

Urban Survival Manuals

Who are the top tennis teachers in Los Angeles? What is the gay community like in Washington, D.C.? Who is the best sportswriter in Texas? Is Chicago's drinking water polluted?

All of these questions have something in common. They are asked—and answered—by a lively gaggle of publications known as city magazines, a diverse, eclectic and sometimes unruly group of enterprises to crowd under one rubric. But most, whatever else they do, aspire to be urban survival manuals, guiding their readers toward the best that city life has to offer while warning them away from its pitfalls and dangers. The genre is by and large prospering: while magazines in general lost advertising pages in 1975, city magazines as a group increased their ads by some 1,100 pages over 1974, a gain of more than 10%. In fact, four of the five U.S. monthlies with the fastest growing advertising volume are city magazines.*

Most of the successful city magazines have borrowed—some of them heavily—from the graphics, format and trendy chic of *New York* (circ. 364,000), the pacesetter weekly first published as an independent magazine by Clay Felker in 1967. (Felker had been its editor in an earlier and simpler incarnation, when it was a Sunday supplement of the now defunct *New York Herald-Tribune*.) Regular features akin to Felker's "The Underground Gourmet" (budget-minded restaurant reviews) and "The Passionate Shopper" are staple fare, and *New York's* penchant for parlor-game lists ("The Ten Worst Judges," "The 100 Greatest Freebies in Town") has been widely copied. Unlike *New York*, which often ranges afield to cover events of national interest (last week's cover story was a profile of Jimmy Carter), other city magazines—all of them monthlies—generally confine their efforts to local stories. Among the best:

► **Texas Monthly** (circ. 185,000), based in Austin, is a city magazine that covers an entire state with an enthusiasm that reflects the youth of Publisher Michael Levy, 29, and Editor William Broyles, 31. Levy, a Wharton School of business graduate who had practically no journalism experience before starting *Texas Monthly*, gave up the idea of confining a magazine to Houston or Dallas because neither city seemed likely to provide a circulation of 100,000—the minimum he felt he needed to succeed. Instead, three years ago, he started a magazine that would appeal to urban dwellers anywhere in the state. "We like to think we're writing about things that

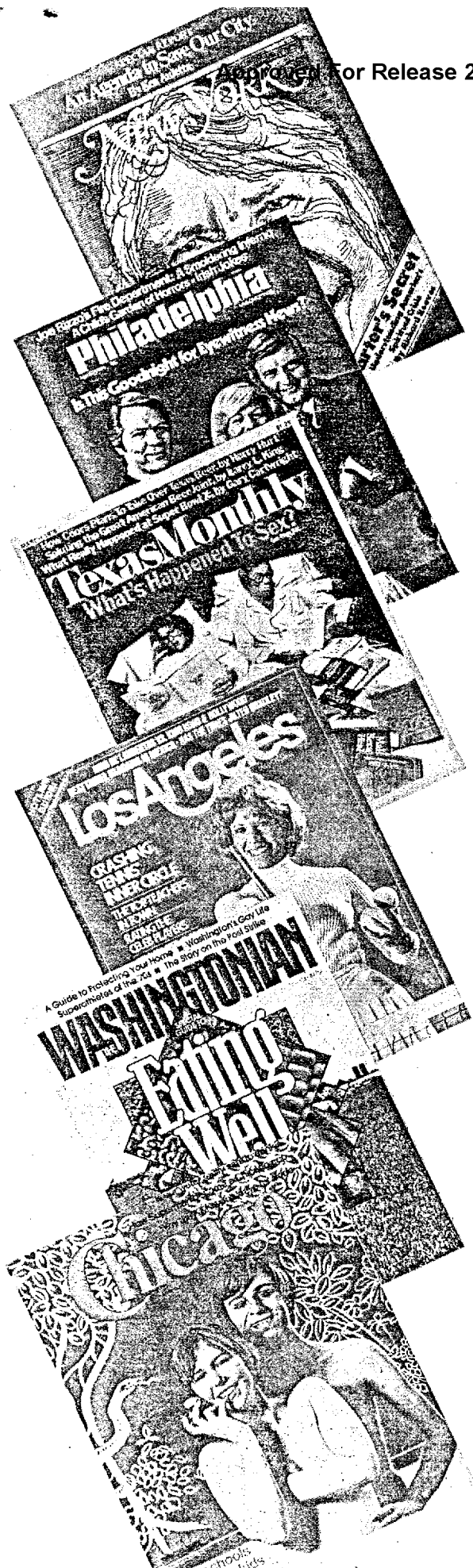
*Chicago, Los Angeles, The Washingtonian and Cleveland. The fifth is Smithsonian magazine.

never would have been written about if we hadn't been here," says Editor Broyles, a onetime writer for the British weekly *Economist*. He may well be right. *Texas Monthly* has boldly attacked Dallas banking institutions, Houston law firms, airport safety and that most sacred of cows, college football. *Texas Monthly* has lacked originality and punch in its graphics, but it has become an articulate voice for the rising urban consciousness in the third most populous state in the Union.

► **Chicago** (circ. 140,000) began life 24 years ago as *Chicago Guide*, a supermarket giveaway that listed radio programs of the city's classical music station, WFMT. In 1971, Publisher Raymond Nordstrand, 43, who came to *Chicago* from WFMT (he is still its station manager), decided to add articles and start selling the magazine to the public. Since then it has become one of the fattest books in the country. Today, a typical 230-page issue carries more than 100 pages of advertising. Last year Nordstrand dropped the "Guide" from *Chicago's* title. But on the inside, *Chicago* is still mostly a gray, though useful, landscape of listings that includes in a typical issue an index guide to 1,000-plus local events, critiques of nearly 80 films, as well as WFMT radio and public TV listings. *Chicago* runs occasional pieces of fiction and articles that cover everything from the Mafia to houseplants in a style that one reader describes as "funky, chic lakeside journalism."

► **Philadelphia** (circ. 122,000) has no peers among city magazines in investigative reporting. Among the imaginatively illustrated magazine's bigger muckraking scoops: the revelation that a *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter was blackmailing banks and businesses by threatening to give them bad publicity (the reporter was suspended from the *Inquirer* and eventually convicted), and an exposé detailing how local politicians had fouled up Philadelphia's Bicentennial celebration by mismanaging funds (as a result, the city restored to the welfare fund \$500,000 that it had earlier diverted to the Bicentennial). *Philadelphia's* success is due to the unwavering localism of Publisher Herbert Lipson, 46, who was a charter member of a booster organization, Action Philadelphia, before taking *Philadelphia* over from his father in 1961. "We wouldn't do a piece on Jerry Ford," he says, "unless it turned out he was born in Philadelphia."

► **Los Angeles** (circ. 100,000), now owned by a medical-book publisher, was once eagerly sought by *New York's* Felker. *Los Angeles* has developed over the past 15 years into a smooth, narrow-



cus magazine that is deliberately occupied with helping its readers to "get the good life together" and, like many of its affluent readers, only mildly concerned with Los Angeles politics and problems. "City government is just not a spectator sport here as it is in other cities," explains Editor Geoff Miller, 39, who joined *Los Angeles* shortly after graduating from U.C.L.A. The sport in Los Angeles is leisure, and the magazine helps its readers play by publishing lists of 52 suggested weekend trips (an annual feature), guides to public tennis courts and 31 ways to keep the kids busy in August. Miller insists he is not worried about *New York* look-alike *New West*, a Felker bi-weekly that begins publication next month in Los Angeles. He takes comfort in the fact that *New West* is aiming at a slightly younger, less well-off audience.

► **The Washingtonian** (circ. 64,000) is an urbane and witty ten-year-old magazine published by Laughlin Phillips, 50, a liberal, wealthy Washingtonian who co-founded the magazine after 15 years in the CIA. He and Editor Jack Limpert, 41, a former U.P.I. reporter and newspaper editor, aim to please a widely scattered metropolitan area audience with wining-and-dining columns, canny pieces on D.C. notables, some press criticism and generally light, glossy cover stories: "Sex, Power and Politics," for instance, or "Adventures in the Loveless World of the Sexually Liberated" (a sellout). The *Washingtonian* publishes service features that sometimes cost it dearly. Example: an article advising readers that they could buy furniture at a lower cost directly from North Carolina manufacturers prompted local furniture stores to pull their advertising.

One of the criticisms sometimes leveled at the *Washingtonian* and other city magazines is that they serve a narrow segment of the urban population, largely ignoring blacks in mostly black Washington, for example, and Chicanos in Los Angeles. City magazines take this course, observes *Esquire* Columnist Nora Ephron, because they are really glossy shopping guides for the privileged. They "have taken food and home furnishings and plant care," she wrote recently, "and surrounded them with just enough political and sociological reporting to give readers an excuse to buy them."

Not every city magazine publisher who takes the field succeeds. Within the last year or two, for example, magazines in Chicago, San Francisco and Detroit have closed their doors. But another half-dozen or so around the U.S. are coming along well. *D, The Magazine of Dallas*, founded in 1974, has steadily increased its circulation, which is now 42,000, and is already in the black. *Cleveland*, which began publication in 1972, now has a circulation of 45,000, and in 1974 had the greatest advertising growth of any U.S. monthly.

Plumbing the Real World of Leaks

Those who want simple answers about the giving away of Government secrets have had a hard time of it in recent weeks. First, Daniel Schorr of CBS irritated even a lot of fellow journalists by the way he slipped a congressional report on the CIA to New York City's flashy *Village Voice*. Henry Kissinger complained that "highly classified information" had been leaked. Then Kissinger himself was embarrassed by leaks of his own confidential Middle East negotiations and, having denounced the deed, had to reprimand one of his closest aides, who had leaked with Kissinger's approval, but perhaps more than his boss had intended. Such a diplomatic reprimand—obviously written in quick fading ink—carries about as much weight as a diplomatic denial.

New York *Times* Columnist William Safire (a Kissinger colleague in Nixon's day but now an implacable enemy) gloated over Kissinger's discomfiture. But many Washington journalists, whatever their views of Kissinger's policies, gratefully regard him as the ablest private explainer of public policy in Washington. His leaks are easy to spot. A recent story in the *Times* begins: "Henry A. Kissinger has concluded that Cuba is again in the business of 'exporting revolution.'" The story goes on: "But Mr. Kissinger has reportedly decided not to say this in public for now." Kissinger thus "goes public" with what he professes not to want to say publicly. When such is the real world of leaks, much of the official huffing and puffing about the subject is humbug.

But not all. When leaks embarrass, the first official cry is that national security has been compromised. On the record of the past few years, this charge simply will not wash. Too much has been stamped confidential in order to conceal hanky-panky and ineptitude, not secrets. Even the celebrated 47 volumes of the Pentagon papers contained, as a Pentagon official admitted, "only 27 pages that gave us real trouble"—and these came to not much. In Daniel Schorr's case, *Village Voice* readers must have nodded over the congressional committee's tentative maunderings and its few carefully bowdlerized CIA documents.

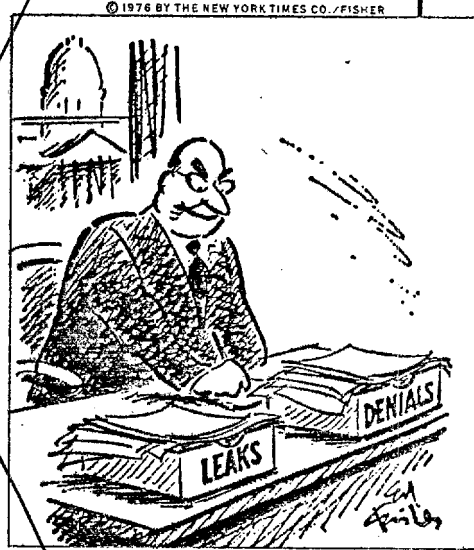
Still leaks can damage. The real effect of the Pentagon papers was to reveal the Government's systematic deception of the public. The real damage of the Schorr leak, once the House of Representatives had voted to keep the report secret, was to show congressional inability to keep a secret. The Kissinger leak warned foreign ministers that what they say in confidence may later be leaked by the State Department.

But even if security is not violated, does not the Government have a right to secrecy, and to private discussion? Indeed it does, as well as the responsibility to keep it private. No one can object if an Administration, by discipline and discretion, saves itself from too many unseemly disclosures. In the poisoned atmosphere of Viet Nam and Watergate, men who leaked were denounced as traitors or hailed as heroes, but in most instances were neither. A leak by a man of conscience, upset by wrongdoing and willing to take the consequences, deserves honoring. But most leaks serve the self-interest of those who supply them, or come from secondary bureaucrats appealing over their superiors to public opinion when their side of an internal argument has lost.

Where the public's interest lies in this dispute between Government and press was put best by Alexander Bickel, a Yale law professor. In his posthumous book *The Morality of Consent*, he answered: "It is the contest that serves the interest of society as a whole, which is identified neither with the interest of the Government alone nor of the press." Bickel expected each side to pursue its interest with zeal, but "the weight of the First Amendment is on the reporter's side, because the assumption . . . is that secrecy and the control of news are all too inviting, all too easily achieved, and, in general, all too undesirable."

Bickel argued and won the Pentagon papers case, which resulted in the landmark decision on secrets and leaks. The Supreme Court decided, in Bickel's words, that "if a newspaper had got hold of those documents without itself participating in a theft of them, although somebody else might to its knowledge have stolen them, it could have published them with impunity." This makes newspapers sound uncomfortably like criminal fences, though the stolen property is not jewels but information.

Many people are disquieted that editors should have the power to print whatever falls into their hands: who elected them? Editors, debating among themselves, usually conclude that they cannot halt what is already public enough for them to know about. Not to publish, when the information adds to the public knowledge, would seem to them even more of an arrogance of power. All in all, it is easier to prove a democracy made sounder by public knowledge than a nation weakened by secrets revealed.



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SC 4.01.1 ~~Texas~~ Monthly

↳ Chicago

↳ Philadelphia

↳ Los Angeles

↳ WASHINGTONIAN

(orig under Texas Monthly)