

# Times They are A Changin'



It was not an easy bit of news to swallow, when I heard it on the radio as I was driving to the grocery store. I was a bit stunned, actually, and several different thoughts came to mind when I listened to the report that a friend of mine, Greg Louganis, was about to tell the world during his interview with Barbara Walters that he has AIDS. I have known Greg for a few years, and have been to his house a few times in the past 12 months. He even came over to my place one Sunday for a brunch I hosted for some friends. Greg is a quiet, soft-spoken individual, very unassuming for a man who most consider to be the very best diver in history. His Olympic feats, chronicled by the world press, will be difficult to match again. Yet, he is not your typical celebrity, all caught up with an overblown sense of self-importance. And that is one thing that attracted me to him, and allowed me to become friends with him. Yet Greg was hiding one important facet of his life, not only from me, but from everybody else—the fact that there was a killer virus living inside him, daring him to try and stop it from doing its deadly deed. On the outside, I could never have guessed he had AIDS. He looks good, he looks fit, and at 35, is aging well. (Something that I look at when I approach the mirror in the morning!)

I heard the radio report and started to examine my own reaction. Should I feel sad for him? Should I be upset that he never told me personally? Early in our relationship, the possibility of romance was there, but I decided that I wanted to be just friends. Would he have told me if we had become more than “just friends?” I think that he *looks* so healthy, despite the fact that he has been carrying this disease around since he last dove in the Olympics prevents me from feeling sad, like one normally would if told his friend had two months to live. He could live a long time. Who knows? I think I know Greg well enough to believe that he would have told me of his condition if our relationship had turned more than platonic. He is, if nothing else, a good person, someone who loves animals, was a personal friend of Ryan White (the young man who died of AIDS), and is often donating his time for charitable causes. I called Greg that night, catching him just before he had to leave for Chicago to do the Oprah Winfrey Show. I gently asked him why he never told me, meanwhile trying to convey my concern for his health, and the fact that he has been carrying this burden alone for all this time. (Even his mother, who lives in San Diego, was only told a week prior to the interview with Barbara Walters.) Greg apologized, softly trying to explain why he preferred not to reveal this to his friends. He and I have sat around his pool on prior occasions, and he opened up quite a bit to me about his past. Maybe he felt that telling me about his having AIDS might have driven me away. He certainly did a good job of hiding the medication he has been taking.



Now that he has come out to the world, reports show that people going in for HIV testing has dramatically increased. Hopefully, more of the barriers of prejudice and ignorance will come down as people begin to realize that even good people, like Greg Louganis, Olympic champion, are not immune to this awful disease. I hope and pray that he finds the support he needs, as he fights against time. How he contracted it matters not. I know it will for some, but the bottom line is, he is a human being who had dreams of gold medals and attained them. He is part of God's creation, and he is my friend.

California Breeze



## Voice From the Left Coast

**A** recent Newsweek magazine cover story surrounded Marcia Clark and the custodial and financial arrangements she has for her children with her ex-husband. Perhaps you have read the story or otherwise heard of her plight with some interest, perhaps you could care less. Since the larger issue of this story addresses the concerns of myself and many other divorced fathers, I thought I would proffer my two cents worth.

To those unfamiliar with the story, Ms. Clark is asking for increased spousal support monies because the trial and its attendant media coverage demands a public persona equivalent, apparently, to that of the surroundings in which she works (i.e. Hollywood). Thus, despite the fact that she makes nearly twice what her ex-husband earns, she feels the need to receive more for new outfits and personal grooming expenses (none of which has anything to do with the children). The ex's response is to sue her for increased custody of their two children, citing the 16 hour days she puts in on the trial as testimony to her inability to effectively parent. Currently he sees the kids every other weekend and for occasional dinners during the week.

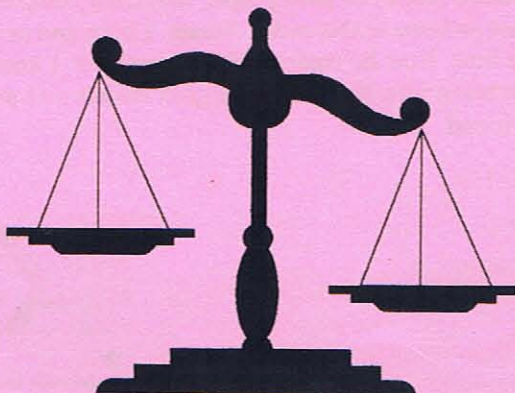
The hue and cry that has arisen as a result, and the reason for my commentary, is from women and mothers who are outraged that a woman is being penalized for having a career—penalized by having her children potentially taken from her. Following the Newsweek article was an opinion piece from a woman, who coincidentally has two children herself, one 14 and the other 4 or so. She has raised the 14 year old alone, not by choice, and is currently involved in a custody battle over the youngest. If you are thinking that perhaps her opinions on custody might be a bit skewed, you're not alone. Their contention is that the system is now turning against mothers who have primary custody of their children simply because they have time conflicts due to their jobs. The author's opinion contends that mothers are biologically better equipped to parent young children thus validating the notion that a correct split custodial arrangement would consist of what is most commonly ordered by the courts still today—that is, the father gets the kids every other weekend and perhaps some extended time during the summer. This opinion supposedly is strengthened by her comment that "there are no motherless children; only fatherless children". Such broad strokes she paints us fathers with!

I am astonished by the attention this issue is getting but more accurately, and troublesome, is the sympathy for the mothers it has elicited. I would like to present here a dad's point of view, which, as you can imagine goes counter to the female belief.

I find this controversy ironic, and am surprised that the mothers who are outraged do not see it as well. After all, it is the fathers who for so long, and for the most part still today, are left powerless to convince the Family Courts that such limited visitation is not sufficient to provide their children with the appropriate influences and contributions that fathers offer. By crafting such inequitable visitation "rights" the courts are saying that the primary role of the father is to be the bread winner and seeing his children a fraction of the time in comparison with the mother is the proper division. Now that the worm has turned and career mothers suddenly find themselves in the same role the rules need to be changed—once again in their favor.

My problem with the whole issue is the disparate time allotment and the relative subordinated role fathers have been forced to accept. My opinion is bolstered by my own experiences in raising Devin thus far, a situation probably not unlike most contemporary families, e.g., both parents working. The facts are that Devin was not breast fed, was

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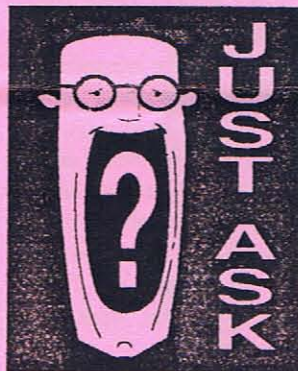
cared, nurtured, hugged and loved by me equally with his mother, and was delivered to the baby-sitter when he was six weeks old while his mother worked her 50 hours a week (including travel time). No one can convince me that the mother is better equipped to care for him under that scenario, which I suggest is most common today.

That which those mothers are protesting against is exactly what fathers have been fighting a losing battle over for decades. Because Marcia Clark cannot spend as much time as before the trial with her children is no reason to return them to their father, and to do so is an outrageous affront to those mothers who want, or need, a career! This is equitable?

I am fortunate to have the type of job that allows me to spend a great deal of time with Devin in the weeks that he stays with me because of office days, or because I choose to take the time. In fact, unquestionably I see him more than his mother, who comes in third behind the baby-sitter. But that doesn't stop me from being fearful that someday, when Devin's mom decides she wants to move out of Warwick and back to Jersey, I will find myself back in Family Court having some \$150/hour attorney speaking for me to an indifferent judge who will decide what is in Devin's "best interests". I am fearful because our situation may be lumped in with all the others when the judge has to decide, meaning—when it comes down to the child living with either the mother or the father as the primary caretaker, the mother in the vast majority of cases will win.

It is unfathomable for me to believe that enough of a parent's influences can be taught/bestowed/transferred to the child when seeing him 4 days a month. If the concept of "child comes first" is to be applied blindly (such as justice purportedly is) then the decision of the court, in the scenario earlier described with Devin's mother, must be that she cannot move, or to do so would relinquish her primary care opportunities.

Perhaps the same should be said for those parents who must choose between child or career. But at the very least, let's take the gender issue out of the equation.



I RECENTLY JOINED another gym, after having let my Bally's membership expire. I was working out at my apartment complex, but now I have a new place to go and lift weights—Racquetball World. It's a huge place, and it offers many different activities

and facilities, whether one is interested in working out, playing racquetball, martial arts, aerobics, or simply sitting in the cafe drinking a beer. I am going to TRY and be faithful about going on a regular basis...

FINALLY BROKE DOWN and ordered new contact lenses. You are supposed to replace them every year, but I have been using these old things for *four* years. Amazing they have lasted this long without my developing an infection. But they cost me \$400 last time, so I am not anxious to make this an annual event. With my Costco insurance, though, they "only" cost me \$225 this year. Look Ma, no infection!

RECENTLY HEARD FROM my alma mater, U.S.D., and since I replied to their inquiry, I am now on a regular mailing list. Apparently there will be a 10 year reunion in November, and that might be

## PAY THE TAXMAN BY APRIL 15TH!

DESPITE THE FACT that Greg does *not* celebrate birthdays, we both have our 39th coming up on the 6th. Now this is really scary, approaching this close to the big 40! I wonder how I will feel as we head to that milestone. I still feel like I am about 25, except that the gray hair that wasn't there 15 years ago is prominent today. Anyway, Happy Birthday, Gregory, may we both be thankful for all we have!

SINCE LYNN MENTIONED that she would like to come to Michigan in June to see more of the family, I was thinking I might do the same. If others were to coordinate some time off from work at that time, we could make that week a lot of fun! Let me know if you are interested in this idea, and what week would be good. Listening, Lynn??

## Tidbits From Texas

Our visitors blew into town and then out again in a seeming blur, as most vacations do, but they left with very nice memories of a week of nice weather, nice visiting, and nice sights seen. Mom and Dad arrived first on a Wednesday late morning, and I brought them to a house that was momentarily at least, clean as a whistle. With a house full of kids, that was not easy to do! Later that night, I went back to the airport to retrieve Lynn and Woody, the last of our most welcomed guests. It is always so special when my family takes the time and expense to come all the way to Texas to see us, because other than Mom and Dad, we rarely receive visitors, but the reasons are well-understood.

While there are not the same sights to show off here in Houston as there are in San Diego, New York, or New Jersey, what they did get to see was some of the best of what we have to offer. First, coming from frozen climates surely made them appreciate our spring-like weather, especially when we sat outside in the backyard enjoying each others' company, and watching the kids (young and old) play basketball. Secondly, we were able to go out to some great restaurants, tasting cuisines ranging from the best of IHOP to excellent Tex-Mex to good ol' steaks in an old 1800's San Francisco bordello setting, with lots of red colors, and even a young girl swing from a velvet swing above the bar, with her kicking cowbells coming and going! That Saturday night, four of us—Lynn, Woody, Frinee and myself went out on the town, something that we have not been able to do for quite a long time. We went to the Cadillac Bar, where they allow you to scribble on the walls (even in Magic Marker!) while feasting on the very best of Mexican food amidst a large and raucous crowd. Several bachelorette parties were in full swing, and even though Woody discovered that his marks left several years ago were painted over, we enjoyed a sumptuous feast of food and drink! Afterwards, we drove a short distance to downtown to the Hyatt Regency and had a drink atop in the Spindletop, where the floor revolves 360 degrees in an hour. The good food and vistas were only topped by the very rare opportunity for some in-depth conversation with Lynn and Woody, this time face-to-face. Frinee and I really appreciated this chance to get out and do something like we were able when we were dating and first married.

The next evening, we all went out to celebrate Dad's birthday. The plans were for some before-dinner drinks at Vargo's, where the setting of the restaurant was wooded and filled with wandering peacocks, swans, and ducks. Azaleas were blooming

as we walked the grounds (actually the place was closed on Sundays), and it was so beautiful and serene! We even saw an albino peacock! Some of the normal ones were struttin' their stuff, fanning out, and some flew into the trees and let out some very loud mating calls. In a city known for its miles of concrete and glass, Vargo's was an oasis par none. Close by was the Old San Francisco Steakhouse, and we all enjoyed a good steak dinner (Jason had chicken), topped off with singing Happy Birthday to Dad. As host, I was pleased with this evening out!

Lynn and Woody left the next morning, and that was too bad, because I took Mom and Dad to Galveston Tuesday to see the Moody Gardens on a splendid day to go to the beach. The island was not crowded this week before Mardi Gras, so there were no crowds to slow us down. The Gardens is a large pyramid with a man-made rainforest tucked inside, and is home to four different types of environments. We walked around admiring many varieties of fauna, fowl, and fish, and taking countless photos of such. Afterwards, we drove down to the seawall where Dad and I walked along the beach briefly, leaving Mom in the car to rest up. Galveston is undergoing an extensive expansion of the beach area, removing boulders and importing sand from a mile out in the Gulf, opening up a large area that was previously off-limits to sunbathers. This resort town has really cleaned itself up as of late, banning alcohol along the seawall and beaches, and the construction of lots of new condos, hotels, and restaurants. It is truly a beautiful place to spend a day, week, or even longer, any time of the year!

The Friday before was special as well, as we all took in a basketball game in which Jason was playing. Seeing my son running up and down the court (not too unlike those of the NBA!) made me quiver with pride. I have been waiting a long time for this, and I cannot be any more proud of Jason! His defensive skills were in high gear as he forced many a bad shot by the opposition, and he snared rebound after rebound. He needs more work on his offense,

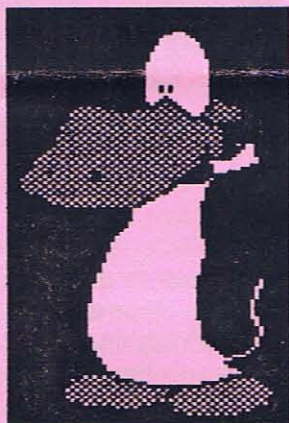
and that will come as he learns to be more aggressive in his game. It is such a joy watching him in his first season, the first of many seasons to come!

God blessed us with excellent weather that



week, a blessing He withdrew as soon as Mom and Dad left that Wednesday. It became rainy and cool, and then wintry cold the following weeks, so I was grateful to Him for this blessing. Another blessing to talk about the reason for the visitors coming here—little Gregory. As we start over once more with this precious infant, we are reminded again of the sacrifices parents are constantly asked to endure in raising their children. How ironic that I, with so little patience, especially with young ones, am to have four of my own! It is not easy raising these little whirlwinds, and God only knows that I constantly fail in my dealings with them, so I ask for all your prayers to give me the understanding and patience that is so necessary. Today's society makes this job extremely difficult with all its immoral and anti-family forces constantly bombarding us. Everyday I realize that a strong faith in God and His Son is more and more important to combat this sinful world, and to keep ourselves on the right path to His Kingdom.

Gregorio



## LYNN DOES HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD...!

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Last night we made a batch of Manhattans and celebrated Sherwood's surviving the big (30% staff reduction) layoff at work. Yesterday was the day they were all told if they had a job or were being let go—he had no idea if he would still be there after this month! So the waiting is over and *thank God* he's still employed! All his company was offering was a max of 15 weeks severance, which wouldn't have helped us much... Yes, we had a very nice visit with the Houston branch of the Schneider clan. I especially enjoyed hanging out with the kids, playing hide & seek or just watching them play in the backyard or their jungle gym set! (while I basked in the Texas sun on Greg's patio—a nice winter break!) I missed them all when I left...I truly wish I could visit all my family alot more often. I miss everyone, even though we get wrapped up in our own little worlds. Now that we know Sherwood's job is secure, I plan on going back to Houston next year! In June we're going to drive home to see Mom & Dad, and hopefully MaryLou, Mark, John and Melissa too! We'll be working around the house when the weather stays warm...the driveway will finally be asphalted, and the attic fan will be installed...next year we'll add a deck off the kitchen!

### DON'T SKIP YOUR PENANCE

Once, a man confessed a very peculiar sin to a priest and they both agreed that the matter required further counseling.

"Go home and recite the rosary," the priest said, "skip a day, recite another one, skip a day, recite another one, then come and see me."

When the appointed time came, the penitent's wife showed up.

"Where's your husband?" the priest asked.

"He's dead," she replied, "and you killed him."

The priest was taken aback. "How can reciting the Rosary possibly kill anyone?" he asked.

"Oh it wasn't the Rosary that killed him," she explained. "It was all that skipping."

# MIKE MAKES HOLLYWOOD FILM DEBUT!



Well, it finally had to happen. You just don't live in Los Angeles, with its Hollywood influence, and not get the bug to somehow get involved in "the Business." Yesterday was my time. I volunteered to be an extra in a film about Dorothy Day. For those who are wondering who she was, she was the woman who in the 20's started the Catholic Worker movement, which challenged the Church in those days to do more than just talk about the needs of the poor and underprivileged. She was a young woman who with her increasing fame, was unwillingly thrust into the spotlight that may one day lead her to be canonized. This movie has a few notable stars, like Brian Keith, Martin Sheen, James Lancaster, and Moira Kelly (and Yours Truly as an extra!). The scene I was in was filmed at the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles, a scene depicting a banquet in which Dorothy is honored for her work. I was one of those seated at a table with others, listening to a brief introduction of Miss Day by the emcee. The experience was interesting, as you get to see how hard the crew works, as they set up the scene, making constant changes with lighting, makeup, camera angles, and so on. For a 3 minute scene, it can take several hours to film it. Amazing! I do plan on going back again on Friday and Saturday evenings to do more filming, this time at Paramount Studios. The film will be out in December, I believe, and they hope it will be as big a hit, if not bigger, than the film "Romero". So, while my film debut is rather modest, and I don't know if I will be able to be picked out in the scenes I am in, it's a start! Who knows, maybe I will be "discovered" as I am sitting there watching the pros work!



## Suburbs

by Bill Schneider

Milko Sticks couldn't believe his eyes. Two yellow notes stuck to the textured refrigerator. One said, "I won't be home this weekend." The other one, "And I want a divorce." Like an afterthought. He sat himself down slowly into a kitchen chair, the early morning sunshine coating the room with warm honey. His wife of four years, thin as a sapling, onyx eyes, pearl skin, wants a divorce! Was it the muscular, green-eyed blond in the mailroom? Maybe it was Frank Bastille, her mellifluous-voiced Managing Editor? Milko Sticks will not take the blame for this.

He got up, snapped the yellow notes off the refrigerator door and glanced down at Snowpuff and Dandelion. They both looked up at him with hungry, imploring eyes. Milko bent down, fixed a note on each of their little poodle collars, gathered them up with a wheeze and with five giant steps, reached the bathroom. He closed the toilet lid, put the dogs down, turned on the exhaust fan to *Infinity* and closed the door behind him.

To the garage. Shoulders sagging from the weight of the two five gallon gas cans. Sloshing out to the shady driveway Milko Sticks stood straight up, eyes squeezed tightly, chest hammering, thoughts like streamers, a hurricane boiling within. *She was his best friend.* He cannot stand aloneness. So many weeds and detritus clogging their short marriage. He set the cans down and squatted on the cement, his chest bursting, tears splashing down his face. A breeze lifted and fell. Crickets chirped softly next to the garage. The morning languorously expanded into afternoon...

## Confessions of a Junkie



**I**t was one of those days that screamed out to drive around town in a convertible. So, that's what I did on this gorgeous Sunday in March. Being that it was one of my rare days off on a weekend, and that the skies were clear and bright, with the sun warming up to around 70, plus the fact that Terry, a friend of mine, just bought a brand new bright yellow Mustang GT convertible, I HAD to go cruising the streets. So naturally, Terry, the proud owner and I took to the streets to enjoy the sights and the heads that turned as we "toured" West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Brentwood.

Now I got the idea that since we were sorta heading in the direction of Brentwood, that we drive by the sight of the double murders, of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman, at 875 S. Bundy. But first, we drove up Sunset Blvd., looking for Rockingham Ave., so that we could see O.J.'s mansion. I have to confess that I have been watching as much of the trial as possible, since I usually don't have to go into work until 1:30. I am hooked on it, fascinated with the strategies of Marcia Clark, Johnny Cochran, Robert Shapiro, and the judiciary style of Lance Ito. So, unless the testimony gets very tedious, I am usually in front of the tube soaking it all in. But I have never driven by the scene of the crime up until today, not wanting to be like all those other tourists who trample on the privacy of the neighbors of O.J. and the murder victims. But today I broke down and decided to drive by and take a look firsthand. Driving up Sunset, we could see a "No turn" sign at Rockingham, which was being enforced by two uniformed police officers. You had to be a local resident to get into the area, at least on weekends. So we turned around and headed toward S. Bundy.

No such restraints on this block, and as we approached the condo at 875, right away we noticed the fencing that was protecting the little grassy island in front of Nicole's condo, which is empty, but for sale. Small groups of people were standing around the front of the gate, reminding me that it still is a drawing card, despite the fact that the murders were committed almost a year ago. We slowed down, looked quickly at the condo, and drove off. I didn't feel quite satisfied, and quietly vowed to return—alone next time, to spend a few more minutes there. We also drove by the Mezzaluna restaurant, on San Vicente Blvd., where Ron Goldman used to work, and where Nicole ate her last meal. Nobody inside at 4:00 in the afternoon, so I guess a late lunch was out of the question.

My feelings about the trial are that O.J. will probably escape conviction, due to a hung jury. I

think he is guilty, but the burden of proof is on the prosecution, not the defense, so I think he will walk free. In listening to the testimony, my certitude as to his guilt increases or decreases, depending on who may be on the witness stand, or what is testified. I admire the job Judge Ito is doing, with all the pressure he is under, but I wish he would limit the rhetoric from both sides more!

The trial will drag on for several more months, they say, and it remains to be seen whether or not my daily viewing of it will continue. Or, for that matter, whether or not I return to S. Bundy or Rockingham Ave. again, to absorb some of the drama played out in that famous courtroom, that came from those quiet, wooded streets of Brentwood.

### Around Home... With Dad

It was GOOD NEWS. I had my annual physical check-up in February at the Providence Family Clinic in town, and the results were very good: Cholesterol was 156, blood pressure 110/170, PSA and the other blood test results, all o.k. To top it off I later had a stress-echocardiogram and it showed the blood is flowing freely through my heart and all is well. So it looks like the old boy is still on his way to a ripe old age. But as the wise one cautions, we must be ready to go at any time; live life well, one day at a time and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We really enjoyed our visit to our Houston branch in February. Greg and Frinee are so hospitable and the whole bunch is fun to be with. Live wires Stefanie and Arianna are a joy to behold and listen to, and little Gregory is a doll. We got to watch Jason and his basketball team win a very exciting play-off game, enjoyed some very nice

restaurant meals as well as some delicious home-cooking by Frinee and her young assistants from El Salvador. It was so nice that Lynn and Woody were there at the same time. I especially enjoyed sitting around the backyard in the warm sunshine with the green grass and budding trees and plants. A pear tree was already in partial bloom. (No, it wasn't a partridge!)

Another interesting event was our side trip to Galveston. We visited Hardy Gardens with Greg. Its beautiful gardens were in bloom and the huge glass pyramid housing a three continent rain forest and native birds and fish was very impressive. As we drove along Galveston's Gulf shoreline we saw under construction a miles long sandy beach being extended into the Gulf of Mexico. A continuous flow of sand and water was being pumped from about three miles out and into a large pipeline already extending 2-3 miles along the shoreline. Earth movers spread and graded the accumulating sand, pushing back the water's edge and creating a lovely broad beach to accomodate the throngs who soon will be coming to enjoy the surf, sun, and water.

Spring has begun to taunt us here in Michigan. We have had 60 and 70 degree days lately mixed in with other days in the 20's and 30's. Hopefully we will not be seeing snow again. We have tulips and other bulb-type flowers sticking up 6 or 7 inches above the ground and we will probably see blooms before Easter. We have no plans for more travel this year—yet. Lynn and Woody are planning to come here in May. Woody has not seen much of Michigan and May is a great month to enjoy spring flowers from here to Mackinac Island.

We hope you all have a Happy Easter and a holy one. There is no joy on Earth to compare with knowing you are in a good relationship with God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was to prove to everyone that what He taught is authentic and the way to live.

# California Breeze

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