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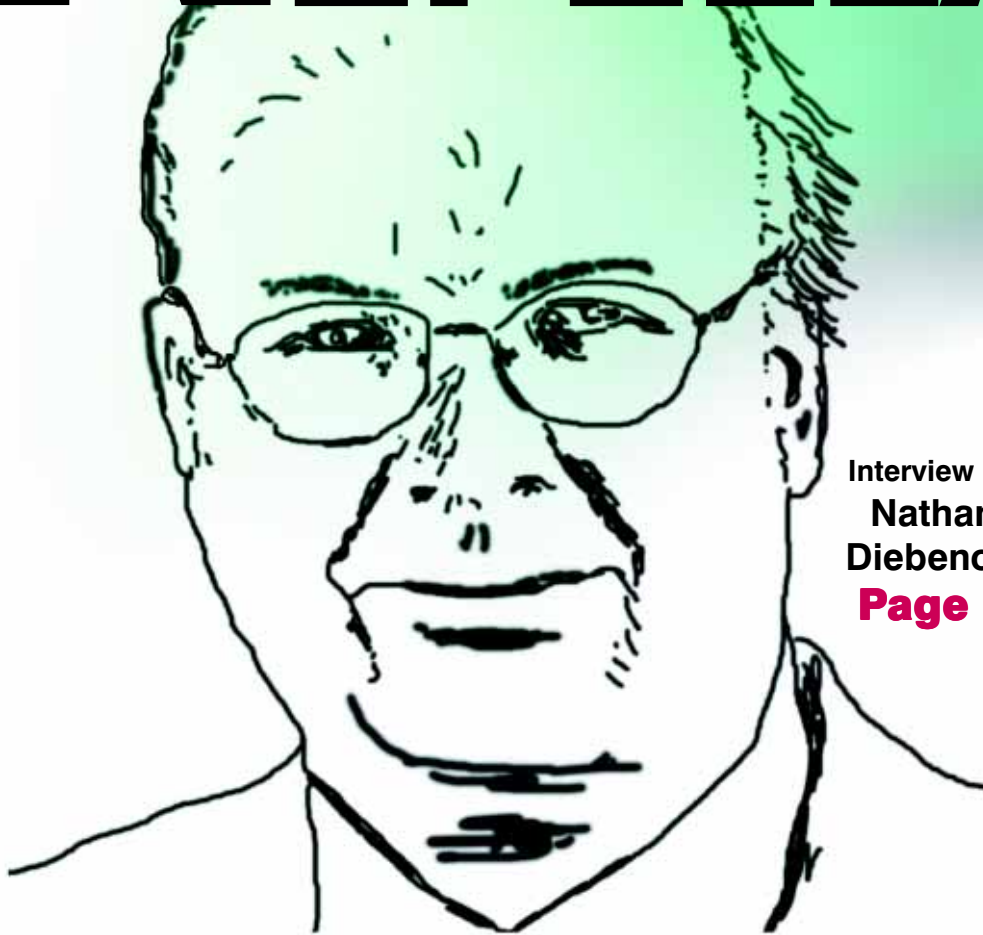
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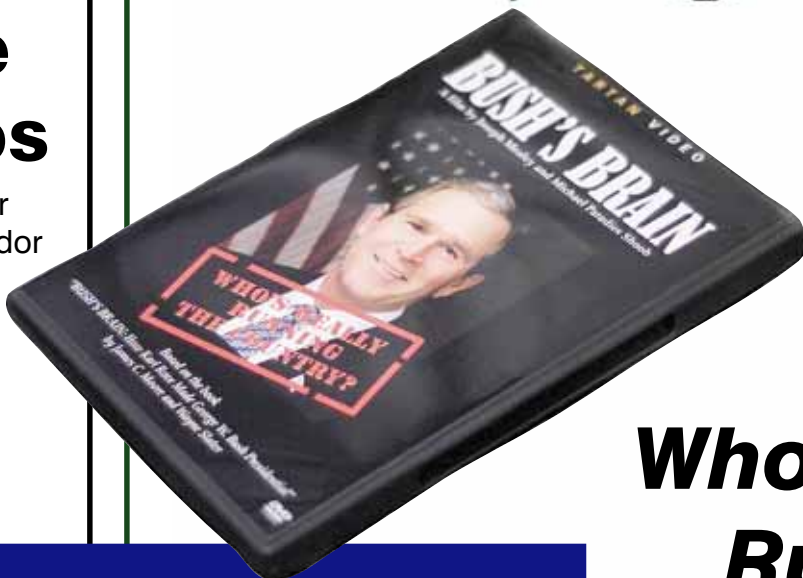
\$1.50 Per Copy www.iconoclast-texas.com • CRAWFORD, TEXAS • Vol. 6, No. 31 — Wednesday, August 3, 2005

ROVE REPELLANT

Filmmakers Michael Shoob and Joe Mealey Dissect Turd Blossom Bush's Brain



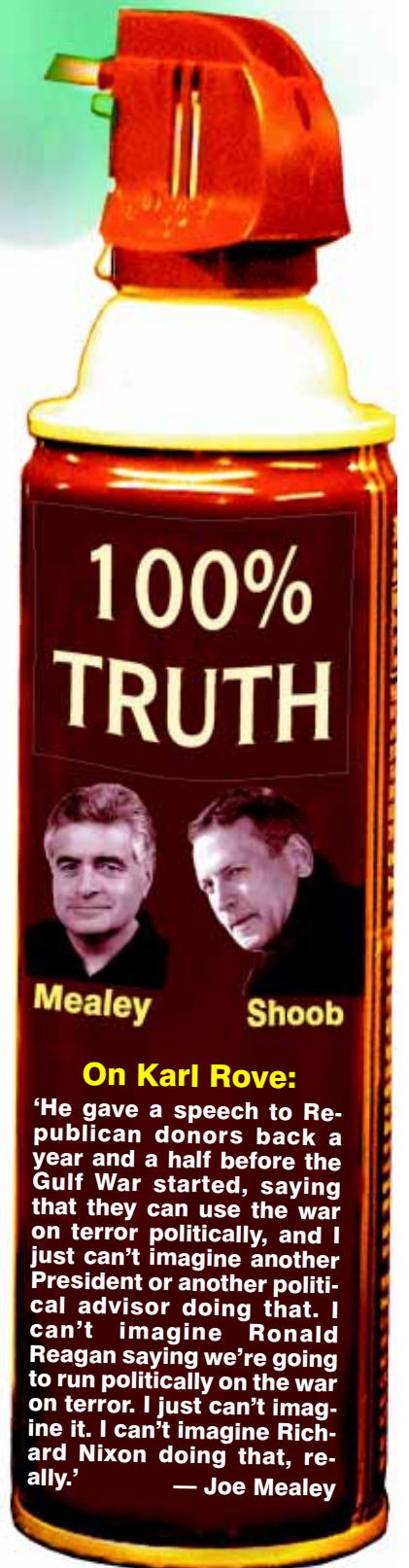
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NEW DVD

QUESTIONS

Who's Really Running The Country



Mealey Shoob

On Karl Rove:

'He gave a speech to Republican donors back a year and a half before the Gulf War started, saying that they can use the war on terror politically, and I just can't imagine another President or another political advisor doing that. I can't imagine Ronald Reagan saying we're going to run politically on the war on terror. I just can't imagine it. I can't imagine Richard Nixon doing that, really.'

— Joe Mealey

Veterans Group Wants Independent Investigation Into Prison Abuse Photos

WASHINGTON — Veterans for Common Sense (VCS), a nonpartisan veterans' organization with 12,000 members, called for a commission to investigate torture allegations in response to the Pentagon refusal to release photos and videos from Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.

In an open letter, signed by more than 2,000 veterans and supporters (including five flag-rank officers and more than 200 commissioned officers), the veter-

ans urged Congress and the President to "commit — immediately and publicly — to support the creation of an independent commission to investigate and report on the detention and interrogation practices of U.S. military and intelligence agencies deployed in the war on terror."

"Once again the administration is fighting to prevent any possible public accountability for its policies, instead choosing to blame it all on the troops.

To court-martial privates while high ranking officials get promoted is damaging to the very principle of command responsibility and undermines the U.S. military," said Charles Sheehan-Miles, a 1991 Gulf War veteran and the group's executive director.

Veterans for Common Sense is co-plaintiff in a lawsuit filed by a coalition of human rights and civil liberties groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Con-

stitutional Rights. The lawsuit has generated thousands of pages of documents in the last year documenting torture, abuse and in some cases murder in U.S. detention centers.

Individuals who have seen the photos and videos, including some members of Congress and journalist Seymour Hersh, have reported they include scenes far worse than anything released from Abu Ghraib thus far, including rape and the videotaped beating of a prisoner. The courts had ordered the Pentagon to release the photos by Friday, July 22, but the Pentagon filed a last minute brief attempting to block their release.

"The Pentagon is doing everything it can to prevent the release of these graphic images, because they know that if the U.S. public were to see the true scope of the abuses, the demands for an independent investigation would be too strong to be ignored," said Sheehan-Miles said.

The full text of the letter and list of signers is available at the organization's website.

INFO

WWW.VETERANSFORCOMMONSENSE.ORG

Six In 10 Americans Say Another World War Likely

WASHINGTON — An Associated Press-Kyodo poll found that six in 10 Americans say they think another world war is likely to occur in their lifetimes.

However, only one-third of the Japanese said they agreed, 60 years after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thereby ending World War II.

The use of atomic bombs, then, was unavoidable, say two-thirds of Americans today. Twenty percent of Japanese agreed, but three-fourths said the bombing was not necessary.

Six in 10 Americans think the Japanese government is trustworthy, but more than half of the Japanese distrust Washington, according to the poll.

A majority in both countries said a first strike with nuclear weapons could not be justified. Twice as many Americans as Japanese, though, said such a strike might be justified in some circumstances.

Bush To Sign Massive Energy Bill

WASHINGTON - President Bush is planning to sign, as early as this week, an energy bill giving billions of dollars in government handouts to U.S. energy companies, while the United States' thirst for oil remains as high and expensive as ever.

The bill's most important corporate

giveaway is the repeal of the Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUHCA), a protection for electricity consumers against massive consolidation of unregulated utility ownership and prohibits non-utilities — such as oil companies, investment banks, and foreign companies — from owning public

utilities.

The House approved the measure last Thursday by 275-156; the Senate approved it Friday by 74-26.

The 1,725-page House version, which was negotiated in the Senate, is estimated to provide \$14.5 billion in tax breaks, mainly to traditional energy companies.

The bill reaches across almost every energy industry from renewable energy to nuclear power. The oil and gas industries get \$2.7 billion in tax breaks and \$500 million over the next 10 years for research into drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

Farmers get support in the form of a mandate for oil refiners to double production of corn-produced ethanol in gasoline to 7.5 billion gallons a year by 2012.

Other provisions include a four-week extension of daylight saving time; tax breaks for making homes more energy efficient, for hybrid gas-electric cars, and for the wind, geothermal and solar industries; new efficiency standards for appliances; new federal reliability standards for the electricity grid to avoid future blackouts; loan guarantees for construction of new nuclear power reactors;

A provision meant to curtail U.S. oil demand by one million barrels a year by 2025 was struck down, as well as provisions for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling and protecting companies from lawsuits pertaining to gasoline additive MTBE and its contamination of drinking water supplies in less than 40 states.

Big Union Splits, Democrats Worry

CHICAGO — Hoping to recruit more union membership from ranks that have depleted over the years, two labor unions split from the 50-year-old AFL-CIO during its annual convention last Monday. Some Democratic Party leaders and organized workers, meanwhile, worry the labor movement will lose its steam as a result of the exodus.

The Teamsters, led by President James P. Hoffa, and the Service Employees International Union, led by President Andy Stern, left, and the United Food and Commercial Workers and UNITE HERE are expected to bolt later. All four, a part of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's Change to Win Coalition, boycotted the convention held in Chicago last week.

"Our goal is not to divide the labor movement but to rebuild it," Stern said, representing his 1.8 million members of the SEIU.

AFL-CIO President Sweeney called the lack of faith a "grievous insult" that damages the fight against globalization and anti-union sentiment in Congress.

"The labor movement belongs to all of us ... and our future should not be dictated by the demands of any group or the ambitions of any individual," Sweeney said.

While the four account for one-third of the AFL-CIO's 13 million members, the SEIU and Teamsters add more than \$20 million to the AFL-CIO's \$120 million budget, much of which goes to Democratic candidates and "get out the vote" programs for Democrats.

The change Stern, Hoffa, and others in Sweeney's Change to Win Coalition wanted more focus on recruiting new union members rather than "throwing money at politicians," as Hoffa put it at a coalition news conference near the AFL-CIO convention site.



The Lone Star Iconoclast (USPS 022-833) is published weekly, on Wednesdays, by Smith Media, Inc., P.O. Box 420, Crawford, TX 76638 and 310 W. 5th St., P.O. Box 353, Clifton, TX 76634

Periodicals Postage is Paid at Clifton, TX 76634.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: McLennan & Bosque Counties, one year: \$40; Elsewhere, one year: \$45. Give old address when requesting change of address.

POSTMASTER: Please send address change to: The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 353, Clifton, TX 76634.

DEADLINES: 5 p.m. Fridays.

Telephone (All Departments) — (254) 675-3336 • Toll-Free 1-800-241-5504

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ROVE REPELLANT

Filmmakers Michael Shoob
and Joe Mealey Dissect
Turd-Blossom Bush's Brain

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
STAFF WRITER

CRAWFORD — He has earned several nicknames in the past few years.

Some are pleasant, complimentary and even flattering, like "Bush's prime minister," "co-president," "boy genius," and "Superman."

Others are not so nice, like "Herr Rove," "Bush's hit man," and "turd blossom." (I just love Doonesbury, don't you?)

But when the documentary *Bush's Brain* hit the scene during election season 2004, more Americans than ever before had the chance to answer that question, "Who is that dweeby-looking guy sitting by President Bush?"

The 80-minute film, based on the book of the same name by political reporters James Moore and Wayne Slater, charts the ascension of Karl Rove, the White House senior advisor who helped orchestrate the rise of a failed oilman from Texas to the most powerful position in the world.

Rove, along the way, earned his nicknames due to his savage ability to win elections at any cost for his Republican clients. His victims line both sides of the political aisle and, nonetheless, all share Rove's turd touch.

The treatment of silver-tongued Ann Richards, for example, while running for her second term for Texas governor against newcomer George W. Bush, bears a striking resemblance to the treatment given to a Republican candidate for senator of Florida, Bill McCollum, who ran against Rove's handpicked candidate, Mel Martinez, during the Sunshine State's Republican primary in 2004.

During Richards' campaign for governor, a rumor was spread, claiming that she was gay and, therefore, too friendly to gays and lesbians; in McCollum's case, a mass mailing was distributed, claiming the former congressman was "the new darling of homosexual extremists" and then explained that he sponsored a hate crimes bill while in the U.S. House. Both Bush and Martinez, consequently, went on to win their seats by slim margins, or by virtue of the U.S. Supreme Court as in Bush's case.

To one of the directors of *Bush's Brain*, though, the American people are responsible for failing to rope in such questionable political tactics if they have the information to stop it.

"I would say that if one thing was of concern to me it's this idea of winning at any cost. In some sense, I think if Karl Rove is out of bounds and is practicing a kind of politics that shouldn't be a part of the American system, then in some way, we are responsible for that, that we are tolerating that level of conduct of our elections," said Michael Shoob. "I think the press is responsible for no oversight. The American people are responsible for a level of indifference. This is why



Drawing of Karl Rove

the practices are allowed."

As they were working on their new documentary that deals with the origins of the Iraq War, the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST's Nathan Diebenow spoke last week with the two directors and producers of *Bush's Brain*, Michael Shoob and Joe Mealey, about their experiences working on their Rove documentary, the politicizing of war, and Rove's fate in connection with the outing of a CIA agent.

.....
ICONOCLAST: How did you get involved with making your documentary?

MICHAEL SHOOB: Joe and I had worked together. I was a directing fellow at the American Film Institute. He was the cinematography fellow, and we had done a number of projects together at the American Film Institute. Then we made a feature film called *Driven* which I directed. It was an ensemble drama which opened at the Toronto Film Festival and was on public television, then on Showtime and the Sundance Channel.

The Rove project was actually Joe's idea, and I've had a great interest in politics, so it was a natural fit for me. We worked together so well over so many years that we decided to do it together. In our relationship over the years, I initiated a lot of stuff. This was something where he optioned the book and came to me and asked if I wanted to do it with him. I was in the middle of planning another feature film, and I did it, and I'm delighted I did.

JOE MEALEY: Jim Moore, one of the authors of the book, wrote an op-ed piece in the L.A. TIMES and that prompted me to read the book. It really answered the questions I had at the

time that was going on. I didn't vote for Bush the first time around, and you know, conservatives and liberals are the yin and yang of American politics, but all of a sudden after 9/11, this blending of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Iraq, and al-Qaeda — I was trying to figure out what was going on here. Jim Moore's op-ed piece answered that question, and then, I thought this book would make a great documentary. It's something that people need to know. We approached the authors. They agreed to it, and Michael and I started shooting.

At the time, I had no idea that there was going to be a bunch of documentaries made at the same time. We've been accused to being a part of the "Hollywood Left" with this agenda to kick Bush out of office. The truth is you make a documentary in a vacuum. You have no idea what's going on. Everybody knew that Michael Moore had a film coming out, but he always has a film coming out. The others just came up organically, really thanks to George Bush.

ICONOCLAST: What did you learn on location about the Texas political scene and Rove? Was there anything that struck you?

SHOOB: Well, I think one thing that struck us in the study of this was how effective and hard working for so many years — that Rove eats, sleeps, lives politics and out-works everyone, and Republicans and Democrats indicated

Republican column.

MEALEY: I love Texas. We spent a month there. I love the people. We were in Austin most of the time. I felt really at home there. What we learned was how opinionated they are about Karl Rove. I have to tell you, we talked to 30 or 40 people who had plenty to say about him, most of it not very good, and I don't think I can get 30 or 40 people to say anything about me. He's made an impression over the years, and that's after we were there for two weeks, interviewed those who worked with him and worked against him.

Then we came back for another trip, and then all of the interviews at the last minute were getting cancelled. We found out that emails were coming out of the White House saying, "Don't talk to these guys." It was just bizarre cancellations: "Well, I forgot I had this other — How about tomorrow?" One after another, they didn't want to talk to us.

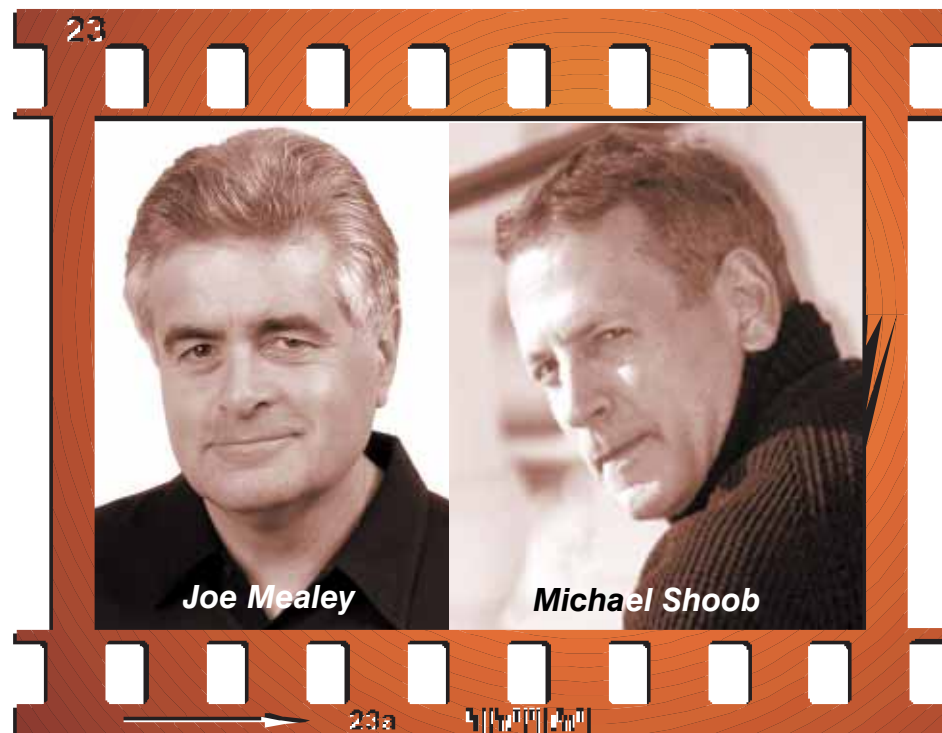
ICONOCLAST: So that accounts for the uneven balance of the documentary. I mean, I got the impression from the documentary that there were more people who disliked Rove than people who liked him, except for Dave McNelly, perhaps, who kind of like, "Well, that's what Karl Rove told me, and I don't know."

MEALEY: Yeah, yeah, we had tried to interview people, at least a dozen who would sing his praises, and they would not talk, and Karl Rove would not talk to us either. I think it was actually a mistake that they wouldn't talk to us. I would have liked to have gotten another side.

ICONOCLAST: Did some talk to you despite the White House's warnings?

SHOOB: No one talked to us despite that. You know some people talked to us before that the White House got to them. Some people were not on their list and some people, Republicans, who were not on great terms with them, and they weren't called.

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, I got the im-



that. I learned how decisive he was. I knew something as a student of politics about Texas as a Democratic state and people like John Connally and Ralph Yarborough in that Democrat tradition in Texas. It was fascinating to see how instrumental he had been in turning Texas around and putting it more in the

pression that there were some dissenters and former friends. What did you think of the people in Crawford? What was your take on them? I presume they didn't know who Karl Rove was way back then.

MEALEY: We spent a lot of time in
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• ROVE REPELLANT ... Continued From Page 3

Texas. We loved doing the documentary and love the people in Texas — love the people in Crawford. Shirley Cuff (the only local who appeared in the film) was an intelligent person. I'm sure she doesn't have that much good to say about us, but she was a very intelligent, well-spoken person. She was an example of how people in the United States think. They trust their president.

SHOUB: I was struck by how wonderfully nice a person she was, but I didn't feel like perhaps she had really searched and found out about Bush's background and things, but I think one of the important things to note is a lot of people, Americans and Texans — I'm from Georgia. It's not all that different, you know? — and folks from the South are naturally trusting. In a lot of parts of the South, they'll open their door and let you in and treat you like a member of the family pretty quickly. I think there's a trusting kind of quality that people in Texas have.

I believe, cynically, Rove has taken advantage of that, the religious people who, when you say you believe in religious values, they don't believe that's a strategy. A lot of them believe that you're speaking directly to them. I think one of the things our film is effective at doing is communicating for honest people who might be conservative that they have to really look deeper than "We believe in Christian values." I don't know Rove's history and the kind of politics he practices is really consistent with the kind of Christian values they're selling.

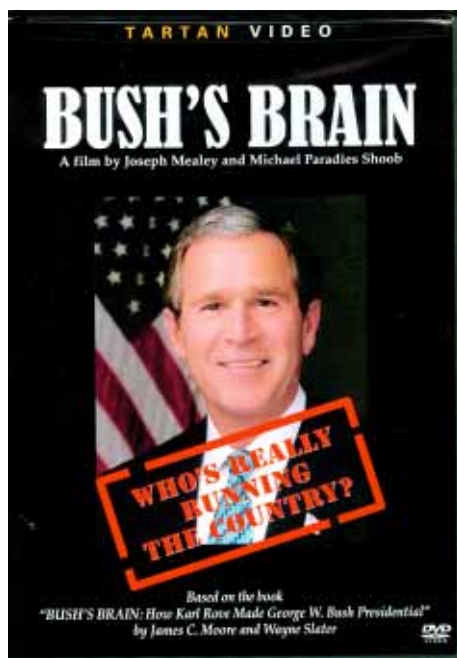
ICONOCLAST: Yeah, I have never heard what Karl Rove's religious background is.

SHOUB: He grew up in Utah, but he's not a Mormon, so my feeling is that he grew up in some kind of Protestant denomination, but I think, for what it's worth, George Bush's religious conversion is a genuine one. My feeling is, to steal one of Joe's lines, Joe said at one of the Q&As that George Bush believes in Christian values and Rove knows how to count the votes of Christian voters.

ICONOCLAST: What brought about the Marine, Fred, at the end of the film?

MEALEY: He was a big part of Jim Moore's second book, and he told us about him, and the truth is I don't think there would be so much opposition, and in fact I'm convinced this documentary would not have been made if it had just been about private savings accounts and Social Security. For better or for worse, George Bush is going to be known for the war in Iraq, how it started, why it started, and how it turned out, and the ramifications of that on our country, that's going to be his legacy. It's anger over us being led into that that created my interest in creating a documentary.

The reason Fred is in there — keep in mind when we made the documentary, the war had just started — there weren't that many soldiers killed. Fred was one of the first soldiers killed in that war and we wanted a human face on the fact that there are victims when you go to war. At the time we made the documentary, the people who had been killed whether they were Iraqis or Americans, they weren't in the American press. They were all over the rest of the war. This was a distant war that you didn't have to pay much attention to. It was more about waving the flag and "Rah!



DVD of 'Bush's Brain'

Rah! We're winning." Bush comes out in his flight suit on the aircraft carrier, and it's like a big football game, and we wanted to make it clear that Fred symbolized everybody who was over there paying a big price. Of course, now, since then, there have been 1,700 or 1,800 deaths and 11,000 or 12,000 casualties, so more people are aware of it, but they weren't at the time.

ICONOCLAST: I know that you'd want to interview more people who were closer to Rove had you had the chance to do so again, but what else would you change about the documentary if you had to do it again?

MEALEY: That's a good question, and I've given it a lot of thought. I've had a lot of people come up to us who have seen the film who have said, "Well, you know, that's just politics. That's the way things are." I think I would have addressed that in the film a little bit better because I don't think it's just politics and the way things are. I think that Karl Rove takes it to a level that the Joe Wilson story shows. It's not good for America, this idea of winning at all costs. It's not good for America. The perfect example is the Iraq war. He gave a speech to Republican donors back a year and a half before the Gulf War started, saying that they can use the war on terror politically, and I just can't imagine another President or another political advisor doing that. I can't imagine Ronald Reagan saying we're going to run politically on the war on terror. I just can't imagine it. I can't imagine Richard Nixon doing that, really.

I think most Americans are pro-military but against the war in Iraq. It shouldn't have happened. It shouldn't have started, and I would say that the people who started the war in Iraq are anti-military in a lot of ways. Are the people in Crawford or in Texas asking why George Bush's daughters have not enlisted?

ICONOCLAST: I know; why aren't there more Republican kids going into the military? But I don't think the people in Crawford would ask Bush's daughters to go to war, purely out of respect. I mean, they're pretty traditional people. They would probably poo-poo the idea of women in the military and gays in the military. That's my guess.

SHOUB: I'm happy with the film.

Here is one of the problems, Nathan; a lot of times you make a documentary, and as a filmmaker, you give yourself 18 months or two years to work on a film. In our case, we felt we wanted to get our film out to encourage debate and discussion before the election, so we couldn't go down every road that we might have wanted to. For example, I think had we had the time and resources, it would have been more interesting to discover more about Rove's background in Utah. We got some of it, but you know, a number of people in the audience wanted to know who Rove was as a person. I'm of two minds about that. I would like that as well, but I also think that once you start getting involved with someone's psychology, they become easier to dismiss in some way: "Well, that guy had a troubled childhood."

I think it's really a look at how politics is conducted, and it's really a cautionary tale about winning at any cost. If you're willing to do anything to win, break any rule, what kind of democracy do we have? I think if you look at the film, we're concerned about the defeat of John McCain and how that was conducted as we are the defeat of Ann Richards. When you look at John Weaver's face, the campaign manager for John McCain, it speaks volumes.

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, the guy is definitely beside himself. What I like about the film, personally, is that it hits all the political high points of Rove's career when he's attacking these people. You see some of his strategy with the TV news piece where Rove is talking about his philosophy on attack ads and —

SHOUB: — and changing the subject, which I think he just did with the Supreme Court nominee. I think that was right out of the Rove playbook. You know, you're under attack, and all of a sudden, you change the subject and the press is talking about the Supreme Court nominee. I don't know if that nominee would have been named six or eight weeks from now normally.

ICONOCLAST: Right and now it's on the cover of NEWSWEEK and/or TIME.

SHOUB: I think what the film does effectively is when people come away from 80 minutes of this film, they really have an understanding of the Bush/Rove history and how Bush came to be a really effective elected official and how he became elected. If you read op-ed pieces on Rove or you see television news stories about Bush, you get bits and pieces; but if you sit through 80 minutes of this film, I think you get a complete picture of how this operation was conducted.

The good thing the film does when people see it is that they wouldn't be taken in; if every American had seen this movie, I don't think the Swift Boat ads would have been very effective.

ICONOCLAST: I just read today that the centrist Democrats are saying, "We Democrats need to support the expansion of the military because it's going to make us look good and show the American people that we have strength as a party. We can be just like Bush and show our strength because no one doubts the Republican Party has the 'in' on National Security." I think it's sick.

MEALEY: I agree with you that it's sick, but I also think that one of the reasons John Kerry lost the presidency is that he voted for the war in Iraq. Hillary Clinton voted for the war in Iraq. And deep down, everybody in their gut, Republicans or Democrats, liberals or con-

servatives, all knew John Kerry voted for the war in Iraq because he was afraid if he voted against it, it would keep him from being President. When he did that, he had no moral standing to attack. Had he voted his conscience rather than what was expedient, people would have listened to him whether they disagreed with him or not.

ICONOCLAST: So war is being used as a political tool. That's a part of the game now.

MEALEY: That's the name of the game with Karl Rove.

ICONOCLAST: To me it's kind of like the dawn of a new era. I mean, this is the first time in American history where there's public discussion about a so-called pre-emptive war before one is launched. We've instigated pre-emptive wars; just take a quick look at the past 100 years with all these little conflicts. We have a habit of going into countries, say in Latin America or the Middle East, support a dictator or an oppressive regime, and stop the native citizens from taking back control. This is the first time our President has legitimized pre-emptive war in the eyes of the public. Well, it's not legitimized for all of us.

MEALEY: And this one is to political advantage. It's definitely a new step in an escalation. Unfortunately, this is not Grenada. It's not Panama. And we're going to be paying the price for it for years.

SHOUB: One of the things that has occurred to me is that Rumsfeld was really determined to not put a lot of soldiers on the ground. In fact, they fired a number of generals who told them they needed a lot more soldiers when they took over Iraq, just to stabilize Iraq. I really feel that Karl Rove's hand was in that because I think he came of age as a student in the '70s, you know? He knows that the student population and the young population were galvanized by the draft, and I think he has been determined to conduct this war without a draft, so the country would not be mobilized against it. I think that's been their approach. I don't think that they wanted only a certain amount of soldiers. I think they realized that at a certain troop level they would rattling the cages of a lot of people and would have protests in the streets, so they were content to let people they thought who would not object fight the war.

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, so right now, what we have is military families coming out, not the student population. It's a different kind of outcry now.

SHOUB: Right. You know, I think if Rove knows one thing about human nature, it's that people are self-interested as much as people like to credit the '60s and '70s for a student revolt and people were in the streets because they believed in their country. I think some did, but a lot more were concerned with going to Vietnam. I think Rove understands that, and he felt like if you didn't make it these people's war, then they wouldn't be involved. They'd go drive their cars and work their jobs and graduate degrees or whatever they want.

ICONOCLAST: That's an interesting point. There's no sense of ownership for this war among the majority of the American people.

SHOUB: I think that's a good way of putting it. I think that's by design.

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, it's kind of left to the politicians to handle.

SHOUB: Right, and I think that's a
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• **ROVE REPELLANT ... Continued From Page 4**

real concern. You know, John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." The cry was for people to get involved, and to tell you the truth, I think what Rove wants is involvement from *his* group. He doesn't want a country involved. This has been the most secretive administration in history.

ICONOCLAST: That kind of reflects into your documentary because he didn't want anyone commenting to you guys. So have you gotten any other comments from the White House or whippers from around the corner from Rove?

MEALEY: No, we haven't actually. The only comment we've had and one thing that I'm proud of during this Presidential campaign, it was at the Republican Convention in New York. Karl Rove went on Fox News and had to take time to answer clips from the film. One of the clips they showed was Jim Moore, one of the authors of the book, talking about how Karl Rove was a threat to the republic. Karl Rove dismissed that as "He's this leftist writer from Texas." He just dismissed the opponents as next to the fringe, but the truth is Jim Moore voted for George Bush three times, twice as governor and the first time as president. It's George Bush's policy that changed him and prompted this documentary, not that he's this long-term marginalized, in his mind, person from Texas.

ICONOCLAST: Wow! (laughs) That's wild.

MEALEY: Well, that's the mark of Rove.

ICONOCLAST: Geez, just personal attack after personal attack — and it's still playing out with Joe Wilson, the former ambassador whose wife was outted as a CIA agent by columnist Robert Novak. What was your feeling on Joe Wilson's plight? What was his demeanor during your interview?

SHOOB: I think that Joseph Wilson was angry, and I think one thing that the White House wants the people to think is that Joe Wilson is a big Democrat. My read on Joe Wilson is that he's an old line Republican. He grew up in San Marino in L.A. which is an old, kind of a conservative area of Los Angeles, very well-established climate. My read, although he didn't say it, was he has traditionally been a Republican. He was the ambassador to Iraq under Bush I. If you're in his office, you see a commendation from George H.W. Bush, and clearly he was a fan of Joe Wilson's, so I think that Joe Wilson was angry. He was sent on a mission to find the truth. He came back to report it and then was slapped down by this organized vendetta against him and his wife. I think he was angry, and perhaps he was surprised that this was the response to going on this mission. What surprised him also was, as he said a year ago, "Suddenly, I'm a hero to the Left." I don't think people who know Joe Wilson would characterize him as being a big liberal. They have a way of trying to tar anyone who disagrees with them. I think Rove likes to paint them — Republicans and moderates, a whole array of people — in a corner, and say, "They're way-out liberals or way-out Lefties" when they're not.

ICONOCLAST: What do you think is going to happen with that? Do you think

that something is going to connect Rove with it or even more so than that?

MEALEY: The answer is all I, like you, know is what I read in the papers and see on TV. I don't know whether he'll get connected whether he broke the law or whether he'll be indicted because I have no idea, but there are two things I think that are important. Keep in mind that is it appropriate for somebody in the White House to go after Joe Wilson — a family member's wife? Is it appropriate for somebody in the White House to attack a family, like Karl Rove did?

What Joe Wilson told us, by the way, was when we interviewed him for the film that he got a call from Chris Matthews saying that Chris Matthews had just received a call from Karl Rove saying that Valerie Plame, Joe's wife, was fair game and that we're going to go after him. Now that in of itself was not breaking the law because her name was out already, but the question is that is it ethical for somebody in the White House to go after somebody's family? That's something Saddam Hussein might have done, not the President of the United States or somebody in the office of the President of the United States.

The other issue that I think we should all keep in mind is, what is it about Joe Wilson that got the wrath of the White House to go after him? I mean, what is it about his story that made them attack him so viciously. That's what I think is the key to Bush's Iraq problem. Keep in mind that he wrote an op-ed piece in the *NEW YORK TIMES*. There have been hundreds of op-ed pieces opposed to Bush's policies in the *NEW YORK TIMES*. He was on Meet the Press, talking about opposing Bush policy. There's somebody on Meet the Press every week doing that. There's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Bush's Brain*, and a dozen documentaries made. What is it about Joe Wilson that they felt so threatened by?

I think that what he did showed that they intended to go into the Iraq War, that they knew Iraq was not a threat, they didn't have weapons of mass destruction or didn't have a real on-going there to use as an excuse. What he does is prove that they knew this and went to war anyway. And when you have the Downing Street Memos, it confirms it — and those two together are really the smoking gun because they said all along that the CIA misled us, and what Joe Wilson's story proved was that the CIA didn't mislead them, the CIA was forced into going along with it.

So I think that whether Karl Rove is indicted or not, is really irrelevant. The story is why was the White House so threatened by Joe Wilson? Why have they been going after him from the beginning more than anybody else, not after the special prosecutor was appointed? As they say in Texas, he struck oil.

ICONOCLAST: So you think that it's a lot bigger than Rove getting indicted, although —

MEALEY: I think that if he leaked the name he should be indicted. That's why the story has legs because it gets to the real bottom of the march to war in Iraq. What it says to me is that the Bush administration when Bush was elected at the point, he intended to go to war and get rid of Saddam Hussein from the beginning. When 9/11 happened, they used it as an excuse and the Joe Wilson story

makes that clear, that they used this as an opportunity.

ICONOCLAST: I totally agree with you there. It lays the excuse for war out there, but a part of me is asking what's going to happen to Rove? For the people who want to see Karl Rove go down, well, sorry, he's probably going to stick around politically for a long time in the background. He might not have as much control over the highest office, but I can see him being the darling of neo-conservative think tanks and limitless possibilities for him to stick around and cause more crazy campaigns like the one that got Mel Martinez elected senator of Florida. Rove is not going to go away.

MEALEY: There's no question.

ICONOCLAST: So I guess that just means that there's more opportunity for you to do more documentaries on Rove, huh? (laughs)

MEALEY: Yeah. (laughs) Unfortunately, there's plenty out there. (laughs) Michael has a great quote on that, but I'll let him give it to you.

SHOOB: Ironically, perhaps the legacy of George W. Bush will be that he got people interested, involved, and passionate about politics again.

ICONOCLAST: Sad, but hopefully true.

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Margarita, Salsa, Queso Contest Heats Up In Waco

WACO — The tenth annual Margarita & Salsa Festival is accepting entries for the legendary margarita, salsa, and queso contests.

The annual event will take place on Saturday, Aug. 27 in Waco, Texas.

Contestants are encouraged to enter as many of the categories as they choose. First, second and third place awards will be presented to the best margarita, salsa and queso for both restaurant and individual entries. Official Salsaritaville judges will judge the entries during the festival.

There will also be a "People's Choice" award, so those not planning on entering the contest may cast their vote for the tastiest entries at the event. Attend-

ees are encouraged to come early in order to sample the contest entries. Samples will be available while supplies last.

This year the contest will be held in

the air-conditioned General Exhibits building at the Heart of Texas Fair Complex, allowing contestants to keep cool while serving their hot salsa.

Deadline for entries is Monday, Aug.

15, 2005.

For more information or for an entry form, contact the Arthritis Foundation at (254) 772-9303 or visit <www.salsaritaville.com>.

Child Care Provider's Conference 'Tools for Growing Tots' Set Sept. 10

STEPHENVILLE — Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) is hosting its annual Child Care Provider's Conference at Tarleton State University in Stephenville on Saturday, Sept. 10, from 8:15 a.m. – 4:p.m.

This conference is designed to provide child care workers, teachers, supervisors and owners with cutting edge information in all areas of the child care industry. This year's conference will focus on younger children, ages birth to

six, but with the wide range of sessions being offered there will be something for everyone.

The keynote speaker, Jeff Sandford, president of the Stephenville Chamber of Commerce, will kick off the conference with a funny and enlightening address titled, "Leaders Change Diapers Too."

Some of this year's sessions include: Better Management for Profit; Child Development; Lesson Planning; Identifying Disabilities; Minimum Standards; Parent Relations; Protecting Your Center from Diseases & Sickness; and Meal Planning for Young Children. All of the sessions will be taught by qualified professionals who work in these areas daily and have experience working in the child care industry.

The conference registration fee is \$25 per person and is due by Aug. 26. Participants completing the entire conference agenda will earn six hours of in-service training credit.

For more information about the Child Care Provider's Conference, contact the County Extension Agent at 254-435-2331 or <dl-edwards@tamu.edu >.

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Arcata City, Calif. Adopts Voter Confidence Resolution

California City Says U.S. Privatized Election Methods Reap Inconclusive Outcomes

ARCATA, Calif. — The Arcata City Council, known worldwide for championing some of the most progressive political and environmental movements in the U.S., is now taking the lead on election reform through their adoption of the nation's first Voter Confidence Resolution.

"The Voter Confidence Resolution is a common sense statement saying privatized election machines and secret vote counting ensure inconclusive outcomes. Under these conditions we will never have unanimous agreement about election results," says Dave Berman, co-founder of the Voter Confidence Committee of Humboldt County, Calif.

"The Arcata City Council has demonstrated that our local government does hear the voice of the people, even when the federal government has stopped listening."

The Voter Confidence Resolution passed by a margin of 3 to 2 after 15 months of community lobbying and ultimately just 35 minutes of official pub-

lic comment and discussion.

Councilmember Dave Meserve voted with the majority and said, "Adopting the Voter Confidence Resolution is an important step in establishing the legitimacy of our federal elections. I'm pleased that Arcata was the first City to pass the Voter Confidence Resolution and hope that many other cities will follow."

The Resolution also states that the Consent of the Governed, defined in the Declaration of Independence as the self-evident truth from which Government derives 'just Power,' is no longer being sought through elections in America. Unverifiable votes, privatized source code, and secret vote counting ensure inconclusive outcomes. Since the results are inherently uncertain, the Resolution states, there is no basis for confidence.

"This is where the faith-based and reality-based communities intersect," Berman said. "Ronald Reagan said 'Trust, but verify.' If only we could. Thirty percent of the votes cast last

November could not be recounted. All votes must be verifiable or there is no basis for confidence in the results reported."

Around the U.S., election reform advocates are actively organizing and lobbying their City Councils to pass the Voter Confidence Resolution as well. The resolution adopted by Arcata has been developed at Berman's blog, <<http://guvworld.blogspot.com>>, and is presented as a template to be customized somewhat by other participating communities. However, the following points are the framework for the Resolution, which when used around the country will generate a cumulative impact as more and more resolutions pass:

1. The way it works now, we're guaranteed inconclusive outcomes and we'll never have unanimous agreement about election results.

2. The Voter Confidence Resolution contains a comprehensive election reform platform designed to ensure conclusive outcomes and create a new basis for confidence in U.S. federal elections.

3. Since the Consent of the Governed is not being sought, we ask: Has the Consent of the Governed been withdrawn, YET?

The benefit of cumulative impact means it is assumed that citizens will eventually switch the answer to this question from no, to YES, the Consent of the Governed HAS been withdrawn.

Berman added: "I have no doubt that other communities will pass the Voter Confidence Resolution. The question is how many will it take before we can say the Consent of the Governed has been withdrawn?"

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CAFTA Passes House By Two Votes

WASHINGTON - After a lot of arm-turning and by the slimmest of margins, the House of Representatives passed the Central American Free Trade Agreement last week, 217-215, to the glee of President Bush and his administration officials.

The trade agreement with six Latin American nations, which critics said would slash more American jobs and leave Latin American workers with employment protections, was passed last month in the Senate, 54-45, and now

awaits the president's pen.

While 27 House Republicans voted against CAFTA, 15 Democrats supported the accord that will end tariffs and other trade barriers between the United States and Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. These countries signed the trade deal a year ago.

Other free trade agreements approved during Bush's terms include Australia, Chile, Singapore, Jordan, and Morocco.

Back To The Drawing Board For Texas School Finance

AUSTIN — After lawmakers last week came to a standstill on deciding school finance, it is back to the drawing board to arrive at some compromise that the House and Senate can agree upon and that will pass muster with the Texas Supreme Court.

The Texas Senate began work on Friday to consider legislation filed by Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano), which some

deem as a last ditch effort to end the second \$1.2 million special session of the Legislature with some degree of success.

But to begin debate on Senate Bill 8, Shapiro would need a two-thirds vote in the Senate. That's just one hurdle, since the House has already rejected a similar plan.

Shapiro's 439-page plan is the subject of considerable criticism since it is similar to legislation that has already failed.

The present school finance system has been ruled unconstitutional by a state district judge who noted that the current system provides too little money for students and not enough tax discretion for school districts.

As time runs thin for the Legislature to act, some legislators have expressed willingness for the Supreme Court to decide for them.



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Former Ambassador Urges U.S. Officials To Leak More Memos

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — The former ambassador to Afghanistan, Ann Wright, called on U.S. federal employees to leak more secret memos on the lead-up to the war in Iraq like Downing Street memos uncovered by the British press this last May.

"It seems like the British government is leaking like a sieve. We need to get our own U.S. government colleagues to be leaking like a sieve," said Wright, who gave up her career in the foreign service because she disagreed with the U.S. invasion of Iraq. "We need more documents — certainly not documents that are really going to jeopardize the security of the United States — but documents that show the sequence of events within our own government."

Wright said that many federal employees disagree with the policies of the current administration but stay involved for a host of reasons, one of which more often than not is that they have mouths to feed. A closer look of the major U.S. newspapers, however, shows that those discouraged officials inside the government are sending signals of hope to the American people, she said.

"It's important that we encourage our colleagues in the U.S. federal government to think really seriously about the future of our country and to inform their conscience and look to see if they can find the equivalent memos that we have in our United States government," said Wright. "So if you have any colleagues, cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, sons or daughters that are working in whatever level of government, talk to them. Just casually mention it. You never can tell."

Wright's remarks were made at a



WE NEED MORE LEAKED MEMOS — The former ambassador to Afghanistan Ann Wright called on U.S. federal employees to leak more secret memos on the lead-up to the war in Iraq like Downing Street memos uncovered by the British press this last May. Wright's remarks were made at a house party sponsored by CodePink Austin, one of over 300 events on the July 23-24 weekend that marked the third anniversary of the Downing Street Memos' existence.

—Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

house party sponsored by CodePink Austin, one of over 300 events on the

July 23-24 weekend that marked the third anniversary of the Downing Street Memos' existence. During her talk in Austin, Wright also answered questions about the effects of depleted uranium on humans (DU is very, very bad), her opinion on whether Sept. 11 was an "inside job" (she hopes that's not the case), as well as the CIA's involvement in Afghan opium production and distribution since the Taliban fell (she needs more evidence).

Moving through Texas prior to the Veterans for Peace Conference in Dallas in August, she also spent Saturday, July 23, with about 225 people at a teach-in at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Houston.

"Once you make a trip from Hawaii, you want to do as many things as possible," Wright said, adding that she gave a brief oral testimony on the Downing Street Memos at hearings held by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) on June 16.

The Downing Street memos interest Wright because they describe what was going on behind-the-scenes between the British and U.S. governments while she served as a diplomat in Afghanistan from December 2001 to March 2003. Wright was one of three who ended up resigning from the diplomatic corps in March 2003. She resigned as the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in

Mongolia in protest over the Bush administration's decision to enter war in Iraq, the lack of effort to resolve the situations in Israel and North Korea, the unnecessary curtailment of civil liberties in the U.S., and the reduction in resources from Afghanistan to a territory unrelated to the attacks in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001.

"My whole resignation at that time was based on gut feelings, and now it turns out that we have memos from the British government which kind of confirm a lot of the feelings I had internalized," she said. "There were a lot of issues going on, and in fact as the memos have come out, it turns out that while I was in Afghanistan in March of 2002, Tony Blair's gang was already starting to work with George Bush's gang on Iraq, and the Britons in those memos said they were taken aback really about how far the U.S. was moving forward on this. They were really concerned about the legal basis on which war could happen."

Wright has since aligned herself with peace activist groups, like Women in Black, Veterans for Peace, and CodePink, because, as she said, she gave up her career in the foreign service over the war in Iraq.

"Although years ago I wouldn't have agreed with some of them, I've seen more of their rationale of why they oppose certain things of the U.S. government," Wright said. "And many of them bring up to me, 'So why did it take you so long to resign? There were so many things the U.S. government was involved in and that you were involved in!' But this one for me was just so far over the top that I wasn't about to be associated with it."

As a federal employee working with seven presidents, Wright said, she found plenty of policies she personally did not agree with and chose to not work toward. "I was able to rationalize that I was able to do good work for the American people because I could get away from those policies. That's the way most people rationalize working for the government because there are so many ups and downs with every administration," she said.

However, Wright admitted she should have resigned over her work in Nicaragua in the 1980s when she was in charge of all civic action and humanitarian systems projects for Central and South American. At the time, the projects were repaying the Hondurans for the Hondurans letting the U.S. train the Contras on their territory, she said.

"But sometimes, you let yourself get wound up in something that is exciting like that, and you don't really look clearly look at all the aspects of it, and there were horrible things that the Nicaraguans were doing to themselves — the Nicaraguans who were fighting the Sandinistas, not that I agreed with everything the Sandinistas did, by any means," she said. "But that was the U.S. creating a military force to implement its will, to get ride of revolutionaries who had overthrown a U.S. friend who was a

Continued On Next Page



CODEPINK AUSTIN sponsored a house party on the weekend of the anniversary of the Downing Street memos existence on Sunday, July 24. The guest speaker was Ann Wright, former ambassador to Afghanistan, who since resigning her diplomatic credentials over the Iraq War has aligned herself with peace activist groups, like Women in Black, Veterans for Peace, and CodePink. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

I have little sympathy — in fact, no sympathy — for Colin Powell,” Wright added. “I think he’s a very unprofessional person. At the Department of Defense, he did okay as a military guy. On the major leadership responsibilities at the State Department, he failed us because sometimes the only time you can win is by resigning and making a stink out of something. He chose to be Bush toady and go along with it. I think his karma — he’s going to come back as a rat.”

— Ann Wright

very brutal, brutal dictator.”

Wright, who served in the military for 29 years and reached the rank of colonel, said that the leaders in the U.S. military are doing what they can to fight the policies of the Bush administration, which are illegal in nature. The military leaders under other U.S. presidents also pushed back against certain policy wranglers, like President Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who wanted to send troops into the Balkans and Rwanda, she noted.

“The military is the least happy about going to war. Some people in the military are (happy about going to war), but most people who have done anything, say ‘Let’s hope those diplomats succeed,’” she said. “Military pressure is good, but when you have really to go to war, oh no, that’s nasty stuff. In many cases, for good reason, it drags its heels. The civilian politicians, many of whom have never been in the military, are ready to use them at the drop of a hat without even considering the types of things that always go on during war, the things that go on in prisons, the aftermath, civil reconstruction.”

Wright also criticized former Secretary of State Colin Powell for being more loyal to the Bush administration than to the American people: “There was nothing legal to say that you could go to war in Iraq in March 2002 and March 2003.”

“I think (Powell) really was more loyal to the Bush family, who had gotten his fourth star for him in the military and who had appointed him National Security Advisor and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and then Bush II comes

back and appoints him the first African-American Secretary of State,” she said. “Miserably he failed the institution he loved the most — the military — when the Army Chief of Staff was telling the world that the operations plans that Rumsfeld and crew were forcing down the throat of the military were short by some 200,000 troops, the troops that would have prevented the looting that took place after we went into Baghdad, to seal the borders, to provide a good security plan.”

Wright said that Powell should have resigned on principle so that it would have caused attention to the lack of proper planning for the war, if not to stop the illegal war from even happening. Instead, Powell presented to the United Nations the United States’ case for war in Iraq based on trumped charges that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, “which he now in private admits was pretty pitiful and will weigh on his conscience forever,” she said.

“I have little sympathy — in fact, no sympathy — for Colin Powell,” Wright added. “I think he’s a very unprofessional person. At the Department of Defense, he did okay as a military guy. On the major leadership responsibilities at the State Department, he failed us because sometimes the only time you can win is by resigning and making a stink out of something. He chose to be Bush toady and go along with it. I think his karma — he’s going to come back as a rat.”

The goal of the July 23-24 events is to tell more Americans about the Down-



THE WRIGHT STUFF — Ann Wright, former ambassador to Afghanistan, (right) who since resigning her diplomatic credentials over the Iraq War, has aligned herself with peace activist groups, like Women in Black, Veterans for Peace, and CodePink. She spoke on the third anniversary of the Downing Street memos’ existence on Sunday, July 24, at a house party sponsored by CodePink Austin that drew over 20 people.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

ing Street memos, these infamous British intelligence minutes that state that “intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy” to justify the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq.

“It’s unbelievable that millions of Americans still don’t know about the existence of the Downing Street Memo, despite the fact that its contents are so controversial that they could provide grounds for the impeachment of the President of the United States,” said Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Global Exchange and CodePink: Women for Peace, two groups that are involved with the After Downing Street Coalition, which spurred the organization of the July 23 events.

The events were also a push for a Congressional resolution of inquiry — the first step in the presidential impeachment process — into the Downing Street memos. According to a recent Zogby poll, 42 percent of voters polled said they would support impeaching President Bush if it were established that he lied about his reasons for the Iraq war.

According to David Swanson of AfterDowningStreet.org, hundreds of people were turned away at the larger DSM anniversary events, which

brought such members of Congress as John Conyers (D-MI), Maurice Hinchley (D-NY), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Jim McDermott (D-WA) and Maxine Waters (D-CA) to standing-room-only town hall meetings in their home districts of Detroit, New York City, Oakland, Seattle, and Los Angeles. The Progressive Democrats of America also helped bring a number of smaller events into creation.

There was another smaller DSM anniversary event in Houston, as well as one in The Woodlands, just north of Houston, and in Winnie, east of Houston. The main Houston event was organized by the Progressive Action Alliance (progressiveactionalliance.org), and co-sponsored by the Harris County Green Party (www.harriscountygreenparty.org).

To read the six Downing Street memos, visit After Downing Street’s website.

INFO

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A DOWNING STREET MEMO HOUSE PARTY was held in Austin on Sunday, July 24, by the members of CodePink Austin. Over 20 people attended the party to hear the former ambassador to Afghanistan, Ann Wright, call on U.S. federal employees to leak more secret memos on the lead-up to the war in Iraq like Downing Street memos uncovered by the British press this last May.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



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Payola: The Return Of An Old Scourge

When I first got into radio, it was fun being a disc jockey. But, that was a lifetime ago... literally.

I did not prostitute myself to the crass, screaming, machine-gun mouthed Top 40 "All The Hits All The Time!" format. (Well, I tried an on-air audition one weekend, but our styles weren't compatible because I was too laid back, and refused to play the Donna Summer records.)

I was fortunate enough to start out at a time when stations were, quite often, privately-owned. It was the post-Beatles era, and programmers were willing to let the on-air people do the thinking. The format was called "Album-Oriented Rock," or AOR.

Essentially, we jocks were a partyin' lot, as were our target demographic, thus we shared an affinity for the same artists and music. So, there were no "playlists" as such. The albums were in the racks, and within certain parameters, it was acceptable to play virtually any cut we chose.

As long as it wasn't the same crap that the airwaves were currently being overloaded and abused with by the Top 40 stations.

The trick was to play different stuff every day, and make the songs blend together, which was always a great challenge.

Plus, the really fun part came in as I could comment openly on just about any subject, because my audience was Liberal, and there was no such thing as "Political Correctness."

It was a beautiful job.

Even the local advertisers loved what we did. I wrote and produced dozens of ads each week, tailored to our format, and the clients clamored for more. Most of them kept our station(s) on in their establishments.

Back in the day...

We didn't get paid much, we were often a rowdy bunch, we were outspoken, yet we were always true to the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Act.

In the earlier days, the majority of people I worked with accepted their responsibility for the public airwaves as the "sacred trust" defined by the Act, and regulated by the Federal Communications Commission.

Payola was non-existent in my circles. We were all well aware of the scandals of the 1950s, and remembered some of the DJs who had lost their lofty positions because of it.

For the uninitiated, during the '50s there was a mad scramble among record companies and their representatives to turn new rock singers into the *hot new rock sensation*. So, when a rep would visit stations in larger markets he would present the programmers and jocks with incentives to provide more airtime for singers on his label.

The logic was that if a song became a hit in a major market, it would catch on elsewhere.

Okay, by "incentives" we're talking undeclared cash; appliances, and other merchandise; booze; drugs; and, since all DJs of the era were male, pre-paid female companionship.

You now understand why only a handful of songs from the '50s have survived



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

the test of time.

In December, 1959 the FCC sent letters to every broadcast station – AM, FM and television – asking them to specify which employees had received gratuities and of what type, earmarked from record companies to show preference to their artists. The Commission also wanted to know what steps the station had taken to prevent further "payola" acceptance. Additionally, the license renewal applications of all suspect stations were put on hold pending investigation.

The following February, The House Legislative Oversight Committee conducted hearings on the prevalence of "payola" throughout broadcasting. This Committee zeroed in on four stations in Boston for what turned out to be other issues. Congress, clueless as usual, offered no solution.

Due to the confused inaction of Congress, the FCC, with its typically knee-jerk aplomb, decreed on March 16, 1960, that all materials provided for which any "valuable consideration" is received by the station must be announced as such. Up till this time, records had been provided gratis to stations by parent labels. Now, every time one of these records was played over the air it was mandatory to announce the source of its donation.

This edict, in the time predating computers, was virtually impossible for broadcasters to comply with. Stations often purchased or traded with retailers for music. Donated records as opposed to purchased ones were not readily catalogued, and it simply couldn't be determined which were played when.

The decree did not allude to "payola" specifically, but any DJ who had received a personal remuneration from a record company or representative became their agent, and as such was now required to disclose such information.

Included were additional disclosure requirements, such as the source of contest prizes (if outside the station ownership).

That September Congress removed its head from its posterior and decided that the provider of music acquired through proper channels need not be announced to the public. At the same time Section 508 was added to the Communications Act. This made it punishable by \$10,000 fine and/or one year in prison to anyone either giving or taking "payola."

So, the radio industry went merrily along for the next couple of decades as a fun and diverse, generally locally-owned and operated entertainment and information medium.

Until Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980.

For some reason, Ol' Saint Ronnie

decided that it was imperative for virtually everything in the country to be deregulated. I don't deny that some systems needed to be cut loose, but giving free reins to the communications industry was as lamebrained an idea as any president has ever had.

A system that worked quite well, allowing ownership limited to seven stations of any type, and native-born Americans, became a monster. Moguls were born literally overnight, scarfing up dozens of broadcast facilities from one end of the country to another. The guy who now owned your favorite hometown station in Monroe, Wash., lived in Miami, Fla., and didn't give a rat's ass about local apple growing conditions – just his own bottom line.

When these individual owners got tired of buying stations and being their own little kings, they sold the assets to corporations. The corporate masters cared even less than a rat's ass about the local listeners, and often programmed the same mindless pap from sea to shining sea.

Worse yet, ultra-conservative foreigners like newspaper magnate Rupert Murdoch were able to utilize the vast assets of his News Corporation in buying 20th Century-Fox studios. This became the platform for Fox Network, then FoxNews, F/X, and all manner of right-wing extremist influence over innocent, unsuspecting American minds.

While all this upheaval in the radio world was going on, a new, dastardly evil was born – *the insultant*. These schlemiels go by the title of "consultants," but to those of us who actually know and love music they were an insult. They were yuppie scum who knew computers, but didn't have the foggiest idea of the difference between the Archies and Led Zeppelin. They might know that "I Want to Hold Your Hand" is a Beatles' song, but they'd never heard of "Helter Skelter."

So, when independent radio stations were forced out of existence, so too was the AOR format. No longer would jocks have the freedom to play such diverse, eclectic artists as Steppenwolf, The James Gang, Joni Mitchell, Lou Reed, and Neil Young in the same hour – at will.

Now, it was called the Classic Rock format. Each two-week period was pre-programmed, hour-by-hour, and the only 200 to 300 titles allowed were distributed to the radio stations on a disk. The program director need only print out the pages.

The songs weren't scheduled back-to-back because they flowed together; they were placed in some kind of secret numeric sequencing.

Each station would pay the insultant tens of thousands of dollars just for that sequencing, and each insultant had dozens of stations or corporate clients. None actually lived in a region serviced by the stations, and the ones I met wouldn't listen to rock radio, anyway.

What any given station paid an insultant was based upon local market size, and often as much as the combined salary of the entire air staff.

The criterion for being on the "hit" list is a song, or album it came from, had to have reached gold status. So, very few



album cuts that weren't released as singles made it to the lists.

Where do the insultants get their research to determine playability? It is provided by the big music distributors – SONY BMG (Columbia/RCA); Capitol; Warner/Elektra/Atlantic. Which artists do you expect these giant music factories are going to say sell the most or are the most requested? The ones who record for their labels!

So, wherever you go in the U.S. and Canada, and stop searching the dial when you come upon a tolerable song by the Doobie Brothers' (Warner), the next one is likely to be some mediocre piece of crap by Eddie Money or Journey (both SONY) or Bob Seger (Capitol). Thus the second-rate stuff gets played over and over and over, while really great music is completely ignored.

Quite honestly, I don't know anyone who bought albums by any of the three aforementioned "artists" and actually gave them a second listen.

This is why I listen to self-burned CDs.

But, with the advent of merely a handful of corporations controlling the recorded music business, combined with the dwindling diversity in radio station ownership, the barn door was left wide open for the "payola" bull to come rushing out.

During the 1980s, there were teen singers who, if not old enough to be accomplished, were basically harmless, like Debbie (now known as Deborah) Gibson. Even the more adult Cyndi Lauper was loopy yet cute. And, God knows there have been dozens of less than talented ersatz musical acts parents, who should have known better, have thrown millions of dollars away to keep their spoiled 11-year-old daughters cool with the other spoiled little girls.

However, I never – ever – listen to hot hits stations, so I'm not up on what's going on with the "flavor-of-the-month"

Continued On Next Page

Payola: The Return Of An Old Scourge

Continued From Previous Page

singers.

I do know that the vast majority of the new wave of “hot” popular singers couldn’t sing “Mary Had a Little Lamb” in tune with five years of expert coaching. So, how do their one-style-fits-all songs receive so much airplay, and how are they able to sell CDs in the millions?

Payola.

It’s back, and it’s got the youthful fans by the throat.

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer announced that, following a year long investigation, SONY BMG MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT and its subsidiary labels have been making payments of varying types and sizes to radio personalities around New York state. The “payola” was made most notably to secure increased airplay for Jennifer Lopez and Celine Dion, although this just seems to be the tip of the iceberg.

Let’s be honest, with few exceptions, who’s going to be listening to the music of the past 15 years? Does anyone remember even last year’s hits? The music factories need to BS the audience to sell its patently inferior product.

There’s no surprise that, 25 years after Yoko broke them up, whenever a Beatles package is released it tops the charts for that year.

The payola came in numerous guises: Outright bribes to programmers, including lavish vacations, electronics and other valuable stuff; surreptitious listener giveaways; payments to middlemen as payola conduits; “spin programs,” or airplay disguised as advertising.

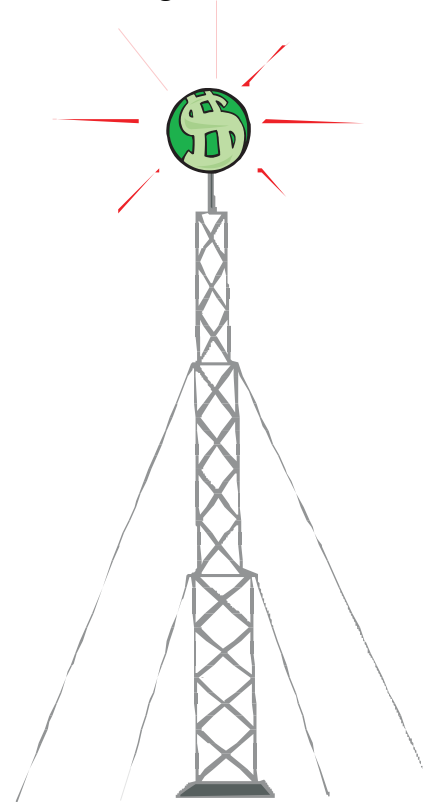
E-mails referring to whom were getting what kind of payments, the dollar values, and for which artists, went up and down the SONY BMG corporate ladder. The company has agreed to stop this practice, and will pay a \$10 Million fine in the form of a donation to fund programs in New York State for music education and appreciation.

Apparently, this has been going on for years, and it runs much deeper than what has come out in this investigation. By buying additional airtime, a music company will skew the charts, both within and outside of the industry, thus giving listeners the concept of increased popularity in a particular song or singer.

On the obvious side, this begs the question of tax evasion, on the part of both the provider and recipient of payola. Next, the parties involved are all subject to fines and possible imprisonment under Section 508. For a Commission that in recent years has bent over backwards to levy unreasonably heavy fines for what it considered “dirty” content, this kind of scam should not go unpunished.

Not only does this hurt the artists who are masters and pros at what they do, and thus overshadowed by the bling of the biz, it cheats the public. Most of us like music. Youths love music. It’s at the very center of everything that goes with being 11 through 20. Youths are very trend conscious, and susceptible to manipulation.

So to be conned by radio stations, who are allowed to operate as a “sacred trust” and “in the public interest”, into thinking the latest garbage from J-Lo is



the hot new CD you’ve just got to have because it’s constantly in your Walkman (a SONY creation) earphones, is a breach of station ownership with the people it has agreed to serve.

I don’t know where this will lead, if other states will take up Mr. Spitzer’s baton, or if the FCC even gives a damn. But, any parent of a child entering puberty, the target of these disreputable schemes, or anyone who loves and appreciates real music – not the overproduced muck and mire that promotes itself as today’s hot pop hits – should be as mad as hell about this multi-million dollar rip-off of the American public.

And people as multi-untalented as J-Lo, or boring as Celine Dion, or greedy as music factory executives do not need to be getting richer through such dubious means.

The Federal Communications Commission collects checks signed by you, Mr. and Ms. Taxpayer – tell them to get off their collective ass and stick it to these creeps!

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Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

A \$70 Million Gift To Halliburton?

Our Federal government is out of control.

Not that this is news.

Two announcements regarding Halliburton last week do qualify as news:

- Halliburton’s KBR division responsible for carrying out Pentagon contracts in Iraq showed a 284 percent increase in operating profits during the second quarter of this year.

- Much of this profit was due to the payment of lavish “award fee” gifts amounting to \$70 million, in light of highly questionable “good work.”

SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS!

Budget-minded number crunchers now have solid proof that a few more beds are needed in the insane asylum.

Think about it.

A \$70 million gift.

Has it suddenly become legal for Pentagon officials to steal your money and give it away to a big corporation?

And this amidst the Pentagon concealing from the public critical reports by military auditors of alleged “unsupported” expenses totaling millions of dollars by KBR, which are “under investigation.”

SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS!

The United States is drowning in red ink, a.k.a. public debt that our grandchildren’s grandchildren will be repaying.

To give away \$70 million beneath this dark cloud is unconscionable!

Not to mention stupid and unethical.

SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS!

President Bush, who has never been a member of the middle or lower class, with a proud smirk calls his “base” the elite, which is where he awarded his massive tax cuts, as favors to his buddies.

Where did this money come from?

The middle and lower classes.

Since day one of his Presidency, and prior to 9/11, Bush has continuously embezzled every penny from the Social Security trust fund — your future security — to provide gifts to his rich friends.

So what’s another \$70 million to Halliburton?

It all comes from the same place.

Of course, the raiding of the Social Security trust fund is illegal and, in a world where right is right and wrong is wrong, its pillaging would be fully prosecuted as a 1st degree felony. And a lengthy jail term would be mandatory, not to mention restitution.

But it won’t happen.

The fox has the keys to both the hen House and the elite chamber that touts neo-conservative fascism as its Senato-

rial dragon.

All the money allocated after the 1983 payroll tax adjustment to provide savings to cover the Baby Boomer generations has been given away. You can thank George Herbert Walker Bush, Slick Willie, and especially George W. for cleaning the clock and putting the cuckoo on a perpetual fast.

SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS!

The \$70 million bonus came on top of preferential “no-bid” contracts.

Local governments could never get away with “no-bid” corruptions this deep, so why should the executive branch of the Federal government? Oh, we forgot. Vice President Cheney had been the CEO of Halliburton. That explains everything.

Consider this:

Pretend that your city hires a company to build a new sewer plant, after seeking bids and then allowing the best lowest bidder to do the job. Because the company “might” have done the job well, “might” have done what it was hired to do, should the city then bestow upon the company officials millions of additional taxpayer dollars?

We hardly think so.

The citizens would lynch the mayor and the city council.

Why isn’t the Federal government and the Pentagon subject to such oversight?

Taxpayers want their money spent reasonably, if at all. Certainly not given away.

Whether the blame lies with Halliburton or with the Pentagon, with profiteers in the shadows, or with Congressmen and Senators who are party to Bush’s “billions of dollars” spending spree, something is imperatively amiss. There are no checks and balances. Accountability is merely a word without deed. The “conservatives” running the country are not really conservatives. They are not even “fiscal liberals.” They are radical squanderers without restraint. Their exploitations lie wider than the economy and deeper than the environment. They extend themselves upon Americans yet unborn. They are aborting fetuses of the right to enter this world without the burden of extreme debt.

To put it bluntly, as taxpayers and citizens we are being ripped off, as are our children.

Fiscal responsibility was tragically derailed when Bush became President in 2000, and the track upon which reasonable adjustment is possible is getting farther and farther away.

SEVENTY MILLION DOLLARS!

Yes, Virginia, there is a Grinch.

—Written By W. Leon Smith

Waterwalkers

One of the best times on drugs I ever had was when I had my wisdom teeth pulled last year.

While I was half-conked out on laughing gas, I found I could manipulate the machine that kept track of my heart rate:

When I raced my heart, the machine beeped faster, and when I slowed my

heart down, the beeps crawled.

It felt odd, like I was playing a primitive video game with a soundtrack that could have eaten the heart out of any Kraftwerk or Devo album.

(Note to Mark Mothersbaugh: for a good heart beat, give me a call. We Diebenows are known to die of cancer, not heart attacks—

— Guest Commentary —

Global Warming — The Water Theory

BY JULIE ISOM
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

With the heat we have had recently, it is hard to understand how we could withstand any hotter temperatures.



Julie Isom

According to scientists, we had better be getting ready for it, though.

It is estimated that by 2100, the average temperature will be 10.4 degrees hotter than it is now.

It is also expected that the United States will be even hotter. It is widely understood that global warming is caused by large emissions of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases such as fossil fuels. Perhaps less commonly known is that it is also caused by deforestation.

According to the Pew Center on Global Climate Change in Arlington, Va., along with this warming will come rises in the sea level, inundating the coastal areas, changes in precipitation patterns, and increased risks of droughts and flooding.

Over and over, we have heard that the solution to this problem is to cut back on the use of fossil fuels and to stop polluting our air.

We have also heard a few others telling us to stop cutting down forests, though for some reason this seems to be the lesser of two evils.

Also, according to the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, most of the sun's energy that reaches the earth is absorbed by the oceans and land masses and radiated back into the atmosphere in the form of heat or infrared radiation. Most of this infrared energy is absorbed and reradiated by atmospheric gases such as water vapor and carbon dioxide. As concentrations of gases that absorb and reradiate infrared energy (i.e., greenhouse gases) increase, the warming effect increases.

I've been wondering, though, if perhaps we aren't missing something here. How do we know that these are the only causes of global warming?

In recent years, we have begun repopulating the forests, and we have cut down on the use of fossil fuels and industrial pollutants. Still, our tempera-

tures increase. I'm not saying that it doesn't help to make these changes; after all, what could it hurt?

But couldn't we be barking up the wrong tree?

Maybe there is something else, something major that is contributing to this eminent disaster.

A local man, Antonio (Sammy) Tremillo, has another theory.

What if all of this global warming is caused by the fast depletion of our water sources? We are using water faster than it can be reproduced. We know this because of all of the cities that have to pump in water from nearby towns just to be able to keep up with water demands.

We surely don't drink that much water, right? So what happens to it? We run it out on the ground to water our plants and yards or wash our cars. You think it all goes back to the rivers? Yeah right. It sinks into the ground maybe a couple of inches and the sun burns up the rest of it.

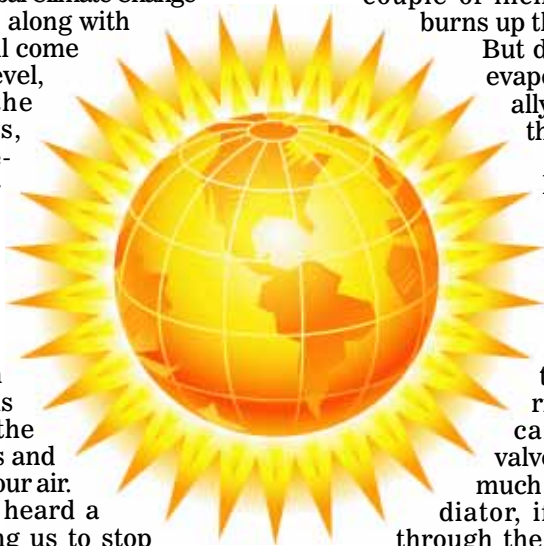
But doesn't that water evaporate and eventually make it back into the river?

Well, just how long do you think that will take? He likens the earth to an engine.

The oceans are the radiator, the cooling system is the underground rivers, and the volcanoes are safety valves. No matter how much water is in the radiator, if it doesn't flow through the engine with the cooling system, the engine will burn up. Underground rivers are the cooling system for the earth. Without water, the earth would burn up. We take our water from deep underground or from lakes, essentially draining our cooling system. The way we waste water, running it onto the ground, and even bottling it up and putting it on the shelves, is fast depleting our water supplies. How can we expect our earth to stay cool when we take away all of the water?

Whether the cause of global warming is the use of fossil fuels, industrial pollutants, and deforestation, or the excessive amount of water being piped out of our underground water systems, we cannot ignore this problem any longer.

So far, we have made little progress toward correcting it. Because of the seriousness of the issue, we cannot afford to disregard any possible theory.



The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



Thankyouverymuch! P.S. I enjoy your compositions in Wes Anderson's films, especially *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*.)

Yeah, and I'm so sure my little heart-beat box would have impressed the pants off of Ada Lovelace.

Lady Lovelace, the daughter of the Romantic poet Lord Byron, foresaw the development of computer software, artificial intelligence, and computer music way back in the year of Our Lord *eighteen-hundred and forty-three*.

Not bad for a estrogen-based life form in a testosterone-fueled society, huh?

Knowing this, it's not surprising that her family was well-acquainted with another radical, feminine thinker — Mary Shelley, the author of the first science fiction book, *Frankenstein*.

For all you book-burning flat-earthers, Mary's novel is about a unethical scientist who rejuvenates life in a corpse. (Frankenstein is the name of the scientist, not the "monster," by the way.)

Mary's story concept is nothing new, though.

In fact, there's another piece of literature that tells of a carpenter (of all people!) bringing folks back from the dead. Certain confused Christians like to refer to it whenever they consider firebombing abortion clinics and stem-cell research facilities.

The hero of that book, Jesus of

Nazareth, however, had a different vision of the world than Dr. Frankenstein, one in which his sidekick Peter almost realized while attempting to walk on the water in the Sea of Galilee during a fishing trip.

This vision valued people over pollution, poverty, pestilence, pain, paranoia, prejudice, and possessiveness, but Peter just couldn't quite trust Jesus enough to take the liquid path that sunshiny day.

Funny how we "walk on water" for some people and their ideas and not for others.

It's like, why do we choose to discount the stories of Tibetan monks from the Shalu Monastery said to have attained the ability of flight without the aide of machinery? Do they know something about life and death that we Westerners don't?

Why do we also take for granted the trailblazers who sacrificed their lives for us, like the Navajo miners and their families who were unknowingly poisoned from uranium radiation by the U.S. government?

Hey, American Cancer Society, why don't we hold a "Relay for Life" to prevent cancer by marching as responsible citizens against the very chemical companies that produce the cancer-causing materials in the first place?

Our hearts might in the right place, kids, but, sometimes, the vision thing needs a good squeegeeing.

For a good rinse, watch the mind-blowing documentary *What The Bleep Do We Know?*

It might just be the best time you ever had sober. I know it was for me, plus it costs less than a visit to the dentist.

Go figure!

INFO

www.whatthebleep.com/

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

COWBOY CORNER



By Billy Cate

Come along, boys, and listen to my tale,
I'll tell you all my troubles on the ol' Chisholm Trail.
Come a-ti yi yippee yippee yea yippee yea
Come a-ti yi yippee yippee yea



& Jack Carlton

The Wild 'Moss Horn' Longhorn

Shanghai Pierce, owner of a million-acre ranch near Palacios, Texas, trailed 2,400 head of the wildest breed of the Texas Longhorn up the Chisholm Trail. In 1866, lightning caused a stampede in Southwestern Johnson County resulting in the loss of 200 beves.

The "Moss Horn" longhorn had been multiplying undisturbed for hundreds of years along the coastal regions of South Texas. Their name arose from a trait limited to this breed. When rounding them up for a drive to market, the drovers found thick layers of moss on their hides and horns. Most of these cattle had never seen man or crossed a stream, thus being wild and dangerous.

With the lightning storm of June 1, 1866, the herd scattered uncontrolled, running headlong and over a high bluff near Camp Creek. After spending 3 days in the saddle, Pierce, lead drover George Duffield and the 13 hands settled the balance of the herd in a canyon and headed for Cleburne seeking a reprieve from their adventure.

Pierce and his "boys" celebrated through the night relieving their stress caused by the

nightmarish event with the spirits of several saloons. The next day, City Aldermen passed an ordinance making it a misdemeanor to ride a horse on the sidewalks of Cleburne.

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Parents: Lung Capacity Key When Choosing Inflatable Toy

We live less than 15 minutes from our favorite lake. The problem is, it also happens to be everyone else's favorite lake, which means in order to get a spot within the vicinity of actual water, you have to be there when the gates open at noon and participate in something similar to the Oklahoma Land Rush. It's not uncommon to see small children strapped to inflatable toys and tossed

ahead of the crowd in order to claim prime territory. As a parent, it's not a gamble I'm willing to take with my child. Especially since, as a general rule, it only counts if your child is in an upright position once they skid to a stop.

The good news is that once the initial pandemonium is over, things generally settle into a state of peaceful co-existence as, one by one, parents begin pass-

ing out while blowing up inflatable toys. Sadly, the evolutionary process has not been able to keep up with the growing demand for larger and larger inflatable animals. Unless you are a pearl diver by trade, chances are your lung capacity is nowhere near what it needs to be in order to fully inflate your child's favorite water toy. This has created a generation of children who are routinely disappointed by their parents during the formative "summer vacation" years, when parents are trying to build a foundation of trust and respect — something that's hard to do when your child sees you pass out facedown between the tail fins of a plastic humpback whale.

I speak from experience. My son's favorite water toy is an inflatable "Shamu" that, when fully inflated, can be seen from space. Though I consider myself relatively fit (and by that I mean relative to other people standing in line with me at Burger King), I have yet, in a single sitting, been able to inflate my son's whale beyond the point it stops resembling a decomposing whale carcass. That's about the time dizziness and suspected cerebral hemorrhage forces me to breath pure oxygen — which, fortunately, is now available to parents in single-use canisters at the snack bar.

Sure, we've tried inflating the whale before driving to the lake.

Once.

We quickly discovered there wasn't



By
Ned Hickson
Siuslaw News

enough room in our mini van to fit a fully inflated whale and both children. This left us with three options:

1) Bring the whale and leave the kids.
2) Stay home and let the kids drive the whale to the lake themselves.

3) Strap the kids to the top of the van and hope for the best.

We went with our third option, but strapped the whale on top instead of the children when my wife raised an important point:

Aerodynamically speaking, the whale would give us better gas mileage.

I'm no Boy Scout, but I know how to tie a knot. I stand by that to this day. Just as I did in court, when I argued that it was a single, unexpected 120 mph wind gust — and not defective knot tying — that caused a nine-foot inflatable whale to go tumbling into oncoming traffic. Thankfully, no one was injured, although a family of six on its way back from the local aquarium is still in counseling. Because of that experience, and a court order, we save the "Shamu" inflation process for the lake.

Naturally, the same goes for the deflation process which, in many ways, is even more demoralizing. That's because in order to get all the air out, I — a grown, 38-year-old man — must roll around on top of a plastic sea mammal while holding onto a tiny air nodule located in a region SOMEONE should have realized was going to look highly inappropriate. In addition to depleting any respectability I had in the eyes of my children, it has also created an image my wife admits "Is hard to get past sometimes."

However, in the end, ask any father who wants his kids to have fun and he'll tell you the same thing:

It's just part of the rising cost of inflation.

(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 new weblog at www.nedhickson.net.)

Email Etiquette And Rules

With apologies to Tivo and the cotton sweater, email just might be the greatest invention of the past 50 years. You can use it successfully 24 hours a day, it's an easy way to communicate, and you don't have to actually talk to someone if you don't feel like it. But email is not perfect. Volumes have been written about the annoying Spam we get, and volumes should be written about the bad jokes that friends forward to us. But I have some other problems with email and think we all have to agree on some basic Email Etiquette and Rules.

Unless you are positive the person you're writing to knows all the geeky email abbreviations and emoticons you know, don't use them. Unless the recipient spends as much time on the Internet as you do, he or she is not likely to know that IOHO stands for, "In Our Humble Opinion," or that 0+ stands for a female. Just write things out. No one's going to LOL at you.

Sometimes I'll send someone an email and I won't hear back right away because the person didn't get the message. Then after a few days, he'll get the message. Where was that email for three days? In Cyberspace, being held hostage by hackers, or is the recipient just ducking me like those who say they never get our phone messages? So, if it's an important email, I think it would be a good rule that once you get the email, you write back and say, "I got it."

If I email you and you don't get back to me for several days, please include my email in your response. Otherwise, I'll probably have no idea what you're talking about. Let's say, I wrote you that my wife had the flu, and I also asked what you thought about a movie. If you don't include what I said to you and you write back something like, "Sorry. It stunk," I'll probably email you again and ask what you're talking about, and the whole process will start all over again.

There are no guidelines for when a back-and-forth email communication should end. It's kind of like teenagers on the phone — nobody wants to be the one to say "goodbye" and hang up. A typical exchange of emails may be as follows:

Jill — I got the photos. They're great. Thanks.

Judy — You're welcome.

Logically, the email exchange could end right there. But it rarely does. It tends to go on like this:

Jill — Let's stay in touch. Bye.

Judy — I'll write to you soon. Bye.

Jill — If I have any news, I'll write to you first.

Judy — Okay.



Modern Times
By
Lloyd Garver

Jill — Bye.

Judy — Bye.

Things can get even more elaborate when plans are made by email:

Jim — How about lunch next Wednesday?

Bill — Sounds good to me. Mario's at 12:30?

Jim — Can you make it 1:00?

Bill — 1:00 is fine.

Jim — Great.

Bill — So, is Mario's okay?

Jim — Sounds good.

Bill — Okay.

Jim — I'll see you there.

Bill — Right.

Jim — The Mario's on Main Street, right?

Bill — Right. Have a good week.

Jim — You, too.

Bill — Bye.

Jim — So long.

Bill — I look forward to our lunch.

Jim — Me, too.

Bill — What time did we say? 12:30 or 1:00?

Jim — 1:00. At Mario's.

Bill — I'm writing it in my book.

Jim — Me, too.

Bill — Bye.

Jim — See you next week.

Bill — See you at Mario's.

Jim — At 1:00.

Bill — Bye.

So, Bill and Jim spent a long time working out plans that could have been worked out over the phone in a minute or two. So, my next suggestion for a rule is that if an email exchange is longer than four emails, STOP! Pick up the phone and work things out more quickly. But if you call, you always run the risk of getting a message like this: "Sorry I missed your call. Please try me on my cell phone." Then you'll have to send them an email to make sure their cell phone got your message.

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter To The Editor,

As a gay man, I've seen first hand how cruel and misguided people can be. House Joint Resolution 6 (Texas Marriage Amendment) is just another load of the same crap. My Lord, people, we are talking about amending hatred into our constitution. I am a dedicated, father and son. I've taken enough from you good people.

I'm tired of your foolish rhetoric about the "homosexual agenda" and your allegations that accepting homosexuality is the same thing as advocating sex with children. You are cruel and ignorant. You have been robbing me of the joys of my life ever since I was a child. Now you dare to rob me of my fatherhood and family values with a constitutional amendment.

I started suffering at the hands of the moral little thugs, from your moral, upright families, from the time I was in the first grade. I was physically and verbally abused from first grade straight through high school because I was perceived to be gay, although I had never professed to be gay or had any association with anything gay. I had the misfortune to not walk or have gestures like the other boys. I was called "fag" incessantly, starting when I was about six.

In high school, while your children were doing what kids that age should be doing, I labored over a suicide note, drafting and redrafting it to be sure that my family knew how much I loved them. It tore the heart out of me as I choked out the fact that I just couldn't bear to continue living any longer, that I didn't want to be gay, and that I couldn't face a life with no dignity. I begged God to take it all away, but he did not, because he knew what he had created was true and good.

You have the audacity to talk about protecting families and children from the homosexual menace, while you yourselves tear apart families and drive children to despair. I don't know why I am gay, but I do know that God didn't put me, and millions like me, on this Earth to give you someone to abuse. God gave you brains so that you could think, and it's about time you started doing that.

At the core of all your misguided beliefs is the belief that this could never happen to you, that there is some kind of subculture out there that people have chosen to join. The fact is that if it can happen to our family, it can happen to yours, and you won't get to choose. Whether it is genetic or whether something occurs during a critical time of fetal development, I don't know. I can only tell you with an absolute certainty that it is inborn.

If you want to tout your own morality, you'd best come up with something more substantive than your heterosexuality. You did nothing to earn it; it was given to you. My own sexuality was a blessing and I received it with no effort whatsoever on my part. It is so woven into the very soul of me that nothing could ever change it.

For those of you who reduce sexual orientation to a simple choice, a character issue, a bad habit, or something that can be changed by a 10-step program, I'm puzzled. Are you saying that your own sexual orientation is nothing more than something you have chosen, that you could change it at will?

If that's not the case, then why would you suggest that someone else can?

Both sides of my family have lived in

Texas for generations. I am heart-and-soul a Texan, so I'll thank you to stop saying that you are speaking for "true Texans."

Principles?

You invoke the memory of the brave people who have fought on the battlefield for this great country, saying that they didn't give their lives so that the "homosexual agenda" could tear down the principles they died defending. "Homosexual agenda"? There is no "homosexual agenda," this is a "Human Agenda."

You religious folk just can't bear the thought that as I emerged from the hell that was my childhood I might like to find a lifelong companion and have a measure of happiness. It offends your sensibilities that I should request the right to visit that companion in the hospital, to make medical decisions for him, or to benefit from tax laws governing inheritance.

"How dare I?" you say. These outrageous requests would threaten the very existence of your family, would undermine the sanctity of marriage. If this is so, then you need to take a little closer look at your own marriage. Marriage is not about sex... it is about compassion, love, honor, and commitment to the relationship.

There are vast numbers of religious people who find your attitudes repugnant. God is not for the privileged majority, and God knows I have committed no sin being homosexual. Some people lecture about homosexual sin and tell us about "those of us who have been blessed with the benefits of a religious upbringing." Ask yourself, "What ever happened to the idea of striving... to be better human beings than we are?"

Indeed, what ever happened to that?

Jerry V. Pierce, Valley Mills, Texas
To The Editor:

Get over it, NOT.

If I read one more "get over it" letter I believe I'll throw up, but not give up. As frustrating as it can be, and futile as the effort at times seems to be, rolling over and playing dead is not an option. Given a choice between standing still and being shot or defending myself and maybe being shot, I'll opt for the maybe every time.

This is not your father's world politic with faults that can be remedied next time around. What we are experiencing is the creation of an all-powerful plutocracy, a 21st Century final solution, the culmination of plans that predate the first gleam in your parents', or their parents', eyes.

The preservation and enhancement of wealth and power to the few at the expense of the many has throughout history shaped the lands, but never before has it had the opportunity and audacity to reshape the world to this end. Ghengis Khan, Caesar, Attila were in comparison shortsighted amateurs.

No, for the sake of my daughter and all those outside the 2% club I will not "get over it."

Alan MacFarland, Tallmadge, Ohio
To The Editor:

Did you happen to catch Helen Thomas on NPR recently? She is the reporter that used to ask all those hard questions at the presidential news conferences. She is really unafraid of those that threaten her for pinning them to the wall. We certainly could use more like her.

She cited the time she asked Bush a question he did not want asked and received a call next day from the press secretary asking her why she had blindsided him. After that she spent every press conference on the front row with her hand up and never once was allowed to ask another question. She also said that these meetings are so carefully choreographed that only those that are "Friendly" reporters are called upon to protect Bush from embarrassing questions. Who needs censorship when this works so well??"

Helen went on the say that with the recent questioning of the press secretary on Rove maybe the media is coming out of their coma. Let us hope so.

I think we should demand that the media stop TV coverage of these press conferences until they are free and open forums. This should apply no matter which party is in power. Every administration should be made to defend their actions and policies as they do in Britain.

Bruce Jones

To The Editor:

President Bush has got it all wrong. He rewards the polluters and exploiters who finance his political campaigns and punishes their victims, some of whom, ironically, will be the polluters and exploiters themselves. Even the affluent policymakers living above the law must, to some degree, live in the ruinous conditions of their making.

The saying, "Who whispers in the ear of the king is more important than the king" exemplifies not only Mr. Rove (the "enforcer" and Mr. Bush's "brain"), who first whispered in Mr. Bush' ear, but Mr. Cheney, as well as Mr. Libby, Mr. Rumsfeld, Mr. Wolfowitz, Mr. Feith and Mr. Perle; and once Mr. Bush was off and running, the whole spectrum of administration malfeasance with its short-term advantages began to materialize. (There are also conflicting reports as to who whispered the news of 9/11 in Mr. Bush's ear. The President says it was his chief of staff, Andrew Card.) While dilution of responsibility might lighten any individual burden of conscience each could conceivably feel, a pat, predictable formula of damage control has become the staple. Eric Alterman and Mark Green, in *The Book On Bush*, describe the technique: "The goal is to muddle the debate and, by doing so, confuse the public so that they'll either stop blaming the administration or just stop paying attention."

The rationale for all Bush administration initiative is the twin objectives of power and profit and the most sensational example is the war in Iraq. Of all the oil-rich nations in the Arab-Muslim world, Iraq was one that could be linked with terrorism and at the same time, being the weakest, the most conquerable, with the accompanying benefit that the flaunting of our political and military might would daunt other regimes and destabilize them, what Feith called the "deterrent value." As Wolfowitz put it, "Iraq was a brittle, oppressive regime that might break easily. It was doable." Control of Iraq, desirable because of its strategic importance, would mean control of its oil. Reconstruction by companies of administration choosing—those with close administration ties—would reap inordinate returns for the companies and once out of office, for their shareholders in the administration, the bills for rebuilding footed by our taxpayers. Meantime, thousands of lives—American and Iraqi—are being sacrificed to the administration's greedy obsession.

Although disclosures by Wilson, O'Neill, Clarke, and Hersh had been relegated to limbo, their cumulative effect must eventually emerge; and the Downing Street Memo, revealing the fixing of intelligence

to justify the Iraq invasion and the clandestine air attacks during the nine months before the official start of the war, also mysteriously withdrawn from the forefront, might have demonstrated to significant numbers of still-credulous Americans the true nature of the Bush/Cheney WhiteHouse and the Rumsfeld/ (formerly) Wolfowitz/Feith Pentagon.

Journalists, lawmakers and the intelligentsia, even once-vocal, established Hollywood figures, suppressed by corporate and political power, have kept many strong opinions to themselves rather than risk imprisonment, job termination or boycott; but, as truths surface, intimidation will become less effective and still more truths will be known.

The Valerie Plame affair, recently revived, can be the first step in what Paul Krugman has called the "great unravelling" of the Bush administration. Someone close to the President, probably Karl Rove, has compromised our national security by leaking the identity of Ambassador Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, as an operative of the CIA. Whether or not she was covert at the time, whether he used her married name, maiden name or simply identified her as the wife of the diplomat and whether or not Mrs. Wilson authorized her husband's famous trip to Africa, are some merely distracting details. The crux is that in discussing the matter with reporters, he made an unauthorized disclosure.

So many broken pledges, so many delusions and deceptions can't all be quelled forever. The profiteering corporate moguls won't tell, nor will administration underlings, but the self-righteous, self-promoting Republican Congress know; the craven Democratic Congress know; the cowardly media know; and among them, courageous legislators, leakers, whistleblowers and muckrakers will tell and the brainwashed people will know.

The blood's on the water, now.

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport, Ct.
To the Publisher, the Editor, or the Newsroom:

The Tennessee governor, Mr. Bredesen, has determined to remove hundreds of thousands from state healthcare programs. It starts July 31, 2005.

My father taught me that a liar will do anything. I have learned that to be true. Gov. Phil Bredesen said the "nation's Medicaid program shares more with socialism than practicality and needs fundamental reform."

He continues, "The way in which Medicaid pays for services has more in common with a socialist economy than the commonsense economic and business principles that do such a good job allocating resources efficiently in other parts of our American life," "the governor said at a conference in Raleigh, N.C., of policy makers studying health care issues."

His remarks remind me of the dark period of this nation's history in which McCarthyism dominated the political arena. In the 1940s and 1950s, a mentally deranged U.S. Senator by the name of Joseph McCarthy came into the limelight for his paranoid pursuit of who he called 200 "card carrying" communists. He was eventually censured by the U. S. Senate.

Here we have a governor who either does not have a clue what socialism is or more than likely he is simply lying. The doctors and medical professionals overwhelmingly do not work for the government. The pharmacists do not work for the government.

On the other hand, he is a great proponent of many education programs that do totally involve employment by the government of staff as well as expansion of or

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improvement government facilities. There is also the goal to eliminate as much as possible the for-profit entities from the public health care system in favor of government issued care. Local public health clinics will pick up much of the health care.

What Mr. Bredesen is actually moving toward is a socialized system and the results will be proven failure.

Mr. Bredesen, like Joseph McCarthy, is a driven man, a man driven by his compulsion to control and his self-indulging idea he has come to the only answer regardless of the carnage it will bring on this state. This compulsive disorder is absent of logic and concern being deeply ingrained due to years as an executive of an HMO that historically are notorious for devising heartless schemes to deny needed health care.

With kindest regards,

Earl Barnett, Speedwell, TN

To The Editor:

A Federalist Society is a Hamilton, advancement for a national government. Government from Washington D.C. that decides all aspects of government, state governments are under D.C. control including the supreme courts of the states. The states pay royally, loyally for the U.S. government that has a capital base theory or foundation for the Constitution, Bill of Rights and it erases the Declaration of Independence's beautiful description of our right to fight for a free and independent government, with state rights. D.C. is in charge, they make the calls, all of them.

Originally voting procedure in a Hamilton-type government was for property owners, only. The privacy act with and it secrecy and its federal authority is a wonderful plan for national government. Eliminating social security is an excellent move toward corporation over constitutional (Hamilton type) Government. Everyone a property owner fits well with banks and a move for national control. The U.S. government is the regulator of banks, a national base. We have an excellent propaganda new sheet in the WALL STREET JOURNAL and similar media of a conservative nature plus the market that has the capital control for a federalist society.

We should be able to see the basics of President G.W. Bush's Hamilton-type influence on our government since he was selected by the supreme court and with Judge Sandra O'Connor as the judge that made the final decision for G.W.'s selection, as president.

The conservative talk shows, conservative religions, and some evangelical religion support of 75 percent influenced the election for the second term for President G.W. Bush and a carry on toward a federalist type government. And with a federalist society backed judge (John G. Roberts Jr. at age 50) for the D.C. Supreme Court provides the avenue a national government strict control of the U.S. governments. Do we want that kind of control?

Louis Freitag, Carbondale, IL
Dear Iconoclast:

You have reported that Coleen Rowley is going to be a speaker at the upcoming VFP upcoming convention. She was heroic in 2002, when she blew the whistle against the FBI officials who obstructed

the investigation of Moussaoui in August 2001. Now she appears to have "softened up."

I hope I'm wrong. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt, but in an appearance on PBS a few months ago she said little about this. Additionally, not long ago she was interviewed by THE OKLAHOMA GAZETTE, and they quoted her as saying things along the lines of blaming "bureaucratic" encumbrances for the August 2001 interference with the Moussaoui investigation, rather than misconduct. This was a great disappointment, but maybe she was misquoted by the amateurish OKLAHOMA GAZETTE.

She has also publicly discussed an interest in running for Congress, so one has to wonder what her current agenda is. In her 2002 protest letter to the FBI director, she was passionate and not afraid, at least, to hint of misconduct. She said that "improper political reasons" might have been behind the obstruction of the warrant to search Moussaoui's computer. One of those people with "improper" political motives was no doubt ex-CIA boss George Tenet, protege and close crony of another politically ambitious schemer, former U.S. Senator David Boren (who has always wanted to be President of the USA). In June 2002, TIME reported that the CIA told the FBI, in August 2001, that Moussaoui was not an Al Qaeda member. This incorrect statement was used by the FBI to enable the obstruction of the search warrant request, and the Al Qaeda 9/11 attack was allowed to go forward. That was a critical moment.

Here is a scanned page from this TIME article: <http://www.bushbusiness.com/Wright_OP_time1.htm>.

In March 2005, Tenet gave a speech at OU, with his mentor David Boren there as host. Boren had given up his Senate seat in 1994 to become the OU president. I had an opportunity to question him about the TIME article, and now have him on video telling another lie to cover for his earlier lie. He said that TIME was "absolutely wrong." Go here for the video (May 12 entry): <http://www.bushbusiness.com/Wright_OP.htm>.

If Rowley is still in any mood to try to ferret out the truth about 9/11, I think she would find value in my work. We could have a very useful exchange of information. I have some very firm suspicions about who had the "improper political motives" she mentioned in 2002. See the April 5 entry at the above link for a summary of my investigative report, and don't miss my sworn affidavit.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Wright, Norman, Okla.
To The Editor:

In response to an inquiry from me, yesterday I received an email from a government archivist telling me that the records of the 9/11 Commission will not be made available to the public until 2009.

Further, their records are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

This is an outrage. As one who has made my own careful independent study of the 9/11 attack, like many Americans, I was not satisfied with the final report of the Commission. The veil of secrecy which is descending over American government actions is disturbing indeed.

I had written to the archivist because I wanted to know the contents of any communications from staff members or Commission members regarding my website and October 2003 phone conversation with staff member John Tamm, who promised to read my website and then get back to me. I never heard from him any more. You can hear John Tamm's voice on my answering machine at the Dec. 28 entry here: <http://www.bushbusiness.com/Wright_OP.htm>.

Michael P. Wright, Norman, Okla.
To The Editor:

As the judge in the Judith Miller-Matt Cooper case said, it just gets "curiouser and curiouser."

For starters, Judy Miller of THE NEW YORK TIMES, who never wrote a word about Valerie Plame, is in prison, while Robert Novak, who broke the story, furnished by Karl Rove, and printed the name, may be weekending at his posh house on Fenwick Island, Del.

Meanwhile, a truly phenomenal case study in the art of spin has been launched on behalf of Karl Rove, aka Bush's brain, now that we know he was Cooper's source on the Plame affair. We have long known that Rove made the repulsive statement to a reporter that Plame, a former CIA undercover operative, was "fair game." Rove was out to smear her husband, Joseph Wilson, who told the truth about Bush's phony claim that Saddam Hussein tried to buy uranium in Niger. What. A. Mess.

According to THE WASHINGTON POST: "Republicans mounted an aggressive and coordinated defense of Karl Rove Tuesday, contending that the White House's top political adviser did nothing improper or illegal when he discussed a covert CIA official with a reporter. ... The emerging GOP strategy — devised by (Ken) Mehlman (chair of the Republican National Committee) and other Rove loyalists outside the White House — is to try to undermine those Democrats calling for Rove's ouster, play down Rove's role and wait for President Bush's forthcoming Supreme Court selection to drown out the controversy, according to several high-level Republicans."

Actually, Rove and the White House got into trouble in the first place by trying to discredit a critic of the administration. They might want to rethink this strategy. For one thing, the spin is so factually challenged it makes your head hurt.

A consistent theme of the spin is that "no crime was committed," that outing Plame as a CIA agent meant nothing since she was then working as an analyst in Langley.

Unfortunately, Plame spent years overseas for the CIA working for a civilian firm without benefit of a diplomatic passport, meaning that she was especially vulnerable, could have been executed if caught and showed special courage. True, she was not working undercover when Novak named her in his column. However, as many CIA officers have pointed out, the outing left her former company and colleagues vulnerable. That this was done for petty political revenge is unforgivable. It is a result of being so focused on your political opponents that you take them more seriously than you do the country's real enemies.

Frankly, it reeks of Rove — and it is what's wrong with much of politics today. If the prosecutor cannot prove a crime, Rove should still be fired, not just because Bush said he would fire anyone involved in the leak, but also because what Rove did is ethically disgusting.

Of course a reporter does not have an absolute right to shield a source — even lawyers don't have such a right. But many other professionals have limited rights to confidentiality, including preachers, psy-

chiatrists and counselors. A journalist's limited right to protect confidentiality is recognized by 31 states and the District of Columbia.

Look, reporters come armed with a notebook and a pencil. They do not carry guns, they do not have the power to arrest people, they do not have subpoena power, they cannot force people to talk by holding them as material witnesses, they cannot sneak into their homes and read their computers. Generally speaking, if the law can't make a case without help from a reporter, they're incompetent.

Miller is not protecting a noble whistleblower who dared to go to the press because his sense of integrity had been outraged by official misconduct and he had no other option. That would be your basic Deep Throat. She is, we can assume, protecting some politically motivated hatchet-man who was part of the smear campaign against Plame's husband for telling the truth. And that, too, is irrelevant to the principle involved.

The larger point is that journalists have a constitutionally protected responsibility to find and publish the truth (as dubious as many of our efforts are). Particularly in covering government and politics, that purpose is often served by protecting slimeballs, or at least people with questionable motives. Just because Karl Rove has forgotten about the public interest is not reason for Judy Miller to do so.

Noomar

To The Editor:

FYI — Here's a copy of an e-mail that I sent to thousands of legislators throughout the country back in 2002-2003. Nothing has changed for the better — it has only gotten worse!

HAVE Rx DRUG PRICES GONE TO THE DOGS, TOO?

My veterinarian had been prescribing 50 mg. of Hydroxyzine for my dog. When it came time to renew the prescription, I was told that his cost for Hydroxyzine had just been increased 1,000 percent! Needless to say, we agreed that he would substitute another medication at a substantially lower price.

When I checked with my pharmacist to determine if indeed the cost of Hydroxyzine had been increased to that extent, she confirmed that her cost for Hydroxyzine had just gone from approximately \$14 to approximately \$84 per bottle. She also informed me that Watson Pharmaceuticals is now the only pharmaceutical manufacturer that is producing Hydroxyzine.

I have done a little research on Watson Pharmaceuticals and have found that over the years there has been quite a number of corporate acquisitions. This raises some suspicion as to whether or not Watson Pharmaceuticals has cornered the market on Hydroxyzine, either through these acquisitions or by "convenient" arrangements with other pharmaceutical manufacturers/distributors. It seems strange to me that Watson would be the only available manufacturer of such a common drug as Hydroxyzine.

One wonders if there is collusion among drug manufacturers to limit sources of supply, so that each pharmaceutical company can charge whatever the market will bear—without price competition.

If the information I have received so far is accurate, it appears that Watson Pharmaceuticals is taking advantage of a monopoly in the marketplace and is price-gouging the consumer. It's scary to think that this may very well be symptomatic of the entire drug industry.

Recently I had contacted my veterinarian's previous manufacturer/distributor of Hydroxyzine and did not receive the courtesy of a response. My inclination was to contact Watson Phar

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maceuticals as well, but I'm quite sure that I would get either a self-serving rationalization for the price increases or no response at all.

Since a large number of your constituents find themselves dealing with outrageous increases in drug prices, I thought you might find this information useful.

I know you are just as concerned as I about the ever-escalating increases in the cost of health care. Perhaps you may wish to pass this information along to an appropriate congressional committee for investigation.

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

I read in the paper about "deadbeat dads" who want the privileges of family without the responsibility. I hear in church about

"deadbeat Christians" who want the advantages of church and the rights of religion without its obligations. I never hear about "deadbeat patriots" who want the rights of citizenship without the duties.

A "deadbeat patriot" supports the U.S. dropping bombs on cities, killing and maiming women and children to give them democracy as long as the cost is passed to future generations to pay.

A "deadbeat patriot" supports U.S. troops patrolling streets, kicking in doors, invading homes, imprisoning and torturing civilians to make them free if neither he nor his children has to risk death, dismemberment or face criminal charges to do so.

If you don't love your country enough to shoulder your share of the load and

your share of the guilt, then leave it. At least stop waving the flag and saying you support the troops.

Robert Flynn, San Antonio
To The Editor:

If John Kerry supports "kids health" so much why isn't he working to shut down the "North American Man-Boy Love Association"?

Why? Because John Kerry supports sexual perversion! He's a hypocrite!

Skogy
To The Editor:

Bush administration rides again

From the president to Karl Rove and on down-the-line, the administration is "gunning-down" the remnants of America's middle class. Apparently, there is little that taxpayers can do about it. Legislation strewn with hidden clauses is taking more money from the majority of Americans and is being applied to satisfy special interests.

Perhaps the only protection for the abused middle class is to take a page from the administration's own safety measures. The middle and poor classes could buy sheets of plastic and rolls of duct tape to wrap around themselves. Being "mummies" in duct tape may be the only form of protection taxpayers will find.

Have "abused" voters had enough?

There's an old parable for getting a stubborn donkey to move, you need to first hit it over the head with a 2-by-4 to get its attention.

During the past three years Texas taxpayers have been getting "beaten" by their legislature. Unfortunately, the re-

petitive inability of legislators to resolve urgent issues hasn't been sufficient to get the attention and needed action of voters. How many more costly "beatings" will it take for Texas taxpayers to vote-out ineffective incumbents? It is mind-boggling at best to watch as special interest politicians, from the governor on-down-the-line, stick in their own quagmire, promising everything yet delivering nothing. Voters need to wake-up!

Second "special" session
Texas voters may want to consider whether the 2nd session called for by the governor is "special" because elected officials really plan on resolving inadequate school financing and sky-high property taxes, or if it's to develop and approve legislation for "special" interest lobbies like telecom, toll, school voucher and big business entities.

Peter Stern, Driftwood, TX

Country Music Favorite Dies At Peak Of Popularity

While on final approach to the Nashville airport on July 31, 1964, a small single-engine plane with country music's favorite male vocalist at the controls vanished from the radar screen.

James Travis Reeves was born in 1924 in the northeast Texas county of Panola, the birthplace 19 years earlier of singing cowboy Tex Ritter. Like his silver-screen predecessor, the farm boy took a precocious interest in music and was warbling on the radio by the age of 10.

In high school, however, baseball became Jim's first love as he matured into a six-foot-two, 185-pound pitcher with a greased-lightning fastball. His diamond deeds earned a scholarship to the University of Texas in 1942 and soon afterward a professional opportunity with the St. Louis Cardinals. But a leg injury crippled a promising career in only his second minor-league season.

The wash-up athlete returned to radio as a disc jockey in Henderson, where he sang on the side to supplement his meager income. Five years of relative obscurity ended with a sudden summons from KWKH, the Shreveport station which broadcast "Louisiana Hayride."

Although Jim functioned as master of ceremonies for the live show, he occasionally filled in for absent guests. Substituting for self-destructive Hank Williams one night in 1953, he so impressed a record company executive, who happened to be in the audience, that he was signed to a contract the moment the program went off the air.

Jim's second release, a catchy tune called "Mexican Joe," soared to the top of the country-music charts as did "Bimbo" a short time later. But the skeptical sensation hesitated to give up his steady job in Shreveport for fear his overnight success might turn out to be a short-lived fluke.

After considerable coaxing, he reluctantly took a leave of absence from the "Hayride" to go on a cross-country tour. To his astonishment every appearance was a standing-room-only sellout.

On the heels of the singing safari, Jim switched to a major record label and stepped in as the summer replacement for Red Foley on the television show "Ozark Jubilee." Then in late 1955 he joined the star-studded cast of the "Grand Ole Opry."

Jim proved he was no flash in the pan with a remarkable 46 Top Ten hits in barely more than a decade. His string of smash singles included "Four Walls," "A Touch of Velvet," "Guilty," "Blue Canadian Rockies," "Tahiti," "Heartbreak in Silhouette," "Golden Memories and Silver Tears," "I Could Cry," "I'll Follow

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



You" and the all-time favorite, "He'll Have to Go," which sold over three million copies in 1960.

The demands of his unparalleled popularity kept Jim on the road 275 days a year. To squeeze more time out his hectic schedule for his family in Tennessee, he became a licensed pilot.

But the amateur aviator recognized the risk in the constant cloud hopping, as a prophetic comment in May 1964 clearly revealed. "The main trouble and danger with tours is getting there and back."

Marty Robbins stepped onto the porch of his home on the wooded outskirts of Nashville for a better look at a violent summer thunderstorm. Although the overcast sky concealed the craft, he heard the sickening sputter of the engine followed by the unmistakable sound of the small plane plunging to earth. "Somebody's been killed out there!" he shouted in horror.

Chet Atkins, Eddy Arnold, and Ernest Tubbs joined Robbins and 700 volunteers in the difficult search for the missing airplane and the celebrated pilot. Forty-eight hours later, they stumbled across the wreckage in thick underbrush a mere 100 yards from a residence.

Arnold shouldered the heavy burden of identifying the two bodies at the crash site. He confirmed with a perfunctory nod the deaths of Jim Reeves and his pianist, Dean Manuel.

The tragedy stunned the country music world, fans and performers alike, who were still mourning the loss of their favorite songstress. Just 16 months earlier, Patsy Cline also had perished in a plane crash.

Despite his premature passing, Jim's music has never died. Thanks to his widow, who had the foresight to preserve his unreleased material, and the marvels of modern engineering, he had six posthumous number-one hits. In fact, "Gentleman Jim" and Patsy Cline came back from the grave in the 1980s to sing a ghostly duet.

On a highway outside Carthage, are Jim Reeves' resting place and a life-size stone likeness atop a 14-ton granite base. The inscription reads, "If I, a lowly singer, dry one tear or soothe one humble heart in pain, then my homely verse to God is dear, and not one stanza has been sung in vain."

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