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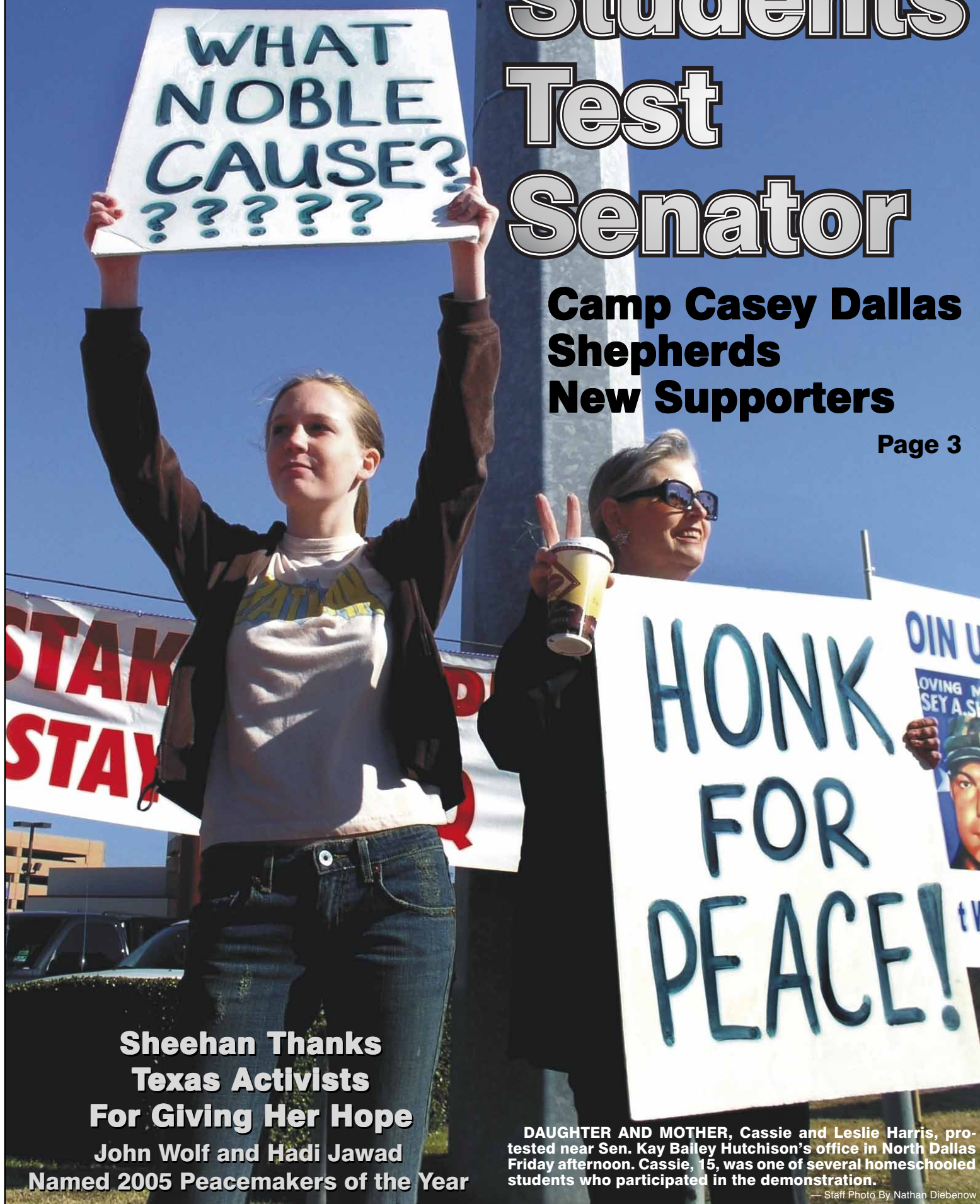
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Sheehan Thanks Texas Activists For Giving Her Hope

John Wolf and Hadi Jawad Named 2005 Peacemakers of the Year

DAUGHTER AND MOTHER, Cassie and Leslie Harris, protested near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office in North Dallas Friday afternoon. Cassie, 15, was one of several homeschooled students who participated in the demonstration.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Protestors Swarm Bush's Denver Appearance

DENVER — Bringing noise and physical disruption, about 300 anti-war activists in Denver greeted President Bush who was there to support a two-term GOP congresswoman vulnerable

to re-election last Tuesday.

The protestors blew whistles, banged pots and pans, and briefly surrounded two press buses en route to the Brown Palace Hotel for a fund-raiser for Rep.

Marilyn Musgrave.

Police finally after 10 minutes cleared away demonstrators to allow the press buses passage to cover the fund-raiser; though Bush's motorcade was spared blockage, protestors displayed signs reading, "Bring our troops home where they belong," "Occupation breeds hate," and "Impeach Bush."

A 31-year-old Frisco mother, Eve Ventrella told reporters that she was there upset over Rep. Musgrave, an advocate for a constitutional ban on gay marriage who has relaxed her anti-homosexual rhetoric while campaigning for re-election.

Ventrella was accompanied there by her five-year-old son, whose Spiderman backpack held a sign that read, "I'm already in debt."

The next day at U.S. Naval Academy

in Annapolis, Md., Bush said that U.S. troops would not leave Iraq amid "artificial timetables set by politicians in Washington."

Democrats said, however, that Bush's speech and his 35-page plan "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," was the same-old rhetoric the White House has hashed since 2003 and failed to feature markers to measure progress in Iraq's stabilization and the U.S. troops withdrawal.

"What we need is a real program," said Senator Edward Kennedy, (D-Mass.). "We need a real plan."

While a majority of Americans — 53 percent — say the war in Iraq was wrong, Bush's approval rating is at 37 percent, the lowest point of his presidency, according to a recent AP-Ipsos poll.

Free Wireless Jazzes New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS — The United States' first free wireless Internet network owned and operated by a major city has been launched in the birthplace of jazz music—New Orleans.

While telephone and cable television companies have stopped publically owned wireless networks in the past, most equipment for the New Orleans

system was donated by Intel Corp., Tropos Networks, and Pronto Networks.

The system is aimed at boosting the Big Easy's ravaged economy. Mayor Ray Nagin said the system will first be located in the central Business District and the French Quarter. Service is to be expanded city-wide by next year.

With or without the wireless system, the overall consensus among almost every socio-economic class in New Orleans is that their city should receive the best possible protection from the most dangerous of storms. This means building levees that withstand Category 5 hurricanes.

Although the cost to rebuild New Orleans and her levees is unknown, the work to upgrade could exceed \$32 billion and might take decades to finish, according to state officials.

Any upgrades, however, will probably cost billions. Comparatively, New York City after 9/11 spent more than the \$21 billion. About \$160 billion a year is spent by all the states together on upgrades to pre-existing infrastructure, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The Army Corps of Engineers said that it will spend \$1 billion to rebuild the damaged levees to their original design levels, able to hold off a Category 3 storm. Those repairs are expected to be completed by June 1, the start of hurricane season.

European Leaders To Grill Rice Over Secret CIA Prisons

WASHINGTON — European leaders are expected to grill Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week about reports that the United States has used secret CIA prisons in Europe to interrogate possible terrorist suspects.

So far, the White House has not denied the existence of such prisons; however, Rice's spokesperson said she will discuss the matter when asked by U.S. allies during her five-day trip to Germany, Romania, Ukraine and Belgium for a NATO meeting.

Europe has been so unnerved amid reports of these prisons that European Union Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini threatened sanctions last Monday on any EU nation that has hosted such interrogation facilities.

Rice's mend-the-fences meeting with new German Chancellor Angela Merkel Germany will come as Germany investigates a claim that an Egyptian was moved from the largest U.S. airbase in Europe located in Ramstein to Egypt for interrogation and torture.

Inquiries into other supposed CIA plane landings have been opened in several European countries, including Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden.

German government's coordinator for transatlantic relations said U.S. lawmakers could better encourage President Bush to get to the bottom of these allegations than European politicians.

CLASSIFIED ADS Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN in accordance with Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, as amended, that the Heart of Texas Council of Governments will hold a **Rural Transportation Planning Meeting**, on Tuesday, the 13th day of December, 2005, at 10:30 a.m., at the **Heart of Texas Council of Governments**, located at **300 Franklin Ave., Waco, Texas.**

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Countries Mark World AIDS Day

JAKARTA, Indonesia — While rallies, workshops, and condom distribution programs took place all over the world Thursday to mark World AIDS Day, the head of UNAIDS criticized Indonesia's leaders for their lax efforts in preventing an epidemic there.

Peter Piot said that although between 150,000 to 250,000 people might be infected in Indonesia, more and more intravenous drug users, sex workers, and their clients are becoming infected. Thailand is one of the world's largest heroin-producing areas.

Thailand's Public Health Minister Phinij Jarusombat said that to raise awareness, 24 million of condoms were to be handed out there.

In India, a country with about 5.1 million HIV-positive people, thousands rallied against AIDS Thursday in Golaghat, a town in the northeast heavily used by heroin traffickers to cross the Myanmar border. Dozens of women who admitted there that they have HIV called for the end to their shunning and pleaded for HIV-infected men to step out of the shadows, too.

Traditional taboos associated with sex must be overcome, so AIDS can be discussed in any social context, said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

China on Thursday launched an AIDS-awareness campaign to reach its 120 million migrant workers. Television there depicted workers at a Beijing construction site receiving condoms.

If the Chinese government fails to educate its youths about AIDS prevention, 10 million Chinese could be HIV-infected by 2010, said UNAIDS. The Chinese government says that about 840,000 people might have HIV and 80,000 others might have full-blown AIDS.

Most HIV infections are among injecting drug users, said a Chinese newspaper. The highest incidence of these infections occur in the regions near Myanmar and Thailand.

Pakistan could become a hotbed for HIV infection with its poverty, illiteracy, a sex industry, and injecting drug users, said a senior UNAIDS official. According to a recent UNAIDS report, about 8.3 million people have HIV in Asia; about 1.1 million people were infected there last year.

In South Africa, activists and physicians last Tuesday filed a lawsuit against the government for not removing a doctor who advocates untested vitamins to combat AIDS.

South Africa has the highest HIV caseload in the world with about 5.6 million out of its 45 million population infected.

In Vietnam, U.S. Ambassador Michael Marine stressed efforts for AIDS prevention should be directed toward teaching children instead of injecting drug users and sex workers.



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Telephone (All Departments) — (254) 675-3634

Fax No. — (254) 675-4090 • Email: news@lonestaricon.com

Web Newspaper: www.lonestaricon.com

EDITORIAL
Associate Editors:
Don M. Fisher
Nathan Diebenow
Reporters:
Deborah Mathews
Michael Harvey

ADVERTISING
Melanie Harvey
Carolyn Black
Allison Pinkerton

**PUBLISHER
& EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
W. Leon Smith

BUSINESS
Kay Ortiz, Front Office Manager
Allison Smith, Internet Manager
Michael Harvey, Bookkeeping

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Students Test Senator

Camp Casey Dallas Shepherds New Supporters

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

DALLAS — About 50 peace activists, energized after an awards ceremony the previous evening, returned to their weekly protest of the war in Iraq near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office in Dallas Friday afternoon.

Though no arrests were made and the senator was absent from her office, the demonstration was still noisy as driver after driver honked their car horns in response to the protesters' signs that read, "Honk for Peace."

Organizers from several local peace and justice groups, included several homeschooled students, joined there under the name "Camp Casey Dallas" in recognition of the late soldier-son of Cindy Sheehan, an anti-war activist who gained international attention for her 26-day vigil outside President Bush's vacation ranch last August.

Marking the 2,000th U.S. soldier's death in Iraq this October, about a dozen protesters were arrested outside Hutchison's office during a sit-in. The protestors intend to fight the charges in court, according to a Dallas activist.

Sheehan not only attended the protest Friday, serving as a media magnet and inspirational figure for the demonstrators, but on

**Sheehan Thanks
Texas Activists
For Giving Her Hope**

Continued On Next Page

**John Wolf and Hadi Jawad
Named 2005 Peacemakers of the Year**

WITH ORIGAMI CRANES, Lisa Willis of Dallas decorates the site of an anti-war protest near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office in North Dallas Friday afternoon.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



• **STUDENTS TEST SENATOR ... Continued From Page 3**

Thursday night, she also accepted a special award and honored the community of activists who aided her during her vigil at the Dallas Peace Center's 19th Annual Peacemaker Award Dinner.

In her acceptance speech for the Center's Phoenix Award, Sheehan said that the outpouring of support by Texan activists during her August vigil renewed her hope and the hope of millions of other people around the world who are against the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

"When Casey was killed on April 4, I thought all my hope was gone," she said. "You know, the sun would come up in the morning, and I'd get up, and I would exist during a long horrible day without my son ... but you all changed that for me in August because you proved that you cared about my family and my sacrifice, and Casey, and the rest of the soldiers ... and the Iraqi people. You gave us back our hope."

Sheehan's schedule since last summer has been hectic. After her Thanksgiving-weekend return to Crawford, for example, she traveled to New York City only to be back in Dallas before a weekend split between Chicago, Ill. and Berkeley, Calif., a stop in Connecticut on Monday, and then a plane ride from New York City to London to begin a tour to promote her new book in Europe on Tuesday.

"It's not easy. It's very difficult, but I know that with your thoughts, your love, and your prayers, it helps me go," she said. "I never, ever thought I'd be spending so much time in Texas, but you know, Crawford is a beautiful place, and apparently, it's my vacation home now, too."

Plans are underway for Sheehan to return to Crawford next Easter, although the door remains open for future visits. "Hopefully, we will be able to come back to Crawford every year to have a big family reunion to remember what we did in August of 2005," Sheehan said.

Four activists who laid the ground-



State Rep. Lon Burnham

work for Sheehan's month-long vigil were honored at the dinner as well. Before introducing Sheehan, State Rep. Lon Burnham (D-Fort Worth), director of the Dallas Peace Center, specially recognized Kay Lucas and Ann Wright for their commitment in assisting Sheehan in Crawford this year.

"I want to make sure that we recognize that behind every strong, important, and accomplished woman, there is usually another woman," said Burnham to a round of applause.

Lucas, a member of Waco Friends of Peace, has served as a coordinator for Crawford Peace House since the facility's inception in spring 2003. A career Foreign Service officer and Army Reserves colonel who resigned from the State Department in protest over the invasion of

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ABOUT 50 PROTESTORS with "Camp Casey Dallas" stood on the corner of Meadow and North Central Expressway in Dallas near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office Friday afternoon to express their views against the war in Iraq.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



ENERGIZING the protesters, Cindy Sheehan, mother of a slain soldier in Iraq, walks the demonstration line last Friday afternoon near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office in North Dallas.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



CAMP CASEY DALLAS, a coalition of groups taking the name of Cindy Sheehan's late soldier-son, protested near Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison's office in North Dallas Friday afternoon. The demonstration remained calm yet noisy due to car drivers honking their horns in support of the anti-war protestors.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



YOUTH FOR PEACE — Ten-year-old homeschooled student Lucas Pyke of Dallas flashes the peace sign with his right hand to a car driver who honked his horn in solidarity with anti-war protestors holding signs that read, "Honk for Peace."

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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Iraq, Wright worked as a personnel coordinator for the events during Sheehan's visits to Crawford this past year.

Noting that Thursday, Dec. 1, marked the 50th anniversary of Rosa Park's refusal to leave her bus seat in Montgomery, Ala., thus launching the civil rights movement, the Rev. Peter Johnson presented Sheehan with a historic button depicting Parks prepared by the Montgomery Improvement Association and a funeral program from Park's memorial in Detroit, Mich.

While introducing the 2005 Peacemakers of the Year — John Wolf and Hadi Jawad — Rev. Johnson explained that however dark these days may be, spiritual significance and outstanding coincidences fill them.

"(Sheehan) did not know about the Peace House and John and Hadi, just as Mrs. Parks did not know about Martin (Luther King, Jr.). Don't you find it special that Casey died on April 4? April 4 was the day that Dr. King was assassinated. Listen, there is magic in what we do!" noted Rev. Johnson.

Rev. Johnson told the audience of 400 at the Renaissance Hotel in Dallas that he came to know Wolf and Jawad through their interest in social justice activism. Thirty years ago, Wolf, a Dallas native, joined Johnson with members of his high school class to a protest at Dallas City Hall. Jawad, originally from Karachi, Pakistan, organized a protest demanding that the bathrooms of his Catholic school be fixed. Wolf and Jawad, however, kindled their friendship a decade ago through a common interest in poetry.

Before last year's peacemaker award recipient Chip Pitts presented Wolf and Jawad their award, Rev. Johnson reminded his audience

to stay active in the social justice movement: "When the Vietnam War was over, our friends in the peace movement cut their hair, took a bath, and put on a Brooks Brothers suit, and went to Main Street. They left us in the social justice movement. I'm asking you all that when this war is over, stay in the fight for justice for everybody—for gay people, for black people"

When Wolf took to the podium, he shared a few poems written while he and Jawad were involved in a poetry circle they started at a café in Dallas, and later explained that these moments with Jawad opened new doors for him.

"For 15 years, I've been protesting this war in Iraq. It breaks my heart to think about what's been going on over there," said Wolf, fighting back tears. "We've tried doing everything we've been able to do, and now I feel a sense of hope that there's a change happening."

After Wolf thanked Sheehan for helping foster that change, he told the story of how he worked through his fear of the FBI and became an activist in Dallas.

"When we choose to cross that line, it's amazing. For everyone of us that is an activist, there are thousands waiting for permission to cross that line," said the owner and co-founder of the Crawford Peace House. "After eight years on the board of the Dallas Peace Center, and so many causes and so many wonderful people, the whole concept of that line just totally disappeared."

Jawad said he was honored to be in such a group as the past recipients of the peacemaker award, thanked his mentors for guiding him, and invited the peace activists in the room to protest at Sen. Hutchison's office the next day.

"This is the work that Cindy started. This is the work of our democracy," he said. "If you really, really care for this country, if you really, really care for the ideal this country was founded upon, protest! Dissent! Don't be afraid! At least let them know that you are not afraid because they want you to be afraid. They are getting away with murder right now."

To a round of applause, Jawad called for charges of war crimes against the Bush administration on behalf of the Iraqi people, and he encouraged the peace community to step up their activities. "We actually have these guys on the run now. The iron is hot! We have to strike right now. We have to take our country back," he added.

Earlier in the evening, author Karen Blesser received the TAFFY Award for her book *Peace One Day* in recognition of a children's learning tool that represents the Peace Centers' values. The late civil rights lawyer Parker Wilson was also remembered for his lifelong dedication to peace and justice through his work to provide legal advice to immigrants.

Musician Baba Charles closed the ceremony with a short speech and call-and-response drum number, and afterward, RushLight performed for guests and dancers.



2005 PEACEMAKERS OF THE YEAR, Hadi Jawad (far left) and John Wolf (far right) received their award from last years' recipient Chip Pitts (center) last Thursday at the 19th annual Peacemaker Award Dinner sponsored by the Dallas Peace Center.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



GROUNDWORK — State Rep. Lon Burnham (D-Fort Worth), director of the Dallas Peace Center, (from left) recognized Kay Lucas and Ann Wright, for their commitment to aiding Cindy Sheehan in Crawford this year.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE — Noting that Thursday, Dec. 1 marked the 50th anniversary of Rosa Park's refusal to leave her bus seat in Montgomery, Ala., thus launching the civil rights movement, the Rev. Peter Johnson (right) presented Cindy Sheehan (center) with a historic button depicting Parks prepared by the Montgomery Improvement Association and a funeral program from Park's memorial in Detroit, Mich. Also picture is past peacemaker award recipient Chip Pitts.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



EASTER RETURN — Plans are under way for Sheehan to return to Crawford next Easter, although the door remains open for future visits. "Hopefully, we will be able to come back to Crawford every year to have a big family reunion to remember what we did in August of 2005," Sheehan said Thursday during the Dallas Peace Center's annual awards dinner.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

66% Of New Yorkers Want New Probe Of 9/11, Zogby Poll Says

UTICA, N.Y. — A new Zogby International poll indicates that New Yorkers want a new probe into the tragedy of 9/11, and that there is belief that complicity by the U.S. government was involved, including 30 percent of registered Republicans and over 38 percent of individuals who describe themselves as “very conservative.”

The charge found particularly high support among adults under 30 (62.8%), African-Americans (62.5%), Hispanics (60.1%), Asians (59.4%), and “Born Again” Evangelical Christians (47.9%).

Less than two in four (36%) believe that the 9/11 Commission had “an-

swered all the important questions about what actually happened on September 11th,” and two in three (66%) New Yorkers (and 56.2% overall) called for another full investigation of the “still unanswered questions” by Congress or Elliot Spitzer, New York’s Attorney General.

Self-identified “very liberal” New Yorkers supported a new inquiry by a margin of three to one, but so did half (53%) of “very conservative” citizens across the state. The call for a deeper probe was especially strong from Hispanics (75.6%), African-Americans (75.3%) citizens with income from \$15-25K (74.3%), women (62%) and Evangelicals (59.9%).

W. David Kubiak, executive director of 911truth.org, the group that commissioned the poll, expressed genuine surprise that New Yorkers’ belief in the administration’s complicity is as high or higher than that seen in polls abroad.

“We’re familiar with extreme 9/11 skepticism in other nations where open media debate of U.S. government complicity has been allowed.

For example, on May 26th the TORONTO STAR reported a national poll showing that 63% of Canadians are also convinced U.S. leaders had ‘prior knowledge’ of the attacks yet declined to act. Our mainstream news outlets never reported on this startling poll nor the mounting evidence that has led tens of millions of Canadians, Europeans, and now New Yorkers to think and feel this way. I think these numbers show that New Yorkers are fed up with the silence and are starting to study the facts on their own. This case is not closed and New York’s questions are not going away.”

Nicholas Levis of NY911truth.org, an advisor on the poll, agrees, “In many ways, these results truly are surprising, but we think they also express a pretty natural frustration with officials, journalists, and investigative commissions who continue to underestimate the country’s hunger for the truth.

“The 9/11 Commission gave us a plenty of ‘recommendations,’ but far more plentiful were the discrepancies, gaps and omissions in their

supposedly ‘final’ report, said Levis. “How can proposals based on such deficient findings ever make us safe? We think these poll numbers are basically saying, ‘Wait just a minute. What about the scores of still outstanding questions? What about the unexplained collapses of WTC 7, our air defenses, official accountability, the chain of command on 9/11, the anthrax, insider trading & FBI field probes? There’s an awful lot more to this story that we need to know about.’ Such a huge majority of New Yorkers now want a new investigation; it will be interesting to see how quickly Attorney General Spitzer responds.”

U.S. Military Pays For Articles In Iraqi Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military in Iraq is paying for news articles to be placed in Iraqi newspapers. Military officials say that the practice is key to combating the enemy’s propaganda in Iraq.

However, a statement released by the U.S. military’s Combined Press Information Center in Baghdad failed to address a report that U.S. military paid Iraqi journalists to write slanted, pro-U.S. views of Iraq in their articles.

Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he approved of the Pentagon’s advertising placement in Iraqi newspapers to fight enemy “disinformation.” On the other hand, covertly planting stories by paying off Iraqi journalists was wrong, he said.

As a matter of reducing risk on Iraqi publishers, the U.S. military contracted with private firms to distribute such news piece to Iraqi publications. One firm, The Lincoln Group, has about two contracts to work public relations for the military there. Its PR. contract in Iraq is worth \$6 million.

A military spokesman in Iraq said the Pentagon’s policy for its disinformation program will be examined and possibly changed. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) has asked the Defense Department’s Inspector General to investigate the matter as well.

Boyd Becomes 1,000th U.S. Execution

RALEIGH, N.C. — Kenneth Lee Boyd became the 1,000th person executed in the United States since the death penalty restarted 28 years ago. About 150 protesters rallied against the punishment at the prison.

Boyd, who died early Friday morning from lethal injection, was a double murderer who shot his estranged wife and father-in-law 17 years ago.

Boyd, 57, said he preferred to be sentenced to life in prison. He added that he’d rather not be remembered as a number.

Nutritionists Criticize Soft Drink Sales

WASHINGTON — The American Beverage Association happily announced Thursday that non-diet soft drinks sales in U.S. schools lunged by 24 percent over the last two years.

The report was meant to stop a lawsuit against soda pop companies, pressured over childhood obesity concerns that have led schools to toss the carbonated sugar water from their halls.

Sports drinks, bottled water, diet soda, and fruit juice have all seen significant increases in sales, according to data from beverage bottling compa-

nies, although regular soda still leads the pack.

Nutrition experts, however, were not pleased by these numbers, citing that soda’s apparent replacement — sports beverages — still have significant amounts of sugar even though their calories are low.

Richard Daynard, director of the obesity and law project at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, has accused these companies of hooking children on caffeine to get them addicted to soft drinks.

Same-Sex Couples Wait To Marry In South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Same-sex couples in South Africa will have to wait a year before marrying because Parliament must change laws allowing such same-sex unions after the highest court there ruled in favor of gay marriage last Thursday.

If the governmental body fails to act within the time constraints then the courts will automatically step in, according to the South African press.

The Constitutional Court’s decision, which undoubtedly paves the way for South Africa to become the first to legalize same-sex marriage in Africa, has disappointed gay rights activists and upset Christian groups saying the ruling is too much.

Lawmakers have many avenues in which to impose limits to the legal definition of marriage for same-sex couples, such as the invention of “civil unions” that set the same legal benefits as marriage but not compel religious bodies to honor them.

South Africa was the first world nation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation when its post-apartheid constitution was approved in 1994. Since then, the government there has stonewalled the extension of the definition of marriage in court to same-sex couples.

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The New Pearl Harbor - Confronting the Evidence Panel To Push For 9/11 Re-investigation This Week

TAMPA — Philanthropist Jimmy Walter will introduce investigatory experts in a forum slated this week at Don Vicente De Ybor Hotel in Tampa, Fla. to encourage re-investigation into the tragedies of Sept. 11, 2001, involving the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Panelists will include Walter, Morgan Reynolds, David Von Kleist, William Rodriguez, and Eric Hufschmid. A press conference kicks off the event on Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 10 a.m. at the hotel.

Dubbed "A Real Investigation Into What Happened on Sept. 11, 2001," the forum will look into these questions:

1. Why the Bush administration ignored warning signs about terrorist attacks.
2. Why the White House leaked classified information to the media.
3. Why members of the administration lied under oath and obstructed justice in an investigation about national security violations.
4. Why Bush and top officials sent the U.S. into war without an exit strategy and without good reason.
5. Why the Republican administration has created massive deficits, while cutting spending on social programs and veteran benefits, and giving tax cuts to the richest Americans.
6. Why the administration has filled vital government positions with political cronies, with disastrous consequences.

From 1997 to 2000 Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, and numerous other Bush Administration officials and friends issued and signed a call for a "New Pearl Harbor," a "catastrophic and catalyzing event," to convince the American People to invade Iraq and project American military power in the Middle East, explained Walter, who quoted from several sources regarding evidence about the attacks:

"— 'NORAD sent fighter jets in the wrong direction...this is unbelievable negligence.' Senator Mark Dayton, D—MN.

"— 'It is likely that there were pre-positioned explosives in all three buildings at ground zero.' Steven Jones, Brigham University Physics Professor.

"— No steel framed building before or since September 11 has ever collapsed from fire or collision, including those at Nagasaki and Hiroshima. One testing agency tried to destroy a steel framed building with jet fuel and failed! Yet on September 11, three skyscrapers, including one that was not hit, collapsed at free fall speed.

"— Scientific American in 2000 said, 'The WTC was probably one of the more resistant tall buildings..they just don't build them as tough as the World Trade Center.'

"— 'The specifics of the fires ... and how they caused the building to collapse remain unknown at this time.' Federal Emergency Management Administration

"— Of the 19 alleged hijackers identified by the FBI, at least have six turned up alive after the attack. (CNN, New York Times, CBS, BBC)

"— The hijackers instructors have stated that they "could not fly at all." Yet the air traffic controllers were amazed at the precision turns and coordination of the attacks at high speed and low altitude. Many professional pilots have stated that the flight paths were impossible for a human to execute.

About The Panelists:

Jimmy Walter: Jimmy Walter is the host and sponsor of "The New Pearl Harbor — Confronting The Evicence: The Sept. 11th Truth Tour." Spending millions of dollars of his personal funds, Jimmy Walter has launched an advertising blitz in the world's most prominent newspapers and magazines, including full-page color ads in *Business Week*, *Forbes*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Readers' Digest*, *The New Yorker*, *The Observer*, *The Guardian*, *Monde*, *Telegraaf*, *de Volkskrant*, *Der Standard*, and others, entitled: "Are We Safer Now?" According to Walter, the 9/11 Commission's official published report contains outright lies and distortions; very troubling questions about the attacks remain unanswered.

Walter first turned to advertising two years ago when he saw the mainstream press self-censoring to support the impending Iraqi quagmire. He felt impelled to get the word out that Colin Powell had lied before for the George H. W. Bush administration and was again lying to the American people, the Congress, and the UN to falsely justify another Gulf War. This would, Walter surmised, increase terrorism, create a new Vietnam, and cause an economic disaster for America. Presciently, his predictions have all come true: The war has increased terrorism against the American people, jobs are scarce, oil is running out, and the world economy and environment are being wrecked by Bush's fanatical actions, notes Walter.

As a patriot, philanthropist, activist with a genius IQ (Cum Laude at Asheville Prep School and winner of the prestigious Morehead Scholarship at UNC,) Walter parlays his knowledge of business, finance, psychology, economics, behavior management, religion, computer science, and philosophy, to promote the creation of eco-friendly, utopian societies.

A venture capitalist and political activist, writer Jimmy Walter is the son of Florida's own James W. Walter, Sr., a successful home builder and industrialist who started Jim Walter Homes and Walter Industries in 1946 with \$1,000 he borrowed from his father to eventually sell the company in 1986 for \$2 billion to KKR. In 1968, he bought US Pipe and Foundry. Later, he acquired Fry Roofing, Georgia Marble, and various other building material companies.

The site <<http://www.reopen911.org>> will give a free DVD of *Confronting the Evidence: A Call to Reopen the September 11th Investigation*, to anyone who requests a copy. To date, Walter has given away more than 450,000 DVDs, in 10 languages. He encourages people to read more about crucial evidence and the latest 9/11 news at: [Reopen911.org](http://www.Reopen911.org).

Morgan Reynolds, PhD: Morgan Reynolds is currently professor emeritus in economics, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. He was former Chief Economist at the U.S. Department of Labor 2001-2002, and also served as the Director of the Criminal Justice Center and Senior Fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis, headquartered in Dallas, Texas.

Professor Reynolds is the author or co-author of six books, including *Public Expenditures, Taxes, and the Distribution of Income* (1977), *Power and Privilege: Labor Unions in America* (1984),

Crime by Choice (1985), and *Economics of Labor* (1995). He has published over 50 articles in academic journals, including the *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy* and *Journal of Labor Research*. He has authored or co-authored dozens of policy studies for organizations like the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress and the National Center for Policy Analysis. He has written dozens of op-eds for *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *Fortune*, *National Review*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *The Washington Times*, *LewRockwell.com*, and other popular outlets.

Dr. Reynolds' research and publication interests include labor market issues, income inequality, trade union behavior, and labor regulation, as well as the economics of crime and punishment. Over the last few years, he has served as a consultant and researcher for the National Correctional Industries Association, an industry trade group for attracting and administering paid job opportunities within-prison-walls for inmates.

William Rodriguez: Last Survivor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center and heroic rescuer, William Rodriguez is one of the many 9/11 survivors speaking out against the Bush administration's official story. Rodriguez will describe hearing explosives prior to the collapse and his fruitless attempts to make this known to the 9/11 Commission, The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), as well as the FBI.

On the morning of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Rodriguez single-handedly rescued 15 people from the World Trade Center's North Tower. As Rodriguez was the only person at the site with the master key to the North Tower stairwells, he led firefighters up the stairwell, unlocking doors as they ascended, thereby aiding in the successful evacuation of hundreds of additional victims. Rodriguez, at great risk to his own life, then re-entered the Towers three times over, and is believed to be the last person to exit the North Tower alive.

After being rescued on 9/11, Rodriguez became an advocate for the victims' families and survivors. He successfully pressed Congress, the Legislature and Senate, for many of the benefits that the families finally received. He is the President of the Hispanic Victim's Group. His

experience at the Towers (20 years) and knowledge of the events is a real eye-opener for those who want to find the real truth about that day. He testified before the 9/11 Commission, yet his testimony was omitted in the final report.

Joyce Riley: Joyce Riley is a former captain in the Air Force, who went on to produce the formidable DVD, *Beyond Treason, The Story behind the Cover-up of Depleted Uranium (DU), Exposure Chemical & Biological Exposure, and Experimental Vaccinations*. Joyce Riley led the investigation into the First Gulf War Syndrome in 1991, and is currently the spokesperson for the American Gulf War Veterans Association. She co-hosts the radio show "The Power Hour" with her husband Dave VonKleist, and it is heard domestically on AM and FM stations, as well as on the internet, satellite and international short-wave radio. Joyce Riley will be available from Dec-7-11.

David Von Kleist is the producer of the documentary *In Plane Site*, which proved that the damage incurred at the Pentagon site on Sept. 11th could not have been caused by a Boeing 757, as the Bush/Cheney-led establishment would have the public believe. The film focuses on the controversy at the Pentagon, and the fact that many military officers and other witnesses have agreed that the plane used in the attack did not appear to be a commercial aircraft. The matter was further complicated when video footage of the attack was confiscated, and crucial evidence was hidden from the public. Von Kleist currently co-hosts the popular radio show "The Power Hour" with his wife, Joyce Riley.

Eric Hufschmid: Hufschmid's book about this baffling 'trial by fire' is considered a must-read for those trying to understand the collapse and disintegration of not one steel building by fire, but three, on the same day.

In *Painful Question: an Analysis of the September 11th Attack*, Eric Hufschmid performs a methodical analysis of available evidence, testing the physical plausibility of the official explanation—now known as the "Pancake Theory." As Hufschmid explains, the credibility of the official theory hinges on how hot the fires were in the towers and how long the fires continued to heat the steel beams. Further, Hufschmid questions how World Trade Center #7 could have collapsed, when it was not hit by an aircraft, and had no significant fires.

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'Too Stupid To Live' Library Grows

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "We orta be thankful for stupidity. Without it, what would we do for a government?"

It's been a while since we visited the "Too Stupid To Live" political library.

If Waco can't get the Bush library, perhaps the area could salvage some of its recent soul-selling executive sucking up with a TSTL edifice instead.

The Too Stupid To Live Library would be larger than Neighbor Bush's, and contain much of the same material.

I mean, what are you going to put in the presidential library of a man who admits he doesn't read?

An empty pretzel box, a bottle of Dick Cheney's spittle, and Karl Rove's cell phone number?

Is there a Dewey Decimal listing for self-deception?

Or is it just kind of all grouped under "lies?"

But that's the problem with neighbor Bush.

We never know whether he's being venal or just stupid.

Or which is worse.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



But speaking of stupid, we have lately felt the wrath of political Too Stupid To Live antics, and it's time to hand out some awards:

Ya Think, Guv?

To Lying Texas Governor Tricky Ricky Perry goes the "Kitty-Up-The-Tree Get Hosed" Award.

A record drought resulted in about 20,000 acres of accidental Texas BBQ before Tricky arrived at the startling revelation that seven counties of his constituency have been on fire for a couple of weeks.

His response?

He decided the Governor's Division of Emergency Management ought to put those fires out.

As opposed to deciding the Governor's Division of Emergency Management ought to put those fires out *before* they reached the suburbs.

He also urged Texans to "take precautions to protect their homes and property," and "remain alert to the threat of wildfires."

No, really.

He said that, honest.

"Hey Martha, something's melting the Christmas lawn decorations, and the Tahoe just disappeared in a ball of hot reddish orangey stuff. Think this could have something to do with why the dog ran away?"

Look, you people in the suburbs voted for this clown, so break out the weenies and Sta-Pufs.

However, in light of Tricky's decisive FAR-FIGHTIN' efforts, we can no longer, in good conscience, refer to him in this space as Lying Texas Governor Tricky Ricky Perry.

Henceforth he will be know as Lying Idiot Governor Tricky Ricky Perry.

Charity Begins At Incarceration

Eight Texas Republican Fascist Congressmen who took bribes from a Californian earned the coveted "Honest, Officer, She Swore She Wasn't A Sheep" Award.

This Christian coalition scattered like feeding time at Lion Country Safari when Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham of California tearfully admitted his guilt (and plea bargained testimony with prosecutors) this week to charges of campaign law violations and money laundering charges.

It seems he also admitted that he sent \$20,000 of his \$2.4 million loot to his pals in Texas.

Six Grand went to Tom DeLay's lawyers, by the way, to defend him against the same charges.

Fight bribery with bribery.

Most of them quickly swore they intend to give their bribes to charity.

Uncle Hugh once tried to do the same thing.

The sheriff wasn't impressed that Hugh pitched the strongbox over the wall of a home for unwed mothers.

The story had a Republican ending, however.

The sheriff kept the box and Hugh kept the home.

Things To See, People To Do

Finally, to McLennan County District Judge Ralph Strother goes the prestigious "Hoover Award For Sucking Up Ground-In Dirt."

Hizzonor did not send the high sheriff (or even the straight sheriff) after Neighbor Bush when the First Landlord, who rents out land in Crawford to real ranchers and bored Secret Service Reps, didn't show for jury duty.

That treatment is reserved for *campesinos*, not *patrons*.

The gopper judge (GOP. Don't that spell "gop?") said the president shouldn't be bothered with his civic duty, especially in time of war, and that he is sure President Little Tree will fulfill his legal obligations when he gets around to it.

First, this is not a time of war.

Maybe the same principle applies to police actions.

To goppers, however, police actions are wars fought by Democrats.

If he is referring to the "War on Terror," he has ignored a basic principle: Terrorists are stopped by police work; terrorists are *made* by wars.

Next time somebody appears before Judge Strother accused of getting remuneration or fulfilling some desire by instilling fear in his victim through force or threat of force, then instead of sending the accused to prison, the esteemed jurist should call in an air strike.

Harry Potter & the Goblet of Fire



Harry (Radcliffe), now 14 years old and entering his fourth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, is mysteriously drafted to participate in the dangerous Tri-wizard Tournament. But the competition turns into more than just a game when the evil Lord Voldemort (Fiennes) and his followers decide to play along.

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Arrested Anti-War Activists Known As 'Prairie Dogs'

CRAWFORD — Twelve anti-war activists were arrested on Nov. 23, on Prairie Chapel Road for challenging what they term as restrictive ordinances concerning camping and protesting in the ditches in the vicinity of President Bush's estate near Crawford.

As part of their personal recognition bond agreements, each must call the bond office every Tuesday after 1 p.m. (central time).

The "Prairie Chapel 12" have take on the moniker of Prairie Dogs. They claimed prior to their arrests that the law enacted by McLennan County commissioners following the 26-day vigil of Cindy Sheehan in August infringes on their First Amendment rights.

Those arrested include:

- Charlie Anderson, Norfolk, Virginia, GI Bill college student and member of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

- Jesse Dyen, Oakland, California, singer and song-writer.

- Daniel Ellsberg, Kensington, California, author of the Pentagon Papers and member of Veterans for Peace.

- Mary Ellen Goodwin, Campbell, California, college instructor.

- Em Hardy, Austin, Texas, licensed psychologist.

- DeDe Miller, Bellflower, CA, co-founder of Gold Star Families for Peace.

- Hiram K. Myers, Edmond, Oklahoma, author, attorney, candidate for U.S. Congress and member of Veterans for Peace.

- Carl Rising-Moore, Fishers, Indiana, author of "Freedom Underground" and field organizer with Crawford, Texas Veterans For Peace chapter.

- Tammara Rosenleaf, Helena, Montana, member of Military Families Speak Out whose husband will deploy to Iraq on Dec. 2, 2005.

- Lee Stanley, Tucson, Arizona, member of Veterans for Peace.

- Lauren Sullivan, Lawrence, Kansas, social worker.

- Ann Wright, Honolulu, Hawaii, one of three US diplomats who resigned in March, 2003 in opposition to the Iraq war, 29-year US Army Colonel, member of Veterans for Peace.

U.S. Soldier Death Toll In Iraq Reaches 2,127

BAGHDAD — Amid a declining approval rating for President Bush and polling about to get under way in Iraq's national elections set for Dec. 15, violence increased this past week in Iraq as 14 American soldiers died in two attacks, one the deadliest in four months.

According to Pentagon figures, the latest casualties brings the number of U.S. soldiers dead in Iraq to 2,217 and the wounded to over 17,000.

The latest bloodshed occurred near Fallujah where 10 soldiers died on Thursday.

It has been 2½ years since the topple of the Saddam regime, an event that the Bush Administration said would spur a flourishing democracy for Iraq and rid the world of terrorism. However, insurgency continues to run rampant and pressure is being placed on the administration to clarify its plans for Iraq, if it has any.

As more and more U.S. lawmakers have begun to criticize the administration for not producing an exit strategy, polls generated in November reveal that

the president's overall approval rating in the U.S. is at its lowest point — 37 percent among Americans.

A November SUSA poll indicates that one year after the presidential election, only three "red states" remain in the United States, as all the rest, including Texas and the entire southern half of the country, have now turned "blue."

Not only do a majority of Americans want an end to the aggression in Iraq, Iraqis have also indicated they prefer an end to foreign occupation.

Editorial OP/ED Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Voting Rights Act Obliterated In Texas

Thanks To DeLay, Craddick, Perry, Crabb

If ever there was a conspiracy, it found its home in the Texas Legislature.

A recent memorandum unearthed by reporters for THE WASHINGTON POST reveals that Texas state legislators rode roughshod over U.S. Department of Justice lawyers who denounced the 2003 congressional redistricting plan as being in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

The Justice Department lawyers and analysts, who carefully studied the plan, had commented that changes made in conference committee indicated "clear evidence that the state had one map it intended to pass from the beginning, and the process was a sham" and that the house plan "which provoked the greatest concern for minorities, was brought into a committee hearing room by Jim Ellis and that Rep. (Tom) DeLay prodded conference committee members to return to these more drastic changes after their respective chambers had eliminated many of them."

A Little History

Immediately after the Republicans took control over both houses of the legislature and the governorship, House Speaker Tom Craddick appointed a committee on redistricting.

This followed with Texas Attorney General Joe Crabb stating that the legislature could adopt a new redistricting plan, even though the court had already issued a plan that would suffice for the rest of the decade.

At this point, House Democrats, to deny the two-thirds quorum needed for debate, fled to Ardmore, Okla. where they stayed long enough to assure the session would end without passage of a redistricting bill.

On June 30, 2003, Gov. Rick Perry called a special session to again address redistricting. After the House approved a bill, it was the Senate's turn. Without consent of two-thirds of its members, the bill died on July 28.

That same day, Perry called another special redistricting session, whereupon 11 Democratic senators traveled to Albuquerque, N.M. to deny

the needed quorum. Another failure.

After one of the senators returned on Sept. 2, 2003, Perry called a third special session (on Sept. 15), upon which a plan was finally approved, with changes that would have to be "hammered out" in conference. The approval came after the senate changed its rules not to require two-thirds of the senate before debating redistricting. Said the memo, "This tradition was broken for the first time to pass the proposed redistricting plan."

According to the memorandum, "The final plan drawn by the conference committee, however, reinstated the most criticized changes to the plans.

"Commonly heard among opponents of the plan was criticism of the role played by Rep. Tom DeLay and the director of his political action committee, Jim Ellis (who, like DeLay, is also under indictment on state felony charges)."

The Conclusion

The conclusion of the Justice Department lawyers was that there was "compelling evidence that the plan was retrogressive" to minority representation in the state. The DoJ lawyers objected to the proposal.

Of course, what the GOP henchmen pulled is in strict violation of the law.

It is high time that all the "conspirators" become answerable to their makers, the people of Texas, in the form of legal inquiry and, ultimately, justice.

The fragility of elections in our country has become pronounced with the interjection of crooked voting machines that default to a certain party's candidates, no matter how one votes.

Fair elections can also be ruined with officials intimidating voters to stay away. Just look at Ohio.

But it can also be done by silencing the voices of minorities with voodoo redistricting plans.

This is clear: There are those in our state government who believe if you can't win it, just steal it.

The theft of democracy should not go unpunished.

— W. Leon Smith

New 'Student Tax' On College Loans Could Cost Borrowers \$5,000 to \$20,000

By CONGRESSMAN CHET EDWARDS
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

I am deeply disappointed that the U.S. House leadership narrowly pushed through partisan legislation on the House floor that could add \$5,000 to \$28,000 to the cost of college student loans.

Unless we can stop the higher interest rates and new origination fees in this bill, they, in effect, will amount to an expensive new student tax. This student tax will place a tremendous burden on thousands of college and university students in our district who have taken out loans to pay for their college education.

With costs for gasoline, utility bills and higher education already rising rapidly, the new student tax could force some students to take on a second or third job, and for others it might mean dropping out of college. For high-achieving, middle- and low-income high school students, it might mean many of them have to give up their dream of a college education.

By significantly increasing the interest payments on college loans, this bill might force future teachers into taking higher paying jobs instead of pursuing their calling to teach.

As our nation faces both increasing foreign competition and the largest trade deficits in history, there could not be a worse time for Congress to increase the cost of college loans. Doing so would be unfair to students and a prescription for long-term economic stagnation.

Budget estimates are that this bill would reduce federal funding for college student loans by \$14 billion over the next five years; \$7.8 billion of that would be direct cost increases to students and \$6 billion would be from cutting subsidies and increasing fees to lenders. It is, in reality, a \$7.8 billion tax on students and families with outstanding student loans. If half of the cost increase to lenders are also passed on to students, it would be a \$10.8 billion tax on students.

How does this bill raise costs to students and families? First, it would mandate a new one percent origination fee on consolidated student loans. Second, there would be a new one percent increase in the interest rate for borrowers who want to consolidate their student loans at a fixed rate. Third, borrowers who are still in school would no longer be able to lock into their present, low loan rates. Finally, the bill raises fees on new student loans as well as raising the cap on the interest rates that students and parents pay. With subsidies to banks and other lenders also cut by \$6 billion, the

bill will most likely reduce the private capital available to students for college loans.

According to Dr. Charles Young, the President Emeritus of UCLA, the present 5.3 percent rate for consolidating federally insured student loans would increase to 7.18 percent. That is a 35 percent increase in the loan rate. When stretched out over 20 years on a \$20,000 loan, the new student tax would total an extra \$5,255. For a \$40,000 loan over 25 years, the student tax would add \$13,932 to total loan repayments.

These increases assume interest rates on 91-day T-bills do not go up. If, for example, those T-bill rates went up 0.75 percent between now and May 31, 2006, a student borrower could be forced to pay \$19,709 more on a 25-year, \$40,000 student loan!

College students and their families have a right to be outraged that the new student tax could be passed into law by Congress with very little input from those who will be hit the hardest. The \$14 billion cuts in federal funding for college student loans under the House version of the budget must now be reconciled with a Senate version that doesn't include this burden on college students and their parents.

The House leadership is no doubt hoping a final budget will pass before college students and their families even know about it.

To add insult to injury, the Republican House leadership has chosen to cut \$14 billion from student financial aid programs over the next five years in order to pay for an extension of its dividend cuts that gives a \$220,000 annual tax break to those making \$1 million a year in dividend income.

I believe the House leadership is out of touch with the values and priorities of American families, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike. If Congress would ask those making a million dollars a year in dividend income to give up just a part of their \$220,000 annual tax cut, it wouldn't be necessary to pass a \$14 billion student tax that will hurt high achieving students and harm our nation's future competitiveness.

The \$14 billion student tax is a bad idea and should be defeated. I hope the voices of college students and their families will be heard in Congress before it is too late.

Cong. Edwards (D-Waco) serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees. He can be contacted by e-mail at (www.edwards.house.gov).



Washington Report

By Congressman Chet Edwards



A Quarter Century Of Genius Lost

"Imagine there's no Heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky..."

— John Lennon, "Imagine"

It was a Monday night.

Despite being Dec. 8, that late autumn of 1980 was unusually warm in the Carbondale area.

Springlike, windows open warm, as a matter of fact.

My final undergraduate finals week at Southern Illinois University had just begun.

I lived in a rented "mobile home" with my seven-month, 10-day-old son Pete and soon-to-be-ex-wife. Our hovel was just another unit in a trailer court university students temporarily called home, one of a countless number of mini-communities that surrounded the growing college town.

Microcosms of the naively hopeful, and those there just to waste money on kegs and whatever.

Pete was awake, and in a world of four (count 'em - 4!) television stations we often watched Johnny Carson. Although I honestly don't think he was fully aware of that.

Whenever atmospheric conditions combined favorably with my attempted adjustments of the outside antenna, the good karma would increase channel choices by 50 percent to six (we'd get a couple of St. Louis stations late at night).

Around 10:45 Central Time that night the most surreal event occurred: Right in the midst of all the fun and joviality, NBC broke in with a News Bulletin.

It was about as unusual an occurrence as I'd ever experienced during *The Tonight Show*.

This particular announcement was more blunt than the typical NBC bulletin; the network didn't even switch from the graphic to a shot of a live newscaster. There was just an ominous voiceover that began with four horrific words, words that I never in my worst nightmare could have conjured up, words that ran through my chest like a red-hot poker, words which I can still hear and run chills through my bones:

"John Lennon is dead."

All at once, in one instant, my youth disintegrated.

I was devastated.

The rest of the bulletin pretty much just flew past my consciousness - something about John Lennon being shot... in New York City... coming home from the studio... outside his home... in front of Yoko...

John Lennon shot!?

What kind of son of a bitch would shoot John Lennon?

Why?

The guy is all about non-violence and peace.

He's a BEATLE, for God's sake!

You don't shoot Beatles!

Then I thought about something I had said on the air, on my radio program the previous Friday night, a scant 70 hours and 30 minutes earlier. It was right after I had played a cut from his new "Double Fantasy" album.

Manure-mouth me complimented the record, or at least the half of the songs Lennon sang. As to the other half of the songs, I questioned John's thinking in allowing Yoko to go anywhere near a microphone and attempt singing.

But, I couldn't end my commentary there. No, I had to keep it up.



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

I got personal, way too much so. My next comment was of a derogatory nature concerning Yoko's looks.

Nope, I didn't shut my mouth with that. I was on a roll.

Still smarting from the break-up that we all blamed on Ms Ono, I actually said, and I quote, because I shall never forget these words, "That woman is so ugly he should take her out and have her shot... put her out of her misery once and for all."

I laughed as I said that on the radio, live, at approximately 12:15 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 6, 1980.

Oh, come on, I didn't really mean it. I don't own a gun, never have and have no plans to change that status.

Okay, so I bought my Son a Red Ryder Daisy BB air rifle for Christmas when he was 12. It's not exactly dangerous, every youngster needs to learn gun safety, and he did not shoot his eye out.

At the time my comments seemed cute and funny, and, well, I was probably stoned, too - pretty much a requirement for late night progressive rock radio.

That *faux pas* taught me a lifelong lesson about humility, and to not say anything into an open microphone that might come back and bite me in the ass.

At Midnight, as Dec. 8, 1980 became Dec. 9, 1980, it would be time to return to those same airwaves, with possibly many of the same listeners, and I had to publicly confront my utter stupidity.

To a certain extent, it was fortunate for me that I never used my real name on air.

Even if I had never made such an inanelly vile statement the guts had been kicked out of me.

One of The Beatles was dead - murdered - shot down in the street like a mangy dog.

This in itself was inconceivable.

However, knowing how insensitive I had been made going on the air damn near impossible.

I felt lower than anything a snail would refuse to eat.

It took all of my concentration just to play music that night; I hardly spoke at all.

A full week passed before I could joke around about anything on or off the air again; to this day how I got through finals week remains a mystery to me.

"Imagine all the people
Living life in peace..."

A brotherhood of man...

Sharing all the world...

You may say that I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one

I hope someday you'll join us

And the world will live as one."

— John Lennon, "Imagine"

I, and virtually everyone around me, my entire generation - at least those of us who were paying attention - grew up with The Beatles.

The sound fell upon us in late 1963, but the phenomenon really broke wide open early in 1964, my time of seventh grade, the transitional age of 12, facial hair (and everywhere else), when even the scrawniest girls in class began to look "inter-

esting."

Meanwhile, all transistor radios were tuned to WLS 89 Chicago, where every other song was either "She Loves You" or "I Want To Hold Your Hand" or "Please Please Me" or "All My Lovin'," or any one of myriad new songs being released in rapid succession by those lads from across the pond.

Throughout the next six years they never failed to surprise, please, or astound their fans, while confounding critics, whether in the studio, on film (well, *I Love Magical Mystery Tour*), on a rooftop, or in some non-performance situation.

Some television historians claim Ozzie Nelson created the Rock Video in 1961 with a travelogue-ish montage of stock footage he edited in synch to Ricky's "Traveling' Man." Ozzie was a savvy showman who knew how to use television, but that was basically time filler for a short episode of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

Others have credited Queen's mini-production of "Bohemian Rhapsody" to satisfy a 1975 appearance obligation on *Top Of The Pops* (BBC-TV) as the birth of the Rock Video.

To be precise, however, The Beatles were 10 years ahead of them. The Liverpool Lads had become so popular around the world by late 1965 it was impossible to make the rounds of television programs with their new songs.

So, beginning with "We Can Work It Out," "Day Tripper," "Help!," "Ticket To Ride," and "I Feel Fine" they produced original films for broadcast. At first, these had the frenetic look and feel of the Beatles' feature films directed by Richard Lester, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*

As the songs became more complex, so did the mini-films. "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" were the first wherein the action on screen was wholly incorporate from the musical performances.

With color television widely broadcast only in certain countries, such as America, the films were made available in both color and monochrome.

Also, different versions were produced for competing networks, so each could claim an "exclusive" (for example, several variations of "Paperback Writer" and "Rain" were distributed).

As much as it pains me to say this, it probably was not Yoko who broke up The Beatles, although I'm sure she was a catalyst. All indications now point to Sir Paul being the one who wanted to move along. But that's just speculation in hindsight from a Child of the '60s.

As shallow and fickle as music fans are known to be, The Beatles have proven longevity and uniqueness all their own. Many musical acts that have come along during the past 40 years are derivative of their sound, often blatantly so.

Every few years, a new package of Beatles' music is re-released. The result has always been the same - despite having recorded together for the last time in 1969, they've topped the charts during those re-issue years.

There's nothing like the real thing.

As their original fan base has advanced in age, they've added the children and grandchildren of those of us who first thrilled to boppin' around the dance floor to "I Saw Her Standing There."

Something that's always bothered me, though, is why no one on any of the various Starships Enterprise relaxed by listening to Beatles' music. Being as

timeless as Mozart, I'd expect Data or at least Capt. Archer to be a fan.

In later years John Lennon, I'll admit, occasionally rubbed me the wrong way, but I've always respected the fact that, with true English aplomb, he never flinched in his opinions.

He got shafted by his mum and the guy who sired him, took some hard knocks as a War Baby in England, yet overcame hellacious adversities to become one of the most prolific songsmiths in history.

Perhaps Lennon triumphed because of the tribulations?

Along with partner Paul McCartney, brother John spoke to a generation.

Before long, he was speaking *for* that generation.

History has shown us that many social changes during the latter part of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, including open protests against and the end of the VietNam War, were resultant from influences inspired through The Beatles musically and culturally, collectively as well as individually.

They expanded conventions in dress, conceptions in popular arts such as music and movies, discernment toward authority figures (at all levels), perception of ourselves.

Top 40 Rock 'n' Roll, from what I like to refer to as the "pre-Beatles era," by 1963 had become stunted, sanitized, sappy and stagnant. Cigar-chomping, balding middle-aged men controlled the record companies, radio stations, live venues, and all other facets of the music business. While pocketing the largest chunk of the profits, these schmoes shoved any hint of youthful exuberance right out of the picture.

The charts were overrun with girl singers and girl groups.

Nobody played the guitar anymore, or wrote their own songs.

Sales were way down, mostly because there was a dearth of talent.

Much like today's pop music scene.

The Beatles not only saved the pop and rock music industry, they re-invented it.

You might say they performed the first heart transplant, then gave the musical world new wings, a revived outlook, plus a vastly improved attitude.

The naysayers like to point fingers and say The Beatles told my generation how to think.

Bull.

If anything, what the more aware derived philosophically from The Fab Four, specifically from John and to a lesser degree the late George Harrison, was to *think for ourselves* (Harrison even wrote a song titled "Think For Yourself").

Okay, so Lennon wasn't shy about letting us in on what he was thinking. But unlike a certain twice-unelected ersatz American president and the black-hearted veep, he never insisted anyone else must agree with his point of view.

First and foremost in everything John Lennon professed was PEACE.

"God is a Concept by which we measure our pain..."

— John Lennon, "God"

He wasn't big on organized religion, or even the existence of God, for that matter.

Still, there have been very few religious leaders this side of Bishop Desmond Tutu who can claim to be as pacific in their rhetoric as John Lennon.

It's woefully apparent our self-proclaimed "born-again Christian" Fearless Leader and the rest of his West Wing Fas

Continued On Next Page

• TENUTO

Continued From Previous Page

cist Cabal completely missed the era of The Beatles and their message of peace, love, and understanding – the very concepts espoused by Jesus Christ minus the trappings of any religious folderol.

Just what *were* Bush, Rove, Cheney, and Rumsfeld up to during the '60s? I can safely surmise none of them were being hip, cool, and with it.

John Lennon was not a man of the cloth. Often, though, men of the cloth assailed him for his honesty. Yet his bottom line was the same as theirs.

The Bible-thumpers feared him because he just didn't see the need to restrict loving one another as part of a church-imposed regimen.

Hell, even America's favorite Conservative, John Wayne, played characters who shied away from attending church services, preferring instead the appreciation of the great vastness of nature as his place of worship.

On several occasions, Lennon joked about getting popped by a nut. During 1980 John even said someone with nefarious intent was stalking him.

I won't honor the schmuck's name by writing it here.

However, there's a movie in production as told from the killer's point of view.

Who in the hell cares?

Yoko's mad as hell about it, and for once I agree with her.

With any amount of luck, nobody will waste one thin dime to see why this socially inept cretin took one of the world's great songsmiths and peace lovers from the rest of us.

John Lennon, who never had anywhere near the opportunity to live out the lyrics of his and Paul's beautiful song, "When I'm Sixty-Four," would have turned 65 this year.

O, what wondrous music might we have shared these past 25 years...

"I was the Dreamweaver

But now I'm reborn

I was the Walrus

But now I'm John

and so dear friends

you'll just have to carry on

The Dream is over."

— John Lennon, "God"

Dec. 7, 2005 – This is the 64th Anniversary of the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor, signaling the entrance of the United States into World War II.

For what did our Fathers fight and die?

We are now into Day 1,823 of AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE – the takeover of our White House and Executive Branch by the Karl Rove-led Neo-con Fascist Regime.

Run the rotters of Washington, D.C. and take back Government of The People.

Tampico Wrong Place To Start A Revolt

Deciding discretion was definitely the better part of valor; Gen. Jose Antonio Mexia left his captured comrades to face Santa Anna's wrath and beat a hasty retreat to Texas on Dec. 1, 1835.

By the fall of that momentous year, Santa Anna had crushed all opposition to his one-man rule. Among the many reform-minded Mexicans driven into exile by the democrat turned despot was Mexia, who joined fellow dissidents in New Orleans.

The general was preceded by an Hungarian world traveler with the improbable pseudonym of George Fisher. The recent coup had cost the naturalized citizen his cozy job in the Mexican bureaucracy, and he was anxious to get back on the government payroll.

When Fisher arrived on Oct. 9, the dramatic events west of the Sabine River were the talk of the Crescent City. Seven days earlier at Gonzales, courageous colonists had taken up arms in defense of a contraband cannon and fired the first shot of the Texas Revolution.

Fisher was refused admission to the exile underground because of his reputation as a corrupt petty official. Only when Gen. Mexia personally vouched for his integrity was the Hungarian allowed to take part in the preparations for their triumphant return.

While Santa Anna was distracted by the trouble in Texas, Mexia would sail in secret to Tampico with a small invasion force. Once the coastal town was under his control, he would incite the eastern states to all-out insurrection.

On orders from Mexia, Fisher briefed Stephen F. Austin on the battle plan. In his tactful reply, the empressario suggested a different destination, the strategic border town 275 miles due north of Tampico.

"Nothing will aid Texas so much as an expedition against Matamoros," Austin stressed. "It is all important. Even a rumor of such a thing would keep troops from being sent to Texas."

Mexia conceded the military logic of Austin's argument but loathed changing plans at the last minute. He sent word to the Texan that Matamoros would be his next stop after the liberation of Tampico.

Mexia sent two trusted advisers ahead to line up local support, win over the government garrison and hire a tug to tow his schooner safely into the harbor. But in his impatience to get on with the grand adventure, he sailed from New Orleans before the advance men confirmed his reservation.

Mexia reached Tampico on the after-

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



noon of Nov. 14, 1835, and flagged down the harbor tug. The pilot was glad to oblige, but his ignorance of the exiles' itinerary so unnerved the general that he delayed debarkation until midnight. In the darkness, the tug pushed his schooner straight into a sandbar wrecking both vessels.

The soaking wet warriors waded ashore only to learn the cat was out of the bag. The pro-democracy faction had jumped the gun the night before, and the government had reacted quickly by rushing a battalion of reinforcements to Tampico.

Though outnumbered better than two to one, Mexia refused to call off the campaign. He accepted no responsibility for the subsequent defeat and blamed the outcome on the inferior quality of his raw recruits.

The general chartered a boat and made a clean getaway with the ragged remains of his amateur army. Thirty-one comrades were left behind in enemy hands.

Three prisoners soon died from the wounds, and the rest were tried by court-martial for treason. Their ingenious defense was that they had only gone along for the ride.

In their "dying statement," a loaded

term that hinted at their chances of acquittal, the accused claimed Mexia had tricked them. They innocently accepted the cunning general's offer to free passage to Texas never suspecting Tampico was the actual destination nor the subversive scheme their generous host had up his sleeve.

Imagine their shock, testified the defendants, when they discovered Mexia's true intentions. But what were their options out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico a hundred nautical miles from the nearest port?

Santa Anna's stooges listened to the preposterous plea in incredulous silence. The fantastic tale was a refreshing change of pace from the usual pathetic appeals for mercy.

But the military judges presiding over the phony proceedings could not have freed the filibusters even if they had swallowed their wild story. In Mexico like Alice's wonderland, the verdict was predetermined and the trial was just for show.

On Dec. 14, 1835, 11 days after Gen. Mexia landed safely in Texas, the 28 captives were condemned to death. Then right on cue came the firing squad to carry out the sentence.

Although Jose Antonio Mexia lived to fight another day, he did not learn from his mistakes. He mounted a second expedition to Tampico in 1839 and this time paid with his life.

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

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Kids' Thanksgiving Visit

Someone asked me the other day what I DO, insinuating that I have plenty of leisure time. That was funny. (Zack has a related routine about my watching soap operas and eating bon-bons). Keeping this old place afloat isn't easy. It's always something (which gives me stories to write). Just now, we have the drought, of course. Cattle are hungry. No one has enough hay to make it through the winter. All kinds of money will have to be spent on feed or cows and calves will have to be sold off. Dust pneumonia is starting to show up. None of this will inspire funny stories of rural minor catastrophes. There is nothing minor about a drought.

Probably unrelated to the drought (but maybe not), we had two perfectly good cows drop dead within the last month, now have one or possibly two orphan calves, too old to bottle feed, not tame enough to care for properly one on one. I will do my best; probably have to invest in a creep feeder. (Anyone have a used one they want to sell?) We have some cows that are probably as old as me. Well, not really, but they're pretty old. (Still not funny).

A few people have stopped me in town lately and asked why I haven't been writing. It's been only a temporary lapse, I assure you. I was waiting to be inspired, I suppose, busy with pre-holiday company. Thanks to all of you who inquired. I am alive and well. So here's an update.

We still have thousand-pound Babe the bull who almost went blind. He is now so spoiled and tame from his time in confinement that he wants to be fed by hand and have his ears scratched whenever he sees either of us. Yes, he sees. We don't know how much, but it's enough for him to spot us almost anywhere and come running. He was pretty tame before, but this is ridiculous. I was planting pansies this morning and felt eyes staring at my back, turned around and there was Babe the bull on the other side of the fence. Watching me. Hoping for treats. I spoke to him, told him I didn't have anything for him. Told him to get on. He stood there for about 15 minutes until I finally went over and rubbed his ears. Then he waited another 15 minutes or so before finally giving up and moving on. This kind of devotion can be a little dangerous if he sneaks up behind us in a pasture.

We have one cat (Zack's) who poops and pees on the rugs because she hates me, I think. So she's been banished to the breezeway where she and the dog (banished to the back yard) can glare at each other. We thought they had finally gotten accustomed to one other, left them alone together for a moment, and disaster struck. The cat is fully recuperated now, and still poops on the breezeway floor. Some things never change. I often wish I had studied animal psychology. I could sure use some expertise in that area right now.

We have recently been adopted by another cat who bites. She lives on the side deck. Gee, I wonder why someone dumped HER out in the country? We have three older, more normal cats (my daughter's, now mine by default). Perhaps "normal cats" is an oxymoron. Two live outside, eat on the front porch, cruise the barns, etc. Occasionally one gets a mouse or rat. Not often. The third of my daughter's cats lives inside and rarely leaves the foot of the bed. We think she jumps down to eat and hit the litter box a couple of times a day, but no one has ever actually seen her do it. She is almost totally inactive, a lump with fur. We can't understand how in the world she has any muscle tone left at all. She seems to be

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.

our most contented animal.

We have Stinky the dog who adopted us last year. His Indian nickname is "No Help With Cows". Some Blue Heeler. But we do love him. Stinky chews up everything he can get his mouth on (including the cat—thus his banishment to the back yard where he can chew up the bedding in his doghouse). Occasionally we have mice. Now that's a whole lot of fun. Almost everything about living in a hundred-year-old farmhouse is a whole lot of fun. (Gives me plenty to write about).

We still have Big Bag the cow who seems to walk through barbed wire fences at will, open gates, barn doors, etc. She does her best to make my life miserable, is always into some sort of mischief. She's been strangely quiet lately. I know she is plotting something really heinous, probably for the coldest day of the winter, maybe when there is ice or snow or something.

We have a calf who has learned to turn on a faucet at one of the troughs. Repeatedly. Probably Big Bag has been coaching him.

Many of you reading this can relate. People around here either have a place in the country, grew up on one, or visited grandma's farm as a child or whatever. When I started writing to rid myself of the almost constant frustration and angst, I expected that some of the women might enjoy the columns, but when the older, male farmers and ranchers come up to me to tell me they read them, that really surprises and pleases me, too. Someone told me, "You take us back." That was one of the nicest compliments I think I have ever had. And just think, because I am living it like it was in the 30s and telling you all about it, now YOU don't have to do it!

When I started writing this column a few years ago, I wasn't sure ANYONE would actually read it. Some do and some don't. I've had my share of comments that weren't so complimentary. Everybody is entitled to his or her own opinion.

I haven't written anything in almost a month because of a wonderful visit from my children and related family stuff. Each of the kids had a friend along this time. Boy could I write about THAT, but they sometimes read the column, so I'd better not. Just kidding, children.

My daughter Becca's boyfriend Jared has been here three times now. At least this trip didn't include an emergency room visit like the last one. His arms weren't scraped quite badly enough to seek medical attention after the spill from that skateboard up in the hills above Avenue Z. He did stick to the sheets a few nights, and I know it must have hurt like the dickens. But like a real trooper, he didn't complain much. And Jared, don't worry about that collector's gun that you shot off, the one that had never been fired before. Zack will eventually get over it.

My son started dating a girl he didn't know all that well. He offhandedly told her she should come visit Texas during the 10 days he would be here. Her mom is a

flight attendant, so she can get cheap flights at the drop of a hat, and she answered that she would just LOVE to come. Well, none of us expected THAT. But it was fine. —Except that, trying to be real cool, we took the four kids out to a cowboy bar in Waco one night. Three of them ate something that made them sick all the next day. Josh said he really got to know the girl after that. Well, I guess so. (I wonder if they are still seeing each other now that they're back in Miami?) Apparently they had never spent much time actually TALKING before.

So Josh's guest couldn't leave as scheduled and was with us yet another day. She's a nice girl who always has a smile on her face, so it was all good. I think everyone had a pleasant time. It's hard not to let the peace of this place wash over you after the shock of having nothing fast-paced to do. Things are sort of weird when your kids return to you as adults, takes some getting used to. Then just when you

think you are handling it OK, one of them will revert to childhood again to remind you that no matter how old they become, they will always be your babies.

If I'm lucky, maybe they won't even read this one. Now come on, kids, you know I'm just teasing you. Where are your senses of humor?

We had an early Thanksgiving meal together before the four kids had to leave (once they could actually eat again), and it's a tradition I might like to continue, having it a couple of days early. I'm not complaining about celebrating on the "wrong day." They needed to get back to their lives. I'm not able to see my kids much, so I'll happily take them when I can get them, with or without their friends, on holidays, before or after or just about any time in-between. The animals even behaved reasonably well during their visit. (Stinky didn't bite Jared this time). Believe me, I know how lucky I am. Every day is a gift, and every day should be for giving thanks.

The Story Behind 'Harry' Is The Real Magical Tale

The time has come for me to make a confession. Because I'm in such a minority, it takes some courage to come forward like this. Here goes: I have never read a Harry Potter book, and I don't think I ever will. Does this make me a bad person? Does this mean I'm culturally illiterate? Is this proof that I have no taste? Am I the only person in the world who has no interest in Harry, and no idea what a Muggle is? There, I said it, and I feel much better.

Once again, the latest Harry Potter movie is Number One at the box office. The books continue to be huge bestsellers. Readers and fans are not just kids, but adults as well. All those millions of people can't be mistaken, so, what's wrong with me?

I've tried several times to read a Harry Potter book, but I've never been able to get into it. It's not Harry Potter specifically. It's the genre that puts me off. For some reason, I've never been a fan of this kind of fantasy literature in which the author creates a world whose inhabitants and rules are unlike the real world, but the action supposedly takes place in our real world. And it's hard for me to worry about a main character when I know that he or she will get out of trouble by magic. If someone can become invisible, turn into a monster, or scare the villain by saying a secret word, how much jeopardy is that character really in?

I was never a big fan of cartoons when I was a kid. Cartoon characters jump off cliffs and, because of the "cartoon law of physics," are able to be suspended there for a few seconds before they realize they are in danger. Once they do realize this, a combination umbrella/parachute will appear and bring them safely to the ground. As a six-year-old knowing this, I couldn't get too worried about these guys. I've seen ads for the new movie, "The Chronicles of Narnia," (whose subtitle sounds like a punchline to an old Johnny Carson joke: "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.") When I saw that an animal actually talked, I knew it wasn't for me. While I appreciate the artistry that goes into creating such worlds, they always end up seeming arbitrary and uninteresting to me.



Modern Times

By
Lloyd
Garver

For me, the fascinating story is the story behind Harry Potter—that of author, J.K. Rowling. Her amazing tale seems more miraculous than any fantasy could be. It was always her dream to be a published author. She worked on the first Harry Potter book for five years. For Year Number Five, she was impoverished, living on public assistance. She was a single mother, and whenever her baby fell asleep, she would rush with her in the stroller to a café where Rowling would get some writing done. She had never had a book published before. "Harry" not only won all kinds of awards, but made her rich. She is now wealthier than the Queen of England, and perhaps even richer than America's queen—Oprah.

She feels her greatest accomplishment was becoming a published novelist. In a bit of understatement, Rowling says she managed to do all this because of "perseverance." She beat the odds, and her dream came true. Now, that's a book I'd love to read, and it's a movie I'd be happy to wait in line to see.

I envy all of you who can be thrilled by the Harry Potter stories, but they're just not for me. I guess if I want to be entertained by tales of evil masquerading as good or of people just ignoring reality, I'll just have to stick to reading the newspaper's political pages.

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

Public Education — Legislators, Business Leaders Need To Go Back To School

What's wrong with this picture and where's Wally?

Glad to see that the state continues to refuse to resolve the issues of financing and improving the quality of public education. For the past five years Gov. Rick Perry has self-appointed legislators and business leaders to form infinite committees on public education and all have failed Texas families and children. They also have failed to provide job security and professional salaries for Texas teachers, who are leaving the education field in droves.

By now it must be clear that the intent to resolve those education issues really is NOT on the agenda for our lackluster governor and majority of legislators. Business leaders aren't going to do the right thing either so that they may continue to shirk their responsibility to help pay their fair share for public education. They do so by circumventing the Business Franchise Tax. In this manner, millions of tax dollars are lost each year that should go to financing education. Meanwhile, during the past decade the state has violated the constitution by decreasing significantly its responsibility



Commentary

By
Peter
Stern

to finance education and has diverted that responsibility to overburdened local communities and homeowners via astronomical property taxes.

Fellow Texans, let's open our eyes. The governor tells us that these are "the great minds of Texas," so we know they aren't stupid. The reason all these folks don't resolve the public school issue isn't because they can't. It's because they don't want to. They want generations of ignorant non-thinking children, who will grow up to become illiterate non-thinking adults. That way the wealthy will get richer while the poor stay where they are, in huddled masses. God forbid that poor children go to the same schools as their wealthier counterparts. Heaven help us if poor kids get the same quality higher

education as the wealthy. What if they all get high-paying jobs? Where would we all be then?

Consequently, the governor's "favorite boy" Speaker Tom Craddick will stay on-track with long-time ineffective Rep. Kent Grusendorf, who has chaired more committees on public education than Mexico has rice and beans — and he still can't lead anyone to intelligent resolutions. Why? Because he doesn't want to. Special interests are paying him NOT to.

So, the committee mentality continues: let's just try to keep the status quo. Let's go through the motions, but let's just pass legislation that will approve more charter schools and a voucher system. Let's keep teachers from actually teaching by giving them an incentive program just to get kids to pass the state exams — in short — let's keep things the way they are, only we'll make it better for ourselves and for the special interests who provide huge contributions to our campaign efforts.

So, fellow voters and taxpayers, let's do our share by letting them all get away with it. Let's keep the status quo so that when legislators leave their jobs they can go to work as lobbyists for those very same spe-

cial interest entities that provided the huge contributions, and as they work at those new high-paying jobs, those "retired" legislators can also pick-up their \$50,000 per year retirement checks for the rest of their lives — paid for by Texas suckers, err sorry — I meant taxpayers.

So again I ask, "What's wrong with this picture and where's Wally?"

Peter Stern of Driftwood, TX is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He is a Vietnam-era Disabled Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees. During the past seven years Mr. Stern voraciously 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. While a lifetime member of the Republican Party, he 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. You may contact Peter Stern at: <psstern@austin.rr.com>.

Cacophony! Casuistry! Conniption!

What a political sea change a few short weeks can bring! Two weeks ago, the White House said those who call for a drawdown of U.S. soldiers in Iraq are "unpatriotic," "cowardly," and they wish to "surrender to the terrorists." All good Republicans know this line very well. It has been the prevailing drumbeat of the last couple years. The extremists, such as the ever-dwindling numbers of avid Ann Coulter disciples, even consider Democrats like John Murtha "not only traitors, but gutless traitors," as the hypocritical propagandist recently said.

Those salmon headed flip-floping Libbers are saying things like "[T]he coalition is not going to defeat the insurgency." Is that not tantamount to Coulter's definition of treason? Calamity! Dubiousness in the Highest Order! Aid and Comfort to the enemy! Oh wait, that was Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on NPR. Curses! Perfidy!

Joseph Biden, leading Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says we should pull at least 50,000 troops out of Iraq in 2006, and a "large portion" of those remaining by 2007. Clearly his words were met with roaring disdain. I mean, come on, he's totally trying a "cut and run" tactic. He waives the white flag, that Milkspol!

Just hours later, the White House issued a statement under the headline "Senator Biden Adopts Key Portions Of Administration's Plan For Victory In Iraq." Wait, wait, wait ... What? The Blue Team objects to the president, but the president already objects to himself and actually did so before his deriders?

Then there was Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said last week "I do not think that American forces need to be there in the numbers that they are now [...]" Days later, The Washington Post reports the Penta-

gon has drawn up a plan which will have over 60,000 troops withdrawing from Iraq in 2006. Hermitage? A "vast" majority will return by the end of 2007.

"A precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would be a victory for the terrorists, an invitation to further violence against free nations, and a terrible blow to the future security of the United States of America," says Vice-Patriot Dick Cheney to the frantic cheers of his pre-screened, pre-approved audience. He shows every member of the Red Team how to "tow the line." Tally-Ho, ya'll! Indomitability, we cry!

Those Carmine Cardinals are starting to remind me of a fish out of

water, flipping and flopping and gasping for air. Looks like The Red Tide has gone back to sea. I suppose the administration was for withdrawing before they were against it. Or was it the other way around? Oscillation of the highest degree!

Steady, firm leadership. Yes. Good. Obviously, since we have been told over and over that withdrawing our troops from Iraq is a Huge Mistake, flip-flopping just like that and suddenly supporting staged withdraw is okay and not hypocritical in the least. I can come to only one conclusion: to suggest withdraw is a treasonous, unpatriotic maneuver ... if you are a Democrat. But when the Republican administration does it, they are pa-



The Webster
Retort

By
Stephen
Webster

triot's of the highest order. Their resolve is to be admired. Dogged, I say!

Now the polls come marching down the sidelines, showing nearly 70 percent of Americans no longer support the war, indeed many believe the president "mislead" the public to get it. Hell of a "mandate" you've got there, Mr. Bush. Looks like someone is just posturing, afraid of what 2006 can and will bring. Unbelievable hypocrisy in the face of Potential Impeachment is a common trait among all presidential liars, Red and Blue alike. Cacophony! Casuistry! Conniption! Justice?

Flashback, McFly! From the New York Times, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away: "United States officials were surprised and heartened today at the size of turnout in the election despite a terrorist campaign to disrupt the voting. According to reports from the Capitol, 83 percent of the registered voters cast their ballots yesterday. Many of them risked reprisals threatened by the terrorists. A successful election has long been seen as the keystone in the President's policy of encouraging the growth of constitutional processes in South Vietnam." Sound familiar? Anamnesis!

Somewhere outside of Crawford, Cindy Sheehan and the Iraq Veterans Against the War are toasting to their first victory. What has become of the unflinching leadership of King George the Second?

It went down the toilet with his job approval ratings.

Mahalo. Stephen Webster is an Investigative Reporter with North Texas weekly The News Connection and a former Contributor with The Dallas Morning News. For more of Webster's musings, visit his blog - gonzomuckraker.blogspot.com

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France...A Well-Intentioned Friend

Bastille Day is the great national holiday of France, equivalent to our Independence Day. It began with the taking of the Bastille, prison of the French State in Paris, and subsequent overthrow of the French Monarchy on July 14, 1789. In the true Gallic tradition, Bastille Day is also celebrated in America.

Why have we Americans so fervently embraced a foreign holiday of which we know so little about? It is due, perhaps, to the unmistakable *joie de vivre* we have imported from the French culture. Our thoughts about Bastille Day are not so much an exercise in history, but rather a reflection of the things we view as endemic to the nation of France.

From the impressionistic skies of Normandy to the crashing waves of Biarritz, the country of ancient Gaul transports itself to America every July 14th. On this day, the French tricolor waves proudly along with our own "Stars and Stripes," political intentions are discarded and a union of cultures is born of civility and cultivation. Francophiles unite for a celebration of the Gallic spirit here in America, although for the past few years this relationship has been strained by the politics of our unwise Iraqi occupation. What exactly is this *joie de vivre* and how do we define it? It is partially Epicurean in nature, stemming from the most discriminating tastes in life's finer pleasures. Yet, there is also an emotional aspect to why we Americans celebrate Bastille Day, which is tied to the romanticism inherent in the French language and culture. It is at times both melancholic and uplifting as it tugs at our innermost feelings. The "Sweet France," as she is sometimes affectionately called, endures as America's oldest ally, the friendship spanning over two centuries. A good friend tries to give good advice as the French did in admonishing the United States not to invade Iraq. Now that they appear correct in their assessment of an ill advised war, it is time to recognize our well intentioned friend. Not since the "French Café Society" of the 1920s have subsequent modes of travel been accessible to the masses, thereby fostering greater Franco-American cross-cultural awareness.

Several generations ago, the Great Liner Ile de France dazzled the world on her 1927 maiden voyage into New York Harbor. She was followed closely by the Normandie in 1935. The French liner offered the ultimate in Gallic luxury as America's social register will attest. The elite often met on board the superliners. On the European side, disembarkation was at Cherbourg and Le Havre where the giddy travelers were whisked off to places like Chantilly, Longchamps, Chamonix, La Baule Deauville, Cannes, and of course the City of Light itself. Douglas Fairbanks, Lady Astor and J.P. Morgan, Jr. were there, as were golfing great Bobby Jones, Gertrude Stein, Madame Curie and the effervescent Josephine Baker. The romance of the sea and the superliners were headed for their twilight years.

During the 1950s commercial air travel began to flow into Le Bourget and Orly airports outside Paris. These jumbo jets descended the storied low clouds of Paris like the giant Albatross in the epic poem "La'Albatross" by Charles Baudelaire. Except for the ill-timed launching of the superliner France in 1962, air travel had rendered a night on the North Atlantic ob-

solete. On a gray overcast day in 1979, church bells gently tolled, as the home port of Le Havre bid adieu to her beloved "France." The great liners of the past began to fade into a distant memory.

Upon their landing in the City of Light, American tourists were greeted by a warmth which touches the soul. It was a passion American travelers would feel, but could not fully describe.

At the world-renowned Café de la Paix, the cigarette girls moved like fallen angels, while a few blocks away, the famous Paris opera was entertaining American tourists.

Around the corner at Harry's New York Bar, patrons kept busy perusing the *International Herald Tribune* and for those that could read it, the French daily *Le Monde*. For fine food and dining there would be Fauchon, Maxims, the George V, and countless other outstanding restaurants.

There was also the Comedy Française and the big three of French theater, Moliere, Corneille and Racine. French movies included perhaps the greatest film ever produced, "Children of Paradise," by brother's Jacques and Pierre Prevert. Jacques Prevert being the famous French Poet. "King of Hearts" and *La Grande Illusion* were two more outstanding classics and who can forget the hilariously funny, "La Cage Aux Folles" brought to America in 1980. The Cordon Bleu Culinary Institute attracted those Americans interested in the gastronomic delights of France. The Tour de France cycling race and the lesser-known Paris-Roubaix also attracted their share of U.S. tourists. During the early '80s, the Nice Triathlon World Championship was dominated by Californians Mark Allen and Scott Tinley.

There were also the fine beaches of Cannes, Nice, La Baule, Deauville and Wissant. Several American swimmers had even swum the English Channel, among the most famous being Florence Chadwick. Along the coast of Normandy, American veterans would recall a time of great sacrifice at places like Utah and Omaha Beaches, Arromanches and Saint Mère Eglise.

The seemingly ubiquitous hedgerows of the Norman countryside are etched forever in America's memory.

Additionally, American travelers would learn firsthand the wealth of customs in this country of contrasts. They would enjoy a collation at 4 p.m., sample a piece of *Pont L'Evêque* cheese in the Norman countryside, or try the famous crêpes suzette at Le Mont St. Michel. There would even be the enjoyment of a morning glass of muscatel in the Brittany region of France. They would also learn the many *patois* or dialects scattered throughout this romantic country.

But finally, it is perhaps the children of France who truly make the holiday. The French have endeared their children to one of the highest levels on earth. This tells us all we ought to know about the Gallic spirit.

Daniel J. Smiechowski is a columnist for the Hillcrest News in San Diego, Calif. He is a former public school teacher with a diverse academic background in Sociology, Politics, French, Linguistics and Education. He has traveled abroad 18 times including study at the University of Paris, France, "La Sorbonne." Smiechowski writes primarily on social philosophy and psychology and resides in San Diego.

<SmiechowskiD@aol.com>

GUEST COMMENTARY



Smiechowski

Men: Choosing Your Wife's Gift May Be The Last Thing You Ever Do

Several years ago, I bought my wife an Epilady shaver for Christmas. Because it was a sleek, modern, electrical device costing over \$50, there was no reason to suspect it would feel like someone had just ripped the hair out of her legs using Super Glue and a roll of duct tape. While I'm sure I've gotten my wife gifts she didn't really like, she's always accepted them graciously. But in this case, as she chased me through the house completely naked and swiping at my scalp with her new Epilady, two things came to mind:

- 1) She really hates this gift, and
- 2) I shouldn't have gotten her the cordless model.

Now, before I get an angry letter from Park Products, Inc., I should clarify that this was a long time ago, and I'm sure the latest model is a vast improvement over the one my wife hurled through our bathroom window.

My point is this: Men, if you suspect the Christmas gift you're planning to get your wife is — after careful consideration — actually pretty stupid, it's not too late to save yourselves. The first step in defusing this situation is acceptance; as men, we must accept the fact that we are — by our very nature — total gift-giving morons. We simply do not understand the complexities of choosing a woman's gift.

Heck, we barely understand the complexities of choosing the correct hand towel in the bathroom. How can we be expected to walk into a department store, spend 5 to 10 minutes scrutinizing hundreds of gift options, and emerge with anything other than...a coconut purse?

Trust me. As cool as it may seem to you, chances are your coconut purse will go completely unnoticed by the person who matters most. And by that I mean the detective searching for the weapon used in your murder.

"I know this is difficult, ma'am, but did your husband own a cannon ball or something similar that could've been used to beat him with?"

"Hmmm. Not that I know of. Say, would you care for a mint?"

"Wow, that's a cool coconut purse." "It was a gift from my husband. It was the last thing he ever gave me..."

"Well, he obviously had good taste — OUCH!"

"I'm sorry. Did I close it on your finger?"

Furthermore, it's when denying our gift-giving stupidity that we men really get into trouble. This usually occurs when attempting to be creative in our shopping by — how else? — trying to think like a woman. This is a bit like Karl Rove trying



By
Ned
Hickson
Siuslaw News

to be Jessica Simpson; even if he learns the moves and memorizes the songs, once the wrapping's off, no one is going to be happy.

So men, take it from someone who has experienced, first hand, what it's like to have portions of his hair ripped out by an angry wife wielding a cordless shaver: If you think you may unwittingly be planning to purchase a stupid gift for the woman you love, put down this newspaper right now and give it some more thought. For those of you who may have already wrapped that coconut purse or Aerobic Housecleaning video, do whatever it takes to make sure she never finds it.

If you don't, there's a good chance no one is ever going to find you.

(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.)

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To The Editor:

Has the Bush Administration stolen \$50 billion from Iraq ???

Sadam Husein sold 1 million barrels of OIL per day on the black market. At \$50 dollars a barrel or \$18 Billion per year the Bush Administration could have stolen \$50 Billion Dollars in just under three years of Iraqi occupation. If this turns out to be true it is no wonder that Bush is in no hurry to end the war in Iraq.

Howard Scott Pearlman

To The Editor:

StealthCare is a newly founded foreign policy which could remedy America's foreign policy with one that shines to the rest of the world the truths of America's mission in the world everywhere. As we see our soldiers and fellow man fall victims to the terrorists America has a group of Disabled Americans who are ready to tackle national healthcare here in the U.S. and shine to the rest of the world away for them to follow our lead and provide a healthcare system for themselves that will give humanity a golden opportunity to share in a global fight to provide healthcare for themselves in a system they will see pays for itself and the sacrifices they make to create a healthcare system that serves everyone with the best man and medicine will offer.

As Sheehan and Quall stand up and voice their concerns over the lost of their loved ones and others, they need to put their well intended efforts into something bigger and best in memory of those people we've lost in this was on terrorism.

Please email me at <klewis59@excite.com> so I can share StealthCare with you and them.

Thanks,
Ken Lewis

Editor,

It's been awhile since I sent you e-mail. I believe the last time was when your article about the President wasn't welcomed by your readers. Everything you said in that article came true. Just like Molly Irvins said, "I told you so."

Bush and Cheney's approval ratings being so low makes me wonder who is there that supports him?

The percent of their approval ratings indicate that they have lost part of their base.

In a local article and in today's (Sunday) Viewpoint by David Ignatius, the headline reads "Opposition to U.S. unites Iraqis." The Iraqis, like most Americans, want a timetable from Bush for withdrawal of our troops.

The day after the Iraqis innitally announced their opposition last week, the Bush administration was taking credit for planning on bring some of our troops home.

And, on Veteran's Day, Bush stretched the truth about entering the war

Dan Bynum, Eldridge, Iowa

To The Editor:

Open Letter to All U.S. Senators and Congressmen

I would like to share with you my excitement over the Medicare Prescription Drug Modernization and Improvement Act. The Republican three-hour arm-twisting marathon, prior to the vote, was important to passage of the bill. I realize that the watered-down package was 'sold' to Congress as costing about \$400 billion over a period of 10 years. In less than two months, that estimate had gone to about \$537 billion dollars. Now it is estimated that the cost will be somewhere between

\$750 billion and as much as \$1.3 trillion. Oh well, what's a few hundred billion dollars or so. After all, it was only an estimate. We should be able to cover that with more of President Bush's tax cuts.

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

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

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

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

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

It was a stroke of genius that the pharmaceutical industry wrote provisions in the Medicare drug bill that prohibit Medicare from negotiating drug prices with the pharmaceutical companies. It's interesting to note that the bill is 675 pages long; that, coincidentally, is one page for each drug industry lobbyist in Congress. The bill is so complex and incomprehensible to almost all legislators that few (if any) have read it. I'm sure the drug lobby, as usual, had provided sufficient guidance to legislators. Now the average profits of pharmaceutical companies (about eight-

teen percent) will continue to remain way out on top of all the other Fortune 500 Companies. Can you imagine that there are still some who believe that the drug companies have been given license to steal?

We all know that research is crucial to the development of new drugs. Of course you know that as much as 85 percent of the research going into development of new drugs is performed by our National Institutes of Health, which is funded in part by our taxpayer dollars (\$24 billion to the NIH in 2003). But, that's okay. The monies saved by the pharmaceutical companies on government-subsidized research enables them to better inform the public through saturation advertising. Some would say that the amount of money spent on drug company advertising, promotion and administration (about 37% of the cost of prescription drugs) is exces-

sive. I'm not sure if the cost of 675 drug industry lobbyists, plus thousands of company service representatives camped on the doorsteps of physicians, are included in that percentage figure; but what price is too much to pay for the privilege of absorbing this wonderful advertising and then being wisely cautioned to first see your physician.

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

Sincerely yours,

Paul G. Jaehnert, Vadnais Hts., MN

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Chelston's Anti-War Anthem Online

CRAWFORD — Songwriter Tom Chelston, a veteran (Infantry Hospital Corpsman, USMC/USN), has composed an anti-war anthem reminiscent of the Harry Chapin style with similarities to Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction."

Chelston's "BushWhacked" is available online, with video or simply audio, at urls listed at the bottom of this story.

Born and raised in New Jersey, he spent six years in the military. "I went from delivering babies at a Naval hospital to Infantry Medic with the Marine Corps," he said.

After spending several years in California, he later moved to Idaho. Now a Texas resident, he works with "Inspire Music" where he manages and develops new musical talent.

Opposed to what he calls "Bush's war," he wrote "BushWhacked" and wants to share it with the public.



Tom Chelston



High res. 9.3 MB:

<http://www.tomsongs.com/images/Bushwhacked_0001.wmv_

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