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## THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

David Remnick, Ryan Lizza, and Dorothy Wickenden on Sarah Palin and the Democratic Convention.



## IN THE NEWS

Elizabeth Kolbert: The risks of rebuilding southern Louisiana, from 2006.

## BLOGS

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Hendrik Hertzberg remembers the best speech he's ever heard.

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**The Cartoon Lounge:** Michael Chabon drinks expensive beer, Perez Hilton, and more.

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**Sasha Frere-Jones** hums a Labor Day tune.

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SEE ALL BLOGS

THE NAKED CAMPAIGN  
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## MY BILLY

by Paul Rudnick

APRIL 3, 2006

For the first eight years of his life, I was terribly worried about my gifted son, Billy. He had undergone endless testing and visits to hundreds of specialists, and he was eventually diagnosed with A.D.W., or Attention-Deficit What; then A.D.H.S.T., or Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Stop That; and, after that, A.D.P.O.Y.P., or Attention-Deficit Put On Your Pants. Finally, I realized that Billy is a Dandelion Child, a term used for unusually bright and active children whose special powers will someday change the world.

Shortly after Billy was born, I noticed that he possessed an unusual affinity for organic play, because whenever I took him on picnics he would eat bark. He also demonstrated highly precocious hand-eye coordination, because at only six months old he was able to fling his dirty diapers at strangers, laugh, and point to me. Before his first birthday, he was speaking in complete sentences, although he was using a complex secret language, similar to Karl Rove's.

Billy's early interactions with other children proved difficult, because his consciousness was so much more developed. For example, in the sandbox other children would use their brightly colored plastic shovels to fill their matching buckets with sand. Billy, however, would place his bucket over another child's head and then beat the bucket with his shovel, demanding, "Where's Waldo? I know you know."

I attempted to schedule playdates with other children, tykes who, sadly, insisted on wearing flammable clothing. It was after one such fruitless attempt that I first took Billy to be evaluated by a therapist, a limited woman who prescribed Ritalin, which only caused Billy to become drowsy and disoriented at odd moments, such as when he was hijacking a bus. The therapist asked Billy if he had any siblings, and I remember how his eyes sparkled as he replied, "Don't you read the paper?"

Next, I enrolled Billy in one of the city's finest private preschools for gifted children; during the interview I was especially proud when Billy showed the other children how wooden blocks make love. Unfortunately, even the school's most accelerated programs bored Billy, and he expressed his frustration by crawling around on all fours, grunting and searching for the truffles that he declared some of the little girls had hidden in their underwear. After being expelled, Billy comforted himself by writing a wrenching memoir of addiction, entitled "Boogers."

A series of other schools were equally repressive, and all I kept hearing was "Billy refuses to sit still," "Billy can't interact with a group," and "Billy covered another child with green finger paint and told her that now she could get a scholarship." That was when, thank the Lord, I discovered a Web site for the parents of other extremely advanced children, called AreYourPetsLimping.com. One generous mom suggested that I read two invaluable books by the pioneering child psychologist Dr. Irene Morningflower-Sanctum, entitled "Catching the Gifted Child" and "If He Can Poke, He Can Fly."

These works described the Dandelion Child phenomenon, explaining how a little boy could welcome his visiting grandmother with hugs and kisses and then create a narrative by murmuring, "I'm not Billy. You killed Billy. Don't you

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KEYWORDS  
Gifted Children; Parents; Attention-Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.); Learning Disabilities; Indigo Children; Dandelion Children; "Where's Waldo?"

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**Trapped:** The ordeal of Nicholas White, who was trapped in an elevator for forty-one hours.

**Abandoned in Baghdad:** Scenes from George Packer's play "Betrayed."

remember?"

The term "Dandelion Child" comes from the children's vividly colored auras, which are golden and sunny, and which, if you're not careful, can ruin your lawn. Dandelion Children are so evolved that the rest of us literally can't understand them, and not just because they enjoy tugging panty hose over their heads and announcing, "Look at me, Mommy. I'm a testicle!" As Dr. Morningflower-Sanctum once told me, as we took Billy for a stroll, "Your son has such compassion, far beyond his years. Watch how he leaves that realistic baby doll on a doorstep, rings the doorbell, and runs away. See the elderly couple reading the note? It says, 'Maybe this one will call.'"

Today, I am proud to report that I am homeschooling a happy, healthy, busy little Dandelion marvel, even if, whenever I try to embrace him, Billy still shouts, "Get off me! I'm not one of your husbands!" As Dr. Morningflower-Sanctum said, just the other day, "Let's peek in on Billy in my waiting room. See how he's bonding with my cat? He's teaching her that we're all connected, sometimes with shoelaces. He's an inspiration. He knows." ♦

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**Birds in Flight:** A portfolio of sculptural structures by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

**Face Value:** A slideshow of Max Factor advertisements from the 1930's to the 1960's.

**Local Heroes:** A selection of paintings by Brooklyn artist Kehinde Wiley.

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