

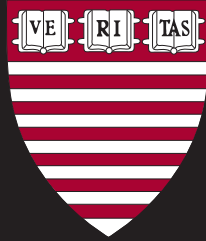
THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

WITH

MAUREEN DOWD

Joan Shorenstein Center

PRESS • POLITICS



▪ PUBLIC POLICY ▪

John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

2007

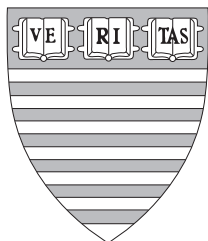
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

History of the Theodore H. White Lecture.....	5
Biography of Maureen Dowd.....	7
Biographies of Dana Priest and David Nyhan	9
Welcoming remarks by David Ellwood	
Awarding of the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism to Dana Priest	11
The 2007 Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics by Maureen Dowd.....	18
The 2007 Theodore H. White Seminar on Press and Politics	37
Thomas E. Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press (moderator)	
Charlie Cook, <i>Cook Political Report</i>	
Tom Fiedler, Shorenstein Fellow	
Mark Halperin, <i>Time</i> and ABC News	
Steve Jarding, Kennedy School of Government	
Marion Just, Wellesley College	
Dana Priest, <i>The Washington Post</i>	



The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post*, entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Chungking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China*, a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President, 1960*.

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964, 1968, and 1972 and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The late Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course not, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."



Maureen Dowd is a columnist for *The New York Times*. She began writing for the *Times* as a New York City metropolitan reporter in 1983. Three years later she transferred to the paper's Washington bureau, where she covered four presidential campaigns, served as White House correspondent, and wrote "On Washington," a column for *The New York Times Magazine*. In 1995, she joined the *Times'* Op-Ed page.

In 1992 Dowd was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting. In 1999 she took home a Pulitzer for her "fresh and insightful columns on the impact of President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky." She has received a number of other prizes including the 1999–2000 Damon Runyon Award for Outstanding Contributions to Journalism and a Matrix Award from New York Women in Communications. She is the author of two books, *Bushworld: Enter at Your Own Risk* and *Are Men Necessary?: When Sexes Collide*.

Dowd received a B.A. in English literature from Catholic University in 1973. In 1974 she began her career as an editorial assistant at *The Washington Star*, where she later wrote sports columns, feature articles, and served as a metropolitan reporter. When the *Star* closed in 1981 she went on to work for *Time* magazine, and, two years later, joined the staff at the *Times*.



DANA PRIEST is the National Security Correspondent for *The Washington Post*. In 2006 she won the Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting for her “persistent, painstaking reports on secret ‘black site’ prisons and other controversial features of the government’s counterterrorism campaign.” In February 2007 Priest and Anne Hull wrote a two-part series for *The Washington Post* about the conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, creating a national uproar. She is the author of *The*

Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s Military. She has worked as an investigative reporter and a Pentagon correspondent for the *Post*, covered the invasion of Panama in 1989, reported from Iraq in late 1990, and covered the war in Kosovo in 1999.



For thirty years DAVID NYHAN was a columnist and reporter at *The Boston Globe*. A graduate of Harvard College and a Shorenstein Fellow in the spring of 2001, Nyhan was a regular participant in Shorenstein Center activities before, during, and after his Fellowship. Nyhan died unexpectedly in 2005. In his eulogy, Senator Edward Kennedy said of Nyhan, “Dave was a man of amazing talent, but most of all he was a man of the people who never forgot his roots. . . . In so many ways, but especially in the daily example of his own extraordinary life, Dave was the conscience of his

community.” The hallmark of David Nyhan’s brand of journalism was the courage to champion unpopular causes and challenge the powerful with relentless reporting and brave eloquence. In his memory, the Shorenstein Center has established the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

OCTOBER 25, 2007

Dean Ellwood: Hello, everyone. I'm David Ellwood, I'm Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, welcome to the John F. Kennedy, Jr. Forum. This is truly an exciting and memorable night, as the size of the audience demonstrates.

Now, this day, this award and this talk is one of the high points of the year, but another high point right now is the presence of Walter Shorenstein who has joined us here.

(Applause)

Dean Ellwood: It is his support for the Shorenstein Center that makes all of this possible and we have had a remarkable journey together, Walter, his family and this school, and it is an enormous pleasure and honor to have him here. He comes all the way from the West Coast and that's a challenge these days.

Obviously we are here to celebrate the David Nyhan prize and to host the Teddy White Lecture, and these are two of the most prominent activities of the school during the course of any given year and, therefore, I don't get to do anything other than just introduce the introducer.

It's actually an enormous pleasure to be joined by Alex Jones, who has been, for a number of years, the head of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, though on leave this year. It's also a great pleasure to be joined by his wife, Susan, and we are thrilled to have both of you here. It's a great day. Alex is a very accomplished journalist. He worked for *The New York Times* from 1982 to 1992, and he received the Pulitzer Prize.

Now, he did mention to me that he was once introduced as having won the Nobel Prize.

(Laughter)

Dean Ellwood: So it's clear that his sights remain high, and he has done terrific work. He is also the co-author of two highly acclaimed books, co-authored with his wife, Susan Tifft. But most importantly, under his leadership the Shorenstein Center has thrived and will continue to thrive. So, with no further ado, let me turn this podium over to Alex Jones, who will handle the ceremonies from here on out.

Alex, welcome.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: I was telling David about a time when Susan and I were guest teaching at a little college called Davis and Elkins College in a little town in West Virginia and the local elementary school learned that I had won a prize and wanted me to come talk to the eighth grade class. So, I

was glad to do it. I went over, and I walked into the library and the teacher dutifully sort of marched this group of completely uninterested eighth graders—and they were kind of looking at me and I was looking at them, and the teacher rather nervously said, “we are very, very proud to have as our guest today Alex Jones, winner of the Nobel Prize.”

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: I did not correct her.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: As David said, each year this night is one of the great ones for the Shorenstein Center. As some of you may know, the Shorenstein Center was created more than 20 years ago as a memorial to Joan Shorenstein, a truly remarkable television journalist who died far too young of breast cancer. Her father, Walter Shorenstein, who you have met already, endowed the Center as a place for the focused and searching examination of the intersection of press, politics and public policy.

Walter Shorenstein not only made the Center possible but he has remained vitally interested in what we do and has been our unstinting supporter and friend. He is here tonight and I want to, like David, thank you, Walter, for your support.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: A bit later you will hear from Maureen Dowd, our Theodore White Lecturer for 2007, but first, I have another task to perform, which is an honor but a bittersweet one. In 2005, we at the Shorenstein Center lost a great and much admired friend, David Nyhan, when he died unexpectedly. Many of you knew David well, some of you did not, and I want to speak of him as we—this year—bestow the third annual David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalist.

David Nyhan was a man of many parts: a devoted family man, a beloved friend, always and boon companion. He was also a Red Sox fan and would almost certainly have skipped the dinner tonight honoring the winner of the prize that bears his name to be at Fenway. He was a big, handsome man with a killer smile, Irish eyes and the rare power to light up a room just by walking into it. I saw him do it again and again when he was a fellow at the Shorenstein Center.

Tonight we honor David Nyhan the consummate reporter and political journalist, which was the role that occupied much of his life and at which he could not be bested. David was a reporter and then a columnist for the *Boston Globe* and his work had both a theme and a character. The theme was almost always power—political power—and also especially the abuse of political power by the big shots at the expense of the little guys. He loved politics and he also loved politicians. As a group, he respected them. He felt they were often given a raw deal, they were judged by a standard that was smug and pious—two things David never was.

But, if politics was the theme of David’s work, the character of that work was a mixture of courage and righteous anger, leavened by a great sense of

humor and the ability to write with grace and passion. He relished, I mean, relished, a good fight with a political figure or perspective, yet had the knack of seeing beyond the surface of issues and the baloney to the heart of things, and especially to the reality of what was going on. He was a self-avowed liberal and utterly not defensive about it. As a columnist at the *Globe*, he was a battler, a no holds barred advocate, but he was also always surprising his readers with his take on things because, most of all, David Nyhan was his own man and he called them as he saw them.

In his memory and honor, the Nyhan family—and many friends and admirers of David Nyhan—have endowed the Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism to recognize the kind of gutsy and stylish journalism that David Nyhan embodied.

Dave's wife, Olivia, his children and many members of his family are here tonight and I would like to ask them to all please stand.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: This year the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism goes to Dana Priest from the *Washington Post*. Dana has worked at the *Post* for fifteen years and she has rocked a lot of boats with her reporting, which taken as a whole, might be described as a deep and probing look at our military in all its variations and dimensions. She covered the Pentagon for six years and spent another eight years writing exclusively about the U.S. military and the war on terror, which expanded her search into the world of clandestine intelligence.

In April of 2006, Dana's outstanding investigative research and superb writing won her a Pulitzer Prize for beat reporting for a penetrating series of articles that broke the story of the clandestine interrogation facilities, black sites secretly kept by the CIA in foreign countries. The story sparked an international debate and examination of the U.S. Government's counterterrorism measures that still continues.

Even before these ground breaking articles, her 2003 book, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*, had been recognized as a deep and timely examination of the military as a whole. It described the changing nature of the military's responsibility and influence. Joe Nye, the then Dean of the Kennedy School and expert on military affairs, called it a "fascinating set of answers to important questions about America's role in today's world." And Ben Bradlee, the *Post's* legendary Executive Editor, who loves the kind of reporting that makes waves, called it "a book that is just in time for the great new debate between the hawks and the doves."

More recently, Dana's articles with Anne Hull shocked the nation with their account of the atrocious conditions wounded soldiers and veterans met at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center after returning from Iraq. The first response to their extraordinary reporting was outrage that such a thing could happen, followed by pledges from the White House that the problems of the nation's veterans hospitals would be fixed. They of course can't be fixed quickly, but to the extent they are fixed, it will be in no small

measure because of the relentless and yet eminently fair, even compassionate coverage of Dana Priest.

Dana holds a BA in Political Science from the University of California at Santa Cruz. So far as I understand, she has never taken a journalism course. David Nyhan would, I have no doubt, offer his enthusiastic approval and admiration.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Like David, Dana has called them like she has seen them, in the process exposing some of the most crucial and shocking stories of our time. Please join me in welcoming Dana Priest to the stage to accept the third annual David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism.

(Applause)

Ms. Priest: Thank you.

Well, I'm assuming it would be okay with David that actually I've turned down opportunities to cover politics as straight political reporting because on the other side of the coin—there is always this terrible abuse of power in politics, and that's where I always found myself: recently with the secret prisons and then with Walter Reed. Both of them have been sort of bookends in my career and calling upon very courageous sources within the system and within the political structure to approach us and to help us write.

The bittersweet story on Walter Reed is that it's by far not over and so the role of journalism in making that right is still very, very important. So, for all the young journalists out there, I say go to it.

Thank you.

(Applause)

The bittersweet story on Walter Reed is that it's by far not over and so the role of journalism in making that right is still very, very important. So, for all the young journalists out there, I say go to it.

Mr. Jones: Theodore H. White was also a consummate reporter whose passion was politics. He came to Harvard on a newsboy scholarship and went on to a very distinguished career as a journalist and also an historian. Indeed, Teddy White, as he was universally known, changed both political journalism and politics when he wrote *The Making of the President: 1960*, about the Kennedy/Nixon campaign. For the first time, he raised the curtain on the sausage-making side of presidential campaigns and changed forever the candor and behind the scenes drama that is now at the heart of campaign coverage.

He followed that first book with three more *Making of the President* books in 1964, 1968 and 1972. No one has yet matched those smart, ground-breaking examinations of what happens and why in the storm of a political campaign.

I think it's fair to say that Teddy White's heirs are the journalists of today—like Rick Berke who is here with us tonight, I'm glad to say, from *The New York Times*—who try to pierce the veil of politics to understand what is happening, and then to analyze and deliver the goods to those of us who are trying to understand.

Before his death in 1986, Teddy White was one of the architects of what became the Shorenstein Center. One of his first moves, when Marvin Kalb became the founding director of the Shorenstein Center, was to raise the funds and establish the Theodore H. White Lecture on the Press and Politics in his honor.

This year, the White Lecture is to be delivered by an outspoken writer who does not like to give speeches. If that seems at all contradictory to you, then you should know that Maureen Dowd is a wealth of contradictions. She is one of the nation's most important and incisive voices in the world of politics, yet does not consider herself to be passionate about politics or even very interested in politics. She has been denounced for partisanship, yet is—for as long as I have known her—someone who is genuinely nonpartisan. She is feared for her wicked tongue and biting prose and is beloved deeply by the close circle who know her to be capable of stunning and spontaneous generosity.

She travels the world as the consummate sophisticate. For instance, she was picked by *Esquire* Magazine as one of the first to be profiled in a feature they called "The Women We Love." It was not a nude spread, I can assure you.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Yet she is, at a core level, the daughter in an Irish family where her brothers give her a hard time because she is mean to George Bush, the daughter of a cop who was a congressional guard and a devoted mother who frequently would send her quantities of unsolicited advice and who adored her absolutely. She is not what a lot of people think she is, in other words. I first came to know Maureen when she and I were both new reporters at *The New York Times*. She had come there from *Time* magazine which didn't know what to do with her.

She had gone to *Time* from the *Washington Star* and was then placed in the nation section where the only other woman was my wife, Susan Tifft. The system at *Time* didn't suit Maureen's talents at all. As a writer assigned a topic, she would sit at her computer and read files of reporting from scores of people who did nothing but report. She was then expected to stitch together a narrative in a very definite *Time* voice, from their reporting. This was not Maureen.

She was spotted and brought to *The New York Times* by a man I think is one of the true journalistic geniuses, Arthur Gelb, the Managing Editor—who, by the way, helped me persuade her to be here tonight and is a member of the Shorenstein Center's Advisory Board. Arthur recognized something very special in Maureen and so did we all in that sprawling

and jumbled and vastly exciting *New York Times* newsroom in the mid 1980s. We worked at very close quarters, with desks jammed against each other, a steadily rising din as deadline approached and all the privacy and personal space of a beehive.

I can remember watching Maureen as she wrote in this maelstrom. It was clear immediately that she was writing with a style and an eye that were unique. She would, unlike at *Time*, do her own reporting and interviewing, somehow worming the most extraordinary and often hilarious things out of people. Then, when it came time to write, she would begin with a handful of quotes that created the real structure of her pieces. Literally, she would type the quotes onto a computer screen with lots of space around them and then, often, she would sit and sit, and sit.

And as she sat, she simply stared into space in what looked like a kind of trance, as she devised the language that she would use to tee up a given quote so that it would have the power of a punchline. First came the eye in the reporting, then the language that was unmistakably Maureen. A few examples: from 1986, before the so-called Liberty Weekend celebrating the 210th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence: “David L. Wolper—the man who is bringing New York 200 Elvis Presley look alikes and 300 jazzercise ladies, Shirley MacLaine and 850 drill team girls on a moving stage with dancing waters, 5,000 homing pigeons playing doves of peace, 10,000 immigrants taking the oath of citizenship by satellite in Miami’s Orange Bowl, square-dancing brain surgeons and physicists and the largest fireworks show in the history of the world—had a crazy idea.

“Here is a crazy one, the Hollywood producer putting on the four-day, \$10 million Liberty Weekend extravaganza told a colleague, ‘What about Richard Nixon?’”

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Or this, from 1990, about the elder George Bush’s particular way with words: “Yes,” she began, “the President talks funny. Yes, he gets tangled in wayward clauses and preppy adverbs, dangling predicates and galloping gerunds.” And to prove it she quoted his answer to a Knoxville, Tennessee high-school student who wanted to know if President Bush would seek ideas to improve American education. “I think we’ve got—we set out there—and I want to give credit to your Governor, George McWherter and our former Governor, Lamar Alexander—we’ve gotten great ideas for a national goals program from—in this country—from the governors who were responding to maybe the principal of your high school, for heaven’s sake.”

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Doesn’t that seem like a simpler time?

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: The language got darker for Bill Clinton, such as this lead on a column about his brutal debate with Bob Dole in 1996: “There was a moment in the San Diego debate, when Bob Dole actually looked as if he

wanted to run and hide behind Jim Lehrer's chair. All night, Bill Clinton had been playing alpha male, throwing gorilla dust at Mr. Dole, hoping to distract his opponent from attacking on character and ethics. In a campaign that choreographs every move for maximum public approval, right down to body language, Mr. Clinton was following his strategist's in-your-face script: You lookin' at me, Bobster? Come over here and say that."

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: And in the Administration of George W. Bush, with the world in clear crisis, Maureen's column sometimes has a tone of urgent anxiety and the humor is so black as to be nearly invisible.

A recent column in the *Times* begins, "Dick Cheney's craziness used to influence foreign policy, now it *is* foreign policy." She continues, "Mr. Cheney seems to enjoy giving the impression that he is loony enough to pull off an attack on Iran before leaving office—even if he has to do it alone, like Slim Pickens riding down the bomb in *Dr. Strangelove* to the sentimental tunes of *We'll Meet Again*. He has even been referring to his nickname, Darth Vader, noting that it 'is one of the nicer things I've been called recently.'"

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Throughout, the voice is consistently and unmistakably Maureen's. She honed that voice working first as a metropolitan reporter, then covering campaigns in the White House. Since 1995, Maureen has been bringing her sensibility and eye to the *Times*' op-ed page, in a column that made her first a scourge of the Clintons and then a scourge to George W. Bush who has honored her with a nickname, "the Cobra."

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: What many of her critics don't get about Maureen is that her interest isn't politics so much as power and the very human human beings who wield and exercise great power. Her lethal wit and biting language are aimed without favor or prejudice at those who make decisions that affect us all, and particularly at that most, most powerful being, the President of the United States.

In her column, Maureen serves less as political analyst than as reporter, who laces what she sees with satire and humor or alarm. Her columns range from imagined eavesdropping on secret interior monologues of the powerful to devastating dissections of behavior and policy that are not leavened with humor and not intended to be. Well, maybe just a little droll humor that is her hallmark.

Presidents and other powerful folk don't like lancers of pretension very much, but those of us who have read Maureen over these turbulent years have found illumination in those carefully crafted, almost sculpted columns. Most op-ed columnists are advocates and partisans. Maureen is neither. Rather, she is the skeptical observer, her nose and eye alert to cant and duplicity, sanctimony and vanity, bullying and hogwash, recklessness and bluster, and that ever-present staple of power as practiced by humans,

foolish and sometimes deadly ego. Maureen’s column won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1999 and she is the author of two well-regarded books, *Bushworld: Enter at Your Own Risk* and *Are Men Necessary?: When Sexes Collide*. She has given us the enormous gift of taking us along as she has born witness to her time—*our* time.

It is my pleasure and honor to present the Theodore H. White Lecturer for 2007, Maureen Dowd.

(Applause)

Ms. Dowd: Well, I’m afraid I’m going to be the Marie Osmond of Harvard here and just faint.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: And I know I have to talk really fast because I’ve already been told I can’t compete with the Red Sox.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I’ve been anticipating this evening for quite a while with great dread. I tried to wriggle out of coming, and if it weren’t for the fact that I would do anything for Alex and my beloved friend, Susan Tifft, and my friends Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb, I would have. As I told Alex, I’m not good at grand oratory and sweeping tours of the horizon. I’m more of a sniper.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: A tweaker, a kibitzer. I looked up “kibitzer” to make sure I was getting the word right and Webster’s says “it’s someone who gives unwanted advice at a card game.”

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Perfect.

My alarm about coming to Harvard intensified when I was reading Arthur Schlesinger’s memoir to review it for the *Times* Sunday Book Review. The one-time Harvard history professor scribbled this to himself after he visited Cambridge in 1979: “the Boston visit was all right, but I left blessing my faith that I decided not to

return after the Kennedy years. I don’t know what is so deeply depressing about it all. Henry Adams had it right when he recalled his days as a member of the Harvard History Department, several score of the best educated, most agreeable and personally the most sociable people in America united in Cambridge to make a social desert that would have starved a polar bear.”

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Schlesinger continued, “I had forgotten the peculiar social gracelessness of Cambridge. In the ’50s we often entertained for visiting dignitaries, the Harvard people, instead of talking to the visitor, would ignore him, cluster among themselves and engage in local gossip.”

I’m not good at grand oratory and sweeping tours of the horizon. I’m more of a sniper.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: If you guys want to ignore me, feel free. It will make me a lot less nervous.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: My jitters were also magnified when I read a piece in last week's *New Republic* by another distinguished Harvard alum, Michael Kinsley. My old friend Michael wrote to the terrors of public speaking, the dry throat, the nervous bladder, the fear that your notes are not in your pocket, even though two copies were there and a third one was folded into your shoe when you checked thirty seconds ago, and a minute ago, and a minute and thirty seconds ago. The fear that no one will show up to hear you; the desperate hope that no one will show up to hear you.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Concern that your material will fill about twenty minutes of the hour that you were expected to entertain, alarmed that you will only be halfway through that same material when your hour runs out and the fellow in the first row starts looking exaggeratedly at his watch and making mad decapitation gestures.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Mental self-abuse and visions of Alzheimer's, because you can not remember that fellow's name, even though you just spent two hours at dinner with him and he is wearing a large badge.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: You cannot read the badge, which is a relief because it means that you are wearing your reading glasses, something that otherwise would also be weighing on your mind as the moment approaches. To all these and more must be added a new horror: you might be introduced by Lee Bollinger.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Michael suggests that the famously cutting introduction of the Iranian dictator, Imadinnerjacket, by the President of Columbia should inspire universities to end the reign of boring, bromide-filled and vain speakers whose subtext generally is "you should try to be as wonderful as I am, but you can't."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: He proposed a new approach: some wealthy Ivy League graduate could endow a speaker series called "Jerks, Lame Brains and Moral Degenerates."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But for tonight, we are going to have to go old school. So you should try and be as wonderful as I am, but you can't.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But certainly Dana Priest and David Nyhan are absolutely wonderful and two of my all-time idols.

This is the eighth presidential race I've covered, always in high heels and sometimes in high dudgeon.

This is the eighth presidential race I've covered, always in high heels and sometimes in high dudgeon. My mom gave me a good tip when I first became a reporter: get on the front page a lot and use the word "allegedly" a lot.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I apprenticed under legendary political writers, including the redoubtable and rotund R.W. Apple, known to all as Johnny. On a trip to Africa with

President Clinton, the first President Clinton—

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Johnny took me to an Indian restaurant in Uganda and belted a piece of advice I have always cherished: "no prawns at this altitude."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: William Safire counseled me once on how to get big shots to return my calls. When their assistant asks you the reason for your call, you simply say "malfeasance." They'll call right back.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Russell Baker, the wonderful *Times* columnist, hated his years covering Washington. He described a Washington reporter as someone content to wear out his hands, sitting in corridors, waiting for important people to lie to him. Once in the '80s, when I was caught up in some imbroglio with the campaign, and the candidates' aides were trying to draw and quarter me, or tar and feather me or something, Mr. Baker wrote me a lovely note to buck me up and urge me to resist pressure from political bullies. "Remember," he wrote, "these are all the same guys you went to high school with."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I went to an all girls school, but I got the idea.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: During the Paula Jones lawsuit against President Clinton, my boss, Howell Raines, edited my column one night from 700 words to 200, advising me this is *The New York Times*; *The New York Times* does not make penis jokes.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I had to explain this to Stephen Colbert last week—

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd:—when he wrote my column and tried to put in a joke about how when you test the waters for a presidential run, you don't want the water to be too cold because the last thing you want is to have Wolf Blitzer broadcasting from the situation room about your shrinky dink.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: He asked me if I could lobby the editors and I said, “this is *The New York Times*, Mr. Colbert.”

My best mentor in covering politics, though, was Shakespeare. Shakespeare teaches you, as they said, that power corrupts and the absence of power corrupts absolutely. Lyndon Johnson said that the two things that make politicians more stupid than anything else are sex and envy—something the bard knew a few centuries ago. Dick Cheney is sort of like Iago, but without the charm.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: He isn’t Iago exactly, because Iago actually went in to hurt Othello by exploiting his insecurities. I don’t think Cheney wishes the president ill. I think he and Rummy exploited W’s insecurities because they thought bringing him along to their view on preemptive global domination was the right thing to do. They didn’t want to destroy W., they wanted to destroy the ’60s. It’s hard to imagine that you could despise the decade that brought us the Twist, Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, and sometimes Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe doing the Twist.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But Cheney and Rummy were determined to turn back the clock and recoup the power they lost because of post-Watergate reforms when they ran the Ford White House. They aim to replace moral ambivalence with moral clarity, a do-your-own-thing ethos with a my-way-or-the-highway ethos, multiculturalism and multilateralism and anything “multi” with unilateralism, Vietnam acid flashbacks with a shock-and-awe muscularity. They claim to be conservatives but after 9/11, Cheney and Rummy launched two massive social engineering projects, transforming the American psyche and transforming the Middle East psyche.

Cheney appealed to the Bushies because of their preference for deference. He was the ultimate courtier, loyal and leak-proof. His Secret Service code name in the Ford years

My best mentor in covering politics, though, was Shakespeare. Shakespeare teaches you, as they said, that power corrupts and the absence of power corrupts absolutely.

Cheney appealed to the Bushies because of their preference for deference. He was the ultimate courtier, loyal and leak-proof. His Secret Service code name in the Ford years was “Backseat” but now he wanted to clamor into the front seat, so he crowned himself Vice President . . .

The first President Bush went to war in the Gulf to demonstrate the principle that one country cannot unilaterally invade another. The second President Bush went to war in the Gulf to demonstrate the principle that one country can unilaterally invade another. That is one wacky family.

was “Backseat” but now he wanted to clamor into the front seat, so he crowned himself Vice President, and he wanted to take along his early mentor in the Nixon years, Don Rumsfeld. Henry Kissinger called Rummy “the rottenest person he had known in government, more devious than any dictator he had ever dealt with.” You know you are in trouble when Dr. Strangelove calls you Strangelovian.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Two grumpy old men going barking mad in a secure, undisclosed location and in a last desperate spurt of waning testosterone, blowing up the Middle East, breaking the Army and upending a half century of American foreign policy, all at a bargain rate of \$2.4 trillion. Not content with that resume of doom, Darth Vader is shaking his fist at Iran now. What could be more Shakespearian than that?

Our lives are bracketed by two Bush wars against the same third-rate Iraqi dictator. The first President Bush went to war in the Gulf to demonstrate the principle that one country cannot unilaterally invade another.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: The second President Bush went to war in the Gulf to demonstrate the principle that one country can unilaterally invade another.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: That is one wacky family.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: You read these stories about Buddhist monks in the Himalayas whose brain waves can actually be altered by meditation. My own unscientific survey of Washington politicians indicates that extreme fawning, giving and getting, can warp your brain. All those decades of deference to Yale cowboys clearly drove Cheney batty and when President Bush nominated one of the devoted women in his political harem, Harriet Myers, to the Supreme Court, he had obviously totally lost sight of the fact that doting on him did not constitute actual experience in constitutional law.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Just because she sent him a lot of mash notes on cards with puppies and poems, and helped him clear brush in Crawford and aided in

brushing back questions about whether he received favorable treatment to get into the National Guard and avoid the draft, does not make up for the fact that she had never logged any time behind the bench in a black robe. Arthur Schlesinger, a man so deferential that he once put on a jacket before talking to JFK on the phone—

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd:—wrote in his diary in retrospect, “deference is bad for presidents, a democracy should not have a royal family.” Now he tells us, seven years into the reign of the boy emperor and one year away from the coronation of the warrior queen.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Schlesinger wrote about an America colored by the entwined political dynasties of the Roosevelts and Kennedys or Plantagenets and Yorks, and now we have one colored by the entwined political dynasties of the Bushes and the Clintons. Once, in order to lure me down to speak at the Bush Presidential Library in Aggie Land a few years ago, he waited until Barbara Bush was out of the country. Poppy Bush gave me a copy of a wacky satire he had written—he picked up on the Arthurian style of a column I had done portraying him as the old king and W. as the boy king.

He sprinkled the piece with words like “verily,” “forsooth” and “liege,” and characters such as “King Prescott of Greenwich,” “George of Crawford,” “Queen Bar,” “King Bill,” “Maid Monica,” “Hillary the would-be monarch,” “Knight Al Gore,” “Earl Jeb of Tallahassee,” “Duke Cheney” and “Warrior Sulzberger.” There was a lot of delicious frolicking, falconing and scheming at the moatless court of the old warrior king, sort of like Monty Python crossed with Britty Worcester.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: When I first started writing about politics for the *Times*, I got criticized sometimes for focusing on the person and not simply the policy. But as a student of Shakespeare and Teddy White, I always saw the person and the policy as inextricably braided. You had to know something about the person to whom you were going to entrust life and death decisions. In his '88 campaign George H.W. Bush promised not to raise taxes—“read my lips,” he said—then he did. In his 2000 campaign, W. promised of a humble foreign policy and not to do any nation building. I guess he might get off on a technicality on that one, since we seem to be either nation creating or nation shattering, there is just too much smoke to tell yet.

DNA always trumps data. LBJ’s DNA led to Vietnam, as Nixon’s led to Watergate, as Reagan’s led to Iran Contra, as Bill’s led to Monica, as Hillary’s led to her health care debacle, as W.’s led to the Iraq mess. For better and worse, presidents merge personal and policy. Reagan made a leap of faith with Gorbachev that changed the world; W. looked into Putin’s eyes and soul and neglected, as John McCain noted, to see the letters “KGB.”

For better and worse, presidents merge personal and policy. Reagan made a leap of faith with Gorbachev that changed the world; W. looked into Putin's eyes and soul and neglected, as John McCain noted, to see the letters "KGB."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Reading Schlesinger's journals underscored my own experience. Politicians often behave irrationally, working against their own interests and the interests of the country they love, and resist learning lessons from history. When Schlesinger wrote about Adlai Stevenson's split between his desire to win and his desire to live up to the noble image of himself, it was hard not to think of Barack Obama. As the diarist noted, history offers ambiguous lessons because people mostly used history to justify policies they wanted to pursue for other reasons.

As the Dutch historian Peter Gale said, "history is an argument without end," and, for W., history is an alibi without end. One Johnson aide told Schlesinger that Vietnam

was all about LBJ proving his manhood and Kissinger described a scene in 1968, in the Cabinet room, when Johnson harangued Robert McNamara, growling about the North Vietnamese, "how can I hit them in the nuts?" Vietnam was also about envy. LBJ was so envious of JFK's incandescence that he put aside his own sharp political instincts and wide pool of advisors to slavishly listen to misguided JFK holdovers like Robert McNamara.

Just so, Iraq was about W. proving his manhood and about envy. After a lifetime of trying and failing to live up to his father's resume, he gambled that invading Baghdad could be the place where he could bound past his father in the history books in one jump over the Tigris, avenging his dad and rebelling against his dad all in the same war. Manipulated by Cheney, Rummy and Wolfy, the malleable and incurious W. ignored the possible negative consequences. He had never had to face negative consequences in his own life. Daddy's friends were always there to clean up the mess, like James Baker rushing down to Tallahassee in 2000 to pickpocket the presidency from Al Gore. If W. had asked his father about Iraq or even watched *Lawrence of Arabia*, he might have had some pause.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: As one member of Bush 41's War Council said, when Poppy didn't go into Baghdad, how long would we have had to stay there to keep this regime in power? How effective would it be if it were perceived as the puppet regime of the United States Military? It gets to be a very difficult, a very nebulous, a very long, drawn out kind of commitment—what I would describe as a quagmire. We have absolutely no interest in getting U.S. military forces involved inside Iraq.

The one who offered that wise analysis was Dick Cheney, the same person who a decade later persuaded Bush Jr. that he would be a wimp if he didn't go into Baghdad. W. thinks history will redeem him, and he has been summoning historians and theologians to the White House for discussions on the fate of Iraq and the nature of good and evil. When presidents have screwed up and want to console themselves, they think history will give them a second chance. It's the historical equivalent of a presidential pardon.

But there are other things—morality, strategy and security—that are more pressing than history. History is just the fanciest way possible of wanting to deny or distract attention from what's happening now. It's amazing, really, how many people who get to run the country go weird on us. Once, during Bush I, they got scared over at the White House about lead paint poisoning—they thought Millie the dog had it—but they should be scared about ego poisoning.

Peggy Noonan said that 1600 Pennsylvania can be a satin-lined jail. It can also be a padded cell, strangely soundproof. As Schlesinger notes, there is no procedure in the Constitution for dealing with nuts and, unfortunately, the White House medical team does not include a shrink. Over cocktails, Bill Moyers told Schlesinger that President Johnson was “a sick man,” so much so that he and fellow Johnson aide Dick Goodwin had begun reading up on mental illness—Bill on manic depression and Dick on paranoia.

JFK called Nixon “sick” and Schlesinger called Jimmy Carter weird because he took Adam and Eve literally and believed he had seen flying saucers. Besides going to jolly parties full of notables with his pal Teddy White, the thing Schlesinger most loved was sitting around JFK's hotel room gossiping and drinking with reporters. That world is lost. JFK and John McCain are two of the only politicians in modern history who even like talking to reporters. And reporters are now, as Alexander Stanley and I wrote a while back for *GQ*, the dweebs on the bus—hard-working techno nerds, who are a far cry from the raffish boys on the bus who started their days with bloody marys and had rules like wheels up/rings off, and you can never stay up late enough to sleep with the cocktail waitress. I think that one worked for us; I'm glad he said that.

I quoted David Hoffman of the *Washington Post* in that piece, and afterwards he called me and said I had gotten the quote wrong. “I didn't say I

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don't unwind," he told me, "I said I can't unwind." Reporters today are festooned with so much fancy equipment—Blackberries, iPods, iPhones, wireless laptops, text messaging, cell phones, digital cameras—that I've actually seen them miss stories because they are more deeply engaged with the technology than the candidate. In *The New Republic*, Mike Crowley suggests that Fred Thompson's campaign is fizzling because 21st Century type A reporters look down on the Tennessean's lackadaisical style.

Crowley defends Fred, writing "if Thompson is as lazy as reputed and if he is anything like me, he would have stuck a post-it note to his wall back in 2002 reading 'Saddam?,' and then never quite gotten around to invading."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Which, in retrospect, may not have been such a bad thing.

At a time when journalism is considered an endangered species, the Bushies at least have proved that our profession is more necessary than ever. The administration tried to create an alternate reality about the war and about the environment, and for a while it worked disturbingly well. They began referring to journalists as "the reality-based community."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Cheney and company did everything they could to kill the system of checks and balances, mau-mauing the press corps by acting as though any questions about their tactics on war, or torture, or civil liberties, or wiretapping, or no-bid Halliburton contracts were unpatriotic, they tried to replace the press with a Potemkin press corps giving access only to Fox TV and other conservative outlets, secretly paying columnists like

Armstrong Williams to spread the gospel and spending hundreds of millions on self-aggrandizing propaganda, fashioned like fake newscasts with faux news anchors that were peddled to local news outlets.

They took away my press pass but gave a daily pass to a guy working for a conservative website who turned out to be a male prostitute—

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: —with a far racier website. The only person who got the administration to switch off the TV from Fox was Nancy Reagan. They gave her an Air Force plane to take Ronald Reagan's body home after his

state funeral and she asked the steward to flip over to MSNBC. "My son is a commentator there," she said sweetly. It's a tough time for journalism. Networks have dispensed with the voice-of-God anchors and now do evening news shows about diets, plastic surgery and why Ellen was sobbing about regifting a dog. And there is a newspaper in Pasadena that has outsourced its local politics coverage to India.

At a time when journalism is considered an endangered species, the Bushies at least have proved that our profession is more necessary than ever.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Don't get any ideas, Joe.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Which sounds like a Borat sequel or like the world has gotten a little too flat. Still, call me a dreamer, but I don't worry too much about journalism's future, either in terms of politicians who try to subvert it—not as long as we have Dana and Rick and Jill—or in terms of new technologies. I don't blog and I belatedly got an iPod which I still don't know how to synch up to my computer.

I have great faith in the story and I don't think in the end it really matters how we tell the story: with blogs or hieroglyphics, with a Royal typewriter, or a cell phone or a carrier pigeon. The important thing is the narrative—what Tom Stoppard calls the dance of time, the unconditional mutability that makes every life poignant. Whether we end up in Hillaryland or Rudyville, we just have to keep telling the story and pulling back the veil. We are, after all, living in perilous, confusing times. We only just broke out of the scary alternate reality of the Bushies and we land in the scary alternate reality of Giuliani. If Rudy can be a Red Sox fan, anything on earth can happen.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: Thank you.

(Applause)

Ms. Dowd: Thank you.

Mr. Jones: Maureen has agreed to respond to some questions. Yes, sir?

From the floor: It's clear that there are a number of Bush haters who want to see us lose in Iraq. They like it when things go wrong. So the question for you is, Ms. Dowd, are you pulling for us to win in Iraq or are you pulling for us to lose?

Ms. Dowd: I grew up in a family of men in uniform. My dad was in World War I, he was a police officer who actually helped rescue the Capitol from the siege of the Puerto Rican terrorists, and my brothers were in the Coast Guard, and my mom was so patriotic that on 4th of July she would wear always red, white and blue but also stockings with American flags. I can't imagine a more patriotic family and I think that I am about as patriotic as it gets.

And as Kennedy once said, you know, the best form of patriotism is challenging your government to tell the truth.

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(Applause)

Mr. Jones: As you do your work, do you think of yourself, as you were describing, as a patriotic American or do you think of yourself as a columnist on a deadline? How do you sort of see yourself in this professional role that you have with the power of speaking through the op-ed column pages of *The New York Times*?

Ms. Dowd: You know, Frank Lyons, one of our brilliant reporters one time had a column and I asked him what the column was called or something and he said, “it’s called about 700 words.”

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: When he had 700 words, that was it. Deadline can be a terrifying thing, but I think—and I think Dana would agree—that the last few years have been the most amazing story that I’ve ever covered and I just—I think that W. and Cheney thought they were doing the right thing. But in the process of doing the right thing they forgot something, which is—I’m going to sound like Goldie Hawn in that movie “Protocol” now—but it’s we the people.

I mean, they have to give us the truth about why we are going to war and they didn’t do that. They assumed that they knew best and that it was okay to create—even as Wolfowitz said in a *Vanity Fair* article—a kind of a faux case that made the best case for what they wanted to do and not give us the reasons. They thought, you know, it would be too much for us to digest. But that is not American; that is not the American way. So that’s where journalism is really good, because even if a lot of people are wanting to hear more about Anna Nicole Smith than Afghanistan, we can keep pressing and keep pressing.

From the floor: There is a story that I think we’ve missed for the last 30 or 40 years and it may be too late. A week or so ago Tim Flannery, the Australian climate scientist, said we are already past the 455 parts per million greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere that is supposedly the tipping point. It seems as if, according to the figures that I’ve seen, that peak level was reached maybe a year or a year and a half ago. What is that narrative and why hasn’t it broken through?

Ms. Dowd: Actually, I think one of the most amazing things that W. and Cheney have achieved is they have helped turn the United States green, which I never thought I would see, where it would become this super chic thing. And their obstructionism and obtuseness and Cheney’s secret energy meetings where he gave away our energy policy to lobbyists and energy corporations, which was I think one of the most outrageous things in American history, sort of woke a lot of people up, so it could be the silver lining. And our brilliant managing editor and assistant managing editor are here, and I’m sure they’ll get right on that, as soon as we leave here tonight.

Mr. Ander: My name is Steve Ander and I’m an MPP1 here at the Kennedy School, and something that has always intrigued me is the role of

entertainment in media and the role of entertainment in politics. And, considering just recently Stephen Colbert, a favorite of mine, was your guest writer, a lot of people complain that politics has turned into just entertainment, and that the depth and the intricate nature of politics is just getting washed over. And at the same time, Stephen Colbert, Jon Stewart, Bill Maher, et cetera, are incredibly popular. Do you see this current role of comedians in politics as a good thing or a bad thing? And also, do you support Stephen Colbert by letting him write your—

Ms. Dowd: Wow. Well, at the *Times*, we are not allowed to endorse.

Well, there are many different forms of entertainment, some of which poison politics and some of which help it, I think. For instance, in Bush's convention—W. Bush's convention—he had a lot of blacks and Hispanics on stage, even though basically he was pursuing a lot of policies that might not be to their advantage. So, you can have that kind of entertainment that obfuscates, and then you can have entertainment like Colbert and Stewart that actually holds politicians to the truth.

And I was telling a student here before I started that one night I had finished my column and gone past the first edition, I was watching Colbert and he had tape of a politician saying something incredibly stupid that was on the subject I had written about—and I ran over to the phone and was going to call the quote in. And even though it was a real piece of tape, I put the phone down and I thought, "no, I can't," I'm a real columnist and I can't start being influenced by a fake news show.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But actually it's fine, because he came to the *Times* and our publisher was saying to him, "how do you get these clips of tape that can hold the president and other politicians accountable by showing that they said the opposite six months or six years earlier?" And Colbert said, "it's very simple, you get an intern, a video machine and—" And I just think they are fantastic. It's analogous to Harry Potter getting kids to read. If you can get people interested in politics by putting some humor on it, great. And also it's in the tradition of Jonathan Swift, and Evelyn Waugh and lots of other fantastic people.

Mr. Gohan: Hi. My name is Tyler Gohan. I'm a junior at the college. I'm a big fan of the *Times* op-ed page and I was wondering what your relationship is like with the other columnists and, if you guys draw off each other's ideas, or if you talk over things with them, or sort of how it works there?

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Ms. Dowd: When I was on the Colbert show he asked me that and I told him this story that sometimes when—very occasionally, you know, every few years—if Tom Friedman is having a bad day and—

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd:—either in terms of his own writing, or the Middle East or something, he'll come into my office very distraught and he'll go, "let's get a daiquiri."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: And Jon Stewart said, "God, he sounds like a temp."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: And Jon Stewart said, "something tells me that you guys don't stand around under a poster of one of those hanging cats." It's a little more sophisticated than that. We used to call it "murderer's row" when Safire was there—but David Brooks is such a sweetie pie, we've kind of suspended that. But why don't you come have coffee and I'll show you what it's like?

Mr. Jones: Before we leave this theme, tell the story about during the early days of the Monica Lewinsky story when Bill Safire came into your office.

Ms. Dowd: Oh, I forgot about that.

Mr. Jones: It has a collegial theme.

Ms. Dowd: Yeah, so, when the Starr Report came out, and Jill and I were pouring over it and it was just complete bodice-ripping, heavy breathing, stuff that made you really worried about Ken Starr.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: And I passed by Safire's office and he was in there with the Starr Report on his lap, reading it very studiously, and he said, "Maureen, can I ask you a question?" And I said, "What?" And he goes, "What is a thong?"

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: And I said, "Well, um, uh." And I tried to explain it to him, but I was turning redder and redder, and finally he goes "Oh, I get it, this is what in my reckless youth in Union City, New Jersey, they called a g-string or something."

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I said, "Well, sort of." And then he goes, "I just needed to know if it was a noun or an adjective."

(Laughter)

From the floor: My question for you is how much of your own reporting do you still do for your column? And to the extent that you don't,

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what criteria do you use to decide whether the reporting is valid for you to base your opinions on?

Ms. Dowd: That's a great question, especially in the era of blogs. But in an ideal world, I would love to do all my own reporting and I try to do as much reporting as I can, but the problem is that—and I found this even when I was a political reporter—if you think that you are going to tell the reader the truth every time and not shave anything off, so you don't make your sources mad, you pretty quickly lose sources. And I think, basically, I have no sources.

But you know, I try, like I tried today to call and get an interview with Giuliani to see if he could tell me about his week as a Red Sox fan.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But they quickly came back with the answer that he was very, very busy. But I try, and then once in a while I get an interview and I do report. I loved the part of my career where I could just go and interview someone, like one time I was interviewing Jimmy Carter and I don't know why but for some reason I said something about, "have you ever written poetry?" And he goes, "Oh, you have to hear my peace poetry," and he began reading me poems and telling me which women who were married to world leaders that he had lust in his heart for.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I mean, I'll be perfectly happy just to be a fly on the wall and never have my own voice again. I'm much happier with other people's voices—that's why I love giving it to Stephen Colbert because it's just more fun to hear, for me, what other people think, which probably means I need a new job but—

(Laughter)

Mr. Willey: My name is Roy Willey, I'm a junior at the college.

In 1988, you and other newspaper columnists around the country effectively helped to derail Joe Biden's presidential campaign and this time one of those same newspapers had made him the first candidate on either side to get an official newspaper endorsement. And assuming from your talk, you said that you think policies and people who enact them are braided very closely, so my question to you is: that newspaper got it wrong once and is getting it possibly right this time. How can the public trust newspapers to endorse and should newspapers endorse candidates?

Ms. Dowd: God, you know, I don't know. We're not allowed to endorse. Tom Friedman is always writing about who he is not voting for.

. . . I tried today to call and get an interview with Giuliani to see if he could tell me about his week as a Red Sox fan. But they quickly came back with the answer that he was very, very busy.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: But I don't know about endorsements. I wrote those Biden stories but this time, and Safire had this expression, "never kick anyone when they are down, only when they are up." So I called Biden and asked him if he wanted to do a nice interview and he was very leery, but finally he did and he was pleased with how it came out. But basically, I believe everybody deserves a second chance, because I've made every mistake on earth and I'm talking at Harvard so—

(Laughter)

From the floor: As an aspiring editorialist and a huge fan of your columns, I just first want to say thank you for coming tonight, and I have a question for you relating to the audacity, if you will, of American newspapers. As a student from France, at home I used to read newspapers which were extremely critical of government and some which were very partisan on one side or the other, and although the excellence of your reporting and that of *The New York Times* and other newspapers, that does on occasion point out enormous discrepancies in policies by the Bush Administration.

I was wondering, do you think that kind of self-restraint that we see in the U.S. versus in Europe is something that's inherent to American journalism or is it a practical access to information problem that was put in place by the Bush Administration? And how do you see that evolving?

. . . I believe everybody deserves a second chance, because I've made every mistake on earth . . .

Ms. Dowd: Well, I think when I started covering the White House, Sam Donaldson was on the beat, and so he would be kind of rude and feisty with Reagan, and Reagan loved it because it was kind of like shootout at the OK Corral and he could take on Sam, but Sam served the purpose of having somebody who was an agitator.

And then, after 9/11, I just think the thing about the press is, we are citizens, and this guy got at the patriotic question earlier—and the press I think was a little cowed at first and didn't quite know how to respond after 9/11 either and how tough to be. And it took us a while to sort through that.

And it was really funny because when the British press would come over for a Tony Blair/Bush press conference, the British press would seem so rude because they had never gotten in this sort of more polite culture, but I think that the U.S. press has bounced back now. I just think that 9/11 was a trauma for all of us and it just took a while to figure out. And I think we learned a lesson the hard way, that at times like that, that's when you have to be more vigilant about the government because they have more power and more backing from the public. So you have to make sure they are not abusing that.

Mr. Wilson: My name is Greg Wilson, I'm a midcareer graduate from last spring.

In '03, there were two stories that made waves from anonymous sources. One was the Novak piece, the second was written by Dana Priest, which said that the leaking of Valerie Plame's name was an act of "pure revenge." And over the next three years, there was big debate within journalistic circles and at conferences about when it was appropriate to reveal an anonymous source, and at most of those conferences people would say maybe two instances when there was a ticking time bomb or if it had to do with troop movements.

With the Scooter Libby trial, we found out under sworn testimony that the CIA briefer for Vice President Cheney informed him that people will be in grave danger with the identity of Valerie Plame being revealed, and that he said they could be tortured or killed. So, I was wondering the next time there is a journalistic conference, do you think that there will be three cases where reporters will be willing to reveal their anonymous source?

Ms. Dowd: Rick, do you want to help me out here?

Mr. Wilson: It's meant to be a bit thought-provoking.

Ms. Dowd: Come on, one of you guys has to come up. Can you? Can somebody help me answer this? Well, because it's more of a news source kind of question I think.

Mr. Jones: I'm not going to put Jill on the spot on this—

Mr. Wilson: I didn't mean to be—

Mr. Jones: This is a delicate question and I don't know that Maureen is really able to answer it, just in her own opinion.

Ms. Dowd: Well, I think that it comes up more often on the news side, so I thought—

Mr. Wilson: Just from an opinion side, it can be—

Ms. Dowd: —get some help up here.

Mr. Jones: This is Jill Abramson, the Managing Editor of *The New York Times* who came to surprise—

After 9/11 . . . the press was a little cowed at first and didn't quite know how to respond . . . and how tough to be. And it took us a while to sort through that.

. . . I think we learned a lesson the hard way, that at times like that, that's when you have to be more vigilant about the government because they have more power and more backing from the public.

(Applause)

Ms. Abramson: I'm going to answer your question in a slightly different way, which is I think the fulcrum of anonymous sources right now is coming in the proliferation of these criminal leak investigations that the Bush Administration is pursuing. The Plame case took up a lot of oxygen, but there are efforts inside the government to try to root out who *The New York Times* sources are on a number of sensitive stories, including the NSA eavesdropping story, a very important story that we published.

They have been poking around disturbingly on Dana's turf and that's really, I think, the most worrisome of the developments in terms of puncturing the relationship between journalists and sources inside the government who are trying to shed light on information that they think is important to bring before the public and the Bush Administration's effort to put a freeze on that process, which I think is a really disturbing trend.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: Thanks, Jill.

We are going to take two more quick questions.

Mr. Leon: Hi, good evening. I'm Tony Leon. I'm a fellow at the Institute of Politics.

As you can hear from my accent, I'm not American. But given your acute observations about the condition of political leadership here, do you think it's possible—given the exigencies of the campaign cycle here, the length of time, the intrusive nature of the media—to actually campaign and thereafter govern without the gross pandering to which you draw attention, without losing your authenticity and without forsaking your principles? Do you think, in the practical, real politics of today and tomorrow, that is actually achievable?

Ms. Dowd: Now, I hate to do this again but, Rick, you have to come up here. Rick is a most brilliant political editor and reporter. Just come for a second. I'll answer, too, but you have to help me out here.

(Laughter)

Mr. Berke: You asked "Can politicians still be genuine?" Is that—

Mr. Leon: Yeah, and do you see any examples of it today? I mean, in the United States, of people who stick to principles, are genuine, and can be elected and govern effectively without doing all the omissions and commissions to which Maureen Dowd effectively draws our attention?

Mr. Berke: I think the American public and voters just want people they feel they can trust and no matter what we write about them, we just try to get at the truth and expose them for who they are, good and bad. And I think we

Probably what you are asking is, after they go through this whole process, are they too crazy to govern? I don't know.

just want to get at what's real, and I think that's a service to the public, to the voting public, when we are able to do that. And I think if a politician can survive the scrutiny and get elected then, sure, they can govern as themselves and get elected.

Does that answer your question, sort of?

Ms. Dowd: Probably what you are asking is, after they go through this whole process, are they too crazy to govern? I don't know.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I don't agree with this whole philosophy when politicians start saying, "oh, journalists drive good people away from the process because they are too intrusive." I just think that's a bunch of baloney. I think that the American public—some of the smartest pieces we do are what we call voices pieces, where we just go out and interview people about the race—and the American public just has a wonderful sense of who they trust and who they don't and who they like and who they don't. And sometimes they get fooled, but I think that they can only judge by what they have at hand and then when they get fooled, then they correct that. So, I don't worry about driving good people out. I think if you have good people that they can triumph in the system.

From the floor: Do you still see sexism as an issue for reporters today?

Ms. Dowd: I don't, yeah, I never like to use the word sexism actually, but we just went through the revival of the Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill thing with Clarence Thomas' book and she wrote a piece for the *Times* op-ed page and—

From the floor: You had a good column.

(Laughter)

Ms. Dowd: I just think that relations between the sexes are complicated and have gone on a very complicated trajectory. Where Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan told us it was going to be easy, it turned out not to be easy. But I have great faith that we'll muddle through all that with humor. Yeah, of course there are problems, but we are stuck with each other until they come up with another species.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Final question.

From the floor: As a long time admirer of your work, I realize you are an equal opportunity kibitzer, but do you put the sins of Bill Clinton on a par with that of George W. Bush—and if not, do you feel any obligation to put it into perspective?

Ms. Dowd: Yeah, this is something that

I just think that relations between the sexes are complicated and have gone on a very complicated trajectory. . . . But I have great faith that we'll muddle through all that with humor. . . . we are stuck with each other until they come up with another species.

still comes up a lot and there was a piece about Al Gore in a recent *Vanity Fair* and the issue is should reporters have been more direct in trying to explain that Al Gore's woodenness was not on a par with W.'s stupidity. And I wrote about both, but I did an interview with W. the day he announced in Kennebunkport, and I said "how do you feel about running for president with no foreign policy experience whatsoever?" And he said, "Well, you know, I have people around, Wolfowitz, Condi, Powell, that I'll just ask and I'll trust my gut."

Now everyone read that interview and they could judge whether they wanted to go with that or not and what that said about him, that he was so incurious in running for president without any experience. But I think that how a candidate manages his campaign just has a lot to do with whether he gets to be president, and Gore's management of his campaign was not brilliant. And I don't think that reporters make a moral equivalency, but I'm not a partisan writer and our reporters aren't partisan, so we are not going to cover up the fact that he is doing something stupid. If he is, we are just going to write about it and then it's up to the voters to decide.

But as Howell Raines used to say, if reporters had so much influence, Ronald Reagan would have never been president, and I think sometimes our influence is really overrated. But all we can do is report, and that stuff is important because it turns out to be determinant factors about whether they win or not. And if they are reading, maybe they can learn something and switch.

Mr. Jones: Maureen, thank you very much.

Ms. Dowd: Thank you.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: I want to again thank Maureen and Dana for being here and thank the Nyhans, and Walter and Arthur for helping persuade Maureen to come.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause)

THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR

OCTOBER 26, 2007

Mr. Patterson: I'm Tom Patterson. I'm the Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press here at the Kennedy School, filling in this year for Alex Jones as Acting Director of the Shorenstein Center. Welcome to the morning panel.

We are going to talk about a topic that's been on a lot of people's minds much earlier than usual: the presidential campaign. It seems to have started right after the midterms—certainly the media kicked in almost immediately after the midterms. One pundit suggested that all this early coverage and attention allows Americans to pretend that George Bush is no longer their president.

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: But we are going to focus on the invisible primary, at least at the start, but let me quickly introduce the panelists. This is a real treat for me, to have this much firepower, and only ninety minutes in which to use it. This is going to be a little "shock-and-awe" of our own kind here this morning. To my far left is my faculty colleague, Steve Jarding, thirty years in the campaign consulting business. One of his more recent successes, Jim Webb's Senate campaign in 2006.

Next to Steve is another of my colleagues, Marion Just, who also holds a faculty position at Wellesley College, one of the nation's foremost experts on media coverage of presidential campaigns.

Charlie Cook is next to Marion. Charlie is the guru of political analysis. He runs the Cook Political Report that all of us rely so heavily on, is with *The National Journal*, and also has been an election night analyst for the networks stretching over a couple of decades.

To my right, Dana Priest, Nyhan Prize winner and *Washington Post* correspondent. Dana said, "what am I doing here?" She said, "I'm not a political reporter." She is our reality check. If you get too close to these campaigns, you lose sight of the fact that they take place within the context of problems that are very much on people's minds, and Dana has been in the forefront of the coverage of some of those issues.

And then sitting next to Dana, Mark Halperin, now with *Time Magazine*, and ABC News, one of the country's top political journalists.

And then on my far right is Tom Fiedler, my current colleague. He is a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center, but Tom made his mark in thirty-five years with the *Miami Herald* holding almost every position of importance and one of the top political reporters in the country.

As I said, we are going to start with what's been called "the invisible primary." That's a term that the journalist Arthur Hadley applied to this early going—before a single vote is cast in Iowa and the candidates' maneuvering during this period.

It's a critically important part of the campaign. This is going to overstate its importance, but I want you to think a little bit about the campaigns from 1984 to 2004. We have had, in that space of time, twelve nominating races, six on the Republican side, six on the Democratic side. Now, I picked 1984 because that's the point at which you start to see clustering. Shortly after Iowa and New Hampshire you start to see the beginnings of front-loading.

. . . how many times did the candidate who had raised the most money before a single vote had been cast . . . end up as the party nominee?

And if you look at those twelve nominating races from 1984 to 2004 and you ask yourself how many times did the candidate who had raised the most money before a single vote had been cast—in other words before the Iowa Caucus, how many of those 12 times has the leading money-raiser ended up as the party nominee? And the answer is 11 out of 12, with the exception being Howard Dean in 2004.

Another part of the invisible primary is the quest for media attention and essentially to try to get yourself in the headlines and bring yourself to the attention of the American public, which can allow you to move up in the polls, get more coverage, attract dollars and the like. And if you ask yourself how many times has the candidate who was leading in the national polls, who was at the top of the party in the national polls before a single vote was cast in Iowa, how many times in those twelve races has that candidate been the nominee? And the answer, again, is eleven. The exception is Gary Hart in 1988 and Tom Fiedler may want to talk a little bit about that at some point in the course of our ninety minutes.

But we are going to talk about this and some other aspects of the campaign, and I thought I would like to start with Marion. She and Tom Rosenstiel have been looking at the media coverage. Russell Baker called the press “the great mentioner”—meaning that the candidates that are singled out by the press have a particular advantage. And, Marion, if you could, talk a little bit about that and maybe describe briefly the findings of the recent study that you and Tom did.

. . . the huge majority of stories that took place during this time . . . were about single candidates.

Ms. Just: Well, the study will be available on Monday. It will be posted on the Shorenstein Center website and also on the Project for Excellence in Journalism's website, and it's a report of the coverage from January 2007 through May 2007 in a vast variety of media, so if you would like to get all the numbers down, that's the place to go.

But I just wanted to emphasize one point because I know we have a very limited time and that is that the huge majority of stories that took place during this time on television—in newspapers, in online news, in talk radio, NPR, the whole works—were about single candidates.

And so the model seems to be follow the candidate, file the story, right? That's the way the press has approached this. Well, that's a fine model when you have a general election and there are two candidates to follow or maybe three, but when you have fourteen or twelve on one side and eleven on the other, depending on how you are counting, that model breaks down almost immediately. So the press was faced this time without an obvious candidate on either side. There was no vice president moving up and they had a huge number of people competing in each party.

And this winnowing aspect of the press is very important for candidates, getting name recognition, moving up in the polls, getting more money, as Tom has outlined. And the press follows a clear formula here. They look at who has the money and then they look at who has the poll numbers, so they then reinforce the money and the poll numbers by giving those candidates the attention and that takes attention away from all of the others who are competing.

It's very rare to see a comparative story. The only big comparative story in the beginning of the year was—you probably know, right? Who compared to whom on the democratic side? Hillary and Obama, right? That's the story. That was an obvious story, an easy one, and one where there was some comparison. But when you take the rest of the candidates, there were no obvious comparisons. There could have been something like U.S.C.—Unknown Southern Conservatives—that could have been a nice sort of a piece, do you see that? Or maybe U.S.L.D.—Unknown Senate Liberal Democrats—right?

There are some on each side but instead they got pushed to the edges where I really felt for Mike Gravel, who you probably haven't heard of but has been running—

Mr. Patterson: Have you ever met him?
(Laughter)

Ms. Just: No, I haven't, but I have seen him on TV, he plays a candidate on TV and he said during one of the debates, "What am I, a potted plant?" And that was his best line in the whole campaign, but of course he

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remained a potted plant for the rest of the time. So, we wonder whether the electorate is losing something by this heavy attention on a narrow set of candidates. And people, by the way, do say they want to know more about these other candidates. They are not totally satisfied yet.

On the Democratic side, they are more satisfied with their choices than they are on the Republican side, but then it's not clear that this is going to be a great Republican year. Republicans haven't been paying too much attention and perhaps somebody will catch fire for them. But if Tom is right, it's going to be the person with the deepest pockets and who actually has a strategy in the campaign. This is worrisome, I think, because we think of the campaign as providing us some surprises, some possibilities that we haven't considered up to now.

And that's also what we hope the early primaries would do, where you didn't need a huge amount of money to get into them but you could come in with a small, concentrated amount of money and make a breakaway impact, say, in Iowa, as Jimmy Carter did, and suddenly go from three percent in the polls to some very respectable double digits, and that is going to be very hard, given the media attention and the front loading of the primaries.

. . . one of the most sophisticated and brilliant political analysts in the country said that it was more likely that he would win the Tour de France than Rudy Giuliani would be the Republican nominee.

Mr. Patterson: Thanks, Marion.

Mark, picking up on Marion's point, from your perspective, have there been some surprises in the way that some of these candidates have operated this year?

Mr. Halperin: There definitely have been. It is so wide open because there is no incumbent president or vice president running and I think we've seen a lots of twists and turns already. We'll see more. You know, to be surprised though, you have to have something happen that you weren't expecting and a lot of the things that have happened have been interesting but not, to me at least, unexpected. I think one thing that stands out as most surprising: one of

the most sophisticated and brilliant political analysts in the country said that it was more likely that he would win the Tour de France than Rudy Giuliani would be the Republican nominee.

Mr. Cook: I was going to address that.

(Laughter)

Mr. Halperin: Yeah, that person is sitting here, Charlie Cook said that, and I agreed with every word—

(Laughter)

Mr. Halperin: —that Charlie wrote about Rudy Giuliani for months and months and I agreed also with what he wrote a few days ago, which is

now it appears that Rudy Giuliani can be the Republican nominee. This to me dwarfs all the other surprises. I think there are surprising things about the McCain candidacy, Obama and Romney as well, but the most surprising thing is someone who Charlie and I, and many others, thought had no chance to be the nominee. I now give a 33.8 percent chance of being the Republican nominee—tomorrow it might be 33.7—but he is I think the, by just a little bit, the most likely person to be nominated.

I won't go into detail about the reasons I think he has pulled that off but I'll just outline I think the three most important reasons. Number one, he has done a masterful job every day of having the news cycle be about what he wants to talk about, rather than what other people want to talk about about him. Number two, the Republican field is weak. All of the candidates have serious flaws, none of them have been able to do what the Republican front runner has always been able to do: become the front runner in money, poll standing, buzz and establishment endorsement. That has been divided amongst all the candidates and Giuliani has taken advantage of that.

And number three, as Giuliani's campaign manager says all the time, this is the first Republican nomination fight since 9/11 and Mayor Giuliani has succeeded in defining this fight about who is the toughest—the toughest to protect America and the toughest to take on Hillary Clinton, who every Republican believes will be the nominee to the Democratic party. As long as every day he defines the race on those terms, I think he is on an inexorable march to the nomination, and none of the other Republicans have figured out a way to stop that as of yet.

Mr. Patterson: Charlie, do you want to jump in on this one?

Mr. Cook: Sure. What I was going to do is sort of give you an example of my personal odyssey in terms of watching this race. They expect someone like me to sift through all the available information, look at it as closely as you can, use the experience that you've gathered over the years and give it your best guess.

And maybe you are a little bit wrong, maybe you are totally wrong, but give it your best guess and that's sort of what we try to do, what I try to do. But I think with that comes an obligation that when you start having doubts about what you initially thought, you need to express them, and if you decide that you are not convincing yourself anymore, then change. Don't go down with the ship. I mean, there is no percentage in sticking to a theory that's gone wrong and hopefully you change and people forget that you were wrong for a long time way back before.

Now, when you say something memorable, like, "I would win the Tour de France before Rudy Giuliani wins the Republican nomination"—I've always thought that politicians should never make truly memorable statements. I now think that politicians and political analysts should never make truly memorable statements.

(Laughter)

Mr. Cook: But for me, early on, I sifted through everything I could and I reached two early conclusions: that I thought that Hillary Clinton would probably win the Democratic nomination and that Rudy Giuliani probably couldn't win the Republican nomination. And subsequently, virtually everything I've seen since then has convinced me that I was right on one, and then we saw Rudy, I mean, he jumped up and, just using the polls as a

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measurement, he jumped up a lot higher than I ever dreamed he would, he stayed up there a lot longer, and even when he started dropping, the drop—initially it was pretty precipitous, but it's now not as deep a drop as I would have thought.

Now, at first I started thinking, well, 9/11 has become kind of a cocoon, like a kevlar jacket that has protected Rudy from being pro-choice, pro-gun control, supportive of gay rights measures, things that would normally be considered necessities on the Democratic side and killers on the Republican side. And the, let's just say, messy personal life on the other side. And you look at all that and say, gosh, at least two or three of these things are going to kill him, and maybe 9/11 has sort of protected him in part from that.

And I was satisfied with that rationalization for a while, but then it got to the point where I wasn't even convincing myself anymore. And I started wondering—maybe something else is happening out there, you know, and started wondering, for example, is something happening within the Republican Party that is just so totally different from anything that we've seen over the last 20 or 30 years? Could, for example, stem cell research and Terry Schiavo have galvanized secular Republicans?

Could they be getting more assertive while the evangelical social conservatives—maybe they are a little bit demoralized after Mark Foley, and David Vitter and Larry Craig, and plus the fact that they are split all over the map? But I'm sort of at a point now where I didn't think there was any way on this planet that Rudy would get the nomination and now I'm kind of wondering whether it's, I don't know, about 50/50 but that he and Romney both seem to have a very, very, very good chance.

At the same time, and I know we are not supposed to jump in with handicapping, but I'm just trying to kind of help you see how I'm working through this process of reevaluating. At the same time, Romney seems to be running against his core strength, which is competence, and he seems to be running as trying to be the most ideological guy in the race. And, you know, the last couple months you watch the guy say things and

you're like, "I know you don't believe that." I mean, here the core value of the Republican Party is competence, and that's his strength and he is running as far away from his own strength as he could possibly get.

So I think it's kind of a combination of Rudy overperforming, Romney screwing up, and some chemical change taking place in the Republican Party. So the bottom line is we are supposed to get out there and try to guess what we think is going to happen, and then watch and monitor and either continue or change. And I'm sort of changing course. I don't know who is going to win this nomination and, gosh, I'm not supposed to say that, but I really don't know. But you've got to reevaluate when you think you might be wrong.

Mr. Patterson: Steve, you worked the Democratic side of the fence for a long time. Looking at the Obama/Clinton race, has there been anything about that race that you think is surprising or has some twists to it that have led you to change your mind about those two candidates?

Mr. Jarding: No, not really. I mean, I think it appeared to most everybody that follows this business that Hillary started out as probably the big dog in the hunt. The question was whether she could maintain that. Obama clearly came out of the gates very strong, and raised a lot of money and had a lot of energy, big crowds. But I always kind of perversely thought that Obama was Hillary's ace in the hole because if the rap against Hillary was that she can't win, Obama makes her look electable, I think, because if the rap was a woman can't win, or she's got negatives or whatever it was—and that rap was certainly there on Hillary—that even though it's not stated, and God knows Hillary hasn't stated it, well, can an African American man with two years experience in the Senate be more electable than Hillary Clinton?

And I think for a lot of a people, in the way she has run the race, she has been very good in the debates and she has run a very masterful campaign, she has a very loyal staff. A lot of things that were questions about Hillary Clinton six or seven months ago, Tom, I think she has addressed and dealt with very well. The problem it seems to me for Obama is that if your attack on Hillary is electability, he can't make that attack because there are questions about his. The same with John Edwards, by the way. It's hard for Edwards to say "I'm more electable than Hillary." I advised John—I ran his

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PAC in 2001—that he really needed to run for reelection because if by chance he didn't get the nomination, he needed a forum. But even worse: "John, if Kerry puts you on the ticket and you lose and you don't win your state, now you have undercut your greatest argument that says 'I can win in the South, I can deliver.'" If he had run for reelection and won reelection, he could say "Kerry lost North Carolina. I didn't. I showed I could win in the South, even with the baggage of John Kerry, put me back on the ticket and I'll deliver for you."

All of that played out as we kind of thought. A lot of people say well, Hillary has 49 percent negative ratings. Let's not kid ourselves out there. I don't care who the Democratic nominee is, he or she is going to have 49 percent negative ratings when this thing is over. The nation is so polarized and it has been for whatever it is, twelve or sixteen years now, that that's going to be the case. That never really bothered me. The question was whether she could perform and today I think she has, and I guess I'm not shocked by that. She is a very tenacious person.

Mr. Patterson: Some analysts think that we are heading toward a train wreck on February 5th. Maybe not for the candidates—I mean, we may have nominees in hand on February 5th, this is the day after those few early primaries when about 20 states will be casting their votes, kind of a super Super Tuesday.

And, Tom, you've been thinking about the problem of this structure and what it means for the parties and the voters, and I wonder if you would help us to think about Super Tuesday this time?

Mr. Fieldler: I think the train wreck analogy is probably a pretty good one, at least in terms of the process. I was amused by Charlie's second guessing of himself here. I thought the idea was when you were a pundit, Charlie, is you follow that line often wrong, never in doubt. And so I think I'm going to jump in there and say we, political journalists, had this concept, when the party reforms—the McGovern/Fraser reforms—that did away with the party bosses and created this process that we have followed now, really since 1972, where the candidates would start out in the small regional races in Iowa.

As Jimmy Carter showed us, you could be relatively unknown, but by doing well, meeting expectations as always, going on to New Hampshire, before you know it they had become a media favorite, and the media is what mattered for a generation. The most interesting candidate in the media's mind have been the candidates that have succeeded. And money always has helped because you buy media attention, paid media and otherwise. So it's been a very interesting process. There was a nice narrative—the political journalists liked it because it was spread out over a long time, it had drama, it had conflict.

But this year, we have now gotten ourselves into this rather twisted situation, whereas in fact, there was a story this morning, Bill Gardner, the Secretary of state of New Hampshire, has still not decided when the New

Hampshire Primary is going to be. And you have two big states out there, my home state of Florida, and Michigan, at war with Howard Dean and the Democratic Party because they have decided that they are not going to follow this process where they defer to Iowa and New Hampshire. They have moved their primaries up too close to New Hampshire for Bill Gardner's comfort and so there is even this what would seem like ridiculous thought that the New Hampshire Primary could actually take place in December, sometime between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

If something like that happens—and I think Florida and Michigan are quite happy to see that happen—it would wreck the whole process because nobody is going to be interested in campaigning when the vote is taking place the year before, over the holiday season. It just has gotten totally out of hand. So, the calendar: we are going to have to go back and look at that—what we have done for thirtysome years now is broken and something needs to take its place.

And then, on the other side of that, I have to say, as somebody who loves to watch politics as a process play out, the idea of there being a train wreck on February 5th is delicious to me, and it's much more likely to happen on the Republican side. It's unlikely to happen on the Democratic side. But if you have Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, Fred Thompson, and I don't know whether McCain will be a factor but Michael Huckabee probably will be, if you have them not in a sprint but in a marathon, it becomes a very different race, just as it does in sports. And who wears well over that long term, I don't think, Charlie, that it's Rudy Giuliani.

Rudy Giuliani didn't wear well in New York City over the long term, so I don't know that he'll wear well, especially when he's got everybody else picking at him. So, I suppose, as a political junkie, I would love to see that play out and maybe not even get settled until the Republican Convention after Labor Day. It would be more fun, almost, than the Red Sox going to the World Series twice.

Mr. Patterson: All right, I think conventional wisdom—at least within the parties—is that it's better to get the race over early so you can position yourself for the fall campaign and kind of husband the resources of the party and the like.

Is there anyone on the panel who thinks that that thinking may not be quite right, that there may be some advantage to a party to having a race that goes on for a long period of time, dominates the headlines, leads to a more dramatic convention than we have seen in forty or fifty years? Does anyone think that that scenario could work to a party's advantage?

Mr. Cook: I don't know about working to a party's advantage, but, I mean, I do think it's dangerous to pick your nominees so far out from the election, and it's such a tight process that the incubation period is just real, real short. I think back to 1992 when—did *The New York Times* break the Whitewater story in May or June? But Clinton was already effectively the nominee, and you know, at the end of the day it didn't hurt him that

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no, I don't think that's particularly helpful, but part of the beef I have is because the process is starting so soon, it's over soon and then you've got this long period of exposure out there.

Mr. Jarding: And part of the problem too I think, Charlie, is that—I mean, take the last race, for example. John Kerry essentially was dead in the water two weeks before Iowa and two weeks after Iowa he is the nominee. And because he was dead two weeks before Iowa, we didn't really vett him. I mean, we didn't know how good of a candidate he would be. Dean implodes, Gephardt couldn't hit the 15 percent threshold, there was a lot of delegates up for grabs in Iowa, and all of a sudden there is John Edwards or John Kerry.

Remember Wesley Clark skipped Iowa. I think today he would tell you that was a terrible mistake. But all of a sudden John Kerry is the nominee and we go, "who is this guy?" And by the time we figured out how this guy was and how good of a candidate he was, we might have picked a different choice. So I don't like the system at all, I think the front-loading is

bad. I mean, if you look at what we have done in America, we essentially reelect a hundred percent of our members of Congress who run automatically because they win the money race, and so we don't really elect our Congress.

And by the way, we tend to have almost our nominees before we ever cast a vote, so I don't know what kind of a representative system we've got but I would say it's fundamentally broken because we are not getting the participation we need to determine who is on these tickets.

Mr. Halperin: Whenever I come here I always attack the press because I know that's popular, so I'll do it again. I think two of our biggest failings in this process relate

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to the topic we are talking about now. One is we don't scrutinize the candidates enough in the nominating process—we don't give nominating voters, primaries and caucus voters, enough information about not just who the strongest general election candidate would be, which is important to a lot of voters, but also who the best president would be, which should be important to everybody. And I think this cycle is going to be worse than it's ever been.

Rudy Giuliani postures that he is the strongest general election candidate and that's why a lot of voters are attracted to him. I think in some ways, I can argue he is the weakest general election candidate, but I don't think that will come out because I don't think the press is going to do a good enough job in the next three months talking about his vulnerabilities. The other thing the press does, we all say what Tom says which is, as political reporters, we would love there to be an extended nomination fight or potentially broken convention, but we are the ones who elevate the importance of the early contests far above their delegate totals and make early wins count for a lot more.

We are the ones who, if a candidate doesn't finish first or beat expectations in Iowa, we'll ask them only versions of one question for every time they face the press which is, "when are you dropping out of the race?" We should all dial back, we should treat the early contests as important because they are, I think, the best test the candidates face, the most human test. But we should let the process play out and not disenfranchise voters in subsequent states. I say we should—I have no expectation that we will.

Ms. Just: I just want to add that "Beat the Press" is the name of a show here in Boston and there is no shortage of that here, either. But I would like to say that it's not just the press that does that. I think the money dries up when a candidate falters, and so it's a combination of things. I think journalists would love an interesting convention. I know that right now the schedule is for maybe three hours of convention coverage, which is really not adequate, I think, for doing the job that needs to be done, but there is a lot of conflict between the parties and television about how newsworthy the conventions are.

We are the ones who, if a candidate doesn't finish first or beat expectations in Iowa, we'll ask them only versions of one question for every time they face the press which is, "when are you dropping out of the race?" We should all dial back . . .

. . . it's not just the press that does that. I think the money dries up when a candidate falters . . .

One thing we know is they are very valuable to voters—but I assure you, if we have a brokered convention, those plans, those three hour plans, will be all revised for the convention.

Mr. Cook: I agree completely with Marion. Journalists deserve just about all the abuse that anybody wants to heap on them, I'll agree to that but, at the same time, I don't think I have ever seen a presidential candidate drop out of a race because they were losing. They drop out of a race because they run out of money, I mean, because there is always hope. But they get to the point where there is no money coming in, there is no money left in the bank and they don't have any choice. They have to drop out.

Now, you could say that, well, the donors decide to stop writing checks because of the press coverage, and okay, there is some legitimacy there, but the thing about it is the donor community, they are going with someone as long as they think they have a chance and if they don't think somebody has got a chance anymore, they cut it off. So I think it's media coverage, absolutely, but also it's the donors.

Mr. Patterson: In the Q&A last night, Maureen Dowd was asked about the media's tendency to kind of pick out some element of a candidate's history or character or the like and to put it forward to the electorate. And Maureen argued that they are just kind of reporting, that there isn't a lot of selecting. There is some evidence to suggest there is some truth to that, but also that it's not quite the full story. You get these emerging story lines in the campaign about a candidate—essentially it's the media's way of framing a candidacy.

If you go back to 2000, for example, one of the story lines that emerged about Al Gore was that he is not quite truthful, that he is a little bit loose with the facts, and the story was done by Bob Lichter. On the evening newscast there were seventeen such claims for every claim that you could trust what Al Gore was saying. And does anyone see these story lines emerging around some of these front runners this time to either their advantage or disadvantage?

And in some cases, of course, these things come later. I think that the Kerry flip-flopping was much more something that happened after the early contest, but is there anything that's been going on to this point that suggests we are beginning to frame or portray a particular candidate in ways that will help him or her or hurt?

Mr. Fieldler: One of the givens going into this of the candidates was that Hillary Clinton is cold and bloodless and what appears to be happening—and I'm reflecting, I suppose, what I'm reading in the press more than anything—is that if there is a surprise there it is that she is not striking voters in Iowa and New Hampshire as cold and bloodless, so much so that it has now caught the attention of the mainstream press that this is news, that Hillary is not cold and bloodless.

Mr. Patterson: I gave a talk last spring at a college and the night before the talk, I Googled "Hillary Clinton calculating" versus "Hillary Clinton

experienced” and there were a lot more mentions of “Hillary Clinton calculating.” This was probably in April, and so last night when I got back home after the talk I thought, well, I’m going to take another check and see what it looks today and you are quite right, Tom. In fact, there is now more “Hillary Clinton experienced” and fewer “Hillary Clinton calculating,” so I think the storyline has changed.

Mr. Cook: But you know, I wonder whether, I mean, “Candidate Tells Truth.” Is that really a news story?

(Laughter)

Mr. Cook: I guess it ought to be, probably, but I’ve never seen one that said that. But I’m sort of thinking about how do you frame Hillary Clinton and it strikes me that—and I’m sure she would not appreciate this, this metaphor—but she is like a mountain goat. I mean, just sure-footed, deliberate, and calculating? Again, I think this is just very sure-footed, not bounding around, not making a lot of extra steps. I mean, just knowing exactly where she wants to go. And I don’t see anything wrong with that. But calculating, to write, it’s kind of like the way we use “scheme” as opposed to the way the British use “scheme” where “scheme” could be a plan and for us it’s like pejorative.

Mr. Jarding: Tom, the only thing I might add is some of it is in the reverse. The candidates put themselves forth. I mean, look at John Edwards, “I am the poverty candidate,” and we find out he gets \$400 haircuts, and he is building the mansion, he has hedge funds, he takes \$40,000 to give a speech on poverty at the University of Wisconsin.

Mr. Cook: And you used to work for him.
(Laughter)

Mr. Jarding: Well, that’s right.

Mr. Cook: This guy is tough.

Mr. Jarding: Well, but it is a drama and I really think, you know, we were talking about Giuliani earlier and I still am of the opinion that he probably won’t be their nominee, but he clearly has moved a lot of mountains to get there. But I still think as a manager or somebody that runs campaigns, you attack people at their strength. Giuliani has not been attacked at his perceived strength. He is out there telling everybody he is America’s mayor—I’m not sure he

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wants to be America's mayor because there is a whole lot of reports, including the 9/11 Commission Report.

Tina Brown had a scathing column on him in the *Washington Post* saying, "the shtick is getting a little old, Rudy, you really weren't America's mayor." And I don't know if this will come through 527s but somebody is going to expose Rudy Giuliani and I think the test for Rudy won't be whether he is competent, it's whether he can

weather the storm, whether he can convince people, "indeed I was a good mayor." I think that's the greatest test. That's what he put out there, essentially challenging: "I'm the mayor, that's why, you know I'm competent, you know I was a leader." Well, we'll see if he can weather that, because I don't think he has been attacked yet and I suspect he will be.

Mr. Patterson: That's a lingering effect of 9/11 and I wanted to ask Dana, Iraq is an issue, just clearly changed the party dynamics in this country and if you ask Americans today what they think is the problem that most needs resolving, it's Iraq. Do you see any possibility of any significant change in Iraq as an issue or Iraq as a situation between now and November that might have some implications for the election?

Ms. Priest: Well, I think we are already seeing that, where Howard Dean was able to make it such an issue and allow people to come out and be critical of the president. I thought we would see a lot more of that this go around, and of course we have. But if you look at where people are now, the Republicans obviously would like to just neutralize the whole thing and have it go away, but I think, in a way, the Democrats would, too. They want to use it symbolically to criticize the president and the Republicans but more and more they are coming to positions that aren't that different than the president's position.

So, on the other hand, you could see the administration perhaps laying out some of the foundation for making this issue less than it could be. You see them having declared over al Qaeda in Iraq, so if we have victory over al Qaeda, which of course is a very risky statement to make, and we have some troop reductions, and we have a plan for more troop reductions that's pegged to something that sounds real, milestones, or training of Iraqi troops or something like that, so that it actually looks like a possible outcome. Well, are the Democrats really going to step out of that framework and say, no, I think we should bring the troops home right now or much quicker? Because they then risk the whole regional strife.

But I think the more interesting thing to look at than Iraq is Iran, because right now it's really the petri dish of who really has new ideas for national security strategy. And that's what I cover, I don't cover politics. Who is really going to be tough in the traditional way, as the president

really has been and yesterday announced this new package of sanctions, so they are not retreating in any way on their stick approach to diplomacy. So now what are the Democrats going to do? Are they going to back that? Some of them have, in a way. Or are they going to stick as Obama did, to some degree, with his original statement that we should talk to people sometimes, even Iran, we should engage?

So I think you have this very interesting policy issue that just may force people, who would rather not reveal really what they think a policy should be on one of the toughest issues of our day, to come out and state one. So I would watch Iran.

Mr. Jarding: Yeah, the foreign policy issue for Democrats, I think, is a real muddy area and for a variety of reasons, some very obvious. But one of the things I think the Democrats are hoping for, that you saw four years ago, is so we want to get to the economy. I don't think you get to the economy when you have men and women in uniform under fire. The dilemma for the Democrats is they want this to be Bush's war, they don't want to necessarily offer a solution, they don't want to go out on a limb because it's a problem to do that.

There is no easy, fun answer to what's going on over there. There is nothing quick—there is no quick fix for this—there is no way that you get political gain, so I think the Democrats are all sitting back either this little bit, “well, I was against it, Obama, you were for it, Hillary,” and they are nibbling at the edges, but you are not going to get any more than that. I think the Democrats want to go into that November election saying, and, frankly, it might be wise to say—not unlike Ronald Reagan did in the Iran situation when we had hostages—“this guy failed, just elect me, I'll be the leader that gets us out. I'm not going to give you a solution ahead of the election because I don't want to.”

Reagan wanted that to be Jimmy Carter's mess. I think the Democrats want this to be the Republicans' mess. We'll deal with it later, and I think that's part of the struggle that you are seeing.

Mr. Halperin: I was just going to say, in terms of the first thing we talked about, whether there had been surprises on the Democratic side, it's been said Senator Clinton looked like she would be a strong candidate and she has been. But I think there is one important thing that has happened that has been surprising, to paraphrase

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. . . to paraphrase the feminist theorist Donald Rumsfeld, you don't try to make history with the first female presidential candidate, with the candidate you might want, you go with the one you have.

And there are a lot of people who are not happy with Hillary Clinton and have ambivalent feelings about her as the potential first female president, but what has been surprising I think is she is—you would have thought that the first strong female presidential candidate would have had as their greatest challenge at a time of war proving that they were up to being commander-in-chief. Rather than being a vulnerability of hers, it seemed like voters, not just the Democratic Party, but many Republicans are her greatest strength.

A few weeks ago, one of Mitt Romney's strongest supporters—someone with great Washington experience—said, as an American, he was totally uncomfortable with John Edwards or Barack Obama as commander-in-chief but very happy on toughness and making decisions about Iraq, about Iran, with Senator Clinton. And if you talk to people in the Bush White House, including to the president, who has said this, not to me but to other journalists, they are pretty comfortable with Senator Clinton succeeding President Bush. They are familiar with Bush-Clinton transitions at this point.

(Laughter)

Mr. Halperin: And they see her as someone who would be responsible. She has extraordinarily good relationships with members of the Armed Services, the uniformed and nonuniformed. She served on the Armed Services Committee. And so, as to the extent this election in both the Democratic nominating fight and in the general election, is about who do you trust to be able to end the war, as Senator Clinton argues, but also to be able to carry on American foreign policy related to difficult areas like Iran, people trust her right now.

And, to go back to what was said earlier, it's difficult for her two strongest challengers, Senator Obama and Senator Edwards, because of their biographies and their youth, to make a credible challenge to her on that issue.

Mr. Patterson: Well, we want to bring you into the conversation. Let me ask one last question and then I'll open it up. Does anyone on the panel think that this is shaping up like a watershed election? I think it's pretty clear that Karl Rove's dream of a permanent Republican majority has been derailed, at least for a period. Republicans pulled within reach of the

Democrats in the Gallup Poll question about party identification. Just a few years ago, they had never been ahead of the Democrats on the Gallup Poll question about party identification and now it's widened to one of the largest gaps in the history of the Gallup Poll—and that's happened within a few years.

Is there anything about this election that looks like it's going to have really long term effects or is this simply going to be one of those elections, maybe with some changes in the leadership and the like, but by the time we get to 2012, kind of a whole new ballgame and not too much leftover from this election?

Charles, do you want jump on that one?

Mr. Cook: I had dinner the other night with a Democratic leader and he was making the case, you know, we could be seeing another 1932. And I'm kind of uncomfortable with that kind of thing because that's sort of been a long time and that was pretty big and, you know, it seemed to me he was kind of getting a little carried away. But, you know, hey. But it is interesting that when you look at this, pointing to another Gallup Poll, when you think of what issue area where Republicans for a long time had so much credibility was on national security. And on the Gallup Poll they asked in the middle part of September, looking ahead for the next few years, which political party do you think will do a better job of protecting the country from international terrorism and military threats?

Now, in September of 2002, Republicans had a 19 point lead. In mid-September of this year, Democrats have a five point lead, 47/42. Now, when you look at something like that, you go, "wow, something has happened," and I'm not sure the Democrats are more credible but I know that Republicans are a hell of a lot less credible. I'm not sure this is going to be a watershed year but I'll tell you what, that's something to take a look at.

But where I'm kind of wondering is, and going back to a point I was making a little while ago, I don't know if Rudy Giuliani is going to win this nomination. I don't know, all I know is I know that it's not impossible—I mean, and I said it was impossible, so that's a big move. But if Rudy were to win the Republican nomination, that would really say something about something big, something watershed perhaps happening in the Republican Party. And if by some chance he were to win, that would be a repudiation, a total 100 percent repudiation of one of the biggest constituencies within the Republican Party, Evangelical Christians.

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And these folks are looking at a situation where for whatever reason they haven't embraced Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney, the Mormon thing gives them pause. But the thing about it is if Rudy were to win this thing, it would basically push them completely aside and that's why I think him winning would be a huge deal in terms of basically telling secular Republicans, "it's okay if you want to be pro choice," or, "it's okay if you want to support some forms of gun control," or, "it's okay if you want to support civil unions or whatever you want to do it." I mean, it would

. . . it would be a green light to certain parts of the party that have really been subordinated in recent years.

be a green light to certain parts of the party that have really been subordinated in recent years. And at the same time, it would be an up yours to some people that have been the backbone of the party. So, if you are looking at something that really could be a watershed—and again, I'm not predicting Rudy gets the nomination, or if he got it that he wins the general election—but the idea that someone with his profile could get to even this point I think is pretty, pretty, pretty amazing and worth watching.

And why I think that you may see some of the evangelical leaders very, very seriously look at a third party effort if Rudy were to get the nomination—because this would basically end their franchise within the Republican Party. It means it's not their party anymore and they would probably rather lose. They would probably rather lose to Hillary Clinton, even, than basically give up their hold on the Republican Party—and I think this is fairly huge.

Ms. Priest: I want to take the question in a totally different way, which is in terms of national security and our role and standing in the world. I see this as a watershed event. No matter who wins the election, it won't be

. . . in terms of national security and our role and standing in the world. I see this as a watershed event. No matter who wins the election, it won't be Bush again.

Bush again. If you look at the trajectory of whether or not we are safer now than we were on 9/11, clearly, yes, in the homeland we are, for all the reasons that you can hear every day from Chertoff and many others, all the money that we've spent to bolster protections.

But if you look outside the borders and you take, for instance, that wildly liberal agency, the CIA, who does their 20/20 look out into the future, no, we are not—we are on the wrong trajectory, in terms of terrorism by itself. That Iraq has clearly inflamed the Muslim world in the way that no one certainly intended it to and there is no turning

that around on our current course. So, even if you get a Republican that believes in George Bush's outlook of the world, I think it will create an opening to have better relations with a lot of the countries that we have strained relationships with now, including, unfortunately, Europe, who has always—even though they speak publicly one way—has always pretty much backed the United States.

Again, going back to the package of sanctions on Iran. I think you are going to see them splitting away more and more and the only hope of really getting a new sort of bolstered coalition on terrorism, perhaps some regional actors to help out with the very risky situation in Iraq and perhaps a nonmilitary solution in Iran is a new day. And so, in that sense, I see it as a watershed for American power in the world.

Mr. Patterson: Tom?

Mr. Fieldler: Two quick things. What Dana says is important to remind us that ultimately elections are about the policy that will be carried out and we haven't really touched on that. But when the nominations are settled, it will matter where the policy positions are of the candidates, whoever they are, and I think that's how the election is going to be decided.

But I agree also with what Charlie has said. I think 1932 is interesting, perhaps 1972 to '74 is, at least in my memory, a pretty good parallel. If anything, the Republican Party is going back to where it was in refighting the 1976 battle, except that it looks like the Gerald Ford forces are going to be prevailing this time around, rather than the Ronald Reagan forces. But just on the political nominating side, one of the things that strikes me, and you raised the question about what are the surprises in the field this year, and I think one of the surprises is that the Democrats are acting like Republicans and the Republicans are acting like Democrats.

And you have on the Democratic side, the Democrats in primaries, going back to 1972, the Democrats were like someone who falls in love on a blind date and then proposes marriage, that's what they liked. It was the candidate who came out of nowhere, impressed them. You know, we had Jimmy Carter, who nobody had ever heard of before, in many ways Bill Clinton, we might have had, very close to having had Gary Hart in '84. So the Democrats liked who was new and if they didn't succeed—Michael Dukakis, I can't forget him—they go, you're history. You get one shot at it, you get a second date and that's it.

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happens in the Congress in the next election. If the Democrats can continue to build on their majorities, that would be certainly a big shift and an important one. If incumbency has, as Steve said, such an incredible impact and there are so few seats that are challenged—and I know Charlie has a number that he could probably give us on that—then I don't think it will be a very major realignment unless there is a real change in the Congress.

But Republicans have always operated like the Rotary Club . . . This year . . . It's a roller derby on the Republican side . . . It may be idiosyncratic but it really . . . may be a realignment that's more fundamental.

been militarily and economically, and I think there is a real deterioration occurring bit by bit and drop by drop. There is so much off the balance

But Republicans have always operated like the Rotary Club, you start out three years in advance as the program chair, then you move up to second vice president, and then treasurer and then you get to be president, so you always know who is going to be there and there was a great deal of predictability and stability to it. This year, really you don't quite know who is going to be the last person standing. It's a roller derby on the Republican side, which is different. It may be idiosyncratic but it really may not, it may be a realignment that's more fundamental.

Mr. Patterson: Marion?

Ms. Just: I just want to pick up on something that Steve said. I think that the real realignment would have to do with what

Mr. Patterson: Well, let's open it up and take questions.

Let me introduce Walter Shorenstein who is the sponsor of the Shorenstein Center, and Walter is involved in our Center in deep ways, not only by being here for these events but many of the ideas that underpin our program initiatives have come from Walter, and we are always grateful for your presence and your ideas.

Mr. Shorenstein: Well, I don't know whether I'm going to be approaching this from left field but all these approaches have been on the political side, with very little emphasis on the economic side. A potential train wreck can be occurring when a major financial institution can lose \$7 billion in a quarter and things of that nature. The strength of the United States has always

sheet that's now coming to the surface, and the impact of that and the deterioration of the United States being the reserve currency, and its debt and all the other things that are detrimental.

It's not really being played out in the dimension as to what could occur and whether the performing loans and the financial institutions can take care of the nonperforming loans. But none of that is really played out in the press and media. The potential hazard of what could happen there and whether the rest of the world is going to continue to buy our debt. There's very little emphasis in the political structure on directing the economic side of things that are potential risks that are out there. So I just wanted to throw that out.

Mr. Cook: I would argue that the media is saying more than the candidates are because the candidates are saying nothing about the economy. You had the Republican Debate in Detroit and it might as well have been in Atlantic City or Coral Gables. It was almost like ignoring where it was and the economic situation there.

I agree with you. It seems like a disconnect between what the candidates are talking about, and the tenuous nature and what's going on in our economy and the risks that we have. It's phenomenal but candidates aren't talking about it.

Mr. Jarding: If they don't have to talk about these issues, there is no easy solution to these, as we know. But if you've got a system where I can be the nominee by just raising money and being ahead in the polls—I mean, if I were advising these guys, why would I tell them to go be controversial? I hate to say that, but cynically, if I want to win and I can become essentially the nominee in my party without having to say anything, that's a pretty good position to be in. I think it is an indictment of the system, the front loading, all the money, all the stuff that matters. There is no incentive for these candidates to stand up and say something.

I hope, by the way, Mr. Shorenstein, we get that in the general election when we narrow the candidates and they can go at each other. But I think this whole system is designed, not by choice but the way it's now set up, that if you can win these invisible primaries, if you can raise that money, get ahead in the polls, move around, get some endorsements, say as little as you can, you are going to be fine because the last thing you want to do is say, "I think we've got a problem in the economy and I'm going to do X," and let everybody attack you.

Mr. Cook: Steve said you have to have a proposal. I mean, if you are a Democrat, you just beat the hell out of the president and the Republicans. You don't have to come up with a proposal—yeah, that would be crazy,

I think that the real realignment would have to do with what happens in the Congress in the next election.

There is no incentive for these candidates to stand up and say something.

Mr. Halperin: I think one of the biggest comparisons between the first President Clinton and the second President Bush, and that goes in Bill Clinton's favor, is one of his great strengths was talking about the economy: the new economy, America's place in the world, international competition, the role of labor unions, the importance of education. He was able to talk about those issues as well as any politician I have seen and President Bush has been challenged in that area.

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He tried in the State of the Union last time to talk about how to have industrial policy. He is not very good at it.

I think in order to do it while running for the nomination you have to be able to do two things. You have to have new ideas, and none of these candidates at this point seem to have any new ideas about how to improve America's economic place in the world. And the other thing you have to have is the willingness to take on special interests. You have to be willing to take on Wall Street or labor unions. You have to call for more regulation and doing that not only threatens your ability to raise money from whatever groups, but it also threatens your ability to build coalitions to win a nomination.

You have to have new ideas . . . you have to have the willingness to take on special interests.

but I don't even see them beating the hell out of the president on it.

Mr. Jarding: And they should. Again, I think the war tends to dominate and they are nervous about it, but I think they are also careful that somebody is going say, "okay, well, what are you going to do?" So they say, "I just won't address it, I don't have to."

The thing that they talk about most is China. Both Mitt Romney and Hillary Clinton talk a lot about China and that's clearly a part of the package, but it's the easiest one because there is not a big pro China constituency in either party at this point. I think in the general election, there will be a lot more talk about it than there is—part of it is the war and part of it is within the parties the candidates tend to agree, there is not a lot of big issues differences on economic policy or almost anything else, and that means there is no incentive for them to talk about it because it doesn't differentiate.

Mr. Shorenstein: This is the first time in the history of money that the reserve currency is indebted to China and so forth, and whether there is going to be an external force that's going to have impact on this with anything you're talking about internally.

Mr. Halperin: I think that my sense is that both the economy and the Iraq War will be roughly at status quo—even if some of the things that Dana talked about happen, that draw down and promises of more draw down. I think as political issues, both the economy and Iraq will be roughly where they are today and it will be likely that the Democratic nominee, likely Hillary Clinton but not definitely, will be more specific and will talk about the mismanagement of the economy—particularly with Hillary Clinton, of the Bush years, compared to the Clinton years.

Mr. Patterson: Before going to Richard, I would note one exception of what Steve is talking about and that's the health care proposals that the candidates have put forward, and that may be a first mover phenomena. If somebody gets out there with a proposal and it seems to be getting some positive traction, that you've got to jump in line, too.

But, Richard Parker, please?

Mr. Parker: I wanted to ask the panel if they wouldn't continue on the line of Walter's pushing and move from an analysis of the tactical reasons for hesitation to talk some about the parties' ideological dilemmas. I mean, we have a Republican presidency that is a big government, high tax, big deficit kind of Republicanism. The last Republican president to run a surplus was Dwight Eisenhower. You've got a problem on the Republican side which is that the core tenets of their traditional ideology haven't been met by their party's leadership for half a century.

And you've got on the Democratic side this vociferous war that's been going on for a quarter century between the so-called paleoliberals and the new Democrats, the DLC Democrats. When Mark talks about new ideas, it doesn't seem to me that the Democrats on the DLC side have been short of new ideas. It's that that party is not willing to embrace that particular set of new ideas and that while Bill Clinton talked a lot about the economy, how he governed and how he talked turned out to be quite different.

So unpacking the idea of the importance of novelty versus trying to look at what the structural crises, which are related but separate in each party, seems to me to be something that the panel could certainly help us think about.

Mr. Halperin: Well, I mean, the Democrats don't want to call for tax increases and most of the money that they think they can save by rolling back the Bush tax cuts, which is in effect a tax increase, they want to put towards health care, so part of the inhibition of coming

The last Republican president to run a surplus was Dwight Eisenhower.

up with new ideas is based on not wanting to be seen as a tax and spend party. The Republicans have not, you're right that they have not shown fidelity to a lot of what they claim to stand for, although President Bush has not increased taxes and that's one of the big things that still unites the party.

I think that the debate within the Democratic Party is—I think part of the reason there aren't new ideas, and I disagree with you about the DLC, they came up with a lot more new ideas that people found interesting and tangible in the '90s than they have in the last few years. Part of the reasons, I think, that new ideas aren't being generated go back to what I said before: there is not a lot of disagreement within the party. I think the Democratic candidates, none of them consider themselves to be pure DLC types, but none of them consider themselves to be left wing and are mostly a synthesis of ideas from both camps.

Within the Republican Party, again, if you look at positions on economic issues, from regulation, to the importance of education, to trade, the differences between Fred Thompson, John McCain, Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney are negligible or nonexistent. So, if you don't have warring factions within the parties, you are less likely to generate competitive new ideas. So, while those camps exist still, I think ideologically—and you can certainly find members within the party in both parties that differ—I think amongst the presidential candidates and the congressional leadership, there is not a lot of ideological tension.

Mr. Patterson: Alex? Alex Jones, Director of the Shorenstein Center.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Tom.

I would like, if I could, to ask the panel to place the issues of immigration and the environment in the context of this particular election and in the future of both parties. Last night, Maureen, after dinner, was talking about how George Bush has turned America green, which is a kind of interesting way of looking at what happens. I mean, she thought that his

oppositions actually galvanized the environmental movement in this country. But what does it have to do with the election, with so many other things going on? And what about the long term impact on both parties?

Mr. Fieldler: Let me just take one little piece of that, Alex. John Della Volpe is the Polling Director for the Institute of Politics, and his spring polling of young voters showed something that I think is going to have a big impact on the outcome this fall and that is that young voters not only are

likely to be mobilized more than they were in '04, which was significantly more than they were in 2000. But on the issues of the two that you mentioned, on immigration and on the environment, regardless of whether

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they see themselves as conservatives or moderates to liberals, they would take, I think, what we see as a liberal position.

They are pro-environment and they are pro-immigration in the sense that—I'm repeating John here, I hope not incorrectly—that they believe that the world's problems are best approached and solved, in effect, by reaching across borders, acting through the United Nations, acting as one. And so to the extent that immigration becomes an issue that particularly the Republican nominee, and we see this with Thompson lately, that his views as a way to solidify that anti-immigration conservative base, there is a real danger there of losing that whole younger vote. So it could be ultimately a very self-defeating position to take.

Mr. Halperin: I would say one sentence in response, which is I think elites in Boston, Washington and New York overstate the importance of the environmental movement for 2008 and understate the importance of the anti-illegal immigrant forces for 2008.

Mr. Cook: I think it's interesting that, Alex, you picked two emerging issues that are totally different from one another. And on the environmental side, I mean, I think it is gradually becoming a consensus issue. Now, the consensus that there is climate change, something is happening, we have to do something about it. Now, you know, when you get to specifics, that's where it all completely collapses, but where there is a growing consensus that way.

But to me, the immigration issue is fascinating because everybody has got an opinion. Ninety-three to ninety-four percent have an opinion on it, but it's only small groups on each side, where the intensity is. But among the people who are intense, boy, it is white hot. I mean, and we've all seen issues like, for example, gun control, where intensity can overcome big numbers on the other side. So it's fascinating to me to see these two big, emerging issues but the dynamics of each issue are totally, totally different.

And I think John McCain's candidacy was already dead, but if it wasn't dead from all its other problems, it would have been dead by immigration because I don't think you could win a contested Republican primary in this country if you are seen as pro-amnesty. I think that's an impossibility in most places. And at the same time, I think you are going to just start gradually seeing more and more Republicans, even House Republicans—they are not going to go for the whole loaf, they are not going to go for the half loaf, but they are going to be looking for a quarter or a fifth loaf of legislation

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that they can vote for so that they can say that they actually supported something towards climate change.

Mr. Patterson: Bernie?

Mr. Kalb: I wanted to pick up on Tom’s word about the significance of the upcoming election. That is to say, Tom used the word “Baghdad,” not “Baghdad, shakedown.” I think that’s too small a word. “Apocalyptic,” I think, is too big a word, but there is no question about the significance and the symbolism of the upcoming election. And I find myself—given the fact that I lived abroad so many years working on foreign stories—moving in the direction of the emphasis day-to-day, in her response to your question, and that has to do with the global scene and the United States.

. . . I don’t think you could win a contested Republican primary in this country if you are seen as pro-amnesty.

I see the election as vast, deep, rich with significance and symbolism for the United States and for the world. I see the election, among other things, as an opportunity to rescue the United States from this image of triumphalism, of unilateralism, of knowing what is right. We have seen the word “humble”

—the president’s word to describe foreign policy early in the last campaign—that’s had a burial service and instead we see mimeographed orders handed out to the world.

I was rather amused, I thought it was the “Late Show” when I read the *Times* or the *Post* yesterday seeing that the president had given instructions to Cuba about—

(Laughter)

We have seen the word “humble”—the president’s word to describe foreign policy early in the last campaign—that’s had a burial service and instead we see mimeographed orders handed out to the world.

Mr. Kalb: —who was going to be the next family owner of Cuba and so forth. And I think in that area you have itemized the challenges on the domestic front, but on the foreign front they are gigantic. The lack of sensitivity of dealing with an inferior feeling once-Soviet Union, Russia finding its way with the benefit of the oil prices, or total misunderstanding of the cultural dynamics of Iraq, the idea that we may even get involved in Iran is a piece of military arrogance that is unbelievable. It is an accumulation of blunder and ignorance.

You are tempted to go back to the vocabulary of definition in how Vietnam was once described. Senator Fulbright, “the arrogance of power.” I lived through so many years of the Vietnam War, covering that war, that the

parallels are terrifying, on ignorance, arrogance, stupidity and sensitivity or an international pushiness that is, in the simplest terms, unbecoming for a country that is so powerful and has so much wealth and should have so much cultural sensitivity to other countries in the world.

And for this combination of reasons, this election is vast. When you say is it a, what's the word, Tom? Watershed? Oh, I mixed that up with Baghdad but there is some relationship there.

(Laughter)

Mr. Patterson: Watergate.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kalb: But watershed, watershed is much too miniature. It's a good try, Tom, it's much too miniature for the stakes involved. There are huge stakes and so I wind up thinking of some little, common scenario. Is there going to be an October surprise? So I would like to invite the panel to speculate about an October surprise. Republicans—according to Charlie Cook and all the pundits—they have already predicted who is going to win. Whether it be a Democratic October surprise or a Republican October surprise, what are the possible scenarios given both the seriousness and the comicalness of the American political scene? Speculate, if you would—October surprise, 2008?

Ms. Priest: Tom, I want to take that first because my record—in our national security pod at the *Post*, which is about six reporters, when we were on the march to the war, we were betting among each other: would we really invade Iraq? And I voted no because I thought, there is no way that you could do this and have a, you know, even a 50/50 chance of an okay outcome. So, with that said, I don't think you'll have an October surprise because the most obvious one would be Iran.

And I think the military is not going to rebel in some kind of mutinous way, but I think what we would see if that was seriously under plans is a lot of information winding up in the hands of reporters, and really good information that would just talk about the risks, and talk about the costs and talk about the next day—so much so that I don't think it can happen. Of course, you could get a much more quirky one, like another strike in Syria or something, but what's the value of that, really?

Mr. Kalb: Any other thoughts? Any other scenarios that could be offered?

Mr. Cook: I agree with you on the stakes of this election. In fact, while you were talking, I was thinking about, now, whoever heard of a situation where you've got a President of Russia inviting a delegation of eminent Americans, like Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn and Bob Rubin, to come to Russia and try to explain to him why is the United States treating Rus-

Is there going to be an October surprise?

sia in such a cavalier fashion? Explain to me what's going on here—I mean, I think that's absolutely fascinating.

But I'm not a big October surprise fan, I find it sort of a form of cynicism that each party has that there is absolutely nothing the other party wouldn't stoop to win an election. And I'm fairly cynical but I'm not that cynical, so the only October surprise that I could see happening would be a legitimate surprise that didn't involve either party, a terrorist attack or something that just kind of comes out of the blue. But I don't think—I guess I'm not quite cynical enough to think that either party would actually do that.

Mr. Jarding: The problem with an October surprise is the messenger. George Bush has no credibility. If George Bush tried an October surprise, I think it blows up in their face. People are going to look at this guy and say, "my God, will he ever stop? When can we get this guy out of office?" There is nothing that could happen that he would initiate that has any threat of credibility. I think, rather, it would be more a terrorist attack or something that he doesn't control.

To me, the October surprise, if you look at polls and you look at internal polls, the American public is so thirsty for leadership, not just on the international front. The Pew polls show that America is not only at an all time low in the world, it's at an all time low in every country that they polled. Every one, no exceptions. You look at what's happened to our Constitution, you look at how the world now views America—we are in a crisis, I think, in the world and we need a leader that will step up and address that.

We are in a crisis at home and we all know we have 47 million Americans without health insurance, we've got another 45 million that lack it for significant portions of the year, so a third of our population. We have 36 million Americans below the poverty line, another 34 million Americans at 200 percent of poverty, that's a quarter of our population either in poverty or teetering on the edge. We've outsourced jobs, we've got wages down seven years in a row, productivity is up 16.9 percent in those same seven years.

And the American public is sitting out there and it's a time bomb. If you look at these polls, they don't trust either party. I mean, the Democrats thought they had a mandate—why are they at 17 percent in the polls now? Because they haven't done a damn thing. They haven't addressed ethics, they haven't addressed these issues, whether it's health care, they haven't addressed the war. There aren't easy solutions, but I really believe that somebody is going to give the American public—that would be my surprise—tough medicine.

One of these nominees is going to say, "here it is America, what kind of nation do you want? Do you want to get rid of greenhouse gas?" We now have 30 percent of all pregnant women in America with mercury poisoning in their fetuses above the levels that the Center for Disease Control

recommends. That's our next generation. We won't spend the money. We have the technology to clean up 95 percent of that crap. We're not doing it. Somebody is going to stand up and say, "I will take the lead, I'll give you the tough medicine." I think that would be the surprise.

If we don't have it in this polarized system, God help us because Congress may stay polarized. It may stay in one party and the president in the other, but somebody has got to step up. These problems aren't going anywhere; they are getting deeper, and deeper and deeper. I don't see it out of this administration but my hope would be I would see it out of one of our nominees.

Mr. Patterson: Please?

Mr. Branham: I'm Ben Branham—I'm a student here at the Kennedy School.

Given that it's a foregone conclusion that Clinton is going to coast to the nomination, and at least among this community where there are a lot of Obama supporters—a number of the faculty here have been involved in his campaign or gone to the campaign—is there anything he can do to beat Clinton, or is it a matter of hoping for the best scenario, hoping that Edwards drops out after Iowa, to just keep doing what he is doing and then have a chance? Or can he, from a campaign perspective, shake it up?

Mr. Halperin: I think the only way to beat her—and I don't think it's a foregone conclusion—the way to beat her is to beat her in Iowa. The races are not symmetrical in terms of how they will play out—the Democratic race is all about Iowa. If she does not win Iowa, she can be beaten. If she wins Iowa, I think the Obama and Edwards people would tell you, at least privately, she will be the nominee. So one way to stop her is to beat her in Iowa. Now, that doesn't mean she is then toppled, it means there's a chance to then try to take her on in subsequent contests.

One of these nominees is going to say, "here it is America, what kind of nation do you want? Do you want to get rid of greenhouse gas?" We now have 30 percent of all pregnant women in America with mercury poisoning in their fetuses above the levels that the Center for Disease Control recommends. That's our next generation. We won't spend the money. We have the technology to clean up 95 percent of that crap. We're not doing it. Somebody is going to stand up and say, "I will take the lead, I'll give you the tough medicine." I think that would be the surprise.

I think the challenge for Senator Obama more broadly and thematically, is what it's been all along—he has to convince people that he is ready to be commander-in-chief from day one. It is very hard to do that, given his record, and it is very hard to do that in the minds of older Iowa caucus goers who dominate the caucuses, and I think it's very hard to do in the context of a campaign. Getting endorsed by Oprah, going on Tyra Banks, dancing on "Ellen" to a Beyonce song are all ways to help raise money, help build buzz, but I think they undermine what is his main obstacle. He has to be perceived as ready from day one against someone who is widely perceived as being ready from day one.

I think it is a challenge on which he is running out of time and it is a challenge on which he must succeed not just in Iowa but broadly and nationally. And all the support he has, and the grassroots and all the money he has raised can't pull that off, he has to do it himself. Like I said, it's hard to do in the context of a campaign.

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Mr. Cook: I agree completely with what Mark said and just take it a step further and say I think one of the things that undercuts the guy is he is 46 and looks 35. He doesn't look old enough to be president. Maybe I have a bias against skinny people but—

(Laughter)

Mr. Cook: He looks so young. And it's interesting watching Clinton and Obama because it's like they both have nontraditional experiences, but it's like two college

students applying, trying to transfer. All of her credits transferred and none of his—his credits aren't transferring.

(Laughter)

Mr. Cook: The First Lady of Arkansas, the First Lady of the United States is transferring; being a State Senator for eight years and a community activist is just sort of not transferring. Maybe it's not fair, I don't know. Maybe it's not, but I think the experience thing that Mark is talking about is exactly right. The other thing is that I think that Obama—there is a segment, a not insubstantial segment of the Democratic Party that is romantic, they are idealistic, the future, new ideas, change—and he has got the Bill Bradley vote, he has got the Gary Hart vote, but that's not enough.

You've got that, and you are running even with Hillary Clinton among African Americans. You can't win a nomination that way. I mean, there are just a lot of other Democrats out there and he has just not been able to tap into it, and I think part of it is the questions about experience.

Ms. Just: I just want to add to that I think one thing he could do would be to get a really good debate coach. He has been in a number of debates and he hasn't stood out. He is the candidate who came in with the credibility that he had a charismatic connection with the audience, and he

hasn't been able to play on that in the debates, the Democratic debates. In fact, I think in the Democratic debates, Hillary Clinton has emerged and that was one of the ways that she demonstrated that she was well prepared, experienced, had answers, was confident, and so forth and so on.

And before those debates, I think a lot of people would have thought it would be very tough for a woman in that scene and yet she shined. And I think that changed a lot of minds about who she was and how she would govern, and I think that's up to Obama now, too.

Mr. Patterson: Well, the election is twelve months away but we are at 10:30 and I made a firm commitment to wrap this up at 10:30.

I want to thank Tom Fiedler, Mark Halperin, Steve Jarding, Marion Just, Charlie Cook. A special thanks to Dana Priest, who last night received the David Nyhan Prize for Political Reporting.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Thanks to Walter Shorenstein.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: Thanks to Alex Jones, who last night hosted what I thought was one of the best ever Theodore H. White Lectures.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: And finally, a very special thanks to Edie Holway, who puts all of this together.

(Applause)

Mr. Patterson: And thank you for joining us.

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