

you give to somebody you can't figure out what else to do with," he says. He likened himself to a monarch.

Turner says that last year was one of the most miserable of his life. His marriage to Fonda ended, after eight years, and this, too, was announced in January. In addition, he smashed his foot in a skiing accident; his beloved black Labrador, Chief, contracted coonhound disease and was temporarily paralyzed; his back hurt and he thought that he needed surgery; and two of his grandchildren were diagnosed with Hurler's syndrome, a rare and sometimes lethal enzyme deficiency. Most adults have the support of a spouse and family, friends, and a job; Turner didn't have a spouse, had never had intimate friends, and no longer ran his own company. "I felt like Job," Turner told me, adding, not for the first time, that he had felt "suicidal."

Yet Turner has, in the past several years, been commanding more attention outside his company, making a new identity for himself as a philanthropist—"I want to be Jiminy Cricket for America," he has said. In 1997, before it was fashionable for billionaires to make such gifts, he pledged a billion dollars to the United Nations. The Turner Foundation, which he controls, awarded fifty million dollars last year to environmental causes. (Turner is a devoted environmentalist—he can name every species of bird and animal on his ranches—and during the oil embargo of 1973 he sold his Cadillac and switched to more fuel-efficient cars; recently, he exchanged his Ford Taurus for a hybrid electric-and-gas Toyota Prius, which averages about fifty miles a gallon.) Last year, Turner started a foundation, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, whose goal is to curb the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and he has pledged two hundred and fifty million dollars over the next five years. In December, to solve a long-running dispute between what the United States owed the United Nations and what Congress was willing to pay, Turner joined Richard C. Holbrooke, then the Ambassador to the U.N., to shape an extraordinary compromise: Turner would contribute the thirty-four-million-dollar difference, and the U.N. would adjust its future dues formula.

Turner calls himself "a do-gooder." He says so in a loud voice, and it gets louder as he gets excited. Turner is uninhibited, and is usually blissfully unaware of others; for one thing, he is hard of hearing and is too vain to use a hearing aid. "Half the people alive today are already living in what we would consider intolerable conditions," he declares. "One-sixth don't have access to clean drinking water; one-fifth live on less than a dollar a day; half the women in the world don't have equal rights with men; the forests are shrinking; the temperature's rising, and the oceans are rising, because of the melting of the ice cap." He sounds like a billionaire Jeremiah. In a hundred years, he believes, New York will be under water and it will be "so hot the trees are going to die." He continues, "It will be the biggest catastrophe the world has ever seen—unless we have nuclear war." He is outraged that the United States and others don't do more to alleviate these horrors and to combat the defense and foreign policies of George W. Bush. "The new Administration attempts to make enemies out of the Russians, the North Koreans, and the Chinese to justify the gigantic military buildup it wants to make in peacetime," he says. "The economy of North Korea is smaller than the economy of Detroit!" And he is disturbed by the world's exploding population; although he has five children, he once declared, "If I was doing it over again, I wouldn't have had that many, but I can't shoot them now that they're here."

Turner's contradictions are as clear as his views. He successfully opposed unionization at his company, yet he rails against élites. He has

called himself "a socialist at heart" and a fiscal "conservative." Turner speaks out on behalf of the rights of women but refuses to denounce Islamic states that suppress women's rights. He has compared Rupert Murdoch, who owns the Fox network, to Hitler, yet when he is asked if he thinks Saddam Hussein is evil he says, "I'm not sure that I know enough to be able to answer that question." And though he preaches tolerance, he has uttered some intolerant words; for example, on Ash Wednesday, seeing the black smudge on the foreheads of some CNN staff members, he asked them whether they were "Jesus freaks." As he frequently does when he says something unwise, Turner apologized, blithely assuming that the furor would pass. It did. A week later, Turner told me, "That's the downside of speaking spontaneously."

Turner has two offices, in New York and Atlanta, and they seem to capture the odd mixture of his views: in his New York office, which is nearly bare, a bust of Alexander the Great peers from a shelf, while the Atlanta office, which is vast and crammed with trophies and artifacts, features busts of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi. "I've gone from a man of war to a man of peace," Turner explains. He offers the Turner principle of world diplomacy: "Just about everybody will be friendly toward us if we are friendly with them."

Despite Turner's success, people who meet him often think that he is peculiar. They hear his piercing laugh and the long "Ahhhhhhhh" he utters as he pauses between words or thoughts, which veer off in surprising directions, and they have no other explanation. A former director of Turner Broadcasting's board who counts himself a friend and a fan describes Turner as a fascinating amalgam of opposites: "He's a mixture of a genius and a jackass. I think Ted could have run for President of the United States—if there were not the jackass side."

The "jackass side" of Turner appears because, he himself says, "I don't have any idea what I'm going to say. I say what comes to my mind." Gerald Levin puts this in the best light: "Ted is by far the most interesting person I've ever met—how he reacts to things. It's as if a child were speaking, without any social inhibitions. You don't say in business, 'I got fired.' He'll just speak out loud what may be going through someone's mind, and he'll say it to everybody. I think that's a beautiful characteristic. He's angelic. The whole world is socially constrained. I love and respect this about Ted, but for other people it may be very difficult."

In November of 1996, for instance, the Friars Foundation honored Turner at a lifetime-achievement black-tie dinner. After he received his award and made a short speech, the lights dimmed, and then, as various entertainers, including the comedian Alan King, prepared to roast him, Turner, who insists on getting to bed early, grabbed Fonda's arm and departed, leaving the crowd gasping and King bellowing, "Rupert Murdoch was right—you are nuts."

On other occasions, humor redeems the situation. In January of 1999, Turner was invited to address the American Chamber of Commerce in Berlin. Eason Jordan, who oversaw international coverage for CNN, had briefed Turner on what he shouldn't say to his audience, made up largely of Germans. Nevertheless, Jordan recalls, the CNN staff was nervous, because Turner had said, "I'll wing it." And he did.

"You know, you Germans had a bad century," Turner declared. "You were on the wrong side of two wars. You were the losers." He continued, "I know what that's like. When I bought the Atlanta Braves, we couldn't win, either. You guys can turn it around. You can start making the right choices. If the Atlanta Braves could do it, then Germany can do it." The audience

laughed with Turner, not at him. He left the podium to a standing ovation.

Turner likens himself to Zorba the Greek: "I lose my self-restraint and... just get up and dance sometimes." Gail Evans, a senior executive at Turner Broadcasting, says that Turner is always "winking," and she recalls the time he asked her to take the oceanographer Jacques Cousteau to lunch: "Go buy Mr. Cousteau a tuna-fish sandwich!" Today, associates are not laughing; they speak of Turner in the past tense, offering epitaphs. "He's the last of the revolution-ary and creative minds in our business," CNN's chief international correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, who joined the company in 1983, says. "The idea of twenty-four-hour news and global news is his creation. That's changed the world. It's changed people's relations with their governments. It's meant that governments can no longer crack down with impunity on protests. And Ted's business also had a human face and a moral face and a social face. It wasn't just about making money and building an empire." She adds, sadly, "He's been shunted aside."

Even Turner talks about himself in a retrospective cadence: "My business side is coming to a close. It's time for me to move on, anyway." Last May, after AOL and Time Warner announced the new management structure, Robert Pittman tried to debunk press speculation that Turner was unhappy, saying, "I think Ted's going to have more influence than he had before." Now Pittman, who was born in Mississippi and has spent weekends hunting with Turner, says, "For me, Ted has a very big role. I don't make major decisions about Turner Broadcasting without talking to Ted." This is not what Turner thinks. "They tell me I have moral authority, and that's great," he says. He looks down at his tie, which is decorated with orange bison, and goes on to say, wistfully, "I'm very busy. Over the last three to four years, I've created another life for myself, and even if they had offered me the chairmanship of the company I probably wouldn't have taken it. It would require all my time, and I'd have to move to New York and I don't want that. I've got this other stuff that I think is in many ways more important."

In March, Turner's business influence was further diminished when the parent company announced that his top lieutenants at Turner Broadcasting—**Terence McGuirk**, the chairman and C.E.O., and Steven J. Heyer, the president—would be replaced by Jamie Kellner, the chief executive and founder of the WB broadcast network. To achieve more of the company's much touted synergies, Turner Broadcasting would be folded into a combined broadcast-and-cable-television division, which would be run by Kellner; Kellner would move to Atlanta from Hollywood. In a press release, Turner applauded Kellner's promotion. He was pleased that the separate fiefdoms in his old company and Time Warner would be joined—he blames Levin for wanting "to keep everybody weak, so he could be stronger"—but sorry that AOL Time Warner was practicing what he thinks of as management by the numbers.

Since Turner's dismissal, his offices, at the CNN Center, in Atlanta, and at Time Warner's headquarters, at 75 Rockefeller Plaza, have been largely idle. Friends notice that his shoulders slope more, that his hair has turned white, that his hearing is worse, that he complains about pain in his back and his foot, that he is self-conscious about his age. His energy level has decreased, along with his business authority. He is a member of the company's official executive committee, but it meets just once a month; the core corporate executive committee meets for lunch every Monday without him.

Still, the needy side of Turner compels him to want to please. Before an Advertising Council dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria last November in honor of Turner and Levin, Turner stood awkwardly beside Levin in a receiving line. As they turned to enter the ballroom, Turner pointed to me and told Levin that I was writing about him. Levin said he knew, and that prompted Turner to reassure him: "I checked first with corporate communications. I would not have done this unless I had approval." Such behavior does not surprise Jane Fonda. Turner is insecure, she says, noting that the man who thinks of himself as Rhett Butler is really the more vulnerable character in his favorite movie: "He loves 'Gone with the Wind' for lots of reasons, and one of them is that he identifies with Scarlett O'Hara."

Rick Kaplan, who was fired as president of CNN/U.S. last September, recalls being taken to lunch by Turner at a Southern-kitchen restaurant, where "you thought you were walking in with Babe Ruth to Yankee Stadium." For the first time, Kaplan noticed, Turner talked mostly about the past: "Whenever I had spent any time with him, he'd always talk about the future. All of a sudden, gone from his conversation were dreams for the future. And he was supposed to be there to make me feel better. Instead, I left feeling worse for him. I spent more time telling him positive, uplifting things, telling him the truth—that people revere him and it doesn't matter what his title is and it doesn't matter what anyone says his responsibilities are. Ted could sell all his stock, divest himself of every nickel he's got, and if he walked into the CNN newsroom the place would stand at attention."

Perhaps, but in the new world of AOL Time Warner it is probably not premature to write Ted Turner's business obituary.

The first word that Robert Edward Turner III uttered was not "mama" or "dada" but "pretty." It was an odd choice, since he also remembers that, growing up in the shadow of the Second World War, he yearned first to be a fighter pilot with the R.A.F., and then to conquer the world, like his first hero, Alexander the Great. Turner was born in 1938 in Cincinnati; a sister, Mary Jane, was born three years later. His father, Robert Edward (Ed) Turner, Jr., ran a successful outdoor-advertising company. Ted's mother was a dutiful wife, who tried to obey her husband's wishes. Ed Turner was a charming, gifted salesman who was on the road or at work far more than he was at home. He was propelled by the memory of his own father, a cotton farmer in Mississippi, who lost his farm in the Depression and, refusing to declare bankruptcy, became a sharecropper instead. Often, Ed Turner would warn his son that Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman were Communists and that the Communists would take over America and execute anyone with more than fifty dollars in his pocket. For years, Ted never carried around more than forty-nine dollars.

Ted was obstreperous. He pulled ornaments off the Christmas tree, and smeared mud on a neighbor's sheets that were hanging out to dry. His father instructed him to read two books each week, and to eat every vegetable on his plate. Ed was often drunk, and would fly into a rage when Ted disobeyed; he frequently beat him, sometimes with a wire coat hanger. He would untwist it until it was straight, like a whip, and then hit his son, exclaiming, "This hurts me more than it does you." When this didn't seem to tame Ted, he reversed the punishment, pulling down his pants, lying down, and ordering his son to administer the lashings. With tears streaming down his cheeks, Ted obeyed. "It was the most painful thing I ever did in my entire life," he recalls, giving his father credit for understanding that "that would be a more effective punishment than him beating me."

Apparently, it was not effective enough; when Ed Turner joined the Navy, during the Second World War, and was assigned to the Gulf Coast,

the family joined him—except for young Ted, who stayed with his grandmother and was eventually sent to boarding school in Cincinnati. Ted was miserable; he was impossible to control, and was suspended. When he was about ten, the family moved to Savannah, Georgia. Intent on teaching his son obedience, Ed Turner became more formal, no longer hugging him but greeting him with a handshake. He sent Ted off to the Georgia Military Academy, outside Atlanta, and then to the military program at the McCallie School, in Chattanooga.

Ted read non-stop, committing poems and military history to memory, but he hated boarding school. "I was hurt," he told me. "I didn't want to go off so young. It was like a prison. You couldn't leave the campus. There was a bell when you got out of bed in the morning and a bell to go to meals, and a bell to go to bed at night." And, he added, "there were no parents there—no mom, no dad." Yet Turner defends and even romanticizes his harsh father, saying that he deliberately instilled insecurity: "He thought that people who were insecure worked harder, and I think that's probably true. I don't think I ever met a superachiever who wasn't insecure to some degree. A superachiever is somebody that's never satisfied."

By the time he was a teen-ager, Ted knew that he did not want to join his father's business. He was religious, and he decided that he was going to be a missionary. Then his sister became ill. He was fifteen when Mary Jane, who was twelve, contracted systemic lupus erythematosus, a disease in which the immune system attacks the body's tissue. She was racked with pain and constantly vomiting, and her screams filled the house. Ted regularly came home and held her hand, trying to comfort her. He prayed for her recovery; she prayed to die. After years of misery, she succumbed. Ted lost his faith. "I was taught that God was love and God was powerful," he says, "and I couldn't understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so."

The experience transformed Turner. "I decided I wanted to be a success," he says. Though he wasn't much of an athlete, he became a good boxer; the same tenacity that enabled him to resist his father helped him in boxing, because, he recalls, "I could take punishment." To impress his father, he took up debating and excelled at it; as a senior, he won the state high-school debating championship. He also became an accomplished sailor.

Ed Turner was constantly giving his son instructions: where he should work during the summers, whom he should date, how he had to save to pay his college tuition. When Ted was at home, his father even charged him room and board. Expecting his son to attend Harvard, he was displeased when a rejection letter arrived. Ted was accepted at Brown, and that mollified his father, but not for long. According to a detailed account of Ted's Brown years in Robert and Gerald Jay Goldberg's "Citizen Turner," he wasn't much of a student. He gambled. He got into noisy arguments, defending the South, defending war as a means of ridding the planet of the weak, defending nationalism. He delighted in irritating liberal sensibilities. He kept a rifle in his room, and sometimes poked it out the dormitory window and fired off a round or two. He partied and drank too much. He talked about dates as if he were describing military conquests. But Ted could be charming and funny, and, as is still the case, he was hard to miss. He joined the Brown sailing team, and was named the best freshman sailor in New England.

His father, who had divorced Ted's mother in 1957 and was now remarried, tried, in his son's word, to "micromanage" his life, to treat college

as preparation for a business career. When Ted chose to major in classics, his father wrote angrily:

I am appalled, even horrified, that you have adopted Classics as a Major. As a matter of fact, I almost puked on the way home today.... I am a practical man, and for the life of me I cannot possibly understand why you should wish to speak Greek. With whom will you communicate in Greek? I have read, in recent years, the deliberations of Plato and Aristotle, and was interested to learn that the old bastards had minds which worked very similarly to the way our minds work today. I was amazed that they had so much time for deliberating and thinking and was interested in the kind of civilization that would permit such useless deliberation.... I suppose everybody has to be a snob of some sort, and I suppose you will feel that you are distinguishing yourself from the herd by becoming a Classical snob. I can see you drifting into a bar, belting down a few, turning around to a guy on the stool next to you—a contemporary billboard baron from Podunk, Iowa—and saying, "Well, what do you think about old Leonidas?"... It isn't really important what I think. It's important what you wish to do with the rest of your life. I just wish I could feel that the influence of those odd-ball professors and the ivory towers were developing you into the kind of man we can both be proud of....I think you are rapidly becoming a jackass, and the sooner you get out of that filthy atmosphere, the better it will suit me.

Agitated by the letter, Ted brought it to the Brown student newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, and, as Porter Bibb says in his biography "Ted Turner: It Ain't As Easy As It Looks," the paper published it anonymously. In his junior year, Ted was expelled for smuggling a coed into his room. In fact, it was just the last straw, and, if Ed Turner was unhappy with his son's behavior, he was glad to have him come home and enter the billboard business. Despite their feuds, Ted now rarely questioned that he would work for his father. "I liked the advertising business," he said. Father and son were similar in many ways. Both were persuasive and headstrong. Both viewed seduction as a game of conquest. Both were self-centered. Both were political conservatives. Both liked whiskey. Both battled moments of depression. And both had unsuccessful marriages.

In 1960, after a brief stint in the Coast Guard, Ted married Julia (Judy) Gale Nye, the daughter of a prominent sailor from Chicago, and they moved to Macon. A year later, when she gave birth to Laura Lee, Ted, intent on winning the America's Cup, was off sailing. Marriage did not stop him from carousing, and he often returned home late at night, as if in a *Playboy* cartoon, with lipstick on his collar and alcohol on his breath. Two years after they were married, Judy filed for divorce. Then she discovered that she was pregnant again, and the couple reconciled. In May of 1963, Robert Edward Turner IV was born. Ted soon returned to his earlier habits, and finally, after a sailing competition in which he rammed his wife's boat in order to win, Judy decided that the marriage was finished.

Turner was a Barry Goldwater supporter, and he met his second wife, Jane Smith, who was a stewardess based in Atlanta, at a campaign rally. They married in June of 1964, and had three children in short order—Rhett, Beauregard, and Jennie. In 1967, Ted also got custody of the two children from his first marriage. The Turners lived in Atlanta, and Ted was not much better as a father than he was as a husband. He was "a dictator," Laura, who is now close to her father, recalls. Because of the sailing season, he was rarely home for Christmas, and because of work the family took few vacations together. In the summer, because Turner refused to install air-conditioning, the family baked. But, Ted says, recalling his own father, "I treated my children entirely differently than he did. I let them make a lot of their decisions for themselves." Yet he had sudden mood changes, and his temper frightened the children. They were expected to be in bed by 8 P.M.

and at breakfast before eight. Good manners were required at the table. Television was limited. If they wanted soda or candy on the weekend, they collected empty bottles to earn the money.

While Ted Turner concentrated on mastering the outdoor-advertising business, his father was trying to escape depression; he drank, smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, and took a huge assortment of pills. In 1961, Ed Turner had sought treatment, and he spent a summer at the Silver Hill psychiatric hospital, in New Canaan, Connecticut. A year after he left Silver Hill, Ed Turner made the boldest business decision of his career, paying four million dollars for the Atlanta, Richmond, and Roanoke divisions of General Outdoor Advertising. Instantly, Turner Advertising was the foremost outdoor-advertising company in the South.

Ted was convinced that they had scored a coup. His father, though, was strangely morose, worrying that he lacked the resources to absorb such a large company. He returned to Silver Hill, and from there placed a panicky call to a friend in the outdoor-advertising business and pressed him to buy the new divisions for the amount they had cost him. The friend, not wanting to take advantage, threw in a fifty-thousand-dollar bonus. Ed Turner still could not shake his depression. "I don't want to hurt anybody. I just feel like I've lost my guts," he wrote to his wife. On March 5, 1963, Ed Turner had breakfast with his wife, went upstairs, placed a .38-calibre silver pistol in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. He was fifty-three.

His son later told Christian Williams, who wrote an early biography of him, that he and his father "had terrible, terrible fights. It was after one of those fights—we disagreed about how the business should be run—that he blew his brains out." The message was clear: Ed Turner abandoned his dreams of business glory because he felt inadequate, and because his son wasn't up to the task, either. The son, who was twenty-four, had to face another message: perhaps he was responsible. For all that, Ted Turner says that he lost his "best friend."

In the weeks and months after his father's suicide, Turner was distraught yet surprisingly focussed. He told his father's advisers and bankers that Ed Turner had not known what he was doing when he resold the company divisions he had just bought; that he, Ted, would sue if necessary to reclaim them; and that, in any case, he was prepared to run the entire enterprise. His ferocity and his mastery of the numbers were impressive. The bankers came through with the loans, and his father's friend sold back the divisions he had bought.

Soon after that, Turner began to dream of going beyond the billboard business, of building a media empire. His first venture came five years after his father's suicide, in 1968, when he bought a Chattanooga radio station, WAPO. Within a year, he had also acquired radio stations in Jacksonville and Charleston. In 1970, he acquired his first television property, Channel 17 in Atlanta, a money-losing UHF station. He borrowed heavily to make the purchase, and the consensus was that he had been outsmarted; although he changed the station's call letters from WJRJ to WTCG, it looked as if he would lose everything. "Working in UHF television at that time was like being in the French Foreign Legion," recalls Terry **McGuirk**, who was hired by Turner the summer after his junior year at Middlebury College, and who became Turner's protégé. The staff consisted of about thirty employees; for many, the pay was thirty dollars a week and all you could eat. The finances became even more dire when Turner acquired a second TV station, in Charlotte. **McGuirk**, who was dispatched to sell ads, says that the new station was costing Turner fifty thousand dollars a month. And a good deal of the time Turner was away sailing, a hobby that

commanded nearly as much of his attention as business did. But he managed to motivate his tiny staff, just as he did his sailing crew.

Turner charmed and wheedled to get ads, and he introduced inexpensive programming. News was alien to the man who would become identified with CNN—too negative, Turner complained—and at first it was aired only in the early-morning hours. Turner programmed “The Mickey Mouse Club” and Three Stooges movies and every sports event he could find. Although profits were slim, he became obsessed with broadcasting. He wanted a national network, and, since he couldn’t afford a broadcast network (there were none for sale, anyway), he discovered a way to get one on the cheap. In 1975, Gerald Levin, of Home Box Office, which was then a regional cable service, owned by Time Inc., that offered movies to subscribers, decided that he could transform HBO into a national pay-TV network by distributing it over the newly launched RCA satellite: all he had to do was get cable operators to invest a hundred thousand dollars in a thirty-foot dish. At the time, broadcast-TV stations like Turner’s Channel 17 relied on microwave signals that bounced off transmission towers. Turner, however, had a tower that was twice the height of most other such towers, and his station already reached beyond its broadcast range, of forty miles, to five states. But a network of towers was expensive, and the signals were impeded by tall buildings and deteriorated over long distances.

Cable had other advantages: unlike broadcasting, which produced revenue solely from advertising, it had monthly subscription charges. But cable in those days had little programming of its own; it had started as a way to improve TV reception, and then became a way to extend television to rural communities that didn’t get broadcast signals. Turner saw an opportunity. With satellites, as HBO had demonstrated, signals could be sent across the nation, and so Channel 17 could become a cable network. He renamed the new network TBS—Turner Broadcasting System.

Turner was taking not only a huge business risk—he borrowed heavily—but a political risk, too, since he needed approval from the Federal Communications Commission. The broadcast networks and the local TV stations were implacably opposed. They were joined by the Hollywood studios, which complained that Turner would be paying a local price for their movies and exhibiting them nationally, and by professional sports teams, which said that Turner was stealing their product.

Turner and others in the cable industry saw the broadcast networks and their allies as a cartel that had induced the government to impose regulations crippling cable’s ability to compete. Cable conventions at that time were like revival meetings, with speaker after speaker fervently denouncing this satan. As a master salesman, Turner knew that Congress had long been concerned about the pervasive power of Hollywood and the three big New York-based broadcast networks, and he assured congressional leaders that he, a broadcaster, was trying to help the nascent cable industry provide consumers with more choices—and better choices, too, since his station would not, he vowed, program violent, sexually explicit movies, like Martin Scorsese’s “Taxi Driver.” Of course, viewers would not be receiving first-class alternative fare, since Turner was offering movies and sports in the evening and “Lassie,” “The Munsters,” and “The Flintstones,” among other programs, during the day. Nevertheless, the F.C.C. allowed tiny Channel 17 to become the Superstation, an overnight rival to the networks.

Cable was starved for programming, and TBS and HBO became its building blocks. To insure continuous baseball coverage that could not be taken off his Superstation, Turner, in 1976, bought the Atlanta Braves;



although he paid a bargain price of ten million dollars, he went into debt to do it. He attended most Braves home games: he ran out onto the field to lead the fans in "Take Me Out to the Ballgame"; sitting behind the Braves dugout, he'd spit Red Man tobacco juice into a cup and swill beer, in hot weather peeling off his shirt; when a Brave hit a home run, he'd jump over the railing and rush to the plate to greet him; he played cards with his players and insisted that they call him Ted. Ralph Roberts, the founder of Comcast Communications, which is now the nation's third-largest cable company, says of TBS, "We thought it was the greatest thing in the world." Roberts was charmed by Turner; others were not. Turner would drop to the floor, histrionically, to beg for business; once, telling a roomful of Southern ladies how to woo advertisers, he explained, "My daddy said, 'If advertisers want a blow job, you get down on your knees.'"

He became Captain Outrageous. Celebrating his victory in the 1977 America's Cup, he swigged almost a whole bottle of aquavit that had been given to him by the Swedish team, and then, drinking champagne, pulled his shirt up to his neck and yelled at some nearby women, "Show me your tits!" Earlier that same year, his second as a team owner, the baseball commissioner, Bowie Kuhn, suspended him for the season, accusing him of tampering when he tried to sign a player who was under contract to another team.

Turner tales became legendary. While racing in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1978, Turner coaxed the French-born Frédérique D'arragon—then, as now, a girlfriend—to wait until their boat came to the reviewing stand and then jump naked into the water. Jimmy Carter remembers that when he became President, in 1977, he invited his fellow-Georgian to state dinners. "He was very raucous," Carter said. "He was loud, and he interrupted sedate proceedings." Carter was amused by Turner. Dick Cavett, on the other hand, was not. During a taping of his television show, Cavett pressed him: "You are a colorful, boisterous, sometimes inebriated playboy type. Maybe it's an act or it's created by the press, but that is your image. You wouldn't deny that, would you?"

"I have heard that you are a little twinkle-toed TV announcer," Turner responded. "Would you deny that?"

By the late seventies, Turner was rich, and although he still behaved in unconventional ways, he had become more serious. He had great respect for Jimmy Carter, and no doubt Carter's more liberal views affected Turner's own politics. He began to liken himself to "an ambassador for good will." He saw himself as a rabbit—"a rabbit that's small and fast. All my big competitors were like a pack of wolves, and they were all chasing me, but I was fast enough to be out in front of them." The emblem of the rabbit was Turner's brand-new Cable News Network.

Reese Schonfeld, a creative and prickly executive, had discussed the cable-news-channel idea with Turner in 1978, and he served as CNN's first president. Turner, who was generous with his money but cheap in sharing credit with Schonfeld, told cable operators that CNN would do for the cable industry what Edward R. Murrow and Huntley-Brinkley had done for network news. CNN would make news the star, not overpaid anchors, and it would not be clotted with ads. Schonfeld travelled the country to sign up cable operators. And at most cable conventions there was Ted Turner, to make a speech and inspire his cable army.

The new cable network, based in Atlanta, made its official debut on June 1, 1980, with three military bands striking up music and a nervous Ted Turner standing at a lectern in a blue blazer. Sporting Elvis sideburns, he began by reciting "a little poem that was written by Ed Kessler," and that

reflected CNN's mission: "To act upon one's convictions while others wait, to create a positive force in a world where cynics abound, to provide information to people when it wasn't available before." A band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and when it ended Turner whooped "Awww-riight!" and CNN went live.

CNN's production values were initially amateurish—"video wallpaper," or "talking heads," network news executives sneered—and ratings were poor. Most of the work of building a staff, imposing news values, and winning clearance from local cable operators was taken on by Schonfeld. But Turner was the galvanizer, the risk-taker. He practically lived in his office, hurrying through the newsroom and rarely spending more than thirty seconds with anyone. Nick Charles, a sports reporter who was one of the first people to be hired at CNN, recalls that most of the staff worked six or seven days a week and relied on portable toilets outside, and that employees would show up in the morning and see Ted, wearing a robe or wrapped in a towel, wandering out of his office, where he slept on a Murphy bed, to retrieve coffee from the newsroom. Once, Steve Heyer remembers, he walked into Turner's office and the great man was sitting at his desk stark naked. "Don't get up!" someone exclaimed. Nick Charles recalls, "He was much more than a cheerleader. He was the kind of guy you'd want to run through a wall for."

At first, many CNN employees were dubious. Daniel Schorr, a former CBS correspondent, who was hired early on, was worried every time he heard Turner extoll the importance of good news, as if what he wanted were more happy news. Worry spread when, in 1982, Turner, frustrated by Schonfeld's close-to-the-vest management style and ownerlike ego, abruptly fired him. Lou Dobbs, another CNN pioneer, who was a business-news anchor, remembered Turner as a drunken sailor and thought that he might not be "the right fellow to lead the effort." Dobbs was afraid that Turner was more an "eccentric" than a "visionary"—until he got to know him. "He is a natural-born leader," Dobbs says. "I once asked him his definition of a leader. He said, 'A leader has the ability to create infectious enthusiasm.'"

CNN started as an all-day, mostly live, and mostly domestic news service. But it strayed to cover Cuba's 1981 May Day parade and a speech by Fidel Castro, and that led to an invitation for Turner to visit the island. Turner, who had never been to a Communist country, and whose politics continued to soften, was curious about it, and the next year he accepted the invitation. For the better part of four days, the Cuban Communist and the Southern conservative hung out, smoking cigars, attending a baseball game, duck hunting, visiting schools, discussing politics, and night-clubbing. To an associate, Turner said, "Fidel ain't a Communist. He's a dictator, just like me." He learned that Castro watched CNN's signal from southern Florida; ever the salesman, he persuaded Castro to tape a promotional spot. Castro, in turn, urged Turner to take his news service worldwide. "Ted came back fired up," Eason Jordan remembers. International news quickly expanded—CNN sent its first signal to Asia in late 1982 and to Europe in 1985. Jordan was twenty-eight when he started running CNN's foreign-news coverage.

In the beginning, the broadcast networks refused to include CNN in their pooled coverage of White House events. Turner filed a federal lawsuit in Atlanta against the "cartel" and the Reagan Administration, claiming violations of the antitrust laws and of CNN's rights under the First Amendment. To build support for CNN in Congress, Turner spent thirteen thousand dollars to install a satellite dish for the House and cabled the

office of each member of Congress. Because CNN had twenty-four hours of news to fill, a congressman had a much better chance of being seen there. Ted Turner would win the battle for public support; more important, in a landmark ruling in the spring of 1982, the Atlanta court declared in CNN's favor, and by the mid-eighties CNN's triumph was apparent.

One reason for Turner's success—with CNN, with the Superstation, with buying sports teams to supply cable programming—is identified by Bob Wright, the president and C.E.O. of NBC. "He sees the obvious before most people do," Wright says. "We all look at the same picture, but Ted sees what you don't see. And after he sees it, it becomes obvious to everyone." As the networks shrank their overseas bureaus, CNN expanded. It invested in "flyaway" portable satellite dishes, costing about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars each, that could be carried in a suitcase and used anywhere in the world to "uplink" to a satellite. Turner wanted to grow bigger still. Although Turner Broadcasting had a mere two hundred and eighty-two million dollars in revenue in 1984, and the New York banks spurned his request for credit, in 1985 Turner got junk-bond financing that enabled him to make a \$5.4-billion offer for a broadcast network: CBS.

Knowing that he was an underdog, Turner sought political support from Senator Jesse Helms, of North Carolina. Helms had mounted a campaign against CBS's "liberal bias," and he encouraged Turner to meet with a group called Fairness in Media, which had sent letters to a million conservatives begging them to buy CBS stock and "become Dan Rather's boss." Up North, many in the media expressed horror at the prospect of Turner, whom they regarded as an unsophisticated Southerner—a redneck—owning "the Tiffany network." Thomas Wyman, who was the C.E.O. of CBS, questioned Turner's moral fitness to run a network and accused him of being in bed with ideological groups, although he didn't name any. Wyman and CBS, hoping to block Turner, welcomed the "white knight" financing of Laurence Tisch, of the Loews Corporation, and Tisch stealthily gained control of CBS.

By the mid-eighties, however, Turner was not the provincial portrayed by CBS. As he sought to build CNN overseas, he became much more of an internationalist; he was more concerned with saving the environment, eradicating poverty, and ending the Cold War. He met and became friends with Jacques Cousteau, the primatologist Jane Goodall, the civil-rights leader Andrew Young, and the environmentalist Russell Peterson. "I was hanging around with people who cared about the future of the planet, both of the human race and of the environment," he says. "And they had an impact on me." Although he had once been a smoker, he now refused to hire anyone who smoked. "I figured any young person who's dumb enough to smoke is too dumb to work at CNN or TBS," he says. In 1985, he established the Better World Society, whose purpose was to subsidize documentaries on the dangers of environmental pollution, nuclear weapons, and the population explosion. He also began to proselytize for an end to the Cold War. After the United States boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics, following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union withdrew from the 1984 Los Angeles Games, Turner financed and launched the Goodwill Games to foster athletic competition between the United States and the U.S.S.R. During this time, Turner even thought of running for President.

But to those who didn't know him—and even to some members of his board, who did—Turner was still often seen as Captain Outrageous. They

were tired of hearing that he was going to own a network or a Hollywood studio, that he was going to make movies like "Gone with the Wind." So when, in August of 1985, Turner, without fully consulting his board, bought, for a billion and a half dollars, the M-G-M film studio, its Culver City lot, and its library of more than thirty-five hundred motion pictures the consensus was that he had overpaid. The financing for his impulsive decision was arranged by Drexel Burnham's junk-bond king, Michael Milken, who was representing both Turner and the owner of M-G-M, Kirk Kerkorian. Milken reduced the amount of cash Turner needed by persuading Kerkorian to accept stock in Turner Broadcasting. The difficulty was that Turner found himself with two billion dollars' worth of debt; within three months, he was forced to sell the studio and other parts of M-G-M back to Kerkorian, for three hundred million dollars.

He kept the film library, however, and he brilliantly exploited this asset. The movies became a source of cheap television programming, and Turner created new cable networks—such as TNT (Turner Network Television), launched in 1988, and TCM (Turner Classic Movies), in 1994—to showcase them. Looking back, he is pleased with himself for having done this "right under the networks' noses" and for having managed to grow "from one-thousandth the size of the networks to two and a half times bigger." He says, "They laughed at me when I started with CBS. They laughed at me when I started CNN. They laughed at me when I bought the Braves. They laughed at me when I bought the Hawks. They laughed at me when I bought M-G-M. I spent a lot of time thinking, and I did not fear, because of my classical background. When Alexander the Great took control when his dad died, he was twenty years old. He took the Macedonian Army, which was the best army in the world at the time, and conquered Greece, got the Greeks to all join with him, and then marched across the Hellespont and invaded Asia. They didn't even know where the world ended at that time. And he was dead at thirty-three, thirteen years later. He kept marching. He hardly ever stopped. And he never lost a battle."

Turner did lose battles, even if they were within the company. Kerkorian, it was revealed, had a stipulation that if Turner did not reduce his debt within six months he would have to pay Kerkorian in TBS stock, and Turner worried that Kerkorian could soon gain control of his company. On top of this, companies like Rupert Murdoch's were turning a raptor's eye on the debt-ridden Turner empire. To avoid losing everything, Turner, in 1987, looked to a consortium of thirty-one cable companies—in particular, T.C.I. and Time Inc.'s cable subsidiary—for a bailout. In return for more than five hundred million dollars in cash, Turner ceded more than one-third ownership to them; he also granted the cable executives seven of fifteen board seats and an effective veto over any expenditure exceeding two million dollars. "In hindsight, you could say that Ted lost his company," Terry **McGuirk** says. "But, at the time, it was in many ways Nirvana, because Ted partnered with his best customers." Turner, however, wanted to expand, and his new partners did not. They wanted to protect Turner's programming assets for the cable industry and keep them away from broadcast rivals. Or they wanted the assets for themselves.

Turner had watched as, in 1985 and 1986, Murdoch formed the Fox network, and CBS, NBC, and ABC got new owners. Increasingly frustrated, he began to spend even more time away from Atlanta. Whenever he wanted to do something bold—buy a studio or a network, for example—he confronted a veto from his board. Decisions about acquisitions were made by committee. One of the few acquisitions that the board approved, in

1991, and only after Turner wore board members down, was of Hanna-Barbera, whose animation library included more than a third of all the animated cartoons ever made in this country; with this library, Turner was able to create the now thriving Cartoon Network.

When it came to programming decisions, Turner remained in charge. Brad Siegel, the president of Turner's Entertainment Networks, remembers that when, in 1993, he was hired to run TNT Turner involved himself in such questions as what programs provided the proper lead-ins for 8 P.M. adult dramas. "One of the great things about Ted is that he watches everything," Siegel says. "Everything we make on the entertainment side—the pilots, the movies, the specials—Ted watches everything on tape. You always got a call." And when the ratings were poor but the program was good—as when TNT aired a "David Copperfield" movie—Turner congratulated Siegel.

Turner's most visible success came ten years after CNN went on the air—with its coverage of the Gulf War. Unlike the other networks, CNN made a financial commitment to cover any potential war from ground zero, Baghdad. Eason Jordan figured that the Iraqi communications system would be taken out in any allied air raid, so he recommended that CNN invest in a suitcase version of a satellite phone; this expenditure, of fifty-two thousand dollars, would be added to the extra millions that CNN was committed to spend to cover what might be the first live war. Tom Johnson, a former Los Angeles *Times* publisher, had taken over as president of CNN on August 1, 1990; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait came on his second day at work. Johnson recalls going to Turner with various spending plans for war coverage. He asked Turner, "What am I authorized to spend?"

"You spend whatever you think it takes, pal," Turner said. Johnson was amazed, especially because, he recalls, "I'm not even sure he remembered my name."

Johnson posted people around the clock in Baghdad and Amman and Saudi Arabia and Israel and the White House and the Pentagon and the State Department. CNN, he says, spent twenty-two million dollars covering the war. CNN got permission from the Iraqi government to circumvent the Al Rashid Hotel switchboard and set up a four-wire telephone transmission from Baghdad to Amman, and then to Atlanta. When the United States destroyed the telephone system in Baghdad, only CNN had a telephone. When the Bush Administration urged the broadcast networks to pull their crews out of Iraq, they complied. Tom Johnson tells how he received calls from President Bush and other government officials, urging him to leave Baghdad, and how vexing this was. When he met with Turner and told him about these calls, and about two bureau chiefs who had been killed when he was at the Los Angeles *Times*, Turner was unmoved. He told Johnson, "I will take on myself the responsibility for anybody who is killed. I'll take it off of you if it's on your conscience." Johnson adds, "I, frankly, was about to order them back to Amman. I thought they'd all get killed."

No one got killed. And Turner was acclaimed as a different kind of businessman, one who thought about more than profit margins. When he commissioned a CNN documentary series, of more than twenty hours, on the Cold War, Rick Kaplan says, "his attitude was, if we break even on 'The Cold War' it would still be an enormous success." Turner understood, in a way that many corporate leaders do not, that building a brand can be expensive.

In the late eighties, Turner's personal life became happier. Jimmy Carter remembers that he was hunting and fishing with Turner at Avalon, Turner's estate in Tallahassee, Florida, when Turner read that Jane Fonda was

planning to divorce Tom Hayden, the sixties activist. Turner told Carter that he had always admired Fonda, as an actor and as an outspoken liberal. "I think I'm going to ask her for a date," he said. When he called, Fonda put him off. She was not yet ready to date, she told Turner, although she was soon photographed at St. Bart's cavorting with an Italian soccer player.

Turner's second marriage had ended in 1988, after twenty-four years, three children, and many dalliances. His dating patterns conformed to his travel schedule; he took up with, among others, a Playboy bunny and the female pilot of his private plane. Turner was persistent with Fonda, and finally, in late 1989, they had their first date. It was followed by many others, including an Academy Awards ceremony, a White House dinner, a Kremlin dinner with Mikhail Gorbachev. They went horseback riding at Turner's Montana ranches; later, Turner, with Fonda by his side, would point out a cabin to visitors and announce that this was where they first made love. Both were famous, opinionated, rich, and attractive. Both loved the outdoors. Both had endured difficult childhoods under severe fathers. Neither finished college. And both felt profound guilt after the suicide of a parent; Fonda's mother had slashed her own throat at the age of forty-two. "She is fiercely focussed and full of idealism and, like all of us, full of insecurities, too. And so is he," the former Colorado senator Tim Wirth, who is a friend of both, says. "She reinforced all the best qualities in him. And she said to me the sweetest thing. She said, 'You know, Ted is the only person who's apologized more than I have.' They are really good, vulnerable people."

The couple held hands on Larry King's CNN program. They kissed in public. Turner brought her to CNN executive meetings and they sent mash notes to each other. She got him to drink less and diet more, to spruce up his wardrobe and buy art for his houses. Turner's mood swings became less pronounced; he yelled less, and he stopped taking lithium, which he had been on for about three years because, he says, "a quack" psychiatrist misdiagnosed him as "manic."

Turner and Fonda married in December of 1991 at his Florida estate, where bride and groom wore white and were surrounded by their children; they dined on fresh quail that Fonda had shot herself, candied yams, collard greens, and corn bread. Turner hates being alone, so Fonda moved to Atlanta. For much of the next decade, she was at his side. In Montana, Turner announced that he was getting rid of his cattle and sheep and returning the land to bison, the animals that grazed there two centuries ago. Fonda became an enthusiastic hunter. Gerald Levin, who says that he is "constitutionally opposed to killing animals," remembers how, on a visit to one of Turner's properties, he learned that Fonda had shot a deer and loaded it into a pickup truck. "I was appalled," Levin says. "It was Bambi in the back of the truck!"

In Atlanta, Turner did not live in a grand style. He poked a hole in the roof of the CNN Center building and put in a spiral staircase to connect the office to what has been called a penthouse but is really a seven-hundred-square-foot efficiency apartment, with a cramped bedroom. (One wall of the bedroom is a two-hundred-gallon saltwater fish tank, on the other side of which is the living room.) The most striking features of the apartment are a terrace, largely unused, with sweeping views of downtown (for a long while, Turner says, he "was the only downtown resident—except homeless people!"), and a photograph—one of the few on display—of Ed Turner looking up adoringly at his son. Turner had slept in his old office for a decade; this apartment allowed him to walk to work and to order room service from the Omni Hotel. To accommodate Fonda, he converted the

bedroom closet into a windowless office for her—"a storage closet," Fonda called it.

"I learned a lot from Jane," Turner says. Laura Seydel, his eldest daughter, explains that her father only reluctantly celebrated Christmas and, until he married Fonda, did not invest time in planning family gatherings. Soon Fonda and Turner and his five children and their families had reunions twice a year, and swapped Christmas presents, and attended church christenings. Laura and her husband, Rutherford Seydel II, live in Atlanta with three young children and are active in charitable activities; Seydel works as a lawyer for Turner. He and Laura think of Turner as a great man, but he was not always a great family man. After he married Fonda, however, Grandpa Turner was around more.

Turner was surprised but not displeased that Fonda attracted more attention than he did when they travelled. Fonda says that Turner was never jealous of the notice she received. "He doesn't have that kind of ego," she says. "He put me on a pedestal. He loved my successes." Although he is not an introspective or patient man, Turner probably opened up more to Fonda than he ever had to anyone else, male or female. By most accounts, the marriage was a good one, and Turner's friends and family came to adore Fonda. Laura says, "She's grandma to our kids. She filmed our firstborn." Embraced by senior female executives at Turner Broadcasting, she went on three-day all-"girls" trips. "Her influence was profound," Jimmy Carter told me. Carter smiled as he talked about Turner. "Ted has always been very hyper, in that he's constantly having visions of grandiose things. He was very restless... always dreaming. Ted told us he was taking sedation to calm himself.... When he and Jane got together, Ted became much more relaxed."

In the early nineties, Turner began worrying once more that his company was too small. The networks had persuaded the government to relax the rules that prohibited them from owning and syndicating TV programs, which is where television fortunes are made. Turner didn't own a studio, and he feared that the studios would reserve their best programs for their networks, starving Turner Broadcasting. Nor could he match the resources of NBC, now owned by G.E., in bidding for world rights to televise the Olympics, or ABC, owned by Disney, in bidding for Monday Night Football. Turner Broadcasting got smaller compared with its competitors. The usual edge of an entrepreneur like Turner—the rabbit's advantage—seemed less vital than size.

"You need to control everything," Turner said one day recently in his New York office, his foot up against an empty coffee table. "You need to be like Rockefeller with Standard Oil. He had the oil fields, and he had the filling stations, and he had the pipelines and the trucks and everything to get the gas to the stations. And they broke him up as a monopoly. You want to control everything. You want to have a hospital and a funeral home, so when the people die in the hospital you move them right over to the funeral home next door. When they're born, you got 'em. When they're sick, you got 'em. When they die, you got 'em." He smiled and added, "The game's over when they break you up. But in the meantime you play to win. And you know you've won when the government stops you."

Turner set his sights once more on buying a studio or a TV network, or arranging a business partnership with one. With John Malone, he tried to buy Paramount. When Viacom won that competition, Turner and Malone explored purchasing ABC and then entered what Turner thought were serious negotiations to acquire NBC; again, some of the cable owners on his board opposed him. Turner says that Gerald Levin, of Time Warner

(Time Inc. had merged with Warner Communications in 1990), which owned nineteen per cent of Turner's company, used that position to veto the five-billion-dollar purchase. Levin was straightforward; he said that the interests of separate companies often diverge. If Turner wanted a network, so did Levin, who was planning to launch his own network, WB.

"Everyone wanted to merge with Ted," Malone told me. "No one wanted to turn control over to Ted." This was true of Rupert Murdoch, who had once gone skiing with Turner. "He is one of the most charming people you'd ever meet," Turner says. "He told me he loved CNN the way it was and if we merged with him he wouldn't change a thing." Turner, who detests Murdoch, says that he didn't believe him. (Murdoch declined to comment.) There was a brief courtship by Bill Gates, of Microsoft; Gates thought that the power of CNN's brand could be transformed into an instantly successful online-news site. Turner thought that Microsoft's deep pockets could be used to help finance a bid for CBS. But the talks went nowhere. (Not long after this, Microsoft became a partner in MSNBC.) Meanwhile, Time Warner was determined that, if anyone was going to take over CNN and Turner's assets, it was going to be Time Warner.

When Turner is agitated, the people close to him try to prevent him from talking to reporters or giving a speech. Around this time, however, he was scheduled to speak at a National Press Club luncheon in Washington. Jane Fonda says that she was aware of the "fragility" of the relationship between Turner and Time Warner. "One false move and it would fall apart. I didn't sleep that night. Ted slept like a baby." When Turner rose to speak, he startled the audience by mentioning a story on clitorectomies that CNN had aired. Suddenly, he started comparing the mutilation of women to what Gerald Levin was doing to him. He cried out, "You talk about barbaric mutilation. Well, I'm in an angry mood. I'm angry at that, too. I'm being clitorized by Time Warner!"

"I slid under my seat," Fonda says. Levin, more diplomatically, says, "Ted is Ted. He not only says what he thinks; he gives the most amazing speeches. While I think his analogy is a little stretched, he was peeved at the time. He actually called me up, and we talked about it. It wasn't a problem."

It was a problem. Turner felt fenced in, as he does when he is handed a speech to read or when he's told that he can't do something. "My inner dream is to go to the place," he starts to explain—and suddenly breaks into the old Roy Rogers theme song—"where the West commences, gaze at the moon till I lose my senses....Don't fence me in." Fences loom large in Turner's mind; he hates them, and that is one reason that his landholdings are so vast. "I'm happiest when I'm on a horse on my ranch," he says. At the same time, he can't stand to be alone.

This much is clear: by 1995, after thirty-two years in business, Turner no longer felt like a nimble rabbit. In the spring and early summer of that year, Terry **McGuirk**, representing Turner, tried to extricate Turner Broadcasting from Time Warner. "I spent about six months negotiating an exit from Time Warner and doing a deal with John Malone," **McGuirk** recalls. But, much as Turner admired Malone, he feared placing CNN in the hands of such a committed conservative. He was also concerned about Malone's business partnerships with Murdoch. Turner's own biases clearly infected CNN. It was an international network that slavishly covered the United Nations, from whose vocabulary, by Turner's dictate, the term "foreign news" was banished, that aired documentaries on subjects Turner cared about. People at CNN undoubtedly knew what the boss wanted. But CNN was not used to punishing Turner's foes, as Murdoch's newspapers sometimes did to



Murdoch's foes. Turner "never once had me pull a story," Tom Johnson says. Nor, says Gail Evans, the CNN executive vice-president in charge of booking guests, did he ever order executives to help a friend. "In my twenty years here, Ted has never once asked me to book a guest," she says.

Meanwhile, Gerald Levin had concluded that his company was not big enough; he saw CNN as "the jewel" that he could link with Time Warner's magazines. Levin also knew that he had to move fast, before Turner was bought by a competitor. After talking it over with only two members of his team—Richard Parsons, the president, and Richard Bressler, the chief financial officer—Levin phoned Turner and asked if he could fly to Montana to discuss an "important" matter.

This was in August of 1995, and by then, Turner says, "I knew I was selling the company. And there was another reason I did it, too. I was a little bit tired." He was tired of his cable partners. Whatever differences he had with Levin, however, Turner knew that Levin cared deeply about journalism, for he was a proud defender of his magazines' independence. Turner also knew that a merger would connect Turner Broadcasting to a Hollywood studio, a giant music company, the country's largest magazine-publishing enterprise, and its foremost cable system.

When Levin's plane landed that morning, Jane Fonda picked him up. Although Turner had weekend house guests—including his neighbors Meredith and Tom Brokaw—he and Levin went out on the porch alone and Levin consulted ten or so points he had jotted down on a piece of paper about why Turner and Time Warner were a perfect fit. Turner Broadcasting, he said, "would be the pivot point in the center of the company," and Ted Turner would be a partner, not an employee. When he and Levin walked back into the house and Turner saw Brokaw, who had just arrived, he shouted, "Hey, buddy. We just made a deal. We're going to merge." Brokaw remembers that Levin looked startled when Turner revealed their secret.

Turner had traded a silent boss for a real one. But he still owned almost eleven per cent of the merged company, and he was not timid. He pressed Levin to sell off company airplanes and expensive American art and to curb costs at the Hollywood studio. He stepped in to stop a fifty-million-dollar sale of Warner Bros. movies to CBS, insisting that the Warner films should be offered first to its own cable networks. He won control of all new international channels, preventing Warner Bros. from spending millions to build a staff that would duplicate Turner Broadcasting's. He pushed for across-the-board budget reductions, and, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, he even fired his own son, Robert E. (Teddy) Turner IV, who was a promotions manager for Turner Home Entertainment, bluntly warning him over a family dinner, "You're toast."

Whether by design or by accident, Levin began to use Turner for his own purposes. "The edict from Gerry Levin was 'Let Ted be Ted,'" a Levin confidant recalls. "Time Warner was buttoned up and bureaucratic. Ted was a breath of fresh air, and Gerry used that to the advantage of the company." When they met with employees, he remembers, "Ted would get up and say, 'I've got one suit. I don't spend my money on suits. I own ten per cent of the company and each dollar you waste, ten cents comes from me.'" Levin remembers that he was "very comfortable" with Ted's saying whatever he wanted, and had no illusions that it could be any other way. Levin and many other Time Warner executives were pleasantly surprised that Turner was a team player. Within the Turner Broadcasting group, Gail Evans says, Turner didn't change the way he worked, except to occasionally say, "I have to check with the boss."

No matter how many times Turner checked, however, he and Levin never grew close. They didn't communicate regularly. Turner was hurt that Levin, who is intensely private, never invited him to his home for dinner. They had business differences—Turner, for example, wanted Levin to fold the Warner Bros. television operations into Turner Broadcasting. He still resented Levin's veto of his potential purchase of NBC, believing that if he had succeeded he never would have sold his company and, he laments, "I'd have bought Time Warner instead of going the other way." Levin, who then wore a thick mustache chopped at the ends, as if he'd got tired of shaving, was reclusive and weighed his words carefully; the six-foot-one Turner towered over him and was impulsive. Levin was a schemer; Turner could become so focussed on the moment that sometimes when he got off his horse he dropped the reins and the horse galloped away, leaving him stranded. "There are probably not two more different individuals that I've ever worked with," Terry **McGuirk** says.

Inevitably, perhaps, after the Time Warner merger Turner and Murdoch declared war on each other. Turner said that Murdoch had to be stopped before he took over the media and used them as a weapon to advance his conservative agenda and his business interests. Turner asserts that men of good will can resolve differences between, say, Arabs and Israelis, yet he does not believe that it is possible to play Chamberlain to Murdoch's Hitler. "How do you make peace with a mega-maniac?" Turner said to me in a November, 1996, **interview**. "Chamberlain tried to make peace. When you've got somebody like that, I don't think there's a spark of human decency in him—except he likes his family." Turner said that Murdoch's Fox News network would do in America what Murdoch had done in China, where he removed the BBC from his satellite system in order to gain favor with the government. Murdoch's *New York Post* taunted Turner, describing him as a doormat for foreign dictators, suggesting that he was wacky, and portraying Fonda as Hanoi Jane. The battle became so ferocious that executives in both camps grew concerned; after all, Fox wanted television shows from Warner Bros. and Warner Bros. needed Murdoch's satellites. Fox would need Time Warner cable systems to carry its new cable news service. In the end, business interests outweighed principles, a truce was arranged, and, though Turner has never altered his view of Murdoch, he began to focus on other things.

With **McGuirk** running Turner Broadcasting day to day, Turner had more time. And, with Time Warner's stock price soaring, he also had more money. In September of 1997, he was to be honored by the United Nations Association-USA, and he had the idea of giving a billion dollars—then a third of his wealth—to the United Nations. The Turners were flying to New York when Turner told his wife what he planned. "I was extremely moved," Jane Fonda says, adding that she told her husband, "Don't you think you should talk to your lawyers first?" He did, and learned that he could not make the gift directly to the U.N.

The next day, as U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan recalls, Turner walked into Annan's office and blurted, "Hi, Kofi. I'm going to give you a billion dollars."

"I thought it was a joke," Annan says, shaking his head in wonderment.

That night, Turner announced that he would give a hundred million dollars a year for ten years to support such U.N. programs as the elimination of land mines, providing medicine for children, and easing the plight of refugees. He hired Tim Wirth, who eventually recruited a staff of thirty-two, to oversee the effort. Turner's only condition was that his money be used only minimally for administrative overhead. Annan remembers that

Turner also said, "All of you billionaires out there, watch out. I'm coming after you."

Turner has written his own version of the Ten Commandments, which he keeps on typed cards in his wallet. Without prompting, he will read from a list that includes these vows: " 'I promise to care for planet earth and all living things thereon'; 'I promise to treat all persons everywhere with dignity, respect, and friendliness'; 'I promise to have no more than one or two children'; 'I reject the use of force'; 'I support the United Nations.' " Along with his manifest generosity, Turner remains enough of a ham to seek a fitting reward: a Nobel Prize. "I've thought about it a little bit," Turner said when I asked him. "Of course I've thought of it."

Turner is easily moved to tears. He sobbed openly when Princess Diana was killed. On a trip to China in October of 1999, with Fonda reading and CNN's Eason Jordan working, Turner put on his headphones and popped in the videotape of a popular Warner Bros. cartoon movie, "The Iron Giant," the story of the friendship between a young boy and a metallic being from outer space who sacrifices himself for the sake of the planet. Jordan remembers looking over at his boss. "Tears were streaming down his face," he says. "I never saw anybody cry like that in my life." As the credits rolled, Turner called out, "That's the saddest thing I've ever seen!"

America and Russia still have some seven thousand nuclear weapons targeted at each other, and Turner is terrified that these—along with chemical and biological weapons—could fall into the wrong hands. He dismisses the Bush Administration's effort to build an anti-missile defense system as madness; the technology won't work, he says, and, in any case, it won't prevent weapons of mass destruction from being delivered by car, by ship, or in a suitcase. All these dangers are "off the radar screen," he says. "We have a huge job. Probably ninety-five per cent of the U.S. population doesn't know about it." Thus Turner's Nuclear Threat Initiative. To lead it, he has recruited former Senator Sam Nunn, who once chaired the Armed Services Committee, and who signed on only after Turner agreed to allow him a free hand. "When he gets behind something, people know it's serious, and it's going to have the energy and resources," Nunn says. Most days, Turner is a fan of the cautious Nunn; some days, he worries that Nunn is fencing him in.

Turner's miserable last year actually began a few years ago, when Fonda began spending more time in Atlanta and less time with him. She wanted to be with her daughter Vanessa Vadim, who had moved to Atlanta and was raising a child on her own. Fonda's daughter Lulu, whose father was a Black Panther, and whom Jane took in when she and Tom Hayden ran a California camp for troubled kids, had also moved to Atlanta. In addition, Fonda had started the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, and had taken up the cause of nurturing teen mothers. During this time (according to an E! biography of Fonda that aired last fall), Fonda started attending services at the Providence Missionary Baptist Church. Turner, who alternately describes himself as an atheist and an agnostic, told me his reaction: "I had absolutely no warning about it. She didn't tell me she was thinking about doing it. She just came home and said, 'I've become a Christian.' Before that, she was not a religious person. That's a pretty big change for your wife of many years to tell you. That's a shock. I mean, normally that's the kind of thing your wife or husband would discuss with you before they did it or while they were thinking about it....Obviously, we weren't communicating very well at that time."

"My becoming a Christian upset him very much—for good reason," Fonda says. "He's my husband and I chose not to discuss it with him—

because he would have talked me out of it. He's a debating champion. He saw it as writing on the wall. And it was about other things. He knew my daughter was having a baby and it would take me away from him. He needs someone to be there one hundred per cent of the time. He thinks that's love. It is not love. It's babysitting. I didn't want to tell you this. We went in different directions. I grew up." Turner's daughter Laura doesn't think religion per se was the real basis of their disagreement. She says, "It was another male"—Jesus. "It took time away from him."

There were other differences, friends of both say, including Turner's libido and his insecurities. "My problem is I love every woman I meet," Turner has said. He and Fonda visited marriage counsellors and psychiatrists, to no avail. On January 4, 2000, they announced an official separation; before the announcement, Frédérique D'arragon, who is fifty-one, and has been in and out of Turner's life for more than thirty years, came back into it. She is almost a foot shorter than Turner, and prefers jeans to designer dresses. Fonda and D'arragon had lunch recently in Atlanta, and Fonda makes it clear that D'arragon will be available for Ted in ways she no longer can be: "He needs to be taken care of. She has no children. And she's loved him a long time." But travelling with Ted has taken its toll on D'arragon, just as it did on Fonda. Turner admits that the persistent travel is "driving her nuts."

A close friend says that Turner is burdened by three things: an insecurity that can be traced back to his abusive father; a manic, restless nature; and lust. "Each one of these is a great huge bear," the friend says. "Turner must wrestle with three bears, and they sometimes overwhelm him." Fonda puts it another way: "Why this guy didn't go under psychologically at age five, I don't know. It scarred him for life. It colors everything—his relationships, his anxieties..."

Fonda and Turner insist that they still love each other; in fact, the best I have ever seen Turner look—his white hair washed and carefully combed, his thin white mustache trimmed, a chocolate-brown sports jacket nicely contrasting with pressed gray slacks, a burgundy tie, and brown Gucci loafers—was a December day in Atlanta when he and Fonda had a lunch date. Both friends and family are distressed by their split. But Fonda, despite her own notoriety as an actor and as a political activist, had lived in the shadow of three dominant husbands. By leaving Turner, she also announced her own liberation.

Turner was despondent, and his sense of abandonment was heightened by the announcement, around the same time, that Time Warner was merging with AOL—more accurately, AOL was acquiring Time Warner. The price, based on the stock values of the companies on the day of the announcement, was pegged at a hundred and sixty-five billion dollars, the largest corporate marriage ever. Although Turner had been alerted to the merger discussions, he had not been invited by Gerald Levin to participate. "Ted was not a strategic partner," a senior executive at Time Warner who is close to Turner told me. "Gerry is a sole practitioner. He keeps things to himself. Ted was not in the loop. Yet Ted did not hesitate to endorse the deal." It was, after all, a growth strategy. Nor, according to an AOL strategist who was a party to the negotiations, was Turner's future role even a minor part of these discussions. What was talked about much more, he continued, was what a great fit CNN and AOL would be. "You can AOL-ize CNN and do cross-promotions," the executives said enthusiastically. CNN, in fact, was desperately in need of promotion, for its ratings had plunged and its promotion budget had been cut.

Turner would own four per cent (now just over three and a half per cent)

of the new company and remain on the board, and he had won a vice-chairman title. But, while executives at the two companies respected Turner's many successes and his "vision," they also found him unfathomable. One senior AOL executive who was working with Turner for the first time says, "In meetings I've been in with him, he just sits there and in a piercing voice—louder than you would expect someone to talk—he interrupts or conveys a sense of 'Hurry up! Why am I here?' He gives off a feeling that he's in a rush, even if he's not doing anything."

Over the next several months, as the two companies tried to get their executives working together and achieve the synergies they had touted, Turner was in Atlanta or New York no more than four or five days a month. He was not involved in budget details, as Terry **McGuirk** was, and soon **McGuirk**, an original Turner loyalist, signalled that he "wanted out from under Ted," a senior member of the AOL Time Warner team explains. **McGuirk** admired Turner, but, if he was to be held responsible, then he wanted the authority, too.

There was one other difficulty. In the reorganized company, Steve Case was going to be the chairman and Levin the C.E.O., and the idea was to divide the company into separate spheres, each reporting to one of two presidents. Time Warner's Richard Parsons would oversee movies, music, publishing, legal affairs, and human resources. AOL's Robert Pittman would oversee AOL, cable, the magazines, television (including HBO, Turner Broadcasting, and the WB television network), and business development. "By a process of elimination, it made sense for Terry **McGuirk** to report to Bob and for Ted to take a strategic role," a senior AOL Time Warner strategist says.

Sometimes Turner made light of his diminished role. Lou Dobbs remembers being invited to Turner's Montana ranch for a weekend. While they were fishing, Dobbs, who left CNN in 1999 to start an Internet venture, Space.com—and who returned last week to, among other things, anchor "Moneyline News Hour"—said, "Ted, I outrank you. I'm C.E.O. and chairman."

"You're forgetting," Turner said. "I'm also chairman of the Turner Foundation."

"Ted, that's nonprofit!"

"What do you think Space.com is?" Turner retorted, laughing.

Dobbs laughs, too, when telling this story, but, like many of Turner's friends, he is angry. "He has not been treated with the respect due him," Dobbs says. Jane Fonda agrees. "The way it was handled was really shocking," she says. "It makes me mad. How dare they give him a phone call!" Surely Turner did not feel that he was treated properly when CNN cancelled a pet project of his—a multi-part documentary exploring the proliferation of nuclear weapons. He recruited a producer, George Crile, but, soon after Crile started work, Turner told him that he was encountering budget opposition at CNN. They would have to scale the project back to three hours. By October, 2000, it was down to a single hour. "There's a lot of pressure to make the budgets," Turner explained, disappointed. In fact, he is so agitated by the budgeting strictures at CNN that, in December, he told me, "I am going to produce, myself, ten hours on nuclear proliferation and chemical and biological warfare. I'll give first crack to CNN, and if they don't want it I'll give it to PBS." (By March, CNN's founder had given up on CNN documentaries. Together with former associates like Pat Mitchell, who is the president of PBS, and Robert Wussler, who had been a top Turner Broadcasting executive, he plans to team up with Bill Moyers for a series of PBS documentaries on world issues; the Turner Foundation will provide

half the financing. "Over the next few years I would hope we would do one hundred hours," Wussler says.)

When he cut the Crile project from three hours to one, Tom Johnson says, "Ted wasn't happy. I don't think he's happy with me. Ted knows I'm in a new world today." Turner was reminded of this "new world" when he invited me to sit in on a CNN executive-committee meeting on December 19th, and the invitation was rescinded. "He invited you to a meeting that is not his meeting," an AOL Time Warner executive explained.

Then, this past January, although Turner calls CNN "the most profitable news operation in the world"—it earned three hundred million dollars the previous year—its staff, of more than four thousand, was reduced by nearly ten per cent. Those who are gone include such Turner stalwarts as Elsa Klensch, Barbara Pyle, Nick Charles, Larry Woods, Gene Randall, and the Atlanta-based Turner Environment Division, with its show "People Count," which Fonda sometimes hosted. On CNN evening programs, talk replaced news reports—often the shouting-head format that CNN inaugurated with "Crossfire" and which Fox News and MSNBC had copied and extended. "Basically, the Fox prime-time schedule is just talk radio," Rick Kaplan, the former CNN/U.S. president, says.

Tom Johnson, who is worried about the future of CNN, says that Bob Pittman assured him that he and his colleagues in New York believed in CNN's mission. But Pittman's definition of CNN's mission may not match Johnson's or Turner's. Daily journalism is an inherently wasteful process: it involves waiting for calls to be returned, for airlines to fly, keeping forty-two bureaus functioning, chasing stories that don't pan out, and sometimes working for days on a single story. Will stockholders think this productive? As late as December, a longtime Turner executive predicted, "Ted will protect us."

Less than three months later, Turner was unable to protect two longtime lieutenants—Terry **McGuirk** and Steve Heyer. Turner says **McGuirk** and Heyer chafed at AOL Time Warner's demand that Turner Broadcasting's "operating profits" (EBITDA, which are earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) grow by thirty-nine per cent in 2001—which Turner says is nearly double the actual profit-growth average of the company over the past five years. "They were unhappy mainly that the financial goals they were given were unachievable without really hurting the company," Turner says.

AOL Time Warner executives insist that the true profit-growth target for the Turner Broadcasting division is half that, and that Turner's percentage does not reflect significant accounting changes. (Nonsense, senior executives at Turner Broadcasting say, claiming that their operating profits in 2000 were just under a billion dollars and that their company-imposed goal for 2001 is nearly \$1.4 billion; the growth target that AOL Time Warner presented to Wall Street for the entire company in 2001 is thirty-one per cent.) Associates say Pittman is disturbed that CNN has lost market share to Fox News and MSNBC; CNN's prime-time ratings for the first quarter of 2001 were down five per cent from last year, while Fox News's climbed by a hundred and twenty-six per cent and MSNBC's by seventeen per cent. Turner is particularly worried about Fox News, which is in fewer homes but has talk-show hosts like the conservative Bill O'Reilly, who is now reaching a larger audience than Larry King, CNN's ratings champion.

Turner says that he is uncomfortable with what he believes are arbitrary budget goals—what he called the company's new preoccupation with "short-term fluctuations" in its stock price—saying, "I never ran the company by the numbers." Pittman denies that the company is being run

strictly by the numbers. "I think CNN is one of the great assets in the world," he says. "But it takes a long time to build a franchise based on reliability and trust. They got it. That's something you can't replace overnight. That's the core, the value." And, Pittman adds, "everyone agreed on" a growth-target number, including, he implies, **McGuirk**. **McGuirk**, asked about the growth target, refuses to comment. He does say, "The numbers are given to us, not negotiated."

Ted Turner today gets more notice outside his company than in it. When Fidel Castro came to New York last year for a three-day summit meeting at the U.N., he wanted to spend one night having dinner with Turner, who flew in from Montana for the occasion. The dinner stretched past midnight, and Castro was in the middle of a long-winded story when Turner raised his hand and exclaimed, "Fidel, this story is never going to end, is it? I got to go!" Castro laughed as Turner exited. Turner was the first Western businessman to have a private audience with Russia's new President, Vladimir Putin, who, Turner remembers, used to drive him when Turner visited St. Petersburg and Putin was a deputy to the city's mayor. "I learned the value of being nice to everyone," Turner says, jokingly. In a trip arranged by George Crile, last May, Turner was also among the few private citizens to visit a nuclear command center outside Moscow. General Vladimir Yakovlev, the commander of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces, cautioned, "Don't touch any buttons!" There was a PowerPoint presentation, in English, delineating Russia's various nuclear forces. Turner learned that each of seven thousand warheads could obliterate everything within a one-to-two-mile radius before the radiation and the fires spread. Turner sat mute, Eason Jordan recalls, for an hour and a half, transfixed by what he heard and saw. "It was the only time I ever saw him speechless," Jordan says.

Yakovlev and Putin, like Castro, watch CNN. "The Carter Center has programs in sixty-five different nations," Jimmy Carter says. "We deal with leaders of nations who have a human-rights problem or conflict.... We go to those countries, and they quite often do not have a U.S. embassy in them. Invariably, in the offices there will be a TV station tuned to CNN." They know about Turner, and they know, Carter adds, that Turner is a true citizen of the world, a man who speaks up for what he believes even when it offends his government. Carter describes Turner as a personal "hero." Kofi Annan sees this in Turner's appeal. "He and Castro have a similar quality," Annan says. "They are folk heroes of a sort. You can have one hundred heads of state here, and most people will gravitate toward Castro. You can have one hundred media heads here, and people will gravitate toward Ted."

In mid-March, Turner made a two-day visit to Harvard. An evening appearance at the Kennedy School of Government drew a large audience, and he was introduced by Alex S. Jones, the director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, who said, "Ted Turner changed America." Turner jumped up on the low platform, pumped Jones's hand, and started talking, with Jones still at his side. Turner used no notes. He wore a blue corduroy jacket and gray slacks. Perhaps it was the way he jumped up and, in his joltingly loud voice, started talking quickly, or the way he suddenly paused and drawled, "Ahhhhhhhhhh"; or perhaps it was the way he seemed to lapse into self-pity when he said, "I'm just trying to do the best I can," or the way he raced from subject to subject, sometimes letting thoughts collide—how he was rejected by Harvard when he applied, and how he'd given Jane Fonda a hundred million dollars, and how, just recently, she bestowed more than twelve million of that sum on

Harvard's School of Education for the study of gender and education, and how he wasn't a journalist but had related to the species since he sold newspapers as a boy—perhaps it was these quirks that caused the audience, as often happens when Turner speaks, to giggle. Michael Baumgartner, a first-year graduate student, initially thought Turner sounded drunk. Watching Turner speak is like watching live TV, with the audience wondering what will happen next.

But although at first people seemed to be laughing at Turner, the feeling in the room soon changed. On being told that President Bush earlier that day had abandoned a campaign pledge to establish "mandatory reduction targets" for carbon-dioxide emissions by power plants, Turner was momentarily silenced. "That's heartbreaking news," he said finally. "I mean, I can't take any more bad news. I've lost my job and my wife this year!" Turner went on to talk about the environment, and about curbing nuclear weapons, and about his commitment to news. When he finished, students clamored to shake his hand.

That night, Turner was discreet about CNN. Asked about its future, he said, "Well, I hope it's a bright one." But, while Turner thinks CNN has programmed "too much" talk, he has no idea how to cure its ratings woes: "Quite frankly, I'm not sure I have the answers." Privately, he is concerned about a general dumbing down that is taking place in the media, putting "DiSiprio"—he means Leonardo DiCaprio—"on the cover of *Time*. Obviously, it should be on the cover of *People* or *Entertainment Weekly*!"

By the next morning, the man who confesses to a congenital inability to police a secret was no longer restrained. Turner did not criticize the recent round of cutbacks at CNN, but he did criticize the parent company's growth target. This was impossible to achieve, Turner said, without doing harm to CNN's journalism. "I always wanted CNN to be the New York *Times* of the television business," he said, a little sadly.

Although the AOL Time Warner merger took effect only in January, there have already been some successes. As the largest individual shareholder in the conglomerate, Turner is enthusiastic about a new emphasis on coordination and synergy. Of Gerald Levin's management over the past five years, Turner bluntly says, "The Time Warner divisions did not cooperate the way they should have.... I think he did a pretty marginal job of running the company." Now, with roughly forty per cent of Americans using AOL to reach the Internet, AOL is vital in promoting each division of the company. In the eight months ending January 31st, for example, Pittman told Wall Street analysts, AOL had sold eight hundred thousand new subscriptions to Time Inc.'s different magazines. The company is in various businesses, Levin said at a conference earlier this month, but one word united them: "subscriptions"—a total of a hundred and thirty million subscribers.

Turner, however, is afraid that when journalistic divisions like CNN shrink corporate executives may try to "avoid doing stories that are critical of the big companies, like the oil companies and the automobile companies. It's not easy to do stories that are critical of G.E.—you know, nuclear-power-plant stories. When was the last time you saw stories on TV critical of G.E. or DuPont? Better to stay away from the corporations—they're the sponsors. That's the danger." Turner, to be sure, does not talk about the embarrassments of his own tenure, including CNN's unceasing coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder case and trial.

At another of his Harvard appearances—a session in which he was questioned by Jones and several others for an hour and then stayed for an hour more as the six finalists for the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative



Reporting discussed their stories—Turner said, “I’ve already been fired, and I probably will be again shortly.” One of the Shorenstein Fellows rose and condescendingly suggested that Turner might follow the example of Henry Ford, who also left his job but who set up the Ford Foundation, which is “one of the most influential forces for the framing of issues in the country. You have a life and a future and can use your contacts—”

“I am,” Turner interrupted, and he mentioned his gift to the U.N. Foundation. “No other individual in the world is giving as much to the poor world as I am. I’m spending fifty million dollars in the United States, mostly on environmental and family-planning causes. Ahhhhhhhh...I mean, family planning is under attack. You know, pro-lifers have got control of the White House. Roe v. Wade is hanging on by a thread. A woman’s right to choose? They want to take that away. We’re fighting global warming.” He mentioned the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the dues payment to the U.N. “And let me tell you what else I’m doing. I’m very close to making an announcement of a personal partnership through our foundation with public broadcasting to fund important documentaries that Turner Broadcasting has dropped.... And I’ve been trying desperately to get my network. It won’t be NBC, but it will start with an N—NTV. The good news? I’m gonna get my network. The bad news? It’s in Russia! I’m gonna try and help freedom of the press. I mean, I am doing plenty, Bubba!”

It’s not entirely clear whether Turner will own a network in Russia. In early April, he announced a plan to purchase part of the network founded by the Russian press baron Vladimir A. Gusinsky. This pleased independent Russian journalists like Masha Lipman, the deputy editor of the magazine *Izvestia*, who says, “It will be much more difficult for the Russian authorities to play dirty jokes” on Turner. But the hard questions, she says, are two: Who will control the journalistic enterprise—Turner or the Russian authorities? And will Turner receive real guarantees of editorial freedom? Turner’s longtime colleague Bob Wussler says that Gazprom, the state-dominated monopoly that has asserted control over the TV network, told him and Turner, “You go do a deal with Gusinsky and come back and we’ll do a deal with you.” And even though President Putin stopped short of offering what Wussler calls “a ringing endorsement” of press freedom when Turner asked for it, Wussler feels that “Putin is a politician and can say just so much. We took it as a good sign.” Last week, however, Turner was struggling to invent a formula to satisfy Gusinsky, Gazprom, and the journalists themselves. On the surface, the deal is consistent with Turner’s world-diplomacy principle—“Just about everybody will be friendly toward us if we are friendly with them.” But it may also suggest a certain naïveté.

Turner’s ability to give his money away has diminished as his principal stock holding—AOL Time Warner—has declined by more than thirty per cent since the merger announcement, reducing his net worth by about two billion dollars. It is possible, he tells me, that he will end his association with the company entirely. He hasn’t quite accepted the idea that his business career is largely over, but he believes that his primary mission now is to help save the world, and perhaps himself.

“For some reason, he has a guilty conscience,” Jane Fonda told me. “He went much further than his father thought he would. So what’s left? To be a good guy. He knows he will go down in history. He won’t go down as a greedy corporate mogul. Although he claims to be an atheist, at the end of every speech he says, ‘God bless you.’ He wants to get into Heaven.” Fonda told me of a family outing in 1992 on the occasion of the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America. They went to a matinée of a film about Columbus and in the darkened theatre someone

screamed out a litany of Columbus's supposed sins. There was a silence, until Turner blurted, "I never did that!" Fonda reached over and soothed her husband by patting his knee and said, "It's O.K., honey. I know you didn't." She now says, "I did that a lot." Turner concedes, "I wish I didn't apologize as much as I do."

Over breakfast at the Charles Hotel, in Cambridge, I asked Turner why he felt so burdened. "It's the position you're in," he said. "Because I was at CNN, because I had commitments, because I did the Goodwill Games, because I was concerned, because I did all those documentaries, I developed a self-imposed sense of responsibility. If Gandhi and Martin Luther King could make the kind of sacrifices with their lives that they did, and that our parents did fighting in World War I and World War II, why couldn't I make sacrifices, too?" At that, Turner looked up from his hearty chipped-beef-and-biscuit breakfast, in the middle of the hotel dining room, and, as people at nearby tables leaned forward to listen, he performed from memory parts of Thomas Macaulay's "Horatius":

And how can man die better  
Than facing fearful odds,  
For the ashes of his fathers,  
And the temples of his gods....

Haul down the bridge, Sir Consul  
With all the speed ye may;  
I, with two more to help me,  
Will hold the foe in play.  
In yon straight path a thousand  
May well be stopped by three.  
Now who will stand on either hand,  
And keep the bridge with me?

"Pretty cool, huh," Turner said, grinning; he had, in the longer version that he recited, got almost every word right. "If Horatius could do it, I can do it. He saved Rome....He stopped the Etruscans." His smile widened, and he couldn't resist a final bow, with a loud "heh-heh-heh." Then he leaned over and whispered, as if to a co-conspirator, "I know a lot. My knowledge is my burden. If I didn't know so much, I could just go through life as a dilettante." He stood up and, watched by everyone in the room, walked briskly to the door. ©

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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS  
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## THE LOST TYCOON

*Now he has no wife, no job, and no empire, but Ted Turner may just save the world.*

BY KEN AULETTA

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Early last year, Ted Turner seemed invincible. He was the largest shareholder in AOL Time Warner, owning around four per cent of the soon-to-be-merged companies; his celebrated name was on the door of a major division, Turner Broadcasting System; and his dimpled chin, gap-toothed smile, and pencil-thin Gable-esque mustache were recognizable everywhere. His life is documented by the framed magazine covers that crowd the walls of his Atlanta office: Turner in 1976, launching the first "Superstation," by transforming a weak local television signal into a robust cable network; Turner in 1977, skipping his boat, *Courageous*, to victory in the America's Cup; Turner pioneering the purchase of professional sports teams as cheap and reliable programming; Turner inventing the twenty-four-hour Cable News Network; Turner buying Hollywood film libraries to create new cable-television networks; Turner as *Time's* Man of the Year.

Ted Turner's business successes didn't end when, in 1996, Turner Broadcasting merged with Time Warner. His influence at the world's largest media company was pervasive; he played the role of crazy-uncle-in-the-basement whose large appetite for cost-cutting has to be appeased, and in the process he helped revive the company's stock. But when, in January of 2000, Time Warner and Turner agreed to join with the Internet company America Online, Turner was not invited to participate in the talks about how the merged company would function.

Less than four months later, Ted Turner was fired. The news, Turner says, was delivered during a telephone call from Gerald Levin, the C.E.O.

of Time Warner, who told Turner what Turner had often told others: the company was going to reorganize. Turner Broadcasting would no longer report to Turner but, rather, to Robert Pittman, the chief operating officer of AOL. "You can't report to Pittman, so you have to have a more senior role," Levin remembers telling Turner. As Turner recalls, Levin went on to say, "Sorry, Ted, but you lose your vice-chairman title as well." According to Levin, Turner offered to give up his vice-chairmanship in order to keep running the Turner Broadcasting division, which included CNN, TNT, Turner Classic Movies, the TBS Superstation, the Cartoon Network, the New Line Cinema studio, the Atlanta Braves baseball team, the Atlanta Hawks basketball team, the Atlanta Thrashers hockey team, and Time Warner's HBO. "I didn't fire Ted," Levin insists today. "I said, 'This is the way we need to run the company.'"

Turner protested, in a series of calls first to Levin, then to Steve Case, the C.E.O. of AOL, who was to be the chairman of the new company, demanding that he not be deprived of supervision of CNN and the other cable networks that he had started. He thought that he would prevail, and in early May—perhaps because he, like Levin, hates confrontation, or perhaps because making speeches has become his accustomed mode of communication and he had now spoken—Turner got on his plane and headed for New Mexico, where he owns a five-hundred-and-eighty-thousand-acre ranch, and where he had invited some friends to join him. Turner is America's largest individual landowner, with nearly two million acres, or the rough equivalent of the land area of Delaware and Rhode Island combined. He owns twenty-two properties, in nine states and Argentina, and he spends about half his time at one or another of them.

Turner didn't see that his travels often slowed decision-making at Turner Broadcasting. Although he entrusted most matters to a deputy, **Terence F. McGuirk**, he expected to approve major projects himself. AOL and Time Warner executives, however, were impatient with the peripatetic Turner. He is sixty-two, and even his friends wanted him to slow down. Jane Fonda, his former wife, thinks that she knows why he is so restless: "I say this with all the love in the world....He has been severely, hauntingly traumatized. He always thinks something is about to be pulled out from him. He has no belief in permanency and stability. It's one reason why I'm not with him. Older age is about slowing down and growing vertically, not horizontally. That's not Ted."

Something was "pulled out" from Turner while he was in New Mexico, as he learned from a five-page fax that he received there. The fax, a press release issued by AOL Time Warner, announced a new management team for the company, awarding Turner one of two vice-chairmanships and "the additional title of Senior Advisor." The fax did not say that he had lost much of his authority, or that his five-year contract to manage Turner Broadcasting had been abrogated a year early. John Malone, the chairman of Liberty Media and an old friend of Turner's, who was a guest at the ranch, recalls that when the fax arrived "Ted went white. He was very upset. He thought it was extremely bad behavior for them to do it that way." Malone told Turner, "You can sue, but you won't get your job back. You'll just get money."

Turner's bosses tried to defuse the publicity with praise. At a press luncheon for CNN's twentieth anniversary, four weeks after the announcement, Case told reporters, "Ted Turner has been a hero of mine for twenty-five years, and he and I are basically going to be joined at the hip." Turner can be seduced with kind words, with pleas to work for the good of the team, but he wasn't this time. "Vice-chairman' is usually a title