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JIM HIGHTOWER, the former Texas agriculture commissioner, returned to Texas from emceeing a press event during the 20th Anniversary Farm Aid concert in Tinley Park, Ill. last Monday only to have a few days to get ready to speak at a mass march on Washington, D.C. Saturday, Sept. 24, sponsored by United for Peace and Justice and the ANSWER Coalition.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



'No Child Left Behind' Hurting More Than Helping New National Study Calls For Moratorium On High-Stakes Testing

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Bush Asked To Declare Texas Border Emergency

WASHINGTON — Nineteen Republican and four Democratic Texas congressmen have sent a letter to President Bush asking him to declare a state of emergency regarding illegal alien infiltration on the Texas-Mexico border.

The lawmakers claim in the letter that “illegal aliens, many of which are other than Mexicans, are crossing our border by the hundreds on a daily basis.”

The declaration from congressmen is considered symbolic since only a president or governor can actually declare such a state of emergency. Texas Gov. Rick Perry has declined to do so. The governors of New Mexico and Arizona have declared states of emergency in their states, which means more money being made available for immigration purposes.

Texans Express Growing Pessimism About Iraq War

AUSTIN — Although Texans in general remain supportive of the war in Iraq, the numbers are shifting, according to an Aug. 22-

Sept. 3 Texas Poll of 1,000 adults.

The President’s handling of Iraq has dropped to 50 percent (with 46 percent disapproving), according to the poll. The remainder are either undecided or don’t know.

Here are some other numbers:

- 28 percent say the war is going excellently for the U.S., the lowest share yet to be reported by the poll.
- 42 percent believe the war was a mistake.
- 39 percent say the U.S. should pull troops out within six months.
- 78 percent believe a terrorist attack in the U.S. is likely within a year.

Perry Chooses Former Political Rival Sharp To Lead Blue-Ribbon Tax-Reform Committee

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry has appointed Democrat John Sharp, a longtime political rival who ran against Perry for lieutenant governor in 1998, to lead a blue-ribbon committee designed to solve public education funding and property tax relief.

Sharp announced that he would not seek the Democratic Party nomination for governor next year, although a recent poll indicated he could seriously challenge Perry, who is seeking his second full term.

In announcing Sharp’s selection to head the tax reform committee, Perry said, “I am not looking for a magic formula for school finance, but instead a fresh perspective that can help bring about bipartisan change and bipartisan solution.”

Perry explained that other members of the committee will be named soon. The committee, he noted, will

conduct hearings around the state.

Texas awaits a Supreme Court decision in a lawsuit filed by hundreds of school districts regarding funding education. This follows the state legislature’s inability to devise a school finance/tax reform plan after a regular session and two special sessions this summer. The Texas Supreme Court’s decision is expected this month.

Said Sharp, who lost to Perry in 1998 and to Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst in 2002, “We will go from one end of the state to the other, educating the public, including business leaders, on what is in the tax code and what the unfairness in the tax code is, and try to build support from there so it will be easier for members of the Legislature to come to a consensus.”

One thing off the table, however, is a state income tax, noted Sharp.

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The Pop of Populism

'America's #1 Populist' On The Move

Interview with Jim Hightower

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — Jim Hightower has been on the move.

The former Texas agriculture commissioner returned to Texas from emceeing a press event during the 20th Anniversary Farm Aid concert in Tinley Park, Ill. last Monday only to have a few days to get ready to speak at a mass march on Washington, D.C. Saturday, Sept. 24, sponsored by United for Peace and Justice and the ANSWER Coalition.

This pace, though, is not out of the ordinary for the man dubbed "America's #1 Populist" — at least not as of late.

When off his speaking tour this summer from such exotic locales as Baraboo, Wis., the former headquarters of the Ringling Brothers circus, he bought himself new office space on the east side of downtown Austin at 81 San Marcos Street, a couple blocks off Caesar Chavez Road.

The neighborhood is predominately Mexican-American with families restoring frame houses in one of the last affordable housing areas of Austin. Hightower explained that he jumped at the chance of moved from the west side of 6th Street after years of leasing space there.

Hightower shares the building — a Church of the Nazarene structure built in 1915 — with his nephew, a photographer who uses the fellowship hall for a studio. Hightower occupies the sanctuary, complete with a baptismal tank converted to a fountain decorated with Texas river rock to "continue the down-to-the-river theme," said the former editor of the TEXAS OBSERVER.

"As you can see, it really doesn't look like a church. There are no stain glass

time, the author, columnist, and radio commentator sat down to discuss with THE ICONOCLAST'S Nathan Diebenow about anger as a political tool, the history of populism, political identification, cowboys and liars, the race for Texas governor, the anti-poverty movement, and the progressive movement's growing infrastructure.

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ICONOCLAST: For the last couple of days, I was trying to figure out how to begin this conversation. Luckily, while I was driving here, I listened to Rage Against the Machine's *Evil Empire*, and that inspired me to ask you about anger as a political tool. I figure it's appropriate since your website describes you as "America's #1 Populist," and populists are known for their "populist anger," or so I hear. How important is anger to the political process? Is it really necessary?

JIM HIGHTOWER: Well, it's real. It's there, and it has fueled American politics from the very start. People were angry at King George III, and so there was a rebellion. The rebellion was not just against him. It was particularly against the British holding companies. The Boston Tea Party, those ships were not owned by King George. They were owned by the East India Trading Company.

These people — who would be condemned today by Rush Limbaugh as these destroyers of private property — Sam Adams and the Sons of Liberty went on board dressed as Native Americans and took the corporate tea and threw it in the Boston bay. They were not angry about taxes. That's the myth of the Boston Tea Party. They were angry that the East India Trading Com-



INTEGRITY IS ESSENTIAL — "(George) Lakoff says we need better language. Jim Wallis says we need to reclaim the Bible and Jesus, and we do. But those are components. We need the whole package. Basically, we need integrity because people know whether you're bullshit or not," said author, columnist, and radio commentator Jim Hightower.
— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

we went to create. We have come a long way, but we're a long way from that egalitarian possibility and so that fuels in a lot of people a lot of anger.

It might be a sort of semi-anger or it might explode in outright anger and even into violence as it has periodically in our history. We can go right on through the populists, the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement. All of these have been struggles by ordinary folks who got fed up and weren't going to take it any more and did something and fought and fought and fought, and it takes a long time to make progress and to democratize our country further down that trail toward egalitarian. It usually takes some heads getting split open, people out in the streets, as well as letters to the editor, nice speeches, and good people running for office.

I think anger is an integral part of who we are as a people and a motivating force in our politics, but again, it's not an irrational anger, and it's not a partisan anger for the most part, certainly not on the progressive side. I'm just as angry at Democrats as Republicans, Bill Clinton. I see the partisan anger on the other side: "Anybody who dares say anything ugly about George W. needs to leave the country. They should just sit down and shut up and go away," as they did up there in Crawford. The peace folks were there and Gold Star Mothers

for Peace and the Veterans for Peace. There was that kind of thing: "You have no right. You're trashing our leader." They don't give a damn about Bush. They give a damn about his policies that are the opposite of justice and fairness.

Again, I think it's a strong motivating factor across the board. The Republicans used it in the last election, trying to whip up the evangelicals' anger about the Hollywood elites: "Those people, we need to crush them." You've got your Pat Robertsons. Did you see him a couple of days ago? Katrina was because of (the lesbian talk show host/comedian from New Orleans) Ellen DeGeneres. (Laughs) She caused it, and the Iraqi insurgency. (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: You know, it seems like depending on who says it first — like if they say, "We're populist. The people are with us." — then they get the upper hand.

HIGHTOWER: Populism is a real thing. They can claim to be populist, but what they mean is that they put on the uniform of populism, but you don't see them taking on corporate power. That's what populism is all about. Populism is about economic decentralization as much as it is political decentralization, bringing it to the grassroots level. It's the support of small farms. It's the support of independent business. It's the support of working folks against the concentrated economic powers.

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'We've always had a rebellion, not against political authority but corporate, economic authority.'
— Jim Hightower

windows nor a steeple. It's a classic Church of the Nazarene, a big rectangular building, 14-foot ceilings," he said of the structure owned twice previously by a Church of Christ congregation and an outfit called the Kingdom Seekers in Christ Jesus.

What remains of church's religious past is limited to a lone pew situated at the front of where the altar used to be and the baptismal tank. Political literature has replaced Bibles and hymnals in the book cases at the front of the sanctuary, although Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* might count for something, right?

Hightower said he plans to rent out the other six rooms there for "good guy groups" in the future, but in the mean-

pany was trying to get a monopoly on tea, so we had to pay the corporate monopoly price for the tea, and they would prevent our tea from being exported to England. That's what that rebellion was about.

So we've always had a rebellion, not against political authority but corporate, economic authority — then, Shay's Rebellion and down the line with Frederic Douglas, the suffragists, the abolitionists, a lot of anger as well as other emotions and ideals because while there's anger, the anger is about possibilities denied. America promises opportunity, justice, fairness. Those are our founding values. It doesn't promise its going to be there, but those are the ideals that folds out the kind of society

• JIM HIGHTOWER...THE POP OF POPULISM ... Continued From Page 3

Populism, remember, rose up in response to the robber barons. It began two counties away from where we're sitting, out there in Lampasas, Texas, where four farmers were being ripped off by bankers. They said, "We've got to do something." They were sitting around the kitchen table and launched what became the populist movement. Of course, your own newspaper is a descendent of that. Waco was the center of Texas populism which then went east across the South and north to the Great Plains and crossed the upper Midwest.

It was a phenomenal political movement and not just a movement about anger which is the way it got written up by Richard Hostetler and some of the historians who wrote the textbooks that we all studied in college: "Populists were these nutballs, no-nothing hicks." — when in fact it had African American populist chapters. It was as much concerned about labor as it was farmers. It was the first political party that called for the suffrage of women. It was the first political party to call for wage and hour laws, for direct elections of senators rather than appointment by the legislature, etc.

So it was a very progressive party, but it did more than that. It created financing mechanisms for small farmers and small businesses. It had a media arm. They were shut out of the media establishment of its day. It created its own newspapers and magazines — national, regional, and local. They also had a speakers bureau, very low-tech, which progressives should be thinking about today. It's not all Internet. They had 40,000 members, so on any given night, 40,000 people could make the speech. They had local, regional, state, and national speakers.

They then created their own political party. They become a force in our society. They took over some state legislatures. They elected a couple of governors. They were the force electing a number of U.S. senators and never got to the presidency, but they changed the politics of both political parties. Their campaigning led to Teddy Roosevelt and Williams Jennings Bryant and led way down the road to the New Deal with Franklin Roosevelt, so it was a true political and grassroots movement that was not one dimensional at all. It had high ideals as well as tapping into genuine anger.

ICONOCLAST: There seems to be more and more green-minded entrepreneurs out there selling their products. Willie Nelson and his BioWillie brand of biodiesel springs to mind as does grocery stores like Whole Foods, which is also a Texas-based business. Have you ever thought about producing or sponsoring your own progressive product, like fair-trade, union-made cowboy boots for example?

HIGHTOWER: Retailing merchandise never particularly appealed to me. We've got the occasional coffee mug and a book of quotes, that sort of thing. But I don't endorse products. It's just not anything that appeals (to me), plus I'm pretty swamped just with marketing my mouth, which is doing my books, newsletter — I've got 125,000 subscribers now. I think it's the biggest political newsletter in the country.

ICONOCLAST: That's what I hear: "It's the fastest growing newsletter in the country."

'Populism is about economic decentralization as much as it is political decentralization, bringing it to the grassroots level. It's the support of small farms. It's the support of independent business. It's the support of working folks against the concentrated economic powers.'

— Jim Hightower

HIGHTOWER: Yeah, and my columns, daily radio commentaries — they're on 130 stations across the country and about to be more because Air America is going to be picking them up. My little two-minute "Pops of Populism," I call them.

ICONOCLAST: Linguist George Lakoff points out that most people in the United States want a clean environment, good schools, safe neighborhoods, and secure jobs. To me, Lakoff's classification of political philosophies, the nurturing parent and strict father, sounds an awful lot like Chris Rock's stand-up bit: "Sometimes, I'm conservative. Sometimes, I'm liberal." Are there any times during the day that you catch yourself thinking and acting like a conservative?

HIGHTOWER: The real political spectrum isn't right to left. That's theory. That's what actually divides us. The real spectrum in America is top to bottom. That's experience. That's where people actually live, and the 80 percent majority in America today knows that they are not in shouting distance of those powers at the top, the media powers, the political powers, the corporate powers — whether those powers call themselves liberal or conservative, Democratic or Republican. So the people are a mish-mash of political views. They are not so clearly one thing or the other.

I think back when I first ran back to political office here in Texas, I did so because the Democratic Party in the late 1970s had decided that Texas had become conservative, even right wing, and so they weren't even running for office. They are repeating that right now, but I knew they were talking about people like my father who if you went and knocked at his door and said, "Are you liberal or conservative?" he would say, "I guess I'm a conservative." If you talked about the power of the chain stores to drive small businesses like his to the brink, if you talk about the powers of the bankers, bank-holding companies putting the squeeze on, or if you talked about the power of the oil companies in the Texas Legislature to control the agenda there, he was not a conservative. He was a William Jennings Bryant populist, mad-as-heller, and so I know of myself that I'm both liberal and conservative.

In some things, I'm certainly liberal on civil issues, civil rights, civil libertarianism, privacy. I don't know if that's liberal or not. I'm a big privacy advocate. Libertarians are big on that. Ron Doyle and Dick Army don't like the USA Patriot Act and intrusion into our 4th Amendment rights. So a lot of these things cross lines, and when I was editor of the TEXAS OBSERVER, I was already writing about some of these things. I



HIGHTOWER ON ANGER "I think anger is an integral part of who we are as a people and a motivating force in our politics, but again, it's not an irrational anger, and it's not a partisan anger for the most part, certainly not on the progressive side. I'm just as angry at Democrats as Republicans, Bill Clinton," said author, columnist, and radio commentator Jim Hightower. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

was writing particularly at that time about the, for example, family farmers who were being squeezed out and led to the Tractorcade demonstrations at the McAllen Bridge here at the State Capitol and in Washington, D.C.

You can have a politics that cross a lot of issue lines. For example, I'm a big opponent of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and now CAFTA and all of these acronyms of globaloney as I call them, because they basically empower corporations to run roughshot over our sovereignty, literally letting foreign corporations come in, or in another country, our corporations go in to overturn the laws of the local people. That's not democracy. That's plutocracy. I don't know if that's liberal or conservative. Most of my liberal friends favor those things, whereas my populist friends oppose it. My libertarian friends mostly oppose it as do a number of conservatives oppose it as well, but the establishment favors it. They get passed usually by hook and crook.

ICONOCLAST: I was going to write an editorial for the *Iconoclast* about "Reclaiming the Cowboy," and I pitched it to a friend of mine. He said that it was just silly and pretentious because the cowboy is a myth, that cowboys use violence to solve their problems, but in reality, cowboys are just low-wage workers, everyday people, and so what is there to reclaim? But in my head, I was still thinking about how to battle President Bush's image as a cowboy, and then I saw you in your cowboy hats and listened to you talk. Then, I found out that a "progressive cowboy" is actually a dance.

HIGHTOWER: Oh, really? (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, so I guess my question is, "Are you a good dancer?" (Laughs) No, but do you think that the cowboy myth needs to be reclaimed or framed differently?

HIGHTOWER: I don't think it's a thing that needs to be reclaimed. I think it's the Democratic Party needs to be reclaimed. The integrity, the fight for working class folks whether they are urban or rural or clean air or water, good

food, standing up for old folks and children — even if that means going against corporate powers. That's been the failure of the Democratic Party.

Lakoff says we need better language. Jim Wallis says we need to reclaim the Bible and Jesus, and we do. But those are components. We need the whole package. Basically, we need integrity because people know whether you're bullshit or not. I got support when I was running for office and for my writings and speeches today because people, whether they agree with them or not, I think, find some integrity in them. I'm saying things that I actually believe in, and this is who I am. It's where I came from. It hasn't changed.

So we need more of that integrity. Now on the other side, Bush claimed to be a cowboy, but that is beyond laughable. It's yet another deceit for political posturing by Karl Rove. When Bush decided to run for president, his image was inside the Dallas country club, which is what he was; that and Midland country club, a failed oil man and a front man for the Texas Rangers, and so they bought him the place up there in Crawford. But as you know, having a ranch doesn't make you a rancher, and he owns no cows. There were always those cows there, but they were owned by the family that sold him the ranch. He can't ride a horse. Holy John Wayne!

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

HIGHTOWER: I understand that (Russian president Vladimir) Putin came to the ranch and wanted his sunset moment, riding off into the sunset, but no, Bush doesn't ride horses. He clears brush. I think they raise brush. How much brush is there? It's impossible. We're in a drought.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

HIGHTOWER: And then he struts around in that hat. It's probably a \$1,000 hat if I ever saw one. He probably bought it at Neiman-Marcus. That's a \$1,000 hat on a 10-cent head.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

HIGHTOWER: It's, you know, J. Frank Dobie once wrote a letter. It's a

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mous. Look it up. It was when — I forget his name — he was the head of Braniff Airlines. He was running against Ralph Yarborough for U.S. Senate, and he claimed to be a rancher, and he's a rich Dallas guy, I think, who went out West and bought a ranch; "therefore, I'm a rancher." And J. Frank Dobie wrote a letter saying so-and-so "ain't no rancher. He ain't no senator either." (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: (Laughs)

HIGHTOWER: So it's the same thing with Bush. It's just the level in which they manufacture — that scene in New Orleans the other night, you know, moving in those humongous lights so that they could stage him, putting the camouflage back so nobody could see the ugliness that was there because he hadn't done his job in the last few years. It's all just PR, and it's fake. They've sold it on that cowboy image some, but I think your friend was right. John Wayne was no cowboy. Roy Rogers (too). Gene Autry was at least a cowboy singer. (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: (Laughs) Right. Well, we know about the Downing Street memos, the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame, the whole Gannon/fake White House reporter thing, Cindy Sheehan and the war in Iraq, the appointment of Michael Brown as FEMA chief, high gasoline prices, jobless recovery — what is it going to take to get President Bush out of office?

HIGHTOWER: I think his disaster was the hurricane. I mean, it's still the war fundamentally because he was sagging bad on that. I guess, I'll back up and say that it's everything. People are now seeing the real George Bush. He's been in charge, both houses of Congress, the presidency, all this people are running the agencies, the subagencies. They're running things, and things are going to hell in a handbasket in Iraq, and then he went out and decided, "Well, I'll just privatize Social Security." Well, the more he talked, the worse it was for him. Every time he went out, numbers dropped on approval of privatizing Social Security.

Then more Iraq collapse. Then Cindy Sheehan was the little spark that ignited the simmering anger about this failed war policy and people dying, and in particular, the real thing that turned there was something I've been talking about for some time; that is, who's going to war? None of the elites are going to war. It's rich man's war, but they made damn sure it wasn't their fight. And that ultimately sifts out to the countryside: "Wait a minute, if this is such a noble cause, why aren't their children in there?" That goes back to those core values of fairness that people care a lot about in this country, and they just put the lies to the war being essential to our national security and being a noble cause. Then Miss Sheehan stands up, and the flame spreads across the country. Then comes Katrina, and we see an administration that is both callous and inept, and then when they finally do realize that people really care about this, it's too late for them, and they do nothing but resort to PR tactics that are not convincing anybody. So he's in the ditch, and I don't think he's going to get out.

The thing about Katrina, even conservatives who don't like big government

know that government has got to be there. The devastation and the aftermath of Katrina was the very definition of need. And their comments, the worse they made it, they being Bush himself and Mama Bush, of course; Tom Delay; FEMA director Brownie; Chertoff, our Homeland Security czar; all these people, and it becomes clear to everybody: "Wait a minute, this is what happens when we de-fund government. It's not there, and it being something as important as levees."

So it goes to the core of who they said they were: "We're strong leaders. We're competent. We know what we're doing. Free enterprise will make things work, and conservative values." Well, horse hockey. In Iraq and New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, it's there for people to see. They were able to lie for a long time and do puffery and get the right-wing puffheads, like Limbaugh, Hannity, those know-nothings: "We're going to find those weapons of mass destruction. Of course, they have ties to Al-Qaeda, etc. etc." They kept that going for a while, but this is on television for everyone to see including the media establishment, and those people were angered.

ICONOCLAST: Even the regular reporters were crying on TV, you mean.

HIGHTOWER: Oh, exactly. They're saying, "This is outrageous. Where are they? They said they couldn't get here, but we're here! Harry Connick Jr. arrived." (laughs) "What do you mean you can't get Homeland Security in?" It's just fundamentally undid them, and it's like Iraq. They have nothing to say: "Well, we have another plan." Or, "It's really not what you see." because it is what you see.

ICONOCLAST: Or, "We'll just have them write a new constitution." (laughs)

HIGHTOWER: Right. That's going awfully well. (laughs) Another theologian.

ICONOCLAST: It's interesting that you mentioned television. I was talking with my buddy about corporations and how this corporate stranglehold came to dominate the political landscape. He said Democrats and pretty much everybody here in Texas didn't like banks and the stock market at the turn of the last century. They were agrarian, like you said. But television has really changed the political landscape, so now it's hard to get different viewpoints to the American people. You know, there's not that many cameras in Iraq, but now there are a ton of them focused on New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, for example, which has led to the fall of Bush — when people see all the people in poverty down there, and the reporters outraged and crying on TV, it just makes Bush look bad, like you said.

HIGHTOWER: Rove's whole approach to the media is television. He doesn't care what's written in the newspapers because on TV, they can frame their message, propaganda, whichever you want to call it, in their own way. They can control it, and TV won't change it. That image becomes what a lot of people think is reality, so yeah, I think that is a very big change.

What I think that really led to the corporate takeover though of our politics is, of course, you can go back to that 1876 or '86 decision that said a corporation

'The real political spectrum isn't right to left. That's theory. That's what actually divides us. The real spectrum in America is top to bottom. That's experience. That's where people actually live, and the 80 percent majority in American today knows that they are not in shouting distance of those powers at the top, the media powers, the political powers, the corporate powers — whether those powers call themselves liberal or conservative, Democratic or Republican. So the people are a mish-mash of political views. They are not so clearly one thing or the other.'

— Jim Hightower

is a person — when in fact it actually didn't say that, but nevertheless, that's the perception — with all the rights of a person, even though it's not a person. It doesn't die, but more recently, the 1976 decision, I think it was, from the Supreme Court that said money equals speech in politics. Well, nobody has more money than corporations, and so that really enthroned them politically at a level that they hadn't been before.

They had been in politics. We know about ADM money — Archer Daniels Midland — that was used in Watergate. They delivered suitcases of cash to (President Richard) Nixon. (President Lyndon B.) Johnson got money from Kellogg, Brown, & Root. That sort of thing, so corporations were there, but now we have a legal decision that says money equals speech, so those who got the most money got the most speech, and then the Democrats decided — this was in the Reagan's early years: "Well, we can get the corporate money just like the Republicans do." That began the Democratic slide into (corporate) money, and when they write those checks, they write their agenda on the back. So we went from Ralph Yarborough, Lane Morris, and Phil Hart, these great champions, "old man Gore" Al Gore, Sr. — people who fought for power on behalf of working stiffs to now these guys hanging out with the corporate lobbyists saying, "We need some checks for our campaigns also."

While the Democrats were still for working people and farmers and all that, they were for them only in so far as it didn't mean going against their corporate friends, so politics began to slide. TV had that power to soak up money, so now we have a politics in which both parties get money from essentially corporate executives and investors. They throw it at television. That's what politics is. We don't have grassroots politics anymore from the major parties.

The good news is that there's a populist rebellion spreading across the country. We saw it dramatically in last year's election with groups like MoveOn and TrueMajority, Progressive Majority, League of Women Voters, League of Conservation Voters, League of Rural Voters, League of Pissed Off Voters. All these new outfits spontaneously without connections to the Democratic Party or to John Kerry got out there and registered voters. ACORN registered more than a million voters, particularly in immigrant neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods. Grassroots activity. They found people to run for local office from their own ranks, and began the rebuilding of a grassroots progressive politics, mostly inside the Democratic Party, though again not connected in the Democratic Party.

There's this surge. Of course, Howard Dean and the Deaniacs and his Democracy for America group, and I find county organizations now popping up, Heart of Texas Democrats in Central Texas — they're called HOT Democrats. (State Rep.) Jim Dunnam (D-Waco) and various people there in Waco are leaders of it, and then there's a group in San Marcos and up in East Texas and so on.

You don't hear much from the state level, certainly not the national level. Things are moving at a grassroots level. Folks are taking action with progressive viewpoints and getting involved in campaigns both electoral and issue-oriented and winning, even so despite John Kerry. He got 55 million votes, more than any other presidential candidate. Bush got a couple million more because of his grassroots effort which was among the evangelicals and what they tapped into.

But they now have frittered that away because the evangelicals have a new thing called The Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility, and it's all the same

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Jim Hightower

GUEST COMMENTARY**Texas Politics: Time to get rid of Moe, Larry and Curly**

BY PETER STERN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

After the legislative debauchery of the past decade, Texans finally are scratching their heads. Not only that, but people who don't even care for politics are angry that legislators have done so little for Texas families, yet so much for their special interest campaign contributors.

Many people are stating that they will NOT vote for an incumbent for Senate or House positions. While that's certainly a reality-based conclusion to consider, it won't mean very much unless Texans vote-out the big three: Moe, Larry and Curly — errrr, sorry — that's Gov. Perry, Lt. Gov. Dewhurst and House Speaker Craddick.

These three individuals have done the most harm in their respective positions. These three are unyielding, myopic and special interest motivated. Perry, Dewhurst and Craddick have ultimate control over the legislature. With their lobbying for special interest legislation, Texas families were hurt by:

- Fewer jobs in Texas, more outsourcing
- Overburdening of Texas homeowners, tax increases every year — sometimes twice within the year
- Sky-high health care costs
- Inadequate public school financing
- Astronomical costs of higher education tuition
- Permitted the doubling of home insurance costs
- Determination to push for Texas toll roads, double-taxing current roads
- Pushed fees, penalties and cost of services onto local governments
- Focused on private school vouchers
- Permitted religious organizations exemption from property taxes on land investments



Peter Stern

- Agreed to control, restrain and eliminate medical malpractice lawsuits
- Decreased needed social service programs, especially for children of low income families

- Froze gasoline tax to underscore falsely the need for toll roads; also diverted a large chunk of tax to higher education

- Approved legislation to provide judges with pay increases while also raising legislators' retirement benefits.

The appropriate conclusion from these ventures is that elected officials in Texas "don't give a hoot" about their district constituents, unless of course they make large contributions to their campaign efforts.

While voting-out most incumbents is a highly desirable goal, Texas voters should NOT be fooled in the process. Voters must recognize that the primary fault with the poor legislative results during the past several years is due to the big three in command.

Until voters eliminate *The 3 Stooges* of the Texas political arena, virtually little will change. Consequently, the top priority is to get rid of Perry, Dewhurst and Craddick. Doing this along with eliminating inept and useless incumbents from their powerful positions will ensure more positive outcomes for Texas families and will get the state back on-track.

Peter Stern, of Driftwood, Texas, grew up in New York City and holds three post-graduate degrees in English and Writing (New York University), Administration & Supervision (Queens College), and Computer Science (Nassau College). He is a Disabled Vietnam-era Veteran. His job experience highlights 15 years in Education as a university professor, school administrator, and public school teacher; 10 years in the computer field as Director of Information Services.

• JIM HIGHTOWER...THE POP OF POPULISM

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churches that backed Bush, and they're saying that the Gospel is the whole of it, not just gay marriage. It's about peace. It's about civil rights. It's about human rights. It's about poverty. It's about everything Jesus talked about. Jesus didn't say the word "gay marriage," but he talked about justice more than anything else in the Bible.

ICONOCLAST: Yes, I've heard of the evangelicals who are pro-environment. They're all about taking care of God's creation.

HIGHTOWER: Stewardship. But they are also other issues, and Bush has frittered away the support he had because they need Social Security, most of the people of those churches.

ICONOCLAST: There are more white people than black people poor in this country, and there are black evangelicals, too.

HIGHTOWER: Right, and it's their kids who are in this war and their folks who are drowning on the Gulf Coast. Bush had a very narrow and very short-term appeal to these folks, and then he's got to walk away from it because there's only so much he's going to do about gay marriage, in fact. Then he chooses (John) Roberts, and they're not happy with him. He's leaving all these real needs unattended.

The question, though, is whether the Democrats will be smart enough to reach out and tap into those folks. But there is a grassroots insurgency within the Democratic Party that is trying to tap into them, and when I say, "tap into," I mean with integrity and sitting down and talking to folks.

ICONOCLAST: So, since we're talking about grassroots here, Kinky Friedman is running as an independent for governor of Texas. He seems to be billing himself as the Jesse Ventura candidate.

HIGHTOWER: Yeah, I think he hopes to tap into that, and Kinky's a real good guy. If there is any issue you want to talk about, he's really solid. But I don't know anything about his campaign. He's getting a lot of media, but it's a joke. I mean, the jokes take precedent over whether he is seriously running for governor or not.

People will be amused by him. They'll like it, but if he's not really running, then — first he's got to get on the ballot. It's not an easy thing because he's not running Democrat or Republican, and then secondly, he's got to convince people that this is not another book in process or another schtick or a movie, but that he actually wants to be governor. His cues are alright. You know, "How hard can it be?" "Why the hell not?" That's right. That's good. That's strong, and I think he's got some good issues he can talk about, but he's not asking me for advice. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: (Laughs)

HIGHTOWER: But if I were to advise him, I would tell him right now you need to tell people, "I'm serious about this. I really want to meet you, and I'll make one hell of a governor." because that's what Ventura was able to do is to convince people that he's a real candidate. He was not just a wrestler, and (Arnold) Schwarzenegger the same thing. Of course, all he had to do was say, "I'm not Gray Davis."

But it could be an exciting time. I

mean, Texas certainly has this tradition of outsiders — Pappy Lee O'Daniel — sort of stepping in and catching fire. He can do it, but again people have got to perceive that he's not just a Kinky schtick, that he really is going to be worthy of your vote because he's really going to try to win, and if he does, he's going to try something different.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think that Governor Perry and Comptroller Strayhorn are just going to cannibalize themselves in the process?

HIGHTOWER: I think they are going to do that no matter what. (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: Right.

HIGHTOWER: Which is always a joy to watch, but that aside, I think the real question is what are the Democrats going to do? I mean, if they nominate somebody who is a real Democrat and willing to go to people at the grassroots level and begin running right now and exciting people, then Kinky might not have so much room. But if they nominate another blah blah blah money guy, then Kinky has a big base of folks who don't have a home.

ICONOCLAST: Going back to Hurricane Katrina, you know, it has raised awareness of poverty in the minds of U.S. mainstream, but is this the dawn of a new, national anti-poverty movement?

HIGHTOWER: There is an anti-poverty movement that has good folks and good organizations fighting the good fight for the long haul — the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, ACORN, Jobs with Justice, for example. There have some really good, grassroots stuff done on a constant basis and often winning. ACORN, for example, has led the fight for living wages ordinances around the country, passed more than 80 of them. It's a big untold economic story. Great success. Wonderful coalition that they've forged. A number of these great groups are having success.

What Katrina did was what Cindy Sheehan did. Katrina ignited the spark in the minds of the larger public: "Oh, I see. This is what it is to be poor. I had no idea that there was an entire city filled with poor people." So you've got Brian Williams saying, "I'm not going to let this go. I'm going to my network and my affiliates and my editors. We've got to have more stories. This is not isolated. This is all over the country." When that happens, poverty gets back on the radar.

ICONOCLAST: So it is too early to tell?

HIGHTOWER: I don't know what's going to happen. It has to be organized, and it has to have a political expression that — again, back to my party, where are they? They are criticizing Bush, rightly so, for his ineptness, callousness, in responding to that disaster; but other than saying we need to do a good audit of the \$200 billion we're apparently going to spend down there, they are not standing up with a program of their own.

I've just written about this in my next HIGHTOWER LOWDOWN newsletter that Katrina should be called K3. There was the storm itself, then the inept response, but the third and perhaps greatest disaster is the recovery, the reconstruction because here come all the ideological nutballs that got us in

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• JIM HIGHTOWER...THE POP OF POPULISM

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Iraq saying, "Ah, we know how to fix New Orleans. We just need vouchers. We need enterprise zones. We need to eliminate corporate income taxes. We need to do away with the prevailing wage laws and bring people down to minimum wage level. We need to bring in outside corporate power, so the Big Easy can become the Big Ersatz, the fake New Orleans, you know, the Disneyworld concept of New Orleans. We'll move all those poor people out because they're really kind of ugly.

ICONOCLAST: "Yeah, we'll move them to Houston.

HIGHTOWER: (Laughs) "Yeah, we'll move them to Beaumont, Port Arthur, Lafayette, places like that. And we'll make this a sparkling corporate city," which is where they are headed. Bush is already calling for nearly all of this.

Then meanwhile, where are the Democrats? They should be saying, "Well, this is a Rooseveltian opportunity to step in and empower these people to build the city themselves. Let the small, local business people, the working folks, the poor folks set up a council like what happened when Galveston was flooded in 1900. Essentially the city management form of government came out of that hurricane. It let the people direct how they wanted their city rebuilt and had them oversee how this money is going with transparency and visibility, but rather than a handful of corporate elites and government executives sitting in a backroom saying, 'We'll put some money here and there. Trickle-down economics. There's a chance!'" And it would train the people with union training to come in for good jobs and good wages to restore the place and then take those jobs. A major infrastructure redoing would be a tremendous example of grassroots enterprise, decentralized, populist economics in action. I hear no Democrat standing up and saying, "We've got a plan! What about our idea?"

ICONOCLAST: It seems like this current grassroots, progressive movement got a big boost from President Bush's antics, similar to when the conservatives started building its own political infrastructure after Barry Goldwater lost his bid for president in 1964 and similar to when the populists created their own over 100 years ago as you said earlier. How far along is the progressive movement in building its own infrastructure?

HIGHTOWER: The progressives are not in 1964 when the right wing began their move, but progressives are more I would say getting close to 1980 or 1976 because their building. Again, not the Democratic Party itself is not doing this. Howard Dean is trying to push the apparatus in that direction. Grassroots enterprises and freelancers are not waiting. They are out there running people for local office. They're beginning to move up. They are developing the resources, like the policy centers, that sort of thing, to put forth these ideas, things like Air America to get more media outreach. It's in a building stage. They're building what needs to be done.

ICONOCLAST: I was thumbing through the book "Fifty Years of the TEXAS OBSERVER." I was fascinated by the founding editor Ronnie Dugger who at

age 26 helped launch the TEXAS OBSERVER. But I wonder where are the younger political writers and political humorists? Where are they coming from? Is there a network or are they just doing their own thing?

HIGHTOWER: I don't know the answer to that. I think they are doing their own thing. A lot of it is on the Internet. These groups like Move On and League of Pissed Off Voters which is actually a group of 22 to 35 year olds. They ran for a bunch of water boards and school boards and got elected in a some places. They have people with skills, artists and writers. You'd have to ask someone more in touch. They are there because I come across them, but I don't know their network or if there is one.

ICONOCLAST: In your experience from working at the TEXAS OBSERVER, how did you bring people in?

HIGHTOWER: It operated out of necessity because we paid \$10 a printed page for writing at the time. (Laughs) I was editor and made \$10,000. We had no money so we had to primarily depend on young folks and people looking to get their material in and so we did.

I think the network — I mean, I know they are out there. I'm not really sure we had a network either. We found venues like the *Observer* and took it over, but there wasn't a network of nurturers and mentors saying, "Young man, you need to go over here." It was sort of a find your own way, which is a fault for progressives in general. That's one thing the right wing does very well because they are tied to corporate power so they've got these little nests of think tanks, foundations, corporations where they can put people, so if they run a campaign and lose, they've got this pool of talent there that just became better trained, more educated, and better skilled than they had been before. So they move there until the next campaign and then come back. We have nothing like that. You lose a campaign and say, "Well, goodbye folks. Good luck." (Laughs)

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, "Now I've got to find a day job. Where's the nearest Walmart?" (Laughs)

HIGHTOWER: Yeah. (Laughs) The same with writers or even candidates. Democratic Party here in Texas I know it used to be and still is if you ran and got the nomination of the Democratic Party, they ask you money. (Laughs) They didn't give you a list of key Democratic contacts in every precinct. You had to reinvent every campaign every cycle. It's ludicrous.

Now there are good folks within the Texas Democratic Party — our state party chair is trying to change that and try to stiff some of these consultants that have taken over the party. Literally every four years for governor and two years or whatever for state wide office, you had to buy the list from the same consultants. They kept the list instead of the Democratic Party. (Laughs) The Republicans would never let that happen, and so we've got to put those components back into place, know who our money guys are, be able to direct candidates to sources of money.

The good news on that is we now can rely less on fat cats on our politics because we have MoveOn.org, True Majority, and these groups that are able to

focus national attention on relatively small local races. That's a powerhouse thing. That is a way around the money blockage. It's a very important institution change.

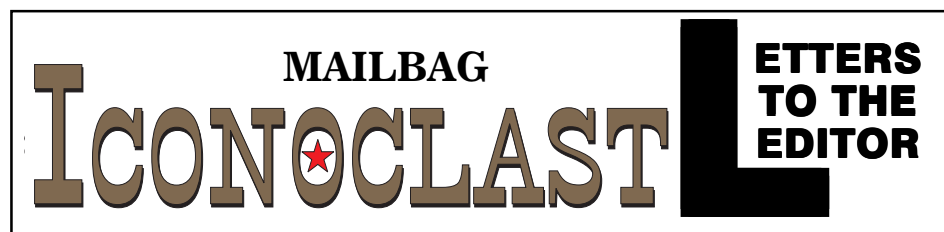
ICONOCLAST: When you brought up Air America, I was thinking of if Al Franken decides to split and run for senator of Minnesota, who is going to take his spot? There's no farm system, if you will, for personalities or message makers for progressives. Are they in the night clubs right now?

HIGHTOWER: Yeah, I think they are everywhere, and again, the fact that we don't have a list of them somewhere is kind of telling about the frailty of our so-called political progressive movement because there are plenty of people. We have funnier, brighter people than the right wing does, certainly funnier. I mean, there's this canard that Limbaugh started in the 1990s: "Well, the Left isn't on the radio. They're not funny." Molly Ivins is funnier than

Limbaugh is. Al Franken is.

There's always hilarious people including a bunch of standup comedians which Al Franken was. Al Franken was not made for radio, you know? When he started, he'll be the first to tell you he wasn't good at it, so replacing Al Franken is not that hard in terms of the mechanics of it but finding a person willing to do that — because it's hard doing a daily radio show having done one for four years. It's very difficult because it just ties you down something awful. But there are plenty of folks out there. Will Durst, a great comedian out of the San Francisco Bay area with good solid progressive politics. There's just no shortage of them.

Maybe they are but they need to be recruiting them. And by they, I mean, not just Air America, but the whole progressive leadership needs to be doing talent scouting in all kinds of positions so that we have an inventory of who we've got and particularly young people.



To The Editor:

Rep. Warren Chisum and Proposition 2: May I have this dance?

It's not the first time Rep. Warren Chisum dances to the tune of a different orchestra. Regarding the issue of supporting Proposition 2 on banning same sex marriages, Chisum would like to dismiss the response as only an emotional issue. Wrong! It isn't just that.

What's really wrong about Proposition 2 is that government once again is trying to tell Americans how to live their lives. That's just simply NOT the job of government. In particular, Texas legislators during the past several years of sessions have shown that they can't even perform their own jobs, now they want to tell people how to live their lives? While I'm heterosexual and married, I say: **When "donkey Democrats" fly!**

Peter Stern, Driftwood, Texas

Good morning,
Your story about the loss of Casey Sheehan's boots is misleading and not accurate. I know because I have Casey's boots in my possession. His real boots. I am the national tour manager for Eyes Wide Open and the person who traveled to Crawford to bring Casey's boots to his mother and had the privilege of presenting them to her. When I returned to Philadelphia, I also took his boots, at Cindy's request where they remain, safe and secure with his other 1900 fallen comrade's boots. Your story of the loss of Casey's boots have upset his family and caused confusion with his friends. Please clarify that the boots that are missing (as all the others in Crawford) are "representative" and not the real combat boots.

Thank you.
Marq Anderson

To The Editor:

Last Night (09-19-05) on ESPN it was announced the New York Giants football team had given \$140,000 to the Katrina disaster. Jack Kemp in an interview shortly thereafter said "that's great, I'm proud of my old team."

There was a go for the money with

phone calls from heroes of pro football players and President G.W. Bush's fund raising heroes, former presidents H.W. Bush and former President William Jefferson Clinton; for the Katrina disaster.

Sometime earlier on, I read where Deion Sanders said, he thought everyone should have \$1,000 deducted from their payroll for the Katrina disaster.

Congress should do all they can to encourage the Katrina fundraisers, maybe they will handle the finance problems if only we can get those with the money to contribute like our regular citizens have been contributing. What do those with the money do with it, they never seem to spend it? If only they'd get a heart for the poor people of New Orleans.

I was sorta amused when President G.W. Bush was so concerned about Trent Lott losing everything, doesn't he know about Trent's pork programs? Trent can recover, I only hope his recovery isn't so much that it may be an overkill.

Louis (Low) Freitag, Carbondale, IL

Texas German Society Slated To Meet, Sept. 27

WACO — The Heart of Texas Chapter of the Texas German Society will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7 p.m. in the Farm Bureau Service Center at 5800 Franklin Ave. in Waco.

The Heart of Texas Chapter includes Bosque, Coryell, Falls, Hill, and McLennan Counties. Visitors are welcome. For questions call Betty Hubbard in Waco at 254-662-0116, or Emma Conrad in Clifton at 254-675-3364.

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New Study Calls For Moratorium On High-Stakes Testing

'No Child Left Behind' Hurting More Than Helping

TEMPE, Ariz. — The pressure associated with high-stakes testing has no real impact on student achievement, according to "High-Stakes Testing and Student Achievement: Problems for the No Child Left Behind Act," a study released last week by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University and the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), high-stakes test scores are the indicators used to measure school and student success on a statewide basis. Low test scores can result in severe consequences for schools under this law.

The underlying theory behind this type of accountability program is that the pressure of high-stakes testing will increase student achievement. But according to this study, there is no convincing evidence that this kind of pressure leads to increased student achievement.

The authors of the study, Sharon L. Nichols, University of Texas at San Antonio, and Gene V. Glass and David C. Berliner of Arizona State University, are calling for a moratorium on policies that force the public education system to rely on high-stakes testing. Their report included a study of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test data from 25 states.

The results of the study suggest that increases in testing pressure are related to increased retention in grade and drop-out rates.

The authors found that states with the highest proportions of minority students implemented accountability systems that exerted the greatest pressure. Thus, the negative impacts of high-stakes testing will disproportionately affect America's minority students.

"The most recent research demonstrates that the pressure to produce high test scores as a result of No Child Left Behind hasn't helped students to achieve more, and has served to limit the depth and breadth of what students are being taught in schools around the country," said Teri Moblo, director of the Great Lakes Center.

Four key findings emerged from the study:

- States with greater proportions of minority students tend to implement accountability systems that exert greater pressure. An unintended consequence of this patterning is that problems associated with high-stakes testing



risk disproportionately affecting America's minority students.

- **Increased testing pressure is related to increased retention and drop-out rates.** High-stakes testing pressure is negatively associated with the likelihood that eighth and 10th graders will move into 12th grade.

- **NAEP reading scores at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels were not improved as a result of increased testing pressure.** This finding was consistent across African American, Hispanic, and White student subgroups.

- **Weak correlations between pressure and NAEP performance for fourth-grade mathematics and the unclear relationship for eighth-grade mathematics are unlikely linked to increased testing pressure.** While a weak relationship emerged at the fourth-grade level, a systematic link between pressure and achievement was not established. For eighth-grade performance, the lack of clarity in the relationship may arise from the interplay of other indirect factors. Inconsistent performance gains in these cases are far more likely the result of indirect factors such as teaching to the test, drill and practice, or the exclusion of lower-achieving students than pressure.

What the researchers could not find is also of great importance. Many different analyses were unable to establish any consistent link between the pressure to score high in a particular state and that state's student performance on

the NAEP. That means that claims of a clear-cut link between pressure and performance cannot be considered credible.

"A rapidly growing body of research evidence on the harmful effects of high-stakes testing, along with no reliable evidence of improved performance by students on NAEP tests of achievement, suggests that we need a moratorium in public education on the use of high-stakes testing," said Nichols, the study's lead author.

The 336-page report suggests that future studies could draw upon character-

izations to investigate the effects of pressure on other teacher/student outcomes.

"For example, is pressure associated with increases in students' antisocial behavior? Students (and teachers) under increased pressure might be induced to vent their anxiety and frustration in undesirable ways. This study represents a solid framework from which future students can examine the effects of pressure across a range of academic and social outcomes," said the report.

"In light of the rapidly growing body of evidence of the deleterious unintended effects of high-stakes testing, and the fact that our study finds no convincing evidence that the pressure associated with high-stakes testing leads to increased achievement, there is no reason to continue the practice of high-stakes testing. Thus, given (a) the unprofessional treatment of educators who work in high-stakes testing situations, (b) the inevitable corruption of the indicators used in accountability systems where high-stakes testing is featured, (c) data from this and other studies that seriously question whether the intended effects of high-stakes testing actually occur, and (d) the acknowledged impossibility of reaching the achievement goals set by the NCLB act in a reasonable time frame, there is every reason to ask for a moratorium on testing policies that force us to rely on high-stakes testing."

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Neighborhood Housing Services Announces Scheduled Workshops

WACO — The Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of Waco has announced its fall schedule, for meetings on the “truth of homeownership,” to be held at 922 Franklin Ave. Workshops are free and available to the public.

The “Homeownership Orientation” being offered is part of an ongoing campaign that is intended to encourage more McLennan County residents to become homeowners, whether staff or students. It is especially a good workshop for seniors, whether they will move elsewhere or stay in Waco.

“Attend this short, fun-filled workshop,” said NHS organizers. “You’ll hear surprising reasons that may be keeping you and others from buying a home—and why these reasons aren’t real obstacles at all. You’ll receive a gift valued at \$15 when you attend!”

English

Sept. 15	4:30-5:45 p.m.
Sept. 22	5:30-6:45 p.m.
Sept. 23	7:30-8:45 a.m.
	12:15-1:30 p.m.
Sept. 26	3:00-4:45 p.m.
Sept. 27	1:15-2:30 p.m.
Sept. 28	9:30-10:45 a.m.
Sept. 29	5:30-6:45 p.m.
Oct. 1	4:45-6:00 p.m.
Oct. 4	8:30-9:45 a.m.
Oct. 6	4:30-5:45 p.m.
Oct. 12	5:30-6:45 p.m.
Oct. 13	6:00-7:15 p.m.
Oct. 14	10:00-11:15 a.m.
Oct. 18	11:00-12:15 p.m.
	2:00-3:15 p.m.

Oct.19	9:00-10:15 a.m.
	2:00-3:15 p.m.
Oct.20	3:00-4:15 p.m.
	6:30-7:45 p.m.
Oct. 21	9:30-10:45 a.m.
	2:00-3:15 p.m.
	4:30-5:45 p.m.
Oct. 24	10:00-11:15 a.m.
	2:00-3:15 p.m.
	5:00-6:15 p.m.
	7:00-8:15 p.m.
Oct. 26	7:30-8:45 a.m.
	10:00-11:15 a.m.
	2:00-3:15 p.m.
	4:30-5:45 p.m.

Spanish

Sept. 22	7:15-8:30 p.m.
Sept. 29	7:15-8:30 p.m.
Oct. 1	6:30-7:45 p.m.
Oct. 13	6:00-7:15 p.m.

INFO:

Gloria Gonzales, 254-752-1647 ext. 202
mggonzales@nw-waco.org
www.nw-waco.org

Agility Classes Offered

WACO — The Waco Agility Group (WAG) of Quail Creek Kennel is offering agility classes for dogs and their owners starting Monday evening at 7 p.m. on Oct. 3. The cost is \$80 for eight classes and registration is limited.

Reservations must be made in advance. The address is 293 Hillside Drive in Robinson. For more information call Pat at 254-662-3868 or visit the website at <www.wacoagilitygroup.org.>

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New Study Reveals Charter Schools As 'A Failed Reform'

TEMPE, Ariz. — Charter schools have not lived up to their promise of increased achievement, says Gerald W. Bracy, George Mason University, in the executive summary of his newly released report "Charter Schools' Performance and Accountability: A Disconnect."

The policy brief released through the Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Education Policy Research Unit at Arizona State University, evaluated charter schools in Arizona, California, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, North Carolina, and Texas, as well as several national evaluations.

"This report argues that evidence exists for the case that the charter school movement is largely a failed reform," said Bracy. "This report puts the charter school movement in the context of dissatisfaction with public schools and the public sector in general. It then describes the claims for charters made by early charter school advocates, emphasizing the advocates' promise of increased achievement."

According to Bracy, "This failure is surprising given that charter schools are small (most have fewer than 200 students) with small classes, two factors known to increase achievement. This failure becomes even harder to understand given the advantages that charters enjoy in their freedom from the rules, regulations, and contracts that are said to hureaucratically burden the public schools."

He goes on to note that accountability for the pro-charter movement has changed from advocates who believed charters could increase achievement to "those for whom deregulation is a sufficient condition for declaring success."

Charter schools made their rise as move toward privatization of education as corporatists began describing public schools as poor and ineffective in educating students to compete in a global economy.

In his report regarding Texas charter schools, Bracy noted that one of the problems is that the Texas legislature has decreased funding for annual charter school evaluations, so much so that only the Texas Center for Educational Research now conducts these studies. He indicated that one of the reasons for the reduced fundings is, according to a researcher, "Because they don't want to see what they'd find."

Bracy notes that results presented in the fifth-year and sixth-year evaluations do not favor charters. He reported that although charters did well on pass totals of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), compared to students who remained in public schools all three years, their actual scores tell another story.

"The evaluation presents only pass rates, not the actual scores" said Bracy in his report. "The passing scores were set initially near the chance level, and small changes in scores produced large changes in pass rates. Since the gains reported were in pass rates and not scores, it is possible that the substan-

tial increase in passing rates represents only a small gain in success. Because they started with higher pass rates, public schools could have raised test scores more than charter, but these increases would not necessarily be reflected in pass-rate statistics. The pass rates for the public school students might have been muted by ceiling effects."

Bracy explained that only 54 percent of public school officials interviewed by TCER were aware of the presence of charters, which, he says, led TCER to find that "charter schools have had little impact on educational approaches and practices of traditional public schools."

Bracy says that the executive summary for the sixth evaluation provides a concise conclusion:

"Across six school years, traditional public schools have outperformed charter schools. Only 14 percent of charter schools earned the highest Texas accountability ratings in 2001-2002 (exemplary, recognized, commended), while 81 percent received one of the lower ratings. Furthermore, an increasing percentage of charter schools have applied for ratings under the less academically rigorous alternative educational accountability system. Even when more equitable comparisons are made with peer campuses with similar enrollments, school characteristics, and student demographics, dropout rates are higher and TAAS passing and attendance rates are lower for charter schools."

Kelly Shapley, director of the TCER, says that an alternative evaluation system is being developed that will apply to about half of the charter schools. She reported that "students in charter high schools were not doing as well as those in regular public schools, especially in mathematics."

Shapley noted that teachers in Texas charter schools are not required to have a major or minor in the subjects they teach, nor even to have a bachelor's degree, which reflects in differences in teacher quality between charter and public schools.

Bracy reported that in 2003-2004, 43 percent of charters were not included in the state system of school accountability and there are currently allegations of "student dumping."

He said, "In a four-month period leading up to the state's testing in February 2005, over 400 students moved from charter schools to traditional public schools."

Bracy quoted Senator Mario Gallegos as saying, "This figure appears inflated to me, and it is almost as if students are being dumped off onto school districts for the sake of ratings." Bracy says that Gallegos has asked Education Commissioner Shirley Neely for an investigation.

"It is too early to say whether this number exceeds the normal flow of students from charters to public schools because the students are dissatisfied with the charter or because the charter has counseled them back to a public school," he concluded.

Rita Hits Gulf

BEAUMONT — Continued rain is expected for several days as a result of the beaching of Hurricane Rita in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday, Sept. 24. High winds and downpours marked Rita's arrival to the Gulf Coast between Galveston, Texas and Lake Charles Louisiana.

In New Orleans, new flooding began as Hurricane Rita approached. Much of the flooding from Hurricane Katrina had been pumped dry; however, levees were breached with heavy rains produced by Rita late last week, which officials termed a major setback.

After Rita made landfall near Sabine Pass, Texas as a category 3 hurricane with winds of 200 kph early Saturday morning, reports of power outages began to pour in. At least 3/4 of a million residents on the Gulf

Coast were without power.

After the storm hit land, its winds subsided to the range of 167 kph (category 2) as it continued its north-westward trek up the mainland. It is expected that some areas will see upwards of 25 inches of rainfall.

During the day Saturday, rescue efforts were under way to save individuals stranded during the storm or those who chose not to heed warnings and evacuate.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry had issued a mandatory evacuation order for several areas of the Gulf Coast and millions of inhabitants departed late last week amid jammed roadways with slow-moving traffic. Individuals found refuge at locations throughout Central and North Texas where temporary shelters had been established or where family members lived.

Volunteer Training Session To Be Held In Waco, Oct. 1

WACO — The Family Abuse Center, Inc. plans to hold a Volunteer Training/Orientation/Outreach/Awareness program on Saturday, Oct. 1, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Providence Medical Center Auditorium at 6901 Medical Pkwy in Waco.

The classes are open to the public at no charge. There will be a continental breakfast of coffee and donuts, and lunch provided, also at no charge.

Guest speaker will be Carolyn Thomas of "A Woman Who Survived." Thomas has recently appeared on Larry King Live, in People Magazine, and on other national talk shows. On hand also will be representatives from the Waco

P.D. Domestic Violence Task Force, domestic violence victims counselors, representatives of the District Attorney's office, a father's story, and personal success stories.

This session serves as a resource for community service credit, college and high school course requirements, service organization projects, and church group projects. The event calls for "very casual" attire and attendees are encouraged to bring a friend or family member. "This information if everyone."

For reservations, call Dinah Husbands at the Family Abuse Center, Inc. by Thursday, Sept. 29, at 254-772-8999. There will be extra seats on a first come/first serve basis for those who cannot reserve in advance.

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The Cowards in the Classroom

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "A paycheck is like dope. Pretty soon you get to thinking you can't live without it."

Thank God for hurricanes.
They're evolution at work.

On the Safer Simpleton scale wherein a five is a sheep or a cow (Chickens are an eight.) and dolphins are ones, ("Hell with this dry land. It's got lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, infectious disease and movies made from comic books and bad TV sitcoms. I'm going back to the water where it's safe!") human beings are somewhere between 25 and 30.

Depending on whether they absolutely won't give up on Neighbor Bush.

Actually, we may be approaching the point when we should regard NB as Uncle Hugh used to admonish us kids about the Tipper twins, Jasper and Wilbur, whose mama went into labor just as the thumper keg exploded on her whiskey still.

"You ort'n to torment th' ffllicted."

That didn't stop us from tying their stick horses to the washer agitator and convincing them it was a rodeo.

But I digress.

For those who still have not yet escaped the anguish of I-45, or the horrors of mere day-to-day life in Dallas, Texas, take heart.

The rest of us will soon join you in hell.

Amid the Chicken Little cries of the nation's TeeVee news actors generating the panic in El Paso to escape the ravages of Rita, we missed the latest report on the Republicans' No Child Left Unscathed ejakashun program (which comes on Fox News right after "Law and Order XVI: Papal Bull Squad").

Two decades of reports, including even those from the education "reform" rightists, have shown that "high stakes testing" hasn't improved education.

Now comes the most exhaustive research to date on test terrorism.

The University of Arizona's Education Policy Studies Laboratory, working with personnel from the University of Texas, studied schools in 25 states that utilized various levels of political threats to produce high scores over the last 13 years.

Texas, which has the nation's worst schools, was the meanest when it comes to punishing students and schools with low test scores.

The study showed that:

Not only does high-stakes testing fail to improve learning, it punishes minority students and increases dropouts.

Okay, stay with me here. This is diabolically complicated.

The state breaks down the student population by ethnicity. Even if a school does well on the test overall, it will be punished if its minority students don't have a high passing percentage. If you have two Tierra del Fuegoans and one of them fails, your school gets punished for having only a 50 percent minority passing rate. The higher the minority population of a school, the more pressure is put on the administration to get better test scores, and the brown kids are forced spend more time learning test-taking, rather than anything else.

Those students who have trouble learning to take tests or blindly follow government orders simply quit school.

Compared to other tests, high pres-

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



sure testing produces no better scores than no testing at all.

Those students, who are clearly smarter than the voting public, simply give up on the whole mess and quit.

Even a slight improvement in elementary school math scores does not continue as those students move on to the higher grades.

The study even observed that testing pressure seems to increase anti-social behavior, resentment of authority and violence in the classroom. They suggest further study.

Funny how school shootings started about the time the Reagan Disaster struck our public schools.

And we thought it was video games and Ice Puffy Master BVD.

In brief, high-stakes testing is not only ineffective, it is child abuse.

It may be bad educationally, but it is so-o-o go-o-o-o-d **POLITICALLY!**

Give a do-or-die test long enough to a large enough population, and the scores will naturally improve.

That's indisputable.

So the politicians involved can claim the improved education without taking responsibility for raising taxes or other kinds of risky behavior that might otherwise see guys like Rick Perry or Dick Cheney having to earn a living by burglarizing nursing homes or selling cocaine cut with Bab-o.

So even though the report calls for a moratorium (I wish they'd quit using these multi-syllabic words that state legislators can't understand.) on high-stakes testing nationwide and scrapping No Child Left Benign, we're still going to retard our public school children in the name of political ambition.

Not because politicians believe the old saw that to do public good, one must first violate any commandment to get elected.

No, let's put the blame where it belongs:

On school teachers.

Who are cowards.

And wimps and whiners.

Teachers have known the truth of this latest report for more than 20 years.

And they have done virtually nothing to stop it.

Oh, there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in teachers lounges throughout the state, but our teachers and their sycophant professional organizations took it in the ear for fear of losing their low-paying, unappreciated jobs.

But protest? Strike? Refuse to follow immoral orders?

This ain't patriotism.

It's education.

It is as though a pederast entered every classroom in the state, and our teachers hid under their desks for fear

of losing their jobs because the pervert was wealthy and powerful.

When the **ICONOCLAST** suggested in July that Texas teachers take a simultaneous sick day in protest of the mess that's been made of Texas education, I wasn't concerned that we might be taken seriously.

We figured that out when the pansy teachers organizations refused to reprint the editorial or even give us a mailing list so we could send it out ourselves.

One organization rep did call up and whine because I called them whiners.

His protest centered around how his organization did such a good job during the three failed Texas Legislative sessions that failed to pass a school finance bill.

Somehow we weren't impressed.

I wasn't concerned that I might lose my own teaching certificate or my livelihood for advocating a teacher job action, which is against the law in Texas.

I just took a day of leave, alone, in protest of the fact that year in and year out, the 60 or so college freshmen that I teach have all passed Texas' high-stakes test, and year in and year out, no more than one or two kids can define Constantinople, not one in the last seven years has read the U.S. Constitution and

they universally think that a hoe is a prostitute and a Trojan is a condom..

When the Reagan assault on our public school system began more 20 years ago, the teachers who were willing to take risks simply left the profession.

When Texas Gov. Mark White required Texas teachers to take a literacy test as part of that assault, the majority of Texas teachers switched their allegiance to vote for Republican Gov. Bill Clements.

He summed up his approach to Texas education with this quote:

"If teachers want to make more money, let 'em go get a real job."

Teachers' political allegiance never switched back.

Not all, but most of our classrooms are filled with non-risk takers, those who will meekly follow any order that the politicians give them, who will go to any lengths to keep their jobs, even to the detriment of their students.

In summary, much as I'd like to be proved wrong, few of our teachers have the backbone to fight back even in the face of evil.

When your community is threatened by terrorist, flood, tornado or hurricane, try not to panic when you think of the kind of person who may be in charge of your children.



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Where's The Gas? Gougers and Gallants

Louisiana took its stab at evacuation with the tumult of Hurricane Katrina.

This weekend was Texas' turn, as motorists were "wastin' away again in 'Ritaville," pun intended.

"Wastin' away" says a lot, for cars were backed up for miles and miles. For some anxious motorists, it took literally hours to travel just a dozen miles as they attempted a mandatory evacuation from the Gulf Coast region of Texas.

Although Hurricane Rita diminished in strength as it came closer and closer to land, people lost their lives on Texas highways to escape its impending torrent.

So, no. Texas was not adequately prepared in the event of an emergency.

The configuration of exit expressways was not well established. To vacate cities such as Houston, Corpus Christi, Beaumont, Galveston, and others requires a better exit strategy. There were ribbons of pavement open, going in the wrong direction, that could have been temporarily transformed. This was not done. Alternate routes could have been established along the way and, again, they were not adequately planned for.

There were gougers aplenty. Sure, retailers have a captive clientele in such occasions, but raising the prices to six times their usual costs is, literally, highway robbery. Preying upon victims

caught in an unpleasant and often dangerous situation is not what true Texans are made of.

And such an exodus requires fuel. Plans were not enacted to have suitable quantities of gasoline available, again slowing down the process of evacuation and causing added consternation among weary and worried travelers.

If nothing else, Rita has provided a chance for state planners to repair the problems. It also provides them the incentive to think outside the box and prepare for other potential disasters elsewhere in the state, like the border..

Yet, in the wake of Katrina, "gallants" did arise in Texas cities and rural areas. They took stranded families into their homes, their churches, and their public trusts. They fed them, helped clothe them, found temporary living quarters for them, and provided emotional and financial support during the dark hours of loss. These gallants repeated gestures of friendship and brotherhood for another wave of evacuees upon learning of Rita's impending doom.

In this regard, Texans were a class act.

Texas hospitality is real. It is more than a legend. Just look at the numbers of homeless who have found new friends for life.

That is what Texas is all about.

— W. Leon Smith

100,000 Rally

Massive March On Washington Sends Anti-War Message

WASHINGTON — An estimated 100,000 people participated in a march on Washington, D.C. this past weekend to loudly voice opposition to the war in Iraq. Shouting “Peace now,” and “We won’t fight,” the demonstrators participated in the largest anti-war protest in Washington since the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The marathon rally consisted of music, marching, and speechmaking, lasting all day and into the night.

People of all walks of life, and political parties, descended upon the nation’s capital to express the belief that the war in Iraq should end. Some were first-time protestors, others’ protest days dated back to Vietnam.

President Bush was not on hand to witness the event, spending the day in Colorado and Texas where he kept track of recovery efforts related to Hurricane Rita which hit land between Texas and Louisiana early Saturday morning.

Some of the same protestors were those who had inhabited Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas throughout much of August, including Cindy Sheehan, the California mother whose son, Casey, was killed in Iraq. She took the stage to speak amid thunderous applause and shouted to members of Congress, “How many

more of other people’s children are you willing to sacrifice?” which resulted in the mass chanting of “Not one more!”

Joan Baez, another veteran of Camp Casey in Crawford, who grew to international fame during the Vietnam era as a folk singer who stirred anti-war emotions with her music, serenaded protestors at a concert near the Washington Monument. She told demonstrators that troops need to come home now. “There is chaos. There’s bloodshed. There’s carnage,” she shouted.

Rallies were also held in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Seattle, plus at locations in Europe..

The Trenchwalker



By W. Leon Smith

One Year Since THE Editorial

This edition of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST marks the one-year anniversary of “the” editorial that turned upside down the lives of the newspaper’s editors and resulted in THE ICONOCLAST going “national.”

After the editorial entitled “Kerry Will Restore American Dignity” hit the streets of Crawford on Sept. 29, 2004, the newspaper became the target of an intense boycott that continues even today. The boycott was extended to any local businesses wanting to advertise in the newspaper, for it was threatened that if they did they would be boycotted, too.

The obvious goal was to kill the ICONOCLAST, even if it meant violating anti-trust laws to do so. There was an actual meeting in Crawford designed for this purpose.

Within a month of publication of that editorial, the words of W. Leon Smith, Don M. Fisher, and Nathan Diebenow, authors of the editorial, had been read by millions of people worldwide. THE ICONOCLAST gained some financial support through subscriptions nationally and beyond, which helped to keep the newspaper operating and enabled it to expand its editorial scope somewhat.

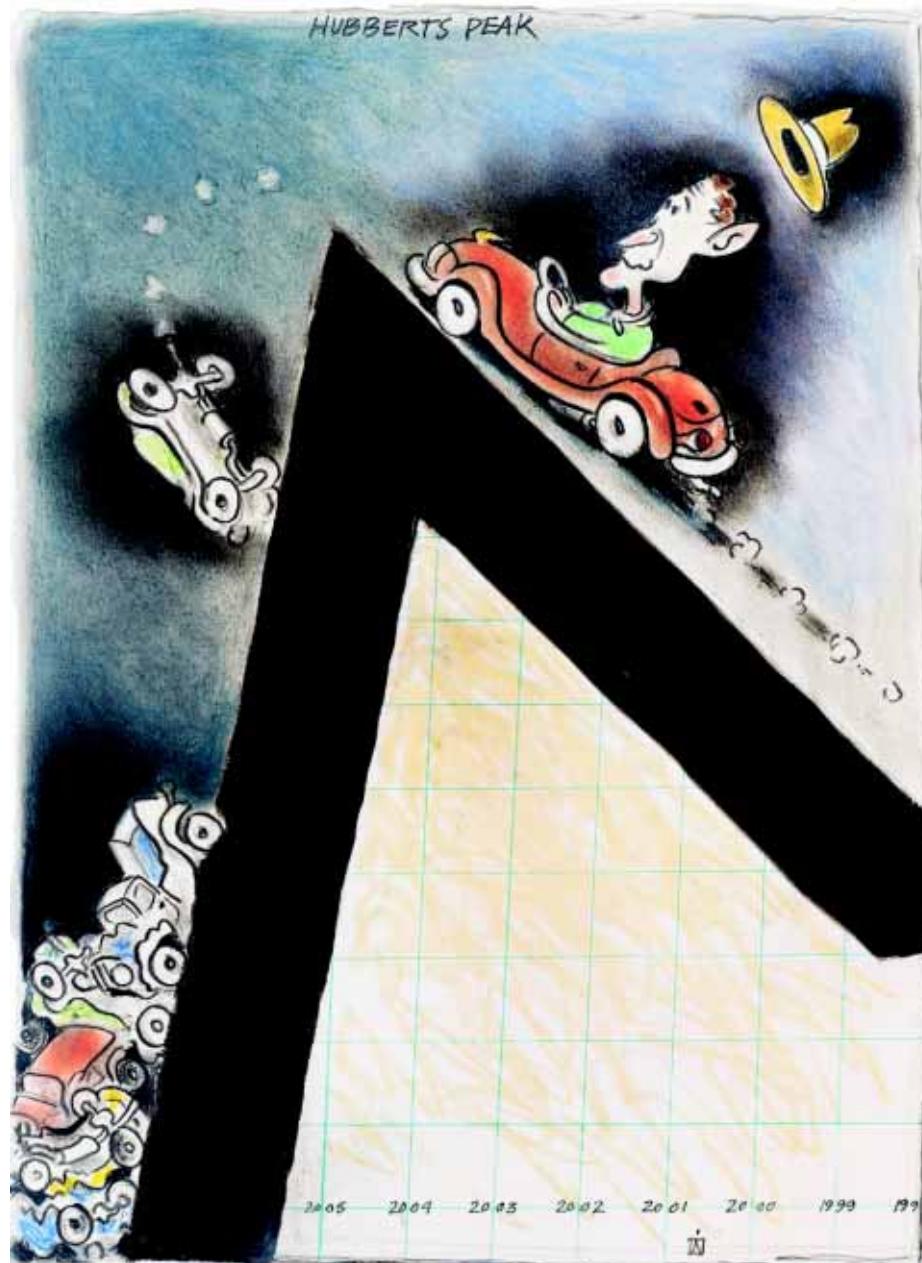
As a result, THE ICONOCLAST was transformed from being a small weekly community newspaper into becoming a small weekly national newspaper.

My wish is to now go to the next level, transforming THE ICONOCLAST into a large national newspaper. Our readers tell us constantly that they wish everyone would read THE ICONOCLAST. But how do we get them started with our limited financial resources that barely keep us in business?

We are open for ideas on how to achieve this. We need your help.

I would personally like to thank everyone who has supported THE ICONOCLAST during the past year through participation in advertising and readership or by simply offering words of encouragement. It has been a tumultuous year.

Another one is upon us.



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Confederate General Drops Dead In Street

Braxton Bragg, the former Confederate general, collapsed in mid-sentence while crossing a Galveston street on Sept. 27, 1876.

According to southern folklore, Dixie's commanders were gentleman gladiators superior in every respect to their Yankee counterparts. The embarrassing exception to this romantic rule was the bumbler Bragg, who always found a way to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

After graduating fifth in his West Point class of 50, the North Carolinian saw ample action in the seven-year campaign against the Florida Indians. The Mexican War resulted in rapid promotions for Bragg, who entered the conflict a lieutenant and exited a lieutenant colonel.

Peacetime boredom led to his resignation in 1856 and a new profession as a Louisiana sugar planter. When southern secession set the

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



stage for sectional strife, he was soon back in uniform but gray not blue.

Second in command to Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, Bragg was called upon to fill his larger-than-life shoes after the revered Texan fell at Shiloh in April 1862. Raised in rank to full general and put in charge of the Army of Tennessee, he invaded the border battleground of Kentucky.

The offensive bogged down in October 1862 at Perryville, where Bragg fought an equally inept federal foe to a draw. Showing the tac-

tical timidity that became his trademark, he bugged out of Kentucky rather than reengage the enemy.

Bragg appeared to be on the rebound two months later in an icy duel with Gen. William Starke Rosecrans at Murfreesboro, Tenn. The fighting was so intense that Rebel infantrymen stuffed their ears with raw cotton to dull the deafening roar of the muskets.

After sending word to Richmond of a major victory, Bragg seemed to freeze in the cold weather. He gave Rosecrans three days to regroup before inexplicably running away from his badly battered opponent.

In a rematch with Rosecrans the next September, Bragg covered himself with glory at the Battle of Chickamauga. But his stubborn refusal to annihilate the Union's Army of the Cumberland tainted the triumph and so incensed subordinates they demanded his replacement.

To mollify the junior officers, Jefferson Davis investigated the matter in person. After a long talk with beleaguered Bragg, the Confederate president refused to strip his old friend of his command.

In return for Davis' risky vote of confidence, Bragg made a career-ending blunder. Choosing to lay siege to Chattanooga rather than storm the city, he allowed food and crack reinforcements to reach the starving defenders. The northern counterattack in November 1863 drove Bragg out of Tennessee and into oblivion.

"I am living almost out of the world, without mental or social occupation, and struggling hard for a subsistence after the complete wreck of my future," the unemployed general whined nine months after Appomattox. While it was true that the post-war occupiers had confiscated his plantation, things were tough for everybody in the con-

quered South.

Bragg was so blinded by self-pity that he actually envied Davis and other prominent prisoners, who faced possible execution for their supposed sedition. He reasoned they at least "are receiving the support which sympathy and condolence always give."

In reality, Bragg had more than his share of chances to get back on his feet but squandered each and every one. He was more interested in holding court with his shrinking circle of admirers than holding down a job.

The indigent general came to Texas in July 1874 as chief engineer for the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad but inside a year charged the board of directors with short-changing him on his salary. After accepting a \$500 cash settlement, he accused the company of cheating him out of the balance due even though he had signed a receipt for payment in full.

In spite of his reputation as a conceited troublemaker, Bragg was appointed state railroad inspector. The position was perfect for a mediocrity with an inflated sense of self-importance.

While walking to his Galveston office in September 1876, Bragg bumped into a former aide. Their casual conversation was abruptly interrupted when the 59-year-old generally suddenly stiffened, reached for his companion's arm, and slumped to the pavement.

Carried into a nearby drugstore and laid out on a sofa, Braxton Bragg was swiftly surrounded by several of the finest physicians on the island. They did their best, but the famous patient died from an apparent stroke in less than 10 minutes.

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

Am I The Only One Who Is Outraged?

Am I the only one who is outraged? Maybe there's something wrong with me, some fatal flaw, some deep-seated cynicism. . . .

Now don't get me wrong. I think it's wonderful when people can step beyond themselves and feel compassion for others, be generous with their time and help. Most of us try to do this every day, in whatever ways we are able. Maybe it takes a tragedy to get some people to feel anything at all.

We're seeing news reports of folks who can barely get by, sending relief money (maybe their rent money or next month's food budget or money for necessities) to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. We see heart-rending pictures of children breaking open their piggy banks and giving their birthday money. Sometimes these are the poorest of the poor giving to those who have even less now than they do. Well, that's noble. I can see the deep-seated humanity of it. It's noble, but I wonder what will happen to these givers when they, in turn, become those in need, maybe as early as next month when that prescription needs to be filled.

What's wrong with this picture? Why do we have two ex-presidents begging individual citizens to reach into their already lean pockets?

Both Bush Sr. and Clinton are asking people like you and me, people who are struggling to pay almost three dollars for gasoline to go to and from work, to give money for relief efforts on a storm ravaged coast.

Am I the only one who is outraged? Where is the government in this effort? Where WAS the government during the storm and directly after it? It didn't take a rocket scientist to know New Orleans was in for trouble when we saw that huge storm approaching. It was like something out of a catastrophe movie. And Biloxi and that whole section of coastline has been through it all before, in the late 60s. (And still Big Money built casinos there). Where are all the tax dollars we as citizens have sent in dutifully, year after year, so there will

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.

be coins in the emergency coffers when our countrymen need help? Into whose deep pockets have those dollars gone?

When another country is in need, we are the first in line to give assistance. It seems our government cannot wait to give away our money for honorable causes, billions and billions of dollars of aid, often never repaid. Who gave us this job?

Do you see many countries lining up to help us now? We are so busy trying to change the world (often where we have no business doing so, often where we are not even wanted) that we cannot afford to take care of our own when need arises. There isn't even money to raid in the social security trust fund in our hour of need. It has already been raided! And for what? Much of our National Guard, trained for such domestic emergencies, was half way around the world fighting in the Middle East when they were desperately needed here, where many people feel they should have been in the first place.

Don't show me another picture of a wide-eyed, innocent child breaking open a piggy bank—to send his or her long-saved birthday money for hurricane relief. (Yes, it's noble. Yes, it's ethical. But why is it necessary?) Don't hide under a thin veneer of human-interest stories. Tell me instead the BIG TRUTH. Tell me why it has been more important these many years for us to line certain pockets and to save the world rather than prepare to save ourselves for the rainy day that always comes.

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Megalomania

Megalomania (noun) 1: a mania for great or grandiose performance; 2: a delusional mental disorder that is marked by infantile feelings of personal omnipotence and grandeur

Sound like anybody you know of, or have read about, or seen on your tee-vee?

The sad truth is that this acrimonious characteristic may be applied to the spurious presidential figurehead, George W. Bush, the only “elected” president of the United States of America who was never elected president of the United States of America — twice.

Unfortunately, the apportionment of this characteristic doesn't stop there. Normally, in any single government or cabal one megalomaniac might be found with the goal of being Lord Master and Grand Poobah Over Everything on Earth.

At the outset of the 21st Century our nation has been blessed with any number of megalomaniacs, each in a position of mass destruction.

For starters, take virtually everyone with access to the West Wing: Dick Cheney, whom many believe actually runs the country; Donald Rumsfeld, who equates real, live soldiers and Marines with pawns on a chessboard; Condoleezza Rice, the excessively-educated Queen of Overachieverism who sold her Soul, soul and dignity, while dumping on her heritage, to be one of the big, powerful white guys; John R. Bolton and Paul Wolfowitz, the sum total of whose combined contributions to the World is an “America Uber Alles” bullying mindset; I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby; et alia.

Then, moving over to the Hill, we find this mania rampantly infests both the Senate and House of Representatives, including but not limited to such good folks as Bill Frist; Tom DeLay; John Cornyn; Roy Blunt; Dennis Hastert; James Sensenbrenner; etc.

As badass as these players want to portray themselves, however, and as high on the food chain each of them might personally consider he ranks, nary a one can compare to the Whitest Guy on the Planet. He's the Nordic-est of the Nordics. Mean, devious and slimier than a Black Forest slug, he is perhaps the most dastardly man on Earth — certainly in America. If there were an award for being EVILICIOUS, this crumb would win it unanimously year in and year out.

For some 30 years now he has literally destroyed all opponents without even stepping out from the shadows. Many of those he destroyed — more often than not good and honest people — had no idea it was even he who had ruined their careers and, in numerous instances, lives. The troops in Iraq can't get armor for their vehicles because this schmuck has appropriated it all to cover his own ass. His favorite song must be “Can't Touch This.”

Despite giving the appearance as that of a powerbroker, he has maneuvered and manipulated people and situations to the point where he *is* the power. Yes, this is the BESCHMUTZENTRICKMEISTER, the STIERSCHEISSEKOENIG, the OBERMEGALOMANIAC who frightens all within his purview to incontinence.

And his widespread, far-reaching purview knows no boundaries.

Such unbridled power for one person, and he's never been elected to, nor even run for, any public office.

You may know him by the title Bush #43 used following his second overthrow of the White House, “The Architect” (a nickname attributed to henchman Heinrich Himmler by one Adolf Hitler). Another popular sobriquet is “Bush's Brain” — let's face it, somebody has to be. My colleague, Don M. Fisher, refers to him as “Closet



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

Karl.” The funniest is Bush #43's long-time moniker of “Turd Blossom.” As for myself, I go with the more Teutonic “Der Karl.”

Aw, gee, you guessed... I've been writing about Herr Karl Rove, wannabe Emperor of the U.S.A., North America, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Watch out, Europe, he's got his eye on you!

Now, he's been officially awarded New Orleans and the Southern Gulf region.

Won't those trophies look good in his study?

(Hell, you didn't expect Bush #43 to give him a mere medal, did you?)

And if Rita flays the Western Gulf with the same malevolent cruelty as Katrina smashed Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, he'll finally get the prize of his dreams:

Texas.

That bogus speech, set amid a specially-lit Jackson Square in the darkened and drowned New Orleans, was nothing more than an infomercial to rally the faithful for Republican votes in 2006. From the floodlight-drenched church and statue of Andrew Jackson, to Bush #43's phony trademark “gunslinger” stride, more dramatic than usual as he stepped out of the shadows to approach the podium, replete in his starched shirt (sans jacket and tie) with collar unbuttoned (unevenly) and sleeves rolled up — as though he was actually going to do something that required exertion — the entire farce was so obviously a RoveCo production.

And the White House, i.e. the Republican National Committee, got the networks to provide free airtime while we taxpayers footed the bill for logistics.

Even so, reporters were commanded to remain in their vans and watch on monitors from a safe distance — safe for Bush #43, that is, lest any embarrassing questions fly at him.

Bush #43 talked up how New Orleans needs to be cleaned and rebuilt. I'm all for that. And it doesn't bother me in the least that some of my tax money will be diverted for that effort.

But his rhetoric was all too full of typical Bush #43 fantasy sequences, broadly painted with an oversized brush slathered in the most delightfully psychedelic pastel shades. He laid out a boatload of dream solutions, such as rebuilding the poorer neighborhoods of New Orleans and inserting into them minority-owned businesses where there were no businesses before.

There was the imaginative “Gulf Opportunity Zone” wherein, and I quote, “...we should provide immediate incentives for job-creating, investment tax relief for small businesses, incentives to companies that create jobs, and loans and loan guarantees for small businesses, including minority-owned enterprises, to get them up and running again.”

By what directive of providence are these new businesses supposed to find paying customers among segments of the

population that had no income to begin with — folks who have now lost everything and are forced to start from scratch?

I'd also like to know exactly whom does he mean by “we”? I never gave Bush #43 approval to speak for me, but still he keeps throwing out the “we's” like I might agree with him.

Not once in the entire transcript of this hallucinatory ramble, I noted this while he was trippin' out then read it to be sure, does Bush #43 say “I care about you” or “I will stay as long as it takes” or “My first commitment” — it was always “You country” or “We” or “Our”!

Why is that? Simple. It's because he does not give a horse's dropping in the middle of a bridle path about anyone who isn't a Neo-con, elitist backer or crony.

Bush #43 keeps asking us to give cash to help out, in addition to our tax support. Hell, at our house we gave the day after Katrina hit. And there have been myriad stories about celebrities giving not just large sums of money and food, water, and other necessities, but their time and effort as well.

How much have George and Laura Bush donated? Dick and Lynn Cheney? Donald Rumsfeld or Condoleezza Rice? What about Turd Blossom?

I'd like to know.

Then, Bush #43 went out way past left field with his psychedelic vision for the fabulous *new* New Orleans that will rise up like a glorious Phoenix from the desolation and putrid muck — brought about in large part by the sheer incompetence and utter callousness of his Fascist Regime.

Let them drink slime, and sleep in the streets — next to rotting corpses.

The *new* New Orleans will be bigger, stronger, and built higher. And, the levees will be made to hold, too.

How convenient that Bush #43's handlers left out of this cockamamie speech who had immediately received no-bid contracts before we, the taxpayers, were even let in on the idea of reconstructing the South.

He did mention the military was going to figure into it, but that was a given. Can you guess which companies were going to profit from this disaster, without any honest, disconnected, or possibly minority-owned American businesses getting a shot?

Bechtel National, a subsidiary of Bechtel Corp. whose CEO is a Bush #43 political appointee, was tapped to find short-term housing for evacuees. Another contract was doled out to the Shaw Group, a client of (surprise, surprise) former Bush #43 campaign manager Joe Allbaugh. Allbaugh became a lobbyist (they make money by the pound, not in dollars) after turning over his job as FEMA director to his old college roommate, Michael Brown.

Of course, we all know how eminently qualified Brownie was for that position.

The lion's share contract went to yet another Allbaugh client, Kellogg Brown and Root.

It may be only coincidence, or perhaps an oversight, but KB&R just happens to be a subsidiary of Halliburton — yes, that Halliburton, with ties as far back as its inception to Grampa Prescott Bush, and more recently Dick Cheney, double-dipping in Iraq, etc.

In keeping with the RoveBush Fascist Occupation Regime's penchant for silence, the slight detail about Uberstoffhohle Karl Rove as overseer of the reconstruction was also omitted (most likely because Der Karl also wrote or approved the speech).

Actually, it's reasonable to assume that Big Chief Weasel gave himself the job.

This poor excuse for turning fresh air into carbon monoxide has been waiting for precisely such a windfall, and Katrina fell right into his hands.

Now Rita may deliver his ultimate prize — Texas.

(Kinda ironic that Turd Blossom got his most explosive gratification from “women,” ain't it?)

Does Herr Rove actually have any qualifications to rebuild a city or any infrastructure? I wholeheartedly doubt it.

I can say, here in print, with reasonable surety, that Karl Rove hasn't the ability to bring the pieces together with the skilled people to put this particular puzzle together.

How do I know? Because he can't ruin the lives of or fire those who disagree with him, and he can't lie about how something needs to be built.

Additionally, he's going to be working with real *menschen* — guys, dudes, beer-swillers, bowlers, softball players — not those greedy, mamby-pamby politicians he's used to.

But that's no reason to concern the RoveBush Fascists. Virtually no one appointed to a position of responsibility by this Occupation Regime has had adequate credentials for elevation to any of the jobs they've been awarded; since stealing the White House from the American citizens, what poses as our Government has simmered the foulest of soups, a mix of blatant cronyism with partisanship creating the most vile stench in history.

At the height of the Third Reich, Hitler had this delusion of building a grandiose monument to himself, a city based upon the architecture of ancient Rome. He had rooms filled with models of what was intended to be the Citadel of the Millennial Reich.

As the war raged on, and the Homeland (now, *there's* a familiar term) was besieged from all sides, the Little Corporal dedicated labor, materials, equipment and countless Reichmarks to the construction of this shrine to his own immortality. As with everything else, Der Fuhrer did not put people in charge who were necessarily apt for the job; rather, he filled key positions with political appointees.

Think about it: Bush #43 has told us that the military will be taking on a more active role in tending to the Southern Gulf disaster, and future disasters — and he's put Herr Karl Rove, America's own Neo-con Fascist #1, in charge!

I am frightened to incontinence.

We should all be.

Herr Rove is a tyrant-in-waiting who hides in the shadows and has no love for America or our way of life. He is the worst kind of coward, a miscreant who wishes to transmute this nation until it is in lockstep with his own deviant perversions of social and idealistic righteousness.

Because this handful of Fascists knows what's good for everyone — and get off on the power — the takeover of our Government is actually considered their personal entitlement by Herr Rove and his gunsels.

In his speech before the Conservative Party of New York State on June 22, 2005, Der Karl mapped out his blueprint for “Amerika: The Rove Way” — a plan he's been working on since his teen years:

“...Conservatism is the dominant political creed in America...we are making progress on so many important issues...the great rise of a great cause.”

“The political realignment in America is moving ahead...the GOP has become a party of ideas...I believe will lead to the further realignment of American politics.”

“We are seizing the Mantle of Idealism...our movement's growth has made us Agents of Reform... (by) preparing Americans for the challenges of life in a free society...we are defending Time-Honored Values...political liberty depends on a healthy social and moral order.”

“...the President is committed to strengthening society's key institutions

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Larger-brained Humans Will Only Lead To Big Heads

As if we didn't have enough problems already, according to a report in the journal *Science* the human brain is getting bigger. In fact, from what I understand (based on my in-depth analysis of a five-word headline in the *New York Post*), there's a good chance yours may be outgrowing your skull right now. Signs this may be occurring include: vomiting, nausea, dizziness, frequent headaches and bleeding from the ears. If you suffer from any or all of these symptoms, DO NOT PANIC! They may only be the side effects of your current FDA-approved medication for acid reflux.

Then again, your brain might have



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

actually gotten bigger since you started reading this column. And not just because of the sheer quality of writing — which is always a possibility (keeping in mind the same symptoms may apply.) Before we go on, I should, as a respon-

sible journalist, take a moment and actually read the article. In the meantime, I'd suggest applying equal amounts of pressure to both sides of your head, just to be safe.

...OK. Sorry — false alarm.

After reading the article it has become clear the threat of spontaneous brain enlargement is actually very slim. In fact, the only documented case appeared in the *National Inquirer*, which reported that a young boy's head spontaneously grew three times its normal size during the Arkansas State Spelling Bee. Amazingly, nine-year-old Reggie Sims survived the incident and now lives in Southern California, where his oversized head goes virtually unnoticed. But for those of us living outside the Los Angeles basin, spontaneous head swelling remains extremely rare. However, researchers say the human brain is getting larger, albeit very slowly, through a process of evolution. At first, larger brains sounded like a good idea since bigger brains means a smarter gene pool, hence leading us toward a Utopian society free of want and suffering.

Or at least free from telemarketers.

The down side is that our great-great-grandchildren could end up looking like one of those bigheaded aliens from a 50s science fiction movie. True, this could happen anyway — possibly even in my own lifetime — if I don't meticulously screen each one of my children's potential spouses. However, assuming neither my son nor daughter marries anyone whose head fits snugly into a standard tractor inner tube, there's still the matter of future

generations to worry about. The journal *Science* article I read doesn't mention anything about other parts of the human anatomy growing in proportion along with our enormous brains — which, as I'm sure many woman would attest, may in itself double the male IQ. Biologists tell us that any "improvement" in the human anatomy is the direct result of evolution's attempt to meet the changing needs of mankind. For example: Our opposable thumbs. This uniquely human trait distinguishes us from other primates, most notably through our ability to use all three holes in a bowling ball.

Following that line of thought, larger brains is likely the result of our need as a species to absorb and process more information at a younger age. This was evident last night, when my six-year-old son whipped my behind in PlayStation 2 football.

He cannot read.

He cannot understand the tactical decision making required for offensive line formations.

He doesn't even know how many yards are in a first down.

Yet he can complete a Hail Mary pass and run a bootleg while I — with my larger and ultimately superior opposable thumbs — push buttons and move toggles as my defensive line is left picking grass from its teeth. I can't say for sure if this has any connection to the evolutionary process. But if his head gets any bigger, I swear:

He's moving to California.

(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)

Bullets and Blankies

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* recently ran a story about a movement to encourage younger and younger kids to hunt. This is not just a program to teach young children gun safety or how to participate in target shooting. Some states have a minimum age of 12 for hunting. This movement thinks 12 is too old, and would like to get as many grade school kids as possible out there hunting animals. It is spearheaded by a hunter named Kevin Hoyt. Since it was presented as a news story in the *NEW YORK TIMES*, they didn't take a position or judge it. Since this is on our Opinion page, I may take a position: This is crazy!

Fourth-grader Samantha Marley won a free "dream hunt" from the generous Hoyt. For three days, she hunted with Hoyt. Other kids go to Disneyland or visit Washington D.C. She got to shoot animals.

There are about 2 million fewer hunters today than 20 years ago. Some people see this as a bad thing. One of Mr. Hoyt's hunting buddies says, "Hunters should be included as an extinct species because we're falling away so fast, we need to be protected." Somehow, I don't have the same sympathy I have for whales or elephants as for the "endangered species" of the camouflaged deer hunter.

You might think that even though Mr. Hoyt sees nothing wrong with six-year-olds hunting, he would at least believe that if a kid is still in diapers, he's too young to take hunting. Not so. He proudly tells of taking his two-month-old son deer hunting. He wore the kid in a backpack as he shot a deer. He explained that he was "stuck" home babysitting, but felt like hunting. (And many of you thought Michael Jackson dangling that baby out of the hotel window was child abuse). I understand that sometimes parents may feel "stuck" and maybe bored while they sit with a baby. But is getting out the old shotgun the only alternative? How about playing games? How about reading the kid a story? Or, I guess he could've taught the baby how to juggle knives.

The idea is to recruit hunters at a young age, and then they'll be hunters for life. The tobacco and liquor industries have used the same approach for years. The difference is that tobacco and liquor can take years to kill, but hunting can do it instantly.

Accidents happen in hunting. Accidents happen during most activities, but



Modern Times
By
**Lloyd
Garver**

most activities don't involve guns and camouflage. So, it's reasonable to expect that as more and more elementary school kids pick up guns and hunt, more and more kids will be involved in hunting accidents. Isn't this reason enough to discourage this practice?

This movement to arm young kids and teach them to hunt is not just the goal of a few individuals. The National Shooting Sports Foundation, the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, and the National Wild Turkey Federation have started an organization called, Families Afield, to lobby states to lower the age at which children can hunt and loosen the requirements that say a young hunter must be accompanied by a parent. On one of their websites, these folks bemoan the fact that because of these rules, kids are discouraged from hunting and "more and more youngsters are settling into other activities like video games and organized sports." Wow, sure wouldn't want them playing baseball instead of drawing a bead on a moose.

Getting back to nine-year-old Samantha, sounding like the kid she is, she says, "Almost anything you hunt is pretty fun." She and her dad are proud of the fact that she shot her first deer when she was seven, and bagged her first turkey the same year. Both animals are trophies on a wall at home. This is America, so I guess your kid can hang whatever he or she wants to in your house. But personally, I like the idea of a kid's drawings being hung on the refrigerator, rather than a kid's killings being hung on the wall.

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 a weekly column for *SportsLine.com*. He can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com

• TENUTO ... Continued From Previous Page

— families, schools, communities, and protecting those mediating structures so important to our freedom, like our churches, neighborhood and private groups — the institutions that inculcate virtues, shape character, and provide the young with moral education... Bush supports welfare reform that strengthens family and requires work... adoption and responsible fatherhood initiatives ... (and) has fostered a culture of service and citizenship."

"Conservatives... want few regulations... measure the effectiveness of Government programs by results... believe in curbing the size of Government..."

we believe in accountability... in 'a culture of life...'"

The Conservatives believe in accountability!?

HA!

I told that one to my cat and even she laughed!

His rhetoric has an eerily familiar ring to it. This is, after all, the mantra of the despot. In fact, compare this to writings about the Nazis and it's undeniable some of this is lifted conceptually, if not word for word, from speeches and writings attributed to Adolf Hitler.

(One shouldn't be surprised as all that, considering Grampa Prescott Bush's well-documented history of dealings with a certain Teutonic dictatorship circa 1930-1943.)

In his own words, Der Karl says that he's out to alter American politics and Government, going so far as to call Conservatism a "creed" (the German Nazis were fervent in the belief that their party was a religion). He doesn't want to work

with Liberals or Democrats or anyone else — Turd Blossom wants everything shaped to his own personal satisfaction.

Ramrod John Roberts in as lead vocals of the Supremes, and that's essentially bottom of the ninth with two out for our side.

Who is Herr Rove, known throughout the land for more than 30 years (his entire adult life) as a liar and scoundrel who will stop at nothing to achieve his goals, to be the moral compass of our Nation? Who is George W. Bush, for that matter? Or any of these malignant human tumors of the Fascist Occupation?

As to children, since he's not a parent, who in the hell is Der Karl to say anything about what they need.

Each area Herr Rove stated his personal Conservative movement and Bush #43 are dedicated to improving are places into which the Government has no business intruding; as these Fascists have muscled their way in, Government has ballooned while becoming increasingly more ineffective. From everything I've read about Ubermeister Karl Rove, he was never "one of the guys." He probably never played baseball or football, or even rolled in the mud. One look at him and you can guess he most likely was the pudgy, kiss-ass dork who always saw to it that Billy got caught smoking in the boys' room, then made sure teacher didn't forget to assign homework at 2:55.

And destroying the United States, while using George W. Bush as his front man, is just Der Karl's way of getting back at those testosterone-rampant dudes who beat the snot out of him for his lunch money all those years.

'Who's Ever Heard Of Clifton, Texas?'

Evacuees Welcomed To Community

By DEBORAH MATHEWS
STAFF WRITER

CLIFTON — Millions of Gulf Coast Texans fled the eye of Hurricane Rita for higher ground late last week, seeking temporary refuge to wait out the storm. Some planned to stay with relatives, while others were quite literally playing it by ear.

Along the way, communities of every size welcomed these evacuees and fellow Texans as temporary guests. It was a matter of lending a helping hand to those who needed it.

In some areas, especially in Central Texas, virtually every available space was being utilized as thousands of volunteers pitched in to help.

One such city was Clifton, located in southern Bosque County, where the already active Clifton Ministerial Alliance stepped into high gear.

The lighted sign on the First Baptist Church lawn that lay adjacent to much-traveled Highway 6 simply said: "Evacuees Welcome."

Residents and churches in Clifton, population about 3,500, had earlier joined efforts to assist evacuees from Louisiana and Hurricane Katrina. Now they extended those efforts to help fellow Texans from the Gulf Coast region as Hurricane Rita approached.

Due to the efforts of the Waco Interfaith Conference Network of Churches, Baptist Men's Association, Clifton Ministerial Alliance, private citizens, and signs posted on the highway, people numbering in the hundreds found safety and compassion in Bosque County.

Locals volunteered to help in whatever capacity necessary and say they will continue their efforts as long as the need remains. David's Supermarket, Two Amigos Restaurant, and other local business have donated food and other items to evacuees.



REV. A.L. JONES AND HIS FAMILY, all of Beaumont, share a room at the First Baptist Church of Clifton. "It wasn't that long ago that we opened our own churches and homes to evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, and now we're the ones in need," said Jones.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

As of Saturday, 79 individuals were housed at First Baptist Church in Clifton, utilizing classrooms and other areas as temporary bedrooms.

First United Methodist Church and Clifton's Church of Christ had close to 20 evacuees residing in their facilities, while some families were staying in private homes. All the evacuees have expressed their heartfelt gratitude at the outpouring of support and aid they have found in Clifton.

Many of the evacuees said that it wasn't so long ago that they were aiding Hurricane Katrina victims in their homes and churches, and now they find themselves in need of the same.

People from Houston traveled approximately 24 hours to reach Clifton.

"The first gas we could find was in a little town just south of Waco, I think the name is Mexia," said Houston resident Christian Cuevas.

"We had filled up our cars before we left, and thank God we did. Stations were out of gas. There just wasn't any more," she said.

Faced with temperatures of more than 100 degrees, evacuees dealt with the lack of public restrooms. "There just were none," said Cuevas. Businesses were closed and there were no roadside parks. "That was the worst part. No air-conditioning, the drivers, and no bathrooms."

Evacuees had to maneuver through congested driving situations.

"People would just push you out of the way," said Cuevas. "It was awful. Whether you moved or not, they were coming."

Cuevas traveled with her four children and her sister, Virna Jimenez, and two children. Knowing that they would be evacuating, they tried to stock up on water and necessary items before leaving.



"EVACUEES WELCOME" reads the sign outside of the First Baptist Church of Clifton. Working in conjunction with organizations based in Waco, church officials opened their facilities to Hurricane Rita evacuees.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



HOUSTON RESIDENTS Christian Cuevas and sister, Virna Jimenez traveled with their six children to Clifton. Leaving Houston Thursday, the family traveled more than 24 hours with food, clothing, and a wheelchair packed in their two small cars and headed North. The women said, "We didn't know where we would go, but the hand of God was always with us."

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

"A case of water was \$24, if you could even find any," said Cuevas.

"Canned food that was usually 33-cents, we had to pay \$3 for," said Jimenez.

Filling the floor of the car with water, fruit, peanut butter, and the very basics, the two women headed north.

Both said that they packed only enough clothing for about three days.

"Whatever would fit in a backpack," said the women.

"We didn't know where we would go, but the hand of God was always with us."

After being in the car for more than 24 hours, the two women and their families arrived in Waco where they were greeted with "No more room." A hotel attendant provided them with a phone number of a shelter. They contacted the shelter and were directed to Clifton.

"Who's ever heard of Clifton?" said Rev. A.L. Jones of Beaumont.

"We hadn't. Now, we feel so wel-

come and so very grateful."

Jones and his family left Beaumont Thursday, but because of impossible traffic, returned home and left again on Friday.

"It wasn't that long ago that we opened our own churches and homes to evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, and now we're the ones in need," said Jones.

Both of the families agreed that although the hurricane is something horrific, it is a blessing in disguise.

Cuevas said, "This has reminded people of what is truly important, each other. We all have to look at this as a sort of lesson. Everyone has opened us to communicate with one another and be more helpful to each other. We were losing our sense of what is important. This has diverted attention to what matters."

Jones said, "Tell everyone how truly grateful we are. I know where Clifton, Texas is now and you can bet I won't forget it. We are so grateful."