What Health Care Means for You
An essential guide to the new plan

Why this changes Obama’s presidency
BY JOE KLEIN

Five things to watch out for in the years ahead
BY KAREN TUMULTY, KATE PICKERT AND ALICE PARK
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LETTERS
Inbox (Inbox)
Now for the really hard part.

President Obama's signature on sweeping health reform legislation in the East Room of the White House on March 23 was an achievement for the history books. Yet even though the bill is now the law of the land, the partisan and ideological warfare over it is certain to rage on, both as an issue in the midterm elections and in statehouses across the map. But the success or failure of the whole endeavor is going to ride not on what it does for anyone's political prospects — or their place in history. The new law will be judged on whether it actually fulfills its promise of a better and fairer health care system or instead sends costs spiraling skyward and opens up a world of unintended medical consequences. Obama's team, for its part, admits to no doubts. "I think this will sell itself," says David Axelrod, the President's top political strategist. "The most important thing is that we implement it effectively, efficiently and with great accountability." Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, meanwhile, says the GOP has an implementation plan of its own: "Repeal and replace."

Economists and health care experts have long agreed on the problems that ail the health insurance system in America. It leaves too many people out. Even those who have coverage may be one diagnosis away from financial catastrophe. On the other side of that same equation lie the waste and excess created by paying doctors and hospitals for the quantity of treatment they provide rather than what works best. By some estimates, as much as 30% of the more than $2 trillion Americans spend on health care each year goes toward treatments that are unnecessary and even harmful. And what does the U.S. get for that staggering investment? Shining hospitals packed with cutting-edge technology but also a population whose health and life expectancy lag behind those of most other industrialized democracies.
Will these reforms turn all that around? We won't know for years, probably not for decades. The most ambitious element of the new health care law — the expansion of coverage to an additional 32 million Americans — won't even take effect until 2014. "It'll take four years to implement fully many of these reforms because we need to implement them responsibly," Obama said as he prepared to sign the legislation. "We need to get this right."

And expanding coverage is just the beginning. Once the U.S. moves close to the long-standing liberal dream of seeing nearly all the nation’s citizens guaranteed health care, there are hundreds of ideas for transforming its medical system into something that will be far more efficient and effective. The big question is how well these theories will work in the real world.

You might think a piece of legislation that is more than 2,400 pages long would leave little to chance or the imagination. That is not the case. At the moment, governors in all 50 states are looking at the prospect of having to set up new health insurance marketplaces for small businesses and individuals who do not get coverage at work. As yet, there are only broad outlines to guide them. Says Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, a Democrat: "I wake up worrying how I'm going to get from 2010 to 2014."

The bill Obama signed, in short, is far from a finished product. In fact, say health experts, it is only a start. "Of course we'll fuss with it," says Karen Pollitz, who directs Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute. "But we'll have something to fuss with, as opposed to nothing." The trick, however, is this: for any part of this new system to work as well as it should, it all has to. Here are five big elements to watch:

1. What Will It Cost?

While the health reform law is expected to reduce the federal deficit by $124 billion in the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, its impact on family budgets is much more of a mystery. Unlike plans to expand coverage and end discrimination against the sick, there's no proven strategy in the reform bill — or anywhere else, for that matter — guaranteed to fix the most daunting problem in U.S. health care: medical costs that are rising at twice the rate of inflation.
Many economists say it will be impossible to bring health care spending under control unless everyone is covered. That's because the uninsured tend to wait until they are very sick to seek treatment. Then they show up at the emergency room, where costs are astronomical.

In the next 10 years, the new bill will spend about $350 billion on subsidies for 24 million low- and middle-income Americans who buy insurance independently. These people, plus small businesses, will have access to a new coverage marketplace in which insurers will compete against one another to offer the most attractive package of benefits at the lowest price. With this streamlining, administrative costs should go down, and with more transparency and competition, insurance premiums should become far more stable.

But those premiums will continue to rise, just with more predictability. Despite the demonization of the health insurance industry — some of it deserved — the business operates on a simple principle: collect enough premium dollars to cover overhead and claims plus, in the case of commercial insurers, earn a profit margin of 3% to 6%. Contrary to the rhetoric that has permeated the reform debate, insurance rates in most cases are rising steadily not because of price gouging but rather because underlying health care costs are increasing at an unsustainable and possibly unstoppable rate.

This growth is due to a number of factors, including a wasteful and inefficient payment system and our innovative — and therefore expensive — approach to medicine. Slowing the rate of increase is the only solution to a health care crisis that is still looming. On its own, the law does not necessarily do that. The reform's ultimate success will hinge on whether it can transform an industry that now rewards volume and accounts for one-sixth of the U.S. economy to one that pays for results.

No one expects the reform package — with all its political compromises — to be a magic pill for cost control. But most policy experts believe it will do more to address the problem of exploding health care expenditures than anything else in history. "It may not be as much as we really need," admits Alan Garber, a health care economist at Stanford University, "but it gets us on the path."

Jonathan Gruber, an MIT health care economist who has consulted for the Obama Administration and Congress, calls the reform legislation a "spaghetti approach" to cost control: "Throw everything against the wall, and see what sticks." The reform idea most likely to stick — in the sense of acting to control costs — is a tax on the country's most expensive insurance benefits, known as Cadillac plans. These insurance policies, which require minuscule or nonexistent co-payments and out-of-pocket spending, provide no incentive for patients to seek cost-effective care and in turn promote overuse of the health care system, all of which drives up costs. Faced with this new tax, employers and individuals will undoubtedly turn to cheaper policies, which economists say will save money in the system overall. In general, economists loathe any tax exemptions for health benefits, which currently cost the government some $200 billion in lost tax revenue per year. "They shouldn't just tax the Cadillac plans," says Alain Enthoven, another Stanford health care economist. "They should tax any plan that costs more than the standard Honda." (Indeed, when the tax on the most expensive benefits was first proposed by Senator John Kerry, it would have snagged more plans sooner, but political pressures weakened the provision in the reform bill's final days of debate.)
The second way reformers hope to rein in rising costs is to start rewarding doctors and hospitals on the basis of health outcomes — such as chronic-disease management and effective treatments for injuries — and not the volume of services they provide. In a system where providers are reimbursed separately for every procedure and service rendered, it's no wonder costs are skyrocketing. No piece of legislation could overturn this long-standing U.S. system, but reform will enable the federal government to experiment with ways to compensate providers for quality.

Pilot projects exploring various payment reforms will be launched within Medicare and, if successful, could be adopted by the entire program and possibly by private insurers as well. One of these demonstration projects, for example, would pay hospitals, doctors and other providers a set fee for a single episode of care — say, bypass surgery. Then everyone involved would have to divide it up. Reformers are optimistic about the pilot projects' chances of success, but truly slowing the rate of spending growth won't happen until a successful experiment becomes widespread policy. That's where pilot projects have fallen short in the past. "It's going to be 10 years before you figure out which of these really work, and by that time, it will be too late," worries Mark McClellan, a doctor and economist who headed the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services during the George W. Bush Administration. "We'll be on to the next round of ideas of how to make health care better. We need much better measures of what is working and a much faster ability to implement them."

There's merit in moving slowly, however, says Linda Blumberg, a health policy expert at the Urban Institute, a nonpartisan think tank. "It could be very disruptive without a lot of gain if you're wrong. It makes sense to approach this stuff cautiously." The same may be true of comparative-effectiveness research, which is funded in the reform legislation and on which many economists and policy experts are pinning their hopes. The idea here is that the research — hard data about which treatments work more efficiently than others — will be adopted as standard protocol.

But there's no guarantee or requirement that this will happen. Lawmakers were careful to avoid giving any ammunition to those who say health care reform will substitute government decision-making for that of the doctor and the patient. Remember last summer's hysteria over "death panels"? The law explicitly prevents comparative-effectiveness research from being used to decide which services Medicare will pay for and how much it will reimburse. It was a victory for politics over science.

2. What Does It Do to Medicare?
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Fiddling with Medicare is not for the faint of heart. In 1989, Illinois Democratic Congressman Dan Rostenkowski supported a law raising premiums for some Medicare recipients to fund a new benefit for those with long-term illnesses. Furious seniors surrounded his car one day in Chicago, hitting it with picket signs, then chased the Congressman on foot down the street. The law was repealed months later.

Medicare, introduced into law in 1965 and now covering 38 million, is one of the most popular social programs in U.S. history, which is why the health reform legislation, in its early stages, will not fundamentally change the way the program operates. Americans 65 and older will continue to receive comprehensive health insurance; doctors and hospitals will continue to be paid per procedure. Those who wrote the new law insist that the $500 billion in cuts to the program over the next 10 years — out of the total $6.1 trillion expected to be spent — will come largely from the elimination of waste in the system and from small but widespread reductions in reimbursements to hospitals and doctors. Not surprisingly, seniors are skeptical.

But if there are to be far-reaching changes in the way medicine is practiced in this country, Medicare will have to drive them. When it comes to purchasing health care services, Medicare has the buying power that Texas does in the textbook market. "Medicare has to go first," says Len Nichols, director of the Center for Health Policy Research and Ethics at George Mason University. "It's the only buyer [in the health care market] with enough power. It's the only buyer big enough to make the hospitals pay attention."

The huge government program also gives health policymakers a window into what is working and what isn't. "Medicare is in a position to be a platform for developing and implementing new approaches," says Stuart Guterman, a former Medicare official and a policy expert at the Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan research organization. "It's perhaps the thing in the health care legislation that holds the most hope for the future."

The new law also addresses some problems with the current system. It begins by phasing out the wasteful subsidies that go to private insurers that contract with the federal government to provide Medicare-type benefits to seniors. Some 10 million elderly Americans get coverage from these Medicare Advantage plans, which often require lower co-payments than traditional Medicare and provide extra benefits like eye care, hearing aids and even gym memberships. These extra benefits, however, come at an extra cost, and experts say the government pays about 14% more for each Medicare Advantage beneficiary than for a traditional Medicare patient. These overpayments will be gradually ended beginning in 2011, and seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage will feel the pinch as insurers try to find a way to continue coverage without this subsidization. (Guaranteed Medicare benefits as defined by federal law will not be changed.)

Further cuts — more than $150 billion — will be made through what the legislation calls "productivity adjustment": shaving small amounts off the annual growth in reimbursements to hospitals and other facilities in the hope that they will squeeze the fat out of their operations. But disappointingly for some, there's no blueprint in the bill for how to make providers more efficient. "It's assuming if we pay less, they'll figure out how to do it," says Gail Wilensky, a top Medicare official under the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations. "People shouldn't assume there's some kind of reform here."
At the same time, the government will start spending more money, not less, on Medicare Part D, which provides prescription-drug coverage. Currently, millions of seniors every year find themselves in the Part D "doughnut hole": a gap in coverage that exists once beneficiaries' costs exceed $2,830. Coverage doesn't kick back in until these seniors pay $6,440 out of pocket. The law will begin closing this gap immediately. Seniors on Medicare will also get free preventive services under the reform.

The new law will set up an independent board to study clinical outcomes and evidence and come up with ways Medicare can reduce spending without sacrificing quality or access. (A similar board exists now; Congress usually ignores it.) Hospitals with the highest rates of avoidable infections and unnecessary readmissions will be penalized — though not as much as many health care experts would have liked. And the Medicare Advantage plans (those able to survive without subsidies) with the best clinical outcomes and highest patient ratings will receive bonus payments. The variety of approaches "is an example of how the bill attempts to try virtually everything that anyone has suggested for slowing the rate of growth in health care costs," says Paul Van de Water, an economist and health care expert at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

But the kind of transformational change that could bring Medicare — and in turn the rest of the U.S. health care system — back from the financial brink won't happen overnight, if ever. "The reason Congress didn't do more is that right now we don't have all the answers for what we need and what will work and how it will work," admits Guterman of the Commonwealth Fund. Plus, lawmakers have learned the hard way that nothing is more dangerous to their survival than treading too heavily on a program that is cherished by seniors.

3. Who Treats 32 Million Patients?

With 32 million Americans gaining health care coverage in the coming years — and demanding services as a consequence — the next challenge is addressing the supply side of the equation. Once these folks start putting their freshly minted insurance cards to use, who will actually perform the blood-pressure checks, treat the cancers and monitor the diabetes? Family physicians, who are on the front lines of this surge in demand, are already in short supply, as are nurses, whom the new law identifies as critical players in meeting some of the expected new demand for services. By 2020, when most of the currently uninsured will have been fully brought into the health care system, the American Academy of Family Physicians predicts a shortfall of 40,000 in the ranks of primary-care providers to treat them.
One way to address that gap would be to make primary-care medicine a more attractive field — not just for physicians but also for nurse practitioners who receive an additional one to two years of training to expand their range of care into areas like anesthesia. The new law calls for appropriations over five years to fund further training programs, scholarships and loan repayments for those entering primary care. But even if new students take up those offers this year, they won't be ready to treat patients for three to seven years. The law would also temporarily boost what primary-care providers receive for treating patients insured by Medicaid, the plan that will pick up nearly half of the newly covered.

In the long run, addressing the shortage of primary-care providers will take much more than money. "What is clear to me is that we cannot fix the problem by adding 32 million people to the mix and not changing the way we deliver care," says Susan DeVore, president and CEO of Premier Healthcare Alliance, a coalition of 2,300 not-for-profit hospitals dedicated to improving health care performance.

So what would fix the problem? Ideally, policy should address not just the question of who delivers care but also how and where services are provided. The new law, for example, recognizes that doctors can't be the only ones to provide care and that hospitals and physicians' offices can't be the only places where people receive health services. The law is expected to ultimately spend $11 billion to create more health centers based in communities and schools as well as nurse-managed clinics. It will also enhance the government-salaried National Health Service Corps of primary-care physicians, nurse practitioners and physician's assistants who target underserved regions and receive loan repayments or scholarships to subsidize their medical education.

The funding will also support programs like the "medical home," a team-based approach to delivering health care that breaks down the traditional hierarchy in which all health decisions are made by the physician. Instead, a medical home disperses responsibility across a range of providers and facilities, which allows existing hospitals and clinics to accommodate the increased demand for services without costly investments in capacity building.

The medical-home concept is already being tested in many markets for just this reason. In New Jersey, for example, AtlantiCare's pilot Special Care Center, a medical-home program collaborating with Atlantic City's largest hotel and restaurant union, is successfully reducing ER visits and hospital admissions. Two family physicians work with a nurse practitioner, and together the team discusses the best ways to treat those with chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Patients receive no claims forms or bills for services at the center, and salaried providers are not reimbursed on the basis of the volume of services they generate, so they can focus on providing appropriate, quality care. "The doctors and patients in the center are outside of what I call the tyranny of the visit," says Dr. Katherine Schneider, vice president of health engagement at AtlantiCare.

Making this shift on a national level, however, won't be easy. Even innovative health-system administrators acknowledge that as long as the fee-for-service reimbursement structure remains in place with private insurers, doctors will be forced to practice two kinds of medicine: one in which they are reimbursed on the basis of the volume of services they provide and another in which the health outcomes and efficiency of their care are prioritized. And as long as patients still view health care as an only-when-I'm-sick endeavor, costs will continue to rise. When Massachusetts subsidized health care
coverage in 2006 and mandated universal coverage by 2007, visits to the state's emergency rooms swelled 7%, adding to a $146 million jump in health care costs from 2005 to 2006.

Massachusetts' experience highlights how much of our health behavior is ingrained in the current fee-for-service system — which, for the time being, isn't going away. The key to achieving real reform within the constraints of that reality will rest on persuading new — and existing — patients to seek care to maintain their health rather than to treat a disease after it has taken hold. If all goes according to plan, the bill's greatest achievement may be to make it possible for more people to access the health system in many different ways. Health care will increasingly take the form of preventive services such as regular diabetes checkups and weight-loss programs, instead of patients waiting to see their doctors until they need coronary-bypass operations or kidney dialysis. Those who are currently uninsured may turn out to be at the forefront of this trend, since 55% of them are under the age of 35, according to the Rand Corp. Traditionally, this group tends to be the healthiest segment of the population and uses health care the least. That makes it the ideal cohort to begin thinking of health care providers as wellness coaches rather than as emergency SWAT teams.

4. State by State

Critics have said the health care bill amounts to a one-size-fits-all program imposed by Washington on the rest of the country. After 2014, the health care system will indeed look far more uniform across the nation than it does now. But the new law leaves a lot of room for variation and experimentation by individual states. That's fitting, given that some states have been far ahead of Washington in expanding coverage and cracking down on dubious insurance-industry practices. Massachusetts, for instance, moved to cover nearly all its citizens in 2006; its system is in many ways a model for much of what is anticipated for the rest of the country. But other states — like Texas, where an estimated 28% of the population is uninsured — will have a lot of catching up to do.

Governors have been lukewarm to the Obama health care bill, in large part because it calls for adding 16 million people to the Medicaid rolls, which are jointly administered by the states and the feds. At least in the initial years, Washington will pick up the tab for those newly eligible. But governors say expanding Medicaid will add billions to their health care costs at a time when their states are already facing record deficits.
The most important challenge for the states will be setting up health insurance exchanges — marketplaces where small businesses and individuals will be able to shop around, choosing from a selection of insurance policies, much as federal government employees (including members of Congress) do now. "Right now there are a lot of people out there buying health insurance on their own or small businesses buying health insurance on their own. They don't work for a big company. They're not part of a big pool. So they have no leverage. They've got no bargaining power with insurance companies," Obama said in a speech shortly after he signed the bill. "What we're going to do is create exchanges all across the country where uninsured people — small businesses — they're going to be able to purchase affordable, quality insurance."

But to work right, each exchange will need to have enough enrollees and enough insurance-plan offerings to assure vigorous competition. That's no small challenge, given the near monopoly power insurers have in many states. For instance, Republican Vermont Governor Jim Douglas notes that while there were 75 major insurers competing for business in his state a decade ago, there are now only three. The rest were driven away, he says, when Vermont instituted many of the same reforms that are envisioned under the federal law.

While some states will be able to operate these exchanges on their own, others are likely to join with their neighbors in regional operations. "The borders don't separate where the care might be given, and I have five borders," says West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin, a Democrat. "We're going to work in conjunction with our fellow states, with our fellow governors, to make the best delivery system and the best economy that we can."

And some states may well return to an idea that generated a lot of controversy during the yearlong battle over health reform: a government-run public option for the uninsured, similar to Medicare. Oregon is already studying the feasibility of including a public option as part of its state exchange. Says Manchin: "All of us are going to have to look at that ... What we've got to do is make [insurance companies] compete — and a public option is probably the only way."

Indeed, many of the battles that took place in Washington during the 14 months of debate on the legislation are likely to be reprised in state capitols across the country over the next few years. At latest count, conservative legislators in 39 states have introduced bills — or plan to — that would exempt their citizens from the new law's requirement, effective in 2014, to have health insurance or else face a fine. Though it is not a good bet that such measures will hold up in court, they have already been enacted by the Virginia and Idaho legislatures, will be on the November ballot in Arizona and have passed one chamber in Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma and Tennessee.
5. What Comes Next

Administration officials say their most immediate concern will be implementing the "early deliverables" — the parts of the new law that go into effect almost right away. Among them are tax credits to help an estimated 4 million small businesses provide coverage for their workers, assistance for people who have pre-existing conditions, a provision allowing young adults up to age 26 to stay on their parents' policies and a $250 rebate for seniors whose initial Medicare drug benefits have run out.

Here's another challenge: filling key posts in the Executive Branch that remain empty more than 14 months after Obama was inaugurated. After all, there will be thousands and thousands of new regulations to be written and administered. But no one has yet been named to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the huge agency that runs those two programs. And Senate Republicans have held up the nomination of Columbia University professor Sherry Glied for the important post of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services. Congressman George Miller, chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, groused that the Administration "is going to have to be more aggressive. They have not been aggressive enough on the appointments process."

Over the longer term, as more and more parts of the new law go into effect, officials on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue promise they will be watching closely to see whether it is working as intended. "There's a lot of money that's going to be spent in accomplishing these goals," says House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman Henry Waxman. "We've got to be mindful of that."

Among the questions they will be asking: Are the exchanges working? Are the billions that are going into health-information technology — like electronic health records — paying off as promised? Is it a good thing or a bad thing if businesses decide to start sending their employees into the government-subsidized exchanges rather than providing coverage themselves? And are the subsidies the government provides adequate for the middle-income people who are required to buy insurance? "The worst thing would be to end up mandating coverage people can't afford," says Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union, which represents many of the nation's health care workers.

Vigilance, of course, is a good thing. But as the forces of reform take hold, there is also the possibility that Congress will be tempted to meddle too much — intervening, for instance, to take care of hospitals in
members’ home districts or to insulate powerful and moneyed special-interest groups like drugmakers. As Stern puts it, "The question is whether Congress can restrain itself and let the market work, or whether they are going to be distorting the system day by day."

So if there is a victory lap to be taken now, it had better be a short one. As Obama said shortly after signing the bill, "For those of us who fought so hard for these reforms and believe in them so deeply, I have to remind you our job is not finished." Indeed, it has only just begun.

WHAT HEALTH CARE MEANS FOR YOU

Young Adults

By KATE PICKERT Thursday, Mar. 25, 2010

The Upside: If you are 26 or younger, you may be able to get insurance through your parents' policy. If you buy coverage on your own in the exchanges, you will have access to cheaper catastrophic coverage. If you buy a traditional benefits package, you will pay less than those who are older.

The Downside: Traditional insurance purchased in the exchanges may cost more than what you can buy now, but you'll have to stay covered unless you qualify for an exemption.

30 percent of Americans ages 19 to 29 are now uninsured
The Elderly

The Upside: You will receive free preventive services under Medicare. If you have Medicare prescription-drug coverage, you will pay less if you reach the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole.

The Downside: If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, your insurer may cut extra benefits or increase co-payments. Until 2019, Medicare beneficiaries earning $85,000 or more will pay higher Part B premiums.

10 million seniors are now in Medicare Advantage plans

Small-Business Owners

The Upside: Beginning this year, if you have 25 or fewer workers, you may be eligible for a tax credit to help you buy coverage for them. By 2017, you'll be able to buy insurance for your employees through new insurance marketplaces.

The Downside: After 2014, you may be eligible for only two years of tax credits to help purchase coverage. If you employ more than 50 people, you'll have to provide benefits or pay a penalty.
50 employees is the maximum number a company can have without providing benefits and paying a penalty

Workers for a Large Company

The Upside: Companies with more than 50 employees will be required to provide coverage or face a fine, so your benefits are secure. Existing benefits packages will be grandfathered, but new plans will have to meet minimum requirements. Limits on out-of-pocket spending may keep your costs down.

The Downside: Premiums may continue to go up, and if you don't qualify for subsidies or entrance into exchanges, you may be stuck with the plan your employer chooses for you.

98 percent of companies with 200 or more employees now offer health benefits

Low-Income Earners

The Upside: If you are among the lowest wage earners — even if you don't have children or a disability — you will become eligible for Medicaid. And if you earn less than 400% of the poverty level — about $88,000 in 2009 — you will be eligible for subsidies to help you buy coverage.
The Downside: Even with subsidies, buying insurance may strain your budget. But you'll have to maintain coverage unless you qualify for a hardship waiver or the cheapest plans available exceed 8% of your total income.

16 million low-income Americans will be added to Medicaid

People with a Pre-Existing Condition

The Upside: If you plan to buy your own coverage, you will be able to get it from any insurer selling in your area, and you will pay the same as anyone else in your age group. Insurers won't be able to place annual or lifetime limits on your coverage, and regulations will limit your out-of-pocket spending.

36 percent of Americans were turned down or charged higher premiums because of pre-existing conditions in 2007

TIMELINE: WHO, WHAT, WHEN?

2010

By ANDRÉA FORD Thursday, Mar. 25, 2010
The Uninsured: Receive immediate access to coverage through high-risk pools if they are uninsured because of pre-existing conditions; children can remain on parents’ plans until they are 26

Insurers: Barred from removing coverage when a person gets sick, denying coverage to kids with pre-existing conditions and imposing lifetime coverage caps

Employers: Small businesses can receive tax credits to purchase insurance for employees

Medicare Prescription-Drug Beneficiaries: Receive a $250 rebate when they hit the "doughnut hole" gap in drug coverage (currently, when enrollees pass $2,700 in costs, they lose coverage until they reach $6,154)

2011

MEDICALRF.COM / CORBIS

Insurers: Required to spend at least 80% of premiums on medical services

Medicare Prescription-Drug Beneficiaries: Receive a 50% discount on brand-name drugs while in the doughnut hole

2013
Taxpayers: Medicare payroll taxes increase and expand to include unearned income for individuals making more than $200,000 and families earning more than $250,000

2014

The Uninsured: Most Americans are required to get covered or pay a penalty; families can receive subsidies to buy insurance if they earn up to four times the federal poverty level (currently about $88,000 a year); individuals and small businesses can buy packages through state exchanges

Insurers: Prohibited from refusing to sell policies and limited in their ability to set prices on the basis of health status

Employers: Businesses with 50 or more employees must provide coverage or pay a penalty

2018

Taxpayers: High-cost employer-provided policies ($27,500 for family or $10,200 for single coverage) are subject to a 40% excise tax
Can Obama Keep Delivering on His Promise

By JOE KLEIN Wednesday, Mar. 24, 2010

US President Barack Obama signs the health insurance reform bill in the East Room of the White House.
in Washington. Obama Tuesday signed into law his historic health care reform, enacting the most sweeping social legislation in decades which will ensure coverage for almost all Americans. Behind him Victoria Kennedy, the widow of late Senator Edward Kennedy.

On the day before the historic health care reform vote, Barack Obama made his final argument in favor of the bill to the Democratic members of Congress. “I am not bound to win,” he began, quoting Abraham Lincoln, “but I am bound to be true.” The next 45 minutes provided a rare, true, almost private glimpse of American politics. Some said they had never seen the President so passionate — although Obama’s version of passion is much calmer than most. He did many of the things expected in a pep talk. He made the substantive case for the bill. He jabbed the hyperbolic Republicans. But then, in the final 10 minutes, his tone became more intimate.

Obama spoke to the Representatives about why he and they had become politicians, and why they had become Democrats. He talked about all the town meetings and compromises, the long hours, the lumps and brickbats, the time spent away from their families. “And maybe there have been times where you asked yourself, Why did I ever get involved in politics in the first place? ... But you know what? Every once in a while, you have a chance to vindicate all those best hopes you had about yourself ... And this is one of those moments. This is one of those times where you can honestly say to yourself, Doggone it, this is exactly why I came here.”

It was a perfect balm, after a season of unrelenting scorn and derision. The caucus was frightened and exhausted. The President emphasized a common humanity with his peers, normally an afterthought in the performance art of politics. He appealed to the battered sense of honor and idealism that still resided beneath their scar tissue. He was seeking not only to inspire his colleagues, but to comfort them. I don't think I've ever seen a President do that before.

The votes were undoubtedly there by the time the President spoke, but the speech solidified him in his party's esteem — just as the vote would anchor him in history. Obama became a very different President in the process. After a first year in office that promised consequence but never quite delivered on it, he had done something huge. The comparisons with Jimmy Carter would abruptly come to an end. He was now a President who didn't back down, who could herd cats, who was not merely intellectual and idealistic but tough enough to force his way. This is bound to change the landscape of American politics. It makes significant progress on other issues — financial reform, immigration, perhaps even the reduced use of carbon fuels — more plausible. It may give Obama new stature overseas, in a world that was beginning to wonder about his ability to use power. Of course, if he doesn't carefully read the lessons of this excruciating passage, it could lead to hubris and overreach. The President's weaknesses — his isolation, his tendency to mediate rather than lead — are less evident in victory, but it remains to be seen if this experience has mitigated them.

"I know this is a tough vote," Obama told the House Democrats, and, for many of them, it was — politically. But in another way, it wasn't: it was ground zero of what being a Democrat has meant for the past 80 years. It rectified an astonishing injustice in American life: most of the nonworking poor are guaranteed health care, through Medicaid, but the working poor are not, unless they're lucky enough to have an employer who provides it. Another injustice: insurance companies determine who receives
coverage and can deny it at will. For Democrats, this represented a gaping hole in the social safety net. Arguments about the details were inevitable, but a yes vote was embedded deep in the party’s DNA.

For Republicans, the issue was more complicated. There was the essential conservative allergy to new government programs. But the existing health care system was an unholy mess, inefficient and costly — especially the segments run by the government, Medicare and Medicaid. It placed an unfair burden on employers, who were assumed to be health-insurance providers of the first resort, and an unfair legal burden on doctors. Substantial numbers of Republicans had always favored reform, even archconservatives: 20 years ago, the Heritage Foundation's Stuart Butler came up with a plan to provide universal coverage, paying for it by replacing the tax-exempt status of employer-provided health benefits with a system of progressive tax credits. In 1993 the Republicans, led by Senators John Chafee and Bob Dole, who never forgot that his life was saved by government health care, offered an alternative that many, including me, thought was better than the Clinton Administration's proposal. It became the basis for the universal health plan passed in Massachusetts by Governor Mitt Romney. Massachusetts, in turn, became the basis for the federal plans offered in the 2008 campaign by Hillary Clinton and later adopted by President Obama. The plan passed by Congress and signed by the President on March 23 was, then, a mongrel; its roots were in the Republican plan of 1993 and in Massachusetts.

But not a single Republican voted for it. Indeed, the Republicans put on a scalding, cynical performance all year, mischaracterizing the bill as "socialism" and a "government takeover" of health care, inventing nonexistent provisions like "death panels" to scare the public. Now that it has passed, Republicans will have to deal with the reality that the bill did not represent "Armageddon," as their overwrought House leader, John Boehner, claimed — that, in fact, it won't have much short-term impact at all and that in the long term, the impact is more likely to be benign than tragic.

The Republican stonewall had its roots in a memo that William Kristol wrote in 1993, urging Republicans not to cooperate in any way with Bill Clinton on health care because, among other things, the plan represented "a serious political threat to the Republican Party." In other words, it would make Clinton and the Democrats more popular. Kristol's strategy succeeded in 1994, when Republicans won control of the House and Senate — but it failed in 2010, although Republicans, misled by momentary anti-reform polls that mostly reflect public confusion, seem intent on pushing "repeal." It remains likely that Democrats will lose seats this year, but those losses may not be as extensive now. A good measuring stick would be the 26 House seats lost in 1982, when Ronald Reagan faced a 10.8% unemployment rate.

The profound question for Republicans is whether they continue on the path of intransigence or decide to participate in the government. Intransigence has its pleasures. In the hermetically sealed tornado of right-wing bloviation, the wildest claims have come to seem the most marketable. This was a problem on the left for a long time. When Congressman Randy Neugebauer of Texas screamed "Baby killer!" on the House floor, the epithet resonated — the protesters who screamed those same words at U.S. troops in the 1960s sent the American pendulum swinging back toward conservatism and crippled the Democratic Party for several generations. The Tea Party nativism, paranoia and anti-intellectualism embraced by the Republicans have rarely been a winning hand in American politics.

"It is abnormal for any industry to throw back upon the community the human wreckage due to its wear and tear, and the hazards of sickness ... should be provided for through insurance," said Theodore
Roosevelt in 1912, at the dawn of the progressive era. The work of building a social safety net for the industrial age proceeded, in fits and starts, for the next 50 years. The excesses of that effort brought the Reaganite swing in the opposite direction, during which time the protections frayed and the need for a new, more flexible information-age safety net became apparent.

Obama's health care reform will undoubtedly prove inadequate to the demands of a globalized, warp-speed economy and an aging population. It will have to be modified, and modified again — and one hopes the Republicans, with their natural instinct for efficiency, will participate in that process. But, however flawed, the health care bill is a sign that major, concerted public reforms are once again possible, and that the difficult work of transforming America to compete successfully in a new world of challenges can now begin.
If people are what they eat, then nations are what is eaten in them. For countries, food is a statement of culture and identity. It's why the French invented terroir — food and drink as an expression of the land — and why American lawmakers, ticked off at the French during the Iraq invasion, invented "freedom fries."

Judged by its food, then, what is the U.S.? To look at our food TV — a mixed-message buffet of indulgence and shame — it's a binge-and-purger. One batch of shows is saturated with fat: Paula Deen cooking "fried butter balls," Adam Richman downing sandwiches the size of dachshunds on Man v. Food, Guy Fieri deep-frying s'mores. (Grilled s'mores? That's rabbit food!) Another is obsessed with weight loss: The Biggest Loser, Dance Your Ass Off, Kirstie Alley's Big Life. Eat this! You're fat! Eat this! You're fat!

Yeah, it's dysfunctional. But dammit, it's our dysfunction. So when ABC brought in British chef Jamie Oliver to teach "the unhealthiest city in America" how to eat right, it was more than a reality-show premise. It was a guaranteed culture clash and a political metaphor on a platter.
In Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution, Oliver — who did a similar show in the U.K. — goes to Huntington, W.Va. (pop. 49,000), where, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half the adults are obese. He finds a town hooked on processed food, a school cafeteria serving pizza for breakfast and kids who can't identify a tomato on sight. His goals: get the kids to eat right young, and set up a community kitchen to teach healthy cooking from scratch.

It's not easy. When Oliver makes students a meal of roast chicken, salad and rice, the kids overwhelmingly choose the school pizza. And his reception from some adults is tougher: Who's this limey know-it-all telling us how to cook our food, run our schools and raise our kids? When he's quoted in the paper as saying locals have an “anemic” understanding of nutrition, it's his “they cling to guns or religion” moment. A local radio host asks, "Who made you the king?"

If this sounds like a political fight, well, it is. Michelle Obama may be tilling nonpartisan ground with her vegetable garden and child-obesity program, but food has long been political. From soda taxes to corn subsidies, food is about health care costs, environmentalism, education, agriculture and class. Above all, it's a cultural marker, a means of saying, We are us, not them. In 2008 candidates played the shot-and-a-beer, mooseburgers-vs.-arugula culture-war cards hardest in places like Huntington.

And in Tea Party America, food is a symbol of the obligations of the community vs. the rights of the individual. On his March 10 Fox News show, Glenn Beck ranted about New York City's barring the ChipShop, an English-pub-grub restaurant in Brooklyn, from serving twice-fried cherry pie. (One of the restaurant's two locations, by the way, is half a block from my house. The deep-fried Mars bars, still legal, are amazing.) Under Obama's health care bill, Beck asked, "will there be food police ready to cuff me and take me in if I have an extra doughnut?" They'll get my onion rings when they pry them from my cold, dead (possibly from a massive coronary) hands!

Yet Food Revolution has a more nuanced view of these personal-political issues than shows like Beck's have. Oliver, for instance, is as annoyed by government regulations and intransigent bureaucracy as he is by Huntington's laissez-faire eating habits. (Rules require, for instance, that he serve bread with his rice — a second fattening helping of carbs.) He allies with a local minister who's doing outreach to cut his congregation's high rate of obesity-related deaths.

And Oliver's regular-guy attitude — he's a multimillionaire celeb but grew up the son of a pub owner — gives the lie to the idea that food crusades are about do-good elitists forcing their values on working people. Looking at the food in the Huntington cafeteria — pink milk, chicken nuggets, some yellowy mass you steam to make "scrambled eggs" — he says, "It pisses me off. And if you're a parent, it should piss you off." A politician could learn from the way he talks to people in Huntington, neither pandering nor patronizing but treating them like peers who can take it straight: "This [food] is going to kill your children early."

Oliver’s experiment is playing out over six weeks on Friday nights on ABC. Whether he reaches many home viewers, who can still flip the channel and see ads for Outback Steakhouse’s 1,500-plus-calorie Bloomin' Onion, is an open question. But his show's implicit message — that people can deal with a touchy issue maturely, that Appalachian parents and a British chef can find common ground — is, at least, food for thought.
The U.S. Census: Why Our Numbers Matter

By NANCY GIBBS Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

I still bear the mental scars of a question on a philosophy exam in college that left me whimpering at its wicked simplicity: “Could the number two change its properties?” I’d been raised to think numbers were as close to reliable as anything could be, so clean and clear and immune to argument. Some are odd, some round, some lucky, but three will always be one less than four.

This is the season when we are reminded that you can safely and reliably count just about anything other than people. Census comes from the Latin censere, which, tellingly, does not mean count so much as estimate, and 2,500 years ago in Rome, people were already squirrelly about being estimated. The penalty for refusing to reveal how many people were in your household, how many slaves, how much livestock, was forfeiting it all and becoming a slave yourself. The Bible tells the story of God getting so mad at King David for ordering a census (granted, it was because Satan had talked him into it) that He sent a plague that killed 70,000 people in three days.

David’s plague may have deterred census takers for many years, but when the Founding Fathers invented American democracy, they realized that if you are going to have government by the people, you need to know who and where they are. The founders stuck a Census requirement in the Constitution so that every 10 years, the young, stretchy country would recalculate which states got how many lawmakers. They worried that a state might try to inflate its population to increase its representation, so they cleverly arranged that the first Census would also be used to spread around the costs of the Revolution. In 1790, 650 federal marshals on horseback began going house to house. It cost $45,000 and took a year and a half to count 3.9 million people.

Two hundred twenty years later, lawmakers are so unpopular, it’s a wonder people fight over the means of getting more of them — except that nowadays about $400 billion per year in federal aid follows the Census numbers, for everything from jobs to bridges to schools, so this really matters.

Of course, there would be more money to spread around if it didn't cost so much to count us in the first place: about $15 billion, according to some estimates. That includes $338 million for ads in 28 languages, a Census-sponsored NASCAR entry, hiring Marie Osmond to do outreach on QVC, $2.5 million for a Super Bowl ad and spots on Spanish radio and soap operas and Dora the Explorer. The ads are meant
to boost the response rate, since any household that doesn't mail back its form gets visited by a Census
worker, another pricey line item. In all, it will work out to about $49 per person, which makes you wonder
whether the government should have just sent an e-mail instead of a packet that looks like junk mail.
(How about spending a little more money on design?) But the Census officials worried about privacy, so
the increasingly irrelevant post office, whose volume dropped 13% last year, gets a spring boost.

Why would anyone not want to be counted? Illegal immigrants fear exposure, despite laws forbidding any
court or agency from seeing the information; indiscreet Census workers can be fined up to $250,000.
Minnesota Representative Michele Bachmann warned that during World War II, Census data was shared
with the FBI "at the request of President Roosevelt, and that's how the Japanese were rounded up ... I'm
not saying that that's what the Administration is planning to do," she said, but nonetheless she vowed
that she'll state how many people are in her household and nothing more. Since participation is
mandatory, this puts her in danger of committing a misdemeanor and being subject to a $5,000 fine.

Bachmann may think the Census is too intrusive; I just wish it were more so. As long as we're spending
all this money to reach so many people, imagine what we could find out. Which do you favor, Leno or
Letterman? Smooth or chunky? Faith or works? Liberty or equality? As it is, we had little to argue over in
my house. This year's is one of the shortest forms in history, and it is aggressively uninteresting; our dry
cleaners demand more information before they'll do home delivery. The trickiest part for us was to name
what used to be known as the head of household, now designated "Person 1." My husband and younger
daughter filled out the form together and decided that I would be Person 1.

It made me feel that I counted. But there was no way, surveying my household, that I could choose who
would be Person 2 — unless, of course, the number two somehow could change its properties.
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**What Would Adam Smith Say?**

*By JUSTIN FOX Thursday, Mar. 25, 2010*

You know Adam Smith for his "invisible hand," the mysterious force that steers the selfish economic decisions of individuals toward a result that leaves us all better off. It's been a hugely influential idea, one that during the last few decades of the 20th century began to take on the trappings of a universal truth.

Lately, though, the invisible hand has been getting slapped. The selfish economic decisions of home buyers, mortgage brokers, investment bankers and institutional investors over the past decade clearly did not leave us all better off. Did Smith have it wrong?

No, Smith did not have it wrong. It's just that some of his self-proclaimed disciples have given us a terribly incomplete picture of what he believed. The man himself used the phrase *invisible hand* only three times: once in the famous passage from *The Wealth of Nations* that everybody cites; once in his other big book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*; and once in a posthumously published history of astronomy (in which he was talking about "the invisible hand of Jupiter" — the god, not the planet). For Smith, the invisible hand was but one of an array of interesting social and economic forces worth thinking about.

Why did the invisible hand emerge as the one idea from Smith's work that everybody remembers? Mainly because it's so simple and powerful. If the invisible hand of the market really can be relied on at all times and in all places to deliver the most prosperous and just society possible, then we'd be idiots not to get out of the way and let it work its magic. Plus, the supply-meets-demand straightforwardness of the invisible-hand metaphor lends itself to mathematical treatment, and math is the language in which economists communicate with one another.

Hardly anything else in Smith's work is nearly that simple or consistent. Consider *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, his long-neglected other masterpiece, published 17 years before *The Wealth of Nations*, in 1759. I recently cracked open a new 250th-anniversary edition, complete with a lucid introduction by economist Amartya Sen, in hopes that it would make clearer how we ought to organize our economy.
Fat chance. Most of the book is an account of how we decide whether behavior is good or not. In Smith's
telling, the most important factor is our sympathy for one another. "To restrain our selfish, and to indulge
our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature," he writes. But he goes on to say
that "the commands and laws of the Deity" (he seems to be referring to the Ten Commandments) are
crucial guides to conduct too. Then, in what seems to be a strange detour from those earthly and divine
parameters, he argues that the invisible hand ensures that the selfish and sometimes profligate spending
habits of the rich tend to promote the public good.

There are similar whiplash moments in The Wealth of Nations. The dominant theme running through the
book is that self-interest and free, competitive markets can be powerful forces for prosperity and for good.
But Smith also calls for regulation of interest rates and laws to protect workers from their employers. He
argues that the corporation, the dominant form of economic organization in today's world, is an
abomination.

The point here isn't that Smith was right in every last one of his prescriptions and proscriptions. He was
an 18th century Scottish scholar, not an all-knowing being. Many of his apparent self-contradictions are
just that — contradictions that don't make a lot of sense.

But Smith was also onto something that many free-market fans who pledge allegiance to him miss. The
world is a complicated place. Markets don't exist free of societies and governments and regulators and
customs and moral sentiments; they are entwined. Also, while markets often deliver wondrous results, an
outcome is not by definition good simply because the market delivers it. Some other standards have to
be engaged.

Applying Smith's teachings to the modern world, then, is a much more complex and doubtful endeavor
than it's usually made out to be. He certainly wouldn't have been opposed to every government
intervention in the market. On financial reform, it's easy to imagine Smith supporting the creation of a
Consumer Financial Protection Agency and crackdowns on giant financial institutions. He might have
also favored the just-passed health care reform bill, at least the part that requires states to set up
exchanges to ensure retail competition for health insurance.

Then again, he might not have. Asking "What would Adam Smith say?" is a lot easier than conclusively
answering it. It is pretty clear, though, that he wouldn't just shout, "Don't interfere with the invisible hand!"
and leave it at that.

*Fox is the editorial director of the Harvard Business Review Group*
Citizen Breitbart: The Web's New Right-Wing Impresario

By STEVE ONEY Thursday, Mar. 25, 2010

Andrew Breitbart sits in an Aeron chair at an iMac computer gazing out the sliding glass door of his Los Angeles home office. On the patio, a hula hoop and a portable basketball rim await his children's return from school. Breitbart, 41, dressed on this late-winter day in his standard work uniform of a dirty oxford-cloth shirt and grungy khaki shorts, looks more like a surf bum than one of the most divisive figures in America's political and culture wars. Then his BlackBerry rings.

The woman at the other end of the line, conservative fulminator Ann Coulter, is among Breitbart's staunchest allies, and they soon are engaged in a spirited attack on liberals. "Their entire structure is writhing in diseased agony on the side of the road, and they don't even realize it," Breitbart says. But the left isn't the only object of disdain. "I'm sick of this effete GOP nothing sandwich," he adds, growing more animated. "As long as everyone is so pristine and socially registered, we're going to lose." Shortly before
signing off, Breitbart says, "The second I realized I liked being hated more than I liked being liked — that's when the game began."

It's a game he plays extraordinarily well. Breitbart has become the Web's most combative conservative impresario — part new-media mogul, part Barnum-esque scamp. Last fall, he launched Big Government, the flagship of his wickedly right-of-center sites, which also include Big Hollywood, Big Journalism — which described the House's March 21 passage of the health care reform bill as a "socialist putsch" — and the news aggregators Breitbart.com and Breitbart.tv. On its first day of business, Big Government produced a scoop: undercover filmmakers James O'Keefe and Hannah Giles — the would-be Borats of the right — had shot videos that appeared to show workers at ACORN, a liberal organization that lobbies for affordable housing, offering tips on how to open a brothel. For Breitbart, the videos proved to be a gold mine, putting the left on the defensive and Big Government on the map. That the filmmakers were accused of entrapping their subjects and editing in footage of O'Keefe dressed as a pimp seemed almost beside the point.

The stunt gave Breitbart — who like many online scribes had spent much of his professional life toiling in anonymity — a public persona. In January, O'Keefe was arrested in New Orleans on charges of entering the offices of U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu under false pretenses while preparing another undercover video. That only boosted Breitbart's profile. At the National Tea Party Convention in Nashville in February, Breitbart introduced the star speaker, Sarah Palin, and delivered a rousing jeremiad of his own. Assailing national reporters for portraying the movement as "racist and homophobic," he used the dais at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel to speak his version of truth to mainstream media power: "It's not your business model that sucks. It's you that sucks."

Breitbart perceives himself as a new-media David out to slay old-media Goliaths. As he sees it, the left exercises its power not via mastery of the issues but through control of the entertainment industry, print and television journalism and government agencies that set social policy. "Politics," he often says, "is downstream from culture. I want to change the cultural narrative." Thus the Big sites devote their energy less to trying to influence the legislative process in Washington than to attacking the institutions and people Breitbart believes dictate the American conversation. Recently, Big Hollywood has gone after Sesame Street for a musical number titled "We All Sing with the Same Voice" that, it alleges, contains "controversial political messages designed to promote multiculturalism." Big Government has targeted the Obama Administration's safe-schools czar, Kevin Jennings, for a reading list, compiled when he headed the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, that includes books depicting adolescent homosexual encounters.

Such cultural crusades might seem to appeal mostly to the far-right fringe, but Breitbart is tapping a deep reservoir of conservative dismay. Former Bush Administration official (and TIME contributor) David Frum says, "What matters to [conservatives] is not why the government is spending $15 million on this or that. What matters is a perception that hostile forces are invading your home, school and family. Those forces come in on TV and in newspapers. An enormous amount of what conservatism now does is media criticism."

The Merry Prankster
Breitbart was raised in Brentwood, on Los Angeles' privileged west side. The area is home to studio
executives and producers, and the politics are Democratic. Breitbart was never fully comfortable in L.A.’s '80s social milieu. His parents are Midwestern Jews. (His father ran a Santa Monica steak house.) They saw life differently than the other kids' sophisticated dads and moms did. "My folks are from an older and very silent generation," Breitbart says. "My dad is as conservative as William F. Buckley was, but without the same presentation. He expressed his conservatism by working 16-hour days at the restaurant and never complaining."

By the time Breitbart entered the Brentwood School, an élite private academy, he was out of step with his classmates. "Andrew didn't fit the mold," says Larry Solov, a friend since childhood and now Breitbart's partner in the Big sites. "At Brentwood, you got A's and bought into a system set up to get you into an Ivy League college. Andrew got C's." Soon enough, Breitbart adopted the guise of skeptic and prankster, staging acts of subversion designed to win laughs and undermine the school's prevailing assumptions about wealth and meritocracy. It wouldn't be Harvard for this wiseacre. He was going to Tulane.

The South was a revelation for Breitbart. Southerners, whom he'd assumed from their depiction on TV to be Neanderthals, were warm and smart and less neurotic than Californians. The social life at Tulane was splendid. "I was a drunk," says Breitbart, who estimates he spent five nights a week at New Orleans bars with fellow Delta Tau Delta fraternity members. The classroom experience was less satisfying. "I didn't read Mark Twain," he says. "I read critical theorists. I graduated with a degree in nihilism and nothingness."

After returning to Los Angeles, Breitbart met Matt Drudge, founder of the conservative Drudge Report. It was the mid-1990s, and the Web was in its infancy. Breitbart went to work for Drudge and served as his legman for 15 years, learning how to excavate news items from databases and wire-service feeds. More than that, he adopted Drudge's contrarian worldview. "Matt rejects entrenched thinking," says Breitbart. If Drudge (who did not respond to messages seeking comment about his protégé) taught Breitbart a new way of seeing, it was another former employer, Arianna Huffington (who also refused to speak about the boss of Big), who whipped him into intellectual shape. Drudge introduced Breitbart to Huffington in the late 1990s, when she was a right-wing provocateur. He worked for her as a researcher. "I was a slacker," he says. "Writing, rhetoric, argument — she demanded that I take a disciplined approach."

Breitbart helped launch the Huffington Post in 2005, but the marriage was destined to fail. Huffington had become a progressive. "It became impossible for me to work with Arianna's staff. They're liberals." But as he walked out the door, Breitbart experienced an epiphany.

The Big sites were born of Breitbart's realization that if Huffington could create a virtual salon for the left, he could create one for the right. "Most conservatives are individualists," he says. "For years, they've been pummeled by the collectivists who run the American media, Hollywood and Washington. The underground conservative movement that is now awakening is the ecosystem I've designed my sites to tap into."

Like some elements of the Tea Party movement, the Big sites can be crude. Also, Breitbart has shown an increasing propensity for bombast. While accepting an award at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington in late February for his role in breaking the ACORN story, he called New York Times reporter Kate Zernike "despicable" for writing in the Times's Caucus blog that a young
CPAC speaker employed racial stereotypes during a speech critical of President Barack Obama. Two days later, Breitbart got into a verbal altercation with freelance writer Max Blumenthal. "You are the lowest life-form I have ever seen," Breitbart said. Blumenthal's putative offense had been to accuse O'Keefe in an article for Salon.com of attending a gathering that featured "white nationalists." All these outbursts were captured on cell-phone cameras wielded by members of competing camps. The videos went viral. The attack dog had become a mad dog.

While Breitbart is a polestar to many Tea Partiers, his excesses have the potential to cause the movement embarrassment. "The smarter conservatives who know Breitbart regard him affectionately," says a plugged-in Republican player, "but they think he's a little out of it. In another age, the Big sites would have been produced on a mimeograph machine. I'd call him the first neo-crank."

Critics on the left are, of course, harsher. "The CPAC stuff was ugly," says Eric Boehlert, who writes for the liberal website Media Matters for America. "He's become known as the guy who yells at people in the halls. And his sites have little impact. The last time I looked, no one in the mainstream media had picked up the campaign Big Government has going against Obama's education guy."

Breitbart's online competitors are both impressed and wary. "Andrew has an eye for stories that never make the New York Times," says a journalist with experience in old and new media. "When I see him, he'll say, 'Why aren't you covering this?' And he's right. But some of what he publishes is irresponsible. He represents something fascinating about today's culture but also something deplorable." John Harris, editor of Politico.com, says, "I regard Andrew as a skilled media and ideological entrepreneur, but as he becomes a combatant, he is going to get scrutinized like one."

To Breitbart, the dismissive reviews are a form of flattery. To speak ill of people in the new media is to do them a favor, generating hits on their sites, which drives revenue. Furthermore, Breitbart is a true believer. "I'm Upton Sinclair 2.0," he says, "except instead of attacking rotten meatpacking houses, I'm attacking the rotten political establishment and the mainstream media that discourage dissent in this country." As for the charge that his sites pay too much attention to the prurient side of issues, he responds, "I like decadent. I like rambunctious. I like mirth."

However polarizing, Breitbart's efforts appear to be flourishing. Technorati, a website focusing on new media, ranks two of the Big sites — Big Government and Breitbart.tv — on its influential top-100 list. (At No. 24 in March, Big Government — while trailing the No. 1 site, the Huffington Post — was ahead of such liberal sites as Daily Kos and Talking Points Memo.) According to Solov, he and Breitbart have not sought outside investors, funding the sites with their own money along with ad revenue. But this may change. In the months ahead, they plan to launch Big Peace, which will cover national security, followed by Big Tolerance (aimed at conservative gays, blacks and Jews), Big Education and Big Soros (which will address the world of institutional giving).

**Tea Party Tycoon**

It is a brilliant weekday afternoon, and Breitbart is at the wheel of his Range Rover, driving to the Los Angeles bureau of Fox News to make a live appearance on Fox's politics and business show *America's Nightly Scoreboard*. He'll then tape a segment for the late-night talkfest *Red Eye*, whose host, Greg Gutfeld, is a contributor to Big Journalism. On *Scoreboard*, Breitbart takes another jab at Blumenthal. On
Red Eye, he shoots for bigger game. "I want it to be in the history books," he proclaims, "that I took down the institutional left, and I think that's gonna happen."

Breitbart observers are divided about what his future will bring. Political blogger Mickey Kaus, an acquaintance and longtime Breitbart watcher, thinks the Big sites will become exactly that — big. "I've always thought of him as an empire builder," he says. "He has the temperament of a tycoon, a conservative Ted Turner. He has what they all have — that slightly crazed look in the eyes." Boehlert sees a different ending: "What's ahead for Breitbart is some sort of spectacular flameout."

Maybe this is why Breitbart is in such a hurry. After dashing out of the studio, he races home via the sort of shortcuts only native Angelenos know. His wife Susie (daughter of Orson Bean, a mainstay of the old TV game show To Tell the Truth) is preparing supper for him and their four children. But the real reason for the rush is that O'Keefe is visiting their house tonight to screen his latest effort, an undercover video revealing purported shenanigans at the offices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Breitbart hopes to debut the footage on Big Government. He believes it will be another scoop — and another blow to the liberal establishment.

"I feel very alive," Breitbart says as he whips along backstreets adjacent to the 405 freeway, where traffic is at a standstill. "We're in a battle, and in hindsight I can see that the moves I'm making are correct. I'm putting together something that's going to be extraordinary."

Oney is the author of And the Dead Shall Rise.

An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that reporter Kate Zernike referred to a speaker at a political conference as "a racist" on a New York Times blog. In actuality, Zernike wrote that the speaker employed "racial stereotypes."
The snow leopard that was caught by a hunter in Afghanistan and rescued by NATO troops

Richard W. Fite

In a valley high in the Wakhan Mountains of Afghanistan, a hunter several weeks ago waded through snowdrifts to check his traps and found that he had snared one of the rarest creatures alive: a snow leopard.

If a naturalist had seen the leopard, he or she would have focused on its snowy fur with black, half-moon markings and its white goatee. A naturalist would have known that it is a solitary, elusive creature, a night hunter that roams the icy Central Asian peaks far above human villages. A naturalist would have known that there are perhaps less than a thousand of them left on the planet. But the hunter who snared the snow leopard saw only a $50,000 price tag. That was the fee supposedly offered by a wealthy Pakistani businessman to any hunter in the Wakhan who could deliver a snow leopard — alive.

The leopard was snarling and furious at being caught, with its hind leg gashed by a wire snare. But otherwise, it was in good shape. With the help of a few friends, the hunter tied the leopard's legs and
muzzle, threw it in the back of a truck, and headed out of the Wakhan Valley to Feyzabad, a three-day journey of hairpin curves along terrifying mountain roads.

But the capture of a snow leopard, once believed to be extinct in Afghanistan, didn't stay secret for long. The feline was to become the object of a four-day rescue operation that involved NATO forces, the U.S. ambassador in Kabul, a royal prince and even Afghan President Hamid Karzai. But the mission would end like so many others of similarly good intentions in Afghanistan.

First, the hunter and his friends were undone by their own greed. Upon reaching Feyzabad, they thought they might get a better price for their cat than $50,000 and began to shop around. "Somebody on the Internet was supposedly offering $2 million for a live snow leopard," says Mustapha Zaher, director general of the National Environmental Protection Agency in Kabul.

But the environmental protection agency office in Feyzabad was tipped off about the cat. Zaher happens to be a prince, the grandson of the late Afghan monarch Zaher Shah, and he has far more clout around Kabul than the ordinary bureaucrat. "I raised a hullabaloo," Zaher tells TIME with a grin. He paged through his contacts book, calling U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, a contingent of German troops stationed in Feyzabad (who at first were skittish about leaving their base, even though that region of Afghanistan is relatively calm). And he called the Afghan President. It had been a hard day for Karzai; suicide bombers and gunmen had attacked an Indian guesthouse in Kabul, killing dozens. But the President was sympathetic to the plight of the leopard. "He told me, 'Do what you can to save him,' " says Zaher.

The leopard was confiscated from the hunters, and Richard Fite, a New Hampshire veterinarian who advises for the U.S. Agricultural Department in northern Afghanistan, was dispatched to tend the snow leopard. Fite was more accustomed to dealing with farm animals, and to encounter a snow leopard was a marvel. "I never imagined in my life that I would be so close to such a creature," he says in a telephone interview. At first, the leopard was kept in a cage at the police station, where it was poked by curious onlookers.

When Fite examined the leopard, it had been moved to the atrium of a nearby guesthouse, and its cage was littered with chunks of uneaten raw meat. The leopard growled at Fite but remained subdued, he says. When he looked into the eyes of the animal, says Fite, he could tell it was ailing. "All I could think of was the tragedy of it all," he says, adding, "The mental stress on the animal from capture, transport, being bound and being held for almost a week would have been unimaginable."

Over the next three days, Fite tended to the leopard. Then, after advice from experts at the Wildlife Conservation Society in Kabul, a decision was made to fly the leopard back to the Wakhan and free it into the wild, once it had regained strength. "We didn't want it dumped unconscious on a snowfield where it would freeze to death," says Dave Lawson, the Society's country director. Bad weather kept the U.S. helicopter grounded. After what seemed like a day of improved health — the leopard was holding its head up and grooming itself — and a break in the storm clouds that would allow the chopper to take off, Fite was optimistic. But the next morning, on March 2, he was informed that the snow leopard had died. "My guess — and it is just that — is that it died from shock" he says, adding, "Snow leopards are solitary, reclusive animals."
An Afghan elder who had seen the leopard in the cage wept when he saw its dead body carried out. “A lot of these mountain people have respect for wildlife,” says Lawson, who was told by an elder that “God put these animals here for us to look after.” The death of a snow leopard may not be of great consequence in Afghanistan’s larger turmoil. But for many Afghans, the snow leopard is a symbol of the country’s spirit of untamed wildness. For a few brief moments, everyone from the President to the top U.S. diplomat in the country turned their gaze away from politics and terrorism to a shivering, sick cat in a cage. And when it died, everyone from the highest echelons of power to humble villagers suffered a profound loss.

— With reporting by Shah Mahmood Barakzai / Kabul

Afghan Tragedy: Death of a Snow Leopard

Majestic

Naturalists estimate that there are less than a thousand snow leopards left on the planet. Their rarity makes them highly prized by collectors of exotic animals; a wealthy Pakistani businessman has supposedly offered hunters $50,000 for a living specimen.
Caught
This feline was trapped by a hunter high in the Wakhan Mountains of Afghanistan. Its hind leg was gashed by a wire snare, but otherwise it was in good shape.

Bound
The hunter attempted to sell his prize in Feyzabad, but word of the capture spread quickly to Kabul, where it reached the ear of Mustapha Zaher, chief of Afghanistan's environmental protection agency. A prince and grandson of a late Afghan monarch, Zaher was able to reach out to powerful friends, and within short order, German troops were dispatched to rescue the cat.
Ailing

The snow leopard was taken to the atrium of a guesthouse, and an American veterinarian, Richard Fite, was called in to help nurse it back to health. When he looked into the feline's eyes, Fite says, he could see that it was ailing. "All I could think of was the tragedy of it all. The mental stress on the animal from capture, transport, being bound and being held for almost a week would have been unimaginable."

Beauty Lost

Though the animal seemed to take a turn for the better, it ultimately did not survive its time in captivity.
Shortly before it was set to be released back into the wild, it expired in its cage. An Afghan elder who had seen the cat in the cage wept when he saw its dead body carried out. Says another man: “God put these animals here for us to look after.” Clearly, in this case, man failed.

Inside China's Runaway Building Boom

By BILL POWELL Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Recently constructed and unoccupied houses in the Kangbashi district of Ordos City, Inner Mongolia. Photograph by Michael Christopher Brown for TIME

No question keeps more economists, investors, hedge-fund managers and bankers up at night than this one: Is China's property market a bubble?

The reason for their angst is clear: A property meltdown in China would imperil the whole world's fledgling economic recovery. Throughout the most severe global downturn in decades, China's economic growth has remained remarkably buoyant. This year, for example, China's GDP will likely rise 9% or more, in contrast to a merely subpar rebound in the U.S. and Europe.
And nothing has driven China's growth more than real estate investment. Last year, fixed-asset investment accounted for more than 90% of China's overall growth, and residential and commercial real estate investment made up nearly a quarter of that.

For years, regional governments across China have been building massive real estate projects that have attracted both private and corporate buyers. As prices have continued to rise (residential values in 70 large and medium-size cities across China soared in 2009, according to real estate consultancy Colliers International), more investors have become speculators, buying brand-new properties with the sole intention of flipping them.

But since a huge real estate bust in the U.S. in 2008 was the catalyst for the still lingering global recession, many analysts fear a replay in China could prove disastrous.

Indeed, evidence of property oversupply is everywhere. In Beijing, vast swaths of commercial space sit vacant — including floors of retail space right next to the iconic Water Cube, the 2008 Olympics swimming venue.

But throughout the Chinese interior, there are even eerier monuments to an as yet unrealized optimism: entire cities built for millions of inhabitants that stand all but empty.

Perhaps the most stark ghost city is Kangbashi, in Inner Mongolia. Built in just five years, Kangbashi was designed to be the showcase urban center of Ordos City, a relatively wealthy coal-mining hub that's home to 1.5 million people. A public-works project worthy of Kubla Khan's "stately pleasure-dome," Kangbashi is filled with office towers, administrative centers, government buildings, museums, theaters and sports fields — not to mention acre on acre of subdivisions overflowing with middle-class duplexes and bungalows. The only problem: the district was originally designed to house, support and entertain 1 million people, yet hardly anyone lives there. Only a handful of cars drive down Kangbashi's multilane highways, a few government offices are open during the day and an occasional pedestrian, appearing like a hallucination, can be seen trudging down a sidewalk, like a lone survivor of some horror-movie apocalypse.

When bubbles burst, they tend to do so with a bang. With the rest of the world still trying to regain its economic footing, authorities in Beijing — and Ordos, for that matter — are hoping they can deflate their housing bubble without a pop. And it's not just the Chinese who should be praying that they can pull it off.
Dreaming Up *How to Train Your Dragon*

By RICHARD CORLISS  Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Two young people take flight on a dragon, just like in *Avatar*, but the trip is longer and way swoopier. Ancient warriors strut their testosterone in approved *Beowulf* or *300* fashion. A kid befriends an otherworldly creature — a flame-spuming update of the alien from *E.T.* — and tries to hide him from adults. It's a foolproof scheme for picture making: take the plot elements of favorite movies, paint the concoction with bright colors so it looks like the zazziest customized car, set it running at NASCAR speed — then add 3-D — and you have *How to Train Your Dragon*, the new feature from DreamWorks animation.

The 3-D bit is recent, but the other items could be the recipe for any of the DreamWorks films that have entertained vast audiences over the past decade. The studio's three *Shrek* movies have earned $2.2 billion at the worldwide box office. Include the last seven capers made at its California headquarters — *Shark Tale, Madagascar* and its sequel, *Over the Hedge, Bee Movie, Kung Fu Panda* and *Monsters vs Aliens* — and the 10-pack has a $5.3 billion global gross. That's just a smidge under the $5.6 billion taken in by all 10 of the features produced by DreamWorks' rival, *Pixar*.

Awww, did we have to go and say *Pixar*? The very word stings the DreamWorks ego like a lighted cigar tip on a fresh wound. Jeffrey Katzenberg, DreamWorks' elfin pooh-bah, had run Disney's animation unit during its renaissance years — *The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King* — before leaving in 1994 as John Lasseter's fledgling *Pixar* outfit came into the Disney fold. Katzenberg's new animation unit soon out-Disneyed Disney, whose 2-D features have waned in appeal. But he hasn't been able to out-*Pixar* Pixar.

At least Oscar voters seem to think so. Nine years ago, when the award for Best Animated Feature was established, DreamWorks got the first one, for *Shrek*. Since then, Katzenberg's products have been shut out (the studio distributed one Oscar winner, Nick Park's veddy English *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*), while *Pixar* has taken five: *Finding Nemo, The Incredibles, Ratatouille, WALL•E* and *Up*. This year, DreamWorks' perky *Monsters vs Aliens* was not even one of the five finalists. “Each year I
do one DreamWorks project,” actor Jack Black told the crowd at the 2009 ceremony, “then I take all the
money to the Oscars and bet it on Pixar.”

That was also the case 60, 70 years ago, when Disney shorts had a monopoly on the Oscars, while the
funnier, livelier cartoons from Warner Bros. — which today are treasured — were ignored. In that sense,
Pixar’s features are closer to the old, elevated Disney style, while DreamWorks’ films are flat-out
cartoons, proud to carry on the fast, cavorting Warner tradition.

The studios also favor different kinds of stories. Pixar makes movies about couples — guy-guy in Toy
Story, Monsters Inc., Cars, Ratatouille and Up, and guy-gal in Finding Nemo and WALL-E — who
overcome initial antagonism and find a shared need. To wit, buddy stories and love stories. DreamWorks
does workplace comedies about groups, in Shark Tale, Over the Hedge, Kung Fu Panda, Monsters vs
Aliens, both Madagascar movies and the later Shreks.

The two studios’ preferred plots reflect their means of creation. Pixar writer-directors, working in a San
Francisco suburb far from the seat of industry power, get lots of staff support but pursue their visions
more or less on their own. DreamWorks movies, made mostly in the Hollywood suburb of Glendale, are
team efforts. A Pixar film may have one writer besides the director; it’s total auteur handicraft. Most
DreamWorks movies credit two directors and several writers, and play like the spiffiest vaudeville. The
DreamWorkers aren’t in the masterpiece business; they just want to provide an expert good time.

All Aboard the Dragon Train
Fun is the first of the goals set by Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois, Dragon’s directors and (with Will
Davies) writers, for their version of the Cressida Cowell book. Their teen hero, Hiccup (voiced by Jay
Baruchel from She’s Out of My League), is the underachieving son of a fierce Viking warlord, Stoick
(300’s very own Gerard Butler), whose tribe has been battling dragons for centuries. When Hiccup
wounds an elusive creature called the Night Fury, no one believes him. Soon he tames, trains and learns
to ride the beast, thus schooling his clan in the proto-eco message that the wilder forces of nature should
not be fought but instead cultivated.

This is the rare DreamWorks movie that might have benefited from a few more gag writers. Its early reels
rely too heavily on the conceit that medieval Norsemen spoke with a Scots accent, and the other teens in
Hiccup’s dragon-training class never surmount their stereotypes. But Sanders and DeBlois, two Disney
vets who told a similar kid-and-feral-pet fable in 2002’s Lilo & Stitch, have the knack of giving life to
fantastical interspecies friendships. And the technicians at their disposal (including the Coen brothers’
ace cinematographer, Roger Deakins) have splashed the screen with landscapes that would captivate all
eyes even if the movie weren’t in 3-D.

How to Train Your Dragon is a little more serious and more ambitious than the signature DreamWorks
films — at least as much an action epic as a cartoon comedy. In its loftier moments, it might almost be
called Pixarian. But the movie may simply be a detour for the studio, not the hint of a new direction. After
all, in May comes Shrek Forever After, in which, we’d guess, the DreamWorks vaudevillians will cavort
again.
Ian McEwan Writes The Book on Climate Change

By BRYAN WALSH Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

It's been a difficult few months for climate scientists. There were the stolen e-mails of Climategate that purported to show an attempt to cover up data disputing global warming, the much ballyhooed summit in Copenhagen that ended in disappointment, and the revelation of several errors in the work of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. By March, congressional Republicans were calling for a McCarthy-style investigation into global-warming scientists, and researchers were being inundated with hate mail. Note to science students in search of a major: entomology is looking nice these days.

So when word went out that Ian McEwan's new novel, Solar, would be about global warming, climate researchers might have hoped they'd found their champion. With his portrait of a relentlessly rational science writer in Enduring Love and his detailed descriptions of neurosurgery in Saturday, McEwan is the rare novelist who understands the scientific world — and the mind-set of the scientist. If anyone could make a best seller out of the sticky stuff of climate science and a hero out of one of its practitioners, it would be McEwan.

As it turns out, they might want to wait for Al Gore's next book. McEwan has turned his sharp, satirical eye to climate change, and the result is anything but heroic. In making Solar a comedy — albeit one as black as the dark side of the moon — McEwan gives the lie to vain hopes that the planet will be saved by a sudden outbreak of environmental virtue. If we're going to avoid choking on what McEwan calls the "hot breath of civilization," we're going to have to harness human nature, in all its selfishness, mendacity — and occasional genius.

In other words, we're going to need Michael Beard, a rotund, balding, 50-ish English physicist coasting on a Nobel Prize he won two decades ago. As Solar begins, Beard is in the waning days of his fifth marriage, hanging on as the chief of a government center on renewable energy, where climate change takes up less space in his mind than adultery. "Beard was not wholly skeptical about climate change," McEwan writes. "But he himself had other things to think about."
That doesn't change even when Beard is invited on a trip to the Norwegian Arctic with a boat full of self-important artists and scientists going north to see global warming in action. The journey is hilarious: Beard suffers frostbite in a rather uncomfortable place and is very nearly eaten by a polar bear. But even better is the way McEwan deftly contrasts the high ideals of the travelers — who call for a new, greener way of life — with their unacknowledged selfishness. The ship's boot room, where people load and unload their polar gear, and which steadily descends into chaos, becomes a symbol of humanity's problems with planetary management. "How were they to save the earth," Beard wonders, "when it was so much larger than the boot room?"

But Beard's dismissal of global warming changes when his unhappy home — his current wife is cheating on him in response to his half-dozen extramarital affairs — and his stalled work collide on the full-length polar-bear rug in his living room. (Updating Chekhov: If the author of a climate-change novel shows you a polar-bear rug in the first act, you can be sure it will bare its teeth in the next one.) Quite suddenly, Beard discovers what he believes is the solution to the problem of climate change: artificial photosynthesis, harnessing sunlight to split water and yield hydrogen and oxygen, which can be used to drive fuel cells and provide cheap, clean electricity. The earth will be saved, as will Beard's flagging career (and bank account). An unrepentant narcissist at heart, Beard has no trouble transitioning from disinterested physicist to clean-energy messiah, addressing conference halls full of skeptical businesspeople. "Now planetary stupidity was his business," McEwan writes — a slogan I should really put on the back of my business cards.

Artificial photosynthesis is a real idea, although it's further from deployment than the novel suggests. McEwan's background research is so seamlessly displayed that scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology — busy working on the same topic — might wonder if he's nicked their notes. But where Solar really succeeds — beyond the dark comedy, too long missing in McEwan's gentler recent work — is the author's ability to reveal the nature of the climate conundrum in the very human life of his protagonist. Beard is a Nobel Prize — winning mess, an obese man who can't stop eating, a serial adulterer who takes up with a lusty New Mexico waitress named Darlene while keeping a family back in London. Even his clean-tech business plan is touched by corruption at its heart. The question in Solar is whether Beard's scientific brilliance will win out before his pathological self-destructiveness catches up. So it is with the species.

But if Beard is far too human to be the hero they'd hoped for, well, climate scientists should still take heart. At least McEwan — steeped in scientific inquiry and accustomed to facing hard truths in his fiction — is no climate-change denier. "Here's the good news," Beard tells a business partner who is worried that climate doubters will hurt their business. "The U.N. estimates that already a third of a million people are dying from climate change. Even as we speak, Bangladesh is going down because the oceans are warming and expanding and rising." In other words, says a jovial Beard, "it's a catastrophe. Relax!" It may be the end of the world — but at least the scientists will be right.
McEwan's research shows in his books

**Saturday**
Neurosurgeon Henry Perowne sees the world through the cool eyes of a scientist — even when his family is threatened. McEwan shadowed a real doctor as part of his research.

**Enduring Love**
Joe Rose, a science writer, is bedeviled by a deranged man who tests the limits of Rose's implacable rationalism. In an epilogue, McEwan appends a mock psychiatric report.

**The Child in Time**
This 1987 novel features mind-bending discussions of quantum physics and the nature of time, circling around the tragic disappearance of a 3-year-old girl.

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**Q&A**

**Mystery Writer Walter Mosley**

*By GILBERT CRUZ Thursday, Mar. 25, 2010*
Detective writer Walter Mosley loves to dig deep into his characters. He wrote 11 books featuring the Los Angeles-based gumshoe Easy Rawlins (the first of which, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, was made into a Denzel Washington film) before retiring him in 2007. His latest private eye, former mob crook Leonid McGill, stars in the new novel *Known to Evil*, the second in what Mosley hopes will be a 10-book series. Mosley spoke with TIME about why he doesn't read mystery novels, the importance of character names, and why he never benefits from inspiration.

**You've written that Leonid is your first hardboiled character. How does that work for someone who has written in the genre for as long as you have?**

The genre is crime fiction, which encompasses everything from [British] cozies to that romantic Raymond Chandler, slumming angel-type detective to Dashiell Hammett, who actually had hardboiled characters. Easy Rawlins is not hardboiled. He's around a lot of hardboiled people, but he himself is a family guy. He's domestic. He has some kids that he's adopted. I guess he has a real kid somewhere. He has a house and works in the garden, that kind of stuff. That's not a hardboiled character.

Leonid McGill also has a family, but it's a whole different thing. One of the things about hardboiled is that the line between good and bad is blurred. Not for Easy Rawlins. But for Leonid, he's been on one side and he's trying to get to the other side, and it's not so easy once you've had a whole life in this other thing.

**Before writing this character, did you re-immersce yourself in hardboiled fiction?**

No. It's very important for me to not read crime fiction, actually. Plots in good crime fiction are so insidious that they get into your head and you don't even know that they're there. I was once writing a book — I forget which one it was, it was one of the Easy Rawlins ones — I was way more than halfway through when I realized, "This is very familiar to me." I'm talking to myself, saying "Well, of course it is, you just wrote it." And then I said, "No, it's familiar for some other reason." And then I realized that I had read it in another book. I was actually repeating a plot that I had read in another book, and I had to start over again.
Which is why as complex as your plots can be, it’s such a delight to actually see what seems to be a fully fleshed out character. Leonid McGill goes well beyond the typical, fairly bland mystery novel protagonist. Do you try to focus on character over plot?

With the original hardboiled detectives, there was an existentialism that entered the genre in the ’30s and ’40s. There was no connection to the world. No mother, no father, no sister, no brother, no friends, no dog, no regular apartment. If you get arrested, they throw you in jail and you can stay there because you don’t have any responsibility outside of the case.

With a person like that, there can’t be character development, so you actually give up one of the most important aspects of the novel. And that’s problematic. The onus now is, How do I create character while also moving forward the mystery, the plot, the crime, the resolution?

Your characters have very unique names. More unique that most authors. Where do you come up with them?

The thing about poor people in general, their lives are all within arms length, right? If you’re rich, you can reach back into history, you can reach out into outer space, you can do all sort of stuff if you’re rich. And if you’re middle class, you can at least imagine it. But poor people, what do they have? They have sex, and then they have children. And they have names for those children. And all kinds of hopes, and maybe despair, is tied up in the sex, and then later on in the naming of the children that came from the sex. And black history in America is very poor.

People skip over names. But names have lots of meaning. I had troubles in the beginning. People were saying, "You're going to name a black character Leonid? How can you do that?" And I’d say, "Why not? Does it make any more sense to call him John? I mean, if black people came from Africa, I should give my characters African names, you know?" But as a writer, as a novelist, names help to identify a character, and place a character in the world.

How much of a mental shift is involved in starting a new character that you think is going to be the foundation of a new series? How much of a character's life do you know at the outset?

I still don't know it. I just finished this morning the first chapter of the third Leonid McGill book. And I'm still learning about him. And I will be learning about him until I come to the last book, which I think will be number ten. And if I wrote an eleventh, I would find out even more about him. That gets back to the whole notion of character development. I see each book as a novel, but then I see the whole series as a novel — one big long novel. And so the character is always growing. If you know everything from the beginning, it's not interesting. It's hard to write.

What's your writing routine? Do you leave room for moments of inspiration?

What I do is I write every day, every single day in the morning. I just start writing. And things come up. And I'm not unaware of them, but I'm not completely in control of them either. Unconscious material start to become conscious. And when I stop writing, all during the day and that night, things are percolating. I wake up in the morning and there's more there. Things I didn't realize the day before. I'm completely
confident in that. That's how I approach writing. So I'm always writing, and my writing always ends up in a book.

Inspiration is a charged word, like everything is beautiful. It sounds positive. So when you're having a character brutally murder another person, does that come from inspiration? Nooo. Some kind of convoluted notion of the world has come up, and you've recorded it. But to be inspired? 'Inspired' work really sounds awful: 'The day was beautiful. The person I'm with is beautiful. We were deeply in love. We got married. We stayed together. We never cheated.'

Was it hard to stop writing about Easy Rawlins after 11 books?

No. The books still exist. They are still there. But they would have gotten boring. One thing I know is that if I kept writing about Easy, it would have been a big mistake. I was finished. The story was over. It was time to move on.

The Short List of Things to Do

WEEK OF MARCH 26

Hot Tub Time Machine

SEAN MCCABE FOR TIME

This seething cauldron of guy-movie stupidity is still bubbly fun — largely thanks to the scene-stealing Craig Robinson (Darryl from The Office), who also pilfered Pineapple Express. Whimpering over a cheating wife or channeling the Black Eyed Peas in Tub's rap finale, he sells camp like a master.
**Toy Story and Toy Story 2**

*Disney / Pixar*

*Toy Story* was the *Avatar* of 1995: the CGI triumph that forever changed animation. Now both *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* receive the high-def treatment in Blu-ray. Extras include profiles of the Pixar magicians behind the toys and exclusive previews of *TS3*.

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**The Way of the World**

*David Redfern / Redferns*

Even when he was singing "Young Man's Blues" in the '50s, Mose Allison came off like a sly, grouchy old ironist. On his first studio album in 12 years, the blues pianist's voice has caught up with his attitude; he's now 82, but his sardonic wit and clipped delivery retain their sting.

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**Memory**

This posthumous work from crime writer Donald Westlake, who died in 2008, concerns Paul Cole, whose memory is impaired when he is attacked midtryst by his lover's husband. Less a mystery than an unsparing look at a manadrift, it's a fitting final dispatch from a master.
When the Rain Stops Falling

T. CHARLES ERICKSON

It opens in the year 2039 amid an apocalyptic deluge, then travels back and forth in time to unravel the story of two families haunted by tragedy. Australian Andrew Bovell’s off-Broadway drama is complex but in a good way: moving and original, it’s the year’s best new play.
Why Start-Ups Are Charging Into Lithium

By STEVEN GRAY / DETROIT Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Sakti3's lithium-ion battery cells, the first of their kind, will enable cars to travel twice as fast as batteries do now. Photograph by Roy Ritchie for TIME

Professor Ann Marie Sastry demonstrates the steps in fabrication of Sakti3's advanced battery cells. The team is using advanced simulation to speed product design and to move their technology quickly into electric vehicles. Photograph by Roy Ritchie for TIME

The A123 Systems battery cell is the form factor expected to dominate transportation applications because such cells can bepackaged together with almost no wasted space. Photograph by CJ Benninger for TIME
The A123 Systems battery module is basically a sandwich of many cells. In an actual vehicle application, several modules are typically combined to achieve the desired voltage and energy storage capacity.

Photograph by CJ Benninger for TIME

In February, President Barack Obama told the crowd at a Henderson, Nev., high school that not so long ago, the U.S. made barely 2% of the advanced batteries used in the world's electric vehicles. Now, thanks to a multibillion-dollar federal investment, American companies are positioned to increase production tenfold — and potentially control 40% of the global lithium-ion-battery market by 2015. "We've created an entire new industry," Obama said.

Not quite, but certainly the beginnings of one. Demand for lithium-ion batteries is increasing dramatically as electric-car technology improves and prices drop. Nissan has introduced the all-electric Leaf, and this year Chevy will debut the long-anticipated gas-electric Volt. Those and future electric cars need battery packs, and at least a dozen American lithium-battery start-ups are competing with Asian companies such as Sanyo and Hitachi to provide them. "There's a tremendous amount of competition," says David Vieau, chief executive of A123 Systems, a Watertown, Mass., start-up powered by federal money that is vying for the business.

And it's a ton of business. The consulting firm Pike Research estimates that the global market for lithium-ion batteries could grow from $877 million this year to $8 billion by 2015. In North America, the market is expected to expand from about $287 million this year to $2.2 billion in 2015.

A123 Systems is a window on how the government's multibillion-dollar electric-vehicle gambit is working. The company was founded at MIT in 2001 with a $100,000 Department of Energy grant. One of its early products was lithium-ion batteries for power-tool maker Black & Decker. Last year, A123 Systems got a $249 million federal grant to open at least three lithium-ion-battery plants in Michigan that will employ hundreds of workers. Michigan is home to or close to many of the plants where electric vehicles are being made, of course, and the state has a surplus of skilled workers. It's not, ahem, a bad choice politically either.

Vieau attributes his company's recent success in part to its deep finances and manufacturing capacity. Customers regularly ask, he says, "Do you have the financial wherewithal to keep up and execute at a large scale?" Companies like A123 are busy wrestling with two key issues facing electric-car batteries:
providing enough power to the car’s engine and storing enough power to guarantee a defined range — say, 200 miles (about 320 km) — between charges. The goal for electric-car manufacturers is an affordable battery that can handle countless partial charge-discharge cycles over an eight-to-10-year life cycle. The battery has to absorb energy from braking and provide short bursts of power for acceleration. Lithium-ion batteries, with their high density-to-weight ratio, provide the greatest acceleration and range with the fewest batteries compared with lead-acid or nickel-metal-hydride batteries. One big problem: they can overheat and even blow up — bad enough in a single-battery laptop but potentially disastrous in a multibattery electric car. So engineers have been busy resolving the heat problem and refining the batteries’ ability to handle partial charge-discharge cycles.

As for affordability, lithium-ion battery packs currently cost about $1,000 per kilowatt-hour of capacity. Which means the GM Volt’s 16-kW-h battery pack alone would cost $16,000, according to some industry analysts. The price per kilowatt-hour has to fall below $500 to make production viable — and it will.

Sakti3 is another company trying to create a breakthrough. The company was launched a few years ago at the University of Michigan by an ambitious young engineering professor, Ann Marie Sastry. Sakti3 is developing solid-state (as opposed to liquid) lithium-ion batteries that Sastry believes will enable cars to travel twice as far as batteries do now, allowing the cars to be used the way internal-combustion-engine-driven vehicles are. Her firm is developing prototypes to deliver to automakers later this year. Sastry’s 20-employee firm, based in Ann Arbor, has generated millions of dollars in government grants and considerable buzz — but so far no juice.

Automakers, meanwhile, are developing their own battery capability. Ford, for one, believes that designing its own lithium-ion battery packs will help streamline the development of its electric vehicles and reduce the cost. Design experts will be brought in-house, says Nancy Gioia, Ford’s director of global electrification. By developing battery packs, Gioia says, "we get the volume and scale of more than 1 million units on our battery-management systems. Our suppliers aren’t in a position to do that yet."

While they wait for the U.S. electric-auto market to develop, some new suppliers are looking toward consumer electronic goods and markets outside the U.S. to keep their plants busy and improve quality until the big orders come in. "We’re in the early stages of what will be a significant run-up," says A123’s Vieau. "There’s a lot of business out there." Sastry echoes that view, saying many automakers rely on engine suppliers. "If the dream I and others have is realized, we’ll see batteries being treated like engines," she says. Job engines, no less.
Cash Crunch: Why Extreme Thriftiness Stunts Are the Rage

By BRAD TUTTLE Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Christopher Greenslate and Kerri Leonard, high school teachers outside San Diego, were griping about the rising cost of groceries when they decided to see what life is like for the billion people on earth who spend $1 a day on food. The couple’s blog took off, and their book, On a Dollar a Day, hit stores in February. They’re part of a growing population of consumers chronicling their efforts to do without, swearing off such things as riding in cars and buying clothes — or buying anything new at all. And they’re not making these vows simply to save money. For some, the goal is spiritual cleansing. For others, it’s to raise awareness of big issues like the environment. It’s also a cheap way to gather good material. If a book deal comes out of it, so much the better.

High-profile books like last year’s No Impact Man, which details one New Yorker’s attempt to spend a year without having a negative impact on the environment, may be particularly popular now because of the Great Recession. It is no longer fashionable to flash bling. Today’s monklike experimenters are flaunting what they don’t have.

"It's like everyone is doing their own version of Lent," says A.J. Jacobs, the virtuoso of this self-as-guinea-pig genre. He has written about such odd and intermittently enlightening challenges as living strictly according to the Bible for a year, during which he followed the Ten Commandments as well as lesser-known rules like the ones prohibiting the shaving of beards and wearing clothing of mixed fibers.

These kinds of experiments are designed to be a shock to the system, but do they have any lasting effect? Greenslate and Leonard decided from the get-go that they would do their dollar-a-day diet for just a month, and even that limited period wound up being a major challenge both mentally and physically. They were so hungry, they experienced dizziness at work, crabbiness at home and extreme boredom of
the tongue after too many bland meals of oatmeal or beans. A nightly dollop of peanut butter was the only indulgence that fit the budget.

After their month was up, they cut loose with some chocolate doughnuts. "The feeling was probably similar to what addicts feel once they finally get a fix," writes Greenslate in their book. "Pure ecstasy, with a recognition for how good it feels to be bad once again."

But they don't binge very often. Like other deprivation bloggers, they say their project made them realize they need far less than what they were accustomed to consuming.

Do-without projects can entertain, preach and irritate — sometimes all at once. They can attract participants and lose them too. Since September, more than 130 people have joined Seattle clotheshorse Sally Bjornsen on her yearlong quest not to buy a single garment other than underwear. But in March, Bjornsen wrote a post about how two fellow self-deprivers had officially given up and how she wished they would tell her their reasons for doing so. "Why not just cheat and then recommit? Why flat out just call it quits?" one commenter asked. "Was it too hard? Too silly?"

The answer is probably both. It's difficult, particularly for affluent consumers, to stick to their own arbitrary rules. Bjornsen admits she's fallen off the wagon at least once. Arriving at the gym with no workout pants and with a babysitter already paid for at home, she sucked up the guilt and bought a $98 pair of Lululemon pants.

Sure, she could have skipped the workout, but it's this kind of "What would you have done?" minidrama that keeps readers coming back to these blogs. Adam Greenfield, a documentary filmmaker in San Francisco who managed to get through 2009 without setting foot inside a car, got ribbed by commenters after he revealed that he had a friend pick up stuff he had bought at a lumberyard while he rode his bike home. One scathing commenter wrote that Greenfield's yearlong endeavor "proves nothing except that one individual can Rube Goldberg around getting in a car."

Sometimes self-deprivers adopt rules that turn out to be not only impractical but counterproductive. Rachel Kesel, a conservationist in San Francisco, has blogged since 2006 about living according to the Compact, a group with more than 10,000 members on Yahoo! who promise to buy nothing new other than food and medicine. But Kesel's work involves long days in the woods battling invasive species, and trying to get by in secondhand clothes meant that she was often pulling weeds in pants that had more holes than thread. Now Kesel begrudgingly buys new, highly durable gear, though only when she must, she insists.

Like many bloggers who have embarked on a deprivation experiment, she says trying to adhere to the Compact has made her realize "how mindlessly I'm capable of buying stuff." One month into the experiment, she walked out of a store with a shiny new can opener, only later realizing she'd broken her vow.

By the end of her first year in the Compact, however, when she and her cohort neared a jubilee day, on which they'd celebrate by buying something new, Kesel went into a store, eager to purchase a
windbreaker she'd had her eye on. But she was unable to close the deal. "I couldn't get jubilant," she says. "I think my credit-card arm has been broken."

Mothers Who Opt for Breast Milk, Not Breast-Feeding

By CATHERINE SHARICK Thursday, Mar. 11, 2010

Noel Hendricks / Getty Images

When Crystal Byrd's second child was born, the doctors urged her to place her baby to her breast. Byrd declined. She had already decided, months earlier, that she would not breast-feed. It was a lifestyle choice, says Byrd, 33, a stay-at-home mom in Cedar Creek Lake, Texas. "I'm a huge fan of breast milk, just not of nursing," she says.

Byrd says she tried breast-feeding her first child, who is now 12, and lasted nine weeks before giving up. "I just did not like it. I felt locked away. I was young and self-conscious, and everyone would leave the room when I breast-fed. I was lonely," Byrd says.

Her plan for Baby No. 2, born in 2003, was to pump milk and exclusively bottle-feed. The criticism came swiftly: lactation consultants warned that she would never be able to express enough milk. Doctors told her she would not bond with her baby. Her friends and family suggested that for all her trouble, she would be better off switching to formula. Byrd held firm.

By the time her baby daughter was 4 months old, Byrd had fed her exclusively with expressed breast milk and had stashed away enough milk in a deep freezer (she estimates she pumped an extra 3,500 oz.) to last until her child turned 1. After the birth of her third child, in 2009, she pumped for 8½ months, bottle-fed and, again, stored enough milk for a year.
2010女NIKE套装新款出炉
惊爆价￥118

超值体验价￥118

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Byrd isn’t the only mother choosing to breast-feed off the breast. Although there is no official tally of the number of women who pump exclusively, numerous conversations with mothers suggest that the practice is not uncommon and perhaps even growing. Their reasons for doing so are varied: some mothers say they dislike the feeling of a suckling baby. Others say it is painful or that the baby fails to latch on. Some want to avoid the uncomfortable possibility of having to breast-feed in public. For many, including Byrd, a key issue is time. "People think that since I am a stay-at-home mom, I should always have my baby attached to my breast," she says. "Well, sometimes I have other things to do." It takes her half the time to pump and bottle-feed as it would to breast-feed, because she can express milk from both breasts at the same time, rather than waiting for the baby to switch from one side to the other.

Pumping is a win-win proposition, say mothers: it gives them freedom while still ensuring their babies get that all-important breast milk. It can be scheduled around work and leisure. Women can drink alcohol, for instance, and "pump and dump," so they avoid giving their babies tainted milk. Further, pumping allows fathers and other caregivers equal time in feeding the baby.

Technology has helped fuel the trend. Medela, the Swiss breast-pump maker and industry leader, introduced its first electric-powered, vacuum-operated at-home breast pump in the U.S. in 1991. Five years later, the company launched the Pump in Style, a portable breast pump that comes in a fashionable bag that looks like a purse. Pumping mothers can also purchase breast-milk storage bags, nipple shields and power adapters for the car so they can pump on the go. A hands-free pumping bra made by a company called Easy Expressions lets busy mothers pump while checking e-mail or even holding (if not feeding) their baby.

Wendy Williamson, a self-described type-A personality, breast-fed her son for only two days. She says the experience made her feel anxious and depressed because she couldn't tell how much milk he was drinking. She started pumping instead, and says it wasn't until she knew exactly how much her son was eating that she could relax and enjoy her new baby. Williamson continued to express milk for her son for more than a year, and donated 200 oz. to a local milk bank in Austin, Texas. "Some of us moms are a little neurotic, and the pump really works for us," Williamson says. "We can see what the baby eats, and it makes us feel so much better."

But lactation experts say mothers should allow themselves more than two days to adjust to breast-feeding. Often it takes much longer to overcome initial anxiety, discomfort or even pain, and researchers say the benefits of breast-feeding may be long-lasting. Studies have found, for instance, that breast-fed babies are more capable than bottle-fed infants at determining when they're full and that that difference may carry into childhood, with breast-fed children developing healthier eating behaviors, reducing their risk for obesity. Since breast-feeding mothers focus on the infant's cues for fullness and hunger, rather than on feeding schedules or ounce-notches on the bottle, they tend not to overfeed their children, studies suggest, which encourages both mother and child to tune in to internal cues for fullness.

And while doctors agree that breast-feeding is best for babies' health, other research indicates that it benefits mothers too. One large study, published in 2009 in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology, found that women who never breast-fed were more likely than women who had to develop high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease years later, in menopause.
In an intriguing paper published in July in the journal *Medical Hypotheses*, Gordon Gallup, a professor of biopsychology at the University of Albany, posits another upside to sticking with the breast: a mother's decision not to breast-feed may unwittingly mimic child loss, evolutionarily speaking. Given that bottle-feeding technology did not exist for the last 99.9% of human evolutionary history, Gallup reasons, the likeliest reason a mother of yore would not have breast-fed is the death or loss of the child. He suggests that the consequences for the bottle-feeding modern-day mother could include an increased risk of postpartum depression and difficulty producing milk.

But pumping mothers may be protected, he says, since the pump simulates a baby's suck and stimulates the flow of milk. Still, since lactation has a lot to do with the mother's direct hormonal response to her child, for some women, Gallup says, pumps may not be as efficient as the real thing. "When you just have a relationship with a pump instead of with a baby, the milk supply can dwindle because the mother may not be secreting the hormone oxytocin that aids in a mother's milk letdown," he says. For those mothers, he suggests staying near their babies or looking at photos while expressing milk.

La Leche League, the world's most active breast-feeding support and advocacy group, insists that breast is best for mother and child. "We would encourage mothers to feed their babies from the breast to promote bonding," says Loretta McCallister, a spokeswoman for the organization. But she concedes that using expressed milk exclusively does not contradict La Leche League's core message: "Women who choose to pump are still providing breast milk for their babies, while doing what is best for their families," she says. "And that is much better than turning to formula."

That's about as much support as pumping mothers get, they say. When Byrd decided to stop breast-feeding her first child, she says doctors suggested formula as the only alternative and never once mentioned pumping. Private lactation consultants typically do not offer pumping as an alternative either, as their goal is to get the mother to breast-feed. Williamson was so frustrated by the lack of available information about pumping from her doctor and elsewhere that she created a website, Got Breast Pump!, in 2004, after having fed her second baby exclusively with expressed milk.

Williamson's site offers how-to's for scheduling pumping sessions and increasing milk supply and sells pumping-related products. In the past 10 years, online community boards for exclusively pumping mothers have popped up on iVillage.com and Yahoo!

That's why Melissa Brown, 31, a program coordinator who pumped milk for two children, first logged on to iVillage. "The iVillage board made me feel normal in what I was doing and gave me the confidence I needed to keep going and get on track," says Brown. In 2008, she became the community leader of iVillage's exclusively pumping board. She estimates that since then, she has helped hundreds of women get through the difficult early days of pumping.

Despite the general bias toward breast-feeding, mothers like Byrd say pumping was the only feeding option that made the first years of their newborns' lives manageable. "People need to understand that after breast-feeding from the breast and bottle-feeding with formula, there is a viable third option for feeding your infant — and that's exclusively pumping," Byrd says. "And all mothers should have a right to choose this option and receive the support and care they deserve from their doctors and families."
10 Questions for Census Chief Robert Groves

Carolyn Caster / AP

What’s the most common lie people tell on Census forms?

Aaron Gertler

WILMINGTON, DEL.

The research is pretty clear: there are very few people who deliberately lie. There are interesting answers that people supply. When we’re asking about race, every decade a few people will write in “human.” So that is probably not a lie.

Why is the word Negro—considered by many to be a racial slur—used in the race section?

Matthew Thacker

BOWLING GREEN, OHIO

Before the 2000 Census, there were a set of studies that queried how people would self-classify racially. One of the discoveries was that there was an aging cohort of African Americans who [used] Negro. For that reason, in the 2000 form, that word was used. The check box had the label Black, African American or Negro. There were about 50,000 people who checked that box and also wrote in Negro. We inferred that they felt pretty strongly about [using that word] to describe themselves. We analyzed that group, and to our surprise, half of them were under 45. That was a finding.

Why is race relevant at all to the Census?

Christine Hermann

MIDDLETOWN, DEL.

It is mandated under the Voting Rights and Civil Rights acts. When states redistrict, many of their redistricting plans are reviewed to make sure that the racial composition of the congressional districts they drew up are not discriminatory. We’re following the law.
Who gets the information collected by the Census? Do other government agencies get to see the forms, or are they strictly confidential?

Yitz Engel, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

The individual forms go to a processing center within heavily secure [Census] buildings. We aggregate answers to produce statistics. Nobody [else] sees your data for 72 years under the law. If I violate that law, I go to prison. All my colleagues took the same oath.

What do you think will be the most surprising information the Census will reveal?

Adam Cook, LOUISVILLE, KY.

I was in Minneapolis, and I spent an hour talking to the Somali community there. People in Minneapolis know about this community. People in the rest of the country don't. What's going to happen to surprise us all is the dispersion of new ethnic groups all over the country. Immigration doesn't just come to the East Coast or the West Coast the way it did in earlier generations. It's everywhere now.

Why only a one-pager this time?

Patrick Ryanball

WASHINGTON, PA.

We noticed in the 2000 Census that the return rate for the short form was much higher than the long form. For that reason, in order to get higher participation rates, we shortened the whole thing.

What was the rationale behind airing an ad for the Census during the Super Bowl?

Greg Melvin

GROSSE POINTE WOODS, MICH.

We spent about $2.5 million on that ad. The Super Bowl had the biggest audience in the history of U.S. television; 113 million people saw that ad. Our purpose was to make people aware that the Census was coming.

Why send a pre-Census letter?

Alex de Soto, PHILADELPHIA

Most houses are going to get an advance letter, questionnaire packets and a little reminder postcard. We think by sending those things out, we're reducing our follow-up costs by about $500 million. In the total picture, this saves money because we don't have to spend it on salaries.

Have you ever applied your statistical smarts to hobbies?
Francis Bova III, CHICAGO

I'm a bit of a genealogist. All of us can go back to old Censuses and do little studies of the neighborhoods of our ancestors. Who did they live with? What were the kinds of people they lived with?

Which is more stressful--your summer as a prison guard or running the Census Bureau?

Bailey Kurko

MARCO ISLAND, FLA.

That was junior year of college. It was a great summer. Very low stress.
NOTEBOOK

The Moment

By BILL POWELL Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

It's possible that Google's defiance of China--on March 22 it stopped censoring its search engine there and redirected traffic to a Hong Kong site--is linked to co-founder Sergey Brin's roots. His parents, Soviet Jews, emigrated from Moscow to the U.S. at the Cold War's height, and Brin has a keen awareness of anything that smacks of political censorship. Google, of course, knew about the compromises one must make to do business in China when it entered the market in 2006. But it seems that Brin decided this year that the company could no longer abide the level of censorship, and hacking, and e-mail pilfering that takes place behind Beijing's Great Firewall. The showdown comes at a time when the most important economic relationship on the planet is getting frayed, as Washington and Beijing swap accusations about trade protection and currency values. Google and other technology companies have long seen China as a key source of future success. But on free speech, trade and just about any other matter that companies care about, China plays by its own rules. As Google now knows.

The World

By Harriet Barovick; Laura Fitzpatrick; Alexandra Silver; Claire Suddath; Alyssa Fetini; Kristi Oloffson; Kayla Webley Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

1 | Washington

Next Up, Immigration?

On March 21, the same day the House passed its health care reform bill, tens of thousands of activists and supporters took to the Washington Mall, eager to spark action on what they hope will be the next big issue in the nation's capital: immigration reform. The crowd of mostly Latino immigrants, who arrived on more than 700 buses from 30 states, waved American flags and chanted "Yes, we can!" in both Spanish and English. President Obama addressed the crowd in a taped video message, but many demonstrators called for him to do more if he is to live up to his campaign promise to overhaul the immigration system. Speaking to the 10.8 million illegal immigrants nationwide and their confederates, Illinois Representative Luis Gutierrez said, "We've been patient long enough."

2 | China

Trouble for Rio Tinto

The Shanghai trial of four Rio Tinto executives charged with bribery and commercial espionage concluded on March 24. The Shanghai-based employees of the British-Australian mining company, who
were arrested in July, confessed to accepting bribes from Chinese steel companies during negotiations over iron-ore prices. With a verdict expected within weeks, they face up to 15 years in prison. Though Rio Tinto will seek to continue to collaborate with Chinese companies, the high-profile case has shed light on the worsening environment for foreign corporations in China.

3 | Russia

Putin Protests Disappoint

A nationwide “Day of Anger” that agitators had hyped for weeks proved to be marked less by ire than by indifference. Organizers, miffed at the sputtering economy and rising prices, had hoped tens of thousands would show on March 20 to call for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to resign. But demonstrators in some cities numbered only in the hundreds. The state media, meanwhile, largely ignored the protests. The Kremlin was unmoved.

4 | Ireland

Bishop Resigns

On March 24, four days after the Vatican released a papal letter concerning the problem of sexual abuse in the Irish Church, Pope Benedict XVI accepted the resignation of Bishop John Magee. The 73-year-old clergyman, who became head of the diocese of Cloyne in 1987 and previously served as personal secretary to three Popes in the 1970s and ’80s, had been under pressure for some time to step down because of his mishandling of abuse complaints that date back to the 1990s.

5 | Qatar

Countries Reject Animal-Protection Proposals

The international community rejected U.S.-led efforts to expand protections for a number of endangered and threatened species at a meeting of the U.N. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Of the roughly 40 proposals on the agenda, the most contentious dealt with a prized fish. Japan, which imports nearly 80% of bluefin tuna for use in sushi and sashimi, fought hard against a proposed trade ban. Conservationists warned against prioritizing economic interests over the survival of an entire species.

Major CITES decisions: winners and losers

Bluefin tuna

A proposed trade ban was rejected despite the depletion of much of the world’s bluefin stock

Elephant

A ban on trading ivory was reaffirmed, though Tanzania and Zambia pushed for it to be lifted
Shark

Only one of four species hunted for shark-fin soup, the porbeagle, was granted protection

6 | China

THE DESERT MOVES

The sky took on an orange hue as sandstorms swept through Beijing on March 20 and 22, causing the city's weather bureau to issue its worst possible air-quality rating. Other parts of northern China were also affected by the brutal conditions, with residents cautioned to stay indoors. Farther south, air-pollution indexes in Hong Kong and Taiwan reached record levels. While sandstorms are not uncommon in China because of Asia's large interior deserts, growing desertification has exacerbated the problem.

7 | France

Sarkozy's Defeat

French President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party didn't just lose the March 21 regional elections--it got trampled. In a shocking reversal of the 2007 elections that put the UMP in power, a coalition of leftist and environmentalist parties took control of 21 of France's 22 regions, winning 54% of the vote vs. the UMP's 35%. Critics point to France's high unemployment rate and immigration fears as reasons for the public's discontent.

8 | Washington

An Alliance Unsettled

With tensions over Israel's planned housing construction in East Jerusalem still lingering, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference on March 22. They both reiterated their dedication to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and addressed the dangers posed by Iran. But it was clear the U.S. would maintain its position against Israeli building on disputed land. Netanyahu met with Clinton and President Obama during his trip, but news of another East Jerusalem housing project threatened to further strain relations.

9 | New York

ACORN to Close Doors

Unable to recover from financial woes and scandal, community-organizing group ACORN announced March 22 it was disbanding. Since 1970 the group had fought to raise the minimum wage, counseled low-income homeowners and registered the poor to vote. In September a video sting operation run by conservative activists hit the group hard: Congress cut its funding, the Census dropped its partnership, and donations plunged.
Percentage of doctorates earned by women

CHEMISTRY

MATH

COMPUTER SCIENCE ENGINEERING

PHYSICS

SOURCE: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

10 | Washington

Math, Science Biases Remain

An American Association of University Women report found that although the number of women entering science and engineering fields is growing, gender biases still affect their career aspirations. While boys and girls graduate from high school with similar math and science grades and the ratio of males to females who score above 700 on the math SAT has narrowed from 13:1 to 3:1 in the past three decades, women still earn only 20% of bachelor's degrees in physics and engineering.

* | What They're Weaponizing in India: The newest addition to India's antiterrorism arsenal is tastier than most. After successful trials in defense labs, the military is converting bhut jolokia— the world's hottest chili—into hand grenades. Intended to render suspects harmless in much the same way tear gas does, the nontoxic bombs have an added bonus, according to R.B. Srivastava, a scientist at the Defence Research and Development Organisation: the grenades' "pungent smell can choke terrorists and force them out of their hideouts."
"Government takeover!" So yelled the many critics of President Barack Obama's health care reform bill. But in their focus on the main event, Republicans seem to have all but ignored another part of the legislation that more precisely fits their rhetoric. In addition to securing the President a victory on health care, the House bill took him one step closer to delivering on a promise to reform the college-student-loan system. If a final piece of legislation before the Senate is approved, millions of students will get their federal loans directly from the Department of Education. In other words, the federal government would sweep aside private competitors in the biggest change to the federal student-loan program since its creation in 1965. It's a legitimate government takeover.

So where's all that outrage now? The thing is, the government already runs much of the student-loan industry. For decades under the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program, the government has handed out subsidies to large banks and companies like Sallie Mae that lend money to student borrowers and collect it from them. In addition, the federal government has been obligated to cover up to 97% of any defaulted loan, effectively eliminating risk for lenders. Figuring that money could be saved by cutting out the middleman, Congress created the Direct Loan program — in which money goes from the
Education Department to students — in 1993. The programs have been in competition with each other since then.

Until now. Gone will be the subsidies, and gone will be the FFEL program. As of July 1, all new student loans will go through the Direct Loan program. The savings — an estimated $61 billion over 10 years — will be used to shore up and increase the need-based Pell Grant program by $36 billion and invest in community colleges. While the Administration has reason enough to crow about the proposed measures, it has had to scale back some of its bigger plans. An earlier version of the bill would have invested an additional $20 billion and offered even more substantial financial-aid increases. As it stands, $13.5 billion will be used to stem Pell Grant shortfalls resulting from the increased number of students forced back to college by the ailing economy. And a plan to raise the maximum Pell amount to almost $7,000 per year by 2020 has been replaced with one that maxes out at about $6,000.

With his first major piece of education legislation out of the way, Obama will likely move on to K-12 matters later this year as he attempts to rework the unpopular No Child Left Behind law. But before then, members of Congress (and America’s students) are going on spring break.

Verbatim

‘The concepts of man or woman don’t fit me.’

NORRIE MAY-WELBY, who became the first person in the world to be classified as genderless after Australian officials altered May-Welby’s birth certificate to read “neuter”

‘We said that if they are extending a metal hand inside a velvet glove, we won’t accept.’

AYATULLAH ALI KHAMENEI, Iran’s ruling cleric, during a televised address in which he pilloried the U.S. government for mixing peaceful overtures with anti-Iran criticism

‘We don’t trample the livelihood of those we’re trying to win over.’

COMMANDER JEFFREY EGGERS, a top adviser to General Stanley McChrystal, on the reluctance of U.S. and NATO commanders to eradicate opium crops in Marjah; the stance is part of an effort to win over Afghans residing in former Taliban territory

‘There are compelling reasons to believe that Israel was responsible for the misuse of British passports.’

DAVID MILIBAND, the British Foreign Secretary, explaining the expulsion of an Israeli diplomat over the Mossad's alleged involvement in the January assassination of a Hamas leader

‘This kind of mistreatment is very common in Chinese zoos.’
HUA NING, program director for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, on the 11 rare Siberian tigers that starved to death at a Shenyang zoo; three more are in critical condition

'To me, piracy is something adventurous. It makes you think about Johnny Depp.'

AGNETE HAALAND, of the International Federation of Actors, arguing that piracy should no longer be used to describe illegal downloading because the term is too catchy

'Since they turned me down for Dancing with the Stars, I had nothing better to do.'

BILL CLINTON, on filling in for President Obama, who was unable to make the annual Gridiron Dinner because of the impending vote on his health care bill

TALKING HEADS

George Will

Criticizing the Obama Administration's proposed changes to No Child Left Behind, in the Washington Post:

"But how does one fulfill--or know when one has fulfilled--Obama's goal of 'college and career readiness' for every child by 2020? That gauzy goal resembles the 1994 goal that by 2000 ... every child would start school 'ready to learn.' Is 'college and career readiness' one goal or two?"

--3/18/10

Hampton Stevens

On the significance of Tiger Woods' return to golf, in the Atlantic:

"Whether Tiger's comeback is a sports story ... depends on who is doing the asking--or the watching. For the casual observer, Woods is interesting mostly for what he represents off the golf course ... For the fan, how he performs matters most, not because birdies bring redemption but because the simple beauty of the game trumps all social discourse. The question, really, is whether you only care about Tiger Woods because he plays golf or you only care about golf because Tiger plays it."

--3/23/10

Bill Bennett

On this November's midterm elections, in a National Review blog:

"The election of 1994 was an elephant stampede in the wake of ethics scandals, higher taxes, more spending, and a failed health-care bill. This year, we've seen ethics scandals, higher taxes, more spending, and a health-care bill achieved by an upside-down view of political power and constitutional perversion--the 2010 election will be a clearing of the jungle."
Most of the salt Americans consume comes from processed foods, which may not taste salty at all. Quentin Bacon / Corbis

Humans can't live without salt, but most Americans could do with far less of it. On average, they consume roughly twice the amount their bodies need. All that gorging has boosted rates of hypertension, heart disease and stroke, costing the U.S. up to $24 billion in health care costs and 150,000 lives every year. Amid growing public-health concern, PepsiCo announced plans to introduce a "designer salt" (its crystals are shaped in a way that wrings more taste out of smaller amounts) that will reduce the sodium in Lay's Classic potato chips and other snacks by 25% over the coming decade.
Sodium chloride wasn’t always a stealth killer. Despite a known link between sodium and high blood pressure, iodized table salt saved lives when U.S. manufacturers started producing it in 1924, adding a bulwark against iodine-deficiency-related diseases like goiter to every kitchen table. Salt consumption spiraled into a public-health problem only after World War II, when postwar prosperity buoyed appetites for restaurant meals and presalted, processed and frozen foods. Salt-free cookbooks were already appearing by the 1950s, and two decades later manufacturers dropped salt from baby food. By 1981 the FDA had launched sodium-education initiatives aiming to cut U.S. salt intake. Three years later, sodium was added to the list of ingredients required to be mentioned on nutrition labels.

Despite such efforts to increase awareness, salt consumption in the U.S. has jumped 50% over the past four decades. One reason: salt often lurks where you don’t expect it. A dollop of cottage cheese, for instance, can pack twice as much of the mineral as a palmful of salted peanuts. Plus, as much as 75% of Americans’ sodium intake comes from processed foods like canned soup and baking mixes—which means you could easily blow past your daily allotment without ever picking up the saltshaker.

The Skimmer

By KAYLA WEBLEY Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife

By Lisa Miller

Harper; 331 pages

As far as heaven goes, there are many more questions than answers: Will we all get our own mansions? Will we see our loved ones? Will our bodies look the way they did when we were 25? Will we even have bodies? The Bible, Koran and Torah leave much about the afterlife up in the air. That means many of us—including the 80% of Americans who say they believe in heaven—must fill in the blanks ourselves. In her new book, Newsweek religion editor Lisa Miller gives it a go, investigating the different concepts of eternity held by the world’s most prominent
religions and talking to religious scholars, pastors, monks and common folk alike to get a better idea of what heaven might be. For some, it's "a place that embodies the best of everything" and is full of "green, green pastures," while for others it is simply "the home of God." Naturally, Miller doesn't come to a neat conclusion about what to expect when our last breath arrives. But she does offer a lot of faith for thought in this thorough and intelligent look at life after death.

READ

SKIM [X]

TOSS

Girija Prasad Koirala
By ISHAAN THAROOR Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

In a country riven by Monarchists and Maoists, Girija Prasad Koirala served as peacemaker. Nepal's four-time Prime Minister and champion of democracy died on March 20 at 86. His six decades in politics began amid striking laborers in jute mills, rose through civil war and regicide and ended with the future of his impoverished nation still poised on a knife edge.

Koirala, popularly known as GP Koirala, was at the forefront of mass protests in 1990 that eventually forced Nepal's King Birendra to introduce multiparty democracy into the Himalayan kingdom. Elections then catapulted Koirala and his Nepali Congress Party into power in 1991. But the subsequent years would be tumultuous ones, as a Maoist rebellion ravaged Nepal, leading to thousands of deaths. Power struggles and factional demagoguery came to define Kathmandu politics.

The murky 2001 massacre of Birendra and much of the royal family could have plunged the country into anarchy had it not been for Koirala's steady stewardship. He was instrumental in reaching out to the Maoists, bringing them into a peace process that abolished the monarchy in 2008 and transformed the country into a republic. But festering divisions remain, and there is no elder statesman of Koirala's stature to lead Nepal forward.

Koirala was born in exile in colonial India--his prominent dissident family at odds with the rulers in Kathmandu at the time--and grew up steeped in the secular traditions of South Asia's independence movements. Koirala's bearing, to the end of his days, was not unlike that of India's own apostle of democracy and first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru: austere and gaunt, forever garbed in an elegant blazer and his trademark Nepali cap.
Stewart Udall

By TOM UDALL Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

My father Stewart Udall is rightly celebrated as a visionary statesman of the modern conservation movement. His legacy as Secretary of the Interior from 1961 to ’69 is marked by such accomplishments as the creation of four national parks, six national monuments, eight seashores and lakeshores, 20 historic sites and 50 wildlife refuges. But I believe it is his influence on the way we think about conservation that may have the most lasting impact.

Nearly 50 years ago my father, who died March 20 at 90, wrote The Quiet Crisis to warn Americans against the overuse of natural resources and the loss of open spaces. He urged the adoption of a new land consciousness to protect the environment and argued that the ideals inherent in the preservation of wilderness, watersheds and recreation areas must be given the same value as the benefits derived from exploiting our abundant resources. Such convictions were consistent with his commitment to public service and social justice. During his time at the Interior Department, he also required the Washington Redskins to integrate before he allowed them to play in a stadium built on public land.

My father believed that a commitment to conservation transcended the partisan divide. He dreamed that a commitment to conservation could bring this country together again.

Udall is a U.S. Senator from New Mexico

Fess Parker

By ALEXANDRA SILVER Monday, Apr. 05, 2010

Chances are, if you grew up in the mid-1950s, you either owned an official Davy Crockett coonskin cap or had the lyrics of the television show’s theme song committed to memory: “Born on a mountaintop in Tennessee/ Greenest state in the land of the free ... Davy, Davy Crockett/ King of the wild frontier.” Under the iconic cap--just one of the show’s many merchandising tie-ins--stood Fess Parker, who died on March 18 at 85. The 6-ft. 6-in. Texas-born actor fit the rugged American frontiersman mold so well in the five Crockett episodes of ABC’s Disneyland that he went on to play Daniel Boone in the 1960s NBC series of the same name. (Boone, as the ballad went, “was a man, yes a big man!”) Parker starred in such movies as Old Yeller and Westward Ho, the Wagons! But in the years following his TV fame, he set his sights on real estate development and started a family winery in California. Parker, who was married to his wife Marcella for 50 years, had two children, 11 grandkids and a great-grandchild.
Inbox

Of Doom and the Moon

TIME's 10-year forecast as described in "10 Ideas for the Next 10 Years" is overconfident [March 22]. In the first entry, "prophets of doom" are seen as missing the reality of American "nimbleness and adaptability." Yet your story misses the reality that America is in a governance gridlock, which raises serious questions about the nation's ability to cope with current crises like debt, unemployment, the terrorist threat and a diminished competitive position globally.

William Gruber, LEXINGTON, MASS.

Fascinating issue—with the exception of Michael Lind's "The Boring Age." We could have moon colonies if it were economically feasible. Because of PCs, advanced linguistics and organizations that care, hundreds of "primitive" cultures are acquiring an alphabet and a written language for the first time. They are leaping into the modern world. Lind is in the Stone Age.

Bob Thomas, ELIZABETHTON, TENN.

Lind sounds like the patent-office guy who wanted to close up shop because he thought everything that was going to be invented had been invented. Hasn't he ever heard of nanotechnology? The cool phones he mentions are only one product of this exciting, growing field of study.

Carl Paulson, LEWISTON, IDAHO

Mom, Can U Bring Me a Coke? TY!

As a baby-boom mother of two millennials, I got a chuckle from Nancy Gibbs' Essay [March 22]. The fact that younger people are more optimistic doesn't come without a price. My husband and I pay for college expenses and cell phones and have sent the girls on trips I dreamed of as a child. And one of my daughters lives at home. If I'd had that growing up, I would be optimistic too!

Robin Cornick, WEST HILLS, CALIF.

Awareness of body language and facial expression is among the social skills lost on a majority of the young people to whom I teach etiquette. I advise them to take small breaks from their gadgets and focus on actual conversations to gain vital skills they won't absorb via text or tweet.

Maura Graber, ONTARIO, CALIF.

I have dubbed this generation the junior high generation. They love vampires, zombies, cartoons. They call home many times a day. Reading, even e-mail, is too demanding; they text people in the next room. Doesn't that sound like a 12-year-old to you?
Choppy Seas

Re "The Sea Witch" [March 22]: I find it ironic that among the accusations against Captain Holly Graf is that she used "salty" language. Does the phrase swears like a sailor apply only to nonmilitary mariners?

Richard Baker

CORNWALL ON HUDSON, N.Y.

Graf's behavior raises a question. Her bizarre actions were well known by everyone in several commands. Since all officers must undergo a periodic evaluation of their performance by superiors, how did Graf continue to get top ratings? That question, it seems, must be asked of Graf's superiors.

William Aylward, RESTON, VA.

A commanding officer of a Navy warship is somewhat akin to a god and must act as such. I served seven years in the Navy, four at sea, and never heard a commanding officer swear at others or berate officers in front of lower-ranking individuals. That is not how a CO is supposed to act.

Thomas Malone, MINNETONKA, MINN.

While Graf's tactics are certainly not to be condoned, it's interesting how this behavior in males is so commonly overlooked.

Emily Dalzell, BISMARCK, N.D.

Poli-Sci, Real Time

Re "Arlen in the Middle" [March 22]: I learned how self-serving Arlen Specter was in 2000 when he visited my university and a reporter asked him his favorite part of being a Senator. Visiting colleges and hearing students' opinions, he said.

Jake Miller, MECHANICSBURG, PA.