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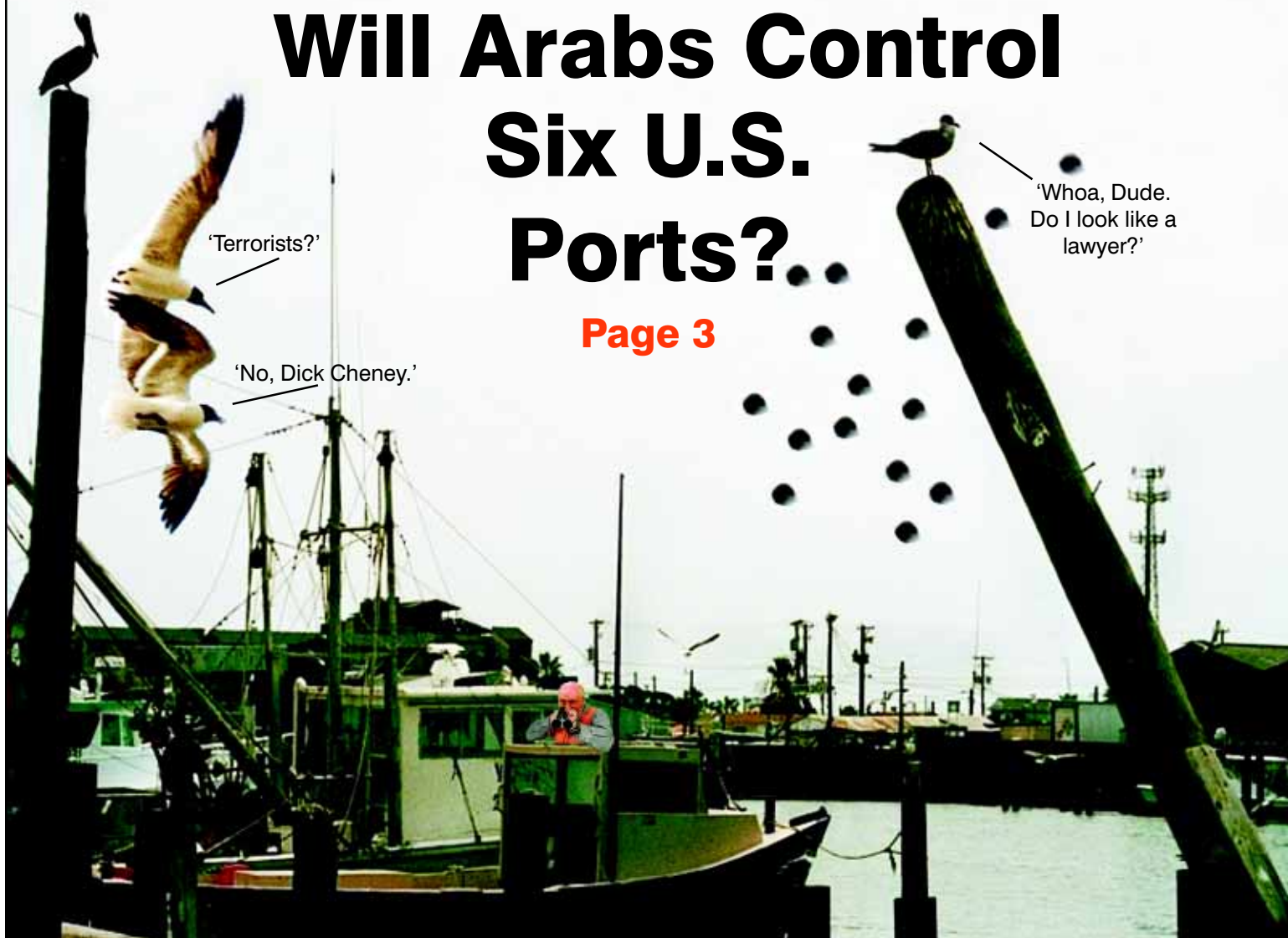
The Lone Star ICONOCLAST

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'Terrorists?'

'No, Dick Cheney.'

'Whoa, Dude. Do I look like a lawyer?'

Senate Gives New Life To Patriot Act

WASHINGTON — The Senate reauthorized the Patriot Act with a vote of 96 to 3 last week, against the efforts of Sen. Russell D. Feingold (D-Wis.) to spend more time debating the renewal which was set to expire March 10.

Feingold, the only senator to vote against the original Patriot Act after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, was joined by Sens. Robert C. Byrd (D-West Virginia) and James M. Jeffords (I-Vermont) in voting no this round, insisting that the act

compromises liberty for national security.

Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) did not vote on the bill.

Last week's Senate vote now awaits final congressional approval, which pundits say is almost assured when both Houses convene after a President's Day recess.

Even with protections to civil liberties hammered out by worried senators of many different stripes, Sen. Feingold was still unhappy: "No amount of cosmetics is going to make this beast look any prettier."

Feingold has criticized the bill for allowing more "government fishing expeditions" through the seizure of "sensitive business records of innocent, law-abiding Americans."

Sen. John E. Sununu (R-N.H.), who once shared Sen. Feingold's concerns, said that the act's changes satisfied him, though "no party ever gets everything that they want."

One of the bill's new provisions exempts libraries from so-called "national security letters" or subpoenas for business records issued by the FBI in terrorism cases without warrants.

The bill also grants appeals of gag orders on recipients of national security

letters. Under these orders, business owners cannot reveal that a government agency is investigating their records. Appeals can be filed a year after owners receive the letters.

Another provision now allows a recipient of a national security letter to not disclose to the FBI the name of lawyers consulted about a search.

Bush Spends \$1.6 Billion On PR Machine

WASHINGTON — Roughly \$1.6 billion of taxpayer money went to public relations campaigns for the Bush administration over a 30-month period, reported the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE last week.

Requested by congressional Democrats, the Government Accountability Office report says that the White House is enlisting the services of private advertising consultants to persuade Americans on such topics as supporting the Iraq war and preventing prescription drug sales from Canada.

The White House refused to comment last week; however, in the past, the Education Department has said PR spending is a perfectly fine method to inform the public.

Though the current GAO report

mentioned no specific endeavor, past reports have noted instances in which the administration paid right-wing pundits like Armstrong Williams to tout its programs.

Criticism also has also been leveled on the Bush administration when it released news-like video reports to the media praising programs without mentioning from where they came.

The federal auditors discovered spending on 343 media contracts, the majority of which came from advertising agencies.

Tom Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste, a not-for-profit watchdog group, noted that while some ads such as military recruitment spots on TV may be legitimate, targeted programs require a second look.

Spy Program Senate Inquiry Sidelined

WASHINGTON — There will be no Senate investigation into President Bush's domestic spy program, reported the NEW YORK TIMES Thursday.

Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee panel, indicated that "such an investigation is currently unwarranted and would be detrimental to this highly classified program."

A separate House inquiry, however, could develop on its own.

Sen. Roberts added that the Bush administration agreed to pass along more information on the spy program operated by the National Security Agency.

The ranking Democrat, John D. Rockefeller IV of West Virginia, however, has proposed another investigation from the committee. Sen. Roberts said when the panel reconvenes on March 7, the proposal will be reconsidered.

And it might just be reconsidered, too, because two of the eight committee Republicans, Orrin G. Hatch of Utah and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, want Congress to receive more information from the White House.

U.S. Company Implants Chips In Workers

AKRON, Ohio — THE FINANCIAL TIMES reported last week that a private video surveillance company became the first known U.S. employer to implant electronic silicon chips in two of its workers to identify them.

The Ohio-based CityWatcher.com said the technology was being tested to control entry into a room that contains video footage for police and governmental agencies.

Viewed as perhaps the next biggest and most controversial industries to emerge, these RFID chips have already been implanted in animals and goods for tracking purposes. These

special chips work using cheap radio transmitters that pulse a signal unique to their design.

Critics of identification technology say the chips' existence bring up privacy and civil liberty issues, such as tracking the user without his knowledge, though a spokesperson for CityWatcher says the company's device does not work like a GPS location system.

The U.S. company that manufactured the chip, VeriChip, stated that its implants were designed for medical purposes only. About 70 people in the United States have had the chip implants, according to the company.

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OPEN TREASON

White House Feels New Heat On Port Security

Will Arabs Control Six U.S. Ports?

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

WASHINGTON — A deal that would give a company based in a country tied to known terrorists and 9/11 hijackers operational control of six U.S. ports renewed doubts that the Bush administration has the security interests of the United States in mind.

According to the NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, the White House caved into congressional pressure to investigate the decision of a secretive U.S. panel that approved a \$6.8 billion deal with the United Arab Emirates-owned Dubai Ports World to manage the maritime portals.

"I called the White House and said I have concerns with this and asked to not go ahead with it until there's been a full investigation," Rep. Peter King (R-L.I.), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, told the DAILY NEWS.

National Security Council spokesman Frederick Jones defended the decision of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States move saying that the panel "rigorously reviewed" DP World. White House spokesman Scott McClellan echoed Jones' defense and directed questions to the Treasury Department which runs the committee.

When asked at a budget hearing Wednesday, Treasury Secretary John Snow, who chairs the secret committee, said he could not discuss any of the panel's considerations.

The Committee on Foreign Investment with help from officials in U.S. intelligence agencies, including the departments of Defense, Justice, Commerce, State, and Homeland Security, reviews

foreign companies seeking to purchase or invest in American industry. Its 12 members reportedly found no problems with the sale.

However, critics say that port operations should not be controlled by a company whose home country served as a headquarters for the terrorists who carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"This shouldn't happen. It really boggles the mind," Rachel Ehrenfeld, director of the American Center for Democracy told the NEW YORK SUN, adding that the United Arab Emirates is "a big hub for all kinds of terrorist activities.... We know that terrorist money is being laundered there."

The Republican minority leader of the New York City Council, James Oddo, expressed his feelings on the matter more colorfully to the SUN: "On its face, this looks like [expletive] insanity to me."

The outcry along the eastern seaboard started last Monday when British shareholders approved the DP World's purchase of London-based Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company which runs commercial operations at shipping terminals in New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, New Orleans, Miami, and Philadelphia.

The DP World/P&O Ports merger is scheduled to be finalized March 2.

P&O Ports, the world's fourth largest

ports company, runs Manhattan's West Side cruise ship terminal and Newark's container port, and owns half of the Port of Miami Terminal Operating Company, which is responsible for cargo containers entering the harbor.

While Rep. Vito Fossella (R-NY) called for congressional hearings on the port deal, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chairman of a subcommittee on the Middle East, urged a "full investigation" into issues involving security.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey also reported that it will not only review the deal "to protect its interests" but also encourage the government to explain its decision-making process.

Port security in the U.S. has been a sore spot since 9/11, and an issue raised repeatedly during the 2004 presidential election season.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) said that outsourcing port operations is not a positive step to ensure national security and urged Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff to also review the deal.

"Should we be outsourcing our own security?" Schumer said on the Fox News Channel. "We have to have hands-on control of things. And to have United Arab Emirates — I mean, they are a country that's allied with the U.S., but at the same time a whole bunch of the (Sept. 11) hijackers came from the United Arab Emirates."

Schumer added, "I think there ought to be a full and public review before this company is allowed to control security up and down the East Coast. The issue is not the head of the company. I'm sure he's

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• **OPEN TREASON**
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been checked out. But how good is their security? How good do they check on their employees? Could people infiltrate this company a lot more easily than they could infiltrate an American company?"

In its defense, DP World points out that its purchase request was approved by all regulatory bodies, right up to receiving no objections from the Bush administration. The company said in a statement that it "intend(s) to maintain and, where appropriate, enhance current security arrangements."

"It is very much business as usual for the P&O terminals" in the United States, the statement added.

The UAE is a key partner against terrorism, according to the State Department, and participated in a U.S.-led program to find illegal ship-

ments of nuclear materials in Dubai's own ports last year.

Despite the detection program and the Bush administration's support for the UAE, lawmakers warn that the Emirates were a hub for smuggling nuclear materials to Iran, North Korea, and Libya by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. In addition, the UAE still recognizes the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government.

According to the director of the Institute for Gulf Affairs, Ali Al-Ahmed, the Emirates have been supporting the insurgency in Iraq by hosting Sunni insurgent supporters and Sunni insurgents.

"If they're allowing this to happen in their country — al-Qaida activities and Sunni insurgent in Iraq activities — why shouldn't they allow it in New York, where it's going to be more and more valuable?"

Al-Ahmed told the SUN.

The United Arab Emirates have a number of connections to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. For instance, the hijackers entered the U.S. from the UAE where the attacks were planned, and the UAE's banking system was used to transfer money to the hijackers for their operation, according to the FBI.

Sen. Schumer also noted that the Committee on Foreign Investment panel's decision "seems to have been unnecessarily fast-tracked."

Others wonder if the Bush administration stacked Dubai's deck in the approval process when last month it appointed David C. Sanborn of Virginia, a senior DP World executive, as the new administrator of the Maritime Administration of the Transportation Department.

But some analysts are less worried.

"Does this pose a national security risk? I think that's pushing the envelope," Stephen E. Flynn, a maritime security expert at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, told AP. "It's not impossible to imagine one could develop an internal conspiracy, but I'd have to assign it a very low probability."

DP World has entered into business agreements in the U.S. before when it purchased CSX World Terminals from Jacksonville-based CSX Corp. for \$1.4 billion. The merger handed DPW terminals at ports around the world, including some in Venezuela.

When a Stranger Calls



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Whistleblower:

NSA Violates 'Millions of Americans'

WASHINGTON — Former NSA employee Russell Tice testified on Capitol Hill last week that another classified domestic spy program is more encompassing than President Bush's warrantless program that was reported to the public by the NEW YORK TIMES.

Tice told the House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations that more than one "Special Access" surveillance program might be eavesdropping on "millions of Americans."

While Tice could not reveal the contents of the programs to the committee due to classification laws, he said he believes that the government is violating the Constitution and FISA laws. He said he could not tell the inspector general of the NSA because he does not have clearance either.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), through a spokesperson, said he wants a hearing on the program, though it would probably have to take place in closed session.

"Congress has a role to play in oversight. The (Bush) administration does not get to decide what Congress can and can not hear," said the spokesperson to United Press International.

Tice, now unemployed, was a National Security Agency intelligence officer stripped of his security clearance from the Defense Intelligence Agency was a spy. An official declared Tice paranoid after he took a psychological examination as ordered by the DIA.

China Complicating U.S. Plans For Iran With Oil Field Buy

Congressman Ron Paul Says Iran Sanctions Are About Euros vs. Dollar

SHANGHAI — Not unlike Iraq which threatened to trade in euros instead of dollars in 2000, Iran and a few other countries are flirting with the same pressure from Washington to keep the dollar as the standard, or else.

With a proposed monetary change-over in Iran approaching a March deadline, a Chinese state-owned energy company has added its own brandy to the mix, by hurrying to complete the \$100 billion purchase of a major oil field in Iran. Not only would the acquisition assist in China's growing thirst for oil, it casts a shadow on U.S. pressure to halt Tehran's nuclear advances.

According to *CALJING* magazine, a Chinese delegation plans to visit Iran within weeks to conclude the agree-

ment, clearing China Petrochemical Corp. to develop the Yadavaran oil field in southern Iran. Their hope is to shortcircuit international sanctions against Iran.

In a speech before the U.S. House of Representatives last week, Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) warned fellow legislators about the end of dollar hegemony. "...after all these many years of great success, our dollar dominance is coming to an end," Congressman Paul said.

"The dollar/oil relationship has to be maintained to keep the dollar as a pre-eminent currency. Any attack on this relationship will be forcefully challenged—as it already has been," said Paul.

"In November 2000 Saddam Hussein demanded Euros for his oil. His arrogance was a threat to the dollar; his lack of any military might was never a threat. At the first cabinet meeting with the new administration in 2001, as reported by Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, the major topic was how we would get rid of Saddam Hussein—though there was no evidence whatsoever he posed a threat to us. This deep concern for Saddam Hussein surprised and shocked O'Neill.

"It now is common knowledge that the immediate reaction of the administration after 9/11 revolved around how they could connect Saddam Hussein to the attacks, to justify an invasion and overthrow of his government. Even with no evidence of any connection to 9/11, or evidence of weapons of mass destruction, public and congressional support was generated through distortions and flat out misrepresentation of the facts to justify overthrowing Saddam Hussein," said the congressman.

"There was no public talk of removing Saddam Hussein because of his attack on the integrity of the dollar as a reserve currency by selling oil in Euros. Many believe this was the real reason for our obsession with Iraq. I doubt it was the only reason, but it may well have played a significant role in our motivation to wage war. Within a very short period after the military victory, all Iraqi oil sales were carried out in dollars. The Euro was abandoned," said Paul.

"In 2001, Venezuela's ambassador to Russia spoke of Venezuela switching to the Euro for all their oil sales. Within a year there was a coup attempt against Chavez, reportedly with assistance from our CIA," he added.

Congressman Paul says that now a new attempt is being made against the petrodollar system. He explained that whereby gold previously supported the dollar, now it's black gold.

"Iran, another member of the 'axis of evil,' has announced her plans to initiate an oil bourse in March of this year. Guess what, the oil sales will be priced Euros, not dollars," he said.

"The administration announcement in 2001 that Iran was part of the axis of evil didn't do much to improve the diplomatic relationship between our two countries. Recent threats over nuclear power, while ignoring the fact that they are surrounded by countries with nuclear weapons, doesn't seem to register with those who continue to provoke Iran. With what most Muslims perceive as our war against Islam, and this recent history, there's little wonder why Iran might choose to harm America by undermining the dollar. Iran, like Iraq, has zero capability to attack us. But that didn't stop us from turning Saddam Hussein into a modern day Hitler ready to take over the world. Now Iran, especially since she's made plans for pricing oil in Euros, has been on the receiving end of a propaganda war not unlike that waged against Iraq before our invasion," he said.

Paul continued, "But the truth is that paying the bills for this aggressive intervention is impossible the old fashioned way, with more taxes, more savings, and more production by the American people. Much of the expense of the Persian Gulf War in 1991 was shouldered by many of our willing al-

lies. That's not so today. Now, more than ever, the dollar hegemony—its dominance as the world reserve currency—is required to finance our huge war expenditures. This \$2 trillion never-ending war must be paid for, one way or another. Dollar hegemony provides the vehicle to do just that.

"For the most part the true victims aren't aware of how they pay the bills. The license to create money out of thin air allows the bills to be paid through price inflation. American citizens, as well as average citizens of Japan, China, and other countries, suffer from price inflation, which represents the 'tax' that pays the bills for our military adventures. That is until the fraud is discovered, and the foreign producers decide not to take dollars nor hold them very long in payment for their goods. Everything possible is done to prevent the fraud of the monetary system from being exposed to the masses who suffer from it. If oil markets replace dollars with Euros, it would in time curtail our ability to continue to print, without restraint, the world's reserve currency.

"If this system were workable long term, American citizens would never have to work again. We too could enjoy 'bread and circuses' just as the Romans did, but their gold finally ran out and the inability of Rome to continue to plunder conquered nations brought an end to her empire.

"Once again Congress has bought into the war propaganda against Iran, just as it did against Iraq. Arguments are now made for attacking Iran economically, and militarily if necessary. These arguments are all based on the same false reasons given for the ill-fated and costly occupation of Iraq.

"There are no other countries that can challenge our military superiority, and therefore they have little choice but to accept the dollars we declare are today's 'gold.' This is why countries that challenge the system—like Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela—become targets of our plans for regime change."

Paul told fellow congressmen, "It seems that the people and Congress are easily persuaded by the jingoism of the preemptive war promoters. It's only after the cost in human life and dollars are tallied up that the people object to unwise militarism.

"The strange thing is that the failure in Iraq is now apparent to a large majority of American people, yet they and Congress are acquiescing to the call for a needless and dangerous confrontation with Iran.

"But then again, our failure to find Osama bin Laden and destroy his network did not dissuade us from taking on the Iraqis in a war totally unrelated to 9/11.

"Using force to compel people to accept money without real value can only work in the short run. It ultimately leads to economic dislocation, both domestic and international, and always ends with a price to be paid.

"The economic law that honest exchange demands only things of real value as currency cannot be repealed. The chaos that one day will ensue from our 35-year experiment with worldwide fiat money will require a return to money of real value. We will know that day is approaching when oil-producing countries demand gold, or its equivalent, for their oil rather than dollars or Euros. The sooner the better."

Tee Vee News Should Hire Quail

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Carryin' a gun is like plowin' with the reins around your neck. If you've got more sense than a mule, you'll probably be all right."

I got shot.
I was 16.
Quail hunting.

I turned my back to my partners to call a dog away from some cattle, and a single broke cover behind me.

A haberdashery salesman named Hutchison shot me in the small of the back with an ounce and a quarter of number 9 shot.

We were about as far apart as a clothesline for a family of ten or so.

I blame all my subsequent walking around on the fact that I'm a pretty good shot.

A canvas game bag full of quail soaked up most of Mr. Hutchison's lead.

Blue jeans, long handles, and a 2-inch wide tooled mulehide belt spared me from the worst part of the rest.

I felt like I got hit with a baseball bat, but after I squeezed a couple of pellets out of my thighs like so many pimples, (at which, as an adolescent, I was adept) I was fine.

My father was pretty angry about the whole thing.

First, Mr. Hutchison shot toward his cattle. Second, the store clerk shot toward his dog. Third, Dad knew I'd use the whole incident to skip farm work for at least two days.

Worse, he missed the bird.

It would be unfair to say I never forgave Mr. Hutchison for shooting me, but we never met after that day that it didn't come up in the conversation.

And we never hunted together again.

And he wasn't my friend.

Now, I have no idea what kind of vice president of the United States Mr. Hutchison would have been.

By all accounts he was pretty good at selling suits and hats.

So, for the life of me I can't figure out what Dick Cheney's hunting accident has to do with a damned thing.

As even an occasional reader of my drivel should know by now, anything I have to say about Dick Cheney is tempered by an opinion that he is the political equivalent of fire ants.

They also threaten quail.

But back to the subject at hand, I don't tell him when I'm going hunting, and I don't expect his notice next time he takes the field.

I doubt now I'd go with him, even if asked, but since there's little chance Cheney would invite me if somebody put

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



a gun to his head . . . OK, bad choice of words.

By the same token, if he wants to get together with a bunch of oilmen to figure out how to use my tax money to make them richer, I'd like the sum and substance of that itinerary.

So far as any argument about Cheney's intellectual capacity goes, in just about any "accident" there's usually a world of stupidity to be proportionately divided.

But if he wants to shoot pen-raised birds or corn-fed deer, that's pretty much his business.

Nobody asks me how my hamburger died.

At least they'd better not, lest I be tempted demonstrate the methodology.

I have made PETA people publicly cry into their poodles.

If you love animals that much, you'd do well to stop all forms of personal hygiene, lest you destroy millions of animals by taking a bath and brushing your teeth.

It seems that we have lost the ability to distinguish that which is germane to the public discourse from that which we merely personally dislike.

I have not seen more TeeVee hairdos demonstrate so much ignorance since . . . well, the day before.

If you don't know anything about hunting, pretty boy, that means you ain't read Faulkner, Roark, or Hemingway.

That means we're starting from the point of view of an intellectual anemic.

But do you have to broadcast it on national TeeVee?

Would the word "research" ever enter your mind?

Like a burglar entering a church?

It's one thing to disagree, even loathe, Dick Cheney's politics and policies.

If you seek any lame reason to disparage him, you will, in all likelihood, end up generating as much sympathy as enmity.

So if you just want to piss in his Post Toasties, maybe you could go hunting together.

You're The Only One For Me. And So Is She.

We just celebrated the most romantic holiday of the year. I'm not talking about Super Bowl Sunday. I'm talking about Valentine's Day. This is the one holiday dedicated to love and affection. It's also dedicated to spending — the National Retail Federation estimates that \$13.7 billion were spent this year on Valentine's Day. It is the biggest single 24-hour period for florists, and it's a big day for candy and greeting card companies. It's also unofficially the biggest day of the year for infidelity — and for catching cheaters.

Millions of people exchange Valentines and gifts on this special day. Some people don't just give a Valentine to their lover, but they give some to their friends as well. It wouldn't seem odd, for example, if you sent a Valentine to a friend you accidentally shot with some buckshot while hunting quail. However, it would seem odd if you sent a Valentine to two different people with the exact same sentiment if the words were, "You're the one I love best." And that's what these sneaky, but stupid, cheaters do every year.

It seems contradictory that a holiday that celebrates love also marks cheating on one's love. But in the devious minds of cheaters, it makes sense. It's the one day of the year that spouses and significant others expect to spend with each other. It's also the one day of the year that those who are cheating with spouses and significant others expect their cheating lover to spend time with them. They want to be reassured that even though Joe is married to Jane, "he obviously loves me better because, look at the card and gift he gave me, and he had dinner with me, not her." So, what does the cheater do if two people are depending on him? He does what he does best — he cheats. He lies to Jane and probably to Sally, too. He'll make up ex-



Modern Times

By
**Lloyd
Garver**

cuses why he can't be with one of them, he'll buy gifts for both of them, and he'll hope he won't get his alibis confused.

Doesn't cheating on Valentine's Day seem even worse than, say, cheating on March 14th? They are taking this almost-sacred day, and turning it into a juggling, trysting challenge. But don't worry, these cheaters are more likely to get caught on Valentine's Day than any other day of the year.

Private detectives report that V-Day is a big day for them. Cheaters are more likely to get caught than on a regular day. They're more likely to be seen buying double Valentine's Day cards or gifts. They're more likely to have two romantic meals with two different people. They're more likely to be so nervous about getting caught that they confuse their lies. So, private detectives who work at such organizations as Discreet Investigations of Golden, Colorado, say that if a lover is likely to stray in general, he's definitely going to roam on February 14th.

The Institute For Divorce Financial Analysts reports that every year, divorce filings spike in mid-February. It's probably because Valentine's Day provides the offended party with unassailable evidence: lies that are just too ridiculous to believe even by those who desperately want to believe them; credit card bills that can't be explained away logically; or

sightings by friends or detectives.

You probably don't need a detective to catch a cheater on Valentine's Day. There are some telltale signs. For example:

1) If he or she says they bought a box of candy for themselves. "Why not? I love myself."

2) If he or she says, "Let's not go out or make a big deal of Valentine's Day. I love you every day, so why should we make a holiday of just one day a year?"

And I'd tend not to believe the one you love if you walk in on him with the one he's loving, and he says, "How do you like this negligee she's wearing? I got it for you, but I couldn't tell if it looked okay on the mannequin, so I wanted to make sure it looked just right on someone real before I gave it to you."

It's a shame that so many people are

besmirching the holiday that we all started to celebrate sweetly when we passed out Valentines to those we had a crush on in grade school. On the other hand, it serves the cheaters right to get caught.

So, if you know someone who's a divorce lawyer or private detective, and they say, "I love Valentine's Day," they might not be romantics. Their heart might just be set on a big payday.

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

Age Can Be Relative With The Help Of An All-Beef Patty

As I've mentioned, I'm turning 40 this year. The good news is I have a friend who just turned 60. Relative to him, I am a young man (Of which I will keep reminding him until that sad day when, unexpectedly, he knocks out my front teeth with his walker). My point is, when it comes to age, what seems relative can quickly change.

Yesterday, for example, I was eating at a fast-food place when I noticed a pair of college-aged girls taking glances at me from another table. This has happened before, which is why I instinctively went through a series of mental checkpoints drawn from previous experience:

1) Is there condiment blowback in my hair, on my chin, or around my nostril(s)?

2) What am I wearing today, and is there any part I forgot to snap closed, zip up, or buckle down?

3) Did I unknowingly allow any part of my body's internal gastro process to be heard externally?

4) Am I slouching, hunched, or otherwise postured in a manner that makes it appear I'm protecting my \$3.99 Value Meal, possibly to the death?

And lastly,
5) Is there someone much younger and better looking sitting directly behind me?

After determining none of these factors was responsible for the attention I was getting from the two co-eds, I continued my meal feeling like I was back in my late 20s, back when metabolism kept things like a small order of fries and an 8-ounce shake from turning into an extra chin roughly the size of a cow udder; back when "harmless flirtation" meant something other than spending an hour on roller-skates without breaking a hip.

As I sat there eating, the two co-eds got up from their table and approached me, smiling nervously.

This was something I hadn't anticipated.

I know this because my throat, which had been in mid-swallow, suddenly forgot where my esophagus was. I took a sip of soda thinking it would jump-start the swallowing process. Instead, the soda backed up in my throat before ex-



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

iting through my nasal cavity — which, thankfully, was too small to accommodate my all-beef patty. Catching a glance at my reflection in the napkin dispenser, I saw what looked like a giant carp hacking up a fistful of Powerbait onto a plastic tray. Relatively speaking, I felt 15 again, back when nerves routinely seized my stomach into a walnut whenever I was around Sarah Getlost.

"Excuse me, are you OK?"

I looked up to see both girls standing at my table.

"Yes," I wheezed, then patted my chest. "Something went down the wrong pipe. I think it might have been my esophagus."

After some nervous laughter, one of the girls said, "I'm sure you saw us looking at you. We didn't want you to think we were stalkers or something."

I nodded and took a sip of soda, trying to act cool; praying it wouldn't come out my nose.

"It's just that, from over there, you looked exactly like my Dad," she explained, "and I'm not supposed to be here. If he knew I skipped classes today for a concert he'd kill me."

And just like that, I was in my mid-50s, racing to catch up with my friend and his walker.

As they started to leave, her friend turned back to me and said, "Just so you know, I told her you looked too young to be her Dad."

In that moment, I don't think I've ever been happier being 39.

Well — relatively speaking, anyway.

(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>.)

Editorial OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

What Is California Thinking?

There is such a thing as paper ballots.

So why would California Secretary of State Bruce McPherson throw caution to the wind by certifying the Diebold TSX and Optical Scan voting systems for use in that state's 2006 elections, especially after the onslaught of debacles revealed in the last elections?

According to the Secretary of State's staff report, the TSx system is being marketed and sold prior to its being fully functional and federally qualified. Not only that, according to the report, the company had misrepresented the status of the system in federal testing in order to obtain state certification, the company failed to obtain federal qualification of the system despite assurances it would, the company in-

stalled uncertified software on election machines in 17 counties, and the list goes on.

In jeopardy is the conduct of the upcoming March primary.

Not until the public joins the various watchdog groups poised to assure fair and accurate elections will things substantially change. It would help, too, to elect people to public office who truly believe in the sanctity of elections.

Of course, with crooked, rigged elections that is a huge, if not impossible, task.

Some states are making progress, but it appears that California's voters will be content to find refuge in some strange medieval age of technology.

Gadgets can move you backward. Especially when they don't work.

— W. Leon Smith

CENTRAL TEXAS HISTORY

'The Gray Phantom' – A Texas Apparition*Part Two*

By **JOE MARCHMAN**
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

MERIDIAN —After the collapse of the Confederacy, quizzically one might ask of what condition existed that allowed men of John Wilkes Booth's notoriety to seek deliverance in Texas.

In the first place, in 1865 the population of Texas was scattered over an area almost as large as all the other "cotton states" of the Confederacy. At the beginning of the war in 1861 only 600,000 inhabitants sparsely settled the state. It is interesting to note that there were 620,000 casualties during the Civil War...360,000 from the North and 260,000 from the South.

Texas contributed 75,000 troops to the Confederacy of which less than 20,000 remained in the state to deal with both Yankee and Indian conflicts.

Southeast Texas was a multimillion acre thick, tangled mass of vegetation known as the "Big Thicket."

There, deserters and fugitives of every description hid out for all of the Civil War. These abstrusive, crass ne'er-do-wells were commonly known as "Jayhawkers." Efforts to extradite these lawless renegades were never successful.

Texas had a 3,000-mile land and sea frontier with not near enough military available for its defenses. But, what it had was hell-bent and determined to protect its own from jeopardy. Miraculously, the Civil War was fought around Texas' edges and not in it.

Sabine Pass, Galveston, and Brownsville were under Federal Army and Naval siege at times... from whence Union plans were to invade the state.

This never happened, owing to the heroic efforts of the Texas Confederate Army commanded by General John Bankhead Magruder and others of "like mettle" who repelled the Union invaders on each and every occasion.

From Sabine Pass, 800 miles to the northwest, Confederate war lord John Roberts Baylor captured what is now southern New Mexico and southeast Arizona.

Union Colonel Kit Carson was whipped soundly in the Texas Panhandle at Val Verde in 1864...no more Federal invasions were attempted from New Mexico.

The Confederate Navy was commanded by Major Leon Smith, a former artilleryman and steamboat captain who had a brother that was a member of Lincoln's Cabinet in Washington...his name was Caleb Blood Smith. The South's Navy was feebly armed —on paper really no match for the Union gunboats and steamers. Major Smith lashed cotton bales to two small steamers used to carry mail.

Five Union steam gunboats were in Galveston Harbor inflicting heavy fire on General Magruder's men on the island. Major Smith showed his grit by ramming the Yankee gunboat

"Harriet Lane." The Yankees' fierce gunboats were not paying that much notice to the small cottonclads. Smith's sharpshooters, from behind the cotton bales, cleared the Goliath's decks, thereby capturing the ship.

History records that the other four Union gunboats participating in the bombardment and, according to Major Leon Smith, "behaved in a very unsportsman like fashion...steaming away from Galveston with truce flags flying." Such were the deeds of valor that kept invasions of the Union forces out of the state.

In April of 1865, Union soldiers tried to ambush a Confederate outpost near Brownsville on the Rio Grande River. The Emperor Maximilian of Mexico had stationed troops on the border that alerted the Confederates that the Yankees were coming. The Rebels from the advantage of a selected rise shelled the Federal troops with their 12 pounders...before sending in the Cavalry to complete the rout...the Yankees broke ranks and ran, to the delight of the Texas Confederates. By virtue of some eastern newspapers, the Southern troops knew the war was already over.

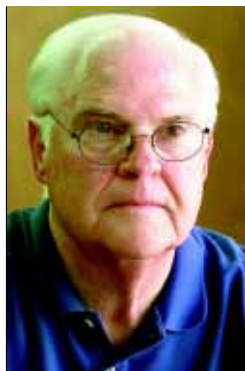
Smugly, Colonel Rip Ford stated on the occasion, "Some of them damn Yankees could outrun our horses"...thus revealing the feelings and individualism that was primary to those Confederate Texans that we call ancestors.

The Reconstruction period after the war was humiliating to most ... General Phil Sheridan, the military dictator of the Southwest during Reconstruction, said in 1865 that he believed most Texans to be incorrigible rebels. He declared: "There is a very unwholesome state of affairs in Texas ... the Governor and the people generally are disposed to be ugly."

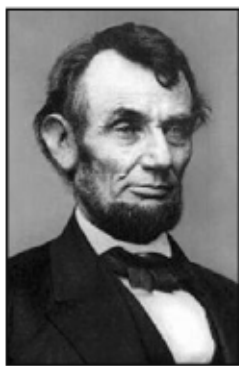
David S. Stanley, a Federal general, told a Congressional Committee on Reconstruction that "Texas is worse than any other Southern state because she has never been whipped."

In the summer of 1865, the land swarmed with armed and confused men under the "over rule" of Gen. Sheridan. He removed several Texas Governors from office "as impediments to Reconstruction." Oligarchy prevailed, giving rise to an atmosphere where most any man could mask his reputation earned by past deeds against the North.

General Albert Pike retired as Indian Commissioner and returned to his ranch which was between Meridian and Iredell in Bosque County.



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.



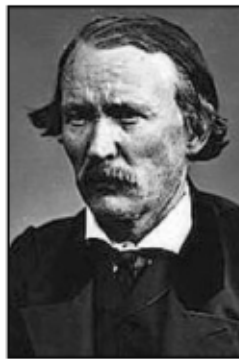
Abraham Lincoln



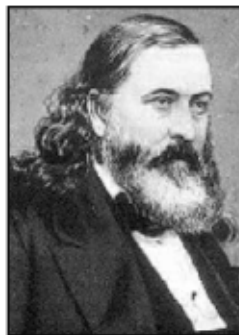
John Wilkes Booth



Gen. Magruder



Kit Carson



Gen. Albert Pike



Frank McCoy



John St. Helen's House — Glen Rose

Pike also served 32 years as Grand Commander of the Supreme Grand Council of Scottish Rite Masons in the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

General Pike on several occasions spoke of John Wilkes Booth frequenting this area of Central Texas.

Pike said that, to his surprise, once he happened upon Booth in a Fort Worth bar and that he had met Booth prior to that in Washington, D.C. some years earlier and had been in his presence numerous times. It seems that Johnnie Booth was also a Mason.

Barnard's Mill was built in 1860 by Charles Barnard on the north bank of the Paluxy River, a few miles before that copious stream entered the Brazos River.

In January 1860, there were maybe 30 families residing in the territory between Bosque and Hood Counties that is now Somervell County. The small hamlet of Barnard's Mill changed its name in the early 1870s to Glen Rose. There were almost no roads in the territory, only wagon trails leading to where-ever early trade demanded.

Men relied on 'lynch law' in the territory where organized courts did not yet have authority. Those were the years between 1855 and 1875, when Somervell County was formed. The Indians remained a threat until the early 1870s.

Somervell County history gives detailed narration of a man living in its midst that was in fact John Wilkes Booth, alias, John St. Helen, as also revealed Hood County's history.

It seems that James Fairly, formerly the County Judge in Glen Rose, was host to many gatherings. He entertained among his numerous guests a "brilliant conversationalist," a man of mystery who called himself John St. Helen. Those present were enthralled with his rhetoric ... he was an enigma that locals enjoyed; however, a real puzzlement. Who was he?

Legend has it for most of this last century and a half, that this man of charm and mystery was none other than John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln and that he had not met the "Grim Reaper" in that fiery barn in Virginia as claimed.

John St. Helen had lived among the early Paluxy Valley folk for a time unrecognized where he operated a small store on the grounds of Barnard's Mill on the Paluxy River.

One frequent patron of St. Helen's store, Frank McCoy, not schooled in the theatre, found him to be "half-mad" with his spontaneous orations, but pleasing to the ear. However, McCoy's description of St. Helen presents a picture of a person that matched that of Johnnie Booth, the actor.

St. Helen, abruptly one night, rode away from his little store at Barnard's Mill, never to return. This incident of hasty departure, according to Frank McCoy, was prompted by the arrival of Cliff Scott. Scott was a young resolute United States Marshall, who had come to claim the Mill operator's attractive sister, Annie Jordan.

Apparently, St. Helen traveled only 16 miles that night to Granbury in Hood County, where his cousin Fannie Booth Rhea lived.

Mrs. Ed Aiken saw St. Helen (Booth) and recalled her impressions of the man at the time. He was unlike other local men of Granbury and it was easy to fixate and rivet his image in her memory. He was very handsome and a dark-complexioned man of about 35 or 40, who limped as he walked, favoring his left leg. Mrs.

Continued On Next Page

Congressmen Butt Heads With President Over War

Jeff : McLemore, a feisty freshman congressman from Texas, butted heads with Woodrow Wilson on Feb. 17, 1916, over the president's about-face toward the European war.

Though surprised by the violent eruption of ancient antagonisms in 1914, most Americans took only a passing interest in the distant conflict. Above all, they wanted no part of the foreign feud, a consensus which produced the presidential pronouncement that the United States "must be neutral in fact as well as name."

Anti-war sentiment was particularly strong in the Lone Star State, according to a prominent Democrat. In a letter to Col. Edward M. House, a fellow Texan and Wilson's key advisor, he reported, "an

overwhelming desire for peace, not perhaps at any price, but at most prices, which is altogether unprecedented in the history of this country."

The plot thickened in May 1915, when William Jennings Bryan resigned as secretary of state in protest of Wilson's tilt toward the Allies after the German sinking of the "Lusitania." In autumn appearances in Dallas and Houston during a coast-to-coast speaking tour, the three-time candidate for the White House warned against the dire danger of militarism.

Wilson's November 1915 announcement of a preparedness plan, widely interpreted as a prelude to U.S. participation in the war, galvanized his Texas critics. A coalition of clergy, farmers, prohibitionists and pacifists countered with a campaign against the military build-up.

Long an advocate of replacing the expensive standing army with a citizen militia, Oscar Callaway denounced the increase in defense spending as wasteful warmongering. The West Texas congressman from Comanche declared in January 1916, "Europe is on fire all right, but there is about 3,000 miles between us and the conflagration."

THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS tried to drum up support for the embattled administration by posing the question, "Are you for or against the president in his stand for preparedness?" The newspaper claimed that 20,000 readers responded to the "poll" and gave Wilson a 20-1 vote of confidence.

A new crisis surfaced on Feb. 15, 1916, when Wilson hinted that Germany would be held responsible for American lives lost in submarine attacks on Allied shipping. Two days later, Jeff: McLemore introduced in the house of representatives his so-called "warning resolution" advising U.S. citizens to avoid vessels subject to sinking by the Germans.

The Austin magazine editor, who used a colon to abbreviate his middle name, emerged overnight as the symbolic spokesman of the nationwide movement to stop the steady slide toward war. Spurning appeals to party patriotism, McLemore insisted the president was not above reproach merely because he was a Democrat.

Wilson mustered sufficient support to table the warning resolution in the house and a similar measure in the senate. Nevertheless, half of the Lone Star delegation put their careers on the line by siding with their controversial colleague.

In addition to Oscar Callaway, praised by his hometown paper for an "absolute lack of fear of criticism," others that dared to break party discipline included Cyclone Davis and James Luther Slayden. The former was a fiery populist recently readmitted to the Democratic fold, while the latter was a past president of the American Peace Society and an 11-term incumbent from San Antonio.

"He kept us out of war" was the ironic slogan of Woodrow Wilson's reelection campaign and the key to his narrow victory in November 1916. McLemore and Slayden survived administration-sponsored challenges in the Democratic primary, but Callaway and Davis went down to defeat.

Five months later, President Wilson requested a declaration of war against Germany. McLemore stood his ground and sealed his fate by casting a "nay" vote.

This Week In Texas History



By Bartee Haile

"I am not yet ready to vote absolutism to any president," explained the plain-spoken politician, "nor will I ever vote to abrogate the Monroe Doctrine by forming any alliance with the warring nations of the Old World."

Slayden, however, decided to go along in order to maintain his "usefulness in Congress." The war, he rationalized, was "an accomplished fact."

If Slayden thought his late conversion would patch things up with the party hierarchy, he was sadly mistaken. An election eve statement from the White House, which questioned his loyalty to the president, forced the congressman to abandon his bid for a twelfth term.

The state legislature removed the remaining thorn from Woodrow Wilson's side by redistricting Jeff: McLemore's at-large seat out of existence. No quitter, he entered the Democratic primary in a Gulf Coast district but finished a poor third.

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

The Gray Phantom — A Texas Apparition

From Previous Page

Aiken got to know Fannie Booth well. She said that Fannie told her that she had first met St. Helen several years earlier when he had come to see her father ... a blood relative.

Fannie received St. Helen as a proper cousin should. While staying with Fannie, St. Helen made her pledge to him that she would not reveal his true identity as being that of the infamous John Wilkes Booth ... nor did she ever tell anyone.

As fate would have it, while in Granbury and working as a bartender, St. Helen became gravely ill with pneumonia. Fearing that he was about to grasp his last breath, he asked the tavern owner, where he worked, to ride to Dallas and fetch a priest. At his bedside, in the presence of the churchman and several others, he asked for Benediction, and then confessed that he truly was John Wilkes Booth.

Again, Johnnie Booth had escaped the "Pale Horse" of death sent by the "Prince of Darkness." He, somehow, recovered completely and vanished from Granbury.

Cousin Fannie Booth was quizzed many times as to where he had gone ... her reply was always the same, "Out West."

Do you find it hard to believe that John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, could have dwelt among our grandfathers' fathers for nigh-on to three decades?

Then, let me remind you of Great-granddad's mind-set about the Civil War:

In Texas alone in 1865 and 1866, just after the war, there were 500 indictments for the murders of disloyal men to the South ... yet not a conviction was had.

On March 30, 1870, Texas was readmitted to the Union by President Ulysses S. Grant. Indeed, this was the same Gen. Grant who was upset with and turned down Lincoln's invitation to Ford's Theatre that fatal night.

Today, the sky has resumed its brilliant hue of blue and the stars twinkle ever so celestially. But, as yet, on certain dark nights, if you really listen with all your being, there seems to come the thunder of hoof-beats of the "Gray Phantoms" as they parade "The Stars and Bars" through the hallowed halls of Texas and Confederate history ... with no regrets.



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No Gay-Lovin' Jew Liberal Hollywood Types Allowed

I have a theory as to why so many people buy the RoveBush Regime's recircling lines of bull dung, and turn a blind eye to the cancerous corruption that has eaten away at Congress.

These good folks are culturally deficient.

What's one of the biggest cries that comes out of the Neo-con camps?

"Everything in movies and on television is controlled by those Gay-loving, Jew Liberals in Hollywood."

Right there, you have the finger of hatred pointed toward four groups in one sentence.

Let's face it, if not for Hollywood we'd have a Nation, and World, totally devoid of those pesky seven deadly sins. Why, there'd be no greed or avarice. Gambling or theft would be unheard of activities.

Nobody would ever willingly engage in any kind of lustful act outside of marriage. Golly, there wouldn't even be any pleasure in sex — it would just be our duty, a necessity to increase the herd.

Our youth, instead of getting fat and lazy eating junk food while sitting in front of video monitors of various sorts, Heaven forbid, might actually take part in some sort of healthy ritual, such as an athletic endeavor. This could be workable, except not all youngsters are suited to the field of sports, making them targets for the jibes of the more aptly endowed.

So, we've now created a group who resent the Adonis and Venus set, not only for how they look and their achievements, but who also detest this physically enhanced segment of society for the higher plateau at which they have arrived.

Being the only game in town, I used to work for what passes for a daily newspaper here in Central Illinois, THE PANTAGRAPH out of Bloomington. There was an article in last Sunday's edition about several local families who decided to sever communications with the outside world via television. Considering there's only one local paper, Right-winged and heavily influenced by Evangelical Christians, the children involved don't seem to have much of a chance at openness of thought processes.

Especially when one reads that they are home-schooled, and have virtually no contact with the other children in their neighborhoods.

The adults even said that while at work, when others discuss what happened during last night's episode of "24" or chatted about the way the White Sox put away game four of the World Series, they were left out.

All three families said that the reasons they had dropped cable or dismantled the dish were because of sex and violence. Even if the show was family-oriented, the commercials often were "R-rated." That has to be about the most shallow excuse for hiding the outside world from your child that I've ever heard.

One parent said his brother, hundreds of miles away, TiVo's stuff and sends it to him without the commercials. Why doesn't he just cut out the ads himself?

Where do these people get their news from? What are they going to do when their children turn 18 or 21 and want to interact with real, live human beings?

How can anybody in these households possibly be informed enough to vote?

I've known some people, and read about others, who have divested themselves of television. I found this article



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

very slanted, because people sometimes just don't like the intrusion of the box. Others are so busy they have no time to watch. Then, there are those who watch outside of the home.

There's something eminently disturbing about people who consider themselves enlightened yet shut themselves and their children off from any knowledge of what in the hell is going on. They turn a blind eye to how the faux leaders of our Nation have created such unprecedented havoc, both internally and internationally, that we now inhabit a Planet that has literally become a powderkeg.

The silliness of their reasoning for removing themselves completely from society is magnified when one notes that we live in an age when low-cost electronic devices exist that make it possible to never have to watch a commercial again.

It was good people just like these who made the tasks of the Brownshirts easy.

I also have friends who, it saddens me to say, have lost touch with the more fun aspects of the cultural world. Some spend too much time in pursuit of paychecks; others have spouses who never shared their interest in comic release or a good bang-bang shoot-'em-up. And I know a few people who have been hoodwinked and molested by demon rum, which kind of diminishes all interest in anything that requires attention.

These guys have missed some of the greatest war movies of the past 25 years. In fact, they probably haven't seen any Best Picture Oscar nominee or recipient since "Rocky" won 30 years ago. Ask them about a television show, they haven't seen it; they watched whatever chick comedy their wife had on. But, their wives don't even pay attention to "Will & Grace" while it's on.

And their kids watch stuff in five to ten minute segments.

When you tell them about something you discussed with them three weeks ago, they say you never told them.

But, they are good Christians and they will stand up for every stupid, addle-brained scheme George W. Bush and his Fascist Band of Pirate Rogues come up with.

And they won't believe one single word when you tell them about Herr Ubermeister Karl Rove — how it has been he and Dark Lord the Dick Cheney in charge of the puppet King George XLIII all along. Even when you show this to them in writing, they still call it an untruth.

So, it becomes useless to tell them things like as the Vice President of the United States Dark Lord Cheney should have come clean immediately about shooting his buddy rich, influential attorney Harry Whittington, instead of leaving it up to a citizen the next morning, his hostess, rich, influential Katharine Armstrong.

THE CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER-TIMES was not as sufficient a newspaper to report the incident to as, say, a NEW YORK TIMES, as Dark Lord asserts, considering the fact they wouldn't have the level of investigative journalists available as a major paper — especially on a Sunday

morning. And Cheney's lame excuse that he had no press person with him was either just that, or pre-planned because he and Harry were accompanied by two women.

Oh, yeah, according to Alex Bennett of Sirius Radio, standing right next to Dark Lord at the time of the shooting was the Ambassador to Switzerland and Lichtenstein, Pam Willeford. Pam and the Dick have been linked together on several occasions, and last June her daughter was named Deputy Chief of Staff to the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

The Kenedy County Sheriff's Department found that alcohol was not a factor in the shooting — following questioning of Cheney and other participants the morning after.

Ms. Armstrong originally was very firm in her assertion that there was absolutely no alcohol served at the barbecue, only Dr Pepper. She was adamant that she doesn't even drink. Katharine also originally stated she was right there during the entire incident, when Harry got "peppered" by some birdshot. (I just love that quaint little Texas euphemism — up north we call it getting blasted by a shotgun, but what do we know?)

By the time the Dick had his story down pat, did he go to the American news media at large and face us like a real mensch? Hell, no! He did exactly what he did during VietNam and used another deferment, hiding behind the safety of his office.

Dark Lord went to the very organization that started the ball rolling for the RoveBush Regime's illegitimate takeover in 2000 — he allowed his favorite non-reporter Brit Hume to hold a mock interview on FOXNEWSCHANNEL, in the middle of the day, when nobody was watching except retirees and shut-ins. Cheney's monotone delivery throughout was perhaps the most false-hearted performance since Richard M. Nixon's "I am not a crook."

Let's see, Cheney waited overnight to talk to the police — time enough to sober up and ditch his female companion. His original statement was scrapped by the White House Sunday as sounding "too convoluted," indicating it was most likely bull. He let Scott McClellan swing in the wind for four days trying to make up excuses for this. When Dark Lord finally decided to face the Nation it was in a sealed environment, as safe for him as he could make it.

Somehow, he managed to come up with a story that nobody else did, one that had every little detail in place. Any fan of "NYPD Blue" or "Law & Order" or "CSI" — or any of the forensic documentaries on Discovery or CourtTV — knows that's virtually impossible immediately after the fact, much less four or five days after an incident.

Ms. Armstrong was not as close to the shooting as she had originally stated.

Cheney claimed to have one beer at lunch. Wow, what a revelation. So, anyone who saw him could say he was drinking a beer.

So, Ms. Armstrong had to alter that part of her story regarding the absence of alcohol.

He also mentioned something about going to the house, and being driven around on a tour of the (50,000 acre) ranch for a couple of hours prior to returning to the hunt. I shall leave it up to your discretion to consider what was going down on that warm Southern Texas Saturday afternoon.

Ms. Armstrong seemed to forget this little detail regarding Dark Lord's absence from the picnic beneath the big old oak tree.

However, if you listen to Bay Buchanan, other Bushite pundits, and the Republicans on the Hill who are misguidedly circling the wagons around the Dick, this is just a little bitty accident, a non-incident that happens all the time. (According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, once for every 33,333 licenses issued — or 30 last year. Since neither Cheney nor Whittington had secured proper quail licenses, this shooting must not count.)

They, like the Republican loyalists, are completely blind to the fact that this is yet another example of the overinflated hubris this Regime has shown time and again toward the Citizenry of our Nation. Cheney, despite being a paid servant of the United States, decided he did not, and does not, have to face up to the People, that he owes us, those for whom he works, absolutely no true accounting.

The entire White House Gang of Rotters think they have an entitlement to do precisely as they feel, and damn the people. We are nothing to them.

This "hunt" was just another weekend romp for the outlandishly privileged wealthy white folks who do not give a rat's ass about you, me, your children, those thousands dead and homeless in New Orleans, the tens of thousands slaughtered and maimed in the Mid East, or anyone else.

Then, goofy people call C-Span to defend this selfish schmuck with comments like, "Mr. Cheney and Mr. Worthington paid for licenses but the county sent them the wrong ones," and the most ridiculous one of all, "Remember Chappaquiddick."

Now, if that's not comparing a quail to an elderly, rich white lawyer.

They were conned into voting for these liars and polecats based on an alleged faith in Jesus, and a song-and-dance that this bunch of guys and one misplaced woman who never did anything for anyone but themselves were going to restore dignity and decorum to the White House (when it was only shunted aside because of Republican overreaching in the first place). Now that the entire Country, and the World, is about to come crashing down on top of all of our heads, they're too ashamed of themselves to admit how stupid they've been.

Friends don't let friends apologize for Bush and his Pirate Gang.

I'd take a Village full of Gays, Jews, Liberals and Hollywood types who would be honest and sincere with me before I'd take a gas-guzzling SUV filled with people who'd lie for Bush.

DAY 1,900 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)

Voter Fraud: Americans Need To Learn From Haitian Politics — Quickly!

Are they isolated incidents throughout the nation, or is voter fraud a way of life in American politics? Currently many Americans may feel that the complaints of voter fraud are the products of “poor loser” democrats and liberals. In year 2000 Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore all but directly accused George W. Bush of perpetrating voter fraud to win the election. During the 2004 presidential elections, many states may have been directly or indirectly involved in various forms of voter fraud. Voter fraud is a real issue.

Currently, many attorney generals of various states — e.g., Texas, Florida, Ohio, New Mexico — are uncovering more than casual and/or accidental occurrences of voter fraud and questionable voting machine integrity. It should be an eye-opener for American voters and a red flag regarding the integrity of our entire political system. Immense power breeds corruption, which unfortunately appears to be an intrinsic human weakness. In the case of a nation’s political agenda, it inevitably could cause the ruination of that country.

During the past 200 years the small island nation of Haiti has remained the prime example of political chaos, economic turmoil and residential unrest. Currently, it has been besieged by voter fraud in its national elections. According to an editorial in today’s WASHINGTON TIMES, “Yesterday, U.N. officials found hundreds of smashed ballot boxes and empty vote bags in a dumpster outside Port-au-Prince — all but confirming suspicions of fraud in the Feb. 7 presidential election. Rioters are in the streets.”

Haiti remains the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere and the primary cause may be traced to its historically cruel and corrupt politics. The “smashed ballot boxes and empty vote bags” found by UN officials in dumpsters underlines the evidence of fraud running rampant in a nation that is stuck in an ongoing political quagmire. Every 20 years or so the U.S. and other nations reluctantly determine to intervene in Haiti’s political mishaps, trying to sort out some semblance of decency and status-quo in an endlessly tyrannical and corroding political, social, and economic system. The people of Haiti desperately are in need of real leadership. Generations of poverty and



Commentary

By
Peter
Stern

disruptive political influences have left Haiti a nation under perpetual siege. Haiti is the “poster nation” of corrupt political despotism for all other nations in the world.

Americans need only look to Haiti to be reminded of what power politics and voter fraud can do to a nation. Contrary to belief, voter fraud is not a new event here in America. History tells us that during the 1800s even the great gothic writer, Edgar Allan Poe, was involved in fraudulent voting. Apparently, Poe needed money and was inclined to work for unscrupulous individuals who paid the writer and others to vote illegally. Lists were distributed of the names of dead persons who were registered voters. Individuals were paid for every vote placed in the name of a dead person. Voter fraud has had a long life in America’s history, though perhaps not highly publicized.

Americans need to learn from Haitian politics — quickly! Voter fraud is an issue that should NOT be taken lightly. Any incidence of fraudulent activity requires firm and swift justice — and that punishment must be for ANY individual, up to and including the President of the United States. To negate and/or divert attention from this issue ensures that one day soon America may rival Haiti’s corrupt politics, social upheaval, and economic oppression.

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 member of the Republican Party, he does NOT support the party’s current platforms, philosophies and actions. He maintains he is an “intelligent” Republican with a conscience — a minority branch of the ruling party. You may contact Peter Stern at: <psstern@austin.rr.com>.

What Would Goat Boy Do?

Lutherans love sex. Hey, we’re human, too, I’m happy to report.

Some of us get carried away, though. Oh, man, they’re worse than Louis “Panty Raid!” Skolnick in *Revenge of the Nerds*.

But there are other sex-crazed Lutherans whom you have to watch out for.

I mean, just take my advice:

Be sure to brush up on your Heimlich maneuver before you bring up *sexy* issues like abortion and same-sex marriage with these conspicuous Lutherans over a quiet dinner.

And while you’re at it, brush up on your karate skills just in case you have to protect yourself from them choking you afterwards!

Yeah, we Lutherans tend to forget Jesus, though a water-to-wine party animal was more interested in focusing his trust in God than in a couple of silly rules on sexual behavior.

You know, I don’t understand why more of us Lutherans don’t take up those e-mail offers from strippers, exotic models, and whatnot if only to invite them to church.

It’s only fair.

“You show me yours, and I’ll show you the Lord’s.”

Church attendance would never be the same, either.

I’m telling you, pews would be full of a fannies from that Sunday on if at least one pornstar attended just one church service.

I know it sounds weird, but I think that’s what Goat Boy would have suggested.

“Goat Boy” is the late comedian Bill Hicks.

I bring him up not only because he died of pancreatic cancer 12 years ago on Feb. 26 at the age of 33...

...but also because I wanted to make a proposal.

See, progressives like to put Bill on their own partisan political pedestal because of his radical humor and philosophy.

But Bill deserves better.

I propose Bill’s memory should accom-

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



pany the epitaph “Don’t Mourn. Organize!” that Molly Ivins hung over the tomb of the late Sen. Paul and Shelia Wellstone of Minnesota...

Bill’s epitaph, however, should say, “Don’t Idolize. Organize!”

“Organize what?” you ask.

Well, Bill deserves to have his vision fulfilled:

“I’m gonna share with you a vision that I had, ‘cause I love you. And you feel it.

“You know all that money we spend on nuclear weapons and defense each year, trillions of dollars, correct?”

“Instead — just play with this — if we spent that money feeding and clothing the poor of the world — and it would pay for it many times over, not one human being excluded — we can explore space together, both inner and outer, forever in peace.”

Bill wasn’t kidding about “trillions of dollars.”

According to Stephen I. Schwartz, director of the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Cost Study Project, the United States spent about \$5.8 trillion (in 1996 dollars) on nuclear weapons, their maintenance, and disassembly until the Cold War ended.

But Bill wasn’t kidding about disarmament, either.

I’m sure he would have ridiculed our fear that terrorists might use “the bomb” on us.

Only an idiot would put his faith under lock and key, especially since his neighbors don’t have the luxury of ignoring that idiot’s 10,000 nuclear warheads next door.

Oh, forget it, you Goat Boy fans wouldn’t want to use your power to stand up for something you believe in, like education, healthcare, or oh so sweet sweet love with Lutherans.

Go back to bed.

Alone, that is.

Call To Women Farmers & Ranchers

As I was wrestling with the hay ring this morning, trying (alone) to pick it up on its side, roll it into position, plop it over a roll of hay I had just put out with the tractor — As I was hoping the big thing wouldn’t fall on me — I had an idea. Eureka!

I’d like to put out a call to women who do hands-on farming or ranching (like I do). Please write in to the paper, send pictures if you like (which will NOT be returned). I would like to compile a list, follow up with interviews, and do a column on all of us, maybe a magazine article or book if there is enough material. I know for sure there are at least a few of us brave and hearty female souls in the area, either helping the men in our lives or doing this on our own or with children or other women.

I do believe this would make a very interesting story, perhaps even a surprising one. So please write me if you hop on your tractor to shred the back forty or hay your herd of cattle, if you raise animals, if you plant crops or a really big garden. Let me know if you break ice in your troughs in cold weather. Tell me if you run your own barbed wire. Do you work alone or do

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.

you hire help? Is your place a family homestead?

Tell me your funny stories, your sad stories, whatever. Let me know if you were born into this occupation, if you married into it, if you are willingly pursuing it full time or as a hobby or a weekend occupation (doubt that will count) or if you are being coerced. (Just kidding). You can even tell me if you are ready to chuck it all and move to a condo in the big city.

Tell me all about yourself, strong, rural women of America. Please let me hear from you.

E-mail: <ellis@lonestaricon.com>.

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IRS's New Dungeons & Taxes

By ALLEN FISHER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Virtual characters, virtual items, virtual money and, now, virtual taxes.

The Internal Revenue Service may soon be taxing game components that don't exist outside an imaginary computer-generated game world.

Trading game components for the Massively Multiplayer online role-playing games such as EverQuest, Ultima Online, Star Wars Galaxies, City of Heroes and World of Warcraft, are now being threatened with taxation.

Players buy the games, then participate online with thousands of other purchasers.

The player selects or creates a character such as a warrior or wizard, then starts on a quest doing battle with other players or game-generated enemies. The character can "earn" advantages, or game components, such as imaginary weapons, potions and other "devices" that give enable the player to compete more successfully.

These components can be traded for other game pieces, or "bought" with "game money."

But these massive multiplayer online games, often called MMOs, have now become a new source of real income.

"On April 15, 2004, I will truthfully report to the IRS that my primary source of income is the sale of imaginary goods—and that I earn more from it, on a monthly basis, than I have ever earned as a professional writer," wrote Julian Dibbel, in "Legal Affairs," an online magazine dedicated to issues of law.

Dibbel said he made a total of \$11,000 on eBay selling imaginary goods that his



Levi Barner plays a videogame called Star Wars Galaxies.

character had won, \$3,900 of which was in the final, most profitable month. All on a game called Ultima Online.

"It's ridiculous; it's just a game," said Levi Barner, a long time MMO gamer, "It's a private transaction between two people. The IRS is just trying to get people's money. And how are they going to track down every single sale?"

To play these online games, some kind of connection to the internet is required. CD's to download the game can be purchased at almost any computer or video game store, along with a game card for those who don't want to give your credit card number out over the internet.

Almost all MMOs require a monthly fee, ranging from \$10 to \$15.

"Why the sudden interest? That's what I want to know," said an online trader. who refused to give their real name out of IRS fear.

"I have done this for about 5 years now, and it's getting me through college. I worked at a game store, but that wasn't enough. I'm making more money now than I did working there. Why does the IRS want to tax money that doesn't really exist?"

EverQuest, an online game with 450,000 subscribers, has playable characters that range from Wood Elves, a race

of humanoids that live in trees, to Vah Shir, a cat-like race from the moon. In the virtual world, the kind of imaginary economic activity can be measured in real-world terms like "gross domestic product."

"Eh, it's not going to change the game really," said Ben Borom, another long term gamer, "It's still going to be a game, and soon it will fall and a different game will take its place."

But just how much do these items and accounts cost?

Try \$650 to \$1300 for a high level character on any given game. Even \$35 to \$40 for large amounts of currency. This leads up to a possible \$880 million exchanging hands, according to e-Bay pricing totals.

Getting fair prices on these virtual currency/dollar exchanges can prove challenging, since there is no reliable data to get a set value.

"I have looked at this data acquisition issue for some time and...keep hitting a brick wall," said Dan Hunter, an assistant professor of legal studies and business ethics at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

These transactions take place in the real world and the online world. An advertisement of the product is sold on an online auction, such as eBay, and when the real cash money is received, the players will meet back up in the game to exchange the money.

There are now even online companies, such as IGE or a Chinese website called GameUSD, that will sell online currency, acting like a "middle man" to sell to other players.

Gamers expressed worry about just how far this will go, taxes now, then insurance claims next week.



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