Liberty

July 2006 $4.00

Of Mars and Mammoths

The Books of Summer

by the Editors and Contributors, including Barbara Branden, John Hospers, Henry Mark Holzer, David Boaz, Sheldon Richman, and David Ramsay Steele

The Life of a Libertarian Lawmaker

by R. Kenneth Lindell

Down in Egypt Land

by Doug Casey

The TIF That Is Eating Portland

by Randal O'Toole

Also: *Jo Ann Skousen* uncovers a hidden language, *Andrew Ferguson* rides into battle, *Gary Jason* chronicles the beginning of the end of the mainstream media . . . plus other articles, reviews & humor.

"Liberty is more favored than all things." — Justinian

Letters

The Ego and the Idiots

Re "Winning the Battle for Freedom and Prosperity," by John Mackey (June): there are no irresistible arguments for freedom (or anything else). People can be unrelentingly stubborn or narrowminded. Also, Rand's "The Virtue of Selfishness" has a vital subtitle, "A New Concept of Egoism." And this concept is simply that a sound ethics has to be egoistic — it must provide one with action-guiding principles that promote one's life on earth, and help one flourish. There is nothing oxymoronic about this.

Tibor R. Machan
Silverado, Calif.

Dredlocked

James Harrold, Sr.'s second letter (April) regarding the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 (not 1856) failed to accept the complexities of the case as well as the political circumstances that influenced the outcome. I stand by my view that Chief Justice Taney's opinion — that no blacks, free or slave, could become U.S. citizens or have any rights — was extrajudicial in the extreme and a prime example of the "living Constitution" doctrine.

There was *never* a racial division regarding these matters in the Constitution. *Never.*

I suggest that all interested readers pick up a copy of Donald Fehrenbacher's Pulitzer Prize-winning, 600-plus page classic work "The Dred Scott Case — Its Significance in American Law and Politics."

Keep in mind that when Taney wrote that one reason blacks were not citizens was because they'd be able "to keep and bear arms wherever

From the Editor

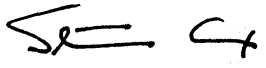
Some years ago, upset by the unworldly ideas of certain friends of liberty, I defined a "libertarian" as a person who believes that the answer to every question can be found in the library. Since then, I've begun to think that's not a bad thing.

Indulging the libertarian taste for books, this issue includes a special section of advice on summer reading. We've assembled Liberty's usual suspects — a highly idiosyncratic, opinionated, quirky, unrepresentative group of individuals — and we've given them our usual orders: "Go ahead. Say anything you want." You'll find the results on p. 15. I believe they'll surprise, annoy, delight, and enlighten you. At least that's the effect that 24 out of 25 of them had on me (I'm the one who brings up the rear, at no. 25).

The rest of this issue offers writing by much the same kind of people, because that's the kind of people we like, whether they're talking about books or films or the state of the world as we know it. The individual mind is a terrible thing to waste, and we don't plan to waste it here.

I hope you're having a good summer — reading books, fighting for freedom, or just watching the clouds go by.

For Liberty,



Stephen Cox
Editor

Inside Liberty

July 2006
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Features

Reviews

they went," he was not stating why they *weren't* recognized as citizens, but why they *shouldn't* be. That's not "original intent"; it is an activist judiciary changing interpretations in order to produce a desired outcome — the "living Constitution" doctrine.

Bob Tiernan
Portland, Ore.

The Giant Sucking Sound

Martin Solomon's "Why I fight" (Reflections, May) on his reasons for sticking with immigration law makes me wonder just how long he reflected on the matter.

His first reason — the expansion of liberty — fails to take into account the steady, increasing drain on the U.S. economy from the federal and other entitlements either aimed at immigrants or not closed to immigrants. Eventually, the load on the nation's economy could destroy what remnants of liberty we now enjoy.

Solomon's second reason — the increase in productivity — is also suspect. U.S. citizens are happy to work at any job that entails fair pay and decent working conditions. Too many employers, however, are delighted to discover sufficient numbers of applicants either ignorant of the law, or resident in defiance of the law, who can be exploited as the employer desires. This draws down the price of labor in other parts of the economy — and inflates shareholders' dividends. This condition has the added defect of synthesizing demand for entitlements.

If Solomon wants to honor his family by supporting new immigrants' efforts at gaining legal status, I see no reason why he should feel any other need to practice immigration law — and he should just admit it without adding excuses.

Eric C. Sanders
Roseville, Mich.

Everything Is Under Control

For the most part I enjoyed John Mackey's article thoroughly. Viewing the pros of libertarianism through the lens of liberalism really hit home, considering I come from an entrepreneurial family with strong liberal values. We understand the importance of civil liberties and social justice, but also the importance of having a business free from government restraint.

However, I must disagree with his views on economic globalization. Mackey rightly rails against all forms of government coercion, economic and social, but then he applauds open markets, trade, and globalization as being beneficial to the world. I find this stance to be somewhat hypocritical for a few reasons: globalization hardly operates through a government free market; it is executed solely by government institutions. The tactics of the WTO, the World Bank, and NAFTA promote a global hegemony, and they are enforced by big government coercion.

His opinion on this matter shows that he still believes that there is a distinct separation between big business and big government. This is big business using big government institutions to expand global economic control, and a great deal of it is paid for by the taxpayers. This is not a good example of a prosperous ungoverned global market, it is more like the ugliest form of government-regulated economics. This is the redistribution of wealth from the bottom to the top. May I dare to say that this libertarian is sounding a bit like a state apologist?

Brandon Bitros
Philadelphia, Pa.

Back Mack

I greatly enjoyed John Mackey's article — his clarity, energy, ideas, and yes, idealism, were very appealing.

The Libertarian Party might put him up as a presidential candidate. We sorely need someone to articulate these good ideas.

Ken Green
Chino Hills, Calif.

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Reflections

Dynastic cycle — First it was Teddy, now his son Patrick . . . clearly, we should view the Kennedys' use of chauffeured limousines not as a perk, but as a precaution vital for public safety.
— Ross Levatter

Onward to Golgotha — The Bushian short-sighted miscalculation has been tax cuts favoring the rich while running up deficits that will eventually need to be paid off not by poor people, who won't have enough money, but those rich who, given their access to media, will publicly crucify Dubya perhaps before his death.
— Richard Kostelanetz

Jax v. LAX — On April 17th, Jesse Jackson was interviewed on CNN about the Duke lacrosse rape case. He claimed the case demonstrated the classic white male fantasy of having a black woman in sexual servitude, a fantasy that brings back the worst aspects of chattel slavery.

When informed no individual on the lacrosse team specifically requested a *black* stripper, Jackson nonetheless maintained, "that is what they got."

It seems to avoid Jackson's claim, the team would have had to specifically request a *white* stripper.

I wonder what Jackson's response would have been to that?
— Ross Levatter

Drunknesse oblige — Patrick Kennedy drove his Ford Mustang into a White House barricade, creating a big media stir which lasted about a week. The strangest part of the story was that he was given a ride home and tucked into bed. A commoner would have been given a breath test and taken to a darkened basement at an undisclosed location for questioning by Homeland Security.

Kennedy's claim when he staggered out of the car was that he was rushing to a vote in the House of Representatives. At 2:45 in the morning. While most people think this is a humorous example of drunken disorientation, the truth is it is an indication that despite his drunkenness, he had the presence of mind to whip out his congressional "get out of jail free" card. Since congressmen "shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same," I would suggest that the "on my way to a vote" immunity is second only to franking in the category of often abused congressional privileges. I'm certain that the same line has been repeated for decades by drunk-driving congressmen coast to coast.

I wonder why people think that a family that has such a long record of crashing cars, crashing planes, and skiing into trees, is full of natural-born leaders. Perhaps that's why Kennedys tend towards a philosophy of government that takes personal decisions away from the individual.
— Tim Slagle

A Ray of sunshine — Only eight months after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin announced the city's evacuation plan in case a hurricane ever threatens the city. I am sure this will be a great relief to all of the local residents who were worried that a hurricane might cause one of the city's seawalls to fail.

Of course, New Orleans had an evacuation plan before Hurricane Katrina. David Brooks observed in the New York Times that this plan "must rank among the greatest emergency preparedness plans" ever written. The only problem was that no one bothered to carry it out.

The difference between the new plan and the old plan is that, under the new plan, when no one bothers to send buses to evacuate people who don't own cars, those people will be allowed to carry their pets in the buses that don't show up. Under the old plan, people were not allowed to bring their pets, so some of them decided not to go to the staging areas where the buses failed to show up.

Obviously, the new plan is far superior to the old one. I am sure that Mayor Nagin has high hopes that it will help him win reelection so he can remain in office to complain about FEMA when the next hurricane hits the Gulf Coast.
— Randal O'Toole

Don't drink the water — When the public school authority in my city discovered that water in some of the school drinking fountains contained from 11 to 18 parts per billion of arsenic, they shut down all the drinking fountains in all the schools and promised to test them all and fix every one

that needed it. The most common response, of course, was that they had no choice but to do this: the federal standard was 10 parts per billion, and in these schools the arsenic exceeded that standard.

No health problem among the students or staff prompted the test. It was made because water in some of the older schools showed rust, and while testing for iron oxide it was thought advisable to test for arsenic. That is how they found it.

Once they had discovered it, it would be difficult to imagine a public school board ignoring it. It was *arsenic!* And yet the other organizations in the city, including the newspapers and the radio and TV stations that raised the alarm about the public schools (but not the private ones), did not announce that they were testing *their* water. Nor did the public hospitals, the city jail, the state university test their water — at least, not that I know of. None of the restaurant chains announced that they had tested their water, and no private employer either. Did any of the parents who had denounced the public schools test the water in their homes? I bet not. Some buy bottled water, but many don't.

That tells me that few people thought it was *that* dangerous. Yet everyone had to pretend it was. — Bruce Ramsey

Power to the people — If government controls most of the wealth in a country, it is in the self-interest of the citizenry to kowtow to the government. If private citizens control most of the wealth, it is in the self-interest of the government to kowtow to the people.

Nowhere is this more starkly the case than in the oil industry. In the U.S. and other western countries, where corporations own the oil in the ground and control its production and marketing, stockholders (that is, citizens) have control of the wealth produced. And affluent citizens are better at getting the government to kowtow to them than are impoverished peasants — like those in third-world countries where oil and gas are nationalized. Like the Middle East. Like Iraq.

Borrowing from the approach of General MacArthur in post-WWII Japan, here is a simple proposal to end the strife in Iraq: create three or four integrated oil companies. Grant them rights to all the oil and gas reserves and production infrastructure in Iraq. Award equal ownership shares to all 26,783,383 men, women, and children in Iraq (all figures in this discussion come from the CIA "World Factbook"). With an annual production of 730 million barrels per year selling at $70 per barrel and costing $1.50 per barrel to find and lift, that works out to $1,867 per year in profit for every Sunni, Shiite, and Kurd in Iraq. Pay out half in dividends and reinvest the rest to bring oil production back to the 1.3 billion barrel per year production level reached in the early '90s — or higher. In Iraq, reserves are not a problem. Proven reserves are 115 billion barrels: enough for 88 years at the 1.3 billion barrels per year production level. Assuming no further discoveries. And not counting natural gas. At a price-earnings ratio of 10, the same as ExxonMobil's, each Iraqi's stock would be worth $18,670. Those who wanted to cash out and reinvest elsewhere would be free to do so.

In one bold stroke the U.S. would accomplish at least four things:

1. Lessen sectarian strife while marginalizing the insurgency. Even when the Sunnis controlled Iraq, the average Sunni got nowhere near $933.50 per year from oil. The Shiites and Kurds got next to nothing. It would immediately be in every Iraqi's self-interest to protect the infrastructure rather than bomb it.

2. Prove that lust for oil is not the reason the U.S. went to war in Iraq. Don't worry. We would still be Iraq's biggest customer. American companies would still be free to compete for contracts to explore and drill. And when you consider the lessening of our expenditure in blood and treasure, we would be paying less for oil than we are now.

3. Allow those Iraqis who cash out and reinvest to sow the seeds of an economic revival in the cradle of civilization. At least they would spend it more wisely than Saddam did. All he did was build more palaces for himself.

4. Add capitalism to democracy to make Iraq the shining beacon of freedom and general prosperity in the Middle East that the neocons are always dreaming about.

Once the government of Iraq starts kowtowing to its people, the allure of radical Islam, government corruption, and tribalism will decrease. Hope will replace hopelessness among the people. Pursuit of profit will replace shame as entrepreneurs invest their oil windfall in other ventures and diversify the economy. The U.S. and its coalition partners will be able to decrease investment in maintaining security in that part of the world. It's a win for everyone involved — except displaced autocrats everywhere. — Richard Fields

Perpetual refrain — The "Real Scotsman" fallacy is based on an old joke where MacGregor says to MacTavish, "Every Scotsman loves haggis."

MacTavish replies, " I can't stand the stuff."

"Well then," says MacGregor, "you're not a *real* Scotsman."

This fallacy always springs up when I try to talk to anyone in a Che Guevara t-shirt. Most modern communists refuse to accept that every time communism has been attempted, it has resulted in poverty, death, and despair. When you point this out they will always claim, "Well, that wasn't *real* communism."

The popular belief is that if a nation would hold true to the tenets of Marx, peace and prosperity would reign. But they won't acknowledge that once property rights are abolished, liberty and life always disappear shortly afterward.

There was a time when the U.S. patent office was swamped with applications for perpetual motion machines. These contraptions always worked well in the minds of their inventors, but could never be constructed, because a perpetual motion machine is prohibited by the laws of physics. The patent office's solution was to require that a working model be provided with any application submitted. The implementation of that rule has prevented any perpetual motion patents from being granted.

I suggest we implement the same rule for communists here. Until you can provide a working model, we don't want anything to do with it. — Tim Slagle

Where the wild things are secretly reintroduced — Before they got religiously green, the Western Europeans killed almost all their wolves and bears. What's left of their wildlife is pretty timid. In America, we have big, wild country and a population of mostly greenish

city slickers. That is the deadly combination that makes for animal attacks. The protected critters get bold, and people in any leafy area less urban than Central Park sometimes get et.

When I lived in France in the early 1990s, I began collecting news stories of animal attacks in America. Some of my French friends loved to hear these stories, because they flattered European notions of America as a wild place.

Not to be outdone, the French have now decided to release Slovenian bears in the Pyrenees. Two or three shepherds opposed and disrupted the first release. So the government released the second bear (named "Franska," or "Frenchy" in Slovenian) at a secret time and place. So, if all goes well, we will have stories from Europe of animal attacks within a few ursine generations. (It takes that long for animals to realize that we got religion and are no longer a threat to them.)

— Michael Christian

Freedom finger — I see in the Wall Street Journal, May 2, that the silvery skyscraper planned for the site of the Sept. 11 attacks in New York City may be filled in large part by federal security agencies, including Customs, Immigration, and the FBI. Why do government officials need to be in such a fancy building? They don't. But building it is a political decision, and it may take political support to fill enough of it to finance its construction.

The private sector is not so eager to fill it. One of the reasons now cited is that a lot of people don't want to be down the hall from the FBI, Customs, *et al.* That may be so — and it may also be easier to say that to a newspaper reporter than to say they don't want to get blown up.

There is a school of belligerent anti-terrorists, especially certain Objectivists, who are hot for replacing the Twin Towers with the tallest, starkest stainless-steel middle finger possible, to extend an unmistakable message to the enemies of civilization. That is what is being done: the building is to be called the "Freedom Tower" and it is to be 1,776 feet high. I think these folks are following their emotions rather than their reason, which ought to tell them that this building has a special risk attached to no other office building in New York City. And the flashier they make it, the more difficult it will be to underwrite life insurance on the tenants. *I* wouldn't rent space in that building, and I wouldn't invest in it either.

Private tenants can make that decision; they don't have to prove anything. The government does. — Bruce Ramsey

I'm sorry to interrupt you . . . — To all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, country-club conservatives, Democratic Party activists, and libertarian political fundamentalists:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm sorry to interrupt the celebration you're having for open borders and free immigration. I know that for the first time in history, you're really enjoying one another's company. I hate to distract you from the food and drink and the big hugs all around, but I'd like to ask you a few short questions. I hope you will try to answer them without reminding me that we are all immigrants, calling me a racist or a xenophobe, or reciting Emma Lazarus' poem about the Statue of Liberty.

Do you believe there are any limits to the number of immigrants that America should accept? If so, what are they? Or should anyone who can travel to America be allowed to live here permanently?

Do you believe there are any limits to "immigrants' rights" — including, as many of you insist, the right to government-provided education, government-provided welfare, government-provided health care, government-provided hiring and advancement quotas, and government-provided pensions, as well as the right to elect the government? Do immigrants gain these "rights" simply by existing here? If so, how long should they be required to do that? Ten years? One year? One month?

News You May Have Missed

Judas to Oprah: "I Did Not Make It Up"

CHICAGO — A nationwide book tour by cult author Judas Iscariot promoting his surprise runaway best-seller, "The Gospel of Judas," was disrupted this week when Oprah accused the writer of fabricating large parts of the controversial memoir. "You betrayed me and everybody else," she said on her nationally televised afternoon talk show as the beleaguered writer cowered on a couch next to her. "You just made stuff up, didn't you? I mean, with twelve apprentices, disciples, whatever, to choose from, we're supposed to believe that you were chosen as the go-to guy? Jesus was leaking all that top-secret material just to you? Come on." But Iscariot continued to vouch for its accuracy. "No, no, I swear, it's the gospel truth," he said of the short but sensational book, which waited an unusually long 2,000 years for the paperback edition.

As for the numerous passages in which Jesus unexpectedly breaks into laughter, Iscariot insisted that they were completely accurate. "Look, I was there, he had all of us in stitches, especially with the one about the rabbi, the camel, and the woman taken in adultery. Jesus was just a laugh-a-minute kind of guy, the first really great Jewish stand-up comedian," he said. "I just wish he had lived to play the Catskills."

Meanwhile, Iscariot's legal troubles mounted as rival author Dan Brown filed a lawsuit against him for stealing the essential idea and "the architecture" of his own best-seller, "The Da Vinci Code." Brown also bitterly complained that "The Gospel of Judas" "made the Roman Catholic Church look bad."

But Iscariot's contentious Oprah appearance ended on a note of reconciliation when he got up off the couch and, as the audience cheered and applauded, embraced her, though she was evidently not very comfortable with the unexpected gesture. "Wait a second, stop that, what do you think you're doing? Stop kissing me! Don't need no damn kisses," the popular talk-show host protested as she tried to push him away. She was reportedly later detained by authorities on unspecified charges and hasn't been heard from since.

— Eric Kenning

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

There's a passage in Martin Luther King's essays that makes me wince. It's a passage where he's talking about Americans' "worship of bigness . . . big cities, big buildings, big corporations." He calls this phenomenon "jumboism."

First of all, he's chosen the wrong target. Americans don't want bigness; they want convenience. The tendency of American capitalism is to make consumer goods progressively cheaper, smaller, and handier. The tiny flash drive sticking out of my laptop has the power of thousands of gargantuan Univacs. Nobody wants a phonograph; everybody wants an iPod. Even SUVs are small, cheap, and handy, relative to the many things they're able to do. As for cities, buildings, and corporations: which do people think is classier, a vast cafeteria or an intimate café, a thousand-unit condo complex or a rustic hideaway? And I'm sure you've noted that when people want to say something bad about Starbucks, they say they don't want "another big *#&*! business in the neighborhood." It's the government, not the private consumer, that can never tolerate anything small. What government always wants is bigger programs, bigger payrolls, bigger concrete Facilities. I'm sorry to say that Dr. King, despite his noble courage and his fine insights into human psychology, had no gift for understanding the nature of big government. Besides, "jumboism" is a silly word.

But it's good for one thing: it's an excellent name for inflated language. Here the target is real: America never has its fill of verbal jumboism.

It used to take the form of tumescent oratory. Here's the start of the two-hour speech that Edward Everett delivered at Gettysburg:

> Standing beneath this serene sky, overlooking these broad fields now reposing from the labors of the waning year, the mighty Alleghenies dimly towering before us, the graves of our brethren beneath our feet, it is with hesitation that I raise my poor voice to break the eloquent silence of God and Nature. But the duty to which you have called me must be performed — grant me, I pray you, your indulgence and your sympathy.

Abraham Lincoln followed with his now-famous handful of words, and the audience is said to have been disappointed.

But don't laugh at the Victorians; we have our own flavors of gas, and our gas is often more dangerous, because it is more insidious. It isn't an inflation of rhetoric, it's an inflation of concepts, or those nameless mental movements that substitute for concepts.

How many times have you heard that "the legendary John Lennon" may have been "the greatest rock 'n' roll musician of all time"? I've heard that at least *a billion* times. Innocuous? Well, what picture of the world does it suggest? It's the picture of "all time" as 50 years long, the picture of pop-culture celebrity as equivalent to "legend," the picture of a man whose every snort and drivel has been publicized in every conceivable way as somehow equivalent in romance and mystery to the keepers of the Holy Grail. It's grotesque puffery, "jumboism" of the human spirit.

And like all bad money, it drives out good. Go to Google and type in "legendary story." (I know there's a redundancy there, since a legend *is* a story, but that's just another form of jumboism — always say things twice.) See what you come up with: "The Legendary Story of Sun Records," "the Legendary Story of the USA Women's Soccer Team," "the legendary quest for Kryptonite's new bicycle locks," "the story of the legendary Gil Dobie . . . the best football coach the University of Washington has ever had," and a headline from no less legendary an outlet than ABC News: "Legendary felon requests sentence to match Bird jersey." In other words, a guy in Oklahoma asked to be sentenced to 33 years in prison because "33" was the number on basketball star Larry Bird's uniform. So he's a "legendary felon."

Obviously, there's a lot of just plain daffiness about this kind of thing. Andy Hanlen of Cypress, Calif., one of the best readers of this column, notifies me that businesses in his neck of the woods are advertising their "ginormous" sales — events that are both *gigantic* and *enormous*, so big that a whole new *word* is needed to do them justice. The fact that they're advertising an *enormous* number of remarkably *small* prices just adds some unconscious irony to the verbal naiveté.

But jumboism is often far from innocent. The legal case of Michael Skakel, a person who killed his next-door neighbor and thought he could get away with it because he's related to the Kennedys, is said by Reuters to have "added to the aura of tragedy haunting America's most celebrated political family." Part of that is right; the Kennedys are the most celebrated political family in America (though they're also the most detested). But the idea that they are "haunted" by "tragedy" is no truer than the idea that your family or mine is "haunted" in that way.

The true meaning of "tragedy" I will leave for another installment of this column. The fact is, however, that members of large families (and we are all members of a very large family) often get shot, die of diseases, perish in plane wrecks, ski into trees, marry ugly men for their wealth, become addicted to drugs, accept prizes for plagiarized books, lobotomize their daughters, try to get the Catholic church to declare that their marriages never existed, drive off roads and cripple their passengers for life, drive off bridges and leave their passengers to drown, sleep with spies and gangsters' molls, or have other strange or unpleasant experiences — yet those families are not said to be "haunted by tragedy." And in truth they are not "haunted." Any "aura" is entirely an emanation of the media. Its insidious political effect is to confer emotional privilege where it is not deserved.

I'll mention one more example of political jumboism — and this one is much more ridiculous. Carl Isackson writes from San Francisco about an interview he saw with Harry Belafonte on C-Span 2. As a way of saying who this strange person was, the TV screen flashed the words "Singer and Humanitarian" under his name. Carl asks the right question: "Is Humanitarian a job?" Well, no, it's not; and it's not a personal identification, either, except when the electronic media have concluded that someone's moral qualities are so ginormous, so filled with aura, and of such a legendary nature, that no mundane title can be used. In other words, the gas has expanded to occupy all the available space.

One minute?

Are you making the same demands for open borders on Canada, Mexico, England, and Italy that you are on the United States?

I know you believe that the American economy derives untold benefits from the existence of a multitude of unskilled laborers in this country. If the economy benefits so much from, say, 10 million unskilled laborers, would it benefit still more from 50 million? 100 million? 500 million? Because I'm sure you could find that many people who would be willing to come here.

If you believed that a preponderance of immigrants from Canada, Mexico, Russia, Afghanistan, or any other country adhered to political or religious ideas that were inimical to the rights that American citizens now enjoy, would you seek to limit immigration from that country?

Here's a final question, just for the libertarians among you:

If you doubted that there was any realistic prospect that you could dismantle government schools, government welfare, government health care, government hiring and advancement quotas, government pensions, and the rest of this country's social-democratic political system *before* you proceeded to dismantle controls on immigration, would you still be in favor of dismantling those controls?

I'm not sure that I know the answers to all these questions. But tell me please: do you? And if you don't, are you willing to say that you don't?

I'll be interested to see whether anyone replies.

— Stephen Cox

China's crazy pills — So I was walking out of one of my consulting gigs today and I noticed some fat cat had not picked up his copy of the Wall Street Journal. As it was Friday night at 6 p.m. I figured it would be OK to repurpose the paper to provide me with some diversion while I ate my roast beef sandwich at the sub shop. The front page had a big article about how overheated China's economy was getting, what with "sizzling" growth rates of 10.2% last year. There was lots of verbiage about how it was bad for the Chinese economy to grow too fast.

"Too much economy" — what an image. Remember Will Ferrell in the movie "Zoolander"? It's toward the end, and he's standing on the runway with his pointy white hairdo, screaming: "Enough already . . . Doesn't anyone notice this? I feel like I'm taking crazy pills!"

How can there be too much economy? Are there too many hands shaking? Too many contracts being signed? Too many people getting new and better jobs? Too much high-quality, low-cost merchandise flooding the shelves? Have I lost my frigging mind? Am I taking crazy pills?

Buried deep in the article, there was a tiny sliver of reason. The writer alluded to capital formation and value creation that can be too chaotic and wasteful. But think about it. It's as if you built a road or a sea trawler all willy-nilly and then regretted it and had to repurpose it as the Derek Zoolander Center for Kids Who Can't Read Good. Well, that, as we technical people say, would be a second-order effect. Getting "economy" earlier in time is just as beneficial as having a career that pays you six figures right out of college. Sure, you might piss some of it away; but you and the world would be far better off than if the money had been dribbled out to you over decades so it could be "managed" by fat-cat opportunists trying to use political means to steer undeserved benefits to a privileged few.

No, the real reason the power elite want to slow down China's economy is so they can get all their deals lined up and their market power established and political pull installed, and then they can make sure to exclude those uppity people who didn't go to the right schools and are not the right color or religion. They hate speed, chaos, and efficiency, because they hate anything that might impede their keeping control and maintaining power.

If its boycott doesn't work, the American Family Association could ceremoniously set DVDs on fire. It describes itself as an organization for "people who are tired of cursing the darkness and who are ready to light a bonfire."

But it is obvious that they are as dumb as a bag of hammers if they think "economy" is bad, and it is obvious that they will be left behind and replaced by the *nouveaux riches*, that aristocracy of merit they so despise for being so elegantly able to outthink and outwork the stupid and lazy sons and daughters of America's old money.

I am so glad that Craig's List and other sites on the internet are putting the newspapers out of business. It's about time, if the newspapers think their readers are stupid enough to fall for such drivel. The Journal's track record on Big Policy is not so stellar. The last big idea it pushed was the unilateral attack on Iraq. Boy, that sure worked out swell. Maybe the Journal should stick to printing yesterday's ticker and leave the complex self-organizing behavior to the "economy."

Besides, all these wasteful copies of the Journal lying around unread in the reception rooms of corporate America make it obvious that the paper has grown too fast, all willy-nilly, and needs to have its growth limited, for its own good, you know, so there's less waste and stuff. — Paul Rako

Always gay terrorists. Always — Lots of people are mad at Wal-Mart.

The AFL-CIO charges that Wal-Mart is using its lobbying power to derail security improvements at U.S. ports. "Wal-Mart, America's largest importer, is using its clout to block new port security measures," contends the labor federation in a recent report, "Unchecked: How Wal-Mart Uses Its Might to Block Port Security."

It's not that Wal-Mart is pro-terrorist. It's just that the company is opposed to beefing up inspections and making containers more secure because such safety measures could produce a drop in profits, according to the AFL-CIO.

New York City is going to die someday, one surmises, because Wal-Mart is too cheap — and because too many of us are trying to save a buck by buying Chinese-made blinking reindeers at Christmas.

Farther below the belt, the American Family Association charges that Wal-Mart is too gay. The accusation was leveled after Wal-Mart placed posters of Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger, the stars of "Brokeback Mountain," at the front of its stores to promote the film's DVD release.

Asserting that Wal-Mart is "trying to help normalize homosexuality," Randy Sharp, director of special projects for the 3 million member American Family Association, asked Wal-Mart's customers to demand that the DVD be removed from the store's shelves.

"It wasn't even a blockbuster movie, so if Wal-Mart isn't trying to push an agenda, why would they put it at the front door?" asked Sharp. "How many copies are they going to have to sell to recoup the losses of customers who they've offended and will no longer shop at Wal-Mart?"

If the boycott doesn't work, perhaps some DVDs could be ceremoniously set on fire. The American Family Association describes itself as an organization for "people who are tired of cursing the darkness and who are ready to light a bonfire."

But where does it stop? Remember when Jerry Falwell concluded that one of the Teletubbies was gay, i.e., Tinky Winky, the purple one with the handbag and a triangular antenna on his head? Falwell, outing Tinky, declared, "He's purple, the gay color, and his antenna is shaped like a triangle, the gay pride symbol." Plus the purse.

"Where they burn books, they end up burning human beings," wrote Heinrich Heine in his 1821 play "Almansor." Just over a century later, the Nazis did exactly as Heine had predicted, targeting, among others, those who might well prefer purple to brown when it comes to picking a national shirt color.

In any case, Wal-Mart spokeswoman Jolanda Stewart replied that the company wasn't pushing any specific lifestyles in its DVD department, just responding to consumer demand. "The fact that we are offering the movie," she explained, "is not an endorsement of the content of the movie or any specific belief."

In other words, a copy of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" on the shelves at Wal-Mart doesn't mean the company is clandestinely pushing an agenda that favors bipolar rebellions.

A more widespread complaint against Wal-Mart charges that the giant retailer comes in and wipes out Main Street, putting an end to all those mom-'n-pops that sell everything from hammers to salmon.

The other side of the story is that salmon is no longer a high-end delicacy, beyond the reach of the average household. With fresh fillets selling for $4.50 a pound in Wal-Mart's display cases, the price for an 8-ounce dinner portion is 44 cents lower than the current price of a cheeseburger Happy Meal at McDonald's.

The end result is better nutrition in America, especially among lower-income households, and less poverty and unemployment in Wal-Mart's primary supply regions in southern Chile.

Altogether, Wal-Mart's prices, according to a study by MIT economist Jerry Hausman and USDA economist Ephraim Leibtag, are saving U.S. consumers more than $50 billion a year — money that's spent elsewhere, boosting volume at other businesses and creating new enterprises, including mom-'n-pops.

The net effect? The director of economic policy for the Kerry-Edwards campaign, NYU economist Jason Furman, contends that Wal-Mart is "a progressive success story." With Wal-Mart's prices ranging from 8% to 40% lower than people would pay elsewhere, the increase in buying power that Wal-Mart delivers, disproportionately to lower income families, more than offsets any reduction that the company has allegedly produced in the earnings of retail workers.

— Ralph R. Reiland

Pyrrhus on campus

— Here's a story that provides a cautionary tale for conservatives, like David Horowitz, who believe they can outwit their opponents on campus by fighting fire with fire.

In a classic Horowitz-style campaign, Michelle Malkin and other conservatives took up the cause of students who complained about an instructor at Bellevue Community College in Washington. The instructor had asked a math question which included these words: "Condoleezza holds a watermelon just over the edge of the roof of the 300-foot Federal Building, and tosses it up with a velocity of 20 feet per second." Outraged conservatives around the country bombarded the campus with phone calls and emails.

The conservatives won . . . but at what cost? Seizing on the controversy, like a typical entrepreneurial college administrator, President Jean Floten turned it into an opportunity to expand the power of the administration. While she sanctioned

the professor, even prompting him to request "cultural sensitivity training," her other changes will enable the campus diversity policemen to impose even more of their one-sided PC indoctrination on all students, staff, and faculty.

Promising to "redouble" the college's "efforts to improve racial and cultural sensitivity," Floten announced more diversity training and the hiring of new staff for this purpose. Most ominously, for those of us who believe in academic freedom, she said that Bellevue will add a diversity ("pluralism") component to "program review and employee evaluations." This looks like some sort of loyalty oath. Some victory!

— David Beito

Medical doubletalk — I was recently at a presentation given by a nationally active advocate for socialized medicine. Of course, that is not what the advocate called it; it was "affordable healthcare for all," or something like that.

She was arguing two things: first, that it was a shame that millions of Americans were not getting care when they needed it, and second, that if we gave them care it wouldn't necessarily cost any more, because it was costing us already when the uninsured went to emergency rooms.

It sounded to me like she was contradicting herself — that people were getting care and that they were not getting it — but I let it go. I was thinking about the cost. Wasn't it true, I said, that in the past when government promised new medical benefits, those benefits always ended up costing more — a lot more — than the advocates thought?

Yes, she said, it was so. But it was that way because people hadn't used the best science in determining what treatments to offer. If we used the best science, cost wouldn't be such a problem.

She also said the medical system should be made sensitive to the needs of individuals, not governments and employers. That sounded good. But to an individual, the "best science" is the technique with the best chance of getting him well. From the system's point of view, the "best science" may be the technique with the best results per dollar, measured statistically. It seemed, somehow, that this advocate was appealing to both ideas at once.

I came away with the feeling of having heard a something-for-nothing argument — and the worry that it had a fetching quality.

— Bruce Ramsey

John McCain is not a person — Some things in the news are just too funny to go unnoticed. There is a silly dust-up over in Greenwich Village at the New School because the administration has selected John McCain to give the commencement speech this year. The students are protesting because they see McCain as anti-gay, and I have to assume there is a sizable gay community in the student body.

Now we all have to remember that McCain is running for president, so the one thing that's assured is that no one will know his true beliefs on anything. Half the engineers at GM probably think their cars are crap, but that is not what they advertise.

So McCain is supposedly against gay marriage, which makes him no friend of mine. Marriage is a powerful institution that should be encouraged to promote a stable society. But the funny part of this whole Manhattan New School fracas is the comment by the student "leader" of the protest. He says: "In all of our classes we're taught the value of inclusion of all people," and "We're taught to question our leaders."

Am I the only one laughing at this remark? They are taught inclusion of all people. So I guess John McCain is not a person. I suspect they are *taught* to include all people, but the young students take away the self-righteous idea that they are only supposed to include "everyone" with the exact same values. Kinda like Ayn Rand only socializing with people who liked Strauss and tap dancing. Talk about narcissism dictating morality — this takes the cake.

And the second phrase is even funnier then the first. They are supposed to question leaders, says the leader of the student protest. Well yeah. Duh. But let's nobody question him.

This is as silly as when Mark Skousen got in trouble for booking Rudy Giuliani as a speaker. Jesus, people, is listening to someone you are not in complete, abject agreement with so distasteful you cannot bear it? Are we all so terrified of others' opinions that we put a wastebasket over our heads and bang it with a serving spoon like Bart Simpson?

Is this irony? Is this an unexpected outcome, that after four years of high-dollar education you end up a bigot? Is the term "liberal bigot" an oxymoron? And what is a tautology anyway?

— Paul Rako

E pluribus unum — The new Iraqi government faces a formidable task — to create a unified "nation" out of a state containing three disparate and widely divergent groups.

A state's borders are not engraved on the surface of the earth and fixed for eternity. Legal boundaries between countries are made by men, can be changed by men, and have been changed again and again over the years by men. For centuries the borders between states were fixed by kings, wars, invasions, and conquests. State boundaries shifted as rulers gained or lost ground. The occupants of the territory had no choice in the matter; they went with the land. The borders of present-day Iraq derive from that tradition; the country was carved out of the old Ottoman Empire after World War I. Embraced within its boundaries today are three distinct and disparate "national" groups — the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds.

With the rise of liberalism and individual rights in the 17th and 18th centuries, the idea gradually took root that peoples should have some say in their government and the state under whose jurisdiction they lived. Thus the concept of the "nation" developed. A state's borders were concrete and definite; the boundaries of a "nation" were not. A "nation," as opposed to a "state," was an intangible concept, based on ideology, culture, ethics, religion, language. Language was perhaps the most important, for it is through language that men communicate. But for a "nation" to endure it must be composed of persons who share a common bond and come together voluntarily. Its inhabitants must enjoy common ties and interests. Ideally the boundaries of a "nation" and borders of a "state" coincide.

Transforming several separate ideological units into a single harmonious Iraqi "nation" will not be easy. Witness, for instance, other attempts to form nations out of groups with widely different interests: British India, after gaining its independence, engaged in bloody conflicts and broke into three separate nations — India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. In Nigeria, thousands were killed in conflicts among its various sections and with the Ibos of Biafra. And Sri Lanka and Yu-

goslavia both broke up and engaged in bloody and lengthy civil wars.

The idea of a "nation" as opposed to a "state" arose during the Renaissance and Reformation, alongside the concepts of freedom, limited government, individual rights, and classical liberalism. In the hope of achieving nationhood, revolutions against statist governments erupted all over 19th-century Europe — in France, Germany, Italy, and the Balkans. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points reinforced the concept that governments should consider "self-determination" and "the interests of the population." As a result, after World War I, the many polyglot countries of Europe began to break up, each linguistic group seeking independence and autonomy as a "nation," and union with others speaking the same language.

The state of Iraq now consists of what are essentially three separate "nations," each a cultural, religious, linguistic entity. Conflict among them is bound to develop unless Iraqidom can become an ideal, a unifying factor under which the Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds can all come together and live at peace with one another.

Accomplishing this will not be easy. As they form the new Iraqi government, today's Iraqi officials might well consider Ludwig von Mises' proposal, made during World War II, for the establishment of an Eastern Democratic Union comprising the many small nations lying between Germany and the U.S.S.R. To some extent the present Iraqi situation, with its three different and distinct ideological and cultural entities, parallels that of wartime eastern Europe, which was composed of many separate nations. Mises believed it would be to the mutual advantage of those many different and linguistically distinct nations to cooperate for their mutual defense against potential foreign threats. He proposed the establishment, under a newly-drawn constitution, of an impartial central government.

Each of the original "nations" would retain the forms of its previous nationality — flag, coins, stamps, songs, etc. — plus responsibility for local, economic, and interpersonal affairs. But legally they would become mere provinces under the central government. To prevent conflicts from arising there would be complete free trade and freedom of movement for all citizens within the state's borders, and absolutely no tariffs or economic interventions or special privileges. All schools would be private, lest government schools be turned into propaganda mills for one or several special interest groups. The central government would control finances, collect taxes, and distribute funds among the separate "nations" according to the population. All languages and all religions would be treated equally; disputes that could not be settled by the local authorities would be submitted to a court established by the overall government. The central government's role would be strictly limited to defense against inside and outside aggressors and to the support and defense of the freedom, individual rights, and private property of all citizens equally. Mises hoped that in this way conflicts could be avoided among the different "nations" within the borders of a single state, so that its citizens could live in harmony, and the state could be blended into a unified and cohesive "nation."

Perhaps a similar set-up in Iraq would allow the Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds to resolve their differences and avoid internecine conflicts. In any case, creating a unified nation in a state consisting of three such distinct and separate "nations" as the Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds will be a formidable task. Success will depend on finding a common bond, such as Iraqi patriotism, or dedication to freedom, on which they can all agree.

— Bettina Bien Greaves

What good is Zacarias Moussaoui? — I've written before that elements within the American government have sometimes defused a threatening minority by legally prosecuting unto death advocates who may or may not have been guilty of a capital crime. Though even now some still think either Nicola Sacco or Bartolomeo Vanzetti innocent, their execution certainly undermined Italian anarchism in America. Similarly, the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg defused Jewish communism, even though, in my considered opinion, the ill-fated couple were wannabe spies who had no serious secrets. Wanting to do something treasonous is not a capital crime, objectionable though it is.

More recently, the execution of Timothy McVeigh defused militias, though I've read serious critiques of how exploding a truck outside a building was less murderous than planting explosives within. The ulterior motive behind the incarceration, apparently for life, of Jonathan Pollard, was to frighten Jews employed by the American government away from collaborating with Israel.

The arrest of Dr. Wen Ho Lee was similarly meant to scare immigrant scientists, especially from Asia, from sending American atomic secrets back home; and even though Lee was finally exonerated, his arrest probably accomplished its ulterior motive. At least no other Asian scientist has been arrested with such fanfare since.

Into this tradition falls Zacarias Moussaoui, purportedly the 20th collaborator in the massacres

of Sept. 11, 2001, even though he was in an American jail at the time. Whether he was actually a conspirator, rather than a friend or a wannabe, is not entirely clear; certainly he was not a participant.

What became clear once he testified, purportedly on his own behalf, contrary to his attorneys' wishes, is that Moussaoui understood what his role in American history is supposed to be: that only in death will his life have a political meaning comparable to that accorded Sacco and Vanzetti, the Rosenbergs, and Timothy McVeigh; that only in his death will he be remembered as vividly as the other martyrs are.

Since the jury gave him a life sentence, he's more likely to be a Jonathan Pollard than a Rosenberg. His incarceration establishes the opportunity to swap him for an alien's country's future American hostage. On the other hand, may I question whether his incarceration, rather than execution, will defuse Muslim-Islamic radicalism within America?

— Richard Kostelanetz

World tour — Chicago-based Boeing, challenged by Europe's Airbus to produce a new plane to carry more passengers at lower prices, is planning a sleek new 787 Dreamliner, which will carry 250 to 330 at passengers nearly the speed of sound. To produce this plane, materials and parts will have to be assembled from all over the world. The center, aft, and forward fuselages, engine pylons, nacelles, and vertical tail will be produced in the U.S., the engines will come from the U.S. (GE) and England (Rolls Royce), the horizontal stabilizer will come from Italy, and the passenger doors and landing gear from France. The cargo and access doors will be made in Sweden; the fuselage wheel well, wingbox, and fixed trailing edge in Japan; the wingtips in South Korea; and the movable trailing edge in Australia. Boeing will be able to coordinate these parts plus all others needed, hopefully in such a way as to compete with Airbus, serve consumers, and earn a profit for its shareholders.

It takes producers in several different countries to create "Topper the Trick Terrier," a robotic dog that can talk and stand on its head. The motor for its legs, the speaker for its voice, and its transistors and wiring are made in China. Its plastic body comes from Malaysia. Koreans make the microfiber fabric for its coat. Its plastic legs and integrated circuit chips come from Taiwan. Its voice-recognition requirements are produced in San Francisco, and it is packaged in Hong Kong. Yet a toy store in the United States can offer it for only $29.99.

Forty miles north of Frankfurt, skillful German artisans assemble the 1,500 parts of the M7 35mm viewfinder Leica the old-fashioned way. The Leica factory boasts that its new digital camera, with 8.4 million pixels of precision, is "handcrafted." That may be true, the cameras may be assembled by hand, but their 1,500 parts are certainly not produced by hand in the quaint town of Solms: the Leica factory outsources the production of parts.

The miracle of the market — outsourcing, insourcing, and in-between sourcing. It's the only way entrepreneurs can expect to anticipate the wants of consumers and offer them cheaper, better goods and services. — Bettina Bien Greaves

Trolling for luggage — Why do people crowd shoulder-to-shoulder around baggage carousels to watch for their luggage? They stand right next to the conveyer belt, even craning their necks and bodies over the belt to see what's coming, often with those large self-serve carts gangling behind them. I always stand back, wait for my suitcase to actually appear out of the chute, and then come forward to claim it. Invariably, I must push my way through carts and passengers, saying "Excuse me" as I snake a hand between two people who refuse to back up and often glare at me as though I am trying to take their place in line. They still don't move as I hook my suitcase by the handle, yank it up, and then reel it in over someone else's unclaimed bag, landing it onshore like a flailing grouper before reaching back through the crowd to snag the next one.

Wouldn't it make much more sense if we all stood behind a yellow line, perhaps three feet away from the conveyer belt? All passengers would then have a good view of the luggage as it comes around the belt, and could step forward calmly when they see their own bags, instead of fighting their way between two carts, three grannies, and four kids sitting on the floor listening to their iPods. I'm not saying there oughta be a law; I'm just saying there oughta be some common sense and courtesy. — Jo Ann Skousen

The price is right — One thing all economists agree upon is the law of supply and demand. The larger the supply of any good or service, the lower the value on the market of a single unit; as economists like to say, *ceteris paribus*, i.e., all other conditions being equal.

Of course, conditions in an economy are never static — they do not remain the same. Prices do not rise or fall in unison. The price of any good or service is affected by many factors. Some prices change suddenly, as gasoline prices spiked when refineries were destroyed by Katrina. Others change seasonally. And some are affected by fads in fashion. New technology and more rapid communications may lead to lower prices of many products, as when computers enable stores to improve their record keeping, reduce inventories, and adopt just-in-time delivery systems. The prices of flatscreen TVs are now dropping sharply thanks to new production techniques, while the price of the gold used in jewelry and electronic devices is rising. The law of supply and demand applies across the board, to anything and everything.

The law of supply and demand even applies to U.S. dollars. If the number of dollars in circulation increases, as it has for decades, this increase imposes pressure on prices — all prices — pushing them above what they would otherwise have been. As a result, the dollar's purchasing power lessens. In other words, when the stock of dollars is increased, each dollar becomes less valuable and it takes more dollars to buy things than before; the market prices of most goods and services rise.

The Federal Reserve reports the quantity of money as M2, i.e., the money actually in circulation (currency, traveler's checks, demand deposits and other checkbook deposits, plus retail money market funds). M2 figures over recent decades show a steady, continual increase. At the start of Reagan's administration in 1981, M2 was $1,606.9 billion. By the summer of 1987, when Reagan appointed Alan Greenspan Federal Reserve Chairman, M2 had been increased to $2,792.3 billion — an increase of $1,185.4 billion. The quantity of money has since been increased still further, throughout the Reagan, Bush

I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations, by means of deficit financing, credit expansion, and monetization of the U.S. debt. By January 31, 2006, when Greenspan retired, M2 had reached $6,736.9 billion!

This monetary expansion itself *is* inflation. The higher prices it has contributed to are only the most visible consequence of that inflation. Other still more serious consequences of the Fed's monetary policy should not be overlooked — government expansion, the transfer of the power of the purse from taxpayers and voters (through Congress) to government bureaucrats, distortion of economic calculation, shifts in patterns of wealth and income, the destruction of savings, the beginnings of the boom-bust cycle. But higher prices themselves are disruptive. And these higher prices derive directly from the Fed's inflationary monetary policy and the operation of the law of supply and demand on the stock of U.S. dollars.

— Bettina Bien Greaves

Ask the local gentry — Remembering Paul Goodman's declaration that the state should not be in the business of licensing sex (i.e., "marriage"), let me suggest that it also shouldn't be in the business of unlicensing sex, which is to say divorce, where the state can function far more dangerously. Marriage should strictly be a religious vow or a business deal done, as well as undone, by holy people or professional negotiators.

Need I add that we should also abolish all those stupid laws that become false incentives to marriage, beginning with tax advantages and visitation rights in a hospital?

— Richard Kostelanetz

Running the numbers — The other night was a rarity: I actually learned something from TV. The History Channel was recounting a lottery scandal of some years back in Pennsylvania. Not surprisingly, lottery officials had been bribed so that three specific numbers would show up: three numbers that would reward the clairvoyants who chose them. Such are the foundations of the game we call the lottery.

Corruption in such games is an old story. But what was surprising about the History Channel show was the revelation that, alongside the state's game, the historic Mafia-sponsored numbers racket hummed on as efficiently as ever. It persisted.

But who would play the mob's game when you could play with the clean-cut minions of the state? Why didn't the hoods

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The message is the medium — As the American government has swelled, it has become increasingly difficult for the men at the top to make sure their underlings are staying "on message."

First, there are simply way too many underlings to keep track of, and they're overseeing all sorts of things that are at best tangential to the major missions the government is undertaking. Second, the speed of modern communication means that any single unguarded, unscripted comment an underling makes will be on everyone's lips within an hour (and faster if it's particularly foolish or vicious).

Obviously, there is only one solution to such a quandary: micromanagement. The prudent executive will thus dictate everything his underlings say, and use a stick-and-carrot approach to guarantee their dedication to the message.

Take, for instance, the Bush administration. The primary message it wishes to convey is that "President Bush has a clear strategy for victory in Iraq structured along three tracks — political, economic and security — to assist Iraqis in establishing a government that provides for and is accountable to its people." By micromanaging effectively, Bush can ensure that any one of his underlings includes this core message even when speaking to an audience, such as a group of farmers in Kansas, or a crowd of food stamp recipients in New Orleans, that might not think much about Iraq in an average day.

Here's an excerpt from a Department of Agriculture memo, showing an example of the strategy in action:

> I'm looking forward to walking through the exhibit hall after our breakfast this morning, and seeing all of your agricultural products and services displayed in such abundance. American agriculture had a great year in 2005, as events like this demonstrate.
>
> But before I begin discussing the productivity of American agriculture, I'd like to take a moment to talk about a nation that is just now beginning to rebuild its own agricultural production. Iraq is part of the 'fertile crescent' of Mesopotamia. It is there, in around 8,500 to 8,000 BC, that mankind first domesticated wheat, there that agriculture was born.

See how easy that was? Half the globe and 10,000 years, bridged over so quickly that the farmers can't help but follow.

Let's see another:

> I'm here to talk about civil rights, which is one of the fundamental tenets of a democracy. In the United States, a democracy that has been evolving for 230 years, we are still conscious of our shortcomings, and still working to become a more perfect union, with true equality for all of our citizens.
>
> So before I begin talking about the civil rights climate at USDA, I'd like to address the situation in another nation that is just now forging the path to democracy.
>
> The citizens of Iraq have a long road ahead. . . .

Now, sometimes an underling might be faced with an audience that tries to drive him off message with a series of irrelevant questions. For these annoying situations, the memo allows for a more direct approach:

> Several topics I'd like to talk about today — Farm Bill, trade with Japan, WTO, avian flu, animal ID — but before I do, let me touch on a subject people always ask about: progress in Iraq.

Yes, the message is clear: "President Bush has a clear strategy for victory in Iraq structured along three tracks — political, economic and security. . . ."

What's that? A question in the back, asking what this has to do with crops? Well, you see,

> the Iraqis have also discussed specific products, like tomatoes, which they are anxious to export into the world community. And President Bush has a clear strategy. . . .

— Andrew Ferguson

The Books of Summer

Summer is a time for reading what you don't *have* to read.
Here's some interesting advice from 25 interesting people.

If you put a lot of marbles in a jar, then ask a thousand passers-by to estimate the number of marbles, the answers will vary tremendously, from ridiculously low to ridiculously high. The extraordinary fact is that if you then average all those thousand answers, the result will be very close to the correct number — usually closer than any single individual answer.

This finding is the basis of James Surowiecki's "The Wisdom of Crowds," now out in paperback (Doubleday). Surowiecki looks at some of the implications of the principle and its limitations. (If you had averaged Americans' responses, four years ago, to the question "How many weapons of mass destruction has Saddam Hussein?", you would have gotten a wildly inaccurate result, but if you'd asked me, I'd have given you the precisely correct answer.) Almost despite himself, the author's conclusions are gently free-market. He's a capable writer and the book is filled with entertaining insights and anecdotes.

What's the explanation for the extraordinary fact itself? Surowiecki makes some stabs at this, but I feel that the puzzle remains. If there's an elegant theoretical answer, it may amount to a Copernican revolution in social science.

Are we witnessing a new trend for action-packed thrillers passionately propounding ideological heresies? "The Da Vinci Code" presented a history of 1st-century Christianity even more implausible than the orthodox Christian one — and that takes some doing. A more recent, more accomplished example is Michael Crichton's "State of Fear" (HarperCollins), which uses a yarn about ecoterrorists to make the case against global warming hysteria.

Who would suppose that you might have fun reading an adventure story in which the characters' conversation is liberally sprinkled with *graphs*? They didn't slow me down, but I suspected others might be discouraged, so I asked around. People who've read the book tell me they enjoyed the arguments about the environment, graphs and all, just as much as they enjoyed the murders and the cyberbabble. "State of Fear" has sold less well than some of Crichton's earlier tales, but that seems to be due to the predictable hostility of environmentalist bigots. The book has a factual appendix; and since it came out, Crichton has given many presentations challenging environmentalist follies.

Nearly all Crichton's novels have been made into films, though some of these would have been better if they'd followed the books more closely. This one presents a special problem. In Hollywood's eyes questioning global warming is morally equivalent to promoting the therapeutic benefits of rape. I guess we must look forward to a movie in which the good guys constantly agonize over the fact that the terrorists are also good guys, albeit wedded to tactless methods.

A book to read at least once every ten years is "Witness," by Whittaker Chambers (Regnery), which, among other things, testifies to the great writer Chambers was and the greater writer he might have become if he had not gotten himself mixed up with a Communist spy ring. This true story, unfolded with prodigious novelistic skill, becomes all the more enthralling if you also read "Whittaker Chambers: A Biography," by Sam Tanenhaus (Modern Library, 1998, slightly revised edition of Random House, 1997), which for me was full of little surprises, including the fact that Chambers became

completely disillusioned with Joseph McCarthy.

Chambers was a brave man, an intelligent man, and above all a good man, pilloried by the sheeplike intelligentsia and media with their cult of "anti-anti-communism." This doesn't mean we ought to swallow his political worldview, which was naively apocalyptic and mystical. Yes, there was a Communist conspiracy, and yes, it was a far greater menace to our freedom than "McCarthyism." However, Chambers enlarged it in his imagination by a factor of 20. I hope it doesn't sound like a bad joke, but Chambers' thinking is strikingly un-American. He would have seen eye to eye with Solzhenitsyn.

"Elegy for a Soprano" is about the circle of people who surround great a singer, and what they are willing to put up with to be in the presence of greatness. Smith said it was the closest she would come to writing about Ayn Rand.

L.P. Hartley is one of the outstanding novelists of the 20th century (his acknowledged masterpiece is "The Go-Between" [New York Review Books Classics]). He was also a classical liberal, a fact which you would be likely to guess from only one of his books, "Facial Justice" (1960; currently out of print but easily available used online, or in libraries). This is the story of a post-nuclear world ruled by pursuit of "Good E" (equality) and fear of "Bad E" (envy). Envy is caused by the envied, so women are given standardized face transplants. And, just as you would expect, this makes them feel *much* better. What could possibly go wrong?

David Ramsay Steele is author of "From Marx to Mises," co-author (with Michael Edelstein) of "Three Minute Therapy," and a contributor to "The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief."

I recommended plenty of libertarian books in "Libertarianism: A Primer" and "The Libertarian Reader," so I'll venture a little further afield here.

Does anyone still read Robert Heinlein? At the founding convention of the Libertarian Party, 16% of the delegates called themselves Heinleinian (or so I've heard), but I don't hear his name much these days. "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress" (Orion) is his most explicitly libertarian novel, a rollicking story of a thinking computer, a polygamous marriage (truly polygamous, neither polygynous nor polyandrous), and a revolution of the moon against the earth.

Kay Nolte Smith was an actress and a member of Ayn Rand's inner circle. Like most of Rand's associates, she didn't start writing until she left that world. And then, in the far-too-short time between breaking with Rand and her untimely death, she wrote seven wonderful novels. The first, "The Watcher" (Pulpless.com), was the most deeply Randian. In the second, "Catching Fire" (Coward McCann), the intense Randianism is gone; what remains are the Objectivist principles that values are important, and that one's choices will have consequences. In "Elegy for a Soprano" (PaperJacks) she wrote about the circle of people who surround a great and greatly difficult singer, and what they were willing to put up with to be in the presence of greatness; Smith said it was the closest she would come to writing about Rand. These and her other novels are all terrific reading.

Tom Wolfe is a staunch conservative and a great writer. He writes huge sprawling novels about modern America — about sex and money and real estate and prison and character. Although he has a bit of trouble wrapping up his multiple plotlines, the books are totally engaging. I also recommend his collection of essays "Hooking Up" (Picador), especially "My Three Stooges," his response to his critics John Updike, Norman Mailer, and John Irving; and "Two Young Men Who Went West," about the parallels between Congregationalist minister Josiah Grinnell and microchip inventor Robert Noyce.

Fran Lebowitz was the Dorothy Parker of the '70s. Perhaps she'd be the Dorothy Parker of the '00s if she ever seemed to write anything. For now, we must console ourselves with her essays collected in two thin books (or one fat one) and with collecting her aphorisms — like "In real life, I assure you, there is no such thing as algebra," and "The outdoors is what you must pass through in order to get from your apartment into a taxicab."

"Fahrenheit 451" (Del Rey), by Ray Bradbury, is a classic novel about censorship, about a society in which firemen burn books and about the people who memorize books in order to save the world's knowledge. Be sure to buy an edition with Bradbury's "Coda" — about how, over the years, his publisher had secretly censored this very book in response to various pressure groups.

Read these books, and you'll have a great summer.

David Boaz is the author of "Libertarianism: A Primer" and editor of "The Libertarian Reader." He blogs at the Guardian's "Comment is free" site and at Cato@Liberty.

It's hard to know how to respond to an invitation to make suggestions for summer reading, since one wants neither to be clichéd (e.g., I think you ought to read Thucydides) nor overly idiosyncratic (e.g., I think you ought to read Neil Gaiman's twelve-volume graphic novel "The Sandman"). One also wants to be somewhat current: if I recommend Neal Stephenson's "The Baroque Cycle," I run the risk of ridicule, as this was the hot pick two years ago. (Alan Moore and David Lloyd's "V for Vendetta" is well worth your time also, but that's even less current!)

But since my field is political philosophy, perhaps I won't get in too much trouble recommending a recent book in political philosophy. "Norms of Liberty" (Penn State University Press), by Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl, is the best philosophical defense of classical-liberal principles available. By best, I not only mean persuasive and reasonable, but also comprehensive, in that the authors respond specifically to a wide variety of prospective criticisms, both from the Left and from the Right. They use a neo-Aristotelian framework, which means that they have a coherent and effective way of combining pluralism with objectivity. They derive a compelling justification for a liberty-protecting political and legal order.

"But why," you ask, "do you think that I, as a reader of

this magazine, need a philosophical defense of a principle I already hold?" The question is fair enough. One answer is that if you're like most readers of this magazine, you're in a minority among your friends and co-workers, and find yourself needing to justify your positions. A good philosophical rationale will go a long way toward cementing your understanding of liberty and its value, and toward enhancing your ability to persuade others. You could use this book as effectively with your lefty-welfarist friends as with your natural-law theocon friends. And what better way to spend your summer than by arguing about political philosophy?

Aeon J. Skoble is Chair of the Philosophy Department at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. He is the author of the forthcoming "Freedom, Authority, and Social Order" (Open Court), and also writes widely on philosophy and popular culture, most recently contributing to "The Philosophy of Film Noir" (Kentucky).

This year I've been fortunate enough to encounter a number of entertaining and enlightening books. I'll start with Steven Pinker's bold and masterly "The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature" (Penguin). Pinker, a leading cognitive scientist, surveys the mountain of evidence against the theory that we are born malleable, with our identities (our genders and personalities) formed by our cultural upbringing. He urges that the nature versus nurture debate is over, and nature beats nurture all hollow — to the immense distress of feminists and social reformers everywhere. Also masterly — and accessible — is Mark Skousen's "The Making of Modern Economics: The Lives and Ideas of the Great Thinkers" (M.E. Sharpe). Skousen deftly explains arcane economic concepts and manages to make it all entertaining. He is archly Whiggish: the classical liberals are the good guys, and triumph in the end.

Another fascinating book is Bjørn Lomborg's "The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World" (Cambridge University Press), a work as controversial as it is comprehensive. Lomborg was a devout member of the High Church of Environmentalism, when he came across the writings of the rogue economist Julian Simon. (Those unfamiliar with Simon's work might want to read his autobiography, "A Life Against the Grain" [Transaction Publishers], which I reviewed in the Sept. 2004 issue of Liberty). Simon's research sharply challenged environmentalist dogmas (that the earth is being overpopulated, that the ecosystem is being destroyed, and so forth), and Lomborg set out to refute him. He was eventually forced to admit that Simon was mainly correct. Lomborg provides a wealth of data to buttress his views.

Finally, following the theme of intellectual honesty (a somewhat uncommon quality in the academic worlds I've inhabited), there is Jeffrey Meyers' superb biography, "Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation" (Norton). You might think it odd that a libertarian should admire Orwell, a socialist, but I do: his writings played a key role in discrediting communism, and I admire his genuine journalistic commitment. When he wrote about being down and out, living the homeless life, he wasn't some callow lefty pup, recently graduated from Columbia J-school and writing from the Olympian heights; he lived on the margins for a couple of years to learn what it was really like. The same holds for his description of the lives of British coal miners; he lived among them too, and his real-life experiences shortened his life considerably. This sort of autobiographically tinged, socially critical writing is rare these days, because contemporary writers' lives are so often bereft of any interesting life experience.

Gary Jason is a writer, businessman, and philosophy instructor. He lives in San Clemente, Calif.

These recommendations feel very personal to me. I want to introduce you to two books that have touched and affected me profoundly. They are among the handful of books that I reread every few years or sooner. They have enriched my life, and I hope they will enrich yours.

The first is "The Gadfly," by E.L. Voynich (Kessinger Publishing).

Bertrand Russell said of this extraordinarily dramatic, fiery, and thoughtful book, "It is still one of the most exciting novels I have read in the English language." First published in Europe in 1897, where it has sold more than 12 million copies, and translated into more than 30 languages, "The Gadfly" has been described by Harrison Salisbury as "a story of revolutionaries and conspiracies, of an effort to overthrow an established order and to destroy the grip of a powerful State and Church." It is that, and it is more than that.

At its heart, this novel is a love story, but not of the usual kind. It is the story of the incorruptible love between Arthur, the passionate, courageous revolutionary who is the Gadfly of the title, and the young English girl who is his co-revolutionary. It tells of Arthur's equally incorruptible love for Italy, his country, and of the danger and agony into which that love propels him. It tells of the devotion to his Church of Cardinal Montanelli, Arthur's mentor, who holds locked within himself the secret of Arthur's birth. But most of all, this novel is the story of the desperate love and the equally desperate antagonism between two men of heroic stature, the atheist Arthur and the God-intoxicated Cardinal. Love and antagonism reach their climax in the novel's final chapters, chapters of such power and drama as to be almost unbearably intense.

When I first read this magnificent novel many years ago, I raced through it, half-skipping passages because the excitement of the events led me on to discover what happened next. I then immediately reread it, slowly and carefully; its intel-

"This new religion sounds neat — what kind of fertility rites does it have?"

lectual drama made me want to savor every page, to think about it, to shake my head in wonder at its climax. This is a philosophical novel of the highest order.

"My Name is Asher Lev," by Chaim Potok (Anchor) is my second remarkable book.

Asher Lev was born with a gift: the gift of experiencing the world in the manner of a painter, through line and color and shape and texture and composition; the gift of finding his spirit's expression through the medium of paint on canvas. "What color is feeling cold?" the young boy asks his mother. From early childhood, he is a member of the religion called painting.

Asher Lev, the son of devout Hasidic Jews, was born with a curse: the curse of loving the father who sees in the boy's choice of a painter's life the abandonment of his sacred heritage, and who turns from his only son; the curse of loving the intense and narrow world of the Hasid, its rituals and beliefs and passionate concerns, a world that turns against him as he follows the path of his gift.

He must learn to be true to himself, the young Asher knows. But which self?

This powerful novel, written with great beauty and subtlety, and exquisite simplicity, follows the destiny of the young man torn between art and religion, and we, the readers, follow the growth of a prodigy. But only on one level is it the story of a conflict between art and religion. More profoundly, it is the story of a young man who must make a wrenching choice between two passionate loves.

It is said that a man approached Somerset Maugham and said: "I would give ten thousand pounds not to have read 'Of Human Bondage.'" As Maugham bristled angrily, the man added: "So that I could have the pleasure of once again reading it for the first time." I think that is how you will feel when you turn the final pages of these two novels.

Barbara Branden is the author of "The Passion of Ayn Rand." She writes occasionally at the "Objectivist Living" site.

Shelby Steele explains the American neurosis over race better than any other writer I have encountered. "White Guilt" (HarperCollins) is his latest. The book is only 180 pages long, and is presented as thoughts on a road trip up the California coast from Los Angeles to Monterey. He starts with a radio announcer's comment about Eisenhower, then is off on a thought-voyage about race, moral authority, and guilt.

"White guilt," he says, "makes the moral authority of whites and the legitimacy of American institutions *contingent* on proving a negative: that they are not racist. The great power of white guilt comes from the fact that it functions by stigma, like racism itself. Whites and American institutions are stigmatized as racist until they prove otherwise." If it puzzles you why big corporations and universities are so insistent on preserving racial preferences, read this book. It explains the whole thing.

For all the fans of war history, this year's selection has to be "Ivan's War" (Metropolitan Books, 2006). If there was ever an army you'd rather read about than be a member of, it was the Soviet army in World War II. The author, British historian Catherine Merridale, has put together a colorful account, drawing on contemporary statements, diaries, intelligence reports from both sides, and interviews with wrinkled veterans. There are terrifying stories here, including tales of Russian defenders who retreated into caves and never came out, of Russian villagers who confronted their own army with pitchforks, and of Russian soldiers who turned rapist when they crossed the border into Germany.

This is the story of a politically correct Stalinist army that shattered in 1941 and was built back through bloody-mindedness into a killer force in 1944–45. It's fine history, and it will blast any idea that the Soviets won mainly because of aid from the United States.

For those who savor obscure books, here's one: "The Pallid Giant" (Fleming H. Revell), a science-fiction novel published in 1927 that is one of the first fictional depictions of a nuclear holocaust. The author, Pierrepont Noyes, was an official of the U.S. occupation of the Rhineland after World War I, and begins his novel at the Paris peace talks of 1919. It quickly turns to weird archaeology, a lost race, and a fantastic tale. It was written before the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction and

assumes that any weapon that is effective will be used, if only in fearful preemption. The book was reissued after the dropping of the first atomic bombs, though it is forgotten today — and hard to find.

Those who need a fat book to occupy themselves while crossing the Pacific or fishing where there are no fish might consider "Life and Death in Shanghai" (various editions), Nien Cheng's story of her imprisonment by Mao's China during the Cultural Revolution. It is a classic of prison literature, and the best of its genre to come out of China. Don't start reading it when you have only a short time to read, because you'll be fighting a tendency to curl up with it until you're done.

Bruce Ramsey is a journalist in Seattle and author, recently, of three collections of the works of an earlier libertarian journalist, Garet Garrett, the latest of which is "Insatiable Government."

Have I got a book for you! "The Greek World," a 1996 Rizzoli publication edited by leading Italian archeologist G. Publiese Carratelli, is heavy going only in the sense that it weighs in at roughly four pounds. Its purpose was to celebrate an exhibition at Venice's Palazzo Grassi, a presentation of "the most detailed, wide-ranging study ever made of the Greek civilization in the ancient world."

Why might a libertarian care about the 8th century B.C.? In two words: shared values. In an era of exceptional development, Magna Graecia — new Greek settlements — sprang up along the west coast of Italy, from the Bay of Naples to Sicily. Art, architecture, literature, politics, religion, science — all of it flourished because of a "dynamic fusion" of Greek and Italian cultures that marked the beginning of "an age of immense creativity." In "The Greek World," essays by 60 scholars, combined with over 1,600 captivating photographs (sculpture, ceramics, jewelry), explore every aspect of these Italian colonies, chronologically tracing the Greek influence on myriad subjects, from the Greek alphabet to the revolutionary thoughts of the first philosophers.

I couldn't agree more with the jacket copy assessment that here is "essential [reading] for anyone interested in the classical world that laid the foundations for our own cultural identity and artistic inheritance."

But should photographs, no matter how magnificent, of the marble statue of the winged Nike from Delos or a detail of a palace fresco — bluebird amidst bronze-gold flowers — put you in the mood to "create" your own inner photographs, there's no better way to serve your purpose than to pick up a superlatively written novel, one that allows you to fill in some blanks even as plot, characterization, and graphic style pull you into spine-chilling escapism.

Scottish novelist Val McDermid's mostly British police procedurals — a four-book (so far) series — are addictive. The author manages to wed serial-killer detection, a sense of place that's both poetic and rings true, and a suspenseful ride through the twists and gut-wrenching turns of some diabolically clever killer's mind — pitted against the combined talents of imaginative detective inspector Carol Jordan and brilliant, troubled criminal profiler, Tony Hill. *Forewarning*: read in order: "The Mermaids Singing," "The Wire in the Blood," "The Last Temptation" (St. Martin's Minotaur Mysteries), and "The Torment of Others" (HarperCollins).

If sun, sand, and beach blanket dream-spinning is your preference . . . and if a smidgeon of that dream shapes up as "someday I'd like to write a novel," hit Amazon to find out how I turned those very words into reality, trading a legal career for writing publishable fiction, thanks to Ayn Rand, my fiction-writing teacher — which happens to be the title of my new book, "Ayn Rand: My Fiction-Writing Teacher" (Madison Press).

"The Pallid Giant" was written before the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction and assumes that any weapon that is effective will be used. The book was reissued after the dropping of the first atomic bombs.

Or maybe you just want to satisfy your curiosity about some writing principles that went into the creation of "Atlas Shrugged." Or much later, into my own novels. Or what it was like being Rand's protégé. Or whether she was a good teacher. Or what pitfalls await every aspiring novelist and how to confront or avoid them.

Relax; this book is a lighthearted, good-natured affair. It has nothing to do with politics, nothing to do with political philosophy. Depending on your mindset, it can be as much fun to read as it was for me to write.

Erika Holzer is a novelist living in Southern California. She is the author of "Double Crossing" and "Eye for an Eye."

Black history is not usually standard summer reading fare for libertarians. This is surprising because few other topics offer a more compelling case for the destructive role of government intervention.

On slavery, Roger G. Kennedy's provocative "Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause: Land, Farmers, Slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase" (Oxford University Press) deserves a prominent place. Kennedy highlights the contradiction between Thomas Jefferson's actual policies and his stated vision for populating newly acquired lands with yeoman farmers. Jefferson fumbled golden opportunities to stop the spread of slavery. During his administration, the federal government used the debts of individual Indians as a pretext to get control of tribal lands and then sell them at a discount to planters. The result was to smother in the womb promising efforts to fill the South with independent black, white, and Indian farmers.

Probably the best source for the post-slavery period has been surprisingly overlooked by libertarians: David E. Bernstein's "Only One Place of Redress: African Americans, Labor Regulations and the Courts from Reconstruction to the New Deal" (Duke University Press). Bernstein shows how local, state, and federal regulations put roadblocks in the way of blacks' advancement. Often their only protection came from the courts, which struck down regulations for violating property rights and freedom of contract.

"America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible" (Simon & Schuster), by Stephen and Abigail Thernstrom, combines a superb summary of black history with a wealth of data on economic progress, which began long before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and changes in black and white attitudes. This book is a devastating retort to those claiming that the racial situation has not dramatically improved since the 1950s.

The most prominent libertarian-oriented black figure in the 1930s and 1940s was Zora Neale Hurston, a novelist, folklorist, and veteran of the Harlem Renaissance. Like Rose Wilder Lane and Isabel Paterson, she zealously held true to the principles of liberty and responsibility. "Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters" (Doubleday) has every available letter she wrote from the 1920s to 1950s. They display her contempt for Roosevelt's wartime and domestic polices and her support for Robert Taft. The editor, Carla Kaplan, puts each phase of Hurston's life into context with richly illustrated and fair-minded background essays.

Skip the shabby plots and overheated prose on the bestseller racks, and pick up a book you remember enjoying in a childhood summer, however long ago.

On civil rights, a good starting point is Charles M. Payne's "I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle" (University of California Press). Payne explores the movement in Mississippi before the advent of Martin Luther King, Jr. The core leaders were entrepreneurs, who had achieved earlier success through thrift, self-help, and initiative. They also relied heavily on armed self-defense to advance these goals. The final section, on the post-1960s period, has depressing object lessons about how the achievement of political power can corrupt even the most admirable of idealists.

David T. Beito teaches history at the University of Alabama and belongs to the Liberty and Power Group Blog (www.libertyandpower.com) at the History News Network. His books include "From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890–1967."

For the convenience of people who are interested in libertarian ideas, I thought it might be a good idea to offer a list of the classics — all of them widely available, in various editions and formats.

John Locke's "Second Treatise of Civil Government" and John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty" are essential reading. Of 20th-century writings, Friedrich Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom" and Milton Friedman's "Capitalism and Freedom" are the leading works, in my opinion. Other personal favorites in the same genre, though not as explicitly libertarian, include Mill's "Utilitarianism" and "Principles of Political Economy" and Jeremy Bentham's "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation."

I should also note Hayek's other invaluable work: "Individualism and Economic Order," "The Constitution of Liberty," "Law, Legislation and Liberty," and "The Fatal Conceit." In addition to the very influential "Capitalism and Freedom," Friedman's key works include "The Methodology of Positive Economics" in "Essays in Positive Economics," and his and Anna Schwartz's "A Monetary History of the United States, 1867–1960."

For those of a more literary bent, Ayn Rand's novels "Atlas Shrugged" and "The Fountainhead" are thought-provoking and enjoyable. George Orwell's "Animal Farm" and "1984" are vital, and Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon" provides much insight.

Lanny Ebenstein is a Cato Institute adjunct scholar and has written the first biography in English of Friedrich Hayek. He is currently at work on the first biography of Milton Friedman.

"Summer books," as advertised by the big-box bookstores, are usually the dumbest, laziest books of the year. Blatant mysteries, oily romances, neurotic thrillers: these are the books I'm supposed to take with me to the hammock? I want to feel relaxed, not lobotomized.

My suggestion is to skip the shabby plots and overheated prose on the bestseller racks, and pick up a book you remember enjoying in a childhood summer, however long ago. A simple pleasure, perhaps, but isn't that what summer is for? Consider, then:

"The Westing Game," by Ellen Raskin (Puffin). Paper tycoon Sam Westing turns up dead, and his bizarre will names 16 heirs — one of whom, he writes in the document, took his life. His entire fortune will go to the heir who puzzles out the culprit. Every character harbors secrets, and the central mystery is by no means the only one, or even the most important. Well worth reading and rereading, it's packed with subtle clues, many of which stay hidden the first time through.

"Archer's Goon," by Diana Wynne Jones (HarperTrophy). This tale of a pleasantly eccentric family and the querulous wizards who secretly run their town features enough identity changes and hidden motives to keep Chesterton entertained. All those who have read the Harry Potter series (and almost everyone should, even if only to spite Harold Bloom) ought to give Jones a try. "Archer's Goon" is the best introduction to her complex magical worlds.

"Danny, the Champion of the World," by Roald Dahl (Knopf). When a wealthy beer baron tries to push Danny and his widower father ("the most marvelous and exciting father any boy ever had") off their land, they fight back by targeting the brewer's prized possession: a flock of pheasants he maintains for society shoots. Though quite different from the wild-eyed looniness of the "Charlie" books, and much gentler than Dahl's savage short stories, this idyllic comedy is still one of his strongest works.

"The Phantom Tollbooth," by Norton Juster (Knopf). Milo is a boy who doesn't know what to do with himself until he discovers a miniature tollbooth left mysteriously in his room. On the other side of the booth are the Lands Beyond, where figures of speech live in the flesh. Allegorically, the book itself is the tollbooth, and on the other side are the fields of the mind: all it takes to get there is the toll of a little spare time.

In the perfect summers of youth, time is something that can always be spared. Perhaps it can be spared right now, as well.

Before becoming an editor at Liberty, Andrew Ferguson spent many summers indoors, selling summer books.

I'd like to recommend some books that were crucial to me.

Works from ancient times that have most influenced me are Plato's "Theatetus," Aristotle's "Poetics" and "Nicomachean Ethics," and Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations."

All the writings of David Hume are crisp and clear and full of philosophical bite, but the one that proved a lifesaver for me as I was approaching philosophical maturity was his "Dialogues concerning Natural Religion." Also very influential were John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty" and "Three Essays on Religion."

In our own time, of course I was greatly influenced by "Atlas Shrugged," though it didn't come on the scene until I was almost 40 years old, and I came to know Ayn Rand personally shortly thereafter. By that time I had been influenced by Hayek's "Road to Serfdom" (in later years I taught his "Constitution of Liberty" to graduate classes at USC) and by Henry Hazlitt's "Economics in One Lesson" (Fox & Wilkes), recommended to me early on by Ayn Rand, followed by his "Foundations of Morality" (Foundation for Economic Education), after which we became personally acquainted. Many books in the Objectivist-libertarian tradition also influenced me, such as Isabel Paterson's "God of the Machine" (Transaction), also recommended to me by Rand; Rose Wilder Lane's "Discovery of Freedom" (Fox & Wilkes); and Edmund Contoski's "Makers and Takers" (American Liberty Publishers).

The 20th-century person I would most like to have known is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. I was greatly influenced by his novels and, when they appeared in translation, the three volumes of his magnum opus, "The Gulag Archipelago," one of the crowning literary achievements of the century. Today, even years later, whenever I learn of some catastrophic turn of events in international relations, or of some example of political blindness or malevolence which could all too quickly turn the tide between war and peace, I turn again to Solzhenitsyn's descriptions of actions which have brought suffering and death to millions of people, and ask, "What is there to keep it from happening all over again?" I wonder which of these two Russians, Rand or Solzhenitsyn, will in the end be the more influential in delivering the world from such a fate.

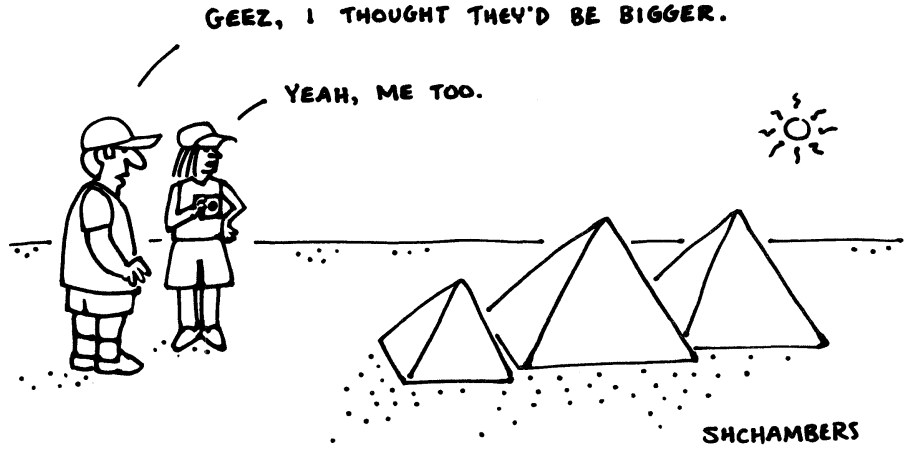
John Hospers is a philosopher and author of "Human Conduct: Problems of Ethics," "Meaning and Truth in the Arts," "Libertarianism," and other books. He was the presidential candidate of the Libertarian Party in 1972 and finished third in the Electoral College.

For good summer reading, you could try any of the novels of Mario Vargas Llosa. Or you could make a journey into the distant past.

Our classical liberal forebears took it for granted that the ancient Anglo-Saxons marked a significant episode in the history of liberty. Among his many other accomplishments, Jefferson should be given credit for almost single-handedly reviving the study of the Anglo-Saxon language, Old English. He was at first "obliged to that source for explanation of a multitude of law terms" and later, like David Hume, saw the Anglo-Saxon period as a foundation for his political philosophy: "The difference between the Whig and the Tory of England is that the Whig deduces his rights from the Anglo-Saxon source and the Tory from the Norman." Eventually Jefferson suggested the study of Anglo-Saxon in its own right and even established a curriculum at the University of Virginia to further that end.

Today, more than at any other time in history, there is a wealth of interesting literature and scholarship about the Anglo-Saxons. It extends well beyond the popular and wildly overrated verse translation of the "Beowulf" poem by Irish poet Seamus Heaney. An excellent place to start is Kevin Crossley-Holland's "Anglo-Saxon World" (available in a cheap Oxford paperback), which includes a complete translation of "Beowulf" along with "The Battle of Maldon" and other important poems, excerpts from the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" (where we find much about their law and politics), and key charters and wills.

"Beowulf" is widely known as the greatest literary work of Old English (not Middle English, as the writers of "West Wing" would have us believe). Preserved in a single manuscript in the British Library, it remained unpublished until 1815 and was probably unknown to Jefferson. Some people may be acquainted, from their undergraduate days, with the very decent prose translation by E. Talbot Donaldson, first published in 1966. A good recent verse translation is by Alan Sullivan and Timothy Murphy (Longman). For those interested in checking out the original, "Beowulf: An Edition" (Blackwell), by Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, is an exemplary work of scholarship, complete with a glossary and many other aids. Tolkien fans will want to read his essay "'Beowulf': The Monsters and the Critics" (HarperCollins). It's still the most important work on the Anglo-Saxon epic.



Dorothy Whitelock's "The Beginnings of English Society" (Penguin) is the best and liveliest short introduction to Anglo-Saxon England. A fuller, authoritative account is Frank M. Stenton's "Anglo-Saxon England" (Oxford University Press). Another book, which is hard to find but considerably more fun than Stenton's, is R.I. Page's "Life in Anglo-Saxon England" (Putnam). And the best overall introduction to the literature and language of the period is Peter Baker's robust and very recent "Introduction to Old English" (Blackwell).

The Anglo-Saxons, as removed from us today as their language, are still with us in our songs of heroism, our struggle for freedom, and what "Beowulf" calls our "eagerness for fame."

Garrett Brown is an acquiring editor in the book division at the National Geographic Society.

Almost a decade back, in New Delhi, I went to a speech on "freedom" by Andrew Cohen, an American spiritual teacher. The speech was about how our worldviews imprison us. He challenged us to recognize that despite the way we talk about freedom, somewhere in our minds we do not want to be free. That we so closely identify ourselves with our material possessions and social prestige and our pathological need for external validation that we make ourselves puppets of other people's agendas. That by covering our insecurities in drama, we manipulate others to serve our ulterior purposes, and eventually wind our minds into knots. That as a result, we have a complicated society where everyone wants to be free, but everyone also wants to control others.

I had gone to the speech to learn something about personality development that could enable me to conduct myself better at work, and in society in general. I walked out with a completely different perspective, but something immensely more valuable and fundamental. Others can have this experience if they read Cohen's "Living Enlightenment" (What Is Enlightenment Press).

One of Cohen's friends is Ken Wilber, who is a prodigious writer. His fiction, "Boomeritis: A Novel That Will Set You Free" (Shambhala), has had a tremendous influence in helping me understand myself, other people, and the world around me. I found it difficult to follow the story, but his philosophy is enthralling. His discussion of Don Beck's "spiral of development" as a blueprint for evolution provides a structure for understanding the worldviews that people hold, and why people who hold different worldviews cannot understand one another's ways of life. He does not say that all these views are fine, as a multiculturalist would say — they exist in a hierarchy, one more enlightened than the other.

A few years earlier, in Vancouver, I was invited to join a discussion group of people interested in Cohen's philosophy. They were extremely wealthy, and all worked in top positions in big companies. One day we talked about public policy. They talked, quite hypocritically, about how the developed world was exploiting the poor, how multinational companies were getting away with paying dirt cheap salaries in the poor world, etc. They wanted me to contribute some sob stories. I disagreed. Developed countries and multinational companies are hardly saints (although coming from where I do, I often see them that way), but the poverty of the poor countries is of the poor countries' own making: it results from their worldviews, and from the corruption and conflicts that are built into their hearts, minds, and cultures. I told the group that, from a certain perspective, Nike and Adidas were heroes. I was virtually thrown out of the meeting!

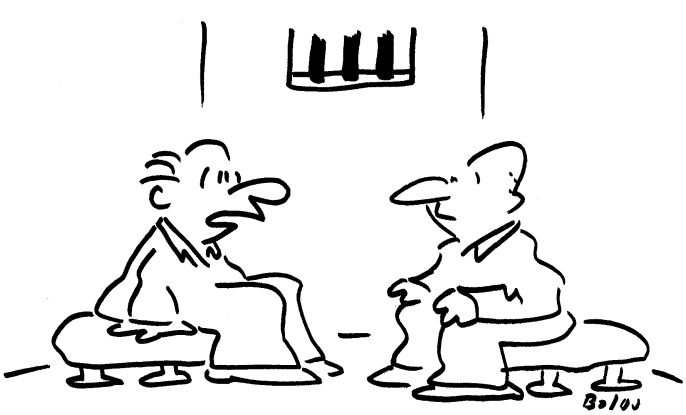
Cohen's teachings might put off some people, as this group in Vancouver put me off. And I'm not sure what Cohen would think about what the group believed. Either way, both Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber have remarkable insights about the human mind. Both are politically incorrect, and refuse to accept cultural rationalizations for human stupidities.

Jayant Bhandari is a business analyst in Vancouver. He wrote "The Real India, Behind the Fog" for the May issue of Liberty and blogs at www.jayantbhandari.com.

Some people must wake up in the morning and jump out of bed and say, "Hello new day! What can I do with you?" Not I. I have the hardest time reconciling myself simply to arising. But those other people fascinate me. They not only *desire* to create; they have the compulsion, persistence, and pure cussedness to see that creativity through. Because it is, perhaps, the most valuable of human traits, I want to recommend three books about creativity.

The first, and most obvious, choice is "Creators," by Paul Johnson (HarperCollins). In many ways this is an answer to his previous work, "Intellectuals." While "Intellectuals" is a frolicking look at many of the "greatest minds" of the past three centuries (with their hypocrisies and wickedness joyfully detailed), "Creators" takes a much more respectful approach. Here are admiring portraits of artistic innovation — in Chaucer and Shakespeare, in painters and architects, in fashion designers and lyric poets. Do not fear; Johnson's trademark wit is not on hiatus. He can't resist a juicy anecdote, particularly if it involves his own encounters with such persons as Dylan Thomas, T.S. Eliot, and C.S. Lewis. My one quarrel with this book is that it is limited to creativity in the cultural arts.

If you're looking for a story of creative vision (not to mention creative perseverance) in a field outside of art, it's hard to find anything more interesting than "The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the



"... And then she turned in all my old love letters and they got me for mail fraud!"

Oxford English Dictionary," by Simon Winchester (Harper Perennial). While many people contributed to the OED, two had key roles, and their intertwined stories are fascinating. Imagine, if you will, Dr. James Murray of the London Philological Society. He has been approached by Oxford to coordinate an enormous academic venture: an exhaustive compilation and

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categorization of the English language. As the submissions for this project pour in from across England, one contributor stands apart in his accumulation of word definitions culled from innumerable texts. Curious, Dr. Murray seeks out this erudite fellow and learns that he is not a man at liberty for casual get-togethers. He is W.C. Minor, an American Civil War veteran and surgeon whose permanent residence is Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum, where he has been incarcerated for murder. The story is remarkable; its telling is highly readable; what is more, the book is a fine introduction to the marvel of the OED.

Among the three studies of creativity I want to recommend, my favorite is probably "The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America," by Erik Larson (Vintage). Here is everything that makes for a rousing, disturbing, and inspirational tale — ambition, innovation, determination, deception, depravity, and, above all, drama. Whose tale is more compelling: that of the brilliant architect, Daniel H. Burnham, who raised a shining beaux-arts dream out of the squalor and swamps of late-19th-century Chicago, or that of the serial killer, Dr. H.H. Holmes, who used the chaos and anonymity of the young city to lure, murder, and dispose of his victims? It's a coin toss. Both narratives are spellbinding. The irony is that both men show the same peculiar strand of compulsive genius, which can manifest itself in darkness or light but is always of magnetic interest.

Justine Olawsky explores literary and cultural issues in her popular blog: www.sadiebugsmom.blogspot.com.

Here are some books that I've spent time with over the last year. I think that other people will like them, too.

First, "The State," by Anthony de Jasay (Liberty Fund). "The State" is an encyclopedic look at the many problems with that singularly problematic institution. Since the time of Thomas Hobbes' "Leviathan" most people have (tacitly) assumed that almost any government is preferable to life in the state of nature. Not so fast, Tom, says de Jasay. Maybe it's not such a deal after all. He writes: "It is not hard to interpret history in a way which should make me prefer the harm *people* do to my interest, to the harm *people organized into a state* and capable of coercing me, can do to my interest." After all, "The state . . . has got all the guns. Those who armed it by disarming themselves, are at its mercy." Thanks, Tom, but no thanks. De Jasay shows that it is the advocates of *limited government*, not the anarchists, who are the wild-eyed utopians. Expecting a state to limit itself is like expecting a wolf to choose dandelions over lamb at lunchtime. And no, a constitution is no solution.

Second, "Our Enemy the State," by Albert Jay Nock (Fox & Wilkes). Speaking of constitutions . . . Nock is one of the godfathers of the modern libertarian movement, but who's read this book lately? Its substance and tone are different from standard libertarian fare. Except for Jefferson, Nock has no time for the "Founding Fathers," who were intent on leaving the British Empire so they could start their own exploitative "Merchant-state." The Constitution was the result of a "coup d'etat" in Philadelphia, where men who were supposed to make only marginal adjustments to the Articles of Confederation opted for a whole new system featuring a strong tax-collecting central government. Thus was born America's Corporate State. Yet, for reasons that escape Nock, constitutional sentimentalism lives — even among libertarians. Go figure.

Third, "Studies in Mutualist Political Economy," by Kevin Carson (self-published; see www.mutualist.org/id47.html). The author is a self-proclaimed "free-market anti-capitalist," a fan of the 19th-century American individualist anarchist Benjamin Tucker. I disagree with some of what Carson has to say, but he is dead on when he writes that libertarians "use the term 'free market' in an equivocal sense: they seem to have trouble remembering, from one moment to the next, whether they're defending actually existing capitalism or free market principles." As a result, the people he calls "vulgar libertarians" defend the reigning property distribution and the dominant corporations as though they had arisen under laissez faire. He throws down the gauntlet to libertarians: either stop apologizing for the corporate elite or stop complaining about government intervention in the economy.

Fourth, "Faith in Freedom: Libertarian Principles and Psychiatric Practices" (Transaction Publishers), by Thomas Szasz. One of the latest books by one of my favorite people, "Faith in Freedom" examines the writings of a slew of classical liberals and libertarians, and finds that in most cases, they are inexplicably nonchalant about the systematic violation of the rights of people branded "mentally ill" by the pseudomedical specialty called psychiatry. It's another case of libertarians needing to wake up.

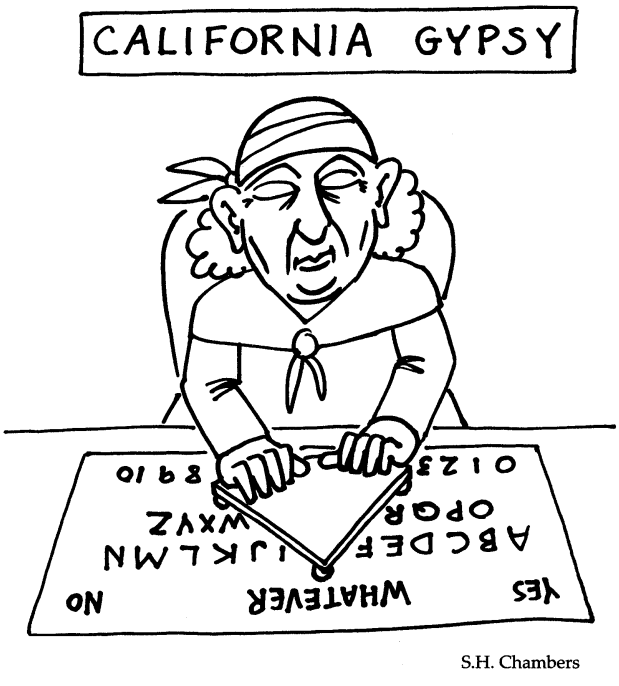
De Jasay shows that it is the advocates of limited government, not the anarchists, who are the wild-eyed utopians. Expecting a state to limit itself is like expecting a wolf to choose dandelions over lamb at lunchtime.

Sheldon Richman is editor of "The Freeman" and proprietor of the blog "Free Association" (www.sheldonrichman.com).

When Jeannette Walls was a student at Barnard College, a professor asked the class to discuss what might be done for the homeless. Walls responded, "If some of them were willing to work hard and make compromises, they might not have ideal lives, but they could make ends meet." The professor shook with outrage at this seeming callousness. "What do you know about the lives of the underprivileged?" he demanded. "What do you know about the hardships and obstacles that the underclass faces?"

As it turns out, quite a lot. Jeannette's parents were living on the streets of New York City at that very moment, homeless by choice. As a child Walls had lived in a trailer, a tent, the family car, a converted railroad depot, and eventually a tiny house in West Virginia with no heat or electricity, but plenty of running water pouring through the roof. But in that Barnard classroom, Jeannette wasn't ready to reveal her past. "You have a point," she meekly responded.

Now a reporter for MSNBC, Walls is ready to tell her story, through an astounding memoir called "The Glass Castle" (Scribner). Raised by brilliant, educated parents who would not settle down or hold jobs, at times she was so hungry she ate food from the school trash can. If anyone had an excuse to whine and complain, she did. But the tone of her memoir is uplifting and triumphant, capturing the adventure of a life lived on the fly, outside the normal rules. "We heard Mom and Dad talking about buying us kids real beds," she writes, "but we said they shouldn't do it. We liked our boxes. They made going to bed seem like an adventure."



S.H. Chambers

Walls makes her whole childhood seem like an adventure. Instead of sniveling about the absence of Santa Claus, she describes the wonder of sitting in the desert with her father on Christmas Eve, being allowed to choose a star for her very own. Once she wanted to transplant a tiny Joshua tree closer to the house they were staying in, where it could be protected from the wind. Her mother stopped her. "You'd be destroying what makes it special," she said. "It's the Joshua tree's struggle that gives it its beauty."

That seems to be the controlling metaphor for this memoir. Witty, honest, sometimes joyful and sometimes shocking, her story is not an invitation to attend a pity party, but a description of the struggle that brought beauty to her life. Walls is proud of who she has become, and understanding of the parents who built "glass castles" for her to dream on. Her memoir will bewitch you.

Jo Ann Skousen teaches English literature and writing at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. Her film reviews are a regular feature in Liberty.

Thomas Sowell's "Black Rednecks and White Liberals" (Encounter Books) is a stunning collection of lengthy essays about race. The principal essay identifies the surprising genesis of redneck culture in America, and its devastating effect on black culture; and it puts the blame exactly where it belongs: on white liberals. Other essays are equally informative and provocative. Sowell's chapter "Black Education: Achievements, Myths and Tragedies" is at once revealing and heartbreaking. He writes that "[r]acial discrimination barriers kept educated blacks out of some . . . occupations but, until perhaps the middle of the 20th century, there were relatively few [educated] blacks to be kept out by such barriers."

If there were two major issues that divided this nation in the 20th century, race being one, the other certainly was radicalism. And there is no better exegesis of the radical experience, personally, politically, and culturally, than that provided by David Horowitz. He rejected the radicalism of his Communist parents and embraced the principles of national security and individual rights that are today the cornerstone of American conservatism. Horowitz's "Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey" (Free Press) is the compelling story of his time on the battlefields of the political and cultural wars that were fought in America from the 1940s to the end of the 20th century. In prose often rising to the poetic, he unsparingly bares his personal, psychological, and political soul. In the end, he openly admits that "[i]f I knew at the beginning what I have learned, I would not have given my life to the socialist fantasy, or the Panther cause, or marriage to a woman addicted to an illusion. But I would not now give up the impulse to love or dream that brought me these travails, either. Or the passion for justice. Or the will to make myself better. If ever I were tempted to give up hope, I would only have to look at how far I have come."

The wars over race and radicalism are, in the end, disputes about the fundamental issue of the nature of this country and the scope of individual rights. Accordingly, and at the risk of being accused of self-promotion, I make a third choice for summer reading: "The Keeper of the Flame" (written by me and available at booklocker.com), an examination and analysis of Justice Clarence Thomas' opinions during his 14 terms on the Supreme Court. These opinions show that Thomas understands the appropriate role of a Supreme Court justice. They also show his methodology for proper decision-making and his position on fundamental constitutional questions, among them federalism, separation of powers, judicial review, and such Bill of Rights issues as abortion, affirmative action, the death penalty, and the alleged rights of prisoners. (As such,

"Keeper of the Flame" is also a primer for the major areas of modern American constitutional law.) Justice Thomas' opinions prove that his originalist jurisprudence is rooted in the Founding, and thus aims at preservation of the constitutional fabric and the individual rights it was designed to protect.

Henry Mark Holzer, a constitutional lawyer, is Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn Law School. He is the author of "Sweet Land of Liberty?", "Speaking Freely," "Why Not Call It Treason?", and other books.

Reading lists are as fun as they are arbitrary; no real book lover can list just one book, or a dozen, as Best, or Favorite, or Most Important. And of course, Liberty's readers are already familiar with the classics of libertarianism. So I will pick four books that I suspect few libertarians have read but that are worth their while. I write this list in the faith that books exist not only to tell us what we want to hear, but to bang on our doors and shout through our windows and give us questions as well as answers.

"America's Constitution: A Biography" (Random House), by Akhil Reed Amar. I know of no writer who understands the Constitution — including such subtle matters as divided sovereignty and the legal significance of the preamble — better than Akhil Amar. Given the alarming number of libertarians willing to humiliate themselves with such concoctions as the "right to secede," it would be a real relief to see more of them sober themselves with this brilliant book. Like his last book, 1998's "Bill of Rights: Creation and Reconstruction" (Yale University Press), Amar's "Biography" combines meticulous precision and encyclopedic knowledge to explain how the Constitution works as a complete structure — an approach that allows him to be simultaneously original and faithful to the Constitution's original meaning. Like the document itself, this book is within the reach of the layman but also a work of profound wisdom.

"The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis," by W.J.F. Jenner (Penguin). This little-known commentary on Chinese culture, first published in 1992, is aging quickly, but its insights are still extraordinarily enlightening. Chinese culture, Jenner writes, is suffering from "the rule that thou shalt commit no novelty," a hex that could portend catastrophe in the new century, and that casts a shadow over the optimism with which many libertarians view China today. Fans of Virginia Postrel's "The Future and Its Enemies" will especially enjoy Jenner's analysis of the ultimate static society.

"The John Varley Reader" (Ace). Varley — my very favorite writer (see "Libs in Space," Liberty, August 2003, or "Of Mars and Mammoths" on p. 45) — makes writing seem so easy. But what he accomplishes is the hardest task of all: no matter how outlandish his premise, he carries you into a world of absolute realism. And Varley's science fiction has some of the most bizarre premises of all. His characters can change sex at will, store their memories in case of death, and sculpt atmospheric storms as artworks. More than imagination and narrative skill qualifies Varley for this list, however. His stories reveal a dynamism — an acceptance of the inevitable pluses and minuses of progress, and a basic confidence in humanity — that mark him as a true "free spirit."

"The Metaphysical Club," by Louis Menand (Farrar, Straus). Well deserving of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize, Menand's book tells the story of the modern age, and especially of progressivism, the philosophical revolution that created the regulatory welfare state (see my "Curse of the Progressives," Liberty, August 2004). Menand, though sympathetic to progressivism, is honest enough to acknowledge its shortcomings. More important, he tells the story in memorable, endlessly compelling terms. The richness of his story is a refreshing counterweight to the boring morality plays pervading so many books on political history. Not that there weren't any bad guys; Oliver Wendell Holmes was nothing short of a monster. But how he got that way is an awful philosophical tragedy. This is must reading for understanding how we got to where we are.

Timothy Sandefur is a staff attorney at the Pacific Legal Foundation.

The recent passing of Jane Jacobs makes me recall that the great, underacknowledged theme of her popular classic, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (Modern Library), was that successful urban life cannot be centrally planned. It results, instead, from individuals acting harmoniously. This was the view that set her in opposition to New York's master builder Robert Moses and his intellectual sidekick Lewis Mumford, who both believed that Higher Intelligences could be wiser than public tastes.

Another Jacobs theme was that life on the street was a greater measure of the quality of a neighborhood's life than, say, its architecture. While the latter can be photographed, the former must be felt to be understood. Her model was the western precincts of Manhattan's Greenwich Village, where she lived, where people walk sooner than drive, where many homes are owned rather than rented, where she successfully resisted Moses' plan to bulldoze residential housing to make way for a freeway, much as he had done in the Bronx in a disgusting episode documented in Marshall Berman's "All That Is Solid Melts into Air" (Penguin).

Need I add that Jacobs' bias influenced my own "SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony" (Routledge), whose libertarian theme holds that no central authority planned the transformation of an industrial slum into a fertile artists' colony with renovated "lofts" in the 1970s and 1980s and, by the

Books exist not only to tell us what we want to hear, but to bang on our doors and shout through our windows and give us questions as well as answers.

21st century, into an informal shopping mall — developments that, may I repeat, were not centrally planned but simply resulted from many individuals acting freely and harmoniously. Indeed, because the industrial slum was so decrepit, it was simply a white space on planners' maps. I'm now trying to relocate to the Rockaways, which is New York City's

beach town on the Atlantic Ocean, where the Mosesmen in the late 1960s bulldozed three miles of friendly summer housing in the name of "urban renewal" that still has not happened. Imagine: oceanfront property in New York City that has been empty for over three decades!

May I also recommend Jacobs' classic to people who have spent their lives in suburbs and rural territories, as a means of explaining how city folk and urban neighborhoods thrive. That's a good reason for reading my book as well.

Way back in 1980, having earlier relocated to Toronto (so that her teenage sons would not be drafted during the Vietnam War), Jacobs published a book sympathetic to Quebeçois separatism, which I still think would be a good idea, not just for the Francophones but also for English Canadians. Had she stayed in New York in the 21st century, she might have joined me in advocating the secession of my hometown, if not the entire eastern seaboard, which would be good not just for us sophisticates but also for Yahooland. But that's my fantasy for the life that Jane Jacobs, a sympathetic polemicist and sensible activist, might have led, had she lived here rather than there.

Richard Kostelanetz is an artist/writer living in New York. He is the author of "Alternative Views" (Autonomedia) and of other new books, appearing under "Examples" on www.richardkostelanetz.com.

So many books, so little space. Now that I've retired from Laissez Faire Books, summer books are all I read. I should have known I'd have to submit a book report.

Two of my favorites are "Iron and Silk" by Mark Salzman (Vintage), and "The Left Hand of Darkness" by Ursula LeGuin (Ace). Salzman's book is a memoir that recalls his time in the early 1980s teaching English in the Hunan province of China. With a delightful knack for describing his students and coworkers, the petty rules of bureaucratic China, and the exacting demands of Pan, his famous *wushu* (martial arts) teacher, he draws the reader ever more deeply into an exotic world. Salzman remains a stranger in a strange land, but his curiosity to understand the Chinese people is infectious, and his determination to excel in his chosen sport is inspiring.

Even more exotic are the people and places of LeGuin's science fiction novel. "Few foreigners are so foreign as I," explains Genly (or sometimes Genry), the narrator of the piece. Genly might seem very usual and knowable to us, but on the world to which he is the emissary he is indeed "foreign," considered to be a sexual "pervert." You see, on the planet Winter, normal folks are all androgynous until they reach *kemmer*, at which point they (and the persons to whom they are attracted) select a gender and have a relationship, perhaps a child. This choice of gender isn't permanent. And the ability to switch sexes isn't necessarily the most interesting thing about the inhabitants of Winter, either. LeGuin gives us an abundance of persuasive, fascinating detail about her lushly imagined world and its people.

It's that same attention to detail that lifts "Iron and Silk" out of the newly-disgraced category of the memoir. To prepare for my book report, I'd planned to just flip through these volumes and quickly refresh my memories of them. But I found myself ensnared anew, compelled to read each from cover to cover. These are books to love, to treasure, to visit again and again — as different as could be, but equally exhilarating.

Since a few words remain of my allotment, I'd like also to mention "Heretic: Confessions of an Ex-Catholic Rebel," by Jerome Tuccille (iUniverse), a prequel to Tuccille's notorious cult-favorite "It Usually Begins with Ayn Rand" (Fox & Wilkes). "Heretic" is just as outrageous, just as fun, and just as serious in its underlying questions.

Plus, if you order quickly from Laissez Faire Books, you might still snag an autographed copy of "Ego & Hubris" (Ballantine), Harvey Pekar's graphic and graphically illustrated account of the outlandish life-so-far of Michael Malice, a Randian who interned at the Cato Institute. Liberty readers will likely feel a kinship.

Whew! I've written my book report and even managed to sneak in a plug for LFB.com, so now I can go back to watching the anarcho-brigand science fiction series "Firefly" for the umpteenth time. Then I'm going to read a book . . .

Andrea Millen Rich ran Laissez Faire Books for 22 years. She is now exploring her next career.

"Where is human nature so weak as in a bookstore?"
— Henry Ward Beecher

My favorite pastime is to drift into a used bookstore during a lazy summer afternoon, and discover a new world. I figure that 80% of used books can't be found in a new bookstore like Barnes & Noble or Borders, but oh, what treasures they are. You'll discover novels, biographies, and words of wisdom that have somehow been lost in today's busybody world. I well remember the day I sauntered into a bookstore in the small college town of Durango, Colo., and discovered the Chinese-American philosopher Lin Yutang and a first edition of his masterfully wise and entertaining "The Importance of Living" (John Day). I've read it many times, and have memorized and repeated his musings and missives on American life — his listing of the "three American vices," and his old Chinese counsel to venerate the old, enjoy the conversation of the female voice, and "lie on a plot of grass under tall beautiful trees of an idle afternoon and just do nothing."

So "The Importance of Living" is my first recommendation. Buy it in a used bookstore if you can, and on Amazon if you must (you probably won't find it in most new bookstores, even though Little, Brown has issued a new printing).

For those inclined toward pecuniary gain, may I suggest that you avoid Donald J. Trump's ramshackle "How to Get Rich" and focus your attention on a real classic published originally in Playboy — "How to Be Rich," by J. Paul Getty, America's first billionaire. (Note the difference between the verbs in those two titles.) What a tale of enterprise, intrigue, and obsession! The first chapter, "How I Made My First Billion" is a hoot, and the chapter on "The Wall Street Investor" is the most profound twelve pages ever written on the subject. Although the book was published in 1965, every page rings true today. Pick up a hardback first edition, or if you can't find one, try the 1983 Penguin Jove edition in paperback.

My third recommendation is a math book. No, not a boring textbook on algebra or calculus, but a delightful and captivating work on the beauty and magic of numbers. It's "Mathematical Mysteries," by Calvin C. Clawson. You'll be

mesmerized by Euler's Theorem, the Golden Ratio, Fibonacci numbers, and the magnificent harmonic series. Clawson also tells the unbelievable stories of famous mathematicians such as Gauss and Ramanujan. Published ten years ago by Perseus Books, "Mathematical Mysteries" is both entertainment and education.

There is no doubt in my mind that if you read any of these three books on the beach, you will be surrounded by admirers in no time. *Buen provecho.*

Mark Skousen is the author of "The Making of Modern Economics."

At the top of my recommended summer reading list is a book by Erika Holzer: "Ayn Rand: My Fiction-Writing Teacher" (Madison Press). I love this book. Rand was Erika's mentor and friend for many years; this book is part memoir and part style guide. As a literary autobiography, it highlights the relationship between Rand and Holzer with stories that are both poignant and humorous. As a literary guide, it extends Rand's aesthetics, exploring the implications of "The Romantic Manifesto" and the many applications of Rand's lectures on writing fiction.

Erika's husband Henry Mark Holzer also offers a great addition to summer reading: a new book that analyzes in great detail all the majority, concurring, and dissenting Supreme Court opinions of Justice Clarence Thomas. "The Keeper of the Flame" (Madison Press) is a remarkable book on many levels; even if you're not a fan of Thomas, Hank Holzer presents a case that is methodical, logical, and historical. He makes a thought-provoking argument for regarding Thomas as a defender of constitutional principles.

For the philosophically inclined, let me suggest a new book by Douglas B. Rasmussen and Douglas J. Den Uyl: "Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics" (Penn State University Press). The book continues the Rasmussen-Den Uyl project of providing a neo-Aristotelian foundation for political liberalism. The authors give us a well-reasoned and principled argument in support of individualism and a libertarian politics.

Finally, for a change of pace, get thee to an online bookstore specializing in used books and order a copy of Miklos Rozsa's autobiography, "Double Life" (Hippocrene Books). The book was published in the '80s, but I can't think of a better way to prepare yourself for the Rozsa Centenary, which is almost upon us (April 2007). Rozsa was one of the finest composers of his generation, and he wrote some of the greatest cinematic scores. But his celebrated work for epic and film noir genres is only half the story; his compositions for the concert hall remain a remarkable, though largely unheralded, achievement. This book will help you understand how a unique creator masterfully navigated his way through two worlds of music.

Chris Matthew Sciabarra is editor of The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies and the author of "Total Freedom: Toward a Dialectical Libertarianism."

I'm not sure how summer reading differs from other reading, but if you're stuck on the tarmac in an airplane that is going nowhere, it would be great to have with you a Sue Grafton or a Jane Austen, and this summer I'll probably be reading Jane Jacobs as well.

Grafton writes the "ABC" series of mysteries, starting with "A is for Alibi" (Crimeline). She has reached "S is for Silence" (Putnam), the only one I haven't read yet. In my view, Grafton is the best writer about female detectives; her Kinsey Milhone is wiry and tough and intensely serious about her investigations. Grafton's writing has some of the spareness of Robert Parker's Spencer novels, but the plots are more intricate and satisfying, and Kinsey is much more appealing than anyone in those books. She rejects social commitments — her strongest emotional ties are with her octogenarian landlord, Henry Pitts — and we respect her while feeling the pain that she doesn't quite admit to. An oddity of the series stems from the fact that the investigation in each book follows quickly on the previous one. The first book was published in 1982, so even after 18 volumes the year is probably 1990. No cell phones or iPods.

Part of Kinsey's charm is that she can't bear society. Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of one of the best novels ever written, also seeks freedom from society — in her case, from the stifling corset of life among the English gentry in the early 19th century. What makes "Pride and Prejudice" eternally exhilarating is that Elizabeth doesn't merely escape the bounds of society but triumphs over them — morally, emotionally, and financially. Her complex courtship with Darcy is breathtaking every time you read it. Unfortunately, explaining Jane Austen's genius is like trying to explain the excitement of golf to a nonplayer, so I won't try.

As for nonfiction, my first thought was any book by Thomas Sowell, but I'm switching my choice to Jane Jacobs. Her recent death at the age of 89 reminded me of the wealth of insights she has given us. I'd like to consider them anew, not through the lens of the urbanists (planners and anti-planners) who have beatified her, but through my own. ("The Death and Life of Great American Cities" [Modern Library] is the urbanists' Bible and the Devil quotes it as well as anyone.)

Not only was Jacobs an autodidact (I learned that word through a somewhat sneering review of one of her later books), but she moved, as interest led her, through disciplines from sociology to economics. Nor did she stop at just a few ideas, even though many of her acolytes did. So I'll probably

"You may speak freely, Frobisher — I intend to let you go by the end of the month anyway."

look back at the surprising "Economy of Cities" (Vintage), in which she introduced the idea that cities preceded agriculture. Then maybe I'll search to see if her hypothesis has gained any traction in academic anthropology departments. Oh, but then I'll need to search the internet, and you can't do that on the airplane . . .

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I'd like to recommend four books that make thinking about complex issues fun, and a fifth that offers a very personal statement by a remarkable man.

"The Undercover Economist: Exposing Why the Rich Are Rich, the Poor Are Poor — And Why You Can Never Buy a Decent Used Car!" by Tim Hartford (Oxford University Press). This lengthily entitled book is an attempt by a writer for the "Financial Times" to introduce people to how economists see the world. It works: Hartford's comments on a wide range of topics, from the price of coffee to the question of why poor countries are poor, are both interesting and completely accessible to readers with no background in economics.

"5000 B.C. and Other Philosophical Fantasies" by Raymond Smullyan (St. Martin's). As the title suggests, Smullyan's book can be described as playful philosophy. The author deals with central ideas, but does so in amusing puzzles and anecdotes. He is the best writer I know at condensing complex issues. Almost hidden among the games and stories is the most elegant depiction of the issues raised by the celebrated Kurt Gödel that I have ever seen — and a lovely discussion of the ontological argument for the existence of God. Neither topic is easy, but Smullyan makes them look that way.

"The Pleasure of Finding Things Out," by Richard Feynman (Basic Books). Feynman was a hero to a generation of scientists. He was a Nobel laureate who resigned from the National Academy of Science because "that was another organization most of whose time was spent in choosing who was illustrious enough to join." He worked on the Manhattan Project, wrote the minority report for the Challenger inquiry (a report included in this book), and inspired many scientists simply to do what scientists ought to do — pursue understanding. All his books are worth reading. This one offers 13 short pieces, among them a thoughtful attempt to discuss the conflict between religion and science, and two discussions that set the stage for nanotechnology.

"The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology" by Ray Kurzweil (Viking). This interesting book should be read as a cross between science and science fiction. The author is a highly respected inventor and a successful businessman. He conceives of himself as writing "the story of the destiny of the human-machine civilization, a destiny we have come to refer to as the Singularity." He believes we are at the point of creating a man-machine intelligence of enormous power: "by the end of this century the nonbiological portion of our intelligence will be trillions of trillions of times more powerful than the unaided human intelligence." In a few areas in which I believe I am competent to judge, I found his positions far too optimistic. But there is much of value in his arguments, and he has made a laudable effort to make them comprehensible. Read this for entertainment. If it strikes a chord, the references are there for you to pursue.

"Dear America," by Karl Hess. The book was published by Morrow in 1975 and is long out of print, but I was able to get a used copy from Abebooks (www.abebooks.com) for under $5, plus shipping. If you knew Karl, as many people in the libertarian movement did, or only know *of* him, you will enjoy his summary of a remarkable life. After all, he did write speeches for both Barry Goldwater and the Black Panthers, and he did run guns to Cuba. His attempts to explain why corporations are dehumanizing can be questioned, but his sincerity and wisdom should not.

Ross Overbeek has been a professor at Northern Illinois and a senior scientist at Argonne National Laboratory. Most of his past research was in computer science, but in 1989 he met Carl Woese and has since focused on understanding microbial life. He most recently was a founder of the Fellowship for Interpretation of Genomes.

Surveys usually show that people prefer long books to short ones. Anyway, summer is the natural habitat of long books. So have you read all the great long books?

"Paradise Lost": Nobody who has got through the first two pages has ever put it down — although, as Samuel Johnson said, nobody ever wished it longer.

"War and Peace": The plot is formless, the philosophy is ridiculous and obtrusive, the characters are almost wholly unsympathetic, as are the reasons that are supposed to make you like them. The measure of the novel's greatness is that despite all that, the book is irresistible; its vitality carries all before it. Besides reading the book, you should check out the DVD of the film version (Russia, 1967) in its complete, eight-hour, newly re-released edition.

"Mansfield Park": The Jane Austen novel that you're not supposed to like is actually her greatest achievement. Its "conservatism" is actually a harrowing vision of good and evil, deception and redemption — a fascinating literary accomplishment.

But literary adventures cannot be measured by number of words or complexity of artistic devices. If I were going to suggest just one book for everyone to read, it would be "Paddle-to-the-Sea," Holling Clancy Holling's illustrated tale for children, first published in 1941 but readily available in a good reprint by Houghton Mifflin. It's the story of an Indian boy who carves a model boat and places it on a snowbank above a tributary of Lake Superior, knowing that when spring comes it will float away from him: "You will go with the water and you will have adventures that I would like to have." And so it is. The tiny vessel, freed by the sun, traverses the Great Lakes, "witnessing" much of the landscape of America and receiving the friendly assistance of various types of people, who repair it and help it on its pilgrimage to the great salt sea. The pictures are beautiful, the text is truly educational, and the message is unforgettable. It comes at the end, in the final picture, at the conclusion of part 27; you'll get to it; and you'll enjoy every stage of the journey.

Stephen Cox is editor of Liberty. His most recent books are "The Woman and the Dynamo: Isabel Paterson and the Idea of America" and "The New Testament and Literature."

My Life As a Legislator

by R. Kenneth Lindell

Getting elected as a libertarian is not easy. Making a difference in office is harder still.

I am a libertarian. I am also a Republican freshman member of the Maine House of Representatives. Some would say that being a libertarian legislator is like being a fish out of water; I would say it's more like a fish learning to ride a bike. But anything is possible with enough determination.

Like most libertarians I am a convert to the movement. I grew up in a Republican family. I was five years old when my father worked for Richard Nixon's reelection. I was an active college Republican during the Reagan era. I thought that Reagan was a great leader, but rather old-fashioned and out of touch with my generation on many social issues. I learned about the libertarian movement in 1988 when I read an article in the Wall Street Journal about Ron Paul's campaign for president under the banner of the Libertarian Party. I was intrigued. My views were far more in line with his than with those of George H.W. Bush. On a whim I voted for Ron Paul that year, and I didn't feel as if I had wasted my vote. Two years later — after President Bush (the elder) and John McKernan, the Republican governor of Maine, had both raised taxes — I joined the Libertarian Party.

The libertarian movement is driven by the fundamental principles of individual liberty and self-sufficiency so well encapsulated in the non-aggression principle. The libertarian economist Murray Rothbard best described that principle, in his essay "War, Peace, and the State":

> The fundamental axiom of libertarian theory is that no one may threaten or commit violence ("aggress") against another man's person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. In short, no violence may be employed against a nonaggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory.

How does a libertarian state legislator hold true to such a principle while participating in the formulation of public policy? After all, every law must be enforced by means of aggression, or at least the threat of aggression.

The answer came to me well before I ever had to ask the question of myself. It came at a rally I attended in Boston in 1996, a fundraiser for Harry Browne's first presidential campaign. The speaker was the late David Brudnoy, who for more than a quarter century was the voice of Boston evening talk radio. Brudnoy spoke of an allegorical "freedom train" making a journey to the perfect libertarian society — Galt's Gulch perhaps? The train has far to travel from the statist society we live in. Many of us may want to get off before the train arrives at its final destination, but anyone who wants greater freedom needs to get aboard right here.

This message resonated with me because even then I was uncomfortable with the anarchist fringe of the libertarian movement. Nevertheless I remained active in the Libertarian Party until 2000 because I believed that libertarian ideas could have an influence on mainstream politics. I also thought that the LP was the most effective means of bringing that influence to bear. It took less than a year on the Libertarian National Committee to disabuse me of that notion. It astounded me how much infighting and jockeying for position could exist in an utterly powerless political organization. The LP should

have been focusing on how it might actually get more libertarians elected, but it squabbled instead over who should attend its conventions or what staff members should be hired or fired. In 2001 I resigned from the LNC and quit the Libertarian Party.

I stayed away from politics for the next few years, focusing instead on building a new business. But in 2004, redrawing of the 151 districts from which Maine state representatives are elected presented the opportunity of an open seat that included my home town of Frankfort, Maine. I decided it was time to throw my hat in the ring and filed papers for the Republican nomination.

I ran a pretty traditional Republican campaign. I first contacted and joined the Republican Liberty Caucus and signed the Liberty Compact, a statement of conscience by candidates running with the endorsement of that caucus. It stipulates that the candidate will work to

> Restore liberty, not restrict it; shrink government, not expand it; reduce taxes, not raise them; abolish programs, not create them; promote the freedom and independence of citizens, not the interference of government in their lives; and observe the limited, enumerated powers of our Constitution, not ignore them.

I was running as a Republican, but also as a libertarian. I campaigned for lower taxes, a friendly business climate, and better education. I had one primary opponent, who dropped out early. My Democratic opponent was the well-connected chairman of the Hancock County Democratic Party. Two of the six towns in the district are in Hancock County, the other four — including Frankfort — in Waldo County. In the end I won by a margin of just 32 votes. I polled less than 35% of the vote in the Hancock County side of the district but won almost 70% in three towns in Waldo County. It was mainly parochial concerns that won the day for me. Few people were put off by my libertarianism, though much was made of it during the campaign.

The 122nd Maine Legislature, to which I was elected, is controlled by the Democrats. In the Senate, Democrats have a three-seat majority (of 36 seats). In the House, they have 74 seats (of 151) but control the chamber with the support of one Green and two Independents. Republicans hold 73 seats and

I thought that the LP was the most effective means of spreading libertarian ideas. It took less than a year on the Libertarian National Committee to disabuse me of that notion.

caucus with a third Independent (first elected as a Democrat). In such a closely divided chamber every vote counts, and that affords a great deal of influence to every member — but only if the influence is wisely and carefully used.

Once I was sworn in I had to decide on a strategy: how to be an effective legislator, being true to my principles but without simply saying "no" to everything. I had to learn quickly how to deal with the thousands of bills that would come before us. I developed three approaches to any philosophically difficult piece of legislation (and there have been many): defer action, take a stand, or try to make a difference.

Taking a stand, of course, is the most dramatic alternative. It is what I have done on issues that are either too important, or too well advertised, to be ignored. Taking a stand often

It astounded me how much infighting and jockeying for position could exist in an utterly powerless political organization.

means accepting that a particularly onerous piece of legislation is destined to become law — raising taxes, curtailing freedoms, or creating new government agencies — yet still acting to oppose it. This might mean standing as a lone voice against a unanimous report from a committee that has not considered the impact that certain legislation can have on individual liberty.

Early in the first session a bill came to the floor prohibiting the furnishing or use of inhaled alcohol. A unanimous report came from a committee, recommending that the bill "ought to pass." The bill aimed at creating a new crime — ingesting alcohol in vaporized form from a nebulizer. (Apparently this is quite a fad in some British "oxygen bars" and among the spring break crowd in Daytona Beach.) Nobody testified against the bill during the public hearings.

I did some research and found that there are no establishments in Maine that furnish vaporized alcohol, a fact that may have accounted for the lack of opposition. I also found that British health authorities had studied nebulizers and found that their use is no more harmful than traditional methods of consuming alcohol.

So I took a stand. I objected to the measure and requested a roll call, stating my objections to the bill. The response from the rest of the chamber was overwhelming support of the measure. I garnered only 10 out of 151 votes. Licking my wounds, I came back on second reading with an amendment to delay the implementation of the law for a year and direct the Bureau of Health to study the safety of vaporized alcohol. The amendment received 64 votes.

I took quite a bit of flack from my colleagues for "championing" vaporized alcohol. But I was vindicated when, a week after the bill was signed by the governor, Time magazine ran an article entitled "No buzz, not filling." The writer pointed out that it takes an hour to inhale an ounce of vodka, and that a bar in New Jersey had installed an alcohol vaporizer but sent it back because nobody could get a buzz from it.

Sometimes a state legislator is faced with the choice of standing on principle and risking his reputation, or sitting silent for the sake of political expedience.

On June 10, 2005, the Maine House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a supplemental budget, known in Augusta-speak as the Part 2 Budget. Part 2 is a fraction of the size of the Part 1 Budget, which in 2005 contained most of the $2 billion to be spent by the state over the following two years. Part 2 is meant to fund special items that don't make up

the bulk of day-to-day government operations. Part 2 is also much less controversial and contentious than Part 1. Last year it was crafted as a compromise bringing together Republicans and Democrats in a unanimous recommendation by the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs.

I had voted against the Part 1 Budget and the mammoth $450 million in borrowing it contained. I voted for Part 2 because it returned some of the money owed to our local hospitals by the state's Medicaid system, and also because I couldn't bear to think about how awful the alternative might have been without the compromise.

The moment of truth for me came in the budget debate when Rep. John Eder, a Green Independent representative from Portland, proposed an amendment. The Eder amendment sought to halt a proposed doubling of the fine for simple marijuana possession from $250 to $500, an effort intended to restore funding for the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency. But this was not a question about the wisdom of the war on drugs.

For the last 20 years state policy has been to treat the simple possession of less than one ounce of marijuana as a civil violation, punishable by fine. The new idea was to increase the resources available to pursue drug traffickers and the users of more dangerous drugs, such as crystal methamphetamine. But doubling the fine might send a message to drug enforcement officers that the funding for their jobs relied on fines from pot possession, increasing the possibility that their attention would be diverted from criminal drug gangs to pot smokers.

My choice was either to sit silent while a misguided policy was enacted, or speak up and risk being labeled as a pro-pot legislator. Almost every representative spoke against the Eder amendment, failing to realize what a foolish policy shift was occurring. Finally I chose to speak, too. My speech raised the issues I've laid out here. The amendment was defeated, with support coming from only 19 members. I guess few others wanted to be labeled pro-pot. Several thought well enough of my principles to send notes to my desk rolled up like joints.

I can take the ribbing. My regret is that after drug enforcement officers have busied themselves ticketing pot smokers, the next complaint will be that the state needs more cops to go after meth labs.

On at least one occasion taking a stand has achieved more than making a statement. During the first session, a bill to establish an insurance fraud unit came before the Insurance and Financial Services Committee — the committee to which I am appointed. It was a perennial bill supported by private investigators who want to require the insurance industry and the State Bureau of Insurance to hire them to investigate fraud. The bill was opposed by insurance lobbyists and the Superintendent of Insurance. But since the Speaker of the House was the bill's sponsor, the committee did not have the nerve to kill it. Instead we created a study commission to report back to the committee in the second session.

During the summer the insurance lobby and the Superintendent of Insurance hatched a plan. The problem they wanted to address wasn't necessarily insurance fraud. The Bureau of Insurance is funded by fees paid by the insurance industry; the revenues, however, far exceed the funds needed to run the bureau. So the legislature routinely sweeps the excess funds from the bureau to the general fund to pay for all sorts of other programs. Meanwhile, the companies rely on their own fraud investigation units, which routinely refer cases to local district attorneys for prosecution. The state attorney general's office also has a financial crimes unit that investigates and prosecutes fraud. Now, however, the superintendent and the insurance industry proposed to employ the excess fees to create five new positions within the Bureau of Insurance for investigators and prosecutors of insurance fraud.

Private investigators were completely cut out of the deal, but when the parties came back to the committee they were all in agreement. The private investigators were nowhere to be found. There were only two opponents of the bill reported to committee by the commission: the Maine People's Alliance (MPA) — a leftist coalition of social activists — and the Trial Lawyer's Association. The MPA opposed the bill as corporate welfare. The trial lawyers objected to some of the police powers given to the proposed fraud unit. I had a different take on the issue; I saw it as an unnecessary expansion of government bureaucracy and power.

The bill came to the floor of the House with a 12–1 "ought to pass" report. I was the sole dissenter on the committee, but I decided to continue taking a stand. I found an ally on the other side of the aisle. A former district attorney who had prosecuted insurance fraud, she immediately recognized the scheme for what it was. We each pitched our cases before our caucuses. This bill had something for both conservatives and liberals to dislike. For conservatives it was an unnecessary expansion of government. For liberals it was an example of the power of big insurance carriers to push through legislation that benefits only them.

The bill failed passage in a 53 to 82 bipartisan vote. Unfortunately, the Senate approved it the next day by a 20–15 margin, almost completely along party lines. Democrats sided with the insurance industry, while all but one Republican sided with consumers and taxpayers. Since the Senate had passed the bill in non-concurrence with the House, it went back to the House to be reconsidered. The Democratic committee chair was so embarrassed about being forced into the posture of defending an industry bill in her own caucus that she made a motion to adhere to our previous action — killing the bill. By taking a stand, I had also helped to make a difference.

My view is that an elected representative has a duty to represent his district first and his personal philosophy second. The people who elected me would be sure not to send me back if I failed to honor this maxim. On some issues, however, my constituents' opinions are, or seem to be, in such conflict with my own principles that I cannot force myself to participate. One bill brought before the legislature would have required women to be subjected to graphic photos of aborted fetuses before undergoing an abortion procedure. I represent a social-

The bill aimed at creating a new crime — ingesting alcohol in vaporized form from a nebulizer. I found out that no establishment in Maine sold vaporized alcohol.

ly conservative district and had promised to be respectful of issues important to the evangelical Christians in my district. I voted for a bill requiring parental notification when a minor receives an abortion. But I just couldn't support the "abortion education" measure, even though the bill had no chance of passing, and I could have voted for it without affecting the outcome. I chose not to be in the chamber for the debate or the subsequent vote.

I voted against a "gay rights" bill because it did not respect the right of free association, regarding a bill prohibiting an employer from firing someone who lives as a transsexual as an infringement on the employer's right to associate with whomever he wished and to regulate behavior in his work place. It should also be the right of a property owner to prohibit sexual behavior that he finds offensive on his property. Many of my constituents are offended by homosexuality. I am not, but I voted against the bill out of deference to the rights of those who do — and, indeed, in defense of the right of association of all people, gay or straight.

Nevertheless, I spent much less of my time taking a stand than trying to make a difference. Taking a stand can sometimes feel as fulfilling as merely deferring action: it feels empty. Seldom is anything accomplished by either of those two strategies. But trying to make a difference can actually work. It involves negotiation and compromise, but compromise need not imply a compromise of principle. To return to David Brudnoy's analogy: it is about getting more people on the train and moving it closer to the libertarian ideal, or at least stopping the train from slipping too far backwards.

Committee work is where any legislator has the most influence and is most likely to be able to make a difference. Maine's legislature has joint standing committees, each with three senators and ten representatives. As I've said, I serve on the Insurance and Financial Services Committee. This is the committee that oversees Governor Baldacci's Dirigo Choice Health initiative. Dirigo is a state-run, state-subsidized health insurance plan that has so far spent over 113 million dollars to insure about 9,000 people, only 2,000 of whom were previously uninsured. Republicans have fought this plan for most of the 122nd Legislature (although many voted for it in the 121st). But Republicans are in a minority.

On Nov. 16, 2005, I unveiled to the Committee my proposal to add a third option to Dirigo. The proposal, which involved a combination of low-cost catastrophic insurance policies and employee-owned health savings accounts (HSAs), promised to expand the appeal of Dirigo Choice by offering a consumer-driven option in addition to the two more traditional insurance plans now available. In my press release I announced:

> I think this could actually save Dirigo Choice. It has become clear that employers and employees are both turned off by the plan as it stands. Premiums are too high, benefits are too stingy, and the structure too inflexible.

My plan keeps the subsidies for low-income individuals, but directs most of those subsidies to consumer-owned HSAs. Through the HSAs, people with low incomes would receive up to $1,500 per year to spend on basic preventive and routine

I guess few others wanted to be labeled pro-pot. Several thought well enough of my principles to send notes to my desk rolled up like joints.

care, and families would receive up to $5,250 per year. The catastrophic insurance plan would cover all medical expenses once the deductible of $5,000 per individual or $10,000 per family was met. If the HSA's balance was not spent it could be rolled over and added to the following year's contribution.

As I explained the details of my plan to my colleagues on committee, I explained how health savings accounts work and how they are a benefit to consumers. Maine was one of a handful of states that still taxed HSA contributions. Although my proposal was killed by the Democrats, I was able to convince enough of them of the benefits of HSAs to get a letter sent to the Appropriations Committee supporting inclusion of an HSA deduction in the 2006 supplemental budget. In March of 2006 we enacted a supplemental budget that implements the HSA deduction in 2006. I had indeed made a difference.

My legislative experience has given me a reputation as a principled, articulate, and thoughtful representative. I tend to stand up and talk too much on the floor, although I have learned not to stand if I don't have anything to add to the debate. The problem is that my perspective is so uncommon in the chamber that I often find I do have something to add. After I spoke in favor of a bill that would have criminalized vandalism intended to ruin a person's business or reputation (a bill meant to deter environmental terrorism), I received a note from a Democrat that read, "I will support the ONTP [ought not to pass] motion, but your motive/behavior distinction is precisely my line of thinking. Glad you expressed it." The bill was passed. I like to think my speech had something to do with it.

At the end of the last session a Republican colleague approached me and said something to the effect that "at first I thought you were a flake, but as I got to know you I have come to respect your point of view." He later said, "I think of you as one of them . . . I forget what you call it." The next day he came up to me and said, "The word I was looking for was 'libertarian.' Yeah, you're one of them libertarians." I told him I considered that a compliment. ❑

"Yeah, but I was innocent *until* I was proven guilty."

The TIF That is Eating Portland

by Randal O'Toole

It swallows neighborhoods whole, leaving only parking lots and rubble — yet it's so sneaky that only planners know it's there.

In November 1998, Metro — the regional government for my hometown of Portland, Oregon — asked voters to increase their property taxes so Metro could double the size of Portland's convention center. The voters resoundingly rejected the idea. So Metro doubled the size of the convention center anyway. As Forbes magazine later noted, the result was that convention center occupancy fell from 71% to 43%.

But after voters rejected the tax increase, how did Metro pay for the expansion?

TIF.

In the same election, Portland's transit agency, Tri-Met, asked voters to increase property taxes to build more light-rail lines. The voters resoundingly rejected the idea. So Tri-Met is building the rail lines anyway. Since the first segment opened, it has carried fewer riders than the buses it replaced.

But, given the fact that the voters rejected the property tax measure, how did Tri-Met pay for the rail construction?

Partly with TIF.

TIF, or tax-increment financing, is a government-finance tool that is much loved by planners and city councils across the country.

TIF is most commonly used by urban-renewal or redevelopment agencies. These agencies have been in the news recently because they frequently use eminent domain to take land from one set of private owners so they can give it or sell it to another set of private owners.

While many people find that outrageous, TIF is more insidious and ought to be more upsetting. It takes money from taxpayers without their knowledge or permission and spends it on things that they probably would not support. Moreover, TIF often provides the financing for eminent domain.

Here's how TIF works. Your city has an urban-renewal agency (or redevelopment agency, depending on the state). The board that runs the agency may be identical to your city council, or the council may appoint a separate board.

The board has the power to draw a line around a piece of vacant land, or perhaps a run-down business district or neighborhood of dilapidated homes, or even a not-so-run-down area, and declare the land inside that line an urban-renewal or redevelopment district. Most, but not all, states require that it declare the area *blighted*, but except as a legal matter, that is unimportant for TIF to work. The property in the district might have a collective value of, say, $1 million, and the property owners pay taxes on that value.

Planners now imagine that this district will be redeveloped and the new developments will have an assessed value of, say, $10 million. That will generate ten times more property taxes. Normally, those taxes would go to schools, police, fire, libraries, and other purposes. But for the next 15 years or more, depending on the state, all the *incremental* taxes in an urban-renewal district — that is, all the taxes paid over-and-above the taxes that are now being paid — go to the urban-renewal agency.

Most states allow urban-renewal agencies to collect those taxes for 10 to 20 years. After that, the taxes go back to the schools, police, and other agencies that normally are funded by them.

Having projected this huge stream of tax revenues, the urban-renewal district sells bonds that will be repaid by taxes. It uses the bonds to subsidize developers to redevelop the properties in the district. The agency will use eminent domain if it thinks the existing owners won't be interested in redevelopment or do not have the resources to undertake it. But often the agency will just negotiate with the existing owners to do the redevelopment.

In effect, developers get to use the property taxes they pay on their developments to help pay for part of their work. Better still, they get the capital value of those taxes, at tax-free municipal bond rates, and they can often leverage that capital to raise more capital.

Imagine getting to use the capital value of 15 years' worth of the property taxes to subsidize the construction of your new home. Depending on your tax rate, you might be able to build a home that is 25–50% larger than you could otherwise afford.

New developments, of course, consume fire, police, sewer, water, and other urban services that are normally paid for out of their property taxes. If they include housing, their residents probably use libraries. If the residents have children, they probably go to public schools. Since the taxes on these properties are not going to a fire, police, water, sewer, library, or school district, other people's taxes must cover those costs. If enough taxes are diverted to TIF, the city schools or libraries will soon suffer a funding crisis, requiring voters to approve tax increases to support them. But the higher taxes are really supporting the TIF-financed developments.

Of course, planners' projections of future tax revenues may be optimistic. In that case, the city urban-renewal agency defaults on its bonds. This may make it difficult for the city to do more urban-renewal projects for a time, but it has no effect on the developer's credit rating or on the bond rating for other city projects. In fact, the city might be able to create a new urban-renewal district somewhere else and start the whole process over.

TIF is extremely popular in California. Former Fullerton city councilor Chris Norby says that the share of all property taxes collected in the state going to redevelopment agencies has increased from less than 1% in 1960 to more than 10% today. As of 2003, says Norby, redevelopment agencies issued $56 billion worth of bonds to finance urban-renewal projects.[1]

The voters resoundingly rejected the idea. So Portland's transit board did it anyway.

At least one state, Colorado, has a sales-tax analog to TIF, known as a public-improvement fee or PIF. Like TIF for property taxes, PIF means that sales taxes collected from retail shops in a redeveloped property go to pay off urban-renewal bonds that subsidized the development, rather than going wherever sales taxes usually go.

TIF was originally developed to fund urban-renewal projects in the 1950s. In those days, urban renewal usually meant downtown revitalization. As "Edge City" author Joel Garreau observes, America built downtowns for only about a century, from the advent of industrialization in the early 19th century until the early 20th century when the decentralizing forces of the automobile, telephone, and electricity rendered downtown densities unnecessary. By the 1950s, many downtowns had declined. They were often populated only by the very poor, with retail stores increasingly threatened by suburban shopping malls, and offices mainly occupied by banks, insurance companies, and other financial firms.

TIF-financed urban renewal cleared the "tenement" housing of poor people, often replacing it with high-rise luxury apartments or civic centers. Planners often botched the job, leaving at best sterile urban monuments and at worst bombed-out districts cleared of low-cost housing but replaced only with parking lots and rubble.

Jane Jacobs discredited this sort of downtown renewal in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961). She argued that many of the so-called slums that planners wanted to clear were in fact living, vital neighborhoods. She claimed that downtown mixtures of housing and retail shops were not a sign of decay, as planners thought, but a usable neighborhood model enjoyed by many working class families.

Jacobs may have demolished the case for slum clearances and urban planning in general, but she did not stop urban renewal for one simple reason: the money never stopped. No state legislature that had granted TIF authority to cities ever considered taking it away. As long as the money was there, it was too tempting for cities to ignore. So cities kept on doing urban renewals of one sort or another.

Of course, it is not necessary for planners to have any logical foundation for their proposals. Planners who suggested that downtowns be revitalized would get strong support from downtown property owners, who welcomed more business and did not mind getting subsidies to attract it. In 1989, MIT planner Bernard Frieden noted that TIF was "one of the leading downtown strategies" because it allows planners to "shield their own ventures from budget review and voter approval." Frieden observed that such programs "are troublesome to people who value accountability based on the informed consent of the governed."[2]

One big problem with TIF is that it creates a moral hazard for developers. Denver-area cities have used TIF to support so many shopping malls that it is doubtful anyone will build a new retail development in the region without TIF support.

While defenders would say that TIF-supported developments create jobs and new businesses, they are at best a zero-sum game. Those jobs and businesses were going to be somewhere in the urban area; all TIF did was transfer them from one location to another. At worst, and ordinarily, TIF is a negative-sum game: the TIF money is taken from schools and other public services, whose quality either declines or is held steady by increases in everyone else's taxes.

Several studies have documented the unfavorable effect of TIF on the cities that use it. Two Illinois researchers found that "cities that adopt TIF grow more slowly than those that do not."[3] A report issued by a left-wing group called the Developing Neighborhood Alternatives Project, in cooperation with the more libertarian Heartland Institute, found that "TIF does not tend to produce a net increase in economic activity;

favors large businesses over small businesses; often excludes local businesses and residents from the planning process; and operates in a manner that contradicts conventional notions of justice and fairness."[4] TIF survives such challenges because it concentrates large benefits on a few, at a relatively small and largely hidden cost to the many.

By 1990, planners had gone beyond merely transferring funds to rent-seeking downtown property owners. Instead, they wanted to change suburban lifestyles. As the fastest growing parts of America, suburbs do not need revitalization, but in planners' eyes they do need redevelopment. The suburbs were too "auto-dependent," planners said. Their solution was New Urbanism.

As long as the money was there, it was too tempting for cities to ignore. So cities kept on doing urban renewals of one sort or another.

Ironically, the planners' "New Urban" model for suburban redevelopment was the high-density, mixed-use downtown neighborhood that Jane Jacobs had defended from an earlier generation of planners. She made her case too well: in arguing that such neighborhoods harbored a valid lifestyle, she convinced a new generation of planners that these neighborhoods were the *only* valid lifestyle. The planners managed to ignore all the pages in the book that criticized both their profession and the very idea of government planning.

So planners set out to redevelop suburban neighborhoods into high-density, mixed-use neighborhoods. Denver used $93 million of TIF money to redevelop old Stapleton Airport into a New Urban neighborhood. Lakewood, a Denver suburb, used $57 million of TIF and PIF money to subsidize the redevelopment of Villa Italia, once the region's largest shopping mall, into Belmar, a mixed-use retail and residential community.

Private developers would have gladly redeveloped both the airport and the shopping mall without any public support. But they would have turned the airport into a conventional low-density suburb and the mall into an updated but still auto-dependent shopping center. Planners used TIF not to spur redevelopment of blighted areas but to socially engineer the region's population to higher densities, densities that they believed were morally superior to those in normal suburbs.

There were few local objections to these projects because neither Stapleton nor Villa Italia had been a residential area. But planners who proposed to redevelop residential areas to higher densities quickly encountered rabid opposition from the people who lived in them. And this is where rail transit comes in.

To get federal funding for rail transit, cities must show that rail lines will be cost-effective. To be cost-effective, they have to attract a lot of riders. So, wishing to boost ridership projections, planners assumed that low-density neighborhoods along the rails would be replaced by high-density developments whose residents would be less auto-dependent and more likely to ride a train. Then, when the rail lines were under construction, the planners told suburban residents that the federal government required that the neighborhoods near the lines be redeveloped into mixed-use, transit-oriented developments. It is one thing to oppose a local plan, quite another to challenge a federal mandate.

Today, Denver and its suburbs plan to use TIF to support the redevelopment of dozens of neighborhoods along existing and proposed light-rail lines. Portland, Los Angeles, San Jose, and other cities with new rail transit lines have done the same.

TIF's most insidious feature is that it is so well hidden that few people are aware of it. As a result, it escaped all the tax revolts that have swept the states in recent years.

- California's Proposition 13, which greatly limited property taxes in 1978, did nothing to slow TIF and only increased the share of taxes that went into it.
- Oregon's Measure 47, passed by voters in 1996, both limited property taxes and required that all increases in taxes and user fees be submitted to the voters. In a compromise approved by the legislature the following year, TIF was the only tax exempted from the requirement that tax increases receive voter approval.
- Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, approved by voters in 1992, limited the growth of state and municipal spending to the rate of inflation plus the rate of population growth. Although TABOR does not mention TIF, cities in Colorado treat TIF as if were outside the purview of TABOR, and no one has successfully challenged this presumed exemption in the courts.

Tax activists in many states have proposed TABOR-like amendments to their own state constitutions. But if they want to curb municipal spending and social engineering, they had better specifically include TIF in those amendments. They should require that no TIF bonding be allowed without a vote of the people in the cities and districts that will be affected by TIF and PIF diversions of taxes into redevelopment.

Recent public attention to the Supreme Court's *Kelo* decision on eminent domain has been a boon for property rights activists. But merely restricting local use of eminent domain will not solve the greater problem of abuse of government power. Without TIF, there would often be no funds for eminent domain for urban redevelopment. But without eminent domain, cities free to use TIF will still waste taxpayers' money on futile social engineering programs. People campaigning to curb abuse of eminent domain should consider restricting TIF as well.

Planners often botched urban renewal, leaving at best sterile urban monuments and at worst bombed-out districts of parking lots and rubble.

The big issue in Portland today is an aerial tramway that

continued on page 42

Down in Egypt Land

by Doug Casey

Treacherous traffic, concrete-bound bureaucracies, and nuclear geopolitics: it's enough to make you wonder how people survive.

Last December, I was in Egypt for a few days during their elections, which predictably reinstalled Hosni Mubarak, age 77, as president. It will be his fifth six-year term, the first having begun in 1981, when he took over from his assassinated predecessor, Anwar Sadat.

Cairo and its environs were pleasant in December. It had been about 30 years, practically a lifetime ago, since I'd been there. Little had changed. Which was surprising, on the one hand, and to be expected — since this is the Muslim world — on the other. One difference, though, was the traffic: it's horrible now, with a lot more cars than 30 years ago, but nonetheless better than it was.

I say that as an involuntary connoisseur of Third World traffic accidents. On a previous visit, I rode a taxi on an expressway from downtown Cairo to Giza. Cars and trucks were weaving as fast as they could between the slower donkey carts, tractors, and bicycles headed in more or less the same direction — all while mobs of pedestrians tried to cross the expressway's eight lanes. I well remember a young woman, carrying a bundle on her head, who got whacked by a taxi a few yards ahead of mine; it was bloody mess, but I don't think she was killed. The passenger in that cab, another woman, jumped out and seeing that I, too, was a Westerner, asked if she could get in. We drove on. I've always wondered what happened to the victim. But I can tell you, being a poor cripple in a poor country is an unpleasant fate. Then again, nobody, not even billionaires, gets out of this world alive. Anyway, the donkey carts are gone now, and today there are pedestrian overpasses at intervals.

The first time I was there, Cairo impressed me as one of the most dirty, crowded, and chaotic cities in the world. But even though its population, and that of Egypt, has more than doubled in the interim, it seemed a much mellower place this time. Perhaps the government's economic growth figures of about 5% per annum are more truth than fiction. Or maybe high oil prices have brought the place a veneer of prosperity. Or maybe some of the $2 billion or so per year with which U.S. taxpayers have been subsidizing the country for the last generation (as a reward for maintaining cordial relations with Israel) have actually gone into the local economy, rather than into various ministers' Swiss bank accounts. Part of the answer is probably that, *mirabile dictu*, the world actually does tend to become better over time because of improvements in technology and the natural inclination of people to work and save. And, like most Islamic countries, Egypt has a stock market.

The Cairo exchange has a fairly long (since 1903) and volatile history. In the '40s, when the extravagant and outrageous King Farouk ran the show, it was the fifth-largest exchange in the world. Then he was deposed by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1952, who nationalized almost everything in his search for the Egyptian path to socialism. The exchange was dormant from 1961 to 1991. Then desperation forced a modicum of liberalization on the government. So there is some reason for optimism, with the government now privatizing many state companies. But I'm not a believer in a rosy future for the land of the pharaohs.

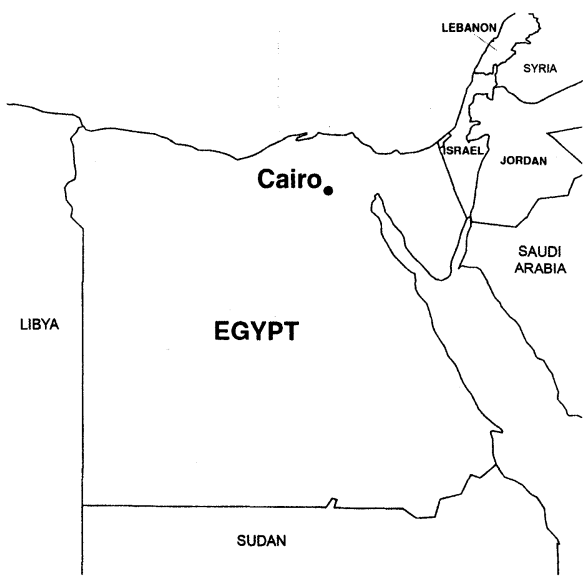
Egyptian Economics — Such As They Are

You've got to ask yourself about any place, but especially about a country like this: how do the people (80 million, in this case) survive? What do they produce? Guesstimates are that

in ancient times Egypt supported a population of about 6 million, and rather comfortably for the era. In those days almost everyone was a farmer, and the annual flooding of the Nile ensured both water and nutrients for crops that made Egypt the breadbasket of the ancient world.

There are still plenty of farmers in Egypt, but since the Aswan High Dam was built by the Russians in the '60s, the Nile doesn't flood anymore. Today the dam generates about 12% of the country's electricity, but it's silting up with the estimated 4 million tons per year of alluvial fertilizer that flows down from the highlands of Ethiopia and Uganda. Now Egyptians have to buy a million tons of chemical fertilizer per year. Of course, a gigantic river that floods everything annually doesn't fit well with an industrial society. When 95% of the country's people live within twelve miles of the river, it's one thing for them all to get wet if they're dirt farmers walking behind oxen, but another thing if most of them are living in apartments.

So the Aswan Dam is a mixed blessing in many ways. Although philosophically I'm of the "pave the planet" school, since I believe mankind's ultimate destiny is in the stars and that the Earth is an insignificant mote in the cosmic scheme of things, I'm naturally suspicious of megaprojects built by economically illiterate socialist governments. They may wind up destroying enough capital to keep people trapped on this planet, like serfs in a medieval village. Militarily, the dam is a boon for Israel. One small nuke and Egypt will be washed into the Mediterranean. Literally.



But farming and the dam, while important, don't bring money into the country. There are basically five things that keep the place going:

1. Tourism. Roughly 5% of GDP. In Egypt, this means foreigners taking pictures of monuments built largely between 3,000 and 4,500 years ago, capital provided by the locals' distant ancestors. And it means other foreigners lying on Red Sea beaches, provided by nature. The tourists keep coming, but every few years they're scared away when a hotel is bombed or a tour bus is machine-gunned.

2. Remittances. Egypt's most reliable export is workers, who send money home to their families.

3. Oil. Net exports ran at roughly 300,000 barrels per day during the last couple of decades, but now the fields are in steep decline, and net exports are down to only 100,000 barrels per day, on the way to zero by the end of the decade.

4. The Suez Canal. Built in the 1860s courtesy of Europeans, it is becoming less important as ships get larger (too large to use the Canal) and air transport grows.

5. Foreign aid.

Unfortunately, none of these things is a sound foundation for prosperity. They're not economic pillars, they're reeds.

For the time being, however, Egypt's balance of payments (which takes into account remittances, investments, and aid) is positive. But the balance of trade (which is much more important because it's a better indicator of what Egyptians produce that other people want) is in the red by $5 billion a year. And there's $25 billion in foreign debt. That's a lot for a country with an $81.5 billion GDP.

No one with any sense has much confidence in government figures, certainly not those from struggling Third World countries. But, to use an old saw from this part of the world, it's not hard to read the writing on the wall, and it's scary. The population is growing at something like 3.5% per year. And unemployment is about 25%, which means that the ranks of young, unemployed, unmarried males — unquestionably the most dangerous creatures ever to have walked the Earth — are swelling. Meanwhile, when you look at the five income sources listed above, you can see that Egypt is relying on nothing but accidents of history and nature, and the kindness of strangers.

From a strictly economic perspective, Egypt is a disaster waiting to happen. But the same is more or less true of all the Islamic countries (with the minor exceptions of the Emirates and Malaysia). All of them, like Egypt, produce little that can be traded. Economically, all are saddled with gigantic, entrenched, concrete-bound bureaucracies that serve no useful purpose, but stop anything productive from happening. Politically, they're all basically authoritarian, one-party states. Sociologically, they're all highly traditional, conservative, and, outside major cities, tribal. Technologically, there's zero innovation; practically everything more recent than 18th-century products either is imported or made under license and with foreign capital.

Why might this be the plight of a huge swath of humanity? What do these countries have in common that might account for their striking similarities?

There's only one thing I can think of: religion.

Clash of Civilizations

Islamic societies are so much poorer and generally more backward than the West mainly because of their religion and the worldview it's engendered. Islam still has a fixed worldview, basically stuck in the 7th century, when the Prophet composed the Koran. The West would be in the same sorry state today had it not broken with religion. That's never happened in Islam. And until it does — and especially after the oil runs out — Muslim parts of the world will remain backwaters.

In a 1993 paper in Foreign Affairs, Samuel P. Huntington proposed that the next step in mass human conflict wouldn't be between princes or countries or ideologies so much as between civilizations. That makes sense to me — a lot more than Francis Fukuyama's foolish "End of History" notion, which surfaced at about the same time. Fukuyama actually posited that "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

Although democracy is today's secular god, it's really just

mob rule in a coat and tie. As such, democracy has little to do with personal freedom, free minds, or free markets. In any event, before the French Revolution, many wars just amounted to conflicts between rulers, who used the lands and people they controlled as chess pieces. The pawns had no passion for the game. Then the paradigm became wars between nation-states

The ranks of young, unemployed, unmarried males — unquestionably the most dangerous creatures ever to have walked the Earth — are swelling.

supported by considerable public enthusiasm — the French vs. the Germans vs. the English, etc. Then, after the Russian Revolution, it became a battle of ideologies — capitalists vs. communists vs. fascists.

With the collapse of the USSR, we entered a fourth stage of conflict, between civilizations. And here there are four serious players — the Western, the Chinese, the Islamic, and the Hindu. They're very different in their values and in the ways they see the world. And none appreciates impingement by a different civilization.

That's why stationing Western soldiers in Islamic countries is such a disastrous policy. Whether we feel they have reason to be there or not, Islam — representing well over a billion people — is feeling mightily provoked. The reason is not so much the insinuation of Western culture through movies, music, and McDonald's franchises; Islamic traditionalists don't like these things, but they can insulate themselves. The big problem, as Osama bin Laden has said (but nobody in the West seems to have listened), is threefold: 1. They don't want foreign troops in their countries. 2. They don't want foreign interference in their politics, especially the installation and maintenance of puppet regimes. 3. They don't like America's one-sided support of the state of Israel, which is viewed as a violent and illegal occupier of Palestine.

These actually are reasonable complaints. The U.S. has bases in well over 100 countries, is constantly meddling and fomenting "regime change," and for years has been propping up repressive quisling dictators everywhere — the Shah, Saddam, Mubarak, the Saudi royals, the Kuwaiti royals, Musharraf, Suharto, a bunch of new penny-ante thugs in Central Asia, etc. That is how the current conflict between the U.S. and Islam began and what it's all about.

The conflict escalated with the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. But now the situation seems about to get totally out of control. If the U.S. or Israel (it doesn't matter which) bombs Iran, the pot is likely to boil over.

It seems to me we're facing the most serious crisis since the Cuban missile showdown 42 years ago. The Iranians believe they have a right to their own nuclear program and their own nuclear weapons — like Pakistan, India, China, Israel, and North Korea. They certainly can argue that nukes have kept Israel from being invaded by its neighbors and protected North Korea from being invaded by the U.S.

Israel and the United States say it's unacceptable for the Iranians to have nuclear capability and have threatened to bomb their facilities — which apparently they'll have to do in the next few months or risk spreading radioactive material everywhere. Indications are that this can't be a simple strike, such as the one the Israelis made on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981. Further, the Iranians have said they won't take it lying down.

What to expect? Forget about oil coming out of the Persian Gulf. Expect a massive escalation in Iraq, perhaps including an Iranian counterinvasion to liberate the country from the Crusaders, and serious anti-American violence all over the world. Perhaps these events would trigger the long overdue overthrow of the Saudi rulers.

It's a trainwreck of historic proportions in the making.

What To Do?

One of the interesting aspects of a war is that, with few exceptions, "the other guy" is always the one responsible for the conflict. I'm sorry to say that, in the War Against Islam, the finger points at us. It didn't start with 9/11. We have to look back a lot further. And even after 9/11, attacking Iraq was like bombing Peking because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Rather than Iraq, a bigger danger is Pakistan, which still will have nukes after the fundamentalists overthrow Musharraf — but that's another story.

Idiotically, the U.S. is committed to expanding its War on Terror, even though "terrorism" is just a concept, a tactic — like cavalry charges, frontal assaults, or artillery barrages. It's a tactic used by people who feel threatened but are conventionally (militarily) powerless. There is no defense against terror tactics but to remove the reasons people want to use them.

For amusement, let's look at what Bush should do. My suggestions are fourfold, in answer to Islam's threefold complaint.

1. Withdraw U.S. soldiers from foreign bases everywhere. Not only will the natives like and respect it, withdrawal will go a long way toward staving off U.S. bankruptcy.

2. Stop meddling directly or indirectly in other countries. As a bonus, that will allow the abolition of incredibly costly and dangerous agencies like the NSA and CIA.

3. Treat Israel like any other of the 200-plus countries in the world. And discontinue all foreign aid to everyone.

4. Apologize, sincerely, for having interfered in the past, and promise we won't do it again. (Bush isn't very good at apologies, but it's something he could do and gain respect

Although philosophically I'm of the "pave the planet" school, since I believe mankind's ultimate destiny is in the stars, I'm naturally suspicious of megaprojects built by economically illiterate socialist governments.

for doing.) Welcome the friendship of all people — including Muslims — and try to be like the America everyone used to love.

I believe that would end the War on Terror, avoid the impending War on Islam, and allow us once again to wear shoes in any airport. Will it happen? Fuhgedaboudit. ❑

Freedom to Speak

by Jane S. Shaw

What are these people doing, giving speeches to one another? They are showing what happens in a free society.

The name is quaint, the materials are lowbrow, the technology is simple, the venue is plebeian. But Toastmasters embodies the time-honored American traditions of voluntary interaction and self-reliance. And it gave me one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life.

At noon once a week, between 20 and 30 of us crowd around tables in a basement conference room of a bank here in Bozeman, Mont. During the next hour, the toastmaster of the day offers some amusing or inspirational words; two or three of us give short speeches; and others evaluate, monitor, and write friendly notes of encouragement. (We're allowed to bring lunches but most people are too busy listening and writing to eat.) We vote on the best speech, the best evaluation, and the best impromptu "table topics" presentation.

The members are mostly professional people, but our ages, jobs, and interests vary widely. We have a public figure who once ran for governor (and came close to winning), a radio talk show host, an award-winning author of Christian novels, a professional environmentalist, a retired pediatrician. A contestant for Miss Rodeo Montana joined to improve her chances of winning (and she did). Several members are affiliated with Montana State University; one runs a motel; and one recently sold a business and isn't quite sure what he's going to do.

For virtually everyone who sticks with it, Toastmasters brings remarkable improvements. Toastmasters (as all members are called) give ten original speeches, working through a manual that introduces an aspect of public speaking with each presentation, an aspect such as "vocal variety," "your body speaks," and "visual aids." Shortly after the first speech the "uhs" disappear. People who tremble visibly during their first "icebreaker" speech learn to be calm, poised, and articulate, thanks in part to friendly evaluations by other members after each speech. By the tenth speech most toastmasters have discarded their notes and many have found that they have talents — the ability to be funny, perhaps — they never realized they had. For me, nearly every meeting brings a new insight into how to communicate or how to run a meeting.

In the course of these speeches we learn a lot about one another. Material is usually drawn from personal experiences — a seriocomic memory of a painful Little League event, a humorous description of menopause, an introduction to yoga. Occasionally speeches are clunkers, but that is pretty rare — and most of the speeches are only five to seven minutes long, anyway. Every speech is applauded (in fact, nearly every statement is applauded!), and there is a feeling of camaraderie that is almost joyful.

Yes, there is something old-fashioned about the organization. Although one of the ten manual speeches is about visual aids, the advice is mostly about handling physical props. PowerPoint is rarely mentioned (in my nearly two years with the group, I think that only one person other than me has used it). The club has a website, but members work from a variety of printed, low-priced manuals filled with encouraging advice and bearing a slightly outdated visual style. Members also re-

ceive the magazine Toastmaster, a similarly cheery four-color publication with chatty articles, many written by members of Toastmasters. (In style it resembles Home & Away, the magazine of the American Automobile Association until its recent replacement by the trendier Via; in fact, the organization as a whole reminds me of AAA.) The manuals may not be sophisticated works, but we soak up everything we can learn from them. And we read every issue of Toastmaster — members sometimes allude to recent issues at the meetings.

Toastmasters illustrates a lot about America — especially Americans' fondness for voluntary associations and our continual urge for self-help. The roots of Toastmasters are midwestern and Christian (which may be why we start our meetings with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance). Officially founded in 1924 (but with its first meeting in 1905), the organization parallels the nation's transition from rural to urban life and the concurrent transition of its people from "rubes" to "gentlemen." One clue to its origins is the fact that each chapter still has a "grammarian." Undoubtedly correcting poor grammar was once a key responsibility, but now the grammarian mostly counts "uhs" (which is why "uhs" rapidly disappear).

Ralph C. Smedley, then educational director of the Young Men's Christian Association in Bloomington, Ill., founded the first Toastmasters Club in 1905. As he wrote in his reminiscences (published in 1959), he saw a need for public speaking skills among the "boys and young men" in the YMCA. So he started a club in which the boys gave short speeches and the "older men" (he was two years out of college at the time) offered criticism. Smedley chose the name "Toastmasters" to convey "a suggestion of a pleasant, social atmosphere, free from anything like work or study."

Even Smedley's name evokes the American Midwest. A frequently reproduced photo of Smedley at a podium (probably from the 1940s) gives him the look of a small-town businessman, with unfashionable glasses and a suit that may have been a little large. According to a Toastmaster who heard him speak in 1951, Smedley wasn't actually that great a speaker. Perhaps that endeared him to audiences — he wrote that one of his goals was to assure businessmen that they could speak in a conversational style, rather than the "formal rhetorical style" of oratory that was still popular early in the century.

By the tenth speech most toastmasters have discarded their notes and many have found that they have talents — the ability to be funny, perhaps — they never realized they had.

The organization did not take off until Smedley settled in Santa Ana, Calif. (in Orange County, a region full of transplanted midwesterners). Even in California, he wrote, "I observed a tendency among my fellow secretaries at the Y.M.C.A. to regard the Toastmasters Club as a sort of peculiarity — an idiosyncrasy of Smedley's." But once a federation of clubs was formed, Toastmasters experienced solid growth. Today, Toastmasters International, headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., claims to have 9,300 clubs in 78 countries.

Smedley, who was involved with Toastmasters until his death in 1965, insisted that the organization be nonprofit. "I have been pronounced various kinds of fool for not making a fortune out of it," he wrote in 1959, "but my reply has been that I would rather be rich in friendship than in money." In fact, he signed over the copyright to the Toastmasters name only with a provision that if it became a profit-making entity the profits would go to him or to his estate. Smedley seems to have been a humble man; his reminiscences are heavily sprinkled with acknowledgments to others for their roles in developing Toastmasters.

Toastmasters parallels the nation's transition from rural to urban life and the concurrent transition of its people from "rubes" to "gentlemen."

The nonprofit nature of Toastmasters probably explains its old-fashioned quality. Without profits, there is little incentive for innovation, especially since there is a complex governing structure (with representatives from areas, districts, and divisions) that gives the federation some inertia. At the same time, the underlying framework is sound, and the organization's continuing growth shows that it is meeting members' needs.

In one of my Toastmasters speeches I tried to explain the market by using Toastmasters as an analogy. Here I want to turn that around and explain the success of Toastmasters by reference to its market-like qualities.

Many voluntary associations are founded with a narrow goal in mind — to build a library, say, or to preserve hiking trails. Such organizations naturally fit a governmental or even military mold. The purpose is clear, and the job is to marshal the membership to carry out the task efficiently. And the task itself is ordinarily something that promises broadly diffused public benefits, bestowed on everyone in a broadly defined class of people.

Toastmasters is a different kind of voluntary association. Even though everyone at Toastmasters has the goal of better public speaking, the specific aims of members are diverse and individual. In our club, for example, one woman wanted to be ready to chair a large meeting of a national charity; another is hoping to speak confidently before the City Commission; many want to improve their job performance. One man is actually in the business of public speaking; others have simply discovered the pleasure of self-expression and stay for fun. In other words, each person is self-interested. All come together to pursue their interests through exchange — making presentations and receiving the responses of individual people in their audience.

What makes this work so well is the existence of rules (think "rule of law"). Although there is little need for parliamentary debate in Toastmasters, Robert's Rules of Order get great respect. (Smedley wrote a biography of Henry Martyn Robert, whom he much admired.) The Toastmasters meeting is organized according to a predictable plan that incorporates

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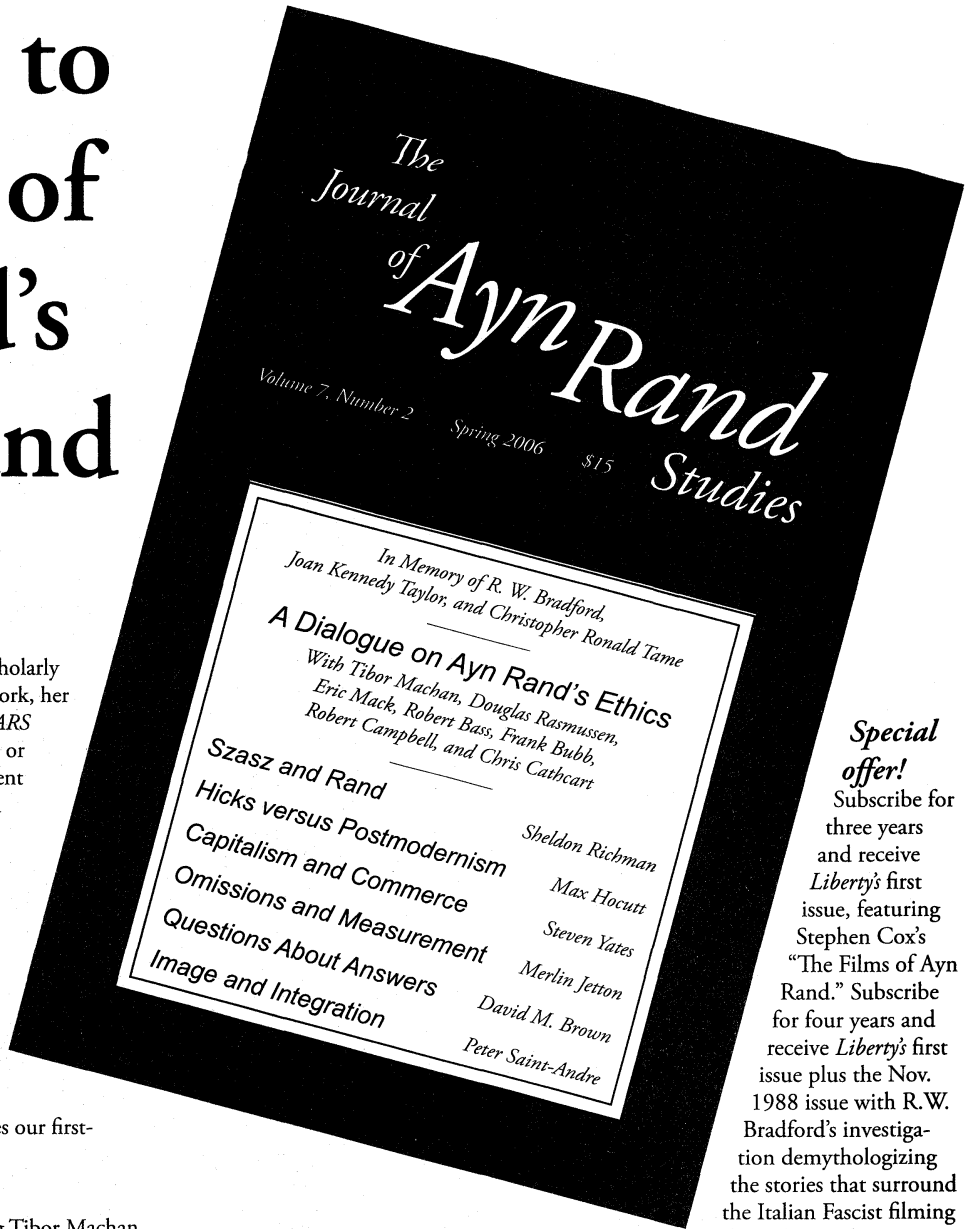

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impromptu remarks by the Toastmaster, formal and informal speeches, and evaluations and observations. These provide a framework for the diversity that each member brings.

This framework evolved spontaneously over the years as Smedley and his associates adopted techniques that made the clubs more effective, such as moving from dinner meetings to noontime meetings, introducing manuals that explained not just how to speak but how to evaluate, inventing "table topics," and originating contests. In spite of this evolution, meetings today are not all that different from meetings early in the 20th century. In 1932, the federation published 15 statements ("the famous 15 points," Smedley called them) indicating the purpose of the organization. Each one — whether "to promote the growth and establishment of Toastmasters Clubs around the world" or "to make the name Toastmaster a mark of distinction and of recognized ability in public speaking" — could have been written yesterday, except that there is no longer an official liaison with the YMCA.

Today, in scores of countries, as people move from agriculture into urban life, Toastmasters is providing the same kind of aid that Ralph Smedley gave to the young men in Bloomington. And, as my experience confirms, even in our educated and urban society, Toastmasters continues to play an important role. Few Americans naturally feel comfortable about speaking in public, but many have found an effective way to help themselves. Through Toastmasters, individuals motivated by self-interest and operating under simple, straightforward rules are led as if by an invisible hand to promote and achieve not only their own interests but also those of one another — while having a very good time. ❑

The TIF That is Eating Portland, *from page 35*

is under construction between a group of hospitals and a planned residential-office complex on the South Waterfront. The initial estimate for the tramway's cost was $15 million, but after construction began the estimate increased to $30, then $45, and now $55 million. It turned out that the people who made the initial $15 million estimate had no previous experience with a tram and sort of just made the number up.

Meanwhile, the anticipated cost of street improvements, parks, and other publicly funded parts of the South Waterfront District — known to its detractors as the So What district — have at least doubled, from $50 million to $100 million. The city has also promised to fund construction of low-income housing, but no one knows how much that will cost. Much of the money for these projects is supposed to come out of TIF. As long as TIF provides a nearly unlimited source of funds, there is no need for accuracy or accountability — which is exactly why TIF should be outlawed. ❑

NOTES

1. Chris Norby, "Redevelopment: The Unknown Government" (Municipal Officials for Redevelopment Reform, 2005) 8, 12.

2. Bernard Frieden, "Downtown Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities" (MIT Press, 1989) 251.

3. Richard Dye and David Merriman, "The Effects of Tax Increment Financing on Economic Development," Journal of Urban Economics 47: 306–28.

4. Developing Neighborhoods Alternatives Project, "The Right Tool for the Job?" (DNAP, 2003).

Reflections, *from page 14*

close up shop when betting on those three little numbers became as respectable as laying a tenner on the church collection plate? The answer was staring me in the face: the crooks paid better than the state!

Yes. You got a better deal from the guys with bulging shoulder holsters than from those with bulging briefcases full of your money. Didn't Bastiat say the state was best at plunder? — Ted Roberts

Jane Jacobs, R.I.P. — Jane Jacobs, who died on April 25 at the age of 89, revolutionized intellectual ideas about cities with her 1961 book, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities." She had two messages: first, that the inner-city districts that urban planners had been clearing away were often not blighted slums but living, vital neighborhoods; and second, that urban planners really had no idea about how cities worked, so most of their plans did more harm than good.

While many praised her book, sociologist Herbert Gans warned that it would attract "the support of those who profit from the status quo, of the nostalgic who want to bring back the city and the society of the 18th and 19th centuries, and of the ultra-right-wing groups who oppose planning — and all government action — whether good or bad." This is exactly what has happened.

Today, a new generation of planners read the first message in her book and become determined to impose the high-density, mixed-use, inner-city neighborhoods Jacobs favored on suburbs and small towns. One of her obituaries stated that she "questioned the sprawling suburbs that characterized urban planning, saying it was killing inner cities and discouraging the economic vitality that springs organically from neighborhoods."

Meanwhile, libertarians embraced Jacobs for her dislike of planners, who she called "know-it-alls who have visions of how to transform the world and proceed to try to do it." In retrospect, it is hard to decide whether Jacobs is a libertarian hero or a planning saint. She wrote eloquently in defense of a lifestyle that government planners were trying to destroy. But she also castigated, with much less personal knowledge, the suburbs and suburban lifestyles that today's planners are trying to destroy.

In truth, Jacobs was simply an urban activist who received a lot of attention for being one of the first to say that the urban-renewal emperor had no clothes. Though covered in terms such as "New Urbanism" and "smart growth," it still has no clothes today. — Randal O'Toole

Reviews

"Snow Flower and the Secret Fan," by Lisa See. Random House, 2005, 258 pages.

Bound but Determined

Jo Ann Skousen

In "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan," Lisa See creates a convincing memoir of an intimate friendship between two women, Lily and Snow Flower, raised in the harsh patriarchal structure of traditional China in the 19th century. Living in different villages and unable to visit each other frequently, they communicate through a secret women's language called *nu shu*, a language that could be hidden in the embroidery of a handkerchief or in the decoration of a fan. See's narrator, Lily, writes, "The true purpose of our secret writing was . . . to give us a voice . . . a way to write the truth of our lives." The fan that passes between them becomes a secret record of their lives, allowing us a glimpse into their private thoughts as they grow through childhood, betrothal, marriage, motherhood, war, and betrayal.

For nearly a thousand years, women's lives in China were dominated by their feet — or more precisely, by what happened to their feet when they were mere children, younger than six. At that tender age, while the growing foot is still malleable enough to be reformed, the gruesome process of footbinding began. See writes: "A perfect foot should be shaped like the bud of a lotus. It should be full and round at the heel, come to a point at the front, with all weight borne by the big toe alone. . . . The toes and arch of the foot must be broken and bent under to meet the heel."

X-rays of bound feet show the four small toes folded tightly under the foot to form a point, the rest of the foot scrunched back and accordioned up like a three-car collision. Think Clarabelle Cow jammed into heels. The little girls were forced to pace endlessly in order to break the toes, lift the arch, and form the foot into a perfect "golden lily." It took over two years of repeated binding and excruciating walking before a girl's foot became completely folded. Rare photographs indicate that the result looked more like pig's hooves than lilies, but the shape and size of a girl's feet would determine her marriageability. If the feet were particularly tiny, her whole family might benefit from the match.

Footbinding served several purposes. It was a tether, keeping a woman in her home for life — teetering on three-inch feet, she could go nowhere on her own, even down the street. Lily writes, "Except for three terrible months in the fifth year of Emperor Xian-feng's reign, I have spent my life in upstairs women's rooms . . . embroidering, weaving and cooking."

Footbinding was considered a precursor of a woman's personality as a wife. How she bore the pain revealed her obedience, self-control, endurance, childbearing potential, familial loyalty, and reverence for culture and tradition. It also indicated her strength and healthiness, as many girls died of gangrene during the process. Footbinding also led to a bizarre sexual fetish, fueled by the belief of Chinese men that the mincing walk developed the vaginal muscles and increased a man's marital pleasure. Finally, footbinding reinforced the cultural belief that the needs of the individual must be restrained in favor of the needs of the group.

Why would a woman force her daughters to go through this ordeal, knowing firsthand the lifetime horror of it? See explains that the masculine Chinese word for "mother love" is *teng ai*, written by combining the words for "pain" and "love." Lily discovers that this characterization does not refer just to the pain of childbirth. A mother experiences pain as she inflicts pain while teaching her daughters to endure pain.

We in the West may consider ourselves above such cruel and foolish torture in the name of fashion, but think of how corsets crushed Victorian rib cages, leading to weakened lungs and death in childbirth; how Hollywood stars have ground down their natural

teeth to replace them with caps and veneers; how women (and men) inject themselves with toxins and carcinogenic implants; and how pointed stiletto heels mimic the tiny footprint and unnatural arch of the bound foot (and produce painful bunions). Cinderella's prince was willing to marry any girl whose foot fit inside the glass slipper, and her stepsisters were urged by their mother to cut off a toe and a heel in order to squeeze into it and marry the prince. Not very charming, is it?

Little girls were forced to pace endlessly in order to break the toes, lift the arch, and form the foot into a perfect "golden lily."

Within the strict Chinese social structure, where little girls were unable to run, play, or even walk downstairs for several years, normal friendships were impossible. Instead, formal agreements were established with other girls in the village, either as "sworn sisters" (girls of similar ages who would serve as confidantes and bridesmaids until they were married) or as *laotongs* in a lifelong pairing between special girls whose circumstances were a close match. While marriage had "only one purpose: to make sons," a *laotong* was a relationship "made by choice for the purpose of emotional companionship and eternal fidelity." "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan" is the story of two such friends, matched at the age of six to become lifelong friends.

Most interesting to me is See's discovery that two written languages developed, representing masculine and feminine cultures, using the same words but not speaking the same language. Lily writes, "Men's writing is bold, with each character easily contained within a square, while our nu shu looks like mosquito legs or bird prints in dust." Men's language was straightforward and literal, because theirs was the language of the dominant culture. Women's language was nuanced, and relied heavily on metaphor to communicate emotion and carry on relationships while concealing their most intimate thoughts.

It's likely that men were aware of the women's writing, but ignored it as a silly feminine fancy. After all, men spent years of study memorizing the more than 50,000 Chinese characters, each representing a separate word, while the phonetic language of *nu shu* encompassed perhaps 600 characters. But those 600 characters could be used to create thousands of words and concepts. See indicates in her epilogue that *nu shu* was written in the 5-7-5 syllabic structure familiar to us as haiku, adding yet another layer of complexity to the women's writing. Ironically, the "weaker" culture mastered a vastly more complex system of language, filled with symbols and multilayered meanings requiring contextual analysis and understanding, despite its users lacking any formal education.

Subversive language often develops among oppressed people. *Nu shu* was a secret language, yet it was out in the open, embroidered on shoes, jackets, and handkerchiefs or painted on fans, teacups, and vases. African-American slaves developed two languages side by side, both using the same English vocabulary but ascribing different meanings to those words. This double language allowed slaves the self-preservation that came with saying the "right" words to their masters, while maintaining the satisfaction and self-respect that came from knowing the secret signification of those words. A complex system of puns, homonyms, and reversed structural contexts gave them the satisfaction of having the last laugh.

Similarly, 16th-century Incas, using the language of iconic art, subversively painted images of their own nature gods into the religious paintings and icons of the churches they were forced to build, allowing them to worship their own gods while pretending to worship the god of their new masters. Their mastery of language gave them a voice and an inner freedom. As Lily's mother-in-law taught her: "Obey, obey, obey, then do what you want."

For nearly a thousand years, women's lives in China were dominated by what happened to their feet when they were children.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, most examples of *nu shu* were destroyed, but recently the People's Republic reversed its stance and recognized it as an important example of the struggle against oppression. Lisa See traveled to remote villages in China to learn more about this poetic language and the culture that spawned it. Her carefully researched and beautifully written novel ensures that the language, and the women who created it, will not be forgotten. ❑

"Mammoth," by John Varley. Berkeley, 2005, 364 pages.

"The John Varley Reader: Thirty Years of Short Fiction," by John Varley. Penguin, 2005, 532 pages.

"Red Lightning," by John Varley. Tor, 2006, 330 pages.

Of Mars and Mammoths

Timothy Sandefur

John Varley writes with startling creativity, and a priceless gift for authenticity. When he arrived in the mid-1970s with a flurry of hard science fiction short stories, he was immediately compared to some of the great names, particularly Robert Heinlein. He has proudly embraced that link, most recently in his novels "Red Thunder" (see "Libs in Space," August 2003) and "Red Lightning," but also in subtler ways. In the 1980s, the stories abruptly stopped because, as he explains in an essay in "The John Varley Reader," he had Gone Hollywood, or at least enlisted: moving to an office on the MGM lot and writing screenplays that were never produced, including a screenplay for Heinlein's "Have Spacesuit, Will Travel." The only tangible results of that decade were the novel "Millennium" (which expanded his short story "Air Raid") and the movie of the same name, starring Kris Kristofferson and Cheryl Ladd. The novel was brilliant, the movie less so (although not as bad as Varley thinks), and he quit films. All the better for science fiction; in 1997, he returned with his finest novel, "Steel Beach," and has been steadily publishing since.

I reserve my highest recommendation for John Varley. I know of no writer in any genre, then or since, who has a better sense of dramatic timing, imagery, and realism, or who writes with such smooth, seemingly effortless grace. He's capable of devising the strangest scenarios — the climax of his novel "Demon," for example, is a battle against an insane goddess manifesting Herself as a 50-foot facsimile of Marilyn Monroe — that he can make the reader absolutely *believe*. His characters are strong, credible, imperfect but admirable; personalities able to stand up to worlds of bizarre and fascinating complexity.

The "Reader" collects some of his very best short stories, including "Air Raid," "The Phantom of Kansas," "Beatnik Bayou," and "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" (also the victim of an atrocious movie sometime in the '80s). It's too bad most of these stories are already easily available in "The Persistence of Vision" (1978). The only less familiar works here are "Just Another Perfect Day," a brilliant story which anticipated the critically-acclaimed movie "Memento" by 20 years; "The Flying Dutchman," a first-rate Twilight Zone-style story of eternal entrapment; "The Bellman," a less satisfying tale which sat on an editor's shelf for decades, and seems to have gathered dust during that time; and "Good Intentions," which is embarrassingly bad. (Brilliant writers are entitled to their mistakes, but they ought not reprint them.) It would have been more gratifying to see some of his more obscure works compiled, like "Scoreboard," "A Choice of Enemies," or (one of my personal favorites) "Goodbye Robinson Crusoe."

But the "Reader" does include "The Pusher," "The Persistence of Vision," and "Press Enter" — all winners of the Hugo, the Nebula, or both — as well as many of his "Eight Worlds" stories. These are stories set in a future universe in which mankind, having been evicted from the Earth by a mysterious, invincible alien race, survives on the moon and other planets. It's always puzzled me that Varley never won an award for these. They are his very best, since the setting gives his imagination free range. Among the innovations man lives with in this future are the technologies of biological engineering and memory-recording, which allow for a crude kind of immortality: record your mind and store it, and if anything should happen, a new "you" can be built from a clone, filled with your stored thoughts. Varley uses this to explore questions about personal identity, sexuality, and individualism. In "The Phantom of Kansas," the same person keeps being murdered over and over again, much to the frustration of detectives. In "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank," people take vacations by putting their minds into the brains of wild animals for a weekend.

The "Eight Worlds" future is dynamic, with great technological advantages and great burdens, and in some ways free of government — except for the many things run by an all-powerful Central Computer. Subcultures proliferate, and awesome achievements coincide with miserable prejudices. Varley relishes the various and doubtful rather than the static and uniform; for him, innovation is attractive because of its unpredictability. But, unlike more generic science fiction, Varley rarely buries himself in the technical aspects of

Varley is capable of devising the strangest scenarios, which he can make the reader absolutely believe.

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his stories at the expense of the people who inhabit them. "I was never much interested in writing about revolutions, warfare, or any of the great social upheavals of politics and violence," he recently told an interviewer, "except from a person's-eye view. . . . My main interest in writing is people, the awful and grand things that happen to them, and how they deal with it." The best science fiction has always remembered that technical marvels aren't just for dazzling or preaching; they're for exploring humanity. Varley recognizes this: it's what makes his stories so severe and so real, and what earned him the 1999 Prometheus Award from the Libertarian Futurist Society.

The story combines Katrina, 9/11, the Christmas Tsunami, Martian exploration, the Department of Homeland Security, and gun control into a smart 330 pages.

Take "Options," for instance. This "Eight Worlds" story, published in 1974, has relatively little space-fantasy pizzazz. It's a simple story about a family — Jules, Cleo, and their three children — living on the moon a century after the invasion. But in this world, sex changes are almost as easy as changing clothes, and Cleo begins to desire to try life as a man. The resulting family tension is the source of the story's power, and Varley tells it believably, honestly, movingly. Just as the three-minute single is the hardest test for a rock musician, the short story is the most demanding form of science fiction writing, and "Options" is simply a masterpiece — one among many in the "Reader." Of course, in the years since 1974, the politics and sociology of sex roles has changed a good deal, and, in Varley's view, for the better. But the point of the story isn't to illustrate a viewpoint in the nature-versus-nurture debate; it's to explore Cleo and Jules and the complications of their marriage.

Unfortunately, he seems to have lost sight of this lesson in "Mammoth." When supertycoon Howard Christian finds the frozen remains of a mammoth in a Canadian tundra, he decides to clone it for an amusement park, Michael Crichton-style. But any similarity to "Jurassic Park" dissolves when archaeologists also turn up the remains of a caveman wearing a wristwatch, and Christian devises a plan to retrieve mammoths through time-travel instead. He hires supergenius Matt Wright to handle the physics, and elephant expert Susan Morgan to handle the retrieved mammoths. But Susan becomes convinced that the circus is no place for a mammoth, and she and Wright hatch a rescue plot that goes haywire. The novel feels very cinematic: fast-paced, with little elaboration. The action tries to distract readers from weaknesses in the mundane structural features that any work of fiction must have — weaknesses shared in some respects with another recent novel, "Red Thunder." But where that book succeeded by building technical plausibility, and following through with an electrifying climax, the characters here are sketched rather than drawn, handicapping an otherwise exciting conclusion.

Varley is at his best when describing the distant future. Closer to home, he is not only constrained by real events; he also spends less time developing the background that gives his stories their vitality. In "Steel Beach," his best book, the reader is prepared to believe in telepathic computers, force-field spacesuits, and microengineered butterflies skimming over the surface of the moon. But in "Mammoth," which is set within the next few years, the reader has a hard time buying Howard Christian's skyscraper penthouse, let alone his Batman-style ray gun, which wreaks vengeance on evildoers in downtown Los Angeles. And the love story that develops between Susan and Matt is cold and unengaging: Matt's devotion to her has all the charm of a desperate nerd who falls for the first girl who comes along.

The best science fiction has always remembered that technical marvels aren't just for dazzling or preaching; they're for exploring humanity.

Howard Christian's romance is even less authentic.

None of these flaws would stand out in a novel by a lesser writer. But at his best Varley can convey the kind of energy and passion that very few writers can muster, and he does it in a style that sweeps the reader effortlessly across the page and into the world he has conjured. Take, for example, a passage from his latest novel, "Red Lightning":

> We'd sit together, watch the sunset. Martian sunsets are pretty, if you like pink. No, we didn't get it on, nobody's figured out how to do that in a pressure suit. It was *night*, you understand, and basically, Martians don't go out at night unless it's an emergency. What you do if you *have* to go out after dark is put on an insulated oversuit, stay in groups of three or four, and get back inside as soon as you can. And you still get cold.
>
> What we'd do those summer evenings was sit on electric pads, lean back against our airpacks, hold hands, and watch the stars come out. Watch Phobos move across the sky, see the blazing exhausts of ships blasting for Earth or the outer planets. Watch for meteorites burning up. Sometimes we talked about anything and everything under the sun, sometimes we hardly said anything. We'd stay out there until our feet and hands started getting cold, then we'd hurry inside and down to my room and jump under the covers until we'd generated some heat.

The love story, the adventure, and everything else about "Red Lightning" is believable, authentic, and rendered with an understated style that focuses only on the details needed to create a compelling illusion. That is the highest virtue in science fiction.

"Red Thunder" introduced us to Manny Garcia, who, along with his friends, a retired astronaut and an idiot-savant inventor, uses a miraculous new technology to reach Mars in his own private spaceship. Now, in "Red Lightning," Manny's son Ramon lives on the new world, and Varley takes us gracefully into the life of a Martian high school graduate, with just the right mixture of the alien and the mundane. Enjoying his waning teenage years, Ramon is stunned by a catastrophic tidal wave that strikes Florida, where his grandmother lives. He and his family travel to Earth to rescue her, and after their return, watch in horror as earthside governments collapse. Meanwhile, their brilliant inventor friend disappears, chased by mysterious government thugs who soon come after Ramon, his family, and his girlfriend. Being set farther in the future, the sequel gives Varley more room to be himself, and the result is naturally superior. The first novel was hampered by sometimes tedious explanations of spiffy new technology that detracted from the dramatic flow. None of that here. The love story is believable, the conflicts are realistic, and the story manages somehow to combine Hurricane Katrina, September 11, the Christmas Tsunami, Martian exploration, the Department of Homeland Security, and gun control into a smart 330 pages. Fast-paced, light-hearted, dramatic, and eminently plausible, "Red Lightning" is Varley's best work since "Steel Beach." If only all science fiction were written this way. ❑

"Inside Man," directed by Spike Lee. Universal Pictures, 2006, 129 minutes.

Do the Right Transition

Jo Ann Skousen

With "Inside Man," Spike Lee successfully makes the transition from "black film director" to simply "film director," creating a tense and entertaining bank robbery movie in the tradition of "Die Hard" and "Heist." As the police detective in charge of the investigation, Denzel Washington only happens to be black; his race is not essential to his character, nor is African-American culture highlighted or stereotyped. Multiple cultures are acknowledged — in the driving Indian music of the opening soundtrack, in the outrage of a Sikh witness forced to remove his turban, in the odd politeness of the bank robbers to a rabbi who has become one of their hostages. As if to emphasize his transition to colorblind filmmaking, Lee dresses most of the actors (bank robbers and hostages) exactly alike, even covering their faces and hands.

Lee tells the story in non-linear time, using a washed-out film development technique to indicate that interviews with released hostages are taking place in the future — a technique that works well. The surreal lighting of the overwash adds to the tension of the story. As with all good cops-and-robbers narratives, figuring out "why" and "how" the heist is committed is just as important as figuring out "who" did it, and the story has enough twists and turns to maintain suspense from start to finish.

Lee's direction is subtle but effective, eliciting from his Big Star actors a different kind of character from the ones they normally play. Gone are the knowing nod and pensive "okay" that seem to have become Washington's signature in recent films. Jodie Foster, whose only romantic role was "Sommersby" (1993), is positively flirty with both Washington and Christopher Plummer, who plays the bank's founder. I'm not sure I like her as a coquette, but I'm impressed that Lee drew that character out of her. Clive Owen plays the head bank robber with an eerie coolness and enigmatic motivation, commanding the audience to "Pay attention. I'm only going to say this once."

One aspect of the film that seems to hark back to Lee's roots as a black film director is his overuse of profanity, early in the film. The bank robbers bombard their hostages — and the audience

Liberty founder Bill Bradford's death is an irreplaceable loss to the end. Shortly before he passed away, he suggested

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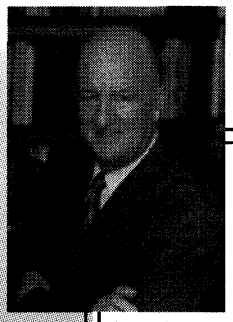

Mark Skousen

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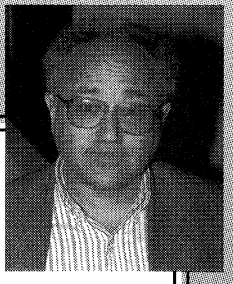

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Economist, professor at Santa Clara University School of Law, author of *The Machinery of Freedom,* and Bill's favorite anarchist scholar.

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Randal O'Toole
Senior economist with the Thoreau Institute, prominent critic of "smart growth," and author of "The Best Laid Plans: The Case Against Government Planning"

Neal Levine
Campaign manager, Committee to Regulate and Control Marijuana — the group behind the Nevada initiative to decriminalize marijuana. (Patrick Killen, communications director, may substitute.)

libertarian movement, but he maintained his usual good cheer to the as his epitaph: "Bradford dies. Liberty lives!"

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— with the F-word. As profanity flies like bullets from a machine gun, I myself feel physically assaulted. Why can't an intelligent director tap into a wider and more effective vocabulary?

Yet this is precisely Lee's point. The robbers use profanity as a deliberate form of control over their hostages, instilling fear and submission in their captives as effectively as if they were literally beating them. In a previous Jodie Foster film, "Panic Room," the character playing her daughter counsels her, "Use the F-word!" when Foster is trying to frighten away some intruders. The girl instinctively understands that using certain words aggressively can be a form of violence and power. There's a reason it's called "strong language." My point is that such language should be reserved for situations that call for violence, not used indiscriminately, in ordinary conversation. Hearing it presented honestly in this film, as an *intentional* act of violence, makes it almost worth enduring.

If you have never seen a Spike Lee movie because you don't like "that kind of film," this one may change your mind. "Inside Man" is worth the price of a ticket and popcorn. ❑

"Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy," by Bruce Bartlett. Doubleday, 2006, 210 pages.

Spurning the Great Communicator

Martin Morse Wooster

For those of us who are committed to limited government, the Bush administration has been a major disappointment. It isn't just the huge deficits or the massive spending for the "war on terror" that's the problem; it's the fact that this nominally conservative president has refused to veto anything and has doubled the budget of the Department of Education.

President Bush has gotten a good deal of pummeling, much of it justified, from the Left. But this is the most significant attack on the Bush presidency from the free-market Right. Bartlett comes to the project with impeccable credentials, including years of experience on Capitol Hill as well as service in the Treasury Department during the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations.

Moreover, this is a very brave book, as Bartlett was sacked from a cushy position as a fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis for writing it. Think-tank fellows lose their jobs for many reasons, but I can't recall another case in which one was fired from a right-wing think tank for advocating free-market ideas, even if that meant attacking a Republican administration. Bartlett's courage in maintaining his commitment to liberty even at the cost of his job is admirable.

Most of the cheers for "Impostor" have come from the Left, who are happy to see a veteran Republican join the pile-on-the-president crowd. Libertarians might well be suspicious of this book, given that its endorsers include liberal Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne and Jonathan Chait, a Los Angeles Times columnist who is also the most left-wing editor at the New Republic. But many liberals haven't been quite sure what to make of this book. The reviewer for the Post provided a typical response, saying that while he was happy to see anybody attack the president, what he *really* wanted was a book on Bush's foreign policy, and since there was nothing about foreign policy in the book, it was a disappointment.

Well, Bartlett isn't a foreign policy expert, and anyone wanting to read a book about the problems of neoconservative imperialism will need to read another book (such as Leon Hadar's "Sandstorm"). What Bartlett is best at is sober, cogent, economic analysis.

In chapter after chapter, Bartlett shows that the administration is more committed to buying votes than helping the ordinary taxpayer. Take the Medicare prescription drug subsidy passed in 2004. This subsidy is the biggest expansion of the welfare state since Medicare's passage in 1965; it ultimately could, according to Medicare's actuaries, cost taxpayers up to $16 trillion. But

Republicans are at their worst when they are dime-store New Dealers.

there's no evidence that the prescription drug plan bought any votes or indeed had any effect the 2004 elections. Bartlett sees the prescription drug saga as evidence that the Bush administration is more interested in pandering to big business (which saved billions in pension expenses) than in maintaining budget discipline.

I can't recall another case in which a fellow was fired from a right-wing think tank for advocating free-market ideas.

In another chapter, Bartlett offers a revisionist view of the Clinton administration — it wasn't that bad! Yes, Clinton had his zipper problems, but government was relatively restrained during his time in office and budget deficits shrank. As the Wall Street Journal reports, the federal government grew by a rate of 2.5% per year during the Clinton administration — and has grown 8.2% each year for the entire Bush administration. Moreover, with the passage of welfare reform in 1996, President Clinton actually cut the welfare state, something President Bush is unable or unwilling to do.

Bartlett offers a grim conclusion. "The Republican Party needs to start a dialogue that will get it back on track as the party of small government before it loses what is left of its principles, reputation, and heritage," he writes. "If the American people conclude that it stands for nothing except for payoffs for those on its team, it will have lost something precious that, like one's virtue or good name, is awfully hard to get back once lost."

If the 2008 presidential contest turns into a tussle between a robust Democratic statist and a flabby Republican statist, the Democrat will win. Republicans, as history shows, are at their worst when they are dime-store New Dealers. But Bartlett reminds us that in times like these, the task for libertarians is to sharpen our arguments and continue to make the case that the Bush administration and its big-government conservative allies are wrong when they bloat the state. ❑

Booknotes

The redneck and the black

— Thomas Sowell must be read to be believed. Merely to characterize him as a "black conservative," as many people do, both to recommend and to dismiss, inadequately encapsulates his originality and complexity. Though I find myself repeatedly recommending his books over his syndicated newspaper columns (which tend to lack complexity and originality), I find that nothing said by me or anyone else persuades people of his value as well as actually reading his books. The great ones deal critically with affirmative action, minority history, and cultural diffusion. For those needing an introduction to his provocative writing and knockout intellectual style, a good place to start is the six long essays collected in "Black Rednecks and White Liberals" (Encounter, 2005, 372 pages).

It seems to me that the animating question informing Sowell's criticism is why Africans (whose ancestors came here before 1875) haven't prospered as well in America as other immigrant groups. Noticing that black West Indians and recent African immigrants generally do as well economically as white Americans (though the former likewise descend from 19th-century slaves), Sowell concludes that African-Americans have been hurt by inferior culture often aggravated by lousy leadership. Thus he unfashionably blames black people as well as white for the predicament of most American blacks.

Why? Why? That's the question haunting Sowell. The theme that is new for him is blaming white people — but differently. He finds that southern U.S. "redneck" culture, out of which most African-Americans came, was always inferior economically and socially, in part because southern states were settled by people from the English hinterlands, rather than more propitious sources in London and Scotland. The stereotypes attributed nowadays to blacks (e.g., laziness, shiftlessness, immorality) have long characterized redneck whites, while to Sowell even "black English" reflects provincial British. Other backward practices indigenous to the American South include lynching, which, Sowell reminds us, was practiced more often against whites than blacks, simply because there were more wayward whites who could be lynched. (This last truth is so obvious that you wonder why so many have missed it.)

One of Sowell's richest digressions documents how, contrary to academic myth, "radical" W.E.B. DuBois was during his writing life respectful of Booker T. Washington, who is still customarily regarded as accommodating white power. Having done an M.A. thesis partly on DuBois 40 years ago, I found this a persuasive revelation.

The other essays in the collection deal with Jews, Germans, the better black high schools destroyed by forced integration (such as Dunbar in D.C.), and "The Real History of Slavery." Here Sowell repeats the obvious truths that slavery was not just an American phenomenon and that American slavery was less arduous than it might have been, precisely because slaves were more valuable in a country that had forbidden further importation than they were in countries that had not. The contrast is with Brazil, where slaves were cheap, and which had a better reputation on this issue when I first read about slavery 40 years ago. "Economic considerations alone," Sowell the economist reminds us, "would prevent a slave-owner from lynching his own slave."

Laziness, shiftlessness, and other stereotypes attributed to blacks have long characterized redneck whites, while to Sowell even "black English" reflects provincial British.

Those of us who have been reading Sowell for a long time tend to regard him as a national treasure. This book is

a good introduction to why we think so highly of him. — Richard Kostelanetz

Hark for Harald — David Friedman's contributor's note in Liberty simply declares him "a professor of law at Santa Clara," but that barely scratches the surface. His website links to articles he's written on subjects as diverse as game theory, Icelandic anarchism, and medieval spices: clearly, he is a man of wide-ranging curiosity.

He draws on his many fields of study in "Harald," his debut novel (Baen, 2006, 304 pages). The name of the title character betrays a kinship to the Icelanders, and the society Harald "leads" is similar to ancient Iceland's: rugged, heroic, and individualistic, with one man exercising political power over another only in emergencies, and then by consent. Harald prefers a quiet life tending his own land, but he proves a capable, indeed extraordinary, general when called to war — shades of Cincinnatus, perhaps.

It wouldn't be much of a novel if Harald were allowed to live in peace; thus there are threats to his land throughout. He must see off an upstart king and repel several sallies from an overreaching Empire, the last one led by the Emperor himself. I don't think it will ruin the suspense to reveal that Harald comes out victorious: though the enemies increase in guile and military might, none is ever going to be a match for him.

This relative lack of tension is offset by the sheer ingenuity of the military maneuvers, as well as Friedman's keen eye for everyday detail, as his characters, commanders and commoners alike, confront the same problems that once confronted actual medieval societies. As this is, in Friedman's words, "historical fiction in an invented context," he is able to present a number of quite different societies (imperial, monarchist, anarchist, nomadic), all dealing with their troubles and with each other.

Friedman has also described "Harald" as "fantasy without magic." That description must have been given to the cover artist, who produced a generic (albeit competently executed) fantasy painting, with no magical element anywhere in sight. I fear the book will miss those readers who enjoy military or medieval fiction but won't pick up anything that looks like boilerplate fantasy.

"Harald" is not boilerplate fantasy. It's also not for everyone. But, if you share any of David Friedman's many interests, it may be for you.

— Andrew Ferguson

Lessons from a great dissenter — "Resurgence of the Warfare State: The Crisis Since 9/11 (Independent Institute, 205, 268 pages), by the distinguished historian (and contributing editor of Liberty) Robert Higgs, is really two books. One is the author's arguments against the Iraq War; the other is the history of his involvement in making those arguments. It is a compilation of his interviews, public papers, and essays, starting in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and running up to the end of 2004.

Higgs is a renowned writer and researcher, who richly merits his renown. He is fully qualified to study the evidence, and his prose style puts him at the top of the list among arguers in this

Notes on Contributors

David T. Beito is associate professor of history at the University of Alabama, and author of *Taxpayers in Revolt* and *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State.*

Doug Casey is a contributing edtor of *Liberty.*

Michael Christian is in early semi-retirement in a semi-paradisaical corner of California.

Stephen Cox is a professor of literature at the University of California San Diego and the author of *The Woman and the Dynamo: Isabel Paterson and the Idea of America.*

Andrew Ferguson is managing editor of *Liberty.*

Richard Fields hosts a weekly cable access TV talk show in Sacramento called *The Libertarian Counterpoint.*

Bettina Bien Greaves is co-compiler of *Mises: An Annotated Bibliography.*

Gary Jason is a writer, businessman, and philosophy instructor living in San Clemente, Calif.

Eric Kenning is a freelance writer living in New York.

Richard Kostelanetz has written many books about contemporary art and literature.

Ross Levatter is a physician in Phoenix.

The Honorable R. Kenneth Lindell is a state legislator in Maine.

Randal O'Toole is senior economist with the Thoreau Institute.

Bruce Ramsey is a journalist in Seattle.

Ralph R. Reiland is the B. Kenneth Simon professor of free enterprise at Robert Morris University.

Paul Rako is a consultant living in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Ted Roberts is a freelance humorist living in Huntsville, Ala.

Timothy Sandefur is a staff attorney at the Pacific Legal Foundation and was a Lincoln Fellow at the Claremont Institute in 2002.

Jane S. Shaw is a senior fellow with PERC (the Property and Environment Research Center) in Bozeman, Mont.

Jo Ann Skousen is a writer and critic who lives in New York.

Mark Skousen is the author of *The Making of Modern Economics.*

Tim Slagle is a stand-up comedian living in Chicago whose website is www.timslagle.com.

Martin Morse Wooster is a writer living in Silver Spring, Md.

field. The result is a book that pro-war Americans will find distinctly uncomfortable and anti-war Americans will find a new and powerful source of ammunition.

Higgs takes a very tough approach toward all who have planned, operated, or supported the war in Iraq. The intensity of his opposition to the war will, I fear, lessen the book's persuasiveness with mildly pro-war readers, who constitute the majority of Americans — although it might be argued that intensity and moral purpose ought never to be separated. How does that saying go . . . "extremism in the defense of liberty . . . "? And war is ordinarily a foe of liberty.

Friedman is able to present a number of quite different societies (imperial, monarchist, anarchist, nomadic), all dealing with their troubles and with each other.

Perhaps somewhat more to the point, Higgs's arguments might profit from more extensive development than is possible in the format of the present book, with its short, punchy, sometimes single-issue chapters. His position is at its most vulnerable, I believe, when he argues that "the whole concept of wiping out terrorism is completely misguided. It simply can't be done. Terrorism is a simple act for any determined adult to perpetrate no matter what kind of security measures are taken. . . . [U.S. government attacks] will only inspire new acts of terrorism . . . " (6). Does this mean that the government should do nothing about murder, because any determined adult can commit it? Or that the government should simply let terrorists do what they will, convinced that nothing can be done to stop them? No, because Higgs also says that "if the government were really serious about diminishing the amount of effective terrorist acts, it would set about creating a global corps of truly unsavory informants on the ground" (6–7). But this argument is not filled in.

Occasionally, also, Higgs seems to have been overtaken by events, as when he argues that Islamic terrorists are motivated only by opposition to our foreign policy, not by the West's "existence as free nations" (119–20). I refer, of course, to the bloody attacks on Denmark and other western countries for the crime of permitting freedom of the press.

But enough of my dissent from the great dissenter. Libertarians will be especially interested in his answer to the question "Are Pro-war Libertarians Right?" (167–70), in such down-home public-policy sleuthing as "The Pretense of Airport Security" (37–40), and in such Twainian or Menckenian essays as "Nation Trembles as Congress Reassembles" (63–65). Higgs is a very entertaining writer. He is also one of the libertarian movement's best historical writers, a judgment supported by such essays as "Free Enterprise and War, a Dangerous Liaison" (73–77). Agree with him or not, there is always something to be learned by reading him.

— Stephen Cox

Killing the liberal media (You bastards!) — Brian Anderson is a widely published author, currently a senior editor of the Manhattan Institute's City Journal, with extensive experience in both print and electronic journalism. Now he's written "South Park Conservatives: The Revolt Against Liberal Media Bias" (Regnery, 2005, 256 pages), a popular book about the rapid shift from mainstream media (MSM) to alternative media (AM). The book is enjoyable if not altogether persuasive.

His thesis is that the MSM is overwhelmingly dominated by the Left, that its leftist bias systematically distorts the news, and that leftist dominated cultural and academic institutions often work to suppress any thought that deviates from leftist orthodoxy. He illustrates this argument with numerous examples. Most of the book, however, nicely chronicles the rise of the AM in reaction to leftist domination.

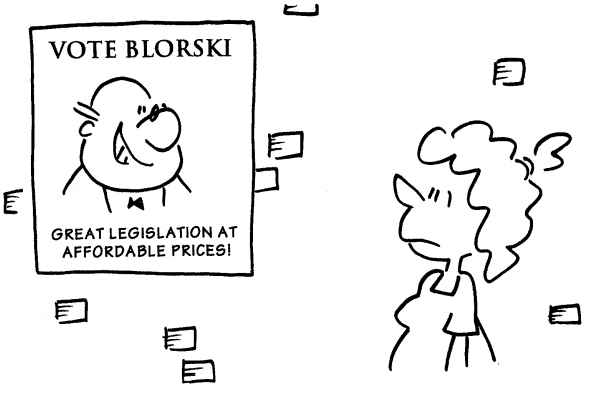
Anderson covers the rise of political talk radio, now dominated by rightwing commentators, after the ending of the Fairness Doctrine in the late 1980s. He discusses the development of alternative cable news, driven by the phenomenal success of the Fox News Channel and C-SPAN, and of politically incorrect comedy cable shows, especially "South Park" — a program hilarious at lampooning leftist shibboleths, but raunchy enough to draw fire from some conservatives.

In addition, Anderson surveys the "blogosphere," the collection of internet sites devoted to political punditry. There are political sites of every hue and stripe, but again the most visited ones are right of center: the Drudge Report, FrontPageMagazine, NewsMax, OpinionJournal, PowerLine, NRO, and so on. Anderson grasps the real power of the internet: the massive parallel processing power of hundreds of individuals, many educated far better than the average journalist, to examine a story from every angle.

The book concludes with a discussion of rightist publishing houses and anti-leftist sentiment and organization on college campuses. Surprisingly, Anderson only briefly mentions rightwing think tanks, which are crucial in providing information to the bloggers, talk show hosts, and so forth.

Again, this is a fun read, but at times Anderson is just whistling past the graveyard. The dominance of the Left in the MSM, the academy, and the centers of American culture is still increasing, and the amount of funding given to leftist think tanks and other organizations dwarfs that given to rightist ones. Yes, the audience for Fox News is growing, but it is still less than that for the major network news shows. And the people who read blogs are still far fewer than those who read newspapers and magazines. There may be a revolution under way, but it has only feebly begun.

— Gary Jason



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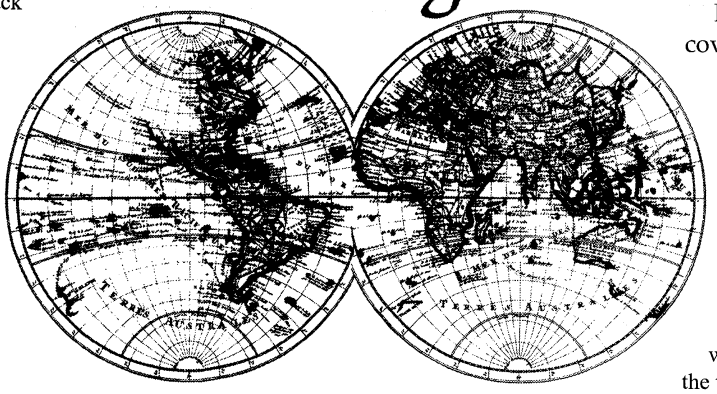


New York

Note on the arts, from a statement issued by the Capla Kesting Fine Art gallery:

"Monument to Pro-Life: The Birth of Sean Preston" is an idealized depiction of Britney [Spears] in delivery. Natural aspects of Spears' pregnancy, like lactiferous breasts and protruding navel, compliment a posterior view that depicts widened hips for birthing and reveals the crowning of baby Sean's head.

The monument also acknowledges the pop-diva's pin-up past by showing Spears seductively posed on all fours atop a bearskin rug with back arched, pelvis thrust upward, as she clutches the bear's ears with water-retentive hands.

Manila

Shameful discrimination in a former American commonwealth, reported in the *Manila Standard Today*:

Philippine judge Florentino Floro, who has claimed he can see into the future, inflict pain by energy transfer, and prevent pains on Fridays, has asked for his job back after being fired by the country's Supreme Court. "They should not have dismissed me for what I believed," Floro told reporters after filing his appeal.

The judge has also admitted to consulting imaginary mystic dwarfs.

Inglewood, Calif.

The "nuclear option" redefined, in the *Los Angeles Times*:

As students from neighboring schools walked out of class to protest immigration legislation, Worthington Elementary principal Angie Marquez imposed a lockdown so severe that some students were barred from using the restroom. Instead, they used buckets placed in classroom corners or behind teachers' desks.

Marquez apparently misread the district handbook and ordered the most restrictive lockdown — one reserved for nuclear attacks.

La Crosse, Wisc.

Return to uniformity in the Badger State, from the *La Crosse Tribune*:

Viroqua High School officials chose to cancel Diversity Day activities following protests that some viewpoints were being unconstitutionally excluded.

The school had scheduled sessions for students to present viewpoints of Hmong, Jews, Muslims, American Indians, Blacks, homosexuals, Buddhists, the physically handicapped, and the economically disadvantaged, but not Christians or former homosexuals.

Woodinville, Wash.

Renaissance in sanitation management, seen in the *Seattle Times*:

King County has officially broken ground on the Brightwater Treatment System, a medium-sized sewage plant that will have a conference center with classrooms, a lending library, and a gift shop. It will also have trails and areas for picnicking, more than $4 million in art, and a "passive-contemplative zone." The project is set to cost an estimated $1.6 billion.

Washington, D.C.

Novel way to blow one's cover, from the *Baltimore Sun*:

Lee Paige, the DEA agent notorious for shooting himself in the foot immediately after telling a classroom full of children, "I'm the only one in the room professional enough . . . to carry a Glock .40," has sued his employer, blaming the drug agency for releasing the videotape of his ill-fated weapon safety lesson. Paige says the tape, which has been widely viewed online, has made him the "target of jokes, derision, ridicule, and disparaging comments," ruining his career as an undercover agent and motivational speaker.

The Middle East

Maneuver in the 21st century's Great Game, noted by the *London Telegraph:*

Calls by Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for Israel to be "wiped from the map" have increased tensions between the two countries.

Rochester, Wash.

Classified advertisement petitioning the Government for a redress of grievances, found in the *Tacoma News-Tribune:*

Announcements: WANTED — Have you also been raped by our U.S. Government? If so, join our Class Action lawsuit which will put a stop to their illegal biotech, biochip, microbot project.

Washington, D.C.

Bipartisan solution to our nation's disaster planning difficulties, reported in the *Washington Post:*

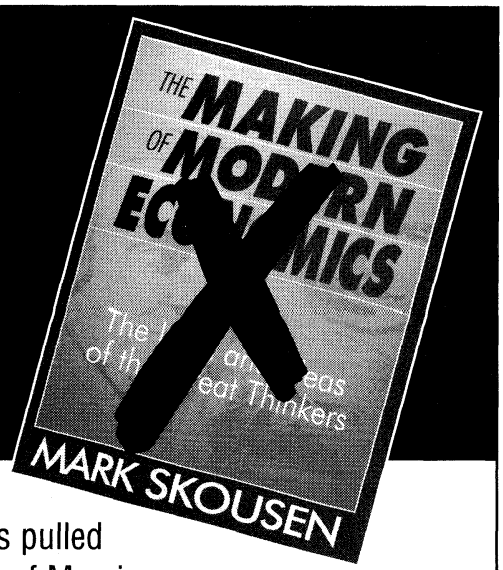
Senators Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) have introduced the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006, a measure to increase the safety of pets in emergencies. The legislation requires state and local authorities to include evacuation procedures for household pets and service animals in their emergency preparedness plans.

Special thanks to Russell Garrard, Brien Bartels, and Philip Todd for contributions to Terra Incognita.

(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in Terra Incognita, or email to terraincognita@libertyunbound.com.)

BANNED

BY MARXISTS, KEYNESIANS AND AUSTRIANS



Why would a history of economics create so much controversy? Dr. Mark Skousen's book, *The Making of Modern Economics*, was pulled from the library shelves of the University of Philippines, a hotbed of Marxism.... censored by Keynesians at Columbia University....and blacklisted at the Mises Institute.

Skousen's "tell all" history doesn't pull any punches. Nobody's favorite pet economist — whether Marx, Keynes, Mises, or Friedman — escapes unscathed (although one economist is rated #1 for his "system of natural liberty" and becomes the heroic figure of the book).

What caused the Marxists on UP campus to ban Skousen's book? His chapter on "Marx Madness" provides a devastating critique of Marx's theories of capitalism, labor, imperialism and exploitation, and why most of his predictions have utterly failed. Plus it reveals Marx as a dismal failure in family, finance, and politics. This chapter alone has converted many Marxists into free-market advocates. (In Communist China, this chapter was translated into Chinese from "Marx Madness Plunges Economics into a New Dark Age" to "Marx and Classical Economics"!)

Why has Skousen been censored by Keynesian professors at Columbia? They don't want students to read his chapter on Keynes and Samuelson, what one economist has called "the most devastating critique of Keynesian economics ever written."

Why does the Mises Institute refuse to list Skousen on its recommended list of free-market authors? Despite the fact that his book is the only one-volume history written by a free-market advocate with 3 chapters on Austrians, it has been censored due to two favorable chapters on the Chicago school and how they have dominated the profession.....words they don't want their students to hear. (Plus they dislike what he says about Murray Rothbard, their patron saint.)

How to Order this Book

The Making of Modern Economics is a 501-page quality paperback, fully illustrated, and available from the publisher (www.mesharpe.com), Laissez Faire Books (www.lfb.com), or from Eagle Publishing (address below). It sells for $31.95, but Liberty subscribers pay only $24.95, plus $4 postage & handling. (Hardback copies are also available for only $39.95, plus P&H.)

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— *Foreign Affairs*

"Though the book reads well, I find myself compelled to issue a warning. The book is a disaster." — David Gordon, Mises Institute

"Lively and accurate, a sure bestseller." — Milton Friedman, Hoover Institution

"Entertaining and mischievous, like the author himself."
— David Colander, Middlebury College

"I find the book extreme, but unputdownable!"
— Mark Blaug, University of Amsterdam

"Provocative, engaging, anything but dismal."
—N. Gregory Mankiw, Harvard University

"I loved the book — spectacular!" — Arthur B. Laffer

"This book stinks! A shallow polemic of an extreme laissez-faire proponent."
— Anonymous reviewer on Amazon

"Skousen gets the story 'right' and does it in an entertaining fashion without dogmatic rantings." — Peter Boettke, George Mason University

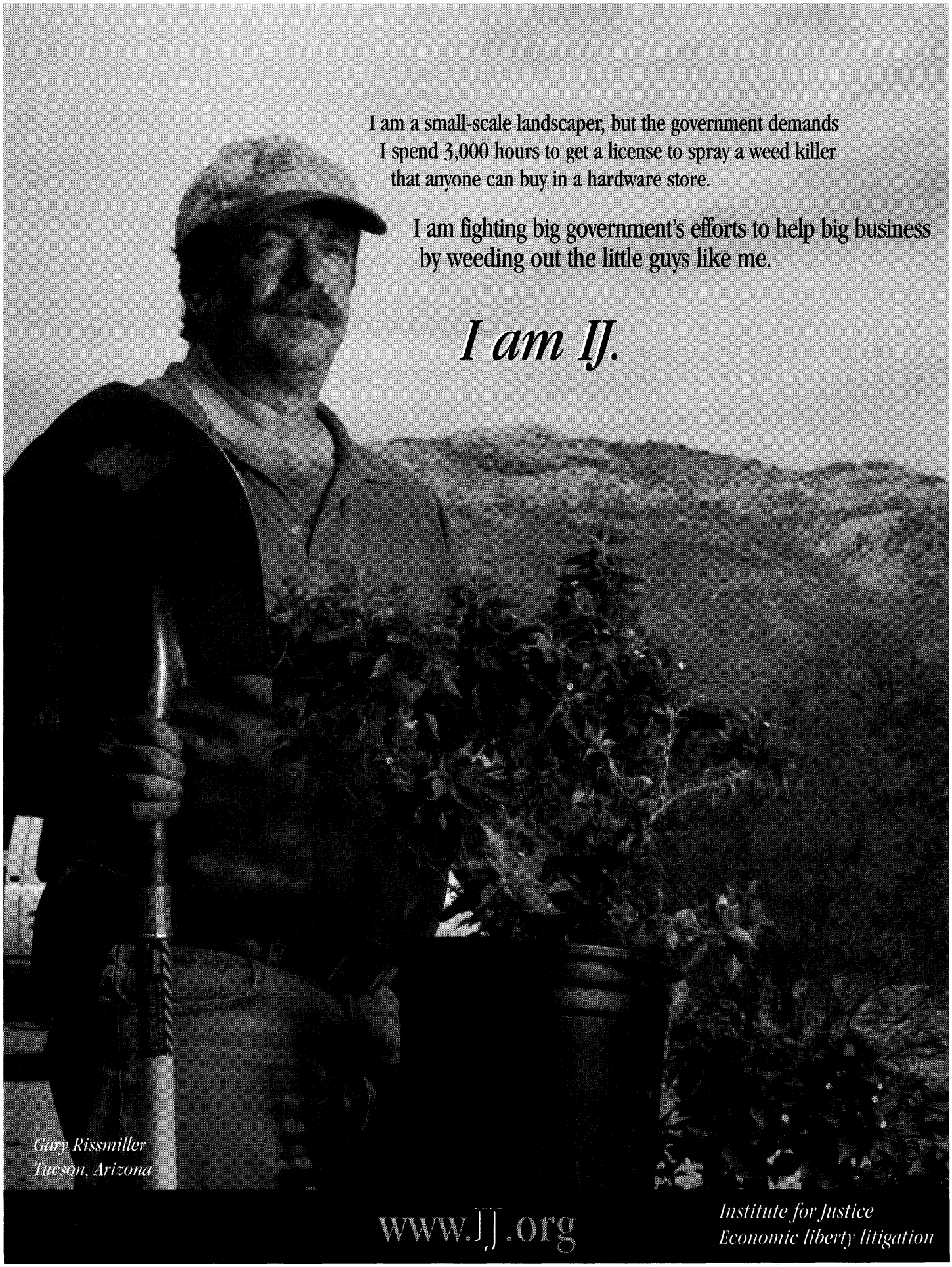
"One of the most readable 'tell-all' histories ever written."
— Richard Ebeling, President, FEE

"I couldn't put it down! Humor permeates the book and makes it accessible like no other history. It will set the standard."
— Steven Kates, chief economist, Australian Chamber of Commerce

"The most fascinating, entertaining and readable history I have ever seen. My students love it." — Ken Schoolland, Hawaii Pacific University

"Mark's book is fun to read on every page. I have read it twice, and listened to it on audio tape on my summer hike. I love this book and have recommended it to dozens of my friends."
— John Mackey, CEO/President, Whole Foods Market

"I champion your book to everyone. An absolutely ideal gift for college students." — William F. Buckley, Jr., *National Review*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