POP CULTURE VERSUS REAL AMERICA

"I know that the stereotypes of the United States are out there. And I know that many of them are informed not by direct exchange or dialogue, but by television shows and movies and misinformation."

– PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

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*All television and cinema profiles are written by Chester Pach.

INTRODUCTION

BY **ANDREW FERGUSON**

Our opening scene takes place in Rome, early morning, late summer, in the breakfast room of a moderately priced *albergo* (hotel), catering to the tourist trade, a stone's throw from the Pantheon. The waiters, Filipino natives, hover in their white waistcoats as the hotel guests, families from the United Kingdom, France, Greece, and Spain mostly, graze over the croissants and sweets and pitchers of juice, maintaining a polite indifference to one another in their respective zones of privacy. Everything is a hum of efficiency and competence, executed in the hushed tones appropriate to the hour.

Then the doors of the elevator slide open, and there he is.

He's a very large man, not fat, necessarily, but brawny and big boned. He has evidently tried to pull himself together, though without much success. His hair sprays off in all directions, defeating his every attempt to smooth it into shape with his beefy hand. His shirttails are busy untucking themselves from his pants, which are hitched two inches too high. His socks are white and they droop.

He approaches one of the waiters and vigorously shakes his hand.

"I heard there was a free complimentary buffet breakfast down here," he says, redundantly. And of course he says it in English, with no thought to the possibility that he might, when in Rome, be speaking a foreign language.

"I'm from Minneapolis," he goes on. "My wife and I just got in. A long flight. I told her I'd grab her a blueberry muffin. Haven't slept in a day. We're from Minneapolis."

The waiter points him to the buffet.

"Where are the blueberry muffins?" he booms, craning his neck and scanning the breakfast breads and bowls of fruit. "She's really hungry. We just flew in. From Minneapolis."

And so he prattles on, expressing astonishment, though no resentment, that there are no blueberry muffins — "How can you have breakfast without blueberry muffins?" he wonders

aloud — and then surprise at the absence of bagels and veggie cream cheese. He mentions that he's flown all night, from Minneapolis, where he's from; his wife too.

All eyes have turned to him by now. Trying to disguise his dissatisfaction, he heaps two plastic plates with booty and cradles them in his arms. Offering a final update, he announces, loudly, that he will take the food upstairs to his wife, who has flown, sleepless, all night. From Minneapolis.

"Have a nice day," he calls out as the elevator door slides shut, just in time to avoid hearing the snickers from the other guests. One of the children looks up from her buttered toast.

"Americaine!" she says. "D'oh!" She's doing a Homer Simpson, and the breakfast room rings out in laughter.

Since I watched it unfold last summer, a week hasn't gone by that I haven't thought of this globalized tableau, sometimes amused, sometimes horrified. Everyone from the United States lives with the phrase "the ugly American," taken from a best-selling book and popular movie from the early 1960s, but when I recall the muffin-seeker from Minneapolis, I wonder whether the ugly American hasn't been replaced by another caricature: not sinister but hapless, not rude but loud, unsophisticated, kind of goofy, a buffoon. We've exchanged one stereotype for another — or for several, just as powerful, just as mistaken.

"I know that the stereotypes of the United States are out there," President Obama told a gathering of university students in Istanbul in 2009. "And I know that many of them are informed not by direct exchange or dialogue, but by television shows and movies and misinformation."

This book is an effort to correct some of the misimpressions. The premise is simple and the technique is straightforward: The world is often misled, as President Obama said, to see the United States through the icons its pop culture has produced — this means you, Homer — and the icons and stereotypes can best be rebutted by exposing them to that universal disinfectant, real life.

As you read along, threading your way between the pop icons on the one hand and the real Americans on the other, you're likely to glimpse several themes emerging. One unavoidable fact is that many of these stereotypes contain a kernel of truth. Our gabby Minneapolitan in Rome did bear a punch-drunk resemblance to Marge Simpson's husband. If he's anything like his fellow countrymen, however, the breakfasters would have missed a lot about him by settling for the stereotype.

What they didn't see — to take a few examples — were the hours he likely devotes to the Lion's Club back home (Americans spent eight billion man-hours on volunteer service in 2008) or the

Sunday school class he teaches at church each week (more than half of all Americans regularly attend a house of worship) or the money he gives to keep the local soup kitchen in operation (Americans donated more than $300 billion to charity in 2008 — that's three hundred billion in dough, not D'oh).

Or ponder the reality of *Baywatch*, as Valerie Due does here. It's arguably one of the most popular television shows in history, notable mainly for demonstrating the large variety of romantic entanglements that can befall mesomorphs as they bounce around in tiny swimsuits. There's a glimmer of truth in the caricature; anyone who visits an American beach can testify to the enviable vigor and ardor of ocean lifeguards. But beyond the glimmer (and the glamour) is the much more admirable reality of the job itself, which values dramatic escapades much less than their prevention. Ocean lifeguarding requires tedious hours of hard training in a surprising range of skills, from rowing to rock climbing, with the end in view, always, of preserving human life. The bouncing is optional.

The pride that ocean lifeguards take in the less eventful aspects of their work points us towards another theme peeking from beneath the icons. Americans place a high value on craft, a job done well. It's unsettling to note that the late rapper, Christopher Wallace, known as Notorious B.I.G., is deemed an icon of American musicianship around the world. Wallace directed his undoubted talent to violence, misogyny, and explicit depictions of sex — subjects that deaden craftsmanship far more decisively than they inspire it.

Consider, in contrast, the alternative, the real thing: Robyn Quinnett, a young African-American violinist, studying at Juilliard. Quinnett might have applied her gifts of perseverance and discipline to other fields — as a girl she won nine gold medals in U.S. Figure Skating Association competitions — but she settled on music because, she says, "Beautiful sounds please people." A life of serious musicianship is unlikely to offer the material rewards that Christopher Wallace reaped even in the three years of his fame, as Quinnett well knows. "I wouldn't really judge my success," she says, "by how well known [I am] or how much money [I make]."

That's another theme echoing through these pages: It's not about the money. To the students in Istanbul, President Obama lamented how often pop culture depicts Americans as "selfish and crass." Throw in a good deal of bedhopping, and you've got an accurate description of America's iconic professionals, the attorneys on *Boston Legal* or the doctors on *Grey's Anatomy*. But it bears no resemblance to the life led by Richard Beilin, who decided to forego high-priced corporate work to become a small-town lawyer

in Morristown, New Jersey, or by M. Natalie Achong, M.D., a native of Queens and Brooklyn, New York, who works in hospitals that specialize in serving the poor while rearing two children of her own.

"I feel there's a higher calling in working and imparting the best medicine to those who maybe can't afford the 'good doctors,'" she says. "It's not just about making money."

Most Americans would agree — doctors or lawyers, fiddlers or lifeguards, whether native-born or citizens of more recent vintage. Katheryn Conde, whose parents arrived from El Salvador shortly before she was born, enriches a life already filled with two jobs and school work by committing herself to community service. She confesses puzzlement at the iconic American teens she's seen flouncing across the fantasy Manhattan of *Gossip Girl*, like the vampiric Blair Waldorf or the predatory Serena van der Woodsen.

"In those shows it seems like all the girls are focused on the social part of their lives," says Katheryn, who has other things to do. There's counseling at the sleepaway camp, volunteering to tutor classmates, and organizing toy drives for poor children. Blair and Serena, phone your therapists.

Every essay here contains a surprise like Katheryn — a surprise, anyway, to those who were expecting Serena and Blair and who have taken the measure of U.S. culture by the pop icons it has produced, sometimes for good but more often for ill. Through the icons, the world sees a quite different sort of American: vain and oversexed, miserly and self-obsessed, prone to violence, a bit nutty.

That imaginary country is ripe for debunking, which is why the book you hold in your hands is so welcome. These are portraits drawn from life, not caricatures inflated from conjecture, misjudgment, and distorted anecdote. What they present is less sensational, more prosaic, and, in the end, more moving and more human. It's a nation of real people, at once big-hearted, hard working, painstaking, imaginative, stirred by fellow feeling, and on the whole quite admirable — even if, once in a while, we go looking, too loudly, for blueberry muffins in all the wrong places.

***Andrew Ferguson** is a senior editor at the* Weekly Standard *magazine. He has written for the* New Yorker, *the* New York Times, *the* Washington Post, *and many other publications and is the author of* Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America. *His newest book is* College Crazy: The Reluctant Education of a Baaaaaad Dad *(forthcoming from Simon and Schuster).*

KRUSTY BURGER

"PUTS THE 'DIE' IN DIET"

Greasy, fattening, and zero nutritional value: Krusty Burgers are the Simpson family's favorite meal.

There's no place like Krusty Burger, the fast-food restaurant on the television program *The Simpsons*, for a quick meal that's just a little bit different. On the menu is the signature Krusty Burger, "which is deep-fried with love." Also available is the Clogger, a pork sandwich that got its name from the effects of its greasy contents on stomachs and arteries. Diners can also enjoy a Partially Gelatinated Non-dairy Gum-Based Beverage, which tastes like a milkshake but probably doesn't contain a drop of milk, or of anything natural.

Bart and Lisa Simpson enjoy eating at Krusty Burger because they're big fans of Krusty the Clown, the star of a popular children's television show. Krusty has shocking blue hair and a huge smile, but he's anything but hilarious off camera. He has gambling debts, alimony payments, and an addiction to a prescription painkiller. He'll sell almost anything under the Krusty brand name to make money, and he couldn't care less about product safety. His home pregnancy tests produced so many false positives that he pulled them off the market and repackaged them as coffee stirrers. He put a jagged metal Krusty O in each box of his breakfast cereal. After eating one of the metal O's, Bart needed surgery to remove his appendix.

Krusty also relies on dubious business practices in his chain of fast-food restaurants. His only interest in recycling is using the uneaten portions of old Krusty Burgers to make new ones. When studies revealed that the Krusty Burger was "the unhealthiest fast-food item in the world," Krusty created a new Mother Earth Burger, made from barley and packaged in a green wrapper. "I'm saving the Earth," Homer Simpson exclaimed as he bit into his "eco-licious" burger. He soon had a different reaction. Like everybody who ate a Mother Earth Burger, he got sick from tainted barley. As usual, Krusty avoided the consequences of another bad product. Instead, the farmers and grain processors who supplied the bad barley went out of business.

— CHESTER PACH

FARM TO TABLE: FRESH FOR THE PICKING

BY **KAREN HOFSTEIN**

Farmers market shoppers browse a wide selection of locally grown produce.

A hundred years ago, the scene was not unusual. Farmers with baskets of juicy yellow peaches, crates of ripe red berries, and bushels of fragrant green vegetables would set up stalls in the village marketplace. Customers would flood into the market to purchase food for the coming week, bargaining and exchanging the news of the day.

Now the village marketplace is located within the busy streets of New York City. The small park in Manhattan known as Union Square is flanked by tall office buildings and megastores like Barnes & Noble, Babies"R"Us, and Best Buy. Located on Broadway between East 14th and 17th Streets, Union Square is the year-round site of a farmers market that convenes rain or shine four times a week. Customers perusing the vast array of fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats, and baked goods are likely to be plugged into their MP3 players, checking their BlackBerries, or attending to their cell phones.

Despite the prevalence of heavily advertised fast-food behemoths, many people seek more healthful food options. A number of shoppers, concerned about the environment, like to purchase organic foods that are free of pesticides. This explains the enormous popularity of the farmers markets, which are sponsored by Greenmarket, a privately funded program of the

Council on the Environment of New York City. In addition to the large market at Union Square, there are farmers markets at 48 other locations throughout the New York City area. Some open only at certain times during the year. One of these more popular seasonal sites is at Rockefeller Center, site of NBC studios and Radio City Music Hall. Tourists visiting during the summertime are surprised to see farmers selling produce, honey, and baked goods at the site of the world famous Christmas tree.

Heather Lindsey, a freelance health and medical writer, is a regular shopper at the Union Square farmers market. Growing up in Portland, Oregon, she says she was always used to having access to fresh produce. Since moving to New York 12 years ago, she was happy to discover the farmers markets.

Standing outside the Our Daily Bread stall after buying a whole wheat pan loaf, Lindsey says, "I love farmers markets." She especially enjoys talking with the farmers from the surrounding New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania areas. "I buy bread here a lot," she says. "I like the egg stand around the corner. There is a goat cheese stand. And any of the vegetable stands are great. I don't like to focus on just one stand. I like to spread it out so I can support a number of farmers versus just one."

A self-described "big fan of Michael Pollan and his book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*," Lindsey says she liked the idea of healthful eating with more fruits and vegetables and reducing meat consumption.

The citizens of Springfield, the home of *The Simpsons*, cannot get enough artery-clogging fast food.

She says, "We have been cooking in [at home] a lot more due to the economy. I love the creativity of cooking and I get a lot of satisfaction from it." To that end, she recently took a course at the Institute of Culinary Education.

She goes on to list an eclectic array of mouthwatering meals she has whipped up in recent weeks:

New Yorkers from all walks of life enjoy fresh air and fresh foods at these outdoor markets.

Kilos of carrots, mounds of melons: Nutrition-conscious consumers search for the best deals on fruits and veggies. Local farmers are happy to help their regular customers.

vegetable and egg tart with whole wheat crust, scrambled eggs with shrimp, whole wheat waffles, linguini with clam sauce, and quesadillas. The last of these, she says, is easy, "You just throw in whatever leftovers you have in the fridge."

Her husband, Michael Mandel, a photo editor, says that they cook a lot of ethnic foods at home, including Italian and Mexican. Lindsey adds, "I try to do some Thai dishes, some Indian dishes. I am sure it's not totally authentic, but it tastes good."

Mandel notes that when shopping at the farmers market, "You have a real connection to the food."

Following a childhood of eating "classical American fast food," he became a vegetarian 22 years ago. "At the time it was very political," he says. "I just realized how everything about meat turned me off. The cost. The fact that so much grain and water goes to cattle and not to human beings. The fact that it wasn't good for you."

He adds, "It has been amazing over the past 20 years to see how [vegetarianism] has become more mainstream. When I became a vegetarian in the mid-1980s, it was still associated with a kind of 1960s revolutionary culture. And health food stores were sort of hippie-ish. Over 20 years it has changed. Now you can go to almost any restaurant and get veggie burgers."

Another regular shopper at Union Square market is Shoshana Berkovic. A vibrant woman with sparkling eyes, she is a secondary school teacher who lives with her teenage daughter in Brooklyn.

Berkovic marvels at the freshness of the produce at the farmers market. Carrying an insulated bag with a frozen pack to keep things fresh, she regularly stocks up on the market's fingerling potatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes. She says, "The food here lasts much longer in the refrigerator."

Berkovic laughs that her own cooking repertoire is somewhat limited. "I don't have a big kitchen. So I mainly cut up things and cook them. "

With making sure that her daughter "eats healthy" as her priority, she says, "I am looking for different vitamins and I prefer to get them in food rather than a tablet."

As a teacher of biology and earth science in the New York City public school system, Berkovic has seen a marked change in the school's cafeteria food in recent years. She says, "They have taken all the junk food machines out and have healthier alternatives." Specifically, she has observed an increase in whole-grain foods and low-fat items. "I have seen a lot of improvement." She sighs, "Of course they still serve French fries. They will always serve French fries. Some kids will only eat that."

The farmers market, in fact, is full of children who are learning what onion and garlic bulbs look like when they are pulled fresh from the ground. They are thrilled to find peaches still attached to twigs and leaves. They find potatoes still encrusted with rich-smelling soil. These city dwellers are learning about healthful food in its most natural state.

***Karen Hofstein** is a writer in New York City.*

BAYWATCH

"FANTASY LIFEGUARDS LOOK HOT IN THE SUN"

They brave the waves and bare (almost) all.

As a youth, President Ronald Reagan was a lifeguard who saved 77 people from drowning at Lowell Park in Dixon, Illinois. Yet Reagan achieved far less fame for his heroics than Mitch Bucannon and C. J. Parker, members of the *Baywatch* crew at Malibu Beach in California. *Baywatch* became the most popular television show in history. During the mid-1990s, it aired in 140 countries and attracted more than one billion viewers. Millions of people still watch reruns of the program. Why has *Baywatch* been so popular?

Perhaps it's because of the bravery of C. J., Mitch, and the other lifeguards. Often ignoring their own safety, they rescue swimmers from riptides, sharks, and other perils, using their own strength and speed in the water, as well as speedboats and helicopters, to save lives.

Maybe it's because the *Baywatch* crew makes fearless efforts to protect the gorgeous waters off the California coast for swimming and surfing. In one episode, Mitch was poisoned when he swam in contaminated waters. C. J. and her friends traced the chemical to a seedy business engaged in illegal offshore dumping. She saved Mitch's life and put the polluters out of business. The "green" values of the *Baywatch* lifeguards may explain their popularity.

Or perhaps so many people enjoy *Baywatch* because of the fitness of the lifeguards. Mitch, C. J., and their coworkers made strenuous efforts to keep in shape. Many episodes showed slow-motion scenes of them exercising or running on the beach. Often they wore tight, brief swimsuits that revealed muscled thighs, ripped abdominals, or impressive chests. C. J. and her friends were in such extraordinary condition that their appearance could fool beachgoers. Once when two of the women in the *Baywatch* crew asked a photographer to move down the beach to a safer area, he looked at them and declared, "These are models." No, they replied. "We're lifeguards."

— CHESTER PACH

SAVING LIVES TAKES MORE THAN A NICE TAN

BY **VALERIE DUE**

Lifeguard Katherine Jackson educates beachgoers on how to stay safe in the surf.

The white truck brakes in the thick sand and a bronzed male lifeguard leaps out, red plastic rescue buoy in one hand, running for the surf. He reaches the water's edge, white-edged waves rushing his ankles, then slows. A female guard from the three-sided seasonal watch tower has beaten him to the surf, where a boy about 10 years old struggles, arms flailing as his head dips in the water. The guard tows the boy to shallow waters and makes sure he's okay and knows where to find his parents before both guards return to their watches.

Lifeguard Sergeant Casey Owens finishes a radio call in his lifeguard vehicle, waiting for the young lifeguard to return before he continues his patrol along San Diego's busy Pacific Beach. He speaks without turning from the water, where his eyes slide along the splashing crowds and bobbing surfers.

"Sometimes you save a kid and find out their parents had no idea [their child was in danger]," he says. "People look away for a few seconds."

The rescued boy has returned to his towel, where his mother hovers over him. He was lucky. Lucky because he's at the beach on a beautiful summer Saturday, and lucky because someone was watching over him at this beach: the lifeguards.

The beach lifeguard became an American pop icon in the 1960s, with the advent of beach-bikini movies featuring surfers, Frankie Avalon and Gidget, and became an international icon after the 1990s *Baywatch*. With his bronzed torso, sun-bleached hair, and skimpy surf trunks, the image of a lifeguard as a carefree playboy surfed around the world. But for real lifeguards, a workday focuses on preventing dramatic rescues whenever possible through vigilance and public education.

"I tell my kids that mommy goes to work to keep people safe at the beach," said lifeguard Sergeant Katherine Jackson, also of the San Diego Lifeguard Service. "Our single most important role is the rescue and safety of beachgoers every day, but that is really about mitigating the actual need for rescue."

San Diego's beaches welcome more than 20 million visitors each year, and lifeguards make about 6,000 rescues annually. But the number of rescues is tiny compared with the roughly 250,000 "prevents," or rescues that never happen, thanks to preventive actions taken by the lifeguard service, such as stopping children from playing in surf close to a current that might pull them offshore, known as a rip current. More than 80 percent of all rescues are the result of rip currents.

Jackson manages a team of male and female lifeguards on San Diego's busy Mission Beach, a three-mile (five-kilometer) stretch of wide, golden sand bordered by a paved boardwalk on one side and rolling surf on the other. Each day she reports in uniform — officers

Real lifeguards rarely look like those on *Baywatch*.

Sergeant Casey Owens scans the surf for signs of trouble, while Sergeant Katherine Jackson keeps watch over a deceptively tranquil beach.

Lifeguards maintain their equipment with considerable care. They must be ready to respond to an emergency at any moment. Opposite page: The mundane side of the job: record-keeping and logistical coordination.

wear blue police-style uniforms or official tee shirts with swim shorts — to the main lifeguard tower for one of her 10-hour shifts. The three-story permanent tower houses a garage, a first-aid room, staff lockers, and storage on the first floor; offices on the second; and an enclosed observation deck on the third floor, from which a guard armed with binoculars can watch the beach for more than a mile.

After opening the tower, setting up safe driving lanes on the beach for emergency vehicles, and checking equipment for safety, Jackson and her team drag out the personal watercraft (PWC) used for rescues, pulling it to water's edge for launching. All lifeguards undergo training and pass certification before they are allowed to operate PWCs on the job. Such training is part of an overall program that encompasses far more than just swimming skills.

"There's a lot of training," Owens said. "And it doesn't end after you get the job. From the time you get hired, you have medical training, first aid, and CPR. There's the lifeguard training academy. Then you start working at the bay first, while you continue more training to get ready for the ocean."

Training to be an ocean lifeguard is only the start for many beach lifeguards, who often also train to be on special teams that rappel down rocks to make rescues on ocean-side cliffs, don scuba gear for underwater search-and-rescue, hoist fire hoses for marine firefighting, or navigate rushing floodwaters on the flood-rescue team, which sped to New Orleans, Louisiana, to help people caught in Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Lifeguards in southern California start as seasonal employees, working the summer's peak season, then returning to regular jobs the rest of the year. Many are teachers, college students, or emergency medical technicians in the winter, while they continue to hone their skills. It can take many years to win a year-round job on San Diego's permanent staff of roughly 70 guards, and non-lifeguards may not understand the rigors of the job.

"My parents still ask, what do you do in the off-season?" Jackson laughs. "I've been a lifeguard for 11 years. And my friends, they don't understand what I do all day."

What they do all day is prevent

accidents through watching, a skill that's finely honed in this job.

"We're people watchers," Owens said. "You watch little kids getting in the ocean for the first time. You can tell when people have never been to the ocean, and they're about to dive headfirst into shallow water, so you go talk to them first, prevent the injury. You learn a lot about people by how they behave and what they do."

Sometimes, even watching isn't enough — it takes a sixth sense for danger.

"My first summer on the bay, I'm watching probably 100 people in the water," Jackson said. "It's not like the ocean where you can see people wade out on a gradual edge, and you can tell they can't swim from the way they react to the waves, so you warn them back before anything happens. If people can't swim in the bay, they're teetering along and then they step off that edge and just disappear, and are drowning."

Jackson pauses. "I'm watching a bunch of kids, and everyone's fine. I look back, and no one is reacting as though there's trouble. But I had a creepy feeling, so I ran down with my fins, and sure enough, right by these kids I could see tiny fingers poking up above the water, reaching. I grabbed the kid and pulled out a little boy. He was fine, coughing and gasping, he hadn't been down long. But no one saw him. No one."

In addition to rescues and accident prevention, lifeguards deal with everything from stingray stings to lost children to enforcing smoking and alcohol bans (San Diego lifeguards are peace officers, with the power to ticket and arrest lawbreakers).

And there's paperwork. Owens looks at an open binder on his desk, flipping pages. "I'm doing payroll today; I've got 37 people to manage." He shrugs. "More people means more paperwork."

In his office overlooking the ocean, paperwork seems like a fair trade-off. Owens laughs. "This is a great job." Owens still seems amazed by the discovery of a profession that offers a prime work location, good pay, the chance to help others, and the excitement of an emergency rescue.

"Every day, we help people. We interact with people from around the world every single day, and it's fun. People ask us everything from 'where are the restrooms?' to 'my friend's hurt' and that becomes a medical call. We're ambassadors of the beach, of the community, of the ocean, and the ocean ecosystem."

***Valerie Due** writes about topics ranging from farm economics to ocean lifeguarding. Her work has appeared in publications as varied as* Forbes *magazine, health care journals, and nonfiction literary journals like* River Teeth.

UNFORGIVEN

"GUN SLINGERS OF THE OLD WEST"

Clint Eastwood and Morgan Freeman play bad boys on horseback.

Unforgiven is a film about the Old West, a part of American life that vanished more than a century ago but that still has a grip on popular imagination. Clint Eastwood, who produced and directed the film, also stars as William Munny, "a known thief and murderer" who has given up his life of violence to become a hog farmer in Kansas. But in 1881, he straps on his gun one more time and makes an unsettling journey back into his past.

Munny leaves his farm to collect a bounty in Big Whiskey, Wyoming, where two cowboys used a knife to slash a prostitute, leaving her face horribly scarred. The local sheriff ordered the cowboys to compensate the saloon keeper who ran the brothel by giving him some horses. The prostitutes were outraged and demanded justice. They offered $1,000 of their own money to anybody who would kill the attackers.

Munny at first refuses to seek the bounty. "I ain't like that any more," he tells the Schofield Kid, a young gunslinger who admires his reputation for killing and proposes that they team up and split the reward. Munny changes his mind, however, because of the bounty. A widower with two young children, he hopes for a better life. He persuades another aging, former outlaw, Ned Lawson, played by Morgan Freeman, to join him and the Kid.

The three bounty hunters track down the two cowboys. Munny kills the first after Lawson discovers that he can't bring himself to pull the trigger. The kid shoots the second. Things then go terribly wrong. The sheriff captures Lawson, beats him to death, and displays his body in front of the saloon. Munny goes to Big Whiskey to avenge his friend, killing five men, including the saloon keeper and sheriff.

Vengeance and money provide no satisfaction. The Kid, who killed for the first time, finds murder isn't so glamorous after all. "I guess he had it comin'," the kid says as he swigs whiskey and tries to overcome his feelings of guilt. "We all have it comin'," Munny grimly replies.

At the end of the film, Munny leaves his farm and goes off to San Francisco to work in dry goods. The Old West becomes an even more distant part of his past.

— CHESTER PACH

MODERN-DAY COWBOY

BY **CANDY MOULTON**

Professional cowboy Duane Wood's responsibilities include driving cattle on the ranch as well as running statistics back at the office.

It is cold in Wyoming and the first snow of the season has already blanketed the ground white, even though it is only mid-September. This is the time of year cowboy Duane Wood likes best, the period when he moves cattle to pastures near the ranch headquarters so they will be easier to feed and find when the real storms of winter blanket the countryside. As the days grow shorter, his work pace slows ever so slightly. Before long, with other ranch workers, he will be pushing the cattle into corrals, sorting them, and separating the calves from the cows.

But during these waning days of summer, Wood, slim, quiet in manner, and with a neat mustache, also is getting ready for winter. He repairs fences and corrals and positions hay for easier winter feeding. He also cuts and hauls firewood to heat his family's home.

It is tough to define "cowboy" today. Once understood to be a man on horseback in the American West, today's cowboy just as likely works in an all-terrain vehicle or a pickup truck, as from the back of a horse.

In the 1800s, most cowboys were young men who helped gather cattle on southern ranges, mainly in Texas, and then drove them along where the cattle could roam, eat, and grow fat for

eventual sale. The conventional image of the cowboy was one of a young man driving hundreds or thousands of head of cattle over the land, crossing rivers, eventually selling the herd, and then spending his pay in rail towns like Dodge City or Abilene, Kansas, or Ogallalla, Nebraska.

Over time, more people moved into the range areas. Some of the range was fenced, and the size of many ranching operations diminished. Others have remained sufficiently large as to accommodate thousands of head of cattle. On those ranches, cowboys maintain the tradition of moving cattle to be certain they have plenty to eat and of otherwise caring for the herds. The ranch where Duane Wood works also conducts research to improve the cattle breed. That means Wood spends a certain portion of his time tracking cattle statistics such as birth and weaning weights. The office work punctuates the physical labor of ranching.

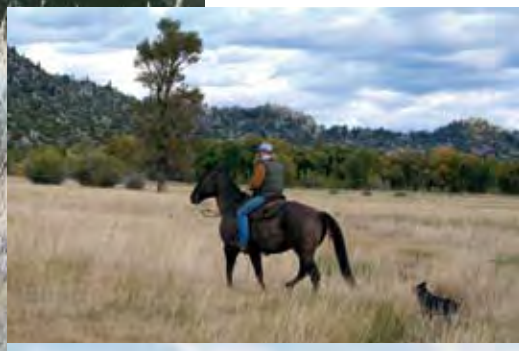
Besides his computer, two of a contemporary cowboy's most important tools are his horse and his dog. The horse is his means of transportation to gather cattle, especially in areas where the country is rough and rugged; the dog is an effective assistant for his work. Wood trains his own horses for the work, and he has a dog, Rosie, who helps with the tasks and is a companion when he is working alone, as is often the case.

"My relationship with my horse is not unlike my relationship with my wife," Wood says. "We depend on each other. He takes care of me; I take care of him."

A cowboy's work changes with the seasons. In the fall, Wood gathers the cows and calves, then separates them (weaning the calves from their mothers) so the calves can be sold and shipped

Playing cowboys is big business in Hollywood.

Wood's days are as varied as the landscape. He is as likely to mount a pickup truck as a horse, and he spends most of his workday solo.



to feeders who will continue to raise them for another year until they are eventually sold for slaughter. Most ranches keep some of the heifer (female) calves for eventual breeding to replenish the herd. Others, like the ranch where Wood works, will keep young bull calves, raising and selling them in the spring when other ranchers need to buy bulls for breeding in their own herds.

During the winter, Wood keeps the cattle close to the home ranch so as snow piles up it will be easier to feed them hay. No matter the weather, the cattle must be fed every day, and that is the main work on a ranch until calving operations begin in the late winter or early spring.

When Duane Wood sets out on a winter day or night to check cattle as a Wyoming snowstorm blows across the mountain country, he wears several layers of clothes: insulated underwear, heavy wool shirt, wool vest, heavy overcoat, jeans, and wool socks inside his insulated boots. His gloves are warm, sometimes made of a waterproof material so if he must clear the ice from a water tank, he can put his hand in, remove the ice, and never get his fingers wet. If a blizzard is howling outside and Wood has cattle to care for, he knows his job. "We just do it. We may dread going out the door, but we just do it," he said.

For calving, Wood moves the cows to a pasture not far from the ranch headquarters where there are trees and other natural protection. This is a hard

Ranch hands come in all sizes: Wood's eight-year-old daughter, Cora, regularly helps out her dad.

part of the yearly work. Using a pickup, all-terrain vehicle, or horse, Wood regularly — day and night — moves through the herd, checking on the calves, doctoring one with a shot of medicine if it is ill, and making sure new calves are paired with their mothers. During calving, sleep comes in short snatches, as the herd must be evaluated every couple of hours.

A cowboy is always aware of the livestock. "Ultimately we are in animal husbandry," Wood says. "They depend on us and we've got to be there to help them." That can mean moving stock from an area where water or grass is no longer available or assisting a cow giving birth.

Spring work involves calving, branding the calves to establish clear ownership, fixing fences, and preparing to move cattle out to summer range. During the summer the cattle are on rangeland farther from the ranch headquarters, eating the natural grass and forage. At this time of year, Wood becomes a hayfield worker, cutting and baling hay then stacking it in locations where it will be available as winter feed.

The image of a cowboy decked out in cowboy hat, chaps (leather leggings they place over their pants for protection against weather or brush), boots, and spurs that jingle when they walk is accurate to a degree; all cowboys wear that outfit some of the time and Wood does, too. But today's cowboys are just as likely to have on a short-billed baseball cap (it usually advertises some type of livestock feed, ropes, or perhaps fertilizer) and jeans without chaps. In winter they often wear a wool "scotch" cap with warm ear flaps and insulated overalls for warmth.

Cowboys come in all shapes, sizes, and ages and are both male and female (ranch women who work with cattle often also are called cowboys). They might be 18 or 38, or in some cases they might be eight, as is Wood's daughter, Cora. This young girl has been riding and helping her dad move cattle since she was three. As a tot she rode Chester, a Shetland pony, and Wood used a long lead rope to guide the pony as they rode. Eventually Cora took the reins herself, and now she rides a quarter horse just like her dad. (Chester has become the mount of her little brother, Bonner, who is now five and, like Cora, began riding alone at age three). Sometimes wife Laurie also helps move cattle. As is usually the case on ranches, Laurie and the children may do the work of cowboys, but they don't receive a paycheck.

"What keeps me in this life is the outdoors and the cattle," Wood said. The opportunity to "get my kids on horseback once in a while" is also a strong attraction because he wants to pass on cowboy traditions. Then there is the satisfaction of riding his horse across good rangeland, where the grass is abundant and nutritious, or through a swiftly flowing creek or river, knowing it provides good water for the animals.

"I don't do the same thing every day," Wood says. "My association with other people is very limited. Most of the time I'm not around a lot of people, and I don't mind that. Matter of fact, I get along a lot better with animals than people."

Candy Moulton *is a rancher's daughter and rancher's wife, who also began cowboy work when she was five years old. She makes her home near Encampment, Wyoming, and is the author of a dozen books, including* Steamboat: Legendary Bucking Horse *and* Hot Biscuits: Stories by Ranch Women and Cowboys.

CSI: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

"SCIENCE MAKES CATCHING BAD GUYS EASY"

Just give us some DNA — we'll figure out the rest.

Police officers call them "the geek squad," but the forensics experts in the Las Vegas Criminalistics Bureau are the heroes on the television program *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. They crack the toughest criminal cases by using microscopes or computers to evaluate each fragment of evidence and carefully piece together the clues. Viewers enjoy their high-tech gadgetry and quirky intelligence. Since its premiere in 2000, *CSI* has been a smash hit, often topping the television ratings. It's so popular that it has led to the creation of two additional *CSI* programs, one set in New York, the other in Miami.

The *CSI* investigators concentrate on evidence, which, unlike witnesses, can never lie. No bit of evidence from a crime scene is too small to ignore. In one case, a toenail clipping proved that someone who claimed that he had killed a man in self-defense was guilty of murder. In another, dirt stains and carpet fibers implicated the killer. Gathering the evidence and interpreting the clues can lead the investigators on a fascinating journey of discovery. In an episode called "Rashomama," a reference to the famous Japanese movie *Rashomon*, about multiple perspectives on the same event, each member of the forensics team recounts his or her investigation of the murder of the mother of a groom at his wedding. Each story takes the *CSI* team one step closer to the identity of the killers — they turned out to be two bridesmaids.

In *CSI* the police almost seem irrelevant. They have little to do other than arrest the suspects that the forensics experts implicate. The show leaves the impression that analysis of DNA samples and hair follicles, rather than the testimony of witnesses, solves every crime and that the most important police work occurs in the laboratory or the morgue. Sometimes, though, even the smartest "geeks" and the most sophisticated science can't solve the crime — in real life, if not on television. In those cases, only a police officer can add up the clues and catch the culprit.

— **CHESTER PACH**

ALL'S QUIET ON THE SMALL-TOWN FRONT

BY **BRIAN HEYMAN**

Chief Richard Guisti scopes out the neighborhood from his patrol car.

The summer sun is shining brightly over the one-story brick police station on Route 188 that runs through the not-so-wild western Connecticut town of Middlebury. Head further down and you might not even realize you just drove through the heart of this tree-lined, 18.5-square-mile (48.1-square-kilometer) middle-class community. It's about one o'clock back at the station, and in a side office with the word "Chief" on the door, Richard Guisti is sitting at a computer in his dark blue uniform, working on an e-mail, taking care of the administrative end of his job. The computer desk is filled with pictures of his wife and his two sons, now in their twenties. His diplomas and training certificates hang on the wall above. On the opposite wall, there are framed pictures on both sides of a bookcase, showing one son playing high school football, the other competing in swimming. Above the bookcase, there's a frame surrounding four photos of former greats playing baseball for his beloved New York Yankees. On the desk behind Guisti, there's a Yankees cap sitting on one side and on the other is a figurine of a policeman with a protective arm around a girl — with an angel guarding his back.

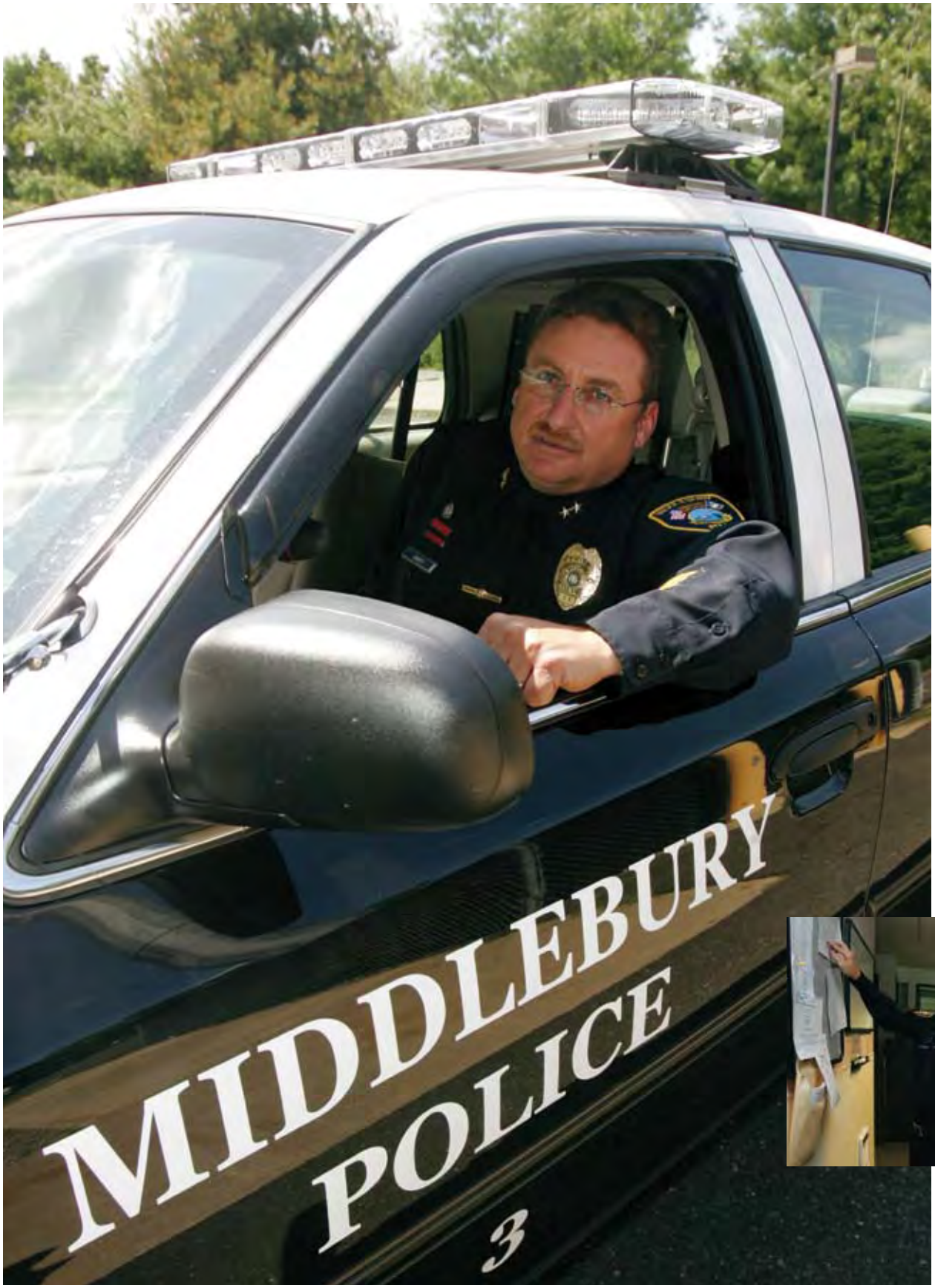
The police chief is a down-to-earth, 48-year-old family man.

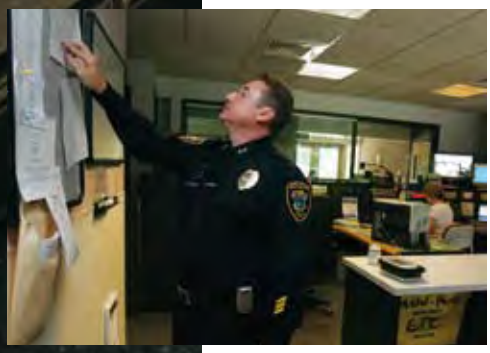
Guisti coaches youth football and high school basketball in his native Waterbury nearby and has been a fixture in the Middlebury community since moving here 25 years ago. It's a town of a little more than 7,000 people, where the violent crime rate is very low.

Television and movies often depict police work as an endless series of car chases and exchanges of gunfire. But those images don't match the reality here for Guisti in this small town and so many municipalities across the country. "TV, I know you see the chases; you see the bank robberies; you see the shootouts," Guisti said. "We do a lot of community calls for services. Being a smaller town, we have two major arteries that come through our town. So we do a lot of motor-vehicle accidents, a lot of motor-vehicle enforcement, because we get a lot of traffic. We're first responders for medical calls. ... We still carry the equipment to get into vehicle lockouts. Still the small-time community policing."

Guisti was promoted to acting police chief in 2005 and permanent chief in 2008. He began in Middlebury as a part-time police officer in 1985, left for another nearby department in 1987, and came back full time two years later. He has been in two, maybe three car chases here, none in almost 20 years. And about the gun that sits in the holster on his right hip? "We draw our

Armed and imaginative: No shred of evidence is too small for the *CSI* team.





Chief Richard Guisti mostly hands out speeding tickets and responds to vehicle lock-outs. He has never fired his weapon on duty.

Report-writing is a huge part of a police officer's job.

weapons at robberies," Guisti said. "But I've never had to actually fire my service weapon."

Now he is in more of a supervisory role, overseeing 14 officers and eight dispatchers. Yet the chief will also head to a scene when needed. "I have responsibility for the overall operation of the Middlebury Police Department, from budgets, to training, to scheduling, to discipline," Guisti said. "I'm also in charge of communications. We dispatch fire, police, and public works. I'm the direct supervisor. You have to multitask. I'm not saying I'm Superman or better than any other chief. It's just that you're so small, if my guys are tied up, I take calls. I leave this office. They could be tied up on a call, and I would have to go out. I've investigated car accidents. I respond to burglar alarms. If my lieutenant is not working, no matter what time it is, if we have a burglary or smash [a car window]

and grab, I may have to go out and supervise until I can get somebody to come in."

When he or his officers investigate further, Guisti said they use "the phone, e-mails, computers. When I came on in '85 ... you didn't have e-mails, you didn't have cell phones, you may have had a computer. These officers right now can get in their cars, and if they have a burglary, they can type it into their computer and send it to just about every department in the state [to check] if they had a suspect or anything similar. ... You'd be surprised by the amount of information that comes back, saying, 'We had something similar,' or the exact same description of the car, the suspects." These officers also go out and use their training to interview people. Or they stake out areas. "Technology has gone a long way to help law enforcement, but you still pound the beat," Guisti said.

Unlike on TV, it can take considerable time to solve a crime. "In *CSI*, they solve everything in eight hours; that's not realistic," said Sergeant John Desmarais, a 15-year veteran of the Middlebury force who coaches football with Guisti. "I would say our percentage of solves ranges from 60 to 70 percent, which is very high. ... We know our community. We know who to talk to. For example, on the midnight shift, the paper boy [person who delivers newspapers] sees everything."

Back when he was a boy, Guisti's goal wasn't to protect and serve the public. His father, Fred, was a toolmaker, and his late mom, Ellen, had a real estate business with her sister. But Richard loved sports from the time he was five and wanted to be a professional baseball player. Then, at about age 14, he was playing in a summer-league game in Waterbury when a policeman spoke to him. "If you're not going to play professional baseball, why don't you become a cop?" the officer said to Guisti. "I said, 'Yeah.' You laugh at it," Guisti said. "He goes, 'Be a cop. Be like me. You'll like being involved with people.'"

It led him to a career that began in 1982 with work as a sheriff at the Waterbury courthouse, where he learned a lot about law enforcement. Now Guisti can look back with a sense of pride. There have been crimes he helped solve, like the time when an elderly person experienced a burglary of items with much sentimental value. Nearly all were recovered. "That was gratifying because you knew that … they were going to be victimized themselves every day because of that reminder of what they had in their house that was there for years," Guisti said, adding that it was solved "just through legwork, information through other departments, information that we ascertained through our department."

Beyond that, he hopes he made a difference in a role you don't usually see on police shows, steering young people on the right path through the work he did for eight years in the local school system. He taught about the dangers of drugs through the program known as DARE: Drug Abuse Resistance Education. "It's gratifying to see the kids that you taught are now grown up and they have children," Guisti said. "I see children that are now doctors, dentists, police officers, teachers. Several of them, I've been to their weddings. That's what I tell my officers. If you can influence one person, you did your job."

Brian Heyman *has been a sportswriter in the New York area for 27 years, earning numerous national and regional journalism awards. He is a staff writer for the* Journal News, *a Gannett daily newspaper based in White Plains, New York, and he freelances for the* New York Times *and the Associated Press.*

PULP FICTION

"SHOOT FIRST. ASK QUESTIONS LATER."

Jules (Samuel L. Jackson) and Vincent (John Travolta) are addicted to violence.

Pulp Fiction is one of the most acclaimed, influential, and controversial movies of recent years. Only the second feature film from director Quentin Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction* premiered in 1994 at the Cannes Film Festival and won the coveted Palme d'Or, the festival's highest prize. It also earned Tarantino an Academy Award for best original screenplay, as well as honors for best director and best film from the National Board of Review. Tarantino's dark humor and distinctive narrative style spawned many imitators. *Time* magazine critic Richard Corliss called *Pulp Fiction* "the most influential American film" of the 1990s.

Other reviewers, however, were not so enthusiastic. Some found the sordid world of the film, teeming with gangsters and drug addicts, depressing and even disgusting. But the single issue that produced the strongest criticism, as Tarantino explained in an interview, was "violence, violence, violence, violence, violence."

The film begins and ends with a man and woman who casually decide over breakfast at a restaurant to draw their guns, empty the cash register, and rob the other patrons. The two main characters in the film — Vincent, played by John Travolta, and Jules, played by Samuel L. Jackson — are hit men who carry on bizarre conversations before blowing away their victims. In one instance, Vincent accidentally kills a man in the back seat of a car when the gun discharges after the vehicle hits a bump. With the help of Winston Wolf (Harvey Keitel), a "fixer" who deals with such criminal complications, they scrub away the blood and the brains from the car almost as if they were cleaning up after a food fight. Winston even arrives in a tuxedo and takes time for coffee as he supervises the disposal of the body.

"Nothing is predictable or familiar within this irresistibly bizarre world," wrote *New York Times* film critic Janet Maslin. "You don't merely enter a theater to see *Pulp Fiction*," she explained. Instead, like Alice in Wonderland, "You go down a rabbit hole."

— CHESTER PACH

SAFETY AND SECURITY: TWIN PRIORITIES

BY **MEGAN A. WONG**

Malcolm Blundell meticulously cleans his prize pistol — after double-checking that it is not loaded.

The cupcake-yellow home of Malcolm and Jacque Blundell is festively decorated for fall. Homegrown pumpkins line the front steps and a string of orange and black cardboard letters wish "Happy Halloween" to passersby. The Blundells relax on a wicker couch on the porch with their small black dog, Charlotte Sophia, at their feet. From this vantage point, one sees couples pushing strollers down the street and clusters of neighborhood children exiting a school bus. The surrounding homes are inhabited by white-collar professionals: lawyers, lobbyists, and high-tech workers. The light is golden and the weather mild for mid-autumn.

The Blundells do not exactly fit the image of violent, gun-wielding thugs. Jacque (pronounced "Jackie") is a longtime volunteer with the local animal welfare league, an organization for which she has fostered kittens in the past. Blundell works as a manager at a local software development company.

The first time Blundell held a gun was at a Boy Scout camp in Hawaii, where he spent part of his childhood. He was 12 years old and was vying for a merit badge in rifle shooting. Blundell still recalls the thrill of shooting a gun for the first time. That was the moment when his lifelong fascination with firearms began.

After attending college on a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship, Blundell completed his obligatory military service with the U.S. Marine Corps over the next five years. When he got out of the Marines, he took a 15-year hiatus from firearms while he concentrated on building his career in high tech. It was not until 2004, by then fully ensconced in a career as a software developer, that Blundell once again picked up his hobby as a sport shooter.

People have different motivations for owning guns, he explains. Some are hunters who use shotguns to shoot game. Others, like Blundell and his friends, are hobbyists who shoot for sport in weekend competitions held at shooting ranges and gun clubs. At these venues, safety precautions are constantly drilled into participants. "There are people who belong to street gangs and there are criminals who have guns," says Blundell. "There are also people like myself — a lot of us — who own guns for sport or competition or self-defense."

There are specific times and conditions in which Blundell feels it is appropriate to discharge firearms — and plenty of occasions when it would not be responsible to do so. In the United States, gun laws vary widely from state to state (sometimes even region to region within a state). Some states enforce strict regulations on firearms (such as licensing, registration, or

Don't mess with the gangsters in *Pulp Fiction*.

Malcolm Blundell and his wife, Jacque, are vigilant about storing their guns in a locked safe when not in use.

Above: The Blundells on their front porch playing with their dog, Charlotte Sophia. Right: Blundell is careful never to handle a loaded gun unless he intends to shoot it.

permits), while other states take a more "hands-off" approach to gun possession. Virginia, the state in which the Blundells live, has severe restrictions on brandishing firearms in residential areas. But the Blundells have friends who live in a rural part of the same state where the local attitude toward firearms is very different than that held by many city dwellers and suburbanites. These friends of the Blundells own 60 acres (24 hectares) of forested private land, and on one section they have built a firing range. Their sprawling rural oasis is one place where the Blundells feel it is acceptable to discharge firearms in a controlled capacity because of the size of the property. The absence of bystanders there makes it unlikely that someone could accidentally get hurt by a stray bullet.

"It's just part of the culture," says Blundell, referring to the

permissive attitude toward gun ownership in some rural areas. Still, he observes, "There is no more or less violence there than any place else." Blundell believes that it is possible to possess and use firearms in a safe manner provided that owners are educated properly and behave responsibly. While the Blundells support freedom to possess and use firearms responsibly, they take guns seriously. "You don't play with them," declares Blundell. "I'm either cleaning them or I'm shooting them or they're in the safe."

This is more than just responsible talk. At this author's request, Blundell retrieves a pistol from his 1,000-pound (450-kilogram), refrigerator-sized black safe. He immediately opens the magazine and hands it — muzzle down — to his wife, uttering just one word: "Clear."

It is both a question and a request. Jacque checks the pistol to make sure it is not loaded. To non-gun owners, this may seem like an unnecessary step. But to the Blundells, safety is standard operating procedure. "It's very important to make sure it's unloaded before I start handling it," says Blundell. "It's just a precaution."

Even if one thinks a firearm is unloaded, it still deserves the utmost respect, repeats Blundell on several occasions. "You don't point the muzzle of any firearm, loaded or unloaded, at anything or anybody that you're not willing to destroy," he says. "One takes great care with handling firearms. It's the habit of a lifetime. And I can attest that having those habits will hold you in very good stead."

Above and beyond their personal code of safety when handling guns, the couple requested a voluntary home review from the police when Blundell rekindled his interest in sport shooting five years ago, to make certain that they were taking every precaution in storing their firearms.

Blundell believes deeply in personal freedom tempered by personal responsibility. He has no tolerance for those who handle guns irresponsibly or with the intent to commit criminal acts. "When I hear about people doing irresponsible things with firearms, I'm irritated because it makes it more difficult for the rest of us," says Blundell. "It makes things harder for the vast majority of firearm owners who behave responsibly."

Respect is the unmistakable theme in any conversation with the Blundells about firearms. "The penalties are very severe if you use a firearm in a crime of violence," says Blundell. "You are allowed to defend your life. But this is not the Wild, Wild West."

At the mention of cinema, Blundell starts in on another pet peeve of his: the laughable portrayal of firearms in films. Movies frequently have "nothing to do with reality," he chuckles. "What I see is what's technically wrong. They're movies; they're fiction. What they show you is impossible." He cites the mismatched sound effects that show too many rounds being fired without reloading and scenes in which novice gun users somehow hit their target with no practice and no kickback.

"I hope people realize that movies were designed to be entertainment," says Blundell. "There's a certain amount of shock value. They're trying to show you what they think will keep you entertained for two hours. It's not necessarily American life."

***Megan A. Wong** is a writer and editor in the Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State.*

GREY'S ANATOMY

"FLIRTING WITH MEDICINE"

We're too sexy for these scrubs.

Treating severe illness, extreme trauma, or a difficult medical condition is all in a day's work for the physicians at Seattle Grace Hospital. A heart transplant or brain surgery is a routine task for Preston Burke or Derek Shepherd, two of the most accomplished surgeons on the television program *Grey's Anatomy*. More challenging was saving the life of a man who suffered a heart attack during sex and had to be "separated" from his lover. Then there was the case of a student who became encased in concrete while trying to impress a friend at a building site.

The physicians on *Grey's Anatomy* care deeply about their patients. Dr. Alex Karev developed a close relationship with a woman he was treating for injuries and amnesia after a ferry accident and eventually slept with her. Izzie, an intern, became engaged to Denny Duquette, a cardiac patient who was awaiting a heart transplant.

The doctors on *Grey's Anatomy* spend much of their time taking care of each other. The chief of surgery, Dr. Richard Webber, has a special interest in an intern, Meredith Grey, who has had a long and complex relationship with Derek. Coincidentally, Dr. Webber had a similar relationship with Meredith's mother, who was a renowned physician. Derek's wife, Addison, also a doctor, had been living in New York but joined the staff at Seattle Grace, as did her former lover, Dr. Mark Sloan. The interns are also close; George O'Malley, Izzie, and Meredith lived together. George slept with both and had an extended relationship with Izzie, even while he was married to Callie Torres, an orthopedic surgeon with whom he worked. The complexities of these tangled relationships often seem to consume as much time as diagnosing illnesses or performing surgeries. With all these personal and professional challenges, there's never a routine day for the physicians on *Grey's Anatomy*.

— **CHESTER PACH**

A PASSION TO SERVE

BY MEGAN A. WONG

Dr. M. Natalie Achong is committed to helping the needy both on the job and in her community.

M. Natalie Achong, M.D., grew up in the working-class New York City boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, where her neighbors were predominantly other African-American families. While she was by no means raised in the lap of luxury, the 41-year-old mother of two likes to focus on the blessings and privileges that she has enjoyed in her life: caring, attentive parents and a close-knit community that instilled in her a sense of ethnic pride and civic responsibility.

Achong's early experiences greatly influenced the person she is today. At her elementary school — where both the students and teachers, including the principal, were African American — young Natalie was educated about the historical struggles and notable contributions of African Americans within the fabric of the American experience. These important lessons instilled in her a sense of civic responsibility and a desire to contribute positively to society as a whole, culminating in her eventual decision to become a physician. Achong developed into a woman with a strong sense of her ethnic and cultural identity as an African American and is determined to affect the world in creative and meaningful ways: both inside and outside of the hospital.

From a young age, Achong and her two younger siblings were

Grey's Anatomy doctors are more interested in each other's anatomy than their patients'. Opposite page: Dr. M. Natalie Achong is dedicated to serving low-income and minority clients.

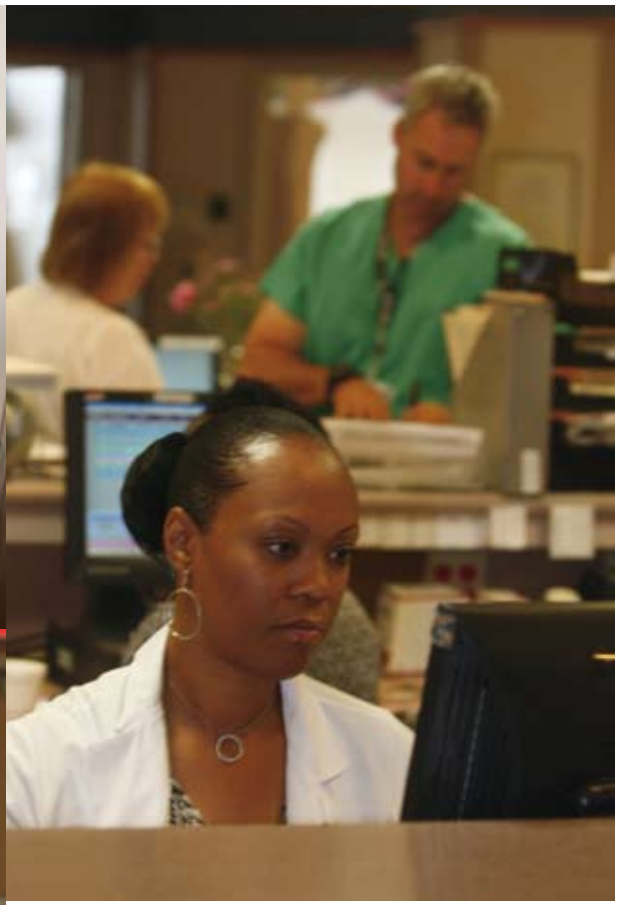
expected to succeed, regardless of circumstances. Their father, an immigrant from Trinidad, was a major role model. He never missed a day of work in his life and used to tell his children that his job was to go to work every day and that their job was to do the very best they could in school. True to her parents' urging, young Natalie Achong excelled in the New York public school system. After graduating from high school, she was accepted to all of the Ivy League universities to which she had applied but instead opted to enroll in a prestigious, accelerated B.S./M.D. program at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education at the City University of New York (CUNY), a program that would enable her to become a doctor by age 22 — the age when most of her peers were just finishing college.

During her medical training, Achong further solidified her commitment to social justice and public service. Although she had never before lived away from home, the then-20-year-old medical student initiated a project that took her to the Deep South to work with teen mothers at a community health clinic in the Mississippi Delta. This profound experience convinced her that she could make a real difference in the lives of young women by specializing in obstetrics and gynecology upon returning to New York to complete medical school.

Her experience in the South during the 1980s also illustrated the disparities present in modern medicine. Determined to reduce

these inequities, she declined offers to join private medical practices that might have afforded her a more lucrative lifestyle. Instead, Achong chooses to serve in hospitals that treat a broad spectrum of needy patients. She also volunteers in many extra clinical activities, including acting as "camp doctor" for her children's summer camp, taking a leadership role in church-sponsored community service, and actively supporting the arts, youth services, and international affairs through involvement in an organization called Links, comprised of female African-American professionals. "I feel that there's a higher calling in working and imparting the best, excellent and valued medicine to those who maybe can't afford the 'good doctors,'" Achong says. "It's not just about making money, as a physician. It's also about doing my best to support my family and also give back to the community."

Achong's many obligations require a great deal of energy, time management, and, above all, personal commitment. She rises daily at 5:00 a.m. for morning prayer and meditation before diving into the many activities that characterize her



There is more to being a doctor than treating patients: Above, Achong steals a few moments to update a patient's chart. Achong's colleagues are personable and professional.

days. Needless to say, Achong's life extends beyond the hospital. One of her greatest joys is her family. In addition to raising two children, which means everything from getting them to school on time to helping them with their homework, Achong takes an active role in their extracurricular activities as well. "I have the work that I do at the hospital and I have the work that I do at home," she says, emphasizing that "the work at home is as pressing, important, and demanding physically as anything I do in the hospital. Doctors lead lives that are complicated and pressured. And as a mother raising kids, it really is a juggling act."

Aside from a hectic schedule that includes commuting between her home and the various hospitals and clinics in which she works, Achong maintains a full agenda of professional and community service commitments as well. In addition to working full time as both an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Yale School of Medicine and as an attending physician at St. Vincent's Medical Center, she spends more than half her spare time on nonclinical duties. She volunteers at a local health clinic, participates in church-sponsored activities, takes a leadership role in the National Medical Association, publishes original research in peer-reviewed medical journals, and volunteers with overseas medical missions. These missions take Achong and her colleagues to places like the Dominican Republic and Ghana, where they set up free medical clinics for local residents.

Achong meditates daily but admits that finding time for self-care is a constant dilemma for many doctors. "Doctors may not always have the time they would like to devote to keeping themselves fit, in balance, and eating well. It's really challenging to do that when you're being pulled in so many directions," says Achong. She humorously adds a self-deprecating reference to the television medical dramas that feature physically stunning physicians who look flawless at any hour of the day or night: "Most doctors don't look like that," she laughs.

Beyond volunteerism and church-sponsored activities, Achong regularly lectures to medical providers (community clinic staff, medical students, nurses, physicians) about topics ranging from cultural awareness to how better to meet the needs of underserved communities. "There is still a lot that needs to be said … on issues of ethnicity because it does make a difference. I certainly see that in terms of heath care when it comes to women's health," Achong says. This belief is at the core of her devotion to women's health, both locally and globally. "More often than not, women are the ones who decide health-care issues in a given family. They're the ones who take the kids to the doctor, they're the ones who take care of the sick children, they make the appointment, they're the ones that drive all that," Achong says. "Even for my colleagues who are mothers and physicians, even with all their so-called titles and education, they're still the ones that tend to the sick and the home, more often than not."

***Megan A. Wong** is a writer and editor in the Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State.*

GOSSIP GIRL

"BUSY SPREADING LIES"

Chatty, catty, and rich: We'll dig up your dirt and tell the whole school.

"*Gossip Girl* here — your one and only source into the scandalous lives of Manhattan's elite. And who am I? That's one secret I'll never tell."

Nobody knows her identity, but everybody at the fictitious Constance Billard School, the oh-so-exclusive academy for girls on Manhattan's Upper East Side, devours *Gossip Girl*'s blogs and text messages. They learned from *Gossip Girl* about "the biggest news ever" — the unexpected return of Serena van der Woodsen a year after she suddenly left New York for boarding school in Connecticut. Serena's departure came without warning; she didn't even tell her best friend, Blair Waldorf. What happened on her last night in New York, however, didn't remain a secret. Serena had sex with Blair's boyfriend, Nate Archibald. And to make matters worse, Nate had never slept with Blair.

Gossip Girl just loves a "catfight" between "hotties," and Blair and Serena didn't disappoint her. They became rivals in their snobby clique of privileged youth on the Upper East Side. Their nasty encounters occurred at lavish parties, designer fashion shows, and even at the dean's home at Yale University when they made a campus visit. Eventually the two estranged friends reconciled, yet they still schemed over sex and status. "I just need to know that in this misbegotten corner of Manhattan, wealth, ambition, and moral laxity are still alive and well," Blair declared.

Some adults Blair knew must have reassured her. Nate's father, a cocaine addict, fled the country to avoid arrest. Catherine Mason Beaton, the stepmother of Blair's new boyfriend, Marcus, had affairs both with Blair's old boyfriend, Nate, and with her own stepson. "Do you ever feel like our whole lives have been planned out for us?" Nate asks his friend Chuck. "That we're just gonna end up like our parents?"

"That's a dark thought," Chuck replies.

"You know you love me. XOXO. *Gossip Girl*."

— CHESTER PACH

HELPING FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND HER COMMUNITY

BY **MEGAN A. WONG**

Kathy Conde (second from left) is devoted to her parents and helps contribute to the family's welfare by excelling in school and working part-time jobs.

On a summer afternoon in August, Katheryn Conde's California home is socked in with fog. Conde, 18, lives with her parents in a working-class neighborhood of San Francisco. The homes here are modest: no mansions, no swimming pools. In fact, many of the houses in the neighborhood could use a new coat of paint. The sage green Conde home is neat and well-kept, however, with three recycling bins responsibly placed out front.

Conde, who likes to be called Kathy, graduated in 2009 from an all-girls Catholic secondary school. Like most teens, she enjoys hanging out with friends and playing with her dog, a Great Dane named Tobby. She was even on the cheerleading team during her sophomore year. But Conde and her pals don't shop for entertainment — their school requires uniforms. For fun, Conde's friends mostly watch DVDs at each other's houses, and no one in her group has a car.

Conde describes her friends as supportive of one another, not back-stabbing or competitive. They often confide their problems to one another and rely on each other for advice, especially about boys. But Conde's romantic life is not filled with dating drama. She does not currently have a boyfriend, but

Left, top and bottom: Who's hot and who's not — that's what matters to these teens from the television program *Gossip Girl*. Above: The carefree lifestyle of TV's most privileged, who are obsessed with shopping.

she did attend her prom — with a male friend from another school. Students at Conde's school do like to have fun and throw parties, but she thinks that TV shows tend to exaggerate the social aspect of American teenagers' lives. "In those shows, it seems like all the girls are focused on the social part of their lives," says Conde. "But in reality, I have to balance my academics and my social life. You don't have to be a superstar or a nerd. You can be a little of both."

Conde's real passion is community service, which takes up virtually all her spare time. During secondary school, Conde peer-tutored classmates, volunteered as a counselor at a sleepaway camp for middle school students, founded a college/scholarship awareness club called S.T.R.I.V.E. (Scholarship Team Researching and Inspiring for the Vitality of Education), and organized a successful toy drive for underprivileged children. She was also elected to the student council and assisted voters as a poll worker in the last four elections.

Conde's home life is typical of her classmates, many of whom are also the children of immigrants. While she was born in the United States, Conde's parents both

More than a pretty face: Conde is an honor student committed to community service and helping the needy.

The Conde family takes their dog, Tobby, for a walk in the neighborhood. Kathy has shown resiliency and drive in the face of various challenges.

immigrated from El Salvador in hopes of a better life. Yet, on their modest salaries (her mother is a housecleaner and her father works in the kitchen at a local hotel), the Condes cannot afford to send their two daughters to college without financial assistance. Conde knew that if she wanted to attend her first-choice university, she would need to find a way to help fund it. Raising awareness about enrichment and scholarship opportunities among her school's student body is what the S.T.R.I.V.E. club aims to do.

Despite such challenges, Conde refuses to feel sorry for herself. She is driven by a desire to succeed and give back to those who have given her so much, including her parents, teachers, and school. "All these people really

want me to do good. And I can't let them down. I want to go to college and actually have it all pay off at the end," says Conde. "There was a point at which my dad had two jobs to pay for my school. [I want] to show them that I appreciate what they've done for me."

Despite a challenging course load (including several honors classes) and a heavy load of extracurricular activities, Conde maintained excellent grades during all four years of secondary school. She is bilingual, proficient in Spanish and English, and fluent in conversational French; and she took math as an elective during her senior year — because she liked it. In recognition of her high academic achievement, Conde was admitted to two prestigious scholastic honor societies, the California Scholarship Federation and the National Honor Society.

Her efforts have been recognized. Conde received numerous awards and scholarships, including several community service awards and the Spartan Award, the highest honor for a graduate of her school in recognition of superior academic performance and demonstrated commitment to school and community. But public recognition is not what drives her. "Doing community service felt rewarding," says Conde. "Just to know that it's actually going to make a difference in someone's life."

One might imagine that maintaining such a demanding schedule during the school year would leave Conde exhausted and ready to watch television all summer. But Conde is not one to rest on her laurels. The summer after graduating, she worked two jobs — totaling six days a week — to save money for college textbooks in the fall. She interned at the San Francisco Superior Court and also worked as a program assistant at a local real estate office. Conde won a number of scholarships — enough to pay her tuition at the University of San Francisco (a private college and her first-choice school). But Conde still lives at home, which enables her to save on rent and stay connected to her community service activities.

More than anything, the experience of Conde's parents convinced her that, if given basic opportunities, most people can make something of themselves in the United States. "They came during the [Salvadoran civil] war," says Conde. "They had to start over. Just to see that they came here and were actually able to do something … what's stopping me? I'll bet what they had to go through was harder than what I do." Conde feels not only pride and inspiration from her parents' story but a responsibility to do well and make their sacrifices worthwhile. "What [money] they do make they have to spend on food, on clothes, and things that we need, so we don't have a lot of extra money," she says. "I want to get a good job and a house and then help out my parents because I feel like they've done so much for me."

The past suggests Conde will do plenty with the opportunities she has been given.

***Megan A. Wong** is a writer and editor in the Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State.*

BOSTON LEGAL

"ATTORNEY ANTICS"

Barely legal: These lawyers are experts at bending the rules, in both their professional and personal lives.

Denny Crane and Alan Shore are both high-powered attorneys at Crane, Poole, and Schmidt, the fictitious law firm on the television program *Boston Legal*. They are close but improbable friends, since they disagree on practically every controversial issue. Denny favors the death penalty; Alan opposes it. Alan has strong reservations about the war in Iraq; Denny brusquely told his friend, "You're either with us or against us." Alan favors gun control; Denny considers any regulation of firearms an infringement of his constitutional rights. Denny keeps guns in his office and occasionally brandishes one when talking to colleagues or clients. He is even willing to pull the trigger, sometimes for the most outrageous reasons. Claiming self-defense, Denny shot a client that the court assigned to him because he didn't want to defend someone who raped and murdered a teenager. Denny and Alan have even ended up on the opposite sides of politically charged cases. Alan was the attorney for the plaintiff and Denny was the counsel for the defense when the town of Concord tried to secede from the state of Massachusetts.

On one issue, however, Denny and Alan agree: They both think that they should be able to indulge their "interests" in women. Denny has propositioned clients and coworkers. He even has a life-size, blow-up doll in the image of his fellow senior partner, Shirley Schmidt. Alan has slept with associates in his firm and even with a judge who presided over some of his cases.

Yet despite their incorrigible womanizing, Alan and Denny ended up together. Since Denny appeared to be suffering from Alzheimer's disease — what he usually insisted was Mad Cow Disease — he and Alan decided to marry so that Alan would have spousal rights in managing Denny's medical care and finances. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia performed the ceremony.

"We're married," Denny exclaimed.

"Can you believe it?" Alan replied.

— CHESTER PACH

ETHICAL ADVOCATE

BY **KAREN HOFSTEIN**

Most of Richard Beilin's time is spent at his desk pouring over client files – not kicking up theatrics in a courtroom.

The room is lined floor-to-ceiling with bookcases holding thick volumes bound in hand-tooled leather, bearing the titles *American Jurisprudence*, *New Jersey Practice*, and *Uniform Commercial Codes*. A long table in the center of the conference room is surrounded by a series of comfortable chairs. Seated at the head of the table is a friendly looking man with dark auburn hair who leans back and says, "One thing I always say to people is, 'If everybody always did what they were supposed to do, you wouldn't need lawyers' because every single thing a lawyer does is based on the premise that somebody isn't going to do what they were supposed to do. That is why you have to write down contracts. That's why things end up in litigation. As society gets more and more complicated, you need people who understand [these complexities] enough that other people can rely on them."

For the past 20 years, Richard Beilin has practiced law in the state of New Jersey. The holder of a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a law degree from The George Washington University, he is currently part of the firm of Wacks & Hartman, located in Morristown.

Established in 1715, Morristown enjoys a special place

Anything goes at the law firm of Crane, Poole, and Schmidt on *Boston Legal*.

in American history as the site of General George Washington's headquarters during part of the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). Today the town is a quiet community filled with Victorian-style houses, office buildings, stores, and restaurants. As the county seat, Morristown is also the site of a large courthouse teeming with daily activity.

When asked how the real practice of law compares with what is seen in television and films, Beilin laughs, "The one time I watched *Ally McBeal* [a television program], it made me nuts because the client would come in and the very next day they would have a trial." The reality, he says, is very different, as a case may take months or even years to come to trial. "Many attorneys I know who do trial work won't have more than one or two trials a year."

Films and television also rarely represent accurately the amount of time lawyers spend at a courthouse waiting for their cases to be heard. "I remember at the time I was doing a lot of work in bankruptcy court," Beilin says. "You could show up at court at 9:00 a.m. and

Beilin stands by the law.

be literally number 115 on the motion list. You'd sit there for three and a half hours before your case got called. I would always bring other work or reading to do while I was waiting. But they never show that on [television shows], how someone has to sit around for three hours with nothing to do. They don't show the down time when you are not on trial."

These days, Beilin says, it is very rare for him to be in court, as the majority of his work is nonadversarial in nature. Most of his time is spent representing the interests of homeowners associations (including condominium boards) and municipal governments. He drafts the ordinances and resolutions that become law for the towns. He also deals with the day-to-day issues that arise in the enforcement of these regulations.

Much of Richard Beilin's time is spent attending town council meetings at night. In the month following the introduction of an ordinance, there are public hearings before the council votes on whether it should be adopted. He notes that when an ordinance

Attorneys study mountains of paper to defend their clients properly.

is to change the speed limit on a street, "You'd be surprised at how many people show up."

Beilin says, "You are writing [laws] that affect people on a day-to-day basis. … This is the ground level of democracy." He continues, "At town meetings you see what the most important issue is to a particular person and it really does get discussed and listened to. The council members look at people's problems — like street road access to fire protection services — and try to solve them. …

"I genuinely do like the fact that most of the members of the boards and councils are volunteers, and they are doing a job that is thankless a lot of the time, but they really do try as hard as they can. They are overwhelmingly honest people. It sounds corny but it's nice to help people."

Beilin adds that he has found a great deal of fulfillment in representing the needs of individuals and fondly relates a particular exchange he had 15 years ago with a grateful client. "When I was doing bankruptcy law, a client called me and said, 'Last night was the first good night's sleep I've had in months. Thanks.' "

Among the many things Richard Beilin considers essential to being a good lawyer is "having the ability to separate the things that are important from the things that aren't." He also says, "It is important to know when you are right and insist on it but also know when you are wrong and have the ability to explain to people why they are right or wrong." He notes, "Many times a lawyer will tell a client that they will win them a $1 million judgment only to try to persuade them later to accept a $30,000 settlement. A lot of times the biggest impediment to settling a case is not knowing how to manage your client's expectations." He adds, "Ultimately you have to really care about the people you are representing."

As a member of the local attorney ethics committee, Beilin does a great deal of work on ethics issues. He says, "When advising a client you can think of other than purely legal issues — like economic issues and moral issues."

His cell phone chimes out with a ringtone set to the theme from the classic Italian western film *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. He excuses himself to answer a call from his wife. For the past 19 years, Beilin has been married to his high school sweetheart, Lorraine. They live in Morristown with their two children, 13-year-old Katie and 10-year-old Sam. Beilin is a dedicated husband and father who says that one of his "most favorite things to do in the world is to go to Sam's baseball games." About daughter Katie, he says with pride, "She's an excellent student and all-around great kid."

Beilin is a "huge baseball fan," with the New York Yankees as his favorite team. As a former college English major, he frequently relaxes at night by reading 19th-century books and what he describes as "big fat Russian novels." He is also a film buff with an encyclopedic knowledge of old movies. His favorites are an eclectic variety that includes *ET*, *Apocalypse Now* ("it has a great literary quality to it"), *Woman of the Year*, *Auntie Mame*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The last of these films is a particularly apt selection for Beilin in that he is very similar to the George Bailey character (played by Jimmy Stewart). Both are dedicated, hard-working family men who have committed themselves to improving the lives of the people in their respective communities.

***Karen Hofstein** is a writer in New York City.*

NOTORIOUS

"RAPPER WITH A RAP SHEET"

Notorious B.I.G. had a short, sensational, and troubled life.

Notorious B.I.G. was one of rap music's greatest performers, and the film *Notorious* tells the story of his short, sensational, and troubled life. "Biggie's" real name was Christopher Wallace, and he grew up in a poor neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. His mother, a teacher and single parent, provided direction and discipline, but young Christopher decided he could never make it big by staying in school, even though he was a good student. As a teenager in the 1980s, he became a street hustler, selling crack cocaine. He had money for hip clothes and fancy jewelry, but his life was full of problems. His girlfriend became pregnant, and his mother threw him out of their apartment when she found out he was a drug dealer. "I wasn't the man my mom wanted me to be," he said in the film.

Wallace then went to jail on a drug charge, and he was behind bars when his daughter was born. He expressed his frustration by writing rhymes in a notebook. After he got out of jail, Wallace used those rhymes to land a recording contract. At first, he used the stage name Biggie Smalls, a play on his large size — over six feet and 300 pounds. Later, he started calling himself Notorious B.I.G. and released his first album, "Ready to Die," in 1994. Among the raps on that album were "Suicidal Thoughts," "Me and My Bitch," and "Who Shot Ya?" Although darkly violent and explicitly sexual, these raps won praise from many critics and fans for capturing life on the streets in inner-city neighborhoods.

With money and fame came more difficulties. Biggie became involved in a feud between rap artists that turned violent. Tupac Shakur, another famous rapper, was gunned down in Las Vegas in September 1996, although Biggie was never implicated in the murder. Despite death threats, Biggie went to Los Angeles to promote his new album. On March 9, 1997, he, too, died in a barrage of gunfire during a drive-by shooting. He was only 24 years old. The film ends with scenes of devoted fans mourning Biggie's death and celebrating his life because he had "proved that no dream is too big." Two weeks later, his second album was released. The title was "Life After Death."

— CHESTER PACH

PERFECTING THEIR PITCH

BY **BRIAN HEYMAN**

Juilliard students Robyn Quinnett and Benjamin Harris know that success in the classical music business takes discipline and endless practice.

Benjamin Harris sat on the stage in front of the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra. He put his bow to his large double bass and played a movement of a concerto for the crowd watching the final concert of the 2009 Sphinx Competition at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Robyn Quinnett had played in the semifinals a few days earlier at another Michigan venue, Rackham Auditorium in Ann Arbor. She put her bow to her violin and let the soothing sounds flow for the panel of judges.

The two 21-year-olds are music students at the Juilliard School, a highly selective and prestigious New York City school of drama, music, and dance. Harris and Quinnett were participating in the Sphinx Organization's annual event for black and Latino string players, part of its program to develop young minority artists and to enhance diversity among classical musicians. While young musicians nationwide submitted audition tapes, only 18, Harris and Quinnett among them, were chosen for the semifinal.

Harris began making a name for himself by reaching the ultimate round and being selected by the judges as the runner-up among the three finalists. He took home $5,000 and a glass trophy. "It was definitely a rush," Harris said, reflecting later in the year at

Juilliard. "Just performing there with a good orchestra behind me, it was quite a feeling. That's what it was all about. I didn't really care about the prize at that moment. Getting to the finals was good enough."

Quinnett would have loved to have made the finals and could try again, but she looked back from school and expressed no regrets about her semifinal performance. "I wouldn't have changed a thing," she said. "Competitions are funny. I've done a lot of them. You have to put your best foot forward and hope you have a good day. I think I had a good day. You learn a lot from the judges' comments."

Both Harris and Quinnett aspire to earn their living in classical music, to put their lessons, talent, and passion to use by performing for others. They can't help but have a connection to their music and their instruments. "Beautiful sounds please people, and I love to entertain people," Quinnett said. "I love for people to enjoy. Music, in general, just takes you away from all the gritty things in life. It can clear your mind. It's very therapeutic. The violin is really expressive."

While Quinnett began on the piano at age six before switching to the violin, Harris wanted a more pulsating soundtrack when he was a child. Although he lived for a little while in Florida and Ohio, he was born and mostly raised in the city of Xalapa in Veracruz, Mexico.

Fighting his way to the top: Notorious B.I.G. mugs for the crowds.

"Music … takes you away from all the gritty things in life," says Quinnett. She started learning piano at age six and later switched to violin.

Harris doggedly pursues musical perfection. At age 21 he already has the talent and the drive to make his dream a reality.

"My mom tried to put me into classical and take me to operas, and I didn't want to have anything to do with it," Harris said. "I didn't understand it. It was too serious. I couldn't stay still for two seconds." So he took up the electric bass guitar when he was 10 and made money playing in clubs with rock bands beginning when he was 13. But he explored other music, including jazz, and took a new direction at 16. "I started double bass and I started listening to a lot of classical music," Harris said. "I just realized that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

He studied for two years at the Instituto Superior de Musica del Estado de Veracruz because the price was right. "My mom was encouraging me to get into that music school because they give you the instruments for free," Harris said. "We didn't have the money to pay for instruments. I was like, 'Wow, the double bass is expensive, so I might as well take advantage.'"

It was no surprise he pursued music. Harris is from a musical

family. His mom, Cecilia Ladron de Guevara, is a singing teacher at the conservatory in Veracruz. She is in that university's choir and sings once a year in an opera. His American father, Arlan Harris, went to the North Texas School of Music and is a piano technician in New York City. He used to be a drummer in jazz bands and played percussion in a symphony.

Benjamin Harris came to New York and auditioned at Juilliard. He received a scholarship and now is in his third year at the school.

"My future goal professionally is first to try to find a job in an orchestra," he said. "That's where I would get my steady income. And then I would also like to keep playing solos and have a solo career as well. I like being soloist of an orchestra. I think I would like to be in the U.S. for a while and pursue being with great musicians everywhere around the world."

Quinnett entered the musical world with her piano lessons on the small Caribbean island of Montserrat, where she was born. She was a seven-year-old living in North Carolina, where her American father, Larry, was stationed in the military, when she saw a symphony orchestra. She asked her parents for a violin and finally received one about a year later and started lessons.

Quinnett then lived the life of a military child, moving to bases in places like Texas and Tennessee. She returned to North Carolina and took secondary school courses online so she could have more time to devote to her two passions. Besides violin, she also showed grace on skates, competing as a figure skater. She said she won nine gold medals and a silver in U.S. Figure Skating Association competitions in her age groupings. "I just had a great time with it," Quinnett said. "I've always been into athletic things."

But at age 15 she gave up skating to focus her energies on making music. "I had to choose between the two of them because I couldn't take them both seriously," she said. "I liked violin a lot better."

After reaching the semifinals of the Junior Division in the 2006 Sphinx Competition, she went to study violin for a year in Georgia, then came to New York City on her own. She eventually auditioned at Juilliard. The acceptance meant everything to her. "It was like being reborn," Quinnett said. "It was a dream come true." Now she is in her second year and thinking about playing professionally and possibly teaching someday.

"The sky's the limit," Quinnett said. "I would love to have solo opportunities. I also really love chamber music, but it's hard to be in a group that you click with. It's like being married to a few other people. My hope is to find people that I really like to work with and have the creative freedom to decide who I want to play with and what I want to play. In that way, you'd have to be in a soloist tier. There are a lot of factors that go into whether you can become successful at it. But if I'm working hard, sometimes it surprises you. It's just little steps at the time, I think.

"I wouldn't really judge my success by how well known [I am] or how much money [I make]. But I would definitely want to be well liked. I would want people to want to hear me. Then I would be doing something valuable."

***Brian Heyman** has been a sportswriter in the New York area for 27 years, earning numerous national and regional journalism awards. He is a staff writer for the* Journal News, *a Gannett daily newspaper based in White Plains, New York, and he freelances for the* New York Times *and the Associated Press.*

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOR"

We share everything — even our spouses.

Wisteria Lane, the street on which all the main characters on the television program *Desperate Housewives* live, winds through a typical American suburban neighborhood in the city of Fairview. The houses are large and comfortable, the lawns are lush, and the neighbors are — well — neighborly. Susan Mayer, who was divorced, married her neighbor, Mike Delfino, divorced him, and then married him again. Susan's old friend and neighbor, Katherine Mayfair, was living with Mike and planned to marry him until he suddenly decided to get back together with Susan. Mike was a very good neighbor to Edie Britt, with whom he had a romantic relationship before he married Susan. Edie also had affairs with Susan's ex-husband and with another neighbor, Carlos Solis, in between his two marriages — both to Gabrielle Solis.

Wisteria Lane seems like a quiet street, where life is safe and secure, but sometimes accidents — or worse — occur. In the opening episode, Mary Alice Young committed suicide. Her neighbor, Rex Van de Kamp, also suffered an untimely death when his pharmacist, who had fallen in love with Rex's wife, Bree, tampered with his heart medication. Susan accidentally set Edie's house on fire; Edie, in retaliation, did the same to Susan's house. Orson Hodge, who became Bree's second husband, intentionally hit Mike with his car, inflicting serious injuries. Even worse was the car accident that took Edie's life. Then there was the tornado that devastated the neighborhood and seriously injured Carlos, leaving him blind for years.

Despite the charms of life on Wisteria Lane, some residents occasionally endured extended absences. Carlos served a prison sentence when he pleaded guilty to assault. Orson went to jail after he confessed to running down Mike with his car. Mike did jail time for manslaughter and drug dealing before he moved to Fairview. All these former criminals have paid their debt to society and are now living "typical" suburban lives on Wisteria Lane.

— **CHESTER PACH**

THEIR OWN SUPPORT NETWORK

BY **JOSHUA K. HANDELL**

Katarina Podlesnaya shows affection for her grandmother.

Nineteen-year-old Katarina "Kate" Podlesnaya comes from a blended family. Like nearly 11 million other minors in the United States, Kate lives with one biological parent and one stepparent. But Kate's family is blended in another, very American way: They represent immigration from different nations. Half of the Podlesnaya family was born in Ukraine and half in Russia, and all of them now live in the United States.

Kate's mother Marina immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1993, first settling in Baltimore, Maryland, before moving to the Washington, D.C., area. It was in Potomac, Maryland — just a few miles outside the nation's capital — that Marina met Yuri Nakshin and his daughter Natalya, Ukrainian-born immigrants who had also arrived in America in 1993. After receiving her visa, Kate joined her mother in the United States during the summer of 2001. With their slight accents, evident only in fleeting moments, the family is eager to share impressions of their adopted country and reminisce about the pros and cons of life in Eastern Europe.

After reciting a list of common American stereotypes of Russians — "Siberia is the worst place on earth, we drink lots of vodka, all of us are in the KGB or the mafia…" — Marina and Yuri get misty-eyed

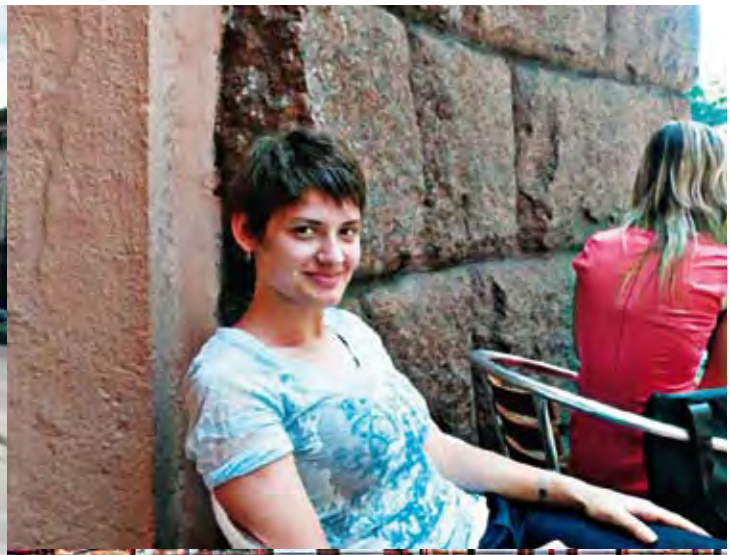
Sin in suburbia: Being "neighborly" takes on sinister connotations in *Desperate Housewives*.

reflecting on the loved ones they had to leave behind to pursue their American dream. "I have this nostalgic urge to return to Kiev," Yuri muses wistfully. "All of my best friends still live there. But with Marina's business, it's hard for us to get away for long periods."

Katarina's family has lived two versions of the American Dream: Not only have they immigrated to the United States and settled into a comfortable lifestyle, but they also have built a business from the ground up. Marina owns and operates her own hair salon just outside of Washington. With the support of her family and the determination to make the most of her opportunities in the United States, Marina has built up her clientele from a few close friends to a large and devoted customer base.

"I've heard people talk about Russia under the Soviets and Russia today as entirely different countries," reflects Marina. "It's

The extended Podlesnaya family reconnects over a meal. These Ukrainian and Russian immigrants integrate traditions and values from the old country into their new lives in the United States.



No backstabbing here. The Podlesnayas demonstrate that the family that plays together stays together.

true [that] a lot of things are very different, but there is still not the equality of opportunity that's everywhere here. It's not as bad in many ways as the Soviets were, but the success I've achieved here would've been nearly impossible in Russia."

Yet economic security cannot fully compensate for far-flung friendships and displaced relatives. Sharing a twinge of melancholy, Marina remains circumspect: "Every Saturday night, we meet up with our [Russian] family friends, drink a couple of bottles of vodka, and argue about American politics. This tradition has been around ever since Yuri moved to the States. These Saturday nights refuel the Russian aspect that our lives might be missing."

Leaving the country of one's birth is always difficult; leaving after growing up there, establishing a career, and starting a family is harder still. But Yuri and Marina both saw advantages for themselves and, most importantly, for their children that far outweighed the costs of moving across the world and starting over in America. Though the immigrant experience in the United States is not always an easy path to prosperity, the new family that Yuri, Marina, Natalya, and Katarina formed in their new homeland has prospered tremendously.

"Life in the U.S. is simply easier compared to life in the post-Soviet bloc," Yuri explains. "During Soviet times, when we were growing up, there was a deficit on everything, ranging from school supplies to even bread." "Except perhaps

vodka," Marina chimes in with a mischievous giggle. "Yes, well, except perhaps that," concedes a grinning Yuri. "Job search and successful advancement depended entirely on your relationship with the [Communist] Party."

Marina shares a story about her father, a skilled pilot, who was repeatedly passed over for promotion for his refusal to join the Communist Party. For her, immigrating to America was about providing a future of economic security and educational opportunity for her daughter. Kate's stepsister, Natalya, was only nine years old when her father brought her to the United States for much the same reason.

While television often depicts American families as the home of spoiled teenagers and "desperate housewives," the Podlesnaya family suggests a more accurate depiction might include strong cross-cultural connections, a deep work ethic, and a strong priority on obtaining a good education, ideally at a world-class university. Describing "equality of the sexes" as one difference between Russia and the United States, Kate attests that her mother has consistently "placed great emphasis on education."

"It makes sense," Kate says. "Parents come to the U.S. to provide their children with an opportunity for a brighter future. As their children, we have to follow suit by studying hard and making the most of our chance." True to her word, Kate is working toward a degree in business administration from the University of Michigan's prestigious Ross School of Business. Looking ahead, she plans to pursue a career in marketing and public relations in the United States, which she calls "the land of the free."

"The U.S. was very welcoming to us, and we are thankful for that," reflects Natalya, speaking for herself and her stepsister. America is thankful too. Immigrant families like Kate's defy simplistic stereotypes of the American family. Neither scandalous nor self-absorbed, Yuri and Marina made great sacrifices to win what some might consider an unremarkable middle-class life. But the opportunities they enjoy and seek for their children are remarkable, and they are a reminder that the United States remains a land of opportunity, not least for new Americans of every race and color and creed.

Joshua K. Handell *was an intern in the Bureau of International Information Programs in the summer of 2009. He is an undergraduate at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he plans to pursue graduate studies in the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.*

MONTGOMERY BURNS

"SHOW ME THE MONEY"

Maniacal mogul: Nothing but dollar signs are in the eyes of Montgomery Burns.

After watching a movie with scary characters, Homer Simpson tried to reassure his son Bart by telling him, "There's nobody that evil in real life." Perhaps not, but in Springfield, where the Simpsons live, there's Montgomery Burns, who delights in evil deeds. Burns is the billionaire owner of the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant on the television program *The Simpsons*, and he's willing to do just about anything to increase his power and wealth. He steals oil from the Springfield Elementary School. He activates a device that blots out the sun so that Springfield will be totally dependent on his power plant. "What good is money if it can't inspire terror in your fellow man?" he asks.

Homer has been a loyal employee at the nuclear plant, but Mr. Burns treats him, like all his employees, with utter disdain. Burns even tried to take away one of the workers' most important benefits — their dental plan — but Homer became union president and led the workers out on strike. They didn't give up even after Mr. Burns turned off all the electricity and plunged Springfield into darkness. In the end, the triumphant workers sang, "They have the plant, but we have the power."

Mr. Burns has lived a long and luxurious life. He is more than 100 years old; he lives in a mansion with the largest television in "the free world" and a collection of priceless treasures. Yet there was one thing that Mr. Burns still wanted — a teddy bear named Bobo that he lost as a child. Through an unlikely series of accidents, Bobo ended up with Maggie, Homer's youngest child. After hard bargaining, Mr. Burns agreed to pay Homer one million dollars as well as three Hawaiian islands for Bobo. No amount of money, though, would make Maggie relinquish her teddy bear. But when she saw how sad Mr. Burns was without Bobo, she gave him the bear for nothing. "Something amazing has happened," the detestable old man blurted out. "I'm actually happy."

— CHESTER PACH

CUTTING COSTS WHILE SAVING THE EARTH

BY **GAIL KALINOSKI**

Small-business owner Steve Rigoni gets his hands dirty helping out with every aspect of his wind farm.

Steve Rigoni's interest in wind power dates back to the 1970s, when the United States was feeling the effects of an energy crisis and oil prices had risen dramatically. He built his own wind turbine then. Though it worked, Rigoni, a third-generation dairy farmer in upstate New York, admits it wasn't terribly reliable, and he eventually took it down.

By 2006, Rigoni had decided to give up dairy farming. "It was my grandfather's dream. I did it for 35 to 38 years. It was time for something else," the 55-year-old Rigoni notes. Rigoni, a married father of three grown children, turned to crop farming. "We grow corn, soybeans, and hay for the local horse people and grass for drying the corn. We do custom [corn] drying for other farmers in the area," Rigoni says.

He also decided that year to give wind power another try. Now when Rigoni looks out in his backyard, he sees a 10-kilowatt Bergey wind turbine attached to a 140-foot (42.5-meter) tower built on his sprawling, 600-acre (240-hectare) farm in Pavilion, New York, located about 90 minutes from the Canadian border.

He is part of a growing trend in the United States: residents, farmers, and small-business owners who are creating their own electricity through wind power. The small wind market has been

growing rapidly in recent years, 78 percent in 2008 alone, according to Ron Stimmel of the American Wind Energy Association. Stimmel says government incentives are helping people like Rigoni, who seek energy independence and a way to reduce their carbon footprint, to manage the cost of the wind turbine systems.

Rigoni was one of the first in his area to put up a wind turbine on his property for his personal use, but others have been cropping up around town since Rigoni's was erected more than three years ago. Even the local school district has turned to wind power, Rigoni says.

Rigoni obtained his turbine from Sustainable Energy Developments, Inc. (SED), a dealer in turbines from the personal size up to commercial models, including a 1.5-megawatt project at Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort in Hancock, Massachusetts. But the company takes a lot of pride in its small wind projects like the one at Rigoni's farm.

Ernie Pritchard, cofounder and director of small wind at SED, says Rigoni and others like him who install wind turbines on their properties are "looking to make a statement and believe in renewable energy." Since SED is a small company, Pritchard remembers installing Rigoni's windmill and still talks with him about maintenance issues.

"He loves his turbine," Pritchard says of Rigoni, sounding like a proud father.

Rigoni's wind turbine system, including installation, cost $55,000. But the U.S. government and many state governments offer tax credits, interest discounts, and other incentives to help Americans convert to this environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient technology. These measures helped Rigoni make the switch to wind power.

Rigoni's turbine produces about 800 kilowatts of electricity a month, just about enough to power all the appliances in his

Cruel, conniving, and obsessed by profits, Montgomery Burns cares even less about the environment than he does about his workers in *The Simpsons*.

Steve Rigoni is one of a growing number of Americans looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint and their fuel costs.

Capturing the wind's energy is safe, clean, and renewable.

home and office. Before Rigoni installed the wind system, he and his wife, Susan, had a natural gas-powered clothes dryer and hot water heater. They switched both to electricity to take full advantage of their windmill.

Rigoni's electric bill used to be about $120 to $140 a month. The windmill makes those bills a thing of the past. He usually only pays a basic fee of about $16 a month to the utility company, National Grid.

During a visit to his farm, Rigoni, dressed in a plaid shirt and blue jeans, demonstrated how his system works. Although it is

only 200 yards (182 meters) from his home, Rigoni says he never hears loud noises. His windmill has become something of a town landmark as others considering erecting their own turbines have stopped by to see his.

Rigoni says he has never been approached by a large commercial wind farm developer seeking to erect bigger windmills on his land, but other farmers in neighboring towns have been. Today, large white wind turbines dot the rolling landscape of many upstate New York communities as they supply clean wind power to utility companies.

Even though Rigoni's windmill is much smaller than the commercial-size wind turbines, he still had to get approval from local officials to set up the system because of its height. Since there are no other neighbors near his property, he was given the go-ahead.

Wind turbines require an annual wind speed average of about 10 miles (16 kilometers) per hour to make them practical for personal use. This works for Rigoni, whose upstate New York town benefits from stiff seasonable breeze blowing off nearby Lake Erie.

On a late summer day, there was a light breeze in the air and the three white 10-foot (three-meter) fiberglass blades of Rigoni's windmill were spinning gently across the brilliant blue sky. He notes it takes five or seven good days of wind to get most of the electricity for the month.

Even though his electric bills are covered every month, it will still take about 15 years before the wind turbine pays for itself. But Rigoni believes it is important for Americans to do what they can to decrease dependence on oil and coal for power and to use more renewable sources of energy like wind, solar, and biofuels.

"One of the ways I look at the wind turbine is it is a diversification in my investment portfolio," Rigoni says. "I put money into buying the windmill now and I get my electric bill paid when I retire."

While he notes that wind power is still "one of the loves of my life," these days Rigoni is putting his energies into another type of alternative energy: biomass, which is fuel or heat created from plants and plant-derived materials. In Rigoni's case, he burns the switchgrass he grows on his farm to dry corn instead of using propane gas.

As with the windmill, Rigoni becomes excited as he explains this new system — how he built it, how it works, and how it saves both money and the environment because it is carbon dioxide neutral. By burning switchgrass, he saves about 1,000 gallons (3,800 liters) of propane a day during the fall corn-drying season. Propane can cost at least $2 a gallon so the savings add up quickly.

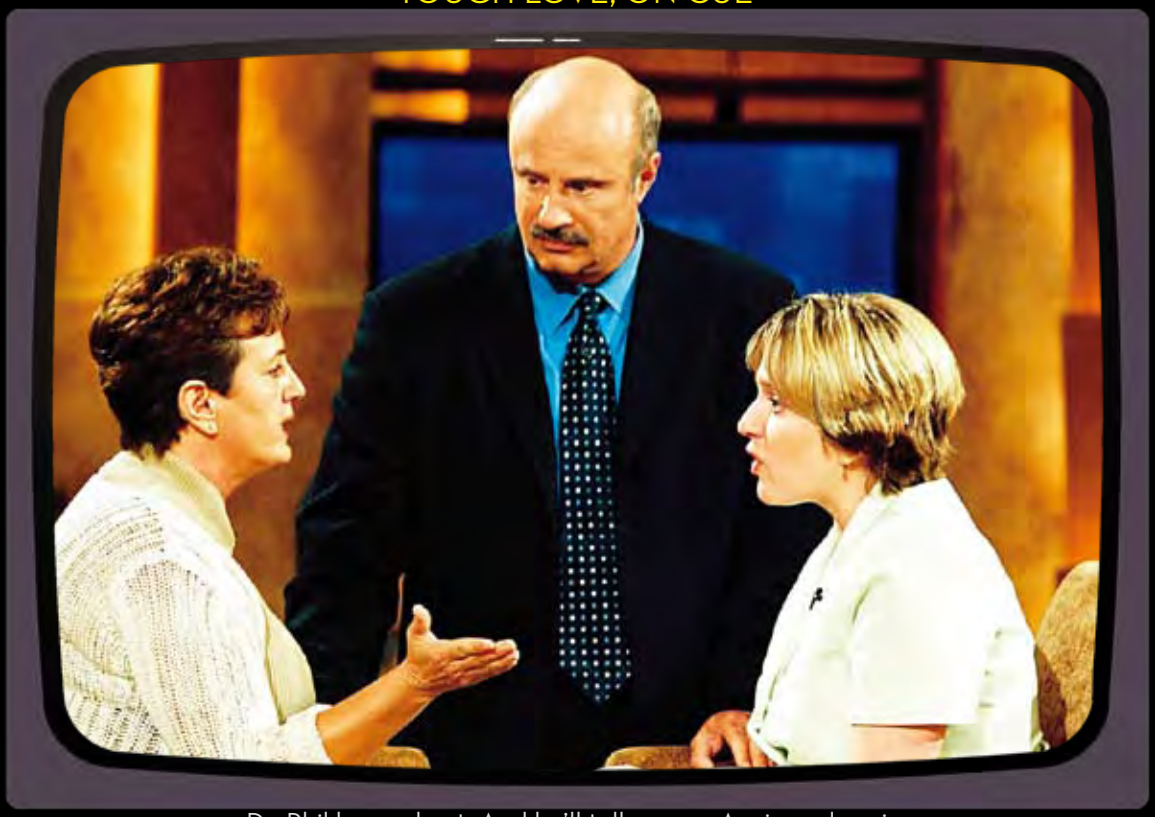
While the savings are important, especially to a farmer, for Rigoni a big part of his switchgrass-burning project is convincing others to invest time and money in creating renewable energy sources and the markets for them.

"Supply and demand, it's something we farmers know all about," Rigoni says, adding, "I believe we all have to do something about the energy crisis."

***Gail Kalinoski** is a freelance writer and editor living in Wappingers Falls, New York. A journalist with more than 25 years of experience, she has written about alternative energy, commercial real estate, and other business topics for newspapers, Web sites, and trade publications.*

DR. PHIL

"TOUGH LOVE, ON CUE"



Dr. Phil knows best. And he'll tell you so. Again and again.

Dr. Phil makes millions of house calls each day, coming into the homes of viewers of his television talk show to provide help with the challenges of daily living, including relationships, parenting, weight loss, and sexuality. Phillip McGraw earned a Ph.D. in psychology in 1979 from North Texas State University, but he gave up his clinical practice. He gained widespread attention with the publication in 1999 of a best-selling book, *Life Strategies*, and then launched his popular television show, *Dr. Phil*, in 2002. Each day's program has a theme, such as "Sibling Abuse," "Sex Offenders Next Door," and "My Big Fat Spoiled Family Member." Guests grapple with their problems on the show, sometimes receiving advice from experts. Dr. Phil is always there, too, bluntly telling them to "get real" and improve their lives.

Many people watch *Dr. Phil* because the program makes complicated issues simple and dramatic. On one show, Dr. Phil brought a mother to tears when over and over he played a video of her screaming at her son, "Shut up, Vincent."

Dr. Phil sometimes deals with sleazy and salacious cases, giving viewers and members of the audience a chance to peer into troubled lives and dysfunctional families. He devoted two programs to allegations that a father was mistreating his three-year-old daughter, complete with what the show's announcer described as "heartbreaking footage" of young Kaylee in tears. The parents exchanged "disturbing accusations" and engaged in what the announcer promised viewers was "a confrontation that you'll never forget." "Does anybody have this child's interest at heart?" Dr. Phil asked, as he sensationalized a sad situation that would usually be resolved by the discreet intervention of professionals in social work or law enforcement.

Dr. Phil no longer has a therapist's license, but the state of California, where he tapes his show, decided that he didn't need one. State officials concluded that his program is more about entertainment than psychology.

— CHESTER PACH

HELPING YOUTH, ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

BY **SONYA F. WEAKLEY**

Dr. Perette Arrington respects those she counsels. This includes protecting their privacy.

Dr. Perette Arrington knows what it's like to listen to emotional outbursts of anger and confusion. She knows about the pain of people who are suffering emotional stress. Her career as a psychologist sometimes means she has to accept and hold the emotions of her patients. She is a container.

"When they can't contain it, they project it out and it has to go somewhere," she said. "I will sit in a session and contain all their emotions."

She is the only person who hears them. She meets with people in a private office in a confidential setting where her visitors can feel safe about expressing their feelings. No cameras. No television. No public drama.

During her career, Arrington has worked with patients who are very sick, and the sessions could be difficult. "Sometimes people ask me how I do the work that I do. It is sad to think what some people go through with mental illness, but I wouldn't do it if I couldn't separate it" from her personal life, she said.

When she goes home, she doesn't tell anyone about any of the people she has seen. "It's part of what makes my job special."

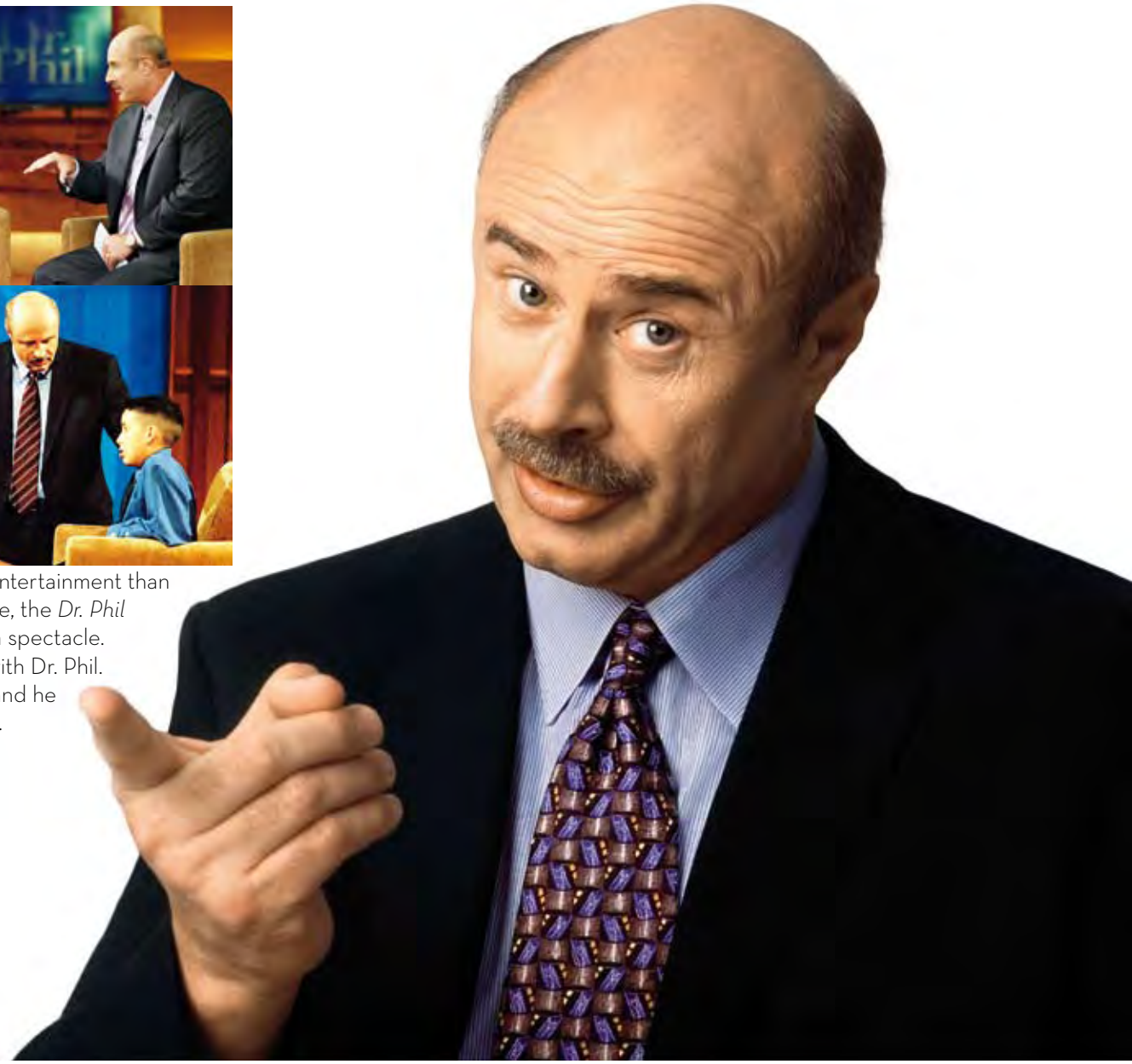
Arrington has a doctor of psychology degree from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and a master's degree in counseling psychology

from Howard University, also in Washington.

Though she has worked in many settings, Arrington recently became the resident psychologist at John Philip Sousa Middle School in Washington. The city has a mental health program to help schools work with children one on one and in small private groups.

In her group sessions, she works with sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders on a single topic, such as conflict or anger management. Her goal is to prevent problems before they happen. She also sees children one at a time to help them work out personal problems, such as a conflict with a friend or a family concern.

She also periodically goes into classrooms to teach an entire class and works directly with teachers and parents on managing different types of behavior. Recently, she taught a class to help students understand the signs of suicide. "I teach them how to figure out the signs within their friends, siblings and how to get help. Sometimes kids just don't know; they might



More about entertainment than helping people, the *Dr. Phil* show is truly a spectacle. Don't argue with Dr. Phil. It's his show, and he is always right.

Dr. Perette Arrington has counseled youth in shelters and in public schools.

Helping middle school students is Arrington's specialty. She takes their problems seriously and they, in turn, confide freely in her.

turn their backs because they don't know how to respond."

For a group of eight sixth- and seventh-grade girls, Arrington led a weekly lunchtime anger management discussion about what it means to have a "low-frustration tolerance." This type of "intervention" is meant to stop problems before they occur.

"You can tell Dr. Arrington your special feelings," said Lajuan, an eighth-grade student. "You can come to her if you are feeling down or have a problem."

She also intervenes in "mini crises," such as when two students get into an argument, but the problem is not discussed in front of other students; the disagreeing students work it out privately.

Sousa Principal Dwan Johnson described Arrington as being able to work well with the adults and the students at the school. The school is lucky because most schools do not enjoy the benefit of having a full-time staff person focused on the mental health of the students, he said. "It has been

a blessing to get Dr. Arrington," he said. The students "all trust her. She's very ethical, and she always has a plan."

Arrington didn't initially choose to study psychology. As a top volleyball player (starting middle hitter for three years) at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, she found herself overburdened majoring in biology pre-medical studies and being a year-round athlete. "I was losing sleep. I had to make a decision."

Her decision was to put her plans to be a cardiologist on hold and explore another health care field. "I switched to psychology and loved it. It made sense to me."

She understood the different theories of psychology and how they help explain different types of behavior, and she seemed to have a natural ability to apply them in specific situations. From that point on, Arrington knew what she wanted to do. Helping people work through personal problems felt like "an innate skill," she said.

While pursuing her degrees, she took advantage of many opportunities for internships and research projects, including an internship at a boarding school and clinic for teenagers with severe emotional disabilities and a program working with children living in foster (usually temporary) homes.

At the boarding school, Arrington worked several months in a special care program for patients who were diagnosed with advanced mental illnesses. She was available to the children 24 hours a day and also served as a familiar face if they needed to go to a hospital or if they faced other emergencies.

"I was so drained and tired," but it became easier when she could see any of the children making progress, she said.

She also has worked in youth shelters, in Washington's public school system, as an associate in a group practice, and as a researcher for the National Association of Social Workers. In addition to her full-time job at the middle school, Arrington has her own part-time private practice where she sees children and adults in individual counseling sessions in her office. She also works as a consultant for another practice.

And never did she give up volleyball. She has been the head coach of the girls volleyball team at Woodrow Wilson Senior High School in Washington for 10 seasons, and her team has won its league championship for each of them. "It's a full-time job in itself," she said. She plans practices and tournaments and even coordinates getting parents and others to drive the girls to games. "I do it because I enjoy it. I do it for the girls."

Coaching volleyball takes a great deal of her time, and she often talks about giving it up, but she continues putting off the decision. "I keep getting these wonderful athletes and I want to help them and mold them and give them the same opportunity I had."

Her work has helped her to understand the way teenagers think and how to channel their competitive nature, and they are comfortable talking to her. "I understand the pressures they are under and I can connect with them. If you enjoy what you do, it is easy for people to feel comfortable around you."

***Sonya F. Weakley** is a writer and editor in the Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State.*

BY THE NUMBERS
FACTS AND FIGURES

- **5,274**: Number of farmers markets in the United States (Farmers Market Coalition)
- **8.9**: Percent increase in the number of farmers markets in the United States from 2005 to 2009 (Farmers Market Survey)
- **55**: Number of varieties of vegetables in the White House garden (*New York Times*)
- **$200**: Cost of seeds and mulch for the White House vegetable garden (*New York Times*)
- **$2.5 billion**: Total spent by Americans in 2008 on home food gardening (Reuters)
- **43 million**: Number of U.S. households that grow their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs (Reuters)
- **20**: Average percentage growth of U.S. certified organic farmers each year for the past 10 years (Organic Farming Research Foundation)
- **40.8**: Percent of U.S. land area used for farmland (U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- **17**: Percent of U.S. land made up of coastal communities (not including Alaska) (National Ocean Service)
- **55,054**: Number of rescues by lifeguards in the United States in 2009 (United States Lifesaving Association)
- **176.4 million**: Number of people who visited a U.S. beach in 2009 (United States Lifesaving Association)
- **45 million**: Number of people who visited New York City in 2009 (*New York Times*)
- **6.4 million**: Number of Americans who use public transportation to commute to work (U.S. Census Bureau)
- **33**: Percentage of that number who work in New York City (U.S. Census Bureau)
- **722**: Miles of subway track in New York City (Metropolitan Transit Authority)
- **700,000**: Number of cars kept out of New York City per day due to public transportation use (Metropolitan Transit Authority)
- **34,000**: Number of police officers in New York City (Reuters)
- **1,619**: Number of police officers in the state of Vermont (U.S. Department of Justice)
- **8,000**: Number of police officers at the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama (*New York Times*)
- **26 out of 44**: Number of U.S. presidents with law degrees (*ABC News*)
- **23,119**: Number of lawyers in Japan (*Japan Times*)
- **1.14 million**: Number of lawyers in the United States (*Wall Street Journal*)
- **788,000**: Number of medical doctors in the United States (*New York Times*)
- **82 million**: Number of people around the globe who watch the world's most popular TV show, the American medical drama *House* (*Foreign Policy*)

- **16,000**: Number of students who graduate from U.S. medical schools each year (*New York Times*)
- **650,000**: Number of international students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities in 2009 (*Washington Post*)
- **12.5**: Percent of the U.S. population that are immigrants (United Press International)
- **10.9 million**: Number of school-age children (five to 17) who speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau and State University of New York-Albany)
- **54**: Percent of all U.S. households with a member who plays a musical instrument (Bolz Center for Arts Administration)
- **61.8 million**: Number of Americans who engage in a volunteer activity (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- **8.24 million**: Number of young Americans (between the ages of 16 and 24) who regularly volunteer (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- **22**: Percentage by which students who participate in community service are more likely to graduate from secondary school than those who don't volunteer (*New York Daily News*)
- **89**: Percent of American households that give to a charity (National Philanthropic Trust)
- **$1.416 billion**: Proposed AmeriCorps funding for 2011 to strengthen America's volunteer sector (AmeriCorps)
- **$6.3 billion**: Money pledged by the U.S. government towards state and local renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts (The White House)
- **627**: Number of wind turbines at the world's largest wind farm, the Roscoe Wind Complex in Texas (*CBS News*)
- **1941**: Year of the first wind turbine to feed into an electrical grid (*Wired*)
- **371.7 million**: Total energy (in thousand kilowatt-hours) produced by renewable sources in the United States (U.S. Department of Energy)

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Chester Pach
The television and cinema profiles in this book are written by Chester Pach. He teaches history at Ohio University, where he holds the title of Outstanding Graduate Faculty Member. He is the author of three books on U.S. politics and foreign policy. His next book, which will be published soon by the University Press of Kansas, is *The Presidency of Ronald Reagan*.

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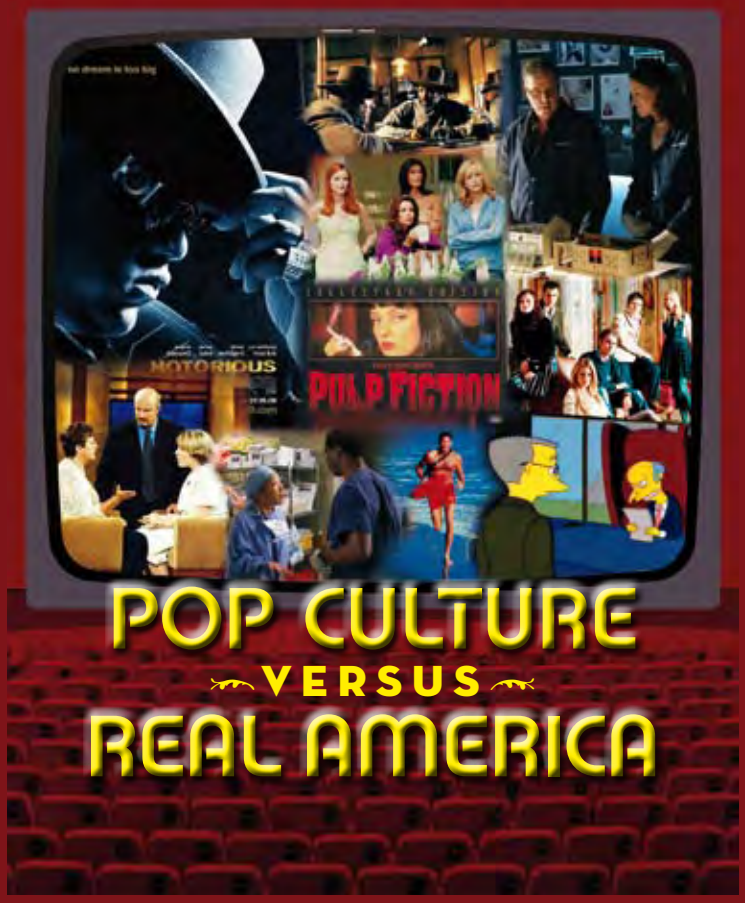

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