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PEACE IN THE U.S. NEWS --- Galen and Ansel Herz of Austin hold the U.S. flag with a peace symbol at a peace rally Saturday in support of Cindy Sheehan, the new shining star of the peace movement. Sheehan has vowed to stay in the Crawford area until President Bush meets with her or the end of the month.

— Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow



Velvet Revolution Takes Off The Gloves, Launches Controversial Long-Term Ad Campaign See Story, Page 10

President Bush, Rice, Rumsfeld Meet Over Developments In Iraq

CRAWFORD — President Bush last Thursday held a joint luncheon with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the Bush ranch near Crawford.

In a briefing with the press, Bush said that recent developments in Iraq were discussed.

“Despite the acts of violence by the enemies of freedom, Iraq’s elected leaders are now finishing work on a democratic constitution. And later this year that constitution will be put before the Iraqi people for their approval,” Bush said.

He noted that “the establishment of a democratic constitution is a critical step on the path to Iraqi self-reliance. Iraqis are taking control of their country. They’re building a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.”

He explained the the strategy of the United States is to hunt down terrorists and train Iraqi security forces so Iraqis can defend themselves.

“Our approach can be summed up this way,” he said. “As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. And when that mission of defeating the terrorists in Iraq is complete, our troops will come home to a proud and grateful nation. The mission in Iraq is tough, because the enemy understands the stakes. A free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will deliver a serious blow to their hateful ideology.”

“The second part of our strategy is to help freedom prevail in Iraq. The recent violence in Iraq is a grim reminder of the brutal enemies we face in the war on terror. And we are a nation at war. The war arrived on our shores on September the 11th, 2001. And since that day, the terrorists have continued to kill. They have killed in Madrid and Istanbul and Jakarta and Casablanca and Riyadh and Bali and London and elsewhere, and they are determined to do more harm. And they kill indiscriminately. In other words, they

don’t care who they kill.

“And they kill because they’re trying to shake our will. They’re trying to drive free nations out of parts of the world, so they can topple governments across the Middle East, and establish Taliban-like regimes in the Middle East, and turn that region into a launching pad for attacks against free people, and they will fail.

“After September the 11th, I made a commitment to the American people that this nation will not wait to be attacked again, and we’re going to stay on the offense. And we’re fighting the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere so we do not have to face them here at home.”

Regarding Iran, the President said, “As you know, the IAEA today issued a report that expressed serious concerns about Iranian decisions, and that’s a positive first step. You know, our strategy is to work with the EU3 — France and Great Britain and Germany — so that the Iranians hear a common voice speaking to them about their nuclear weapons ambitions. And I appreciate the IAEA’s positive first step. As you know, there will be a report back after a period of time, and we look forward to working — hearing what that report says.

“But the point is that — is that the world is coalescing around the notion that the Iranians should not have the means and the wherewithal to be able to develop a nuclear weapon.”

Regarding the withdrawal of American troops in Iraq, Bush said, “As for the troops, no decision has been made yet on increasing troops or decreasing troops. I know there’s a lot of speculation and rumors about that. We did, as you might recall, increase troops for the Iraqi election and for the Afghanistan elections. It seemed to have helped create security, and I know the Secretary of Defense is analyzing that possibility.

“I also know there’s a lot of folks

here in the United States that are, you know, wondering about troop withdrawals. They’re concerned about the violence and the death. They hear the stories about a loved one being lost to combat. And, you know, I grieve for every death. It breaks my heart to think about a family weeping over the loss of a loved one. I understand the anguish that some feel about the death that takes place.

“I also have heard the voices of those saying, pull out now, and I’ve thought about their cry, and their sincere desire to reduce the loss of life by pulling our troops out. I just strongly disagree. Pulling the troops out would send a terrible signal to the enemy. Immediate withdrawal would say to the Zarqawis of the world, and the terrorists of the world, and the bombers who take innocent life around the world, you know, the United States is weak; and all we’ve got to do is intimidate and they’ll leave.

“Pulling troops out prematurely will betray the Iraqis. Our mission in Iraq, as I said earlier, is to fight the terrorists, is to train the Iraqis. And we’re making progress training the Iraqis. Oh, I know it’s hard for some Americans to see that progress, but we are making progress. More and more Iraqi units are becoming more and more capable of fighting off the terrorists. And remember, and that’s a country where 8.5 million Iraqis went to the polls. They’ve said, we want to be free. And our mission is to help them have a military that’s capable of defeating those who would like to dash their ambitions to be free.

“Withdrawing before the mission is complete would send a signal to those who wonder about the United States’ commitment to spreading freedom. You see, I believe and know that we’re at war, and we’re at war against a hateful ideology. And the way to defeat that ideology in the long-term is to spread a hopeful ideology, one that says to young

girls, you can succeed in your society, and you should have a chance to do so; one that says to moms and dads, you can raise your child in a peaceful world without intimidation; and one that says to people from all walks of life, you have a right to express yourself in the public square.

“It’s the spread of liberty that is laying the foundation of peace, and is very important for our citizens — no matter what side of the political aisle you’re on — to understand that the mission is a vital mission and it’s one that will be — that we obviously couldn’t complete if — if we — if we didn’t fulfill our goals, which was to help the Iraqis.”

When asked by a reporter if he was referring to Cindy Sheehan, who had established a camp near the Bush ranch with the intention of remaining there until Bush would speak with her personally, Bush said, “I’m referring to any grieving mother or father, no matter what their political views may be. Part of my duty as the President is to meet with those who’ve lost a loved one. And so, you know, listen, I sympathize with Mrs. Sheehan. She feels strongly about her — about her position. And I am — she has every right in the world to say what she believes. This is America. She has a right to her position. And I’ve thought long and hard about her position. I’ve heard her position from others, which is, get out of Iraq now. And it would be — it would be a mistake for the security of this country and the ability to lay the foundations for peace in the long-run, if we were to do so.”

He went on to say the he had met with many families, “and I have done my best to bring comfort to the families and honor to the loved one, and get different opinions when you meet with moms and dads and sons and daughters and wives and husbands of those who have fallen. One opinion I’ve come away with universally is that, you know, we should do everything we can to honor the fallen. And one way to honor the fallen is to lay the foundation for peace.”



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Peace Diva Meets Media, Not Bush

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — She is in a director's chair getting made up before her next photoshoot. Though there might be water standing next to her, this woman is no swimsuit model. No, the sad-looking lady in the blue raincoat and fisherman's hat is Cindy Sheehan, 48, of Vacaville, Calif., the newest star of the peace movement.

It might seem that she found that chair all by herself, but in reality it took teamwork and infrastructure that was already in place to aid her attempt to meet President Bush face-to-face at his Prairie Chapel ranch this August. A number of groups whose members count in the thousands have helped provide transportation, communications, logistics, food, water, and financial and emotional support for her.

For starters, a small cadre of U.S. military veterans bused Sheehan to Crawford as their annual Veterans for Peace conference in Dallas concluded last Saturday. Then, as news of her defiance there grew, the founding members of CodePink, a women's peace and justice group known for disrupting Bush's inauguration and a host of other corporate interests, flew in to perform odd jobs aimed to launch Sheehan into the mainstream media spotlight, much like how the NAACP took Rosa Parks, a secretary of that organization's Alabama chapter, and turned her into a saint of the Civil Rights movement.

In other words, this is no fly-by night arrangement. No-sir-ree-bob! It's as professional as grassroot activism comes.

There's Jodie Evans, one of CodePink's founding members. She's on her cellphone headset talking to her PR team to line up future media interviews with Sheehan.

There's Col. Ann Wright, who started working with CodePink after resigning her position as a U.S. foreign service officer in protest over the invasion of Iraq. She's playing good cop to Diane Wilson's bad cop with the McLennan County Sheriff's Department trying to make sense of the right-of-way laws here in the countryside. Wilson, a fisherwoman from Seadrift, Texas, is also a CodePink co-founder on a hunger strike until Sheehan's roadside vigil ends.

There's Medea Benjamin, yet another CodePink co-founder, getting jiggy to the tunes of singer/songwriter Eliza Gilkyson who took the stage at Tonkawa Falls Park Saturday. Then, there's Lisa Fithian, a highly-experienced organizer with United Peace & Justice, occasionally moving in and out from the background to work the cops like a coach would work the refs.

Then, there's the Crawford Peace House, which is serving as a drop-off point for supplies sent with tsunami-like accuracy from Cindy's sympathizers around the country since her arrival at Camp Casey, her campsite five miles from Crawford named after her son, Casey, an Army specialist killed in an ambush in Iraq in 2004. Activist Johnny



THE MEDIA has been out in full force to cover the events surrounding Cindy Sheehan.

— Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Wolf of Dallas co-founded the Peace House in 2002 as a base for staging press conferences, rallies, and vigils against the policies of the Bush administration whenever it knows that the commander-in-chief is in town.

Due to Sheehan's recent actions, the Peace House has received gifts, such as a wireless Internet system, computers, and six vehicles donated by Air America radio talk show host Randi Rhodes to shuttle people to and from Camp Casey. The social justice organization also has boomed with financial aid, going from \$3 in the bank to "all debts paid" in less

than a week's time. Pretty much its only problems now are finding parking for guests in Crawford, preparing meals, and maintaining proper plumbing.

As a whole, these groups, as well as Iraq Veterans Against the War, Gold Star Families for Peace, and Military Families Speak Out, make sure that no one steals Sheehan's thunderous story: a disgruntled mother of a U.S. soldier slain in Iraq travels to Crawford wanting to speak with President Bush face-to-face. Her only wish is to ask him for what "noble cause" her son died in Iraq and why his daughters, if this war was

so just and needed, haven't enlisted in the U.S. military yet? Their point is to bring the U.S. troops home now, return complete power to the Iraqi people over their nation, and see that no more blood is spilled for the U.S. oil industry to swipe black gold underneath the Iraqis' feet.

The international media has been eating up this drama: the anti-war soccer mom versus the most powerful man in the world. The right wing, needless to say, is fuming over the peace movement's weeklong hijacking of the U.S.

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media — the same media in fact that prefers questioning scientists over space shuttle foam to questioning President Bush on the invasion of Iraq in 2003 ala the Downing Street memos which were released here a month after the British press did so.

But let's not confuse things, alright?

Dueling Military Moms

Right away, the Right initiated a smear campaign designed to discredit Sheehan and her supporters in the media. First, the Drudge Report claimed that since an article in her hometown paper, THE REPORTER, was published, Sheehan changed her opinions about President Bush whom she met yet did not criticize over the Iraq war at the time. THE REPORTER came out later, though, and defended its story and Sheehan, saying that, "Drudge ... didn't explain that [a quote in the story] referred to sharing time with her family, not the president."

Then, the pro-Bush side of Sheehan's family stated that they wanted her to stop her vigil, to which Sheehan replied that they certainly were entitled to their opinion, but they "barely knew" her son. Her husband, Patrick Sheehan, it should be noted, has reportedly been separated from Cindy since the death of their son. He has not commented on her actions.

Other smears included that Sheehan has taken \$20,000 for her stance against the war; she is an anti-semitic for saying, "My son joined the Army to protect America, not Israel;" she is a traitor, as FoxNews pundit Bill O'Reilly said on his show; the groups supporting her are anti-America, communist sympathizers who have brainwashing her — oh, just to name a few.

At least two conservative groups attempted to steal back the political football from Sheehan in Crawford and run for higher moral ground. They had their day in the media sunshine, and stood behind Bush's pledge to "stay the course" in Iraq because they believe their family members in the military are doing good there. Perhaps the most direct confrontation between the two rival factions was when Mike Gallagher, an 8th-rate conservative radio talk show pundit, and his group from the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex placed American flags in front of a religious memorial for the fallen U.S. soldiers installed by Cindy's supporters.

Otherwise, it was a case of dueling veterans and military moms screaming for the media's attention, though both groups agree that the U.S. soldiers in Iraq fight for the guy next to them and that the soldiers' welfare is their top priority.

"Not one more dead. Not one more dying. No more lies. No more deception. End the occupation. Bring the troops home now, and most importantly, take care of them when they get home," said Sue Niederer of Pennington, N.J., a co-founder of Gold Star Mothers for Peace whose son 1st Lt. Seth Dvorin was killed in action in Iraq in 2004. "For all of those people who say that we are the ones who don't know what we are talking about, I have two questions for them: When is Mr. Bush going to volunteer his children? And when is the opposition going to volunteer their own children for this war?"

"We're not here to bash anybody. I'm a mom, and I can try to associate with [Cindy Sheehan's] pain. I hope I will



MEMBERS OF GOLD STAR FAMILIES FOR PEACE were at centerstage during the Pro-Peace Rally in Tonkawa Falls Park in Crawford Saturday. — Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow



MARINE MOTHERS FOR BUSH were at center stage during a pro-Bush, pro-U.S. troops rally outside Pirate Field in Crawford Saturday. — Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow

never feel that pain, but I think it's gone a little too far," said Gale Muskiet, a Marine mother from Houston whose son, Cpl. Matthew Muskiet, might reenlist in Iraq after his tour ends. "We did not send our children. They volunteered," Muskiet added. "None of us would send our children willingly, but you know

what? When they get to legal age, they can make their own mind. We raised them to be responsible, God-fearing American adults. They made the choice."

Linda Waste of Hinesville, Ga., and her husband, Phil, two of the 2,500 members of Military Families Speak Out,

questioned the basis for the opinions of Rightist pundits and worried for the troops' mental health at the pro-peace rally at Tonkawa Falls Park.

"Who is sacrificing? It is we the people who are sacrificing. Not the House. Not the Senate. Not the Bush administra
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CASEY SHEEHAN'S CROSS IS HELD HIGH by his mother Cindy as she stands against the yellow police barricade tape. She wanted to be sure it was seen by the President as he passed by on Friday.

— Iconoclast Photo By Deborah Mathews

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tion. It is we the people, and enough is enough," said Waste, whose three sons and two grandchildren are on active military duty in Iraq. "So the question should be asked, 'What are our troops going through? What stresses and anxiety are they going through?' Their lives are changed forever. Their family's lives are changed forever."

Living In History

Still, Sheehan's supporters — the average Lefties — have sacrificed

much while propelling their peace diva into the international spotlight. Several of them have spent their own money and time to get to Camp Casey, taking off work and temporarily leaving their friends and families at home.

Tiffany Strause, a TI consultant from San Diego, Calif., for instance, flew to Central Texas with her friend, Julie, not only to support Sheehan but also to take more action than just "adopting" to a self-described conservative, Republican Marine and sending him equipment that the U.S. government should have provided before the Iraq war.

"When I read Cindy's story, it was head-to-toe shivers. I was so moved. It really put a face on it," said Strause, whose future in-laws are Bush supporters. "I think this war was a choice. It wasn't a necessity, and for that reason, my impatience got to the point where I had to take a stand."

Strause, like other peace activists, thinks that Sheehan's vigil is not only about getting President Bush address her this time as a person, not under a generic moniker like "Mom," but it's also about showing the American public his humanity and ability to change.

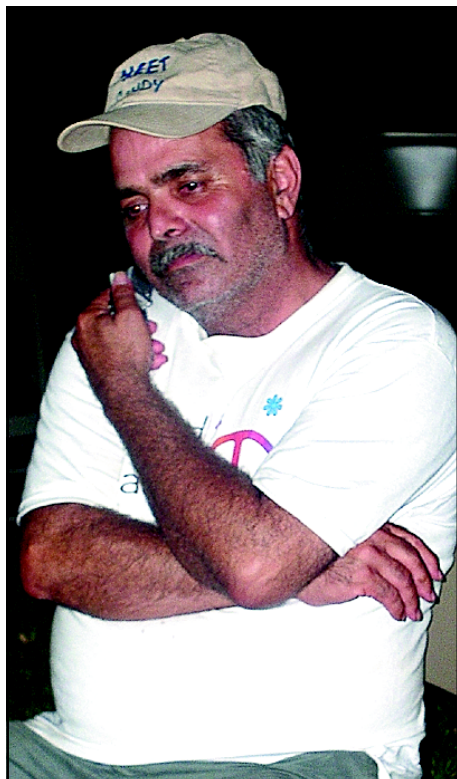
"It would be so easy for him to do. So easy. He's right here. We're right here. Just to be real for five minutes, but to me, it's always been my feeling that it's a case of the emperor has no clothes. You know, he doesn't read the paper. he doesn't watch the news. His handlers keep him insulated. He really is disconnected with the pulse of this country and what people are feeling and what they are going through," she said.

Still, Bush has said that he has met with people — military families — who disagree with his war stance, and he has said repeatedly that he



GRIEVING MOTHER Cindy Sheehan held a gift of yellow roses Wednesday as she gave interview after interview at Camp Casey, the encampment named after her late son which has been the site of her vigil to meet with President Bush to discuss the nature of the war in Iraq.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



HADI JAWAD, a board member of the Crawford Peace House, answers one of several hundred phone calls he received yesterday regarding how to give support to Cindy Sheehan as she awaits a face-to-face meeting with President Bush at his Prairie Chapel ranch.

— Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow

won't ever change his mind about his policies. He certainly has a clear track record, too.

When he doesn't have protestors corralled and then arrested, Bush has

his limos drive past their demonstrations, like he did on the way to raise money

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IRAQ VETERAN and author Phil Kiver presents a copy of his book and his support to Cindy Sheehan. — Iconoclast Photo By Deborah Mathews



EARLIER IN THE WEEK, supporters of Cindy Sheehan placed flags in the ground near Camp Casey. Later, when a pro-Bush rally was held in that area, those members placed flowers near many of the crosses. — Iconoclast Photo By Deborah Mathews

• **LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTIVISM ...** Continued From Page 5

for the Republican National Committee last Friday, as Sheehan carried a poster by the roadside that said, "Why do you make time for donors and not for me?"

Four recent Crawford High School graduates did express interest and visited the Peace House last week to see what all the hub-bub was about. Although the two that the **ICONOCLAST** interviewed requested that their identities be protected, it reveals that that curiosity is still valued in the Lone Star State.

"I'm just interested in seeing other people's points of view on what all is going on in the country right now. We're living in history, you know, everyday. We live in Crawford, Texas, and to not be involved, that would be ridiculous. If you're living in this town, why not get out and see what's going on?" said John Doe's buddy, Jeff Doe, in that interview.

Maybe these boys, instead of bull-headed politicians and celebrity activists, can inspire the regular joes on the Left and the Right to chit-chat over a cup of coffee. It's just a thought, but an iconoclast can always dream.

Until then, the public, according to both Bush and Sheehan supporters, is more than likely going to hear more



MIKE GALLAGHER, a nationally syndicated radio talk show host, said during a pro-Bush rally near Crawford that he would have liked to place a flag in remembrance of Army Specialist Casey Sheehan, the late son of Cindy Sheehan who died in Iraq, but the police suggested he not do so. A spokesman for the McLennan County Sheriff's Department said that no such suggestion was made and that each member of Gallagher's group had access to every memorial cross in the area. — Iconoclast Photo By Nathan Diebenow

shouting across the stadium between pro-peace and pro-war advocates, and the only players on the field will be an angry military mom and a dove hunter who, though annoyed, empathizes with her, while the President is nowhere in sight.



Cindy Watch To Continue

CRAWFORD — "THE LONE STAR **ICONOCLAST** will attempt to continue its fairly indepth coverage of the Cindy Sheehan story as it unfolds in Crawford," said **ICONOCLAST** publisher W. Leon Smith.

The weekly newspaper's website has been carrying on-the-spot reports daily during the past week, with updates as conditions change or noteworthy events take place.

"This is really a stretch for our staff," said Smith, "but we realize that our readers throughout the world want to keep up with what's happening in Crawford regarding Sheehan's determination to speak with President Bush. So we'll do our best."

The newspaper's website is located at <www.iconoclast-texas.com>.

Said Smith, "We have taken many, many photographs and have conducted numerous interviews — too many to fit into the print edition. So we encourage our readers to go online for a more thorough accounting."



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Shots Fired On Sunday — Landowner Issues Ultimatum

PRAIRIE CHAPEL — On Sunday, five shots rang out near Camp Casey.

Landowner Larry Mattlage fired into the air, away from the camp, which got the immediate attention of the campers and the media, and was followed up by members of law enforcement agencies that keep tight reins on the area.

Mattlage said he was getting ready for dove season.

"I'm practicin'," he said.

When asked if there was another message involved with the gunshot, he said "You figure it out for yourself."

Mattlage said that the law enforcement agencies do not have "any rights to get rid of this stuff," referring to the protestors.

"So we've got two law enforcement agencies and all these helicopters up here and none of them can do nothing and will do nothing," he added.

Of the protestors, Mattlage said, "When they first came out here, I was sympathetic to their cause, right. They as American citizens have a right to march to protest. It is like this—it's like having company, if you have your brother-in-law at your house for five days, wouldn't it start stinking after a while. You are ready for him to go home, aren't you? Five weeks of this is too much. We live here. It's our community. Apparently we have no respect over here and we have no respect over here (pointing to the two groups of activists). Somebody has got to get together and clear it out. It's a damn shame. The news media has got to solve this dilemma. But we got a dilemma here. We got a battle of the porta-potties. You all got started out going to the bathroom in a five gallon bucket. Then they moved one porta-pottie in here. No we got two porta-potties. And now we have three and if this keeps up, it will be all the way down the road. And they've got more porta-potties over there (pointing at the Bush ranch). The only one winning here is the one cleaning the porta-potties."



LARRY MATTLAGE fired a few shots into the air and was later met by law enforcement personnel and the media. Officers explained that shooting a gun on his own property is legal, as long as it is not aimed across the road.

— Iconoclast Photo By Deborah Mathews

Mattlage continued, "Sir, this community is a tight-knit community. This is a German community of farmers and ranchers who settled this land 145 years ago. We have fought a lot of battles with drought and everything else. This is a tough group of people and they want to just mind their own business. There is nobody said nothing here right now, because they're not that away."

When asked a question from a reporter, Mattlage responded, "Sir, I've lived here for six years since the president have moved here, okay. I don't even know him and he's my neighbor. I love him as a neighbor. I don't care what he does, that ain't my business. I ain't a politician. All I know is that when he gets done with the presidency, he is our neighbor and all of you all and all of this

protest is out of here. The Good Book says you love your neighbor so I love George Bush. He will be our neighbor as long as we're here then he becomes a part of our community."

When asked, "What do you say to the fact that these people are just temporary neighbors? Would you love them just the same?" Mattlage responded: "I loved them for a week. I mean, would you want somebody invading your house for a long time and blocking your view and blocking the road? I wake up every morning to this stuff. I go to bed every night and got a campground down here on a public road that I'm taxed to the middle of this road. The sheriff's people down there says that I don't have no rights, but I am paying taxes. The man over there is paying taxes to here."

This is how it is in Texas. So, actually, I can't prosecute nobody for trespassing and the sheriff knows it so he's allowed them to park on my property—my own damn sheriff—allowing them to park on my property."

Mattlage noted that the situation is all about respect: "Where has common courtesy gone in America? Somewhere, you supposed to respect people. I respect them and I respect George Bush. I can't do nothing about the world situation, okay. Somebody has got to settle. And that's what I'm saying to you people, so the whole world understands my position. I'm not a negotiator."

He added, "These neighbors out here are upset—I don't want nobody getting hurt. I just want 'em to pack their damn tents and go back to where they came from. Their plea is over with. They made their point and everybody understands it. How many times do you have to tell people? I feel for that young lady. She hurting. I know she's hurting. But there are people hurting in this whole community. All of you are hurting because you're leaving your family, coming out here filming this mess."

"Everybody got a problem. Everybody got a problem and I got one right now. How we resolve it, I don't know. If I could get George Bush over here, I'd get him in a minute. If I could get her and if everybody would go home—but I don't think they will solve the problem. The president can't go talk to everybody that's got a problem, okay. He got other work to do and I understand that. Let me ask you, what are you all going to do about it (he was asking the press)? 'cause you all are part of the problem, too. You all come out here in a car, which you are blocking the road, which if this lady up here that's 85 years old, if she has to go to the hospital, the damn ambulance can't even carry her to the hospital. Now, is that any respect? You tell me? That's all I got to say about that."

DATELINE:

Crawford

Hometown of the President of the United States



Alonso Gallegos and Daniela Rodriguez

Gallegos, Rodriguez To Wed

WACO—Mr. and Mrs. Jaime and Arcelia Rodriguez of Valley Mills are pleased to announce the engagement and approaching marriage of their daughter, Daniela Beatris Rodriguez to Alonso Gallegos of Fort Worth.

The bride-elect is the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Concepcion Medrano of Bruceville-Eddy. She is a 2005 graduate of Crawford High School and is currently running a family business in Eastland.

The prospective groom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Gallegos of Strawn. He is a 2000 graduate of Strawn High School and is currently employed at Trac-Work, Inc. in Fort Worth.

The couple plans a Fall wedding at 2 p.m. on Nov. 19, at The Sacred Heart Church in Waco. A reception will follow.

USDA Rural Development To Hold Community Leader Summit

WACO—On July 27, State Director for Texas USDA Rural Development, Bryan Daniel announced a Community Leader Summit will be held in Waco. The summit will bring together community leaders and elected officials to discuss issues that are important to rural communities such as housing, business development, and community facilities.

The Summit will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 16, at the Hilton Hotel located at 113 South University Parks Drive in Waco. Registration begins at 1 p.m., with the summit slated to start at 1:30 p.m. Representatives from USDA Rural Development, the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Central Texas Resource Conservation and Development Council will be on hand to explain more about the programs offered through their various agencies. This is a first of a kind event for this area, bringing State and Federal Officials together to explain our programs for rural community improvement. The targeted areas include Bosque, Coryell, Ellis, Hill, and McLennan counties.

"This conference is designed to bring together people who make things happen. They are the people who have the ideas and solutions that can make a difference for their community," said Daniel. "By providing the resources to these leaders, they can help ensure that jobs, housing and improved community services are available to rural Texans."

"This is an excellent opportunity to gather information relevant to making our communities a better place to live, work, and raise our families. Through the numerous programs offered, USDA Rural Development is committed to enhance the quality of life in rural communities by improving the flow of capital to businesses and addressing the essential needs of housing, water, education, and health care," said a USDA official.

There is no cost to attend. RSVP to the USDA Rural Development Office in Hillsboro at (254) 582-7328, extn. 4 by Aug. 12, to reserve a seat.

Man Whose Son Was Killed Same Day As Cindy's Flies To Texas From California To Offer Support

Iconoclast Publisher Makes Midnight Visit To Camp Casey

12:35 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2005

By W. LEON SMITH
PUBLISHER, THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST

PRAIRIE CHAPEL ROAD — A distinct calm permeated the grounds of Camp Casey as the midnight hour slipped into Wednesday morning. Crickets sang amid the backdrop of trees on one side, as lights from Waco in the far distance on the opposite side outlined the open prairie in between.

The camp was dark, save the predictable flicker of a thunderhead in the south and the occasional light-up of a cell phone that doubled as a flashlight for a few human night owls seeking a place to get comfortable.

An intermittent sweep of drizzle kept the air muggy, but cool. A few tents and numerous graffiti-scribbled signs were silhouetted as they jutted up from the grass.

In all, about 15 vehicles had made their way to the sanctuary in the ditch where fate decreed an icon of peace to take her stand.

Cindy Sheehan was seated in a lawn chair next to a friend, who had come to Crawford to lend support for her cause. He, too, had felt the pangs of losing a child to a war he didn't believe in.

It had been a long day for Sheehan, whose voice had softened in the wake of seemingly endless interviews. With worldwide attention focused on her quest to expose the war in Iraq as ignoble, the press had become a constant companion.

But she was tired and it was late; and the unknowns of tomorrow would require strength, so she hugged her friend good-night and wandered toward her tent.

Her friend was weary, too, for California is a long way from Texas and the trip can be exhausting, but he agreed to visit awhile with the publisher of The Lone Star Iconoclast to explain his interest in supporting Cindy.

Bill Mitchell, of Atascadero, Calif.— a city that lies along the central coast halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco — said that he came to Crawford to support Cindy Sheehan, with whom he holds a special bond.

The Interview:

MITCHELL: My son, Sgt. Mike

Mitchell, was killed in Iraq on 04-04-04 in the same battle with Casey Sheehan. My daughter connected up with the Sheehan family shortly thereafter. I was in Germany at the time with my son's fiancée. I started e-mailing Cindy when I was in Germany.

ICONOCLAST: Were you in favor of the war prior to his death?

MITCHELL: In February 2003 there was a worldwide rally against the war and I was in San Francisco with 200,000 other people carrying signs and marching against the war. This was a month before the war started. I haven't seen war myself, but I am a vet and understand the camaraderie and the military mentality.

ICONOCLAST: How are you dealing with this?

MITCHELL: Not very well. My life's been devastated. It's been turned upside down. Very few aspects of my life have a similarity to the past. It just kind of churns you up, shakes you out, and drops you off. I'm doing much better than I have been.

ICONOCLAST: Does it help to bond with other people who have had similar experiences?

MITCHELL: Extremely. Extremely. I come to events like this and I really get empowered from being with other people and working for the cause. I met Cindy shortly after our sons' deaths. We did some military speak-out events together. I realized there was a power in her speaking and in her stories. Even those people who don't agree with the war, or our opinions, see this.

We have a certain credibility. We're not someone up there that's just espousing some ideology or some belief. We're victims of this war like many other people are.

ICONOCLAST: What do you foresee happening with the war?

MITCHELL: Unfortunately, I see it dragging on — unless we are able to put a stop to it. I can tell you that I first spoke out eight weeks after my son's death, on Memorial Day. That was my first speaking event, at a rally. I've pretty much been speaking out since then, just telling my story.

ICONOCLAST: What was he doing in



BILL MITCHELL (left) is interviewed by Iconoclast publisher W. Leon Smith.

— Iconoclast Photo By Allison Smith

Iraq when he was killed?

MITCHELL: Mike and Casey died on the same day.

Mike was part of the 1st Armored Division and Casey was with the 1st Cav. Mike had been in Iraq for 11 months. He went there in May 2003 after mission had been accomplished. He was there as part of the stabilization force. Up until April 4th — 11 months in Iraq — not one soldier in their company had died.

On April 3rd, my son and all his buddies packed up all their equipment. They were headed to Kuwait the next week because Casey and the 1st Cav. were the reinforcements that came. This was much different than the Vietnam days. In the Vietnam days, you had maybe a thousand guys flying in every day and a thousand guys flying back, so you had people there who knew the

jungle. They had tribal knowledge.

I am relatively confident that Mike and Casey never met until they were in that plane. That picture that was taken in Kuwait on April 7th? Mike Mitchell and Casey Sheehan were in those boxes.

But Mike couldn't tell the new guys how to get by in Iraq — the tribal knowledge you get being there 11 months. For instance, Mike had basic Arabic down.

Forty-five minutes before Casey died, the general from the 1st Armored Division passed over the command to the general in the 1st Cav. So this whole uprising took place on the day when they were transitioning from the 1st Armored to the 1st Cav.

So what happened on April 4th is that 20 soldiers from the 1st Cav. got ambushed in Sadr City. Mike spent eight months at Sadr City. These guys in the

Continued On Next Page

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• **INTERVIEW** ... Continued From Previous Page

1st Cav., it was their first day there. They'd never seen Sadr City before. Those 20 guys that got ambushed didn't realize when they drove into the city that there were piles of tires and rubbish and junked cars, whatever, blocking the access back out. These guys were stuck there within the city.

Mike had been out running with his buddy, Carl, and they came back into the camp and there was a buzz going on. One of the tank commanders came to my son and said, "Mitch, I need you to ride loader today, in Sadr City." Mike goes, "I'm with you."

Mike had spent two years at Fort Hood. He was part of the 1st Cav. when he was at Fort Hood. I'm sure he felt a certain camaraderie to those new guys that had been ambushed in there.

They send young men to war because they think they're invincible. My son thought he was Mighty Mouse. He kind of laughed when anyone expressed too much concern about his well-being. He told his older sister, Terri, he goes, "There's 35,000 of the 1st Armored here. What's the chance of getting me?" particularly my son being a mechanic. The loader on the tank is a guy sitting there with an M16 machine gun. So that's what my son was doing the last day of his life.

So, eight soldiers were killed that day, seven from the 1st Cav., one from the 1st Armored. That was the first death in Mike's company in 11 months.

We were all back in the states, having suffered through 11 months of Mike being there in Iraq and... he was on his way home. He was a week from going to Kuwait, two weeks in Germany, and three months from his wedding date. He had a fiancée in Germany who was just crushed. But I pretty much adopted her and am helping her continue on.

So, anyway, I'm here in Crawford, Texas today to support my friend, Cindy Sheehan. I appreciate what she's doing. I was against the war beforehand. I wish I could sit here and tell you how much you should appreciate my son for your liberty and freedom, but, you know, I didn't believe that before the war, and when my son died I surely couldn't grab that and cherish that feeling, because I know it's lies that got us there.

We have no reason to be in that country. There's no reason that Mike or Casey or that the other 1,800 men and women should have died.

ICONOCLAST: You drove here from California?

MITCHELL: I was going to drive, but I ended up getting a plane ticket because Cindy said, "I need you here now." So I flew down to be here and support her and the work she's doing. She's just incredible.

I don't know whether Americans just have too many distractions or are too busy with their own lives, but, you know, this war doesn't touch that many people in America.

ICONOCLAST: What do you think it would take to fix things?

MITCHELL: The mothers of America to all stand up.

It may take the draft. If the recruiting continues to fall short and they are forced to bring the draft back, maybe that might wake people up. But people aren't affected by it. Sometimes, we'll tell people that our sons died in the war, and they go, "What war?"

Every morning when I wake up, it's

— hopefully it's my first thought. If I go through five minutes of the morning without thinking about Mike, and all of a sudden I see one of his pictures hanging on my wall, it's kind of a shock again. I'm really kind of happy when I wake up and I have Mike there in my mind because it's not such a shock, a jolt that you go through again.

He was the baby of the family, Casey was the big brother of the family. It's like a little pebble into a pond. There's a ripple effect. There's brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles.

One of my biggest fears while Mike was in Iraq was that he would never see his grandmother again. (pause) Mike's grandmother had to go to his funeral. She's devastated still by it. My mother's a very sentimental, a very emotional woman. She's having some health issues in her life. I was afraid she would die before Mike got home.

ICONOCLAST: Is there anything you'd like to add?

MITCHELL: I'm sure Cindy has said it, but we know what it feels like to lose a child — to have a child killed in this war. And we're just doing whatever we can to end it so quickly that no one else has to experience that same pain and devastation, the same upset in their lives.

My life has not been the same since my son was killed.

I have three other daughters. I have eight beautiful grandchildren. I was at a very good point in my life. Life had been very good to me. And then this just came and turned it upside down.

I had been hanging out, waiting for Mike to get back from Germany. I was going to jump on a plane after he and Bianca had a few weeks together, fly to Germany, spend a few weeks with him, travel around Spain and Portugal a little bit.

I was back to Germany in August, for Mike and Bianca's wedding and the only other plan I had in my life at that point was Mike and Bianca coming home for Christmas together. Mike was bringing his new wife home.

(long pause)

This is the work I do now — to tell my story and to bring the reality, the pain of this war, back to people in America.

It doesn't so much matter whether I'm out speaking in the name of peace and my son's name or whether I'm out camping having a good time, when I come home to my little four walls, my son's still dead. The death of any child is a devastating event for a parent. A piece of your heart dies when your child dies. So I just want to stop this. I don't want to hear about anybody else dying, American or Iraqi.

When Cindy wrote the couple of quotes about Bush, about him wanting to honor the fallen, I don't want any more blood in my son's name. My son wouldn't want any more blood in his name either. My son was a very sensitive, very caring young man. He'd been with these guys for 11 months. There's a real camaraderie that develops. It was about his buddies. It's not about democracy in Iraq, it's not about freedom and liberty in America. It's his buddies, that develops in a military unit, especially in a war zone.

Iconoclast Making Its Way Around The World

CRAWFORD — THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST has seen an unusually large number of visitors on its online edition this past two weeks, which publishers attribute to coverage of the Cindy Sheehan protest in and near Crawford.

Among the countries from where individuals have visited the website <www.iconoclast-texas.com> are these:

United States, Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Uruguay, France, New Zealand, Taiwan, Province of China, Spain, Belgium, Mexico, Switzerland, Malaysia, Italy, Korea, Republic of China, Ireland, Brazil, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, South Africa, Israel, Austria, Saudi Arabia, Czech Republic, Greece, Turkey, Argentina, Slovenia, Indonesia, Hungary, Philippines, Portugal, Poland, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Egypt, Europe, Nigeria, Chile, Pakistan, Vietnam, Jordan, Russian Federation, Guam,

Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia, Estonia, Iran, Islamic Republic of Bermuda, American Samoa, Slovakia, Kuwait, Malta, Luxembourg, Bolivia, Lithuania, Trinidad and Tobago.

Also, Myanmar, Iceland, Dominican Republic, Senegal, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Cyprus, Benin, Tanzania, United Republic of Qatar, Cuba, Bangladesh, Oman, Guadeloupe, Yugoslavia, Albania, Sudan, Cayman Islands, Netherlands Antilles, Ukraine, Maldives, Romania, Moldova, Republic of Barbados, Bulgaria, Armenia, Peru, Kenya, Ecuador, Brunei Darussalam, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, 6 Virgin Islands, U.S., Latvia, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Antigua and Barbuda, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Cook Islands, Cameroon, Palau, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Mauritius, Paraguay, Monaco, Belarus, Bahrain, Uganda, Tunisia, Gambia, Gibraltar Grenada, and Bahamas.

Most of the visits were from throughout the United States.

Charlie & the Chocolate Factory



Johnny Depp plays Willie Wonka in this Tim Burton remake of the classic Roald Dahl story. The mysterious, eccentric and reclusive chocolate maker Willie Wonka offers a once-in-a-lifetime tour of his factory that no one has seen in 15 years to five lucky kids who happen to claim the prize of a golden ticket wrapped inside one of his famous Wonka chocolate bars. Charlie is a good-hearted boy from a poor family who lives in the shadow of the Wonka factory. Charlie's fortunes begin to change when he unwraps the fifth golden ticket and enters a world of imagination and discovery.

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Velvet Revolution Takes Off The Gloves, Launches Controversial Long-Term Ad Campaign

CRAWFORD — The Velvet Revolution, a nationwide movement started immediately following the discovery of numerous voting discrepancies in Ohio following the 2004 Presidential election, is launching a long-term advertising campaign questioning “why the rich children of this chicken hawk administration won't go to war.”

Its supporters say, “The cluck stops here. Something foul is going on in Crawford, Texas.”

VelvetRevoluton.us is a movement of more than 110 organizations reaching millions of people.

The first two-page color paid advertisement appears in this week's LONE STAR ICONOCLAST to coincide with President Bush's five-week ranch vacation and Cindy Sheehan's nearby protest of the war in Iraq.

In a written release, the organization indicated that a copy of the paper will be delivered to the Bush ranch and dozens of copies will be given to the media and to protestors at Camp Casey where Sheehan is protesting.

Sheehan's son, Casey, was killed last year before the Downing Street Memos

revealed that there was no legal justification to go to war and the decision was made regardless of the real situation in Iraq.

Now Sheehan has made it her mission to demand an end to the “unjust war” so other families will not lose loved ones based on a lie. VelvetRevolution supports Sheehan and her cause.

The first color ad says: DON'T LOOK FOR THESE NAMES AMONG THE DEAD AND WOUNDED, and lists on Dog Tags the names of Jenna Bush, David Wolfowitz, Elizabeth Cheney, Valerie Rumsfeld, along with their religious affiliation. Below it says, “Our children have to die so Chicken Hawk children can stay home and get richer? Take back the White House for Americans who know the value of human life. Come to www.VelvetRevolution.us.”

VR will place other hard-hitting ads throughout the country and on the Internet to raise awareness about 1) the Iraq war based on lies, 2) the Downing Street Memos, 3) the rigged election of 2004, 4) the failure to heed pre-911 warnings, 5) corrupt vote machine companies, 6) war profiteering, 7) torture as a

policy, 8) illegal outing of intelligence officials and 9) the corrupt Iraq election, said a spokesman for the organization.

These ads will appear in newspapers, magazines, billboards, transit shelters, bus and rail cars, and on dozens of web sites in order to reach the most people.

These ads will show that the actions of this Administration amount to a policy based on lies, corruption, fear, in-

competence, indifference and arrogance, said the release.

“VR will rely on donations from citizens and organizations nationwide to fund the ads so that Americans everywhere will know the truth,” said the release. Avenging Angels Inc. will create all the ads for this campaign.

For more information, visit www.velvetrevolution.us.



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Operation Orphan, Inc. To Hold Doe Hunts This Fall

MASON—The Board of Directors of Operation Orphans, Inc. has selected five dates for doe hunts during the forthcoming whitetail deer season. They are on Oct. 29, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Jan. 7, and Jan. 14. The first date will be an all girl's hunt, while all others will be all boy's hunt.

This is the 46th year of the “Take a Child Hunting” program. To date, Operation Orphans, Inc. has hosted 16,034 youngsters with a total game harvest of 15,656. During this program, landowners from the surrounding Hill Country allow children from child care facilities to harvest does from their property. Ranchers use the “Take a Child Hunting” program as a means to reduce the over population of does and to get buck to doe ratios in order. Landowners and hunters also participate in this program to help educate youngsters about the outdoors and provide a worthwhile outdoor adventure field trip.

A summer fishing program for underprivileged children was begun in 2004. Operation Orphans, Inc. hopes to offer the same concept with fishing as is offered with the hunting program.

Operation Orphans, Inc. provides the children, guides, and food for the activity. In an effort to maintain the highest safety standards, all guides have successfully completed the Hunter Safety Course. One guide is assigned to each child. During the girl's hunt, a woman or a man/woman team serve as guides. The meat which the child care facilities receive from these hunts helps to relieve some of the burden of their rising food costs for the year.

Operation Orphans, inc. came into being when the late Gene Ashby, a State Game Warden, realized that the Hill Country had an excessive deer population and the necessity for removing a

large number of antlerless deer. He approached some local ranches with the idea of allowing orphans to harvest these deer. With help from sportsmen's clubs throughout Texas, donations, and help from other concerned individuals, Camp Gene Ashby is today a beautiful facility capable of housing and feeding 250 visitors.

Operation Orphans, Inc. is a non-profit organization made up of a board of directors whose sole purpose is to serve less fortunate youngsters by offering them a positive outdoor experience. Any persons who are interested in assisting with the “Take a Child Hunting” program, please contact camp supervisors, Jerry or Lyla Crouch at (325) 347-6745, or write Operation Orphans, Inc., P.O. Box 535, Mason, Texas, 76856. Persons interested in guiding, please contact director George Mann (325) 481-0512 or georgemannsr@wcc.net.

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Still Crazy In The Face Of Benevolent Imperialism

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Nothin' is ever ALL anything."

It is the bent of all true rebels to consider the wealthy as fundamentally evil. Those who have prospered tending the open sores upon the body politic are as corrupt as the disease itself.

Yet I am inevitably brought up short by my own presumptions and the philosophical contradictions, as they should periodically confound us all.

But to prove I have not yet been seduced by the sirens of rationale among the shoals of Neighbor Bush's political occultism, I am confident that his pack of Egg-Sucking Dog Republicans are not troubled by that aforementioned introspection.

What's an Egg-Sucking Dog Republican.

A Yellow Dog Democrat is one who will vote for a yellow dog so long as it is a Democrat.

An Egg-Sucking Dog Republican is one who will not vote for even a Republican unless it sucks eggs.

His neighbor's eggs.
And hides the shells.

See? No need to worry. I'm still crazy.

But an institution of wealth brought me up short this week, proving a fundamental truth.

However, the Fundamental Truths Department is located at the rear of this column next to Layaway. Please have a major credit card and two forms of ID ready.

I encountered, for the first time, Fry's Electronics, the ultimate meth lab for technology freaks.

Understand, I'm only a social user.

A little word processing now and then. Maybe some document prep.

Okay, I'm pretty heavy into image manipulation and audio downloading, but only on the weekends.

I stay away from the hardware stuff. I don't want to get hooked.

But once inside Fry's acres of interactivity, I couldn't help myself.

I decided to try a couple of sticks of memory.

I mean, one time couldn't hurt, right?

And, like all dealers, they made it so easy.

You got three slots, buddy, just pull the old ones out and stick these in. Nothing to it. Next thing you know, you'll be grooving to a whole new virtual reality.

Have I worn out this metaphor yet?

Anyway, back home from Austin, D.C., I gingerly popped the case and followed the now-distant dealer's instructions.

AND IT DIDN'T FIT!

Now, I have to admit to a certain

Call To Mind



By Don M. Fisher

amount of WalMart prejudice here.

I have become so accustomed to the Mega-retail attitude that I called Fry's with blood in my eye and a loaded column in my brain. And I wasn't afraid to use it.

I mean, the usual Big Store attitude is, "If you wanted quality merchandise and competent service, why did you try to buy cheap? And how did you get this telephone number, anyway? The automated answering system should have routed you through the Please Hold dead-end barricade and off a telecommunications cliff hours ago while our operators were serving other customers."

So once again a get-in-get-your-money-get-out chain had my money and a hundred miles on me.

This couldn't work out.

And then a person answered the phone.

A person who talked faster than a Midland auctioneer with his tongue caught in a coffee mill, granted, but a person.

I have to admit I wasn't ready for somebody who could fight back.

There is a certain amount of impotent satisfaction in repeatedly punching the tar baby.

But people are different.

They fight back.

And they get hurt.

Cussing somebody who'll cuss you back is about as much fun as rearing a teenager.

I explained my problem.

They said they'd get back to me.

Yeah, right.

And then Bill showed up at my front door.

He drove up from Austin with a sackful of memory chips.

And came in and installed it.

And when that didn't fix the unrelated problems I had with my computer, he worked on it, no charge, for about an hour.

Billy didn't have to do that.

I recalled my conversation with the store and began to feel like something I'd scraped off the sole of my boot.

And when Bill couldn't fix it here, he took it back to Austin and said he'd call.

It turned out to be a mess.

Billy and Derek, two more Fry's guys, worked on it three days, then cut me a deal on the tab because they took longer than they said it would. The whole thing cost me a Grant and change.

Wow. My boot heel was getting nastier by the minute.

Of course there was method in their methods.

I doubt I'll ever buy any other electronics anywhere but the intersection of Parmer Lane and MoPac in Austin, Travis County, Texas.

But this goes beyond that.

These guys weren't working for Fry's. They were working for me.

Fry's just pays them. And whatever it is, it ain't enough.

Who am I to be worthy of such deference?

Nobody.

Just a customer.

A guy who used to be a king before he was turned into a sucker by all those other fluorescent fried warehouse retail miners.



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Unanswered Questions

There once was a word.

It was called "accountability."

It meant that when a tragedy or mishap occurs, truthful answers would naturally follow.

The requisite for truthful answers extends beyond the "why." It is a mechanism geared toward avoidance of the same tragedy again.

Cindy Sheehan is seeking answers, as are Americans throughout the nation.

The Administration's answers relating to America's involvement in the war with Iraq keep changing, open proof that lies have been told.

The recently unearthed Downing Street Memos take it a step deeper, indicating that a hidden agenda existed prior to day one of the involvement.

Then we learned of the illegal ouster of an agent who was poised to blow the lid off the "fixing of facts" aimed at devising an untruthful reason to go to war.

One thing is a fact: soldiers who die or are injured while serving under the flag of their country are patriots, having made an ultimate sacrifice, and should be always honored for this.

It is the venue of politicians to assure that the expenditures of these lives are minimized and that the political reasons to activate a military into aggression are solid, sincere, and a last resort.

This is the basis of one mother's complaint.

However, accurate answers and the attached motives remain hidden, as untruths have already been exposed.

"Faith" is an acceptable virtue when forfeited to a supreme being.

But even faith requires questions, for without them, it is worthless, blind.

Remember President Reagan's motto when dealing with the nuclear arms race and the Soviet Union: "Trust must verify."

"Facts" are the required measure on the world slide rule in assuring the accountability and motives of a politician.

Yet unanswered questions prevail within this Administration — even beyond those related to the war in Iraq.

These, too, might be asked of the President:

• With this country so severely in

debt, why did you grant tax cuts to the very wealthy?

• Why did you attempt to undo our country's Social Security system and why did you go back on your pre-election promise to not raid the Social Security trust fund?

• Why did you develop plans, and then enact them, to disable fundamental portions of the Constitution of the United States?

• Why did you try to stop the efforts of the 9/11 commission? Why don't you want a full investigation as to what happened?

• Why did you grant no-bid contracts to the Vice President's former company?

• Why have you promoted the export of American jobs overseas?

• Why aren't you supporting the needs of our veterans?

• Why don't you ever listen to or surround yourself with Americans who might not agree with you politically?

• Why was Jeff Gannon planted in your press conferences to throw softball questions to you?

• Why are depleted uranium weapons being used in Iraq?

And there are many more.

But this is the question of the moment:

Why didn't you stop for five minutes on your way back to the ranch Friday to answer Cindy Sheehan's questions? You made time for a fund-raiser, time to throw the first pitch at a baseball game, time to meet with foreign heads of government — but no time to meet with and answer the questions of a mother whose son was killed in Iraq?

This is what "war presidents" do. There is no vacation from reality.

Ms. Sheehan made the long trip from California to Texas and has spent over a week in the boiling Texas sun, camping as close as she can get to your gate, fending off fire ants, attempting to let you know that she needs to speak with you.

Her quest for your attention is important in that she represents many other mothers who want truthful answers to the same questions..

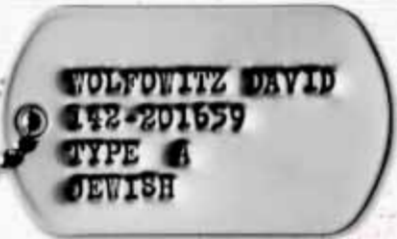
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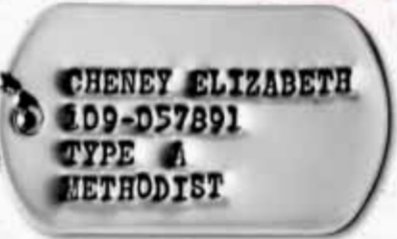
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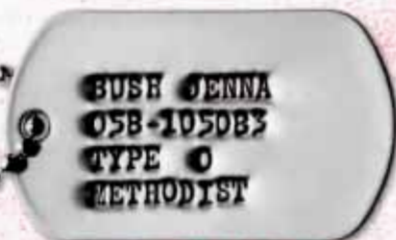
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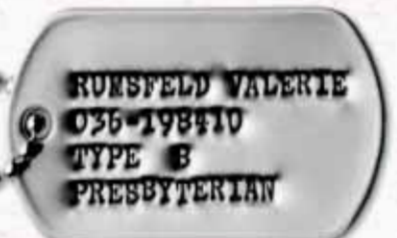
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Veterans for Peace: Celebrating 20 Years of Reconciliation and Resistance

By SUSAN VAN HAITSMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Returning home from the national Veterans for Peace (VFP) convention held Aug. 4-7 in Dallas, I opened my daily paper to an opinion editorial entitled, "Thank God for the Atom Bomb; it saved thousands of lives." I thought of a contrasting statement made during the convention by GI resister and conscientious objector, Camilo Mejia. "Conscience is a place where one meets God. Conscience is what makes us human, more than intelligence."

The meeting place of conscience is what really saves us. In fact, during the convention, I heard more than one veteran say it: Thank God for Veterans for Peace. You saved my life.

Celebrating its twentieth anniversary at this convention, VFP has been growing by leaps and bounds in recent years. Membership has increased from about 550 in 2001 to some 4,000 today, with 123 chapters across the country.

Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) also celebrated their very busy first year of activity.

The convention marked the first as Executive Director for Michael McPhearson, an Army veteran whose 20 year-old son is scheduled to be deployed to Iraq this year. McPhearson's opening address to the convention began, "First, thank you for existing."

During the convention, placards declaring the five points of VFP's statement of purpose followed the assembly, appearing prominently during the business sessions, then migrating to the big tent stage as backdrop for the speeches and entertainment. When these vets get together, they have a very good time.

But they meet primarily because they have a mission.

We Must Work to Increase Public Awareness of the Costs of War

Brad Johnson, VFP Chapter 80, draws from his 20-year Navy career when he talks with students in Duluth, Minnesota. He visits high schools with his "War is Not the Answer" banner. When students ask what the answer is, he doesn't hesitate. "I ask them how many windmills they see around here and how they are doing in their science classes." Straightforward, funny and wearing one hoop earring, Johnson must be capturing the students' imagination with his anti-war message. He clearly appreciates the opportunity. "I'm buying back my soul," he says, "one classroom at a time."

Like Brad Johnson, Vietnam Air Force Veteran, Brian Willson and his partner, Becky Luening also believe it is crucial to explore the "why's" of war.

Willson and Luening took the train to Dallas from their home in Northern California because trains make the most efficient use of fuel per passenger. Willson said they decided to attend the convention because when he saw the preliminary schedule, there was no workshop addressing the structural and root causes of war. He offered to facilitate one. "Our system requires war," he says. "Do we want to be anti-war, or do we want to get rid of war?"

Willson is well-known as the attorney and activist whose legs were severed on Sept. 1, 1987 by a Naval munitions train carrying weapons bound for Central America as he and others protested on the tracks. Willson walks skillfully with

two prostheses. He and Luening live close to the land, growing much of their food and conducting their business locally.

Willson no longer uses air travel and declines most speaking engagements.

"When I am invited to speak, I ask, 'Can I get there without harming the earth?'"

We Must Restrain our Government from Intervening in the Affairs of Others

During the convention's opening plenary, Iraq Veterans Against the War co-founder, Mike Hoffman took the stage along with seven other IVAW members.

They spoke of their appreciation for older vets, especially Vietnam Veterans Against the War, who helped them learn to organize in the midst of war. Marine veteran, Stephen Funk, the first conscientious objector to serve time in a military prison during the Iraq war, said that one of the first groups to reach out to him when he became a GI resister was VFP. He said he knew he didn't have to be suspicious of the group's motives.

One IVAW member said, "I am a veteran of Operation Iraqi Plunder. To call it Operation Iraqi Freedom is an insult to Iraq and an insult to humanity."

He described symptoms of PTSD he is experiencing: fits of rage, sleepless nights, tearful outbursts. Another IVAW member said, "When people tell me they are proud of what I did in Iraq, I say, 'Well, I'm not. You don't even know what I did over there.'"

Hoffman and other IVAW members have been criss-crossing the country over the past year, appearing at schools and public demonstrations. They speak from experience, challenging what vets call "a culture of silence" in the military. To a standing ovation at the convention, Hoffman said, "Bush hides behind the troops when he is criticized. He claims that critics don't support the troops. Troops are his shield. Well, IVAW will be the shield of the peace movement!"

We Must Seek Justice for Veterans and Victims of War

A banner created by the Santa Fe VFP chapter read, "Who will support the troops when our troops become veterans?" The banner included eight photographs from the book, "Purple Hearts," of veterans who have lost limbs or suffered other injuries in Iraq.

One of the resolutions considered during the day-long business session of the convention was a proposal to revise the VFP statement of purpose to read, "We Must Seek Justice for Veterans and Other Victims of War," in order to make the point that veterans are war victims also. However, the VFP board and convention voted to keep the statement as is. "Veterans are victims and also executioners," said David Cline, board president, reflecting the group sentiment that VFP members take responsibility for their actions in war. One vet commented, "Veterans are in both worlds, and in fact, so are most people."

The VFP convention commemorated the 30th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, or as it is known in Vietnam, the American War. Many Vietnam veterans have traveled to Vietnam since the war to participate in projects that promote reconciliation and restoration. VFP member Suel Jones, spoke about his involvement with Vietnam Friend-

ship Village, a community for children and adults affected by Agent Orange. Jones described his amazement that the Vietnamese people welcomed him even when they knew he had killed Vietnamese people during the war. "Veterans who go back to Vietnam with me always ask two things," he said. "What the hell were we doing and why didn't I come back sooner?"

Justice for GI resisters was a major focus of the convention. Workshop panelists, plenary speakers and late-night documentary films explored GI resistance during the Vietnam War and Gulf Wars I and II. Vietnam GI resister, Steve Morse was on hand to talk about the huge increase in calls to the GI Rights Hotline, which he coordinates through the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. Lee Zaslofsky, a US Army deserter and Canadian resident since 1970, spoke about his current role as coordinator of the War Resisters Support Campaign, which is lobbying for political asylum and providing practical assistance for 15 US military deserters in Canada.

An estimated 5,500 soldiers are in deserter status in the U.S. Whethersoldiers of conscience go to prison, as have Camilo Mejia and Stephen Funk, or seek refuge in Canada, as have Brandon Hughey and Jeremy Hinzman, or just go AWOL, VFP supports them. We Must End the Arms Race and Reduce and Eventually Eliminate Nuclear Weapons Anita Cole enlisted in the Army because she believed the military was "a meaningful and shared public effort." She felt there weren't enough outlets for such efforts outside the military. While she was stationed in Japan, she visited Hiroshima. She began to realize that the shared public effort she'd joined "was the most destructive system in the world." Her belief system "crystallized," as military regulations call it, and she was discharged as a conscientious objector in 2002. An articulate spokesperson for the rights of conscience, she now serves on the board of the Center on Conscience & War and answers calls for the GI Rights Hotline.

The convergence of anniversaries during the 2005 VFP convention included the 60th year of remembrance of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Attending the convention from Japan was special guest, Dr. Satoru Konishi, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing. Dr. Konishi addressed the convention in halting English, describing his memory of the bombing and subsequent campaign for a nuclear-free world. He closed by reading a poem by Japanese poet, Sankichi Toge, who died from radiation poisoning several years after the bombing.

Reciting the poem, Dr. Konishi's voice suddenly gained strength.

*"Our fathers, give back to me,
Our mothers, give back to me,
Our elders, give back to me,
Our children, give back to me!
My self, human, give back to me!
And all humans linked to me!
Peace, give back to me,*

*One, indestructible forever,
As long as the human's human world will last."*

When another special convention guest, Cindy Sheehan, finished her already legendary address to a very enthusiastic standing ovation, Dr. Konishi spontaneously gave her the first hug from the front row as she stepped from the stage.

We Must Abolish War as an Instrument of National Policy

The human life we have taken and keep taking in war cannot be brought back. But, the human connections we make now could be our saving grace. The camaraderie – the love for each other – is what most veterans, including Casey Sheehan, have paradoxically cited as the main reason for following orders into war. VFP understands the significance of camaraderie because the same kind of bonding is necessary for waging peace. VFP members and chapters across the country are involved in powerful, creative efforts to strengthen human connections. In the process, they create the kinds of meeting places where lives are saved.

Susan Van Haitisma is active with Nonmilitary Options for Youth and is an associate member of VFP Chapter 66 in Austin, Texas.

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How Building a Saudi City Made a Lefty Out of Dick Underhill, VFP

By GREG MOSES
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Back in the 60s you could say two things about Navy and Air Force veteran Dick Underhill: he liked to do the work that nobody else wanted to do, and he was a Goldwater Republican. Today as Underhill shuttles in and out of Crawford, Texas, running supplies and tending to lists of things to do in support of Cindy Sheehan, you could still say he likes to do the work that nobody else wants to do, but you couldn't call him a Goldwater Republican anymore.

"You have heard about PTSD, haven't you?" asks Underhill in a telephone interview Tuesday afternoon from his Austin home. "That's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Well, I have a name for something else that I call PASD. That's Post Awareness Stress Disorder. It's what happens to you when you've been raised all your life to believe the story that the slaveholders and merchant pirates who founded the USA were good people and that the government of the USA is the best in the world. When you find out that's not true at all, it does leave you under stress."

The foundation of Underhill's Goldwater Republicanism was an economic conviction born out of his background as a working class juvenile delinquent who made something good of his life. Anybody, said that conviction, can pick themselves up by their own bootstraps no matter what. If Underhill had done it, so could everyone else.

But the foundation of Underhill's economic conviction began to crack during the seven years (1978-85) that he spent working for the Parsons Corporation building the Saudi Arabian city of Yanbu from the ground up. Since he was single at the time he could travel quite a bit, so he saw the worlds of SouthEast Asia, India, and the Middle East. Whenever he saw extreme poverty, he heard the same formula for economic opportunity: get access to USA markets. But that wasn't quite the bootstrap of his convictions, so he began to question his economic theories.

In Tucson during the 1990s Underhill began taking lots of courses at the community college and University of Arizona, where he learned how to outgrow his childhood textbooks. He remembers especially two courses on Latin American history. In part one, "the Spanish are the bad guys you know," says Underhill. "But in the second part I found out what the government of the USA did." He learned what happened to Allende in Chile and the usual list of things like that. "It destroyed my vision of what I thought we were like."

At about the same time, Underhill started going to weekly Peace and Justice vigils in Tucson. He recalls that the vigils were originally called to protest conditions that produced illegal immigrants from Central and South America, but the vigils adapted to changing issues. At the vigils he met some folks from Veterans for Peace. "One thing I have noticed," says Underhill. "If you are in a group that is predominately pro-peace, ask how many have lived or worked outside the US. Four and Five Star package tours don't count. My experience is that 70 percent will identify themselves as having lived abroad."

Now we fast forward to Austin, where Underhill moved to "follow the money" which is his way of joking that his wife found work there, so he came with her. About three years ago, he watched a film about the USA invasion of Panama.

"In my mind the invasion of Panama involved a few helicopters. Our guys chased Noriega into a building and they played loud music until he came out. Then we hauled him off and threw him in prison forever. But I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about it." In the film he saw a story of an illegal invasion in which thousands of civilians were killed, thousands more displaced, entire apartment complexes burned, all in the name of a "drug war." For Underhill the film portrayed a military preparation for the invasion of Iraq, a proving ground for war technologies such as the newly made stealth bomber. And all of it neatly tucked behind glossy media management so that Americans could coast along on the lie.

"I saw that film three years ago," says Underhill, "and I haven't been off the cell phone since." Which brings us back to the Dick Underhill who likes to do the things that others don't. For the past three years, Underhill's cell phone has been ringing with movement business. If a bus is coming to town on a national tour. If a speaker needs a place to stay. All those things that need doing, Underhill tries to get them done. And although Underhill is very active in the Austin chapter of VFP, he had nothing to do with a national office decision to bring the 20th annual VFP convention to Dallas. That decision had more to do with a need to rotate regions and, oh yes, the fact that George Bush lived here ("for tax purposes," quips Underhill, "because Texas has no state income tax") and kept a summer home nearby.

About 100 days before the convention was to open near Dallas, Underhill was asked to take over the work of coordinating all the details. How much time did he put into that job? "I worked as long as I could stay awake," says Underhill. One detail, as we know, was to invite Cindy Sheehan to speak. "I had quite accidentally run across someone who recommended Cindy," recalls Underhill. So we tied that up, but no one knew about her plans to visit Crawford until the day before she arrived at the convention. As soon as I got her email about it, the first thing I did was to contact the Crawford Peace House and ask them to get ready."

The Crawford Peace House was set up by a farsighted peace activist from Dallas named Johnny Wolf. He purchased the building in the Spring of 2003 for just this kind of eventuality. He knew the Crawford Ranch would draw activists, and he wanted a watering hole for them to stop at along the way. "We're not going to let them turn the town into a three-ring circus," said Crawford Mayor Robert Campbell to the DALLAS MORNING NEWS when the news of the Crawford Peace House was announced. "If they want to protest, let them go to Washington."

That was long before Cindy Sheehan made up her mind to find out where Crawford was so that she could confront

the president of the USA at his summer home and tell him to stop using the deaths of soldiers like her son to justify further war in Iraq.

GUEST FEATURE

There were some folks who encouraged Underhill to move the entire VFP convention to Crawford at the last minute, but he reminded them that Crawford was not an easy place for lots of people to eat on short notice.

"There's only one blinking light in that town," says Underhill, "and it's about eight times brighter than the President." So the VFP worked out a caravan that would be led by an Impeachment Tour Bus. A couple veterans stayed with Sheehan in Crawford, and you've probably heard what happened next.

What you don't see so much in the tip of the tremendous iceberg that Cindy Sheehan has thrown in front of the President's war cruiser is the long years of preparation, the weekly vigils in Tucson, the courses in history, the film festivals, the fund drives, the chores and newsletters that finally fuse enough people together that they can move in under Cindy Sheehan and make sure she stays afloat as long as it takes.

Even Underhill thought the scene

looked pretty desolate when he passed through Crawford Sunday afternoon (was that just two days ago?) and saw this one lonely tent pitched against the Texas prairie. Although by that point Underhill knew that the Crawford Peace House had thrown open its doors and CodePink had mobilized its network, "It didn't look too powerful."

"But you know what?" says Underhill, pausing for a while at home between his support trips to Crawford. "I think this has shaken the whole globe. I have a friend in Germany and he says it's on television there. This has blown wide open." Tuesday morning campers watched ABC camera crews hang through the rain to get dawn shots for the evening news. Something about Cindy Sheehan is bringing out the poetry in everyone's imagination.

"And you know if we had anybody else out there, nobody would care," he says. "This is all about Cindy." And Cindy is all about Casey (May 29 1979-April 4 2004).

Not in his name, Mr. President. Not. In. His. Name.

Greg Moses is editor of *Peacefile* and author of *Revolution of Conscience: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Philosophy of Nonviolence*. He can be reached at <gmosesx@prodigy.net>.

Remembering Peter Jennings

By LEONARD JENSEN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Alcohol and Drug Deaths

One of the more consistent misguided justifications for leaving tobacco on the market is a comparison of tobacco to alcohol and drug related deaths and morality. The facts are that alcohol related driving deaths in 2004 were 16,694 (and dropping); while tobacco deaths always tarry near 400,000; each and every year.

The uniformed also like to emphasize that the moral degradation of alcohol and drugs is more of an issue than tobacco. This thinking is also misguided. While drug and alcohol addicts may be counseled and reformed, most tobacco induced cancer patients are simply dying or dead. There is no opportunity for counseling. Additionally, while quitting smoking has many health benefits; a reduction in the risk for lung cancer is NOT one of those rewards. About 50% of new lung cancer patients are former smokers. The lungs are sponge-like material that just does not heal or rebuild itself very well. Once the tar and poisons from tobacco are induced, they are generally there to stay. If you have quit, you are still at risk.

Peter Jennings

The most well know advocate of anti-tobacco efforts was Peter Jennings of ABC News. ABC News broadcast several of his specials on tobacco that exposed key members of tobacco's congressional blockade and colossal mistakes by leaders of the FDA and even the Surgeon General. However, the public did little to respond to Jennings' specials; even though the specials focused on Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tx) and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Tx). While it is sad that tobacco killed Peter Jennings; it is also ironic that the public, unknowingly, has continually supported and re-elected Barton and Hutchison. It is even more ironic that Barton and Hutchison represent a non-tobacco state. What do think their motives are?



Action and Advocacy

While there are a lot of efforts to reduce tobacco deaths (re: Anti-smoking campaigns); those efforts are typically countered by the innovative marketing techniques of the tobacco industry. As in any conflict you must be able to go through the blockade or defense to inflict damage to the enemy. If the tobacco industry is the enemy, then the blockade is surely Rep. Barton and Sen. Hutchison.

If the citizens of Texas have any morals at all; they will discontinue their support of Barton and Hutchison. But then again, the people of Texas, have an uncanny ability to excuse immorality in the name of corporate greed.

Growing Disapproval Of War In Iraq Landing Squarely In Bush's Backyard

By VIVIAN GREENTREE
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The nation's growing disapproval of our involvement in Iraq has landed squarely in our own backyard. Or, more specifically, the President's. Cindy Sheehan, whose son, Army Specialist Casey Sheehan, was killed in Iraq, has staged an impromptu protest outside the President's Crawford ranch, where he is vacationing...again.

The question that I have is why won't the President meet with her?

Why wouldn't our President, who claims to sympathize with those that have lost a loved one in our war against terrorism, meet with a mother

whose son gave the ultimate sacrifice?

From a purely political standpoint – and let's be honest, isn't it always about politics – it would have been more than prudent for him to invite Cindy up to the house when she first showed up and listened to her complaints, questions...whatever. Just listened to her at all. Instead, he continued his normal isolation routine and sent down an emissary who did little to comfort or allay Cindy's qualms. Maureen Dowd, in an article last week, described it as another one of the administration's shows of inhumane humanitarianism. I couldn't agree more.



Vivian Greentree

GUEST COMMENTARY

To ignore her, and her pleas, which echo so loudly within our community at large, is just the kind of swaggering, haughty behavior that Bush should try to play down instead of epitomize. He has nothing to lose by showing sympathy to Cindy and everything to lose by attempting to ignore her. She is an ordinary American with first-hand knowledge of the results of terrorism, violence and war. She is simply bearing witness and asking to be heard.

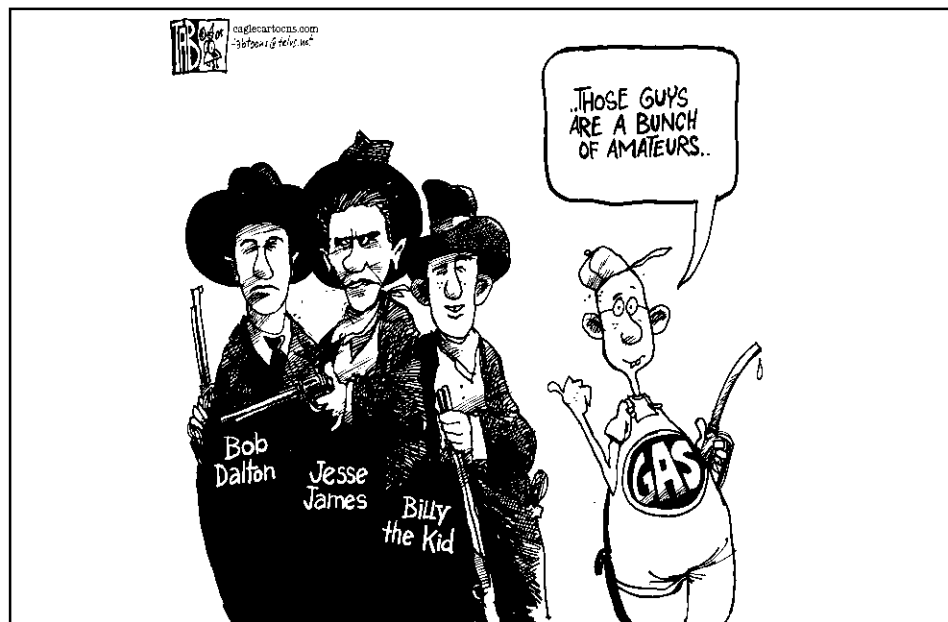
Right-wing pundits are now tripping over themselves to make a joke of Cindy. They misquote old news articles, trying to show inconsistencies in her story. Fox News pundit Mike Gallagher has now staged a "Pro-America Bus Trip" to Crawford. I assume because the moment Cindy started asking questions, she became an Anti-American extremist. They relegate her to "sour grapes" and say she is politically motivated. Politically motivated? Is she running for Congress?

No. She is simply a mother who has lost her child to the war in Iraq, just like anyone of us could. She is also a woman who is searching for answers, just like all of us should. She is an everyman, in the sense that it could so easily be me, you, or the next mother out there when it happens to our own family. So, please don't dismiss her out of hand as being

some weapon of the Lefties and dehumanize her, because isn't that, presumably, what we are over in Iraq fighting for?

Aren't we fighting over there to help set up a democracy in which people can ask questions of their government? And doesn't terrorism gain momentum by dehumanizing real people and real feelings and turning them into distant stereotypes that are easily summed up and judged? Cindy is a real person with a real pain inside her chest that the President could and should take the time to see. She represents the thousands of others who can't be there to do the same. To respond that her demands are inauthentic and insincere dehumanizes her in the same way that terrorism, violence, and war dehumanize us all.

The fact is, the President probably won't see Cindy, even if she stays camped out in his backyard for the entire duration of his vacation. However, the growing numbers of Americans with first hand knowledge of the war on terror cannot be ignored. He should recognize in Cindy the growing majority of us who see the war for what it really is and want the troops home. He should see in Cindy the humanity of those families that are affected each and every day when their loved ones are killed or maimed for the rest of their lives. Because right now, many of them remain largely invisible to the American people.



Speaker Tom Craddick: Stereotypical Honest Texas 'Leader'

By PETER STERN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The latest "hot news" from the legislature is that the Speaker is going to speak to Texans in radio and TV ads. After years of

legislative business behind closed doors, he's going to tell the public what REALLY has been going on in the Texas Legislature. His spokesperson says that Craddick plans to pay for the ads from his campaign funds. Perfect!

We taxpayers must all be idiots living in "la-la-land." Craddick must think that Texans believe that the House and Senate did many wonderful things for hard-working Texas families, otherwise, why would the Speaker have to "explain it" to us? Why would he have to tell us what REALLY happened?

Speaker Craddick must want to tell us the truth — that during the past several years no positive legislation was passed to enhance the lives of the majority of Texans. He must want to tell us that Texas leaders have "screwed-up big time" and that special interests are the only ones to benefit from the past decade of legislative sessions. It must be that Craddick needs to "smarten us up"

by letting us know the reality that our children's public education still is sinking into the mucky quagmire of inadequate financing and that learning

outcomes as a whole for Texas children are decreasing rapidly.

Craddick also must want to tell us that he really didn't know a huge check was in the envelope he personally hand-delivered to "the friends of Congressman Tom "The Hammer" DeLay", but that he's quite certain it couldn't have been any sort of political pay-off because he doesn't do things like that.

It's for certain Craddick may want us to know that during the past several years he has strived actively to keep Texas House members on-track to ensure that Texas families get everything they need to live quality lives here in the most "people-sensitive" state in the nation.

This must be why Craddick wants to explain legislative activities to all of us in right in our homes via radio and TV ads?

And if you believe all that, please be advised that I own 10 acres of ocean-front property here in Central Texas that I can sell to one or more believers at a fabulous price.

GUEST COMMENTARY

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Sheehan Taps Into Truth: Mothers Shape History

BY GEORGE HENSON
LECTURER, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

Between 1976 and 1983, the Argentine military waged a Dirty War against its

own people.

The beginning of the end of the violent period that saw the disappearance of thousands of Argentine citizens

The New-Fangled Rain Begatter

If you were wondering where all this rain came from recently, you can thank Zack and me.

You might remember one of my columns a couple of years ago recommending various methods of calling down those precious drops of water during times of drought. Short of performing rain dances (and don't think I haven't tried them), you can start, in the winter, by simply washing your vehicle or putting out a load of clothing on a clothesline.

If those methods don't work, you must go further. We did. You might try leaving the windows up in the house and down in the trucks and cars. When even those methods didn't produce the desired result, we brought furniture out of the house (in order to paint the walls and sand and polyurethane the wood floors). That seemed to do it for us on that occasion. The heavens opened up, and the rains came.

Last summer, we all had more rain than we needed. It was the first time I can remember that the tank didn't dry up by July or August. Water ran through this place all summer. It was a miracle.

This year, the heat began early. The official high temps might have been in the 90s, but our thermometers all read well over 100 on many days in June and July. Like most weather-obsessed farmers and ranchers, we have almost as many thermometers and rain gauges as I have reading glasses (last week's column). We have thermometers in sun and shade, at both little farmhouses. We have them both indoors and out. (That enables us to whine and complain when we are too stubborn to use the A/C, which is most of the time). We even have one thermometer that is indoors but registers the temperature both inside and out, by means of a little wire snaked through a window.

Our friend Jimmy, another weather-obsessed rancher, has a thermometer/rain gauge that is both remote and digital, a gift from his dad. So now, through the marvels of high tech modern science and toys for big boys, he can sit inside to watch the readouts as the numbers change. We'll call each other during storms and say, "Yeah, we have about two tenths," and Jimmy will respond that he has 0.349.

Jimmy (and almost everyone else we know) usually gets more rain than us. There seems to be some black hole right over this place that sucks the water away. We watch storms swirl around us and miss, time after time. Jimmy or Ron or Zack's cousin might telephone to ask what our rain gauge says. (Of course, if they call, we know THEY are getting rain). And we usually have the same sad answer. "None". Or if they had three or four inches, we had a trace or a tenth (for which we were always quite grateful. I'd obviously rather have rain, but given the choice of "cloudy with a drop in temperature" or "100+degees," I'll opt for

Rustic Ramblings

By Gene Ellis



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

a dry but cool afternoon and evening every time).

Those of you who were gleefully bragging about how much rain you received three or four weeks ago were the lucky ones. We had none, kept telling ourselves, "One day closer to rain." It became sort of a mantra.

So this year, as we became more desperate, we tried everything short of emptying the house of furniture again to produce moisture. The W.W. B. Dahl grass we planted in the spring (drought tolerant to the max) was holding up better than we could have hoped, but that couldn't last forever. The Sudan hay was starting to dry up. We were hoping for a second cutting (still are). I thought there must be some other, equally effective solution for coaxing rain besides bringing my aunt's antique couch onto the front lawn. And sure enough, there was.

We finally found time to pressure treat the other little farmhouse. Most of the paint was peeling off anyway (the result of a bad paint job someone ELSE did a few years ago). We determined that this time, it would be done right. Everyone knows if you want something done right. . . you do it yourself!

This whole thing should have been done last summer as planned, but that ship sailed. Then we promised ourselves we would start this past June. Well, that didn't happen. Some other job always seemed to suddenly be more urgent. We saw the summer begin to wane. In true "git'er done" desperation, we finally started this job a couple of weeks ago.

We pressure washed most of the house. Of course, at that point, a part on the washer broke, and it is going to take two weeks to obtain the replacement. So we began the slow, tedious job of sanding the parts we had already washed. And that seemed to solve our drought problem.

As soon as much of the poor, little house was stripped buck nekkid down to its 75-year old, bare wood, the rains came down. First just a little, then a little more, then finally almost two inches. We were deliriously happy. The hay seems to be saved. The grasses will grow. I even had a happy respite from watering my flowers. We didn't have as much rain as many, but I think we had enough. All I can say is a grateful thanks. Good luck to the house. I hope it will be OK until we can get the primer on.

started with one unequivocal universal truth: the love that a mother feels for her child.

Cindy Sheehan, the mother of slain Iraq war soldier, Casey Sheehan, has tapped into that truth in Crawford, Texas.

During the seven-year campaign of government-sponsored terror in Argentina, the country was ruled by a three-member military junta. Their purported goal was to restore order following prolonged civil strife, riots and violence.

Their actual goal was to rid Argentina of what it considered to be a subversive leftwing element, by any means necessary.

To say their measures were extreme would be an understatement – just as it would be redundant to state that the brutal torture and murder of innocents were carried out in secret.

While the exact numbers may never be known, most agree that some 30,000 Argentines disappeared. There were no records of arrest. No hearings. No trials. What took place was, in effect, a systematic and covert series of political abductions that were followed by the torture and death of thousands of Argentine citizens.

The vast majority of the desaparecidos – the disappeared ones – were young people, young men and young women, who were suspected of participating in anti-government activities or – in many cases – of just being sympathizers.

When anyone – usually a mother – presented to the authorities to report a missing son or daughter, reports were rarely taken. Police, instead, told the concerned friend or relative to go home. "Your son probably ran away" or "He's drunk somewhere" or "She ran off with some boy" was the typical reply.

Today we know just how horrific the so-called campaign to restore civil order was. People were tortured. Young women's babies were cut from their bodies. People were buried in mass graves. Bodies were tossed from airplanes over the ocean.

During those seven brutal years, those who complained about the disappearances were ignored or intimidated. Middle- and upper-class Argentines cared little because public order had been restored.

While authorities hid their campaign of terror and well-to-do Argentines turned a blind eye, a group of mothers and grandmothers began to march. Be-

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cause no one in the government would listen to them, the madres took their protest to a city square – choosing the Plaza de Mayo – hoping that someone would pay attention.

They carried placards around their necks with photos of their missing children and grandchildren. A handful met on a Saturday. The next week on a Friday. Thereafter on every Thursday.

Remember, these were the days before the Internet. The only people who knew about them were those who passed them in the Plaza de Mayo in the heart of Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires.

It is impossible to know when or why people began to pay attention. Perhaps a force – a cosmic deus ex machina – saw the injustice, saw that mothers were doing what they could to right a wrong, and stepped in.

As the number of mothers grew, so did their sympathizers, and so did the press coverage – first international, then national.

At first, the Junta bet that no one would care. In 1977, when the crowds began to grow, and murmurs began to get louder, the Junta acted: Three mothers were abducted and became victims of the same clandestine kidnappings and murder that had taken their children.

As is usually the case, it wasn't until the economy began to collapse, and inflation reached 900%, that those who were seemingly unaffected by the rape of their fellow Argentines' civil liberties began to wake up.

The madres de la Plaza de Mayo – the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo – through their persistence, their maternal instinct – their unequivocal universal truth – exposed the murderous campaign that the Argentine government had waged against its own people – and they toppled that government.

What Cindy Sheehan in Crawford, Texas is doing is no less significant. Cindy Sheehan is only the first. Others must follow if we hope to make sense of what a clear majority of Americans now consider to be senseless killings in Iraq.

The president may continue to ignore Cindy Sheehan. He may even have her arrested – as has been rumored – as a threat to national security. But there will be more Cindy Sheehans. And – just as in Argentina – truth will prevail.



Plan? What Plan?

"A leader without a plan is not a leader."

This was a line in a television program I was watching the other evening.

I honestly don't remember the dramatic series, or whom the scriptwriter was, but the line is profound – and my suspicion is it was aimed at Bush #43.

In that context it requires no elaboration.

Just as are the lyrics of the song, "Sweet Neo Con," from the forthcoming Rolling Stones' CD. Keith Richards, who lives in the U.S., said it's Mick's song; Mick Jagger said he considers it impolite to comment on elections where he doesn't vote. Jagger also stated that he wrote it in response to a heated personal debate with some Republican friends (an Eric Idle "nudge-nudge, wink-wink").

Personally, I think truer words were never sung. If you've missed out on all the media coverage, here's the sample Sir Mick has provided us:

"You call yourself a Christian,
I call you a hypocrite;
You call yourself a patriot,
Well, I think you are full of shit!
...How come you're so wrong,
My sweet neo con?"

The song also points out Mick's distaste for Condo-LIEZ-za Rice.

The last Stones' album I bought, aside from "best of" CD packages, was *SOME GIRLS* back in 1978. But it looks like I'll be buying a copy of *A BIGGER BANG* when it's released next month.

In the Sept. 9, 2004, issue of the *EASTHAMPTON STAR*, Long Island, New York, an essay appeared by award-winning author E.L. Doctorow, entitled "The Unfeeling President." In this treatise, Doctorow noted a variety of observations that I had made prior to stumbling upon it last year.

The opening sentence is, "I fault this president for not knowing what death is." Doctorow goes on to say, without ever mentioning him by name, that Bush #43 has not the mind to know death, evidenced by his joking with the press about the war in Iraq, or the shirt-sleeved "he-man" strut across stages, waving with "triumphal" smiles to handpicked audiences.

Doctorow points out that Bush #43 does not mourn, nor does he understand why he should mourn. To Bush #43 it is enough to look solemn only for the moment of the speech (he obviously did not write or even study) when he mentions the brave young Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Long before reading Doctorow's essay, I noticed that which the writer described thusly: "...you look into his eyes and know he disassembles an emotion which he does not feel in the depths of his being because he has no capacity for it."

I agree wholeheartedly with Doctorow that Bush #43 feels absolutely no personal responsibility for any of the people – American, British, Italian, Iraqi, or whatever nationality – who have died for his convoluted war. It was in his head that as soon as he got into the Oval Office he was going to wage war on Iraq, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. And, he had no concept of the cost of war at any level.

Other observations by Doctorow, of which I along with many others have

been aware pretty much since 9/11/2001, and that many more have come to realize these past four years, include Bush #43's policies to undermine and decimate the very Constitution he has sworn to uphold. He has no concern, or concept, of what it means to be an average working American, much less one grieving for a son or daughter, husband or wife killed in combat. Bush #43 keeps taking from the mainstream population, and giving it back to the richest 1% of our citizens.

There is no room for dissent within or without the West Wing, with the diminishing of America's greatness being further abetted by a string of appointees and nominees who are "cast in his image."

In Doctorow's words, "And this litany of lies he will versify with reverences for God and the flag and democracy, when just what he and his party are doing to our democracy is choking the life out of it."

As I've on occasion attempted to note, Doctorow decries the regime for morphing the greatest power on Earth into a rogue nation; reducing the most progressive and benevolent nation known to humankind "...not to advance the ideal of a concordance of civilizations but to endorse the kind of tribal combat that originated with the Neanderthals..."

The question that I can't stop asking is: How did Herr Karl Rove manipulate the ballots? It just doesn't seem possible that so many people could have been that stupid as to be fooled so thoroughly by the Republicans. Or am I that naive?

Gas prices keep going up. Where are the major oil companies located? Texas. And what is one of the two major industries in America crowing about record profits this year? Oil companies. Again, I invoke Eric Idle – "Say no more!"

In 1988, Raphael Palmeiro was the wonderboy 1st baseman of the Chicago Cubs. He even won the National League batting title. Before 1989 he was traded to the Texas Rangers (owner: George W. Bush). The official Tribune Company explanation was "he'll never be a home run hitter." Palmeiro was traded to make room for Mark Grace – a better defensive player and hitter, but not a slugger either. There have long been rumors around Chicago as to the real cause of Raphael's departure.

Palmeiro hit a grand total of 30 home runs in three seasons, 1988-1990.

Sometime after becoming a Ranger, Palmeiro's upper body and shoulders began to magically enlarge. By the time he became a Baltimore Oriole in 1994, he was belting damn near 40 a year – 47 at age 35! In front of Congress this spring he emphatically denied ever taking steroids; four months later he tested positive for steroid use. Palmeiro denied knowingly using the enhancer.

Why did Bush #43, who didn't need to say anything, volunteer support by releasing a statement that he believed Palmeiro when his friend said that he didn't take steroids?

We have learned, unofficially, that *The War On Terror* has now been officially redesignated *The Struggle Against Global Extremism*. What folly for representatives of the Bush #43 White House to refer to the Muslims as extremists while



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

their boss: Rules fanatically by Divine Right; rams his special interpretation of Christian doctrine down the collective American throat; is obsessed with his bloody, insane* crusade to spread RoveBushocracy around the world, even where folks don't want it; plays up to the most right-wing, hardcore evangelical minority.

That's like those schmucks at Halliburton calling the putzes from Enron greedy.

*All war is insane, although sometimes unavoidable; going to war without cause is criminally insane.

Bush #43 refuses to agree to fund scientific advancement of stem cell research because it will destroy the Petri dish embryo he says is life. Your basic fertility lab scientist types, as well as a preponderance of doctors, say it's not life. Meanwhile, Fearless Leader doesn't bat an eyelash raining death on innocent Muslim people, or sending the young adults of America and other nations into harm's way

They are so clueless over at the West Wing and the Republican National Committee – but then, so are those who listen to their propaganda. That's what Herr Rove and his prized toady, RNC Chairman Ken Mehlman, thrive upon. Blind faith in Bush #43 blots out the simple truth that we have evangelical extremists waging war against Middle Eastern extremists, with some form of God being blamed on each side, and no respect for one another or life.

Not long before this writing the big \$286.5 Billion Transportation Bill was signed into law by Bush #43. He flew in from Crawford to just up the road apiece from me, right outside of Peoria, for the signing. Okay, so the Caterpillar factory is about 40 miles away. I guess that's far enough.

Fearless Leader had personally put a limit on money bills, not to exceed \$284 Billion. Guess he got carried away with this one. What was that he's always saying about Democrats spending our money?

One of Bush #43's big campaign issues was how he was going to tighten the screws on the Hill, and eliminate "pork-barrel" spending. This bill contains a record 6,371 pork projects! By comparison, Saint Ronald Reagan once vetoed a bill because he thought 155 pork projects were too many. The Trans Bill pork by itself will cost you and me \$24 Billion! That's \$80.00 apiece for every man, woman and child in the U.S.

Two highlights of the bill are doozies:
1) The sum of \$207 Million has been set aside for the "Prairie Parkway," connecting two Interstates in Central Illinois. It just so happens that numerous Illinoisans do not agree with what they refer to as "the Sprawlway." In fact, the five-year feasibility study is only in its second year. Guess who's district the highway's in? Speaker of the House Dennis (Duh, whatever you say, George) Hastert, by golly.

2) Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, blustered his way into acquiring nearly \$1

Billion for one of the least populace states in the union. His pork included a \$250 Million bridge in Anchorage, to be named, appropriately, Don Young's Way (because he got his way, I reckon). There is another \$250 Million for a bridge to connect a town of 14,000 with an island inhabited by 50 – that's fifty – people.

Seems to me a \$250,000 ferry would do the job.

Then, we return to Bush #43's "inhumane humanitarianism" (credit for this phrase goes to Maureen Dowd in a *NEW YORK TIMES* op-ed piece, Aug. 10, 2005). For weeks a Mother from California has been camping outside of "Prairie Chapel," the Bush #43's cowboy ranch at Crawford. Cindy Sheehan's son, Casey, was killed last year in Iraq.

He was 24, the same age as my son.

Several months after Casey's death, Bush #43 met with a number of parents of fallen soldiers. However, not being the brightest candle on the Menorah, he couldn't remember the names of the soldiers or their loved ones. He also had trouble with corresponding relationships – aunts, uncles, brothers, whatever. According to Ms. Sheehan, Fearless Leader gave a rather generic performance, acted as though it was a time to celebrate, and assumed she would be comforted by his faith in the Almighty.

Bush #43 couldn't even bring himself to the comprehension that she had lost a son. When Ms. Sheehan put it in terms of how he would feel if one of the First Twins were killed in Iraq, Fearless Leader said he didn't want to go there.

There we find the most serious flaw in Bush #43's character of which E.L. Doctorow wrote.

All this mother wants is a few minutes of his time, some solace in the form of an explanation as to what the purpose was of her Casey's untimely death. But Bush #43 won't see her while he's vacationing these five weeks (which breaks St. Ron's record for presidential vacation time, and there's still three-and-a-half years to go). Why?

It ain't 'cause he's too busy, 'cause I've seen him on the T and V cuttin' up branches and such.

Fearless Leader won't see Cindy Sheehan because he's afraid of her – there's no answer for her, or any of the other mothers, fathers, wives, children, life partners, brothers, sisters, and myriad loved ones who have suffered losses in this bloody, insane crusade.

The only response the West Wing has is standard operating procedure – attack the character of this poor woman. Please don't be fooled by the phony press releases that state how thrilled Cindy Sheehan was last year after meeting with Bush #43. She's one lone woman, with limited resources, and they are the White House, blowing your tax dollars in an effort to demonize a heartbroken mother.

As of this writing, Ms. Sheehan, co-founder of Gold Star Families for Peace, has been joined by another co-founder, Celeste Zappala, who lost her oldest son, Sherwood Baker, last year. And supporters continue to gather outside Prairie Chapel Ranch.

How can someone name his ranch Prairie Chapel, yet act so un-Christian and downright cruel?

The fact is, Bush #43 fancies himself a leader, but with no plan he's little more than a dictatorial liar.

Sheehan Shows How

By BRIAN MANNIX
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The question of whether one individual can actually make a difference in the world has been asked throughout the course of history. Only rarely is the answer in the affirmative. This has led entire generations to give up on the autonomous strength of the individual and yield their power over to the ruling elite. It is often assumed that the existing power structure is too large to overcome or that the powers that be are too great to be altered in any real sense of the word. Individuals of great influence have come around in the form of great figures of religion such as Jesus of Nazareth, Martin Luther, and Mohammed and likewise in the form of such political figures who have changed our world, such as, John Locke, George Washington, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohatma Ghandi. These individuals proceeded with a faith, determination and vision that inspired others to act. Because, with their passion, come a deep seeded resonance of the righteousness of their cause.

Currently, there is an individual in Texas who is attempting to make a heroic change in the moral structure of our foreign policy. Unfortunately for the citizens of the United States, and the world for that matter, that individual is not George W. Bush. Our president as the commander in chief of, arguably, the most economically and militarily dominant country this world has ever seen, should be able to influence society in grand fashion. While, certainly George W. has about as much tangible power as anyone in the world, it just might be a single mom who has more affect on our future than anyone would suspect.

Cindy Sheehan is a woman with a deep emotional wound that she feels was unjustly inflicted and she is calling the president and the nation to task to ask the question, "Why?"

Cindy Sheehan's son, an army specialist from California was murdered just over one year ago in the blood-drenched nation of Iraq. His name was Casey and he was only 24 years old. After being dissatisfied with George W.'s explanation, that her son, along with all of the other U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan died for a noble cause, she has determined to ask the president face to face exactly what noble cause her son died for. She, along with more than half of the rest of the nation are not exactly sure why we are engaged in a war with Iraq.

Odd, it seems, that a supposedly free and democratic nation with a reportedly responsible media would allow its citizens to be misinformed as to the reasons that would bring the United States of America, the supposed beacon of freedom and liberty into a military, political and moral disaster, such as the one we have created in Iraq. Where has been the accountability? Does it not matter that the citizens of the United States were lied to by the current administration. Lied to! Not "misinformed." Not "relied on faulty intelligence" or "manipulated intelligence to achieve their own economic and strategic advantages." We were lied to. There were no WMD's. The

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CIA, the FBI, the Defense Department, and even the State Department all allowed lies to be told to the American public. That's right, with the Vice-President leading the Niger/Uranium charge and the President certainly a knowledgeable participant, we were brought into a foreign policy disaster that may have far dire consequences than we can currently imagine.

The Bush administrations' lies have resulted in 1835 Casey Sheehans. Actually, that too is a lie. We are fighting a war with for Iraq and with Iraqi allies. The number of Casey Sheehans is currently over 25,000. For Cindy Sheehan, she only wants a word with the man who was responsible for the war that killed her son to ask him why we fought the war. No one is saying that Bush is directly responsible for the deaths of American soldiers at war, of our our allies, or even our enemies. However, if the president can't face a grieving mother of one of the soldiers under his command, look her in the eye and tell her honestly why we are there, he is in for a much greater judgement than from any of the angered war victims. If the President has a truthful reason for going to war, even if its victims cannot agree that it was justifiable reason, such as controlling the Iraqi oil reserves or continuing the job that was never completed under his father's administration, he should look at Ms. Sheehan directly in the eye and tell her so. Ms. Sheehan need not be satisfied with the truth behind our nation's entry into war and George W. may not be proud of his actions, but he needs to come clean. He needs to come clean to the thousands of Cindy Sheehan's out there. He needs to come clean for the thousands of soldiers who have died under his command and he needs to come clean for the integrity of the office of the President of the United States of America.

It is the American public's job to force him to answer the questions posed before him while he vacations in Crawford. Imagine the anger and the loss that Cindy Sheehan has waiting outside the president's ranch. Her son is gone, forever. And for what? What was the reason we went into Iraq? Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters, we must focus attention on Cindy Sheehan, for she represents each and every one of us. Waiting for answers. Answers that we all deserve as citizens. Answers that everyone around the world deserves as human beings. Why did the United States go to war with Iraq?

Wake up the media and force them to address this story. Write your newspaper. Call your local news stations. Call your senators and congresspeople. Tell your friends about the little woman waiting outside a ranch in Texas with a question for the head honcho hiding inside? Is it too late for an individual to make a difference in the world? I hope not. Especially, when the individual is a mother who lost her son over a lie. Answer her, Mr. President. Face to face.



Call Me If Your Name Is Larry; We've Got A Bad Connection

There are three things I know about "Larry."

He is a contractor; he lives somewhere in Multnomah County; and he has the same cell phone number that I do.

The calls started about a month ago, presumably about the time "Larry" got his contractor's license and began making bids. Since then, he has been a busy man, picking up jobs and making sure that his clients know they can call him any time. Day or night. For any reason at all.

Which they do — to my cell phone.

The Hansons, for example, call whenever they change their mind about what color tile to use around the bidet in their new bathroom. For the Gilmores, deciding between cedar shakes or aluminum siding requires at least one consultation a day. And the Reyboulds are still contemplating the ripple effect of kitchen cabinets without knobs. Mrs. Reybould thinks knobs would make their kitchen look more inviting; Mr. Reybould believes not having knobs would stymie their 2-year-old and keep him out of the cabinets for at least another year.

Over the course of the last month, I've gone from politely explaining that there is no "Larry" at this number, to a more direct approach, which is that "Larry" died — killed in a freak shop-vac accident that was a gruesome, yet impressive, testimonial to the workmanship of Black & Decker products.

I was certain that this tragic revelation would solve my problems. That was until the calls started up again, no doubt after "Larry's" apparent resurrection from a 3-gallon-capacity shop-vac canister.

This left me only one choice.

When the Hansons called this afternoon asking for advice from "Larry" about their decision to use apricot-colored tile around the bidet in their new bathroom, I told them, as their contractor, they could save themselves a tidy sum of money by simply purchasing a better brand of toilet paper.

Click — dial tone.

One down.

For the Gilmores, who were still



By
Ned Hickson
Siuslaw News

agonizing over the decision between cedar shakes or aluminum siding, I suggested ditching the house for a double-wide trailer covered in simulated wood paneling and accented with a fence made out of used shipping pallets.

Click — dial tone.

Two down.

The next time the phone rang, I snatched it up on the first ring.

"Larry speaking."

It was the Reyboulds, looking for help on reaching a final decision about those kitchen cabinet knobs.

"It seems to me that the perfect combination would be something inviting and deceptively hard to open," I said, and heard the Reyboulds agree. "Might I suggest installing some beautiful ceramic knobs on your cabinets, then nailing the doors completely shut."

Mrs. Reybould hesitated before asking, "And where are we supposed to store our dishes?"

"Hey, I'm offering a solution! If you want to bicker over functionality, find another contractor!" I snapped.

There was an awkward silence before Mr. Reybould grabbed the phone. "What kind of nails would you suggest?"

Click — dial tone.

Though I hung up on them I do plan on calling them back at some point.

In the meantime, if "Larry" happens to be reading this, please call me so we can straighten this whole mess out.

You know the number.

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

Vets Versus The Government

By KATHRYN RADEFF
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have been shipped off to fight wars. They agree to risk their lives to protect this country. The U.S. Government agrees not to betray them when they come home. Yet, our elderly veterans who gave America enduring freedom in battles around the world are still fighting - not about the past - but about the government's broken promises. It's time for this nation to live up to its end of the agreement and stop making our veterans keep fighting.

During President Bush's first days in office, he vowed to "keep our commitment to those who wore the uniform in the past." He said, "We will make sure promises made to our veterans will be promises kept."

Yet, many World War II and Korean War military veterans - now in their 80s who feel they are entitled to benefits - are still fighting the U.S. government and the Department of Veterans Affairs for medical treatment.

The federal government has over 80 million sets of personnel records filed away in a five-acre facility in St. Louis, and in an average week gets up to 7,000 requests for copies of files, some of them containing hundreds of pages. It can take time to get copies, considering the enormous size of the operation, but some medical records cannot be found. That's because on July 12, 1973, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis destroyed close to 18 million sets of records, including 80 percent of the Army records for people discharged between 1912 and 1960. Members of Congress can be helpful in the search, and sometimes the records "miraculously appear" if someone is persistent, as I learned once I re-opened a previous claim for my dad that was denied because it was not "well-grounded."

The U.S. has a funny way of show its thanks. World War II veterans, six decades later - are now getting their actual medals for bravery. Sadly, few people at the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers show sympathy for these servicemen, and VA bureaucracies can be frustrating. It's outrageous!

Isn't it about time that the president keeps his promises to those military veterans who risked their lives to protect our country? After all, aren't they very ones who built America into the greatest nation on earth?

In 1941, my dad, George, was an athletic, healthy young man, who at age 21, volunteered to serve in World War II, taking his older brother's place because "Andrew had a better job" and could "remain home" with his ailing widowed mother.

"I've always thought a lot about joining the service," my father told the Buffalo, New York *Courier Express*. He didn't know then that not only was he about to fight a war for our country's freedom, but he would also have to engage in another battle with the country that he served for medical care and

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compensation.

Except for the time he had his tonsils out as a kid, my dad, who also is a veteran of the Korean Conflict Era, had never been sick or hospitalized. So when he was exposed in 1943 to radiation and fell ill in Yuma, Arizona—a remote desert area on a sensitive site where the nuclear bombs during the government's Manhattan Project were assembled and tested—he feared that his life, as he knew it, was over.

He was admitted to a military hospital for nine days of treatment. The VA "data card" shows in late 1943, dad was treated for an abscess, and cellulitis—infectious skin diseases usually due to an infective process from the invasion of toxins, resulting in a localized collection of pus.

In late 1951, Dad was discharged from the Korean War for "hardship" reasons. His health was rapidly deteriorating and he was no longer able to remain in the service. In 1955, he was diagnosed with infectious hepatitis, which can be caused by environmental toxins. A calcified scar was also discovered on his left lung.

During the years, he had numerous health problems—living on low pay at great cost to his family—which he attributes to his service during World War II. Things have never been right with him since he was exposed to the radiation. Yet, he faced an uphill battle with the VA for benefits he felt he was entitled to. For years, his claim for service-connected disability was denied.

Dad rarely talked about his military experiences. Most veterans don't. But after my mother died in 1989, the door had opened and I was learning not only about dad's war experiences, but also about his life.

In 1996, I began a letter-writing campaign on my father's behalf, with no success. I was disappointed, but determined. I persisted writing letters and researching. And then, with the help of a congressman, the VA finally on Feb. 1, 2002, granted my father nonservice-connected disability pension benefits His claim for service connection for hepatitis and lung cancer is still under review.

Wounded World War II and Korean War veterans all over the world who made the "ultimate sacrifice" are still fighting the U.S. government to uphold its part of the bargain and ensure that all veterans - today's military force and those in the future - are treated fairly. Both class action and private lawsuits filed during the years are denied, ignored, or prevented by the Justice Department.

Nationwide, the American Legion estimates there are about 600,000 wounded war veterans—nearly 12,000 in New York alone—who are being short-changed on federal disability and retirement benefits. Others are battling the Army over missing medical records needed to process claims. A California man, who was a National Guardsman



Kathryn Radeff

serving on an American base in the Philippines, suffered for his country in 1942 when the invading Japanese army captured him. Miraculously, he survived a POW camp, yet continues to fight the government for compensation for his suffering.

The Pentagon, in 1996, finally acknowledged that those serving in the Gulf War "may" have been exposed to nerve gas in combat. And it wasn't until 2002 - nearly 40 years after the fact—that the Defense Department confessed to conducting Cold War tests of chemicals and biological weapons that could have imperiled the health of servicemen. Others have suffered mysterious illnesses, and in some cases fatal health problems. Yet, American servicemen continue to battle the government. It's outrageous!

Where's this nation's gratitude? Our country is again under attack and hundreds of thousands of soldiers are fighting a war on terrorism. Will these servicemen and women have to fight for medical care? Will the government reciprocate their loyalty?

As I stood beside my dad when he finally received the medals he earned in World War II combat during a special ceremony on Armed Forces Day, May 17, 2002, we both wiped tears from our eyes. Later that night, I sat in silence and thought about the life he had lived. If I discovered anything about life, about the human heart that night, I learned it through dad and all the other war heroes that teach us by example - give, share, help others.

"We did what soldiers have to do," he said. "We were just doing our duty."

They're Still Heroes



Modern Times
By
Lloyd
Garver

I know the Discovery space shuttle voyage was widely covered in the news, but I can't help feeling that we've become too blasé about space travel. At any given moment, most of us couldn't say if there is a space trip in progress or who's manning the international space station and what are they doing up there. We forget how extraordinary this all is. Years ago, everybody stopped whatever they were doing to marvel every time a person went into space. Everybody knew the name of each astronaut. I know it's natural for us to be less excited about what they just did than we would have been years ago, but it's not their fault they weren't born 60 or 70 years ago. And it doesn't make them less heroic.

Maybe you feel space travel is a foolish way to spend money. Maybe you feel it shouldn't be a priority. Maybe you're right. But don't blame the astronauts. They don't set policy. They just do things that most of us wouldn't consider doing for a second.

President Bush praised them as "risk-takers," and that was putting it mildly. Think about them in comparison to the rest of the population. We order salad dressing on the side, we're afraid to drive with less than half a tank of gas, and our doors are triple-locked at night. Meanwhile these brave people were hurtling through space at speeds thousands of times greater than a 16 year old with a new license.

Shortly after takeoff, the world and the astronauts were told that their spacecraft might have a problem similar to the ill-fated Columbia. This was like being on a plane and hearing the pilot say, "This turbulence might not be minor. It could lead to a disaster. But just act normal." And the amazing thing is they did just act normal. Better than normal. In an unprecedented move, they fixed the craft.

The astronauts shouldn't be admired just because of the physical risks they're willing to take. They put up with all kinds of things the average citizen wouldn't go for. We complain about a long, five-hour flight. It takes them days

to fly to the space station. When astronauts eventually fly to Mars - which they will probably do in a few years - the flight will take six months each way. Six months without stretching your legs outside or breathing fresh air. Six months of not using a regular bathroom. Six months of being stuck with people you work with 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

And someday, the flights will get even longer. It would take three years to fly to Saturn, and using the same technology and fuel we have today, it would take 75,000 years to reach the closest star (not including the sun). 75,000 years! Those newspapers and magazines are really going to stack up at the astronauts' homes.

Think how upset you'd get if you were told that the plane you were on was going to land an hour late. These folks had to deal with landing 24 hours later than scheduled. And they touched down hundreds of miles from where they were supposed to land.

Astronauts risk hearing loss, radiation exposure, decrease in bone density, and something called, "Puffy-head Bird-legs syndrome." And I get upset if I'm on a flight and the air conditioning isn't perfect.

So, let's give these people some medals, give them a parade, certainly give them respect. At the very least, we should learn their names. They are Eileen Collins, Steve Robison, Jim Kelly, Andy Thomas, Wendy Lawrence, Charlie Camarda, and Soichi Noguchi. And none of them complained about not having a window seat.

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

MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR

EDITOR'S NOTE — *The Iconoclast has received hundreds of letters regarding Cindy Sheehan's vigil at Camp Casey. Interspersed among the letters below are what we feel are a cross-section of the letters received, some in favor of her stand and some against it.*

Mr. Smith,
Thank you so much for the excellent coverage by you and Mr. Diebenow of Cindy Sheehan's protest at the monkey farm. As I told Mr. Diebenow yesterday, this country needs more newspaper journalists like him and more newspapers like the **ICONOCLAST**. The **ICONOCLAST** has just earned the title of "The Best Little Newspaper in the Country."

Most sincerely,

Nicholas Hancock, Asheboro, NC
To The Editor:

My name is Phil Perry, I'm a Vietnam vet and I just read the report on Cindy Sheehan in Crawford. Thank you for reporting this important event. Please keep reporting. By the way, I was **VERY** insulted to hear she and her supporters were force to walk in a ditch!

Phil Perry

Dear Editor:

I saw Cindy. I heard her questions, saw her whiney comments and thought, "Boy, would her son be embarrassed and possibly ashamed." I went online and saw your paper. You, too, should be embarrassed and ashamed. Your paper seems more like a frat house rag—well, excuse me, not a frat house. That would be elevating the intellectual level so patently absent. How about high school rag?

Seven astronauts are coming home, the last ones died. I don't remember any of their families whining question, "W. killed my (son) (daughter) (husband) (wife)...why did he/she/they have to die? We should pull out of the space program so that no other mother/wife/daughter/grandmother has to die—for what? a noble cause? sniff, whine, sniff, sniff." **PATHETIC. ABSOLUTELY PATHETIC.**

Kate Johnson, who, by the way has also lost a son and a daughter. Whose son was in the Navy, daughter and son-in-law in the U.S. Army. Whose husband served in Vietnam, whose father served in WWII, landing on the beaches at Anzio, who is from TEXAS—where are you from? Minnesota? Massachusetts?

Kate Johnson

To The Editor:

I applaud your editorial on Public Education. You're one of the few editors who continues to scream-out the truth. We need one thousand more like you.

If teachers do "take a stand," you can "bet the farm" that they will be further punished by state officials. But I still agree with you.

"No good deed goes unpunished."

Iraq: just one quick question

Why doesn't the U.S. declare *martial law* in Iraq so it can scour the cities and countryside to "search & destroy" remaining "terrorists" without more of our soldiers dying from daily attacks and us in response killing more innocent civilians?

Mr. President:

Instead of pushing aside the issue and refusing to meet this mother, Cindy Sheehan, and thus, among other things, turning her into a martyr against the Iraq War and your administration, why not just meet with her and eliminate/resolve this conflict? After all, I would think the President of the United States would want to

meet with the mother of a slain patriotic soldier and hero.

Peter Stern, Republican, Driftwood, TX

To The Editor:

Dear Mr. President,

While you take this opportunity to rest on a 'working vacation' at the Crawford Ranch, it appears that there are still many unanswered questions and now is the time for TRUTH and JUSTICE for the American people (your employer).

You swore on the Bible before God and Country that you would uphold the United States Constitution. This is our 'contract' with you; our public servant. I guess I don't have to tell you that you're not the 'dictator' that you wished you would be, and you are in fact, answerable to the PEOPLE, the Congress, the Senate, and the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

We tried to give you sound advice, as did many others, and I recall stacks of letters and petitions that were hand delivered to the White House for your response. In fact, I believe there were over 560,000 delivered directly to the White House gates in one day alone. Now, I know that's too many to fit in your 'in-box' but, the questions are all identical so, that should make it much easier on you to reply to the American people.

I for one, would personally be willing to excuse a direct response to me, in lieu of you inviting in Cindy Sheehan and all those that accompany her currently holding vigil right outside your door there in Crawford, Texas. Cindy, and many others who have made the 'ultimate sacrifice' deserve to have answers and to know that their sons, daughters, husbands, and wives, have not died in vain.

Will you open the door and invite Cindy in and tell her why you killed her son? Why her son is dead and why you're still convinced that the troops should 'stay the course' in Iraq? How many more have to die? This is another defining moment for you in the eyes of the world, everyone is watching and waiting. Will you do the right thing?

I seem to remember you mentioning during the presidential campaign that you sat and prayed with families of the fallen, have you now forgotten how to do that? Your actions now will speak louder than words ever will or could.

Sincerely,

Sandra Jurgensen

To The Editor:

Hello Crawford, Texas and the **ICONOCLAST**!

I am writing to express my support for Cindy Sheehan, in her effort to get George II to answer her question. I'm there with her in spirit, and I want my name to be added to any list of supporters you may be printing.

I am a Navy wife (24 yrs service, retired), and if I could, I'd gladly be standing beside her out there outside that ranch. Incidentally, I'm not holding my breath for those Bush twins to volunteer for duty in Iraq.

Peggy David, Coronado, Calif.

To The Editor:

Open Letter to All U.S. Senators and

Congressmen Re: Medicare Rx Drug 'Discounts'?

I would like to share with you my excitement over the passage of the Medicare Prescription Drug Modernization and Improvement Act. The Republican three-hour arm-twisting marathon, prior to the vote, was important to passage of the bill. I realize that the watered-down package was 'sold' to Congress as costing about \$400 billion over a period of ten years. In less than two months, that estimate had gone to about \$537 billion dollars. Now cost estimates for the next ten years range from \$750 billion dollars to as much as one trillion dollars. Oh well, what's a few hundred billion dollars or so. After all, it was only an estimate. We should be able to cover that with more of President Bush's tax cuts.

Who would have ever imagined that there would be 73 choices for a discount card from a myriad assortment of drug companies. Now all I have to do is dial 1-800-MEDICARE to select a card that will now allow me to get an unknown discount on as-yet-unknown drugs, at unknown prices and unknown availability, which I may, or may not, be needing in the future. Of course an unknown discount off the unknown moving-target price of a drug, even when the drug is 100% overpriced (and likely to become priced even higher), is still a discount. Unfortunately, those not eligible for Medicare prescription drug coverage are not able to get these discount cards. But then we can't expect Congress to work its miracles all at one time.

With U.S. drug prices running out of control, I must admit that I am somewhat surprised that President Bush has not proposed some kind of compassionate conservative, faith-based drug pricing structure for the pharmaceutical industry.

Legislators' concerns about drug safety are admirable. After all, to keep drugs safe, we need to continue to allow the pharmaceutical companies to spend untold billions of dollars in advertising and promotion so that the consumer may be well informed about those 'angels of mercy' who've dedicated themselves to furtherance of the public health, unprecedented prosperity for drug, advertising and insurance companies as well as the multi-million dollar salaries—plus millions more in stock options—that the indispensable CEOs of these companies enjoy each year.

Many are the countless hours we all spend reading the hundreds of thousands of prescription drug ads in magazines (especially the full pages containing 'brief' summaries of prescribing information printed in 6-point type), and watching those delightful ads on most television stations (especially during prime time news).

Legislators' concerns about importation or re-importation of drugs are well founded. After all, we don't want to purchase unsafe drugs from foreign companies such as Glaxo-Smith-Kline (headquartered in the United Kingdom), or U.S.-based Pfizer, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly and Wyeth, all of which have outsourced American jobs to foreign countries. I do understand, however, that the monies saved by the pharmaceutical companies by employing cheap labor abroad and avoiding payment of taxes to the U.S. government will enable them to produce even more tax-deductible ads and TV commercials for our enjoyment.

It was a stroke of genius that the pharmaceutical industry wrote provisions in the Medicare drug bill that prohibit Medicare from negotiating drug prices with the pharmaceutical companies. It's interesting to note that the bill is 675 pages long; that, coincidentally, is one page for each

drug industry lobbyist in Congress. The bill is so complex and incomprehensible to almost all legislators that few (if any) have read it. I'm sure the drug lobby, as usual, had provided sufficient guidance to legislators. Now the average profits of pharmaceutical companies (about eighteen percent) will continue to remain way out on top of all the other Fortune 500 Companies. Can you imagine that there are still some who believe that the drug companies have been given license to steal?

We all know that research is crucial to the development of new drugs. Of course you know that as much as 85 percent of the research going into development of new drugs is performed by our National Institutes of Health, which is funded, in part, by our taxpayer dollars (\$24 billion in 2003). But, that's okay. The monies saved by the pharmaceutical companies on government-subsidized research enables them to better inform the public through saturation advertising. Some would say that the amount of money spent on drug company advertising, promotion and administration (about 37% of the cost of prescription drugs) is excessive. I'm not sure if the cost of 675 drug industry lobbyists, plus thousands of company service representatives camped on the doorsteps of physicians, are included in that percentage figure; but what price is too much to pay for the privilege of absorbing this wonderful advertising and then being wisely cautioned to first see your physician.

An added bonus is the millions upon millions of dollars spent by pharmaceutical companies for political contributions in order to persuade legislators to enact legislation favorable to the industry. These contributions serve a dual purpose; now we can enjoy not only pharmaceutical advertising, but also thousands of political ads that claim credit for the economies in our health care and pharmaceutical distribution systems.

Sincerely yours,

Paul G. Jaehnert, Vadnais Hts. MN

To The Editor:

I am sickened and appalled at the spectacle that Cindy Sheehan is making of herself by using her brave son's death to make herself look like a martyr. Her son was not a child. He was not mentally handicapped. He was an intelligent young man who voluntarily enlisted in the military and was trained with the purpose of going to war. Don't let the protesters or propagandists like Michael Moore fool you, the military is designed for and trained for going to war. This is not a fact that is kept secret from enlistees. Where were Cindy's protests when he signed up? Where were her protests when he was first shipped out to war? And since when has grieving become something that you do in public, on camera, and in protesting? The mothers and wives of the men who died in WWI and WWII didn't behave like this. They grieved and they dealt with their losses. They honored their fallen sons and husbands and accepted that death is often inevitable in war. They didn't turn around and protest and question why we went to war with Germany or why we couldn't have just negotiated with Japan. They were made of tougher stuff than women like Cindy Sheehan. She is not a hero and she is not to be admired. She is a sick woman who needs therapy and to learn how to stop blaming and start dealing.

Shawn Lathrop

Dear Mr. Editor,

I read about your trouble (endorsing Kerry) in a German newspaper. I tried to help you and informed the Dailykos frontpaggers - no reaction, no answer.

Now you get the attention because of Mrs. Sheehan. I am supporting her action

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MAILBAG

ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

100% and I wish you good luck in making your magazine.

Yours sincerely
Juergen Dopp, Germany

Dear Iconoclasts,

After reading The Price of Loyalty I learned of W's penchant for nicknaming people. It was clear that this habit is one part affection and three parts power tripping, and it seems that calling Mrs. Sheehan "Mom" was part of this.

It seemed also (clearly) seemed inappropriate given the circumstances of their meeting, still it also seems from my experience watching the Dr. Phil show that it may be a "Texas thing."

Dr. Phil routinely calls his guests (on family topic episodes) "Mom" and "Dad." So I figured, you folks may be the ones to ask. Is this a case where we might actually need to show a little cultural sensitivity for W's (so-called) Texas roots?

Best wishes,

Anders Martinson, Union City CA

To The Editor:

WHAT IS ALL THE FIGHTING ABOUT?

Cindy Sheehan is camping outside Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas. Cindy's son, Casey, was killed in Iraq. As a grieving mother, Cindy wants to ask Bush, "What is all the fighting about?"

Charles A. Beard, in his book entitled The Republic, relates a statement made by General Johnson Hagood before the 1938 Naval Affairs Congressional Committee to the effect that he served for forty years and never found out what all the fighting was about. Decades before Cindy Sheehan, Colonel Hagood asked Congress, "What was all the fighting about?"

As the fighting continues in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is imperative that we demand an answer. "What is all the fighting about?" Why do we send our young men and women to their deaths, to be physically maimed, to be psychologically broken? Why do we rip apart families and allow children to be orphaned?

We the people of these united States of America deserve to know what all the fighting is about.

Nancy B. Detweiler, Richmond, VA
Hi,

This twisted and corrupt lunacy known as "W's WAR" is simply not tolerable any longer. Anyone who still has a ounce of honesty, respectability and moral conscience, will not support this continued crime against humanity in Iraq. It's time to work on bringing our Soldiers home and alive, while there are still some left, to bring home. Speak your truth today and stop living in fear, without fear you can't be controlled. It's time to hold the elected and those "appointed" political officials accountable for their actions.

It's critical and imperative that each of us, let our voices be heard. Educate people about the madness, of allowing this despot administration to continue doing as they please. All without any apparent opposition or question to their insanity, greed and complete disregarded, for the people they claim they serve. This buffoon administration obviously no longer serves "US" as in "We the people" It's up to you.. each one of you can reach one, teach one, this is undoubtedly the worse time in recent American history. Lets turn things around before it's too late. How many

more American kids need to die in Iraq, before we demand an end to this complete and utter insanity?

Bearz, Sylva, NC

To The Editor:

Thank you for covering Cindy Sheehan's "camp" in Crawford, Texas. My son recently returned from Kuwait, and he may be sent back to Iraq (Mosul) very soon. Just about two years ago, he was supportive of the current administration and defended his "boss." However, his eyes have been opened wide, and he sees the White House and its staff for what it is - nothing but a gang of deceptive, leaking, money- and power-hungry crooks. Cindy's son did not have to die for this worthless cause in Iraq. Nobody's son or daughter should have to die. If George W. Bush had told the American people the truth from the beginning, our troops would not be in this quagmire in the middle east.

I applaud your media coverage of this tragic time.

Rhonda McNamara, Parkersburg,
West Virginia

To The Editor:

Please get out of the business of helping form national political opinion.

Your recent interview of Cindy Sheehan, bereaved but misguided mother of slain soldier Casey Sheehan, has put you in the national spotlight. While this is great news for your circulation, it irks me that this left-of-center coverage is being perceived outside the state as representative of Texas and Texans as a whole.

As a person who grew up, lived, and worked in Highlands, Spring, and Abilene, I take umbrage at Texans being represented as people with worldviews normally associated with the smelly-hippie-fringe community exclusive to Austin.

If you need to use such stories as Ms. Sheehan's interview as front-page material, at least offer some sort of explanation that her "enlightened" California perspective is at odds with most Texan's kick-ass-and-take-names attitude.

Griff

To The Editor:

Mrs. Sheenan : The President has shown his disrespect to you, and other Americans all along:

- Staging his press conferences and meetings with Americans, caters only to supporters.

- Tells the mother who has to work three jobs to make ends meet "you're a unique American."

- Gives the wealthiest tax cuts.
- Burdens all American for wars that had very little to do with real threats, but very much to do for oil greed and personal enrichment.

Please read my comments to the survivors of the families killed in 911:

I agree with you. The official explanation of 911 does not explain the facts that have been uncovered.

I was offered a job in the twin towers just out of college, as a history major for a position of a social security disability analyst, but I turned it down not wanting to work so far away from my family. I became a teacher in Queens and we saw the twin towers burning from our school. All I could think was "oh my God, all those people."

We have a President who said "what a

lousy pilot!"

His lack of concern for people is a direct contradiction to his stated born again beliefs. His hypocrisy in saying we are fighting for freedom by bombing a country, which has now been shown, not to have WMDs, and that in the DSM were shown to have been fabricated, outrages me. Bombs spread hatred, not freedom.

His reluctance to have investigations, and his limiting them is suspicious.

Those appointed to the Keane Commission all had business ties to him and his administration. David Ray Griffith points out all this in his book the New Pearl Harbor.

I've been researching the internet for four years. I've found too many inconsistencies. Warnings were issued to several people before it happened. Videos of the fall of the towers indicate a demolition, especially because WTC 7 was not even hit by an airplane. The Pentagon was hit probably by a missile.

Carol Valentine's research work shows that the offices hit were those of Naval intelligence officers whose offices were responsible for uncovering the Pollard spy case.

I was shocked to see that the top necons of his administration were extremely Pro Zionist Israel.

The PANC had everything to gain by fabricating an attack and plans like Northwoods, seemed to give it plausibility.

Over time though I realized there were too many Saudi connections to the Bush family, and their family Businesses. It turns out that their business are not just oil, but also drugs. (see the writings of Sherman Skolnick for this : Sherman Skolnick, Prosecutions Coming).

Their connections to the British family, and joint accounts also flabbergasts me. Their family fortune is based on monies gained from trading with the Nazis. So were many other elite families in America.

This led me to start researching the very Wealthy American families of America, and starting with the Rockefellers I saw they have gained control of the money system in the Federal Reserve, and have a plan for a New World Order. They have been buying up most of the mainstream media, and push for their agenda.

Now with evidence coming from many other researchers I see that this attack was an outgrowth of a consolidation of powers into the executive branch by the elite of this country.

Please see my more recent post, <http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2005/07/322288.shtml>

The Downing Street Memo and the Rove leak are the tip of the iceberg.

I do think the elite of America are allied with various others groups and are pursuing a disastrous foreign policy for average Americans. We Americans have been trusting and generous people, but we now have to wake up, because greed inhabits the strangest places, and we need to know who are real enemies are!

C.M. Neill

To The Editor:

Millions of Americans share Cindy Sheehan's grief over the loss of her son in Iraq. We salute her for her courage in publicly opposing this endless and senseless slaughter.

But Casey Sheehan was only one of nearly 2000 young Americans whose lives have been cut short. And for every one of them, there is another grieving mother, father, wife, husband, sister, brother, son, daughter or friend.

And multiply 2000 by a factor of ten or twenty to estimate how many more naive and innocent young men have lost arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, faces. Many will never be able to care for themselves

again. And each of them has family who love them, grieve for them, and ask whether their sacrifice had any value or meaning.

And multiply these horrible numbers by another unknown number—Five? Ten? Who knows?—to try to understand the number of Iraqis killed and wounded. For many, medical care is either non-existent or rudimentary. Their suffering will be long and their chances of survival slight.

Tell us, Mr. Bush, why your war is worth this horrendous human cost, let alone the hundreds of billions of dollars squandered, with no end in sight. Tell us why you deceived Casey Sheehan into believing he should willingly sacrifice his young life. His mother—and nearly 70% of Americans—eagerly await your answer.

Burt Bogardus, Danville, CA

To The Editor:

I want to send a big Colorado "Thank You!" your way for your excellent reporting and wonderful photos. It's almost like being there without the heat (85 here.)

I know that this event must be stretching your resources, personnel, financial, and web to the limits. I am grateful for bringing this to the world.

Love your organ's name!

Paul Verizzo

To The Editor:

I love many things about this great country. I have hesitated to criticize President Bush since 9/11, but now I'm disgusted. I read that he was on his way from his ranch to a Republican fundraiser and did not stop to talk to the mother of a soldier killed in Iraq. I read that guests at the fundraiser had contributed at least \$25,000. Those who raised \$100,000 or more are called "Pioneers"; those who raise \$200,000 or more are called "Rangers." I wonder about the many possible motives for such contributions. For example, I wonder if any of that money has to do with the rising price of gasoline?

I call scientists who are trying to do stem cell research to cure and prevent diseases "pioneers." And I am proud to call my son in the U.S. Army a Ranger, a title he earned. President Bush, your rich fellow Republicans did not contribute their lives in Iraq, the mother's son did.

A soldier's mother,

Cheryl Swofford, Atlanta, Georgia

To The Editor:

Does not the mother of the dead soldier realize that withdrawing from Iraq and not "staying the course" would make her son's death completely worthless as well as all the other young people who have lost their lives in this war??? Does she not realize her stand is dishonoring her own son who chose to be part of the armed forces and serve our country. He wasn't drafted into service. No one chooses to die but each person joining the armed forces realizes that is a possibility. Her son died serving honorably and she is dishonoring what he chose to do with his life and his dying serving our country.

She could be a "poster" girl for all those terrorists who want America to move its forces out of Iraq before the job is finished. Her pictures have probably been distributed among these people to show how Americans are on their side.

Shame on her!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lavon Miller

Dear Nathan Diebenow:

I am a regular recipient of news and info from Truthout.org's daily email news service which had your article "President Bush Ditches Mother of Slain Soldier." I read the article with great interest as I have been following the events in Crawford, Texas for the past several days, particularly today. I then read other articles by you and Deborah Mathews as well as the great pictures from the location. I feel like I am there. Your articles

Continued On Next Page

Mexican Revolution Spills Over Border

In the running war with Mexican bandits, six U.S. Army cavalrymen fought a brief battle with hit-and-run raiders on Aug. 10, 191, 25 miles on the Texas side of the Rio Grande.

It was only a matter of time before the violent convulsions racking Mexico would spill over the border. In the sum-

mer of 1915, halfway through the revolution that eventually took two million lives and drove hundreds of thousands into exile, Texans living in the Valley suddenly became targets in a shooting war.

On Aug. 6, a dozen bandits rode into Sebastian 35 miles north of Brownsville.

This Week In Texas History



By Bartee Haile

The proprietor of the general store in the sleepy hamlet turned to greet the always welcome customers and found himself looking down the barrels of two rifles. The robbers helped themselves to his sparse shelves before moving onto the next business.

That was the corn shelter run by Al B. Austin and his son Charlie. When both defiantly refused to raise to their hands, the bandits shot them dead.

Leaving the Austins where they fell, the raiders robbed the third and last establishment in the tiny town — the post office. Satisfied there was nothing left in Sebastian worth taking, they saddled up and galloped off.

Adjutant General Henry Hutchings, the governor appointee in charge of the state's military, caught the next southbound train out of Austin. With the help of the Cameron County sheriff and Ranger Capt. Henry Ranson, he organized a 20-man posse and took off in pursuit of the murderers.

At half-past 10 the next night, the lawmen located three members of the gang in a house five miles from the scene of the crime. Two bandits caught napping on the back porch opened fire on the posse and died an instant later in a hail of bullets. The third tried to run for it but lost the life-and-death race a few yards from the house.

In an official statement, the Adjutant General tried to calm the paranoid public. Although Hutchings believed the Rangers and local law enforcement could handle the situation, he did not rule out asking the governor to send the National Guard.

James B. Ferguson answered his military attaché at a press conference in Corpus Christi, where he expressed the dubious opinion that "the trouble in valley is of a local nature" and had nothing to do with the chaos south of the border. Rather than call out the Guard, the governor announced the hiring of 20 "special" Rangers, which he termed adequate reinforcements.

THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE concurred with a comment typical of the times. "A Mexican had a wholesome fear of Texas Rangers, and this concentration may

mean the end of (the) difficulties."

Two days later on Aug. 9, a special train carrying 17 Rangers and eight Army troopers arrived at Norrias in Willacy County. The soldiers stayed behind at a nearby ranch house with a group of eight civilians, while the Rangers set out on horseback for a water hole, a rumored bandit campsite, 12 miles away.

Early that evening, the soldiers saw figures in the twilight which they presumed to be the returning Rangers. Minutes later, the unsuspecting Americans came under attack from an unusually large band of 60 bandits.

The fighting raged for an hour and half with the badly outnumbered defenders managing to keep the raiders at bay. But they were down to their last bullets and praying for a Ranger rescue.

Lucky for them, the water hole had been a wild goose chase. The familiar sound of gunfire caused the returning Rangers to quicken their pace, and they arrived just in the nick of time.

The bandits disappeared in the darkness leaving five dead for the Texans to bury. The soldiers and their plainclothes comrades-in-arms suffered nothing worse than minor wounds, and all of them lived to tell about their harrowing experience.

Fear gripped the Valley in the aftermath of the Norrias incident. The sheriff of Kleberg County appealed for guns and ammunition in order to give Kingsville a fighting chance in case of bandit attack.

The Aug. 11 edition of newspapers across the state reported that Mexican army troops loyal to President Venustiano Carranza had been coming across the border 30 or 40 at a time in recent days. Texans worried that Carranza, snubbed by President Woodrow Wilson since seizing power eight months earlier, just might be mad enough at Washington to make such a crazy move.

Texans in the Valley and elsewhere along the Rio Grande lived on pins and needles for the next five years. Following Pancho Villa's March 1916 raid on Columbus, N.M., more than 35,000 U.S. troops were stationed on the Texas-Mexico border.

There would be no peace in the Valley until the Mexican Revolution finally ran out of gas in 1920.

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

MAILBAG ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

and pictures are excellent and are a real public service. I wish to express my deepest appreciation for your coverage of this event and letting people read and see pictures of what is really happening there. Such coverage is pretty absent from mainstream, local media.

For your information I am a peace advocate who participated in peace vigils in early 2003 (in Phoenix, Arizona) prior to the start of the Iraq War, and attended a peace vigil in support of Cindy Sheehan Friday in Phoenix where we had about thirty or so people lined up at the corner of a busy commercial street (Camelback Road and 24th Street) with signs in support of Cindy, to bring the troops home and against the war. A lot of people who drove by honked their horns in support of our demonstration and vigil. That was very heartening!

I also listen to progressive Air America radio's station in Phoenix KXXT AM and their talk show hosts have been giving special coverage and attention to Cindy Sheehan and her vigil near the President's Crawford ranch. Ernie Hancock, who is the executive producer of Charles Goyette's morning talk show on KXXT (he's a local host) is headed down to Crawford to support Cindy and report back for our listening audience in the Phoenix area.

Please keep up your good work and thanks again for your excellent reporting! Please extend my encouragement to Cindy Sheehan and the folks at the Crawford Peace House for the wonderful work they are doing. Cindy is truly a courageous woman who deserves much credit for taking a stand and asking tough questions in the face of an atmosphere where questioning the party line is considered "unpatriotic."

In a way, I feel like I am reliving the days of the Vietnam War and the growing protests against that horrendous war in the late 1960's and early 1970's during the later years of the Johnson Administration and the Nixon Administration. May our effort bear fruit and see the troops brought home soon from the occupation of Iraq. Our best support is to bring them home now!

For a peaceful world,
Pete Creelman

Dear Editor:

Wouldn't you know it would be a woman?! Who else in that He-Man state would have the guts to expose the naked emperor for the coward and money-grubbing damned-near royalist he is and that his entire lying cabal of criminals are?

Not only is Dubya a disgrace to Texas in particular and the United States in general, he is an embarrassingly stupid and inept one at that. Any publican worth his

salt would know that the quickest way to diffuse Mrs. Sheehan's noble efforts to get a word with her "leader" would be to invite the lady in for a cup of tea, a piece of cake and a little confab so as to take some of the wind out of her sails. then the fool, because he is a fool, could say: "ah shucks, folks, ya'all see? At least I tried. Silly woman is just bein' unreasonable. Mus' have PMS or somthin'." By the way, how come Dubya has such a pronounced Texas drawl, although he was born in Connecticut and went to all those elitist schools he sneers at, but Jeb Bush, who was born, raised and educated in Texas doesn't? Now there's a question I'd like an answer to. Does this mean Dubya can lie in Texan?

Instead of doing what any amateur politician running for the school board would have done to neutralize a threat, Dubya leaves the mother of Casey Sheehan, a dead true American hero, standing in a ditch in the August heat in front of a chapel on his cowless ranch while he and his motorcade — composed of cars and drivers paid for by the American taxpayer, one of whom is Cindy Sheehan, mother of Casey Sheehan, a dead true American hero, as he returns from his fat-cat Republican fundraiser where he hoped to get hold of another \$2 million from his local contingent of the "...haves and have mores."

Meanwhile, the whole world is watching this sorry excuse for a man make an even greater fool of himself, and of Texas in particular and the United States in general, and as he embarrasses the country even more than he already has.

And all the while, the numbers of dead, dying and dismembered grow while he, loyal only to those personally loyal to him and his family, like any medieval king, and to the likes of Karl Rove who illegally and treasonously betrayed a covert CIA, but not to the United States of America. Not even the Mafia would behave the way he and his cabal of criminals do who feed off the fat of the land while "dissing" the mothers of fallen true American heroes.

The Mafia has too much honor, integrity and character to disgrace and debase itself that way.

Sincerely,
Lorraine Stone, Florida

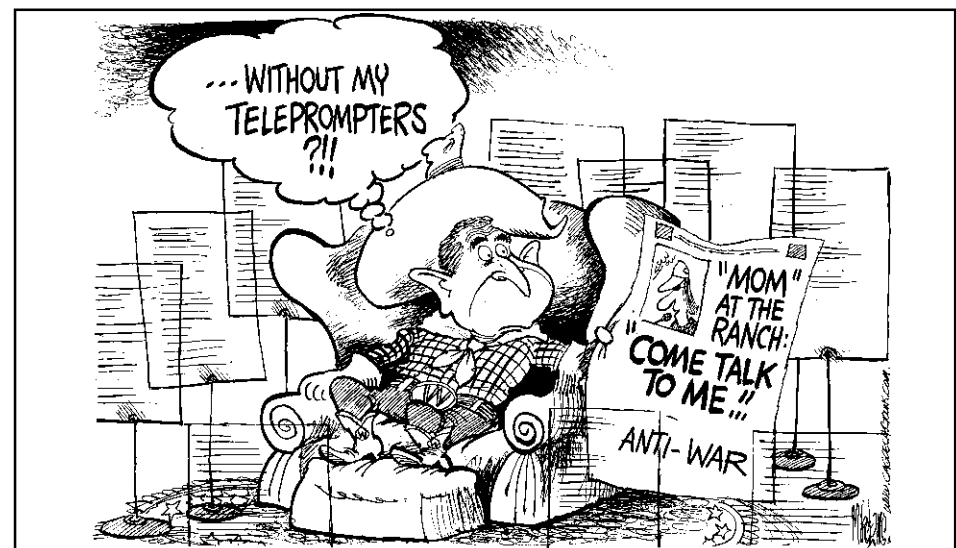
To The Editor:

Bravo to the ICONOCLAST for covering the Cindy Sheehan protest!

I especially enjoyed looking at the reporter's blog and the photos. You are doing a service for democracy in the U.S. by covering this mother's attempt to meet with George Bush.

I am very impressed with your coverage. Keep up the wonderful work.

Rhonda L. Neugebauer, Riverside, CA





PRESIDENT BUSH shakes hands with members of the LaFayette La little league team Saturday Aug. 13, 2005, in Waco. Bush threw out the first pitcher of the Southwest Regional championship game between Louisiana and Bryant, Ark.

— Rod Aydelotte/Waco Tribune Herald, Pool

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