

Notable Quotables

December 23, 2002 (Vol. Fifteen; No. 26)

A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance
to the Media

THE BEST *NOTABLE QUOTABLES* OF 2002 The Fifteenth Annual Awards for the Year's Worst Reporting

Welcome to the Media Research Center's annual awards issue, a compilation of the most outrageous and/or humorous news media quotes from 2002 (December 2001 through November 2002). To determine this year's winners, a panel of 52 radio talk show hosts, magazine editors, columnists, editorial writers and media observers each selected their choices for the first, second and third best quote from a slate of six to nine quotes in each category. First place selections were awarded three points, second place choices two points, with one point for the third place selections. Point totals are listed in the brackets at the end of the attribution for each quote. Each judge was also asked to choose a "Quote of the Year" denoting the most outrageous quote of 2002. The winner and top runner-up appear on page eight.

A list of the judges, who were generous with their time, appears on the back page. The MRC's Kristina Sewell and Amanda Monson distributed and counted the ballots. Brent Baker and Rich Noyes assembled this issue and Mez Djouadi posted the complete issue, along with video clips, on the MRC's Web site: www.mrc.org.

Join us in Washington, DC on March 27 for the *Dishonor Awards of 2003: Roasting the Most Outrageously Biased Liberal Reporters*. Tickets for the event will go on sale in February. For more information on what will surely be a fun-filled evening, please contact the MRC's Director of Special Events Sue Engle by e-mail at sengle@mediaresearch.org.

Media Hero Award

✓ "For Castro, freedom starts with education. And if literacy alone were the yardstick, Cuba would rank as one of the freest nations on Earth. The literacy rate is 96 percent."

— Barbara Walters narrating her interview with Fidel Castro on ABC's *20/20*, October 11. [73 points]

Runners-up:

■ "[Senator] Jim Jeffords is the personification of one man, one vote, and his story a classic of American politics. What Jim Jeffords did simply was turn Washington on its ear. In the months following President Bush's inauguration in January, the 67-year-old Jeffords found himself increasingly at odds with the GOP on Capitol Hill and the White House over issues ranging from education, to the environment, to the size of the tax cut, all of which forced him to examine his core beliefs....Jeffords knew and agonized that a political switch at this time in his career would affect not only him, but Republican colleagues, and his staff and family....But flying to Vermont in May, Jeffords knew he'd made the right decision....Today, Jeffords is a man at peace with himself, enjoying work on his Vermont farm, splitting logs, saving a few pennies with some inventive repair work on a wheelbarrow."

— NBC's Katie Couric introducing a December 17, 2001 *Today* show interview with Jeffords. [53]

- ■ **Brian Williams:** "Is it fair to call him [Jimmy Carter] the best former President in, at minimum, modern American history, and perhaps, well, I guess, the last 200 years?"
- **Historian Marshall Frady:** "Which embraces all presidencies, I think. Absolutely."
- — Exchange on CNBC's *The News with Brian Williams*, October 11. [45]
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- ■ "He is the last of the liberal lions, roaring on behalf of the voiceless....The 30-year-old with nothing but a name to run on turned 70 as one of the premier legislators of the 20th century....He has championed civil rights, pushed for improved education and better health care. His name is on hundreds, probably thousands, of bills....He is an undiluted, undeterrable liberal, but a closet pragmatist. He prefers half a loaf to none, something to nothing, results over rhetoric."
- — CNN's Candy Crowley, noting the 70th birthday of Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy, on the February 22 *Inside Politics*. [33]
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- ■ "I leave my friends behind and rush the stage to try to dance with [former Attorney General Janet] Reno, only to find myself in a small crowd of men living the same fantasy. When I finally push my way past them, she is gone."
- — *Time* staff writer Joel Stein, recounting Reno's dance party fundraiser for her campaign for Florida Governor, in the magazine's July 29 issue. [27]

To watch, via RealPlayer, many of the broadcast quotes in this issue, go to: www.mediaresearch.org

General Phil “Cheap Shot” Donahue Award (for Swipes at the War on Terrorism)

✓ “This is interesting news that we get now, and it may put the President under a lot of heat today as the public learns that he knew, through his daily CIA intelligence briefings, that bin Laden had potential terror attack plans under way....It also calls into question what happened when Andy Card, Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, that morning went and whispered in the President’s ear, as the President was talking to a group of school students in Florida [on Sept. 11, 2001]. Was the President really surprised?”

— Charles Gibson’s introduction and question to White House correspondent Terry Moran on ABC’s *Good Morning America*, May 16. [79 points]

Runners-up:

■ “We begin with the news from the White House that President Bush knew that al Qaeda was planning to hijack a U.S. airliner and he knew it before September the 11th.”

— Judy Woodruff on CNN’s *NewsNight*, May 15. [74]

■ “Recovery and debris removal work continues at the site of the World Trade Center known as ‘ground zero’ in New York, March 25, 2002. Human rights around the world have been a casualty of the U.S. ‘war on terror’ since September 11.”

— Reuters News Service caption for a photo of the destroyed World Trade Center site which was distributed with a September 3 story by Richard Waddington headlined, “Rights the first victim of ‘war on terror.’” [53]

■ “Good morning. What did he know and when did he know it? The Bush administration admits the President was warned in an intelligence briefing last summer of the possibility that Osama bin Laden’s terrorist network might hijack American planes, raising more questions about whether the attacks on America could have been prevented.”

— NBC’s Katie Couric introducing the May 16 *Today*. [45]

Fourth Reich Award (for Portraying John Ashcroft as a Fascist)

✓ “One of the interesting things about this German story that’s coming out is they had like 90 pages of particulars of this cell and it makes you think — they were leaving trails and clues all over the place — if we’d really been watching and paying attention we could have headed off 9/11. But the German prosecutorial system was pretty laid back and didn’t want to be John Ashcroft, you know, they didn’t want to be the SS, they had that worry there, no Gestapos. And so it was a great place for terrorists to operate.”

— *Newsweek* Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas on the August 31 *Inside Washington*, referring to German surveillance of an al Qaeda group before 9/11. [88 points]

Runners-up:

■ “We have an Attorney General that is, I don’t know, how would you describe him, demented? We have an Attorney General who doesn’t seem to understand the law.”

— *New Yorker*’s Seymour Hersh to the Chicago Headliner Club, as quoted by Steve Rhodes in *Chicago*, May 2. [81]

■ “‘Send me,’ it says on the Statue of Liberty, ‘your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.’ Well, some of them maybe. If they have visas and are from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan or Syria, they now pose national security concerns and must be fingerprinted and photographed. This registration system, Attorney General Ashcroft said, would eventually be expanded to other visitors who posed a security concern. What would the standards for that be? Well, they’d be secret, that’s what. It’s a little like the search for communists in the government after World War II. There were some, of course. But a lot of innocent people had their names blackened and their careers damaged during the hunt.”

— Bruce Morton in his “Last Word” commentary on CNN’s *Late Edition*, June 9. [48]

■ “Increasingly, there are important questions that need to be asked....For example, the Attorney General of the United States before, just before September 11th, started inexplicably taking private aircraft to places where normally the Attorney General wouldn’t take private aircraft, you know, government planes. Well, that would indicate that somebody somewhere was getting pretty worried, but if you’re going to share that with the Attorney General, you know, why wasn’t it shared with the public at large?”

— CBS’s Dan Rather on MSNBC’s *Imus in the Morning* radio show, May 22. According to NBC’s Jim Miklaszewski: “It was determined that since John Ashcroft is such a polarizing figure, that the threat assessment against him would be high,” so shortly after taking office “he started taking government planes all the time....It had nothing at all to do with any terrorist threat.” [35]

Ashamed of the Red, White & Blue Award

✓ Phil Donahue: “Let me tell you what is impressive. You’re not wearing a flag. Well, I don’t want to damn you with my praise, but I say hip-hip-hooray for that, and I think you gave the right answer when you spoke at Northwestern University....”

Tom Brokaw: “Right. I said, you know, I wear a flag in my heart, but I think if you wear a flag, it’s a suggestion somehow that you’re endorsing what the administration is doing at the time. And I don’t think journalists ought to be wearing flags.”

Donahue: “And I say hear, hear, hear.”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s *Donahue*, July 25. [89 points]

Runners-up:

■ “It’s an obscene comparison, and I’m not sure I like it, but there was a time, in South Africa, where people would put flaming tires around peoples’ necks if they dissented. And in some ways, the fear is that you’ll be necklaced here [in the U.S.], you’ll have the flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it’s that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions and to continue to bore in on the tough questions so often. And again, I’m humbled to say, I do not except myself from this criticism.”

— Dan Rather on BBC’s *Newsnight*, May 16. [80]

■ “As President Bush toured Asia last week, some world leaders worried publicly that the war on terrorism was starting to look suspiciously like the last great American campaign — against Communism....The McCarthy years in some ways were eerily similar to the present moment....Communists were often conceived as moral monsters whose deviousness and unwavering dedication to their faith made them capable of almost anything....The first victims of anti-Communist hysteria were immigrants, and hundreds of immigrants have been detained since Sept. 11, many with little apparent cause beyond the fact that they were Middle Eastern men.”

— *New York Times* reporter Robert F. Worth in a February 24 “Week in Review” article headlined “A Nation Defines Itself By Its Evil Enemies.” [71]

Give Appeasement a Chance Award

✓ “The President disclosed that he has been reading *Supreme Command*, a new book by Eliot A. Cohen, a neo-conservative hardliner on Iraq....

“In his reading choice, Bush seems to be following the advice of Bill Kristol, the arch-neoconservative who has been using his *Weekly Standard* magazine to chide Bush for being too soft on Saddam Hussein....Kristol, suspected of playing puppeteer to a number of hawkish officials in the Bush Pentagon and National Security Council, appears to have added the marionette-in-chief to his act.”

— *Washington Post* reporter Dana Milbank in his “White House Notebook” column, August 20. [84 points]

Runners-up:

■ “Can you assure the American people that this elevated [terrorism] threat alert is not part of the administration’s effort to convince people that the danger is such that military action against Iraq is necessary?”

— ABC’s Terry Moran to White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer at a September 10 briefing. [59]

■ Peter Jennings: “We’re going to take ‘A Closer Look’ tonight at the mood in the country as the President’s determination to wage war against Iraq becomes more defined. The country appears to be less confident than the President.”

Bill Redeker: “Voices of opposition. Not so much against getting rid of Saddam Hussein but how, when and at what cost....Military retirees remember getting bogged down in Vietnam and losing support at home. Many here are leery of a rerun....Unilateral action also troubles those we talked to in Denver. Few want to go it alone....In all three cities, there is a feeling the administration is moving too fast....Contrary to what the President says, when it comes to war, America does not speak with one voice.”

— ABC’s *World News Tonight*, October 14. The story on public opinion in San Diego, Denver and Charleston only quoted people reluctant or opposed to using military force. [53]

■ “Many Iraqis believe America’s true motive is to remove Saddam Hussein from power, install a puppet government and seize Iraq’s vast oil wealth. On the streets, many see

• Hussein’s offer to allow the inspectors back as a wise, brave decision showing strength.”
• — NBC’s Ron Allen reporting from Baghdad for the September 17 *Nightly News*. [47]

• ■ “Wherever you live in the world today, the sound of war drums being beaten in Washington has become unmistakable. With the first anniversary of the September 11th attacks behind us...the administration’s preoccupation with Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction has rapidly become the number one issue in international affairs.”

• — ABC’s Peter Jennings during a live report before President Bush’s speech to the United Nations, Sept. 12. [45]

Begala & Carville War Room Award for Bush Bashing

✓ *Rolling Stone’s* Will Dana: “Some people on the Left have said that the war on terrorism is actually about making sure the Middle East keeps pumping oil on our terms. In your book, you refer to ‘Mr. Bush and his oil-industry paymasters.’ What do you mean?”

• *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman: “I think these guys are bought and paid by Big Oil in America, and they are going to do nothing that will in any way go against the demands and interests of the big oil companies. I mean, let’s face it. ExxonMobil — I think this is a real group of bad guys, considering that they have funded all the anti-global-warming propaganda out there in the world. And Bush is just not going to go against guys like that. They are bad, bad guys — because of what they are doing in fighting the science of global warming.”

• — Interview published in the October 17 *Rolling Stone*. [68 points]

Runners-up:

• ■ “What also struck me, aside from how frightening much in this speech was, were the things that were missing. Very little with respect to minorities, the uninsured, the homeless, the elderly, Enron workers who have lost their life savings.”

• — *Washington Post* reporter Ceci Connolly during Fox’s broadcast coverage of President George W. Bush’s State of the Union address on January 29. [59]

• ■ “Gun-rights advocates have been emboldened by an administration that is sympathetic to their cause. The closeness was underscored by the fact that the military-style gun used in the sniper attacks — named, unfortunately for the White House, Bushmaster XM15 — was manufactured by a company owned by Richard Dyke, a Bush fundraiser.”
• — *Time’s* Karen Tumulty and Viveca Novak, November 4 issue. [49]

• ■ “When we come back, the other big news from the White House today. President Bush makes a major announcement. Tonight, why the U.S. is deliberately going back on its word in front of the rest of the world.”

• — MSNBC’s Brian Williams promoting an item on Bush’s decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty, on the December 13, 2001 *News with Brian Williams*. [47]

Media Millionaires for Smaller Paychecks Award (for Demanding the Tax Cut Be Repealed)

✓ "It is scandalous to think we are indulging ourselves at the expense of the elderly....How can we look at ourselves in the mirror if we keep shoving tax cuts into our pockets while letting poor, elderly people go without doctors and medicine?"

— **U.S. News & World Report Editor-at-Large David Ger-gen, who is often used to balance liberal pundits because he worked in the Nixon and Reagan White Houses, in a back-page editorial for the April 1 issue. [71 points]**

Runners-up:

■ **A compilation of questions from NBC Meet the Press moderator Tim Russert:**

"Can we afford an invasion of Iraq and also maintain the Bush tax cut?"

— **Russert's question to Democratic Senator Joe Biden, who voted against the Bush tax cut, August 4.**

"Should the Democrats be in favor of freezing the Bush tax cut?...Would it be better to freeze, postpone, the Bush tax cut?...Why not freeze the tax cut rather than spend the Social Security surplus?...Democrats are reluctant to say, 'We have to freeze the tax cut,' because you're afraid it's politically unpopular....As part of a budget summit, would you be in favor of freezing the Bush tax cut?...But, Congressman Davis, you did come to office with a \$5.6 trillion surplus, and it's gone, and a third of that can be directly attributed to the tax cut."

— **Russert's questions to Reps. Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Tom Davis (R-VA), September 1.**

"Can we afford a war in Afghanistan or in Iraq and the Bush tax cut? Back in 2001 on this program you said we should repeal the Bush tax cut. Do you believe that is now necessary in order to have the money to fight wars?"

— **Russert to Senator Hillary Clinton, September 15.**

"Since Inauguration Day, the Dow Jones is down 26 percent. The unemployment rate is up 33 percent. The budget had a \$281 billion surplus. We now have a \$157 billion deficit and there's been a net loss of two million jobs. You were prescient, prophetic about the Bush tax cut. Why did you change your view and vote for it?"

— **Russert to Senate candidate Lindsey Graham (R-SC), reminding him how in 2000 he'd sided with John McCain against Bush's tax cut, on October 13. [66]**

■ "Karl Rove declared war on the estate tax....You know, the tax only one-half of one percent of Americans pay? Falsely cloaking themselves in concern for family businesses already protected, the Bush administration refused all compromise, like raising the already generous exemption to \$7 million. What will fathers say to the age-old question now: 'What did you do during the war, Daddy?' Fight to destroy al Qaeda and avenge the deaths of three thousand U.S. citizens? Or wage war to protect America's luckiest and wealthiest?"

— **Time columnist and reporter Margaret Carlson's "Outrage of the Week" on CNN's Capital Gang, June 15. [60]**

Blame America First Award

✓ "I think very definitely that foreign policy could have caused what has happened [last September 11th]....It certainly should be apparent now — it should be, for goodness sakes understood now, but it is not — that the problem is this great division between the rich and the poor in the world. We represent the rich....Most of these other nations of Africa, Asia and South America and Central America are very, very poor....This is a revolution in effect around the world. A revolution is in place today. We are suffering from a revolution of the poor and have-nots against the rich and haves and that's us."

— **Former CBS Evening News anchor Walter Cronkite on CNN's Larry King Live, September 9. [77 points]**

Runners-up:

■ **Tom Brokaw:** "That brings us to America's growing Arab and Muslim communities. For many, this has been the year — as one observer put it — that the American dream for them descended into nightmares."

■ **Jim Avila:** "This is Jenin Ahman, an American of Palestinian descent, born 42 years ago in suburban Chicago, now worried everything she learned as an American about justice and civil rights collapsed along with New York's Twin Towers."

— **NBC Nightly News, September 11. [30]**

■ "The U.S. has to distinguish itself from what I call the 'thugocracies' that rule places, and until recently ruled Afghanistan, that certainly rules Iraq. And to establish moral leadership the U.S. has to establish that it is governed by the rule of law and that it is willing to submit to the rule of law around the world. However, it's a very tricky issue at a time when the U.S. continues to hold citizens of other countries without access to counsel, without access to evidence held against them, in military tribunals, in Guantanamo Bay."

— **Nightline reporter Michel Martin on the roundtable portion of ABC's This Week, July 7. [29]**

Bill Moyers (Subsidized) Sanctimony Award

✓ "Last year, a year ago this month, the right-wingers at the Heritage Foundation in Washington teamed up with deep pocket bankers, some of whom support the Heritage Foundation, to stop the United States from cracking down on terrorist money havens. I'm not making this up, it's all on the record....The President of the powerful Heritage Foundation spent an hour with Treasury Secretary O'Neill, Texas bankers pulled their strings at the White House, and, Presto!, the Bush administration pulled out of the global campaign to crack down on dirty money. How about that for patriotism? Better terrorists get their dirty money than tax cheaters be prevented from evading national law. And this from people who wrap themselves in the flag and sing 'America the Beautiful' with tears in their eyes. Bitter? Yes."

— **Bill Moyers in a Jan. 4 speech at the LBJ library in Austin, Texas, quoted by the Weekly Standard's Stephen Hayes in a Feb. 25 cover story on Moyers, "PBS's Televangelist: Bill Moyers Preaches On...And On." [62 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "It concerns me more that Kenneth Lay is meeting secretly with the Vice President than it concerned me that President Clinton was meeting secretly with Monica Lewinsky."

— **Bill Moyers' comment to feminist author Katie Roiphe on PBS's *Now*, February 8. [49]**

■ "Next week, over 100 heads of state will meet in Johannesburg, South Africa. Their goal is to search for ways to save the Earth's life support system — our water, air and soil. Ten years ago they gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the same purpose, but United Nations studies reveal the Earth's environment is still in decline. So the leaders of every major industrial country will be in Johannesburg next week, except for George W. Bush. That makes his core constituents quite happy: Representatives of the religious right, conservative activists and big companies like ExxonMobil wrote the President this week praising him for not going to the summit. They also asked him to make sure American officials...keep the issue of global warming off the table. It's all part of a pattern. The Bush administration is carrying on what the *Los Angeles Times* this week called 'the most concerted exploitation of the public's land, air and water since fundamental protection laws went into effect three decades ago.'"

— **Moyers on *Now with Bill Moyers*, August 23. [42]**

Carve Clinton into Mount Rushmore Award

✓ **Joy Behar:** "I want to ask the audience: Clap if you would have your daughter be an intern for Bill Clinton."

Barbara Walters: "I think that's so unfair. That's so unfair." Behar: "Why?"

Walters: "Because the man was the President. He does need people to work in that office and come on, I mean, let it go already."

— **Exchange on ABC's *The View* on Sept. 13. [72 points]**

Runners-up:

■ **Charlie Rose:** "What will be the judgment of history about him [former President Bill Clinton]?"

New York Times Executive Editor Howell Raines: "Huge political talent. Huge political vision and I suspect — none of us, I can't predict who's going to win the next election, much less what history is going to say about anyone. But I think President Clinton's role in modernizing the Democratic Party around a set of economic ideas and also holding onto the principles of social justice, and presiding over the greatest prosperity in human history. Those would seem to me to have to be central to his legacy."

— **Exchange on PBS's *Charlie Rose*, August 6. [70]**

■ "In a crowded conference room at the Waldorf, some 300 world leaders in politics, industry and finance were held spellbound by a freewheeling, solo seminar conducted by someone whose idea of a great meal was the Mexican platter at the White House mess: former President Bill Clinton, the ultimate Davos Man, always ready to expound on globalization until the last top-dog dies....

• "Dapper in a double-breasted blue blazer and hand-held microphone, the man the official program described as 'Founder, William Jefferson Clinton Foundation,' held forth on North Korea, the Middle East, Enron and health care. At one point, he welcomed a guest star, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel, who declared, 'I wish we'd had just a few more months, then we'd have peace in the Middle East.'"

• — **Todd Purdum and David Sanger's front-page *New York Times* article, "It Was Clinton at Waldorf Instead of Dessert," February 5. [62]**

• ■ **Joe Klein:** "The '90s will be remembered more for the ferocity of their prosecutions than for the severity of their crimes. I think we all went a little bit berserk during that time. I think that there really was a conspiracy against Bill Clinton on the right, and I think that he did some terrible things. But there is such a thing as balance and...James Carville said to me, 'All you have to do is say one sentence in favor of Bill Clinton and you're an apologist.' It shouldn't be like that. It shouldn't be like that. We should be able to acknowledge the fact that he made life a lot better for a lot of people in this country."

• **Tim Russert:** "And yet many people will say, if he's the President of the United States, the chief law enforcement officer, and he breaks the law he should be penalized."

• **Klein:** "So Franklin Roosevelt too, huh? You think he should have been penalized for lying about lend-lease?"

• — **Discussion with Klein, a *New Yorker* columnist and former *Newsweek* Senior Writer, about his book, *The Natural: The Misunderstood Presidency of Bill Clinton*, on CNBC's *Tim Russert*, March 9. [49]**

Barbra Streisand Political IQ Award for Celebrity Pontificating

✓ "I despise him [President George W. Bush]. I despise his administration and everything they stand for....To my mind the election was stolen by George Bush and we have been suffering ever since under this man's leadership....And I think this latest thing with Iraq is absolute madness and I'm stunned that there is not opposition on a much more global scale to what he's talking about....There has to be a movement now to really oppose what he is proposing because it's unconstitutional, it's immoral and basically illegal....It is an embarrassing time to be an American. It really is. It's humiliating."

• — **Actress Jessica Lange at a September 25 press conference at an international film festival in San Sebastian, Spain where she was given a lifetime achievement award. Her remarks were shown in the U.S. on the syndicated show *Inside Edition* on October 4. [79 points]**

Runners-up:

• ■ "It was 1993...a time of hope...of new possibilities. We believed that our children and grandchildren would live in an age of extraordinary opportunity. We had a Democratic Congress that put the country on the road to prosperity... passed the Family and Medical Leave Act...legislation to increase funds for education...an anti-crime bill that banned assault weapons and violence against women... safe water and clean air acts.

“Unprecedented Growth in the Economy/The Dow Was Up, the Deficit Was Down/As Long as Democrats Were the Majority/I Could Sleep Nights, Not Weep Nights.

“I find George Bush and Dick Cheney frightening...Donald Rumsfeld and John Ashcroft frightening.

“Global Warming? Don’t Believe a Word of It/And What’s a Drop of Arsenic or Two?/Saving Medicare? They Never Heard of It/To Them, Health Care Is Wealth Care

“Now we have tax cuts for the rich, but no raise in the minimum wage for the poor... poison in the water, salmonella in the food, carbon dioxide in the air and toxic waste in the ground that polluters no longer have to pay to clean up — the taxpayers do.

“So on next Election Day I Pray/That the Country Will Deliver, a House Without Tom Delay!/We Need a Team Change/A Definite Regime Change/Oh, That Would Be a Dream Change/From the Way We Are.”

— **Barbra Streisand interspersing comments with singing of customized lyrics to “The Way We Were,” at a Sept. 29 fundraiser for Democratic congressional candidates and later posted on her Web site, BarbraStreisand.com. (Ellipses are speaking pauses as in original.) [68]**

■ “This is a racist and imperialist war. The warmongers who stole the White House (you call them ‘hawks’, but I would never disparage such a fine bird) have hijacked a nation’s grief and turned it into a perpetual war on any non-white country they choose to describe as terrorist.”

— **Former Cheers star Woody Harrelson in an op-ed headlined “I’m an American tired of American lies” published Oct. 17 in London’s The Guardian newspaper. [65]**

■ **Larry King:** “We [Americans] try to do good, don’t we? I mean, we’re basically good.”

Bill Maher: “No. Not for the rest of the world....Iraqis, I think, feel that if we drove smaller cars, maybe we wouldn’t have to kill them for their oil.”

— **Exchange on CNN’s Larry King Live, November 1. [49]**

Mount St. Helen Award for Helen Thomas Eruptions

✓ “I censored myself for 50 years....Now I wake up and ask myself, ‘Who do I hate today?’...I have never covered a President who actually wanted to go to war. Bush’s policy of pre-emptive war is immoral — such a policy would legitimize Pearl Harbor. It’s as if they learned none of the lessons from Vietnam....Where is the outrage?”

— **Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers White House columnist and former UPI reporter, speaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on Nov. 4 and quoted on MIT’s Web site two days later. [76 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “Reagan turned the country to the right. There was a Reagan revolution, a very conservative revolution, and it was social Darwinism. If you can’t make it, tough. I mean, he did not believe in social welfare and, but at the same time, he did build up our military. He had a secret plan to spend one trillion dollars on new arms when he came in....”

• “Clinton, I think his heart was in the right place. He certainly built up a great prosperity and surplus, balanced the budget, I think that he had great ideals, but, of course, he tarnished the White House with his liaisons and, but eventually, you know, every President, time is the great healer, and every President looks better in retrospect, so I think that he has a legacy that will be worthwhile.”

• — **Thomas speaking at a March 3 Newseum session shown by C-SPAN on March 4. [49]**

• ■ “I think the chipping away of our civil liberties is unprecedented. Even in World War II, I never saw anything like that in Washington or any of the wars. I think that people are standing mute, and I remember the rabbi in the March on Washington program. He said that the greatest sin of all in the Nazi era was silence. He had been in a concentration camp for many years. People have got to, they must speak up now or forever hold their peace.”

• — **Thomas on MSNBC’s Donahue, July 22. [47]**

• ■ **Helen Thomas:** “Does the President consider this [election outcome] a mandate to fulfill his agenda? Going to war with Iraq, privatizing Social Security, weakening the Civil Service Commission and so forth?”

• **Press Secretary Ari Fleischer:** “Helen, you sound like a commercial that didn’t work.”

• — **Exchange at White House press briefing, Nov. 6. [28]**

Good Morning Morons Award

• ✓ “Iraqi citizens are preparing to go to the polls to decide whether Hussein stays in office.”

• — **Preview of an October 14 segment on CNN’s American Morning with Paula Zahn posted on CNN’s Web site. [83]**

Runners-up:

• ■ **Charles Gibson:** “My wife has a sign on her office wall and it says, ‘Won’t it be a great day when the Air Force has to hold bake sales to get a new bomber and the schools have all the money they need?’”

• **Diane Sawyer:** “I love your wife! I love her for many reasons. Love that sign.”

• — **Exchange on the October 2 Good Morning America. Gibson’s wife, Arlene, runs an all-girls private school in New York City. [67]**

• ■ **Mark McEwen:** “Up and down the East coast, it’s coming our way, but we will probably see just rain in the big cities.”

• **Bryant Gumbel:** “We never get any snow.”

• **McEwen:** “Do you think it’s global warming?”

• **Gumbel:** “Yes, yes.”

• **McEwen:** “Do you, Jane?”

• **Jane Clayson:** “Yeah.”

• **McEwen:** “We’re unanimous...it’s global warming.”

• — **Exchange on CBS’s Early Show, February 6 [46]**

• ■ “Last week the President spoke, the market went down. Yesterday, the President spoke, the market went down. Should he be quiet for a while?”

• — **CBS’s Mark McEwen on the July 16 Early Show. [35]**

Damn Those Conservatives Award

✓ “The [President’s Council on Bioethics] will be navigating a scientific and ethical landscape significantly more complex than the one that existed...last summer. In November, researchers announced that they had made the first human embryo clones, giving immediacy to warnings by religious conservatives and others that science is no longer serving the nation’s moral will. At the same time, the United States was fighting a war to free a faraway nation from the grip of religious conservatives who were denounced for imposing their moral code on others.”
— *Washington Post* reporter Rick Weiss in a January 17 “Federal Page” article. [69 points]

Runners-up:

■ “The meanest [song], by far, is ‘Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue,’ which unabashedly glorifies the bombing of Afghanistan. The song traffics in vivid, simple shades of black and white, good and evil.”
— *Washington Post* Style-section reporter David Segal writing about country singer Toby Keith’s new album, *Vanished*, July 25. [55]

■ **Anchor Daryn Kagan:** “You know what, Kate? Shame on all of them. They’re sitting there playing politics in Washington. I know we have a lot of viewers at home, a lot of older people who their simple, simple request is just to be able to afford the drugs that they need.”

Reporter Kate Snow: “Yeah, they will say it’s a lot more complicated than that. And, you know, that there, again, there are policy differences and it’s hard to get agreement when you don’t agree on how to do it. That’s what they’ll say to that, but I think you’re right, that I think a lot of seniors are going to be disappointed.”

Kagan: “Tell that to our grandmothers and grandfathers and uncles and aunts who are just trying to kind of put together the bottom line.”

— Exchange July 31 during CNN’s “Breaking News” coverage of the end of Senate efforts to create a new prescription drug entitlement for senior citizens. [42]

■ “A supportive spouse, surprisingly accepting colleagues, and a mandate to legislate. For Sen. Clinton, life is almost perfect. If only they weren’t still out to get her.”

— Subhead of *Washington Post* reporter John Harris’s profile, “The Liberation of Hillary,” the cover story for the *Post*’s Sunday magazine, January 27. “They” referred to Clinton’s conservative critics. [40]

Politics of Meaninglessness Award for the Silliest Analysis

✓ “Seven years ago, when the last referendum took place, Saddam Hussein won 99.96 percent of the vote. Of course, it is impossible to say whether that’s a true measure of the Iraqi people’s feelings.”

— ABC’s David Wright, *World News Tonight*, Oct. 15. [50]

Runners-up:

■ “Experts Agree: Al Qaeda Leader Is Dead or Alive.”
— On-screen graphic during a story about Osama bin Laden’s fate on CNN’s 2pm *Live From...* on Sept. 3. [42]

■ “Arbitrary Victims, Identical Fate; County’s Growing Diversity Reflected in Those Gunned Down.”
— **October 4 front-page headline in the *Washington Post* about the sniper shooting murders of five random individuals in Montgomery County, Maryland.** [42]

■ “Since the early 1970s, the number of state prisoners has increased 500 percent, growing each year in the 1990s even as crime fell.”
— *New York Times* reporter Fox Butterfield, Jan. 21. [41]

■ “There are a lot of stories about the struggles Cuban people face here. Stories about the lack of things, the lack of cars, the lack of human rights, the lack of certain foods. But if you go asking Cubans, and even if you look at statistics from international groups, you’ll find there are some areas where Cubans have made successes. According to a United Nations study, Cuba’s regular schools rank at the top in Latin America...”

“Another success Cubans point to: health care...every Cuban has a primary care physician....Doctors get to know their patients and even make house calls....Cuba may not have the nicest facilities or equipment, medicine is sometimes in short supply, but everyone has access and the concept of paying is completely foreign.”
— CNN’s Kate Snow on CNN’s prime time *Live From Havana* during Jimmy Carter’s visit, May 13. [33]

See No Liberal Media Bias Award

✓ “If I were biased, I don’t believe I would have gotten the job.”
— George Stephanopoulos to *Newsday*’s Verne Gay as quoted in a June 19 story after he was named host of ABC’s *This Week*. [64 points]

Runners-up:

■ “I have yet to see a body of evidence that suggests the reporting that gets on the air reflects any political bias.”
— Former CBS and CNN correspondent Deborah Potter, who is currently the Executive Director of NewsLab, when asked for a comment on her former colleague Bernard Goldberg’s new book *Bias* by the *Boston Globe*’s Mark Jurkowitz for a January 17 article. Potter had not read the book. [61]

■ “I don’t think it’s a liberal agenda. It happens that journalism will always be spending more time on issues that seem to be liberal to some people: the problem of the downtrodden, the problem of civil rights and human rights, the problem of those people who don’t have a place at the table with the powerful.”
— NBC anchor Tom Brokaw on MSNBC’s *Donahue* when asked about the claim of liberal media bias, July 25. [59]

■ “[Former CBS News correspondent Bernard] Goldberg has picked this moment in time to haul out the old canard about the media being ‘liberal’ and the news being slanted leftward. It’s the first refuge of a no-talent hack.”
— *Washington Post* TV critic Tom Shales in a review of Goldberg’s book *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*, in *Electronic Media*, Jan. 7. [53]

Quote of the Year

✓“The entire federal government — the Congress, the executive, the courts — is united behind a right-wing agenda for which George W. Bush believes he now has a mandate. That agenda includes the power of the state to force pregnant women to surrender control over their own lives. It includes using the taxing power to transfer wealth from working people to the rich. It includes giving corporations a free hand to eviscerate the environment and control the regulatory agencies meant to hold them accountable. And it includes secrecy on a scale you cannot imagine.

“Above all, it means judges with a political agenda appointed for life. If you like the Supreme Court that put George W. Bush in the White House, you will swoon over what’s coming. And if you like God in government, get ready for the Rapture....

“So it’s a heady time in Washington, a heady time for piety, profits and military power, all joined at the hip by

• ideology and money. Don’t forget the money....Republicans out-raised Democrats by \$184 million and they came up with the big prize: monopoly control of the American government and the power of the state to turn their radical ideology into the law of the land. Quite a bargain at any price.”

• — **Bill Moyers’ commentary at the end of his PBS show *Now* on November 8, the Friday after Republicans won control of the Senate in midterm elections.**

• Runner-up:

• ■ “The reason that the World Trade Center got hit is because there are a lot of people living in abject poverty out there who don’t have any hope for a better life....I think they [the 19 hijackers] were brave at the very least.”

• — **AOL Time Warner Vice Chairman and CNN founder Ted Turner in February 11 remarks at Brown University, as reported by Gerald Carbone in the February 12 *Providence Journal*. The next day, Turner issued a statement: “The attacks of Sept. 11 were despicable acts. I in no way meant to convey otherwise.”**

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PUBLISHER: L. Brent Bozell III
EDITORS: Brent H. Baker, Rich Noyes
MEDIA ANALYSTS: Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ken Shepherd, Patrick Gregory
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE: Kristina Sewell
RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Amanda Monson
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Liz Swasey

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