

## The Right Fluff

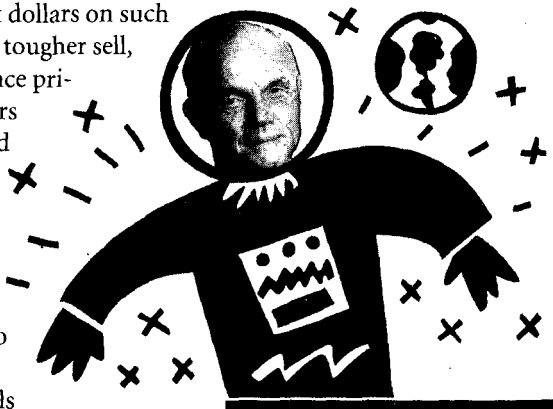
By Nick Gillespie

**D**uring the Cold War, government-financed space missions didn't require much salesmanship: National security "demanded" that we get there and do that before the Russkies turned the moon into a literal satellite republic. These days, though, spending tax dollars on such ventures is a tougher sell, especially since private operators are ready and willing to step up to the launching pad. Gimmicks are needed to keep NASA's funding levels healthy (remember the strategically timed "discovery" of possible Martian life forms?).

Enter John Glenn, the very senior U.S. senator from Ohio who, back in 1962 as a Mercury astronaut, became the first man to orbit the planet. This October, at the age of 77, he is scheduled to become the world's oldest spaceman, playing the official—and telling—role of "payload specialist" on shuttle mission STS-95.

But such hucksterism has so far failed to ignite the great boob public's enthusiasm. It has inspired instead mostly comic and cynical reactions, including a Letterman-inspired Top 10 list of changes in NASA policy ("Tang will be replaced with Metamucil... dishes of candy will be spread around the shuttle cabin...") and often harsh treatment by the press. Even in Glenn's

home state, a *Cincinnati Enquirer* editorial wondered whether his ticket to ride was a "presidential payoff for partisan service in helping to bury the Senate investigation into Clinton-Gore campaign finance violations," then suggested it was time for the millionaire pol to finally settle a very Earth-based matter: the \$3 million debt left over from his 1984 run at the presidency. Such attitudes may prove harder to escape than gravity's pull.



## Toasting Tobacco

By Jason Brooks

**"I**t's time to get the country looking at the alcohol industry in exactly the same way we're looking at tobacco," says Sandy Golden, president of the Tampa, Florida-based Campaign for Alcohol-Free Kids. "We're 10 to 15 years behind the tobacco people, and we want to close that gap in the next year or two."

Golden, who was the first executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, says, "The alcohol industry is far worse than the tobacco industry, if you look at the number of years of life lost." Golden's group plans a multifront war on booze:

■ In hopes of encouraging states to sue alcohol compa-

## Balance Sheet

By Rick Henderson

ASSETS



▲ **Special Delivery.** Telling a conference of business customers the Postal Service "needs to be deregulated, commercialized," new Postmaster General William L. Henderson concedes the first-class mail monopoly will eventually end. This public reversal may also signal less hostility from the Postal Service toward its customers and competitors.

▲ **Local Authority.** The Salt Lake City Council refuses to convert its local police force into federal immigration cops. A plan drafted by the chief of police, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Attorney General Janet Reno, and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) to "cross-deputize" 20 Salt Lake City cops is voted down 4 to 3.

▲ **Trumping Trump.** Donald Trump and the Atlantic City Casino Reinvestment Development Authority end their attempt to seize boardinghouse owner Vera Coking's property. (See "Trump Change," Citings, May 1997.) The CRDA tried to take Coking's home so that Trump Plaza could build a parking lot for its limos. But after a local court rules this use of eminent domain unconstitutional, the agency abandons its effort.

▲ **Blue Moon.** Pandering to the "family values" crowd, Norway's ruling Christian People's Party implements Sunday blue laws. Large retailers must shut their doors. But gas stations are exempt, letting crafty merchants fight back. RIMI and REMA, the nation's two largest supermarket chains, say they'll install gas pumps at several hundred outlets.

nies, Golden is "teaching" groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Movement to write letters to state attorneys general. "The goal of the letters is to determine whether it is possible to sue big alcohol the same way as big tobacco," he says. "If one attorney general launches a lawsuit, there will be a domino effect. They will all do it."

■ Golden is pushing for a presidential commission to "address the issue of underage drinking." He says a com-

mission to study and propose new regulations on alcohol advertising is "just a matter of time."

■ Golden has filed a formal petition with the Federal



▼ **Stun Gun.** Mr. Smith, Mr. Wesson, meet Mr. Nader. The latest gun control scheme would apply federal health and safety regulations to firearms. Writes Violence Policy Center analyst Susan Glick in the *Los Angeles Times*, "If handguns were held to the same standards as every other consumer product in America, they would likely be banned."



▼ **Cattle Prod.** The General Accounting Office says more than one-quarter of the federal government's \$1 billion food inspection budget is wasted on a single antiquated process. While safety measures to check for infectious bacteria go unfunded, notes the GAO, federal inspectors

squander \$271 million a year eyeballing cow and chicken carcasses for visible signs of disease.

▼ **Kangaroo Court.** Did ads for Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election violate campaign laws against "express advocacy"? Certainly not, despite the bleatings of campaign reformers and the Federal Election Commission. Clinton may deserve to lose the White House, but not over this.

▼ **Old News?** Greedy geezers and the redistributionist crowd get an unexpected reprieve: Stock market gyrations and the Clinton scandals all but guarantee that Social Security reforms won't take place before the 2000 election.

Communications Commission, calling for a rule that would let parents screen out alcohol ads from their television sets with V-chip technology.

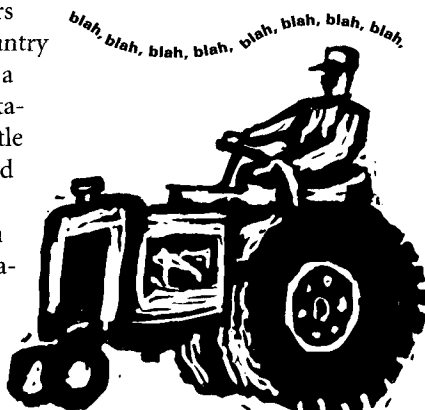
## Unauthorized Transmission

By Michael W. Lynch

In Tioga, North Dakota, the sole radio station offers both kinds of music: country and western. Roy Neset, a local farmer, asked the station many times for a little variety but never received satisfaction. So Neset made an agreement with a Colorado talk-radio station and retransmitted its signal from his home satellite dish over the five-mile ra-

dius where he does his tilling.

The local radio station doesn't like the competition. Its manager complained to the Federal Communications Commission's field office, which in turn convinced the obviously underworked U.S. attorney in North Dakota to sue Neset for the crime of broadcasting from home to tractor without a license.



So why doesn't Neset just get a license? The FCC won't give him one for his 30-watt transmitter, even though the entire FM spectrum over his farm lies fallow. Since the Carter administration, the agency hasn't issued any broadcast licenses for transmitters of less than 100 watts.

Neset is not the only victim of this policy. The Institute for Justice, which has mounted a First Amendment defense of Neset, reports that over the past year the FCC has initiated actions against approximately 100 microbroadcasters, from groups offering original programming such as Free Radio Berkeley to retransmitters like Roy Neset.

## Ageless Hostilities

By Jason Brooks

A July rally in Washington intended to rejuvenate supporters of Social Security got nasty when a group of seniors encountered a cohort of libertarian-leaning youth. The National Council for Senior Citizens, an advocacy group that opposes any changes in Social Security, held a rally at the Capitol to "bridge the generations" on the issue of old-age entitlements. Seniors carried signs bearing such messages as, "Don't pit the young against the old."

But many of the 2,000-strong protesters—who consisted primarily of retired union workers—seemed to be more interested in preserving the welfare state than in intergenerational harmony. When one young person asked what will happen when the Social Security trust fund runs out in 2029, a senior remarked with a shrug and a smile, "I won't be here."

## QUOTES

**"If the marketplace had its druthers, you'd have slavery and children doing labor."**

—Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.), addressing the National Association of Black Journalists, July 31

**"There are a lot of sight gags in our house."**

—Tipper Gore, in the *July Good Housekeeping*

**"[Gambling] raises an almost metaphysical challenge to our belief in an ordered cosmos, governed either by providence or a fundamental rationality....In our post-modern times, too many of us tend to think that the cosmos is a kind of chaos—that we have been thrown into the world for no higher reason than to pursue our own pleasure-fantasies."**

—Adam Wolfson, executive editor of *The Public Interest*, in the August 14 *Wall Street Journal*