

Reaching for the Center

By **JOE KLEIN**

THIS WAS A BIG DEAL. CERTAINLY, IT WAS THE end of George W. Bush's radical experiment in partisan governance. It might have been even bigger than that: the end of the conservative pendulum swing that began

with Ronald Reagan's revolution. Not only did the Democrats lay a robust whupping on the Republicans in the midterm elections, but—far worse—the President was forced to acknowledge that the defining policy of his Administration, the war in Iraq, was failing.

One day after the midterms, George W. Bush replaced Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the blustery symbol of American arrogance overseas. And after six years of near total control at home, Bush had to adjust to a situation in which his vision had been rejected by the voters and his power seriously limited. Rumsfeld was replaced by Robert Gates, who had been a junior associate on the foreign policy team of President George H.W. Bush and was well schooled in the cautious "realism" that marked the reign of the elder Bush.

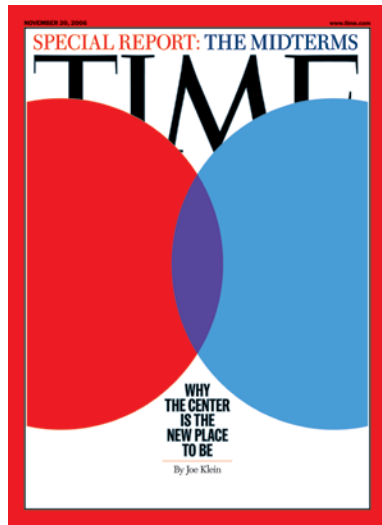
Bush's decision to delay the firing of Rumsfeld until after the election will undoubtedly stand as one of the greatest mistakes of his presidency. It was a purely political decision, straight from the playbook of presidential adviser Karl Rove: show no sign of weakness or indecision in the midst of a campaign—or, as Bill Clinton neatly summarized it, Strong and wrong beats weak and right. Not this time. "Strong and wrong" may have cost Bush the election. It may also have cost him whatever chance he had for a dignified exit from Iraq. His refusal to change his team and his strategy prevented an effective

response to the disintegration of Iraq over the past few months. The exit polls indicate that the war was not the main issue in the 2006 election: the general odor of corruption and incompetence emanating from Washington seemed to be the real motivator. But the Administration's stubbornness on Iraq, neatly symbolized by Rumsfeld's detachment from reality, certainly didn't help the G.O.P. cause.

If there was a common strand in the many Democratic victories and Republican defeats of November 7, it was the coming to power of realists. The Democrats chose their candidates on pragmatism, not principle. The incoming Senate majority leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, and Senator Charles Schumer of New York made a stark decision to force the attractive if inexperienced Iraq war veteran

Paul Hackett out of the Senate race in Ohio and to support Congressman Sherrod Brown, a feisty old-school liberal whose economic views matched well with Ohio's economic desperation. In Pennsylvania, Reid and Schumer went with a pro-life candidate, Bob Casey Jr., despite shrieks from the party's pro-choice base. The common denominator wasn't liberalism or moderation but the ability to win. The question now is whether "winning" means blocking the President or demonstrating the ability to govern. It probably means a little of both, but the Democrats will be better served by proving they have the maturity to do the latter.

Why? Because the American public proved that it had the maturity to ignore, and in many cases rebel against, the sludge tide of negative ads that were splashed onto the public airwaves, primarily by Republicans. Americans tossed aside candidates who had associated themselves with the corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff, those whose position on immigration slouched toward



anti-Hispanic racism, especially in the Rocky Mountain gubernatorial contests and several congressional districts in the Southwest. They chose candidates who, in the words of Colorado Congressman John Salazar, “have manure on the outside of their boots rather than on the inside.” Nowhere was this more literally true than in Virginia, where footwear actually played a role in the campaign. The Democratic challenger, Jim Webb, wore his son’s combat boots and the Republican incumbent, George Allen, wore cowboy boots that were unstained (on the outside, at least). Webb’s successful antiwar campaign was about the fate of his son, a Marine lance corporal serving in Iraq’s Anbar province; Allen’s campaign was a dreadful series of gaffes followed by a despicable effort to smear the Democrat by quoting graphic passages from Webb’s critically acclaimed war novels.

But this election was not only about a disastrous war and the stench of corruption. It was also about a style of politics—the slashing negative politics practiced by a generation of media consultants in both parties. Voters sent a clear message to politicians: stop slinging the manure, and start getting serious about the nation’s problems.

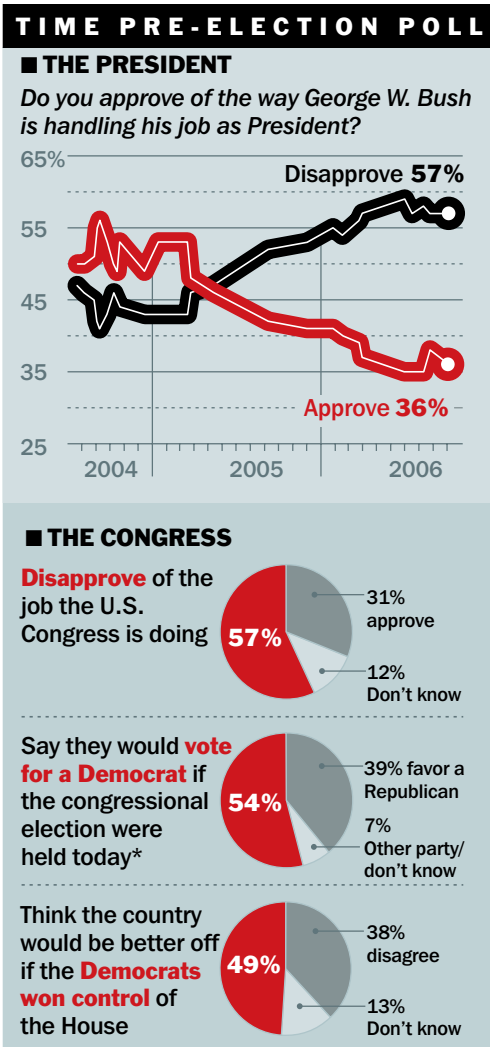
Which may be the most compelling case for a bit of optimism in a difficult time. In a meeting with political columnists, Reid said, “It’s not a time to get even with the Republicans; it’s a time to treat them the way they didn’t treat us.” And then he announced that he and Nancy Pelosi, the new Speaker of the House, had decided to open the House-Senate conference committees to the press. It’s a small point, but it has great symbolic relevance.

The conferences are where the most important legislative action takes place, where compromises are worked out between House and Senate versions of legislation and where, in the recent past, all sorts of special deals for lobbyists and pork for legislators have been inserted without public scrutiny. In the old days, the conferences were public. They’ve been closed for at least the past 10 years, and during that time, pork-barrel earmarks have increased tenfold. It’s not impossible

that this little adjustment will restore bipartisan compromise to its honored place as the essential act in a working democracy, and restore pork to its sordid, if greasily necessary, corner of the legislative dance. “We may actually have to work on Saturdays,” Reid said, in a reference to the bankers’ hours kept by the Republican Congress. “And I want to be clear, bipartisanship doesn’t mean hugs and kisses. It’s not going to be touch football; it’s going to be a free-for-all. We’re going to come out of that chamber covered in mud and with plenty of bruises, but that’s the only way to get anything accomplished.”

After a dark congressional session dominated by the refusal to seriously address health care, energy independence, immigration or the war in Iraq, Reid’s mod-

est promise that his Senators will have some mud on the outside of their boots is realistic—and also downright exhilarating. ■



Questions

1. According to Klein, what will stand as one of the greatest mistakes of George W. Bush’s presidency?
2. What was the biggest issue on voters’ minds when they went to the polls on November 7, 2006?

“Anybody knows not to mess with me”

Democrat Nancy Pelosi brings a fiery style to her new job as new Speaker of the House

By PERRY BACON JR.

NANCY PELOSI MADE HISTORY ON JANUARY 4, 2007, when members of the House of Representatives selected her to become the first female Speaker of the House. “This is an historic moment for Congress, and for the women of this country,” she proclaimed. “It is a moment for which we have waited more than 200 years.”

The 66-year-old lawmaker from San Francisco is a hyper-partisan politician who is the Democrats’ version of Tom DeLay, minus the ethical and legal problems of the former Republican House leader. To condition Democrats for the 2006 midterm elections, Pelosi employed tactics straight out of DeLay’s playbook: insisting House Democrats vote the party line on everything, avoiding compromise with Republicans at all cost, and requiring members to spend much of their time raising money for colleagues in close races. And she has been effective.

Pelosi grew up in a prominent political family in Baltimore, Maryland. Her father was the mayor for almost her entire childhood. After college, Pelosi and her husband Paul moved to New York City and then to San Francisco, where she became a leading Democratic fund raiser, then chairwoman of the party in California. But she waited until the youngest of her five children was a high school senior before she ran for Congress in 1987.

Once in Congress, she was embraced especially by liberal Democrats. She opposed the Gulf War

and in a 1996 interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, “I pride myself in being called a liberal.” In 2001, Pelosi won an intense battle with Maryland’s Steny Hoyer, who is more centrist, to become the No. 2 Democrat in the House. A year later she defeated another moderate, Martin Frost of Texas, to become the party’s leader in the chamber. While she declines to discuss those conflicts, Pelosi told TIME, “Anybody who’s ever dealt with me knows not to mess with me.”

Like DeLay, Pelosi has embraced hard-knuckle partisanship, even if it means standing still. When Bush announced his Social Security plan in 2005, Pelosi told House Democrats they could never beat him in a policy-against-policy debate because he had the megaphone of the presidency and was just coming off re-election. So the Democrats thunderously attacked Bush and argued there was no Social Security crisis and therefore no need for them to put out their own proposal. Some members were concerned that Pelosi would make the Democrats look like the Party of No. They asked when they were going to release a rival plan.

“Never. Is never good enough for you?” she defiantly replied.

Up until now, Pelosi’s most important role has been behind the scenes. Now that the Democrats have taken the House, that will change, since Speaker Pelosi is the face of the Democrats and second in the line of succession to the presidency, after Vice President Dick Cheney. It will also be a test of Pelosi’s skills: she has unified the Democrats in

Nancy Pelosi has unified the Democrats in opposition, but it will be much more difficult to keep Democratic members in line now that they have control.

opposition, but it will be much more difficult to keep Democratic members in line now that they have control. “They listen to no one,” says Pelosi. But so far, the Democrats have listened to their leader—and if she keeps guiding them smartly, Nancy Pelosi could make President Bush’s final two years even more vexing than the past two. ■

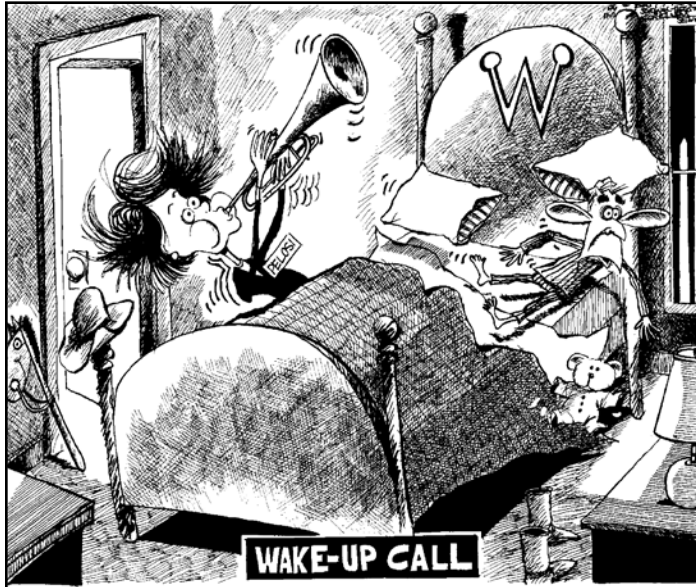
Questions

1. How did Pelosi condition House Democrats for the midterm elections of 2006?
2. How does Pelosi describe her political views?



The Midterm Elections: A Gallery of Views

In the midterm elections of 2006, the Democrats pulled off a stunning victory. They not only won back the House by a wide margin, but against all odds, they regained control of the Senate. The ramifications of the defeat of one-party rule and the rise of the new Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, are discussed in **Reaching for the Center** on **pages 2 and 3** and **“Anybody knows not to mess with me”** on **page 4**. In response to the shift in the balance of power, commentators offered a variety of perspectives. Study the three cartoons at left. Then answer the questions below.



1. Describe the action taking place in each image. What figures are shown? What symbols do you see?
2. In the top cartoon, why do you think Bush is being knocked out of bed?
3. What is the second cartoonist's prediction regarding the way that President Bush and Congress will get along? How do you think the relationship between the President and Congress will play out?
4. What comment is the cartoonist who created the bottom image making about President Bush's power to veto bills? How does the cartoonist convey this point?
5. Of the three images, which do you think is most supportive of President Bush? Least supportive? Justify your answers. What progression do you see in the cartoons?

For Further Exploration

What changes are Democrats expected to push for now that they have won control of Congress? Conduct additional research and write a one-page essay in which you share your findings.

Gerald Ford: Steady Hand for a Nation in Crisis

By PAUL GRAY

HE WAS NOT ONLY AN ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENT but a famously and endearingly accident-prone one as well. Fate evidently had elaborate designs on Gerald Rudolph Ford and fulfilled them

on the world's stage in a dazzling combination of high pomp and low slapstick.

He was the nation's first appointed Vice President, chosen in October 1973 by President Richard Nixon under the terms of the recently ratified 25th Amendment to succeed the disgraced Spiro Agnew. Less than a year later, on August 9, 1974, Nixon resigned rather than face a Senate trial on three articles of impeachment passed by the House of Representatives, and Ford took the oath to be the 38th President of the U.S.

That was a preposterous development in the career of a politician who had never run for office beyond the confines of the Fifth Congressional District of Michigan. In his first televised statement after his swearing-in, Ford acknowledged his unusual status: "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots. So I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers."

His request found a receptive audience. For nearly two years, the accelerating Watergate scandals had polarized Washington, dominated news coverage and poisoned public discourse. Even to his loyal defenders, the increasingly

embattled Nixon did not radiate trustworthiness. On TV that August afternoon, Ford seemed the anti-Nixon: plainspoken, keeping steady eye contact with the camera. "My fellow Americans," he said in his reedy Midwestern tones, "our long national nightmare is over."

That verdict was premature, but people believed

it because they so desperately wanted to. Besides, Ford looked like an honest, decent man, and that, as people who knew him readily attested, is exactly what he was. Frank Capra might have made a movie of Ford's wholesome life to date, although perhaps without the improbable fade-out in the Oval Office.

He was born Leslie Lynch King Jr. in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1913. Two years later his parents divorced, and his mother moved with him back to her hometown, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she met and married a businessman named

Gerald R. Ford. She changed her son's name to that of his stepfather, and he did not learn his true identity until he was, as he later recalled, 12 or 13. In 1931 he enrolled at the University of Michigan on a full athletic scholarship. He majored in economics, played center on the Big Ten varsity squad and during his senior year was chosen to participate in the Shrine College All-Star game. After graduation he went off to Yale to coach football and boxing. After taking several courses on a trial basis, he was admitted to Yale Law School, from which he graduated in the top quarter of his class in 1941. He returned to Grand Rapids to found a law practice with his friend Philip Buchen, but



shortly after Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the Navy and served for four years.

He returned to Grand Rapids to restart his law firm and pursue his interest in politics. His stepfather was active in local Republican affairs, and in 1948 Ford plunged in. He challenged the local G.O.P. Representative and won. Three weeks before the election, Ford, in a quiet ceremony, married Betty Warren, an attractive divorcée.

Ford spent the next 25 years in the House, maintaining his seat through careful attention to his constituents back home and rising in rank through seniority and his amiable relations with colleagues in both parties. After the Democrats' landslide victory in 1964, Ford was elected House minority leader. After Nixon's election in 1968, Ford had a President he could work with but not a G.O.P. majority in the House. When Nixon's 1972 trouncing of George McGovern still failed to overturn the Democrats' congressional advantage, Ford began to consider retiring, feeling he would never become Speaker of the House. When Nixon's surprise offer of the vice presidency arrived, Ford told a colleague, "It would be a good way to round out my career."

Less than a month after taking office, Ford took a step that many believe doomed his presidency. His full pardon of Nixon for any crimes he may have committed while in office provoked a firestorm of criticism and outrage and led to widespread suspicion that Ford had made a secret agreement with his predecessor: Nixon would resign if promised a pardon. Congressional hearings were called, and Ford willingly appeared in person to answer questions. He denied making any deal with Nixon. The matter has been investigated many times since, and no evidence has ever been found to challenge the truthfulness of what Ford gave as his reason for the pardon. He believed that a protracted trial of Nixon would provide a rancorous distraction from the nation's pressing business and that his pardon was made for "the greatest good of all the people of the United States." His approval rating,

according to the Gallup Poll, plummeted from 71% to 49%.

For an accomplished ex-athlete, Ford sometimes displayed surprising physical awkwardness. He tripped, in full view of cameras, while descending the stairs from an airplane. Unfortunately for Ford, NBC had launched an experimental live-action comedy show called *Saturday Night Live*, designed to attract an audience of irreverent younger viewers. Chevy Chase, one of the original cast members, began playing Ford in skits and taking elaborate, deadpan tumbles, leaving the props and set in shambles. Viewers howled. Ford took those gibes in good humor, another sign of his essential decency; he was not a collector of grievances like his predecessor. But the public perception of his occasional ineptitudes did not help him govern, nor did the heavy Democratic majorities in Congress after the 1974, post-Watergate elections.

Ford had announced he would not run for President in 1976, but his sense of work left undone made him change his mind. His Democratic opponent, former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, ran energetically against Washington and the eight previous years of Republican rule. The election was surprisingly close.

Carter won, with 297 electoral votes to Ford's 241. Ford campaigned ferociously in the final days; he was teary when the results were announced.

On January 2, 2007, as an honor guard prepared to carry Ford's coffin into Washington National Cathedral, you could hear the august music of *Hail to the Chief*. Inside the church, George W. Bush and three of his predecessors were gathered. But for the moment, there was only one chief who mattered, the man who once helped the nation weather a shock to its system. In his eulogy, George H.W. Bush said it best: "Gerald Ford's decency was the ideal remedy for the deception of Watergate." ■

In his first televised statement after his swearing-in, Ford acknowledged his status: "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots."

Questions

1. How did Gerald Ford become President?
2. According to many observers, what decision did Ford make that doomed his presidency?

What a Surge Really Means

Can a couple more divisions in Iraq make a difference in countering the insurgency? Or is President Bush's idea too little, too late?

By **MICHAEL DUFFY**

FOR YEARS NOW, GEORGE W. BUSH HAS TOLD Americans that he would increase the number of troops in Iraq only if the commanders on the ground asked him to do so. It was not a throwaway line: Bush said it from the very first days of the war, when he and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld were criticized for going to war with too few troops. He said it right up until last summer, stressing at a news conference that Iraq commander General George Casey "will make the decisions as to how many troops we have there."

Now, as the war nears the end of its fourth year and the number of Americans killed has surpassed 3,000, Bush has dropped the generals-know-best line. The President has proposed a surge in the number of U.S. forces in Iraq. A senior official said reinforcements numbering "about 20,000 troops," and maybe more, could be in place within months. The surge would be achieved by extending the stay of some forces already in Iraq and accelerating the deployment of others.

The irony is that while the generals would have liked more troops in the past, they are cool to the idea of sending more now. That's in part because the politicians and commanders have had trouble agreeing on what the goal of a surge would be. But it is also because they are worried that a surge would further erode the readiness of the U.S.'s already stressed ground forces. And even those who back a surge are under no illusions about what it would mean to the casualty

rate. "If you put more American troops on the front line," said a White House official, "you're going to have more casualties."

All kinds of military experts, both active duty and retired, have been calling for more troops since before the war began. But seen in another light, the surge is the latest salvo in the 30-year tug of war between the two big foreign-policy

factions in the Republican Party: the internationalists and the neoconservatives (also known as "neocons"). The surge concept belongs to the neocons and in particular to Frederick Kagan, who taught military history at West Point for a decade and today works out of the American Enterprise Institute as a military analyst. The neocons don't have the same juice they had at the start of the war, in part because so many of them have fled the government in shame. But they are a long way from dead.

It was no accident that the surge idea began gathering steam among the war's most ardent supporters at exactly the same moment the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group proposed, in early December, that the White House start executing a slow but steady withdrawal from Iraq. To the neocons, former Secretary of State James Baker is the archenemy, the prime example of those internationalists who have always been too willing to cut deals with shady players overseas.

Bush greeted the Baker-Hamilton proposals with the gratitude of someone who had just received a box of rotting cod. By Christmas, it was clear that he had not only rejected a staged withdrawal in the mold of Baker-Hamilton but was ready to up his bet and throw even more troops at the problem.



Bush sent his new Pentagon boss, Robert Gates, to Baghdad to see whether the Iraqi commanders needed more troops. Bush then turned to his National Security Adviser, Stephen Hadley, to hack this new way out of the Iraqi jungle.

So far, the Hadley-run hunt for a new military and diplomatic approach has earned mediocre marks from inside and outside the White House. Wider-ranging alternatives were not explored in any depth, said several foreign-policy experts who met with Hadley in December, and talks with Iran and Syria were ruled out of the question. A dismayed Administration official who has generally been an optimist about Iraq described the process as chaotic. “None of this,” he predicted of the surge and its coming rollout, “is going to work.”

According to Kagan, the newly enlarged forces would reorder U.S. priorities in Iraq and make protecting the Iraqi people Job One. How? With what retired Lieutenant General David Barno, who helped Kagan and former Army Vice Chief of Staff Jack Keane write the plan, calls “classic counterinsurgency tactics. These include soldiers going house to house in every block, finding out who lives there, what they do, how many weapons they have, whom they are connected to and how they can help or hurt.” Only by winning the trust of the people, the thinking goes, can the U.S. overcome the insurgents. There is a big debate about

how many troops would be needed to execute that mission successfully. Some experts think 100,000 might be the right number; Keane and Kagan say it can be done with 35,000, which is about the limit that would be available. It does not appear that the White House will be sending that many.

Asked what happens if the surge fails, Kagan told *TIME*, “If the situation collapses for some other reason—loss of will in the U.S., say, or an unexpected Iraqi political meltdown, then the reduced violence will permit a more orderly withdrawal, if that becomes necessary, mitigating the effect of defeat on the U.S. military and potentially on the region.” A retired colonel who served in Baghdad put it more bluntly: “We don’t know whether this is a plan for victory or just to signal to Americans that we did our damndest before pulling out.”

There is one other scenario to consider: it may be that Bush won’t pull out of Iraq as long as he is President. Whether it works or not, a surge of 18 to 24 months would carry Bush to the virtual end of his term. After that, Iraq becomes someone else’s problem. Bush’s real exit strategy in Iraq may just be to exit the presidency first.

The White House imagines it is girding for battle against the Democrats and the naysayers who opposed the war in the first place. In fact, its fastest-growing problem is with Republicans who carried Bush’s water on “stay the course” last fall. That gambit cost the party 36 seats in

the House and Senate in November. One can only imagine what that number would have been—45? 55?—had Bush campaigned last fall for sending 20,000 more troops to Iraq instead. ■

Questions

1. What political faction is behind President Bush’s plan for a surge of troops in Iraq? What competing faction is not?
2. What would be the top priority for American troops after the surge?



Like Father, Like Son

Vietnam hero and Senator John McCain has unyieldingly backed the Iraq war. Now McCain's son Jimmy is heading to boot camp—and maybe to battle

By **MASSIMO CALABRESI**

IN SEPTEMBER, SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN'S youngest son, Jimmy, 18, will report to a U.S. Marine Corps depot near Camp Pendleton in San Diego. He could be in Iraq as early as this time next year, and his chances of seeing combat at some point are high. Of the 178,000 active-duty Marines in the world, some 80,000 have seen a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan, and 25,000 are now bearing the brunt of some of the worst fighting in Iraq. About 6,000 Marines have been wounded there, and about 650 have been killed.

At 70 years old, McCain might have thought his days of living in the shadow of family military men were behind him. His grandfather, Admiral John S. McCain Sr., served in the Pacific in World War II and was present at the Japanese surrender aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri*. His father, Admiral John S. McCain Jr., commanded U.S. forces in the Pacific during Vietnam, when the young McCain was a prisoner of war in Hanoi.

McCain says he doesn't read much into Jimmy's decision. "I know that he's aware of his family's service background," he says. "But I think the main motivator was, he had friends who were in the Marine Corps, and he'd known Marines, and he'd read about them, and he just wanted to join up."

Named after McCain's father-in-law, James Hensley, Jimmy is the lively, happy-go-lucky member of the clan, friends say. During the

2000 campaign, a *Boston Globe* reporter spotted Jimmy, then 11, chasing his older brother Jack around the house, calling him a "pork-barrel spender"—a deep cut in the McCain home.

McCain is rock-star famous, and his wife Cindy came to the marriage with money as the daughter of a Budweiser distributor. While others have signed up for duty—the sons of Senator Kit Bond of Missouri and Tim Johnson of South Dakota have served combat missions in Iraq—it is nonetheless unusual for children with their background to enlist. By comparison, at least 32 congressional family members were found to be lobbyists, in a recent study by Public Citizen's Congress Watch.

Jimmy McCain's deployment will affect more than his family. His father is a main contender for the White House in 2008 and the leading voice calling for increasing the number of U.S. troops in Iraq.

The country may find itself viewing Iraq through Senator McCain's eyes as it follows his son's progress.

McCain says his son's service won't change his position on the war, and claims it won't even affect how he feels about it. "Like every parent who has a son or daughter serving that way, you will have great concern, but you'll also have great pride," McCain says. But it will be hard to ignore. McCain already has strong national-security credentials. His son's service

only strengthens his position. It will neutralize the assertions of the left that Republicans are "chicken hawks," pursuing the war for ideological reasons without any connection to the pain of it.

More than anything else, though, the country may find itself viewing Iraq through McCain's eyes as it follows his son's progress. And nothing is more powerful for a candidate than sympathy. Nothing, too, is more irritating to McCain, who sounds annoyed by the interest in his son's enlistment. Whatever Jimmy's enrollment says about him, his father or the country, candidate McCain is letting it speak for itself, for the most part. ■

Questions

1. According to Senator McCain, why did his son Jimmy enlist in the Marine Corps?
2. What does the writer mean when he says McCain's enlistment "will affect more than his family"?

The Year Of You

In 2006, the World Wide Web became a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter in new ways

By **LEV GROSSMAN**

THE “GREAT MAN” THEORY OF HISTORY IS usually attributed to the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle, who wrote that “the history of the world is but the biography of great men.” He believed that it is the few, the powerful and the famous who shape our collective destiny as a species. That theory took a serious beating this year.

To be sure, there are individuals we could blame for the many painful and disturbing things that happened in 2006. The conflict in Iraq only got bloodier and more entrenched. A vicious skirmish erupted between Israel and Lebanon. A war dragged on in Sudan. A tin-pot dictator in North Korea got the Bomb, and the President of Iran wants to go nuclear too.

But look at 2006 through a different lens and you’ll see another story, one that isn’t about conflict or great men. It’s a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It’s about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people’s network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It’s about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.

America loves its solitary geniuses—its Einsteins, its Edisons, its Jobses—but those lonely dreamers

may have to learn to play with others. Car companies are running open design contests. Reuters is carrying blog postings alongside its regular news feed. We’re looking at an explosion of productivity and innovation, and it’s just getting started, as millions of minds that would otherwise have drowned in obscurity get backhauled into the global intellectual economy.

Who are these people? Seriously, who actually sits down after a long day at work and says, “I’m not going to watch *Lost* tonight. I’m going to turn on my computer and make a movie starring my pet iguana. I’m going to mash up 50 Cent’s vocals with Queen’s instrumentals. I’m going to blog about my state of mind or the state of the nation or the *steak-frites* at the new bistro down the street.” Who has that time and that energy and that passion?

The answer is, you do. And for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game, TIME’s Person of the Year for 2006 is you.

Sure, it’s a mistake to romanticize all this any more than is strictly necessary. The Web harnesses the stupidity of crowds as well as its wisdom. Some of the comments on YouTube make you weep for the future of humanity just for the spelling alone, never mind the obscenity

and the naked hatred.

But that’s what makes all this interesting. The Web is a massive social experiment, and like any experiment worth trying, it could fail. But, this is an opportunity to build a new kind of international understanding, not politician to politician, great man to great man, but citizen to citizen, person to person.

Questions

1. What are the reasons for TIME’s selection of its 2006 Person of the Year?
2. What are some ways in which the Web is creating new forms of community and collaboration?



The Gurus of YouTube

How a couple of regular guys built a revolutionary new company that changed the way we see ourselves and our world

By JOHN CLOUD

LET'S SAY YOU'RE IN YOUR 20S AND YOU START your first Internet company. Let's say 21 months later you sell it for \$1.65 billion. What happens next? That's just the question Steve Chen, 28, and Chad Hurley, 29, two of the three founders of YouTube (the other, Jawed Karim, went to grad school last year) are asking themselves.

YouTube became a phenomenon in 2006 for many reasons, but one in particular: it was both easy and edgy, a rare combination. You can watch videos on the site without downloading any software or even registering. YouTube is to video browsing what a Wal-Mart Supercenter is to shopping: everything is there, and all you have to do is walk in the door. But because the site doesn't prescreen uploads—which is a lot cheaper for Chad and Steve than hiring a bunch of editors to police millions of users—it ends up hosting a lot of out-there stuff as well: obscure bands, tear-jerking video diaries, and so on. The unmediated free-for-all encouraged the valuable notion that the site was grass-roots and community-run. These are partial fictions, of course. YouTube controls the “Featured Videos” on its home page, which can dramatically popularize a posting that otherwise might fade. Also, the video in the top-right section of the home page is an advertisement, even though it doesn't always look like one. There is an endless supply of kinda weird, kinda cool, kinda inspiring stuff there, which means you can waste hours on Chad and Steve's site.

That, in turn, means advertisers want to be on YouTube, which is why Google paid so much to buy it. If even, say, 10% of the \$54 billion spent

on TV advertising annually migrates to video sites like YouTube in the next few years, we will pity Chad and Steve for selling for a mere \$1.65 billion. But for now, with YouTube still unproven—it has never made much money, and it could be crushed by lawsuits from content creators whose material shows up on the site without permission—the blockbuster acquisition price carries a whiff of the late-'90s Silicon Valley gold rush. It now falls to Chad, the CEO, and Steve, who runs the tech side, to prove that what they created

YouTube became a phenomenon in 2006 for many reasons, but one in particular: it was both easy and edgy, a rare combination.

with Karim will not become the next *broadcast.com*, the video provider Yahoo! bought for \$5.7 billion in 1999—and which now doesn't exist.

Turning YouTube from a sensational rumpus to a profitable corporation will require Chad and Steve to thread the company through legal disputes, hire at least 100% more employees than they have now,

negotiate with the biggest ad and media companies in the world, maintain their unique identity without getting swallowed up by Google, please shareholders, manage p.r. and flawlessly execute a thousand other tasks that far more experienced executives have flubbed. Can a couple of kids who grew up nowhere near Silicon Valley handle all this?

Chad Hurley met Steve Chen and Jawed Karim, two engineers with whom he would occasionally bat around ideas for start-ups, while he was working at PayPal. Karim, 27, enrolled at Stanford last year to pursue a master's in computer science, and today there's some tension between him and the other founders, who have become famous while he toils in a small, modestly furnished dorm room. Although Karim is named on YouTube's site as a co-founder, Chad and Steve have promoted a highly simplified history of the

company's founding that largely excludes him. In the stripped-down version—repeated in dozens of news accounts—Chad and Steve got the idea in the winter of 2005, after they had trouble sharing videos online that had been shot at a dinner party at Steve's San Francisco apartment. Karim says the dinner party never happened and that the seed idea of video sharing was his—although he is quick to say its realization in YouTube required “the equal efforts of all three of us.”

No company, of course, is ever founded in a single moment, and YouTube evolved over several months. Chad and Steve agree that Karim deserves credit for the early idea that became, in Steve's words, “the original goal that we were working toward in the very beginning”: a video version of HOTORNOT.COM, a dating site. Karim says it was a pioneer: “I was incredibly impressed with HOTORNOT, because it was the first time that someone had designed a website where anyone could upload content that everyone else could view. That was a new concept because up until that point, it was always the people who owned the website who would provide the content.”

The idea of a video version of HOTORNOT lasted only a couple of months. “It was too narrow,” says Chad. He notes that another early idea was to help people share videos for online auctions. But as the site went live in the spring of 2005, the founders realized that people were posting whatever videos they wanted. “In the end, we just sat back,” says Chad—and the free-for-all began. Within months,

investors such as Time Warner and Sequoia Capital, a Menlo Park investment firm, began to approach YouTube about buying in.

Early on, Chad and Steve made a crucial good decision: despite pressure from advertisers, they would not force users to sit through ads before videos played. Pre-roll ads would have helped their bottom line in the struggling months, but the site would never have gained its mythological community-driven status. It would have seemed simply like another Big Media site. The question is, How do they preserve the site's underground image now that YouTube is merely a jewel in the Google empire? As it happens, Google executives are powerfully aware of this problem, and they are sending outward signals that YouTube will remain independent.

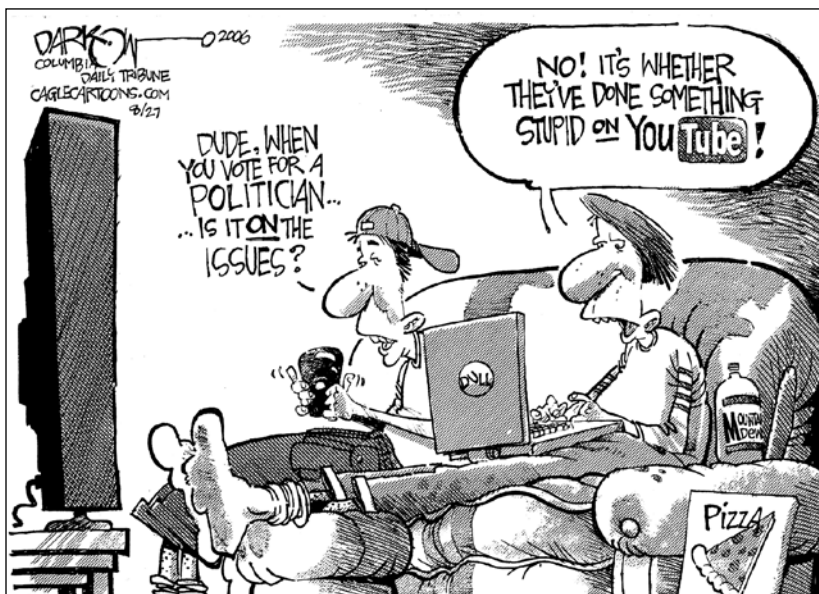
The biggest threat to YouTube remains potential copyright lawsuits from content providers who could claim that the site—like Napster before it—is enabling thieves. YouTube says federal law requires only that it remove videos when copyright holders complain—not to preemptively monitor the site for infringements, which would destroy its spontaneity.

It's hard to imagine Chad and Steve sitting through endless meetings on copyright law. They're too young and too creative. They usually demur on questions of what they will do next, blandly stating their hopes to “improve the product,” as Chad puts it. But, PayPal co-founder Max Levchin, their former boss at PayPal, says,

“The essential crisis is coming. They better get ready. And the essential crisis for an entrepreneur is, What is this all about? Did I just make the most money in my life ever? For what purpose? And...am I going to start setting up my family office and manage my investments, or am I going to jump off another roof and hope there's a parachute?” ■

Questions

1. What is the main reason YouTube has been such a phenomenon?
2. What is the biggest threat to YouTube's survival?



Why We Don't Prepare

By **AMANDA RIPLEY**/BOULDER

EVERY JULY THE COUNTRY'S LEADING DISASTER scientists and emergency planners gather in Boulder, Colorado, for an invitation-only workshop. Picture 440 people obsessed with the tragic and the safe, people who get excited about earthquake "shake maps" and righteous about flood insurance. It's a spirited but wonky crowd that is growing more melancholy every year.

After 9/11, the people at the Boulder conference decried the nation's myopic focus on terrorism. They lamented the decline of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). And they warned to the point of cliché that a major hurricane would destroy New Orleans. It was a convention of prophets without any disciples.

This year, perhaps to make the farce explicit, the event organizers, from the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder, introduced a parlor game. They placed a ballot box next to the water pitchers and asked everyone to vote: What will be the next mega-disaster? A tsunami, an earthquake, a pandemic flu? And where will it strike? It was an amusing diversion, although not a hard question for this lot.

The real challenge in the U.S. today is not predicting catastrophes. That we can do. The challenge that apparently lies beyond our grasp is to prepare for them. A review of the past year in disaster history suggests that Americans are particularly, mysteriously bad at protecting themselves from guaranteed threats. We know more than we ever did about the dangers we face. But it turns out that in times of crisis, our greatest enemy is rarely the storm, the quake or the surge itself. More often, it is ourselves.

Here is the reality of New Orleans' risk profile, present and future: Donald Powell, the banker appointed by President George W. Bush to run the reconstruction effort, said last December,

"The Federal Government is committed to building the best levee system known in the world." As of right now, the Corps plans to spend \$6 billion to make sure that by 2010, the city will (probably) be flooded only once every 100 years. That's not close to the best in the world. The Netherlands has a system designed to protect populated areas against anything but a 1-in-10,000-years flood. Alternatively, the Corps could build 1-in-500-year protection for the city, but that would cost about \$30 billion, says Ivor van Heerden, deputy director of Louisiana State University's Hurricane Center.

In the 12 months since Katrina, the rest of the U.S. has not proved to be a quicker study than the Gulf Coast. There is still no federal law requiring state and local officials to plan for the evacuation of the sick, elderly, disabled or poor. In June the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released an unprecedented analysis of state and urban emergency plans around the country, including assessments of evacuation plans and command structures. The report concluded that most "cannot be characterized as fully adequate, feasible, or acceptable." Among the worst performers: Dallas, New Orleans and Oklahoma City. (The best by far was the state of Florida.)

But it's not just bureaucrats who are unprepared for calamity. Regular people are even less likely to plan ahead. In this month's TIME poll, about half of those surveyed said they had personally experienced a natural disaster or public emergency. But only 16% said they were "very well prepared" for the next one. Of the rest, about half explained their lack of preparedness by saying they don't live in a high-risk area. In fact, 91% of Americans live in places at a moderate-to-high risk of earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, high-wind damage or terrorism, according to an estimate calculated for TIME by the Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute at the University of South Carolina.

Here's one thing we know: a serious hurricane is due to strike New York City, just as one did in 1821 and 1938. Experts predict that such a storm would swamp lower Manhattan, Brooklyn and Jersey City, N.J., force the evacuation of more than 3 million people and cost more than twice as much as Katrina. An insurance-industry risk assessment ranked New York City as No. 2 on a list of the worst places for a hurricane to strike; Miami came in first. But in a June survey measuring the readiness of 4,200 insured homeowners living in hurricane zones, New Yorkers came in second to last. They had taken only about a third of eight basic steps to protect themselves from a major storm (such as getting flood insurance or putting together a disaster evacuation plan or kit).

At the close of the Boulder workshop this year, Kathleen Tierney, head of the Natural Hazards Center, stood up to say, "We as human societies have yet to understand... that nature doesn't care. And for that reason, we must care." She was quoting herself intentionally. She had said the same thing the year before, seven weeks before Katrina. As she spoke, her voice rose: "Here we stand one year later. Where is the political will to protect lives and property?"

Then Tierney announced the hotly anticipated results of the Next Big One contest. There were some outliers. One person predicted that a gamma-ray flare would kill 90% of the earth's species. That is what is known in the disaster community as a hilarious joke. But the winner, with 32% of the votes, was once again a hurricane. After all, eight of the 10 costliest disasters in U.S. history have been hurricanes. This time, most of the hurricane voters predicted that

the storm would devastate the East Coast, including New York City. History has left us all the clues we need. Now we wait for the heartbreak. ■

Questions

1. What is the biggest challenge for the U.S. today regarding catastrophes?
2. What two cities do insurance companies rate as the worst places for a hurricane to strike?

Hurricanes

More than 130 million Americans—almost half the population—live in the path of future hurricanes

Number of hurricanes expected in a 100-year period

- 20 to 40
- 40 to 60
- More than 60

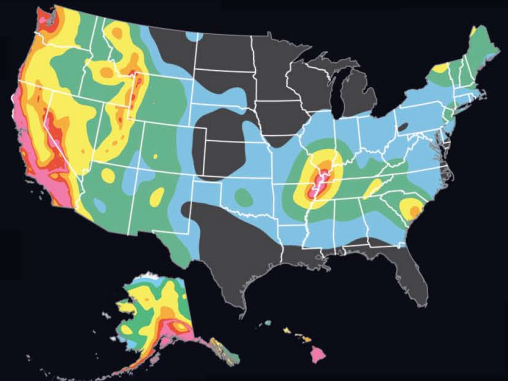


Earthquakes

The risk spreads far beyond the West Coast. More than 75 million people in 39 states live in potential quake zones

Probability of strong shaking in a 100-year period

- Very low
- Moderate
- High

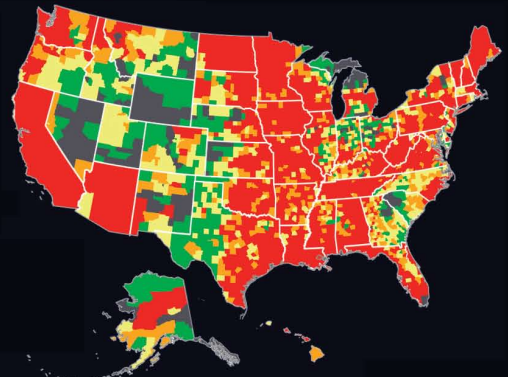


Floods

Americans like to live near water, but most bodies of water can—and repeatedly do—flood

Presidential flood-disaster declarations, 1965-2003

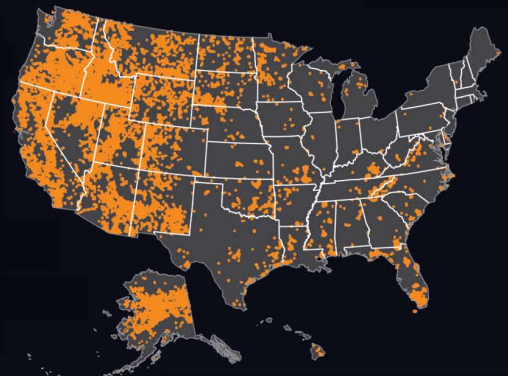
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more



Wildfires

As development spreads, we fight wildfires to protect property. But that leaves more fuel behind for more fires to damage more property

Wildfires of more than 250 acres, 1980-2003



Source: USGS