off the signature saga. He says he is hopeful about the future of the product he thinks of as one of his kids. "Let's see what happens," he says. "I think the old girl isn't dead yet."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p14s01-lire.html>

# Matters of faith

By Jane Lampman

## God's voice sounds familiar ...

Before it became the written Word, the "greatest story ever told" was passed on passionately by word of mouth. Now you can hear it, too – from some 200 actors, clergy, and musicians.

A dramatized audio performance of the New Testament has just been released – "The Bible Experience" – which draws on dozens of renowned African– American voices. The complete Bible, including the Old Testament, will be available by next fall. Both are based on Today's New International Version of the Good Book, first released in contemporary language in 2002 by Bible publisher Zondervan.

Such celebrities as Denzel Washington, Bishop T.D. Jakes, Angela Bassett, Eartha Kitt, Ruby Dee, and Forest Whitaker are in the production. Blair Underwood plays Jesus, LeVar Burton is John, and Samuel L. Jackson stands in as God.

Cuba Gooding Jr. is cast as Judas Iscariot.

Other plum roles include Abraham and the Holy Spirit (Bishop Jakes), Moses (Mr. Whitaker), Solomon (Mr. Washington), Simon Peter (Kirk Franklin), and the Angel of the Lord (Ms. Bassett).

Designed particularly to reach younger generations and urban youths, the project includes an original musical score and is the work of Emmy and Grammy award-winning producers in the Inspired By Media Group. Zondervan has released it in both traditional CD and MP3 formats. Cost: \$49.99 for the New Testament on traditional CD.

## **Civic-Minded Muslims**

The first scientific snapshot of American Muslim voters depicts a well-educated, family oriented group that is younger than the general population and favors active engagement in US society.

A survey released last week shows 62 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (compared with 30 percent for the US in general), including 48 percent of Muslim women. Some 78 percent are married, and 43 percent have a household income of \$50,000 or more.

In political orientation, 42 percent call themselves Democrats, 17 percent say they are Republican, and 28 percent do not belong to a party. Almost 90 percent vote regularly.

On the issues, they rank education as most important (25 percent), followed by civil liberties (24 percent) – a prime concern since 9/11. Next come the conflicts in the Palestinian territories and Lebanon (20 percent) and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (18 percent).

When asked about religious affiliation, 40 percent respond "just a Muslim." Another 36 percent say they are Sunni, 12 percent identify as Shiite, and 2 percent say Sufi (a mystical tradition).

As for religious practice, 31 percent attend mosque weekly, while 27 percent say they seldom or never attend. A majority (54 percent) say they are not very involved or not at all involved in mosque activity aside from attendance at formal prayers.

A large majority (84 percent) believe Muslims should emphasize shared values with Christians and Jews, and 77 percent say they worship the same God. Yet 55 percent are afraid the war on terror has become a war on Islam.

Sponsored by the Council on American–Islamic Relations, the poll involved phone interviews with a random sample of 1,000 people culled from a database of 400,000 registered Muslim voters.

## **Spirituality online**

In partnership with AOL, California–based MyPathTV has launched an Internet video channel for the "spiritual seeker." For a fee, the channel will offer commercial–free, 24–hour access to "mind, body, and spirit video programming" from such wellness gurus as Andrew Weil, Deepak Chopra, Joseph Campbell, Ram Dass, and Larry Dossey. New programming in full–screen format will be added monthly on [www.mypathtv.com](http://www.mypathtv.com).

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)



- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 01, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1101/p15s01-lifo.html>

# Chowders: America's first 'melting pot'

**A simple, rustic dish sprung from necessity has become a cultural tradition in clams and corn.**

**By Luis Andres Henao** | Contributor to The Christian Science Monitor

A quick glance at Daniel Webster's résumé reveals: statesman, senator, orator, chowdermaker.

Chowdermaker? Yes, along with his political talents, the historical figure apparently had a knack for making stew. His best-known recipe for fish chowder mixes a head of a cod with haddock fillets cooked in a "sufficient quantity of water ... good Irish potatoes ... and a few of the largest Boston crackers," according to a timeline in "50 Chowders: One Pot Meals – Clam, Corn & Beyond," a cookbook by Chef Jasper White.

Chowders have endured as a culinary favorite of Americans – a true "melting pot" of traditions as chefs over the decades have put their own twist on the land-and-sea mix.

The dish originated as a simple meal among early American settlers who threw whatever fish and salt pork they had on

hand into a pot. Today, the varieties of the stew have multiplied from corn to chicken, to that hearty New England staple: clam chowder.

Its name probably comes from *chaudire*, the French word for iron pot. Everyone from English, Basque, and Celtic fishermen to medieval and European cooks, are known to have mixed vegetables and fish in iron pots for a stew, according to "America's Founding Food: The Story of New England Cooking," by Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald.

But it was on the shores of the New World that "chowder" took on a distinct cultural identity.

"[Chowder] tells the story of American food," says Chef White, who is also the chef and owner of The Summer Shack, a seafood restaurant chain in Massachusetts.

He explains how experimenting with chowders is one way food products came to be included into mainstream American cuisine.

When settlers first came to the East Coast, the soil was poor for crops so they used fish – mainly cod and haddock – to make their stews. But since fish wasn't recognized as a good source of protein at the time, the broth-based mixtures were fortified with salt pork. The use of pork, and

later biscuits, for thickening is what made this stew different from its European cousins.

By the 1800s, the expansion of farming brought an abundance of dairy products and vegetables to the dinner table. "Spuds" soon became a staple in chowder and are included in most recipes today. But not all potatoes are good chowder potatoes. High starch potatoes like the Russet Burbank will turn mushy, says White, while low-starch waxy ones like Red La Soda have limited use because their texture won't allow them to blend well with the rest of the ingredients.

As Americans moved to the Midwest in the mid-1800s looking for arable land, corn and tomatoes, long considered poisonous products, found their way into the soup. And in New England, clams were declared a good substitute for fish.

Bill Coyne, head chef for the 180-year-old Union Oyster House in Boston – the oldest continuing restaurant in America – knows all about New England clam chowder. Chef Coyne makes more than 40 gallons of it each day, and up to 80 gallons on the weekends.

In the kitchen, he perspires through his chef's hat as he tosses ingredients into a pan, his cheeks rosy behind his walrus mustache. First, the onions and celery sizzle with

fresh cubes of salt pork. Then, a dash of flour thickens the mix. In another pot, the clam broth and potatoes mingle as Coyne stirs in plenty of cream before combining the two pans. Most important, he says, let it rest before you serve it so the flavors can meld.

While it's now consider a classic chowder, there are so many more varieties than the creamy New England version. Bermuda chowder, for example, looks more like chili than stew. It's a beef broth-based mixture of fish, crab, and enough spices to make you sweat Caribbean-style. Some other chowders do not contain any seafood or cream at all and feature such varied ingredients as meatballs, chicken, eggs, bacon, even pheasant and veal.

But what all chowders have in common, says White, is their humble origins. "It's a working-class dish," he says. "Everyday food for everyday people."

Most of the recipes in his book can be made in 30 minutes. This is why the dish can be so practical for people with busy work schedules. White recommends making a large pot and keeping it in the refrigerator overnight and for up to three days. With little effort, you'll have a meal on hand "to go" every time you open the fridge.

Most important, always feel free to improvise, he says. That way, like Webster, you, too, can add "chowdermaker" to

your list of talents.

## **Corn chowder**

**3 medium ears fresh corn (or substitute 2 cups frozen or canned corn)**

**4 ounces bacon (about 6 pieces of sliced bacon), diced**

**2 tablespoons unsalted butter**

**1 medium onion, diced**

**1/2 large red bell pepper, diced**

**1 to 2 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves removed and chopped (1/2 teaspoon)**

**1/2 teaspoon ground cumin**

**1/8 teaspoon turmeric**

**1 pound Yukon Gold Maine, PEI, or other all-purpose potatoes, peeled and diced**

**3 cups chicken broth**

**Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**2 teaspoons cornstarch, dissolved in 2 tablespoons water**

**1 cup heavy cream**

**For the garnish:**

**2 tablespoons minced fresh chives or thinly sliced scallions**

Husk the corn. Carefully remove most of the silk by hand and then rub the ears with a towel to finish the job. Cut the kernels from the cobs and place in a bowl. You should have

about 2 cups. Using the back of your knife scrape down the cobs and add the milky substance that oozes from the corn kennels. (Tip: If you are making your own chicken broth for this recipe, add the corn cobs to the stock to increase the corn flavor. Do not scrape after removing kernels in this case.)

Heat a 3- to 4-quart heavy pot over medium heat and add the diced bacon. Cook until the bacon is crisp and golden brown. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat, leaving the bacon in the pot.

Add the unsalted butter, onion, bell pepper, thyme, cumin, and turmeric and sauté for about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon until the onion and pepper are tender but not browned.

Add the corn kernels, potatoes, and stock, turn up the heat, cover, and boil vigorously for about 10 minutes. Some of the potatoes will have broken up, but most should retain their shape. Use the back of the spoon to smash a bit of the corn and potatoes against the side of the pot. Reduce the heat to medium, and season the chowder with salt and pepper.

Stir the dissolved cornstarch mixture and slowly pour into the pot, stirring constantly. As soon as the chowder has come back to a boil and thickened slightly, remove from heat and stir in the cream. Adjust seasoning if necessary. If

you are not serving the chowder within the hour, let it cool a bit, then refrigerate. Otherwise, let it sit at room temperature for up to an hour, allowing the flavors to meld.

When ready to serve, reheat the chowder over low heat; don't let it boil. Ladle into cups or bowls and sprinkle with the chopped chives or scallions.

Serves about 4.

Adapted from "50 Chowders: One Pot Meals – Clam, Corn & Beyond" by Jasper White

### **New England clam chowder**

**1 pound potatoes, diced**

**1 quart clam juice (or clam broth)**

**2 pounds fresh clams, diced**

**(if you are using frozen clams, defrost in a bowl overnight)**

**2 ounces salt pork, diced**

**1 small onion, diced**

**2 ribs of celery, minced**

**1/2 cup butter**

**2 tablespoons flour**

**2 cups half-and-half, scalded**

**Salt, pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and hot pepper sauce to taste**



## Oyster crackers, for garnish

Bring potatoes and clam juice to a boil. Cook until potatoes are done. Add the clams, along with their juice. Cook until tender, being careful not to overcook and toughen the clams. Set aside.

Skin the salt pork, dice it, and sauté in a pan. Cook until rendered. Add onions and celery, sauté until translucent. Add butter, melt, and cook slightly. Add flour. If mixture is too loose, add a little more flour. Cook until slightly colored.

Bring clams, juice, and potatoes back to boil. Add cooked flour and salt pork mixture. Sauce will thicken, so stir often. Bring to a rolling boil.

To scald the half-and-half, heat it just until steam rises from the top, do not let it boil. Add heated half-and-half to mixture to desired consistency. Season to taste with salt and pepper, Worcestershire sauce and pepper sauce. Garnish with oyster crackers. Serves 8.

Recipe courtesy of the Union Oyster House, Boston, Mass.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 31, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p20s01-lign.html>

# Backstory: Halloween goes to the dogs, and lizards

**More people are dressing up their pets to attend parties or go door to door. Seriously.**

**By Frank Kosa** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

## LOS ANGELES

Asquana is a very young mother, yet she's remarkably stoic. Her daughter is about 6 months old, already half her size, and perfectly behaved. But this is no tragic story of teen mothers. Asquana and her daughter, Godzilla, are pet lizards. They're dressed to kill and out to win.

The bad news for them is that first prize in this contest is an eight-pound bag of dog food. The good news is that two of their pet "siblings" are dogs, and they are possibly the lizards' biggest fans at this moment.

This moment is a Halloween pet costume contest at a Petco in the southern Los Angeles neighborhood of Westchester. Asquana and Godzilla are dressed as mother and child,

appropriately enough, in costumes that were painstakingly handmade by their human mother, as she is called, Frances Howie.

Godzilla is in a crib, perhaps four inches square, that comes with push-button audio that plays the Brahms' Lullaby, and a baby's voice plaintively saying "maama." Asquana has her hands (OK, her front feet) placed on the rail of the crib and in the world of inscrutable lizard gazes, I believe this would constitute the one of the Madonna. Her lips even appear to have the slight upturn of that mystical smile of Mona Lisa.

I would say they're shoo-in winners. Last year, in fact, Asquana did win – with her own mother. But they face serious competition, the vast majority of which are dogs. Hence the first-place prize.

What these animals represent together is the rapidly growing phenomenon of people dressing up their pets for Halloween.

One website, [raisingkids.co.uk](http://raisingkids.co.uk), reports that 3.5 million Americans will purchase a Halloween costume for their pet this year. According to Elaine Binner of the eponymous Elaine's Pet Depot in Santa Monica, Calif., that's up from a decade ago by ... well, 3.5 million. "I first saw them [pet costumes] 10 years ago, but I only made sure to stock them in the last four years," she says.

She has been nearly sold out for two weeks, but you can still find a limited selection – ballerina, superhero, and the always popular devil. You can also get your animal to appear as another animal, say a zebra, giraffe, or skunk.

This doesn't appear to cause any identity confusion, and for all we know may have become an inside joke among pets. Picture, if you will, a bunch of pugs in green visors seated at a poker table laughing heartily about what animal they were last Halloween, perhaps under the influence of the dog equivalent of "one too many."

\*\*\*

Halloween costumes remain a relatively small part of the more than \$36 billion spent on pet products each year. Products that, by the way, include pajamas, make-up, and orthodontia. Ms. Binner has several of those costumes. Clancy and Bubba, her Boston terriers, will be dressed as aliens or pumpkins. Her 140-pound Rottweiler will be in a pink tutu. Buddy, her blind Doberman, is exempt from the pageantry.

What do the dogs make of all this? Binner believes "they could not care less." Animal behaviorist Richard Polsky says, "It's enjoyable for the kids and the family, and doesn't change a dog's behavior. So take them out trick-or-treating."

Others are less come-what-may. "Halloween is one of the most dangerous nights of the year for a pet," says Warren Eckstein, an animal behaviorist who may be the "Dr. Phil of pets" – the author of 11 books, including "Pet Aerobics." He says it's OK to put your animal in costume. In fact, Cisco, his Chihuahua, has a leather motorcycle jacket that he wears when Mr. Eckstein gets out his Harley Davidson. "He doesn't ride with me, and it's not real leather," Eckstein is quick to add. "But he has to look macho – he's a little dog with a Napoleonic complex."

But Halloween is different. With all the kids "dressed up as Martha Stewart, or Oprah Winfrey, or worse, it can be very upsetting to animals," he says, suggesting it frightens them. "Don't take your dog out." He also adds that candy – particularly chocolate – can be harmful to animals, particularly dogs.

Yet this Halloween treat crisis can be resolved, I'm here to tell you, if you have a Three Dog Bakery nearby. It's a franchise that sells upscale, freshly baked products for dogs.

There you will find aid from people like Cristina Gonzalez, the pastry chef in the Los Angeles store. She whips out breakfast fare like "pupcakes" and "mutt-aroons" for the regulars, and, this time of year, offers Halloween cookies that she can personalize with your dog's name written in

carob.

\*\*\*

I decide to pay close attention to Asquana and Godzilla, in part because I can't help but wonder if animals who lose costume contests suffer. The two lizards parade around the circle as the master of ceremonies, Charles Holling, calls their names. Mr. Holling is the general manager of the Petco. He understands the agony of defeat. He was in a contest one week earlier that involved "Eatables," food you can eat with your dog. (The humans were not allowed to eat with their hands.) In a race to see who could finish a bowl fastest, Holling came in a close second, behind his boss.

Sure enough, the lizards don't finish in the winner's circle. "They were the most original," the judge later tells me, "but they won last year."

The top prize goes to a Yorkshire terrier named Coco, and her parent/owner Manuel Escobar – both of whom are dressed in Winnie-the-Pooh costumes.

As the animals file out, they seem perfectly oblivious to the results. I don't see a long face on any of them, though it can be hard to tell. For the most part, the humans, predominantly parents and children, are smiling and laughing as well.

Now if you're worried about having missed out on this Halloween, don't. Christmas is right around the corner, and there are still plenty of hot-pink antlers in stock.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the October 27, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p20s01-lihc.html>

## Backstory: Max to the rescue

**In Rhode Island, an energetic German shepherd named Maximus and his handler, an ex-Marine who has a deft touch with dogs, team up to become one of the nation's most effective K-9 units.**

**By Cynthia Anderson** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

### PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Ears back, shoulders forward, 4-year-old Maximus is trying to muscle his way to the front of a pack of 200 first responders on the downtown scene of a simulated disaster.

Other K-9 members of Task Force 1 may be distracted by all the emergency vehicles or even – no names named – fooling around, but not Maximus. He is 75 pounds of single-minded purpose. There's work to do, and he wants at it. His choke collar tightens as he pulls.

"Hold on," says his handler and housemate, Cpl. Matthew Zarrella of the Rhode Island State Police. A powerfully built ex-Marine, Corporal Zarrella seems as focused and intense as Max. He is the kind of man who can pull a 13-hour shift,

a 70-hour week and get up on Monday and do it all again. Eagerly.

Zarrella's drive and love for K-9 work has helped make him one of the top trainers in the United States. In a post-9/11 environment, with law-enforcement agents and civilians seeking to certify dogs in search and rescue, the call for Zarrella's expertise has never been greater. His success stems, in large measure, from the rapport he establishes with his dogs.

"Matt Zarrella is the best there is," says James Rawley, another member of the K-9 unit. "He and Max are so tuned in to each other. Matt's able to read his dog before anyone else in the room even knows what's going on. And he's able to transfer that knowledge to other handlers and their dogs."

Sweating, Zarrella pulls on Max's leash to hold him back. The German shepherd looks around as if to say, "Let's do it," but Zarrella waits to hear details of the catastrophe: a blown-up minivan, collapsed buildings, dozens of casualties. The K-9 unit is divided into squads; Max and Zarrella will search city hall. They're up to the challenge. They got a good night's sleep, breakfasted on bowls of Back-to-Basics kibble and Blueberry Morning cereal, respectively, and were on scene by 7:30 a.m.

What's more, the pair has compiled an extensive record of "finds," including: Waveland, Miss., after hurricane Katrina; Vietnam, where Maximus located the remains of a missing American pilot; and nearby Westerly, R.I., where Max rescued a man lost in the woods.

Finally the door to city hall swings open. Max and Zarrella surge forward, along with another handler and her 6-month-old border collie, a rookie. Inside it's dark, especially in the labyrinthine basement. Zarrella switches on his headlamp, unsnaps Max's leash, and slips the choke over his head. "Search 'em out," he commands. The dog takes off, a scent machine with a nose 100 times more sensitive than a human's.

Through training, he's learned to seek only people in trouble – down, immobilized, or unconscious. He disappears into a tunnel, with Zarrella close behind. "Anybody here?" Zarrella's voice echoes. "Anybody need help?" Max loops back, continuously checking in.

Maximus finds his first victim in a fourth-floor office. A teenager with a bloodied face huddles against the wall. Max stands by him as Zarrella approaches. "Good boy!" he tells the dog. Even though the scene is simulated, to Max a find is a find. He accepts his reward – a treat – with eagerness. Zarrella strokes the dog's ears. Maximus's tongue hangs happily out of the side of his mouth.

Before Max, there were three other dogs: Hannibal, Gunner, and Panzer. Zarrella trained them, too, and with each accrued impressive finds. Now it's Zarrella and Max who are together 24/7, on the job or at home in Narragansett, R.I., where Max and another shepherd, Eva, share immaculate downstairs quarters. The tiled floor is free of hair, and there is no doggy smell. Their backyard play area includes a koi pond and lush grass.

Zarrella rescued Max from an animal shelter when he was 6 months old. "He was a handful, spinning around and barking. But I could tell he had excellent problem-solving ability," says Zarrella, who refers to himself as "Dad." In many ways Max does seem like a precocious toddler: strong-willed, energetic, and smart.

Zarrella began his training by teaching the dog to recognize the scent of chemical byproducts present in human decomposition. If Max succeeded in locating a scent-laden object (sometimes a gauze bandage), he received a treat or the opportunity to play with his favorite tennis ball. The searches gradually grew more difficult, from shallow gravel areas to larger ones with a complex array of smells. Max was taught to indicate he'd made a find by sitting quietly beside it. He proved to be a quick study.

Even though any dog can be trained for search and rescue, sturdy ones with stamina and focus tend to dominate. It's more a matter of temperament than of breed, although Zarrella says he's never trained a toy dog, and hunting breeds can be difficult to teach because of their inherent drive for game.

Max and Zarrella grew close during their trip to Vietnam in 2003. "We were searching the jungles, looking for remains day after day. That strengthened our bond," says Zarrella. They made dozens of searches; Zarrella later received a plaque for their contribution to the recovery of the body of a pilot shot down in 1965.

When he talks about his canine partners – and his own part in K–9 search and rescue – Zarrella grows as soft as he otherwise is tough. "I believe that God put me on Earth to work with animals and help my fellow human beings," he says.

His words characterize the K–9 community – no–nonsense, caring people who see it as perfectly plausible that a dog can be an instrument, a fool for a squeaky toy, and a hero, all at the same time. If the dogs are sometimes anthropomorphized, surely it's because of their close ties with their human partners. "Every canine handler ... should take one long look into the eyes of their canine partner," writes master trainer Jonni Joyce. "[W]hat they see is a

mirror image of their own strengths and weaknesses, their own hopes and desires, their own needs and feelings."

The job is not without danger. In 1995, Zarrella traveled to Colombia with the Drug Enforcement Administration and Federal Bureau of Investigation to search for a mass grave. One afternoon, while leaving the site with Hannibal and Panzer in an open-bed truck, a Jeep sped up behind them. Two Colombian marines guarding them brandished their weapons. The Jeep veered away. Zarrella learned it was an attempt on his life.

\*\*\*

After city hall is cleared, Max and Zarrella reunite outside with the rest of the unit. Among the other dogs, Max lights up – eyes shining, tail in nonstop motion. His demeanor differs from that of the serious K-9 who minutes ago was sweeping a building for survivors. He sniffs and licks and prances. Zarrella, too, is relaxed. He smiles as the Providence police chief pulls up in his SUV to congratulate the unit on its efficiency.

Later, the team gathers in a nearby restaurant to discuss the exercise. "Everybody did great," Zarrella says. Indeed, a federal emergency evaluator cites their unit as the only one that showed "urgency."

Still, Zarrella is cautious. Every team is only as good as its next search. Outside in the parking lot, the dogs rest in their handlers' vehicles. Sprawled in his kennel, Max drowzes, chin resting on paws. His work is done, for now.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p16s01–sten.html>

# Satellites seek global hot spots

**By Robert C. Cowen**

Where is the world's hottest place? Weather reports are too sparse to tell. But all-seeing infrared heat sensors on satellites can do the trick. A study published last week gives the 2003 honor to Queensland, Australia, with that year's high of 156.7 degrees F. (69.3 degrees C). Iran's Lut Desert claimed the title in 2004 and 2005 with highs of 154.4 and 159.3 degrees F., respectively (that's 68 and 70.7 degrees C).

The study published in *Eos* by David Mildrexler, Maosheng Zhao, and Steven Running at the University of Montana in Missoula illustrates a new phase in climate monitoring. Satellites that survey Earth's surface and instruments that probe beneath the sea provide a continuous overview of global climate.

The research team explains, "In a warming world where extreme [land surface temperatures] are predicted to occur more frequently ... high-resolution satellite data provide the means of keeping track of where things are heating up."



This will help water–resource and land– management planning. The maps also illuminate the influence of land use on regional climate. The study finds, for example, that maximum temperatures in forested areas tend to be some 86 degrees F. (30 degrees C) cooler than neighboring unforested regions. Areas as disparate as the Congo's rain forest and a northeast Oregon tree farm show this effect. The satellites measure the temperature of whatever surface they see – bare ground, vegetation, or treetops. Bare ground acts like a hot plate. In a forest, trees use some of the solar heat to release water vapor, so there's less direct heating of the air from the ground.

The research team notes that the maps also highlight the importance of polar regions as "cooling engines for the Earth's atmosphere and ocean." Last summer's severe heat waves in North America and Europe illustrate this point. In the current issue of *Weatherwise Magazine*, geographer Jeffrey Halverson at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, describes what happened. Satellite maps show how widespread extreme heating in middle latitudes pushed the atmosphere's jet streams farther north than normal over North America. This tended to lock up the cooler northern air that would have tempered the heat waves.

Oceanographers can combine satellite measurements with data from buoys, free–floating robots, and ships to track heat flows in the upper part of the sea. John Lyman at the

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration laboratory in Seattle and colleagues have estimated what happened to the heat content of the upper 2,500 feet of the sea between 1993 and 2005. Their report in September showed a slight cooling between 2003 and 2005. It's a minor blip in a long-term warming trend, however. Dr. Lyman noted that "34 percent of the heat absorbed by Earth since the mid-1950s has gone into warming the ocean.... Measuring ocean temperature is really measuring the progress of global warming."

Meanwhile, Iran sees its hot spot as an opportunity. Payvand's Iran News has invited "adventurers and desert backpackers" to test their mettle in the Lut Desert, where snow-covered peaks rise above one of the hottest places on Earth.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |

- [Corrections](#)
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 01, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1101/p17s01-stct.html>

# Do you really need that latest gadget?

**Some gadgets improve the quality of your life. Others sit in your attic.**

By **Tom Regan**

How much is too much? When it comes to technological devices, I find myself asking that question more and more.

Our society is filled with iPods, Treos, Bluetooth devices, cellphones, laptops, satellite radios, global tracking devices, TiVos, flat-screen TVs, universal remotes, Game Boys, PlayStations, Xboxes, Sidekicks – the list goes on and on.

Now, I am no Luddite. I've always been an early adopter of technology. I had a cellphone in my car in 1990. I paid almost \$500 for a 14.4-baud modem in 1993 and marveled at how much faster it made my Internet connection. I created the first newspaper site on the Internet in Canada in 1994. I have two Apple Newtons in my attic, in almost pristine condition. In 2001, I even purchased an "Audrey," a machine designed to be the first "kitchen computer" or Web-appliance. These days, it's keeping the Newtons

company upstairs.

It's not that I don't appreciate the occasional new device. But as time passes, I find my appetite for new technology fading. Increasingly, if it doesn't serve a useful purpose in my life, I'm not interested.

For instance, while I've used an iPod, I don't own one. When I want to listen to music, I play a CD. (I even have a machine that plays – gasp – my old records made of vinyl.) Or I listen to this thing called the radio, which seems to offer a wide variety of all kinds of music.

But for me, the device that falls into the "too much" category is the BlackBerry, "a wireless e-mail solution for mobile professionals." About 5.5 million of these machines have been sold, according to Research in Motion, the BlackBerry's manufacturer. Many of my friends now have one – and swear their world would fall apart if they could no longer use one.

A Sprint television ad for BlackBerry actually makes fun of how this small machine can take over your life. One man, talking about his BlackBerry's new GPS tracking feature, says he would be lost without it. A friend takes the device from him to look at it, and suddenly the owner acts lost, not recognizing his surroundings. He is not restored to normal until his BlackBerry is returned.

A good friend of mine, Sue Gardner, also a journalist, uses a BlackBerry like I use a fork. The machine has become an indispensable part of her life, made necessary by a job that requires her to be in constant contact with her office. As head of the CBC's news website in Canada ([CBC.ca](http://CBC.ca)), she no longer views her BlackBerry as simply a business tool, it has become – in some Star Trek Borg-like fashion – an extension of her arm. Sue has been assimilated. And she knows it.

"I keep it on a very short leash," she told me over the telephone from Toronto last weekend. "I bought it in 2000, and since 2000, it has never been more than four feet from me."

She even knows that it may be more of a security blanket than a truly necessary tool.

"For instance, when Saddam Hussein was captured very early in the morning on a weekend, I was home in bed," she said. "There was nothing I could do about that – there were already people in place to take care of it. The work gets done, I don't really need to know. So there really is no rational explanation for my BlackBerry. But I love it."

Good-natured kidding aside, I believe the dividing line between just enough and too much ultimately has to be a utilitarian one.

Sure, sometimes you can buy something because it's cool or fun. Or like my friend Sue, because it offers some intangible quality that you relish. But even people who purchase iPods do so because it makes the act of listening to music easier.

For me, my cellphone is my Borg device because it keeps me connected to my family, my kids' school, my wife's office, etc. But I'm not interested in owning a Bluetooth earpiece for the simple luxury of hands-free talking. I just don't need it.

And that measuring stick should apply to every technology purchase you make: Do you really need this?

For example, if you are buying a new computer this Christmas, think about what you really need it to do. Far too many people who are interested only in e-mail and Internet surfing buy a machine that could power the space program. Simply put, they spend way too much money.

Be smart. Find out how a new gadget will improve your life before buying it. Or just let it be. Certainly by letting technology's advance pass you by, you won't worry about having too much of it.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the October 30, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p13s01–stct.html>

# What to know before you sign up for a cellphone plan

**By Randy Dotinga** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

When the Council of Better Business Bureaus made a list of the industries that received the most complaints in 2005, the usual suspects appeared – new car dealers, auto mechanics, and Internet providers.

The industry at the top – or the bottom, depending on your point of view – will come as no surprise to anyone who's been socked with an unexpected \$150 invoice or stuck with a signal-less phone in the middle of nowhere. BBB affiliates received nearly 32,000 complaints about cellphone products and services, more than any other type of business.

Ben Popken knows the drill. He's editor of [consumerist.com](http://consumerist.com), a blog that recently told readers how to use a temporary loophole to cancel Sprint plans before their contracts expired. It didn't take long for dozens of people to bombard Mr. Popken with their stories of success – or failure – at trying out this newfound exit strategy.

"I could write about cellphones all day long and people would be happy," he says. "Oftentimes, it seems like cellphone companies have arrayed themselves against the consumer to prevent them from getting the best deal they can."

Despite legions of frustrated customers, cellphones remain extraordinarily popular. CTIA—The Wireless Association, an industry group, estimates that there are 225.8 million cell subscribers in the United States, paying an average of \$49.30 a month. And it's easier than ever to change plans because customers can now keep their phone numbers when they switch.

## **What kind of phone plan do you need?**

If you're shopping for a plan, here are a few suggestions from the experts:

**1. Know thyself.** Regardless of whether you're buying a cellphone plan for the first time or simply trying to get a better deal, first spend a few minutes figuring out how you use the telephone.

Do you make calls mainly during daytime or during evening and weekend hours? Do you call long distance or while on the road? Will you ever need to use your phone to send text messages, look at photos, or access the Internet?

"You have to really think long and hard about who you are and how you use your phone before you ever even make a sales call or go surfing around the Internet," says Linda Sherry, spokesperson for Consumer Action ([www.consumer-action.org](http://www.consumer-action.org)), a nonprofit consumer education and advocacy organization in San Francisco. "Most people skip that first practical step of looking at some old bills and seeing how they've used the phone in the past."

Once you've figured out your needs, find a resource that compares different plans. One good place to start is the January 2006 issue of Consumer Reports. (Find it at your local library or you can access it for \$4.95 – which includes a one-month access to the magazine's online archives – at: [www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)).

You can also visit websites like [trac.org](http://trac.org), [letstalk.com](http://letstalk.com), and [myrateplan.com](http://myrateplan.com), although be aware that some comparison websites don't include all plans.

**2. Watch out for extra fees.** Cellphone bills are chock-full of fees and taxes. "It's likely that the \$39.95 plan will cost over \$50 a month, even if you don't get any extras," says Edgar Dworsky, founder of [consumerworld.org](http://consumerworld.org), which helps consumers find resources and deals on a variety of products. He advises customers to ask company representatives what the full cost will be.

Or you can simply count on adding about 15 percent to the pretax cost, Ms. Sherry says.

**3. Avoid contracts if possible.** Service providers love to lock customers into multiyear contracts, and they often dangle the carrot of a free upgrade to a new phone after a certain period.

But in some cases, the phones don't last even two years, Sherry says, and the companies try to extend the contract if you get a new phone. Providers may even lengthen your contract if you find that you need to upgrade to a plan with more minutes.

The penalty for ending a contract early can be hefty – \$150, \$200 or more.

**4. Save the phone for last.** Search for the best plans first. "Once you narrow it down to one or two companies, you can start looking at what kinds of phones that company offers," says Mr. Dworsky.

Don't be intimidated by the bells and whistles on cellphones if you don't need frills. There are simple phones on the shelves, although it might take a while to find them.

And make sure to check the reputation of the phones you consider. Dworsky suggests that customers simply type the

model of their phone and the word "review" into the Google search engine.

**5. Return to sender, if necessary.** Although many customers may not realize it, you're not stuck with a contract from the moment you buy a plan. Often, you can cancel the plan and return your phone in a certain amount of time, typically 14 days or a month.

There's a cost – you'll still pay for the service you used – but the standard cancellation fee won't apply.

**6. Teach your children well.** A chatty teen who makes lots of calls and sends out hundreds of text messages can easily rack up a monthly bill of hundreds of dollars. And don't assume the provider will give you a heads-up.

"A cell costs a lot more than a landline," Dworsky says. "You have to teach them that talking isn't free."

And that's not a bad lesson for anyone.

Understanding your phone usage patterns is key before signing up for a cellphone plan. Here are three common types of cellphone consumers and what they should watch out for:

**The emergency-only user** (1to 2 hours a month) – Consider a prepaid plan that allows you to buy a small number of minutes. You won't be stuck with a lengthy contract.

**Caution:** Minutes on prepaid plans may expire after a few weeks or months, forcing you to buy new minutes before you've used the previous ones. Or you might have to use the phone regularly to keep your plan alive.

**The frequent user** (2 hours a week) – Look for a plan that provides 500 or more minutes a month with a short contract or none at all.

**Caution:** Nighttime and weekend usage may be unlimited, but make sure you know when those minutes begin: 7 p.m.? 9 p.m.?

**The talkative teenager** (15 or more hours per week) – Plans with 1,000 "anytime" minutes and unlimited night/weekend use per month can cost \$80 or more. Check if your teen's friends use the same company; those with the same plan often can call each other without using minutes.

**Caution:** If your teen loves to send text messages, look for plans that shut off that service if charges reach a certain point.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p12s02-stct.html>

# Rise of the boutique carmaker

**Twenty-five years after John DeLorean's gull-winged gas-burner arrived, small, private-label carmakers are decidedly in drive.**

By **Clayton Collins** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## **SAN CARLOS, CALIF.**

The slope-nosed supercar sits ready to awaken, latent power in deep red. It should be nearly time to savor the harmonics of an engine well built, to smile at an exhaust pipe's burbling notes.

But today in San Carlos, Calif., in a region better known for silicon chips than superchargers, the Tesla Roadster comes to life with the auditory drama of a golf cart.

An engineer at the wheel, the Tesla – a preproduction sports car that's a heavier electric cousin to the wasplike Lotus Elise – engages and rolls away in a hush, tires humming on the concrete floor of a hangar-size garage.



The car, headed off for more tests in advance of its release next year, has the capacity to leave this building and run 250 miles before its 900-lb. lithium-ion battery pack needs a charge. At a stoplight it could – tapping the low-end torque inherent in electric drive – joust confidently with a similarly priced Ferrari. All without burning any gas.

It's one vision, at least, of the automotive future. Twenty-five years after John DeLorean rolled out his gull-winged gas-burner, small, private-label carmakers are decidedly in drive.

Several – including some whose creative juice flows back to General Motors' famously "killed" electric car, the EV1 – now bank on batteries, tuning out critics' static about battery longevity and questions about how electric utilities might generate enough power to handle a widespread shift.

Experts debate what role such boutique firms will play in an industry dominated by a dozen alliance-clad global juggernauts. The smalls still lack economies of scale, and must eye narrow niches in hopes of winning public attention (if you want a \$100,000 Tesla, get in line behind George Clooney).

But they might be well suited to a coming shift: By 2015, parts suppliers – not carmakers – will represent nearly 80 percent of the industry's "total value creation," according to

a 2004 report by Mercer Management Consulting.

"Smaller companies may really benefit from these developments," says Christian Kleinhans, a Mercer principal based in Munich, and a coauthor of the report. They will gain access to technology in such vital areas as electronics, he says, that they did not fund.

Nimble little firms can also adapt quickly to evolving consumer desires. Tesla, for one, plans another car, probably more mass-market friendly, as soon as 2009, says Martin Eberhard, cofounder and CEO. He built the Roadster to "convince consumers that an electric car can be something more than an in-town runabout."

Tesla sells direct to customers; its first wave of 100 Roadsters was snapped up in August. Orders for 2007 models are in the hundreds, says Mike Harrigan, Tesla's vice president of marketing.

"You don't have to make a million cars a year to be in the car business," says Peter Morici, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Business and former chief economist at the US International Trade Commission. "If [small carmakers] get out there in front, then they will develop expertise the big guys don't have.... I think there's an opening here."

Pointing to another business realm, Professor Morici cites the example of Dell creeping up on a complacent IBM, a firm he says "did not initially grasp the consequences of the PC and didn't fully exploit it," lingering instead in mainframes.

Others say carmaking entrepreneurs stand little chance against highly motivated giants, even as several of the titans struggle financially.

"Every generation has its creative geniuses who think that they can beat the odds, but the reality is that the car business is more than just the challenges of engineering the car itself," says Maryann Keller, an industry analyst, in an e-mail. "Getting the attention of the buying public with advertising and then setting up a dealer network – no, you can't sell them online – parts and repair investments, etc., are usually way beyond the capability of most individuals."

Ms. Keller also doubts consumers will align with brands whose futures seem uncertain. "Remember," she says, "the DeLorean was a failure, except in the movies."

But industry upheaval has generated all kinds of action. Some mavericks are focusing on collaborative engineering and low-cost manufacturing in making their runs. Visionary Vehicles founder Malcolm Bricklin, best known for bringing the Yugo to the US, aims to import a vehicle from

China-based Chery next year, for example.

All-electrics, too, have picked up some buzz. Beside Tesla, there is Commuter Car Corp. in Seattle, building the two-passenger Tango. AC Propulsion, the San Dimas, Calif., firm whose founder engineered GM's EV1, has an electric based on the Toyota Scion.

And if hydrogen fuel cells remain a holy grail for most majors, with gas-electric hybrids as a stepping stone, some of the big firms also are dabbling in all-electrics.

A DaimlerChrysler unit, Global Electric Motorcars, is building a small, fleet-type car. Toyota is weighing a plug-in version of its hybrid Prius. (Some impatient owners had been making the change themselves.) Mitsubishi introduced the third generation of its electric "i" car this week, though it's not planned for the US market.

Tesla's Mr. Eberhard acknowledges the complexity of creating an automobile in what amounts to a small high-tech shop, with clusters of engineers poking at wire harnesses and whiteboards covered with scrawl about actuators. High-voltage signs are everywhere.

On one table a battery case lies open. Inside, a blue tube for liquid coolant snakes around the 621 cells on each of 11 stacked sheets. It's one of a few tables that can't be

photographed. ("There," jokes an engineer, covering it with paper after its display. "Now it's secret again.")

"There's a lot more to a car than there is to a typical Silicon Valley project," Eberhard says. "And remember that in our case, we're not just building a new product, we're also building a new company and a new kind of company, and that takes a fair amount of effort and energy and money and time."

Money came from a group of investors that included billionaire PayPal founder Elon Musk as well as Google cofounders Larry Page and Sergey Brin. That has helped Tesla compress time.

"In order to get the Roadster on the market fairly quickly, all the choices we made were not the most cost-effective choices," says Eberhard.

The manufacturing is done in England. Some parts – windshield-wiper motors and the like – are bought from other automakers in a milder form of the sourcing done by companies like Georgia-based performance carmaker Panoz, a leader in "scavenger" engineering.

"We're developing a car for \$60 million," says Mr. Harrigan. "GM would probably spend that on marketing [alone] for its new Chevy Cadaver or whatever."

Eberhard says he understands the importance of support and sales infrastructures. (Regional "depots" are planned.) As for a nationwide system that will help drivers get around from day to day, he points to the 250-mile range and a portable recharger pack. "You charge at your house and that's enough," he says. "I mean, how much cellphone-charging infrastructure do you depend on?"

He brushes off concerns about battery technology, citing steady increases in capacity and declining costs. Eberhard seems quietly self-assured, almost missionary. As one Boston headline writer put it last summer: "Who's reviving the electric car?"

But even if Tesla and others can push the innovation curve and generate broader interest, says Ryan Brinkman, senior analyst at the PricewaterhouseCoopers Automotive Institute, that's the full extent of their impact.

"I don't think that a small manufacturer is going to come in and revolutionize this industry," Mr. Brinkman says. "I would place the probability of that as close to zero." Domestic and foreign manufacturers, he says, have too many billions invested in technologies even beyond electric vehicles.

Eberhard is used to hearing firms like his sold short. "Excellent," he says with a laugh, "I love it. That way maybe the big guys won't see me as a threat for a long time."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 26, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1026/p14s02-sten.html>

# Why coastal Florida may have northern Africa to thank

**This year's hurricane season has been much milder than forecast. Tons of dust from the Sahara Desert could help explain it.**

**By Moises Velasquez-Manoff** | Contributor to The Christian Science Monitor

In May, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecast an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season, with up to 16 named storms and 10 full-blown hurricanes, six of them Category 3 or greater.

But with the August-through-October peak nearly over and only nine named storms to date – five of which reached hurricane status – this year's season, which ends Nov. 30, looks pretty low-key.

Many scientists credit the unexpected arrival of an El Niño, a periodic warming of the eastern Pacific that suppresses hurricane formation. But it may have been something else, too: desert dust.



A new study in Geophysical Research Letters suggests that large amounts of hot, dry, dust-laden air coming off West Africa may have squelched Atlantic hurricanes.

Nascent hurricanes need warm water – at least 80 degrees F. – and relatively calm atmospheric conditions to form. The warm, moist air rises, billowing into clouds and eventually forming storms. In summer, these conditions prevail over the ocean off West Africa, where 85 percent of all major hurricanes originate.

Some years, however, powerful winds blow off West Africa, carrying Saharan dust as far west as Central America and the Amazon basin. Scientists have long suspected that these massive dust storms, often covering an area the size of the lower 48 states, can stymie hurricane formation in the Atlantic.

"It's almost like moving the Sahara desert over the ocean," says Amato Evan, lead author of the study and an assistant researcher at the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. This stops hurricane formation in several ways.

Saharan dust "absorbs solar energy just like a rock under a tree during the summertime," says Jason Dunion, field program director at the Hurricane Research Division of NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological

Laboratory in Miami and a coauthor of the study. The heated dust further warms the air, which prevents the moist ocean air below from rising, squashing the storm.

Airborne particles can serve as nuclei for water droplets to form, creating precipitation and clouds. But the sheer number of granules in these storms inhibits this process. No single particle can accumulate enough water to form a droplet.

Most important, the dryness of the Saharan air – up to 50 percent drier than ocean air – creates a strong wind shear. "When you have air that's that dry, it's almost like getting out of a shower on a cold morning," says Dunion. "The moisture gets ripped right off you." The powerful wind effectively lops the top off "seedling" storms, stopping them before they get started.

But lots of dust does not always mean fewer hurricanes.

In 2005, the year of Katrina and Rita and the most active hurricane season on record, more Saharan dust arrived in the Caribbean than at any time during the previous 30 years, says Joseph Prospero, director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the University of Miami.

"It goes completely contrary to our argument," Mr. Prospero says, adding that many other factors, like the location of high-pressure systems over the Atlantic and El Niño in the Pacific, affect hurricane formation.

Prospero, who has measured Saharan dust in the Caribbean since the 1960s, saw it increase four-fold in the 1970s. Saharan dust varies directly with rainfall in the Sahel, a belt of land just below the Sahara Desert running the width of Africa, he says. Not coincidentally, the Sahel has suffered drought conditions since the 1970s.

The drought "is largely attributable to rising world temperatures and, specifically, increased temperatures in the Arabian Sea and Atlantic Ocean," he says. If carbon-dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels are responsible for rising global temperatures, "then this increased dust that we're seeing is anthropogenic." In other words, humans may be to blame.

But human activity of another form may also have an impact, says Natalie Mahowald, a scientist who studies mineral aerosols at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. Not only does dust coming off West Africa vary with rainfall in the Sahel, she points out, but with farming and pasture use as well.

"The biggest source of dust may be natural, but that doesn't mean all the dust is natural," she says.

As for the future, Ms. Mahowald foresees less dust, not more. Many climate models – hers included – predict higher global temperatures will lead to a wetter Sahara. Add to that the fertilization effects of higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, which may allow vegetation to colonize environments that were too hostile before – like the Sahara – and we might be in for "a less dusty future," she says.

## **How Sahara dust helps the Amazon**

The world's largest desert, the Sahara, currently dumps up to 200 million tons of dust into the North Atlantic annually. Scientists blame this dust, which may land as far west as Central America, for everything from melting glaciers in the Alps to the decline of Caribbean corals.

Because it is fine and reddish in color, residents of the southeastern United States, especially those in south Florida, often confuse Saharan dust with haze and smog. On bad days, authorities in Puerto Rico issue air-quality alerts because of the dust.

But the dust's most significant role may be as fertilizer.

Blowing off arid land, the dust is rich in iron and phosphorus – minerals often leached from soil in wetter climes. Scientists have blamed the fertilizing effects of this dust for toxic algal blooms in the Gulf of Mexico, even as they credit the dust for enriching soil in Bermuda.

But the greatest single beneficiary may be the Amazon rain forest, which scientists estimate receives one-third to one-half – up to 13 million tons – of all the Saharan dust that floats into the Western Hemisphere.

In fact, some scientists think that the Amazon rain forest may grow and shrink in direct proportion to the expansion and contraction of the Sahara Desert.

On different occasions during the Pleistocene era, which ended 10,000 years ago, green savanna dominated the Sahara and grassland – not rain forest – covered parts of the Amazon basin. Separated by an ocean but connected by dust, the two ecosystems may move as one.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |

- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 26, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1026/p20s01–sten.html>

## Backstory: Cage diving for a cause

**A conservationist uses tourists – in cages – to pay for his research on great white sharks.**

**By Stephanie Hanes** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

### **GANSBAAI, SOUTH AFRICA**

The first shark glides by not long after the boat drops anchor. It is a small one, as great whites go, between six and nine feet long, a slinking gray shadow in this aqua-blue water a half mile from shore. It circles around the 32-foot catamaran, smelling the "chum slick" – water with dissolved tuna bits – that Michael Scholl has been pumping into the ocean from a big barrel.

"Shark!" one woman cries, and the other tourists rush starboard, vying for a better look. Soon, they will slip into wet suits and goggles and get an even closer view, sliding into a metal cage suspended in the ocean water, cold even now in the Southern Hemisphere summer.

Mr. Scholl smiles at the excitement. Sharks are his passion, so he's happy when tourists start buzzing at the sight of a telltale dorsal fin, the gray triangle that pierces the water's surface.

South Africa's rapidly growing shark-cage industry baits adrenaline addicts with promises of "Jaws"-like encounters, and Scholl knows that many of the people on his boat are simply here for the thrill. But he hopes to turn them into shark lovers, by sharing his research and his belief that great whites are the "most fascinating, beautiful, and perfectly adapted animals out there."

This puts him at the epicenter of the debate here about great whites and cage diving – about safety, shark conservation, and animal exploitation. He works in an industry that has been criticized by environmentalists for perpetuating "Jaws"-like stereotypes, but he is a researcher and conservationist first. His findings have helped the cage-diving business expand, but he knows they may eventually lead to more restrictions. But in the end, he says, he's squarely on the sharks' side.

"I've always been supportive of the cage-diving industry as long as it's done properly," Scholl says. "The more people see those white sharks out there for what they are, the less people will be afraid of sharks.... I think it's a great tool for education."



On one sunny morning, Scholl clicks through a computerized slide show in the headquarters of Marine Dynamics, the company that employs him as a shark guide. This is his pretrip presentation, with details about great white biology, South Africa's unique ocean system, and his research.

For eight years, Scholl has been building what shark experts say is the world's most extensive database of great whites, using the individual marks and notches on dorsal fins as identifiers.

This is the main reason he works for the cage-diving company – he needs a way to get out on the water to continue this project. He and other scientists hope that this research will help them estimate the shark population and learn more about great white behavior.

Scholl's work is "vital," says Michael Meyer, of South Africa's Marine and Coastal Management. "He's got the biggest database as far as known sharks. We give whatever we collect to [Scholl]."

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species prohibits the sale of great white jaws – long considered a prized hunting trophy – and the World Conservation Union has great whites on its "red list" of threatened species. But nobody knows exactly how many

great whites still exist. Nobody has seen a great white mate or give birth. Researchers don't understand why the sharks linger in one part of the ocean for a week and then move elsewhere.

"There is a fascination with sharks, sure," says Dylan Suhor, a research assistant who is working with Scholl. "But when you say 'shark,' people think 'Jaws.' There are many more questions than answers."

Mr. Meyer says there are only about half a dozen scientists working to answer these questions along the southern coast of Africa – one of the world's prime great-white-spotting places. These sharks don't survive in captivity, so they're notoriously difficult to research.

Aboard "Shark Fever," Scholl records information about the sharks he sees swim by. "I like the fact we haven't been able to successfully cage every single [kind of] animal on this planet," he says. "It's kind of nice to know there are some animals that are going to refuse that."

Meanwhile, tourists aboard are lining up for their own cage, to be lowered into the sharks' world. The boat has been chumming, letting out tuna-water mix, for an hour. It has attracted the sharks' attention, and one at a time, they circle the boat, looking for a meal. They zigzag under water, trying to find the source of the smell. To get a shark to come to the

surface, crewmembers toss out a fish head on a float tied to a piece of rope. The sharks lunge toward this bait, sometimes splashing out of the water, swimming inches away from the 3– by 6–foot steel cage, all but the top foot of which is submerged in the rocking, aqua water.

The captain tells four or five tourists huddled in the cage when to hold their breath and duck under water in order to see a shark – and sometimes its teeth – up close and personal. Sometimes the shark lunges, a powerful surge of gray flesh bursting through the water, its mouth agape, displaying rows of jagged, sharp teeth. Sometimes it glides by, ghostlike, large, dark blue eyes inches from human eyes wide behind goggles.

The tourists involuntarily pull back. Often they come up for air, gasping and exclaiming.

The crew tries to make sure the shark doesn't actually get the fish bait. This is a regulation established in part to address the concerns of surfers and other water sports enthusiasts who have criticized shark diving for causing more shark–human conflict in waters near Cape Town. (There were 30 shark attacks on humans between 1960 and 2006, according to government data. Thirteen of these, including three fatal attacks, were in the past four years.)

But Scholl says a more probable reason for the attacks is increasing numbers of people in the water, due in part to better wet suits. He says that the sharks only stay in the waters near Gansbaai for a few weeks. And, because the cage-diving crew typically pulls bait away before sharks ever even get a taste of it, he explains, "I don't think the shark is going to distinguish the boat from the cage from the people inside.... Even if the shark goes to the beach five minutes later and sees a surfer or swimmer, I don't think he's going to go, 'Wait, that's what was just in that cage.' "

This view is shared by a recent World Wildlife Federation report that found no scientific link between cage diving and the attacks.

A better reason for keeping the bait away from sharks, Scholl says, is that it isn't environmentally sound to feed wild animals.

Scholl, a native of Switzerland, moved to South Africa for the sharks in 1998. At first he funded his research with grants, but moved to the shark-diving boats when those funds ran out. His work helped expand the industry when he discovered a new area where sharks congregate – now dubbed Shark Bay – that let companies ensure sightings for their tourists.

But Scholl now suspects that Shark Bay might be a great white mating ground – something never before identified by humans. He thinks this, not the hunting in a nearby seal colony, might be why the sharks are here. If he can prove this theory, it would be a boon to shark research, and conservationists, including Scholl, would clamor to stop tourist activities there.

He says he isn't well liked in the business because he has pushed for government regulation of the diving and files official complaints against operators who he believes mistreat sharks. He says some operators manipulate bait so that sharks lunge for it and slam against the cage – a thrill for tourists but harmful to the sharks.

But Scholl shrugs off the criticism.

"The sharks come first," he says. "For me, it's always been about the sharks."

• *Read the reporter's first-person account of going eye to eye with a great white shark at*

[http://weblogs.csmonitor.com/notebook\\_africa](http://weblogs.csmonitor.com/notebook_africa)

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 26, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1026/p17s01–stgn.html>

# On the horizon

**News from the frontiers of science.**

By **Peter N. Spotts**

## **The Amazon's ancient flow reversal**

Graduate student Russell Mapes's study started with a simple question: How fast does silt move from the headwaters of the Amazon River high in the Andes to the vast delta that spills into the Atlantic? But he got a bit sidetracked after discovering that grains in rocks from the central Amazon basin were too old to have moved down from the Andes.

The results indicate that the Amazon once flowed east to west, tumbling out of mountains that formed when South America and Africa scraped past each other between 145 million and 65 million years ago. Previous studies from a handful of locations along the river pointed to the possibility that the Amazon had been thrown into reverse. Mr. Mapes; his adviser, Drew Coleman, from the University of North Carolina; and colleagues in Brazil took their samples along

some 80 percent of the river's run. These samples clearly indicated the switch in flow.

It took the erosion of the eastern mountains and the rise of the Andes to throw the river into reverse. The team reported its results Tuesday at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting in Philadelphia.

## **Here come the floods**

The bays along the Gulf Coasts of Texas and Louisiana have been dancing a slow-motion rumba for millennia – with the bays expanding, contracting, and encroaching farther inland, only to shift close to the sea again – several times.

These results from core samples taken on coastal bays and their environs suggest that, over this century, coastal communities there are likely to face more flooding, says John Anderson, a University of Houston oceanographer who did the research. Sea-level rise and a relative dearth of silt coming down rivers are the likely triggers, he says.

His research found that during the past 10,000 years, each of seven bays and coastal lakes have experienced an average of six flooding events. Because the floods don't match up to sea-level trends, he concludes that the floods resulted from a lack of sediment coming down rivers that



feed the bays and lakes. Without this replenishment, bays expanded by up to 30 percent over the course of 100 to 200 years. And they extended their reach tens of miles inland. The process reversed itself when sediments once again started to flow and fill in the bays.

Given projected sea-level rise over this century, as well as the large amounts of sediment rapidly backing up against dams upriver, Mr. Anderson says, there's ample evidence that these one-two punches will occur over the next 100 years in each of the bays he's studied. He reported his results Monday at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting.

## **A very old fish tale**

The lowly lamprey is nothing if not a survivor. The parasitic fish is one of only two vertebrate species without a jaw. This suggests that it is one of the most primitive forms of vertebrates. Now, paleontologists have discovered a 360-million-year-old ancestor to the modern lamprey, the oldest lamprey yet found. Until now, the oldest lamprey fossil dated back 125 million years.

What's striking about the new find, researchers say, is how little lampreys have changed over that time, surviving four major extinction events in the process. This makes the animal a useful reference for tracing evolutionary changes

in other vertebrates. Subtle variations in the overall size of its mouth, and the mouth's size relative to the rest of its body, are the biggest differences between the fossil specimen and its modern descendants, the researchers say.

Paleontologists from the University of Chicago and the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa unearthed the fossil some 18 months ago from rock formations that once formed the mouth of an ancient river. Lamprey fossils are extremely rare, the scientists say, because the creatures lack a skeleton or an appreciable backbone. Its soft tissue decomposes quickly. In this case, however, the find was remarkably preserved, the team reports in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 23, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1023/p14s01–sten.html>

# Penguins get a helping home

**A South African program provides fiberglass 'igloos' to protect the nests of endangered African penguins – and the birds love their new homes.**

**By Stephanie Hanes** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

## OFF DYER ISLAND, SOUTH AFRICA

Houses go fast on Dyer Island. Not 15 minutes after Wilfred Chivell finished the final touches on one recently installed structure – covering it with dirt, making sure the opening was clear – a couple had made themselves at home. Such is the demand on this flat, rocky island, once home to the largest colony of African penguins in the world.

"These penguins were just dying for shelter," says Mr. Chivell, a conservationist and tour-boat operator who helped launch this avian housing project – one of the more novel and promising attempts to help southern Africa's endangered penguins.

He and others are installing small, fiberglass igloos on Dyer

Island, a jagged square mile that still is home to some 4,000 penguins. Their hope is to make up for the manmade habitat destruction that has forced the birds to nest in the open, a practice that makes their eggs and chicks vulnerable to predatory gulls. The conservationists have installed 200 artificial nests so far, and eventually want to put 2,000 in place, enough to protect every penguin pair. If the program is successful, they plan to expand it to other colonies in South Africa.

"The penguins occupy those burrows like greased lightning," says Les Underhill, a professor of avian demography at the University of Cape Town. "Anything that provides shelter is better than an open nest. You can feel quite moved for these poor birds who really are struggling."

Years ago, the African penguins (once known as "jackass penguins" for their vocalizations) burrowed their nests in guano, nutrient-rich bird droppings piled meters thick on the small seabird islands that speckle the water where the Atlantic and Indian oceans meet. The dried guano offered shade that kept them from overheating, and protected their eggs from predators.

But by the end of the last century, people had scraped away all the guano to sell as fertilizer, and the penguins had to nest directly on island rock. Without shade, the birds overheat, and must periodically leave their nests to cool off

in the ocean. That made chicks and eggs vulnerable to kelp gulls, which also live on the islands.

To make matters worse for the penguins, the gull population has skyrocketed in recent years, largely because so much food is available from community rubbish dumps, Underhill says. Add to this oil spills, overfishing, and a shift in the swimming patterns of anchovies – one of the penguins' main food sources – and the penguins simply have been overmatched, he says.

Across the region, the number of African penguins has dropped from about 1.5 million adults in 1930 to 153,000 in the 1990s. On Dyer Island, the penguin population fell from a peak of 22,655 pairs in 1979 to about 2,000 pairs today.

Chivell says that he didn't realize how bad the problem had gotten until he visited the island in the late 1990s. The island is run by Cape Nature, the South African government's conservation body, and was designated by BirdLife International as a worldwide "Important Bird Area" for its large concentration of gulls, terns, and oystercatchers. From the water, the island looks pancake flat, with hundreds of birds perched along the rocky outcroppings.

Few people can visit Dyer Island, which is about three miles offshore. It is off-limits to anyone but researchers, and most

scientists are barred during sensitive nesting times. But because of his local conservation work, Chivell says, he got a tour.

"I just saw that the penguins needed some shelter," he says. He started planning the building project, but says it took years for the various governmental and research bodies to coordinate, and to agree to let a private citizen get involved with such an ecologically sensitive place.

In March, Chivell and Cape Nature launched the Dyer Island Conservation Trust and the related "Faces of Need" campaign. They advertised that people could "buy" a penguin house for about \$50, and started raising public awareness about the penguins. Within weeks, hundreds of the igloos had sold.

"People are so wonderful," says Claudine O'Connor, who works for Chivell on the Faces of Need campaign. "I think people really didn't realize how bad it was. Now, we've had such a wonderful response."

Habitat destruction is one of the biggest problems for species worldwide, points out Lauren Waller, a nature conservationist with Cape Nature, who is working with the penguin project. There have been other attempts to create artificial nests or covers for endangered birds, she says, but few efforts in the region have been on this scale.

"The uniqueness in this project is the magnitude," she says. "It's quite a huge project, and we want to roll it out to other islands."

The artificial nests are about three feet long and 18 inches high, modeled on the birds' natural burrows. To install them, conservationists dig into the rock and gravel, place the nest into the earth, and then cover it up so only a little bit of the opening shows.

"It's real rocky, so instead of using shovels, you have to use a pickax and your hands," says Dylan Suhor, a young research assistant who helped install nests last month. He says it took about a dozen people seven hours to install 40 igloos.

As researchers install the nests, Ms. Waller is monitoring the penguins' dwelling preferences. She notes if they are more attracted to certain floor plans – say, a north-facing semicircle – or certain distances between burrows. Researchers will also see whether pairs return to the same houses each year, or whether breeding patterns change.

"We've laid out nests in different designs, different densities," she says. "And we'll have an ongoing monitoring program to look at all this."



So far, Walker says, the penguins seem to be happy with anything.

"They check out the nests right away," she says. "You can see the footprints. They have certainly taken to [them]."

Underhill, the professor, says researchers hope to gather enough information to export the program to other seabird islands. For instance, Cape Town's Robben Island, well known as the site of the prison that housed Nelson Mandela, has a large penguin population that also needs shelters.

"It's a species that needs all the help it can get," Underhill says. So far, the Dyer Island Conservation Trust has sold 600 nests. They plan to install more after the nesting season ends.

• *For more information on the Dyer Island Conservation Trust, e-mail: [dic@iscales.co.za](mailto:dic@iscales.co.za)*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |

- [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 01, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1101/p15s02-alar.html>

## Complex justice in a Nazi-looting case

**Next week's auction of modernist masterworks ends a long chapter, but won't close the book on wartime art thefts.**

**By April Austin** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Four masterpieces by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) will be auctioned next Wednesday, bringing to a climax one story of Nazi looting and a family's efforts to reclaim its heritage. The sale, however, raises complicated issues of museum responsibility, public access to important works of art, and a need to correct injustice.

The Austrian National Gallery returned the paintings in January to the heirs of Ferdinand Bloch–Bauer, a wealthy Jewish businessman whose extraordinary art collection included porcelains as well as 19th–century Austrian paintings. The four to be sold Nov. 8 at Christie's in New York could fetch more than \$93 million.

A fifth painting, the portrait "Adele Bloch–Bauer I" sold earlier this year for a record \$135 million to cosmetics heir Ronald Lauder, for his museum, the Neue Galerie in New

York. As the auction nears, speculation is heating up that Mr. Lauder may try to buy at least one additional Klimt for the museum.

The family's decision to auction the paintings – instead of donating all or a portion of them to a museum – was met with disappointment in the museum community. The Austrian museum was unable to meet the price set by the family, led by Bloch–Bauer's niece, Maria Altmann, in Los Angeles. An agreement also failed to materialize with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Concerns were raised that the paintings might be bought by private collectors and disappear from public view.

"No one would say, 'This woman doesn't have the right to do what she wishes with these paintings,' because of the tragic circumstances," says James Cuno, director of the Art Institute of Chicago. Mr. Cuno served on a presidential advisory panel on Holocaust assets. He considers it a loss when paintings of such caliber must leave a museum, even if for all the right reasons.

"The entire issue is about righting a historic wrong," says Sharon Flescher, executive director of the International Foundation for Art Research (IFAR). "These cases are more poignant because of the emotional and ethical – as well as legal – issues involved."

"Maria Altmann is a very determined woman," says one of her lawyers, Steven Thomas, in Los Angeles, referring to Ms. Altmann's eight-year legal battle to win the paintings back. "She wanted to set all those wrongs to a right."

When the Nazis took control of Austria in 1938, Bloch-Bauer escaped from Vienna to Zurich, losing his business, homes, and art.

After the war, Austrian officials took "a very aggressive position" on retaining artwork, says E. Randol Schoenberg, the lawyer who pursued the case against the Austrian museum. The Bloch-Bauers, along with other families, had to cut deals in order to get certain art out of the country. The Austrians took advantage of this, says Mr. Schoenberg, and used Adele Bloch-Bauer's will (Ferdinand's wife, who died in 1925) as leverage for holding the Klimts.

In January 2006, Austrian arbitrators declared that the paintings had been obtained illegally, and under Austrian law, must be returned to the family.

In 1941, Bloch-Bauer wrote to Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka from Zurich: "In your position, I would have gone to America and if it is still possible, go immediately! Europe will be a heap of ruins, perhaps the whole world; for art there will be no place here for decades!... Perhaps I will get [back] the two [Klimt] portraits of my poor wife.... I should

find out about that this week!... [I] will wait and find out, whether justice will still come, then I will gladly lay my hammer down."

Bloch-Bauer never saw his art again.

After the war, the paintings were moved to the Austrian museum, where they hung for 60 years and were seen by hundreds of thousands of visitors. The portrait "Adele Bloch Bauer I" was second only to Klimt's "The Kiss" as a tourist attraction.

It is the loss of this close identification of a group of paintings with a cultural milieu – that of Vienna – that saddens Cuno. "Museums live with the hope that pieces which come to us from private collections will remain in the public view," he says. At the same time, "the public trusts us not to hold on to objects for which we don't have clear title."

The Klimt paintings were exhibited in Los Angeles and New York after their return to Mrs. Altmann and in advance of the auction. "She wants it acknowledged in this very public setting that justice has been done," says lawyer Schoenberg. Altmann, who is in her 90s, has said publicly that she hopes the paintings will be made accessible to the public by whoever buys them.

Bidding is likely to be intense next week on the four remaining Klimts, which include a later portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer and three landscapes. Excitement around the Klimt sale owes in part to "interest in the cultural circumstances of Klimt and the artists in Vienna during the Freudian era," Cuno says. "The paintings are glamorous in a decadent way. That makes them more modern."

US museums receive about three or four ownership claims a year against their collections, says Erik Ledbetter of the American Association of Museums. Mr. Ledbetter was project manager for the start-up of the AAM's Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal, one of a dozen such databases in the US and Europe.

But Hector Feliciano, a journalist who has researched Nazi-looting cases extensively and published a book on the topic, "The Lost Museum," says that museums are underreporting the number of claims they receive and failing to fully disclose the numbers of suspect art in their collections. American museums took the lead in setting guidelines in the late 1990s, but in the years since, momentum has stalled. European museums are slower still, with some former East Bloc countries lacking restitution laws that would aid in the return of looted property.

Ledbetter of the AAM says the amount of research involved is daunting and will take decades. "Our effort is to define the

largest universe of work that could have passed through Nazi hands," he says. Of the 20,000 items listed on the Nazi-era provenance portal, for example, probably "99 percent will be found not to have had any Nazi connection," he says.

Mr. Feliciano and others say the number of Nazi-looted art objects, particularly in Europe, reaches into the hundreds of thousands, with countries steadily selling off assets for which no heirs have been found. Critics of the databases say it's not fair that the onus is on survivors' families to know what they are looking for. They also argue that museum guidelines are fuzzy and open to interpretation.

What is the public to make of these competing interests?

Experts say that until museums clarify their guidelines and governments quicken the pace of declassifying wartime documents and improve restitution laws, families will have a difficult battle proving their claims. In the meantime, the Klimt sale will be watched closely.

"Who can say if this is the last high-profile case?" asks Dr. Flesher of IFAR.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)



- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 30, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p02s02-alsp.html>

# After 24 years, bliss for St. Louis fans

By **Mark Clayton** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

## ST. LOUIS

In the upper reaches of Busch Stadium, in the standing-room-only section where an icy breeze blew down on the fifth game of the 2006 World Series, three defiant women wearing red-neon flashing cat's-eye glasses and sipping hot chocolate held a placard: "We're charged. We're lit."

Ditto for all St. Louis fans. After 24 years of patient waiting, the baseball loyalists of this Midwestern city were more than ready for a championship. Only two years prior, they had ceded to the Boston Red Sox, which beat both the "curse of the Bambino" and their beloved Cardinals in four straight games.

Now, though, the fans and their city had built a new stadium. And as the saying goes, "if you build it, they will come" – championships, that is. In this case, it was the 10th world championship for the Cardinals, the most after the

Yankees.

The city was to celebrate its storybook October with a parade Sunday afternoon. Also following the win, Cardinals merchandise was hotter than ever – as fans at a stadium store bought just about everything in sight.

This was a team dismissed by most professional prognosticators as an also-ran, limping into the playoffs on the heels of a precipitous losing streak. But along with its teeth-chattering fans, it was to find redemption.

As Cardinal pitcher Adam Wainwright struggled to strike out the Detroit Tigers' last batter, the fans in the upper reaches of the stadium were both agonized and exultant, knowing instinctively that the team they had painted their faces for, and wept for in 2004, was about to win.

"Get 'im out, Adam," cried a woman. "You can do it," a man screeched, his voice cracking. And then – he did.

"I confess I never thought they would actually do it, but they did," exulted Stephanie Frierdich, her pink Cardinals scarf flapping. She had attended the 2004 game in which the Cards lost it all to the Sox. "This is like a dream."

Indeed, the flashing signs declared Busch Stadium to be "baseball heaven," and there was little disagreement with

that sentiment.

"I don't even feel like I'm working," said Chris Linton, an usher at the stadium. "This is unreal. I really feel like a fan."

For Dan Davis and Dave Davis, who painted their faces red to celebrate, it was a sweet moment.

"This is the second-happiest moment of my life next to my son being born," Dan said. "He was born in February, and I'm giving him the ticket stub from this game."

Not everyone was ebullient, though. Hanging toward the back of the upper deck, clad in Detroit jerseys and caps, Steven Kenna and John McGuffie smiled sadly. After the rainout on Wednesday, with more bad weather being predicted, the pair had driven back to Detroit. Then, realizing the weather had cleared, the two drove eight hours back for the Friday night game.

"These are the nicest fans, the nicest people," Mr. Kenna said, his arm sweeping across the stadium. "They've treated us really well. Sure, I'm sorry the Tigers lost. But these guys deserve this victory."

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 30, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1030/p20s01–alsp.html>

## Backstory: Dean of the gridiron

**By Patrik Jonsson** | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

### SUMMERVILLE, S.C.

High school football legend John McKissick, the winningest coach of all time, is quick to credit the community, the school board, and the principal for his success. Easy for him to say. Both the chairman of the board and the principal of the school played for him.

Fact is, almost half the town played for him at some point over the past 54 years, during which he racked up more than 500 wins, 10 championships, and 28 regional titles – all either world, national, or state records. "Kids he coached are now grandfathers in the stands," says Joanne McKissick, his wife. "It's pretty amazing."

After peering down a half century's worth of boyish faces and grass-stained jerseys, McKissick has become a household football name throughout the Palmetto State – and beyond. But here in Summerville, what could be called McKissick's laws – order, detail, forgiveness, teamwork –

have leeches from the gridiron into the very clay of the community.

His protégés are now so plentiful that they shape the town as doctors, lawyers, and politicians. All in all, he has coached 3,276 players since he first started striding the sidelines in 1952. "He's shaped us all," says assistant coach Steven Steele, who played for McKissick in the early '90s.

And they have come to expect nothing less than victory, Friday night after Friday night. With only two losing seasons to his name, McKissick tends to deliver. After trouncing Battery Creek 41–14 on a recent Friday, this year's Summerville High School squad is 10–0, ranked in the Top 20 in the country by USA Today.

\*\*\*

Oddly, McKissick started out as a "repo" man, collecting unpaid goods for an insurance company. It was a decent job for a guy who had bounced around colleges before getting a degree. But he hated the work. Desperate for a coaching job, he took a position in Clarkston, N.C., a town so small that it had to compete in a six–person football league. He called a friend. "I don't know anything about six–man football," he said. "What are you talking about?" the friend replied. "You don't know anything about 11–man football."

Clarkston posted a 7–3 record that year.

When a slot opened up in Summerville, a sleepy town with oaks and dirt roads, he jumped on it. Summerville was already a football power, with two state championships. He got the job knowing he had to succeed – quickly.

To prepare, he studied football books late into the night. He instituted a brusque new order in the locker room. When it came time to address his first pep rally, he had just finished wrapping a player's ankles with tape. He kept rubbing his hands to get the glue off as he spoke. He has rubbed his hands during every pep rally since – a McKissick trademark.

One night during that first year, he and his wife decided to go to the theater. She waited on the porch while he pulled the car out of the garage. She was still waiting as he drove off into the night – lost in thought about football.

The Green Wave won 10 games that year.

\*\*\*

Summerville is like the movie Pleasantville, without the creepiness. The downtown, circa 1950s, is immaculate. Barbershops brim with grinning kids. In October, locals decorate the town square with pumpkins and scarecrows.



The suburb just north of Charleston has grown dramatically – from 6,000 in the 1970s to 25,000 today. Its high school is now the largest in the state, with 3,100 students. Yet the town has maintained a sense of tranquillity and tidiness.

Locals attribute part of this to the simple credo of longtime mayor, Berlin Myers: If you see a weed, pull it. Yet few people have had as much impact on the psyche and values of the town as McKissick. "If you walk down the street 10 years after graduation [wearing] your letter jacket, smoking, they'll take it from you right there," says Jerry Nettles, a quarterback in the 1950s.

Even newcomers quickly sense how far his persona and legacy burrow into the town's taproots. "It's wild that they let him get away with imparting these old-school values," says Don Daniels, a transplant from Maryland. "In another place, he'd be a dinosaur."

Like many towns in the South, Summerville is frenetic about football. On Friday nights, the stands are filled with fans and generations of gridiron greats. Two thirds of the stadium is usually reserved for former players and their families. The next morning, many team members gather at Simmons Barber Shop to tell stories about the game and to have their performance deconstructed by players who go back to 1952.

"If they did well, they'll hear about it," says Coach Steele. "If they didn't do well, they'll hear about that, too."

\*\*\*

In 2003, McKissick notched his 500th win. Today, his record is 541–127–13. He has already been inducted into the National High School Football Hall of Fame. He holds the record for longest high school coaching career – and the most time spent at one school.

Over the years, he has turned down numerous job offers from colleges. One reason is that he sees an opportunity here that other schools might not give him. No one forces him to cut players. He often carries 90 players on the varsity squad.

Most of all, he likes to shape the character of the young and knows that fielding a winning team is inspirational. He also always works with problem players to help turn them around. "At least I have them here in the afternoons where I can see them," he says.

After 54 years on the sidelines, McKissick has slowed down. He now tools around the practice field in a golf cart. But he still gets out to show a player how to set up for a field goal or how to tackle properly.

If there's one philosophy that defines his on-field strategy, it is, according to his wife: "Three yards and a cloud of dust." In other words, pound the ball on the ground. Hit the holes. Take your gains, no matter how short. When he has a talented receiver, he will pass. But mostly he likes to run. It is a conservative philosophy, but who's arguing with Saint John? Opponents "know what he's going to do, but he dares them to do something about it," says former player Dennis Folden.

Trademarks of McKissick teams are consistency and discipline. "He has them run through almost every possible scenario, so they know what they're doing when it's happening," says Dickey Dingle, the school principal. "There's rarely any scrambling around."

McKissick, who turned 80 last month, shows no signs of hanging up his cap. Joanne bought two seats at Memorial Stadium, the local football venue, figuring her husband would join her when he retired. That was 20 years ago.

Joe Call, McKissick's grandson, quarterbacked for The Citadel and is now an assistant coach. Some see him taking over for McKissick when the time comes. Really?

"See that old live oak over there," says Mr. Call, pointing to a majestic tree in back of the end zone. "They tried to kill that tree by drilling holes and pouring salt into it, but instead

it just grew and grew. My grandfather always glances over at that tree when the team comes out of the locker room. I think he sees something of himself in it."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p12s01-almo.html>

# Lofty 'Babel' is a tower of hot air

**By Peter Rainer** | Film critic of The Christian Science Monitor

"Babel" is as pretentious as its title. Loosely designed as a modern version of the story of the Tower of Babel, it might more accurately have been called Babble. Not only is there a surfeit of scenes with people talking and talking; there are four separate narratives that are supposed to interlock, but never really do.

"Babel" is the conclusion of the trilogy by director Alejandro González Iñárritu and screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga that began with "Amores perros" and "21 Grams." "Amores perros" was a viscerally powerful experience, but "21 Grams" I found conceptually and emotionally chaotic. Arriaga likes to pile on the plots, but more isn't always better.

The pileup is compounded in "Babel," to even lesser effect. I felt I was watching a multi-story movie made by people who couldn't decide which one to tell.

The odyssey begins when a Moroccan goat herder from a poor mountain village buys a high-powered hunting rifle and leaves it with his two young sons. One of the boys unthinkingly fires on a tour bus in the far distance and hits a tourist, Susan (Cate Blanchett), who is vacationing with her husband Richard (Brad Pitt).

We already have seen a bit of their troubled marriage before the shooting; the sudden eruption of senseless violence brings them much closer together than they ever imagined they would be.

Meanwhile, the couple's two young children in Los Angeles are being cared for by their Mexican nanny Amelia (Adriana Barraza), who hastily decides to transport them across the border to Tijuana to attend her son's wedding. Her nephew Santiago (Gael García Bernal) is the reckless driver.

The Tokyo portion of the movie involves a deaf-mute student, Chieko (Rinko Kikuchi), who has a fraught relationship with her widowed father (Kôji Yakusho) and likes to go to nightclubs, where she drives the boys to distraction.

The crosscutting between these stories isn't particularly adept. Even though we are clearly meant to see the plots as resonating, most often we are simply looking at four different tales crunched together.

The Moroccan story is the most dramatic. Tension builds when the local police begin scouring the hillside for the shooters and Susan's life hangs in the balance – on top of which she discovers that her children are missing! Melodrama never quite rises to drama.

Blanchett does well in her role, even though she is near comatose for long stretches. Pitt overdoes the grimaces, clenched smiles, and pounding fists. His anguish is showy. Pitt is not your typical Hollywood star: He takes chances by appearing in nonstandard fare such as "Twelve Monkeys" and this film. But he also seems in over his head.

The Tijuana story is surprisingly the least interesting, despite the fact that the filmmakers are Mexican, and it touches on issues of illegal immigration and xenophobia. The Japanese segment, which for a long time bears no relationship whatsoever to the other three, has a free-floating ennui that at times recalls "Lost in Translation." Chieko's deafness is clearly intended as a metaphor. But a metaphor for what? Closed-off modern youth? Using her as a high-toned conceit dehumanizes her.

The conclusion of "Babel," when everything supposedly comes together, does not really justify all the heavy lifting it took to get there. Multiple story lines, particularly ones that don't mesh right away, can seem impressively arty to some people. But Messrs. Iñárritu and Arriaga have played this

card one too many times. If they really want to appear radical the next time out, my advice is: Tell a single story and tell it well. What a concept. *Grade: B-*

• *Rated R for violence, some graphic nudity, sexual content, language, and some drug use.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)





from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p16s01-almo.html>

## In 'Sing,' a trio whistles Dixie

**'Shut up and sing,' a sharply observed documentary, goes behind the scenes with country music's iconoclasts.**

**By Peter Rainer** | Film critic of The Christian Science Monitor

You could say that "Dixie Chicks: Shut Up & Sing" is a terrific music documentary, but who would think of it in those terms? That's like saying "Bowling For Columbine" is a great movie about guns.

Actually, it's unfair to invoke Michael Moore here, since the directors of "Dixie Chicks," Barbara Kopple and Cecilia Peck, don't wear their agenda on their sleeves. They straight-forwardly document what happened to the Chicks after lead singer Natalie Maines told her cheering London audience in March 2003 that she was "ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas."

Once the press picked up her comment, the group became country music pariahs and their bookings dwindled. Ms. Maines's remark particularly galled many of her hard-core fans because it was uttered outside the US. The

biggest-selling female group of all time has been gamely fighting back ever since.

Kopple, who has directed two documentary masterpieces, "Harlan County, U.S.A." and "American Dream," and Peck, who produced Kopple's 2002 TV documentary "The Hamptons" and is Gregory Peck's daughter, astutely capture how the Chicks attempted both to make nice and stand fast.

From the get-go, Maines never backs down from her statement. The other Chicks, Martie Maguire and Emily Robison, clearly wished Maines had kept silent, but they support her throughout.

I suppose one could put a cynical spin on their steadfastness – why break up the band and lose all that moolah? – but that's not how it comes across. These women obviously care a lot about one another, and they have families and children who are just as much a part of their lives as their music.

They even seem to enjoy the controversy, posing near-nude for an Entertainment Weekly cover as if to tell the rabble-rousers, "You still like looking at us, don't you?"

The filmmakers had impressive access to the group, and the results are eye-opening. When Maines receives a

highly credible death threat days before a concert, we see how the situation is handled – and its effect on her. In a hotel suite, Maines watches Tom Brokaw on television questioning President Bush about her statement in London, then launches into a diatribe that makes her London dig seem tame.

This movie brings out the irony that Maines's in-your-face spiritedness – so integral to the Chicks' appeal – pushes her to say things that end up turning off longtime fans. You can't have one Maines without also having the other. The film may be subtitled "Shut Up & Sing," but you can't sing with your mouth closed. *Grade: A–*

• *Rated R for language.*

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p16s02-almo.html>

## Movie Guide

**By Peter Rainer** | Film critic of The Christian Science Monitor

### New in Theaters Catch a Fire (PG-13)

*Director: Phillip Noyce. With Derek Luke, Tim Robbins, Bonnie Mbili, Jessica Anstey. (101 min.)*

Philip Noyce's anti-apartheid drama is tense and thoughtful, if somewhat marred by Hollywood-style thrills. It's about the radicalization of an unmilitant family man, real-life Patrick Chamusso (Derek Luke), who becomes a leader of the African National Congress after being wrongly accused of sabotage at the refinery where he works. Arrested and tortured on trumped up charges, along with his wife (Bonnie Mbili), he becomes upon his release the very man he was falsely accused of being. As Chamusso's adversary, security police chief Nic Vos, Tim Robbins brings an eerie duplicity to the role. The script is by Shawn Slovo, who wrote the great "A World Apart" and whose father was ANC leader Joe Slovo. *Grade: B+*

### Death of a President (R)

*Director: Gabriel Range. With Hend Ayoub, Brian Boland, Jay Patterson, James Urbaniak. (90 min.)*

There's something foul about staging the assassination of a sitting president in order to push a political agenda that could just as easily have been put forward without resorting to such sensationalism. British writer-director Gabriel Range's controversial movie is a staged docudrama set several years in the future that looks back to the imagined assassination of President Bush and attempts to piece together what happened. With the world in turmoil, Bush is shot in Chicago after delivering a speech to business fat cats; the Cheney administration uses the shooting as an opportunity to enact draconian domestic security measures and target innocent Muslims. Range employs digital effects to rejigger real footage of Bush and others, and he's fairly adept at action filmmaking. *Grade: B-*

*Sex/Nudity: None. Violence: 11 scenes, including an assassination and war scenes. Profanity: 3 profanities. Drugs/Alcohol/Tobacco: 1 scene with drinking.*

### **Still in Release The Prestige (PG-13)**

*Director: Christopher Nolan. With Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Scarlett Johansson. (128 min.)*

After the surprise success of "The Illusionist," "The Prestige," about dueling magicians in 19th-century England, may not seem like such a commercial long shot. I wasn't nuts about "The Illusionist" but, because I love magic on film, I was reasonably entertained. I'm also not crazy about plot-heavy "Prestige," but it has its moments, too. Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale play the two rivals, Scarlett Johansson is the magician's assistant who shuttles between them, and Michael Caine, easily the best in the bunch, plays their mentor. Christopher Nolan, fresh from his pitch-black Batman, once again goes heavy on the chiaroscuro. *Grade: B*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |



- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

[www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com) | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p12s03-alsp.html>

# As NBA season starts, eight key questions

**By Erik Spanberg** | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

It took the better part of a decade, but the NBA – finally – is past Michael Jordan. One generation of stars, including Kevin Garnett, Allen Iverson, and Vince Carter, came and went without making anyone forget Air Jordan during the 1990s. Every year, the question persisted: When will the NBA rebound?

Last season, it did. The playoffs delivered a slew of scintillating series packed with Game 7 thrillers, back-and-forth match-ups, and the style points crucial to capturing casual sports fans. With a new season tipping off Oct. 31, the Monitor asks eight questions about the months ahead.

## 1) Is a new golden era upon us?

It's easy to dismiss the NBA as a league far removed from the glory days of Larry, Magic, and Michael, not to mention Sir Charles and Hakeem the Dream. Pro hoops briefly devolved into selfish scoring displays of "SportsCenter"

highlight reels. No more. The faces of the NBA are young, talented, and indisputably dedicated to teamwork and winning. Thanks to the troika of the 2003 draft – Cleveland's LeBron James, Denver's Carmelo Anthony, and 2006 NBA Finals hero Dwyane Wade of Miami – pro hoops is must-see TV again.

Wade, star of the championship-winning Miami Heat, is making Spike Lee-directed Converse spots while James and Anthony scoop up celebrity cachet. But you can't become the face of the league until you actually win championships, cautions Kenny Smith, a TNT analyst and former NBA player. "LeBron last year took steps, and Carmelo this year will start to do that," he says.

## **2) Will the Knicks show a knack for improvement?**

Madison Square Garden proved so toxic last season it should have been condemned. The Knicks' ballyhooed hiring of head coach Larry Brown left the franchise in tatters, replete with a wave of player injuries, front office and locker-room spats, and yet another change in head coaches. Brown is out, left to squabble with the Knicks over a contract settlement. His replacement, GM Isiah Thomas, has been given a win-or-else mandate by team management. Ominously, the Knicks caved to the Celtics in the preseason. Coming off a 23–59 season, New York didn't make any major player moves this off-season.

Thomas could be unemployed by spring.

### **3) Can the Heat repeat?**

Wade is a young superstar with limitless energy, but what about the rest of the cast, including the not-so-spry Shaquille O'Neal? Other key players (Alonzo Mourning, Gary Payton) are also on the downside of their careers. "Miami is the best team in the [Eastern Conference], but they're dealing with age and with everyone gunning for them," says Greg Anthony of ESPN.

### **4) Is the ball in for a fall?**

A new official game ball, manufactured by Spalding, debuts this season, though early reviews have been spotty. O'Neal recently compared it to a driveway relic from a toy store, but NBA observers say the carping will cease early on. Says one longtime scout and analyst, who wished to remain anonymous, "It will be a controversy until somebody makes 11 out of 13 shots in a game. Then, it will be a great ball."

### **5) Will the NBA develop great rivalries again?**

Ever since the Jordan-era Chicago Bulls were dismantled in the late 1990s, rivalries have suffered. Lakers-Celtics? Nope. Sixers-Celtics? Ditto. Signs of hope have emerged, though. Last spring's Texas shootout between the Spurs

and Mavericks brought thrills, and LeBron's Cavs nearly took the feisty Pistons to the mat in the playoffs. If and when these and other rivalries flourish, the NBA will see a spike in fan interest on top of recent successes (record attendance and revenue during 2005–06).

## **6) Can the NBA pull up its long socks ?**

It took most of a season to overcome the nightmarish 2004 brawl between players and fans at a Pacers–Pistons game, and until recently the NBA seemed to be in much better graces. But during training camp, Pacers guard Stephen Jackson got into a fight at a strip club and fired his gun in the air. Also, Kings coach Eric Musselman was charged with driving drunk this month. If such incidents become commonplace, David Stern, the image–savvy NBA commissioner lambasted by critics for "nannying" the league, may have to come up with something more draconian than a dress code.

## **7) Whither Kobe and Cuban?**

Sure, Kobe Bryant scored 81 points in a single game last season and led the Lakers within a game of upsetting Phoenix in the playoffs, but he drooped in the deciding game – and Zen master Phil Jackson can't conjure enough motivation to make a mediocre team a contender. Now Bryant must grapple with off–season knee surgery, which

hobbled him throughout training camp. As for Mark Cuban, the dot-com billionaire last seen cheering his beloved Dallas Mavericks all the way to the NBA Finals, his team could take the crown behind the ascendant Dirk Nowitzki and an enviable depth-laden roster.

## **8) Who else should we be watching?**

Orlando, with young star Dwight Howard, is on the move, as are the Hornets, led by Chris Paul, reigning rookie of the year. Defensive stopper Ben Wallace left Motown for the Second City, setting the Bulls up to make some playoff noise for the first time since you-know-who left. Phoenix, with a dazzling fast-break style and gee-whiz point guard Steve Nash, could fly even higher with the return of Amare Stoudemire. If you think Tim Duncan and the internationally minded Spurs may be passé, take another look. All the talk of LeBron's Cavs and Wade's Heat shouldn't make you give New Jersey short shrift, either – with the ever-brilliant Jason Kidd leading the way, the Nets strengthened their bench and their hopes.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |

- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p14s05-align.html>

## Monitor picks

### Snark attack

In New York in the mid-'80s, before the ascent of cheeky mock news sources like The Onion and The Daily Show, editorial wunderkinder Kurt Andersen and Graydon Carter unleashed their savage wits in the parody-packed Spy magazine. **Spy: The Funny Years**, a time capsule in book form, takes us back to when snarkiness became an art.

### Blues you can use

The irresistible **Schultze Gets the Blues**, now on DVD, is the story of an accordion-playing German retiree whose monotonous, dead-end life is suddenly doused with three-alarm hot sauce when he hears Zydeco music on the radio. It's love at first listen, and his liberating journey to Louisiana to immerse himself in its percolating rhythms is funny and heart-tugging.

### Domo arigato, Mr. Roboto



The Japanese love robots. A new book, **Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots**, traces the nation's affection for automatons from its earliest roots in Edo–Period, wooden puppetlike robots to the contemporary Repilee, an eerily lifelike android modeled after a popular Japanese newscaster. Paro, a fuzzy replica of a baby harp seal created as a companion for elderly Japanese, is an adorable symbol of the widespread embrace of the robotic 'friend.'

## **Great parodies in music, part 1**

Professor Peter Schikele, classical music's own "Weird Al" Yankovic, has dedicated his life to championing the work of P.D.Q. Bach, an unknown composer (principal instrument: the kazoo). On the DVD **P.D.Q. Bach in Houston: We Have a Problem**, Schikele conducts pieces such as "The Unbegun Symphony" and "Schleptet in E–flat Major." Result: cadenzas of laughter.

## **Great parodies in music, part 2**

"Weird Al" Yankovic comes rhyming back into the zeitgeist with his take on "Ridin,'" Chamillionaire's rap about racial profiling. **White and Nerdy**, now on iTunes, has no social–justice aspirations – just a mission to induce guffaws with lines such as "I'll ace any trivia quiz you bring on/ I'm fluent in JavaScript as well as Klingon."

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p14s03-almo.html>

# New on DVD: Monster House

By Stephen Humphries

## Monster House (PG)

"Monster House," an animated horror film, is rated PG for "Parental Guidance." In this case, I interpret that to mean that parents should guide anyone under the age of 8 out of the TV room. Very young viewers may find this tale of a haunted house more trick than treat, but the families with older kids will love it. The story begins on Halloween Eve when a boy named DJ notices that the dilapidated house across the street occasionally comes to life to ensnare unsuspecting passersby. Along with his friends, Cracker and Jenny, DJ hatches a MacGyver-like scheme to thwart the most ominous building in the movies since the Bates Motel. The extras reveal how the voice actors, including Kathleen Turner, suited up in motion-capture gear so that their movements could be replicated by the animators.

*Grade:* **B+**

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p14s02-altv.html>

# Tubegazing: Paul McCartney: The Space Within Us

By Gloria Goodale

**Paul McCartney: The Space Within Us** (*A&E Networks, Saturday, 10 p.m. EST*): Beatlemaniac alert! Take a Magical Mystery detour from the divorce headlines dogging Sir Paul and experience the sheer fun and listening pleasure of classic Lennon/McCartney songs, as well as a sprinkling of Wings and solo McCartney material. While it provides plenty of music, this hour-long documentary based on McCartney's 2005 US tour is more of a concept film than a traditional concert flick. It opens with the former Beatle musing about the nature of creativity, outer space, and the scientific underpinnings of music. This cosmic perspective plays out in McCartney's live, onstage musical wake-up call of "Good Day Sunshine" to the International Space Station during a California concert. The hour includes an eclectic mix of notables reminiscing (including President Clinton and Tony Bennett) as well as numerous surprisingly sweet meet-and-greets with McCartney and his starstruck fans. This is the best sort of family entertainment, one that allows

multiple generations to bond over a genuine cultural icon. Watch it and sing along with the ecstatic crowds filmed by more than 25 HD cameras. Even if you can remember a time when this music didn't exist, why would you want to? (This program will be released in an enhanced, two-hour DVD format on Nov. 14). *Grade: A*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)



from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p14s04-align.html>

# Into it: Barry Pepper

Actor Barry Pepper, what are you ...

## ... Reading?

I'm one of those readers who has several books on the go at once. I'm reading books on learning the guitar and learning Spanish, just for personal interest. I'm also reading Noam Chomsky's **Failed States**. The book I've been reading most recently is **Don Quixote**. Terry Gilliam had began shooting a film version with Johnny Depp. I saw a documentary ["Lost in La Mancha"] about that movie, and I thought, "I've got to read it." It's an excellent book – definitely in my top 100.

## ... Listening to?

I've been listening to **The Strokes** and **Pearl Jam's** latest. I am a huge fan of **Bruce Springsteen** and **Neil Young**. I am a big fan of their political commentary. What I like about Springsteen is that his music and his persona seem to change and evolve. He seems to approach his music in character. He tends to have that wonderful gravelly voice,



and sometimes he can sound like Bob Dylan. I really have eclectic musical tastes. I don't know that there's much music I wouldn't listen to. When I visit Toronto next, I am going to see the **Johann Strauss Orchestra** with [violinist] André Rieu – he plays incredibly.

## ... Watching?

I saw an amazing documentary on **PBS** about Bill Gates and Warren Buffett and their merger to fight poverty together. Those two guys are emblematic of everything great in our world, and I wish there were more people like them. They've achieved that type of success for a purpose. **The Last King of Scotland** stars Forest Whitaker, who is a personal friend. He spent two months researching the part of Idi Amin before he went to Africa to film. I was mesmerized by him. He really is the movie; he fills every frame. This year I was invited to join The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. I think I'll vote for Forest to win an Oscar!

&bull; *Barry Pepper stars in "Flags of Our Fathers," an epic set in World War II, now in theaters.*

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 31, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p13s02-bogn.html>

# All the faerie young ladies

**A short story collection ideal for readers hungry for fairy tales for grown-ups.**

**By Yvonne Zipp**

Do you believe in fairies? Or rather, how did you respond to that question when Peter Pan was trying to save Tinker Bell?

If you clapped till your palms were sore when you were 5, but felt rather as if the question was violating your privacy later in life (clapping out of politeness or so that your younger sibling wouldn't think you were trying to off Ms. Bell), I believe I may have a book for you.

(If you instead sat on your hands, then no fantasy, no matter how dryly witty and erudite, is likely to appear on your bookshelf. Please go and read "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" – unabridged – and leave the rest of us to our fairy tales.)

There's not a hint of preciousness in the eight stories that make up Susanna Clarke's fantasy story collection **The Ladies of Grace Adieu** – in fact, the Los Angeles Times dubbed the book "fairy tales for cynics."

"Tom Brightwind – loud, egotistical, and six feet tall – was most emphatically not the sort of fairy that Arthur Conan Doyle and Charles Dodgson hoped to find at the bottom of their gardens," writes Professor James Sutherland of the University of Aberdeen, the "scholar" who ostensibly put together the collection.

As fans of her brilliantly inventive 2004 novel, "Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell," already know, Clarke has envisioned an alternate Georgian England in which the study of magic (which reached its heights during the Renaissance) had dwindled until it become strictly theoretical – until two men, the pedantic Gilbert Norrell and his protégé Jonathan Strange, made the study practical once again.

And as readers also know, one of the chief delights of that novel was the elaborate footnotes, written in a mock-scholarly style. Thanks to "Professor Sutherland," there's plenty of deadpan erudition in "The Ladies of Grace Adieu."

The collection works as a lovely companion piece to the novel. All but one of the eight stories have been previously

published. Here, they have been packaged together with illustrations by Charles Vess, an artist whose lovely style is reminiscent of the great Arthur Rackham, harking back to the early 20th-century golden age of children's book illustrations.

Jonathan Strange himself puts in an appearance in the title story, as he faces off against three country witches who aren't at all impressed by his fame or his acquaintance with the Duke of Wellington.

That military hero pays a brief visit to the land of Faerie in "The Duke of Wellington Misplaces His Horse," the more successful of the two stories that show that even the genteel pursuit of embroidery has its dark side.

It also, as Professor Sutherland points out in his foreword, demonstrates "the appalling unpreparedness of the average nineteenth-century gentleman when he accidentally stumbled into Faerie."

My favorite tale was "Mr. Simonelli or the Fairy Widower," in which the titular curate ("a monstrously irritating writer," Sutherland says, sniffing), who thought he was Italian but is in fact part fairy, tries to protect the ladies of his new village from the depredations of his fairy kinsman, John Hollyshoes.

Also delightful was "Tom Brightwind or How the Fairy Bridge Was Built at Thorseby," in which an isolated village finally gets a bridge to the outside world. Because it was commissioned by a fairy, it leads to Italy and not to the other side of the river.

But for a fairy gift, that's a pretty innocuous twist. The story also comes equipped with footnotes and another foreword by Sutherland, giving Clarke ample opportunity to display wit as dry as stale biscotti.

"Considered as literature, it is deeply unremarkable," Sutherland notes of the tale. "It suffers from all the usual defects of second-rate early-nineteenth-century writing."

Readers will notice plenty of echoes of 19th-century authors, such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, as well as the occasional antiquated spelling ("scizzars") and historical figure, such as the Duke of Wellington; Mary, Queen of Scots; and writer John Aubrey, who is among the scholars visiting the wife of a 17th-century landowner, in "Lickerish Hill," a retelling of "Rumplestiltskin."

"Mr. Meldreth, a sweet, shy gentleman the colour of dust, is for Insects and haz 237 dead ones in a box.... Dr. Foxton has shewn by Irrefutable Arguments that Cornishmen are a kind of Fishe."

In that story and "Mrs. Mabb," in which a young woman tries to wrest back her fiancé from a fairy, women seem to fare better than men in dealing with fairy-kind. A peasant also does rather well, persuading the saints to help him best the Raven King, the central legendary figure in "Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell."

While "Ladies of Grace Adieu" might inspire new readers to buckle down, do those push-ups, and pick up the 782-page "Jonathan Strange," its more likely audience is those who have already finished that novel and are experiencing such withdrawal that they are perusing scientific texts about sea cucumbers, searching for footnotes.

To them, my advice is simple: Read slowly. Her new novel isn't supposed to be out until late next year.

• *Yvonne Zipp regularly reviews fiction for the Monitor.*

The Ladies of Grace Adieu and Other Stories

By Susanna Clarke

Bloomsbury USA 256 pp., \$23.95

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

• [Home](#) |

- [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the October 31, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p13s01-bogn.html>

## At home in the big city

**For Adam Gopnik, as both writer and dad, there is no better spot than New York.**

**By Marjorie Kehe**

When Adam Gopnik was a young man first living in New York City, he had an experience that now belongs to the annals of history: He underwent psychoanalysis with a true German-born Freudian. "It may be worth recalling," Gopnik writes, "if only in the way that it would be interesting to hear the experiences of the last man mesmerized or the last man to be bled with leeches."

It was probably, Gopnik notes, one of the least successful psychoanalyses ever attempted. It seems that the most he ever got from his 80-something mental health practitioner were restaurant recommendations for a trip to Venice and statements of the doctor's admiration of various celebrities. ("She is very well defended," he would say admiringly of someone like Susan Sontag.)

In Gopnik's hands, however, this experience becomes an essay that is ultimately as sad and tender as it is funny, concluding with a final summation from the good German doctor: "So you see, Adam, in retrospect, life has many worthwhile aspects."

The same might be said of Gopnik's delightful **Through the Children's Gate**, a collection of essays (several of which were previously published in *The New Yorker*) dealing with life in New York City, and most particularly with the experience of raising children there. The essays touch on many of the more worthwhile aspects of life (home, family, friendship, the small pleasures of daily life in a city that you love.) You don't have to be a New Yorker or even necessarily an enthusiast of the city to be alternately amused, touched, and charmed by Gopnik's well-crafted pieces.

As a writer for *The New Yorker*, Gopnik left New York for Paris for five years (and wrote the wonderful "Paris to the Moon" about those experiences). But as his children grew to school age, both Gopnik and his wife felt a desire to return home and so in 2000 they landed back in New York and set about looking for a home for their young family.

The essay "A Hazard of No Fortune" wrings the requisite amount of humor out of the search for a habitable space in New York. Gopnik notes that looking for an apartment in

New York is "potentially fatal, like scaling Everest." Adding an interesting literary twist to what seems to be an entirely contemporary real estate horror story, Gopnik harks back to the forgotten "A Hazard of New Fortunes," a William Dean Howells novel, to prove that looking for an apartment in New York was every bit as traumatic over a century ago as it is today.

In the book's title essay, Gopnik devotes space to analyzing the new New York – a freshly suburbanized place where "it was now the drug addicts and transvestites and artists who were left muttering about the undesirable, short element taking over the neighborhood" – children.

But Gopnik and his family don't have long to enjoy this family-friendly version of Gotham before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 cast a pall over their lives. Gopnik writes of the day of the attacks and the aftermath in several of the essays, but really from thereon in, "Through the Children's Gate" – at least, the best of it – is about the fragility of all that we love most, including childhood, friendship, and, in Gopnik's case, New York City itself.

Gopnik is at his best as a writer when he stays closest to his heart. There are also enjoyable essays on the wild parrots of Brooklyn ("Power and the Parrot"), fine dining ("The Cooking Game"), and the death of department stores ("Under One Roof"), but the truly memorable pieces in the

book tend to be the ones most closely tied to the author's personal experience.

He writes deftly – with a neatly calibrated balance of wit and pathos – of the loss of a family pet ("Death of a Fish"), the last days of Kurt Varnedoe the art historian, one of Gopnik's best friends, and – briefly – his son's football coach ("Last of the Metrozoids"), and the way it feels to watch your child in a school production of "Peter Pan" ("First Thanksgiving: Densities").

There is also a hilarious and poignant piece ("Bumping into Mr. Ravioli") about his daughter Olivia's imaginary friend Charlie Ravioli, a friend so busy that they can connect only by cellphone. (When it reaches the point where Olivia can no longer reach Charlie himself directly and can talk only with his assistant, Laurie, the Gopniks consult Adam's sister, a child psychologist. She tells them emphatically that, outside New York, children's imaginary friends don't have assistants. " 'I think you should move,' she said flatly.")

One of the chief pleasures of "Through the Children's Gate" is the way it combines Gopnik's urbane wit with a kind of sweet vulnerability that seems to come at us from another century. In the book's closing essay, "Last Thanksgiving: Immensities," Gopnik writes of the special affinity he feels for a book called "A London Child of the 1870s" and there is, indeed, a good deal in "Through the Children's Gate" that

– despite Charlie Ravioli and his cellphone – somehow manages to evoke the feel of cultured, middle-class life in any lovely, major European city a century or so ago.

There is also much here that is universal, particularly the acknowledgement of the sweetness of parenthood – a joy marred only by the knowledge that it won't last, that the children, even at their youngest and most precious stages, are already preparing to leave.

In the end, Gopnik gives the final word to the Freudian: "Life *does* have many worthwhile aspects, but the trouble is that the really worthwhile ones are worth too much and last only a while. That the dear doctor forgot to say," he laments.

Transient though life's pleasures may be, for Gopnik there has been for some decades now at least one enduring thread of joy and that is his feeling for New York.

He tells of the night he first fell in love with the city and adds, "Through it all that first feeling, on a night forty years ago, remains my major feeling: I am so pleased to be here that I can hardly believe I am." Fortunately, it's a pleasure that readers anywhere can share.

• *Marjorie Kehe is the Monitor's book editor. Send comments to [Marjorie Kehe](#).*

# Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York

By Adam Gopnik

Knopf 318 pp., \$25

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 31, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p15s01-bogn.html>

## Oh, how sweet it was!

**Bill Bryson hilariously recalls a 1950s childhood in Iowa, 'the most peaceful place on earth.'**

**By Chuck Leddy**

Bill Bryson is such a funny and evocative writer that he can transform the least promising material into something memorably hilarious. He's written a memoir about his 1950s boyhood in Des Moines, Iowa, that begins by warning us that "what follows isn't terribly eventful" and apologetically concludes "No one died. Nothing ever went seriously wrong." In a typical moment, Bryson describes a school field trip to the museum of the Iowa State Historical Society "where you discovered that not a great deal had ever happened in Iowa; nothing at all if you excluded ice ages."

Yet Bryson's sardonic wit and absurdist sense of fun fuel every "uneventful" page, bringing to life a schizophrenic decade of wild optimism mixed with rampant fear. Bryson writes glowingly about how proud his parents were in 1955 to buy a new "Amana Stor-Mor refrigerator," and how his sportswriter father would hold endless conversations with

houseguests about the various newfangled features of the appliance. Yet Bryson also describes school civil defense drills where his classmates would dive under their desks for protection against possible atomic annihilation and recounts much of the decade's anticommunist hysteria, infamously embodied by Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

Despite the decade's perils, young Bryson felt indestructible. He contrasts the era's "can-do confidence" with today's climate of anxiety: "We didn't need seat belts, air bags, smoke detectors, bottled water.... We didn't require child safety caps on our medicines. We didn't need helmets when we rode our bikes.... We knew without reminding that bleach was not a refreshing drink and that gasoline when exposed to a match had a tendency to combust."

Indeed, Bryson writes almost lovingly about being bitten by a dog while delivering newspapers and crashing his head into a wall during a tackle football game.

As the book's title suggests, young Bryson loved comic books. Some of his favorite times were spent in the Kiddie Corral of Dahl's Supermarket where, while his mother shopped, he was left to explore a collection of comic books so abundant that one might "find a child buried under a foot or so of comic books fast asleep." At age 6, while playing in the basement, Bryson discovers an oversized woolen jersey



with a thunderbolt on the front. In his comic-book powered imagination, it becomes "the Sacred Jersey of Zap, left to me by King Volton, my late natural father, who had brought me to Earth in a silver spaceship."

Part of Bryson's comedic talent involves a gift for exaggeration. He describes an elderly woman on his paper route as "seven hundred years old" and tells how, after he'd knock on her door, she would "start coming towards the door at about the speed that ice melts." Describing his mother's subpar cooking skills, Bryson deadpans that "you knew it was time to eat when you could hear baked potatoes exploding in the oven. We didn't call it the kitchen in our house. We called it the Burns Unit." Bryson's technique often involves piling one exaggeration on top of another, until the reader is compelled to stop reading due to a crescendo of laughter.

Some of Bryson's humor is based on the politically incorrect obsessions of boyhood and involves gags centered on various bodily functions, insects, and "toilet humor." Bryson writes of finding his father's stash of "girlie magazines" hidden, he says, "in a secret place, known only to him, me and one hundred and eleven of my closest friends." He also tells how a friend purposefully places a bug in his soup at a restaurant in order to get a free meal, and then shows up again days later, orders the soup, and dumps "about two pounds of dead flies" into it.

Bryson can also be quite lyrical. He adores his grandfather's nearby farm and writes reverentially about its rugged beauty. Witnessing a tornado, he writes: "The sky everywhere was wildly, unnaturally dark and heavy and low, and every wisp of cloud in it, from every point in the compass, was being sucked into the central vortex."

Throughout this memoir, Bryson is unapologetically nostalgic, and like so many memoirs, this one may leave readers wondering what is true and what has been distorted by memory and the wistful uncertainties of remembrance. What is abundantly clear, however, is that Bill Bryson is a very funny man who loved his "normal" 1950s Iowa boyhood. "What a wonderful world it was," he writes. "We won't see its likes again, I'm afraid."

• *Chuck Leddy is a writer and book reviewer in Quincy, Mass., and a member of the National Book Critics Circle.*

The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir  
By Bill Bryson  
Broadway 224 pp., \$25

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |

- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 31, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p15s02-bogn.html>

# The Republican Party: an incredible knack for winning

**How the GOP turned the art of electioneering into a science.**

**By Ari Pinkus**

You could hardly turn on the television or pick up a newspaper in recent weeks without learning about a Republican running for his or her life. Of course, no one knows yet what voters will really do in the privacy of the voting booth next week.

But whatever happens on Election Day, nothing changes the fact that the Republican Party has the upper hand over the Democrats in the mechanics of campaigning: money, message, and organization. Even should the GOP suffer a setback at the polls, these formidable advantages will not disappear anytime soon.

The new book **One Party Country: Republican Dominance in the 21st Century** examines the nuts-and-bolts of the way Republicans have been building this sturdy foundation aimed at achieving successive

election victories.

At a time when Republicans have not articulated a clear strategy in the Iraq war and have bungled the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, "One Party Country" suggests that the immediate priority and long-range plan of the Republican Party is wrapped up in winning elections. With so much of the focus on electoral tactics, the offshoot is that governing the country takes a secondary role.

"One Party Country" does a good job of spelling out the GOP electoral strategy objectively and in detail, and without evidence of partisan leanings.

Written by two investigative reporters for the Los Angeles Times, Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten, this book shows the signs of incisive journalistic digging. Early on, a minihistory lesson shows how the Republicans seized the opportunities for electoral success afforded by redistricting, particularly in the South.

More recently, the Republican Party has shown that it is well on its way to flawlessly executing the technique of microtargeting – developing messages and reaching specific individuals who are most likely to vote for a candidate. A new approach to conducting campaigns, it puts the onus on campaign staffs to learn about voters, including those who have not turned out in the past.

The authors extensively discuss the Voter Vault, a database of names, voter registrations, positions on key issues, and marketing information that can help the GOP reach new voters.

With this under-the-radar model, the Republicans would take the Democrats by surprise, the authors say. "It was the political equivalent of stealth technology in air power: Democrats would feel the bombs explode, but they could not see the bombers."

In 2004, the Bush campaign, led by master strategists Karl Rove and Ken Mehlman, spent \$120 million in grass-roots politicking.

It's been successful so far, according to Hamburger and Wallsten. In numerous regions of the country, Republicans are siphoning off votes from several demographic groups that traditionally vote Democratic: Latinos, African-Americans, and Jews.

In the current environment, politics goes beyond targeting blocs of voters right before elections. Republicans frame all issues, including managing governmental regulations, in terms of gaining political advantage. Bush's faith-based initiatives were intended to cultivate support among African-American preachers, and educational reforms have helped him with minority voters.

Even mid-level bureaucrats don't escape the attention of GOP political operatives, the authors write.

They also explain the importance of the conservative network's weekly meetings led by Grover Norquist of the Americans for Tax Reform in keeping the two main groups (the fiscal and social conservatives) focused on their common GOP connection.

The reporters were able to get into a few of these private forums where conservatives can promote a message or share disagreements. Mr. Rove explained the Medicare prescription drug plan to this gathering and encouraged them to support it or keep mum if they did not, all for continued electoral success.

Particularly with midterm elections looming, "One Party Country" leaves the reader with fundamental questions: Are the Democrats about to put a halt to Republican dominance? If not, what might US society look like with a one-party system where campaigning is king, and governing an afterthought?

&bull; *Ari Pinkus is a Monitor editor.*

One Party Country: The Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century

BY Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the October 31, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p14s02-bogn.html>

## Book bits

**This week: A modern-day fairy tale, three tail-wagging reads, and an online collection of top 1,000 lists.**

### **Fairest, *By Gail Carson Levine***

What do you get when you mix one part Ugly Duckling with two parts Cinderella, add a dash of Sleeping Beauty, a healthy sprinkling of modern sensibilities, and mix in the imagination and skill of a Newbery Medal author? A deliciously satisfying recipe for adventure, romance, surprise, disaster, and, of course, the triumph of good over evil.

With *Fairest*, a newly released novel for young readers, Gail Carson Levine has cooked up another enchanting tale sure to please the middle-grade set and adult readers alike (recommended for readers in grades 7 through 10).

The novel's heroine, Aza, lives in the kingdom of Ayortha, where people value a fine voice above wit and even prized beauty. Instead of being oppressed by a wicked stepmother, Aza enjoys the affections of a loving family who

treat her with kindness – and love to tell the story of the day she was abandoned at their Inn as a newborn babe.

Her family gives her the Ayorthaian name for lark and treats her as one of their own, though they have to shelter her from the rude stares and remarks of others. Alas, Aza suffers from being indescribably ugly. Not only is she large, but she has "a face that made dogs howl."

Despite her appearance, Aza has the finest, most unusual singing ability in her village, and possibly the kingdom. One day she hiccups and discovers that she can "fling" her voice across the room. She adds this trick to her skill of mimicry and names it "illusing."

While Aza aches to be pretty and imagines that a fairy godmother or magic spell might rescue her, instead, fate intervenes in the form of a duchess who stays at the inn and invites Aza to accompany her to the king's wedding. As Aza gets swept into the personal dramas of the royal court, readers share her astonishment as the prince suddenly begins to show her special attentions.

Surprises and plot twists in an adventurous mid-section sweep the reader along, making "Fairest" well-paced and readable.

In a tale complete with a magic mirror and a visit to the land of gnomes, Aza discovers vital secrets of the queen and important revelations about her own identity. At last, our heroine learns that inner transformation, strength, and dignity are more important than physical beauty, and can transform the way others see her and the way she sees herself.

– *Enicia Fisher*

### **Three books about dogs**

#### **I Have Heard You Calling in the Night, by Thomas Healy (Harcourt)**

Thomas Healy was a drinker and a brawler, living the lowlife in Glasgow, when one night, half drunk, he impulsively purchased Martin, a Doberman pup. Healy's memoir tells how the love he came to feel for Martin led him to quit drinking and fighting and make a new life. Healy's tone is whimsical more often than sentimental, but that doesn't prevent him from concluding that Martin was "a gift from God."

#### **A Good Dog: The Story of Orson Who Changed My Life, by Jon Katz (Villard)**

Dog-loving readers will undoubtedly be well acquainted with the books of Jon Katz and many will already have enjoyed "A Dog Year," the first part of Katz's love letter to Orson, a troubled border collie to whom he opened his home and his heart. This second book is a bit darker. (Hint: Do not attempt to read without Kleenex.) It's the tender, true story of how Orson, whom Katz considers a once-in-a-lifetime dog, blasted Katz out of midlife ennui in the N.J. suburbs and into a richer world surrounded by animals.

**From Baghdad With Love: A Marine, the War, and a Dog Named Lava, by Jay Kopelman with Melinda Roth (Lyons)**

Jay Kopelman knew it was against the rules, but when the marine found himself face to face with a helpless puppy in a deserted building in Fallujah, he ignored the fact that he was on active duty in Iraq and kept the lively young fellow as a pet. The book tells of Kopelman's struggle, first to keep Lava (named for Kopelman's unit, the Lava Boys) alive, and then to get him home to the US. It's a dog-lovers story, but it's also laced with plenty of drama detailing a soldier's daily life in Iraq.

**Books online**

Lovers of both books and lists will enjoy the "Top 1,000" lists assembled by the Online Computer Library Center and available at their website at [www.oclc.org/research/top1000](http://www.oclc.org/research/top1000). The site provides lists of the top 1,000 holdings of member libraries across the United States, offering a unique perspective on what constitutes "culture" today in the US. (Musical recordings – mostly classical and opera – are included.) There's a general list and then categories like the Top 1,000 travel books ("Travels of Marco Polo," No.2), the Top 1,000 poetry volumes ("Mother Goose," No.1), and the Top 1,000 banned books (the Bible, No. 1.) Bibliophiles will relish noting the creation of new classics ("The DaVinci Code," No. 469; "Dilbert," No. 399.) It's also interesting to see how great books stack up against one another ("Gulliver's Travels," No. 20 versus "Moby Dick," No. 34) or to see writers compete with siblings ("Wuthering Heights" by Emily Brontë, No. 28, versus. "Jane Eyre" by sister Charlotte, No. 30) And don't miss the nifty mix of "factoids" connected to the main list.

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |

- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 31, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1031/p14s01-bogn.html>

## Readers' picks

I just read Cormac McCarthy's harrowing *The Road*. I think it is an American masterpiece (McCarthy's second, after "*Blood Meridian*"). In a few words, McCarthy can cause images to spring up in your mind that won't let you go. I challenge anyone to read this book and see if they're not still thinking about it weeks later.

– *Jim Reddoch, Portland, Tex.*

For readers interested in Hawaii post–Pearl Harbor the novel *Aloha: Goodbye & Hello* by Jessica K. Saiki follows the life of a Japanese–American girl who marries a G.I. She moves to a small Wisconsin town, is widowed, then moves to Chicago and life with a sculptor. Eventually she and her daughter return to Hawaii where mixed marriages are commonplace.

– *Lorel Keiko, Los Angeles, Calif.*

*Internal Combustion* by Edwin Black: Here, for the first time, is the whole sordid history, thoroughly documented, of how corporations and governments have, with deliberation, addicted the world to oil – and derailed the alternatives. This is a book for all humankind, a brave manifesto that

should make every world citizen pause ... and think!  
– *Al Mankoff, High Point, N.C.*

I'm currently reading Karen Armstrong's *The Great Transformation: the Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*. The period of about 900–200 BCE (or BC) was important for the great spiritual advances made in societies from Greece to Israel to India to China. Ms. Armstrong is an excellent writer and speaker who has written many books on religion. This book is invaluable to understanding the basis of much of the intellectual history of our time.  
– *Michael Stewart, Wharton, N.J.*

What are you reading? Write and tell us.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)



- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 24, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1024/p15s01-bogn.html>

# A timely tome darkens the White House door

**Woodward's latest: packed with inside-the-Beltway detail and in bookstores just in time for midterm elections.**

**By Peter Grier**

Looking for the juicy bits in Bob Woodward's latest book, most commentators have focused on such things as its assertion that Henry Kissinger still visits the White House, or that many, many people have tried to get Don Rumsfeld fired.

But the story I liked best was the one about the colonel who writes haiku.

Army Col. Steve Rotkoff was a military intelligence officer, bookish, and one of the top officials assigned to track down Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, or WMD. First in the United States, then in the Iraqi theater of operations, he kept a diary laced with Japanese-style poems that expressed his growing frustration with the unfolding events.

At the start, Mr. Rumsfeld wouldn't provide enough troops. Next, the expected WMD didn't turn up. Finally, an unexpected insurgency threatened to unravel the whole effort.

"We knew how to fight/ Not so; building a NATION/ We may lose the PEACE," read the final diary haiku, as recounted by Woodward.

There you have it: the theme of **State of Denial**, in three lines. In this volume, his third on the Bush presidency, America's preeminent print reporter tells in numbing detail how, in his view, the Bush administration mismanaged the aftermath of the Iraq war, and then avoided admitting that fact, both to the public and even to itself. (More on the "numbing" part later.)

First off, there's a reason why Bob Woodward remains a brand name of news more than 30 years after Watergate. The man's a reporting machine. His reputation is such that he can talk to almost anyone he wants to – so he does. And then he asks them for all their e-mails and their diaries and that interesting-looking report on their desk that he can see is marked "SECRET" even though he's reading it upside down.

The result is that he's got great stuff to illustrate his points. To show the effects of Rumsfeld's allegedly harsh

management style on the Pentagon, he tells how Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Richard Myers lays his head down on his desk when asked how to decode the mercurial Defense secretary.

To show the breakdown in services in Iraq, he tells about Margaret Tutwiler, GOP communication specialist extraordinaire, whom the White House dispatches to Baghdad to help promote a positive message. She finds conditions there appalling. Proconsul Jay Garner personally shows her how to eat military MREs, meals ready to eat. (Chicken tortellini turned out to be her favorite.)

Then there's White House micromanagement, symbolized by the anecdote about Vice President Dick Cheney phoning the WMD search team in Iraq with coordinates of sites he wants them to check.

To be fair, some of those described have questioned the way they and events are interpreted. For instance, the White House sent reporters an e-mail titled "Five Key Myths in Bob Woodward's Book."

As to Woodward's charge that the White House has knowingly misled the public about trends in insurgent violence, the White House missive had this to say: "FACT: President Bush Knows We Are In A Tough, Critical Struggle And Consistently Reminds the American People Of This....")

But given the volume of material here tracing the interagency process of the US government, and how it struggled after 2003 with the challenge of governing a ruined country as an insurgency grew by the day, it's hard not to be affected by this book.

Actually reading it is another matter. As most of Woodward's authorial efforts, it often seems like a gazillion-word Sunday story from The Washington Post – the kind you get one-third of the way through, then quit when your eyes go numb.

As an investigative reporter, Woodward spends lots of time on things that only advance his story incrementally. And to some extent he's a captive of his sources. For instance, Mr. Garner, the first US civilian chief in Iraq, obviously provided Woodward with plenty of access. The bureaucratic enemies of the secretary of Defense were also apparently eager to talk, with the result that at times the book seems like the precis for a new sitcom, "Everybody Hates Rumsfeld."

And remember, the main subject here is Washington policymaking. That means it's about well-dressed people arguing over pieces of paper prior to going out to lunch. There are lots of acronyms and references to "the inter-agency process" and such.

Typical is this chapter–ending bit of heart– thumping action, describing a meeting of top officials: "Rumsfeld didn't respond, but charts and diagrams were only so much abstraction. Under the president's directive, NSPD–24, he was in charge."

Stand back Condi! He's got an NSPD–24, and he's not afraid to use it.

Still, you've got to admire a reporter who can get the inside scoop on why a top official won't talk. By the end of "State of Denial," the national security adviser to the president, Stephen Hadley, has stopped cooperating. According to Woodward, Hadley tells a friend that the book's release in late 2006 will only inflame debate about Iraq at a crucial moment, just prior to the midterm elections.

If that's true, Hadley was prescient.

• *Peter Grier is a Monitor staff writer.*

State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III

Bob Woodward

Simon & Schuster 560 pp; \$30.00

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 27, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1027/p14s01-bogn.html>

# Stephen King turns a page

**By Erik Spanberg**

In the publishing world, few tales are more common than the literary novelist who lusts after blockbuster sales even as the blockbuster novelist longs for literary credentials. Which brings us to Stephen King, the horror master who once proclaimed himself the "literary equivalent of a Big Mac and fries." Not anymore. After a brush with death in 1999 and a controversial 2003 National Book Foundation lifetime achievement award, he now finds the dual-track life of routine critical trashings and mammoth sales dispiriting. "Lisey's Story" is billed as a different kind of King novel and, in some ways, it is. Lisey Landon is the widow of a famed Maine writer (nudge-nudge) who, unlike his creator, owns a Pulitzer as well as bestseller royalties. Lisey brims with Mr. King's everyman (everywoman?) musings, not to mention a language pool filled with enough colloquialisms to choke a whale. The novel soars in its depiction of the marital landscape: the day-to-day rhythms, the slights, the unspoken joys and, most of all, the elusive glue binding ever-erratic human hearts. King being King, though, he hasn't gone all Dr. Phil on us. Rest assured, "Lisey's Story"



is a macabre valentine. Yes, King long ago became more than a literary happy meal, but sharing a publishing house with Hemingway doesn't mean it's time to break out the "Cujo" CliffsNotes just yet. *Grade: B+*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)

- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 24, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1024/p15s02-bogn.html>

# How did we ever live without the iPod?

**A Newsweek writer considers how Apple's digital music player stole consumer hearts and shuffled the music industry.**

**By Clayton Collins**

At the moment when my 10-year-old thought her Huey was lost, a look of panic crossed her face that I immediately understood. Huey, soon found under the car seat, is not a pet mouse or a little brother but her Nano – a slim permutation of the iPod digital music player that in the past five years has sped from inception to ubiquity.

It wasn't just that she knew that the device, a gift, would be costly to replace. Among an iPod owner's first acts is to assign to his palm-size pal a moniker more friendly than the one given by default with registration, a your-name-here possessive.

After that, it's love.

Intuitive to use, in true Apple fashion (sweet, thumb-able wheel!), an iPod also quickly makes itself indispensable,

standing ready like a tiny concierge with vast personal playlists, easily uploaded and summarily sorted into soundtracks for every mood.

Yes, it has detractors. An iPod can be isolating if its white-earbuds-wearing user allows it to be. Cranked too loud it can hurt the ears. Like any material object it can be fetishized to unhealthy heights.

But as cool tool and technological Meisterwerk, iPod deserves a biography on its fifth birthday. It gets a deep and richly written one in Steven Levy's **The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness.**

Levy is a fan without reservation. He is, for example, so taken with the iPod's shuffle function – the device jumbles the listening library and presents songs in random order – that he persuaded the publisher to let him mimic it.

Chapters appear as modular, stand-alone treatments of different facets of the phenomenon – "Origin," "Download," "Identity," and so on – and a reader might pick up any of four shuffled versions of the book. (The approach mostly works, even if it calls for the occasional brief reintroduction of a point already made.)

His treatment of shuffle also highlights Levy's remarkable depth of access. Recounting one of many private

encounters with unrelenting visionary Steve Jobs, Apple's chief, the author describes a heady chat about the "randomizing algorithm" of shuffle.

Levy has noticed what he thinks is a disproportionate representation of Steely Dan songs in the playlist his iPod concocts from his deep, varied collection. On the spot, Jobs has an aide call Apple headquarters in Cupertino, Calif., and the three of them parse the cryptography involved in the selection process.

Levy, a senior editor and chief technology writer for Newsweek, handily lays out the landscape from which iPod – deliverer of "portable alternative reality" – dramatically emerged. (And keeps emerging. After a sales surge in 2004, Apple sold 42 million iPods by the end of 2005 and blew past 50 million units soon after.)

He breezily covers the history of transistor technology and the sweeping evolution of the "personal audio experience" as both technology and business battleground, from the crude forerunners of Sony's Walkman to the advent of the MP3 format and its early players to the daggers-out days of Napster and the file-sharing firms that followed.

The rise of legal online music store iTunes is cast as only a matter of time. As Jobs told Levy in 2004: "The Internet was built to deliver music." Jobs's triumph: leveraging Apple's

smallness in the world of personal computing to win the race and revolutionize the method and the machinery.

Levy laces the book with telling company lore: The English judge who heard a case involving a Beatles lawsuit over Apple's entry into the music business (the name Apple is also a Beatles trademark) began proceedings by confessing that he was an avid iPod user.

At a late-'90s event unveiling the iMac, Jobs – though well-versed in intellectual-property law – boldly insisted on using a cartoon video clip from "The Jetsons" even when he learned at the last minute that permission had not yet been formally granted. (The paperwork went through after the fact.)

Levy assigns Jobs a few warts, if hesitantly. Apple workers are described as being frustrated at times by their boss's legendary stubbornness and stung by his occasionally dismissive critiques. And Levy describes an exchange Jobs had with Casey Neistat, whose much-downloaded film "The iPod's Dirty Secret," detailed Mr. Neistat's 2003 experience with Apple support staff. When his battery died prematurely, Neistat was told that for what a new battery would cost, he might as well buy a new iPod.

Apple's replacement policy was soon rewritten (the company said a change had already been planned). But

Neistat later wrote to Jobs asking whether he thought the initial policy had been a mistake. "Nope," Jobs wrote back in full, according to Levy. "I don't think Apple made a mistake. Steve."

Jobs gives little ground. Asked by Levy how he finds the viewing experience on the video iPod's tiny screen, Jobs replies "fine," faint praise, Levy points out, from someone prone to hurl such adjectives as "insanely great."

But both Apple and Jobs, Levy persuades, continue to emit brilliance, navigating the rocks of digital rights management, morphing the product, winning over fans from rock stars to college kids to preteen girls.

"When companies ... think of improvements to their products, they figure out how to put more capacity in them, extend battery life, make more colors, add FM radios," Levy writes. "But they don't make iPods, and people know it."

• *Clay Collins, a Monitor staff writer, lives in a four-iPod household.*

The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness

By Steven Levy

Simon & Schuster 284 pp., \$25

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |
  - [Privacy Policy](#) |
  - [Rights & Permissions](#) |
  - [Terms of Service](#) |
  - [Advertise With Us](#) |
  - [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the October 24, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1024/p17s01-bogn.html>

# A painful tale of race relations

**Joyce Carol Oates tackles the ache of white liberal guilt.**

**By Yvonne Zipp**

Sometimes, you just wish she'd slow down a little. Even by the standards of the Speedy Gonzales of the literary world, 2006 has been a prolific one for Joyce Carol Oates. She kicked off the year with "The Female of the Species," a poisoned vat of mystery and horror pieces, immediately followed by "High Lonesome," an impressive collection of 35 stories (11 of them new), as well as a thriller written under her pseudonym Lauren Kelly, and a Young Adult novel. Now, it's October, and what could have been a stunning examination of race relations and white liberal guilt on a college campus, **Black Girl/White Girl**, instead feels a little, well, rushed.

Generva "Genna" Meade is the "white girl" of the title. Ignored and undervalued by her parents – a crusading liberal lawyer and a drugged-out hippie – she's nonetheless a child of privilege. She's a scion of the wealthy Quaker family who founded the college she attended in the



mid-1970s. For 15 years, she's been haunted by the death of her roommate, Minette Swift, their freshman year. The daughter of a preacher in Washington, D.C., Minette is self-absorbed, intolerant, and stubbornly ungrateful for her scholarship, the constant excusing of her academic failures, and the persistent (almost stalkerlike) overtures of her roommate, who wants to be Minette's friend.

Genna's been raised to believe that African-American culture is superior to her own racist, hypocritical one. ("...so good for Genna to have such a friend, to be exposed to unique individuals not racial stereotypes.") But her motives for befriending Minette have a selfish undercurrent: She's hoping to make her radical (and mostly absent) dad proud of her. Throughout the novel, she fantasizes that he'll come to visit her, and she can parade her African-American roommate for his approval. Also, given that her dad walked out on their family when she was 10, declaring that "the family is extinct," and that her mother has told her that "love is an illusion of the ego," it's not surprising that she would gaze longingly on Minette's stable family.

Minette, understandably, wants nothing to do with Genna – and, indeed, has trouble recognizing her outside their room. Then incidents begin to pile up around Minette: a broken window, a vandalized book. The attacks take on a racist cast. Minette spirals into a depression, while Genna tries to tidy the mess and protect her roommate, feeling hideously

guilty all the while. "I was sick with worry, she would see into my soul: she would see my guilt and misread it. For I was behaving like a guilty person."

This is not to say that Genna is innocent: As Minette pushes her away, Genna becomes frantic, following Minette and reading her journal. When "the sudden wish comes over Minette to shove this white-girl Genna away with the heel of her hand, hard," readers will kind of wish she had.

At the same time, Minette's prickly defensiveness and pride make her an outcast, "a black girl who refuses to act black." At one point, Genna's chief suspect in the terrorizing of her roommate is another African-American girl. When a copy of the "Hottentot Venus" is shoved under their door, Genna remarks, "I would wonder if the act hadn't been purely personal, aimed against Minette Swift as an individual, and not 'racist.' Yet how swiftly and crudely the personal becomes the racial! As if, beneath ordinary hatred, there is a deeper, more virulent and deadly racial hatred to be tapped."

Oates has said that the plot is based on actual events from the 1970s. She's taken on an impressive challenge, even without making both girls so very unpleasant. But then she ups the ante too far, weaving in a second plot about Genna's dad (whose one note is strident pompousness) and his history with counterculture terrorists that ultimately

consumes the ending and leaves Minette's death a footnote.

At different moments, the book reminded me of two better recent novels, Zadie Smith's beguiling "On Beauty," and Sigrid Nunez's memorable "The Last of Her Kind," also a novel about 1970s counterculture and two college roommates. But where Nunez's novel was a fully realized portrait, "Black Girl/White Girl" feels episodic and fragmentary – a collage of a tragedy.

• *Yvonne Zipp regularly reviews fiction for the Monitor.*

Black Girl/White Girl

By Joyce Carol Oates

Ecco Books 272 pp., \$25.95

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |

- [Corrections](#)
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p18s03-hfes.html>

# Court painter with an eye for royalty – and reality

**The National Gallery in London celebrates the man who became one of the noblest painters of nobility – but who never lost his taste for painting people of humbler means.**

**By Christopher Andreae**

"Each image [bears] his distinctive sensibilities – reticence, authority, brevity, and paradox." These carefully chosen words were written by Dawson W. Carr, curator at London's National Gallery, about a remarkable exhibition devoted to that genius of 17th-century Spanish painting, Diego Velázquez.

The National Gallery has a collection of Velázquez paintings second only to that at the Prado in Madrid – although it is quite a distant second.

An exhibition that can claim in any way to adequately represent the artist that Manet admiringly named "the painter's painter" has to have substantial loans from the Prado, and this exhibition certainly does. Those

masterworks that visitors go to Madrid to see, such as "The Meninas," "The Spinners," "The Count–Duke of Olivares on Horseback," – and enough others to ensure tourist–satisfaction – are not on loan to London. But a generous number of works are in the show, among them the two pictured here, "Tavern Scene," and "Pope Innocent X."

Wonderful examples of the court artist's work have also come from many other corners of the globe. A strong replica of Olivares on his horse comes from New York. There are also stunning works from Chicago, Boston, and Dallas.

Velázquez's portrait of the Infanta María Teresa (1653), so formal and yet so realistic, comes from Vienna – as do two other portraits of the children of Philip IV, Velázquez's chief patron. These child portraits breathe life and freshness into the stiffness and requisite tact of royal portraiture, and the viewer is persuaded that far from being remote icons, these are actual children the artist knew well.

The economy of the painter's touch contributes to the vital sense of a directly recorded moment. While this illusion of spontaneity was something he increasingly mastered – supremely in "The Meninas" and "The Spinners" – it was self–evidently a fascination and challenge from his earliest work onward.

On loan from Edinburgh, Scotland, is "An Old Woman Cooking Eggs" (1618). The two eggs magically appearing to coalesce in the hot oil could hardly be more instantaneous, and their immediacy is contrasted with the feeling of timelessness pervading much of the rest of this early work. It was painted when he was 19 and still in Seville, Spain, before moving to Madrid as a court painter. Its ambition is an indelible sign of his overall ambition as a painter. He successfully elevated his status as an artist, eventually achieving knighthood in a period when artists were still often considered little more than artisans.

But even though he had become one of the noblest painters of nobility in art history, he never lost his taste for painting people of more humble position.

• *'Velázquez' is at the National Gallery in London until Jan. 21, 2007.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |

- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.



from the November 02, 2006 edition –  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p18s02-hfks.html>

## Short stuff

**Compiled from websites and wire reports by Steven Ellis**

### **Female space tourist**

Buckle up, space explorers: The galaxy is within reach, provided you can afford a round-trip ticket.

Anousheh Ansari recently became the first woman to blast off into space as an amateur astronaut.

Flying aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket, Ms. Ansari, an Iranian–American businesswoman, accompanied two professional astronauts bringing supplies to the International Space Station.

The price of the ticket was undisclosed. But Space Adventures, the private company that arranges spaceflights, reportedly charges \$20 million a ticket. The flight lasted 11 days.

The trip makes Ansari the fourth private space explorer to visit the station.

"By reaching this dream I've had since childhood, I hope to ... demonstrate to young people all over the world that there is no limit to what they can accomplish," she says on her website.

## **Web-slinging spiders**

If Spider-Man were real, it's likely he'd shoot webs from his abdomen – as most spiders do – rather than from his hands. But a new finding gives Spidey a small dose of scientific credibility.

According to a recent article in the science journal *Nature*, the zebra tarantula from Costa Rica makes silk in its limbs. What's more, the spider uses the sticky webbing to help it scale steep surfaces, such as vertical pieces of glass. It's the first evidence of a spider species using its silk for locomotion.

But Spider-Man still has a leg up on the zebra tarantula: He has his own theme song and a cool costume!

## **New children's book**

Have you ever gone to a children's museum and wished you could take home some of the exhibits because you enjoyed them so much?

Thanks to a new kid-friendly book of 400 experiments and explorations by San Francisco's Exploratorium, you *can* take home some of your favorite exhibits. Well, sort of.

"Exploratoria" (Little, Brown and Co., \$29.99) is an interactive book filled with many hands-on activities. And while it may not be quite like spending a day at a children's museum, you'll find plenty of instructions for turning your kitchen, bedroom, or backyard into a "science lab."

The book covers such topics as how to plant a garden that will bring butterflies to your yard and why yeast makes bread rise.

The experiments are easy enough for younger kids and diverse enough to hold the attention of older children. There even are riddles and quizzes throughout the book (with answers in the back, in case you get stumped).

## **Berries that bounce**

Know what happens when you drop a fresh cranberry? Small pockets of air inside the deep-red fruit cause them to bounce. Really!

The tiny air pockets also make the berries float in water, which is how many cranberries are harvested. However, contrary to popular belief, the tangy-tasting fruits do not

grow in water.

A perennial plant, cranberries grow on low–running vines in sandy bogs and marshes. Because the fruit floats, some bogs are flooded with water when the berries are ready for harvesting.

Other berries are harvested using machines that resemble lawn mowers, which "comb" fresh berries from the vine.

The cranberry is only one of a handful of fruits native to North America. Others include the blueberry and the Concord grape.

Of the 400 million pounds of cranberries consumed by Americans each year, 20 percent are eaten around Thanksgiving. Will you eat cranberries this holiday, too?

## **Pet–friendly cities**

If you think of your pet as a family member, it follows that he or she should come along on family vacations.

Three Texas cities – Houston, San Antonio, and Austin – top the list of North America's most accommodating cities for travelers with pets, according to "Traveling With Your Pet: The AAA PetBook."

Cities are graded on the number of pet–friendly lodgings they have. Here are the Top 10 :

1. Houston
2. San Antonio
3. Austin, Texas
4. Albuquerque, N.M.
5. Phoenix
6. Dallas
7. New York
8. Orlando, Fla.
9. Nashville, Tenn.
10. Tucson, Ariz.

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
  - [About Us/Help](#) |
  - [Feedback](#) |
  - [Subscribe](#) |
  - [Archive](#) |
  - [Print Edition](#) |
  - [Site Map](#) |
  - [Special Projects](#) |
  - [Corrections](#)
- 
- [Contact Us](#) |

- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

www.csmonitor.com | Copyright © 2006 The Christian Science Monitor. All rights reserved.

from the November 02, 2006 edition –

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1102/p18s01-hfcs.html>

# Ideas fuel solutions

## **A Christian Science perspective on daily life**

Fluctuating oil prices, corroded pipelines, projected shortfalls, and the growing concern over global warming all have people seeking answers more than ever.

I remember the first Earth Day, in 1970, when Ralph Nader was the featured speaker at my college. We discussed limited global oil supply, pollution from automobiles and industry, and the need for conservation. Predictions were dire, but no one doubted that we could do something to make things right.

Since then, good ideas – from recycling, to conservation and better land management, to cleaner and more efficient technologies – have improved environmental quality in many regions. And today, rather than wondering whose fault it is or how bad it can get, we would do well to ask ourselves how we can find and develop solutions.

I once read a newspaper article from the 1890s that, as I recall, predicted New York City would face an uncontrollable

problem with horse manure by the 1920s. Then, what could be called our greatest renewable resource – fresh ideas to meet the demands of the day – stepped in. The most significant advancement at that time was the internal combustion engine, now seen by many as the cause of today's environmental concerns.

But help is here again. This time good ideas are taking form in a variety of alternative fuels. A recent article in this newspaper noted, "After a 20-year hiatus, ethanol, methanol, biodiesel, electricity, and other potential fuels are pushing to challenge king gasoline at the pump" (Aug. 1).

Assuming that new ideas are, in fact, our greatest resource, where are they found? The Bible asserts, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness..." (James 1:17). Good ideas are gifts. They flow continuously from God, divine Mind.

This question, which Mary Baker Eddy posed in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," shifts the focus from the standpoint of lack to the premise of God-given abundance: "Shall we plead for more at the open fount, which is pouring forth more than we accept?" (p. 2). Our real need is to acknowledge God as the limitless source of intelligence with which to solve problems, and to accept more of what is already flowing to each of us from Him.



Everyone has the capacity to commune with God and to gain insights that lead to solutions. As the Psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (119:18). As children of God, we're each designed to do just that. Such a desire draws individuals closer to the divine Mind, and this results in solutions that benefit everyone.

The effectiveness of our efforts to find answers to environmental questions depends largely on the *mental* environment we create and maintain. Will it be one of competition for dwindling resources, with greed in the driver's seat? Or will we draw from God's inexhaustible source, and draw together as a people?

In his book "The World Is Flat," Tom Friedman observes that the fuel for today's economies is information. And that those economies most adept at gathering and sharing (not hoarding) ideas and information will prosper. Just in the past decade, technologies such as the Internet and cellular phones have facilitated the distribution of ideas that have brought people and communities closer.

One inspired consciousness, rising to a higher level of spiritual understanding, is a prayer that brings good ideas into focus. We're all innately able to reflect God's wisdom, creativity, and unity of purpose. The expression of divine intelligence will help us regulate our lives on this planet, for

the good of all. Each recognition of that spiritual fact, coupled with the willingness to act on it, will reveal significant and lasting solutions.

*Adapted from the Christian Science Sentinel.*

Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links

- [Home](#) |
- [About Us/Help](#) |
- [Feedback](#) |
- [Subscribe](#) |
- [Archive](#) |
- [Print Edition](#) |
- [Site Map](#) |
- [Special Projects](#) |
- [Corrections](#)
  
- [Contact Us](#) |
- [Privacy Policy](#) |
- [Rights & Permissions](#) |
- [Terms of Service](#) |
- [Advertise With Us](#) |
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)