

**Second Annual Yesteryear Issue**

---

**SEX!  
VIOLENCE!  
MORAL  
OUTRAGE!**

# SCANDALS



*Oh, How the Mighty Keep Falling*

---

**LAST APRIL, NEW YORK** published the first of what we hoped would be a recurring event: an anniversary issue (the magazine debuted on April 8, 1968) that celebrated our birthday by exploring a slice of this city's history. In the 2011 edition, we traced the evolution of the New York apartment. That seemed to work out all right, so now we're doing it again. The subject this time around: scandals. Which are just as associated with New York City, when one stops to think of it, as the railroad flat or the classic six. ¶ And yet, ever since we landed on this topic, there's been a rolling debate in our offices as to what constitutes a scandal. Does an awful, world-shaking celebrity murder count (like the shooting of John Lennon)? Or an instance of chilling moral depravity (like when Kitty Genovese's neighbors appeared to yawn through her murder)? Or your run-of-the-mill tabloid tale (say, the Seymour-Brant on-again-off-again divorce)? No, we decided: A fall from grace was required. The mighty had to stumble, the pious to be caught in sin. We asked novelist Colin Harrison to parse the definition further, which he does in his introduction on the following page. ¶ That said, it is both a tribute to—and a loving indictment of—this city and its environs that, even after adopting our strict definition, we still threw up our hands: There have simply been too many New York scandals to include them all. And so we apologize for overlooking more than a few corrupt politicians, randy cads, literary frauds, Wall Street swindlers, and doomed aristocrats. And we admit that we let in some lurid tales that stretched our parameters because, well, we simply couldn't resist. ¶ Speaking of scandals with legs, we end the issue with a question, posed to New Yorkers far and wide: Which recent megascandal is most likely to be remembered many years hence? As former governor David Paterson notes, it sure won't be those Yankees tickets he got for free.

# ***A City of Ids***

***New York: the ripest microclimate  
for infamy known to man.***

**By COLIN HARRISON**

**NEW YORK CITY** attracts the very people most likely to be ruined by scandal: men and women who rise in society by virtue of their smarts, ambition, and labor. By their physical charms, vigorous egos, and appetite for conquest. Mostly strivers, but sometimes born into high position, they make money, become powerful or famous or both, and induce yet more opportunity for themselves. In time the rules appear to become different for them: Judgments are reserved, corners sliced, doors opened. The slingshot effect of wealth and power lifts their

life arcs higher than they might otherwise go. An individual enjoying these altered societal physics may even feel an intriguing vertigo. It's human nature to push one's luck, to see what might happen...

Let us thus recall the afternoon of Monday, March 10, 2008. A morsel of intrigue buzzed through the city. Something big was going down. The *New York Times* was about to reveal the name of a major politician caught using a high-priced call-girl service. Who? Speculation was feverish: Bill Clinton? A Bush-administration official? The miscreant was, of course, Governor Eliot Spitzer, the hard-driven former prosecutor once mentioned as a possible future presidential candidate, and suddenly, two days later, after his brief, grim-faced resignation, merely a broken politi-

cal doll tossed on the scrap heap of city history. (Or at least for the time being, until his rehabilitation is complete.)

Shocking as the moment was then, how long ago it now seems. But that should be no surprise. After all, the very essence of such a major New York scandal is that it suddenly achieves a supernova of excitement that is soon supplanted by the next one. Each subsequent outrage, each new version of our indigenous circus-opera, demands we pay attention, and we do, because we love scandals, assuming their flames of destruction don't touch us or those whom we care about. They make us feel momentarily safer (his fate was not mine) and a bit more alive (*could* his fate have been mine?). Scandals are agreeably toothsome, with potentially fascinating

complexities, and unfold dramatically. Like sporting events—unscripted, the ending in doubt—they nonetheless conform to certain rules; they have beginnings, middles, and definite ends. They remind us that New York City is, among other things, a machine of fate. The high do sometimes fall, and the guilty are, in fact, sometimes punished. Even the shameless can be shamed, if only temporarily, and the power-besotted can be reminded of the costly, eternal laws of human gravity.

**BUT WHAT IS a scandal?** The etymology is suggestive: The French *scandale*, from Old French, means “cause of sin”; the Latin *scandalum* means “trap, stumbling



PHOTOGRAPH: BROWN BROTHERS



Harry Kendall Thaw, murderer of architect Stanford White, confronts the tabloid glare.

block, temptation.” Perhaps a basic definition is in order: A scandal involves unseemly conduct that results in the destruction of a reputation. Someone’s position in society changes for the worse. The fall must appear irreversible. Suffering is necessary. As is humiliation.

Not all shocking events are scandals. Sordid tragedies, gruesome murders, baroque malfeasance—there are thousands of juicy New York tales that do not feature a character of good standing succumbing to his id and therefore do not qualify. And to rise to a classic New York scandal, the episode generally requires at least two of four crucial elements: power (of an institution, celebrity, or social position), money

(the more of it the better, especially if it is cleverly stolen or deployed to hide crimes and misdemeanors), sex (preferably involving the pairing of a physically loathsome, goatish old man with a young woman of unquestionable allure and highly questionable judgment), and violence (especially anything weird, ritualistic, or psychoish). These factors can be combined any which way, so long as there are at least two. The biggest scandals deliver three elements, and ones that deliver all four are exceedingly rare. One such was the 1980 murder of Dr. Herman Tarnower, author of the best-selling book *The Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet*, by his lover Jean Harris, headmistress of the Madeira School

for girls in Virginia. Finding another lover’s lingerie in Tarnower’s bedroom, Harris shot the well-known cardiologist four times with a pistol she claimed she’d meant to use on herself instead. Her seemingly endless trial lasted fourteen weeks. While out on bail, she was seen to visit his grave.

BUT HAS THE definition of scandal—and most particularly, of the New York scandal—morphed over time? Determined scrutiny suggests not: The parade of murdered lovers, wealthy debauched husbands, smiling con artists, and piggish city officials has marched more or less without interruption. What has evolved is how most New Yorkers have learned about their scandals.

The early-nineteenth-century city was just waiting for a paper to traffic in such behavior, and eventually it got plenty. Unlike most American towns of the era, the New York of the 1800s had not only the expected mix of European descendants of various Protestant stripes but a multihued hodgepodge of seekers, drifters, dreamers, and the dispossessed from all over the world. The city already represented a psychic zone where one could disappear, shake off the strictures of one's upbringing elsewhere, or, indeed, destroy oneself privately or in public.

One of the more colorful subpopulations of the 1840s was the so-called sporting men, foppish young New Yorkers of enthusiastically degenerate habits: sex, gambling, theater, whoring. Their comings and goings were chronicled by weekly papers like the *New York Sporting Whip*, *The Flash*, and *The Weekly Rake*, proto-lads' mags that "served up steaming platters of scandal," as Mark Caldwell describes in his 2005 history *New York Night*. Their pages were laden with lurid intrigue and suggestive tidbits that seemed placed by would-be blackmailers. One such story, which if not quite scandalous by today's standards, suggests a newfound willingness to expose and humiliate the famous. *The Whip and Satirist of New-York and Brooklyn* sent along a reporter on the night of March 4, 1842, as none other than Charles Dickens, then one of the most famous people in the Western world, was toured through Manhattan's low life. They visited a roughhouse tavern owned by Frank McCabe. As Caldwell reports, "Once inside, Dickens," according to the *Whip*, "shrank back in horror when he came upon five blacks, male and female, all stark naked and sweatily entangled in mid-gangbang ... Dickens," the *Whip* said, "nearly fell into a swoon and fled the place."

Newspaper titles and circulation exploded as technology evolved and the old rags required to manufacture newspapers were replaced by cheaper wood pulp (hence both terms of contempt). With the advent of the telegraph came the wire service (the Associated Press was formed in 1848), which proved essential to report the Civil War as well as useful for updating courtroom developments in long-running local scandals. As New Yorkers became connected to the world by telephone, train, and faster transatlantic shipping, scandal also became a dependable commodity, capable of being monetized within hours in afternoon newspaper editions. Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* battled William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* for this audience, with one-cent editions that featured one sensationalistic story after the next.

And so perhaps it's not surprising that "the Crime of the Century," the murder of

architect Stanford White by the enraged husband of his onetime lover Evelyn Nesbit, came in 1906: The early years of the twentieth century delivered what we today recognize as the electric burst of scandal, which depended on the automobile for rapid movement of reporters and newspapers, and the timely printing of black-and-white photographs. Enter the tabloids—memorably, in the case of the *Daily News*, which made its name in 1928 by publishing a disturbing photo of Ruth Snyder, a saucy bottle-blonde Long Island housewife convicted of murder, taken the moment she was fried by the electric chair at Sing Sing.

Then, another world war later, television changed everything again. The rise of the local news broadcast, with its tease-ins and live reporting spots, had by the sixties perfected a form of breathless instant TV tabloidism. At the same time the arrival of the New Journalism elevated writing about scandals (or, depending on your taste, lowered journalistic standards). In this first-person, metaconscious world of journalism, it didn't hurt that one of its chief practitioners, Norman Mailer, was a bit scandalous himself, especially after he stabbed his wife, Adele, at a party one night.

New York hit the skids in the seventies, becoming dirtier, poorer, and more dangerous. The city also saw the delivery of scandal taken down-market, when Rupert Murdoch bought the *New York Post* and imported the screaming sensationalism of his British and Australian papers. And there was plenty to get excited about, such as Sid Vicious's alleged murder of his girlfriend in the Hotel Chelsea in 1978, and Claus von Bülow's 1985 acquittal for the attempted murder, by insulin injection, of his heiress wife, Sunny. In 1986, the strangulation of an 18-year-old student in Central Park rose to the level of scandal thanks to the tabloid tag "The Preppie Murder." It didn't hurt that the murderer, Robert Chambers, was handsome, blue-eyed, and six-foot-four. Chambers, it may be remembered, had the bad judgment while out on bail to be videotaped twisting the head of a Barbie doll and saying, in a falsetto voice, "Oops! I think I killed it," while looking into the camera with leering, satanic delight.

SCANDALS MAY NOT have changed much, but their context has shifted enormously. Dare we admit that in a time of total information bombardment we find juicy new scandals strangely reassuring, a welcome dramatic relief? They distract us not only from the plainly bad news (war, economic troubles, disasters), but also from our irresolvable, ever more relativistic postmodernity with their clear moral structures, their simple (or simplified, anyway) story lines,

and the Schadenfreude that comes from seeing that the very bad thing happened to someone else, not us: While I was watching television and eating ice cream one night, Governor Spitzer was destroying his political career.

At the same time, as science has encroached relentlessly on what we still call "personality" and "behavior"—explaining human action as the inevitable outcome of genes or bad parenting or too much corn syrup—scandals reassert the mysterious insanity of human beings. As the French philosopher Blaise Pascal said, "The heart has reasons that reason will never know." Just what did Bernie Madoff think he was doing? How many times a day, an hour, a minute, did he privately instant-message himself with some defense against what he knew would ultimately result? It could be a hundred years before someone—an artist—really answers that.

We can imagine that in the future, an increasing number of scandals will be witnessed, recorded, and uploaded simultaneously, making the sensation explode in real time and stunning the principals, whose reaction to others' reaction may also be captured visually. We saw a hint of this in Anthony Weiner's penile farce as a storm of texts, tweets, and posts accelerated the story faster than Weiner could spin it. The speed of these events will no doubt be matched by the media's fiendish ability to convert them into commodities that draw page-views, mobile downloads, or whatever else computers will be doing (to us) in the future, like projecting high-definition, 3-D versions before us or maybe even directly feeding them into our brains.

For this reason, as well as the relentless trampling of what was once considered outrageous, the truly shocking scandal will be, by definition, rare. Given that sexual images are already omnipresent, the bar of titillation will probably get higher, although one shudders to think what will be necessary to spur outrage: children, animals, coma victims? The dollar figures will get higher, too, in the way that the Madoff scandal reset the parameters of epic fraud. Marriage, that tattered convention, may come to matter less as a lever of scandal. (Were that great moralist, Rudy Giuliani, to throw off yet another wife tomorrow, most New Yorkers would no more than shrug.) In any case, we may be confident that the past will dazzlingly invent itself anew. New Yorkers, relentlessly organizing themselves into hierarchies, seeking advantage and wealth and lubricious gratification, will continue to fall prey to themselves, to rise and fall scandalously. As we have for centuries, as we do today, the rest of us will gape and gasp, and wait for the next one.

# 310 YEARS

## of DISGUST and DELIGHT

1702

### English King Appoints Drag Queen

Hello, Gov'n'r!

WHEN EDWARD HYDE, Lord Cornbury, the newly appointed governor of New York and New Jersey, arrived in Manhattan on May 2, 1702, he was ebulliently received by the citizenry. This was likely the high point of his six and a half years in office. Among the allegations of corruption that would soon dog him: accepting bribes from crooked Jersey officials, spending extravagant sums on candles and firewood for two Colonial garrisons, building a "pleasure house" on Governors Island, and running up colossal personal debts.

But rumors of financial improprieties alone wouldn't have led mythologizers to dub Cornbury "a degenerate and a pervert" and "quite possibly the worst governor in the history of the empire." Such bile had more to do with his personal habits, particularly what is said to have been his signature sartorial flourish. He opened up a session of the New York Assembly dressed as his cousin—Queen Anne. "You are

very stupid not to see the propriety of it," he scolded the legislators.

Cross-dressing reportedly became a theme of his regime. He pranced in drag along the ramparts of Fort Anne. He got his kicks by donning a dress, hiding behind a tree, and startling passersby, shrieking with laughter. After his wife died in 1706, one account alleges that he "was in that Garb when his dead Lady was carried out the Fort, and this not privately but in face of the Sun and sight of the Town."

That many of these stories were suspicious, if not specious—advanced by three of Cornbury's most hated political enemies, none of whom claims to have witnessed any of it firsthand—did nothing to diminish their efficacy as political smears. In 1708, Cornbury was sacked as governor, arrested for unpaid debts, and imprisoned for seventeen months. Upon his release, he fled back to England vowing to clear his name. He failed. ERIC BENSON

A Tawdry Spectacle  
STARTING WITH

"A degenerate and a pervert"

"Quite possibly the worst governor in the history of the empire."

1871

## Boss Tweed in Pinstripes!

Theft!



By some estimates, the Democratic boss William M. Tweed's ring stole \$45 million (nearly \$1 billion today).

Bribery!

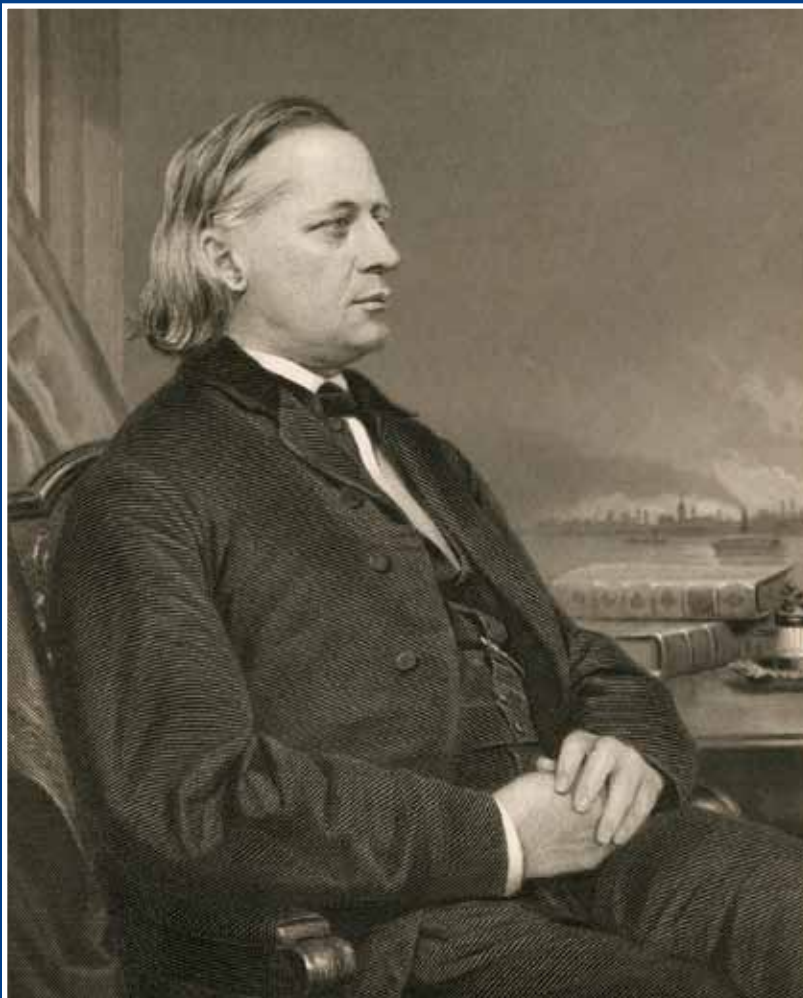


Thomas Nast's Harper's Weekly cartoons helped land Tweed in jail. (Tweed once tried to pay Nast off.)

Comeuppance!



When Tweed fled to Spain in 1875, he was caught—by officials who recognized him from a Nast cartoon.



The Affair That Shocked a Nation

## PREACHER BEECHER, A SEX-CRAZED CREATURE

1875

QUESTIONS FOR *Debby Applegate*, author of *The Most Famous Man in America*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Henry Ward Beecher.

**How did Henry Ward Beecher land in court?** Beecher was a famous and beloved Protestant preacher. He was head of the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, and he

had a falling out with a member of his congregation and his longtime friend, Theodore Tilton, who sued Beecher for “criminal conversation.” Essentially, he accused Beecher of having an affair with his wife, Elizabeth.

**And this shocked the nation?** By some counts, there were more headlines devoted to the Beecher scandal than there were to the Civil War.

It was a combination of who Beecher was and what he represented. He promoted several ideas, including that love should be the center of Christianity and that politics belongs in the pulpit. He advocated controversial causes, like the emancipation of slaves, and he created a lot of enemies. When you are controversial in a moral way, people are much more likely to point out your faults. But

the problem was he couldn't use his knowledge of human nature to keep himself out of trouble. I spent twenty years working on Beecher, and I am still shocked that powerful men think they won't get caught. Truly, Henry Ward Beecher thought he could get away with it.

**Even before the Tilton allegations surfaced, did Beecher have a reputation?**

There were accusations all over. Everyone knew Beecher flirted too much. It was his "clerical weakness." His delivery was so emotional and so genuine that people felt he was a personal conduit for God's love: God loves Beecher, and Beecher loves me, so that must mean God also loves me. That creates a powerful temptation for a pastor. That attitude wasn't great for his marriage; his wife was famously jealous. Many women in the Plymouth Church congregation would fall in love with him, and so he also made other marriages miserable, too.

**So what was the scandal?**

After the accusation was made public, there were plenty of "I told you so's" and "You know that man." But still, for a whole generation, the Beecher scandal was their version of an end of innocence. Every generation seems to have an "everything has changed" moment, a period of tremendous disillusionment. And here was this Oprah-like figure, who was open about his own failures, like a lovable old uncle, someone who always gave you a hug. Some scandals come from the glare of distance—a person looming so large above me that I will take pleasure to see him or her brought down. Beecher seemed like a better version of ourselves. He possessed a magical kind of charisma; people told him things that they never tell their spouses.

**The trial ended in a hung jury. Did Beecher recover?**

Not much changed for Beecher. He made more money in the last ten years of his life than ever before. Audiences went in droves to see him speak. His congregation gained members, and after trial, the church board of trustees voted to award him a \$100,000 bonus. God bless America, we are the most curious people.

MATTHEW GILES

## YOU SAY CATHARSIS, I SAY SCHADENFREUDE



Jim Holt



Laura Kipnis

**ARE SCANDALS EVER morally instructive, or do we just pretend they are to justify our titillation? A discussion between Jim Holt, author of the forthcoming book *Why Does the World Exist?*, and Laura Kipnis, a professor at Northwestern and author of *How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behavior*.**

**JIM HOLT:** Laura, I know you're heavily invested in highbrow scandal mongering—I mean, you wrote a whole book on how it's supposedly "cathartic" for us to watch famous people publicly self-destruct. Well, I hate to say it, but the kind of scandals that obsess you and the media these days are really pretty trivial. Go back to 1906, when the millionaire Harry Thaw fatally shot the architect Stanford White in the face on the rooftop of Madison Square Gar-

den—because 50 years ago, let's say, you couldn't publish the details of people's tawdry dalliances, JFK being the great example. So because the press can now publish all the details of cigars and thongs, we do get more small-scale, tawdry scandals.

**J.H.:** Oh, I don't know: The yellow press wasn't shy about printing that White had a sex pad with a red velvet swing. But now, with "Page Six" and Gawker, even the most trifling embarrassments get bandied all over the Internet. Who is the audience for this stuff? You know the famous quotation that "scandal is merely the compassionate allowance that the gay make to the humdrum"? I'd rather not be among the humdrum.

**L.K.:** You protest too much, Jim. I happen to know that you remember obscure details of scandals going back twenty years. Who remembers

I'm not arguing that scandal is morally elevating but that it exposes the underlying fault lines that govern all our lives.

**J.H.:** But let's talk for a moment about the real moral damage that an obsession with scandal can do. One of the scandals you touch on in your book is the Bill Clinton–Monica Lewinsky business, and I was just reading a review of a memoir by a U.S. diplomat who was in Rome negotiating the American participation in the International Criminal Court at the time. He said that his bosses in Washington were so distracted by the revelations spilling out that they couldn't be bothered to give him instructions on how to negotiate jurisdiction over genocide and war crimes, so today we are not a party to the court!

**L.K.:** Given that there was absolutely no way the affair with Monica was not going to be exposed, it does raise pretty critical questions about his self-destructive tendencies, which doesn't seem entirely irrelevant when it comes to the qualities of a national leader.

**J.H.:** But that kind of behavior is self-destructive only because we've come to make it so. I'm with Molière here: To sin in private is no sin at all. When Kennedy was president, the press more or less agreed.

**L.K.:** I don't disagree, but let's face it, these are the times we live in, and for anyone in politics to willfully ignore the existence of the scandal press is to be fatefully oblivious to those historical realities. In fact, what's so distressing about so many of these scandals is the degree of obliviousness even the most rational people are capable of. Take Anthony Weiner. It's fascinating just how much unconsciousness he seemed to be scattering around in public for the rest of us to witness. He wasn't just sending lewd pictures of himself to these women; he was sending out engraved invitations to his own downfall.

**J.H.:** I would maintain that we're all constantly engaged in behavior that would be our undoing if it was exposed to the glare of publicity. By the way, in objecting to scandal mongering I'm by no means objecting to gossip. There's nothing wrong with that. I think it was Oscar Wilde who said that scandal is gossip spoiled by morality. It's the feigned moral outrage in the public's reaction to scandal that I find a bit nauseating.

**L.K.:** Yes, but as we do live in a scandal-obsessed culture...

**J.H.:** I don't want to live in that culture. You make me feel like William Buckley. I want to stand athwart the times and yell, "Stop! Stop it or you'll go blind!"

**L.K.:** I'll be interested to hear what exit strategy you figure out.

**"I'm with Molière here: To sin in private is no sin at all."**

den—which White himself had designed—over White's rather kinky dalliance with Thaw's actress wife (see page 37). Now there's a big, juicy scandal. And today we're supposed to achieve catharsis when a congressman gets caught "sexting"?

**LAURA KIPNIS:** One interestingly counterintuitive argument I've read is that it's actually sexual liberalization that leads to more scandals,

Sukhreet Gabel but you? [*The daughter of the judge in the "Bess Mess"; see page 60.*] And I'm really not interested in catharsis. I think we're fascinated by scandal because we're trying to comprehend the social and psychological dynamics of the world we live in. For example, how can you not be stunned by the failures of self-knowledge and tragic self-deception of someone as otherwise brilliant as Eliot Spitzer?

1901

## TEMPERANCE LUNATIC ON THE LOOSE



**ANTI-BOOZE CRUSADER** Carrie Nation had already gained national fame for smashing up Kansas saloons with a hatchet when she arrived in New York one August morning and demanded to meet with the police commissioner. “The crime and murder shops in this great city—mind, the time’s a-comin’,” she told him. She’d be arrested ten days later for wrecking a Coney Island cigar store. The next year she confronted the Vanderbilts at Madison Square Garden for their opulent dress. Marching out with a crowd behind her, she stopped near the exit to tell a Champagne importer that he was “eternally damned.”

SWINGERS

# STAR-CROSSED STARCHITECT SHOT RIGHT IN THE FAÇADE!

By LEE SIEGEL

1906

**THE GENIUS ARCHITECT.** The Sadistic Millionaire. The Stunning Girl From Nowhere. Has New York’s exquisite palate for scandal ever had it so good since Harry Kendall Thaw pumped three bullets at point-blank range into the head of Stanford White in Madison Square Garden’s rooftop theater on June 25, 1906? What William Randolph Hearst’s newspapers giddily touted as (the very first) “Trial of the Century” remains the gold standard of New York’s entertainment-journalism complex.

Thaw claimed that he shot White because the latter had seduced and possibly raped Thaw’s wife, Evelyn Nesbit, five years earlier, when she was 16. White had also snubbed Thaw, a cocaine addict who had once savagely whipped Nesbit—possibly before also raping her—in an Austrian castle. This was some months before she surrendered to his proposal of marriage.

You might say that we’ve inherited from the White scandal our contemporary tendency to never rest until we have stripped the façade off respectability and wealth. Stanford White just about single-handedly invented the American façade. His firm designed the Astor, Vanderbilt, and Tiffany mansions; the Century and Metropolitan clubs; Judson Memorial Church; the Washington Square arch; and the second Madison Square Garden—now long destroyed—where he was killed.

Perhaps White was so good at façades because he himself had so much to hide. By the end of his relatively short life—he died at 52—he was saddled

THE MEN WHO WANTED POOR EVELYN NESBIT



*Husband, killer,  
coke addict.*



*Debtor, cruiser,  
possible rapist.*

with over half a million dollars in debt and faced prison as a result. His most manic appetite, though, was for underage, impoverished chorus girls. He brought them up to his West 24th Street apartment, where he urged them to soar naked on a red-velvet swing as prelude to a tumble in the sheets. He could well have met his eventual murderer, who shared his predilections, trawling for young actresses in Broadway’s hidden enclaves.

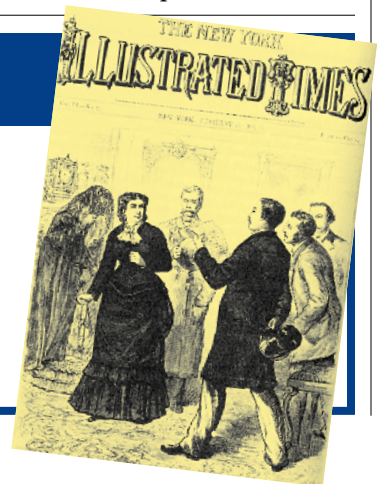
If White embodied the elegant hauteur of New York’s social elite, Thaw was a crude arriviste. Born and bred in Pittsburgh, he was the son of a railroad and coal magnate and lived the unstable life of a rich layabout. In some ways, the White scandal was a tale of two cities. “Hell with the lid off” was the way one nineteenth-century writer had described industrial Pittsburgh; in Gilded Age New York, White had done his best to keep the lid on.

## Madame Restell Found Dead in Tub

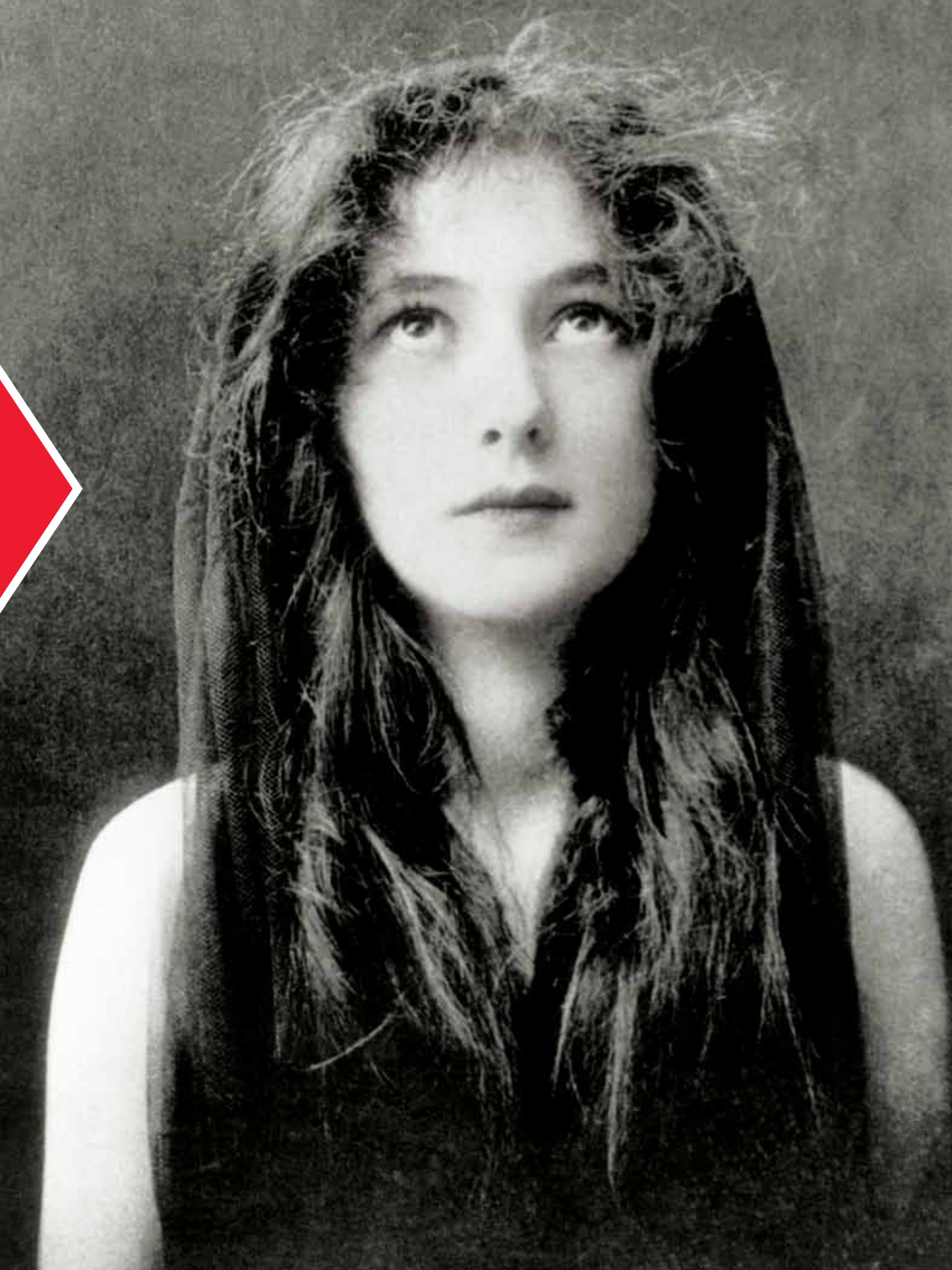
*Abortionist of choice for Manhattan elite.*

1878

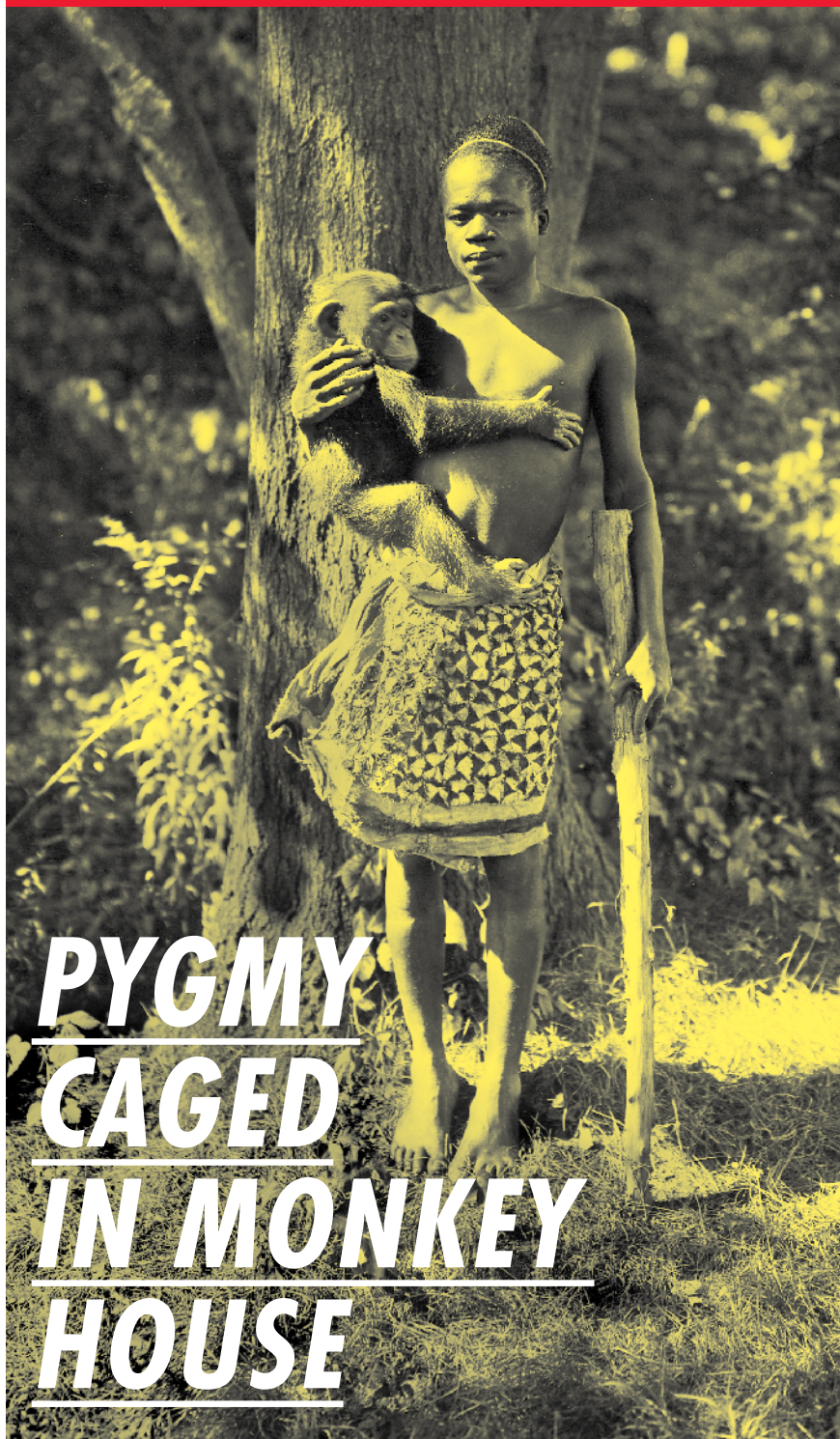
**IN THE MIDDLE OF** the nineteenth century, an English immigrant named Ann Lohman, known as Madame Restell, was the city’s most celebrated abortionist, operating out of a four-story townhouse on Fifth Avenue and amassing a \$1.5 million fortune. But by the 1870s, Anthony Comstock’s New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was ascendant, the mood of the city had changed, and Restell’s old allies could no longer defend her. In 1878, Comstock posed as a man who had impregnated his lover and entrapped Restell into selling him an abortifacient. Arrested and awaiting trial, the 66-year-old Restell dipped into a tepid bath and slit her throat.



PHOTOGRAPHS: THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (NATION); BETTMANN/CORBIS (THAW, WHITE, NESBIT)



**Bronx Zoo swarmed, thousands crowd to watch.**



# PYGMY CAGED IN MONKEY HOUSE

1906

OTA BENGHA arrived at the Bronx Zoo one day late in the summer of 1906 wearing a white linen suit. He was lugging a wooden bow, a set of arrows, and a pet chimpanzee. Twenty-three years old and twice widowed, he had already hunted elephants, survived a massacre by the Belgian colonial army,

been enslaved and freed, danced at Mardi Gras, and posed alongside Geronimo in the St. Louis World's Fair. And yet Americans were forever calling him "boy"—in part because, as one of the Congolese tribe of Mbuti pygmies, he stood less than five feet tall and weighed only 103 pounds. He spoke no English. When he smiled, he

revealed a set of incisors whittled to sharp points, like a vampire bat's.

Benga had traveled to the U.S. with the anthropologist Samuel Phillips Verner, but upon arriving in New York, Verner had gone dead broke. He contacted the zoo's director, William Temple Hornaday, who agreed to loan Benga an apartment on the premises. Hornaday was an enlightened zookeeper and among the earliest to endorse displaying animals in naturalistic settings. He also happened to be a Darwinian racist who schemed to exhibit Benga alongside the apes.

For nearly two weeks, Benga roamed the grounds unnoticed; to the zoo's visitors, he was just a small, somewhat strange black man. But over time, at the urging of Hornaday, the zookeepers convinced Benga to play with the orangutan in its cage. Benga obliged. Crowds gathered to watch the two monkeying around. The keepers gave Benga his bow and arrow; he shot targets, squirrels, the occasional rat. Bones were scattered about the cage to add a whiff of cannibalism. The keepers goaded Benga to occasionally charge the bars of his enclosure, baring his sharp teeth. Children screamed. Adults were at turns horrified and titillated. "Is that a man?" a visitor asked. A circus owner offered to throw a party for Benga, a French spinster offered to purchase him, and a black manicurist offered to paint his nails. Hornaday posted a sign outside of the cage, displaying Benga's height, weight, and how he was acquired. "Exhibited each afternoon during September," it concluded.

Alerted to the situation by a story in the *New York Times*, a group of Baptist clergymen became incensed. They wrote letters to the city papers and traveled to the office of Mayor George B. McClellan, who hid in his office and sent out a note telling them to address their complaints to the New York Zoological Society.

Hornaday took down the sign and banned Benga from entering the monkey cage, but the furor only escalated. The zoo attracted as many as 40,000 visitors a day in mid-September, many of whom hounded Benga throughout the grounds. Unable to articulate his frustration, Benga repeatedly lashed out, shooting one visitor in the calf with an arrow and brandishing a knife at a zookeeper. In public, Hornaday seemed unconcerned by the controversy. In a letter to the mayor, he wrote, "When the history of the Zoological Park is written, this incident will form its most amusing passage." Meanwhile, he privately wired Verner an SOS. "Boy [has] become unmanageable, also dangerous ... Please come for him at once." ROBERT MOOR

# Cubes! The Horror!

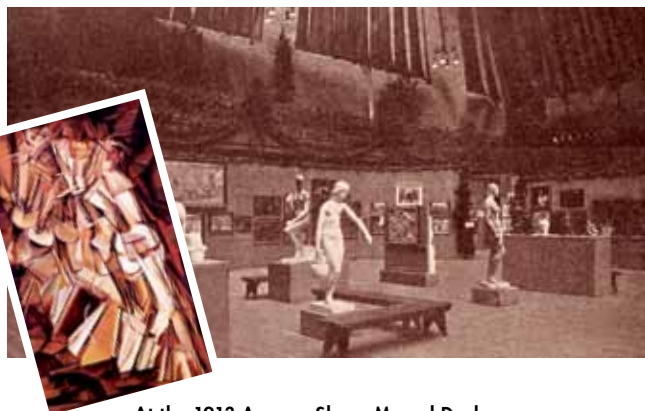
Chaos at Armory show. By JERRY SALTZ

1913

ONCE ARTISTS are expected to shock, it's that much harder for them to do so. And the prototype for all New York art scandals to come was not over Chris Ofili or Robert Mapplethorpe but the 1913 Armory Show. The infamous exhibit displayed more than 1,000 works of art by more than 300 artists. The roster included Picasso, Matisse, Manet, and Cézanne, all unknown in this country. Also on hand was Marcel Duchamp's Cubo-Futurist *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*. The outrage aimed at this one work was epic. People packed the Lexington Avenue Armory by the thousands to gawk at, ridicule, and revile it.

Today the painting hangs quietly in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and it takes effort to grasp what the to-do was about. No longer looking like the "explosion in a shingle factory" it was said to resemble, it is a well-constructed, small, brownish, semi-abstract image of angled stairways, banisters, balustrades, a landing, and a sort of stop-action stick figure. It's still visionary in its ideas, but hardly shocking.

Viewers didn't just dislike the painting; they saw it as a threat—



At the 1913 Armory Show, Marcel Duchamp forced American art audiences to confront a new way of seeing. They didn't appreciate that.

un-American, a ruse, a challenge to their religious faith. Remember that in 1913, there was no American avant-garde to speak of. Americans presumed paintings should be of historical scenes, Hudson River landscapes, presidents, cowboys, and Indians. There were plenty of nudes, too, but they weren't taboo as long as they were realistic depictions of spent-looking, lounging women, or moony girls with budding breasts.

Duchamp's painting broached cognitive boundaries. People weren't able to handle that he redefined what originality was, or that he was trying to shatter what he considered a dead academic language of painting. In retrospect, there was a good reason for the scandal: Gallerygoers were faced with a living, breathing image of rebellion.

In art, scandal is a false narrative, a smoke screen that camouflages

rather than reveals. When we don't know what we're seeing, we over-react. Oscar Wilde wrote that "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral" work of art. He's right. Art is good, bad, boring, ugly, useful to us or not. It does or doesn't disturb optical monotony, and succeeds or fails in surmounting sterility of style or visual stereotype; it creates new beauty or it doesn't. Scandals happen when people are certain—certain that a bunch of angled shapes on a brown ground is vulgar. Certainty sees things in restrictive, protective, aggressive ways, and thus isn't seeing at all. What the scandalized don't take into account is that more than one thing can be (and often is) true at once.

To engage with art, we have to be willing to be wrong, venture outside our psychic comfort zones, suspend disbelief, and remember that art explores and alters consciousness simultaneously. When someone sees something immoral, he or she is actually seeing something immoral in him- or herself. This built-in paradox is one of art's services to us. It creates space for doubt, accepting that we're human animals. Scandal is only human.

1916

## LOVERBOY ARRESTED IN BROTHEL

Accused of Pimping

Rudolph  
Valentino flees  
to Hollywood.



ARRIVING IN NEW YORK by boat from Italy in 1913, Rudolph Valentino worked as a "taxi dancer" at Maxim's Restaurant-Cabaret, where rich women could pay for all sorts of pleasures with exotic men, also known as "tango pirates." He eventually moved on, repairing his reputation on the ballroom circuit—but then served as a witness in a highly public divorce, provoked a (probably) retributive arrest for "vice," and had his newly respectable name sullied. He fled to Hollywood and started over.

## THE FIRST PERSON WHO

REACHED  
Did NOT Reach

## THE NORTH POLE



1909

FREDERICK COOK, a Brooklyn doctor, claimed to have beaten Robert Peary to the Pole by a year. He turned out to have faked the records; his Inuit guides tattled, too.



Who killed the minister and his mistress? Of 157 witnesses, only one was a recumbent female hog farmer.

**"PIG WOMAN"**  
TESTIFIES IN BED!

# "SHE IS A LIAR! LIAR!"

Romance in the pews leads to blood in Jersey. *By SADIE STEIN*

1922

A YOUNG COUPLE strolling down a lovers' lane outside New Brunswick, New Jersey, on a September morning made a gruesome discovery: the bodies of a man and a woman lying under a crab-apple tree.

According to accounts—because confusion over jurisdiction left the bodies in an unsecured scene for hours, there were many—the man's face was obscured by a Panama hat; the woman's throat was wrapped in a blood-soaked scarf; her throat had been savagely cut and the wound was crawling with maggots. Both victims had been shot in the head. And the bodies had been arranged after death, her head resting on his arm, her hand on his knee, both pointed toward the crab-apple tree. Torn love letters were scattered between the bodies, and the man's calling card lay at his feet: He was Edward Wheeler Hall, a New Brunswick Episcopalian minister whose wife had ties to the community's most prominent families. The woman, 34-year-old Eleanor Reinhardt Mills, was a congregant—and his mistress.

It took hours for the police to clear the scene, and by the time they managed to do so, the surrounding area was trampled, the tree had been stripped of bark by souvenir-hunters, and the business card had been passed from hand to hand. The press attacked the case,

reporters and photographers descending on the area. The bodies were exhumed and reexamined. The young couple who'd discovered them were questioned again and again, as was the girl's father. He (the father) was later jailed for incest, she for incorrigibility. When Hall's diary and a packet of their love letters were discovered in Mills's house, her daughter promptly sold them to the *New York American*. One school of thought held that the Klan was involved.

Prime suspects were Hall's wealthy widow and her two brothers—one eccentric (and "a sort of a genius"), the other a skilled gunman. But indictments did not come quickly; a loose silent film adaptation, *The Goose Woman*, arrived first. When the three were belatedly brought to trial, in 1926, the courtroom circus was wild indeed. Damon Runyon was a reporter, to give you an idea. Western Union had to hire extra telegraphers. Antics included the unreliable key prosecution witness being rolled into court on a hospital bed: a mule-riding hog farmer whom the press dubbed "the pig woman" and whose mother said from the crowd, "She is a liar! Liar, liar, liar!" All in all, 157 witnesses would be called, and the *New York Times* would devote countless front-page stories to the trial. Everyone got off.

1924

## BLUE BLOOD MARRIES "COLORED GIRL"

Emily Post Frowns

Judge orders "nipple" check.

By WILLIAM NORWICH

IN 1921, WHILE OUT motoring, society's Leonard Kip Rhinelander met Alice Beatrice Jones, a domestic worker who lived near Stamford, Connecticut's Orchard School, an inpatient clinic where young Leonard was seeking the cure for a variety of "nervous conditions" including stammering and extreme shyness. While Alice had a curative effect on Leonard, his family hoped it was just an upstairs-downstairs dalliance. They hoped wrong. In 1924, shortly after Mr. Rhinelander turned 21, the couple married. Unbeknownst to all, Mrs. L. Kip Rhinelander became the first black woman in the *New York Social Register*—but not for long. A reporter discovered that she was the daughter of "a colored man," a former taxi driver who was almost unrecognizably mixed-race.

Newspapers ran with headlines like "Blue Blood Weds Colored Girl." For a few weeks, Leonard defended his wife, but his family won, urging the couple to separate "because of the Ku Klux Klan," reported the *New York Times*. His lawyers filed for an annulment, claiming that Alice had hidden her race from Leonard.

In the judge's chambers, Alice, crying and holding on to her mother, was forced to remove various articles of clothing so the all-male and all-white jury could see, by the appearance of her nipples, back, and legs, that Leonard must have known prior to the marriage that she was not entirely of white blood. To the jury's credit, the annulment was denied, the marriage upheld. Under a subsequent agreement, Alice received a sum of \$32,500 plus \$3,600 annually for life. (She and Leonard never reunited.)

It was Emily Post, otherwise the champion of kindness and courtesy, who pushed the *Social Register* to drop Alice. Personalities over principles: Her people in Tuxedo Park were related by marriage to the Rhinelanders, you see. Mrs. Post got more than she bargained for. She sought only Alice's ouster, but with it came Leonard's as well.



## Hizzoner's Disgrace!

Crusading judge wipes smile off Jimmy Walker's face.

By JONATHAN MAHLER

1932 LOOKING BACK, IT WAS inevitable—the fall of Gentleman Jimmy. "No man could hold life so carelessly without falling down a manhole before he is done," as a columnist at the time put it.

Jimmy Walker was the anti-Bloomberg, the mayor as unself-conscious hedonist in a top hat and swallowtail coat. He presided over New York during the great age of Gatsby and perfectly embodied that moment of indulgence: the public servant who favored short workdays and long afternoons at Yankee Stadium, who was loath to miss a big prizefight or Broadway premiere, who left his wife and Greenwich Village apartment for a chorus girl and a suite at the Ritz-Carlton.

As Walker framed it, he wanted to see his smile reflected in the faces of his constituents. And for a while, he did. New Yorkers loved their Jimmy, the crowds gathering at the Hudson River pier to wish him well when he set off on his European junkets.

But then the market cratered, and panic set in. New York's archbishop spied divine retribution for the dubious character of the city's leadership, though moral denunciations were the least of Walker's concerns. With the city now deep in debt, Governor Roosevelt appointed a crusading judge,

Samuel Seabury, to investigate City Hall.

The resulting scandal was spectacular, even for a city with a bar for municipal corruption set by Boss Tweed. The Police Department was running a protection racket so widespread that a sheriff who earned \$8,500 a year had managed to squirrel away \$400,000 in a box. One would be hard-pressed to find anything in Walker's New York—contracts, leases, judgeships—that wasn't for sale. All told, the mayor himself had accepted some \$1 million in bribes.

A songwriter before getting into politics—anything to avoid the bar exam upon finishing law school—Walker's biggest hit had been "Will You Love Me in December (As You Do in May)?" Metaphorically speaking, it was now December. The love for Walker faded; his resolve flagged. Roosevelt, needing to bolster his presidential candidacy, urged him to resign. "That dazzling, theatrical, and essentially absurd career has collapsed at last," wrote the *New York Herald-Tribune*.

Eight days later, in September 1932, Walker again boarded a transatlantic liner for Europe, vowing to return soon to clear his name and again run for office. In truth, he was fleeing possible prosecution. It surely wasn't how he had imagined it ending, but he'd had his fun.





THE ACID ON  
HER FACE WAS THE  
LEAST OF IT.

# ***PEACHES: WHO'S YOUR DADDY?***

By *DAN P. LEE*

# She was 16, he was 52, what could go wrong?

1926

DADDY'S ATTORNEY wanted to know whether she blamed Daddy for the acid attack. There was no proof at all, but Peaches said she suspected he had something to do with it all the same.

Though she did not act very much like it, Frances "Peaches" Browning was only 16 years old. On the witness stand, she wore a bandage on her chin to cover the scarring from the vial of acid she claimed was splashed on her as she awoke one morning a year ago, just before her wedding. It had become yet another point of contention in the legendarily tawdry trial for separation (divorce was not an option at the time, since neither had claimed infidelity), which her husband, 52-year-old Edward "Daddy" Browning, one of the most successful real-estate developers in Manhattan, had opposed. He'd intended to be with Peaches forever, but after lavishing her with 200 bunches of flowers and 50 boxes of candy and 60 dresses and 179 coats, less than six months into their marriage and twenty pounds heavier she'd walked out of their Kew Gardens residence, along with her mother, whom Daddy had agreed to let live with them and whom Peaches had used, he would testify, as another tool in the arsenal of excuses and obstructions she'd put between him and his "rights as a husband." As part of her suit for alimony, Peaches—a "nice girl who petted," as one acquaintance summarized to reporters—asserted virtuousness, and claimed that she had no choice but to flee given Daddy's aberrations, from his affinity for bent spoons and a honking pet African bird and alcohol and pornography to his demand that she parade before him naked and interact with an occult woman who wore a snake around her neck and espoused sexual magic.

As vendors hawked hot dogs and souvenirs to the 3,000 gawkers who gathered outside the White Plains courthouse, more than 40 newspapermen assiduously reported every detail, with fresh Western Union and telephone lines run to the city to accommodate their transmissions. The grotesque fairy tale of Peaches and Daddy Browning had become one of the most sensational news stories in post-World War I America. With the couple's frequent cooperation and coordination, the press had witnessed nearly every milestone of their whirlwind romance, including Fifth Avenue shopping trips with a six-person security detail, all-night dancing adventures across Manhattan, and a trip to Atlantic City with Peaches in a shocking, thigh-bearing one-piece. In-

deed, when the couple took up residence in the Hotel Gramatan, several reporters followed suit, so that, according to Michael M. Greenburg's definitive 2008 account of the marriage, the sound of typewriters was audible in the hallways.

Even before Peaches, Daddy was well known in New York as perhaps the most idiosyncratic of the city's eligible bachelors. A single father worth what would now be an estimated \$300 million, he'd become a tabloid fixture after marrying, at age 40, his first wife, Adele, a considerably younger blonde file clerk with whom he lived in a 24-room penthouse apartment overlooking Central Park. Unable to have children—throughout his life Daddy would vehemently defend himself against rumors of infertility—the couple adopted two daughters—Marjorie and little Dorothy "Sunshine," as Daddy



nicknamed his favorite—and when Adele slipped off aboard a steamship to Paris with the 28-year-old playboy dentist whose office she'd been visiting frequently, she took Marjorie with her. The couple split, and each kept a favored daughter.

Vowing never to marry again, in what the tabloids quickly helped morph into a Willy Wonka-style lottery, Daddy set about finding a sister for Sunshine: After personally reviewing 12,000 applications and interviewing scores of would-be daughters, he chose Mary Louise Spas of Queens, who, despite being 16 and therefore two years older than the cutoff, bore a charming gold tooth and stole his heart. A *My Fair Lady* transformation ensued, rapturously reported by the press, which continued trolling Spas's past, ultimately uncovering revealing swimsuit photos that led to school records that led to the disclosure that Mary was actually 21 and not poor. Daddy moved to have the adoption annulled. Mary re-

sponded with a tabloid tell-all and lawsuit, alleging Daddy was a pervert.

Daddy turned his attention to charity. Especially for children, and especially for the local chapter of the Phi Lambda Tau social sorority for high-school girls, of which he was the main benefactor. The sorority's primary function was throwing dances across Manhattan for girls in scanty flapper dress, where Daddy, with his long, sagging face and steep *W*-collared dress shirts, smoked cigars and held court. And so it went that one night, inside the ballroom of the Hotel McAlpin on 34th and Broadway, Browning's life intersected with Frances Heenan's, whom the press would describe as a "chubby," strawberry-blond high-school dropout with "piano legs" but an inexplicably "magnetic" smile who worked as a shop clerk and lived with her single mother in Washington Heights. He likened her to peaches and cream, securing her lifelong nickname. Thirty-seven days later, to thwart a child-protective-services investigation, they were married.

In the end, though Peaches had comported herself well on the witness stand in White Plains—exercising her affectation for answering questions with not "yes" but "pos-i-tive-ly"—it was her diary, which revealed her experience "making love" with several others before Daddy, that did her in. In his ruling, the judge lauded Daddy's generosity—his introducing Peaches "into good society"—and concluded that her charges of "abnormal and unnatural acts and practices" were "false and vicious." (Despite a police investigation, the perpetrator of the acid attack went unidentified; like Daddy Browning, many would blame Peaches herself.) Though the separation was granted, the marriage would stand, and Peaches was entitled to no alimony.

His credibility restored, Daddy Browning did not leave the tabloid spotlight. A series of smart business moves before the market crashed kept him in good financial stead, until a cerebral hemorrhage rendered him, essentially, a paranoid schizophrenic roaming his Scarsdale mansion, where he died alone at 59. Peaches pursued a successful career in vaudeville. She had an affair with Milton Berle. After Daddy died, she married and divorced three times more. She also became an alcoholic. On August 23, 1956, her mother heard a crashing sound in the bathroom of their New York City apartment and found Peaches unconscious on the floor with a large contusion above her ear. She was 46.

# Mary Astor Blushes When Her Filthy Diary Leaks



**1936** HIS FIRST INITIAL is G, and I fell like a ton of bricks. I met him Friday. Saturday he called for me at the Ambassador and we went to the Casino for lunch and had a very gay time! Monday—we ducked out of the boring party. It was very hot so we got a cab and drove around the park a few times and the park was, well, the park, and he held my hand and said he'd like to kiss me but didn't.

Tuesday night we had a dinner at '21' and on the way to see *Run Little Chillun* he did kiss me—and I don't think either of us remember much what the show was about. We played kneesies during the first two acts, my hand wasn't in my own lap during the third. It's been years since I've felt up a man in public, but I just got carried away.

Afterwards we had a drink someplace and then went to a little flat in 73rd Street where we could be alone, and it was all very thrilling and beautiful. Once George lays down his glasses, he is *quite* a different man. His powers of recuperation are amazing, and we made love all night long. It all worked perfectly, and we shared our fourth climax at dawn. I didn't see much of anybody else the rest of the time—we saw every show in town, had grand fun together and went frequently to 73rd Street where he fucked the living daylights out of me. ”

—Excerpts published in Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon*, from the diary of actress Mary Astor, whose affair with the playwright and critic George S. Kaufman was exposed during her 1936 custody battle. She claimed the snippets leaked to the tabloids were inaccurate. We'll never know: A judge in 1952 had it burned.

**1927**

## RUTH SNYDER FRIES!

Shot While Executed



IN 1927, A QUEENS housewife named Ruth Snyder and her lover murdered her husband, bashing his head in with a window-sash weight. Caught and convicted, the two were sent to the electric chair at Sing Sing, making Snyder the first American woman to be electrocuted. The sensational story only became more so after a photographer for the upstart *Daily News* strapped a spy camera to his ankle and snapped a picture in the death chamber as the juice was turned on. The *News* doubled its newsstand circulation that day, instantly establishing itself as the masses' paper of choice.

**1938**



1929: Vice-president of New York Stock Exchange crowned "savior of Wall Street." 1938: After three charges of grand larceny, called "wolf of Wall Street."



**Plays prostie on the Great White Way, wears silk undies in jail.**

# MAE WEST “SEX” CAPADE!

By FRANK RICH

**1927** IN A 1925–26 New York theater season with acclaimed new plays by O’Neill (*The Great God Brown*), O’Casey (*Juno and the Paycock*), and Coward (*Hay Fever*), critics agreed that the rock bottom was *Sex*, the first Broadway vehicle written by and starring the voluptuous vaudeville trouper Mae West. *Sex* was “street sweepings,” in the verdict of *The New Yorker*, and “a crude, inept play, cheaply produced and poorly acted,” according to the *Times*. The paper’s review did helpfully note that the show’s “one torrid love scene” lived up to its title. An ad warning patrons who “cannot stand excitement” to “see your doctor before visiting Mae West” didn’t hurt either.

The play outlasted nearly all the competition. *Variety* christened its heroine, a Montreal lady of the evening with a fondness for sailors, “the Babe Ruth of stage prosties.”

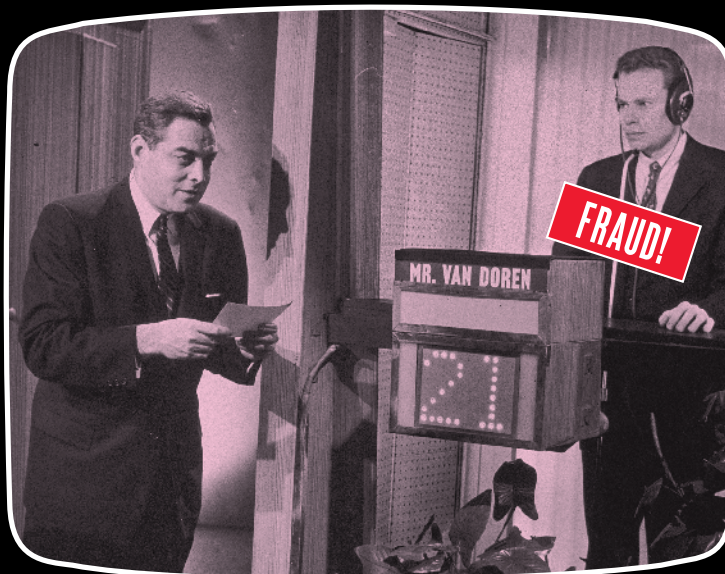
Politics turned a hit into a Jazz Age phenomenon. When New York’s rakish mayor, Jimmy Walker, took a Havana holiday in February 1927, the acting mayor, Joseph V. (“Holy Joe”) McKee, raided three risqué Broadway shows. West was the prime target: *Sex*, then in the tenth month of its run, had been seen by 325,000 theatergoers. To the delight of the tabloid press, its twenty actors were hauled off to a police station in Hell’s Kitchen. The star spent the night in the Jefferson Market Women’s Prison.

West bailed out her company. The court had offered to drop charges if she would close the show. But she knew that in showbiz, crime paid. The grand jury’s claim that her “obscene, indecent, immoral, and impure drama” would abet “the corruption of the morals of youth” was better than any rave review. Festooned with white roses, she rode a limo to incarceration on Welfare Island and boasted of wearing silk underwear throughout her eight-day stay there. When *Liberty* magazine paid her \$1,000 for an exit interview, she used it to start a Mae West Memorial Library for female prisoners.

A later West play—*The Pleasure Man*, awash in female impersonators and homosexuali-

ty—would be raided and shut down at its second Broadway performance in 1928. Undaunted, she eventually revived *Sex* and toured the Depression-era Midwest without incident, before arriving in Hollywood, where, paired with Cary Grant and W.C. Fields, she hit superstardom as she was reaching 40. The Bushwick-born, self-invented West (1893–1980) wrote the Ur-text for Madonna and Lady Gaga, repeatedly breaking gender and sexual barriers over a marathon career as a writer, performer, free-speech provocateur, and showbiz entrepreneur. Her pioneering playbook for turning scandal into profits remains the gold standard in American pop culture to this day.

# SAY IT AIN'T SO, QUIZ SHOW!



**1956** THIRTY-FOUR MILLION U.S. households had television in 1956, and that December an estimated 50 million Americans watched the climactic, rigged episode of *Twenty-One*—pitting a Jewish ex-G.I. from Queens against a Brahmin second-generation Columbia faculty member in side-by-side Eichmann-style isolation chambers, a staging that looks now like the first great televised show trial of American meritocracy.

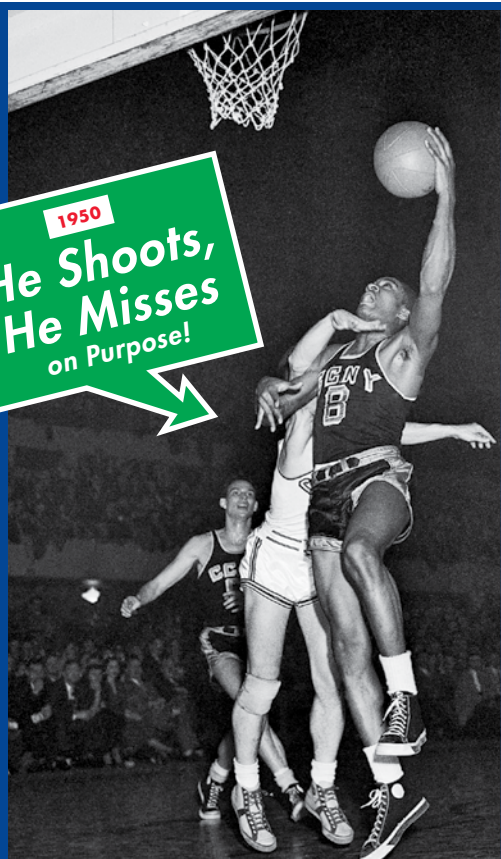
We returned the wrong verdict first. Herb Stempel had been the show's pick for champion and among the first to be fed answers from producers—one of whom went on to found *Penthouse Forum*. But the audience got bored with Stempel. They wanted someone more polished, more imperial—someone who made mastery of trivia look like a form of genteel grace rather than something that rubbed off on your hands from cheap newsprint. The contest picked up a lot of power, generations later, as a forced parable of lost innocence (thank you, Robert Redford), but it's

American cynicism in the imperial style when a studio-system hack crowns a cipher like Charles van Doren a national hero. And the country eats it up.

Then came the wronger verdict—cheering on a witch-hunt prosecution meant to straighten out prime time. Really, they were prosecuting producers for how they were programming: The Manhattan district attorney's office took up the sanctimonious crusade of exposing the game shows, Kenneth Starr style. (Twenty-four were on the air at the time, the peak of Sputnik fever.) A House of Representatives subcommittee launched its own investigation and compelled Van Doren to testify and finally confess—the golden boy had lied to the grand jury but couldn't bear to do it in the halls of Congress. When he returned home from Washington that night, a reporter met Van Doren at the door with news from his two employers: NBC had fired him, and Columbia had accepted his resignation.

DAVID WALLACE-WELLS

**1950**  
He Shoots,  
He Misses  
on Purpose!



IN 1950, THE City College of New York men's basketball team won the NCAA and NIT tournaments at Madison Square Garden—a rare feat. A year later, seven members of the team were arrested in a point-shaving scheme that ultimately involved 32 current and former players from several teams, and proved to be one of the greatest (known) scandals in college sports.

## **1959** D.J. SPINS FOR PAYOLA

### What About the Teens?

Rock-music pioneer Alan "Moondog" Freed fired after taking industry cash to play records.



The first U.S. post-op, in a gorgeous fur coat, arriving at the Public Health office at Idlewild Airport in 1953.

## First sex-change op in U.S. history.

**1953** **EDITOR AND Publisher** estimated that more newsprint had been devoted to sex-change pioneer Christine Jorgensen in 1953 than to any other individual. Jorgensen had been a frail Bronx boy named George who after a stint in the army, hormone therapy, and a trip to Denmark, became Christine. In her autobiography, she describes the aftermath of surgery:

The door opened and a neatly dressed young woman entered; a complete stranger to me. "I'm afraid you have the wrong room," I said. "Who are you looking for?" "Are you Miss Jorgensen?" "Yes." "I have a telegram I think you should read." I thought there might have been a death in my family. I reached out to take it from her hand, and read the message: BRONX GI BECOMES A WOMAN. DEAR MOM AND DAD SON WROTE, I HAVE NOW BECOME YOUR DAUGHTER. I read it again, not really comprehending, until I realized at last that it had not been addressed to me: It was a message sent over an international press-service wire, and what I held in my hand was a copy of the dispatch. "Who did this unforgivable thing?" I asked. She answered me quietly and sympathetically. "I truly don't know," she said. "You'll have to prepare yourself, Miss Jorgensen. Tomorrow's newspapers will carry this story in banner headlines. I'm a reporter for Information. Will you give me an interview?" It seems to me now a shocking commentary on the press of our time that I pushed the hydrogen-bomb tests on Eniwetok right off the front pages. A tragic war was still raging in Korea, George VI had died and Britain had a new queen, sophisticated guided missiles were going off in New Mexico, Jonas Salk was working on a vaccine for infantile paralysis. Christine Jorgensen was on page one.

*Excerpted from Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography. (c) 1967 by Christine Jorgensen. (c) Renewed 2000 by the Motion Picture & Television Fund. Published by Cleis Press.*

SWITCHEROO!

# SHE WAS A HE?!

Wanamaker princess's big pink party turns into drunken riot.

# PSYCHO SCIONS RAMPAGE



**1963** PRETTY, BLONDE, AND rich, 18-year-old socialite Fernanda Wanamaker Wetherill was the most famous debutante in America since Brenda Frazier made the cover of *Life* magazine in 1938 for being pretty, brunette, and rich. Wetherill was the essence of

her breed and the envy of millions of young girls. The great-granddaughter of John Wanamaker, the founder of the eponymous department store, her clothing, country-clubbing, and patrician boyfriends with perfect teeth were great fodder for gossip columns, as were the minutest details of her all-pink coming-out party held at her stepfather Donald Leas's Southampton estate on Labor Day weekend 1963—pink invitations, pink dress, pink floral arrangements, and a pink three-poled tent under which 800 guests culled from the Social Register would sip pink Champagne. Her stepfather rented an oceanfront mansion as a dormitory for her young friends with no place to sleep.

There wasn't much sleeping. After 24 hours on a liquid diet, left alone to their own devices in the huge mansion, about 60 of the pride of society went on a *Lord of the Flies* rampage. The beds were splintered, the chandelier ripped from the ceiling, the crystal and china used for target practice, and the house stoned

in a frenzy that broke all but six of its 1,600 exquisitely mullioned windows. The owner was paid for damages, but no charges were filed immediately, inciting a wave of public indignation. Under mounting pressure, a grand jury was convened, and thirteen young men (five in the Social

Register) and one girl were charged with the willful destruction of property. The trial in Riverhead gave the public a perturbing glimpse into the lives of the spoiled rich. When sophomore Eaton Brooks, who was swinging from the chandelier when it ripped loose, was asked by the district attorney how he was invited to the party, he answered, "There is a social secretary." Philadelphia Mainliner Samuel Shipley III accused authorities of using "innocent people's lives as instruments of publicity." The

D.A. then called him a "snotty kid."

The incident was analyzed by the media for months as having grave sociological implications. Do "the Rich Have Immunity?" asked the *Times*. *Life* ran an eight-page spread with a group photograph of the perpetrators looking very much like a Ralph Lauren ad and the headline "Young People Don't Give a Damn Attitude Hits A New Extreme." The magazine also hired a psychoanalyst who proclaimed the destruction an act of "mass psychosis."

STEVEN GAINES



## SALAD OIL SWINDLE!

One Slick Financier

Oil tanks filled with water!



**1963** REMEMBER WHEN Wall Street traded in actual commodities, not derivatives and other "financial products" that made it oh-so-easy to bamboozle investors? The good old days—when it was just as easy, it turns out, to pull the wool over the eyes of the unsuspecting. Easier, maybe. If you were Bronx native Anthony "Tino" De Angelis, all you needed was a refinery in Bayonne and a working knowledge of the nation's soybean surplus. The son of Italian immi-

grants, De Angelis was a commodities broker who'd run into trouble with the law for supplying improperly prepared meat to the federal school-lunch program. In the early sixties, he finagled an initial contract with the U.S. government's Food for Peace program, which sold excess foodstuffs to poor countries. And on the basis of his stunningly large, almost totally fake inventory—De Angelis claimed 1.8 billion pounds of soybean oil, but had only 110

million—the swindle raised at least \$180 million from investors.

De Angelis filled some of his tanks with water, leaving only a thin film of oil on top in case of inspection—perhaps the most literal Wall Street slickster of them all. But soybean prices tumbled when the Soviet market didn't open up as De Angelis had expected, and when panicked investors came knocking to collect on their chits, the authorities followed.

NOREEN MALONE



## Norman Mailer Runs for Mayor, Stabs Wife

Manly men like swords.

**1960** “COME ON, YOU little faggot, where’s your *cojones*.” It was 4:30 A.M., and a drunken Adele Morales Mailer was berating her drunken husband at their own party for once more playing the belligerent fool in front of the literary Establishment. His shirt already torn and his eyes wild, Norman whipped out a penknife with a two-and-half-inch blade and stabbed her.

That fall of 1960, the barrel-chested writer and provocateur had hatched the idea that he should run for New York City mayor, despite a recent arrest after he hailed a police cruiser as if it were a taxi. Mailer planned to form a coalition consisting of a newly immobilized mass of “the disenfranchised”—criminals, Bowery bums, hipsters—and the city’s elite. Having infamously celebrated the “courage” of hoodlums in the essay “The White Negro,” he was unlikely to win the up-the-middle voter anyway.

For a November 19 party to kick off the candidacy, Mailer rounded up the disenfranchised—many of them homeless people—and enlisted George Plimpton to gather the “power structure.” The results

weren’t enough for Mailer, who was expecting at least a Rockefeller. He challenged Plimpton and several others to fight as the night went south, with a hostile, ragtag crowd setting the tone.

High-level literary types who witnessed the stabbing got Adele safely to University Hospital for surgery. Mailer had punctured her cardiac sac. Yet nearly everyone in the know, women included, immediately focused on Norman’s fate rather than Adele’s. He was One of Us—an intellectual, not a criminal—and after all, he was three sheets to the wind. Surely this could all be worked out privately. After hiding out for a day, Mailer appeared as scheduled, incredibly, on Mike Wallace’s morning TV show and spoke strangely of the sword as a symbol of manhood.

Much of Mailer’s coterie thought that the stabbing “would be the end of Norman,” as one friend said, but in the end he got off lightly, with the law and his peers. Years later, he marveled in these pages at his reception at a party within a week or two of the crime. “Five degrees less warmth than I was accustomed to. Not fifteen degrees less—five.”

EVAN HUGHES

## “Howard Hughes”

Spruce Goosed!

**1971** A CON FOOLS one mark, a scam a whole school of them. The ambition of a hoax is much grander, to sucker the whole world, which means it’s an absurdist fantasy more or less doomed from the start. Or maybe not, if the huckster is savvy enough to pick an unwitting shill who’s so completely ascended into myth and innuendo that people only doubt stories about his life when the dispatches seem to arrive from the real world.

By 1970, when a novelist named Clifford Irving living in Ibiza hatched a plan to cash in by publishing an entirely fabricated “autobiography” of Howard Hughes, the billionaire tool magnate, aviator, and gonzo movie producer was not just our richest recluse but the most famous, legendary for being legendarily weird: Michael Jackson by way of Citizen Kane, Charles Manson, and Tony Stark. That he was scheduling a rendezvous with a secret biographer on top of a Mexican pyramid seemed perfectly plausible. Much likelier, anyway, than that he was engaging in a snippy he-said-he-said fight with a small-time writer over whether a book was actually “real.”

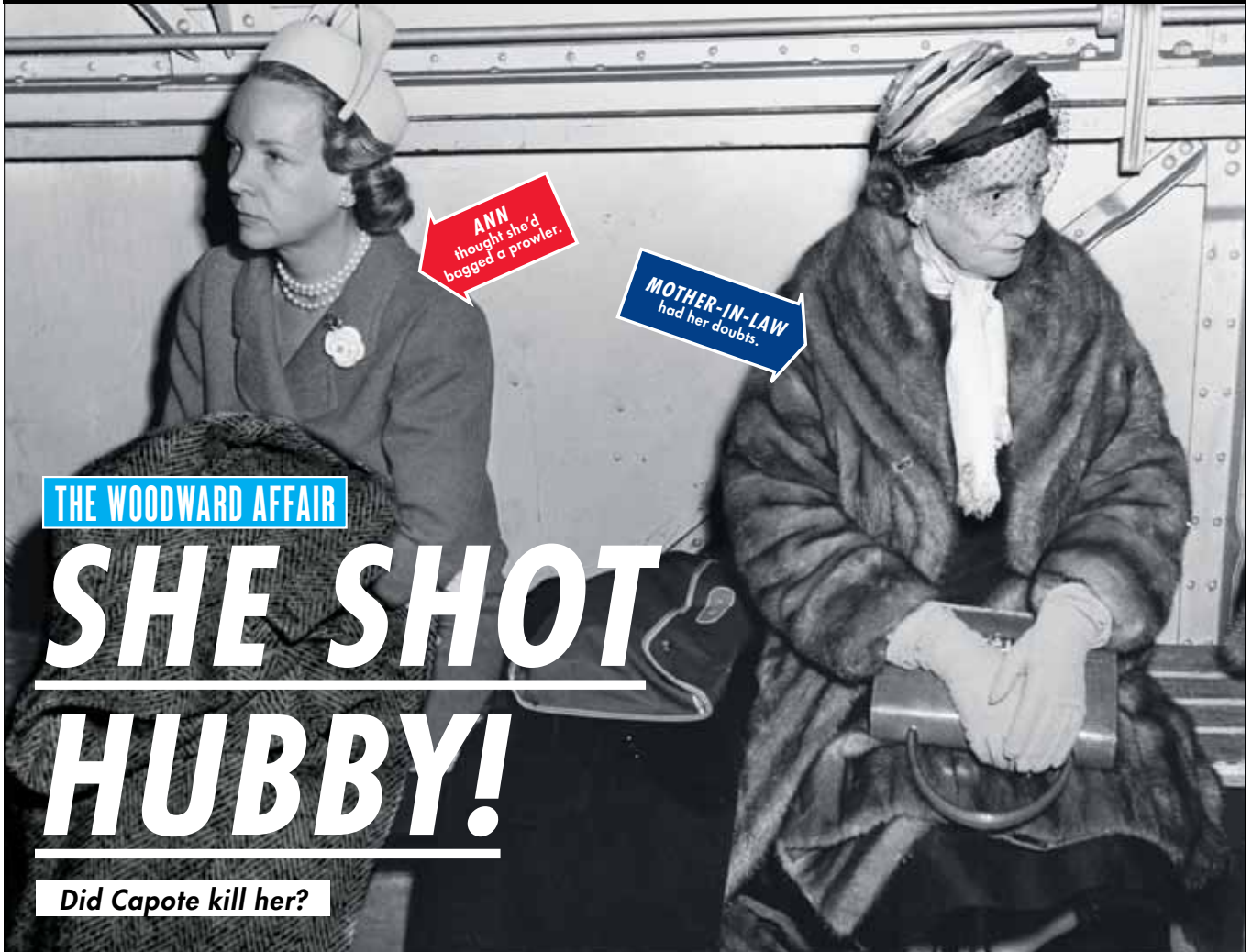
Hughes, hearing of the 1971 McGraw-Hill book deal, made an angry call to Frank McCulloch, who’d been the last man to interview him. It was the first time he’d been heard from in years; McCulloch took the call but, ultimately, Irving’s word. Hughes then staged a conference call to denounce the book. But Irving was much more sensible-seeming on *60 Minutes* a week later. Mike Wallace believed him.

Most journalistic hoaxes are amateur-hour operations, delicious because the stakes are so low and the pigpen so small. But Irving’s was impeccably planned. He’d forged letters so perfectly that experts authenticated them. He had McGraw-Hill send Hughes’s checks to a Swiss bank, where Irving’s wife collected them, with a false passport, as “H.R. Hughes.” Most important, he had lucked into an unpublished biography by a Hughes confidante—and appropriated it, much of it nearly verbatim. The “autobiography”—now an icon of writing in bad faith—therefore had the unfortunate problem of being largely true.

Much of it, anyway: It soon emerged that on the dates of Irving’s supposed meetings with Hughes, he had in fact been “meeting” with mistresses. Confessing, Irving had to return the \$750,000 advance, but his follow-up tell-all reportedly netted a \$500,000 offer. When that book was made into a movie in 2007, he insisted his name be removed from the credits—it took too many liberties, he said.

DAVID WALLACE-WELLS

*"Why don't you just bring a man in our bed?"*



## THE WOODWARD AFFAIR

# SHE SHOT HUBBY!

*Did Capote kill her?*

1955

ANN WOODWARD WAS the Platonic ideal of the High Society arriviste, female version, originally from Pittsburg, Kansas, with the voluptuousness and vivacity to drive men wild and the lack of social graces to drive their wives nuts. She was the kind of woman who'd wear red shoes with a blue dress and didn't worry too much about smoking in public.

She and her husband, banking heir Billy Woodward (Woodward's father had originally spotted her, likely exasperating her future mother-in-law, Elsie Woodward, the highest of high-society dames), had a very good time. They both slept with pretty much whomever they wanted to—his conquests included women and men. "Why don't you just bring a man in our bed," she yelled at him, in one of their frequent, drunken tiffs. "That's what you want." But when they fought, they quickly made up—possibly, it was an upper-class version of true love.

It happened after a particularly boozy party at the Duke and Duchess of Windsor's (she and Wallis Simpson, a fellow arriviste, had a deep bond). In their North Shore neighborhood, there had been reports of a prowler, so husband and wife went to bed half-drunk—in separate bedrooms—with weapons by their sides. In the middle of the night, she saw a shadowy figure and fired both barrels of her



shotgun. The police arrived to find her crying next to her husband's body.

The drama delighted their high-society friends, whose pride and insecurity was that all anyone could see in them was dollar signs—of course, a woman like Woodward would stop at nothing, even murder, to get her hands on her husband's money (in fact, most of it was kept in trust for her sons). A jury took a half-hour to find her innocent of murder—but her sentence turned out to be much more diabolical than mere prison. She was entangled in a heavy web of gossip. One of her troubled sons wouldn't forgive her for killing his father and tried to kill himself (he'd later succeed, as would his brother). Shortly thereafter, she heard that Truman Capote's legendarily unfinished gossip novel *Answered Prayers* was to feature an account of the killing, essentially convicting Ann of murder. Rather than live through a new round of hounding, she took a cyanide pill, lay down on her bed, and never got up. Her mother-in-law, who'd always believed that Ann pulled the trigger with malice aforethought but had kept quiet so as to minimize the scandal, is said to have remarked, "Well, that's that, she shot my son, and Truman murdered her, and so now I suppose we don't have to worry about that anymore."

JOHN HOMANS

PHOTOGRAPHS: BETTMANN/CORBIS

# BAD BEHAVIOR IN BOLDFACE



Steven Gaines



Liz Smith

**VENERABLE GOSSIP columnist Liz Smith, 89, has been in the catbird seat of New York gossip for over 50 years, with columns in the *Daily News*, *Newsday*, the *Post*, and syndication in over 70 newspapers. She got her start ghost-writing Cholly Knickerbockers's column in the Hearst newspapers. The *Post* dropped her column in 2009, though she's still in other papers. Steven Gaines is author of such books as *Philistines at the Hedgerow: Passion Property in the Hamptons* and co-author of *Obsession: The Lives and Times of Calvin Klein*.**

**Steven Gaines:** You once said something to me years ago, just in passing: You don't have to sleep in the bed that you made. That people are forever escaping their follies.

**Liz Smith:** If you're just guilty of public opinion, you can work against that to come back. A lot of people have. Eliot Spitzer is on the rise. Clinton totally became a reformed character, or he appears to have become one. Anybody can come back from anything, I think, if they haven't killed somebody or committed a criminal act.

**S.G.:** I'm surprised how easily Don Imus came back. He was off the air for a little while after the "nappy-headed" comment in 2007, and then he's back as strong as ever.

**L.S.:** Well, he made a really righteous apology. Also, Imus kept on being on the air, and the victory will come to those who are constantly in the limelight. If you're on television enough, you become some kind of

a classic, whether people hate you or love you. Look at Jennifer Lopez. Wasn't she with Sean Combs when the gun went off in the nightclub and all of that? She wasn't too popular and then she took up with Ben Affleck and then she ... Now she's a beloved figure, I'm telling you. Paula Abdul—a big comeback.

**S.G.:** Marv Albert had trouble coming back from his sex scandal. It involved biting.

**L.S.:** It's hardest to come back after something specific and, I'm sorry to say, in my opinion, small. Eliot Spitzer's involvement with a prostitute was a real scandal because he was so brilliant and rising. The difference between him and Congressman Weiner is that the latter treated his own body like a kind of joke, and it made him a joke.

**"Sex is sex.  
It never surprised me  
or shocked me."**

**S.G.:** There are some things that other people just don't want to forgive you for. For instance, Woody Allen and Soon-Yi.

**L.S.:** That's exactly right. And he was kind of arrogant when that happened. But now he seems to have changed. And also, he made a success of the thing that was a scandal. He made a success of his marriage, and he suffered terrible losses, whether we think so or not. He lost

touch with his own child, and he changed his life. And he is a much nicer person now. But listen, things have changed drastically. Divorce itself, the very word used to be a scandal. And now it doesn't even—you don't pause. You've got Newt Gingrich married so many times, and he's running for president. But because the Internet tells all, and so quickly, nobody is sure what they believe. So the result of this instant news and the press hyping it up into a scandal—well, the *Post* is a good example. They make big mountains out of molehills every day. They're going now with this prostitution scandal. And I don't blame them, but I'm not very interested in that. I don't know who any of the people are.

**S.G.:** I know, I'm not at all interested.

**L.S.:** But the enhanced access of the instant news, so that gossip columnists of my kind couldn't even exist today, the result is total cynicism on the part of the public. They're quick to point the finger, they're quick to be reassured. Thinking about Lindsay Lohan; she has become a scandal because the press overemphasizes her every move. Addicts have been forgiven. But she was so attractive when she first appeared—and so your admiration, your scorn, and your pity all mingle when you think about her. She becomes a scandal, like, "Why can't that girl pull herself together?"

**S.G.:** Scandals used to be more rarefied.

**L.S.:** Ann Woodward—this was a really great story. She shot and killed her husband in their home and claimed she thought he was a burglar. It was said she committed suicide when she read the Truman Capote version of the story. And her mother-in-law was protecting her two grandchildren and refused to say anything about the fact that a lot of people believed that Ann had murdered William. *That* was a great story. That had class.

**S.G.:** Do you remember when I wrote

One of the things that made it into a greater scandal was that my editor called me and told me that Barbara Walters had a word with [then-publisher] Phyllis Grann and said, "You can't do this to Calvin; it's making him miserable. Everybody's gonna be angry at you, Phyllis." And so once I went to the press and repeated that, a lot of people were really angry at me, including you.

**L.S.:** Well, I probably was. I probably was defensive about Calvin's sex life.

**S.G.:** No, you were defensive about Barbara Walters.

**L.S.:** Well, I used to defend Barbara. I always believed, Steven, that you had to get access. So I worked hard to get access. So sometimes I overstepped my ... I think loyalty is the biggest last line in the world. More people do bad things and lie and defend people and attack people over their loyalty. Loyalty seems to be craved by everybody, and I think it's a bad thing to have. It clouds your judgment. Makes you so you can't be dispassionate about things. When you're writing about them, you need to be dispassionate. Generally. I got away with a lot because I wasn't a serious writer.

**S.G.:** Also, there was a certain kindness. You weren't in this to destroy lives, to make people unhappy, or to cause embarrassment.

**L.S.:** I don't know whether I deserve so much credit. I was probably just cowardly and loyal to certain people.

**S.G.:** You were kind to me when they dragged me off to the hospital to dry out.

**L.S.:** I never wanted to see people suffering. I had an advanced viewpoint about sex. Sex is sex. It never surprised me or shocked me. People are going to go on doing strange things like biting each other. But the Internet is just outrageous. Maybe when I was writing, you could believe that I was a real human being who was trying to present both sides of it, though I certainly have fended against that plenty. But you don't believe any of this shit you read on the Internet. They may be right, they may be intrinsically right, but it's all so mean-spirited that it's made gossip not fun.

**S.G.:** You don't know what to believe.

**L.S.:** And they have no guardians. No editors, publishers, lawyers. We used to have to vet everything with the lawyers. We had to explain ourselves, what we were saying. Well, all I can say is I had the best of it. It deserted me in the end.

**S.G.:** How do you mean?

**L.S.:** Well, I got fired by the *Post*. I had no outlet anymore. And you're only as good as your outlet.

# ROCKS OFF!

Nelson's coitus massively interruptus!!!



1979

"NELSON THOUGHT HE was coming, but he was going." That was one quip following the news that Nelson Rockefeller—New York's four-term governor, former vice-president of the United States, and the most prominent scion of America's most famous wealthy family—had succumbed to a heart attack at the age of 70, while in his midtown townhouse with his 25-year-old assistant, Megan Marshack. Preferred joke: How did Nelson Rockefeller die? Low blood pressure: 70 over 25.

Before there was Warren Buffett and his secretary, there was Rockefeller and his. *Autres temps, autres mœurs*. The official story quickly broke down. He had not been in his office working on a book about his art collection but in his townhouse. He had not been with his security guard but with his security guard and his chauffeur. Okay, security guard, chauffeur, and a young blonde woman in a black evening gown. He died instantly. Actually, he died one hour after he was stricken. The blonde called 911, and that's all she did. Well, first she called her friend, TV personality Ponchitta Pierce, and it was Pierce who called 911. Where was Marshack? Out of town, replied the family spokesman, though when reporters had reached Marshack by phone a few hours after



the death, she explained that she was with the family spokesman.

Eager for closure, the family allowed no autopsy and had the corpse cremated, hastily absolving everyone involved of any negligence or malfeasance—"4 Rockefeller Children Say All at Hand Did Their Best" read the good-natured headline in the *Times*. But the image of an engorged "Rocky" launched into eternity by an orgasm worthy of America's premier financial titan was already firmly established in the popular mind.

The sudden death may have robbed the public of democracy's birthright, the spectacle of the high and mighty crushed and fallen. Rockefeller himself was the very Midas of scandal, his touch turning gold to outrage: the Diego Rivera mural at Rockefeller Center, the prison riots at Attica, and of course his high-profile divorce from Mary Clark, his wife of 22 years, to marry Margaretta "Happy" Murphy, his wife at the time of his death. By the time scandal arrived breathless and too late in that midtown lair, Nelson Rockefeller, as a liberal Republican, had been out of sync with his various milieus for a long time. Of course, not knowing whether you are coming or going is the very definition of even a moderate Republican these days.

LEE SIEGEL

1980

## SUNNY IN A COMA

Killer Claus?

And Dominick Dunne is off to the races!



VON BÜLOW was not his real last name: Claus's Danish father, a drama critic who greatly admired the Germans, was convicted as a collaborator after World War II, so Claus took his maternal grandfather's name. Trained as a contracts lawyer, he impressed J. Paul Getty enough to become his personal assistant, and at a party, he met Sunny Crawford, a beautiful heiress unhappy with her royal husband's roving eye. In 1966, after her divorce, they married; by 1979, they weren't as happy, and he was having an affair with a socialite actress. That December, Sunny dipped briefly into a coma; a year later, it happened again. She had suspicious traces of insulin in her system, and after the second time, her son, Alexander von Auersperg, and a P.I. he hired found a black bag in Claus's locked closet that included an insulin-tainted needle. Claus was charged with attempted murder, and in 1982, he was sentenced to 30 years. He then hired Alan Dershowitz to handle the appeal. Truman Capote came forward to swear that Sunny had been an intravenous-drug user. In 1985, Claus was retried, at vast expense (writing in *Vanity Fair*, Dominick Dunne observed, "The powerful defense team assembled by Von Bülow for the second trial so outshone the prosecution that the trial often seemed like a football game between the New York Jets and Providence High"). Nine witnesses testified that Sunny's condition might not be consistent with an insulin overdose. Claus was acquitted, Dershowitz wrote *Reversal of Fortune*, and Jeremy Irons won an Oscar for playing Claus in the film adaptation. Sunny died in 2008.

CARL SWANSON

PHOTOGRAPHS: AP (MARSHACK); CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY IMAGES (ROCKEFELLER); CHARLES KRUPA/AP (VON BÜLOW)

# Spurned Headmistress Packs Heat

Heads to Scarsdale.

By NORA EPHRON

**1980** I SUPPOSE THE best moment was at the very beginning.

This is how it is with great murders: At the very beginning, you know only the basic outline, the tabloid headline on the first-day story; so you have the maximum ability to apply your theories, your insights, your own particular life lessons—in short, your narcissism—to what happened. Every murder is a Rorschach, and the Rorschach is at its most powerful before you know too much, before the inconvenient facts get in the way, before the people involved turn out to be people after all.

And so on March 12, 1980, when all of New York awoke to the news, this was what we knew: that Jean Harris, 57, the headmistress of the Madeira School, had driven from Virginia to Scarsdale, New York, and killed her former boyfriend, a best-selling diet doctor named Herman Tarnower, 69, by shooting him four times.

There it was: SOCIALITE HELD IN DOC SLAYING. It was a tabloid dream. The doctor lived in an “exclusive” Westchester home, the socialite headed a “posh” girls’ school.

We were thrilled. When I say we, I mean me, but I also mean every woman who has ever wanted to kill a bad boyfriend.

There was a kind of giddy exhilaration that passed through the city. I’m not just projecting. Everyone called everyone up. The day was completely blown discussing it. We were all



thinking, *You go, girl*, even though that expression had not yet been invented.

It was clear there would turn out to be another woman (there was), and that she would be younger, prettier, blonde, and probably his receptionist (all true). But as it turned out, Jean Harris did not want to be a celebrity murderess like Roxie Hart, or even a poster child for women whose antidepressant supplies run low. She was a proud, prickly woman, a classic headmistress. The night of the murder, she’d worn a headband. She insisted to police that she hadn’t meant to kill Tarnower; she’d brought the gun to Scarsdale only to kill herself. She claimed that Tarnower had tried to take the gun away from her, and she’d accidentally shot him.

She could easily have gotten off by pleading temporary insanity; she could have copped to a lesser plea; instead she stuck to her sad, implausible story. She had a terrible lawyer, in our opinion. We all spent hours discussing this.

We dissected her defense, rewrote her version of things so it would conform to our expectations. After she was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to fifteen years in prison, we wrote letters to the governor urging him to commute her sentence. Finally, after twelve years, he did.

Two TV movies were made about the murder, and several books written, including dueling best sellers by Shana Alexander and Diana Trilling, but all of them suffered from the fact that Jean Harris’s one big moment had been completely out of character.

Harris herself wrote three books, including a best-selling autobiography, and became an advocate for incarcerated women and their children. She is now 88 and lives in a retirement home.

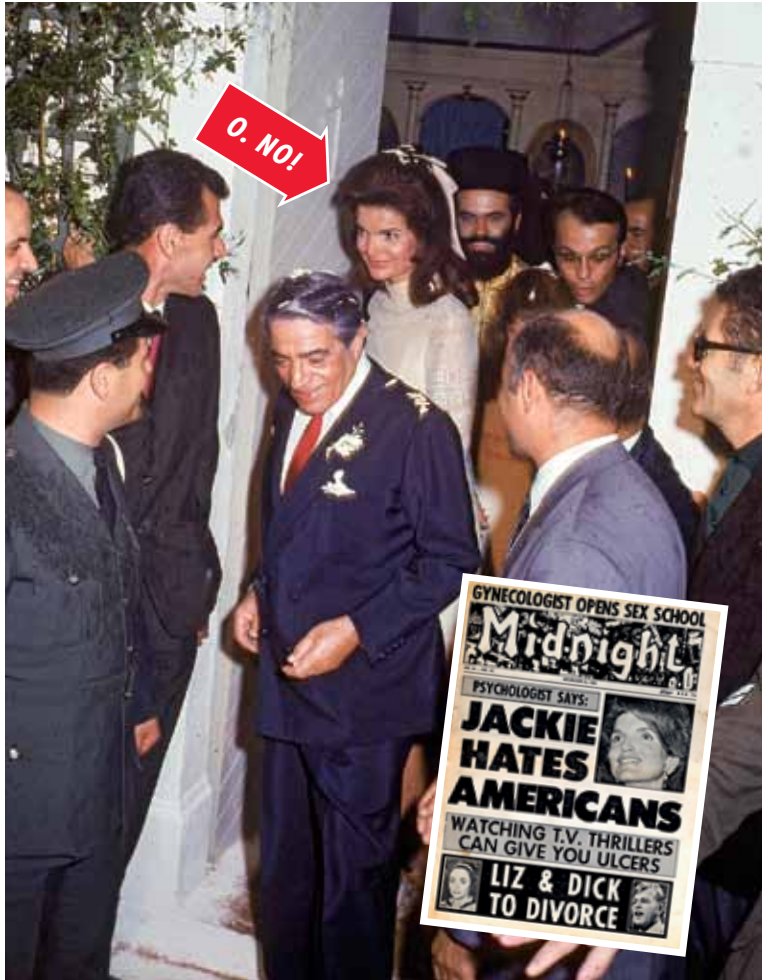
## There She Is, Miss America!



**1984** VANESSA WILLIAMS, the first African-American to win the title Miss America, also became the first in the pageant’s 63-year history to resign the crown after news broke that nude photos of her in sexually explicit positions with another woman would be published in the September issue of *Penthouse*. The photos had been taken two years before Williams was named Miss America, when she worked briefly as a makeup artist and receptionist for a little-known Mount Kisco photographer. *Penthouse* sold nearly 6 million copies of the issue and made a reported \$14 million. Williams responded by telling *People Magazine*, “I am not a lesbian and I am not a slut, and somehow I am going to make people believe me.” ALEX MORRIS

# "She Was Ripe for Seduction"

By WILLIAM NORWICH



1968 BECAUSE THE RICH *are* different, it's sometimes useful, when talking about scandals, to determine whose scandal we're talking about, theirs or ours? A scandal is when the people involved are shamed, shocked, rattled to their cores. You will always read that the marriage of Jacqueline Kennedy to Aristotle Socrates Onassis was a huge scandal, but it wasn't. In her world, it was just complicated.

They first met in the fifties, when the Kennedys were invited on Onassis's boat, *The Christina*, to meet Winston Churchill. In 1963, after the death of her newborn son Patrick, the First Lady accepted the shipping tycoon's invitation to recuperate on *The Christina* in the Aegean—against the advice of her husband. Onassis told his biographer that when the First Lady arrived, her first words were, "So this it seems is what it is to be a king." She was, he said, "ripe for seduction."

After the death of the president, they exchanged letters, gifts, and books. But Onassis was considered a liability to Robert Kennedy's political career, and interactions were not encouraged. After RFK was killed, in June 1968, nothing could stop them, and their families understood, even if not all of them liked it. (Edward M. Kennedy helped secure the prenup.)

If it wasn't a union with a fairy-tale ending—the couple was separating when Onassis died, in 1975—the relationship had its diversions: the island of Skorpios, the Avenue Foch apartment in Paris, the plane and boat to always follow the sun. Perhaps more important, Onassis, one of the bride's cousins explained, "gave her the security and companionship she desperately needed after the second Kennedy assassination."

It was the American media that was scandalized by the marriage on behalf of the American people. "Jackie How Could You?" and "Jack Kennedy Dies Today for a Second Time" cried headlines. Magazines like *Life* feared their best-selling cover subject was disappearing to a kingdom by the sea. Of course all they had to do was wait fifteen minutes, until she was reinvented as that piece of newsstand heaven: "Jackie O.," never too thin and never too rich.

1971

## SAINT SERPICO VS. THE NYPD

*Knapper!*

Good ethics,  
movie-star looks.

IT TOOK A "HIPPIE COP" to bust down the NYPD's blue wall. Shaggy dog Frank Serpico didn't just blow the whistle on kickbacks and payoffs in New York's grimmer decades, he wrote the damn book—feeding the *Times* the front-page exposé that gave us the Knapp Commission. And made him few blue friends. During a routine 1971 bust, Serpico was left unprotected and shot in the face—an attack that his many hagiographers took to be a bungled assassination attempt. Serpico wanted to be a saint—a monk, anyway. He retired, moved to Europe, bought a farm, crisscrossed the U.S. in a camper, then built himself a one-room cabin in the Hudson Valley. "This is my life now," he told the *Times* in 2010. "The woods, nature, solitude."



# EVICTED!

Jogger shot after stealing his  
landlord's model girlfriend.  
Disguised convict sneaks out of jail.

By ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST



1978

BUDDY JACOBSON'S DEADLY love triangle was a story I lucked into. A recent arrival in Manhattan, I often ate in Nicola's restaurant on 84th, where another regular was Jacobson, who owned the building opposite, No. 155. A one-time top racehorse trainer, but highly unpopular with the nobs—"I don't even like horses," he would say—Jacobson had been booted off the track for causing labor trouble and started a model agency, My Fair Lady, because of what he did like: plenty of young women.

Jacobson, who was 47 but a liar about his age, lived in 7D with 23-year-old Melanie Cain, who was a leading model as well as his partner in the agency and a girlfriend of several years. Jacobson was wiry and intense, with shaggy dark hair, and Cain, who moved to the city as a teenager from Naperville, Illinois, was well described by *Seventeen* when she made the cover as "the image of everything wholesome, like Kellogg's Corn Flakes."

It was also in Nicola's that I met another tenant in Jacobson's building, Jack Tupper. Tupper ran into Cain one hot July afternoon; she'd been having troubles with Jacobson in the street. She suggested to Tupper that they go jogging. Their affair began.

Jacobson, jealous, offered Tupper \$100,000 to leave Cain, so

the new couple decided to move. On Sunday, August 6, 1978, Cain left Tupper in bed and went to sign a lease on their new apartment—that was the last time she saw him alive. It was not a perfect murder. Tupper was stabbed, bludgeoned, and shot seven times. Jacobson and two Italian workmen he was using on another building on 83rd Street then dumped the body in a box and drove in his yellow Cadillac to the Bronx, where they were spotted trying to burn it by somebody who even got the license plate. Jacobson was arrested while stuck in a jam at the Triboro toll plaza. Which was when the story began to become interesting. There were, as it turned out, untrue rumors that My Fair Lady was actually a call-girl front and that Tupper was involved with cocaine smuggling (though he was on intimate terms with a hash-running ring).

After he was convicted, Jacobson, disguised as a lawyer in a suit smuggled in by a friend who owed him money, walked out of the Brooklyn House of Detention and made his way to California—Manhattan Beach, no less. He was caught six weeks later, turned in by his son David, who'd also helped with his escape, and died in prison of bone cancer in 1989. David is today a horse trainer and says his dad was "railroaded." Cain got married and now teaches yoga in Connecticut.

## THE MEDICAID-FRAUD RABBI

1976

DISGRACED RABBI Bernard Bergman, the proprietor of a chain of nursing homes, was convicted of defrauding the state government of \$2.5 million in Medicaid funds. Patients in at least one of his homes complained that they were subjected to physical abuse and unsanitary conditions. Bergman was fined \$2.5 million and sentenced to a year in prison.



# Uptown Gallery Turned S&M DUNGEON

Gays: This is the man you were warned about!

By CHOIRE SICHA



1985

WHILE THE GUN was discovered in art dealer Andrew Crispo's 57th Street gallery, and while the man who fired it claimed that Crispo forced the victim to kneel and be shot, and while the shooter's lawyer claimed, according to the *Times*, that "his client was drugged and under Mr. Crispo's control," and while Crispo had picked up the victim in a bar and provided the cocaine, not only was Crispo not charged in the murder, but he didn't even testify at the trial. The judge said he didn't want the needless drama of Crispo pleading the Fifth.

And so Crispo's involvement in the 1985 execution of a 26-year-old F.I.T. student—who had been shot twice in the back of the head and whose burned body was found in a Rockland County smokehouse, clad only in a leather hood—was never established. It did bring Crispo enough notoriety that another young man came forward, this one a teacher from Montreal, with a tale of being held captive and tortured at the gallery, with Crispo as ringleader. This time, Crispo was charged with kidnapping, sodomy, assault, coercion, and unlawful imprisonment. But in the end, the same man, Crispo's henchman Bernard LeGeros, took the fall for both cases.

Five months after the murder trial, the invulnerable Crispo was sent to jail—for tax evasion. Released in 1989, he went to jail again at age 55 in 2000, after being convicted of attempted extortion and obstruction of justice. For those eleven straight years of freedom, he continued to be the bogeyman of New York City's gay world. He was, overtly or abstractly, what was meant when older gay men cautioned younger gay men about Bad Things That Happened when hooking up on phone sex lines or on the street or in hustler bars like Rounds. But none of the stories told ever resulted in the record of the court system. There was always too much that would need to be explained.

## Mayflower Madam: Ho, Hum

1984

THE REMARKABLE thing about the Mayflower Madam, the New York *Post*'s brilliant sobriquet for Sydney Biddle Barrows, is that she managed to exist at the center of one of the city's biggest sex scandals with an almost complete absence of shame. A young woman in Manhattan, even one with a *Mayflower* pedigree, has to make a living. Fired from May Company in the recessionary late seventies, Barrows took the only job that presented itself—answering the phone at an escort service—and the rest of her Pilgrim's Prog-



ress is history. Very respectable history. In truth, Barrows displayed a quiver of Colonial virtues—humility, resourcefulness, honesty (of a kind)—in her administration of the high-end escort service Cachet, and after the police had closed in, she held her head high. "I ran the wrong sort of business," she told the *Boston Globe*, "but I did it with integrity." (Of course, her flawless features and blonde bob didn't hurt.) Barrows's matter-of-factness about her life story made her seem as wholesome as Marlo Thomas in *That Girl*, and much wiser.



# Maximum Outrage Over Minimalist Sculptor

Carl Andre: “OJ of the Art World”?

By CARL SWANSON

1985

AROUND 5:30 ON the morning of September 8, 1985—a Sunday—the doorman at 11 Waverly Place heard what sounded like a woman pleading “No, no, no, no” from high above him; a few minutes later, there was what sounded like an explosion on the roof of a nearby deli. Artist Ana Mendieta had fallen from the 34th-floor window of the apartment on Mercer she shared with her husband, the famous minimalist sculptor Carl Andre, at the neighboring high-rise. She was wearing only her blue bikini underwear. Andre was charged with murder, and the entire art world took sides.

Mendieta, it turns out, was drunk; she and Andre were often drunk and often fighting. To the surprise of many of their friends, they’d married the previous January after breaking up the year before. Andre was older, 50 to her 36, and they were temperamentally at odds. He once complained to his gallerist “It’ll never work—a New England puritan and a Latina.” And while his coolly delivered work—think plates of metal or bricks arranged precisely on the floor—was not as fashionable as it was when he was one of the irascible scene-makers at Max’s Kansas City and the Guggenheim gave him a retrospective at 35, his art-historical significance was assured. Cuban-born Mendieta, whose work was more personal, was on the cusp of possibly making it.

The question that night was whether their differences—they’d been fighting, he said—were enough to get him to throw her

out the window. Was she threatening to leave him after finding out about an affair he was having? That night, Andre called the police and told them, hysterically, that she’d committed suicide; when they arrived, they found him with scratches on his arm and face.

Beyond that, it was all a matter of conjecture. How could someone with a show about to open at the New Museum (it opened just in time for Andre’s trial) commit suicide? How could someone who was so afraid of heights get so close as to accidentally fall out a window? Much of the art Establishment—friends and acquaintances of Andre’s—rallied around him. Some of Andre’s friends told the press that “the poor guy is being victimized by a feminist cabal.” During the week of the New Museum opening, unsigned posters soliciting witnesses for the prosecution were put up around Soho, reading: “Suicide? Accident? Murder? Anyone With Information Please Call.” Then: the D.A.’s number.

At trial, Andre asked that it be decided by a judge, not a jury. In 1988, he was acquitted. Andre was never really free, though: In the nineties, the Guerrilla Girls labeled him the “O.J. of the Art World,” and though he continued to produce work until very recently, and continues to live in the same apartment, he’s become somewhat reclusive, or perhaps ostracized. Still, the Dia Art Foundation is planning a retrospective next year. Last December, he told *The New Yorker* that Mendieta, who was barely five feet tall, had climbed up on the sills to close the windows and had “just lost her balance.”

Andre in front of the high-rise from which his wife fell to her death.

# QUEENS BEEP WEEPER

## Man, Oh, Manes!

By MARK JACOBSON

1986

NINETEEN EIGHTY-SIX was a wild year in the County of Queens. The Mets, powered by a clubhouse of reputed coke snorters, won the World Series. It was also the year of the so-called Parking Violations Bureau case, easily the most Grand Guignol of recent New York City political-corruption scandals. In many ways the PVB scandal fit the usual pigs-at-the-municipal-trough trope: The taxpayers' money was stolen, lower-level operatives were caught and squeezed by the authorities, formerly powerful individuals were disgraced and sent to jail. What set the PVB affair apart were the outsize characters, with Ed Koch as the arrogant, shrieking mayor; a pre-imperial Rudy Giuliani as the dogged, incorruptible U.S. Attorney; and Jimmy Breslin in the role of the ultimate Big City columnist. But Donald Manes, the 52-year old Queens borough president, was the star, the doomed, tragic figure.

At 27, the youngest assistant D.A. in the Queens office; at 31, the youngest person ever elected to the City Council (a record

later beaten by two other scandal-touched Queens pols, Anthony Weiner and John Liu), Donny Manes was always a comer. In 1985, when he was reelected for the fifth time as borough president with 85 percent of the vote, he was widely considered the second-most-powerful politician in New York, a likely successor to Koch as mayor. The highly public unraveling began soon after midnight on January 10, 1986, when two cops found a blood-covered, barely coherent Manes in his car near Shea Stadium. With his left wrist bearing a large Y-shaped wound, Manes claimed to have been attacked by two hoodlums who had hidden in the back of his car outside the Queens Borough Hall. This canard was swept away only days later, as Breslin's columns on the breaking PVB scandal began to appear. A key player in the scheme was Manes's long-time friend Geoffrey Lindenauer. A former small-time operator on the edge of the sev-

enties self-help movement—he once ran the Institute for Emotional Education—Lindenauer was Manes's bagman at Parking Violations, largely in charge of collecting bribes from various private companies engaged in the always-booming New York City parking-ticket business. Although the money involved (\$400,000 is the usually quoted figure) palls by today's standard, news of Lindenauer's impending cooperation with Giuliani's office was apparently enough to help push Manes over the edge.

On the evening of March 13, 1986, having stepped down as borough president only weeks before, a severely depressed Manes was in the kitchen of his house in Jamaica Estates speaking on the phone with his psychiatrist, Dr. Elliot N. Wineburg. Wineburg asked Manes to hang on a moment. It was during this time that Manes opened a kitchen drawer, pulled out a fourteen-inch Ekco flint knife, and jammed it into his chest, killing himself. Manes's body was discovered by his 25-year-old daughter, Lauren. As noted in *City for Sale*, Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett's classic account of the Koch-era scandals, Manes's demise came three decades after the doomed politician found the body of his own father, who also committed suicide.

Hundreds, including the mayor and Governor Mario Cuomo, attended Manes's funeral at Schwartz Brothers-Jeffers Memorial Chapel, in Forest Hills. The eulogy was given by then-Assemblyman Alan Hevesi, another close Queens County associate of Manes. "I must tell you there may be some confusion because of recent events, but it doesn't have to be. That's not the reality. Forget that image. The real Donald Manes was an outstanding public figure," said Hevesi, now incarcerated on corruption charges himself.

More than 25 years after the fact, Donald Manes may be just one more footnote in the vast saga of New York City public corruption, but the afterimage of his deeds still re-run on cable channels all over the globe, every day. A fictionalized version of the Manes story was the basis of the pilot episode of the original *Law & Order* series.

Manes recuperating from having slit his left wrist. He stabbed himself two months later.

ATTEMPT #1



# RAKING THE MUCK



Wayne Barrett



Tom Robbins

**THE TWO former Village Voice reporters discuss their histories digging up municipal malfeasance.**

**Which scandal did you have the most fun uncovering?**

**Wayne Barrett:** The mob connections of Geraldine Ferraro. She was intimately involved in her husband's business, and one of the key guys was Nicky Sands. He had mob ties and had been shot eight times—and he happened to chair a fund-raiser for her when she ran for Congress the first time. [William] Bastone was my intern in 1984, when she was nominated for vice-president.

We couldn't find Nicky anywhere. Knowing that we're tracking him, Sands puts himself in the hospital for voluntary surgery. Bill and I find out what hospital he's in, and we go to Beth Israel. They tell me they have no such patient, but Bill goes behind the desk and he can see the room number on the computer screen. So we go up to the room, and Sands is lying in his hospital bed. He looks up and says: "You must be Barrett."

Bill sticks a tape recorder under the bed, and we talked to him about two or three hours. We got some great stuff.

**What happened to the story?**

**W.B.:** The lawyers [at the *Voice*] said you invaded his privacy, you can't use any of the taped interview. We never got to write the story. Ul-

timately, we wrote a story when she ran for Senate in '92. By then it was like the 24 mob connections of Geraldine Ferraro. It probably cost her the Senate nomination.

**Where is the best place you ever heard of someone passing a bribe?**

**Tom Robbins:** They always said that the bathroom at the Old Homestead restaurant on 14th Street saw more cash change hands than the Citibank on the corner. It was right next to the old meat market.

**Who was passing the money?**

**T.R.:** Crooked union officials, city inspectors, wiseguys.

**Tom, you broke one of the biggest scandal stories of the Giuliani era,**

guy is traveling all over the world. So I filed a Freedom of Information request. They didn't fill it, and they didn't deny it; they just refused to respond for the longest time. Eventually, I get a letter saying all the records were lost in a move.

When a new administration came in, it occurred to me to refile the request. To its credit, Mike Bloomberg's administration gave me the records, and they show that Russell had been on a spending binge. He had traveled literally around the world, staying at every place from San Diego to Hong Kong on the city's dime. I wrote that story, and he ended up getting indicted. They found he had stolen more than \$400,000. And they got into his computer and found child porn. He ended up serving nearly five years in prison.

**Have you ever been assaulted by anyone you were investigating?**

**W.B.:** The one that got a lot of press attention at the time was in the mid-eighties. Ramon Velez, who was the most powerful Latino in New York, had been a city councilman. He was the king of anti-poverty programs in the Bronx, made a fortune running anti-poverty programs. So much so that he had fourteen condominiums in Puerto Rico. I got all the records, went down to Puerto Rico, went from one to the other, and he was waiting for me in the last.

I have a photographer with me, Susan Ferguson, and we're walking up the steps. It's a very dark corridor, and when we get to the top, he is in the stairwell. Ramon weighed about 300-and-some pounds. His arm was about three or four times the size of my arm, and it was wrapped around my throat. He didn't have a weapon, but he kept saying, "I'm going to kill you, Wayne! I'm going to kill you!"

Susan jumped on his back and dug her fingernails into his eyes. His grip loosened a bit, and we ran

ber of agencies, the number of commissioners, the amount to which they had left open the door for hoods and charlatans ... I mean, the guy who was running the Parking Violations Bureau was a sex-therapy quack. Some of the stuff was just insane.

**W.B.:** The commissioner of the Department of Transportation actually put the sex therapist, Geoffrey Lindenauer, in charge of the Parking Violations Bureau because he was the bagman for Donny Manes. Manes had enormous power.

They were able to fix the award of contracts to private agencies that would collect parking fines. The award of these various contracts was on the basis of cash bribes in bathrooms passed to Geoffrey Lindenauer, and Manes would be stuffing the money in his basement. Geoffrey would give the money back to Donny, maybe keep a little himself, and that's what brought Donny down. Then Donny stuck a knife in his own chest.

**T.R.:** I remember how horrified so many people were about his suicide. I think a lot of it had to do with everybody thinking how incredibly tortured he had to have been. That guy was one sad piece of work.

But you know, he was fun. I used to go to the Board of Estimate [meetings], and he once took his shoe off and pounded it on the table, which is what Nikita Khrushchev did at the U.N. He was unlike everybody else. He was colorful, and he understood theater. People liked him.

**W.B.:** Manes was one of the most pleasant guys in the world. Very funny, very loose. The gift of a great politician is false candor. Donald Manes had it. It's an extraordinary talent, where you can sound disarmingly truthful and yet everything you're doing is a lie.

But Manes had a way about him. He would sweat. I remember I had this confrontation with him. I can't remember the questions, but he couldn't answer them. I had him against the wall. I can still see the redness in his face. Manes was a very emotional guy. His father had killed himself. He had a dark, dark side to him.

**Who is the most ethically compromised politician you ever covered?**

**W.B.:** There's no fucking competition for this: Al D'Amato. The greatest journalism honor I've ever received was being called a viper by him in his memoir. I don't think anybody else can compete.

**T.R.:** Say what you will about the guy, Wayne. He walks between the raindrops. God bless him.

INTERVIEW BY

JENNIFER GONNERMAN

**"They said the bathroom at the Old Homestead restaurant saw more cash change hands than Citibank."**

**which involved Russell Harding, son of Liberal Party leader Ray Harding. Why did you zero in on him?**

**T.R.:** Russell was running this obscure but very lucrative housing organization called the Housing Development Corporation. Somebody called me and said you should try to get his spending records because the

down the stairwell and jumped on the elevator. By the time we got down to the bottom, he was there too, and he had a broom. So Susan got a lot of pictures of him attacking me with this broom handle.

**Which mayoral administration that you've written about was the most scandalous?**

**T.R.:** Koch's third term. The num-

1987

## WHAT A "BESS MESS"

Sad! Tedious!

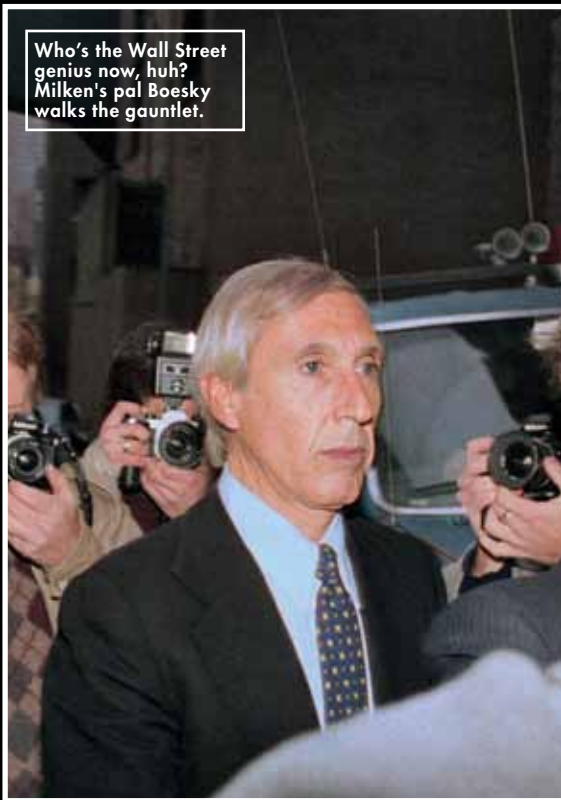
WHEN BESS MYERSON, the first Jewish Miss America, was accused of getting her sewer-contractor lover's alimony payments reduced—in exchange for a job for the judge's daughter, Sukhreet Gabel—she had to quit as Ed Koch's cultural commissioner, putting a big dent in her beautiful longtime companionship with the mayor (so invaluable during Koch's '77 race). Everyone beat the rap, but Myerson's reputation didn't.



## Ivan the Terrible

# "THE NERVE OF A BURGLAR!"

Who's the Wall Street genius now, huh? Milken's pal Boesky walks the gauntlet.



1987

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE about Ivan Boesky's crime is that he managed to get away with it for so long. It wasn't any secret that he was taking massive positions in stocks in companies that, in a matter of weeks, became takeover targets of the corporate raiders of the day, earning the financier huge profits. Boesky sold himself as a genius, dreaming in his Fifth Avenue office high over Cartier, with a kind of second sight into the ineluctable logic of the American economy, superpowered by the latest in eighties technology ("a 300-line telephone console," wrote *Time*, in amazement). In the popular press, the wizard act was pretty convincing, but his father-in-law, who'd provided the original seed capital for his business, may have had more insight into his character. Boesky, he said, had "the hide of a rhinoceros and the nerve of a burglar."

Boesky, of course, was a burglar, using those phone lines to collect tips from the likes of Michael Milken. The scam was hidden in plain sight. The nerviest part of Boesky's crime was his attempt to convince everyone that he was doing the world a service as he was robbing them blind. "Greed is all right, by the way," Boesky famously told the 1986 graduation of UC-Berkeley's business school. "I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself." People laugh—but many have never stopped believing.

JOHN HOMANS

## Queen of Mean Dethroned; "Little People" Rejoice

1989

EVEN MORE than Gordon Gekko, Leona Helmsley symbolized the "greed is good" ethos of the eighties. Her trial in 1989 for tax evasion was a delicious coda to the decade, offering up the pleasure of watching the Queen of Mean, outrageous, nasty, and entitled, be forced to swap her 10,000-square-foot Park Lane penthouse for a prison cell.

The daughter of a Brooklyn hat manufacturer, tough-talking Leona Mindy Rosenthal worked her way up from receptionist to top real-estate broker—jettisoning two husbands en route—when she caught the eye of the married older

billionaire Harry Helmsley.

After marrying the unassuming Harry in 1972, she became a household name, starring in glitzy cleavage-baring ads for Helmsley hotels as the perfectionist "queen," guaranteeing the good life for guests and willing to terrorize the staff. It wasn't an act. Leona humiliated and fired employees at whim.

She also had an obsession with avoiding taxes. Caught up in a sting involving Van Cleef & Arpels, she received immunity for testifying that jewelry-store employees allowed her to walk out with thousands of dollars of bangles and shipped empty boxes to her out-of-town

residences to save on sales tax. After she and Harry stiffed the contractors renovating their 28-room Greenwich home, disgruntled employees alerted the *Post* about the Helmsleys' curious habit of charging pricey renovations (a marble dance floor, a \$130,000 stereo system) to corporate accounts. Enter crusading prosecutor Rudy Giuliani.

Charged with 235 counts of tax evasion, Harry, a frail 80-year-old, was found unfit to stand trial, so Leona was left to face her employees' revenge. The high point: housekeeper Elizabeth Baum's recounting that Leona told her "We don't pay taxes, only the



little people pay taxes."

Fined \$7.1 million, Leona served eighteen months in prison and was freed in 1994 (her husband died in 1997). She was later sued by two employees who claimed she fired them because they were gay. She lived until 2007, leaving one last spiteful surprise in her will: disinheriting two grandchildren and leaving \$12 million to her Maltese, Trouble, a biter who attacked staff. A judge slashed the bequest to \$2 million. Trouble, who received death threats (requiring a \$100,000 yearly security retinue), died in 2010.

MERYL GORDON



## This Man Bites!

One victim escaped  
Marv the Perv by yanking  
off his toupee ...

"WHEN ARE WE going to meet? Got somebody to take the tickets? And, oh, by the way, do you have somebody for the threesome?" Marv Albert was persistent, prepping for a hotel liaison with an old friend, according to the accuser at Albert's 1997 trial for forcible sodomy and assault. "Hey, do you have somebody lined up?" the broadcaster asked again later. "Keep trying to get somebody." "Ah, I see you have nobody," Albert said when she arrived alone. "Come in." The voice of the Knicks and Rangers favored male-male-female arrangements with a well-endowed third, his accuser later testified, and when on that occasion she failed to deliver in D.C., he bit her repeatedly on the back and neck and forced her to perform oral sex. (He said the rough sex was consensual.)

That summer, weeks before his day in court, Albert's name appeared in the black book of a murdered dominatrix—the kinks just kept coming. On his trial's third day, a surprise witness testified that Albert sexually assaulted her in a hotel years earlier, wearing only women's underwear and a garter belt, after calling the concierge to request help sending a fax. He allegedly bit her too, and she escaped only when she ripped off his hairpiece. The following day, plenty exposed, Albert pleaded guilty to assault and battery, avoiding jail time, but losing his jobs with NBC and MSG networks. (Both would rehire him by the decade's end.) During a post-trial media redemption tour, a credulous Barbara Walters had the announcer's fiancée describe their sex life. "I'd say it's pretty ordinary," she answered, to which Albert shot back, "Hey!"

JOE COSCARELLI

# MAMMA MIA!

Woody ♥ Soon-Yi

By DAVID EDELSTEIN

**1992** IT WAS A New York fairy tale turned seriously sordid psychodrama: In 1992, Woody Allen, the nearsighted little Jew from Brooklyn who redefined film comedy; bedded a series of slim *shiksas*; preferred to stay in Manhattan on the night he won an Oscar for *Annie Hall* to play his clarinet; conferred hipness on whatever restaurant/club he visited while maintaining an air of privacy and radiating (his word) anhedonia; and evolved into a high-toned director and a moralist, anointed by Vincent Canby as one of our greatest filmmakers, was discovered to have slept with and taken lots of dirty pictures of the 21-year-old adopted daughter of his decade-long partner, Mia Farrow. The funny part? He said there was no scandal.

New York disagreed, violently. But it was hard to apply conventional morality to such a couple. Farrow, born into Hollywood royalty, was a serial wife of accomplished men (Frank Sinatra, André Previn) and serial adopter of neglected children. She and Allen also had a son together, Satchel, but he lived across the park from Farrow and her brood. The object of Allen's ardor, Soon-Yi, was eating out of garbage cans in South Korea before Farrow and Previn adopted her, at age 8. Allen would have met her when she was 10.

Allen pointed out that he was neither Soon-Yi's father nor stepfather and that she'd liberated him from a moribund relationship. (His coruscating

*Husbands and Wives*, on screens at the time, resounds with bad vibes.) It's easy to believe that he believed he did nothing wrong. Years earlier, Pauline Kael noted his peculiar morality in *Manhattan*, where the protagonist contrasts the self-centered intelligentsia with a fresh-faced 17-year-old Dalton girl: "What man in his forties but Woody Allen," Kael wrote, "could pass off a predilection for teenagers as a quest for true values?"

The aftermath was yet more fascinating. Farrow unsuccessfully prosecuted Allen for sexually abusing a girl they had adopted together and penned a scathing account of his perfidy in *What Falls Away*—written while seeing Philip Roth, another illustrious Jew with a notorious sex life. Allen responded with a movie, *Deconstructing Harry*, about a Roth-like novelist whom the world decries as a shit. Then he made a movie about the corrosiveness of celebrity culture. Manhattan: S'wonderful no more.

Allen married Soon-Yi in 1997, and she seems surprisingly right for him; in Barbara Kopple's documentary *Wild Man Blues*, she's alternately deferential and ball-busting—a good combo for overmothered Jewish men. Farrow adopted six more kids. Satchel changed his name to Ronan and is now a human-rights crusader who considers the actions of his father, with whom he has no contact, a "moral transgression." Everyone has a point of view!

# PUFFY POW POW!

*Combs & J.Lo flee, Champagne in hand.*

By JESSICA PRESSLER

**1999** ON DECEMBER 28, 1999 Sean “Puffy” Combs and then-girlfriend Jennifer Lopez had been celebrating a soon-to-be released album by Shyne, a.k.a. Jamal Barrow, the rap mogul’s 21-year-old protégé, at midtown’s Club New York. They were leaving when Combs, carrying a bottle of Champagne, accidentally jostled one of the club’s patrons, knocking a drink out of his hand. The man, Matthew Allen, a street tough known as “Scar,” responded with a shove. Things escalated—one of Allen’s companions allegedly threw a stack of money in Combs’s face—and shots were fired, leaving three people injured.

Combs and Lopez were arrested fleeing the scene in a Lincoln Navigator with a gun in the trunk. J.Lo was quickly absolved, and although witnesses said they’d seen Combs with the weapon—and his driver testified that his boss had bribed him to claim ownership—his legal team, including Johnnie Cochran, created enough doubt that Combs was acquitted, too. “I don’t know if you know this, judge, but this person Jennifer Lopez is a very famous actress,” one lawyer pointed out. “To think Mr. Combs is walking around with her with a loaded gun ... it’s so ridiculous that it stretches the imagination.”

In the end it was Shyne who served almost nine years for assault, gun possession, and reckless endangerment, though he did so angrily, claiming Combs had sold him out to save his own skin. After his acquittal, Combs changed his nick-

name to P. Diddy in hopes of putting the past behind him, but the saga lived on for years in song (“Whatcha gonna do when shit hit the fan / Take it like a man or snitch like a bitch?” Shyne asks pointedly on a track released after the incident), and naturally inspired a *Law & Order* episode, which aired in 2001. “It was a great New York story,” says Richard Sweren, who wrote the script. “Of course, we had to make it a murder.” The adaptation, “3 Dawg Night,” took other liberties as well: It’s rap mogul G-Trane’s famous girlfriend, a “ghetto girl made good,” played by a dewy Kerry Washington, who pulls the trigger after being disrespected. “He forgot who I was,” Kerry from the Block tells assistant district attorney Jack McCoy, of her aggressor. “I couldn’t let that happen. Not after how hard I worked to be who I am!”

The twist was inspired, but the story’s real-life ending is odder: This past December, Allen was shot to death at Footlights, a Brooklyn nightclub. And last month, Shyne, who embraced Judaism in prison and renamed himself Moses Michael Levi, squashed his beef with his former mentor at Paris Fashion Week, where they attended the Kenzo and Givenchy shows together. Shyne is prepping a new album for release this year, while Combs is still smarting over 2010’s *Last Train to Paris*, the lowest-charting album of his career. As *L&O*’s McCoy put it, “At that rate, he might have to go out and actually shoot somebody.”

The Rap-Beating Rap Mogul!



The Scene-Fleeing Starlet!

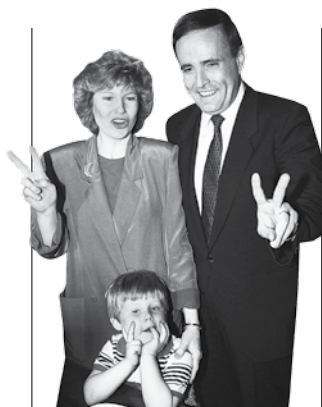


The Put-Away Protégé!



The Drink-Dropping Instigator!





2000

## GOOD NIGHT GRACIE

We're Getting Divorced!

WE ARE?!

**WHEN MAYOR Rudy Giuliani held a press conference to announce his marital separation, no one was more surprised than his wife, Donna Hanover, who hadn't been briefed. She refused to leave Gracie Mansion and later filed a court order to keep his mistress, Judith Nathan, out.**

## "I JUST WANT TO FOCUS ON MY SALAD"

*Insider trading—not a good thing.*

By VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

2002

**BEFORE IMCLONE**, everything was just perfect for Martha Stewart. Her story had been one of ever-increasing power, from the admittance to Barnard in the fifties from Nutley, New Jersey, where she grew up as the eldest daughter in a Polish family of eight, to almost single-handedly building the domestic-bliss industry in the eighties, harnessing the rise in disposable income and backlash against the arid feminism of the previous decade; to say nothing of her role atop Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, a publicly traded company encompassing all things Martha, from tart-making, to tips on pruning trees, which she liked to do in the middle of the night.

Then the American icon of flawlessness made a mistake. On

December 27, 2001, when the young assistant to her debonair Merrill Lynch broker told her on his orders that she should sell all her 3,928 shares in ImClone Systems, a biotech company run by Sam Waksal, because the company was about to implode, she jumped at the opportunity. She would never have felt the loss—she was coming up on a billion dollars, and by selling those shares she avoided a loss of \$45,673—but she couldn't resist the chance to daub at the blot on her investment record. "Isn't it nice to have brokers who tell you these things?" she reportedly said. It was a good thing—and then it became a very bad thing.

Her arrest and conviction made inadvertent parody of her perfectionism. "I just want to focus on

my salad," she said when asked questions about the trade on *The Early Show*. She was sentenced to prison for five months, and no one was surprised that, like so many other things in life, she excelled at being incarcerated—she showed all the other ladies the best way to wax a floor, boiled up the dandelions that poked through the concrete slabs of the jail, and was a good sport when she lost a decorating contest—but her image never recovered, and her company struggles today.

Looking back, it doesn't seem fair that with one piddling trade she became the very emblem of corporate greed. But what she really may have been paying for was all those years of lording her own country-cute, glue-gun perfection over the womanly masses.



SCREEEECH!

## Reverse of Fortune

*Lizzie Grubman's PR nightmare.*



2001

**"FUCK YOU, white trash."** If publicist Lizzie Grubman hadn't allegedly uttered those four words before backing her SUV into a line of people waiting to get into Southampton nightclub Conscience Point Inn, the crack legal team that power lawyer Allen Grubman assembled for his 30-year-old daughter might have had an easier time making the case that the crash, in which sixteen people were injured, was an accident. As it was, the words clung to her like "Let them eat cake," despite her frequent denials. Literally overnight, Grubman became the pinup girl for a class war that had already been brewing. Hand-wringing editorials painted her crime as characteristic of the dangerous entitlement of the new-monied elite. When Grubman, pale, makeupless, and Nicole Richie thin, pleaded guilty to felony charges and served 38 days of solitary confinement, it was viewed as the end of this era; a sign that henceforth, even the rich would be punished for their sins. But in the end, Grubman was rewarded for her behavior with her own reality show—and as for the Hamp-ton, the worst was still to come. JESSICA PRESSLER

Twelve-year-old phenom actually 14!

# The Kid (Who Wasn't)

By WILL LEITCH

2001

ANYONE WHO ever played organized youth sports remembers that kid on the other team who seemed older, bigger, more adult than everyone else. His parents had to be lying about his age; no way that kid could be freaking 9! That phenomenon, in 2001, had a name: Danny Almonte.

That August, Almonte, a five-foot-eight Dominican left-hander who had moved to the Bronx just a year earlier, became a national feel-good story when he threw a perfect game in the Little League World Series. Almonte faced 72 batters in the LLWS and struck out 62 of them, with 12-year-old after 12-year-old flailing helplessly at his 78-mile-per-hour fastballs.



Almonte and his teammates were introduced at Yankee Stadium. President Bush shook his hand. Mayor Giuliani gave him a key to the city.

Then it all fell apart. *Sports Illustrated* raised questions

about Almonte's age, and the Dominican government ultimately confirmed that his birth certificate had been falsified: He was 14, not 12. The Bronx team was disbanded, the LLWS wins discounted, and

Almonte turned into a national joke. (Jay Leno: "You know who ended up catching the fact that the kid was older than 12? Michael Jackson.") Almonte married a 30-year-old while he was still in high school, being ignored in the Major League draft, and pitching in a total of six minor-league games for the Southern Illinois Miners. As of last summer, he was reportedly separated, playing in an adult competitive league in town, and helping coach sandlot teams. Little League Baseball, meanwhile, reportedly brings in \$5 million from the broadcast of the LLWS, and ESPN drew 4 million viewers to a game last year, all with a cast of characters they don't have to pay a dime.

## Bill O'Reilly's falafel fetish.

### Fox Chases Tail

"Use your vibrator to blow off steam."

2004

ROUGHLY THREE WEEKS before the 2004 presidential election came an October surprise of sorts, not one that damaged either political party but one that dropped like a bomb in the media's proxy war. Bill O'Reilly was sued by *Factor* associate producer Andrea Mackris, who in her complaint alleged years of quid pro quo sexual harassment from her boss, who played "a morally upright, independent political pundit" on television but had a proclivity for one-sided phone sex.

In a children's book released a month earlier, the Fox News host wrote, "Thanks to some of the loonier films and magazines today, many of you know a lot about unusual sexual practices." The allegations against him proved enlightening as well, when the complaint was published by the *Smoking Gun*: Mackris, 33, alleged the blunt talking head urged her to "just use your vibrator to blow off steam" and bragged about his international sexual exploits, including, but not limited to, "a little short brown woman" in a Bali massage cabana, two "really wild" Scandinavian stewardesses, and a Thai-sex-show "backroom" special. O'Reilly allegedly touched himself while detailing a shower fantasy featuring Mackris and "that little loofah thing" but later in the call, evidently flustered, referred to the prop as a "falafel thing." When he was finished, Mackris said, O'Reilly praised his own recent appearance on the *Tonight Show*. Details all out, the suit was settled about two weeks later, while the audiotapes Mackris was thought to have kept secret. O'Reilly's ratings were reportedly up 30 percent.

JOE COSCARELLI



Mackris: Steamed.

2008

## WALL STREET'S GOLDEN THRONE

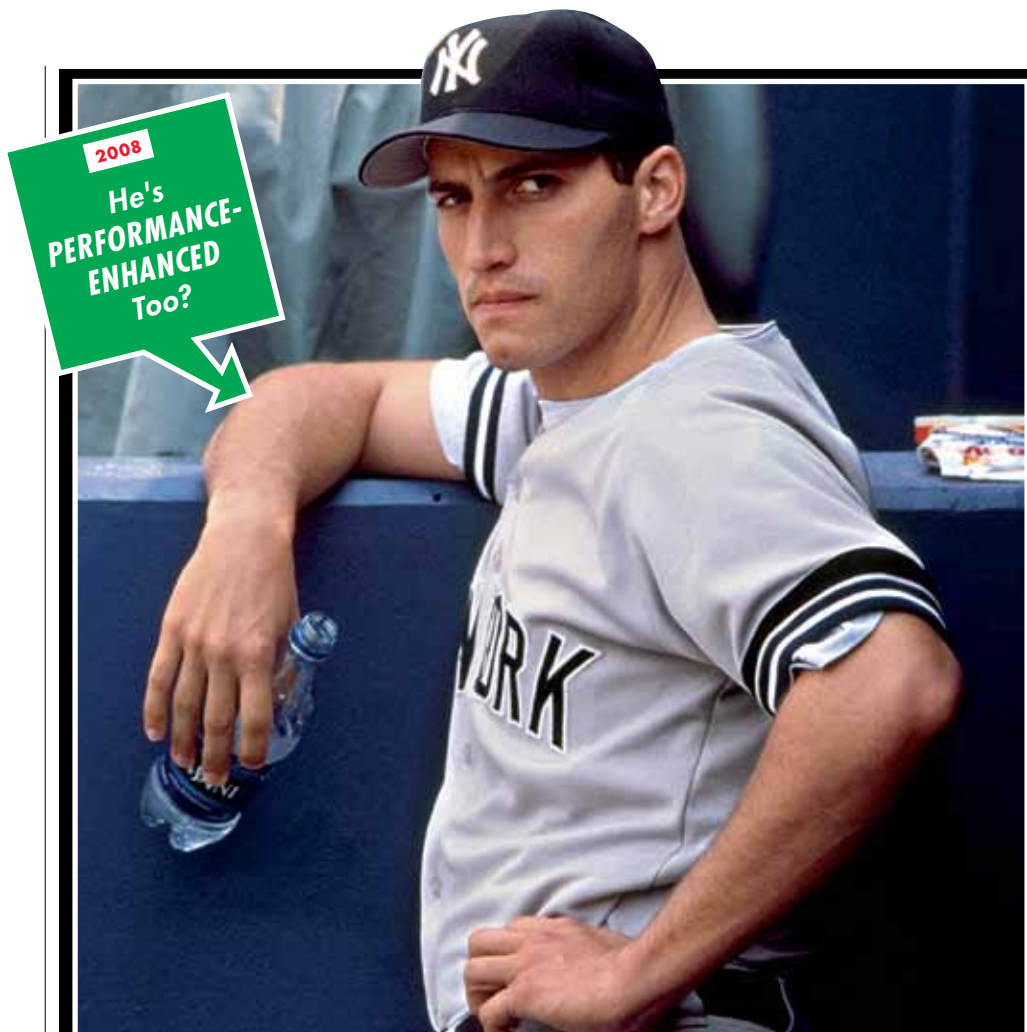
This Commode  
Costs a Load



WHEN LEAKED documents revealed that Merrill Lynch CEO John Thain spent \$1.2 million on an office renovation in 2008, months before the 94-year-old brokerage announced the billions in losses that later led to its collapse, the reaction was as swift as a guillotine. “Click here to see Thain’s Top 16 Outrages,” crowed the Daily Beast, which gleefully itemized the Caligulan amenities bought with company funds, including a “George IV Desk,” an \$11,000 “Roman Shade,” and an \$87,000 area rug. But it was the *objet* mysteriously described as “something called a commode on legs” that many thought emblematic. Had bank CEOs gotten so self-aggrandizing that they now required for themselves literal thrones on which to defecate? In fact, the answer was no. The scandal, according to Margaret Russell, the editor-in-chief of *Architectural Digest*, was elsewhere. “I was appalled because so many people didn’t fact-check,” says Russell, who is friends with Michael Smith, who designed Thain’s suites. “A commode is not a fancy toilet. It’s a very commonly used word for an antique chest of drawers.” Specifically, Thain’s was an eighteenth-century English piece. Ironically, she said, Thain, who was retained in 2007 to revive the firm after the disastrous reign of CEO Stan O’Neal, had been trying to restore dignity to the space. “His predecessor had a *Battlestar Galactica*-style office,” she says. “He wanted something that reflected the nature of what they did.” Enter the commode. “John Thain may have been guilty of something, but it wasn’t bad taste. He certainly has very good taste.”

JESSICA PRESSLER

PHOTOGRAPHS: LEFT, BOB LEVERONE/SPORTING NEWS/GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT, ROB KIM/GETTY IMAGES



# NO, NOT ANDY!

“I KNOW THAT once I have this press conference, and talk to everybody about this and share everything with you, I think the truth will set you free,” said the baseball player from Texas, standing in the tent in Florida, about as unlikely a tableau for a New York scandal as you will find. It wasn’t like revelations of performance-enhancing drugs in sports, at this point, came as a shock. Our blinders were fully off. But Andy Pettitte? Getting busted for using HGH? He was our rock. He was the nice guy, the honest and humble guy, the guy who’d been raised right and talked openly of missing his kids and wore his faith in a way that never came off as righteous or judging. He was also, most crucially, the pitcher whose absurd-

ly clutch, 8 1/3-inning, 1-0 game-five performance against the Atlanta Braves in the 1996 World Series lifted the Yankees out of the fifteen years of bluster, overspending mediocrity—I know, I know, try being a Cubs fan—that had defined my life, so far, as a fan. Whenever grown humans talk about their feelings for professional athletes in this way, it can veer quickly into stupidity and creepiness, but I liked Pettitte, admired his whole deal. I felt like, had I been born with some rare athletic talent, too, we could have hung out, maybe trained bird dogs together in the off-season or something. So when the Mitchell report came out in December 2007, naming Pettitte—along with his teammate, Roger Clemens—as a user

of HGH, I thought, *No way. Pettitte, a cheater? Never.* But then here he was, two months later, in his goofy golf shirt, gripping the lectern nervously, owning up to his lies, apologizing for having used HGH—twice, he said—to speed his recovery from an injury. A funny thing happened in the course of this admission, though: Andy Pettitte emerged from the crucible of his public humiliation as somehow more likable, more real, more ... honest. I realize how that sounds: You’re not honest if you are cheating to get ahead. Which is true. He wasn’t honest. And then he was. He surrendered to the truth, and owned up to his flaws, and the world related, and the world moved on.

ANDY WARD

# ASTOR, MADOFF,

***The last four years brought four first-class New York scandals, each epic, tragic, difficult to***

➡“You mean nobody cares about the fine I got for the Yankees tickets? The Spitzer thing was shocking but long-lasting is easily going to be **Madoff**. The weekend it broke, I was the keynote speaker for Yeshiva University and I said that the Jewish community is maybe the most resilient community in history, given all the different traumas it has survived. I said this after, say, a terrible tragedy in Israel. Every single time I saw other speakers do this, there’s been a disaster is so great, that right now we can’t even think about resilience.’ And then I got this collective sigh, ‘It’s so personal.” —DAVID PATERSON, *FORMER GOVERNOR* ➡“**Madoff**, because people love to gossip about sex and money.” —JAMES H. HANCOCK, *WRITER* ➡“**Madoff**. Money matters over sex at all times.” —GAY TALESE, *WRITER* ➡“**Spitzer**. He provoked a scandal.” —MICHAEL ORESKOS, *CHIEF, NEW YORK POST* ➡“**Easy: Madoff**, because of the scheme’s scale, longevity, megacriminality, and sheer peculiarity.” —KURT ANDERSEN, *WRITER* ➡“In the future, everyone will have a dirty digital past, so Weiner’s downfall befalls the rich.” —MIKE ALBO, *WRITER* ➡“**Weiner**. Years from now, New Yorkers will think to themselves, **Bernie Madoff**. He fucked over so many people that the Ponzi scheme will forever be linked with his name and his offense is so risible (which, if you mispronounce it, makes the whole event even more preposterous (if not ruined). And as hilariously appropriate as Weiner’s last name is, Madoff’s is even better.” —TODD LITVACK, *WIFE ABOUT SEX*. Same with Brooke Astor, because it’s axiomatic: Where there’s a will, there’s a war. Madoff is down in the books because it’s the only postmodern one. In olden days, he would have been arrested for being a Jew.” —JAMES HANCOCK, *NEW YORK SOCIAL DIARY* ➡“**Spitzer**, Madoff, Weiner, Astor. Hookers > Fraud > Sexting > Family Fight.” —JAMES HANCOCK, *NEW YORK SOCIAL DIARY* ➡“It’s the gift that keeps on giving. Like herpes.” —SIMON DOONAN, *CREATIVE AMBASSADOR, BARRY SCHERER* ➡“The scandal by a son is too common. And the Weiner scandal will be as forgotten as a discarded Casio cell phone.” —JAMES HANCOCK, *NEW YORK SOCIAL DIARY* ➡“The scandal will be resolved in the biographies of a few stout and earnest people. There was nothing earnest about **Madoff** or **Madoff**. There’s little chance of the others being remembered by anyone other than antiquarians. —LITVACK, *WIFE ABOUT SEX* ➡“You can’t get more sordid than those two.” —MAUREEN BRAY, *DIRECTOR, SEAN KELLY GALLERY* ➡“**Brooke Astor**.” —JAMES HANCOCK, *NEW YORK SOCIAL DIARY* ➡“**Weiner**, because, unlike the others, it could never have happened at any other time. All his drama and its fallout, ended up just a tinpot Clinton, but **Madoff**—in his Jewish George Washington p.o’d mouth), the way he so plainly resembled a caricature straight out of the Protocols of Zion—Madoff is the worst enemies’ view of us. If there is an increased anti-Semitism in this country, if people fall back to the old tropes, ➡“**No question, Madoff**. He came to represent a terrible rot that was rampant in our financial system. The others have no real larger ramifications; they are mere personal and private dramas.” —JON ROBINSON, *WRITER* ➡“**Madoff**. He managed to derail the Mets even without the scandal. I’m not surprised if anyone remembered any of those scandals a month from now much less a century.” —JAMES HANCOCK, *NEW YORK SOCIAL DIARY*

# SPITZER, WEINER

to forget. But which will we still be talking about 100 years from now? We asked around.

because of the contrast. There's nothing like when somebody gets caught breaking their own rules. But the graduation—and Bernie Madoff was the treasurer—and I felt like I was at a state funeral. At one point, I times over the centuries that the Jews have bounced back from disaster. I'd seen other people do this—you'd n resounding applause. But this time, everybody looked at me. Nobody clapped. And I said, 'Maybe this gh. I sat down next to Speaker Sheldon Silver, and he said, 'Not that time.' Not that time. It was just too ad family scandals for a few weeks, but they never forget the guy who picks their pockets. —LAURA MILLER, red to be a man of action. Madoff and Weiner were phonies. One big, one little." —COL ALLAN, *EDITOR-IN-* and embodiment of an era—although the Weiner episode gets honorable mention for its highly 2011-ish iner and Spitzer will be minor footnotes. **Ms. Astor's** story will endure as yet another example of what s: a sex scandal, both tragic and comedic, and without sex." —ED KOCH, *FORMER MAYOR* ➡ **"No question: white-collar black magic."** —DAVID CHANG, *RESTAURATEUR* ➡ **"Weiner,** because the confluence of his osterous)." —DANIEL OKRENT, *WRITER* ➡ **"Madoff.** So many powerful people and institutions affected PPY, *EDITOR*, *ESOPUS* ➡ "Spitzer's story will be forgotten first because it's basically just a man lying to his ff's story will have long legs because swindlers tend to be immortalized. But the **Weiner** scandal may go eing a public nuisance and that would have been that." —DAVID PATRICK COLUMBIA, *EDITOR/CO-FOUNDER*, " —SCCO \_ K, *NYMAG.COM COMMENTER* ➡ **"Hands down, Bernie Madoff.** New details emerge every ARNEYS NEW YORK ➡ **"1. Madoff. 2. Spitzer.** The other two not—Astor is too great, and will-pilfering PETER KAPLAN, *EDITORIAL DIRECTOR*, *FAIRCHILD FASHION MEDIA* ➡ "Emerson once said that history can ff, of course, but he will be the figurehead of our era of greed." —COLUM MCCANN, *WRITER* ➡ My money's UC SANTE, *WRITER* ➡ **"Spitzer and Weiner.** New Yorkers have a love affair with sordid politicians, and e **Astor—if you're gay.** The straights don't really get into the whole Ancient Socialite thing." —KAFKASK, ther moment—he owns the early teens 4EVA." —LORIN STEIN, *EDITOR*, *THE PARIS REVIEW* ➡ "Spitzer, for ton looks (the hair sort of long but not unkempt and just flaring at the ears, also the melancholy nose and f not only forever changed how the world looks at Wall Street, he also personified Jewish fears about our e old, poison canards about Jewish bankers, it will be Bernie Madoff's fault." —DARIN STRAUSS, *WRITER* stem." —RICHARD PEÑA, *PROGRAM DIRECTOR*, *FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER* ➡ **"Madoff,** because IN BAITZ, *PLAYWRIGHT* ➡ **"Madoff.** It's one thing to bilk pension funds, but it takes a real sadist to orse than they could by themselves!" —SUSAN YUNG, *BAM PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR* ➡ "I would be very I already get Brooke Astor mixed up with **Brooke Burke.**" —AARON SORKIN, *SCREENWRITER*