

April 10, 2014

Jennifer Rubin spots the difference between two presidents.

Secretary of State John Kerry's testimony on Tuesday served to remind us how a single presidential decision can have monumental effects. For the president who said a decade of war was ending, the decision not to act in a bloody war in which WMD's had been repeatedly used was the tipping point in an already floundering foreign policy. The contrast with his predecessor is stark.

George W. Bush's arguably finest moment as president and President Obama's worst moment involved a similar dilemma: When does the commander in chief put country above politics and lead on foreign policy despite the adverse political consequences? When the chips were really down, Bush championed the surge in Iraq; when the chips were down in Syria for violation of the red line, Obama blinked.

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Jonathan Tobin explains Kerry's lies about Israel.

... Kerry probably thinks no harm can come from blaming the Israelis who have always been the convenient whipping boys of the peace process no matter what the circumstances. But he's wrong about that too. Just as the Clinton administration did inestimable damage to the credibility of the peace process and set the stage for another round of violence by whitewashing Yasir Arafat's support for terrorism and incitement to hatred in the 1990s, so, too, do Kerry's efforts to portray Abbas as the victim rather than the author of this fiasco undermine his efforts for peace.

So long as the Palestinians pay no price for their refusal to give up unrealistic demands for a Jewish retreat from Jerusalem as well as the "right of return" for the 1948 refugees and their descendants and a refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and end the conflict, peace is impossible no matter what the Netanyahu government does. Appeasing them with lies about Israel, like the efforts of some to absolve Arafat and Abbas for saying no to peace in 2000, 2001, and 2008, only makes it easier for the PA to go on saying no. Whether they are doing so in the hope of extorting more concessions from Israel or because, as is more likely, they have no intention of making peace on any terms, the result is the same.

Telling the truth about the Palestinians might make Kerry look foolish for devoting so much time and effort to a process that never had a chance. But it might lay the groundwork for future success in the event that the sea change in Palestinian opinion that might make peace possible were to occur. Falsely blaming Israel won't bring that moment any closer.

Charlie Gasparino provides another grown-up look at Michael Lewis' book about high frequency trading.

It's easy to bash Wall Street as the root cause of all financial problems (and some non-financial ones), which is why Michael Lewis is getting away with blowing so much smoke about the latest supposed ripoff of the "little guy."

Easy, but completely and utterly disingenuous.

The "scandal" Lewis points to in a new book (and in his high-profile publicity campaign) is something called high-frequency trading, or HFT. In a scam of epic proportions, we're told, smart Wall Street fellows can miraculously figure out when, where and how much stock you, the individual investor, want to buy — and then rip you off.

The HFT guys supposedly do this by jumping in front of your order at the speed of light and forcing you to pay more for a stock than you would've if the high-speed computer never existed. Even as the market hits record highs, Lewis wants you to believe the system is rigged.

The book is a fast read — as long as you suspend your disbelief over Lewis' thesis: These evil traders are screwing the American people once again, just as they did during the financial crisis.

But, as with that easy lefty interpretation of the 2008 crisis, Lewis conveniently leaves out some important facts ...

Well, here's something to burst some bubbles! According to a study from Great Britain the consumption of organic foods does little to help women avoid cancer. You'll learn a new word here - boffin. It is British slang for scientist or technical expert. Sounds derogatory, but it's not. So you wouldn't call someone a boffo boffin because it would tend to be redundant. The story come from [The Register](#), which looks to be a Brit equivalent to Wired.

One of the primary drivers of the growth in organic food sales over the last couple of decades is the perception that organic food is healthier than conventionally farmed food.

It stands to reason, doesn't it? After all conventional crops depend on chemicals and organic food doesn't.

And we all know that chemicals, in this case mainly pesticides, are bad for you. Ergo organic food should be healthier, and the strong growth in organic food sales (up 2.8 per cent last year, after a few years of downturn during the recession) attests to how popular opinion has accepted this assertion.

This is why the results of a new UK study that looked at cancer risk and the consumption of organic food is so damned inconvenient. Where organic food advocates have pushed organics as a way of reducing cancer risk, the study shows that it makes little difference one way or another.

Hence uncomfortable headlines from the likes of the Daily Mail: Eating organic foods does NOTHING to reduce the cancer risk among women, says new study.

The study in question appears in the latest edition of the British Journal of Cancer and is by Oxford University cancer epidemiology boffin Dr Kathryn Bradbury and co-workers. Part of the Million Women Study funded by Cancer Research UK and the Medical Research Council, this particular bit of research tracked 623,080 middle-aged British women for almost 10 years and looked at their pattern of organic food consumption and the incidence of 16 different cancer types, as well as overall cancer incidence. ...

Since we're in the business of bursting bubbles today, how about a blind taste test for violins? Do you think the \$3 million Stradivari did well? A blog named [Phys.Org](#) has the answers.

Ten world-class soloists put costly Stradivarius violins and new, cheaper ones to a blind scientific test. The results may seem off-key to musicians and collectors, but the new instruments won handily.

When the lights were dimmed and the musicians donned dark glasses, the soloists' top choice out of a dozen old and new violins tested was by far a new one. So was the second choice, according to a study published Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Of the six old violins tested, five were by made by the famous Stradivari family in the 17th and 18th centuries. The newer violins were about 100 times cheaper, said study co-author Joseph Curtin, a Michigan violin maker. But the Strads and other older Italian violins have long been considered superior, even almost magical.

The idea was to unlock "the secrets of Stradivari," the study said.

So the study tries to quantify something that is inherently subjective and personal, the quality of an instrument, said Curtin and lead author Claudia Fritz of Pierre and Marie Curie University in France. A few years earlier, the duo tested violins blind in an Indianapolis hotel room, but this one was more controlled and comprehensive, putting the instruments through their paces in a rehearsal room and concert hall just outside Paris. They even played with an orchestra, the results of which will be part of a future study.

"I was surprised that my top choice was new," said American violinist Giora Schmidt. ...

Late night humor from [Andy Malcolm](#).

Conan: Did you know, Texas was an independent nation that bordered the U.S. from 1836 to 1845? And then in 1845, the U.S. surrendered to Texas.

Fallon: The White House says it's surpassed its goal for people enrolled in ObamaCare. Man, it's amazing what you can achieve when you make something mandatory and fine people if they don't do it, and keep extending the deadline for months.

Fallon: If you don't enroll in ObamaCare you might get a penalty of 1% of your salary. Then Americans said, "Man — good thing I don't have a job!" ...

Right Turn

The defining moments for Bush and Obama

by Jennifer Rubin

Secretary of State John Kerry's [testimony on Tuesday](#) served to remind us how a single presidential decision can have monumental effects. For the president who said a decade of war was ending, the decision not to act in a bloody war in which WMD's had been repeatedly used was the tipping point in an already floundering foreign policy. The contrast with his predecessor is stark.

George W. Bush's arguably finest moment as president and President Obama's worst moment involved a similar dilemma: *When does the commander in chief put country above politics and lead on foreign policy despite the adverse political consequences?* When the chips were really down, Bush championed the surge in Iraq; when the chips were down in Syria for violation of the red line, Obama blinked.

Bush went outside the chain of command to find experts and a general to devise a new strategy when he saw the war strategy wasn't going well. Obama hid behind obvious [catastrophizing by the military](#) when he decided to avoid holding to his red line.

Bush took full responsibility for the strategy. Obama claimed it wasn't "his red line," but Congress's and the international community's.

Bush knew it would cost him politically and his party the House. (It did.) Obama saw the results of the vote in the British parliament and ran for cover. He punted the decision at the last moment to Congress to provide him with a vote on authorization for use of force.

On January 10, 2007, [Bush gave a speech](#) to the country explaining what was at stake: "The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people, and it is unacceptable to me. Our troops in Iraq have fought bravely. They have done everything we have asked them to do. Where mistakes have been made, the responsibility rests with me. . . . This will require increasing American force levels. So I have committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them — five brigades — will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations." He went on to explain the elements of the strategy and why he thought it would succeed. (It did.)

Obama went before the American people in September, 2013 and gave a speech [so internally contradictory](#) and [unconvincing](#) that rare [consensus](#) formed across party lines that this was a disaster.

Bush was able to hand off a military success to Obama (who promptly dropped the ball by not concluding a security of forces agreement). Obama's decision not to act arguably will have ripples for years to come — a prolonged Syrian civil war with thousands more dead, an emboldened Iran, the revival of Russia as a Middle East power, encouragement to Vladimir Putin that aggression (e.g. Ukraine) would not be met with U.S. force.

Bush's conduct of the war is hardly beyond criticism. From the flawed intelligence on WMD's to the years of drift before the surge, Bush bears ultimate responsibility. But when it mattered most he got it right, going against his party, the media and the polls. Obama's Syria policy, if you can call it that, has been a disaster from the get go. When given the opportunity to course correct, Obama blinked and succumbed to his base and popular opinion. If you want to know the difference between the presidents there's no better example than this.

Contentions

[Why Did Kerry Lie About Israeli Blame?](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Today in testimony before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary of State John Kerry performed a post-mortem on the recent collapse of the Middle East peace talks. According to Kerry, the Palestinian refusal to keep negotiating past April and their decision to flout their treaty commitments by returning to efforts to gain recognition for their non-existent state from the United Nations was all the fault of one decision made by Israel. [As the New York Times reports:](#)

Secretary of State John Kerry said Tuesday that Israel's announcement of 700 new apartments for Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem precipitated the bitter impasse in peace negotiations last week between Israel and the Palestinians.

While Mr. Kerry said both sides bore responsibility for "unhelpful" actions, he noted that the publication of tenders for housing units came four days after a deadline passed for Israel to release Palestinian prisoners and complicated Israel's own deliberations over whether to extend the talks.

"Poof, that was the moment," Mr. Kerry said in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Poof? To say that this evaluation of the situation is disingenuous would be the understatement of the century. Kerry knows very well that the negotiations were doomed once the Palestinians refused to sign on to the framework for future talks he suggested even though it centered them on the 1967 lines that they demand as the basis for borders. Why? Because Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas wouldn't say the two little words — "Jewish state"—that would make it clear he intended to end the conflict. Since the talks began last year after Abbas insisted on the release of terrorist murderers in order to get them back to the table, the Palestinians haven't budged an inch on a single issue.

Thus, to blame the collapse on the decision to build apartments in Gilo—a 40-year-old Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem that would not change hands even in the event a peace treaty were ever signed and where Israel has never promised to stop building—is, to put it mildly, a

mendacious effort to shift blame away from the side that seized the first pretext to flee talks onto the one that has made concessions in order to get the Palestinians to sit at the table. But why would Kerry utter such a blatant falsehood about the process he has championed?

The answer is simple. Kerry doesn't want to blame the Palestinians for walking out because to do so would be a tacit admission that his critics were right when they suggested last year that he was embarking on a fool's errand. The division between the Fatah-run West Bank and Hamas-ruled Gaza has created a dynamic which makes it almost impossible for Abbas to negotiate a deal that would recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state no matter where its borders were drawn even if he wanted to.

Since Kerry hopes to entice the Palestinians back to the talks at some point, blaming Israel also gives him leverage to demand more concessions from the Jewish state to bribe Abbas to negotiate. Being honest about the Palestinian stance would not only undermine the basis for the talks but also make it harder to justify the administration's continued insistence on pressuring the Israelis rather than seek to force Abbas to alter his intransigent positions.

Seen in that light, Kerry probably thinks no harm can come from blaming the Israelis who have always been the convenient whipping boys of the peace process no matter what the circumstances. But he's wrong about that too. Just as the Clinton administration did inestimable damage to the credibility of the peace process and set the stage for another round of violence by whitewashing Yasir Arafat's support for terrorism and incitement to hatred in the 1990s, so, too, do Kerry's efforts to portray Abbas as the victim rather than the author of this fiasco undermine his efforts for peace.

So long as the Palestinians pay no price for their refusal to give up unrealistic demands for a Jewish retreat from Jerusalem as well as the "right of return" for the 1948 refugees and their descendants and a refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and end the conflict, peace is impossible no matter what the Netanyahu government does. Appeasing them with lies about Israel, like the efforts of some to absolve Arafat and Abbas for saying no to peace in 2000, 2001, and 2008, only makes it easier for the PA to go on saying no. Whether they are doing so in the hope of extorting more concessions from Israel or because, as is more likely, they have no intention of making peace on any terms, the result is the same.

Telling the truth about the Palestinians might make Kerry look foolish for devoting so much time and effort to a process that never had a chance. But it might lay the groundwork for future success in the event that the sea change in Palestinian opinion that might make peace possible were to occur. Falsely blaming Israel won't bring that moment any closer.

NY Post

[Michael Lewis' high-frequency bull](#)

by Charles Gasparino

It's easy to bash Wall Street as the root cause of all financial problems (and some non-financial ones), which is why Michael Lewis is getting away with blowing so much smoke about the latest supposed ripoff of the "little guy."

Easy, but completely and utterly disingenuous.

The “scandal” Lewis points to in a new book (and in his high-profile publicity campaign) is something called high-frequency trading, or HFT. In a scam of epic proportions, we’re told, smart Wall Street fellows can miraculously figure out when, where and how much stock you, the individual investor, want to buy — and then rip you off.

The HFT guys supposedly do this by jumping in front of your order at the speed of light and forcing you to pay more for a stock than you would’ve if the high-speed computer never existed. Even as the market hits record highs, Lewis wants you to believe the system is rigged.

The book is a fast read — as long as you suspend your disbelief over Lewis’ thesis: These evil traders are screwing the American people once again, just as they did during the financial crisis.

But, as with that easy lefty interpretation of the 2008 crisis, Lewis conveniently leaves out some important facts — the biggest being that, if anyone’s ripped off by HFT, it’s not small investors. (More on that later.)

And, to the extent ripoffs are going down, the vast majority of them are perfectly legal, aided and abetted by government policy.

Yes, government. Conspicuously missing from the high-frequency debate is that government policy is at the heart of the problem (if there even is a problem with high-speed trading).

Most investors think that when they buy or sell a stock, the order is routed to the New York Stock Exchange or the Nasdaq. Not so: The Securities and Exchange Commission thought two exchanges weren’t enough, so it opened up what it considered competition starting in 2005, allowing almost anyone with a computer terminal to create an exchange.

These exchanges are known derisively as “dark pools,” because, even as it gave them the green light, the SEC also took a largely hands-off approach to regulating them. The “transparency” of pricing you see at the NYSE and Nasdaq doesn’t exist with the dark pools.

The big Wall Street firms and their clients such as Blackrock and other money managers liked it that way. They could hide their orders, and trade without alerting the rest of the markets — which was great for them.

Until, that is, some smart guy wrote a computer program that could largely figure out how the big guys were trading, then jump ahead of those orders lightning-fast (hence “high-frequency”) to make quick profits.

Nefarious? Not for anyone but the big guys. What Lewis doesn’t tell anyone (and what Steve Kroft in his “60 Minutes” interview wasn’t smart enough to ask) is how this hurts the small investor.

Because it doesn’t. This isn’t traders vs. the little guy, it’s “Alien vs. Predator” — one set of financial insiders outsmarting another bunch.

The guy who buys Apple on an online-brokerage account gets the price he sees on his screen; that’s how the E*trades of the world fill orders. And if you have a mutual fund, your money

manager should be smart enough to figure out (as many have) how not to be gamed by the HFT guys.

Another thing Lewis doesn't tell you is that HFT has also reduced the cost of trading: These guys trade so much, they've driven down the cost of buying or selling stocks. So whatever game they're playing might be a net plus for investors.

None of which is stopping the usual headline-hunters from riding to the "rescue." As the Fox Business Network was first to report, Manhattan US Attorney Preet Bharara is investigating the HTF "scandal," and even butting heads with the New York office of the FBI over who'll get credit for the first scalp.

Keep in mind, our law-enforcement officials have a lousy record of nailing the true culprits in the financial world. All those insider-trading convictions they tout have nothing to do with the 2008 collapse.

The myth is that, fueled by computers and excessive greed, MBAs pushed the limits of rationality and created investments tied to housing bonds that tanked the financial system and the economy in 2008 — just as they're doing now with high-speed trading.

What this leaves out, of course, is that those MBAs were reacting to a multitude of government incentives and mandates that allowed the housing-related securities to be created in the first place and to be regulator-classified as "safe" investments, just as new government rules allow HFT guys to game other traders in the market Uncle Sam created.

To recap: Any ripoff here is of the rich, by the rich — and it's in a government-created system, with the "watchdogs" as much to blame as the traders.

None of which is going to stop people like Lewis from fighting on in their endless quest to expose evil on Wall Street — and sell books at the same time. Don't be fooled.

Charles Gasparino is a Fox Business Network senior correspondent.

The Register, UK

Organic food: Pricey, not particularly healthy, won't save you from cancer

Study of 'organic' food consumption and cancer risk showed some interesting results

by Dr Pan Pantziarka

One of the primary drivers of the growth in organic food sales over the last couple of decades is the perception that organic food is healthier than conventionally farmed food.

It stands to reason, doesn't it? After all conventional crops depend on chemicals and organic food doesn't.

And we all know that chemicals, in this case mainly pesticides, are bad for you. Ergo organic food should be healthier, and the strong growth in organic food sales (up 2.8 per cent last year, after a

few years of downturn during the recession) attests to how popular opinion has accepted this assertion.

This is why the results of a new UK study that looked at cancer risk and the consumption of organic food is so damned inconvenient. Where organic food advocates have pushed organics as a way of reducing cancer risk, the study shows that it makes little difference one way or another. Hence uncomfortable headlines from the likes of the *Daily Mail*: Eating organic foods does NOTHING to reduce the cancer risk among women, says new study.

6,000 eaters probed



Organic, not organic? Makes no difference.

The study in question appears in the latest edition of the British Journal of Cancer and is by Oxford University cancer epidemiology boffin Dr Kathryn Bradbury and co-workers. Part of the Million Women Study funded by Cancer Research UK and the Medical Research Council, this particular bit of research tracked 623,080 middle-aged British women for almost 10 years and looked at their pattern of organic food consumption and the incidence of 16 different cancer types, as well as overall cancer incidence.

Based on their reported eating habits the women were put into three groups: never, sometimes, or usually/always eating organic food. The headline result showed that eating organic food was not associated with overall cancer incidence one way or another (in fact there was a tiny increased overall risk of about 3 per cent, but it's the sort of noisy result one can ignore). Look at the specific cancer types and the results are mixed, with some showing increased or decreased risks, but again nothing to be alarmed (or pleased) about.

Of course this has upset some, especially the British Soil Association, the guardian of all things organic in the UK (including being the premier organic certification body in the country).

According to Peter Melchett (aka Lord Melchett or the 4th Baron Melchett, ex-Greenpeace head honcho and now Policy Director at the Soil Association) the study is flawed because certain confounding variables weren't addressed and because, according to him, the authors don't understand what pesticides are found in food or how they get into food.

However, he was quick to pick out one of the results for particular attention – the numbers show that there is an apparent 21 per cent decrease in non-Hodgkins lymphoma risk among the women who reported "usually or always" eating organic food.

However, there were other numbers that were *not* picked out by the Soil Association, the most alarming of which was the apparent 9 per cent increase in the risk of breast cancer. This was a result that the study authors subjected to a series of additional tests and the results still stood. More alarming still was the 37 per cent increase in the risk of developing a soft tissue sarcoma, a form of cancer which is rare and hard to treat. Why no mention of those figures at the Soil Association?

It's all relative

Of course the fact is that all of these figures are dealing with relative risk, which is standard practice in epidemiological studies. To get some perspective, the chances of getting non-Hodgkins lymphoma is about 2.1 per cent, so if the results of this study hold true, then sticking to an always organic diet will reduce that to 1.66 per cent.

The figures for breast cancer are around 12.3 per cent life-time risk, and this will be increased to 13.4 per cent if you go the all organic route. And if you really want to trade punches with the proponents of organic, you can point out that a high-organic diet will lead to more cancers as the incidence of breast cancer is much higher than the incidence of non-Hodgkins.

However, it's unlikely that this finding is going to do much to dissuade the faithful that the benefits of organics have been over-sold. After all, this is not the first negative study when it comes to organics and health. A systematic review published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in 2012 found that: "The published literature lacks strong evidence that organic foods are significantly more nutritious than conventional foods".

There were differences reported to do with pesticide residues but nothing to cause alarm. In terms of nutrient content, there was one statistically significant nutrient where organics outdid conventional produce: phosphorous. Now, if you're starving, then eating organic is the better choice, but if you're not, then increased phosphorous is pretty much irrelevant as it's abundant in the diet no matter where it comes from.

Of course it's the pesticide residues that ultimately drive the idea that organics are better for us. This ignores the fact that even organic food uses pesticides, for example rotenone and pyrethrin, some of which are considered carcinogenic or otherwise hazardous to health.

And, just to throw in some numbers, a study by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2012 found that 4 per cent of organic food samples had pesticide residues above the 5 per cent EPA limit, which technically meant they would have failed the organic certification they carried.

But leaving that aside, the chemophobia of much of the population is stoked by the use of *in vitro* studies which show that certain pesticides are carcinogenic. However, there is a huge difference between the inside of a petri dish and the inside of a human.

Pesticides are amongst the most heavily regulated chemical agents in the world, and if there was a link to cancer incidence then we would expect to see it in studies such as this one, and in studies that looked at farm workers and others who have greater exposure to pesticides.

One recently published paper looked at the incidence of cancer in agricultural workers in France during the period 2005 – 2009 ([the AGRICAN study](#)). It reported that overall agricultural workers were healthier than the general population, with reduced cancer incidence compared to the general population in the same areas. So where are the bodies (so to speak)?

There are, of course, problems with this new study in the UK. For one there was no stratification by type of organic diet – so, for example, we don't know whether the lymphoma result was skewed by an excess of vegans or carnivores.

And the categories of "never", "sometimes" and "usually/always" are by necessity coarse and difficult to quantify – for example how can you tell how much non-organic food the "usually" group eats?

But for all that, this is study with a large sample size and if there was a positive signal that eating organic protects against cancer you'd expect to see it.

The upshot? It's probably true to say that spending the pennies (or pounds) you save by eating non-organic on eating MORE fruit and veg is a healthier bet than forking out the extra for "organics".

Phys.Org

[In blind test, soloists like new violins over old](#)

by Seth Borenstein

Ten world-class soloists put costly Stradivarius violins and new, cheaper ones to a blind scientific test. The results may seem off-key to musicians and collectors, but the new instruments won handily.

When the lights were dimmed and the musicians donned dark glasses, the soloists' top choice out of a dozen old and new violins tested was by far a new one. So was the second choice, according to a study published Monday in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.



Of the six old violins tested, five were made by the famous Stradivari family in the 17th and 18th centuries. The newer violins were about 100 times cheaper, said study co-author Joseph Curtin, a Michigan violin maker. But the Strads and other older Italian violins have long been considered superior, even almost magical.

The idea was to unlock "the secrets of Stradivari," the study said.

So the study tries to quantify something that is inherently subjective and personal, the quality of an instrument, said Curtin and lead author Claudia Fritz of Pierre and Marie Curie University in France. A few years earlier, the duo tested violins blind in an Indianapolis hotel room, but this one was more controlled and comprehensive, putting the instruments through their paces in a rehearsal room and concert hall just outside Paris. They even played with an orchestra, the results of which will be part of a future study.

"I was surprised that my top choice was new," said American violinist Giora Schmidt. "Studying music and violin in particular, it's almost ingrained in you thinking that the most successful violinists on the concert stage have always played old Italian instruments."

French soloist Solenne Paidassi said "there's a paranoia about new instruments," compared to "a glamour about old instruments."

Even Curtin who makes new violins for a living, said he was surprised, adding the study was designed to eliminate bias in favor of either group of violins.

"I remember trying the old violins and the new violins among ourselves just before the testing got going and saying, 'You know maybe the old ones will win'," Curtin said.

But when the lights were turned down, all that could be judged was the sound. Some violins were 300 years old. Some were days old.

And when the soloists were asked to guess whether the violins they were playing were old or new, the soloists got it wrong 33 times and right 31 times.

Canadian soloist Susanne Hou has been playing a rare \$6 million 269-year-old Guarneri del Gesù violin and knows what she likes and what she doesn't. During the testing, some of the violins she played for only a few and then held the instrument out at arm's length in noticeable distaste. But, like others, she was drawn to a certain unidentified violin. It was new.

"Whatever this is I would like to buy it," she said in video shot during the September 2012 experiment.

Schmidt, who normally plays a new violin with a little more down-to-Earth price tag of \$30,000, liked a different new one, calling it extraordinary in a phone interview: "I said kiddingly to them I will write you a check for this fiddle right now."

Curtin said the researchers won't ever reveal which instruments were used to prevent conflict of interests or appear like a marketing campaign.

James Woodhouse, a professor of engineering and expert on musical instruments at the University of Cambridge in England, wasn't part of the study, but praised it as solid "and very tricky to carry out."

Classic violins "are still very good, but that when a level playing field is provided for making honest comparisons, the very best of the contemporary instruments stand up remarkably well in their company," Woodhouse wrote in an email.

Hou, whose four-year loan of the classic Italian violin has expired, explained in an interview that finding the right instrument is so personal: "There are certain things you can't explain when you fall in love."

And since Hou is shopping for violins this week, one of the restrictions on the experiment truly bothers her: The scientists wouldn't tell her who made the violin she fell for.

IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: Some Starbucks are reportedly going to start selling alcohol. Their drinks will come in "Tall," "Grande" and "Sweet Jesus — it's 8 a.m.!"

Fallon: Big new UN report out. Experts say climate change could threaten the world's fruits and vegetables. Americans said, "OK, let us know when it starts affecting Twinkies and Hot Pockets."

Seth Meyers: Opening day for Major League Baseball means we're only 17 months away from the World Series.

Seth Meyers: The Putins are officially divorced. In 30 years of marriage they shared two daughters, several homes and one laugh.

Fallon: Hillary Clinton says the media treat powerful women with a double standard. Or as the media reported it, "Hillary Clinton shows off sassy new haircut."

Conan: Did you know, Texas was an independent nation that bordered the U.S. from 1836 to 1845? And then in 1845, the U.S. surrendered to Texas.

Fallon: The White House says it's surpassed its goal for people enrolled in ObamaCare. Man, it's amazing what you can achieve when you make something mandatory and fine people if they don't do it, and keep extending the deadline for months.

Fallon: If you don't enroll in ObamaCare you might get a penalty of 1% of your salary. Then Americans said, "Man — good thing I don't have a job!"

Conan: Great to be here in Dallas for the Final 4. Of course in Texas, "The Final Four" refers to the number of Democrats left in the Legislature.

Conan: Opening day for Major League Baseball. And by the way, just an hour ago, the Houston Astros were mathematically eliminated.

Fallon: Edward Snowden is in the news again. Now intelligence officials are accusing Snowden of helping the Russian government get around NSA surveillance. And Snowden said, "Look what I do with my computer, on my time, with your information is nobody's business but mine."

Fallon: We have Joan Rivers on the show tonight! This is her first appearance on the show in 25 years. Or roughly 43 faces.

SethMeyers: Google says it's launching a new security feature to combat future intrusive NSA-like spying programs. Then Google returned to driving around and taking pictures of the street you live on.

Conan: Scientists have found a gene they say is linked to a low IQ. When they found the gene, it was watching "Dance Moms."

Conan: The NFL has announced some tough new rule changes for next season. There will be a 10-yard penalty for abusive language and a 15-yard penalty for murdering someone.

SethMeyers: New British technology is enabling store mannequins to talk about what they're wearing. Said the inventor, "The idea came to me in a nightmare."

SethMeyers: The Secret Service arrested a man today after he tried to scale a fence at the White House. They reportedly said to the man, "Sorry, but you still have two more years, Mr. President."

SethMeyers: A new unemployment study says it's now harder to get a Walmart job than to get into Harvard. Of course, it's a lot easier if your Dad went to Walmart.

Conan: Learning a lot about Dallas. It's home to many incredible art museums. And while I'm here, I plan to drive by all of them.

Conan: During my week here in Dallas I'm going to try my hardest ever to give you people a great show. Why? Because I know you're armed.

Conan: Lotsa history in Dallas. The public library has an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. Also the only copy stained with barbeque sauce.

Conan: Dallas is known for its strip clubs. So last night I visited one. It was great, I got to meet all the Dallas Cowboys in person.

SethMeyers: Tiger Woods won't play in the Masters because of recent back surgery. His doctors told him to avoid swinging and also golf.

SethMeyers: Californians trying to sign up for ObamaCare by phone were accidentally redirected to a phone sex hotline. When the hotline asked what their fantasy was, callers responded, "I'd like to keep my current coverage."

SethMeyers: The Department of Agriculture is encouraging grandparents to read their grandchildren bedtime stories about nutrition. Stories like "Goodnight Kale," "James and the Giant Organic Peach" and "The Little Engine That Could, Thanks to His High-Fiber Diet."

Conan: One of Texas' unofficial slogans is "Don't Mess With Texas." Of course, I'm from California where our state motto is, "Are those real?"

Conan in Texas: Eating so much. I try to eat healthy. So I went to a Dallas vegetarian restaurant. They actually served a barbecued vegetarian.

Conan: Texas legislators were asked to find a place to store high-level radioactive waste. Then someone said, "How about Oklahoma?"

Conan: One of my favorite Texas sayings is, "All hat, no cattle." Which is awkward because that's also my porn name.

Conan: It's been a great week in Dallas. I leave Texas with new friends, great memories and dangerously-clogged arteries.

SethMeyers: Italian police recovered \$50 million in stolen paintings from a Fiat employee's home. Police want to know where he got the art works. But more importantly, how'd he fit them into a Fiat?

Fallon: An 84-year-old Florida woman crashed her car into a CVS. No one was hurt, but there was \$65,000 damages. They patched the hole with just one CVS receipt.

Fallon: The U.S. Olympic team visited the White House. But it got awkward when Joe Biden told the biathletes, "I won't rest until all you guys can get married."

SethMeyers: New research says cellphone radiation increases the risk of ED. So they're recommending that you text with your fingers instead.

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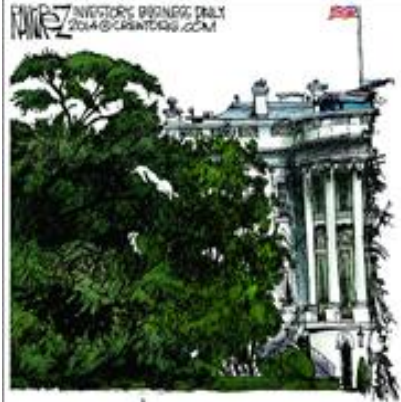
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