

Yearly Review

The United States marked the five-year anniversary of the war in Iraq. Over four million Iraqis had fled the country or been internally displaced, and the total cost of the war, currently about \$650 billion, was expected to rise to \$2 trillion over the next five years. Oil rose above \$147 a barrel, and Abu Dhabi bought New York City's Chrysler Building for \$800 million. Somali pirates stole a Saudi supertanker. President George W. Bush announced that North Korea was no longer a state sponsor of terrorism. The CIA expanded its covert operations in Iran. Bozo the Clown died, as did Jesse Helms, William F. Buckley Jr., Paul Newman, Heath Ledger, Indonesian dictator Suharto, comedian George Carlin, didgeridoo master Alan Dargin, and, at age 110, Louis de Cazenave of the Fifth Senegalese Rifles, one of the last two living French veterans of World War I. "War," he once explained, "is something absurd, useless, that nothing can justify." Ariel Sharon was still alive, and Israel bombed Gaza in retaliation for ongoing rocket attacks. Tom Jones insured his chest hair for \$7 million.

Australian police tasered a ram. France banned TV shows for babies. Pope Benedict XVI toured the United States, and the Vatican released a list of seven “social” sins—including littering, genetic tampering, and creating poverty—to complement the seven cardinal vices. The World Health Organization announced that virtually untreatable drug-resistant tuberculosis could now be found in 45 countries. Japanese men began to wear bras. The cost of rice increased by 30 percent, and food riots broke out in 30 countries. The United Nations expected the number of starving people in the world to rise to 950 million. North Korean hunger scientists announced a new noodle. In an expanding thousand-square-mile low-oxygen zone growing along the coast of Oregon and Washington, every fish, crab, and sea worm was dead. A 7.9-magnitude earthquake centered in China’s Sichuan Province left tens of thousands of people dead and millions homeless. The Summer Olympics were held in Beijing, heralded on television by fake, computer-generated fireworks. Structures built for the 2004 Athens Olympics were falling into ruin. A man in Swansea, Wales, died from eating too much fairycake, and an elderly German woman filed a lawsuit against a

hospital in Bavaria after she went in for a leg operation and was instead given a new anus. Paddington Bear turned 50; both the cubicle and the assassination of Martin Luther King turned 40; Viagra turned 10. One in 100 American adults was behind bars.

The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that detainees held as “enemy combatants” by the United States at Guantanamo Bay have a constitutional right to challenge their detention through habeas corpus petitions in federal courts. Scientists located the part of the brain responsible for understanding sarcasm. Global stock markets lost \$3.1 trillion in four days, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell below 10,000 for the first time in five years. The real estate boom in Dubai slowed. Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul declared that there are “no more great writers,” and Bob Dylan won a Pulitzer Prize. Illinois Senator Barack Obama was elected President of the United States. Gunmen terrorized Mumbai, and inflation in Zimbabwe reached 23 million percent. Iceland went bankrupt. Zookeepers across the United States put their animals on diets, feeding gorillas according to a Weight Watchers point system

and offering polar bears sugar-free Jell-O. The thoughts of a monkey in North Carolina controlled the actions of a robot in Japan. New York researchers used carbon nanotubes to create the darkest material known to man. Two teams of physicists, one in Calgary and the other in Tokyo, successfully stored nothing within a gas in the form of squeezed vacuum composed of uncertainty.