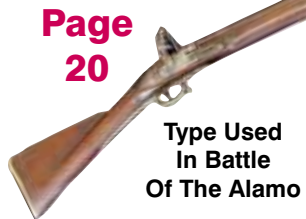


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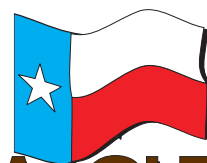
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The Lone Star



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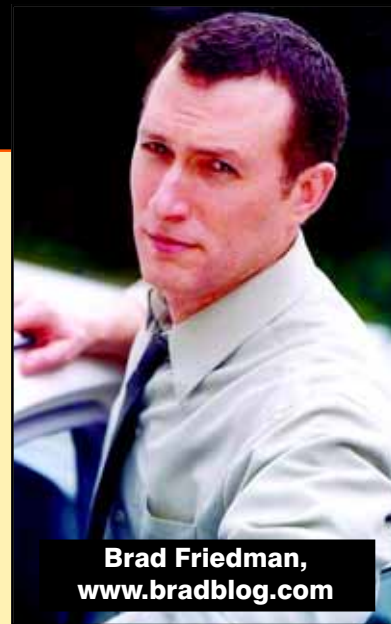
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87 Citizen Groups
Launch Nationwide Campaign
To Right Voting Machine Wrongs

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Brad Friedman,
www.bradblog.com

The Velvet Revolution: Divestiture For Democracy

87 Citizen Groups Launch Nationwide Campaign To End Secrecy In U.S. Voting Machine Companies

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — A coalition of more than 87 citizen groups nationwide have united to address the problems created by secret vote-counting inside the newer electronic voting machines.

Under the banner of the Velvet Revolution, mainstream and activist groups have organized to demand re-institution of vote-counting procedures so that all American citizens can verify with certainty that democracy is indeed working accurately.

Congressman John Conyers (D), minority chair of the House Judiciary Committee, has endorsed the campaign with a strong letter to nine vote machine companies, telling them that if they fail to implement the requested steps, he will urge members of Congress to pass legislation to deny them funding under the Help America Vote Act.

Brad Friedman, co-founder of the Velvet Revolution, told The Iconoclast in an interview Friday that it is important for Americans to take an active role in supporting this cause since it represents a renewed commitment to an electoral process that is both just and crystal clear.

Friedman, who investigated several voting irregularities in the past presidential election, explained that several groups were doing the same thing, but found it difficult to attain a united voice to do something about them.

“Since Nov. 3, I had been reporting on all this on my blog (<www.bradblogger.com>) and there sprang up all of the different groups who were trying to do the same thing, get the news out, do something about it, so I have been trying to bring them all together as sort of a central repository, an umbrella organization, so we can support their groups,” said Fried-

man.

“We’ve set up an easy-to-use e-mail link (on <www.VelvetRevolution.us>) where you can come to our site, fill in your name, and it will send out an email to all nine of these companies saying, ‘Hey, we stand with the Velvet Revolution and want you guys to do the right thing for our country, and if not, we will join the massive divestiture at the end of 60 days.’”

“We would love folks to send mail to those companies. We have made it easy for them. Of course, we would love donations to better help support the effort and the education campaign and get the word out far and wide so they really understand there are millions of Americans, more coming on every day” who want change, said Friedman.

“Right now there’s all this election reform legislation that’s going through Congress. Most of it is put forward by Democrats, so it probably won’t get very far right now. We are letting them all wrangle over that and we’re sort of taking matters in our own hands, saying ‘Hey, we’re the people, we’re the citizenry, and we’ll let the Congress worry about what they’re doing.’ We’re going to go straight to the companies and say, ‘Hey, enough is enough. You’re doing a function of the government. You are a government function, and so you need to operate as a branch of the government would, which is be open, have transparency, and institute a corporate policy so your executives can’t go out and say we will deliver the state of Ohio to George Bush.’”

Friedman continued, “It’s time for them to do the right thing, so we calling on them to do that, and we would love for folks to jump in, bury them with e-mails, sending them the message that we stand with the Velvet Revolution and we need to restore confidence in the

world’s most important democracy which is quickly becoming a laughing stock. Even Putin or one of his deputies told Bush, ‘Why are you lecturing us about democracy? Look at your own elections,’ which is troubling, I think.”

Problems with electronic voting machines have been documented by more than 50,000 complaints received in the 2004 election concerning observed malfunctions, he said.

According to a recent online survey on election reform:

- 87 percent of those surveyed advocate the expansion of early voting programs,
- 95 percent favor the creation of a public campaign to educate voters on voting rights and anti-intimidation laws, and
- Nearly 99 percent asked to ensure that every voting machine has a verifiable audit trail.

According to Friedman, “Velvet Revolution was a term that was used in Czechoslovakia when Havel came to power and the people hit the streets en masse and demanded to throw out the corrupt government through non-violent demonstrations...a peaceful revolution of the people, a people’s brigade. It brought down the government in Czechoslovakia, USSR, South Africa, and most recently, in the Ukraine, which would be the best example of a velvet revolution.”

In February, <VelvetRevolution.us> (VR) sent letters to the nine major vote and vote tabulation companies — Diebold, Sequoia Voting Systems, Election Systems and Software, HartInterCivic, MicroVote, DanaherGuardian, TriadGSI, UniLect, and Advanced Voting Solutions — urging them, within 60 days, to open themselves up to transparency and accountability or face a massive and sustained



Velvet Revolution Co-Founder and Investigative Reporter **Brad Friedman**

Websites To Visit

www.bradblogger.com
www.VelvetRevolution.us

divestiture campaign from hundreds of organizations representing millions of Americans.

VR is demanding verifiable paper ballots for all votes cast, a paper trail of all vote tabulations, open software and hardware that is subject to independent analysis, machines that are not, and cannot be networked, no involvement in elections or politics by company executives, and independent observers of that tabulation process, Friedman explained. These are required under existing law because the vote machine companies are merely extensions of the government in that they are performing a purely governmental function — vote counting — and are being compensated using taxpayer funds.

Friedman added that VR will broadly recognize the companies that publicly state within 60 days that they will comply with the patriotic concerns of the Velvet Revolution members. Those who choose against doing the right thing for the country will have to deal with a sustained campaign of boycott against their companies, affiliates, and clients, he added, noting that VR will also launch a broad education, advertising, and public relations campaign for the American people explaining precisely the dangers that these companies represent in regard to democracy.



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Underwater Noise Pollution

Will Dolphins And Whales Go The Way Of The Dinosaur?

By W. LEON SMITH
ICONOCLAST EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FLORIDA KEYS — After 70 beached rough-tooth dolphins floated or swam to shore here last Wednesday, U.S. Navy and marine wildlife biologists found themselves embroiled in pursuit of why.

By this past weekend, more than 20 of the mammals had died or were euthanized for trauma, coaxing the debate as to whether submarine exercises conducted by the USS Philadelphia the day before off Key West contributed to the tragedies. Although Navy authorities have declined to say whether the use of sonar, which can be heard miles away in the water, was implemented as part of the training, many scientists believe that this might be yet another example of how underwater noise pollution is changing life in the depths of the blue.

Although the Navy contends that there are other, more bothersome, environmental threats to sea mammals, animal activists argue that whales and dolphins suffer immensely when loud bursts of underwater sonar are sounded.

In an interview with the WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, Navy spokesman Ted Brown commented, "In the global war on terrorism, effective antisubmarine warfare is critical to ensuring the Navy's ability to defend national interests around the world."

It was noted that other nations use diesel-electric submarines that are very quiet and hard to detect.

However, there is growing evidence that high decibel mid-range sonar sound waves may harm marine animals, injuring their ears, brains, and permanently disorienting them to the point of being easy prey to predators and unable to fend for themselves. When they lose their bearings and surface too quickly, decompression damage, similar to "the bends" in human divers, occurs.

Currently, the U.S. Navy is at odds with Nato and the European Union over sonar emission standards, with the Pentagon opting out of their plan to preserve the underwater environment by limiting sonar use. European countries have also been attempting to design sonar that will not harm water mammals and has implemented a strategy to not use sonar in areas inhabited by whales.

Three years ago, the Pentagon persuaded Congress to change the Marine Mammal Protection Act, thus reducing protection for whales.

Other concerns voiced by members of the European community deal with mammals not visiting their regular feeding grounds in order to stay away from sonar blasts.

According to the Ocean Mammal Institute in Reading, Penn., there is a grave concern that proliferation of these noise sources poses a significant



Researchers study mammals and fish to determine whether sonar disrupts sea life.

threat to marine mammals, fish, and other ocean wildlife, some of which include endangered species.

Their website proclaims: "Scientists agree, and a growing body of research confirms, that the intense sound produced by these noise sources can induce a range of adverse effects in marine mammals. These effects include death and serious injury cause by brain hemorrhages or other tissue trauma; strandings and beachings; temporary and permanent hearing loss or impairment; displacement from preferred habitat, and disruption of feeding, breeding, nursing, communication, sensing, and other behaviors vital to the survival of these species.

"High-intensity sound has been shown to have adverse impacts on other marine species as well. Scientific studies have demonstrated that airguns have the potential to injure and significantly reduce catch rates of certain fish species at substantial distances. The proliferation of intense underwater noise poses a threat to already depleted fish stocks through the world's oceans."

The site quotes the Cetacean Specialist Group of the IUCN-World Conservation Union as targeting military operations as a significant threat: "Military operations involving the use of high-intensity sonar, explosive devices, and other intense noise sources pose

both lethal and sub-lethal threats to cetaceans."

According to the Marine Mammal Commission, high doses of sonar can cause "lung and tissue hemorrhage and trauma in marine mammals (and fish) as well as cavity explosion and hearing loss causing subsequent starvation."

The Commission notes that the behaviors of marine mammals related to sound include communication, navigation, detecting natural enemies, avoiding natural enemies (they become silent to hide, and become silent at hearing unfamiliar sounds), and detecting prey.

Physiological effects related to active sonar might also cause problems with disturbed sleep, high blood pressure, reproduction and youth rearing problems, and a weakened immune system, leaving them more vulnerable to infections and parasites, noted the Commission.

Another problem, says the Commission, relates to altered mammal migration routes, in order to avoid sounds louder than 120 dB, plus interference with the mammal's own "sonar system," since ocean mammals use their own sonar to see, as light does not penetrate very far below an ocean's surface.

Bruce Joffe, a geographic information consultant and environmental steward who has done considerable research into sonar use and its impact on marine

mammals and a member of the Seaflow organization in Sausalita, Calif., says that there is considerable circumstantial evidence linking military sonar use with the beaching of whales. "It is a pattern," he says, "and it happens at locations all over the world. The European nations were doing it (using high blasts of sonar) as well, but they have stopped."

Joffe sent an op-ed piece to newspapers throughout the country, explaining his concerns.

"What I tried to do is try to find some alternatives to the reasons why they actually think that they need this. If they need to communicate to the nuclear submarines, there are other ways of doing it besides using super-loud sonar. If they need to detect other submarines, there are other ways of doing that besides super-loud sonar, as well.

"I just had an emotional feeling about the impact on these animals, but then I also looked at how the Navy could solve its problems."

Joffe's article, entitled "Defending the Silence of the Seas," appears elsewhere in this edition of THE ICONOCLAST.

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Libertarians Attack Perry's Tran-Texas Corridor, Regional Mobility Authorities

AUSTIN — “While tolls are a sensible method of financing new road and bridge construction, the blanket tolling of existing roads is an extreme idea,” Patrick Dixon, chair of the Texas Libertarian Party said last week. “The problems include double taxation, toll rates set by political forces instead of actual user benefits, and decision making by unelected bodies.”

Dixon pointed out that, contrary to official claims, sufficient revenue exists from gas taxes to expand and maintain our state highway network. “The problem arises with Democrats and Republicans in the statehouse, the Congress and bloated bureaucracies who spend gas tax dollars on wasteful projects like Boston’s ‘Big Dig’ or billion dollar bridges to nowhere in Alaska” Dixon explained.

“Politicians pandering to special in-

terests have also diverted money into non-roads programs like public transit and bike trails. That’s why we see congestion and gridlock.”

Dixon acknowledges that transportation issues present a vexing problem. “Government has created a situation where competitive solutions are not viable,” he admitted. “One alternative to Regional Mobility Authorities is to have new roads built by private interests (land owners) who are then reimbursed by TxDOT for all gas taxes generated by the road’s users, for a period of time.”

“But the Trans-Texas Corridor is a scar across Texas,” Dixon added. “It will divide counties, drain the State Highway Fund and ultimately fail. We need practical solutions, not grandiose visions.”

House Bill 3588 permits Perry to take more than 20% of the State Highway

Fund for TTC. “That would cripple urban areas with urgent needs,” said Vice Chair Nancy Neale. “Our Highway funds are already being looted for other uses.”

The State Libertarian Executive Committee voted for a resolution recently that condemns Rick Perry’s road financing plans as embodied in House Bill 3588. It also states that any toll projects undertaken should be approved by voters.

“Ideally, we want a situation where the people that use a resource are the ones that pay for it,” said Dixon. “We would like to encourage a market condition where the Laredo bypass, a privately developed and operated freeway, is viable. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Authority is a long standing example of a self-funding freeway project. Let’s start thinking outside the ‘tax and spend’ box and provide real solutions.”



Members of TxDOT have been holding meetings throughout Texas explaining the merits of the Trans-Texas Corridor.

Edwards Secures \$7 Million For Waco Transportation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Representative Chet Edwards announced last week that legislation that would provide \$284 billion in federal highway, transit, and road safety projects through 2009 was overwhelmingly approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Wednesday. The bill contains \$7 million added by Edwards for highway and road improvements in McLennan County.

“I appreciate Transportation Committee ranking member Jim Oberstar supporting me in my requests for our district transportation projects,” said Edwards. “These transportation projects are crucial for the safety of our citizens, continued economic growth, and easing congestion” said Edwards, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. “Transportation projects create jobs today through construction and they create jobs tomorrow because transportation infrastructure attracts new business to the region.”

Funding secured for McLennan County projects includes:

- \$3 million for Ritchie Road from FM

1695 to US 84, Waco — This facility will provide a four lane divided urban arterial parallel to FM 1695 in order to alleviate traffic congestion along FM 1695.

- \$2 million to widen FM 1637 from FM 3051 to FM 185 — This facility proposed four lane divided will serve the rapidly growing residential and retail development by enhancing safety, increasing mobility, and relieving congestion. Because of China Springs’ recent growth, road improvements are needed to allow for continued growth in the region.

- \$2 million to Construct Loop 574 from Business 77 to I-35 in McLennan County — Key objective is to construct the last segment necessary to create Business Highway 6 to provide improved access from southeastern McLennan County to downtown Waco, Cameron Park and Zoo, Waco Regional Airport, and the southeastern portion of the Brazos River corridor.

The City of Waco was pleased to hear that Edwards’ funding requests for the area were honored in the bill.

“The federal funds Waco will receive have been made possible by the dedi-

ated efforts of Congressman Edwards and will go toward projects throughout McLennan County that, when completed, will alleviate traffic congestion and promote economic development for our citizens,” said Waco city manager Larry Groth. “We are extremely glad to see transportation dollars coming to Waco during such a tough legislative session.”

Yousry Zakhary, Woodway city manager said, “This project in Woodway is important to our future growth as well as the surrounding area. The expansion of Ritchie Rd. will serve a rapidly growing residential area and aid in relieving increasing traffic congestion along FM 1695 (Hewitt Dr.) while improving safety in the area. In the past few weeks we have seen another accident on that narrow stretch of road and this road project will certainly help to reduce the number of traffic accidents.”

The bill will go to the House floor next week for passage before heading to the Senate. The annual 2006 Transportation bill, a separate measure, is scheduled to pass later this year.

Alliance Kicks Off To Create Dept. Of Peace

CONCORD, Mass. — Congressman James McGovern (D-Mass.) last Saturday talked about his support for legislation to establish a Cabinet Level U.S. Department of Peace at First Parish in Concord. As one of the 54 co-sponsors of H.R.1673, a bill submitted by Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich in 2001 and 2003, Congressman McGovern will speak on the importance of this legislation.

The department, with funding at two percent of the Department of Defense budget, would focus on non-military peaceful conflict resolutions, prevent violence, and promote justice and democratic principles to

expand human rights.

Domestically, the department would be responsible for developing policies which address issues such as domestic violence, child abuse, mistreatment of the elderly, and other issues of cultural violence. Internationally, the department would gather research, analyze foreign policy, and make recommendations to the President on how to address the root causes of war and intervene before violence begins, while improving national security, including the protection of human rights and the prevention and de-escalation of unarmed and armed international conflict.

Additional endorsers of this event

included First Parish Concord Social Action, Grass Roots Action for Peace, First Parish Denominational Affairs Committee, UU Women & Religion, Mass Bay District, and The Concord-Carlisle League of Women Voters.

Additional information about this legislation and ways that you can help can be found at (www.dopcampaign.org).

For further information on attending this event or other supporting activities surrounding this bill, please contact Dave Dunn at (djkcdunn@earthlink.net), Carol Dwyer at (dwyerjandc@aol.com), or Pat Simon at (psimon@gis.net).

School Finance Bill Drafted By House Committee

AUSTIN — The House Public Education Committee last week approved a school finance reform bill that would increase funding \$1.5 billion a year, while cutting the school property tax by a third. The measure was expected to go before the entire house this week for debate and alteration.

The measure offered by Rep. Kent Grusendorf, R-Arlington, passed on a partisan 6-3 vote, with the committee’s three Democrats opposed to it, would have businesses pay the salary based tax on every employee, with a cap of \$880 per year on salaries of \$80,000 and higher.

Included in the package is a merit-pay system for teachers, an overhaul of the student assessment program involving online state examinations, and a measure to require all school districts to start classes after Labor Day.

Also being considered, to offset the reduction in property taxes, are proposals to increase the state sales tax, along with a \$1 per-pack increase in the cigarette tax and an increase in the gasoline tax.

Democratic critics of the proposed bill say that the increased money raised will be nominal, with one form of taxation simply being replaced with another. Too, they argued that a disproportionate amount of state funds will assist

Continued On Page 15

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Two Groups Sue Rumsfeld On Alleged Civil Rights Violations

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights First filed suit Tuesday in federal district court against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Illinois on behalf of eight former detainees who said they were severely tortured in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Pentagon had no immediate comment, representatives said.

The suit cites an order Rumsfeld signed on Dec. 2, 2002, authorizing new interrogation techniques for

“war on terrorism” detainees at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, such as “stress positions,” hooding, 20-hour interrogations, removal of clothing, exploiting phobias to induce stress, prolonged isolation, and sensory deprivation.

The suit alleges that as substantial evidence of torture became available, Rumsfeld ignored it, allowing the inhumane acts to continue.

Willing to come to the United States to testify, the plaintiffs — four Afghan

citizens and four Iraqis — said that they want the court to declare Rumsfeld’s actions unconstitutional and a violation of U.S. and international law. They are also seeking monetary damages for their injuries.

An international scandal erupted last year after pictures appeared showing sexual abuse of men at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The Bush administration contends that only a few “bad apples” in the lower ranks com-

mitted dubious actions.

Efforts to charge senior officers and administration officials in the abuse of detainees have not proceeded very far, despite other cases that were brought against soldiers in the Middle East and abroad.

By a panel appointed by Rumsfeld, an August 2004 report stated that he and other top Pentagon leaders helped to create the abusive environment at Abu Ghraib.

— Reuters contributed to this report.



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**Trade To Be Topic
At Bush Ranch,
Baylor March 23**

CRAWFORD — The Western White House and Baylor University will be the site of meetings when President Bush hosts leaders from Mexico and Canada on March 23.

Topics will include trade among the countries and border security.

Invited are Mexican President Vicente Fox and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin.

A work session at Baylor University will be followed with lunch, hosted by Bush, at his ranch near Crawford.

**DSL Now Available
In Crawford Area
Through Valor Telecom**

CRAWFORD — Valor Telecom recently said that it now carries high-speed digital subscriber line (DSL) Internet service for business and residential consumers in Crawford. This service is 50 times faster than standard dial-up service, representatives said.

"We are excited about offering enhanced, high-speed Internet access to our customers in Crawford and providing quality telecommunications products," said Mike Estill, local area manager for Valor operations.

Valor is offering this service with a special introductory price of \$24.95 per month, plus a free DSL modem and activation with a 12-month service agreement. With DSL "always-on" service, customers are able to surf online and talk on the phone at the same time, as well as around the clock technical support and installation within five business days.

For more information, contact Crawford's local Valor technician or representative toll free.

INFO

Office, (866) 329-4375.



A Nice Ring To It!

'C' IS FOR CHAMPIONS — Crawford (16-0) defeated Troup at Birdville, 28-14, to attain the 2-A State Championship Title on Dec. 18, 2004. Rings like the one pictured above were presented to the team members at a recent ceremony in the high school gym.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

CHAMPIONSHIP RINGS were recently given to the seniors on the 2004 Crawford High School Varsity Football Team (16-0) at a ceremony in the high school gym.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

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Ellis, Lucio Call For Emergency Status On Legislation To Ban Execution Of Juveniles, Life Without Parole

Status Would Mean Rapid Passage Of SB 226, SB 60

AUSTIN — Senator Rodney Ellis (D-Houston) and Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr (D-Brownsville) have called on Governor Rick Perry to designate emergency status to the two bills, SB 226, banning the execution of juvenile offenders, and SB 60, creating a “life without parole” option for Texas juries in capital cases. An emergency designation would allow the Texas Legislature to consider these bills on a fast track basis.

“Until this week, America stood alone in executing juveniles, and Texas was at the front of the line,” said Ellis. “As the state most affected by the Supreme Court’s ruling, I believe Texas cannot be passive in its reaction. We should take a positive, proactive step and pass legislation codifying the ruling into Texas law. The immediate passage of this legislation will display that Texas intends to uphold the rule of law. It is the law of the United States and simply the right thing to do.”

This week, the Court held in *Roper vs. Simmons* that sentencing juvenile offenders to death is cruel and unusual punishment and violates the Eighth Amendment. SB 226 would bring Texas into compliance with the Court’s ruling by prohibiting the imposition of the death penalty on any defendant less than 18-years of age at the time of the offense. Senator Ellis has long advocated this criminal justice reform, filing legislation, SB 218, in 2003.

“The Court’s ruling also brings to light one of the major defects in our punishment system: the lack of a life without parole option in Texas,” said Lucio. “Essentially, Texas juries will now only have one option when sentencing a juvenile in capital crimes cases: life with the possibility of parole. With the law as it is right now, this means that young persons who commit these terrible crimes are guaranteed to someday walk the streets again.”

“SB 60 does not diminish my support for the death penalty, but as this ruling proves neither the death penalty nor life with the possibility of parole provide certainty to the families of victims — only life without parole guarantees that an these offenders will stay behind bars. Forty-six other states give juries this option and so should Texans. I have complete faith in Texas juries and I believe we should give them the full range of options when deciding the severest of punishments,” Lucio added.

Texas has been the leading state when it comes to handing out — and carrying out — death sentences for juvenile offenders. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, Texas has carried out 13 of the 22 executions of juvenile offenders, nearly 60 percent of all such executions in America. There are currently 29 inmates on Texas Death Row who were juveniles when sentenced. According to Amnesty International, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States are the only nations believed to have carried out death sentences for juveniles since 1990, yet each of those nations has either abolished capital punishment for juveniles or has publicly disavowed the practice.

“I support the death penalty, but I believe we should implement it a little more fairly and a little less indiscriminately,” said Ellis. “For those who disagree, no one is talking about not holding juvenile offenders responsible for their actions. For the worst offenders, we are saying we should lock them up and throw away the key, but reserve the ultimate penalty is reserved for adults. It is more humane, more consistent, and now it is the law of the land.”

Regarding SB 60 and the Court’s ruling, Lucio noted, “It is now time, more than ever, to pass this important piece of legislation. Now, more than ever, the safety of the citizens of this state demands this. We have one choice left to make. Are we going to allow persons who Texas juries would previously sentence to death to be eligible for parole one day or are we going to lock those people up and keep them away from our community forever?”

Worst Disaster In East Texas Being Told In Johnson Play

NACOGDOCHES — The story of the worst disaster East Texas ever suffered is being told in a play written by a Texas historian with a personal tie to the tragedy.

“East Texas Remembers. . . A Texas Tragedy” is based on the horrific 1937 explosion of New London’s junior-senior high school, which killed more than 300 people, mostly students. It will premiere April 1-3 and April 8-10 at Lamp-Lite Theatre in Nacogdoches.

The play is the culmination of decades of research by Dr. Bobby H. Johnson, a history professor at Stephen F. Austin State University. It is a fictional account of the disaster drawn from historical records, newspaper accounts and Dr. Johnson’s extensive oral history interviews.

The historian and playwright lived with his family in New London at the time of the explosion, but he was too young to remember the disaster itself. He did, however, come to understand the devastating emotional toll the disaster took on local residents, including his father who assisted with the emergency response and recovery.

The explosion at the state-of-the-art school in oil-rich northwest Rusk County occurred shortly after 3 p.m. on March 18, 1937, when a spark ignited natural gas that had silently seeped into the building and become trapped. Witnesses said the building was literally lifted into the air by the force of the explosion before it blew apart and smashed to the ground.

Mary Lou Taylor, who now lives in Jack-sonville, was sitting in a seventh-grade

math class at the New London school when it exploded. She said she is pleased that a play has been written about the event, which so deeply affected her personally and East Texas as a whole.

“I think it’s very good because it’s not in history books like it should be, and maybe this will bring it to the front so people can understand what happened to us,” Taylor said. “We all need to remember.”

Lamp-Lite Theatre’s founding/managing/artistic director Sarah McMullan said the timing for the play seems right.

“This is a piece of Texas history that is important to everyone who lives here, and I think enough time has elapsed that it can be put into a historical context and not be depressing so much as meaningful,” she said.

About two dozen Lamp-Lite Players of all ages will be involved in the production McMullan said promises to be “tremendously moving.” Dr. Johnson will have a small singing part in the two-act play, which incorporates traditional Christian hymns.

“A Texas Tragedy” is the third in a series of plays about East Texas written by Dr. Johnson. The first two, “East Texas Remembers” and “East Texas Remembers World War II,” were presented as stage adaptations of oral history interviews conducted by the author during the past 35 years.

For performance times and ticket prices, call Lamp-Lite Theatre at 936-564-8300. For information on other events and attractions in Nacogdoches, call the Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-888-OLDESTTOWN or log onto <www.visitnacogdoches.org>.

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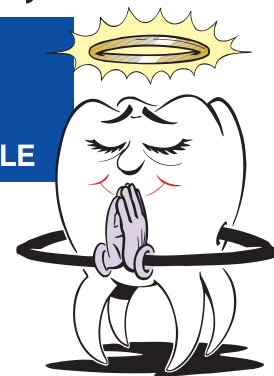
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AUSTIN — On March 18, Texas will join more than 33 other states that require most dairy cows and dairy bulls to have a negative test for cattle tuberculosis (TB) within 60 days before entering the state. Young dairy heifers and bull calves hauled to Texas will have to be officially identified with an ear tag and will be restricted at a designated facility until they test negative for TB at six months of age. With 807 registered dairies, Texas ranks among the top 10 states in the nation for dairy cattle and milk production. Nearly 62,000 dairy replacement animals entered the state in 2004.

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Sculptors Dominion Hosting Large-Scale Show In San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO — The Sculptors Dominion, a Texas non-profit cultural organization, will open its third annual outdoor large-scale invitational sculpture show entitled "Magnificent" from April 16 through May 22.

The event will be held at the Villa del Carmen residence (former residence of Texas Secretary of State Roy R. Barrera, Sr. and Carmen Z. Berrera) at 11356 Vance Johnson (between Wurzbach and Huebner) and is open Saturdays and Sundays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and each Thursday night with a lighted show from 6 to 9 p.m. The opening night gala will be held Thursday, April 14, from 7 to 10 p.m.

Featured will be the works of over 60 sculptors from several states, Mexico, and other countries, showing up to 120 sculptures, which the sponsors deem as providing awesome photo opportunities.

All the sculptures are expensive and are for sale to private, public, and corporate patrons. To locate a map to the event, log on to <<http://www.sculptorsdominion.com/directions.htm>> in San Antonio.

This Invitational was formed to distinctively exhibit career professional large scale outdoor sculpture in a spacious and beautifully landscaped seven-acre Salon atmosphere. This concept offers the community and patrons a culturally rich art experience that includes the flavor of an international embrace.

Admission is \$10, except opening



Rhino by Julia

night it is \$25. All proceeds pay the bills and are used to maintain the show and newly forming sculpture school.

The Sculptors Dominion offers a large scale outdoor show and has a sculpture school, gallery, and guild under development set to open April of 2006. The show is financed out of the credit cards of its sculptor founder Gilbert E Barrera and the support of his father's law firm Nicholas & Barrera of San Antonio. There have been two invitational shows that thus far have grossed around \$100,000 in sales of about 55 key sculptures.

On the website are over 1000 photos of sculptures from both shows representing some 150 sculptors from several states and Mexico. Barrera has also toured some 2000 school children and their teachers and chaperons.



Pegasus by Doberfuhl

2005 can be seen on the website. Some of them are Johannes Eyfells of Iceland, Mircea Tocaci or Romania, James Muir, Woitena, Priour, Van Vranken and Hair of the United States, Benini of Italy, Alvarado of Mexico and many more. Plus there will be a special re-showing of John Houser's 14 foot monumental Andalusian horse portrait from his colossal 36 foot full figure Horse of the Southwest. The range of styles is from modern abstract to contemporary stylistic to classical figurative which include the themes of traditional and dramatic and allegory all the way to humorous and the very weird. The patron will see materials of bronze, glass, granite, ceramic, limestone, wood, welded/painted metal, marble, fiberglass, cement, volcanic stone, and other contemporary resins.

Rovics To Perform March 11 In Waco

WACO — Hosted by Waco Friends of Peace, singer/songwriter David Rovics will perform for one night of his Texas tour on Friday, March 11, at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Waco.

Touted as the Pete Seeger of today, Rovics has performed world wide, writes his own songs and has a large following among progressives. It is said that Rovics inspires even Howard Zinn who who said of him, "An artist with a social conscience is to be cherished."

To read his lyrics, visit his website (www.davidrovics.com).

Movie Screening

Friends of Peace will also host a screening of *Is Walmart Good for America?*, a film produced by PBS Frontline. A discussion centered on "The Economics of Peace" will follow the film at Waco Central Library, 1717 Austin Avenue, downstairs, on Tuesday, March 15, at p.m. Snacks served at 5:30 p.m. For more information, contact Boyce Vardiman.

INFO



Horse by Houser



Aphrodite by Barrera

The websites of the participating sculptors are also kept as a diary of each show. Last years show of 2004 has a slideshow in PowerPoint of each sculptors portrait and some of their works and achievements. The opening of 2004 featured a live bronze pour by Vince Villafranca, foundry man and sculptor.

This year up to 10 sculptors from Texas, Mexico, the U.S., and Romania will demonstrate on opening weekend and or build a sculpture over the duration of the six weekend show.

All of the participating sculptors of



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Top-10 Spring Break Cities Revealed

March 2005 (Newstream) — Travel experts say this year's most popular spring break destinations are the usual suspects. Hot weather and cool nightlife are the two overriding factors involved in the city's popularity. This year's picks for students and others planning a winter escape come as no big surprise.

According to VacationSpot.com, the top destinations for Spring Break 2005 are:

- * Daytona Beach
 - * Honolulu
 - * Cancun
 - * Las Vegas
 - * Miami
 - * New Orleans
 - * Orlando
 - * Phoenix/Scottsdale
 - * San Diego
 - * Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater Beaches
- Many of these destinations have great bargains

right now and surfing the web for fun in the sun isn't a bad idea. But families searching for accommodations this Spring Break should look no further than <www.VacationSpot.com>, a resource for booking vacation rentals on the Internet. The new website, which launched Jan. 24, and is powered by Hotels.com, features thousands of vacation rental properties including condominiums, suites, villas and vacation homes, suited for families and groups at a fraction of the cost per person of traditional lodging.

Travel experts say rental properties offer consumers more for their money and now that these properties can be booked online, finding and booking them is as simple as a click of the mouse. VacationSpot.com is the first website that lets people instantly check availability, review photos, property descriptions, and quality ratings, and choose and book from thousands of vacation rental properties in the most popular worldwide destinations.



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Defending the Silence of the Seas

Imagine you are walking downtown with the two kids in tow. It's Saturday afternoon. The streets are bustling with people. Suddenly, The Noise, louder than anything you've ever heard, blasts your attention. It sounds like the pulsing pressure of a motorcycle, grating like a car alarm, with the intensity of a foghorn blasting right into your ears. What the? It's so LOUD! Gotta get away. Where is it coming from? People on the street are running every which way, hands glued to their ears, eyes squinting with pain. Not that way. Not there. Try inside the building. Where's Susie? You look down at her terrified face. Blood is trickling from her ears. Her eyes are about to explode. You can't bend down to carry her because your hands are locked over your ears. It doesn't help. The Noise is blaring inside your head. You head into the building. The pulsing. The grating. Machine guns are shooting into your ears. People are falling over each other. You can't hear their screams. You only feel the pulsing pain. And the warm blood running down your neck.

A horror something like this happens to the intelligent animals that live in the sea, whales and dolphins, when the U.S. Navy activates its hyper-loud, under-water sound blaster called Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS) Low Frequency Active (LFA) sonar. The Navy's LFA sonar blasts The Noise so loudly that whale ear drums break, their sinuses explode, blood hemorrhages in their brains and lungs. In March, 2000, immediately after a Navy LFA sonar test in the Bahamas, fourteen whales ended up "stranded"; their dead bodies washed up on the sand. Biologists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute examined them and observed the tissue damage. The Navy's test blared The Noise at 195 decibels (dB). LFA sonar's full operating volume of 240 dB is 20,000 times LOUDER.

Under the sea, sunlight dims quickly. Deeper than 100 ft., little can be seen. Whales and dolphins use sound to find food, to evade danger, to watch over their young, to communicate with their mates, and to keep their group together as they swim on their migrations. Their sense of hearing is highly developed and very sensitive. They can hear much better than humans, and like bats, they use sound echoes to locate prey and each other. While we use sight to orient ourselves, to know where we are and to communicate, whales and dolphins use hearing. Caught within the radius of The Noise, sea mammals get disoriented. They can't hear, they can't see, they don't know where they are, or which way is up. They lose their young. Those not killed from tissue damage starve from deafness.

As sound travels outward from its source, it attenuates. Yet, even at distances between 100 to 200 miles from the LFA, where the 240 dB Noise diminishes to "only" 160 dB, severe tissue damage still occurs in sea mammals. Deafness, disorientation, and other dysfunctions occur wherever The Noise is louder than 120 dB, more than 1,000 miles from the LFA source.

Why is the Navy sound-blasting the silent seas? Navy documents claim they need loud, "active" sonar to detect enemy submarines over long distances. But Rear Admiral Malcolm Fages has pointed out that passive (silent) listening systems are more effective. Former Director of the U.S. Naval Weapons Lab, Dr. Charles Bernard, says that active sonar identifies the source

By BRUCE JOFFE
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION CONSULTANT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD

vessel and highlights our own submarines as well as enemy subs, thereby placing our own personnel in jeopardy. LFA would alert an enemy to our intention to track them. It would give them warning to take evasive action.

Others have said that the Navy needs active sonar to communicate with our deep-water nuclear subs. Normally, these fully-loaded behemoths deploy large, floating antennas to pick up low-frequency radio waves in order to know whether to launch their nukes and go to war. But when they are in "stealth" mode, deep under water where radio waves don't penetrate, only sound messages travel through the dark ocean's depths. So, to control our nuclear arsenal, the Navy must send sound signals to its subs. The LFA hyper-loud speakers are being deployed to reach them wherever they may be, The death and injury of thousands of creatures is considered unfortunate, unavoidable, collateral damage.

A strange thing happens to sound deep under the sea. Within the first 400 to 500 feet, wave action and warming from the sun keep the water turbulent. Below the turbulent surface area lies a stable layer of deep water called the isothermal sound channel, capable of conveying sound over thousands of miles with little attenuation. Eons ago, whales discovered this and use it for navigation and long distance communication. When the Navy's LFA sonar is fully deployed, 80 % of the world's ocean could be polluted with sound. Sound so loud, according to the Marine Mammal Commission's 1997 report to Congress, that uncountable numbers of living creatures will die. What will happen to the ecology of the ocean? What will happen to our source of seafood? What will happen to us, if we allow such pain and suffering to be unleashed upon other feeling beings? Will we still be able to call ourselves human? Or will we become "golem," soul-less creatures in human shape?

"National security," "homeland security," "protection from terrorists," these are the magic mantras that fuel the Navy's single-minded quest to wire up the seas like a huge loudspeaker. So focused are they on this one technology that their response to thousands of objections to the Navy's Environmental Impact Statement on deploying SURTASS-LFA has been to seek exemption from the environmental review process. Undeterred that the LFA technology is not as effective, and also more dangerous, than passive sonar, the Navy has not seriously looked at alternative technologies. There are other ways to communicate with our hidden nuclear submarines. Effective methods exist that would not damage and possibly destroy nearly all sound-sensitive sea creatures.

One such alternative is the use of Local Acoustic Transducers (LATs). These are relatively inexpensive, floating devices that contain radio receivers and low-level acoustic transducers (speakers). When the Navy needs to communicate with a particular sub, a coded message could be sent via satellite to the floating radio buoys. Only the buoys nearest the specific sub would activate its sonar transducers. Being closer to the sub, its sound would not need to be as loud as the LFA sonar. Being specifically activated, the total amount of noise in the sea

would be greatly reduced, and the sea animals and fish would be spared suffering a horrible death. Inexpensive buoys could be anchored to the sea floor, and be regularly replaced if they were dislodged. Highly sensitive microphones on the subs would enable them to receive communications within a range of several hundred miles from each floating LAT. Enough LATs could be deployed so that each sub would be within range of two or three LATs to assure accurate communication.

Perhaps even better technologies are possible as well. But none will be explored unless the Navy is stopped from deploying URTASS-LF sonar. Funds for this

deadly program (over \$ 350 million has already been spent) should be re-assigned to other methods. Our Senators and Congress representatives need to know that we are concerned and opposed to the Navy's sonic blasters. Gordon England, Secretary of the Navy, and Donna Weiting, Chief of the National Marine Fisheries Service, as well as President Bush and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld need to know that destruction of the silent sea and most of the ocean's life is not a viable option for living on Earth.

Bruce Joffe, founding Principal of GIS Consultants in Oakland, CA, provides geographic information planning, management, and public policy services to public agencies. <GIS.Consultants@joffes.com >.

Editorial OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

CONFLICT AT THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Will Public Debt Dictate Foreign Policy?

Mixed, ambiguous messages from the White House are doing nothing to assuage a potential civil war between two countries that are commonly thought to be one — China.

What divides the People's Republic of China and the island of Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China) is the 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait.

What divides the citizens of the two regions are their forms of government. The mainland's Stalinist People's Republic of China is communist, under rule of a dictator who stays in power by utilizing repressive police state tactics, while Taiwan is a democracy, complete with strongly contested parliamentary elections and freedoms similar to those in the United States.

At issue are two proposed initiatives:

Many in Taiwan want to declare themselves an independent democracy and exercise the right to control their own destiny, while the People's Republic is taking action to approve anti-separation legislation, to unite the two sections under rule of the mainland.

Since 1949, the two have been separate entities, with no jurisdictions over each other. However, the anti-separation legislation, according to Taiwan officials, would result in any future action toward separation subject to punishment and would make mainland China the sole arbiter in the settlement of any disputes between the two and could give mainland China sole authority over enforcement of law.

Of great concern to the Taiwanese is that the legislation would openly allow the use of mainland forces against Taiwan at a time when the People's Republic is undergoing a massive build-up of its military capabilities with 500 missiles trained on Taiwan, while demonstrating increased nationalism, a pretext for military action.

The United States, for decades, has considered the regions "one China," but now finds itself caught in the middle, attempting to decide who to support. The U.S. has been involved in major arms sales to Taiwan and President Bush had earlier pledged that he would do "whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself."

He now says, "We don't support Taiwan moving toward independence."

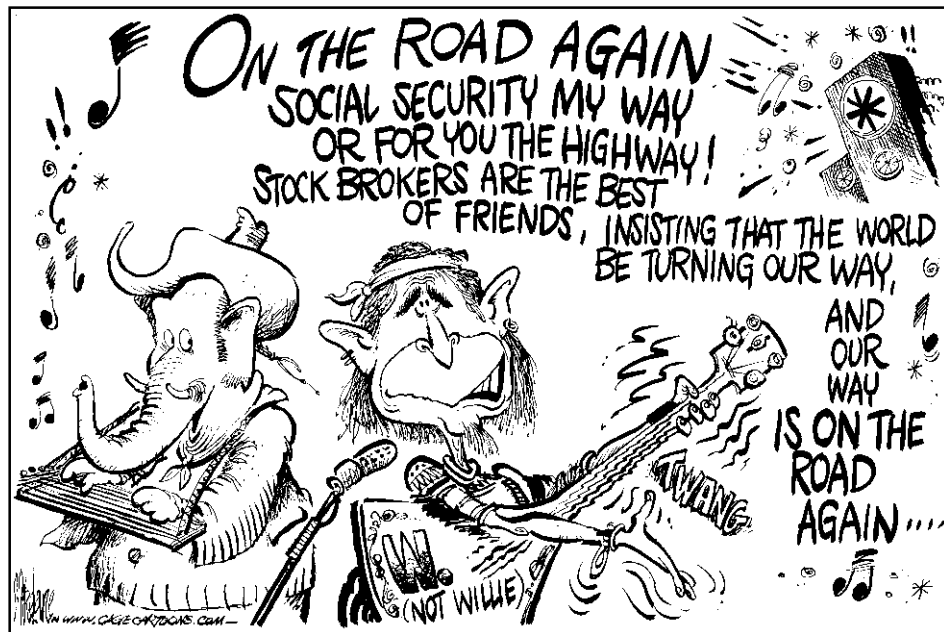
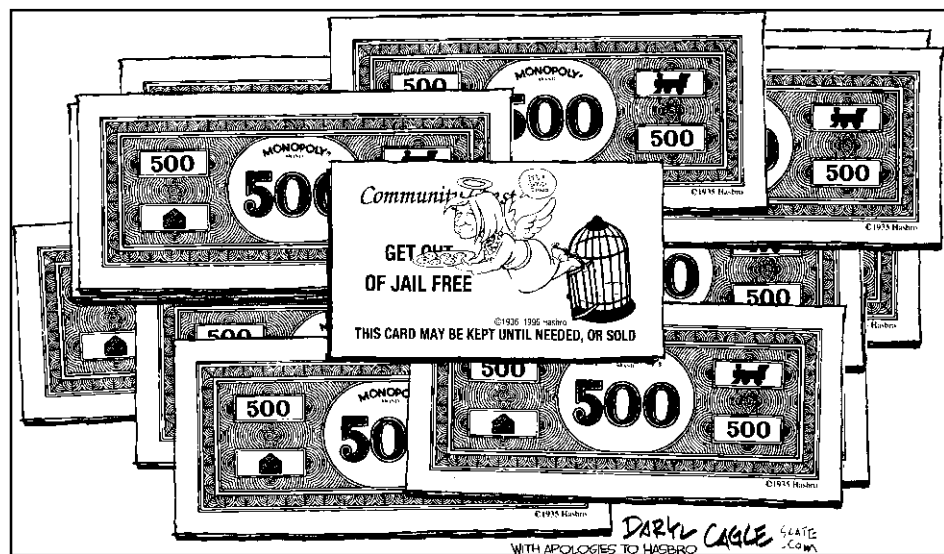
Last week, China's foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, warned the United States: "Any practice of putting Taiwan directly or indirectly into the scope of Japan-U.S. security cooperation constitutes an encroachment on China's sovereignty and interference into China's internal affairs."

Too, China is holder of much of the United States' deep financial indebtedness.

The question is: "Does the United States support a communist dictatorship or does it support the independence of a democracy?" — Does it do neither, or does it do both. That is the bark upon which Bush's muddled message chews.

Since the 1990s, the United States has held to the Taiwan democracy theory, but to bow to China would be a break from this. We have been playing both sides. It appears now that the power, and our debt, rests with the communist regime.

— Written By W. Leon Smith



Greasy's Robbing Hoodlum Plan

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If you want some money, get a gun. If you want to be rich, get elected."

Welcome to the wonderful world of state income tax.

It was introduced in the Texas House this week, thanks to Rep. Kent "Greasy" Grusendorf, the Osama bin Laden of Texas education.

His idea of education finance is the Robbing Hoodlum plan: Rob from the poor and give to nobody.

And square in the path of his green tights and swashbuckled swinging vine is your paycheck.

Hey, if you don't draw a paycheck, you sure ain't reading *this* column!

Grusendorf, who heads the House Uneducated Committee, is a typical Texas Legislative Sleazycratitan (a Republican who 10 years ago would have been a Democrat, but is protected from partisanship by a naturally thick coating of political slime).

He got rich selling crap to the government, then bought himself a House seat in Arlington, the original White-flight suburb and home to the consistently worst player trades in baseball.

Greasy is promoting the Wal-Mart approach to Texas education finance: cheap is good, scam is better, and quality is entirely optional.

Taxation by Grusendorf is like a drug: Property owners may get relief, but big business gets high. Instead of paying taxes on income, companies get to charge their taxes to their employees.

Your payroll deduction will be somewhere between \$500 and \$880.

That is, if you make more than 80 grand, you'll only have to pay the double-eight-oh.

You common people will have to foot the bill for the CEO.

Of course Greasy and his coupon-clipping constituency will pay nothing.

Well, not exactly. In fact, they will pay less than nothing. They get a property tax break on the mansion, remember?

But you ordinary people will still be able to drive by and dream about winning the lottery as you gaze across.

Except in gated communities, of course.

And you won't be driving a new car; there's a one percent sales tax increase on auto sales. That's another \$200 bucks or so, if you don't smoke and don't buy anything but food.

Greasy wants to increase all sales taxes.

Oh, and gasoline. More tax on that, too.

So maybe you won't be driving by after all.

Speaking of the lottery, wasn't it supposed to go to education?

The Greasyites complained about lottery money and education loud enough, until they got into office and promptly forgot.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



Small businesses will also experience serious side effects from Greasy's tax dope; more internal bleeding than even their employees.

Most small operations are constantly at payroll capacity; that is, they are paying as many employees as they can afford as much as they can afford. Most are specialty businesses and can't handle the expense of a lot of turnover. This tax will simply come out of their pockets and soak up any new production earnings.

In other words, if you work for a small business, Greasy Grusendorf just spent your next raise.

And don't expect any new help or better equipment.

Just tell your wife's cousin to apply somewhere else, then break out the duct tape and bailing wire.

You ain't getting a new drill press. Of course the boss won't have to pay as much tax on the old one.

Which will probably just about cover his accounting expenses to keep up with this new tax scam.

Oh, and since this is not technically a payroll tax — Greasy is calling it a "franchise tax" — it won't be deductible from your federal income tax.

Funny thing is, by Greasy's own admission, this won't add any money to Texas' already under-funded schools.

Now, here's the punch line: Greasy sez schools can make up the difference by reducing administrative costs.

Yuck it up! Sleazeballs like him pass a diaper load of "accountability" laws that bury schools in paperwork, then say administrative costs are too high.

Ain't that hysterical? What a clown!

Right now, the average Texas public school uses up the equivalent of five pounds of paper per student just in record-keeping from first grade to the *Pomp and Circumstance* stroll.

If he or she is failing state tests, handicapped, special ed or a behavior problem, quadruple that.

But all that data isn't for the school's benefit; they know who their kids are and where their problems lie.

Those records are for Greasy and the boys' down at the statehouse, you know, so that at election time, they can stomp around their home districts talking about how they're going to reform education. If it kills us.

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The Mouse Wars Continue

I'm still fighting the mouse wars. Yes, I'm publicly admitting it — so those others of you who are in the same boat won't feel so bad. It happens to all of us at one time or another, and is nothing to be ashamed of. It's the country.

Maybe it has something to do with this relatively mild, and very wet winter we are enjoying. I haven't had much success against the ladybugs either. I have talked to several people with the same problems, so I feel strangely better. Misery loves company.

It's funny, but like a loosely connected self-help group (with no meeting place), we all feel better when someone else admits that they have the same problem.

For weeks now I've put up as best I can with the ladybug infestation. I have picked them up and put them outside. I have relocated them to the ivy I am trying to root next to my sink. I have placed them in the tulips Zack gave me for Valentine's.

Kim must have sold dozens and dozens of the pots of tulips that weekend, rarely missing with the men who came into Keith's Ace Hardware for nuts and bolts, plumbing supplies, ammunition, etc. She'd just innocently ask if they had bought their honey (or their mother or sister or whomever) a Valentine's Day gift yet. And bingo. Even Zack succumbed, easily, I suspect. Rusty, I hope you recognize a star saleswoman when you see one! Little did Kim realize she was providing an 11th hour rescue for dozens of ladybugs, a commutation of sentence, or as it turned out, only a short reprieve.

Finally today I became exasperated enough to suck all the ladybugs up into a small, hand held vacuum cleaner. I rationalized this move by telling myself that they don't seem to live all that long inside the house anyway, and perhaps they will be happier during their last days, as a group, in the vacuum bag. And they possibly might find more food there than in the kitchen. Am I the only one who has noticed that they seem to die with their wings out? Is this some sort of death throe ladybug thing or what?

The mouse problem hasn't had a happy ending either. I was running my traps quite successfully for a while, but then things went downhill. You would think that at this point in the operation, I would have trapped every mouse within a five-state radius. But no.

They just aren't getting trapped any longer, although there is evidence that they are around. I have two theories. The mice might be getting smarter and learning to avoid the sticky traps that were so effective initially. Or when the weather is colder, it is possible that the sticky stuff simply isn't so sticky.

I'm thinking that these mice are pretty tiny and light. I mean, it is possible (as well as disgusting) that we could be on our second or third generation of baby mice within the last couple of months. It is possible that they are so small that they can walk right onto a sticky trap and not get stuck. My only hope now may be to fatten them up on their meal of choice, the readily available cat food, and get them heavy enough to sink into the goo on the traps. How sick is this plan? I'm feeding out mice.

The two resident cats are no help at all. I am totally ashamed of them.

I switched to "real" traps, the kind that can break your finger. I hate them. Different people have given me advice on bait. Jamie swears by peanut butter. Robin recommends chocolate chips.

Rustic Ramblings

By Gene Ellis



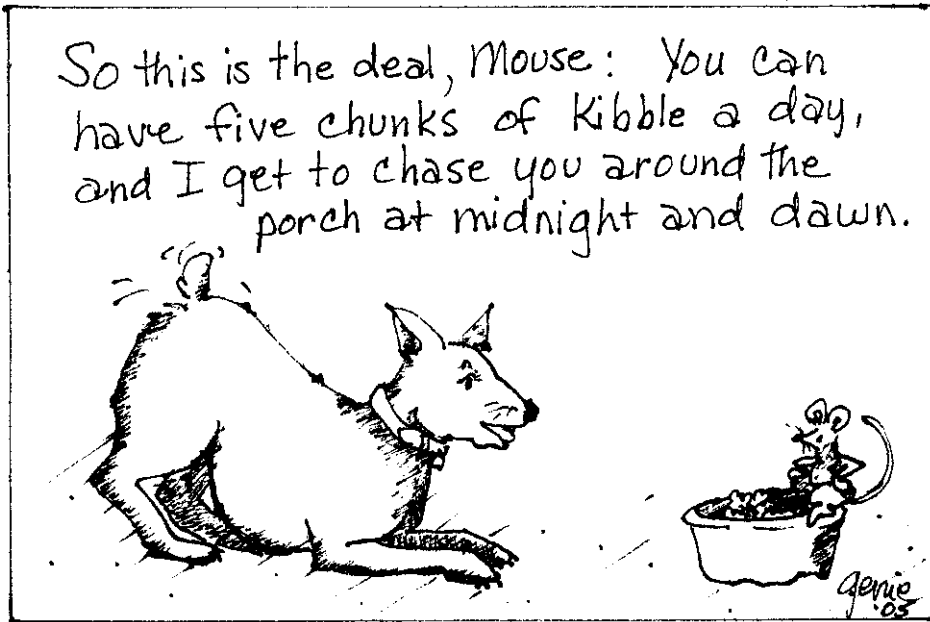
Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

Just to be on the safe side, I used both, sort of a Reece's Peanut Butter Cup for rodents. All I have caught so far is one sticky trap that was sitting near a snap trap.

We did hear another trap pop this afternoon. When I put the flashlight in Zack's hand, he asked, "Why did you give it to ME?" "You're the man" was the best quick answer I could come up with. ... Not that I haven't been retrieving my share of stuck mice lately. (Do all women accomplish this, as I do, wearing a rubber glove? I know at least one friend does. Don't worry, I won't. ... heh, heh, heh, RAT YOU OUT here in public). I wasn't sure I was up for seeing the results of the mouse in a "real" trap. But when Zack went to retrieve it, the whole thing was gone. Now there's a mystery for you. Go fig.

Yet another well-meaning friend suggested putting mothballs in areas where mice hide. — I knew someone once (you know who you are) who tossed mothballs under his house in an attempt to rid it of varmints. The smell was so awful that he ended up crawling under the house to retrieve all the mothballs. Not a pleasant job.

Hearing of his experience led others of us to invent an insightful method of administering the stinky remedy. I will



now pass this on to you, gentle readers, as a public service. Put the mothballs in a leg of pantyhose. Tie a long string to the pantyhose. Toss the whole thing under the house. Leave the string within reach. When the smell drives you nuts, simply pull the whole mess out. This is supposed to deter a variety of pests who favor the space under old farmhouses and other structures.

I have heard it said that no critter can stand the smell of a mothball. Sounds reasonable. I hate it myself. So I left three mothballs in strategic spots. Just three. The odor is already getting to me. And it doesn't seem to bother these mice at all. There is incriminating evidence of their continued presence all around the mothballs. So much for that sure-fire plan and the mothball lore. Am I growing super mice here or what?

Today I bought yet another kind of trap, a plastic one, but not the variety that traps the mouse live. What good is that? Does anyone really think that if you relo-

cate a mouse, it isn't going to come right back in again? The only possible use I can think of for this trap is for people who keep (and feed) live snakes for pets, another phenomenon I have never clearly understood. (Forgive me, Melanie and family, and all you other snake fanciers out there).

Oh, I get tired trying to be humane. I hate to kill anything, but draw the line at creatures like poisonous snakes, cockroaches, ants, wasps, flies, and now mice. Almost any critter that comes into the house uninvited is fair game. I just repeat my mantra before inflicting the sentence, as if that somehow exonerates me. "I TOLD you that you can't live here," are the last words they ever hear.

I'm about to the point of putting out poison. Can anyone answer a question for me please? If a mouse gets poisoned and one of my outside cats got hold of it, would the poison in the system of the mouse kill the cat? This is the only thing that is stopping me.



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The Last Message From The Alamo

Before the messenger disappeared in the pre-dawn darkness of March 3, 1836, the hollow-eyed colonel whispered, "Every morning at daybreak, I will fire a cannon as a sign that we still hold the fort, but when the cannon is heard no more, its silence will tell the Alamo has fallen."

The man to whom William Barret Travis entrusted his final appeal was by Anglo-American standards a longtime resident of Texas. John William Smith was an accidental immigrant, who came in 1826 to collect a debt and found something far more valuable — a new home.

Back in Missouri, Mrs. Smith shuddered at the thought of raising a family in the frontier environment that was the subject of such hair-raising stories. She

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



not only refused to join her husband with their two small sons but notified him by return mail that she was filing for divorce.

Maria Jesus de Carbello, a direct descendent of the Canary Islanders that settled San Antonio in 1731, healed the newcomer's broken heart. Not long after the divorce was final, the couple married.

As rebellious colonists encircled San Antonio in November 1835, Smith was arrested in a roundup of suspected sympathizers. Forced at gunpoint to drag heavy artillery pieces into position, he alertly noted the exact location of every cannon and memorized the government defenses down to the last detail.

Smith escaped from custody and shared his priceless knowledge with the insurgents. He drew an incredibly accurate map, which served as a blueprint for victory in the Battle of San Antonio.

During a routine patrol on Feb. 23, 1836, Smith and fellow scout John Sutherland were the first to lay eyes on the punitive expedition under the personal command of Santa Anna. In their hellbent-for-leather dash back to town

to sound the alarm, Sutherland's horse went down on a wet bridge and rolled over his legs.

Later that afternoon, Col. Travis dispatched Smith and his crippled companion to Gonzales to rally reinforcements. Due to the frequent stops Sutherland's painful injury required, the 70-mile ride took 30 hours.

Thirty-two volunteers were ready to leave the instant Smith and Sutherland arrived but wanted to wait for Col. James Fannin, who was expected at any moment with his formidable 400-man force. When five days passed with no sign of the indecisive Fannin, the courageous contingent decided to go on without him and asked Smith to lead the way.

The cool-headed scout calmly guided the group through enemy lines and entered the Alamo at approximately three o'clock in the morning on the first day of March. The small band from Gonzales, the only reinforcements that would ever come, raised the number of defenders to just over 180.

Forty-eight hours later, Smith again slipped out of the mission and evaded the Mexican sentries. He carried Travis' last desperate plea for aid to the independence convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos as well as farewell letters from the doomed freedom fighters to their families.

The first part of the journey was over the familiar road to the Gonzales, a route Smith knew by heart after two previous trips in little more than a week. Without a lame traveling companion to slow him down, he made excellent time.

The next leg was the 45-mile sprint to Moore's Ferry, present-day site of La Grange, on the Colorado River. From there it was another 65 miles on a very tired horse to Washington-on-the-Brazos.

After three exhausting days in the saddle, Smith reached his historic destination soon after breakfast on March 6. His delivery of Travis' defiant dispatch coincided almost to the minute with the fall of the Alamo.

At the time, however, the mud-caked rider was mercifully unaware of that ironic twist of fate. Smith stood in the corner and studied the grim faces of the delegates as Buck Travis spoke to them from the grave.

"I shall have to fight the enemy on his own terms. I will do the best I can. The victory will cost the enemy so dear, that it will be worse for him than defeat. God and Texas. Victory or Death."

Ten tumultuous months later, Smith took office as the first mayor of independent San Antonio. He served three terms before satisfied constituents elevated their favorite son to the senate of the Lone Star Republic in 1842.

In January 1852 at the age of 52, John W. Smith passed away in, of all places, Washington-on-the-Brazos. He died without leaving any permanent record of how he felt about being known as the Alamo Messenger or the thoughts that raced through his mind on that solitary ride into history.

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



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Things Have Gotten Divided

Whatever happened to Ken, Pauly, and Barney? I've been hanging and partying with these three characters since being stationed together in Germany during the mid-1970s. Two of them, Ken and Pauly, like me, hail from the Chicago area. Barney is a denizen of a small town in Southern Illinois near Carbondale, where I went to college. They're the three best friends I have in the world, more like brothers to me than my own brother.

However, since "The Great Uniter" snuck into the White House some things have gotten divided.

Ken is an all around great guy, willing to lend a hand to practically anyone for any project. Mention a little car problem or some minor carpentry project, Ken's there to help. During periods of deepest personal hardship and loss, Ken has often kept me afloat.

Two lifetimes wouldn't be enough to repay him for all he's done for me, my wife and kids.

Pauly is quite a different sort from Ken. Ken is North Side, Pauly is South Side, yet he's a die-hard Cubs fan. Maybe it was the ever-present Cubs cap that first drew me to him. Just like mine. Pauly's a big Beatles and Neil Young aficionado, too, as am I. Pauly and I also share an eclectic love and respect for music and classic movies.

At times we were so close it was almost eerie. One of us would begin a sentence, the other would finish it. We could crack each other up without even saying a word.

Unlike the rest of us Barney grew up on a farm outside a very small town. So small, in fact, that downtown consists of one intersection. By comparison, the entire population was about one fourth the size of my high school graduating class.

That's not to say Barney was a Will Stockdale (Andy Griffith in *No Time For Sergeants*).

He's always been bright, quick, and fun. Barney's gregarious, yet lives in a rather secluded area off a lake. He finds humor in occasional small bites of trouble, even to this day, but that's because he's just a self-proclaimed "good old boy." Barney likes his motorcycle, belongs to a cyclists' organization, and only uses it for good. He's got a heart as big as Texas (with a sister in Houston).

And he was best man at my wedding. Okay, so now that you've got a little background, let me fill you in on why I'm so perplexed.

Ken went to the dark side, and I cannot get him to see the light. I doubt that it's his church, because Ken's got lots of bad habits. Neither right to life nor gays is the question. Generally speaking, he doesn't really care what other people do.

Essentially, Ken does not like either of the two controlling parties because they are the two controlling parties. So, he voted for Ralph Nader in 2000. Fine. I can deal with that. It's a wasted vote, other than as a statement, albeit a silent statement. Nevertheless, it's his choice, but valueless in Illinois.

By 2004, Ken finally realized that Nader was done. So, despite his abysmal record on every conceivable issue the previous four years, Ken voted for



Out Of The Blue

By
**Jerry
Tenuto**

George W. Bush. He has yet, after six months of friendly yet spirited discourse, failed to give me a good, reasonable, solid answer why.

Because such an answer does not exist.

Ken tries to intimate that Bush is the only person who can handle: Terrorists on U.S. soil since 9/11; the action in Afghanistan; and, of course, the concocted War in Iraq. As if another administration would just stand down our defenses and open up the borders.

He truly believes those poor low-ranking Reservists and National Guard people who've been the only ones sentenced to prison for misdeeds at Abu Graib prison are actually the responsible individuals. Ken had those prisoners confused with terrorist insurgents who came along weeks after the Abu Graib incidents. I sure know a set up when I see one.

What really fries me, though, is whenever I point out that I work in the media and can sort the wheat from the chaff, Ken plays the Clinton card. This is where his logic becomes wholly illogical: I voted for Bush, and back him, because Bill Clinton had a wandering libido. Bush is moral, and Clinton is morally bankrupt.

It does no good to point out to Ken that, as a Christian, he should be far more concerned with the lack of moral fiber in someone who: slunk into the Presidency completely devoid of proper experience or vote tallies, with nowhere near a mandate from the people; invaded two sovereign nations under false pretenses, thus ordering the deaths of countless tens of thousands of innocent women, children, and men; and more.

Pauly's turn to conservatism is a little more understandable. He has angry white man syndrome. I guess it's always been simmering, but over the years it has superheated and boiled over. He never liked Dick Nixon or any other person who used his authority to subdue the little guy. It was several years ago that I noticed his sarcasm changing to anger at the world. Pauly would blame someone today for an incident that took place 40 or 50 years ago, even if that person was just a child at the time.

I can understand his frustration. However, it does no good to pull over and put in park just because the first avenue doesn't take you to your destination. Pauly originally told me the reason he became a Republican, and voted for Bush (twice), was because the Democrats who run Cook County (Illinois) raised the taxes on his home. Perhaps I'm missing something, but I fail to see the correlation between county property taxes and a Presidential election.

Pauly is probably the most acutely loyal George Harrison fan on the planet. He's also extremely intense

concerning John Lennon and Neil Young. As far as I know, he's got virtually everything ever put on vinyl, CD and tape by all three of these excellent artisans. Yet he has no response whenever I put it to him to tell me how he thinks they, especially the ultra peace-loving Harrison, would feel about Bush's policies.

There is a commonality I have noted between Ken and Pauly and the convoluted logic: Both of them listen far too much to a radio station from Chicago that used to be the only place you could hear rock and roll. Now, it is 50,000 clear channel watts of hatred, venom, innuendo and, yes, even lies, spread all over the continent 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with Rush as its centerpiece.

After sending him an e-mail about an Abu Graib prisoner being killed, Pauly responded that they should have killed them all. He refused to listen when I explained that we had invaded their country, not the other way around, and this was not a soldier or a terrorist. Pauly's whipping boy for the ills of the world and all the Liberal evils is Ted Kennedy. He really doesn't mean these things, rather it's just recitation of "chapter and verse" as passed down by AM radio talk show propagandists. If they can worm their way into the psyche of veterans who have been to Germany, visited Dachau, and what was then the East German border, imagine how they are poisoning those who are less worldly with day in and day out exposure.

Let's not forget Barney. Now, he's surrounded geographically by screwballs who consider their arsenal of weapons, caches of ammo and canned goods, and attack dogs the most important things they'll need for survival on the New Frontier. For a while, Barney was a rebel against the two-party system who voted for anybody else.

Then he took another look at the self-anointed "survivalists" he knew: None of them had women or children; most lived in squalor because all their money went toward weaponry and canned foods; they weren't going to remain mobile long because their vehicles were junks; chances were they were going to be killed in a gun battle within the first day or two after whatever "hostilities" erupted.

Barney now hangs with the old hippie types with small farms in his area, many of them musicians, and at least he enjoys his kids and life. Oh, he voted for Kerry, but try as he might can't get the sense of that through to Ken or Pauly.

We are four guys who have been through a lot for each other and with each other over the past 30 years, good and bad. Yet, the Great Uniter has managed to divide us in ways we never thought possible. My Father, curmudgeon that he can be, is quite the Liberal when it comes to politics. He and his brother disagree vociferously over the Presidency of George W. Bush. (Frankly, I was absolutely amazed at my Aunt and Uncle's extreme pro-Bush stance.) Yes, even in the Blue states Bush policies have managed to divide friends and families. But, we still love each other. Hail to the chief.

From The Desk Of



STATE
SENATOR
**KIP
AVERITT**
District 22

On Wednesday, the House Committee on Ways and Means passed HB 3, the tax component of the House school finance plan. This legislation is revenue neutral. HB 3 reduces local property taxes by creating a business payroll tax, increasing and broadening the sales tax, and increasing tobacco taxes.

Highlights of the taxes in HB 3 include:

- lowering the maintenance and operation property tax cap from the current \$1.50 to \$1.00,
- replacing the current franchise tax with a 1.1% tax on the first \$80,000 paid to employees (this would apply to all businesses in the state including sole proprietors, excluding certain non-profits),
- increasing the sales tax from the current 6.25% to 7.2%,
- increasing the sales tax on motor vehicles from the current 6.25% to 7.35%,
- expanding the sales tax base to include bottled water, motor vehicle repairs, car washes and billboard advertising, and
- increasing the cigarette tax from \$.41 to \$1.41.

HB 3 will probably be considered by the full House during the middle of next week.

As you know, HB 2, the education reform component of school finance, was passed by the House Committee on Public Education this week and is scheduled to be before the full House on Tuesday, March 8. Although it is early in the process and the House is still formulating a plan, I believe we can do far better than HB 2.

School finance is now in full swing in the House. We expect a lively debate next week on the issues addressed in the bill, and there is the possibility that a complete substitute may be offered by opponents.

As always, please feel free to contact my office with comments.

Sincerely,
Kip Averitt

School Finance Bill

...from Page 4

poorer school districts, eventually doing away with the Robin Hood system of disbursement from wealthier districts.

Passage of the bill found displeasure with various education organizations, including school boards, administrators, teachers, and others representing school districts.

Democratic legislators offered an alternative to the GOP plan, saying that their plan would offer more money for education, while extending more relief to homeowners. The Democrats' plan places a heavier burden on businesses, but raises about the same amount of

Never Had Food Poisoning? Thank A Humor Columnist

Being a journalist, I naturally have journalist friends who, whenever we get together, want to talk about (yawn) heady issues facing the nation and the world. This is done in a discussion format similar to "Meet the Press," except that our debates are often interrupted by someone's beer foaming over. Aside from that, it's just like the show on TV. As you can imagine, our exchanges get pretty heated as each of us presents an important topic of debate.



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

forced, once again, to defend my journalistic integrity by explaining the value of what I do, then underscoring it by offering to pay for everyone's beer.

Admittedly, I have it easy compared to other journalists who must worry about gathering "facts" and finding "sources" while I, on the other hand, can "make" things up without "leaving" my desk. Which isn't to say I'm not held

to the same journalistic standards as everyone else. I can't claim, for example, that dipping your head in Frito-Lay bean dip can promote hair growth similar to that of a Tibetan Mountain yak. At least, not without some kind of corroborating evidence, such as testimony from an actual mountain yak. But even then, ONLY if it happens to be from Tibet.

If I were a less responsible journalist who tried to substantiate his claim with testimony from a yak living in, say... the San Gabriel Mountains, I could open myself up to litigation from Frito-Lay, the state of California, and, quite possibly, every bald person smelling of bean dip.

The fact is, what I do comes at great personal risk. Not just in terms of potential lawsuits, but also in terms of actual physical danger — particularly when you consider how often I mention my wife in my column. This is an occupational hazard my "real" journalist friends never have to contend with. Chances are, they'll never write a story, be lying in bed the next morning, and have a city official roll over and smack them in the head with the newspaper.

Yet, week after week, at the risk of returning home to an angry wife and total financial ruin, humor columnists like myself sit at their keyboards, surfing the net until an hour before deadline.

Why?

Because each of us REALLY AND TRULY believes we're making the

world a better place by doing everything we can, as humor columnists, to stay out of the skilled-labor work force.

Let's face it, for every culinary position a humor columnist takes up, there are at least a dozen people hurling into a commode. Countless people (i.e., there's no time to count them before my deadline) owe their lives to the fact that I — and others like me — are sitting in a newsroom making stuff up. Imagine being stuck on a mountainside knowing that the person repelling down a rope to save you is the same person who, if they had a choice, would rather be writing about glow-in-the-dark mice.

Would you be willing to put your life in that person's hands? Or would you go ahead and take a chance that a giant Slip-N-Slide will suddenly sprout from the mountain sometime in the near future?

If it were me, I'd take my chances with the Slip-N-Slide. Even if it wasn't wet, and it meant sliding down half a mile of dry plastic.

The point is, we humor columnists know our place in the world. We understand the risks involved in what we do. Which is why, as a humor columnist who actually worked in the food service industry, I can say, with some authority:

You really should wash your hands after reading this.

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

Martha's Dilemma

Martha Stewart got out of prison a few days ago, but there are probably some people who think she didn't want to leave. The judge didn't realize that when she sentenced her, he was saying, "For your crime, I sentence your stock to double and you to get a new television show on NBC." But that's what happened.

Before she was found guilty, many people in and out of the press derided her. They said she was "too rich," "too cold," and "too perfect." But something happened when she announced that she wanted to serve her sentence "as soon as possible."

The public liked that she wasn't appealing the case and she wasn't complaining. People hate complainers even more than they hate criminals. Suddenly she went from somebody who "obviously did something wrong," to "whatever she did, it wasn't that big of a deal."

Things only got better for the Martha Image once she started serving time. She took on prison reform and the humane treatment of inmates as a personal cause. And what has really worked for her is that she seems sincere about it. Nobody will be shocked if she continues to work to improve prison conditions after she's released.

That's quite a change from the image of the selfish, cold Miss Perfect. You don't hear a lot of put-downs and jokes about her now. Nobody's talking about her going from making decorative plates to license plates anymore. It's as if she's become a revered, untouchable female icon like Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, or even Princess Di.

So, you might think that being imprisoned was a good move for her. I don't know about that. I would never presume to minimize what it must be like to be in jail. Regardless of how relatively comfortable the facilities are, you're locked up. Cynics may call certain places "country club prisons" or "sleep-away camps," but they are still jails. You can't come and go as you please. I feel the walls of the dining room closing in on me after about 20 minutes of listening to my relatives argue about the family tree. How long could I survive in prison?

But there will probably be some "bottom line" types who only see the bottom



By
**Lloyd
Garver**

line: "She went to jail, and while she was there, her stock went through the roof." So, some of them may conclude that it's an easy way to get even richer. "All these years, I've been stabbing my colleagues in the back and exploiting my employees, when I could have just been doing time." The search will be on for incompetent lawyers who can't keep their clients out of prison. And these executives won't all have to run out and commit some crime so they can get caught and incarcerated. CEOs with this mentality will only have to confess to crimes they've been committing for years.

But they're bound to be disappointed. It's possible there were other reasons for the rise of her stock. I don't know enough about the world of finance to explain why it did so well. I don't even understand something as simple as President Bush taking a surplus, turning it into the biggest deficit in history and somehow that being good for the economy. Maybe her stock increase was part of an odd stock market cycle — one of those "buy stocks whose CEOs are women in years that the American League team wins the World Series and there's no hockey season" kind of thing. Regardless, no one can say that the reason the stock soared was definitely because the boss was in jail.

So, despite what some may think, I'm sure she was happy to leave prison and start her new life. However, if her stock starts to tank or her TV ratings slip, nobody will blame her if she's tempted to jaywalk in front of a police car, hoping to get caught.

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com

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MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Loving your Gannongate article...read about it on DKos, and immediately subscribed to your newspaper. I think you will find quite a spike in submissions since you've been one of the only Texans to stand up against Dur Fuhrer.

Just wanted to say, keep up what you are doing...GREAT writing...and I hope any extra income you get, you can use to further this investigation before the trail gets too cold. You are in the "belly of the beast" - hope you can help get some answers.

Best,

Hopesprings at DKos

To The Editor:

This North Carolinian just read W. Leon Smith's column "Deep Throat II" online. Thank you. You give all of us hope for the future of our country.

Hang tough.

Regards,

Randal Haithcock

Sir,

Since what has been happening in the U.S. has had such a major effect on the world, it behoves the rest of the world to care about it.

Given your recent stance and the reaction that you have felt, I would like to congratulate you and to support you. Since I am relatively poor I cannot return to you all the advertising revenue that has been "stolen" from you. I can however (and must!) support you as best I can. That would seem to be by taking up an overseas subscription, and I would like to do this thing. If you could trouble yourself to tell me how much that subscription would be in Australian dollars and the name that should be on the cheque, I will mail one post haste (bad pun!).

I'd just like to add that while the whole of the "Western World" are the heirs of Franklin, it would seem that you are among the few who remember that fact. Thank you. Sir, I hold you in considerable esteem.

If you are wondering where I came by your articles and name, it was at dKos. Should you wish to reproduce this in whole or part (not that I have said anything but the obvious), you are free to do so. As such, my legal name is Geoffrey Charles Marshall and I would be proud to have it alongside yours.

G.C.M.

To The Editor:

You may not like an outsider from Missouri pointing this out, *but* - I noticed that some prominent Texas politicians were using supporters' money to pay for their websites that were being physically hosted on servers owned by Media Temple of Santa Monica, Calif.

The five websites I found are: www.tlrpac.com (Texans for Lawsuit Reform PAC), www.appraisalCap.com, www.taxpayerrelief.com, www.victor2004.com (Victor Carrillo site), and www.bohac.com (Dwayne Bohac site).

None of these sites use public monies, but I thought it was odd that Republicans; money was going out of state to a California company. Particularly when

these California hosted sites were being used to tout Texan values. I'm guessing a few thousand dollars per year are going to California, not Texas. Yes, It's a small thing. But couldn't these public servants do a better job of looking out for their constituents?

Marion Storm, Columbia, MO

Dear Editor,

I was looking through the Sunday FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM today. It had one of those little information boxes that showed where the Legislature was looking for Revenue options.

They included business tax, a cigarette tax, a gambling tax, a gas tax, and a sales tax.

I am channeling the spirit of modern Republican conservatism. The main problem is we have to educate all those dam kids. Here is what we are going to do. We need to put slot machines in all the junior high schools in the state of Texas. The revenue will be shared equally between all the schools of Texas.

That will eliminate business and gas taxes.

Cigarettes, cigarettes. The problem with cigarettes is that not enough kids are being taught how to smoke cigarettes. We need to put a smoking education class in all the high schools in the state of Texas. That will put some revenue in the state treasury. And by the time those kids get to be 30, we will have so much money coming in from cigarette taxes that the state can open free golf courses all over the state for us to play in. We will even be able to cut the sales tax on luxury items.

I think that will be enough for now.

The Spirit of Modern Republican Conservatism

J. Tanner

To The Editor:

Sorry if this is all old news to you. It passes for "upbeat" in the current political climate.

About a week ago, Dem. Rep. Maurice Hinchey of upstate New York (Ithaca and thereabouts) said publicly that anyone with half a brain should suspect Karl Rove of having planted the fake documents that brought down Dan Rather and his team at CBS, in their report on Bush's National Guard service.

Since that moment of sanity, Hinchey has been under attack by the right wing. Now, some of his local supporters are asking people to help him by voting for him in a poll being run by a local newspaper in Hinchey's district.

As you may know if you track the votes in Congress, Rep. Maurice Hinchey is one of the few in Congress with integrity and guts. He stood with Congressman Conyers on the Ohio electoral fraud vote and voted against confirming Rice and Ashcroft. He is the kind of Congressman and Democrat we wish they all were. I am proud that he is my representative and want to keep him in Congress.

Recently Rep. Hinchey has come out with information that Karl Rove was behind feeding Dan Rather false information to deflect attention away from Bush's military record. Now he is the

target of a RW smear campaign. Our local paper has picked up on the story and is running a poll on the subject of Rove's involvement. As soon as the RW got wind of this, they began flooding the poll and skewing the results. Representative Hinchey needs your support and he needs you to vote in the poll. Any letters to the editor of the Daily Freeman <www.dailyfreeman.com> or to your local paper about the issue would also be appreciated.

Thanks,

Donna Kippe

Dear Editor,

Remember the "faith-based initiative?" Well, now that the Federal Election Commission is releasing the numbers of who contributed money for what in the 2004 election, it looks like those who put their trust in God and country in the hands of the supporters of George W. Bush have been sorely deceived.

It turns out that the Swiftboat Veterans and POWs against Kerry got more than half of the \$22 million dollars they spent trying to ruin his reputation from just two people in Texas; Bob Perry and Harold Simmons.

What led Mr. Perry to spend almost \$8 million dollars to defeat John Kerry is unclear. But maybe it has something to do with the reports that many of the people who have bought houses from Perry Homes are angry enough to want to sue. Maybe it was the promise of tort reform, making it harder for ordinary folk to sue, that prompted Perry's support for George Bush.

Why Harold Simmons was not keen on Kerry, the man with the sterling en-

vironmental record, is relatively easy to figure out. After all, Simmons has become a billionaire in the waste handling and disposal business, ably assisted by the EPA which spent \$42 million tax dollars cleaning up just one of his properties and only charged him \$8, million that is. Any way you slice it, that's a good investment. And now that the disposal of low-level nuclear waste is coming down the pike, even a slight relaxation of the rules meant to avoid contamination, means more money in his pocket.

Actually, Mr. Simmons and Mr. Perry might just have an aversion to "nuisance" lawsuits by irate neighbors in common. After all, what made cleaning up the Simmons property in New Jersey so expensive was the fact that 1500 families had their yards contaminated with lead from the processing of old car batteries, which hadn't been properly disposed of by the operators of the plant.


It used to be said that "one man's waste is another's treasure." But surely the author never meant that hazardous waste would be turned into gold by just moving it around from place to place and then charging big dollars to take it away yet again.

While attacking the honor of a man who might obstruct such a shell game seems about par for the course, what's really disgusting is how so many patriotic and right-thinking people were deceived. These purveyors of lies and filth abused the trust of the very same people most likely to suffer the ill effects of living with industrial pollutants they can't even see.

Sincerely,

Monica Smith, Durham, N.H.

Continued On Next Page



Brought back to life by her mentor then released to her own devises, Elektra (Jennifer Garner) becomes a killing machine. She is a gun for hire out in the real world. She is hired by a mysterious third party and sent to a beautiful island to wait for further instructions. She meets a young girl and her father. They become her next targets but she is not able to finish the job. Elektra flees with them to get away from the assassins that are hot on their trail. It comes down to a battle to preserve the balance of good and evil.

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MAILBAG
ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

To The Editor:

The Fish and Wildlife Service declared that 19 states have placed a moratorium on eating fresh water fish due to the increased mercury levels coming from the coal burning power plants. Our own Gale Norton is fully aware of this danger, but on instructions from the C- student has said nothing.

Mercury, as we all know can lead to cognitive impairment, mental retardation, autism, blindness, kidney and liver disease. Women who have excess mercury in their bodies certainly threaten their offspring with a host of these maladies.

Clinton recognized this threat and classified mercury as a hazardous pollutant under the Clean Air Act. Bush, as the schmuck he is, announced that he was rescinding the Clinton era rules and replacing them with those written by the lobbying firm of Latham and Watkins, another large contributor to his campaign. They plan to clean up 50% of the mercury within the next 15 years at which point a new specie will walk the streets of the USA.

Because of the fact that the coal companies are blowing off the tops of mountains and depositing the debris into our streams, pollution is continuing at an alarming rate. As a result a fellow by the name of Joe Lovett from West Virginia sued the Bush administration as well as the Army Corps of Engineers. The lawsuit was won, but wouldn't you know it, the Cretin from Crawford rewrote the Clean Water Act to allow mountain top mining to continue ad infinitum and to continue the depository of shit into our streams and rivers. Further proof that he is a dirt bag.

We may be too old to realize the future implications, but our children and grandchildren will have to suffer the ecological and economic Armageddon that is sure to come as a result of this rat bastard in the White House.

N.M.

Dear Editor:

ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE.

I have had it. It has to stop. It is just not right to say such things. It is in error!

—NO ONE CAN CALL GEORGE BUSH A CHEAP POLITICIAN.

-I mean-

---LOOK HOW MUCH HE HAS ALREADY COST THE TAXPAYERS

K.S.

To The Editor:

To Heck with the Social Security Private Accounts Debate

Private Social Security Accounts are not a priority. They not only do not improve Social Security's financial situation, they, in fact, would actually increase the budget deficit. So ... enough already with the political horse manure. Let's talk about those things that are really important.

Let's talk about issues that have an immediate impact on the economic welfare of the United States - the twin deficits - federal budget deficit and the foreign trade deficit.

All those who think that these two are not the real issues that need to be addressed please stand up so that we can all clearly identify the morons amongst

us.

Let's also first sweep away all the political ideological garbage concerning taxes and spending. The fact of the matter is we are spending more than we take in. The only way to solve the problem is to manipulate both variables. Take your partisan stances and stick them where the sun don't shine.

Enough already with the propaganda, lies and distortions! Frankly my dear, political legacies mean nothing. If you guys don't get your act in gear you're going to screw up my ability to provide for my family. The future is at stake here.

Medicare and Medicaid are a problem. Fix them. And ... if that means creating a universal health care system, then do it. Leave the lobbyists out in the cold for once. Who invited them to the table anyway?

Semantics be damned. We don't have the luxury of placating people's ideological dogmas. We've allowed experimentation, theory and conjecture to get in the way of fiduciary responsibility. Stick to the facts. Stick to GAAP.

Blow away the smoke. Break the mirrors. Drain the swamp. Face the fact that there are certain things we need to pay for like healthcare, road construction, and national security. Step up to the bar that the government has to take in as much money as it spends and tax accordingly. Leave the fairy tales to bigots and simpletons.

This is going to hurt. No one is going to be happy. But ... you know what ... if we don't do something now it will only get worse. Let's choose for ourselves when and how we take our medicine. Let's not wait until all semblance of control is out the window and we are faced with a 1930's style financial slaughter.

You want to get re-elected? Then put your constituents at the top of your priority list. For a change ignore the people with the checkbooks. Pay attention to the people who are dependent upon you to make decisions in their best interests.

And ... if by chance you don't get re-elected for doing the right thing ... then go out in glory and the knowledge that you did all you could. God will know that you tried. History will too.

BTW: This would be a good time for William Safire, George Wills, Maureen Dowd, Molly Ivins, Thomas Friedman, Cal Thomas, Pat Buchanan and all the other members of the fourth estate to all do the right thing and rally around financial responsibility and what's good for the whole country red, white and/or blue.

Angie Pratt

To The Editor:

A civil trial opened in Austin this past Monday involving illegal campaign contributions to Republican members of the Texas House.

The reason is the House majority leader, Tom Delay, another scum bag who is among the most powerful men on Capitol Hill, as well as his party's most prolific fund raiser

This law suit was prompted by Democrats who charged that DeLay had used illegal fund raising tactics to engineer a Republican take over of the Legislature. The take over benefited DeLay and his colleagues by enabling Texas Republicans to redraw Congressional districts

solidifying Republican control of the House. This redistricting was done illegally since they can only be redrawn every ten years and this action was done after three and a half.

Two of DeLay's major political operations in Washington and another in Texas were indicted last year in the illegal contributions scandal. The law specifically states that companies are barred from making contributions to individual candidates for the Legislature.

These Texas guys really know how to work the room. A close friend of Delay, Tom Craddick, the Texas House speaker, has had his records subpoenaed by the grand jury.

DeLay as is his want is busy gathering donations in Washington for his defense fund.

If you remember, last year the House Republicans tried to have him retain his job even if indicted, but it generated such criticism from within his own party, that DeLay must surrender his position if in fact he is indicted.

The most anticipated testimony will come from Tom Craddick concerning DeLay's involvement in raising hundreds of thousand dollars in corporate donations. Seems as if the legal noose is tightening around Tommy's neck.

Craddick had admitted to distributing \$152,000 to Republican candidates, a small portion of the amount gathered by To DeLay.

And talk about nepotism, Texans for a Republican Majority awarded DeLay's daughter a \$30,000 contract to organize fund raising events.

N.M.

To The Editor:

Highest home insurance rates in the nation?

Perhaps Texas Department of Insurance Commissioner Jose Montemayor and legislators could please address why Texans must pay the highest rate of home insurance, more than anywhere in the nation?

Wait! Before you say it's due to the mold and/or frivolous claims, what about earthquakes, Santa Ana dust storms and heavy rains in California? What about the heavy rains and active volcanoes in Hawaii? What about the hurricane damage in Florida, Louisiana and other southern states? Meanwhile, Texas doesn't have any more frivolous insurance claims than most other states.

Please explain why we pay double the insurance costs of homeowners in other states.

Legislative policy: divert issues and tax dollars?

By now, Texans should be used to the "flight pattern" of their tax dollars. From the governor on down-the-line elected officials constantly divert money from the state onto local sectors, and from one form of regressive taxation to another. In addition, the resolution of urgent issues parallels a similar flight plan. Those are being pushed aside for our children's generation to deal with.

More than one decade ago the state provided 70 percent of the money to educate Texas children, while today in some districts it's as low as 30 percent. School districts via local property taxes have been forced to pick up the state's slack. School bonds have been another way local districts could raise much needed revenue to add-on to existing school structures or to build new ones; thereby, enabling the state to continue its irresponsible circumvention of the Texas Constitution, which calls for the state to provide a quality education for all children.

Last year the governor and/or legislature moved more of the funding of various local and social services onto local

government and also initiated and/or raised the amount of hidden state fees and penalties — thereby "honoring" the promise of "NO NEW TAXES" (ha-ha).

Currently the majority of legislators are at it again. Case in point, HB 2 is a worthless piece of legislation that masquerades as the cure for the ills prevalent in public education. Well, here's the news-flash... it doesn't, in fact the perils of education may be worse off from the bill.

It's amazing to watch the ongoing play-by-play of current Texas politics. It seems to be more of a bad Houdini "sleight-of-hand" than a true and honorable attempt to resolve the urgent issues plaguing Texans and their families. From the issue of public education to home insurance to health care, Texans have been, and are, at the mercy of a pack of insensitive, special-interest motivated band of brigands at the Capitol. It will be interesting to see how long the voters will permit all these legislative transgressions?

Peter Stern, Driftwood, Texas

To The Editor:

Illegal aliens win, veterans lose.

I am making it clear to members of Congress that as long as they see fit to allow the American taxpayers to shell out over \$68 Billion dollars per year to provide "free" health care to illegal aliens then I will expect Congress to provide the VA with a full and complete budget to take care of ALL of our veterans. My WWII veteran father deserved better than to have the door slammed in his face by the VA. And there are hundreds of thousands of veterans like him with horror stories of how they are mistreated by an UNgrateful group of politicians up on Capital Hill who refuse to fully and adequately fund the Veterans Administration.

Go to www.vfw.org or read the Independent Budget at www.independentbudget.com to see what is being done to our veterans. I for one know that when push comes to shove I would want my tax dollars to go towards helping our veterans who fought to keep freedom alive and who were willing to die for that cause over putting my money towards people that are here in America ILLEGALLY, bankrupting our health care system.

Freedom is not Free and the sacrifices, blood, sweat and tears are "written on the Wall" and I for one will make sure that our veterans are treated with respect, honor and dignity for I am truly grateful for all of their sacrifices.

If it comes down to having my tax dollars put towards taking care of our veterans or putting that money towards illegal aliens health care I will choose taking care of our veterans every single time. The VA and our senior citizens sure could use that \$68 BILLION per year to assist them with their out of sight health care and nursing home costs. I for one feel that we owe our veterans that much at least.

My 88-year-old WWII veteran father had both Cigna PPO and Medicare but NEITHER ONE pays for Nursing Home or Assisted Living Care which right now stands at around \$5,000.00 per month out of pocket costs. Even though the local VA Nursing Home had vacant beds they refused my dying father because of the Millenium Act which Congress passed in the mid 1990's. My WWII veteran father was not looking for a hand out as he served this Nation well and was an honorable man, but the way our VA and Congress treated him during his dying hours and thousands like him IS a national disgrace.

Joanne Consalvo-Mulvaney, Navy Veteran, Stockbridge, GA



Rare Brown Bess Musket Discovered

JASPER, Texas — An East India pattern Brown Bess musket has been discovered that was recovered off of the Battlefield of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The musket has been traced back to James Lathem, a contract freight carrier, for the early Arsenals of the Republic of Texas. His initials of "JL" were hand engraved on the left hand side of the wood stock and matched to documents located at the Texas State Library & Archives in Austin.

The Brown Bess was a British smoothbore musket used during the Napoleonic War period with earlier models used during the American Revolutionary War.

Mexico began purchasing these surplus muskets through British Arms Merchants in 1827.

When General Santa Anna marched into Texas, this weapon was the dominant firearm used at the Battle of the Alamo on both sides.

At the Battle of San Jacinto over 600 were captured. Many of these muskets ended up at the West Bernard Station in present day Wharton County, Texas. Post Bernard was the first Texas Arsenal and by 1840 these muskets were

transported to the new Houston Arsenal.

The musket was acquired at the February 2004 Houston Gun Collectors Show and is presently owned by Freedom Documents Fund, Inc. of Jasper, Texas, a non-profit Texas corporation.

A tour is now being planned that will take the James Lathem musket to the San Jacinto Museum of History, the Alamo, the Sam Houston Memorial Museum, and to the Texas State History Museum, says James K. Mitchell, Jr., president of Freedom Documents Fund, Inc. The musket will be displayed in full battlefield dress with bayonet, sling, and mounted flint. A special display case made out of the State Wood of Texas (pecan) will be used to present the musket.

No other complete firearm from the Mexican side of the Texas Revolution period has been identified. Since the Mexican Matamoros and Toluca Battalions were both at the Battle of San Jacinto and also in the assault of the Alamo, it is possible that this historic musket was in both battles.

This treasure of the early history of the Republic of Texas will soon be available for public viewing.



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