

INSIDE STORIES



Texas Gov. Rick Perry

**Gov. Perry
Calls Special
Session**
Page 2



Sen. Hutchison

**Sen. Hutchison
Says No To
Governor's Race**
Page 2



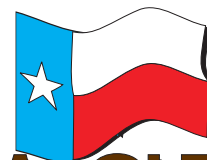
Rev. Tom Beaty
Describes No-Waste
Agriculture System

**No-Waste
Farming Key
To Healing**
Feeding The World
Page 16



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Exporting Jobs



**Delta Brands, Inc. Says
Ex-Im Bank-U.S.
Ignores Small Companies**

**Calls For Change
In Leadership**

I could have done this in China, when DBI was one of the first U.S. companies that did business there in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, but my patriotism did not allow this business practice. Ex-Im Bank under Phillip Merrill gave me no choice.'

— Sam Savariego, DBI

SAMUEL SAVARIEGO, DBI President and CEO, says that although his manufacturing company is hiring again in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, he condemns the leadership of Ex-Im Bank for forcing him to export more than 300 manufacturing American jobs to Eastern Europe just to keep his business afloat.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Iconoclast EDITORIAL:

Book Burning Is Next

Page
8

**Downing Street Memo Hearing
Ends With Call For Full Inquiry
More Memos Surface**

Page 7

Gov. Perry Calls Special Session For School Funding

Vetoes More Than \$35 Billion in Appropriations

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry last week vetoed \$35.3 billion in the Texas Education Agency budget and called lawmakers back for a special session to “get education funding right.”

“For all the successes of this past session, job number one was left undone when the session ended without the passage of school finance reform,” Perry said. “I’m not going to approve an education budget that short-changes teacher salary increases, textbooks, education technology, and education reforms. And I cannot let \$2 billion sit in some bank account when it can go directly to the classroom.”

Perry’s use of his line-item veto authority means legislators will have 30 days to complete the task left unfinished in the regular session that ended in May. Perry has been meeting with the leadership since then to negotiate a compromise on education reform and property tax reduction bills. The special session also will afford legislators the opportunity to fund textbook purchases for



Gov. Rick Perry

schools and classroom technology. “Make no mistake about my message today: While I respect the deliberative process and will continue to welcome and engage in negotiations, this issue has been studied and debated long enough and now it is time to act,” Perry said.

Without a special session, about \$2 billion that had been intended for teacher pay raises, education reforms, and other school priorities would have gone unused instead of going to schools because House Bill 2 didn’t pass.

These funds cannot be re-distributed under budget execution authority, meaning they can only be spent on education if appropriated during a special session. And without additional legislative action, textbooks would remain sitting in warehouses rather than in school children’s hands.

“I recognize this is a bold step, and frankly one I wrestled with,” Perry said. “Ultimately I determined this

action was necessary to ensure we fully fund our schools, provide needed reforms in the classroom, and pass real and sustainable property tax relief.”

Perry said his veto will, “deliver more, not less, for our children: more money for their teachers, more money directed to the classroom, and more results in their schools.”

Perry assured parents, teachers, and school children that there is ample time for legislators to finish the task and for schools to open on schedule, with better funding, better teacher pay and, most importantly, critical reforms that will ensure more children are challenged to achieve in the classroom.

Perry also vetoed about \$1.7 billion in all funds for other line-item appropriations from the 2006-07 spending bill, freeing up a portion of these funds for property tax relief or education funding and making legislators’ jobs easier in a special ses-

sion.

In his veto proclamation, Perry noted that in his State of the State address in January, he said Texans have a right to an unambiguous and understandable state budget that shows how tax dollars are spent. “Senate Bill 1 continues the recent practice of combining numerous programs into enormous line items of appropriation that allow too much discretion in the use of public dollars,” Perry said in his veto statement.

“This practice restricts the ability of a governor to exercise the constitutional authority to line item veto. For instance, hidden in the Parks and Wildlife Department’s budget is \$1,000,000 to construct bird watching facilities.

“Over \$18 billion is appropriated to higher education in lump sums that would require the governor to veto an entire university to reject any provincial, outdated, or ill-advised spending item.”

Gov. Perry Signs Life Without Parole Bill

Also Signs Bill Changing Death Certificate On Executed Inmates

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry today signed Senate Bill 60, which gives juries in capital murder cases the option of sentencing a defendant to life without the possibility of parole.

“I believe this bill will improve our criminal justice system because it gives jurors a new option to protect the public with the certainty a convicted killer will never roam our streets again,” Perry said.

While the life without parole sentence cannot be applied retroactively to those already convicted of capital murder, it will provide victims assurance that in the future, even if appellate courts overturn death sentences, those convicted of the most heinous murders will never be released from prison. The law applies only to those convicted of capital murders committed on or after

Sept. 1, 2005.

Perry also approved another death penalty-related bill, House Bill 93, which will change the terminology used on certificates of death for executed inmates.

“Individuals who commit unspeakable crimes against Texas citizens and are put to death under Texas law are not victims,” Perry said. “They are criminals and the final document that bears their name should reflect this fact.”

House Bill 93 requires the death certificate of an inmate executed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to be classified as death caused by “judicially ordered execution.” Currently, the death certificates list the cause of death as homicide. This bill will take effect Sept. 1, 2005.

Sen. Hutchison Says No To Governorship Will Run For Third Senate Term

AUSTIN — U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison on Friday put to rest rumors about running for Texas governor.

In an e-mail, she indicated that she would make a formal announcement on June 27 explaining her intentions to run for a third term in the U.S. Senate and “why she believes it is in the best interest of Texas.”

It had been speculated that she was considering challenging incumbent Texas Governor Rick Perry, who would be seeking his second full term. He as-



Sen. Hutchison

sumed the governorship in 2000 after George W. Bush resigned to become president. Perry was elected to his first full four-year term in 2002.

Consternation by Republican Party officials that a brutal GOP primary in March 2006 would not be good for Texas has been voiced in the state for months.

Noted Perry, “Senator Hutchison has been a true champion for Texas in Washington, D.C. Her decision to seek re-election is great news for Texas.”



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Exporting Jobs



**Delta Brands, Inc. Says
Ex-Im Bank-U.S.
Ignores Small Companies**

Calls For Change In Leadership

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — Delta Brands, Inc. is doing the best it can as a business, but its owner is still smarting from the lack of supportive financing from the Export-Import Bank of the United States which, he says, has caused him to compromise his patriotism.

Samuel Savariego, DBI President and CEO, says that although his manufacturing company is hiring again in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, he condemns the leadership of Ex-Im Bank for forcing him to export more than 300 manufacturing American jobs to Eastern Europe just to keep his business afloat.

Times were not always so bad for DBI, which began rather humbly 42 years ago when its first shop was opened in McGregor, 10 miles from Crawford, the current vacation spot for President George W. Bush.

"Delta Brands, Inc. is a company that I founded in a dirt floor plant. Our first site looked more like an abandoned garage," said Savariego, in his office in Irving.

DBI is a systems integrator, which means that the company engineers industrial components that use hundreds of parts from more than 500 companies.

With parts like motors, gear reducers, clutches, brakes, hydraulic cylinders, and bearings, DBI produces a number of machines used to process steel for the manufacturing of other commercial and military products. In the last four decades, DBI has exported its equipment all over the world.

Many of those exports were to developing countries, says Savariego, and in order to finance these exports, DBI needed special financing that could only be provided by Ex-Im Bank.

Savariego's history with Ex-Im Bank's representatives date back to the early 1980s when DBI was the first company to ever use the newly founded Ex-Im Bank Working Capital Program.

"This program allowed a small like company like DBI to work with Letters of Credit that were paid 60 days after

the presentation of Ocean Bills of Lading," said Savariego.

Ex-Im Bank was first authorized by an act of Congress in the 1930s with the purpose of assisting smaller companies that couldn't compete in the world market without the support of an export credit agency. Other countries have export credit agencies, including Italy (SACE), Germany (HERMES), France (COFACE), and Spain (CESCE).

Congress reauthorized Ex-Im Bank in 2002 under the motto "jobs through exports."

Gone Sour

DBI's relationship with Ex-Im Bank has soured since 2002, though. Savariego says that he has seen key players in Ex-Im Bank forced out as the new bank administration appointed by President Bush took root and imposed policies that favored the big guy over the little guy.

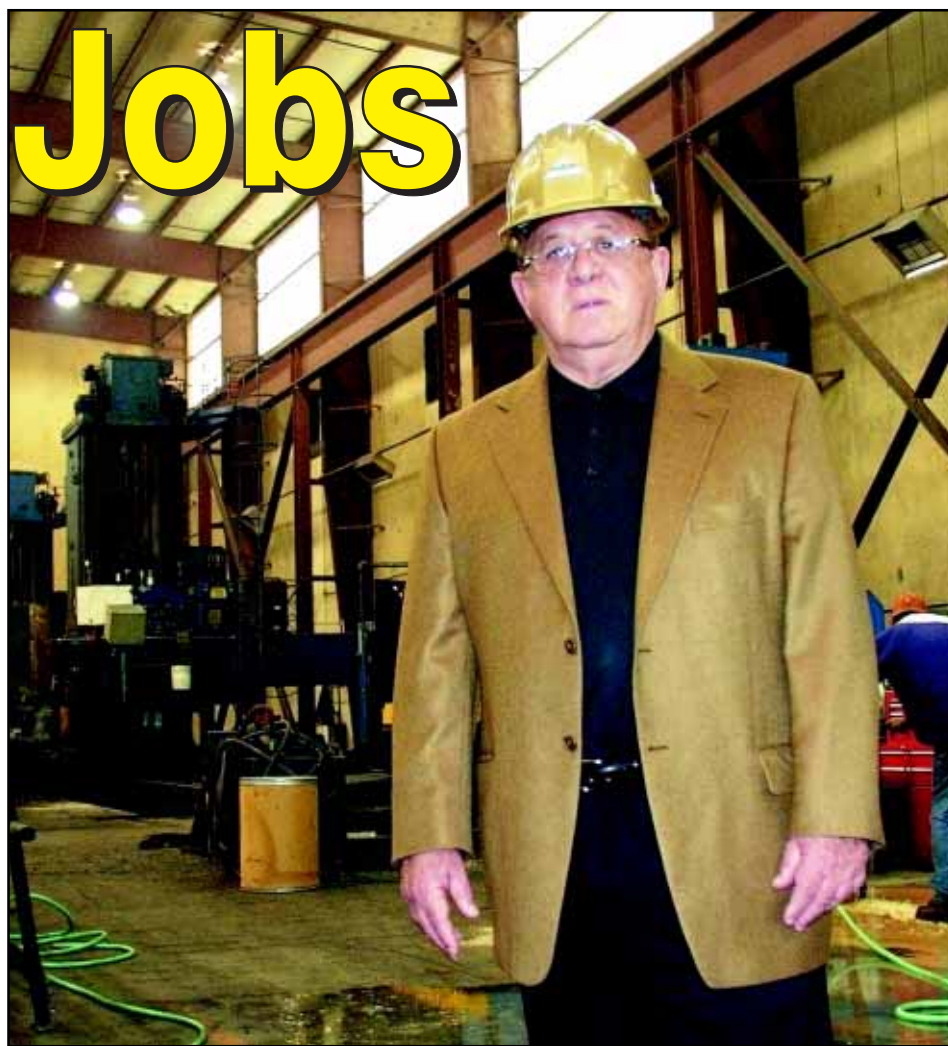
"When Chairman John E. Robson passed away in March of 2002 and Phillip Merrill was appointed Chairman, Ex-Im Bank went down on a spiral to the level that it is today," says Savariego. "The reason Phillip Merrill is the chairman of Ex-Im Bank is that he has been a contributor to the Bush campaign. He's a close friend of (Dick

“Companies Ex-Im bank is financing right now include Boeing, and you and I both know that Boeing can get a loan anywhere. Them and the oil field manufacturing.”

— Velinda Savariego

Chaney. It's like a big oil affiliation, I guess, but they are all in it together," says Velinda Savariego, DBI's Chief Operating Officer, and daughter of its co-founder.

According to an online profile from the International Relations Center, "Phillip Merrill, a minor media mogul and current president of the U.S. Ex-Im Bank, is on the advisory council of the hawkish Center for Security Policy. In 2003, Merrill donated \$4 million to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies to set up a new Center for Strategic Studies, which is to be



LAST OF THE MOHICANS is what Samuel Savariego, DBI President and CEO, calls his business because companies like DBI that can produce pickling lines, galvanizing lines, and color coating lines no longer exist in the United States.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

headed by Eliot Cohen, a key neocon scholar and member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board."

The profile continues: "Merrill has also served as the assistant secretary general of NATO and in a number of U.S. government posts in the State and Defense Departments. In 1988 he was awarded the Medal for Distinguished Service, the highest civilian honor given by the Defense Department."

The Savariegos have no love, either, for Peter Saba, General Counsel of Ex-Im Bank, and Jeffrey Miller, Senior Vice President and Head of Export Finance.

When Merrill took the job as President and Chairman at Ex-Im Bank on Sept. 30, 2002, he said he would focus the

bank's activities in the "basic" economy (such as airplanes, tractors, pipelines, etc.) and support companies pushing new technological economies in medicine and computers.

Merrill has also said that he favors

deals in countries with markets located in southeastern Europe, like Romania, Ukraine, and Bulgaria.

Velinda Savariego questions Ex-Im Bank's current financing priorities: "Companies Ex-Im bank is financing right now include Boeing, and you and I both know that Boeing can get a loan anywhere. Them and the oil field manufacturing."

Before oil interests, communications, and agriculture, Boeing Aircraft is Ex-Im Bank's biggest recipient of financing.

"Their agenda does not include small

business or the U.S. economy. It has to do with what they want to finance. It's become a dysfunctional agency," said Velinda Savariego. "Originally, it was founded to create jobs, not to destroy them, and the U.S. industry is diminishing."

Sam Savariego said he saw the future of Ex-Im Bank at one of Merrill's first appearances as the new President/Chairman of Ex-Im Bank. After a meeting with the U.S. Department of Energy in late 2002, Savariego attended a cocktail party organized by the U.S. Exporters Association.

There, as Savariego recalls, Chairman Merrill took the microphone and said, "Let me tell you, in Washington, if you want a friend, get a dog."

Looking back, Savariego says, "I didn't know what he meant with these words then, but I know now."

Other Ex-Im Critics

Others, too, have responded with criticisms to Ex-Im Bank's policies. As chairman of the House Small Business Committee, Congressman Dan Manzullo (R-Ill.) noted some "disturbing trends" this past April during an oversight hearing held on small business performance of Ex-Im Bank.

As part of Ex-Im Bank's reauthorization in 2002, Congress mandated that Ex-Im Bank devote 20 percent to small businesses. The bank, however, failed to do so, achieving 19.7 percent in 2003 and 16.7 percent in 2004.

"Frankly, these numbers are suspect. Moreover, the trend is clearly in the wrong direction," said Congressman Manzullo in a prepared statement at a hearing in April.

In his defense at the hearing, President Merrill said, "And during my ten

Continued On Next Page

• EXPORTING JOBS ...

Continued From Page 3

ure, over 80 percent of the Bank's transactions have directly benefitted small businesses. For 2004, of the 3,107 transactions the Bank completed, 2,572, or 82.8 percent, directly benefitted small businesses."

Merrill added, "I want to assure the Committee that we take the 20 percent very seriously and our analysis of the numbers shows that we were on track to exceed 20 percent for small business, but for two large transactions approved by the board late in the fiscal year. While those two transactions pushed our small business percentage below 20 percent, they helped to support jobs in the United States, many of them as indirect small business suppliers."

Congressman Manzullo blames "bureaucratic inertia," "corporate culture issues" with the bank, and "adversarial relationships between the bank and its customers and partners" for causing Ex-Im Bank to falter from its mandated goals.

Manzullo proposed reforms for Ex-Im Bank to streamline the application process, encourage more banks to offer export financing; create and manage an organization-wide small business plan as well as develop small business distribution networks; address businesses through better and more transparent board processes and procedures.

As a follow-up to the oversight hearing on April 26, Congressman Manzullo formally requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigate the methodology and parameters of Ex-Im's calculation of its share of financing and insurance programs that goes to small business.

"We agree with Congressman Manzullo, Chairman Phillip Merrill



THE SAVARIEGOS chat as workers at the Irving Plant of Delta Brands, Inc. Samuel Savariego, DBI President and CEO, started DBI with a partner 42 years ago in McGregor. The McGregor Plant has since closed due to complications with globalization and Ex-Im Bank.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

needs to resign. In our opinion, Peter Saba and Jeffrey Miller need to resign as well," said Velinda Savariego.

Sinking deeper into debt to Japan, China, and other nations, the U.S. has an international trade deficit at an all-time high of \$195.1 billion U.S. from January through March of this year. Up 28.6 percent from the previous record of \$519.7 billion in 2003, the current account deficit hit \$668.1 billion for all of 2004.

Ex-Im Bank is up for reauthorization again in 2006.

DBI Woes

DBI's frustrations with Merrill, Saba,

and Miller came to a head when in December 2003, the Texas manufacturer was down to 82 employees as Ex-Im Bank stalled DBI's finance deal with a Ukrainian firm that manufactures products for housing construction.

Since it once employed over 300 people in the Dallas area, the loss of jobs was a major blow to DBI. The company traces this loss to the Ex-Im Bank Board reneging on a commitment on July 15, 2002. The board under Chairman James Harmon had given its preliminary approval on a transaction with Turkey on Oct. 12, 2000, said Savariego. The application for financing the



DBI employees protest in Washington, D.C.

Ukraine deal was filed with Ex-Im Bank that, if approved, would have solved most of DBI's problems, he added. In desperation and fear for their jobs, all 82 employees, "some of which had spent their entire working career with DBI," traveled in two buses to Washington to protest at the door steps of Ex-Im Bank.

While there, Samuel Savariego met with Ex-Im Bank Vice Chairman April Foley for the first time to discuss DBI's situation. Peter Saba and Jeffery Miller were also in attendance.

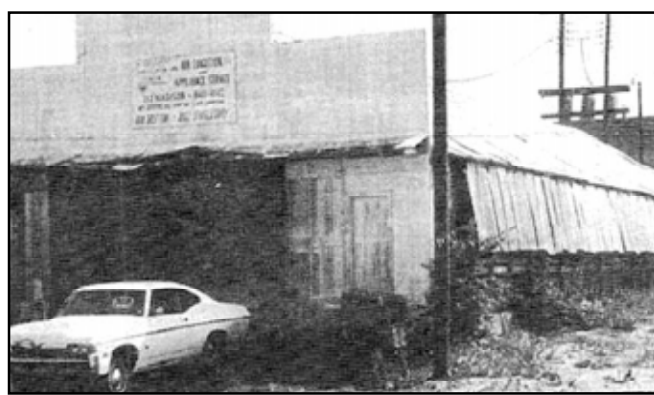
"When I started to describe our problems, her eyes turned red and wet with tears. This was all I needed and I got emotional as well. I had to excuse myself. I broke up also in tears," said Sam Savariego. "The DBI employees are closer to me than most members of my own family."

The week before Christmas, the employees stayed to protest. Shortly after that, Ex-Im Bank approved a Working Capital Line for DBI but with special conditions engineered by Miller and Saba that could not be met, said Savariego.

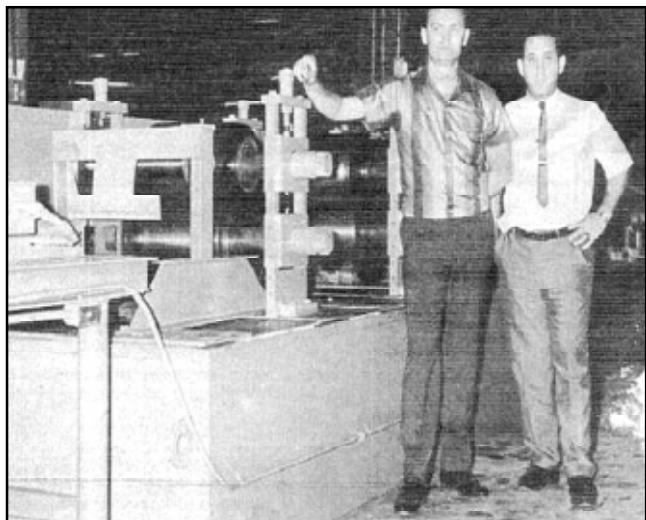
On May 20, 2004, there was a deadlock vote that killed DBI's Ukrainian deal because Chairman Merrill failed to cast his vote over the phone while he was having dinner with the Prime Minister of Ukraine. Vice Chairman April Foley and Linda Conlin voted approvingly to the transaction, while Joe Grandmaison and Max Cleland (by telephone) voted no.

This transaction with Ukraine was terminated, even though DBI was

Continued On Next Page



DBI facility in 1964



Early profile: Jim Yeager (deceased) and Sam Savariego



Delta Brands, Inc.
Designers & Manufacturers
Of Metal Processing Machinery



McGregor Plant before it closed



DBI Headquarters in Irving, Texas



DBI employees stop for a portrait while in Washington

• **EXPORTING JOBS ... Continued From Page 4**

backed by the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, the International Trade Commission, the State Department, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, U.S. Congressman Martin Frost, U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions, and Retired General Barry Bates.

These backers supported DBI because its customers supply to AM General and many other defense contractors with the steel used to produce armor-plated vehicles and other pieces of equipment crucial to the national defense of the United States.

“Retired General Barry Bates wrote an emotional letter to Ex-Im Bank urging the bank to support the DBI transaction in the interest and safety of the U.S. military personnel in harm’s way,” said Sam Savariego.

“If you don’t have the machine tools to cut the armored plate in America, you can’t produce armored vehicles unless you import it already cut,” said Velinda Savariego. “If we’re the strongest, all-powerful nation in the world, and we don’t even have the capacity to make the equipment to cut those parts needed to make the defense paraphernalia, then doesn’t that put this country at a disadvantage?”

Velinda Savariego speculates that the U.S. steel industry’s lobby forced Ex-Im Bank’s board to kill DBI’s Ukrainian deal. “The steel industry is cracking down on DBI because ... they are saying that our equipment increases steel production. The real reason is because in Slovakia, U.S. Steel has a plant which is not far from Ukraine,” she said. “Our customer buys equipment like the ones that U.S. Steel has in a nearby country and that will hurt U.S. Steel’s business. They want to have a monopoly, if you will, in the steel industry, because at that point, they can charge whatever they want.”

Velinda Savariego said that the Ukrainian contract had to be rewritten and

eventually it went through with the buyer ending up scaling down what he was going to buy.

“It was going to be for about \$50 million and it ended up being \$15-16 million. His capital investment had to be less so he could get his own financing,” she said. “The only reason the customer didn’t say ‘Later’ to us is because our technology is superior.”

Velinda Savariego added that the buyer produces only 150,000 tons of steel product a year “which isn’t enough steel to have an effect on U.S. industry.”

“When the American company has a disadvantage over its competition, it begins to sell financing and not goods. Our goods might be better, but they’re financing could be better,” she said. “Not everybody needs a mortgage on a house but most people do, right? So if you didn’t have a mortgage payment, you’d have to buy the homes for cash, and then not too many people would have homes in America or anywhere for that matter.”

Surviving With Innovation

Today, DBI has employed more than 300 Romanians who are building equipment with American engineering and “jobs that belonged to the Dallas/Fort Worth area” in order to keep the company alive, said Sam Savariego.

Since there is no outside financing for DBI’s current transactions, the company is only getting by due to cheap labor.

“We did it by becoming an exporter of jobs,” he said painfully. “We are still manufacturing the critical components of our machinery here in Irving, but a great part of our machinery is being manufactured in Romania and the Czech Republic.”

Sam Savariego said that he found it easier to sell DBI equipment in Europe by building in Eastern Europe and use the lower labor costs to absorb the higher interest cost of his European customers. However, in transactions



DBI Carries Several Lines

“I could have done this in China, when DBI was one of the first U.S. companies that did business there in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, but my patriotism did not allow this business practice. Ex-Im Bank under Phillip Merrill gave me no choice.”

— Sam Savariego

with Mexico and South American countries, this advantage lessens due to transportation costs.

Still, the McGregor Plant remains shut down after 10 years, even though its location is prime for shipping to markets below the Equator.

“Today, all DBI Mexican customers are purchasing their equipment from our foreign suppliers, who have the support of their respective Export Credit Agency,” said Sam Savariego. “McGregor is only five hours from the Mexican border.”

Sam Savariego calls his business “The Last of the Mochicans” because companies like DBI that can produce pickling lines, galvanizing lines, and color coating lines no longer exist in the United States.

“I could have done this in China, when DBI was one of the first U.S. companies that did business there in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, but my patriotism

did not allow this business practice. Ex-Im Bank under Phillip Merrill gave me no choice.”

Velinda Savariego said the economy in McGregor has suffered a severe impact since the DBI closed. “At the moment you don’t have a plant, you don’t have personal property taxes. You don’t have the population. It’s almost like a whole town because you have 300 workers and 300 families and once you have a plant there are businesses that you have around it,” she said.

She continued: “It’s not only our plant. It’s also the surrounding business that they do business with. It’s almost not measurable. The impact is not felt so much by us but that area because our payroll is about \$5.5 million a year. And we have half the workers we once had. That area is dead. It once had a lot of activity. There’s a railroad.”

Sam Savariego said that the only rea

Continued On Next Page



How Delta Brands, Inc. Got Its Start

Delta Brands, Inc. had its beginnings with the dream of an eight-year-old boy who grew up in a small town, Piedrecitas, Camaguey, a province of Cuba.

Sam Savariego tells how his vision for a successful future in America began:

It started “in front of a small train station where there was a large smoke stack of a sugar mill, surrounded by pillars of machinery that had been removed and used as spare parts for other sugar mills. This sugar mill was destroyed by the great hurricane of 1935 that went through this part of Cuba,” explains Savariego, who at that young age pondered the future and told his parents that he was going to become an engineer and one day convert this graveyard of industry into a great factory.

Savariego was later sent to the United States to attend school, excelled in college, and struck out on his own, and barely one year after graduation, started from scratch to build that dream.

Eventually, utilizing his skills at marketing and inventing, he was able to start a small company, eventually expanding the company he started in McGregor to a plant deep in the heart of the Dallas - Fort Worth Metroplex and a production facility in Irving that has been the envy of his peers worldwide.

PHOTOS: Sam Savariego in his office (left) and The Savariego family, with Sam at age 5 (lower right).



THE MCGREGOR PLANT owned by Delta Brands, Inc. remains shut down after 10 years, even though its location is prime for shipping to markets below the Equator. Today, 300 DBI manufacturing jobs have been sent to Romania and The Czech Republic to keep the business alive.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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• EXPORTING JOBS ... Continued From Page 5

son DBI is still around is because of, “modesty aside,” its creativity: “I created a steel making process that will be known in the industry as BESTRIP, a process that saves more than 90 percent of the energy used to make steel and that makes subsequent processes less costly while at the same time, increasing production, and also, again, saving more energy.”

A plant is currently being constructed in Brownsville that will be the model and training grounds of future plants to be built around the country, he added. The project is almost completed and will be fully tested by the end of this summer.

“U.S. industry needs an export credit

agency that assists in leveling the playing field, so that they can be competitive. That is the reason that Ex-Im Bank was founded in 1934 and no other reason,” said Sam Savariego. “Maintaining our industry prosperity is not only a matter of national security but also insures the future of new generations.”

For the time being, DBI’s McGregor Plant will lay vacant of workers yet aligned with trees planted outside by the people of McGregor, so that President Bush can have a pleasant drive to Waco Airport from Crawford down Hwy. 84.

“Let’s create jobs through exports, and let’s not hide behind the trees,” said Sam Savariego.

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'Memo-Gate' Hearing Ends With Call For Full Inquiry

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A month and a half after the so-called "Downing Street Memo" was published in the SUNDAY TIMES in England, 20 U.S. House Democrats held a hearing last Thursday that ended in a call for Congress to open an inquiry into accusations that President Bush was committed to war on Iraq months before he said so publicly.

The congressional inquiry would look into whether the President should be impeached for misleading the nation.

John Bonifaz, co-founder of AfterDowningStreet.org., said the American people have a right to know if intelligence was indeed "fixed" around policy to persuade the U.S. to war, so says the now-famous Downing Street memo, named after the Downing Street office of British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Reporting that Bush wanted to go to war, a top Blair adviser wrote the secret memo on July 23, 2002. The war began March 19, 2003.

Both the U.S. President and British Prime Minister have denied misleading the public.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee organized Thursday's hearing on the memo in a Capitol basement room. A group of anti-war activists and former CIA analyst Ray McGovern and former U.S. ambassador to Africa Joe Wilson also attended the hearing that Conyers deemed a "forum" in light of Republicans refusing to participate.

Early Thursday evening, Rep. Conyers delivered to the White House petitions signed by 105 members of Con-

gress and some 540,000 signatures gathered by email with the help of MoveOn Pa. The petitions sought President Bush's answer about the memo.

The Congressional Research Service and the Department of Defense reports that the official cost of the war up until last week is \$208 billion and the lives of 1,704 U.S. troops.

Organized by Code Pink and Progressive Democrats of America, a protest with hundreds of people calling for an investigation into the Downing Street Memo descended on Lafayette Park across from the White House late Thursday afternoon.

A handful of counter-protestors from the D.C. chapter of Freerepublic.com gathered nearby to support the President and called the Downing Street memo "much ado about nothing."

U.S. Media Delay

The mainstream U.S. media delayed covering the Downing Street Memo a month after the Sunday Times in London first reported it May 1, 2005.

Only two questions about the memo out of about 940 other questions had been raised at White House briefings since it first surfaced.

Knight Ridder newspapers and EDITOR & PUBLISHER gave the memo the earliest U.S. coverage, although a few columnists reported it soon after the British press. USA TODAY reported the memo for the first time last week and also noted, "None of the stories appeared on the newspapers' front pages. Several other major media outlets, including the evening news programs on ABC, CBS, and NBC, had not said a word about the document before Tues-

day."

The ombudsmen of THE WASHINGTON POST, THE NEW YORK TIMES and National

Public Radio have raised questions as to why their news services failed to give attention the minutes.

More Downing Street Memos Surface

LONDON — More "secret" or "confidential" Downing Street memos have surfaced, totaling eight in all, regarding President Bush's and Prime Minister Tony Blair's pre-war intentions involving invading Iraq.

One of the 2002 memos notes that when Blair's chief foreign policy adviser dined with Condoleezza Rice six months after Sept. 11, the then-U.S. national security adviser was intent on discussing a "regime change" in Iraq — more than a year before the invasion.

In one of the memos, British Foreign Office political director Peter Ricketts says the U.S. "scrambling to establish a link between Iraq and al-Qaida is so far frankly unconvincing. It sounds like a grudge between Bush and Saddam."

The memos, consisting of a total of 36 pages, were first obtained by Michael Smith, a British reporter.

According to Toby Dodge, an Iraq expert teaching at Queen Mary College, University of London, "Soon after 9/11 happened, the starting gun was fired for the invasion of Iraq."

'Freedom Fries' Republican Leads Call For Troop Withdrawal Timetable From Iraq

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Walter B. Jones Jr., Republican from North Carolina, led the way last week by introducing a bipartisan resolution calling for President Bush to come up with a plan by the end of this year to withdraw the troops from Iraq, and for the withdrawal to start no later than October of 2006.

Rep. Jones became famous for changing the name of the french fries in the congressional cafeteria to "Freedom Fries" when France came out against invading Iraq. He also represents Marine Corps base Camp Lejeune, where many new recruits go for basic training, so it

is significant that he is publicly breaking with Bush policy.

"This is how quagmires like this end," said Darcy Scott Martin, representing TrueMajorityACTION in an email. "First the public support drops, and polls already show Americans' support for this war declining. Next, Congress begins to pressure the administration to come up with a way out. That is what this resolution does. Finally, if the administration continues to fight calls for withdrawal, Congress pulls the plug on the money. That is how the war in Vietnam eventually ended."

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Mark Mounger Made Other People's Work Better

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Politicians, generals and other outlaws get books wrote about them. Really good people, you never hear from."

This week I heard Mark Mounger has been dead for a year.

While running down this road, things we meant to go back and pick up later are gone before we get to wherever we thought we were going.

You probably never heard of Mark Mounger.

If he'd lived to double his half century, you probably never would have heard of him.

Mark lived his life making other people's work better.

He was a copy editor for the SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS.

He put pictures and stories on pages. Doesn't seem like much of a job, does it?

Anybody can do it.

There are few jobs tougher to do well.

Writing is simple. You just put what you know on your fingertips, then shake it loose.

Getting people to read your finger-painting is the trick.

For that, you need a copy editor.

Someone who moves your words around until they make you look less like a moron, then arranges it on paper so that people notice.

And then takes your abuse because he deigned to alter your pristine prose.

Someone who makes things better without the need to plaster his name all over it.

Think about the monumental works that we consider great.

If there's a name on them at all, it's usually somebody you have to look up.

So let me tell you about one of those somebodies, and maybe a little of who he was will rub off on you.

Hell, maybe it'll even get a little bit on me.

To me, he was always a kid.

We were veterans of the TEXARKANA GAZETTE in the late 70s, a bad paper in a worse town.

Texarkana was the junction of every bad road in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

It was the worst place to live, and the best place to run a newspaper.

Heroin, hot cars, hookers and homicide.

Sleazy breakfast thrown on your doorstep before sunup.

We had a newsroom full of Yankees with impressive journalism degrees and no idea where they were. Unfortunately his prized writers thought playing 'possum was acting like a marsupial and a whiskey cook was some kind of chef. And they all wanted to write stories about dreading sundown or the Fouk monster, so we needed editors.

The managing editor was an emigré from a culturally superior northern clime who believed he could change State Line Avenue to West Side Drive with a three-part series, and for some reason couldn't get anybody with any sense to work for him, other than whiskey-soaked cynics who wore Mickey Mouse ties and made fun of the way he talked.

But I did have a few favors out, so I called the DALLAS MORNING NEWS and asked for a lead on any copy editors who knew the difference between a hamster and a ham hock.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



There was this youngster just graduated from North Teacher's stuck doing the NEWS sports agate, taking box scores off the wire service, and shooting up sports junkies. He needed some real desk experience before he could get anywhere with the metros, so I tricked him into Texarkana.

He had a face as fresh as a yellow meat watermelon and a copy pencil sharp enough to cut one.

God a'mighty those writers hated him.

Of course after he got through with their literary masterpieces, none of them ever looked better, and eventually those with any pits under their peach fuzz began to get the message.

He made them better writers.

We were vampires, children of the night, making music from a Goss rotary web press and getting the world's woes onto a circulation truck headed for Broken Bow, Okla. or Arkadelphia.

But Mark Mounger never lost sight of a seemingly contradictory newspaper axiom:

This time tomorrow they'll wrap fish in it. So first, make your deadline. We ain't gonna hang it in the Louvre.

But just as important, everything can be better. You just have to know how to hold back time.

It was that second one that stuck with me.

Mark had that effect on people.

You can make it better.

Or you can be a jerk.

And that was another Mark Moungerism.

Everybody's a jerk sometime, but there are those who choose to be jerks.

With deliberation and careful planning.

We worked together off and on for a decade or more, and he never stopped doing his best to try and make it better.

Even when he became embittered by management (and that's easy to do in this business; after all, we're trading on the credibility and integrity commodities markets) Mark Mounger never lost his taste for quality.

And he never complained about the work. Maybe the job, but never what he did.

I never once heard him complain about the diabetes that he fought from his childhood.

He was glad to be alive, not sorry to be sick.

We slowly lost touch over the years.

After I became a teacher, he came up from San Antonio and spoke to my classes.

I don't know whether they listened, but I remember the one thing he said about why we do this.

"I learn something new every day," he said. "I am constantly reading things I didn't know, or revising the things I thought I knew. I don't know of any other

profession that requires one to do that."

This isn't the way life is supposed to happen.

I was not Mark's mentor or anything like it. He was, if I had to put a finger on it, a successor, a valued colleague a decade or more behind me and an assurance that good men will continue the

struggle after you are gone.

Such men are not, we make ourselves believe, to precede you.

Once I had a friend who saw his duty as making things better.

Most people never heard of him.

Many will miss Mark Mounger and never know it.



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Book Burning Is Next

The U.S. House did not go far enough last Wednesday when it voted 238-187 to block part of the USA PATRIOT Act that had allowed the government to investigate the reading habits of terror suspects. The Congressional action to block, likely to be vetoed by President Bush, is still replete with negative implications on First Amendment rights.

The potential for invasion of privacy of innocent library patrons and Internet users is very real, reeking of a Big Brother mindset.

One of the biggest threats, however, deals with the likelihood that libraries and other sanctuaries of knowledge will begin to limit their selections to those that fit squarely into the myopic neo-fascist philosophy — alas, modern-day bookburning.

Do you become marked as a potential terrorist if you read a book on bomb building or if you read about Middle Eastern religions?

What if you check out a magazine that carries a story about the negative aspects of war? Does this make you a potential terrorist?

What if you choose a book on psychology, or mental afflictions? Could this be construed as you being unstable and leaning toward terrorism?

If you read about Nazis and Adolph Hitler, does this mean that you are planning to walk in his footsteps?

History bulges with acts of terrorism. Dare you read these texts lest you be targeted as a terrorist yourself?

No, the rightist, corporate movement is determined to censor your ability to obtain, digest without fear of repurcussion, and learn about what is really happening in the world. It's the removal of comparisons. It is locking minds tightly into a vise.

The real culprit here is fear.

Their fear that you will learn too much.

Your fear to trek into the world of enlightenment, for that torture cell in Cuba has your name on it.

You already see the constriction of education in schools, where often history is rewritten to become politically correct, where student learning is channeled into a narrow rivulet and shackled onto a single-minded test. It's a system of dumbing-down our children by removing well-rounded strategies of edification — placing their futures on the dumbed-down political frenzies of the rightist elite.

The 187 House members who voted to retain the PATRIOT Act elements that constrict the First Amendment have actually taken exception to the veracity of the U.S. Constitution and are attempting to obliterate it, which is an act of treason and should be punished as any other treasonous act.

This is that serious!

Not only should Congress vote to ditch all of the 15 PATRIOT Act laws subject to the sunset provision, they should examine the entire document (which would be the first time for many in Congress), and remove any and all elements that might weaken the U.S. Constitution. To not do so is, in itself, an act of terrorism against the United States of America.

Unfortunately, when you elect fanatical ideologues to office, you can expect acts of repression, if not outright idiocy.

To quote Rep. Tom Feeney (R-Fla.): "If there are terrorists in libraries studying how to fly planes, how to put together biological weapons, how to put together chemical weapons, nuclear weapons ... we have to have an avenue through the federal court system so that we can stop the attack before it occurs."

Perhaps someone should tell Rep. Feeney that one need not check out a library book to read it, since the congressman has obviously never been in a library. But what the paranoid monomaniac is really saying is hardly humorous.

He is saying that everyone is a potential terrorist.

— Written By W. Leon Smith and Don M. Fisher

CODEPINK:

Making The World Stop And Look

By SUSAN VAN HAITSMSA
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The handmade sign posted in the front of the bus read, "Bell broken. Please call 'next stop'."

The book in my bag that morning happened to be the collection of essays, "Stop the Next War Now," produced by CODEPINK. The coincidence brought to mind political cartoons showing an oblivious George W. Bush driving a vehicle labeled 'USA' or 'Iraq liberation' or 'No Child Left Behind' straight toward a cliff's edge. Warning bells are not working. The system is broken and passengers have got to call out.

I had purchased the CODEPINK book when co-editor Jodie Evans and founding member Diane Wilson were in town during their book tour. They spoke about actions, arrests, and travels that brought them closer to women in countries where the USA is at war now or threatening the next one. Describing with humor and candor the already legendary creativity distinguishing CODEPINK actions, Evans said, "If we're going to be an alternative, let's be somewhere people want to go." Wilson, a fourth-generation Texas shrimper from the Gulf Coast whose gutsy environmental and anti-war activism has landed her in jail several times explained, "The only thing that stops you in an action is yourself."

Riding the bus, staring at the "Bell broken" sign, I was thinking about an action planned for later that day in Austin by local CODEPINK people. It was to be a demonstration at an advertising firm that creates recruitment ads for the Air Force that feature young children. The protest was timed for that evening because the ad agency was hosting a reception to announce a book project called, "The Amazing Faith of Texas," an effort to promote religious tolerance and explore common ground by focusing on five core values shared by faith groups in the state. CODEPINK wanted to dramatize the contradictions inherent in celebrating Charity, Humility, Forgiveness, Faith and Compassion while selling the military to children.

Reception goes and several lanes of drivers stuck in rush-hour traffic in front of the ad agency were greeted by about a dozen women, men, and children carrying signs and dressed mostly in hot pink. Two CODEPINK women decided to risk arrest by entering the reception area and holding their banner near the podium where the agency's president was scheduled to speak about the book project. Recalling Diane Wilson's challenge, I decided to join them. Turning the tables, the company president cited First Amendment rights, welcomed us, and invited us to stay and distribute fliers to the crowd. For one moment while a CODEPINK woman did a quick errand, the president offered to hold her end of the banner, which read, "How can we create peace when we profit from war?"

As part of the event, local religious leaders had been invited to offer brief reflections on each of the five shared aspects of faith. With the CODEPINK banner serving as the elephant in the room, none of the five speakers addressed in their prepared statements either the war or the militarism that feeds it.

But if the speakers that evening avoided the opportunity to talk about war in light of Charity, Humility, Compassion, Faith and Forgiveness, the women and men who contribute essays to "Stop the Next War Now" explore these themes with eloquence and directness. Contributors include journalists, teachers, politicians, businesswomen and artists. Many have experienced the effects of war firsthand.

"A Mother's Plea" by peace activist and educator, Nurit Peled-Elhanan opens with a dedication to a 13-year-old Palestinian girl, Iman El-Hamas. Peled-Elhanan's only daughter, Smadar, was killed at the same age by a Palestinian suicide bomber.

She writes, "Death has created a new identity for me and has given me a new voice. ... This new identity and voice transcend nationalities, religions, and even time; the identity overshadows all other identities and the voice deafens all the other voices I have been given by life. My little girl was killed just because she was born Israeli, by a young man who felt hopeless to the point of murder and suicide just because he was born a Palestinian. ... There she lies, alongside her murderer, whose blood is mingled with hers on Jerusalem's stones ... there they both lie, deceived ... And they were both deceived because the world goes on living as if their blood had never been shed. Both are victims of so-called leaders who keep on playing their murderous games, using our children as their puppets and our grief as fuel to continue with their vindictive campaigns."

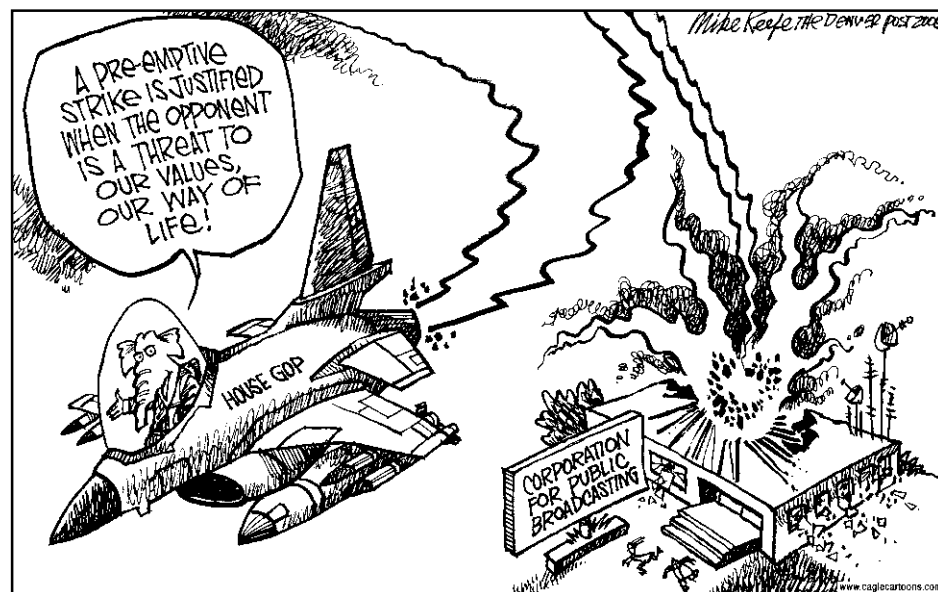
"... I have come here to ask you: please help us save the children that are left to us. Help us make the world stop for a moment to look at the small body of Iman, pierced by 20 bullets, and at the 21st hole at her smooth temple and ask with us, Why does that streak of blood rip the petal of her cheek?"

These closing words of Peled-Elhanan's appeal should have rung like bells in the hall in Austin where folks pondered a book about religious tolerance while tolerating military advertising to children. Attendees had to have noticed the two women in pink calling out, "Next stop. Stop the next war now."

Susan Van Haitsma is active with Nonmilitary Options for Youth in Austin, Texas. She can be reached at (jeffjweb@sbcglobal.net).



Susan Van Haitsma



House Bill Threatens To Cut Public Television Funding

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The House Appropriations Committee last Thursday approved cutting funds to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting by \$100 million, or 25 percent, starting in October.

The funding cut still must be passed by the full House and Senate.

One less than 50 federal programs are also slated for elimination in this bill drafted the Ohio Republican Rep. Ralph Regula.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting provides federal funds to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), a

nonprofit organization operated by 348 public television stations in the United States.

PBS, the home of notable children's television programs like "Sesame Street" and popular documentaries, has been threatened to be defunded by congressional Republicans in the past.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich 10 years ago attempted to privatize PBS by eliminating its federal funding.

This year, PBS's news shows like "Now" have been accused of having a liberal bias — a charge the PBS president has denied.

Public Citizen Urges U.S. Mayors To Oppose Water Privatization

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) gathers in Chicago for its annual meeting, Public Citizen last week urged the organization to strengthen its commitment to protecting municipal water systems with public oversight and accountability, and not to hand control of the systems to private water companies.

In a letter sent to more than 40 mayors serving in the conference leadership, Public Citizen urged support for proposals to establish federal trust funds to finance water and wastewater infrastructure, such as the safe water trust fund that was recently proposed to the U.S. House of Representatives.

With many cities struggling to get the necessary funding to maintain and upgrade existing water infrastructure, private water companies are eyeing mayors as a new business target. They are lobbying the USCM's water arm, the Urban Water Council, to convince it that privatized water would be a cost-efficient solution to local budget crises. And it appears to be working.

Instead of enthusiastically supporting the establishment of federal trust funds to address the nation's massive clean and safe water infrastructure needs, the USCM reserves its strongest support for a corporate-backed proposal to lift the cap on private activity bonds, a tax-free financing option, effectively encouraging privatization through cheap financing for corporations at the expense of U.S. taxpayers.

"These private water providers are taking advantage of local officials who

are desperate to keep their water systems up and running," said Wenonah Hauter, director of Public Citizen's Water for All campaign. "But these companies exist to make money off our water systems, not to help mayors or consumers with clean and affordable water."

In a report, Public Citizen details the pitfalls of privatization in jurisdictions throughout the United States and its territories, including not only better-known examples such as Atlanta, Stockton, New Orleans, and Puerto Rico, but in more than a dozen other cities from coast to coast.

Private water companies view federal financial assistance for water and wastewater infrastructure as a "subsidy" that gives cities an unfair competitive advantage over private water companies. They oppose increased federal funding for water and wastewater systems, in the hope that the more financially troubled a city's system, the more receptive city leaders will be to ceding control over that system to a private operator. But privatized water systems often result in higher rate increases for consumers, backlogged maintenance and repair requests, poor customer service, and a loss of local oversight and control.

"So-called public-private partnerships don't exist on an equal playing field. We've seen too many examples of private companies making money and giving the city nothing in return," said Hauter. "Privatization of such an essential public resource is doomed to fail because water is not a commodity."

Wonderful Stuff To Come

When we were kids, we all looked forward with great anticipation to the fabulous life of peace, leisure, and relative wealth that awaited us in the forthcoming 21st Century.

Marvels of stupendous magnitude and once unthinkable wonder sprouted up all around.

There were SuperLiners, massive trains that stood three stories tall, unequalled in their brilliance with polished silver bodies that reflected each individual ray of the sun. General Motors assured us that these new masters of the rails, built just a stone's throw from my boyhood home at their Electro-Motive Division, would not only be fast, but would be the cat's pajama's in comfort and luxury.

We kids just thought they were "neat."

Dwight David Eisenhower was our very dull, Wonder Bread and white picket fences Republican President from 1953 till 1961. Heck, he was a war hero, so let's make him the Prez. "I Like Ike" was the cry. He won World War II for the Allies, at least in Europe, without ever leaving his office – or his female driver's... well, that's for another day.

Ike was convinced that Hitler had a great idea with the Autobahn: Under the guise of building a high-speed roadway providing relatively easy access to anywhere in Germany, the Nazis constructed an infrastructure for their military unmatched anywhere on Earth.

Thus was the Interstate system born in the United States. As far as anyone knew, this great new superhighway system was coming, ultimately linking virtually every American via safe, smooth state-of-the-art roadways. This beat the hell out of vacation trips down "blue highways," two-lane annoyances of snail's pace speed limits and stop signs in every jerkwater town. Added bonuses to the Interstates were the expressways that linked suburban areas to major cities.

All in all, this whole project was "really, really neat."

What fools we mortals be – Ike never would have committed to the Interstate project without its utility as a way to move the military as far and fast as possible.

When hundreds of thousands of men returned to civilian life, many of them had considerable muster pay coming. It seemed as though each wanted two things above all else: A house to call his own; and a shiny, sleek new car, preferably with a powerful engine.

The housing boom was unbelievable. Suburbs sprouted up where fields and wooded areas had stood since the passing of the Ice Age. Larger companies built subdivisions to provide low-cost homes for their new and returning employees. Having seen other parts of the country and world, veterans were no longer as reluctant to move away from the family homestead.

As a result of technological advancements being necessitated by the war, numerous new industries, with previously unheard of opportunities, had arisen. Computers had been applied by the military with astounding results. Giant leaps were made in electronics technology. The uses for plastics



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

seemed endless.

Of course, let's not forget the evolution of weaponry during the 1940s and beyond.

There were jobs for everyone who wanted to work, and prosperity for all.

Best of all, we could get into our huge steel and chrome mini-tanks and waste sinful amounts of fossil fuels tooling down the new Interstate to, well, wherever. Prior to 1960, Detroit produced one size of automobile – BIG. Heavy metal. The more chrome, the better.

What? No V-8? You WIMP!

Oh, Chrysler and Ford made their share of big cruisers. But it was GM that put out the cars that were the ultimate for luxurious rollin' down the Interstates. Massive hunks of molten inorganic matter, stamped, bolted and welded, then painted. Like a lady of the night, GM often used garish color combinations to attract the male buyer. They put huge hunks of chrome all over the cars, gleaming in the sun by day, sparkling with city lights at night. And lady me, my-oh-my those *fin's*!

The interiors of GM cars were thick and plush and rivaled those of the finest furniture maker anywhere. Their dashboards were replete with knobs and buttons, doodads and folderol, some of which looked good but did absolutely nothing. We were treated to all kinds of creature comforts from the engineers at GM: In-dash radio with a rear speaker; power steering and brakes; automatic transmission; power windows; power seats; under-dash record player.

Since having the windows open at 80 miles per hour or faster sucks, GM made us all get (or at least want) a little item of optional equipment called factory-installed air-conditioning. In some cars this could even be upgraded to "Climate Control."

And with the line-up of powerful V-8 engines available from GM, these cars took to the Interstates like they were designed on the same drawing board.

We kids, and apparently many adults, thought of the GM cars as "super keen neat."

Now, upon taking office Ike had selected as his Secretary of Defense one Charles Erwin Wilson. Was Wilson chosen because he was a military veteran? Why on God's green and bomb-scarred Earth would West Point alum Ike, General of the Army and Commander-In-Chief, want a military veteran running *his* military?

Wilson knew less than ant droppings about running the military. He got the job because he was president of General Motors. He knew how to build motor vehicles. He knew how to build military equipment. He knew just what kind of a roadway would be necessary to accommodate both types of vehicles.

As Secretary of Defense, Wilson could order equipment from his own

company.

Having the inside track on the Interstate system would give Wilson's company the edge on how to engineer its automobiles. (There seems to be a real good chance they *were* designed on the drawing board.)

What Wilson knew best was the military-industrial complex. He's the guy who's been quoted as saying, "What's good for General Motors is good for America." In Wilson's spin version it has been documented as, "...for years I thought what was good for the country was good for General Motors and vice versa..." You can pick your favorite version, but I buy the former before the latter.

Well, GM got its wish and became the largest automaker in the world. Now they've gotten the old newspaper delivered to their front door wrapped up like a present. Inside is a huge fish with the rusting hulk of a 1959 Cadillac Coupe deVille stuffed inside, fins and all.

Nobody wants to buy their cars anymore, at least not in the numbers GM execs would like. Why not? First, they're dull, dull, dull. Sure, GM makes reliable cars that are comfortable. If you're past retirement age and you like big cars that use a lot of gas. Their smaller cars are uncomfortable as all get out for anyone over the age of 28 and heavier than 150 lbs. They're still topheavy with bling, and GM has been beaten to death by engineering advancements from Chrysler, Ford, and the imports.

Plus, GM cars are ridiculously overpriced and, often, cheesy.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s we children were filled with all kinds of hope for a richer future. I even think that many of our parents believed the fantasy, or wanted to. A few examples of what we were expecting but have yet to achieve:

We were treated to demonstrations of picture phones, which have only sort of come into existence as Internet adjuncts. Dick Tracy had his two-way wrist radio, and we have cellphones. He then got a two-way wrist-TV, so we're almost there with the picture cellphone.

By the end of the 20th Century man was supposed to have established colonies in space. If not on Mars, then at least on the Moon. Ah, the economics of space exploration. And inadequate funding for NASA. This would go a lot faster were private industry allowed more leeway.

Nobody should be starving on the planet anymore. Overpopulation should not be a problem. Gosh, maybe if we started colonizing elsewhere...

Doctors and scientists working together to discover wonderful new drugs so people would not have to suffer lingering and debilitating illnesses, or they could die painlessly and with dignity. Unfortunately, many within their ranks are afraid to do what people of science are expected to do – explore new territories. And throughout the world, not least the U.S., we're saddled with politicians who detain the forward movement of medical and scientific discovery based upon their own unreasonable and unrealistic 9th Century evangelical stubbornness.

We figured to have autos, or at least some mode of personal and family transportation, that were not made of metal. These would not depend upon fossil fuels in order to function. We also figured rubber tires that wear out would have been passé. The automotive and oil industries are just too big for radical changes such as those.

As for peace, we tried that until General Ike committed us to take the mess in VietNam over from the French. The quagmire we got into there should have been a lesson to America and the world that war ain't good for nothin'. With Jimmy Carter as President that concept started to come to roost, but toward the end he got shafted in Iran.

Bill Clinton kept things relatively quiet for his eight years in the White House. Every time he did flex America's muscles the Conservatives jumped up and down on his head. Of course, whenever he chose not to put the war machine into attack mode the Conservatives attacked him. Clintonbashers are still griping that he didn't go al Qaeda hunting after the USS Cole incident. Get off it already, people!

When did we backslide into a war nation? Openly, it was on Nov. 22, 1963. The day they killed John F. Kennedy was the day we lost any chance to stay out of stupid wars. All wars are stupid, but some can't be helped. World War I was a stupid, stupid war. WWII could not be avoided, and the U.S. was stupid to have waited so long to get involved (at least in Europe). But hey, our big moneybags were in tight with Adolf, so we couldn't stick our noses in too soon.

With JFK's assassination we lost an eye for the future. The nation lost a major chunk of its vitality and youth. We spiraled down into doldrums and didn't come out of them until the election of 1976. By then it was too late, the military-industrial complex had taken control. Americans really began to lose our grip on the Country the day they started to plot Kennedy's death, and the deal was sealed with Bobby Kennedy's assassination.

There was a period of cool water and fresh air during the 1990s with the Clinton Administration, but the Conservatives did everything they could to ruin the good feelings then, too.

I couldn't believe it when George W. Bush beat Senator John McCain and the others for the Republican nomination in 2000. I didn't buy it when it was guesstimated that Junior Georgie had been "voted" into office in 2000. I found it a travesty when the Supremes allowed the Florida vote to go to Dubya uncontested, making him the first installed president in U.S. history.

It was unconscionable when Junior George actually went ahead with his plot to rain death on Iraq to save them from their dictatorial leader, considering we have our own dictator in Herr Karl Rove.

After everything he's screwed up, and all the speciousness and knavery, it is beyond me how enough people could actually vote for Dubya in 2004 so the machines registered him winner... again.

That was, until I saw the interviews with the members of the Michael Jackson jury, each one more functionally incapable of reasoned thought than the next. There sat 12 people who were a snapshot of precisely why our great nation is right down the dumper with that Quran.

— Guest Commentary —

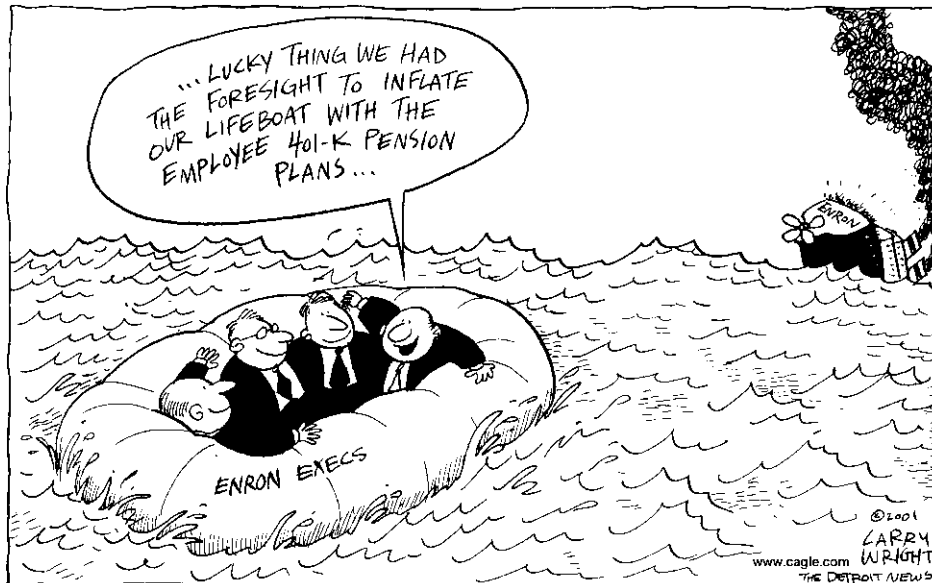
Eroding An American Dream: The Disappearing Pension Fund

By TRISH BOWCOCK
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Two years ago my mother had a stroke. She was 71 years old. She is doing well, but needs a bit of help with day-to-day life. Her primary source of income is from Delta Airlines. She receives survivor's retirement benefits. Delta Airlines is threatening to file bankruptcy so it can stop paying benefits to people, like my mother.

My parents entered adulthood in the early 1950s. They lived in accordance with societal prescriptions. They married while Dad served as an Air Force pilot in the Korean War. After his service, Dad joined Delta Airlines. That was in 1955. He was part of a team, staying with Delta for 30 years. He was granted many promotions and retired when mandated by federal law. Mom was a traditional housewife. They had four children. Mom took care of us. Dad worked. We followed the American Dream, acquiring a little more each year. Last year Dad died. Mom now receives a portion of Dad's pension. If Congress allows Delta Airlines to dump its unfunded pension obligation, most of Mom's retirement income will dry up.

My sister asks, "what will become of Mom?" I do not know. Somehow, we will manage. There is a government bailout program for victims of companies defaulting on pension promises, but it only pays a tiny portion of previous benefits. And, the federal government says the program is running out of money. We could raid our own retirement savings to take care of Mom. But where will that



leave us financially, when we can no longer work? Financial security doesn't seem so secure any more.

Our family's predicament exemplifies the demise of an American Dream. We played by the rules, planning, avoiding debt, working hard, paying taxes and saving. Yet at 73 years my mother is facing a potential financial crisis. Her aging children could cover the loss, but only by jeopardizing their own future financial security. There are thousands of Americans just like us. We watch as our financial security is threatened. We are not slackers. We do not seek a handout. It is not our fault.

But, blame can and should be placed.

Our federal elected officials have sanctioned policies and laws allowing corporations to under-fund pension plans. They have also created financial rewards when these corporations later default on these under-funded plans. The promise to pay retirees disappears with the magic of bankruptcy. Ironically, Congress "reformed" bankruptcy laws earlier this year. But instead of restricting corporate ability to renege on promises to retirees, Congress attacked alleged individual abusers of the bankruptcy system. After Bankruptcy Reform, our pension worries remain. But, at least we can rest easy knowing our

Bush Must Be Held Accountable

By HADI JAWAD
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

George W. Bush must think himself invincible. Even when there is a smoking gun memo, the president seems to dodge the bullet.

A memo leaked to the LONDON TIMES in early May by a high ranking British official indicates that Bush was committed to invade Iraq eight months before the actual March 2003 invasion. A more disturbing disclosure in the memo is that leaders in Washington were aware the case for war was thin; therefore, 'facts' and 'intelligence' would have been manipulated to "fit the policy."

Though the decision to attack Iraq had already been made, the war still had to be sold to the American public. Demands by Bush that Iraq allow weapons inspectors, speeches at the U.N. by Powell and Bush and pursuit of a Security Council Resolution to legitimize the attack had to be carefully choreographed. The public dutifully bought the story. The memo disclosure caused an uproar in the U.K. but in the U.S., nary a whimper from an apathetic public and no questions were raised by an obsequious media.

The U.S. led attack on Iraq was unnecessary, illegal, and immoral. The war has exacted a staggering price in resources and lives with nothing to show for it except a broken Iraq and countless broken lives. If American leaders are unwilling to accept the wrongs that have been perpetrated on the people of Iraq by their actions, then the only hope left is the American public. Obviously, the national media has voluntarily abdicated its responsibility as their watchdog in favor of the

more comfortable position of being the government's lapdog. Americans have spoken clearly in the past, as during the Vietnam War, and their collective voice changed the course of history.

From The
**Crawford
Peace
House**

A starting point to restore U.S. credibility in the world would be for Americans to initiate serious conversation about several issues simultaneously: What sort of mental gymnastics one has to indulge in to accept the death of more than 100,000 Iraqis killed in the war as unavoidable roadkill? How much collateral damage is acceptable? How many U.S. soldiers have to perish before we say, enough is enough? How is it possible that the thoroughly debunked casus belli-justification for war offered by the Bush Administration, Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, has suddenly become irrelevant? With gaping holes in the administration's story are slogans like "stay the course" and "finish the job" desperate attempts to deny culpability in turning a stable Iraq into a failed state?

There are not many good options left in Iraq except what the Iraqis themselves have indicated they fervently desire: a swift withdrawal of all foreign troops from their lands, absolute control of their oil resources, and a strong military that provides them security in a dangerous part of the world.

If the people of America lead, the leaders will follow and both nations will be restored to their rightful place in the family of nations.

— Hadi Jawad is a member of the Board at the Crawford Peace House (www.crawfordpeacehouse.org).

freeloading neighbor won't be able to file for bankruptcy, even if experiencing a financial crisis through huge medical bills incurred from a catastrophic illness.

Perhaps our elected officials in Washington D.C. would like to explain to my mother how the laws they enact are jeopardizing her financial security. Or perhaps, as a gesture of kindness, they would like to donate their personal federally guaranteed retirement money to the U.S. Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation to cover the losses of the thousands of people just like us, who are now facing financial insecurity. People just like us, who are now facing financial insecurity. After all, it is their policies and laws that have eroded our system and created this crisis. And, indeed it is a crisis.

CORRECTIONS, CLARIFICATIONS

Navajo Aid Correction

In last Wednesday's issue of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, an error was made in the article "Energy Wars: The Navajo Strike Back."

According to Larry Martinez of the Office of Navajo Uranium Workers, the Navajo miners did indeed receive funding through the RECA to a total of \$133 million from 1990 to the present. The U.S. Department of Justice allocated \$93 million, and the U.S. Department of Labor appropriated \$40 million to certain victims of uranium exposure.

This correction was verified on Friday, June 17.

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

Emissions Correction

In last Wednesday's issue of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, an error was made in the article "Energy Wars: The Navajo Strike Back."

According to Frank Maisano, lawyer for Sithe Global, LCC, of Houston, the proposed Desert Rock plant will emit 3,319 tons of SO₂ emissions, 3,325 tons of NO_x, 5,529 tons of CO, and 1,120 tons of PM₁₀.

"To place this into perspective, San Juan and Four Corners each emit about 70,000 and 50,000 tons of SO₂ and NO_x each respectively," he said. "So you can see, even using the same type of coal, our emissions will be radically lower."

Maisano added, "All 1,300 coal-fired power plants only contribute currently 48 tons of mercury in the atmosphere. The Bush Administration is proposing to reduce those emissions by 70 percent down to around 15 tons by 2018.

"Our mercury emissions will be virtually non-existent with the superior measures being taken to reduce SO_x and NO_x," Maisano continued. "In addition to those controls, though, which will likely capture 70 to 80 percent of the plants mercury emissions, this facility will also employ Activated Carbon Injection (ACI) systems that will reduce mercury emissions even further."

This correction was verified on Friday, June 17.

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

Mineral Water Makes CSI: Ashland Hard To Swallow

As you might've noticed, police dramas involving any type of forensic investigation are extremely popular right now. For those of you who aren't familiar with this type of crime show, it's when old-fashioned detective work—in combination with high-tech science—is conducted by really attractive people who would otherwise be getting into water balloon fights at the Playboy Mansion. This formula has proven so popular that every major network now carries at least one of these shows (Not counting the WB, which cancelled its plans for CSI: Pennsylvania after test audiences complained that watching Quaker detectives chase villains in pony carts was "really boring.")

In spite of this, talks are continuing about a new spin-off from the CSI franchise that would take place in Ashland, Ore., which, in real life, is home to the world's only forensic crime lab dedicated exclusively to cases involving wildlife.

For example: When a squirrel's death is deemed accidental after attempting to retrieve a loose walnut from Interstate 5 during the city's annual Shakespeare Festival, it takes a highly-trained forensic detective to unravel the ugly truth.

"Hmmm. Judging from this buzzard feather I found near the scene of the crime, I think the victim was PUSHED in front of that Volvo!"

Until recently, I was completely unaware of its free-flowing fountain that



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

spews naturally-occurring mineral water from an underground spring.

Apparently, this is a huge attraction that draws tourists from throughout the world for a chance to drink this mineral-rich water. It is also a huge attraction for Ashland residents, who come to watch tourists gag and then rub dry grass in their mouths after actually tasting the water that comes from the fountain. I'm not saying that everyone thinks it tastes bad; but there's a reason it's not in a squeeze bottle next to the Evian.

Which brings us back to the city's unique crime lab, and its potential as a new police drama. Although I'm not at liberty to divulge my source, I was able to get my hands on a page of script from the pilot episode — which opens with David Hasselhoff standing over a 60-foot-long indentation left in the grass by what he deduces was a severely undernourished boa constrictor.

Hasselhoff: I want this area completely

sealed off. It's going to take a while to process this.

Coroner: What are you doing?

Hasselhoff: I'm going to sift through all 60 feet, starting here at this water faucet and all the way across the yard to the vegetable garden. I WILL find out who starved this poor snake and just left it out here to die.

Coroner: You DO understand that this was made by the garden hose after we

moved it, right?

Hasselhoff: Hmmm?

As you can see, there's plenty of potential here for some riveting television drama. Granted, it isn't Shakespeare. But I don't think it'll be hard to swallow.

Especially with a little mineral water.

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

Unwelcome Chinese Find Home In Texas

A Southern Pacific special pulled into the San Antonio station on June 15, 1917, and more than 400 Chinese nationals poured onto the platform for a peek at their new home.

The American Punitive Expedition failed to find Pancho Villa, but the foot-sore soldiers did not come back from Mexico empty-handed. Although the March 1916 attack on Columbus, N.M., went unavenged, Gen. John J. Pershing had nearly 3,000 refugees to show for his time and trouble.

Once the Army escorted them safely across the border, the Americans and Mexicans that made up the vast majority of exiles at least had someplace to go. Not so for 427 Chinese, who under U.S. law were about as welcome as the plague.

To stem the tide of Oriental immigration, Congress took the drastic step in 1882 of temporarily slashing to zero the quota for Chinese. This ban became permanent 20 years later.

In spite of this prohibition, Gen. Pershing refused to leave the helpless pariahs behind in Mexico, where their lives were in serious jeopardy, and insisted upon humanitarian grounds that they be allowed to enter the country. Immigration authorities reluctantly agreed to provide sanctuary but only until the danger passed down south.

The Chinese were held in quarantine in New Mexico, while Pershing looked for better accommodations. In his absence, William Tracy Page, an old friend, tended to the needs of the illegal aliens.

Just before he embarked for Europe and World War I, Pershing found jobs for the idle Chinese at military construction sites in the San Antonio area. After the mountain of paperwork was successfully scaled, the apprehensive Asians climbed aboard the train that carried them to Texas in June 1917.

The Army was anxious to build a new camp near Fort Sam Houston, but the land had to be cleared of an impenetrable growth of cactus and thorn bushes. According to experienced supervisors, the tough task would take at least three months.

To their astonishment, the Chinese finished the job in a mere five weeks. Hard at it by sunrise, the tireless foreigners labored late into the night by the light of the moon without asking for a penny of overtime.

The guest workers also showed they were model citizens. After toiling all day in the searing Lone Star sun, they spent their evenings studying English. They even contributed to local charities by taking up collections for the Red Cross and the poor at Christmastime.

As wartime construction wound down in the Alamo City, Page scrambled to locate other employment for his charges. At first he farmed out many to military installations in western Texas and New

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



Mexico, but at the end of the war the Chinese were working as far away as Arizona, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Retirement from the service in July 1919 did not diminish the responsibility Page felt for his displaced friends. He stayed in San Antonio and continued to act as their unpaid benefactor.

Meanwhile, the federal government moved to deport the Chinese. Since conditions had not improved in Mexico, they would be shipped back to their famine-ravaged homeland. When the secretary of war applied for the funds to finance the mass repatriation, Page rushed to Washington.

He talked two prominent attorneys into accepting the complicated case for free. After examining the options, the lawyers recommended a direct appeal to congress that called for granting the Chinese permanent residency as a reward for their patriotic participation in the war effort.

Page had no trouble enlisting Gen. Pershing in the cause. The famous commander of the victorious Allies played an indispensable part by opening the closed minds of several important politicians to the unpopular idea.

But the unscrupulous interference of an influence peddler threatened the entire enterprise. Charles Hille, a lawyer retained by well-meaning Chinese-Americans, tried to go through the back door to gain citizenship for the refugees.

Tipped off to Hille's questionable methods, the secretary of labor sent a subordinate to San Antonio to investigate the matter. Mistaking the Good Samaritan for the charlatan, the bureaucratic bloodhound reported that Page instead of the shyster was in it only for the money.

In spite of the confusion created by Hille as well as the outright hostility of federal officials, the Chinese resolution was passed by both houses of congress and signed by President Harding in November 1921. Included in the measure was the promise of full citizenship for the children of the long suffering exiles.

By February of the following year, the Chinese were free to start their new lives in America. More than half chose to stay in San Antonio, where they became industrious and respected members of the community.

"Best of This Week in Texas History"
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MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR

Hi,
I live way up here in Massachusetts.

A friend, who used to live in Texas, sent me the article "Depleted Uranium" and because I thought it was the best I had ever read about this subject, I stored it as an url in my webtv. Now - when I click on the URL - I see the article about DU is gone.

Is there any way at all of getting a copy of that article in print? It was a very fine piece about this heinous subject.

My next positive mention goes to the person who brought forth the article I read today about the Navajos and what a bum time they have been having (to put it very mildly!) for far too long a time.

-uranium mining and more - again.....
I am thrilled to pieces to find your online paper — I have had my webtv since 1997 - and my world has slowly opened up for me; it is never too late to learn more!

I am 75 and live on very little but when good quality online reading comes my way, I like to let the "Source" know about it!

With all good thoughts,
Cynthia Hollingsworth

To The Editor:

For the last 50 years or more the American public has been bombarded with attacks on political liberals. It is about time that these attacks are answered.

Spiro T. Agnew, that great American who barely avoided prison, sneeringly spoke of "pointy- head Liberals" and "do gooders". These and other epithets were used to deride and degrade the efforts of those people who have tried to improve the lot of ALL Americans.

Simply reading a dictionary, [something the right-wing seems unwilling to do] gives the true definition of a political liberal. For instance; my dictionary says a political liberal is "One who advocates more individual freedom and democracy and believes that the government can and should have a positive effect on the lives of the people." Further definitions say that "liberals are favorable or in accord with concepts of maximum individual freedom, especially as guaranteed by law and secured by government protection of civil liberties. Liberals favor or permit freedom of action; especially with respect to matters of personal belief or expression. And, encourage representational government rather than aristocracies, monarchies or dictatorships."

There is much more in that same vein, but I think that sums up the definition of a political Liberal.

Throughout the history of this nation, and the world, the conservatives have always defended the status-quo. That is what conservative means.

At the time of the birth of this nation the conservatives opposed independence from Britain. After independence they offered George Washington a crown to be king of the United States. Of course, he refused.

The conservatives also tried to set up a system of landed aristocracy. I can see it now: the "Duke of New York" or the "Margrave of the Ohio Valley," or maybe the "Count of New Mexico."

The liberals of that time opposed this. The conservatives of that time also thought the first ten amendments to the Constitution were unnecessary.

These same people thought that only MEN who owned a certain amount of property should be allowed the vote.

Again, the liberals opposed that. They said that any man, no matter how poor, should be allowed to vote in all elections.

Later the conservatives defended slavery and called Lincoln Republicans "radicals."

In the slave states a plantation owner was given an extra vote in state and local elections for every male slave he owned. That is the main reason public education in the south was almost non-existent.

Child labor laws were condemned by the right because they said they would destroy the nations ability to compete in foreign markets. Maybe you remember seeing photos of little boys in coal mines and little girls working in cotton mills.

Women's suffrage was condemned because women were considered to be unable to make any serious decisions. Workplace safety laws and the Pure Food and Drug Act were opposed by conservatives. Again because they said laws like that would hamper our ability to compete and that they were interfering with 'free enterprise.'

The conservatives called the Social Security and Wagner Payser Acts "socialist." They were violently opposed to the Civil Rights Act.

One piece of legislation opposed by the right has had a tremendous positive effect on the nation.

If you don't already know, it is the the Veteran's Readjustment Act, or the G. I. Bill of 1944.

Hundreds of thousands of young veterans were paid by the Federal government to further their educations. The bill passed congress by one vote!

I would bet that you or many people you know have benefitted from that legislation. They received educations and many, including myself, were able to buy homes with government subsidized, low interest loans.

The country has been repaid a thousand times over for that investment in the people. So, the next time you hear someone sneer at Liberals you might consider the source.

John Ford, Roswell

To The Editor:

The 'Downing Street Memo' is news by any definition. My favorite definition of news was offered as, "News is what people in power don't want you to know." This qualifies.

I urge you to venture into investigation of this memo, the information to which it alludes, and the extreme importance of determining the truth of those statements contained in the memo.

It's bad enough that a large proportion of the citizenry no longer trusts the accuracy or honesty of our election process; but for us no longer to trust the veracity of a sitting president is abhorrent.

Do your damndest, I say, and let the chips fall where they may. If the chips pile up around the impeachment option, I would be neither surprised nor sad.

Tim Slack, Newburgh IN

To The Editor:

Conservatives and the Bush gang believe they know the best way to honor our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. We must pretend that the wars are going fine and that progress is proceeding according to plan, that the insurgency will soon be routed and victory is just beyond the horizon.

When things went well last winter during the Iraqi elections, we were urged to

proclaim a victory and an imminent triumph just as the right wing pundits predicted. But this was not to be. Things began to deteriorate with the upsurge in car bombings, attacks and those on a suicide mission. We were told to ignore the bad news, no reference being made to the insurrection by these same pundits.

Although the ongoing carnage no longer gets the headlines; they being saved for Michael Jackson, Laci Peterson, Brittany Spears, et al. for the flickering attention paid to death's drumbeat is even too much for these enthusiasts.

Both Bush and Cheney evidently believe their own rhetoric and dismissal of all criticism. They won't let reality-based analysis intrude on their faith based perspective.

At his latest news conference Bush said he thinks (which is unusual for him) that the new government will be up to the task of defeating the insurgents. He was heartened to learn there are 40,000 Iraqi troops well trained to protect Baghdad. This turned out to be another inch tacked on to his nose. To him, every devastating attack serves as further proof that insurgents are desperate.

Cheney, the other bullshitter has the same optimistic approach. He told Larry King that he perceives major progress in Iraq, where they're in the death throes of the insurgency. This is in direct contradiction to earlier remarks made that the war might conclude by 2009, and we would have to have some kind of presence there over a period of time.

The American people now realize they were duped. Their initial support for the war was misplaced. Over the the past month polls have shown decreasing confidence in the way the administration is running the show, what with the cost in billions and the many lives lost, to say little of those maimed. Few are willing to say we are losing the war, but fewer agree with Bush and Cheney that things are going very well.

N.M.

To The Editor:

(George W. Batten, Jr., an editor of the BAYOU BANNER, the Sierra Club/Houston newsletter; recently sent a letter to President Bush and offered it for reprint in THE ICONOCLAST. The letter follows.)

Dear President Bush:

I have heard that you plan to gut the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and that you may make an announcement to that effect within 24 hours. My wife, Barbara, and I are dismayed by this. Four generations (that I know of) — that is, since before the year 1900 — of my family have been connected with the forests of the United States through businesses within the forest industry, recreation, conservation, and youth education and we have watched and supported efforts to protect parts of our heritage within the National Forest system.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule was developed over many years, beginning, I believe, with the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) program started during the term of President Reagan.

The Rule was developed as a truly grassroots effort by the American people — probably with more participation and support than any other such rule.

Here in Texas, your home state, in public hearings by the National Forest Service 28,713 persons offered their support for the Rule, with only 393 persons opposing it — 73 to 1 in FAVOR of the Rule — and in most cases people had to travel considerable distances to attend meetings.

Barbara and I and our adult daughter traveled 90 miles each way to attend the closest meeting where we could make official comments — and we live in Houston! The Forest Service did not make it

easy for those living in large metropolitan areas to attend such meetings.

Nationwide over 1,600,000 persons attended the 600 meetings, and the conclusion is the same: overwhelmingly, we, the people of The United States of America, want our roadless and other wilderness areas protected. I frequently work with youth. For over 20 years I was a scoutmaster. Now I take city-resident youth camping in wild areas, hoping that they will learn more about the environment and their heritage in the forests. I can tell them about my family's relationship with the forest, and how my father and I could go backpacking for a weekend in East Texas and not have to cross a road; now the youth I take into our National Forests in East Texas cross several roads in one day.

Tomorrow I will be taking a group of about 20 youth and several adults backpacking. What will I tell them? I will tell them about our National Forests:

- How our National Forest were started, in part, to protect our drinking water; but now the intrusion of roads into the forests and the deterioration of those roads has created an environment that threatens our drinking water.

- How the Congress and the President have thought so little of our National Forests that they have not provide enough funds to repair the roads that have deteriorated.

- How logging in the National Forests produces only four percent of the timber that is used in the United States, and that the sale of timber from the National Forests actually costs U.S. taxpayers large amounts of money — over one billion dollars per year — and that this, alone, should be sufficient justification to stop the logging.

- That the Roadless Area Conservation Rule applies to only 54 million acres, considerably less than one-third of the 192 million acres in

the National Forest System.

- That protection of the roadless and wilderness areas will save taxpayers money, and that remediation of forest areas with damaged environments will provide more jobs than logging in the National Forests.

- That protection of these areas will provide areas for preservation of wildlife — both fauna and flora; and that such wildlife should be protected for generations to come, not only for esthetic and moral reasons, but also since all living things are connected in the web of life, for practical reasons relating to the preservation of life as we know it on our spacecraft that we call Earth.

...the list goes on and on.

Yes, and one more thing: that, while I do not want to speak negatively about the President of the United States, I do think that he will be making a monstrous mistake if he guts the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

I will do this not in the spirit of criticizing you, the President, but because I believe it is important for them to understand how the world works: how it is difficult for the average citizen to understand everything that goes on in our government, and how decisions by national leaders have a profound effect on their lives now and in the future. I hope they will learn indirectly from this letter, that personal letters to local, state, and national leaders do have an effect — that you will listen to the people of the United States.

I have no doubt that you will receive many letters advocating this: please give us a strong program protecting roadless and wilderness areas. It is clear to me that this is what the people of The United States of America want.

Sincerely yours,

George W. Batten, Jr.

Endorsed by Barbara B. Batten
Sierra Club/Houston: Bayou Banner

Take That, Opec!

My wife and I recently bought a hybrid car. The way it works is sometimes its gas engine powers it and sometimes its battery powers it. The car automatically “decides” when to switch to which engine. The car usually gets 40-something miles per gallon. So, now we only have to risk spilling gas on our shoes every other week.

We bought the car because we wanted to pay less for gas and we wanted to help the environment. The car is on the cutting edge of what is available to us consumers today. It even has “Bluetooth technology” which, I’m told has nothing to do with poor dental hygiene. One of my favorite things is that you don’t need to put the key in the ignition to start it. You don’t even need to put the key in the door lock to open the door. As long as you have the key in your pocket or your purse or your briefcase or your sock, you can open the door, get in, and push a button to start the car. I love that. Of course, I’m a sucker for gadgets. Keep in mind, I got that robot vacuum cleaner.

Hybrids are pretty popular where we live. In fact, some dealerships have a six-month waiting list. I knew I couldn’t handle that. I’m someone who changes lines at the supermarket when I see the person in front of me reach for their checkbook. So, we drove to a dealer in one of those areas beyond suburbia where they have these mini-towns that consist of every car dealership that you can think of and a “Denny’s.” After learn-



Modern Times
By
Lloyd
Garver

ing more about the car and driving it, we went home and thought it over for a day or so. Then we went back out there and bought it. Yes, I’m aware of the irony that we drove to a location 35 miles away – twice – because we were concerned about wasting gasoline.

When you have a car that gets great gas mileage, you become obsessed with your car’s gas mileage. When you have a gas guzzler — maybe because of denial — you really don’t pay any attention to the mileage at all. But my wife and I pay a lot of attention to it with the hybrid. Anytime it dips below 40 mpg or rises above 45 mpg, whoever drove it lasts gets the credit or the blame. “How was your day?” and “You look good in that shirt” have been replaced in our house by, “What kind of mileage did you get?” and “I noticed you got it up to 45.3.”

We’ve found that, like any car, if we press lightly on the gas pedal and drive the car smoothly, we’ll get better mileage. Unfortunately, there are other ways to improve the mileage. I will go out of my way to a street that has a hill on it, so I can coast down to improve the mileage. My wife will take a longer route just so she can get in some highway driving. So, there are times when we actually drive more miles just so we can be happy that we’re getting better mileage.

Okay, so we’re not using the car as efficiently as we could. But when I drove it off the lot that first day, I wasn’t just happy that we had a new car. I was proud that we were doing our part. A big smile came to my face when I realized that the foreign interests who control our energy and the American companies that keep raising the prices at the pump are going to be pretty upset when they hear that the Garvers bought a hybrid.

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

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— Guest Commentary From London —
A Plea for Freedom

BY KAPIL KOMIREDDI
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

"In their behaviour toward creatures, all men are Nazis. Human beings see oppression vividly when they are the victims. Otherwise, they victimise blindly and without a thought," wrote the Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer. The great Hassid's observation perhaps is the tersest and most germane quote to describe America's actions generally post 9/11, and specifically with regard to indefinite detentions of those deemed "terrorists" by the government.

Every human rights organisation in every country has criticised the Guantanamo Bay detentions in the sternest language. Yet, immersed in isolation which can only be described as either arrogance or, worse, ignorance, the American government has done little to address the problem. When confronted with the issue, it has criticised the credentials and intentions of the confronter, rather than putting its own actions through some moral introspection.

If France were to openly criticise America's blatant abuse of human rights in the name of security, Bush's speechwriters would instantly get busy dusting off old books and preparing speeches accusing the French of "jealousy" for not possessing America's "unparalleled power." France may have its own ambitions, and perhaps it is criticising America simply out of frustration and not any real concern for human rights, but that doesn't veil the real problem: America, in defiance of international laws — and, possibly, its own laws — continues to detain, and abuse, countless prisoners. (I say *countless* not because they are innumerable, but because a definite number isn't available.)

Last year, we saw the disgusting pictures of Iraqi prisoners being abused in Abu Ghraib detention centre; almost everyday, we hear stories of abuse emanating from this or that American detention camp. But what we don't come across is a message of humility from the White House. President Bush disapproves the actions and disowns the perpetrators — a natural political reaction. But what he doesn't do is tell us what he is going to do with those being held. He says they are enemy combatants, hence not covered by the Geneva Convention. He says they're being kept on foreign soil, thus outside the U.S. Law — a point with which the courts and legal experts disagree. He is, in other words, keeping the fates of many helpless men under a non-negotiable *status quo*.

Some of those men may well have partaken in terrorist activities, but how are we to know that for certain unless both sides present their case in front of a judge or jury? Are we to trust the intelligence people who told us Saddam had weapons of mass destruction? Or, are we to go with the President who, in the words of M.J. Akbar, discovered an unfailing passion for democracy only after failing to discover any of those weapons his underlings said — or were pressured to say — he would find?

Only today I saw the reconstructed footage of a teenager who is being held

at Guantanamo. He was, as per his lawyer, arrested at the age of 14, in Pakistan, where he went to study English and computers. Following his arrest, when he was told that he was being taken to America, the boy, naïve that he was, conjured up images of the America he had seen in films. He ended up in a cell at Guantanamo. There, he said, he was routinely tortured, abused and swore at. One day, the "guard" brought with him a young lady, who laughed at the boy, while the guard examined the boy's penis with a pair of scissors. "I'll chop it off," the guard threatened. When the boy started crying, the guard told him to "shut up, you nigger." Another day, the boy was told that, since he's "innocent," he'd be sent home in some weeks. Instead, he was sent to another camp, whose speciality is extreme isolation. I don't know what currently is happening with him.

President Bush claims to be a Christian, a born-again type who renounced alcohol for Jesus. But his administration's actions, vis-à-vis foreign and domestic policies, are hardly a reflection of Christian humility. The neoconservative interpretation of Christianity, I sometimes wonder, is not unlike the hard-line Islamic interpretation of democracy.

It is, I know, anathema to question the Bush administration's actions nowadays. If one musters the courage to do so, he is instantly branded "unpatriotic." And being identified as "unpatriotic" by the "patriotic" lot in today's America can be similar to being recognised as a heretic under Taliban. Remember the ill-repute heaped on THE ICONOCLAST for questioning President Bush's record? If an American can be castigated by the powers that be for daring to imagine his nation's destiny, how can America claim to be a great nation? The generation which made America great is in the grave, and Bush is chewing off whatever little reputation it has left.

The people of America, nonetheless, can make all the difference. Surely the finest way to celebrate one's love for one's country is by standing up for the ideals on which the country was founded, just as the finest way to preach democracy is by practising it. Freedom and Liberty are the heart and soul of America. They are simply non-negotiable. But no freedom can be sustained if it comes at the price of pain and grief of others. Hence, this plea for freedom:

If every Crawfordian wrote to his president, who is your local, perhaps there would be some movement in the direction of sanity. I don't expect the President to instantly convert to Christianity as preached by Jesus and make a move guided by wisdom. But, at least, a note from his fellow Texans, whom he so values, will, one hopes, put the matter on his agenda. One then can only hope that his decision is guided by common sense and compassion. And if it is, then Crawfordians will have partaken in more than a mere conscience-driven exercise. You will have changed America's direction and steered it, once again, towards greatness.

Write to the author at komired@aol.com

Cow Poop Locators

We recently discovered the best ways to locate cow poop. I'm not certain about the applications or the implications of our discovery, but I will leave that to you, dear readers. I'm just here to impart knowledge. What you do with it is entirely up to you.

We've recently had some problems with cows wanting to be where they were not wanted, certainly not an unusual situation around here. Our good neighbors have called twice now to let us know some of the bovines were happily grazing their back yard. There was some danger of them moseying on into the front and then into the road. We rushed over to chase the "ladies" back through whatever hole they had made — and did some quick and dirty patch jobs on the old section of offending fence. We will replace it ASAP.

While working, we discovered that one can almost invariably find cow poop if one either opens one's truck door and steps down or opens one's tailgate and steps up to it. This works particularly well at dusk when it is more difficult to see what one might be walking into.

I have often allowed that the difference between city folks and country folks is this: country folks don't even bother trying to avoid stepping in cow poop. We have boots for this kind of work. Hence, the footwear nickname "kickers." What? Did you think we were kidding?

There is another sure-fire way to find

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.

cow poop that works even better than the first two I mentioned. Zack discovered this one all by himself, but I quickly experienced it as well. It is this: drop a heavy roll of barbed wire onto the ground in any pasture. Kick it to unroll some wire. You will find that the roll always goes directly to (and through) cow poop. I mean, like a magnet. —Like bees to honey. —Like white on rice. In fact, this is a sure fire way to find extremely fresh cow poop, if you are in need of that particular variety. It never fails. If there's absolutely no cow poop around, you're sure to turn up some other variety using this method.

The next tutorial will probably involve locating ground wasps, killer bees, fire and other varieties of ants, poison oak, and that awful itchy vine with the skinny, jagged, heart shaped leaves. If anyone knows what this darned stuff is, please tell me, so I can call it by its proper name when I curse.

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No-Waste Farming Key To Healing, Says FUMC Minister

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CLIFTON — The Rev. Tom Beaty of Clifton First United Methodist Church said that no-waste farming is a way to break the cycle of chronic poverty and homelessness.

During the 1990s, Beaty considered himself “modified capitalist farmer” who co-created a system that utilized rabbits, worms, vegetables, fish, and alligators in a closed system in which each organism benefits from the by-products of the others.

On each acre of land, 437,865 lbs. of nutritious food is produced annually, Rev. Beaty said, adding that similar systems exist elsewhere in the United States.

“It prepared me for the ministry,” Beaty said, noting that the events that led up to the implementation of the system were gradual.

It was on a mission trip to Ecuador that gave the Rev. Beaty the experience of seeing mass suffering at the hands of unfortunate situations.

“We are the most benevolent nation in the world,” said Rev. Beaty. “When it comes to human relief, they are able to pull resources together.”

However, in Honduras, he realized that certain projects failed because once the aid-giving group left the area for its next project, people who are financially disadvantaged would return to their normal ways. In other words, an ethic of independence was not instilled in the people the aid groups were trying to help.

Epiphany hit when, one day while working at a shelter, Beaty noticed that two homeless men from Huntsville were working on a garden. “They were better adjusted and began to think about their future,” he said, explaining his realization that there is a connection with “healing the land” and human healing.

The no-waste agriculture system was, therefore, also developed as a way to fuse a self-sustaining economic system without using toxic chemicals that would harm the environment.

Other goals were to create a farming system that required little to no expensive equipment and could be replicated virtually everywhere in the world.

“It gets better if you get beyond thinking about Thumper,” said Beaty, referring to the animated Disney bunny from the movie *Bambi*.

As Beaty recounted, rabbits are raised for their fur, high-protein meat, and nutrient-rich excrement which are used as fertilizer for the vegetable gardens and for feed for catfish. The worms are used to help cultivate the top soil for the plants as well as more feed for the catfish.

The unprocessed parts of the fish and rabbits are then fed to alligators (aka natural “trash cans”), which at some point in their development would be slaughtered to sell their hides. In the mid-1990s, a pair of alligator shoes cost around \$900, said Beaty. “That and they make a great tourist attraction,” he added.

“The key to success in no-waste agriculture is to cooperate with the natural balance God established on the earth,” he said.

The homeless people on the farm

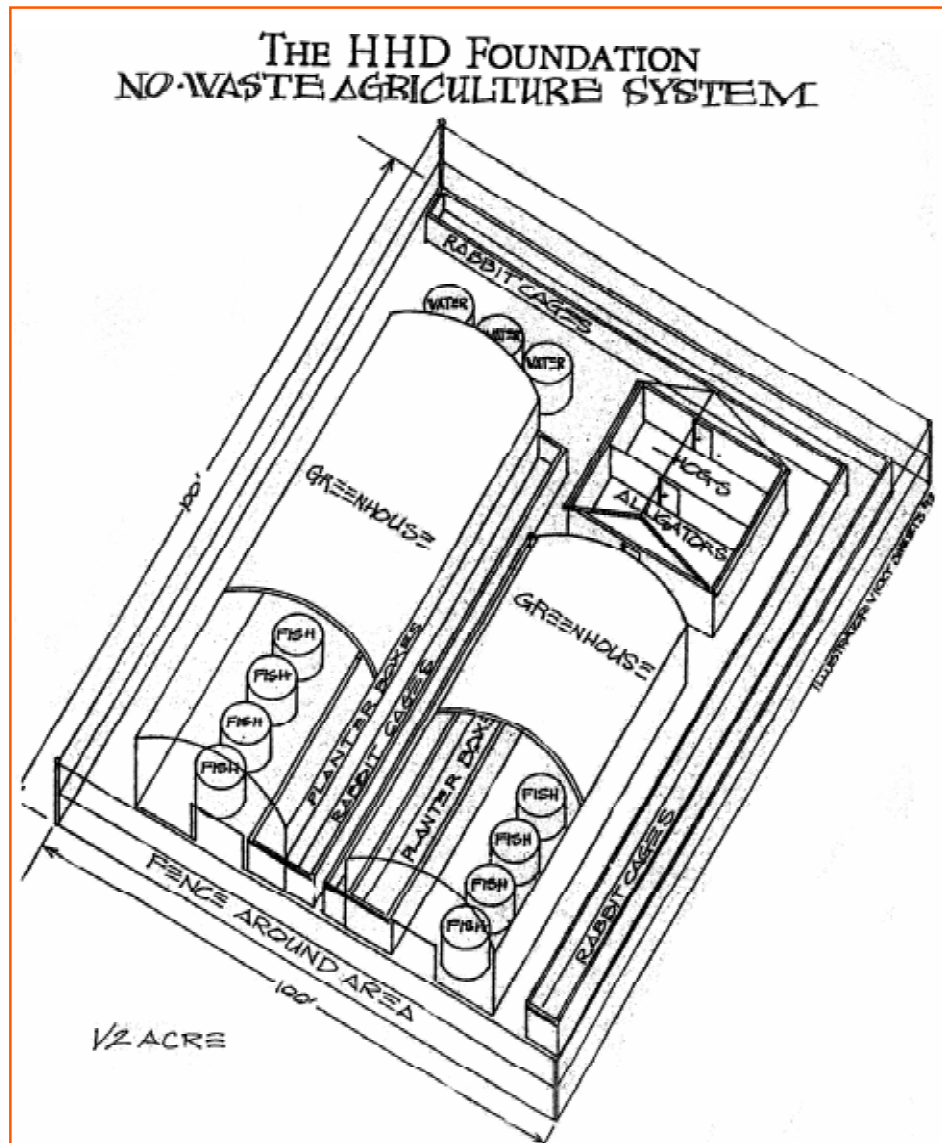


WASTE NOT, WANT NOT — The Rev. Tom Beaty co-created a no-waste agricultural system as a way to break the cycle of chronic poverty and homelessness.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

didn't get a free ride, though; they had to pay \$40 in rent in order to stay there, he said. “Of those people, 80 percent never went back to a life on the street,” Beaty said.

For a time, the farm thrived with Beaty touring on the lecture circuit promoting the no-waste ideals, but he had to end his part because he wanted to move on with his life, he said. The farm has since ceased operation.



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