

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

December 10-11, 2005

# MAGAZINE

36-PAGE  
CHRISTMAS  
GIFT  
GUIDE



Steve Vizard

# THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

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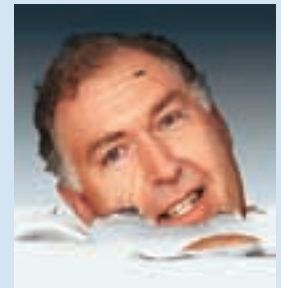
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N.B. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be considered.

Printed by Hannanprint, 55 Doody St, Alexandria, NSW 2015, for the proprietor and publisher, Nationwide News Pty Limited (ACN 008 438 828), of 2 Holt Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, for insertion in The Weekend Australian, December 10-11, 2005. Registered by Australia Post. Publication no pp24550/00010.



COVER STEVE VIZARD  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION  
IRVINE GOWANS



# FEEDBACK

HAVE YOUR SAY



**“If Australia needs women to have more babies, why is this Government introducing industrial relations legislation that will make this more difficult?”**

● “Why we need more babies” (November 26-27) mentions the environment only once and then only to dismiss the legitimate concerns of Tim Flannery as secondary to the almighty economy. Our standard of living is based on unsustainable levels of consumption. Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions are the highest per capita in the world and rising, our water resources are stretched, and urban sprawl is still chewing up bush and creating social alienation. The economic and social costs of these and other environmental issues have yet to be taken seriously by any Australian government, state or federal. It’s time to wake up Australia, not to go back to bed.

**Robert Frith**  
Cottesloe, WA

● I was disappointed to read the panel headed “Muslim numbers swell in Europe” in Greg Callaghan’s fascinating article. We’ve already had the threat of an Asian invasion, and now there’s the possibility of Muslims overpopulating our fellow white European countries. With the strife in France, we had better bump up our own Anglo-Saxon majority to prevent such a thing happening here. Was this strategically placed as another of those terrorist scare tactics?

**Rebecca Lacey**  
Larrakeyah, NT

● If Australia needs women to have more babies, why is this Government introducing industrial relations legislation that will make this more difficult? Mothers with dependent children will quickly find that they are in no position to bargain for family-friendly and flexible working arrangements under the new rules. This is especially true for those in low-paid and casual positions (mostly women). Obviously men can’t give birth or breastfeed, but it would help the cause of family life if they took on child-rearing by refusing to work long hours which exclude them from experiencing the joys

and demands of bringing up children. Is the Government trying to have it both ways?

**Margaret Wilkes**  
Cottesloe, WA

● In an age of terrorism, war and environmental degradation, I am quietly astonished that anyone would want to bring children into the world. There are six billion human beings already on this planet, which is staggering under the burden. No amount of legislation would have influenced our decision whether or not to have children. I adore my two teenage sons but I worry for their future and I believe Tim Flannery’s is the voice of reason in this debate.

**Jane Powell**  
Weyba Downs, Qld

● I agree that the Government needs to provide more practical support to encourage mothers like me to have “one more for the country”. We took the plunge and went ahead with our third “for the country” in late October. I tried to put my newborn on waiting lists at two long-daycare centres for a place around the beginning of 2008, only to be told that the waiting list was closed. It seems there needs to be a waiting list for the waiting list. Getting my three and four-year-olds into preschool is another hurdle. Why does everything seem so hard? If the Government is fair dinkum about encouraging Australians to have more children, please make it easier for parents.

**Patricia Wang**  
Lane Cove, NSW

● I’m going to use the headline as my next pick-up line: “Why we need more babies”. Stay tuned.

**Paul Hunt**  
Engadine, NSW

● Using the naked form of a woman to sell, as decor, as “leer-material”, or indeed under the guise of art, degrades women and perpetuates the propensity to sexualise women (“Goude heavens”, November 26-27). It should not be

condoned in any form. Some of the “creative” works of Jean-Paul Goude belong in copies of *FHM*, not a family magazine.

**Nimmi Candappa**  
North Dandenong, Vic

● “Return of the great storyteller” (November 26-27) left me choking over my coffee cup. Jeffrey Archer is a proven bouncer, a liar and a cheat. His lies ruined the life of Lloyd Turner, the Manchester *Daily Star* editor, who was sacked soon after he lost the 1987 libel case against Archer involving the prostitute Monica Coghlan. Turner did not live to see his own name cleared and Archer jailed 13 years later. One begins to wonder why Archer is launching his book so far away from England, where he has had most of his success. Could it be that the British book-buying public have longer memories than Archer would care for?

**Jim McCranor**  
North Brighton, SA

**The Government wants more of these? So make it easier for us to care for them, says a reader.**



GETTY IMAGES

● Staff writer Mark Whittaker has won the prestigious Walkley Award for Magazine Feature Writing for his

story “Ordinary Heroes”. The cover story of June 18-19 told how a group of ordinary people displayed extraordinary courage to save toddlers Sophie Delezio and Molly Wood, injured in the car crash at the Roundhouse Childcare Centre in Fairlight, Sydney, in 2003.

● Does Ruth Ostrow (November 26-27) seriously believe that Tony Abbott should take risks and list drugs on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme that have not yet been properly tested? Remember Thalidomide? When and how a person dies is something we all have to come to terms with. Ms Ostrow has obviously not reached this far in her development yet.

**Sylvia Jones**  
Bridgetown, WA

● Good grief! Dr Nicholas Tonti-Filippini considers a mother smoking in terms of possible mental illness and even immorality (Modern Dilemma, November 26-27). Newsflash to sanctimonious consultant ethicists – maybe she just enjoys it, it’s her life, and I’m guessing it’s only the thought of the next cigarette that gets her through a visit from such a pursed-lipped, disapproving son.

**Kaye Matthews**  
Moonah, TAS

## CORRECTION

The Goodbye column in *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (November 26-27) referred to Gordon “Shirley” Strachan. It should have read Graeme “Shirley” Strachan. We regret the error.



The writer of December’s best letter wins a case of six Black Wattle Cabernet 2001 magnums from Cellarmasters: The Wine Cellar, valued at \$600. Only 100 cases were produced from the Black Wattle vineyard in Mount Benson, South Australia.

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## TIME CAPSULE >> 11/12/1994 RUSSIA INVADES CHECHNYA

● Angus Roxburgh, a British foreign correspondent, was driving down a road in the snow-covered foothills of the Caucasus mountains in Chechnya when a phalanx of Russian troops, under the order of president Boris Yeltsin, launched a huge military assault on the rebel region 11 years ago this weekend.

"Attack helicopters flew overhead firing missiles into villages ... their houses were destroyed and cattle left dead in burnt-out sheds," Roxburgh wrote. He spent the next few weeks in Grozny, the Chechen capital, which was, he reported, "quickly reduced to rubble. It's a phrase that's often used lightly. But in Grozny it was really like that. It became a ghost town".

The flashpoint for what rapidly escalated into the bloodiest conflict in the post-

Cold War era was Chechnya's unilateral declaration of independence following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. When Yeltsin assumed control of the Russian Federation, he was fearful Chechnya's bid for national independence would spread to other Muslim regions within the federation.

"In effect, that day in December marked the beginning of a large-scale army operation from Moscow to 'restore constitutional order'," says Dr Kirill Nourzhanov, lecturer at the Australian National University's Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies.

"That may have been the official line but Yeltsin had decided to liquidate the de facto independent republic of Chechnya."

Yeltsin's advisers had assured him it would be a short, Falklands-type operation and

that, by the new year, the rebellious republic would be pacified. Instead, Russian troops were dragged into an unwinnable guerilla war that lasted two years and resulted in the death of more than 25,000 civilians, 4103 federal forces, and about 15,000 Chechen fighters. "It was a major miscalculation on Yeltsin's part because, instead of a small, victorious war, Russia found itself mired in a big war with an uncertain end and major international repercussions," says Nourzhanov.

Even more ominously, the war not only left Chechnya in ruins; it also Islamicised

Chechen politics. When the second war broke out toward the end of 1999, it was no longer a case of Russia attempting to suppress the pro-independence nationalist movement but Russia fighting Islamists.

"Towards the end of the first war a lot of foreign mujahideen began to arrive in Chechnya from Afghanistan, Algeria and from all over the Arab world, and they brought with them the ideals of radical Islam," says Nourzhanov. These fighters were better trained, better equipped and better motivated than the Chechens, so that by 1999 the Chechen nationalists were no longer in control but

rather the international Islamists under the leadership of Emir Khatab, an Islamic militant who had trained in Afghanistan.

"After two wars, the insurgents are no longer fighting for nationalism but for the Islamic caliphate that will transcend the boundaries of Chechnya and not only occupy the entire Caucasus but link up with Iran and Afghanistan," warns Nourzhanov.

"As a consequence, Chechnya today is a problem for the world because it has become a breeding ground for international terrorists."

Liz van den Nieuwenhof



Russian president Boris Yeltsin's plan to crush Chechnya's independence bid was a major miscalculation.

# FOREWORD

## SOMEONE'S GOT TO DO IT >> LYNDON STENNING SOMMELIER

● "I used to be a semi-professional cyclist, but decided I ought to get a job. Working in restaurants was a good area for me because it meant I could travel. So I became a sommelier. Basically I am a wine specialist. I work for a few restaurants, although I'm based at Essence in Sydney's Darling Harbour, and I purchase the wines, train the staff and, of course, sell the wine to the customer. I also run masterclasses about wine and food matching. To me, wine is something that unites people; if you talk to anyone at a dinner party, they will talk about which wines they like. I mainly learnt the job hands-on. There are a lot of winemakers out there; I get people every day asking me to taste their wines. In a week I can taste up to 50 wines. I love choosing a fine wine and seeing the enjoyment it brings the customer."

Debra Taylor



## PASQUALIE'S THOUGHT FOR THE WEEKEND

Taxidermy: A cabdriver who makes your skin crawl.

## MODERN DILEMMA >>

Q MY TEENAGE CHILDREN DON'T KNOW OF MY HUSBAND'S AFFAIRS AND HOW THEY CONTRIBUTED TO OUR DIVORCE. THEY BLAME ME FOR PUSHING HIM AWAY. SHOULD I TELL THEM?

### THE HUMANIST

Blame is an ugly word. He may have had extramarital affairs because you were withholding sex. You may have withheld sex because he was being cruel or depriving. Where does it all start? In the end the marriage fell apart and you must be totally honest with your kids, but make sure you tell them he has a point of view too. The best lesson you can teach kids is that no one is to blame; we all contribute to the messes we make.

Ruth Ostrow  
Author

### THE JURIST

If they are unfairly judging you harshly, you are entitled to tell them your explanation of the marital breakdown. But don't seek to alienate them from their father. Treat them as intelligent adults to whom you want to explain why things went wrong. If you handle this tactfully, they are old enough to *understand your side* of the story. But don't ask them to *take your side*. There is a subtle but significant difference between the two.

Sir Laurence Street  
Former NSW Chief Justice

### THE ETHICIST

Blaming him may be hurtful for children who feel torn by divided loyalties and under pressure to make a choice between two people they love. Despite the adult hurt and the injustices that surround marriage break-up, there is a need, for their sake, to try to create circumstances in which they are encouraged to relate to both of their parents. They are likely to love you all the more for that freedom and be less inclined to be resentful.

Dr Nicholas Tonti-Filippini  
Consultant ethicist