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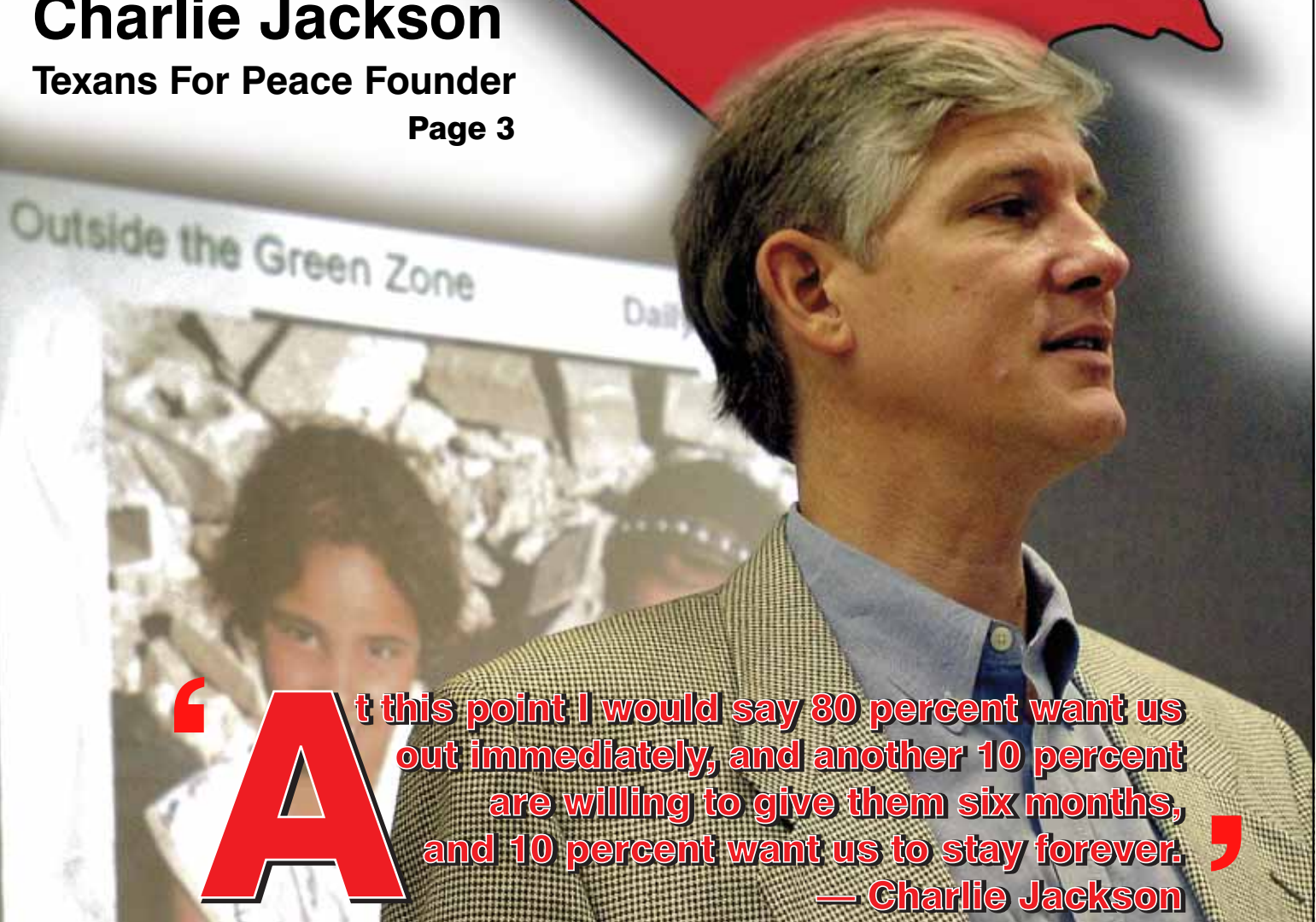
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Casualties:  
U.S. Military Deaths  
2,068  
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# The Lone Star ICONOCLAST

# ASK IRAQ

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**A**t this point I would say 80 percent want us out immediately, and another 10 percent are willing to give them six months, and 10 percent want us to stay forever.  
— Charlie Jackson



# FEMA Reneging On Post-Katrina Contract Promises

WASHINGTON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency is practically reneging on promises to re-open bids for contract work and hire firms owned by minorities in areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

Homeland Security Department now says that by February, the new contracts will be awarded, which is basically when the original contracts will be completed.

Last month, FEMA acting director R. David Paulison promised to increase percentage to minority-run firms though it has only risen from 1.5 percent to 1.8 percent of the \$3.1 billion, which

## ImpeachPAC Raises \$30,000 In First Week

CRAWFORD — A new political action committee created to support congressional candidates who favor impeaching President Bush and Vice President Cheney announced Friday that it raised \$30,569 from 696 donors in its first week-end of operation.

“Thank you if you’ve already contributed!” said the posting on ImpeachPAC’s website. “Our goal is \$100,000.”

According to a new NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, 57 percent of Americans believe Bush deliberately misled people to make the case for war, compared with 35 percent who say he gave the most accurate information he had.

## Senate Calls For Report On CIA’s Secret Jails

WASHINGTON — The Senate on Friday called for a report on the alleged secret prisons run by the CIA overseas.

U.S. intelligence chief John Negroponte is planned to testify in secret to two Congressional intelligence panels.

The Washington Post reported recently that the CIA operated “black sites” in eight countries, in Eastern Europe and Asia. A number of countries have denied any knowledge of such prisons in use by the U.S. to interrogate terrorists.

The European Union said it intends to investigate the allegations. No countries were named in the Post’s report. The White House has not confirmed or denied the report.

is way below the five percent of federal contracts regularly allocated for said firms.

The promise was made amid allegations of favoritism to Shaw Group Inc., Bechtel Corp., CH2M Hill Inc. and Fluor Corp which were all given no-bid contracts for temporary housing worth about \$100 million each.

Needless to say, lawmakers and

business groups were upset at FEMA’s slow actions. FEMA and HSD has said the original no-bid contracts were awarded to hasten recovery that competitive bidding would have slowed. Officials say that the process to rebid contracts is slow because of paperwork.

The first 15 new contracts, which amount to \$100 million each, are

planned to be awarded by Feb. 1. Eight of these are meant for minority-owned businesses.

Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, a ranking Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, plans to file a bill requiring the HSD to keep a regular database for small and minority-owned businesses to be hired as prime contractors.

## Wal-Mart Heads Knew Of Illegal Workers, Said Affidavit

WASHINGTON — Two top Wal-Mart executives conspired with cleaning contractors to hire illegal immigrants, says an unsealed affidavit filed by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A New York attorney requested that a federal judge unseal the document that was linked to an investigation of the world’s largest retailer by federal immigration officials.

Since Wal-Mart opted to pay \$11 million in March to settle the case, the company insists that its executives had no knowledge nor backed the illegal actions. This new document contradicts the retailer’s defense, says the lawyer who requested the document be unsealed.

Wal-Mart continues to deny the heads had direct knowledge, noting that the execs’ comments were pieced from

larger conversations.

In the affidavit, Steve Bertschy, a Wal-Mart vice president who managed maintenance of all Wal-Mart stores, commented to a contractor: “And they load them up into one or two apartments and they take a family of five and pay them \$1,000 a week, that’s probably a dollar an hour if they’re there seven days a week and they’re not paying taxes because they’re not getting paid a fair rate compared to U.S. standards, then they start stealing from the store to make up the difference.”

Federal officials through raids found illegal immigrants jammed into small apartments and sometimes living in Wal-Mart stores and moving from job site to job site with their personal stuff.

# Cheney, Libby Worked To Out CIA Agent, Says Former Senator

WASHINGTON — Vice President Dick Cheney and his former chief of staff were a part of a broader White House campaign to smear a critic of the invasion of Iraq by outing his wife as a CIA operative, said former Sen. Bob Graham of Florida recently to the MIAMI HERALD.

Graham, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee in 2002, dared Cheney to “defend and explain himself” as his former aide, I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby faces charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in the CIA leak case.

The White House refuses to comment about the case because of the ongoing investigation.; however, President Bush lashed out at congressional critics over the Iraq war last Friday, noting that their actions encourage the insurgency and discourage the U.S. forces in Iraq.

Bush’s comments were made in a speech delivered a Veterans Day at Tobyhanna Army Depot. Graham, who voted against the war resolution on

grounds of the war on terrorism draining domestic resources, spoke on a conference call arranged by Senate Democrats.

## McLennan County Adoption Day, Fair Coming To Waco On Nov. 19

WACO — Sponsored by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the Waco-McLennan County Young Lawyers Association, the McLennan County Adoption Day will be held on Saturday, Nov. 19, from 9 to 11 a.m., at Baylor Law School, 1114 S. University Parks Drive, in Waco.

On the day of the event, those who have adopted and are finalizing the adoption of 12 children who were previously living in foster care, will be cel-

ebrated. The Adoption Fair will provide information to those interested in adoption. Local adoption agencies, Child Protective Services and families who have adopted in the past will be present to answer any questions.

This event is made possible through a grant from the Texas Young Lawyers Association and a donation by the Waco-McLennan County Bar Association.

For more information, contact Angela Cruseturner at 254-297-7322



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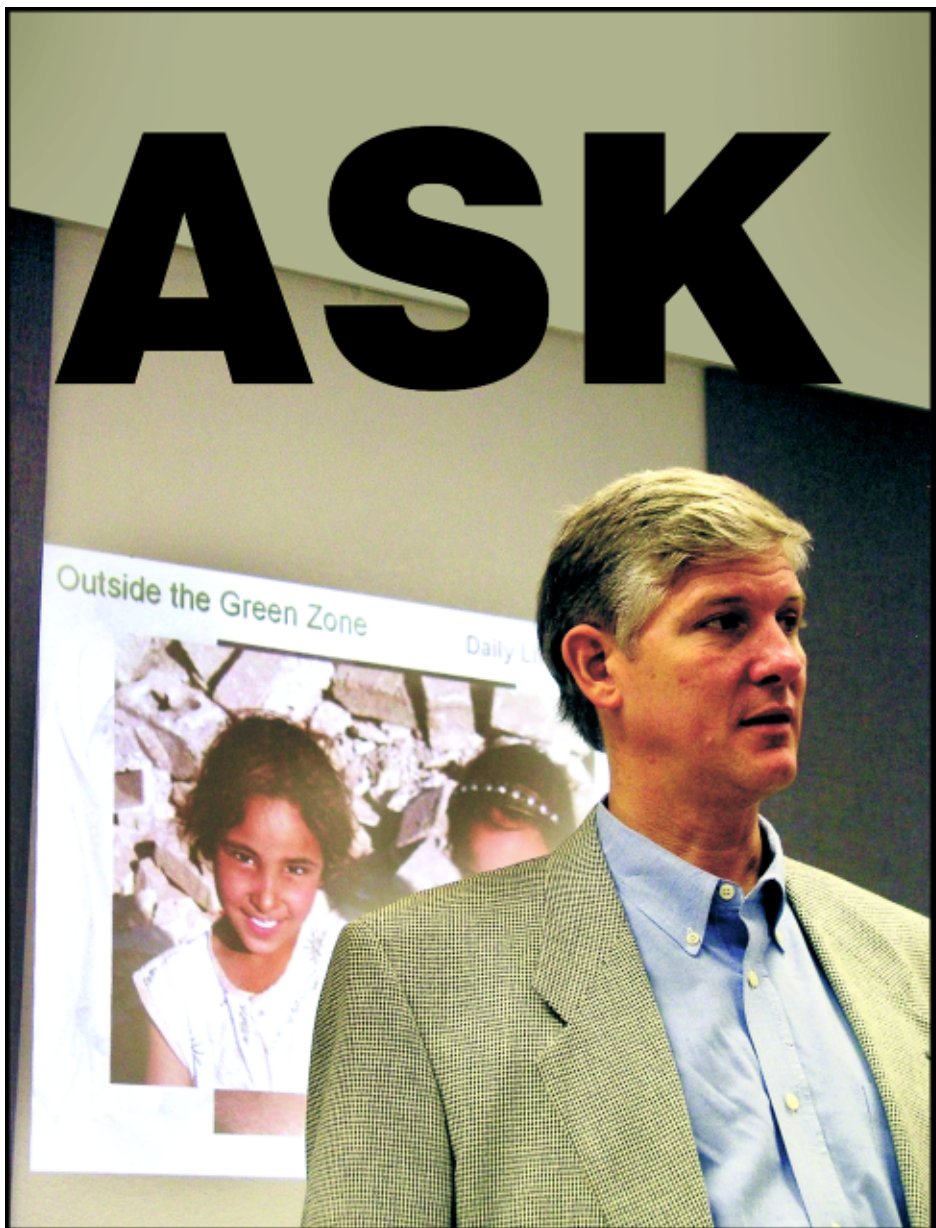
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# IRAQ



## Peace Advocate Finds Truth In Iraq's

# 'Red Zone'

## Interview With Charlie Jackson, Texans For Peace Founder

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

BURNET — Charlie Jackson isn't your typical daredevil.

Last September, the founder of Texans for Peace traveled to Iraq for the third time in as many years on a two-week, fact-finding mission with a six-member delegation led by a Christian Peacemaker team.

But traveling to Iraq is one thing. Traveling around inside Iraq is a whole different ball game, especially if you're a civilian from the United States.

Most professional journalists in Iraq, though less of them stay there now to report than they did even a year ago, dare not venture outside the U.S. military's secure "Green Zone" in Baghdad which means they rarely, if ever, report on the day-to-day experiences of common Iraqi citizens.

Jackson, on the other hand, prefers to get his news from the horse's mouth. During his trip he walked in the "Red Zone" and met with religious leaders, educators, business professionals, medical personnel, public works officials, and what few representatives of international humanitarian organizations that were still left operating there. One night, his group stayed in the house of an Iraqi family in Najaf. The rest of the time they stayed in a rented apartment.

Since he returned home, Jackson — the international computer consultant

based in Austin — has found time to speak about his experiences in Iraq in a presentation entitled, "Outside the Green Zone: The Truth About Iraq." About 40 members of the Burnet County Democrats heard it last Thursday at the Burnet Community Center before more stops over the weekend in Kingsville and Corpus Christi.

After his presentation, THE ICONOCLAST's Nathan Diebenow had a burger with Jackson and his press secretary, Alyssa Burgin, at a local fast food joint in Burnet for a quick talk about "extreme traveling," Jean-Claude Van Damme's popularity, and Iraq, among other things.

.....  
ICONOCLAST: What was your purpose in Iraq? Why did you go back there for a third time?

JACKSON: Well, for me personally, I wanted to see what the difference was between my last trip, which would have been a year-and-a-half ago, and see what improvements had been made in reconstruction. I was really hoping to see that a lot of things were improved in the country and find out what is currently going on.

ICONOCLAST: What were some of the conditions that changed?

JACKSON: The streets are cleared of rubble and clutter. Trash pick up is regular. Water and sewer has improved, so some basic infrastructure has improved. Electricity hadn't improved at

all. Traffic and gasoline shortages were still a large problem. Unemployment has come down a little bit. It's 50 percent now. It had been much higher. The schools were probably the bright spot. The schools have actually improved quite a bit. They put a lot of money in improving the schools, everything from painting to fixing them up to getting materials to just expanding them.

ICONOCLAST: Who is making these improvements? Is it U.S. money, Iraq money, or foreign money?

JACKSON: Mostly it's Iraqi money, not foreign money to be sure, but mostly it's Iraqi money, projects run by the Iraqi government. There are some discretionary funds and projects that the U.S. Army is doing, particularly the water and the sewer. The water and sewer in Baghdad that was I think with the 4th Infantry and the 1st Cavalry Divisions' generals who were funding that out of their discretionary funds. Fixing up parks, there was a lot of cleaning up parks, putting in new playground equipment, what they could do with the limited amount of money they had. We didn't see evidence of large expenditures for large-scale projects like fixing the electrical problem, those kinds of things.

ICONOCLAST: What do you mean by discretionary funds?

JACKSON: Discretionary funds are funds that the military commanders have at their discretion to spend — individual unit commanders even. They are generally found monies, called CERP funds, but it is my understanding that those are monies that they just

find, such as in Saddam's old palace, and they are turned over to the military, and they can use those as discretionary funds. They are separate from the funds that come from Congress for reconstruction. Most of the congressional funds are managed by the USAID, not the military, so USAID has a presence there, and they are supposed to be responsible for reconstruction mostly

ICONOCLAST: But those are just construction projects in the Green Zone, right?

JACKSON: No, they are supposed to be responsible for any of these new projects that are supposed to be going on in Iraq regardless of where they go. It's just that we didn't see any construction projects, except inside the Green Zone.

ICONOCLAST: It's not that they are not there doing their job, it's just that you personally didn't see anyone working on anything.

JACKSON: We went to the refinery. We went to the electrical plant. Throughout the countryside. To the hospitals particularly. We didn't see a lot of evidence, especially after two-and-a-half years of rebuilding, reconstruction, reformulating, except like I said the schools and the universities had been fixed up a lot. They had been looted and burned, but I didn't see what I expected to see, and that was a dramatic improvement in the year and a half since I'd been there. In fact, what we saw were more barriers and more parts of the city cut off and more concrete, more concertina wire, and economic condi

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## • ASK IRAQ ... Continued From Page 3

tions for a lot of people worsened.

ICONOCLAST: What are Iraqi women expected to do in typical day?

JACKSON: Well, it depends on which women. There's women who stay at home, and there's plenty of women that work, that are professionals. If you go to hospitals, more than 50 percent of doctors and physicians are female. Any business you go to, you'll see women working from secretarial positions to administrative positions, so a large segment of Iraqi workforce is women in a variety of professions. I won't say just like here but similar to the U.S., and there are women who stay at home usually because they have young children. The schools are almost run by all women. The schools I visited, which were elementary schools, have almost all women teachers and principals.

ICONOCLAST: How are any these women treated generally?

JACKSON: Well, they seem to be respected for what they do in their positions. The big change I've seen among women is that now when they go out in the streets, they go out less often, and they're wearing head coverings more, and they are more fearful about going out in ones or twos and even in groups as being a target sometimes of criminal activity and sometimes of other things. The situation in women has worsened probably from the way it was a year or so ago, but it is probably much better than in some other countries, so the women there feel pretty much empowered, and they are not likely to sit by and have their liberties taken away from them.

ICONOCLAST: One of the things I hadn't thought about but was a very good point in your presentation was the story you told after a question from a guy about what the youths of Iraq are feeling. Are they hopeful? Are they optimistic about the future?

JACKSON: Right, and I told the anecdote because I couldn't tell I don't know about all the youth. In this anecdote, there's this family I visited three times on three different trips. The first trip the kids are bright as buttons. They're all straight A students. The family is pro-American. Good times all around. The second time, pretty much the same, except when the mother was out of the room, the son came back in and talked about how he had walked up to a U.S. soldier who he talks to every day and said how easy it would be for him to walk up with a gun and shoot the soldier right there. The soldier laughed at him, and the boy felt insulted by it.

Now, I didn't think that was a big deal at the time; however, on this trip when I went back, they wouldn't have me in their home anymore. They were very pleased to have me back in Iraq. The parents met with me outside of their home, but my concern is with their son who was a straight A student. They had told me that their son had failed his senior year. So going from a straight A student to failing your classes your senior year in high school is a pretty dramatic turn around.

My concern was that there was something behind that. It could be anything, but it also could be his son is dissatisfied with the war and wants to join the rebels. But I don't know that for a fact. Maybe he has some other problem.

ICONOCLAST: In your presentation, you also made a connection with teen-



agers over here in the same kind of situation.

JACKSON: The same kind of situation. One of my son's friends last year had already turned 18 and decided to graduate early from high school, so he could join the Marines early and go off to fight in Iraq. This was a student who was planning to go to college. He was well off. There was no reason for him to do anything except college where his older brother is, but instead the guy is fighting in Iraq now. This was a kid who used to come to our house for sleepovers and dinner, so I know him pretty well and it's a shame to see he has made that decision and that he's fighting over in Iraq. Having been to Iraq, I wouldn't advocate that any kid would go over there. I really wouldn't. I wouldn't for adults either, but adults go there all the time.

ICONOCLAST: One of the things you pointed out was how easy it was for anyone to go to Iraq.

JACKSON: People go all the time. A Royal Jordanian flight or several other airlines. You can literally book your ticket all the way through. American Airlines has this deal with the Royal Jordanians. You can just book your ticket all the way though to Baghdad. I haven't tried, but I wouldn't be surprised.

ALYSSA BURGIN: Can I ask you a question here? Are people going to be regularly flying into Baghdad now or are they going to be driving from Amman?

JACKSON: Nobody drives because it's too dangerous on highways.

BURGIN: So everyone is going to fly in.

ICONOCLAST: Those who can afford to. There are buses — the highway runs right by Falluja, so it's a dangerous strip of highway.

BURGIN: I don't think you said it in this presentation. I've heard so many presentations but you talk about in one of your earlier presentations that when the plane landed, it went into this bizarre spin.

JACKSON: Yeah, it went into a spiral landing so that it wouldn't get shot down. Instead of a low glide, it comes in a corkscrew landing.

BURGIN: That makes it sound like flying into Baghdad is not something everybody would want to do.

JACKSON: Well, planes do get shot at. Planes have been shot down in the past. I think that there are four regular commercial airlines that fly in and out of Baghdad. And they have Iraqi airlines that fly to other cities — Mosel, Basra

— and the first time I was in Iraq, I flew on a plane from Basra, and then I had to get in this long SUV ride all the way back to Amman, but they had commercial flights. We just did it because we were cheap.

ICONOCLAST: When you were there, when an Iraqi guy comes up to you because you're obviously foreign-looking, do you tell him that you're Texan?

JACKSON: Well, it depends. If they don't look like any harm, I'll just be straight with them. If they look like they might be a little bit belligerent, I'll just start speaking French or Spanish, and pretend I don't understand them. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: Because you look like you're Spanish, right?

JACKSON: If nothing else, it confuses them. "Okay, so where are you from? I don't understand your language." "I don't understand English. Sorry!" It's an old trick but it seldom happens. Most people I tell straight out.

ICONOCLAST: How do they treat you?

JACKSON: "Wow! I hadn't seen any for a long time!" Some haven't seen any Texans ever. "Come home. I'll buy you dinner!"

ICONOCLAST: Is it bizarre to you or is it normal?

JACKSON: You're a curiosity. You're from another country, and they're like,

**At this point I would say 80 percent want us out immediately, and another 10 percent are willing to give them six months, and 10 percent want us to stay forever. That's just walking around and asking people that question on all sides — Christian, Muslim, Turk, Arab, rich, poor. It seems to have shifted so that a lot more people now — the whole country wants us to leave now, except for those who are personally profiting from the war and that's pretty much the only ones who want the U.S. to stay. And we met some of them. There were some who are doing very well with the contracts and concessions and things by the U.S.**

— Charlie Jackson

"Ah! We like Americans! Come home with me!" Usually, they'll be polite. "So why are you in Iraq? Right now you're not wearing a uniform, and you're walking around." A lot of it is shock and surprise. They are used to seeing foreigners all over the country, and they are used to having tourists, especially in Shia shrine cities from Shia communities all over the world. And some of those communities have different races.

It's not surprising to see Germans or Russians or even Americans in the old days. It's more of a surprise now with a war going on. They don't see any reporters or anything. We didn't see any foreigners this time either, so while we were there, we saw people who looked like they were from Iran and a few Middle Eastern countries.

The only place obvious foreigners — they were trying to disguise themselves, and they were by themselves, and they were men dressed up in Middle Eastern garb. Everybody was avoiding them, too. They were spies. It was just so obvious. They were curious about us, but we didn't interact with them. It was so funny because they were so obviously foreign, too, but they disguised themselves. We saw through it in a second. They weren't U.S. military, but they were something.

ICONOCLAST: Do the Iraqis still believe that there is a separation between the U.S. government and the U.S. popu-

lation?

JACKSON: Yeah, in their country they were used to that between the Saddam regime and what the people wanted, and they see that its perfectly reasonable in the U.S. between the regime that runs things here and what the people want.

ICONOCLAST: How do they feel about the insurgents now?

JACKSON: They're disgusted with the insurgents. They hate the insurgents. They are quick to point out that before the invasion, there were no insurgents in their country or in other countries, but they didn't have a problem with insurgents. Now it does have a problem with insurgents. So on one hand they traded off a dictator, but on the other hand, they've got a force in charge of their country that allows insurgents to bomb people at random. That's the way they look at it. They blame the U.S. for the insurgency problem. There's no sympathy for the insurgent attacks because they blow up innocent civilians all the time, but there's some sympathy for the attacks on the U.S. whether they are by insurgents or Iraqi nationalists.

ICONOCLAST: So what percentage of the Iraqis would you say want the U.S. to leave immediately?

JACKSON: At this point I would say 80 percent want us out immediately, and another 10 percent are willing to give them six months, and 10 percent want us to stay forever. That's just walking around and asking people that question on all sides — Christian, Muslim, Turk, Arab, rich, poor. It seems to have shifted so that a lot more people now — the whole country wants us to leave now, except for those who are personally profiting from the war and that's pretty much the only ones who want the U.S. to stay. And we met some of them. There were some who are doing very well with the contracts and concessions and things by the U.S.

ICONOCLAST: The thing that I didn't even think about was what you said about the Iraqis just approving their constitution and saying, "Well, just take this piece of paper, and we'll change it later. We just want to get the Americans out now."

JACKSON: A lot of countries have a history of changing their constitution a lot, so they don't look at it as something that is set in stone. They tend to be on the more practical side of things, so they basically said even if they don't like it, they'll hold their nose and vote for it because there are those things that will get them further down the road to get an elected government and to take control of their own affairs. They might have gone and voted against it in the booth, but it's pretty evident that they didn't. They voted for it.

ICONOCLAST: So they weren't pressured to vote for it.

JACKSON: We didn't see any pressure. I mean, there were groups that took positions, but we didn't see obvious pressure on people to vote one way or the other as much as what happened before where there was real pressure by groups and a lot of intimidation. It looks like a clean, fair election for the most part.

ICONOCLAST: You mentioned that there are going to be 14 permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, but do you think

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that even if we have bases there, a civil war is going to happen in Iraq?

JACKSON: I think that whether we're there or not is not going to effect if they have a civil war. We're not going to do anything to stop it if we're there or if we leave. Our presence won't make any difference, I don't think. I think its more likely that our presence will cause more continued attacks and the people will be caught up in those attacks. The other thing is that as long as we are present, we're also staging ground for all these other organizations that might be helping to create these problems, underground clandestine kinds of activities, which might be adding to the civil unrest and instability rather than detracting from it. We can't say for certain that the only people that do the bombings and insurgence activities are Middle Easterners.

ICONOCLAST: To some degree we seem to set ourselves up for this sort of escalation. I mean, because we had military bases in Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Ladin's supporters attacked us. And now we have bases in Iraq, so the next time our soldiers get attacked there, we're going to send more troops to stop the aggression.

JACKSON: That was on the news today. One of the senators said that 150,000 soldiers — because we've gone up in our troop levels — is not enough, so we should send more troops. There's already more people calling for sending more troops because the violence has gone up. Now you see how this spirals. It keeps going up. We send more troops, so there's more violence, and we send more troops. If we were to cut the troops in half, probably the violence would be cut in half.

Now that's our logic, but that's the opposite logic of the planners who are conducting war. They think that if you don't send troops, you'll have more violence. The evidence so far is to the contrary. The more troops, the more violence. I mean, remember all these milestones. They said, "Once this happens, the violence will go down. Once they had that, the violence would go down." Through every one of those milestones, the violence has continued to escalate.

Either there is some other factor in play or the people are just wrong — the same people that were wrong in the logic that said we should invade Iraq in the first place are still wrong in their logic saying they understand the situation today. They don't understand it any more today than they did they understood it the first time, and none of those people were fired. What you'd do is say, "Guys, you're losers. You're incompetent. The advice you gave me was wrong. You're fired!"

No one in this administration that promoted this war has been fired for any of the failures. The only ones who were fired were those who spoke out against the war. You keep the same people, you get the same results. There are plenty of Republicans saying that to George Bush every day. Right now, Rumsfeld's head is out there, but I don't think they are going to get rid of him. He's the greatest head of defense we've ever had!

BURGIN: I don't think Bush is in a position to let those people go, though.

JACKSON: Okay, well, let's look at the



**CHARLIE JACKSON, the founder of Texans for Peace, traveled to Iraq for the third time in as many years on a two week, fact-finding mission with a six member delegation led by a Christian Peacemaker Team.**  
— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Katrina thing. Bush could have said you're incompetent. He didn't fire him! He should have fired him! Instead they wait until he decides to resign.

ICONOCLAST: You don't run a business like that. I keep bringing that up, but it's true if you believe government should be run like a business.

JACKSON: But the people who took over his administration weren't business leaders, either. They haven't proved that they could run a decent business, either. So you could say that they began incompetent and they continue to be incompetent. I mean, Condelezza Rice. Would you trust Condelezza Rice to run a business? None of them. Other people in the administration maybe, but not any of the people on the side of the war stuff. Even Dick Cheney. Golly. He's probably the sharpest business guy. Wait a minute! He's still getting big contracts. What can I say?

ICONOCLAST: You went to Iraq in September, and you've held a handful of presentations before this weekend's round since you've been back. What's been the feedback you've gotten?

JACKSON: Mostly curiosity, which is what I expect. I expect people wanting to know more and to be curious about Iraq. Sometimes very probing questions. Very seldom do you get people that have a real position who'll say, "By golly, this is what I believe!" although you heard that one guy stand up and state his position.

For the most part, the reason people want to come to these things is that they want to learn. We're trying to be as truthful as possible when I present, even though I may be opinionated, so the people can have some good facts and learn more about the situation and the country itself if they are interested.

BURGIN: There have been some interesting contrasts. For example, the presentation I did yesterday was in front of a group that had never heard this before. They were the Hill Country Democratic Women, which is New Braunfels all the way up to Blanco. It's a new Democratic group and most of the women have not been real active in anything, but now they are getting active. I had to catch them up with the whole story not only with his trips but

really a lot of information about Iraq.

In contrast, the Kendell County Democratic Women, a group to which I belong — that's Burney, north of San Antonio — they heard his presentation after his first trip, second trip, and now his third trip, and they were so with it. I mean, they asked amazing questions.

JACKSON: But truthfully, the first time, they were just as clueless as any other audience.

BURGIN: But they followed everything he did very closely. It's amazing because that group now numbers 65 people. They feel they are really a part of this, that they are a part of the organization because they've given a lot of money and they've done a lot of great things. It's great to see people like that learn and pick up on it and want to be a part of it.

JACKSON: We're talking about like the people here tonight, just regular citizens taking time out of their week or their night to go and learn about something they don't really have to. If they didn't want to, they could have been at home watching TV. They're interested in finding out what's been going on and being engaged, sometimes for political reasons but sometimes because they just want to know

Hopefully some people are interested in what's going on in Iraq. It would be a shame that we're having this huge giant war going on and nobody in America cares at all. Sometimes I feel that way, except the military families. They go drive themselves crazy trying to get news about what's going on. They don't get enough news. I mean, can you imagine the mothers at home?

I read some of the e-mails from particularly mothers, but fathers too, and some of it talks about how some of them go nuts not hearing about their child for a week or two and they don't know what's going on. Every time they hear about an explosion and somebody's killed in Iraq, they don't know if it's their kid. We hear that a lot, and some people at some point have a complete nervous breakdown in some families. I mean, I would, too. If my son was over there — well, actually, I'd be standing in front of him with a gun. (Laughs) But I'd definitely be keeping up with him.

BURGIN: It's the amazing inability to

find out what's going on over there that drives you crazy. I remember during your second trip, you were in very close contact with me by e-mail, but then you fell out of contact for like three days. During that time, I knew his itinerary — I knew where he was going — so I knew where he was going, but it just so happened that there was this convoy that was attacked and everybody was murdered right where he was supposed to be, and of course, I had no way knowing. I didn't know what to think. I made frantic phone calls all over the place, and people treated me like, "There, there."

JACKSON: The worst was my first time because we were coming out of Basra. We were coming back to Baghdad and we were in an auto wreck. I ended up in the hospital. One of the guys was killed, and all anybody got back here was "He's in the hospital" and it was a week before I could get in contact with anybody, so nobody over here knew what was happening. My whole family, I just knew they were going nuts. I worried about them, but I was hurt. I was in the hospital. It was quite difficult at that time to phone, so I can imagine what people are going through.

ICONOCLAST: Now that I'm thinking about this, do you get a thrill out of this — going to these war ravaged areas of the world? Did you outgrow roller coasters?

JACKSON: Well, no, I'm not one of those thrillseekers or what they call extreme sports. I tend to be on the more safe side. You know, I was an adult before I learned how to ski, and I'm a careful skier. I've never broken anything in my life until I was in that car wreck. I tend to be a little —

BURGIN: Stuck in the mud. I'm sorry. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

JACKSON: No. I like to travel and learn new things. I'm not a thrillseeker physically, but when it comes to peace and justice issues and pushing the envelope, sure, I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to take on the worst dictator in the world for two reasons. One, I want to see how far I can push the envelope, and two, I've learned that the more you push the envelope, there's nothing there. The world isn't as scary and a danger zone as great as they appear to most people. You don't find that out until you try to overcome it. I was scared to death the first time I went to Bosnia. The second time, I was less scared. The second time I went by myself. The first time I went to Iraq I was scared. The second time I was scared. This time, it was a walk in the park. The other people, I'm sure, were scared to death. I would have been, but it's not so much seeking the thrill of the experience, it's really not so dangerous. I try not to be foolhardy, let's put it this way, so I'll walk down deserted alleys sometimes —

ICONOCLAST: You're an extreme traveler!

JACKSON: I'm sort of an extreme traveler, but say there's a volcano that's going to erupt, I'm not going to go in the volcano. I'm not crazy-crazy. Look, nobody has shot me with a bullet. I avoid the places where they are shooting. It doesn't mean that they are shooting every place in Iraq, and I don't try to make myself a target, except to the U.S. troops, but that's a whole different story.

You know the day they had that marches in Washington, D.C. in September? I couldn't be here, so I stood on top

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## • ASK IRAQ ...

Continued From Page 5

of a building with my t-shirt facing the snipers with their scopes because I knew they could see it. (laughs) The group wouldn't let me go protest. They said it would be too dangerous and I'd be shot. We actually had done protests there before, but this time around, no way. Either things had changed and they are more dangerous or the current group is more afraid than the previous group. I don't know. I can't say. Part of the rules is that you've got to follow the rules.

It's also we're a part of a temporary delegation which they have a lot more responsibility for. Now the group itself, the permanent team members, three of them just got back escorting a group of Palestinian Iraqis all the way up trying to get back into Syria and ended up camping out in an refugee camp on the border after trying to get the Syrian government to allow them in and they went through some hairy situations and went through cities where bombings happened. The difference is that they are willing to take the risks for themselves, but they couldn't take them on for someone else. Personally, I would take on that risk, but I wouldn't necessarily drag somebody else in it if I thought it was that dangerous.

ICONOCLAST: I follow you. It's like when you drive a car by yourself, you'll drive faster than if you have a little kid with you.

JACKSON: Right, but the scariest place I've been so far has been Bosnia. It wasn't Iraq in terms of the most danger I'd ever seen. In Iraq; there's a civilization and some norms and rules of behavior you can expect normally. Even in every place I've been so far, there's some semblance of order and most people are reasonable, intelligent people you can talk to. In Bosnia, the war had dragged on. There was so much genocide that people disintegrated. Any person could come out on the street and shoot you dead and not even have a conversation. It was that callous attitude in Bosnia. I took way too many risks the second trip and ended up going over land and meeting the Serbs and the bloodthirsty mercenary kids who were drunk and on drugs carrying guns. I've had a lot more people point guns at me in Bosnia than I did in Iraq. It's funny. The only people in Iraq that had pointed a gun at me had been U.S. troops and one Iraqi policeman because we had stopped to get out and the other car stopped and we were going to give them some time. They get nervous when a car stops next to them. He pointed his gun at us and then he shot it up in the air. "Move along!" I would have much rather a U.S. soldier point a gun at me. Wait, their aim is much better. They practice much more.

ICONOCLAST: I know what you're talking about. I watch the History Channel. So talking about visions, I know you have a hope for the future of Iraq, but what is your realistic vision of what Iraq will be in the future?

JACKSON: I think what will play out in the long term there will be some stability. The people will be in control of their own government. It will live up to the promises of a free democracy and a free society, the largest in the Middle East, and it'll probably become one of the top economies again in the world. I'd say one of the top 20 countries with



ABOUT 40 MEMBERS of the Burnet County Democratic Party last Thursday attended Charlie Jackson's PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Outside the Green Zone: The Truth About Iraq." — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

the kinds of things it had in the 1970s.

I mean, they have the possibility to reconstitute that because they are a wealthy country, and they have a lot of intelligent people. They have infrastructure, and they have the motivation, and they are in the Middle East. I really see it becoming a really prosperous, stabilized, western kind of country in the future, and I think that's what most Iraqis want to see in the future, too. It's been frustrating how long it's taking to get there.

We were hoping things would improve rapidly after the U.S. came in there, but they're not seeing that. But they'll probably be better off in 10 years than New Orleans. They'll probably have more money, energy, and drive to get there, on one hand. On the other hand, they are also in the crossroads of a bunch of conflicts in the Middle East and they could get dragged into any of those any day. But there's no reasons they wouldn't end up being like a Germany in 20 years. I mean, a real prosperous, big country.

Ideally, their access to markets is great. They have multiple huge industries. They are sitting at the right place in the Middle East to be a leader in the Middle East than a poor country like Egypt, and Iran is not going there anytime soon. A lot of the other countries are real repressive and don't have that western outlook in terms of the future of their people.

ICONOCLAST: It sounds like you're seeing Iraq the way those neo-conservatives see Iraq.

JACKSON: Well, if their goal really was a stable, prosperous country in the Middle East, that would be the place. I don't think that was their goal. I think they wanted to control the Middle East

and they wanted a base to do it. In terms of the country with the most prospects of success in the Middle East, it would probably be Iraq, followed by Jordan, Israel. I mean, Iraq will be much wealthier than Israel will. More water, more resources, more population.

ICONOCLAST: What about your vision of the U.S. foreign policy and the U.S.'s image abroad in the future?

JACKSON: I don't know. It suffered a lot of damage because of the war, not only in the Middle East but everywhere in the world. The policy has caused a major attitude toward the U.S. You saw it in Latin America, in Europe — you see it everywhere, and I travel a lot, but it quickly got there. It got there because of the decisions of a small group of people in Washington who led us down a path that changed the entire attitude of the U.S.

I think it can just as quickly change back if the U.S. does the right things to the world and participates the right way from the world's perspective. In order to get there we've got to stop the war because that's one of the bad things from an outside perspective, regardless of our arguments for staying. The world condemns it still.

But you know even people who don't like U.S. policy want to be Americans in most cases. They want to dress American and watch movies.

BURGIN: They want our consumerism.

ICONOCLAST: Well, a lot of it is "Gosh! I watch *Desperate Housewives*. I want to be just like that!" (laughs)

BURGIN: That's a terrible thought. JACKSON: It's a terrible thought, but it's true. So many parts of the world. Let me tell you. It's funny where you see it. You don't see it in all the expected

places. You go to Singapore and you'll be walking around and you'll be saying, "Man! This looks like Pasadena, Calif." Modern, upscale, they've got Disney stores. They've got Subway, escalators, everything, wireless Internet. "Wait a minute. There's something odd here. Let's see. They're all wearing the latest fashion. Oh, that's right. They're all oriental." But other than that, it's like you just dropped one of the upscale areas of California. I mean, it is more American than America. And they know it. They do it consciously.

ICONOCLAST: But they want to do it better.

JACKSON: So, by-golly, if they have a Starbucks, we've got to have a Starbucks. So in some places that have the money, you see that immediately, but even in the poorer places, you see a lot of that. I'm up in the villages of Guatemala where kids can't afford shoes. Their parents are begging for money for shoes and they are all wearing van Damme t-shirts. Jean-Claude van Damme is popular in Latin America. You might not say that's American, but that's American. And these are people who don't have TVs or movies.

BURGIN: I don't understand that. When I lived in El Salvador, they would bring in bags and bags of clothing that had been brought in by the pound from the United States and it was in really bad shape, but they would unload the bags and the children who had no education, no sophistication would go through the bags and pull out Nike. They knew the name. "Nike! Nike!" I don't understand that and I still don't. I mean, where did they get that?

JACKSON: The gods must be crazy. BURGIN: Our consumerism is crazy.

Continued On Next Page



# Big Oil, Senators Butt Heads Over Price Gouging

WASHINGTON — Oil company chiefs denied allegations of price gouging dur-

ing a Senate hearing last Wednesday. Lee Raymond, chairman of Exxon

Mobil Corp., in defense of record-setting gasoline prices, stated that his industry's profits similar to other industries when revenues and earnings are compared. Other executives noted that they spend their billions of dollars in profits in investments.

good. Twenty-eight states have price gouging laws, though they vary in enforcement policies.

The 29 largest oil companies are predicted to earn \$96 billion this year, according to industry analysts.

In a separate statement, Sara Zdeb, Friends of the Earth legislative director, noted that oil companies are profiting not only from the high cost of oil but also from lavish government tax cuts.

"These big oil companies were on the receiving end of more than \$4 billion in spending subsidies and tax incentives included in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. And they were already set to reap an additional \$10 billion in tax cuts authorized prior to passage of the energy bill," she said in a written statement. "You name it, there's a tax cut for it. Congress should repeal these special interest giveaways."

## • ASK IRAQ ... Continued From Page 6

JACKSON: Again, the remote villages of Guatemala where they can't afford shoes, they found out I was a computer expert and the next thing out of mouth was, "Give us computers." I'm like, "Wait a minute! You don't even have electricity! What do you know about computers?" "Well, if we had computers, we could get jobs and we could learn to do this, that, and the other." How did they learn about this? Some of them had been to the city and they saw these people working on computers. They might not have heard about Bill Gates, but somebody has figured out the difference between people who sit in air conditioning and the people out toiling the fields.



have enough know-how. If you came here to steal the oil. Fine. Take the oil, too." That's how bad some of them want the U.S. out, and they were a rich country before oil was discovered. I mean, they were a pretty well off country any day of the week — agriculture, manufacturing, trade, even if they didn't have a drop of oil, they'd already be a wealthy country, and they know that.

That's one of the reasons why they are so educated and sophisticated. They've been doing it for forever. Since the invention of the library, writing, math. It's a part of their culture. Reading and writing has been a part of their culture for how many years? Since cuneiform days. It's not like it's a backwater country. Yeah, it's been reduced to that mostly because of Saddam and the sanctions, not the war. There are enough educated people that know they can go back to that.

Now if another generation went by and they didn't have the money and had sanctions or Saddam for another 10 years, you might not could have said that because it wouldn't have had the money for education. It would have regressed and there is some regression just by the brain drain from the country. They're trying to bring it back, but they can't bring it back if there's a war going on.

ICONOCLAST: I liked the comment you made during your presentation about asking an Iraqi what he wants.

JACKSON: To everyone of these right wing pundits, that's the first thing I say. Ask the guy that you're interviewing who is such an expert on Iraq, "How many Iraqis has he or she talked to?" Simple answer: Question the credibility of the statements they make of what's good or bad for Iraq. If they have a basis for making those statements, fine. If they've never been to Iraq, if they've never met an Iraqi, they only got it off a news release from the White House, well, call them on it because they're probably getting a news release from somebody else who has never been to Iraq. We've got this fabrication that has no basis in reality and that's what everybody is making their decisions on in this country, good or bad about the war. It's based on a whole fabricated book. I mean, they've spun it really well out of Washington. It's that simple.

Now, you'll find Americans, especially do-gooders, who will say, "We don't want to change their culture. They live such bucolic lives on farms we don't want to introduce things that completely change their culture." Why don't you let them make that decision? Ask them if they'd like to have a refrigerator or have their food spoil. Don't you say, "Oh, you can't have a refrigerator because we want you to live like you've lived for centuries." Let them decide. Give them the money. Let them have the jobs. Let them have what they want, and you know what it's going to end up? Pretty soon they'll all have cell phones. They'll have refrigerators. Their children won't be dying of dysentery and their children will have shoes on their feet. Why do we want refrigerators? For the same reason. It's not a luxury anymore. It's considered a quality of life thing. You live longer if you have a refrigerator.

I see that around the world, but Iraq is different. Iraq was already a modern, first world country, which is enough reason to think it's funny that we talk about spending money to rebuild there. We're talking about putting money into a rich country, not a poor country. There are plenty of poor countries around this planet that we will spend less money on than we end up spending in Iraq, which is the joke of this whole deal.

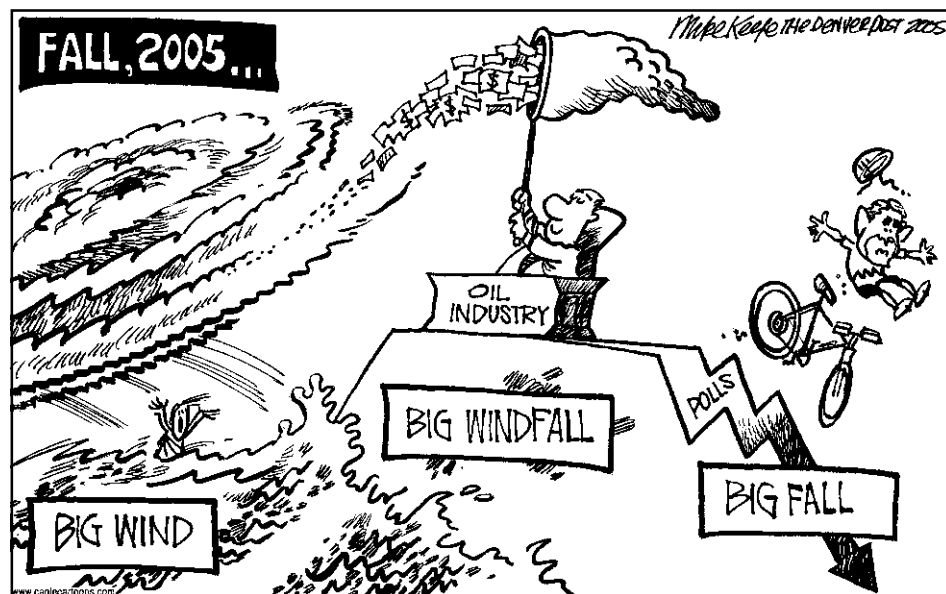
If we left tomorrow, and the Iraqis are pretty savvy, they say, "Leave tomorrow." Well, what if the U.S. pulled all of its money out?" "Fine, pull the money out. We'll even give you the oil! If you just leave the country, we'll give the oil to you, too. Leave. We've got enough money. We've got enough resources. We

## 10 More U.S. Troops Are Killed In Iraq

BAGHDAD — At least 10 U.S. troops were reported dead this past week as guerilla warfare continues in Iraq, bringing the total U.S. military deaths to at least 2,068 since the war began in 2003.

According to an Iraqi doctor, more than 50 bodies, including women and children, were found in rubble near the Syrian border town of Qusayba, which U.S.-led troops swept through in an anti-insurgent offensive last week.

The military claims that every effort was made to avoid civilian casualties.



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# Texas Bans Same-Sex Marriage, Gov. Arnold's Ballot Initiatives Bite Dust

AUSTIN — Texans, through a constitutional amendment, became the 19th state to ban same-sex marriage last Tuesday. Question remains on whether the amendment eradicated all marriages in the process.

On the left coast, Mainers decided to keep its own state law to protect homosexuals from discrimination in employment, housing, and education. This is the third time voters ruled on similar anti-discrimination laws. Massachusetts is the only state that allows same-sex marriage.

In a special election, Californian voters rejected Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's bid to strengthen his legislative power through four ballot initiatives. These measures would have limited the use of the member dues of public employee unions for political purposes, capped state spending, redrawn legislative districts and made public school teachers work longer to achieve tenure. The move was seen as a threat to Schwarzenegger's chances of reelection.

Californian voters also overwhelmingly killed a ballot measure requiring the parental notification of minors who want abortions.

Ohio voters, where complaints of shadiness marred the 2004 presidential



elections, killed all four proposed election-law changes, including two that would have removed election oversight duties from the elected Secretary of the state and political direct mapping from the Legislature to two separate, neutral

or bipartisan commissions. Outside Democratic groups supported the measures.

New Jersey, where citizens saw the state Senate president replacing two governors who left office early, has now an office of lieutenant governor, per voters wishes.

In a reaction to a mayor striving for political correctness, the Fort Worth suburb of White Settlement, Texas — named after the white pioneers who settled the territory once inhabited by Indian tribes — kept its name. The proposed initiative would have renamed the town of 15,000 "West Settlement."

Voters in Washington state okayed a statewide ban on smoking inside public places. The fine for breaking the new law is as much as \$100 for smoking outdoors within 25 feet of a building entrance.

A proposal to construct a 10-mile, \$1.7 billion monorail was rejected in Seattle, Wash.

Handguns are now banned in the city of San Francisco, Calif., and military recruiters are there are also banned from public high schools and college campuses.

Two races for governor in were seen as a possible signs that President Bush's coattails are ripping. In New Jersey, Democratic Sen. Jon Corzine defeated Republican Doug Forrester by 10 percentage points, and GOP-leaning Virginia, Democratic Lt. Gov. Tim Kaine beat Republican Jerry Kilgore by more than five percentage points.

Cincinnati, Ohio's third-largest city, has elected its first black mayor when State Sen. Mark Mallory beat Councilman David Pepper in a runoff. Both candidates are Democrats.

## FSA Accepting Emergency Loan Applications

CLIFTON — Coryell, Bell, Bosque, Hamilton, and Lampasas counties were declared eligible for Farm Service Agency (FSA) disaster emergency loans on Oct. 31.

Generally, that means that farmers who have lost at least 30 percent of their production due to the damages and losses caused by high winds are eligible for FSA loans. Proceeds from crop insurance are taken into account when determining eligibility.

FSA Farm Loan Manager, D. Dale Vann, Sr., is urging farmers who are

interested in receiving an emergency loan to get their applications into FSA as soon as possible. Vann said, "We hope farmers will get their application in early rather than waiting until near the deadline, which is July 3, 2006. The longer they wait, the more chance there is for long delays. If the applications come in early, we can avoid backlogs and speed up the process."

The FSA office is at 297 E. Hwy. 22 in Hamilton. The telephone number is 254-386-3913.

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# Ohio's Voting Machines Had Security Flaws: GAO Report

CRAWFORD — The Government Accounting Office recently released a report supporting claims that security flaws with electronic voting machines in Ohio may have swung the 2004 presidential election in President Bush's favor.

The GAO found three major problems with the machines: faulty encryption codes made it possible to change audit logs without detection; files defining the look of ballots could be changed to a different candidate; uncertified versions of voting system software were installed at the local level.

The GAO that "some of [the] concerns about electronic voting machines

have been realized and have caused problems with recent elections, resulting in the loss and miscount of votes."

Concern over electronic voting machines' reliability was raised prior to the 2004 presidential election when the CEO of Diebold Warren O'Dell vowed that President Bush would win Ohio and the presidency. Bush went on to defeat Sen. John Kerry in Ohio by 118,775 votes.

Soon after the election admit reports of voting machine irregularities, Rep. John Conyers, a senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, requested that the GAO investigate the

electronic voting machines in Ohio.

Mass protests took place in Ohio, and the Judiciary Committee received over 57,000 post-election complaints during several hearings. Accusations that President Bush had "stolen the election" climbed as it was revealed that Ohio's secretary of state was also co-chairman of Bush's Ohio campaign.

Reports of fraud continue to come out of Ohio as one campaign operative, Tom Noe was indicted in late October for essentially money laundering to the Bush campaign — by writing \$45,400 in checks to a third party who then made checks to Bush's campaign.

## Grandfathering Period For Electrical Licensing Nearing End

### Applicants Who Have Not Completed Requirements By Dec. 31 Must Pass Exam

AUSTIN — Time is becoming an issue for qualified electricians who want to obtain a state electrical license without passing the state electrical exam during the state's second electrical licensing grandfathering period.

Senate Bill 1317, which was passed by the 79th Texas Legislature, reopened the grandfathering period, but also set a deadline of December 31, 2005. Applicants who have not completed all requirements for licensure by then will be ineligible to take advantage of the grandfathering period provisions.

The law allows two routes to a state license without a test.

First, any electrician who can show that they hold or have held a municipal or regional electrical license and can meet experience requirements may use that license as the basis for a state license. Second, electricians who live and work in areas of the state where no electrical licensing existed prior to the creation of the state license may qualify for a license without testing if they can

demonstrate that they meet specific experience or education requirements.

"Consumers have a right to know that any licensed electrician that they retain has the knowledge and experience to properly perform his job," said William Kuntz, TDLR's executive director. "But an electrician that has already proven that he is qualified shouldn't be required to prove it again to get a state license. The vast majority of the municipally-licensed electricians in Texas already have passed a test. This grandfathering period allows one last opportunity for those qualified, experienced electricians to get a state license without passing another test."

After the grandfathering period ends

on December 31, applicants for most license types will be required to pass a test demonstrating they have a working knowledge of the electrical code. Only applicants for apprentice and business licenses will not be required to pass a test.

"If you believe you qualify for an electrician's license, now is the time to apply," Kuntz said. "Beginning January 1 everybody must pass the test to get a license."

For more information about electrician licensing or the grandfathering period, applicants may contact TDLR's Customer Service Division at (800) 803-9202 or (512) 463-6599 or by email to <customer.service@license.state.tx.us>.

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# Sheehan Set To Return To Camp Casey

— First On The Agenda, Civil Disobedience —

By DEBORAH MATHEWS  
STAFF WRITER

CRAWFORD — Gold Star mom Cindy Sheehan has made plans to return to Crawford for the Thanksgiving holiday, staying throughout President Bush's vacation. Supporters have scheduled several events for the six-day vigil.

According to Tamara Rosenleaf, the group will arrive in Crawford on Tuesday, Nov. 22. Plans are to protest at the site of Camp Casey I, where previous demonstrations in that area have proven difficult for Sheehan as local law enforcement forced the relocation of many of the activities. The activists plan to begin the vigil with "civil disobedience."

On Wednesday, Nov. 23, participants will organize the loading of a truck with donated items. The collection is to be donated to Hurricane Katrina victims. Thursday, to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, supporters will share a meal of Iraqi food, prepared at the site of Camp Casey II.

The dedication of a stone, cut by Ron Teska, will be held in Crawford at the Peace House. Sheehan will be on hand to witness the placement of the large

marker in the gardens at the Peace House. The stone has not only the name of her son, Casey, but also 22 other names of fallen soldiers.

At some time while in Crawford, the group may have a tree dedication ceremony at Camp Casey II.

Owner of the one acre of land where the camp sits, Mark Matlage, has asked the supporters to plant the tree in honor of the events occurring there. These plans have not been finalized as the

search for a mature red oak tree is ongoing.

Matlage has also installed power and water on the site, making long stays easier for the participants.

Tentatively planned for Saturday, Nov. 26, is a rally or march, with the group disbanding on Sunday.

## 'Reopen911.org' Advocate Protests In Front Of NY Times

NEW YORK — Mega-millionaire Jimmy Walter, who has donated millions of dollars in his quest to have the 9/11 attacks of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon reinvestigated, spent several days last week in front of the NEW YORK TIMES building protesting the newspaper. He says the newspaper has declined to allow him to purchase an advertisement that he wants published.

Walter had been carrying a sign that reads:

"NY Times Prints Millers Lies.  
Censors \$1,000,000 challenge.  
Cowards and Traitors!  
Free DVD, Reopen911.org"

Walter says that on the fourth day of his protest, law enforcement personnel were called "to have me harassed for standing in the same spot I had stood in every day."

The philanthropist says he had made it a point to be overly courteous and "backed away from anyone who came close. I helped invalids and delivery men through the door. I never said any curse words or harassed anyone. I told the other security guards, who were all nice and polite, that I would cooperate and did not wish to block anything. They told me that the position I was in was okay for three days. Many, many employees had taken my free DVD and contest sheet, giving me a wink! Many said they already had it! Others had turned away in shame. Some were angry."

Walter says, however, that on the fourth day, a security guard yelled at Walter and lied that "I had been sticking my sign in people's faces when it had never been more than six inches from my body and I had never been closer

than three feet from anyone." The guard "stalked off saying he was calling the cops, without any further explanation," said Walter.

Shortly thereafter, an officer arrived, noted Walter. "He was an upright, polite guy. He asked what I was doing and I replied, 'Protesting the NY Times.' He said, 'Exercising your first amendment rights, that ok by me.' and went inside. He came back out and said the letter of the law was that I had to be 20 feet from any active door and at the curb. He helped me find a legal place and reminded me to watch the traffic so as not to get hit."

Walter added, "Please give a cheer for this really good NYPD officer who did not bend to the will of the puppet masters, the traitors, censors, and propagandists." The millionaire plans to continue his protest.

## 'Seasons Of Light' Brings Holiday Magic To Planetarium

STEPHENVILLE — The spirit of the holiday season and the high-tech magic of the state-of-the-art Planetarium on the campus of Tarleton State University combine for a special presentation of shows now through December. "Seasons of Light" is the holiday show set to premiere Friday, Dec. 9, at 2 p.m.

Dr. Michael Hibbs, Planetarium Director, has released the holiday schedule which as always includes a mixture of popular old shows and some special new presentations. Shows are planned for two dates in November and four in December.

"Our holiday show, 'Seasons of Light,' is about the coldest and darkest of seasons—a season which holds some of the warmest and brightest celebrations of the year," said Hibbs.

Narrated by NPR's Noah Adams, it traces the development of many of the world's endearing holiday customs, and how they involve lighting up the winter season. Whether it's the burning of the Yule log, the sparkling Christmas tree lights, or the lighting of the Menorah and luminaries, each brings a spark of brightness into the dark and cold environment.

The show also recounts the historical, religious, and cultural rituals practiced during the time of winter solstice—not only Christian and Jewish, but also Celtic, Pagan, Nordic, Roman, Egyptian, and Hopi. It also takes a look at some of the more light-hearted seasonal traditions, including gift-giving; kissing under the mistle-

toe; songs about lords a-leaping and ladies dancing; and the custom of decking the halls with greenery and candles. St. Nicholas, Sinterklaas, Kris Kringle, Father Christmas, and Santa Clause all drop by as well.

The show on Dec. 9 is free to the public as part of the University's "gift" to the Cross Timbers region. "Seasons of Light" is sure to warm holiday spirit and get everyone in the proper mood for the days ahead. Organizers encourage people to make plans now to attend.

On Saturday, Nov. 5, a special Planetarium "marathon" will be held beginning at 3:45 p.m. with the popular "Enlightening Lightning." To follow will be "Mars Quest" at 4:45 p.m.; a command performance of the "Halloween Show" at 5:45 and "Ring World" at 6 p.m. The admission price of \$2.50 per person is good for one show or all four.

On Saturdays, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Dec. 10, and Dec. 17, the presentations will include "Enlightening Lightning" at 3:45 p.m.; "Seasons of Light" at 4:45 p.m. and "Mars Quest" at 6 p.m. Again, admission fee of \$2.50 covers all three shows.

Housed under a 40-foot dome, Tarleton's Planetarium is the pride and joy of the University family. The facility is equipped with a computer controlled Digistar II star field projector (one of only forty in the United States) and 18 slide projectors, two video projectors, and two DVD players.

Hibbs and his staff are always pleased to show off the capabilities of the unique arena.

## The Legend of Zorro



De La Vega rides again. It is 10 years after Zorro defeated the evil Montero. He and Elena are married with a young son. As the provinces begin the process to vote themselves into statehood, the criminal element is at work to destroy our young nation. Zorro and Elena each plot out how to defeat the evil forces without the other knowing what is happening.

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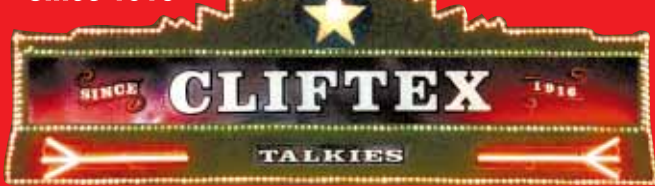
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# Gouge Thy Neighbor

*J.R., pass the gravy. I'm hungry.  
Sorry, Miss Ellie, I'm keeping it all to myself.*

CEOs of the top five oil companies, who dodged being sworn in to tell the truth, went before Congress last week to explain why they have been gouging the American public with obscene, record-breaking fuel prices and reaping outlandish profits at a time when middle and lower-class families are struggling to make ends meet as they cope with the aftermaths of recent natural disasters.

"When they're down, don't just kick 'em. Stomp on 'em some. Keeps 'em in line."

Democrats were outraged.

Republicans were bothered a little, but understood that billions in profits to companies that refuse to build new refineries, thereby causing a bottleneck in supply, is smart business. Screwing American families is okay, since it is all part of getting more money to the rich, while taking from the poor and middle classes, which is what most Texans chose to champion in the last presidential election by the way they cast their votes.

What's interesting is that, about the time that gasoline prices started to leap off the page, Republicans had just written an energy bill giving \$14.5 billion in tax breaks and incentives to the energy industry at the behest of President Bush, who glowingly signed it into law.

A gift like this, at a time when the public debt is mushrooming and nothing is

being done to pay it back?

But let's keep our priorities straight. The extra income to the oil industry will allow oil companies to buy more stock and pay their CEOs millions more without batting an eye. In fact, why not have a "food for oilmen" drive and take meals off our tables to give to them, too?

Oops. You're right. We are already doing that.

Why aren't the Republicans irate about the gouging? They can't be. You see, these same Republican aristocrats simply couldn't forget that the oil industry contributed \$25.5 million to federal candidates during the last

election cycle. Eighty percent went to GOP pachyderms. So, if you were one of those Americans who bought gasoline, you were at the same time contributing to a political candidate of the oil industry's choosing. You were helping them purchase some senators.

The money was, of course, laundered with ethyl detergent, and you don't know for sure on whose clothesline it now stretches, even though the embroidery in the corner says GOP and the blend is laced with ivory.

Here's how the third quarter shaped up for the big five: Exxon Mobil, \$9.9 billion "increase" from 2004; Royal Dutch Shell, \$9.0 billion "increase" from 2004; BP, \$6.5 billion "increase" from 2004; ConocoPhillips, \$3.8 billion "increase" from 2004; Chevron, \$3.6 billion "increase" from 2004.

From where did these enormous profits come?

We paid for them at the pump.

— W. Leon Smith



## Editorial

### First 'Parallel Election' Provides Citizen-Run Exit Poll

ARCATA, Calif. — Over 55 percent of all voters who placed their official ballot at the Arcata City Hall precinct also participated in the region's first "Parallel Election," staffed by volunteers of the local citizens group called the Voter Confidence Committee of Humboldt County (VCC) this past Friday, Nov. 11.

The group undertook this project to compare the results and verify the accuracy of the official vote tally performed on electronic machines with secret programming code.

VCC co-founder Dave Berman was optimistic about results of the Parallel Election, saying, "Participation was much greater than expected."

He added, "Moving forward, voters can expect the VCC to remain vigilant about monitoring election results, and we will conduct this same experiment in the 2006 primaries."

The VCC and other election reform advocates have raised serious concerns about Humboldt County's vote counting program called GEMS, manufactured by Diebold. On the whole, this software contains trade-secret ("proprietary") programming kept private from election officials and the public at large, said Berman.

"While no one can explain precisely how the program works, it is known that GEMS operates on Microsoft's Access platform that has been proven unsecure by industry experts. The citizen-run Parallel Election was conducted largely to increase awareness of this with Humboldt's voting public."

On election day, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., VCC volunteers invited voters exiting City Hall to participate in the Parallel Election by replicating their votes on a second, secret, parallel ballot that duplicated what was on the official ballot.

Official poll results provided by the Humboldt County Elections Department

ment indicate 473 voters cast official ballots inside City Hall, and there were 261 people (55.2%) who participated in the VCC project. A comparison of the two sets of voting results can be found at: <<http://tinyurl.com/af8go>>.

Berman noted that, throughout election day, many Parallel Election participants expressed gratitude for the VCC's watchdog role.

"Even though we were located across the street, calling out to voters as they exited the polling place," said VCC co-founder Scott Menzies, "most voters were eager to participate and supportive of our efforts."

Josh Meisel, Ph.D. from HSU's Department of Sociology, oversaw the hand count of parallel votes conducted in the open public space of the HSU library lobby.

While statistical analysis of the results were inconclusive, Meisel said the VCC's experiment made "an excellent point about the functional utility of the Parallel Election — the questions raised about making such (voting behavior) comparisons is analogous to the uncertainty surrounding voting systems that eliminate paper trails for vote verification."

Since there was no way to prove that people voted exactly the same way in the Parallel Election as they voted in the official election, Meisel added, "We cannot assume that the 261 Parallel Election voters are representative of all 473 precinct voters."

"Despite some of the inconclusive results mentioned by Professor Meisel, the VCC's concerns about election conditions remain unchanged," said Berman. "Our trial run Parallel Election is proof positive that voters are wary of electronic voting machines, and looking to ensure the verifiability of official results."



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# Gay Rites After The Honky-Tonks Close

## Racial Tensions Cause Cart War

In an urgent letter dated Nov. 11, 1857, the secretary of state pleaded with Gov. Elisha M. Pease to avoid jeopardizing U.S. relations with Mexico by using every means at his disposal to end the Cart War in South Texas.

Prior to the struggle for independence, Anglo-American colonists and Mexican inhabitants of provincial Texas lived side by side with a minimum of racially tinged conflict. But all that changed after 1836.

In the emotionally charged aftermath of the Alamo slaughter and the merciless massacre at Goliad, retaliation was inevitable. Blinded by rage and hell-bent on revenge, most Anglos forgot that many of their Mexican neighbors also had taken up arms against Santa Anna.

The backlash frequently took the form of a greedy land grab. In Victoria, for example, the founding Mexicans were driven from their homes and their property was seized without compensation. Local law later required Mexican visitors to register within 12 hours of arrival and to obtain written permission for departure.

A new wave of persecution followed the Mexican War and Lone Star statehood. Twenty families, permanent residents of Austin, were run out of town in 1853 on the bogus charge of horse stealing. The innocent refugees were subjected to the same mistreatment two years later in Seguin.

Because their native nation had banned human bondage decades earlier and routinely offered sanctuary to runaway slaves, Mexicans were often seen as sinister abolitionists. During a slave revolt scare in September 1856, they were evicted en masse from Colorado and Matagorda counties. The hysteria spread west to Uvalde County, where Mexicans had to produce passports regardless of their country of residence.

Meanwhile, angry Anglo teamsters declared war on their Mexican competitors, whose lower rates had locked up the lucrative freight business linking the port of Indianola with San Antonio. At least 75 Mexican oxcart drivers lost their lives as masked gangs turned tranquil trails into a bloodstained killing ground.

To some the so-called "Cart War" was simply the latest chapter in a fight to the death between two incompatible cultures. Expressing support for the vigilantes, a Karnes County newspaper called "the continuance of peon Mexican teamsters on this road an intolerable nuisance," while an editor in adjacent Goliad County warned, "The first offense committed by armed Mexicans in this section will be the signal to sweep them from the face of the earth."

Not all Texans applauded the carnage. In an editorial deploring the violence, the SOUTHERN INTELLIGENCER reasoned, "If we permit the driving out of Mexican laborers, a war upon the Germans will come next and that in

## This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



turn must be followed by a war between the poor and the rich."

Though susceptible to the prevailing prejudice which had produced the bloodshed, the NUECES VALLEY WEEKLY advocated tolerance toward "the greaser population." In a classic case of benevolent bigotry, the publication lectured, "The fact of their being low in the scale of intelligence is no excuse for our making them the scapegoats for all the outrages that have been committed during the progress of this unfortunate war."

By October 1857, the Cart War had blossomed into a major international incident. On two separate occasions, the Mexican minister called upon Secretary of State Lewis Cass to protest the murders of his countrymen in South Texas.

Cass appealed to Gov. Pease for prompt action in restoring law and order in the chaotic southern section of his state and guaranteeing the safety of citizens and aliens alike. Within 72 hours, the governor obtained permission from the cooperative legislature to send a full complement of Texas Rangers to the troubled region.

By then, however, the teamster terrorists had widened their war to include everything that moved on the unprotected trails between San Antonio and the Gulf Coast. Anglo freight haulers, army caravans and ordinary travelers were increasingly the targets of indiscriminate attacks.

As a result, public sympathy for the raiders evaporated. Deciding to deal with menace themselves instead of waiting for the Rangers, South Texans formed posses that combed the countryside for the suddenly unpopular outlaws.

In a few short days, the Cart War was over. Those self-appointed "soldiers" taken prisoner were hanged on the spot, and their surviving accomplices high-tailed it for parts unknown.

All that remained for the Rangers to do upon reaching the pacified scene was to count and bury the bodies. Any attempt at identifying the members of the lynch mobs would have been a waste of precious time and scarce resources.

The teamsters had gotten what was coming to them, and that qualified as justice on the Texas frontier.

"Outlaws & Lawmen" - "Best of This Week in Texas History" Vol. VI now available for \$10.95 plus \$3.25 postage and handling from Barte Haile, 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581.

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Texans are law-abiding. They abide so much law just about ever'budy breaks it."

It is significant that on the 57th eve of Kristallnacht, Texas voted to continue our hateful ways.

In a state with nation's highest divorce rates and the largest concentration of spousal and parental abuse, we voted to continue the persecution of homosexuals.

Yep, load the pickup, boys, stop by the American Legion Park and pick up the softball bats.

WE'RE GOIN' QUEER KNOCKIN'!!! Now I know good ol' State Rep. Warren "Amen Corner" Chisum, who give us this god-given ballot choice to show we hate queers just as much as Niggers an' Meskins, said he aims to listen to Fags and treat 'em with respect. But he's got to say stuff like that so real Texans will be able to express their true feelings.

We'll listen to 'em for a while. 'Fore we lynch 'em.

Now we can kick snot out of 'em with a clear conscience.

And guess what, boys!

He's goin' after them pansy divorce laws next!

Ol' Warren says he's gonna fix it so your ol' lady cain't run off an' file for divorce and spend your honky-tonkin' money on child support just because you're an asshole!

Now we can beat our wives like we beat our Bibles!

Instead of draggin' you down to the courthouse faster than you can say "community property," you'll have two years to beat some sense into the ol' heifer.

'Course Ol' Warren calls it "counseling."

But it really means if you git one too many col' bairs in you an' persuade her to change her attitude and bridgework, you can just say you're sorry instead of her an' little Bubba runnin' off to some shelter while you pick up trash on the highway in them crotch-bindin' orange coveralls.

Okay enough vitriole.

And yes, we really are that venal and stupid.

By almost three to one.

Add to that mix Preacher Robertson calling down a pillar of fire on the township of Dover, Pa., just because they don't vote according to the twisted channels his mind follows as he lies in bed nights masturbating to a Heronymus Bosch PowerPoint.

And it never once occurred to Petty Pat that with statements like that, he pretty much disproved any notion of "intelligent design."

Thing is, even those of us who sort of like the Prime Mover aspect of the Mystery just prefer that such discussions be kept down the hall in the theology or comparative religion classes.

Comparative anatomy and molecular biology are tough enough.

I once had an employee who had AIDS.

He was an old friend.

I never much liked his choices.

But they were just that: *his* choices.

When he got sick, he got fired from the radio station where he worked and lost his insurance.

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



He missed a lot of work; wasn't worth much when he did show up.

Like I said, he was sick.

And, like I said, he was a friend.

One day I heard a commotion back in the composing room.

I walked in to find my friend standing there trying to staunch the flow from an X-acto knife cut. A deep one.

My employees, most of whom were in the pews every time the church door opened, were pressed against the walls, horrified and immobile.

I wasn't in much danger. A little bleach on my hands took care of any potential problem.

I had a few months of blood tests to go through, but it was a small price to pay to help an old friend.

Thank God I'm not a Christian.

Nope, I long ago graduated off the prayer lists.

Now the people who just *associate* with me make the prayer lists.

Were I a Christian, I could not have carefully planned an eternity in hell, where I can perpetually torment the likes of Warren Chisum and Pat Robertson.

Oops, sorry preacher.

Third time this week I bumped you into the lake of fire.

Grab this poker, and I'll pull you out.

I'm here in hell because I just didn't have enough cheeks to turn to a three-to-one margin that voted to hate someone they don't even know.

That, and I missed Uncle Hugh.

But in case all you foot-washin' scripture-pickers are wonderin' how you got down here with the whiskey-drinkin' trash, it had something to do with disobedience of the Unwritten Commandment.

"THOU SHALT MIND THINE OWN BUSINESS1"

And where it says render unto Caesar, it wasn't suggesting that you *become* Caesar.

Oh, and so far as persecuting anyone who merely wishes the opportunity to express love and commitment to another human being, there's one of the many pieces of scripture you picked over:

*"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."*

## Local Attorney Declares Candidacy

WACO — Local Criminal Law attorney Scott Peterson, a former chief felony prosecutor for the McLennan County District Attorney's office, will formally announce this week his intent to seek the Democratic nomination for judge of the 54th Judicial District Court.



## The Democracy That Refuses To Die

As I write this week's column, I find myself reflecting on two recent elections. I turned up late to work today, having requested a brief reprieve to cast my ballot against the ugly, discriminatory, poorly written Proposition 2. As of this moment, I have no idea if the ever-popular Fear and Loathing of the Gay Lifestyle has prevailed in this summary of opinion. But I digress; that is not the point of today's diatribe.

This morning I trudged into my local polling place, just down the street from my residence. As I walked inside, I was confronted with the usual long lines attributed to voting day. Immediately apparent was the stack of paper ballots being distributed close to the polls. This put my mind at ease for a little while, anyway.

I remember very well my experience last November, waiting for over an hour in the cold to cast my ballot for John Kerry. It was not a pleasant choice to make — like being forced to decide between Gonorrhea and HIV — but I, along with millions of others, went one way or the other. We had to.

That fateful November, as I left the voting booth I felt a little queasy having cast a ballot on a touch-screen. I had read all about the potential for voter fraud through the use of electronic ballots, but I had not actually seen it for myself. Then, my delusion came crashing down. "Oh my GOD!" screamed an elderly woman from three booths down. "It changed my vote! It changed my vote!" she yelled. "I voted for Kerry, but it changed it to Bush!"

Election workers jogged towards the woman and asked her to calm down. They assured her that it was just a display malfunction, and her vote for Gonorrhea — I mean, Kerry — had been counted as such. She was obstinate, and demanded a paper ballot. They had none to give, so she pledged to go to another polling location where her vote could be later verified.

As she walked out, I got that sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. Surely this cannot be happening all over the country. After adding my voice to those standing for equal rights in today's Proposition 2 vote, I was confronted with an electronic ballot scanner equipped with a memory card that essentially serves as the ballot box, carrying the tallies in its easily-modified memory bank. In spite of my paper ballot, a machine was still the overriding factor.

I later discovered that nearly 80 percent of America's votes in 2004 were cast or counted via machine. The Diebold Corporation is responsible for over half of these devices used in approved polling places. What I learned next hit hard.

Walden O'Dell, the C.E.O. of Diebold, was a member of Bush's "Rangers and Pioneers," a set of particularly dedicated individuals who raised at least \$100,000 for the HIV-AIDS — I mean, Bush-Cheney — campaign. In August of 2003, good 'ole Walden told attendees at a Republican Party fund-raiser in Ohio, "I am committed to helping Ohio



Electronic Horizons  
By  
Stephen  
Webster

deliver its electoral votes to the president next year."

But everyone said those who would question our irrefutable election system were just crazies afraid of transmitters implanted in their teeth by Major League Baseball, or some other such nonsense. Unfortunately, those who would raise such doubt had little to substantiate claims of corruption and election theft.

Until now, that is.

The Government Accountability Office, or G.A.O., is a group of legislators from both parties. The six-member panel recently issued a report about electronic voting security. Their findings do not install any confidence in the new system of voting. According to the G.A.O. ...

*"Cast ballots, ballot definition files, and audit logs could be modified. Supervisor functions were protected with weak or easily guessed passwords. Systems had easily picked locks and power switches that were exposed and unprotected. Local jurisdictions misconfigured their electronic voting systems, leading to Election Day problems. Voting systems experienced operational failures during elections. Vendors installed uncertified electronic voting systems."*

The G.A.O. report was issued a month ago, yet not a single mainstream media outlet devoted a word to it. It was neglected by all the wire services, all the television news networks, and all the corporate newspapers. That most citizens will learn of these findings through independent media and locally owned newspapers testament to how the mainstream media is, at best, neglecting the very job they are intended for.

It is time for a revolution of citizen watchdogs. We must all become empowered and informed, lest we be doomed to accept death with a passive glare. If the mainstream press cannot even discuss this dire and growing threat to the system we base our liberties on, it is time to abandon them. What am I saying?

Cancel your subscriptions. Turn off your TV and get on the Internet. E-mail your congressional representatives and use the harsh language you would normally reserve for conversations with friends. Make them know what you expect, and do not be afraid of retribution. It is your right. Use it while you still can.

I believe it was Joseph Stalin who once said, "It's not who votes that counts; it's who counts the votes." Take that to heart, lest we fall behind an iron curtain of our own creation.

Mahalo.

## Well, If That Just Don't Beat All

Know how when you are expecting company and you have so many things to do, all kinds of random stuff just sort of falls from the sky? I guess it only seems that way. Truth is that "the sky is always falling." We just might tend to notice it more when we have something extra to do.

My kids are coming in tomorrow. That's the good news. We need to go to a family "do" in Dallas this weekend, and hotel rooms are like a kazillion dollars. But since the organizer of the event booked a block of rooms, now ours will be only about half a kazillion.

At least the cheapest gasoline I found (and believe me, I always shop around) has dropped below \$2.20/ gal. (last time I checked) for our trip up there. — Like that's a real bargain. . . . Wonder if it will ever go below \$2.00/ gal. again. (Remember the gas wars when it was \$.39/ gal.? Maybe less. I do! (Clever readers can probably calculate my age from this information). I can remember two gas stations on Bosque Blvd. in Waco when I was a kid — They were across from each other and kept dropping prices trying to compete. It was great. That was also back when "filling stations" (no one calls them that now) gave away glasses and stuff to hook you in. Those were the good ol' days. If we'd all saved those promotional items, we could sell them for a fortune now on Ebay. Hindsight is always 20/20.

— Heard the oil companies were trying to justify their enormous profits today. So big deal if they have to pay more taxes. I mean, it would be better than letting them get away with it, but that doesn't help ME. (And it's all about ME). That isn't going to help what has come out of all our pockets for the last few months. I'm so disgusted with the leadership of this country. No one has any guts any more. Sometimes I think we've all turned into a bunch of sheep.

And also in the news today, no gay marriages recognized in Texas. (Like that vote was a big surprise). AND. . . the fact that the state is cutting down perfectly good hundred-year-old pecan trees actually made it to KWTX news tonight. Judge James Morgan of Bosque County ruled that the state can do whatever they want as far as destroying those stately old trees. (Well, they CAN of course, but is it RIGHT? Does anyone care any more if things are RIGHT? How about sensible?) They murdered one of "our" trees last week. We found out after the fact and were justifiably horrified. If I had known about it before it was a *fait accompli*, I would have laid down in front of the bulldozer. (And I'd probably be dead now). To my knowledge, there has never been an accident at that corner, so justifying the felling of that lovely tree for reasons of safety doesn't wash with me. I'm thinking of drawing a chalk line in the shape of a huge tree with paint. If everyone who lost a beautiful, old tree in front of his property would do this, it might just make a pretty powerful statement. Maybe the state would think twice before continuing on this expensive, unnecessary, and thoughtless path. I mean, don't they have better things to do with our tax dollars? I wonder who is profiting from all this tree cutting? Did Halliburton get the contract?

We've been adopted by a stray cat. I tried for a month or more to chase her away, but then Zack (soft touch that he is) saw her and fed her. Well, that did it.

## 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.*

To thank him for his kindness, she bites him. (Three times so far). I named her Wild Thing and avoid her like the plague. I didn't need this.

Zack's OTHER cat Seeky now lives on the back porch and breezeway. If you don't use the litter box, you vacate the premises. Actions have consequences around here. Quite simple really. We thought Seeky and Stinky the Dog (who lives in the back yard) had finally become accustomed to each other, after glaring through the screen for a month or so. When a recent storm blew the door open and the frightened dog dashed onto the porch, they completely ignored each other. But I guess they both had scary wind and thunder on their minds. The dog, coward that he is, hid in his travel crate. So about a week later, we left them alone together for about half a minute, and, you guessed it. Big mistake. — Don't know who started it or if it was just one of those big misunderstandings that just somehow escalates and gets ugly. I found a cat claw in the fur of the dog's back, and the cat ended up with a bite. She's convalescing nicely, trying to worm her way back into the house, but that ain't gonna happen. But as far as future dog and cat encounters, never the twain shall meet again.

Other good news is (and thanks to all who inquired) that Babe the Blind Bull is back in the herd. So far, he sees well enough that he hasn't fallen off a cliff, manages to find food and water, and stays with the others. I think he'd probably be considered legally blind now, so we won't allow him to drive. But we don't have to destroy him, either. Sometimes you catch a break.

I have some kind of bulbs or onions that are coming up. That's just wrong. This warm November has them thinking spring has arrived. Zinnias are coming up from seeds that dropped last month. We had that one 28-degree night that ruined most of my summer flowers. Those zinnias are in for a rude awakening very soon, I fear. This warm weather can't last. (Hopefully, neither can the drought. But that's another column). I even found a couple of ladybugs in the house. And that usually doesn't happen until spring either. Everything is all mixed up.

To top it all off, the mice are back. I'm running my traps again and already bagged five. (Searching for the point of entry now). This last one is smarter. So far, he's escaped from a sticky trap (twice) after dragging it about a foot. Each morning, the traps have been disturbed, but nothing is there. And he's managed to steal the nuts and chocolate off a real trap at least three times without setting it off. How can that be? If I just look at a trap hard, the thing snap shut and goes flying. I haven't actually seen the elusive rodent yet, but I've named him Houdini. And declared war. Where are all these cats when you need them? Stay tuned.



# My Greatest Childhood Fear? Being Bitten By A Radioactive Moth

For most of us, there comes a time in our lives when we must face the truth, and accept the fact we will never actually possess any type of super-human powers. This includes the ability to fly, shoot laser beams out of our eyes, look good in a skin-tight costume, or spontaneously emit a cloud of paralyzing gas (Let's be clear on that last one; if it requires eating a Taco Bell value meal and a 30-minute waiting period, technically your paralyzing gas is NOT a super power).

As a child, I spent countless hours thumbing through comic books and dreaming of the day I would be bitten by a radioactive insect — and knowing full well that, with my luck, it would probably be something stupid like a moth:

"Curses! It's Moth Man, here to foil my evil plans! How can I stop him? Hey — maybe I'll try this porch light..."

In fact, I was so sure that I would end up as a lame super hero that, with the help of my friends, we came up with a



By  
**Ned  
Hickson**  
Siuslaw News

plan to **MAKE** me into Spiderman before there was any chance of me being bitten by a radioactive moth, ear wig, silverfish or stink bug.

Our plan was simple:

**Step one:** Find a spider — preferably a small one — and expose it to high levels of radiation.

**Step two:** Make it bite me.

Now, finding just the right spider proved tricky. That's because there were certain genetic traits that I did not want incorporated into my DNA. For example, really hairy spiders were out.

So were those spiders with the big squishy bulb in the back. Maintaining a secret identity was going to be crucial, and trying to do that as a seven-year-old with a giant rear end and thick body hair would be nearly impossible.

After eventually capturing the perfect spider specimen, it was time to expose it to high levels of radiation. This, of course, meant gaining unfettered access to the most potent source of radiation at our disposal: The microwave oven.

Since there's a good chance that many of you are actually reading this at breakfast, I'll spare you the details and just tell you that I never ate out of that microwave again. I also never gained any super powers. I did, however, gain an appreciation for the super powerful absorbency of Brawny paper towels.

The reason I'm bringing this up is because of an incident last week that proves that there ARE those among us who aren't willing to give up the dream

of having super powers.

According to a CNN report, a man entered a bank in Utah, walked across a lobby full of customers, and began taking handfuls of money from the vault without filling out a withdrawal slip — which he didn't figure he needed to since he was completely invisible.

In fact, it wasn't until being tackled from all sides by bank security and a mob of angry customers that he suspected his invisibility scroll, which he'd purchased from a "sorcerer" for \$625, might not be working.

Though it's true the incident ended badly for him, it's a real positive for the rest of us if this is the direction that super villains are headed.

Heck, maybe it's time I pulled out my old Moth Man costume.

Assuming it doesn't have holes in it.

(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](http://www.nedhickson.net))

## Speak English Or Else?

Last week, my column was motivated by my seeing a sticker on a van that read, "Speak English or Die." I looked into the "English-only" movement, which is against having the government spend money on multilingual versions of things like voting and educational materials.

Prior to writing the column, I believed that many people hold sincere views that these multilingual publications represent an inappropriate use of public



Modern Times  
By  
**Lloyd  
Garver**

funds as well as an incorrect message for immigrants who haven't learned English. I also felt that — considering all the current immigrant bashing — that some, yes just some, of the people who were for the "English-only" policies were people who felt some intolerance for immigrants and were just using this policy as a way to legitimize or mask their true feelings.

I received more e-mails in response to this column than to any of my previous columns. This even includes the column about "Spongebob Square Pants," which elicited a great number of e-mails because of the apparent controversy regarding the cartoon character's supposed subversive homosexuality.

The number of responses and their contents only confirmed my original views about this topic. Many people combined the English-only topic with their criticism of immigrants as "illegals," and as "people who are destroying our culture." Some of them magically see immigrants as simultaneously "too lazy to get jobs" and "stealing jobs from Americans."

I share some of the responses with you:

**DEBORAH:** Why don't we start printing everything in Islam, too? Maybe we can make it easier for the terrorists — they won't have to learn English.

Deborah's title is Executive Assistant, Transport Security Administration, at a major airport.

**AUDREY:** How dare you come into this country and insult the way we speak. Remember we belong here, you don't.

**JP:** I think English as the only language serves a useful purpose, for instance, enabling the Mexican immigrant

to order Chinese food.

**ANN:** I think they should learn English because when they want to get a better job than working in Wal-Mart they will have to speak English.

**BETTE:** Some of us had ancestors that were already here when settlers/immigrants came to this country, and most of mine would not have learned to speak English at all if "non-native" people had not come to America. Without getting on a soapbox, I do think that many people that advocate English-only are forgetting that English is not the native language of this country, so perhaps a little tolerance wouldn't be such a bad thing.

**RICHARD:** Get with the program called AMERICAN PRIDE. The Mexicans are taking this country from us liberal by liberal.

**COURTNEY:** Have you ever considered that the immigrants themselves might do better in the long run if we stopped coddling them in their own languages?

**JOE:** There is a whole realm of sensitivity that has to go along with how we do this, bringing these kids into the public school system so they can be successful, without smashing the sense of self before they get there.

**BRIAN:** I believe that if this trend continues, within 50 to 100 years we will have a secession movement in the Sun Belt states. After all, without assimilation, these Spanish-speakers could well identify themselves more closely with their counterparts in northern Mexico than with the old, cold rust belt. That being the case, I choose English-only.

**ROBERT:** Friends of mine traveled all over Europe on vacation this summer. They went to France, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Spain over a three-week

period and said they did not have any problems whatsoever with language because everyone spoke English. What they did find funny is that when they got home, they went down to Miami for dinner and had trouble because no one spoke English.

**JULIE:** Where else in the world can you go and get all of your information in your native language? For my experience, only America! That is what makes our country so appealing. Easy, schmeazy.

**MARK:** I know how we can stop the flow of illegals from Mexico. We need to allow border patrols to shoot on sight when they see a vehicle trying to cross the border illegally... speak English or don't speak at all.

**MARY:** I don't think that the inscription on the Statue of Liberty means, "Come on in, disregard and complain about everything you don't like here, expect everyone to change their ways to better suit you and if they don't you can file a discrimination lawsuit."

**NANCY:** The kids of those Koreans you can't understand at the convenience store are going to kick your professional butts in a couple of years, in perfect English while playing the Polonaise on the piano and solving complex equations in their heads. And having that caliber of people will make America a better country.

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](mailto:lloydgarver@yahoo.com)

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# Women Are People, Too

BY VIVIAN GREENTREE  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Feminist – there is just something about the word that immediately puts people on the defensive. Nonetheless, when polled, the majority of men and women consistently agree that feminism has improved women's lives. In fact, when the definition of feminism is given at the time of polling (i.e., a person who supports the social, political, and economic equality of all people) about 70% of all women are likely to call themselves feminists. However, without the definition, the number drops to anywhere between 30-50%.



Vivian Greentree

Furthermore, a little research revealed that in a 1995 poll, 68% of Americans said they support "political, economic and social equality for women." However, in that same survey less than 44% of those same people were willing to call themselves feminists. Those statistics reflect a cognitive dissonance where people are supporting the essential principles of feminism, yet are afraid of, well, calling themselves a feminist.

So here I go. Hi, my name is Vivian...and I am a feminist. Now don't go flying off the handle because I used that old political buzzword. I'm still the same person I was before you heard me classify myself as a hairy-legged, bra-burning she-beast.

To steal a famous quote - for me, feminism is the radical idea that women are people, too. We are as diverse and unique and wonderfully competent as men and we want the same choices and opportunities they have. That's it. And I don't think I should have to burn my bra to say it!

Look, obviously women have come a long way with respect to attaining equality. I just got off four years of active duty service in the Navy, which certainly shows how far we have come. However, imagine my surprise when I found out that in a job in the "real world," on average, I would only make about .85 cents to a man's dollar. Who would have thought that the U.S. Navy

would be at the forefront of women's rights?

I have a "This is what a feminist looks like" t-shirt that I wear sometimes just to throw people off balance.

I wear it when I have my 19-month-old son with me while I'm grocery shopping. I don't think I look too threatening and "man-hating" with cracker crumbs on my chest and my sunglasses flopping around on my head while trying to juggle both the cart and an over-eager toddler. Just because I believe in women's equality doesn't put me at odds with simple, mundane tasks such as grocery shopping for my family – and I think Pat Robertson, Phil Gramm, Tom DeLay, and all the other rank and file fema-not-see's should know that.

The problem with the word Feminist is that it has become an exhortation that is spat out like something distasteful when used to describe women's interest groups and those that would somehow seek to upset the status quo. Those feminists won't be happy till men are wearing dresses and Hillary is President! While I do believe Hillary has a lot to bring to the table in any election (her views on universal healthcare would definitely benefit women), I certainly don't care what men attire themselves in...as long as they adhere to the no white after Labor Day rule.

But seriously folks, let's make this personal. Let's make it personal because that is where your outlook on life gets started – what is near and dear to your heart. So, ask yourself – do I support social, political, and economic equality for men and women? If the answer is yes, did you suddenly become a radical? No. Did you become a Feminist? Well, I guess that is up to you.

*Vivian Greentree graduated from the University of Georgia with degrees in Political Science and Public Relations. After serving as a Supply Officer in the U.S. Navy for four years, she is currently pursuing her Master's degree.*

# 'Mr. Prez, I'm Your Man'

By L.B. PARR

SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Dear President Bush,

I would like to apply for the job of director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

While I have no prior experience per se, I do know how to ride a horse. I realize you usually appoint your buddies, buddies of buddies, or somebody who helped you get elected or gave your election campaign a huge chunk of money, but, if it helps, I know a few people that voted for you – both times, plus I always check that little box on our income tax return where it asks if I want to contribute to the Presidential election fund.

I have to admit that I'm a bit confused about exactly what FEMA is supposed to do when there is a disaster. On Saturday, Aug. 27, when you declared a Federal emergency for the State of Louisiana, you authorized FEMA to "coordinate all disaster relief efforts." You went on to say that FEMA is to "provide appropriate assistance... to save lives, protect property and public health and safety." So, what part of that did FEMA director Brown not understand? More appropriately, why didn't you do anything when it became painfully obvious that people were dying due to his inaction?

I hesitate to bring this next subject up because I really do want this job, but I feel compelled to say the remark you made on the Thursday after Katrina hit that "I don't think anyone anticipated a breach of the levees" had to be one of the stupidest things you have said (and, to be frank, you have said a lot of stupid things). Before 9/11, FEMA listed a direct hurricane strike to New Orleans as one of the three most likely catastrophic disasters facing America. Just last year, FEMA officials practiced how they would respond if New Orleans was flooded and its residents were stranded.

Did "Brownie" think the National Hurricane Center was lying when it warned that a hurricane was going to hit New Orleans and it could cause "human suffering incredible by modern standards" and that there would almost certainly be levee failures making the area "uninhabitable" after the hurricane arrives?

If I am appointed the director of FEMA, my very first task would be to provide you, your administration, and everyone at FEMA with a battery-operated television set so everyone in the

## GUEST COMMENTARY

federal government would know as least as much as the American public knows about what is going on in disaster areas.

Didn't you just want to crawl in a hole and hide when you heard your very own hand-picked Secretary of Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff admit on National Public Radio that he and Michael Brown had no idea until Thursday evening that there were 25,000 evacuees stranded at the New Orleans Convention Center and had been there for 3 – 4 days without food, water, or medical assistance? Everyone else in the United States that had a TV had known of this tragedy since Wednesday morning.

I understand that even you did not have a clue about the urgency of the disaster relief needed until Dan Bartlett, one of your top aides, made a DVD of national newscasts covering the devastation and suffering and showed it to you as you were flying down to the Gulf Coast to make an appearance, four days after Katrina ravaged the area.

I don't think the American public understands that you had more important things to do earlier in the week than sit around the White House and deal with the worst natural disaster in our nation's history. I mean, flying to Arizona and San Diego to talk to senior citizens and veterans plus squeezing in one more day of an already lengthy vacation in Crawford while hundreds of people were dying because of the federal government's lack of response might appear to some people as a tad self-serving.

Wasn't it amazing that the minute you finally showed up in New Orleans after the storm, with all those television cameras trained on your every move, there was suddenly hundreds and hundreds of National Guardsmen everywhere, and truck after truck, as far as one could see, were moving in to New Orleans with food, water, and other necessities. What a production. It reminded me of Moses parting the waters, I swear. Nice touch "W"!

Mr. President, I really want this job. Talk about job security! I mean, there is always going to be a hurricane, tornado, or other disaster going on and as history has shown, even if I screw up royally, I won't get fired. I'll just get "re-assigned"!

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# Torture, And Other Sundry Pleasantries

As an American, you should be as thoroughly disgusted as I.

There he was on world television from Panama, George W. Bush, ersatz president of the United States of America, slovenly leaning on the podium as usual, looking like a seventh-grader called in front of the class, way too cool to show any proper decorum or respect. When the question was put to him regarding his Regime's torture policy, Fearless Leader stumbled over some doubletalk phraseology, searching for an exit line.

Unprepared to be put on the spot by a low-level upstart foreign correspondent, Bush #43, renowned for his inability to be quick on the draw with unscripted questions and answers, was noticeably flustered — as well as visibly irritated.

Finally, a pearl of wizdumb sprang from the Cheese Executive's lips: "We do not torture."

Uh-huh. Yup.

And I do not love pizza from Salerno's in Berwyn, Illinois.

Mamma Mia! It's so gooey and drippy — they back a dump truck up to load on the cheese, and the entire circumference is covered with sausage that's to die for...

Oh... sorry.

Well, that's why, during Bush #43's recent trip and failed attempt to hogtie our Central and South American friends and neighbors with a trade agreement favorable mostly to his Big Biz Buddies, the Dick Cheney reverted to his Dark Lord persona as he summoned Hill Republicans to super-secret meetings.

Apparently, a few days earlier Snidely DeLay had convened his own clandestine three-hour conclave. He needed to remind the House Republicans exactly who was still their liege, and to relight any fear that may have cooled with his indictments.

So, once DeLay thought he had hammered the rank-and-file back into compulsory lockstep with the dictates of the Executive Branch Fascists, no matter how outlandish, inhuman or anti-Constitutional, Dark Lord Cheney went about his bidding.

Despite a Senate vote of 90% denouncing the use of torture, upholding the "McCain Amendment" to the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, two of the biggest wusses of the VietNam era, Bush #43 and Cheney, continue the push to subvert all that is American, civilized, and accepted conduct by people of religious conviction.

Of course, this is exactly how these power-mad miscreants have always behaved.

This pair of warmongers, neither of whom ever spent one collective minute anywhere near a field of combat, maliciously and fraudulently invaded a sovereign nation on the other side of the Planet, just so they could be reapers of the spoils.

We're all aware of the story: While countless Americans fought in VietNam, and over 58,000 died, you-know-who's heavyweight bureaucrat Daddy called in a few favors, which landed him safely in the Air National Guard.

Despite years of repeated protestations from Bush #43 apologists, hanging around the ANG was not exemplary of noble, brave or selfless service to our Nation; neither would Young George have gotten in through his own efforts. The history of the period is unalterable — at the time one simply did not apply for and get accepted into *any* branch of the National Guard. They were somewhat akin to good ol' boys' clubs; you had to know somebody to get in, and even then only the most favored of the privileged zoomed to the top



Out Of The Blue

By  
Jerry  
Tenuto

of the list of candidates.

The other schmuck received not one, not two, but a whopping five draft deferments — college; marriage; child; second child; and, by using up enough time with the first four, holding out till he was too old — to avoid military service completely.

Upon coming of age, the Dick immediately quit the graduate program where he was hiding behind Lynn's pants in Wisconsin, and thumbed his nose at the rest of us.

In all honesty, I may have found a tinge of respect for him were he a subversive or a genuine conscientious objector, instead of just a greedy p.w.'d "girly-man."

Regular folks, i.e. polite society and the media, refer to individuals such as Georgie and the Dick as "chickenhawks."

In the military, where terminology tends to be somewhat brutally less p.c., we would plainly and simply call them "chickenshits."

Because there ain't nothin' lower on the face of the Earth.

Besides, why tarnish the reputation of the chickenhawk? They only do what nature intended, and I never knew anybody who had a beef with one.

Bush #43, through Dark Lord Cheney, insists upon twisting the arms of Republican lawmakers until they, to a member, submit and allow the Government of the United States of America to violate human beings through torturous activities.

As a youngster I used to read World War II books, usually written from first-hand accounts, of atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers upon Allied prisoners. And Germany had those lovely Nazi getaway Concentration Camps — with their catchy slogan, "Werk Macht Frei."

When Dark Lord and Lynn Cheney represented us at the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, he couldn't be bothered to show proper respect by wearing a dark suit to such a somber occasion — it was a national embarrassment and disgrace the way Cheney stood out in his casual attire!

Bush #43 and Cheney have gone so far as to make the torture issue a personal fight against Arizona Senator, and fellow Republican, John McCain. Everybody in this Country, and probably the free world, knows that Sen. McCain is a bona fide VietNam War hero, a downed fighter pilot who spent five years subjected to the most cruel mental anguish and physical atrocities the North VietNameese Communists could devise.

True to their standard under the leadership of Snidely DeLay, defiant of all positive Senate accomplishments and irresponsible to the betterment of America, the House version of the DOD Appropriations Bill does not contain the "McCain Amendment."

That's the way #43 and the Dark Lord like it, and want it.

Bush #43 has already let the Legislature know he will veto the bill if it is passed with "McCain."

What utter incompetence.

How lacking in moral fiber or substance!

Such hubris, to spit in John McCain's face!

However, for all the scare tactics within

their own party, the Bush #43 noose, Dark Lord Cheney's evil sneer, and the "hammer" wielded by Snidely DeLay have in recent weeks become less ominous.

It doesn't hurt our Nation that Bill Frist and Herr Ubermeister Karl Rove currently function under mantles of diminished capacities.

Every poll now shows Bush #43's numbers dropping in virtually each category. Foreign leaders have finally turned their backs on him. The riots that follow Georgie wherever he goes are an unmistakable signal of the world's distaste for him, and, unfortunately, how low he's dragged America's image.

Whomever printed up those posters of Bush #43 as Der Fuehrer that were plastered all over walls of buildings around Mar del Plata, Argentina, just a few blocks from the conference was right on message.

Following the "hammer's" conclave, some House DeLayists crowed that Ol' Tom had restored the fear he previously instilled in GOP members as Majority Leader. However, it appears as though this was wishful thinking on their part.

Numerous party leaders and mouthpieces referred to this past Tuesday's rejection of most things Republican by voters nationwide as a minor blip; it was nothing to be too concerned with, just a bunch of local stuff.

What in the hell kind of political mind does not comprehend that the most important politics is done at the lowest levels?

More RNC smoke and mirrors.

Increasingly, GOP lawmakers are taking whatever measures necessary to distance themselves from the likes of Bush #43, Cheney, DeLay, and the rest of the Right-wing extremist faction, while maintaining the "I'm a good party member" balancing act.

The very idea of torturing prisoners is losing support very rapidly, with the exception of a handful of rabid UltraChristians.

During this week's most uplifting election, there were some school board members in Pennsylvania up for re-election, eight in particular. Those in question must have taken 10th Grade Science with Professor Irwin Corey; there's no other explanation why they would all believe that "Intelligent Design" is a viable, acceptable theory of creation.

Here's the "ID" argument in a nutshell: The make-up of the human being is too complex for our species to have been the result of an accident. Our very complexity proves we had to have been purposely designed.

Watching a school board meeting on television while this postulation was being espoused, I couldn't help but think, "How ludicrous is it for an allegedly highly educated man to sit in a room with people of both genders, where not any two persons look even remotely alike, and make such a harebrained remark?"

Okay, if that's true, please explain the following:

Racial differences; religious intolerance; how hearts, lungs, kidneys, and other organs wear out or just fail; depression or full-blown insanity; various hair and eye colors; differences in height, build, attractiveness; the reason some of us are very smart, others can't put sliced meat on bread; and so on.

(I heard a remark the other day that Bush #43 couldn't tie his shoes without Herr Rove to help — wish I had thought it up.)

Here are my two favorites —

1) Were man the creation of some

higher order entity, why make us fatally vulnerable to any one of a plethora of vermin so miniscule that we require the aid of an electron microscope to see the damn things?

2) It seems that man, not the cockroach, should be the ultimate survivor.

In a victory for common sense, on Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2005, the aforementioned eight school board members who insisted "ID" be rammed through the ear canals and into the brains of all Pennsylvania students, as scientific doublespeak, were handed their walking papers by the voters of that great Commonwealth.

Ironically, at the same time a butterfly must have flapped its wings somewhere near the South American leg of Bush #43's "Anti-American Tour '05." Six of the 10 members of the Kansas Board of Education decided "ID" was just what the science classrooms of their state needed.

Commenting to reporters, Janet Waugh of Kansas City, one of the four dissenters, said, "This is a sad day, not just for Kansas kids but for Kansas. We're becoming a laughing stock not only of the nation but of the world."

I concur with Ms. Waugh's assessment. Several English newspapers as well as Pravda cannot figure what in the hell is going on with the Religious Right and its stranglehold on our Government and schools.

Never fear, Kansans and America! That cockamamie edict won't become part of the curriculum until 2007, so there's plenty of time to stop it at the polls or in the Courts.

I heard Jimmy Carter on WGN-Radio, Chicago, today. A born-again Christian long before being elected President (while Bush #43 was still partyin' hearty), he's fed up with the strong-arm tactics of those of privilege from the far right out to control America, while twisting the Constitution and the Courts askew, in the name of Jesus. He's even got a book out on the subject, a genre he's never done previously yet felt compelled to write.

The list disproving any validity in "ID" is virtually endless, just as are the possibilities for the infinite numbers of accidental variables that have come along throughout the millennia, and occur with every conception, to make each human being unique unto himself.

Unless, that is, you happen to be a Right-wing, Evangelical, Neo-Con, UltraChristian Republican Automaton; a supporter of any war Bush #43 gets us into and the torture of Muslim prisoners, yet will under no circumstances ever enlist or allow any member of your family to become part of the military riff-raff.

Thank your own personal Deity we're not in Kansas anymore.

LOOK! An added bonus for reading this far.....

Here's a list of the nine befuddled Republican Senators wholly devoid of moral fiber and any sense of honor, they who voted to allow the United States Government to sanction torture:

WAYNE ALLARD	Colorado
KIT BOND	Missouri
TOM COBURN	Oklahoma
THAD COCHRAN	Mississippi
JOHN CORNYN	Texas
JAMES INHOFE	Oklahoma
PAT ROBERTS	Kansas
JEFF SESSIONS	Alabama
And, of course,	
TED (got \$250M for a bridge to nowhere?)	
STEVENS	Alaska



— Guest Commentary —

# One Is Not A Bogus Number

By LINDA ZOBLOTSKY  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Cindy Sheehan lost one son for the endless lies pouring out of the Bush and Cheney White House. The number of men and women injured in battle is higher than 2,000 and the nature of their injuries, physical and mental, should be counted, reported, and discussed, along with the death and injuries suffered by the innocent Iraqi and Afghani people. And with each death and injury in the "war on terrorism," the occupiers of The White House will tell us that fundamentalists want to kill Americans.



Linda Zoblotzky

The American fundamentalists want to kill science, civil rights, and all of the foreign fundamentalists.

One is not a bogus number. Cindy Sheehan lost one son, fighting against an enemy that our government has not defined. "You're either with us or against us" in the words of the psychopath-in-chief could mean that I am the enemy, writing what I want to say from my laptop and saying what I want to say to whoever will listen, hoping and praying for a world without a "war on terror" and an endless occupation in the race for resources in countries where the U.S. is not welcome.

"91" is not a bogus number? Ninety-one Senators stood with John McCain and supported his anti-torture amendment? This American President has skewed priorities, supporting ways to enable the CIA to use more torture in the "war on terror." One is a bogus number for one man to claim political capital, when millions around the world oppose the war against a country that did not attack the United States. Millions march for peace. Millions more oppose torture used against people who have not even received due process.

We support the troops and our country by asking Congress to stop robbing the national treasury for "the war on terror." Millions in the United States are not bogus when they long for nutrition, education, health care, affordable housing, and SMART SECURITY, protecting our nation within our borders. How many conservatives ask how we can defend the borders of Iraq and defend our borders or at least defend our jobs and the opportunity to earn living wage?

President Bush responded to the 9-11 terrorist attacks by attacking two countries that did not attack us and neither of those countries or the people had due process before waking up to "shock and awe." The United States supported Osama bin Ladin in Afghanistan fighting against the Russians. Iraq under Saddam was declared a friend of the United States when it served our interest to support Iraq in the war against Iran.

WHAT'S A PRESIDENT TO DO?

Oh, I don't know, maybe finish reading an appropriate book for his own academic level and then fly around, as the U.S. has suffered a terrorist attack on the mainland, staying the course above all of us, symbolic of this administration's regard for tax breaks to the upper classes, so that they can live above us all.

President Bush told the mainstream press this week that the U.S. does not support torture, while a few weeks ago, President Bush refused to sign the McCain anti-torture amendment? Is this resolve?

This is the man selected to dictate the U.S., who wore a navy jump suit strapped to his groin and stood under a sign that declared: mission accomplished. And back then some Americans cheered for President Bush's shallow Rambo act. Why can't President Bush travel to Iraq to rally the Iraqi government and elections propped up by the men and women of the U.S. armed forces?

Jimmy Carter has demanded that voters receive a receipt when placing a vote at the neighborhood touch-screen voting machine here in the good ol' U.S. of A. Voters in the U.S. do not feel that their choice on Election Day is monitored by a clean and legal election process. Only 53.3 per cent of Americans voted in the 2004 presidential elections.

How many kinds of security should Americans be concerned with?

As Americans find their economic security challenged, they are waking up and seeing the costs of our strong commander-in-chief's kill all the "terrorists" policies.

Twenty-three is not a bogus number. 23 is the number of Congressmen on the House International Relations Committee who want to know how many lies and how many people from the elite corporate ruling class lied about pre-war intelligence, sending more people than the number of people who died in 9-11 to death.

We do not support this President's policies and, therefore, we march, write letters to the editor, write letters to our representatives, and let them know that the war is not in our name. We support our troops and we want them home ALIVE and WELL. That isn't bogus.

Linda Zoblotzky is writer, producer, and director of the entertaining and educational one-woman play "Linda Zoblotzky Is Luvchild," about adoption and an adopted adult's search for her birthparents. There are 6,000,000 adopted people in the United States. "Luvchild" helps the non-adopted population understand the obstacles that adopted adults face when searching for their natural families. Zoblotzky lives and works in NYC as a performing artist and has toured the United States in "Phantom of the Opera." She played Madame Giry and Carlotta. Zoblotzky enjoyed the "GREASE!" tour with Frankie Avalon, playing Miss Lynch.

# Deep In The Heart Of Texas

Deep in the heart of Texas last night there was a resounding victory for the institution of marriage and "traditional family values." The people have spoken — Amen!

Let's just never mind that 1.5 of every two marriages between one man and one woman fails.

Let's not worry about the fact that more American children are raised in "broken" homes than ever before and they are being educated in public schools that are NOT financed adequately.

Let's merely forget about the fact that the majority of Texas children are growing up without any health care insurance.

Let's just "turn the other cheek" that there are fewer jobs available for fewer parents. But at least we saved "traditional family values."

Does anyone know exactly what "traditional family values" are because the term escapes me when more families are comprised of only one parent and more folks are unemployed than ever before in the state.

By the way, more "traditional families" are losing their "traditional" homes to very "untraditional" foreclosures.



Commentary

By  
Peter  
Stern

Doesn't that sort of mean that we ARE losing some of our "traditional family values"?

Well, whatever. At least for now "...the stars at night, are big and bright...[clap, clap, clap, clap]... deep in the heart of Texas..."!

Peter Stern is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He holds three post-graduate degrees. During the past seven years Mr. Stern has studied and followed legislative politics in Texas and writes prolifically about various urgent issues and proposed legislation to inform the community without political bias or affiliation. He is a life-time member of the Republican Party but does NOT support the party's current platforms, philosophies and actions. He maintains he is an "intelligent" Republican with a conscience — a minority branch of the ruling party.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Despite the hyperbole coming out of the Executive Branch today, the Congressman and Senators who voted their support for America to go into Iraq did so on the firm belief that the information they were given by Bush and Company was truthful and accurate. Given the chance of a 20/20 hindsight opportunity though MANY if not ALL of them would now vote against the invasion of Iraq. The White House's continued excuse in defense of going into Iraq of "well the Democrats voted to invade so they too are to blame" is disingenuous at best.

And while we are on the subject how did we go from finding and destroying the Weapons of Mass Destruction to "spreading/importing democracy to the region?" Iraq had NOTHING to do with the events of Sept. 11th and anyone who says differently is lying to you.

The Bush Administration has opened up Pandora's Box by falsely invading Iraq. Don't be fooled into thinking that American soldiers will be coming home any time soon because they won't as Halliburton is building 14 permanent bases there with the intent of staying AT LEAST another 8 years.

The information sending Americans into Iraq was FALSE and MISLEADING! You cannot fault the Congressmen/Senators for supporting what they believed to be the truth. However, YOU can and YOU must fault this Administration that created the lies that have killed over 2,060 Americans. Whoever said that this wasn't blood for oil has not been paying attention because this is very much what this is... Iraq = "Blood For Oil" as well as a blot (as Colin Powell later said of his UN appearance with fake anthrax powder) on the integrity, honor and history of this country and those who have served her. Corporate greed personified while hiding behind the façade of Christianity and "making America safer." Is it me or does it seem that it is MUCH later than it seems?

Jenn Coolidge, Lakeland, FL

Dear Editor,

Finally, the Senate is taking up the oil companies' excessive profits. The oilmen tell us their all-time record high profits are "in line" with industry averages as a percentage of revenues. That's not a satisfying statistic. While the world market for oil has shot up due to Bush's war and Katrina's response, the cost of oil production remains relatively constant. Add a fixed percentage profit margin onto higher prices and voila! higher profits. As oil companies pass the higher market prices onto us consumers, responsible companies would keep their profits at a fixed amount, not a fixed percentage. Congress should enact a Windfall Profits tax immediately, and should rescind the tax-breaks recently given to these gougers in the Energy Bill. Let them share our pain.

Yours truly,

Bruce Joffe, Piedmont, CA

To Editor,

Texas, once again, has proven itself as a state plagued by inequality and backwardness. Yesterday, fear drove swarms of Texas voters to officially ban gay marriage. Existing Texas laws that prevented gay marriage were insufficient; Texans were seeking for more protection from the "gays and lesbians."

Texas children live without health in-

urance. Corrupt Texas CEOs have destroyed the lives of many Houston residents. But as long as gays and lesbians can't marry, all is good in the great state of Texas. The reality is—very little changes. Gays and lesbians are still going to be gays and lesbians, albeit now with new discrimination to overcome. In the end, bigoted Texans have merely made it harder for committed couples to solidify their relationship in a legally-protected context. The irony is—promoters of "family values" have now forced thousands of Texas couples to live outside a protected union—in wedlock.

While hate dominated this recent Texas ballot, other states such as Maine have declared that open-mindedness and equality are vital components to a just society. My message to gay and lesbian Texans: don't stop fighting because civil rights progress takes time. Don't listen to those who are afraid to link the gay rights movement to other civil rights movements because you know the link could not be clearer. Fortunately, women eventually did gain the right to vote, black Americans did gain the right attend "white" schools, and gays and lesbians will someday have the right to love who they and and have that love protected by law.

Thank you,

Ken Seifert, former Texan, now  
Arlington, VA

To The Editor:

Cost effective business strategies in Iraq: The failed blanket strategy in Iraq must give way to the obvious reality that there are really three Iraqs. This was always true and will always be true.

I am a businessman and this is America, the home of the Capitalist Dream of universal opportunity. Yes there are always very visible caste alignments in any human social order but in America we can break out of our social and ethnic boundaries and with some drive and grit we can better ourselves. And that is what we are all about. Our various caste boundaries are perennially porous by law and self determinism is the water of life to Americans' precious and ubiquitous promise of self betterment.

I think its about time we applied some good old Yankee business acumen to this Gordian Knot that is confounding us over in Iraq. This deal is becoming increasingly less than cost effective and is fast amounting to being a giant hole in our national back pocket.

Gentlemen & Ladies: Its time to get smart about this thing. Its not our job to invent democracies for other peoples and nations. That would be contrary to the most basic American principle of self determinism and self reliance. That is what has made us great and what must be self evident to any aspiring new nation in order to succeed. If we attempt to aspire for them, then in fact whatever we are creating is merely an imitation of a democracy and hardly the real thing. Case in point is the recent Orange Revolution in the Ukraine. Ukraine was self united and self motivated and has succeeded. Southern Shiite and Sunni Iraq is not. But Kurdistan as likened to the successful Ukrainians most surely is. So what is the obvious cost effective solution in Iraq relative to our soldiers' sacrifices and our quite large dollar investment?

As far as Iraq parallels, or not, that Or-

ange Revolution, let's get serious folks; "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." And that goes especially when its really three horses who traditionally, and still do, hate eachother very much; and we're trying to get them to act as if they are one single horse.

Blanket solutions seldom work, and in point of fact the very term 'blanket solution' is a fiction. One size fits all is a concept that has never and will never function except under the most infamous forms of dictatorial duress such as with a tyrant like Sadam Hussein or a colonialist imperial domination. And these are historically doomed to ultimate failure and will sap and decimate any world power that stubbornly attempts to functionally refute it. For example, now, the sun does most definitely set on the British Empire. And any lame attempt for Britain to think that they are using Saudi and the U.S. to maintain the old Empire by proxy is at least deluded, and more precisely a form of Empirical senile dementia.

And that is exactly what it took to create the fiction of a single Iraq and to maintain it in the first place. Learning by the mistakes and miscalculations of history is our only hope in the long run. We must forget the sunk costs of both the far past, and the recent past, and tighten up our game before we find ourselves over extended an ineffective merry-go-round like unto our failures in Indo China. Rule number #1 of economic success is, 'don't cry over spilled milk but remember the lesson.'

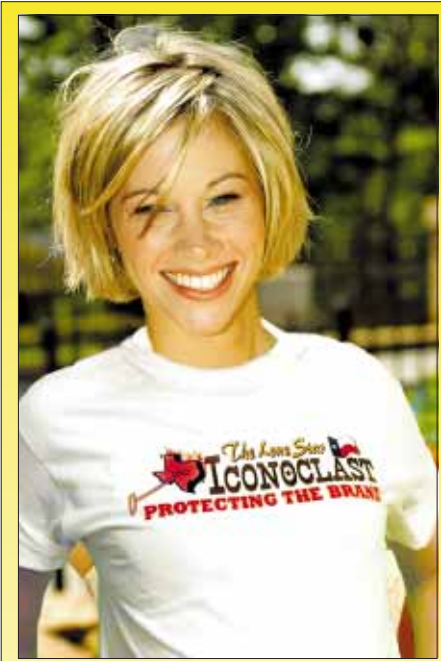
We need to quit acting like amateurs that have no depth of historical perspective, but instead like professionals with some sound capitalistic business acumen. Cost effective success must be the prime consideration as our central motivating principle that will guarantee simultaneously our national security in tandem with a successful foreign policy.

Politics aside this must be implemented immediately as we are at the tipping point crucial juncture of our current failed conduct in the mideastern trade zone adjacent to Iraq.

The single most salient fact which we are avoiding at our imminent national peril is that a single Iraq is and always was, and always will be a externally imposed fiction. Iraq is three nations. And at present only northern Kurdistan is a viable self motivated nation with a ghost of a chance of becoming a modern self determinate democratic success. They've already proved that against all odds and are alone the only quasi national entity in the mideast that is worthy of our military and economic aid. And the most crucial element is that they actually like us, which is huge, and want our help. Help the friends and let the others burn out by there own foolish stubbornness on eachother and not at the wasteful expense of our soldiers and our bucks. This is simple, let's do it.

The southern Shiite zone is a defacto nation unto themselves, and is not an ally of ours, but to the stark contrary, is a puppet of Iran. And Mister Chalabi is also an agent of Iran who's artful treachery has made of us foolish pawns to his personal agendas. Chalabi is nothing but a more suave version of Sadam himself. We must cut Chalabi loose and look to our most potentially profitable successful Kurdenstani allies in the north. If not, our efforts will have been rendered failed and impotent so far in our experimental fiasco that Iraq is proving to be. Tenuous constitution or no, Sharia Law will rule any state that is dominated by the Shiites. Let us disabuse ourselves of any other fantasies of Jeffersonian republicanism for the Shiites, or for the Sunnis either.

Continued On Next Page



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## Continued From Previous Page

And our two faced enemies the Wahabi Saudis will continue to support the Sunni insurgency until Hell freezes over to foment the civil war that will sap the resources of its number one enemy in the world. You would think that number one enemy of the Saudis is Iran and world Shiite dreams of Islamic dominance, but that would be mistaken. The Iranian Persians are only Public Enemy #2 for the Saudis of Mecca. The number one enemy of the Wahabi Saudis is you guessed it, the good old U. S. of A. And anyone who would deny this is either deeply deluded or complicit. In this case denial for what ever reason will prove to be lethal to America and our economic and political interest abroad.

Case in point is that decades of denial in France is catching up to them with a vengeance. This stands to happen to us on global scale when we see that World Islam is indeed fomenting Wahabist revolt in all emigrant Islamic populations that stands render our European allies and client states socially in chaos. This will obviously disrupt and sap their respective economies, and their military resources, and their national wills much as America's unrest in the 60's & 70's served undo us in Viet Nam.

Before we do this all over again we need to start working smarter and not harder in Iraq and let the Sunnis and Shiites slug it out in the South which they will do anyway. They must be left to sort out their own difference in their own way because the U.S. is mutually hated by both of them and neither southern Iraqi party will ever support a U.S. sponsored solution. As soon as we are gone any U.S. sponsored solution will dissolve whether we stay for a year or a hundred years as with the British. We must be realists here. Pay more attention to history and disabuse yourselves of utopian idealistic philosophical agendas. Those failed agendas are costing us both our monetary capital and world political capital disastrously.

We need to focus all of our troop presence and efforts to build fortress Kurdistan in the north which should include an extremely well fortified and secured Kurdistan northern oil field. We need to only occupy where our troops are actually welcome and where the success of our various national interest agendas is actually viable. We owe that to our troops and to our citizens who bare the ultimate price of our enterprize in Iraq. They alone are the life's blood of our great Republic, of the People, by the People, and for the People.

Saudi through their hooks in the Bush family is goading us to further estrange Venezuela and ultimately invade them and further destroy our international credibility and ties, especially with our Pan American neighbors whom we desperately need to be our firm allies in our impendin international future. And reinitiating the Cold War in the Western Hemisphere will be bone headedly disastrous. Especially if we are doing this at the behest of an expatriot Cuban political block in Florida, this would be one of the most ludicrous mistakes we could ever make. We need to shake off that relic of the old Cold War before it comes back to bite us in the hind quarters with a vengeance.

Otherwise China stands to still our thunder totally in this as it has with the Panama Canal and we will find ourselves as international trade pariahs in our own hemisphere as well as estranged in the rest of the vibrant sectors of the world economy. A superpower with only guns left and short of butter who has no other clout but sabre rattling is as doomed to fall imminently as was the Roman Empire in about 400 A.D.-C.E.

We need to estrange ourselves from the Wahabi Saudi Royals and warmup and recreate strongly good relations with Venezuela and Russian in the package. We also need to abandon the tired old Fidel in Cuba, drop the sanctions and leave them in peace to join a vital Western Hemispheric alliance with the United States. Our friendship with Jordan is much more central to our future successes in mideastern diplomacy than our current poisonous psuedo friendship with the treacherous two faced Saudis. Only by estranging the Saudis will they be forced to show their true enemy face to us which will allow us to deal with them as the very source and primary supporter of all international terrorism. Nineteen Saudis were sent by the Saudi Wahabis to New York on 9-11 and its high time for paybacks. Its high time that the Saudis were rendered financially and petrochemically isolated and impotent if not relieved of that petro power monopoly of their all together. Saudi is the prime malignancy on the planet at present and makes Stalin's Soviet Union seem like a minor irritant in comparison. Their will be neither any peace nor safety for Israel as long as the Saudi Wahabis reign over Mecca and Medina and thusly they reign over World Islam.

It would be accurate to say that whoever distracts from focus on the intensely dangerous threat that Saudi Wahabi power poses to our planet is aiding and abetting our enemies.

Tony Blankley asked why the Bush White House refused to stand up for themselves over certain intelligense indiscretions which have become part of standard operating procedures at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue these days. What is being obscured by them is the ominous depth of the Bush involvment and complicity to the most anti western agendas of the Saudi Wahabis. Is GWB simply a naive pawn, or does it go deeper? Which ever the answer, either notion is somewhat of an impeachment of the President's credential to maintain authority in government. Whether this is made manifest in GW being merely the lamest lame duck in American history; or whether there should be a more proactive solution effected by Congress is, of course a matter for further debate upon the respective floors of the Senate and the House.

Prince Bandar Bin Sultan is one of a very exclusive number who have instant access to the private residence of George W. Bush in the White House. I would like to believe that this is a shrewd example of the old Godfather's rule, "Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer." But I've come to be somewhat disabused of that notion as of late.

Is anybody listening?

Hank R. Graham, Denver Colo.

To The Editor:

What? Me worry?

For four years we've "prepared" for a catastrophic event in this country, either due to the fairly predictable natural rhythms of the planet, or terrorists who work on their own clock. Katrina proved it all for naught, clearly displaying an unacceptable level of incompetence fostered by the current administration, and even giving them the benefit of the doubt as to the motivations of these choices, it has become obvious they are not up to, or apparently interested in, handling the task. Now the very same group proposes spending billions upon billions of your money, doled out most assuredly in no-bid cost-plus contracts, more than likely under the auspices of a dysfunctional Department of Home Land Security, to prepare for the onslaught of Avian Flu. I can't quite put my finger on it, but I just don't feel any safer.

Alan MacFarland, Tallmadge, Ohio  
To The Editor:

CAUGHT: first, Texas Republican, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, indicted for money laundering and criminal conspiracy; now, Vice President Cheney's chief aide and confidant extraordinaire, Scooter Libby— currently on crutches with the broken foot he put in his mouth— described by Howard Fineman as a "sort of semi-henchman," indicted for lying to federal agents, perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice. Mr. Libby's two hats, since his resignation, are now being worn by David Addington, as chief of staff and John Hannah, as national security advisor, both principal figures in promoting the mendacious case for war and Addington, an advocate of detainee torture.

On Wednesday morning, Oct. 26, Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald walked briskly past reporters and into the courthouse, his regular routine, but with a difference. Instead of carrying one heavy briefcase, he carried two, one in each hand. On Friday afternoon, he revealed the outcome of his 22-month investigation into the Valerie Plame national security leak and to the consternation of many, Karl Rove's name was conspicuously missing. That second briefcase, along with two meetings with Mr. Rove's lawyer, Robert Luskin, could have meant that a plea bargain was struck and that Mr. Rove, Mr. Bush's own confidant extraordinaire, betrayed Mr. Libby to forstall, or at least delay, his own indictment.

It's been established that Libby's information that former ambassador Joe Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, was a covert CIA operative, came from several government officials as well as Mr. Cheney, who was informed of it by the CIA's George Tenet, now out of the loop over failure to prevent the 9-11 attacks and failure to find Iraq's purported Weapons of Mass Destruction. Now, in a state of permanent disgrace, he does have his Presidential Medal of Freedom, a parting gift from Mr. Bush, for comfort.

As Cheney is protected by Libby, so Bush is protected by Rove. Should Libby be found guilty at trial and be given a sentence of 30 years and offered an alternative of 10 for identifying his fellow conspirators, he might conceivably accept, in spite of his and his attorneys' insistence to the contrary. Political loyalty is expedient, but can be conditional, contingent on circumstance. Interdependence is particularly evident in this administration and its president relies heavily on his satellites and their silence.

Mr. Libby, the first high official to leak Plame's identity to a reporter, accord-

ing to the prosecutor, although not indicted for that, was easy prey and may well be bait for the bigger fish, Msrs. Cheney and Rove.

If Libby is the stepping stone to Cheney, Rove is the stepping stone to Bush. The clever, thorough and meticulous Mr. Fitzgerald, in his continuing investigation, ascertaining that all possible technicalities are anticipated, may be able to catch Rove in the same sort of contradictions and inconsistencies that indicted Libby of the lesser charges, necessitating his resignation and Mr. Cheney, certainly implicated, may be obliged to resign, as well.

President Bush's hastily thrown together pledge of November 1, to protect America from the bird flu, clearly illustrates that he's scrambling for distractive straws, that panic is setting in. Even before the demonstrations, both peaceful and violent, against the trade summit and administration trade policies and the war, took place in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on November 4, his agitation and evasions at his press conference there that same day were vividly apparent.

If he was aware of deliberate leaks of classified information of a covert agent's identity as per the 1982 federal law, his complicity may be assumed; otherwise, he was patently not in control. The president is trapped in a catch -22. If both his major mentors are forced to resign, especially if one is indicted and ultimately convicted of such a crime, where will that leave an unprotected president— naked, shivering, alone— with the two brand new mentors chosen by him and given still more unfettered authority than their fanatical predecessors?

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport  
To The Editor:

Hurricane Rita came through Jasper County in a fury. Trees and power lines were everywhere, and we immediately knew that electricity was in the far-off future. Damage to the homes on our county road was minimal, but many of the old trees were down. Every transformer on our road was down. It looked like a war zone.

Finally we saw the power trucks checking our road, and this company was S & H Powerline Construction from Crawford. These men went to work immediately and gave progress reports the whole time. Our power was restored in 24 days. We can't thank them enough for their hard and tireless work.

The couple on County Road 142 in Jasper are truly thankful for these men and their help. We are the ones with the 80-year old oak tree in our front yard.

John & Judi Johnson

To The Editor:

A Judge for the Supreme Court that is as narrow in religious belief as Samuel Alito for the USA Supreme Court does not seem proper as we are already overloaded with judges of the same belief and practice.

How could they properly make decisions for the benefit of the country as a whole?

We have two judges that are inclined to follow the ways of the priesthood, with Samuel we will be more likely to follow the rules of the Pope which will be a breach of the USA Constitution.

The basic purpose of the Supreme Court is to be our guide for the Constitution.

We do not need the Pope rules guiding the government of the USA. Let us move in a direction with a judge for the Supreme Court of the USA that we can depend on to follow our governments Constitution.

Louis (Lou) Freitag, Carbondale, IL



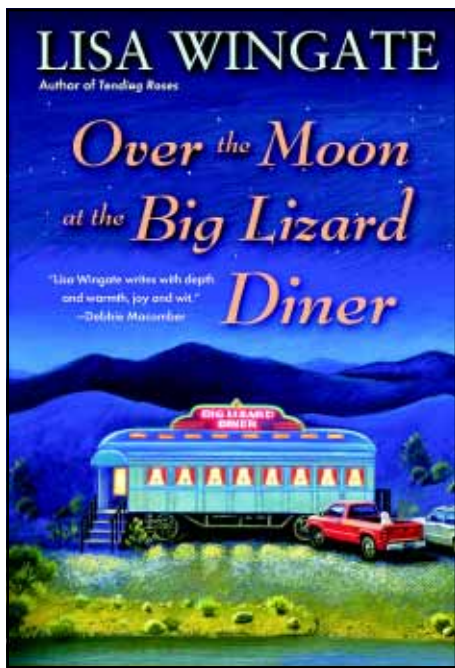
# Lisa Wingate's New Book Available

## Over the Moon at the Big Lizard Diner

CLIFTON — Clifton author Lisa Wingate returns to the small towns and out-of-the way cafes of the Texas Hill Country for her latest book, *Over the Moon at the Big Lizard Diner*.

The novel, which is the third in her Texas Hill Country series, following the critically acclaimed *Texas Cooking* and *Lone Star Café*, travels the back roads and byways of the fictional town of San Saline, where fine cuisine at the enigmatic Big Lizard Diner is anything smoked, smothered, or fried, and matchmaking is a local pastime. But matchmaking is the last thing on the mind of paleontologist, Lindsey Attwood, when she arrives at the nearby Jubilee Ranch, intent on solving the mystery of some ancient dinosaur tracks, stolen from a nearby riverbed.

"The idea of stolen dinosaur tracks came from a news feature in the CLIFTON RECORD a few years ago," said Wingate. "The story was about a set of Theropod tracks that were chiseled from a bed of solid limestone, and stolen from the Owen Ranch. It was such a bizarre story. I couldn't imagine that thieves would sneak onto private property, cut a four-foot chunk of limestone



from a riverbed and secretly make off with it." The story was so unusual that it was covered by WASHINGTON POST and the Associated Press.

Wingate then met with ranch owners,

Fred and Gwen Owen, who were kind enough to share various news items about the stolen tracks. The fossil's street value is difficult to estimate, and few clues as to the thieves' identity were left behind at the scene. In Wingate's novelized version, the outcome is much more satisfying. "The wonderful thing about fiction is that you can capture the villains in the end and bring them to justice."

But, at heart, *Over the Moon at the Big Lizard Diner* isn't just about tracking down mysterious fossil thieves. It's about an ordinary woman, suddenly plucked from her comfort zone and faced with the question of taking a leap of faith into an entirely new life. Along the way, Lindsey's journey is aided by local folks, down-home food, a giant stray sheepdog with a bad reputation, and a horse whis-

pering class in which the horses teach the whisperer a thing to two.

These unlikely elements combine to create another novel in which, according to Kirkus Reviews, "Wingate lets her magical Texas locations and idiosyncratic supporting characters shine." The result is a story that is sometimes funny, sometimes touching, sometimes introspective, and always honest as it considers the questions of life, love, leaps of faith, and the tracks of a big lizard that long ago roamed the canyons and creek beds of one of Bosque County's historic ranches.



Lisa Wingate

Wingate's book is now on shelves at bookstores and available through online booksellers, and will also be available during several area signings.

Wingate will be appearing at the new Waco Books-a-Million Store for a book signing on Nov. 17 at 7 p.m.



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