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# Intriguing people for January 20, 2010

By Jay Kernis, CNN

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Republican Senator-elect featured in 1982 Cosmo centerfold

President Obama marks one year since inauguration

'American Idol' contestant gaining online fame

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**Editor's note:** Every weekday, CNN focuses on a handful of people in the news. This is a chance to find out more about what they've done -- good or bad -- what they've said or what they believe, and why we think they're intriguing.

### (CNN) -- Scott Brown

The Republican Senator-elect handed President Obama the first defeat of his presidency. After trailing by double digits a little more than a week ago, yesterday Brown beat Democrat Martha Coakley in the race to fill the late Ted Kennedy's Senate seat. No Republican had won a U.S. Senate race in Massachusetts since 1972. Brown, a 50-year-old state senator, campaigned as the pickup truck-driving candidate, capitalizing on voter frustrations and vowing to send Obama's health care bill "back to its drawing board." The GOP win in Tuesday's special election means that Democrats have lost their 60-seat, filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, jeopardizing much of Obama's agenda, including health care reform. "He's branded himself brilliantly. He has run as the people's senator," said Jennifer Donahue, a political analyst and contributor to The Huffington Post. Brown, a lieutenant colonel in the Massachusetts National Guard, is well-prepared for life in Washington. As a 22-year-old law student at Boston College, he won Cosmopolitan magazine's "America's Sexiest Man" contest, appearing nude in the June 1982 issue. A Cosmo Web columnist wrote, "Compared to some men in the GOP, this politician looks pretty damn good for his age." A Washington Post headline dubbed Brown "Sen. Beefcake."

[Cosmopolitan: Senator-elect is magazine centerfold](#)

### Barack Obama

President Obama launched his presidency before an estimated 1.5 million people on the National Mall one year ago today with somber yet confident tones, saying the country will overcome its serious economic and international challenges. "Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real," Obama said in his January 20, 2009, inaugural address. "They are serious, and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met." Among the serious challenges: a crippling recession, millions of people out of work, fighting terrorism at home and abroad, immigration reform and passing health care legislation. According to a CNN Poll of Polls, Obama's approval rating when he took office was 65 percent. Today, it's 51 percent.

[CNN Political Ticker: Obama approval at 51 percent at one-year mark](#)

### Sarah Wallace

The 24-year-old midwife from Canada moved to Jacmel, Haiti, in 2008 with the hopes of building a maternity center and orphanage. The Edmonton Journal reports that the port city of 40,000 people is a shambles and Wallace has been sleeping outside, distributing food or driving injured people to get medical help. In emails to the Canadian newspaper, she has been describing her experiences: "Broken houses; people sitting outside their homes waiting for the word that it's all over; people hysterically crying because of lost ones; dead people on the street or in the backs of trucks," she says. "I have asked if the U.N. has organized anything for children who have lost their parents, but nothing has been set up yet. I think all orphaned children are probably still in the care of neighbors, relatives or strangers." After two visits to Haiti as a teenager, Wallace decided to rent a house with money she had earned as a golf course maintenance worker in Canada and with funds that friends and family had sent her. At the house, she taught "traditional Haitian midwives skills to give babies born in their care a better chance." Wallace also

registered a charity in Haiti called Olive Tree Projects.

[Edmonton Journal: Midwife says quake is a reason to stay in Haiti](#)

[Olive Tree Projects Web site](#)

### **Tim Tebow**

Focus on the Family has announced that it has purchased its first Super Bowl ad to air February 7 during CBS Sports' coverage. According to the organization's Web site, the commercial will feature Tebow, a University of Florida football player and Heisman Trophy winner, and his mother, Pam, sharing "a personal story centered on the theme of Celebrate Family, Celebrate Life." Pam Tebow was pregnant in 1987 and became sick during a mission trip to the Philippines. She ignored doctors' recommendation to abort her fifth child and gave birth to Tim, who grew up to become one of the nation's most-beloved college football players. TNS Media Intelligence reports that a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl costs between \$2.5 million and \$2.8 million. Jim Daly, president and CEO of Focus on the Family, said the funds came from "very generous and committed friends" who donated specifically to support the project.

[CNNMoney: Focus on the Family buys Super Bowl ad](#)

### **Larry Platt**

A 62-year-old's rhythmic fashion review has become the Internet's first viral sensation of the new decade. "Pants on the Ground," an atonal and repetitive condemnation of baggy jeans by "General" Larry Platt of Atlanta, Georgia, capped last Wednesday's episode of "American Idol." In less than a week, the performance has hit the two magic millions of online fame -- more than 1 million fans on Facebook and 1 million-plus views on YouTube. Way more than 1 million views, in fact. As of Tuesday afternoon, several versions of "Pants on the Ground" had together tallied somewhere around 5 million clicks on YouTube. The most popular had more than 1.8 million views, and another had about 1.5 million. The military veteran said there are plans to record the song -- which consists mostly of the lyrics -- "Pants on the ground, pants on the ground, Looking like a fool with your pants on the ground."

[CNN: 'Pants on the Ground' first viral video of 2010](#)

### **What makes a person intriguing?**

*There are people who enter the news cycle every day because their actions or decisions are new, important or different. Others are in the news because they are the ones those decisions affect. And there are a number of people who are so famous or controversial that anything they say or do becomes news.*

*Some of these people do what we expect of them: They run for office, pass legislation, start a business, get hired or fired, commit a crime, make an arrest, get in accidents, hit a home run, overthrow a government, fight wars, sue an opponent, put out fires, prepare for hurricanes and cavort with people other than their spouses. They do make news, but the action is usually more important than who is involved in the story.*

*But every day, there are a number of people who become fascinating to us -- by virtue of their character, how they reached their decision, how they behaved under pressure or because of the remarkable circumstances surrounding the event they are involved in.*

*They arouse our curiosity. We hear about them and want to know more. What they have done or said stimulates conversations across the country. At times, there is even a mystery about them. What they have done may be unique, heroic, cowardly or ghastly, but they capture our imaginations. We want to know what makes them tick, why they believe what they do, and why they did what they did. They intrigue us.*

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