

Signals in the Static: **Clint Eastwood** licenses his image for Las Vegas slot machines. K-Mart’s Blue Light Special turns 40. *The Maltese Falcon* turns 75. Died: Jefferson Airplane drummer **Spencer Dryden**, 66; journalist **Lucien Carr**, 79, literary muse and catalyst for the “beat generation.”

**Brittan Elementary School** in rural Sutter, California, requires all their students to wear radio frequency identification (RFID) badges to track their movements, simplify attendance-taking, curtail vandalism, and improve student safety. **San Francisco** bans smoking in all public parks. Maine’s **Black Mountain** ski resort bans smoking everywhere, including the alpine and cross-country trails.

In an effort to draw in more buyers, **VW** is conducting an experiment in which buyers will get a free insurance policy good for one year. Discount retailer **Costco** sells a “Lady of Guadalupe” casket (\$924.99 incl. shipping) on its Web site. NYC’s JFK airport opens the **Oasis Day Spa**. **McDonald’s** will sell a fruit-and-walnut salad this spring. Wendy’s is already going national with main course-size fruit bowls. **IHOP** will introduce entrée-sized fruit plates in May. **Bacardi** will launch a low-calorie, flavored rum called “Island Breeze.” **Starbucks** expands lunch offerings to five new cities and will expand its hot breakfast menu to 100 outlets in Washington. **American Airlines** removes pillows from nearly all domestic flights. Blankets still remain. **ABC-TV** will produce “Miracle Workers,” a reality series where a “dream team” of physicians attempt to cure a family member who does not have necessary financial or insurance resources. **Electronics Arts** joins with the University of Southern California to endow the first university chair for the study of electronic gaming. **Nerveana**, a

NYC Greenwich Village night club, opens featuring nineties nostalgia decor (Spice Girls, Snoop Dogg, a white Ford Bronco, a Forrest Gump bench, and a stained Monica Lewinski-style dress displayed next to a chewed cigar).

Applications to Military Academies Fall: Applications to West Point have fallen 16% in two years to 10,412. The Naval Academy is down 2,852 applicants, a 20% drop in one year. The Air Force Academy is down 3,054 applicants from 2004, a 24% decrease. Last summer 52 sophomore cadets dropped out of West Point, compared with 32 the year before, and 18 the year before that. *N.Y. Times*.

Sponsored Random Acts of Kindness: To promote the TV drama “Joan of Arcadia” in which God appears to the title character in various human forms (and which has declined in viewership from 11.1 million viewers last season to 8.4 million), CBS dispatches do-gooders to help people with packages, buy them a cup of coffee, or give them a free bus pass. Then they hand the recipient a printed card hyping the show. *Ad Age*.

Robot Soldiers: The U.S. Army is sending 18 remote-controlled robotic soldiers called SWORDS (Special Weapons Observation Reconnaissance Detection Systems) to Iraq. The robot shoots only when its human operator presses a button after identifying a target on video shot by the robot's cameras. *Washington Post*.

Viewpoint—Sports and Organized Religion: “Team sports provide three satisfactions of life to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans that, before the modern age, only religion offered: a welcome diversion from the routines of daily life; a model of coherence and clarity; and heroic examples to admire and emulate.” —Michael Mandelbaum, *The Meaning of Sports*, PublicAffairs, 2004.