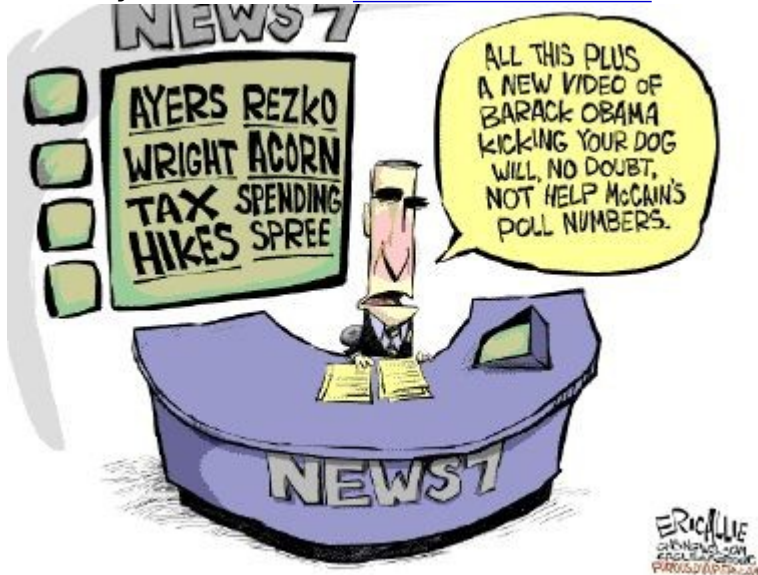


Century Marks

Century Marks in the [November 4, 2008](#) issue



Eric Allie

Brazil apologizes: Because of his close association with Dom Helder Câmara, the Catholic archbishop who was an outspoken critic of Brazil's harsh military rule in the years 1964-1985, Methodist missionary Fred Morris was kidnapped by the Brazilian military in 1974, confined for 17 days and severely tortured, then expelled from the country. (Morris wrote an account of his ordeal for the Century's January 22, 1975, issue.) But last month Morris was invited back to Brazil by the Ministry of Justice's Amnesty Commission. Along with a few other victims of the former dictatorship, he was given an apology and was formally asked for forgiveness in a ceremony attended by government and church officials. Morris said he was especially moved when a Brazilian Methodist bishop asked forgiveness for the Brazilian Methodist Church's failure to come to his aid in 1974. At the end of the ceremony Morris was awarded an indemnification, which consisted of a lump-sum payment and a monthly pension for life. Continuing his Latin American ministry, Morris, 75, is moving this month from Panama to Nicaragua, where he will develop materials for children's environmental education for use in Sunday schools (AP and reports from Fred Morris).

Opposite attraction: When Ted Triebel and Peter Klopfer began jogging together 21 years ago, they didn't know the truth about each other—that Triebel, a retired navy captain, was a former prisoner of war in Vietnam who had just come to Duke University to run its new navy ROTC program, or that Klopfer, a pacifist Quaker, had been sentenced to prison for his refusal to serve in combat in the Korean War and had chaired a committee that had tried to abolish the ROTC program on campus. They subsequently got to know each other well and discovered mutual interests beyond jogging. The men and their wives socialized together. By agreeing to disagree on their views of the morality of war, they've forged two decades of friendship. And they still jog together three times a week (*Herald-Sun*, October 1).

Stalin lives on: Russia is experiencing a revival of interest in Joseph Stalin. Rather than being horrified by Stalin's atrocities during the Soviet era, Russians are seeking to explain them. Young people especially are attracted to the ruthless leader. In the belief that Christians must address this development, organizers recently held a conference in Moscow. One speaker contrasted Russians with Germans after World War II and suggested that the reason for the resurgent Stalin cult is that "the root of [this] evil was not pulled out, the people did not repent." Some believe that the Russian Orthodox Church needs to take a more active role in addressing the problem. But another speaker said that the church is part of the problem because it is still attached to an idea of a father tzar that "is also connected with a loss of historical memory and spiritual understanding" (October 3 report from Paul Goble, a Soviet-Russian specialist).

Not fit for viewing: According to Mel Robeck, a Pentecostal scholar at Fuller Theological Seminary, you don't have to agree with Sarah Palin's politics to be offended at the way the vice presidential candidate's Pentecostal background has been portrayed in the media. He compares it to filmmakers' attempts to portray sexual intimacy that turn out to be voyeuristic or pornographic. One cannot, he says, understand from the outside the intimacy of the divine-human encounter as experienced by nearly a half billion Pentecostals worldwide (Religion blog, *Dallas Morning News*, September 22).

Mind-boggling: If the \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street were paid out in \$100 bills, it would amount to a stack 54 miles high. Or if you were to count to 700 billion at the rate of one number per second, it would take 21,000 years. Given the magnitude of the plan, no wonder there is public outrage. But columnist James Carroll noticed another, similar figure: in the fiscal year just begun the Pentagon will spend \$607

billion on regular military operations (as well as another \$100 billion on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq). He wonders where the outrage is over this comparable figure. “The annual American military budget is at least 10 times larger than the military budgets of Russia and China,” says Carroll, and “it is 20 times larger than the entire budget of the U.S. State Department” (*International Herald Tribune*, October 7).

Choosing a decider: President Bush, by his own admission, relies on his instincts when making decisions. Using one’s instincts can be valuable for some kinds of decisions, says Jonah Lehrer, author of the forthcoming book *How We Decide*. Research suggests that simple problems with few variables lend themselves best to a more cerebral, deliberative decision-making style, whereas more complex issues benefit from the powers of the unconscious mind. However, instincts and unconscious reflections are not enough: a person must first absorb all the pertinent facts. The best decision makers are those who are conscious about the decision-making process, aware of their own fallibility in decision making and surrounded by advisers willing to criticize their ideas and instincts. Lehrer thinks that the next president should put some people on his cabinet from the opposite party to aid in self-critical thinking (*Boston Globe*, October 5).

Computer generation: John Palfrey and Urs Gasser wrote *Born Digital* to help parents and teachers understand students who have grown up with computers and other technology. They think there is little evidence that computers are changing the way students learn. While there are legitimate reasons for banning use of computers in the classrooms, as some law schools have done, that step is usually counterproductive. Computers have the potential to make learning more interactive, and educators should be helping students make the most of the technology. Students often accept Internet information uncritically—in using the popular Wikipedia encyclopedia, for example—but heavy Internet users tend to be more critical of what they consume. One issue that begs for attention is the legality of certain uses of online material (insidehighered.com, October 2).

Long and short of it: A Sikh inmate in a corrections facility in Duval County, Florida, protested that his religious rights were violated when he was forced to cut his hair and beard. It is against the Sikh religion to cut off anything that is an integral part of the body, and that includes hair. A spokesperson for the sheriff’s office responded that long hair and beards are forbidden because they can be used to hide weapons or other illegal items (UPI).