

The Highlights & the Lowlifes

by Richard Lim

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January

•The National Hockey League's team owners and players settle their labour dispute just in time to play 48 regular season games and to collect their annual salaries averaging 17 jillion zillion dollars. In totally completely unrelated news, Québec City and Winnipeg announce they can no longer afford to keep their teams.

•Storms and floods in California cause over 40 deaths and nearly \$1 billion in damage, prompting governor Pete Wilson to declare 37 of the state's 58 counties "disaster areas." Kevin Costner arrives several days later to begin filming "Waterworld II."

•The Canadian Airborne Regiment is disbanded after a number of video tapes reveal that the paratrooping unit was the second shooter behind the case across the grassy knoll on that fateful, tragic day in Dallas.

February

•Television evangelist Jim Bakker gives his first sermon since going to prison in 1989, preaching at a friend's memorial service. He is later caught pinching the corpse's wristwatch.

•England's oldest financial institution, the Barings Bank, declares bankruptcy after its chief trader in Singapore, Nick Leeson, loses \$1 billion on the derivatives market. Leeson insists that the \$1 billion is, "not lost, really, just resting somewhere else for a little while."

•The RCMP seizes over \$17 million in counterfeit American money in Québec. The Caisse Populaire denies suggestions that the money would have been used to shore up the Canadian dollar in the wake of the impending referendum.

March

•United Nations soldiers pull out of Somalia after 26 months. The operation helped approximately 13 people and cost \$2 billion. Nick Leeson claims that he donated half of that amount on behalf of Barings Bank, but is unable to produce the receipt for this charitable donation, and the judge throws out Leeson's defence.

•The Canadian Coast Guard arrests a Spanish trawler for violating international fishing quotas off the coast of Newfoundland. The European Union's representative in the dispute attempts to foster an environment of cooperation and congeniality by getting on CBC's The National and foaming at the mouth.

•And the Oscar goes to... "Forrest Gump," an uplifting film about an idiot who personally experiences every significant event in American history in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s — much like the people for whom the film is intended.

•The O.J. Simpson murder trial enters its fifteenth month.

April

•The longest strike in sports history, 234 days, comes to a close, as Major League Baseball players and owners grudgingly

agree to continue earning 59 billion jillion zillion dollars a year. In totally completely unrelated news, the price of hot dogs at Toronto's Skydome goes up to \$7, not including taxes and condiments.

•A car bomb explodes outside a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and injuring more than 500 others. Law enforcement authorities, experts on terrorism, the media and the general public agree that this was clearly the work of Muslim fundamentalists. Sure enough, less than a week later, two middle-class white Anglo-Saxon males are arrested, just as everyone figured.

•The European Union and Canada reach an agreement over fishing rights: The Europeans will continue to overfish, and the Canadians will continue to argue that the Europeans do not have that right.

May

•The Indianapolis 500 is won by a Canadian, for the first time in its history, as Jacques Villeneuve takes the checkered flag at the Brickyard. He is later asked to return the flag so that it may be used for next year's race as well.

•Paul Bernardo goes on trial for the murders of Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy. One Ontario teenager comments, "He couldn't have done it; he's good-looking!" The popularity of skateboards and grunge music/fashion is thus explained.

•The Secret Service wounds an armed intruder on the White House grounds. The man claims he was actually looking for 24 Sussex Drive, and is given appropriate directions by the federal agents.

June

•Mike Harris' Progressive Conservatives win the Ontario provincial election on the basis of their "Common Sense Revolution" campaign, Harris himself places third in a Ralph Klein lookalike contest.

•Four Montreal policemen are convicted for beating taxi driver Richard Barnabe into a coma in December of 1993. The four peace officers are sentenced to between 15 and 30 days of community service, to be served on weekends. The judge states that these sentences will allow the officers to continue beating up innocent people throughout the work week.

•British Prime Minister John Major resigns from his post as leader of the Tories, forcing a leadership election.

•The O.J. Simpson murder trial enters its sixth year, making it the longest murder trial in sports history.

July

•John Major wins back the leadership of the Tory Party, and thus the Prime Ministership. For some reason, he regards this circuitous chain of events as some sort of achievement.

•British actor and inexplicable sex symbol Hugh Grant pleads no contest in court after he is caught receiving oral sex from a prostitute in Hollywood. Millions of Grant's fans, apparently unable to separate movie characters from

real-life individuals, take this incident as a personal betrayal. Nevertheless, Grant's next movie, "Nine Months," is a box office hit.

•The United States renews diplomatic ties with Vietnam, demonstrating the kind of class and form which can only be possessed by a country which has taken twenty years to come to terms with the fact that it lost a war to an enemy the size of Florida with inferior technology and weaponry.

August

•Montréal's biker war briefly distracts the provincial government from its referendum plans after an 11-year old boy is killed by a car bomb. After hurling some funds at an anti-biker task force, as requested by the city of Montréal for many months before that latest bombing incident, the Parizeau administration goes back to designing Oui/Yes campaign posters.

•Elizabeth Taylor and Larry Fortensky announce their trial separation after four years of marriage. This will be Taylor's eighth divorce and Fortensky's third.

•Microsoft's Windows 95, formerly Windows 93, goes on sale. Soon, millions of computer users are seated before their terminals, glued to their telephones as they try to get through to one of the two individuals manning the Windows 95 help lines.

September

•France begins a series of nuclear weapons tests. The French government assures the international community that the explosions will occur underground and are thus no danger to anyone. However, France then insists on setting off the nuclear devices in the South Pacific, as far away from themselves as possible.

•Paul Bernardo is convicted in the murders of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French, ending a 15-week trial.

•The O.J. Simpson murder trial sets a record for the longest sidebar in legal history, at twelve days, three hours and seventeen minutes. The result of this sidebar: Witness Kato Kaelin must stop addressing Judge Lance Ito as "Yo, Lance-a-lot Dude!"

October

•Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan organizes the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. Hundreds of thousands of black men attend the gathering; organizers estimate there were over one million men in attendance, while local law enforcement authorities argue that there were 400,000 people present. The latter individuals are later recruited by the Québec government to count the number of people at the federalist rally at Place du Canada on October 27.

•The O.J. Simpson murder trial finally ends. The jury, after deliberating for three hours, including lunch and potty breaks, acquits Simpson of the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

•35,000 people show up for the One Hundred Fifty Thousand Person Rally in Montréal on Oct. 27.

•Québecers narrowly vote against providing the provincial government with a mandate to declare Québec sovereign after having made a formal offer of an economic and political partnership with Canada and within the scope of the National Assembly's bill regarding Québec's future as well as in light of the agreement signed in June — wait, what the hell was the question again?

•Québec premier Jacques Parizeau blames the referendum loss on "those damn lying squirrels" and announces his resignation.

November

•Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, is assassinated in Tel Aviv by an Israeli extremist.

•A mentally unstable Québecer missing since referendum night is found, safe and sound, outside the bedroom of Prime Minister Jean Chretien. The ensuing inquiry into the conduct of the three RCMP guards reveals that the officers were armed only with Super Soakers and Cheezies.

•Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney files a lawsuit against the RCMP and federal Justice department, claiming that his reputation has been damaged by the Airbus bribery investigation. He also files a lawsuit seeking \$50 million in damages. Those lawsuits are probably one and the same, but that scarcely seems probable.

•Mulroney's lawyers release a confidential document to the media, claiming that the document was previously leaked by the RCMP to the media. The lawyers initially refuse to explain how they themselves acquired this document; they later admit that they, not the RCMP, leaked the document to the media the first time around.

•Diana, Princess of Wales, appears on a primetime television interview to announce that she does not want any more publicity and that she would rather be left alone.

December

•Montréal Canadiens star goaltender Patrick Roy is traded to the Colorado/Québec Avalanche/Nordiques after he and coach Mario Tremblay are seen on-camera having a heated argument regarding the verdict of the O.J. Simpson trial.

•The peace treaty to end 43 months of war in Bosnia is signed in Paris.

•Consumers are flooded by a record number of Christmas albums and television specials. Notable among these: a Christmas album by the Beastie Boys, a Christmas special by sitcom star Fran Drescher, and that old favourite, the Jingle Cats.

•Outgoing Québec Premier Jacques Parizeau gives an emotional farewell on his last day in the Québec National Assembly. Parizeau touches on several key events in his long political career, concluding by stating that he could have won the October referendum, "if it weren't for those meddlin' kids."

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