

# commentary

from other pens...

## Two new portraits for the Senate

Portraits of Robert F. Wagner, an up-from-the-streets New York City liberal, and Arthur Vandenberg, a Midwestern conservative with a world view, are being readied for display among the giants of the U.S. Senate.

Wagner and Vandenberg may no longer be widely familiar names. But in the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman they were the stuff of headlines, policies and hopes for the future.

Vandenberg, a Michigan Republican and former journalist, turned from prewar isolation to give his party an internationalist outlook. He helped build the underpinnings of mutual security that saw the United States through the Cold War.

Wagner, an immigrant janitor's son who wore his Phi Beta Kappa key on a gold watch chain, sponsored the 1935 law establishing Social Security as the nation's safety net for the elderly. He wrote the Wagner Act, which transformed labor-management relations.

Their oil portraits will occupy two round spaces high on the south wall of the gilt and frescoed Senate Reception Room. They will fill blanks left for history by the Italian artist Constantine Brumidi when he decorated the newly expanded Capitol in the Civil War era.

They will join a select group of five senators chosen nearly 50 years ago by a panel headed by Sen. John F. Kennedy, D-Mass. The portraits are to be unveiled during the current Congress, probably in 2004.

Wagner and Vandenberg were chosen to join such figures as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun after consideration by historians and curators and the Senate leaders of both parties.

"The general public is not going to know these people, but they were chosen because they are so important to the history of the U.S. Senate in the 20th century," said Diane Skvarla, curator of the Senate.

Skvarla said many think it would be best to allow another 50 years to pass before selecting faces for the four round blanks remaining.

"Wagner was a 'dese and dose' type of New Yorker and he could be rough," said Donald A. Ritchie, the Senate's associate historian. "He was a poker-playing, backroom, deal-cutting politician who was the epitome of the Eastern urban liberal."

Vandenberg, former editor and publisher of the Grand Rapids Herald, was an accomplished stem-winding orator. "As a former newspaperman he knew the power of words," Ritchie said.

Ashy man, more at ease in the cloakroom than on the Senate floor, Wagner knew the power of ideas.

Born in 1877, Wagner was 9 years old when his family emigrated from Germany. Robert was a newsboy and might never have risen much higher had his brothers not saved money to send him to the City College of New York and then to New York Law School.

Elected to the Senate in 1926, Wagner quickly became known as a legislative craftsman. After Roosevelt became president in 1933 he played a central role in passing New Deal legislation.

Appointed a senator in 1928, Vandenberg became an eloquent voice for America's isolation from the dangerous turbulence of world affairs, voting against the Selective Service Act in 1940.

After Pearl Harbor, "a lot of his isolationism sort of crumbled away," historian Ritchie said. "Because he had been such a strong isolationist, his conversion was instrumental in bringing along many others in his party."

After World War II, Vandenberg backed the Truman Doctrine resisting the spread of communism. His support provided the key to congressional support for the Marshall Plan and NATO.

Soon the two senators will be a recognized part of Senate history. "It shows that today's lawmakers do have a remembrance of the past, and that the past sets the mold," Ritchie said.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — *Lawrence L. Knutson is completing a 35-year run reporting on Congress, the White House and Washington's history, and a 37-year career at The Associated Press.*



## Is it real — or the Sims?

Katacia Williams is a 23-year-old college graduate who writes and edits marketing reports in Ann Arbor, Mich. She is also Faith, a beautiful and outgoing waitress, who will one day be a glamorous movie star.

Williams knows Faith's future because she created Faith in The Sims video game and controls almost everything about Faith's life, from when she uses the bathroom to what color tank top she wears to the gym. She decides who Faith will marry and how many children she'll have and whether her kitchen countertops will be Italian tile or Formica.

"My boyfriend tells me I like the game because I can control people," Williams says of the game. "I think he's right. You can't control your own life, but here are these little people on a screen and you can make their lives whatever you like."

There are no targets to hit or enemies to thwart in The Sims. There is no score, and thus no winners or losers. You simply live your life in all its strangely compelling mundanity.

Since its introduction two years ago, The Sims (a spin-off of the surprisingly popular SimCity, which first came out in 1989) has sold more than 8 million units, making it the best-selling PC video game of all time. Surf the net and you'll find about 1,000 Web sites devoted to the game. Now there is an online version in which a player's character interacts with characters created and controlled by other real people.



joan ryan

• commentary

What is the secret to the game's phenomenal popularity? Why are children and adults alike drawn to a game that has no explicit objective?

Forbes magazine suggests it is "a prosthetic for our imaginations." We can recapture some sliver of the freedom we felt as kids in pretending to be Patty Duke, or Little Joe in "Bonanza," when we still thought we could grow up to be whatever we wanted. In the game, we can be professors or femme fatales, bikers or debutantes, trying on alter egos without our friends and families thinking we've gone nuts. We can appoint our homes with the quilts and pine sideboards our real-life husbands think are too precious. We can flirt shamelessly at dinner parties and, if rebuffed, create a new party with more devilish guests.

Imagination surely is a crucial piece. But I think Williams captured the stronger attraction: control. We can construct a reality that reflects the narrative we want. More precisely, we can construct a series of realities until the narrative unfolds the way we want.

I like to imagine there already is a Sims game for government and that folks in the White

House are playing late into the night creating characters (dictators with hairbrush mustaches, for instance) and putting them in situations (fending off invasions, for example) to see what happens.

Pamela McCorduck, co-author of "The Futures of Women: Scenarios of the 21st Century" (Warner Books, 1997), remembers sitting with a group of fellow futurists at the beginning of the first Persian Gulf War and considering various scenarios of what could happen next.

"We felt we could be ready for anything," she said, "simply because we had thought about it."

Yet, she found that government often fails to go through the same exercises.

"You think they're thinking five or six moves ahead, like in a chess game," she said, "only to find out after the fact — in Vietnam, for example — that they were flying by the seats of their pants all the way."

The few critics of The Sims worry that ardent players will blur the line between what is real and what they would like to be real. The critics worry that soon we might have to filter information from people by asking, "Is it real — or The Sims?"

I imagine, as this year unfolds, it will prove an increasingly useful question of our government as well.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfxchronicle.com.

## A cheapskate? Who? Me?

Some people think the word cheapskate is an insult. Not me. I enjoy being called a cheapskate. It reminds me that I'm not what I used to be: a credit-card junkie. There was a time I used plastic to fill the gap between my pathetic income and the life I so richly deserved.

When my six-figure bridge collapsed (yes, it was more than \$100,000 in non-mortgage debt) I had two choices: change my ways or lose everything. Knowing I wouldn't do well with the latter, I opted for change. I could fill several books with all that happened and what I've learned (and I have), but I'll cut to the chase. My husband and I didn't go bankrupt: we paid back every penny and lived to tell the tale. Yeah, you can call me a cheapskate any day and I'll take it as a compliment.

So, you may be thinking, "How did she do that?!" I stopped spending every penny I had and all we hoped to have. Bottom line: I learned how to live on less than our income. A lot less. The steps are simple:

1. Rein in your brain. You have to stop believing you are entitled to have it all now and then pay, and pay, and pay for it later. The truth is you can't have it all, but you can have



mary hunt

• everyday cheapskate

enough.

2. Embrace frugality. I was repulsed by the word until I understood it. Frugality is just doing whatever it takes to spend less than you earn. What a novel concept. Frugal doesn't mean tacky, frumpy or stingy. The truth is we cheapskates actually fix stuff instead of running out to buy new stuff. Another novel concept. We figure out how to use this for that when that costs more than this. We drive paid-for cars, we challenge everything and ask if there's a better way. Here's an example: I used to get my hair cut every four weeks. Then I figured how to stretch that to six. That's four-and-a-half fewer haircuts a year, which translates to, well, you do the math. Apply this kind of thinking to all areas of spending and just watch the dramatic results. Being a cheapskate is less

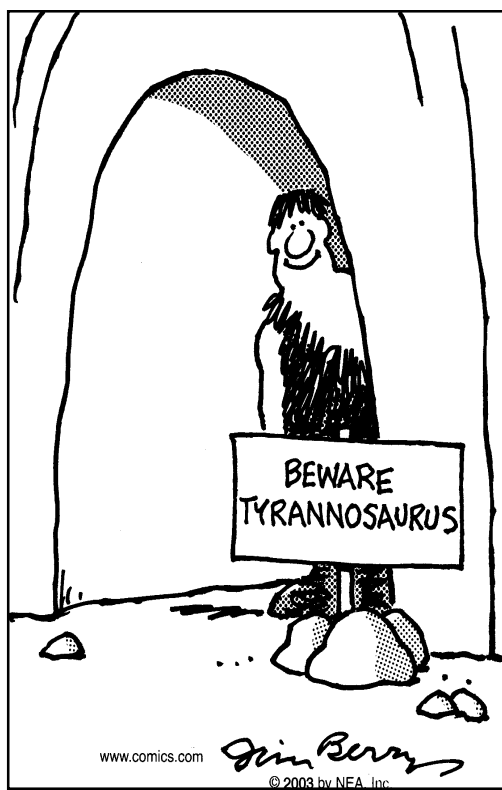
embarrassing than you'd think (unless you count that half-haircut, ha-ha!).

3. Never pay retail. As cliched as that may sound, it's a principle to hang onto. With so many discount stores and America's gigantic online garage sale (also known as eBay.com and half.com) you may never pay retail again. And how about that food? Let me tell you, I was a major coupon-snob until I learned how to make those suckers work for me. Now I save about 60 percent off my grocery bill every week. I swallowed my pride and learned how to do it right. That's going to be one entire column in the near future, you can count on it.

I could go on and on, but I'll close with this: If you begin to apply even a few of the tips you'll read every day you will end up with extra cash. You just might want to open that savings account now so you'll be all ready to go.

Mary Hunt is the creator of "The Cheapskate Monthly Newsletter" ([www.cheapskate-monthly.com](http://www.cheapskate-monthly.com)) and the author of 12 books, including "Debt-Proof Living," "Tiptionary," "Cheapskate Gourmet" and "The Financially Confident Woman." You can e-mail her at [cheapskate@unitedmedia.com](mailto:cheapskate@unitedmedia.com).

### berry's world



## The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
The Associated Press

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper Association  
e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com)



Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor/Editorial  
Managing Editor

Pat Schiefen, Copy Editor

Michelle Hawkins, Reporter

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Eric Yonkey, Bill Wagoner, Advertising Sales

Skilar Boland, Adv. Production Sheila Smith, Office Manager

### Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl

Ron VanLoenen

Judy McKnight

Betty Morris

Mary Jo Tapparo

Lana Westfahl

Teneile Lovelace



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services  
([nbetz@nwkansas.com](mailto:nbetz@nwkansas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. ([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

**The Sherman County Herald**  
Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

**THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
1994-2001

### Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company