



Why Washington Won't Write Paulson A Blank Check

Curtis Sittenfeld Falls for Michelle Obama

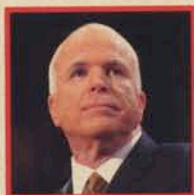


Environmental Heroes: 10 Who Make a Difference

TIME

Who Can Rescue The Economy?

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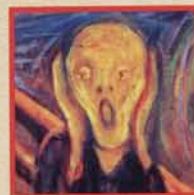
JOHN McCAIN
{Republican}

(CHECK HERE)



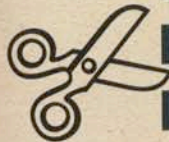
BARACK OBAMA
{Democrat}

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NONE OF THE ABOVE
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I got a firsthand look at such heroism this summer when I joined a team of international researchers led by Dahl-Jensen at the NEM camp in Greenland. NEM stands for North Greenland Eemian Ice Drilling (the acronym is Danish, as are the leaders of the project), and the scientists are digging deep into the Greenland ice—more than a mile and a half deep to be precise—to try to understand its pedigree. Depth is time, and the lower you go, the further back in history you travel. As ice formed in Greenland, year after cold year, bits of atmosphere were trapped in the layers. Drilling into the ice and fishing out samples—ice cores—that contain tiny bubbles of that ancient air can reveal the temperature, the concentration of greenhouse gases, even the ambient dust from the year that layer was formed. It's like tree rings but for climatic history. "In order to predict the future, we have to understand the past," says Minik Rosing, a geologist at the University of Copenhagen.

NEM is focused on the Eemian stage, a period from about 115,000 to 130,000 years ago, right before the last ice age, when the world was warm—quite warm, about 9°F hotter in Europe than it is today. Given that the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that temperatures could rise 3.24°F to 7.2°F over the coming century, the Eemian could offer a model for the effect such thermometer swings will have on Greenland's ice. A full climatic record of the Eemian has never been constructed, but over the next several summers (scientific work is seasonal on the freezing-cold island), the NEM researchers hope to harvest cores that will help them track the state of the ice throughout that era, when Greenland was warm enough to actually be green. Dahl-Jensen believes that with enough information, they will be able to project forward and understand just how vulnerable Greenland is to future melting. "With 10 years of intense research, I think we can reach a reliable estimate for that tipping point," she says.

It's that type of confidence that serves as our light in the climatic darkness, living proof that hope hasn't vanished. You need that comfort when you're standing on a rocky hilltop in Greenland, watching the ice disappear. As Jakobshavn gives way to the fjord, a stadium-size iceberg suddenly implodes, disintegrating like a collapsing skyscraper. I watch as a plume of mist fills the air where the iceberg once was, while the fjord churns on. And then I wonder, just how much time do Greenland and the rest of us have before it's too late? That may be up to us—and the heroes we choose to follow. ■

Heroes of the Environment

It's not governments alone that will clean the earth. It's people. Here are 10 showing how



Alice Waters. Serving taste and passion by cooking fresh and local

It has been a slow 30 years of progress for all environmentalists, but Alice Waters has more right to gripe than most. She's never asked anyone to install solar panels or drive less. She just wants people to eat stuff that tastes better. The owner of the venerable Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, Calif., Waters has been proving since 1971 that the best foods of all are locally grown and simply prepared—making them good for you and for the planet as well.

In recent years, Waters, 64, has seen her ideas go mainstream. Her restaurant and cookbooks launched the local-foods movement, and her Edible Schoolyard project encourages students to help grow and shop for their lunches. She is also working in the Slow Food movement, helping to find the best varieties of fruits and vegetables for sustainability and nutrition—and, of course, taste. Because that's how Waters wins any debate about the environment. —BY JOEL STEIN

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Peggy Liu. Turning China green—before it's too late

THREE YEARS AGO, PEGGY LIU WAS YOUR TYPICAL OVER-achieving MIT graduate. After leaving a job at the consulting firm McKinsey, she co-founded a venture-capital firm in Shanghai with her husband. One day she attended an alumni-association meeting to hear a speech by MIT's new president, Susan Hockfield. Concerns about climate change were rising, and Hockfield's message was simple: Unless China got a grip on its energy use and mounting environmental troubles—and unless the developed world helped it in that effort—everyone was going to be in a world of environmental hurt. Convinced that Hockfield was right, Liu helped organize an MIT-sponsored conference on global warming in the spring of 2007. Building on those discussions, she set up the Joint U.S.-China Cooperation on Clean Energy (JUCCCE), an NGO focused on finding practical solutions to big problems.

With the help of her prodigious Rolodex, Liu, 39, brought together high-powered business and government types from both the U.S. and China. One of her first recruits was Rob Watson, who founded a widely recognized environmental-rating system for buildings in the U.S. and elsewhere. With China expected to add some 50,000 new skyscrapers by 2030, the energy-conservation potential is enormous—but so is skepticism among developers who question whether it's worth investing more to make a building energy-efficient. Liu is convinced it is, and her business background helps her make that case. Whether you're dealing with mayors or real estate developers, the one thing they all respond to is numbers. If you can show them "how to make green by going green," she says, you've closed the sale.

The results of her efforts are showing. The number of buildings under development in China that meet Watson's standards has increased significantly just in the past year, he says, noting, "Peggy and JUCCCE have been critical in spreading the word." Adds Liu: "We're not about pilot projects. We want to be here for 10 years and have a demonstrable record of accomplishment." So far, so good. —BY BILL POWELL



Jack Sim. A toilet expert campaigns for better sanitation



Jack Sim is not afraid to talk about poop. In fact, the founder of the World Toilet Organization—a lesser known if also vital WTO—sometimes talks of little else. And that's a very good thing for the planet.

Lack of proper sanitation is one of the developing world's greatest problems. Some 2.6 billion people have no access to toilets, and groundwater contaminated by fecal matter is a major killer. But getting villagers to realize the importance of toilets is difficult because of the embarrassment factor.

Sim, 50, a retired real estate entrepreneur, founded the nonprofit WTO in 2001 to change that mind-set. "It's a question of marketing toilets as a status symbol," he says. "I want people to aspire to owning a toilet."

Surprisingly, it's a luxury that could come cheap. Basic, ecologically sound latrines can cost as little as \$10, and the WTO, which now boasts 133 member organizations from 50 countries, is getting them out there. Sim is working to partner toiletmakers with fertilizer businesses so that human waste can serve as a natural crop booster. He also touts an emerging technology that transforms sewage into biogas, which can be used as cooking fuel. In a world of scarce resources and limited space, that's the right kind of potty talk. —BY HANNAH BEECH