

Notable Quotables

December 25, 2000 (Vol. Thirteen; No. 26)

A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance
to the Media

THE BEST *NOTABLE QUOTABLES* OF 2000 The Thirteenth Annual Awards for the Year's Worst Reporting

Welcome to the Media Research Center's annual awards issue, a compilation of the most outrageous and/or humorous news media quotes from 2000 (December 1999 through November 2000). To determine this year's winners, a panel of 46 talk show hosts, magazine editors, columnists, editorial writers and media observers each selected their choices for the first, second and third best quote from six to eight quotes in each category. First place selections were awarded three points, second place choices two points, with one point for the third place selections. Point totals are listed in the brackets at the end of the attribution for each quote.

This year, to match the news of the end of the year, we conducted an automatic recount, followed by a hand count. But each time MRC elections officer Kristina Sewell got the same results. However, she did not count dimpled ballots and avoided trying to divine the intent of judges if any quotes were not clearly marked.

A list of the judges appears on the back page.

Aiding & Abetting in an Election Theft Award

✓ "Here we will have possibly a bunch of tax dodgers deciding the election."

— *Time's* Margaret Carlson on Florida absentee ballots from military personnel, on MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning*, November 8. Florida does not have an income tax. (Carlson later apologized) [64 points]

Runners-up:

■ "If it turns out that Al Gore wins the popular vote nationally, there will be intense pressure in this country to have him become the President. Most people think the guy with the most votes wins. Recounts are as much an art as a science. You have experts, consultants, who go around the country doing recounts. If the recount came out on behalf of Bush and Bush had lost the popular vote nationally they would go to court, there'd be another recount. It would become endless. And the political pressure would mount very quickly to, to certify Al Gore as, as the winner. Especially since you have a potential conflict of interest here with the Governor of the state that is handling the recount being the brother of Governor Bush."

— *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter on NBC in the early morning hours after election night, November 8. [50]

■ "Secretary of State Katherine Harris in Florida. As you know she's a Republican, a Bush supporter. Warren Christopher said yesterday that her, her decision on this five o'clock deadline has the look of trying to produce a certain result in the election. Do you think, and to use a rather crude

term, that her decision does not pass the smell test?"

— Matt Lauer to Gore campaign's Bill Daley, Nov. 14. [35]

■ "There is no question, or very little question, that Al Gore won the votes cast in the state of Florida. The question is: Will he win the votes counted? Look at the statistics. In the rest of the state of Palm Beach County [that's what he said, strike "of Palm Beach County" to make sentence accurate] Buchanan was strongest in the precincts where Bush was strongest. In Palm Beach he was strongest where Gore was strongest because they were right next to each other on the ballot. Even more important, in the rest of the state Buchanan got the same percentage of votes on the ballots as he did in absentees, in Palm Beach County he got four times more votes on this butterfly ballot than he did on absentees. Listen, if this race is counted fairly, Al Gore won more votes in Florida."

— ABC analyst and reporter George Stephanopoulos on *This Week*, November 12. [34]

■ "There's an equal number of Americans right now who worry that they're being cheated on the other side and to suggest that one side is culpable here and not the other. There is no difference between what Bill Daley said and what Jim Baker said. Both have declared an end to this election before the process is finished. And Karl Rove is going out lying about various things and somehow that's acceptable. I'm sorry, you cannot say there's a difference in behavior here."

— *Wall Street Journal* Executive Washington Editor Al Hunt on CNN's *Capital Gang*, November 11. [26]

To watch via RealPlayer the broadcast quotes in this issue, go to: <http://www.mrc.org/bestofnq2000.html>

Kiss Me, Too, Al Award (for Gore Gushing)

✓ "At the same time, he will have to find a way to disassociate himself from the President's extremely low personal approval ratings. It shouldn't be that difficult. Al Gore has been perhaps the most active Vice President in American history, and there's not a hint of scandal associated with Gore's personal behavior. So much for logic."

— **ABC *Nightline* host Ted Koppel previewing Al Gore's convention address, August 14. [44 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "Let's talk about what they are now calling, Mr. Vice President, 'The Kiss'. You heard about 'The Catch' in that football game, this is 'The Kiss.' You really planted one on Mrs. Gore at the beginning of your speech there. What were you thinking?"

"Were you trying to tell the American people that you're really a kind of emotional guy?"

"Well, after watching that kiss I know how you survived 30 years, Mr. Vice President. Way to go! It's nice talking to you."

— **NBC *Today* co-host Matt Lauer to Al Gore, August 21. [39]**

■ "You've spent a quarter century in public service and have worked on a lot of these issues, obviously have mastered a lot of the details of them. When you look across the stage, are you frustrated at all?"

— **ABC's Terry Moran to Al Gore after the third debate, October 18 *Good Morning America*. [36]**

■ "This one [Winnie Skinner] was spontaneous and wow, is it resonating. It was a very powerful moment in that room and if you thought Tipper got the kiss treatment from the Vice President at the convention, she got five from the Vice President! And it wasn't just political. I think most of us in the room thought that he and the entire room really were moved by her very compelling story. There have been a lot of people we've seen out there who really struggle to pay for their prescription drugs, but her story really resonates."

— **NBC's Chip Reid describing the woman who claimed she had to collect cans to pay for medicine, September 27 *The News with Brian Williams* on MSNBC. [36]**

Kosher Kiss-Up Award (for Lauding Lieberman)

✓ "Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore officially introduced his history-making running mate today, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. History-making because Lieberman is of Jewish heritage and faith. The two started running right away. In their first joint appearance they gave a preview of the Gore-Lieberman fight-back, come-back strategy. Their message: They represent the future, not the past, and they are the ticket of high moral standards most in tune with real mainstream America."

— **Dan Rather introducing the Gore-Lieberman ticket, August 8 *CBS Evening News*. [62 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "Labor might not be happy. He is a conservative Democrat and they probably don't agree with everything he supports, but, you know, Gore is a pretty conservative Democrat."

— **NBC's Claire Shipman on MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning*, August 7. [60]**

■ "Lieberman is a true centrist, a moderate who can build coalitions. You know how the Republicans in Philadelphia kept trying to show how moderate they were? Well, this trumps anything the Republicans had to say."

— **CNN analyst Bill Schneider, August 7 *Inside Politics*. [60]**

■ "Today Joe Lieberman had to go before the Black Caucus because there were members of that caucus, the Congressional Caucus, who had some reservations about his social conservatism. Did he persuade you and the others that he's the right kind of vice presidential running mate for this ticket?"

— **Tom Brokaw to U.S. Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. during MSNBC's Democratic convention coverage, August 15. [31]**

Reality Check:

Lieberman's 1999 ratings. Americans for Democratic Action: 95 percent; American Conservative Union: 0 percent; National Taxpayers Union: 8 percent.

I Am Woman Award (for Hillary Rodham Worshipping)

✓ "I'm endlessly fascinated by her....She's so smart. Virtually every time I've seen her perform, she has knocked my socks off."

— **CBS News reporter Lesley Stahl on Hillary Clinton, as quoted by Gail Shister in the December 8, 1999 *Philadelphia Inquirer*. [91 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "It was hard in the summer of 1992 for a young woman to stay objective and not become enchanted by the promise of Hillary. I had spent my formative professional years undercover in the dark age of Reagan-Bush. Those were the days when women were not allowed to wear pants in the White House. Anita Hill had just been whomped. Anti-abortion judges were packing the Supreme Court. And here was a woman who had kept her own name!....I'll be voting for her just to make sure Trent Lott doesn't get another foot soldier for his holy war."

— **Former *Time* reporter Nina Burleigh, who once said she would give Bill Clinton oral sex for keeping abortion legal, in the February 14 *New York Observer*. [90]**

■ "When your husband ran for President eight years ago, it was often said you get two for the price of one, meaning if you elected him, they got your expertise. Does the same now apply? Do we get two for the price of one? If we vote for you, do we get his expertise?"

— **Bryant Gumbel to Hillary Clinton on CBS's *The Early Show*, June 28. [39]**

■ "I think a lot of women will read that and see an underlying sexism to that, to that tone....And I think this serves Hillary Clinton well. That, 'see, these guys don't want a, don't like powerful women. They don't like to see someone like me who challenges their power.'"

— **Steve Roberts of *U.S. News & World Report* reacting to a GOP direct-mail letter which described Hillary Clinton as "a fraud, a phony, and a pretender...She's hard-core, hardline, hard-nosed ultra-liberal who uses people and hates Republicans," July 16 *CNN Late Edition*. [38]**

Carve Clinton into Mount Rushmore Award

✓ "You're going to miss that guy. Don't tell me you're not gonna miss that guy. This is a master. He may be a rogue, but he is an artful and pleasant rogue and done a hell of a job as President. I'm gonna miss the guy...He should've been the vice presidential candidate."

— **Geraldo Rivera after humming the theme from *Rocky* over footage of Clinton's pre-speech hallway walk at the Democratic convention, August 21 *Rivera Live* on CNBC. [81 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "President Clinton, surviving impeachment and remains a colossus on the world stage as witnessed by his prosecution of the war in Kosovo, plus the peace accord in Northern Ireland, and peace with negotiations in the Middle East, which wouldn't have happened without his prodding."

— ***Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift on her pick for the "Biggest Winner of the Year," December 25, 1999 *McLaughlin Group*. [59]**

■ "It's not unlike watching a BMW, fully loaded, the sunroof back, the heated seats, the Blaupunkt speakers blasting. No curves, no spin, a 180-kilometer-an-hour purity of performance. It's December and a press conference in the bowels of the cement box that is the State Department, and up there on the stage, hand jauntily in pocket and press corps in the palm of his hand, the President is wowing 'em again. So you have again the fractured promise of William Jefferson Clinton. Oxford Bill with the political skill set of a veteran Chicago ward heeler. More intellectually supple than Al Gore without the rent-a-wreck personality. More politically attuned than George W. Bush, and he really reads the books."

— ***Washington Post* reporter Michael Powell in a December 9, 1999 "Style" section story the day after a Clinton press conference. [35]**

Media Hero Award

✓ "However formal the father-son relationship, it was strong enough that Al [Gore] went off to war for him. When most kids wouldn't come to the dinner table wearing a clean T-shirt, Al signed up for Vietnam to diminish the impact of his father's opposition to the war in his unsuccessful fight to keep his Senate seat in 1970. Gore, to preserve his father's career, did what few sons of privilege had to do....As psychiatrists and Shakespeare would have it, a son comes into his own

when he surpasses his father. By that measure, Gore is fully grown. Unlike the breezy George W. Bush, who was on a career respirator much of his adult life, Gore has worked up a sweat getting to where he is."

— ***Time* columnist Margaret Carlson, February 28. [60 pts.]**

Runners-up:

■ "The Children's Defense Fund will release its annual report today, and the figures in it are shocking and disturbing. They say one in five American children live in poverty. 13.5 million kids in this country are poor. Marian Wright Edelman, the incredible head of that organization, will be here to tell us today what can be done about it. And she firmly believes that mothers, in particular, across the country can get involved in this fight and should get involved because everybody's children are all of our children....It's a call to arms really for America's mothers to get involved in the gun debate. Silence the NRA. Get involved. You say it is all of our fights!"

— **Maria Shriver plugging Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman's appearance, followed by one of Shriver's questions, March 24 *Today*. [53]**

■ "I think the American public really got a taste of the degree to which not only Elian had been, in my view, you know kidnapped by these people [Cuban-Americans], but American policy on Cuba has been kidnapped by a very active, vociferous minority...."

"I just came from a trip from Venezuela to Bogota, Colombia to Moscow. I got to tell you, what people in Bogota, Colombia would give for five minutes of Janet Reno. What people in Russia today in these lawless, no rule of law societies, would give for five minutes of Janet Reno."

— ***New York Times* columnist and ex-reporter Thomas Friedman, *PBS's Washington Week in Review*, Apr. 28. [52]**

■ "We all know now that you can be, rest assured that will be the bookend on Janet Reno's tenure as Attorney General, that and Waco on the other end. It is appalling from her perspective because of the true compassion she has for children. If you've ever seen her around children, you know how much she truly cares for them, and this has got to be tearing at her."

— **CBS reporter Jim Stewart during live coverage of the INS raid to seize Elian, Saturday morning, April 22. [42]**

The Real Reagan Legacy Award

✓ **Co-host Bryant Gumbel:** "Well, later on this morning we're going to be talking on this President's Day about this presidential survey. Who would you think finished first?...Of all the Presidents when they did first to worst. Oh c'mon, you would know."

Clayson: "Ronald Reagan."

Gumbel, dropping his pen: "First?!?!?"

Clayson: "Who was it?"

Gumbel: "No! Reagan wasn't even in the top ten. Abraham Lincoln. Maybe you've heard of him."

— **Exchange on CBS's *The Early Show* about C-SPAN poll of historians which ranked Reagan 11th, February 21. [95 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "His presidency ended more than a decade ago, but politicians, Democrat and Republican, still talk about Ronald Reagan. Al Gore has an ad noting that in Congress he opposed the Reagan budget cuts. He says that because Bill Bradley was one of 36 Democratic Senators who voted for the cuts. Gore doesn't point out that Bradley also voted against the popular Reagan tax cuts and that it was the tax cuts that piled up those enormous deficits, a snowballing national debt."

— **Bruce Morton on CNN's *Late Edition*, February 6.** [75]

■ "We went through that whole period, get government off our backs. Remember the Competitive Council? Let the corporations voluntarily regulate themselves and come up with safety standards, so that the Carter administration could come up with new standards for tires, the Reagan administration came in and cut them out, abolished them and cut the budget of that very agency, that the Republicans are now criticizing, by 50 percent. And it's never come back. It's never come back."

— **Time's Margaret Carlson holding Reagan accountable for bad Firestone tires, Sept. 9 CNN *Capital Gang*.** [47]

Flirting with Disaster Award (for Proximity to Conservatives)

✓ "The platform is, again, very strongly pro-life and rejects abortion rights, and the platform specifically comes out against gay unions, and against legal protections based on sexual preferences. So is this really an open, compassionate, tolerant party?"

— **Charles Gibson to Lynne Cheney, August 2 *Good Morning America*.** [54 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Dan Rather:** "One issue that is sure to come up in the fall campaign that has already surfaced is Bush cozying up to the self-described religious right, including the Reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell."

Richard Schlesinger: "...Pollsters and pundits and politicians like to describe the primary season as a search for the soul of a party. Now the question is: Did George Bush sell his soul to the wrong group?"

— **March 13 *CBS Evening News*.** [53]

■ "You said you ended up with a more conservative platform than you originally drafted. How disappointed are you?"

— **NBC's Maria Shriver to platform committee chairman Tommy Thompson, during MSNBC Republican convention coverage, July 31.** [32]

■ "How does that broaden the appeal of the party? You're talking here tonight about being more inclusive, yet 59 percent of the people here describe themselves as conservative."

— **Andrea Mitchell asking New York Governor George Pataki about Dick Cheney, July 31 MSNBC prime time coverage of the Republican convention.** [29]

■ "Well, you put Tom Ridge out there for example, the Governor of Pennsylvania, big and important state, a guy with a great record, pro-choice, immediately the Catholic Church and Jesse Helms said no way."

— **Tom Brokaw to George W. Bush on potential VP picks, July 24 *NBC Nightly News*.** [26]

The Galloping Ghost of Gingrich Award (for Chiding Cheney)

✓ "And when you talk about votes like that, that he made while in Congress, anti-affirmative action, anti-abortion, anti-gun control, anti-equal rights, how does George Bush portray him as a compassionate conservative?"

— **Today co-host Matt Lauer to Tim Russert, July 26.** [41]

Runners-up:

■ "This week we learned that citizen Dick Cheney didn't vote in 14 of the last 16 state elections in Texas. His excuse? He was, quote, 'focused on global concerns.' Was part of his concern Halliburton's policy abroad of segregating bathrooms for Americans only? Halliburton's excuse was they were providing for, quote, 'cultural needs.' Didn't they say something like that in Mississippi in defense of whites-only toilets?"

— **Time columnist Margaret Carlson's "Outrage of the Week" on CNN's *Capital Gang*, September 9.** [40]

■ "I have to ask you, as an African-American, if you have any difficulty supporting a man who voted against releasing Nelson Mandela from prison....Is that kind of vote acceptable under any circumstance?"

— **Jane Clayson to Republican Congressman J.C. Watts on CBS's *The Early Show*, July 31.** [34]

■ "Cheney's politics are of the hard-right variety. He's opposed to abortion and gun control and favors both capital punishment and school prayer."

— **Bryant Gumbel on CBS's *The Early Show*, July 25.** [31]

■ "But Bush is portraying himself as a compassionate conservative. If he's running with somebody who voted for all the Reagan budget cuts, for example, wouldn't that prove a bit of a problem?"

— **Gloria Borger to Karl Rove, July 23 *Face the Nation*.** [30]

■ "[T]he official announcement and first photo-op today of Republican George Bush and his running mate Richard Cheney. Democrats were quick to portray the ticket as quote 'two Texas oilmen' because Cheney was chief of a big Dallas-based oil supply conglomerate. They also blast Cheney's voting record in Congress as again quote, 'outside the American mainstream' because of Cheney's votes against the Equal Rights for Women Amendment, against a woman's right to choose abortion — against abortion as Cheney prefers to put it — and Cheney's votes against gun control. Republicans see it all differently, most of them hailing Bush's choice and Cheney's experience."

— **Dan Rather on the July 25 *CBS Evening News* introducing that night's story on the Bush-Cheney debut.** [30]

W is for Woeful Award (for Bashing Bush)

✓ “He went along with having an openly gay Congressman address the convention last night, yet Bush opposes hate crimes legislation, gay marriage and gay adoption. He is the candidate who talks of making health insurance available to all who want it, but has fought to limit federal insurance for children. Bush is the candidate who has proposed a huge tax cut as a way to help the working class. But more than sixty percent of the relief would go to the richest ten percent of Americans. And while he speaks of the need to protect the environment, Bush supports mostly voluntary efforts to do it.”

— **ABC’s Dean Reynolds, Aug. 2 *World News Tonight*. [44]**

Runners-up:

■ “When he picked a running mate, he picked a running mate who was straight out of the red meat, right-wing part of the party. When he was asked about who he wants, everybody’s talking about how he’s not making a litmus test about abortion for Supreme Court nominees, but he says his two favorite Supreme Court nominees are Scalia and Clarence Thomas, hardly people that most blacks or Hispanics think are ideal candidates for the court. There’s still some kind of a disconnect between this wonderful public face, comfortable with Hispanics or whatever, and the decisions this guy has actually made.”

— ***Time’s* Jack White on *Inside Washington*, Aug. 5. [40]**

■ “A new poll shows that nearly 60 percent of Texans believe the state has, at some point, executed the innocent. No matter. These voters apparently view state-sanctioned murder as a fair price to pay for maintaining the status quo. A real leader would try to take his people to a better place. Will Bush? I have reasonable doubt.”

— **Jonathan Alter in *Newsweek*, July 3. [39]**

■ “On one bit of campaign meanness and nastiness in particular, George Bush now says he’s sorry his gutter language and personal attack was picked up by a microphone at a campaign stop yesterday, but he refuses to apologize for the substance of his comment. Bush’s remark was about Adam Clymer, a *New York Times* reporter whose coverage he doesn’t like.”

— **Dan Rather on the *CBS Evening News*, Sept. 5. [31]**

If He Didn’t Sink, Send Him Back to the Clink Award (for Portraying a Cuban Paradise Awaiting Elian)

✓ “While Fidel Castro, and certainly justified on his record, is widely criticized for a lot of things, there is no question that Castro feels a very deep and abiding connection to those Cubans who are still in Cuba. And, I recognize this might be controversial, but there’s little doubt in my mind that Fidel Castro was sincere when he said, ‘listen, we really want this child back here.’”

— **Dan Rather, live on CBS the morning of the Elian raid, April 22. [65 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “Elian might expect a nurturing life in Cuba, sheltered from the crime and social breakdown that would be part of his upbringing in Miami. Because Elian’s father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, works as a cashier in a tourist resort, the family already belonged to the nation’s well-off stratum, who has access to American dollars. The boy’s relatives in Miami can offer further support: Cuba now even has ATMs that dispense dollars from foreign banks. The education and health-care systems, both built since the revolution, are among the best in the Americas, despite chronic shortages of supplies...”

“The boy will nestle again in a more peaceable society that treasures its children. But his life will oscillate to the contrary rhythms of this central Cuban paradox. As a shining symbol of the communist state, he will have access to the corrupting fruits of the new economy. He’ll enjoy the best Cuba has to offer, the things only dollars can buy.”

— **Brook Larmer and John Leland, Apr. 17 *Newsweek*. [46]**

■ “Good evening. In Miami today, immigration officials met with the Miami relatives of Elian Gonzalez again and once again the government has failed to get the kind of cooperation from the relatives that might allow the case of this young boy to end in a civilized manner that is best for him.”

— **Peter Jennings opening *ABC’s World News Tonight*, March 28. [45]**

■ “Part of what the children talked about was their fear of the United States and how they felt they didn’t want to come to the United States because it was a place where they kidnap children, a direct reference, of course, to Elian Gonzalez. The children also said that the United States was just a place where there was money and money wasn’t what was most important. I should mention, Peter, that, you know, as you talk about the global community, Cuba is a place, because of the small number of computers here — in the classrooms we visited yesterday there was certainly no computers and almost no paper that we could see — this is a place where the children’s role models and their idols are not the baseball players or Madonna or pop stars. Their role models are engineers and teachers and librarians.”

— **ABC’s Cynthia McFadden referring to her visit to elementary-school-age kids, live from Havana during *ABC 2000* coverage, December 31, 1999. [43]**

Little Havana Banana Republic Award

✓ “Some suggested over the weekend that it’s wrong to expect Elian Gonzalez to live in a place that tolerates no dissent or freedom of political expression. They were talking about Miami. All eyes on south Florida and its image this morning. Another writer this weekend called it ‘an out of control banana republic within America.’ What effect is the Elian Gonzalez story having on perception of Miami? We will talk with a well-known columnist for the *Miami Herald* about that.”

— **NBC’s Katie Couric opening the April 3 *Today*. [60 pts.]**

Runners-up:

■ “The ‘banana republic’ label sticking to Miami in the final throes of the Elian Gonzalez crisis is a source of snide humor for most Americans. But many younger Cuban Americans are getting tired of the hard-line anti-Castro operatives who have helped manufacture that stereotype – especially the privileged, imperious elite who set themselves up as a *pueblo sufrido*, a suffering people, as martyred as black slaves and Holocaust Jews, but ever ready to jump on expensive speedboats to reclaim huge family estates the moment the old communist dictator stops breathing.”

— *Time* Miami reporter Tim Padgett, April 17 issue. [59]

■ “Cuban-Americans, Ms. Falk, have been quick to point fingers at Castro for exploiting the little boy. Are their actions any less reprehensible?”

— Bryant Gumbel to CBS News consultant Pam Falk, April 14 *The Early Show*. [51]

■ “Elian and his family will spend the next three weeks in a seaside Havana house....ostensibly to let Elian get caught up in school so he can enter the second grade in September. But critics in the U.S. warn that the quarantine is meant to deprogram Elian. (If so, he’ll be used to it: the private school he attended in Miami, owned by a right-wing Cuban-exile leader, was just as dogmatic).”

— *Time* Miami correspondent Tim Padgett, July 10. [48]

Semper Fidel Award (for Jim Avila’s Admiration of Fidel Castro)

✓ “What is deprogramming? What is reeducation? The young man [Elian] will go back into the, into the school system in Cuba. The school system in Cuba teaches that communism is the way to succeed in life and it is the best system. Is that deprogramming or is that national heritage? That’s certainly what he’ll be learning. He’ll also be living in a different kind of society, a society that many people here in Cuba like. The CIA, in fact, says that if the borders were open that most, 90 percent of the population here in Cuba would stay in Cuba because they like it.”

— NBC News reporter Jim Avila from Cuba on CNBC’s *Upfront Tonight*, June 27. [66 points]

Runners-up:

■ “The one thing that most, that I’ve learned about Cubans in the many times that I have visited here in the last few years, is that it is mostly a nationalistic country, not primarily a communist country.”

— NBC News reporter Jim Avila on MSNBC’s simulcast of *Imus in the Morning*, April 26. [65]

■ “Why did she [Elian’s mother, a maid] do it? What was she escaping? By all accounts this quiet, serious young woman, who loved to dance the salsa, was living the good life, as good as it gets for a citizen in Cuba....In today’s Cuba a maid, where dollar tips are to be had, is a prestigious job. Elian’s life relatively easy by Cuban standards, living with Mom and maternal grandparents half of the

• week, in Dad’s well-furnished home the rest of the time.
• Both Mom and Dad friendly to each other and caring towards their only child....An extended family destroyed by a
• mother’s decision to start a new life in a new country, a
• decision that now leaves a little boy estranged from his
• father and forever separated from her.”

• — Jim Avila from Havana on *NBC Nightly News*, April 8. [59]

Bring Back the Iron Curtain Award (for Admiring Communism)

• ✓ “To be a poor child in Cuba may in many instances be better than being a poor child in Miami and I’m not going to condemn their lifestyle so gratuitously.”

• — *Newsweek’s* Eleanor Clift on the *McLaughlin Group*, April 8. [62 points]

Runners-up:

• ■ “Like these young dancers, Carlos [Acosta] benefited from Cuba’s communist system because it not only recognizes physical talent, it nurtures it, whether it’s baseball, boxing, or ballet.”

• — CBS *60 Minutes* correspondent Christiane Amanpour on a star of London’s Royal Ballet, May 21. [44]

• ■ “We missed the death of a notable American this week, so we want to catch up. Gus Hall actually died on Friday. The son of a Minnesota miner became head of the U.S. Communist Party at the height of anti-communist McCarthyism in the late ‘40s and ‘50s. He spent eight years in prison and a lifetime in the political wilderness for his views here, but he was a dignitary, dignitary in the Soviet Union. Even after his friends there abandoned the cause, Hall never wavered and he was 90.”

• — ABC’s Peter Jennings, October 17 *World News Tonight*. [40]

Damn Those Conservatives Award

• ✓ “What a f—king idiot.”

• — Bryant Gumbel caught on camera after he threw the show to a weather segment seconds after wrapping up a hostile interview with Robert Knight of the Family Research Council, June 29 *The Early Show*. [91 points]

Runners-up:

• ■ “George W. is one thing, but as long as the Republican Party — you noted some of them — is populated by the Pat Buchanans, the Jesse Helmses, the Jerry Falwells, the Bob Barrs, don’t blacks have a right to be suspicious?”

• — CBS’s Bryant Gumbel to a panel of black men, August 2 *The Early Show*. [33]

• ■ “Howard, who are the Republicans who are not happy with the way this event looked tonight and similar groupings of these six, meaning, and it’s red meat for conservatives, the positions rather strident tonight: anti-gay, pro-Jesus, and anti-abortion and no gray matter in between?”

• — Brian Williams, after a debate amongst Republican presidential candidates, to *Newsweek’s* Howard Fineman, Jan. 6 MSNBC’s *The News with Brian Williams*. [32]

■ “No matter what George Curry accomplishes during the remainder of his journalistic career, he will be remembered for one thing: he was the editor who slapped a portrait of Clarence Thomas wearing an Aunt Jemima-style handkerchief on a 1993 cover of *Emerge* magazine. That shocking image outraged Thomas supporters, of course, but it crystallized the disgust that many African-Americans had begun to feel about the ultraconservative legal philosophy of the U.S. Supreme Court’s only black member....That’s the uncompromising voice that made *Emerge* the nation’s best black news magazine for the past seven years.”

— *Time* national correspondent Jack E. White’s “Dividing Line” column on what will be lost with the demise of the liberal black magazine *Emerge*, June 12 *Time*. [31]

Good Morning Morons Award

✓ “In a macro-political sense, do you think the Gore preoccupation with morality is a frightening turn for the party?”

— Bryant Gumbel to Hugh Hefner, host of a fundraiser moved to another location, August 15 *The Early Show* during the Democratic convention. [72 points]

Runners-up:

■ “I ask the question because this ticket has put a premium on what’s called ‘family values,’ which for a long time, as you know, was a code word for intolerance. Need people be concerned about a hard turn to the social right in the Democratic Party?”

— Gumbel asking Hadassah Lieberman if she agrees with her husband’s Hollywood critiques, August 16 *Early Show* during the Democratic convention. [70]

■ **Matt Lauer:** “Let’s say I come down to your dealership, I buy a car tomorrow, I get my voucher, I go out and get my gun and then in a week or so I decide that I don’t want it, what’s to stop me from selling it to anyone I want to sell it to?....”

“And so if then the person that buys that gun from me goes out and commits a crime with it, or God forbid takes a life with it, how are you going to feel at your auto dealership?”

Tennessee car dealer Greg Lambert, who gave free gun to car buyers: “I’m not responsible for the actions of other people...what we need is crime control, not gun control.”

Lauer: “Yeah, but why not take away the possibility? If you give someone a CD player, they can’t go out and kill someone with it....From what I understand, Mr. Lambert, you’re taking the promotion a little bit further. Even children who come to your dealership are going to get a free water pistol, and some people say that’s just going too far.”

— August 25 *Today* interview. [46]

■ “Americans are working more and getting less vacation time than people in any other industrialized nation....I feel strange saying, I never stopped to think about the fact there is no official U.S. policy on vacation time.”

— *Today* co-host Matt Lauer to *Escape* magazine’s Joe Robinson, a proponent of mandated vacation, June 12. [32]

Politics of Meaninglessness Award (for the Silliest Analysis)

✓ “I had my opinions surgically removed when I became a network correspondent.”

— *CBS 60 Minutes* correspondent Lesley Stahl denying liberal bias, Fox News Channel’s *The O’Reilly Factor*, January 25. [53 points]

Runners-up:

■ “I have an analogy. This came to me the night I saw this. The death penalty is like Viagra in middle-aged men. Texas uses the death penalty to remember what it was like in those good old cowboy days. If you want to send me your hate mail, go ahead, ‘cause that’s the way I see it. This thing is insane!”

— Geraldo Rivera wrapping up the June 26 *Rivera Live* on CNBC. [50]

■ “The larger point here is how awful SUVs are. It amazes me that no one contemplates getting rid of them, in a serious way, getting rid of the things. They’re gas guzzlers in a big way that are going to hurt us — our long-term dependence on foreign energy. They’re very unsafe. They roll over. If you’re in a small car, they’ll crunch you. Everything about them is bad, yet Americans gleefully buy them and nobody talks about banning them.”

— *Newsweek* Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas on *Inside Washington*, September 9. [31]

■ “You may want to note that Cheney is referring to Clinton Gore, not Clinton and Gore, in effect making Clinton Al Gore’s first name: Clinton Gore.”

— Dan Rather during Dick Cheney’s acceptance speech after Cheney said “We’re all a little weary of the Clinton-Gore routine...it is time for them to go,” August 2 CBS News Republican convention coverage. [30]

■ “We begin by going right to the hotel that houses the winner of the Iowa poll tonight. Governor George W. Bush of Texas, and with him is his lovely wife Laura. George is on the right. Laura is on the left.”

— Larry King hosting his CNN show, January 24. [28]

Too Late for the Ballot, But Year End “Best of NQ” Worthy: Post-Election Bias Admitted

Don Imus: “What if Gore had won and Bush, what if the roles were reversed? How would, I wouldn’t want to include you in this, but how would the liberal weenies of the news media be treating this if the roles were reversed?”

Howard Fineman, *Newsweek* Washington bureau reporter and MSNBC analyst: “Oh, my God. Are you kidding? That George Bush was a crybaby, that he was the spoiled son of a failed President. You know, you could just hear, the personal attacks on Bush would be just absolutely vicious.”

— Radio’s *Imus in the Morning* simulcast on MSNBC, November 28.

Quote of the Year

✓ “Yup, I gotta confess, that now-famous picture of a U.S. marshal in Miami pointing an automatic weapon toward Donato Dalrymple and ordering him in the name of the U.S. government to turn over Elian Gonzalez warmed my heart. They should put that picture up in every visa line in every U.S. consulate around the world, with a caption that reads: ‘America is a country where the rule of law rules. This picture illustrates what happens to those who defy the rule of law and how far our government and people will go to preserve it. Come all ye who understand that.’”

— **Thomas Friedman, former *New York Times* reporter and occasional PBS *Washington Week in Review* panelist, April 25 *New York Times* column. [68 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “But should you be using the national airwaves to promote your opinions?”

— **Diane Sawyer to Fox News Channel show host Bill O’Reilly, October 10 *Good Morning America*. [67]**

■ **Linda Chavez, Center for Equal Opportunity:** “If you’re someone like me, who lives out in a rural area — if someone breaks into my house and wants to murder or rape

- me or steal all of my property, it’ll take half an hour for a
- policeman to get to me....Thousands of lives are saved by
- people being able to protect themselves.”
- **Bonnie Erbe, host and former NBC Radio/Mutual reporter:**
- “And if you look at the statistics, I would bet that you have a
- greater chance of being struck by lightning, Linda, than living
- where you live, and at your age, being raped. Sorry.”
- — **Argument about using a gun for self-protection, PBS’s**
- ***To the Contrary*, May 13. [48]**
-
- ■ “Communism Still Looms as Evil to Miami Cubans.”
- — **Headline over April 11 *New York Times* story. [39]**
-
- ■ “Al Gore must stand and deliver here tonight as the
- Democratic Party’s presidential nominee. And now Gore
- must do so against the backdrop of a potentially damag-
- ing, carefully orchestrated story leak about President Clin-
- ton. The story is that Republican-backed special prosecutor
- Robert Ray, Ken Starr’s successor, has a new grand jury
- looking into possible criminal charges against the President
- growing out of Mr. Clinton’s sex life.”
- — **Dan Rather opening the August 17 *CBS Evening News***
- **from the Democratic convention. A federal judge appoint-**
- **ed by President Carter admitted the next day that he had**
- **inadvertently leaked the news. [39]**

2000 Award Judges

Chuck Asay, editorial cartoonist, *The Gazette* in Colorado Springs
Brent Baker, Editor of MRC’s *CyberAlerts* and *Notable Quotables*
Mark Belling, talk show host, WISN in Milwaukee
Neal Boortz, nationally syndicated radio talk show host
L. Brent Bozell III, Chairman of the Media Research Center
David Brudnoy, talk show host, WBZ in Boston; adjunct professor at Boston University
Priscilla Buckley, Contributing Editor of *National Review*
Trucker Carlson, *Weekly Standard* writer; co-host, CNN’s *Spin Room*
Bernadette Malone Connolly, editorial page editor, Manchester (N.H.) *Union Leader*
Mark Davis, talk show host, ABC Radio and WBAP in Dallas-Ft. Worth; columnist, Ft. Worth *Star-Telegram*
Midge Decter, writer and critic, New York City
Jim Eason, KSFO in San Francisco talk show host, emeritus
Don Feder, syndicated columnist and *Boston Herald* writer
Eric Feltmann, columnist and editorial board member, *New York Post*
Tim Graham, Director of Media Analysis, Media Research Center
Kirk Healy, Executive Producer, Cox Radio, Orlando
Quin Hillyer, editorial writer, *Mobile Register*
Marie Kaigler, radio talk show host, Detroit
Cliff Kincaid, President, America’s Survival
Mark Larson, talk show host and general manager at KCQB/KPRZ in San Diego
Jason Lewis, talk show host, KSTP in Minneapolis/St. Paul

Tony Macrini, talk show host, WNIS in Norfolk, Virginia
Don Markwell, talk show host, WACV in Montgomery, Alabama
Patrick McGuigan, Editor, editorial page, *The Oklahoman*
Jan Mickelson, talk show host, WHO in Des Moines
Gary Nolan, national radio talk show host, Radio America
Jane Norris, talk show host, WHAS Louisville & WLAP Lexington
Robert Novak, syndicated columnist and CNN commentator
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Kate O’Beirne, Washington Editor of *National Review*
Marvin Olasky, Senior Fellow, Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty; Editor of *World* magazine
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Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, Executive Editor, *The American Spectator*
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William Rusher, Distinguished Fellow, Claremont Institute
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Ted J. Smith III, Professor of journalism, Virginia Commonwealth U.
Philip Terzian, nationally syndicated columnist
Cal Thomas, syndicated columnist; panelist on FNC’s *Fox Newswatch*
R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., Editor-in-Chief of *The American Spectator*
Armstrong Williams, nationally syndicated columnist
Dick Williams, columnist; host of Atlanta’s *Georgia Gang*
Walter Williams, Professor of economics, George Mason University
Thomas Winter, Editor-in-Chief of *Human Events*

Notable Quotables

PUBLISHER: L. Brent Bozell III
EDITORS: Brent H. Baker and Tim Graham
MEDIA ANALYSTS: Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Paul Smith, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ted King
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE: Kristina Sewell
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Liz Swasey
INTERN: Ken Shepherd

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