

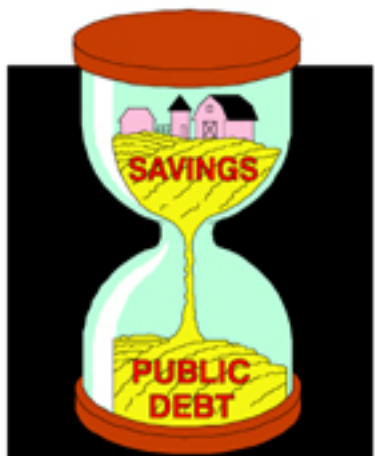
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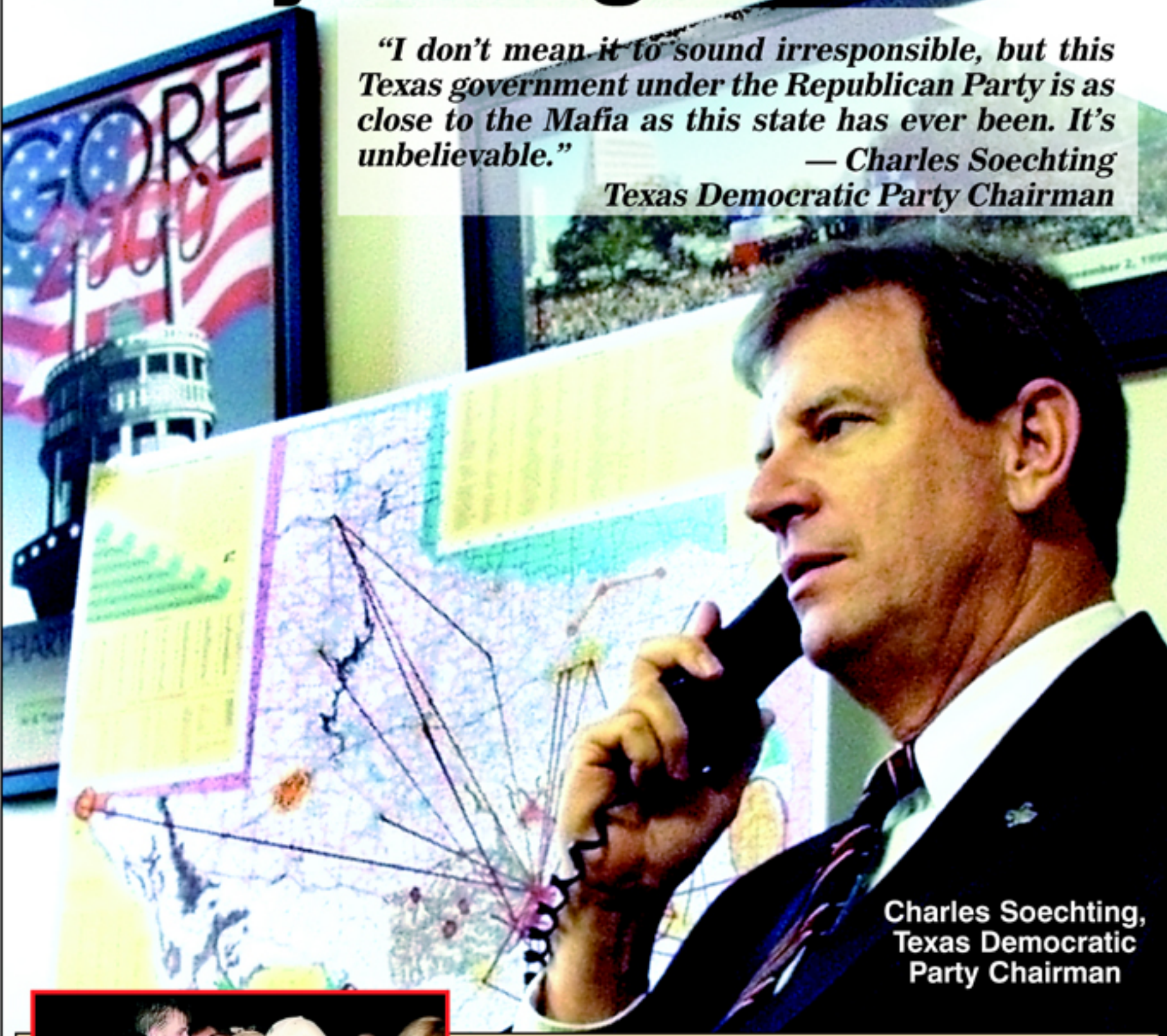
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*"I don't mean it to sound irresponsible, but this Texas government under the Republican Party is as close to the Mafia as this state has ever been. It's unbelievable."*  
— Charles Soechting  
Texas Democratic Party Chairman



Charles Soechting, Texas Democratic Party Chairman



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Story, Photos Inside

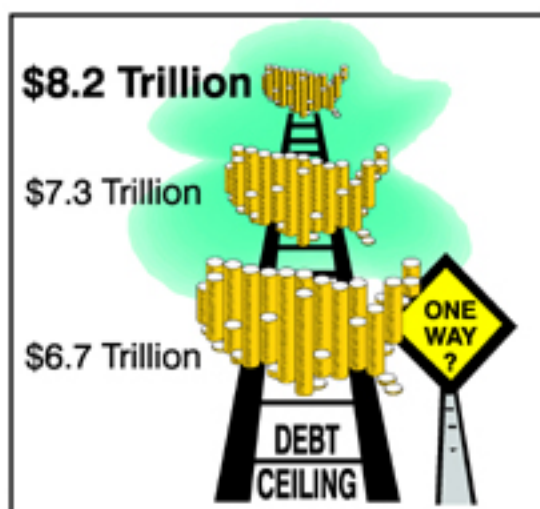
TROPHY TIME was shared by the members of the Crawford Pirates after their dramatic double-overtime win against the Cisco Lobos last Friday night at Tarleton Memorial Stadium in Stephenville.  
— Photo By Stephen Cook

# U.S. Debt Ceiling Raised By \$800 Billion

WASHINGTON — While in transit to an economic summit meeting in Chile, President Bush on Friday signed legislation raising the U.S. debt ceiling by \$800 billion.

The House of Representatives approved the measure after debate last Thursday on a highly partisan 208-204 vote. The Senate had earlier approved raising the debt limit to \$8.184 trillion on a 52-44 vote.

The higher limit allows the U.S. government to issue payments owed to investors in government securities and to beneficiaries of Social Security, among other programs. The U.S. Treasury had told Congress that approval was a necessity by Thursday to avoid governmental defaults, since the government last month had reached the



limit set by Congress on the Treasury's ability to borrow.

In the interim, Treasury officials had moved money among government

pension funds, canceled the sale of state and local governmental securities, and postponed an auction of four-week bills.

This was the third increase in the debt ceiling since President Bush took office. In 2000 there had been a federal surplus of \$237 billion.

President Bush commended Congress for approving the debt ceiling increase. According to a written statement by the White House, "Passage of this legislation was important to protect the full faith and credit of the United States."

Arguing in favor of the increase was Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), who explained that the increased authority to borrow would allow the government to pay Social Security benefits and its

other bills.

Rep. Charles Stenholm (D-Texas) who was defeated in the November election but is known as a hawk when it comes to debt, offered legislation on behalf of the Democrats that would provide some short-term relief, but allow the new legislature to take up the debt problem again in the spring.

Democrats have argued that the debt is a direct result of Republicans tax cuts and lack of a desire to adopt a pay-as-you-go policy.

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-New York) expressed outrage at the attempt to put the country in deeper debt. "Don't get us involved in any more debt unless you have some kind of a cockamamie plan to get us out of the debt you put us in," he said.

## GOP Loosens Party Rules To Keep House Leader In Office If Indicted

CRAWFORD — House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Sugarland) can sleep a little more soundly after U.S. House Republicans approved a change to their own rules last Wednesday in Washington that could let DeLay keep his leadership post if he's indicted by a grand jury.

In closed session and without issuing a vote count, the House Republican Conference ruled that a party committee would review any felony indictment of a party leader and would recommend whether the leader should be removed from office.

The old rules required House party leaders and heads of various committees to vacate a member's seat if indicted for a felony. The new rule still would automatically allow for the removal of a member from Republican

membership convicted of a felony.

The Democrats are raising issue with the GOP's internal rule change because a Travis County grand jury in Austin is currently investigating state political corruption charges related to the 2002 legislative elections. Republican wins in those races paved the way for a congressional redistricting plan in Texas that enabled the GOP to pick up five U.S. House seats.

In addition to DeLay's three associates under indictment in Travis County, eight corporations have been charged in the probe of alleged campaign finance law violations.

There's no indication, only speculation, that DeLay will be indicted by a Travis County grand jury in the probe led by longtime District Attorney Ronnie Earle.

DeLay has called the probe a partisan attack. A Democrat and former member of the Texas Legislature, Earle has noted that he has prosecuted four Republicans and 12 Democrats during his career.

Earle said that although the Republican rules change will have no effect on his investigation, the public should be aghast to see their leaders substitute their judgment for that of the law enforcement process.

The leader of House Democrats, California's Nancy Pelosi, said the rule change shows Republicans "simply do not care if their leaders are ethical."

In the last few months, DeLay has been rebuked three times for alleged unethical conduct by the Republican-led House Ethics Committee.

## President Bush Yet To Appoint, Nominate Democrat To Cabinet Post

CRAWFORD — With speculation as to the appointment of at least one Democrat, President Bush has tapped four longtime loyalists to Cabinet posts for his second term of office, an act which so far has not reflected his promise of bipartisanship made soon after the Nov. 2 election.

The recently announced personnel changes come mainly from some of the president's closest confidants from the White House as well as from his time as Texas governor.

President Bush named national security advisor Condoleezza Rice to be his

nominee for Secretary of State to replace Colin L. Powell; domestic policy advisor Margaret Spellings in place of Education Secretary Rod Paige; White House counsel Alberto R. Gonzales to succeed Attorney General John Ashcroft.

All four of President Bush's high-level nominees or appointees have been with his administration since the start of his first term four years ago, and three even longer.

It has been reported that President Bush could offer a Cabinet position to a Democrat, such as moderate Sen. Ben Nelson of Ne-

braska.

The list of likely replacements for other Cabinet officials who might leave include Medicare chief Mark B. McClellan for Health and Human Services in place of Tommy G. Thompson; Homeland security advisor Frances Townsend to succeed Tom Ridge; economic advisor Stephen Friedman to replace U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick.

Of recent two-term presidents, Richard Nixon's second-term Cabinet had the most new members at nine, compared with President George W. Bush's six thus far.



From the Pixar animation studio comes an action comedy about defunct superheroes. Bob Parr used to be "Mr. Incredible", a superhero with extraordinary strength who saved lives on a daily basis. But now, fifteen years later, Bob is retired to the suburbs in a government protection program with his superhero wife and three kids. In a boring job and out of shape, Bob is itching to get back into action. Finally, his chance comes when he receives a mysterious call from a remote island, and a voice from the past has a top-secret assignment for him.

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# RECAPTURING TEXAS

## Texas Democratic Chairman Ready To Fight

### Exclusive Iconoclast Interview With Charles Soechting

AUSTIN — Texas Democratic Party Chairman Charles Soechting, 54, is still cashing in on light-hearted bets — i.e. free lunches — he won from friends concerning the outcome of the Texas House elections, three weeks after the Nov. 2 general election.

It's these tiniest of rewards that seem to fuel his intensity to restore focus and drive into the TDP which had waned in the 1990s to serve the voters of Texas an alternative to the GOP. "We're making this party more accountable than it's ever been to the people of Texas," he said.

The spark of this new accountability is a 5th-generation German-Texan who grew up in San Marcos. Up until month ago, Soechting lived about five blocks from where he grew up, six miles from where his great-great grandfather, Friedrich Heinrich Andreas Soechting, first settled in Texas in 1850s.

"I love being in a small town where my kids are known as Charlie's kids and I was known



Charles Soechting

as Elwood's boy," said Soechting (pronounced like "intersecting"), "but I'm the type that thinks the world is bigger than a small town."

Right out of high school, he joined the Merchant Marines and learned first hand what it meant to have a "good union," he said. After a very "unspec-

tacular" first semester at Southwest Texas State, he enrolled at Wharton County Junior College, he said.

"Most people didn't know you can make that many hours of F's in one semester. I thought that if you quit going to classes, they'd give you an incomplete," he joked.

Four weeks after graduating from Wharton, he joined the Texas Department of Public Safety where he served as a highway patrolman for three years. While there, he became one of the first-ever minority recruiters in the nation during "changing times" in the early 1970s.

"If I had anything growing up with my dad and grandparents, it was that we didn't know racial boundaries in San Marcos. Everyone pretty much got along in those day. I can't remember people not getting along," he said.

As he worked for the DPS, Soechting took college classes and got his degree from Southwest Texas State. What tipped him off to be a lawyer was watching a bungling young lawyer in Austin handle a traffic court case involving Officer Soechting in Austin. "The lawyer was the worst lawyer I had ever seen. He was driving a brand new Mercedes convertible, and I thought, 'Well, if a bad lawyer can make money, then how much could a good lawyer make?' I learned later that probably his parents gave that car to him."

Soechting's days driving sports cars have been over since 1988. Today he drives a four door Chevy pick-up.

Through law school at South Texas College of Law in Houston, he was a bailiff in a sheriff's office. "It was a great job for someone who was in law school. I also saw some of the best lawyers there ever were," he said.

Soechting cut his political teeth in law school working for a Democratic judge, Robert Lowery, the first juvenile judge in Texas. "If there is anything that is going to reinforce your Democratic leanings, it's looking at kids who have not had a shot in life, other than maybe a hit across their face by their parents," he said.

Since 1981, Soechting has been a private practice attorney, and has managed the San Marcos office of the Houston based law firm of O'Quinn,

Laminack & Pirtle. In 1982, he was the Hays County Coordinator for the Lloyd Bentsen campaign.

After chairing the Hayes County Democratic Party for two years, he served as TDP General Counsel for two years because, as he said, he had a known-record of defending Democrats from frivolous lawsuits filed by Republicans.

To serve out the remaining term of outgoing chair Molly Beth Malcolm, Soechting was elected on the second ballot (34 of 62) as the interim chairman of the Texas Democratic Party in 2002. He beat out five contenders including his friend Garry Mauro, former land commissioner and former gubernatorial candidate against George W. Bush.

Mauro reportedly stormed out of the meeting, but now "when I have a conflict — I just can't be at two places — I'll call, and Garry will go for me. It's hard to beat that," Soechting said. "He's a good guy and a good friend. I hated the devil that we ran against each other."

Soechting was reelected chairman in June 2004 from the floor of the state convention. "Roughly 9,000 people said yes and three or four said no," from the greatest number of delegates, about 10,000, to attend the convention in the last three election cycles.

At his office at Texas Democratic Party's headquarters in Austin last Wednesday, exactly a week before his prostate surgery, Chairman Soechting sat down with the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST'S Nathan Diebenow to talk about the power of the "ATM States," the four bittersweet U.S. Congressional races in Texas, and the bite the Texas Republicans will feel come the next election in two years.

SOECHTING: You probably want to know what I think about George W. Bush, huh?

ICONOCLAST: Okay, what do you think about George W. Bush?

SOECHTING: It's a sad thing because the very simple fact is John Kerry is a better  
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• **SOECHTING: 'Bush is still the most overated thing since number two pine.'**

Continued From Previous Page

man than George Bush. I can't even say that George Bush stole this election because he didn't steal it this time. They got a few million more voters.

**"I think I'm the meanest chairman they've ever had."**

— Charles Soechting

Bush is still the most overated thing since number two yellow pine. Anybody who knows whoever built with number two yellow pine knows what I'm talking about. He is just not as capable or as competent as he was thought to be at first, and I think that the fact that you've got a shake up of monumental proportions in that cabinet right now is some evidence of that. I don't think he's replaced any of them with any better than he had to start with. The notable exception is General Colin Powell who by all accounts is a very decent man.

ICONOCLAST: But he's more decent now that he's out of there, right?

SOECHTING: Well, I don't think he ever lied to the American people. I think he was given bad information, but I think that George Bush has no problems looking into the camera and telling the biggest lie he can. It just doesn't seem to matter to him. He's overrated and surrounded by some awful, mean, narrow-minded, vicious people, and unfortunately, he relies on them for his advice. Hell, so what do you get? A mean, nasty, narrow-minded, vicious president that smiles at you while he lies to you, and he's screwing the American people by and large. I mean, I give him credit. He is truly taking care of the richest people of this country and doing well at that.

ICONOCLAST: The real question is what happened to John Kerry's campaign for president? Do you think that Kerry should have come here to Texas to campaign more?

SOECHTING: Absolutely! He should have campaigned

**"I think if you're not careful, you create battleground states. You've got to treat every state like it's a battle worth fighting."**

— Charles Soechting

here at least about once every five or six weeks. He would have made Bush spend money in Texas. Bush got a free ride. He didn't deserve it either.

You know, I've got prostate cancer, and I'm moving my surgery up from Dec. 2 to Nov.

24, so I can be in Orlando, Fla., to attend the Association of State Democratic Chairs conference on Jan. 10-11. We're going to have a lot of impact and input because we're one of the ATM states — Texas, California and New York.

We're going to show what not reinvesting in a blue state can cause to happen. Texas is already turning into a Republican state, and we're trying to turn it back. California and New York, if they are not careful, if they disregard them like Texas this year, it won't be good. In this election cycle, I believe Texans contributed around \$15 million to out-of-state campaigns. No Democratic money was spent in those states. It all went to Iowa, Illinois, and the like. The last time the DNC spent any money in Texas was in 1980. I think if you're not careful, you create battleground states. You've got to treat every state like it's a battle worth fighting, I believe. You win few battles by not fighting. You

**"I wouldn't be surprised if we saw a bunch of Republicans get indicted before this is all over with."**

— Charles Soechting

never win a battle by not fighting.

I want to make it real clear, I'm not mad at the DNC. I like the DNC. We partner on deals. I certainly don't begrudge anybody who is giving money to the national campaigns, but I think if the national campaign is going to get resources from the state of Texas, that the voters of the state of Texas are sure entitled to the candidates showing up. John Kerry came to Texas on April 22. John Edwards was a dream candidate. He was very good about coming to Texas. He was the keynote speaker at the state Democratic convention. He's a great man, and I'm very hopeful that he's going to be the next candidate for president.

I think you're going to see a different type of DNC in the future. I'm proud to serve with them. They're good people. And as you know, we're in the process of electing a new DNC chair. I've

already started getting phone calls from all the top contenders because they know that we vote in a lot of delegates from Texas.

ICONOCLAST: So which way are your delegates going to be voting?



THE STAFF OF THE TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY includes (from left) Charles Soechting, Loi Taylor, Linda Leff, David Parney, Mary Blumberg, Brian Pendleton, Chrissy Mobin, Ken Bailey, Muriah Celovsky, Shelley Smith, Evan Hicks, and Mike Lavigne.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

SOECHTING: I don't know. Dean is a pretty neat guy. All except for one little scream in Iowa, I've never seen anything about him that wasn't 100-percent normal. That one little nanosecond clip was played repeatedly to try to frame him. He's a good man. He's very good with the grassroots.

You've got Governor Bill Sack from Iowa, who is a friend of mine. I like him an awful lot. I'd be real, real happy with him, too. We're hearing that Ron Kirk might be running from Dallas, and I'm excited about that. I haven't heard from Ron, but I'd like to. I think that it's going to play out for the next two months as to who's in and who's out.

ICONOCLAST: Why isn't the Texas Presidential Election Primary closer to Super Tuesday in order to have Texans' voices heard more strongly in the election processes?

SOECHTING: Last year it was changed to a week after Super Tuesday. Ask the Republicans in the Legislature why because this time and before, they don't want people coming to Texas and talking bad about George W. Bush. I just think it's as simple as that. George Bush didn't want anyone to talk bad about him. I mean, when your entire presidency and your entire career is a big facade, it's important you try to preserve it as best you can.

ICONOCLAST: So it's possible to move the Texas primary?

SOECHTING: Oh, the Legislature can move it in a heart beat. I would challenge the new state rep that covers Crawford to step up to the plate and introduce legislation moving the primary closer to Super Tuesday.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think that these electronic voting machines ought to leave a paper trail for safety sake?

SOECHTING: Yes, but there ought to be some honest people running the companies that produce these machines.

I have no problem with electronic voting machines until there is a level of competence and integrity that we are far from having. Right now, I don't like them.

ICONOCLAST: What is your process for recruiting new candidates in Texas like? How does that work through this office, if it does?

SOECHTING: Oh, it does. I put out notes and memos to everyone in the field. Every county official, every elected official, and every Democrat will get one in the next several

months, and the newest one is going to say we've got another election cycle coming up in the next year and half from now — that's when it really starts in earnest in 2005 — so you have to start eight months from now to groom your candidates.

This last time around, I was told that we were crazy to think we were going to get 11 candidates to challenge. That's what a Democrat told me. We ended up getting 35 challengers. With that we got some that were obviously

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• **SOECHTING...From Previous Page**

stronger than others, but we got some really good candidates.

I think that [the candidate selection process] is a local issue, but tomorrow, I'm going to the Valley to meet with leaders I respect, and, maybe, I don't even get along with right now, but we all talk and figure out the things we did right and the things we did wrong and how we can change it.

For instance, one of my county chairmen down there says we need to work on more white turnout. And I agree with him. Our Hispanic and African-American constituencies vote very well, but we've got to somehow reach across the divide to that missing middle, like the people that it makes absolutely no economic sense to back the Republican Party. It makes absolutely no sense. They might as well go to Wal-Mart — because they have to go to Wal-Mart because Wal-Mart has driven their local merchants out of business — and buy a new hammer, which is probably made in a foreign country, and hit themselves on their head with it everyday because it makes as much economic sense for them to be backing the Republicans as it does hitting themselves with a hammer. It's crazy.

**ICONOCLAST:** What are the Texas Republicans doing that the Texas Democrats aren't in terms of reaching that "missing middle?"

**SOECHTING:** The Republicans have done a very good job to frame our party as being the party that doesn't like guns. You know, I spent the last three days on the deer lease in south Texas and had a great time. I would venture to say that I own more firearms than 99 percent of any Republican, and most Democrats I know do. It's just a false issue.

The same-sex marriage issue is a false issue. It was put into play only to polarize the nation, and I have to ask myself what kind of man — we come back to George Bush — would let something like that be framed or let people work for him that would promote that issue knowing that was not an issue anywhere until he thought to make it an issue.

Same-sex marriage has already been decided upon by the Texas Legislature. We don't need an amendment. George Bush has said he's in favor of civil unions. I don't know of any widespread effort anywhere to have same-sex marriage, but it's one that the Republican Party tries to make an issue.

I get along fine with Rs and Ds, but I just think that — when you get down to the social issues, the economic issues, the education issues —

if, in fact, these Republicans really believe some of the things they're saying, then someone took their brains out and put them in a pickle jar. You can't be using your brain and think that we don't need to have a strong public education system. I challenge Tom Craddick, David Dewherst, and Rick Perry to deny right now that they are not trying to privatize public education in the state of Texas. It's clear as glass. It's all about big bucks.

I don't mean it to sound irresponsible, but this Texas government under the Republican Party is as close to the Mafia as this state has ever been. It's unbelievable. They shake people down for money. Intimidate. The simple fact is these are the kind of guys that got beat up in high school, and they've got power now, and they use it very, very unfairly when it comes to people. The Democratic Party is lily white compared to this bunch.

God! They act like they are the only people that go to church. You know, that's simply not the case. There's a lot of us have faith, a very traditional faith, I might add. I was raised in the Southern Baptist church. My grandpa was a Southern Baptist preacher. I've been an Episcopalian for nearly 30 years. I still have my original confirmation prayer book that was given to me at the time of my confirmation, so I don't know why George Bush gets off because he's friends with frauds like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and I guess he and Jimmy Swaggert are good friends, but these are a bunch of financial frauds trying to make a fortune off God.

**ICONOCLAST:** What about the bigger races in Texas like Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and the like? Who is making noises about running for these offices?

**SOECHTING:** I had breakfast yesterday with a man that I know is going to be one of our statewide candidates in '06. Right now, when the Republicans gave us congressional redistricting, they gave us four candidates that are potential statewide candidates today. Look at men like Charlie Stenholm. Charlie forgot more about agriculture in the last 15 minutes than his opponent knew his entire life.

Obviously, there's going to be an ag commissioner race coming up. You've got men like Tom Ramsey, former state representative, that has indicated an interest in that job in the past. You've got land commissioners. You've got Attorney General. God knows Texas could use an honest attorney general. You've got Supreme Court race coming up. You've got Bruce Bell and Jim Turner, both very able lawyers who



**MAIL-OUT MADNESS** — Independently of their candidates, State Democratic Executive Committee paid for mail-out advertisements which were specifically formatted to fight against their Republican competition in selected races this last election cycle. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

have served in Congress very respectably. I have to wonder what they'll be looking at, so those four and others. Tony Sanchez has indicated that an interest in governor. And I'm sure he'll do his due diligence and make some decision.

There's no shortage of state candidates, and we're not going to have under my chairmanship, the kind of bloodbaths that both Democrats and Republicans have had in the past. We're not going to have the candidates go through such a tough primary that's divisive. We're going to have races that are going to be conducted with dignity and unity. I know I'm capable of that. I'm a pretty good lawyer. I have to admit that. If nothing else, I've got the bully pulpit as state chair now, and we can talk to people in a persuasive manner and explain to them that it's a whole lot better to go into this better united than divided. Republicans used to do that, but now, they're starting to eat their own.

**ICONOCLAST:** Tell me about how the Texas Democratic Party regained seats in the Texas House this last election.

**SOECHTING:** One of the biggest things we did this last legislative session was "Take Back Texas" which was the coordinating campaign run out of this office. We put a lot of effort into it.

First, the Republicans helped us all they could by generating some unbelievable news stories. I call it the "Craddick Corruption Cartel" because it is. You know you have the speaker of the house

going down, meeting people he doesn't know at breakfast and taking \$100,000 checks, saying he doesn't know what they were for, and he has a hard time understanding what's wrong with that?

What we did, for instance, Ray Allen was discovered running an illegal business out of his office. These mail-outs were specific to that race, but then, we had some mail pieces, no matter what district you were in, because the same group of fellas and ladies had taken this illegal money, in our opinion. We dropped their name on these, and they went out to different districts in the state. I think it was CAPITAL ONLINE magazine said it was

like guerrilla warfare. As they said, we offered no apologies and no withdraws. We just ran races like the Republicans have run races, and they have run nasty races. We just got in there and mixed it up this time, and they were kind of upset that they got slapped here and there.

Anyway, the piece where they really got hot about was "Tom DeLay & Talmadge Heflin — Together We Can ... Finish Off Texas Families."

**ICONOCLAST:** So what your office did was basically filled in the blanks in these mail-outs, changing the names of the Republican candidates in each district on the same

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## • SOECHTING...From Previous Page

mail out?

**SOECHTING:** Unless there were some specific stories, like this man had been the chairman of appropriations in the House for 22 years, Talmadge Heflin. He tried to steal that little baby there, that African-American boy. Now, of course, he's deciding on whether he wants to steal the election where he was beaten by Hubert Vo by 31 votes. And, of course, when he did something like this, ordinarily in the past, maybe he would have gotten a pass from the state party but not this year because when a man is busy trying to steal someone's baby, that's something the voters ought to know.

**ICONOCLAST:** Are you saying that the Republican Party didn't like what Heflin was doing either?

**SOECHTING:** No, they couldn't care less about it. I think that the district attorney down in Houston should have taken action against Talmadge Heflin because there was a question about whether the woman was his maid or his housekeeper, but he got on the witness stand, swore to God, and said, "She's a housekeeper No, I mean, a maid."

We ran truthful and honest campaigns that they just thought [Heflin's situation] was wrong. Everyone from Tom DeLay to the local candidates thought we were being too mean. DeLay, a man who can't even spell "ethics" — you can stick a Webster's Dictionary in front of his face, and he might find ethics, but he can't find it in his heart. He even came out and said that it was some of the meanest mail we had ever seen.

I think they've gotten a pass in years past where they didn't get hit as hard. Mike Haley once said that in years past, Martin Frost and Pete Laney kept the state party out of things as much as they could, but it said that the state party under Charles Soechting turned to Kelly Faro (Soechting's favorite advisor) and decided to have guerrilla warfare, which we did. The first time in 30 years we've had a net gain in House seats. The last time, my poor predecessor, she had to be here when we lost 16 seats. We had a net gain of one at the same time the Republicans were predicting to pick up 10.

I wouldn't be surprised if we saw a bunch of Republicans get indicted before this is all over with because you can't take the magnitude of the money taking, the arrogance with which they took it in complete disregard of campaign finance laws. If any

of them get indicted it's because they made a conscience decision, they wanted to go to jail. I mean, they just thought they were bulletproof. What's the three stages of intoxication? Invisible, bulletproof, and totally arrogant.

**ICONOCLAST:** What do you think about Tom Craddick's stance on Hubert Vo?

**SOECHTING:** I think it would be the craziest thing Tom Craddick has done to date because we all know Tom Craddick calls the shots and tells people what they can and can't do. I think it would be like taking a live hand-grenade and stuffing down the front of your shorts. It would make no sense. I would be shocked to see someone do it.

**ICONOCLAST:** Comments like that make me think you're the bulldog of the party. You kind of get Democrats going. Is that what the chairmanship is all about?

**SOECHTING:** I think I'm the meanest chairman they've ever had. I had one candidate at the state convention that was just — you have to understand I had back surgery right after the convention, so I was a little less than hurting. (smiles) There was no question. He would not stop grabbing a hold of me, wanting to talk. I kept telling him we would talk, and we did talk, but he wouldn't stop. Finally, I told him if he touched me one more time I'd strangle him.

My old predecessor Bob Slagle, known as the most congenial, affable, decent man, but an unbelievable shrewd politician took me aside. He said, "Now, Charlie, you're going to learn that if you threaten to strangle someone you have to do it with a smile on your face." I learned from Bob earlier on, you have to smile through a lot of this, but the fact is the state party has come alive for the first time in a long time.

**ICONOCLAST:** Going back to your roll at the TDP. How would you define your roll?

**SOECHTING:** My job is keep the message focused. It's not about me. It's truly not. It's about letting the people know — and I'm talking about all the people in the state — for instance, when we catch Tom Craddick not playing by the rules, when we catch Tom DeLay not playing by the rules, the list goes around. Once we catch these guys going out-of-bounds, it's my job to make sure the people in the state of Texas know about it. If I can say we've done one thing,



Charles Soechting with his law enforcement patches.

it's that we've done a great job at that.

This is a pretty big tent we have here in the Democratic Party. We try to make sure that all the different points of view get a fair hearing. We come up with what we hope is a cohesive and unified message. That's my main job. Today, I'm here. Tomorrow, I'm going to the Valley. Friday, I'll be in the Valley. Saturday, I'll be in San Antonio in the morning. Temple in the evening. Sunday at home. Monday, I don't have a clue. They usually tell me. What day is Monday next week? I've got to get ready for this surgery, so I have to take

*"If a criminal has the right to a lawyer than a kid has the right to a doctor, especially children of working parents."*

— Charles Soechting

a few days before that.

**ICONOCLAST:** What's the hardest part about running the Texas Democratic Party right now?

**SOECHTING:** The hardest part about the job is raising money right now, but it's getting better because people have been intimidated by the Republicans. There are lobbyists here in town that will tell you, probably off the record, that they've been told that if they get caught giving any money to a Democrat, their issues will never see a hearing, never see a floor vote. If there has ever been a time that politicians have misused their positions of power, it's been the Craddick administration. He and Rick Perry have absolutely shown that Texas government is the best you can buy. There's no question that it's for sale under these guys' leadership.

What I'm looking forward to is being out there for the next two years. That's how much longer I have in my term. I think our legislative program is going to push hard this time for restoration of CHIP. I mean,

if a criminal has the right to a lawyer than a kid has the right to a doctor, especially children of working parents because the Medicaid programs are going to pick up the absolute bottom, but see, if you look at the math the way the Republicans do math, they'll say, well, we're going to put these kids on Medicaid instead of CHIP. Who pays for Medicaid? You can't sit there and say and act like there's not an expense at all.

**ICONOCLAST:** How are the Democrats going to get those 150,000 children back into the Children's Health Insurance Program?

**SOECHTING:** The funding has always been in place. The problems is that the Republicans kicked the children off the rolls by tightening up the requirements so people don't qualify. The federal government's budget provides help to provide funding for this program. It's just whether you're willing enough and smart enough to take advantage of the resources that are available.

**ICONOCLAST:** Are the Democrats going to file legislation to loosen the eligibility requirements back to the way they were before?

**SOECHTING:** I think even the Republicans have realized that this was a gigantic blunder on their part. And I think that they are going to be smart enough to restore funding for it because the money is there to do it. Yes, we're going back to the old eligibility requirements to get these kids back in the program.

**ICONOCLAST:** What is the status on the congressional redistricting maps? The Supreme Court sent the maps back to the three judge panel to review.

**SOECHTING:** We'll have to update the evidence in light of what happened in this election, but I don't begin to dare predict what that panel is going to

do. I sat through the arguments and a big part of that trial. The judges, of course, can come to decisions based on what they perceive the evidence to be, but I would have had a hard time reaching the same conclusions two of those judges reached. It was a partisan deal. I come from that old school where I thought the facts and the evidence really mattered in a trial, and I guess the two judges in the majority really felt that's what the evidence showed them but apparently, this very radical Supreme Court and partisan in appearance thought they ought to have looked at the evidence in a different way. Whether they do or not, I have no idea.

**ICONOCLAST:** What can we expect out of this office in the next two years?

**SOECHTING:** I think you can pretty much expect that we'll be all over the place during the session trying to make sure that the Democrats, number one, vote their districts and number two, vote responsibly. I think there's no problem with that.

You know, one thing that happened after I got to be chair — I believe I was the first chair in party history to openly come out and endorse against incumbents, people who had stopped voting like Democrats and had taken up with Craddick. We were able to beat his chairman of county affairs, Glenn Lewis, his chairman of ways and means, Ron Wilson (of Houston), Roberto Gutierrez (of McAllen), Jaime Capelo (of Corpus Christi), Gabi Canales (of Alice). The people got rid of some really marginal Democrats, people who wouldn't know how to find their way to their district with a good road map and a GPS. They were taking care of themselves and not their districts. Those were people on Tom Craddick's leadership team. Now, we have a very reliable and known quantity of state reps. I'm real pleased with what we got. We've probably got some of the best state reps talent-wise this legislature has ever seen.

Let me ask you this, have you any luck with interviewing my counterpart?

**ICONOCLAST:** Honestly, I haven't even tried.

**SOECHTING:** You won't get it. She won't do it.

**ICONOCLAST:** Why is that?  
**SOECHTING:** She won't do it. I mean, she will not do an interview. Period. I've talked to all the political papers. They've tried and tried. I think you ought to call her and say just so you can say you called and asked for an interview. Be sure to tell her what paper you're with and she'll absolutely (cough).

# Researchers, Democrats Continue To Dispute Presidential Election Totals

CRAWFORD — In at least two states, Florida and Ohio, that unofficially went to President-Elect George W. Bush, the 2004 presidential election was still in dispute last week by university researchers and state party Democrats while another state released counts favoring a Bush victory.

Starting with the latter, Iowa's seven electoral votes will be marked into the Republican column for the first time since 1984 as Iowa Secretary of State Chet Culver released unofficial totals last Wednesday. President Bush won by a margin of 10,059, with 751,957 votes to 741,898 for Sen. John F. Kerry.

This defeat was decided by less than one percent of the 1.5 million ballots cast, however, compared to the last presidential election when the margin was more than double — Democrat Al Gore won by 4,144 votes in 2000.

Had Independent Ralph Nader gotten twice as many votes in Iowa than he did, 5,973 votes, he would have been a factor in the race.

Iowa's vote totals will be certified on Nov. 29 by the state's Executive Council, a panel of statewide elected officials.

## Florida

President George W. Bush may have been awarded 260,000 or more votes due to electronic voting machine irregularities from three Florida counties that have more voters registered as Democrats than Republicans, according to a report issued by a UC Berkeley research team.

Led by Sociology Professor Michael Hout, the research team called for an immediate investigation by Florida officials after disclosing their findings during a press conference last Thursday.

"Something went awry with electronic voting in Florida," said Hout, to PC WORLD magazine.

The team noted that President Bush gained votes in counties where electronic voting machines were used versus counties using traditional voting methods. They concluded that discrepancies this large or larger rarely arise by chance — the probability is less than 0.1 percent.

"The three counties where the voting anomalies were most prevalent were also the most heavily Democratic counties, not the [conservative] Dixiecrat counties you've all heard about before, but the more heavily Democratic

counties that used e-vote technology, including Broward, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade counties in order of magnitude," said Professor Hout, as reported by Buzzflash.com.

Although the irregularities account for between 130,000 and 260,000 votes, compensation of these votes will not give the state to Sen. Kerry, who lost by more than 377,000 votes.

"For the sake of all future elections involving electronic voting, someone needs to explain the statistical anomalies that we found in Florida. We're calling on officials in Florida to take up this task and to take action now," said Hout via Buzzflash.com.

## Ohio

The Ohio Democratic Party is set to battle in federal court for 155,000 provisional ballots saying that uniformed counting should be performed across the state and therefore might show the real winner.

Don McTigue, a Columbus lawyer who filed the lawsuit for the Ohio Democratic Party, said the Democrats have concerns that different standards are being applied from county to county, according to the CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER.

"Our action is not tied to some hope of changing the outcome of the election. We're being consistent with the Kerry campaign, and the

Democratic Party's interest in seeing all eligible ballots are counted," McTigue said via the PLAIN DEALER.

President Bush won Ohio with 136,000 votes more than Sen. Kerry, according to the unofficial tally. Kerry conceded that not enough outstanding votes exist to sway the election his way in the key battleground state.

Election officials in Ohio said last week that the vast majority of provisional ballots cast in Ohio were legitimate.

At the same time, election officials in Madison County found that about 2,600 ballots were double-counted, and two other counties have discov-

ered possible cases of people voting twice in the presidential election.

They voting errors are believed to be the fault of the poll workers mishandling ballots as well as giving wrong information about voting requirements with regard to absentee ballots.

## Washington State

Washington's secretary of state said last Wednesday that he would order a recount for the gubernatorial race this week in light of candidate Dino Rossi, 45, a Republican businessman and former state senator, up ahead by 261 votes. Under state law, a winner must be declared by Dec. 2.

# Blake Crowned Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo

HOUSTON — The first Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo queen pageant was held at the Hobby Hilton Hotel with the horsemanship portion at the Pasadena Rodeo arena.

The inaugural Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo queen who was appointed last year, Lacey Williams, ended her reign on Saturday night, Nov. 13, as she crowned the new Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo Michaelle Blake and the first ever Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo Teen queen Avery Gonzales in front of a gala event gathering.

Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo Michaelle Blake is a 19-year-old sophomore at Texas A&M University and is studying Biomedical Sciences where she has a 3.1 GPA and is on her way to entering the College of Veterinary Medicine. Blake is a native from Nacogdoches, Texas. Blake was active in 4H and Pony Club for 11 years, including the last two years as President and First Vice President, and the FFA for 4 years. Michaelle is the 2001 Greater Houston and Lone Star Quarter Horse Association Reining Circuit Champion, 2004 District 5 4-H Grand Champion Gelding.



THE NEW MISS HOUSTON-HARRIS COUNTY RODEO Michaelle Blake (left) and the first ever Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo Teen Queen Avery Gonzales (right) were crowned at the Hobby Hilton Hotel with the horsemanship portion at the Pasadena Rodeo arena.

Blake has also competed in the HLSR Quarter Horse Association Youth Reining and

the HLSR Paint Horse Association Youth Reining competitions placing in the top five

for the last three years. She also competes in the AQHYA World Horse Judging and Texas State 4-H Round up Horse. In the spring of this year she will be on the Texas A&M horse judging team.

Miss Houston-Harris County Rodeo Teen Avery Gonzales is an 18 year-old-senior at Groesbeck High School where she has a 4.1 GPA and anticipates graduating in May 2005. Currently she is also taking classes at Navarro College in Corsicana, but has her eye on Texas A&M University after high school graduation. She has helped her FFA chapter to grow and was the first from her chapter to qualify for State and served as it's 1st vice president. She has been in the National Junior Honor Society where she served as Vice President. Avery has volunteered for the THSRA Special Kids, Toys for Tots, and Waco Center for Youth Equestrian Program among others.

During the day and a half competition the contestants were judged in specific categories: horsemanship (riding ability and equine science knowledge), current events rodeo knowledge, appearance personality, and speech.

# Spanish Royals' Visit To Bush Ranch Marks Sign Of Friendlier Relations

CRAWFORD — In an effort to smooth over relations after disagreement on global anti-terrorism policies, the king and queen of Spain will stop at President Bush's ranch near Crawford for a short, private visit on Wednesday.

The Bush family plans to spend lunchtime with King Juan Carlos I and his wife,

Queen Sophia, before the royal couple leave for their home country later in the day.

The two countries have been sharing tense relations since Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero was elected last April. As promised by his election campaign, Zapatero withdrew troops from Iraq, a move that an-

gered the Bush administration.

Jose Maria Aznar, Zapatero's predecessor, was blamed by some for a terrorist attack on Spanish trains that killed 200 people days before the Spanish election.

The most recent diplomatic scuffle between Spain and the U.S. happened late last week

when six nations — Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, and Greece — refused to send troops to train Iraqi officers as a part of a broad security program.

All 26 NATO countries, however, agreed to help fund the training program, according to a State Department official via the Associated Press.

DATELINE:  
**Crawford**

Hometown of the President of the United States

**Pirates' Come-Back Kick Routes Loboes In 2nd OT**

— Crawford To Face Cooper Next Week —

CRAWFORD — The Crawford Pirates (12-0) came back to defeat the Cisco Loboes, 27-24, in a dramatic double-overtime match last Friday night at Tarleton Memorial Stadium in Stephenville.

Set up by runs by Derek Dumas and B.J. Christian, Shawn Fulwider's 24-yard field goal clinched the Pirates' chances of moving on to play Cooper at a site and time yet to be determined at presstime in the regional quarterfinal of the Class 2A playoffs next week.

Crawford make time out of 8:53 in regulation play to score two touchdowns to turn the game around. Cisco was up 17-3 in the final period until dodging the Lobo defenders, quarterback Lee Murphy connected with Dumas who received enough blocking to score from 58 yards out to slash the Lobo lead.

Stepping up again, Dumas snagged an interception on 4th and six from



**THREE-POINT DIFFERENCE** — Shawn Fulwider's 24-yard field goal clinched the Pirates' chances of moving on to play Cooper at a site and time yet to be determined at presstime in the regional quarterfinal of the Class 2A playoffs next week.

the Pirate 36 for a 64 yard touchdown. Jad Tawater ran it in for the two-point conversion.

In the first overtime, Christian blazed a 10-yard trail to put the team up 24-17, only to be countered by Cisco's 4th and 3 rush for

their next TD of the night.

A couple of key defensive plays helped the Pirates from disaster. Andrew Judy sacked the Lobo quarterback at a key moment in the second overtime by pushing the rival team out of field goal range, as demonstrated by its short attempt.

Cornerback Adam Murphy, near the end of the first half, knocked the ball away from the Lobo receiver before crossing the goal line, and Tanner Jacobs recovered the gall for a Pirate touchback.

Lee Murphy completed 14 of 19 pass attempts for 211 yards. Tawater received six passes for 75 yards.



**DEREK DUMAS (3)** escaped the Cisco Lobos last Friday night in Stephenville. During the game, he scored two touchdowns, one from a pass by Lee Murphy and another from an interception.

— Photo By Stephen Cook



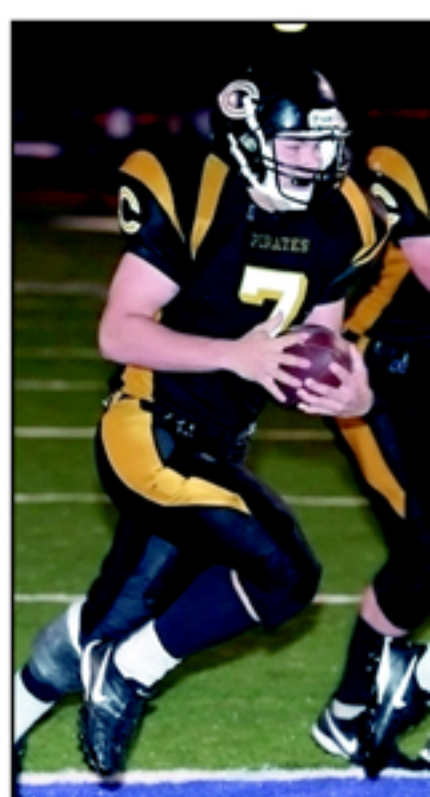
**LEE MURPHY (19)** completed 14 of 19 pass attempts for 211 yards and a touchdown against the Cisco Lobos in a playoff game last Friday night in Stephenville.

— Photo By Stephen Cook



**COACH ROBERT MURPHY** phones in the score, 27-24, of the Crawford Pirates (12-0) came-back win over the Cisco Loboes in a dramatic double-overtime match last Friday night at Tarleton Memorial Stadium in Stephenville.

— Photo By Stephen Cook



**JAD TAWATER (7)** ran it in for the two-point conversion after Derek Dumas' touchdown interception-run last Friday night against the Cisco Loboes in Stephenville.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

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**Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-6 p.m.  
Saturday 8 a.m.-3 p.m.**





## Crawford FFA

THE CRAWFORD FFA held its show on Saturday, Oct. 30. Some of the participants included (top, from left) first place goat winners, Lauren Berger, Jeff Holmes, Tyler Christensen, Kaitlyn Holmes, Bailey Witty; (middle, from left) Blake Berger, third place goat winner, Hunter Brown and Justin May, swine show, Nick Shelton, 7th and 9th place Heifer; (bottom, from left) Mathew Stevens, Sydney Christensen, grand champion rabbit, Wiley Sparks, judge, and Katie Farmer, reserve grand champion.



## Crawford FFA Members Run Show Smoothly

CLIFTON — The Crawford FFA members not only participated in the Crawford FFA Show on Saturday, Oct. 30, but they also were in charge of running the show, making sure that everything went smoothly. The following FFA members participated in the show:

• Heifers & Steers — Jonathan Weatley; Ryan Dillon, 3; Tyler Stevens; Dakota Smith, 7; Nick Shelton, 3; Austin Smith, 3;

Mathew Stevens; Laura Little, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3.

• Swine — Aleya Blacketter; Kevin Hejl, 3, 5; Reagan Hejl, 1, 3; Nathan Hejl, 2; Colton Anderson; Heather Garcia; Hunter Brown, 2, 2, 2, 4, 8, reserve cross; Kelby Noack, 5, 5, 7; Lane Brookshire; Justin May, 1, reserve champion hamp.

• Goats — Jeffrey Holmes, 1; Kaitlyn Holmes, 1, reserve champ; Sydney Christensen;

Tyler Christensen, 1; Calee Cargill; Pamela Klutts; Shae Doty, 4; Jessica Evert, 5; Lauren Berger, 1; Rachel Ochoa, 8; Bailey Witty, 1; Blake Berger, 5.

• Rabbits — Katie Farmer, reserve champion; Sidney Christensen, grand champion.

In the Heart of Texas Fair & Rodeo from Oct. 8-16, the following Crawford FFA members participated in the show:

• Heifers & Steers — Jonathan Weatley, 14; Ryan Dillon, 9; Tyler Stevens, 8; Dakota Smith, 7; Nick Shelton, 7, 9; Austin Smith, 3, 4; Mathew Stevens (Brahman, 2, 4; Beefmaster, 1, 2, 3, 4; Steer, 3).

• Swine — Aleya Blacketter, 8, 12, 14; Kevin Hejl, 5; Reagan Hejl, 7; Nathan Hejl, 5; Cooper Waits, 1, 2; Colton Anderson, 12, 11, 13; Heather Garcia, 15; Hunter Brown, 1, 7, 8; Kelby Noack, 15, 15; Landon Lippe, 5, 10; Lane Brookshire, 9; Justin May, 2.

• Goats — Austin Behringer, 7, 9, 14; Kaitlyn Holmes, 6, 11; Sydney Christensen, 1; Tyler Christensen, 5, 8; Derek Christensen, 9; Brian Christensen, 6, 12; Jessica Evert, 5; Lauren Berger, 1; Calee Cargill, 14; Shae Doty, 3, 6; Bailey Witty, 7, 9.

## Tickets On Sale For Home Tour Dec. 11

CRAWFORD — The Prairie School Association has set its annual Christmas Tour of Homes for Saturday, Dec. 11, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

All homes and businesses on the tour are located in

Crawford and the historic Prairie Chapel community.

Tickets are \$5 per person and may be obtained through the Prairie Chapel School Association, P.O. Box 94, Crawford, Texas 76638.

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**Crawford Girls' BASKETBALL**  
2004-2005  
Schedule  
**HIGH SCHOOL**

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TEAMS	TIME
Tuesday	Nov. 30	at Lorena	Lorena	9, JV, V	5:00, 6:15, 7:30
Thurs.-Sat.	Dec. 2-4	Grandview Tournament	Grandview	V	TBA
Thurs.-Sat.	Dec. 2-4	Gatesville JV Tournament	Gatesville	JV	TBA
Tuesday	Dec. 7	Lorena	Crawford	9th, JV, V	5:00, 6:15, 7:30
Thurs.-Sat.	Dec. 9-11	Crawford Tournament	Crawford	V	TBA
Thurs.-Sat.	Dec. 9-11	China Spring Tournament	China Spring	JV, 9	TBA
Tuesday	Dec. 14	at Goldthwaite	Goldthwaite	JV, V	4:30, 6:00
Saturday	Dec. 18	at Bosqueville	Bosqueville	JV, V	5:00, 6:30
Friday	Dec. 20	Valley Mills	Crawford	JV, V	5:00, 6:30
Tuesday	Dec. 21	Gatesville	Crawford	JV, V	5:00, 6:30
Wed.-Fri.	Dec. 29-31	Caprock Tournament	Lubbock	V	TBA
Tuesday	Jan. 4	Dublin	Dublin	JV, V	5:00, 6:30
Friday	Jan. 7	Moody	Crawford	9, JV, V	5:00, 6:15, 7:30
Tuesday	Jan. 11	at Clifton	Clifton	9, JV, V	5:00, 6:15, 7:30
Friday	Jan. 14	Troy	Crawford	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Tuesday	Jan. 18	McGregor	Crawford	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Friday	Jan. 21	at Bruceville-Eddy	Bruceville-Eddy	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Tuesday	Jan. 25	at Moody	Moody	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Friday	Jan. 28	Clifton	Crawford	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Tuesday	Feb. 1	at Troy	Troy	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Friday	Feb. 4	at McGregor	McGregor	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00
Tuesday	Feb. 8	Bruceville-Eddy	Crawford	JV, V, 9	5:00, 6:30, 8:00



**Crawford Girls' BASKETBALL**  
2004-2005  
Schedule  
**JUNIOR HIGH**

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TEAMS	TIME
Monday	Nov. 29	Troy	Troy	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Monday	Dec. 6	McGregor	McGregor	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Monday	Dec. 13	Bruceville-Eddy	Crawford	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Thursday	Jan. 6	Moody	Crawford	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Thursday	Jan. 13	Clifton	Clifton	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Thursday	Jan. 20	Troy	Crawford	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Thursday	Jan. 27	McGregor	Crawford	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00
Saturday	Jan. 29	Crawford Tourm	Crawford	7 Black, 8 Black	TBA
Thursday	Feb. 3	Bruceville-Eddy	Bruceville-Eddy	7Gold, 7Black, 8Gold, 8 Black	5:00



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**Christmas In The Park Set Sunday, Dec. 5**

CRAWFORD — Christmas In The Park will be held on Sunday, Dec. 5, at Tonkawa Park, starting at 6:30 p.m., sponsored by the Crawford Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.  
The Chamber also invites participants to purchase this year's Chamber ornament, a red French horn, and place it on the Christmas tree in the park.  
The engraved ornament costs \$25 for a small size and \$50 for a large size. The larger

ornament can be purchased in honor of, in memory of, and in appreciation of someone special.  
This year, the Chamber is also sponsoring a toy and special items drive for military families at Fort Hood. Donations can be dropped off at the Park on Dec. 5.  
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600-700 lb.	100-112	
700-800 lb.	97-103	
<b>No. 1 Heifers</b>		
under 300 lb.	135-166	Steady
300-400 lb.	115-141	
400-500 lb.	105-126	
500-600 lb.	100-112	
600-700 lbs.	95-106	
700-800 lbs.	92-99	
<b>Slaughter Cows</b>		
High Yielding	47 to 54	Steady
Low Yielding	37 to 44	
Fats	45 to 52	
Thin & Shelly	30 to 40	
<b>Packer Bulls (1250-2075 lb.)</b>		
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**Huckabee To Repair CES Pavement Summer 2005**

CRAWFORD — The Board of Trustees of the Crawford Independent School District was informed in regular session on Monday, Nov. 15, that Huckabee and Associates will repair the asphalt on the pavement at the elementary school during the summer of 2005 at no cost to the district.

A report was provided from Fugro Consultants to the board regarding the results of the elementary school pavement testing and their recommendation regarding the proposed method of repair.  
Supt. Kevin Noack and campus administrators also recently met with Mike King of Huckabee and Associates to discuss future project needs for the district.

Supt. Noack reported that the purchase of the house is moving forward, and also informed the board on the progress of the technology upgrade.

The board approved that the regular monthly board meeting be changed to the third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. during daylight savings time. The meeting time will change to 7:30 p.m. during the time change forward. The motion was made by Trustee Chuck Raley and seconded by Trustee Rick Williams.

The board approved the consent agenda as presented along with the following budget amendments: \$20,000 from 81-6600 to 36-6400; \$20,000 from 51-6400 to 81-6600, \$2,400 from 611-6300 to 23-6300, and \$6,400 from 51-6200 to 53-6300. The motion passed unanimously after Trustees Jeff Baize moved and Charles Raley seconded.

Supt. Noack informed the board that the holiday on Jan. 17, 2005, would be changed to Jan. 21, 2005, due to a band trip to Washington D.C.

General information was presented to the board regarding the current status of the school bus fleet.



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### Varsity Lady Pirates Lose To Groesbeck, 54-50

GROESBECK — The Crawford Lady Pirates Varsity lost to Groesbeck, 54-50, last Tuesday, Nov. 16, in Groesbeck. The team's record, as of deadline, was 1-1.

Alicia Turbeville led the team with 14 points, four assists, five rebounds, a steal, and a three-pointer. Kristen Campbell and Kara Blenden also had notable games against Groesbeck.

Campbell scored 11 points with two assists, 10 rebounds, a steal, a block and a three-pointer.

Blenden had eight rebounds, two points, two steals, an assist and a steal.

"We played better, but not well enough to beat a very good basketball team," said Coach Justin Shultz. "The future looks bright if we correct the mistakes we made against Groesbeck. Our Lady Pirates did complete with a lot of heart and effort."

Running up 16 points in the second quarter, the Lady Pirates cut Groesbeck's lead to two points before half-time. In the third quarter, Groesbeck out-shot Crawford by eight points, but the Lady Pirates drove back and scored 22 points in a dramatic loss, missing the win by two buckets.

In the team's first game of

the season, they defeated China Spring, 40-34, on Nov. 13.

Turbeville landed three three-pointers to lead the team in scoring with 13 points, nine rebounds, and two steals.

Campbell posted 10 points, two assists, three rebounds, and two steals. Jennifer Jones assisted four times and stole twice. Skyler Westerfeld grabbed seven rebounds, four points, and four stole balls. Blenden earned two points, six rebounds, and two blocks.

"We played an extremely hard fought battle," said Coach Shultz. "Both teams had several mistakes, but continued to play hard. It is always good to start the season with a win."

#### Junior Varsity

The Lady Pirates Junior Varsity (3-0) defeated China Spring, 66-30, last Thursday night in China Spring. The team kept the lead from the very start.

Karlie Dieterich (16), Brittany Dumas (11), Hope Talbert (12), and Brianna Maciel (15) all scored in the double digits.

Dieterich grabbed four rebounds and 11 steals. Dumas assisted once, rebounded four times, stole

• See LADY PIRATES, Page 16

## Lady Pirates Cross Country Team Places 6th At State

ROUND ROCK — The Crawford Lady Pirates Cross Country team took sixth place at the state cross country meet in Round Rock on Saturday, Nov. 13.

Shanna Lippe was the fastest Lady Pirate runner for the day reaching 22nd place with a time of 12:17.

Karlie Dieterich followed 21 second behind to

place 37th.

Tara McMullen placed 54th with a time of 12:55.

Alicia Turbeville placed 77th, 13:24; Shae Doty, 78th, 18:26; and Hope Talbert, 97th, 14:14.

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## The Young Marine Did His Job

As Uncle Hugh used to say, apologies are flies. Most of the time you're only sorry the other feller got mad, and the rest of the time you're just sorry you've still got such a low-down nature.

My first city editor told me never to write when I was mad.

But he never said anything about disgusted.

Right now there is a young Marine catching crap for trying to stay alive in a distant, dangerous place.

He shot an enemy soldier he believed was feigning death, and for that he stands before the mast.

Perhaps he shot a wounded enemy soldier; perhaps that wounded enemy soldier was unarmed.

We don't know, and he certainly didn't.

He didn't have time.

He just had time to stay alive.

It's time for a reality check: That was an enemy combatant. If he wiggles, put a round in him!

Nothing makes a human more dangerous than fear of imminent death, and if that same enemy combatant gets the chance, he will surely put one into you.

He's dead; you're alive, and that is how wars are won.

And lost.

"Atrocity" is a real world word.

This Marine doesn't live in the real world.

He lives in an atrocious world.

War itself is an atrocity. It is a sin. It is madness.

John Wayne is dead, and there ain't no rules but to stay alive.

We sent this young man into an offensive after telling the enemy we were coming. If this is a war worth winning why didn't we carpet bomb Fallujah in the secret dead of night? Is this city somehow different from Tokyo or Berlin?

Or Hanoi?

We told this Marine to be exclusive in his killing while engaging a foe bound by no humane prohibition. We pitted him against a fanaticism that turns its children into bombs, its innocents into hostages, it's dead into death traps, and murder into television programs.

And he so loved his country that he went.

We would prosecute such a man?

Now we blame the horror

### Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



of war on those we send to fight it?

And what is our leaders' reaction?

Ban the news from recounting what we order these young men to do.

Just turn off the camera, and it won't be real any more. Let's see who's on Letterman.

First we stopped showing the return of their dead bodies so we wouldn't have to think about the cost.

Then we convinced ourselves that it is traitorous to question the way we are fighting the war.

We want to believe that our prayers to bring our boys home safely do not call upon the other edge of that terrible swift sword to eviscerate someone else's boys, drive their families from their smoldering ruined homes and subject their countrymen to pestilence and starvation until they forsake their conscience-driven ideals and plead for peace over their children's broken bodies.

So we point our self-righteous fingers at a young man guilty of wanting to live, of defending his brothers in peril, because we want to believe in conscience-clear comfort that we are fighting a clean, righteous war, and that we are absolved of any share in what he did.

We did not need the camera to show us; whether we want to believe it, we all entered that room right behind him, saw what he saw, and ordered him through omission or commission to open fire.

And we ought to all stand with him through whatever hypocrisy awaits in those minds now only concerned with how his actions look on TV.

If you have the courage, write your congressman or senator and tell him to leave this kid alone. He's been through enough. Send him back to his unit, or, better yet, bring him home to begin the getting over. He's got nothing to be ashamed of, and only he knows what he needs to get over.

And in the unlikely event that young man should read this, *Semper Fi*, man.

Even if the rest of us aren't.



# Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

OP/ED

— Editorial —

## U.S. Children Become \$8.184 Trillion Slaves

Thanks to a Republican charged soul-selling last week, future children of the United States will find themselves enslaved by other countries. Raising the debt ceiling to \$8.184 trillion provides the ransom.

Actually, the future is now. This government's greed and cowardice has increased foreign interests' ability to dictate its American policy.

"It'll never happen," you might say. But it has, and history proves it.

Go back in time, way back, to 1997, when a clash of direct and indirect tax systems related to foreign trade resulted in a dispute between the United States and the European Union.

The problem? Border tax adjustments. Because of the complicated nature of the U.S. corporate income tax system, there was a dispute as to how much could be deducted from a U.S. product's price prior to exportation. America gave tax breaks to companies that exported more goods.

The European Union, in effect, sued through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and won. After all, the EU, even though it acts as one country in global organizations, still has 25 votes. America has one.

To comply with the WTO order, the U.S. Congress in 2000 created the Extraterritorial Income Exclusion Act (ETI), but in 2002 the WTO again said that was a prohibited export subsidy. The U.S. was facing imposition of more than \$4 billion in sanctions on its products if our government did not change our tax law.

The Republican leadership backed down and repealed the ETI regime. That measure, ironically hidden in the Jobs Creation Act of 2004, resulted in about a \$4.5 billion annual tax hike on export companies and weakened the value of the dollar.

American tax law was dictated from Europe. History lesson Number Two:

Back in mid-2001, U.S. regulators had just cleared the world's largest industrial merger, with General Electric buying out Honeywell International — a \$42 billion acquisition. However, due to concerns by the European Commission that the integration of GE's jet engines and Honeywell's avionics would lead to market dominance and deal a death blow to foreign competitors, the merger was killed by overseas regulators.

The U.S. gave in under economic pressure. Dictated to again.

Even American security is knuckling under to European pressure. This week the EU said they doubt they will comply with the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) requirement that airlines provide passenger

lists for security scrutiny, citing that the request violates too many European privacy laws. The TSA is expected to at least modify the requirement, if not drop it altogether, in fear of trade actions against the already weak U.S. airline industry.

Now, with China and Japan holding most of the notes on our vastly accumulating national debt, their ability to call in orders to America like a pizza delivery is almost ensured. Not only is cash due to be paid back, but side issues are the devaluation of the dollar, our decreased ability to borrow in the future should we really need it, and the havoc that the federal debt and foreign investment play on savings, encroaching our already huge current account deficit (the difference between a country's savings and its investments, now at \$166.2 billion).

Already foreign governments have told us to raise our interest rates so they can make more money. We have no choice but to listen.

Alan Greenspan last week told the European Banking Congress in Frankfurt, Germany that international investors will eventually "adjust their accumulation of dollar assets or, alternatively, seek higher dollar returns to offset concentration risk, elevating the cost of financing the U.S. current account deficit and rendering it increasingly less tenable."

The housing, real estate, and automobile markets are holding up the biggest pier under our sagging economy; higher interest rates will stagger all three.

Greenspan added: "Reducing the federal budget deficit (or preferably moving it to surplus) appears to be the most effective action that could be taken to augment domestic savings." Greenspan called for the need to significantly increase private saving in the United States, "finding policies that would elevate the personal saving rate from its current extraordinary low level."

The United States' record budget deficit is a key player and it will continue to swell, now that the Congress has raised the debt ceiling. They have invited a new round of job exportation. Dollars will flow to other countries as fewer dollars come into the United States.

We have not only invited our enemies to sit at our dinner table, we are letting them run the kitchen.

When the United States owes its financial life to foreign countries, they dictate our economic and perhaps even our political policies. That open window could extend foreign opportunity's reach into the lives of American companies and individuals. Decisions will no longer be ours to make. They will be made for us.





## Question: Did Money From Indian Casinos Fund Redistricting Efforts?

Some top Texas Republicans are sitting on pins and needles as they await the outcome of investigations into whether money donated to lobbyists close to Sen. Tom DeLay was used to fund recent redistricting efforts in the state and if those "donations" were laundered in the legislature.

Six Indian tribes saw more than \$66 million taken from their collective coffers to be spread as grease to improve their chances of being better heard in Washington. There are claims, however, that knowledge of the removal of their savings, or profits, was not well known by some individuals who should have known that funds were being withdrawn.

Several significant federal agencies are looking into the matter.

One question centers around whether certain casino operations were inappropriately shut down as part of a secret deal.

Word has it that some religious right groups were brought into a con game as catalysts and that a truckload of insiders knew what was going on but chose to keep their mouths shut since "dirty money" had made the rounds.



**THE CAPITOL RAT**  
CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM THE RATHOLE IN AUSTIN

# The Three Bears Go To Washington



Once upon a time there were three bears — a papa bear, a mama bear, and a baby bear.

Papa Bear had invested heavily in the stock market. He had become rich and had put aside several million dollars, but he didn't have a way to spend it in the forest. "I've got money," he said, "so I'll run for Congress." And he did.

His opponent was a wise four-legged creature that liked to scale mountains. The creature's campaign theme was "I'm baaaaaaaa-d, I'm fast, and I'm smart."

Papa Bear, feeling that he might lose the election, launched a barrage of Swift Goat ads and was eventually proclaimed the winner. It was only then that he realized he couldn't do all his representing from the forest. He asked Brother and Sister Bear how he could possibly handle business from home.

But his kinfolks said, "Bear, move away from there. They said, Washingtonie is the place you ought to be," so he loaded up the truck and moved to Dee Cee.

Papa Bear had a hard time in Congress. First, he was criticized for shedding on the furniture. Next, when asked whether he was a donkey or an elephant, he said, "No, sir, I'm a bear." Again, he was criticized, until members of the parties realized they needed his vote, so he became the target of the two-party lobbyist

effort, which he didn't mind, for his popularity among them grew.

Mama Bear was having troubles of her own. She didn't like the traffic and Baby Bear was constantly the subject of Show and Tell at school. The cub had found a friend, a little girl named Goldilocks, a bed-hopping, porridge-slopping glutton, who liked to break chairs by jumping on them.

Mama Bear was worried that Baby Bear would pick up some bad habits, but was glad that Baby Bear had found a chum.

Being new to Congress, Papa Bear sought counsel regarding protocol, which came in abundance.

First, he was told by a Democrat, "You must always vote against an issue first. Then, after the bill is revised, vote for it. That way, when you get back home and no matter who you talk to you can say in all honesty you cast a vote that your constituency will approve of, one way or the other."

A Republican Congressman quickly added, "That's called a Kerryism."

The Democrat scowled. The Republican offered this advice: "Get yourself a press secretary. That way you don't have to answer the hard questions, and if the PR guy happens to blunder on your behalf and it is embarrassingly discovered later, you can simply claim that he was misinformed. 'Misinformed' is a fa-

## The Trenchwalker

By W. Leon Smith



favorite governmental word these days.

"And, oh yes, never ever question the authenticity of the 9/11 attacks. It's not proper. I realize there is no way an airliner would ever fit in the hole made in the Pentagon, but some things are best left undiscussed. National security, you know. Wouldn't want to ruffle anyone's feathers."

The Democrat picked up on an earlier point, "Kerryism? The Republicans coined the word and the technique. They also call it flip-flopping, which is what happened when the Republican Party abandoned its ideals of fiscal responsibility and are now the biggest spenders known to man and beast."

"Wait," said the Republican, "that's not true. Our party is simply attempting to adjust the balance of wealth to correct a long-standing wrong. You see, those with wealth, like yourself, Congressman Bear, are best at determining how to invest it. The peons get what they deserve, which is usually very little. That's why God created the caste system. And never be mistaken, God

speaks to the Republican Party."

The Democrat was shaking his head. "The Republicans are well known for appointing their friends and business associates to high places. Just look at the vast majority of Bush's appointees; friends, business associates, and most importantly,

oil barons."

Now the Republican was shaking his head.

"We could argue all day," said the Republican, "but what it comes down to is that as a Congressman you are in an elite group and must maintain that stature."

"For you, my friend Mr. Bear, the most important thing to re-

member is that you should never visit a zoo, for obvious reasons. You see, the real world is a zoo and you wouldn't want to be mistaken for one of its inhabitants."

The bear departed, dazed. When he got home, he told Mama Bear what he had learned.

"So, you see, there apparently are two worlds, one real and one not. Right now, the Washington world is real; the other one is not."

Mama Bear had misgivings about what was said, fearing Papa Bear had been brainwashed.

"Here's how I am going to look at it," she finally said. "It's all part of the same world and, in a way, we are all part of the United States...."

"But Washington, D.C. is not a state. It is a state of mind."



**Ret. Gen. Colin Powell ...** for being the voice of sanity as Secretary of State in the Bush administration for four years. We're sorry you stepped down, but we understand why.

**Sen. Kip Averitt ...** for prefiling legislation to reimplement the Children's Health Insurance Program. Finally, a real compassionate conservative!

**The Ohio Democratic Party ...** for trying to set a legal precedent to make sure that all votes are counted properly with a standardized system other states can emulate.



**House Republican Conference ...** for throwing ethics out the window and allowing potential felons to continue to hold public office.

# MAILBAG

# ICONOCLAST

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

The pigeons are coming home to roost. Isn't it interesting that President Vladimir Putin of Russia now feels compelled to build his nuclear arsenal beyond its current capacity? Russia already had the ability to annihilate every country on Earth that might present a threat to it, except one — us. Why would an ally of ours feel so threatened? Could it be that the Bush administration's policy of marginalizing the rest of the world has confirmed the worst fears of even our closest friends?

Let's face it. The U.N. is the world's democracy, and the only forum many countries have to voice their foreign policy concerns. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the biggest fear much of the world had was that the sole remaining superpower would unilaterally impose its will. For four years, those fears have been growing as this administration has done everything in its power to de-legitimize the United Nations. With the departure of Colin Powell, the trend can only get worse.

What is to stop a new Cold War set in motion by the predictable response to our very simplistic approach to foreign affairs? This administration, with all its lip-service about promoting democracy has in fact thwarted democracy on a global scale and George Bush is too simple to see it. Stand by, America. Russia is only the beginning.

J.H., Kingsville, TX

Dear Editor:

Well, I can hardly believe it. A Bush win in the most important election in decades. It was a surprise because... 70% of the people I know voted for Kerry. So, how in the world did George win the election. And, why... didn't John Kerry insist on all votes being counted? Here we are ... going around the world telling others they should be a 'democracy' like us. But, how can you justify that? When... you don't count your total votes.

I think that people would be much more settled if they knew the votes had all been counted. But, the fact is that they were **not counted!!!** Kerry may have lost even if they had been counted... but, it is the principle of the the whole thing. We profess the belief in the idea that every vote counts. Which is poppycock!

I listened to a couple of people I know say that this was 'God's Will'. So, I asked them...

'how do you figure that?' The answer: "God doesn't like the way we have gotten away from the Bible and we are in the 'last days'. THE LAST DAYS???? What kind of logic is that? So, are we to believe that the world is coming to an end? This is totally negative and gloomy. And, who started this war in Iraq anyway? The 'Last Days Club'?" Ridiculous isn't it?

D.A., Missouri

Sir,

I certainly appreciate any newspaper that will print the truth in this day and time. I have cancelled the paper I used to subscribe to because there was little truth, and just copycat articles. It came out of Ft. Smith Arkansas.

I have been reading some of the letters, and I find it so disturbing to me, that a person could pick out a persons political party the minute they start to read it.

The Republicans are so full of hate and vile. Where does all of this come from. Well I guess when you can't think for yourself, you believe things that are told to you over and over.

You would think that they could be happy since they have all the power, and quit their whinning.

Perhaps we could just dream that this might happen. Don't hear all that hate and vile and venom from the other side.

K., Oklahoma

To The Editor:

I had subscribed to the Houston Chronicle for 36 years when I cancelled my subscription on the day they endorsed George W. Bush. Throughout all those years, the Chronicle rarely endorsed any candidate that I supported, but this Bush endorsement was the last straw. I started my subscription to the ICONOCLAST shortly after your endorsement of John Kerry, and I received my second issue this week.

This week's editorial alone made your paper worth my six-month subscription. How utterly refreshing to read a paper that tells the truth, regardless of the cost. Thank you for giving a lifelong Democrat in Houston a newspaper to look forward to each week. I'd love to read some editorials about the war in Iraq. I plan to continue my subscription when my six months runs out.

Thank you.

E.C., Houston

To The Editor:

A few years back, between journalism jobs in South

Texas, I spent roughly six months working as a Country-Western night club bouncer in Corpus Christi—and at the time it was the largest and busiest dance club in town. Far more handy with a pen and pad than my fists, I had to learn how to handle crowds and deal with angry drunks. It was a lesson in life that I'll never forget.

And what I learned from trying to hold together an anyways shaky peace in the midst of chaos is something that George W. Bush needs to figure out pretty damned fast: any mule can kick down a good barn, but it takes a skilled carpenter to build one. By this, I mean that anybody can start up a fight. But it's much tougher and requires far greater skills to keep a bunch of crazed people from shooting each other. This has obvious applications, namely—the Middle East.

I found out pretty fast in that swirling sea of people on a packed Saturday night that if you want to create pandemonium on a crowded dance floor, all you've got to do is hit somebody in the head with a beer bottle. That will pretty much do it every time.

Instead of hunting down Osama Bin Laden like a coon hunter with a truck full of howling dogs, when Bush ordered the American invasion of Iraq he was hitting that country in the head with a bottle—disrupting that delicate dance between countries in the Middle East. And just like in a busy dance hall, now all hell has broken loose—except George W. Bush and his bouncers don't know how to handle it. All politics—especially geopolitics and superpower military machinations—is local indeed.

After working as a reporter for more than a decade, I've learned a lot. But I learned more about people in that rowdy club—a six-month behavior boot-camp—than anywhere else.

On every Friday and Saturday night, especially in June and July, the booze ebbed and flowed like the Mustang Island tides. When the music was cranked up and the people started dancing and drinking, my job was to function as head of security overseeing the club and its five bars with three or four door personnel.

I always wore a Western suit, bolo tie and boots, and prowled the club all night long, scouting for trouble spots. I

usually didn't have trouble finding them. But my mission was always to try and talk my way through to a hard-headed drunk, resolving a problem without violence—bad for the club's reputation, after a while.

I could either solve the problem myself, or go to the back office and ask the manager for his take on something like—whether or not to kick out a surly but rich local VIP who was friends with the owner.

Israel comes to mind when I think of that situation—a risky one indeed for my job security. In our current context, Bush is the head bouncer and that rich, arrogant customer in the club is Israel—a cocky, mean drunk itching to start a major conflict. And when others complain? Bush looks the other way. Good for his job, but bad for the club.

Had Bush made an effort to be fair in his dealings with Yassar Arafat instead of completely ignoring him, the U.S. would have looked a lot better to many people all over the world. Instead, he called Arafat a terrorist while watching Israeli war crimes mount unchecked. Completely irresponsibly—the equivalent of a bouncer letting a friend shoot someone and throwing out someone else. Keeping the peace—international diplomacy—is an art and it requires great skill and experience. Sometimes you also need a lot of luck.

I remember one situation vividly, when a large group of German Navy sailors stormed into our club one calm week-night, and they were definitely intoxicated on all the charms of our establishment.

Late in the evening I was called upon to confront a certain Goliath petty officer in his early 20s, shouting and dancing without his shirt in the middle of the largest dance floor.

I was about six-feet tall and 180 pounds, and that raging sailor must have been about six-eight and 280. I was a tug boat going up against a battleship. Everyone winced as I tapped the fellow on the shoulder from behind, expecting him to hit me with his 16-inch guns. He couldn't understand English, and I couldn't speak German either. I motioned to him to come get a drink. Seeing that I was dressed respectably, like a manager, he followed to the nearest bar and I did buy him that drink—and a few more for good measure. He even put his shirt back on—an added bonus. Later, his buddies had to each take an arm or a leg and heave-ho him on back to the ship. But a major international incident was avoided. There must have been 150 of those German sailors in our club that night, all young and strong and ready for action. I had to en-

force our main rule—wearing clothes on the dance floor—but I also needed badly to avoid becoming a broken piece of furniture while doing it.

Thank God for Jack Daniels, and for knowing a little bit about handling people—by that time I was a seasoned veteran of about five months' experience.

George W. Bush knows a little about God, Jack Daniels, and a lot about luck. I think it's high time he learned something about how to deal with people in the real world—especially those who dislike and disagree with him and his often radical, always unyielding, policies. And I would like to state emphatically—though I've never held an elective office beyond that of high school rodeo club treasurer—that before any man or woman is administered the Oath of Office, he or she should be required to spend a few weeks working as a bouncer in a wild and rollicking Country-Western club. President-elects would learn a boatload about diplomacy at critical moments—basically, how to keep the peace when the world seems like a swirling sea of madness.

And with our world now filled with hotheads on all sides, with nuclear missiles aimed every which-a-ways in various countries, I'd say diplomacy and peace should be a priority—with swaggering false bravado escorted unceremoniously out into the parking lot—banned from the club forever.

J.F., Grandview, TX

To The Editor:

Electronic voting machines in Vanderburgh County now are undergoing both manufacturer audit and independent testing trying to determine that each person's vote was both accurately recorded and accurately tabulated. One could say, "We hope that these tests confirm this to be true." But I say, "These audits are only the bare minimum that should be done."

Nationwide, computer experts and software/hardware security specialists seriously doubt the validity of testing procedures for almost all of this new generation of voting machines. One independent testing lab simply omitted tests for the most critical feature of all — vulnerable entry points — stating "not reviewed" on their report, and proceeded to certify the machines. Federal Election Commission regulations require identification of possible methods of attack, but (the lab) listed "not applicable" as their response to that section of the test. When asked how tabulators accepted large numbers of "minus" votes during certi-

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# MAILBAG ICONOCLAST

LETTERS  
TO THE  
EDITOR

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

fication testing, the (lab) rep said he "didn't mention that in his report because the vendors don't like him to put anything negative" in reports.

Voting — the right to choose our representatives — is bedrock to our democracy. The very minimum expectation American citizens must hold is that every eligible voter have access to cast their ballot; that any mechanism recording their vote is unquestionably and un-failingly accurate; and that the vote then is tabulated correctly. Any process short of this minimum standard is, itself, suspect, and calls into question the credibility of the results.

T.S., Newburgh, IN

To The Editor:

No one argues that Colin Powell isn't a man of integrity. When Colin Powell speaks the truth is expected. His sincerity is not questioned. His facts are expected to be facts, not hyped spin. That's why when he gave his speech to the UN about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq it was taken as being generally true.

At the same time, it is also a recognized fact that Colin Powell is the odd boy out at the Bush frat-house. His words while spoken with conviction were his and, as was shown numerous times, not necessarily those of his neoconservative boss. His diplomatic, reasoned approach has constantly been pushed aside for the "might makes right" approach of the far right ideologues that dominate the Bush administration.

By accepting Colin Powell's resignation and replacing him with Condoleezza Rice, George Bush is trading credibility for certitude.

No one argues that Condoleezza Rice doesn't have the full faith and backing of George Bush. She is a confidante of Bush. Her neoconservative credentials are impeccable. The fact that she speaks for the Bush administration will not be in doubt.

All will immediately know that her words are those of the White House. And her diplomatic parties will be well served from soup to nuts and from Brahms to Brahms — a Brahms contemporary prehaps said it best — "a pedestal without a statue."

As such, Condoleezza Rice's new job is to front the Bush administration foreign policy positions to the world. In so doing, she will ride shotgun over the neoconservative philosophies that are replacing the tried and true method of "winning friends and influencing people" with "like it or lump it" diplo-

macy. "You're either with us or against us" is pretty self-explanatory.

The problem, of course, is she has no credibility. The whole world saw her spin away about WMDs last June on "Meet the Press" where her quote on the screen refuted what she had just said. For a short moment she was at a loss for words. We all know that her words have nothing to do with the truth but are all about PR.

So ... when Condoleezza Rice takes over management of the U.S. leadership of the world, she will do so with an iron fist and not a velvet glove nor even a velvet tongue. You don't need the truth when you have force. You don't need to be right when you don't admit you're ever wrong. You don't have to be conciliatory when you don't care what others think.

THE FORT WORTH STAR in its endorsement of Bush for president in October said that it did so because it thought that Bush would this time be the moderate he had claimed to be, the centrist that they thought they had endorsed in 2000. THE STAR was by no means the only newspaper that showed this same kind of naivete. It's about time that the United States wakes up to the fact that the Bush administration is radically to the right of center. It's about time that the United States realizes that past actions are a better predictor of the future than fairy stories from Bush loyalists.

The rest of the world already knows this. They have already come to grips with this reality. The fact that Condoleezza Rice is now going to be in charge of the State department is of no surprise to them.

"New blood!" "Bah Humbug!" The Bush Administration is quite happy with itself and sees no reason to change. Condoleezza Rice's nomination to be Secretary of State is simply further truth that it's going to be a cold four more years in foreign relations where other countries will be treated like domestics.

A.P.

Editor:

After reading the Associated Press and NEW YORK TIMES stories about your election endorsement, I sent you 20 bucks to pay for a partial subscription. My first copy — the Oct. 27 issue — arrived today (Nov. 15). (It takes a while for the stagecoach from Texas to arrive back East in Virginia.) It was good to see all the display ads supporting your First

Amendment right to have an opinion.

A free and vigorous press is what makes America great. Keep publishing — and keep speaking out! It won't take your local business people long to realize how lucky they are to have a courageous voice in their community.

C.S., Petersburg, VA

Hi Leon...

Keep up the good work!

I am a California subscriber, new to the ICONOCLAST. I was both moved and impressed by the paper's (your) cogent discussion of Bush's complete failures in office and your courageous endorsement of Kerry (though frankly, I don't believe he deserved anyone's endorsement) and had to subscribe.

I sent my subscription in through Paypal, and would like to have access to the special "online" edition.

Leon, America sorely needs more JOURNALISTS like you. Our dear country is in dire need of real information and not just viscious propaganda. Our mass media puts the Politbureau to shame and would make Goebels proud.

Your piece on the chilling effect of the FCC's tacit threat to prosecute or fine broadcasters for showing anything that someone over three might find offensive is RIGHT ON! The "off" switch is and has been the most effective means of "protecting our children." Being directly involved in their lives is another. Worked for me.

Anyway, please put me on the "e-list."

Best regards,  
P.S., California

To The Editor:

December 13<sup>th</sup>!!!

Keep that date in mind, my friends, as that is when all recounting must be done in Ohio, so says Ken Blackwell. And is anyone but Stephanie, Miller, Keith Olberman and NPR talking about this? Perhaps some of you would like to take up the standard here?!?!?

You also MUST read Bloggerman today as he discusses the new UC Berkeley report out that claims that in Florida, Bush got 260,000 votes he shouldn't have due to faulty voter machines. These votes are called "excessives" (and if that ain't more aptly named, I don't know what is!).

Check out all the details at: <http://alexdesuze.blogspot.com/> and as always, pass it on, pass it on, pass it on!  
Peace.  
A.D.S.

## Adopted By A Dog

It had to happen eventually. We've been adopted by a dog. I wasn't ready for this, but as my friend Valerie reminded me, "You're NEVER ready." Her theory is that when you lose a pet, you almost magically receive a "replacement" when it's time. I think she might be right.

I won't get into a deep philosophical or religious discussion about this loosely concocted theory about dogs going to heaven or having souls or whatever, but it's one of those harmless, comforting things that our minds wrap around to reconcile the loss of a pet.

Poor, old, stubborn, beloved Wolfie has been gone for months now, and we have resisted all efforts by family, friends, and acquaintances to give us dogs they have heard about, found, or no longer want themselves (usually for good reason). I have actually had three individuals try to pawn off their aging or problem animals on us under the altruistic guise of our "needing a dog on the farm." (My cousin tried it with his pot-bellied pig).

The plan was to wait until the back fence was completed, then buy or adopt two sibling pups to keep each other (and us humans) company, and help with the cows. We would train them ourselves, to avoid inheriting someone else's mistakes. We planned to finish the fence next summer and be ready emotionally and financially by then for the new additions.

The best-laid plans can change in a heartbeat. They flew right out the window of opportunity. In exactly the same way Wolfie had arrived at my side 15 years ago, another little fellow came walking into my life. I expect that if such things are possible, Wolfie had something to do with sending him. They are enough alike that it's eerie.

We were checking a wheat field for armyworms when a dog materialized at our feet. Zack is the soft touch for strays, while I try mightily to be the voice of reason. My first reaction was an immediate and emphatic "Oh, no," although the actual words that escaped my lips might have been somewhat different.

It never ceases to amaze me that people can so easily shed their responsibility to the animals they own, allow to breed with abandon, and raise. Even the Bible urges us to care for our ani-

## Rustic Ramblings

By Gene Ellis



Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

mal charges in a humane way. I will never understand how anyone can dump a trusting animal on the road to face an uncertain and perhaps dreadful future, or manage to lose a collarless dog. And yet, it happens all the time.

Two minutes after meeting this creature, we were both smitten (I with reservations), and on the way to soap and water, our new friend being rather ripe after who-knows-how-many days on the road. Unfortunately, the name "Stinky" has stuck, and Dr. Kennedy and staff chuckled over it at the Vet Clinic. A couple of hundred dollars later, Stinky was ours, or rather Zack's, for he is definitely a one-man dog. (I am waging a constant campaign to bribe him away with treats. He gives me a good amount of attention by default when Zack isn't around, but never minds me as well as he does the "human alpha male").

So at the vet's office, Stinky got stuck more than once, checked out OK for heart worms, endured the humiliation of having a thermometer stuck up his butt in front of four or five virtual strangers, and now has his own six-month supply of meds for various pests and parasites. He also, of course, has food, treats, a bed, Wolfie's old travel crate, and a few other hand-me-down doggie items I had saved, the works.

We took him to see the cows. Enthusiastic but perhaps unskilled right out of the box, he received a "tickle" from the business end of a heifer, a harsh first lesson in his new life. (I will always wonder what things were like for him before, what his name was, who fed him and perhaps loved him, if they were kind to him, if they miss him now).

The kick slowed Stinky down for a few days as he nursed a sore paw, but he is frisky again and a little mischievous. With four good feet, he's fast! His personality is emerging, and overall, with a few corrections in manners, what a good guy! It's as if he has been with us forever. Sometimes I look into his eyes and see Wolfie. Back in the dog business. Here we go again.



ANDREW JUDY (37) sacks the Cisco quarterback during a key moment of the playoff game last Friday night in Stephenville.

— Photo By Stephen Cook



PEDRO RODRIGUEZ (8) stands in the way of the Lobo rusher last Friday night during the playoff game in Stephenville.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

• **LADY PIRATES**

Continued From Page 11

the ball four time, and blocked once.

Talbert also rebounded four times and stole twice. Maciel rebounded twice and stole once.

"They are really beginning to play well," said Coach Heidi Elmore. "Their effort and intensity has begun to create great opportunities for future wins."

Last Tuesday, the JV defeated Groesbeck (0-1) by another wide margin, 60-35.

Shanna Lippe (10), Talbert (13), Joanie Mauerman (10), and Dumas (11) all scored in the double digits.

Lippe rebounded seven and stole eight balls; Talbert had one assist, three rebounds, two steals, and three-pointer. Mauerman assisted twice, rebounded six times, and stole four balls, while Dumas rebounded five and stole four.

"We are really playing hard and working together," said Coach Heidi Elmore. "Their efforts in practice have paid off in the last two games. Keep working hard!"

Crawford pulled away from Groesbeck in the second quarter to a seven point lead. After the half, the team raised 23 points to Groesbeck's 14. The fourth saw the Lady Pirates post 16 more points, 11 over Groesbeck.

The JV won against China Spring, 54-35, in the first game of their season. Dieterich posted 15 points, six assists, three rebounds, and 11 steals. Lippe scored 14 points, rebounded seven, stole eight, and blocked two balls.

**Freshmen**

The Lady Pirates Freshman team lost to Groesbeck, 37-17, last Tuesday afternoon. The team suffered its first defeat of the young season.

Shelbi Payne scored three points, had one assist, three rebounds, two steals, and one block. Shay Knight grabbed two points, three rebounds, and two steals.

Rebekah Dillon, with two rebounds, and Lindsey Judy, with five rebounds, both scored six points each.

"This was a good first game for the freshmen," said Coach Elmore. "They play hard and are continuing to improve each practice."

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