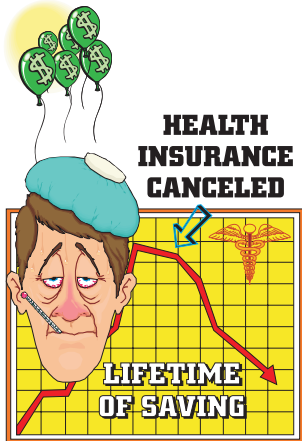


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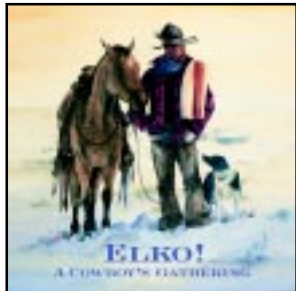


Medical Bills
Leading Cause Of Bankruptcies
Page 2

— Editorial —

Teacher Merit Pay Filled With Potholes

Page 10



Elko!

A Cowboy Gathering CD Offers Trip To Yesteryear
Page 9



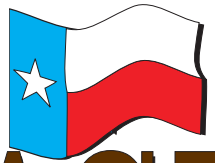
Religious Right Targets SpongeBob
Page 12



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The Lone Star ICONOCLAST



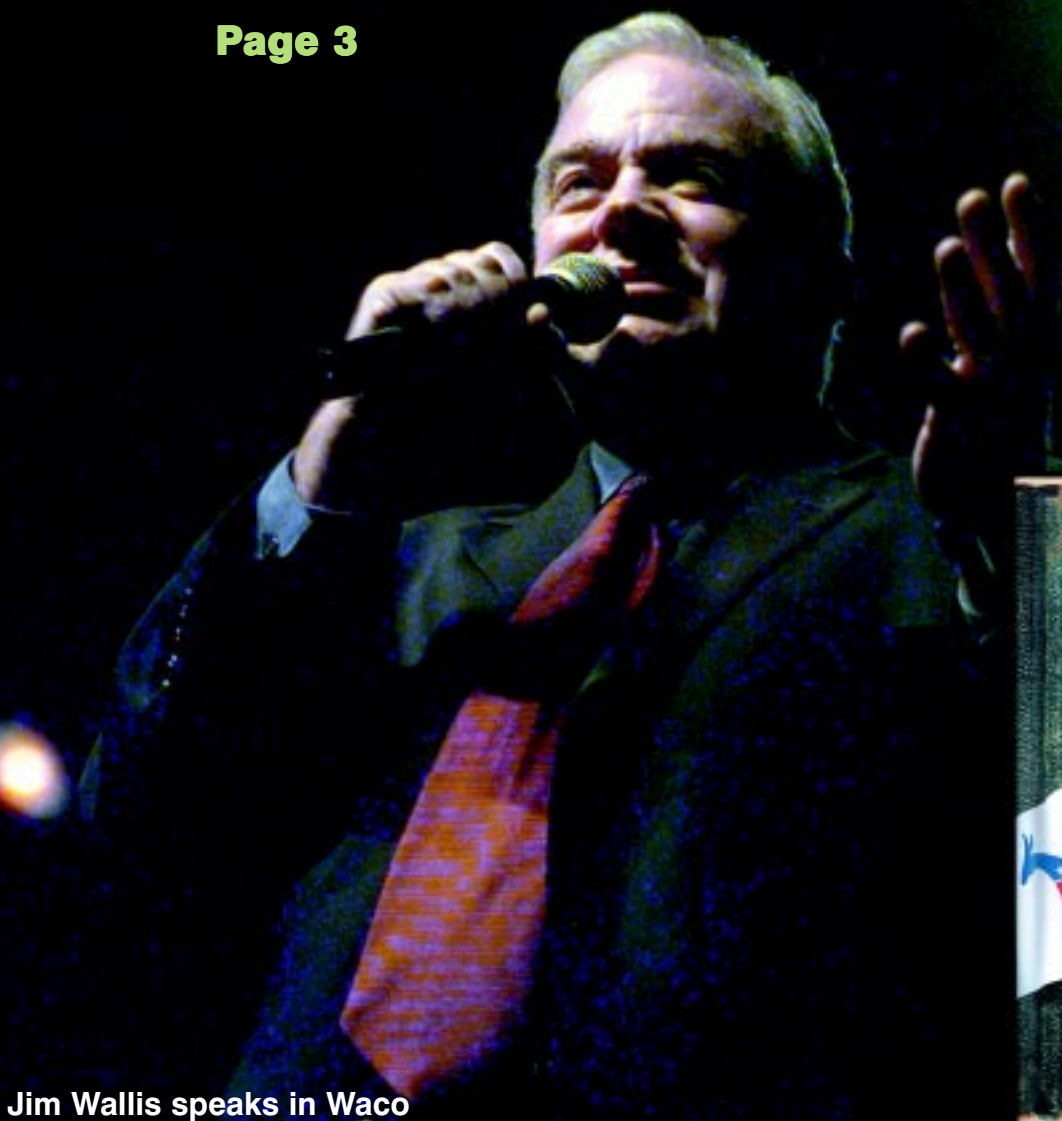
God's Politician:

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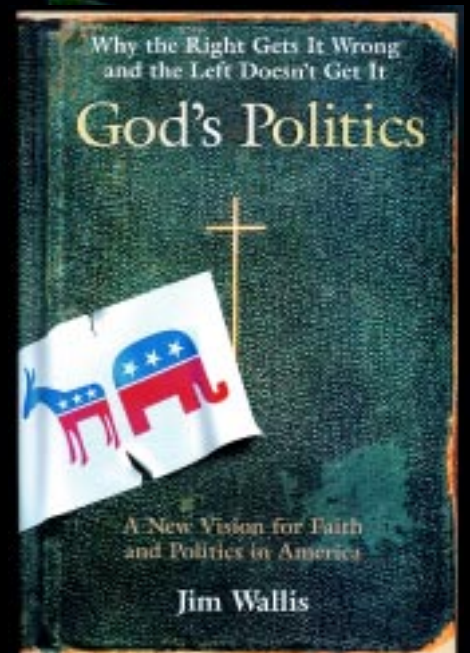
Page 3

'I disagree with him (Bush) profoundly, and I wouldn't be surprised if I, in a second Bush term, end up spending some time in jail.'

— Jim Wallis



Jim Wallis speaks in Waco



Unexpected Illness, Medical Bills Cause Half Of All Bankruptcies

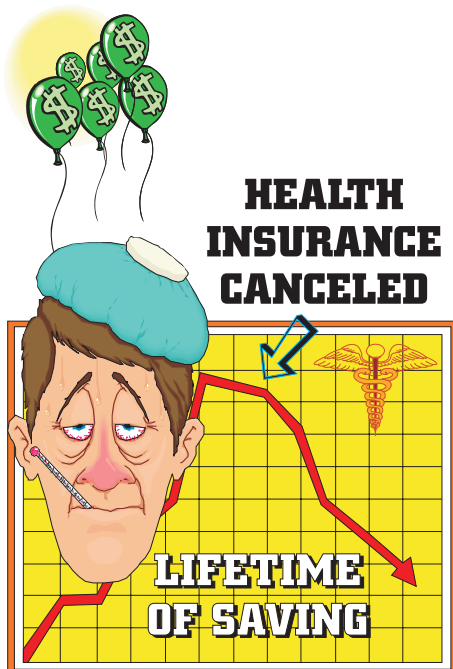
CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Medical problems contributed to about half of all bankruptcies, involving 700,000 households in 2001, according to a recent story published as a Web Exclusive by the journal *Health Affairs*.

Families with children were especially hard hit — about 700,000 children lived in families that declared bankruptcy in the aftermath of serious medical problems. Another 600,000 spouses, elderly parents, and other dependents brought the total number of people directly affected by medical bankruptcies to more than two million annually.

Surprisingly, most of those bankrupted by medical problems had health insurance. More than three-fourths were insured at the start of the bankrupting illness. Among those with private insurance, however, one-third had lost coverage at least temporarily by the time they filed for bankruptcy. Often illness led to job loss, and with it the loss of health insurance.

The research, carried out by researchers at Harvard Law School and Harvard Medical School, and supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is the first in-depth study of medical causes of bankruptcy. With the cooperation of bankruptcy judges in five Federal districts (in California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas) they administered questionnaires to 1,771 bankruptcy filers and reviewed their court records.

Dr. David Himmelstein, the lead author of the study and an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard, commented: "Our study is frightening. Unless you're Bill Gates, you're just one serious illness away from bankruptcy. Most of the medically bankrupt were average Americans who happened to get sick. Health insurance offered little protection. Families with coverage faced unaffordable co-payments, deductibles, and bills for uncovered items like physical therapy, psychiatric care, and prescription drugs. And even the best job-based health insurance often vanished when prolonged illness caused job loss — precisely when families need it most. Too often, private



health insurance is an umbrella that melts in the rain."

"When medical debts and lost income from illnesses leave families facing a mountain of bills, bankruptcy is their last chance to stop the collection calls and try to put their lives back on track," noted Elizabeth Warren, Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law at Harvard and a study co-author. Professor Warren, a leading expert on personal bankruptcy, went on: "Bankruptcy costs these families substantial assets and deep personal shame. A person may recover physically from a medical problem, but millions of Americans will never recover financially from their encounters with the health care system."

According to study co-author Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard and primary care physician in Cambridge, Mass.: "We need to rethink health reform. Covering the uninsured isn't enough. We must also upgrade and guarantee continuous coverage for those who have insurance. Only national health insurance can do that. But we're headed in the wrong direction. An increasing number of employers and politicians are peddling phony insur-

2 Million Americans Financially Ruined Each Year

ance—stripped down plans so riddled with co-payments, deductibles, and exclusions that serious illness leads

straight to bankruptcy. We need real health security, not counterfeit coverage."

In this sequel to MEET THE PARENTS, it's time for Ben, his soon-to-be bride and in-laws to travel to Coconut Grove, Florida and meet Ben's parents. The straight-laced, uptight and suspicious DeNiro must find a way to cope with this new extension of family who has not yet been inducted into his "circle of trust". Focker's parents (played by Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand) are the antithesis of DeNiro and his clan, carefree in their actions, words and sexuality.

Rated PG-13 • 2 hours

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God's Politician:

Evangelical Seeks To Unite Progressive Faith With Politics

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — From the sidelines, comedians have for years satirized Super Bowl winners who praised God as though he had singled them out to victory on the gridiron. Still, the hypocrisy of such narrow sentiments will undoubtedly continue on from this past Sunday in Jacksonville, Fla. — the so-called “Buckle of the Bible Belt.”

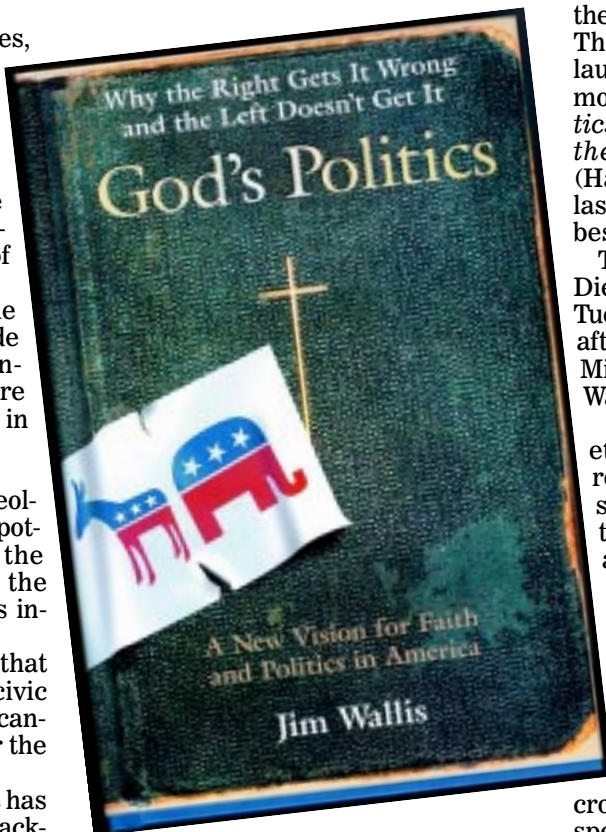
This “What has God done for me lately?” theology, however, has made some Americans so angry, disenchanted, and hopeless that they are ready for a new religious message in a post-2004 election climate.

And they just might have one.

A leading voice of progressive theology has recently caught the media spotlight for intercepting God from the Religious Right while criticizing the Secular Left for downing religion's influence on politics.

In religious terms, the message that God favors no one sports team, civic group, political party, presidential candidate, or nation is nothing new for the evangelical Rev. Jim Wallis.

For the past three decades, Wallis has covered faith, politics, and culture, tackling issues such as poverty, war, AIDS, and world hunger, as editor of the progressive faith-based magazine *SOJOURNERS* (www.sojo.net) and as a founding activist of Sojourners, a Christian ministry whose mission is to proclaim and practice the biblical call to integrate spiritual renewal and social justice.



According to the magazine's website, the Sojourners' office building also houses *Call to Renewal*, a network of people, churches, and organizations working to overcome poverty.

Since the 2004 elections, Wallis has upped his profile, meeting with the

nation's top Democrats, appearing in the mainstream media (most notably on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart), and launching a nation wide book tour promoting his latest manifesto *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (HarperSanFrancisco), which climbed last week to #5 on THE NEW YORK TIMES best seller's list for nonfiction.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST'S Nathan Diebenow joined the hungry Wallis last Tuesday night at a restaurant to unwind after he gave the keynote speech at the Mission Waco's 2005 UrBanquet at the Waco Convention Center.

Over a plate of ribs, steamed vegetables (no potatoes), and a glass of red wine, Wallis spoke about the responses to his new book, his vision of the progressive religious movement, and President Bush's “bad theology.”

.....
ICONOCLAST: What events led up to your new book, *God's Politics*?

WALLIS: I've been doing this for about 30 years, and for a long time, to talk about progressive religion, progressive faith, felt like you were speaking in a stadium without a microphone. The way you do it was you spoke with one section at a time as far as your voice would carry. So 200 talks a year for lots and lots of years, we built up quite a constituency, but the Religious Right controlled the conversation at a national level. I just felt like maybe this was the time to end the Religious Right's monologue on faith and politics, and create a real dialogue. To do that you have to speak to how neither side is getting it right, so that's why the subtitle is *How the Right Gets It Wrong, and the Left Doesn't Get It*.

I knew this election would be important, but we decided not to get caught up in the election, caught up in the whoever versus Bush. We campaigned in the fall with “God is not a Republican or a Democrat,” but we decided to run with the book post-election. We had no idea the timing would be as good as it has been, so it really seems to be a story of “right book, right time.” And what it's doing, it's invoking a response we didn't anticipate. It means that the country is hungrier than we even knew for a real, different conversation about faith and values and politics, particularly with a younger generation. (I was on) *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. I must have had 15 young people who said “Hi, I saw you on *The Daily Show*.” I got hundreds of emails after the show saying, “I lost my faith because of Falwell or the Religious Right. I didn't know you could be a Christian, care about poverty, the environment, or be against the war. I didn't know that.” And now it's opened up a possibility of faith for these people. It's been real heartening.

The media has been saying a lot about how I'm talking with Democrats, which is true, but the book is only a little bit about Democrats and Republicans. It's more about how to seriously build a movement around the issues of poverty.

ICONOCLAST: So how has the Reli-



THE REV. JIM WALLIS gave the keynote speech last Tuesday night at the Mission Waco's 2005 UrBanquet at the Waco Convention Center. In January, Wallis launched a nation-wide book tour to promote his latest manifesto *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (HarperSanFrancisco), which climbed last week to #5 on THE NEW YORK TIMES best seller's list for nonfiction.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

gious Right responded to your book? How have they dealt with this new thrust? You've always been here.

WALLIS: Yeah, that's right. I've been doing this for years, but now it's breaking through in a way that it never has before. So I think that the Right —

ICONOCLAST: Have you met with anybody to the Right?

WALLIS: Well, I invited Dr. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention to my book launch to speak. He did, because I believe in dialogue. He responded to me at the book launch, and Richard and I are getting along. We're talking. We're having civil conversation.

ICONOCLAST: Was it bad before?

WALLIS: I had never met him before. Land is perceived by a lot of people as, you know, like Land and Dobson are two of the most powerful leaders on the Right. So my response is to talk to them, not talk about them. Talk to them. And he's a serious, formidable spokesperson. So we're having a dialogue. See, I want the dialogue. That's the thing. They want a monologue. I'm not saying Richard does, but the Religious Right wants a monologue. They control it. And their monologue is over. Their monologue is over. Now we have a dialogue, and it's evangelicals; Christians who don't feel represented by the Religious Right who care about more than abortion and gay marriage; Catholics who are progressive in their social teachings and social commitments; mainline Protestants who feel left out of this whole discussion; Black churches who feel left out of the whole conversation. It's always a White conversation. Black churches are evangelical, too. What's wrong about them? A lot of Jewish rabbis have been coming out to me to events, and some Muslims are coming out, and a lot of people who are spiritual and not religious, and every time, we'll get people who say, “I'm an agnostic, but I feel included in this conversation.” (interrupted by the waiter) I'm expecting something, some kind of direct at

Continued On Next Page



BOOK PROMOTION — The Rev. Jim Wallis in January launched a nation-wide book tour to promote his latest manifesto *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (HarperSanFrancisco), which climbed last week to #5 on THE NEW YORK TIMES best seller's list for nonfiction. He signed books after Mission Waco's UrBanquet last Tuesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

• GOD'S POLITICIAN ... Continued From Previous Page

tack from the Right. So far, there hasn't been.

ICONOCLAST: Like a personal attack?

WALLIS: No, no. Like some article or review of the book ... They can't attack my theology. I'm as evangelical as any of them. And people know that.

ICONOCLAST: You mean, like you're pro-life and you're pro-family values? Are you talking about that?

WALLIS: Well, my Christian theology is as evangelical as any of them, and people know that. Billy Graham trusts

me because I'm evangelical. So they can't touch me. They would have to try and go after my politics. I'm not sure. They disagree with the book, so they're going to — I say that the Right "gets it wrong." But I also say that the Left "doesn't get it,"

but I say that the Right gets it wrong, so they need to get it right.

It used to be that everybody would listen to them. Now they are listening to another alternative. I'm going to be interested to see... I've heard nothing yet from the White House. So we'll see. But I talk with Republicans. Since the book was published, others have been coming, too. But I'm trying to get a dialogue that will bring principled people on different sides of the aisle together to solve some problems. The extremes on the sides won't come along, but I think a lot of people will.

ICONOCLAST: So you're using yourself as a wedge.

WALLIS: Not myself, but the whole notion of we find common ground by moving to higher ground. Faith and values shouldn't be wedge issues or weapons. They should be bridges. We had an event in Boston on Sunday called "Beyond Red and Blue." I think there are values that do go across these Red and Blue lines. I do think a lot of people care about the poverty question. Most of the American population thinks now that going into Iraq was a mistake. And I think a lot of people want better answers to the War on Terrorism.

ICONOCLAST: How has the rollercoaster ride been?

WALLIS: I'm enjoying it. I'm enjoying the book store signings and the speaking engagements. The media things have been by-and-large fun.

ICONOCLAST: Have they?

WALLIS: Yeah. Stewart is great. Terry Gross is great. They seemed pretty good.

ICONOCLAST: So you count Jon Stewart as being a part of the media?

WALLIS: Oh, he'd say he is, too. He's a critic of the media, but he's in it. I'm a magazine editor. So I'm in it, too. We're all part of the media. He's a very good voice in the media, and he got CNN's Crossfire kicked off the air.

ICONOCLAST: You've drawn a lot of people into the movement. Are there a lot of people you didn't expect? I guess you've been around

the block for a while, so you probably saw some people coming.

WALLIS: Oh yeah. We're been trying to build these meetings for a long time. Right now, it's breaking through to the culture. It's a cultural zeitgeist, still to be religious means to be right wing, and that isn't true. It hasn't been true for a long time, but that's the cultural zeitgeist. It oversees all. The Europeans, whenever I did an interview for the BBC, they all think Jerry Falwell speaks for all Americans.

ICONOCLAST: Like he's the supreme high priest of the United States of America? That's what they think?

WALLIS: They think that Jerry Falwell speaks for all Americans. They are amazed that a Christian talks the way I talk. They think we are all like Falwell, so I say in the

'I disagree with him (Bush) profoundly, and I wouldn't be surprised if I, in a second Bush term, end up spending some time in jail.'

— Jim Wallis

book, "How did Jesus become pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-America?" George Bush's personal faith is very real. I've met with him at meetings. I've had personal conversations with him. It's his theology that I disagree with, and basically, his God is a God of charity, faith-based initiatives, and volunteerism, while his budget priorities clearly favor wealth over work, favor the rich over the poor, and benefit those on the top. Well, you can't do that. Your budget and your God are inconsistent with your goals and constituents.

The Bible has a God of justice, not a God of charity. It talks about equity and wages and labor and capital. The Bible is full of that kind of stuff. (President Bush) doesn't see that. He's a self-help Methodist, not a social reformer. And the foreign policy stuff, he's — to not see the face of evil in Sept. 11 is to be some kind of post-modern relativist. To say that they are evil, and we are good is bad theology. Jesus says, "Don't just care about the speck in your adversary's eye but also the one in your

'I've had personal conversations with him (Bush). It's his theology that I disagree with, and basically, his God is a God of charity, faith-based initiatives, and volunteerism, while his budget priorities clearly favor wealth over work, favor the rich over the poor, and benefit those on the top. Well, you can't do that. Your budget and your God are inconsistent with your goals and constituents.'

— Jim Wallis

In the book, there is a statement from a number of quite conservative theologians who worry about three things: a theology of war, a language of righteous empire, and the sense of divine mission for our nation and our president. And



GOD'S POLITICS — The Rev. Jim Wallis' latest manifesto *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (HarperSanFrancisco), which climbed last week to #5 on THE NEW YORK TIMES best seller's list for nonfiction. He signed books after Mission Waco's UrBanquet last Tuesday. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

so, the chapter in the book calls it "Dangerous Religion: The Theology of Empire." That's bad theology.

My dispute is how he uses faith and religion, not that he's religious. I also don't have a Michael Moore-like hatred of George Bush. I don't have an antipathy toward him at all. I don't know him well, but I don't hate him like some people on the Left do. I disagree with him profoundly, and I wouldn't be surprised if I, in a second Bush term, end up spending some time in jail.

ICONOCLAST: What?

WALLIS: Well, I've been in jail 20 times over the years for various forms of nonviolent civil disobediences. And if George Bush continues down the path of permanent tax cuts for the rich and a preemptive unilateral war strategy as his primary

foreign policy, he's going to get a Christian opposition from a number of us who will frame our opposition in Christian terms. And he'll have to deal with that. That's why secular humanists —

ICONOCLAST: — Because that obviously doesn't work, right?

WALLIS: Well, I think citizen protests by anybody is a good thing. I'm saying that the stereotype is that Christian president with secular opposition and what will be the case is Christian president, Christian opposi-

tion. Make sense?

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, yeah. So tell me more about this "movement" that you spoke about in your speech tonight. You talked about moving from a programs mindset to a move-

ment. What is the next step? What do you envision the movement as being like? What would you like it to be?

WALLIS: It will be at least two things. One of things it will be is a much more consistent alternative voice in the mainstream media and also alternative media. We create our own media. We do magazines. We do online. We keep expanding. We may do radio. We may do a bit more op/ed. We do a regular, consistent voice out of this progressive religious perspective —

ICONOCLAST: — which you've already started to build with your magazine.

WALLIS: But now the opportunities are going to expand quickly, and we're going to do a lot more grassroots organizing — congregations, schools, etc. A lot of students and young people want to get involved. We might do a lot of meet-ups with progressive religious people. Organizing, voice, networking. The Religious Right communicates with each other. They coordinate. They strategize. That's happening now on the progressive side. Interfaith, too.

The young people who watched Jon Stewart didn't realize that there is a progressive religious option, and it's so exciting to be able to let people understand that you can be progressive and religious.

Last night, I was in Boston. I was signing this guy's book. He said, "I'm gay. This is my partner, and thank you for making us feel included. But I want to say that it's easier to come out of the closet as gay than come out of the closet as religious in the Democratic Party."

ICONOCLAST: Really? (Laughing)

WALLIS: I thought that was interesting. When that begins to change, that would be great. People can say, "I'm religious. I'm Catholic. I'm evangelical. I'm Black Baptist. I'm Jewish. And I'm progressive."

Study: Students Say First Amendment Goes 'Too Far'

WASHINGTON — A study of high school attitudes released last Monday noted that students believe government censorship of newspapers was a good idea and that First Amendment goes "too far" in granting rights.

The results reflected indifference, with almost three in four students saying they took the First Amendment for granted or didn't know how they felt about it. It was also clear that many students do not understand what is pro-

tected by the bedrock of the Bill of Rights.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation sponsored the \$1 million study conducted by researchers at the University of Connecticut. The study encompassed more than 100,000 students, nearly 8,000 teachers and more than 500 administrators at 544 public and private high schools in early 2004.

Students who take part in school media activities, such as a student news-

papers or TV production, are much more likely to support expression of unpopular views, for example.

More than one in five schools offer no

student media opportunities; of the high schools that do not offer student newspapers, 40 percent have eliminated them in the last five years.

Asbestos Victims To Receive \$30 Million From Halliburton

SEATTLE, Wash. — About 120 families of people who were exposed to deadly asbestos while working in shipyards, construction sites, and industrial plants in the Pacific Northwest or serving on Navy ships that were serviced there will receive \$30 million from the Halliburton Co.

Announced last Thursday in Seattle, the Pacific Northwest settlement is part of a recent \$4.3 billion national settlement to wrap up the Houston-based oil-services giant's liabilities for people who are ailing, have died — or will die in the coming years — because of asbestos exposure.

Halliburton inherited the asbestos and silica claims when it bought Dresser Industries Inc. in 1998, during Dick Cheney's tenure at Halliburton before he became vice president. Most of the claims had been filed against Harbison-Walker Refractories Co., a Pittsburgh-based subsidiary of Dresser.

Asbestos-related deaths have hit the Pacific Northwest hard, as a legacy of the area's shipbuilding industry. Nearly half of the 120 families were exposed through Puget Sound-area shipyards, according to the victim's lawyers.

— *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer Reporter contributed to this report.*

Washington House Okays Mental Health Insurance Bill

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A bill requiring health insurance companies to cover mental health the same way they cover physical health recently passed 67-25 with bipartisan support in the Washing-

ton-state House. The bill is to go to the state Senate.

The bill mandates "parity" for mental health — for example, if the co-payment for a cholesterol drug is \$10, the co-payment for an anti-anxiety medication would be \$10.

House Bill 1154 would require plans that offer mental health coverage to offer those benefits at the same level and cost as benefits for medical and surgical services, not require employers to offer health benefits or require health insurers to offer mental health coverage as state law does now.

Some House Republicans voted against the bill worrying that it would increase costs, but Democrats said other states have shown that expanding mental health coverage doesn't make it so. The governor's budget office found that claims costs for state employees' health care plan would increase 0.3 percent if the bill becomes law.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

Chairman: Examine Race, Gender For Changes In Social Security

CRAWFORD — House Ways and Means chairman Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA) recently claimed Congress should consider looking at Social Security reforms that would payout future benefits — on such factors as race and gender.

The Kern County congressman explained to NBCNEWS Tim Russert on Jan. 23: "We also need to examine, frankly, ...the question of race, in terms of how many years of retirement do you get based upon your race. And you ought not to just leave gender off the table, because that would be a factor."



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Students Want Military Recruiters Thrown Off Campus In Seattle

SEATTLE, Wash. — Students at Seattle Central Community College who chased military recruiters off their campus last month are now attempting to keep them out for good by legal means.

The group spearheading the effort, Students Against War, launched a petition drive aimed at persuading administrators to order a halt to on-campus military recruiting.

These students point to a November ruling by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that held that a college opposed to the policy barring gays and lesbians in the armed forces has a First Amendment right to protest by blocking

access to military recruiters.

Last month, a mob of students from across many groups affiliated with the college hurled insults and water bottles, according to witnesses, forcing the two recruiter to flee under the protection of campus security officers. There were no reports of injuries.

Central President Mildred Ollee noted that a government rule allows federal money to be withheld from any college that refuses to give military recruiters access to students and student-contact information.

— *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* Reporter contributed to this report.

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- Keep warm by closing off rooms you don't need and use only safe sources of heat, like a wood stove. Do not burn charcoal indoors—it releases carbon monoxide, which is deadly. If you operate lanterns or fuel-fired cook stoves or heaters, make sure that you have adequate ventilation to keep harmful fumes from accumulating.
- Don't drive unless absolutely necessary until road conditions improve. If you must drive, go slowly and pump your brakes to stop.
- Be extra careful not to slip on treacherous ice.

Ice storms are more than a nuisance—they can be deadly!

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GOP Bill Intends To Stop Out-of-State Abortions

NEW YORK — A federal abortion bill titled the Child Custody Protection Act, if passed, would outlaw the transporting of a minor across state lines to obtain an abortion with the intent to evade parental consent or notification laws in the girl's home state.

On the Senate GOP's priority list, the bill carries a sentence of up to one year in prison, but would only affect a small number of pregnant teens.

Advocates say the bill is for those girls who become impregnated by an abusive older man who then drives her to an out-of-state abortion clinic so the girl's parents and the authorities won't find out about a relationship that might have been illegal because of age differences.

Opponents of the bill say it would criminalize the well-meaning acts of an aunt, older sister or other confidante who assist a girl terrified of being beaten or evicted from home if her parents learned of the pregnancy.

Thirty-two states have parental-involvement laws in force, though right-to-life proponents say eight of the laws ineffectual because of loopholes.

In 2000, about 92,000 girls 17 and under obtained legal abortions — 7 percent of the U.S. total.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

Gonzales Added To War Crimes Lawsuit In Germany

CRAWFORD — The Center For Constitutional Rights filed new documents on Jan. 31 with the German Federal Prosecutor looking into war crimes charges against high-ranking U.S. officials including Donald Rumsfeld.

One document includes new evidence that the Fay investigation into Abu Ghraib protected Administration officials. It is a comprehensive and shock-

ing opinion by Scott Horton, an expert on international law and the Chair of the International Law Committee of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York.

The second is a letter that details how Attorney General nominee Alberto Gonzales's testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee confirms his role as complicit in the torture and abuse of detainees in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere in Iraq.

Gonzales made history by becoming the first Hispanic U.S. attorney general last week when the Senate confirmed him on a 60-36 vote with all of the "no" votes coming from Democrats and Democratic-leaning independent Jim Jeffords of Vermont.

Judge Backs Guantanamo Detainee Challenges

WASHINGTON — Foreign terror suspects held in Cuba can challenge their confinement in U.S. courts, according to a federal judge ruling last Monday who is handling claims filed by more than 50 detainees at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay.

Judge Joyce Hens Green upheld the Supreme Court's decision last year that the detained terror suspects have constitutional rights that lower courts should enforce.

Green also ruled that hearings set up by the government to determine if the prisoners are "enemy combatants" are unconstitutional.

The decision conflicts with a ruling two weeks ago by U.S. District Judge Richard Leon, who found that last year's Supreme Court ruling did not provide Guantanamo detainees the legal basis to try to win their freedom in American courts.

U.S. District Judge James Robertson ruled in November that military trials denied basic legal rights and ordered the military to come up with a new procedure. The government is appealing.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

Georgia To Subsidize Day Care For More Kids

ATLANTA, Ga. — Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue and the state Department of Human Resources announced last Friday that a new plan that will give day care to about 5,000 more Georgia children.

The increase will be found by squeezing \$18.5 million from about \$183 million from the federal government for a program meant to help low-income parents transition from welfare to work, a key component of which is providing child care.

Social services experts say that many single parents don't seek work because they cannot find affordable child care.

The state program already provides day care subsidies to about 53,700 low-

income children. A waiting list for the subsidies includes about 30,000 more children in the state.

In an effort to give parents more choices, the state Division of Family and Children Services will also increase the maximum child care payment under the plan.

Chertoff Apt to Face Questions On Ethics

CRAWFORD — Michael Chertoff, who has been nominated to run the Department of Homeland Security, gave the Senate conflicting answers last spring when asked whether a government ethics office had warned against interrogating John Walker Lindh — an American captured while fighting for the Taliban — without a defense attorney present.

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Lawn/Garden Soil Testing

Campaign Under Way Til Feb. 19

WACO — The McLennan County Horticulture Committee is sponsoring a soil testing campaign until Saturday, Feb. 19 for a reduced price of \$6 per sample from a person's home lawn.

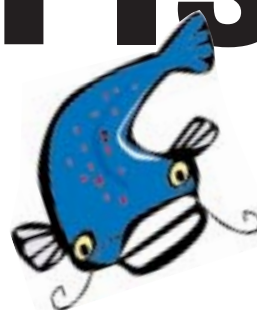
Sample bags can be picked up at a number of nurseries including Storm's Nursery. Samples must be returned to the business where bags were obtained, and checks should be made to Program Development Fund.

For more information, contact McLennan County Extension office, 420 N. 6th Street, Waco.

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13 Crawford FFA Students Make County Show Sale

CRAWFORD — The students of Crawford FFA participated in the McLennan County Junior Livestock Show from Jan. 17-21.

Thirteen students made the Sale of Champions and received a total of

\$26,000 from local businessmen.

The following students placed in the show:

Goats — Lauren Berger, 3rd, 4th; Christopher Bamsch, 13th; Austin

Behringer, 1st, 10th; Calee Cargill, 12th; Brian Christensen, 8th; Tyler Christensen, 3rd, 7th; Sydney Christensen, 1st; Derek Christensen, 7th; Shae Doty, 11th; Jessica Ewert, 8th; Kaitlyn Holmes, 12th; Jeffery Holmes, 3rd; 7th, Rachel Ochoa, 7th; Bailey Witty, 3rd.

Swine — Colton Anderson, 3rd, 3rd; Lane Brookshire, 2nd, Reserve Champion White OPB, 7th; Hunter Brown,

3rd, 8th, 9th; Nathan Hejl, 10th; Kevin Hejl, 7th; Reagan Hejl, 6th, 9th; Justin May, 7th; Kelby Noack, 10th; Cooper Wals, 1st, Champion York, 2nd, Reserve Hamp.

Heifers/Steers — Ryan Dillon, 3rd; Nick Shelton, 3rd; Austin Smith, 3rd; Mathew Stevens, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd, Senior Showmanship; Mathew Stevens, 2nd steer; Tyler Stevens, 1st; Johnathan Whatley, 4th, 5th.

DATELINE:
Crawford
Hometown of the President of the United States

Family Abuse Center's Volunteer Training Class Set Saturday, Feb. 26

WACO — A volunteer training session from the Family Abuse Center, Inc. will be held on Saturday, Feb. 26, from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Providence Medical Center Auditorium. The session is free and open to the public.

The session serves as a resource for community credit, college and high

school course requirements, service organization projects and church group projects. For reservations, contact Dinah Husbands at the Family Abuse Center, Inc. by Friday, Feb. 25, if possible.

INFO

Husbands, (254) 772-8999.

McLennan County Livestock Show



Left Column, Top To Bottom:
Lauren Berger, Austin Behringer (1st), and Hunter Brown
Right Column, Top To Bottom:
Nick Shelton, Kelby Noack, Lane Brockshire, and Kevin Hejl

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The Lone Star **ICONOCLAST** Entertainment

'Elko! A Cowboy Gathering' Offers Glimpse Of Past

NASHVILLE — Dualtone is delivering via CD a visit to the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nev., where cowboy poetry and music of days of yore are relived.

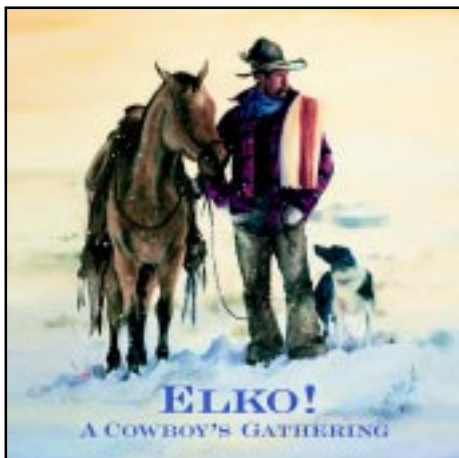
The sampling of the diversity of poetry, music, voices, subjects, and generations helps listeners recapture values that many have lost to the strains of modern life.

Those who have attended the annual Elko event have said, "You can't explain it. You've got to be there. It's magic. It's what I have been looking for my whole life without knowing it. It's like a huge family reunion, only everyone likes each other. It has helped me find out who I am. The gathering has enhanced and changed my life."

The recording is an effort to give listeners a glimpse of what they would hear at such a gathering.

Among those featured on the CD are J.B. Allen, Oscar Auker, Virginia Bennett, Long John Best, Baxter Black, J.V. Brummels, Jon Chandler, John C. Dofflemeyer, Ruthie Dornfeld, Don Edwards, Michael Fleming, Peggy Godfrey, Skip Gorma & The Waddie Pals, Janine Haig, R.W. Hampton, Brenn Hill, Hot Club of Cowtown, Jill Jones & The Lone Star Chorale, Walt Larue, Lyn messersmith, Wally McRae, Waddie Mitchell, Michael Martin Murphey & The American Buckaroo Orchestra, Joel Nelson, Rodney Nelson, Rich & Valerie O'Brien, Glenn Ohrlin, Henry Real Bird, Randy Rieman, Tom Russell with Andrew Hardin, Georgie Sicking, Sons of the San Joaquin, Jesse Smith, Sourdough Slim, Red Steagall, Ian Tyson, David Wilkie and Denise Withnell, Andy Wilkinson, Wylie and the Wild West, and Paul Zarzyski.

The two-CD set features songs and



ELKO! A Cowboy's Gathering is available at <www.dualtone.com/b2b>. The cover painting on the CD was created by William Matthews.

poetry by Western music's greats and was recorded live in January 2004 at the 20th annual National Poetry Gathering. A portion of the proceeds from the project benefit the Western Folklife Center.

To order, log on to <www.dualtone.com/b2b> for the Western Jubilee titles.

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People Do That In War

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Bein' an outlaw ain't dishonest. Bein' an outlaw and sayin' you ain't is dishonest."

All right, lay off Gen. James Mattis.

He's the Marine general who pointed out that for him, "It's a lot of fun to fight ... It's fun to shoot some people."

And he also told the San Diego radio audience:

"You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn't wear a veil. You know, guys like that ain't got no manhood left anyway. So it's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them."

That shocked people?

What in hell do you think we've got Marines for?

THEY KILL PEOPLE.

If Marines are successful, they kill a lot of people.

To reprimand Gen. Mattis is like beating a mule for being a jackass.

Personally, I live in terror of the day we have a military with general officers who do *not* like to kill people.

The primary problem that we face right now is this John Wayne good guy image that President Rove is making up for us.

Like our guys are just shooting the guns out of the enemy's hands, rescuing the school marm and Old Fuzzy with a nice clean fistfight in which Americans do not pick up chairs and bottles like the bad guys do.

No, this is a war, not one of Kaptain Karl's television commercials.

Our soldiers shoot people in the back, kill wounded soldiers, blow up women and children. People do that in war, even when they try not to. It is a mean, brutal, hateful business, and if this nation is at war with the right enemy, thank God they do it well.

Then they come home and try to live with having to do all that in order to survive.

If Gen. Mattis doesn't like to kill some people, he needs to come home and join the plumbers union, because if he doesn't relish his trade, he's going to get the wrong people killed.

It was interesting that Mike Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, said Mattis "should have chosen his words more carefully."

In other words he should have lied.

He should have told us that the Iraqi people love us, and we are spreading

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



more peace and joy with every depleted uranium round.

Truth is, we are not fighting a nation, we are fighting a sect.

We are not at war with Iraq, we are at war with Sunni Moslems.

In Iraq.

Where we are allies of Shia Moslems, most of whom consider Osama bin Laden a hero, and who are now our enemies in Iran and Afghanistan even though they were our friends when we needed them to kill our Russian enemies, who are now our friends.

That doesn't even consider our friends the Kurds, who are hated and regularly persecuted by our friends the Turks.

Of course we might patch up this little spat between the Shia and Sunni.

It's only been going on since the Seventh Century.

And that's just the Reader's Disgust condensed version.

So if we are going to continue fighting for oil in the Middle East, which is really to say as long as we want to drive 70 miles per hour on 15 miles per gallon, we are going to need guys like Gen. Mattis.

And to shrink in horror from his honesty is hypocrisy at its most Republican.

Corrections, Clarifications

Convict's Sentence Inaccurate

CRAWFORD — In the Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2004, issue of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, an error was made in the article "Sister Pax: 'Dead Man Walking' Author Speaks In Crawford."

It has been brought to THE ICONOCLAST's attention that Cathy Lynn Henderson was convicted of capital murder only, not kidnapping.

This correction was verified on Friday, Jan. 4.

THE ICONOCLAST apologizes for any confusion or harm this error may have caused.

Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Teacher Merit Pay Filled With Potholes

Carrot-and-stick coercion of Texas' underpaid teachers to perform in the political arena is more befitting a circus than an educational system, and should be considered an insult.

But insulting Texas teachers, school districts, and students is nothing new for Gov. Rick Perry, who put education finance reform on the back burner last session in favor of a partisan redistricting gerrymander that consumed virtually every droplet of burning midnight oil.

Perry's plan to award select teachers \$5,000 for forcing higher grades on standardized tests might make him look good — even though nothing else has rehabilitated the governor's sagging image — but it is poison to a fair standard for students and districts. This plan assumes that schools are factories and students are robotic, interchangeable units whose individual talents, abilities and personalities are worthless if not pre-approved by the state.

There are 300,000 classroom teachers in Texas, about 50,000 less than our children need. Virtually all had benefits cut while Perry and the Pirates of the Legislature have successfully avoided the reality that there is a continuing exodus from the teaching profession because Texas teachers are continuously lied to about benefits while their integrity is questioned and their ability is shackled by idiotic tests like TAKS that inhibit their ability to do their jobs — teaching.

Professional educators know that standardized tests might indicate whether a student has a problem in either ability or achievement. All they really prove is that the student performed that way on that test that day. Yesterday or tomorrow, his results might be radically different, depending whether the child fought with a parent that morning, just broke up with a sweetheart, or simply skipped breakfast.

Some otherwise capable children simply will never do well on tests; they do not successfully think that way. Only an overall assessment of a student's performance over a long period of time has any real meaning. Writing examples from research papers to poetry and short stories, problem-solving skills, leadership ability or simply application of principles in shop or on projects are all bases for determining the value of a student's education.

None of those show up on tests, and only the student's teachers and educators are capable of making those assessments.

Big brother in Austin cannot make that determination.

But standardized tests do serve one purpose; they make it easy for sleazy political vampires like Rick Perry to feed off our fears that our children might not be prepared. It is an incontrovertible

fact that scores on standardized tests will automatically improve with each passing year. Once remediation materials and test awareness develops, Perry and the Pirates can beat their chests and boast of their educational prowess.

In fact they have done irreparable damage to our children.

Because the TAKS is generally a multiple-guess test, college instructors have begun to complain that students cannot give intelligent answers unless they are given options to choose from, and that the higher education curriculum is constantly being "dumbed down" by all the public school attention to standardized tests.

Yet this is the standard by which Perry thinks we should judge our teachers.

It is a proposal that will reward teachers in "good" schools where wealthy parents can pay for tutors and materials while making jobs even less attractive in impoverished, overcrowded districts where poor and working-class students without resources or guidance need dedicated teachers most.

Perry's message is clear: if teachers want rewards, they must go where the scores are good.

Lawmakers should examine the historical consequences of individual merit pay doled out on the state level and realize that other states have tried this and abandoned it. The high costs without results proved the folly of Perry's plan.

But the Legislature has only to go back to the 1980s. They might remember the Texas "career ladder," a controversial merit system of classroom "dog and pony shows" that was abolished in 1993.

Nobody liked it.

In his State of the State address recently, Perry pointed his finger at educators with the holier than thou:

"Excellence should not be rewarded the same as mediocrity. Otherwise, mediocrity becomes its own incentive. When money follows results, we will get more results for our money."

Perry's administration proved that point when it sanctioned the CHIPs travesty and the inaction that has made education finance reform a crisis, but it does not extend to Texas teachers or his punitive plans for Texas children.

Teachers need a decent living wage for their families' sake, but few teachers base their careers on their paychecks. Their ideals run at a much higher level. Those not drawn to this calling would not do the job for any salary. Money never made a good teacher, but that does not mean teachers should not make good money.

It is fair to base educators' salaries on years of experience, for trustees in local school districts to have the authority to determine teacher performance based on professional standards rather than political ones.

— By Don Fisher and W. Leon Smith

Ranger Gets Governor Off Hook With Washington

Under the pretext of compensating him for the theft of his horses, Mexican soldiers lured a Rio Grande rancher to their side of the river on Feb. 13, 1914.

Forty miles north of Laredo and a stone's throw from Hidalgo, Mexico, there once was a poor imitation of a town called Palofox. Clemente Vergara lived on the bluff above the border crossing and used a small island in the shallow Rio Grande as a natural corral for his horses.

Dolores Vergara looked out her window on the morning of Feb. 12, 1914, to

see government troops in full uniform driving 11 head of her father's horses into Mexico. She immediately sent word to the elderly rancher, who had gone down to Palofox after breakfast.

Vergara hurried to Hidalgo and hunted up the commander of the local garrison. Although nothing normally escaped the notice of the eagle-eyed officer, he flatly denied any knowledge of the brazen daylight robbery and the exasperated rancher returned home empty-handed.

The following day, three figures called

out to Vergara from the opposite bank. If he would come on over, they promised to make good his loss.

Accompanied by his young nephew, Vergara rowed across the river in a small skiff. The instant the craft settled on the foreign shore, he was grabbed by the trio and brutally beaten. The terrified boy eluded capture and watched from the thick underbrush as the thugs dragged away his unconscious uncle.

Vergara's wife and daughter located their battered loved one the next morning under armed guard in the army barracks at Hidalgo. Dolores later described his condition: "My father had two cut places on his head, a cut on the nose and a bruise on the left side of his face. The wounds had never been dressed and the blood was clotted in his hair."

The worried women stayed the night in Hidalgo and were awakened early the next day by a surly soldier, who told them Vergara had been taken to Piedras Negras. He added in a menacing manner that they would be well-advised to go back to Texas.

The frantic females reported the kidnapping to the county authorities, but they were stonewalled by tight-lipped Mexican officials. Gov. Oscar B. Colquitt also tried his luck, but with Mexico in its usual state of chaos he too hit a brick wall.

For help in breaking the diplomatic bottleneck, the governor contacted William Jennings Bryan, who showed scant interest in saving the life of an expendable citizen. The secretary of state did express grave concern that the Texan might go off half-cocked and provoke an international incident and warned him against sending the Rangers into Mexico to rescue the rancher.

In the middle of this fruitless exchange between Austin and Washington, a number of Lone Star newspapers reported on Feb. 25 that Vergara had been hanged the day after his abduction. His unburied body was supposedly still swaying in the breeze a week and a half later.

On March 8, Gov. Colquitt received a telegram from Capt. J.J. Saunders of the Texas Rangers that caused him to shudder at the potentially serious im-

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



plications. "Have just returned from Hidalgo," read the wire. "Have the body of Clemente Vergara on Texas soil."

Did this mean Saunders had gone into Mexico against the wishes of the secretary of state to retrieve the rancher's remains? According to a detailed story in the LAREDO TIMES, that was exactly what it meant.

The resourceful Ranger promptly set the record straight. He apologized for giving the governor the impression that he had illegally snatched Vergara's body out from under the very noses of the uncooperative Mexicans. Instead, acting upon an anonymous tip, he found the corpse conveniently waiting on the Texas bank of the Rio Grande.

Saunders also provided an ingenious explanation for the "misleading" telegram. He dictated the message to the American consul, who had been up all night and in his exhausted state got it all wrong. The text should have been, "Have just returned to Laredo. Recovered Clemente Vergara's body on Texas soil."

No one really believed the Ranger's second version, but that was beside the point. He had neatly gotten the grateful governor off the hook with the secretary of state, while at the same time protecting his own posterior.

As for the murderers of Clemente Vergara, they never paid for their cold-blooded crime in a court of law. But if a persistent rumor were true, the killers were unofficially punished.

Some months later, Texas Rangers caught two of the cutthroats not far from Palofox but mysteriously misplaced them on the way to jail. Back in those days, the border had its own brand of justice.

"Best of This Week in Texas History" Vol. V available for \$10.95 plus \$3.25 postage and handling from Barte Haile, 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581.

Me? On A Diet? — Part Two

Someone without a sweet tooth could have pulled it off. I'm referring to the diet I wrote about in my last column. The South Beach Diet, a variation of the low carb thing. There is plenty a person can eat, including artificial sweeteners.

I never could stand artificial sweeteners. I would rather have water than a diet drink any day. (Well, I would really rather have caffeine-free Dr Pepper, but that wasn't one of my choices). When this new sweetener, Splenda, was introduced, I tried it. It's made from sugar, you know. . . . I really couldn't tell the difference in tea or coffee (which I don't drink much anyway). So I figured it would be fine in the new low carb ice creams and candies.

My reasoning was that by using these products as a crutch, surely that would get me over the hump—of the sugar cravings. I only bought items with the Splenda brand or sucralose in them. But I think some must have had other (yucky) sweeteners as well. Several products warned, in small print, of a laxative effect. (Can this stuff really be harmless?) I must have scoured every shelf in the supermarket looking at ingredients. I was in there for hours.

For me, a meal isn't complete without a sweet at the end. (I can't blame my parents for much, but we did always have dessert. They thought that was a good thing). A snack isn't a snack for me unless chocolate is involved. And it's so easy, in the middle of the morning or afternoon, to pop a few M&M's with almonds into my mouth if I'm hungry. . . (which I always seem to be).

I like salty things well enough, but I can pass up a bag of chips or pretzels if I have to. I wish I didn't like sweets, but I do. We're all probably better off without so much sugar.

One brand of sugar free fudgesicles I tried wasn't so bad. It was a little like eating air, but it wasn't absolutely disgusting. I went through a box of them in a few days. They were expensive, and there weren't very many in the carton. (That's a pattern I've noticed with most diet products. Lots of people are making plenty of money off us dieters). The second box of the same exact brand of fudgesicles was as awful as the first was palatable. (Where was quality control when these things were being prepared and packaged?) I tried a bite or two of one brand of sugar-free ice cream, and convinced myself it was OK too. Not great, but OK. Mind over matter. The second time I tried it, I threw it out.

Then I started taste-testing the candy. I bought one of everything that appealed to me, thinking this would be the trick

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.

to get me through. I'd take a little bite of each one and sort of mentally rate it. Some tasted awful to me, and some weren't so bad. They were all, however, a little reminiscent of plastic, or maybe those wax soda pop "bottles" that were filled with colored sugar water (except the wax was better). We all loved those things when we were kids. . . .because of the sugar, of course.

What I noticed during my taste-testing phase was that items containing sugar substitutes made me feel a little sick. . . . which made me less interested in eating. (Can this possibly be harmless?) I started to wonder if the real secret behind the success of the sugar-free products was this: people lose weight because they feel so icky after ingesting the stuff. Then they don't feel like eating anything else, and they lose weight. . . . an interesting approach.

When confronted with the choice of not eating anything at all and feeling hungry /unsatisfied but generally OK. . . .or eating something that can marginally pass for chocolate but will make you feel yucky, one might just opt to keep one's mouth firmly closed. (Or one might opt to return to the real thing, in moderation. That was one of my father's mottos: "Everything in moderation." He lived to be 98, so I hold great stock in his beliefs).

You KNOW some study in a few years is going to prove that this new variety of artificial sweetener causes some hideous disease. It wouldn't be the first time the government had given its seal of approval to some food or medicationand later admit that, well, gee, I guess it really did kill a few folks after all.

Anyway, I did OK on the diet for a couple of days, with not a drop of sugar or chocolate passing my lips. And I think I was better that way, before I started trying the artificially sweetened things. I should have just gone cold turkey. But in the end, it didn't matter. You will have to read the next column to see why.

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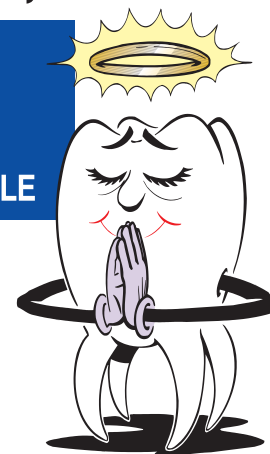
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When Did Intolerance Become A Family Value?

Recently, popular radio commentator and founder of the conservative Christian group, Focus on the Family, James C. Dobson, focused on an unlikely target: the cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants. At a black tie dinner in which he addressed some members of Congress, Dobson claimed that the animated sponge was actually part of a movement to slyly promote homosexuality to children. Huh? James, it's an animated character, and it's not even a human!

Nonetheless, Dobson is outraged. As proof of his assertion, he pointed out that SpongeBob often holds hands with his friend who is a pink starfish. And the two friends watch an imaginary television show called, "The Adventures of Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy." What more evidence could this guy need?

But there's more. What really has made him mad is that a group called, the "We Are Family Foundation" has made a pro-diversity video with SpongeBob and other characters from kids' shows. On the video, characters from "Barney," "The Muppets," "The Book of Pooh," "Clifford the Red Dog," "Lilo and Stitch," "Rugrats," and "Sesame Street," along with the evil SpongeBob, sing the '70's song, "We Are Family."

A spokesman for another conservative group, the Family Research Council, said that their "homosexuality detection expert" is also suspicious of the video.

I didn't even know there was such a thing as a "homosexuality detection expert." Is that what he puts on his income tax form under "occupation?" What kind of detection equipment does he use? Gay-dar? How do you become an expert in this area? There's probably a debate in their community about it. Some people may believe you just choose to let others convince you to be a homosexual detector, while others may believe you're just born with the skills.

There is no mention of sexual identity on the video. However, included in the teaching materials is a link to a website where there is a "tolerance pledge," and that's what offends Dobson and his buddies the most. This statement seeks "respect for people whose abilities, beliefs, culture, race, sexual identity or other characteristics are different from my own." Those words sound very much like the ones I've heard President Bush use and encourage all of us to be-



By
**Lloyd
Garver**

lieve. Does Dobson think that George Bush is also a secret agent for the homosexual army?

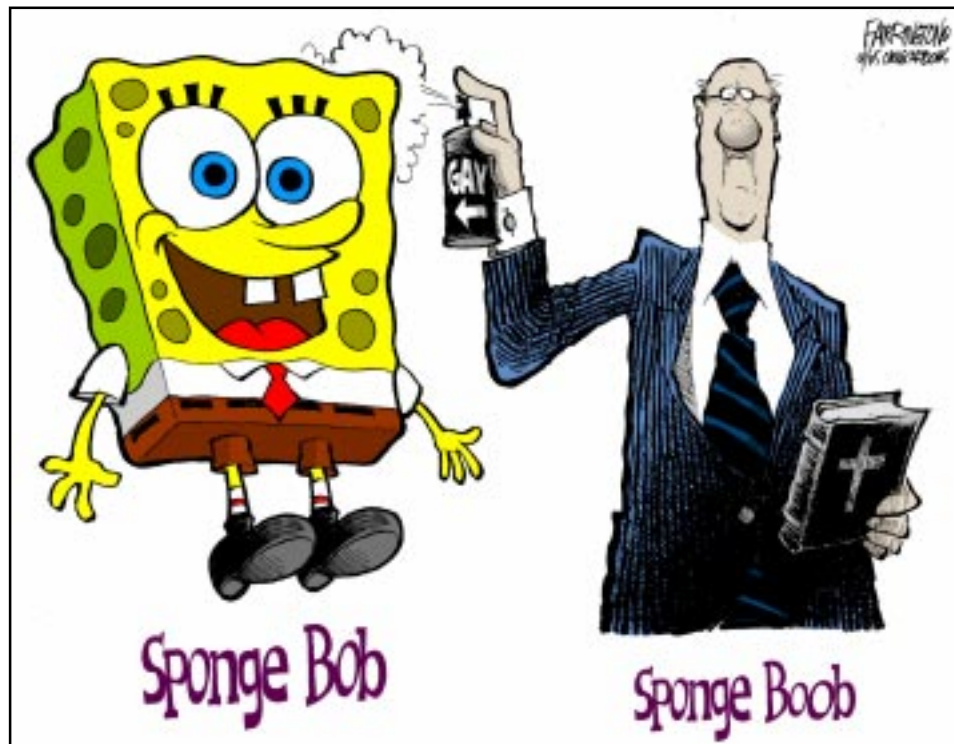
I guess if you hate something enough, you can convince yourself you see it in all kinds of places. But why stop with SpongeBob? Has Dobson put Bert and Ernie to the test? What were Heckle and Jekyll up to all those years? And surely, there are other subversive things that have been sneaked into cartoons. What about the ridiculing of Scrooge McDuck by Donald and the others? Isn't making a rich, miserly duck the butt of jokes just a subtle way of anti-American communists making fun of capitalism?

It would be nice if we could just dismiss Dobson as one man with some weird, but harmless ideas. But we can't do that. Dobson's group has a budget of more than \$100 million, a magazine empire with millions of subscribers, and thousands of radio stations. When he gives an opinion, politicians listen.

The irony of all this is that if it weren't for adults, kids wouldn't need to be taught tolerance. Young children seem to treat all different kinds of people the same. The brouhaha about these characters singing "We Are Family" makes me think of a song from the musical "South Pacific" that maybe Dobson and, well, all of us should take to heart. The words are,

"You have to be taught
Before it's too late.
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives
hate.
You have to be carefully taught."

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier" to "Home Improvement." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's Opinion page and can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com



The Green Lutheran

Lutherans never get any respect.

It's so bad that we rarely, if ever, get disrespected, especially in the mainstream entertainment-media.

Other than Woody Harrelson's character "Woody" being a Missouri-Synod Lutheran on the hit 1980s sitcom *Cheers*, there's been little Lutheran representation on television that I'm aware of.

Then again, it's no wonder that our voices don't carry in pop culture when only six percent of Americans identify themselves as Lutheran.

We only have ourselves to blame.

Growing up, no one told me that in real life, actors, writers, musicians, and celebrities could hold down jobs in Hollywood and still practice their Lutheran faith.

It was only later that I learned that we had the late Buffalo Bob Smith of Howdy Doody fame and Theodore Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss, in our corner.

It's weird because a lot of other Lutheran entertainers fly under the radar, like Loni Anderson, Brice Beckham, Beau and Jeff Bridges, Dana Carvey, Gary Cole, Kirsten Dunst, William Hurt, Kris Kristofferson, Lyle Lovett, William H. Macy, Ann-Margaret, Andy Richter, Sally Struthers, and Bruce Willis.

Although I knew of David Hasselhoff from watching *Knight Rider*, I didn't know he was Lutheran, so I had to otherwise create my own Lutheran role models. I had to adapt.

Being that I was reared in the 1980s, I was naturally drawn to violent cartoons like *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*.

However, the one semi-violent cartoon I loved the most was *Super Friends*. These comic book characters were so cool: Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, the Flash, and my favorite Super Friend, the Green Lutheran.

Yeah, the Green Lutheran — "The Man Who Sins Boldly."

Based on DC Comic's character the Green Lantern, the Green Lutheran was only super hero who could manipulate the energy of Oktoberfest through his enchanted green fork with his passion, will power, and imagination into

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



any shape to fight the bad guys, fly through space, and eat sausage, sauerkraut, and herring.

If the Green Lutheran imagined a 50-foot-tall boxing glove, he could will it into life with his magic fork, as long as he was aware that regardless of the outcome of the fight, he was still a "sinner." In other words, if GL thought that he was "special" or better than the next guy, his fork wouldn't work for him. He must pause, reflect, and take responsibility for his actions before a fight.

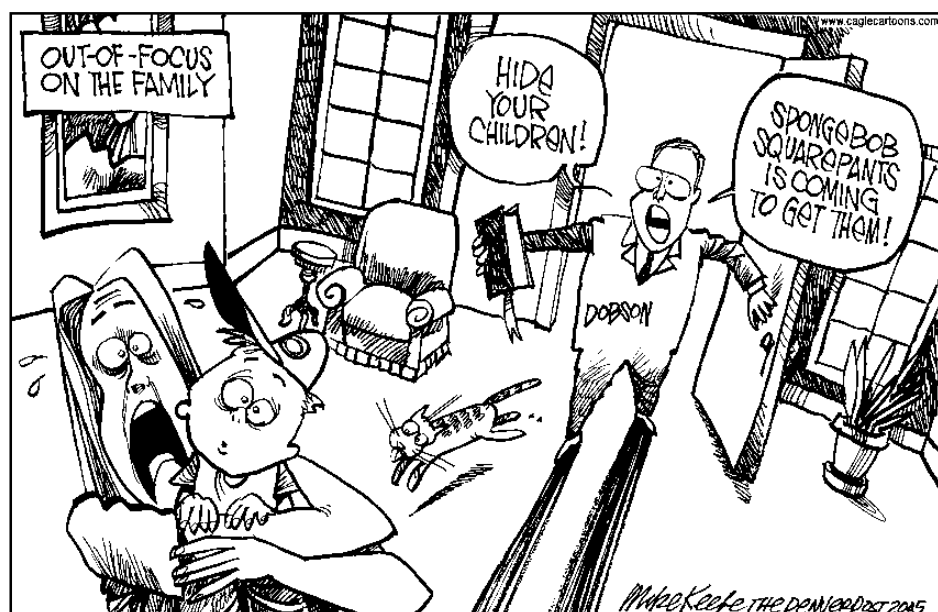
His powers, however awesome they might have seemed, were also impeded by the color "mustard." For instance, if Captain Crunch threw his yellow cereal at the Green Lutheran, Batman would have to eat it ... and you can imagine all the carbs from cereal the Dark Knight would have had to burn to stay fit to fight crime.

But that's a small price you mysterious multi-billionaires with childhood abandonment issues have to pay to help your friends not have to eat deadly cereal, you know?

The reason I like the Green Lutheran the best was because he trusts his friends enough to tell them about his limits and flaws, which means that none of them were afraid to share the burden of evil. This was the secret of the *Super Friends*' successful because each valued fairness, personal responsibility, cooperation, civic participation, and law.

The lesson I learned from *Super Friends* is that without these values, there would be no reason for anyone to seek justice when the legions of doom strike. There would also be no reason for the very Lutheran William Rehnquist to be Chief Justice for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Take my advice: be fair to everyone because you might just be sitting next to a justice-loving Lutheran right now and not even know it.



MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Open letter to all media outlets:

If we use words and phrases that resonate at a subconscious level, our message is more likely to be heard and received as legitimate. Individual words matter, and the "right" phrase has much more impact than an unfortunately chosen phrase. Indeed, a poorly chosen word or phrase can simply pass right by the listener, like a radio tuned to one frequency 'hears' one program but not another. The conservative political movement has used this technique to startling advantage over the past couple decades, and the radical fringe of the conservative movement compounds those gains daily.

We hear about 'freedom being on the march,' but what's really marching is imperialism and free-market capitalism. 'Personal accounts' for Social Security (already dialed back from 'private accounts' due to negative polling responses) are really instruments with which to dismantle our country's most successful social safety net. The 'ownership society' spoken of by President Bush is about 'we own more, you own less'; 'culture of life' clicks into anti-choice for women but is either neutral or bears an eye-for-an-eye mentality on the death penalty, and has little relationship to quality of life after birth. And nobody even knows what "weapons of mass destruction program-related activities" is supposed to mean, except that it obscures gross exaggeration and misrepresentation by this administration.

Cognitive science and linguistics professor George Lakoff, UC Berkeley, captured the essentials of the aptly chosen word in his book, Don't Think of an Elephant. Consciously choosing and using specific words evokes a 'frame' of context in the listener. If it's a frame with which they generally agree, even if unaware of their own framing, the listener is more likely to integrate the message. If the listener's beliefs, her 'frames,' are jarred or at odds with the word or phrase, the message bounces right off the listener's framing and is either invisible or simply doesn't make any sense to the listener.

My call to journalists everywhere is to pay more attention to your own framing. Just because the administration switched to calling them 'personal accounts' doesn't mean the plan isn't privatization; Iraqis fighting to rid their own country of an invading army are not necessarily 'terrorists'; and how can 'freedom' possibly be 'on the march' when we have such egregious violations of freedom committed by our own country? Think about Guantanamo detainees, or the trial-less incarcerations of un-indicted 'evildoers' under the USA Patriot Act, or the administration's persistent ignoring or increasingly successful suppression of legitimate protest of all sorts.

Please, Journalists, choose and use the words that suit the picture, don't just parrot the soundbites offered by briefing packets. This country will never have legitimate dialogue on important

issues until we all insist on calling things by their true names.

T.S.

To The Editor:

What happened to the United States?

The people lost control of their society. A small cabal of our richest and most powerful dynastic families got control of our major institutions. We currently have interest group government or rule by a small cabal that would even now deny that they exercise power. They continue to allow their privately owned media to perpetuate the myth that the American people have power thru elections and that we are still a Republic.

The fraudulent elections in Florida, Texas, Ohio, Nevada and probably other states with rigged voting machines should wake up the most somnolent of our citizens that care.

However half the eligible population no longer votes as many lost faith in the two major parties. About a third of the citizens now see themselves as independent. Politicians are held in low regard as they have been working for clients and special interest groups.

The promotion of the general welfare is no longer a serious issue. We are a warfare state. Laissez faire capitalism will no longer be impeded by a big government that would regulate business or correct the worst abuses of economic power.

We no longer have self corrective checks and balances to restrain the power of the few against the many of bewildered citizens. The best above all the rest can continue to practice economic and military imperialism all over the planet in quest of vital resources. Few Americans even recognize the reasons other nations fear us and why they protest against our aggression and efforts to dominate. Other nations actually resent our bribing foreign governments and our overthrowing governments that we can't buy.

We cannot eliminate tyranny abroad when the patriot acts assault our own bill of rights here. We cannot free other nations as we are losing the right to rational thought and are propagandized with a web of lies.

The repeated lies of powerful corporations and the neo-con government threaten this nation.

This government does not protect us; it threatens us in many ways. It has no regard for the very environment that sustains us. It risks devastating wars. It ignores the health and educational needs of millions of citizens. It makes bacteriological weapons that threatens billions of people. Neo-conservatives lie and for that many of us will die.

Most Americans do not know the social history of our dynastic power elite families like the Olin, Ford, du Pont, Sloan, Raskob, Pew, Colgate, Elihu Root, E.F Hutton, Avery, Rockerfeller, who are just a few of the "American Liberty League" "dynastic families, numbering 156 enemies of a democratic Republic. They failed in 1933. They have succeeded in taking the Government today.

They practice indirect rule and their trained spawn make the decisions for our society today. They got the media, control our resources, and are your unseen masters.

When they control information they can manipulate the populace. Who do you think started the American Psychological Association, and the American Historical Society, and Planned Parenthood? Who started the Eugenics movement in the United States? You don't know very much if anything about the Carnegie Institute at Long Island. For this everyone will pay a heavy price in our youths' blood and national treasure.

This society had been under-informed, programmed, mislead and bamboozled by the media which has not been a guardian of democracy.

Thirty-eight percent of all news stories have been coming out from right wing think tanks and they have an agenda to consolidate their power within the United States as well as project economic and military power abroad.

The unorganized populace has been duped by a group that owns public relations companies, hires trained lobbyists, and has platoons of lawyers to do their bidding.

The dynastic power elite families have their minions running their corporations, trust foundations, think tanks, the media, academia, the military, and now the government. Stealth politics by the right wing has successfully penetrated our major decision making institutions.

This right-wing government has got us into wars that give their companies massive profits and plunge the government into debt servitude for future generations. The money has been borrowed from the same financial interests that put the Bush regime into power.

The whole government has been purchased by a minority that has an unsavory past ignored by mainstream media, because the media is now designed to distract us, entertain us, and propagandize us. There are a few independent book companies that printed the facts and the social truths and most Americans don't have time to read them as they are deluged by fiction and spun information.

Most families have both parents working trying to support their debt ridden families in a economy does not mind having millions of people without jobs and millions working in the poverty pit. It would appear that some of our elite even believe their own social mythology, like the proposition that we are a Super Power. This reminds me of the Nazi Germans who claimed that they were a Super race.

Why in the world did this society weaponize small pox after the world scientists almost eradicated that scourge to human life. Why did we allow our military to develop anthrax as a weapon of war? Even atomic weapons do not give us security or act as deterrent to war. As Julien Huxley said, atomic weapons were "detergents what would wipe us off the Planet."

We have not spread freedom by conquest in the Middle East or Central Asia. We made new enemies, scared our former friends.

War is mass murder. Lying hides great crimes against humanity. Stealing whole countries and putting in puppet governments is still theft.

Other societies will resist. The oil war we now fight can escalate into a religious and racial conflict that will expand.

We now torture helpless prisoners of our war, kill innocent civilians and create more enemies each day that we violated international law. Iraq is a young nation. Half of them are children. They will not forget "shock and awe." Every civilian we kill has relatives that will turn against us. We did them no favor by bombing them and trying to justify this war because Saddam was a sadistic tyrant. Saddam was an assassin who killed his way to the top of his society. They never had a democratic tradition.

He was a C.I.A. asset, who we funded in a war against Iran. He was goaded into invading Kuwait and bushwhacked by "Poppy" Bush. It gave this country the excuse to build bases in the Middle East and Central Asia. Iraq was the designated new enemy to replace the defunct Soviet Empire that broke apart to become 14 separate countries. In order to justify militarism to our people, maintain the vast war profits of the military industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned us about, Iraq became the "New" enemy. Americans are a fear based society with guns in most houses and a bloated military budget. The neo-conservatives that currently run this country have us running to the cliffs like benighted lemmings.

Samuel Bush provided arms for the Kaiser of Germany in World War One. That dynastic family also provided Remington arms for the American Army. The family profited from both sides. It's a Hegelian tactic to support thesis against antithesis as when synthesis occurs you never lose, as you control the ultimate outcome.

Its known as hedging your bets. For example, some duPont family members supported the democratic leadership council that sponsored Gore and Lieberman in an earlier selection. With right-wing think tanks, funds, and media support they also sponsored Bush and Cheney. That dynastic family could never lose influence. Only the American people lost representation.

In the 1930's Senator Nye verbally attacked the Bush family and others like the du Ponts as "merchants of death" but what would you expect from Yale Skull and Bones men? The du Ponts came over here after the French Revolution and they made gun powder. One member created General Motors, the modern corporation. They and 156 of our richest families formed and funded the American Liberty League in 1933, with a plot to replace democracy with fascism.

They went underground during World War Two. They were eugenicists, too. Their right-wing trust foundations trained the neo-conservatives in the government today.

Most under-informed Americans do not know that Henry Ford funded the "Bund" American Nazi Party as the richest property holders feared Communism. The media has blinded this country and we will stumble through history. Other nations will resist this "new World Order" which is not new.

This society will eventually devour itself. This nation is going for the big hurt.

Continued On Next Page D.K.

MAILBAG



**LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR**

Continued From Previous Page

To The Editor:

There is something sick and foreboding about the current reason we are in Iraq. According to the spin it is now all about democracy and the right to vote in Iraq. Condoleezza Rice calls it a great day in America. FOX News of course is all smiles and reflective of today being a victorious day for the president's foreign policy. A victory bathed in our blood and tax money is nothing to brag about, but in a sound bite society like ours it will play well.

There will be right-wing rejoicing for a foreign election with absolutely no bearing on American safety or sovereignty. We are a country that stands silent on the disenfranchisement of over two million black votes last November, while half our population applauds a ballot by bullet election thousands of miles away. How gauche. If I can be even more reflective for a sentence it is a sure sign that America has become the great Satan radical Islamics say we are.

It will take years to repair the damage caused by the Bush doctrine of preemptive strikes against former puppet dictators in the middle east. Our children's children and their children will curse our graves for allowing this war monger a second term. The GOP relishes the role of world cop and empire builder. A check of our recent history (the last 30 years) makes this clear. So what cause should we adopt to stop the madness?

I submit we must adopt the cause called common sense and massive voter turn out in 2006. The Democrats will at least avoid war, and reinstate needed social assistance to the least among us. They will also trash the ambushing of social security for the benefit of wall street. The other end of our cause should be to determine the truth about 9/11. Something ugly was allowed to happen that day, and I strongly suspect it emanated from the White House.

As long as we the people allow republicans to govern America, ours will be a nation of many tears and rising deficits. The end of our civil liberty and freedom of expression will erode to a level of Orwell's 1984. We are the generation of record totally responsible for the future of our nation and the planet; to stand by and watch life as we know it become passe is a sin. We should have done something about it last November, so the '06 elections should be considered a make up test for the one we woefully flunked. Peace and prayers.

Rev. Frank Garrett, Jr.

P.S. — When in Austin you can hear the award winning "Wake Up Call" radio talk show starting at 7 a.m. Monday through Friday on KAZI-FM stereo radio, 88.7 mhz. You can hear replays of the show on the web at: - <http://www.live365.com/stations/blacktalk>.

Dear Gene Ellis,

I just finished reading your article titled LET'S GET OUT OF THIS WAR

on my ICONOCLAST edition dated 01/19/2005. I found it very inspiring, concise, logical, simple but most of all very personal and coming from the heart.

We both know that this administration will totally dismiss it but it is important to remember that big changes start with small steps. Having served in Viet-Nam during the 60's, I have perhaps a different outlook on these futile Quixotic campaigns that Bush is stupidly pursuing with no end in sight and it is refreshing and uplifting to hear someone put it in print for other people to share and hopefully expand and execute.

This is truly democracy at work. Thank you for doing it!

Regards,

*Lou Esquivel
Sgt/USMC 1961-66*

To The Editor:

Social Security — It Is Time To Draw a Line in The Sand

It is do or die time for the Democrats. The Republicans can not be allowed to eviscerate Social Security. This issue, of all issues, stands at the very heart of what the Democratic Party stands for. In all reality, this issue, of all issues, defines the Democratic Party.

Benefits may need to be adjusted. Retirement age may have to be adjusted. Taxes may have to be adjusted. An open and spirited debate on making social security strong enough to meet the challenges of time is a must.

But the principle feature of this program must go untouched. Namely, Social Security is a public insurance program. There is nothing private about it.

Democratic lawmakers can not in any way shape or form agree to allow the Republicans to strike what could be a mortal blow to Social Security. Democratic lawmakers must go on the offensive not only to beat back this poorly disguised attempt to do away with the New Deal but must show it for what it is — an attempt to get rid of entitlement programs in their entirety.

This is a litmus test. You can not be a Democrat and support this concept. You can not be a Democrat and agree to privatization. There is no room for "wishy-washiness" here.

It is time to draw a line in the sand. Is there a Social Security crisis? No. Social Security has a trust fund that is backed by the government of the United States. If these IOU's are worthless, then somebody better tell China, Japan and the rest of the world who are gobbling up US Government IOU's by the truckload to finance our exploding trade deficit.

Is there a budget deficit crisis? Yes. The Bush Administration has cut taxes too much. Supply side economic theory doesn't say zero taxes. It simply states that at some point there are too many taxes. It's corollary is true as well. There can be too few. The lines have crossed on the graphs and we are sinking quickly down the diminishing returns curve. It's time to be fiscally responsible and talk about raising

taxes.

As the Republican propaganda machine roles out with its audiovisuals and armies of paid consultants, the Democrats must be prepared to call a spade a spade. There is no room for compromise of this issue.

If the Republican Party would like to make the 2006 election a referendum of Social Security privatization then so be it. This is not a fight to run away from. It is a fight that must be confronted head on — with no confusion.

"Semper Fi."

A.P.

To The Editor:

Why not just say the truth about the U.S. Social Security System - it is healthy, robust, strong - and the envy of the world!

According to the bipartisan Congressional Budget Office it can pay all its bills until 2052 and after that it will still be able to pay 80%. Any privatization scheme will be costly and risky in the extreme. Great Britain has lost a fortune in their privatization fiasco - but then, so has every other country that has tried it. Yes, Social Security's income is conservative, but it is guaranteed!

So let's be conservative and give Social Security the minor tweaks it needs - but let's not wreck the only guaranteed retirement insurance for our children and their children on some snake charmer's potion.

J.G., Houston

To The Editor:

A Critical Look At The Foster Care System Medication of Children

In Washington state, one out of every five children in the foster care system is on potent mood-altering medications. Yet the state has no safeguards in place regulating their use to protect the children who swallow the potentially toxic pills.

The state does not chronicle the problems children experience with these drugs, nor are officials even certain how many of their wards take behavioral medications. And the ranks of foster children being given psychotropic drugs have swelled over the years, experts say.

Says Aija Guedel, former president of the School Nurses Organization of Washington: "When I see foster children, most of them are on a stimulant, anti-depressant or anti-psychotic - or usually all three."

What are the results on the children? According to a six-month investigation conducted by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

· A 4-year-old girl was rushed to intensive care with an erratic heartbeat after her foster parents accidentally doubled her daily dose of anti-depressants - a dose already far above the maximum recommended for her age and weight. The foster parents said neither their doctor nor social worker had warned them of the hazards of the drug, amitriptyline.

· A 5-year-old boy tried to kick out the windows in a bus, covered himself with feces and tried to run naked down the street after being given powerful anti-depressants. His foster mother said she never was warned of the side effects.

· A 13-year-old boy sent into foster care in 1995 during the Wenatchee sex-ring trials heard voices and suffered memory loss after being put on high doses of the anti-depressant Zoloft. He later tried to kill himself.

· Domico Presnell died. The wavy-haired 6-year-old failed to wake up in his Seattle foster home last April 21. A toxic level of amitriptyline was found in his blood.

The psychotropic drug most often prescribed to foster children in Washington state over the past five years has been methylphenidate, or Ritalin, which costs the state about 17 cents per pill, according to the 1996 Formulary and Drug Use Guidelines used at Western State Hospital.

The second most commonly prescribed pill was the anti-depressant imipramine, costing about 2 cents a dose.

San Francisco youth activist Lyn Duff, herself a former foster child, describes her experience while in state care: "They put me on desipramine. A week later they took all the kids in a van to the doctor. He spent five minutes talking to us, with the other kids in the room."

The use of psychotropic drugs to control foster children in state care has long been documented.

In a landmark suit filed against the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the American Civil Liberties Union blamed the child welfare agency for much of the child abuse in the state.

One of four teenagers named in the class-action suit had been in state custody as long as he could remember. Although his mother and grandmother had told him they wanted him back, the 13-year-old had not received any services that might have helped to reunite his family.

In the meantime, he had been "warehoused" for three months in the Henry Horner Children's Center, where he was routinely drugged with psychotropic medication and in danger of assault, according to the suit.

One of the numerous terms of the consent decree stemming from the suit describes the use of these agents to control foster children:

By Jan. 1, 1992, DCFS shall convene a reform panel to review and make recommendations regarding its policies and procedures concerning (i) the use of restraint and seclusion on children in care and (ii) the use of behavior controlling drugs including a prohibition on the use of such medication for the punishment of children, the convenience of caretakers or as a substitute for programming for children's needs.

Caseworkers prefer that the child is medicated. It helps the foster care parents, who may not be qualified to deal with a disruptive child. Staff often have no idea what a drug does to the child. They dispense it like aspirin. There is absolutely no one to monitor kids on multiple meds.

What this all amounts to is a systematic assault on children who've already been removed from home, medicated, coded, misdiagnosed, therapized...

Prentis Caudill was a ward of the state. Both he and his sister endured the difficulties of placement in residential group homes and psychiatric facilities. "All you have to do is act up and they give you drugs," says Prentis. "The drugs were nice because they'd calm you down or put you to sleep for days."

Adds Prentis: "They gave me Thyroxine. Sometimes your muscles twitch."

A 1997 Los Angeles Grand Jury report indicates that foster children are frequently medicated with psychotropic

Continued On Next Page

MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

drugs.

Not only are the children excessively medicated, but the conditions in group foster homes were found to be deplorable. The *Los Angeles Times* describes the Grand Jury findings:

Many of the nearly 5,000 foster children housed in Los Angeles County group homes are physically abused and drugged excessively while being forced to live without proper food, clothing, education and counseling, according to a blistering report by the county grand jury.

The Grand Jury found that children were given a variety of medications without the proper consent of a guardian or judge in nearly half of 158 audited cases. In another instance, a group home withheld drugs in hopes that a child would be ruled severely emotionally disturbed—thus drawing a higher rate of government payments.

The Grand Jury also identified inadequate psychotherapy for the children, with sessions of as little as five minutes being held, although therapists were billing for full-length sessions.

Caseworkers, investigators and attorneys believe that some foster parents routinely complain of behavioral problems, insist that those behavioral problems require mental health therapy and then seek additional funds for regular transportation to the therapist and special care needs. These claimed behavioral problems are subjective and are not capable of being confirmed by objective tests.

In examining the improper use of controlling medications, the Grand Jury found that the medications in use ranged from mild depressants and hypnotics to strong psychotropic drugs.

A 1990 report issued by the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families described the use of these mind-altering medications, and the bizarre treatments to which children in state care are frequently subjected: "In the state mental hospital in South Carolina, children who attempted suicide were stripped to their underwear, bound by their ankles and wrists to the four corners of their beds, and injected with psychotropic drugs."

ELICITING DISCLOSURE

Some critics charge that psychotropic medications are not only routinely provided as a method of controlling foster children, but as the means to obtain disclosure of non-events.

In Wenatchee, Washington, where allegations of a bizarre and highly improbable "sex ring" involving several prominent citizens came to surface, children alleged to be victims are apparently being provided medications and therapy as a means to elicit disclosure, critics charge.

One witnesses for the prosecution, publicly recanted her testimony on a televised broadcast, claiming that it had been coerced.

Immediately on the heels of her public recantation, she was seized from her grandparents' home.

The girl is not alone in her plight. More than a third of the alleged victims of the so-called "child sex ring" in Wenatchee were placed on psychotropic drugs paid for by the state once they entered foster care.

Are the Wenatchee children truly victims of a sex ring that included dozens of people with a local pastor as ring-leader, or are they victims of a state sanctioned machine determined to extract testimony from them at any price? Their stories include:

- A 12-year-old boy taking the anti-depressant Zoloft who heard voices telling him to hang himself by jumping off a milk crate with a rope around his neck. His counselor worried he was suffering from memory impairment as a side effect of the drug.

- A 15-year-old developmentally delayed boy who became a chief witness in several of the cases after being sent to a facility later attempted suicide while on psychotropic drugs.

- A boy described in medical records as "in denial" and "non-compliant" after his parents were sentenced to prison on sex charges. At age 9, in April 1995, he tried to run away from the foster home he shared with two other alleged sex-ring children. Doctors increased his dosage of Zoloft, and the fourth-grader "tried to stick (a) metal object through his chest," according to a DSHS episode report. He then entered a Seattle psychiatric hospital, where he was prescribed the anti-depressant amitriptyline.

The greatest irony to be found among these tragic circumstances is that a significant number of foster children have been removed from their homes for reasons alleged to be related to "neglect" stemming from substance abuse by their parents.

While "historically, people have thought of substance abuse as an adult problem, substance abuse by parents has made it a children's problem, as well," said a spokesperson for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services.

Apparently, the child protective system has gone to great lengths to ensure that substance abuse is indeed "a children's problem," as its solution is all-too-often the traumatic removal of children from their homes, and the systematic turning of the children into drug-dependent wards of the state.

The above article was e-mailed to some newspapers in Texas and Oklahoma. Please send a copy to your local newspapers and to your congressional representatives. Editors need to KNOW that what is going on in DHS/CPS is NOT in any way BEST for any child!

This is just a little PART of the Abuse and Neglect problem that is actually going on in our country under the pretext of what is called the "Protection of Children" System of the Health and Human Services/Department of Human Services.

Doesn't it make you proud to be a citizen of a nation that promotes such per-

manent damage of their defenseless little children? Just give them some mind-altering drugs each morning as they leave for school! They'll be OK! They'll walk around like zombies in their classroom! Peers will tease them for the way they act and the things they do. Peers will ask them all sorts of questions so they can go home and tell their parents about the NEW kid in their class! Their life will be in danger!

Those little children will NOT be allowed to be a part of the decisions for their future! They won't know what's going on behind the closed doors of DHS as caseworkers and other staff members decide what to do with the little child so they can keep him/her in custody for 15 months, remove parenting rights and adopt him/her so they can apply for the BONUS MONEY!

We WOULD have a much greater nation if HHS/DHS/CPS was deterred from the damage they INTENTIONALLY do to our future generation. What a shame! Hiding behind the handguns of our police officers, parents are forced to let DHS/CPS emotionally damage their little innocent children! Someone calls in, as required by Oklahoma Statutes, on the DHS HOT LINE. They report what they 'think' could be something resembling abuse and/or neglect and BOOM DHS eagerly fetches those little children under the protection of our police officers!

Easier yet, the police officer goes to the local school and asks the teacher to call the child out of his classroom and they're hauled away in the police cruiser to be emotionally disabled by DHS/CPS! This is currently going on right here in the state of Oklahoma - right in your own home town! It's going on in every state in our nation! Child abuse and neglect is being legally promoted by the Clinton Administration's *Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997*. What a shame and disgrace for the leaders of our great nation to desire this to be continued through the year 2008! The Bush Administration has just recently extended the effective date of the ASFA through the year 2008.

Yes, indeed! Let's "Adopt-A-Worker" by calling Russ Urquhart at (405) 603-3380 or e-mail him at russ@CornerstoneOKC.org. Let's promote OKDHS abuse and neglect activities by adopting a DHS worker! Let's give DHS the free reign over our Faith Communities by changing the laws so NO CHILD WILL BE LEFT BEHIND!

Read the articles telling how many of our little innocent children have been Adopted for BONUS and AWARD MONEY to OKDHS since the ASFA was enacted in 1997!! Don't you KNOW that every one of those little children BEGGED to be adopted and have their names changed on their birth certificate so it will be harder for them to find out who they REALLY are? Will these children ever know if their evening date or engagement/marriage partner is their sister, brother or cousin? Isn't that called incest when loving relationships develop within blood relatives? Well, yes, it is unless DHS is the power behind the adoption!

Oklahoma Statutes indicate that if the little child in OKDHS/CPS custody is under the age of 12, he/she has absolutely NO VOICE in his/her adoption to ANYONE of DHS/CPS's choice. If the Adoption doesn't work out suitable to the adoptive parents or OKDHS SWIFT ADOPTIONS WORKERS, the adoptive

parents can return the child to DHS/CPS. The SWIFT ADOPTIONS WORKER can simply pick the child up if he/she thinks the adoptive home MIGHT not be suitable for the child. Then, the child can be re-adopted to another adoptive home of DHS/CPS's choice for MORE BONUS MONEY.

Once the child reaches the age of 12, he CAN express his desire NOT to be adopted but that's NOT ACCEPTABLE to DHS! That's the reason for establishing and maintain the SWIFT ADOPTIONS OFFICE in OKDHS/CPS. If the child is not adopted, DHS will NOT get the BONUS MONEY! Of course, children of any age can be prescribed mind-altering drugs by DHS contractors to help them WANT to be adopted! It's called Child Protective Services.

Once the 'mean' rate for doubling adoptions can be approved, MORE states will qualify for the BONUS MONEY to help OKDHS/CPS permanently damage and disable our future generation!

Write or call your congressional representatives. Let them KNOW what is really going on in our country. Give them the evidence or tell them where they can easily find it! Then, the ball will be in their court to do something about the ASFA's promotion of abuse and neglect of our little children, our future generation! The ASFA is a shame and disgrace to our FREE country!

L.H.M., Oklahoma

Dear Editor,

As Bush campaigns to sell us on privatizing Social Security, people should know this is a con. The politicians that conned us about WMDs in Iraq now want us to think that putting our SSI money into private accounts will guarantee more at retirement time.

This is a con because the basic mechanism of the stock and bond markets, where privatized accounts would invest, is "win-loose." For every person who makes money in the stock market, there are others who lose money. We all know that you make money in the market by buying low and selling high. But for every high-price seller, there has to be someone willing to buy at that price. Each buyer believes that the prices will continue to rise. But prices rise only so long as there are more buyers in the market than sellers. Eventually, fewer people believe the market will continue rising than those who want to sell. Then the prices drop, rapidly. This happened in 1989 and in 2001, leaving many people with less than half their savings.

We've heard that Bush's plan is a scam because it would add \$2 trillion (that's 2 million million) dollars to our national debt, and it would give stock brokers windfall commissions. But the fundamental con is that it would pump money into the market for immediate gain while leaving long-term, privatized SSI accounts busted when retirement time comes.

Sincerely,

B.J., Piedmont, Calif.

To The Editor:

Columbia and Yale Universities recently released a report on where countries stand in protecting the environment. They included 5 areas in the study.

The areas studied were Environmental Systems, Reducing Stresses, Reducing Human Vulnerability, Social and Institutional Capacity, and Global Stew

Continued On Next Page

MAILBAG
ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

ardship.

Out of 146 countries the United States ranked 45.

This means that 44 countries care more for the environment and the future of this world than we do.

Finland was at the top of the list with Norway and Uruguay following. Also ahead of the US were countries such as Guyana, Latvia, Russia, Congo, and France. We were at least ahead of North Korea, Iraq, and Rwanda.

Those in power can talk all they want about terrorist and threats to the world. Until we understand that terrorists can be in many forms and those that dirty the land, water, and air; those that drive species into extinction for their own monetary gain or personal pleasure and those who only care about themselves and not future generations are as much a terrorist as those that hold others hostage at the end of a gun.

S.W., McGregor, Texas

To The Editor:

Today's news via the internet, daily papers, radio and television are full of the proposed Social Security revamp, Tsunami Victims, Iraqi War, refugees and poor all over the world.

I'm sitting here this morning wondering if Social Security would be in trouble if the \$9 billion appropriated for Iraq, that is now missing due to whatever reason, were in the Social Security coffers and the Two Billion Dollars a Day being spent on the so called "War in Iraq" were instead diverted to Social Security. Would Social Security need a revamp?

Statistics for the year 2002 show: 37 million children in this country are living at the poverty level, existing without the basic necessities. Now I ask you: "is this a problem an issue our government should concern themselves with or must these children be born in a foreign land to foreign parent before they are afforded our government's attention?"

It's quite obvious this Government, of our, is concerned far more with foreign populations and business interests and certainly don't give a damn about the American Children or their parents.

If there was ever a time, the time is now, to ask: "When is this government going to start doing for its own people?" When if ever will this government begin to return some of the respect afforded it by the American Public?

The American people are not asking for hand outs! Their asking for jobs! Many are asking for their jobs back, the ones shipped overseas. The ones sent to foreign factories for the sole purpose of increasing US industrial profits. They are asking for an opportunity. The same opportunities this great land is supposedly made of. The same opportunities this government has seen fit to deprive them of.

In 1961, then President John F. Kennedy uttered the immortal words: "Ask not what your country can do for you; Ask what you can do for your country." Those words were well accepted and well heeded for many years.

John F Kennedy asked for and received the total commitment and loyal-

ties of the people. Today all the American People are asking for is their just respect, a Commitment to and the Loyalty of their government to the people.

Now, Is this asking too much? I don't think so and I don't believe You think it's too much to ask of Our Government.

You might say: Well this is all well and good but what can be done about it. Word of mouth is the best advertisement! Start talking about it, discuss it with your friends. If enough of America says it's had enough, your voice will be heard.

God Bless America and its People.

D.M.

To The Editor:

Uh-oh. Churches in general could be in a pickle, especially if they're in Virginia and conservative. The Virginia General Assembly is considering a bill by Republican Senator William Mims that would give title to buildings and property used by local congregations to those congregations if they bolt from the national church. Currently, such breakaway congregations leave not only their spiritual home but their physical structures as well, since under current law the national organization is considered to 'own' those buildings by even if they'd been purchased by local

congregants with local money.

The heated argument put forward against Mr. Mims bill is that the government has no place interfering with affairs of the church, and that a church, nationally or locally, should be able to formulate its own policy on, for instance, gay ordination or same-gender marriages. Here we have one mouth of the church saying that the religion should be able to dictate governmental affairs - must, for instance, outlaw same-gender marriage and actually integrate discrimination into the U.S. Constitution - and yet with another mouth saying that the government has no right interfere with the church's affairs.

Well excuse me, but the knife cuts both ways. There's a German word for my feelings about all this: *schadenfruede*, roughly translating as 'joy felt from the distress of others.' In fact, this very situation has been forecast ever since the revival, pun intended, of efforts by organized conservative and radical conservative religion to direct the affairs of government. Commentators have been warning that churches cozying up to the State run the risk of the State cozying right back - and now here we are. It'll be interesting, and more than a little bit fun, to see the wiggling and hair-splitting going on to justify interference one way while at the same time defending against interference traveling the other.

Yes sir, quite a pickle.

T.S., Newburgh, IN

To The Editor:

TOP TAXES TOO LOW

Since 1913 a progressive federal income tax system has been in place, with tax rates increasing as income rises.

The top marginal tax rates resulting from the costs incurred by World War I were at, or about, 70%. From 1925-1931, the years leading up to and including part of the Great Depression, the top rate was 25%. Where was our booming economy when top rates were that low? That ought to tell us something!

During World War II, tax rates for the wealthiest of Americans soared, reaching 94 % in 1944 and 1945. Similarly, the top tax rates during and following the Vietnam war were at 91% over a period of many years.

As a result of President George W. Bush's tax cuts, the current top tax rate is among the lowest ever at 35%. Taxes on unearned income (investments, stocks, bonds, etc.) also are at historically low levels.

With record-setting budget deficits, international terrorism, the war in Iraq and 'nation building', Bush's tax cuts have been a disaster. Bush is digging us a deficit hole from which we may be unable to extricate ourselves. Who does he think will pay the bills? Apparently it doesn't matter. His solution to almost everything is more tax cuts — especially for those that need them the least.

It would have been far better for the Bush Administration to *increase* tax revenue by getting serious about attacking corporate fraud, tax loopholes, tax evasion, tax shelters, wasteful spending and offshore corporate tax havens, than to slash taxes for the wealthiest of Americans.

Our soldiers in Iraq should not be the only ones to make sacrifices in time of war.

P.J., Vadnais Hts., MN



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