Accountability

**A few years ago, actress Gwyneth Paltrow was offered the lead in a movie opposite a rapper. At first, she wanted to do it, but later, aided by her parents’ advice, she changed her mind. For the woman who would later star in Emma, the rejection began a trend in which Paltrow turned down the lead for five more films early in her career because, she realized, she was still learning. “I told them I wasn’t ready. At that point, if I had done something just to be the star of a movie, the responsibility would have been placed on me,” she explains. “I wasn’t in a hurry, and I didn’t want to be held accountable for the success of a film at 21.” *(Nancy Jo Sales, in New York)***

**What are America's ties to ISIS?: Does anyone believe the U.S. when it claims to be shocked by the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria? asked Jihad Al Mansi. The Americans were able to blockade Iraq thoroughly ahead of the first Gulf War, and for years afterward, "not even a bird was allowed in without permission." And that was long before the U.S. developed a fleet of drones, which now crisscross the Middle East's skies, watching everything. "So why doesn't the U.S. know how the Islamic State and other groups are funded?" Are their drones for some reason uniquely incapable of monitoring ISIS members? We know that some U.S. aid and weaponry intended for the Kurds have ended up in ISIS hands. The U.S. must have some role, overt or covert, "in supplying these bloody organizations with human resources, money and weapons." Do I sound paranoid? Recall that under President Reagan, the U.S. armed, trained, and funded the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, who later became the Taliban and al Qaida. Even now, the U.S. seems content with verbal condemnation of ISIS atrocities, doing little militarily to stop the group. The U.S. knows how ISIS developed, "who funded it, who supported it, and who opened borders to it." America is hiding the truth -- why? *(The Week magazine, March 20, 2015)***

**A landmark bankruptcy reform cleared its last hurdle in the Senate, paving the way for the most sweeping overhaul of bankruptcy law in 27 years. The legislation, expected to glide to approval in the House of Representatives, would make it harder for people declaring bankruptcy to get most of their debt erased. It would require that the bankrupt pay back at least part of the money they’ve spent or borrowed over a period of years. *(The Week magazine, March 18, 2005)***

**A man says to his lawyer: “Gee whiz. I don’t know why I confessed to a crime I didn’t commit. Maybe so I’d have an alibi for the one I did do.” *(Mike Baldwin, in Cornered comic strip)***

**At Phoenix House, the highly regarded drug-rehabilitation center in New York, a typical therapy group will start out by listening quietly to all the victim chatter of a recently arrived addict. Then someone will say something like “It isn’t your mother or society or even the pushers who put the needle in your arm. You did.” Therapy starts there. *(John Leo, in U.S. News & World Report)***

**When you’re from Mississippi and you’re a conservative and you’re a Christian, there are a lot of people that don’t like that. I fell into their trap, and so I have only myself to blame. *(Sen. Trent Lott)***

**In 2010, Germany finally paid off the last of its debts from World War I, for reparations they agreed to in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles for the damage done to Allied countries. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 194)***

**Comedian Jackie Gleason was just getting started in his career when he found himself unable to pay the rent at the seaside boardinghouse where he was staying. To sneak out without paying, he lowered his suitcase out his window to a waiting friend, then walked out of the house in his swimsuit as if he were going to the beach. Years later, he returned to pay the debt he owed and nearly gave the landlady a heart attack. “Oh my lord,” she exclaimed, “I thought you were drowned!” *(Ben Franklin’s Almanac)***

**While president, Ulysses S. Grant was fined $20 for driving his carriage too fast. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 182)***

**We have not passed that subtle line between childhood and adulthood until . . . we have stopped saying, “It got lost,” and say, “I lost it.” *(Sydney J. Harris)***

Lucy: “I guess you’ll have to say goodbye to the TV after your Dad sees your report card.” Girl: “Naw. I’ve got it all worked out, Lucy. All I have to do to avoid taking any responsibility for my lousy grades is say I take full responsibility for it!” Lucy; “Oh. OK, that makes no sense at all.” Girl: “I know, but apparently it’s the adult thing to do.” *(Wiley, in Non Sequitur comic strip)*

**BP agrees to record fine for Gulf oil spill: British oil company BP last week accepted criminal responsibility for the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill and agreed to pay $4.5 billion in fines, the biggest penalty ever levied by the U.S. Justice Department, said Kathy Finn and David Ingram in Reuters.com. Under the settlement, BP will plead guilty to 11 felony counts related to the deaths of 11 workers on the Deepwater Horizon rig, and one count of obstruction for giving Congress false information about how much oil was leaking from the well. The company could still be fined up to $21 billion for pollution violations under the Clean Water Act. *(The Week magazine, November 30, 2012)***

**Five judges of Olympic boxing contests are drawn from five continents, in an attempt to assure neutrality. What it really assures, some say, is that the judges so scatter after the games they can’t be held accountable for rotten calls. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Woman: “Not only is it illegal to have parties like this, Pierce, it’s also incredibly risky! Your parents will be held responsible for anything that happens on these premises!” Pierce: “That’s not fair!” Woman: “Well, that’s the way it is.” Pierce: “I do all the work and they get all the credit?” *(Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman, in Zits comic strip)***

**You can’t run a society or cope with its problems if people are not held accountable for what they do. *(John Leo, in U.S. News & World Report)***

**Albert Schweitzer blamed himself for every failure: “If I achieve nothing through demonstrating love it is because there is not yet enough love in me. If I am powerless in the face of insincerity and lies then my own sincerity is still at fault. If my tolerance is misunderstood or mocked then there cannot be enough tolerance within myself.” *(Peter Liefhebber, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Officials in Philadelphia were astonished last week to receive a letter and payment from a motorist who had been given a speeding ticket on July 15, 1954. John Gedge, an English tourist, had been visiting the City of Brotherly Love when he was cited for speeding in Fairmount Park. The penalty was $15, but George forgot about it for almost 52 years, when he discovered the ticket in an old coat. “I thought, Blimey, I’ve got to pay it,” said Gedge, 84, who now lives in a nursing home in East Essex. “Englishmen pay their debts.” City officials plan to frame the five-pound note George sent, rather than cash it, but Gedge says it doesn’t matter to him. “My conscience is clear.” *(The Week magazine, June 30, 2006)***

**Good week for: Consistency, when Richard Knoebel, chief of police in Kewaskum, Wisconsin, wrote himself a $235 traffic ticket for passing a stopped school bus. Knoebel said he didn’t see the bus on the other side of the road until he had passed it, but wouldn’t accept that excuse from another motorist. “I shouldn’t be any different,” he said. *(The Week magazine, February 16, 2007)***

**It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable. *(Moliere)***

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