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The CIA knew in 1993 that there were no nuclear weapons programs in Iraq. The CIA knew in 1994 that there were no chemical weapons in Iraq. The CIA knew in 1995 that there were no biological weapons in Iraq.' — Scott Ritter

Former weapons inspector Scott Ritter spoke recently at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church's 4th Annual Activism and Spirituality Conference in Austin, at which he urged Americans to demand accountability of their government leaders and adhere to the powers of the U.S. Constitution.

The Simpsons Better Known Than First Amendment: Study

CHICAGO — Is the longest-running cartoon television show *The Simpsons* better known than the First Amendment of the United States' Constitution?

Apparently so, according to a survey conducted by the McCormick Tribune

Freedom Museum, which will open its doors in Chicago on April 11.

When asked, one in four Americans can identify more than one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment, but more than half know at

least two members of the dysfunctional cartoon family, said the study.

The names of the fictional Simpsons family members are Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. The five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment are free-

dom of speech, religion, press, assembly and petition for redress of grievances.

The director of museum exhibitions Joe Madeira said that his staff will have its work cut out for them. The museum's goal is to help people understand their freedoms rooted in the First Amendment.

While 69 percent of those surveyed knew that the freedom of speech was a First Amendment right, 24 percent identified the freedom of religion as a right, followed by freedom of the press with 11 percent, freedom of assembly (10 percent), and freedom of petition for redress of grievances (1 percent).

The survey made via telephone by the Synovate research firm took the opinions of 1,000 adults from Jan. 20-22. It had a margin of error of plus or minus three.

Protests Against U.S. Media War Coverage March 15

WASHINGTON — Before the third anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a national day of protest has been rescheduled for March 15 to raise awareness of the U.S. media's poor news coverage on the war in Iraq and its scandal-ridden aftermath.

"The media helped make the war possible," charges Leslie Cagan, United For Peace and Justice National Coordinator. "It's time to call for more coverage and better coverage."

Organizers Media Channel, a media watchdog group, and UFPJ, America's largest anti-war coalition, plan to hold forums and film parties explaining how the U.S. media continues to hide the truth about events happening in the name of "supporting the troops" and the "war on terrorism."

"We are thrilled that anti-war activists will now be connecting with media reform activists to challenge mainstream media 'coverage' that has underreported civilian casualties and much of the costs of the war," says MediaChannel Director David DeGraw.

Lately the U.S. media has glossed over

the importance of the newest photographs of detainees abused by U.S. soldiers in the infamous Abu Ghraib gulag in Iraq, according to MediaChannel editor Danny Schechter, "The News Dissector."

News media in the United Kingdom and Australia, however, picked up the story after the American Civil Liberties Union discovered the photos last month using the Freedom of Information Act.

"All of us are media consumers," said Schechter. "We can all take part by monitoring media coverage, writing letters and emails to media decision makers, and protesting against a pro-war media tilt in much of the coverage. If you have ever complained about the coverage, now's the time to do something by speaking up."

During the protests, tributes will also be made to journalists killed in the line of fire, kidnapped, or jailed without charges.

Media Channel and UFPJ suggests the following actions activists can mount on March 15: endorse the campaign for

"Truth in Media" by signing a MediaChannel email or writing one of your own; call journalists and talk show hosts; write letters to the editors; notify media outlets in advance about what you will be doing and why, and ask for coverage; post MediaChannel and UFPJ announcements on your websites and your email list serves; form delegations to meet with local media decision makers at newspapers, radio stations and TV outlets in your hometown; organize mid-day protests in front of your local media outlets when people are out in the streets; mount candlelight vigils at 6 p.m. outside TV and Radio Stations when the 6 p.m. news is underway; hold post vigil forums, teach-ins and "speak outs" so that activists can discuss media issues and plan follow-up actions.

For more information, contact Priya Reddy at Media Channel.

INFO

Priya Reddy

Priya@mediachannel.org

United For Peace and Justice

www.unitedforpeace.org

New Home Sales Slump Hard

WASHINGTON — January saw new home sales fall by five percent, a mark the market hasn't seen in a year, according to a U.S. Commerce Department report. Economist expected a faster sales pace for January.

Another signal the housing market is cooling after five years is that the number of homes for sale is at a record high.

Economists say that this pace is because the Federal Reserve's monetary policy campaign is paying off through its interest rate increases.

House prices, on the other hand, have been seen by economists as being driven by sellers eager to take advantage of the market's highs.

Except for the West with a 11.3 percent increase, all regions have felt the fall in new home sales; the Northwest dropped by 14.9 percent; the Midwest by 10.8 percent, and the South by 10.3 percent.

Reproductive Rights Conference Set April 7-9

AMHERST, Mass. — Now in its 20th year, a conference on women's reproductive rights will be held the weekend of April 7-9, at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass.

Entitled "From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom," the conference is expected to draw hundreds of participants from the United States and abroad.

Conference speakers will address reproductive freedom as it relates to a broad range of social justice initiatives, including economic justice, healthcare reform, racial equality, peace, freedom from violence, youth liberation, civil liberties, and LGBTQ rights. There will be more than 30

workshops and trainings.

Over the weekend, participants will learn about and share organizing experiences and strategies, broaden their understanding of reproductive rights, and make connections with other related movements and issues.

The location of the conference is Hampshire College, 893 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002.

For more information, contact Azi Shariatmadar.

INFO

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Peace House Work Days Set April 11-12

CRAWFORD — To prepare for Cindy Sheehan's Easter visit to Camp Casey, the Crawford Peace House will be hold two work days on April 11-12.

"Come be part of the team and the fun," said Rena Guay Communications Coordinator Crawford Peace House. "We need help with cleaning, fixing, building, moving, sorting, planting, painting, chucking and more! So much to do — so little time!"

The preparations will start Saturday morning. Coffee and pastry will be served, along with pizza later in the day. Participants are encouraged to bring tools and work gloves.

"No special skills required, but experience welcome — just let us know your talents," said Guay.

To see the specific jobs needing to be done or for more information, visit the Crawford Peace House website or call Guay.

INFO

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(254) 486-0099

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www.crawfordpeacehouse.org

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Do It Yourself, America!

Think Beyond Impeachment, Says Former U.N. Weapons Inspector

‘Democracy is a tough, dirty business. And it takes a lot of work. It requires citizens to invest themselves. And we the people have failed egregiously.’

— Scott Ritter

because the only thing holding the three infighting ethnic and religious groups (Kurds, Shi’a, and Sunnis) together since the end of the Ottoman Empire after World War I was Saddam Hussein’s Baathist Party.

“People say, ‘Why was Saddam Hussein so brutal against the Shi’a?’ Because if he wasn’t, you’d have the same problem you’d see in the streets today. ‘Why was Saddam Hussein so brutal against the tribes?’ If he wasn’t, you’d have the same problem you’d have today. ‘Why did Saddam Hussein repress Kurdish independence?’ Because if he didn’t, you’d see the same problems you’d see in Iraq today. It’s all predictable,” said Ritter.

He told the audience that the United States used Saddam only when it was convenient, such as during the Iraq/Iran war in order to keep Iran’s Islamic fundamentalist government at bay. The Gulf War, Ritter said, however, was the result of poor communication between the United States and her ally Iraq due to the first Bush administration’s heavy, narrow focus on the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In March 1990, then-President George H. W. Bush sent a delegation to Iraq led by Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kansas) that embraced Hussein’s government during a spat between Iraq and Israel, but by October 1990, Saddam invaded and occupied its southern oil-rich neighbor Kuwait, Ritter explained. That summer, Hussein had asked Washington three times whether or not he had the green light to take land away from Kuwait over a border dispute. All three times, Washington told Hussein, “America has no position,” according to Ritter.

Kuwait Invasion

The initial response inside the U.S. government toward the Iraqi invasion was “good” because “[e]verybody understood that Kuwait was doing some bad things in terms of slant drilling and holding Iraq’s feet to the fire on financial issues,” Ritter explained. “And the feeling was that if Iraq had limited its incursion by simply taking over the Ramadi oil fields, controlling the Emir’s palace, and occupying the (nearby) islands — there wouldn’t have been a problem.”

Instead, Hussein moved into Kuwait City and threatened Saudi Arabia’s oil fields, which forced President H.W. Bush to raise his rhetoric even harsher by comparing Hussein to the former leader of Nazi Germany Adolph Hitler, said Ritter, adding that in doing so, the president covered up the complicated nature of the situation from the American people to wage war against Iraq.

“We knew there were nuclear weapons and biological weapons, but while we had our chemical protective gear, we had our little magic pills, [and] we had our inoculations, there wasn’t a big fear factor,” said Ritter, who served during the Gulf War as a Marine. “There seemed to be more fear about Iraq’s nuclear weapons capabilities in 2003 when they didn’t have them than in 1991 when they did have them.”

Life Or Death

To further the case for the Gulf War,
Continued On Next Page

THE ADDICTION TO OIL is a problem that the American citizens face as their government attempts to gain the best price from a Middle Eastern country, Scott Ritter, the former U.N. weapons inspector (right), told an audience at a spirituality and activism workshop at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Austin recently. Radio talk show host Jack Blood (left) moderated the discussion.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Scott Ritter Explains What Happened In Iraq

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — Scott Ritter, the former United Nations weapons inspector who served during President Bill Clinton’s administration, had some strong words for people who call for President Bush’s impeachment.

Ritter explained that more people should be held accountable for supporting the current war in Iraq than the Bush Administration, including members of the Clinton administration, congressmen, senators, the U.S. media, and the American people.

“The Bush administration has committed felony after felony after felony by going into Iraq. There’s no doubt about that,” Ritter said, while describing a meeting he had with Democrats on Capitol Hill on the issue of impeachment. “But I say, ‘Timeout, guys.... We’re culpable.’”

Guidepost

At a recent activism workshop in Austin, Ritter said that the American people should use the U.S. Constitution as a guidepost for making decisions with regard to U.S. foreign policy.

“When we say, ‘Bush administration, do it yourself. Clinton administration, do it yourself,’ I say, ‘No. America, do it yourself,’” said Ritter. “We the people of the United States of America need to reflect on the preamble to that constitution. It’s our constitution. It’s our country. This is our problem. The only way we are going to resolve it is to infuse ourselves with a sense of citizenship that has sadly not been in this country today.”

Ritter said that the American people seem to behave more like consumers than citizens: “We want the easy fix. We want the government to solve the prob-

lem for us. That’s not how democracy works. Democracy is a tough, dirty business. And it takes a lot of work. It requires citizens to invest themselves. And we the people have failed egregiously.”

Sponsored by Tour of Duty, Ritter’s talk was moderated by talk radio host Jack Blood before a packed sanctuary at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Austin. Earlier in the day, a conference was held on the church grounds devoted to linking spirituality and activism.

Iran War Looming

Ritter noted that after the three-year U.S.-led occupation of Iraq, the next challenge to the American people is finding the truth about Iran’s nuclear energy program.

Though he is skeptical of Iran’s claim that its civilian energy program is peaceful, Ritter said that no one has yet to supply hard evidence to the public that shows Iran has a nuclear weapons program. Still, he said he supports a presence of viable, capable U.N. weapons inspectors as an alternative to rushing “hell nelly” toward armed conflict with Iran.

However, Ritter said he fears that the Bush administration has already gained the support of the American people who follow him to a new war without question.

“This is where we the people have failed yet again because when you take a poll of the American people, 80 percent believe that Iran has a nuclear weapons program. Why?” He asked. “Because they have failed their responsibility in citizenship. They accept at face value everything they hear from Fox News, from CNN, from THE NEW YORK TIMES. And they still don’t engage that little brain matter between their earlobes to think

for themselves. It’s the mistake we made in Iraq.”

Signs of War

Ritter went on to say that the United States military is already gearing up for armed conflict with Iran as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld drums up the support from countries that have airbases surrounding Iran. Another sign of war, Ritter noted, is that U.S. aircraft are being used to scout future missions for U.S. troops.

“We’re over flying in Iran and we’re taking photographs. Is this peaceful?” asked Ritter. “If the Cubans were flying over our nation with reconnaissance aircraft taking photographs of facilities they were getting their troops ready to target, we’d shoot their planes down, and we’d say we have to right to protect our national defense.”

To drive his point home, he added: “If the Cubans were taking Cuban Americans in the United States and forming them into operational groups to go around blowing up bridges and assassinating politicians, we’d call it an act of terror. Not only would we hunt down the perpetrators, but we’d probably blow Cuba off the face of the earth in the process because they’re attacking us. But we’re doing the same thing (to Iran).”

Ritter suggested that to stop a war with Iran, Democrats must be elected to take control of at least the House of Representatives in the 2006 election. This way, said the self-described registered Republican, a healthier amount of skepticism will check and balance the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government.

No Surprise

Ritter explained that none of the sectarian violence currently going on in Iraq should have taken anybody by surprise

Do It Yourself, America!

From
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there were charges that the Iraqi leader was a "personification of evil" who gassed his own people, namely the Iraqi Kurds.

As Ritter explained, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the Iraqi Kurds switched allegiance to Iran and fought against Iraq. At a battle over a dam where electricity was created to power Baghdad, Iraq used a mustard agent to repel Iranian soldiers from a hill top. When the Iranians counterattacked with a cyanide-based blood agent, the Kurdish rebels were killed in the middle.

As a preventative measure in "a life or death struggle," as Ritter termed it, Hussein gassed at least three Kurdish villages, which is not the same as a systematic extermination of defenseless people such as the six million Jews in Europe who died under Hitler's reign, Ritter noted.

This weaponized blood agent may have resulted in the deaths of 7,000 Kurds, he explained, during a war in which about a million people died from conventional weapons like artillery and machine guns used by Iran, a country of 60 million people, and Iraq, a country of 23 million people.

"I'm not condoning the Iraqi actions, but we need to put it in perspective," said Ritter, adding: "With the exception of nuclear weapons, a Marine corps rifle company with an unlimited supply of ammunition will kill far more people than chemical weapons, biological weapons, or long-range ballistic missiles. I mean, but we don't call a Marine corps rifle company 'a weapon of mass destruction.' Maybe we should."

Deal With Saddam

At the same time in the 1980s, Ritter noted, Donald Rumsfeld delivered assurances from the United States to Hussein to make it clear that the U.S. government sided with Iraq, but all the while members of Congress condemned the Iraqi leader's use of chemical weapons on the Kurds, even as the U.S. government was secretly supplying Iran with ballistic missiles for use against Iraq's army.

"So we did condemn Saddam from using chemical weapons but said, 'No problem, you keep doing it.' Why? Because it's good for us. It helps America contain Iran. The problem is ... we now have to deal with the reality of Saddam," Ritter noted.

The tactics with which to "deal with Saddam" after the Gulf War meant political trouble for President H.W. Bush because the American leader left "the new Hitler" in power for the security of the region instead of ousting him like he had promised at the outset to the American people, according to Ritter.

"We needed Saddam Hussein to die, so that [President H.W. Bush] wouldn't be opened up to political criticism here at home. But the war is over. The troops are home. How are we going to get rid of this guy?" explained Ritter.

The answer was a policy of containment through which a series of economic sanctions was arranged to continue as long as Hussein stayed in power, despite a U.N. Security Council resolution that called for the sanctions to be lifted once Iraq disarmed itself of weapons of mass destruction.

Enter Scott Ritter

Enter Scott Ritter and his frustration with the U.S. government during the implementation of Security Council Resolution 287 to inspect and disarm Iraq's weapons.

"A successful inspection regime would be the enemy of American policy. That is something that I as an inspector found since day one," said Ritter. "When I showed up, it was obvious that the United States did not want the weapons inspections program to succeed. They were afraid."

"When I reported to the CIA in 1992 that we could account for all the Iraqi nuclear capability, that was a finding they did not want because we could account for missiles, but right now, there was a possibility we could account for chemicals. If we could account for chemicals, then we can account for biologicals, and then we can account for nuclear for Iraq to disarm."

Ritter told his audience in Austin that the fact that the U.S. government rejected the inspectors' findings, instead of saying, "Hooray! Good job inspectors," meant it didn't want them to succeed in any step of the disarming process. Then, the director of the CIA said before the U.S. Congress that 200 missiles were still in Iraq, a number the CIA head made up, according to Ritter.

"Two hundred missiles that physically can't exist in Iraq. Where did you get that number? You made it up. Ladies and gentlemen, it should be clear to everybody," he said. "This isn't about Bush bashing. Have you noticed the time frame I'm talking about? The majority of my life with the U.S. government took place between 1992 to 1998 during the Clinton presidency. This isn't about Republicans. This isn't about Democrats. It's about America, about American politics, about going down the wrong path."

Act Like Saddam

Ritter said that the last three presidential administrations deliberately misled the American people about the reality of Iraq.

"When people say we didn't find any weapons in Iraq in 2003, I'm here to tell you that, no, it wasn't a mistake," said the former U.N. weapons inspector. "The CIA knew in 1993 that there were no nuclear weapons programs in Iraq. The CIA knew in 1994 that there were not chemical weapons in Iraq. The CIA knew in 1995 that there were no biological weapons in Iraq."

"The CIA knew that Iraq had been disarmed, but that's not the CIA's job," he added. "The CIA's job is not to disarm Iraq but to create the conditions for the removal of Saddam Hussein. This is important because that same pattern of deception that you saw in Iraq is taking place today when it comes to the issue of Iran."

Until 2000, the United State waited for someone like a Sunni general who could be like Saddam Hussein without being Saddam Hussein and take over control the Baathist Party and Iraqi government, Ritter said. "Then we'd be happy."

Baathists Ousted

But then, on March 19, 2003, the

U.S.-led invasion force went into Iraq and threw the baby with the bath water, so to speak, by removing the Baathist Party along with Saddam Hussein, a move that caused widespread civil unrest in Iraq soon after.

"As soon as we invaded, someone said, 'What do you think?' I said, 'America has lost the war.' He said, 'How can you say that?' The second we crossed the line, we lost the war because we embarked on a mission that was going to undo that which held Iraq together, and there was no way America could sustain a long-term presence in Iraq that would devolve into chaos and anarchy," said Ritter.

Addicted To War

Ritter stressed that U.S. presidents are in essence forced to lie to the American people about going to war in the Middle East (by using the excuse that the nation in question poses a threat) because the United States is addicted to its lifestyle based on cheap oil.

"We consume far more than we produce as a nation. Therefore, this lifestyle that we are all addicted to requires our government to gain access to resources we need to sustain this lifestyle, and to gain access to these resources on terms that are economically beneficial to America, so we have to have a foreign policy in place that guarantees we have this access," explained Ritter.

He added, "A president can't flat-out say, 'I have to feed your addiction to oil, so I'm going to gain total 100 percent control of the Middle East. I'm going to get rid of every government in the Middle East ... that doesn't march to our tune.' What president is going to be honest enough to say that? Not a single one of them."

"So they are going to come up with excuses: 'Saddam Hussein is a threat to our security because he has weapons of mass destruction. We need to get rid of Saddam. Iran is a threat because of a nuclear weapons program. We need to get rid of the Iranians. The Saudi Arabians are a threat because they finance global terror.' That might actually be a true statement, but we're not marching on Riyadh anytime soon."

More Active Citizens

The bottom line, Ritter said, is that citizens of the United States should take the responsibility for the deployment of their armed forces more seriously, as they are empowered to do so by the U.S. Constitution, for the sake of their country and "those men and women who honor us by the uniform of the armed services of the United

States [who] took an oath to protect the Constitution of the United States."

"The military doesn't get to engage in this constitutional debate. Why? Because they expect the people of the United States to do it," explained Ritter, who as a Marine, served as a ballistic missile advisor to Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf during the first Gulf War. "That was another great lesson I learned. When the boss says, 'Take the hill,' you don't go, 'But there's machine gun up there!' You take the hill ... Tough luck. Get the job done."

Ritter added that the only reason why the military should be asked to fight in the name of the United States is when "there is a threat that puts our nation at risk."

Marine's POV

When asked about the dangers of depleted uranium radiation from U.S. weapons, Ritter, a U.S. Marine who served 12 years, unapologetically answered that he looked at the issue from the standpoint of a Marine in the heat of battle.

"You put me in charge of a couple hundred Marines, and we're dug in and a T80 Battle Tank comes over. I don't want to fight an equal fight. I don't want him anywhere close to me. I'm going to open up a 120 millimeter Battle Tank gun with continued depleted uranium rounds that will carve up that tank like a hot knife through butter and kill everyone inside before they can even come close to me," said Ritter, who served as a ballistic missile advisor to Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf during the first Gulf War.

"I love DU!" he added. "I want to be able to use it on my 20 millimeter Bushmaster, on my LAB25, so it'll cut through T62 tanks. Why? I don't want an equal fight, ladies and gentlemen. You send me to war, and I'll kill the enemy. I'm going to slaughter them! I'm going to eviscerate them! I'm going to annihilate them! And I'm going to do it in a way that brings all my Marines home or at least as many of them as I can. THAT'S—MY—JOB! My job is to wage war, not make the world lovey dovey. You click on the "on" switch on, it's going on, and I'm going to them, and you better give me the weapons to do the job."

"And you better understand that when you give me those weapons, and I use those weapons, there are repercussions. When I pull that trigger on a DU weapon I'm creating conditions that are harmful to American service members. I'm creating conditions that are harmful to innocent civilians that have to live in that area. If you don't want that, don't send me to war."

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\$188 Million In Loan Guarantees, Grants Available For Renewable Energy Projects

TEMPLE — USDA Rural Development recently announced the availability of almost \$188 million in loan guarantees and grants for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. The funds support the Bush Administration's objective to increase production of renewable energy from domestic sources to reduce U.S. dependence on imported oil.

USDA Rural Development has invested almost \$290 million in programs designed to encourage the development of new energy sources.

"USDA Rural Development will focus efforts to bring together agricultural pro-

ducers and rural businesses to spur the development of our renewable energy options. Rural Texans have ideas and solutions that make a difference in the rural economies in which they farm, ranch and do business." said Bryan Daniel, USDA Rural Development State Director.

Section 9006 of the 2002 Farm Bill established the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements loan and grant program to encourage agricultural producers and small rural businesses to create renewable and energy efficient systems. The funds announced will be

available to support a wide range of technologies encompassing biomass (including anaerobic digesters), geothermal, hydrogen, solar, and wind energy, as well as energy efficiency improvements.

Applications for grants must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development State Office no later than May 12, 2006. Guaranteed loan applications are due to the National Office for funding consideration by July 3, 2006, and are awarded on a continuous basis. Any guaranteed loan funds not obligated by August 1, 2006, will be made available for competi-

tive grants.

For more information refer to the announcement in the February 13, 2006 Federal Register or on the web at <www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html>.

USDA Rural Development strives to ensure that rural citizens can participate fully in the global economy by providing technical assistance, funding, and other programs that help rural Americans build strong economies to improve their quality of life. To learn more about the program, call USDA Rural Development in Temple, at (254) 742-9780.

72 Percent Of U.S. Troops Say 'End War This Year'

WASHINGTON — Seventy-two percent of U.S. troops in Iraq say that the American military should leave there sometime this year, according to a survey conducted by Zogby International with Le Moyne College's Center for Peace and Global Studies.

The poll, however, showed that a pretty even split of the respondents' opinions about just when the exit should take place. Twenty-nine percent say the U.S. should leave Iraq "immediately;" 22 percent say in the next six months; 21 percent say between six and 12 months; and 23 percent say stay as long as needed.

The poll, which asked members of each branch of the armed forces, found that 42 percent of those military personnel in Iraq are unclear about the U.S. mission there. Still, 85 percent say the mission is primarily "to retaliate for Saddam's role in the 9/11 attacks." Only 11 percent of respondents believed their mission was to secure Iraqi oil supplies.

"Ninety-three percent said that removing weapons of mass destruction is not a reason for U.S. troops being there," said Pollster John Zogby, President and CEO of Zogby International. "Instead, that initial rationale went by the wayside and, in the minds of 68% of the troops, the real mission became to remove Saddam Hussein."

The poll also shows that a clear majority of the U.S. troops (80 percent) do not think negatively of Iraqis because of the continued insurgency attacks. Eighty percent said they oppose the use of napalm and white phosphorous, which are

internationally banned weapons; but still 45 percent said it is generally okay to gain information from insurgent prisoners through harsh methods.

Soldiers (70 percent) expressed little to no problems with Washington over necessary war provisions, and just 35 percent said Iraq's civilian infrastructure had not improved throughout the year.

Nine hundred and forty-four military personnel from across each branch of the armed forces were interviewed face-to-face in private in Iraq from Jan. 18 to Feb. 14, 2006. It has a +/- 3.3 percentage point margin of error.

Students Encouraged To Participate In Congressional Art Competition

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Chet Edwards announced that his office is now taking applications from high school students in his 17th district for this year's Congressional Art Competition. Since the competition's inception in 1982, hundreds of thousands of high school students have been able to participate and Members of Congress have been able to showcase the talent of their creative high school constituents.

"This competition will provide an exciting opportunity for talented young artists in our congressional district to display their talent," said Edwards. "I encourage all students, parents, and teachers to get involved in this worthwhile endeavor."

This year's competition deadline for submission of artwork is Friday, May 12. Edwards is requesting that every high school within his 17th district submit two pieces of artwork. The final judging of the artwork will take place approximately May 19. The winning artwork will be professionally framed and then sent to Washington, DC to be viewed by hundreds daily for one year in the Cannon Tunnel located in the US Capitol building.

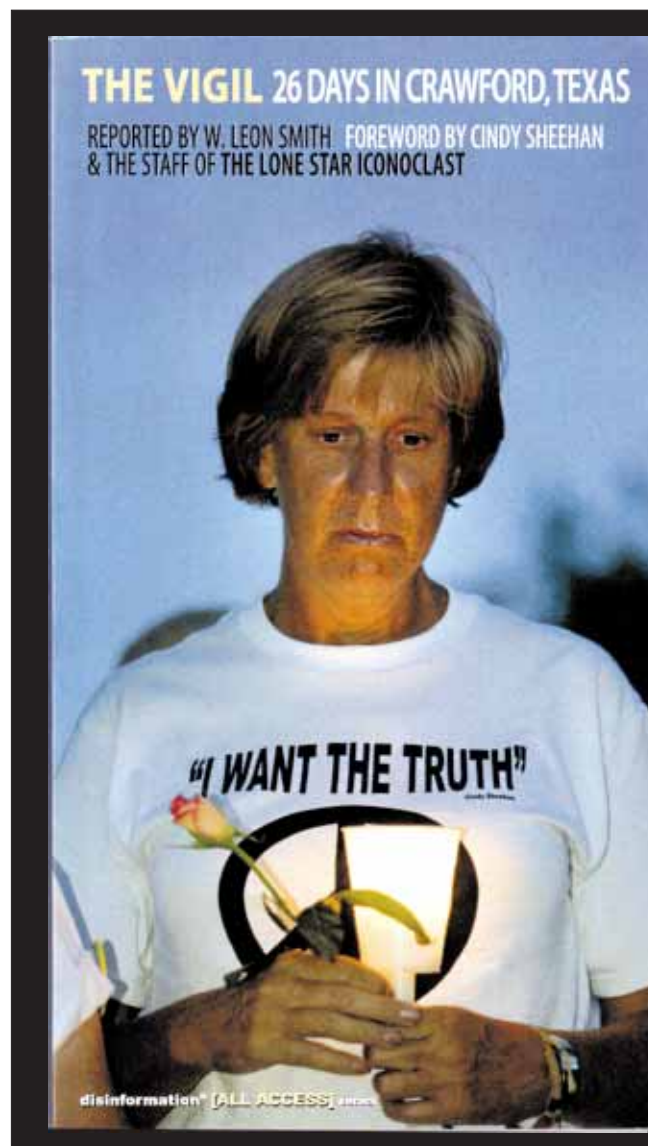
For more information on the guidelines of the competition, please contact the Edwards' district office of Waco Office, College Station, Cleburne Office; Daniel Nichols at (254) 752-9600; Lindsey Davis at (979) 691-8797; or Jennifer Ward at (817) 645-4743.

Waco Library Seeking Books

WACO — The Friends of the Waco-McLennan County Library are currently collecting new and used books for their annual Book Sale, held in November.

Paperbacks, hardbacks, textbooks, religion, children's, and encyclopedias (1990 to present) are examples of what we accept. Books may be dropped off at any of the Waco Library locations. Also accepted are recent magazines that are sold year around in East and Central locations.

To arrange for large pickups of over three boxes, call 254-750-5943. For more information on the project, contact Kim Salome at 254-750-5974.



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."

Indo-U.S. Deal: A Partnership to Remember

By KAPIL KOMIREDDI
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

When historians dissect the 21st century, they will surely mention President Bush's fecund trip to India in March, 2006. Whatever his other failures, Mr. Bush will be remembered for finding that which eluded every predecessor of his (with the feeble exception of Bill Clinton): A trusted and powerful ally in South Asia. What's more, the U.S.'s new ally is a vibrant, and genuinely secular, democracy, with a military might matched by a few nations. But most importantly, India has grown into an economic powerhouse, with a projected growth rate of 7 percent for some years to come. Measured by PPP, it is already the fourth largest economy in the world. Another point: India is China's neighbour, and the two are not the best of friends.

Unlike China, however, India has little style. Mumbai is not Shanghai. But India has substance. In the cramped, colonial-style offices in New Delhi, wizened polymaths run wide-ranging research projects for multinational corporations. In Bangalore, IT wunderkinds produce the finest solutions at an unbelievably low cost. In short, India is a badly designed restaurant which serves up quality food. But now that food can be home-delivered — and that is outsourcing. Some perceive it as a threat to jobs at home, and propose protectionism as a solution. But erecting barriers in a global market is a parochial approach. The proper solution, as President Bush rightly said, is to prepare people for 21st century jobs.

India's rise does not threaten the U.S. but, rather, helps it, and Mr. Bush understands this reality. He courageously rejected the myopic approach of protectionism, even though it is politically inexpedient to do so, especially in an election year. Admire him or detest him, President Bush has shown immense courage in the most unusual situations; and his partnership with India may well yield the most remarkable results of all. Some credit must be given to Condoleezza Rice, Mr. Bush's erudite Secretary of State, who, unlike her predecessor, Colin Powell, understands the importance of the region, and has been pushing for increased cooperation with India, her efforts culminating in this historic deal. Thanks, too, to Nicholas Burns, Ms. Rice's competent Undersecretary of State.

Some argue that the U.S. approach is riddled with hypocrisy. How can it sign a landmark deal with India, giving it unprecedented access to nuclear technology, while lecturing Iran on non-proliferation? I asked the defence expert Thomas Donnelly at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., who gave me a straightforward answer: "Iran is an enemy. It is entirely different from India." Has China's rise prompted this deal? Yes, and if the editorials in Chinese newspapers are anything to go by, India and U.S. have so far succeeded. But has the U.S. really found a trusted ally in South Asia, a true counterweight to China? Mr. Donnelly sounded sceptical (he called it "realistic"): "We have to be cognisant of India's political realities." And his scepticism is absolutely warranted.

For all the talk of "New India," there are still many ideologues in that country who dream of building a shrine to Soviet-style socialism. If nationalists aim to build a Hindu India (which perhaps never existed), the socialists hope to build a

GUEST COMMENTARY

Leninist one (which most certainly won't come into existence). The nationalists came to power and destroyed the country's social fabric. Now the socialists are determined to destroy its economic progress. There were many who published articles suggesting Mr. Bush was unwelcome in India. Untrue. Successive surveys — by BBC Worldwide, Pew and *Outlook*² — have shown that India is the most pro-American nation in the world. Some elements of India's clerisy just don't

want to grasp this reality, and continue to offer anti-American rhetoric under the guise of intellectual debate.

In fact, the so-called creatures of left in India have just lost touch with reality. Their presence is essential, even imperative, to ensure India's communal harmony, but they just don't understand economics. America will have to learn to live with this reality. The other, more worrying problem is that Indians' thankfulness will not always translate into concurrence. Call it the curse of colonialism, but Indians are worryingly proud and, as a result, very irascible if anything seems to be interfering with their "independent" position. Washington's Amba-

sador to India, David Mulford, recently learnt this firsthand, when he suggested that, if India wanted the nuclear deal, it must vote against Iran at the U.N. Within hours, the media, the opposition and the government were up in arms. Ambassador Mulford was summoned by India's Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, and forced to apologise. M.J. Akbar explained this tendency best: "Indians do not make good stenographers. They simply do not like taking dictation." This is another troubling reality with which the U.S. must learn to live.

Thankfully, the Indians didn't push Mr. Bush on Pakistan. As someone once said to the BBC journalist Paul Danahar, "If you want to run with the big dogs, you have to stop pissing with the puppies." Indian diplomats have grasped this reality. Dedicating time to Pakistan-related discussion only served to impede Indo-U.S. progress in the past. There is little fear that a similar deal with Pakistan may be in gestation. Tim Donnelly was terse when I asked him: "Pakistan is the worst proliferator." Pakistan's pointless obsession with Kashmir has hampered the country's progress. By the time India has moved into the next level of stardom, Pakistan will conceivably still be making statements about Kashmir. By any standards, Pakistan is a failed state. Its continued stagnation will only serve to precipitate more terrorism, and if that leads to a war with India it will create further terrorism—all of which is not good for India, and not good for the world. So America's engagement with Pakistan is in India's interest. In a way, by not entangling itself in the Kashmir issue, America is acknowledging the Indian desire. Yet, at times there will be disagreements on this, too. But both India and U.S. must learn to overcome those.

Is this relationship, despite the difficulties, worth it? Yes. The United States and India are natural allies, in the truest sense. The relationship between the world's largest democracy and its wealthiest democracy has been forged because of economics, but it transcends commerce and politics. The only nation to have mirrored the United States, from its constitution to film industry, is, in many ways, India. Both crushed colonialism, wrote marvellous constitutions entrenching the rule of law, fought segregation and firmly established themselves as unbreakable democracies, in which every citizen, no matter his ethnicity or religion or political proclivity, is treated equally. Both have emerged as multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious democracies in a world which is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with heterogeneity. Indian democracy, with its numerous languages, the largest number of religions and most diverse cultures, is a marvel. Emerson and Thoreau had inspired Mahatma Gandhi, and Mahatma Gandhi ended up inspiring Martin Luther King. Christopher Columbus had set sail to discover India but ended up finding America. Today, the two countries have found each other. At the end of their first press conference in India, Dr. Singh said to Mr. Bush, "Mr. President, we have made history." For very good reasons.

Kapil Komireddi, a freelance writer who has contributed to various publications, is presently working on a companion biography of Sen. John Kerry, to be published in 2007; he can be reached at: <kapskom@gmail.com>.



Venezuela To Discount Cheap Oil For 15,000 Connecticut Citizens

HARTFORD, Conn. — About 15,000 Connecticut citizens with low-income stand to receive discounted heating oil from Venezuela during the coldest part of winter, according to Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal.

Blumenthal last Monday approved the deal which will provide 4.8 million gallons of heating oil at a 40-percent discount to Connecticut households that qualify for state home heat assistance.

The deal is the seventh in which Citgo Petroleum Corp., a subsidiary of Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA, has distributed cheap oil to areas containing needy U.S. citizens. Such areas include Massachusetts, The Bronx in New York City, Maine, Rhode Island, Vermont, Connecticut, Delaware and the Philadelphia area.

By Citgo's estimates, about 44.5 million gallons of this oil will be exchanged along with another 258,000 gallons free to homeless shelters.

Venezuela, the fifth-largest foreign supplier of oil to the United States with about 15 percent, has per capita income of about one tenth that of the U.S., and houses one of President George W. Bush's fiercest critics, President Hugo Chavez.

While critics say President Chavez's recent dealings are attempts to embarrass President Bush, Blumenthal, whose legal opinion on the matter was asked for by Conn. Gov. M. Jodi Rell, seemed to say that the U.S. had already embarrassed itself.

"As a matter of policy or political perspective, there may be sound reason to

have reservations about the source of this assistance — a company effectively owned by a foreign government that may have questionable policies or motives," he said. "There is also sound reason to be critical of Congress whose ill-advised neglect makes the assistance necessary."

The week prior, Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas) launched an investigation into the very same discount heating oil program Citgo has implemented over the last few months in the U.S.

In turn, Rep. Jose Serrano (D-New York) on *Democracy Now!* called Barton's investigation "obscene" in light of no such challenges to the U.S.-based oil companies engaged in possible price gouging during skyrocketing gasoline prices.

"[T]he only thing [Rep. Barton] is interfering in Citgo is in the usual rip-off of the poor and the working class by the oil companies in this country" said Rep. Serrano. "As you know, their profits have been outrageous, and no one is looking at that. They were asked by members of the Senate to do something. They totally ignored it. Citgo was the only one that stepped up."

Rep. Serrano went on to say on *Democracy Now!* that the Republican administration's attempts to stifle Chavez's discount heating oil program will perhaps backfire if it affects "the home-owner communities composed of working class and senior citizens, white folks throughout this country, who are benefitting from this program."

Independents Get Shaft In Texas

You are either among the “in” crowd and are a groupie of a political party, or you are a lone-wolf independent who must grovel for crumbs.

That sums up the political caste system in Texas.

For anyone wanting to run as an independent, good luck. Obstacles aplenty make it a daunting, if not impossible, task.

This year, two independents have signed on for governor as ballot hopefuls in the fall, Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn and singer/writer Kinky Friedman. To get on the ballot, each must gather 45,540 signatures from individuals who did not vote in this week’s primaries.

To make matters more difficult, Texas Secretary of State Roger Williams is touting the importance of Texans to vote in the primaries, which is perhaps the flag-waving, red-white-and-blue thing to do, but, if he is successful, this will make it harder for independents to obtain hen-scratches on their ballot peti-

Editorial

tions following the primaries.

With two independents in the running for governor, the garnering of bonafide signatures becomes harder, since a backer cannot sign for both candidates. Only the first one counts.

Then there is the compressed time frame, ending May 11. The compression intensifies if there is a run-off in any primary for the gubernatorial race, since the independent candidates cannot begin to gather the signatures until after the primary victors are decided.

Their goal, of course, must be for substantially more signatures than the required 45,540, since the

governor-appointed Secretary of State will likely be looking for any excuse to throw out as many signatures as possible, and coming up short would mean no ballot position. So look for petitioners at every type of event imaginable during the days that follow the primaries.

Texas law for independents is akin to racism against non-party hopefuls. Two-thirds of the states in the U.S. simply require a fee to run as independents, while those that do require petitions are more lenient in giving more time to gather the needed signatures.

Those interested in signing a petition for an independent candidate must be registered voters who did not vote in either the Republican or Democratic primaries, and this means for any office, including local races, so it is a tough decision for anyone wanting to help an independent but also wanting to support a county commissioner or district judge candidate at home. It is either/or.

To be fair, Texas should either require all candidates, of all parties, to go through the petition process in order to be labeled as fit for inclusion on the ballot, or drop this encumbrance for independents and allow them to simply pay a fee, like the groupies do.

But Republicans and Democrats control the Texas House and Senate. God forbid that an independent thinker be allowed among them.

— W. Leon Smith



Let's Not Risk Scaring 'Em Into Peace

It was meant as a sarcastic tongue-in-cheek utterance without any real foundation.

But the dark comedic gesture has apparently come true.

After being recognized for an award at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church's activism and spirituality conference on Feb. 25 in Austin, I urged the audience of about 200 to be sure to log onto THE ICONOCLAST website on Wednesday (March 1) for an important story that would be breaking that day, in the event the larger mainstream media in their area did not pick it up.

“Consider it a test,” I commented, in reality thinking that our story on a new finding that suggests that depleted uranium “travels” would be like a minnow in a pool of sharks. News of the study would flood the airwaves and bump the crosswords from newspapers throughout the country.

After all, the study conducted in the UK revealed that DU from munitions in Iraq had perhaps contaminated a European country many, many miles away.

To me, that is important, and the vast implications on planet earth, as told to our staff by several prominent world-renowned scientists, should persuade at least a second look at the possibility of nuclear infringement on all the countries, even the U.S.

The story has made its way all over Europe and in Australia, but we are yet to find any medium in the United States, save our own and a few websites, that are letting the public know about these new findings.

Zero, zilch, nada.

As a newspaper publisher, it is usually pleasing to know that we have a story that others do not, to have a scoop. But in this case, it is worrisome, since not everybody in the United States reads THE ICONOCLAST, though we wish they did.

It is frustrating in that the public is, for instance, fed news over and over again

The Trenchwalker

By W. Leon Smith



about a show dog that escaped a contest, but not a word about the newly discovered dangers of nuclear weaponry, the advent of strange and new cancers, and the spikes in diabetes that some scientists, after intense scrutiny and years of research, are now linking to low levels of radiation.

The vast majority of Americans know nothing of this.

They don't know to question the new study, for they don't know it exists.

What scientist Chris Busby learned is upsetting, as are the possible ramifications.

Citizens of the world, if apprised of the findings, might decide that the nuclear answer is more of a half-baked question than a conclusion.

They might dictate that the world seriously consider moving away from nuclear energy and weaponry.

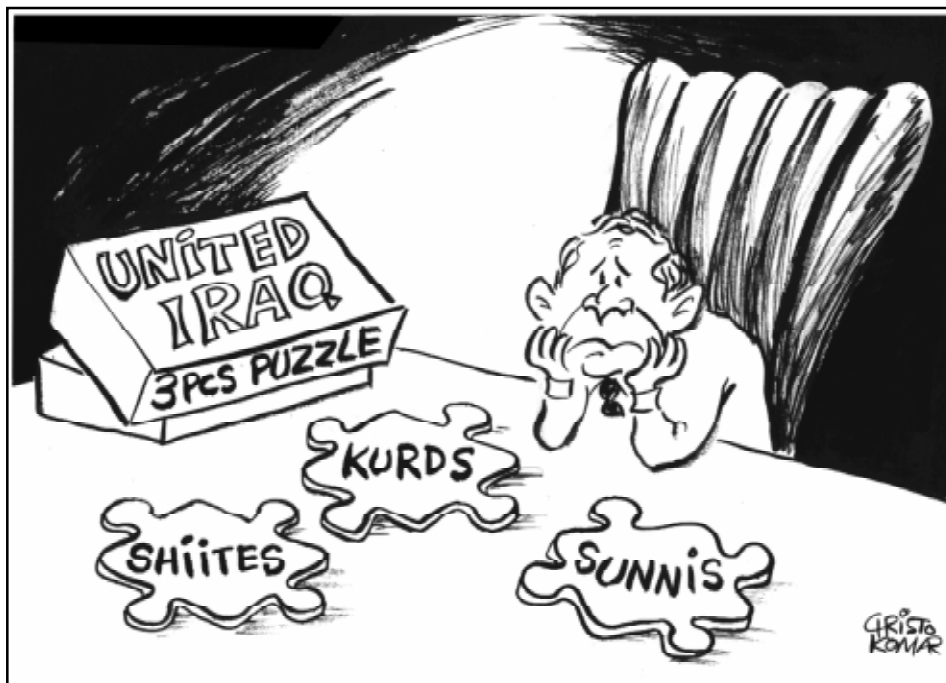
They might put two and two together. They might conclude that new-age diseases have a likely source.

They might review the health of their families and realize that some of these cancers are not hereditary, nor, perhaps for them, is diabetes.

They might see that dangers do exist. They might begin an uprising, calling for the end of any and all DU weaponry, even if the ultimate result for some major corporations is depleted profits.

I guess the question comes down to this. If you can be scared into nuclear war, can you be scared out of it?

God forbid that common sense be allowed to dictate.



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Rowe Lawyer Receives '06 'Fueling The Flame' Award

Attorney Sarah Weddington Delivers Keynote Address



SARAH WEDDINGTON, the lawyer who argued *Rowe vs. Wade* in the U.S. Supreme Court 33 years ago, received an award from the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — The lawyer who argued *Rowe Vs. Wade* in the Supreme Court 33 years ago recently received one of this year's Fueling The Flame awards for her bridging the divide between spirituality and activism.

Sarah Weddington, the daughter of a Methodist minister, was one of five recipients who were honored at the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25.

Before awarding Weddington, the Rev. Dr. James Rigby said that his church, one representative of the spiritual community, honored her on behalf of their daughters and daughters yet to be born for her work.

"It's time that we stopped treating people who stand up for women's rights as less than people who stand up for men's rights. We have to rewrite the history books. Only part of the story has been told," said Rev. Rigby.

Weddington, in accepting her award, referred to the blockbuster hit movie *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* to describe her hope for the future of women's rights. The specific scene was one in which the good people of the town and the king have retreated to a defensive structure with no way out other than to fight the orks, a seemingly doomed prospect.

"And then if you remember on the third day on the top of a hill, reinforcements appear," she said. "Sometimes I see that we are faced with an overwhelming numbers and with overwhelming weapons and it is frightening, and yet I still think that when it is the darkest, reinforcements will appear."

In her keynote address "Finding the Energy to Lead," Weddington said that when looking back on *Rowe vs. Wade*, she talks about it "with a sense of gratitude that it helped society and great fear of what the future holds."

As she explained, the United States before *Rowe* was drastically different in that, for example, girls played basketball on a half-court and had to pass the ball after dribbling the ball twice. In terms of women's reproductive rights, though, women had little to no legal opportunity to protect their bodies through the use of contraception or abortion.

"At the time I started *Rowe*, the University Health Center at the University of Texas had a policy that it would not give contraception to a co-ed unless she certified that she was within six weeks of marriage, so you could be legally protected on your wedding night," Weddington said. "The result was a lot of unplanned pregnancies."

Weddington noted that in the time leading up to *Rowe* being argued in the Supreme Court, aid to women's rights causes came from quite a few faith groups, including the Unitarians, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Jewish people, United Church of Christ, and



REV. DR. JAMES RIGBY presented awards at the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

others.

"There were a lot of religious people in our favor. Ministers, rabbis, and others in their own congregations could be able to figure out what's best for that woman, her family," she said.

Unfortunately, the threat to return to a time when abortions procedures were performed in dangerous conditions for women is no less real today with the legal challenges mounting, such as those from the South Dakota legislature who feel empowered by the socially conservative nature of the current U.S. Supreme Court, she said.

However, Weddington advised that the future women's rights leaders keep energized by taking care of their own physical and mental health first, learning and studying continually through risk-taking, practice, and self-criticism, and feeling comfortable being different.

"I think our faith sustains us. It's the value that we believe in that motivates us," she said.

The four other award recipients included Rev. Don Bobb of Austin Center for Peace and Justice; Rev. David Loehr, minister of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin; anti-war activist group Code Pink Austin; and W. Leon Smith, editor and publisher of the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST.

In accepting his award, Smith said that although standing for one's principles has its consequences, it's still worth it to be able to sleep at night.

"When we started the ICONOCLAST, we pledged to pursue the truth no matter what and that's what we've tried to do. Sometimes you just have to do it. We couldn't sleep the night if we didn't do what we did," said the co-author of an editorial endorsing Sen. John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election in President George W. Bush's adopted hometown of Crawford, Texas.

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Bush Rejects Nuke Deal With Pakistan

ISLAMABAD — While praising the anti-terrorism efforts of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, U.S. President George W. Bush rejected Pakistan's request for a nuclear technology deal similar in scope to one given to its rival India days prior.

The Indian deal yet to be approved by the U.S. Congress and other nuclear countries allows U.S. technology to be sold to India for its growing energy needs.

However, neither India nor Pakistan are parties to the international anti-nuclear proliferation treaty of 1968, and under this new U.S. deal, only civilian nuclear plants, not military plants, will be able to be inspected in India, whose nuclear program has been operating in isolation for some 30 years.

In the eyes of the U.S. government, Pakistan remains suspect due to its top nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan who was involved in a nuclear proliferation scandal. India was criticized in 1998 for exploding a bomb and has since not repeated itself, though it can produce 100 nuclear warheads with 20 bombs able to be dropped by its air force.

President Bush's three-day visit to the Asian subcontinent was still marred by mass protests. In India, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched not convinced of the peaceful nature of nuclear technology trade deal, some yelling "Beat up Bush with slippers" and "war criminal."

"The U.S. President has come to India as a guest of the government but he

is not the guest of the people," Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Prakash Karat told the 100,000 people at a rally in Delhi.

President Bush said that the deal will slow prices for oil from soaring in the U.S., India, and China and in effect help consumers.

Both Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have said that Pakistan and India have different energy needs and therefore should expect to receive differing deals for appropriate technology.

Experts also see the U.S.-India trade deal as putting New Delhi equal to Beijing as a nuclear power house. China has offered a non-proliferation treaty with India along with weapons disarmament.



REV. DON BOBB of Austin Center for Peace and Justice, received an award from the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25. Rev. Bobb is serving as a missionary in Africa working on starting a school for peace there.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



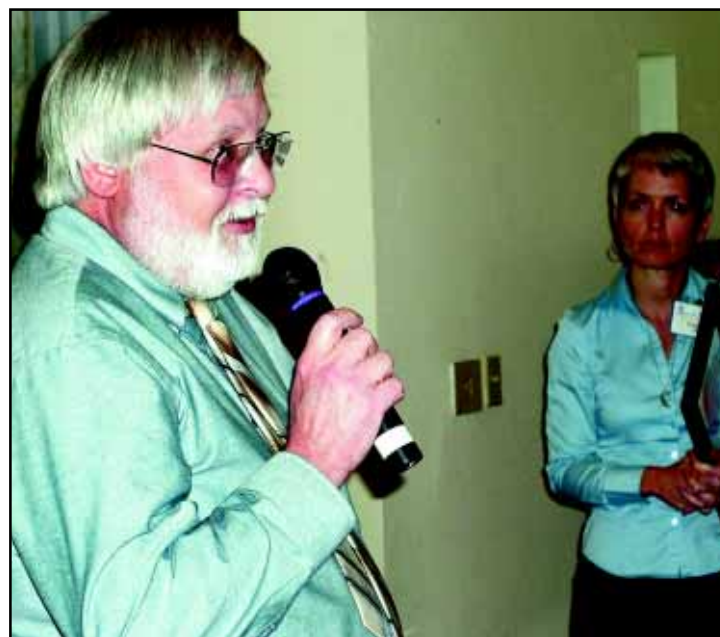
REV. DAVID LOEHR, minister of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, received an award from the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25. In November 2004, Rev. Loehr preached a sermon entitled "Fascism" in which he criticized President George W. Bush.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



CODE PINK AUSTIN, a three-year-old antiwar activist group composed primarily of women, received an award from the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



W. LEON SMITH, editor and publisher of the Lone Star Iconoclast, received an award from the 3rd Annual Spirituality and Activism Conference in Austin on Saturday, Feb. 25. The Iconoclast endorsed Sen. John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election in President George W. Bush's adopted hometown of Crawford, Texas.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



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To The Editor:

Mexican Tejano Martyrs of the Alamo

On Texas Independence Day, March 2, 2006, Texans of Mexican American heritage have much to celebrate with great pride. We have a rich legacy left to us by Mexican Tejano heroes who fought and died in the Alamo in the struggle for independence from Mexico. In spite of the fact that there are some today in Texas who would prefer to ignore, diminish or deny their contributions, these Mexican Tejanos shared the same dreams of freedom and independence for Texas as those of the Anglo colonists. With reverence, they will always merit our respect, remembrance and acknowledgment.

Of 189 men who fought in the Alamo only six were actually born in Texas, and, most were members of Captain Juan N. Seguin's company. The total number of Mexican Tejanos who died in the Alamo was nine though it needs to be stated that this was only a small number of the many Hispanics who fought in the War for Texas Independence.

Juan Antonio Badillo (born in Texas) remained in the Alamo when Captain Seguin left to rally more reinforcements.

Carlos Espaller (born in Texas) and a protégé of Jim Bowie was only seventeen when he died at the Alamo.

Gregorio Esparza (born in Texas) chose to stay in the Alamo along with this wife and four children. He died from a gun shot and a saber wound while manning a canon. He was the only Alamo defender granted a Christian ceremony and burial since his brother, who served in the Mexican army, was granted permission by Santa Anna.

José Toribio Losoya deserted the Mexican army to enlist with Seguin's company. His wife and three children survived the siege in the Alamo mission chapel.

Antonio Fuentes (born in Texas), José María Gregorio, Guadalupe Rodríguez, Juan Abamillo (born in Texas) and Andrés Nava (born in Texas) also stayed and fought heroically along side other defenders until the bitter end.

These Mexican Texano heroes are hardly ever remembered and given due credit. Nevertheless, Texans need to acknowledge that these heroes were true and worthy founding fathers just as equal to the Anglo founding fathers. What more could have been asked of them than to give their lives for the cause of freedom and independence from tyranny? Their sacrifice, even if they may not have spoken English, was no less than the sacrifice made by the Anglo colonists. Their blood still ran just as red along side of the other defenders. Perhaps, it could be said that their sacrifice was a bit more significant since they had to give up their allegiance to their mother country so that their dream for Texas could have a new beginning.

Today, the crucial question that needs to be asked by everyone concerned is "For what purpose did the Mexican Tejanos die fighting along side of the Anglo colonists?" Was it so that Hispanics in Texas would forget their cultural and language heritage? Was it because they wanted Hispanics to become low class citizens? Was it that they wanted Hispanic land owners to lose their lands? Was it because they thought that Hispanics should always be governed and never govern; or, was it that they wanted Hispanics to be constantly offended and assaulted by the stupidity of prejudice?

The sacrifice made by these Mexican Tejano heroes laid a foundation of courage, dedication and heroism which to this day continues to be demonstrated by US Hispanics serving their country in many capacities. Their sacrifice makes it possible for Texas Hispanics to hold their heads up high with pride while remembering that they stand on the solid and heroic foundation laid before by courageous and dedicated Mexican Tejano martyrs who died at the Alamo. *Recuerden el Alamo!*

Bob Montanez, Odessa, Texas
To The Editor:

"URGENT! -SAVE OUR PORT SECURITY." The Bush Administration, led behind the scenes by New World Order - Council on Foreign Relations types like Dick Cheney, has apparently become so overconfident in pursuing its internationalist-take-over America-agenda by transferring America piecemeal to foreign hostile interests that it has forged ahead with letting Communist China run the Panama Canal, and now letting an Arab Emirate run our main seaports!

This is carrying criminal sell-out to our enemies to unbounded dimensions, by those who have no regard for our national independence.

We must see: www.jbs.org for information and e-mail and / or call both our Congressmen and Senators at 1-877-762-8762 toll-free and DEMAND congress preserve our national security at American ports by voting to block the United Arab Emirates-Dubai Ports World takeover of operations at great numbers of key U.S. seaports and ensure a veto-proof majority in both houses of Congress to stop this insanity.

Further we should see: www.thenewamerican.com or call 1-800-jbs-usa-1 for more free information and continue demanding congress protect our nation from this Trojan Horse treason personified by the Bush Administration and previous administrations pursuing similar policies.

Sincerely,
Ed Nemechek, Landers, Ca.

To The Editor:

To perk up his image, President Bush was bound to do something outrageous. He needed to bolster the alarming drop in confidence in his presidency and draw attention from the exploding scandals of his second term; but instead, he managed to alienate most of his support; first, the illegal wiretapping (thought, however, to be a necessary evil by most Americans, actually begun in secret two or three years ago, thus duping a somehow still trusting public) and now, this.

He was (or was he?), as is so often the case, the last to know about a \$6.8 billion sale and has for the first time set the majority of private citizens, Congress (from whom the news was concealed) and the media against him. Even the devotion of the unshakable religious right is dwindling now because of this latest issue (or because he hasn't been sufficiently honoring his promises). He's been crossed, which makes him very cross, and in defiance, he announced categorically that he'd veto any legislative attempt to block the transaction. An inevitable question arises: Apart from, or in tandem with, the foreign investment benefit, is there more to this than meets the eye? Could there be hidden profits in the offing for Mr. Cheney, Mr. Rumsfeld, Mr. Bush and for others?

Behind the presidential back (or not),

the London company, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation (Peninsular and Oriental Ports North America), sold their control of six East Coast United States ports to Dubai Ports World, a company controlled by the Dubai monarchy of United Arab Emirates, a tiny country on the Persian Gulf, whose wealth is mainly based on oil and gas, abutting Saudi Arabia to the south west. Seven Arab emirs are to run six key American ports in New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans and Miami where, as in all the highly vulnerable major ports in the nation, incoming cargo containers are only randomly and sparsely inspected. Eleanor Clift of Newsweek points out that we would be "sharing logistical details" with a regime whose recent history is one of shifting allegiances; this government could be privy to our security operations. If we're offending the Arab world, as Mr. Bush contends (and more particularly, the Dubai monarchy), so be it. If even a remote possibility, why risk placing national security in added jeopardy?

It's being argued by that small minority not averse to the takeover that since UAE won't have authority over security, the new management poses no threat, that Homeland Security, the Coast Guard and customs officials bear the responsibility of guarding our ports. Yet this new management, whose motherland recognized the Taliban in Afghanistan, laundered money for 9/11 and spawned two of the 9/11 hijackers, considering the gaps in our homeland protection, could easily infiltrate our security by something so simple as bribing drivers, who have had no background checks, to look the other way. Besides the glaring practical concern, the psychological impact on the public is significant.

The president's typically inconsistent and contradictory stance, that there's no difference between the Arabs that are to control the ports and the British controlling them now, belies his warnings of the menace of terrorist attack, so relentlessly instilled in the public consciousness by Mr. Bush and his team and is, in this instance, to be disregarded.

Congressional pressure has now forced a 45-day delay before the transfer can go forward, contingent upon the findings of a legally mandated inquiry; but legislators are asking if such an investigation will be taken seriously by a president who has already made up his mind. Will he use the time period to lobby Congress to support him?

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport, CT
To The Editor:

I find it disappointing that several Republican leaders have decided to complain about "negative" campaigning.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with questioning your opponent so long as your questions are legitimate and your focus remains on the issues.

This is not "negative" campaigning, and throwing around such a term does nothing but distract the voters from the issues being conveyed by the candidates.

The voters have a right to know not only where you stand, but where your opponent stands as well.

Whether it is Tucker Anderson, Van Taylor, or Rick Perry, each and every Republican candidate is going to go "negative" at some point during their campaign, and for Republican leaders to fault them for doing so is ridiculous.

I would encourage each and every voter, candidate, and Republican leader to do their research, fight for their beliefs, and stop whining about everyone getting along.

During campaign season we are not supposed to all get along, we are supposed to determine who will best represent our values once elected - let the candidates speak, and as they say, if you can't stand the heat, then get out of the kitchen.

Josh Tetens, Waco

Dear Editor,

Mr. Bush is championing something called the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

It follows along in the same footsteps as NAFTA and CAFTA and goes even further. Many of the agreements in the trade arrangements would bring a lot of money to certain specialized industries - like computers for instance - of course, many of those computers that will be shipped under these trade agreements from the United States are made in Communist China - so don't expect a check in the mail if Bush gets his way.

Jeffrey Schott, a senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics (a non-partisan 'think-tank' that thinks mostly for Republicans), said the FTAA should be seen as more than just a way to boost sales of computers and airplanes. He said trade agreements could be used to promote good governance, strengthen the courts and other democratic institutions and encourage cooperation on large regional infrastructure projects.

"The foreign policy side of the story is quite important," he said, "and one of the major reasons we're expending these efforts."

In George Bush's world it is necessary for us to become less like ourselves in order to succeed. In his world Americans aren't good enough they way we are. We must be repackaged, reformed, restyled and put into Styrofoam carriers and sent away to be rebuilt. We no longer make anything and the only thing exportable is our jobs.

In his world it is by being less ourselves that we will force others to be more like us.

Sincerely,
Alfred Brock

To The Editor:

TAX-DODGING SCHEMES

According to a General Accounting Office report on Dec. 19, 2003, tax-dodging schemes, especially those involving illegal offshore credit-card accounts, have been growing faster than the IRS' ability to crack down on them.

"Abusive tax-avoidance schemes could threaten our tax system's integrity and fairness if taxpayers believe that significant numbers of individuals are not paying their fair share of taxes," the report concludes. IRS documents indicate that the schemes are depriving the Treasury of as much as \$40 billion dollars each year. That estimate references only illegal accounts. Many billions more in tax revenues are lost through 'legal' outsourcing of jobs to other countries. The number of companies leaving the United States each year is accelerating at an alarming rate. The huge loss in tax revenue is becoming almost incalculable.

According to the December 2003 report, the IRS had identified over 400,000 taxpayers who are involved in tax-evasion strategies that are likely illegal. Earlier that year, the IRS had estimated the number at 131,000. It's clear that the IRS (and Congress) doesn't have a clue as to how much revenue is being lost - but it is substantial!

Now, two years later, with the foxes still guarding the chicken coop, you can be sure that the problem is only getting worse. The IRS tax code has become so complicated and incomprehensible that virtually nobody can understand it, obviously leaving it subject to broad interpretation. The IRS Tax Code needs to be completely revamped. Tax loopholes for 'special interests' must be curtailed.

So, what has the Bush Administration done to solve the problem? They have declared that outsourcing of jobs is good for America, tax cuts will reduce the deficit, and have reduced IRS auditors by several thousand.

Paul G. Jaehnert, Vadnais Hts., MN

Texas Sues Federal Government Over Unfair Medicare Policy

AUSTIN – Gov. Rick Perry today announced that Texas has filed suit in the U.S. Supreme Court to protect taxpayers from an unconstitutional federal Medicare policy that would commandeer billions in state general revenue dollars.

“Today, all Texas taxpayers can be assured that we are standing up against an unconstitutional federal policy,” Perry said. “Texas will not

foot the bill for a benefit that the federal government should responsibly provide to the American people.”

The Texas suit asserts that by mandating the payments, the federal government has levied a direct tax upon the states which usurps their sovereign power and interferes with essential state business.

At the center of the suit is the federal policy – known as “Medicare

clawback” – which became effective in January. The clawback policy requires states to make payments to the federal government for the bulk of drug coverage for individuals who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid, known as “dual-eligibles.” Texas has an estimated 323,000 dual eligibles. States are currently required to cover 90 percent of the costs of prescription drugs for dual-eligibles, but the federal formula is not set in stone.

Using one formula provided by the federal government, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott estimated that the “net loss” to Texas could be \$100 million over the next four years; Perry said the stakes are even higher because the currently-mandated yet unconstitutional payments will quickly soar into the billions of dollars.

“Ensuring that seniors and Texans

in need can access prescription drug coverage is our primary concern, but we will not continue to bear the burden for this federal benefit Texans deserve,” Perry said. “When Congress implemented the clawback provision it did so only so it could shift billions of dollars in costs of the program to states. This policy is an unprecedented, unconstitutional raid on state funding.”

In January, Perry directed the state cover drug costs for dual-eligibles who were inappropriately denied coverage due to “transition glitches” when Medicare rolled out its new drug plan. The federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services assured Perry that Texas would be fully reimbursed for that effort.

Texas was joined in its suit by Kentucky, Maine, Missouri and New Jersey. Nine other states have joined a friend-of-the-court brief filed by Arizona in support of the states that have filed suit.

TV Justice Has Changed

Stuck in the middle of all the commercials during the Winter Olympics was a promo they repeated many times for a new show called, “Conviction.” The ad showed young lawyers who, presumably, have conviction. At first I was surprised and pleased by the commercials because I thought finally we were going to get a lawyer show that wasn’t from the point of view of the prosecution, that wasn’t about nailing the “bad guy” no matter what. These freshly scrubbed young lawyers with conviction obviously would work hard to make sure justice was served. They would help the downtrodden and the unjustly accused. But I was wrong. “Conviction” in this case, is a pun and also refers to the fact that these young lawyers are assistant D.A.’s determined to get a conviction.

A show like this couldn’t have existed in the Sixties or Seventies. It would have been a laughable premise, worthy of mocking in “Mad” magazine. Back then, young, idealistic lawyers worked hard to have their innocent clients set free. These lawyers didn’t care about expensive suits or partnerships. They wanted to make sure that innocent people weren’t taken advantage of by the more powerful establishment. Working for “the man” would be a sign of selling out, not a goal for young people. (Donald Trump’s “The Apprentice” would not be a hit back then unless it was about how the apprentice could infiltrate Trump’s organization to make sure all his employees were treated fairly). Today, the young lawyers on TV have been co-opted by the establishment, and historically that is a strange thing. Aren’t young people supposed to rebel, question authority, and be idealistic?

A long time ago, there were such shows as “The Defenders,” “Judd for the Defense,” “Perry Mason,” and even one called, “The Young Lawyers” in which the main job of the lawyers was to see that justice was served. Defense lawyers weren’t bad guys who got in the way of law and order by bringing up the civil rights of their clients. The bad guys were often part of an unscrupulous establishment who didn’t care how they got a conviction as long as they got it. Today, those “I don’t care how we get a conviction” people are the good guys.

So, the pendulum has swung, and it appears to be stuck. Part of the success of these shows is that we live in a law & order era. Imprisoning bad guys without charging them is okay, as long as we “know” they’re guilty of something. Illegal wiretapping is okay as long as it might help keep us safe. The old maxim in law is that we’d rather set a thousand guilty men free than imprison one innocent man. Now, it



Modern Times
By
Lloyd
Garver

seems that we’d rather imprison a thousand innocent men rather than set one guilty man free.

Despite crime rates going down, we’re somehow meant to feel afraid. The government perpetuates this milieu of fear, but so do all the TV programs that show how the world is filled with evil people ready to pounce on the innocent in unimaginably disgusting ways. In fact, these programs show the most perverse crimes perpetrated by the worst imaginable people. So, it becomes easier to rationalize throwing the “dirtbags” in jail even if their rights get stepped on a little.

Recently, ABC introduced a new show (also with a pun for its title) called, “In Justice.” A promo for this show says that it “offers a completely new take to the procedural drama: rather than merely catching the bad guys, this group of young lawyers and investigators catch the bad guys and frees the good!” It’s so “completely new,” it sounds like it could have been on TV 40 years ago. So far, the show hasn’t been a ratings smash, but if it does succeed, you know every network will start copying it and putting on shows about innocent people, wrongly accused.

And that might mean there will be more of a variety of storylines on TV. That’s got to be a good thing. This glut of snarling cops and prosecutors who don’t care how they toss the “perp” into jail has to run its course soon, doesn’t it? So, the next time someone at one of the networks suggests another show like “CSI Dubuque,” or “Law & Order Decapitated Victims Unit,” I hope some people in the room will raise their hands and say, “Let’s not do the same old thing. Why don’t we do a show about defense lawyers who are good guys?” And I trust whoever makes that suggestion won’t be looking for another job by the end of the day. But if they are, I hope they get a good lawyer.

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

Time To Mow Again? Learn CPR First

Men, spring is almost here. That means it’s time to start preparing for the very real possibility you will soon be neck deep in grass clippings. I made this realization while standing in the kitchen, sipping my morning coffee, and trimming dandelions away from the window screen.

“Do you think the grass is dry enough to mow yet?” my wife asked.

“It really needs one more day of sun,” I answered.

“Actually, I think it’s supposed to start raining tonight.”

I, of course, knew this already, which is why I’d like to submit the following performance to the members of the Motion Picture Academy for their Oscar consideration:

[Cut to — Close-up of Ned as he slowly turns away from the grass-covered window and meets his wife’s gaze.

“You’re not serious, are you?” he says, stopping in mid-sip. He looks back to the window, which has already begun to sprout a new dandelion. Trembling, he sets his coffee down and lifts his gaze toward heaven. With outstretched arms, he whispers between clenched teeth, “Please — just one more day of sunshine” and throws his head back, emitting a deep, primal scream of frustration.]

“Knock it off,” my wife said. “I saw you checking the Weather Channel this morning.”

Standing in front of our shed 30 minutes later, I realized — like a lot of men — I wasn’t prepared for the dreaded “First Mow” of the season. Aside from the fact that our lawn mower was buried beneath several layers of camping equipment and inflatable toys, I had a sneaking suspicion, once I dislodged the mower, I was going to find what was essentially a hardened glob of grass clippings with a starter handle.

And no gas.

And probably no oil, except for what was oozing out from under it.

Yes, our lawn mower is old. The last time I took it to the shop, a man at the counter (who I’m guessing repaired the first combustion engine) hobbled over,



By
Ned
Hickson
Siuslaw News

tapped my mower with his cane and said, “Well — That brings back some memories.”

This isn’t something you want to hear when it refers to an important piece of mechanical equipment you rely on to keep your spouse from wielding a Garden Weasel. While it’s true I’ve considered buying a new mower, I just can’t bring myself to spend that much money on something which, for all intents and purposes, I will eventually come to despise. Because of this rationale I found myself straddling the mower in the front yard, yanking on the starter handle and giving what would be the equivalent of CPR to a two-cycle engine with congestive heart failure.

“Spark plug! Starter fluid! Clear!”

Fwopp. Fwopp. Fwopp.

“More starter fluid!”

“We’re losing him, doctor!”

“I know that! Clear!”

Fwopp. Fwopp. Fwopp.

“He’s hemorrhaging, doctor!”

“Quick, another pint of oil!”

Fwopp. Fwopp. Fwopp.

Sadly, I was forced to give up when the rain moved in earlier than expected, leaving me in the unenviable position of having to tell my wife I wasn’t able to mow the lawn again.

On the other hand, my performance could provide me with another shot at an Oscar.

Academy members: Please consider my lawn mower for a supporting role.

(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>.)

Wakey-Wakey, My Fellow Americans



Out Of The Blue

By
**Jerry
Tenuto**

The alarm has rung, America. The auto-brew cycle on the coffee maker has kicked in.

Ah, smell the coffee. Take a whiff of that fresh-roasted flavor as it wafts through the house.

No, no, don't roll over and hit the snooze button...

Ah, geez! NO!

It's time to **wake up**, America!

Time to demand more from your – our – Government.

Could you not see it coming way back when George W. Bush was first thrown out into the fray as a contender for the Republican nomination as president?

It was clear as oil from the very beginning that he was ill-informed, ill-mannered, ill-read, ill-spoken, and ill-tempered for such a lofty position. The man had never been off the North American Continent, and now was being touted as capable to lead the free world after a mere five years as governor of Texas.

And his record in that position was abysmal at best.

As had been his carefully guarded record at everything else prior to that misadventure.

During his relatively short tenure Texas state finances went from substantially black to bright red. He turned the state's social and educational programs from quality into some of the nation's more pitiful messes. In Texas the gasoline now has to be specially refined, at a higher cost to consumers, as compensation for sloppy environmental policies allowed while "ex-oilman" George W. Bush was governor.

He executed more prisoners than any governor in history, never once considering a stay or commutation. In George W. Bush's prisons, every convict on death row died on schedule – even those with IQs below the level of retardation. To him it was beyond conceivable that a prosecutor might be overzealous, or a witness lied, or the accused just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

All this righteousness from a guy who failed at running every company his Daddy ever put him in charge of; a putz unable to get elected to Congress in his own district, despite the dirty trickster machinations of manager Karl Rove.

The way these guys went through money just during the primaries should have warned everyone that Mr. Bush the younger was not adept at being fiscally responsible.

It was obvious that he was a puppet when paraded out as a gubernatorial candidate in Texas, and even more painfully so when brought out of left field to run in the 2000 Republican primaries.

The more he spoke in public, the more it became aware that this Bush was wholly incompetent to lead anything, much less the free world.

Then, it appeared as though he was out of the race when going into South Carolina the far more qualified and able, not to mention reputable, Sen. John McCain of Arizona led the field by some 20 points.

Well, the candidates were preceded by the Karl Rove organization's well-oiled slander machine. By the time they had finished with the good Senator and his family, the bona fide hero who had suffered for more than five years the hands of the North Vietnamese, including time in the infamous Hanoi Hilton, was a sexual degenerate.

According to the RoveCo smear campaign, depending upon which story you chose to believe, McCain had: Spent his

time in captivity cavorting in the love nest of an Asian concubine, which produced the love child he and his wife raised as an "adopted third world orphan"; or, he had an affair with their illegal alien maid, producing same child.

Numerous allegations about Sen. McCain, and his family, were spread around the Republican community throughout South Carolina in the crucial days leading up the primary, each one more ludicrous than the last. However, being a state with some of the most seriously flawed Christian influences in politics, a fact Rove banked on, the local yokels bought into the balderdash as verities. George W. Bush was presented as a bona fide born again Man of Christ, thus McCain's record as a hero was trumped by a schmuck who hid under the bed when he wasn't partying during the unpleasantness in VietNam.

Well, once Bush had performed a "miraculous" turnaround victory in South Carolina, predicated on what were now becoming Rove's notorious stock in trade smear tactics, the field was his. If Rove could rain such disaster down upon John McCain's head, what chance did any other candidate stand?

We all know how things went from there: The questionable vote count in Florida that was never allowed to occur due to the interference of the Federalist Society Court of William H. Rehnquist; the immediate curtailment of personal freedoms by Attorney General John Ashcroft, who was only available for the job because he had lost his Senate seat in Missouri to deceased (assassinated?) opponent Gov. Mel Carnahan; how the warnings about a major terrorist threat were ignored, leading to the tragic collusion of Sept. 11, 2001; the Richard Kimble-like search for Osama bin Laden, who may or may not actually be a patsy; the internationally non-sanctioned, immoral invasion of Iraq.

Death and destruction on a global scale.

A new attorney general who considers the Geneva Convention as a "quaint" idea, torture as a viable tool to extract information.

A planet filled with fellow human beings who now hate us.

Interesting how the U.S. media and military are only now catching on to the impending civil war in Iraq. The British news outlets have been warning about it for the past six months. Of course, the White House continues to deny things might not be going so good.

Then, this ersatz president and treacherous vice president refuse to ever admit anything could be going wrong.

Lies and deception to the American people since the first day of primary campaigning.

A federal budget that went from reasonable black to crushing deficit of record proportions.

Absolutely no improvement of internal infrastructure.

A pathetic record of diminished social and educational policies.

Horrendous environmental reversals and costly energy schemes.

One secretive plot after another with, and to the advantage of, the regime's bloated business cronies.

Invasions upon the privacy of Americans' electronic communications, without warrants, at the whim of the supreme leader.

A man sitting in the Oval Office, in our White House, who functions under the delusion that he is allowed to do what-

ever he wishes, to whomever he wishes, whenever he wishes.

And then there are the Congress and Senate, stopped dead in their tracks with majority Republican "leaderships" that are stymied on every issue and misappropriation of Executive Power and Privilege by Herr Obst Karl Rove's edict: Any GOP member of the legislative branch who dares to defy the White House will be denied both funding from and support of the RNC for the upcoming election.

Every Bush appointee, nominee, or crony who appears before a Senate or Congressional committee obfuscates and stonewalls when sworn in, prevaricates when not sworn. By the power of Rove, nothing ever goes beyond any of these committee hearings.

Time and again, Bush gives lip service to "this is going well" and "we're standing by to provide support for that." And people believe them road apples. However, the realities of our fantasy-aded non-leader's inability to govern are that unless you're one of his megabucks backers nothing's going well, and, as is the case with any Fascist Regime, these schmoes are not standing by to support.

They just don't care. Whenever one among them shows concern for their fellow Americans, the rest plow that person under with bureaucracy, blame him or her for whatever went wrong, then throw them out with the trash.

You remember what happened to former FEMA Director Michael Brown. We were all led to believe that he was a complete screw-up, weren't we?

Well, well, well... by now you've seen the tapes. Brownie, just as he stated, was sounding the alarm of serious, deadly destruction about to come down full force, in Biblical proportions that uberChristian George W. Bush should have understood, on New Orleans and surrounding area.

We've heard George W. Bush promise all the assistance they would need was at the ready. He then left Crawford, Texas, and headed west – away from the storm – to party in Arizona and raise campaign funds for the GOP in California.

Meanwhile, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff went to a destination somewhat north and east of the Gulf of Mexico, an avian flu conference in Atlanta.

By the time George finally did show up to personally look the area over, he was eminently concerned that Sen. Trent Lot's (R-MS) house would be rebuilt – bigger and better than before – and was looking forward to sitting on the porch enjoying the sunset.

Katrina, the worst hurricane in perhaps 100 years, quite possibly recorded history, virtually wiped out New Orleans, took out huge chunks of Mississippi, and over 1,400 people died. Six months later some 2,000 folks are still missing, tens of thousands remain homeless, and devastated properties and wrecked vehicles that should have been bulldozed by now are left where they landed, providing festering hovels for vermin of all sorts.

The levees are not intact, with just three months till hurricane season.

Still, George W. Bush refuses to believe anybody else in the world, scientist or leader, no matter how expert they are, when he's told that it's now past time to stem the effects of global warming.

Meanwhile, thousands upon thousands of unoccupied mobile homes contracted by FEMA, at a cost of tens and

possibly hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars, are sinking into muddy fields in Arkansas and elsewhere. The catch-22 is they can't be shipped to New Orleans because Federal regulations prohibit putting them on ground where they would be subject to sinking into mud.

This alleged government won't even get on the insurance companies to settle property claims with the victims.

While all this non-progress is going along within Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf, at least four brave American military personnel are being slaughtered each and every day, and numerous others mangled for life, in the most horrid of manners in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So, America, you've seen the video. You saw George W. Bush sitting at his Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, being warned about the utter destruction that was about to hit the Gulf region, primarily New Orleans.

You have heard him promise all the help the cities and states needed.

You saw that the help was far too little, much too late.

Nero fiddled why Rome burned — King George XLIII played with his new gear in Arizona while Gulf residents died and lost their homes.

The polls have finally dropped to a 34% approval rating, or Bush's core support group. Cheney's approval is even lower.

At last, most Americans understand these guys are not to be trusted with our Nation's security.

So, I ask you, America – Where is your outrage?

What more do you need to say "ENOUGH?"

These people stole our White House. They bastardized all four branches of our Government. They have done nothing for the People, not one thing the majority of the People have wanted.

If you haven't read between the lines, then I'll spell it out: ***I'm so damned pissed off I could chew nails!***

You should be, too.

Don't you dare roll over and hit that snooze button! Get your ass up – open your eyes.

America and the rest of Planet Earth can't take another three years of Bush, Cheney, Rove, Rice, Rumsfeld and the rest! And they don't deserve more time.

It has been 1,914 days since the Rehnquist Supreme Court allowed this illegal oligarchy overthrow of our Government. It's high time we take it back.

Richard M. Nixon was tossed out of office for far less, and Spiro T. Agnew left the vice-presidency in disgrace over what amounted to a minor infraction compared to Cheney's dishonorable, greedy, un-American activities.

Impeach the lot of the George W. Bush and Karl Rove Cabal.

(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)

The Estate Sale

For the last week, my daughter (who flew in from Miami to help me) and I have been preparing for an estate sale at my dad's house. (Big Job #1). I have been working on this for the last three years, but for one reason or another, it has taken me an inordinately long period of time to go through the accumulations of several lifetimes. There was a LOT of stuff. (First my uncle and aunt had the house — bought it in 1967 and moved in with not only their own belongings, but also what remained of my grandparents' "treasures". (My aunt was a worse pack rat than I am). My father moved into the house after the aunt and uncle passed on, after losing my mother. He just commingled his things with all the aunt's and uncle's — minus Mom's personal things, disposed of after her death). Dad's been gone now over three years, and there it all has all sat, awaiting my disposal).

The two-day sale was over as of 5:00 p.m. today. The only time I really lost it was after an elderly man bought, for ten dollars, the (very nice, but slightly stained) upholstered rocker my father found so comfortable toward the end of his life. (Its first home had been with another uncle. Then it passed to my aunt, and finally to my father. The buyer of the rocker and his wife had surprised us and asked to be let in for a preview the day before the sale, when we were trying frantically to prepare and price things. I didn't realize this was common practice, but they weren't the only ones who arrived a whole day early.

I hesitated to let the couple in, but I caved. Once inside, it was painfully obvious that they did yard sales for entertainment and had eons of time to kill, which we certainly did NOT. My instincts had been, unfortunately, right on. They took forever, examined minutely every item and were uninterested in anything over a quarter. Judging from their appearances, they couldn't afford more. (Probably eccentric millionaires).

After 15 minutes, I strongly suggested they return the next day when we would really be "ready for business". (I simply didn't have the hour or so it was likely to take to accompany them through rooms still filled with clutter. I could just imagine someone tripping and getting hurt. The names of personal injury attorneys began to flash through my paranoid mind).

Instead of turning around to exit the front door, only a few feet away, they pushed stubbornly forward. The man walked painfully, listing slightly to one side. They seemed quite reluctant to leave and exited like snails. Meandering a big, slow circle, they hit four rooms and a hallway on their torturously tortoise-like trail. Almost back to the door, they spotted the old rocker. Once the old man sat down, the pain disappeared from his face. I hoped he would live long enough to enjoy it. Becca and I carried the piece of furniture to his car. When the rocker left, I knew it had gone to exactly the right home, and I lost it, right there on the sidewalk in front of the house. After that, I was pretty much OK.

We had taped up the toilet in the one bathroom that was open and full of sale items, and removed the toilet paper (so no one should be tempted). The lock on that bathroom has always stuck, and I had nightmares of someone getting locked in. Veteran of many yard sales, both as buyer and seller, I knew I'd have no time to deal with that. The idea of masses of strangers using our facilities

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.

didn't set well with me anyway. As it turned out, only two people asked. (The taped toilet spoke volumes). We had also taped off the door of the other bathroom, leaving our personal belongings inside. The rest of the house was open and full of furniture and other items for sale, with the exception of a couple of closets and the garage.

I had no trouble sticking to my guns when the first one asked to use MY bathroom. (She should have gone elsewhere before she arrived or could certainly leave to do so. I wouldn't ask to use a perfect stranger's bathroom and don't expect anyone to ask to use mine. Does this make me a bad person?) The second "request" came from an elderly lady who informed me that having no toilet paper would certainly be preferable to her simply peeing her pants right there on my carpet. Her tone of voice told me there was no time to waste in graciously acquiescing. She meant business, and was willing to show me her seriousness in following through. I immediately escorted her to the bathroom and hurriedly removed the tape from the toilet. Funny how some people can be so persuasive, and how, given the proper incentive, my well rationalized and serious convictions could collapse. The woman left, by the way, without purchasing a thing, (and I re-taped the toilet for the remainder of the sale immediately after her departure. I determined then and there that the next person who threatened to pee on my rug would be escorted outside to water the lawn).

We did fine. I don't know if we would have done better hiring professional estate sale people and giving them a big percentage of the take. But I didn't seem capable of allowing someone else handle it. I knew the value of the bulk of the items, although judging from the enthusiasm of the many antique dealers who dropped by, I probably priced many things too low. Although it was hard to see some of the old, familiar things leave, I did need to empty the house.

—So many things! —And so many now gone to new homes, in the possession of others, an odd feeling. I tell myself these are only things. And of course, it is people who are important, not things. But for me, there are memories attached. I am the caretaker of those memories, the last left to remember my uncle in his favorite chair, (snoozing after lunch), my father in that darned rocker, or family dinners using Mom's or my aunt's tablecloths, good china and crystal.

Judging from the storage room appearance of my art studio just now, I must have kept enough of everything to jog my memory if it should grow dim. I kept things for the kids that they will certainly never want. (I guarantee you they'll finally learn to appreciate such things —and want this or that— about two months after I finally dispose of it all). The phrase

Children Low On Texas List Of Priorities

I'll make this commentary "short and sweet." If kids were important to elected officials, they would have arrived at a rational and swift resolution to financing public education. There would NOT have been a decade-long inertia on the issue!

Several years ago Gov. Rick Perry ordered cutting social services and health care for children because the state was trying to balance the budget. BTW, Perry's questionable leadership sent legislators an outline of a budget that included nothing but zeros in the dollars column. Meanwhile, under public pressure and an election year, recently Perry reinstated some of the dollars previously taken away from these children's programs and then took the credit for adding dollars to those needed programs. *Whatta guy!*

Recklessly, the state continues to focus on children passing inconsequential exams (e.g., the TAKS) as the means to gauge student knowledge. If we really care about our children here in Texas, we'd instead promote the effective process of learning, to teach children how to learn for themselves, rather than to teach them to learn for one major exam that does little to enhance or approve their education and learning sustenance. In essence, we need to teach our children how to become productive members of our society. Instead, we have placed this urgent priority on some back-burner.

Lastly, during the past seven years or it has been our misfortune to have the same types of "leaders" attempting to resolve the issues of public education and its financing. External special interests have combated that effort during that time period because elected officials have permitted it. Quite frankly, individuals and groups like multi-millionaire James Leininger (who virtually cares only for a voucher program), Bill Hammond and his Texas Association of Business (who promoted increasing class size to save on teachers' salaries), long-

"I can always get rid of it later" became my mantra as Becca urged me to be more cutthroat about the whole business. She actually wrote the phrase down on our daily "to do" list. "Get rid of it", she would beg, as I agonized over each of the seemingly endless sea of items.

My aunt's long time housekeeper, now an elderly, frail woman herself (which is hard to see), came around to check on us toward the end of the sale. She has known me since birth. I gave her anything she would take, mostly items she felt would be functional; sheets, blankets, aprons, house dresses, robes, nightgowns, lamps, house wares, etc. I would certainly have given her more if there had been even one additional cubic inch of space in her car. Perhaps she will come back again before I dispose the rest. I wish she had visited earlier in the week when the better items were still available and there was more of everything.

My daughter was a wonderful help, good company and moral support for



Commentary

By Peter Stern

time Chair of various Committees on Public Education Rep. Kent Grusendorf (who evidently isn't really interested in resolving education issues), Speaker Tom Craddick who keeps appointing the same lackluster individuals on these committees, and finally, Gov. Rick Perry who could push for an immediate resolution to ANY issue if he wanted to. By now it should be clear that our state government is inundated with corruptive influences who do NOT place Texas children at the top of their priority list.

Children are a state's most important resource because they are our future. To discard their TRUE educational needs is a vile, contemptible and irresponsible action perpetrated by those officials elected by the people of Texas to provide the education, services, programs, financing and activities that benefit the community at-large. Currently, Texas is near the bottom of the national list of providing our children with their educational and health needs. We should all be VERY ashamed of this and we need to act on initiating positive change. The best way to get Texas back on-track and to serve our children properly is to vote-out all lackluster special interest officials in the next several elections — **that includes from the governor on down-the-line!**

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas 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. You may contact Peter Stern at: <pstern@austin.rr.com>.

the last week and a half. It was such a joy to spend this time with her. As bad a job as this was, we managed to laugh quite a lot and enjoy each other. I simply couldn't finish it alone. (If I could have, I would have —a couple of years ago. It's so hard for me to ask anyone else for help). I needed my daughter's youth, energy, and heartless ability to push me to be objective, to see an old place mat as an old place mat, not some shrine to my happy childhood memories and loving family, now all departed. She reminded me that I still had the memories, even if I parted with the triggering THING. A dear friend came by too, at just the right moment to help price it all, and stayed for a couple of hours to assist with the sale. Thank you, Bobbie Sue.

I'm glad it's over. Well, almost over. Now we must distribute the "leftovers" to various places, go through the two closets and the utility room we never had time to finish, clean the house and put it on the market, hopefully "by owner." And THAT is Big Job #2. Stay tuned.

CENTRAL TEXAS HISTORY



The Alamo

‘El Alamo de Bexar’

BY JOE MARCHMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

In 1836, brashness was a Texian’s birthmark. It mattered not that he had been here 15 years or 15 minutes. But we are in Texas now, so you might as well brace yourself as we gaze in wide-eyed wonderment at the scene unveiling before us of those astounding deeds of liberation from Mexico. The facts parade before us to the chorus, “It only really happened in Texas.”

Texas had, perchance, 30,000 Anglo-American inhabitants in the chillsome spring of 1836, primarily due to the Colonies of Stephen F. Austin and Green DeWitt. The new settlements were knowably established below the “Old Military Road,” better known back then as “Contraband Trace,” which crossed Texas “antigodlin” from Nacogdoches, to Bryan, and on to San Antonio (Bexar). This famous old trail ambled meanderingly along the bottoms or lowlands of the Trinity, Brazos, Colorado, Guadalupe, and San Antonio Rivers. These rich soils are where most settlers built their log dwellings and, as a matter-of-course, it follows that revolutionary events in Texas from the Alamo to San Jacinto would happen here.

Then, woes and wrongs clouded the sun over Texas like a locust plague. General Lopez de Santa Anna, spouter of pretentious pomposity and otherwise meaningless gestures of well-being favoring the Texians; thusly beguiling the new folks till he set himself up as Dictator-President of Mexico. However, the people of Texas soon found the man to be a lecherous hypocrite and a dastardly individual with no morals...one, who lacked the mental links between man and monkey...although many at the time thought of him as the latter.

On March 31, 1836, three weeks after the Alamo had been pillaged and ransacked by General Santa Anna, a Mexican “broadside” was being circulated around Mexico and Texas, which reprinted a letter that had been written to Colonel William B. Travis,

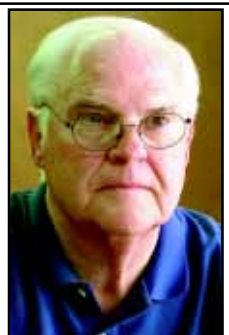


Davy Crockett

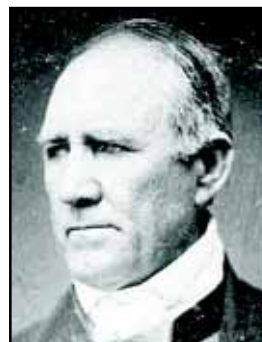
Commandant of the beleaguered Alamo. The epistle had apparently been rummaged from Colonel Travis’ quarters after his death.

The original letter was written from Gonzalez on March 1, 1836, by attorney and personal friend R.M. “Three-legged Willie” Williamson. This communiqué had been stealthily delivered through the Mexican shroud safely into the Alamo, oddly enough, by another attorney and boyhood classmate of Travis, James Butler Bonham, on March 3rd.

In the text of his letter, Williamson tried to stimulate a bit of cheer to Travis, with the comforting news that 300 reinforcements were on their way. Friend “Willie” then added in closing, “For God’s sake hold out until we can assist you.” Williamson, being in Gonzalez, the capital of DeWitt’s Colony on the banks of the Guadalupe River, had first-hand knowledge of the men there awaiting their Commander-in-Chief, Gen-



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.



Sam Houston



Gen. Santa Anna



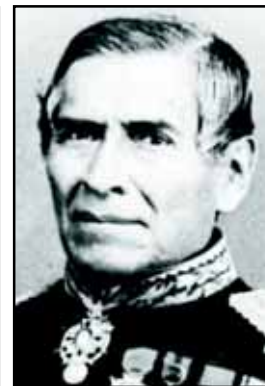
William B. Travis



Jim Bowie



R.M. Williamson



Juan N. Almonte



James B. Bonham



Francisco Antonio Ruiz



Susana Dickinson

eral Sam Houston.

However, “Willie,” as an elected delegate to the Constitutional Convention, had another pressing urgency...The Declaration of Independence from Mexico. So, immediately he swung into his saddle, galloped his horse 75 miles to join friend Sam Houston and the 50 other delegates at Washington-On-The-Brazos.

On March 2, 1836, Sam Houston rose before the Convention delegates and urged the adoption of the Declaration of Independence from Mexico. Without benefit of another speech, motions were made and the document was approved with a resounding voice vote. March 2nd was also Sam Houston’s 43rd birthday. Secretaries worked all night. The document was signed the next day, March 3rd.

Williamson, being chummy with Houston, doubtlessly was aware of the General of the Armies’ plan to dispatch relief to Colonel Travis and Bowie at the Alamo in San Antonio.

“Three-legged Willie” iterated that he had written a second letter to Colonel Travis the same day, March 1st, in which he stated, “I remit to you with Major James Bonham, a communication from the ‘Interim Governor.’” One would surmise that, according to the usual course of things, Bonham snuck two letters past the Mexicans into the Alamo, yet no record exists of the Governor’s letter to Travis, as well as the military papers on the garrison at the Alamo that were required of Travis.

Colonel Travis would not have vacuously destroyed the records of his mili-

tary charge until he was absolutely positive the battle was lost...he did expect aid at any moment from Gonzalez. Historians assume that Travis did not have time to burn his records, especially since Santa Anna surprisingly began his last all-out siege at 5:30 a.m. that fatal morning of March 6, 1836.

Juan N. Almonte, aide to Santa Anna, noted in his diary on that day, “Many ‘curious’ papers were found.” “Curious” meaning the papers of the Alamo differed with Santa Anna’s. However, until this very day – 170 years later — Alamo historians or representatives of our government have never been able to identify those records or even have access to the Mexican Archives where those objects from the Alamo were known to have been taken.

Ponder this...Why was the illustrious “Three-legged Willie’s” first letter the only document ever made public, and indeed so soon after the Battle of the Alamo? Most armchair historians conclude that General Santa Anna, himself, ordered that only this letter of Colonel Travis be reprinted in order to conceal the inaccuracies of his own official report concerning the infamous victory of the Mexicans at the Alamo.

Santa Anna, headquartered in the spacious Barrera house in San Antonio, wrote his official version of the Alamo battle at about 8 a.m. the morning the fortress fell. In his official report, the Napoleon of the West claimed that 600 Texians had been killed...this is more than three times the actual body count. It then stands to reason that the same official

Continued On Next Page

'El Alamo de Bexar'

From Previous Page

port or fabrication of Santa Anna would deliberately understate his own Mexican losses...which he had.

Together with his image-enhancing official report, Santa Anna also sent back to Mexico a flag that had been flying over the small fortress. This was the banner of the "New Orleans Grays," a volunteer organization of two companies of men sent to aid Texas in January of 1836. Santa Anna offered this captured flag as tangible proof to the Mexican Nation that the United States was giving sustenance to the Texas Revolutionists.

Little has been made of the fact that our much heralded harbingers of the courageous Battle of the Alamo would have nothing to decry, if only General Sam Houston's orders had been followed in the first place. Indeed, no "Remember the Alamo," for the Battle of the Alamo would not have happened.

General Houston not once, but twice, ordered the abandonment of San Antonio and the destruction of the fortress there. On Jan. 17, 1836, Houston instructed Jim Bowie and his 30 volunteers to go to the relief of Colonel J.C. Neill in San Antonio. The orders that Bowie bore for Neill was to pack the ordinance, destroy the mission, and leave San Antonio. The order was ignored to abandon San Antonio...truth was, Colonel Neill did not care for Sam Houston nor his directives.

San Antonio in 1836 had been there for at least 140 years; subsequently, the old mission San Antonio de Valero was built on the east edge of town. More often than not, back then, the mission was more easily referred to as "El Alamo"...because of the cottonwood trees that grew there.

In Sam Houston's own words from a speech reprinted in the 1860 Texas Almanac, we continue the saga of the Alamo, in third person, as Houston liked to express himself when relating one of his many exploits.

Sam Houston said, "Col. W. Barrett Travis had been placed in command of the Alamo replacing Col. James C. Neill, subsequent to the order for its demolition. Barrett remained there in tranquility, until it was formally invested by the forces of Mexico - The President-General (Santa Anna) commanding in person. Travis had, when first besieged about one-hundred forty men; among them were Colonel James Bowie, David Crockett, of eccentric fame, and Colonel James B. Bonham, a gallant and accomplished young gentleman from South Carolina. The melancholy fate of the earliest victim...the magnitude of their exploits to the declared Independence of Texas...will be related."

Houston continues, "On the 24th of February, Colonel Travis in a high-spirited address to the people of Texas, said, I am besieged by a thousand Mexicans...I shall never surrender or retreat...the enemy are receiving reinforcements daily...and he concludes with the emphatic motto, 'Victory or Death'. Travis and his devoted soon realized the last awful alternative" (was death).

"On March 1, 1836, a gallant band of thirty-two men from Gonzalez, led by Capt. J.W. Smith, made their way into the Alamo, in despite of its strict investment; thus giving magnitude to the dreadful slaughter that ensued.

"Colonel James B. Bonham who had visited with Colonel Fannin (in Goliad) to solicit aid, eluded the enemy's pickets

and returned to that fatal scene, where, soon he was to be numbered with the illustrious dead."

"The 'Alcalde' of San Antonio, whose duties were that of Mayor and Justice of the Peace, was Francisco Antonio Ruiz, and his account of the events the day the Alamo fell are as follows:

"Santa Anna sent one of his aid-camps with orders for us to come before him. He (Santa Anna) directed me to call on some of the neighbors to come up with carts to carry the dead to the cemetery. Also, I was to accompany him (to the Alamo), as he was desirous to have Colonel Travis, Bowie and Crockett shown to him....

"On the north battery of the fortress, lay the lifeless body of Colonel Travis on his gun-carriage...he was shot only in the forehead. To the west of the small fort we found the body of Colonel Crockett...Colonel Bowie was found dead on his bed in one of the rooms on the south side (of the Alamo).

"Santa Anna, after all of the Mexicans had been taken out, ordered wood and dry branches to be brought to burn the bodies of the Texans...it was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when they commenced laying the wood and dry branches, upon which a file of dead bodies was placed; more wood was placed on the dead and another file (of bodies) was brought. And it was in this manner that they were all arranged in layers...and about 5 o'clock in the evening it was lighted.

"The dead Mexicans of Santa Anna were taken to the graveyard, but, not having sufficient room for them, I ordered some of them thrown into (the San Antonio) River.

"Santa Anna's loss was estimated at 1600 men...these were the flowers of his Army.

"The gallantry of the few Texians who defended the Alamo was really wondered at by the Mexican Army. Even the Generals were astonished at their vigorous resistance, and of how dearly victory had been bought.

"The men burned (Texians) numbered one-hundred-eighty-two, I was an eyewitness, for as 'Alcalde' of San Antonio, I was with some of the neighbors collecting the dead bodies and placing them on the funeral pyre.

Signed Francisco Antonio Ruiz
"P.S. - My father was Don Francisco Ruiz, a member of the Convention. He signed the Declaration of Independence on the 2nd of March, 1836...F.A.R."

The 1860 Edition of the Texas Almanac printed the first and only translation of the "Alcalde Ruiz's" report. While the account contained valuable information on those martyrs of the Alamo who voluntarily suffered death as the penalty for opposing the Mexican dictator, it, also was explicit as to the dead heroes' fate after the battle was over. However, there are some inconsistencies... one especially concerning where Davy Crockett fell in the fortress.

Another eye-witness, Mrs. Almaron (Susana) Dickinson, wife of a lieutenant of the Alamo's artillery, had after the siege, with her "babe" hoisted on her hip, visited the bleeding and dying soldiers with a pitcher of water to see if any of those comrades of the Alamo, languishing in the pains of death, needed a cup of water...or had some wish to send, a last dying message of love to a wife or mother. Susana made her way through the bloody

damnable scene, talking and consoling any wounded she found...behind her the Mexicans were bayoneting and sabering the Texans to death on the spot.

Slightly wounded herself, Susana Dickinson declared later that she had located the dead bodies of Bowie, Bonham, and Travis, and her late husband all weltering in blood. Then, she said, as she traversed the courtyard of the Alamo she found Davy Crockett lying dead...a sight not likely forgotten. Davy was in the northwest corner of the yard with an exceedingly large pile of dead Mexicans round about him.

F. Antonio Ruiz, the "Alcalde" of San Antonio and Susana Dickinson, the pretty 18-year-old, blonde-haired widow of the Alamo, were conversant on most facts, but not all. They agreed that Colonel Travis died at the beginning of the last Mexican charge as he stood on the wall, having been hit with one rifle-ball squarely between his eyes. Both, acknowledged that Davy Crockett took lots of Santa Anna's best troops with him, in whatever part of the courtyard he was found.

One thing Ruiz didn't mention and on which Susana was unbendable concerning the subject... was the description of Jim Bowie's body, still lying there on his sick bed where he was appallingly mutilated, more than most of those there devoid of life...Why?...Bowie had been in Texas for 15 years, obviously much longer than most. Jim Bowie had married Senorita Ursula de Veramendi in 1831, whose father was Vice Governor of the State. Bowie loved his wife and life in San Antonio, that is, until the 'little dictator' Santa Anna changed things.

At the time Santa Anna's siege began, Jim Bowie was feeble with tuberculosis and lay on a cot in the Baptistry of the Chapel. Davy Crockett revered the boldheartedness of Jim Bowie. The legendry of both famous men had securely made entry into the annals of American chronicles of which both men were well aware...of what must have been mentioned in their last intimate conversation....Davy, then leaving for his last post on the Alamo wall, left two loaded pistols beside Jim Bowie within reach. Bowie, as a result of his illness, was a mere shell of the hard-living, hard-drinking giant beloved by all men of the Alamo...except Travis, who envied the charisma of both Bowie and Crockett.

Mexican officers at the Alamo reported later that the calmest combatant in the siege, on either side, was the tall Texian who wore the funny furry hat with a tail, clad in buckskin. The Mexican enemy

praised Davy Crockett's composure as well as his skill.

Capitan Rafael Soldana of the Tampico Battalion of General Santa Anna's Army eulogized Senor Davy Crockett as being seemingly unconcerned and aloof to their musket fire, as he calmly loaded his celebrated "Old Betsy" for another kill...over, and over, and over.

As the gruesome battle unfolded, Crockett's right arm was broken by a musket-ball...he fought on with his left until "Old Betsy" was smashed into at the stock. Yelling at the top of his lungs, Davy drew his Bowie knife and continued to battle... finally Mexican musket balls and bayonets silenced the backwoodsman from Tennessee.

Previous to Crockett entering the Alamo, he was camped nearabout Santa Anna's lines surrounding the old mission. While there he chanced to meet a "Texian Revolutionary" and their palaver went, as the story goes: "Si seenyor, ever since back home when they rescaled me out o' my election...and I up and told my constitchents they could go to hell, fer I'm going to Texas...so here I be, Jus Colonel Crockett o' Tenn'see and ready to give y'all a helpin' hand on the high road to freedom...b'sides, I always was a hankerin' to have a spoon in some such mess as this, anyhow."

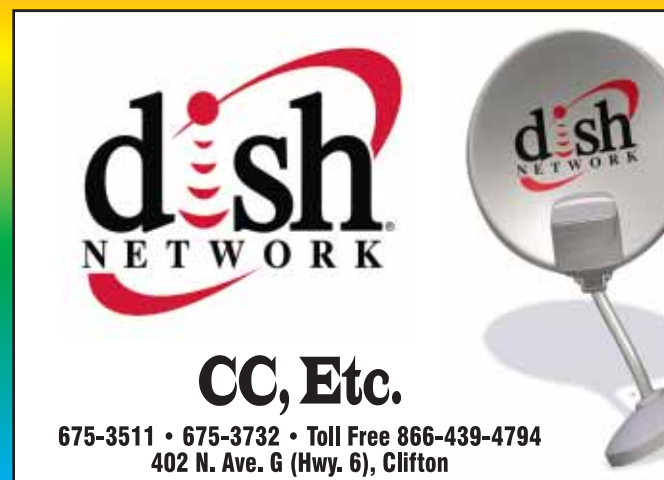
And so it was that chilly nearspring day in the good Lord's scheme of things, that 'Ole Davy Crockett' would embark on the greatest chapter, yet to be ascribed of his legendary life...that one of more fame and martyrdom in the never-to-be-forgotten battle of the Alamo.

Indeed, that same Davy Crockett from the backwoods of Tennessee, who was "half hawse, half alligator...with a dash of snappin' turtle, who can wade the Mizippi, leap the Ohio, ride a streak o' lightning, and whop his weight in wildcats"...it appears from all accounts that Santa Anna's men believed that Texas had the faculty for drawing big men, and ...making them bigger.

The Alamo, which is the Altar for Texas Freedom, hails the remembrance that is summoned of those heroic deeds and events for each of us on March 6th. The sacrificial reasons for the commemoration of this special day remain vivid in our hearts and minds...voices speak from the annals of the past...forms and faces shape themselves in our thoughts, and on occasions as this, our minds are fictitiously made to flash visions of another time...as if we were there.

Fortunately, for one who loves to glamorize and write about Texas...it is for the most part, impossible to tell lies about her.

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