

- Tech & Science
- Health
- Society
- Education
- Entertainment
- Tip Sheet
- The Boomer Files
- Columnists
- Letters & Live Talks
- Multimedia/Photos
- Search Archives
- Xtra.newsweek.com

Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Elie Wiesel ... and Norman Borlaug.

Story continues below ↓

advertisement



Video

- U.S. News**
- Politics**
- World News**
- Business**
- Sports**
- Entertainment**
- Health**
- Tech / Science**
- Travel**
- Weather**
- Blogs Etc.**
- Local News**
- Newsweek**
- Multimedia**
- Most Popular**
- NBC NEWS**
- Today Show**
- Nightly News**
- Dateline NBC**
- Meet the Press**



Alex Wong / Getty Images

Feeding the World: Borlaug's Gold Medal

POLITICS AUDIO AND VIDEO 1/5

Senators Want Gonzales Perjury Investigation
 July 26, 2007: Senate Democrats called for a perjury investigation against Attorney General...

MORE

- 1. **Senators Want Gonzales Perjury...**
- 2. **Audio: Politics: Edwards and Cheney**
- 3. **Audio: Iraq: A GOP Revolt?**
- 4. **Audio: Campaign '07 - Obama...**
- 5. **Audio: Scooter Scoots**

Subscribe To Podcast **HIDE LIST**

Norman who? Few news organizations covered last week's Congressional Gold Medal ceremony for Borlaug, which was presided over by President Bush and the leadership of the House and Senate. An elderly agronomist doesn't make news, even when he is widely credited with saving the lives of 1 billion human beings worldwide, more than one in seven people on the planet.

Borlaug's success in feeding the world testifies to the difference a single person can make. But the obscurity of a man of such surpassing accomplishment is a reminder of our culture's

Video

- [U.S. News](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [World News](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Tech / Science](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Blogs Etc.](#)
- [Local News](#)
- [Newsweek](#)

- Multimedia**
- Most Popular**
- NBC NEWS**
- Today Show**
- Nightly News**
- Dateline NBC**

- Meet the Press**
- MSNBC TV**

• **Disable Fly-out**

SUBSCRIPTIONS



- [Subscribe](#)
- [Give a Gift](#)
- [Renew](#)
- [Change Address](#)
- [Classroom](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)



Norman who? Few news organizations covered last week's Congressional Gold Medal ceremony for Borlaug, which was presided over by President Bush and the leadership of the House and Senate. An elderly agronomist doesn't make news, even when he is widely credited with saving the lives of 1 billion human beings worldwide, more than one in seven people on the planet.

Borlaug's success in feeding the world testifies to the difference a single person can make. But the obscurity of a man of such surpassing accomplishment is a reminder of our culture's surpassing superficiality. Reading Walter Isaacson's terrific biography of Albert Einstein, I was struck by how famous Einstein was, long before his role in the atom bomb. Great scientists and humanitarians were once heroes and cover boys. No more. For Borlaug, still vital at 93, to win more notice, he would have to make his next trip to Africa in the company of Angelina Jolie.

The consequences of obscuring complex issues like agriculture are serious. Take the huge farm bill now nearing passage, a subject Borlaug knows a thing or two about. Because it seems boring and technical and unrelated to our busy urban lives, we aren't focused on how it relates directly to the environment, immigration, global poverty and the budget deficit, not to mention

POLITICS AUDIO AND VIDEO



Senators W Perjury Inv
July 26, 20
Democrats
perjury inve
Attorney co

MORE

1. [Senators Want Gonza](#)
2. [Audio: Politics: Edward](#)
3. [Audio: Iraq: A GOP R](#)
4. [Audio: Campaign '07](#)
5. [Audio: Scooter Scoots](#)

[Subscribe To Podcast](#)



NEW FEATURE

Get alerted to the latest from New columnists through your MSN or Messenger, your e-mail or your n

advertisement

SEARCH THE SITE

BOOKSHELF

The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the

Newsweek
Business Directory

Stop searching,
start finding!

- 401K Plans
- Accounting
- Advertising & Marketing
- Air Charter
- Air Travel
- Annuities
- Answering Services
- Antivirus / Antispy Solutions
- Apartment Loans
- Apartment Rentals
- Apartments
- Appliances
- Apply for Jobs

POWERED BY
 DIRECTORY

the highly subsidized high-fructose corn syrup we ingest every day. We can blame the mindless media for failing to keep us better informed about how \$95 billion a year is hijacked by a few powerful corporate interests. But we can also blame ourselves. It's all there on the Internet (or in books like Daniel Imhoff's breezy "Food Fight"), if we decide to get interested. But will we? Sometimes it seems the more we've got at our fingertips, the less that sticks in our minds.

Triumph of Hope

Click here to buy this book

JONATHAN ALTER

He Only Saved a Billion Peop

The Mayor's Veep Scenario

CONTINUED

1 | 2 | Next >

Full Article

Rate this story Low ★★★★★ High

Current rating: **4.5** by **5137** users • **View Top Rated stories**



Print this



Email this



Blog this



IM this

Sponsored Links

Investing in China

Learn How to Double Your Money in China Without Buying Chinese Stocks

www.DailyWealth.com/China_Report

Outsource the President

Just What America Needs Cheap and Convenient Democracy

www.apuforpresident.com

Is Hillary the 2008 JFK?

Share your Opinion at Helium.com Make a Difference!

www.Helium.com/USPolitics

The Evil of Extremism

Intolerance is Intolerable, Hate is Hated & Moderation is Militant

www.cedartree.net

advertisement



Hot Topics. Expert Advice.
Health news women want.

Check in with Her Body on Newsweek.com

Newsweek's Web-exclusive column from award-winning writers,
Barbara Kanrowitz and Pat Wingert.

Brought to you by \$



GARDASIL.
[Quadrivalent Human Pa
(Types 6, 11, 16, 18) Recom

[Subscribe to Newsweek — Lowest Rate Available](#)

[Add Newsweek RSS Feeds](#)

Mobile.newsweek.com



A CITY SLICKER
E-MAILED IN
THE STICKS.

THE NEW INSPIRON™ 1521 NOTEBOOK.
PRICE UPGRADE: 3GB Memory™ and 16GB™ hard drive.
\$749 Add help laser wireless for \$180
Some offers and S/B **HEY GET IT HERE**

Web

MSNBC

Make MSNBC Your Homepage | MSN Home | Hotmail |



Newsweek Home » Politics » Jonathan Alter

Newsweek Politics



Column / Between the Lines Jonathan Alter

[✉ • E-mail the author](#) | [📖 • Biography](#) | [📁 • More by the author](#)

Dami

Newsweek

Subscribe Now

Table of Contents

Periscope

My Turn

National News

Politics

World News

International Ed.

War in Iraq

Business

Enterprise

Tech & Science

Health

Society

Education

Entertainment

Tip Sheet

The Boomer Files

Columnists

Letters & Live Talks

Multimedia/Photos

Search Archives

Xtra.newsweek.com

He Only Saved a Billion People

< Prev | 1 | 2

Born poor in Iowa and turned down at first by the University of Minnesota, Borlaug brought his fingertips and mind together in rural Mexico in the 1940s and 1950s to develop a hybrid called "dwarf wheat" that tripled grain production there. Then, with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, he brought agronomists from around the world to northwest Mexico to learn his planting and soil conservation techniques. "They [academic and U.S. government critics] said I was nutty to think that it would work in different soil," Borlaug told me last week. The resulting "nuttness" led to what was arguably the greatest humanitarian accomplishment of the 20th century, the so-called Green Revolution. By 1965 he was dodging artillery shells in the Indo-Pakistan War but still managed to increase Indian output sevenfold.

Story continues below ↓

advertisement

CIMMYT LIBRARY

Video

U.S. News

Politics

World News

Business

Sports

Entertainment

Health

Tech / Science

Travel

Weather

Blogs Etc.

Local News

Newsweek

Multimedia

Most Popular

NBC NEWS

Today Show

Nightly News

Dateline NBC

Meet the Press

MSNBC TV

• Disable Fly-out

SUBSCRIPTIONS



- Subscribe
- Give a Gift
- Renew
- Change Address
- Classroom
- Subscriptions



The experts who said peasants would never change their centuries old ways were wrong. In the mid-1970s, Nobel in hand, Borlaug brought his approach to Communist China, where he arguably had his greatest success. In only a few years, his ideas—which go far beyond seed varieties—had spread around the world and disproved Malthusian doomsday scenarios like Paul Ehrlich's 1968 best seller "The Population Bomb." Now the Gates Foundation is helping extend his innovations to the one continent where famine remains a serious threat—Africa.

Borlaug, who launched the prestigious World Food Prize, has little patience for current agricultural policy in the developed world. "The claims for these subsidies today by the affluent nations are pretty silly," he says. So far, Congress isn't listening. The octopus-like farm bill does little to curb the ridiculous corporate welfare payments to a tiny number of wealthy (and often absentee) "farmers" who get more than \$1 million a year each for subsidized commodities that make our children obese. (Did you ever wonder why junk food is cheaper than nutritious food? Because it's taxpayer-funded).

Borlaug scoffs at the mania for organic food, which he proves with calm logic is unsuited to fight global hunger. (Dung, for instance, is an inefficient source of nitrogen.) And while he encourages energy-conscious people to "use all

POLITICS AUDIO AND VIDEO



Senators Want Perjury In
July 26, 20
Democrats perjury inve
Attorney co



MORE

1. Senators Want Gonza
2. Audio: Politics: Edward
3. Audio: Iraq: A Gop R
4. Audio: Campaign '07
5. Audio: Scooter Scoots

Subscribe To Podcast



NEW FEATURE

Get alerted to the latest from New columnists through your MSN or Messenger, your e-mail or your n

advertisement



SEARCH THE SITE:

BOOKSHELF

The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the

Newsweek
Business Directory
 Stop searching,
 start finding!

- 401K Plans
- Accounting
- Advertising & Marketing
- Air Charter
- Air Travel
- Annuities
- Answering Services
- Antivirus / Antispan Solutions
- Apartment Loans
- Apartment Rentals
- Apartments
- Appliances
- Apply for Jobs

POWERED BY
 DIRECTORY

the organic you can, especially on high-end crops like vegetables," he's convinced that paying more for organic is "a lot of nonsense." There's "no evidence the food is any different than that produced by chemical fertilizer."

Triumph of Hope
 Click here to buy this book

In 1960 about 60 percent of the world's people experienced some hunger every year. By 2000 that number was 14 percent, a remarkable achievement. But as Borlaug cautioned at the ceremony in his honor, that still leaves 850 million hungry men, women and children. They are waiting for the Norman Borlaugs of the future to make their mark, even if they aren't likely to get famous for it.

JONATHAN ALTER
He Only Saved a Billion Peop
 The Mayor's Veep Scenario

© 2007 Newsweek, Inc. | [Subscribe to Newsweek](#)

< Prev | 1 | 2

Full Article

Rate this story Low ★★★★★ High

Current rating: **4.5** by **5137** users • [View Top Rated stories](#)



Print this



Email this



Blog this



IM this

MOST RECENT COMMENTS (6 COMMENTS IN TOTAL)

Posted By: Phil Haze (7/26/2007 12:42:54 AM)

I do blame the media. They receive press releases about the President's itinery each day. They chose...

[Reply to Comment](#)

Posted By: Carla O'Neill (7/25/2007 11:20:01 PM)

I will agree with everyone on the greatness of this story and man,and the minor acknowledgement he received....

[Reply to Comment](#)

Posted By: Hope Morgan (7/25/2007 6:19:56 PM)

Thank you for writing an article about something REAL. Mr.Borlaug is an amazing man who has done some...

[Reply to Comment](#)

[Read All Comments](#)