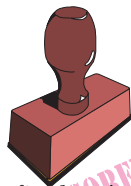


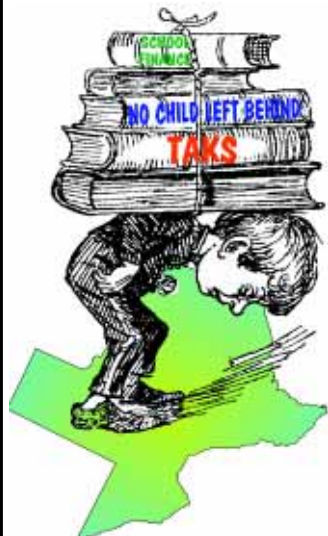
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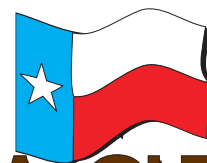


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Embargo Busters On Board

**Activists Deliver Aid To Cuba
Against U.S. Policy**



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On The Cuba Embargo:

It is immoral because it endangers the lives of millions of Cubans and inflicts suffering on innocent children, as well as adults. It is illegal under international law because it uses medicine and food as weapons of war to force another nation to change its government. Licensing is also unconstitutional because it requires people of faith to submit their acts of conscience and friendship to government licensing, in violation of our right to freedom of religious expression, political thought, association and travel.'

— Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr.

House Okays USA Patriot Act

WASHINGTON — Handing over more authority to government agencies for terrorist searches, the House of Representatives Thursday reauthorized the USA Patriot Act, originally passed with little overview after the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington

Although President Bush wanted Congress to make the whole act permanent, House Republicans agreed to renew every 10 years two clauses: the so-called library clause — which gives U.S. agencies access to a secret court to seize the personal records of suspects from book-

stores, libraries, businesses, hospitals and other organizations — as well as the "roving wiretap," another that allows U.S. agencies to eavesdrop by phone lines.

A version provided by the Senate judiciary committee included four-year renewals of these two clauses.

The USA Patriot Act has been slammed since its inception due to claims that U.S. officials have carried out various abuses with it.

House Democrats have complained that the House's leaders should have allowed more debate on the act.

SPECIAL SESSION #2

Gov. Perry Calls Yet Another Special Session For School Reform

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry last Thursday called his sixth special session in two years to fix Texas' school finance system, nicknamed "Robin Hood" because it takes a portion of taxes raised from property-rich districts to property poor districts.

House leaders failed last week to reach an agreement during negotiations on its tax-swap bill that educator groups, businesses, and school districts opposed.

The tax-swap bill would have cut property taxes while

raising the state's sales tax to offset the initial reduction without adding any new money to the public schools.

The state's own studies indicate that this plan would have raised more taxes from roughly 90 percent of Texans.

A filibuster stopped debate in the Senate to kill the year's first 30-day special session last Wednesday at midnight.

Each special session costs \$60,000 a day.

Permaculture Course Slated Aug. 27-Sept. 9

SANTA FE, N.M. — An intensive course covering permaculture, a design system and set of principles (care for earth, care for people, share the surplus) that integrates all aspects of living sustainably on the land will be held in Santa Fe, N.M., Aug. 27-Sept. 9.

Permaculture uses indigenous knowledge and contemporary innovations to teach pattern thinking and principles for designing site-appropriate environments.

This design certification class, sponsored by EcoVersity, includes lecture, hands-on site assessment and design, field trips, special presentations, and optional evening activities.

For more information, contact the course coordinator at EcoVersity, 2639 Agua Fria, Santa Fe, N.M. 87505.

INFO

EcoVersity,
(505) 424-9797 ext. 10
info@ecoversity.org

Eco Architecture Study Tour Set Aug. 7-13

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — A Eco Architecture Study Tour thrown by the San Francisco Institute of Architecture will take place Aug. 7-13, in San Francisco, Calif.

This event will feature seven days of field trips, studies, lectures, and conversations with leading planners, architects, and builders in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Included will be visits and analyses of the massive "Living Roof" of the Renzo Piano Academy of Sciences building, the green San Francisco Federal Building, designed by Thom Mayne of Morphosis, the "Green Roof" and eco-design of the Gap building, by Gensler Associates and William McDonough, the workshop studio of visionary

architect Eugene Tsui, author of "Evolutionary Architecture," and many more.

The event will also include office and site visits with experts in earth and straw bale construction, photovoltaics, passive solar energy, bioclimatic architecture, living walls, and native landscaping.

For more information, contact Fred Stitt, San Francisco Institute of Architecture, SFIA Information Office, Alameda, CA 94501.

INFO

Stitt, (510) 523-5174
SFIA@aol.com

Energy 2005 Exposition Slated Aug. 14-17

LONG BEACH, Calif. — A training workshop and exposition for federal, state, local and private sector energy managers, energy service companies, utilities, procurement officials, engineers and other energy professionals will be held Aug 14-17 in Long Beach, Calif.

The Energy 2005: The Solutions Network, sponsored by the U.S. Depart-

ment of Energy, will include topics such as building operations and maintenance best practices, energy project financing options, new and emerging energy technologies, green procurement strategies, and energy security and reliability improvements.

The exposition will have over 150 technical product and service exhibitors, and a training session, entitled

"How to do Business with the Federal Government," will be offered to exhibitors.

For more information, contact Maddie Harwood, U.S. Department of Energy, Forrestal Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20585.

INFO

Harwood, (202) 586-5000
webmaster@hq.doe.gov



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Embargo Busters On Board

Activists Deliver Aid To Cuba
Against U.S. Policy

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — In the name of family values, an international humanitarian aid group tested perhaps the last artifact of the Cold War as they crossed the U.S./Mexican border from McAllen last Friday on their way to deliver medical supplies to Cuba without federal permission.

The members of the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan to Cuba say that their mission is to raise awareness on the U.S. sanctions on Cuba that have made it harder in the last year for Cuban-American families here to travel and send aid back to their loved ones in the communist island country.

This travel policy not only restricts Cuban-American citizens from traveling to Cuba for two weeks every three years to visit family, but it also redefines "family" as the immediate family members, not extended members, said Lisa Valanti, president of U.S.-Cuba Sister Cities Association.

Appalled, Valanti said, family interaction "is the most fundamental human right. We can really show what family values are" on this trip.

U.S. Commerce Department officials confiscated electronic devices in McAllen Thursday, after threatening to seize all items the group failed to register with the U.S. Treasury Department. However, as a principle, Pastors for Peace does not accept or apply for such a license. In all, officials confiscated about 20 computers while the rest of the caravan went on to Mexico. The group plans to return to the states at the beginning of August.

For the last 14 years, the Pastors for Peace's Friendship caravans have faced an assortment of problems challenging the 40-year-old trade blockade. In the Friendship's first year, CNN television cameras filmed U.S. Treasury

officers assaulting a Catholic priest carrying Bibles into Cuba. On at least two other occasions, PFP participants held hunger strikes when stopped from completing delivery of school buses and computers intended for medical applications.

"As people of faith and conscience, it is our duty to resist and condemn this cruel U.S. policy," declared Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr. executive director and founder of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), a 36-year-old ecumenical agency. "IFCO/Pastors for Peace rejects this licensing system as both immoral and illegal.

"It is immoral because it endangers the lives of millions of Cubans and inflicts suffering on innocent children, as well as adults. It is illegal under international law because it uses medicine and food as weapons of war to force another nation to change its government," Rev. Walker continued. "Licensing is also unconstitutional because it requires people of faith to submit their acts of conscience and friendship to government licensing, in violation of our right to freedom of religious expression, political thought, association and travel."

Eight caravans consisting of eight buses, a box truck, and two small cars carrying a total of 130 U.S. citizens and 140 tons of aid started their 120-plus city journey in early July from the four corners of the United States.

One caravan from the Chicago area stopped by the Crawford Peace House on Saturday, July 16, from Dallas to refuel, eat lunch, and update those present on the current legislative issues affecting Cuba. The Friend of Peace Waco donated a pair of crutches, a wheel chair, and a walker to the cause. This was about the fourth time a caravan from Pastors of Peace had paused

at the Peace House. "Everytime we've been down here, Bush hasn't given us anything, not even a dirty look," said Bob Abplanalp of Chi
Continued On Next Page

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WAR OF THE WORLDS

While heading home from work one day in lovely New York City, all hell breaks loose for Tom Cruise and the rest of the habitants in the town. It looks as though aliens have coordinated a massive attack on our planet. Their weapon of mass destruction is hundreds of tripod contraptions that were buried beneath the Earth's surface and are now being used to annihilate all of humanity. Cruise, a divorced father who just happens to have custody of his two kids during this untimely weekend, must act as protector.

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• **EMBARGO BUSTERS ON BOARD ... Continued From Page 3**

ago, the driver of one of the buses provided by a group from the 15th Friendshipment participants from Denmark and a PFP committee member.

Like others on their first attempt to break the embargo and risk fines from the U.S. government, Jennifer Shu, a junior at Amherst College in Amherst, Mass., said that she signed up for this latest challenge with Pastors for Peace because she wants to see Cuba and its people for herself.

"My friends don't realize that it's against the law for U.S. citizens to cross into Cuba," said Shu, at the Crawford Peace House. She learned about the Pastors for Peace caravan from a friend who participated in last year's mission.

A number of activists from the international community, such as Germany and Scotland, also ran the blockade out of solidarity with the caravanistas, as they call themselves. Allison St. Brice, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and a sophomore at Amherst College, said

that from her island country in the Caribbean, she has been exposed to such polarizing views of Cuba that she wants to find the truth and lend a helping hand to her island neighbors.

"The Caribbean countries aren't doing enough to help Cuba because they're scared of the United States. Cuba doesn't suck up at all," said St. Brice. "I feel that this is a way to help people of Cuba."

Kathryn Hall, founder of Birthing Project USA, a national model for improving birth outcomes for high-risk women out of Sacramento, Calif., said that she was travelling to Cuba to continue her studies of the Cuban healthcare system, which provides free healthcare to all its citizens. She noted that World Bank studies have shown that Cuba has a lower infant mortality rate, higher literacy rate, more doctors per capita, less homelessness, less violence, and less substance abuse than the United States.

"We're asking the wrong questions about Cuba. How could there be a room in your house you can't go?" asked Hall, noting that Americans can't look beyond the myths of Cuba, like "Cuba's leader Fidel Castro is a dictator whose government persecutes all people who practice religion," and "Everyone in Cuba wants to leave but can't due to its brutal policies."

"We need to learn from Cuba to save us. Actually, Cuba has a lot to teach the world," she stated, adding that the State of California passed a resolution condemning the blockade due to its adverse impact on the Californian economy and the loss of pharmaceutical products only produced in Cuba.

Embargo Opposition

Soon after Cuba's communist government seized all property owned by U.S. companies in 1960, President Eisenhower imposed a trade embargo on all Cuban-made goods. President Kennedy strengthened the embargo's restrictions after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1962.

Over time, though, support for ending of the U.S. blockade has come from inside the U.S. as well as from inside Cuba, even from the most unlikely sources. In an interview by the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour in 2001, Cuban dissident Elizardo Sanchez said that for the last 15 years, he has opposed these unilateral sanctions against Cuba because Cuba's communist leader Fidel Castro uses it to his political advantage.

"For a long time, I was alone among dissidents in this view, but now nearly all of us oppose the U.S. policy," Sanchez said. "I believe the embargo is the best ally this totalitarian government has, because it justifies its failures. When there's no medicine or transport, or food, everyone says, 'It's Washington's fault.'"

"For decades, the government has liked to present an image of itself as a little David against a giant Goliath," he added. "The day they lift the embargo and normalize relations as you've done with Hanoi, for example, or China, that will be the beginning of the end for this government."

Many free trade advocates, export associations, and agribusiness groups want the embargo lifted because they have seen Cuba as an untapped market to sell their goods. This last spring, religious, agricultural, labor, business, medical, entertainment, and Cuban

American communities, as well as former government leaders, asked President Bush to open up food and medicine sales to Cuba.

"Last year's Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement law mandated that regulations interpreting the legislation be issued by Feb. 26 of this year, and we are still waiting," Audrae Erickson of the American Farm Bureau Federation said in a press release.

Stephen Northrup, Executive Director of the Medical Device Manufacturers Association, noted, "We are deeply disturbed by reports that the regulations are likely to maintain existing U.S. restrictions requiring end-use verification on the export of needed lifesaving medical products to Cuba. Such an interpretation is clearly at odds with Congressional intent, and we strongly recommend that sales of medicine be permitted under the liberalized framework provided by the law."

Mississippi Black Farmers and Agri-culturists Association President Lloyd Moore added, "Black farmers and small farm communities across the South have borne the brunt of the embargo since it shut-down our natural market of Cuba 40 years ago. We hope that the Bush Administration will allow Americans who need it most to access a piece of the \$1 billion annual Cuban food market."

Congressman Jeff Flake, a member of the House International Relations Committee (R-Arizona), in June offered an amendment to the Science-State-Justice-Commerce appropriations bill that would have prevented enforcement of federal regulations that prevent Americans from sending humanitarian items like personal hygiene products and clothing to Cubans. The amendment was defeated, however, 216-210.

"Cubans have it rough enough living under Castro's brutal regime," said Flake. "Denying them basic products like toothpaste and toilet paper was not our finest hour."

"How do toothpaste and toilet paper prop up Castro?" he added. "All these regulations do is make life even more desperate for Cubans who have to live under that regime."

At the National Summit on Cuba in June, government leaders in states along the Gulf Coast, like Mike Dow, mayor of Mobile, Ala., former U.S. Rep. Sonny Callahan, and Alabama Agriculture Commissioner Ron Sparks, also expressed their push for loosening restrictions with the communist country 90 miles from Florida.

Buffy Donlon, a Mobilian of the Cuba Trade Coalition, told the THE MOBILE REGISTER, "Open, honest, unfettered trade, that's what it's all about," to which Ruben Bonilla, chairman of the Corpus Christi Port Authority in Texas, added, "Let's build bridges of commerce and export democracy into Cuba."

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba has still had to rely on aid from countries with which the United States has uneasy relations, like Iran, Venezuela, and China. Although ties between Cuba and the European Union have mellowed some recently, European aid increases aren't likely because of Cuba's human rights practices, said Philip Peters, vice president of the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va.

Peters said in a recent column that
Continued On Next Page



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CARAVANISTAS IN CRAWFORD — One Pastors for Peace caravan from the Chicago area stopped by the Crawford Peace House on Saturday, July 16, from Dallas to refuel, eat lunch, and update those present on the current legislative issues affecting Cuba. The Friend of Peace Waco donated a pair of crutches, a wheelchair, and a walker to the cause. This was about the fourth time a caravan from Pastors of Peace had paused at the Peace House. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

• **EMBARGO BUSTERS ON BOARD ... Continued From Page 4**

Cuba's allies will nonetheless help to soothe the effects of the White House's new sanctions which are meant to stop \$500 million of Cuba's \$835 million per year economy, according to the Bush administration's figures.

"As a result, the only strong impact will be felt by Cuban families who no longer receive visits, packages, or cash aid from their loved ones in America. It's hard to imagine that was President Bush's intention," Peters said.

Cuban-American Influence

Vicki Huddleston, a retired diplomat, has said that Cuban-Americans have all but taken full control of the United States' Cuban policy. At the National Summit on Cuba, she offered an alternative policy that fosters greater alliances with the island's dissidents and moderates.

"The only way we will have a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba is if the Cuban people make a peaceful Democratic transition," Huddleston told THE MOBILE REGISTER.

Some of the families of these wealthy, capitalist Cuban exiles fled their country to Florida and elsewhere around the U.S. following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and have since regularly tapped both Democrats and Republicans to keep pressure on Castro.

Such anti-Castro programs include the creation of Radio and TV Marti, a radio broadcasting system that transmits programming meant to cause distrust between Castro and his people; the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, which prohibits any foreign-based subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba, as well as outlawing

family remittances to Cuba and banning U.S. citizens from travelling to Cuba; and 1996's Helms-Burton Act, which was created to punish foreign companies from doing business with Cuba by allowing U.S. citizens to sue investors who use American property seized by Cuba — any such foreign investors are also denied entry visas to the United States by law.

According to OpenSecrets.com, Cuban Americans generally donate money for congressional races to Democrats and for presidential races to Republicans, although Cuban Americans tend to give more to Democrats.

"Among congressional candidates, 56 percent of the community's contributions (just over \$1.8 million) went to Democrats, while 44 percent (\$1.4 million) went to Republicans. But among presidential candidates, Republicans collected 69 percent of Cuban-American contributions (\$436,866), with Democrats collecting just 31 percent (\$196,800)," said the report from OpenSecrets.com.

"The chief beneficiaries of the presidential contributions were George W. Bush and his father. The elder Bush collected \$165,225 from Cuban-Americans; his son drew \$114,550. As with most presidential candidates, all that money came from individuals, rather than Cuban-American PACs. The top three presidential recipients, the senior Bush, his son, and Bob Dole, together accounted for 54 percent of all the money the community spent on presidential contributions since 1979."

However, in the last presidential election, incumbent President Bush lost Miami-Dade County (a large hub of

Cuban-Americans) to Sen John Kerry by six percent (409,732 Kerry to 361,095 Bush).

To secure more of a following from the Cuban-American population, President Bush's chief advisor, Karl Rove, encouraged Housing Secretary Mel Martinez last year to run for the U.S. Senate on the Republican ticket for the seat being vacated by Senator Bob Graham (D) who retired. Martinez ended up winning by one percent over the Democratic contender after a Republican primary fraught with controversy: a staff person in Martinez's campaign took the heat for writing a passage in a flyer that depicted GOP opponent Bill McCollum as an underling of the "radical homosexual lobby."

After winning his seat, Sen.

Martinez, the first Cuban-American to serve in the U.S. Senate, has tended to support many of the White House's plans, including the tightening of travel to Cuba and the U.S.-Cuba trade embargo. Martinez last spring helped launch the Congressional Cuba Democracy Caucus (CCDC) to promote policies to hasten "Cuba's transition to a free and democratic society."

"The CCDC will help bring more attention to the issues surrounding a transition to a free Cuba in Congress. It will give us the opportunity to educate our colleagues about the severity of the oppressive Cuban government and the human rights violations that are keeping the Cuban people from being free," said Martinez.

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Jim Hightower To Speak at Veterans For Peace Convention

IRVING — Jim Hightower, former Texas Agriculture Commissioner and national radio commentator, will be speaking at the Veterans For Peace

National Convention 2005 at the University of Dallas in Irving. This is 20th year for VFP's annual convention as veterans from all over the nation gather to

stand against war and move forward the cause of peace.

Dubbed "America's most popular populist," Hightower is writer, public speaker, and author of *Thieves In High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time to Take It Back*. He will speak at the banquet on Saturday, which starts serving at 7 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Other speakers include Jesselyn Radack, whistleblower and former attorney; Coleen Rowley, former FBI agent and whistleblower; Mike Hoffman, co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War; Cindy Sheehan of Gold Star Families for Peace; Camilo Mejia, conscientious objector; and Kerol Harrod, folk musician.

Workshops during the convention include "Demilitarizing Schools," "Gender and Militarism," "Gulf War Syndrome, Sarin, DU, and Other," "Advocating for Veteran's Rights," "Latin America and the SOA," "Accountability and Impeachment," and "Patriot Act."

Registration will open on Wednesday,

Aug. 3, at 2 p.m. The first set of workshops begin Thursday, Aug. 4, at 1:15 pm. Official opening is 3 p.m. Welcome and social mixer/ barbeque is at 6 p.m. Thursday.

On campus residence hall lodging is available. Register for campus lodging with Veterans For Peace National Office. For off-campus lodging, call the Radisson Hotel in Dallas. Discount travelling and hotel fees are valid Aug. 1-10.

The conventions is located at 1845 East Northgate Drive in Irving. For more information or to register online, visit the VFP website.

For the last several months, the Veterans for Peace are actively seeking actions to impeach President Bush and to remove him from the office of president.

In a letter sent to each member of the U.S. House and Senate, Veterans For Peace stated that "this administration's war on Iraq, in addition to being increasingly unpopular among Americans, is an unmistakable violation of our Constitution and federal law which you have sworn to uphold. In our system, the remedy for such high crimes is clear: this administration must be impeached."


David Cline, a decorated Vietnam War combat veteran and VFP President, said, "We do not make this call lightly and as former members of the U.S. armed forces, we take our responsibilities as citizens very seriously."

The Veterans of Peace official said that the Iraqi War violates Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, the War Crimes Act of 1996, and "numerous international treaties which are legally binding on our nation."

"We are not the first group to call for impeachment. All the reasons given for the invasion have shown themselves to be half-truths or misleading," said Cline. "It is clear that George Bush does not intend to change course in an effort to right this great wrong. He has had enough time in his second term to begin a shift and he has not. It is time to remove him from office."

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www.veteransforpeace.org/



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Phone Company 'Giveaway' Expected After School Bill

CRAWFORD — The Texas House by a wide margin passed Senate Bill 21, a big phone company giveaway that allows them to set their own residential rates and ease their move into the television business.

However, GOP leaders have said they want an agreement on school finance before taking up any other measures.

Another special session on school finance was called Thursday.

This will be the third time the Legislature has attempted to change the phone rates and TV franchises.

Texas would be the first state to okay the single franchise, a benefit SBC Communications Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. will gain upon passage.

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Report: '25,000 Civilian' Deaths In Iraq

CRAWFORD — The U.K.-based Iraq Body Count and Oxford Research Group recently released a report stating that a little less than 25,000 civilians

have died in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003. Women and children deaths account for a fifth of the estimated death total.

"On average, 34 ordinary Iraqis have met violent deaths every day since the invasion of March 2003," said John Sloboda, an author of the report. "The ever-mounting Iraqi death toll is the forgotten cost of the decision to go to war in Iraq."

The Dossier on Civilian Casualties in Iraq 2003-2005 states that insurgents have caused nine percent of the deaths; post-invasion criminal violence caused another 36 percent.

The study notes that most of these deaths happened during the invasion phase that ended May 1, 2003. The study is based in part on over 10,000 media reports.

Iraq Body Count — run by academics and peace activists — and the Oxford Research Group admit that a more realistic accounting of the death toll can

only be achieved "on the ground" and therefore want an independent commission to assess the civilian death count. However, the U.S. military has said in the past that it does not keep such statistics, an argument that human rights groups criticize

The Iraqi government, although appreciated the compassion behind the report, disagrees with its final analysis, stating that terrorists keep the Iraqis more at risk than the coalition forces.

"The international forces try to avoid civilian casualties, whereas the terrorists target civilians and try to kill as many of them as they can," the Iraqi government said in a statement. "The root cause of Iraq's suffering is terrorism, inherited from Saddam's fascist regime and from mistaken fundamentalist ideology.

Two Democrats Submit Bill To Block Media Consolidation

CRAWFORD — Two House members introduced a bill that proposes to roll back media consolidation regulations on radio and TV attributed to the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

Reps. Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.) and Diane Watson (D-Calif) co-sponsored the Media Ownership Reform Act of 2005 (MORA), which aims to restore the Fairness doctrine and a national cap on radio ownership, reinstate a 25 percent national television ownership cap, reduce a company's local market share of radio stations, and require stations to file with the Federal Communications Commission regular public interest reports.

Trial Set for Cuban Exile Aug. 29 In El Paso

EL PASO — Former CIA employee Luis Posada Carriles will appear for trial in El Paso on Aug. 29 on charges of entering the United States illegally. Human rights activists as well as Cuba and Venezuela wish Carriles be extradited to Venezuela for a re-trial in the 1976 bombing of the Cubana plane that killed 73 people.

Judge William Lee Abbott will hear arguments on whether the 77-year-old Cuba-born Venezuelan national is in the United States illegally. Carriles' attorney

Eduardo Soto says that his client is still a U.S. resident and entitled to remain in the United States.

"Carriles relinquished his residency rights in the 1960s by not residing in the U.S. since at least that long ago. Also, his crimes of terrorism and murder would automatically disqualify him for asylum," said a spokesperson for Act Now to Stop War & End Racism in a mass-circulated email.

Carriles last April requested political asylum in the United States after sneaking

across the Mexican border. He was later detained by the Department of Homeland Security as he was caught attempting to flee the country. At the time of this arrest, large anti-Carriles protests were held in Havana with an estimated participants numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

Carriles has denied responsibility for the 1976 bombing, which took the lives of the members of the national fencing team that had won a tournament in Caracas.

The White House said that it fears the deportation of Carriles to Venezuela would lead to Carriles' hand over to communist Cuba, although Cuba's leader Fidel Castro has said Carriles' trail in Caracas would be acceptable.

If Washington refuses extradition, it would be guilty of protecting international terrorism, said Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in a recent televised statement. Venezuela's extradition treaty with the U.S. was signed in 1922.

INFO www.answercoalition.org

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Brazos G Water Planning Group Accepting Public Comments

WACO — The Brazos G Regional Water Planning Group is requesting public review and comments on the "Initially Prepared 2006

Brazos G Regional Water Plan" (IPP), which includes updates to the 2001 plan that was included in the 2002 state water plan prepared

by the Texas Water Development Board.

The public comment period has been set for Wednesday, Aug. 17, at 10 a.m., at the Brazos River Authority central office located at 4600 Cobbs Drive, Waco.

Both written and oral comments about the proposed plan will be accepted at the hearing, with oral commentary limited to five minutes per speaker. Written comments may be tendered at the

meeting or until 5 p.m. Monday, Oct. 17, by sending them to Teresa Clark, Brazos G Administrative Agent, c/o Brazos River Authority, P.O. Box 7555, Waco, TX 76714-7555.

Questions regarding the submission of comments may be directed to Clark at (254) 761-3177.

Copies of the plan are being placed in public libraries and in the County Clerk's office in the multitude of counties that fall under jurisdiction of the group.

DATELINE:

Crawford

Hometown of the President of the United States

Crawford VFD Gets New Brush Truck

CRAWFORD — The Crawford Volunteer Fire Department has purchased a

new four-wheel-drive brush unit that carries 500 gallons of water and has a foam unit. It is loaded with rescue equipment.

Called Brush Unit 604, members of the department say it will serve the community in just about any capacity needed.

To gain reimbursement for the purchase, which has depleted all the fire department funds, the department will host an open house at the fire station on Aug. 6, from 8 to 10 a.m., and invites the public to view the new truck and witness a demonstration of its abilities.

Applications will be available for those wanting to join the department. Donations will be accepted that morning, or persons may mail tax deductible contributions to Crawford VFD, P.O. Box 224, Crawford, TX 76638.

Crawfordite's Niece Holds Pageant Title Until This Summer

CRAWFORD — Joy Barlow will complete her reign as 2005 Our Little Miss at the World Youth Federation's 2006 World's Our Little Miss Scholarship Pageant to be held in Phoenix later this summer.



Joy Barlow

Upon capturing the coveted Texas Our Little Miss title last summer, she was required to represent Texas at the International level.

International competition in the seven-to-nine year age division included interview, playtime, sportswear, partywear and talent between 29 girls from across the U.S. and several foreign countries and was held in New Orleans.

Judges were from Los Angeles, Hollywood, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, and Knoxville. She currently represents The World Youth Federation's World Our Little Miss Scholarship Pageant in her community as she performs at nursing homes, day cares, fundraisers, parades and whenever requested.

Until Phoenix, Barlow will be visiting royalty at three state and/or foreign country pageants. She is the niece of William (Bill) Steinkamp of Crawford.

Tullous Recognized At Tarleton University

STEPHENVILLE — Ashley M. Tullous, of Crawford, was among 18 members of the spring 2005 graduating class at Tarleton State University honored as "Departmental Outstanding Graduates" during commencement exercises on campus recently.

Tullous was recognized in the College of Science and Technology and has been studying nursing.

Departmental Outstanding Graduates are selected by the administrators and faculty from a student's major field based on academic excellence, strong leadership qualities, and the potential to be successful professionals in their chosen fields.

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How Comcast Censors Political Content

By DAVID SWANSON
SPECIAL FROM COMMONDREAMS.ORG

Most Comcast internet customers seem to have horror stories, but in my humble opinion this one is a doozie and may even suggest threats to freedom of speech more significant than the jailing of a court stenographer.

I'm working on a campaign headquartered at www.afterdowningstreet.org that seeks to draw attention to the Downing Street Minutes and to lobby Congress to open an investigation into whether the President has committed impeachable offenses. According to a recent Zogby poll, 42 percent of Americans favor impeachment proceedings if the President lied about the reasons for war, and according to a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll, 52 percent think he did. But this story is nowhere to be found in the corporate media. So, our website attracts a lot of traffic.

In addition, July 23rd was the three-year anniversary of the meeting on Downing Street that produced the now infamous minutes, and we are organizing events all over the country on that day. Or, we're trying to. But we noticed about a week ago that everyone working on this campaign was having strange Email problems. Some people would get Emails and some wouldn't, or they'd receive some but not others. Conference calls were worse than usual (I can't stand the things anyway) because half the people wouldn't get the info and know where to call in. Organizing by internet is super easy, but when you have to follow up every Email with a phone call to see if someone got it, it becomes super frustrating. Volunteers have been complaining all over the country — especially now that we've figured out what the problem was and they know what to complain about.

We didn't know it, but for the past week, anyone using Comcast has been unable to receive any Email with "www.afterdowningstreet.org" in the body of the Email. That has included every Email from me, since that was in my signature at the bottom of every Email I sent. And it included any Email linking people to any information about the upcoming events.

From the flood this evening of Emails saying "Oh, so that's why I haven't heard anything from you guys lately," it seems clear that we would have significantly more events organized by now for the 23rd if not for this block by Comcast.

Disturbingly, Comcast did not notify us of this block. It took us a number of days to nail down Comcast as the cause of the problems, and then more days, working with Comcast's abuse department to identify exactly what was going on. We'd reached that point by Thursday, but Comcast was slow to fix the problem.

During the day on Friday we escalated our threats to flood Comcast's executives with phone calls and cancellations, and we gave them deadlines. Friday evening, Comcast passed the buck to Symantec. Comcast said that Symantec's Bright Mail filter was blocking the Emails, and that Symantec refused to lift the block, because they had supposedly received 46,000 complaints



about Emails with our URL in them. Forty-six thousand! Of course, Symantec was working for Comcast, and Comcast could insist that they shape up, or drop them. But Comcast wasn't interested in doing that.

Could we see two or three, or even one, of those 46,000 complaints? No, and Comcast claimed that Symantec wouldn't share them with Comcast either.

By the time Comcast had passed the buck to the company that it was paying to filter its customers' Emails, Brad Blog had posted an article about the situation and urged people to complain to Comcast.

<http://www.bradblog.com/archives/00001602.htm>

Brad quickly added Symantec phone numbers to the story on his website, and we called Symantec's communications department, which fixed the problem in a matter of minutes.

So, why does this matter?

Comcast has a near monopoly on high-speed internet service in much of this country, including much of the Washington, D.C., area. Many members of the media and many people involved in politics rely on it. Three days ago, I almost decided to put a satellite dish on my roof. There's no other way for me to get high-speed internet, unless I use Comcast.

Comcast effectively censors discussion of particular political topics, and impedes the ability of people to associate with each other, with absolutely no compulsion to explain itself. There is no due process. A phrase or web address is tried and convicted in absentia and without the knowledge of those involved.

Now, did Comcast do this because it opposes impeaching the President? I seriously doubt it. Apparently the folks at Symantec did this, and Comcast condoned it. But why?

Well, we have no evidence to suggest that these 46,000 complaints actually exist, but we can be fairly certain that if they do, they were generated by someone politically opposed to our agenda. There's simply no possible way that we've accidentally annoyed 46,000 random people with stray Emails and

mistyped addresses. We've only been around for a month and a half, and we haven't spammed anyone. In fact, during the course of trying to resolve the problem, Comcast assured us that they knew we hadn't spammed anyone. And once we'd gotten Symantec's attention, they didn't hesitate to lift the block.

But it had taken serious pressure to find out what the problem was and who to ask for a remedy. We only solved this because we could threaten a flood of negative attention.

This state of affairs means that anyone who wants to stifle public and quasi-private discussion of a topic can quite easily do so by generating numerous spam complaints. The victims of the complaints will not be notified, made aware of the accusations against them, or provided an opportunity to defend themselves. And if the complaints prove bogus, there will be absolutely no penalty for having made them.

And this won't affect only small-time information sources. If the New York Times or CNN attempts to send people Email with a forbidden phrase, it won't reach Comcast customers or customers of any ISP using the same or similar filtering program.

And there is no public list posted anywhere of which phrases are not permitted. This is a Kafka world. This is censorship as it affects a prisoner who sends out letters and does not know if they will reach the recipient or be destroyed.

What if I had tried to Email someone about a serious health emergency during the past week, but they had been using Comcast and I had been including the address of my website in my Email signature? Is this not a safety issue?

Above all, though, this is a First Amendment issue, as is well laid out in this excerpt of a statement released today by People-Link.org, the organization hosting the www.afterdowningstreet.org site:

"This goes far beyond the normal anti-spam measures taken by major providers and represents an effective blocking of constitutionally protected expression and the fundamental right to organize and act politically on issues

of concern.

"Most spam blocking measures focus on the email address or the IP address of the suspected spammer. While there are anti-spam measures directed at the body of the email, these usually target attachments that could contain virus programs.

"Targeting the inclusion of a website url can only have one outcome: that communications about that website and the issue it is presenting will be blocked from large numbers of people and that the communications from that site's administrators and the campaign's organizers will not reach their full constituency.

"Whether Comcast's intention or not, this is effectively political and unconstitutional.

"It keeps people from getting valuable information about a campaign that is, in the opinion of many, critical to the future of this country's political system.

"It disrupts the organizing of this campaign and cripples the campaign's ability to use its most effective communications tool: the Internet.

"It damages people's confidence in this campaign since many people who write the campaign can't receive the response they expect and that the campaign has sent.

"Perhaps the worst part of this development is that Comcast has been reportedly doing this without the knowledge of the managers of this website or anyone affiliated with this campaign. In fact, no Comcast customer has received any indication that email to him or her containing this url was blocked."

David Swanson is a co-founder of After Downing Street, a writer and activist, and the Washington Director of Democrats.com. He is a board member of Progressive Democrats of America, and serves on the Executive Council of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild, TNG-CWA. He has worked as a newspaper reporter and as a communications director, with jobs including Press Secretary for Dennis Kucinich's 2004 presidential campaign, Media Coordinator for the International Labor Communications Association, and three years as Communications Coordinator for ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Swanson obtained a Master's degree in philosophy from the University of Virginia in 1997.

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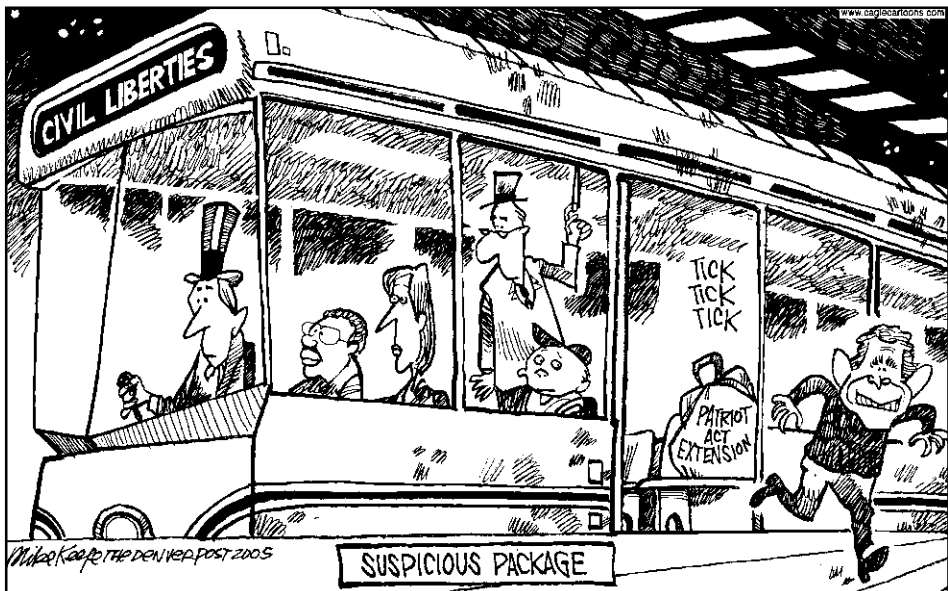
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Why I'm Anti-War

We stopped the movie while my father wept.

The movie was Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*, a collection of short films based on Kurosawa's actual dreams.

The point where my father broke down was during "The Tunnel," a nightmare depicting a soldier haunted by the ghosts of his old army platoon whose deaths he caused.

Every time before the ghosts appear to the soldier, an angry dog barked at him. The soldier goes through the motions again and again of apologizing and asking his comrades to go back to their graves.

"The dogs of war always come back," my dad said when he finally dried his tears. "They always come back."

My dad is a victim of war.

A child during World War II, my father survived Briton's bombing of Hamburg on July 28, 1943, an attack which was responsible for a two-day firestorm that killed about 42,000 civilians.

As a result of 7-28-43, my grandparents' apartment building was destroyed, along with their personal library consisting of several first editions.

Their worst loss, though, was the emotional and mental security of their child; for the next 40 or so years, my dad planned escape routes under his houses in order to fall asleep.

No doubt, these experiences informed his work as a Lutheran minister and a father of two, but until Kurosawa's dog rattled by dad's cage, I hadn't hit me to connect him to the horrors of war on personal level.

This is my dad. He lived in fear of death as a kid. How could this be?

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



Then, almost instantly, my awe and empathy for my father turned to anger toward the Bush administration — for not only using one war to justify another war, but for also in the process creating more children of war, like my dad, in Iraq and Afghanistan all in the name of "prevention."

It's sick. It's sick that a man who brands himself as compassionate and an anti-abortion person decides the fate of hundreds of thousands of children with weapons of mass destruction.

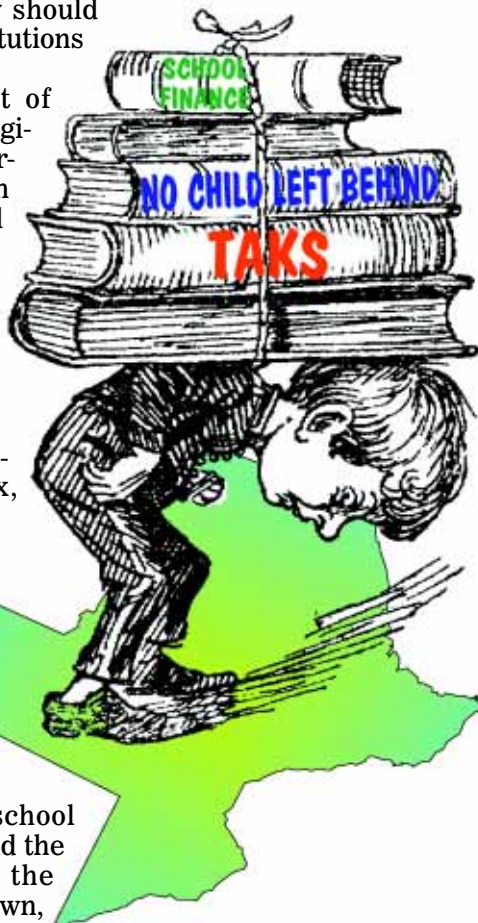
Not that starvation through trade sanctions isn't any better.

We Texans who descend from several generations of German immigrants also know what it's like to lose our native culture and language as a consequence of war; my mother's parents didn't teach their children how to speak German.

So, I can empathize with watching a negative piece of a larger culture on the silver screen repeatedly. Don't get me wrong, I get a cheap thrill out of seeing the faces of Nazis melt at the end of *Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

The ironic part is that the dogs of war are staring us Americans right in the face, yet we still can't see these horrors on network TV and in print.

Why? Are we afraid deep down we'll melt, too?



Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Texas GOP Taking Local Control Away From School Districts

Texans are about to lose the last vestige of local control in their school districts.

And no less from a Republican Party that has traditionally touted an Orwellian promise: the little guy should have authority over its public institutions of learning.

First, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS™) regiment eliminated the districts' determination to set their own curriculum guidelines. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) then tightened the screws.

Now, the school tax philosophy proposed by GOP leaders here will eradicate the schools districts' ability to levy their own taxes, thereby reducing the school boards' only power to hiring a superintendent to run the district according to a series of complex, draconian state mandates.

Even this smidgen of local authority can be bureaucratically usurped when the schools fall below an arbitrary, state-dictated level; the school board will have no say in choosing its superintendent if the district's standardized test scores fail to improve.

Might as well just eliminate school boards, and let the Legislature and the Texas Education Agency meld the minds of youths from the top down, right?

It would seem that the Republican plan would still hurt the property-wealthy school districts, but on closer look, the tax-swap proposal hands more to the Hummer class than the Kia class.

This proposal — lowering property taxes and raising sales taxes to balance the cuts — means that nearly 90 percent of Texans would pay more taxes, according to the state's own studies.

Further, actual property values rise in the well-to-do neighborhoods because the standardized tests are biased toward the white, upper-class subculture. Meanwhile, the Legislature will keep these neighborhoods' tax bills artificially low.

The only learning going on in Texas stems from the smarts that land bruises on the property-poor districts, so is it any wonder then that since no new money is going for schools, all educator groups in Texas are opposed to the GOP's legislative proposals?

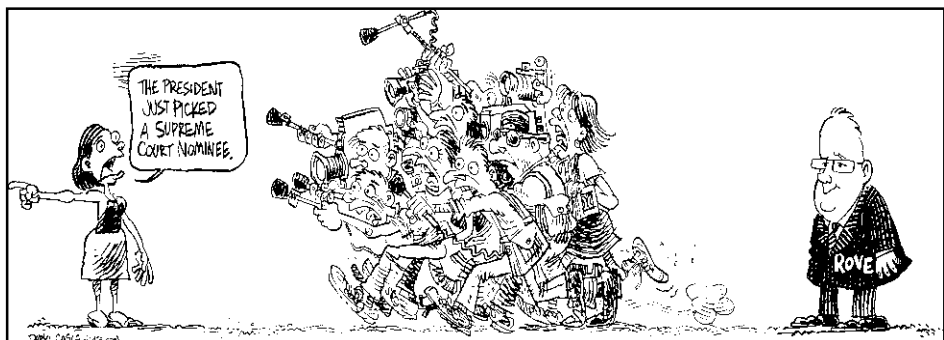
To add insult to injury, Texas businesses don't want the tax-swap if it means carrying the burden of financing property tax relief themselves.

As Republican Gov. Rick Perry calls his sixth special session in two years (each special session costs \$60,000 a day) after three regular sessions without fixing public schools, can we Texans really trust the type of investment our leaders are pouring into our public education system?

The Republicans promised better schools; they promised fair taxation, and they promised local control as part of a decade-long campaign. That campaign has now proved no more than a power grab, and those promises turned out to be Big Brother's Newspeak as we the parents and taxpayers surrendered our rights to an Austin bureaucratic machine.

The truly fiscally-responsible know when to say when.

— By Nathan Diebenow and Don Fisher



Texas Farmers Lobby For Dirt-Cheap Labor

Worried that war would cut off their supply of cheap labor, the Texas Dirt Farmers Congress appealed to the federal government on July 22, 1941, to re-open the border with Mexico.

At the end of the 19th Century, less than one Texan in 20 had ancestral roots south of the Rio Grande. Even in cosmopolitan San Antonio, the Lone Star melting pot with a population of 53,000, Germans outnumbered Mexicans.

But the Mexican presence grew by 75 percent in the opening decade of the new century. The annual influx surpassed the total number of Mexicans that settled in Texas during 300 years of Spanish rule.

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



Despite the pittance they were paid, the eager immigrants earned more hard cash in a month than in a lifetime of backbreaking toil in their native land. By American standards the newcomers were the victims of cruel exploitation, but to them Texas was paradise on earth.

The search for a better life turned into a flight for life itself between 1910 and 1920, as Mexicans escaped the carnage of their national nightmare. An estimated 264,000 refugees sought sanctuary in Texas, and the vast majority remained long after the Mexican Revolution had run its bloody course.

Until the official closing of the international boundary in 1917, Mexican citizens were free to cross at will. The battening down of the border was part of the joint U.S.-Mexico effort to restrict job seekers to contracted workers called "braceros." In reality this program, discontinued after the First World War, did nothing to slow down the human flow northward and succeeded only in turning legal immigrants into criminal "wetbacks."

In the years between the wars, many farmers in the Lone Star State and throughout the Southwest developed a dependency on seasonal labor from Mexico. The economic impact on Mexican americans in South Texas was devastating. Entire families were uprooted and driven by desperation into the wretched dead-end existence of migratory gypsies.

The exaggerated fears of the dirt farmers notwithstanding, there was an abundance of agricultural labor in Texas in the summer of 1941. But in the panic-stricken aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the farm lobby had no trouble convincing the Roosevelt administration that crops would rot in the fields without the massive importation of Mexican harvesters.

Washington negotiated a revival of the bracero program. This time, however, Mexico City drove a hard bargain insisting upon numerous guarantees concerning hours, working conditions, housing, and health care not covered by the World War I agreement.

Farmers accustomed to dictating the terms of employment for foreign workers flatly refused to play by the new rules, especially the mandatory minimum wage of 35 cents an hour. They retaliated by boycotting the braceros and pressuring Congress into lifting the lid on Mexican immigration.

The Rio Grande was reopened on May 11, 1943, only to be shut down three days later by the Immigration and Naturalization Service on orders from the

State Department. Seventy-two hours was long enough for Texas farmers to sign up 4,000 undocumented workers for the season.

Later that summer, coastal cotton farmers broke the boycott and filed a request for 63,000 braceros. A government study revealed the applicants padded their real manpower needs by 300 percent in order to trap the transients into working for less than the guaranteed wage.

Meanwhile, Gov. Coke Stevenson was jumping through hoops to pacify Ezequiel Padilla, the Mexican foreign minister who had declared Texas off-limits to braceros because of alleged racial discrimination. Stevenson pleaded for fair treatment of guest workers in a letter to law enforcement agencies and promised to set up a Good Neighbor Commission to investigate bias complaints. As a final gesture, the governor accepted an invitation to attend the independence celebration in Mexico City.

In return Padilla secretly agreed to the transfer of 5,000 braceros to Texas from the western United States. But headlines like "No More Workers Will Go to Texas in Humiliation" in the hostile Mexican press forced the foreign minister to break his promise.

By keeping the Lone Star State on the bracero blacklist for the rest of the war, the Mexican government played into the hands of those farmers who had opposed the strings attached policy from the outset. They were perfectly happy with the powerless "wetback," to whom nothing was owed not even respect and a decent wage.

In a classic case of talking out of both sides of their mouths, the very employers that profited from the porous border and the traffic in undocumented workers were among the shrillest critics of the phenomenal increase in the number of Mexican nationals who decided to make Texas their permanent home. To hear them tell it, the so-called "illegals" must have dropped out of the sky!

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

Dangerous Behind The Wheel

A couple of days ago, I decided I would mow/shred the "grounds." This is my fancy name for pastureland. It just happens to be inside the barbed wire fence separating the residential area from the rest of the ranch. There are a variety of grasses and weeds there which, when mowed, pass convincingly as lawn for about four days — until the weeds outgrow the grass and it all begins to look scraggly again.

The morning was cloudy, and still quite pleasant at 8:30. I managed to do a lot by 1 p.m. . . . That was the good news. The bad news was that, between the riding mower and the tractor, I ran into a few things such as:

1. The door of the old metal shed. (It wasn't exactly perfect to begin with, so while I sure wish I hadn't done it, there was no great tragedy. I even poked a little hole at the top of the big dent. I couldn't undo it, so there was no use crying. It still works. (I backed into it, which makes me sound like even more of a ditz. The tractor brakes don't seem to work very well when the shredder is attached, and that was the first time I had encountered this phenomenon. It was a bad way to find it out, but it could have been worse. I could have backed into my truck or one of the little houses. You just have to be grateful sometimes for the things you DON'T do.

2. The deer fence around the garden, but I patched that up pretty easily. (I had caught it with some little itty-bitty part on the mower. It ripped and ripped as I cheerily mowed along, oblivious, with my earplugs blocking out any hint that things were amiss).

3. That big rock marking the location of the crepe myrtle I mowed over last year.

4. The same, poor crepe myrtle that had been valiantly trying to come up again. Past tense.

5. The air conditioner sticking out the back of the new metal building. . . . Now, although this was the worst of my bad mowing news, it wasn't as bad as it sounds for the A/C unit. That's intact. But the lever on the riding mower that raises and lifts the mower blade assembly — and dis-

Rustic Ramblings

By Gene Ellis

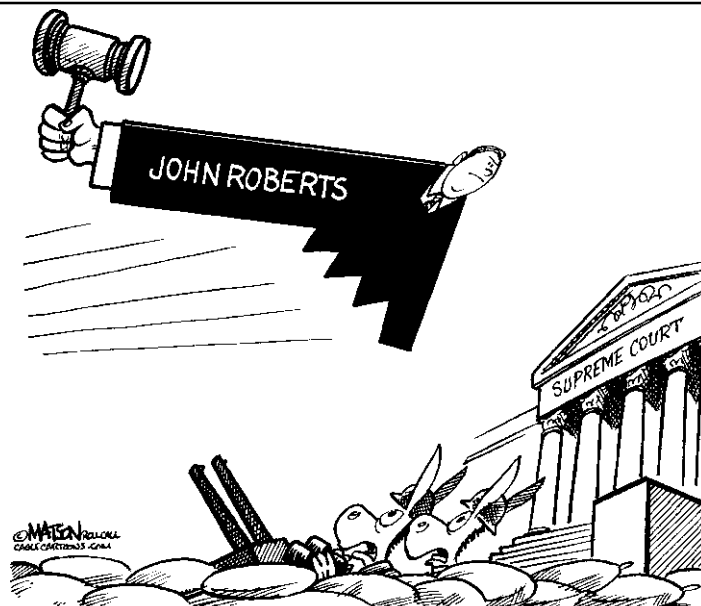


Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

engages it so the mower can back up or start . . . well, that's what was sticking out when I came too close. I definitely knocked something loose, even though I cushioned the blow to the lever with my leg. I had thought that would have helped a bit, but no. The lever was wobbling all over the place. When the engine died, it wouldn't start again. The mower thought its blades were still engaged. Nothing wanted to move in a normal way. (When I break 'em, I break 'em good). So my faithful lawn machine sat in the back yard until Zack somehow convinced it to slide into neutral. We pushed it into the cattle trailer and took it to be repaired. That sounds, in the telling, a lot easier than it actually was.

The yard around the house is only partially mowed in a fractal, haphazard pattern. I had been maneuvering around trees before I killed the mower, planning to neaten things up later. Now that must be done with the push mower, a machine I try my best to avoid. (I acquired "tennis elbow" many years ago using a push mower. If I was destined to have this ailment, I've always thought it a shame I wasn't doing something fun and sporty — like actually playing tennis — to deserve it).

I was disgusted with myself that I had done so many stupid things, mainly busting the mower, but what was done was done. I decided to finish the large, uncut areas with the tractor. That was when I backed into the shed, hit the rock and obliterated the valiant crepe myrtle. I'm not pleased to be the woman all comedians joke about who is dangerous behind the wheel. At least my driving problems seem limited to the riding mower. I suppose things could be worse.



"NOT MUCH OF A RECORD FOR US TO SHOOT AT... BUT LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT RIGHT WING!!"

Yet Another Bush Family Favorite

Who is John G. Roberts, Jr?
I dunno.

He's no stranger to the Bushes, though. Nor undoubtedly Karl Rove. In keeping with Bush #43's blinder-restrained tunnelvision, Justice Roberts is yet another reachback to the reign of Bush #41.

Ain't it nice when Daddy and his friends kin help ya'll out?

One of those friends takes shape as the extremely well-financed, Right-wing organization, Progress for America (whose name is an oxymoron, as they actually stand for regression). Their \$700,000 ad campaign to convince America just how perfect a nominee Roberts is began within 36 hours of Bush #43's announcement.

The red flag in my mind grows of its own accord! Our Nation is in serious trouble, sinking ever deeper into a bottomless abyss of feces-laden toxic waste, when a special interest group spends nearly a quarter-million dollars to promote the ascension of the guy it wants on the highest court in the land!

This should in and of itself be enough reason to scuttle his nomination.

Out of all the possible jurists in the United States, George W. Bush came up with Roberts as his first nominee to replace the retiring Sandra Day O'Connor. Not a woman, nor a Hispanic, nor a Black, nor an Asian — but a white guy who's as white as Butternut bread, Tom Sawyer's fence, or an Arab Emir's robe.

Good gravy, he's only been a judge for two years. It seems to me that one unyielding requirement elevation to the Supreme Court should be that the justice is... how can I put this? — EXPERIENCED!

And by "experienced" I don't mean being a friend of the Bushes.

Most classified job listings ask applicants for more than two years of experience, even the \$9.00-an-hour positions!

By all accounts the man is thoroughly Conservative, and a practicing Catholic, although hopefully not as righteously fanatical as, say, Rick Santorum.

Actually, your typical sundry evangelical probably wouldn't even consider him a proper Christian.

Born in New York, Roberts, 50, grew up in Long Beach, an upscale community in northern Indiana. He is married to Jane Marie Sullivan Roberts. They have two adopted, pre-school aged children.

In 1973 he graduated first in his class from a small, exclusive Catholic boarding high school, La Lumiere (The Light), in LaPorte, IN. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude*, from Harvard in just three years, Roberts received his Harvard law degree three years later (*magna cum laude*). He accomplished this Herculean task while serving as managing editor of the *Harvard Law Review*.

Roberts' official ties to the upper echelon of the Federal judiciary began immediately upon his graduation in 1979. Following a year clerking for Henry Friendly on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, he became a law clerk for



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist.

Next, Roberts held several positions in the Reagan administration. In 1986 he became an associate with Hogan & Hartson, a Washington, D.C. law firm of the highest magnitude.

When the Department of Justice under Bush #41 needed a Deputy Solicitor General in 1989, Roberts was the man. In this capacity he argued 39 cases before the Supremes (including his old boss, Rehnquist). Gee, care to speculate as to why he won 25 of those cases?

Upon the ousting of Bush #41 by Bill Clinton in the 1992 election, Roberts went back to Hogan & Hartson. Coincidence of coincidences, H & H just happened to be an advisor to Bush #43 concerning the Florida vote "predicament" in 2000.

Nominated for the D.C. Appellate Court in 2001 by Bush #43, Roberts' name never made it out of committee. True to the pigheaded stubborn arrogance that we've all come to know and detest, Bush #43 re-nominated him in 2003. This time the Republican-dominant Senate voted Roberts to the Federal Court.

Okay, so serving Republican presidents, and knowing the stuff only attorneys know, *does* have its rewards.

At least two of Roberts' more notable arguments on behalf of Justice before the Supremes took the side of the Federal Government against its own laws and citizenry: In 1991, he wasted taxpayer dollars defending a regulation that banned abortion-related counseling by federally-funded family planning programs. His argument referred to *Roe v. Wade* as "wrongly decided" and

called for it to be "overruled." Clearly, this was a Bush #41 administration end run attempt to undercut an existing Court ruling, and deny a majority of Americans their will.

Roberts slyly explained this away during his 2003 confirmation hearing by stating that it was his client's stance, not his own personal feeling. As he said when queried, "*Roe v. Wade* is the settled law of the land...", and as such he would apply it "fully and faithfully."

Right — until presented with his first opportunity to upend it.

The other came when he argued, in 1992, that a citizen has no right to sue the Federal Government over violations of its own environmental regulations. Huh? Whatever happened to "Government by the People, of the People, and for the People?" Oh, yeah, silly me — that codicil "the People" only applies to those approved by Rove and the Bush family.

In private practice, Roberts has gone to the mat as a champion of those downtrodden, much maligned big businesses, including heavy-duty mining interests. Being a true Conservative, he showed further disregard for the environment by arguing for the National Mining Association's legal claim to mountaintop removal.

Roberts' environmental disregard burrowed beneath the Earth as well, engaging in a Donnybrook with the miners themselves while representing mining companies before the Supremes. The companies sought fines against the United Mine Workers of America for criminal contempt after a strike had been ruled unlawful. The miners won.

As an appellate judge, Roberts has continued to show a predilection to advance big business interests over the environment. In a case regarding encroachment upon the Endangered Species Act, he wrote the lone dissenting opinion in favor of the developer, questioning propriety of the Act.

How could someone from northern

Indiana, who spent his high school years in a setting of wooded scenic splendor, be so callous and insensitive toward the care and concern of our natural resources? Simple — he's a Conservative.

In a case that made national headlines, Roberts authored the 3-0 opinion refusing to uphold the rights of a 12-year-old girl who had been handcuffed and detained at a police station by the Washington Metro Authority. Her crime? She had dared to ingest a French fry in a Washington Metro station. Now, *that's* how you get youngsters, especially in a troubled city, to trust and respect the law!

Being D.C., she probably should have said it was a "Freedom Fry."

Remember when Donald Rumsfeld, standing in for the RoveBush Regime, was sued over military tribunals, and it was adjudged in lower courts that holding human beings incognito and incommunicado, indefinitely, without charges or proof, then subjecting them to military tribunals in lieu of standard American jurisprudence, simply wasn't Constitutional? Roberts upheld the Regime's tribunal sanction.

Look, I'm not questioning whether Justice Roberts' is or isn't a brilliant legal mind. The preceding has just been background, hastily researched, condensed, and quickly shared.

Knowing what we know, what follows are some of my concerns:

La Lumiere was not your typical, average, all-American high school environment. I checked out its website the morning after Bush #43 nominated Roberts. His picture was already on the homepage. This is an enclave of privileged Catholic youths, living and learning together, cloistered among 155 acres of wooded serenity in what is essentially a depressed area of northern Indiana.

The website offers little or nothing in the way of concrete, useful information. There are no specifics regarding class size, aggregate number of students, what religious society it's affiliated with. Wanna know more? Call for an appointment — so they can screen out the under-achievers and riff-raff, no doubt.

I did learn that to divest yourself of contact with your high school student on a full-time basis (a.k.a., boarded student tuition) will cost \$21,885.00 for the 2005-2006 school year. Foreign students get charged an additional \$1,175.00. There's nothing to indicate if books or anything beyond room, meals, and classroom instruction are included. (If you live nearby and your teenager comes home each evening, your nut will be a mere \$6,905.00.)

The website states that financial aid is extended to one out of every five students, but c'mon, that's just for the politically correct monitors. Honestly, would you want to be one of the 20% token brainiacs or sports phenoms, such as the child of a grocer or from some inner city hellhole, exiled 24/7 among these rich kids with nowhere to avenue of escape?

Each day is strictly regulated from

Continued On Next Page



Yet Another Bush Family Favorite... Out of the Blue by Jerry Tenuto

Continued From Previous Page

sunup to lights out (seniors get to stay up an extra 30 minutes). There are even daily room inspections, a la military school. Miss a meal, well, there's no contingency to make it up. However, several opportunities throughout the course of the day are afforded students to shop at the school store – because there's obviously nowhere else to spend money while they're permanently stuck out in the woods. The distinct impression is given that sports and additional extracurricular participation are mandatory.

Socialization is encouraged, of course, with all good children being allowed out of their dorms for a full 25 minutes each evening to mingle with kids from other buildings. Wow! How do they contain themselves?

Catholic grammar school made me crazy enough. And regular Catholic high school has its own brand of genuinely strange idiosyncrasies. But banishing teenagers into this kind of abnormal societal gulag is truly an abomination.

This is precisely the perfect institutional setting if you're grooming Conservative, fascist young adult Catholic automatons.

In all logic, how can a guy who spent his high school years in a clandestine atmosphere such as this understand real people? Roberts simply cannot put himself in my shoes, or yours, because he lacks any point of reference with the common man.

How was Roberts able to get through Harvard's grueling undergrad program in just three years? My best guess is he's an over-achiever with no idea how to go out and enjoy himself.

Students at colleges far lower on the food chain, taking much less taxing programs, need five or more years to get a B.A. This guy went through Harvard *plus* Harvard Law in only six years!

That's neither natural nor normal. Of course, Roberts was above working in the private sector. He landed positions in Federal courts, with the highest levels of law deciders. Then, just two years out of law school, leapt to the White House – while only 25!

Being as highly connected as any white, Harvard male grad could be, Roberts was taken in at one of D.C.'s most potent law firms; then a return gig at the White House.

When the Republican political well dried up during the 1990s, the firm took him back, where his clientele included, among others, no less than the National Mining Association and Bush #43.

Bells are going off like crazy in my head — John Roberts has been around the Bushes and Roves and Cheneys for 25 years, virtually his entire adult life!

Considering that propinquity it's inevitable that he's picked up some bad habits from these schmucks.

Making Roberts one of the Supremes would fabricate a Bench composed of six out of nine former Harvard Law students. He and David Souter both graduated from Harvard College as well as Law; Stephen Breyer, Antonin Scalia and Anthony

Kennedy are Harvard Law grads; Ruth Bader Ginsburg studied there.

What the hell kind of diversity of thought, reason and discourse is possible when 67% of the Court has been nurtured from the same trough of knowledge? Most universities insist on broader variation than that within their faculties.

We all should be fed up, sick, and tired that Rove and Bush #43 never look anywhere other than their personal Rolodexes to find individuals whom they consider "qualified" to elevate to positions of high authority in our Government. It's *our* Government, damn it, not theirs! Whether we like him or not, and whether he likes it or not, George W. Bush works for us.

Yet, every time the Regime nominates some candidate for a prominent position, it's not necessarily the best choice for America – or even close to being reasonably worthy. The candidate's a crony, or it's payback for prior services rendered, or an individual who's going to utilize his or her

contacts to abet the regime in some scam to further screw all of us.

Why can't we get somebody like Vincent LaGuardia Gambino appointed to the Supremes? Remember the movie they made about him, *My Cousin Vinny*? He's got excellent street smarts, common sense, and he'd certainly liven up Court proceedings.

But seriously, is John Roberts the only candidate Bush #43 can come up with? There are thousands of excellent judges and jurists around the country, yet nobody seemed to be shocked or awed that the only ones even considered were among those Rove and his puppet, Bush #43, have known for years.

There's probably some woman sitting on the bench in Duluth, Minnesota, or a Native American judge in Mesa, Arizona, neither of whom have ever even been anywhere near Bush #43. Maybe there's a top graduate of Southern Illinois University Law School, or somebody beyond brilliant who got a law degree by putting herself through night

school.

How about a veteran who had to go into the military to pay for his education?

These people, and America, deserve a chance. They, anybody, certainly deserves more of a chance than the privileged Friends of the RoveBush Regime.

I will admit to not being too thrilled with a Conservative joining the Supremes. However, it would feel much better if that Conservative were someone who lived the life of the common man, and understood the plight of the average, everyday Jane and Joe American. A true, old-school Conservative who's honest and straightforward.

And hasn't had his or her nose up the ass of Karl Rove or one of the Bushes for decades.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with this thought:

How a man this accomplished and obviously learned is able to converse one-on-one with Bush #43 remains a mystery to me.

Viagra, Breasts, And Your House

It's time, once again, for me to share some of the readers' responses I've gotten to recent columns. To protect their privacy, I've not revealed the full identity of any of these people, but I promise you that Karl Rove is not one of my sources.

Many people responded to my column about the House of Representatives banning Medicare and Medicaid from paying for Viagra and similar medications:

EWORTH... "My tax dollars aren't here to make sure each American male reaches his erectile potential."

GERA... : "... This legislation is just plain cruel to older men."

I wrote about the new food guidelines and pyramid.

DAN: "Reading parts of your column was like hearing an echo. They keep changing Their minds about what's healthy and unhealthy."

CARL: "We don't need a pyramid... we need good old-fashioned common sense."

I discussed a support group for liberals.

BALVER... : "Hurrah and thank you for your article. Maybe there is still hope for this country."

STEVE: "With public opinion and the power of Congress on our side, liberals will need more than therapy — they should seek political asylum – LOL!!!"

I expressed that I would have been happier if the mystery of "Deep Throat" had remained a mystery.

GAPON...: "If there's anything to be learned from this, it's that's you're right on. Flawed, regular people can and are often heroes. And, right now, we need all we can get. Deep, mid or shallow."

GMET...: "Clearly Felt was/is a reluctant, conflicted, and perhaps, troubled individual. An imperfect



By
**Lloyd
Garver**

hero to be sure. But a hero nonetheless."

DAN: "We know he [Felt] became a traitor when Nixon bypassed him, selecting Mr. Gray, to succeed Hoover as the director of the FBI. This happened in old China many times over the last 2,500 years. There were many Mr.Felts in China's long history."

I spoke about the latest trend of women wanting to look like they have breast implants.

TRIN... "It amazes me that while our society is bombarded with messages of tolerance, embracing diversity and celebrating our differences, no one wants to stay the way they were created... The group who truly suffers in all this is the American teenage girl."

I wrote about how difficult it is for some of us to make some hard decisions and write a living will.

FRED: "My Living Will is titled, "Put a fork in me when I'm done."

I expressed my disappointment at the Supreme Court's recent decision allowing local governments to invoke Eminent Domain to take private homes and sell them to other private individuals.

JUNE: "The whole American dream is to own your own home. And now for the courts to pass such a ruling is absurd. Let's take away their homes and see what they would say."

GLOVE...: "I was shocked and appalled when I heard the opinion as I'm sure millions of other Ameri-

cans also were. We have been encouraging, certainly by example, the benefits of private property ownership to Russia, and now we are discouraging it here in America."

I talked about the latest trend of expelling pre-schoolers for pulling hair and kicking others.

RJACHE...: "Your piece is ridiculous and predictable... Having no immediate consistent consequences for your actions eventually ends up with a society in which they have a place in the desert were you go and 'what happens there stays there.'"

JWILL...: "It's time parents stepped forward and accepted responsibility... and it's time for the Feds to consider making quality early child care a universal right."

CHARLES: "This is just another product of over legislation and under funding, zero tolerance and all other politically correct status symbols. You need to just let the kids be kids and learn on their own instead of being overprotective."

DJSIM...: "If a child is repeatedly disruptive he should be expelled so that the consequences of his behavior fall on his irresponsible parents rather than the teachers, the other children and their parents. If you were being sarcastic, never mind."

I appreciate all of your responses, and hope that you will continue to let me know what you think. And I'm not being sarcastic.

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

Online College Coming Of Age

By JULIE ISOM
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Are college campuses and dorm rooms a thing of the past? Hundreds of thousands of students are now turning to other alternatives for furthering their education. What if I told you that your kids, and even you, could sit in your living room, never leave your house, and receive the same education as you would by going away to college for four years? And what if I told you that you



Julie Isom

could do this in three years instead of four? With so many colleges offering online degrees, this has now become a reality. All you need is a computer, a telephone, and an Internet connection. You could be starting college in a matter of days or weeks instead of waiting months for the next semester to begin.

With our hectic schedules these days, who has time to dress for class, drive for miles and sit in a classroom for hours listening to lectures? Through online courses, students can do their homework on their own time, whether at 5:30 in the morning, 3:00 on the afternoon, or midnight. No driving, no babysitter, nothing but learning. You can even do it in your pajamas.

As a current student of a popular online university, I have had some strange looks when I tell people that I am attending college online. First I say, "By the way, I am going to college now." I normally get that surprised, "OH!" Then when I tell them that it is totally online, I get that other "oh." The "oh" that means, "I thought you meant a REAL college." Online colleges are just as real as campus colleges and are gaining popularity. You get the same degree that you would if you went to college the traditional way. It is just as accredited.

There is a negative side to going to college online. You don't get to go to frat parties or join a sorority. You can't play on the football team or join the cheerleading squad. There are no dorm rooms. No picnics on the lawn between classes. No cooking grill cheese sandwiches with your iron. And there are no panty raids. There is only intense, in-depth education. All of the fun "extras" are cut out. So if you are looking for those things, this is not the experience for you. But if your focus is your education and getting your degree as quickly as possible, I definitely recommend this route.

There are more drawbacks to online education. It is not for the technologically illiterate. Even people with years of experience with computers often have problems maneuvering around the classrooms. Luckily though, there are academic counselors available as well as technical support. I had one poor technician stay on the phone with me for over an hour until I finally got set up in my classrooms. Being able to type quickly is definitely an added advantage.

Another problem with online education is your Internet service provider. No matter how diligent you are with getting your assignments in on time, there may be times that your Internet server goes down at exactly the wrong moment. The best way to avoid this is to turn in all of your assignments early.

Realistically though, we know that can't always happen. There may be nights that you have two hours to get an assignment in, but your server goes down or there is a thunderstorm in your area. One option is to go to the local library, but that isn't always feasible either. I have found that the teachers have been very understanding and if they do take points off for your assignment being late, the results are miniscule and do not threaten your overall grade. Once you get passed these technical difficulties, I feel sure that you will enjoy your online college experience.

Online education is especially handy for working adults who already have a family. It is sometimes not feasible for us to go to night classes at the local college. We already go to work eight to ten hours a day. We are then expected to sit for two hours in a classroom? Where are our families during this time? Sitting at home, supporting Mom or Dad while we are away at college? Through online education, we can come home from work, fix dinner, visit with our families, tuck the kids in bed, and then do our schoolwork. Or maybe we settle the kids down for the evening with a movie and we can sit in the same room on our computers doing our assignments.

So how does it work? The University I go to uses Outlook Express. All of our classes go straight to the same program we use for our email. Basically, we subscribe to the newsgroups through our Outlook Express, and all of the new messages go into our newsgroup like it would in an email or a chat room. Then it is there for us to read when we are ready to get to it. If we have a question that needs answered immediately, all of our instructors are just a phone call away.

What kind of classes are available online? The classes range from business and technology, to nursing and healthcare. Almost every class that you can take at a traditional college is now available online. Classes are kept small so that instructors can focus on individual needs and abilities.

How do you get started with your online degree? Nothing could be easier. Go to your search engine on your computer, type in "online education," and choose a college. On their website, you will ask for more information, and they will either call or email you or you will find a contact number where you can call them. Once you speak with a counselor, you are on your way to a higher education.

What about the expense? Actually, getting your degree online often costs less than a traditional college. The college doesn't have to pay for the physical classroom. The air conditioning and heat, and other utilities are unnecessary. Instructors have less work also; therefore can handle more classes. Computers can automatically grade much of the homework, so Instructors don't have as much paperwork to handle. All of these savings are passed on to students, making your education much cheaper than it would have otherwise been. With all of the advantages to online education, it seems to be a trend that is fast gaining popularity among working adults and full time students alike.



Excuse Me, Can I Show You My Blog?

I'm about to do something a little risky (possibly even controversial) by explaining how you could be the first person, aside from my wife, to see my blog. Exposing my blog is something I'm not entirely comfortable with. However, considering how hard I worked to get my blog up in the first place, I'd like as many people to see it as possible.

And though I'm sure this goes without saying, I'd like to clarify that what we're talking about is my new Internet weblog.

Anyone under the age of 25 knows exactly what a weblog is. Which is why, as a 38-year-old man, I recently found myself declining the advances of a young woman who was offering, rather enthusiastically, to launch my blog. I explained to her that I was extremely flattered, but also happily married to a woman whose Southern traditions include, among other things, castrating livestock. And while my temptation as a man was strong, my fear as a husband was stronger — to which she responded with a lesson about blogs.

What they are.

How they work.

And why, on second thought, she would not be getting anywhere near mine.

Being a man, I instinctively responded by telling her I didn't need her help anyway because I was perfectly capable of launching my own blog. Probably in half the time. This, of course, was a mistake. Not only because it stopped most of the conversation in the room, but also because I realized the only way to save my dignity was to make an actual weblog available on the Internet. This meant utilizing a part of my brain that often shuts down after just 10 minutes of trying to re-program the TV remote; this meant tapping into a series of synapses so gapped and corroded from disuse that getting them to fire would require surgically implanting 10-gauge wiring; this meant, above all else, running the risk of exceeding my brain's operating capacity to the extent I find myself writing paragraphs that are merely a string of sentences joined to-



By
Ned
Hickson
Siuslaw News

gether by semi colons.

I decided the first step in building my blog was to get on the Internet and look at other people's blogs. This, as you've probably heard, is extremely easy to do. In fact, I'd say there are more people on the Internet wanting to show you their blogs than just about anything else. From there, I came up with a list of ideas, some of which, until surfing the Internet, I honestly didn't know you could do with your blog.

Next, I staked my claim on the World Wide Web and chose what is known as "domain name" which, from what I understand, is mine forever. Or at least until I do something stupid that inadvertently causes the collapse of the Internet and, quite possibly, draws the attention of Homeland Security. For this reason I gave the name a lot of thought before finally — in a moment of epiphany — lightning struck:

www.nedhickson.net.

Of course, there's a lot more that goes into creating and launching a weblog than this. For example: whining continuously until your web-savvy friend agrees to help you. This only came after waking up at 3 a.m., face down in the keyboard, with my spacebar short-circuiting in drool.

That said, I hope you'll check out my blog.

But please, keep any comparisons to yourself.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at ned@nedhickson.net, or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR. 97439. Visit his weblog at www.nedhickson.net)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Prescription Drug Advertising — Where is the Outrage?

The majority of legislators in Congress simply do not get it! The largest contributing factor in the outrageous cost of prescription drugs is advertising and promotion — about 37% of the price we pay for those drugs. The cost of research and development (R&D) for new drugs does not even approach that percentage, since a huge part of the research going into the development of new drugs is performed by our National Institutes of Health. About twenty-five billion dollars of taxpayer money goes to the NIH each year, much of which is spent on research for the development of new drugs. It is the pharmaceutical industry's advertising, promotion and excessive profits, not research and development, that drives up the costs of prescription drugs.

The incredible waste of valuable prescription drug resources is appalling. Here's but one example of such waste: There are hundreds of thousands of pharmaceutical company ads that appear in many thousands of magazines and newspapers each year. Most of the major pharmaceutical company ads in magazines usually contain a couple of pages of 'stats' describing the product and its contraindications. These pages are usually set in type so small that they cannot be easily read. And if one were to take the time to read it, the technical language is virtually incomprehensible to almost all readers. Since only a physician may prescribe prescription drugs, such information properly belongs only in medical and professional journals.

Billions of dollars are spent (and wasted) each year on television and print media ads. These enormous costs are reflected in the price of the product. Direct to Consumer (DTC) advertising of prescription drugs should be banned. The United States and New Zealand are the only countries that permit DTC advertising of prescription drugs — and prescription drugs in New Zealand are heavily subsidized by the government (and, as an indirect result of DTC advertising, so are pharmaceutical companies). Drug prices in most other countries are about half those in the United States.

But the most damnable outrage is the recently-passed Medicare prescription drug legislation language that prohibits Medicare from negotiating Medicare prescription drug prices! You can bet that it was the drug companies that wrote that provision into the bill. The gratuitous 'discounts' that are being offered to low income prescription drug consumers by the pharmaceutical industry are a sham. What good is a 25% discount when the product is 200% overpriced?

The pharmaceutical industry does not need any more protection — it needs less! It is the drug consumer who needs protection from drug companies. It's time to rein in the pharmaceutical industry drug cartel and their congressional co-conspirators.

Paul G. Jaehnert, Vadnais Hts., MN
To The Editor:

Quotes: Big Bush Lies About Rove.

? "If there's a leak in my administration, I want to know who it is." —George W. Bush

? "The White House has flatly rejected as "ridiculous" and "just not true" sugges-

tions that the source in question was Karl Rove..." —GLOBE AND MAIL

? "There's been nothing, absolutely nothing, brought to our attention to suggest any White House involvement, and that includes the vice president's office, as well,...if anyone in this administration was involved in it, they would no longer be in this administration." —Bush Press Sec. Scott McClellan

? "McClellan said Rove "wasn't involved" in any disclosure of the operative's name. "The president knows he wasn't involved. . . . It's simply not true." —WASHINGTON POST

? "In early October 2003, NEWSWEEK reported that immediately after Novak's column appeared in July, Rove called MSNBC "Hardball" host Chris Matthews and told him that Wilson's wife was "fair game." But White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters at the time that any suggestion that Rove had played a role in outing Plame was "totally ridiculous." —MSNBC

? "White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove spoke with at least one reporter about Valerie Plame's role at the CIA before she was identified as a covert agent in a newspaper column two years ago, but Rove's lawyer said yesterday that his client did not identify her by name." —WASHINGTON POST

? "I didn't know her name, and I didn't leak her name." —Karl Rove

? "Federal law prohibits intentionally disclosing "any information identifying" a covert operative. So Rove broke the law, right? Unless he insists he didn't know she was a covert CIA agent. But how did he know Wilson's wife [last name, Plame] even worked for the CIA? After all, she was undercover." —Ward Harkavy

? "So, Rove's defense now hangs on one word—he "never knowingly disclosed classified information." Does that mean Rove simply didn't know Valerie Plame was a covert agent? Or does it just mean that Rove did not know that the CIA was "taking affirmative measures" to hide her identity? —Lawrence O'Donnell

? Getting Off Scott Free: AP Presents McClellan's Past Quotes on Rove and Plame —to July 11, 2005

? "Nearly two years after stating that any administration official found to have been involved in leaking the name of an undercover C.I.A. officer would be fired, and assuring that Karl Rove and other senior aides to President Bush had nothing to do with the disclosure, the White House on Monday refused to answer any questions about new evidence of Mr. Rove's role in the matter." —WASHINGTON POST

? "The real Rove scandal...If you can't shoot the messenger, take aim at his wife. That clearly was the intent of White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove in leaking to a reporter that former Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV's wife, Valerie Plame, was a CIA agent. To try to conceal the fact that the president had lied to the American public about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, Rove attempted to destroy the credibility of two national security veterans and send an intimidating message to any other government officials preparing to publicly tell the truth. Rove's lawyer now says that Rove didn't break the law against naming covert agents because he didn't know Plame's name and therefore couldn't have re-

vealed it. Perhaps he can use such a technicality in court, but in the meantime he should resign immediately — or be fired by the president — for leaking classified information, trying to smear Wilson and possibly endangering Plame's life." —Robert Scheer, LAT

Quip: Gentlemen, Mr. Bush is running late. He suggests you begin sucking up without him."

Noomar

To The Editor:

I am sad. I am sad for my country and my people. I am sad that we are ruled by a regime that has no conscience. A regime that says lies are truth and evil is good. A regime that has no sympathy for or understanding of ordinary people.

I am sad that we are no longer a democracy but are now a corporatocracy.

A country where greed has become a virtue. A country where the Military-Industrial complex controls all. A country whose wealth is squandered on the conquest of a country that was never a threat. A country where the media is only a vendor of propaganda.

I am sad that people like John McCain and Colin Powell have shown that they do not deserve my respect.

I am sad that Americans and Iraqis are dying for oil.

I am sad that we have become a nation where dissent is equated with disloyalty.

I am sad that only the poor and working people's lives are sacrificed for oil.

I am sad that G.W. Bush's two daughters sit in luxury with no worries or concerns while other young people die for their father's vanity.

I am devastated when I see young people crippled and maimed for life. I am sad when I see the families of these people trying to be brave and hoping that the sacrifice was not in vain.

I am sad when I see pictures of Iraqi people killed and maimed. I am sad because they look so bewildered and lost.

I am sad because our troops refer to the Iraqi people as "ragheads" which dehumanizes them.

I am sad for our troops who have been killed and maimed in Iraq. I am disgusted with a regime that has reduced compensation for their sacrifice. A regime that was charging eight dollars a day for room and board in military hospitals.

I am sad that I think good news from Iraq is no U.S. casualties.

I am sad and ashamed that this great nation has a leader that never reads. A man that has the headlines read to him by a flunky. A man who cannot construct a simple declarative sentence. A man who say "nuclear" when he means nuclear. A man that says "disassemble" when he means dissemble.

I am sad because this president seems to care nothing for those who have sacrificed their lives for his ego.

I am devastated when I see veterans of the conquest of Iraq who have been crippled for life.

I am sad because thie regime tried to destroy the reputation of a decorated veteran with lies, innuendos, and half-truths.

I am sad when I read about our industries being exported to countries where the workers are little more than slaves.

I am sad about our immigration situation. Poor people are coming from Mexico because they have lost everything because of NAFTA. I am sad because these people are treated like serfs here. If they complain they are turned in to the INS. The pay they receive is well below our minimum wage and they have no benefits.

I am sad that a woman, and a black woman at that, is part of this terrible charade.

I was almost reduced to tears when I

saw a man who had hidden out from active service give the Congressional Medal of Honor to the son of a soldier killed in Iraq.

I am sad and angry and frustrated.

I am a Korean War veteran and served this nation for 30 years.

John K. Ford, Roswell, NM

To The Editor:

Read your article, 'Groups Promote Fair Trade Chocolate At 'Charlie' Screenings,' and wanted to let you know about an educational program called Get It! (Global Education to Improve Tomorrow), by Heifer International. The curriculum teaches students and teachers about sustainable solutions toward ending poverty across the world. The lessons focus on the global environment and people across the world specifically in the agricultural growing regions for flowers, coffee, and bananas.

It is worth looking into.

Also, does your office drink Fair Trade coffee?

Angie Warner

To The Editor:

Eliminate Medicare Penalty

Unknown to most people, including legislators, there is a Medicare penalty if someone becomes eligible to apply for Medicare Part B but chooses not to apply for it until a later date. Exactly why there is such a penalty is unclear, but the government will apply a 10-percent penalty each year after the year of eligibility up to the time the person applies for the coverage. Once the penalty is determined, it must be paid each month during the participant's entire lifetime. A *lifetime penalty*?

Most Americans work their entire lives and pay a Medicare Tax on their earnings on every payday. It is everyone's right to apply for Medicare Part B whenever they need it and there should be no penalty if one decides to apply for it at a later date.

It's time to eliminate the absurd Medicare penalty. It's just another way for the government to shirk its responsibility to hard-working American citizens. Please do whatever possible to change this unfair and inappropriate penalty.

Big Business Needs To Pay Taxes

During the past decade the majority of Texas businesses, including "mom and pop" companies, have been paying their Business Franchise Taxes every year. Only the bigger and more wealthy businesses have been able to circumvent the system. Ensuring that these "escapees" no longer continue to fall through the loopholes made available to them must be a priority of the legislature; however, the business lobby — a.k.a., Texas Association of Business (TAB) — has ensured its independence from paying taxes by instead continuing to contribute huge dollars to legislative campaigns. In short, big business pays out "protection" money. On the street, it's illegal. In the legislature, it's okay.

Tax immunity for big business continues to be the priority among legislators, along with taxing the middle class. At this rate, the state will ensure the increase in its poor and wealthy, with the middle class going the way of the *dinosaur*. The reality is that both the legislature and big business continue to shirk their responsibility to Texas families and children, as outlined in the state constitution and tax laws. These ongoing actions border on criminality, as both entities ignore the real issues of the community. The tax loopholes must be closed and Texas voters must demand elected officials do so immediately.

Peter Stern, Driftwood, TX

Students Join Fair Trade Businesses Against CAFTA-DR

SEATTLE, Wash. --- Students across the country who are part of the United Students for Fair Trade (USFT) network are enlisting fair trade business leaders to call upon Congress to reject the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

USFT students partner with several businesses in the internationally traded craft and coffee industries to promote products bought and sold under fair trade standards. These fair trade businesses work to ensure that small coffee farmers get a fair deal for their products. Many are taking a principled stand against CAFTA

because it undermines the goals towards which they work.

"We understand the potential for trade to help impoverished countries," said Cameron Herrington, a recent graduate of University of Washington who has researched CAFTA's impact in Guatemala. "These businesses understand that when trade is conducted in a way that threatens the lives and livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable people, it is not only unfair, it is immoral."

USFT is encouraging businesses to demonstrate leadership by calling upon Congress to differentiate between trade agreements that will

accomplish development goals and those that will not. Seven coffee roasters from across the country -- Just Coffee, Larry's Beans, Dean's Beans, Higher Grounds Trading Company, Peace Coffee, Thanksgiving Coffee, and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters --- have publicly declared their opposition to CAFTA, along with the national fair trade crafts retailer Ten Thousand Villages.

"As fair trade coffee roasters we are 100 percent opposed to CAFTA," said Matt Early, co-owner of Just Coffee. "As we have seen in Mexico with NAFTA, this trade agreement will weaken workers'

rights, displace small farmers, degrade the environment and continue an ever-expanding race to the bottom--both in Central America and here in the U.S. At Just Coffee we support the students of USFT unconditionally in their opposition to this proposed trade agreement. CAFTA is not fair trade."

Approved by the Senate last week by a narrow margin, CAFTA is likely to come up for a vote in the House of Representatives this week. The trade agreement, if passed, will subject millions of small farmers in Central American countries and the Dominican Republic to unfair competition with heavily subsidized U.S. agribusinesses, undercutting their livelihoods and increasing endemic poverty throughout the region.

"Fair trade enables family farmers and other community-based economic entities to access global markets," said Larry Larson, chairman of Cooperative Coffees. "The net result of CAFTA is to shut down community-based economics and empower corporate control--which means more people working in sweatshop conditions and less people working the land," explained Larson.

USFT is one of dozens of organizations warning that millions of rural agricultural livelihoods in Central America will evaporate if CAFTA is ratified. This situation will contribute to workers' rights abuses, environmental degradation, and northward migration.

Student activists and businesses that practice fair trade principles are pushing their representatives to take a stand against CAFTA and for trade agreements that empower communities worldwide.

United Students for Fair Trade (USFT) is a three-year-old national network of hundreds of university and high school students advocating for fair trade products, principles, and policies.

Just Coffee --- a 100 percent fair trade coffee roaster in Madison, W.I. --- is committed to 100 percent fair trade as a business opportunity and not simply as a market opportunity. They offer micro-batch roasted, fairly-traded, naturally grown, great-tasting coffees at a low prices.

Larry's Beans --- a Raleigh, N.C. based coffee roaster --- is committed to equitable trade partnerships. It takes great pride in sharing information about the impact consumers can make by voting with their dollars.

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