

Sidelights

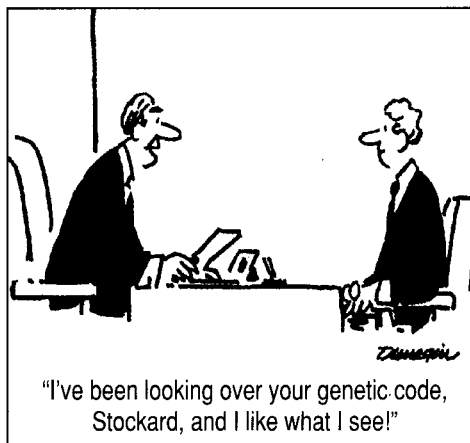
President Clinton “revels in the stock-market rise during his tenure,” notes columnist **James Glassman**, “yet for the period when he governed with a Democratic Congress, the Dow rose only 600 points.” Since Republicans have controlled Congress, the Dow has risen over 6,000 points. ♣ Studies at the Annenberg School for Communication, reports Dean **Kathleen Hall Jamieson**, show that in general elections from 1952-96, attack ads were “more accurate than those touting the virtues and record of a candidate.” ... A study of the presidential primaries this year found that “negative” ads draw voters to the polls. ... The *Washington Post* editorial page goes negative on the Vice President: “In lashing out against big oil, big pharmaceutical firms, and big health maintenance organizations, Mr. **Gore** is playing the demagogue, and he himself must know it.” ♣ The Harvard Program on Education Policy and Governance studied school voucher programs in Dayton, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; and New York City. It found black students who switched from public to private schools improved their reading and math scores dramatically in both the first and second years. The voucher programs closed the black/white test score gap by one-third in those first two years, a much larger improvement than was produced by programs elsewhere which either reduced class sizes or implemented rigorous statewide tests. ... Parents with children in grades K-12 of Chicago’s public schools will receive report cards rating them in such areas as their children’s bed times and whether the parents attend school events. ♣ For parents who regard their children as “fashion accessories,” Italian designers now offer \$600 dresses and \$500 silk pants. ♣ **Jeff Bezos** of Amazon.com shocked a recent American Booksellers Association meeting by predicting that, a decade hence, only 15

percent of sales will occur online: “The physical world is still the best medium ever invented.”

Just days before his latest TV special was to air, **Geraldo Rivera** announced he might run for mayor of New York. “Gee,” sneers *Washington Post* TV critic **Lisa de Moraes**, “do you think his ‘stunning’ announcement might have been a mere publicity stunt to try to goose ratings on this latest incarnation in his series of NBC prime-time ratings losers?” It didn’t work: Geraldo’s special “was whipped by ‘Flipper.’ That’s gotta hurt.” ♣ Two University of Maryland economists studied 37 cities with professional sports teams between 1969-96 and found that the negative economic effects of a team coming to town always outweighed the positive. ♣ In China, the *Times* of London recently reported, a woman who gave birth to a fourth child in violation of that country’s “One Child” policy had her healthy baby forcibly taken from her and drowned in a rice paddy before her eyes. ... The House of Representatives approved by 380 to 15 the Born Alive Infant Protection Act, which would require that children who survive abortion attempts receive appropriate medical care after birth and not be put to death. ... “Nearly

half of households earning between \$250,000 and \$499,999,” the *Wall Street Journal* writes, “had just one breadwinner in 1998, up from about 38 percent six years earlier. For households earning \$500,000 to \$999,999 the figure was 58 percent. Having an at-home spouse “says something about what you’ve achieved,” one “adviser to wealthy families” told the paper. ♣ If your child is kidnapped, the IRS only allows a tax deduction for him the year he’s abducted; ransom, however, is always deductible. ♣ U.S. District Judge **Robert Cleland**, outraged by “one of the most unjustifiable lawsuits” he’d ever seen, ordered the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to pay over \$58,000 to a Burger King owner it had sued for supposedly discriminating against blacks. ♣ The *Christian Science Monitor* observes a strong trend among churches to minister to single parents, both spiritually and practically. “If you are going to be anti-abortion,” the paper quotes a Southern Baptist spokesman saying, “then you absolutely must... provide support for women who are alone, in need, and have been duped by men and by the law.” ... The Urban Institute studied 1998 tax returns and found that the state with the least charitable giving was Massachusetts. Mississippi, however, though forty-ninth in the nation in average income, boasted the country’s most generous citizens, followed by other southern Bible Belt states, the Dakotas, and heavily Mormon Utah. ♣ The National Rifle Association’s membership has rocketed to over 4 million, an all-time high. The previous record, 3.1 million, occurred in 1994, the same year Republicans swept the House of Representatives. ... A *Washington Post* reporter who was writing on Marine Corps training asked the weapon safety officer for a cigarette light—while standing in an ammo shed.

—SW



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DON'T WRITE OFF THE NEXT GENERATION

In *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*, Neil Howe and William Strauss predict the generation of young Americans due to start hitting college campuses soon will have little patience for the politics of baby boomer faculty members, and will rebel against university policies they see as promoting racial, sexual, and ideological separatism.

The authors suggest the "Millennial Generation," beginning with this year's college freshmen, is "team-oriented, optimistic, and...poised for greatness on a global scale." Just as students at the end of the 1960s were starkly different from their mild-mannered counterparts in that decade's early years, so students raised today amid coarseness and cynicism may just rebel themselves into decency, self-restraint, and public-spiritedness.

If that sounds unlikely, consider data showing that homicide, violent crime, abortion, and teen pregnancy are plummeting at some of the fastest rates ever recorded, while teen suicide is falling for the first time in decades. (See the *TAE* issues on "Generation X," January/February 1998, and "Is America Turning a

Corner?" January/February 1999.)

Baby boomers and those immediately following them were interested in personal liberation, says author Howe, and that's what Millennials "are rebelling against." "It was like reality hit...and people realized society was on a downward spiral," freshman Alexandra Kagan explained to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Asked "What is the major cause of the problems in this country?" today's teens cite "selfishness" first of all.

Five or six years ago, college kids "were real angry," one college administrator told the *Chronicle*. "There was an overwhelming sense of entitlement. It was always, 'I pay your salary, and you should do what I say. Screw your rules.'" Such attitudes are "slowly starting to change." When students screw up, they're "more likely to take responsibility for their actions," and when tragedy strikes them, they "tend to be more resilient" and seem, "on the whole, happier."

Howe and Strauss foresee some chance that Millennials, who love rules and trust institutions, "could be led astray by a demagogue, or use technology in Orwellian ways." But in today's cultural climate, we'll happily risk those trade-offs.



A 1 PERCENT PICTURE

In the last election, the "wealthiest 1 percent" of Americans were frequently invoked in sinister tones. But they were hardly ever described. Are they partying Kennedy kids, chauffeured oil barons, retired rock stars?

Hardly. For 1998 (the latest year data is available), the top 1 percent:

- paid about 35 percent of all personal income taxes, up from 29 percent in 1993 (the entire bottom 50 percent of taxpayers paid a mere 4 percent of income tax receipts),

- had adjusted gross incomes beginning not in the millions but at \$269,496.

Another survey of the top 1 percent (focusing especially on technology workers) found:

- nine out of ten did *not* inherit their wealth,
- they've been working 29 years on average, and still work 56 hours a week,
- 83 percent volunteer time for charities, and on average give away 8 percent of their income.

Sorry, Al, they don't scare us.

DID SOMEONE SAY DIALOGUE?

From the newsletter published by iconoclastic black commentator Larry Elder:

Harvard's African-American Studies department chairman, Henry Louis Gates, once complained that because of white racism, "when I walk into a room, people still see my blackness, more than my Gates-ness, or my literaryness."

Then there's Karen Russell, the Harvard Law grad and daughter of former basketball great Bill Russell. "I am angry.... How am I supposed to react to well-meaning, good liberal white people

HOME ON THE RANGE

Nevada house builder Ignatius Piazza has put up a new 177-home development near Pahrump, Nevada, with some highly unusual amenities: 13 shooting ranges and 400 yards of shooting trenches. Oh yes, and free gun cleaning for every resident.

Piazza has named the community Front Sight (much more interesting, we think, than the usual monikers—The Oaks at Tricking Brook, etc.).

"Wouldn't it be nice to live in the safest town in America?" Piazza asked a crowd at a recent rally. "We won't have any crime at Front Sight, not with everyone trained in firearms, and most everyone owning them."