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there is simply too much news. It is everywhere and available immediately through the Web, TV, and radio. It has lost its impact through overkill. Just imagine the excitement before radio, when you heard a newsboy shouting, "Extra! Extra!" in your neighborhood. It had to be something big—and it was: The *Titanic* had struck an iceberg and gone down with enormous loss of life. Charles Lindbergh had flown across the Atlantic alone. That was the news.

LOUIS C. KLEBER
Las Vegas, Nevada

SLACKIDEMIC

IN "Lazy-Ass Nation" [October], Jim Windolf managed to take a serious subject, the fact that Americans are woefully inactive and alarmingly obese, and water it down with examples that were often not only ill-informed but downright mean. Yes, the Clapper may seem to encourage laziness, but I do seem to remember those early commercials for the product showing an elderly woman clapping the lights off from her bed. And attacking cup holders? For crying out loud, it seems to me that these convenient devices actually encourage the questionable but unlazy practice of multi-tasking. The holders allow a person to drink coffee while driving to work, where they will no doubt perform several tasks at the same time all day.

JIM ROMANOFF
South Burlington, Vermont

I WAS GOING TO WRITE and mail my letter of praise for Jim Windolf's hilarious take on our "lazy-ass nation," but I couldn't find a pen or a stamp. Then I thought I could fax it over, but, alas, who faxes anything anymore? Dialing 10 numbers is much too taxing. Finally, I resorted to the tried-and-true e-mail method. Voilà! (But could someone work on a way for readers to text in our comments—or, better yet, ESP?)

LAURA DODD
Los Angeles, California

JIM WINDOLF proves himself to be the quintessential citizen of the "lazy-ass nation." No contact was made before he gave incorrect information about Soho Parenting, the family-counseling service in New York City. Instead, he seems to have relied on inaccurate reporting from other publications. We do *not* toilet-train children for parents, and one simple call would have clarified our philosophy. Soho Parenting is a resource, not an outsource, for parents who are struggling to maintain a clearheaded, hands-on, balanced approach to raising children in a sped-up and pressured world.

His shortcut cheapened *Vanity Fair's* reputation for accuracy and honesty.

JEAN KUNHARDT AND LISA SPIEGEL
Co-founders and co-directors, Soho Parenting
New York, New York

EXTREME MAKEOVER: HITCHENS EDITION

SUICIDE is a matter of velocity: a bullet to the head is instant, while smoking, for example, is a much slower method. Underneath what I believe to be Christopher Hitchens's God-given gift of brilliant writing ("On the Limits of Self-Improvement, Part I," October) one detects a bald lack of faith, self-hatred disguised as humor, a pooh-poohing of the value of good health, and the consequence of a life without meaning.

DHANI SCHIMIZZI
Rochester, New York

V. F. CLASSIC



While President George Herbert Walker Bush's approval rating took a tumble during his four-year stint in the White House, his wife, Barbara, with her well-honed image as America's favorite grandmother, retained close to universal popularity. The First Lady appeared, after all, to be a champion political wife. But in August 1992, Marjorie Williams chiseled away at Barbara's public persona, revealing how the president's spouse had managed to hide not only her combative fierceness but also her deep unhappiness behind a façade of cheerful photo ops and eager activism. As Williams reported, the devoted Mrs. Bush had become trapped within the domestic destiny she created for herself. To read Williams's "Barbara's Backlash," please visit VANITYFAIR.COM.