

LITE OF THE MIND

(a light-hearted look at all things Chicago)

Contested ideas

■ *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, AB'83, received what he calls "the big break of my professional life" after he wrote a William F. Buckley parody in the *Maroon*. On a visit to the University, Buckley read the satirical takedown of his memoir and offered fourth-year Brooks a job on the spot.

Now, we're not making any promises. We're just saying, with that "big break" story in mind, how could you *not* enter the *Magazine's* **David Brooks Column Parody Contest**? Knowing, as you will in five, four, three ... that Brooks himself will read the best entries and select the winners.

Brooks has developed a reputation as a rigorous intellectual. A "true public thinker," presidential adviser David Axelrod, AB'76, said in a *New York* magazine profile that dubbed Brooks "A Reasonable Man." Despite his famously rational, analytical style, the article noted that the high-profile *Times* platform gives Brooks the experience of being, as he put it, "hated on a mass scale."

We at the *Magazine*, on the other hand, want to flatter him in the sincerest form. Well, we want you to do it for us. Write 500 words analyzing anything on the socio-cultural-politico-intellectual spectrum—from Afghanistan to the zeitgeist—in your best Brooksonian prose.

The *Magazine's* editors will cull the most knee-slappingly centrist, most side-splittingly sober, most fire-breathingly bipartisan, most spit-takingly intelligent entries for Brooks to public-think about and select the winners.

Please send your entries, no more than 500 words, by January 1 to uchicago-magazine@uchicago.edu. The writers of the best parodies, which will be published in the Mar-Apr/11 issue, will receive a signed copy of a Brooks book. And who knows what else.—J.K.

ASSESS SOCIOLOGICAL DATA

"... They cite my favorite piece of sociological data: In 1950, thousands of teenagers were asked if they considered themselves an 'important person.' Twelve percent said yes. In the late 1980s, another few thousand were asked. This time, 80 percent of girls and 77 percent of boys said yes. ... We've entered an era where self-branding is on the ascent and the culture of self-effacement is on the decline. ..."

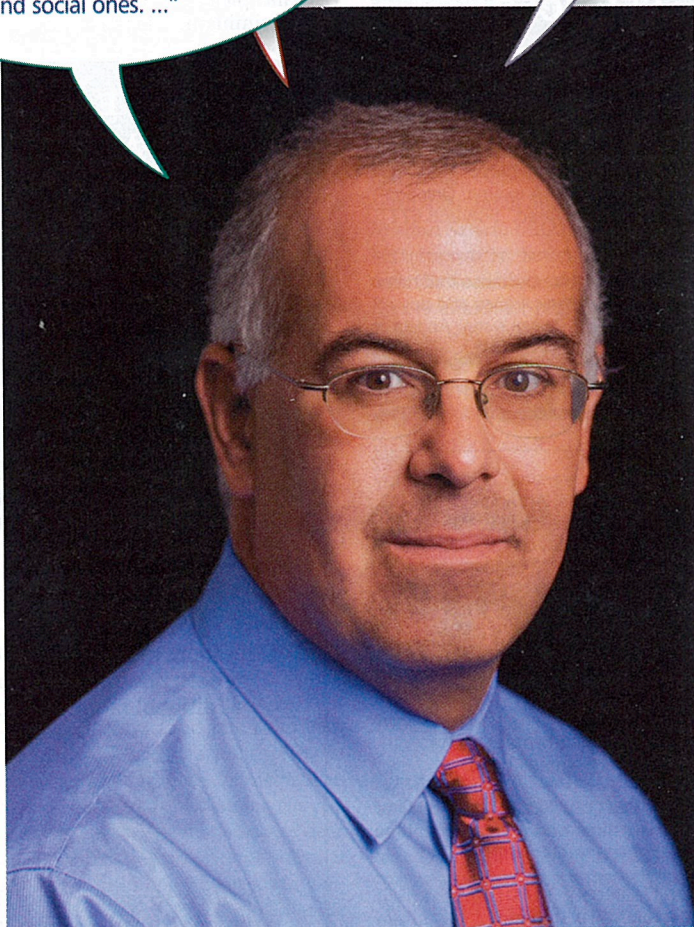
HOW TO WRITE LIKE BROOKS

SIP FROM CULTURAL COCKTAILS

"... It's a mixture of softness and hardness. [Jan] Baalsrud was kept alive thanks to a serial outpouring of love and nurturing. He and his rescuers displayed an unbelievable level of hardheaded toughness and resilience. That's a cultural cocktail bound to produce achievement. ..."

RUMINATE ON MORAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

"... Most schools and colleges spend too much time preparing students for careers and not enough preparing them to make social decisions. Most governments release a ton of data on economic trends but not enough on trust and other social conditions. ... They have an affinity for material concerns and a primordial fear of moral and social ones. ..."



Josh Haner/New York Times