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Casualties:

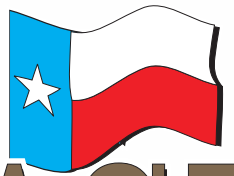
U.S. Military Deaths

2,225

U.S. Govt. Statistics



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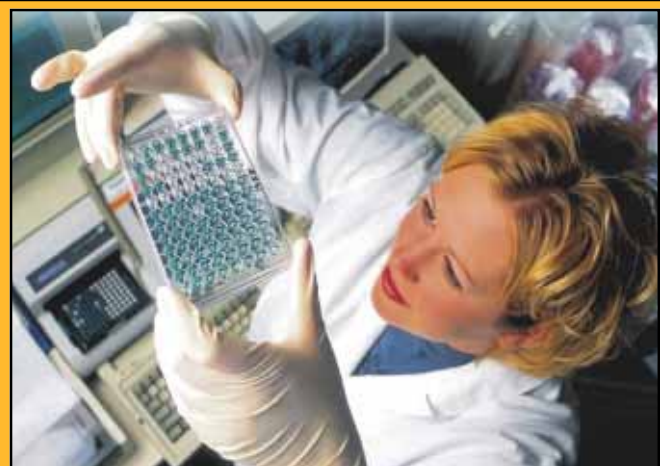
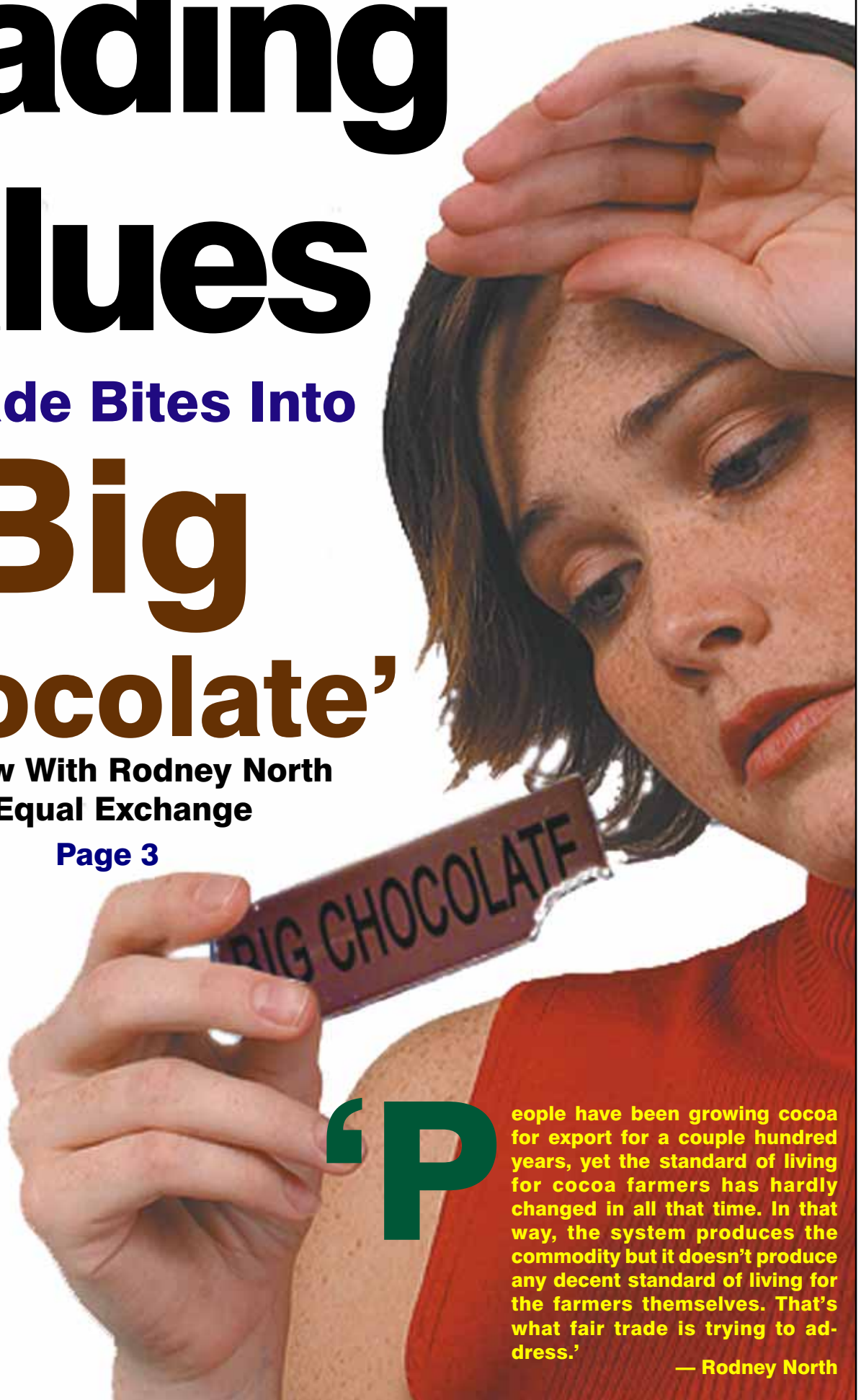
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people have been growing cocoa for export for a couple hundred years, yet the standard of living for cocoa farmers has hardly changed in all that time. In that way, the system produces the commodity but it doesn't produce any decent standard of living for the farmers themselves. That's what fair trade is trying to address.'

— Rodney North

Bush Policy Condones Torture: Watchdog

WASHINGTON — A human rights watchdog group said last Wednesday that the Bush administration condones torture of suspected terrorists during interrogation based on new evidence.

"The Bush administration is the only government in the world known to claim this power openly, as a matter of official policy, and to pretend that it is lawful," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch's 2005 report said evidence of the Bush administration's policy included: President Bush's threat to veto Sen. John McCain's anti-torture bill; Vice President Dick Cheney's attempt to exempt the Central Intelligence Agency from the anti-torture law; Attorney General Alberto Gonzales' claims that the U.S. government can abuse detainees if they are non-Americans; CIA Director Porter Goss' assertion that "waterboarding" was simply a "professional interrogation technique."

The report also said that such a deliberate policy of torture and mistreatment is detrimental to Washington's power to influence other nations to abide by international law.

"Fighting terrorism is central to the human rights cause," said Roth. "But using illegal tactics against alleged terrorists is both wrong and counterproductive."

Cronkite: U.S. Should Leave Iraq

PASADENA, Calif. - Former CBS anchor Walter Cronkite told reporters last Sunday that the United States should remove its military from Iraq.

"It's my belief that we should get out now," said the 89-year-old television journalist.

The man once known as "the most trusted man in America" came to the same conclusion about the Vietnam War in a 1968 documentary made during the Tet offensive.

After the documentary aired, then-President Lyndon Johnson is reported to have said, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America."

Cronkite, who has expressed his views for military withdrawal from Iraq in the past, said to the reporters that a similar statement about Iraq could have come after Hurricane Katrina.

"I think we could have been able to retire with honor," he said. "In fact, I think we can retire with honor anyway."

Consequences of such tactics, Roth noted, are increased terrorist recruitment, damped civilian support for counterterrorism initiatives, and sabotaged the prosecution of detainees.

The report also pointed out that the U.S. allies, like Britain, Canada, and the European Union, undercut their credibility for human rights advocacy by undermining international protections. Other

My Lai Hero Passes Away At 62

CRAWFORD — The former Army helicopter pilot who rescued Vietnamese civilians from U.S. soldiers during what has been known as the My Lai massacre passed away earlier this month.

Hugh Thompson Jr. died of cancer at the age of 62 at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Alexandria, according to a family friend.

Thompson, his door-gunner Lawrence Colburn, and crew chief Glenn Andreotta are known for preventing American troops from firing on Vietnamese civilians by landing their helicopter in between on March 16, 1968.

"These people were looking at me for help and there was no way I could turn my back on them," Thompson told the Associated Press in 1998 of his role in the 1968 massacre.

After a high-stress standoff, Thompson covered by Colburn and Andreotta evacuated civilians and a wounded child to a hospital.

Though journalist Seymour Hersh exposed the massacre in 1969 which grew opposition to the Vietnam War inside the U.S., Thompson's testimony about the incident to Congress was revealed in the late 1980s by David Egan, a professor emeritus at Clemson University.

Egan's letter-writing campaign resulted in Thompson and his crew being honored in 1998 with the highest award for bravery not involving conflict with an enemy, the Soldier's Medal.

Over the years, Thompson was looked down upon, including a congressman who said he should have been punished for his actions at My Lai. However, in his later years, he gave lectures at West Point to teach students of his experience.

Thompson was last year featured in a cover-story in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST.

countries, such as Uzbekistan, Russia and China, used the "war on terrorism" as an excuse to attack their political opponents.

While Roth suggested that the Bush administration and Congress set up ap-

propriate investigations into these abuses, he admitted his worry that Bush will insist he retains "commander-in-chief authority" over any interrogations.

The White House refused comment on the report.

Two Lawsuits Aim To Halt Spying On Americans

NEW YORK — The American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Constitutional Rights last Tuesday each filed two separate lawsuits to halt President Bush's secret domestic spy program.

Both suits say that since the day after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the spy program has operated with disregard of a 1978 law that mandates court approval of electronic surveillance. Plaintiffs also say the National Security Agency harmed their ability to help their clients, some of whom are classified as "enemy combatants" at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The plaintiffs of the ACLU suit include the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Greenpeace, and journalists, scholars, and lawyers that talk with people in the Middle East and Asia.

"President Bush may believe he can authorize spying on Americans without judicial or Congressional approval, but this program is illegal and we intend to put a stop to it," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero. "The current surveillance of Americans is a chilling assertion of presidential power that has not been seen since the days of Richard Nixon."

The Justice Department denied the truth of the lawsuits' claims. President Bush contends that the program operates legally via a congressional action allowing surveillance of international communications such as telephone calls and e-mails that could be a risk to the United States.

The ACLU lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Michigan, the CCR suit in New York.

Dunnam To Perry: Kill 'Tainted' Contracts

Kill 'Tainted' Contracts

AUSTIN — House Democratic Leader Jim Dunnam (D-Waco) last week called on Gov. Rick Perry to cancel two lobby contracts tied to associates of former congressional majority leader Tom DeLay. Dunnam said that the contracts were not only unnecessary and wasteful but also unethical.

Since 2003, Perry hired the firms of former DeLay chief of staff Andrew Maloney and Todd Boulange (an associate of lobbyist Jack Abramoff who pleaded guilty to federal charges) to lobby on behalf of the Texas Office of State Federal Relations (OSFR), an publicly-funded agency that advances the interests of the state in Washington.

Dunnam said that the Governor's recent allocation of over \$1.1 million in taxpayer money for the two lobbyists was uncalled for. He also provided evidence

that the money was funneled through Maloney to the war chests of Republican candidates.

"This is an outrage. It's a clear case of unethical and unseemly cronyism. Maloney and Boulange are dirty and the Governor is giving them Texas taxpayer money," said Dunnam. "Governor Perry needs to stop this right now. Why do we need to spend over \$1.1 million state tax dollars on lobbyists when Texas is home to 32 Congressmen and women, 2 Senators, and the President of the United States?"

From 2000 to 2002, Maloney gave only \$250 in political contributions. Since 2003 when Perry awarded Maloney's \$180,000 per year contract, the lobbyist has doled out more than \$75,000 in political contributions, all of which went to candidates, PAC's, and causes associated with Republicans.



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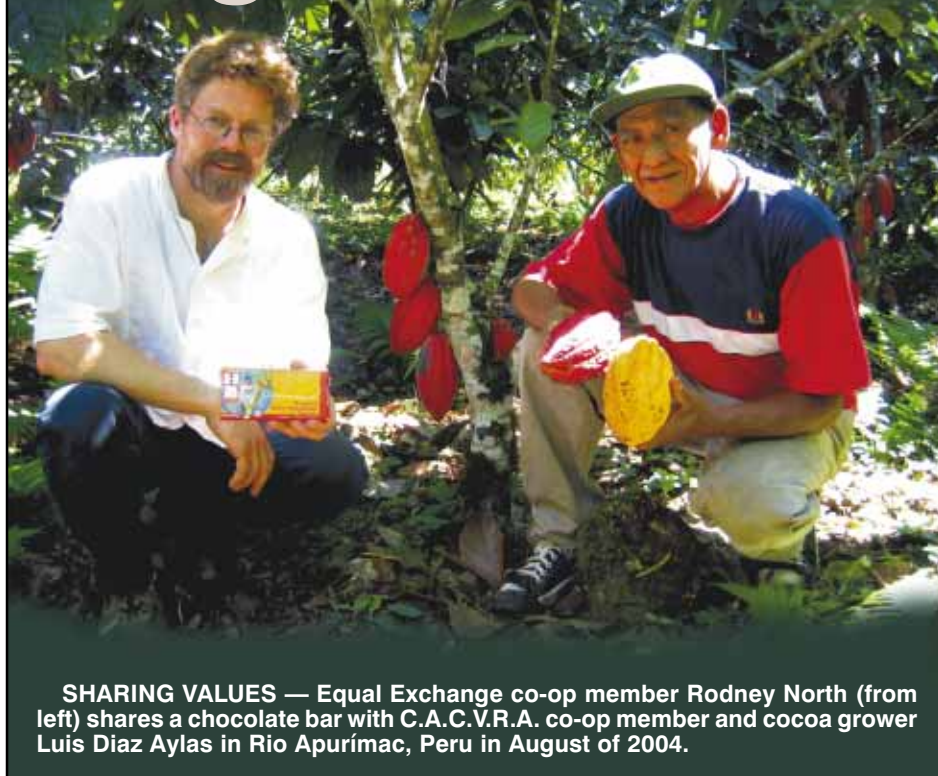
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Trading Fair Trade Bites Into 'Big Chocolate'



SHARING VALUES — Equal Exchange co-op member Rodney North (from left) shares a chocolate bar with C.A.C.V.R.A. co-op member and cocoa grower Luis Diaz Aylas in Rio Apurimac, Peru in August of 2004.

Interview With Rodney North Of Equal Exchange

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — May 1986 wasn't a bad time of year.

The 1986 World Exposition opened in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Columbia Pictures released the Richard Pryor bio-pic, *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life is Calling*, which later grossed \$18,034,150 that year.

Steaua Bucharest won the European Champions Cup in Sevilla.

Millions of people held hands for 15 minutes across the continental United States to raise money for local homeless charities. The benefit event was called "Hands Across America."

The European Community adopted the European flag.

Oh, and three men Michael Rozyne, Jonathan Rosenthal, and Rink Dickinson co-founded Equal Exchange in West Bridgewater, MA.

Their business model was progressive in that they structured Equal Exchange as a for-profit worker-owned cooperative. Every employee is an equal owner, each with a vote and the ability to sit on the

company's board.

Twenty years later, Equal Exchange is still strongly delivering on its promise of "fair trade," a economic balance among the interests of farmers, customers, shareholders, and workers.

The *ICONOCLAST*'s Nathan Diebenow recently spoke with Rodney North, 40, Equal Exchange's "Answer Man" to talk about his company's growth, challenges, and future.

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ICONOCLAST: How long have you been with Equal Exchange and how did you become involved in the fair trade movement?

RODNEY NORTH: Exactly 10 years. The short version was that I was studying International Development and Economics, and I was thinking I'd go into something like the Peace Corps or USAID.

But as I studied economics I realized that the most powerful, the most dynamic part of the economy was the private sector. I wondered if something like Peace Corps' ideals could be taken to the private sector and arguably possibly in-

Values



TO FIND FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS from Equal Exchange, consumers can visit its retail store website (store.yahoo.com/eeretail/index.html) or thousands of supermarkets, natural food stores, restaurants, and consumer cooperatives. Major chains of participating retailers include: Kroger, Price Chopper, Shaw's (New England), Stop & Shop (New England), Hannaford (New England) and Heinen's (Ohio).

fect the private sector in that you could take all the capital and money and energy and put it to better use.

So when I went looking around, I found very few enterprises that I thought were doing that, and one of the handful was Equal Exchange, and I got lucky. At the time Equal Exchange only had 13 people and very few job openings, especially if you didn't want to work in sales, and I didn't. I got my foot in the door and I've been here ever since.

ICONOCLAST: Is Equal Exchange affiliated or have a relationship with the Bainbridge Graduate Institute in Washington State?

NORTH: Actually, there is somebody there now writing a book and we're included in their book.

ICONOCLAST: Do you guy send workers over there for more education?

NORTH: No. Actually, to my knowledge, well, I know they interviewed one of our founders to pick our brain about our experience but no, we haven't sent anybody there. We do have some members of our cooperative who have gone elsewhere, especially they did graduate training in cooperative management because the way co-ops are managed is different than your typical business.

ICONOCLAST: From what I understand Equal Exchange's 2005 sales will be about \$20.8 million, which is 25 percent over sales in '04. Equal Exchange has doubled in size in just three years. How do you explain this surge in sales?

NORTH: Actually, it's not a surge. We've been growing at this pace or faster for all of our 20 years, so it's not new. It's

just an engine that keeps on turning. We continue to find people who want what we're offering.

If they want coffee or chocolate, then we're offering them a product that is high quality, reasonably priced, that they can feel good about.

Even though we've grown a bit, we're still just a drop in the ocean of the supermarkets and every year we meet more people who are looking for the kinds of things that we are offering and, thankfully, other companies are getting on the fair trade bandwagon and either in a small way or a large way are adopting it as a practice.

Even with their entry into this new category, we're still growing because I think people who provide fair trade coffee and chocolate have only begun to scratch the surface of the American appetite for something that we can purchase and feel good about without hesitation. In our case, nearly everything that we're offering is not only fair trade, but it's also organic. There's a whole environmental facet that we're addressing.

ICONOCLAST: During the last 20 years, how has Equal Exchange and its network of cooperatives dealt with those years that the coffee, cocoa, and tea markets have been down?

NORTH: It's when the market is down that we are making the biggest difference. Of course, the prices we pay the farmers doesn't go down, and there have been times where it's been really hard especially when our competitors drop their prices since their own costs have gone

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down. But we've always managed to find a way to keep paying farmers fair trade prices and stay in business, and there's a variety of reasons behind that.

Obviously, when we're paying more, and we work closely with the farmers, we're in a position to command the very best quality ingredients because we're paying more than our competitor. That certainly builds a lot of loyalty to the farmer co-ops. They know we're there for them, and consequently we can forge unusually tight relationships with them. We're bothering to work directly with them. Most importers simple say, "Send me your samples and I'll accept them or I'll reject them." And that's the extent of the relationship.

In contrast, we're visiting them. We're bringing them to work with us, for example, in our quality lab and to meet our customers. For example, every employee here, unless there is a health reason, goes on a trip sometime to spend a week with one of the farmer co-ops.

So I'm just trying to paint a picture of the tightness of the relationship. Those unusual bonds gives us a better chance of weathering the low coffee prices.

Also over the years, there's also been a growth in the specialty coffee market. Increasingly, people are looking for higher quality coffee and that has also happened with chocolate and tea. We're very well positioned to buy them because all along we've been out there paying farmers more, providing affordable credit, and getting to know farmer cooperatives. We were doing it for a host of reasons, many of which were to address chronic problems of poverty, economic vulnerability, and lack of access to markets. While we wanted to tackle that for its own sake, we wanted to take pride in what we put out there on the market.

Because of all this, we've been in the right place at the right time to provide high quality coffee, tea, and chocolate for the market as interest in those things grows.

ICONOCLAST: What's been the biggest hurdle Equal Exchange faces in doing business and fighting for economic equality for farmers?

NORTH: I'd say the largest challenge has been that most shoppers don't think about the story behind what they are putting into their shopping cart, or the shirts that they buy, or what have you. You know, all of us are busy with other things to think about that we don't always have time or inclination to think about the ramifications of our purchases.

Also, when we go to the polls, we're thinking about big picture issues, about what kind of world that we want but every time we go to the store or make a purchase or an investment, we're also casting a kind of vote for the kind of world we want to live in.

So one of our challenges has been to encourage people to ask these questions when they're shopping or making investments. The kind of world we get has a lot to do with what we put our money behind. There's that saying, you know, "Put your money where your mouth is." And I don't think that its for any lack of goodwill, but rather not everybody is aware of how their purchasing decisions play out, and admittedly, like I said, we Americans are busy people. Pretty much everybody everywhere is busy, and it can be hard to do the type of research to know, "What shampoo I should buy? What should I do with my 401K?" That kind of thing.

But thankfully, that's getting easier. For one thing, whereas once upon a time there weren't those choices you could make when you went to the store.

Increasingly, there are. There's a host of organic products, not just food but also organic cotton. There are socially-responsible mutual funds that we can choose, and in part because of what Equal Exchange has worked on for 20 years, there are fair trade products you can choose. One way we try to make that easy is that everything we offer is fair trade certified. Almost everything, 95 percent, is certified organic. We price these the same as comparable products.

That's the first challenge, but the second would be there is confusion in the marketplace. There's a fair amount of greenwashing and tokenism where conventional corporations feel the public pressure to do the right thing, but they sometimes do it in just a small way, enough that they have something to advertise, something they can talk about, and that they can use, so they'll offer one fair trade coffee out of a whole long line. They'll talk about that one enough to cre-



Rodney North

‘When we go to the polls, we're thinking about big picture issues, about what kind of world that we want but every time we go to the store or make a purchase or an investment, we're also casting a kind of vote for the kind of world we want to live in.'

— Rodney North

ate this image where you'd think, "Oh, that's the kind of coffee they source and import. It's fair trade coffee." But in fact, it's just this one item. It might be one percent of their total coffee imports, but you wouldn't know it unless you take the time and look for the fair trade label or you research the company.

We run into that time and time again. People think they know what's going on because they've done some research or read some articles, or somebody told them about the fair trade system. They think they are choosing a fair trade product supporting small farmers when in fact they may not be and that just requires creating a new habit.

We've done that with other products. We look for recycled content in the paper products or we look to see if a food has trans-fats. With fair trade they're going to have to take a second look. Doesn't it have a fair trade seal? Or is it from a company like Equal Exchange that I can trust? We think that will come in time.

ICONOCLAST: Are there any other challenges?

NORTH: Sure, we need to do everything any company has to do. We are a for-profit cooperative. We don't get any tax breaks. We have to pay our own bills. We can't receive charitable donations. We have to raise money.

We have to "run a tight ship." We need to get the word out. We need to recruit. We have to be as efficient as possible. That just takes constant effort and constant vigilance. Twenty years going, we have been in the black for 16 of the last 17 years which is something any company can be proud of. Even in at this age, we're still doubling every three years, so we seem to be rising to the challenge.

ICONOCLAST: Is fair trade, as its practiced now, just a band-aid on the problems with capitalism (profit over people) while still operating under a capitalist model?

NORTH: No, I wouldn't think that. I think, of course, you're opening up a very large topic, but one critique of capitalism could be that it's a morally neutral system. That it's very responsive to market forces, but not always to moral concerns, and one thing that fair trade tries to do is

to offer farmers and importers and retailers and consumers and even the investors is a chance to put their values to work even while operating within that free-market system.

In fact, this is the kind of choice we always have to make about who we give our business to or our investment money or our labor. Who are we going to work for? What kind of company do you want to work for? I think that there are a lot of untapped opportunities out there whether its fair trade or it's the organic movement or the co-op movement, which is something that we are very committed to.

We're a worker cooperative. We buy almost exclusively from farmer cooperatives. Consumer cooperatives have been a huge part of our success for 20 years. We work with co-op banks, and I think co-ops in general represent an opportunity.

They're all around us. In fact, when you add together all the cooperative opportunities around the country, it's pretty impressive. This co-op option is all around us but it's kind of invisible. It certainly hasn't been pursued as much as it could be. It's something we encourage people to explore.

It's interesting when you look at the last 20-30 years. There are some large cooperatives out there: The Associated Press. Land O Lakes, Ocean Spray, or rural electric and telephone cooperatives. Especially in agriculture, the cooperatives are larger, but you have cooperatively owned utilities, and they just don't show up when you see the business scandals.

Then there's the whole credit union sector— credit unions are basically another kind of cooperative bank, and it's very indicative that you have these large parts of the economy operating on a cooperative principles and year-in and year-out, they are scandal-free. When you look at them closely, they are actually delivering a lot of the goods and services that everybody needs and they are doing it in a way that we can feel good about.

When you examine the seven cooperative principles that all co-ops follow you'll understand. Whether it's a farmer co-op or a marketing co-op — like True Value

or Ace Hardware, no one is talking about them coming in an destroying downtown businesses because cooperatives are part of their communities.

So it's sort of like this long kept secret. I mean we have this co-op card to play, an economic card and many of us are already participating and we don't even think about it. We might be a member of a credit union and don't realize we're a part of the co-op sector. Or we buy our electricity from a co-op utility and not realize it.

So when you look at the California energy crisis, there were no co-op utilities involved in that scandal, and you see this as you look around at retailing, the financial sector, or the farm sector, co-ops consistently turn up as a viable economical alternative that we can feel good about.

ICONOCLAST: I was thinking about Tim Burton's remake of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory recently, and although its a piece of fiction, like the novel that its based, the message it conveys is horrible, namely about the way a chocolate maker treats his workers.

You know, Willy Wonka relocates a tribe of savages, the Oompa-Loompas, from a Third World country to his factory. With that said, can you tell me about reality of the cocoa industry?

NORTH: I would say that Willy Wonka is just totally unhelpful if you want to understand the reality of the cocoa or chocolate business. The movie doesn't talk about how cocoa is grown and how it gets to the factory. That part happens "off-camera" so to speak.

Ninety percent of the world's cocoa is grown by small-scale farmers. That's about two million farms each having less than 10 acres. These aren't like Iowa corn farms or other images we have of American farms where even a small one has many hundreds of acres.

The world's cocoa farmers have these tiny plots. As individuals in the market they have no bargaining power. Often they have very little information and they don't have direct access to markets, only to local buyers. There are usually one or two local buyers who set the price, and the farmers are price takers.

American farmers will often recognize that they are at the mercy of the market except that the reality of these small-scale farmers is quite extreme where a cocoa farmer making \$1,000 a year would be doing really well, but because of that reality of their small plots, no bargaining power, and no marketing information — they have no idea of what the price is of their commodity — the cocoa system just doesn't produce cocoa for export, it basically produces poverty as well year after year.

People have been growing cocoa for export for a couple hundred years, yet the standard of living for cocoa farmers has hardly changed in all that time. In that way, the system produces the commodity but it doesn't produce any decent standard of living for the farmers themselves. That's what fair trade is trying to address.

ICONOCLAST: Well, what about the cocoa industry's ties to slave labor in Africa?

NORTH: Seventy-percent of the world's cocoa is grown in West Africa. Forty-percent of the world's cocoa comes from Ivory Coast alone. The rest comes from surrounding countries like Ghana and Camaroon. In this area, the dominant form of cocoa production is on these very small farms.

As poor as the farmers are on the Ivory Coast, they are actually better off than the people living in some of the neighboring countries, especially Mali in to the north. Consequently, you find there a constant

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flow of migrant labor just like you have in the United States.

We have migrant farm workers go up and down the west coast going from crop to crop. In Central America, they migrate from Nicaragua to Costa Rica. They migrate from Guatemala to Mexico. It's always from the poor country to the less poor country.

The same with West Africa. You have Mallians migrating south to the Ivory Coast. But also you have mass illiteracy. You have ethnic and linguistic barriers and you have a tradition of sending children to far away when you have reason to believe they will have some chance of a better life. This is more common when children are sent to extended relatives.

Well, then middlemen or basically traffickers can evolve. They come into poor rural communities in Mali. They make great sounding promises to parents that they can provide jobs and a better life for the children and so they'll pay the family a small amount of money and assure them that the child will make so many hundreds of dollars at the end of the harvest year.

But there's a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence supported by statistical evidence that the children are then brought down to the Ivory Coast where they don't speak the language and where they have no connections. The traffickers then sells the services of the child to a farmer. Some farmers, in fact, fulfill the obligations at the end of the year and pay the teenager something so he can go back, but other farmers don't do what the parents in Mali were expecting.

Remember, the parents have next to no information. They have what they are told by this person coming into town making promises. They're just really poor and thinking, "How can it get any worse than what we have here?" The children (who have been taken to the Ivory Coast) are without recourse. They have no papers. They might be illiterate. They could be Muslim and the farmers might be Christian, or there could be an ethnic divide between them and the farmer. And so when they are on the farm they are at the mercy of the farmer. This is the kind of situation we're concerned about, and that can lead to exploitation.

This is the kind of story that began to arise in the last five years. It's not child labor on a family farm as we have here in the United States, that worries us so much. There are children who work on their own family's farm, which is one thing. It's something altogether different when you're working on a stranger's farm and you're completely vulnerable. There seems to be many cases where in effect these children were working in cocoa farms under abusive conditions and they are not at liberty to leave or do anything about it.

ICONOCLAST: And from what I understand, the cocoa industry itself was supposed to implement its own voluntary monitoring system by July of 2004 but hasn't.

NORTH: When the story came to light, Sen. Harkin from Iowa and Rep. Engles from New York turned up the heat on the industry, saying "Either you do something or we're going to impose rules upon you." They wanted to give the industry two years, but the industry convinced Sen. Harkin and Rep. Engles to give them four years, and throughout the four years, they dragged their feet and did very little. All along they kept insisting they would meet the deadline. It was funny the quote they kept handing out like business cards, "We have met every deadline thus far. We're on schedule to

meet the July 2004 goal." And come July 2004, they said, "Well, we're almost there." Industry critics said, "You really haven't done anything. All you have is a few pilot projects. You're not sincerely addressing the problem."

So Sen. Harkin and Rep. Engles don't have much leverage. They're not likely to get Congress to act on it, so the best they could do was to make public pronouncements decrying the situation but ultimately giving them two more years before anything else may happen.

ICONOCLAST: So what is needed to

Starbucks was small once upon a time, but you have this growth in the coffee industry of lots and lots of small companies. Many of them are more progressive than their corporate competitors. So in fact, you don't see the corporations responding. They are in effect getting smaller at the expense of smaller, more progressive companies. And I'm okay with that.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) Well, what is the vision of the future of Equal Exchange for the next 20 years?

NORTH: While we hope to see more

exciting.

We've already expanded into tea about eight years ago. Just four years ago, we expanded into cocoa. Just last year, we added sugar. So we would hope to bring fair trade to more farmers and put more fair trade and organic products into more of the store. You know, more of your shopping cart would be ethically sourced and really expanding the whole co-op model. We're not sure how. It can take a bunch of different forms but whatever we do, we hope it will contribute to a more powerful co-op economy.

Here is one example that is coming up. We're innovating ways for people to invest into cooperative businesses like ourselves. Historically, it's been hard for co-ops to raise money, so we have something in the works right now. If it comes to pass it will enable an individual or households to make small investments in our cooperative and that kind of innovation could not only help us grow but it could an example for the whole cooperative economy.

ICONOCLAST: What's been the problem with investing in Co-ops?

NORTH: Because co-ops are designed to be democratic organizations, they are owned and controlled by their members and so it could be hard for them to make use of other people's money. Historically, in our economy, if you take other people's money, in exchange they get a say over what you do. But usually, it's such an extreme transaction, you have investors who have all the say and you have workers and farmers who have no say.

In that case, the 68 members of our co-op have ultimate control. We do sell stocks to outsiders but there is no vote that goes with that. Like already, we've raised about \$3 million that way which is not much in the American marketplace, but it's enough to enable us to do what we do. But we're looking to create new ways individuals can make small investments or at least participate financially, which is a broader term, in this co-op model without undermining democratic control that makes it a co-op in the first place.

ICONOCLAST: When is any kind of final announcement going to be made as to what this is going to look like?

NORTH: We'll have word about this financial innovation within a couple of weeks. We're filling out the last of the details.



ORGANIC HOT COCOA (12oz) from Equal Exchange helps farmers in three countries — the organic cocoa from small-scale farmers in the Dominican Republic, the organic sugar from farmer cooperatives in Paraguay, and the organic milk powder from Organic Valley Family of Farms in the U.S.

make the industry comply?

NORTH: Public pressure. You know, basically they need to see that the public and that the marketplace will penalize them for inaction or insufficient action. If they lose marketshare to companies who are serious and committed to fair trade, then they might get serious.

ICONOCLAST: So we need to get people dressed up as Oompa Loompas to protest outside stores that sell "blood chocolate" so to speak?

NORTH: Not necessarily. Based on our experience with fair trade, change can happen in lots of different ways. In the coffee industry, there were many factors, but I'd say the main factor was that small responsible companies who actually cared, they embraced the fair trade model and began to eat away at marketshare from the more laggard corporations. That motivated at the least the more responsive corporations to get serious.

The very largest corporations never got beyond tokenism. But at least some of the middle-sized firms made some more sincere efforts.

And, it's kind of a funny thing. Some people paint a picture of corporations as these monolithic entities that are unbeatable, but if you look at the coffee industry, the mass market brands every year lose marketshare. They lose marketshare to basically upstarts.

of the same, which is to say more growth, if we keep growing at this rate doubling every three to four years, and that's not likely, but if something even close to that were to happen, that's a doubling of our impact. That's doubling the size of our worker cooperative. That's a doubling the size of the example we're setting, so that would be

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Protestors To Stage Rallies During Bush's Address

WASHINGTON — Rallies in large cities around the country are scheduled in the hours before President Bush's State of the Union Address on Tuesday, Jan. 31, at 8 p.m. CST.

All participants are expected to make noise with pops, pans, drums, car horns, and other loud instruments to "drown out Bush's lies."

In Texas, events under the banner of "World Can't Wait: Drive out the Bush Regime" will take place in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio.

The Austin rally with speakers starts at 7 p.m. at Austin City Hall (downtown,

'World Can't Wait'

where S. 1st St. Bridge meets Cesar Chavez) with the Drown Out Event during Bush's address.

Events in Houston begin at 6:15 p.m. at the Intersection of Taft & Clay. At 7:30 p.m. participants will then march a few blocks to the CBS affiliate, Channel 11, 1945 Allen Parkway.

In San Antonio, participants are to meet at 7 p.m. at the corner of S. Alamo and Commerce.

The next national protest action will occur on Saturday, Feb. 4, at 11 a.m. in Washington, D.C. Delegations from Austin and Houston are preparing to travel by bus for this event.

"This regime is immoral, dangerous, and criminally indictable," said a statement on the "World Can't Wait" website. "Turn your outrage into mass political action."

World Can't Wait's supporters includes Gore Vidal, Harold Pinter, Cindy Sheehan, Kurt Vonnegut, Jonathan Kozol, Jane Fonda, and Cornell West.

For information about events in Texas,

visit World Can't Wait's national website or email local chapters.

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Houston
houston@worldcantwait.org
San Antonio
sanantonio@worldcantwait.org
(210) 733-8666
University of Texas
UTAustin@worldcantwait.org

NASA Launches Nuke-Powered Probe To Pluto

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA launched its \$700-million unmanned, nuclear-powered probe to Pluto last Thursday on its third try within a week.

The New Horizon spacecraft was delayed once due to high winds at the Cape Canaveral, Florida launch pad and another time because a power outage hit near its mission station in Maryland.

Earlier in the week, about 30 anti-nuclear activists protested the mission because of the risks involved in sending 24 lbs. of radioactive plutonium—the probe's fuel source—into space. NASA estimated that the chances of a launch failure were one in 350.

Spacecrafts with plutonium fuel were shot into space at least three other times prior to Thursday's New Horizon. Over eight years ago, 72 lbs. of plutonium rocketed to Saturn to the chagrin of hundreds of anti-nuclear protesters.

Scientists planned for 17 years for the New Horizons voyage which will take 10 years to reach Pluto. The probe will study Pluto and the Kuiper Belt.

Although NASA estimates that the cost of plutonium decontamination is between \$241 million to \$1.3 billion per square mile, the local environmental impacts of each launch are typically ignored, said Bruce Gagnon, the coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.

"The Atlas rocket that carried the New Horizons probe into space punched a bigger hole in the ozone layer above the Earth," Gagnon wrote on his blog "Organizing Notes." "The toxic cloud from the rocket also fell onto the Cape Canaveral national seashore 'wildlife preserve' where it contaminated the water and fish died as they do after each launch. Birds eat the contaminated fish and die. On through the food chain the killing goes even without a launch pad accident."

"No one notices and even 'space coast environmental groups' don't talk about it because the space center is the local job creation machine. We learn to look away."

Specter Questions Bush's Spy Program

WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. Arlen Specter last Sunday questioned President Bush's program that spies on American citizens on ABC's 'This Week.'

As the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Pennsylvanian will preside over next month's hearings on the president's decision to okay the National Security Agency to operate without court approval.

Specter said President Bush knows his feelings that the program might be illegal. However, Specter doubted impeachment and criminal prosecution are on the horizon if the president's actions are found to be unconstitutional.

Bush said he believes a post-Sept. congressional resolution gives him the power to run his domestic spy program.

Green, Nuke Lobbies To Fight Over UK Grid

LONDON — Environmentalists and nuclear energy advocates are fighting this week for the future structure of the United Kingdom's energy grid.

On Monday, the Blair government kicked off a campaign to gather public preference for power sources, and the green lobby promised to not go negative against the nuclear industry to promote renewable energy as a clean, cheap alternative to global warming, high gasoline prices, and security interests.

"We are not going to repeat the negative messages of the 1970s and 80s. The campaign for us is to show that the alternatives such as renewables and greater energy efficiency can work and nuclear is not necessary," Tony Juniper, head of Friends of the Earth, told Reuters.

The nuclear industry, however, said that it is confident that its will win out, despite a legacy polluted by the Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion in April 1986.

Gardner Named To TSTC Honor Roll

WACO — Crawford resident Jennifer Gardner has earned a place on the President's Honor Roll for the Fall semester at Texas State Technical College Waco. Gardner is a student in Webmaster Technology, and is among those recognized with a scholastic achievement of a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

Texas State Technical College, the only state-supported technical college system in Texas, offers specialized, hands-on instructional courses at campuses in Harlingen, Marshall, Waco, and West Texas. It's information numbers are (800) 792-8784 and direct (254) 867-3371.

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While Prime Minister Tony Blair is said to support the building of new nuclear power plants to replace the country's outdated models, a new poll by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research showed that 54 percent of Britons favor nuclear power as a way to stop global warming.

Still, environmentalists say improving the energy grid's efficiency should be a top priority, so that wind and wave power structures could run the country without expensive new nuclear plants.

Greenpeace estimates that the current fossil-fueled grid loses 61.5 of every 100 units of energy through inefficient generation and heat wastage, 3.5 units lost in transmission and 13 units through inefficient end usage.

Against environmentalists' contention, the nuclear industry says it won't have to take government subsidies to work.

On the other side of the Atlantic, California energy regulators recently okayed 10-year's worth of consumer rebates totaling about \$3 billion in order to help citi-

zens invest in roof-top solar panels.

Environmentalists hope 3,000 megawatts of solar electricity is produced on one million buildings during the rebate time frame. They also say that the program will create jobs, cut pollution, and decrease energy costs.

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One Day Closer To Rain...

One day closer to rain. We've been chanting that mantra for months now. Every day we expected this horrible drought to end. But it hasn't. We had half the normal amount of average expected rainfall in 2005. Even when others around us had rain (which landed in the record books as measurable precipitation), we had none or just a trace, not even enough to settle the dust. Things are very dry and brown right now at the ranch. Like many of our neighbors, we're forced to sell off most (or maybe all) of our cattle.

We've bought a little additional hay (at exorbitant prices) as emergency backup to supplement what we have. We could ill afford it. When we bought it, we hoped there would be rain forthcoming, that by selling off calves and old cows, we could keep the rest of the herd, feed the hay we had made, along with what we bought. But rain hasn't come. We bought the usual nutritional supplements for the cattle as well as extra things we wouldn't normally feed.

Usually this time of year, there's plenty of winter grass, but not now. Last year we went to, what for us, was great expense, to plant a field of perennial rye grass. We were expecting that grass to return again and again, to supplement the winter-feeding for years to come. But no rain, no rye grass. We don't know if it's dead or just waiting.

The only good news was that cattle prices remained high. Every day, we thought, surely, we're "one day closer to rain." But it hasn't come. Nothing is growing, not one green blade of anything, no winter grass, barely any weeds. A respiratory disease known as "dust pneumonia" has affected many cattle in the area as they lower their heads into the dust and dry weeds searching for food. This requires treatment, and treatment means time and money.

Even Babe the (Legally Blind) Bull's bout of double whammy pink eye was the result of his grazing the dusty ground, irritating his eyes with broom weed and other dry vegetation. That pink eye, rare in both eyes, required a pricey trip to the vet, medication, stitches, quarantine, his own sanitarium (in the cow lot), personal hay bales, and hand feeding for two months by Zach and yours truly).

Not only is this situation affecting cattle ranchers, but anyone who plants crops. All have lost everything they invested for the winter season, often thousands and thousands of dollars. It also affects those who own livestock of any kind. It isn't only that we must supplement what we were able to grow last year before the rain stopped coming. It isn't just that hay prices are twice what they should be. Now it's become almost impossible to find hay at any price. Many animals, including cattle, need roughage to remain healthy. Some can't thrive on feed alone.

There are some square bales of hay sitting in the old barn collecting rattlesnakes for over 20 years now, since the advent of the larger round bales. Zack climbed into the hayloft and kicked some of the stuff down for the cows, and they ate it up like it was mana from heaven. Surely it has no nutritional value whatsoever after all this time. But we will gratefully use what little there is, feed it with "molasses, a pricey liquid supplement.

A few weeks ago, the herd, probably led by Big Bag, "the cow I love to hate," the subject of many diatribes and more than a few stories and cartoons, broke into another old barn. There, in one of the "rooms" sat a foot-deep layer of thirty or forty or maybe even 50-year-old oats. That stuff dates back to the era when crops were grown here, stored, and fed to the herd.

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.

Those hungry cows somehow smelled the ancient feed and broke in to find it. They pushed their way through stored furniture, old stoves and windows (all destroyed now) and farm equipment—to get to the prehistoric feed. That's how desperate they were, even after we had been feeding them hay, just not as much as they wanted, not as much as they are accustomed to. When cattle are hungry, they start breaking through fences, causing ranchers all kinds of trouble. I didn't know they would break into barns as well. I guess I underestimated the inimitable Ms. Bag.

Even the Bible instructs us to feed our animals before ourselves. So it's hard to hear them calling to us when they're hungry. We've tried to hold back the meager supply of hay, hoping to dole it out until there's something green growing. The cattle see the hay on the other side of the fence and don't understand why we won't bring them a bale or two. It's heartbreaking. And it's only a matter of time before they push through the fence.

So rather than let them starve, we have to let most of them go. Even Big Bag's time has probably come. Although she's been a huge nuisance over the years, you have no idea how much this pains me. And she's not the only one who is familiar, like an old friend I see every day, an integral part of this place and of our lives. These animals have depended on us for years and have served us well. It's been a good partnership.

I'm trying to look at the sell off of the herd as a blessing in disguise, an opportunity to take older cows who really need to go. I would have held onto them longer, but now there's no choice. You aren't supposed to get sentimental about livestock. I thought I was safe naming mama cows, getting somewhat attached. You don't expect to sell them off until they're very, very old. I've fed them, broken ice in troughs for them, worried over them when they were sick, written stories about them, drawn cartoons of them for newspapers and magazines.

On a practical note, if we are able one day to buy back younger cows and begin again with a new herd, it will take time before they respond to us as this familiar group does. These cows have "been making a living here" for a long time, and know exactly what's expected when we work them. This makes life much easier for all of us. As new animals have been introduced to the herd, the old ones have shown them the ropes.

As a group (with a couple of notable exceptions), the cattle are quite docile and accustomed to our ways. All we must do to elicit a desired response is call a certain word or whistle a certain way, and they know whether to come or go. We rarely raise our voices. Sometimes just seeing us enter a field from a certain direction, these cows know it's time to vacate the premises. They intuit our directions. Contrary to popular belief, they aren't so stupid.

So an entire routine will be broken for us all, humans and bovines alike. And

some still viable animals who should have lived comfortable, productive lives out here for years to come will probably make their way a little too early to McDonalds. I try not to think about it. —Such a waste on all counts. I thought of suggesting a nationwide Adopt-A-Cow program. You send me money for a year's supply of hay and name your cow. I could send a picture. You might even want to come visit. If you choose Big Bag, it will cost you double, and the name cannot be changed. Babe, Lumpy, Lou, Freckleneck, Funnyface and E.J. won't cost you extra, but the names remain the same.

I try to keep joking and looking for a silver lining. Thank goodness cattle prices are still high, so if we are both careful and lucky, we may put something aside to buy back younger cows when moisture returns someday to this parched landscape, if it ever does. The term "dust bowl" has been bandied about lately, and it scares me.

Maybe large companies like Tractor Supply Corp or Purina would like to make substantial contributions to loyal customers. After all, if we go under, it will affect their businesses. People always seem to take notice when things hit their pocket-books. For people like us who have already been forced to sell animals, it's almost too late for extra hay. But if this situation continues, we will all need assistance, and help replacing our herds in the future.

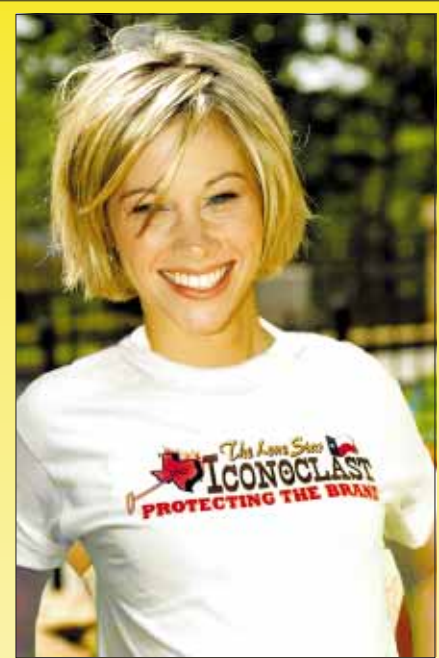
Things are reaching a true crisis situation in Texas and Oklahoma. This is no joke. This problem is very, very serious. We're talking here about hard-working people who, while they haven't had their homes or livelihoods swept away by floods or destroyed by storms, are in very dire straits right now, in danger of losing most of what they have worked for, in some cases, for a lifetime.

At the newspaper office, we have been wondering whether local farmers and ranchers as a cohesive group or perhaps an organization like the Texas Farm Bureau might encourage our state representative to go to bat on our behalf, introduce bills to get aid, find us some hay, get us some feed. This breed of farmer/rancher folk isn't likely to ask for help. So I am asking for us all. Others in true need (and some who are good at the con) seem to get relief for this catastrophe or that, as well most should. We Central Texans need to get in line now and be grateful for any assistance. Most of us have paid into the system all our lives. Now, by no fault of our own, we need to make some withdrawals).

We do NOT need only loans. We need the same kind of free and clear help that everyone else seems to receive after a disaster. We need drought relief payments for crops planted that never came up, for replacement cattle we will buy later, probably at higher prices. These relief payments need to be fair and reasonable, not tokens. We need help paying for supplemental feed, not only loans, but outright gifts or cheaper commodities. Maybe private citizens would like to contribute to rancher relief. That would be fine, too.

What we really need is rain. Unfortunately, the last time I checked, our government didn't have any greater influence in that department than we do.

So this isn't my usual humorous minor catastrophe column. This time I'm writing about a real catastrophe, a big one. It's affecting hundreds, possibly thousands of farmers and ranchers, both large operations and small ones, like ours. We need help. What can you do for us, President Bush? Your citizens are in need of assistance right here at home. Your neighbors need help.



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No, Mr. Mayor, Just You

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If the Lord's perfect, how come we got ticks, fleas, water moccasins and bankers?"

No, Mayor Nagin, just you. I doubt if God drowns children and old people as a political policy critique.

Well, ok, maybe back in his wild Old Testament days.

Still sowing his oats with pillars of salt, rains of fire, frogs and locusts, all those crazy party antics.

And when he woke up with a headache the size of Gomorrah and his mouth feeling like the bottom of a birdcage, he probably thought better of it.

Would have made amends except for the tabloids, like *Genesis* or *Exodus*.

Imagine those check-out newsstand headlines:

"God Torches Cities In Fit Of Pique!"

"Lot Caught In Wife-Swap With Morton Salt Girl."

"Noah's Drunken Nude Romp!"

"Moses In Sex Scandal With Nefertiti, 'He's Through In This Town,' Rameses Vows."

"No, I Changed My Mind, Rameses Tells Moses."

"I Got Your Change Of Mind: God!"

"God Taking Sides in Egypt-Israel Labor Dispute"

But then he calmed down in the New Testament.

Having a kid will do that to you.

So we're talking about the laid back, water to wine, star in the East, Away in a Manger God.

God doesn't get angry with America.

Just Americans.

When they die.

Stay alive, Mr. Mayor.

Oh, and you too, Pat Robertson.

According to these clowns, God is an equal opportunity destroyer of worlds.

Frankly, I doubt if God really has a vested interest in the K Street Project, the mid-term elections or the Superbowl.

If he were that political, how do you explain Tom DeLay?

Think he fooled God the way he copped all those people down in Sugerland?

And if you point to the heavens and praise the Lord for that touch-down, how do you explain that third quarter pass that hit you in the back of the head?

Maybe God was up getting himself another beer.

Here's the cosmic catch, folks, wa-a-a-a too much is up to us for our

Call To Mind



By Don M. Fisher

own good.

So now hizzoner says he misspoke.

I guess a couple of verses of "Cry Me A River" would be terribly inappropriate here.

I don't remember any fondness for segregation in any of Dr. King's writings.

One way or the other. Maybe I missed the "I Have A Hershey Bar" speech.

Mayor Nagin should check the mirror.

He ain't exactly Nestle's Dark. More like the soft and sticky caramel center.

The jaw-locking surprise you get from a cheap sampler box.

Fact is, regardless of your ethnicity, somebody is going to pretend your skin color makes you something you're not, and you'll be embarrassed.

Believe me, if I could do a John Howard Griffin on David Duke, I'd spring for the Clairrol.

Actually, I think Rod Serling already did that one.

Or was that Michael Jackson?

Ok, I promised I wouldn't do any more Michael Jackson cheap shots. I lied.

I only have one, actually two, questions about the mayor's babble:

Wilson Pickett, the acid-gargling voice of soul, spread his music from the dirt streets to the stars. Ride, Sally Ride. His tunes and style could be heard all the way from the black and blue collar dives to the White Boy frat house binges, and to all the ears and feet and Wickedly inspired smiles in between, where people just appreciate style and class in the midnight hour.

Shelley Winters hung up a bitter and brutal mirror in "A Patch of Blue," to show us a part of ourselves we'd prefer to remain blind to. Her work was as often bad as brilliant, as will be those who vary performances from slapstick to glamour to grit. She was as good as Hollywood gets, and she earned her veracity stripes before Tracy and Hepburn's better-known squeaky clean dinner party.

Why did the ravings of a forgettable Louisiana politician get more attention than the farewells to these two lives, who gave us more than they got?

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We Need Some More Sam Irvins

By GRAYSON HARPER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Apparently, the pen that President Bush is using to sign bills into law is filled with disappearing ink. With the use of "signing statements," he is asserting his right to either revise or completely ignore, if he chooses, anything he puts his name to. So far, he has done this with over 500 pieces of legislation, including the recent ban on torture, which he signed last month.

What's going on, here? For one thing, apparently, it seems the President now gets to pick and choose whatever laws he will obey. It also means our corruption is out in the open, now. For instance, when our government was still conducting "extraordinary renditions" (kidnapping), and torturing people in secret, we were entitled to hope that something might be done about it. Now, the President reserves the right to disregard the torture ban whenever it suits him. And he's saying it straight out.

He also says he has the right to spy on American citizens, which we just learned he's been doing for the past four years, in direct violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. He freely admits breaking the law and defies Congress to do anything about it. Bush's Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales, appears to have no interest in investigating this crime, but seeks instead to ferret out and indict the leakers for exposing the criminal.

Question: Why hasn't this man been impeached? As I recall from my high school civics class, it's not all that easy to get bills passed through both houses of Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States. Why go to all that trouble, if he's just going to do whatever he feels like doing from now on? Come to think of it, what do we need all these congressmen for? Kind of a wasted expense, isn't it?

Is this what they meant when they said they wanted to "get the government off our backs?"

Some 30 years ago, another president—Richard Nixon—invoked almost the identical stock phrases and euphemisms that Bush and Cheney now employ to justify their lawbreaking. Phrases like, "national security" and that old chestnut, "executive privilege."

Compared to Bush's list of crimes, the break-in and attempted wire-tap of the Democratic National Committee by Nixon's little gang of thugs now seems almost quaint. Yes, and he spied on us as well, through the same National Security Agency that Bush has been using. You can read all about it in Nixon's Articles of Impeachment.

The difference between that time and now is immense. In those days, the President found himself head to head with a real and viable Congress—both Democrats and Republicans—who took violations of the law seriously. The man who led the charge was a feisty seventy-six-year-old senator from North Carolina, Sam Irvin. In his role as chairman of the Senate Watergate

GUEST COMMENTARY

Committee, Irvin became something of a folk hero, spicing his questions of witnesses with equal parts of the Bible, the Constitution and Shakespeare. When it came to cross-examining stone-walling conspirators, such as H.R. Haldeman and John Erlichman, Irvin's "b.s." detector was always in play. You knew the whistles were going off when his eyebrows shot for the roof and his jowls trembled.

When Nixon initially refused to let his aides testify, citing "executive privilege," Irvin snapped: "Divine Right went out with the American Revolution and doesn't belong to White House aides. What meat do they eat that makes them grow so great? I don't think we have any such thing as royalty or nobility that exempts them. That is not executive privilege. That is executive poppy-cock."

Irvin said that Watergate for the first time sought to destroy the integrity of the process. "If the many allegations made to this date are true," he said, "then the burglars who broke into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate were, in effect, breaking into the home of every citizen of the United States. What they were seeking to steal was not the jewels, money, or other precious property of American citizens, but something much more valuable—their right to vote in a free election."

Irvin likened the mindset of Nixon's henchmen to the Gestapo. Referring to former Attorney General John Mitchell, and former White House aide, John Erlichman, both convicted for their roles in the conspiracy, Irvin said, "I don't think either one of them would have recognized the Bill of Rights if they met it on the street in broad daylight under a cloudless sky."

A pity there are no Sam Irvins in our current Congress. Thus far, they have either actively participated or else passively sat on their hands and watched while the Bush-Cheney "cabal" has looted and trashed the place.

If it is true that the law is now what the President says it is, then where does that leave us? It seems to me we are at a cross-road, very similar to the one Nixon brought us to. And what we are faced with is whether we will continue to have a government based on our old Constitution and existing laws and rights as "free citizens," or if we will trade it in for something entirely new and different.

Richard Nixon once said, "When the President does it, that means it's not illegal." And Congress answered.

How will they answer now?

Grayson Harper is a freelance writer and playwright based in Fort Worth. He has written for Fort Worth Weekly, and co-publishes the weblog, Tholos of Athena.



Editorial

Opinion - Columns - Letters

OP/ED

— Editorial —

Where Lies The Demarcation Of Surrender?

The President's refusal of truce offered by Osama bin Laden was predictable.

The U.S. will "never accept anything less than total victory" has been Bush's firm mandate.

However, the demarcation of surrender remains unclear. How can you define "total victory" without completely identifying the opponent?

The President has said that bin Laden is no longer the main target, that terrorism has mushroomed into an ethno-religious network of cells churning throughout the world.

Does this mean that all members of Al-Qaeda, past and present, no matter where they are must lay bare their arms and forfeit themselves to the custody of the United States, or are we reserving surrender to include only the Afghan Arab nucleus of insurgents?

What if insurgents simply stop fighting and quietly melt into the obscurity of the desert? Is that an acceptable surrender?

If surrender is to be flavored with justice, then depths of longitude and latitude that include time and space must be applied.

The roots of Al-Qaeda go back to 1988, to the era when Osama's older brother, Salem, was a partner with our current president in failed oil ventures. Salem, a contemporary of GWB, was fast becoming "Americanized." An experienced pilot, Salem took off in a lightweight aircraft near San Antonio on May 29, 1988, and promptly flew the plane into some high-line wires, tumbling to his death in what onlookers have described as a freak accident.

One must wonder, if Salem bin Laden had not been killed in Texas, would there have been planes crashing into the World Trade Center on 9/11? Would Osama have created Al-Qaeda the same year his brother died in the United States?

In 1991, the first Gulf War was definitely about oil, to drive Iraq out of Kuwait to keep Saddam Hussein's hands away from a potential world oil monopoly.

Osama wanted the Saudi royal family to take care of Saddam, but he was overruled. The Saudi elite chose instead the U.S. and Bush Sr. to do it. After all, Saddam had been our friend.

The solicitation of Americans onto Middle Eastern soil infuriated Osama and his fundamentalist followers.

When the U.S. set up bases in Saudi Arabia, Osama had had enough. He was granted permission to leave Saudi Arabia, taking with him his vast wealth plus funding from other wealthy Saudis

to enhance his militaristic Al-Qaeda movement. The only condition was that he would not retaliate with force against the royal family.

If Saudis helped to fund Al-Qaeda, is that not aiding and abetting and should that not qualify them for applicability of surrender? Or does the blood drawn by Al-Qaeda remain invisible on the hands of Saudi "business partners?"

The lines of justice and surrender are further blurred in Iraq.

Many American soldiers were killed invading Iraq in order to get Saddam, who the President without proof linked with Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks, terming him a terrorist, torturer, maimer, killer.

Isn't that how the story went? Saddam's absolute guilt and aiming of weapons of mass destruction at the U.S. was the reason the United States invaded Iraq.

So how is it he now gets a trial? If we are fighting a war on terror and he is a terrorist, why don't we simply execute him? This is confusing.

Does the sword fall only on blue-collar terrorists, blue-collar innocent bystanders, and blue-collar soldiers in the field?

Does "professional courtesy" slither into being when it comes to fallen leaders, and is this the real reason Osama is still at large, no longer considered relevant?

Officially, Iraq has not surrendered, but our pronounced occupation of that country leaves little debate about our at least temporary control of it. But to smoke out terrorists where they live means future Iraqs and a never-ending series of wars, especially when the demarcation of surrender is so vague, if that line exists at all.

The overriding problem lies in the terminology "war on terror," for terror is actually a crime, normally handled by law enforcement officers. To give it "new world order" global identification is nothing less than declaring war on every country, including ours.

Here, the end-game becomes a moveable feast and the demarcation of surrender is but a mirage.

Members of Congress should not be asking how many troops will be pulled out next week.

They should be asking for expulsion of the so-called "war on terrorism" anomaly to be replaced with a tangible, true-to-life definition of what we realistically intend to accomplish.

It's time to get specific. Americans deserve to know the answer.

— W. Leon Smith

GUEST
COMMENTARY**This Politico Has
A Lot At Stake**By **JEFF CARMACK**
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

When it comes to politicians it seems like all you hear about is corruption, deception, and sleaze – and that's the *good* news. So when a politician comes along who's not afraid to speak plainly, it's refreshing.

Jonathon Sharkey is just such a politician. Sharkey, a self-professed satanic priest, announced last week that he was running for governor of Minnesota.

"I'm going to be totally open and honest," said the 41-year-old leader of the Vampyres, Witches and Pagans Party. "Unlike other candidates, I'm not going to hide my evil side," he said.

Note to Sharkey: take a tip from Tom DeLay. He's never tried to hide his evil side, either, and you can see where that got him.

That a professed Satanist would run for governor of Minnesota is not much of a stretch, since the state is basically hell with snowplows. Anyone with \$300 and nothing better to do with it can get on the ballot, and every year or so some nut decides to make a play for the statehouse.

Sharkey raises the bar, though. For one thing, he drinks blood. Also, his platform makes death-penalty advocates seem soft on crime, as it calls for impaling terrorists, rapists, and other criminals at the State Capital building. He did not mention lobbyists.

Sharkey said he was injured during a parachute jump with the Army in 1982 and receives veterans' disability benefits. He didn't specify, but I'm guessing he landed on his head.

Sharkey has also said he'll run for president in 2008. Maybe he thinks that, since George Bush can't run again, the hell-spawn demographic is up for grabs.

Speaking of the undead, Dick Cheney was in the news again last week. Cheney was hospitalized briefly after suffering from shortness of breath. Doctors quickly determined that Cheney was retaining fluid as a result of a drug he had been taking for a foot problem.

Cheney spent about four hours in the hospital and by mid-afternoon was back at work tearing the wings off flies.

The foot problem had been causing Cheney to walk with a cane, and also affected his hobby of kicking small dogs.

The VP has suffered four heart attacks since 1978. Following repeated rounds of heart surgery, Cheney quit smoking and began taking medication to lower his cholesterol. He also modified his diet and today eats only organic, low-fat orphans.

Cheney has been diagnosed as having tendonitis that occasionally causes pain in his left heel. Aides did not say which medication the vice president had been taking for the pain, nor would they confirm that Cheney had been scoring from Rush "Superfly" Limbaugh.

Truth Or Consequences

Modern Times
By
**Lloyd
Garver**

The latest literary controversy involves the best seller, "A Million Little Pieces," a memoir by James Frey. It's supposed to be an inspirational tale about Frey's battles with drugs, alcohol, and the law, and his turning his life around. The only problem is that Frey made up many of the details in his "memoir." In recent years, other writers, historians, and journalists were discovered to have fabricated things that they had passed off as facts. Those writers were scandalized, and often lost their jobs or even their careers. The difference this time is in the reaction to the discovery of the fraud: instead of the many fans of the book being outraged by Frey, they seem to be angrier with those who have exposed him. Their reaction is that it's "close enough" to the truth, so don't make a big deal about it.

But the truth is a big deal. And let's face it, it's not all that hard to tell the truth. I'll prove it to you right here. I'm going to be completely truthful with you in this column.

Back when I was at Harvard Law School,¹ I was impressed by the value given to telling the truth. And while working with Steven Spielberg as he put the finishing touches on "Schindler's List²," I was amazed by how important it was to Spielberg for every frame of the film to be truthful. Sometimes, while exercising I see the importance of truth. Just the other day, while I was working out with two-time Oscar winner, Hillary Swank,³ I had one of those moments of clarity.

Frey's book has been the Number One nonfiction paperback best seller on the New York Times list for weeks. (At this point, in the spirit of full disclosure, I should mention that I have a long-standing relationship with the New York Times)⁴. It became a big success after Oprah Winfrey touted it on her show and it became a selection of her "book club." (Once again, in my attempt at being completely truthful, I should mention that I have been a guest on Oprah's show).⁵

Now that it's been revealed that the memoir is not completely non-fiction, Oprah has surprisingly stood behind the writer. She's declared that the discrepancies between the book and the truth are "much ado about nothing."⁶ This is Oprah Winfrey talking. If fudging and telling lies is okay with Oprah, who's going to mess with the truth next? The President?⁷

Maybe we're so used to accepting lies in our everyday life, that we aren't particularly upset by something like Frey's

book. Our politicians lie to us, and we barely blink. Viewers know "reality TV" isn't reality, but they watch it anyway. And we tell "little lies" every day: "Your hair looks great." "No, it's delicious. I'm just not very hungry." "I was just about to call you."⁸ We rationalize these lies as things we say so that we don't hurt other people's feelings, or sometimes it's just "easier" than telling the truth. But isn't it possible that we are so used to hearing and telling these little lies every day that we allow ourselves to tell and be told bigger ones?

If you believe that some of us are being too picky when it comes to the truth, then you also probably believe that this column is just as valid without the footnotes as with them.⁹

So, let's see just how hard it is to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Let's "just say no" to lying.¹⁰ We'll declare today "National Truth Day." Let's all try to tell the truth for 24 hours.¹¹ Will we alienate our friends? Will we lose our jobs? Will we incriminate ourselves?¹²

Let's see what happens. Write me and tell me how it went for you. If it works out for a day, maybe soon we'll try it for a week or even longer. One good thing is that if each of us tells the truth, we won't have to wonder if the other guy is lying to us. But best of all, maybe we'll feel better about ourselves. I think there is some real value in taking those words of Shakespeare seriously: "... to thine own self be true" — "Hamlet."¹³

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>.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Once I visited my friend, Ralph, who was a student there.

2 Spielberg was simultaneously work-

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ing on Schindler's list while Executive Producing "The Flintstones." I was one of the many uncredited writers on "The Flintstones."

3 Actually, we just happened to be exercising at the same time and place. I was walking on the bike path and she was running in the opposite direction.

4 The relationship consists of my subscribing, and their delivering the paper to my house.

5 I really was. I was on the show about 15 years ago because of a piece I had written for "Newsweek" about "Nintendo addiction." Why she didn't choose that to be part of her 25th Anniversary celebration, I'll never know. Maybe it was my sports jacket.

6 Although it may have been assigned to me in high school, I don't recall every having read Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing."

7 I know. Cheap shot.

8 I really was just about to call you.

9 I admit that some of my passion about this is because I'm excited that I figured out how to do footnotes on my computer.

10 This is in no way affiliated specifically with the "just say no" to drugs movement or to Nancy Reagan, in general.

11 It won't count if you nap for ten hours.

12 I've broken no laws.

13 I did read "Hamlet" — although I don't think I got a great grade on the paper.

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Conspiracy Theory

Hillary Rodham Clinton was right on target about 10 years ago when she stated that there was a "vast right wing conspiracy" to bring down her husband Bill's Presidency.

As someone who had provided legal assistance for the Nixon prosecution, the Junior Senator from New York was in a unique position to know just what the Conservatives were about.

Well, the Neo-cons, led by America's premier voice of hatred toward anyone named Clinton, not to mention all Democrats, all Liberals, and anyone who would dare think freely with an open mind, Ann Coulter, mocked her as being loony.

Consider some of the key players bent on the ruination of William Jefferson Clinton throughout the 1990s: From the good elected folks, Newt Gingrich; Trent Lott; Tom DeLay; Bob Barr; Henry Hyde; Lindsey Graham are but a handful.

Then there were those never voted in to squat, the likes of Pat Robertson; Jerry Falwell; James Dobson, and the other wealthier-than-God Superevangelists spurring all hardcore Christians on to believe that the Clintons were evil incarnate.

Who could ever forget Linda Tripp? How about Ken Starr and his ludicrous waste of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars just to find out President Bill was lonely and weak of the flesh? Or the daily leaks from his "behind closed doors" investigations?

I have absolutely no doubt that somewhere, somehow Herr Ubermeister Karl Rove had his slimy fingers in the pie, too.

At the head of the Clinton-Haters were the self-righteous extremists, the Ann Coulters, the Robert Bennetts, and especially the Rush Limbaughs - those of privilege who became disgustingly wealthy by way of spewing hatred and fomenting seditious, venomous allegations at the Man From Hope, all members of his family, and his friends.

It was a well-coordinated attack on the mostly unsuspecting American people and our Constitution. Camouflaging their motives with Juh-ee-zuss and the Bible, these Right-wing Neo-con Fascists passed their spurious gutter trash into the mainstream media through carefully placed tidbits of "information" in the only sources that would buy their blather, a handful of Ultra-Conservative publications, talk radio, and the Neo-con's own propaganda machine, FOXNEWSCHANNEL.

The conspiracy was played open and laid bare by the very same young, idealistic journalist who had authored the anti-Clinton tripe. After being enlisted by Coulter and Company, then duped into writing bullshit articles for a right-wing rag, he discovered the truth and published a book denouncing these self-serving crumb.

We remember other players, including Paula Jones and several disgruntled Arkansas State Troopers, all compensated for their accusations by the Coulter crowd. Hollywood glory-seeking attorney Gloria Allred, who never met an innocent man or a guilty woman, came out to hitch her caboose to Ms. Jones' train wreck.

It seemed Bill couldn't have a conversation with a woman, lest she would accuse him of improprieties; that phenomenon in itself had become a cottage industry. Dig a little, and these women never had witnesses yet were usually put on display by Coulter or some hardcore Rightist organization.

Even FBI Director Louis Freeh, whose recent book shows obvious disdain for

Bill Clinton, was not doing his best for the needs of our Nation. Estimates were that at times he engaged as many as 5,000 Agents in the Starr Witch Hunt to bring down a Presidency.

Yet, he manages to make the former President the fall guy for all of his inadequacies as FBI head honcho. Go figure.

Don't you think that, if not distracted chasing down the President's peccadilloes, some of those 5,000 Agents might have figured out why suspected members of al Qaeda were taking flying lessons?

But, as we look back, was it specifically Bill Clinton the Neo-cons wanted out so badly?

I don't think that he, personally, was exactly what frightened them.

It was what Bill symbolized, what he was.

Anyone similar to Bill would have sent the Neo-cons into a frenetic spin.

Bill Clinton was the little guy who grew up in less than favorable conditions, overcame the hardships of his youth through brilliance mixed with charisma, and the privileged types never expected him to unseat their sitting President, George H.W. Bush.

(The white ties never expected the other Texan, Ross Perot, a "real" Son of the Lone Star State, to get more than half as many votes as the incumbent Bush #41.)

Clinton was an unknown quantity. He wasn't rich; owned no property to speak of; was Democratic governor of a relatively small, "backward" Southern state. Bill had no real experience in D.C. politics; believed in people; any ties he had to big business were not the same bunch as the Bushes, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the aforementioned.

It truly frightened the bejesus out of the white tie set that the guy now at the top was not one of their own. And, he was smart - a genuine Rhodes Scholar - probably sharper than the entire kit-and-caboodle of his detractors combined.

I'm not looking for the man's canonization to sainthood like the GOP has done with Ronnie (they all think he really was George Gipp). Bill was as good a President as he could be while suffering slings and arrows from the day his hat was tossed into the ring, and would have been better with a reasonably cooperative, bi-partisan Legislature.

To the Conservatives, Clinton's ascendancy was a huge "yield" sign, if not played right perhaps even a complete halt, in their three decades of machinations toward complete Governmental upheaval and control.

Because these are people who couldn't care less about doing the people's business.

From the very day Bill Clinton won the Democratic nomination in 1992, the Right-wing extremists unleashed their attack propaganda. They went at him every way possible, starting with Jennifer Flowers.

Daddy Bush was such an ineffective president, Ross Perot struck just the right nerve, and it was impossible to keep Bill out of the White House.

So the Neo-con slime machine did the next best thing: It tainted Bill Clinton so badly that the Dems in the House and Senate suffered in the 1994 midterms.

As soon as Newt Gingrich, Smiler DeLay and their ilk took over the Congress, what was the first thing they did?

These hypocrites began looking for a way to run Clinton out of D.C.



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

When they couldn't stop him from besting Bob Dole in 1996, the race was on to find some way to impeach the President.

Well, we all know how that went.

I believe the overall plan was once Bill was gone, it would be far easier to run roughshod over former Senator Al Gore, whom the Republicans deemed a lightweight.

Unfortunately for Newtie, there was a backdraft. He wound up leaving Congress in disgrace. Bob Barr, freshman Congressman elected in Georgia essentially on an "impeach Clinton" platform who lead the charge, lost his seat.

There's no doubt where Tom DeLay and some of the other hypocrites are headed.

We all know what resulted from the "Government of the Highest Bidder" deceptions of 2000 and 2004.

In 2000, the GOP couldn't have an honest guy like John McCain actually run for president - he had a good shot at winning, then quite possibly would have done something about the corruption. So, as soon as he got too far ahead in the primaries for a dunderhead like George W. "Fool me... can't fool me again" Bush to overcome, Herr Rove buried his campaign with the most foul of uncivil prevarications and deceptive practices.

What the RNC needed to present to the public was a poster boy. Someone who could be twisted and turned to suit the party's whims, who will look like a leader because he's full of braggadocio and big talk - like the coward of the county he truly is.

How many people who voted for George W. Bush in either election do you think had any notion whatever that he lost when Turd Blossom trotted him out as candidate for Congress? The good people of his district didn't even want him as their representative!

However, Young Georgie was just what the RNC leadership ordered. I once read an opinion that Bush probably doesn't tie his shoes in the morning without Herr Rove's assistance - I'd like to add zipping up his pants to that assessment.

With Dark Lord the Dick Cheney as Vice President calling the shots; Donald Rumsfeld wholly clueless on military matters; Condoleezza Rice talking down to anybody and everybody as if we're all morons, plus never once giving us the straight story, wife Laura keeping his toes on the line so he doesn't look utterly stupid; and the rest of the West Wing cast of players in this tragedy, George W. Bush remains as insulated from reality as any human being ever could be.

The trouble is, as the alleged Leader

of the Free World he's not supposed to be distant from reality.

I would assume that somewhere in the manual, under "Job Description for The President of The United States" it is required that the person holding that position be aware of what in the hell is going on around the world; that he or she be far more concerned with the health, welfare and safety of America's citizens than its corporations and the CEOs thereof; and, that the person in that important position not go around pissing off the leaders, and peoples, of every other nation on the Planet.

And that the President clean up corruption in our Government, not foster its proliferation and prolongation.

The henchmen of the white tie conservatives, in the guise of good Christian soldiers, nest in the White House, as well as sit on the Republican side of the aisle in both the House and the Senate.

Their goal is to make the Federal court system as Christian as they claim to be.

Thus, the D.C. Republicans spew epithets about what God wants our Country to be, and how they legislate through divine guidance. Meanwhile, they're picking the pockets of American taxpayers with one hand and reeling in money by the pound from special interest groups through lobbyists with the other; at the same time they're stomping our Constitution and Bill of Rights straight into oblivion.

Yes, Hillary was right. There was a vast Right-wing conspiracy. They took control of Government through dubious means.

Just as she was right when remarking that the Republican leadership "runs the Congress like a plantation."

They see themselves as the "massahs," the privileged few. The Congressional Democrats are not their equals, but lower in stature.

As are we everyday typical Americans.

Once again, people are giving Hillary crap about this statement.

Nobody important, though, just the white tie set's henchmen, that white guy exclusive Neo-con Conservative Republican club on the Hill.

And Ann Coulter, I'm sure. So Mrs. Clinton needn't worry. Let's shut down this "Culture of Corruption" before the end of the year.

Come November, vote these lynin', cheatin', stealin', four-flushin' Republican bums out!

DAY 1,872 OF AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE - our White House and the Executive Branch overrun by the Karl Rove-controlled Neo-con Fascist Regime.

Impeach George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. He holds a BS and MA in Communications from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Depending upon your taste in political stew, you can either blame or thank Jerry for his weekly "Out Of The Blue" feature in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST.)

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Crawford Peace House:

We Must Fight To Retain Fundamental American Principles

By CARL RISING-MOORE

VETERANS FOR PEACE, CAMP CASEY CHAPTER

Over the course of American history, during times when those who profess to lead our country create chaos and self-destruction, it has become tradition in this country to speak truth to power. Some Americans react to these defining moments in history by educating themselves and their neighbors about how their beloved nation is being led down a dangerous path and look toward solutions. Once responsible, concerned Americans contemplate the problems they perceive to be causing harm to their nation, our tendency is to act.

This tendency goes back to the founders of America and includes well known actions such as the Boston Tea Party and the formation of a Continental Army. When we hear the words of the Star Spangled Banner, we should imagine just how desperate the situation for those first American patriots actually was. Upon declaring the independence of America, everything was to be gained from success and only the direst consequences resulting from failure. While we no longer languish under the rule of a foreign crown, the imperium that is being created in our nation and in our name may have consequences no less disastrous.

It has been said that each generation must fight to retain the fundamental American principles of freedom, liberty and justice. At the beginning of the 21st century, we find ourselves in a similar position and must once again fight to retain the liberties that America's founders found so important that they were willing to risk their lives. This time, however, we are not fighting King George III; we are fighting King George the Younger, a man whose administration has created such chaos both domestic and foreign that we may well find ourselves on the brink of economic and social collapse as a result.

This dangerous situation, of course, did not happen completely under the rule of George W. Bush. America began traveling down similar dangerous paths early on in our history. Manifest Destiny was a rationale for attacking the Native Nations that existed here long before European contact. Deriving from empire, we soon implemented our own "Great Game" of empire building and soon became a player with the greatest nations of the era of empire building. Over and over again, we have pursued the course of aggressive militarism and today we have permanent military bases in over 130 countries. But now, in the 21st century, modern Americans are experiencing the same pain and confusion that is created when a country believes itself to be beyond the laws that govern all nations. As a result, there are those who are now arising who speak truth to power.

The visionary Americans that created the Crawford Peace House were inspired several years ago to step up to the plate. Kay Lucas, Hadi Jawad, John Wolf and others saw the need to create a staging area that could protest the direction our nation is heading. Just as the founders created the Declaration of Independence which became the instrument and platform that preceded the struggle ahead, these few Texas patriots decided to create a platform in the physical world and

GUEST COMMENTARY

they named it the Crawford Peace House. When a bereaved mother named Cindy Sheehan was added to this mix, a formula for changing the world resulted. It is this model that may well be our best bet for battling the kind of tyranny represented by George W. Bush and his extremist administration now and well into the future.

The Crawford Peace House embodies the same spirit of resistance to tyranny that mobilized the first revolutionaries of America. These feelings run deep and can be truly described as the American Spirit. Along the way, the world has gained only a few new tools for fighting tyranny. Before the turn of the 19th century, when America decided to invade Mexico, Henry David Thoreau protested and disobeyed the laws of this country to the point of being jailed. His short paper "On Civil Disobedience" was studied and emulated throughout the world.

One reader of his document was Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi expanded upon the concept of civil disobedience and added nonviolent resistance to this effective formula. Gandhi used these principles to tremendous effect in his native India under British colonial rule.

In modern times, Dr. Martin Luther King utilized this proven concept and proceeded to change America. Once Rosa Parks said "no" the path was set and America is far better for the civil rights movement.

It is the First Amendment to our Constitution sets us apart from other nations as it defines our rights as Americans to speak truth to power. Indeed, this voice is the only thing that keeps us from falling into the chaos that continues to beset much of the world. While we may not agree with the perspectives of certain other Americans, but an overwhelming majority of citizens in this country believe strongly in the right to express dissent to those who profess to lead us. It was Thomas Jefferson who said "dissent is the highest form of patriotism." As Voltaire, a leading figure of the Enlightenment and thus an inspiration for the American Revolution and Constitution, said "I may not agree with what you say, but to your death I will defend your right to say it."

The Crawford Peace House embodies this basic American principle and has become a strong platform through which voices of resistance may be heard. When Cindy Sheehan decided to come to Crawford, Texas to voice her question "what is the noble cause for which my son was sacrificed?," the Crawford Peace House was already there, established

and ready to support her question and the questions of the many thousands that followed.

If the current American government continues to wage wars of aggression on other sovereign states, the model of the Peace House will live on and provide a similar foundation to those who come to fight for the rights of American citizens in the future. After the next presidential election, whether the winner is John McCain, Dick Cheney or even Hilary Clinton. Those who continue the imperialistic, warlike path established by Mr. Bush and his cronies, there will be a new Peace Houses created to focus the voice of those who cry out against the atrocity and obscenity of war. Our political servants must come to understand that enlightened Americans will no longer stand for such a brutish and ignoble path.

As a result of the actions of Cindy Sheehan and the Crawford Peace House, a Camp Casey Chapter of Veterans for Peace now exists in Crawford, Texas. These additional resources for peace exist thanks in large measure to the visionary efforts of these few. On the business card for the Crawford Peace House there is a quote from Margaret Mead:

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Corrupt Society: They still hang horse thieves, don't they?

We have arrived at a new low — whether it's via basic evolution, intelligent design, psychological propaganda or just plain corruptive biological genetics. Our American society is the most corrupt to date. Corruption has become a way of life, top-down domino effect that has caused our society great harm. The Bush administration and its special interests have picked-up the reins from previous generations and have transcended corruption to greater heights, which has filtered down throughout state and local governments. At one time corruptive influences and actions merely were fractions of our society, now they are the norm.

These are terrible times with horrendous role models for American children, who now comprehend that they must do anything and everything in their power to attain wealth. They are taught that corruption breeds astronomical wealth and power, which are now held in esteem as life's greatest achievement. The corrupt society honors athletes who can catch, throw and hit balls, pucks and each other. We revere Hollywood's stars who achieve greatness by being great at pretending to be someone else in imaginary or real world lives and situations. Our imaginations have become reality, while our reality has become imaginary.

We have created a topsy-turvy world that pays tribute to officials who have used human step-ladders to climb to the Everest of our system. On the other end of the scale, we overlook teachers who provide the most worthwhile service imaginable, to educate our children. Instead, we underpay them and tell them to get



Commentary

By
Peter
Stern

kids to pass useless state exams. Generations ago education was a most worthy endeavor, now schools generally are places to house children en masse — a place to keep kids off the streets and out of trouble. Teachers have become babysitters. *Whatever happened to real learning?* At one time and throughout most nations of the world, teachers were revered. They were held in highest esteem because their job was the most important position imaginable. Families invited teachers into their homes to join family dinners as a tribute to what they were doing for the society. Today our corrupted leaders aren't interested in educating children. They aren't interested in doing what is best for the community at-large. Corruption is a gigantic mutated octopus with far-reaching tentacles extending into and breaching every facet of American society, ultimately corrupting our American ideals. Those same deviants proudly go to churches on Sunday to pray to their almighty God and are forgiven their many sins. Today, corruption has discovered a life of its own.

Will corruption ever end? Even as I write this commentary we have a President and/or members of his ad-

ministration who may face impeachment trials. We are surrounded by multi-level scandals that seem to grow in volume every day. We have the DeLay's and Abramoff's who feel they are above the law parasitically feeding off taxpayers, disrespectful of our American way of life and bringing dishonor to their oaths and responsibilities. Corruption has become like a satanic cult ritual during the past several generations, and you just have to wonder when American voters will have enough and will start to vote-out the parasites in a major effort and overhaul to pump new blood into the diseased system. There may come a time when American citizens via impartial committees will provide oversight, including honest objectives and long-range goals as a cure for the corruption that plagues American families and creates havoc with our American way of life. Until then....

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>.

'Plan Of San Diego' Was Recipe For Race War

The nine signers of the so-called "Plan of San Diego," a blueprint for a borderland bloodbath, were charged on Jan. 24, 1915, with conspiracy against the United States government.

As revolution raged in their homeland, Mexican exiles and their American cousins revived an old dream. Article after article in the 230 Spanish-language newspapers from California to Texas talked about taking back the territory lost in the 1848 war with the gringos.

Four Mexican anarchists, led by a former customs officer named Basilio Ramos, opened a cantina in San Diego, Texas in the summer of 1914. Under the very noses of the apathetic authorities, they attracted an audience for their ideological harangues by passing out free

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



drinks.

The agitators returned to Mexico in December 1914 with their most promising convert, Luis de la Rosa. Reunited by the Mexican police, they celebrated the New Year in a Monterrey jail cell.

Six days later, the five anarchists and four sympathetic inmates signed a document titled "Plan of San Diego, Texas." The inflammatory manifesto called for

the armed liberation of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California — the land Mexico swapped for peace 67 years earlier.

The Plan was a recipe for race war that pitted Mexicans, blacks, Indians and Japanese against Anglo-Americans. White males over the age of 16 were marked for death.

Black participants were to be rewarded with six states of their own — presumably Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Utah — and Indians with the restoration of their tribal grounds. What was in it for the Japanese was anybody's guess.

The revolt was scheduled to start at precisely 2 a.m. on Feb. 20, 1915. The conspirators were not released until mid-

January, which left them just five weeks to carry out the most ambitious plot in North American history.

Soon after slipping across the Rio Grande, Basilio Ramos was arrested in McAllen when a potential recruit tipped off the sheriff. Government investigators first learned of the Plan from the copy he carried. Since Ramos' confederates had been foolish enough to put their names on the incriminating paper, the U.S. attorney had no trouble obtaining a speedy indictment.

The date of the Southwest insurrection came and went without so much as a ripple. Taking this fact and the absurdity of the scheme into account, a federal judge said Ramos "ought to be tried for lunacy not conspiracy against the United States." Freed on bail pending trial, Ramos promptly and predictably disappeared.

But amusement turned to alarm in the Rio Grande Valley after a rash of Plan-inspired incidents. Forty Mexican nationals murdered two Anglo men on a Willacy County ranch on the Fourth of July and a teenager near Raymondville during a two-week rampage that ended with their successful escape.

Responding to a similar raid in early August north of Brownsville, a posse proceeded to the ranch of Ancieto Pizana, a well-to-do Texan of Mexican ancestry. In the ensuing gunbattle, the posse sustained four casualties and Pizana's 12-year-old son suffered a leg wound so severe the limb had to be amputated.

Anarchist propaganda allegedly found in Pizana's home was enough to link him to the Plan. The rancher denied any prior involvement in the plot but readily admitted that the maiming of his boy convinced him to join the guerrilla campaign.

Meanwhile, Luis de la Rosa and 14 heavily armed followers terrorized the Lower Valley. Their strike was preceded by the distribution of a leaflet in Matamoros urging inhabitants to "unite with our brothers in Texas for this is the solemn moment for the vindication of right and justice lost to us for so long a time."

Following the cold-blooded execution of a father and son at Sebastian on Aug. 6, the De la Rosa band attacked an outpost on the King Ranch. A mixed bag of defenders that included Texas Rangers, soldiers, deputy sheriffs, and cowboys killed five raiders before De la Rosa sounded retreat and high-tailed it for the river.

Fear gripped the Valley as random violence became a daily occurrence. "Everyone feels he is about to face a massacre," a Brownsville resident shuddered. The unprecedented movement south of Mexicans with their household effects heightened the apprehension.

Pizana came out of hiding on Sept. 2, and led 25 riders in a surprise attack on the Fresno Pump Canal near Harlingen. Three Anglo men were taken captive and subsequently slain.

Indiscriminate reprisals were inevitable and took scores of innocent lives. As a Valley newspaper noted the week after the Pizana raid, "The finding of dead bodies of Mexicans, suspected for various reasons of being connected with the troubles, has reached a point where it creates little or no interest."

"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.

Getting Older: It's A Slippery Slope Down A Falling Ladder

From time to time it's good to give yourself a refresher course on the basic laws of physics. This weekend I chose gravity. I did this by climbing to the top of an extension ladder and, for the sake of science and a clogged rain gutter, riding it to the ground while screaming. This impromptu experiment helped underscore several known principals of time and space, such as:

Given the space of 12 vertical feet there still isn't enough time to call 911 before hitting the ground.

My experiment proved this is true even if, as a safety precaution based on prior experience of yourself doing stupid things, you have entered the first two digits of 9-1-1 before climbing the ladder. In theory, there should have been plenty of time between points "A" and "B" to punch a single digit on my cell phone. Possibly even leaving enough time to speed-dial my favorite coffee shop and order a double latte for the ambulance ride. However, the experiment also proved that somewhere between "A" and "B" there was a previously undiscovered point,

which is that I haven't gotten any smarter or more coordinated with age. This was demonstrated by the fact that, even with a full 2.5 seconds of "hang" time, I could not get my thumb, which was poised over the "1" button on my cell phone, to engage until after I was lying on my back looking up at our rain gutter — at which point my thumb locked onto the button and remained there for the next 30 minutes until the phone battery gave out.

In summary, we can conclude that Sir Isaac Newton was correct when, in 1667, he revealed his Third Law of Gravity: "What goes up must eventually come down, particularly if it involves a klutz on a ladder."

Given that my ankle took the full impact of my ladder-ride-for-science, my wife urged me to have it checked out immediately. She said this was the logical thing to do and assured me it had nothing to do with my being nearly 40. I asked what she meant by that and she explained, being a man, I might see an immediate trip to the hospital as a sign of



By Ned Hickson
Siuslaw News

getting older.

I laughed, then assured her I was totally secure with my age. To prove it, I would go see the doctor.

"When?" she asked.

"As soon as there's reason to."

That reason came the next morning, when I woke up to find someone had surgically removed my ankle and, at some point during the night, replaced it with an eggplant. Two hours later, I was in the exam room, where I was told my X-rays looked good.

No broken bones; just a really bad sprain.

"However, I think I see the beginning stages of...arthritis

...arthritis

...arthritis

...in your lower ankle, right below that...

...bone spur

...bone spur

...bone spur."

He pointed to a couple of spots on the X-ray as proof that I was, in fact, falling apart from the ankles up. Though he didn't come out and say it, I could tell by his expression I'd be lucky to make it back to my car before crumbling into a pile of dried carbon with an ankle brace. Suddenly, my life was flashing before me. I wanted to call my wife and children to tell them I loved them. If only I hadn't burned out the "1" pad on my cell phone!

"Mr. Hickson?"

"...huh?"

"I see on your chart you'll be 40 this year."

"It's true."

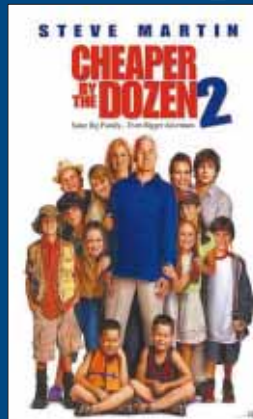
"I've been there. Relax — you're just getting to the good part."

During the ride home I realized he was right. Sure, I might be hobbling around for a while but eventually my ankle will heal. Before long I'll be back to doing all the things I normally do.

Assuming, of course, none of those things involve a ladder.

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

Cheaper By The Dozen 2



The Bakers are going back to the lake one more time before the older kids go off to start their own lives. When they return, Tom Baker (Steve Martin) meets up with his lifelong rival Jimmy Murtaugh (Eugene Levy) and his wife (Carmen Electra) and his eight kids. The rivalry sets the stage for the fun to begin.

PG

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America's Collective, Selective Memory

"I am convinced that it is one of the most unjust wars that has ever been fought in the history of the world. Our involvement in the war in Vietnam has torn up the Geneva Accord. It has strengthened the military-industrial complex; it has strengthened the forces of reaction in our nation. It has put us against the self-determination of a vast majority of the Vietnamese people, and put us in the position of protecting a corrupt regime that is stacked against the poor. [...] We have alienated ourselves from other nations so we end up morally and politically isolated in the world. There is not a single major ally of the United States of America that would dare send a troop to Vietnam, and so the only friends that we have now are a few client-nations like Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, and a few others."

— Martin Luther King Jr., *Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution*

This column would have been more appropriate last week. Jan. 16, 2006 — the day when our nation honors a great orator, advocate of equality, activist for peace. Martin Luther King Jr. A day which many Americans, young and old, imbue with a sense of remembrance and gratitude. We honor a tower of a man, his struggle, and the victory of an oppressed people over the forces of Old and Evil.

But what of this nation's further plight? Why do so few recall Dr. King's activism for peace? His calls to end the unjust, illegal war in Vietnam? He stood and fought against a war started on the basis of a lie, perpetuated by criminals and thieves and liars. A war which swallowed over 50,000 members of an American generation. A war which scarred our country's consciousness forever.

I cannot lay claim to having been present on this earth during those tumultuous years. Yet as a child, my father would regale me with stories of the peace movement; tales of upheaval, sit-ins and protest. From a young age I could recite lines from Dr. King's most famous of speeches. His message, my father's message, was one of justice and equality. It was, and is, very dear to me. Their words, the foundation of my core beliefs upon which I stand each week in the pages of this publication.

You may call me a hypocrite; a hippie; a peace-nic; a "pinko," to quote one recently received missive. But I say to you, do not celebrate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King without considering the breadth of his message. His words are as powerful and meaningful and important today as they were when he first ascribed them to paper and shook the institutions of power to their very core.

On Jan. 16, 2006, our president stood before the nation and violated the memory of King, calling him simply "an American who called Americans to account when we didn't live up to our ideals." I would remind those few who still fanatically embrace the broken, destruc-



The Webster Retort

By
Stephen
Webster

tive policies of President Bush to read between those lines. Deep within our nation's collective, selective memory lies a hero of not just a proud people united for racial equality, but a hero to all who seek peace and justice in America and the world.

Remember Martin Luther King Jr. for who he really was and what he did; not this idealized, non-threatening, fake, irrelevant mockery propped up by a corporate media sham and its Neo-Con masters.

Do not segregate the remembrance of a great man from his beliefs. How many more must die before we throw off the reigns of oppression once again, stand up and speak with one unified voice against the war-mongers, the fascists, and those who propagate hate? Dr. King had a dream, where all men were equal. Where all nations worked for the betterment of each other. Where the measure of a society is the well-being of least of its members.

"Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and dealt death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours."

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,
Beyond Vietnam

I too have a dream.

End the war in Iraq and prevent the invasion of Iran. Restore America's honor in the world community. Hold this government responsible for its wide-reaching abuses. And for the sake of the very basis of our nation — the American Constitution — vote against this evil in November. Your nation and world depend upon it.

Wake up, my countrymen. Remember.

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's Science & Technology section*. For more of Webster's musings, visit Gonzomuckraker.BlogSpot.com.

Werewolves of Crawford

I love werewolves.

They're hairy. They're vulnerable to *only* silver. They're hairy. They're cursed. They're hairy. They're moon-powered.

They're hairy, like me.

Need I say more?

To list my top five favorite werewolf movies is tough, though I'll never forget making out with this one hot redheaded chic after watching *An American Werewolf In Paris*.

She's now living in Europe married to some older dude, from what I hear.

Oh, well. We'll always have *Paris*, I guess.

Despite lacking a redheaded lip-locker at my side, *Underworld* was still cool because the werewolves were all about rebelling from their vampire slave-masters.

Teen Wolf wasn't a bad flick either, considering I was old enough to play patty cake and yet see the connections between Michael Landon's break-out role in *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*.

John Landis' *An American Werewolf In London* was awesome not only because of Rick Baker's Academy Award winning make-up, but also because the film was so damn dark and funny that it didn't need Angie Everhart nibbling on my ear.

Be that as it may, there is still only one *The Wolf Man*.

Okay, in today's Final Jeopardy round, the category is "Stars."

The answer is: In the 1941 movie *The Wolf Man*, the pentagrams the cursed Wolfman Larry Talbot sees on the palm of his victims' hands is based on the stars that marked this ethnic group for death.

*Dieb hums the theme to *Jeopardy*.*

Time's up.

Sorry, the answer we were looking for was "the Jews."

We would have also accepted "The Chosen People" as an answer, although please ignore the irony out of respect for

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



those who can't take a joke.

See, Curt Siodmak wrote the screenplay for *The Wolf Man* based on his experiences as a Jewish German who viewed Hitler's rise to power first hand.

And thus, the modern myth of the werewolf was born from real live monsters with a penchant for genetic purity. Hmm, genetic purity?

That sounds an awful lot like the wish list science businesses make nowadays:

"With more research in stem cells, we can cure Michael J. Fox of his lycanthropy!"

"Ur, or is that muscular dystrophy? I can never remember. Hey, Igor, you think maybe Jerry Lewis might know?"

Or am I just shooting silver bullets at innocent human beings here?

Truth is, corporations aren't human beings. Nor are they innocent.

Yet biotech companies are allowed to patent genetically-engineered forms of life, except a full-birth human being, of course.

This takes the idea of an ownership society to a whole new level, don't it?

Instead of owning slaves and pack animals, corporations can own our genes, those bits and pieces of our bodies that constitute the evolution of our species.

Boy, as much as I love werewolves, you think they can get me my very own honey-haired wolf-mama?

Hmm, on second thought, maybe not such a good idea.

I wouldn't wish that amount of hair-care products on anyone, even my exes.

Yikes!

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To The Editor:

The Imperialist policies of the Bush Administration dictate an indefinite stay in the Middle East and a continuous state of war. Peace has no place on their agenda. To establish a permanent stronghold for control of, and profit from, the region's oil resources has always been their objective. The Bush neocons, as with the practitioners of all ideologies, pursue their goals with obdurate and singleminded purpose, believing that the ends justify the means, even if thousands must be slaughtered.

The superiority of our military guaranteed the anticipated quick and easy victory over the militarily vulnerable state of Iraq, but in their ignorance and arrogance, the Bush team assumed the occupation would be a cakewalk. However, the reality has been quite different from the assumption and public opinion may finally force withdrawal.

Vice President Cheney claims that if we'd eavesdropped within the United States before 9-11, 9-11 wouldn't have happened; yet sufficient and often detailed warnings were received and if the administration ignored those warnings, deliberately allowing

9-11 to happen, it was to afford them the excuse to assault the oil-rich nation and to provide Mr. Bush the opportunity to be seen as an alert and responsive president. Some would say that it was a calculated risk, paying off short term, but unfortunately for them, backfiring. Whatever the scope of their infractions, our outrageous leaders are being betrayed by their own horrific schemes.

Although Vice President Cheney may be behind them, in collusion with Pentagon hawks, accountability cannot be further diluted and the commander-in-chief must be considered the party ultimately responsible for the reckless and inhumane actions of the past few years that are reaping such calamitous consequences.

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport
To The Editor:

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." This wisdom has been known and cited for centuries, yet too many Liberals stand by and let right wing extremists intimidate and slander people who do not think exactly as they do. The title of this piece is actually a misnomer. In a democracy, Liberalism should need no defense.

I am a veteran of the Korean Conflict. I love my country and served it for almost 30 years. I was born before Franklin Roosevelt became president and have lived through 13 presidents. I am a political Independent and have voted for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. I do not belong to and do not support any political party.

I am sick and tired of right-wingers accusing those of us who want more democracy and individual freedom for all Americans of being unpatriotic. Their smear and sneer tactics have influenced the opinions of some citizens to the point where they automatically equate dissent with treason. The accusers do not seem to realize that dissent is the essence of Democracy. Passive or submissive people are not truly free.

I refuse to be passive or submissive and encourage others to stand up for

their beliefs, also.

For 50 years or more the American public has been bombarded with attacks on political Liberals. It is about time that these attacks are answered.

Spiro T. Agnew, that great American who barely avoided prison, sneeringly spoke of "pointy-head Liberals" and "dogooders". These and other epithets were used to deride and degrade the efforts of those people who have tried to improve the lot of all Americans.

Simply reading a dictionary, [something the right-wing seems unwilling to do] gives the true definition of a political Liberal. For instance; my dictionary says that a political Liberal is "One who advocates more individual freedom and democracy and believes that government can and should have a positive effect on the lives of the people." Further definitions say that "Liberals are favorable or in accord with concepts of maximum individual freedom; especially with respect to matters of personal belief or expression and encourage representational government rather than monarchies or dictatorships."

There is more in that same vein, but I think that sums up the true definition of a political Liberal.

Throughout the history of this great nation, and the world, the Conservatives have always defended the status-quo. That is what conservative means. For instance:

At the time of the birth of this nation the Conservatives opposed independence from Britain. After independence they offered George Washington a crown to be king of the United States. Of course he refused.

The Conservatives also tried to set up a system of landed aristocracy. I can see it now. "Duke of New Mexico" or "Margrave of the Ohio Valley" or some such idiocy.

The Liberals of the time opposed this. The Conservatives of the time also thought the first ten amendments to the Constitution were unnecessary.

These same people thought that only men who owned a certain amount of property should be allowed the vote. Again, Liberals opposed that. They said that any man, no matter how poor, should be allowed to vote in all elections.

Later, the Conservatives defended slavery and called Lincoln Republicans "radicals."

In the slave states a plantation owner was given an extra vote in all state and local elections for every male slave he owned. That is the main reason public education was almost non-existent throughout the South.

Child labor laws were condemned by the Conservatives because they said such laws would destroy the nation's ability to compete in foreign markets. Maybe you remember seeing photos of little boys in coal-mines and little girls working in cotton mills.

Women's suffrage was condemned because they were considered to be unable to make any serious decisions. Workplace safety laws and the Pure Food and Drug Act were opposed by Conservatives, again, because they said it would destroy our ability to compete in the market-place, and that they were interfering with "free enterprise."

The Conservatives called the Social

Security and Wagner-Payser Acts "socialist."

They were violently opposed to the Civil Rights Acts.

One piece of "Liberal" legislation opposed by the right has had a tremendous positive effect on the nation. If you don't already know, it is the "Veteran's Readjustment Act of 1944" or as it is more commonly called "The GI Bill." If I remember rightly, a couple of million young American veterans were paid by our government to further their educations. The benefits of this piece of this bill to the nation are incalculable. The bill passed Congress by one vote. The Conservatives opposed it. I would bet that you know people who benefited from this bill. Those that did are now in their 70s or 80s, but I'm sure they, also, remember.

The nation has been repaid a million times over for that investment in our veterans. Including by the extra taxes they paid over the years due to the higher income jobs their GI Bill funded educations allowed them to get. So, the next time you hear someone sneer at Liberals, you might consider the source and suggest that they take the time to read some history.

SLANDER - LIBERAL LIES ABOUT THE AMERICAN RIGHT

I have been reading Ann Coulter's book, "Liberal Lies About The American Right". It is very interesting. One of the things I find interesting is how she accuses Liberals of defaming the right while she spouts a constant stream of insults and smears in every paragraph. For instance:

"The liberal catechism includes a hatred of Christians, guns, the profit motive and political speech and an infatuation with abortion, the environment, and race discrimination."

WOW! All Liberals are atheists, gun control freaks, and hate for anyone to make a profit. George Soros and Michael Moore will be surprised to know that. Both are devout Christians and Soros is a billionaire and Moore is a multi-millionaire. So much for accuracy about those subjects.

She also says that Liberals hate political speech: How interesting. Liberals are always trying to generate a dialog on subjects that the neo-cons refuse to debate. Those on the right control all branches of the government.

An infatuation with abortion and the environment and race discrimination?

Again, WOW! Baby killers and tree huggers and N — Lovers. Strong words but totally inaccurate. The Liberals I know don't like abortion but believe a woman should have control over her own body. Environmentalists want to keep the developers from completely denuding the land. Shouldn't some places be left alone? Race discrimination is a bad thing.

If you believe in Adam and Eve you believe that we are all their descendents. If you believe in evolution you believe the evidence of DNA shows that all people are related. The Liberals I know believe that all people should be treated with equal dignity and fairness.

Ms. Coulter does not seem to know that she is free to do anything she wants within the law, including insulting and denigrating the very people who are responsible for her freedom. "Ignorance is curable; stupidity is terminal."

As a political Liberal I am free to disagree with other Liberals. And, I find that there are things that some of them espouse that I disagree with. I am glad that we all have that right. I hope the right-wingers will not take it away from us.

"THE WAR IN IRAQ IS A NOBLE CAUSE"

Mr. Bush said we must crush Saddam Hussein because he was a threat to our nation and his neighbors.. He told us that Iraq had 'Weapons of mass destruction' and planned to use them. We were told that he could deploy those weapons in 45 minutes. None were found.

When no weapons were found we were told that Saddam had programs in place to produce them. No feasible programs were found.

Nothing was found. Nada! Zilch! Zero! The whole scenario was just smoke and mirrors made up to fool the American people into thinking that Iraq was a threat to us and world peace.

Bush and Co. used the old trick of using fear and hate to galvanize the country into supporting him. Karl Rove and that bunch know very well that fear and hate will unite millions of people, but love will only unite a few. They also know that most Americans don't read. It is not that they can't read, they just don't bother to read. They get 99% of all their information about day to day events from television. And, too many of them get their news from FOX.

A disproportionate number of FOX viewers STILL believe that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, that he had ties to Al Qaeda, and that he was a threat to the U.S!

Still believe in "Fair and Balanced" news?

We must be vigilant or we will lose our freedom. The extreme Right never ceases their assault on our liberty. They may be temporarily defeated but they begin immediately to undermine the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Neo-Fascists who control our government at this time are the worst in our history. They are arrogant, secretive, corrupt and worst of all, incompetent.

I do not say "God Bless the United States," I say God Help the United States.

John Ford, Roswell, N.M.

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THE BEEF CHECKOFF this summer will help Texas high school juniors and seniors examine the beef industry's diverse career opportunities. The Texas Beef Council and Texas Cooperative Extension invite eligible students to apply to attend the Texas Beef Young Leaders Program June 25-29 in Amarillo.

Texas Checkoff Helps Students Explore Careers In Beef Industry

AMARILLO — The Texas beef check-off program invites Texas high school juniors and seniors to take a close look next summer at the diverse career opportunities available in today's beef industry.

The Texas Beef Council (TBC) and Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) will host the first Texas Beef Young Leaders Program June 25-29 in Amarillo. Interested juniors and seniors must submit an application and be accepted to attend.

"As the \$153 billion U.S. beef industry continues to expand its markets, products and technology, it creates more career opportunities for young Texans who are just a few years away from entering the job market," said Richard Forgason, DVM, a Hungerford, Texas, beef producer. "The Texas checkoff is funding this program to help many Texas students examine their beef opportunities before they choose a college or start their careers."

Forgason, who serves as chairman of TBC's beef quality committee, said the beef industry offers diverse career opportunities ranging from beef cattle production to occupations in the fields of food safety, beef marketing and nutrition.

The Texas Beef Young Leaders Program will give Texas students an opportunity to learn first-hand about these many opportunities while also developing their professional skills. Over five days of interactive sessions, the participants will:

- Explore many different career opportunities in today's beef industry.
- Build communications skills through oral presentations.
- Interact with key industry leaders and managers.
- Expand industry awareness after the seminar through required presentations in their communities.
- Create lifelong contacts with fellow Texas students interested in similar career paths.

TBC and TCE invite interested Texas high school juniors and seniors in the 2006-2007 school year to apply for this unique program. Applications are available from 4-H agents, FFA teachers and through the junior representatives at beef breed associations. Interested applicants can also request an application from TBC at 1-800-846-4113 or go to www.texasbeef.org and download an application form.

Perry Declares Statewide Drought Disaster Requests USDA Assistance For All 254 Texas Counties

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry today declared a disaster in all 254 Texas counties due to severe drought conditions, and requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency provide disaster relief assistance for Texas farms and ranches that have suffered economic and physical losses as a result.

Today's action builds upon Perry's ongoing efforts to secure drought assistance for Texas farms and ranches. Since early summer, Perry has requested assistance for 113 drought-affected counties on behalf of local officials. To date, the USDA has approved 54 of those requests.

Perry asked that the USDA expedite all pending requests, and also approve all remaining Texas counties for assistance.

"Our farmers and ranchers have been suffering from extremely dry conditions, as well as devastating wildfires," Perry said. "I am asking the USDA to help all farmers and ranchers in Texas who have been affected so they can recover."

If Perry's statewide request is ap-

proved, qualified farm operators in all Texas counties will be eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the USDA's Farm Service Agency. Producers can borrow up to 100 percent of actual production for physical losses, or a maximum of \$500,000. The agency also offers additional programs, such as technical assistance, to eligible farmers.

On Dec. 26, Perry declared a statewide disaster due to the threat of wildfires caused by extremely dry weather conditions. On Jan. 11, President Bush approved Perry's request for a statewide Presidential Disaster Declaration, making Texans whose homes and property were destroyed or damaged by wildfires eligible to receive individual assistance, and local jurisdictions that have been fighting the costly fires will be eligible for public assistance.

Dry conditions are expected to continue in the coming weeks and months. For a list of Texas counties that already have been approved for USDA assistance, or counties that currently have a pending assistance request, please visit Governor Perry's website at www.governor.state.us.

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