



## The Surfer Mentality

Surfers have a single focus. To ride the next wave. Their life-style centers around that single focus. It is a day to day, short term obsession. It creates a nomadic, sporadic and narrow goals in the quest for the tranquility of the big surf rush life-style.

Out in the water, anything goes mentality is a primitive survival mechanism against the brutal and dangerous forces of nature. Paddling into a two story wall of water that crashes down like a load of bricks takes guts, a gut check and a free mind to take the negative thoughts from the equation of life and death.

Surfers are risk takers. America was founded by risk takers. The risk and reward formula is American capitalism. But most risk takers have a long term goal for success. The average surfer's goal is to cut the curl to the shoreline in a minute ride without being tossed and cut by the bottom coral in a wipe-out.

The only goal is to get into the water, tread water, and wait for the tide to rise. It is a primitive hunter-gatherer self sufficiency mentality but without the elements of hunting or gathering.

*Cont. page 2*

## BLUE STATES-RED; RED STATES-BLUE

The map of the United States is as divided as it was before the Civil War. It is not based upon social or economic issues. It is about power and control of the growing massive federal and local government bureaucracy.

The Blue states think Bush is taking away freedoms and liberties to create a conservative police state. Red states believe the Democrats are trying to force their form of socialism and nationalization of America to an extreme welfare state. Both parties are taxing the middle class to death. Which is the plan for both parties to continue their drunken spending sprees because in the next 10 years, \$130 trillion of wealth is expected to be transferred from the greatest generation to their spoiled baby boomers.

The patronage, the campaign finance abuses, and pork



barrel kickbacks are skyrocketing in the face of "reform" legislation which is only for public relations and not real enforcement.

As the wolf pack of the two current parties growl and consume the middle and lower classes, true change can only occur if the map turns to purple: a viable third party to challenge the current mad spenders and incumbent elites.



# the real news

Winter 2004

## LOST IN AMERICANA

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But what happens when the surfer mentality takes root away from the ocean shores and imbeds its roots in middle America?

It is modern human nature to get from Point A to Point B by the easiest means possible. Long gone is the agricultural society where work meant physical labor. Today, public education feeds the mind where work means the movement of information contained on paper.

If one does not want to struggle with the mental challenges of the professions, there are the mentally unchallenging occupations of semi-skilled minimum wage labor. The fast food industry has been the fastest growing segment of the public economy. (The largest growing segment in the American economy has been government jobs.)

So in the petri dish of America, there is a medium for those youth who do not want

to mainstream but wake against the flow.

It has been ingrained that there are social safety nets so you can have Time to find one's self. The safety net has been government welfare. But more often now, it is parents and grandparents who are being tagged for supporting their adult children beyond graduation. There is a grow-

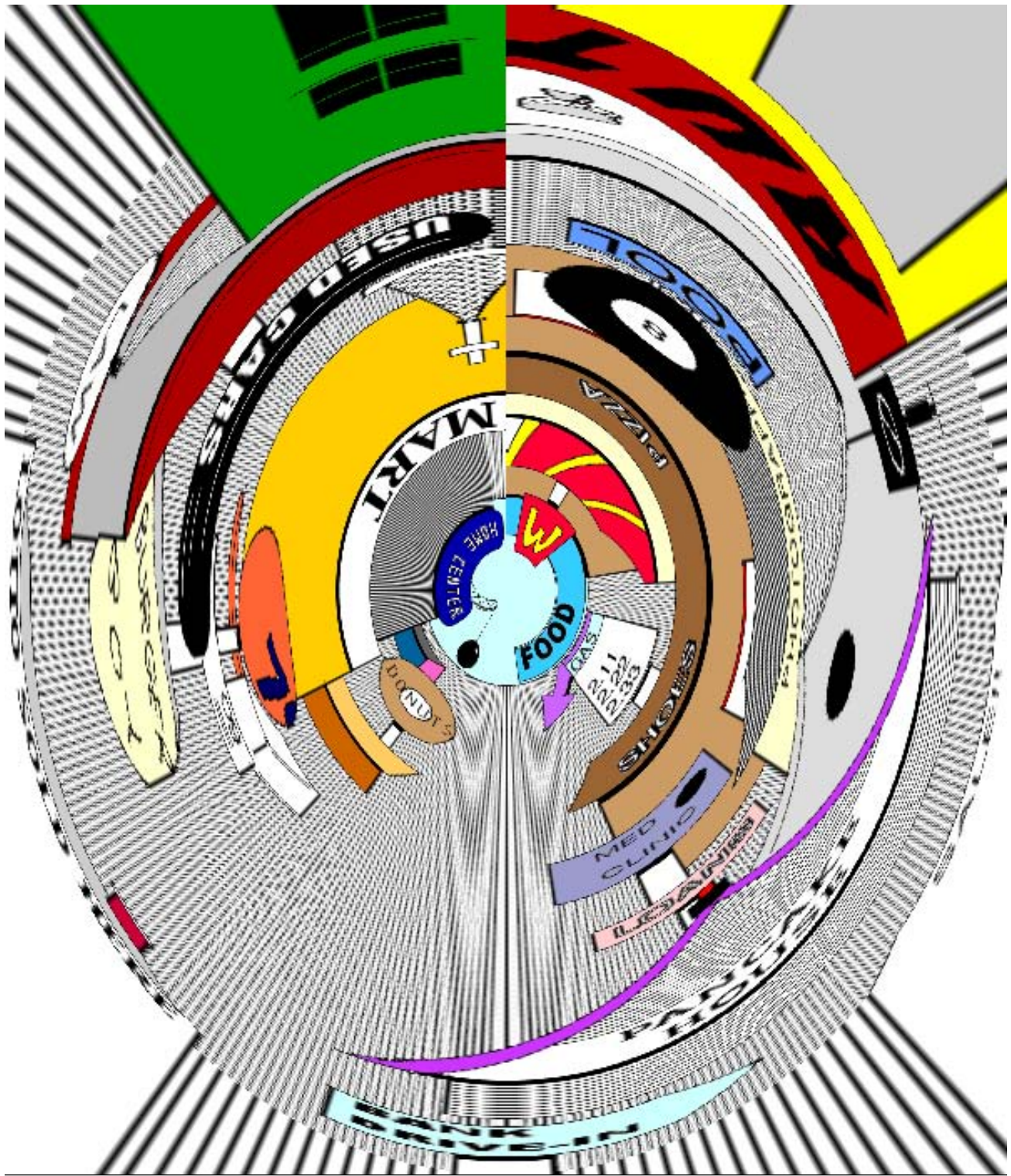
ing belief in this culture that they have the right not to grow up.

So they don't grow up. They go through the motions of being an adult in order to surf their life-style. Substitute wave surfing with another focal activity of Gen X. Young college graduates bounce from job to job year after year because getting seniority or promotions are not important. A job is just a paycheck to spend on their social circles' focal activity: example, the mall, or the club-bar scene. They walk away from stress and challenges by continuing the nirvana of the college all-night binge because they don't want to grow up and be responsible or accountable.

A cultural subgroup of apolitical, non-saving, nomadic hedonists is developing under the current. They do not think of retirement at 65; they don't even think about where they will be at the next year. The only contact they have with government (court system) is an arrest record or skipping out on the landlord's rent. They live pay check to pay stub. They go to where the action is, and live the carefree existence of commune in an urban environment. A metro area gives them the shelter and elements to continue their cultural de-evolution under the radar of parents or authority figures.







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## THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE The Winter 2004 Real News Edition

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How can one describe the American Landscape? Europe has the narrow, winding cobblestone medieval masonry fortress buildings that have stood the test of time. America, the land of opportunity, has been terraformed, transformed and transfixd on the concept of building change. In the past four years, America has been on a building boom, fed by cheap mortgage interest rates, a wave of new immigrants, and the investment backlash from the bubble burst 1990s stock market.

It was a late Saturday morning. The season had begun to change to the cool nights of early fall. The trees snapped into bright red and orange hues. On such a clear crisp day, the mind drifted into getaway mode from work.

The flashing neon sign hit the frontal lobe. POWERBALL TICKETS SOLD HERE. POWERBALL TICKETS SOLD HERE. Now, Illinois has its own multi-state lottery, but the PowerBall was 25 times greater in value, near \$214 million first prize. The nearest ticket agent is in Genoa City, Wisconsin. So the northern sojourn along West U.S. Route 12 would begin like many prior nine-digit gold mining expeditions.

The multi-state lottery is the weak sister of the 1949 California Gold Rush. People packed up their lives, sacrificed their families, crossed a hostile countryside, for the prospect of instant wealth in the form of crude mineral nuggets. Today, the prospect of instant wealth is in the form of slick register receipt paper with lines of random numbers. Everyone dreams of the instant lightning bolt of fame and fortune. That was the original American Dream for those individuals brave enough to challenge the choppy Atlantic, the stench of disease, to start a new life with only your own two hands and hard work.

Route 12 had a history of the summer flight from Chicago to small cottage life along the many lakes in the Fox River watershed. At the turn of the last century, Chicago was a foreboding hot, dirty, sooty and noisy pumping economic heart of the Midwest. Many families left the city for the therapeutic tranquility of the country life. The small hamlets along the route were summer vacation destinations. The towns were small. The main streets lined in a rural building fashion, with a boat reseller or bait shop being featured on highway signs. Route 12 was also an avenue for the very wealthy who would traverse to the mansions that dotted Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

Route 12 is a four-lane, suburban artery from Des Plaines to McHenry County. Lake Zurich has exploded in strip malls and big box shopping centers. Saturday morning traffic crawls from stop

light to stop light. The steroidal SUVs choke the sun from the late model sedans. As traffic crawls past the new outlet restaurants, the movieplex and coffee huts, a 1960s tan Dodge, with the retro-space ship fins and chrome round head and tail lights creeps past. It is driven by a young Amish-like woman with a large white bow in her hair. It was a Twilight Zone, time warp forty year old ghost machine moment.

It was a strange slap-in-the-face image because of the surroundings. In the middle of late model suburbia, there drives a young woman in a bonnet driving a vintage Dodge in bumper to bumper traffic stalled around miles of plain vanilla shopping centers. The American landscape is no longer centers around the unique town square or old west style Main Street of Frank Capra movies. America has turned into a concrete gray, big box, backlit sign mega-strip mall signature.

The bib box discounters are popping up like mushrooms along the roadside. Every town from Chicago to the Wisconsin border appears to have its major discount chain, and every franchise available in America only a mile in between each other. It is saturation retailing. The 1970s corner convenience store has morphed into the community megamart. Each town and village now looks the same. There is no unique character left in the business districts across our land.

Fueling the blandness, local governments are trying to keep up with their neighbors. There is no economic sense to have seven major retailers in a town of 30,000 chasing the same citizen dollar. But the underpinnings of this weed like growth is that local governments are pushing these new stores with tax breaks, TIF districts, and incentives. It is a local power play by politicians to get a pie of the political pie. The public statement is that the new business is good for the local economy, but it hurts long time Main Street stores. The public statement is that the government wants more sales tax revenue for public services. But the reality is that most deals with the big boxers comes with real estate tax freezes, sales tax rebates or public bond money for site development. Public dollars

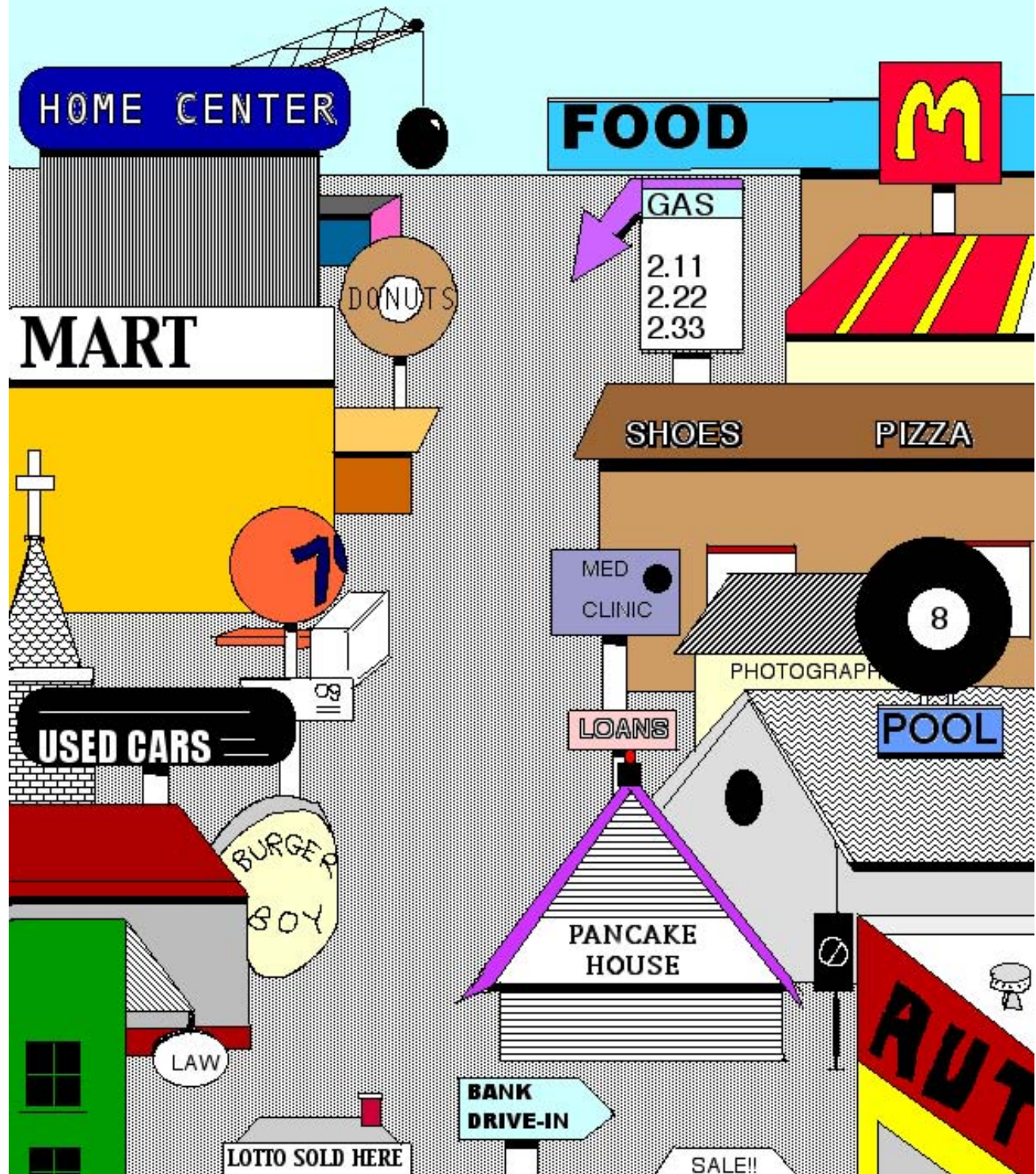


# THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE THE REAL NEWS PAGE FIVE

which are not recovered by minimum wage employment standards.

Consumers are driven to these modern centers like moths to a flame. It is conditioning. It is alleged convenience. It is alleged bargain price point merchandising. But as the costs continue to grow, consumers flee to more extrasuburban lo-

cales, and the cycle continues all over again. Then the older towns are left with store vacancies driven by big box bankruptcies. The fading concrete strip malls create the blight problem which government claimed to have saved the community from in the first place. The landscape will be littered with empty storefronts and fading signage.







## DEMSURVIVOR

THE REAL NEWS PAGE SIX

It is the Celebrity Democrat All-Star Survivor. The last national election is over, and the key Democrats are around their charred remains of their campfire pondering the future. The fire has gone out so the blame game is about to begin.

The first game winner, Bill, sits naked on a log amused by the defeats of the others. He has already proven himself the leader and the party winner. His focus is not on the game but on himself and his own legacy.

Candidate John is roped by his wrists to a dead tree. His long face was the cartoonist's gag for the election cycle. But it was John's gag on the issues that lead to bitter defeat to a Texas tample. John had attempted to take the old-line Massachusetts liberal base cross country to the victory line but somehow forgot about the states in Middle America.

His mentor, Edward, is hog-tied like a beached whale. His focus is, to say the least, personal. He is there but not there. He is the lingering

shadow of the Hollywood party script of glam, glitter, and power.

Castaway Al is hiding behind the weeds. He is no longer a player, even though he thinks he still is one. He still thinks he won the Last Game, but it was stolen away from him by lawyers, gun lovers and money.

Party Pit Bull James is hunkered over a coconut. It reminds him of his skull and the hardball politics that he dreams about 24 hours a day. But his monkey screams failed to energize the independent swing voters. His voice is fading in the wilderness.

Sitting on their wooden crate throne is Hillary. She took the role of immunity idol in this last election. Her followers stood panting on the sidelines as she allowed Candidate John bury himself in the mire of a popular incumbent president. She hoed the field for the next Game in 2008 by staying above the fray during the last vote. She now collects the skulls of her colleagues for fun.

According to cable programmers, it appears that America will become a single nation of motorized welders. Revenge of the Shop Nerds.

The “hot” or “in” adult toys for the past two years have been the things your parents told you couldn’t have when in high school: motorcycles or fast cars.

Custom “chopper” motorcycles costing \$50,000-\$100,000 are now common place. The new iron machines are selling like hotcakes at a local pancake breakfast.

Muscle cars and street racers are also the “must have” vehicle for the status conscious consumer. Twenty years ago, no one bought a Charger or Challenger--- one bought a Mercedes or Lexus or Ferrari in order to make the statement to your neighbors. The old 1970s pony cars and muscle cars rusted away in garages and barns until the calendar flipped to the twenty year since production mark. 20 years means “classic” car in the auto collection field.

The explosion of interest in custom motorcycles and the rebirth of muscle car mania can be traced to cable television programs like *American Chopper*, *Biker Build-Off*, *American Hot Rod*, *Overhaulin’*, and *Rides*. All these shows have in common is that builders take raw metal or junk, pound the crap out of it, then weld the pieces together like a sculptor. It is the fascination with men working with their hands to create something functionally cool that is lacking in the viewer’s boring office existence. Most people do not pick up a hammer, saw or blow torch to fix their problems. They hire someone to do all the routine tasks around their house: handyman to fix gutters, the 5 minute oil change place to do routine car maintenance, hire a landscaper to cut the lawn, or hire an interior decorator to redo a room or kitchen. Write a check to the contractor and be done with it. It is the easy way to get instant gratification.

The motor build shows are the balance to the booming home remodel and decorating shows that have expanded to take bandwidth like locust on a wheat field plain. A guy stuck with a “to-do”

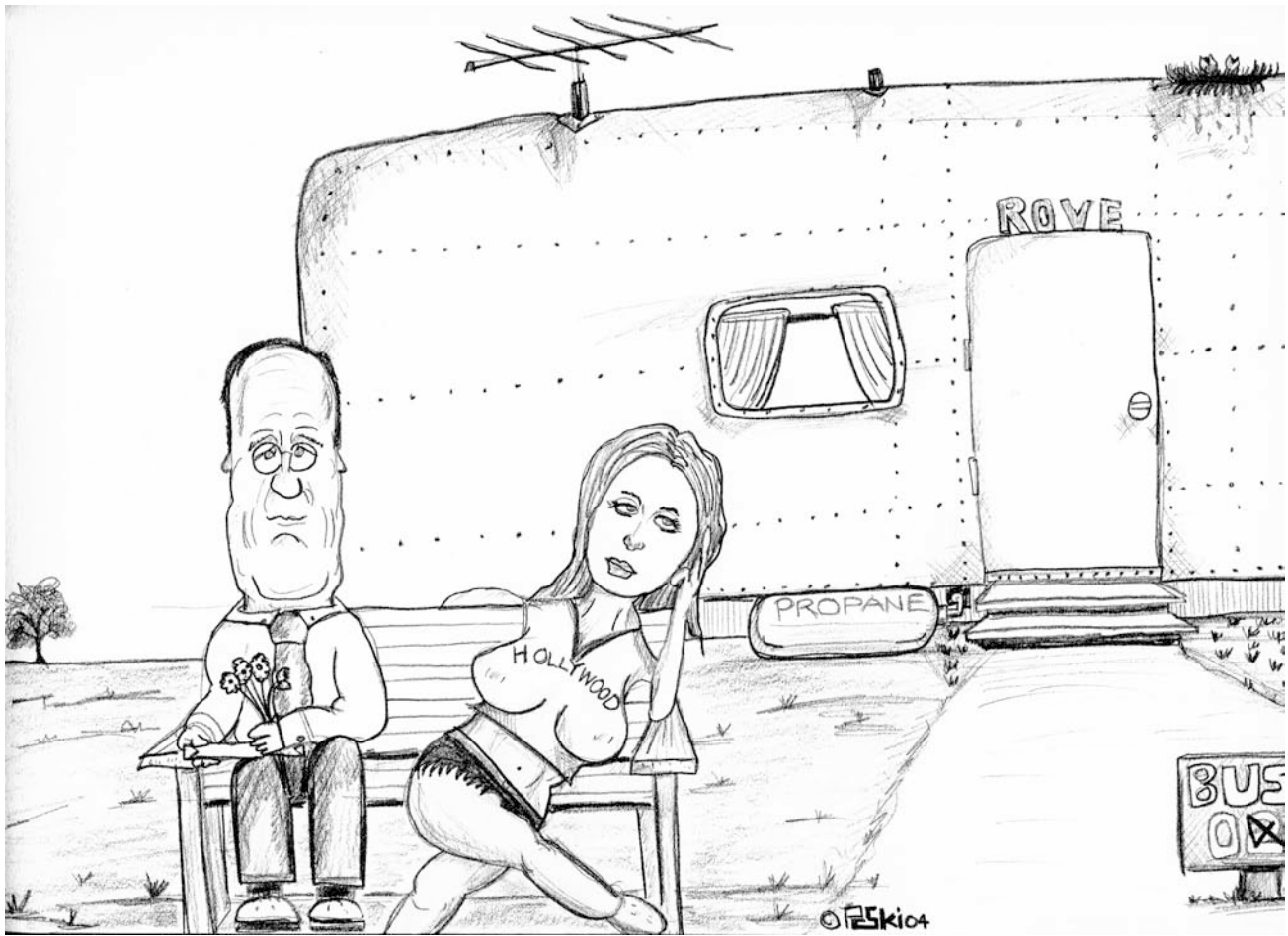
list inspired by his wife’s viewing of those home improvement shows needs his own venue of escapism.

Now, every since Henry Ford put the concept of motoring into the reach of every American, America has had a love affair with the automobile. It has been the foundation of the nation. As General Motors goes, so goes the country. The amount of manufactured parts that goes into one car creates a huge economic engine of suppliers and skilled laborers creating those parts that are transported to final assembly plants. The concept of motoring meant that the opportunities were no longer local; the freedom of travel in the constitution became a reality. The interstate highway system became the arteries of Uncle Sam.

Everyone could have their own car. If you could not afford the car you wanted, there was a price point lesser version in the manufacturer’s car line. Then after-market parts suppliers gave the average person access to new body panels, decals, engine turbos, custom wheels and components. One’s ride is an expression of the driver.

Things got to the tilt phase craziness when the Speed Channel televised the Barrett-Jackson automobile auction. It is the candy store for the motoring public’s lust for polished V-8 metal and chrome Americana. People of all ages and demographics were bidding fantastic sums for those previously rusty muscle cars of the 1970s; \$50-60-100,000! Classic 55 Chevys were topping \$100,000 with ease. Jay Leno purchased a Lincoln Zephyr custom street rod for \$400,000. Brock Yates commented that such a vehicle was “truly an American art form.” But people were paying the price of modest American homes for vehicles that may be garaged for investment/collection purposes.

But the shaping and reshaping of metal, and adding power plants on steroids, cuts to the core of the American experience. Big. Bold. Powerful. Extreme engineering. The roads will fill with the scent of burned rubber as the collector custom market continues to explode in the 21st century.



## THE MOST POWERFUL MAN THE REAL NEWS PAGE EIGHT

In every White House, there is a “go-to” guy. A guy who shuns the limelight but enjoys the day to day details of moving forward the vision of the President. He may have been the non-glamour, hardworking, book-smart geek. He may be considered the power behind the throne. If he was aligned with his opponents, he would be called the most brilliant in the Beltway. But his opponent political wonks merely curse his name under their breath. They tried to make him into a Satan figure, but the general public could never picture him because he was always in the shadows. So the barbs could never stick. Which made him even more powerful.

Karl Rove is Bush’s powerbroker. He has the egghead, corporate cubical blandness that makes him mesh well with Bush’s low-key Texas drawl. Rove did not need to be the most popular kid on the block, but after the pulling together the winning November election by turning out huge numbers of the Republican base under the media

radar, he became the most popular political catch. He has won the last two Super Bowls of Politics. He should be wooed by the television talk shows, patted on the speaking fee back, and get that fat book and movie deal from Hollywood. But as the Bush cabinet bails faster than rats from a sinking ship, Rove stays the course to bail more hot water from the hold.

He is a master on how to get elected but his record on governing is the debate among the critics. President Bush is in charge, they claim, in theory, but the fingerprints on policy, appointments and strategy is Rove’s. He may be the glue that keeps the delegated pieces of the administrative puzzle together. Bush has allowed his cabinet members wide berth to accomplish the mission. Bush is into general principles; Rove is the nuts and bolts mechanic. He is not the limelight author of any success; he is not the blame for any failure. He is the Forrest Gump of his political generation of handlers; the heir to Lee Atwater.





## THE HOBBY HORSE

THE REAL NEWS PAGE NINE

The Second Term always begins with a disadvantage. It begins in *Lame Duck Mode*. Without a clear, popular mandate to stay the course, a second term president cannot force through his campaign promises by the will of the bully pulpit.

The national media will not champion any of his causes. His own party will cool to the ramifications of doing anything out-of-the-ordinary because party regulars and incumbents are more concerned about their own re-election in two years than creating a lasting Bush legacy.

Big Changes will take some Big Deals. The privatizing of social security is the Republican Love Canal. The Democrats blocking Bush court appointees on their liberal litmus tests is their China Syndrome of alienating the moral Red State voters. However, most of America wants less forced

“change” of a stalemate than more government.

Federal, state and local agencies are raising taxes, user fees and debt service to levels that will bankrupt the nation. Taxpayers are on the verge of total revolt; many cannot afford three months of their collective salaries to pay just their annual property taxes. Politicians are deaf to the growing discontent of the squeezed middle class.

For incumbents, the system is merely a game that they control. There are no personal consequences because it is not their own money at risk. They exempt themselves from the requirements of their own regulations, by law or by practice. In essence, they are spoiled little children who refuse to listen to their parents. Their parental taxpayers have been stonewalled for so long, they have stopped yelling at the wayward kids. But it gets to

# THE HOBBY HORSE

CONTINUED

a certain point where even the most apathetic parent must lay down the law.

Bush also does not recognize the explosive ramifications of a discontent middle class. This is not a Trojan Horse being wheeled up to the gates of the White House. This is a real story that affects real lives.

The media consolidation of the 1990s but local journalism into a wire service commodity business. Less reporters reporting less local news (i.e. tax increases) or analyzing local news (i.e. why taxes are increasing exponentially).

The reason is the lawmakers excuse. "We need more revenue." The problem is not revenue. The problem is out-of-control spending.

Last year, the Financial Times of London did a cover story on how Illinois state government was a bankrupt facade. No local media picked up on the obvious. The State has sold billions in bonds to pay for lawmaker perks (multiple retirement plans at more income than current salary levels) and pork projects in the face of massive declining revenue.

But the kids will continue to spend beyond their means because they will not be around when the credit cards come due. And the taxpayer will have to bail out their mistakes while the pols continue on the gravy train.



## COURT OF GRAY ROBES

THE REAL NEWS PAGE 10

The Democratic congressmen were livid that candidate John Kerry had millions of dollars left over in his campaign war chest. The Dems philosophy was to leave no penny behind in a political race. Spend it on ads, flyers, campaign workers, consultants, or street money. Buy as many votes as a candidate can afford to assure victory. Victory is viewed in the formula of dollars per vote.

Kerry kept millions in a legal slush fund reserve. Call it the Al Gore addendum to Campaigning 101. Just as important as buying votes is buying an army of attorneys to flood the courtrooms across the land to challenge the results in order to squeeze more votes to victory.

The American way is throwing everything into a courtroom and see what happens. Courts are making political decisions because legislators don't want to take the electoral heat. Class action lawsuits for any issue are out of control. The legal system should be black and white; right and wrong. But the swell of bad cases, bad judges, and bad precedent has led to a system of gray. One cannot predict the result from case to case. The system is broken but no one wants to fix it.

Kerry now has a treasure chest of cash which his colleagues envy. Kerry now has power over his fellow lawmakers because he has campaign money to burn or give to others.



# COURT OF GRAY ROBES

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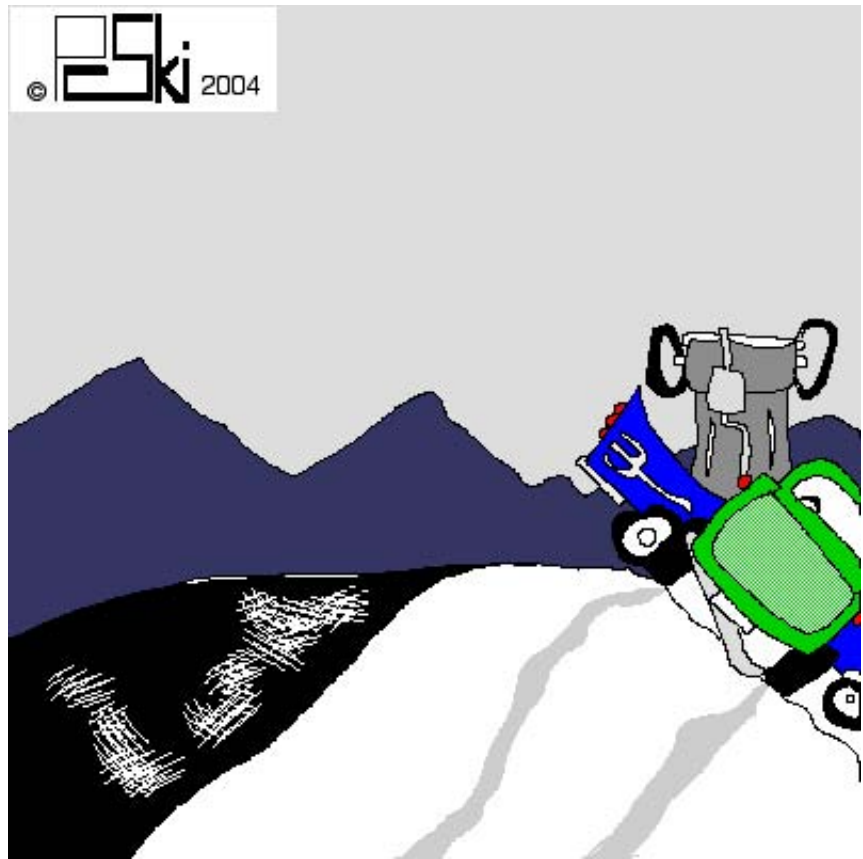
The Democratic National Committee was on the firing line before the Election. The DNC was blamed for lack of leadership in getting Gore the Florida vote in 2000. The election that they spent four years claiming that was stolen from Gore.

In 2004, the DNC prepared their workers to complain about voter intimidation, voter fraud and ballot problems WEEKS before the actual election. When the schemes came out in the pundit press before the election, the DNC had to hide from the blunt fact that one cannot complain about election day problems before the election even occurs.

The DNC was also misled by the pollsters who make several assumptions in their data gathering then compound any errors with their predictions. They gave Kerry three battleground states early which made the final scoreboard bitter in defeat.

The final results were so black and white that the DNC army of lawyers could not get into the gray robes to argue that the results needed to be overturned for Kerry. The post-election court battle strategy was as flawed as the candidate's campaign themes.

Kerry's crew will probably fade in the mire of discontent losers like his own career.



## WAVE OF LIFE

THE REAL NEWS PAGE 11

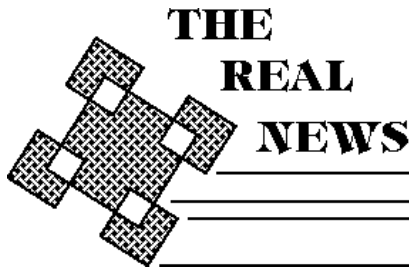
There was a recent commercial that featured a smiling suburban guy tending to his new house, his lawn; smiling about his two new cars, kids in private school, all the amenities in life. In a zombie grin he asks his own question of how he can do it all; "I'm in debt up to my eyeballs," he says. It is a quiet plea to kill him. The fear has put him into the zombie numb state because the crushing mountain of debt could crash upon him ending his stressful misery.

It shows the generations who have grown up addicted to cheap credit. Whether credit cards, installment loans or home mortgages, a segment of our society is only focused on leveraging their net worth to obtain more and more material luxury items.

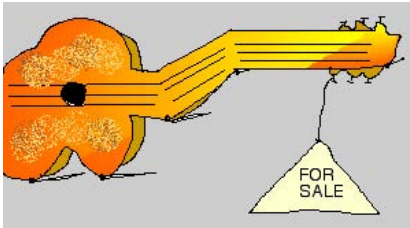
This would partially explain the daily early morning motor vehicle carnage. Daily there are massive rollovers, truck crack ups and blocked expressways. This was before the first snow fall. Drivers are so tired, unfocused on the road, stressed out by the debt load to function.

But then, 44% of Americans take at least one prescription drug per day. One in six Americans take three or more. Also, twenty percent of the under 21 crowd take a prescription a day. The roads are clogged with drugged zombies.

Have we become a nation looking for the magic pill bullet to live longer, look better, and live longer? The war on drugs appears to have been lost at the prescription counter.



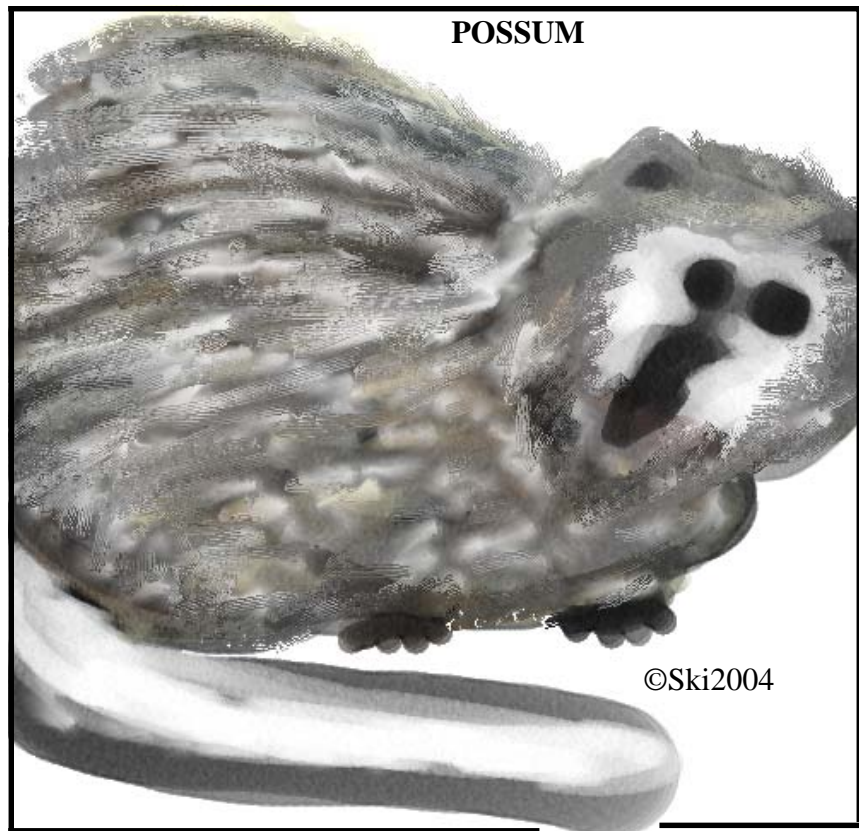
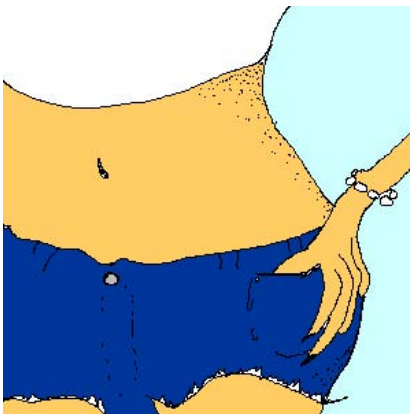
## MUSIC 2005



iTunes, Apple's on-line music store has surpassed 200 million downloads. The music industry fought the concept of digital distribution in order to control the distribution of artist materials. Labels wanted to continue to control artists who did not have the investment capital to print, burn and distribute CDs.

But now, bands have the alternative of using the internet to distribute their songs without having a label. No longer tied to the physical constraints of disks. Virtual distribution of entertainment is a growing industry.

The only downside is that if a band becomes a virtual player, does that mean it will only get virtual groupies?



There is a saying in the corporate service world, "you eat what you kill."

I found a new profession which is more profitable than yours and mine together based upon the quote I received on a recent workday morning.

Wild Animal Removal. Yes, as I was walking past the back office windows at 9:30 a.m. I saw a big white and gray mass quickly jog toward the building foundation. Possum. Big, fat, rat.

The wild animal was running around a suburban backyard in the midst of a village downtown in daylight. It was highly unusual. I flashed to the tale that only sick animals are out in the day out of their behavior patterns.

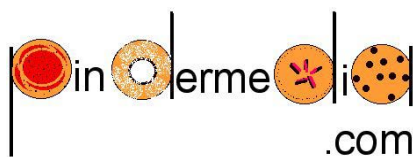
I did not want this old critter to make the office a new homestead.

So I banged on the window pane to scare it, and it wandered back and forth under the bushes, until he found a distant window well where he curled up to sleep the day away. I found him, started beating on the window pane, awoke it, he turned, glared, opened its crock-like jaw, gnashed his needle teeth and went back to sleep.

So to the Yellow pages for relief. I want the animal captured. "Normally, we then release it on the property." No, I will pay extra to have to take it off property and release it someplace else. I knew the possum will just circle around the garage and get right back to a window well to sleep. I do not want a vermin habitat.

The five minute capture job will cost me as much prorata as Ron Artest lost.





cyberbarf

Examine the Net Way of Life



Where One Combines  
America's Passions

THE NEW BLOODSPORT



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Street Life of the Mind



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## A LETTER FROM THE PUB

THE REAL NEWS PAGE 13

Some readers may have noticed that this issue contains many cartoons and illustrations of varying media. The diverse forms of artistic expression include computer drawing programs, original watercolor on paper, freehand pencil drawings and computer watercolor painting. It was not intentional to put in as many different art styles into one publication; it sort of happened that way.

For the past few years, the computer mouse and paint programs were the mainstay of creating graphics here at the RN. But during the rare boring Sunday afternoon, dead inspiration hits like a ton of bricks whining that I should accomplish something this weekend, so the question is posed, and the art supplies found.

It is interesting to note that while doing computer graphics is good and quick, it made the freehand pencil drawings better. Just like when I used to use my left hand to write or draw, when I go back to the dominant right hand, the drawings were better. Maybe its the left brain-right brain jealousy. Maybe dumb luck.

The pencil drawings were also the outgrowth on a marathon session with my elementary and pre-school nieces one weekend wherein we drew in crayon various Thanksgiving and holiday story pictures (more than 100 pages in total). Trying



to draw lifelike features with a stubby melted crayon takes more concentration.

That is it: concentration. That is the key to just about everything. That, or stumbling good luck.

This issue turned into a theme expression after noticing several links to the state of Americana during this summer's road trips and the daily cable news nonsense during an election year. Observations. Observational humor.

As 2004 rolled through the meat grinder socket into the casing of time, it is a time to reflect on the status of things. After beating your head against the wall so many times after observing the dumb get dumber, the know-it-all knowing less, and the P.C. crowd going more nuts, you get numb. Apathetic. Indifferent.

But, hey, this is America. We are not supposed to be indifferent. If that was true, we would have taken the place of our ancestors would still be in central Europe waiting to be invaded by the next army. No. That would not be right.

Aloha.