

Century Marks

Century Marks in the [April 19, 2005](#) issue

What would Hippocrates say? A Boston doctor says that 15 years ago 80 percent of end-of-life medical conflicts pitted families who wanted to stop aggressive treatments against doctors who were trying to keep patients alive. Now positions have reversed: 80 percent of the time it's the families that want to continue life-prolonging measures and the doctors that are ready to end them. How then does one explain the polls indicating that 60-70 percent of respondents supported removing the feeding tube from Terri Schiavo? It makes a difference when the patient involved is a loved one (*New York Times*, March 27).

Gassed in California: The increasing number of Californians who drive gas-conserving hybrid cars worries the people who collect the state gasoline taxes, reports Bill McKibben (*Orion*, March/April). With decreased tax revenues, they fear they won't have enough money to repair the highways. So they've come up with the idea of placing a box in every car that will record how many miles each vehicle drives and then taxing owners on the basis of miles rather than how much gas they use." That should make all the Hummer owners happy: they'd end up paying the same amount in transportation taxes as those who drive hybrids.

Far right going mainstream: Joe Bageant, who grew up in a southern fundamentalist family, says that in daily living most fundamentalists are good people. "Conservative Christians actually do what liberals usually only talk about. They visit the sick and the elderly, give generously of their time and money to help those in need, and put unimaginable amounts of love and energy into their families." Nevertheless, many fundamentalists adhere to what is called Christian Reconstructionism, which maintains that until Jesus returns our "satanic humanist state" and federal legal systems should be replaced with pure "biblical law." The Reconstructionist ideal would impose the death penalty—execution by stoning because stones are plentiful and cheap—for a wide range of offenses, from sodomy and adultery to practicing witchcraft or astrology. And it would do away with labor unions, civil rights laws and public schools (homeschooling is preferred). Lest anyone think this perspective is only on the margins of American life, Bageant notes that 7

percent of all internships in the Bush administration are given to students from Patrick Henry College in Virginia, whose students were all homeschooled, and which promotes a similar “Christian worldview” (*Zion’s Herald*, July-August).

Speaking for God: Allilee DeArmond, owner of a Christian bookstore in Santa Cruz, California, has a mischievous retailing strategy. She puts end-of-time literature on a shelf called “millennial panic.” Says DeArmond: “I just don’t believe God is only going to save middle-class, churchgoing arty ladies. What kind of God would he be if he didn’t save the rednecks and the snobby intellectuals too?” She also likes to pair books with similar titles but opposing points of view. For example, there’s *Who Speaks for God?*—one by the conservative Chuck Colson and another by the progressive Jim Wallis (PW Daily, March 25).

The real St. Nick: In February the Turkish town of Demre voted to install a statute of Santa Claus in the town square, replacing a bronze statute of St. Nicholas, a bishop who lived there in the fourth century. Explained the mayor: Santa Claus “is the [St. Nicholas] everyone knows. We couldn’t figure out what the other one is” (*Washington Post*, March 23).

Toll of Iraq War:

- 1,512 U.S. troops killed in Iraq
- 1,157 combat deaths
- 355 U.S. noncombat deaths
- 11,285 U.S. troops wounded
- 17,053-19,422 estimated civilian casualties since the war started, according to Iraq Body Count
- 189 foreign nationals kidnapped since October 2003, 47 still captive
- 170,000 coalition troops as of March 2003
- 175,000 coalition troops as of March 2005
- 18,000 estimated insurgents
- 1,000 estimated foreign insurgents

(*Guardian*, March 19)

Worldly Christians: According to *Harper’s* (April), 35 percent of born-again Christians in the U.S. have been divorced, the same percent as other Americans. The chances that the divorce of a born-again Christian happened after he or she accepted Christ are 9 in 10. It is estimated that in 1995 2.5 million young Christians

pledged to wait until marriage to have sex, but that only 12 percent kept the pledge.

Bad lawyer joke: People who like to tell disparaging jokes about lawyers sometimes quote Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." But context is important: the line is said by a henchman for a would-be tyrant. Shakespeare's point is that the lawyers are the ones standing in the way of anarchy and mob rule, and if you want to be ruled by a tyrant and not by law, then you should kill all the lawyers (*Chicago Tribune*, March 22).

Shutting down Fox: FOX Blocker is an innovative product designed to filter out the Fox News Network. Simply screw the gadget into the back of a TV and you never have to be subjected to right-wing propaganda again—at least not through Fox News. FOX Blocker users are also encouraged to inform advertisers on Fox what they've done and why (FOXBlocker.com).