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# The Lone Star ICONOCLAST



# Making Waves



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# Abramoff's Plea Deal Shakes Both Parties

WASHINGTON — Tremors went through both Republican and Democratic parties in Congress, included the White House, last week as a GOP lobbyist plead guilty to three federal charges (conspiracy, fraud and tax evasion) in Washington and two criminal charges (conspiracy and fraud) in Florida.

As a part of both his plea deals, Jack Abramoff intends to testify against about 20 lawmakers and aides who received campaign contributions and other gifts from him in exchange for political favors.

A Justice Department official, though, warned that the probe may not lead to indictments against more lawmakers due to the difficulty of the case. So far, investigations have opened for at least four congressional Republicans, including former House Republican Leader Tom DeLay of Texas and Rep. Bob Ney of Ohio, both of whom claim innocence.

In the federal case, Abramoff faces 30 years in prison. Restitution could reach \$25 million in the case, according to the U.S. District Court judge and lawyers.

In an effort to distance themselves from the once-powerful lobbyist, politicians among both parties who received funds linked to Abramoff said they will refund or donate those funds to charity. These lawmakers include President Bush (\$6,000), House Majority Leader Roy Blunt (\$8,500), former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (\$15,000), Sen. Elizabeth Dole (\$1,000), Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, (\$2,000), Rep. Henry Cuellar, (\$500), Earl Pomeroy, (\$6,950), Charles Rangel, (\$2,000), along with as many as 40 other Republicans and Democrats and a dozen since last year.

At least one Democrat, Rep. Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island, said he would not relinquish the \$42,500 he received from tribes represented by Abramoff because he already supported American Indian causes and was never lobbied by the GOP lobbyist.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, a campaign watchdog group, Kennedy is the top congressional Democratic recipient of Abramoff-linked funds. Kennedy, the co-founder of the Native American Caucus in the House, has also raised money from several tribes as the head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign

Committee.

Republicans outnumber Democrats in Abramoff's dealings because he is a Republican lobbyist.

While Republican and Democratic leaders argued over which parties were more at fault over taking Abramoff's funds, officials with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said lobbying-reform legislation is on the horizon this year.

Former House Speaker Newt

Gingrich, however, told Republicans not to blame only lobbyists because the party's congressional majority is at stake. He also championed systematic changes against congressional incumbents' financial advantages in elections.

"You can't have a corrupt lobbyist unless you have a corrupt member (of Congress) or a corrupt staff. This was a team effort," said Gingrich, who resigned his

seat in 1998 amid a \$300,000 fine for breaking House rules against calling on tax-exempt foundations for political uses. The Republicans later lost seats.

"If they intend to retain a majority, then ... they need to take the lead in saying to the country we need to clean this mess up," Gingrich told reporters. "But any effort to push this under the rug, to say this is just one bad apple: That's baloney."

## Bush Breaks Promise To Reconstruct Iraq

WASHINGTON — President Bush plans to not renew funds for the reconstruction of Iraq, breaking his 2003 promise to give Iraq the best infrastructure in the Middle East.

With an \$18.4 billion allocation set to end June 2007, the Bush administration said it intends to pass on a budget request which is to be sent to Congress next month, reported The Washington Post last Tuesday.

Iraq has unfinished projects that cost tens of billions of dollars, which include a faulty oil industry and electrical grid. However, almost half of the current funds for reconstruction have been directed to battle the insurgents and prepare for the Saddam Hussein trial.

The Post reported that roughly \$2.5 billion to fix Iraq's infrastructure and schools went to training security forces, and other funds to repair the country's electricity and sewerage systems went to bomb squad units and a hostage rescue force.

Reconstruction funds also went to hold the Iraqi elections, establish a justice system, construct 10 new prisons, safe houses and armored cars for Iraqi judges, and research the mass graves of Saddam's victims.

Security at the public works systems cited as the main reason for the changes in funding allocations.

The average Iraqi still receives less than 12 hours of power a day and the country's oil refineries produce about 1.5 million barrels of oil a day less than were produced before the invasion.

When the Post questioned the overseer of the work about Bush's 2003 promise, Brigadier General William McCoy said. "The U.S. never intended to completely rebuild Iraq. This was just supposed to be a jump-start."

When the Post questioned the overseer of the work about Bush's 2003 promise, Brigadier General William McCoy said. "The U.S. never intended to completely rebuild Iraq. This was just supposed to be a jump-start."

## U.S. Warplane Kills Iraqi Family

WASHINGTON — U.S. warplanes bombed a house in Baiji, Iraq, early last week, killing between six and 14 members of an Iraqi family, including at least two children and a relative who worked for the Iraqi police.

Local officials condemned the bombing, noting that an innocent family was killed when alternative methods to obtaining alleged insurgents went unchecked.

The U.S. 101st Airborne Division said in a statement that on Monday night, an unmanned reconnaissance drone spotted three men "as they dug a hole following the common pattern of roadside bomb emplacement."

The Division's statement noted that the three individuals left the site for a building close by; soon after, coalition air forces bombed the structure with guided missiles. The statement, however, failed to cite evidence of the exist-

ence of the roadside bomb.

While insurgents have been obstructing oil flow from Baiji, the location of the biggest oil refinery in Iraq, the U.S. mili-

tary has increased airstrikes by 10 times over the course of last year, while decreasing ground troop attacks on insurgents.

## Dover Board Kills 'Intelligent Design' Policy

DOVER, Pa. — The newly elected Dover Area School Board last Tuesday night unanimously rescinded a policy to present "intelligent design" alongside the theory of evolution in science classes. The board members did not comment after the vote.

A different school board drew criticism for establishing the policy in October 2004, and most of the members were later ousted during the last elections by candidates who campaigned to end the policy.

The ID policy called for ninth-grade biology students to listen to a statement saying that Darwin's theory is "not a fact" and then referring to an "intelligent-design" book.

Two weeks prior the new board's rescindment, a judge ruled that the ID policy unconstitutional in a case brought to district court by eight families. U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III agreed that "intelligent design" is religious, not scientific, and therefore, broke the establishment clause in the First Amendment.



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# U.S. Military Censors Soldiers' Blogs

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military is shutting down more and more of its soldiers' Internet journals, or milblogs, in an effort to reduce risk of enemy surveillance and incidently cut off graphic correspondence to family members thousands of miles from the battlefield, reported **NEWSDAY** last week.

New York Army National Guard Spc. Jason Christopher Hartley, 31, was demoted from sergeant and fined \$1,000 last January for questionable content on his milblog, [justanother soldier.com](http://justanother soldier.com).

While the Army cited him for security

breaches, such as a description of his unit's flight route into Iraq which might get U.S. aircraft shot down, Hartley believes that the Army was more uncomfortable with his satirical tone. On one set of photos on his milblog, he wrote, "Photos of the week of cute Iraqi kids who I want to shoot."

"The ones that stay up are completely patriotic and innocuous, and they're fine if you want to read the flag-waving and how everything's peachy keen in Iraq," Hartley told **NEWSDAY**.

Some troops, however, understand

that the tightened control of milblogs is still necessary, and they back the armed forces' attempt to require bloggers to register milblogs for monitoring.

"The limitations on blogging basically mean, 'Don't make it easy for them. Don't readily give up information,'" that might harm troops, said Marine Capt. Don Caetano, who ran the embedded journalist program while stationed in Fallujah.

Critics of the clamp down warn that soldiers' combat experience should not be censored. Others say this information might also cause unnecessary worry for

families who jump to conclusions whenever a trooper is injured or killed in combat.

Anti-censorship critics also note that soldiers will have a harder time questioning the war effort and military policies, like the "stop-loss" policy.

Reporter Seymour Hersh told **NEWSDAY**, "The Army is wasting its time" with censoring milblogs because of the "tremendous communication underground."

For example, one milblog called [mudvillegazette.com](http://mudvillegazette.com) received over 700,000 views in 2005.

## Oregonians File Initiative For Universal Health Care

SALEM — The two Oregon citizens filed a ballot initiative for next year's election that would extend medical insurance to every single Oregonian by the year 2008. If it passed, Oregon would be the only U.S. state with a universal health care system.

Oregon, with more than 600,000 of its citizens with no health insurance, is no stranger to such a proposal.

In 2002, voters there beat a plan to finance universal healthcare by in-

creasing the payroll tax up to 11.5 percent on businesses along with another increase to personal income taxes. Business, insurance and health care industry groups campaigned against the 2002 measure.

One of the plan's co-sponsors Dr. Evan Saulino told the Associated Press that voters should decide on this mandate, so that business, insurance and health care groups can be kept from influencing the Legislature.

Still, critics of the measure intend to oppose it due to heavy tax increases on businesses and individuals. Labor and health care groups have been courted for support by Saulino and his fellow co-sponsor, registered nurse Dominga Lopez, though some groups have yet to endorse the plan.

The Saulino/Lopez plan is one of a few health care initiatives filed, including proposals to increase the state cigarette tax and grow a new

state prescription drug discount program.

Since Oregon launched its Oregon Health Plan in 1994, funding for the plan which expanded Medicaid coverage for the "working poor" has struggled under increased medical costs and state economic troubles. The current state budget will more than likely cover less than 25,000 people, which is 100,000 less than in 2001, the year of peak enrollment.

## Military Poll: Less Support For President, Iraq War

WASHINGTON — The 2005 **MILITARY TIMES** poll showed support for the U.S. policy on Iraq dropped nine percentage points to 54 percent among the armed forces from a year ago.

Support for Bush's overall policies slid 11 percentage points to 60 percent, according to the third annual survey of military personnel produced by the publishing group that runs **ARMY TIMES** and **NAVY TIMES**.

Though the military generally supports the president more than the civilian population, the military's shift in opinion seems to track the current feelings held by the public.

"Though support both for President Bush and for the war in Iraq remains significantly higher than in the public as a whole, the drop is likely to add further fuel to the heated debate over Iraq policy," **MILITARY TIMES** said.

The Times, though, warned that results of this poll do not represent the entire U.S. military because questioned were only 1,215 active-duty servicemen who are "on average older, more experienced, more likely to be officers and more career-oriented than the military population."

The drops in support seen in the **MILITARY**

**TIMES** poll are "real drops, but I see them as reflecting the tone of the country," said David Segal, a military sociologist at the University of Maryland. "People in the military talk to folks back home. Eventually, the military does catch up (with public opinion)."

The CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll showed that support for Bush's performance as president dropped eight percentage points to 43 percent from November 2004 to December 2005.

The **TIMES** reported that sixty-one percent of respondents said they served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Deployed troops and troops yet to see deployment have similar opinions. Four of every five respondents said the media reports are often inaccurate. One of every five respondents refused to comment about the president's overall performance.

However, confidence in Bush's pro-military stance dropped from 69 percent to 58 percent since last year. The feeling that the U.S. should have gone to war in Iraq fell from 60 percent to 56 percent. Confidence in the Pentagon's leadership trickled down from 70 percent to 64 percent.

Also, opposition to the draft dropped from 75 percent last year to 68 percent this year.

## U.S., NATO Planning Iran Assault, Says German News

CRAWFORD — The German newspaper **DER TAGESSPIEGEL** recently reported that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States government are coordinating plans for a possible military attack against Iran.

CIA Director Porter Goss, according to the report, visited Turkey on Dec. 12 to request the use of military bases for the U.S. to launch an invasion.

Countries around Iran, like Saudi

Arabia, Jordan, Oman, and Pakistan, were also informed of the Iran attack plan, reported the German news agency DDP. Airs attack were mentioned as a possibility, though a time frame was not provided.

**DER SPIEGEL** noted that, although the attack plans are not fully substantiated, U.S. forces entered Iran in 2005 to cite targets for an air assault, according to a January 2005 **NEW YORKER** report.

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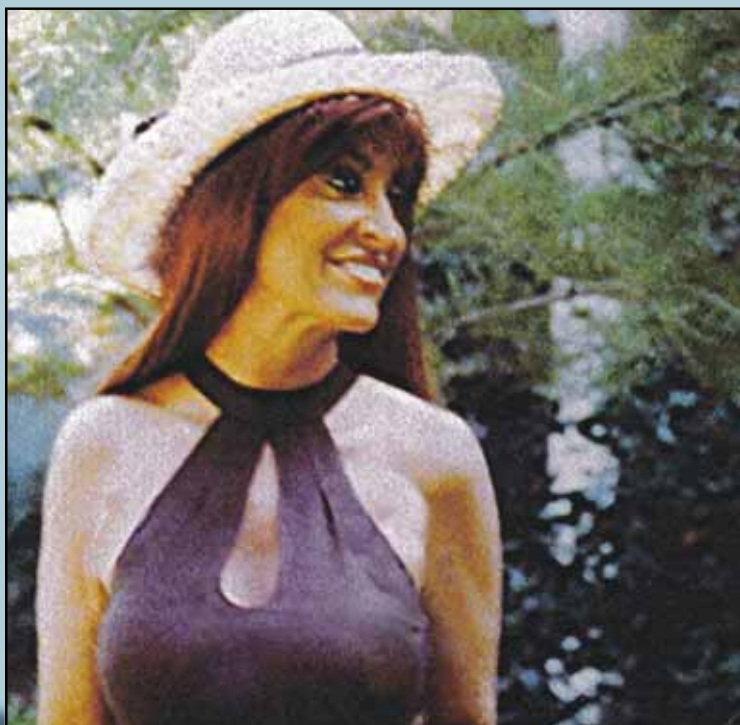
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# Making Waves

## ***Petite Fashion Designer Takes On Bush Administration With Unique 'Pedestrian Visibility Opportunity'***



By DEBORAH MATHEWS  
STAFF WRITER

DALLAS — European designer and entrepreneur Christa Allen is taking a stand against what she calls “stupid politics.” With a bold message and no sense of hesitation, the diminutive fashion designer attaches “tags” to her luxury clothing and heads out far and wide to deliver her message, from Camp Casey in Crawford, to the local grocery store, places where people might be encouraged to stop and think.

Inspired by not much more than intuition, Allen has begun a crusade that she ultimately hopes will be the catalyst for the impeachment of President Bush. She is now making plans for her company's '06 fashion debut, and is hoping to fuse elements of her political crusade with daring and inspirational fashion statements — to bring about change for the better in this country. She invites like-

minded individuals to contact her and get involved in the process to enhance and enlarge the movement.

Her fight began with an open letter sent to any place that would take it. Continuously denied access, refused printing orders, and restricted from participation in chat rooms, the dedicated designer continues to tackle the man she calls the “arrogant bully.”

With her 12-page letter that includes extensive research into the current administration,

**‘M**aybe this can help start a movement with the tags that will get Bush impeached.’  
— Christa Allen

Allen makes statements like, “I hope and pray that I can stir up enough emotion with my letter so people will at least be open to discover for themselves what really happened and why these power hungry buffoons are so adamant in firing and silencing those who are speaking out.”

*An Important Open Letter to the Inept Bush Administration from a European Entrepreneur* includes statements like “Brazenly calling themselves an ‘Administration,’” and “What makes you think that you have

Continued On Next Page

EUROPEAN FASHION DESIGNER Christa Allen balances her time between a 2006 fashion debut for her company, Je T'aime Petite, and her anti-Bush activities. Above, she models a sundress and (below) she takes her crusade on the road.

— Photos Courtesy of Je T'aime Petite



• **CHRISTA ALLEN — ‘MAKING WAVES’** ... Continued From Page 5

been anointed to be the police of other nations when you're not even capable of stopping police brutality in your own back yard?"

Allen brings attention to the "distress of the nation" with detailed information and a no-nonsense idea of the "secrecy" of the current Administration. She asks some tough questions about the "steadily eroded (civil rights) here in the U.S." and doesn't mind comparing the President's IQ to golf-scores.

She begins her document with an absolute declaration of utter respect for the Office of the President of the United States and concludes it with a quote from President Abraham Lincoln: "America will never be destroyed from the outside, if we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves!"

Allen doesn't stand alone in her strong opinions of the Bush Administration. With the release of the letter, she received responses from all over the nation. Fellow activist David Kenly, formerly working under NSA auspices in communications intelligence, responded because, "I recognized within her words the same sense of violation and anger I too have felt, and furthermore because she expressed those feelings."

While with the NSA, Kenly had continuing access to information that he says, "Demonstrated to me that U.S. interests are not always as they appear, and that, as a consequence, the public is kept from being informed of what transpires in its name." He believes that Allen has taken a "definitive and steadfast position and that these, the only true patriots, need to be encouraged and acknowledged for their voices."

Licensed social worker Pete Yulum of New Orleans learned a lot about the inner workings of the federal government in the position of federal probation officer. In his opinion, "Surprisingly, a lot of it was good but there's definitely room for improvement. Additionally, I got a decent sense of what comprises crimi-



Christa Allen

nal behavior. Bush doesn't disappoint us in this category."

After reading Allen's open letter, Yulum said, "I just resonated with her comments about Bush's incompetence at the time she wrote and sent her comments. Christa's comments at the time were new and fresh."

Corpus Christi architect George Clower felt the need to contact Allen from an "Apparent mutual disdain of the current Bush administration's policies and actions." As a "somewhat reluctant protestor of the Vietnam war and seeing some disturbing similarities between those times and now — only now may be worse,"

Clower believes that, "Christa expresses some of the same disillusionment, frustration, and anger that I have felt about an arrogant executive branch who seems to prefer to cram their way down the country's throat with little desire of receiving any feedback, unless, of course, it is accolades for their ideas and performance."

"She took the time and effort to pen such a lengthy, comprehensive and passionate letter," he continued. "I am very impressed by her courage and persistence, for she continues to rally her opinions openly in public receiving retributions and risking her business life. Although others may feel as she, most often, I find, they are unwilling to walk the walk and often not even talk the talk. Christa does both — a true heroine."

THE ICONOCLAST had an exclusive interview with Allen.

ICONOCLAST: Where were you born?

ALLEN: I was born in Neustadt, Germany, to very poor parents, you know, outhouse and all. I did not have a silver spoon in my mouth, though I was always a little entrepreneur. When the other little girls were playing with their dolls, I was making clothes for them. Gosh, I was about seven when I started to sell my creations of doll clothes and baby clothes. Life was quite difficult.

many so we would alternate living there and in the U.S.

ICONOCLAST: When did you become a U.S. citizen?

ALLEN: September 1993.

ICONOCLAST: Let's talk about your profession.

ALLEN: Actually, I have planned a fashion debut. I have not been able to continue this because I decided I need to devote some time with this project. This is really so important to me. I am a designer. I have put my fashion debut on hold for over two years now because I felt that it was imperative to get involved.

ICONOCLAST: Tell me about the beginning of the idea for this project. Do you just wake up one day and decide something like this?

ALLEN: Actually, I have no political background. I was never even interested in politics until I saw Mr. Bush while he was still governor of Texas. I saw him smirk in front of a TV camera. Of course, by now, I know he suffers from uncontrollable lying and facial smirking. Be that as it may, when I saw him announcing that he would not grant a stay of execution to Carla Faye Tucker — she was an ax murderer, actually, and I think the first woman executed in Texas since the Civil War. Personally, I am a proponent of the death penalty. She was clearly proven a killer and she killed her victims in a horrific manner.

But, it was such an impact when I saw Mr. Bush's mannerism in front of that camera that day, Deborah, I was mesmerized. I couldn't understand why he grinned and let the world know how happy he was

with his decision. That sort of changed me. I have to wonder why that man didn't show, at least, some proper etiquette or decorum in public.

ICONOCLAST: Without even having a

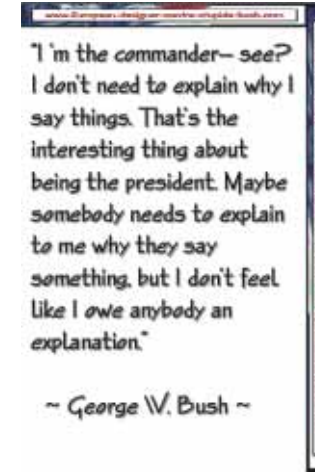
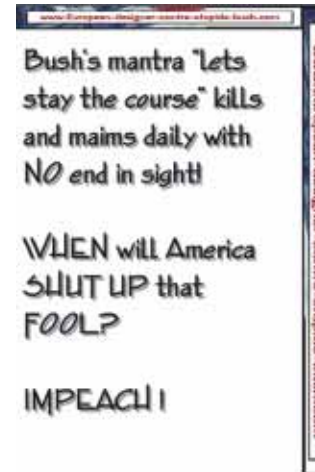
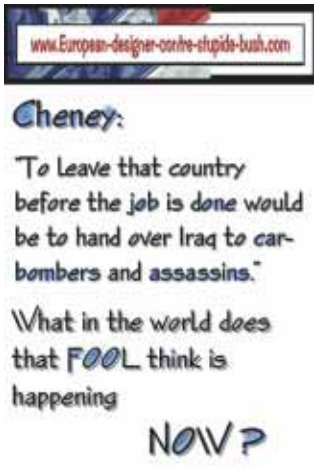
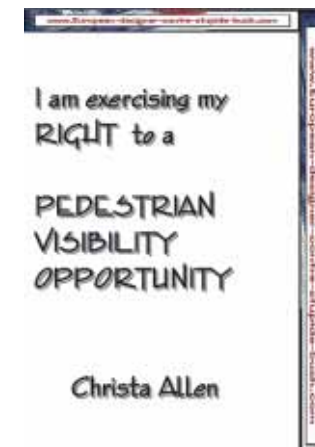
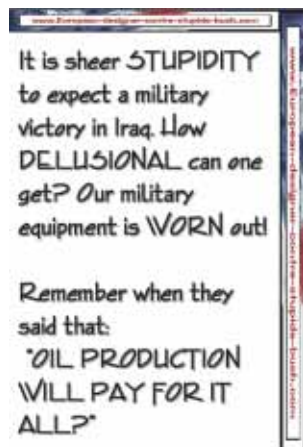
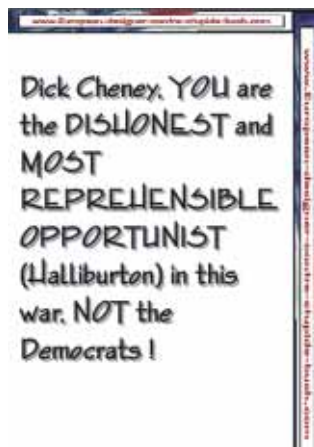
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**'M**y God, the more I looked, the more dismayed I became with the American public who largely really didn't seem to care whether they had a president who resembled a sort of comedian-in-chief rather than a commander-in-chief.'

— Christa Allen

ICONOCLAST: Tell me about coming to America.

ALLEN: I graduated with a degree in retail management and I married an Air Force pilot and moved to the U.S. for the first time in '69, though I did not live here continuously. My ex-husband liked Ger-



• **CHRISTA ALLEN —  
'MAKING WAVES'**

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political background or any real interest at all, it was something in his mannerism that captured your attention.

ALLEN: When I saw that, it changed my life. For weeks, that shocking face haunted me. It was unnerving and almost obsessed. He had so much cruelty and I wondered just what prompted this man to act in such a way. Finally, I had come to the conclusion that Mr. Bush has no earthly idea as to how his actions may affect people. And then, a most horrific realization swept over me and I thought, Texas has a totally incompetent man in a very powerful position. It may sound strange, but that is how it all happened.

ICONOCLAST: I do understand what you're saying, but I must admit that I'm a little surprised that there wasn't more than that that prompted you. You're basically saying that you saw that and concluded that there was just something wrong here.

ALLEN: I was myself shocked by that discovery. I thought to myself that I've heard of the term "dirty politics." Now, do we have "stupid politics?"

It was really a monumental thing. For weeks, I just couldn't let go of that. I kept asking myself how in the world was it possible that reasonably intelligent people can vote for a man so badly lacking the essential qualifications to be a governor.

ICONOCLAST: Did you have an opinion of Bush before that?

ALLEN: No. I was not even interested. All I wanted to do was to get my business going. That was just so profound for me. Of course, at that time, I really didn't know how far I would go with it. It was just a strong sense of something is wrong there and I continued.

ICONOCLAST: How long after that did you write the letter?

ALLEN: I had my first brush with the voting. I did vote for Ann Richards. When she lost, I thought, well, I can't do anymore, anyway. Somebody planted this Bush and hopefully, that's all he can do.

Now, we come to the letter. I was shocked and surprised shortly after that when all that hoopla followed when the Supreme Court ensconced a man. Now, that is when I got that idea about the letter.

ICONOCLAST: Give me an idea about your emotion. Obviously it was very profound, but were you angry.



IN THE DARK OF THE EARLY MORNING, dedicated activist Christa Allen shares her thoughts about the present Administration and President Bush with fellow activist Daniel Ellsberg at the Camp Casey demonstration in Crawford on Thanksgiving.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

ALLEN: I was angry because I thought that something was very, very wrong and I decided to do some serious research. I didn't know all about it at that time. My God, the more I looked, the more dismayed I became with the American public who largely really didn't seem to care whether they had a president who resembled a sort of comedian-in-chief rather than a commander-in-chief. I didn't get that. I talked to various people and nobody really wanted to talk about it.

FROM THE OPEN LETTER: "I can

only shake my head in disbelief at how someone with such limited mental capabilities could actually become a President of the 'most powerful nation in the world.' I have always been quite proud when I became a US citizen, however, since the Supreme Court decided that someone like Mr. Bush play President I am embarrassed for the country."

ICONOCLAST: So your idea with the letter was just a way to say, "Hey look! Pay attention."

ALLEN: At first. But, I didn't realize I would find so much. It took me nearly

five months to do the research. I have a stack of papers that I have printed out with this, that, and the other, and I thought that I needed to share that. That is when I decided that I needed to write a letter and I need to publish this letter before the elections.

ICONOCLAST: Where did you publish the letter originally?

ALLEN: Actually, I couldn't publish the letter. I published a link to the letter. I called various people and various newspapers.

Continued On Next Page

**BUSH IQ Story**

www.European-designer-contre-stupide-bush.com

Since ratings continue to drop, Mr. Bush can soon look forward to the very **DISTINGUISHED** honor of being the **FIRST** US President who's ratings actually reflect his **IQ**!

Chalabi is **IN** AGAIN.

Can you **IMAGINE??**

Can **ANYONE** Imagine?

No one in this **DELUSIONAL**

Whitehouse appears to understand the definition of the word **"PROGRESS"**

The Insurgency grows stronger. more people are being killed daily. **YET—** we are making **"PROGRESS!"** ???

**QUESTION:**

How many Murderers does it take to kill hundreds of people daily in Iraq?

**ANSWER:**

An **ENTIRE** administration @ the White House!

• **CHRISTA ALLEN — 'MAKING WAVES' ... Continued From Page 7**

ICONOCLAST: But you were denied the option of publishing the letter itself?

ALLEN: Yes, but actually, Counterpunch had a link to my letter. I told them about it and they put a link to my letter. They barely had that letter on for 12 minutes before I got my first response. The responses were incredible. They started coming in just a few minutes after it showed up in Counterpunch. Counterpunch is "America's best political newsletter." That is how it started. People who responded to me then forwarded that letter apparently, to other sites.

ICONOCLAST: But it was only listed on the one, Counterpunch?

ALLEN: Yes, then someone forwarded it to, I think, Pat O'Reiley. On his site, it explained that someone who visited his site sent him the letter — From the Internet site Update Archive of Sept. 26, 2004, the text read: Check out this site and tell me what you think: <http://jetaimepetite.com/bush>; Someone who visited this site sent me the link via e-mail. If every American citizen were this passionate about getting George W. Bush out of Al Gore's office, we would be in a much better position to do it right now. Rant of the Week is back, albeit in a somewhat different form; I let someone else make my case for me."

Other than that, I also have press releases. I got many responses from that.

ICONOCLAST: Where did you issue the press releases?

ALLEN: I actually used e-mail wire service.

ICONOCLAST: Now, let's talk about the chat room where you were denied access.

ALLEN: The theme was "Lying and Liars." At that point, I had never used a chat room. I didn't even know how to use it, but I was desperate as it was shortly before the election. I thought that I would use anything at my disposal. So, I got into that and introduced myself and told them that they could read that letter. It took maybe a few hours before the

first response came. There, I had quite a few people who were pretty nasty and used a lot of profanity. After a few days, I was told by the chat room administrator that "based on our standards, your

post was removed to avoid disruption to the board discussions." I was told that they have certain standards and that I did not comply with that. I did not ever use any expletives. As a matter of fact, I did not use the same language that was used towards me. Of course, I knew why that was happening. That was just a couple of days after it started.

ICONOCLAST: Were you surprised by that reaction.

ALLEN: I was shocked because some of those people were cussing me out and that is when I realized the power of the media. Many of those people, apparently, were Bush fans.

ICONOCLAST: You created a storm, though. Obviously, there were a lot of responses, whether good or bad. You mentioned earlier that you felt that people weren't really aware of how he was. If people were responding to you, people were aware, or maybe have some of the same ideas?

ALLEN: Yes. Now, so often do I hear "We know what is wrong, but we are really helpless, have no avenue other than writing our elected officials and all we get in return is a form letter with the plea of a donation." People are fed up; their fear is almost palpable!

I was kicked out of the chat room two days after that; however, I went back every few days and the discussion continued for about two months. That is a big help. It seems that most subjects die out after a little while. This one just kept on and on.

ICONOCLAST: Following that, you still had the link on Counterpunch, right?

ALLEN: Yes. It is still there in their archives. A few weeks ago, I got more responses and it was not just Republicans, but it did surprise me. I think later on it dawned on me that it was probably because I had a press release out for the model search and at the end of that release, I had the Bush letter. I think it was published in a lot of media. It was global, the press release was global. I think that is why I got this onslaught of sudden interest from Republicans. I did think it could have had something to do with Bush's ratings. I think it had more to do with people looking at the site and seeing the Bush link and then reading the letter.

ICONOCLAST: Those responses were good? Did you have any not so good ones?

ALLEN: Yes. I have had a total of only four really, really nasty ones. Out of those, one lady eventually e-mailed me and apologized.

ICONOCLAST: How long did it take you to compose the letter? I have read through the 12 pages of the letter and I see very, very different ideas.

ALLEN: Just about five months. Not the typing, but because I found out more and more information. This was information that I had actually researched.

## FROM THE OPEN LETTER:

**'Without your 'security blankets' Rove and Cheney you are exactly the Wimp and Coward that you portrayed these seven minutes sitting hapless in a chair at that school.'**

— Christa Allen

This was, as I knew it, finite and proven. It just was not out in the mass media. Some of the things like Ashcroft being paid \$1,600 per hour to have him in the plane. That is not out there. You have to really look that stuff up. I did five months of digging. I have a closet full of notes that I made and then I sorted through it. If it hadn't been so close to the election, I would probably have made the letter even longer. Some people, when I first contacted Counterpunch, they told me that it was just a fantastic letter, but they did suggest that I shorten it. But then, there were so many things in there, I couldn't. I would not have been able to make the points I made.

So many people who have responded said thanks. They thanked me profusely for going to the trouble of getting all of that information.

ICONOCLAST: As I said, I have read it, and it is long, but there are some things in there that I was unaware of.

Even so, five months is a lot of time.

ALLEN: I finally stopped just so I could get it published. Then it took me another two months to find someone who would give me that website.

You see, though, now that the elections are over in Iraq we see escalating violence again, which is exactly what I had predicted in my letter. Saddam may be out of power, but he might surprise you yet. Ultimately the strongest and meanest guy will prevail, which leaves

**I want to be able to motivate people with a positive message and I don't think they need much more of a push right now.'**

— Christa Allen

them exactly with what they had before! The violence will not cease. On the contrary, I predict a civil war soon! How many Americans will have to die before this DELUSIONAL "administration" understands the words "Iraq will NOT have a democracy in our lifetime!"

ICONOCLAST: Let's talk about the tags.

ALLEN: I had the idea for the tags for a while. I didn't know what kind of a response I would get; but, I've had people, some reporters, who called me from their home phone, telling me that they got the biggest kick out of my letter and wished that they could print it, or at least the link, but they're not allowed to. People were afraid, and I understand that.

ICONOCLAST: You had people calling you privately, but they couldn't do it publicly.

ALLEN: Yea. They said that they would do whatever they could, like forwarding it.

ICONOCLAST: When did the tags start?

ALLEN: That was sort of percolating for a while. I just felt that I needed to do more, because I saw the potential when Bush's ratings went down. I decided that

I had already cooked up those tags, use them. I did feel that people would read them and that maybe I could make a difference. I thought that it was so unusual and a little over the top.

ICONOCLAST: When did you first go out with the tags on

and where?

ALLEN: Nordstroms in Dallas for the grand opening. Though I had the idea before, I didn't want to get arrested. I am simultaneously working and that would set me back for my fashion debut.

ICONOCLAST: What about the tags on your car? You talked about an experience with officers following you.

ALLEN: I had various encounters with these people. I am sure that they were just following orders. At one time, I had been flanked for several miles by two squad cars, as if they were intercepting fighter jets. They looked at each other frequently and for some strange reason, they blocked the exit on either side. After about five minutes or so, they just sped off.

ICONOCLAST: Were you afraid?

ALLEN: No, I was not afraid. I put it all together later after other things happened. Another officer followed me several miles to a gas station. He parked

the squad car right next to me and just watched me. I asked him if there was a problem and he said, "No." After that I drove off and so did he. I thought that it makes one feel exceptionally well protected. That is when I thought that probably they were told to do that, because I drive that route often and it wouldn't be hard. Two other times, I had a squad car pull right up next to me and I could see the officer motion with his arms for me to go to the right and drive off. I had not

exceeded the speed limit and I didn't have any warrants out.

Occasionally, I took my stickers off, just to mess with them. When I don't have them on, nothing like that happens to me.

ICONOCLAST: How long have you carried the stickers on your car?

ALLEN: Well, it took me a long time to find someone who would print the stickers. I've had people respond pretty nasty. It was only two days ago that an entire family asked me in front of a grocery store what they can do to help (they saw the car stickers.) I told them of my tags, my Internet information, and they promised to contact me.

ICONOCLAST: By the way, you mentioned that you believed that your phone was tapped.

ALLEN: Oh, I believe that. A lot of people that responded to me told me that it was possible. I didn't have a problem with that. If I were a scared person, I would never have started this. I'm not scared of this.

ICONOCLAST: That's okay with you?

ALLEN: Yeah. When I told some of the people that I know about it, they did distance themselves from me, not because they were not in agreement, but because they were afraid. I was told that I might be found dead somewhere.

ICONOCLAST: Is that something that you seriously considered, death? Is all of it worth it?

ALLEN: Yes. Because, I believe that if everybody would back off because of that — I am very cautious and very careful, I do not live in fear.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think, then, that people are not willing to stand out.

ALLEN: I think it is important enough. Of course, I have always been that type of person. I do something because I believe it is right. I believe what I'm doing is right. I'm trying to educate the public. All I want to do is just have people look into it.

I can't understand that the American people are not uprising to such EVIL! Just seeing Dick Cheney's grotesquely contorted face when he speaks, excuse me, LIES, makes one realize just WHO is pulling the strings in this administration! Bush is merely the messenger, Cheney and Rove have kept him out of the loop for the most part; the power-wielding evil is DICK CHENEY!! Sure, Bush is doing somewhat better with his public appearances. Hey, one can train a monkey in 10 days. Bush ought to become somewhat refined in all of these years, yes?

ICONOCLAST: Has there been any point when you did feel like giving up?

ALLEN: No. Never. I will not give up. I will see this through if it takes me another year before I can do this debut. Maybe this can help start a movement with the tags that will get Bush impeached. Sometimes, people need to be

Continued On Next Page



• **CHRISTA ALLEN — ‘MAKING WAVES’** ... Continued From Page 8

pushed into that. Sometimes, they need to be woken up.

By the way, I went out yesterday in jeans and a sweatshirt and people reacted the same way as when I'm dressed well. I think it is the message that I have. I beam at people too. I am very positive. At first, I thought that people liked it because of the clothes, but that's not it. It's innate. It's something inside. People pick up something that they feel that they want to respond to. One woman inside just looked at me, but didn't say anything. She ran after me outside. I gave her those little tags so that she could look it up on the website. She said that she didn't want to say anything in the store and she wanted me to know that she was appreciative of what I was doing. She said that she would like to be able to do more.

ICONOCLAST: Are you not surprised by that, though. She was unwilling to approach you in the store where anyone could see, for whatever reason, but then will run you down in the parking lot and wants to share the information. Is that not a little discouraging?

ALLEN: No. I think that there is strength in numbers. She was just one person and I think I may have changed her mind after talking with her for a while. After she reads the letter, maybe that will make her do more. Rome wasn't built in one day. I think I have to do more. When she saw me, I only had two tags on, too, one in front and one in back.

ICONOCLAST: Ultimately, what do you want to accomplish?

ALLEN: My ultimate goal is to have other people who want to help start a movement with that. Maybe they could e-mail me and I could forward them my stickers, or they could do it on their own. If we had several people in a city, we could educate others. Apparently, when I talked to that lady, she told me that she didn't know a lot. So people are not informed. What I would like to do is to help inform people. Not only are people not informed, but they are wrongly informed. They get things that are being said by the media, what the media wants them to know. For the most part, it is inaccurate. It's lies. Maybe, this way, I can start a movement or educate people.

I had 36 people who had written to me and told me that I had changed their minds and that they wouldn't vote for Bush again. It was a small number, I know. But, there is a possibility that if everybody bends together, maybe he could be impeached. I don't think he can be tried with war crimes because I think he chose not to make America a signatory for the ICC, where American officials are exempted from prosecution. We could work on having him impeached.

ICONOCLAST: Coming down to Crawford when you did, tell me about your reasoning then. Was it just a matter of being around other like-minded people?

ALLEN: Yes. I felt that if I went, there would be media there. So far they have ignored me. Well, not really ignored, but not aware of me. I thought that I could make people aware of what I was doing. It may be a silly thing with all of those tags, and sometimes, I felt kind of stupid wearing them, but I also felt like I was making a difference because of the incredibly positive response from people.

I'm going to continue with what I'm doing. Now, over the next few weeks, I plan to go out and display my tags and



Christa Allen models one of her fashion creations.

see if I can get a bigger response. Look at what's happening now, since the White House hurriedly had to do their 'damage control' — it was Christmas eve, people were desperate for some good news — the slick announcement on Christmas eve, was just that, slick! The very next day Generals on the ground (Peter Pace) already performed his 'disclaimer service' duty, saying that it all depended on what is happening on the ground. Well, duh — elementary my dear Watson!! I am tired of having these clowns insult my intelligence! Even today, now and then Fox all excitedly brings a segment in which they say how wonderful about the troop down-size, etc... we've got to do something!

ICONOCLAST: Did not being born in the United States give you any pause at all?

ALLEN: Actually, no. That is not the responses I got. People have told me that that was quite an asset. Some of the letters I received said things like "I was way ahead of my time" and "at least I

can see things." I did have some funny responses too. One person even suggested that I was writing this for Kerry. I told them that I was very flattered by that because he is an intelligent man, but that I was doing this on my own. Some people questioned whether I was a real person, thinking that I was something that Kerry put out there. One of the negative responses was from a woman who used every expletive out there. My only response to her was that she was probably as ugly on the outside as she was on the inside. That is as far as I went. After that I got a letter from her husband. "This is the husband of the inside/outside ugly woman" (laughing) he said that we girls should stop it. It was really kind of a bright spot.

I certainly don't have a halo, but her diatribe really bothered me. I don't use expletives. I don't use them and I don't like it.

FROM THE OPEN LETTER: "I am totally confident that Senator Kerry would not have 'shocked' the children

by telling them that the President has an important matter to attend. I'll guarantee you that these kids would have learned an invaluable lesson, don't forget, they are now almost four years older and most likely will remember a 'never elected president' with his pants glued in his chair while the Nation was attacked! Yes, results matter Mr. Bush!"

ICONOCLAST: What about your family?

ALLEN: My ex-husband (Air Force pilot) said that he would die for my right to say whatever I felt, but just to be careful of what I was doing and be aware.

ICONOCLAST: Well, these are very bold statements. You use words in your letter like "bumbling moron." You wrote something about . . . "take advice from top generals instead of firing them for disagreeing with his majesty and you are a sorry excuse for a man."

ALLEN: I tried to use words that were derogative but not expletives. I felt that if I were to do any less than I was doing, it really would not make much difference. I felt that I needed to stand out. Also, since the letter is so lengthy, I use the language that I did because I had to keep people's attention. This man is evil and he's stupid. When I see him, I'm always reminded of an old German expression: You can't take anything out of a naked man's pocket.

ICONOCLAST: You mentioned plans were to display the tags more. Any other big plans? Are you coming to Crawford at Easter. I know you have been invited. Also, I'm curious to what level you will go. In August when the huge rally and demonstrations were held, even in my capacity as a reporter, just being there put me in different positions when there were derogatory things screamed at me. People there on either side were pretty extreme. Would you put yourself in that position?

ALLEN: Well, I have. I was expecting that when I went downtown for the first time. I was shocked at the responses of people. Sometimes, I think it's how you think. If you're scared, people pick that up. They may not be able to put a finger on it, but they can tell. I was concerned, but I was prepared. People still responded so positively. Maybe I'm foolish to think that way.

ICONOCLAST: You're such a small woman, physically. You're not worried about being assaulted?

ALLEN: Yes, it has occurred to me. I feel that I would just deal with it at the time. I just feel that I can change their minds. I have had instances where I've turned very, very negative people 100 percent around. So much of this is innate. I just do it. Maybe it is an asset to be a tiny petite. When you look up at a big guy, you have to remember that before he is a screamer or a politician, he is a man. He will respond to you at that level first. I use that to my advantage.

Most of the time, there are other people around, though. I'm just not going to give up. As a matter of fact, I'm going to escalate what I'm doing. Had I realized how it would go, I would have done it earlier. I took me some time to prepare to go out with them.

ICONOCLAST: You have not had any other support. You have done this all on your own.

ALLEN: Yes. Absolutely. I've even lost friends over it.

ICONOCLAST: Still, you feel like it's worth it?

ALLEN: Eventually, I feel that it will

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• **CHRISTA ALLEN — 'MAKING WAVES'**

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be. I think I will get something done. Once people look at it, they will see. Right now, I'm taking baby steps. I think this is only the beginning. There will be others. Just like Cindy Sheehan, this could go around like wildfire. Nobody can stop this article you're doing from coming out. This may be what is needed to get a movement going. That's the first battle.

ICONOCLAST: Working at the same time on your fashion debut, is much of your time used up? Will this create a problem for your work success?

ALLEN: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. In a more artistic field, people don't give you much credit. I've had responses like, "Gosh, when I saw your website, I didn't think you could write a letter like that." I think it will be more of a help than a hindrance.

ICONOCLAST: When you made the decision to publish the letter, what did you expect?

ALLEN: I was a little surprised that people were so successful at keeping it out of the media.

ICONOCLAST: Why do you think that is?

ALLEN: People were just scared. I

tried the DALLAS MORNING NEWS. I couldn't even get it through their screening committee for a chance.

ICONOCLAST: Do you feel like people are getting away from that now. More and more people are speaking out against the President and his administration.

ALLEN: Yes. That is why I think I have a good chance. Chances are better now than a year ago to work against him. Look at the situation now, the Iraqis have shown that they CAN fight, I just wished they would fight their enemy, the insurgents instead of the Americans! Dick Cheney's stupid comment "to leave that country before the job is done would be to hand over Iraq to car-bombers and assassins" what exactly does the fool think is happening NOW? Translation: "We have not secured all of the oil reserves for us, don't have all of the multi-billion contracts yet, for heavens sake, let's get all that is ours BEFORE we can even THINK of pulling out!" Yes, that idiot's 'cake walk' has not materialized, so, just sacrifice more soldiers, hey, we still have plenty...

FROM THE OPEN LETTER: "Without your 'security blankets' Rove and



CHRISTA ALLEN creates unique fashions for women on the go, such as this ensemble which she is modeling.

— Photo Courtesy of Je T'aime Petite



CHRISTA ALLEN is planning her 2006 fashion debut and encourages people interested in restoring dignity to government to join her movement. Here, she models one of her many creations.

— Photo Courtesy of Je T'aime Petite

*Cheney you are exactly the Wimp and Coward that you portrayed these seven minutes sitting hapless in a chair at that school."*

ICONOCLAST: Will you stay involved in politics or is this primarily George Bush?

ALLEN: It is this administration. I will have my debut and go on, but it would be difficult for me to distance myself now. Who knows what going to come. I will always be watching. I think it is good for everybody to informed with whatever is going on.

FROM THE OPEN LETTER: "Thanks to the help from you and your sorry administration the prestige and credibility of America has been seriously eroded world-wide."

ICONOCLAST: Do you feel that impeachment is something that can be accomplished, really?

ALLEN: I think it can, yes. I am convinced that things like this could lead to that. It's like they say, "A journey starts but with one step." I am convinced that I can make a difference! I will use everything at my disposal. It is horrible what this man is doing. It's just wrong.

It's just a matter of time. The wheels have been set in motion and something is going to happen. This is not going to go away. I want to be able to motivate people with a positive message and I

don't think they need much more of a push right now. Look at what's happening now and has been for quite some time. I truly believe that there is a possibility that Bush will be impeached.

So many people don't have time to get the information that I have been able to get. They don't have time. They have to work and put food on the table and do other things. I am glad that I was in a position to do all that. I am totally convinced that I can make a difference.

My hope is that some big Democratic organization will get involved with what I'm doing. Help with getting the message out to the masses. You can't tell people what to do, and I don't believe in that. I just want to have a chance to inform people, but I do need some help because if the media makes an effort to keep you out, there is nothing that you can do. I need some big guns. Regardless, I will do whatever it takes.

The letter can be read at <European-designer-contre-stupide-bush.com>.

There is also a link at Allen's company website of <jetaimepetite.com/bush/>.

To contact her directly, send an e-mail to <EuropeanDesigner@aol.com>.

# DeLay Preparing To Step Down As Prosecutor Broadens Inquiry

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As Texas prosecutor Ronnie Earle last week demanded additional documents involving U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay, the on-hold House majority leader has indicated that he intends to give up that post.

DeLay was indicted last year on money-laundering charges and was forced to temporarily vacate the position of House majority leader while the case is pending.

House Republicans had been pressuring DeLay to abdicate his post amid concerns for the upcoming mid-term elections and the taint that his legal problems were causing them.



Tom DeLay

Prosecutor Earle last week sent subpoenas to Edwin A. Buckham, a former DeLay chief of staff, who had founded the U.S. Family Network which had illegally received \$500,000 in 1999 from the National Republican Congressional Committee; Christopher Geeslin, the Network's former president; the National Republican Congressional Committee; and the treasurer of DeLay's leadership political action committee, Americans for a Republican Majority.

Travis County District Attorney Earle is seeking all documents related to the \$500,000 contribution, along with associ-

ated correspondence involving DeLay or Jack Abramoff, the lobbyist who this past week pleaded guilty to conspiracy to bribe public officials.

## Violent Week In Iraq U.S. Troop Fatality Count Now At 2,198, Says Pentagon

BAGHDAD — A marked increase in violence was witnessed in Iraq this past week, with 11 U.S. soldiers among the fatalities, according to the Pentagon, which places the number of U.S. military fatalities since the 2003 invasion at 2,198.

In the various attacks, approximately 130 Iraqis were also killed, and hundreds wounded, it has been reported.

Seven U.S. soldier deaths were listed as caused by roadside bombs and two were caused by a suicide bomber. Two Marines were killed in a battle involving small arms fire.

## Leading Economists Says Iraq War Could Cost Over \$2 Trillion

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Joseph Stiglitz, a Columbia University professor who won the Nobel prize for economics in 2001, and Harvard budget expert Linda Bilmes have completed a study that reveals the predicted cost

of the war in Iraq was underestimated and will likely be between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion, up to 10 times more than previously thought.

The economists' study takes into account lifetime disability and healthcare for troops injured in the war and the impact of the war on the American economy.

Stiglitz has indicated that the study's figures are conservative, with the final costs to likely be much higher.

The study has been presented to the Allied Social Sciences Association in Boston.

Paul Bremer, the first U.S. administrator of postwar Iraq, told NBC in an interview that the United States did

not anticipate continued activity by insurgents following the initial charge into Iraq, which has resulted in unforeseen additional costs. He also indicated that poor planning contributed to the problem.

Stiglitz, a former World Bank chief economist, said the document is available at <josephstiglitz.com>.

## City Council Calls For Impeachment

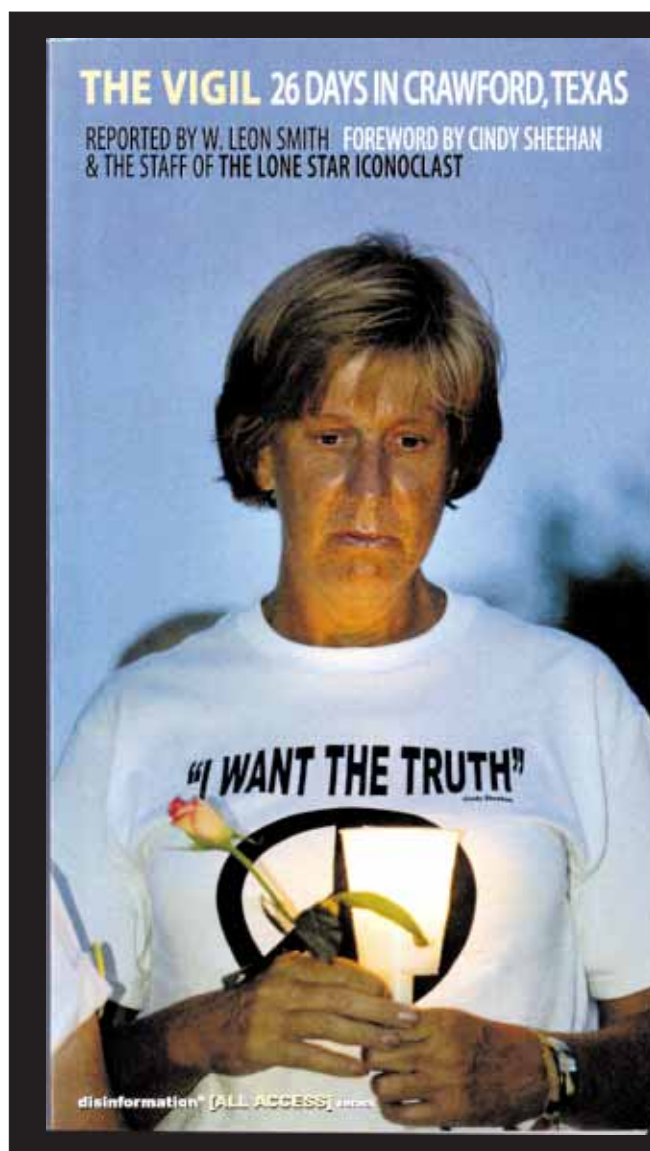
ARCATA, Calif. — On a 3-2 split vote, the City of Arcata council passed a resolution last week calling for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney.

The resolution cited what the council deems as impeachable violations of international and constitutional law.

Among the charges listed in the resolution were "the crime of misleading the American people and Congress into waging an unnecessary and brutal war in Iraq," "the criminal failure of the president to respond adequately to the Hurricane Katrina disaster," "torturing human beings in violation of the Geneva Convention" and "ordering the secret surveillance of American citizens."

According to Councilman Dave Meserve, who drafted the resolution along with Councilwoman Harmony Groves, "All elected officials swear to uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic," Meserve said. "This obligates us to act when the president violates the Constitution. We hope that other cities will join us in demanding the impeachment of Bush and Cheney."

Impeachment begins with a formal accusation brought by the House of Representatives with a majority vote. It is then tried by the U.S. Senate, requiring a two-thirds vote for conviction.



## AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES & ON THE WEB...

### THE VIGIL

In August of 2005, a grieving mother and her supporters laid siege to Crawford, Texas. Cindy Sheehan set up camp outside of President Bush's ranch, determined to find some answers. For 26 days, all eyes were on Camp Casey.

At the center of it all was Crawford's own *Lone Star Iconoclast*. In the heart of the reddest of Red States, *The Iconoclast* found itself caught between the public's (deeply conservative) expectations, and the paper's publisher, W. Leon Smith's, sense of journalistic duty to report objectively. **THE VIGIL** is an invaluable record of *The Iconoclast's* coverage, with Sheehan herself providing a scene-setting foreword.

The result is a high stakes, blow-by-blow account of the events as they unfolded. You experience this vigil right along with the writers and participants: the heat, the fire ants, the gunplay, the celebrity appearances, and the intense emotional rollercoaster that has yet to end. Smith and his crew demonstrated a level of professional virtue that—to quote Sheehan herself—"shines like a lone spark of integrity in the prairie darkness."



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# Family Says Ground Zero Death Linked To World Trade Center Cleanup

NEW YORK — The death of retired NYPD detective James Zadroga this past week has revived the charge that the air surrounding Ground Zero, site of the 9/11 tragedy, was contaminated, even though the White House had edited an advisory from the Environmental Protection Agency saying that the air was safe to breathe.

Zadroga, who worked more than 450 hours at Ground Zero during the 9/11 emergency, died last Thursday from brain and respiratory complications. His family says his death is linked to the WTC cleanup.

The detective had suffered from a constant cough and sore throat and in a letter wrote that no one at the job cared about his well-being. "They tell me I'm

fine, go back to work. But, truthfully, I haven't felt this bad in my life.... And what thanks do I get now that I'm sick?"

Police officials explained that Zadroga, 34, had been given a tax-free disability pension of ¾ pay in 2004, his pension being the result of a pulmonary disease related to 9/11. But after leaving the NYPD, Zadroga was responsible for his own medical bills.

Zadroga died at his parents' home in Little Egg Harbor, N.J., leaving behind a four-year-old daughter, Tylerann, who helped care for him in his last days.

According to police, Zadroga was inside 7 World Trade Center as it began to collapse on 9/11. He returned to the site for weeks to help search for victims' remains.

## 80% Of Marines Killed Could Have Been Saved, Says Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At least 80 percent of the Marines killed from wounds suffered in Iraq could have survived had they been issued extra body armor, says a recent study released by the Pentagon.

The Pentagon, however, has declined to supply the armor to troops, although officials in the field have requested it.

Part of the reason for not supplying the added protection, says the Pentagon, is that it would add to the weight carried by the soldiers. The ceramic plates would cover body areas that are now exposed to bullets and shrapnel. The problem of inadequate protection has been known since the beginning of the war, but the Pentagon has been trying to decide just which kind of protection to order, which has delayed their purchase and issue.



# Waco Writer's Workshop Coming In January

WACO — McLennan Community College (MCC) will host the Waco Writer's Workshop beginning in January. The course, comprised of three sections, will be taught by George Wilhite.

Wilhite, author of *The Texas Rodeo Murder*, is an adjunct instructor at MCC and teaches writing at Texas State Technical College. He is a published novelist, short story writer, fiction judge, and a presenter. A former state and national award winning journalist,

he has written many published nonfiction articles in several newspapers, as well as national and international magazines.

Two of his most notable articles, *Rodeo Clowns: Tough Times 10* and *Texas Rangers: 175 Years of Lone Star Justice*, appeared in *Cowboys and Country Magazine*. Wilhite will bring his expertise and incorporate other authors as occasional speakers in these courses designed to create a forum for local writers.

The course will include "Being a Writer," lasting four weeks (12 hours) at a cost of \$50, meeting Jan. 17 through Feb. 7, on Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m.; "Write About What?," lasting four weeks (12 hours) at a cost of \$50, meeting Feb. 21 through Mar. 21, on Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m.; and "Writer's Block?," lasting four weeks (12 hours) at a cost of \$50, meeting April 4 through April 25 on Tuesday from 6 to 9 p.m..

For more information about MCC courses, call 254/299-8888.

# Maybe They Were Just 'Happy'

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Ain't no sense wartin' a man over his brand of whiskey."

First, all this controversy about *Brokeback Mountain* is misplaced.

Yes, this is a disreputable abomination of the Lord's intended plan for mankind.

But that's got nothing to do with homosexuality.

No, there is a greater dissipation of human behavior depicted here.

These two guys are represented as cowboys.

The operative word here being "COW." Good, clean, morally upright *cattle*.

Well, good and morally upright.

'Cept for that high-headed cross-bred heifer that put ol' Jim through the corral fence.

But I digress.

This sybarite cinematic carnality centers around two guys who wrangle sheep.

They are not gay cowboys.

THEY ARE SHEPHERDS!  
Huge difference!

I mean, as cowboys, they might be looked upon somewhat askance.

Among shepherds, well, homosexuality would be considered a propriety upgrade.

The objects of their affection have at least half the usual number of legs.

Didn't anybody consider that the gay community might take offense at being characterized as *shepherds*?

Don't these movie people have a modicum of sensitivity about them?

And this is not the first cinematic representation of homosexuality among the six-gun set.

There was *The Gay Amigo* in 1949, starring Duncan Renaldo as The Cisco Kid, Leo Carrillo as Poncho, and Clayton Moore as not the Lone Ranger.

How about *The Gay Cavalier* back in

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



1946, back when Gilbert Roland was The Cisco Kid and hadn't discovered Bette Davis.

And who could forget Roy Rogers, as *The Gay Ranchero* among all that fringe and sequins and that Devine Andy.

Then there were those racy foreign "art" Westerns like *Romance Of The Royal Mounted* starring Robert Kent back in '36.

Of course some Westerns were just afraid to come all the way out of the closet.

Take *Boss Of Lonely Valley* in 1937 with Buck Jones, *Manhattan Cowboy* back in 1928, Bill "Hopalong Cassidy" Boyd's *Texas Man Hunt* in '42 or one of Roy's earlier works, *Man From Music Mountain*.

No, anticipating your next inquiry, I have no shame.

And if you doubt any of the above assertions, then maybe you can explain why, with Sweet Nell bending over the top rail of the corral fence with heaving and sighing calico cleavage, the cowboy always rides away.

I guess if you object to movies about homosexuality, you ought not to go see any of them.

If you object to gay marriage, you probably ought not to marry a gay person.

So, to all you Christer fascists, I have but one thing to say: Jack Abramoff!

That's Jack Abramoff! Jack Abramoff! Jack Abramoff!

Nya-a-a-h-h-h-h-h!!!



# Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

## Recess Appointment Scheme Another Nail In Fair Elections Coffin

Lawmakers and advocacy groups are right to be upset with the latest Bush exercise to circumvent the intention of the law.

Last week, he decided to ride a technicality to bypass the Senate in filling several key posts at the State Department, Federal Election Commission, and National Labor Relations Board.

Constitutionally, a president may make recess appointments while the chamber is in recess, but the intention is that they are absolutely necessary and they are usually very short-term, to expire at the end of the next congressional session.

Bush contends that since the Senate held a pro forma session last week and then adjourned, the second session of the 109th Congress has begun, meaning his nearly 20 appointments may now ride it out until the end of 2007.

Bush's track record for appointments has been abysmal, filled with buddies and campaign supporters. To him, qualifications do not matter. FEMA and Homeland Security are prime examples.

With its confirmation abilities, the Senate provides oversight, sometimes good, sometimes bad, but another look, nevertheless. Senators can probe to determine if nominated appointees are qualified. They can also smoke out hidden agendas.

Of his most recent appointments, many of whom are not qualified to serve, perhaps the most chilling is Bush's appointment of Hans von Spakovsky to the FEC.

As the Republican Party chair of Fulton County, Ga., Spakovsky worked toward requiring Georgia voters to have a photo identification, which would disable many minority voters from casting ballots.

Likewise, he was also involved in the decision that rejected a recommendation of Justice Department lawyers in Tom DeLay's Texas redistricting case where minority voting power was reduced in Texas and additional Republican districts were added, which violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

A ringer has now been inserted.

There is clear evidence that the elections of 2000 and 2004 were rigged by voting machine companies that owed allegiance to Bush. Texas' redistricting plan, hammered into place by DeLay, was an evil farce shoved down the throats of Texans, again as a way to rig the election process.

Midterms are coming up and Bush appears determined to put his guys in place in advance of them.

Here we go again!

— W. Leon Smith



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# Public Education: An Issue Of Legal Responsibility

I've long pontificated that if the state doesn't want to assume its constitutional responsibility to provide a quality education to every child, then legislators need to change the law. Lawmakers appear to be looking at doing just that.

Currently the state is guilty of violating its mandated responsibility to parents and their children. Personally, I advocate a class-action lawsuit against the state by parents and educators. Seems like any effort to resolve an educational issue in this state results from the judicial and not the legislative system. The latest court decision found the

current financing system illegal. Interestingly enough it was the court that determined the current financing system, which includes the "Robin Hood" clause.

If legislators want to privatize education, that's fine only if taxpayers don't have to foot the bill for it. Otherwise, legislators simply are looking to cover their own butts for not providing the appropriate and adequate financing during the past decade. Case in point: It is the legislature that has created the current emergency plight of public education by forcing the court to set up a financing system that ensures educational inequal-



Commentary

By  
Peter  
Stern

ity among economic classes and is doomed to fail.

Furthermore, if privatization of public education is our next step, legislators had better put into place a regulated system of tuition and finance costs. We need only observe what has occurred under the recent deregulation of higher education tuition costs to note the critical nature of this issue. Privatization of public education brings along a whole set of other issues and problems. Ongoing legislative inept short-term thinking is incapable of determining and implementing an entirely new educational system. In addition, operating two parallel educational systems under the state rubric, public and private, is doomed for failure. If the state cannot successfully manage one system, how is it possible for it to manage two?

However, if the real concern is to educate every child equally (which it isn't) then privatization is NOT the educational road to recovery. Privatizing education will merely ensure the inequality between the "haves" and the "have-nots" within our society. Currently, the governor self-appointed yet another Commission on Public Education, which he named "The Texas Tax Reform Commis-

sion". It is headed by Democrat John Sharp and a host of 23 of the governor's major campaign contributor. There are no parents, educators, middle-class homeowners or students on the commission. It's hard to imagine this group of businessmen arriving at financing public education that will benefit most Texas families.

Privatizing education is another misguided special interest notion legislators have selected so they don't have to assume the constitutional responsibility they have been diverting for the past decade. Isn't it clear yet to everyone that legislators and businessmen are NOT the group needed to develop a quality functional public school system with adequate financing? During the past decade they have proven beyond a doubt that they are incapable of doing so.

*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: <pstern@austin.rr.com>.*

## Abramoff Family Values, Part One

On Jan. 3, 2006, Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleaded guilty in federal court to conspiracy, mail fraud, and tax evasion. He also agreed to a guilty plea in related indictments from Florida on fraud and conspiracy stemming from his purchase of a SunCruz casino boat line. The judge presiding over his trial asked him if he agreed that his firm had engaged in a conspiracy to corrupt public officials. He said yes. He is now facing up to 30 years behind bars, and has agreed to become the Justice Department's star witness in what THE NEW YORK TIMES is calling "the biggest scandal in congress in over a century."

Well, screw 'em. The first rule of Investigative Reporting is "follow the money." Money dictates all things; it corrupts absolutely. Members of Congress should have known better. Now, many will face public embarrassment and possible jail time for accepting bribes. Despite the fact that Abramoff is a died-in-the-wool partisan Republican, his money and influence have spread so far and wide over D.C. that his testimony has singled out three congressional Democrats. Some of our liberal representatives like House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi will try to turn this into an entirely partisan issue, using the "culture of corruption" tagline like something on the bottom of a movie poster. They will point to a list of over 20 congressional Republicans under investigation in the Abramoff probe. They will tell you that an entire party is corrupt. That is simply is not the case. It is mostly a partisan issue. Not everyone wearing blue will be spared the guillotine. And believe me when I say, heads will roll. Most of them will bear an elephant's trunk, but trust me - a few jackasses will be tossed as well.

The Abramoff scandal is quite complicated, but very important given the scope of his influence peddling. It is essential that you, as a voter, grasp what has happened and why it should factor heavily in the Nov. 2006 federal elections. So, let us examine these *Abramoff Family Values* ...

First up on the current roster of politicians in hot water is none other than Houston Representative Tom DeLay. In spite of his other legal woes, DeLay's entanglement with Abramoff is nothing short of brazen. There are so many instances of DeLay and Abramoff blatantly trampling house ethics rules, it would take an entire three-part series to cover half of them. So, just the important stuff for now.

According to THE WASHINGTON POST, Abramoff and his wife have donated over \$40,000 to DeLay's campaign. In 2005, Abramoff's fake charity, "The Capitol Athletic Foundation," gave \$25,000 to



The Webster  
Retort

By  
Stephen  
Webster

DeLay's fake charity, "The DeLay Foundation for Kids." DeLay also accepted lavish gifts from the lobbyist, including stays in skyboxes at the Washington Redskins' FedEx Field and the MCI Center. Members of his staff were treated to the U.S. Open in Pebble Beach, Calif. and the 2005 Super Bowl. DeLay and his family, along with several aids, accepted an Abramoff-financed vacation to the island of Saipan in 1997. The vacation was, according to ABC, "part of an effort by [...] Abramoff to stop legislation aimed at cracking down on sweatshops and sex shops in the American territory. [...]"

While on the island, DeLay told Saipan factory owners he would block legislation intended to stop the sex trade and abusive labor practices. "[I]f they elect me majority whip, I make the schedule of the Congress, and I'm not going to put it on the schedule," he said. Abramoff was rewarded with \$1.36 million for his success. DeLay also accepted trips to Russia, Scotland and Korea, with most expenses being charged to Abramoff's American Express card.

And the money trail leads on in so many other directions, it boggles the mind. From Illinois Republic Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert to Mississippi Republican Senator Trent Lott to Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid to Texas Representative Pete Sessions, the power centers of our government are trembling.

The list of names is long, and the crimes are many in number. This scandal could very possibly take down a large section of our federal government. According to THE WASHINGTON POST, Abramoff claims he has evidence on at least 60 individuals, including public officials, current and former. For a comprehensive list of those under the microscope, visit my blog at GonzoMuckraker.BlogSpot.com. Next week - the sins of your Senator, John Cornyn, and his friends at The Christian Coalition.

*Stephen Webster is an Investigative Reporter and Syndicated Columnist with The News Connection, a Staff Columnist with George W. Bush's hometown weekly The Lone Star Iconoclast, and a former Contributor to The Dallas Morning News' Science & Technology section. For more of Webster's musings, visit GonzoMuckraker.BlogSpot.com.*

## The Art Of Gloating<sup>©</sup>

By L.B. PARR  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Gloat, as defined in my American Heritage dictionary is, "to feel or express great, often malicious, pleasure or self-satisfaction."

As a more than just a little left-leaning citizen, the opportunities to gloat since the Republicans took over Washington D.C. have been few and far between. Not any more. Now, I am in full gloat mode 24/7!

Finally, the American people are coming out of their Bush-induced, Svengali-like trances and realizing that President Bush, his administration, and their cronies in Congress have been going to incredible lengths to get their way, including lying, cheating, and stealing. Last month, the Wall Street Journal released a Harris Poll that showed 64% of Americans now believe that the Bush administration "generally misleads the American public on current issues to achieve its own ends."

The first to fall from grace was House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas. I have to admit I did a happy dance or two when I heard he was forced to step down as Majority Leader when he was charged with obstruction of justice and money-laundering in connection with campaign contributions in Texas.

Then, there is Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist who apparently pulled a "Martha" and will probably be charged with insider trading. Stupid move on his part, but definitely gloat-worthy on my part.

This next one inspired me to break out

GUEST  
COMMENTARY

in a lively rendition of "I Could Have Danced All Night!" The five-count indictment of Scooter Libby, Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, for perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with the leak of the identity of CIA covert operative Valerie Wilson should provide insight as to just how far the Bushies were willing to go to justify invading Iraq.

As expected, the Republicans are calling Mr. Libby's indictment a Democratic witch hunt, but it was their own fearless leader, the "W" himself, who selected Patrick Fitzgerald as special prosecutor so, as Mr. Bush might say if he truly is the cowboy he pretends to be, that dog won't hunt.

While I am at it, would someone please tell Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, who was quick to try to downplay Libby's indictment, that perjury is not a "technicality?" It is a crime. Lest she forget, lying to a grand jury is why she voted to have former President Clinton impeached!

The latest inductee to the Republican Hall of Shame is California Representative Randy "Duke" Cunningham. Good ole Duke tearfully confessed to taking at least \$2.4 million in bribes from government contractors for rewarding them with government contracts worth tens of millions of taxpayer dollars. I wonder if he will drive his Rolls Royce to the hoosegow. Stupid, stupid, stupid. Happy

Continued On Next Page

# Resolutions Are Best Kept By Using Permanent Ink

Traditionally, I tend to wait until the last minute to determine what my New Year's resolution will be. This, of course, is a mistake. The stroke of midnight on Jan. 1 is no time to be making any kind of life-changing declaration to a room full of people. Particularly if you are intoxicated and the designated driver has access to a camcorder. In 2001, for example, I raised my glass and promised myself — and the world — that I would stop taking out the trash in my underwear.

OK, I mostly made this promise to my wife, who was tired of finding a new trash service each spring, when my stealth pre-dawn trash runs were ceremoniously exposed on the first Monday following the time change. Since my wife was the designated driver that fateful New Year's Eve, I was reminded of my resolution — thanks to the wonders of video technology — every Sunday night for the next six months.

This year, I was determined to avoid relying on the cognitive skills of my intoxicated brain, which, come midnight, is generally functioning at the level of a standard Chia pet. This year, there would be no raising my glass and promising anything stupid or embarrassing, like in 1998, when I declared to our family, friends and most of the dining room at Chili's, that I would start eating healthier so I wouldn't be so gassy all the time.

(In case you're wondering, this tape was purchased and destroyed before leaving the restaurant parking lot.)

In preparing for this New Year's Eve, I knew the responsible thing to do would

be to make myself a designated driver and therefore avoid drinking altogether. I seriously considered this (estimated time: one minute) before reaching the following conclusion:

Umm...no.

Next year, I will be 40. Chances are, this was going to be my last New Year's celebration without blood pressure and cholesterol medications, or any other medications that, when mixed with alcohol, could send blood rushing to the wrong places for an unhealthy period of time.

This left me with one option: Determine my resolution before New Year's Eve and, in a similarly responsible manner, write that resolution on my forearm in big black letters. This way, there would be no slip of paper to lose or any chance of forgetting what my resolution is when the time came. I could simply roll up my sleeve and read it to the world or, if necessary, wave it at people while hurling into a commode.

Because I had more time to decide on this year's resolution, I was able to dig deeper and come up with something that would help me grow as a person. Something that went beyond reducing my own gas emission standards, or not scaring the recycling person by running at them in my tighty-whities with an armload of tin cans (Although my wife said both resolutions have improved her life considerably.)

After careful consideration I chose this year's resolution and, following my plan, wrote it on my arm before heading out



By  
**Ned  
Hickson**  
Siuslaw News

with my wife to ring in the New Year. The good news is that it worked perfectly. When the moment came, I was able to declare a resolution that wasn't embarrassing to my wife or me.

Naturally, no one got this one on tape. The bad news is that I didn't consider

what would happen if I couldn't get it off right away. We are well into the new year and the words "Be More Patient" are still visible on my forearm. I'm not sure what kind of marker I used but apparently it has many of the same compounds NASA paints its heat shields with.

However, I noticed today that the ink is beginning to fade. Slightly. So I know it WILL eventually go away.

Until then, I'll just have to...well...

Be patient.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at [nhickson@oregonfast.net](mailto:nhickson@oregonfast.net), or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR. 97439.)

## Supreme Court Jesters

The results regarding the individual members of the Supreme Court are in. Antonin Scalia got a 77, and Clarence Thomas got a woeful 0. This was not a ranking about how competent the Washington Nine was. It's a ranking of how funny they are in court. The statistics were computed by Boston University Law Professor, Jay D. Wexler. According to transcripts, Scalia got 77 official laughs during the court proceedings in the 2004-2005 sessions. He was followed by Breyer with 45, Kennedy with 21, Souter with 19, the late William Rehnquist with 12, Stevens with 8, O'Connor with 7, Ginsburg with 4, and Thomas with 0. This was obviously an informal study filled with possible flaws, and there are very few conclusions we can draw about the Justices based on their sense of humor. Personally, I've always found that people who make other people laugh are of extremely high intelligence. But there might even be flaws in that conclusion.

What is obvious is that having a sense of humor and making colleagues laugh is a part of being a Supreme Court Justice. Only laughs that were heard while court was in session were counted. So, don't bother going back to 2000 to see how many times the Conservative Justices laughed after one of them suggested, "You mean we get to decide the election?!" What we're talking about here is the ability to take one's self a little less seriously. We're talking about loosening up the other eight so everyone can relax and get on with the serious business of deciding things that may determine the course of history.

The good news about this study is that it comes out right before Samuel Alito faces his confirmation hearings. Until now, Alito has been having practice rehearsal hearings called "murder boards" where those who want him to pass muster ask him hard questions. I have a feeling there's not a lot of humor in something called, "murder boards." Well, that's obviously a mistake, and those Republican lawyers pretending to be Senators should throw in some opportunities for Alito to get a few laughs. Give him some joke tutoring.

When asked, "Why did you take such a conservative approach to the Constitution during the Reagan administration?" Alito could reply, "Conservative? Are you kidding? During the Reagan Administration, anybody who didn't believe in the Monarchy was considered a liberal."

When asked, "Do you think a woman



Modern Times  
By  
**Lloyd  
Garver**

should be in charge of her own body?" he might deflect the topic by saying, "They always are when I'm with them."

The most interesting thing about the study is that humor cuts across ideological lines. You can't say conservatives as a rule crack more jokes than moderates or liberals. It's obviously an individual thing. And I salute Justice Scalia for getting the most laughs. These men and women can do their very serious business and still laugh now and then. It makes them human.

The problem is now that the Justices know that people are counting the laughs, they're probably going to become competitive. They're going to feel pressure to get the most laughs. They'll be tempted to bring comic props into the Court. I'm all for freedom of expression, but I really don't want to have Supreme Court Justices sneaking silly string and whoopee cushions under their robes. So, Justices, please limit the jokes to verbal ones.

That should be challenge enough. Obviously, Clarence Thomas has the biggest motivation to increase his laugh quotient. How would you like to be known as the guy who's not as funny as Ruth Bader Ginsburg?

But they'll all try to top each other. If Souter gets off a quip about Eminent Domain, Stevens will probably jump in with some rabbi, minister, priest joke about oil rights. Soon, there won't just be dissenting opinions, there will be comedy opinions. Instead of just hiring law clerks, they'll probably hire comedy writers. And to that I say to the ladies and gentlemen of the Court, you know where you can find me.

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

## The Art Of Gloating<sup>©</sup>

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

dance, happy dance.

I didn't quite do a happy dance when Harriet Miers withdrew her nomination to the Supreme Court for three reasons: First, if Mr. Bush thought she was the best qualified for the job, I was terrified to think who his next nominee would be. As it turned out, my fear was not unfounded. Judge Alito makes Harriet look like Ted Kennedy's best friend! Secondly, I kind of feel sorry for anyone who claims that President Bush is the MOST BRILLIANT MAN she has ever met. That's not gloat-worthy, that's sad. And third, well, I used to have a cat named Harriet and she was very nice.

I could go on and on with reasons for

my elevated gloat status but I'm exhausted from all my happy dancing. And, I'm realizing, sadly, after my frenzy of gloating, that the pleasure and self-satisfaction that my dictionary mentioned, quickly vanish when faced with the reality of the administration's clueless bungling of major issues that threatens the quality of life of most Americans: high gas prices, affordable health insurance, huge increases in the cost of home heating fuel, a total disregard of the environment and job security, to name but a few.

You see, the downside of having so many things to gloat over is that no one really wins, or worse, somebody always loses.

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# Do Wal\*Marts Breed Violence?

As a personal protest against greed, both corporate and that of useless blood kin, I did not set foot inside a Wal\*Mart store throughout the entire holiday shopping season.

Truth is, I haven't entered a Wal\*Mart for any reason whatsoever in some 10-12 weeks now.

Oh, there are the occasional treks to Sam's Club for mass quantities of our favorite paper towels and t-p; a reasonably-priced yet excellent organic whole bean Brazilian coffee not found anywhere else; delicious and devilishly low cost fresh bakery muffins; plus the incidental this and that we know from savvy shopping are true bargains.

But I ain't a-goin' into a Wal\*Mart agin unless it becomes an absolute necessity.

Virtually all those things we used to go to Wal\*Mart for at "everyday low prices" aren't really as low as they want us to think.

The dishwasher liquid we prefer is cheaper every day at Menards, the do-it-yourself center, even less when it's on sale. It can often be acquired for less than the WM price if we pay attention to sales at the local supermarkets.

The same it true for headache tablets, shampoo, snacks, just about anything WM sells.

You only need be an informed shopper. Why, the two of packs of Fruit of the Looms I bought at Target a couple of weeks ago cost less than the last bundle purchased at WM.

Alas, a huge part of what makes shopping at WM so unpleasant isn't just its own internal totalitarianistic structure; rather it's that the majority of its clientele seem to be wholly uninformed as to the intricacies of judicious shopping.

These lemmings follow a simple strategy, as laid out in many WM television ads, of the more they buy at Wal\*Mart the more they'll save.

Kind of like following George W. Bush's "stay the course" thinking to wrack and ruin.

Nor do WMers in general understand the "shop neighborly" concepts of respecting another's space and don't block the damned aisle so nobody else can get through.

Thus, by avoiding Wal\*Mart you reduce your chances of getting rammed into by ignorant, inconsiderate schlemiels, or their brats, who use the carts as though it's a practice course for the demolition derby.

And the noise level — OY! In any WM the cacophony is enough to make me want to rip off my ears!

If there's a given in every Wal\*Mart store, I can guarantee the piercing wail of somebody's young'n screaming bloody murder. Worse yet, the usual methodology of the alleged "adult" in charge for quieting the poor youngster is often a public display of corporal punishment... the result being an increase in screaming volume with extension of duration.

(Please note: I am *not* by any means affixing the preceding commentary to *all* Wal\*Mart shoppers. Neither do these behaviors occur exclusively in WM stores. Nevertheless, during some 32 years of observation, it has come to my attention that WM does attract more than its fair share of folks who simply have no idea how to act in public venues, or within city limits.)

Being a "warehouse" style store, lacking walls to break down sounds, there is absolutely nowhere one can go to escape such wailing. The acoustics of all WMs are designed to effectively echo these

screams throughout the entire premises, at a pitch guaranteed to pierce human eardrums and make all forms of headache remedies fly off the pharmacy shelves.

Then there are the neverending "announcements" over the world's most gratingly designed public address system. As a broadcaster, I can safely say I've never been in a Wal\*Mart store where anyone has keyed in the microphone who was vocally qualified to do so.

It has long been my firm belief that before being placed in a position where one will be allowed to speak on any store's PA system, it is necessary to pass an *irritant* test. Only those individuals who surpass a specific level of aggravation, blood pressure elevation, and/or nerve damage to the subject listeners get to use the microphone.

The more sibilance (overemphasized hiss) and popped Ps the better.

My gripes go beyond Wal\*Mart's unwillingness to give employees: access to union options; full 40 hour weeks; living wages; real-world benefits such as insurance and vacations; proper lunch breaks; and other sundry proprieties as granted every person on American soil in the Emancipation Proclamation.

This discontent with WM exceeds its strong-arm tactics in demanding suppliers meet low-ball purchase offers.

I began to wean myself from Wal\*Mart when I read an article estimating that each of Sam Walton's layabout heirs made 771,000 times as much money as the average American. (I had no way to substantiate the accuracy of the figure, mind you; rather, it was the principle that these people are so ungodly rich just for being born yet do absolutely nothing that steamed me.)

Meanwhile, this greed-infected corporation has the unmitigated gall to play Guardian Overlord of The 1st Amendment by censoring specific books, CDs and movies it deems "unwholesome."

I wonder... did Mr. Fred Rogers ever teach children to say "hypocrite?"

I don't mind Tom Hanks or Sean Connery making \$20 million or so to be in a movie, or say Carlos Zambrano \$3 million to pitch for the Cubs — they're talented, plying a craft while doing something people enjoy. Better they get the money than the suits.

But, as long as little of my money finds its way into the pockets of the useless Walton heirs, then there you go.

Now, there's one more thing that's been stuck in my craw for some time — kids and violence.

I have my own little theory about this. Being a suburb of Chicago, we didn't have real guns, not even the BB variety. Most guys had air rifles, sure, but the only real guns around, as far as anyone knew, belonged to two police officers who lived in the neighborhood.

There's no adult I can even think of back then who was a hunter.

When we were growing up, though, most of the kids in my neighborhood had arsenals. Mattel made the best guns, before it became the girlie company of Barbie. (I guess making weaponry for the VietNam fiasco was too lucrative.) There were Mattel Fanner .50s and Winchester, later replaced by Shootin' Shell Fanner .50s and Winchester. We even had Shootin' Shell Snub-Nose .38s with shoulder holsters that actually hid under our coats.

There were also Tommy guns, grease guns, and battery-powered .50 caliber machine guns; M-1 carbines as well as

.45 automatics. I still have a working life-like Luger. Somebody even came out with a replica M-16 during the early days of VietNam (little did I know then I'd soon carry a real one).

Geez, we had grenades, knives, WWII uniforms, cowboy gear, the whole nine yards.

We grew up watching violent television on a daily basis: *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*; *Gunsmoke*; *Wanted-Dead or Alive*; *The Rifleman*; *Combat!*; *M Squad*; *The Detectives*; all kinds of old Warner Brothers movies, sometimes pre-code.

The movies we saw in theatres had their fair share of death and mayhem, too.

There was never any trouble in our neighborhood. No fighting, no stabbings, no break-ins, no assaults. The only two kids who got into serious police trouble, repeated breaking and entering for cigarettes at stores at least four blocks away, were a pair of brothers who never played with toy armaments. (One of those families that moved around a lot, they were gone in a year or so.)

One kid who didn't play with guns wound up getting a girl "in trouble" in 12th grade and had to get married right out of high school; another became an alcoholic in his 20s.

As far as I know, none of the aforementioned watched the violent television shows, either.

All around my neighborhood it was pretty much the same story — the kids who played with toy guns and were allowed access to violent television and movies grew up to be quiet, mostly college educated, and sensitive toward girls and women. Your basic nurturing types.

The guys who weren't allowed to play with guns, could not fantasize, whose outlets were sports only, they became Neanderthalic meatheads.

More often than not their fathers drank heavily, and didn't get involved in the kids' sports activities. These dads were heavy-handed, often mean, toward their entire families; they made snide remarks about, sometimes at, kids from other homes whom they perceived to be better off.

This anger passed through their sons to kids who did nothing to them. For example, because all they got for Christmas might be clothes, the



Out Of The Blue

By  
**Jerry  
Tenuto**

Neanderthals-in-training would pick fights with the kids who got toys *simply for that reason*.

As adults these clods became the next wave of women and children beaters.

And the chain just keeps adding links. So, in my humble opinion, perhaps we should take a fresh look at these alleged "studies" concerning television violence begetting violence. It might serve everyone to learn the agendas of the so-called "experts" conducting the various research projects.

Take, for instance, the tale of the Texas young'n who derived great glee in blowing up frogs with fireworks. He eventually became ersatz president of the United States, somehow, and abused his powerful office by illegally ordering death and suffering — blowing up countless tens of thousands of innocent people.

The reality is it takes considerably more impetus than exposure to violence on television to spur a youth on to violent acts.

One way is to smack your child for crying while in a Wal\*Mart, instead of taking a moment to cuddle that young human being and stopping the tears with some love and patience.

Perhaps in doing so you'll refresh yourself on the ins and outs of public civility and social awareness.

LShalom.  
DAY 1,858 OF AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE — our White House and the Executive Branch overrun by the Karl Rove-controlled Neo-con Fascist Regime.

The most patriotic act we can make in 2006 would be to take back our government. Tell your Senators and Representative to return the Government of The People to the people.

Impeach George W. Bush and Dick Cheney; let's run their entire gang out of Washington, D.C.

(Depending upon your taste in political stew, you can either blame or thank Jerry Tenuto for his weekly "Out Of The Blue" feature in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, Crawford, Texas. You may read more, scold or applaud him at <www.LoneStarICON.com>.

## Annual Women's Forum Jan. 17

WACO — We all want to "look and feel like a million dollars," and this year's Texas Family Forum is designed just for women, to help them look and feel like a million dollars. The annual event will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at the Waco Convention Center, and is sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension.

According to Donna Edwards, Bosque County Extension Agent-FCS, registration begins at 9 a.m., and exhibits will be available for viewing during registration and throughout the day. The program gets under way at 9:30 a.m. and will conclude at 3:30 p.m.

The "dynamic duo" of Mary Doebbeling and Kim Nicholson of Our Thyme Gardens were hits at last year's program and are returning by popular demand as this year's featured speakers. Whether entertaining a crowd or feeding the family, they will be sharing fabulous ideas to help you create festive and fun occasions.

Participants will then have the opportunity to take part in all three break-out sessions that continue to focus on the "Million \$\$\$ You."

"How to Look Like a Million Without Spending One" will be presented by Waco's Janna Beatty, an image consultant for over 23 years.

Shelli Hollingsworth of Gatesville, a medical massage therapist will highlight ways to "Feel Like A Million." Attendees can learn more about the medical benefits of massage therapy, the various types and the proper techniques, and how some insurance now cover this.

Registration is \$32 with lunch and BIG keynote speaker, or \$20 with lunch on your own. Checks can be made out to District 8 FCS Association and mailed to Pate Adams, P.O. Box 38 Marlin, TX. 76661.

For more information regarding the Texas Family Forum, visit the website <mclennan-tx.tamu.edu> and click on Texas Family Forum for a registration form.



# Things Had Been Too Quiet

I knew things had been going too smoothly. A few days ago, we had a water emergency. We had lured the unsuspecting cattle into the pens we use to cut out (separate) the calves to take to market. I really hate the whole process. I know I'm not supposed to get sentimentally attached to the livestock that is my livelihood, but I've known the little critters since birth, so I hate to send them on. And when an older cow has to go, it's like saying goodbye to an old friend who has been in my care for years.

Even when things go relatively well, the actual work of separating the cattle is physically demanding, often frustrating, and occasionally a little dangerous, no matter how careful one is. Cows and calves kick. One has to be careful not to close in too tightly on the business end of the animals, for several reasons. Kicking is the most painful. So the process of taking animals to the auction, the separating and loading especially, is exhausting work for me. From the time we get the whole herd into the cow lot until the time we take the calves to the auction, and even for a few long days and nights after, as the mamas call for their babies, I'm a nervous wreck.

We had to sell almost all the calves today, whether they were big enough or not. They were old enough to be away from their mothers, but we would normally have let them grow bigger and gain more weight before selling them. No choice this time. With the awful drought, there just isn't anything to feed so many animals, and the mothers are all pregnant again.

There is no real rain in the forecast for the foreseeable future. Drought is a bad thing. We will have to use about a tenth of the money from the calves to buy extra hay, very expensive hay, and hope that will be enough to see us until spring. Supply, demand, and free market, dontcha know? Hay is scarce, so the prices have risen more than double. And since anyone with hay lives far away, add to that the high fuel bill tacked onto the delivery charge. We are also supplementing with molasses and range cubes and hope this will get us through the winter. Anyone who planted winter wheat or oats is out of luck. Nothing is coming up as it should. Our perennial rye grass hasn't had enough rain on it to make an appearance either. We may have lost it altogether from lack of moisture. Even the hardy, winter grass is absent. By the time rainfall amounts reach enough to stimulate growth, it will be time to plow most things under and cross our fingers for spring. Most everyone around here is in the same boat. So if misery loves company, we all have plenty of that. Not much consolation. I wouldn't wish this on anyone, certainly not my neighbors.

So with no choice but to sell off some of the herd, we put the whole bunch in the lot. We don't usually have that many in there at a time, certainly not for more than a few hours. They were sharing one large water trough. The trough is fed by a well. It's been many years since the windmill has worked properly, so water is pumped electrically into an overhead tank and delivered to the troughs by gravity feed system. This is a pretty slow process that it usually works well enough.

But not this time. There were just too many cows in that lot. They drank the trough down overnight and were staring accusingly at me in the morning when I came to check on them. The goldfish were trying to swim in the muck at the

## 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.*

bottom. Water from the float was filling the trough painfully slowly.

What to do? I couldn't let the cows out to drink from other troughs (which were full), one only a few feet away from the northern gate of the lot. (I kicked myself for not putting in a gate at the end of the area. I've talked about it often enough. If it were in place, I could have easily opened that second trough to the cattle while still keeping them contained).

So no opportunity to use any other troughs. I couldn't let the herd out of the lot. We were getting ready to cut calves out of the herd within a day or so. Keeping them together until the day of the auction would not only keep the calves weight up but also save the old fences. Last time we tried to separate mama cows from calves for weaning, Big Bag walked through a fence like it wasn't even there. The time before, she opened a gate. Darned if I know how she did it. We have some major fence work to do in the cow lot. So the herd had to stay put. If we lost this window of opportunity — of taking them to auction this week — we'd be forced to wait until after the holidays. There stood 70 or so thirsty animals before me, waiting and complaining.

Two calves came up and nibbled on my knees, licking my jeans. That was a first. And how weird! They usually run from me. Babe the bull joined in to see if I had range cubes, had his head scratched, and became insistent. I wisely relocated to the other side of the fence, weighing my options.

I was even worried about the goldfish. It was pitiful to see them floundering in the trough where they had done such a fine and faithful job of eating algae for the last few months. I dipped my hands into the cold water, flipped them where it was a little deeper under the dripping float. I hate to see anything die.

I headed to the overhead tank. In a series of complicated plumbing maneuvers, I turned off the water from the windmill and turned on the community water, directed it to the overhead tank, ran back to the cow lot, and watched as water trickled slowly into the trough, only a few dozen yards away. Not good.

Plan B. I directed the community water right into the underground pipes to the troughs, but that worked only a little better. I went off in search of answers and found them at three OTHER troughs scattered throughout the ranch — all with malfunctioning floats. Now we rarely have one float malfunction, but here were three. It must have had something to do with all that thick ice the day before. Things like this never happen when it's warm enough to stick your hands into the water comfortably to

jiggle the float or to change it out. Here I was inadvertently directing expensive community water onto the ground in three different areas. What a waste. No wonder water wasn't filling the trough in the cow lot, the last one on the line.

I could hear the cattle complaining. Plan C. I "borrowed" garden hoses from three different locations, strung four of them together, and directed the water into the one trough where I needed it. Voila. Success. Within a few minutes, the fish were able to move more freely, and I knew the cattle would have their drinks. It seemed my problem was solved. My hard work had paid off. Then like a little bonus, sort of a reward for a job well done, I saw my miracle of the morning, a brand new calf in the corner of the lot. That just made my day, and

made all the unexpected problems melt away.

The large concrete trough would take at least an hour to fill, probably more with all those cows sucking at it. I returned to the house (and the propane heaters) congratulating myself on not only solving my problem and finding a new baby, but even saving the goldfish.

When I returned to the lot an hour or so later, the trough was indeed full. The cattle seemed to be totally ignoring it. Either they had all finished drinking just before I arrived or they never needed more water at all — after emptying the trough overnight. Perhaps they only wanted to know there would be drinks available upon demand. They are into instant gratification.

And all my fish were floating dead on the top of the full tank of clear, bacteria-free, expensive, chlorinated community water.

Sometimes you just can't win.



## Go Pirates!

*Doreen Wagner  
Chicago, Illinois*

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## For Once, Indians Win A Battle

Although everything was in their favor, the Kickapoos, who were only passing through West Texas en route to Mexico, went out of their way to avoid a fight on Jan. 8, 1865.

The first sign of the Kickapoo exodus from the Indian Territory was detected the previous month at the headwaters of the Brazos River. Militiamen on routine reconnaissance stumbled across an empty camp of 92 wigwams and 10 tents that had been vacant no more than a couple of days. The two dozen volunteers hurried home with the hysterical hunch that hundreds of hostiles were on the warpath.

Since nearly all able-bodied Texans were away at war, a "home guard" had been created to deal with domestic emergencies. As a result, 325 adolescents, old men, and maimed veterans of the North-South carnage assembled at Meridian the week before Christmas under the command of Capt. S.S. Totton.

Everyone had something to prove. For the ragtag rank and file, the expedition offered the opportunity to refute the charge that they were the cowardly dregs of Lone Star society. For Totton, whose military career had been cut short by a Yankee bullet, it was the chance to show he was still fit for combat.

Equally as eager for a share of the glory was the captain of the Rebel regulars at Fort Chadbourne. While common sense dictated that he wait for the militia, Henry Fossett set out in search of the unidentified Indians on Jan. 3, 1865, with an insufficient force of 165 troops.

During four days in the saddle, the Confederates discovered a string of four large campsites. On the fifth day, scouts found the migrating Kickapoos on Dove Creek, 16 miles from present-day San Angelo.

The elated Fossett announced his plan for an immediate attack only to have the party crashed by several home guardsmen. He grudgingly agreed to rendezvous with the "flop-eared militia," as the regulars called them, in a ravine three miles from the Kickapoo stronghold.

The Confederates reached the location at two o'clock in the morning, seven hours ahead of their civilian counterparts, who had to ride all night to keep the appointment. The impatient Fossett not only ruled out a nap and a meal for the exhausted volunteers but also put a five-minute time limit on the strategy session with co-commander Totton.

As orders filtered down through the ranks, a tribal elder appeared out of nowhere to plead the Kickapoo case. He explained that his people were "friendly Indians" whose sole desire was safe passage to Mexico. Fossett retorted that any Indian caught in Texas was by definition up to no good and had the emissary executed on the spot.

The militiamen with Capt. Totton

### This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



in the lead were already wading Dove Creek in a suicidal storming of the Kickapoo defenses. From the dense brush on the opposite bank, as many as a thousand warriors opened fire with Einfield rifles, killing 18 part-time soldiers and seriously wounding 14 others.

The panic-stricken survivors "fled like stampeded cattle," according to an eyewitness. Totton begged and bellowed, but his frightened followers refused to budge from their flickering campfires. There was nothing the captain could say to persuade them to return to battle.

The initial wave of 75 Confederates escaped a similar ambush with minor wounds. However, when the regulars regrouped for a counterattack, they were pinned down by a cleverly conceived crossfire that would have made a West Point graduate proud.

The troopers spent the rest of the day flat on their stomachs, rarely rising to risk a shot at their invisible foe. The estimated 1,400 Kickapoos could have crushed the Confederate contingent at any moment, yet were content to inflict a few token casualties.

The Indians pulled back soon after sunset allowing their helpless opponent to slip safely out of the trap. The uniformed Rebs and their plainclothes comrades owed their lives to a wise Kickapoo chief.

Common sense rather than compassion guided No-Ko-Wat's decision not to slaughter the whites, whose actions merited no mercy. He knew that a massacre would have meant annihilation of the Kickapoos because Texans never let a bloodbath go unavenged. By sparing his adversaries, the chief saved his own people.

Captains Fossett and Totton colored their accounts of the debacle at Dove Creek in a clumsy attempt to save face and salvage their reputations. Both minimized the scope of the humiliating defeat, while wildly exaggerating the losses suffered by the other side.

The record was eventually set straight by an Austin newspaper, which published an Eagle Pass interview with No-Ko-Wat. Readers were shocked to learn that his dead totaled 14 instead of the hundreds claimed by Fossett and Totton.

In other words, the Kickapoos pulled their punches and still kicked butt.

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

## Saving Private Lion

It's not easy being a folliclely-enhanced German-American.

But it's really fun playing *Jeopardy* with the Jewish ladies.

Dieb: "Ulundi, South Africa is the site of the final battle of England's 1879 war with this people."

J-La: "Who are the Zulus?"

Beautiful minds. Beautiful minds.

To be honest with you, my taste in Jewish women is not this shallow.

I also enjoy their bodies, especially in the shower.

Oh, yeah!

What I like to do is tease them by leaving the bathroom for a minute.

Of course, before leaving, I fart, so she's all like, "Baby, what's that smell?"

"Oh, nothing. I just released some Zykon B Don't worry. Just get in the shower, and take deep breaths."

"Dieb, you so crazy!" she says, laughing. "No sex for you! Ha! Ha!"

Okay, so the joke is still on me, the hairy Yankee kraut.

And that's fine by me. I can take a joke.

Actually, every time those Germans' faces melt during *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, I breath a little easier. Laughing, especially at cartoony special effects, works wonders on the sinuses.

Steven Spielberg's most recent masterpiece, *Munich*, on the other hand, was not so funny, unless you find stories about powers at battle for a host of idolatrous reasons—you know, like those in *Munich*—equivalent to a Three Stooges routine.

In the end, *Munich*'s main character, Ayver, finds no solace, let alone redemption for assassinating those behind the murders of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympics in Germany, but why should he when he was blinded by his government, his family, and his ego?

### The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



Now contrast this with *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a war movie for children marketed to Christians.

Basically what we have here is a watered-down version of *Munich* in which we're supposed to empathize with a talking lion that inspires a family of four children to kill a sexy, evil witch.

Heck, Spielberg could have directed a much more believable (read: violent) monster battle scene because he did one already with *Saving Private Ryan*.

You know, after watching *Narnia*, I half-expected Disney and the U.S. Army to break out an advertising campaign for a brand new child soldier recruitment program, Mickey Youth.

I mean, if the Nazis tried to create their own racially-pure knock off of Christmas, what's stopping our government from replacing Christ's birth with—I don't know—The Flying Spaghetti Monster?

I'm sure it's a big temptation for some, but thankfully, the jump for government-issued deities here in the United States is about as easy as flying to the sun with wax wings.

Remember the separation of church and state?

Um, now that I think of it, who would want to fly to the sun anyway?

There aren't any Jewish babes there.

Let's save the wax for candles on Valentine's Day.

I love you Sarah Silverman!

## Hill College To Offer Several Classes In Clifton

CLIFTON — Hill College has released a tentative schedule of classes for the 2006 spring semester to be offered in Bosque County.

### Continuing Education

- Computer Science: Beginning Computer, Introduction, E-Mail, etc. — 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays, at Hill College Nursing Extension on West 13th street, near Clifton Lutheran Sunset Home. Register Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m., at the nursing extension.

- Photography: Digital Photography — 6:30 p.m. Thursdays at nursing extension. Register Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2006, 6:30 p.m., at nursing extension.

- Spanish: Conversational Spanish — Beginning Spanish for personal and general use. 6:30 p.m. Mondays at CHS. Register Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2006, 6:30 p.m., at CHS.

- Scrapbooking — 6-8 p.m. Thursdays, April 6-27. Register 6 p.m. Thursday, April 6.

- CNA: Certified Nursing Assistant — 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and every other Saturday, March 2 pril 6, 2006. Register 7 a.m. Thursday, March 2, 2006.

For more information about these classes, contact the Hill College office in Clifton, located at 505 West 5th Street,

Suite 240 (Bank of American building), or call (254) 675-6611.

## Texas Preservation Conference Slated In Galveston

AUSTIN — The Texas Historical Commission has selected Galveston as the site for the Annual Historic Preservation Conference to be held April 20-22.

"Deep in the Heart of Texas, Preservation Makes Cents" is a three-day conference featuring seminars, workshops, and panel discussions on preservation issues.

One of the conference highlights is the awards luncheon where the recipients of the THC's 2005 historic preservation awards will be honored.

The conference will be held at the historic Tremont Hotel.

Preservationists, county historical commission members, government officials, history buffs, students, teachers, volunteers, community activists, or individuals considering a career in historic preservation are urged to attend.

Registration forms and brochures will be available in February.

For more information, call (512) 463-6255.



To The Editor:

Most born-again-fascia Republicans just can't get their pews straight over the indictment of Tom DeLay. How could one the squeaky-clean generals of GW's party get so dirty so quickly? Well, the answer lies deep in the heart of Texas; or should I say, Texas Rangers baseball.

George W is a committed Christian. However, his management style has never been one of great leadership. Long before he ran for President, GW was on the management team for the Texas Rangers. Anyone in Texas should be able to admit; GW typically lets others lead and he just follows. The current controversy over torturing prisoners is a great example. GW is easily swayed from his roots.

The scary thing is that GW continues to be led by the DeLays of the Republican Party. Vice Pres. Dick Cheney, Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) are typical of the unethical cowboys that bridle GW.

As shown many times by the late Peter Jennings of ABC News, Barton and Hutchison are career corporate politicians and staunch supporters of the tobacco industries. Don't you think it is strange that Barton and Hutchison represent a non-tobacco state? What do think their motives are?

While most people associate DeLay and other Republicans with the Christian facade of Pres. George W. Bush; DeLay and others have proven themselves otherwise. While most people assume the Republican Party carries Christian Conservative values; nothing could be further from the truth.

*Leonard Jensen, Fort Worth*  
To The Editor:

I was taken aback when I learned that the NY TIMES "held" the story about Bush's secret spying on U.S. citizens for more than a year before they published it. And, the TIMES had the story well before the 2004 presidential election!

Justifiably, there has been a firestorm of criticism against Bush's unilateral snooping on American citizens. I am convinced what Bush did was illegal, and he is guilty of a crime. And I can't help but wonder, if this news was published before the election would the outcome have been different?

In my opinion, the TIME's explanation for holding off publication seems hardly contrite. Executive Editor Bill Keller, defending the timing of the story said, "We published the story when we did because after much hard work it was fully reported, checked and ready, and because, after listening respectfully to the administration's objections, we were convinced there was no good reason not to publish it."

I believe the NY TIMES was wrong to "listen respectfully to the Administration's objections" to release of this story knowing all too well Bush's history of having manipulated the media, assaulted Constitutional protections of privacy and civil liberties, intimidated critics, and otherwise mislead, misinformed, and deceived the American people in addition to other egregious and impeachable misdeeds.

Now more than ever, I am curious about whether the NY TIMES may be "holding" other stories in respectful deference to the administration's objections.

Are other newspapers also withholding news critical of the Bush administration? The mind boggles!

In view of recent revelations about how the TIMES mishandled the publication of Bush domestic spying, it may be time to revise the original NEW YORK TIMES mast-head logo, "All The News That's Fit to Print," which dates back to 1896. Suggestion: "All The News That's Bush Approved."

*Harold S Kramer, Marblehead, MA*  
Dear Jerry Tenuto:

Just finding the time to read it. You referred to the "Murder of JFK." Since I'm old and from the People's Republic of Massachusetts, and Irish on top of it, I've always been interested in this issue... issue seems the wrong word.

I presume that by using the word "murder," you are not a magic bullet guy. That is, perhaps, you don't believe some kid got 3 shots off w/ a 30cal+ (big recoil) in <6" and hit his moving target 2x, thru a fully a fully leafed-out tree, w/ gun that couldn't shoot straight.

If so, perhaps next time you can use the word "bushwhacked" instead.

Regards,  
*Barry Fitzgerald, Nyack, NY*  
To The Editor:

The Texas Comptroller Carolyn Rylander and candidate for Governor has completed an audit of the Texas Residential Construction Commission (TRCC). This Commission was created by the homebuilding industry supposedly to provide protection for consumers. Unfortunately the commission was stacked with members of the industry and has provided little if any protection for new homebuyers.

We believe this audit will validate the many concerns of consumer groups concerning the bias towards the homebuilding industry and the complete lack of consumer protection for homeowners.

There seems to be a move to stop the release of this audit to the public by an opinion request from Rep Swinford on the State Affairs Committee to the Attorney Generals office. The request can be read here: <[http://www.oag.state.tx.us/opinions/requests\\_ga/RQ0424GA.pdf](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/opinions/requests_ga/RQ0424GA.pdf)>.

Representative Swinford, and a friend of the homebuilding industry, has questioned whether Rylander has the legal right to perform such an audit, although the audit is completed already.

It should be released immediately to the public.

*John R. Cobarruvias, Houston*  
To The Editor:

Eavesdrop on this, Mr. President: President Bush recently called the disclosure to the NEW YORK TIMES information regarding NSA's surveillance of Americans a "shameful act" even though this policy violates the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and Fourth Amendment because he did not obtain the necessary warrants.

THE NEW YORK TIMES has reported that numerous current and former officials came forward because of concerns about the constitutional legality of this operation.

Whistle-blowers who have the courage to speak up about such abuses of power are to be encouraged, not condemned.

Consider this, what good will fighting for Democracy abroad do if in the pro-

cess, we lose that very Democracy out of fear, blame and censorship?

If this program did, indeed, involve only the interception of telephone and e-mail conversations by "Americans suspected of links to terrorism" why didn't he obtain the necessary FISA court warrant when he had 72 hours after the fact?

Also, how to explain the database of non-violent anti-war protestors?

*Kate Bodi, Waterford, CA*  
Dear Editor:

Learning that George W. Bush has allowed wiretapping on American citizens without a warrant is a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment. When Mr. Bush became President, he vowed under oath to uphold the Constitution. Once again, Mr. Bush has broken his vow.

FISA, the court appointed to review wiretap requests, has denied only 5 out of 200 requests. The Court was set up to keep every wiretap legitimate. So the question becomes what is the White House hiding from the American public? What are they so desperate to hide that they are willing to flagrantly violate the Fourth Amendment?

Also disturbing is Supreme Court nominee, Sam Alito, has said in his papers that he finds wiretapping American citizens without a warrant justified. Is Mr. Alito unaware of the Constitution as well? Should a man who does not respect the Constitution be allowed on the bench?

Bush appears to believe that he is King of America. Congress is there for a reason. To keep the checks and balances in place but Bush keeps stomping on the Constitution, declaring it "just a goddamn piece of paper." A small group of attorneys hand picked by Bush and his cronies should NOT be deciding how government should run. That's the job Congress was elected to do. How ironic that Bush keeps trying to sell us on democracy in Iraq. Whatever happened to democracy in America?

*Concetta Castro Murray, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.*  
To The Editor:

President Bush and other top officials in his administration used the National

Security Agency to secretly wiretap the home and office telephones and monitor private email accounts of members of the United Nations Security Council in early 2003 to determine how foreign delegates would vote on a U.N. resolution that paved the way for the U.S.-led war in Iraq, NSA documents show. Two former NSA officials familiar with the agency's campaign to spy on U.N. members say then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice authorized the plan at the request of President Bush, who wanted to know how delegates were going to vote. Rice did not immediately return a call for comment. The former officials said Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also participated in discussions about the plan, which involved "stepping up" efforts to eavesdrop on diplomats.

A spokeswoman at the White House who refused to give her name also would not comment, and pointed to a March 3, 2003 press briefing by former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer when questions about U.N. spying were first raised. "As a matter of long-standing policy, the administration never comments on anything involving any people involved in intelligence," Fleischer said. "So I'm not saying yes and I'm not saying no." Disclosure of the wiretaps and the monitoring of U.N. members' email came on the eve of the Iraq war in the British-based Observer. The leak — which the paper acquired in the form of an email via a British translator — came amid a U.S. push urging U.N. members to vote in favor of a resolution that said Iraq was in violation of U.N. resolution 1441, asserting that it had failed to rid the country of weapons of mass destruction.

News of the NSA spying on the U.N. received scant coverage in U.S. newspapers at the time. But with the explosive domestic spying report published in the New York Times last week, a closer examination of pre-war spying may shed light. This crap is getting out of hand, they also had a hand in the Anthrax scare that haunted only the Democratic Senators right after Sept 11th 2001.

*Davi Joseph*

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# Investment Grows In Solar Energy

NEW YORK — Investment in renewable energy sources, especially in solar energy, is currently on the up and up, fueled by high oil prices and concerns about climate change and pollution, reported SocialFunds.com, a website that

issues advice regarding socially responsible investing.

"Interest in solar power and solar stocks has never been higher," said Matt Patsky, a portfolio manager of the Winslow Green Growth Fund. "The

number of small, public solar companies has been increasing, with several recent solar IPOs."

These recent initial public offerings, such as China-based SunTech Power and US-based SunPower, have seen suc-

cess. However, a few "pure plays," or small companies only focused on solar, have been profitable, said Carsten Henningsen, chair of Portfolio 21.

"Although companies present themselves as profitable, it would be wise to examine cash flows and future prospects before investing," Henningsen warned SocialFunds.com.

According to Liz Levy, Winslow's environmental analyst, large companies like GE, BP, and Wal-mart that have recently committed to renewable energy are validating the notion that such energy sources "will be needed to meet the world's energy demands, and renewables such as solar will have major roles to play."

Since silicon remains the main ingredient for solar technology, quality and supply of this material can be a problem. "Pure play" U.S.-based DayStar Tech, though, uses non-silicon-based materials to create its solar cells.

Government-based subsidies such as those in Germany, Spain and some U.S. states, are also growing markets for solar energy business. Last month, the California Public Utilities started the California Solar Incentive Program with incentives of \$3.2 billion over the 10 years to install solar panels on homes and businesses.

## Texas Forest Service: 2006 Already A Bad Year For Wildfires

### TFS Urges Texans To Use Caution

COLLEGE STATION — State Forester and Director of the Texas Forest Service Jim Hull says this winter's fire season is the worst he's seen in nearly 10 years since he became state forester in 1996. He is urging Texans to remain on their guard against any actions that could result in additional wildfires in the state.

In the first five days of 2006, 191,806 acres have burned in Texas, which are more acres than all of 2005. While local fire departments are the first responders to wildfires in Texas, if the size of a fire or conditions — such as the recent drought and high winds and low relative humidity — exceeds local control, additional Texas Forest Service crews and equipment are called upon to help.

"Current fire threat conditions are so extreme that almost

any wildfire has the potential to exceed local control at this point," said Hull.

Today, 156 Texas Forest Service personnel are assigned to the fires, with another 279 out-of-state firefighters from 34 states working under the direction of the agency. Supplementing the personnel are 19 helicopters, four tankers, 14 air tactical aircraft, 82 dozers and 28 fire engines. In addition to those working directly on the fires, personnel and equipment are pre-positioned in areas that the state's fire behavior analysts have predicted to be in an extreme fire danger situation.

"We are here to protect Texans and their property," said Hull. "And we need all Texans' help in guarding our state against the devastation of these fires."

## Historians' Conference To Examine Opposition To Iraq War

AUSTIN — The first national scholarly conference in the U.S. to examine the origins of and opposition to the war in Iraq in historical perspective will be held at the University of Texas, Austin, Friday-Sunday, Feb. 17-19.

Speakers at the "Empire, Resistance, and the War in Iraq: A Conference for Historians and Activists" will examine the history of resistance to U.S. empire, the history of international peace and justice movements, the relation of gender to imperialism and war, and the defense of civil liberties and democratic institutions in wartime. In addition, speakers will discuss the Iraq war in long-term historical context.

The conference is in the Thompson Conference Center with the exception of

the Friday night keynote, which is in the LBJ Auditorium in Sid Richardson Hall. Keynote speakers include Howard Zinn, Boston University (retired), author and activist; and Andrea Smith, University of Michigan.

A diverse panel will present their thoughts on what historians and activists can learn from each other on Sunday from 9:30 a.m. — 12:15 a.m. Following will be an open discussion on what historians and activists can do on their campuses, in communities, and in the country to contribute to and build anti-war consciousness and activity. Participation is encouraged.

Early registration before February 1 is \$40 (or \$25 for students or low-income/unemployed), payable either on-line

through PayPal or by check. On-site registration is \$45 (or \$30 for students or low-income-unemployed). Registration includes admission to the entire conference, including the Friday and Saturday night plenaries, and all the panels. It also includes a coffee break, lunch, and afternoon cookies on Saturday.

The conference is organized by Historians Against the War, a network of his-

tory teachers, scholars, and activists seeking to bring historical analysis to bear on U.S. foreign policy and its social/political impact.

For more information about the conference schedule and lodging, visit the HAW website.

### INFO

www.historiansagainstawar.org

## MCC To Offer Intermediate ESL Classes

WACO — McLennan Community College's Continuing Education Division has announced it will offer an Intermediate English as a Second Language class for students wanting to advance a step further in their studies of the language.

This 16-week course will meet every Tuesday from 6-9 p.m., beginning Jan. 31

on the MCC campus.

Students will focus on improving reading and comprehension skills and increasing vocabulary through computer lab assignments and class activities, including interactive games and movie reviews.

For more information, call (254) 299-8888.



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