

Century Marks

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Imagine this: Nursing professor Geraldine Gorman notes that for two centuries her profession has cared for the casualties of war. But, she wonders, what if nurses said “we will not practice our healing art so that our children can be bandaged and sent back to battle to be killed or to kill the children of other mothers on the other side of the world”? There are about 3 million nurses in the U.S., and they are among the most trusted of all professionals. “Imagine how we could shape the future if nurses refused participation in the follies of men who care not for the children” (*Chicago Tribune*, November 7).

Counting the cost: According to the National Priorities Project, the Iraq war so far has cost over \$145 billion (see www.costofwar.com). At that rate Martin E. Marty (*Sightings*, November 8) calculates that the war has cost his own small town (Riverside, Illinois, population 8,895) over \$6 million. Marty says that “for the cost of the war so far, we could have insured 86,047,783 children nationwide for a year. That would translate to 3,225 tots in Riverside (if we had that many children here).”

Revealing language: Warren G. Harding was a mediocre president but a great orator—which may account for his rise to power. But it is no longer possible for people to advance themselves politically through the use of great oratory or formal speech, says linguist John McWhorter, author of *Doing Our Own Thing* (Gotham Books). Think of Al Gore, for instance, who, if not a great orator, was articulate and formal in his speech—and lost the election to a candidate known for stumbling speech. Although conversation has always been casual and informal, written language and oratory traditionally has been distinct, known for its formality, precision and aesthetic qualities. Something happened in the mid-1960s, according to McWhorter: a conversational style took over both written language and oratory. Don’t blame it on TV, he says; in this case TV simply mirrored culture. A conversational style became one more expression of being suspicious of authority. A more formal and aesthetic literary style has never been recovered (*Mars Hill* audio interview, volume 69).

Off the mall: The satirical *Onion* suggests that the Pentagon, sensing that the coalition forces are stretched to the limit in Iraq, will send 30,000 U.S. shopping-mall security guards to the troubled Sunni Triangle region (November 10).

Blast from the past: Karl Rove, chief political strategist for President Bush, admits his model for political campaigns goes back to President William McKinley. More particularly, Rove follows the example of McKinley's adviser, the industrialist Mark Hanna. Hanna was best known for resisting the efforts of government to break up monopolistic business interests. Hanna turned to wealthy industrialists to finance the McKinley campaign, making victory impossible for McKinley's populist-oriented opponent, William Jennings Bryan. Hanna told labor interests that he was willing to advocate for better pay and working conditions, a hollow claim, since his—and McKinley's—loyalties were with the industrialists who financed the campaign (James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain*, John Wiley).

Two Americas: When David Brooks was hawking his book about the booming exurbs in America, he gave a reading in Berkeley. While there, he asked some bookstore employees if they sold many copies of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, by megachurch pastor Rick Warren. They admitted they had never heard of the book, despite the fact it has sold millions of copies. Brooks concludes that there are really two conversations going on in America: one among elites and one among the people populating burgeoning exurban communities away from metropolitan centers. The Republicans, he claims, were able to tap into the exurban conversation, which contributed toward their victories (*New York Times*, November 9).

On a mission: It's said that when Chinese emigrate to a new place, they start a restaurant; Japanese immigrants start a factory—and South Koreans start a church. South Korea has more missionaries abroad—over 12,000—than any other country besides the U.S., despite the fact that they don't have the support of their own government and two thirds of the country is not Christian. These new missionaries are evangelizing in some of the most challenging places, including among Muslims in the Middle East. South Korean Christians plan to open a seminary in Baghdad, even though Christian churches in Iraq have been bombed recently (*New York Times*, November 1).

Heart-safe churches: Typically, only 5 percent of sudden cardiac arrest victims survive. However, if victims are defibrillated within three minutes, the survival rate can increase to 74 percent. Hence, airports, airplanes and other public places are

increasingly equipped with automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Why not churches? Gerard C. Muench successfully persuaded his parish, St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church in New Jersey, to install an AED. Churches interested in implementing an AED program can email Muench at rodmuench@yahoo.com.

Snubbing Santa: Some Canadian Christians have started a movement called “buy nothing Christmas,” in order to decommercialize the holiday, and “create lifestyles that are richer in meaning, smaller in impact on the earth, and greater in giving.” The group has also produced an antishopping musical, *A Christmas Karl*, featuring a teenage activist bent on ending her shopaholic mother’s conspicuous consumption. The movement’s founder has been called both a Grinch and a Scrooge, but the movement’s aim is to help people celebrate without the usual stresses. (See www.buynothingchristmas.org.)