

## America: If you're happy and you know it, just jump

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For the *The New York Times*

The sun has come out in New York after a long spell of weather, a good time to pause in life's turmoil and count our blessings.

Ordinarily we would do this in November but things may not be as good then as they are now.

These are good times to be alive in America. The tide of hogwash is receding a little and, with the Republicans in eclipse, pious humbug also is slightly reduced.

The young president seems to have a tonic effect on everybody, including his opponents. He thinks, he talks, he enjoys the give and take of politics, he has some good ideas and he isn't full of himself.

Democrats of my generation tend to be long on sensitivity and short on sense, but this president has the good sense to feel lucky. So should we.

Last week, Florida made it

legal to breast-feed a baby in public. The naked breast had been forbidden in Florida, but not now, so long as there is a baby attached to it.

This may not be an earthshaking advance, but young mothers in Tampa and St. Pete who might have been doing jail time are free today, as free as a parent of a small child can be.

Progress is rampant all along the line. American shamanism is at an ebb.

You hear less about codependency than you used to and nothing about the men's movement. Postmodernism now strikes everyone as completely outdated, along with its rather arrogant notion that we stand at the end of history. (What do we do with the kids?)

There seems to be less narcissism around. Or is it just me? We know we are in a new and improved era when nobody suggests that the terrible

troubles in Bosnia are the result of misguided American policy and could have been easily avoided.

The number of Republicans gainfully employed has been rising steadily since the end of January and this is bound to have a good effect sooner or later.

Now they can go be entrepreneurs and create real jobs for themselves and the American people will not have to pay them to sit in Washington and denigrate the idea of public service.

Nothing makes me happier on a sunny day than to think of how wrong I've been in the past.

The old fears of people like me that technology leads to totalitarianism and cultural sterility do not come true. The computer, the fax, the car phone, the answering machine, all seem to lead to a more civilized life, affording us greater privacy and freedom,

not less.

Television is a scam, based on selling advertisers something that doesn't exist: the devoted attention of viewers.

Now that everyone has remote control, nobody watches commercials anymore. People skate from show to show and the shows are designed to accommodate this transient audience. If you watch one for 60 seconds, you've got it and can move to the next.

It isn't art but it isn't bad. My children and their friends all grew up with television, and they seem smart and funny and mature to me, less zombielike than most people my own age.

On Sunday, walking in New York in the sunshine, thinking about these important matters, I saw a young man in a black cotton suit and big basketball shoes bouncing up and down on the corner of 81st

and Columbus. He was bouncing high, rotating counterclockwise, and grinning.

People noticed him in that cool way New Yorkers have, not looking at him but at something just on the other side of him.

You wondered: What am I supposed to do about this? Call the cops? Is this something I'll read about in the tabloids tomorrow, "New Yorkers Ignore Man Having Seizure On Street, Hundred Pass By As Victim Leaps To Exhaustion?"

I don't think so. I think he just felt really good and was trying out his shoes. He was happy to have so much spring in his legs.

I feel that way myself sometimes when the sun comes out.

Garrison Keillor, host of "American Radio Company," is also the author of "WLT: A Radio Romance" and "Lake Wobegon Days."