

# MAGAZINE RACK

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What's Hot Under Covers

02138

by Fern Siegel, Wednesday, Jan 3, 2007 12:15 PM ET

**TO PARAPHRASE VOLTAIRE, ABSOLUTE POWER** corrupts absolutely fabulously. Provided you're a Harvard alum, you can, with luck, exist in a Cambridge-infused designer's paradise: A world that is pretty, powerful and, forgive me, a tad precious. I don't mind affluence, but I draw the line at a 3-year-old swathed in Noel Coward's silk pajamas. I'm sure if it was up to little Ford, he'd grab a Sponge Bob T. And, if he changed his name to Mustang or Jaguar, could enlarge his dating pool. But as the son of socialite Marisa Noel Brown, who is obsessed with playing dress-up, his options, like George Bush's (Harvard MBA '75), are limited.



Happily, the other women profiled in *02138*, a new quarterly that targets Harvard grads, boast a more serious demeanor. Martha Nussbaum is a distinguished professor of law and ethics at the University of Chicago Law School, while Margaret H. Marshall is chief justice, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. And the men are equally accomplished, from world-renowned cellist Matt Haimovitz to a fascinating look at Peter Woit, a maverick physicist who is challenging the much-touted string theory.

All have found their way into *02138*, the *90210* of the adult moneyed set. And why not? Like attracts like--and Harvard alumni, both the Old and New Money variety, are undeniably influential. Say what you will about education, but I doubt Penn State reunions focus on the complexities of wealth management--or can claim most of the writing staff of "The Simpsons."

Which is why *02138*, named for the Cambridge, Mass., Zip code, exists. Launched in September and backed by the company that produces *The Atlantic Monthly*, it claims a coveted readership of 50,000 Harvard alums its publisher dubs "the epicenter of the leadership class in America." If you want to know how "leadership" lives, look at the ads. It flies in Marquis jets, drinks single-malt Glenmorangie Scotch, drives BMW X3s and wears Parmigiani watches. I never heard of them either; then again, I'm afraid of timepieces that cost more than my co-op.

Still, many have benefited by the extraordinary accomplishments of the university's graduates. The newest: cover boy Gov. Eliot Spitzer, who helped clean up Wall Street and now wants to introduce ethics to Albany. Talk about ambitious.

In short, when it comes to trumpeting top dogs, *02138* doesn't disappoint. Yes, it's a glossy tribute to in-house cheerleading, but it delivers on its promise: connecting readers and advertisers to key people. Plus, it's well-written. The story by Alan Dershowitz, taking aim at a bigoted article on Israel by the JFK School of Government and supported by *Harvard Magazine*, was eye-opening. The degree gives its bearers cachet and entrée into select circles. And for those who qualify for entrance, deservedly so.

The tricky bit is those who don't.

Harvard recently dropped its early-admissions program because it favors the advantaged. But it left in place legacies and development cases. Legacies are the children of alumni, who have an easier time getting in. Ditto for development cases, a euphemism for kids of celebrities, rich execs and politicians who, according to Daniel Golden, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter and author of *The Price of Admissions*, are admitted with S.A.T. scores 300 or 400 points below rejected applicants. Think Claude Rains in "Casablanca"-- "I'm shocked, shocked to discover there's gambling here"--and you appreciate the obvious injustice.

The rationale is that such candidates will give more money in scholarship aid. In reality, they usually give money to slap their names on buildings. I hate to keep mentioning the Decider-in-Chief, but even his closest admirers wouldn't peg him as Phi Beta Kappa material.

Which brings me to a final irony: Harvard males, according to *02138*, like to "drop the H-bomb" during dating, a reference to their belief that the degree carries the same force as a thermonuclear device.

It's true.

The National Security Matrix story lists 13 Harvard men responsible for "the ins and outs of the Bush administration's national security policy." All are interconnected in a Kevin Bacon-like maze to people such as Elliott Abrams, the Deputy National Security Adviser for Global Democracy Strategy, who advocates interventionist American policy. Along with his cohorts, he helped Don Rumsfeld, a Princeton man, engineer the Iraq War. Is reality-based learning not part of the Harvard curriculum?

OK, so we won't have peace in our time. But come the presidential primaries, if H-man Sen. Barack Obama tosses his hat in the ring, *02138* will offer a big, upbeat profile. The pub's goal is to showcase, not critique, since the influentials are a tad sensitive about criticism. That's the real beauty of status; often, like Mafia dons, they get 24/7 protection. Membership has its privileges.

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