



by Benjamin J. Stein

# It's Only My Money

**T**o begin late at night, it's been an incredible struggle making our 9-year-old son and his visiting 12-year-old best pal from Idaho go to sleep. But finally, after a dozen cookies, a horror film about a wicked leprechaun, and threats to lock them in a cell, they have fallen asleep or else they're whispering so quietly I can't hear them.

It's about one a.m. by the time I put away all of their toys and wash their dishes, and my wife, who has dragged them shopping earlier in the day, is lying in bed reading a mystery. The dogs jump up on the bed, pant for a while, and then fall asleep.

My wife and I talk about the cute things Tommy and his pal did during the day. We talk about whether our son will ever get into junior high school. Then we read a mail order music catalog, one of the dozen we get every week. It's like opening a sheaf of the cerebrum that contains hidden memories. There is an ad for a disc by Timi Yuro—"What's The Matter, Baby, Is It Hurting You?" Most Americans wouldn't remember it, but we do. There are pitches for the greatest hits by Ian and Sylvia, who were sort of popular when we were in high school. How many of you remember "Four Strong Winds"? There is a disc of Ral Donner, who in the 1950's sounded just like Elvis. Maybe he still does. There are discs of "Rock Relix" from when my wife and I were student radicals at Yale—"Lay Down Your Candles in the Rain" by Melanie, one of my all-time faves, although I can listen to any one of about 200 songs 200 times in a row. Then there's "Fire and Rain" by James Taylor, a good song for

when you think you might be committed to a mental hospital.

There is a disc of great Joan Baez songs from Broadway composers, including the one Alex used to listen to and think of me, far away in California, "Diamonds and Rust." ("Well, I'll be damned, here comes your ghost again..." is how it starts.) Then there are Eagles songs from when we got together in Los Angeles to live our lives as a husband and wife again, after a five-year separation. We used to listen especially to "Life in The Fast Lane," the life we thought was ours, the life of living fast, dying young, and leaving a good looking corpse, all foreclosed options for me at this point.

We circled the songs we wanted to order and then my wife fell asleep while I listened to the Who, as in "Who's Next?" on my Discman. Can you believe that LP came out in 1971?

But there in the dark, with the dogs breathing sonorously, I kept thinking that the songs we are going to order are not really the music.

My wife, and our shared life together—the way we know all of our experiences, all of our defeats, all of our little triumphs, the struggles to get our son, the fact that are soul mates in an often soulless world—that's the music that makes sleep possible.

What if I awakened and my wife were not there? Who would I call every day, twenty times a day, and tell about acting parts not gotten, shows of "Win Ben Stein's Money" lost, stinging comments from agents, unexpected gifts from the residuals department of SAG, incredibly funny comments our son makes about sugary cereals? Who would always tell me it was all right even in the bad days when we lost stunning sums day by day in the market, and who would bother to applaud like she applauded when it was going up?

What if my wife were taken away by aliens and there were no one to call each afternoon to tell her I was about to take a nap? What if there were no one else to laugh with about food faddists and fans of Deepak Chopra? Who would I tell about the nuts who infest my life?

What if some other man stole my wife away and there were no one to help me manage Tommy and love him and no one to plan to grow old with?

What if my wife were not there? *Who would know me and know the music in me?*

But in the morning my wife was there, snoring away with two big dogs, also snoring, draped over her, and there's the music of another day starting all over again.

Monday

**I** am hurtling along the Kanan-Dume detour high in the mountains above Zuma Beach, heading vaguely towards the studio where we're making my show. The sky is blue, the ocean is making huge white surf on the sand far below, and I am thinking about my car. In particular, I am considering the truth that Cadillacs are the stuff dreams are made of. You might have noticed that Bruce Springsteen did not write any songs about "Pink Saabs." I defy you to find a photo of Elvis Presley in a pink Rambler or even a pink Lincoln. The dream of the hillbilly cat was to have Colonel Tom Parker come along with his cee-gar and offer the singer a Cadillac, not a Lexus.

I can barely remember when I did not want a Cadillac. My rich relatives in Schenectady had them when I was a boy and they seemed like the heaven-sent certification of happiness and security and success. Uncle Dave's Fleetwood glided along the highways and along Central Parkway silently, powerfully, gleaming black with its

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power windows and its “search” feature on the radio. The perfect mid-twentieth century measure of success. Aunt Pearl’s white Caddy convertible (I think it was ’55, the choicest of years for GM cars), reeked of luxury, self-confidence, speed, and assurance. To have a car like that with its rolled and pleated leather seats would surely be about as close as we on earth came to *satori*, perfect serenity. That’s how it seemed then and, frankly, I am not sure I was mistaken.

Then there was Elvis with his collection. For those of us in the know in the days of “Blue Suede Shoes,” it was clear that a Caddy was a coolness machine. It was about picking up beautiful women and carrying them off to Graceland to have them marvel at the chance to be near The King. When you wanted to impress a beautiful all-American girl, you didn’t pull up next to her house in a sensible car such as a Chevy Bel-Air or a Mercury Montclair. No, you pulled up in a car that said the possibilities of life were endless—the Cadillac, oozing power, money, and joy. Speaking in deep Elvis-like tones about a life where magic happened.

It took me far too long to make good on my wish to have a Cadillac. I did have one other dream GM car, a 1962 Corvette (and I certainly love Oldsmobiles), and it far surpassed all of my fantasy expectations for the main reason any man has a car—its effect on women. When I had to sell it because I was moving across the country, my girlfriend—voted the most beautiful girl at American University—actually cried. But when I got to the place in my life where I could afford almost any kind of car, it turned out I’d been brainwashed by idle talk of foreign makes. I got a Mercedes, and then another, and two Porsches, and a BMW, and they were all fine

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cars. They had a solid, sturdy machine-tool quality about them, as if I were driving a well-sculpted drill press. They were the same as every other young striver’s car at the Palm or Morton’s. When they broke, it took all of the heart out of me to plead with the mechanic to condescend to fix them, but they were fine cars.

But I had not grown up fantasizing about owning a BMW. The Mercedes is a fine machine, but it is not about the imaginings of the endless American landscape of possibility the way a native-born Caddy is.

Last summer my son and I spent most of July and August in North Idaho. One day, the folks at the Avis rental counter at the nearest airport, Spokane International, told me that they had a great Cadillac I should try. I rented a Seville STS and off I went. Suddenly I was back in my Aunt Pearl’s Caddy convertible in 1955. I was driving a machine that did own the whole damned road, thank you. The car had power, amazing handling, and comfort. When we got to our rented house on Lake Pend’Oreille, I had thoughts of sleeping in the garage in my car. In my Cadillac.

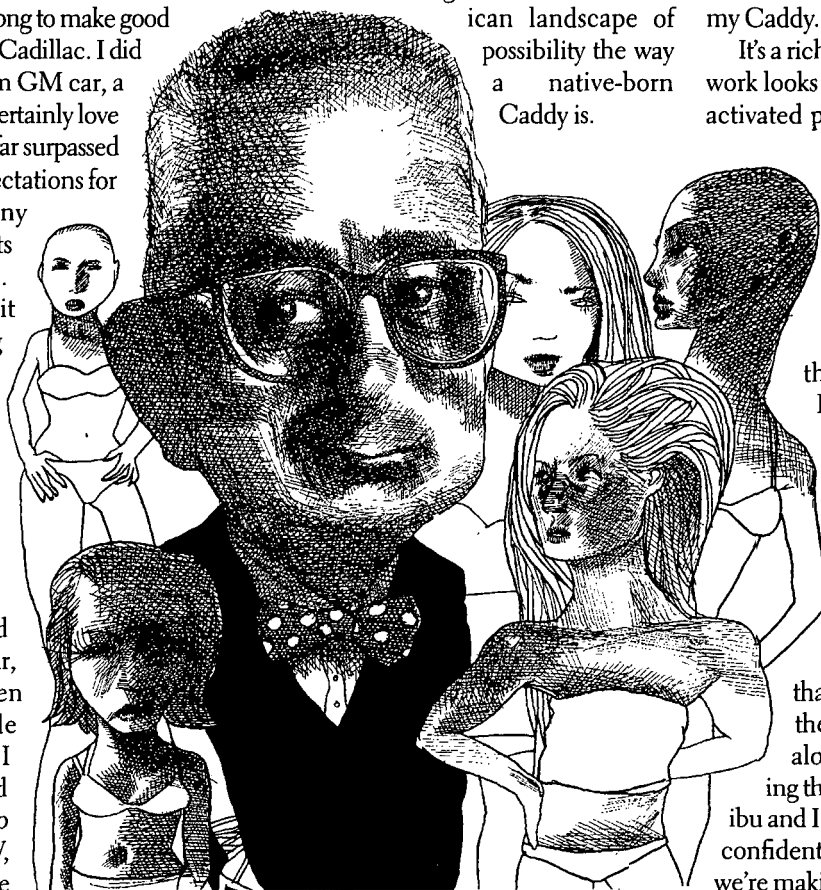
That night I determined to get me one. I soon became distracted, though, and only resumed my urgent task after reading that Cadillac had something called an OnStar system that would call for help if I broke down anywhere in North America and would tell me the weather forecast and order flowers for my wife. I could get OnStar free if I bought by June 1.

So Tommy and I went to a Cadillac dealer. We were shown the car by a big man who was Jackie Robinson’s nephew. A few days later I came back and signed the lease. No fuss, no muss, and off I went in my Caddy.

It’s a rich Pearlescent white and its grille work looks as if it’s glowing. It has a voice activated phone. The OnStar can keep me company anywhere I am.

The CD player is better than any stereo I have at home. I can rock out at sixty and feel as though I’m flying on a cloud of music and power.

But the best thing is that it’s the car that my American Dreams are made of. When I am on the road, I feel about the car as I feel when I am with my son around other boys: no one else has anything better. The model I have is the best you can have—son or car. I have 300 horses in the same kind of car that Elvis had, and yes, I do own the whole damned road. I motor along the canyon roads overlooking the ocean near my house in Malibu and I own the ocean. I maneuver my confident way into the studio lot where we’re making my show, and I own the stu-



dio. In fact, I own all of Hollywood. Every trip out of the driveway is a new adventure, not a boring chore.

I have my Cadillac and I love it. I only regret that I waited so long. I must have been crazy. The next one is going to come a lot faster.

*Sunday*

**T**oday is Mr. Perfect's first day at camp. This is the big one, sleep-away camp. His pal Alex from Idaho, son of the late Peter Feierabend, is here, and through the Ben and Alex Stein Foundation, is going to camp with Tommy. I have been dreading this for months now. Mr. Perfect away from Daddy. This is going to be hard.

"Tommy," I said to him as he awakened this morning, "how about not going to camp and staying with Daddy instead?"

"Yeah," Alex said. "And Mommy, too." "No."

"All right, but if you go to camp, I'm going to come there tonight and carry you away. I just want you to know that."

"No," said Tommy, his face in a little scowl. "No. Absolutely not."

I love it when he says that, that "absolutely not" because that's one of my favorite phrases, too. I go into ecstasy when he uses phrases he obviously learned from *moi*.

Alex and I packed his and his pal's gear into the trunks of our super mupster cars, the mighty Beemer and the Caddy dream car, and off we went, first for bike riding in Santa Monica, then to my house in Malibu, and then to camp. The camp is in Malibu Canyon, only about a half hour from our Malibu pad, and it's run by Pepperdine, but still... It's not down the hall.

In the car, I pleaded with Tommy not to go to camp. "I'll make sure you go to Magic Mountain every day," I said.

"No," he said. "I want to go to camp."

When we rode our bikes on the path in Santa Monica though, I noticed that he was distinctly less perky than usual. He was even a bit glum. "If you're nervous, you can always change your mind," I said.

"I am *not* nervous," he shouted at me.

"If you get homesick at camp, I'll send Susie and Peabo to keep you company."

"I will not get homesick," he said, but he said it in a low, mumbly voice indeed.

Alex Feierabend rode even more qui-

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*I was so homesick at camp, I made constant trips to the infirmary just to have some woman take care of me.*

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etly. He's not only going to sleepaway camp, but it's fifteen hundred miles from his home.

When we finished a quiet, glum bike ride, Tommy and Alex and I had McDonald's food, and then went to my house to get my mail, a veritable mountain of condolences. I plan to send replies to every single one, although it will take a while.

On the ride down Pacific Coast Highway, Tommy looked straight ahead. Alex sat silently in the back seat. I tried to talk to them about how they could stay at camp a week or two weeks or three weeks or if they were unhappy they could come home at any time. They didn't say a word.

Then we turned into the camp driveway off Malibu Canyon Road and they could see a swarm of young people, counselors, a swimming pool, and a sort of tan young nimbus rising from the parking lot.

Tommy still looked apprehensive. After a long wait, we registered him with the counselors, whose names were something like "Tick" and "Lurch" and "Swamp Guinea." The counselors all recognized me and pleaded with me to say things from *Ferris Bueller*. I told them that I would read them the whole speech if they took care of my boy, and they promised they would. "We're going to call Tommy 'Bueller,'" Tick said. "That'll be his camp name." Tommy looked almost pleased.

Then Tommy and his counselor and Alex and his counselor hefted their packs and went up a hill to the bunk, and Tommy did not even look back. Alex, my wife, and I stared at them for a long time and then we headed back in our mighty cars, without our boy.

In about thirty seconds I was both sobbing and having a wildly upset stomach, with powerful gusts of nausea. I tell you, I am addicted to that boy.

I also thought, as I rocketed along in my Caddy, of my parents leaving me off at Camp Log'n'Twig "in the heart of the Poconos," lo these forty-one years ago. I was so homesick I could barely stand it. I recall I made constant trips to the infirmary just to have some woman take care of me. Then after about two days I got over it and truly loved camp. We called all the counselors "Uncle" this or that. We learned to swim and to boat and had great hikes through the magnificent mountains. I can still recall the lichen-covered rocks dividing up ancient claims to property.

It was at Log'n'Twig that the very first girl who ever liked me kissed me. Her name was Sue Ellen and she was adorable. I have not seen her for at least forty years. She was from Allentown, as I recall, and her Dad owned a big swimwear company, Sea Nymph. I wonder where she is.

Too much time passing. It would be good if time went not only straight ahead but also back and forth.

How can it be that my Mommy, who sent me letters every day at Log'n'Twig, is no more?

How can it be that Tommy is already at sleepaway camp, and I can recall carrying him home from Kansas City in a blanket as if it were yesterday?

Alex and I had a lavish dinner in the dining room of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, and then we went to bed early. Alex's sister has come to town and the two of them are off to Hawaii tomorrow for ten days. I will be at home with Ginger, Susie-Moo, and Peabo. I am praying that Mary Muff does not appear on her broom.

"There's too much saying goodbye, too many people going away," my mother used to say. Her mother used to say it to her. I feel it tonight. I am going to be all alone for ten days.

*Monday*

**W**ell, not quite totally alone. Because here I am in Detroit, Michigan, my father's childhood home. I am here to do a commercial for OfficeMax. I arrived yesterday via Northworst Airlines, a new low in travel. It's in

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NOT TO BE REPRODUCED  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same league with Continental, the previous all-time low, and much below Alaska, which has great attendants and clerks in Spokane but bad everything else. When I arrived at Detroit airport yesterday, I was met by an immense woman in a huge Cadillac. The woman had only recently become a driver, but she did a good job.

"I learned this because I had to," she said. "I didn't want to starve if I lost my welfare."

So, chalk one up for welfare reform.

This morning, as I tried to squeeze in a bit of rest before my commercial, I observed how tiny my room was. It might be the smallest hotel room I have had in ten years. But it's all right because it has a super comfy, very firm bed. A good bed makes all of the difference. Plus, it's totally quiet, and I like that.

On the set people are hustling and bustling. There are student extras; one of them wants to be a singer, another wants to be a dancer, several want to be actors, and one even wants to be a lawyer, poor thing. They all have amazingly sweet looks on their faces.

We did the commercial in no time at all. The director was hilarious and extremely efficient. At every break he told me horror stories about his parents' estate. Really scary stuff. He was audited by the IRS over truly tiny details and they made his life hell for years after his mother died, and then they did it after his father died.

I would love to see a psychometric workup on the people who work at the IRS.

As we were doing our spots, there were huge booms and groans outside the sound stage. Guess what! Spectacular lightning and thunderstorms. Oooh, scary.

I left in a tiny car for the airport well after the storms had passed. My driver rushed me like a banshee, and I got there in plenty of time for my return flight. But, surprise, surprise, because of the storms, traffic at the Detroit airport was backed up. That part was not at all surprising and even reasonable. What was not at all reasonable was that the air conditioning was not working at the airport. Of course, the windows did not open. Because of summer travel and the backups, the terminal was mobbed, jammed beyond imagining. It was a hot, sticky, smelly mess. Plus, in their penny-pinching wisdom, the powers that be at

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*Susie makes me up  
extremely thoroughly  
so that I will not look  
as old and beaten  
down as I am.*

”

Northworst had failed to provide more than a few chairs in the terminal. Plus, there was hardly any provision for food. One hot dog stand for about two miles of terminal.

But the best part was the totally negative attitude of the people checking us in. There we were, tired, hot, impatient, and they took evident pride in gossiping between themselves and taking as long as possible to get us situated.

Hmmm. Potential IRS agents.

*Saturday*

**F**or the past four weeks, I have been living the life of a TV star. Every morning, I get up, get dressed, eat my usual breakfast of Thomas's English Muffins and orange juice, and then head out to the lot at KTLA, Sunset and Bronson, where they filmed *The Jazz Singer*. I am met at the gate by my Israeli bodyguard, Yaniv. He's been assigned to make sure that no one comes near me to give me the answers or the questions on the show, "Win Ben Stein's Money."

He helps take my huge bag of books out of the car, and then we go up one flight of steps to my dressing room. It's called the Bette Davis Suite, even though it's only one small, very dark room without windows. It has a bed that I insisted upon, a couch, and a large bathroom. I get into my bed, put on my headphones—Denon 950's, which I really like a lot—listen to Beethoven or Mozart or Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young or "Hair," and fall asleep.

In due course Yaniv wakes me up by turning on the lights. He brings in Terry, a quiz show veteran who helps make up the questions, and Alex (not my wife) who is

from Standards & Practices, and they go over the questions that I will ask the three contestants in round one.

There are rarely any questions about the questions except matters of pronunciation. Then I talk with them about rock music, and then I get myself next door. Susie, the beautiful make-up woman with the light blue eyes, makes me up extremely thoroughly so I will not look as old and beaten down as I am. Then Jody, the costumer, lays out some outfit that almost always is a gray suit and a blue or yellow shirt and tie.

I get dressed, feeling my stomach churn, and take some paregoric. Then I brush my teeth a few times and then I pray a lot, and head down the hall with Yaniv and Susie and Jody and Bones, the stage manager, and Jackie, the sound woman.

After I have passed a few feet from my door, I feel as if I am in a fog bank that leads into a dream world. I still find it amazing that this is happening. Begun with the most casual of conversations with the show's inventor, my pal Al Burton, who thought it up, stirred in the laboratory by Michael Davies, high honcho of Disney, and Andrew Golder, high prince of daytime creativity, worked on for a year now, almost dead many times from contractual struggles, *my own TV show* is alive and kicking.

In fact, as of today, we have done sixty-one of our shows, usually at the rate of four per day, and today is our last day.

I get off the elevator, and a phalanx of guards sticks out their hands to greet me and wish me luck. Then I walk onto the stage. It's always freezing cold in there, and the audience is restless. There are about 150 people, many of them regulars now, and they cheer as if I were someone really important when I appear on the set.

Usually, I bow to them, ask them where they are from—Germany, Sweden, Monrovia, Anaheim, New Jersey—and then I walk onto the set and look at the contestants. I like it when they look really young, stupid, and disoriented. Alas, they almost never do. They mostly look middle aged, cagey, experienced, and waiting to take my money.

The scheme of the show is that if any contestant besides me wins, he or she gets \$5,000 that would otherwise go to me from Disney. Or close to that.

I hate it when I lose, partly because of the

money, partly because I just plain hate to lose. Losing is a lot worse than winning.

I usually whisper to my co-host, the funniest man on earth, Jimmy Kimmel, who at 29 has a career ahead that will make Jay Leno scared when he finds out about it.

We handicap who the likely winner will be—the one who gets to play against me in the final round—and then I pray some more, eat some potato chips, drink some soda, take more paregoric, pray more, and begin the show.

It is an astounding thing. Jimmy introduces me. I come out, bow to my competitors, bow to Jimmy, and the crowd goes wild. Then I say a few trivialities, Jimmy introduces the contestants, and the show begins.

The questions in round one are usually not that hard. The premium is on ringing the buzzer first.

Then I bid adieu to the low scorer, and in round two (after more potato chip eating, praying, and drinking water) I play against the two survivors.

Those questions can be really hard, like names of obscure authors. Then I play in round three against the winner of round two. We are each in tiny little isolation booths and it's *really claustrophobic and scary*. Usually the outsider goes first. I see how many of ten questions he's gotten right in sixty seconds and I have to tie or beat it. I get very nervous and sometimes get so tired and flustered that I miss very obvious ones like who was the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, one of my favorite books. Luckily, the other guy or gal also often gets flustered.

So. Then I learn if I have won or tied or lost, come out of my booth, congratulate my opponent, hand him play money, and say some witty thing. Then the show is over. If I have won, I feel great. If I have lost, I am hysterical, angry, moody, and my entourage of Susie, Jody, Yaniv, and Al run and hide.

But I have only lost about a quarter of the time, and I know I am way ahead. So today I mostly feel sad. This show has been the most intense work experience of my life by far. Imagine that I was in that isolation booth sixty-five times in only about sixteen days! It was like being a wild, loose guy for two rounds, and then being squashed up to maximum competitiveness and then stretched out, then squished again, over and over again.

Many days I have wanted to run and

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**Jimmy Kimmel, my co-  
host, has a career in  
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”

hide. But I kept on, largely because Andrew and Al cheered me up. Sometimes Ann Miller, the producer, also cheered me on. She worked like a madman to keep costs down, and if she hadn't I guess we could not have done the show.

Anyway, today I am up against my usual run of contestants: beefy men who have been on “Jeopardy,” loners usually, people who keep an almanac next to the toilet, people who play tournament chess, people whose lives are knowing facts and hitting the buzzer fast.

But today I did not feel as scared as usual of them. After all, it's *my show*. Even if they win, it's still my show. Not theirs. Ha-ha. I keep thinking that I, little me, whom Gay Patten would not love in high school, would not even go out with, has this show. It's got my name in it.

Probably Gay still would not go out with me, but I have a show.

One of the thoughts racing through my head today is how kind people on shows are. Once you get down in the production arena, working day by day with guards, cameramen, gaffers, sound people, editors, lighting people, electricians—they are really, really friendly, kind and supportive. There is basically no friction at all on the set. Blacks and whites, Hispanics, Asians, we all work together seamlessly. An American dream. The real America, without any government compulsion, really working. We're all motivated by the best of motivations—money and steady work and helping out our buddies.

At every show the staff winks at me, the staff smiles at me, they tell me I can beat the contestant, wish me luck, say prayers for

me. They bring me tea, laugh at my jokes, cheer me up when I am low.

The Hollywood that actually works in shirtsleeves is as kind and nice as any people on earth.

Then, as if in a rush, I am in the isolation booth for round four, and I know the name of Alexander the Great's horse (Bucephalus) and I win.

I do not want this to be over. How will I live without Yaniv and Susie and Jody and Bones and Andrew and Ann and Jackie? How will I ever live without my family on the set? How without Michael Davies cheering me up?

After the show we had a small wrap party at a small restaurant. Very poor food, but happy people. We think we have a hit. Maybe we do and maybe we don't. As for me, it's been beyond what I could ever have hoped for. And I am going to miss that air-conditioned freezing stage one, that home which became for me the warm center of the universe for four amazing weeks when I was a star among stars.

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by James Ring Adams

# A New Lasater Connection

## Were Jean Lewis et al. punished for probing drug money?

**T**he suspension of the Kansas City Three stands out in the long list of administration efforts to stymie the Whitewater investigation, but it now seems that more was at stake than simple retaliation.

The three thrift investigators in the Kansas City Resolution Trust Corporation office certainly earned the hostility of Clinton apologists. Their persistence kept alive criminal cases against the Arkansas political clique that plundered the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan. But Washington higher-ups in charge of their punishment were also nervous about their attempts to probe Clinton family friend Dan Lasater's suspected drug money laundering through Madison.

This concern may explain why the RTC imposed administrative leaves in August 1994 on the entire Kansas City chain of command dealing with the Madison criminal investigation, not just whistle blower Jean Lewis (see "What Jean Lewis Knows," TAS, July 1997). On February 18, 1994, the feisty Lewis briefed Rep. Jim Leach, then the minority leader of the House Banking Committee, about an apparently orchestrated campaign to stifle the Madison investigation. She fully expected to pay a price. The axe fell in August, shortly after the wrap-up of the House Banking Committee's carefully limited first Whitewater hearings, run by the then Democratic majority. But RTC headquarters surprisingly broadened the suspensions to Lewis's immediate superiors Lee Ausen and Richard Iorio.

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An outcry from Congress and the public forced the RTC to back down quickly, putting all three back to work. (A subsequent internal review, recently obtained by TAS, called inter-office complaints against the supervisors "overblown" and insisted that since paychecks had continued, the three weren't really punished.) But the whistle blowing and office politics weren't the only issues. A meeting shortly before the congressional hearings and the suspensions showed that RTC headquarters was nervous about the money-laundering probe.

On June 29, 1994, Iorio, the field director of the RTC's Kansas City investigations office, and Ausen, his department head, were summoned to Washington with their three Madison investigators for a comprehensive review of their criminal referrals. (Lewis, who had been taken off the case the previous November by "the powers that be," received word from D.C. not to attend.)

The all-day meeting, held in the conference room next to the office of the RTC's general counsel, was called by Deputy General Counsel Andrew Tomback, an Ivy League whiz kid recently recruited to the RTC. Tomback explained he wanted to get up to speed on the Madison case because it was the most political and sensitive one then facing the corporation. Although the Washington figures were frequently called from the room, Iorio and his staff went point by point through their ten criminal referrals, by that time safely in the hands of Independent Counsel Robert Fiske. But Tomback seemed especially interested in the additional "soft referral" on the alleged drug money laundering.

The investigators told him their suspicions that Dan Lasater, the Little Rock bond dealer, convicted cocaine distributor, and family friend of Governor Clinton, may have used accounts at Madison and elsewhere to make his drug profits reappear as legitimate money. The Little Rock police department, they said, was providing material from its own investigation of Lasater. Tomback reacted with a large bucket of cold water. He called the connection "tenuous" and argued against asking the independent counsel for a full-press series of witness interviews. (The field agents had prepared a list of twenty names.) In a "discussion" with the RTC field staff, he warned against exaggerated claims or speculation based on "disconnected facts." Later he insisted on rewriting the minutes of the meeting to include the point, which he scribbled on the margin of his draft, "AT said give all evidence to Fiske."

In a lengthy interview with TAS, during which his memory of the meeting noticeably sharpened, Tomback said, "As I remember the meeting, I tried to identify for them where there were missing linkages and lack of logical reasoning, to strengthen their product, but in no way stopped it from going forward."

But the field investigators read Tomback's challenges as a reluctance to forward referrals that weren't already an airtight case. This would have been a change in established procedure, although Kansas City had run into similar roadblocks in the Justice Department review of Jean Lewis's original Madison referral. "Our job was to turn over everything we were getting," said Iorio, a former bank president and FBI agent, who in his Kansas City position coordinated investigations in twenty-one states.

The experienced agents also looked askance at Tomback's credentials. His most