

servatism," he writes. Instead, it is a bias "against all politicians, and especially against those most identified with electoral politics." And, he adds, "television newspeople also have an antiestablishment bias: that is, they view with special suspicion whatever political leaders and organizations seem most powerful at the moment."

I think this amounts to a half-explanation. Liberalism is also a factor, but not always the overriding one in political coverage. Ranney cites the example of the kid-gloves treatment of Jimmy Carter when he was a long-shot presidential candi-

date early in 1976 compared to the more critical coverage after he became the favorite for the nomination and for winning the presidency. "It was Carter the long-shot who became Carter the frontrunner," he writes, and this changed the press treatment. Senator Edward Kennedy experienced the same phenomenon in 1979 and 1980. When favored to oust Carter, he was handled roughly, his halting speeches pilloried. But once he lost any chance to beat Carter, he was lionized by the press as a gallant, articulate warrior for the liberal cause.

Rather boldly, Ranney goes so far

as to insist that Vice President Spiro Agnew's attack in 1969 on network television's news coverage had some merit. "It seems to me that, at least, Agnew's charges were and remain serious," he says. "If television plays as important a role in creating political reality for Americans as I contend . . . and if that reality is systematically biased in favor of a particular ideology or party or candidate, then one of the most basic preconditions for democratic government does not exist in this land, and those of us who care about that should think hard about how we can induce the broadcasters to maintain a

more objective stance without violating their First Amendment rights." Ranney notes that he pursued the question of bias and remedies for it "on the assumption . . . that one can raise these topics without in any way appearing to be a supporter of Spiro T. Agnew."

Given the normally hysterical reaction of the press to any criticism of its practices, I'm not sure Ranney is on safe ground with this assumption. Is it really respectable for anyone to devote nearly a whole page of a book to quoting from an Agnew speech that attacked the press? Time will tell. □

EMINENTOES



BARBARA HONEGGER'S GREAT DAYS

by John H. Fund

Now that the cool weather has arrived and our more than 4,000 accredited media representatives are no longer so parched for those non-stories which figured so prominently in the languid days of August, it is a good time to sit back and take a deeper look into those summer news crazes, perhaps the most peculiar being the case of Barbara Honegger. She, of course, is the Reagan appointee who quit the Department of Justice and called the Administration's policy on women's rights a "sham." Her resignation set off a ten-day extravaganza that began by threatening to create another canyon in the "gender gap" and ended as a surrealistic farce.

Barbara Honegger is the product of a Republican family from California's sprawling San Joaquin Valley. A precocious child, she graduated first in her high school class before enrolling at Stanford University, receiving a B.A. in creative writing in 1969. For the next decade, she pursued her own educational odyssey, holding down research and secretarial jobs while immersing herself in parapsychology (the study of psychic phenomena, meaningful coincidence, and synchronicity). According to col-

lege acquaintances, if a subject was outré, bizarre, and not to be found in the normal college catalogue, she was immediately attracted. As one Stanford student put it: "She was 180 degrees removed from a California Valley Girl. Instead, she was a bonafide Space Cadet."

Honegger reveals in her autobiographical manuscript, *The Omens of Power* (written under the pen name Damien Windsor), that during this time "a web of well-kept secrets about the origin of this nation" were

revealed to her through parapsychology. Among these secrets was how the symmetry of the three stars in the constellation Orion's belt were linked to George Washington's presidency and the "all-male secret society" of the Masons.

Then in 1976, Honegger became a research assistant for Dr. Martin Anderson at the Hoover Institution, a Reagan domestic policy adviser in the '76 presidential campaign. After a year at Hoover she left to enroll in the country's first graduate program in

parapsychology. Two years later, her coursework completed, she received the "first accredited degree in parapsychology in the nation," albeit from the rather obscure John F. Kennedy University of Orinda, California. By this time, in her role as a "cosmic Sherlock Holmes," she had completed the link between the Dog Star Sirius and the Masonic goal to "establish a new world secular order, completely separate from the older sacred or religious order linked to God or gods."

Here the author of *Omens* pauses to catch her breath. "I wouldn't blame the reader if he threw down this record at this point convinced that it is utter nonsense," she informs the reader. "Do that if you will, but you will miss the events which link the United States unquestionably to the ancient and secret Masonic tradition, and the coincidences which link Ronald Reagan to its source."

In December 1979, Honegger was rehired by Martin Anderson to resume her old duties as a research assistant. This, of course, had been foretold to her, as an increasing number of occurrences in her life seemed to be.

On January 7, 1980 she returned to Hoover for a morning appointment



John H. Fund is a reporter for syndicated columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak.

with Anderson. While sitting in the chair next to Anderson's desk, "I looked out the plate glass window to the gray sky and rolling foothills in the distance. As I did, I was suddenly moved to speak:

"I want to tell you why I'm here. You're going to return to the Reagan campaign. Reagan is going to win by a landslide, and you're going to follow him to the White House. I am going to be there with you."

As she spoke these fateful words, "the sun broke through the clouds and flooded the room in which we sat with brilliant light. As it did, I felt another flood, more uncanny, which I can only describe as a sense of pure empowerment. It has been from that moment that I have known that Reagan can't lose."

Anderson did in fact rejoin the Reagan campaign, which went on to score a landslide victory. Honegger followed Anderson to Washington, where she became a special assistant and scheduler for him. She made no secret either of her interest in the occult and coincidences or of her profound disagreements with Reagan on social issues. "She was very liberal on crime and abortion," says a former roommate, Elisabeth Richards. "She would always complain about the 'reactionaries' on the White House staff." One co-worker says, "I honestly believe she felt she would convince Reagan to support abortion and the ERA."

Honegger established a reputation of being "somewhat odd" among button-down Reaganites. She sported necklaces in the shape of a "mystic beetle" and her office window featured a display of the fateful three stars mounted on sticks. To anyone who evinced the slightest interest, she would give a copy of her magnum opus, *The Omens of Power*.

When Anderson departed from the White House in early 1982, Honegger was quickly brushed aside. But backed with a warm letter of praise from then White House liaison Elizabeth Dole, she clinched a temporary \$37,000 a year job in the Department of Justice.

During the 1980 campaign, Honegger had been the brainchild of the 50 States Project, an attempt to smooth over Reagan's opposition to the ERA by promising firm and swift action to aid individual states in ending discrimination in their own laws. At the Justice Department, Honegger pursued the same principle in examining federal statutes. She drafted the executive order creating a "gender discrimination agency review" to serve as a centerpiece of the Administration's ERA alternative, even serving as its project director until

the ephemeral body was disbanded. She portrayed herself as a loyal Reaganite trying to use her position to elevate the issue of women's rights inside the White House.

But others disagree. Some say that she was already applying for positions with liberal and feminist groups because she considered her job involving dreary word-searches through the Federal Code for gender-specific laws as "computer drudgery." Honegger was then supposed to forward these lists to her superiors. "They gave her a very fancy job title, but nothing to do in terms of making policy. It happens all the time but it frustrated her," says one co-worker.

After more than a year at the Justice Department, Honegger saw her temporary position expiring on September 30. With no job prospects in sight, and in complete frustration at her inability to make anyone take her concerns seriously, she decided to blow the whistle. At first she planned a simple letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*. But feminist friends, sensing the best cause célèbre for the women's movement since Jimmy Carter fired Bella Abzug, convinced her to write an opinion piece instead. Honegger stayed at the house of her already acquired media consultant while writing the article. "I was afraid to be alone at home," she said. "I had the sense I was pregnant with a national baby. . . ."

When the piece appeared in the Sunday *Washington Post* on August 21, it proved to be a rambling, ultra-detailed account of her disillusionment with Reagan that took up almost an entire news page. After outlining her failure to make anyone take her computer printouts seriously, she ended with the following line: "Frankly, my dear, I don't think Ronald Reagan gives a damn."

This bombshell was followed the next day with a bubbly profile in the *Post*. Honegger resigned her position the same day and became an instant celebrity, appearing as *Newsweek* put it "on virtually every news show but the early morning farm report." Phone calls pursued her across town and she claimed to feel "like a piece of public property." But, she gamely added, "I will be public property until the job is done."

Yet had it not been for Justice Department spokesman Thomas DeCair's characterization of Honegger as a "low-level munchkin," the story would have ended in a day or so. White House press secretary Larry Speakes further inflamed the situation by saying that Honegger had "played an important role" at

the White House by dressing up as the Easter Bunny in the yearly Easter egg roll.

DeCair and Speakes thus transformed Honegger from a disgruntled ex-employee into a crusading Joan of Arc, giving her a brand new lease on news space. She called a full-scale press conference where, flanked by a galaxy of feminist leaders, she pointed out that it had actually been Ursula Meese, the wife of presidential counselor Edwin Meese, in the bunny suit. She then proffered a photograph of herself and Reagan, saying: "This is the munchkin with the Wizard of Oz."

"Barbara Honegger is nothing less than Ronald Reagan's smoking gun on women's issues," claimed one feminist leader. But Stuart Taylor of the *New York Times* noted with bemusement that "Miss Honegger seemed to be loving the limelight in her rambling discourse at today's news conference. . . . As stage-managed media events go, the news conference arranged by NOW was less than smooth. But it was deliciously evocative of political public relations in the television age, especially in August when news is scarce and reporters are hungry."

"Totally exhausted" at the close of the conference, Honegger nonetheless closeted herself with two public relations consultants and prepared to travel to San Diego to con-

front the Wizard during a speech to a group of Republican women.

Two days after her *Post* article, it reached the point where the NBC-owned station in Washington preempted "Real People," that celebration of the American eccentric, to air a half-hour report on the gender gap featuring Miss Honegger. As the interview progressed it became less and less possible to distinguish be-

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tween the two programs. When Honegger was almost begged to cite specific laws she had discovered that discriminated, she offered only one: the fact that federal law provides a pension for the widow of the President but makes no provision for a widower. In another interview she mentioned the prohibition against women serving in combat but continued her evasive maneuvers on the matter.

By the time Honegger arrived in San Diego the limelight had proved so comfortable that she relaxed enough to tell a *People* magazine reporter some of her more unusual views. Sitting in the restaurant of the Bahia Resort Hotel she commented, "You do, of course, see that my initials are all over this hotel, don't you?" Later she confided *The Dirty Secret of the Administration*: "Reagan is planning coerced body-part donation. And eventually coerced whole-body donations. That's what forced pregnancy is. If we can force whole bodies, why not body parts?"

But what marred her media event

in San Diego was a *Los Angeles Times* interview in which Honegger revealed that a supernatural "source" using her voice had told her she would be part of a Reagan Administration in order to defend women's rights. Calling it "channeled information . . . as if it were from the future," Honegger boasted that she wanted to "redeem the soul of the Republican Party."

Hounded by reporters for an explanation, Honegger claimed she had been misquoted. "There was no voice," she told them. "It was a very strong intuition."

More and more pieces of the Honegger mosaic were vouchsafed by friends or unfriendly White House sources. She had told associates she had a Ph.D. in parapsychology but suddenly claimed only a master's. She had boasted of raising money to launch an expedition to survey Halley's comet and of having lunched with noted Soviet parapsychologists while at the White House. One reporter who sympathetically interviewed her at length nonetheless

judged her in no uncertain terms. "She's a kook, and a publicity hound . . . I don't think she ever believed in Reagan and is now taking us all for a ride." *USA Today* reported that Honegger had told them that White House deputy chief-of-staff Michael Deaver had scheduled an appointment with her. Yet Deaver's office denied this, saying only that a low-level aide would be speaking with her "on the telephone."

The Honegger Hype ended suddenly when Sam Donaldson delivered the coup de grâce on the August 26 "Nightline." Pale and nervous, she responded to even the simplest questions by telling viewers to "read my article in the *Washington Post*." After repeated attempts at communication, an exasperated Donaldson explained that many Americans weren't able to get copies of a week-old *Post* article. "Her appearance was a fiasco," reported *People* magazine. Said one technician after the show, "Well she's sunk her own boat. She's committed media suicide." Like sharks scenting blood,

the press now played up Honegger's "erratic public behavior." It was humiliation by a thousand cuts. What the media giveth they can and do taketh away. The deaths of Marines in Lebanon and the loss of the Korean airliner combined with her quirky personality to end her stay in the sun of publicity.

But Honegger had the last laugh. She had told the *Washington Post* "that media attention would get them [the White House] to fulfill their own promise." Two days after his bunny suit remark, Larry Speakes was contrite. "We would be glad to have her input as we have all along," he said. And on September 8, the White House announced it would support changes in the gender designation of 47 federal statutes. Although many of the proposed actions were admitted to be "trivial" (partly because many of the federal laws Honegger had found were of debatable importance), "Brave Babs" had cowed the President's staff into submission. At last word, she was planning to run for Congress. □

AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS



HEALTH FOOD AWAKENINGS

by Lawrence Klepp

If anyone is to be honored as the founding father of the health food movement, it probably should be the Rev. Sylvester W. Graham, a Presbyterian clergyman best known as

Lawrence Klepp lives in New York and is writing a book about eccentric religious sects.

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the inventor of the original Graham cracker. During the 1840s, the Rev. Graham traveled about the country fervently preaching against white bread, meat, spices, and spiritous liquors. Meat, he declared, caused constipation and sexual excess, both subjects about which he had strong feelings. So often did he extol daily bowel movements that the newspapers began referring to him as the Peristaltic Persuader. He was also one of the first theorists to connect onanism with creeping dementia; he recommended, in addition to vegetarianism, cold showers as a preventive measure.

At about the same time the Rev. Graham was annoying butchers and bakers, A. Bronson Alcott and eleven other Transcendentalists withdrew from the Brook Farm cooperative community because they found it too worldly and set up their own community, called Fruitlands. There they

refrained from not only meat but also butter, eggs, milk, cheese, tea, coffee, rice, and molasses. At least one man also refused to eat any root that grew downward instead of aspiring upward toward the sun. They began the day at dawn with a breakfast of dry wheatcakes and water and proceeded to their work in the fields, doing without the use of either farm animals or manure on moral grounds. Since they also believed that weeds had as much right to grow as their crops, the farm wasn't very successful. Some began advocating letting the forest grow back and living entirely on wild berries. It was the onset of winter, however, that proved their undoing. They had also renounced wool clothing, leather shoes, and the burning of oil or tallow candles, and after a number of long, cold, dark winter nights they concluded that transcending the world was best done back in Boston.

Thus dietary reform had from the start an intimate connection with moral uplift and spiritual endeavor. Religion has always meddled with food, but what has distinguished the health food movement is a tendency to consider food morally potent in itself, producing virtue or depravity according to its nature. Consider, for instance, Dr. J.H. Tilden, who late in the nineteenth century taught that pies, cakes, chewing gum, and certain combinations of foods (e.g., starch and protein, as in a cheese sandwich or meat and potatoes) cause fermentation in the digestive system, which in turn gives rise to evil thoughts and deeds. As he put it, "Go back of all rottenness in domestic, church, social, and political life, to the kindergarten of crime, there disease-producing table habits and all social crimes, in miniature, will be found. Lascivious thoughts, followed by onanism, are the legitimate out-