

\$1.50 Per Copy

CRAWFORD, TEXAS

Vol. 7, No. 12

MARCH 22, 2006

www.lonestaricon.com

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'Some people think the dollar is highly, highly overpriced and highly vulnerable to crash in the next month.'

— F. William Engdahl

China Giving Military Aid To Latin Americans

WASHINGTON — Bipartisanship began to take root at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing last week when Army Gen. Bantz Craddock testified that China is training more and more Latin Americans in military techniques.

Gen. Craddock, who is in charge of military operations in Latin America, said for the first time, the Chinese are taking advantage of a U.S. law that stops countries from receiving U.S. military training if they allow U.S. citizens overseas immu-

nity from the International Criminal Court.

Since 12 Latin American countries have rejected granting such immunities to the United States, they are not only now candidates for sanctions but they are also opening their doors to Chinese military training and aid.

U.S. lawmakers originally approved the measure out of fear that the ICC might prosecute American citizens under political motivations, though the court was sponsored by the United Nations four years ago to bring war criminals to justice. In 2003, roughly 771 military personnel were trained by U.S. authorities stationed in the current sanctioned countries, said Craddock.

Called for the elimination of the law came from both U.S. political parties on the Senate committee. While Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) referred to the Chinese actions as "one of the most serious problems we face," Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) suggested the amendment be repealed through a emergency spending bill already in consideration.

Craddock added that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was not helping the United States' situation either by exporting his "extreme populist movement" to countries such as Peru and Nicaragua, both of which will have presidential elections later this year.

Chavez's oil-rich country has steadily strengthened economic ties among his Latin American neighbors. Last week, Brazil and Venezuela brokered a \$3 billion sale of Brazilian oil tankers to Chavez's state-run oil company. Venezuela has also bought \$2.5 billion of Argentina's debt, a move that replaced financing from the International Monetary Fund to the dismay of free-market advocates.

Chavez has also opened relationships with the leader Communist Cuba Fidel Castro and newly elected Bolivian President Evo Morales, and shown solidarity to Iran's civil nuclear power aspirations, all of which have not seemed to lose Chavez much support at home and in South America.

'Islamophobia' Spreading: Survey

CRAWFORD — A recent survey found that more Americans than ever since 9/11 think that Islam teaches violence against non-Muslims. With this news, however, more U.S. citizens who are Muslim are reaching out to their communities to promote the value of peace within the Islamic faith.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll showed that 58 percent of 1,000 people interviewed by phone last week believe that Islam has more violent followers than any other religion. Thirty-two percent currently believe mainstream Islam encourages violence against others.

To account for the current state of "Islamophobia" in the United States, analysts point to the recent media coverage: the U.S./U.A.E. port controversy; the sectarian violence in Iraq; the election of Hamas by the Palestinians; and protests against cartoons of the prophet Muhammad.

Muslim civil rights groups, however, argue that anti-Muslim sentiments have not wavered in the United States since 2001, largely due to the fact that politicians and talking heads in the media continue to demonize their culture.

Still, Muslims remain vigilant, promoting open houses at area mosques, such as the one at the Plano Masjid in Plano, Texas, on Saturday, April 1, from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.

"More In Common Than You And I Think" will have tours, presentations, Q&A session, reception, and free literature. Presentations include: Understanding Islam, Contemporary Issues, Status of women in Islam and Commonalities of religions.

For more information, contact Br. Ayaz Ahmed, open house chair at <out_reach@planomasjid.org> or A. Basit Siddiqui at <Basit@Ameriglobeusa.com> or (972) 712-1884.

U.S. Keeps Preemption Policy: Report

WASHINGTON — Days before the third anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration announced that its policy of preventative first strikes against would-be enemy states remains fully active when diplomacy is exhausted.

The report entitled "The National Security Strategy of the United States" not only reiterated the hardline defensive stance the U.S. government would take in foreign affairs but also could be taken as a warning to states such as Iran with whom President Bush currently suspects of having a nuclear weapons program and a part to play in destabilizing Iraq.

Since President Bush during his 2002 State of the Union address named Iran, North Korea, and Iraq the "Axis of Evil" and presented the doctrine of preemptive war, which had already been a longstanding U.S. policy tactic, tensions flared up with Iran only to rise with the March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

At the time in 2003, President Bush called for the invasion on claims that Iraq had intent to use "weapons of mass destruction" on the United States. These claims have since been discounted because no such illegal, unaccounted weapons have been found there. Other claims the Bush administration used to trumpet for war, such as those that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and terrorist leader Osama bin Ladin are allies, have also been proved false.

The 2006 report outlines the Bush administration's strategy in dealing with the international community, specifically targeting countries that the president's feels threatens the values of democracy, freedom, and human rights — namely North Korea, Zimbabwe, Syria, China, Russia, and the Palestinian government controlled by Hamas.

Law requires the Bush administration to release one NSS report each year; however, the last NSS report was published in 2002.

Senate Prevents Default On U.S. Treasury Notes

WASHINGTON — By a 52-48 vote, the Senate Thursday prevented the first-ever default on U.S. Treasury notes by increasing the national debt ceiling by \$781 billion to almost \$9 trillion. The bill awaits President Bush's signature.

With this measure, the U.S. government can cover the costs for the war in Iraq, Medicare, and other programs without increasing taxes. Later in the day, the House okayed another \$91 billion to pay for the war in Iraq and more aid to victims of hurricanes.

Democrats criticized President Bush of fiscal abuse because this is the fourth time the debt limit would be increased since he came into office when the government had record surpluses. The Republican who spoke in favor of the bill said it was needed to cover the war on terror in a post-9/11 world.

By a 55-44 vote, Republicans, however, killed an amendment to the bill that would have required a study be performed on the economic dangers of the U.S. debt in foreign hands, one-fourth of which is currently allocated to them.

Mad Cow Case Found In Alabama

WASHINGTON — The third case of mad cow disease in the United States has been found in Alabama, according to the Agriculture Department last Monday.

A government laboratory in Ames, Iowa, confirmed the finding: a beef cow about 10 years of age that hadn't entered the food supply, said a department official.

The cow had apparently spent a year at an Alabama farm. The department plans to investigate further into the animal's history.

Two other cases of mad cow disease have been found, one in Washington state in 2003 and another in Texas last June.

Congress OKs \$1 Billion More In Energy Aid

WASHINGTON — By a 287-128 vote, the House last Thursday approved an extra \$1 billion in federal aid to cover the rising energy costs for Americans with low income. The total cost spent on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which the Senate passed the week prior, is more than \$3 billion for this year. President Bush is expected to sign the bill.



The Lone Star Iconoclast (USPS 022-833) is published weekly, on Wednesdays, by Smith Media, Inc., P.O. Box 420, Crawford, TX 76638 and 310 W. 5th St., P.O. Box 369, Clifton, TX 76634

Periodicals Postage is Paid at Clifton, TX 76634.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: McLennan & Bosque Counties, one year: \$40; Elsewhere, one year: \$45. Give old address when requesting change of address.

POSTMASTER: Please send address change to: The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 353, Clifton, TX 76634.

DEADLINES: 5 p.m. Fridays.

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Oil Slick Currency

Will Iran's Oil Bourse Harm U.S. Petrodollars?

Interview With William Engdahl, Economist/Journalist

F. WILLIAM ENGDahl, a native Texan and current resident of Germany, has reported Big Oil's effects on geopolitics since the first oil shock and world grain crisis in the early 1970s. He has also authored a best-selling book on the subject called *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order* published by Pluto Press.

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

FRANKFORT, Germany — F. William Engdahl has eyed Big Oil's effects on geopolitics for over 30 years and hasn't looked back.

Since the first oil shock and world grain crisis in the early 1970s, he has covered the GATT Uruguay Round trade talks, EU food policies, the grain cartel, IMF policy, Third World debt issues, hedge funds and the Asia crisis.

The native Texan/current resident of Germany has also authored a best-selling book on the subject called *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order* published by Pluto Press.

While reporting, Engdahl wears his economist hat he received as a graduate study in comparative economics at the University of Stockholm. He also earned a degree in politics from Princeton University and worked as an economist and journalist in New York and in Europe.

Engdahl has contributed regularly to a number of publications including Japan's Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Foresight magazine; Grant's Investor.com, European Banker and Business Banker International.

The Lone Star Iconoclast's Nathan Diebenow recently phoned Engdahl in Germany to discuss the effects of Iran's possible oil bourse on the U.S. dollar hegemony, Russian technology as a discredit to the peak oil controversy, and the impact of the so-called "color revolutions" on China and Russia.

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ICONOCLAST: How did you get started focusing on oil and geopolitics?

F. WILLIAM ENGDahl: That's something that is hard to give a short answer to. Basically, I've been looking at the world in sense of politics, geopolitics, international politics for 30 years or so. I started as a journalist in New York during the first oil shocks. I got very intrigued then by the enormous power of Big Oil suddenly. Then it was called Exxon, Mobile, the Seven Sisters — just overwhelmed all other corporations in terms of annual cash through-put. Oil was king in those days, 1973, '74, and '75.

I, as an American, feel more than uncomfortable. I think it's obscene the fact that one country, even though it's my own country, literally dictates life and death over virtually a 130 nations on this planet simply according to whims over some people in Washington who have a very dubious record of personal morality, to say the least.

— F. William Engdahl

That kind of caught my attention, if you put it that way. I've been looking at the world ever since, slowly building up a sense of history, a sense of process, where they came from and where they seem to be going. That's the short answer.

ICONOCLAST: So your education base is journalism?

ENGDahl: No, no, no. Not at all. I never studied journalism. God forbid.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

ENGDahl: I hope I'm not insulting anyone.

ICONOCLAST: No, no. (laughs)

ENGDahl: Okay. No, I just started writing. I pieced together things that I saw. I did interviews. I kind of self-taught,

but my education background is in economics and politics. I think I have a little sense of history, again looking at these things. I got curious and then started digging. I guess I'm a habitual digger. I'm always unsatisfied with the surface of stories. I look behind the facade or try to dig deeper to find out where something comes from. That's been with me in my whole life.

ICONOCLAST: One thing that was digging at me was how petrodollars, the fusion of the U.S. dollar to the price of oil,

relates to international politics. It seems like this cycle of violence in the Middle East is starting up again but this time between Iran and the United States. With regard to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, you theorized that invasion happened in part because Saddam was threatening to change from the petro-dollar "the enemy's currency," as he put it, to the petro-euro.

ENGDahl: I wouldn't call it a petro-euro. He made a deal with the president of France and the BMP Party to sell the "oil for food" oil in euros in 2000. That was an irritation, I think, for the U.S. Treasury and the hegemony of the dollar, but little more than an irritation until a lot of other nations, for example, Iran, some of the

OPEC member countries, Venezuela, and even Russia began to talk about, "Well, it's much more logical to price oil in euros because most of our trade goes to European countries."

So that was I think an aspect, but only an aspect, of the decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein. I think it was a relatively minor, even though I three years ago thought it perhaps was a major, factor, but in retrospect, it was a factor but relatively minor factor. The real point in all this, and the reason I think you have an administration in Washington with the former CEO of Halliburton geophysical resources Dick Cheney and several other people steeped in the oil business is, this administration unlike the Clinton administration, sees its major agenda item as securing with military means if necessary all the major oil fields of the world. It's a big order, but they seem to be doing it.

ICONOCLAST: So the petro-dollar is only one little aspect of it?

ENGDahl: I think so. That's my conviction. I think it could have been a factor, but wasn't the factor as some people have claimed it was. The reason I say that, you can look back to the year 2000 even before the pricing in petro-euro, if you want to call it that, took place, and you had a report in September 2000 from the Project of New American Century which included Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, and vice president of McDonald/Douglas, and several of the neo-conservatives who are close to the current administration. They called for a pre-emptive war against Saddam Hussein and a military taking of Iraq,

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• **ENGDAHL ... Continued From Page 3**

even if there was no military threat or weapons of mass destruction. That was in 2000 of September, months before the pricing of oil in euros by Iraq.

ICONOCLAST: Okay, so Project already had a plan in place.

ENGDAHL: To understand this you have to step back and look at how people like Cheney view the projection of the supply and demand of global petroleum over the next 20 years. Back in 1999 at a speech at the Institute of Petroleum in London, a bunch of oil industry good old boys, Cheney as CEO of Halliburton outlined the prospect by I think 2020 the world is going to need — given the fact that oil fields like the North Sea, Alaska, and certain fields in Mexico and elsewhere, are depleting at a very dramatic rate now, they have reached a so-called aging phase — that the world will need 50 million barrels of new oil discoveries online by 2020.

Right now we have a world production of 84 million barrels a day, so where is the world going to find 50 million new barrels? But Cheney was optimistic. He said, “Well, we know where the oil is. There’s only one place in the world where it exists in such abundance. It’s so easy to tap and that is the countries in the Middle East. There’s only one problem with those countries, however. All the oil companies are in state-owned hands.”

Cheney didn’t elaborate, but he means that the state-controlled oil in Iraq, the state controlled oil in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere between now and 2020 has to be put in the hands of private interests. For sure he was thinking of Exxon/Mobile, Chevron, Texaco, and a few of his chums in Houston there in the oil trade.

ICONOCLAST: Looking back, the Bush administration was already thinking about resorting to violence to take over the Middle Eastern oil.

ENGDAHL: I think they were thinking about taking it over, but I don’t know if from the get-go that violence was uppermost on the agenda. Perhaps they thought they could cut a deal with Saddam Hussein. I just don’t know. I’m not privy to that. But the idea of taking direct military control of the Middle East — I mean, this has been inching in that direction since the 1970s, and as soon as the Bush administration came in, Paul O’Neil, the former Treasury Secretary under Bush who was fired because he simply spoke his mind — Bush is a team player as you probably know in Crawford, Texas —

ICONOCLAST: Oh, yeah. (laughs)

ENGDAHL: Paul O’Neil has said in his memoirs after he left office that almost from the first day he sat on a meeting in early 2001, something like March or April, Bush, Cheney, and other the Cabinet were talking about how we can get Saddam Hussein, so that tells me that this is a long-term project.

I think the way to understand this (is to ask) why does Big Oil suddenly need to militarily control Iraq, Iran, and some of these Middle East oil sources? And the answer to that, if you look at a map, and I urge your readers to do that—look at a map of Eurasia. Eurasia is the term for the continental landmass which goes from France all the way on the Atlantic Coast to Vladivostok, Russia on the Pacific Coast. It includes China, Russia, Azerbaijan, and all the oil rich countries in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea. It also includes the countries in the Middle East.

Several of the Washington strategists and presidential advisors openly said the number one policy of the United States is to prevent the emergence of any global super-power combination that could conceivably threaten American hegemony, so the emergence of China over the next five-10 years is right now considered within the administration, as far as I can see, the number one geopolitical threat — not Iran, but China.

I think that close on that is the reckoning about Russia because Russia has — number one — oil, it has resources, it has raw materials, which western Europe

‘S

o Saddam Hussein was a pushover compared with Iran. Iran is impenetrable by ground forces. It’s very mountainous. The Iranians have prepared themselves very well for this situation, and I think it would be the beginning of the end of the United States as a nation if they were insane enough to do this.’

— F. William Engdahl

needs. Number two, Russia has a very formidable nuclear arsenal and extremely sophisticated missile delivery techniques and anti-missile systems, so that’s kind of like the fly in the ointment of the whole global domination theme of Cheney, Bush, and some of his friends in the Pentagon.

ICONOCLAST: So Russia and China are sort of on the horizon right now. I read recently that Bush was in India and a deal was struck over nuclear arms. How does India play in all of this?

ENGDAHL: Well, about one year ago, the Bush administration turned to India as a strategic partner and a counterweight against the growing power of China in Asia, and they simply said, “We want to get a foothold in Asia and India is our best bet.” So the United States is trying to play, if you will, kind of a British geopolitics or a balance of power politics against China in Asia by offering carrots to India. Ironically, they are assisting India in exactly the same kind of civilian nuclear program that Iran is trying to build, and that doesn’t enter into the calculus. So you have to ask why some countries with nuclear potentials are considered black sheep and why others are considered allies. It’s kind of a funny calculus.

ICONOCLAST: Going back to Iran, so are we bullying Iran because of its supposed nuclear energy aspirations or is it mainly having to do with oil or is it mainly about Israel?

ENGDAHL: Well, I think all of the above, if this were a multiple choice test.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

ENGDAHL: The Iran situation is far more complex than Iraq was by orders of magnitude for the simple reason that it’s three years after the attack on Iraq, and it’s very clear to Iran back in March 2003 exactly just what nastiness the U.S. is capable of. Number two, Iran has quietly been building its defenses because the President of the United States made a State of the Union address in January 2002 where he said Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are the “Axis of Evil,” whatever that means.

So Iran knew it was on the target list and that, by the way, was well before Iran decided to make an oil bourse which may or may not go ahead this spring. But going back to the main point — the complication — Iran would be a crucial chess piece in a great game of the new version of the British great game in central Asia from the last century. Iran would be a major coup in the march to encircling Russia and controlling the potentials of Russia to ally with Iran, to ally with

China, to ally with Germany, to ally with France and to create a counterweight to this unbridled U.S. power.

I, as an American, feel more than uncomfortable. I think it’s obscene the fact that one country, even though it’s my own country, literally dictates life and death over virtually a 130 nations on this planet simply according to whims over some people in Washington who have a very dubious record of personal morality, to say the least.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

ENGDAHL: And aren’t very good bird hunters either.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) Ooooooh! Well, I did want to ask you about the Iranian oil bourse. Why do you say that it may or may not go through?

ENGDAHL: Well, let’s see. It may not go

through and it may be a success. But I think it’s more a technical factor in terms of Iran selling most of its oil to places like China and Europe where the currency is the euro so they can sell their oil for Chinese yuan. The Chinese provide Iran with a lot of equipment. They provide Iran with military defense material so that would make sense. Why lock yourself in the American dollar to sell your oil and then reexchange it for euros or for Chinese yuan? Why not deal directly and you’ll avoid the currency risk because some people think the dollar is highly, highly overpriced and highly vulnerable to crash in the next month.

ICONOCLAST: In the next month!

ENGDAHL: There are certain aspects of the Iranian oil bourse that technically could work. I think also the Iranians see this as a pin prick irritation to the Americans to simply start pricing oil in euros. It’s kind of a no-no since the 1973 oil shock. Washington has always insisted that OPEC countries sell only in dollars. It’s not much of a problem as it was then. Today the prompt is more of the recycling of Chinese trade surpluses into the dollar and into the U.S. Treasury bond market.

ICONOCLAST: So this bourse could only be a minor irritation to the U.S. economy?

ENGDAHL: Yeah, I don’t see it as a major—the crucial question is there’s one major reserve currency in the world still today and that is the American dollar, even though the dollar is no longer backed by gold. The reason that has been possible to keep despite the hollowing out of the industrial economy in the United States in the last 20-25 years and despite the fact that the debts and the trade deficits and the federal budget deficits are stratospheric in dimension over the past five years especially — all those things would speak for the collapse of the dollar as a worthless paper currency — why hasn’t it collapsed? Simply because the United States has allowed countries like Japan and China to import without restriction in order that they recycle those trade dollars. These aren’t petro-dollars. These are trade dollars — hundreds of billions of dollars a year into American treasury bonds.

What does that do? That makes the interest rate on treasury bonds, which are the bench mark of the entire domestic economy in the United States, far lower than it would have been would the Chinese, Japanese and other trade partners were not doing that. They do it partly because they are afraid that if the dollar collapses, their exports will be over-

priced and they won’t be able to make the trade. So it’s a devil’s circle and it’s a very conscience one. Washington has realized this since 1971 when Nixon closed the gold window and slammed it shut in the New York Fed and said, “We no longer give gold for our paper dollars.” France, Germany, and several other countries were asking for gold and they were simply left on a lurch.

I developed that in some length in a book I wrote called “The Century of War.” It’s available through the University of Michigan Press in the U.S. and Pluto Press in Britain. If people are interested, order that at any bookstore and learn more about how that worked.

ICONOCLAST: You made a statement about why do we give nuclear technology to India but we’re upset that Iran is getting it. I see a similarity in the sense that, why does the United State choose to violently invade Iraq and allegedly help stage a coup against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela on the one hand but help fund these non-violent so-called “color revolutions” like in the Ukraine? Why use violence in one area and why use nonviolence in the other, you think?

ENGDAHL: I think that quite simply it’s whatever works. The thing against Chavez failed dramatically because Chavez I think has a fairly strong popular base and that’s something that is difficult to uproot.

The color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Serbia and so forth were backed by the U.S. State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House, which is an organization headed up by former head of the Central Intelligence Agency James Woolsey. These were effectively the kind of destabilizations that the CIA did directly in the ’50s and the ’60s but now are done by private agencies like the Soros Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy.

The goal was to put in hand-picked puppets to be, for example, Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia. The country Georgia in the Caucasus lies on the critical pipeline route going from the Caspian Sea into Turkey which is a NATO country and is very close to Washington, so if they didn’t have somebody who was in their pocket in Georgia, their whole pipeline route would have been threatened. So James Baker went to Georgia and prepared that color revolution personally, and the one with Ukraine — Ukraine is the cross roads of almost all the natural gas pipelines going from Siberia into Western Europe, so if Washington controls Ukraine, then it has the potential to simply choke off the lifeline of the Russian economy.

This is part of an encirclement of Russia which has been going on since the end of the Cold War really in very incremental steps, and to my mind, it’s a highly dangerous geopolitical game that Washington is engaged in because the Russian Tiger does still have nuclear teeth. They have a few cavities, but they’re still nuclear teeth.

ICONOCLAST: With your knowledge of the Big Oil industry, where do you stand on this argument about “peak oil?” Are we past the peak? Have we yet to hit it?

ENGDAHL: It’s a very complicated question. I recently wrote an article for a German newspaper, “Confessions of an Ex-Peak Oil Believer.” And I was very taken by the peak oil thesis, but I ran across several of its advocates back in 2003 or so. I’ve met Golden Campbell and most of the people who advocate this thesis. I increasingly began to have doubts with the way it was being argued that

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everything, well, it goes back to peak oil; the world is running out of oil; we suddenly have to prepare for catastrophe, starvation and whatever.

But there's a much more interesting reason I'm an ex-peak oil believer, and that is, I think the idea that petroleum is a fossil fuel, the idea that petroleum is a

biologically based material which was formed hundreds of millions of years ago under pressures of rock on top of dinosaurs, plankton and algae — to have a trillion barrels of oil produced in the last, you're going to have to have quite a few dinosaurs packed belly-to-belly nose-to-

nose 10 deep or a hundred deep to make that kind of biological matter.

But the Russians have developed actually during the Cold War — it was a national emergency to get energy independence — and their geologists said, let's look at where oil comes from in a very scientific way. After several years of research and experiments, actually testing their theory, they came to the conclusion that petroleum is formed deep, deep, deep under the earth's mantle under granite and not close to the surface as you find it in Saudi Arabia and places like that. It has come close to the surface of those countries. That's not the origin of it, and they tested the hypothesis and drilled very deep into this granite and through the granite and found oil, lo and behold. What they found was oil that didn't run dry. It kept being created, so to speak, deep in the earth. It's like a huge oven that has enormously hot temperatures and enormously high pressures, and through that, you create petroleum not too much unlike how diamonds are created. Then through shifts of tectonic plates and so forth on the earth's surface, the oil can seep up close to the top.

American geologists for the last 100 years have been lucky because they have been able to access cheap easy oil. Since 1945, they have controlled Saudi Arabia. The royal Saudi house is very dependent on U.S. military support, and as long as they have cheap and easy oil, they didn't have to worry about it. Now, what's happening is that they don't have the technology to drill these deep wells, and the Russians do, so the wells that they do have, many of them are beginning to deplete, and production rates are declining. That's very real. The Russians maintain that can be corrected if you know how to do it. They claim they've done it and that's why Russia today is the second largest oil producer next to Saudi Arabia. That's an impressive record.

I began to have doubts about the Peak Oil thesis. I came to the conclusion that it, in effect, helps Big Oil, Exxon/Mobile, etc. slowly raise the prices to levels where they're making obscene profits now on a quarterly basis, if you look at their quarterly and annual reports over the last two years. They are able to say, "It's because we're running out of oil."

So the Peak Oil question is a complex one. I do think these fields are depleting and there are technologies that have been developed to ream these wells out or to do off-set wells. That's been done in many cases, but the Russians are kind

of the world experts on this, and the U.S. geologists don't have the slightest idea on how to think in those terms. In that sense, Russia has a strategic asset in terms of energy that the West lacks. We probably would be well advised to have a more cooperative policy toward learning some of these things.

'So the Peak Oil question is a complex one. I do think these fields are depleting and there are technologies that have been developed to ream these wells out or to do off-set wells. That's been done in many cases, but the Russians are kind of the world experts on this, and the U.S. geologists don't have the slightest idea on how to think in those terms.'

— F. William Engdahl



ICONOCLAST: So what I gather from what you're saying is that there is some sort of natural petroleum creation process that is in place—

ENGDAHL: Yeah, and the Russians found again and again — they thought it had peaked out, that when they reduced the production rate, suddenly the well was topped up again from deep, deep underground.

ICONOCLAST: Can they account for how much is down there?

ENGDAHL: It seems to be quite a lot. The Russians even found places like Vietnam which were deemed barren by western geologists, so the Vietnamese are very thankful to the Russians helping them get some energy independence. Of course, they tried to do this in India in the 1980s and the U.S. State Department and intelligence agencies sabotaged and bribed various Indian officials to shut the program down because that would have made India far too independent.

ICONOCLAST: So we're not into any end of the world scenario because of Peak Oil?

ENGDAHL: No, I don't think so. It's a question of the right technology and the right investment in future technology as well as we can do a lot to use far less oil in automobile engines and so forth. In Europe, diesel engine cars are the most commonly bought car because they can get 50-60 miles to the gallon, and there's no reason why we can't do that in the U.S. It's just politics. Oil companies just love to sell all of that, and the refining companies — that's a whole other scandal. They've shut down perfectly good, brand new refineries in order to jack the price of gasoline and refined products as high as they've had.

ICONOCLAST: Where's that going on?

ENGDAHL: In the U.S. and in Europe. Also there have been documented cases of Shell oil Company doing that and several of the other refiners. In California, Shell did that also with a new refinery that was very state of the art, modern refinery, and they shut it down and refused to sell it. People wanted to buy it, so that's kind of suspicious. The journalists who got some internal documents of these companies about a year or so ago put them on the Internet. They're out there for people to read.

ICONOCLAST: So how do you think this Iran thing is going to play out?

ENGDAHL: Oh, if I had the answer to that, I'd be a rich man.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

ENGDAHL: Frankly, this is just a gut feeling. The Bush administration has got-

ten into a very, very nasty pickle with their bravado against Iran, going back to the Axis of Evil 2002 State of the Union address, and once you start making those kinds of threats, if you don't deliver on them, you are perceived as being a paper tiger as the Chinese said years ago. Well, at this point, were the United States

to bomb Iran — I mean, it's unquestionable that they could wield enormous physical damage with the arsenal of air power the U.S. has and even with mini-nukes which Rumsfeld and others have hinted at, but what would that bring?

As Iran has said, and I'm sure that they are not just making bravado, they would unleash a holy war the likes of which the world has never seen. I mean, this character Osama bin Ladin hiding in the caves of Tora Bora, I think he's chump change compared to what could be done against oil installations that are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy and the world economy. So keep in mind, the Iranian government is a Shia brand of Islam. The Saudis are Sunni, Wahabbi Sunnis. The Iranians have very close ties to the Shias who are now the dominant political faction in the Iraqi parliament, but also to the fact that the largest oil installation in Saudi Arabia in the area of Ras Tanura, where all the oil is loaded up on super tankers and heads out to Japan, to China, to the U.S. and elsewhere, the work is done by Shia Islam workers in Saudi Arabia, and were they to be activated by Tehran as a retaliation for the nuclear bombing of Iran, that could simply shut down the world's oil flows then big time.

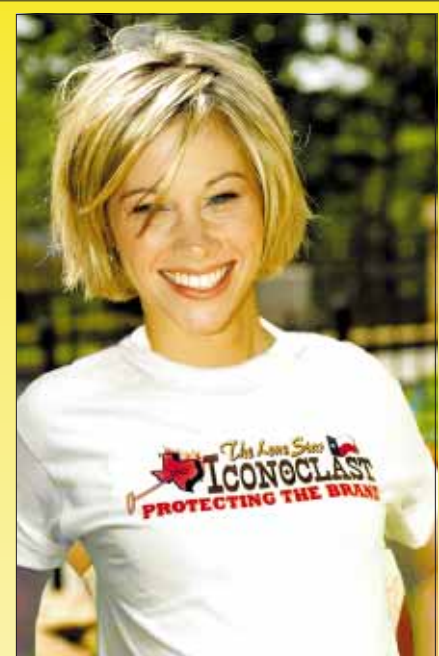
Iran has strategic military ties with Russia. Russians are building the nuclear reactor in Bushehr, Iran. They see it as a commercial reactor and something that is bringing a lot of good hard currency dollars to the Russian economy, and also Russia is delivering missiles and other technologies so that Iran can defend itself. So Saddam Hussein was a pushover compared with Iran. Iran is impenetrable by ground forces. It's very mountainous. The Iranians have prepared themselves very well for this situation, and I think it would be the beginning of the end of the United States as a nation if they were insane enough to do this.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

ENGDAHL: No, really. I'm quite serious. So for that reason, I mean, there are some what I consider insane things going in government in recent years, but I somehow think they have to pull short of launching a full scale nuclear war and I don't think they can have Israel as a proxy to it because as a Russian general said a few days ago in Moscow, "Well, if the U.S. launched a bomb strike against Iran, that would immediately solve the Palestinian problem, the Iraqi problem, the Iranian problem, and the Israeli problem because they would no longer exist."

ICONOCLAST: Wow!

ENGDAHL: That was the Russian view of it. I think it is an immensely dangerous thing. The leveler-heads in Washington know that, so maybe there will be some scandals against the Cheney/Bush administration that will stop short of them going to war. I just don't know. It's going to be a fascinating and a very dangerous six or nine months before the November U.S. mid-term elections.



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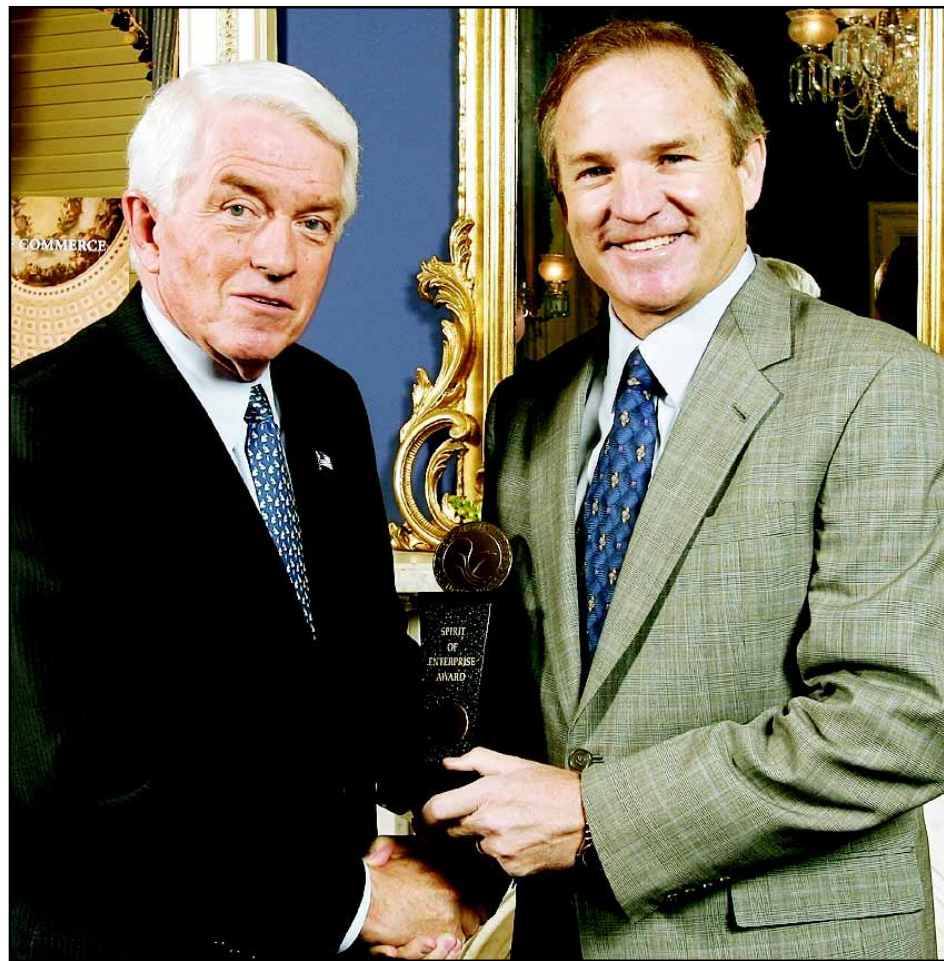
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REPRESENTATIVE CHET EDWARDS (right) won the prestigious "Spirit of Enterprise" award for his support of a pro-economic growth legislative agenda. Chamber President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue presented Edwards with the honor.

U.S. Chamber Honors Rep. Edwards With 'Spirit Of Enterprise' Award

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United States Chamber of Commerce today presented Representative Chet Edwards with its prestigious "Spirit of Enterprise" award for his strong support for a pro-economic growth legislative agenda in the first session of the 109th Congress.

"Chet is a leader who has fought for legislation to spur job creation, increase productivity, and keep our economy growing," said Thomas J. Donohue, Chamber President and CEO. "We're proud to present him with this award on behalf of America's businesses, both large and small."

The Chamber awards the "Spirit of Enterprise" based on rankings it gives members of Congress for key business votes outlined in its annual publication, *How They Voted*. Edwards scored 74 percent with the Chamber last year and has compiled a 74 percent cumulative ranking during his tenure in Congress.

Chamber-designated "key votes" are recorded floor votes on issues established as priorities by the Chamber's board of directors and on which the Chamber communicates its position prior to the vote. Members of Congress who support the Chamber's position on at least 70 percent of key votes receive the award.

For the first session of the 109th Congress, the Chamber scored 18 Senate votes and 27 House votes as key votes. Key votes for 2005 included the class action reform, bankruptcy reform, a comprehensive energy bill, transportation reauthorization legislation, and the U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement.

The U.S. Chamber is the world's largest business federation, representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region.

Farm Bureau Members Helping Fellow Farmers

PAMPA — In the wake of a devastating fires that are sweeping the Texas Panhandle, Texas Farm Bureau is asking members in other parts of the state to step forward to help fellow farmers and ranchers in need.

As of Monday morning, seven people had died and more than 700,000 acres were consumed, according to reports from the Texas Forest Service.

"We know for sure that at least 25 structures that were insured through Farm Bureau have been lost," said farmer Billy Bob Brown, Farm Bureau's state district director for the area.

News reports said the wall of flames — fueled at times by as much as 55-mile-an-hour winds — literally burned livestock where they stood in some places. The flames came so quickly they simply weren't able to make a run for it. Firemen continue to battle the blaze as north

winds feed the flames.

"There's just incredible devastation everywhere for the people living up here," said Brandon Wheeler, agency manager in the Gray-Roberts County Farm Bureau office.

Much of current ranch grazing is lost, Wheeler said, and so are many of the cattle. For those that remain, hay supplies are nonexistent. In an effort to help the many farmers and ranchers living in the Northern Panhandle, Wheeler has opened his office doors to accept donations of all sorts, including hay, fence posts and wire, not to mention personal items and monetary contributions for families, as many lost homes and barns in the wildfires as well.

Those wishing to help are encouraged to contact the Gray-Roberts county office in Pampa at (806) 665-8451.

Brazos River Authority, TCEQ Fly The Rivers

AUSTIN — A project documenting the status of two major rivers in the state will kickoff next week with the first run of aerial videography through the Brazos River watershed.

A jointly funded effort by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the Brazos River Authority (BRA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the project will entail a helicopter fly-over of the lower two-thirds of the Brazos as well as all of the North Bosque River. The Brazos River portion will originate at the confluence of the Salt and Double Mountain Forks (located in eastern Stonewall County near Aspermont) and proceed southward to the Gulf Coast.

"The purpose of the documented flights is to obtain a photographic record of the riparian habitat zones along the rivers and lakes," said John Ellis, PhD, Strategic Planning Manager for the BRA and project manager

for the program.

"The resulting record will aid both the BRA and TCEQ in their oversight and protection of the water resources of the state." Brazos Helicopters of Bruceville, Texas will perform the aerial videography.

The initial phase of the project is expected to cost \$220,000, with the final products available in the fall of 2006. Additional flights will take place in the future, covering the John Graves Scenic River portion of the Brazos (located in Palo Pinto and Parker counties). Texas State Senate Bill 1354, authored by State Senator Craig Estes of Wichita Falls and Representative Jim Keffer of Eastland, authorizes biannual documentation of the status of the John Graves Scenic River portion of the Brazos River.

For further information on the Brazos River Authority, please contact Judi Pierce, Public Information Officer at 254-761-3103.

State Farmers Return From 104th National Farmers Union Convention

DENVER — The group included five delegates representing Texas who helped shape the direction of the national family farm organization through policy development. Delegates were A J Priesmeyer, El Campo; Gary Moore, Tulia; Charles Anderson, Lamesa; Mike Oldham, Shamrock; and Wes Sims, Sweetwater. In addition David Schertz, Denton County served on NFU's national policy committee.

"Delegates at the convention have spoken decisively about the key issues concerning rural America today, adopting strong policy statements on a variety of issues from Social Security and international trade to biofuels and market concentration," said Texas Farmers Union President Wes Sims, who led the state delegation.

This theme of this year's convention was "Fuels From the Farm — Our Nation's

Future." Farmers Union advocates growing the use and production of fuels from the farm to ensure farmers get a fair price from the marketplace and our nation becomes energy independent.

Sims also said during the convention Farmers Union voiced strong opposition of the agricultural budget cuts that make up a major share of the deficit reduction in President Bush's proposed budget, the need for permanent disaster assistance and a two year extension of the 2002 farm bill. Also, given high priority were special orders of Business concerning the need for Congress to pass permanent disaster assistance.

About 600 Farmers Union members attended the four-day event, which also included speeches by former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, former Senator John Edwards, and Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer.

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U.S. Launches Largest Air Attacks In Iraq

WASHINGTON — The largest U.S. air offensive in Iraq since the 2003 invasion kicked off last Thursday aimed to take out insurgent targets northeast of

Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, said the U.S. military.

This latest string of attacks called "Operation Swarmer" is composed of "more

than 1,500 Iraqi and Coalition troops, over 200 tactical vehicles, and more than 50 aircraft," according to a military statement.

The area under attack is near the site of the Feb. 22 bombing of a Shiite shrine that led to 500 deaths and hundreds more injuries, a scene in which analysts worry might later lead to a civil war in Iraq.

Critics of this latest escalation noted that on May 1, 2003 under a banner that read "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED" on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, President Bush claimed that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."

These strikes also happened to occur as protestors from around the world readied themselves to demonstrate on

the third anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, while about two-thirds of Americans think the Iraqi war is going badly, according to a recent opinion poll.

"U.S. claims to institute democracy in Iraq and liberate Iraqis is being held up for ridicule around the world as Iraq teeters at the edge of a civil war," said Dallas Peace Center member Hadi Jawad.

"This pursuit of a military solution in Iraq indicates an unwillingness to seek negotiated political answers to a crisis that can easily spill across Iraq's borders and engulf the entire region in flames. The U.S. military planners in Iraq must forego their penchant for violence and stop immediately all actions that imperil the civilian population of Iraq," Jawad added.

Edwards Introduces H.R. 4949 To Block Tricare Fee Increases

WASHINGTON, DC — U.S. Representative Chet Edwards (TX17) today introduced HR 4949, the *Military Retirees' Healthcare Protection Act*. Edwards' bill would block the Administration's proposal to double and triple health care premiums for about three million enlisted and officer retirees under Tricare, the military's health insurance system, and require the Administration to request future increases through Congress. For the first time, the provision was included in the Administration's annual budget proposal, which immediately caused serious concern among military retirees across the country.

"I believe that keeping our promise of quality, affordable health care for military retirees is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. It is right because our nation has a moral obligation to keep our promises to those who have kept their promise to defend our nation. It is the smart thing to do because we cannot attract the best and brightest to fight our war on terrorism in the years ahead if they see us breaking faith with those who served in years past. To win the war on

terrorism, we must keep faith with our warriors and stop this military retiree tax," said Edwards, ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs.

Thirteen associations representing military retirees support H.R. 4949, authored by Edwards and Representative Walter Jones (NC03), the lead cosponsor of the *Military Retirees' Healthcare Protection Act*.

"I would like to thank Congressman Walter Jones for his leadership on this important issue," said Edwards. "We believe the Constitution purposely gave the Congress the power to declare war and to pass appropriations bills, so we think it is reasonable that Congress has a say in approving appropriations for health care programs for those who fight our wars."

Vice Admiral Norb Ryan, Jr., USN-Ret, President of the Military Officers Association of America, said, "We appreciate the strong stand that Rep. Chet Edwards is taking to make the point that the richest country on earth can afford both military weapons and health care, and doesn't have to stick the troops with that bill. Defense leaders pushing to triple or quadruple health fees for military retirees seem to forget that career servicemembers already paid their premiums — and paid them up-front, through two or three decades of service and sacrifice. Those who think military people have some great health care deal need to ask themselves why people aren't lined up around the block to join. It's because they don't want to pay that heavy premium."

Edwards' legislation will do two main things. First, it will stop the Administration's proposed tax on military retirees by requiring congressional action in four areas: enrollment fees for retired members and survivors in TRICARE Prime; pharmacy co-payments; enrollment fees for the new TRICARE Reserve Select program for our Guard and Reserve families; and co-payments for inpatient care. Second, it will require congressional approval for any future increases in military retiree health care costs.

Specifics of the Administration's Tricare budget proposal:

- Enrollment fees (now \$230 for individuals/\$460 for families) would be tripled for retired officers to \$750/\$1500 (individual/family) by Oct. 2008. Enlisted retirees under 65 would see enrollment fees nearly double by October 2008 to \$450/\$900 (individual/family).

- First-ever enrollment fees for Tricare would start for officers at \$150/\$300 (individual/family) and rise to \$300/\$600 (individual/family) in 2008. Enlisted retirees would pay \$100/\$200 (individual/family) next October, rising to \$200/\$400 (individual/family) in 2008.

- Annual deductibles under Tricare for retired officers, now \$150/\$300 (individual/family), would double to \$300/\$600 (individual/family) in 2008. Enlisted retirees would see their Standard deductible rise to \$200/400 (individual/family) in Oct. 2008.

Governor Perry Announces Special Session of Legislature

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry today announced that he will call a special session of the legislature beginning on Monday, April 17, at 2 p.m.

"The Texas Supreme Court has ruled that Texas' current tax system must be reformed by June 1," Perry said.

"This special session provides legislators of both parties a rare opportunity to significantly reduce property taxes, make substantial reforms to the franchise tax so it is fairer and broader, and ensure our schools have a reliable and constitutional stream of revenue."

The governor will issue a proclamation outlining the specific issues for the session at a later date.

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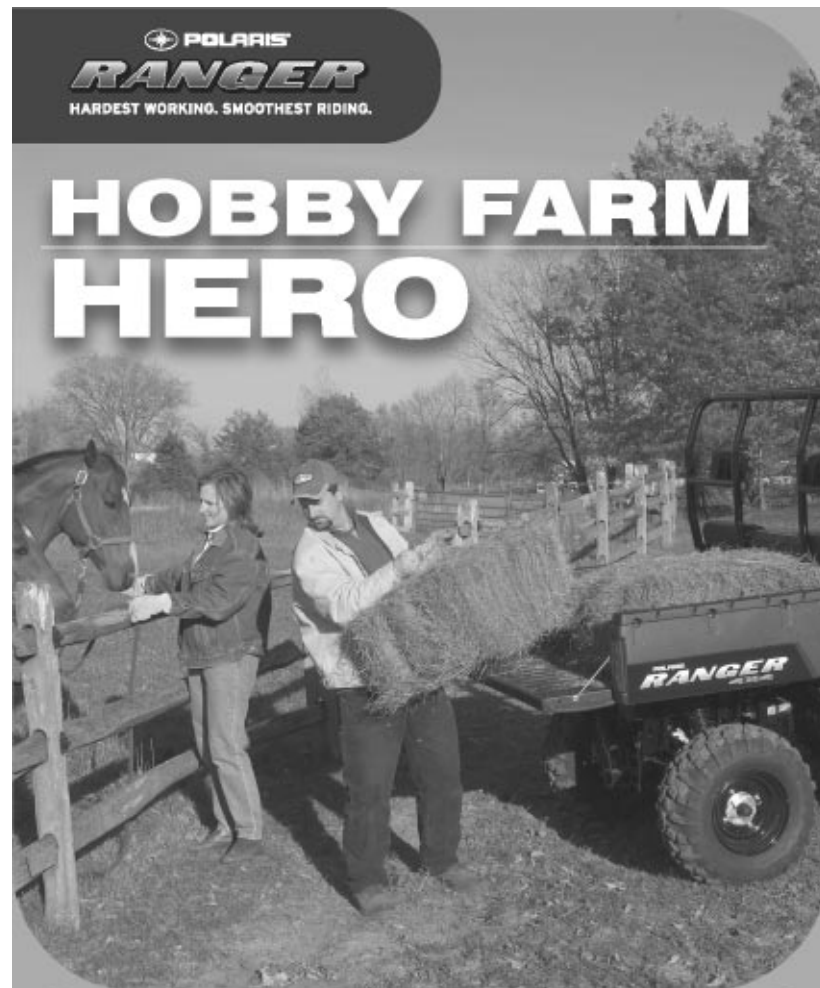
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Lydia Cornell Blog Double Nominee For Koufax Award

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Lydia Cornell, best actress nominee at Method Fest for the independent film “Miss Supreme Queen,” and star of the long-running hit show “Too Close For Comfort,” is a double nominee for the 2005 Koufax Award.

The Koufax Awards are named for Sandy Koufax, one of the greatest left handed pitchers of all time. They are intended to honor the best of the left of blogtopia. At its core, the Koufax Awards are meant to be an opportunity to say nice things about favorite bloggers and to provide a bit of recognition for those who provide information, insight, and entertainment usually for little or no remuneration.

Cornell’s site, <www.lydiacornell.com>, covers politics, spiritual therapy comedy, prayer miracles, bridging the gap between faith and the Democratic Party to counter the bizarre extremism going on in politics.

Says Cornell, the site “honors and supports our troops. You can support the troops, yet be appalled at this war. If there was ever a ‘bleeding heart liberal’ it was Jesus. The term ‘conservative Christian’ doesn’t make sense — although I just met one who gives me hope. I have had so many healings through prayer. God is love and love transforms.”

Cornell is a political writer and humorist who has been described as a “female Dave Sedaris.” Her current project is an explosive and controversial book tentatively titled “Serpentine: Tales of a Recovering Bimbo” about her own humiliating journey from the heights of fame to the devastation of alcoholism to miraculous renewal, including motherhood then marriage.

Cornell now has three boys and two dogs, including her husband.

Cornell says, “Everyone is going through puberty in our house. We are constantly regressing. I now have the most hilarious, incredible life I ever dreamed possible — but it was a very screwy route to spiritual growth. Lots of raw, ugly, embarrassing celebrity mo-



Lydia Cornell

ments.” Including being dumped by various icons — and being locked in a bank vault above Harrods’s by Dodi Fayed, Princess Diana’s ill-fated partner. Lydia describes her Hollywood experience as a crash-and-burn, then a “catastrophic” spiritual awakening that was almost supernatural.

In “Serpentine,” with chapters such as “How to Talk to Ann Coulter, If You Must,” and “Falling Up,” Lydia chronicles her tragic-comic journey as a female in the 21st century, and explores being an American in this bizarre new millennium where ‘peace’ seems to be a dirty word.

Cornell went to Beirut, Lebanon in the first USO visit to a Mideast war zone for the International Peacekeeping forces. She left right before the first

suicide truck bomb killed over 200 Marines of the 24th MAU. US Magazine published her “Beirut Diary.”

Her Soviet novel, “The Sylvia Plan” is based on the true story of one of Stalin’s most complex assassins: the man who killed Trotsky. The book, spanning the Spanish Civil War and World War II, had to be put on the back burner while Cornell raised children. It is finally coming out in 2006 and she has offers for the movie rights.

Cornell’s frustration with materialism compelled her to write the film “Venus Conspiracy.”

“I actually know nine-year old girls who worry about wrinkles and dieting!” Cornell says. She teamed up with her former co-star from “Too Close For Comfort,” Deborah Van Valkenburgh. Ironically, both actresses portray sisters in “Venus” as they did some 20 years prior.

“We got to have a great fight and we laughed until we cried,” says Cornell. This zany, poignant comedy-thriller in the vein of “Dr. Strangelove” and “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” clearly sends a message to all women, “Women have never achieved as much as men because they spend too much time putting on makeup!” EXTRA recently profiled Cornell and Van Valkenburgh, showing clips from “Venus.”

Cornell comes from a family dedicated to the arts. Her great-great grandmother was Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.” A feminist and children’s advocate, she is passionate about helping orphans and underprivileged children. Profits from her ventures go to various children’s charities, including Give Kids a Break, Girls Inc. and Feed the Children and right now, hurricane relief/missing kids as well.

Rhino continues their highly successful DVD release of “Too Close For Comfort,” Seasons I and II, which follows the everyday exploits of a couple whose grown daughters live directly downstairs. “Too Close For Comfort” marked the triumphant return of “The Mary Tyler Moore Show’s” Ted Knight as San Francisco cartoonist Henry Rush. The popular series also stars Nancy Dussault, Deborah Van Valkenburgh, JM J. Bullock, and the legendary Audrey Meadows — who played Jackie Gleason’s wife on “The Honey-mooners.” (<www.rhino.com>)

One of her most recent postings on her blog is entitled: “Bush’s Last Will And Testicle,” which is receiving considerable comment.

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HEIGHTS HOME HEALTH, Waco Branch, is now taking applications for attendants who have home care or nursing home experience for the Crawford area. For more information, call 254-753-0431 and mention this ad.

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Going After The Prince Of Darkness

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Whoever said, 'There's no fool like an old fool!' never had children."

So, the Students for a Democratic Society is back.
If we ever left.
Let me save you guys some grief. Don't expect to outlast the war. Most of your comrades are just here for the dope and the girls.
Uh, make that *women*.
Unless you are a woman.
And if you are a woman, what's your sign?
Another sizeable percentage of your ranks just don't want to get drafted. In the long term, most will end up as Republicans.
And the rest will end up like me. Not much of a future, hunh?
So, consider the alternatives and just go jump off the university tower.
If you have a tower.
We didn't have one at Austin College. Well, there was a chapel steeple, but that would have been a bit melodramatic for a Presbyterian.
Even if it was predestined.
So I transferred to East Texas State, where the only tall building on campus was the preppy dorm.
Not the crowd for a James Dean road trip.

Call To Mind



By Don M. Fisher

You could drown yourself in the campus lake, if you didn't know how many people had barfed in it or . . . well, let's just say there are some things worse than death.
I suppose now you could make some kind of solidarity statement with your fellow Middle Eastern student brothers and become a suicide bomber.
But considering that in the traditional SDS lexicon, a bomber was a marijuana cigarette the size of your thumb, it wouldn't be much of a statement.
Not a very coherent one, anyway.
Now you are a bullhorn crying in the wilderness.
With too many syllables.
We had it simple: *Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today? Make love, not war! U.S. out now! Hey, man, spare change?*
Now sloganeering is tough: *One, two, three, four, we don't want your fuckin' deficit! Outsourcing is not healthy for*

children and other living things! Hell no, we won't join the National Guard!
The short answer is, there is no short answer.
You can't oppose globalization without appearing racist.
At least you can't without a five-page policy analysis.
Immigration is simply a nightmare, because the issue isn't immigration.
It's a decent life for working people.
And let's face it, most people who are part of SDS, then and now, aren't exactly Joe Hill.
More like Westlake Hills.
But then that's where most revolutionaries come from, isn't it?
Thomas Paine, Lenin, Chè Guevarra. Pretty yuppie bunch.
I could emphasize that this radical point of view is brought to you by the first generation middle class son of a couple of public school administrators from Detroit, Texas.
So, hello, young radicals where ever you are, I've had a cause of my own.
And have some free advice, which is probably worth exactly what you paid for it.
First, accept that there's practically no chance that you'll win.
Certainly we, your predecessors, haven't dealt you a lot of high cards.
I'm sorry, but we used up all the fun in the 60s.

No more sex, drugs and rock'n roll.
All we left for you is STDs, Just Say No and Dave Matthews.
You may not even make a difference.
And the matters you do change will eventually be hyped to sell boxed set CD collections commercially interrupting old movies in the early morning hours.
Second, who cares?
You aren't in this for yourself, and if you give a damn what anybody else thinks about you one way or another, you're in the wrong business.
Try insurance.
But if you want to shave or make up a face each morning that you can look back at with no guilt or regrets, then pick up your sign, go to your meetings and do battle with the Prince of Darkness on Meet the Press.
Maybe you can fix some of the things we failed to make right.
And even if you can't, when that first shovel-full of dirt lands on the lid of your casket, you will know that, even if you didn't make too much of a difference, they damn sure knew you were here.
Even if they hate you for it.
And by the way, yes, it was worth it. Hell, it was a gas!
I'm even sorry I'm not young enough to go with you and do it all again.
Being hated by all the right people ain't half bad.

Iraq War Denounced By The World, As Well

Not only do the majority of Americans want the bloodshed in Iraq to stop, so do the masses residing in the rest of the world.

On the third anniversary of the U.S.-led coalition invasion of Iraq, protests are bleating throughout the planet, from Australia, to Europe, to Asia and Turkey. Citizens of the world are demanding that the madness of war cease.

What began on a fabricated lie — that weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were trained on the United States — has resulted in a disaster with literally hundreds of thousands killed or maimed for life.

Iraq is now teetering on a civil war as the United States increases its air strikes. President Bush has resolved to keep the war going. To top it off, the possibility of invading Iran is not off the table, especially since the petro-euro timetable is near.

Three years ago Americans sup-

ported going to war after being sold a bill of goods by the Bush pro-war regime.

But now, as lies are being continuously exposed, our citizenry is becoming impatient with those employed to implement our government, yet too few are actually willing to jump in front of the stampeding herd.

The cabal in Washington seems determined to dismiss the idea of peace, having learned that here in the U.S., lies blended with fear produce a tempting elixir combining bloodshed and insanity.

The corruption in Washington these past six years has predestined

that upcoming generations of Americans, our grandchildren's grandchildren, will be forced to grapple with poverty. The national debt is due a day of reckoning, and it won't be pretty.

Our addiction to oil, coupled with minimal acuity and attention given toward developing new forms of energy, have left us vulnerable economically and domestically.

The national debt grows as the influence of the dollar wanes.

The political sterility and cattle-like mindset of the American people to do nothing about it, except to continue to let it happen, unveils that there is no accountability, from the

ground up. There is no repair.

The Iraq war has been a lose-lose situation for all concerned, save perhaps those few corporations that benefit financially by providing weaponry or those that are given our nation's wealth to reconstruct what the weapons have destroyed.

The biggest loser is humanity. The notion of peace is a fading abstraction smudged by a forgotten, crinkled Constitution that used to represent our backbone..

If anniversaries are a time to reflect, then Americans should take a long, hard, look at their elected officials and posture themselves to never again trek down the same road of unrestricted trust and blindness.

Don't forget. Patriotism can also mean capturing peace through negotiation.

Or has that, too, been relegated to the rubble known as the pre-911 mindset?

— W. Leon Smith



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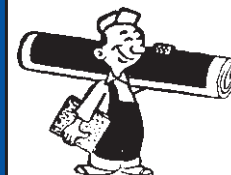
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I'll Have A Side Of Karma With That



Out Of The Blue

By
**Jerry
Tenuto**

I had a mild run in with Karma the other day. Well, it really wasn't a "run in," but more like a nod and a wink.

You may remember that Karma was real big back in the 1960s and '70s, thanks to the VietNam unpleasantness and people of the free lifestyle. It's kind of made a comeback in recent years, although I don't think the concept ever completely left California.

Lately, Karma has made a big hit on television in the least expected of settings — an unnamed, jerkwater town somewhere in southern wherever.

I'm talking about "My Name Is Earl," the funniest, most intelligent program about erstwhile poor dumb folks to come along since "The Beverly Hillbillies."

If you haven't caught it, and you're reading this, then you should. Star and producer Jason Lee (you'll recognize him from all kinds of movies and guest roles) plays Earl Hickey, a bumbling, low-level crook and all-around sleazeball who has pulled some kind of scam on virtually everyone in town since he was a kid.

His even dumber brother, Randy (played to perfection by Ethan Suplee and snubbed by the Emmy mainstream), has been following Earl's lead through-out life.

These guys are essentially harmless; they're just on the left side doing anything that would require listening to instructions and punching a time card.

The basic premise, set up in the pilot episode, is that Earl wins \$100,000 on an instant lottery ticket, is hit by a car on the way to cash it in, and loses the ticket. While hospitalized he reads the concept of "Karma" and decides to turn his life around.

Earl makes up a list of some 263 things he's done to wrong people, and upon being discharged sets out to rectify those situations — whatever it takes.

His first lesson is rewarded with finding the lost winning ticket, and he sets out using the money for good.

A rather unique premise for a television comedy, deftly handled with great writing and characters, that is honestly more than funny. This show is consistently a hoot! Plus, it's a hit, because apparently the network suits haven't screwed it up.

Now, to my own momentary Karmic experience. We all have them every now and then, you know. What's good is to recognize and sense these events, no matter how minor, at the moment they occur.

Okay, so I'm tooling up I-55 at a reasonable clip (I'm not gonna write for all the world to see that I was doin' like 80MPH, because that's faster than the law allows). In my CD player is one of my personally-made road mixes, crafted to make the miles fly by like my Aurora was just floating along.

The next song to come on is the Eagles' classic "Take It Easy," (written by Jackson Browne and Glenn Frey). One of its more famous verses goes:

Well I'm a-standin' on the corner in Winslow, Arizona

With such a fine sight to see

It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford

Slowin' down to take a look at me...

Long story short, just after this song began playing I looked up the road a short piece and, my Lord — it's a flatbed Ford!

Now, if that ain't Karma...

Not only that, it was an old flatbed Ford, a real countrified farm type vehicle,

circa 1969-71, ancient enough to have been around when the song was first written! It even bore Iowa plates, attesting to its authenticity, with the paint on the hood largely burned off from years of sitting out in blistering sunny summers and harsh winters.

My excitement could not be contained! I immediately called my son so I could tell him and he would hear the song at the same time as I was passing the truck. He's kind of into Buddhism, so it worked for him.

(Incidentally, the song is so famous it inspired "Standin' On The Corner" Park in downtown Winslow, featuring a statue of a guy on a corner and the image of a girl in a flatbed Ford.)

Why, you may be asking yourself, am I filling space with this tale of a Karmic Encounter of the Third Kind?

I guess that it is just my small way of reminding us all that we've been putting up with some really bad Karma for the past five years now.

Just as Earl Hickey has devised a way to counteract the bad Karma he's laden upon his own essence, we need to find a way to reverse the negative forces which are rendering our Nation into fragmented shards.

George W. Bush could not have been more full of feces as when he called himself "compassionate" and a "uniter," for the man has proven to be neither.

We are all far too painfully aware of the multiples of tens of thousands killed all over the World for his self-serving ends.

In America we have the tragedies of 9/11/2001 and Hurricane Katrina, just for starters. Some 4, 400 dead and 2,000 missing, with both events being forewarned yet ignored by King George XLIII and his Court.

There are more than 2,300 brave military people, young men and women, far braver than any of the wimp ideologues who sent them under false pretenses to be slaughtered in Iraq. Add another 270 or more dead in Afghanistan. Nearly 34,000 of these young men and women have been seriously wounded fighting a shadow enemy. The reality is, America cannot be certain of any of these figures because we have to rely upon the military to provide them to us.

For good or bad, estimates are some 30,000 Iraqi troops have died these past three years, with 90,000 seriously wounded. The British medical journal *The Lancet* figures Iraqi civilian casualties at 189,000 dead, 340,000 seriously wounded.

In Afghanistan, deaths include 8,600 troops and 3,500 civilians, with 26,000 and 6,300 wounded, respectively.

The best estimates of figures accumulated to date among Afghani and Iraqi civilians and troops, U.S. troops and civilians, and various coalition civilians and troops within these two theatres of operations are: 234,300 human lives lost; 497,500 people seriously, painfully wounded — a very large percentage un-

doubtedly maimed for life.

It took Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, and King George XLIII a mere three years to accomplish these massive slaughterhouse totals.

Good Lord, they must be proud of themselves! What are they gonna do next? Iran? Syria?

How about the Heartland of America? The very reason they continue to grip America and our Government in such a stranglehold is their constant mantra-like recital of "gotta keep the evildoers, the terrorists away from our borders."

What utter hogwash! According to the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, since 1968 across the entire planet terrorists have been responsible for the deaths of 35,593 persons, while injuring less than 88,300.

So, the Bush Fascists are responsible for causing the deaths of human beings at a rate of 78,000 per year, to save us from a threat that might kill 930 people per year — worldwide. And they are maiming 165,833 people annually to prevent a possible 2,323 serious injuries per annum.

Gee, I can kind of see where that makes sense. Don't you?

Then there's the Iraqi civil war that the RoveBush Regime insists does not exist. Why, then, have European news services been reporting it for six months?

And now American reporters have finally begun to inquire about the possibility of a civil war. Is that the reason, despite continual denials by Rumsfeld, various generals, et al, the U.S. Forces in Iraq deemed it necessary to launch the most massive all-out air strike in months just today (March 16, 2006)?

Instead of simply being diligent and cautious, and reacting like a true leader, at a normal level of cost to the taxpayer, fiscally off-the-wall King George XLIII has burned up hundreds of billions of dollars in his insatiable quest to lighten gravity's load. I guess there just weren't enough inmates on death rows in Texas prisons.

These kill-crazy warmongers and their Big Business cronies have absolutely no intention of stopping this madness. Why should any of them care who dies, or how many — ain't none o'them their kids or relatives. And anyone who actually believes they want anything to do with "democracy" or a "republic" needs to put that bottle of Old No. 7 down and start thinking with a clearer head than Bush and most Republican "leaders."

While I'm on the subject of leaders, you Congressional and Senatorial Democrats really fried my chicken legs too long. I can't believe you left Russ Feingold swinging out there in the breeze like a pennant atop Wrigley Field during a prevailing Canadian Northeast wind!

Do something about King George XLIII, already! What does the schmuck have to do, commit murder on live television before you move against him?

Sure, censure is not impeachment, but look what the GOP did to Bill Clinton just for being lonely. There isn't a person with access to a communications satellite or the Internet who doesn't know that George W. Bush has no business sitting in the Oval Office — why aren't you doing something about it?

I can't disagree with Feingold's asser-

tion that Democrats "run and hide" rather than face up to this White House. The complete non-response was appalling, and after Monday's performance I am ashamed to be a registered Democrat.

What's going to change if you do nothing?

And, with the exception of Lou Dobbs, you putzes in the mainstream media are letting the Fascist takeover succeed.

Where is Edward R. Murrow now that we need him?

Another thing I recently noticed along I-55 is just one more sign of how much we've lost in this great Nation. I was passing a car with Pennsylvania registration, and what we read on the plate disgusted my son, Pete, and me. I'm certain it has William Penn whirling in his grave, as well.

Our country's earliest history, yea, its very independence, can be traced back to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. However, here in the 21st Century, in the era of the RoveBush Fascist Regime, does the license plate of that Commonwealth proudly portray the Liberty Bell, or shine with the red, white and blue? Is there any indication whatsoever of its heritage as the Seat of Liberty?

Not at all. Their new plate is made up of some drab, non-descript color combination, and simply says Pennsylvania across the top with the official website at the bottom. How utterly depressing.

Lest there be any more finality to the death knell of our beloved Liberty Bell?

Well, here in Illinois, despite all those Neo-cons (the gay president) and neo-Nazis (the bum that emancipated the slaves) who would demonize his memory, we are still damned proud of Abraham Lincoln! He's on each and every vehicle, don'cha know.

Okay, let it all go to hell. I'm sure nobody has any children or grandchildren they care about.

Like I asked one of my two best friends, Ken, when he was defending the never-ending war scenario: What are you going to be saying in six or seven years and your then 18-year-old son is part of the mandatory conscription?

You don't really think Herr Ubermeister Karl Rove has any plans of ever leaving the West Wing, do you? Why else would Rove, Cheney and Rummy have all purchased multi-million dollar homes in or near the D.C. area?

We got ourselves in unison and brought some of the good Karma back to the U.S.A. when Nixon left, but lost it again midway during the Reagan years. Let's work together and bring it on home to stay.

The first step, it has been 1,928 days since the Rehnquist Supreme Court illegally allowed this illegitimate takeover of our Government by the RoveBushCheney Fascists. If we don't impeach the entire cabal now, we may never get rid of them.

(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)

Christmas Day Shootout In A Small Texas Town

Two enterprising thieves returned to the scene of their crime on March 14, 1876, but a Winchester volley put them permanently out of business before they could load a couple of butchered beeves.

Like most Texas counties after the Civil War, Bastrop was crawling with desperadoes of every description. The rolling prairie around McDade due east of Austin was especially thick with thieves, who pillaged the countryside with impunity.

Since there was not enough law to take into their own hands, the upright element became a law unto themselves. The vigilantes served notice on the criminal class in January 1875 by decorating a tree with a pair of their cohorts.

The rustlers retaliated by bushwhacking an old man that had dared to testify against them in court. For the rest of the year, war raged on the range as both sides periodically picked off members of the opposition.

The four Olive brothers swore to shoot on sight any stranger caught coveting their cattle. Finding two freshly skinned carcasses, they patiently waited for the culprits to come back for their prizes. After gunning down Turk Turner and James Crow, the Olives wrapped the dead rustlers in the hides and left them on the prairie as a grisly warning.

Led by Crow's son, a frequent visitor to the state penitentiary, a band of bad men swooped down on the Olive ranch on the night of Aug. 1, 1876. Wounding two of the brothers and several hired hands, they looted the place before burning it to the ground.

"Crime is holding high carnival in this state," a law-abiding resident complained to THE GALVESTON NEWS in early 1877. "Here in Bastrop County, under the very shadow of the capitol, there have been ten persons killed in the last few months. There have been more men killed in Texas in the last year than she lost during the late war."

To save themselves a long ride in the sweltering summer heat, the vigilantes came up with an ingenious plan to reduce their most-wanted list by four. Betting their prey could not pass up a party, they persuaded a popular fiddler to hold a dance.

The shindig was in full swing, when the host suddenly stopped the music. As he read off the names of the partygoers whose presence was requested outside, hooded figures blocked the exits.

Borrowing a fan from his partner, one of the doomed men joked about spending a hot night in jail. But a buddy, who failed to see the humor of their predicament, brooded, "You won't need no fan where we're going."

Resigned to their fate, the quartet offered no resistance. The masked mob marched them at gunpoint to a giant oak and hanged all four from a single sturdy branch.

The mass lynching convinced most bandits to move on, and Bastrop County basked in the glow of the first peace in a generation. Although their ropes and revolvers gathered dust, the nightriders stood ready at a moment's notice to dispense their rough brand of justice.

The shocking slaying of a deputy sheriff brought the plainclothes posse out of retirement in December 1883. Two hundred angry citizens assembled at McDade's one and only church and drew up a new hit list.

The revived vigilantes struck on Christmas Eve. Eighty stormed the local saloon to seize Thad and Wright McLemore and also took along an inno-

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



cent bystander, who recognized a familiar face behind one of the masks. Moments later the trio was hanged without benefit of mistletoe.

A youth assigned the chore of cutting down the bodies vividly remembered the ghastly spectacle 60 years later. "The sight of them with their twisted faces and

the nooses hanging at different angles about the victims' necks was about the most gruesome thing I have ever witnessed."

The next day, friends and foes of the dead McLemores celebrated Christmas with a blazing gun-battle on the dirt streets of McDade. The three Beatty boys supported by numerous kinsmen shot it out with half of the town.

Realizing his brothers were done for, Heywood Beatty turned and walked away. Spun around by a shotgun blast, he fire a few more rounds before resuming his agonizing journey.

Bullet after bullet slammed into Beatty knocking him to his knees or flat on his face. The shooting stopped each time he

went down only to started up again, when he staggered to his feet.

No one gave the order to cease firing. Partly out of respect for a man who refused to die and partly from stunned disbelief, the marksmen lowered their weapons.

Bleeding from 17 separate wounds, Heywood Beatty walked the five miles to the family farm and collapsed in his mother's arms. He eventually recovered and lived to see the Second World War, which must have seemed relatively tame compared to his Christmas Day ordeal.

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

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 improve their education and learning sustenance. In essence, we need to teach our children how to become productive members of our soci-



Commentary

By Peter Stern

ety. Instead, we have placed this urgent priority on some back-burner.

Lastly, during the past seven years or so 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-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: <psstern@austin.rr.com>.

5th Annual Levi Baur Memorial 3-D Archery Benefit April 8 In Crawford

CRAWFORD — The 5th Annual Levi Baur Memorial 3-D Archery Shoot is set for Saturday, April 8, in Crawford's Tonkawa Park and in downtown Crawford. All proceeds will go to the Levi Baur Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Crawford School.

The previous events have gone so well that the Baur family has given a scholarship each year in Levi's name and their hopes are to continue doing so for many years to come," said a spokesman for the event.

The 3-D archery shoot will be held in the park, and the barbecue and auction will take place at the Amslers Building, located in downtown Crawford on Hwy. 317.

The non competitive 3-D Archery events start with registration beginning

at 9 a.m., and events will end in the park at 3:30 p.m. Tickets for the archery event will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. During the archery event there will be concessions, a balloon release, children's play and activity area, and other fun for the entire family.

The doors will open for the barbecue dinner in Crawford's Amsler Building at 5:30 p.m. and the auctions will begin shortly after everyone is served. There will also be a drawing for several raffle items, including a Polaris four-wheeler, a Spa @ Canyon Oaks spa package, an 18-carat white gold 3/4-carat diamond necklace, and a Weatherby Vanguard rifle. Raffle tickets can be purchased from Keith's Ace Hardware in Hewitt, Lone Star Music in Waco, Security Bank in Crawford, The Crawford General

Store, or from any committee member.

"The Baur family and those who worked on the previous four years events are tremendously grateful for the generosity of the many individuals, archery clubs, and businesses that gave time, donations, and moral support, making the Levi Baur Memorial Archery Benefit such an overwhelming success," said the spokesman. "We feel that through this event, Levi is still touching the hearts of many children and adults by bringing them together to experience what he loved so much — family, friends, archery, and the great outdoors."

For more information about the event; or to volunteer, sponsor, or to donate auction items, contact Sandra Baur at (254) 749-9557 or Jim and Kim Hilton at 486-2291.

Navigating Through Heavy Traffic Means Being In The Right Hemisphere

It's a well-known fact that men and women think differently. This is because of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. While women tend to rely on the more creative, right hemisphere of the brain, which is responsible for verbal skills and abstract thoughts, men favor the more technical left side of the brain, which is mainly reserved for thoughts of sports and beer.

This is why a man can deduce Anna Kournikova's exact measurements during a tennis match and, based on her perceived weight, determine exactly how many beers it would take before she would be intoxicated enough to make brief eye contact with him at a singles bar.

The difference between how men and women think has never been more evident than it was last week, during our



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

family road trip to California. From the start, my wife insisted on being the navigator, even though, technically, navigation is a left-brain activity. I brought this to her attention, and, using her superior right-brain communication skills, my wife explained that, technically, I have the di-

rectional sense of a wind sock and would therefore remain behind the wheel and away from the Road Atlas at all times.

Admittedly, my wife was right about this point. When it comes to finding my way on the open road (or even on roads closed to thru traffic) nothing short of a full escort by compass-wielding Boy Scouts can keep me from getting lost. Several years ago while under hypnosis, I discovered that I was a Canada Goose in another life — a life that was tragically cut short after flying north my very first winter.

Because of this revelation, I didn't argue about the driving arrangements.

At least not until we got to San Francisco.

You see, it was at that point that my left-brain processing skills discovered an interesting mathematical equation that goes as follows:

The time that is required for my wife to chart a course through heavy traffic is directly proportional to the number of lanes I have to cross in order to reach the appropriate exit.

Example:

Positioned in the far left lane within eight lanes of heavy traffic, it takes my wife approximately six minutes to deduce that we should've taken the exit we passed five minutes ago.

That's because, in most cases, my wife is too busy shoving her feet through the floorboards and repeating the Rosary to worry about reading a stupid map that, in her words, "Was probably drawn-up by some left-brained, beer-swilling, sex-crazed male with NO SENSE OF DIRECTION ANYWAY!"

Even though this announcement was made at the peak of rush hour traffic in the heart of San Francisco, it still illustrates the difference between how men and women think; In that same instant, MY thoughts were focused solely on traffic flow, and how, based on speed fluctuations and random lane changes, we could eventually catch up to the car whose driver I thought looked suspiciously like Anna Kournikova.

In spite of these differences, we did find common ground once we left the interstate and went on foot into downtown. That's because, as man and wife, our bond of love and respect won't allow us to admit when both of us are completely lost.

But hey, if nothing else, at least we were in the right hemisphere.

Then again, maybe it was the left.

(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.)

Romance On The Web

Years ago, people found dates and prospective mates at school, at work, through friends, or just by running into them by accident. That was back in the years B.C., Before Computers. Now, computer dating sites are extremely popular. But even if they work, are they preferable to meeting people the old fashioned way?

Eharmony.com claims that 30,000 couples have gotten married as a result of meeting on their site. (Of course, there are millions of people who have gotten married without going on a dating site). There are many online dating services, some catering specifically to people of a certain religion or ethnic background. For some online services, you have to answer hundreds of questions. Some of the dating services claim to be "scientific." Reducing love to science has been repudiated in many romantic comedy movies involving a scientist who falls in love in spite of him- or herself. But I guess some people just haven't been paying attention. Chemistry.com was started by Helen Fisher who is something called a bioanthropologist. She seems to believe that love can be boiled down to brain chemistry. The first question on her site has to do with whether your second or your fourth finger is longer. According to Ms. Fisher, if your fourth finger is longer, this means that you were awash with testosterone while your mother was pregnant with you. But it's not clear if that means your life partner should be someone with a similar ring finger longy or with a pointer longy.

Assuming that both people are telling the truth about themselves, it's fairly easy for a computer to match people with similar interests. But do similarities attract or do opposites attract? The answer, obviously, is that it varies from couple to couple. We all know happy couples who have nothing in common and we all know couples who share all kinds of interests. So how does a dating computer handle that reality?

One of the goals of these services seems to be speed. The assumption is that busy professionals don't have the time to go out on a bunch of dates with losers. Let the computer weed out the Mr. and Ms. Wrongs, and you just go out with the ones you're more likely to hit it off with.

I have a feeling there are many people who, if their friends call to ask them out for the evening, they'd reply, "I can't. I'm going to be up all night filling out my online dating questionnaire." Wouldn't all those hours they spend checking boxes and typing out their favorite foods be better spent outside of the house where they might actually meet someone in person?

Besides, I'm not so sure if the goal



Modern Times
By
**Lloyd
Garver**

should be somebody you hit it off with right away. While there are many stories of love at first sight, there are at least as many about people who hated each other at first. Once again, we only need to look to most romantic comedies for collaboration. After a disastrous meeting, the couple gets to know each other, and then they realize they're in love. You must know people that this has happened to.

I wouldn't be married to my wife of 35 years if I had given up after the first time she told me she wanted to be "just friends." But I badgered her and wore her down. That was part of the courtship process. How does badgering fit in with digital dating today? Is it becoming a lost art? Is there a "Come on. You'll like me once you really get to know me" box to check?

Now there's a new on-line service to help daters. It's called Don'tDateHimGirl.com. It's a site that lists men who are known to have cheated on their girlfriends. If a woman has a bad experience with a cheater, she can register his name and photograph with the website, and, presumably, other women won't get hurt as she did. Yikes! Shouldn't we hear the cheater's side of the story before he's blasted all over cyberspace? And if this service is needed, shouldn't there also be a Don'tDateHerGuys.com to help protect men from cheating women?

Reputable E-dating services warn that a person has to be patient, has to have realistic expectations, and has to use his or her instincts. Isn't that the same advice you'd give someone using more old-fashioned dating methods? If they're going to do all that, why do they need a computer dating service? But of course, that's just my opinion. I'm no expert. I'm just a guy who's been married a long time, has seen lots of movies, and whose second finger is slightly longer than his fourth.

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

A Dangerous Line In The Sand

BY GINA PARKER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Political commentators are always arguing about what is the proper role of government. Ronald Reagan stated, "Government's first duty is to protect the people." If the Gipper were alive, he would be alarmed that our government is failing in its duty to protect "We the People."

Today there are violent skirmishes occurring along our southern border. These battles are a sign of the new war that faces our state and our nation. The 2000-mile border between Mexico and U.S. southern states is as porous as a screen door. The clamor about guest worker programs and amnesty detracts from the more serious threats to our country's security — escalating violence and covert terrorists spilling across the Rio Grande.

In January 2006, drug smugglers crossed into Texas. Men in Mexican military uniforms armed with 50-caliber machine guns escorted these thugs. Local sheriffs, border agents, and state troopers were in an armed standoff with foreign invaders on U.S. soil. Thankfully, no shots were fired, and the enemy retreated across the river.

Last April, R.D. Ayers witnessed an invasion of his friend's ranch that was a scene straight out of Apocalypse Now. Approximately, 11 miles north of the Arizona-Mexico border, Mr. Ayers watched an unmarked Huey helicopter descend and land. Soldiers streamed out of the chopper, wearing helmets, masks and body armor, and brandishing military-style rifles. Mr. Ayers could clearly see a patch on their sleeves that said "Mexico." After holding Mr. Ayers at gunpoint, the leader ordered his men to return to the helicopter, and they flew toward the border. Authorities speculate that the invaders were looking for vehicles to use for smuggling drugs.

GUEST COMMENTARY

The most dangerous threat posed by our open borders is the potential of terrorists who could sneak into Texas or Arizona with ease, carrying weapons of mass destruction. No one would know of this "immigration" until there was a mushroom cloud over Houston or a nerve gas attack in Dallas.

Texas law enforcement agencies have detected camps south of the border where "narco-terrorists" are trained in combat techniques and evasion. The FBI has warned sheriffs in southern Texas that Islamic men with possible al-Qaida connections are training in these camps, adopting Hispanic names, and crossing the border. Intelligence reports indicate that al-Qaida member Adnan Shukrijumah met with alien smugglers in Honduras and Mexico in 2004. Shukrijumah was making plans to bring more terrorists into the U.S. Last year, Mahmoud Kourani was convicted in Michigan of aiding Hezbollah. Kourani was in Michigan after sneaking across the Mexican border in 2001.

We face a serious threat to the lives of our citizens. It is time for political double-speak to end and for action to be taken to protect our borders. Anything less is a dereliction of the duty of government to provide basic protection to its citizens.

Gina Parker is the CEO of a dental manufacturing company, and is also an attorney. She serves as a Gov. Rick Perry appointee to the Texas Commission on Licensing and Regulation, is on the American Family Radio Advisory Board, and was both the former Republican Party of Texas Treasurer and Associate General Counsel. Parker was a former candidate for Chairman of the Republican Party.



Gina Parker

Intelligent Design No Excuse for Faulty Product

By W. E. GUTMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Unable to shore up the absurd claims of creation "science" with empirical evidence, anti-Darwinists raring to inject creationism into America's science curriculum have devised a new slogan: Intelligent Design."

Intelligent Design (ID) is the untested assertion that the universe, the living things that populate it and the ceaseless upheavals they endure are the result of an all-knowing, albeit paranormal, cause or agent, not a freehand process such as natural selection (evolution).

Most ID advocates publicly state that they are searching for evidence of sentient intent in nature, without regard to who or what the designer might be. In private, however, all unambiguously assert that the designer is the Christian God. [Note the accent on Christian. Forget the Yahweh the Jews invented nearly 6,000 years before the Christian Era and the Judeo-Christian deity the Muslims adopted and renamed "Allah" in the 8th century C.E.]

Taken to its incongruous extreme, ID could one day be called on to explain that things fall not because gravity acts upon them, but because a higher intelligence consciously and deliberately pushes them down. Planes crash, they will argue, and buildings collapse and empires rise and topple because these events are pre-ordained by some inscrutable force. The more vicious among them will insist that these misfortunes are in fact the result of wrathful retribution. A large array of phenomena are already similarly blamed on ID — from war and hunger and disease to earthquakes, cyclones and tsunamis — damned by the laws of science or mankind's unholy predilections.

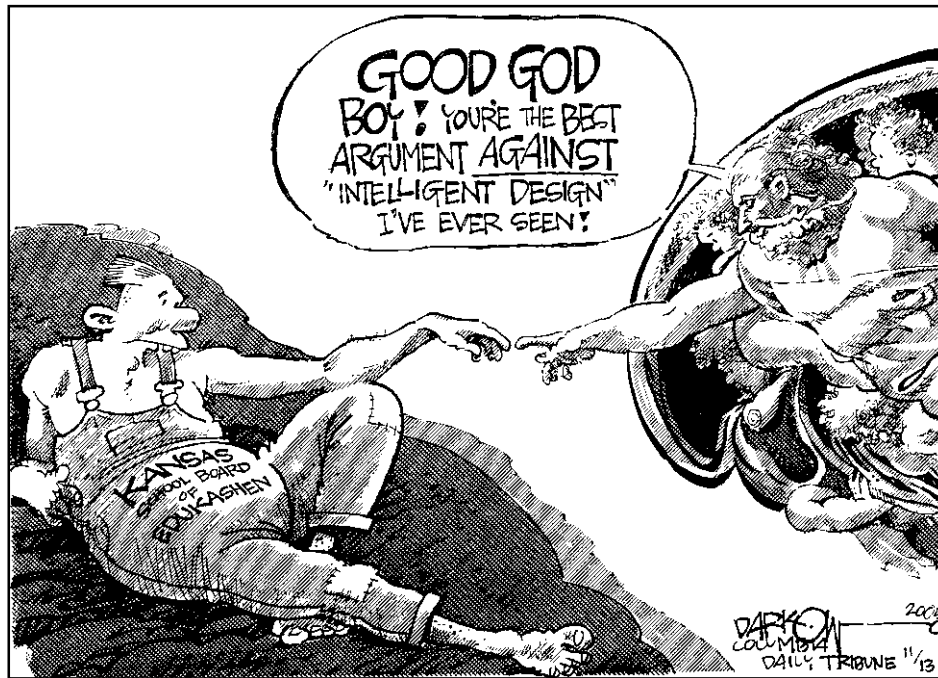
Intelligence is defined as "mental acuteness," "the skilled use of reason and application of knowledge" and "the ability to think abstractly" (including the capacity to envision the consequences of one's actions).

Thus, ID presupposes two reciprocal attributes: The existence of a gifted (if unknowable) draftsman and an exceptional blueprint from which a useful and efficient prototype can be rendered. Such inquiry-stifling premise unavoidably raises questions that, so far, ID has been unable to answer:

* What is smart about a creature that kills for pleasure and insists on procreating itself into extinction? What mental acuteness is displayed by corruptible beings who cling to rival and inflexible doctrines? What common sense is at play among mortals addicted to greed and violence? Why are we susceptible to pain and defenseless against the fury of disasters that ID insists are wrought against us "for mysterious reasons" by some capricious supernatural force? What knowledge is skillfully harnessed by entities powerless or brutishly unwilling to learn from their mistakes?

* Conversely, what measure of intelligence can be ascribed to a "maker" who inflicts or tolerates atrocities for "the good that comes from them"? What cunning and irreducible absolute orchestrates without apparent aim — or turns a blind eye to — the paroxysms that convulse his realm?

* What abstract reasoning inspires a creator to remain unmoved by sorrow and calamity and the ceaseless suffering of his own progeny? What justifies such dispassion? What superior wisdom endows itself with ostensible kindness and unkindness and allows itself to be per-



ceived as possessing equal amounts of benevolence and evil, munificence and heartlessness, genius and folly, as circumstances dictate?

* What intelligent designer arms himself with an ego, gives himself a name by which others will know him in silent awe while their sobs are never heard as they weep and suffer and die forgotten because pain, by some outlandish verdict, is the pathway to salvation? What su-

preme entity is this, whose ear is inattentive and whose breast is unfaithful to the throngs who call on him and seek his succor?

* What Alpha and Omega unleashes scourges that enfeeble, jeopardize and often destroy the masterwork?

* What cruel despot decrees that his subjects will speak words not their own, that they will blindly obey the injunctions of his self-anointed envoys, tremble at

GUEST COMMENTARY

their admonitions, mouth off supplications and jeremiads and recite words of indebtedness and veneration, all repeated ad nauseam, day after day, to a God who never shows his face, never bares his heart, never sheds a tear, never says he's sorry, a God who grants life and, with it, the fear of death?

But God upon whom we turn for comfort, whose indulgence we seek for our offenses and whose wrath we invoke against our enemies, turns a stone visage to human misery and a deaf ear to our most heart-rending cries.

Until irrevocable proof of "Intelligent Design" is put forth, the concept will more likely be viewed as a clever stratagem cooked up by a new generation of Elmer Gantrys who hijack and exploit hopelessly bewildered spirits and subvert them with falsehoods that only blind belief can ever legitimize. ID is not just an alternate theory explaining the advent of God's most defective creation. It is a dangerous eccentricity concocted to exact faith by psychological extortion.

As for me, I am never more certain of my origins than when I look into the soulful eyes of a great ape. I find comfort and a sense of innocence — long since lost — in this genesis. It is when I look at myself and examine my fellow Homo sapiens that I worry about the future of the human race. This is one faulty product that can never be recalled.

W.E. Gutman is a veteran journalist on assignment in Central America since 1991. He lives in southern California. Born in Paris, educated in Europe, Israel, and the U.S., he is a widely published journalist with a multifaceted, globetrotting career spanning 30+ years. His Central American beat is politics, the military, human rights, and other socio-economic themes.

The former managing editor of Aerospace America and the cofounder and editor of NBC Defense International, a publication covering tactical and strategic Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare activities worldwide, he was also U.S. editor of SCIENCE IN THE USSR, the official trilingual magazine of the Moscow-based Soviet Academy of Sciences.

He was appointed a Press Attaché at Israel's Consulate General in New York and served in that capacity from April 1993 to August 1994. He resigned to return to traditional journalism and relocated to Costa Rica.

He was most recently employed as an editor, staff writer and columnist for the Antelope Valley Press, the award-winning daily covering the "high desert" region of Los Angeles County. He resigned in December 2002 to pursue independent journalistic and literary projects.

He is the former international editor and science consultant to the now defunct OMNI magazine

The editor of EVIL MONEY, a book on international narcotics trafficking released in 1992 by Harper Collins, he is also the author of a book-length work of fiction, NOCTURNES. An anthological work of nonfiction, JOURNEY TO XIBALBA: The Subversion of Human Rights in Central America, was published in early 2000. His autobiography, THE ESTUARY: Long Journey to the Open Sea (ISBN 1-59453-473-X) was published in August 2004.

EIGHT BELOW



A scientific expedition to the Antarctic made of Jerry Shepard (Paul Walker), his best friend, Cooper (Jason Biggs) and an American geologist (Bruce Greenwood) are forced to abandon the base camp when they are beset with a serious accident and a fast approaching storm. Unfortunately they can't take their team of dogs with them. The dogs are left to fend for themselves in the intense frozen wilderness for over six months until the team can mount a rescue mission to save them.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I live just east of Cranfills Gap in Texas. I am writing to voice my opposition to the National Animal Identification System and Texas HB1361. I just learned of this a few days ago. I waited a few days to write to you because I was so enraged it would have been impossible for me to keep a civil tone. I believe that if this passes, in any form, it would be one of the greatest violations of our freedom in recent memory. Forgive me if I ramble, but this is wrong in so many ways that it is difficult to focus.

First, the most obvious abridgement is our right to privacy. I do not think it is any of the government's business that I raise livestock. The thought of premise registrations smacks of something that happened behind the Iron Curtain. Worse than that thought is the proposed R.F. Identification tags that are the ultimate goal of the NAIS. What is next? Placing R.F. Identification tags in every citizen so their actions can be tracked to reduce crime.

Secondly, I believe that this proposal is yet another mechanism by which big business can squeeze out small business. My wife and I have worked hard and sacrificed a lot to get our piece of the "American Dream." For us that dream is 45 acres of rocky, rugged land that is not good for anything but raising livestock. We try to raise enough meat for our family's needs and sometimes we sell a few head of livestock. We are not interested in securing overseas export business. I cannot help but notice that the "big boys" will be able to register groups of livestock while small farmers like myself will be expected to register every individual animal. If this is not another example of big business writing law, then I do not know what is!

Finally, this proposal ignores the fact that while Mad Cow disease is a relatively small problem, that small problem is almost solely caused by big producers. Big producers that feed cows-cow in feed lots. Why not introduce legislation to ban some of the abhorrent feeding practices of the big producers. Such as Bone Meal!!! Our animals are grass fed with very little grain. No, I am not some green freak. My wife and I both grew up in Central Texas. We have been around agriculture and the small farmer our whole lives. This legislation threatens not only our way of life but countless others also.

In summary, this legislation is yet another attempt at eroding the freedom that made the U.S.A. and Texas what they are today. Ignoring the financial consequences, which the proponents of this bill will say are small — citing the low registration fees (which will most certainly increase); this legislation is wrong in principle. Just because technology makes something possible does not make it right. I wish that you could see what is in my heart. Words are poor conveyors of my emotions when I feel that my liberty is being taken away from me. For the first time, I know what our forefathers must have felt during the Boston Tea Party and the fight for the Alamo. I have never felt my right to self determination so threatened. I believe so strongly in this that I will exercise my right under the Second Amendment. I beg you to stand and fight with the courage of our forefathers, and defeat this bill.

All Texans should hold their freedoms more dear, after all two wars of independence were fought for them.

Thank you for your consideration,
John Hamby, Cranfills Gap, Texas

Dear Editor:

At the direction of the Texas Legislature, the Texas Animal Health Commission is trying to implement a Texas Animal Identification System, the first step of which is mandating premises registration with global positioning satellite (GPS) identification of all farms and ranches and requiring bi-annual fees.

This is only the first step. The next step is individual animal identification via radio-frequency identification chips and required reporting within 24 hours of every animal's movement off the farm for any reason (a trip to the vet, to a show, to auction, or to private sale) to a central recording database. The current position is that such central recording organization be privatized, ostensibly to avoid loopholes in Freedom of Information Act requirements. However, a private database will also permit bureaucrats and elected officials to deny responsibility when producers' private data is leaked, hacked, or otherwise compromised.

This program is NOT about animal health or food safety. It is CORPORATE WELFARE for big producers who wish to export to Japan, the European Union, and other countries by assuring them that the USA has "disease-free" livestock, poultry, and fish. By requiring all producers to participate in this sham program, big exporters will be able to shift the cost of "proving" their animals' good health onto small producers and the American taxpayer, the latter through the creation of new bureaucracies at state and federal levels. Producers wishing to export should be allowed to set up their own testing facilities at their own expense and prove to their buyers that their products are safe.

Organic growers will be especially negatively impacted through increased costs. Amish and other religious groups will be unable to comply, since using modern electronic tools are not permitted by their religions. For goat producers, specific markets will be lost; some ethnic group buyers require goats that are "unblemished" by even so much as an eartag. The use of electronic implants will effectively kill off that market.

The USA has the safest, most abundant, and cheapest supply of food in the world. We do not have serious or imminently-serious animal health or food safety problems. Policies currently in place catch the occasional problem — Newcastle's Disease in chickens, BSE in cattle — and take the affected animals out of the food supply. Further, the diseases being focused upon are not zoonotic — they are not transmissible to humans but they DO have economic impacts upon producers. Illnesses like Avian Flu are carried by wild birds which are impossible to control and are not addressed by TAIS/NAIS.

Animal health issues are more likely to appear in crowded and dirty conditions that are more likely to be found in feedlots, slaughterhouses, and restaurants than on farms and ranches of individual livestock producers. The usage of animal by-products in animal feed has been banned in the USA, making the likelihood

of BSE-like diseases even more less likely to appear. Taxpayer funds would be better spent instituting improved inspections procedures at slaughter houses, restaurants, and especially at points of entry where livestock enter the USA from other countries.

Please see Dr. Mary-Louise Zaroni's letter to the USDA. She can be contacted at mlz@slc.com or googled and easily found.

The current TAIS is a one-size-fits-all program. The same RFID chips would be used in all animals, whether they are cattle, horses, goats, or smaller animals, making the costs proportionately higher for producers of smaller species. Flocks (turkeys, chickens) would be permitted to use flock numbers. In a flock of 100 or 1000 chickens, who could possibly identify individual birds if they were replaced? The distinct likelihood that wild animals and birds will carry disease isn't even addressed. NAIS is not well thought out and has loopholes that are rife for abuse.

TAIS is an invasion of privacy and violation of private property rights. As a goat producer, I will be told at every step what I must do with my animals in order to sell them. TAIS is the agricultural equivalent of the US Supreme Court's Kelo decision that virtually abolished private property rights.

TAIS does nothing to address the

safety of imported food that Texans eat. The real threat to food safety is imported meat, fruits, and vegetables grown in foreign countries under conditions unknown to and uninspected by American officials. These products are allowed into the USA without a blink of the regulatory eye.

TAIS will unnecessarily increase the cost of food to consumers because producers cannot absorb \$15.00 (materials and labor) or more per animal without increasing prices for their products.

The proposed system simply will not work. It assumes that any health problem occurs at the animal's original point of origin. What about contamination and sickness that may well have occurred somewhere along the animal's route to eventual consumption? There will be no way to accurately determine origination of illness or contamination.

The people pushing this program are the large livestock and poultry producers and the companies that make the RFID chips.

The Texas Animal Health Commission has had its budget cut by the Texas Legislature and has been told that it can make up lost funds by charging premises identification fees.

The current voluntary programs in place for identifying health issues in cattle, goats, and other livestock are working. Recent identification of

Continued On Next Page

Industry of Fools

Johnny Rotten is a wolf without fangs.

Yeah, the only talent he and his band, The Sex Pistols, seem to possess is the ability to insult the establishment, whether it be directed at their record company or the Queen of England.

Heck, just about anyone can grab a pen and paper and do essentially the same thing through the mail—

And nowadays, with the Internet and email, there's even less excuse to offend people who would rather torch their own churches than allow Pistol-clones to perform anywhere near them!

So why the hell would any white gloves want the Sex Pistols to join their ranks?

Well, if you're the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, it's because you value anger in dollars, not democracy.

But I say so what if John "Rotten" Lyndon tells the Hall to stick its invitation where the sun don't shine!

It's not like Lyndon criticized the music biz for failing the healthcare needs of musicians retired and/or still in the game.

Ain't it a pity that NFL football players have better success dealing with their big bosses!

And don't tell me heroin isn't a performance-enhancing drug for musicians either...

...okay, well, it really isn't, but before all you Pistols fans tee-pee my house, I've got to ask you:

Why is it when the Sex Pistols sell the rights to their back catalogue to a company like Universal Music Publishing Group, many of you and the press call them "sell outs"...

...but when a newspaper giant like the McClatchy Company offers to buy Knight-Ridder, Inc. for \$4.5 billion, it's just "business as usual"?

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



It's not like the Pistols are going to lay off a couple hundred thousand workers as a part of their deal!

But if you still don't like the idea of a band that released only one or two albums in 30 years putting out action figures of themselves now, then maybe you should reconsider the economic system in which you and the entertainment industry live.

I mean, why can't workers who exert effort and passion get the creamy filling in their donuts, too?

As it stands now, the record industry doesn't allow just any artist to have access to the market—no matter how hard and long they work!

I know this from a personal experience as a consumer. Last week I thought I could buy an album by the Marcus Garvey-inspired hip-hop duo Black Star at two music stores chains in the predominately white area of south Arlington, Texas.

And to think I thought that chain stores have everything I want to hear! Wrong!!!

To play on a Rage Against The Machine lyric: they don't gotta burn records; they just don't gotta sell'em.

So what good is barking at an industry of fools for crumbs when our fury is better spent ensuring we all have tongues to speak?

If true security is having no need for it, then let's leave the market for a more humane economy instead.

That way maybe Mr. Lyndon can get something to smile with for a change!



Continued From Previous Page

Newcastle's Disease in chickens and BSE in cattle have been traced back to imported some illegally imported) animals and, most importantly, have been found and identified quickly.

TAIS is a program to fix something that isn't broken. It is an unnecessary and unacceptable invasion of individual privacy, personal business, and property rights. And it cannot accomplish the goal that is claimed of it. Tell the Texas Animal Health Commission's commissioners and directors that they should not adopt TAIS regulations and tell the Texas Legislature to rescind TAIS when it convenes in January 2007.

Suzanne W. Gasparotto, Lohn, Texas Editor:

Please allow me to put forth this plan for the United States Military to exit Iraq.

American troops on the ground in Iraq will stand down for thirty days. This stand down will allow the Iraqi government, the Iraqi armed forces, and the Iraqi citizens to prove that they are serious in their desire to stand up for unity and peace.

At the end of our stand down and if we see genuine effort toward a unified Iraq in which peace is the prevailing power, we will immediately bring home twenty percent of our troops and hand the Iraqi people a timetable for complete withdrawal.

Let me suggest that this is the simple solution to our complex problem.

Michael Anthony Carnacchi, Sebastopol, Calif.

Good Morning:

I call it "a la carte" ticketing and in December predicted it was coming in 2006 - that some airlines would charge for specific seat assignments on the plane - particularly emergency exit rows.

Today, Northwest Airlines began doing just that - charging \$15 for emergency exit rows as well as some select aisle seats.

Will this work?

With a few adjustments - yes.

However, the emergency exit rows can probably earn them more than \$15 - so I expect to see that amount increased.

Will that be it?

Nope!

As I see it, some airlines will match what Northwest is doing... some will roll out their own formula ... some will keep things as they are.

I believe a \$1 to \$2 charge for sodas and juice is coming but the most controversial issue will be when the first airline announces a charge for checking baggage. I believe it's coming and it's coming in 2006.

Terry Trippler, Airline Expert To The Editor:

Send DU....to Crawford, Texas, Washington, D.C. and Kennebunkport, Maine and see if they like (don't mind) it!? ha, ha-fockers. Rrrrrr.

Rob

To The Editor:

A depleted uranium bombshell ignites upon impact at a temperature of 5,400 degrees Celsius. Not only does it demolish equipment and hiding places, but it burns everyone inside to a crisp. As armor, the material is impenetrable by most steel ballistics.

If you enjoy the macho rush of killing people and destroying property wholesale, D.U. is your bosom buddy.

Imagine the enormous potential of depleted uranium!

Large amounts are available, and it's inexpensive. The five walls and roof of the Pentagon could be sheathed with depleted uranium against another air attack. What about D.U.-plated limousines for President Bush and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld? Could the material be adapted as impregnable body armor for Vice President Cheney's hunting companions?

Not likely.

Unfortunately for the American troops who employed depleted uranium weapons over the past fifteen years, D.U. is perhaps the most lethal time-released agent ever to be unleashed on mankind except for maybe one exception — its kin — the atom bomb.

Iraq and Afghanistan troops are coming home sick and producing children with birth defects. . .

Find everything you need to know about depleted uranium and how it's destroying the U. S. military in "We're Not in Kansas Anymore."

<www.notinkansas.us>

Irving Hall

To The Editor:

So much has gone wrong during the Bush presidency: the three outstanding events—9/11, with its questionable procedural breakdowns, and Katrina; the ample warnings preceding them unheeded and their lagging, inadequate responses, particularly the 9/11 failure to intercept the attacks, even, according to military expert Stan Goff, who taught Military Science and Doctrine at West Point, as the four hijacked planes' flight plan deviations were being tracked by FAA radar, yet there have apparently been no reprimands, according to Canadian media analyst Barry Zwicker (much less, any courts-martial) of air force personnel; and the big one, the costly, demoralizing, profiteering misadventure of the preemptive war in Iraq.

Although various administration members have contributed, often covertly, to its disastrous policies, the unwanted buck belongs squarely on the president's desk.

Are the Bush people so shortsighted that they can't predict the onslaught of disclosures of unclassified material (whatever remains, with the pace in classifying increased, so far, by 75% since Bush first took office) that they can no longer prevent, come 2009 and following?

Maybe they're all planning to pack up and leave for a "secret undisclosed location," fortunes in tow, on the morning of 1/21/09; but what of their legacy for posterity? Maybe they'll shrug it off with an "apres moi le deluge," in the words of an infamous predecessor, Louis XV of France. His name has a permanent place in history's archives and name recognition is everything, isn't it?

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport

To The Editor:

ORACLE @ VIRGINIA BEACH: What's in the cards for George W. Bush and neocon boys in the Casa Blanca Band?

The simple answer is: You're over in Iraq George. The marriage of neocon stupidity, American soldier's graves, and the Iraqi Civil War is a failed & doomed polygamy.

The George & Dick Show is canceled and they are dealt out of any future de-

terminate decision making process as regards America's inevitable solution to any further involvement in Iraq's ongoing problematic fate.

In short: There is NO American solution in Iraq; end of story.

Neocon hubris's contra-idealistic adventurism is revealed as a disease pathology. Neither is Dr. Frist the physician for the problem. And John McCain's bucolic parroting of 'Stay the Course & Send More Troops' unfortunately marks John as being sadly fixated on the 'We can still win in Vietnam' syndrome. This symptomology is known as 'projection.' And as follows, it is 'obsessive compulsive' delusional fixation. Too bad because John is a man of essentially a true heart and an otherwise noble nature. But admittedly John has survived utter hell in his past and comes by his delusional fixations understandably. They should not reflect upon his upright character.

However, the same can hardly be said of the neocons. They are simply creatures of slander and carnage without the moral fibre and intestinal fortitude to either admit to mistakes or even attempt to rationally correct same.

PREDICTION OF THE NEAR FUTURE: Catherine Harris R-FLA. Senatorial candidate will spill the beans (circa year 2000/1999 Pres. ballot in FLA) on an up-coming broad and sweeping Federal Investigation called, "Conspiracy to falsify the vote count returns of a Federal Election." A little bird in a black fedora has fingered certain Florida insiders who will be pursuantly granted immunity to testify against Catherine Harris. And the Cat will sing a plea cop dirge that will freeze hearts from the Florida's Governor's mansion on up to the D.C. White House.

AND IN EPILOGUE/EULOGY FOR THE NEOCONS: The calling of every-

thing that opposes bloody neocon bumbling as either 'terrorist' abroad and/or 'unpatriotic' at home is at best Joe McCarthyist, at worst fuhreristic, and at very least plainly ignorant and stupid. And: 'Here's you're sign!'

AND FINALLY: Yes, Iraq does have a solution that will in no way be either neocon or involve neocons from the head of that serpent to its decaying rattles.

AND YES: Truer and better souls and better minds will free America from the Quagmire of Iraq.

AND NO: The totality of America's political will of either political party does NOT start and finish with the failed neocon agenda.

Edgar Dixon, Virginia Beach, VA G'day Leon,

I've just logged your article on DU and discovered your wonderful LS.Icon site.

I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for you article and your site/paper. Please carry on the good work. Humanity's future and indeed life on earth is now at stake here.

I'm from Melbourne, Australia, have been a lifelong activist and teacher.

At the moment I am collecting a DU file for the Australian Greens Party to try and get some action.

Your Government persuaded our Prime Minister 'Little Johnny' Howard to allow firing range access for your planes and navy to practice so that we get contaminated with DU - not Americans.

I guess I've already been contaminated as I was in my father's village north of Verona May-September 2003 ...

I came home fit and healthy but have struggled with a sudden worsening of my arthritis, and have a struggle walking far...

My very best wishes,

Carlo Canteri

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National Animal ID System Continues To Ignite Controversy

By DEBORAH MATHEWS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CLIFTON — Claiming the need to safeguard animal health, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to push toward the implementation of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) despite significant opposition to the use of electronic animal identification. The excessive regulations being examined threaten privacy and the overall existence of the American small farm.

In April 2004, the USDA announced the framework for implementing the NAIS as a tracking system that will be used in all states and that will operate under national standards. When fully operational, the system will be capable of tracing a sick animal or group of animals back to the herd or premises that is the most likely source of infection. It will also be able to trace potentially exposed animals that were moved out from that herd or premises.

Three main components are involved in the NAIS system, one of which is the premises ID program. Those owning livestock of any sort — cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, deer, elk, horses, mules, asses, goats, exotic livestock, llamas, alpacas, domestic fowl, poultry, exotic fowl — are currently encouraged to register for their “unique” Premises Identification Number or PIN.

The Premise Identification defines a geographic site, such as ranches, farms, feedlots, livestock markets, slaughter establishments, rendering or carcass collection points, veterinary clinics, livestock show, fair or exhibition sites, quarantine facilities, laboratories, ports of entry, or any other facilities where animals are handled. The premises number is a unique 7-character code, issued by the TAHC or USDA.

The proposed plan does not distinguish between large corporate factory farms and the smallest family producer, hobby farmer, or the “grandmother with a few backyard laying hens.”

The second component is the animal identification device, a tag of sorts with a unique 15-digit electronic number. This device is intended to remain with the animal for its life, and if lost can be replaced. The seven-character premises identification and the 15-digit animal identification device number will correlate only in records.

In the NAIS, some species, such as commercially produced swine or poultry, may be identified by group/lot numbers, provided the animals are held and managed as a group throughout the pre-harvest production process.

The final component of the national plan is the recording and reporting of animal movement, sales, comingling, or slaughters. According to information provided by the TAHC, “when implemented, the system will enable efficient tracing of animals for the disease eradication efforts.”

Following the adoption of House Bill 1361, the Texas Animal Health Commission is authorized to determine when premises identification will be required and to assess and collect fees for premises registration. The proposal now is the required premise registration by July 1, 2006, with the submission of the \$20



Do animals have any privacy rights? Would people be next?

two-year registration fee, payable every 24 months thereafter.

“Although the TAHC commissioners always urge voluntary compliance with agency regulations, the proposals include penalties for noncompliance,” as stated in the “Premises Identification Proposed Regulations of the TAHC.

In response to the “infringement of the fifth amendment rights,” organizations and websites have been established with the sole purpose of preventing the “three Ts — tagging, tracking, and taxing.”

One such group, Stop Animal ID indicates — “StopAnimalID.org is the online manifestation of a grass roots refusal to submit to the latest grasping for control of what was once a government of We The People, but has now become a government of Them, The Agri-Conglomerates. This website is a means for like-minded individuals to band together and discover they are not alone in opposing this abuse of privacy and property rights”

According to information provided by the National Center for Animal Health Programs (NCAHP), “livestock identification in the United States has been documented in large animal production industries dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. Cattle ranchers, to indicate ownership and deter theft, first used hot iron branding. Swine producers for registration and record keeping purposes used ear notches for individual animal identification. These two methods are rapidly losing popularity due to concerns about humane treatment of animals and a decrease in product value.”

tags, back tags, neck chains, tail tags, freeze brands, tattoos, paint marks, and leg bands. Electronic identification methods including bar codes and/or radio frequency identification (RFID) transponders are becoming increasingly useful tools in herd management programs. As these new technologies develop and become compatible with one another, they may prove to be cost-effective tools to increase the efficiency of production. Similarly, regulatory agencies may benefit from these systems through increased accuracy and efficiency of tracing the movement of livestock.”

“The current primary driving forces behind the development of livestock identification systems are based on recognized industry needs. They include disease control and eradication, disease surveillance and monitoring, emergency response to foreign animal diseases, regionalization, global trade, livestock production efficiency, consumer concerns over food safety, and emergency management programs.”

“The Secretary of Agriculture has the statutory authority and responsibility to determine that when “any State, Territory, or the District of Columbia are affected with any contagious, infectious, or communicable disease of livestock or poultry for which, in his opinion, a quarantine should be established” notice will be given and a rule will be issued and included in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Thus, the CFR contains all the rules governing the movement and handling of animals in interstate commerce for the purposes of controlling or eliminating disease in livestock.”

Whether viewed as an unconstitutional infringement of rights, the necessary protection of the national “herd,” the inducement of adherence to existing regulations, a moneymaker, or the detriment of the small family farm, the NAIS system is on track to becoming compulsory. Should the USDA find a way to tax evenly, eliminate human error, and maintain strict information protection, the program could be as effective as the eartag and other popular methods.

Without adequate solutions to those major difficulties, the smaller producers are sure to feel the strain first.

In information provided on the American Heartland website, Kevin Starr comments, “Part of what it is to be an American can be defined by the virtues and successes of the small farmer.”

“APHIS and its predecessor agencies began using ear tags, back tags, tattoos and face brands in the early 1960s. These identification methods were required by statutory regulations and successfully used to trace the movements of diseased animals during disease outbreaks and eradication programs. With this long history of contact with the field, APHIS has led the way in the development of national identification systems. The agency continues to place a high priority on livestock identification and database development.”

“Current methods of livestock identification include but are not limited to ear

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