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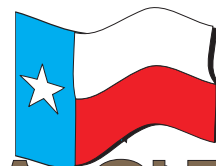
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The Lone Star



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Electoral Votes To Be Counted Jan. 6

Rep. Conyers Asking Senators To Object To Certification Of Election

WASHINGTON, D.C. —U.S. Cong. John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), who has been investigating alleged voter irregularities in the Ohio presidential election and has described them as severe, has sent a letter to each of the 100 members of the U.S. Senate asking them to join with members of the House in objecting to the certification of the election results when the final vote count is held this Thursday.

In his Dec. 30 letter, Conyers is calling for Congressional debate on the 2004 elections.

He states in the letter:

"As you know, on Jan. 6, 2005, at 1 p.m., the electoral votes for the election of the president are to be opened and counted in a joint session of Congress, commencing at 1 p.m. I and a number of House Members are planning to object to the counting of the Ohio votes, due to numerous unexplained irregularities in the Ohio presidential vote, many of which appear to violate both federal and state law. I am hoping that you will consider joining us in this important effort to debate and highlight the problems in Ohio which disenfranchised innumerable voters. I will shortly forward you a draft report itemizing and analyzing the many irregularities we have

come across as part of our hearings and investigation into the Ohio presidential election.

"3 U.S.C. §15 provides when the results from each of the states are announced, that 'the President of the Senate shall call for objections, if any.' Any objection must be presented in writing and 'signed by at least one Senator and one Member of the House of Representatives before the same shall be received.' The objection must 'state clearly and concisely, and without argument, the ground thereof.' When an objection has been properly made in writing and endorsed by a member of each body the Senate withdraws from the House chamber, and each body meets separately to consider the objection. 'No votes . . . from any other State shall be acted upon until the [pending] objection . . . [is] finally disposed of.' 3 U.S.C. §17 limits debate on the objections in each body to two hours, during which time no member may speak more than once and not for more than five minutes. Both the Senate and the House must separately agree to the objection; otherwise, the challenged vote or votes are counted.

"Historically, there appears to be three general grounds for



Congressman Conyers

objecting to the counting of electoral votes. The language of 3 U.S.C. §15 suggests that objection may be made on the grounds that (1) a vote was not 'regularly given' by the challenged elector(s); and/or (2) the elector(s) was not "lawfully certified" under state law; or (3) two slates of electors

have been presented to Congress from the same State.

"Since the Electoral Count Act of 1887, no objection meeting the requirements of the Act have been made against an entire slate of state electors. In the 2000 election several Members of the House of Representatives attempted to challenge the electoral votes from the State of Florida. However, no Senator joined in the objection, and therefore, the objection was not 'received.' In addition, there was no determination whether the objection constituted an appropriate basis under the 1887 Act. However, if a State — in this case Ohio — has not followed its own procedures and met its obligation to conduct a free and fair election, a valid objection -if endorsed by at least one Senator and a Member of the House of Representatives- should be debated by each body separately until 'disposed of.'"

Ray Beckerman, a New York attorney who has been involved in the investigations, has described Jan. 6 as "a criti-

cal date in American history," suggesting that if Senators and Congresspeople "do not stand up and do the right thing that day, democracy is over in the nation that introduced it to the modern world, and our descent into dictatorship will have been completed."

He says that if the multitude of irregularities are allowed to stand there will never be election reform: "It will have become impossible to rid our nation of this cancer through the electoral process."

Among the irregularities that Beckerman cites are fraud, disenfranchisement, voter suppression, recount obstruction, and voter machine tampering.

Regarding the election, Ohio Republican Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell refused to appear at a deposition on Monday, Dec. 27, which was part of an election challenge lawsuit filed at the Ohio Supreme Court.

Blackwell, who administered Ohio's Nov. 2 election, served as co-chair of the Bush-Cheney campaign.

Rumsfeld Contradicts Official 9/11 Story?

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last week said that Flight 93 was "shot down" in the rural fields of Pennsylvania on Sept. 11 contradicting the U.S. government's official story of the fate of the aircraft.

Rumsfeld made this comment during his surprise Christmas Eve trip to Iraq: "I think all of us have a sense if we imagine the kind of world we would face if the people who bombed the mess hall in Mosul, or the people who did the bombing in Spain, or the people who attacked the United States in New York, shot down the plane over Pennsylvania and attacked the Pentagon, the people who cut off peoples' heads on television to intimidate, to frighten — indeed the word 'terrorized' is just that. Its purpose is to terrorize, to alter behavior, to make people be something other than that which they want to be."

The Department of Defense issued a statement saying the secretary has simply misspoke, but conspiracy theorists still jumped at the quote.

The official story was that passengers on the United Airlines flight attacked the hijackers to prevent the plane crashing into a target, one of which might have been the U.S. Capitol. Three other hijacked aircraft were reportedly

crashed on U.S. soil the day of Sept. 11, 2001 — two into each of the World Trade Center towers on Manhattan Island in New York City and another into the Pentagon.

However, the story of the Pennsylvania crash has been disputed by several eyewitnesses. Some claim they saw a "military-type" plane flying around Flight 93 when the hijacked passenger jet crashed.

Still three years after the event, the real cause of Flight 93's crash remains the unclear, despite an onboard fight between the hijackers and passengers, which was captured the "Let's roll" call by Todd Beamer.

More than a few Shanksville, Pa., residents have said that they saw another plane, an unmarked military-style jet. On Sept. 14, 2001, THE RECORD newspaper of Bergen County, N.J. reported that five eyewitnesses saw a second plane at the Flight 93 crash site.

THE RECORD reported the same day that FBI Special Agent William Crowley said investigators could not rule out that a second plane was nearby during the crash. Dousing rumors, the agent later said he had misspoken.

U.S. officials insist a pursuit of Flight 93 never happened, but they were told the flight was suspected of having been hijacked at 9:16 a.m., 50 minutes before the crash.

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Disaster Strikes! Asian Tsunami Takes Thousands Of Lives Day After Christmas

CRAWFORD — An under-ground 9.0 magnitude earthquake caused a 500 mph wave to strike 11 countries in Southeast Asia the day after Christmas, taking the lives of over 125,000 people with more bodies — mostly those of women, children, and the elderly — yet to be counted. After the deadliest tsunami in nearly 300 years, officials estimated that five million people lack clean water, shelter, food, sanitation, and medicine.

Emergency workers with supplies in perhaps what will be the biggest, most costliest international rescue effort ever started relief efforts in the three hardest hit countries, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and India last week, as mass graves were filled with a multitude of rotting corpses to prevent the spread of disease in the days after the waters from the horrific tsunami rolled away.

The quake started near the Indonesian island of Sumatra which caused two-story-tall waves to race across the surface of the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal and nearly 3,000 miles to east Africa, causing more deaths in Somalia, Tanzania, and Seychelles.

The epicenter region is known for its seismic activity, and the morning of the catastrophic event, a Thai and a Swedish newspaper reported, the Thailand's foremost meteorological experts decided against issuing a warning for fear of harming the tourism industry. The main argument against such

a warning was that there have not been any floods in 300 years.

International ocean monitors saw the activity minutes after their instruments picked it up. They figured a tsunami was on its way, but they didn't know whom to contact.

The last of the deadliest tsunamis to be recorded struck the Portuguese capital of Lisbon in 1755 and killed an estimated 60,000 people. There have been four major earthquakes that have rumbled the Earth since 1900. The one on Dec. 26 was the fourth.

Death tolls across the island and coastal regions in Southeast Asia continued to grow over the weekend. Whole islands disappeared under the damaging waters, and entire villages were reportedly eradicated with as many as 40,000 citizens of one coastal town lost.

Thousands of Westerners were yet to be found: roughly 2,500 Swedes, 1,000 Germans, 500 French, 500 Danes, and thousands more Americans. About 14 U.S. citizens were counted as dead from the tsunami.

The disaster struck all levels of society. The 21-year-old grandson of Thailand's king was found dead. A Czech supermodel was found alive with a broken pelvis; however, her British photographer boyfriend was still missing and presumed dead. Hungry islanders in Indonesia looted what they could in the days following the aftermath.



PRESIDENT BUSH answers questions during a news conference at his ranch near Crawford Dec. 29, 2004. Bush spoke on a large number of issues including the aid for the Tsunami victims, Iraq elections, and flooding of the west coast.

— Rod Aydelotte/Waco Tribune Herald, Pool

At least one Civil War in the region was called to a cease-fire, as members of both factions took charge of recovery efforts to find missing relatives and bury the dead. U.N. teams were allowed to help with efforts.

Costs & Criticisms

About \$500 million has been donated for the relief efforts, said U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, adding he was "satisfied" by the response, after U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland complained that nations in the West were "stingy."

Amid criticism of President Bush's lack of urgency to the disaster for spending the majority of his time at his Prairie Chapel ranch last week, the Bush administration added \$20 million more in aid relief to an earlier pledge of \$15 million to nations suffering from the Indian Ocean tsunami. The Pentagon also sent an aircraft carrier and other military equipment to the region. Probably 1,000 U.S. military personnel will be arriving this week, according to a U.S. military official.

Aides to President Bush told reporters that the president was monitoring the devastation from the deadly earthquake by television and sent

letters of condolence to Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, Maldives, and Malaysia.

This past weekend, Bush announced that assistance from the United States would be greater than \$350 million.

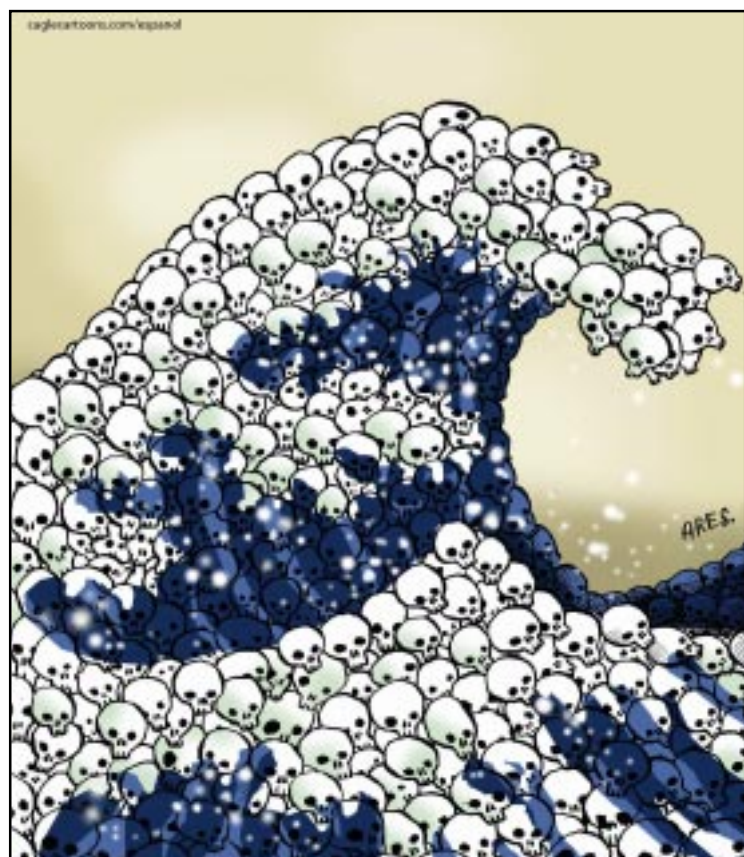
"We will prevail over this destruction," President Bush said in his first public statement a week after the tsunami hit. He added that the U.S. would give more aid to the region over time. This time last year, Bush monitored the damage from an earthquake in Iran, which killed more than

26,000 people.

President Bush announced plans that the U.S. and a coalition of Japan, India and Australia will coordinate relief and was accused of attempting to undercut the United Nations with a rival party.

India politely refused aid from several foreign countries that offered earlier last week, although the refusal did not include U.N. agencies and non-government organizations already in the region.

The World Health Organization has requested \$40 million to supply the needed relief.



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DATELINE:

Crawford

Hometown of the President of the United States

11 Pirates Named To Super Centex Team

WACO — Eleven Crawford Pirates, which includes three honorable mentions and Coach of the Year, were last week named to the WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD's 50th annual Super Centex Football Team.

Crawford Pirate Head Football Coach Robert Murphy was named Super Centex Coach of the Year last week, along with Riecher Cougar's Head Coach Mark Waggoner.

Coach Murphy received the honor for leading the Pirates to an unbeaten season with a 28-14 win over Troup to claim the UIL's Class 2A Division II title, which was CISD's first ever title in a boys' sport.

Murphy gave praise to all the supporters of this team, including Crawford's assistant coaches included Delbert Kelm, Ronnie Bruce, Clark Moore, Greg Jacobs, and Alan Abel.

The rest of the Pirates named to the 2004 team include WR Jad Tawater first team offense; DL Andrew Judy and LB Derek Dumas, first team defense; QB Lee Murphy and RS B.J. Christian, second team offense; and DB Pedro Rodriguez, second team defense.

Honorable mentions were given to four Pirates: Todd Westerfeld, receiver/tight end; Aaron Nolte and Hunter Brown, offensive linemen; and Garrett Gonzalez, linebacker.

Revolution Uniform Program Given At Waco Chaper SAR

WACO — William S. Covington, Jr. of Cedar Hill presented a program about the Revolutionary uniform at the Waco Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution.

He teaches American history in three area colleges in the Metroplex in addition of giving programs. Should any American history teacher want to have him present this program, he can be reached at home: (972) 299-9328 or (972) 571-0139.

Two new members, Darrell York and Robert Scott, were installed to the chapter.

LaVega High School JROTC Commander R.E. Haney and Cadet Vanessa Oranday presented a slide presentation of her "boot camp" training during summer 2004. The chapter helped her financially. "We feel this is a very worthwhile program," said a spokesperson. "We hope to do it again in the future."

The next chapter meeting will be held on Saturday, Jan. 8, at 11:30 p.m. at the Lake Brazos Steakhouse, 1620 MLK Blvd. in Waco. The speaker's subject will be "Let's Remember Our Heritage." The public is invited.

Crawford EMS Seeks Volunteers, Donations For Newer Equipment

CRAWFORD — The Crawford EMS is currently soliciting donations and a call for more volunteers to help keep its community ambulance service operational.

The Crawford EMS has employed a larger ambulance this year, which has been enjoyed by the current volunteer base, said a spokesman. Future donations to the local EMS will go toward monthly payments of the new ambulance as well as a new, light weight stretcher.

"We periodically update our equipment to keep up with technology, which will increase a more efficient service for our patients," said a spokesman in

a statement.

EMS classes are available through MCC and are taught in McGregor. For more information or to join the Crawford EMS, contact Marilyn Judy. The EMS is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

"You should feel proud to live in a community that takes care of its own needs," said the spokesman. "There are many towns larger than us that do not have their own ambulance service because the local citizens refuse to support one."

INFO

Judy, (254) 486-2101

Youth Connection Benefit Set Thursday, Jan. 20 At Knox Hall In Waco

WACO — An evening of dining and dancing honoring President George W. and Laura Bush will be held on Thursday, Jan. 20, at Knox Hall — Texas Ranger Hall of Fame off I-35 and University Parks Drive in Waco. The event will run from 8 p.m. - 12 p.m. Tickets are \$100 per person.

Ticket prices include buffet, open bar, memorabilia, and entertainment. Proceeds benefit Youth Connection, Inc., an organization devoted to impacting teenage pregnancy by reducing adolescent sexual activity and reducing the incidence or repeat adolescent pregnancy. The organization does not endorse or affiliate with any political party or organization.

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— Guest Commentary: A Review From England —
**2004: A Rambling and Dreary Year,
Another Poverty-Stricken Year**

BY KAPIL KOMIREDDI
© KAPIL KOMIREDDI, 2004/5

LONDON — On Christmas day, the Pope and the archbishop of Canterbury delivered their Christmas messages. The holy Pope regretted the war in Iraq and the continuous killings in Sudan, which are, just like the genocide in Rwanda, being ignored by the so-called civilised world. The archbishop condemned the indifference of the rich nations toward the poor. It is almost the end of another disastrous year, and as the New Year dawns, in the terpsichorean frenzy of celebrations, their messages will be largely forgotten.

Perhaps the starkest reminder of our indifference was highlighted in Christmas Eve's edition of the British daily, *THE INDEPENDENT*. The front page was filled with numbers which, if anything, highlighted the hypocritical callousness of the "developed" nations. But, look at the pathetic nature of the world at present, rather than contemplating, those who saw the figures stigmatise the news as a leftwing propaganda tool. If highlighting the suffering of the poverty-stricken millions as a consequence of the inexorable ignorance of rich nations is propaganda, then the journos at *THE INDEPENDENT* should be proud propagandists.

£20mn is what Mark Tilden, the inventor of this year's hit toy, Robosapien, made. That is also the amount of money nations of sub-Saharan Africa are paying the developed world in dept repayments every 16 hours. The glaring report, compiled by Cahal Milmo, also tells us that £813 is the average spending per adult in Britain on celebrating Christmas, while £50 is the per capita annual income in Ethiopia. An estimated 5 million Britons will suffer a stomach upset after consuming 7,000 calories on Christmas day. Contrast that with the 2.1 million people killed in the developing world owing to diarrhoeal diseases as a consequence of malnutrition. And if that is not a monstrous enough inequity, compare the £4.2 billions spent on cosmetics during Christmastime to the £4.1 billion aid Britain has budgeted for the developing world in 2004.

In a report released this year by Oxfam, the charity fustigated rich nations for halving their aid budgets. While commoners make donations to charities, poor countries pay \$100mn a day in dept repay-

ments. As this essay is being written, children are dying due to hunger and disease. What a shame. Our leaders, who revel in their titles of "the world's most powerful men," cannot even get food and medicine to these kids. How small our hearts are. To inflate our coffers, we snatch the life away from starving children. How esoteric our love and sympathies are. We have billions invested in the future of our kids, but we make it impossible for the children in the developing world to receive education or healthcare.

Political Chicanery:

2004, with all its remarkable successes, has been a year of failure. The "terrorists will attack you and we will protect you" rhetoric continued to dominate the political atmosphere. There were times when leaders came to power by promising the citizens illimitable dreams. R.F. Kennedy's statement reflects that: "Some men see things as they are and say, 'why?' I dream things that never were and say, 'why not?'" Now, the aspirants of limitless power promise dreams no more. They promise us protection. From whom, though? Enormous resources are dedicated to propagate the notion that a powerful enemy actually exists, and the phantasmagoria of imminent threats is played up as and when required. Who will deny that bin Laden was George Bush's most significant campaign star?

Post 9/11, there hasn't been a single terrorism-related death within America, but gun crime has picked its victims. Maybe the president, an ardent supporter of the archaic amendment upholding the bearing of arms, should rethink his position. The amendment reads: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." How on earth can such a predicate be justified in today's world, especially in a rich and developed nation like the USA? Anyone challenging it is labelled unpatriotic. Do people simply lack the perspicacity to see that challenging the constitution of the land is not the same as being unpatriotic?

As per *THE LANCET*, 100,000 civilian Iraqis got killed since the start of the invasion. Tony Blair's government questioned the accuracy of the findings, but refused to conduct an investigation of its own. *THE GUARDIAN*'s cartoonist, Steve

Bell, drew a lurid cartoon, mocking Blair's hypocritical stand.

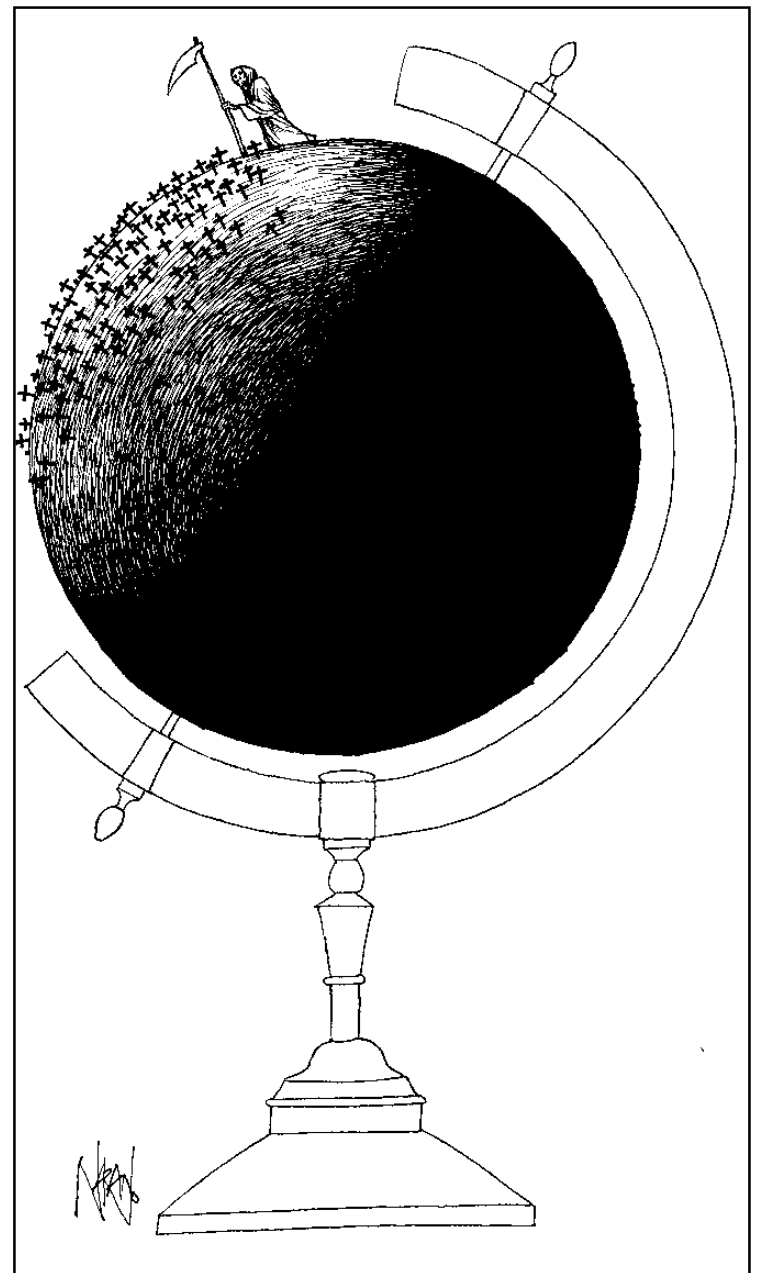
In spite of all that, 2004's survival man has to be Tony Blair. In a political system, in comparison to other veto-holding nations of the U.N., as transparent as the British, where the authors of democracy took as many measures as they could to make sure power wasn't vested in any single person, Blair has managed to have his way. It is all the more remarkable because Blair is a Labour man. Defying his party's historical socialist proclivity, he has come to be known as the finest Tory prime minister to come from the Labour Party. He is immune to any attack from the right, because he stands for almost everything that once could be construed as rightwing. Like Napoleon, the leader pig in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Blair signals, and all the Labour MPs follow him like callow beasts.

The Death of the Tories:

In the land of Winston Churchill, the Tory party is facing a gradual death. In denial they may be, but it is quite clear from all the by-elections that the Tories have gone from bad to worse. Unless they find a dynamic leader and articulate what they stand for, nothing can resurrect the Conservatives. The latter would be harder because everything they once advocated is being successfully implemented by the government; and when they do come up with something new or groundbreaking, it mysteriously becomes a government policy overnight.

So, to garner support, Michael Howard — the transatlanticist leader of the Tories, who was told quite clearly by the White House officials that he can forget ever getting an appointment with the President — lurches to the right, in an attempt to appeal to the base fears and prejudices of people: asylum seekers. Michael Howard is doing a great disservice by suggesting that Britain must adopt the racist attitude of the Australian government. This is the man who thanks Britain for taking his family when they fled Hitler's persecution, but refuses to afford the same dignity to others.

In this environment, Charles Kennedy is about the only leader of a major party exuding any leadership in Britain. His party's proposals are simple: increase in pensions; scrapping of tuition fees; im-



proved healthcare and better transport. In 2005's general elections, though the Liberal Democrats may not get a landslide victory, there is every chance that they will emerge as the primary opposition. The *Guardian* and *The Observer* have already indicated that they will be endorsing the Lib Dems in '05 — and that is, symbolically at least, a big blow to Tony Blair.

The Heroes:

2004's global hero was, undoubtedly, John Kerry. Only the myopic regard victory to be emblematic of heroism. Historically, real heroes have been titled so after a defeat. And, in Kerry's case, defeat is an ephemeral phase for contemplation and organisation. He is hardly a goner. The title of Comeback Kid is no ordinary one, but it shouldn't be seen in the context only of the '04 elections. Anti-Americans, as a result of Bush's re-election, have got copious ordnance now to vituperate America as a whole, branding it rightist. But what is important to note is that 49 percent of the overall voters voted for a man dubbed as the "No.1 liberal," and that is no meagre achievement. The maladroitness were susceptible to Karl Rove's turbid tricks, but the fact that 49 percent of the population resisted the propaganda is a sym-

bol of America's democratic resilience and strength.

Kerry got more votes than Reagan or Clinton. In a global poll, conducted online by globalvote.com, Kerry won a landslide. Unfortunately, the global results had no bearing on the actual elections. In spite of the results, Kerry's presence is palpable. How many defeated candidates get actively involved in the day-to-day politics of the nation? Most of them retire to the country and write memoirs, at least for a while. Not Kerry. He is out there, writing private member bills to help the poor, campaigning for healthcare and chalking out an itinerary that includes visits to Iraq and rest of the Middle East. If the grilling of Donald Rumsfeld by the troops in Jordan is any indicator, Kerry will be received with heroic thunder that Bush can only dream of.

Michael Moore is another American hero of 2004. Whether you agree or disagree with him, you cannot possibly ignore him. Moore has empowered cinema. He is the greatest filmmaker to come out of America — perhaps the entire world — if one believes that the purpose of cinema is more than mere entertainment. Unfortunately, his film failed to topple

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• GUEST COMMENTARY FROM ENGLAND, Review of 2004 by Kapil Komireddi ... Continued From Previous Page

Bush; if anything, it probably strengthened the conviction of the extreme right to eviscerate the liberals in America. In this battle, the right managed to purge America, transitorily at least, of its libertarian gems. Nevertheless, Moore is essential stuff.

The lesser known of all the "prominent" figures of 2004, but as important as any, is Mr. W. Leon Smith, editor of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. To George Orwell, free press was the basis of democracy. It keeps excesses, of whatever nature, in check. One would think that threats to newspaper editors are an obsolete practice in the present zeitgeist. It would surprise one to know they still occur. It would flabbergast one to know they occur in America. But how is one to react when one learns that they occurred in the hometown of the man who wants to democratise the entire world?

Mr. Smith's resolve to endorse Kerry in the hometown of President Bush is a testament to the spirit of democracy and hope. The editor received letters threatening physical harm. Advertisements were cancelled, subscriptions were annulled, and shops stopped selling the paper. But the support which the paper garnered far outweighed the louche discouragement of the blinkered malcontents, and successfully breached the cordon sanitaire. The paper's courageous candour was lauded by almost everyone who believed in democracy. Letters of support poured in from every corner of the world. And today, THE ICONOCLAST has become a political voice to be reckoned with.

The Greatest Achievements:

Perhaps the greatest positive development of 2004 was the rejection of the B.J.P.-led rightwing N.D.A. government in India. I had the good fortune of observing those elections firsthand, and I can report that the democratic zeal of the Indian electorate is almost unparalleled. From the nook and corners of the remote villages, voters debouched in their thousands and, in temperatures rising above 40 degrees, kept their cool and voted for a change.

It is interesting that the voters should reject the N.D.A. government, because it is under the N.D.A. rule that India developed its nuclear weapons programme and became a major player in the world. India's GDP rose, in 2003/4, by 8 percent, and its foreign reserves hit the \$100bn mark. Despite all this, the humiliation which the N.D.A. suffered at the hands of the electorate, owing to their complacency, is a symbol of India's remarkable and mighty democracy. Almost every opinion poll predicted the return of

N.D.A., but, to the common voter, communal harmony mattered more than gross domestic product. In spite of the overwhelming suspicion of foreigners — a legacy of the British rule of India — Indians voted in favour of a white Italian, disenthroning the racist and communalist bigots of the B.J.P., who authored an unprecedented pogrom of the Muslims in Gujarat in 2002.

On the other hand, the Ukrainians, who were voting once again yesterday, after the country's Supreme Court annulled the results of the previous poll, exhibited unprecedented democratic fervour. In subzero temperatures, masses, said to be more than 100,000, gathered on the Independent Square and protested for weeks. What is remarkable is that there wasn't a single reported case of violence during these protests. Ukrainian youth displayed Gandhian tolerance in their remonstrations, giving roses to the armed forces and sharing food with the opposition. The poisoned Yushchenko wants a pro-European Ukraine, while Yanukovych is inclined to make it pro-Russian. It was Ukraine's litmus test. Democracy, it appears, has triumphed. Yushchenko has claimed victory.

2005: What Next?

For good or bad, George Bush has been re-elected. That is the incontrovertible truth. THE TIMES' Simon Jenkins said on BBC that the best thing George Bush can do is take his eyes off Middle East. There are other reasonable issues he cited — the African poverty, the Chinese trade, the Russian issue, etc. I would say Mr. Jenkins made a very brilliant point.

However, Middle East remains a priority, and for it to take a back seat in the President's agenda, it ought to be dealt with first. And if any outside intervention can help mitigate the crises, it is the US's. Indeed, in the words of the erudite NEWSWEEK editor, Fareed Zakaria, U.S. intervention, with all its fallacies, is the best option (in this case.) It is a utopian blunder to assume that, somehow, the Middle East crises will find a solution if and when the U.S. stops interfering.

The problem, however, is that the phrase "Middle East crises" is so broadly used that its context has been forgotten. Does the phrase actually encompass the whole of Middle East? Of course, there is an overwhelming desire to see democracy in the whole of Middle East; but unless the Palestine crisis is resolved, democracy elsewhere is a distant dream. Palestine, therefore, is the issue.

The clerisy of the Middle East loathe U.S. intervention. Al Jazeera's newsreels are enough evidence of this. "Democracy is evolutionary, not revolutionary," is one of the most common and popular quotes. The commoners, it appears, do want democratisation, but the continuing endorsement of Israel's picaresque adventures by the U.S., only serves to anger them, and it helps the ruling classes propagate anti-Americanism.

As Zakaria rightly pointed out, the Middle Eastern governments must stop using foreign policy as an excuse to punish their own people. Since the human rights situation in the Middle East is abysmal, western didacticism — led by the U.S. — is necessary. But U.S.'s human rights record in the recent past puts it in no position to preach.

George Bush can do a world of good by listening to the moderates. First, he must afford fair trials to the inmates at Camp Delta. U.S.'s reputation is at its nadir owing to the continuing abuse of human rights at home and abroad. Secondly, though irreparable damage has been done in Iraq, he must confront the situation with humility and not arrogance, as we have seen in the past one year. Bush's unbending arrogance is alienating most nations. A discontented Chirac in Europe is no joke matter. If Europe crumbles, America's power will be lost (which, some will argue, is good for the world.) But a strong America is essential, among a cornucopia of other things, to stop North Korea in its tracks.

Solution to the Palestinian issue, though difficult, if achieved, will put Bush in the golden pages of history. All his

mistakes — and there are too many of those — will be expiated by this singular achievement. A functional Palestinian democracy will automatically spread, in spirit, to the neighbouring nations — and no one then can stop democracy from outdoing the extant plutocracy. Evolution indeed it will be. Serious attention can then be paid to North Korea.

Bush can learn a lesson or two in diplomacy from his predecessor. Though Clinton didn't ultimately succeed in achieving a solution, he came too close to it. Where Clinton — the adored man in Middle East — didn't succeed, Bush can. Making macho statements simply won't do. A functional Palestine will be the starting point of Middle East's transformation — and Bush is in the remarkable position of making it happen, and 2005 can be its beginning.

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FASHION THREADS PEACE



Designer Julia Gerard



Russian Immigrant Turned High Fashion Designer **Peace Symbol Making Comeback As Fashion Icon**

Iconoclast Interview With Julia Gerard

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOS ANGELES — Like more than a few Americans, fashion designer Julia Gerard, 50, reacted personally to the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001. She wanted revenge to those who committed such an atrocity. Bear no expense. Hunt them. Annihilate them!

As a Russian immigrant, however, the daughter of a seventh rabbi-generation butcher who survived five years in one of Hitler's concentration camps remembered the reason — peace — her father moved their family to the City of Angels, Los Angeles, Calif., from Riga, Latvia, which was once known as "the Paris of the Baltics."

"My father was a visionary. Simply put. He was someone who dreamed about something and then created the dream," she said. "When he came out of the concentration camps, he had no family left. He just wanted to rebuild his life. He had a few relatives in Los Angeles, and he was always talking about it. As soon as I was born, he worked his

way — it took us 10 years to get here. It was very difficult to get out of there."

Instead of hiding her feelings about peace in the U.S., she chose to share them on her clothing in the form of activist Gerald Holtom's design based on two letters of the international semaphore alphabet superimposed on each other, N and D, which stand for "nuclear disarmament."

The positive response to her fashion statement grew into her expanding her gallery space to include her first exclusive "Clothing for Peace" Collection. The peace symbol adorns not only every piece of clothing in her new "Increase the Peace" gallery but also merchandise such as wine glasses, candles, jewelry, and furniture. Some of her clientele includes internationally-reknown entertainers, actors and sports icons: Tina Turner, Elizabeth Taylor, Cheryl Ladd, Sally Kirkland, Chris Evert, Natalie Cole, Gloria Estefan, Bette Midler, and Dave Matthews.

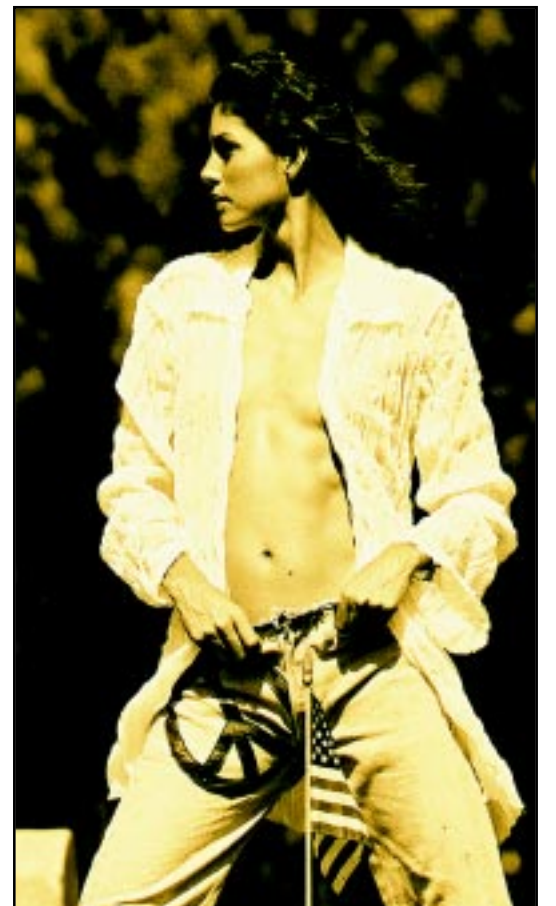
Three years after the twin World

Trade Center Towers tumbled down, New Yorkers and Europeans with a penchant for high fashion — the life blood of her small business that employs about 10 people — are just starting to trickle in more and more on Melrose Ave., thanks to the devalued U.S. dollar.

Gerard still smells the aroma of peace and freedom, which she has come to savor in the United States for 40 years, but she fears it is slowly being replaced by a scent similar to that of Stalinist Russia where she was raised until she was 10 years old.

Over the phone, THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST's Nathan Diebenow spoke with J. Gerard, the Czarina of Chic, at her 20-year-old boutique on Melrose Ave. in wintery wet Los Angeles, Calif. after Christmas weekend to talk about her personal transformation into a peace activist since Sept. 11, 2001, her spiritual concern with the Bush administration's environmental policies, and her own purchasing power.

Continued On Next Page



• **JULIA GERARD ... Continued From Previous Page**

ICONOCLAST: So, how's business going?

GERARD: Since Sept. 11 — it was a really damper on everybody — we seem to be a little bit on the recovery end. The elections didn't help. That's for sure. It has never really been the same since Sept. 11. That's an honest statement.

ICONOCLAST: Tell me about the inspiration for your "Clothing for Peace" line.

GERARD: I happen to be a hippie, a natural born one, from Russia believe it or not (laughing), but the minute Sept. 11 happened, I got so ugly, and I realized that the peace my father brought me to and that I felt here for 37 years disappeared out from underneath my feet. I love this country to no ends, and I'm not just waving a flag. I come from such hell that this is really the land of opportunity, the way North Americans don't understand.

For what happened at Sept. 11, I got so nasty that I put peace signs on my own clothes, just to keep my mind focused. I work on myself spiritually all the time, but I was so upset and so hurt that this happened that I felt that you can't live anywhere. It doesn't matter where you live. It's all the same now. I didn't give up though, and then all of a sudden, everybody started to ask me for peace signs on their clothes. That's how it happened.

I also follow, like I said, a spiritual path. Supposedly, when you get to a good point in your life, you are supposed to put together your talents and humanitarian callings, and I guess this is a combination of both. The peace sign gallery is a combination. Clothing didn't mean anything to me anymore. It's not that I don't like to design clothes. I love to design clothing. All of a sudden, after Sept. 11, everything changed.



ICONOCLAST: So it was some sort of personal transformation?

GERARD: My friends said it was an accelerator thing. It's like I would have done this anyway at some point, but that day accelerated so many things. It totally catapulted me in a different reality, and I'm not talking about a reality like two and two make four. Just a reality. My axis shifted.

ICONOCLAST: Were you politically active before Sept. 11, 2001?

GERARD: I'm not politically active still. I hate politics. I think politicians should disappear (laughing). I follow this spiritual path, and according to this spiritual path, we're all supposed to be, at some point very soon, connected to each other through economy. That means that we need each other naturally: if I need you to provide me food, and you need me to provide you with clothing, we'll be fine no matter what. That's what I believe in. I don't believe in politics. I believe in peace, love, and music. Literally. I really do.

ICONOCLAST: But you would still describe yourself as an activist, right? Are there other causes that you're sympathetic towards?

GERARD: You want to hear the latest? George Bush overturned the Preserving Forest Act. That's it for me now. This is it. I saw the Nobel Peace Prize concert. I don't know if you had a chance to catch it on the E! Channel with Oprah Winfrey and Tom Cruise. I can't believe they have not shown it again. They have not been repeating it for some reason. Usually, E! Channel repeats their concerts throughout the month. And they also kicked off Howard Stern, so I wonder what's going on over there because this concert was honoring a woman, an African doctor, who planted over 33 million trees. She has done so much work. Her thesis says that ecology is our connection to peace. That same week, George Bush came out and I fear that somehow that concert was squashed. I'm seriously, seriously upset about it. I was beyond words. When I heard about Bush overturning the act, it was one of the most heinous things I had ever heard. Now they're going to go into our forests and parks.

ICONOCLAST: And where did this environmental streak come from in you?

GERARD: I'm a nature baby. I'd say that the only two things that inspire me in life are nature and music. Those two are my very being. I'm not as dedicated as Mother Teresa, but I have that vibe completely.

ICONOCLAST: What has been the reaction to the clothing line?



GERARD: The best way to put it is the women love it, and testosterone are thinking about it. (laughing) It's the truth. I don't know why. The word "testosterone" probably describes it. I really don't know why. That's one thing I cannot understand. I was unpleasantly surprised. I thought it would be equal across the board. I really did. Especially in California. Northern California is a little bit more open to it but still. Women are buying it more than men. They're buying it for the guys, too. The Europeans, they buy it. American men uh-uh very few. The women are definitely the ones. Any woman. The gay men love it. I'm based in a gay neighborhood.

ICONOCLAST: Has the response grown stronger since the Nov. 2 election?

GERARD: Oh yeah. Absolutely. We're still working on the store. If that store had been open right now, this Christmas would have been a blow out. I know it would. We're doing corporate gifts. We did 80 T-shirts, and we packaged them beautifully for this one woman who is a manager of A-list movie stars. She gave all of her 80 clients a peace sign T-shirt. We're talking Benicio Del Toro, Bridget Fonda, Kris Kristofferson... the list goes on and on.

ICONOCLAST: We've already discussed how have you personally changed in the three years since the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, but do you feel safer? You've been quoted as saying that you didn't know what peace was until you came to America. You said, "You can smell it. Every one of your senses goes berserk." Has the smell of peace changed in the last three years

since you started the line?

GERARD: My safety thing is gone. I wouldn't feel any safer in Russia now than I do here. I'm not being extreme or melodramatic. I still love this country. I don't want to move from here, but the thing is that I could move somewhere else and feel the same. I'm not saying Iraq, but we're there, too, aren't we? (laughs) You don't want to know my suspicions. (laughs) I'm from a time and a place where I can smell the stench of dictatorship like this. Once you've been in it, you can never get it out from underneath your nails, like a dead, burning body. The olfactory glands are a part of our memory glands. This is crap from the very top. These guys are government criminals. Renegade cowboys. I just never would have believed the Bush family would have turned out to be more powerful than the Kennedys. That's my shock. That's my ignorance. I also think they did a good job keeping it that way.

There is no smell of peace anymore. It's something I create now within myself as opposed to feeling like it's all around me. And I'm not stupid. I know. I was married to a police officer who was also a war historian, and he always told me that two-thirds of the world are in hand-to-hand combat at all times. It was really hard to fathom because of living here, but he knew what he was talking about. It's probably a true statistic. Now it's here.

My aunt and uncle came from Russia about 10 years ago to live here, and they were telling me how where they were there was — in Chechnya especially — you go to work with people, your next door neighbors, and you don't know if

"We donate a lot to local shelters and charities for women who are abused and are in transition. The truth is peace starts at home."

— Julia Gerard

they're terrorists. That's how infiltrated they are. And we're probably on our way there right now.

This is something very weird. About 12 years ago, someone dropped a Watch Tower (a Jehovah's Witness publication) on my doorstep. It talked about how the next war will be a terrorist war, not war as we know it, and they totally predicted this. I'm not a Jehovah's Witness or anything of the sort, but I can't get that out of my mind. It had a map of the Muslim population throughout the world. I was shocked to see — because I don't even think about these things, right? — I was shocked to see how many Muslims there are in Russia and in China. I guess it's been going on for years. My aunt and uncle were just confirming what the publication said. Japan is sticking to their agreements, saying that they're not allowed to war, so they're working through the economy. I guess people will war no matter what. It's just so difficult. I'm not obsessed with war. I'm obsessed with the end of war. That's probably why I don't have any kids either.

ICONOCLAST: To which global causes are you donating the proceeds of your "Clothing for Peace" line?

GERARD: Definitely I will be donating to the United Nations because I think that they take care of a lot of things. I'm also afraid they're on their way out. I just feel like their power has been so diminished, especially during the investigation of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. I felt like the U.N. was so discounted, literally like on sale, like a Wal-mart sale. They became so cheapened, and they're not. The world got cheapened. It was one of the most horrific scenes I had ever seen because I had always wanted to be a translator for the U.N. Somehow I have an affinity for that organization. We're making an incredible quilt right now to donate to them. It's a lot of work, so I don't know how long it's going to take. I just want them to have it. I don't care what they do with it. We donate a lot to local shelters and charities for women who are abused and are in transition. The truth is peace starts at home.

ICONOCLAST: I live in Central Texas on a journalist's salary. What in the "Peace" line is in my price range?

GERARD: Everything I sell is from \$5 to \$50,000, from
Continued On Next Page



• **JULIA GERARD ... Continued From Page 7**

candles to sculptures. The T-shirts are \$45 and up. My goal is to have everybody in the world to wear something with a peace symbol on it or some form of the peace sign. I know how much it helped me, not that it changed me, but it really helped me. It took my focus off that heinous stuff I was thinking about. I was into annihilation. Literally. And it's the very thing that happened to my family. I don't have any aunts or uncles that are on my dad's side. You don't want to turn into the thing you hate, you know?

ICONOCLAST: Have you heard of BuyBlue.com?
GERARD: BuyBlue.com? No.
ICONOCLAST: It's a website that digs around to uncover the political ties of corporations, so consumers can make informed buying decisions that coincide with their beliefs.

GERARD: I love that, yeah.
ICONOCLAST: Do you purchase products based on what the political views of the leadership of that company who manufactured that product are?

GERARD: I've had two or three inheritances in my life, and each one of them involved stock portfolios. The pharmaceutical companies are the ones I got rid of first. They are the most disgusting drug dealers on the planet. As soon as I find out something lousy about the corporation, I sell their stock, whether I would make money on it or not. I'm definitely that way. I resent the fact that these pharmaceutical companies have cures, and they will not put them out there because coming back to the drug dealer is much more profitable.
GERARD: You know what? I think they are people who happen to be in public who would have that opinion anyway. I think it's just a part of who they are. There are a lot of designers who I know who wouldn't give a flip about the person sitting right next to them. I've seen it. Some people just have that streak in them. That's all it is. And look at what happened this time around in the election. How many musicians who wouldn't care ordinarily, who wouldn't get involved politically, who went so out of there way to make a concert happen to encourage people to vote, because they know that insanity is going on. If that doesn't move people, I guess nothing will.

I think it's just a natural thing in a human being. They would do it in a big way, a little way, whatever way they could. My parents were too afraid to speak. I wasn't. It's a good thing my dad got me out of Russia.

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Have you seen Chris Rock's

State Agency To Host Informational Meeting For Prospective Foster, Adoptive Parents

AUSTIN — Child protective services is offering a free information meeting for prospective foster and adoptive parents Tuesday, Jan. 11, at 7 p.m., at Hillcrest Baptist medical Center's Julian Pace Administration Building, 5th Floor, #507, 3000 Herring Ave. in Waco.

"We have a huge need for foster and adoptive homes for children of all ages," said Zanell Dorsey, a regional recruiter for CPS foster and adoptive program. "We have children ranging in age from newborn to 17, children who are part of sibling groups who would like to stay together and children with special medical and emotional needs. These children come from ethnic backgrounds, but they all have one thing in common: a need for a safe and loving home."

Caseworkers will provide information about the selection criteria and training required to become a foster or adoptive parent. Current foster or adoptive parents will also be available to share their experiences and answer questions at the meeting. There is no fee to become a foster or adoptive parent with CPS, and financial assistance is available.

For more information about fostering and adopting children through CPS, visit the organization's website. For

more information about the meeting, call the toll-free number.

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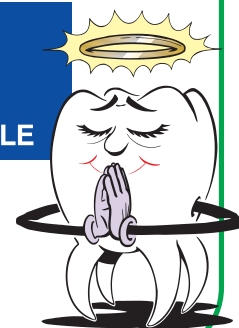
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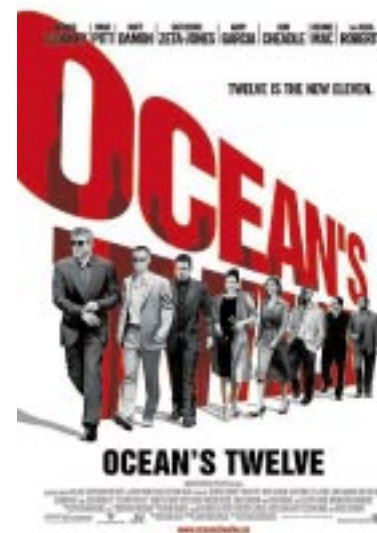
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take on the drug companies? He's brilliant: "There ain't money in the cure. When was the last time they cured anything? Polio!" It's true! My mother just went through seven years of cancer. You should see the bills from the insurance companies. It's so intertwined. I think if they allowed a cure for cancer, the whole economy would fall apart. I swear. Cancer keeps this country alive. It's insanity.



Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) saw Danny Ocean (George Clooney) and his gang (Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, and others) steal \$160 million from one of his casinos, and now he wants the money back, with interest. To avoid Benedict's wrath, Ocean rounds up his crew of thieves and jets to Europe with plans to score loot in Rome, Paris, and Amsterdam, including Rembrandt's "De Nachtwacht" painting.

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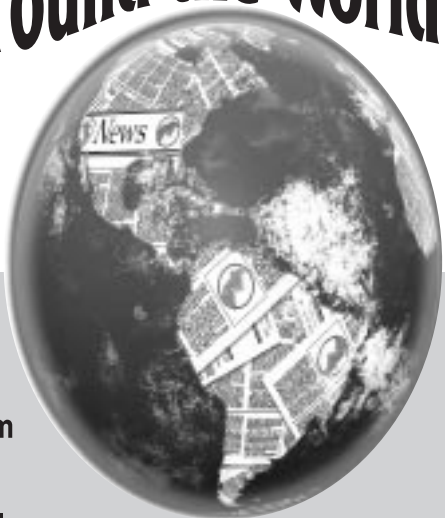
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Send Your Conscience To Support Tsunami Victims

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If we're so anxious to civilize the heathen, why do we keep tormenting them with guns and missionaries?"

A week or so ago, if someone had asked me to name the most beautiful parts of the planet, I would have included Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.

As a former geography teacher, if someone had asked me to pick the worst place in the world for an earthquake, I would have probably said the mouth of the Bay of Bengal.

At the end of this column, you will find two websites listing places where you can send your conscience.

Don't worry about how little you send.

We're talking about places where, in the best of times, you can buy a child for ten bucks.

But here's some free advice; it's probably worth exactly what you pay for it.

Include with your contribution a letter requesting that ALL your gift be used for relief efforts; none for administration.

That is not to say that all charities are thieves.

First, you have to define thievery.

Most theft is done in the name of Deity or necessity, and the greatest sins are committed in the name of God.

Second, if you give a gift, do you have a right to say what the receiver does with it?

Finally, remember, you're giving your money to the charity, not the tsunami victims.

Which leads us once again to question the unquestionable, or that which contemporary political rhetoric calls unquestionable.

Consider these: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

I could make a joke here about the sanctity of the Mass, but I won't.

Sure I will. WMD's are bad, right? They should be destroyed? Wrong.

Other nations' gas, pet germs and nukes should be destroyed. We want to keep ours.

Funny that they don't see it that way. Why wouldn't anybody want to put the lives of whole populations in the hands of nice

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



guys like us?

But there is a fundamental flaw in weapons treaties in general.

We live in a world where population is a weapon and hunger is its detonator.

In such cases, there is no more dangerous weapon than a cheap rifle.

And we all know how popular gun control can be.

You don't have to worry about expensive bomb delivery systems. With a half billion people, they can hand-carry it over here.

They don't need weapons treaties.

They need supper. STRICT IMMIGRATION POLICY

Let's move it a little closer to home.

Suppose Mexico's poverty breeds an Osama bin Garcia.

Would he find an audience? Think we're having a tough time in Baghdad?

Try Juarez.

Maybe we ought to think about our kinder, gentler labor exploitation.

It could be that a couple of propagandist presidents meeting in a border town cutting hip-pocket business deals in Spanish doesn't mean much to a guy who'll walk a hundred miles of desert or suffocate in a boxcar just to earn seven bucks an hour.

INSURGENTS

They don't hate us for our freedom.

They hate us for our money.

Which we get to spend because we wear Wal-Mart shirts from exploited children so poor they think selling their souls for five bucks a day is one hell of a deal.

They hate us because they aren't us and don't stand a chance of becoming us without trading centuries of cultural values for televised indifference and a comforting understanding of firepower.

Little mention of the Asian tsunami coverage has been

given to the fact that a some bloody and prolonged rebellions have been interrupted by a wall of water.

Those rebellions may find that the sea has left more fertile soul for hatred of the way things are run there.

But then that is up to us, isn't it?

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/122804dnmethelpbox.5>

www.wacotrib.com/news/content/shared/news/yearinreview/photos/tsunami/help.html



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

'05's Brave New World

There has always been a certain amount of argument about whether government is an exercise in trickle-up influence or trickle-down rule. Since 9-11, trickle-down has won out.

The two modes can be explained this way: Trickle-up is the populace telling those in government what to do;

trickle-down is the government telling the people what to do, but doing so carefully so that they will more readily go along with it. And it helps to cloak it in secrecy or emphasize that it's part of a war effort.

As 2005 emerges, it will be interesting to see just how many freedoms will be robbed from Americans this year. Although most do not realize it, a new, stealthier version of the Patriot Act has been approved. It was renamed so as not to draw attention to itself and get the public into an uproar. With the passage of time comes acceptance, for each day lets the ink dry on acts that become history.

Investigations into the presidential vote in Ohio have revealed that the election was compromised in a major way, eliminating any possibility that the election was fair. On Jan. 6, the government has an opportunity to right this wrong to democracy by refusing to certify the Ohio electors. That will be a red-letter day in history, for its ramifications are deep.

Our question is "Will Congress act to save democracy?" Our guess is "Probably not." The conventional wisdom in Washington is that the people do not deserve a fair election; only reassuring propaganda.

America is in what President Bush likes to call a war with Iraq, a "war" that we created. Scheduled in January are that country's first so-called elections as a democracy. How many of our readers know who is running, what they are running for, how that country's constitution

is written, and just what power those electors will have? Will Iraqis be voting by machine or paper ballot? Who is supplying the machines? Will they have independent monitors? Who is going to determine who is eligible to vote? You'd think this would be important, due to our

cost in lives and dollars, but dare we say, few Americans know what is going on over there. Perhaps it is better that we don't know. No use upsetting the government's hidden agenda until it can be "spinned."

There has been an intense attempt to divide America into two historical slices: pre-9-11 and post-9-11 frames of thought, and in doing

so to relegate pre-9-11 thinkers as naive, while also redefining history prior to that date as being somewhat irrelevant. We encourage the true freedom-fighters in our government to roll the clock back to 9-11 and thoroughly re-investigate what happened and where that day of disaster has taken us. Reevaluate the tradeoffs between safety and freedom, between security and liberty, between democracy and fraud.

Does this country have any reachable, positive goals that extend to the current generation? If we do, what are they? And are they the goals of the people or the goals of those who acquire wealth from either the spoils of war or from big corporate comradeship with government?

The coming year could be one filled with answers, but we are not holding our breath. As long as apathy reigns, the dominant spin machines will celebrate as they lip-sync for the ventriloquists who manufacture weapons for gain. And liberties, one by one, will be voided and marked for deletion, all in the name of security. This is a prediction that we hope does not come true.

— W. Leon Smith



Other Austin Was Unhappy Has-Been

Limping up Buffalo Bayou in a leaky ship, Henry Austin landed at Harrisburg on Dec. 29, 1830.

No one loathes poverty quite as much as the tortured soul, who once had money but let it slip through his fingers. Stephen F. Austin's first cousin was just such an unhappy has-been, a pathetic prisoner of his wealthy past that spent his last 40 years searching for a paradise lost.

Elijah Austin was a New England merchant, who broke the commercial ice with China and made a fortune in Far East trade. Cutting short his son Henry's childhood in 1794, he sent the 12-year-old on a cruise to the Orient as a cabin boy.

Henry came back from Asia to find his father struck down by yellow fever in the prime of life. While still in his teens, he replaced an older but inept brother as the head of the house and boss of the family business.

Despite his youth and inexperience, Henry was up to the challenge. He not only cared for his younger siblings but in the spirit of his audacious sire

sailed to the Persian Gulf and cut a lucrative deal with Arab exporters.

There was no room in Henry's hectic routine for a day off until 1806, when he finally took a vacation. He went to Missouri to visit his uncle and 13 year old cousin. A messy matter involving money later ruined his relationship with Moses Austin, but he retained the friendship of his son Stephen.

Henry married in 1814 and fathered six children over the next decade. The baby boom coincided with a sharp decline in income from the shipping business, which Henry tried to offset by sinking his shrinking capital into numerous risky ventures. But he had somehow lost his Midas touch and awoke one morning on the brink of bankruptcy.

Ignoring an open invitation from Stephen to assist in the colonization of Texas, proud Henry preferred to go it alone. Though unfamiliar with the customs and conditions, he went to Mexico in 1825 with high hopes of recouping his recent losses.

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



Five unsuccessful years later, Henry was only deeper in debt. Disavowing any personal responsibility for the disappointing outcome, he blamed his failure on the alleged character flaws of an entire nation. "There is such an inveterate jealousy and so much perfidy in the Mexican people," he whined, "that nothing conducted by a stranger can succeed if they can prevent it."

Texas suddenly did not seem so bad, and Henry happily took Stephen up on his standing offer. He picked a choice homestead on the Brazes River and sent for his family to join him.

While waiting for his loved ones, Henry tried to earn an extra dollar hauling freight to New Orleans. Damaging the hull of his ship in a close encounter with a sand bar, he overruled the worried crew and pig-headedly refused to stop for repairs.

Sure enough, the vessel began to take on water out in the Gulf of Mexico forcing Henry to hurry to the nearest port. By the time he docked at Harrisburg, the water-logged ship could even be sold for scrap.

Texas was the perfect place for starting over, Henry assured his long suffering wife. But she did not survive her second frontier winter and was soon followed to the grave by a delicate daughter.

The grief-stricken husband and father sent the rest of his children back east to live with relatives. "Poor man!" observed a sympathetic sister. "How misfortunes are heaped upon him."

Henry scrambled to keep a roof over his head and to pay his kids' expenses. But Texas was not his promised land, and he faced the fact that his best days were behind him.

As political tensions increased in the province, Henry heeded Stephen's advice to keep a low profile. Realizing any opinion he expressed would reflect upon the empresario, he rarely commented on public affairs.

Once the rebellious die was cast, however, Stephen expected those Texans who shared his surname to do their patriotic part. He was deeply embarrassed by Henry's scandalous failure to fight and ill-timed departure for the United States only days after the fall of the Alamo.

When his controversial cousin had not put in an appearance two months after the Battle of San Jacinto, Stephen jotted off an angry letter. Insisting upon his immediate return, he wrote, "You ought to be here!"

Criticism of his war-time conduct mystified and offended Henry. Had he not paid two of his employees to take his place in the Texas army? Their wages not to mention their arms and ammunition had cost him a pretty penny. What more could he have done?

The veterans of the Lone Star Revolution felt Henry Austin should have been right there with them in the thick of the fighting. Hard times may have hardened his heart, but adversity was no excuse for cowardice.



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Unexpected Visitors At The Ranch

It seems we have some unexpected visitors at the ranch. . . again. They come every year, like swallows returning to Capistrano. If you ever wondered where ladybugs like to winter, look no further. When the temperature drops, they pack up their little polka-dot sun suits and head for our kitchen. Who knew we would be the destination spa of Bosque County for the insect crowd? We have found a few bugs in other locations, but for the most part, they prefer the southeast corner of this particular farmhouse. They don't seem to like the other one nearly so much.

I think the little critters' main ports of entry are the old sash weight window mechanisms. (I feel a children's book idea coming on). We scoop them up and escort them out, only to find them again (or dozens more of their friends) in an hour or so. Finally, we had to capitulate on the relocation project. . . . just couldn't keep up with them.

I don't mind swatting a fly or mosquito, certainly not a wasp or yellow jacket. But squash a ladybug? I think NOT. Sadly for the insects, they only last a few hours or days, and end up deceased, usually on the floor. . . .sometimes elsewhere, like in the cat food. Then the cats look up at us like, "What kind of establishment IS this? There's a bug in my soup".

Every morning as the room heats up, there begins the daily parade of ladybugs across the ceiling. They move with such purpose! But if they have a destination in mind, I have yet to determine it. Where is there to go?

They sometimes flit by as I stand at the sink, washing dishes, gazing out into the Sudan field. (I'm usually hoping to sight a few deer, some raccoons, maybe a fox). The first week the ladybugs were back, I found their flight patterns across my range of vision disconcerting. We were still deep into "fly season" then. So my first reaction to miniature aviators in my kitchen was not at all favorable. But my learning curve kicked in quickly and told the old brain, "Only a ladybug." Not filthy. Not dirty. Just a ladybug. Now I barely flinch unless they land on me, which is still somewhat startling.

The ladybugs have been returning to this house for several years now that I am aware of. And we're not the only ones to host an entomological bed and breakfast. I thought our appeal had something to do with the age of the house and it's likely less than desirable structure. I mean, it's probably an engineering marvel that it's still standing after more than 100 years, put together as it is from two or three different buildings. There must be all kinds of old nooks and crannies under the siding that would be attractive lodging

for these creatures.

It turns out some of our friends also have winter ladybug visitors. (I hesitate to use the word "infestation". It seems so. . . dirty!) And their homes are much newer, much, larger, and certainly of higher caliber construction. —Seems ladybugs are equal opportunity visitors, though. They don't necessarily go only for the five star accommodations. They choose to frequent our humble abode as often as the more pricey real estate.

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.

I read an article on the subject of ladybug visitors in a popular woman's magazine last year. Turns out this is a common problem in other areas of the country as well. Just

not for everyone. There are only a lucky few of us who are graced by the presence of these gentle creatures. I choose to think of it as good luck. (It's less aggravating that way). And there seems to be no easy solution short of fumigation. (We already did that before we moved into the house, and it has been highly effective for all other insects!)

The author of the article I read chose, as we have (at least for now), to tolerate the temporary situation with grace

and humor, to welcome the little insects back year after year (because we simply have no other realistic choice). We see the return of the ladybugs as one of those occurrences that mark time in our lives. With the change of season they come to us. End of story.

If you should visit us as the ladybugs make their purposeful way across the ceiling, over the wavy glass panes of the old windows, up and down walls, we hope you will graciously pretend not to notice.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To W. Leon Smith and Don M. Fisher,

I just want to commend you on writing this fabulous article. Once again, you shine like a beacon of light on our fragile and perhaps disintegrating democracy.

We, and the millions of Americans who KNOW, without a shadow of a doubt, that this election was STOLEN, once again applaud your courage and conviction to come forward and speak the truth. For the truth shall always prevail over lies and deception.

"A little patience, and we shall see the reign of witches pass over; their spells dissolve, and the people, recovering their true sight, restore their government to its true principles. It is true that in the meantime we are suffering deeply in spirit, and incurring the horrors of a war and long oppressions of enormous public debt. If the game runs sometimes against us at home we must have patience till luck turns, and then we shall have an opportunity of winning back the principles we have lost, for this is a game where principles are at stake." -Thomas Jefferson, 1798

Kudos to you,

S.D., Bend, OR

Dear Iconoclast staff:

First I would like to thank you and everyone there for being a "beacon of light" in a very strange time indeed in American history.

Brushing aside the insanity of it all, it is quite clear to the likes of folks like you, that first and foremost in our country's obligations is to "do good in the name of the Sovereign," plain and simple.

When I looked at your page recently I had noticed you have taken on a new look — but then, on second glance, I thought, no, not really, you guys have always (so long as I have known you) been truthful and straightforward the whole distance.

That is the recipe for ultimate success — to be on the right path and stay there. As soon as I am able, I will become a lifelong subscriber of your paper.

You guys made history. And what a proud history it was.

Also know that the editorials, such as your recent one entitled Ohio - Ground Zero (written By W. Leon Smith and Don M. Fisher) and several others I have read are, bar none, some of the best (academic, well thought out) editorials that I have ever read on the net (and

not to polish my brass, but I post graduate person, and a very critical reader).

At any rate, your editorials are excellent and beyond reproach.

L.D., *Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin*

Dear Mr. W. Leon Smith and Mr. Don M. Fisher:

I very much appreciate your excellent editorial about the Ohio recount ("Ohio — Ground Zero"). This issue is crucial to our democracy, and I just can't thank you enough for your words of wisdom.

Sincerely,

S.Z., *San Francisco, CA*

To The Editor:

Ohio - Ground Zero..Thank you for the opinion titled Ohio-ground zero. Unless there is a full investigation and recount I will never believe the results of the 2004 election. There are too many "irregularities" that favored Bush, in too many different places. What's wrong with looking into it and making sure? If it is about the cost, I'm sure we can suspend some costs of Star Wars to generate enough money to investigate.

P

To the Editor:

Thank you, thank you for your editorial calling for a fair recount in Ohio. If only more newspapers were willing to speak the truth. I applaud you!

W.M.

Hello,

I have been meaning to subscribe to your paper ever since I read on www.buzzflash.com that after you had NOT endorsed George Bush for reelection you lost advertisers and patrons. This is the United States and we are supposed to be able to speak our minds and disagree if we want. Of course it helps that I happen to agree with your assessment of George Bush and the current political situation, so I put my money where my mouth is- I just subscribed. A friend of mine in Colorado subscribed earlier and she says she enjoys your paper very much. I am looking forward to receiving it. Please keep up the good work and speak up!

D.M., *El Segundo, CA*

To The Editor:

I just had to drop a note to thank you for acknowledging the voting problems in Ohio. Today is the first day I have seen reference to the Ohio recount in my hometown newspaper, THE EUGENE REGISTER GUARD, in the form of an AP story.

I find it so painfully ironic

that these past two weeks the media has spent an inordinate amount of time on the Ukrainian election and has entirely discounted what is absolutely an attack on democracy in this country. People in America just don't seem to realize that democracy must be practiced and used, it's like working to maintain a healthy marital relationship. We can't just hope that democracy survives. If the 59,000,000 of us who voted for John Kerry were to take to the streets for 1/2 hour at a certain time on a certain day, it would be noticed. I am utterly frustrated by American complacency, the attitude that someone else will do the work. We've become a lazy bunch, but thank God for those of you who have the courage to do the hard work. We appreciate you —

C.W., *Eugene, OR*

To The Editor:

Please allow me to join my wee little voice with all the others who are speaking out about what is going on in my country. It is appalling to me that no one seems to notice these things, except for people like you, who raise their voices. My hope is that we won't ALL be standing here silently while they carve numbers on our forearms and make us salute a graven image called the "W God." The sad thing is this is the first time in my life when I have been terrified of my government.

Going to go subscribe to your paper. It's the least I can do.

Thank you!

M.P., *Austin, Texas*

To The Editor:

God bless you brave souls for trying to keep honesty and democracy alive! I admire your courage and hope the (sorry, folks) bastards don't try to shut you down. PLEASE keep up the fight that almost every other "journalist" has given up.

a school teacher from California

To The Editor:

re: Ohio Recount Editorial
Mr. Smith and Mr. Fisher, just a love note from over here in the heart of the Red Belt. Apparently much of the media considers us folks "in the red" as one vast army out gunning for detractors of your neighbor Mr. Bush. Let me tell you, that ain't even half so.

There is flat out no telling how many voting machines in how many states were rigged, or how many computers that counted the votes were "adjusted" in Bush's favor at the

last minute. We know for a fact that goon squads from other states invaded our polling places where young and minority voters were concentrated, and without any penalty whatsoever intimidated people and ran them off before they got a chance to vote.

One more thing we know for sure: the Bush machine did not intend to lose, anymore than it intended to lose in 1992, or 2000. As Bill Clinton learned, and alas aided and abetted, that steamroller gets mighty rough when somebody gets in its way. And it does not intend to relinquish its power, ever, henceforth. We have got one colossal mess on our hands, and I am personally thankful to people (like you) with the courage to speak out, and keep speaking. It may take a lot to wake up the walking brain-dead so don't grow weary.

May the God of the Scriptures (as opposed to the horned red god of Mr. Bush) hover over you and sustain you, however long it takes.

Most gratefully,

D.J., *Six Mile, SC*

To The Editor:

Great!

You people are so dam smart. Great job supporting the effort to expose the vote fraud. I don't want to live in a phony democracy. We need you to continue to speak up to push the rich-guy media to report on this issue and expose the fake president. Thank You.

S.W., *Las Vegas, NV*

To The Editor:

Just to say I support your clear, direct, open, honest brand of no-frills, (the highest form) DEMOCRACY.

How reassuring to find in print, those I agree with totally. Keep up the great work (and writing).

B.F.

Dear Editor:

I want to thank you for giving me a subscription to what has to be the boldest weekly newspaper in Texas. Your journalistic integrity is appreciated by me, and the listening audience I share your newspaper with. In my quest to keep my vast audience informed (Austin based but shared with listeners around the world on the Internet), I rely on newsprint to supply me with relevant talking points each day.

I received my third issue of the Lone Star Iconoclast today and must say each issue seems to get better. I will open my show tomorrow with the "Prove It!" challenge from Philanthropist Jimmy Walter: I just viewed "9/11 In Plane Site" and find it very disturbing to say the least. I have a number of listeners who have a copy of the documentary and contend, as Mr. Walter does, there is a disconnect between what the nation was told about the disaster and the truth.

I don't know how many of my listeners will salute you by taking out a subscription to your newspaper, but I suspect a number of them will. Austin-Travis County is a blue island in a red state, and my talk show is an oasis for those thirsting for the truth.

Having the LSI at my disposal will only give more aid and comfort to a growing number of weary citizens needing a daily dose of the truth to quench their thirst for change. Thank you again for adding a huge canteen to my supply.

Peace.

FG., Jr., *Austin*

To The Editor:

I, too, along with apparently many others, subscribed to your paper as a way of applauding your very brave stand with your endorsement of Sen. Kerry. In all honesty, I did not think I would read it.

However, I DO read it, enjoy it more than the local paper and look forward to its arrival each week.

Well done.

PL., *Raleigh, NC*

To The Editor:

The Brand New Evil Empire

You hear it repeated like a mantra every time a story comes across the wire about voting irregularities in the Presidential campaign.

"Oh we're not disputing the outcome. We just need to address some...things."

How timid have we become as a nation and as a people that we must look to the Ukraine of all places for an example of a democracy with some teeth.

These people, inheritors of our long lost democratic legacy have taken the basic premise and did us one better. They had elections and irregularities and a contested outcome. Except they stepped up to the plate. They dug in, held their ground and did not go quietly.

Colin Powell held a press conference to announce that the United States could not accept the results of an election so steeped in allegations of voter fraud. If only he'd said it about three weeks earlier.

But hey, maybe we'll get lucky and when Mr. Yushchenko gives his inauguration speech, He'll say to his people and the whole wide world

"Mr. Bush, Tear Down This Wall"

And then, we can all get a taste of this new thing called democracy that the Europeans and Iraqis are always going on and on about.

D.M., *Winston Salem, NC*

To The Editor:

In the tradition of Muckrakers!

I have a subscription to your paper and I love it. I recently read the article about Jimmy Walker—amazing stuff! I believe Mr. Walker may be cor

Continued On Next Page

MAILBAG ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

rect. I am a New Yorker and I have always felt that the way the towers collapsed was very strange indeed. I won't pass on my speculations because they are just that conjectures but as one who was there I believe that Mr. Walker has hit the nail on the head.

THE NEW YORK TIMES has not even covered such a story.

Be proud to be the paper that you are!

N.G., Staten Island, NY
Dear Editor,

I subscribed to the Iconoclast after reading about it in the Democratic Underground. I wanted to support you for your extraordinary editorial supporting Kerry. I thought I wouldn't be reading it when I got it because I thought there would be mostly local stories, but I have been astounded at the high quality of the choice of articles, the interviews and the diversity of topics, all of interest to me.

I want to share a comment from a friend to whom I gave a subscription for Christmas.

"Wow! I got your envelope yesterday with the "prelude" info to the Iconoclast and I received my first issue today.

"This is a *WONDERFUL *treat, whooda thunk something this moxie could come out of the boonies of Texas? This is like having Michael Moore as a personal pen pal...too good to be true! Thank you so very much for this "lifter of spirits." I am *so* pleased. And you KNOW my Mom will be reading each issue, too, before we pass it on to like-minded friends...like the news editor of the East Oregonian, our local paper."

I also wanted to comment to R.R.'s letter in the Dec 15 issue saying that the right has the police and military on their side. As a former military member, I can assure R.R. that this is not a given. Like the praetorian guards have done in the past, the emperor can be unseated if the military is dissatisfied.

Appreciative of your excellent newspaper,

C.V., Prescott, AZ
To The Editor:

President Bush, still and yet again, is attempting to remake the world to his personal specifications. By hook or by crook, he is determined to achieve exemption from the International Criminal Court for any actions by U.S. citizens, military forces, or foreign nationals working for the U.S.

The ICC, established in 1998

under international mandate, is charged to investigate and prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and other atrocities and has been endorsed by 139 countries. Every country in the European Union, and all NATO members except Turkey have signed, including President Clinton for the United States. But 'W' renounced this treaty in 2002, closely following his denouncement with demands that U.S. nationals as well as foreign nationals working for the U.S. actually be shielded from ICC jurisdiction, thus flipping the whole idea of the ICC on its head.

Bush says his demands are "necessary to protect U.S. soldiers operating in foreign countries," that "U.S. troops would be particularly vulnerable to politically inspired prosecutions by the ICC." Well, duh. Torture and abuse prisoners, fire on and kill unarmed civilians, maintain a can of abused worms down in Guantanamo, and you should be exactly the ICC's meat. But wait, there's more than just a simple flip-flop.

Bush and his conservative ilk in Washington have shaped and amended legislation that strips billions in military, domestic and economic aid to dozens of countries just for ratifying the ICC and having the audacity to expect every nation to be accountable for the atrocities of its military and 'freelancers'. One would think the administration might have developed some sensitivity to the hazards of poking the eyes of most of the civilized nations of the world. Again, and sadly, one would be wrong. And so the Bush administration continues to gouge out its niche in history as the most intolerant, insensitive, and arrogant in this country's entire 230 years of existence.

Millions of people disagree with the President's plan to "adjust" Social Security or Medicare or the tax structure, feeling that promised benefits are better than open market potluck. Yet President Bush wants to develop the 'ownership society', helping people to grasp their piece of the pie. How to reconcile all the different opinions?

Laura Flanders outlined a solution in a program she put forward on Air America radio: Let's privatize the military! Everybody can be responsible for the security of his/her own personal space and that of his/

her family members. The government could jumpstart the program by issuing vouchers, similar to their intentions for schools, which could be turned in for the armament of your choice. As Ms. Flanders observed, not everybody is going to want an M1 Abrams tank, or even a big artillery piece; some will opt for a bakers' dozen assault rifles, maybe a couple machine guns or a handful of land mines or grenades. Others will want all they can get, and if they can afford it, I say, "Go for it!"

That's the beauty of this program. Everybody gets to buy in at his/her own level - survival of the fittest. How you defend yourself is your own choice, a much more modern idea, and it's got freedom written all over it. The best part is the market would set prices, just as it does now with health care, retirement plans, or medicine. That really should appeal to the 'supply-siders', and liberals and the anti-gun lobby could just opt out altogether if that's how they feel. The truth is, the promises made to the military far exceed the ability of the U.S. Treasury to deliver. We simply cannot continue borrowing to sustain a bloated Pentagon budget, one seemingly larger each year.

Unquestionably, there might be some disparities in preparedness - some Americans may have more training or innate ability to defend themselves - but no more so than the skill-set to plan for and manage your own retirement, for goodness sakes. Some defense contractors (probably only the weaker ones) might go under, and a few millions of families might be unable to afford to protect themselves. And maybe we wouldn't have the same level of participation when we'd like to invade another country or change some regime abroad, but after all, we can only go to war with the army we have, not the one we would want. Just think about the enormous cost overruns that could be avoided, the bureaucratic inefficiencies eliminated, the democracy of it all. I'm stunned nobody thought of this before Ms. Flanders.

Sure, there will be some details to work out; but trust me when I say, "We'll figure them out as we go along." The certain fact is, this problem is real, the crisis dire, and a solution must be found today, before it becomes more costly at some future date.

T.S., Newburgh, IN

To The Editor:

No More Questions, We Want Answers.

I'm really tired of hearing about how compassionate and caring our President is. A man of faith. A man of morals and family values.

Not only didn't he express OUTRAGE that Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has been sending out *form letters* to the bereaved families of our valiant soldiers killed in Iraq...

Not only didn't he ACKNOWLEDGE, let alone apologize for senseless remarks made by the same man when he essentially told our troops that he wished he had better, but he'd take what he can get....

But the questions still scream from the depths of our sensibilities...How many funerals has our President NOT attended? How many beheadings has he ignored and swept under a rug? How many of our sons and daughters were lost because he didn't properly equip them for battle? How many Iraqi nationals need to be slaughtered because we've turned them from innocents into "insurgents?" And, ultimately, why aren't our media journalists asking him these questions and many others?

We give him OUR best to send to fight his war, why doesn't he give us HIS best by protecting them as best he can, taking responsibility for those working for him, and showing remorse for errors in judgment and deed?

R.S., Lynbrook, NY
To The Editor:

How wonderful to read a newspaper that isn't afraid to speak truthfully! I have enjoyed your newspaper from the editorials to the stories about the election mess in Ohio. Keep up the great work in our President's "hometown." He needs to hear and read more than what his Yes-men and women are telling him.

S.L.

To The Editor:

You want to know why when news of prisoner torture percolated up the channels of the government nothing was done? The answer is quite simple. They condoned the actions. In fact, we now know that they were following an executive order from George W. Bush.

This isn't based on hearsay. This isn't a figment of some Massachusetts liberal's imagination. This allegation is based on an internal FBI document obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The document, a two-page FBI internal e-mail, references an Executive Order that states the President directly authorized interrogation techniques including sleep deprivation, stress positions, the use of military dogs, and "sensory

deprivation through the use of hoods, etc." The FBI e-mail, which was sent in May 2004 from "On Scene Commander—Baghdad" to a handful of senior FBI officials, notes that the FBI has prohibited its agents from employing the techniques that the President is said to have authorized.

Now... do you think the government released this e-mail freely? Nope. It took a federal judge in response to a freedom of information request lawsuit brought by the ACLU to force the release of this information. Why? Because the Bush Administration knows it is guilty of sponsoring the use of inhumane interrogation methods against Moslem detainees.

The Bush Administration has slipped down the slippery slope and fallen into Satan's den. The God that George Bush claims to speak to is not the one that Jesus speaks about. Torturing prisoners is not an activity that Christ would approve of. Christians around the world need to stand up and declare these actions immoral.

The people of the United States need to step up and demand an accounting from the Bush Administration. We need the Administration to stand up and tell the truth for a change. If they think they were right in ordering an abandonment of the Geneva Convention then let them stand up and say so. The fact that they are hiding and probably shredding information stands as proof that they know that they have broken the law.

This isn't a case where fully releasing pertinent information will harm the security of the United States. This isn't classified defense stuff. This is evidence in a criminal investigation. No wonder George Bush was against signing the European war crimes initiative.

A quick and dirty investigation by anybody with any ties with the Bush Administration is unacceptable. An independent prosecutor must be named with full subpoena powers. Anything less will be a charade.

There is more at stake here that the impeachment of George W. Bush. The very moral fiber of the United States of America is at risk. We have always been able to hold our heads high because we knew in our hearts and minds that we were on the moral high ground. To find out that our leader has embraced morally reprehensible behavior strikes at the very core of our American values.

The moment we decide that the ends justify the means is the moment that we become no better than our enemies. Turning the other cheek as Jesus suggests doesn't mean
Continued On Next Page

MAILBAG ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

being a patsy for the terrorist and bad guys of the world. But it certainly does mean that you should not take on the tactics of your attackers.

This low point in America's integrity needs to be turned into a high point. The only way this can become reality is for us to demonstrate to the world that we can police ourselves.

We must demonstrate that our words and our actions match. We must hold the Bush Administration accountable for its use of torture.

A.P.

Dear Editor,

It was reported that employees of the Department of Defense stole one hundred million taxpayer dollars last year. Has Mr. Rumsfeld identified any of the thieves? Has Mr. Rumsfeld gotten back any of our taxpayer dollars from the thieves? Have any of the thieves been punished? Did any of the thieves get fired? I haven't read anything about this theft since it was first reported.

E. J. Las Vegas, NV

To The Editor:

This is an open Letter to the President of the United States, Congress and the American

people. There is nothing greater than the American service member, it does not matter if they are male or female, it doesn't matter if they served in any of the branches of military. They either chose to wear the uniform or the local neighborhood draft board decided they needed to wear the uniform of the US. What these citizens deserve is the opportunity to have the Veterans administration to properly and competently handle all of their claims for service connected injuries. The veterans do not deserve to have a government agency that is deliberately throwing up block walls to obtain benefits, if you have proof, they just do not address the documents in their denial letters, my denials from the VA have been consistent for the past two years, none of them mention the fact, that during 1974 I was used as a human test subject for chemical warfare agents, drugs, and biological weapons, in other words I was a "guinea pig" at Edgewood Arsenal, it is one of the largest hazardous areas in the US, at the top of the list for clean up under the super-

fund. They are still finding hazardous chemicals buried there since WW1. Many men and women have died without ever having their claims approved by a fair system. The VA claims the procedure is non-adversarial, it isn't they just deny everything or ignore the evidence that proves your case. That's not adversarial, to

me that is criminal. I have written Sec Rumsfeld, Sec Principi for the past two years, with no help from either of them, I even wrote the White House asking for help, they sent the letter to the VA, the ever going merry go round. Please it is time to stop the merry go round, the American veteran deserves better.

M.B., West Columbia, SC

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