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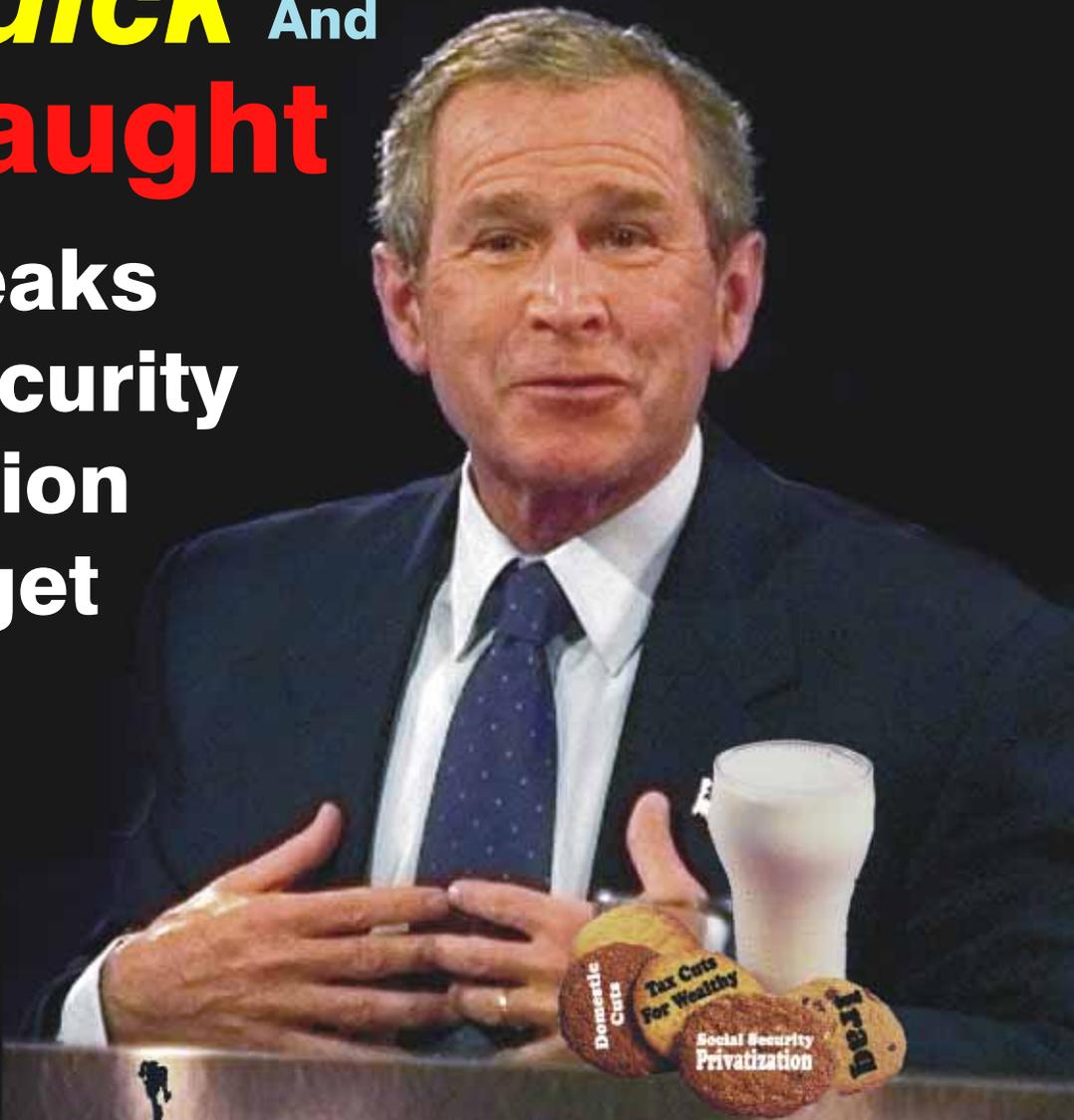
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Law Students Protest Gonzalez, Wiretapping

WASHINGTON — A group of 22 protestors interrupted Attorney General Alberto Gonzales during his defense of the National Security Agency's domestic spy program at Georgetown Law School in Washington late last month.

While Gonzalez mentioned the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, four student protestors held a banner with the words attributed to Benjamin Franklin "Those who would sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither." Five other student protestors walked out on the speech.

Gonzalez, however, remained unphased during the protest and kept talking.

Democrats, such as former President Jimmy Carter and former Vice President Al Gore, and a few Republicans say that the program is illegal because it spies on U.S. citizens without a warrant.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, said recently that he thinks that Bush broke the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 which calls for a secret court to okay such spying.

Gonzales, on the other hand, has said that the program was approved by Congress, that the president has the authority regardless because he is commander-in-chief, and the FISA act is too restrictive for using during a "war on

terror."

Two lawsuits, one from the American Civil Liberties Union and another from the Center for Constitutional Rights,

have been filed recently to stop the program.

Gonzalez is to meet with the Senate Judiciary Committee later this month.

Sheehan Drops Challenge For U.S. Senate Seat

BERKLEY, Calif. — The mother who re-electified the anti-war movement in the United States last August has decided not to run against a Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., in the June primary.

Cindy Sheehan, the mother of slain soldier, Casey, said last Thursday that the anti-war movement would be better served if she remained a private citizen keeping her bonds intact with her allies while continuing to pressure the government from the outside.

"Some people don't agree with my politics, but at least they agree with my heart," said Sheehan, 48. "And if I'd gone into the (political) arena right now, a lot of that would have changed."

Sheehan said she would campaign in support of any anti-war candidates for office regardless of party affiliation.

"It's not enough to say that one is critical of the war in Iraq," Sheehan said. "If an elected official voted for the war, votes for the funding of the war, and doesn't call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops, then that official is 'pro-war' no matter what he or she says."

Feinstein is still on Sheehan's protest list for voting for Bush to use force in Iraq and not calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Feinstein defends herself by saying that the Bush administration misled her then, but also says that a quick troop withdrawal would be irresponsible.

White House Approved Leaks, Says Libby

WASHINGTON — I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, admitted to a federal grand jury that his bosses allowed him to divulge top secret information to the press.

The purpose of these leaks, according to court papers, was to defend the Bush administration against a report that the cause for invading Iraq was unjustified.

This testimony will be used to support evidence Libby met with former New York Times reporter Judith Miller, according to documents filed last month by special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald.

In summer 2003, the former White House aide told reporters of the contents of a classified National Intelligence Estimate, a report for high-level government officials, including the president.

Fitzgerald's letter to Libby's lawyers dated Jan. 23 said Libby, 55, also testified that one other official leaked secret information to reporters at that time.

The White House refused to comment on Fitzgerald's letter, though Libby's lawyer said his client would not fight federal charges by blaming his bosses.

Libby is charged with lying to a grand jury about his role in revealing the identity of covert CIA agent Valerie Plame to the media.

Robert Novak published Plame's identity in a July 2003 column after the agent's husband, former U.S. Ambassador Joseph Wilson, said that Iraq was not seeking uranium in Niger to make weapons of mass destruction, contrary to the White House's insistence.

Bush Budget Cuts Public Broadcasting

WASHINGTON — Big Bird is in President Bush's cross hairs.

The president's 2007 budget request calls for slashing funds to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting by more than \$150 million.

"We've dealt with cuts from this White House every year, but these are the deepest he's ever presented," said John Lawson, president/CEO of the Association of Public Television Stations. "We see a clear and present danger here."

The home of Sesame Street is planned

to be cut by \$53.5 million in 2007 and \$50 million more in 2008 while military spending increases to pay for the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, though troop reductions are being strongly hinted at in the coming year.

Conservative Republicans are notorious for wanting to cut CPB funds because many see it as a feeding ground of liberalism. Just last year Congress restored cuts okayed by Bush, but this year, the administration threatens to cut even deeper.

FEMA Cuts Hotel Payments For Katrina Victims

NEW ORLEANS — The Federal Emergency Management Agency started reducing funding to pay for the hotel stays for over 4,500 evacuees from

Hurricane Katrina early last week.

Protesters rallied outside the Crowne Plaza in New Orleans with signs that said: "No trailers. No eviction."

Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco was upset that FEMA ended the hotel program before acquiring alternative housing.

The agency extended payments to more than 20,000 victims through this week or perhaps until March 1. Some evacuees found new housing, but others said they couldn't.

A FEMA spokesman said agency workers went door-to-door to about 25,000 hotel rooms to give evacuees enough time to file for an extension. Some people ran when they saw a FEMA official approaching, said the spokesman.

About 80 percent of the 4,000 evacuees in Houston received extensions in area hotels until Monday. The other 20 percent didn't make proper arrangement with FEMA, according to a spokesman for Houston Mayor Bill White.

Church Fires Appear To Be Linked In Ala.

BOLIGEE, Ala. — Nine church fires in rural Alabama could be linked, according to Alabama Gov. Bob Riley. Five fires at Baptist churches south of Birmingham have been ruled arson, while four other fires in western Alabama showed similar traits last week.

Officials say that while there is no proof of conspiracy against Baptist churches, a "thrill motive" could be at work. Authorities are investigating witness accounts of two white men in a dark SUV who appeared near the fires. Other vehicles are suspected as well.

The fires are split between white and black congregations with four black churches being burned Thursday and five white churches being burned Friday.

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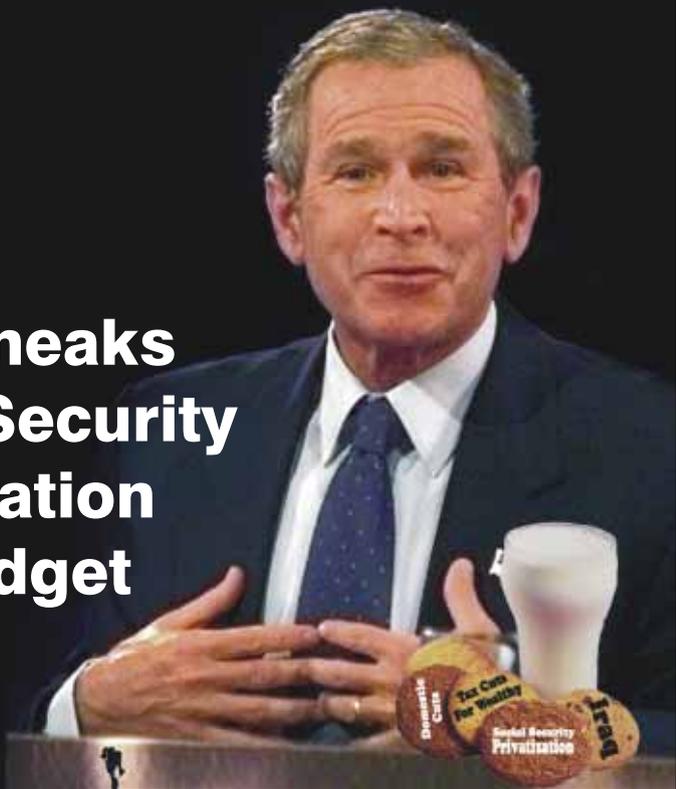
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COOKIE JARRED

The Quick And The Caught

Bush Sneaks Social Security Privatization Into Budget



BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

WASHINGTON — If you spend practically a whole year campaigning to privatize Social Security, and the public and Congress refuses to sign off on it, what do you do?

For President Bush, you sneak the privatization program into a federal budget proposal like the one he sent to Congress last Monday.

This new proposal allows citizens to voluntarily create private accounts in 2010 at the cost of over \$700 billion in Social Security tax revenues for the first seven years.

This move comes as a major surprise, considering the Bush Administration last year refused to reveal any legislation let alone costs such a Social Security privatization program might incur.

President Bush, it should be noted, made no mention of his intentions to slip the plan into his budget proposal in his State of the Union address the week prior.

The only surprise during the address, however, was when Democrats mocked the president with a standing ovation after he said, "Congress did not act last year on my proposal to save Social Security." It's tough to act on a Social Security privatization proposal, though, when he never submitted any specific legislation on it to Congress.

Be that as it may, these new "voluntary private accounts" under Bush's plan will be able to contain up to four percent of a citizen's wages from Social Security in the first year. In the beginning, the accounts max out at \$1,100 annually and increase by \$100 a year through 2016.

Even with numbers on the table, the plan is fuzzy on what services Social Security recipients would see cut if they chose to use Bush's accounts, not to mention how the accounts operate.

The Bush proposal also changes the way Social Security is calculated, though this so-called "progressive indexing" seems more like welfare than an earned benefit if you look closely.

Under this plan, Social Security benefits are still tied to wages for people with low income. However, people with high income would have their benefits linked to inflation. In the end, the rich people

pay more into this new system than poor people.

But if the Bush Administration was truly concerned with "saving" Social Security and still serving the coming Baby Boomers in retirement, then he could have proposed several other measures.

James K. Galbraith, the Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in government-business relations at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, in his piece in the AMERICAN PROSPECT, said that if the U.S. economy takes a downturn just below average, its population growth falters, and Social Security benefits are only funded through payroll taxes, then, yes, there would be a crisis in the future. But otherwise, Social Security is doing fine.

In such a crisis case he detailed, the funding sources for Social Security would have to be extended away from payroll taxes, which already cut too deep into working class incomes, to care for the two-thirds of the elderly in America, he wrote.

Galbraith proposed a series of suggestions that formed the solution to the so-called Social Security "crisis":

"If there is a Social Security funding gap, fill it by raising taxes on those who

can afford to pay. The right transfer is from the wealthy (some of them elderly), not from the young. How? Restore the estate and gift tax (and perhaps raise the rate on the largest estates). Impose a new top income-tax rate for millionaires. Impose new taxes on financial transactions. Close the loopholes that permit, in particular, the use of offshore tax havens. Revenues from these sources can be credited contingently to the Social Security Trust Fund — to pay benefits if the pessimists are right and new revenues are eventually required. If not, they can go to deficit reduction."

It has yet to be seen, though, whether President Bush will call for another bipartisan commission to salvage a re-vamping of Social Security now that he has let his plans become more fully known.

Budget Attacks

Still, there were other attacks leveled at Bush's \$2.77 trillion budget plan last week when members of Congress from both parties said that the budget cuts would harm education, healthcare, and farm programs while the budget deficit would increase to \$423 billion, an all-time high.

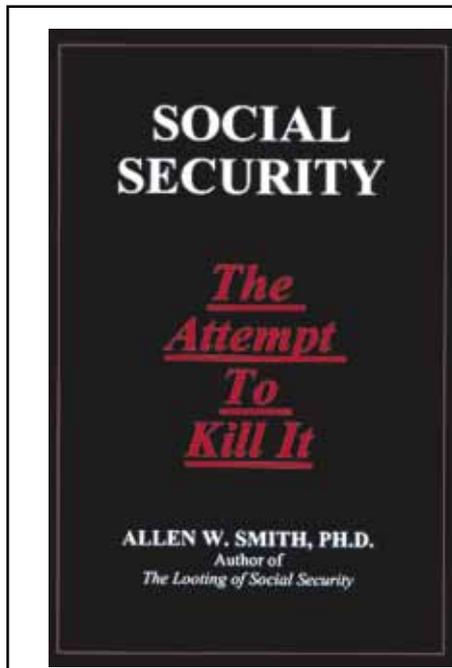
Democrats said the Bush budget un-

derstated the needs of American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan but also relied heavily on foreign financing of the national debt. Using charts, Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., noted that the foreigners held \$1 trillion of the U.S. debt before Bush took office, but now, five years later, that number has more than doubled.

The Pentagon would receive a big boost, with a seven percent increase to \$439 billion in 2007, which doesn't account for Iraq and Afghanistan. The Department of Homeland Security would also see a large increase by six percent or \$42.7 billion more.

On the home front, however, the president wants to slash \$36 billion in Medicare, \$5 billion in farm programs, and \$4.9 billion in Medicaid for children all over the next five years.

"This budget will make life harder for many Americans," said Rep. Charlie Gonzalez (D-San Antonio), who sits on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "Seniors, children, and working Americans should not shoulder the burden of funding cuts. At a time when many American families are barely getting by, the President wants to remove some of the tools they've been using to make it."



RECOMMENDED READING

May Be Ordered On The Lone Star Iconoclast Website:

www.lonestaricon.com

or from Amazon Books

www.amazon.com

Silver-Haired Legislature Filing Dates Announced

WACO — Candidates for the Texas Silver Haired Legislature (TSHL), an elected group of advocates for the state's elderly, may begin picking up candidacy forms at the Heart of Texas Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging. Elections will be held on May 23.

The AAAHOT office is located at 300 Franklin Ave. in Waco, and will have these forms and petitions available through the Feb. 28, filing deadline. Completed forms must be returned to the AAAHOT office along with a \$5 filing fee.

Prospective candidates for the TSHL must be at least 60 years old by Jan. 1, 2006, registered to vote in Texas, and live in the precinct from which they are seeking election. Before filing each candidate must obtain petition signatures from 25 older adults who are registered voters and who live in the respective precinct.

The Heart of Texas region will have four delegates to the Silver Haired Legislature. Precincts are established on the basis of population. Precinct 1, Bosque and Hill Counties, one delegate; Precinct 2, Limestone, Freestone, and Falls Counties, one delegate; and Precinct 3, McLennan County, two del-

egates.

The Silver Haired Legislature convenes in Austin every two years. A total of 117 legislators form throughout the state will converge on the House of Representatives Chambers in Austin. In 2006

and 2007, TSHL legislators will attend three meetings lasting several days each, plus other meeting as the issues and interests of the legislators dictate. TSHL legislators must pay their own expenses when attending TSHL sessions.

Emergency Haying, Grazing Of CRP Land Approved For Texas

TEMPLE — The USDA is permitting emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land established in permanent grasses across Texas. This action is in response to the continuing drought and recent devastating wildfires throughout the state.

Emergency haying is authorized until May 1, and emergency grazing is authorized until June 1, 2006.

CRP participants in every county in Texas are eligible to take part in emergency haying and grazing, but they must visit their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) to get approval. They must also visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to obtain a modified conservation plan which will list specific requirements. This modified conservation plan will help landowners determine proper grazing heights and the proper design of haying strips needed to meet the emergency haying or grazing requirements.

NRCS can provide technical assis-

tance to all agriculture producers through the development of a conservation plan, which includes drought management strategies. When a drought plan is requested, Conservation Planners with the NRCS give the producer a complete assessment of their current management system and what changes may be needed to minimize the effects of the drought and provide continued protection of the natural resources.

NRCS, through the invitation of the local soil and water conservation districts, is the federal government's principal agency for conserving natural resources on private lands, while encouraging voluntary efforts to protect soil, water, and wildlife on private lands. NRCS has offices in USDA Service Centers in nearly every county in Texas and offers its services free of charge.

For more information, call the USDA-NRCS office in your county, listed under "USDA" in the phone book or on the Texas NRCS website at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/.

Region G. Regional Water Planning Group Seeks Member Nominations

WACO — The Brazos G Regional Water Planning Group (RWPG) is soliciting nominations for one voting member representing Municipalities in the Brazos G Regional Water Planning Area. Nominations will be accepted until 5 p.m., Friday, March 24.

In selecting a voting member for the vacancy, the Group will consider a number of factors, including the nominee's qualifications to represent the interest category, willingness to devote the time necessary to participate in the Regional Water Planning Process, and willingness to abide by the bylaws. The RWPG voting members will strive to achieve geographic, ethnic, and gender diversity.

The vacancy is defined as follows:

- One voting member vacancy representing the interest of "Municipalities" defined by the Texas Water Code, §16.053 (c) "as governments of cities created or organized under the general, home-rule, or special laws of the state".

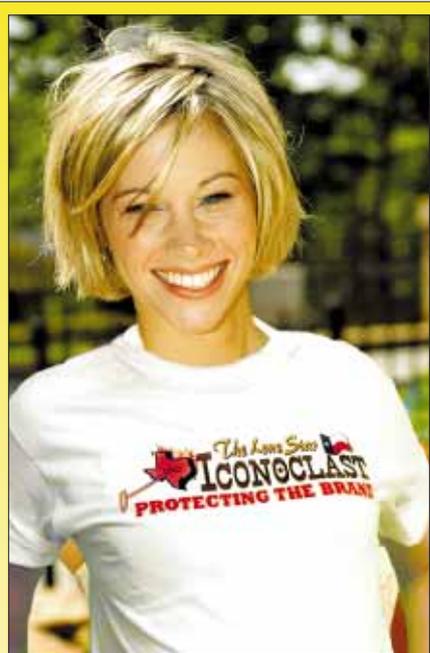
- Brazos G members are not compensated for their services by the State of Texas. If eligible, travel expenses for voting members may be reimbursed in accordance with rules adopted by the Texas Water Development Board as funds are available.

- The new voting member shall be filling a term that expires at the end of calendar year 2007; and thereafter, shall be eligible to serve a maximum of two additional consecutive five-year terms.

- In order to provide a smooth transition into the Group, the new voting member will be required to attend new member orientation sessions. Nominees are invited to visit the Brazos G website at www.brazosgwater.org for additional information including the bylaws.

Nomination packets shall include a brief cover letter from the nominee explaining how the nominee's qualifications represent the interest category sought; resume; and support letters (maximum of six recommended).

Nomination packets should be mailed to the following address and will be accepted until 5 p.m., Friday, March 24. Brazos G RWPG Executive Committee c/o Teresa Clark, Brazos River Authority, P.O. Box 7555, Waco, Texas 76714-7555.



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Elderly Access To Care Threatened By Lack Of State Funding

\$75 Million Emergency Appropriation Urged to Meet State's Obligation

AUSTIN — Citing a statewide funding deficit that threatens access to quality healthcare for seniors, the Texas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (TAHSA) urged state leaders to immediately appropriate \$75 million in emergency funding.

"We cannot expect our frail elderly to have access to quality care, when the Legislature continues to under-fund the actual cost of care. According to the state's own figures, frail elderly care is in a deficit of at least \$1 billion," said TAHSA President and CEO George Linal. "It is time for the Legislature to stand up for our seniors and their healthcare."

Linal said the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) should convene immediately and appropriate the funds for nursing homes. Last year, after the Legislature failed to adequately fund nursing homes, the state's leadership pledged to address the issue through an emergency budget measure, conducted by the LBB.

"We cannot continue this dangerous waiting game with legislative leadership. Without emergency funding, faith- and community-based organizations providing care for the frail and elderly could be forced to greatly reduce the amount of care for frail elderly Texans," said Linal. "This is unacceptable to the mission and purpose of each faith-based organization caring for the elderly."

A bleak fiscal picture confronts the frail elderly in Texas non-profit nursing homes:

- Medicaid reimbursement rates in

Texas are among the lowest in the nation.

- The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) estimates state reimbursements are 20 percent below the actual cost of care.

- DADS estimates Medicaid nursing home rates are at least \$1 billion underfunded in Texas.

- The average reimbursement rate is less today than in 2001. (Inflationary Adjustments: 2001: \$99 per day. 2006: \$95 per day.)

- The actual cost of caring for a nursing home resident is about \$125 per day.

- The Texas Legislature failed to address the reimbursement issue in 2005.

"TAHSA had realistic expectations that the reimbursement issue would be addressed last November, when Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick said he was working with Lt. Governor David Dewhurst to resolve the issue. Unfortunately, nothing has happened," said Linal.

In November, Speaker Craddick and Lt. Governor Dewhurst both made commitments to seek more funding at an LBB meeting, with Speaker Craddick's office proposing appropriations of \$75 million per year for nursing home rates.

Although Speaker Craddick and Lt. Governor Dewhurst co-chair the LBB, no meeting has been scheduled to address the shortfall in funding frail elderly care.

"A \$75 million emergency appropriation in 2006 would allow the state to increase reimbursement rates to about \$100 a day, still short of the actual cost of care, but an improvement," Linal said.

Bush Proposes Slashes To Programs That Benefit Rural Texas

WACO — Once again President Bush delivered a budget proposal to Congress that cuts more than \$5 billion from programs that help farmers and rural communities survive. Texas Farmers Union said that cutting these programs at a time when the rural economy is struggling is a serious mistake.

“Once again the Administration is proposing to drastically cut the 2002 farm bill

safety net at a time when Texas farms are struggling,” TFSU President Wes Sims said. “Commodity prices have been declining, production in many areas has been down as a result of weather-related disasters, and input costs have skyrocketed as a result of energy costs.”

The 2002 Farm Bill promised farmers and ranchers a guaranteed safety net for six years to help rural America cope with

economic circumstances beyond their control. The administration’s proposal would force Congress to go back on this promise it made to rural America, while cutting taxes for the nation’s wealthiest.

“I know that we need to reduce the federal budget deficit,” Sims said. “But it does not make sense that the administration wants to lower payment limits at a time when we can’t get a price from the

marketplace, especially when we have been ravaged by weather circumstances beyond our control.”

Texas Farmers Union will be working to ensure that Congress does not enact the President’s proposals, and recognizes the need to protect our nation’s food and fiber producers.

INFO: <www.texasfarmersunion.org>

Texas State Historical Association Puts Texana Auction Of The Century On-Line

History Goes High Tech as On-line Auction Makes Texas Treasures Available to Bidders Worldwide

Preview in Early February with Bidding to Open Mid-February

AUSTIN — If you could own a piece of Texas history, what would it be? A gold and topaz ring that Sam Houston gave to his wife? A collection of spurs forged by early West Texas master spur maker Wally Boone? An extremely rare Texas custom saddle made by the Dublin Saddlery in Dublin, Texas, circa 1910? A copy of one of the first widely distributed maps showing Texas as a state in the United States?

Beginning mid-February, these and other Texas treasures will be up for bid on-line as the Texas State Historical Association presents its Texana Auction of the Century. Information about the auction is available on the Texas State His-

torical Association web site, <www.tsha.utexas.edu>. Through the generosity of Heritage Auction Galleries, a link to the auction catalog will be available for browsing and bidding in early February.

“Our on-line auction will allow us to reach Texas history enthusiasts anywhere in the world, and they can bid on-line in the convenience of their homes or offices,” said Robert Wooster, president of the Texas State Historical Association.

This year’s auction is inspired by the success of the Texana Auction of the Decade held in 1981. Some of the highlights of the 2006 auction include:

- Gold ring with topaz stone given by

Sam Houston to his wife. The inside of the band is inscribed “Sam Houston to Margaret Lea.”

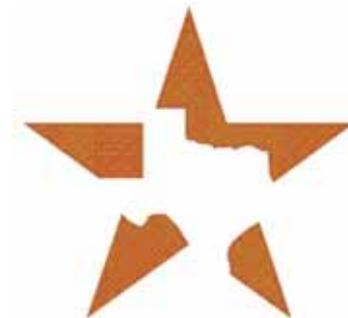
- Wally Boone Spur Collection, 1920s. This is the most extensive, highest quality and best-conditioned assemblage of work from early West Texas master spur maker Wally Boone. He is widely recognized as one of the pioneers who shaped and defined the Texas spur.

- Constitution of the State of West Texas. This dates from when dividing the state was discussed at the Reconstruction Convention of 1868-69.

- Thomas W. House Cotton Archive, 1865-1870. Cotton was king and Thomas House was its leading merchant. Archives provide insight into the cotton industry in Texas.

- A Mexican broadside concerning the condemnation of Emperor Maximilian and his date of execution, 1867.

Bidding closes March 4 during the



2006 Gala & Texana Auction of the Century. The Gala will honor five distinguished Texans for their contributions to the state.

The Gala & Auction will benefit the Association’s innovative *Digital Gateway to Texas History* project. Currently the TSHA web site supports more than 24,000 encyclopedia articles from the *Handbook of Texas Online*, hosting more than four million page views per month from 150 countries worldwide.

In this new initiative, the online database managed and maintained by the Association will expand to comprise the entire published catalogue of TSHA resources, including more than 130 books, 108 volumes of the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, and various updates to the *Handbook of Texas Online*. The Texas State Historical Association’s goal is to engage the support necessary to make it easier for students, teachers, and scholars around the world to access all of our treasures in Texas history.

Waco Agility Group (WAG) of Quail Creek proudly presents the

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Gov. Perry Launches State-Led Border Security Operation

State Operations Center to Coordinate SWAT Teams, Investigators, Air Assets

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry today launched "Operation Rio Grande," a state-led initiative to address escalating violence, increase border security and ensure Texans' safety. The operation brings together a variety of state resources to better secure the Texas-

Mexico border from Brownsville to El Paso.

"There is not only great concern that the drug trade is becoming more aggressive, but that terrorist organizations are seeking to exploit our porous border," Perry said. "Last year alone, 135,000 people who are not of Mexican descent were apprehended entering Texas illegally. The threat is real, and it grows each day."

Recent events along the border indicate that violence and criminal activity have escalated, including the apprehension of four Iraqis headed to U.S. soil by Mexican officials, the discovery of a criminal organization's weapons stockpile in Laredo that included improvised explosive devices and fragmentation hand grenades, and the recent chase of narco-terrorists involving local deputies and Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers in Hudspeth County.

"With 'Operation Rio Grande,' the state will take the lead role in coordinating state and local efforts to detect, track and deter criminal activity along the border," Perry said. "I am taking these actions to make Texas safer and more secure. Using intelligence, available state assets, and a new command and control structure, we are going to take back our border from those who exploit it."

This morning, Perry activated the Governor's Emergency Management Council and placed the Texas Fusion Center on the highest alert level under the supervision of Texas Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw. The State Operations Center will serve as a central point of coordination for state, local and federal officials, as well as a single hub for incident reporting and intelligence support for law enforcement agencies up to 100 miles away from the Rio Grande River.

Perry's action represents the first time the State Operations Center has been activated to coordinate a law enforcement operation.

As part of "Operation Rio Grande," Perry has also ordered deployment of:

- A DPS rapid response team of state troopers dispatched to troubled areas;
- DPS narcotics, motor vehicle theft and criminal intelligence investigators to conduct covert patrols and surveillance activities;
- DPS fixed and rotary aviation assets to support Operation Linebacker patrols;
- A DPS SWAT Team and the development of regionalized, enhanced SWAT teams with rapid response capabilities;
- A border-wide investigation of alleged incursions by the Mexican military, conducted by the Texas Rangers; and
- Other state assets, including Texas Department of Criminal Justice canine search teams, Texas Parks and Wildlife game wardens, and Texas Department of Transportation road barriers.

"While enforcing our border remains the responsibility of the federal government, the consequences of an action are felt right here at home in Texas," Perry said. "The state will not wait for Washington to take all the necessary actions."

Although Perry emphasized that border threats are best addressed by law enforcement, Texas Army National Guard planners and analysts will also provide support to operation.

"Operation Rio Grande" builds upon Operation Linebacker, an initiative developed by the 16-member Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition to deter border-related criminal activities through increased manpower and equipment. Perry has

provided nearly \$10 million to Operation Linebacker since December.

Perry was joined at the news conference by Zapata County Sheriff Sigi Gonzales, who heads the Texas Border

Sheriffs' Coalition, as well as representatives of the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas, the Texas Municipal Police Association and the Department of Public Safety Officer Association.

NYC Peak Oil Conference Set In Late April

NEW YORK CITY — A conference on peak oil will take place over a three day period at the end of April in New York City. Peak Oil NYC is organizing the Energy Solutions Conference on April 26, 27, and 29.

So far, 25 experts will be speaking, including ecologist Richard Heinberg, columnist James Kunstler, and world renowned permaculturist Geoff Lawton.

The goals of the conference are to eradicate the myths surrounding the realities of fossil fuel depletion and its affect on the global economy and to provide potential solutions for a post-peak oil future.

Topics include economic localization, sustainable food systems, alternative transportation, and responsible financial management in a low-energy, sustainable society.

The "Local Solutions to the Energy Dilemma" conference will be located in the Unitarian Church on E. 35th street on Thursday, April 26, and in the Manhattan Center on W. 34th street on Friday, April 27, and Saturday, April 28.

For more information, visit the Energy Solutions Conference website.

INFO

www.energysolutionsconference.org
www.peakoilnyc.org

Ohio Grassroots Summit Slated March 26

AKRON, Ohio — The Progressive Democrats of America are sponsoring a summit on Sunday, March 26, entitled, "Organize, Mobilize, and Deliver the Progressive Vote in 2006" in Ohio.

The summit will feature progressives, labor activists, Ohio Democratic Party leaders sharing practical training in grassroots organizing, strategies for winning votes in Ohio, and network building skills for success in Ohio and the nation in 2006.

Panelists for the day include PDA National Director, Tim Carpenter, Ohio Democrat Party Chair Chris Redfern, and Blue 88 Director Chris Glaros.

The summit will be located at the Main Branch of the Akron Public Library in downtown Akron, 60 South High Street, 44308. There will be free parking and hotels within walking distance.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Patrick Carano or Mary Nichols Rhodes.

INFO

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HILLSBORO — Experience Works, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that provides paid job training and employment services to low income older workers. The company is currently recruiting job-seeking individuals in the community who are 55 and older with limited income and want to work.

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For more information, visit the website at <www.experienceworks.org> or by calling Bobbie Bates at 800-200-2000.



CONGRESSMAN CHET EDWARDS discusses the Army Budget with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Pete Schoomaker at the Capitol. Edwards is the Co-chairman of the bipartisan House Army Caucus and member of the House Budget Committee. Also pictured is Congressman Rob Simmons (R-Conn).

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America Needs Fuzzy Math And Pseudo Science

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Some folks need to remember the first two things anybody learns in school: Sit down and shut up."

Neighbor Bush's sorry state of the union sniveling had its coyote detractors.

Somewhere on the prairie a squealing yelp invades the dreaming night, answered by another wavering scream that invites a yelping chorus like the last day of school.

Everybody with a microphone and a \$50 haircut burred on about the war and the hurricane relief like a commercial promising to reduce swollen casualties and relieve the heartbreak of Katrina.

Some ventured into tenuously daring criticism, the budget, a subject as controversial as a five-alarm fire.

Somebody ought to do something about it just as soon as we run out of marshmallows.

But no one mentioned a pervasive, institutionalized idiocy that has plagued this nation since the late Soviet Union won the space race.

Oh yeah. They won.

They got there first and killed more people doing it.

That gets you top billing in any history book ever written.

But since '57, U.S. politicians have bent the American people at the waist by declaring that American ejukashun needs to teach more Math'nScience.

Math'nScience is the only worthwhile larnin'.

Everything else, like reading and history, just gets in the way of Math'nScience, prayer and reciting the pledge under God.

And God knows we don't need no sissy art or music except to make fence signs and play in the band at football games so we can get some use outa them wussy, pasty-faced peace creep kids.

We have emphasized Math and Science for half a century now, during which time public education has declined at a faster pace than Republican integrity.

The kids can't read and write, but boy, can they ever bubble!

Fact is, most people have little need for either math or science.

The average working stiff needs a course in How Things Work, but enrolling most of us in calculus and comparative anatomy is like teaching a hog to sing.

Works fine if you like accordion and bagpipe duets.

Mathematicians and scientists, a comparatively miniscule segment of the population, need extensive study of math and science.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



The rest of us just need their phone numbers.

There is no unimportant knowledge.

It's just that a few of us need to know the tensile strength of tungsten filament, and the rest of us just need to change the light bulb.

The people who need "more" math and science are those who want to be mathematicians and scientists, a comparatively static minority of the population compared to those who want to be insurance agents, hardware clerks, or dope dealers.

You know, those of us who just need to know a little arithmetic and how to access the "calculator" function on the computer.

That tiny minority of math and science researchers, however, do need to know how to read.

Otherwise, how will they know how to say, "Now I am become death, destroyer of worlds," before they turn the latest baby broiler over to the politicians who never studied history?

Other than the story about Washington throwing a dollar across the Gerry-mander River.

History isn't merely important. It's all we know.

No one knows the future, and by the time we say, "Now," it's in the past.

Everything we talk about is history. Some of it just hasn't been through the Republican spell check yet.

In point of serious fact, there is no educational discipline that needs more emphasis than any other.

The study of mathematics and science just seems safe to those whose political power depends on brute force and massive ignorance.

Neighbor Bush, for example, probably finds it much safer for students to read about quantum mechanics than Xenophon. Binomial equations are more conservatively politically correct than Thomas Malthus.

And if Americans really learn to read, we'll dig up Ronald Reagan and hang him.



"LOOK, KIDS! THEY'RE DIGGING YOUR SHARE OF THE NATIONAL DEBT!"

Editorial OP/ED Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

CZ Fear

Cubic zirconia is to diamonds as dealing in fear is to the "ghetto" President.

Not unlike the fake "diamonds," CZ fear is cheap and can mess with the minds of the unsuspecting.

Somewhere in the future, our grandchildren will look back and wonder why Chicken Little sprouted wings during the opening bars of the 21st century.

Fear today is gone tomorrow. It will likely depart when the bush leaguers that occupy the White House can no longer shout "fire" in the crowded American theatre.

To many, fear is an absolute. Either you have it or you don't.

To others, especially bastions of deception, it is merely a tool — but one that can be quite effective.

Sen. Hillary Clinton was right when she recently took exception to Bush's overuse of the silicon decree that fear rules.

When the public starts to get an inkling of what's really going on at the White House, you can count on the fear card being played. The latest was the announcement of a supposed threat in Los Angeles — four years ago.

Now that's digging deep into the deck. Politically, the queen of fears was turned over to buttress support for the Patriot Act and a classroom pass to al-

low peeking into the girls' dressing room.

It appears, however, that Americans are beginning to wise up.

Gone are the color-coded terrorist alerts of yore that dragged us along a path of submission.

Gone is the belief that those we hire to administer our country won't lie to us — time and again.

Gone is the thought that the war in Iraq is not about oil.

Oh, there are a few out there who still believe.

But they are lying to themselves.

This they have been trained to do, for they are accustomed to being force-fed a new flavor each week and are now addicted.

The only value of fear in politics is to obtain something. It is a license to mislead.

In an honest world, leaders preach the value of not fearing, of facing challenges head-on, of being prepared.

This administration is preaching the opposite.

Being prepared is meaningless. Look at our borders, for instance.

Fear cards are filled with zirconia diamonds.

Let's all get together and denounce them, in spades.

— W. Leon Smith

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Gonzo's Bob And Weave

I wonder if Alberto Gonzales has any boxing experience in his background. Watching the Attorney General expertly, blithely bob and weave his way around virtually every question put to him by the Senate Judiciary Committee last Monday (Feb. 6, 2006) concerning the RoveBush Fascist Regime's policy of electronic spying on American citizens was reminiscent of the "float like a butterfly" style of one youthful Cassius Clay.

For some unknown reason, the normally reliable Committee Chair Arlen Specter (R-PA) did not require that Gonzo be sworn in at the onset of proceedings, a la the unprecedented courtesy extended the oil pals of Bush #43 and Dark Lord Cheney by Ted Stevens (R-AK). Why Specter let AG the AG

slide on this formality is anybody's guess.

By the way, unfettered by the specter of possible perjury charges the oil big shots lied about their secret 2001 meetings and energy policy plots with Dark Lord the Dick Cheney.

My supposition is if tight with King George XLIII or his Gang of Four one neither be held to truthiness nor sincerity when providing, or dodging, testimony at Senate or Congressional Hearings.

At one point, Alberto invoked the antiquated, lame-brained and paranoid policies ill-advisedly thrown into use by Woodrow Wilson during World War I. These tactics included invasions of privacy as well as restrictions on 1st Amendment Freedom of Speech, res-

urrected by the current regime. As is the case now, the Wilson White House was enabled by the lunkheaded Supremes of its day.

In another wrong-headed comparison, Gonzo likened today's supercomputer-generated and satellite-enhanced techniques, dealing with peoples of all nations, to those employed by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War — wherein essentially every participant was an American, and it was virtually impossible to distinguish who sympathized with whose cause.

He also referred to George Washington's reliance on electronic (?) surveillance, and, as this Rove-controlled Regime loves to do, fell back on the FDR card; this time it was that he used electronic techniques within American boundaries.

What's the difference, you might ask? Well, we're not fighting Nazis or Japanese Imperialists, any kind of organized, properly trained and militarily functional Axis-type Wehrmacht. This is not an all out war with an enemy force comprised of a large, mobile military that could strike within our shores en masse. Rather, it is a "war" of our Neo-con Executive Branch's own design, brewed behind closed doors in a cauldron filled with falsities for their own glory and to amass more wealth.

With the exception of several well-programmed questions from three of the Republican Senators on the Committee, whom to America's misfortune and chagrin do little more than waste space in Washington, D.C., Gonzo answered nary an inquiry put to him. These three schlubs, all honorable men, I am sure, are among the 9 percent of GOP loyalists who have upon their desks rubber stamps marked "YES — for Jesus and Bush #43," and "NO — to American Freedoms." They also excel at lobbing Wiffle balls to all Bush nominees, tossing live hand grenades at anyone with a true sense of Liberty.

You'll know them by their names, as they run with the other six usual suspects of lopsided thinking: Tom Coburn (OK); John Cornyn (TX); Jeff Sessions (AL). Here we have three of the nine U.S. Senators who think it's perfectly okie-dokie to torture anyone our military or intelligence community or executive branch or whomever sees fit. And of 18 members on the Senate Judiciary Committee, thankfully their imprimatur for King George XLIII to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, to whomever he wants - in this instance spying on American citizens - are outnumbered 15 to three in favor of our Constitutional rights.

How is it creeps like these guys get elected to lofty office in the first place?

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!*

*Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*
(Lewis Carroll, JABBERWOCKY, from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, 1872)

Gonzo couldn't answer questions as to how many people had had their telephone calls intercepted.

Nor could he answer how many, if any, viable leads or arrests had been attributed to this "program," as he kept calling it.

When asked what was being done



Out Of The Blue

By
**Jerry
Tenuto**

with the hours and hours of data the NSA and whichever other unknown agencies were collecting, Gonzo had no idea.

Neither could, nor would, Gonzo tell America if there were any wholly domestic intrusions upon private communications.

He was neither certain of the law, nor how to apply it.

Gonzo couldn't even come up with a straight answer when Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) reminded him of his denial of any knowledge of such a "program" during appointment hearings in January of 2005.

Since when did it become the function of the Attorney General to run interference for the president and his staff? Does the AG's job description not read something along the lines of protecting the *people* of the Nation?

For some seven hours, the Attorney General of the United States sat in front of 18 duly elected Senators, plus anyone in the World who was watching, and essentially denied any knowledge of what in the hell kind of intelligence gathering was going on from the Oval Office, through the VP's lair of darkness, swirling around unknown agencies, aimed at who knows which American citizens for what precise purpose.

Following non-answer after non-answer ad nauseum, Ranking Democrat Sen. Patrick Leahy (VT) apologized to Gonzo thusly: "I'm sorry, Mr. Attorney General. I forgot. You can't answer any questions that might be relevant to this."

Here is the whole crux of the matter: **WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT THIS REGIME IS UP TO.**

Our best guess as Liberal-thinking, freedom-loving, progressive Americans of the homo sapien variety can only be that whatever it is Herr Ubermeister Karl Rove and Dark Lord the Dick Cheney have concocted with this electronic spying scheme is nefarious in the worst possible manner.

These blackguards used a phony reverence in ideological Christianity to sway voters. They doctored an electorate for votes that weren't acquired honestly, then made illegal use of the Nation's top court to seal and finalize their theft of ultimate power.

Next, they allowed the tragedies of 9/11/2001 to occur — still the RoveBush Fascists' rallying cry — not unlike the 1933 burning of the Reichstag, which resulted in Germany's National Socialist Party taking firm control. Their swiftly enacted Homeland Security Act, much like our rushed through Congress at the insistence of Bush and Cheney with no-time-for-in-depth-scrutinization Patriot Act, took broad swipes at personal freedoms such as: Free expression of opinion; right of privacy of postal and electronic communications; right of assembly and association; protection against unlawful search and seizure; individual property rights; states' rights of self-government.

Don't the previous two paragraphs seem just a little too familiar?

These ersatz leaders faked a crisis

Continued On Next Page

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• **TENUTO...** Continued From Previous Page

solely to stoke the fears within the lowest common denominator of the public. This was merely an excuse to gain support for the illegal, unwarranted invasion of a sovereign nation on the other side of the Planet for no reason whatsoever (if one doesn't count stealing its oil and raking in billions in war profits).

When German generals disagreed with the Little Corporal, they were executed or "vanished." Whichever American generals dared to be honest with the Regime concerning the lack of feasibility in its war schemes were removed from command or publicly humiliated.

The following places could almost be interchangeable – Sudetenland; Afghanistan; Poland; Iraq; France; Iran; Russia; Syria; England...

The miscreants who invaded and overtook our White House created a war, which isn't really a war in the traditional sense, just so young Georgie could repeatedly call himself "commander-in-chief," a title I've heard no other president use, and tell us how he's a "war president" with powers far beyond those of mortal men.

An' he don't hafta folla the law whenever it gits in his way.

The non-communicative performance Alberto Gonzales presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee, not to mention his every public comment in support of any cockamamie idea King George XLIII gets into his head, is proof positive of the extreme level of contempt this regime has for the regular folks that are America.

There was an observer in the gallery during the hearings who waited until... I dunno, maybe until he'd heard enough bullshit or too much of nothing. Or, perhaps the guy was just hungry and ready to go to lunch. Anyway, he utilized his 1st Amendment right and expressed the opinion that Gonzo was a Fascist.

Sen. Specter was willing to let him stay if he sat down and was no longer disruptive. The gentleman opted to leave, apparently having had his say, or was too hungry to hang around, or both.

The good Senator then sort of apologized to Gonzo, telling him he wasn't a Fascist.

But we know better, don't we?

The day after Gonzo took the Senators on an all day merry-go-round ride, King George XLIII and Queen Laura begrudgingly changed their plans to attend the funeral services for Coretta Scott King. Needless to say, they were seriously upstaged, with no effort whatsoever, by everyone else on the dais.

To a small extent, I give him a C+ for moxie – there was no Herr Rove visible to cover his ass.

The erstwhile King squirmed like a six-year-old in his first suit while the Queen of Adding Nothing to the National Discourse sat dispassionately upright, dagger eyes fixed on all speak-

ers with her face scrunched up as if sucking on lemons.

As Jon Stewart quipped on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" the next night, and I also noted privately, Bush was definitely out of his element, surrounded by "a room filled with thousands of people who, outside of the woman on his left and possibly his Dad, didn't vote for him."

It really had to fry their green 'matters when one speaker after another used the opportunity to slam imbecilic White House policies, from the illegal, unnecessary wars to massive cuts in social programs to lack of aid for Katrina victims and New Orleans in general.

The biggest blow to Georgie and Laura's combined, over-inflated ego had to come when Bill and Hillary Clinton received a rousing ovation – and repeated accolades of love – from the 10,000 good folks who came to honor one of America's finest women and an undisputed leader in the movement for Civil Rights and equality for all Americans.

And unsolicited pledges of votes for Hillary for President in 2008!

I sincerely believe that Martin and Coretta, together again at last after 38 years, were smiling warmly down on New Birth Missionary Baptist Church as the people gave a voice united to remind the Bushes what America was all about.

Just watching the proceedings, I could tell King George and Queen Laura still weren't getting it. 'Tis hard to know reality when you refuse to let it touch you.

On Thursday morning the faux president-who-would-be-king spoke, as usual at a time when most people can't watch, to the National Guard Association. (For some reason he likes the NGs, and they think he's just peachy-keen, despite the fact that their membership has been screwed over royally with reckless abandon by the insanity of RoveBushCheneyRumsfeldRice misguided policies.)

As is his standard speech in front of these war-friendly groups, King George read a laundry list of how much spending was gonna go to what they needed (applause), and they were gonna git this piece a'armored stuff (more applause) an' that piece a'armored stuff (still more applause).

The sad thing is, these suckers were applauding the King for telling them he was gonna git 'em the same stuff he and Dark Lord Cheney and Rummy have been telling them they're gonna have for three years now – and they ain't got most of it yet.

King George made some half-assed attempts to try to justify his spying on Americans scam by bringing up old news, such as a 2002 plot to attack the tallest building in Los Angeles by Asian terrorists. They were going to hijack

an airliner by wearing shoe bombs.

This was one of 10 alleged terrorist plots the U.S. and its allies foiled around the world according to a list released by the White House last October. Typically, there are no real facts to back up the veracity of the Regime's claim to the existence of these plots.

If there were any "terrorists" involved, they would have been "renditioned" to who knows where, kept incognito, and tortured until there was a confession. Or they died.

And there is absolutely no indication that any wiretapping programming led to these plots that may or may not have existed.

Senate Intelligence Committee members Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), as well as yours truly, were wary of this disclosure considering the timing King George picked. In separate comments they each questioned its validity and viability.

I wonder why we, the taxpaying public, never heard about this before.

Funny how Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was also kept unaware of this dastardly plot against his city – until King George blabbed it on worldwide television some four years later.

(According to a Feb. 9 article in the WASHINGTON POST by Carol D. Leonnig, the Constitutionality and legality of Bush's wiretapping scheme has been questioned by U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, who presides over a secret surveillance court. Her predecessor, Royce C. Lamberth, along with at least one top Justice Department lawyer, expressed the same concerns.)

Meanwhile, the Republican Congress in January passed a budget bill curtailing or pretty much eliminating all social programs. Then the RoveBush Fascist 2007 Fantasy Budget came out

last week, calling for enough military spending to overshadow any remaining social programs.

Thus, the people funding the Government are getting absolutely nothing back other than Weapons of Mass Destruction – and loss of personal freedoms.

Must I really refer back to Germany of the 1930s?

The RoveBush Fascists have no interest in governance. They only want to rule. And the only people whose well-being they're concerned with is their white-tie, privileged and powerful base.

In "Magnum Force," when Inspector Harry Callahan's partner asked whether they should follow the Mercury or the Cadillac limousine, he replied, "Stick with the money."

Remember – if they won't tell us whom they're spying on, we can't possibly know whom they're not spying on.

There's no way I trust King George XLIII, Dark Lord the Dick Cheney, Gonzo and the rest of that cabal to not spy on Americans as they please.

Can you trust them?

Honestly?

DAY 1,893 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, run the rest of their cabal out of our Nation's Capital.

(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service in the U.S. Army, 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. Visit his blog BLUE STATE VIEW at illinoiscentral.blogspot.com)

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Gonzales Versus Common Sense, Round One

On Monday, Feb. 6, 2006, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales sat before the Senate and answered questions about the Bush Domestic Spying program. Judging from the transcripts that have surfaced, it was a riveting exchange with plenty of finger shaking and carefully worded statements.

Since the story about Bush's warrantless spying and wiretapping broke in December of 2005, there has been a lot of talk on the Right about using it as a blunt weapon against Democrats. The line is that Democrats care about partisan politics more than national security, making them unpatriotic, friends of Osama, Freedom Haters, and all-around bad dudes. There has been so much table-pounding on part of the Right, many think Congress will just sit down and drown its loss of oversight powers in a bottle of Wild Turkey. But if the first grilling of Alberto Gonzales is any indicator, Congress just may be on the road to Sober Justice.

The first volleys fired against the Administration were from none other than Pennsylvania Republican Arlen Specter on Sunday's *Meet the Press*. He told Journalist Tim Russert that the argument being presented by Bush is "very strained and unrealistic." He went on to say, "The authorization for the use of force doesn't say anything about electronic surveillance. The issue was never raised with the Congress. And there is a specific statute on the books, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which says flatly that you can't undertake that kind of surveillance without a court order." On Monday, when bringing the Senate hearing to order, Specter refused to allow Gonzales to be placed under oath, and denied other Senators the opportunity to show video clips of Gonzales' past statements.

Nevertheless, Specter's words served as a clear reminder to other Republicans that the issue of Domestic Spying is not partisan in nature. What is at stake is the support structure of our system of laws and the very fidelity of our constitution, he and others contended. At one point, Specter even reprimanded Gonzales for giving a non-answer, as many politicians do so frequently. "I don't think you can use principle of avoiding a tough constitutional conflict by disagreeing with the plain words of the statute," said Specter. "Attorney General Gonzales, when members of Congress heard about your contention that the resolution authorizing the use of force amended the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act there was general shock."

Gonzales responded with a muddled bit of tripe. "We've never asserted that FISA has been amended. We've always asserted that our interpretation of FISA, which contemplates another statute and we have that here in the authorization to use force, those complement each other. This is not a situation where FISA has been overwritten or FISA has been amended. That's never been our position."

Specter promptly brushed him off, saying, "That just defies logic and plain English."

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina joined the



The Webster Retort

By
Stephen
Webster

fray, adding, "All I'm saying is the inherent authority argument in its application to me seems to have no boundaries when it comes to executive decisions in a time of war, it deals the Congress and courts out, Mr. Attorney General."

Another major gaffe on Gonzales' behalf came when he could not answer a question about propaganda. Democrat Diane Feinstein asked if Bush has the authority to suspend Section 503 of the National Security Act, which prohibits actions that would "influence United States political processes, public opinion, policies or media." The Administration's top legal mind responds that the question is too hard and he would not want to respond "off the cuff". I have yet to figure out when the last time anything said before the United States Senate was "off the cuff"? But I digress.

The last, most important pillar of the Administration's argument to fall was the contention that other presidents have used similar authority in times of war, and Bush's Domestic Spying Programs are within his "constitutional authority." He even brought this point up during the recent State of the Union address, saying, "Previous Presidents have used the same constitutional authority I have, and federal courts have approved the use of that authority."

Democrat Russ Feingold of Wisconsin hammered out a carefully worded line of questioning that turned the popular fabrication into a pile of rubble. Asked Feingold: "[D]o you know of any other President who has authorized warrantless wiretaps outside of FISA, since 1978, when FISA was passed?"

Gonzales, having argued the line that Bush could do it because Lincoln and FDR did similar things, lacked material to jaw about. "Um, none come to mind, Senator," he said. "But maybe — I would be happy to look to see whether or not that's the case."

"I can take it as a no unless you submit something?" asked Feingold. "I can't give you an answer," responded Gonzales. After Gonzales refused to assure Democrat Joe Biden that no American "other than someone who has a communication that is emanating from foreign soil by a suspected terrorist" is being spied on, the mood of the Senator's questions turned very skeptical. Once it was said and done, Gonzales was pulling bits of boiled egg out of his ears.

"It's a ridiculous argument, not only bad, it's ridiculous," said former president Jimmy Carter. "Obviously, the attorney general who said it's all right to torture prisoners and so forth is going to support the person who put him in office. But he's a very partisan attorney general and there's no doubt that he would say that. I hope that eventually the case will go to the Supreme Court. I have no doubt that

when it's over, the Supreme Court will rule that Bush has violated the law."

"Under the Bush administration, there's been a disgraceful and illegal decision — we're not going to let the judges or the Congress or anyone else know that we're spying on the American people," Carter continued. "And no one knows how many innocent Americans have had their privacy violated under this secret act."

Carter's rebuke was even more strongly worded than those from the Senate, given that he was president when FISA became law. "If my voice is important to point of the intent of the law that was passed when I was president, I know all about that because it was one of the most important decisions I had to make."

Tuesday morning, a report surfaced in Right Wing magazine *Insight*, run by conservative paper *The Washington Times*, which accused Bush's political strategist Karl Rove of trying to intimidate the party. Rove allegedly threatened Republican Senators and Representatives with a

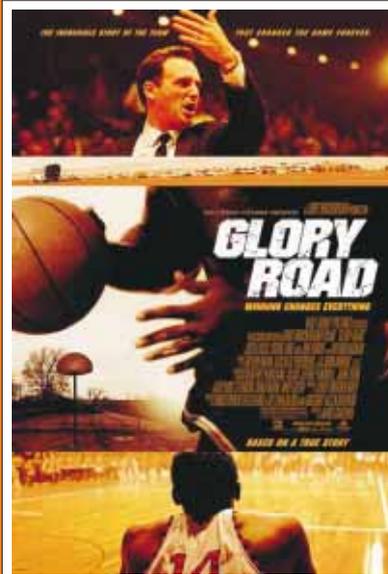
blacklisting if they do not support the Domestic Spying Program. Those who go against Rove will receive zero campaign funds from the RNC and will have their access to the president and the White House cut off completely.

And thus, efforts to strengthen ethics in Washington were successful and the Republican Party lived happily ever after.

All of this over a silly law the president said was written too long ago for the president to be forced to follow. Take it from Bush: "If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a lot easier - just so long I'm the dictator." And he's right, too.

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

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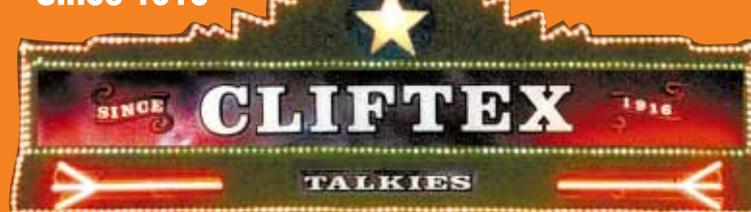
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Let's Keep Pluto In The Family

Last year, astronomers discovered a "tenth planet." This new planet is similar to, but slightly larger than Pluto. All of this is exciting news, but not without controversy. Now, some scientists say that it's not a "real planet," and neither is Pluto. They want to take away the planet designation from Pluto and just say that it's a bunch of ice, and part of something called, "The Kuiper Belt."

One of the problems is that there is no official definition of "planet." Personally, I like the following definition: "the nine heavenly bodies that you had to memorize in elementary school plus any new planets that are subsequently discovered are officially planets."

Apparently, I'm not alone in this definition. Dr. Frank Bertoldi of the Max Planck Institute is in favor of declaring the "tenth planet," 2003 UB313, a new planet, and keeping Pluto a planet, too. He says that to downgrade Pluto to a non-planet would be "impolite." Perhaps a more important group, school children, agrees with him. When it was learned that a new model of the solar system at the American Museum of Natural History in New York leaves out Pluto, kids began a letter-writing campaign urging the museum to reinstate Pluto.

Don't worry about having to memorize the name 2003 UB313. If it's declared an official planet, it will have a name based on a god of mythology like the other planets. Those who discovered it have given it a temporary name, "Xena," named after the TV show heroine. I guess if it had been discovered this year, they would have called it "Earl," or referred to it and its moon as "Desperate Housewives."

My objection to downgrading Pluto to a "thing" from a planet is based more on emotion than science. I've always had a special feeling towards the other planets in our solar system, and I don't want to start being condescending towards good old Pluto. Like so many people, I've wondered if there is life on other planets, and certainly Pluto was one of those planets that was in my imagination. When I was a kid, it was one of my favorite planets. I thought that it was named for a Disney character, and assumed if they ever found another planet, they'd name it "Goofy."

Just because some scientists with fancy degrees say Pluto's not really a planet doesn't make it so. These guys have made mistakes before. When I was a kid, Uranus was pronounced "Youranus," which, of course, made some of us more immature kids giggle. So, what did the scientists do? They changed the



Modern Times
By
Lloyd
Garver

pronunciation to "Urine-us," so kids are still giggling. Anybody who could make a silly decision like that could be just as far off base as the anti-Pluto faction.

Maybe the best perspective to give those scientists who want to downgrade Pluto to a non-planet is to put the space shoe on the other foot. How would they feel if the evidence of some scientists, or some new definition of "planet" meant that Earth was no longer a planet? I'd be pretty depressed about that. I've been going along my whole life, feeling rather cocky, believing that I live on one of nine planets in the solar system, and then all of a sudden, some guys are telling me that it's not really a planet. It's just a bunch of water and dirt that revolves around the sun.

How would the children react to that? "Mars and Jupiter are planets, boys and girls, but we live on, well, something that isn't quite as important."

It would put an end to all those science fiction movies in which life forms are found on other planets and they come into conflict with Earthlings. Believe me, if we're reduced to non-planet status, Martians, Venutians, and Jupiterians aren't even going to bother with us anymore. And in the distant future, don't expect non-planet Earth to be asked to join any interplanetary governing body like the Union of Solar System Planets. We'd just be a non-voting place that would have to go along with the majority.

So, let's not be too rash here. Let's not risk hurting the feelings of the things that may live on Pluto. If this new discovery is similar to Pluto, call it a planet, too, instead of ousting Pluto. I know they'll never really go for my childhood suggestion for a name for the new planet. But I also know to kick "Pluto" out of our family of planets is just plain "Goofy."

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

Big Month At The Vet Clinic

What a day! Yes, another one. There's an old saying, "If you ain't got no problems, you ain't got no business." I learned that one during my years in New York City, but it applies anywhere.

We've been contributing greatly this last month or so to the local Vet Clinic. (I'm not complaining. I'm glad they're here. I'm just mildly whining). It wasn't the blind bull. (He's better now). No, this time it began with Stinky the Dog having his teeth cleaned. The good news (if this can be considered good) is that those rotten looking teeth Stinky brought with him when he arrived unexpectedly last year were just horribly, disgustingly dirty.

After the great job Dr. K. did, this pooch is a walking commercial for teeth whitening products. Ka-ching! Then there was the annual rabies shot (Ka-ching!), the year's supply of heartworm pills (Ka-ching!), and another item or two. Ka-ching! Ka-ching! That other noise you hear, besides the cash register opening, is the great sucking sound as money flies out of our hands. And we haven't even renewed the flea and tick product yet. Like my father always said, "Gene, it costs money to be civilized."

Zach's cat had something to be checked. Turned out to be benign (hopefully), but we'll watch it. Before the exam, the poor animal hid her head in Zach's coat as he kept her from jumping off the examination table. Dr. H. should go into the veterinary massage business. After he gave Seeky the annual shots and palpated that poor, terrified cat for about ten minutes, she actually fell asleep right there. Or maybe she passed out from fear, humiliation, or exhaustion. We all had a good laugh about it at her expense as she slept. Shame on us. Ka-ching!

Before leaving for the vet, we had tried to catch the wild cat that has recently adopted us. This is the one I was shooing away for weeks that Zach was secretly feeding. He's such a soft touch. I tell you, critters are crafty little devils. That animal knew something was up and refused to show for breakfast that very morning. We had finally gotten it tame enough to touch, but couldn't pick it up or check it out in any way. Zach, braver (or possibly stupider in this case) than I, has received several bites. I wisely keep my hands away from its face. I'm not all that interested in making nice to an animal that wants only to attack me after I have provided

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.

it with food and a warm bed.

The plan had been to feed the cat in a pet carrier for a week or so, get it used to this routine, then slam the door shut when it took the bait on "vet morning." The alternative plan was for Zach to don his welding gloves, grab it and "urge it into the carrier." I keep using the word "it" because we have yet to determine the sex. It SEEMS like a female, but one can never be too sure about these things, the world being what it is and all.

When Wild Thing arrived, it was starving like most strays, and as is usual with our adoptions, weight gain was rapid and plentiful. (Stinky went from a skinny 45 to a hefty 63 pounds in a year). Every day I was unable to capture the cat, I feared it was pregnant rather than fat—and that kittens would be forthcoming, a situation I hoped to avoid like the plague.

Finally this morning, after waiting patiently and courting the cat for over a week, I trapped the poor, unsuspecting thing and whisked it off to the vet clinic. When I filled out the new patient form, I couldn't say if this was male or female, whether or not it had ever been spayed or neutered, how old it was, anything.

All I knew for sure was that I didn't want a wild, rabid cat living on our side deck accompanied by an unending, geometric progression type supply of generations of kittens for years to come. That's why all our animals have been fixed. I need to call the vet now for the answer to the sixty-four thousand dollar questions (for those of you who are old enough to know what I'm talking about). Is Wild Thing a he or a she? Did they neuter it or spay it? Was an abortion involved? Did adding these services to my growing bill equal sixty-four thousand dollars? Ka-ching!

Stay tuned.

Has Anyone Seen OUR America?

During the past decade we have witnessed the death of a more honorable era and the beginning of a tragic movement in America. Eight years of the Bush administration is revamping American values significantly so that its democratic roots will have been buried completely from view.

Our once great nation is involved in inconsequential wars, in which the only rewards abound in the pocketbooks and ledgers of wealthy special interests.

There are fewer jobs available to American citizens, thanks to ongoing outsourcing and the hiring of illegals who provide the work more cheaply. Where, oh where, has OUR America gone?

The disappearance of honor and ethical behavior and the emergence of the

idolization of greed in our society is resulting in the destruction of our uniquely democratic American ideals and community.

The nation we currently are mismanaging has become as divided as Germany once was when the Berlin Wall ripped apart the unity of that industrialized giant.

Currently, the "new" America supports an apartheid of wealthy and poor in America that is more dramatic and detrimental to a nurturing society than South Africa's historical black and white dilemma.

During the "Neolithic" reign of the Bush administration, it has chiseled the nihilistic destructive wedge deep-down into the very heart of OUR America.

We have squandered taxpayer dollars mercilessly until there is no reserve. Still, there's a Bushian imperative for further spending and more net profit, so the fo-

cus is on spending more taxpayer dollars, eying the privatization of Social Security and ensuring that the "Grim Reaper" takes more healthy souls. We have spent billions in credit overseas, while denying basic living revenue to our own citizenry.

Perhaps the next step is to change the motto printed at the base of New York's Statue of Liberty to: "Bring us your wealthy few and enslave the poor; bring us your cheap labor force, while we unemployment and crush our own."

In truth, "America, the Beautiful" isn't so pretty any more.

Why can't Americans see that?

Why can't we rediscover OUR America?

Peter Stern of Driftwood 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. While a lifetime mem-



Commentary
By
Peter
Stern

ber of the Republican Party, he does NOT support the party's current platforms, philosophies and actions. You may contact Peter Stern at: pstern@austin.rr.com.

PS. — There is a petition available for people to sign up to remove John Boehner as House Majority Leader. We can make a change. Let's work on this one together. One small step leads to others.

To sign the petition, go to this link: <http://www.e-thepeople.org/petition/14830/view>

Women Break Gender Barrier In Texas Politics

Newspapers tried to make Margie Neal the laughingstock of the state on Feb. 8, 1927, by unfairly ridiculing the first female member of the Texas Senate for casting a vote against her own bill.

The first women elected to public office in Texas were chosen by an all-male electorate. Adella Kelsey Turner and Ella Isabelle Tucker won seats on the Dallas school board in 1908, a full decade before their gender finally got the vote.

Texas women were partially enfranchised in March 1918, two and a years before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as a result of a behind-the-scenes bargain. Minnie Fisher Cunningham, leader of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, convinced Gov. William P. Hobby that he would lose a men-only election to his impeached predecessor. Legislators went along with the idea of letting women vote in party primaries, and Hobby crushed James E. Ferguson two to one.

While they were putting "Farmer Jim" in his place, the new voters provided the margin of victory for Annie Webb Blanton in the race for superintendent of public instruction. The former president of the Texas State Teachers Association would go down in history as the first woman to hold a statewide office.

The next "first" went to Edith Wilmans of Dallas. A founder of the local chapter of the Equal Suffrage League, she was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1922. She limited herself to a single term, choosing instead to wage back-to-back campaigns for governor in 1924 and 1926 that attracted a grand total of 19,817 votes.

The winner of the gubernatorial contest of 1924 was Miriam A. Ferguson, wife of the controversial ex-governor. Comparatively few women, especially in the suffragist movement, voted for her or derived any satisfaction from her history-making victory. She was not, to put it plainly, one of them.

But "Ma" Ferguson was more in favor of the feminization of politics than generally believed. As proof, she appointed Emma Meharg of Plainview to the important post of secretary of state.

The last "boys' club" to be breached was the Senate. The year was 1926, and the gatecrasher was a 51-year-old newspaper publisher from Carthage.

Margie Neal already had several "firsts" to her credit including first woman to serve on the board of regents for the state normal college system and first of her sex to register to vote in Panola County. But nothing could have prepared her for the challenge of being the lone woman in the upper chamber of the legislature.

Sen. Neal had been on the job less than a month, when she had the temerity to introduce a bill. By the time opponents had diluted the proposal with hostile amendments, she could not recognize the would-be law and had to cast a "nay" vote.

"The next day various newspapers told in a humorous vein of how Margie Neal had become so overwhelmed by parliamentary complexities that she had opted to vote against her own bill," the EAST TEXAS HISTORICAL JOURNAL recounted 46 years later. The gritty newcomer took the floor to set the record straight and so impressed skeptical senators that they gave her a respectful round of applause.

Neal was reelected unopposed to a second four-year term in 1930. She left Austin in 1934 to collect her reward for a job well done as co-chair of the 1932

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



Roosevelt-Garner campaign. Ten years later, Margie Neal retired to Carthage and lived to the age of 96.

Another petticoat pioneer left the legislature at about the same time. Sarah T. Hughes, honored by capitol reporters in 1933 as the most effective representative, gave up her three-term seat in the House to become the first state district judge in Texas.

After unsuccessful bids for congress in 1946 and the state supreme court in 1958, Hughes was appointed to the federal bench by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Two years later, Texas' first female federal judge administered the oath of office to Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One.

The suffragists, who labored so long and so hard for the franchise, believed a tidal wave of women would be swept into office by their sisters' votes. But the earth-shaking change never occurred.

In the half century following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, there were never more than four female representatives or one senator in the Texas legislature at the same time. During two sessions (1925-27 and 1937-39) both bod-

ies were comprised completely of men.

Ground was actually lost in the mid-twentieth century as fewer women won election to the legislature in the 1960s than the 1940s. A constitutional amendment allowing them to serve on juries appeared on the ballot as early as 1935 but did not pass until 1953.

Today 28 of 150 state representatives are women, four of 31 state senators and 3 of 32 members of the U.S. Congress. Only in the United States Senate has equality been achieved with Kay Bailey Hutchison as one of Texas' two senators.

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

Let The Games Begin! (Before We Get Sued)

Hello and welcome to the final installment of our groundbreaking (at least in terms of blatant copyright infringement) three-part Winter Olympics preview:

Fifteen Reasons to Be a Summer Olympian

Today, we will be focusing on some of the most dangerous and exciting events at the winter games. Events like **Luge**, **Skeleton** and **Ski Jumping**. Events that require an extraordinary amount of physical and mental conditioning before an Olympic hopeful, such as myself, can compete without soiling his polymer body suit. While I've never actually trained for a spot on the U.S. Luge team *per se*, I experienced something very similar in the winter of 1999 when I slipped in the snow and landed on what rescuers believe was a discarded Volkswagen hubcap.

Whatever it was, I clung to it for most of my 3/4-mile descent down the "pro" slope, which I executed in perfect Olympic "supine" position — feet down and head back — except for all the screaming. In retrospect, a skin-tight polymer body suit would've helped. Especially when you consider it would've prevented



By
Ned
Hickson
Siuslaw News

me from being allowed near the slope in the first place.

Luge, as many of you know, requires athletes to ride a tiny sled feetfirst down a winding ice track while exceeding speeds of 130 km per hour (U.S. conversion: really, really fast) with almost no ability to steer. Keeping that in mind, the sport of **Skeleton**, which is the same as Luge except that athletes are positioned on their stomachs, is often referred to as "mysterious" and "bizarre," primarily because no one understands why any person who isn't on crack would want to compete in Luge while going headfirst.

This brings us to the thrilling event of **Ski Jumping**, where athletes utilize a

combination of strength, speed, precision, equilibrium and concentration to soar high above the field of play before landing gracefully, after more than 100 yards of flight, on Bob Costas.

OK. That actually only happened once, in 1990, when Jim McKay told Costas about a "short cut" between the biathlon and ice hockey events. This footage was later edited into the now famous clip: "The agony of defeat."

Next, we have **Snowboard**, which made its Olympic debut eight years ago, thanks to the persistence of Jack Burchett, an American surfer, who said he conceived the idea while — and this is a direct quote — "Looking for some action during the long winter break." In addition to snowboarding, Burchett is also credited with two other conceptions, which his lawyers flatly deny he was involved in.

Our next event combines balance, speed, endurance and inner thigh muscles the size of Mini Coopers to produce the fastest human-powered sport held on a flat surface: **Speed Skating**.

In this event, athletes skate around an icy track at speeds of 40 mph while simultaneously running the risk of bursting into flames due to the amount of friction generated between their enormous thigh muscles, some of which are so large they occasionally hold their own press conference.

This brings us to what is arguably the most popular Winter Olympic sport, **Ice Hockey**. We say "arguably" because — Hey, we're talking about HOCKEY here! You wanna make something of it?! That's right. Hockey is by far the most physically aggressive Winter Olympic sport, as long as you don't count women's figure skating. In ice hockey, competitors with sticks chase a small puck around the rink and try to score points by slapping it past a goaltender. Whereas in women's figure skating, competitors chase and slap *each other* for making passes at, and attempting to score with, their favorite bartender.

And there you have it. We hope you've enjoyed our special Winter Olympics Preview. Join us again in 2010 when we'll offer an inside look at the Winter Games in Vancouver, Canada, in a special series we're calling:

How to compete like an Olympian without straining you Molson Muscle
Let the games begin!

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

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CENTRAL TEXAS HISTORY

'The Gray Phantom' – A Texas Apparition

Part One

By JOE MARCHMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

MERIDIAN, Texas — In 1854, it was hardly nine years since Texas had become the Union's 28th state. Bosque County was a garden of delight in Central Texas with its hilly rugged surface, tall prairie grasses, frequent out-croppings of limestone, and pure crystal-clear streams. Only God, himself, could have endowed these courageous new-sprung folk this wonderful land to settle.

Undoubtedly, frontier life was hard striven. Conflicts with the Indians were understood and dealt with. One's own life was precious, yet not too great a price to pay in protecting home and property...many did.

And, so it was in Texas and Bosque County in the early days. Only the hard of hearing could not hear the political storm in the offing. Soon, however, only a smattering of years had passed before the chilling north winds howled an ominous antagonistic cry of war and unrest.

The sky changed from its brilliant nurturing blue to an odious gray in 1860. Life, the way it had been lived on the Bosque county frontier was being challenged...not from the Indians that were still angry at the White man's intrusion into their way of life and hunting grounds...but, from Abe Lincoln's 'Yankee' Unionist of the North.

Stout-hearted, angry men in Bosque County stood in defiance with Texas alongside the other Southern states. The voters of Bosque County gathered on Feb. 23, 1861, to cast their ballot of secession. The vote was an overwhelming 156 for secession and 16 against.

On March 17, 1862, the good citizens of the county met in Meridian to organize a "Committee of Safety" to draft a resolution of patriotic purpose.

Reflecting the sentiment of Bosque County folk, a resolution was drafted and approved by the commissioners of Bosque County...it vindictively read:

"Whereas, the Southern Confederacy is having an unnatural curse and sanguinary war waged against it by Abraham Lincoln and his abolition hordes.

"Whereby, our lives, liberties, and fortunes are being impoverished and our soil is being desecrated by the vandal tread of our 'Yankee' enemies...making it imperative that our best citizens go to the seat of war and drive back the invading foe, and by their valor achieve our independence...

"Whereas, there are, as we believe, in our midst, persons hostile to our institutions, consequently, enemies to our country and its cause; besides characters who have no love of country, and who know not the meaning of patriotism, but who will take advantage of the absence of our good citizens to depredate upon their property...thereby showing themselves clearly as great enemies to our country and its cause...

ing in our midst, who has been or who may hereafter be guilty of using language derogatory of the Southern Confederacy or its cause, or by any act giving evidence that he is unfriendly to the Confederate Government ...therefore, let the county

committee shall test him, by his being required to show his fidelity of our Government and it's cause, by enlisting in the Army of the Confederacy;

"And, if he refuses, give him a free pass to leave for the Lincoln Government in the North.

"And, if he refuses to do either, he shall be regarded and treated as an alien spy for which he shall be executed by the committee."

Thusly, the citizens of Bosque County had spoken. 'Yankee,' alien or Lincoln influences were not to be tolerated in the county.

The Commissioners' Court spent much of its time arranging for food, clothes, ammunition, etc. for the men of Bosque County serving in the Civil War. The Court also felt it proper to provide for the families of those men while they were away.

The vengeance of Texas and Bosque County to a "Yankee" of any description was reported by THE SAN ANTONIO HERALD — quote: "There are bones bleaching the soils of Texas in every county from the Red River to the Rio Grande."

Those persons passing through Denton and Wise Counties, for example, spoke of bodies hanging from the "Black-Jack Trees" by the score...a common display of sentiment during the Civil War.

Bosque County, true to its resolve, purged its area also. One such recorded account was of a man who expressed defiance to the County Committee and openly was a Yankee sympathizer. He was hanged from a stately oak tree on Meridian's main street in front of where stands the J.J. Lumpkin place on the old covered wagon trail to Walnut Springs.

The mood of Bosque citizens had, obviously, been changed by the provocation of the meddlesome Yankees. The altercation with President Lincoln and the Government of the North brought on a new emotion of strong dislike for those contentious of the Southern cause and Texas. Texas had been the seventh state to withdraw from the Union.

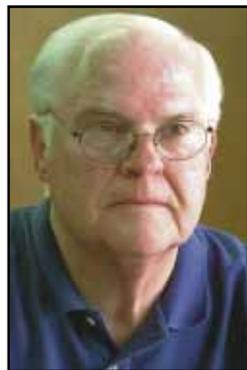
Four years past...in 1865, the Civil War with Lincoln's "Blue Clad Oppressors" was mercifully coming to an end. Lincoln as President and Commander-in-Chief had many enemies, not only in the South, but also in the North.

Horace Greeley, for one, constantly chastised and harassed the President with his NEW YORK TRIBUNE, editorializing with his opinion...quoting one editorial, "We are all going to the Devil—all owing to the stupidity in Washington."

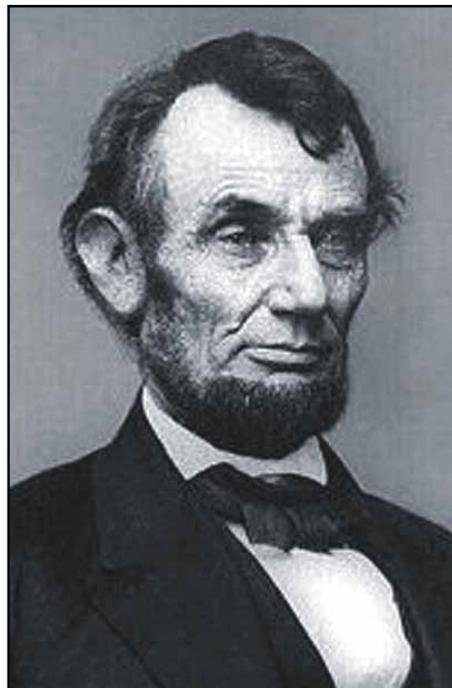
THE NEW YORK EVENING POST, THE CINCINNATI GAZETTE, and others were antagonistic to Lincoln's Washington—a popular atone for many at the time.

Another Confederate patriot living in the North and compassionate to the South was an actor named John Wilkes Booth.

His brother, Edwin Booth was consid-



Joe Marchman is a state-recognized award-winning writer for The Clifton Record. A researcher and investigator, Marchman specializes in the intricacies of Texas history.



Abraham Lincoln



John Wilkes Booth

ered the greatest Shakespearian thespian of his generation.

Johnnie Booth was also an actor of much acclaim, who frequented the Washington, D.C. theatre scene. Booth's family had been traditional Shakespearian performers for decades. Plays such as "Julius Caesar," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Hamlet" were favored performances.

Johnnie Booth's "Hamlet" was insane, fiery, artistic, and very convincing. He was very gifted and athletic. On one occasion, as he was being heckled during a performance, he ad-libbed, very dramatically, "I am the Headsman (one that beheads)...I am the executioner." The audience was spellbound and believed...an omen perhaps.

Johnnie Booth was fanatical in his devotion to the Confederate cause...as were many others of the day. He relentlessly expounded the South's cause around Washington, D.C. He was very oblivious to the fact of where he was and cared even less.

Booth had conspired for months prior to the Civil War's end to abduct President Lincoln and deliver him to Richmond, Virginia, the South's capital. In achieving this, he surmised the War would be over in favor of the "Rebel South."

On Sunday, April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the South at Appomattox. The Southern Cause for liberty was lost. Johnnie Booth was crazed with his distress at the news.

Monday, April 10, 1865 saw President Lincoln's return to Washington, D.C. to plan the South's reconstruction.

Tuesday, April 11, 1865, a crowd gathered that evening in front of the Executive Mansion. Booth and a friend, Lewis Payne, were amidst the somber portion of the gathering...The assemblage clamored for President Lincoln to come out and speak. As Lincoln obliged, Booth urged his friend Payne to pull his revolver and shoot Lincoln then and there. Payne, however, thought better of the occasion. An angry and frustrated Johnnie Booth whispered to his companion, "That will be the last speech his will ever make."

April 14, 1865, Good Friday, Booth learned of Lincoln's plans to attend Ford's Theatre. He knew Lincoln loved the the-

atre. Good Friday was the perfect day to strike a blow for the Southern Cause. Maybe, just maybe, it wasn't too late.

Was there a conspiracy or has history been deficient in openly preserving all the facts? The President invited General U.S. Grant and his wife to accompany him and Mary to the theatre. Grant and his wife refused the President's invitation, as did several others. On the playbill was the very popular English comedy entitled "Our American Cousin."

John Wilkes Booth arrived at Ford's Theatre early that evening...leaving his horse in readiness tied at the stage door. He visited with colleagues and friends around the theatre as usual, even borrowed a "chaw" of tobacco before settling at the bar next door to await the intermission prior to the third act.

As planned, at this interval, he ascended the stairs to the balcony level where the Presidential Box was located. To his astonishment, there was no guard on the door to the Executive Box. He eased inside, barricading the door behind him.

Lincoln, his wife Mary, and two others of the Presidential party and even the guard were engrossed in the dialogue of the British comedy. And, this was Booth's cue to give a performance that history will not forget.

Perhaps he heaved a deep, audible sigh and removed his tiny one-shot brass Derringer pistol from his coat. At point-blank range he fired a bullet into President Lincoln's head, less than five feet away. Dropping his small weapon, he pulled his dagger, and leaped to the stage, some 10 to 15 feet below. In doing so, he caught a spur on the flag adorning the Presidential Box, breaking his left leg as he hit the stage. In one of his best characterizations, and as if part of the play, he hobbled across the stage to the back door and made good his escape on his awaiting horse.

The audience and cast watched in amazement, not realizing the course of events was not part of the play. Booth did not wear a disguise, yet was not recognized as Lincoln's assassin until several days later.

As Johnnie Booth galloped out of the
Continued On Next Page

• THE GRAY PHANTOM

... Continued From Previous Page

city, he must have been totally consumed with his action on behalf of the South. Would he be a martyr... would he received the greatest accolades from a grateful people for ridding the county of such a despised despot?

The pain from his broken left fibula finally ushered him back to reality... Knowing he needed help, he stopped at Dr. Samuel Mudds' to have his leg splinted. While there, he shaved his moustache before continuing on his way.

A week later, as Union history would have you believe, John Wilkes Booth was trapped in a burning barn in Virginia, where Barton Corbett claims to have shot him through an "eye hole" in the wall. Another account stated that Booth had shot himself, uttering as he lay dying, "I care not to outlive my country" and "...Tell my mother I died for my country."

Lincoln, oddly enough, had dreamed the night before of his own death. After many attempts on his life, the President had mentioned several times to intimates that he must be prepared for a sudden death. And, so it was, at a house across the street his last breath was drawn at 7:21a.m.

William Henry Seward was chosen by Lincoln as his Secretary of State after the 1860 election. Early in 1865 Seward was badly injured in a carriage accident. While convalescing, he was stabbed by one of the conspirators on the night of Lincoln's assassination. He recovered.

Wild scenes followed at the National Capital. Edwin McMasters Stanton had been named by Lincoln as Secretary of War in 1862. Secretary Stanton, obviously not hell-bent on having all the answers, simply announced that Booth was dead, and Barton Corbett had shot him. A body was brought to Washington...supposedly that of John Wilkes Booth. However, there were many that questioned the validity of the body.

A local doctor, who had removed a tumor from Johnnie Booth's neck, said later, that there was no resemblance to Booth and the body. To add to the controversy, the right leg, not the left one, had been broken on the doubtful cadaver. The intrigue continued when the government secretly buried the supposed assassin at midnight in a prison yard. Nonetheless, with all things being equal, it wouldn't be the first time, nor the last, that Washington had finessed the American people with a "little tainted baloney."

Well, consider this...chaos ruled the South in the aftermath of the war. Peace was beginning to smile, but sneering feelings of hate lingered on for decades.

What of John Wilkes Booth? Did he make good on his escape to his beloved South? Many think he did just that.

Next week, more on Booth in Texas after the assassination.



Dr. Samuel Mudd



Wm. Henry Seward



Edwin Stanton

Kinky Diebenow

Q: Why am I such a radical pastor's kid?

A: I had a pastor's kid for a mentor. I didn't have to go very far.

My mom, the daughter of a Lutheran minister, trained me like Mr. Miyagi from *The Karate Kid* movies, but instead of "Wax on... Wax off..." I was taught "The Law... The Gospel..."

Okay, if you're not hip to the Lutheran theological lingo, that's fine. We'll convert you heathens later.

Now, back to the column: After I used the "Theology of the Cross" (or "crane-style" to you *Karate Kid* fans) on some Sunday Schoolers, my mom took me aside and broken it down for me. She said:

"Nathan, don't even try to use any of the PK techniques I taught you on anybody in church or at school. You're just wasting your powers. Save your energy for one big public display of trouble-making when you're older.

"I mean, at least make headlines in *The New York Times* while you're at it for chrissakes!" she concluded.

Both my parents stressed that I could do anything I wanted with my life when I grew up, like be a garbage man, for instance...

...so I became a journalist and "dumped trash" on President Bush by co-writing a presidential endorsement for Sen. John Kerry in Bush's adopted hometown newspaper, *The Lone Star Iconoclast*.

"The Law... The Gospel..."

With that all said, my mom just celebrated her 60th birthday, and I think that when she retires in the next six years, she ought to run for governor of Texas.

I think she can win.

And if you can keep a secret, I'll tell you how.

First she flies to Pakistan...

Hold on, hold on. Calm down. Let me

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



finish.

She wants to get captured by the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

I promise you that she'll be okay once she shows them her son's anti-Bush newspaper editorial!

And then, they'll be like, "Oh, you're Nathan's mom! Sure, come on in. Wait till we tell Osama. He'll definitely want to meet *Nathan's mom!* We love his work!"

So then my mom, because she's so charming and sweet, convinces Osama to knock off all the terrorism crap.

Of course, the West will have to make some concessions, too, such as respecting the Prophet Muhammad, but, more importantly, STOP KILLING MUSLIMS!!!

Now who's "the tough, Texas grandma?"

Well, I'm not saying that only a pastor's kid could pull off such a mission AND get voted into office for actually stopping the "war on terrorism"...

Okay, I am.

But with or without disarming Osama and the West, I think my mom could beat any candidate for Texas governor, though I am basing her chances on the current line up.

My mom has way prettier hair than Rick Perry.

Her children and grandchildren are obviously way cooler than Carole Keeton Strayhorn's.

And she's way funnier than Kinky Friedman trying to give a vasectomy to a squirrel with a kosher pickle.

Yeah, she's even funnier than THAT — and she makes a kick-ass batch of chocolate chip cookies to boot!

Just ask my friends.

VALOR Accepting Scholarship Applications Through March 15

IRVING — Commemorating its third year of recognizing high school seniors for volunteerism and academic achievement, VALOR Telecom today announced that applications for the Community Leader Scholarship program will be accepted through March 15, 2006.

"Since the program's launch in 2004, we have awarded \$24,000 in Community Leader Scholarships to high school seniors throughout our service areas in Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma," said East Texas Division Vice President Buster Brady.

This year, VALOR will award \$1,000 scholarships to as many as 12 high school students living in the communities served by the company. Qualified applicants must be high school seniors who demonstrate strong community leadership through volunteerism and civic involvement. They also must have maintained a grade point average of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) and plan to enroll in an accredited two- or four-year college, university or vocational school. Applications need to be postmarked by March 15, 2006. Scholarship recipients will be announced in May 2006.

"Contributing to the growth, prosperity and well-being in the communities we serve has been an integral part of our business since the company's in-

ception in 2000," said Brady. "In addition to contributing to a student's academic future, we feel that the Community Leader Scholarship program fosters volunteerism in our communities."

For more information or to obtain an application, visit <www.valortelecom.com> and click on the Community Connection tab.

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Cedar Park High School students studied how to cook beef at a special Boot Camp seminar in January at Texas Beef Council offices. The students' goals are to become chefs or restaurant owners and operators.

High School Students Get Skinny On Beef

AUSTIN — Central Texas high school students who are aspiring toward a restaurant career got the skinny on beef in January from the Texas Beef Council. The Cedar Park High School students attended a Beef Boot Camp at TBC offices.

TBC staff taught the students beef cooking methods in an interactive session where they also prepared beef recipes. These students have been accepted or plan to apply to the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park, N.Y., and

Johnson and Wales University, with campuses in several states.

The students' goals are to become chefs or restaurant owners and operators.

Hip-Hop Activist To Speak March 18

BOSTON, Mass. — Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr., a community activist and board member for the Progressive Democrats of America, will be the keynote speaker at a town hall meeting on March 18, in Western Massachusetts.

The meeting will focus on the occupation in Iraq and its costs, such as domestic service cuts and the slow federal response in the Gulf Coast region in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

During the 2004 Presidential election, Rev. Yearwood created, along with Russell Simmons and Jonathan Lewis, the first ever Hip Hop Team Vote Bus Tour. The purpose of the tour was to ensure that young people were challenging the established political order in a most profound and substantive manner.

Rev. Yearwood has recently been named the President and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus, a national coalition of pop-culture social/political organizations, community-based organizations, youth leadership organizations, and individuals who believe in the collective power of persons aged 14-39 years old. HHC is the first and only Hip-Hop membership organization in existence to establish a comprehensive agenda for the Hip-Hop Community.

Muslims Angry Over Muhammad Cartoons

KABUL, Afghanistan — Four protestors died in Afghanistan early last week during violent demonstrations on a base of Norwegian troops which was sparked by editorial cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper.

Violence spread to about six Afghan cities which officials there say might have been caused by al-Qaeda and Taliban forces trying to take advantage of the Muslim's anger although proof was nil.

Iran suspended all economic ties to Denmark, the country where the 12 cartoons first were published. In protest, some supermarkets in the Middle East cleared their shelves of Danish goods.

A spokesperson for the Confederation of Danish Industries said while the exact results of the boycotts remain unclear, the dairy firm Arla Foods was hit the hardest, with losses estimated at 1.3 million euros a day. Danish brands, such as toy maker Lego, and Danish travel operators might suffer longer term harm, industry insiders say.

The anti-Muslim drawings were published in Denmark's daily newspaper the *Jyllands-Posten* last September. Danish Muslims at the time protested peacefully, but since then, more newspapers in Europe and the United States began re-publishing the pictures, causing worldwide protests and scattered violence.

Co-workers of four kidnapped Christian peacemakers in Iraq decried the caricatures months ago on grounds that they would only foster more "hate and bigotry." And indeed it has, as the Iranian newspaper *Hamshahri* asked local artists to compete in a Holocaust cartoon contest to test, it said, the limits of freedom of speech.

Muslim protestors say that Islamic scripture outlaws pictures of their spiritual leader Muhammad because doing so might spark idolatry. However, the editorial cartoons added insult to injury when the one pictured the prophet with a turban shaped like a bomb with a lit fuse.

Withstanding tear gas and water cannons, thousands of protesters last Sunday burned down a Danish mission and looted a neighborhood in the Christian part of Beirut, Lebanon. Tens of thousands more people protested in Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Yemen, Djibouti, Gaza, Azerbaijan, and the United Kingdom.

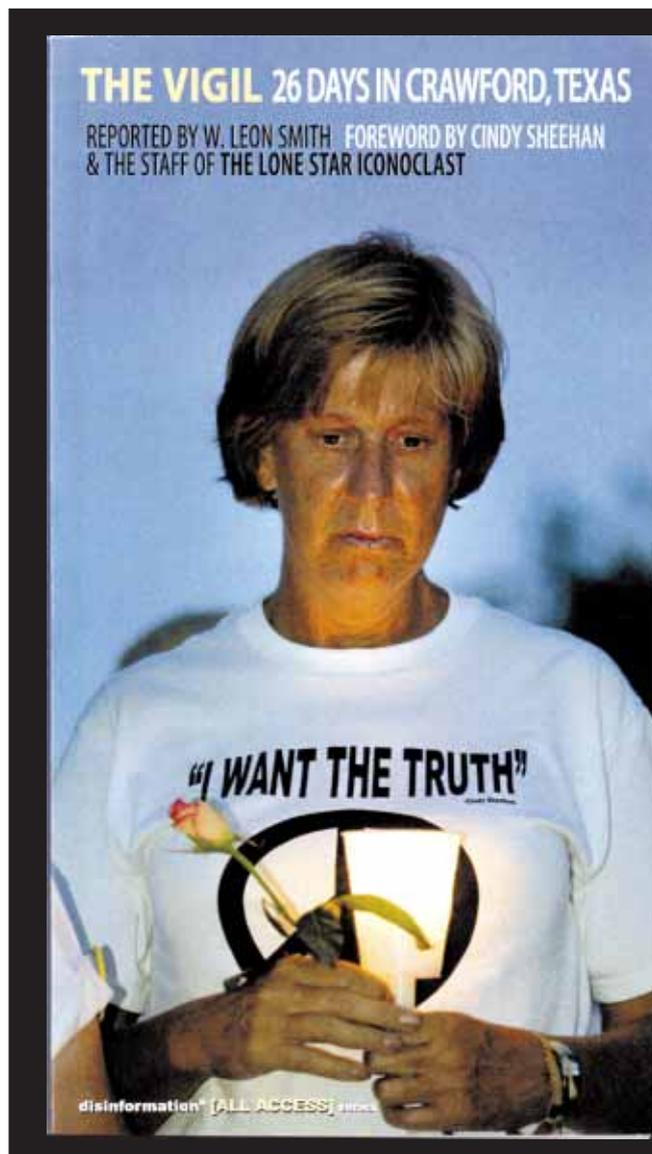
While Vice President Dick Cheney called all the Muslim outrage unjustified, White House spokesman Scott McClellan suggested that their anger was hypocritical in that anti-Christian and anti-Semitic cartoons are prolific in Arab periodicals.

Arab pundits, though, rebuff the criticism, noting laws in Europe that support Christians and Jews, not Muslims. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, even went so far as to say that *Jyllands-Posten's* pictures were a direct reaction to Hamas' winning last month's Palestinian elections.

"The West condemns any denial of the Jewish Holocaust, but it permits the insult of Islamic sanctities," Khamenei said.

The cartoons have appeared in Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Fiji, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United States, Ukraine, and Yemen.

Jyllands-Posten has apologized for the cartoons; however, the Danish government has refused, putting the responsibility on the newspaper.



AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES & ON THE WEB...

THE VIGIL

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

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

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