

Notable Quotables

December 19, 2005 (Vol. Eighteen; 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 2005 The Eighteenth 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 2005 (December 2004 through November 2005). 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 2005. 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 Michelle Humphrey and Karen Hanna distributed and counted the ballots, then produced the numerous audio and video clips that accompany the Web-posted version. Brent Baker and Rich Noyes assembled this issue and Michael Gibbons posted the entire package on the MRC's Web site: www.mrc.org.

And please save this date: Thursday, March 30, 2006. At our annual gala celebration that night in Washington, DC, the MRC will announce the winners of its *DisHonors Awards of 2006: Roasting the Most Outrageously Biased Liberal Reporters*. Check www.mrc.org in early 2006 for ticket information.

Slam Uncle Sam Award

✓ **Andrea Mitchell:** "It is an iconic picture: American hostages, hands bound and blindfolded, being paraded outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran by their captors. But has one of those student radicals now become Iran's newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad?... Tonight, U.S. intelligence officials say that they will continue to study this, but may never have definitive proof of what the role was of Iran's new president, Brian."

Brian Williams: "Andrea, what would it all matter if proven true? Someone brought up today the first several U.S. Presidents were certainly revolutionaries and might have been called terrorists at the time by the British Crown, after all."

Mitchell: "Indeed, Brian."

— *NBC Nightly News*, June 30. [91 points]

Runners-up:

■ "I just want to say: Who are we? We are people who have always been for inspections of prisons, for some degree of human rights, and now we're defending neither.... We have now violated everything that we stand for. It is the first time in my life I have been ashamed of my country."

— NPR's **Nina Totenberg**, commenting on a front-page *Washington Post* report that captured terrorists are being held at undisclosed sites, *Inside Washington*, Nov. 4. [80]

■ "*Stealth* is a pretty fair military-hardware action movie until you start thinking about it — at which point it turns

• incredibly sour in your mouth. I can therefore recommend
• it to any and all audiences lacking higher brain functions.
• Sea cucumbers, perhaps. Ones waving American flags....
• This is exactly the sort of movie we don't need right now:
• a delusional military fantasy in which collateral damage
• doesn't exist.... For a movie to pretend, in the face of the
• deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi men, women, and
• children directly or indirectly caused by our presence
• there, that we can wage war without anyone really getting
• hurt isn't naive, or wishful thinking, or a jim-dandy way to
• spend a Saturday night at the movies. It's an obscenity."

• — *Boston Globe* movie critic **Ty Burr** in a July 29 review of
• the movie *Stealth*, about a fighter jet that is piloted by a
• computer with artificial intelligence. [53]

• ■ **Brian Williams:** "You just told me the story about one
• photograph from the war that always kind of catches you,
• the Japanese soldier returning to his city that's been de-
• stroyed. Do you have remorse for what happened? How
• do you deal with that in your mind?"

• **Enola Gay** navigator "**Dutch**" **Van Kirk:** "No, I do not have
• remorse! I pity the people who were there. I always think
• of it, Brian, as being, the dropping of the atom bomb was
• an act of war to end a war."

• — Exchange as the two stood next to the plane at the
• Smithsonian's new National Air and Space annex near
• Dulles airport, in a segment on the 60th anniversary of
• the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Ja-
• pan, *NBC Nightly News*, August 5. [34]

Madness of King George Award for Bush Bashing

✓ "It's like he [President Bush] stuck a broomstick in his [FDR's] wheelchair wheels."

— *Newsweek's* Jon Meacham on MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning* May 9, discussing Bush's criticism of Roosevelt's Yalta deal with Stalin on post-war Europe. [62 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Reporter Lee Cowan:** "The proposed [Bush budget] cuts hit the heartland like a mountain of unwanted news, from the soy bean fields of Iowa, where farmers marched on the capital to voice their disgust at slashing farm subsidies, to large cities like Minneapolis, where block grant programs help the homeless and the hungry....The White House calls the budget 'lean,' proponents call it difficult but brave. But critics charge the people these cuts hit the hardest tend to have the weakest political voice."

Robert Greenstein, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: "Cuts in programs for the working poor, low income elderly people, people with disabilities. They tend not to have much in the way of lobbyists. They don't give campaign contributions."

Cowan: "....This Dallas health clinic serves only the poorest of patients, but already there is a two-month waiting list. Dr. Maureen Thielen says the President's proposed cuts in Medicaid will only make it worse....Agencies that are already doing the work of the poor now find themselves in the unenviable position of proving that their cause is worth it."

— *CBS Evening News*, February 7. [43]

■ "In the words of one of his [Ayatollah Sistani's] aides, 'the representation of our Sunni brethren in the coming government must be effective, regardless of the results of the elections.' As an Iraqi politician said to me, 'There are currently two Grand Ayatollahs running Iraq: Sistani and Bush. Most of us feel that Sistani is the more rational.'"

— *Newsweek's* Fareed Zakaria in a column published in the magazine's January 24 edition. [42]

■ "President Bush's second inauguration will cost tens of millions of dollars — \$40 million alone in private donations for the balls, parade and other invitation-only parties. With that kind of money, what could you buy?

- 200 armored Humvees with the best armor for troops in Iraq.

- Vaccinations and preventive health care for 22 million children in regions devastated by the tsunami.

- A down payment on the nation's deficit, which hit a record-breaking \$412 billion last year....

"The questions have come from Bush supporters and opponents: Do we need to spend this money on what seems so extravagant?"

— **Reporter Will Lester's lead to a January 13 Associated Press dispatch.** [41]

■ "The Libby indictments have opened the door to making the wider case against the Bush administration that

they misled the country into war....The next logical step is impeachment, and I think you're going to hear that word come up, and if the Democrats ever capture either house of Congress there are going to be serious proceedings against this administration."

— *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift on the *McLaughlin Group*, November 5. [40]

The Kanye West "George Bush Doesn't Care About Wet People" Award

✓ "The dilatory performance of George Bush during the past week has been outrageous. Almost as unbelievable as Katrina itself is the fact that the leader of the free world has been outshone by the elected leaders of a region renowned for governmental ineptitude....The populism of Huey Long was financially corrupt, but when it came to the welfare of people, it was caring. The churchgoing cultural populism of George Bush has given the United States an administration that worries about the House of Saud and the welfare of oil companies while the poor drown in their attics and their sons and daughters die in foreign deserts."

— **Former *New York Times* Executive Editor Howell Raines in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, September 1.** [89 points]

Runners-up:

■ "After meeting with Louisiana officials last week, Reverend Jesse Jackson said, quote, 'Many black people feel that their race, their property conditions and their voting patterns have been a factor in the response.' He continued, quote, 'I'm not saying that myself.' Then I'll say it: If the majority of the hardest hit victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans were white people, they would not have gone for days without food and water, forcing many to steal for mere survival. Their bodies would not have been left to float in putrid water....We've repeatedly given tax cuts to the wealthiest and left our most vulnerable American citizens to basically fend for themselves....The President has put himself at risk by visiting the troops in Iraq, but didn't venture anywhere near the Superdome or the convention center, where thousands of victims, mostly black and poor, needed to see that he gave a damn."

— **Contributor Nancy Giles on CBS's *Sunday Morning*, September 4.** [58]

■ "For many of this country's citizens, the mantra has been, as we were taught in social studies it should always be, whether or not I voted for this President, he is still my President. I suspect anybody who had to give him that benefit of the doubt stopped doing so last week. I suspect, also, a lot of his supporters, looking ahead to '08, are wondering how they can distance themselves from the two words which will define his government, our government: New Orleans. For him, it is a shame, in all senses of the word. A few changes of pronouns in there and he might not have looked so much like a 21st century Marie Antoinette."

— **MSNBC's Keith Olbermann, Sept. 5 *Countdown*.** [54]

■ “You know, I’ve been to some pretty lousy places in my life. And Iraq over the past 12 months and Banda Aceh, open graves and bodies. These were Americans, and everyone watching the coverage all week, that kind of reached its peak last weekend, kept saying the same refrain: ‘How is this happening in the United States?’ And the other refrain was, ‘Had this been Nantucket, had this been Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, how many choppers would have—”

— *NBC Nightly News* anchor **Brian Williams** on *Comedy Central’s The Daily Show*, September 8. Audience applause drowned out Williams as he was finishing. [38]

“God Save This Court from Extremists” Award

✓ “An Advocate for the Right.”

— **Headline over a *New York Times* “news analysis” of Judge John Roberts’ judicial philosophy, July 28.**

vs.

“Balanced Jurist at Home in the Middle.”

— **Headline over a June 27, 1993 *New York Times* story on Supreme Court nominee Ruth Bader Ginsburg. [78 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “When John G. Roberts Jr. prepared to ghostwrite an article for President Ronald Reagan a little over two decades ago, his pen took a Civil War re-enactment detour.... The Indiana native scratched out the words ‘Civil War’ and replaced them with ‘War Between the States.’...Sam McSeveney, a history professor emeritus at Vanderbilt University who specialized in the Civil War, said that Roberts’ choice of words was significant. ‘Many people who are sympathetic to the Confederate position are more comfortable with the idea of a “War Between the States,”’ McSeveney explained. ‘People opposed to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s would undoubtedly be more comfortable with the words he chose.’”

— *Washington Post* reporter **Jo Becker**, August 26. [58]

■ “I want to ask you about this 1991 opinion...[Judge Sam Alito] was the lone dissenter. He argued that a woman should have to notify her husband before she gets an abortion. Now, let me just say Sandra Day O’Connor heard this same case and Sandra Day O’Connor said this reflects a repugnant view of marriage. Women do not lose their constitutional rights because they’re married....Does this opinion give even you pause? Again, Sandra Day O’Connor’s notation that it was a repugnant view of marriage?”

— **Diane Sawyer** to conservative commentator **Joe Watkins** on *ABC’s Good Morning America*, November 1. [51]

■ **CNN’s Jeffrey Toobin:** “[Judge Alito] thought it was okay that Pennsylvania insisted that a woman get her husband’s permission before she got an abortion....”

CNN’s Carol Costello: “Why, legally, would you uphold something like that? That a woman would have to check with her husband first in order to get an abortion?...I guess what I’m, I’m trying to get at is, is this is a very conservative judge, and he’s going to be against legalized abortion?”

• I mean, you could draw that conclusion from this, couldn’t you? Or could I?”

• **Toobin:** “I think it’s a very good indication that this is a judge who will want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.”

• — **Exchange on CNN’s *Daybreak* October 31, soon after word of Alito’s impending nomination leaked out. In fact, the law only required notification if the husband was also the baby’s father, not his “permission.” [48]**

• ■ “I’ve known John Roberts for years. I think it’s a very sensible pick in all serious ways. But I must say that when I spent five hours reviewing all of his documents from when he worked in the Justice Department, I was actually quite surprised at how, how very, very conservative he was.”

• — **NPR’s Nina Totenberg** on the July 30 *Inside Washington*. Totenberg had previously referred to Judge Roberts as “very, very conservative,” “very, very, very conservative,” “a really conservative guy,” “a conservative Catholic,” and “a hardline conservative.” [40]

Damn Those Conservatives Award

✓ “The day I say Dick Cheney is going to run for President, I’ll kill myself. All we need is one more liar.”

• — **Hearst White House columnist Helen Thomas**, as quoted in the “Under the Dome” column by **Albert Eisele** and **Jeff Dufour** in *The Hill* newspaper, July 28. [68 points]

Runners-up:

• ■ **CNN’s Jack Cafferty:** “What should Karl Rove do if he is indicted?...He might want to, he might want to get measured for one of those extra large orange jump suits, Wolf, because looking at old Karl, I’m not sure that he’d, they’d be able to zip him into the regular size one.”

• **CNN’s Wolf Blitzer:** “He’s actually lost some weight. I think he’s in pretty good shape.”

• **Cafferty:** “Oh, well then, maybe just the regular off the shelf large would handle it for him.”

• **Blitzer:** “But, you know, it’s still a big if. It’s still a big if.”

• **Cafferty:** “Oh, I understand. I’m, I’m just hoping, you know. I love, I love to see those kinds of things happen. It does wonders for me.”

• — **CNN’s *The Situation Room*, October 17. [65]**

• ■ “I don’t have a clue as to whether [former House Majority Leader Tom] DeLay violated the law or not, this very old Texas statute that he’s been indicted on, but I do know it’s the first time in 200 years that the House of Representatives has been run for a whole decade, or almost a decade, by a corrupt zealot.”

• — **Newsweek Senior Editor Jonathan Alter** on *MSNBC’s Imus in the Morning*, October 3. [58]

• ■ “Karl Rove is a liability in the war on terror....In his ‘story guidance’ to Matthew Cooper of *Time*, Rove did more damage to your safety than the most thumb-sucking liberal or guard at Abu Ghraib. He destroyed an intelligence asset like Valerie Plame merely to deflect criticism of a politician. We have all the damned politicians, of every stripe, that we need. The best of them isn’t worth half a Valerie Plame.”

• — **Countdown host Keith Olbermann** in a July 11 posting to his “*Bloggerman*” page on *MSNBC’s Web site*. [37]

Captain Dan the Forgery Man Award

✓ **Dan Rather:** “My principal problem was that I stuck by the [Memogate] story, I stuck by our people for too long. I’m guilty of that. I believed in the story, and the facts of the story were correct. One supporting pillar of the story, albeit an important one, one supporting pillar was brought into question. To this day no one has proven whether it was what it purported to be or not....You know, I didn’t give up on my people, our people. I didn’t and I won’t.” [Applause]

Marvin Kalb: “Dan, thank you. You said, I believe you just said, that you think the story is accurate.”

Rather: “The story is accurate.”

— From *The Kalb Report*, an interview series produced by the George Washington University and Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University, and shown live on C-SPAN September 26. [80]

Runners-up:

■ “As was the practice in all he did, Dan was meticulously careful to be fair and balanced and accurate. When did we stop believing that this is indeed how we all perform our jobs, or try to? When did we allow those with questionable agendas to take the lead and convince people of something quite the opposite? It’s shameful. But I digress.”

— MSNBC President and former ABC and CNN news executive Rick Kaplan praising ex-CBS anchor Dan Rather on September 19 as the latter received a lifetime achievement award from the National Television Academy, a ceremony televised on C-SPAN on October 1. [58]

■ “A panel was appointed by CBS News to look into thisThey concluded that whatever happened, whatever you thought about it, it was not motivated by political bias, and they said that, although they had four months and millions of dollars, they could not demonstrate that the documents were not authentic, that they were forgeries. They said they couldn’t make that conclusion....Whatever one thinks of what we did or didn’t do with the story in question here, nobody broke the law, nobody lied. Depending on your point of view, it was a mistake, and who hasn’t made a mistake somewhere along the line?”

— Outgoing CBS Evening News anchor Dan Rather discussing the investigation into his forged memo story, on CBS’s *Late Show with David Letterman*, March 3. [35]

“Baghdad Bob” Was Correct Award

✓ **Co-host Mike Jerrick:** “What do you think’s going to happen Sunday?”

FNC reporter Steve Harrigan, just back from Iraq: “I think there’s going to be a bloodbath on Sunday....All over the place, especially in Baghdad and a few other cities.”

— FNC’s *Fox & Friends*, January 28, two days before Iraq’s largely peaceful elections. [71 points]

Runners-up:

■ “I’m Bob Schieffer. It just keeps getting worse in Iraq. The death toll is rising. Tension is growing between Shiites and Sunnis. Is the country sliding toward civil war?”

— Schieffer beginning the May 19 CBS Evening News. [60]

■ **Chris Matthews:** “What does it smell like over there [in Baghdad]? Do you sense fireworks?”

NBC’s Campbell Brown: “You do, Chris....On the street, you get the sense that something big is about to happen, something big and fairly ugly.”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s *Hardball* January 28, just before Iraq’s first free elections. [50]

■ “In other parts of the Sunni Muslim heartland tonight, it looks as if the election process has been rejected. In many places we’re told the polling stations didn’t even open. This is a huge problem for Iraq as a whole. Without Sunni participation, somehow, the future here is still pretty bleak.”

— ABC’s Peter Jennings on the January 30 *World News Tonight*, just hours after voting ended in Iraq. [42]

■ “According to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld the insurgency could last another 12 years....I think most Americans say, ‘Oh my goodness!’ And they gasp because that seems like such an extended period of time for these very powerful, very tenacious insurgents to have control of the situation....It must be very frustrating at times to see things unraveling so.”

— NBC’s Katie Couric to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on *Today*, June 28. [37]

Crazy Chris Award for Chris Matthews’ Left-Wing Lunacy

✓ **Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan:** “We’re not going to cure terrorism and spread peace and good will in the Middle East by killing innocent people or — I’m not even saying our bullets and bombs are killing them. The occupation — they don’t have food, they don’t have clean water, they don’t have electricity. They don’t have medicine, they don’t have doctors. We need to get our military presence out of there, and that’s what’s gonna start building good will....I see Iraq as the base for spreading imperialism....”

Host Chris Matthews: “Are you considering running for Congress, Cindy?”

Sheehan: “No, not this time....”

Matthews: “Okay. Well, I have to tell you, you sound more informed than most U.S. Congresspeople, so maybe you should run.”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s *Hardball*, August 15. [93 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Actress Jane Fonda:** “From an historical point of view, they were defending their country. If we had been invaded and an invading force came into this country and divided us in half at the Mississippi River...we would understand why people were fighting....We should never have been there [in Vietnam].”

Chris Matthews: “There were a lot of people, Jane, who....can’t imagine slipping out of their American skin, their American soul and becoming so objective, as you just were a minute ago....How do you step out of being an American to make such an objective judgment?”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s *Hardball* on April 15. Fonda was promoting her new book, *My Life So Far*. [91]

■ **Chris Matthews:** “Do you think President Bush used this [emotional hug at the State of the Union between an Iraqi voter and Janet Norwood, the mother of a Marine killed in Iraq] to push his numbers on Social Security reform, just to get his general appeal up a bit, a couple of points?”

MSNBC political analyst Ron Reagan: “Well, I don’t want to speculate on what was in President Bush’s mind.”

Matthews: “How about his handlers? Do you think the PR guys...around the White House did this to promote the President’s agenda?”

MSNBC’s Joe Scarborough: “Please, come on.”

Reagan: “Well, of course they did. Oh, sure they did.”

Scarborough: “Oh, come on!...I mean, that’s just the height of cynicism.”

Matthews: “No, I’m just asking you, I’m not taking sides here, but you know who makes these decisions, the PR people around the President...They make the decision about who sits in the box and where they’re seated...The only question is whether that Iraqi woman was prompted to go up and hug Janet Norwood by some staffer.”

— Exchange during MSNBC’s live coverage following Bush’s State of the Union address, February 2. [59]

Barbra Streisand Political IQ Award for Celebrity Vapidity

✓ “I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they’re looting. See a white family, it says they’re looking for food....A lot of the people that could help are at war right now fighting another way, and they’ve given them permission to go down and shoot us....George Bush doesn’t care about black people.”

— **Rapper Kanye West during NBC’s Concert for Hurricane Relief, September 2.** [53 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Rosie O’Donnell:** “This President invaded a sovereign nation in defiance of the UN. He is basically a war criminal. Honestly. He should be tried at The Hague. This man lied to the American public about the reasons for invading a nation that had nothing to do with 9/11. And as a Democrat, as a member of this democracy...I feel I have a responsibility to speak out, as does every other person who disagrees with this administration. And it’s scary in a country that you can say something against the President and then worry about your career. That Dan Rather gets taken off CBS News for writing, for saying a report that essentially was true, that George Bush did not show up—”

Geraldo Rivera: “Okay, okay, we get it, we get it!”

O’Donnell: “Okay, there you go. Anyway, it infuriates me.”

— Exchange on FNC’s *At Large with Geraldo Rivera*, April 30. [52]

■ “The President is a moron! I’m saying it. I don’t care. He’s an idiot. Cheney is evil. I’m sick of, impeach them, get them out! I hate them! I hate them. Get them out. They got to go!...What is it going to take for you people? Get Bush out! Impeach. Out! Out! Out!”

— **Actress/comedienne Kathy Griffin on Comedy Central’s Weekends at the DL, September 10.** [46]

■ “Cindy Sheehan is my hero. She is the hero of all Americans who make up the 62 percent of us who oppose this war. As an American exercising her right to free speech, she is a brave, passionate, living example of democracy.... No wonder Bush is intimidated. No wonder he can’t even walk down his driveway to speak with her. He is scared shitless. Whether he acknowledges it or not — whether his aides try to insulate him from the truth or not — his hands are covered in the blood of Cindy Sheehan’s son. They are dripping with the blood of all who have died there.”

— **Actress Christine Lahti in an August 11 Huffington Post blog entry.** [44]

■ “Most Republicans who are registered Republicans are decent, honest good people who you have a difference of opinion with. The leadership of the Republican Party are a bunch of sociopathic maniacs who have their lips super-glued to the ass of the conservative right.”

— **Actor Alec Baldwin during an appearance on HBO’s Real Time with Bill Maher, April 1.** [40]

■ “Hurricane Katrina is George Bush’s Monica Lewinsky. One difference, and I’ll say this, the only difference is this: That tens of thousands of people weren’t stranded in Monica Lewinsky’s vagina. That is the only difference.”

— **Comedy Central’s Jon Stewart during his opening remarks on The Daily Show, September 6.** [35]

Media Millionaires for Smaller Paychecks Award

✓ **NPR’s Nina Totenberg:** “And let us say one other thing. For years, we have cut our taxes, cut our taxes and let the infrastructure throughout the country go, and this [Katrina damage] is just the first of a number of other crumbling things that are going to happen to us.”

Charles Krauthammer: “You must be kidding here.”

Moderator Gordon Peterson: “She’s not kidding.”

Totenberg: “I’m not kidding.”

— Exchange on *Inside Washington*, Sept. 3. [66 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Nina Totenberg:** “I was very happy to see him [Bush] take responsibility and to not pretend that the buck stops someplace else. But it would have been a great opportunity to say, ‘Look, I’m for tax cuts, but we need a Katrina tax, we need to really pay, to do this and to pay for it.’”

Moderator Gordon Peterson: “You want more taxes.”

Totenberg: “I want more taxes, yes.”

— *Inside Washington*, September 17. [54]

■ “If there’s an upside to Katrina, it’s that the Republican agenda of tax cuts, Social Security privatization and slashing government programs is over. It may be too much to predict an upsurge of progressive government, but the environment and issues of poverty, race and class are back on the nation’s radar screen.”

— **Eleanor Clift in her weekly “Capitol Letter” column published on Newsweek’s Web site, September 9.** [53]

Good Morning Morons Award

✓ **Matt Lauer in Baghdad:** "Talk to me...about morale here. We've heard so much about the insurgent attacks, so much about the uncertainty as to when you folks are going to get to go home. How would you describe morale?"

Chief Warrant Officer Randy Kirgiss: "In my unit morale is pretty good. Every day we go out and do our missions and people are ready to execute their missions. They're excited to be here."

Lauer: "How much does that uncertainty of [not] knowing how long you're going to be here impact morale?"

Specialist Steven Chitterer: "Morale is always high. Soldiers know they have a mission. They like taking on new objectives and taking on the new challenges...."

Lauer: "Don't get me wrong here, I think you are probably telling me the truth, but a lot of people at home are wondering how that could be possible with the conditions you're facing and with the attacks you're facing. What would you say to those people who are doubtful that morale can be that high?"

Captain Sherman Powell: "Sir, if I got my news from the newspapers also, I'd be pretty depressed as well."

— Exchange on NBC's *Today*, August 17. [87 points]

Runners-up:

■ "Do I need to be concerned that I'm going to go live with a church family, are they going to proselytize me, are they going to say, 'You better come to church with me or else, I'm, you know, you're not going to get your breakfast this morning'?"

— Co-host Harry Smith asking author/pastor Rick Warren about church families taking in those displaced by Hurricane Katrina, on CBS's *Early Show*, September 6. [77]

■ Co-host Matt Lauer: "Pain at the pump. Gas prices are going sky high. I paid \$2.94 a gallon over the weekend to fill up the car."

Co-host Katie Couric: "It's ridiculous. I had to take out a loan to fill up my minivan. It's crazy."

— Exchange at the top of NBC's *Today*, August 15. Couric makes about \$15,000,000 a year. [66]

Politics of Meaninglessness Award for the Silliest Analysis

✓ "It's been 11 days since two African-American teenagers were killed, electrocuted during a police chase, which prompted all of this."

— Anchor Carol Lin after a Nov. 6 CNN *Sunday Night* story about riots in France. The two teenagers were not Americans, but French citizens of Tunisian heritage. [51]

Runners-up:

■ "CBS News has a culture, has a history that for those of us who work here, is very real — that we see it as a sort of magical mystical kingdom of journalistic knights — and I know I can mentally hear people rolling their eyes, that's the way we feel."

— Ex-CBS News anchor Dan Rather on CNBC's *Topic [A]* with Tina Brown, May 22. [38]

■ "Cutting the [worldwide] military budgets back by ten percent and using that money to basically solve the real, the real serious poverty problems in the world would be a much better investment in fighting terrorism than — you don't stop terrorism with tanks, you stop it with giving people hope so they won't want to blow themselves up."

— CNN founder Ted Turner on CBS's *Late Show with David Letterman*, September 16. [28]

■ "As President Bush travels to Rome this morning along with the First Lady, Condoleezza Rice and former Presidents Bush and Clinton, the question some people are asking is where's President Carter in all this? Are the Bushes and the Carters the modern day version of the Hatfields and the McCoys?"

— NBC's Katie Couric opening the April 6 *Today*. [20]

■ "Across the nation, gas prices went to record highs today....Will it get to the point that only the privileged can afford gas?"

— John Blackstone, *CBS Evening News*, August 11. [19]

Media Hero Award

✓ "I see her [Hillary Clinton] in — she's very consistent [in] what she's always believed. She's very consistent [in] what she's always believed. She's always had strong religious faith. She's been a strong Methodist. She does have conservative social values on many issues."

— U.S. News & World Report Editor at Large David Gergen, on CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, February 9. [71 points]

Runners-up:

■ "Brilliant....Skilled and surprisingly self-destructive....

Despite the scandals and investigations, Bill Clinton was an incredibly popular President who connected with the American people....Under Clinton the economy boomed — deficits turned into surplus — and more than 22 million jobs were created. Along with the character flaws and the subpoenas came peace and prosperity."

— Matt Lauer assessing Bill Clinton during the June 5 Discovery Channel special, "Greatest American." [63]

■ "What do you hope your legacy will be?...You literally have the weight of the world on your shoulders."

— Katie Couric's questions to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in an interview shown June 7 on NBC's *Today*. [45]

■ Reporter Carl Quintanilla: "[Left-wing activist Cindy Sheehan, say some historians, may be evolving as an icon in the war's turning point, if this is one. For three weeks, she's dominated headlines, mobilized protesters, both with and without relatives in Iraq."

Cindy Sheehan: "They don't have what I like to call skin in the game, but we are all affected."

Quintanilla: "Making it safe, her supporters say, to voice doubts about the war, just as Walter Cronkite did on the *Evening News* in 1968....Historians say we won't know Cindy Sheehan's place in the war until the war itself is history."

— NBC *Nightly News*, August 25. [39]

What Liberal Media? Award

✓ "I'm going out telling the story that I think is the biggest story of our time: how the right-wing media has become a partisan propaganda arm of the Republican National Committee. We have an ideological press that's interested in the election of Republicans, and a mainstream press that's interested in the bottom line. Therefore, we don't have a vigilant, independent press whose interest is the American people."

— **Bill Moyers, who retired in December 2004 from the PBS show *Now*, as quoted by AP television writer Frazier Moore in a December 10, 2004 dispatch. [108 points]**

Runners-up:

■ **Host Chris Matthews:** "What do you think of this guy [ex-Talon News reporter Jeff Gannon/James Guckert]? You're a real reporter. What do you think of this guy who says he's a, he operates under a different name. He's a blogger, I guess...."

Weekly Standard senior writer Stephen Hayes: "Look, at the end of the day, if we're worried about too many conservatives in the White House press briefing room, this is a discussion that's not, that's not going to resonate with the American public."

Matthews: "You think it's mostly packed with liberals? Are you saying most of those people who are paid to be journalists in that room are lib-labs, they're liberals?"

Hayes: "Yes, of course....I don't think there's any — is there a debate about that?"

Matthews: "Well, there's Helen Thomas, who I would call liberal. But who else is in there? Seriously. There are a lot of straight reporters in that room."

Time's Margaret Carlson: "I think they're mostly straight reporters. And I don't think you can keep your job otherwise....Elisabeth Bumiller reports for the *New York Times*, which has a liberal editorial page, but she plays it straight down the middle."

— **Exchange on MSNBC's *Hardball*, February 25. [67]**

■ **FNC's Bill O'Reilly:** "Now the right wing thinks you're a raving liberal, you and Rather contrived to put Bush in the worst possible light....So are you a liberal?"

Fired CBS News producer Mary Mapes: "Well, I'm not sure what a liberal is. I'm more liberal than some people. I can tell you my eight-year-old son thinks he's being raised by the most conservative parents in the world...."

O'Reilly: "Are you registered Democrat?"

Mapes: "You know, I don't know....I don't know if I'm independent or Democrat. I know I'm not — in Texas, I'm not sure how I'm registered."

O'Reilly: "So you would describe yourself politically as?"

Mapes: "Oh, my goodness. I'm liberal on some things, I'm conservative on some things."

— **FNC's *The O'Reilly Factor*, November 10. [52]**

■ "One way a reporter in this country should be judged is how well he or she stands up to the pressure to intimidate. I remember the first time someone accused me of being an 'N-lover.' There was a lot of that during the '60s

when I covered the civil rights movement. Then you move forward from civil rights into the Vietnam War....'We're going to hang a sign around you which calls you some bad name: anti-military, anti-American, anti-war.' Then, when Watergate came into being....was the first time I began to hear this word 'liberal' as an epithet thrown my way....People who have very strong biases of their own, they come at you with a story: 'If you won't report it the way I want it reported, then you're biased.' Now, it is true about me, for better or for worse, if you want to see my neck swell, you just try to tell me where to line up or what to think and mostly what to report."

— **Dan Rather near the end of his CBS News special, *Dan Rather: A Reporter Remembers*, which aired on his last night as CBS Evening News anchor, March 9. [46]**

Oh, That Liberal Media! Award

✓ **Newsweek Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas:** "Is this attack [on public broadcasting's budget] going to make NPR a little less liberal?"

NPR legal correspondent Nina Totenberg: "I don't think we're liberal to begin with, and I think if you would listen, Evan, you would know that."

Thomas: "I do listen to you and you're not that liberal, but you're a little bit liberal."

Totenberg: "No, I don't think so. I don't think that's a fair criticism, I really don't — any more than, any more than you would say that *Newsweek* is liberal."

Thomas: "I think *Newsweek* is a little liberal."

— **Exchange on *Inside Washington*, June 26. [81 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "The elephant in the newsroom is our narrowness. Too often, we wear liberalism on our sleeve and are intolerant of other lifestyles and opinions....We're not very subtle about it at this paper: If you work here, you must be one of us. You must be liberal, progressive, a Democrat. I've been in communal gatherings in *The Post*, watching election returns, and have been flabbergasted to see my colleagues cheer unabashedly for the Democrats."

— **Washington Post "Book World" editor Marie Arana in a September 29 contribution to the *Post's* "daily in-house electronic critiques," as quoted by *Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz in an October 3 article. [75]**

■ **Host Hugh Hewitt:** "Are there members of the White House press corps, Terry, who actually hate Bush?"

ABC White House correspondent Terry Moran: "I would say the answer to that is yes."

Hewitt: "And what percentage of them, do you think that amounts to?"

Moran: "Uh, small, I would say, but some big fish."

Hewitt: "What's your guess about the percentage of the White House press corps that voted for Kerry?"

Moran: "Oh, very high. Very, very high."

Hewitt: "95 percent?"

Moran: "No, I don't think that high....Upwards of 70 [percent], maybe higher....I would say very, very high...."

— **Exchange on the May 18 *Hugh Hewitt Show*, a nationally-syndicated weekday radio program. [55]**

Quote of the Year

✓ **Reporter Brian Ross:** "Mary Mapes was the woman behind the scenes, the producer who researched, wrote and put together Dan Rather's *60 Minutes* report on President Bush's National Guard service, a report which Rather and CBS would later apologize for airing...."

Ross to Mapes: "Do you still think that story was true?"

Ex-CBS producer Mary Mapes: "The story? Absolutely."

Ross: "This seems remarkable to me that you would sit here now and say you still find that story to be up to your standards."

Mapes: "I'm perfectly willing to believe those documents are forgeries if there's proof that I haven't seen."

Ross: "But isn't it the other way around? Don't you have to prove they're authentic?"

Mapes: "Well, I think that's what critics of the story would say. I know more now than I did then and I think, I think they have not been proved to be false, yet."

Ross: "Have they proved to be authentic though? Isn't that really what journalists do?"

Mapes: "No, I don't think that's the standard."

— *ABC's Good Morning America*, November 9.

• Runner-up:

• **■ Ted Turner:** "I am absolutely convinced that the North Koreans are absolutely sincere. There's really no reason for them to cheat [on nukes]....I looked them right in the eyes. And they looked like they meant the truth. You know, just because somebody's done something wrong in the past doesn't mean they can't do right in the future or the present. That happens all the time."

• **Wolf Blitzer:** "But this is one of the most despotic regimes and Kim Jong-Il is one of the worst men on Earth. Isn't that a fair assessment?"

• **Turner:** "Well, I didn't get to meet him, but he didn't look — in the pictures that I've seen of him on CNN, he didn't look too much different than most other people."

• **Blitzer:** "But, look at the way, look at the way he's, look at the way he's treating his own people."

• **Turner:** "Well, hey, listen. I saw a lot of people over there. They were thin and they were riding bicycles instead of driving in cars, but—"

• **Blitzer:** "A lot of those people are starving."

• **Turner:** "I didn't see any, I didn't see any brutality...."

• — Exchange on CNN's *The Situation Room*, Sept. 19.

..... 2005 Award Judges

Lee Anderson, Associate Publisher, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*

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Cal Thomas, syndicated columnist; panelist on FNC's *Newswatch*

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Chris Warden, Hall School of Journalism, Troy University

Clay Waters, Editor of the MRC's *TimesWatch.org*

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Notable Quotables

PUBLISHER: L. Brent Bozell III

EDITORS: Brent H. Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham

MEDIA ANALYSTS: Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Barnes, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ken Shepherd, Megan McCormack, Mike Rule, Scott Whitlock

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE: Michelle Humphrey

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Michael Chapman

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