Accountability

**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)***

**Three members of Ohio’s Amish community were caught carrying forbidden cellphones during the October 4th national test of the government’s emergency alert system. A former community member, Eli Yoder, described on TikTok how three male friends for whom he’d secretly procured the phones were startled when their hidden devices began blaring the emergency alert. “We had our phones on vibrate, and it still went off,” Yoder said they told him. He said the men reported that church elders had sentenced them to “shunning,” which means they can’t take part in community activities. *(The Week magazine, October 27, 2023)***

**A New Jersey jury ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay $750 million in punitive damages to four people who said their use of the company’s baby powders caused a rare cancer. Citing state law, the judge said she planned to reduce the award to $186.5 million. J&J faces suits from 16,800 plaintiffs over talcum powder; it’s appealing a $4.7 billion Missouri verdict. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 21, 2020)***

**Banks: Another settlement for Wells Fargo: Wells Fargo agreed last week to pay $575 million to all 50 states and the District of Columbia "to settle civil charges related to the bank's fake-accounts scandal," said Annalyn Kurtz in CNN.com. The agreement follows other settlements the nation's third-biggest bank has paid out since 2016, when it admitted its employees had opened up to 3.5 million fake bank and credit card accounts. Wells Fargo has also been fined for overcharging auto loan and mortgage consumers. The many missteps have led regulators to bar the bank from expanding "until the Federal Reserve is satisfied that it has cleaned up its act." *(The Week magazine, January 11, 2019)***

**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 computerized bill had this notice on the bottom: "Failure to receive this bill is no excuse for non-payment of the amount shown below. *(Robert Sylvester, Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate)***

**Three Cheers for: Brown Mackie College in Salina, Kansas, which makes its graduates guaranteed successes. If they do not receive a bona-fide job offer within 120 days, the school will refund their tuition. Earl Edwards, dean of instruction at the 92-year-old business school, says, "Schools ought to be good enough so graduates can go out and get a job. We know our students will be satisfied customers. That is probably the highest level of accountability in education that you can get." Brown Mackie has a good track record. In 1982, 97.9 percent of its graduates found jobs either in their own field or in related areas. *(United Press International)***

**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)***

**When it became obvious that our dog was pregnant, there was a great deal of speculation as to who the pups' papa might be. Eagerly we awaited the day when, by their appearance, the pups themselves might provide an answer. But when they arrived, they all looked like their mother. If we were left confused, apparently one of our neighbors was not, for later that afternoon the doorbell rang. When I answered, there sat big, handsome King with a saddlebag on his back filled with puppy biscuits and a sign around his neck proudly proclaiming: CHILD SUPPORT. (*R. Quinn, in Reader's Digest)***

**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)***

**A wind energy company was ordered to pay $8 million in fines and restitution after pleading guilty to killing 150 bald and golden eagles at its wind farms. ESI Energy will also spend $27 million to minimize future incidents. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 22, 2022)***

**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)***

**Three companies – DuPont, Chemours, and Corteva – agreed to pay more than $1 billion to settle claims that “forever chemicals” contaminated U.S. water systems. The three chemical giants are facing thousands of lawsuits from across the country over pollution from the toxic chemicals, known as PFAS. *(CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 16, 2023)***

**As we must account for every idle word, so must we account for every idle silence. *(Benjamin Franklin)***

**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)***

**Nearly 90 percent of all home loans originated in the U.S. this year were either funded or guaranteed by the federal government. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 18, 2009)***

**Bob Hope tells a story about a high-stakes golf match with Bing Crosby. Hope was leading by five strokes on the 14th hole when he was called away. Reluctant to lose his advantage he suggested that Crosby finish the match, playing for both of them. That evening Crosby phoned with the news that Hope owed him $500. Hope protested, pointing out that at the time he left the golf course, he had a five-stroke advantage. “That’s true,” said Crosby, “but after you left your game fell apart.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

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**At least 400 people from 43 states have been charged for taking part in the Jan. 6 Capitol Insurrection, with new defendants indicted daily. Prosecutors say they expect to charge at least 500 people who took part in the assault, which injured more than 100 Capitol Police officers, some seriously, and forced Senate and House members into hiding. *(CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 14, 2021)***

**The Justice Department has prosecuted 716 people in connection with the Jan. 6 insurrection, and so far has won 529 of 532 resolved cases – a 99.4 percent conviction rate. *(Forbes, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 11, 2023)***

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**Good week for: Customer service, after al Qaida's branch in Iraq and Syria set up a complaints department for "anyone who might have a complaint against any element of the Islamic state." The organization promised "accountability." *(The Week magazine, June 14, 2013)***

**Will nobody hold Israel accountable?: What’s the point of international law if no one obeys it? asked Ibrahim Shaaban. As a Palestinian lawyer who follows these issues closely, I’ve lost count of how many war crimes Israel has committed during its month-long war against Hamas. It has hit medical centers, in violation of “many texts of international humanitarian law.” It has demolished residential neighborhoods, flouting protocols that compel countries to avoid civilian casualties. It has shelled dozens of mosques and three churches, turned two refugee camps into craters, and cut off 2 million people from food. Seventy percent of the nearly 10,000 people killed in Gaza so far are women and children who bear no responsibility for Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, yet Israel callously declares them collateral damage. “Have the Geneva Conventions simply disappeared?” Europeans spent years of laborious diplomacy creating human rights treaties, yet now European governments stand by silently as Israel shreds them. Of course, we hardly expect the United States to speak up, given its “long record of international crimes” in Latin America, its torture camps like Iraq’s Abu Ghraib, its history of bombing other countries. International law apparently doesn’t apply to the U.S., or to its proxy Israel. *(The Week magazine, November 17, 2023)***

**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, syndicated columnist)***

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)*

On September 30, 1946, the Nuremberg Trials concluded after 22 German military leaders were charged with war crimes stemming from their involvement in World War II. Only three of the defendants were acquitted of charges. (*The Daily Chronicle)*

**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)***

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**Pharma: Opioid distributor charged: A major drug distribution company has been hit with criminal charges, a first in the fight against the opioid crisis, said Tom Winter and Elisha Fieldstadt in NBCNews.com. Federal representatives charged Rochester Drug Co-Operative with conspiracy to violate narcotics laws and other offenses, accusing the firm of 'distributing tens of millions of doses of oxycodone, fentanyl, and other opioids" to pharmacies that "had no legitimate need for them." Rochester's former CEO, Laurence Doud III, and its former chief compliance officer were also individually charged. *(The Week magazine, May 3, 2019)***

**Pharma: Opioid deal could hit $18 billion: The country’s three biggest drug distributors this week offered to pay $18 billion to settle thousands of opioid lawsuits, said Sara Randazzo in The Wall Street Journal, just ahead of a landmark federal trial set to begin next week. McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health could collectively pay the sum over 18 years for what plaintiffs allege was a failure “to implement adequate systems to halt suspicious drug orders as the opioid epidemic came into focus.” The companies are under pressure to make a deal capping their liability in the litigation; such an agreement would make them the first companies “to achieve a broad resolution of the opioid lawsuits outside of bankruptcy.” *(The Week magazine, October 25, 2019)***

**Opioids: Holding a drugmaker to acccount: Officers of a company that hyped the opioid fentanyl are set to go on trial next week on charges that "they acted more like mobsters than pharmaceutical executives," said Jonathan Saltzman and Maria Cramer in The Boston Globe. The U.S. charges that John Kapoor, "a onetime billionaire" and founder of Insys Therapeutics, paid bribes and kickbacks to get doctors to prescribe the company's fentanyl spray, Subsys. The Insys trial is a rare effort by the federal government "to hold drug companies to account for the nation's deadly opioid epidemic." *(The Week magazine, February 8, 2019)***

**Opioids: Drugmakers offer $10 billion to states: Three major pharmaceutical distributors this week proposed paying $10 billion to settle claims they helped fuel the opioid epidemic, said Jef Feeley in Bloomberg.com. McKesson, Cardinal Health, and AmerisourceBergen made the proposal in talks with a group of state attorneys general, who have accused the distributors of "ignoring red flags about the misuse of painkillers" and flooding states with 76 billion pain pills between 2006 and 2012. The states countered with a demand for $45 billion to cover costs in the public-health crisis. The distributors face almost 2,000 additional lawsuits brought by cities and counties. *(The Week magazine, August 16, 2019)***

**Opioids: J&J hit with $572 million verdict: An Oklahoma judge ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay $572 million this week in the first trial of a drug manufacturer for its role in the opioid epidemic, said Jan Hoffman in The New York Times. That falls shy of the $17 billion the state had sought, but marks a major loss for a company whose "share of opioid sales was scarcely 1 percent of the market" in Oklahoma. There are now more than 2,000 pending opiium-related lawsuits against drug companies nationwide. Purdue Pharma, "the company blamed for much of the epidemic," has offered as much as $12 billion to settle litigation, including $3 billion from its owners, the Sackler family. It could have been worse, said Michael Hiltzik in the Los Angeles Times, and Johnson & Johnson could have been on the hook for $17 billion. But the "size of the judgment in a small state, levied on a company with a tiny 1 percent market share in opioid painkillers, has gotten the attention of legal experts." For J & J, this "is the equivalent of about two weeks of profit." But for the pharmaceuticals industry, Judge Thad Balkman's verdict points to liability of as much as $150 billion. He ruled that the company intentionally taught its sales reps to avoid talking about addiction. This suit is a template for much bigger ones to come. (*The Week magazine, September 6 / September 13, 2019)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Picking Her Spots: A few years ago actress Gwyneth Paltow 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)***

**Kids' gun deaths are no accident: When a child finds his mom's or dad's gun and totally shoots himself, authorities often call it an "accidental" death. But these shootings "aren't accidents," said Justin Peters. They're the predictable result of the parents' "criminally negligent behavior." Consider the recent spate of "accidental" shootings in Houston, where, in under a week, two boys, ages 3 and 4, fatally shot themselves in their homes, and a 6-year-old boy was critically injured after his younger brother unintentionally shot him. "In all three cases, the guns were left out in the open, loaded and unsecured by allegedly responsible adults who should have know better." In Texas and 27 other states, it's "a criminal misdemeanor to leave a readily dischargeable firearm in a place where it's accessible to a child," and evidence shows that such legislation can reduce child-shooting deaths. Yet these laws are only effective as a deterrent if they're vigorously enforced by authorities, who often choose out of sympathy not to prosecute already suffering parents. Yet, these shootings are tragedies. But if we want to save other at-risk children, we must hold parents criminally responsible for these preventable deaths. *(The Week magazine, March 20, 2015)***

**Good week for: The rule of law, after a Florida police chief issued himself a parking ticket when a neighbor alerted him that his vehicle was parked illegally. "I cannot hold anyone accountable until I hold myself accountable," Chief Melvin Tennyson said after paying the $45 fine. *(The Week magazine, May 27, 2016)***

**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)***

**The FCC issued a record $299,997,000 fine to the robocall operation responsible for issuing more than 5 billion calls to half a billion phone numbers in the span of three months in 2021. The spam calls were about extending your vehicle’swarranty. The FCC says it is now up to the Justice Department to collect. *(CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 18, 2023)***

**A Missouri jury ordered Bayer to pay $1.56 billion to four plaintiffs who claimed the company’s Roundup weed killer caused cancer. The verdict is the fourth straight loss in court for Bayer, which faces an additional 50,000 claims. In 2020, Bayer settled most of the then-pending Roundup cases for $10.9 billion. *(Reuters, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 1, 2023)***

**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)***

**In the 145 school shootings committed by minors since 1999, the guns involved in at least 84 of them were taken from the shooter's home or from a friend's or family member's home. But in those cases, just four adults have been successfully prosecuted for failing to keep their guns secure. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 17 / August 24, 2018)***

**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)***

**Southwest Airlines agreed to pay a $140 million fine for last year’s holiday travel meltdown, when it canceled nearly 17,000 flights and stranded 2 million passengers. The Department of Transportation said the fine is 30 times larger than any it has issued for consumer protection violations. *(CNBC.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 29, 2023/January 5, 2024)***

**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)***

**Donald Trump faced potentially crippling and financial jeopardy this week, after New York Attorney General Letitia James warned she would start seizing the former president’s real estate assets if he failed to pay his $355 million judgment for financial fraud. And the $355 figure wasn’t pulled out of the air: The judge “cited exact figures of how much Trump was improperly enriched by his cheating and lying.” *(The Week magazine, March 1, 2024)***

**6 VW execs charged in emissions scandal: U.S. prosecutors charged six Volkswagen executives this week for their alleged role in the company's "vast" emissions cheating scandal, said Nathan Bomey in USA Today. The Justice Department unveiled the indictments Wednesday, also announcing that the German carmaker had pleaded guilty to criminal charges for conspiring to cheat environmental regulations. Volkswagen will now pay $4.3 billion in criminal and civil fines, bringing the scandal's tab to nearly $22 billion. One of the indicted VW executives was arrested while vacationing in Florida earlier this week; the remaining five are in Germany. *(The Week magazine, January 20, 2017)***

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

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