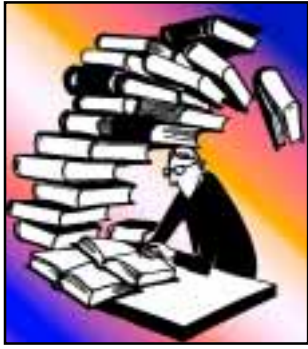
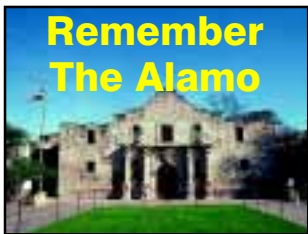


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Social Insecurity?

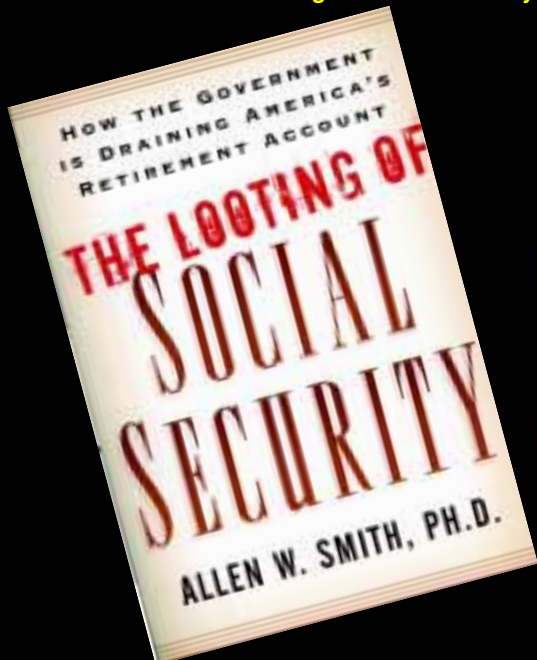
Manufacturing A Crisis

Iconoclast Unravels Mystery Surrounding Social Security

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'Social Security is \$509 billion deeper in the red today because of Bush's looting over the past four years, and he continues to loot the fund to the tune of approximately \$438 million each and every day. This looted Social Security money became a major source of funding for Bush's tax cuts for the rich.'

— Allen W. Smith, Ph.D.,
Author of *The Looting of Social Security*



Allen W. Smith, Ph.D.

Thousands Of Librarians, Supporters To Rally For Texas Libraries In State Capitol April 6

AUSTIN — Thousands of librarians from all over Texas will gather at the State Capitol April 6 from 4-5 p.m. to send a message to lawmakers: Libraries are an investment that works, and funding for libraries is critical for economic development.

The Texas Library Association, representing the 7,000 librarians who work in the state's public, school and academic libraries, will hold their annual meeting in Austin for the first time in 40 years—not coincidentally, during the biennial Texas legislative session.

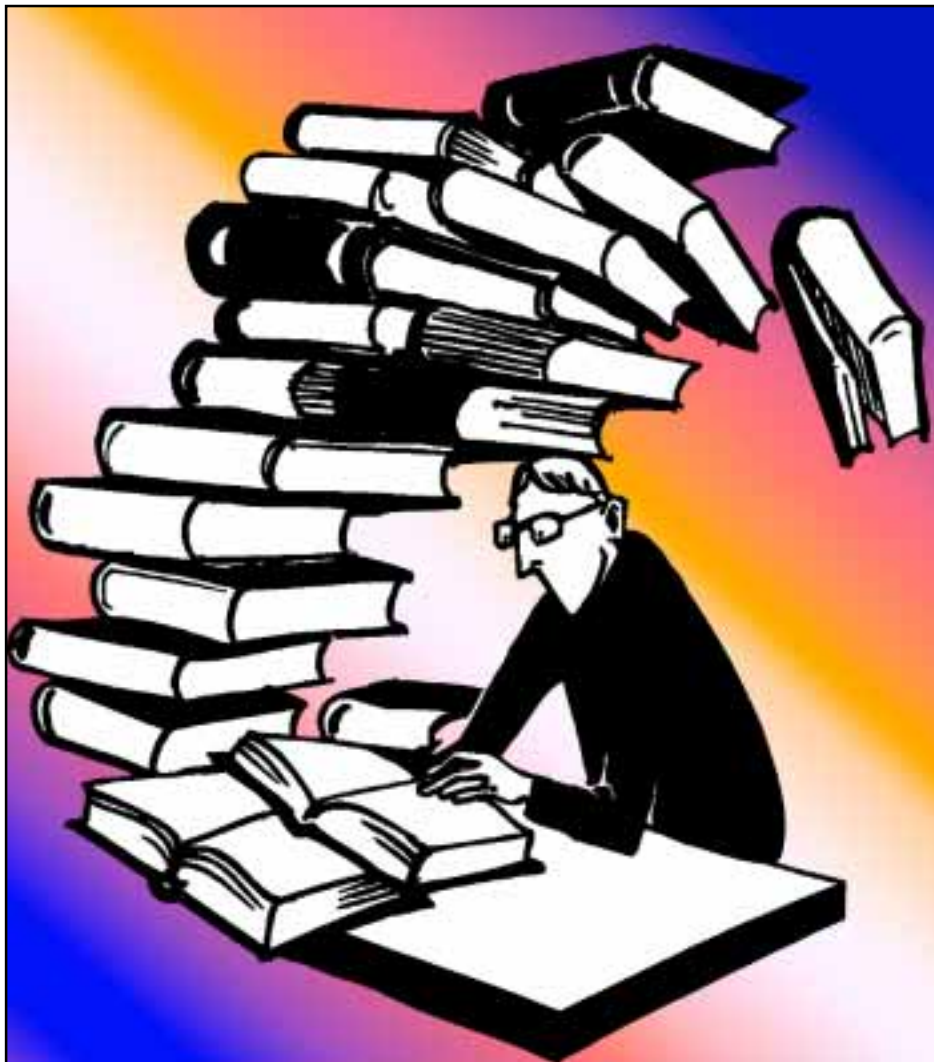
"Libraries are a critical part of our state's educational and workforce infrastructure," said Patricia Smith, executive director of the Texas Library Association. "Funding for Texas libraries was \$30 million less in 2002 than 2004, and the impact of those cuts has been devastating to communities across the state," Smith said.

"Most Texans love their libraries, but what many don't realize is that in addition to providing access to information and serving as their community's town squares, strong libraries help Texas compete in recruiting new companies and retaining current businesses. Companies demand quality schools and an educated workforce, and libraries help Texas deliver on both fronts," Smith said.

High-profile library supporters will address the Rally, including Texas Monthly editor Evan Smith, author Carmen Lomas Garza, and American Library Association President Carol A. Brey-Casiano. In addition, newspaper editors from around the state have been invited to attend the Rally as honored guests, and will be seated on the dais with the Rally speakers.

Perhaps playing against type, librarians will not be quiet at the Capitol. The Rally will begin with a performance by the performance group Drum Café, to set the tone for what organizers promise will be a spirited and inspiring event. Banners and signs promoting library issues will be in abundance.

"Drumming has been used for centuries to communicate, celebrate and prepare for battle," Smith noted. "Beginning with a drumbeat seems very



appropriate given what we want to communicate and accomplish at the Capitol."

TLA's legislative priorities include:

- Restoring funding for TexShare databases and other online resources so that all Texas communities and school children can have access to world-class online research and instructional materials. Nearly half of Texas' K-12 students have minimal (if any) access to online reference materials and periodicals, and millions of public library users and college students have far fewer online resources since funding cuts were made in 2003, putting their ability to learn and their

futures at risk.

- Funding for Loan Star Libraries, a direct aid program to strengthen public libraries statewide, allowing them to maintain longer hours and provide better services. Texas spends only 9 cents per person for public library support.

- Supporting the continuation of the telecommunications discounts for all Texas libraries that were included in telecommunications deregulation legislation in 1995. Without such discounts, even the largest libraries will be unable to sustain their current services.

About the Texas Library Association

TLA is the largest state library association in the United States with more than 7,000 members who work in public, school, academic and special libraries, plus library vendors and citizens who support libraries. TLA offers a wide range of services, including an annual conference that attracts more than 7,000 librarians and exhibitors, a leadership development program, legislative advocacy, and publications.

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Social Insecurity?

Manufacturing A Crisis

Iconoclast Unravels Mystery Surrounding Social Security

SPECIAL REPORT

By Nathan Diebenow and JonMichael Swetnam



Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Social Security into law.

CRAWFORD — The Republicans have been trying to destroy Social Security since its inception 70 years ago, and President George W. Bush is next in line seeking to “reform” it. In actuality, the Social Security trust fund is not in crisis and will be solvent without any changes until 2042.

The problem is how the government will pay back the “special issue” bonds or IOUs it owes to the Social Security Trust Fund from which it has been spending the fund since its first surpluses were created in 1983.



Morton

The proposed solution by President Bush is to take money away from what payroll taxes are paid in to the Social Security Trust Fund and funnel them into the private sector. Naturally this leaves less money in the fund for paying out benefits to the retirees, the disabled, and surviving dependents, said Evelyn Morton, Director of Economic Issues for the AARP Federal Affairs Department.

According to the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare's President and CEO Barbara Kennelly, “privatization is not a plan to save Social Security; it is a plan to dismantle Social Security, and no amount of tinkering with the details can change that fundamental flaw.”



Kennelly

According to the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare's President and CEO Barbara Kennelly, “privatization is not a plan to save Social Security; it is a plan to dismantle Social Security, and no amount of tinkering with the details can change that fundamental flaw.”

Roots of Destruction

President Bush's intention to dismantle Social Security isn't uniquely his at all. Oil millionaire-turned Republican presidential candidate Alf Landon ran on a platform to eradicate Social Security, way back in 1936. This agenda has been a fixture of the Republican Party's ideology ever since.



Landon

Immediately after the stock market crashed on Oct. 29, 1929, markets were reduced, and a large pool of cheap, dis-

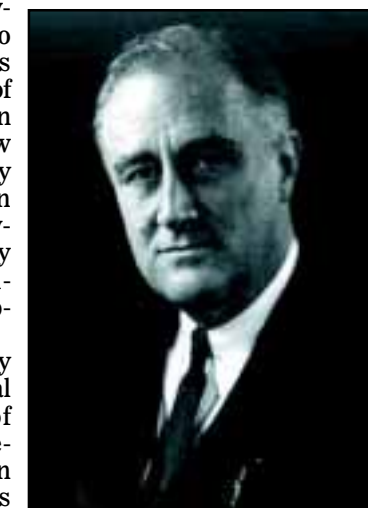
posable labor was created. By 1934 the main form of support for the elderly was through their immediate families, who were living in abject poverty and reduced to standing in bread lines for handouts. As a part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, Social Security would ease the strain on these families by relieving them of the necessity to spend their hard-earned savings to support their loved ones.

The Social Security portion of the New Deal adopted principles of “social insurance” developed in Germany in 1889. These principles held the government responsible for providing for citizens' economic security. Under Social Security, people earn the right to participate by working and contributing. The program was never intended to be an investment program. With broader policy goals than private retirement plans, its intent was to provide guaranteed income to seniors, disabled citizens, survivors, and their families.

Landon and the Republican Party tried to dismantle Social Security at its inception in 1935. “The so-called reserve fund is no reserve at all because the fund will contain nothing but the government's promise to pay,” said Landon, adding that Social Security was really just a “cruel hoax.”

Roosevelt went on to defeat Landon in the 1936 election in a landslide, forcing the conservative's public opposition to Social Security underground until economist Milton Friedman and Sen. Barry Goldwater hit the scene in the 1960s.

“I wanted to make Social Security solvent, to improve it,” said Goldwater, who ran for president in 1964. “The first thing wrong with Social Security is the fact that it is compulsory. Secondly, it is not actuarially sound: It promises more benefits to more people



Franklin D. Roosevelt, the father of Social Security

than the incomes collected will provide.”

Goldwater, the founding father of America's modern conservative movement, went so far as to say that “perhaps Social Security should be abolished,” according to historian Michael Beschloss.

Ronald Reagan launched his own political career with an endorsement of Goldwater's anti-Social Security platform. In a 1964 televised speech, Reagan backed the idea of privatizing retirement security.

“Can't we introduce voluntary features that would permit a citizen to do better on his own?” Reagan asked. “We are

against forcing all citizens, regardless of need, into a compulsory government program.”

Landon and Goldwater were crushed at the polls. Landon managed to carry Maine and Vermont. Goldwater gathered five southern states and his home state of Arizona.

The Third Rail

Reagan did better in 1980. Once he gained the Oval Office, Reagan took a swing at the political “third rail” of Social Security, ushering in two terms of staggering national debt and runaway government spending in the process. Three, counting George H.W. Bush.

During Reagan's first term, the 1982 Presidential Commission on Social Security, chaired by future Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, recommended that Congress pass legislation designed to increase payroll taxes on the Baby Boomer generation for seven straight years. In effect, these taxes forced the baby boomers to pay for their own retirements, as well as the previous generation's benefits.



Greenspan

“Prior to the 1983 Social Security tax

increases, Social Security operated primarily on a ‘pay-as-you-go’ basis, which meant that each year the fund collected just about as much revenue as it paid out. Therefore, the Social Security fund had an approximately balanced budget every year, so that adding it to the government's operating budget did not distort the operating budget deficit very much,” said Allen W. Smith, Ph.D, in his book, *The Looting of Social Security: How the Government is Draining America's Retirement Account* (Carroll & Graf, 2004).

While still paying Social Security benefits, however, the government treats these funds as general revenue by spending the surplus on various programs by converting the marketable U.S. Treasury bonds into “special issue” bonds, the equivalent of IOUs. Even though these IOUs hold no real assets, the government will still eventually have to find other revenue sources with which to repay them to allocate future Social Security benefits to the Baby Boomers, said Smith.

As a part of Reagan's political philosophy for smaller government and low taxes, he signed into law the Kemp-Roth tax cut of 1981, or “Program for Economic Recovery,” which cut personal income tax rates by 30 percent over a three-year period. Prominent economists warned against Reagan's plan, saying it would lead to huge budget deficits and prove disastrous for the economy.

According to Reagan's Budget Director David Stockman, the Kemp-Roth tax cut was “always a Trojan horse to bring down the top rate.”

“Stockman asserted that the supply-side theory was not a new economic theory at all but just new language and a new argument of the old Republican orthodoxy known as ‘trickle-down’ economics. Basically, this doctrine holds that the government should give tax cuts to the top brackets; the wealthiest individuals and the largest enterprises, and let the good effects ‘trickle-down’ through the economy to reach everyone else. According to Stockman, when one stripped away the new rhetoric emphasizing across-the-board cuts, the supply-side theory was really just new clothes for the unpopular doctrine of the old Republican orthodoxy,” Smith said, referencing THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY article “The Education of David Stockman,” by William Greider in the Dec. 1981 issue.

In his first televised address to the nation on Feb 5, 1981, Reagan declared: “There were always those who told us that taxes couldn't be cut until spending was reduced. Well, you know we can lecture our children about extravagance until we run out of voice and breath. Or we can cut their extravagance by simply reducing their allowance.”

Due to Reagan's fiscal policy, the U.S. government's national debt doubled in a little over five years. By 1992, the deficit was running at \$340.5 billion, and the national debt rocketed to more than \$4 trillion. America's first trillion in national debt was a long time coming — two centuries, roughly. Reagan and

Continued On Next Page

• **SOCIAL INSECURITY ... Continued From Previous Page**

Bush managed to quadruple that figure in a mere 12 years.

The "New" Route

"Historians will have a difficult time explaining why the American voters (or more accurately, the United States Supreme Court) sent George W. Bush to replace Bill Clinton. George W. Bush is almost a carbon copy of Ronald Reagan in terms of the economic policies he advocates," Smith said.

President Bush's proposed Social Security reform would allow workers under the age of 55 to place a percentage of their payroll taxes into voluntary private investment accounts. White House estimates place the plan's initial 10-year cost at \$754 billion, though other estimates range into the trillions.

Bush's behavior toward Social Security reform also follows a blueprint strategy published in 1980 by the libertarian Cato Institute proposing private accounts. That paper inspired Cato to publish a second paper in 1983.

The authors of "Achieving a 'Leninist' Strategy," Stuart Butler and Peter Germanis advised turning over at least a portion of Social Security to the private sector. They recommended criticizing Social Security to undermine public confidence in it, welding banks and other financial institutes into a coalition of supporters, assuring people near retirement that their benefits would be left intact, and introducing legislation that would make private accounts more comfortable to the mainstream.

"We must be prepared for a long campaign," Butler and Germanis wrote. "It could be many years before the conditions are such that a radical reform of Social Security is possible. But then, as Lenin well knew, to be a successful revolutionary, one must be patient and consistently plan for real reform."

Following this plan, Bush has gone on tour, pitching his program to the young and elderly in several states. This tour chases the heels of a radio address he issued last month warning of a demographic change that would potentially bankrupt the system.

President Bush, in courting the younger generation of America's workforce, said: "If you're 20 years old, in your mid-20s, and you're beginning to work, I want you to think about a Social Security system that will be flat bust, bankrupt, unless the United States Congress has got the willingness to act now."

"And so, therefore, when you have more retirees living longer for greater benefits with fewer people paying in, the system will inevitably go into the red. In 2018, 13 years down the road, it starts to go negative. And every year thereafter, the situation gets worse," said Bush. "In other words, more money is required to meet the promises. So that by the year 2027, the government is going to have to come up with \$200 billion additional above-and-beyond the payroll taxes to meet promises — and greater the next year, and greater the next year; \$300 billion in 2037; until 2042, it's broke. And that's the dilemma we're faced with."



Allen W. Smith, Ph.D.

Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan said he supported private accounts, but cautioned that they would not solve the program's problems. Greenspan stressed that they could provide a sense of ownership and transferable wealth to those "who have had to struggle with very little capital." He also said that the program is not facing imminent danger.

"Crisis to me usually refers to something which is going to happen tomorrow or is on the edge of going into a very serious change. That is not going to happen," Greenspan said to the House Budget Committee on Feb. 16 of this year.

A year prior, Greenspan urged Congress to control rising budget deficits and forestall a "very debilitating" rise in interest rates by shaving Social Security benefits.

"This dramatic demographic change is certain to place enormous demands on our nation's resources — demands we will almost surely be unable to meet unless action is taken," Greenspan said. "For a variety of reasons, that action is better taken as soon as possible."

Smith says that the Baby Boomers are not the root of the problem. For the past two decades, the government has been "borrowing" the Baby Boomers' surplus tax dollars while not replenishing the program.

"The money continued to be 'embezzled' and spent, with almost nobody aware that the 'crime' was taking place. However, it finally came into light during the 2000 presidential campaign," Smith said.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Gov. Bush and vice president Al Gore promised to end the spending of the Social Security Trust Fund. Bush repeated that pledge in his first State of the Union Address, delivered Feb. 27, 2001: "To make sure the retirement savings of all America's seniors are not diverted to any other program, my budget protects \$2.6 trillion of the Social Security surplus for Social Security and for Social Security alone."

Violating section 13301 of the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990, a federal law prohibiting the allowance of Social Security funds in budget calculations, and ignoring his pledge to the American people, President Bush "borrowed" and spent every dollar of the \$509 billion in surplus Social Security revenue (the Baby Boomers' retirement contributions) generated during his first term, making him the biggest contributor of all to the real Social Security problem, Smith said.

Bush even admitted that the Social Security Fund revenue was spent, leaving IOUs in the "trust fund," Smith said.

"Now, one of the myths about Social Security is that there's a pile of money sitting there accumulating, because you put money in, the government saves it for you, and then when you retire, you get it out. That's not the way the system works," Bush said Feb. 10, 2005 in Blue Bell, Penn. "Every dime that goes in from payroll taxes is spent. It's spent on retirees, and if



there's excess, it's spent on government programs. The only thing that Social Security has is a pile of IOUs from one part of government to the next. This is a pay-as-you-go system."

"We understand that there is a wrong way to solve this problem, and that is to take money away from a by and large successful program," AARP's Morton said.

Full Faith & Credit

Those opposed to the president's proposed plan say that taking money that is paid into the program which forms the base of that program's benefits is not the way to solve the social security issue. They say that such a course of action will limit the benefits available to that program and thereby weaken the aid it can provide to those who need it.

"Social Security is \$509 billion deeper in the red today because of Bush's looting over the past four years, and he continues to loot the fund to the tune of approximately \$438 million each and every day," Smith said. "This looted Social Security money became a major source of funding for Bush's tax cuts for the rich."

"To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush is not the solution to the Social Security problem, he is the problem," he added. "Because of this trust fund looting, when Social Security begins to run annual deficits in 2018, it will be necessary to cut benefits or raise taxes in order to generate the necessary revenue to repay the government's huge debt to Social Security."

"The president's plan would basically divert a percentage of the payroll taxes to set up individual accounts. The challenge there is that as the Baby Boomers retire, there will be fewer people paying into the program than drawing benefits. The program won't go bankrupt. Even past 2042, it will still be paying benefits. Up to 2042, it will pay 100 percent of promised benefits. Past that, it will still be paying roughly 75 percent of promised benefits. Of course, that's not acceptable. So the current debate is about how to make up that 25 percent," said Steve Hahn, AARP spokesman.

"The challenge is to look for a way to make the system whole, instead of carving money out of the program, which would ultimately lower benefits," Hahn said. "It's not a crisis, it's something that we believe would be less painful to fix now, instead of waiting 39 years down the road."

Smith recommended that the Social Security problem can be fixed at this

time with a single simple action. "Remove the Social Security payroll tax cap of \$90,000 per year, so that those earning more than \$90,000 will pay Social Security tax on their entire income just like everyone else," he said. "Those earning more than \$90,000 have received such large tax breaks from the Bush income tax cuts, that they can certainly afford to pay the additional payroll tax."

"The American people must also demand that Bush immediately stop looting the more than \$400 million per day of Social Security surplus money and allow that money to be invested in marketable U.S. Treasury bonds. Secondly, we must demand that legislation be enacted requiring that the \$1.5 trillion of the Social Security surplus that has already been looted be repaid. If these two steps are taken, there will be no Social Security problem until at least 2042," said Smith.

David Walker, comptroller general of the Governmental Accountability Office said there is a legal, moral and political significance to the Social Security fund. However, there is no economic significance, because there are no tangible assets, he said.

"The way the law works right now, Social Security is not funded through general revenues. Social Security is funded through payroll tax revenues, but it doesn't have the right to use general revenues," Walker said. "You can use general revenues to pay off the bonds. These IOUs are a priority claim on future general revenues. After you've paid off the bonds, there is no priority claim anymore."

When asked if taxing the Baby Boomers twice is a fair method of raising revenue in the social security fund, Walker said: "Well, one would question whether that would be fair, yeah. But understand this: this is a social insurance program, and the payroll tax base was determined in 1983.

"What a lot of people don't realize," he continued, "is that when the reforms were made as a result of Greenspan's Commission, they knew when they got done with those reforms that while it would end up providing several decades of additional life to Social Security, they knew they weren't solving the problem. They knew they would have to come back at some point of time in the future. So, they came up with a temporary solution."

The "full faith and credit" of the U.S. government backs the Social Security bonds, Morton said. So when the bonds mature, the government must find the money to pay those bonds.

Remember The Alamo!

BY JOE MARCHMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

CRAWFORD — The morning of Feb. 23, 1836, broke shiveringly cold and overcast for Private Daniel Cloud, who was posted as a sentinel at the bell tower of San Fernando Church, which stood in the middle of San Antonio de Bexar.

Cloud was watching for Santa Anna, who was reported to be only 18 miles to the southwest with thousands of troops camped by the Medina River. Lon Tinkle, in his book "The Alamo, 13 Days To Glory," imagined that Pvt. Cloud stood that guard freezingly alerted to the possibility that Santa Anna and his horde could appear on the horizon of the flat country dense with mesquite thicket to the south and west at any moment.

Pvt. Cloud yawned and stomped his cold feet as he thought of the party celebrating George Washington's birthday that might have been going on yet had Jim Bowie not received the message of Santa Anna being so near, thus causing Bowie and William B. Travis to station him at the bell tower to watch.

Feb. 22 had been a long day with the festivities and all. Jim Bowie, who shared command of the 180 or so men at the Alamo with William Travis, had had his Mexican friends set up a feast on tables in the main plaza, laden with food, "tamales and mescal." The dancing and guitar music was great fun, as was the fiddle contest, horse races, and cock fights. But the day had gotten a bit long for young Dan Cloud as Davy Crockett's Southern-fried oratory had started at noon and lasted all afternoon.

Pvt. Cloud had join the Texas Army a few months before in Nacogdoches, and if the message Bowie had received about Santa Anna was true, that meant fighting — and that's what he joined for. Others had seen fighting a couple of months earlier, in December 1835, when they had chased Santa Anna's brother-in-law General Martin Perfecto de Cós out of San Antonio and back to the Rio Grande.

Since then there were supposed to be no Mexican troops this side of the Rio Grande after Gen. Cós had been embarrassingly defeated by a Texas army less than half the men Cós had. The Texas troops, green and lazy, didn't answer to roll call or bother to drill. They ate and slept and chased the young Mexican señoritas, or sat around the San Antonio cantinas chatting about the feud between Bowie and Travis as to whom was in command of the Alamo.

Suddenly, Pvt. Daniel William Cloud realized that to the south, where only moments before there had been nothing but emptiness, there appeared hundreds of Mexican soldiers and cavalry. He stood in disbelief.

He ran for the bell rope, pulling with all his might. The tones of the bell reverberated through the city and countryside, announcing Santa Anna's approach.

Many of San Antonio's 4,000 Mexican inhabitants began evacuating the city, moving northwest over the muddy road with all their belongings they could carry, a far different scene than the fiesta of the day before in honor of

"El Señor Jorge Washington."

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the Mexican dictator, was there to revenge the four straight Texas victories over his Mexican troops, at Gonzales, at Goliad, at Concepción, and particularly at San Antonio de Bexar, where Gen. Cós had been routed after four days of furious fighting which had cost the Texans their leader, Ben Milam.

Twenty-seven-year-old William Travis stood in the plaza, running his fingers through his red hair, formulating his plans to defend Bexar and the Alamo. If only Jim Bonham would arrive — it had been six days since he had sent Bonham to Goliad to talk Col. James W. Fannin into reinforcing his command at the Alamo with his 400 Texan troops.

Col. Travis put Davy Crockett in charge in the plaza. Crockett had only been in San Antonio 15 days before Santa Anna's arrival. Davy had become disgusted with the voters of Tennessee after being elected twice as their representative to Congress, but failing in his third try.

Davy told his constituents in his disappointment, "You all can go to hell, and I'm going to Texas."

The colorful and appealing character of Davy Crockett enhanced the small band of Texans and their emotional feelings at the thought of defending the small fort a half-mile east of town, popularly known as the Alamo.

Davy is quoted as saying when he arrived, "We heard you were having trouble with the likes of old Santy Anny, and we 'lowed as how we might help you since we like a good fight."

Capt. Almeron Dickenson, in charge of the Texas artillery — not long after the bells stopped clanging — raced his horse to his living quarters not far from the plaza. He fetched his 18-year-old wife Susana and 15-month-old daughter Angelina, returning with them to the safety of the Alamo. There were several other women of Mexican descent inside, but Mrs. Dickenson was the only woman there from the states.

Jim Bowie came to Texas in search of silver and land. Now as the story goes, Vice-Governor Juan Veramendi had a beautiful young daughter named Ursula. On April 23, 1831, after the customarily long Mexican courtship, Jim Bowie and Ursula de Veramendi were married.

Bowie and Ursula were extremely happy together, and soon two children were born. In 1833, a cholera epidemic was running rampant throughout the States and Mexico. Jim sent his wife Ursula and their two children to the family's summer home at Monclavo with Ursula's father and mother. He figured that they would be safe in the mountain air of that resort. He was to join them in the fall when he finished his deals in Natchez.

Within three days' time, from the 5th to the 8th of September, Bowie's wife, his two children, Ursula's father and mother, all died from the cholera.

Bowie was shaken as never before.

In a speech he made before the Texas Consultation in 1835, his emotional state was truly reflected as he said that he had yielded to the dictates of his own heart, he had taken to his



Joe Marchman

Marchman is an award-winning writer for The Lone Star Iconoclast who is currently writing books on the legendary E.T. "Bull" Adams, his wife, Mabel Wayland Adams of Glen Rose, Texas, and her father, Dr. James. H. Wayland, a horse-and-buggy, High Plains pioneer of Plainview and West Texas.

This article about Texas' fight for independence weaves straight facts with colorful insight to the times when the future of Texas was unknown but by a few brave souls who had the courage and confidence to lead the Lone Star State into the legend it is today.



bosom as a wife "a true and lovely woman, the daughter of a 'Coahuil-Texano,'" yet like a thief in the night, death had invaded his home and had taken his wife, his little ones, and his in-laws.

Now all that remained for him in life was the privilege of serving Texas.

Jim Bowie, who's national reputation proclaimed him the champion of knife-fighters, was sent to the Alamo Jan. 17, 1836, by Gen. Sam Houston to destroy the mission fort. However, Col. Bowie and Col. William B. Travis decided that San Antonio was the "key to Texas," and must never be abandoned.

The two heroic Texans never liked each other, but on this they agreed, even if their lives were forfeit in disobeying Gen. Houston's orders.

Frank X. Tolbert, in his book "An Informal History of Texas," says that Santa Anna usually carried a mistress along on military campaigns, but when he arrived in San Antonio he didn't have such a diversion.

Perhaps the "Tiger of Mango de Clavo," as President Mirabeau B. Lamar referred to him, and who also had a wife at Mango de Clavo, was remembering those days at the age of 19 as a cadet in the army of the brutal Mexican General Arredondo, when they had occupied San Antonio in 1813, and Santa Anna had accomplished a romance with Gen. Arredondo's mistress, Miss Pia Quinta.

As the siege of the Alamo took Santa Anna 13 days, as one might expect, the

Mexican presidente began courting a beautiful teenager of 17.

Melchora Iniega Berrera belonged to one of the best families of San Antonio. Melchora's mother, more concerned with the virtue of her daughter than fear of Santa Anna, demanded marriage before he obtained the favors of the young beauty.

Santa Anna reluctantly agreed. He then arranged for one of his sergeants to disguise himself as a priest to do the wedding ceremony. Miss Berrera lived with her mother in one of San Antonio's better houses. Santa Anna moved into the Berrera home for a honeymoon while the bloody siege of the Alamo was in progress.

By March 4, the main column of Santa Anna's army had arrived. Ramón Caro, Santa Anna's secretary in his account of the siege of the Alamo, stated that the Mexican dictator entered the area towards the close of the battle to direct the slaughter of the defenders of the Alamo — 183 brave patriots of the Texas Revolution — on March 6, 1836.

Next week, the fight for Texas Independence will continue from within the Alamo, and the fate of Texas' brave heroes there, until the battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.

Oddly enough, Santa Anna and his diversions with the fair sex cost him.

Texas. The den of the Tiger of Mango de Clavo, which once echoed the cries of helpless womankind, would prevail in the end.

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Bullfrogs — Versatile, Studied, Unique

**Cross Timbers
Wildlife News**

By Jim Dillard

*Wildlife Biologist,
Texas Parks &
Wildlife Dept.,
Mineral Wells*



Some of my earliest biological study about the inner workings of animals came at the expense of bullfrogs. In my high school biology class, they were the

specimen of choice for comparative anatomy. The small school I went to didn't buy them; they just sent some of us boys on a frog gigging expedition out

to Billy William's stock tank the night before to collect some. One gig we had was of a 5-prong spear attached to a long cane fishing pole used to impale an unsuspecting bullfrog. The other was a clamp-like device put on the end of an old hoe handle that would snap shut on contact and hold a frog in its grip. Getting close enough to gig bullfrogs is best accomplished by blinding them with a light. All we had was a couple of those old 2-cell flashlights and one coon-hunting headlamp. After considerable sloshing around in the tank and an encounter with an agitated water moccasin, we were able to gig several nice specimens for the biology lab.

Not everyone in the class seemed to appreciate our hard work or poking around on the inside a formaldehyde saturated bullfrog, but I thought it was pretty cool. I learned right off the bat that pinching the sciatic nerve with a pair of tweezers would make my bullfrog start kicking in the dissecting pan, thus providing great entertainment for the class. The teacher didn't share my enthusiasm or burgeoning knowledge of anatomy.

The bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) is a member of the true frog Family Ranidae and is North America's largest frog species. Their generic name *Rana* is Latin for frog and the species name *catesbeiana* honors the English naturalist Mark Catesby (1683-1749) who published a book on natural history in pre-revolutionary North America. They're found throughout most of Texas except the dry desert country of west Texas and the High Plains. These mostly aquatic frogs live in wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers, ditches or other wet places with suitable habitat.

Skin coloration varies from light green, dark olive to almost black with small or large indistinct dark spots or blotches. There is barring on the hind legs and the belly is white or yellowish. Large bullfrogs measure up to 8 inches in length and 12 to 18 inches with legs outstretched. Their large external eardrums (tympanum) are located just behind their eyes and are bigger than the eye in males and the same size or smaller in females. Their hind feet are extensively webbed except for the last digit on the fourth toe, making them strong swimmers. The throat is usually yellow on males and white on females. A prominent skin ridge extends back from the rear of the eye around the back of the tympanum and ends above the foreleg. The large mouth extends almost half way around their broad flat head, enabling them to swallow relatively large prey. Their sticky tongue is attached to the front of the mouth and is forked in the back, allowing them to hold onto prey until swallowed.

Bullfrogs use the sit-and-wait strategy and will eat just about anything that moves within their reach they can get a lip around. Their voracious appetite includes small fish, insects, crayfish, worms, small birds and mammals, young turtles, other frogs and snakes. In turn, they're eaten by birds, snakes, mammals (raccoons and skunks) and us. A powerful leap with their strong legs often puts them out of harms way

to live another day.

Fishermen often entice them to strike at lures or other brightly colored objects for a date with the frying pan. Frog legs are considered a delicacy in some circles and renowned to taste "just like chicken" — personally, I think they taste "just like frog legs!"

Bullfrogs are one of the first frogs to go into hibernation in the fall and last to emerge in the spring. During the winter, bullfrogs and their tadpoles bury themselves underwater in the mud and remain in a state of hibernation for months at a time. Oxygen is exchanged through their skin so they don't have to surface to breathe. Beginning in the spring, the distinctive bel-

lowing "brr-ummmm" or "jug-o'-rummm" mating call of the males can be heard in the evening. The internal vocal sac is inflated while keeping the mouth and nostrils tightly closed. Air is then squeezed back and forth between the lungs and mouth, producing their signature music. Males are solitary and intolerant of other bullfrogs in their territory; frog fights and wrestling matches are not uncommon. On rainy nights, males will often venture off cross-country in search of new surroundings to see if it's froggier on the other side of the fence.

A female bullfrog will select a mate to her liking and then lay 10,000-20,000 eggs. The male grasps the female with his forelegs around her body and fertilized the eggs as they are laid in a floating jelly-like mass that attach to underwater vegetation. These hatch within several days as tadpoles (also called pollywogs) with external gills and tails. Tadpoles feed on tiny plants and animals they locate in shallow water areas. Those few that survive will eventually complete a two years or longer process of metamorphosis into adults. In warmer climates, metamorphosis can take much less time. Young bullfrogs then require four to five years to reach sexual maturity.

Bullfrogs have been introduced around the world and are now commercially produced to satisfy the market demand including imports into the United States. There's a good chance the frog legs you eat down at your local eatery are like everything else these days - "Made in China."

There no telling how many times I've walked along the weedy shoreline of a lake chunking bass lures only to have a bullfrog spring into mid-air right from underfoot with a loud and unnerving "MEAP" and then disappear into the depths of the pond. It's always a surprise but one I'm glad to experience. I'd just as soon they keep their legs — chicken tastes better anyway. Until next time, I'll see you down the road and **God Bless America!**

Congressman Chet Edwards Staying In Touch



President's Day A Reminder To Honor Our Democratic Legacy

BY CONGRESSMAN CHET EDWARDS

February 18, 2005 — This week, Americans celebrate the President's Day holiday to honor the two Presidents considered the fathers of American democracy, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

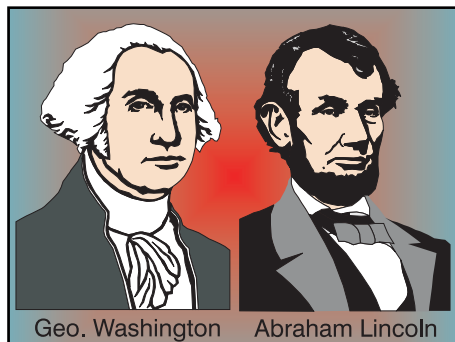
President George Washington, our first President who successfully commanded American forces during the Revolutionary War, was born on February 22, 1732. Historically, the holiday was originally established to commemorate President Washington's Birthday in 1796, the last full year of his presidency.

By the early 19th century, Washington's Birthday had firmly taken hold in the hearts and minds of Americans. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, a revered president who guided this nation during one of its most troubled times, the Civil War. Lincoln, like Washington, had a February birthday too, the 12th. The first formal observance of Lincoln's birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become an official federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday observed in several states.

Until 1971, both Feb. 12th and Feb. 22nd were observed by the public as holidays to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. In 1968, legislation was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year whether or not it fell on the 22nd. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

While the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday, it has become popularly known as "President's Day." Today, the third Monday in February is a day for honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served us as President.

The legendary wisdom of Abraham Lincoln and courageous vision of George Washington, still serve as a pow-



Geo. Washington Abraham Lincoln

erful reminder today of what we look for in our Presidents to confront the challenges of today. I'm especially respectful of the wisdom of the founding fathers, including Washington, who built checks and balances into our system of government so that even a President does not have unchecked power. That is why Congress, not the President, has the power to declare war, appropriate spending, and serve the public good through legislation.

Our founding fathers understood that even the best of Presidents is human. That's why Washington and Jefferson purposely made Congress a co-equal partner with the White House, not a subservient branch of government. This ensured that our democracy and the best interests of the American people would be served.

That is why my position has always been, whether the President is a Democrat or Republican, to support the president if I felt it was right for our district and country and to respectfully disagree if I felt it was not.

My hope for the future is that the White House and Congress will work in good faith together for the good of the country. Recognizing that the respectful debate of ideas is what democracy is all about, it is crucial that we honor the legacy of our democracy, especially at a time when our country faces significant challenges at home and around the world.

Chet Edwards is serving his eighth term in Congress and is one of only six House members to serve on the Appropriations and Budget committees. Edwards is a recognized leader on issues of fiscal responsibility, national defense and homeland defense against nuclear terrorism.

Overeager Secessionists Seize U.S. Arsenal

As the sun rose over San Antonio on Feb. 18, 1861, scores of secessionists surrounded the United States arsenal, which happened to be housed in the most famous structure in all of Texas.

The commander of the Department of Texas was ready and willing to oblige his friends, but the Texans were in too much of an all-fired hurry to waste time asking for what they could simply take. A veteran of the Mexican War as well as a southern soul mate, Gen. David E. Twiggs desired only that the transfer be orderly and dignified.

The previous December the 71-year-old soldier had, in fact, foreseen the inevitable breakup of the Union. The week before South Carolina took its leave, Twiggs requested written instructions from his superior in the likelihood Texas followed the example of the Palmetto State.

Gen. Winfield Scott complained in his brief reply that he could not get a straight answer out of the president or the war department. He wished Twiggs luck and advised him to use his best judgment.

But the secretary of war interpreted the sincere appeal for guidance as a symptom of subversive sympathies. He instantly called for replacing Twiggs with a die-hard that would resist any attempted take-over regardless of the consequences.

Fortunately events moved far too fast for that rash order to be carried out. Enough blood would be shed in the war to come without needlessly sacrificing more lives in a useless dress rehearsal in Texas.

On paper Twiggs appeared to have

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



sufficient forces to keep the Confederates in check. A tenth of the entire U.S. Army, almost three thousand troops, was stationed in Texas. But only 160 were based in San Antonio, site of the federal arsenal, while the rest were scattered from the Red River to the Rio Grande.

Even though the secessionists asked him to vacate the premises in early February shortly after the adoption of the ordinance of withdrawal, Twiggs presumed no action would be taken before Texans voted in the statewide referendum scheduled for Feb. 23. He did not understand that the election was merely a rubber-stamp formality.

Revered Ranger Ben McCulloch issued a clandestine call to arms, and hundreds answered by hurriedly converging on San Antonio. In the pre-dawn hours of Feb. 18, several hundred volunteers silently encircled the Lone Star shrine converted into a munitions dump.

Each and every one prayed that the small garrison inside those hallowed walls would give up without a fight. No clear-headed Texan wanted to trade places with Santa Anna and fire upon the Alamo.

At sunrise a spokesman approached the arsenal under a flag of truce. He

exchanged pleasantries with the young officer in charge before politely pointing out the silhouetted sharpshooters who had him squarely in their sights. The frightened lieutenant surrendered on the spot.

At his headquarters on the outskirts of San Antonio, Twiggs enjoyed a leisurely breakfast blissfully unaware of the dangerous drama unfolding in town. Strategically placed Confederates had intercepted the messenger sent to bring him the bad tidings.

Following a rigid routine shaped by 50 years of military service, Twiggs slowly dressed. Finally passing his own strict inspection, the elderly general summoned his carriage.

Rounding a bend in the road, Twiggs nearly ran over two shaggy pedestrians. Before he could reprimand the strangers for their bad manners, they produced shotguns and announced he was under arrest.

Twiggs was escorted under guard to the Grand Plaza, where the militiamen had gathered after the successful seizure of the arsenal. The crowd parted to reveal the old Ranger, who greeted

the general with a perfunctory nod.

"Ben McCulloch!" shouted Twiggs on the verge of losing his composure. "You have treated me most shamefully, ruining my reputation as a military man, and I am now too old to reestablish it!"

Taken aback by the harsh but undeniably accurate accusation, McCulloch carefully chose his words. "I am serving my state, the State of Texas, sir."

Tears streamed down his cheeks as Twiggs moaned, "But you, sir, without papers, without notice have assembled a mob and forced me to terms." Suddenly the aged general broke under the unbearable strain of the public humiliation and cried like a baby.

At that awkward and painful moment, the embarrassed Texans felt more like bullies than triumphant heroes. In the eerie silence that fell over the throng, a single thought raced through their troubled minds.

What kind of war had they gotten themselves into?

Barte Haile welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at haile@pdq.net or 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581.

FSA Accepting Emergency Loan Farm Applications

HAMILTON — Coryell, Bell, Bosque, Lampasas, and Hamilton counties were declared eligible for Farm Service Agency (FSA) disaster emergency loans on Feb. 2, 2005. Generally, that means that farmers who have lost at least 30 percent of their production due to the damages and losses caused by excessive rain, flooding, hail, and high winds are eligible for FSA loans.

Proceeds from crop insurance are taken into account when determining eligibility. FSA Farm Loan Manager, D. Dale Vann, Sr., is urging farmers who are interested in receiving an emergency loan to get their applications into FSA as soon as possible. Mr. Vann said, "We hope farmers will get their application in early rather than waiting until near the deadline which is Oct. 3, 2005. The longer they wait, the more

chance there is for long delays. If the applications come in early, we can avoid backlogs and speed up the process."

Applications can be picked up at the Coryell, Bell, Bosque, Lampasas, and Hamilton FSA county offices. Any questions can be directed to the Hamilton office at (254) 386-3913.

Courthouse Program Wins National Award

AUSTIN — The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers recently awarded a New Initiatives award to the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program for excellence in historic preservation. The New Initiatives award recognizes an exemplary role in the creation and successful implementation of a new statewide project or program benefiting historic preservation.

The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the first of its kind in the nation, was cited in the nomination as achieving spectacular results in its first five years of existence, pointing out that other states now look to Texas for leadership in preserving their historic courthouses.

To date, 22 historic courthouses have been restored and rededicated through the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state, of which 234 are eligible for the program. Currently 112 courthouses are participating in the program.

For more information, contact the THC's Architecture Division at (512) 463-6094.

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DATELINE:
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Caravan Carrying Aid To Mexico To Stop In Crawford March 6

CRAWFORD — Six caravans sent by Pastors for Peace will make a scheduled stop on Sunday, March 6, at the Crawford Peace House on their way take aid to Chiapas, Mexico.

The 15 community activists planning to caravan through 42 U.S. cities this March are concerned about a continued threat of human rights abuses in Chiapas. The church groups and community organizations that host them will fill their trucks and yellow school bus with humanitarian aid destined for displaced indigenous communities in Chiapas. The activists hope these gatherings will have a ripple effect and raise awareness about the issue.

“The threat of repression in Chiapas continues,” said Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr., executive director of IFCO/Pastors for Peace. The area, he says, “remains militarized and the presence of paramilitary groups continues despite international outrage.”

Upon arrival in Chiapas, the group will spend 10 days visiting schools, clinics, and refugee communities. They will

also meet with non-governmental and religious organizations who work with indigenous communities in Chiapas, where they will deliver medical and school supplies, bicycles and tons of corn, beans, rice and cooking oil.

An estimated 13,000 indigenous people in Chiapas have been driven from their homes since 1994. Faith-based organizations such as the Fray Bartolome Center in San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas have documented large scale human rights abuses including assassinations, torture and forced displacement of entire communities. International observers report that the situation remains unstable. Opponents of NAFTA believe that Chiapas has been targeted by multinational corporations looking to exploit the region’s abundant resources.

Briana Harris, program coordinator of the Chiapas Caravan for Pastors for Peace said that partner organizations Enlace Civil and Caritas who promote health, education and small business and farming cooperatives will ensure that the aid gets to where it is needed most.

Pastors for Peace is an action/education project of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization. Since 1988, Pastors for Peace has organized scores of humanitarian aid caravans to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Over 35 million dollars worth of humanitarian aid has been delivered by thousands of volunteers from the US, Canada, Mexico and Europe.

Workforce Commission Wins Texas Court Case

AUSTIN — The Texas Workforce Commission will retain \$1.9 million in Unemployment Insurance taxes after the Texas Third Court of Appeals upheld a lower court decision against a Texas employer.

In 2002, TWC denied a request from Corpus Christi-based Berry GP Inc. for an Unemployment Insurance tax refund. The decision was based on the fact that the company used a tax-avoidance strategy to achieve a one-time tax benefit.

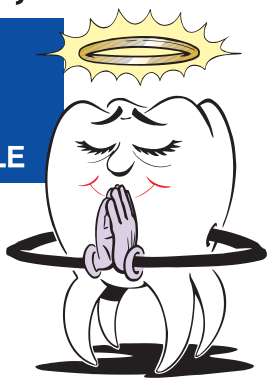
In upholding TWC’s decision, the Third Court acknowledged that Berry GP Inc. sought to escape from a less than favorable tax rate by forming a new company, Berry Contracting L.P. and then transferring employees to the new company in two waves. First, Berry GP Inc. created the new company with only two employees; a few weeks later, it transferred the remaining 3,000 Berry GP Inc. employees into the new company.

“To base appellant’s compensation experience rating on the two employees transferred first, rather than the 3,000 employees transferred second, would defeat the purpose of rewarding employers who have earned a favorable tax rate,” the Third Court in its opinion stated.

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Country Bracing For Draft

CRAWFORD — The United States has not had a military draft since 1973, but fears are growing throughout the country that there might soon be a return to the Selective Service.

Students are beginning to take the looming threat seriously as they consider ways of making themselves "draft resistant" as they gear up for conscientious objector status, establishing advance proof that they will qualify.

Lawmakers are scrutinizing the military commitments of the United States. If the numbers fall short, a military draft could quickly follow.

According to Sen. Joseph Biden, (D-Del.) "Our ability to have any flexibility with ground forces anywhere else is diminished. If we had to move into Iran, Syria, North Korea, or anywhere else, we'd be in real difficulty."

He added, "We have absolutely spent, exhausted, and in some instances misled the National Guard and the reserves. I've been in Baghdad and Fallujah and I've spoken with them. When they enlisted in the Guard, they never anticipated being sent for two tours of duty in Iraq lasting a year or 18 months. We can't keep asking citizen soldiers to do that."

A draft, in enacted, could be up and running quickly, thanks to former President Jimmy Carter who in 1980 put into place a program requiring young men to register with the government when they turn 18.



REBOUND — Derek Dumas (4) tries to break away as Lee Murphy (15) pulls a rebound against Moody on Friday, Feb. 11. The score was Crawford 71, Moody 39. — Photo By Stephen Cook

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Teachers Lose Social Security Benefits

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "The rich may get richer, but the poor don't get no poorer. There ain't no gauge for cold cornbread."

Do not feel sorry for me.
I'm not complaining here.

This is just a warning to the rest of you.

After paying into Social Security for more than 30 years, I won't get a dime.

Neither will my widow.

I got snookered.

Never was it done slicker, unless you count that redhead in a Tulsa pool hall . . .

Never mind.

There're children present.

I wasted most of my life chasing cops and politicians around with a notebook and a typewriter.

I can admit that now that my parents are dead.

They never knew I wasted my life, but passed on to their reward believing that I owned the towel concession in a bordertown bordello. Finally, late in my journalistic debauchery, I fell into the depths of depravity and became an editor. I was hiding out behind the editorial page of the *Bryan Eagle* back during the Reagan Disaster, and kept hearing how education was in trouble.

I was reared by school teachers. My grandmother ran a one-room schoolhouse and Sunday school. Both my parents taught. My older brother, Fred, and his wife both taught. My wife is a teacher. I was the only one who ever went bad.

Unless you count Uncle Hugh.

From whom I learned far more than I ought.

Naturally the good Christians in the family didn't count Uncle Hugh, unless it came to business. And then you had to learn to count in the dark.

But I digress.

The state launched a campaign to lure those with "practical" experience into the classroom.

Besides, I figured I could help.

It never occurred to me that learning is about as practical as it gets, so I went back to school and got my masters and a teaching certificate.

And a \$8,000 per year pay cut.

Then I learned the first part of the con.

Education wasn't in trouble.

Never had been.

The whole thing was a Reagan scam to cut education funding by doing away with vocational programs, making labor cheaper simultaneously. Based on *A Nation at Risk*, a bookfull of misinformation about test scores, a politically motivated panic turned us into a nation of child abusers.

Still, I enjoyed myself and, as it turned out, I had a knack for teaching.

After all, Brer Fred and I were in school 24-7, and all I had to do was pass on a few of the tricks I learned to play on the system.

In public school my kids' lowest average TAAS score was 93 percent.

Once they figured out the whole thing was a scam, a bunch of Austin bureaucrats was no match for them.

But I had stopped paying Social Security.

Texas doesn't pay SSI on its teach-

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



ers.

The state even cheats them out of their own retirement system.

The system is too complicated to go into here, but suffice it to say that state bureaucrats, who pay less into the Teacher Retirement System, get to take out more in benefits than teachers.

But until the Republican Coup, teachers could still draw both SSI and TRS pensions. If you'd paid into the system, or could work a day for a state entity that paid SSI and draw on your spouse's benefits.

That was before the Congress introduced the Windfall Elimination Provision to the Social Security Act.

If teachers have not paid into the system within the last few years, they and their spouses lose their benefits. Lose their benefits.

The thousands I paid into the system went down Neighbor Bush's rathole.

Neither Texas senator is in favor of correcting the Social Security snatch for those the state conned into leaving our jobs to teach.

Comical thing is, Lying Texas Governor Tricky Ricky Perry launched another campaign recently to try and attract working stiffs into the teaching profession.

Of course he doesn't mention that they're going to lose their Social Security while he cuts their medical benefits and retirement funds.

But, like I said, don't feel sorry for me.

I am not without other resources.

When I get ready to retire, I can always go back to what I used to do for a living: working a mere 12 hours a day putting out a newspaper.

But when Neighbor Bush and the Congressional Country Club talk about "reducing benefits," this is what they mean.

Besides, this isn't a problem that is going to get much attention no matter what I do.

There aren't many of us right now.

Most of the private sector types couldn't hack it.

They left the classrooms after a year or so.

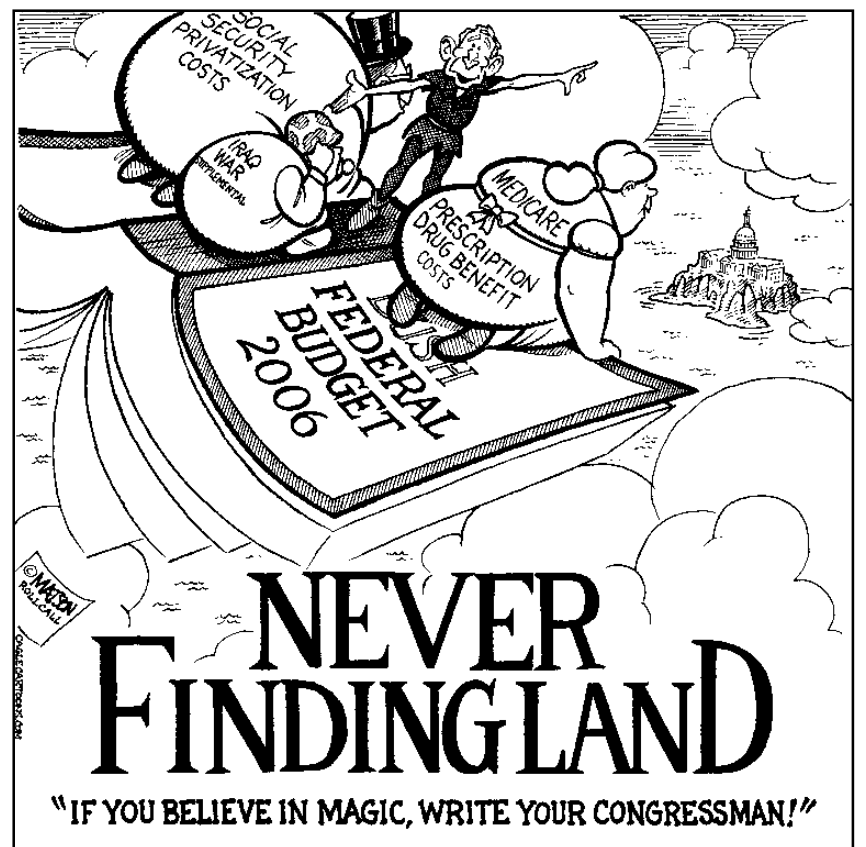
The pressure and demands of offering direction to young people's lives is the hardest job I've ever done. Frankly, most people can't do it.

Kids trust you; they even love you.

If you screw up, they won't forgive you. Worse still, you won't forgive yourself. So don't feel sorry for teachers.

They don't make much, but they do make a difference. That difference will continue as successive generations build a future on the knowledge that teachers offered today.

And teachers will make a difference long after the Perrys and the Bushs are just boring textbook lines that students skim over on their way to the important stuff.



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Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Lobbyist Influence

On Governor's Office Must End

The electors of public officials in Austin do not vote on lobbyists, but virtually all legislation that is drafted for consideration by the legislature is written by lobbyists.

Gov. Perry inherited former Gov. George W. Bush's penchant to engage high-level lobbyists to guide his agenda, often resulting in a revolving door landmine whereby the lobbyist serves the governor, then enters into lobbying pursuits, or vice-versa. The end-result is legislation tainted by input from special interests that have a profit agenda of their own to achieve on behalf of their clients, usually major corporations or industries.

State elected officials sit in offices waiting for bills to be brought to them by various special interest groups, knowing full well that this is the pathway to campaign contributions, not only in the form of hard cash, but with campaign assistance — bribery, pure and simple. Sure, it is a crooked game, not the way government should work, but both the good guys and the bad guys play it, for the feel they have to. Lobbyists work to garner enough sponsors to get a bill to the floor, then they lobby the committee, and follow the process through to fruition. This has become common practice, with lawmakers simply waiting for their favorite lobbyists to perform.

The Governor claims that these individuals are experts in their field and can offer valuable input on the trek toward legislation, but the perception of profiteering clouds respect for the practice.

Recent examples include former chief of staff Mike Toomey who is now a lobbyist for gambling, tobacco, and healthcare interests that stand to gain from the evolving policies that Toomey helped to establish under Perry, and Dan Shelley, a lobbyist for Cintra, the company awarded a \$7.2 billion contract to construct the Trans Texas Corridor, Perry's superhighway initiative. Shelley is now helping Perry write transportation law.

The perception of ingrained favoritism runs rampant when five former members of the Governor's executive staff become lobbyists who earn \$250,000 to \$1.25 million to champion specific causes that relate to their input as former members of the Governor's staff.

The citizens of Texas deserve better. They deserve laws that are drafted without the input of paid lobbyists, laws that emerge from the grassroots of our communities where their impact will be more realistically felt.

We don't need a closed society, geared at profits for those whom the lobbyists represent, where special favors are granted to insiders whose hidden agendas influence and, eventually dictate, the resulting overall legislative agenda.

A five-year moratorium forbidding former government staffers from lobbying any branch of state government would be a favorable starting point in achieving some degree of detachment from this type of unwarranted influence.

To go one step further, lawmakers should perk their ears more attentively to the populace of the state and forego the lavish considerations of the lobbyist blocks whose claims of need are often nothing more than calculated methods to rip off Texans who do not have the millions or billions of dollars to purchase legislation.

— Written by W. Leon Smith

Deep Throat II?

The mainstream media widely reported last week on speculation in high places that George Herbert Walker Bush was perhaps Deep Throat, of Watergate fame, the insider who tipped off Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein about the wrongdoings of the Nixon Administration. That's yet to be seen.

However, if it is true, will Gannongate provide another like-father, like-son phenomenon, with George W. Bush as the current-day Deep Throat who provided particular information to a "member" of the Washington Press Corps, namely Jeff Gannon, also known as James Guckert?

For the past two years, Gannon, representing Talon News, has apparently been awarded special Bush Administration media privileges and news flashes before they broke to the other media. He has worked "very closely" with the Administration to proclaim, on his Website, that the only way for America to reach heaven is through Bush's definition of neo-conservatism.

The credibility of both Gannon and his apparent Skull and Bones leader fell from grace this past week when it was learned, first of all, that Gannon, a double agent with an alias, was ostensibly planted inside the press corps "briefing" room to deflect hard questions asked of the White House. Now it has been learned that Gannon's eerie past—including his associations with Meetlocalmen.com, MilitaryescortsM4M.com, and Workingboys.net—has stripped

The Trenchwalker

By W. Leon Smith



the Bush Administration of any claim to traditional Bible Belt ethics.

THE WASHINGTON POST reported that a Web designer in California had posted naked pictures of Gannon at the client's request and had designed a gay escort site for him.

Where were Bush and Karl Rove? Ouch! Is there any intelligence at the White House? What did they know? Or, dare we ask, "who" did they know?

The ghost of the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates has stirred from his sleep and is smirking at an exposed White House, not only for Gannon's supposed eruption from the closet, but for the Administration allegedly harboring a propaganda operative as a mouthpiece to denounce gays while touting the edicts of the supposedly moral right-wingers.

It's enough to make some red states blush a deeper shade with embarrassment.

The White House has skewed the honest efforts of the real press and, with the creation of a fake media sponsored by the Federal government to shamelessly exploit the public, has cast a shadow on the integrity of the motives of this Administration and the inbred secrecy that is its idol.

President Bush has always been adversarial to the news media, for he

cannot stomach that which it represents — the morality of truth and the exposition of dark yet relevant secrets. Take the caskets in Iraq, or the sexual tortures of Abu Ghraib that are unique to this Administration.

We see, even in Crawford, Texas, attacks on the press when RTL Broadcasting in Denmark broadcasts a story throughout Europe that depicts Crawford school children proudly stating that a free press does not exist in that city. Or check out the website www.truthout.org (under "multimedia") to view Chris Hume's Red State Road Trip, where members of the Crawford community proclaim that people who do not think pro-Republican should leave town.

But take it a step further. Crawfordites claim blind allegiance to Bush over country. That's a given. Most in this rural suburb of Waco consider him a deity, of sorts. Yet if you bring a local merchant the head of George Washington on a greenish paper background (times 10), you can walk away with a quasi-pornographic paper-doll book that flaunts President Bush clad only in his underwear and cowboy boots. Neo-conservative values run deep, you see.

Of course, you cannot find a copy of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST on the merchants' shelves, for it has been banned. The town's businessmen got together and with ambivalence to anti-trust laws and allegiance to the values of old-time Nazi Germany decided to boycott its existence.

Their venom, however, does not extend to stopping the sale of the Bush paper-dolls in boots and briefs. He must feel honored. And let's not forget, paper

dolls are generally the playthings of impressionable five-year-old girls. What kinky Presidential messages are the parents attempting to teach their children, anyway? This is scary.

To the new world order, there is nothing wrong with this, for it fits perfectly into their re-definition of the Bible. How can you argue with people who believe that putting their children on the sacrificial rock of Iraq befits Genesis and where bashing gays yet engaging their influences merges with Freud?

No, their values have departed the shores of truth as a voyage en route to an island of false idolatry and bald-faced greed.

One must wonder what really goes on behind the closed doors of the hideout, a.k.a. the Western White House. How many potential "fake journalists" did Rove wade through to find the perfect one to converge upon the Presidency? How many other Gannons have been christened to deceive the American public, and on whose behalf?

This Administration has not only ruptured the sanctity of the U.S. Constitution and shredded portions as no longer relevant, no longer American, we have allowed it to likewise desecrate the Ten Commandments. Read it. How many "thou shall nots" has our country willingly violated. Does God speak to Bush or does Bush speak to God? That is the question.

When it comes to weapons of mass debauchery and the likes of Jeff Gannon, it appears that President Bush found what he was looking for. Now the world is awaiting his explanation.

Vigilantes Take Over When Government Doesn't Act

"Will Texas be next?" is a question lawmakers are asking themselves as they view the planned invasion of the Minuteman Project along the U.S.-Mexico border

in Arizona beginning on April Fool's Day. The group of self-appointed border watchers, that currently includes 29 Texans and is drawing volun-

teers from throughout the nation, is seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of the border patrol in keeping illegal aliens from crossing over into the United States.

A spokesman for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Washington is concerned that "middlemen" on the border could result in the violation of the rights of illegal immigrants and skew the efforts of the border patrol in doing its job.

The project was founded by James Gilchrist, a Vietnam veteran who lives in California, who has said he will "defend our country and will not allow for some criminals and drug traffickers to enter."

Although the Minutemen Project volunteers claim they are not vigilantes poised to take the law into their own hands, some civil rights organizations don't buy into the tactics and claim the volunteers are not educated about the problems of border control activity and there could be international repercussions.

Ideally, competent authorities should deal with the problem, but when government fails to act and the citizens have had enough, such a gesture by the Minutemen Project could bring attention to how ineffective the government has been at regulating its border.

Depending upon how brightly Arizona's test shines in the limelight, Texas could be next.



THE CAPITOL RAT
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Giving Our Secrets To The Russians

It's happened again. There's been a serious national security leak. This time it's the Russians who are the recipients of some of America's deepest secrets. And it's all happening out in the open! It's hard to believe, but some Americans are bringing one of the greatest symbols of our country to Russia. They're teaching the Russians baseball.

Our "National Pastime" in the former Soviet Union? A generation of Cold Warriors must be turning over in their bomb shelters. What's next? Teaching China how to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? As Major League baseball considers an international draft, scouts from professional teams have invaded Russia to try to promote baseball and develop some potential stars. The sport hasn't exactly caught on yet. The best Russian athletes go into soccer, hockey and basketball, leaving the leftovers to pick up a bat and glove. Fewer than a dozen fans attend a typical game. But if the Montreal Expos could sustain a team for so many years with similar attendance, who knows what will happen in Moscow?

Conspiracy buffs are probably asking



By
**Lloyd
Garver**

why this happens to be going on during the Bush administration. They may feel it's not a coincidence that news of the Mudville-Moscow connection has come out just when there is so much discussion about Major League baseball players using steroids. Maybe it's an attempt to deflect attention from the drug issue. After all, President Bush was the owner of the Rangers while Jose Conesco was in Texas using steroids and becoming slightly larger than the Alamo. They might wonder aloud, "What did George Bush know and when did he know it?" But I think it's quite a stretch to try to involve the President in this controversy — although it wouldn't be the last time that some people who worked for him had too much testosterone and not enough

common sense.

Professional basketball has been internationalized in the last few years, and I think that's great. It's been fun to watch players from all over the world play with and against each other. Part of my enjoyment probably comes from my naive, corny view of sports. It's that same mushy feeling that some of us get during the Olympics: "If people can get along so well on the playing fields, maybe we can all get along in the real world." So, why didn't I greet the news about trying to teach baseball to the Russians with the same enthusiasm?

I think it's because baseball seems uniquely American, and it's so much a part of our history. It's the Grand Old Game. Wartime soldiers used baseball terms as tests to tell if a stranger were an enemy or a friend. The President of the United States throws out the first ball of the season. And just about every American has played some form of baseball at some point in his or her life — even if just taking a few swings or tossing a ball around.

Deep down, I know spreading baseball around the world is a good thing. It'll just take me a while to get used to

it. It's also going to take the Russians time to learn the game. Baseball may look simple, but there are all kinds of nuances that players must learn. For example, simultaneously spitting and crotch-scratching doesn't come easily. They'll also have to learn to say, "I'd play the game for free" while asking for tens of millions. The terminology might be difficult for foreigners to grasp: In baseball, "stealing" and "hitting" are good things, and a "screwball" is not just that shirtless guy who writes the team's name on his belly.

So, I figure by the time there are Russians in the Major Leagues, I'll be so used to the idea that I'll greet them with a standing ovation. In the meantime, I'll just try to imagine the vendors in the Russian stadiums crying out, "Hot dogs! Peanuts! Borscht!"

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

Outlook For The Future Of Education? Just Pee-Chee

When I was a kid, our school supply list consisted of a Star Wars notebook and a Pee-Chee folder. The notebook helped us organize our assignments; the Pee-Chee folder was used for entertaining ourselves during class by drawing thought balloons for the athletes on the cover.

Football Guy: (Getting tackled) "Oh sure — run the old L-42 play, THAT always works..."

Tennis Girl: "If my skirt gets any shorter, I'll be playing Olympic volleyball..."

You get the idea.

Just about everyone remembers this folder because, like Al Sharpton's hair gel, it has remained virtually unchanged since 1964. What has changed, however, is the growing list of items parents must provide throughout the school year. This comes in addition to rudimentary things, such as clothing, snacks and a recent urine sample. The reason is simple: The government is tired of wasteful spending, particularly in the educational system, where a special task force has discovered that schools routinely get bilked into spending thousands of dollars on paper alone.



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

"And, shockingly, most of this paper has turned out to be blank," said White House spokesman Fred Netterman.

The study, code-named "Operation: Waste Storm," was described by Netterman as "the first step in a three-pronged approach to end overspending in four areas of education."

Netterman later apologized, saying his initial figures were incorrect, and that it was actually a four-pronged approach.

"The point is, I've been promised as many prongs as it takes to get the job done — that's how serious we are," said Netterman, who revealed that "scissors," "glue" and "construction paper" were other pork barrel items targeted by the study.

"Obviously, we're approaching construction paper with a great deal of sensitivity since, in addition to money, it involves issues of color."

When asked if making additional cuts to education contradicted the President's "No Child Left Behind" law, Netterman said it did not, arguing that it was the President himself, back in 2000, who stated: "Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?"

Netterman explained that withholding another \$30 billion from education will encourage schools to do more with less, which will go further in preparing children for the real world than making paper hats and collages — items

which, as Netterman pointed out, could be outsourced to children in Taiwan and imported for half the price.

"In addition to the cost savings, think of how it would bolster our relationship with the Taiwanese people," said Netterman, who underscored his statement by pointing to a map of Japan.

So, how will all this affect our children's education?

I honestly don't know.

But I'm sure, eventually, everything will be just Pee-Chee.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at nhickson@oregonfast.net, or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439.)

Authors To Speak On Researching Roots Of African-Americans

WACO — Central Texas Genealogical Society invites the public to attend a meeting with authors and genealogists Edith Smith and Vivian Lehman on Monday, Feb. 28, at 7 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the Central Branch of the Waco-McLennan County Public Library, 1717 Austin Ave.

in Waco.

Visitors will hear about the research involved in compiling these volumes of material. The timing is perfect as the Waco-McLennan County Public Library has purchased the entire set and will have the books available to all researchers that visit the Library.

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The Koran Is A Beautiful Book

The Koran is, for the most part, a beautiful book. Sometimes I think these people who call themselves Muslims don't even read the same book I am referring to. Certainly the Allah of the Koran is not an Allah who would condone the practices of terrorists.

And I have heard recently that the people being recovered from most suicide bombs are from Turkey and other places, imported terrorists, not even Iraqis. We have to eventually realize that we cannot win a war against people with such a different view of God. The young men who strap bombs to their chests are being brainwashed by religious leaders who assure them they will go straight to heaven and have 75 virgins waiting—if they will just explode in the right place at the right time for the cause. Who makes up this stuff? Is this actually what the Koran dictates?

And how about the way these men treat their women? Don't get me started.

We are not allowed to interrogate the enemy in the only way they would understand. They are not accustomed to being asked politely. If we are not willing to play dirty, we have no business being over there. If we stay, we need to either take off our gloves or hire someone else to do the dirty work correctly. Do we really have the stomach for this?

Our military is spread way too thin now, and one day when our forces are needed elsewhere, they will still be in Iraq, fighting a war that is impossible to win. We need to get out of there, stop keeping kids in the service after they were promised they could go home. We need to stop engaging our National Guard. When you pull Mr. Everyday Guy out of his plumbing business in Kansas, Mrs. Guy can't make the house payments, and little Johnnie and Susie Guy aren't going to have enough in their college fund when the time comes.

But don't suggest instituting a draft. Just get out of Iraq. The only reason we are there is to line the pockets of the private contractors who are profiting from the war and possibly Mr. Bush's desire

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 do what his Daddy couldn't or wouldn't finish. It isn't about oil. It isn't about terrorism. It isn't about freedom. It's about money, and money for only a select few big companies with important and highly placed connections. It's common knowledge. Why isn't everyone screaming about it?

Why are so many Americans so convinced that this war is a worthwhile effort that they are willing to let their husbands and wives and children give their lives for it, make the ultimate sacrifice. I am so tired of hearing words like honor and duty (which are not, in themselves, bad things). With every life that is changed by injury or lost, we are setting in motion a huge chain of events. Every loss effects history.

I wouldn't want this on my conscience. No amount of money would cause me to send someone's son or daughter to Iraq to risk his or her life. When are the people of this country going to wake up?

Remember Country Joe and the Fish? They sang during the Vietnam era. Remember the song about the kids coming back home in body bags? "Well, it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for? Don't ask me, I don't give a damn. Next stop is Vietnam. Well, it's five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates. There ain't no time to wonder why. Whoopee, we're all gonna die!" It finishes, "Be the first one on your block to have your boy come home in a box."

This is happening again, people. Open your eyes!

—Gene Ellis, Ed.D.
—W.C. Zacharias, Ed.D.

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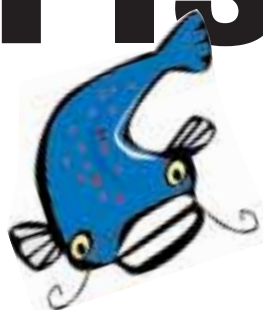


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I have just read the excerpt from your paper that is being passed on by the Power Hour and was impressed by the reporting style. The interview with Joyce & Dave was music to my ears also. I've been studying the Bush family's involvement with world corruption and greed carried on for at least 75 years and its astonishing the amount of evil tied to this one family. I can only pray that each one who heard the interview can ante up a few dollars to help your cause and spread the truth.

God Bless You
Robert McCarty

To The Editor:

We, the American people, wish to give you some helpful advice!

The American people are tired of lies! Changing "Medicare", and "Social Security" would be committing "Genocide" against the American people!

Those billions of dollars it would take to change "Medicare", and "Social Security", put that money directly into "Social Security!!"

The United States Government can pay back the "Social Security's" billions of dollars it took from "Social Security" over the years!

We don't need billions of American dollars out there for the people at the top to steal!

Think of all the American people, not just some of the rich!

Americans can save outside of "Social Security," no one is stopping them!

Remember, we, the American voters are watching to see if you help destroy our "Social Security," and "Medicare!" Stop peddling fear!

We vote in every election!

Bush's Budget 'Plan' will help destroy the people of the United States!

By the way, all Americans should have "Health Care" now!

You have "Health Care," paid for by the taxpayers! The American taxpayers should also have "Health Care!" Tax dollars belong to all of us!

Don't bother to put a 'spin' on any of this! We Americans are sick of lies, stealing, greed, wastes, pork, and fraud, leading to the "Horrendous National Debt!"

Sincerely,
Clara Mae Johnson
Robert A. Johnson

Dear W. Leon Smith,

Sending a paper, I'm sending to senators, and Congress people, one, or more from all 50 states.

Thank you kindly for all your wonderful work! We need a good government, for all Americans!

Take good care of yourselves!

Sincerely,
Clara Mae Johnson

To The Editor:

Do ex Enron employees love the Stock Market? As Bush campaigns to sell us on privatizing Social Security people should know this is a con. The politicians that conned us about WMD's in Iraq now want us to think that putting our SSI money into private accounts will guarantee more at retirement time.

For every person who makes money in the stock market, there are others

who lose money. Ask any Enron employee. 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. Are the American people blind to history of the great stock market crash? History repeats.

Go ahead. Take the Enron Con.
Your children will curse you.

Rhonda Simon

Wife of an ex-Enron employee
To the Editor:

Lest we forget!!

Social Security is an insurance program, not an investment program!

Following the Great Depression my father, a hometown bank cashier agreed with all employees to take half pay rather than lay off half of the staff. This saved the bank and investors savings while other banks were closing doors.

Soup lines were common in most large or small towns. My mother wouldn't accept free apples and oranges at the court house because so many others needed it more than we did.

Some states offered meager "Old Age Pensions" to the starving elderly, others offered none.

Social Security was voted into being by Congress to ensure that every one in every state was treated equally regardless of whether or not they had paid into the system.

An elderly friend saved for his retirement only to have his savings exhausted when his wife developed a serious heart condition. He felt badly about accepting money from Social Security in excess of what he had contributed. I told him that was my generation saying thanks for his generation opening this country so that we could all profit later.

Let us just fix Social Security without the potential danger of privatizing. Extend the retirement age if we must. Collect the IOUs the general fund owes from previous borrowing. If necessary have the IRS charge back the recent tax refunds that used up the surplus.

I know of some, now receiving disability payments who are being charged back by the IRS a portion each month because of previous overpayments. So it is being done and can be done on rolling back tax refunds and charging recipients. Let us all do our fair share in keeping a cost effective National Program instead of a questionable privatized experiment..

James G. Winton, Waco

To The Editor:

Every lawyer I know — Republican and Democrat — is livid over the rail-roading of attorney Lynn Stewart.

I have been comforted to hear even lawyers who voted for Bush speaking out — loudly — against Stewart's prosecution and conviction.

They all agree — federal prosecutors pursued this case in order to cast a "chill" over lawyers, to make them think twice before defending people who are brought up on charges of terrorism.

So, to the long list of democratic principles under attack by this regime — the Separation of Church and State, the

First Amendment, the Senate Filibuster — we must now add the Sixth Amendment. That's the one that guarantees the right to counsel.

Every lawyer you know should be aware of Lynn Stewart's case, and following it.

We need all of them now, in a way we haven't before. We need them all to defend the Constitution, before it's broken into so many pieces it can't be restored.

A.C.

Continued On Next Page

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MAILBAG
ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

To The Editor:

President Bush is an exploitive man. He exploits the blind faith, ignorance and intolerance of the religious right; he exploits low-income earners with promises of "ownership" in America; he exploits the panic he's managing to impose on portions of the Social Security membership with the delusion that the system is faltering; he exploits the nation's fear of nuclear and terrorist attack; he exploits the compliance and patriotism of the military; he exploits the vulnerability of returning veterans; he exploits the greed of the opulent; and he exploits the belief in his good will of others who crisscross the usual voting groups.

In choosing Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General, he has exploited the public's growing imperviousness to repeated references to detainee abuse, its sluggishness, short memory, reluctance to face up to the repugnant subject of torture and its failure to question the fact that no investigation has actually assigned blame to the policy makers.

In confirming Alberto Gonzales, a Senate majority has displayed its craven willingness to fall in line with an insidiously calculated policy that redefines terms to make their application seem acceptable.

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport, CT
To The Editor:

Bless you!
Thank you for having the guts to interview Karl Schwarz. I have been following him since I read his letter to the President on Sept. 30, 2004. The man and his team have done wonders uncovering the deep, dark, nasty secrets of this underworld government that is in control of each and every one of our lives. Most important, I want to thank Karl and everyone who made his book possible. I am an outraged American. I was outraged on 911. After the government showed us who the hijackers were, I stated to my husband; "they think we really buy that garbage?". I knew right then our government was involved. It has been very clear to me and my family since 911. When the Iraq was started I knew it had to be tied. I knew it in my heart. I heard too many lies from this administration, former administrations and our main media. I want to thank Karl for bringing us the facts and the documentation. There is one book that every American must read and it is "One Way Ticket to Crawford Texas"! Stay tuned to his articles on the onlinejournal.com.

As an American it gives me hope. I pray the people of this nation will take action against these criminals who have committed murder, treason and war against the people of the US. I salute you and every true freedom loving citizen of the United States of America. As long as I can breathe, I will continue in my fight to help save America from these criminals and run them right out of our Capitol. These criminals will continue to rape and kill our Country, it's people and other in-

nocent lives. They have more planned for all of us! It is time for ALL American's to wake up! They need to be stopped NOW!

Solidarity in the Truth
Sasser family Florida Outraged in the USA

Dear Editor,

My fellow citizens, help is needed now to explain the social security program to the people in Washington D.C. and to our neighbors.

People need to know Social Security is a social program. It is not an investment program for the individual. We have the 401K & IRA plans for those of us interested in investing for retirement. The Social Security program places a small monthly payment in every retired person's hand once a month. Social Security also supports the handicapped people of this nation.

The long term funding of Social Security can be improved by removing the cap & by investing a small portion of the total fund in one of the five mutual funds the government now owns. Investing in the market is not as secure as US Government bonds which is the investment now used by the Social Security system. A fact we must keep in mind.

The great national push to avoid this civic responsibility is difficult for me to understand.

Tom Keyes, Burnet, Texas
To The Editor:

George Bush's second inaugural extravaganza was every bit as repugnant as I had expected, a vulgar orgy of triumphalism probably unmatched since Napoleon crowned himself emperor of the French in Notre Dame in 1804.

The little Corsican corporal had a few decent victories to his escutcheon. Lodi, Marengo, that sort of thing. Not so this strutting Texan mountebank, with his chimpanzee smirk and his born-again banalities delivered in that constipated syntax that sounds the way cold cheeseburgers look, and his grinning plastic wife, and his scheming junta of neo-con spivs, shamans, flatterers and armchair warmongers, and his sinuous evasions and his brazen lies, and his sleight of hand theft from the American poor, and his rape of the environment, and his lethal conviction that the world must submit to his Pax Americana or be bombed into charcoal.

Difficult to know what was more repellent: the estimated \$US40 million cost of this jamboree (most of it stumped up by Republican fat-cats buying future presidential favours), or the sheer crassness of its excess when American boys are dying in the quagmire of Bush's very own Iraq war.

In 1944, Franklin Delano Roosevelt opened his fourth-term speech with the "wish that the form of this inauguration be simple and its words brief". He spoke for a couple of eloquent minutes, then went off to a light lunch, his wartime victory almost complete as

well.

But restraint is not a Dubya word. Learning nothing, the dumbest and nastiest president since the scandalous Warren Harding died in 1923, Bush is now intent on expanding the Iraq war to neighbouring Iran.

Condoleezza Rice did admit to the US Senate this week that there had been some "not so good" decisions. But the more I see of her gleaming teeth and her fibreglass helmet of hair and her perky confidence, the more I am convinced that back in the '60s she used to be Cindy Birdsong, up there beside Diana Ross as one of the Supremes of Motown fame. I don't think it's a good idea to let her make a comeback as Secretary of State.

The war in Iran is under way already as clandestine US special forces have been on the ground there, targeting nuclear facilities to be bombed whenever Bush feels the time is ripe. The immediate goals of the attacks would be to destroy, or at least temporarily derail, Iran's ability to go nuclear.

Naturally, Pentagon flacks rushed out to deny all. But then they did that of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in 1968, and again with the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. A tussle between the truth and the Pentagon is no contest.

What terrifies me most is the people planning this new war. The CIA professionals have been frozen out: too weak and wimpy for the Bushies.

The Defense Secretary, the incompetent Donald Rumsfeld, has seized control, aided by Douglas Feith, a mad-eyed Zionist largely responsible for the post-invasion collapse of order in Iraq, a civilian bureaucrat memorably described by General Tommy Franks, as "the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the Earth."

The other lunatic is army Lieutenant General William G. (Jerry) Boykins. Jerry is a born-again Christian evangelical, a three-star bigot who, in his spare time, stumps the country in full uniform, preaching that America's enemy is Satan, Allah is a false idol, and that George Bush has been ordained by the Lord to rout evil. Can you believe that these retards are dictating policy?

"He's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this," Jerry told a prayer meetin' in Oregon just a while back. Scary is an understatement. What these screwballs are proposing is scaring the shit out of me.

Be very afraid.
On the surface it may look good, but

like a lovely pair of shoes, you can't tell where they pinch.

N.M.

To The Editor:

Thanks so much for the article from Karl Schwarz writer of One Way Ticket to Crawford Texas. I have known much of what he said but have never seen it put into one format. Awhile back there was a journalist on CSPANN who talked about the pipeline and that most of the upgrades and construction work being performed in Afghanistan is on the pipe line route.

He commented that if you go much beyond that route there has been little or nothing done. Unfortunately, various new agencies did not pick up the story due to either fear of Bush or something else. In fact I never saw that reporter again on any program. Makes one wonder....

Sandy Wittliff, McGregor, Texas

Liberty And Justice For All

Dear Editor,

All patriotic Americans believe in and support liberty. But this is not our only major objective. The other essential objective is justice. These two objectives are set forth in the Preamble of our Constitution, and in the last words of our Pledge of Allegiance — "with liberty and justice for all."

Liberty does not insure that justice will automatically be established. For example, in our own country, while a majority of Americans had liberty, slavery was legal, women couldn't vote, and children worked in "sweat shops."

The backbone of the terrorist's war against the United States does not stem from a desire for liberty. Rather, it stems from a desire for justice.

It turns out that a violent fringe element of the Moslems believe that, despite our professed belief in justice, we Christian Americans have joined with the Jews in a Holy War, or crusade, against Islam.

In support of this view, they point out that we have been totally unjust in our lopsided support of the Israelis against the Palestinians — diplomatically, financially, and militarily.

To win the war against the terrorists, we must start by becoming true to our national values, by using our power and influence to establish a Palestinian as well as an Israeli state, "with liberty and justice for all."

R. Wylie Tarwater
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Lockheed Martin Selected To Build President's New Chopper Fleet

US101 Helicopters To Replace Current 'Marine One' Fleet

AMARILLO, Texas (Newstream) – The U.S. Navy selected Lockheed Martin to build US101 aircraft as the new fleet of "Marine One" helicopters for the President of the United States. Lockheed Martin, which leads Team US101 as prime contractor, will receive a \$1.7 billion contract from the Navy for the Marine One program's systems development and demonstration phase. The team will build and equip the US101 medium-lift helicopter to provide a safe and secure "Oval Office in the Sky" for the President.

Team US101 will immediately begin work on the program, building on the staff and facilities already in place to support Navy-funded risk reduction activities under way since March 2004. Near-term activities involve the establishment of a secure presidential heli-

copter facility, including a new integration center and hangars, at an existing Lockheed Martin site in Owego, N.Y., and construction of helicopter assembly facilities at Amarillo. Staff recruiting also is under way.

More than 200 suppliers in 41 states support Team US101, led by Lockheed Martin with teammates AgustaWestland and Bell Helicopter Textron. Suppliers include some of America's leading aerospace companies, such as General Electric, ITT, Northrop Grumman, Kaman Aerospace and Palomar Products.

Based on the current contract schedule, the first US101 ready to transport the President is expected to be available in 2009, with the entire fleet of 23 US101 delivered to the Marine One squadron by late 2014.

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Guest Speaker



The
Forgotten
Hero of My Lai:
The Hugh Thompson Story

Thursday, February 24

11:10 a.m., MCC Conference Center
(MCC students, faculty, and staff)

7 p.m., MCC Conference Center
(open to the general public)

Thompson's biography will be for sale at both presentations, and he will be available to sign copies.

Vietnam veteran Hugh Thompson was first condemned by the government and then awarded the prestigious **Soldier's Medal** for his heroic actions at the village of My Lai. Thompson will recount the horrific events of the U.S. troops' attacks on civilian villages, and share how he personally saved several lives by literally stepping between U.S. soldiers and Vietnamese civilians.



Thompson is reunited with two of the women he saved from the My Lai massacre during a reunion at the 30th anniversary ceremony for the village.

For more information about this presentation, call the Tartan Scholars Program at 289-8907.

