



The Hoagland Affair

by John Corry

Until her death last year, Marion Magid was the managing editor of *Commentary* magazine, and though we never met, I knew about her in the way that journalists and writers in New York know about others in the trade who share their general interests. Magid once wrote thoughtful essays about contemporary culture, and was blessed by good taste and high intelligence, two qualities not always joined. More important, many people seemed to love her, and she was known for the kindness she showed to forlorn writers and other waifs who so often trekked through her life. Consequently, I am sure she deserves a better memorial than the one she receives in an *Esquire* article by Edward Hoagland. He writes about the affairs he had while he and Magid were married.

Hoagland, an author of repute, has been known until now mostly for his essays and ruminations on the wilderness and its fauna. In *Esquire*, however, he confesses that he often shared his outdoor adventures with women other than Magid, whom he married in 1968 and was divorced from the same year she died. His tone is at once elegiac, boastful, and patronizing, and while he insists he was always full of love for Magid, he tells us things about her we have no business knowing—that she had trouble reaching an orgasm, for example—and really do not want to hear.

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On the other hand, whether, or how, he loved Magid is incidental. Mostly he wants us to know that it was political fastidiousness that led to his carrying on with a succession of Daisy Maes in the boondocks. His article—"Sex and the Married Man," it says on the *Esquire* cover—is another skirmish in the cultural wars.

Hoagland is clear about what happened. His marital difficulties began, he writes, the same year he was married. Magid took him to *Commentary* parties, and he met some awful people. Years later, it is all still fresh in his mind:

Neoconservatism was an embryo at these soirees, and an Israeli visitor might stand up before our seated group and describe with visible relish how abjectly a Palestinian prisoner would break under the beatings administered off-street in a police van. Vietnam was an additional issue.

Marion and I had our first fights over the invasion of Cambodia by American troops, because, for her, toughness in Southeast Asia seemed to translate into future support for Israel in the Middle East. . . . I began to think that neoconservatism, as spearheaded by *Commentary* in championing the South Vietnamese regime, the Argentinian junta, the Salvadoran dictatorship, was warping our foreign policy away from a Jeffersonian involvement with the Third World, and that her interest had shifted from Isaac Bashevis Singer to Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. From this point on, we felt an undertow in our marriage.

A few years later, Hoagland met his first Daisy Mae. ("At last, down in Texas, I fell in love.") The relationship ended when her husband came looking for him with a gun. Other women, however, soon followed, many of them, apparently, from out of state.

The people his wife forced him to hang out with in New York—pushy Jews, obviously, even if Hoagland does not exactly identify them that way—were a pretty obnoxious bunch. They thought that "Palestinians weren't quite human beings." Moreover, they disparaged Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi. Eventually the nastiness became too much for the author to bear. He recalls when he decided enough was enough:

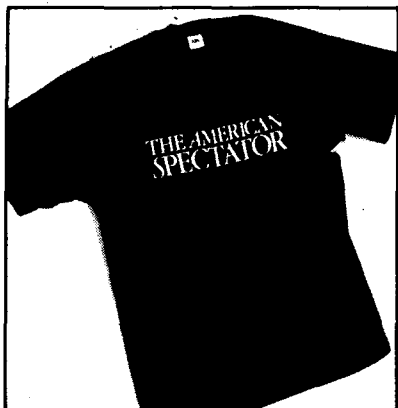
I remember a specific moment when it registered on me that I was traveling with the wrong crowd. We were driving to the Upper East Side with a man



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who, with his deep tan and good car, had done pretty well, like so many of her friends, riding the neocon wave. We were passing the Martinique Hotel, a welfare dumping ground at Thirty-second Street whose haggard beggars this lunchtime had spilled over the curb at the stoplight. They weren't blacks on this particular day, so the crux was poverty, not race. They were Appalachian-looking whites—bony, vitamin-starved, despairing kids of ten or twelve with faces out of Walker Evans or Dorothea Lange, the product of some social cataclysm in coal country. This man's father, if I recall, had had a horse and wagon hauling junk in Winnipeg fifty years ago, but when these hungry-looking, country-looking children asked for change for groceries at his window, he was exasperated, rolling it up—that he hadn't clear sailing all the way uptown. It was of a piece with the neocon idea that the problem of homelessness was being exaggerated by liberals, and I made up my mind that I had better cut and run.

And so he did, although not before falling in love again, this time with a nurse in Alaska "much younger and more politically radical than me." When he finally left Magid, Hoagland writes, his friends wondered why he had not done it sooner. He had been putting up with so much for so long that they thought he just liked being unhappy. We do not know, of course, what Magid thought.

Granted that there is nothing new about a middle-aged writer describing his sexual awakening, but the *Esquire* article does break new ground. Politics and marital break-ups have been joined in imaginative ways. Infidelity becomes an appropriate response when your wife's friends decry the Palestinian Intifada (which, in a loopy historical parallel, Hoagland compares to the Tet Offensive); and when you see, or imagine you see, some coal-miner's kids outside the Martinique, you know you must get a divorce. A sensitive liberal mentality can be pure hell on a marriage.

The mentality, however, is growing, particularly as it touches on women. Gloria Steinem once declared that Jeane Kirkpatrick was

only masquerading as a woman, and in reality was one of "them," meaning the males in the Reagan White House, even though by all ancient standards, Kirkpatrick, happily married and the mother of children, was much more of a woman than Steinem. The founder of *Ms.* magazine was being spiteful, but there was craftiness in her attack. The idea that womanliness and political convictions are entwined has become encapsulated in media thinking. A woman without the proper convictions is not a real woman, and reporters may invade her privacy and write about her as they please. There is a direct line between Steinem insulting Kirkpatrick, and the *Esquire* editors publishing revelations about Magid. There is linkage, too, with how the press treats Paula Jones. The woman who brought a sexual-harassment suit against Bill Clinton is being portrayed as a Snopes family cousin, who grew up on the set of "Hee Haw."

Here, for instance, is Evan Thomas, *Newsweek's* Washington bureau chief, describing Jones with elegant contempt on "Inside Washington." She is, he says, "some sleazy woman with big hair coming out of the trailer parks—I think she's a dubious witness, I really do."

And here is Margaret Carlson, the *Time* magazine columnist, exercising the same disdain on CNN's "Capital Gang." Jones, she declares, is "someone without a job, from Arkansas, whose lawyer says she's not in it for money, but clearly she's in it for something—fame, celebrity, money, something."

Big hair, trailer parks, and clearly she's in it for something. Prominent journalists, upper-middle class and rising, know poor white trash when they see it, and poor white trash are not a protected minority, except when they turn up at the Martinique. One *Newsweek* story said that if Clinton's attorney wanted to discredit Jones he "need look no further" than her brother-in-law. *Newsweek* then quoted him gleefully: "Promiscuity? Good gosh. Her mother is fixing to get the shock of her life when Paula's life comes out. . . . She went out and had herself a good time. I've seen her at the Red Lobster pinch men on the ass."

And here is the breathless lead para-

graph on a long story in *U.S. News & World Report*:

Above all else, she wanted to get out. Paula Corbin Jones had no use for the rusty trailers and decaying storefronts of Lonoke, Ark., for her Bible-toting mother or the snotty rich kids at the high school or the endless procession of admiring farm boys whose life ambition was a hitch in the Army and a job at the Conoco station off Interstate 40. Even as a teenager, Jones shunned the nearby Wal-Mart for the upscale Dillard's department store and preferred name labels like Nike and Calvin Klein. In time, she fell in love with a man who bought her a Gucci bag and a Mercedes.

None of this is flattering to Jones; none of it is meant to be flattering, either. Young reporters in Washington identify with Bill and Hillary; they would like to be like them. No one wants to be a Paula. Paula is a visitor from another planet, and she shares nothing with the journalists who write and talk about her except the preference for name labels like Nike and Calvin Klein. But the unblinking fact is that if the journalists portray anything accurately about her at all, it is that she exudes an unsophisticated sexuality that would lead a randy young governor to misread her. A pinch on the ass at the Red Lobster would suggest promiscuity to him, too. As one of the state troopers said, Clinton thought she had a "come-hither look." Given what we know about the man, he probably busted his braces.

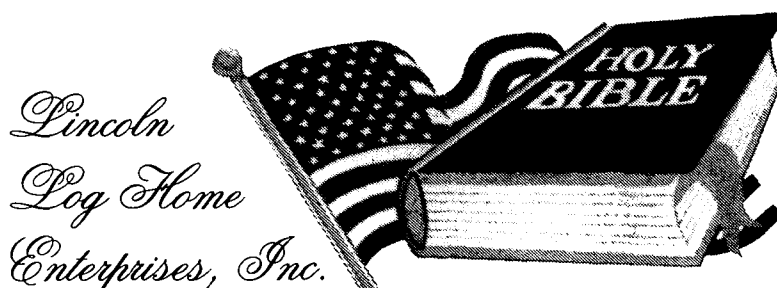
Precisely what happened that day at the Hotel Excelsior, though, will never be established beyond the shadow of all doubt. The door to the hotel suite was closed. Nonetheless, it is dead certain something happened, and that Jones is more believable than Clinton. She may have big hair, but she also has six affidavits. Columnists and other feminists have been having a hard time with that, although a fractured party line has been emerging: Feminists do not have to believe everything other women say (Ellen Goodman); it is all a right-wing plot (Eleanor Smeal and others too numerous to mention); and Paula Jones does not have anywhere near the credi-

bility of Anita Hill (Anna Quindlen, most notably).

Quindlen argued in the *New York Times* that because Jones waited so long to make her accusations—the disputed afternoon at the Excelsior was all of three years ago—she could not be telling the truth now. Quindlen neglected to mention, however, that Hill waited ten years before she made her charges against Clarence Thomas.

This was too much for Katha Pollitt, a feminist herself, who wrote in the *Nation* that while Quindlen's column was "no doubt, enshrined on refrigerator doors nationwide," Jones, in many ways, had made a far stronger case for sexual harassment than had Hill. So far, few other journalists seem to agree with Pollitt, though, and given that sensitive mentality, it is unlikely that many will. □

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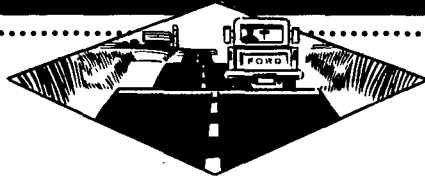


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Future Limits

by Terry Eastland

In early June, the ambitiously named Project for the Republican Future sponsored the first of several conferences about the direction of GOP politics and policies in the 1990s. "Is empowerment the right GOP strategy for the 1990s?" was the question put to the three panelists—former congressman Vin Weber, former OMB director Richard Darman, and Jeffrey Bell, long-time party activist and author of *Populism and Elitism* (1992). Their opening remarks concluded, the PRF chairman William Kristol bravely asked them what they thought of trying to revive "the most traditional Republican principle of all"—that of limited government, for which, he averred, there might be more public support today than when Ronald Reagan was elected president. "Am I wrong," he asked, "to put great hopes in *relimiting* government as a Republican alternative to the Clinton administration's reinventing government?"

Weber told Kristol he was wrong, because a politics aimed at relimiting government won't work. The public today is different, he agreed, but not in the way Kristol supposes. Echoing the conventional wisdom about the 1992 election, Weber said there is "a demand for government activism that didn't exist at the beginning of the Reagan administration. . . . People are asking the government for help." To compete with Democrats, Weber said, Republicans will have to "discover a principled response." By that he means one that uses government to empower people but is no longer preoccupied with trying to limit, or relimit, government. Darman, as might be expected, also told Kristol he was wrong. "You need an exciting vision to be exciting politically, and just being for limited government isn't such an exciting

vision. You have to be able to show that you can address the basic problems that people think relevant. This will require a governmental role." Only Bell seemed to think Kristol might be right, but his answer was limp. "If things keep going down the path they are now, we can do a lot more in this direction." Kristol told me later, "I was a little surprised that none of the panelists seemed particularly taken by the idea."

In his penetrating new book, *Dead Right*, David Frum, late of *Forbes*, explains why. Conservatives, he writes, "have wearily concluded that reducing [big government] is hopeless, and that even the task of preventing its further growth will probably exceed their strength." *Dead Right* is basically an argument that notwithstanding Reagan's many achievements, he also managed to kill off a central tenet of modern conservatism—rejection of big government. Frum spares few on the right for their acquiescence to big government: Jack Kemp, Bill Bennett, Ed Meese, even Pat Buchanan, even the Heritage Foundation.

Not every conservative has made peace with big government. Texan Phil Gramm is one belligerent, Texan Dick Armeý another. When I asked Gramm how he would have answered Kristol's question, the senator delivered this stemwinder: "If our experience of the last ten years in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and in the Third World is any indicator," he said, "the movement toward limited government is the most powerful force that exists on the planet. We have the incredible paradox in America that we are the only country in the world that is trying to get into socialized medicine rather than trying to get out of it. . . . If the Republican Party doesn't stand for individual freedom and limited government, I don't know what it stands for."

Despite his support for the mohair subsidy (mohair sheep graze in Texas) and for

the 1990 Bush-Darman tax increase, Gramm's anti-government growth credentials are solid. As he likes to point out, the second half of the 1980s saw the size of the federal government relative to the economy shrink for the first time since World War II. It shrunk in large part thanks to the 1985 Gramm-Rudman law, which imposed stringent limits on federal spending. Unfortunately, the law was eliminated by Darman's budget deal of 1990.

Gramm and Armeý are among the very few Republican politicians willing to speak openly about reducing government. "You can't justify a third of it," Gramm says when asked how much of the federal government he'd cut. Armeý, with his skinflint voting record, would cut it by a quarter, and "a clear place to start is the Education Department." The party's "basic thrust" should be that "government's too big, spends too much, and is too involved in our lives." Armeý reads the electorate—or at least his electorate—differently from Weber. "Back home," he says, "I'm the moderate trying to stop a march on Washington." Like Kristol, Armeý foresees a popular revolt against big government.

Their vision may elude most folks. Certain aspects of the welfare state are popular with conservative voters, and not even Gramm and Armeý are willing to touch Social Security, the proverbial third rail of American politics. If smaller government is to become a reality, politicians, and the academics and journalists who shape public opinion, will have to go out on a limb for it. George Will, once an advocate of a conservative welfare state, has in recent years performed a notable about-face. "I am much less sanguine about the capacities of the welfare state," he told me, although he disagrees with those who think it will require a major shock to the body politic (a debt crisis, say) to put the idea of limited government into serious play. "The good news about

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