

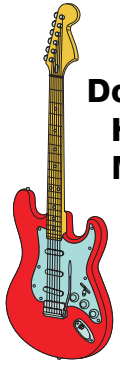
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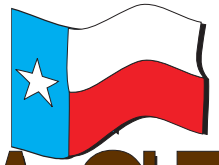


Dr. Shirley J. Neeley, Education Commissioner



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The Lone Star



# ICONOCLAST

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# Lessons of My Lai: Army Whistleblower Urges Public To Do The Right Thing

Story By Jonmichael Swetnam Page 3

*"All I can say about what went on is that the person who had it good that day would have been an 18-year-old girl who wasn't pregnant and died fast, from a gunshot to the head. You can take that statement, and let your imagination run with it. You still won't cover all the bases."*

— Hugh Thompson



Hugh Thompson, Lecturing At McLennan Community College, Waco, Texas



# Texas Overrides 'No Child Left Behind' Law

## Could Be Sanctioned By Feds For Not Complying With 1% Rule On Special Ed Student Testing

CRAWFORD — By approving appeals by 431 school districts in Texas regarding the failure rate of special education students, Texas Education Agency Commissioner Dr. Shirley J. Neeley last Friday apparently prevented more than 40 percent of Texas districts from failing under the federally mandated No Child Left Behind standards that require districts to show improvement annually.

Several McLennan County school districts fell into the category of those missing the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards due to a one-percent cap on the number of students that may take easier, alternative exams, claims the TEA, which is challenging that cap. Last year, nearly nine percent of Texas students in grades 3-10 took the easier State Developed Alternative Assessment instead of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Although state officials challenged that the one-percent cap would erroneously result in about eight percent of students being categorized as "artificial failures," the U.S. Department of Education ruled that Texas would have to comply,

even though the federal rules took effect following testing.

By approving nearly 90 percent of the 431 districts' appeals over the special-education issue, Commissioner Neeley was acting on a state law that authorizes her to allow districts to administer an alternative test to most special-education children.

TEA spokesman Debbie Ratcliffe noted that Commissioner Neeley has authority under the No Child Left Behind Act to consider appeals from school districts if they deem they have been treated unfairly.

State officials believe that should Texas be sanctioned by the federal government for its lack of improvement through the AYP ratings, the implications will be mild, with technical advisers from the U.S. Department of Education likely targeting problem areas for special attention.

## Students To Mobilize Against War, Racism In March

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Global Resistance Network and Youth & Student A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition are



Dr. Shirley J. Neeley

Actual sanctions would not kick in until the districts fail a second consecutive year.

Out of 402 schools that failed in 2004 to reach progress standards,

291 received federal Title I funding for disadvantaged students. Ninety-one of these districts are in their second year of failing to meet standards, which allows students in those districts to transfer to other schools, with transportation costs being paid by the offending school district.

Sanctions in ensuing years of non-compliance are strengthened, and may include replacement of school staffs, abolition of districts, and closing of schools.

The bone of contention between the federal government and about a fourth of all states is the one-percent cap that the TEA contends is unfair to districts that attempt to educate a larger number of special education students than falls under the radar of the sweeping federal mandate.

McLennan County school districts that met the AYP after appeal include: Waco ISD, McGregor ISD, Moody ISD, Connally ISD, China Spring ISD, Robinson ISD, La Vega ISD, Axtell ISD, Mart ISD, Riesel ISD, and West ISD. Missing the AYP in performance of both reading and mathematics was Bruceville-Eddy ISD.

intitating a series of week-long actions culminating on Saturday, March 19, in the U.S. in conjunction with other antiwar groups around the world to march against the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq. Tens of thousands of young people are planning to mobilize for mass antiwar demonstrations, organized walkouts, and more at their schools and on their campuses during the week of March 14-18.

"During the week of the second anniversary of the "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq, our generation will make its presence felt," said a spokesperson. "We have opposed the Bush administration's cynical manipulation of the events of Sept. 11 to carry out wars and occupations abroad, and attacks on people's rights at home."

### Funds Needed

As A.N.S.W.E.R. organizers and affiliates are busy organizing local ac-

tions on March 19 all over the country, funds are urgently needed to help the antiwar movement continue to get stronger.

"We can't do it without your help. You can make a contribution through a secure server by clicking here, where you can also find information on how to contribute by check," said a spokesperson.

The recent Jan. 20 CounterInaugural student walkouts were a big step in the reconsolidation of the Student and Youth Movement, said the spokesperson, for Act Now to Stop War & End Racism. Students walked out of class in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, Tucson, Boulder, Philadelphia, and many other cities in resistance to Bush's right-wing policies of war and repression.

### INFO

www.ANSWERcoalition.org  
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# Lessons of My Lai:

## Army Whistleblower Urges Public To Do The Right Thing

By JONMICHAEL SWETNAM  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

WACO — Hugh Thompson doesn't describe himself as a "bumper sticker freak."

Thompson, a Vietnam veteran, former army helicopter pilot, and witness to one of the most shameful American military debacles of the 20th Century, said he only recalls having two

bumper stickers on his car: "Vietnam Vets Aren't Fond of Jane" and "If you like your freedom, thank a veteran."

During a Feb. 24, 2005, lecture at McLennan Community College in Waco, he wore a simple gray suit, well-shined shoes, and spoke in a quiet, even voice.

All told, this native of Stone Mountain, Georgia, seemed rather reserved for someone who went into a burning village and carried several people safely away from a massacre.

"All I can say about what went on is that the person who had it good that day would have been an 18-year-old girl who wasn't pregnant and died fast, from a gunshot to the head. You can take that statement, and let your imagination run with it. You still won't cover all the bases," Thompson, 61, said.

### The Four House Slaughter

That day was March 16, 1968. American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant William Calley systematically massacred hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in the village of My Lai, a small hamlet near the border between North and South Vietnam. According to eyewitness accounts, women, children, and elderly were lined up in ditches and executed in cold blood. Women were



**MY LAI NEVER AGAIN — HUGH THOMPSON, 61, received a standing ovation after his Thursday, Feb. 24, 2005, lecture at McLennan Community College in Waco, about the My Lai Massacre; according to eyewitness accounts, women, children, and elderly were lined up in ditches and executed in cold blood by American troops. Women were raped, beaten, and murdered. Children of all ages were shot dead in the arms of their grandparents.**

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



**VIETNAM VETERAN HUGH THOMPSON, 61, on Thursday, Feb. 24, 2005, gave a lecture at McLennan Community College in Waco, about the My Lai Massacre. During his talk, he said he was compelled to stop the massacre at the hands of his fellow Americans not because he wanted to but because he had to; thus he said, he wouldn't call himself a "hero."**

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

raped, beaten, and murdered. Children of all ages were shot dead in the arms of their grandparents.

It took a little over four hours to slaughter more than 500 civilians, destroy their crops, kill their livestock, and burn the village to the ground. It took a little over two years, however, to reveal what had happened.

Thompson, a Warrant Officer, was flying reconnaissance that day.

"My job was, basically, we'd fly out front and try to get the enemy to shoot at us. When they started shooting, we'd tell the soldiers on the ground where the enemy was," Thompson said.

Thompson said he flew around the village all morning, back and forth. Before long, he started noticing the bodies lying everywhere.

"Everywhere we'd look, we'd see bodies. There were infants, children, women, very old men; no draft-age people whatsoever. That's what you look for, draft-age people," Thompson said.

Later reports revealed that most of the villagers were unarmed.

"My gunner's big questions were, 'Were there weapons that day?' There was not the first weapon captured, to my knowledge, that day," Thompson said.

As they circled the village, Thompson and his crew noticed a wounded woman. They dropped a smoke grenade to let the medics know where she was, so they could administer aid.

"We got on the radio and called for some help and marked her with smoke. A few minutes later up walks a captain, steps up to her, nudges her with his foot, steps back, and blows her away," Thompson said.

Thompson and his crew then came across a ditch

with several wounded Vietnamese lying in it. Thompson landed his helicopter, got out, and asked a sergeant to help the people. The sergeant replied that he'd "help them out of their misery."

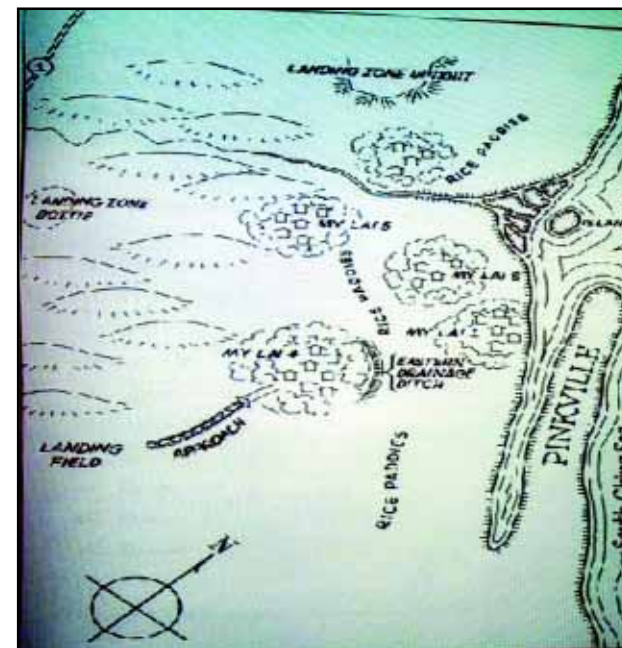
"I took it as a joke at the time. One of those, 'Man, shut up' sort of jokes," Thompson said. "We took off and broke away from them, and my gunner, I guess it was, said, 'My God, he's firing into the ditch.' We'd asked for help twice, both times — well, actually, three times by then, I guess — every time that people had been killed."

### The Bunker

Their fourth effort at rendering aid met with more success. Thompson and his crew spotted a group of people huddled in a bunker.

"The only thing I could see at that particular time was a woman, an old man, and a couple of kids standing next to it. We look over here and see them and look over there and see the friendly forces, so I landed the helicopter again."

Continued On Next Page



Site of My Lai Massacre

## Justice Dept. Opposes Reopening Edmonds Case

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Justice Department expressed its opposition to a federal appeals court for it to hear a lawsuit by Sibel Edmonds, an F.B.I. translator who was dismissed in 2002 after complaining that FBI linguists had produced incorrect translations of key terrorism intelligence before and after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Lawyers for the government said that the lawsuit should not proceed because doing so would compromise the United States' national security and foreign policy by disclosing privileged and classified information.

Edmonds, who served the FBI for six months by translating material in Azerbaijani, Farsi, and Turkish, accused a colleague of blocking the translation of material involving acquaintances who had come under suspicion. She said the bureau also allowed diplomatic ties with fellow nations to taint translations

of intelligence reports.

The American Civil Liberties Union last month asked the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to revive her original lawsuit against the FBI after it was dismissed in July by Attorney General John Ashcroft who said the case fell under 'state secret' privilege, a rarely used government power.

Last week the Justice Department decided to permit the information to be released, after it had retroactively classified a 2002 Congressional briefing about the case and some related letters from lawmakers.

The inspector general of the department concluded last month that the F.B.I. had failed to aggressively investigate Edmonds' accusations of espionage and fired her in large part for raising them.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES contributed to this report.



## • LESSONS OF MY LAI ... Continued From Previous Page

I didn't want there to be any confusion or something; I really don't know what was going on in my mind then," Thompson said.

"I walked over and asked them to get those people out of the bunker. They basically said, 'We'll get them out with a hand grenade,'" Thompson said. "I told them to wait there, turned around, and went back over to the bunker. I didn't know what I was going to do, because there were about nine or 10 people. So I called one of the gunships, the helicopters covering me, and asked them to come in and get those people out. They could maybe fit five or six at a time, so he made two trips."

"I didn't do what I did because I thought people were going to call me a hero. In fact, I remember thinking, when I turned my back on that lieutenant, I remember thinking: 'Fool, you are gonna spend the rest of your life in Leavenworth for this,'" Thompson said, referring to Fort Leavenworth military prison in Kansas.

Shortly afterward, Thompson returned to the ditch.

"My crew chief said he saw some movement there, and he just bolted — jumped out and went running down into the ditch. He got there, picked up this kid, and came back to us," Thompson said.

"It was hard going. There was blood on his legs. Wounded people were grabbing his pants, trying to go with him," he said.

"We all got back in the aircraft and took him back to the hospital and the orphanage — when there's a war, all the hospitals have orphanages next to them. I remember thinking he was maybe five years old. Turned out he was about nine. When he got out of the orphanage, that nine-year-old went back to bury his family."

After the mission, Thompson reported to his platoon leader, his opera-



**U.S. MILITARY RULES AND TRAINING CHANGED** after the My Lai Massacre, said Vietnam Veteran Hugh Thompson, who helped put a stop to the senseless murder of hundreds of Vietnam civilians in March 1968. The fruit of the change can be seen in the bloodless capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

tions officer, and his commander. "After the mission that day, I went back to our operations area, which was over in LC Dottie, and I was very upset. I was very mad," Thompson said.

"In combat, you get close to each other. You bond real fast, because you're willing to die for this person, and you hope he's willing to die for you. So when one of you does something, it reflects on all of you. To think that something I was a part of had caused My Lai was more than I could take."

"My commander was very interested. Within a day or so — I don't think it was that day, it was probably the next day — we were called up to the command bunker, and everybody gave their statements. This was a full colonel; that means he can walk on water. He was very interested it seemed; I remember him taking notes, and that was it, I do believe. I don't know if I was called again to report to the commanding general. It seemed like it was just dropped after that," Thompson said.

"I kind of blocked it out of my mind after that. When it all came out two years later, it was because of a man named Ron Ridenhour, who wrote a letter to his congressman about it. So a few years later, the Department of the Army Inspector General was asking me about stuff that happened in 1968. I had no idea what this guy was questioning me for."

### Investigation

Once they learned of My Lai, Congress called on the Pentagon to investigate. The investigation began April 23, 1969, and charges were brought against Lt. Calley later that year.

"They appointed Lieutenant General Peers to investigate, and he released his report in 1970. I think the Army was looking for a yes-man, and found out when he released his final report that he was not it. I think he made a fairly accurate report of what happened that day," Thompson said.

Of the 14 officers charged with offenses related to events at My Lai, or suppressing information of the events that occurred there, only Calley was sentenced. The charges against all officers not at My Lai were soon dropped, and several officers present at My Lai were also let go.

Calley received a life sentence, which was swiftly pared down to 10 years after a series of appeals. He ultimately was released on bond in 1974, and was soon paroled one year later.

He served three years of his original sentence.

"How did they get off so light? They had better lawyers. I think our judicial system is one of the best in the world, but it can fail. And it did fail there," Thompson said.

"I'm not saying they should have gone in and tried Calley again. That would violate double jeopardy. But there were a lot of people that should have been tried and weren't," Thompson said. "The Army didn't, because a lot of those officers were what we called two-year wonders: they'd get turned loose before the court martial could be convened. And you can't court martial a civilian. So the only group left that could have gone after them was the Justice department. And that didn't happen."

Thompson was not exactly richly rewarded for his heroism.



**KURT CHUNN**, Tartan Scholars Program Coordinator, introduced Army Whistleblower Hugh Thompson on Thursday, Feb. 24, 2005, before a lecture at McLennan Community College in Waco, about the My Lai Massacre.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

"For a long time I had people calling me a traitor and threatening me, leaving mutilated animals on my doorstep, that sort of thing. And I frequently caught myself thinking, 'What in the world is going on? How is it bad to help people? And about the only reason I can think of is that the civilian side of the Army didn't think Americans could handle the truth. They didn't think it would be helpful to the war effort. The country was divided over the war. There were riots all over the country; demonstrations in just about every university,'" Thompson said.

"A lot of people think there was a cover up, and I have to agree with them. Sometimes I think it went about as high as it can go in this country," Thompson said.

Thompson's bravery was finally rewarded in 1998, when the U.S. Army awarded him the Soldier's Medal, which is awarded for bravery that does not involve actual conflict with the enemy.

### A Lesson For The Future

The lessons of My Lai need to be examined and absorbed, Thompson said, adding "We base our future on our past. So if our past is a lie, then what is our future?"

Among the questions raised at My Lai was how a system designed to produce soldiers for the U.S. Armed Forces could break down so completely, and so horribly, as to produce a massacre like My Lai.

Most of the blame rested squarely on poor leadership from the officers in charge, Thompson said.

"None of them had been really well trained," Thompson said.

"The second main factor was negative peer pressure. There were about 190 individuals on the ground that day. Only between 13 and 18 were firing. The rest just kind of looked the other way," Thompson said.

"See, the example I use — when I'm up north, anyway — is that evil is like a snowball. It starts off small and eventually builds to the point where it's hard to resist," Thompson said. "One fellow that was there was being interviewed. They asked him how he did what he did. And he said 'Killing the first one was hard. The second one wasn't that difficult.' So once you're over that line, it gets harder and harder to come back."

Prejudice also factored into the massacre.

"It came in many forms, but the goal was basically to dehumanize the people you're fighting," Thompson said.

"The big thing that day at My Lai was revenge. The commander of that outfit was, apparently, a great leader. Lots of promotions. His nickname was 'Mad Dog.' Figure that one out. But, anyway, he gathered everyone up and gave a briefing. My Lai was going to be his outfit's first face-to-face encounter with the enemy," Thompson said.

"They had been taking losses for a while, and now this officer said they were going to have their chance to get even. They were going to go in and wipe out everything that moved. In my mind, a better briefing wouldn't have gotten people's adrenaline flowing like that," Thompson said.

"That unit took losses because they were new in country, and new people will take shortcuts. Shortcuts are where casualties come from," Thompson said.

"For example, walking through a rice paddy is pretty nasty. A lot of people didn't want to wade through one, so they walked along these dikes instead. The VC (Viet Cong) saw that, and so that's where they set their booby traps," Thompson said.

"The revenge motivation was deliberate, and it was the C.O.'s fault," he said.

"I cannot think that any actions in the other villages would have been different from what happened in My Lai 4, because as far as I know, there weren't any other briefings given," he said.

The combination of poor leadership and insufficient moral training virtually guaranteed a catastrophe.

"If you have that many negatives operating together, you're bound to have a real bad day," Thompson said.

"I have never talked to a military person who said that [My Lai] is what soldiers do. Because it's not what soldiers do; it's not what humans do," Thompson said.

"Soldiering is an honorable profession. To maintain that honor, you do your job. And the way I was trained is that your job is to kill the enemy in order to remove the threat. If the enemy is no longer a threat, then he's no longer your enemy; he's your prisoner, and you treat

Continued On Page 6

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### • LESSONS OF MY LAI ... Continued From Page 4

him as such."  
"The way I was raised, what I believe, is that you will be required to answer for all that you do in your life, one way or another. Whether it's in this life, or maybe in the next, I don't know. But I believe you will at some point be brought to trial for the things you do," Thompson said. "About the best you can do is stand on your own two feet, and be responsible for your actions. Stand up for the little guy; don't take the bully's side. I guess the main point is just to live by 'The Golden Rule.'"

#### Lesson Learned?

Thompson's lecture comes as America finds itself embroiled in Iraq. "I think the Iraqi people are — any people would be — a lot better off without a leader like Saddam Hussein. I imagine if more people knew some of the things he's done, Joe Blow off the street would have gone over and tried to kill him," Thompson said.

"I have a lot of respect for the soldier who caught him, because there was nothing forcing that soldier to take him alive. I think the aftermath of 9/11 proved what a strong country we are. I never imagined Saddam Hussein would be caught alive. I think it shows that we are becoming a better military," Thompson said.

That improvement in morality can be traced to My Lai, Thompson said.

"I don't think anything quite like My Lai could happen again, because we spend time training our people not to do that sort of thing. And I mean there is some heavy duty training going on," Thompson said. "If you talk to a military person who says they haven't heard about My Lai, then you're talking to someone who sleeps a lot in class."

Despite such bright spots as Hussein's capture, Thompson said he predicts a long struggle in Iraq.

"If our government does what it says

it intends to do in Iraq, it's going to make Vietnam look like a short period of time. The official wartime dates of Vietnam are 1965-1975. If you were actually there, it was more like 1961-1975. Know the dates for the Gulf War? It runs from the early 1990s to the present. There are no breaks in that conflict for veterans' benefits. So it's been going on for a while," Thompson said.

Thompson also said that the increasing number of casualties may mar support for the war.

"I feel it's a likely possibility that the more casualties come home, the less support will be shown, publicly, affectionately, in our country, for the war in Iraq. I think that would be a mistake," Thompson said.

Another wartime difficulty Americans are forced to grapple with is the problem of international reaction.

"I think the national perception on this one [Iraq] was very negative, worldwide. I think in Vietnam, other countries supported us. So I think the current war didn't really get off on the good foot," Thompson said. "But our commander-in-chief said this is what we had to do, and this is the road we will take. I think he demonstrated that he isn't just a yes-man, that he'll do what he thinks is necessary to help this country."

Thompson also expressed hope that someday matters will improve.

"I think the way it works is that we get upset with each other, fight, and then get along," Thompson said.

"I've gone back to Vietnam a few times, and I didn't see any hostility. I think the general opinion of the Vietnamese people is that the United States is the only one still fighting the Vietnam War," he said.

"What usually happens is we get upset, drop a lot of bombs, and wind up doing a whole lot of talking. I take the attitude that if we do a lot of talking first, maybe the bombs wouldn't have to fall in the first place."

## Craddick To Testify At Campaign Funds Trial

AUSTIN — House Speaker Tom Craddick is to testify this week in the first trial of three lawsuits alleging Republicans illegally raised and spent corporate money in the 2002 elections. With Craddick, Texas Association of Business President Bill Hammond was also issued a subpoena to testify.

Hammond is said to have bragged that TAB spent more than \$1.9 million in corporate money to aid GOP House candidates in the 2002 campaign, which resulted in a Republican takeover of the Texas House.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs want to show that Hammond conspired with Texans for a Republican Majority, which was founded by U.S. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Sugar Land). DeLay has congressional immunity from testifying in a lawsuit and has not been subpoenaed in the case.

Although Craddick is not a defendant in the trial, the case might explain his role in helping TRMPAC raise and spend more than \$500,000 in corporate donations. Corporate and labor money is not allowed to be used to influence a candidate's election, according to Texas election law.

The 2002 Republican election victories in about 20 House races boosted Craddick from state representative to speaker, a position elected by a majority of House members rather than voters at large.

Craddick is also a subject of an ongoing investigation in a Travis County grand jury investigation that has resulted in indictments against three political consultants, which parallels a lawsuit filed by losing Democratic candidates against Texans for a Republican Majority Treasurer Bill Ceverha.



House Speaker  
Tom Craddick



# Documentary Highlights Musicians Fighting Poverty

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — RockA Mole Productions has recently finished a documentary film, *The Ultimate Song*, that highlights the great importance of music in the battle to end poverty.

This documentary combines interviews with action footage of the growing poor people's movement in the United States. The leaders from the ranks of the poor detail the importance of music in their work, how it helps break down the isolation of individuals and organizations and how it keeps spirits up during trying times.

Those artists interviewed and/or performing in the documentary are Ice T, Sara Hickman, Jackson Browne, Tom Morrello of Rage Against the Machine, Bruce Springsteen, Brother Bank, Marah, Warren Haynes of Gov't Mule, Krown Ju-Elz, Steve Earle, Kindred, Wayne Kramer, and Brian Blade.

*The Ultimate Song* explores a new relationship between musicians and poor people's organizations, where

the poverty of musicians and their struggle to create is placed on the same footing as the general problems of high rent and low health care.

*The Ultimate Song*, filled with music from beginning to end, shows how the use of culture can help bring about the end of poverty for

## 'No Puff' Bill Moves To Georgia House

ATLANTA, Ga. — The Georgia Senate passed a statewide ban on smoking in indoor public areas last Wednesday, by a 44-7 vote in favor of the bill, SB 90. However, some provisions were watered down for smoother passage.

The bill heads now to the House where it might find trouble with some Republicans. House Speaker Glenn Richardson (R-Hiram) said that the bill "hurts" the Republican philosophy of telling businesses how to function but he added that if the public is for it, the bill might survive.

The amendments to the bill approved last week included allowing Georgians to smoke in vehicles used for work, exempting businesses with fewer than five employees, exempting small bars and restaurants, weakening the ban on smoking within 25 feet of public doorways, and giving flexibility to violators before they would face tough penalties or lose their licenses.

The amended bill also exempts private homes, some hotel rooms, nursing homes and some small businesses.

In support of the bill is the Georgia Alliance for Tobacco Prevention, a broad-based coalition of more than 300 health insurance companies, doctors, restaurants, taverns and other businesses, as well as the American Lung Association, American Heart Association and American Cancer Society.

A similar smoking ban bill cleared the Senate last year, but advocates say the House has a better chance to pass it because because of the large number of new lawmakers.

There are 23 municipalities in Georgia that have passed ordinances restricting smoking in public areas, including restaurants, bars and work areas. In metro Atlanta, ordinances exist in six areas.

— THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION contributed to this report.

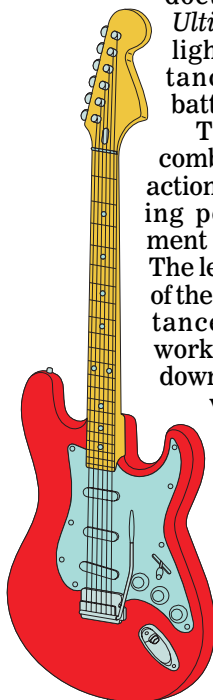
musician and fan alike. It tackles such questions as: "Are Poor People Lazy?," "What Color is Poverty?," "Musicians Are (Poor) People Too," "The Power of Music," and "What Can Musicians Do?."

"With our leaflets or our speeches, we can only speak to hundreds or thousands of people. Music speaks to millions," said Willie Baptist, Director of Education, Kensington Welfare Rights Union.

A VHS copy of *The Ultimate Song* will be provided free to any musician who wants one. For a copy, contact Rap/Rock Confidential (rockrap@aol.com) with your name and postal address. For everyone else, a \$10 donation is requested to be sent to RRC, Box 341305, Los Angeles, CA 90034.

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# Crawford ISD Board Of Trustees Sets Election Date, Renews Contracts

CRAWFORD — The Board of Trustees of the Crawford Independent School District during regular session on Monday, Feb. 21, set the school board trustee election for May 7, 2005. Early Voting will take place from April 20 - May 3 in the Crawford ISD Business manager's Office.

The places currently held by Trustee Jeff Baize and President John Minnix are expiring. Trustee Gary Bowdoin made the motion that Trustee Baize seconded.

Trustee Rick Williams moved and Trustee Charles Raley seconded a motion to authorize President

Minnix to sign a utility easement agreement with Cooper and Horn after legal counsel has reviewed it. The motion passed. Mike Dixon submitted and reviewed a proposed utility easement agreement.

Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Charlie Kasparian seconded a motion to approve an agreement with Huckabee and Associates for architectural services and give President Minnix the authority to execute agreement. The motion passed.

Trustee Baize moved and Trustee Raley seconded a motion to table

DATELINE:  
**Crawford**  
Hometown of the President of the United States

discussion on roofing bids to a future meeting. Johnson Roofing submitted a bid of \$68,815. Parson's Commercial Roofing submitted a bid of \$75,339. The motion passed.

Trustee Raley moved and Trustee Kasparian seconded a motion to authorize Superintendent Kevin Noack and President Minnix to sign the Statement of Impact regarding the East Waco Charter School stating that the Crawford district will not be impacted. The motion passed.

Trustee Baize moved and Trustee Raley seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda with a budget amendment (Increase Function 35-6300 \$10,000 with revenue and expenditures). The motion passed.

Superintendent Kevin Noack communicated to those present the process that the school district follows regarding problems with school personnel.

President Minnix reviewed the school board training hours of board members. Trustees John Minnix, Jimmy Talbert, Rick Williams, Gary Bowdoin, Jeff Baize, and Charlie Kasparian exceeded the number of hours required. Trustee Charles Raley did not meet minimum requirements.

Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Kasparian seconded a motion to contribute towards the purchase of state championship rings for eight football coaches and Principal Don Harris at a price of \$300 each. The motion passed.

Superintendent Noack discussed the upcoming March board meeting. The meeting will be Tuesday, March 29, at 6:30 p.m.

### Personnel Contracts

The school board went into executive session at 7:26 p.m. under government code 551.074. School Board came out of executive session at 8:47 p.m.

Trustee Raley moved and Trustee Baize seconded a motion to extend

the contract of Linda Stout and Don Harris for an additional year. The motion passed.

Trustee Jimmy Talbert moved and Trustee Gary Bowdoin seconded a motion to give Jason Bunting a two-year contract. The motion passed.

Trustee Raley moved and Trustee Bowdoin seconded a motion to give Justin Shultz a two-year dual assignment contract. The motion passed.

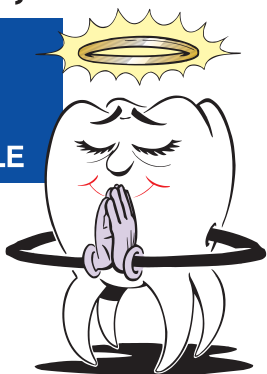
Trustee Kasparian moved and Trustee Talbert seconded a motion to give Robert Murphy a two-year dual assignment contract. The motion passed by a vote of 4-3.

The following members were present: John Minnix, Jeff Baize, Charlie Kasparian, Rick Williams, Gary Bowdoin, Jimmy Talbert, and Chuck Raley. School officials present were Kevin Noack, Billy Lynch, Don Harris, Jason Bunting, and Linda Stout.

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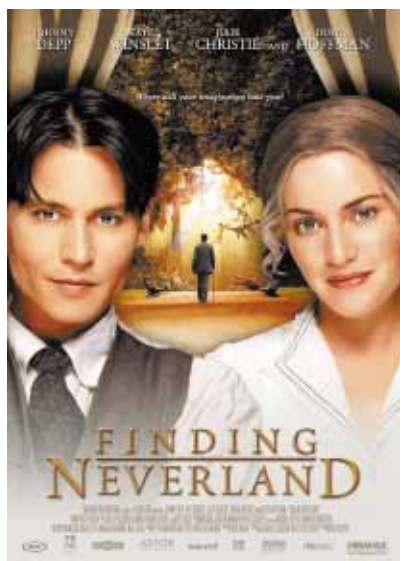
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TANNER JACOBS drives in for the basket against Moody on Friday, Feb. 11.  
— Photo By Stephen Cook

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## Crawford Cage Action

KRISTEN CAMPBELL (10) get her Lady Tiger opponent off balance in order to pass on Friday, Feb. 11. The Lady Pirates won by a basket, 54-52.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

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# Miscarriage Of Scuttlebutt

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Just because you can don't mean you orta."

If neighbor Bush was worried about whether kids might try drugs if they knew that he used to be a doper, what does he think they're going to do now that they know that he was a doper and lied about it?

Yes, he *did* lie!

Letting the gullible believe a lie is still a lie. When he refused to answer, he empowered those looking for a reason to believe in the George and Laura paper dolls.

You know, followers of the Fascists for Christ or the Slow Boat Malingerers for Scuttlebutt.

Which shows what a mess we get into when we try to vote for a disciple instead of a guy looking for a job.

Christianity got its start because the Roman Empire tried to legislate morality.

Nowhere has that been more apparent than in the case of the East Texas teenager who deliberately miscarried her twins.

She beat herself up for weeks because she didn't want babies.

When that didn't work, she had her boyfriend stand on her stomach.

Now here's the trick.

Under Texas' idiotic fetus protection law, the boyfriend, a high school senior who had a promising college soccer career, is in jail. He could get the death penalty, even though the fetuses may have already been dead.

His sweetie is free as a vulture.

It's not against the law for a woman to get an abortion.

So why didn't she just have an abortion?

She thought it was wrong.

Let's spread some more biased misinformation on this issue and see if we can confuse a few more kids.

And the slack-jawed legislative morons, who claimed they could protect fetuses from drunk drivers or assaults

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



with this law, clutched their Bibles and their Big Church campaign contributions to their breasts and, with weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, stammered:

"Uh, we didn't never thunk about that'n, but the law is the law, forever and ever, amen."

And stupidity is stupidity; hear our prayer, Oh Lord, Amen.

Austin's emptiest haircuts failed to realize, in their veiled attempt to curb abortion, that efforts to stop fun stuff like sex will invariably end up in a miscarriage of justice.

Yeah, I phrased it that way intentionally.

Even in the Old Testament, the literature of lynch mobs, the Ten Commandments say, "Thou shalt not ..." instead of, "Thou shalt not punishable by not less than twenty years nor more than the rest of your natural live to be served at a facility determined by the Texas Department of Corrections as appointed by Lying Texas Governor Tricky Ricky Perry."

It's hard to imagine that anybody who isn't desperate thinks abortion is a good idea.

But as long as Texas is located between Oklahoma, Louisiana and Mexico, abortion is going to be available.

About all we can do is make them safe and dangerous. Like most things in Oklahoma, Louisiana and Mexico.

Of course it's a bit hypocritical, coming from a state that elects legislatures like this one.



# Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

OP/ED

— Editorial —

## Let's Keep Gambling Out Of State Government

Lawmakers in Austin are again considering whether to embark on gambling as a means of financing education in the state. First it was scratch-offs with the Texas Lottery; now it is slot machines.

Neither are good answers, partially because the practices by-and-large attract low income participants who waste their meager finances on false hopes rather than spending them on essentials. State-sanctioned gambling is merely another tax on the poor.

Many cities and counties have in recent years worked hard to eradicate quasi-legal slot machines, games that paid out tokens for prizes (at least in the open). The damages that have been done to families has been proven and the games are usually rigged, becoming increasingly so after the players are addicted.

For the state to engage in the same practice can only encourage this kind of chicanery.

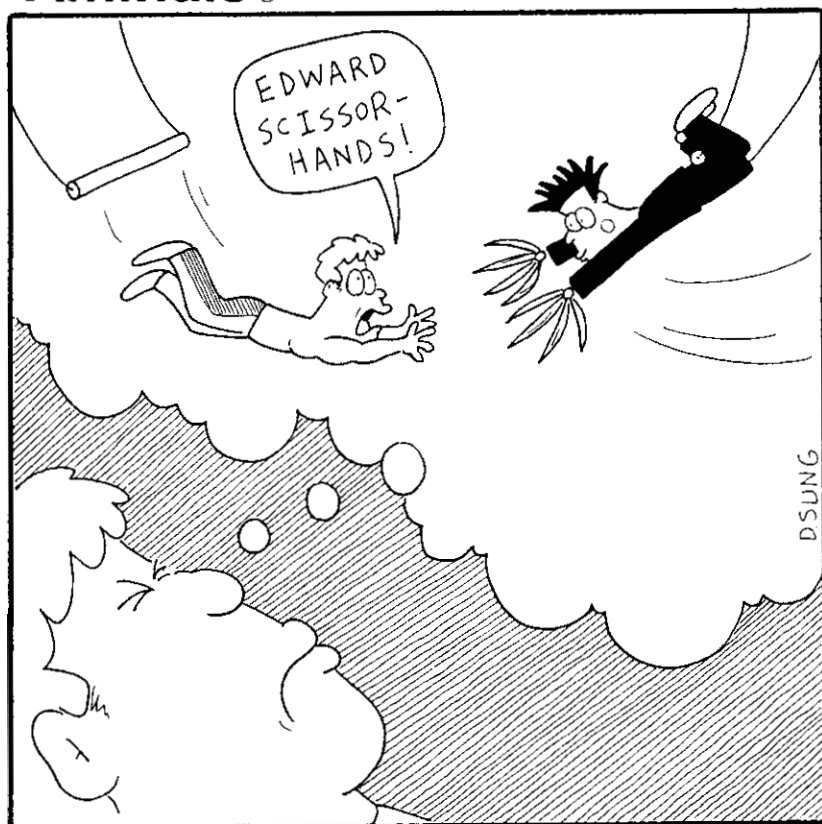
We gamble on state government anytime it is in session, and we usually lose. You have to wonder about the values of a legislator who would even consider gambling as a fruitful means of raising funds and where this could lead. Next he'll have our school districts offering classroom studies on how to gamble, especially if that becomes a new life-skill needed to survive in Texas.

Instead of arguing the merits of slot machines, the Legislature should be arguing how to rid itself of the Lottery and emerge from the bowels of the degenerate.

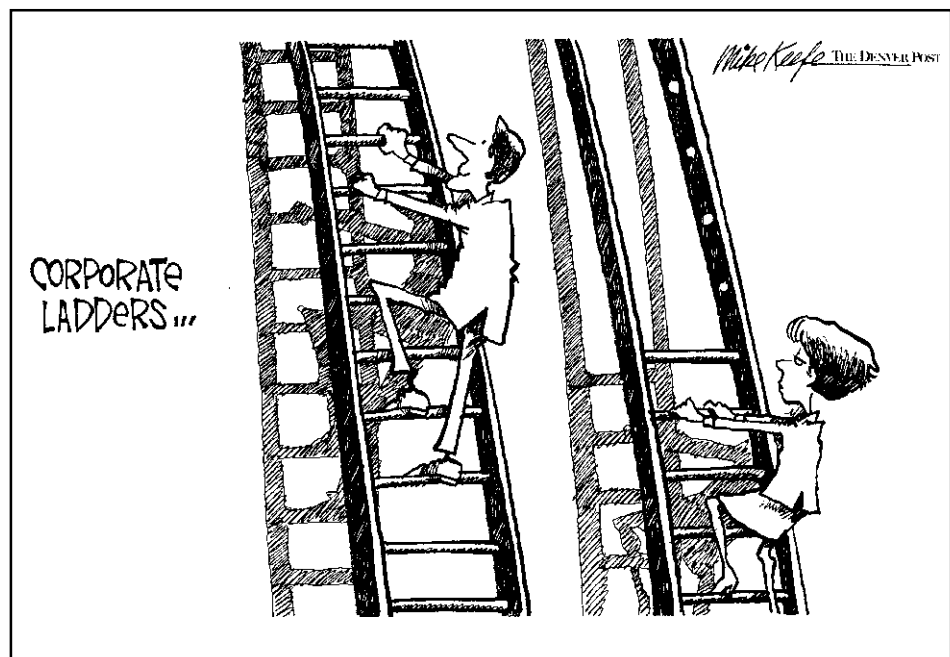
— W. Leon Smith

## Aminals

By David Sung



A trapeze artist's worst nightmare





# MAILBAG ICONOCLAST

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Let's really support our troops and fight for their veterans rights.

Let us forget for a moment that this war was started under false pretense. Let us forget also that the commander in chief was a deserter.

Instead, let us take a moment to see what is happening with our returning veterans.

It appears to this writer that all is not well with our brothers and sisters. It seems that these men and women are getting the royal shaft. It is very upsetting to watch what is happening to these brave souls.

Every day I read of another veteran going through continued battles after returning home, because now they must fight once again to attempt to receive the medical and financial benefits and assistance promised to them by a crippled Veterans Administration system.

In addition, I read about the increasing numbers of homeless among the returning heroes of this War on Terror...

Daily, I read how our military is shafting the very people it needs to keep its machine oiled. Will someone please explain to me exactly what is going on here? These brave veterans do not know that the combat they may have encountered while on active duty was just a warm-up for the combat they would have to do with the VA to hold even. Many of them do not know how to, or if even if they should, fight for themselves. And so the VA wins the disgraceful battle; they intentionally cheat these heroes out of the benefits earned as they risked great personal peril and danger.

Can someone please explain also, what is causing these increasing suicides among Vets? I can understand a man saying, "Enough is enough! I did one tour I am not going back!" I also understand why he would go to Canada to escape. Perhaps, if his father or mother were in politics, he would not have to make that decision.

However, I cannot understand the many suicides. What does it say when a trooper commits suicide rather than return to battle?

What message is the military trying to send to the troops when a soldier cannot get the help needed to fight the echo of the evil beast of war that is now to live in his head for the rest of his life?

One such warrior checked into a private hospital for necessary emergency psychiatric care because he did not receive help from a military hospital. He now is to be court martialed for being AWOL. The military knew where he was at all times.

The Commander in Chief was not court martialed when he was AWOL. He never even had to serve in a combat zone!

So please explain to me why they are punishing this warrior in need for getting the necessary care he so requires. What is the justification for punishing this hero who honorably served?

By the way, how many senators and representatives do we have in Washington D C? How many of their sons and daughters are in Iraq or Afghanistan?

Why does the United States government attempt to make it's physically maimed and mentally wounded souls pay for their own meals during what bit of treatment they are able to receive?

Why are these brave soldiers returning home only to flip-out emotionally and murder the people they love? They survived the emotional stress of battle.

So what, pray tell, may have pushed them over the edge when they returned home?

These incidents are not isolated. There are far too many of them. Could it be the multitude of untested drugs these warriors are injected with before and during their tours of duty? Could it be the malaria pills? The probability is very high that these things are the cause.

Remember Agent Orange and all of the denials of the deadly, crippling damage it did to untold numbers of veterans?

Is the Beast claiming many more victims?

This is very possible.

If you combine all of these factors, the truth may begin to clearly appear. Many of the returning veterans have serious problems. We remove them from their families and jobs and send them over to Satan's playground. We send them with little training for combat, no body armor and without sufficient armor to protect their vehicles. When their bodies are blown to pieces and they complain that they are not getting what they need to protect themselves, our leaders tell them. Tough, that these are the horrible realities of war.

They are blown apart physically and mentally. They are set on fire. These soldiers become half the person they once were. And now the real nightmare begins. They must continue to fight continuous battles once at home in order to get the proper help that is their right: not a gift, but a right. They must wait six months to twelve months to receive necessary medical and/or psychiatric care from the VA health care system to heal their bodies and souls.

They must again wait one to 10 years to obtain a disability rating and any compensation for the disabilities they now have from combat. During this endless wait, many are unable to work and support themselves and their families so they become a burden on their loved ones. It must be very difficult to retain any self-esteem and a positive mindset when you are being constantly beaten down in the battle with the Veterans Administration.

Is this how we reward our military for their sacrifice?

This sacrifice freely given by them, so that we all can remain free and live comfortable lives, while they must suffer endless physical and mental burdens??

When a life is lost, we can give the surviving families \$250,000.00 for their

loss, but we cannot spare a dime for the wounded? You discard them to suffer while you reap the benefits of their sacrifices.

Our government can award contractors billions of dollars for non-existent reconstruction, yet they close VA hospitals for lack of funds.

Come on folks, something is just not right here.

Am I the only one who sees this horrible injustice? These great, heroic men and women have paid a terrible price for our freedom. Please explain why they are being treated as second class citizens when they return home.

We spend a half trillion dollars for defense to fight the War on Terrorism, yet we cannot compensate the real victims of the battle, our veterans? Russia and China combined spend approximately 100 billion dollars on this war.

Halliburton and other American corporations profit unknown billions from this war. Many thousands of ribbons on vehicles in America proclaim Support Our Troops. Flying flags, ribbons and bumper stickers are easy to display.

Wake up Americans! The reality is that you are NOT supporting your troops. You are abandoning them to fend for themselves after they have given the ultimate sacrifice for you and your families.

If you genuinely want to support the troops, then you must get on the backs of your congressmen and ride them to fight for the Veterans. Make them get off their butts and fix this mess NOW, before it is too late for many of our veterans. These forgotten brave warriors are your fathers and mothers, your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters. They are your friends, co-workers and neighbors who sacrificed so much so you can live the good life. There is no valid reason why these veterans cannot be awarded their disability ratings and compensation at discharge and not have to endure the endless hassle and denials from the VA. We need to readjust our priorities and take care of our returning heroes, so that they may recover from the torments of battle. Any remaining funds can be used to support the evil killing machine. How can we do this to the cream of the crop, the brave and cherished youth of America?

Perhaps if they were criminals and liars, we would treat them much better. You must truly support the troops, America, and fight for them and their promised Veteran benefits, just as they fought for you and your families!

*Chuck Wilson, Hayden, Idaho*  
To The Editor:

We appreciate your honest approach to that pseudo-Texan across the hill from you! How can you stand to be so near?? I am spreading the "word" about the Icon.....to the 4 winds.

Please look up my subscription date and keep me apprised as to when mine runs out.

Thanks!  
*Jimmy Hillman, Tucson, Arizona*  
P.S.

Tell Uncle Hugh that the last editorial was the best. As a 82 year-old and once farm boy in Mississippi, I got only the chicken feet [I swear!] and the wings and gizzards. And, we children ate last....the preacher was snoring before we finished our bread pudding sweet.

Dear Editor,

Bravo on your endorsement. Some of

your neighbors might be displeased with your common sense and threaten you or call you names. I for one congratulate you. It was President Theodore Roosevelt who said: "To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, it's morally treasonable to the American public." God bless you Sir for your wisdom.

*Dr. Patrick Swift*

*A native Texan working in New York City*

Dear Editor:

Just a brief thanks for your interview with Jim Wallis. He spoke at the Alliance for Democracy convention in Davis, CA, a few years back and I liked him then. [Alliance for Democracy is a non-partisan, progressive organization founded by your fellow Texan, Ronnie Dugger].

Thanks for publishing some really good advice from Rev. Wallis.

*Joanne Nagy, Granada Hills, Calif.*

To The Editor:

Veterans In Nursing Homes Slated For The Budget Axe — and that is wrong

The President is cutting a lot of programs, and we all have our own opinion on this. But one budget cut that has raised it's ugly head up is to make heavy cuts in funding for Veteran's Nursing Homes.

Unfortunately, his new 2005-06 budget cuts the funding for Veterans Nursing Homes. Yes indeed, those brave military Veterans from World War 2, including my own father, those the President calls the Greatest Generation who weathered the great depression and won World War 2 for us, and are now in the twilight of life have felt the cold of this budget axe.

Too weak to fight back, too sick to protest they silently take the cuts and still hold their heads high. We have all fought over different political issues, but this is one cut that regardless of party or conservative or liberal, we know it is wrong. These are the veterans and their loving spouses that defeated the Nazi, stopped the conquering Japanese, and won the cold war.

They raised a lot of us up to pay our taxes, fight in our wars, love our country, and respect our politicians and our elders - just like they did.

Now that they can't speak for themselves, we need to be their voice. Let congress and the president know that though a lot of cuts will be made, cutting up the care received by our old veterans is not one we want to see made in our names to these elderly people.

Their necks are on the line as you read this, let your politicians in Washington know that this is one cut not to make, not to the people that saved our country.

*Ken Williams-Democrat, son of WWII veteran Bill Sells of 69th Artillery Battalion*

*and Alberta Matheson - Republican - Veteran Nurse of WWII - Asian Theatre of War*

Letter to the Editor:

If a person cannot see that Bush has done the same as Caesar, that person is like the ostrich with his head in the sand. The Bush/Rumsfeld team attacked Iraq with no plan to secure the

**Continued On Next Page**



# State Capitol Update — By State Rep. Jim Dunnam (Dist. 57)

## Why Are Some Texas Children More Equal Than Others? Treating Texas Children Equally

While touted as a “roadmap to results,” the current proposal to revamp school finance, known as HB2, can best be summed up as “all children are equal but some children are more equal than others.”

Despite the claims that HB2 is more equitable, it is not. The funding gap between the richest districts and the rest actually grows. In fact, the bill’s hold harmless provisions guarantee schools who currently receive more will continue to receive the most—not to mention the institutional facilities inequities which HB2 ignores. But even if HB2 did achieve 90% equity, what does that say about Texas and how we value our children?

Public school children in Texas are held equally accountable to the same tests, the same curriculum, and the same attendance and graduation requirements. Those children will ultimately compete for the same slots on college campuses and in the job market; but there is no hold harmless provision on a college admission form or a job application for children who did not receive as much funding for their education.

In fact, studies have shown the devastating impacts of the inequality in the current system. Currently Texas has a graduation rate of approximately 68% — meaning a third of Texas children are not graduating from high school. And as much as 32% of those who do graduate are not at a skill level ready to take college courses. That is not acceptable, and I know we can do better.

If we are going to hold our children equally accountable in the classroom and in the real world, then why do we



Rep. Jim Dunnam

have a school finance system that treats children unequally? Why should only 10%, or even 1%, of Texas children have the benefit of better paid teachers, the newest textbooks and the best facilities? Why should 90% of Texas children receive a below average education so that 10% can receive an above average education? Why should some children be more equal than others?

The answer is clearly that they should not. But the reality of HB2 is that it treats Texas children unequally. Under

HB2, most schools will receive a 3-4% increase in funds, barely enough to match inflation and not even enough to make up for the cuts they suffered last session. But under HB2, a few select schools will receive huge increases. For example, Highland Park would receive a 52% increase in funding, meaning that while 90% of Texas children might receive \$300.00 more for their education, a child from Highland Park receives over \$2,000 extra. Why are those children so favored?

The fact that Republican politicians have written a bill that singles out Highland Park for exceptional treatment while systematically starving the rest is probably no coincidence. The largest group of non-lobby donors to Republican officeholders lives in the Highland Park school district.

But, Highland Park is not the villain here. Who can blame anyone for wanting more for their school children? We all want that. Instead, the blame lies on a school finance system and lawmakers who would propose a school finance system that divides our great state into those who have a public school and those who can afford a better public school. That is wrong — “morally wrong” said *The Dallas Morning News*— and Texans must insist that the games being played with our children and our future end.

Every Texas child should be provided an equal opportunity to succeed in life. The quality of a child’s education should never be dictated by their ZIP code. It is Texas Legislators who should be held accountable and guarantee that happens.

~ Jim Dunnam

## Revenge of the (Sports) Nerds

My mom prefers to refer to my big brother as “passionate,” but really, he’s a nerd.

A *sports nerd* to be exact.

Family lore differs on the origins of Steven’s sports nerdiness.

Some say it began with his fascination with baseball trading cards.

Others say that when he learned to play card games like “Spades” and board games like “Risk,” he really came into his own as a fierce competitor (read: crybaby).

Big Bro eventually shifted focus from paper to contact sports, like baseball, football, and soccer, and achieved moderate success on the fields of physicality.

After high school, he tried to walk on to the University of Florida football team as a punter, but unfortunately, he couldn’t quite kick it. It’s sad, too, because “Diebenow” is, like, *the* perfect last name for a punter.

However, up until college, Steven had not shown his true sports nerd colors. No, we knew only when he returned from college one summer, sat in front of the TV for hours and hours, playing 8-bit Nintendo games, like “RBI Baseball” and “John Madden Football,” and kept meticulous stats for each “season.”

Steven had sheets and sheets of statistics, miles and miles of numbers and words on them written with hundreds of #2 mechanical pencils.

The method to his madness was that he used this special grid paper, so he wouldn’t have to draw graphite lines with rulers that could be smeared. Everything was so legible, so easy to read. In retrospect, we should have framed them.

Although he has outgrown the Nintendo games, he’s now addicted to Fantasy Football, which is a little too “Dungeons & Dragons” for even my own comic book dork taste.

I’m not worried about Steven though. He’s still a normal person underneath the rainbow wigs, blue face paint, and the (lite) beer belly.

And besides, I’m not alone. Every family in America has at least one member who is a sports nerd. Some have

## The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



more than one. And many more have as many as a half a dozen or more just living in Texas.

If you can’t tell if your loved one is a sports nerd, there are a number of signs. Here are a handful of helpful hints:

- His carpet, walls, and ceiling are stained with blue body paint.
- His safety deposit box has five SPORTS ILLUSTRATED football phones still in their boxes in near mint condition.
- The only cookbook in his kitchen has recipes from Bobby Valentines’ Sports Grill.
- Next to the football phones are Polaroids of Ted Giannoulas without his Famous Chicken costume on. The only reason he gives for having the pictures is “just in case.”

• He knows Pele’s career numbers like the back of his hand ... well, actually, because they’re tattooed on the back of his hand.

• He can list from memory all of the Soviet hockey players on the 1980 Olympic team and their favorite colors.

• On his dresser are unmailed letters to ESPN Page2 columnist Hunter S. Thompson requesting him to officiate his wedding at CBGCs in the NYC Bowery in a Santa Clause costume.

Okay, that last one was my own personal fantasy ... and so it shall remain. (R.I.P. - H.S.T. - 1937-2005)

You know, I’ve also wondered what it would be like if instead of going to Friday night football games, everyone in small town America dressed up like their favorite sci-fi characters and watched high school teams battle each other with light sabers.

You know, like, you’d have matches with Star Wars vs. Star Trek or Alien vs. Predator vs. Freddy vs. Jason...

Now, that would be sooo cool!

## MAILBAG

# ICONOCLAST

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Continued From Previous Page

peace and no plan for our withdrawal. It seems like they are leaving it up to fate to decide what happens in Iraq. Even a large number of Republicans are now questioning how this administration screwed up so bad.

I ask you the question: do you believe you have more freedom now with the passage of the patriots act, 1 & 2, or less? If you are not aware of this administration’s removal of laws that protect Americans, no matter what your political leanings are, then you are like the three monkeys that see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. You are like sheep being led to slaughter by the sound of the bell from a goat added to the flock. The name of the goat isn’t referred to as the “Judas Goat” for no reason. All Americans have a right to question this governments actions. That’s what freedom is.

I am an American first and always, and no mater which political party is in

power, I vote for what I think is the best for this country, and this administration is far from it.

This administration is the most secretive of any administration in the history of America. It is also the greediest, and is for big business and the wealthiest of Americans only.

It does not represent the middle class or the poor. This administration understand greed and how it works. Before the 2000 election, Bush promised a \$300 rebate, and instead of voting for what is best for America, a lot of greedy people voted for him so they could get the rebate. The problem was, most people got nothing, because they didn’t read the fine print, and didn’t qualify for it. Judas got 30 pieces of silver for his betrayal. A lot of Americans did it for three hundred dollars, and got nothing instead, except the Counterfit Texan, Bush. But that’s freedom for you.

Rudi Lehmann, Belton



# Prisoners Roll Dice To Decide Who Dies

After six long years, the king of Spain finally found the time on Feb. 23, 1807, to decide what to do with a dozen Americans held prisoner in distant Mexico.

The twelve were the survivors of the Nolan Expedition, a freelance foray into Spanish Texas led by an intrepid

Irishman named Philip Nolan. For several years he had slipped in and out of the province rounding up mustangs, an illicit activity the authorities tolerated until informed that the smuggler would be back in 1800 for much more than mere horses.

Nolan returned that October with an estimated 20 American adventurers and several personal slaves. Despite the puny size of the alleged invasion force, the paranoid Spaniards were convinced that Texas was under attack.

Nolan dodged patrols under orders to stop his supposedly seditious expedition at any cost. Then in March 1801, soldiers surrounded the intruders and killed their leader in the ensuing battle. Nolan's frightened followers quickly capitulated in the mistaken belief they would be paroled to the United States after a token detention.

For the next eight months, the confused captives cooled their heels in San Antonio de Bexar, while the military commander of Texas and the civilian viceroy in Mexico City were embroiled in a jurisdictional dispute. The royal tribunal eventually resolved the delicate issue by deciding that the trespassers ought to be punished at the scene of their crime.

In the meantime, the Americans had been transferred to Saltillo, capital of Coahuila-Texas. Before the viceroy could concede defeat, they were moved farther into the interior of Mexico.

The bureaucratic debate was renewed with such passion that the king himself was compelled to settle the matter. Although the monarch instructed his colonial subjects to try the suspects at Mexico City, the prisoners somehow wound up at Chihuahua in March 1803.

Better treatment from their new jailers raised false hope of an early release among the Americans. As Peter Ellis Bean remembered years later, "By the time we reached Chihuahua, we began to think we would regain our liberty."

Although the Mexicans had no intention of turning them loose, the prisoners were given the run of their respective towns, Chihuahua and San Carlos, after being split into two groups. Within the year, Bean was even allowed to travel unescorted to San Carlos.

During this reunion, he took his comrades aside and tried to interest them in a mass escape. To his surprise they advised him to face the fact he would never get out of Mexico alive and to ingratiate himself with his captors by converting to Catholicism and marrying a local woman.

This was, of course, a ruse. No more content with incarceration that Bean, the San Carlos contingent was already plotting their own jailbreak and simply did not trust him with the details.

## This Week In Texas History



By Bartee Haile

As a result, two separate plans gradually evolved at Chihuahua and San Carlos with neither group aware of the other's intentions. However, both bids for freedom were coordinated by Thomas House, who made the foolish mistake of putting it all down on paper.

Sensing something was up and angry at being left out, Jonah Watters secretly searched House's cell. Finding copies of the plans, he turned over the incriminating evidence to the Mexicans, who immediately tightened security.

The mail from Madrid finally arrived on Nov. 9, 1807, and the royal verdict was read to the glum prisoners. According to the king, one out of five would forfeit his life for the attempted overthrow of the Spanish regime in Texas, and the rest would do an additional 10 years at hard labor.

The three that did not resist arrest in 1801 were spared, leaving nine to take their chances in a gallows gamble. In a rare display of mercy, the officer in charge ruled that only one not two had to die.

Each prisoner was blindfolded and forced to kneel before an upturned drum. Given a glass containing a pair of dice, he tried his luck on the improvised crap table. The lowest roll won a date with the hangman.

The Mexicans rewarded Watters for his cowardly cooperation by forcing him to take his chances with the men he betrayed. Everyone rooted for snake eyes, but the turncoat saved his skin by rolling a seven.

Three more also totaled seven, two hit 11, one an eight and Bean managed a five. The "winner" was Ephraim Blackburn with a roll of four.

The Mexicans gave the condemned man two days to prepare for the hereafter before hanging him in the main plaza of Chihuahua. Blackburn's comrades cursed a system based on luck instead of justice, but no one volunteered to take his place.

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

## I Miss The Sixties

Not in the same way I miss being able to enjoy munching popcorn at a movie or peanuts at a Cubs game. Nor like the gratification of laying solid wood on a high fastball or the good sting as a sinking liner dies in my leathered right palm. Time, in its own dispassionate yet wise way, has distanced me from such pleasures.

What I miss about the Sixties is the personal approach. Take protest, for instance. Was it really so long when ago people actually got off their cushions or futons or back pockets (empty as these might have been), ventured outdoors, commingled with other human beings, and publicly expressed themselves?

Imagine — face-to-face communication between real, live people in a unified effort to achieve a common goal. Americans stepped up to the plate and took their swings at social ills and injustices.

So, what happened when the people spoke out? There was violence, there was more injustice. There was blood in the streets and on college campuses all across our Nation. Mayors, governors, police chiefs and National Guard commanders used every tool and weapon available to stifle their countrymen. Even one President, the soon-to-be deposed Richard M. Nixon, had the FBI and Air Force Intelligence keeping tabs on dissenters who dared to exercise their 1st Amendment right to Freedom of Expression.

Blacks marched as they sang, "We shall overcome." Many white people marched and sang right along with them. Numerous Americans were beaten and thrown in jail together. Some of them died... together. One of those who died was a childhood friend of a young Condoleezza Rice. In the end they overcame.

There was also a war. A most unpopular war. This war was so unpopular, in fact, that George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and numerous cronies of this administration pulled whatever strings it took to stay away. The aforementioned excluded, college students, veterans and young adults all over America took to the streets and campuses in open disapproval of the war and governmental agenda.

People, mostly kids, were beaten, jailed, and shot, even killed, for doing their patriotic duty: Expressing displeasure with unjust policies and an insane war.

It truly is amazing how everything that evolved in the Sixties, all the events that resulted in social reconstruction, seem to have zipped right past Bush, Cheney, Rice and Rumsfeld. They have led us right back into the same place we were 40 years ago, a war with no purpose or end. And it really baffles one as



Out Of The Blue

By  
Jerry  
Tenuto

to how and why Condi, a victim of racial terrorism in Mississippi circa 1962, would associate herself with these rich white guys.

So, where are the protesters? Why are there no college students marching on the ROTC building?

They're all sitting in their dorms or cushy apartments, playing video games or watching DVD's or surfing the net. They don't live like college kids did 40 years ago. If you were fortunate enough to have a car it was a beater, now student parking lots are overrun with \$25,000.00 SUV's. Dormies had maybe a refrigerator and a small stereo, today add a microwave, computer, color TV, bigger stereo, VCR, more, more, more. Off-campus housing used to mean a cramped apartment or ragged trailer, sparsely furnished. Now it means a luxury town home with all the amenities.

Heck, roommates don't even talk to each other anymore. Scrounging a couple of bucks for beer has become a lost art as well, because everyone has money, an ATM card or a credit card. There seems to be some motivational correlation between social activism and empty pockets.

There was a protest at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale about a year ago. Now, SIU has long been known as a bastion of progressive thinking and free speech. However, one young woman began a movement denouncing the school as being "anti-free speech" because a group or individual is required to sign up in advance to use the Free Speech Area, a policy that has worked for three decades. Essentially, what she wanted to do was hold her protest any time she felt like it and interfere with the freedoms of others.

Here we are in the 21st Century and the post-slacker generation has morphed into moles. They stay hunkered down in their own little electronic worlds and have not really developed proper communication skills. There is a severe drought in social ability and societal awareness. They get their news from the Internet, most coming from bloggers and precious little of it accurate.

So, what's to protest? There's no draft. The war's way over in the Midwest and doesn't affect me. Why should I vote? It's all fixed, anyway.

Holding Space

for Peace

in  
Crawford,  
Texas

Crawford Peace House.org 9142 5th Street - 254-486-0099



# Shooting A Country Music Video? Avoid The Black-Eyed Four-Step

Admittedly, being a humor columnist has its privileges:

- Complimentary full-body waxes.
- Unsolicited fruitcake.
- Tickets to the World Toilet Expo.
- The list goes on.

However, occasionally I'm invited to be part of something really cool that doesn't require shaving my entire body or sitting on a giant, revolving commode that burps. In this case, I'm talking about being on the set during the making of a music video for country singer Adam Marshall. According to Adam and his producer, after reading some of my columns, they thought it would be fun to have me write about the making of their music video, "Cowboy Hat." As an added bonus, they created a part just for me, in which I play the pivotal role of "Crowd Member" who, according to the script: Could be replaced by a coat rack if necessary.

The truth is, I've been a fan of country music for years and probably would've pursued my own career if things had turned out differently, and my musical talent had extended beyond



By  
**Ned  
Hickson**  
Siuslaw News

being able to perform the drum solo from "Wipeout" on my inner thighs.

Because of this, I had to settle for the only record deal I could get, which is a generous contract entitling me to 15 free CDs, as long as I agree to buy one John Tesh album sometime before I die.

Because I have no experience in front of the camera (not counting the occasional home video, where, in most cases, I'm either choking on a bratwurst or trying to pull an appendage out of something), I'm not sure how I'm going to do when it's time to start shooting. Chances are the director's command for "ACTION!" will then be

followed by someone screaming "MEDIC!"

My wife has spent the last few days helping ease my fear of cameras by sporadically leaping out of closets or from behind furniture with our video camera rolling. With her background in social behavior, she insisted this process would eventually cause me to build a resistance to my fear.

But so far, all we have is about 90 minutes of footage with me screaming from various places throughout our home — kitchen, tool shed, crawl space under the house.

I'm not sure what she thought was going to happen when she surprised me in the bathroom, but once I stood up and started running for the door, we were both screaming. Even if this doesn't work, it won't be a total loss because, after we get this thing edited and add some music, I think we'll have a good chance of finding a distributor at Sundance.

In some respect, I suppose my wife's idea has worked; as long she isn't allowed anywhere near a camera on the

set, I'll be just fine.

The other thing I have to worry about is dancing. This is a music video, after all, and a good portion of it takes place in a country bar with Adam Marshall singing. I'm assuming this will lead to dancing. Possibly even to the Cotton-Eyed Joe or Texas Two-Step.

Or, in my case, a dance I created while living in Texas called the Black-Eyed Four-Step, wherein I would accidentally step on the feet of various women throughout floor and get punched in the eye by their boyfriends. I should mention that I was always completely sober and, in each case, had started out dancing with my wife before getting disoriented by my own boot scootin' boogie.

So, when the video airs in April, don't be surprised if I've been replaced by a coat rack.

Especially once they've seen my rendition of "Wipeout."

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

## 'Remember Goliad' — Why?

### Spotlight On Texas History

BY JOE MARCHMAN  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

CRAWFORD — Texas citizens, born or naturalized, pay special homage during the months of March and April to those historic days in which our beloved Lone Star State fought and won her independence from Mexico.

On March 2, 1836, at Washington-on-the-Brazos, Texas' declaration of independence was proclaimed.

On March 6, 1836, the Alamo fell to Gen. Santa Anna — 183 Texians massacred.

On March 27, 1836, Goliad fell to Santa Anna — 360 Texians massacred.

On April 21, 1836, Gen. Sam Houston and his volunteer Texas army defeated Gen. Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, thus gaining Texas independence.

Goliad, in February 1836, had been a typical Mexican frontier village of about 1,000 inhabitants located on the San Antonio River about 40 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. San Antonio de Bexar and the Alamo were located northwest of Goliad about 80 miles. During 1835 and 1836, the mission in San Antonio — The Alamo — and the mission at Goliad — La Bahia — were used as forts or military posts.

Acting Gov. James W. Robinson appointed Col. James W. Fannin in charge of Texan forces at Goliad — about 400 men strong — Texas' most formidable force at the time.

In late February of 1836, Col. Fannin and his troops were rebuilding the fort at Goliad when a courier from Col. William B. Travis at The Alamo came with the report that Santa Anna had taken San Antonio de Bexar. Col. Travis called, urgently, for help for himself, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, and the other nearly 200 Texan troops entrapped in the old mission fortress of The Alamo.

Col. Fannin chose to ignore Travis'

plea for reinforcements — pleas which had come almost daily since Santa Anna's approach to San Antonio, but it all ended on the north bank of the San Antonio River some two miles from his Goliad fortress. It seems an ox-cart had broken down, laden with supplies. At his misfortune, Col. Fannin decided to return to the fort and discontinue his effort to reinforce Col. Travis' outmanned heroes.

Fannin was aware that Goliad was no longer a strategic post to defend, but hesitated in moving his troops back to Victoria across the Guadalupe, a place most defensible by a small force if any existed in Texas. Instead, Fannin's small force had become enamored with its fortification work at La Bahia and didn't want to leave until trying it out against the Mexican army.

On March 6, 1836, there were no more pleas of desperation from the Alamo — pleas asking for Fannin's choice troops who to-date had only polished and perfected a fort they would never use. Fannin and his men knew the Alamo was a hopeless cause.

Col. Fannin sent a courier to the provisional government at Washington-on-the-Brazos asking for orders.

On March 6, acting Gov. Robinson wrote:

"We instruct you to use your own discretion to remain where your are, or to retreat, as you may think best for the safety of the brave volunteers under your command — unless you are instructed otherwise by Gen. Sam Houston, who has been confirmed as commander-in-chief of the Army of Texas."

Fannin could have retreated from Goliad — he should have retreated — but he was not practical nor an experienced commander. He was a good soldier but not ready for such a command, according to most historians.

Col. Fannin's men could not believe



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.

they were in real danger from an enemy they hadn't seen, especially a Mexican enemy. In Goliad on March 14, 1836, Fannin received orders from Gen. Houston to retreat. The retreat was not attempted until March 19 where on the prairie beyond the San Antonio River ford Col. Fannin halted the march to rest his oxen pulling supply wagons after going a mere 10 miles.

Soon Fannin was surrounded by Gen. Urrea, commanding the southern wing of Santa Anna's army. Col. Fannin's men deployed coolly and bravely and fought courageously through the long afternoon. The Texans were informed that if they surrendered, they would soon be sent to New Orleans on parole. Gen. Urrea promised to intercede with Santa Anna with those terms of surrender.

Col. Fannin and his men were taken back to Goliad for incarceration on the morning of March 20, 1836, after a truce was arranged and the terms agreed on.

Gen. Urrea left orders that the Texan prisoners were to be treated humanely. That order, however, was superseded by an order of Santa Anna from his headquarters in San Antonio.

Palm Sunday, March 27, at daybreak, Col. Portilla marched 330 Texans out of the mission on the pretense of scavaging for food. Instead, he executed the lot in cold blood as Santa Anna had directed.

Col. Fannin, hearing of the massacre of his men while confined to his quarters because of a wound he had suffered at his capture the week before, was ordered to prepare for his immediate execution. Fannin responded that he was ready, as he had "no desire to

live after the cold-blooded, cowardly murder" of his men.

He bared his chest in readiness and uttered a death wish of "not to be shot in the face."

The treacherous deaths of Col. Fannin and his men spread like wildfire over the United States and around the world. The victims of Goliad now fought more effectively for Texas, in death, than they had when alive.

Perhaps no other single event in history has more profoundly influenced the attitudes of North Americans than Santa Anna's needless slaughter at the mission fortress La Bahia at Goliad. Had Mexico's ruthless dictator, Santa Anna, not massacred the near 400 Texan troops from almost every portion of the United States and had paroled them as promised, there would have been 400 witnesses to the incompetence of Texas leadership at the time — to the strange apathy of Texans in the cause of freedom from Mexico and to the lack of appreciation for the brave volunteers from the U.S. who had taken up the cause for Texas independence. Mexico could have been depicted as a tolerant nation, rather than a nation with the despised attitude that history pages reflect, an attitude which governed relations between the U.S. and Mexico for decades to come, and still does.

Yes, the defenders of Goliad forfeited their lives — maybe not with the heroic efforts that Col. Travis, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, and the others who died at the Alamo had for Texas — hence, "Remember the Alamo" is always first in the hearts of most Texans and was, of course, on the lips of those who defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto just three weeks later on April 21, 1836, achieving Texas independence.



# Flu Season Is In Full Swing

Flu season is in full swing. Boy, is it! There have been multiple school closings in many surrounding towns. It seems everyone here is sick. When I went into the clinic a couple of weeks ago for a "well check up" kind of visit (unfortunately scheduled weeks before, for a Monday, the worst of all possible clinic days), the waiting room was filled with young and old alike, sneezing, hacking, and blowing their noses.

When I registered, I told the receptionist I hated to come in when I was well. She rolled her eyes and said, "I know. It's been horrible for days." She pushed a box of masks toward me and said, "We're suggesting that everyone wear a mask either for protection or to keep others from getting sick." I looked around the waiting room, and of course, not one person had a mask on.

"Give it to me," I said, and took one. I sat down and tried to casually slip it over my nose and mouth as inconspicuously as possible. (Yeah, right). Finally, I tired of holding the thing up. I hooked it over my ears and started reading the book I had brought along. (I wasn't going to pick up one of the complimentary magazines all those SICK people had touched). Everyone in the entire room stared at me in the mask like I had the plague. Some whispered and pointed. That's OK. I was probably the only well person in there who didn't come down with some bug two days later.

I had tried to fade into the woodwork in that waiting room, but sure enough, the next day when we went to pay the electric bill, Alice said, "Oh, you were the one wearing the mask in the waiting room at the clinic yesterday!"

(Years ago, on a trip to the Orient, I noticed a few people in Korea wearing surgical masks—on the streets, in the malls. I saw it in Japan as well. I discovered that in that area of the world, people are so considerate that they try to avoid passing a cold or virus to others. No one thinks it odd there to see someone with a mask. I believe it was thought rude if one did NOT wear a mask in public when ill.

Zack succumbed to some nasty, upper respiratory thing a few days ago, but his fever is lower now. . . He obtained some antibiotics from his doctor this morning. I'm sniffing but still hoping against hope to escape what my father always called "the misery" —or slide by with a milder case than Zack and so many others seem to have.

When I thought I was coming down with something a few weeks ago, I tried a product that claims to lessen the severity of a cold — if you start using it in time. I THOUGHT it actually might have helped, or was that wishful thinking, mind over matter? Well, what difference did it make?

(And speaking of over-the-counter products, am I the only one who is totally grossed out by the television commercial of the walking, talking blob of mucous taking up residence in a human chest? Yuck. Madison Avenue, do we really need to see this? I wouldn't buy that product now just on principle).

Whatever form of "the misery" I caught never turned into a full-blown upper respiratory infection. (But while using the cold busting miracle in my nose those few days, I decided to forego my anti-allergy nasal spray. It just

## 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.*

seemed like too much stuff—and too different—to put in one nose. Naturally I ended up with hay fever. (Murphy's Law). Sometimes you just can't win for losing.

So when my throat felt funny this morning, and knowing that Zack was a walking, talking, coughing, germ manufacturing machine, I used the over-the-counter cold buster again. Can I get lucky twice?

The other thing in my favor (I hope) is that I actually had a flu shot this year. . . early. I went in and got stuck before all the big deal about how scarce the stuff was. Then of course, I had survivor guilt, figuring I kept some elderly or otherwise at-risk person from getting his or her dose.

There's another commercial on TV advertising an antibacterial hand product. It shows a young woman attempting to open a door with her foot. She is trying hard to avoid touching the handle. I'm starting to see myself in that caricature. This must be so wrong.

When I sub at the high school, I refuse to touch the hall pass the kids carry when they must use the facilities. Most other teachers won't handle it either, so I know I'm not alone. Everyone is well aware those passes are germ sponges, cesspools of possible infection of every variety.

I keep antibacterial hand cleaner in my truck. And I actually use it. I reach for it when I return from stores, from putting my hands on shopping carts, handling merchandise, opening doors.

Tonight we saw *The Aviator* at The CLIFTEX. As I watched Howard Hughes become more and more germ-phobic, insisting his staff wear gloves, refusing to shake hands, not wanting other people to touch his food, etc., I started to see myself during flu season. Not a good thing. But Hughes was probably psychotic. (At least I don't hear voices and see things that aren't there. . . yet. Well, I don't THINK I do. Do I? I mean, how can you tell?).

Have you ever seen someone cough into his hand and then hold it out to be shaken? Is this a gesture of good will? —Sheer stupidity? —Mind-numbing oblivious inconsideration on the grand scale? —The height of unconscionable rudeness? Should I be worried more about my own paranoia than the flu?

OK, OK, this column, like many I write, is a little tongue in cheek. We can only do so much in a valiant attempt to keep ourselves healthy. But it isn't such a bad idea to be considerate when we are sick.

Wash your hands often. Keep yourself and your germs at home, away from the rest of us, when possible. One of my pet peeves is businesses and bosses encouraging employees to come to work when ill. Then everyone else gets sick, of course. Is it surprising? How counter-productive is this? How cost effective?

When my kids were small, it would drive me crazy that other parents would send their sick children to school or over to play, where they would of course immediately infect other (MY) unsuspecting little kids. . . and then me as well. We were all sick every two weeks during the first two years of my son's preschool career.

So, in my attempts at sheer self-preservation, I was a little paranoid about this, even all those years ago. I was directly responsible for our pediatrician in Miami dividing his waiting room into sick and well areas. They all did this when I was growing up in Texas. When did such a good, civilized idea disappear? I felt it my civic duty to educate the young doctor. (All the sick kids could still pass different, awful germs to the other sick kids, but every system has its imperfections).

The same pediatrician had his nurses spray the examination rooms with antibacterial spray between patients. They

must have used a ton of the stuff. If it wasn't effective, at least it made us all feel that they were doing everything possible to keep us healthy.

And doctors used to wash their hands IN FRONT OF US, before they examined our children or us. It was a considerate, comforting gesture. No one wanted to wonder what ailment or condition the guy before had come in with. All that hand washing probably caused the doctor to purchase antibacterial soap (before it was a popular consumer item) and moisturizing hand lotion wholesale from the same supplier who sold him the antibacterial spray.

So please, folks, do what you can to keep yourself and others healthy this cold and flu season. Instruct your children to be considerate of others. Use tissues and dispose of them properly. Remember to cover your mouth with a tissue or hand when you sneeze or cough. And please don't be offended if I don't shake that hand directly after.

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# Caught Napping?

I have this uncle, Rip Van Garver, who just woke up after sleeping for 30 years. Some people think he slept so long because he was exhausted from working so hard as a political activist during the 60s and early 70s. Personally, I just think he found a comfy pillow. Regardless, here's the transcript of our first conversation:



By  
**Lloyd  
Garver**

ME: Uncle Rip, how are you feeling?  
RIP: I'm okay. But I really need to brush my teeth. What year is it?

ME: 2005.  
RIP: Wow. I've got a library book I better return pronto. So, nobody blew up the world. That's good. I guess the U.S. has been making sure the whole world listens to the U.N.

ME: Uh, not exactly.  
RIP: It must be wonderful to live in a world where we'll never have another Vietnam. What's it like where everybody feels safe, knowing that no President will ever take us to war again without telling Americans the complete truth and having certain intelligence?

ME: Well, actually, we're fighting in Iraq now. And the intelligence was pretty messed up. You see, we were attacked, and...

RIP: We were attacked by Iraq? No wonder we retaliated.

ME: No, Iraq didn't attack us. It's complicated.

RIP: Say, did the Republican Party ever bounce back from the Nixon fiasco?

ME: Oh, yeah, the Republicans are doing just fine.

RIP: Good. America always works best when we have two strong parties with respect for each other.

ME: You've really been sleeping pretty soundly, haven't you?

RIP: There must have been some amazing scientific breakthroughs in the past 30 years.

ME: Definitely. Now you can cook a hot dog in a minute.

RIP: Why would you want to?

ME: Well, people are in a hurry.

RIP: Have scientists found an alternative for the gasoline-powered car?

ME: They've found some alternatives. But they're not making them that fast.

RIP: I guess not everybody's in a hurry.

ME: Also, remember when you studied American history, and read about evolution being a controversial subject?

RIP: Sure, that was way back in the 1920's.

ME: Well, it's controversial again.

RIP: You're kidding. How about gravity? Do people still believe in that?

ME: Yes. And the theory that the earth is flat, not round, hasn't made a

comeback. Yet.

RIP: With all this going backwards, I've got one important question: is my Nehru suit back in style.

ME: No, but Paul McCartney sang at the Super Bowl.

RIP: At least the world must seem like a more humane place without the death penalty.

ME: Actually, the death penalty's back.

RIP: All over the world?

ME: No, most countries consider it inhuman punishment. But not us.

RIP: What about women's rights? Since Roe vs. Wade, it must be nice for every American girl to grow up, knowing she'll always be in charge of her own body.

ME: Actually, Uncle Rip, there are a lot of people who want Roe vs. Wade overturned. The government's gotten more and more involved in what people do in their private lives. They call it "morality and family values."

RIP: How about television? There were some great shows in the 70s. What's going on in TV today?

ME: Instead of having just a few channels, now there are hundreds of them. But most of the shows seem to be about daring people to eat bugs or wives swapping families.

RIP: What about that "morality and family values"?

ME: Hey, these shows make money.

RIP: I guess my eyes haven't adjusted to being awake yet. When I look outside, the air looks filthy, and I know we were making good progress against smog.

ME: It's not your eyes, it's the air. The environment's not such a big priority anymore.

RIP: This is terrible. How did Americans let so many things move backwards while I was asleep?

ME: I guess you aren't the only one who's been sleeping.

*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 can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com*

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