

\$1.50 Per Copy

CRAWFORD, TEXAS

Vol. 7, No. 15

APRIL 12, 2006

www.lonestaricon.com

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From TEXAS to NEW YORK they came.

IN SUPPORT of the boycott of ExxonMobil Corporation in Waxahachie, Texas, Jimmy Turner, a native of Waxahachie, Texas (left), last Tuesday shakes the hand of Gayle Dunkelberger, an activist from New York, who is with ConsumersforPeace.org during a two-week long anti-war march to Crawford. Interviewee Nick Mottern is pictured in the back (in red shirt).

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Dr. Lowery, Dean Of Civil Rights Movement, To Give Easter Sermon At Camp Casey In Crawford

CRAWFORD — The Reverend Dr. Joseph E. Lowery will deliver the Easter Sunday service at Camp Casey to a diverse group of attendees, including veterans, along with consumer, peace, and civil rights advocates.

Following the Easter morning sunrise worship, Dr. Lowery will officiate at the Third Anniversary Celebration and Prayer Service of the Crawford Peace House on April 16, 2006, at 1 p.m. in the Garden at 9142 East 5th Street, (Highway 185) Crawford.

All are invited.

For more information, visit the web site <www.crawfordpeacehouse.org> or call 254-486-0099.

The anniversary prayer service will close several days of activities featuring Dr. Lowery as the keynote speaker, beginning Thursday of Easter Week in Crawford.

The Rev. Dr. Lowery is co-founder with Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and served as president and chief executive officer from 1977 to January 15, 1998.

Most recently, the Rev. Dr. Lowery gave the eulogy at the memorial service for Coretta Scott King. The Crawford Peace House has recently become a Texas affiliate of the SCLC.

The final leg of the 120 mile, March to Redeem the Soul of America, which began on April 1, at ExxonMobil headquar-

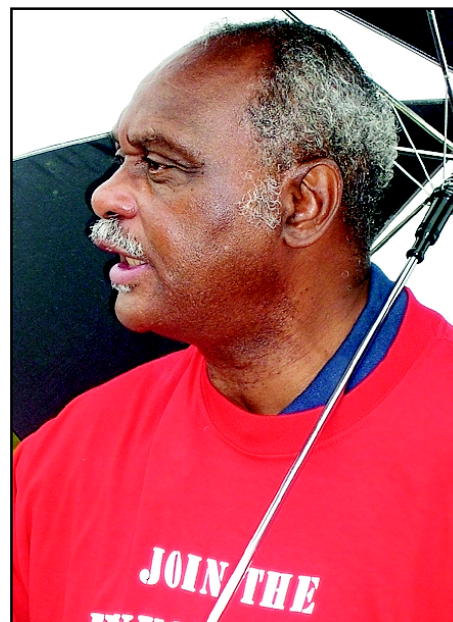


Dr. Joseph E. Lowery

ters in Irving, will conclude on Good Friday with a Stations of the Cross walk beginning at the Crawford Peace House, past the security checkpoint near the Bush Ranch.

The walk finalizes at Camp Casey where peace mom Cindy Sheehan will again pitch her tent at Camp Casey near the vacation retreat of President George W. Bush.

The Rev. Peter Johnson, one of the organizers of the March to Redeem the Soul of America, along with Consumers for Peace, said there is something fundamentally wrong with our nations' soul when rich cities such as Dallas, home to large multinational corporations such as ExxonMobil who registered record prof-



Rev. Peter Johnson

its in 2005, still have people living under bridges.

"Christ told us to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and clothe the naked. That's why we must march. That's why we must go to the Western White House during resurrection week and try to redeem the soul of America," said Johnson.

Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery Biographical Highlights

Chairman, Black Leadership Forum
Co-Founder/President Emeritus, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
Chairman, Georgia Coalition for a Peoples' Agenda

Honorary Doctorate Degrees:
Morehouse College, Alabama State University, Dillard University, Central State University, Miles College, Paine College, Beloit College, Atlanta University, Clark College

Background:

Dr. Lowery is one of the founders of SCLC (1957) and served as vice-president until 1967 when he was nominated by Dr. King to serve as first chairman of the board. In February, 1977 he was named Acting President following Abernathy's resignation to run for Congress and in 1977 was unanimously elected SCLC's third president at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Dr. Lowery has been a major leader for civil and human rights for almost half a century, some of his work includes equity for voting rights, anti-apartheid efforts in South Africa, AIDS/HIV advocacy, and many other notable causes.

During the 1997 NAACP convention as a recipient of the Achievement Award, Kwesi M'Fume remarked, "Lowery is the dean of the civil rights movement," having raised his eloquent voice for a half century calling for justice to roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."

A native of Huntsville, Alabama, Dr. Lowery studied at Alabama A & M, Knoxville College, Payne College and Seminary, Wayne University, and Chicago Ecumenical Institute, he holds BA, BD and DD degrees.

Journey Connects Big Oil To Iraq War

CRAWFORD — A march through oil country to demand accountability from oil companies and corporate warmongers began at ExxonMobil headquarters in Irving and ends near President Bush's ranch.

The final leg of the 120-mile March to Redeem the Soul of America, which began on April 1 at ExxonMobil headquarters in Irving, will conclude on Good Friday with a Stations of the Cross walk in Crawford from the Crawford Peace House, past the security checkpoint near the Bush Ranch.

The walk concludes at Camp Casey where "peace mom" Cindy Sheehan will again pitch her tent at Camp Casey near the vacation retreat of President George W. Bush.

The Stations of the Cross is a meditative ritual marking the journey of Jesus through Jerusalem on his way to his crucifixion, and a solemn part of the Easter week for Christians.

The Rev. Peter Johnson, who is among those who helped Consumers for Peace (<consumersforpeace.org>) organize the march, said there is something "fundamentally wrong with our nation's soul" when rich cities such as Dallas, home to large multinational corporations such as ExxonMobil that registered record profits in 2005, still have people living under bridges.

For more information visit the web sites <www.marchtoredeem.org> and <www.crawfordpeacehouse.org> or call 254-486-0099.



Dr. Joseph E. Lowery received a standing ovation during his address at the funeral of Coretta Scott King recently.



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 569, 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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Fighter for Truth, Justice, and the American Way.

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Interview With Nick Mottern



Marchers Boycott Local ExxonMobil Stations

March To Crawford Under Way

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

WAXAHACHIE — Nick Mottern put them on the spot.

Dropping in on an ExxonMobil gas station in the Gingerbread City — better known as Waxahachie, Texas, he asked the two cashiers inside if they were aware the gas company was being boycotted nationally.

Both women just shrugged their shoulders, “No.”

Being the coordinator for ConsumersforPeace.org, however, Mottern came well-prepared, distributing his “Democracy Dollars” flyers and explaining the boycott that he helped organize.

“We’re just making people aware that there’s a connection between oil and the war, and by having on the back different companies that are connected to ExxonMobil and their board of directors, we’re doing a boycott that affect nine other major companies,” Mottern told the cashiers. “We give these (flyers) to people so they can have them in their wallet and know what’s being boycotted.”

While looking at the little green flyer, the blonde cashier asked, “Campbell’s Soup?”

“Yeah, there’s somebody on the board of Campbell’s and ExxonMobil,” replied

Mottern.

“Gerber Baby Food? SpaghettiOs?” asked the young woman before Mottern explained his intention to protest ExxonMobil on the sidewalk outside the station with Gayle Dunkelberger, an activist from New York.

Soon after, the employees notified the manager of the station of the demonstration taking place nearby. The manager who identified himself by his last name “Mola” told the *ICONOCLAST* that the station belonged to H&H Oil which is a Vectren Company. Mola admitted that he was unaware of the national boycott and was also “really not good about politics” when asked his opinion of the boycott being held so close to his place of business.

“I don’t know what to say. It sounds good,” said Mola, a seven-year resident of Waxahachie who has been running the store for four years.

Just then, a person driving by the scene in his car yelled out his window to the demonstrators, “Get a life.”

“I don’t know,” said Mola, appearing to second-guess himself. “I may need to call the company and see what’s going on, see what they think about that.”

The protest was not without supporters honking their car horns or walking up to them. Jimmy Turner, a native of

BOYCOTT ON THE SPOT — Gayle Dunkelberger, an activist from New York, and Nick Mottern, the coordinator for ConsumersforPeace.org (from left), hold a banner in protest of the ExxonMobil Corporation at an Exxon gas station in Waxahachie last Tuesday. The protest was one of many along the way to Crawford on “The March to Redeem America’s Soul” organized by a variety of social activist organizations.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Waxahachie, said he stopped there because “it looks like ya’ll are at least trying to do something to make a change, and that’s all we’re trying to do to.” To make his change, Turner sells a new gasoline additive originally from Europe that he says increases mileage per gallon and reduces emissions.

Turner explained that he would be against the war in Iraq even if it had been officially declared by Congress in the first place. “There was no declaration,” he said. “We send people down there and pay them huge sums of money every year to represent us; then they don’t do it.”

When asked about the treatment of Iraqis under the U.S.-led coalition forces, Turner said, “Well, it’s wrong. We don’t want any more business to be in their backyard than they have to be in our backyard. They haven’t done anything to us, and the people in this country have done nothing to them, and if those people are being led to believe that the people are waging this atrocity upon them represent us in any shape form or fashion, they’ve been horribly deceived, have they not? Because the people in this country don’t want to wage war against those

people.”

Turner’s solution to the war is to send the politicians and their families to Iraq “and bring our boys home and see how they do,” he said, adding that he doesn’t have a problem with declaring war, but the representatives in Congress should reduce their own salaries to that of the highest ranking officer to save money.

“I mean, if it’s that important for us to declare war and if it’s legitimate, then they won’t mind sacrificing like they ask us to, right?” said Turner. “It’s just really sad that these people, they want us to vote for them, they want us to respect them and then they turn around the literally sell our nation right from under us.”

Moments later, a police officer from the City of Waxahachie politely informed the demonstrators — the number of which tripled in size since the manager left — of its right to protest but not their right to impede the right-of-way on the sidewalk. Should the group become involved in a fight, said the officer, one of them should call the police. The protesters motioned that they understood, and the

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officer departed.

Actions such as this one in Waxahachie are performed frequently on "The March To Redeem America's Soul," a two-week anti-war march from Dallas to Crawford themed after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous marches for civil rights during the 1960s.

For the remainder of the Waxahachie protest last Tuesday, the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST's Nathan Diebenow took Mottern aside to discuss the motivations behind the boycott, the organization of the peace movement, and the challenges to the "gun-point business" model.

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ICONOCLAST: How did you end up getting involved with the ExxonMobil boycott?

NICK MOTTERN: Back in June or July, I was just trying to think about things people can do everyday to take opposition to the war because the demonstrations and rallies — I mean, it's very hard for people to keep going to these all the time. So I got the idea that maybe we could boycott ExxonMobil because it seemed it was very involved with it in some kind of back way.

I talked it over with some other people in New York, and they thought it was a good idea, and so we began to gather information about ExxonMobil and the war, and it appears that Lee Raymond — who was the president until the end of the year at ExxonMobil — had a good relationship with (Vice President) Dick Cheney. And he met with Cheney right after he got elected the first time — I guess less than 10 days after the inauguration. We don't know what they talked about but it's also true that Cheney formed this energy task force. Shortly after that, it may have been that was already in the works.

The energy task force proceedings have been secret, and there was revealed that part of the papers they were gathering had to do with Iraqi oil fields and who was due to do business in various fields. There were a lot of European countries doing business with Saddam Hussein, so we think that ExxonMobil and other energy company people met with the energy task force over a period of months really. It seems as though there was a connection to the whole geopolitical thing that the people involved with this were very well aware of.

Then in December, right before the war, Raymond became the vice-chairperson of American Enterprise Institute. The AEI I think could be said was the immanent creator of a Middle East policy that would see Iraq as being some kind of military platform or base for the United States that could be then used to subdue or influence the rest of the Middle East. So we thought it was very curious that he took this role on right before the invasion, and since then, of course, AEI has been very forward about pushing the Bush policies. There have been AEI people formulating the policy. Even after Raymond stepped down as chairman and CEO of ExxonMobil, he still remains as vice chair of that AEI board which is really a direct pipeline into the White House.

Now additionally I talked with some-

body who was working for Colin Powell at the time in the intelligence section of the State Department. I asked him, "While you were working on your plans for Iraq, was oil a part of that?" He said it wasn't specifically, but everyone had it in the back of their mind that this was the second largest reserve known in the world. I said, "If ExxonMobil had been involved to influence what was going on, wouldn't they have come to you?" He said, "No, they would have gone through to the vice-president's office." So I think it was known within the bureaucracy that Cheney was and is the channel for energy company involvement with policy.

So we don't have papers from Lee Raymond that say to Cheney, you know, "This is what I want," but Raymond's interest in this policy and his associations with Cheney, and the materials that have come out about this energy task force I think are pretty persuasive in terms of ExxonMobil involvement.

We also have in Venezuela a situation where ExxonMobil is the only major oil company to not want to come to terms with the Venezuelan government over royalties and taxes. And every time it seems that there's disagreement there's an attack from the United States on (Venezuelan President Hugo) Chavez, saying that he is crazy, that he is a communist, or that he is a friend of (Cuban President Fidel) Castro. As we've been out on this march, we've found people that say, "We don't like Chavez." They don't even know who he is! But they just say, "We don't like him."

So I think it's pretty clear that ExxonMobil and the U.S. government are very close.

The other part of it is that we wrote a certified letters to every firm, including ExxonMobil, that we are boycotting, telling them we intended to undertake this boycott asking if they take a position against the war. We got all the firms except Verizon, I think — we got the signature card back from the post office saying ExxonMobil got our mail and we also know these companies got our mail because Novartis which is one of the ones we're boycotting sent us a letter back saying they appreciated our concern about the war and understand that we may want a change in government but they didn't feel they could ask the person on their board who sits on Exxon's board to take a position that would affect his fiduciary responsibility to ExxonMobil stockholders.

It was very interesting that Novartis is based in Switzerland and that they forwarded our letter to their office in New York City. They took it seriously enough to give us a response, and we wrote back and said, "Can we discuss this?" And they wrote back and said, "No, we don't feel any further discussion would be beneficial."

We haven't heard from any U.S. companies. And we certainly haven't heard from ExxonMobil.

The other thing that is interesting is that we asked ExxonMobil to give back the \$7 billion that's war profits and I haven't seen their response — I haven't the article written by the Associated



CONSUMERSFORPEACE.ORG, coordinated by Nick Mottern (pictured), boycotted outside an ExxonMobil gas station in Waxahachie, Texas, last Tuesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Press, but my understanding is that what they contested us on — they have given to charity, so why should they give up this \$7 billion for veterans or for relief to people in communities where they have facilities that cause problems. They never once said, "We're against the war." They haven't ever once said, "We don't support the government in this." They've never once said, "They are neutral in this." And that of course is the central theme that we've raised.

To jump back, you know, we've learned more since we started in July but we learned enough in July to go forward with the boycott.

Then we tried out these "Democracy Dollars." We made a couple of thousand that we passed out in shopping centers and in front of Radisson Hotel and TGI Fridays because they are connected through Carlson Company to ExxonMobil. We've found very favorable responses. We explained the connections between the war and ExxonMobil, so we felt we'd perfect this website so we can put out as much information as we can. By the end of December we launched the website and we had I think pretty good traffic on it. I thought maybe if we could work out having some kind of march in Texas to connect the war and ExxonMobil and Big Oil, it would be helpful. I talked to people and Texas — you know, the Dallas Peace Center — and they were very eager to do it. Also people down in Austin — Karen Hadden and Dick Underhill, so we've been working on putting this together two months.

It's been very heartening to see how many people in Texas are not liking this war. It's just like whoa! Like yesterday in front of ExxonMobil in Red Oak, we were getting so many favorable comments, waves and all that. It's less so here in Waxahachie, which is interesting, but I think everybody is very pleased with the way it has come forward.

ICONOCLAST: So how did you get started — your own personal distaste of the situation in Iraq connected to ExxonMobil? When did that happen for you?

MOTTERN: Well, I think the Iraq invasion was illegal and bogus. You know, when Colin Powell went to the U.N., hundreds of thousands of people knew it was a bunch of baloney and so there wasn't any justification for this, and everybody believed that oil had to be a part of this,

and the government denies it up and down so much, so often, that it seems to me that it's actually rock solid proof that's what they're up to. There are other reasons for it in the sense they want a military platform; they want that kind of influence in the world over there, but it's still fundamentally about oil. If you take oil out of the equation, would we go there? I don't think so.

So I guess it became clear that at some point after this had gone on that we just really just needed to get at this oil thing in some kind of real way. Actually, it's interesting that I'm reading this book "American Theocracy" that Kevin Phillips just came out. He spent the first third of the book talking about the connections between the oil and the Iraq war. You know what? When someone like that comes out and says it, I guess we might have been on the right track here.

I think it started right off. You saw "No Oil For War" signs and all that, but I think it was in a way the peace movement.

It was hard to believe how cynical and how headless of life that kind of assault would be just to get oil. But I think the reasons for this have been dropping all over the place. I come down to two reasons for Bush to stay there.

Number one, I think that the oil people want to see if there is one slim little chance that this thing could work out to get some oil out of there.

Number two, I think he's afraid that if he gets out of there, people are going to turn against him and not only impeach him but quite possibly prosecute him the same way they went to prosecute Pinochet. I think people will start saying, "How could you have done this to us?" I think right now, a lot of people down here are thinking that everything he's been saying hasn't been working out that way.

And the illegal part of it is something that nobody really wants to address, but I think they will because this is just like anything. If you start breaking the law, things can start to go really badly for you. The laws are set up for certain reasons and one of them is that people's rights are not just totally destroyed. When you start doing that, you can open up a whole a horrible tornado for yourself and I think that's what he has done. If he had observed international law and the U.S. Constitution, we wouldn't find ourselves in this situation right now, but law is not

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something they feel is applicable to them.

ICONOCLAST: Well, they can ignore it and claim to have Constitutional rights. The Bush administration has written more statements than any of the past presidents that say he doesn't have to follow laws that make him disclose information about the FBI's activities under the Patriot Act to the Congress, for example.

MOTTERN: That's absolutely right. And I think that it's obvious that he watched so damn many Westerns or movies on vigilante justice or whoever knows what that he might actually believe that he can do this. I mean, it's maybe that he believes he is living in some kind of delusional world where he thinks he can get away with this. Little by little, more and more people are waking up to "this is not working" and "this is wrong." And "we don't want to suffer from this kind of lawlessness"

If he'll do that to the prisoners on death row in Texas and the kind of crazy judicial laxity that has brought so many death row sentences, now people find that he can do that in Iraq, do that here, and I think more and more people will see that nobody is safe from this. I hope that that feeling becomes prevalent so he doesn't start coming out here locking people up because he doesn't like what they say.

I hope it will cause the Congress to stop him from killing people. But I think Cheney is deep into this, and when I say, "Bush," I don't think he's the genius behind this. I think Cheney has a very, very strong commitment to these oil companies. And really he's given them all kinds of subsidies in this energy bill and this drilling in the Gulf. It's like a \$7 billion subsidy to them. They can charge anything they want at the pump. There's all kinds of price fixing. They are just totally out of control.

ICONOCLAST: I wanted to ask you about the connection to the peace movement. Former U.N. arms inspector Scott Ritter came out with a piece recently about how the peace movement has to think like the warrior class to try to subvert them. He didn't come out and say it, but I've heard it said before that if you want to change the military, go ahead and join it. He didn't say that, but I would say that the next thought would be to join the military and change it from within. But his point was for the peace movement to come together and just focus on the anti-war message and nothing else, not justice, not environmentalism, not sexism, not racism. It would seem to me that if you do strictly focus on the anti-war movement and drop all the other issues connected with it, you would lose so much possible entry ways for support. What do you think?

MOTTERN: I think you could take it two different ways. One is that it would be good, for instance, for the Expose Exxon Campaign which is an environmental campaign to join in with the anti-war movement, and we did invite them to come to ExxonMobil headquarters first, and the organizer there told me that initially she was enthusiastic. She said it would be great if we could bring the anti-war movement and the environmental

movement together.

Then as things progressed, I asked her if they would be coming and she said that she discussed this with the people in the coalition and they felt they didn't wish to be a part of this because they had millions of members and they felt a significant number of their collective membership were pro-war. And so that's why they didn't appear here. That's to me a real problem.

However, there are people like migrant workers, and women who are facing this abortion ban, who have desperate personal needs that they have to take care of in the street and everybody needs to be supportive of that, but to tell women who are faced with this kind of punitive abortion situation and these migrants who are going to be locked up at any moment that they have to be for the anti-war movement exclusive of their own interests, I think is not right because they are facing life or death circumstances personally.

I think if you have an argument that is compelling and people want to join in with it then they'll do it. You can't say to people what you must or should do. They'll do what is necessary for them. I think it's up to the anti-war movement to carry forward in an imaginative way, while constantly trying to find those things not only that will capture people's imagination but have some kind of power. I will say, too, that the anti-war movement and democratic politics in general has been making fun of Bush and Cheney and I think that tends to take away the energy from the seriousness of the circumstances. I think there is a place for humor. It's interesting. I read a book called "Defying Hitler," and one of the problems at the very beginning of his time was that a lot of intellectual people seriously thought he was an incompetent buffoon, and so there were jokes about him and this and that, but it was a serious business which they found out about later on.

I think a lot of people prefer not to take action. If you prefer not to put yourself on the line, you can find refuge in joking. I think that still continues to be a real problem in terms of mobilizing folks, saying we have to be out in the street, and we can't settle this thing at the ballot box. That's not really appropriate to our needs. There's a whole range of political levers, but I feel that we are in a situation where being out in the street is really the lever we have to be addressing right now. I think a lot of liberal folks aren't really prepared to recognize that. They think it's a threat, but if people are getting killed everyday, and our worst threat is that a policeman us asking us why we're on the corner, then we really have to just get it right. The comparative risk is pretty huge. The policeman is not going to shoot us in this country right now for doing these things. But if we don't do these things right now, we might find ourselves in a position for being shot for it.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think that we should just get rid of our dependence on oil right now? Do you think that would be the solution to terrorism on us and



PEACE DANCERS — Before leading a peace dance in Carl's Corner, Texas, Michael Poehls, Sydney Strahan, Sonya-Sophia Illig, and Bonnie Lambourn (from left) last Thursday night sang a song they wrote while travelling to the event that gathered about 25 activists on their way to Crawford for "The March to Redeem America's Soul." Houstonians Poehls, Strahan, and Lambourn are members of Extatic Dance Houston. Austinite Illig is a member of Body Choir Austin.

—Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

terrorism we perform on others? Do you think there has to be more perspective with the way we consume oil and other general resources?

MOTTERN: I think there are two aspects to it.

The first one is we the United States, the people here — the people haven't been aware of this, I think — we've been able to get oil relatively cheaply from the Saudis and others across the world almost at gunpoint. There have been times when at gunpoint we have taken oil, when we saw to the killing of (Iran's prime minister Dr. Mohammed) Mossadegh in Iran so that the Shah could come in and take over the oil and sell it to us at very favorable prices. There have been other instances where we have indeed had blood on our hands, so that we could get this oil cheaply. This is a thing that has been a custom in the business equation and ExxonMobil is now trying to get this oil cheaply out of Venezuela. They are used to the United States coming in and taking care of business and dealing with Chavez, and it's not really working out the way they want it. That's been part of the normal business equation. What it has meant is that oil has been valued so cheaply that the whole pressure for alternatives and looking for ways to grow food organically because agriculture uses a tremendous amount of energy in trucking, fertilizer, and farm machinery has caused dislocation of people. There are people from Mexico and Central America who used to be farmers and who are displaced by industrial farming. They are coming up here. People don't like it.

That kind of gunpoint business is reality. We're backing up these oil companies and if we have to do it with weapons, we will. Part of the business equation is starting to fail, and ExxonMobil is huge, but it is in a very vulnerable situation because it has to get access to reserves in huge quantities. I mean, they pump four million barrels a day, and if they don't find reserves that constantly keep replenishing that, that company is in trouble because they have this huge technological investment and so Iraq looks good to them. I mean, if they've got one of these southern oil fields, they can double their reserves, so they would be good to go for — I don't know — another

50 years.

That kind of thing is beginning to fade as part of the business equation, but I don't think we should get out of the oil business. If we let go of that gun-point business — like a lot of oil companies have — you know what? These people realize now what their oil is worth. We have to deal with them in a different fashion where we start paying what they feel it's worth. The good news about that is less oil is going to be pumped. It means these oil supplies are going to last longer. They're going to give us more time to get ourselves shifted around, so that, you know, we can go more to organic farming and small scale farming, so that we can have more bus systems, so that the suburbs can somehow reorganize with transportation other ways, so that we don't get hit with \$5-\$6 a gallon of gasoline because that could happen right now. If Nigeria, Venezuela, Iran — all those things blow up — and with Iraq the way it is, we could be up to \$5 a gallon of gas real fast, especially if these oil companies are given free run the way they are right now. It's not as though we are home free, but if the government says, "You're going to have to agree with Venezuela, ExxonMobil, and you're going to have to come to terms with them in the next 20 years, so that we have some predictability," it may cut your profit and your stockholders might be squirming, but that's the only way we're going to get through this. We cannot go down and kill these people and grab the oil.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think the oil companies are going to stop acting this way through an internal process whereby they change their charters because the way corporations are bound by law — if I'm wrong, please explain how I am — to rack in these profits?

MOTTERN: I don't know if they are legally bound to get maximum profits but what they are probably bound to do for their shareholders is to get a reasonable return on their investment and not have the company go out of business and go bankrupt. I think ExxonMobil has a hell of a long way to go between bankruptcy and what they are doing right now. If they can come to terms and get access to reserves that they need for the next 20

Continued On Next Page

Massive Bombing Campaign Planned Against Iran, Says New Yorker Magazine

NEW YORK — According to an article in the April 17 edition of *THE NEW YORKER*, the Bush administration is planning a massive bombing campaign against Iran, including use of bunker-buster nuclear bombs to destroy a key Iranian suspected nuclear weapons facility.

The White House, according to the report, is viewing Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as a potential Adolf Hitler, and to change the power structure in Iran, war is required.

THE NEW YORKER report says that the military planning is being devised on the belief that “a sustained bombing campaign in Iran will humiliate the religious leadership and lead the public to rise up and overthrow the government.”

According to the report, a former senior intelligence official noted that attention given to the nuclear option has created serious misgivings inside the military, with some officers considering resignation after the attempt to remove the nuclear option from the plans failed.

“There are very strong sentiments within the military against brandishing nuclear weapons against other coun-

Zinni: Rumsfeld Should Quit

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Former Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni, who headed the U.S. Central Command from 1997 to 2000, has called for the dismissal of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld because of critical mistakes made in the Iraq war.

On “Meet the Press,” Zinni said, “There’s a series of disastrous mistakes. We just heard the Secretary of State say these were tactical mistakes. These were not tactical mistakes. These were strategic mistakes, mistakes of policies made back here. Don’t blame the troops. They’ve been magnificent. If anything saves us, it will be them.”

tries,” said the adviser, according to *THE NEW YORKER*. The Pentagon adviser warned that bombing Iran could provoke

“a chain reaction” of attacks on American facilities and citizens throughout the world.



Continued
From Previous Page

more reasonable prices and lock things down that way, the shareholders are going to be happy their Exxon stock isn't going to be looking like GM stock because if they keep going the way they are, they risk that.

ICONOCLAST: Have you spoken with any shareholders about this boycott?

MOTTERN: I used to be a shareholder, and I couldn't take the ethical problems around the environment, getting into the Greenpeace business, getting them into intimidation and misinformation and all that. So I got rid of it. My father left me a good bit of it, and I just couldn't take it. I think my experience and what little I've observed the stock market is that if you have a company that is transgressing in a really unethical way, you may not end up with too much money out of it because things can go back real fast, and I think that's the situation they're in. I don't think they are being responsible to their shareholders to try to strong-arm these other countries or get the U.S. government to do it.

ICONOCLAST: It ends up hurting them in the end.

MOTTERN: Absolutely. And if they get kicked out of Venezuela in a strong way and other countries decide, “We don't want to do business with you because of your human rights record or because —” you know, the Nigerian government is in a tough spot right now because they have some ExxonMobil facilities, but they're got some real problems with folks in those areas taking up arms to protect themselves from what the oil companies are doing, so the Nigerian's central government had to go to China for arms because the U.S. government embargoed them over human rights violations. But the U.S. is going to, I'm sure, try to get involved with Nigeria to protect these corporate interests and it's going to be a

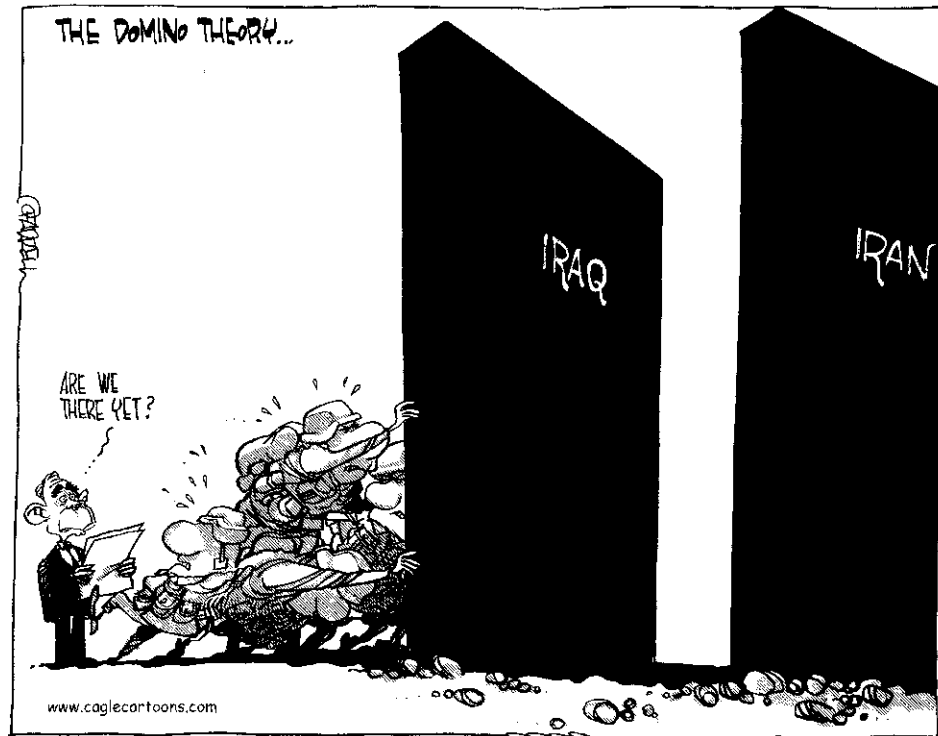
really nasty situation. I don't think any shareholder is going to want to be around what could happen over there because it's going to get very bloody in a very direct way. I think right now the central government in Nigeria is trying to figure out how to handle it.

But all this kind of information you can read in the *FINANCIAL TIMES*, the *INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY*, but especially the *FINANCIAL TIMES*. You won't see that in the paper's general distribution in this country. You won't see it in the *DALLAS MORNING NEWS*. You don't see it probably to some degree in the *HOUSTON CHRONICLE*. All this stuff is very important to us here right now with the gas pump prices, but it's not something the average person knows about. The only reason I know about it is because I over the last six months really had to learn something because of the war. It's not that easy to find it out, either.

ICONOCLAST: So people can go to your website <Consumersforpeace.org> to get information.

MOTTERN: Yes, there's a fair amount of information there and we try to keep it up-to-date in terms of — you know, for instance, if an oil platform is seized in Nigeria, we'll put that up in our news section, and we change it every two or three days with things that seem to be really important. I've been working so much on this march that I haven't really had the chance to — I did a few analytical articles, one on Bush, Cheney, Mark Rich, and Scooter Libby, but basically, we'll have more of this kind of analysis as we go along.

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Buckley Says Iraq War A Failure

WASHINGTON, D.C. — William F. Buckley, known as the father of contemporary conservatism in America, said last week that the war in Iraq is now a failure. He added that the George W. Bush presidency will be judged by the outcome of the war.

In comments on Bloomberg Television, Buckley, 80, said, “Mr. Bush is in the hands of a fortune that will be unremitting on the point of Iraq. If he'd invented the Bill of Rights it wouldn't get him out

of his jam.”

Buckley said that the president is to blame for the failed war in Iraq and that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been “a failed executor” of the war.

Buckley, who founded the magazine *National Review* in 1955, said, “The neoconservative hubris, which sort of assigns to America some kind of geo-strategic responsibility for maximizing democracy, overstretches the resources of a free country.”

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THE VIGIL

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

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

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

Immigration Bill Does Not Cross Over Into Law

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Lawmakers adjourned for their two-week hiatus from service without coming to agreement on a controversial immigration bill that has recently prompted protests from

throughout the nation.

Republican Senators were attempting a compromise last Friday that some hoped would result in the 60 needed votes for passage, but they came up

short, with only 38 votes.

Highly debated is whether illegal immigrants — millions of men, women, and children — should be granted amnesty, be fined, be allowed to pursue citizenship,

or be deported.

When Congress reconvenes, its members are expected to resume the battle, which both Republicans and Democrats have blamed on each other for producing a stalemate.

As the November general election nears, legislators have been scrambling to enact laws to enhance border security, while at the same time controlling the number of expatriates entering the country as temporary workers and re-defining immigration.

Several bills, and amendments to them, have been considered, with the House drawing a line in the sand against amnesty.

DeLay To Step Down In June

WASHINGTON — Representative Tom DeLay said last week that he will not seek reelection and leave Congress, a decision that came after telling close colleagues that he thought he faced certain defeat at the polls.



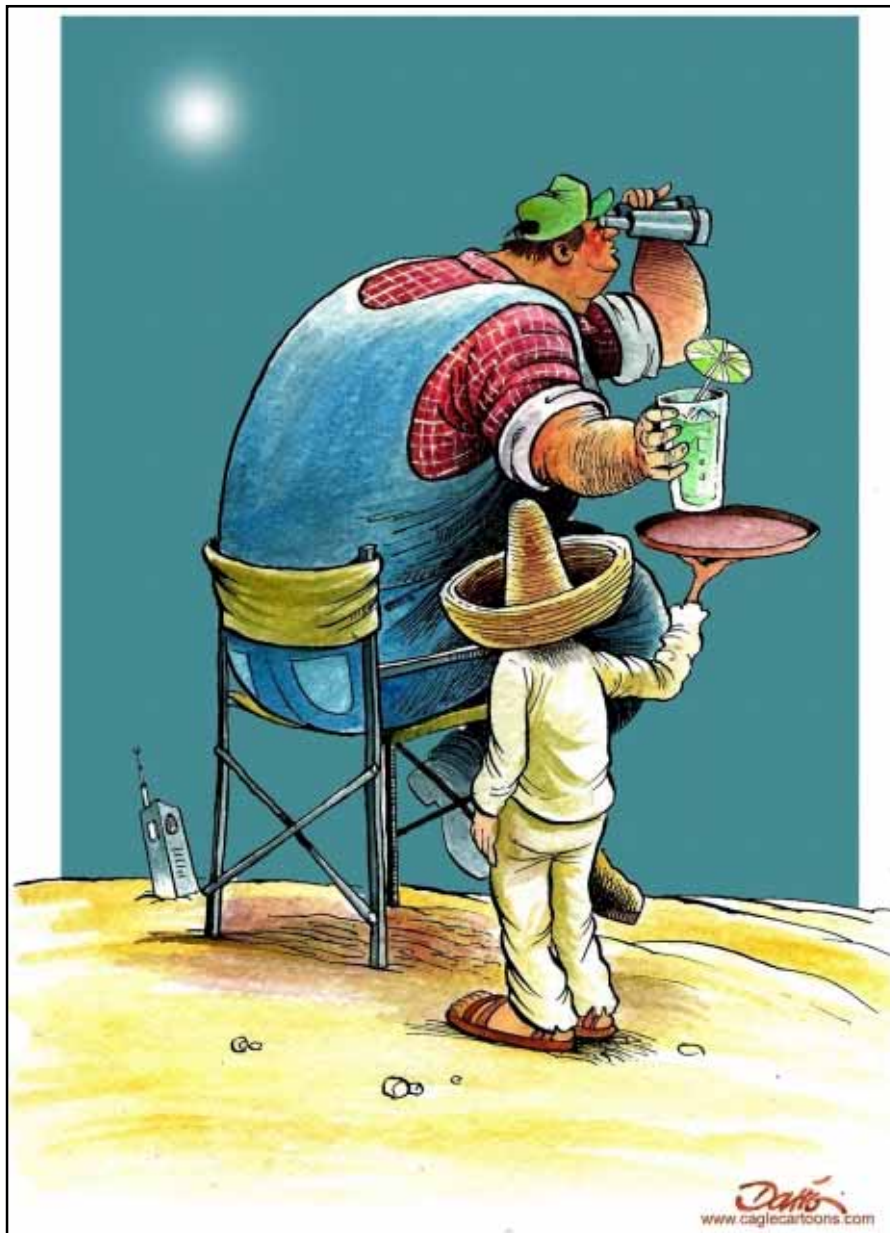
Tom DeLay

In a videotaped statement, the scandal-rocked DeLay said he would still “engage in the important cultural and political battles of our day from outside the arena of the United States House of Representatives.”

A DeLay cohort reportedly stated that the 11th term incumbent ended his political career after his former chief-of-staff pleaded guilty to corruption charges. DeLay stepped down from his seat as the House majority leader this year due to the indictment of his former ally Jack Abramoff, a lobbyist.

DeLay, 58, plans to vacate his seat for the 22nd Congressional District by late May/early June, but he denies that the departure was not tied to his indictment in Texas on campaign-finance related charges.

So far, two GOP candidates — David G. Wallace Jr. of Sugar Land, a real estate developer, and Tom Campbell, a lawyer — have stated they intend to enter the race to replace DeLay for the Republican nomination, which DeLay originally won in the March 7 primary.



New Orleans Vows To Keep Free Wi-Fi Service

NEW ORLEANS — The City of New Orleans’ free wireless Internet network could be curtailed or shut down despite the public utility’s effectiveness in the hurricane ravaged city.

The network — the first of its kind run by a major city — has restored economic activity to the area since it came online last fall, said city officials who are prepared to defy a state law that limits Wi-Fi use to emergencies and disasters.

In other parts of the country, phone and TV companies have opposed legislation allowing government agencies from establishing their own free Internet networks. The current Louisiana legislature is considering bills that would have allowed New Orleans to retain its network at its fastest speed — 512 kbps. Similar bills were struck down last session.

City officials worry that any reduction in the Internet speed would hinder businesses from functioning in the city limits.

The telecommunication companies are not backing down from supporting the state’s Fair Competition Act, a bill that would kill the city’s legal power to run the network once the emergency period ends. Still, for the benefit of its citizens, New Orleans expect the matter to be settled via the courts.

Polls Indicate Bush, Republicans At New Lows

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The latest AP-Ipsos polls reveal that President Bush and the Republican Party are at risk of losing governmental power, as new lows were logged for both.

With just 30 percent of the public approving of the GOP-led Congress’s job performance and the public favoring Democrats over Republicans by a 49-33 percent margin, Republicans are running scared, with mid-term elections just months away.

Democratic leaders are now predicting they will seize at least one chamber of Congress, maybe both, unless the political landscape changes soon.

“These numbers are scary. We’ve lost every advantage we’ve ever had,” GOP pollster Tony Fabrizio said. “The good news is Democrats don’t have much of a plan. The bad news is they may not need one.”

With talk of impeachment and censure of the President growing nationwide, Republicans fear that a tilt in the majority could cause that trigger to be pulled at the government level. With both chambers’ majority currently residing with Republicans, they feel

more secure at being able to protect the chief executive from these measures, as with renewed investigations into 9/11, discrepancies in the the reasons for going to war with Iraq, the CIA leak case, warrantless eavesdropping, and other matters.

According to a survey of 1,003 adults conducted this week for The Associated Press by Ipsos, an international polling firm:

- Just 36 percent of the public approves of Bush’s job performance, his lowest-ever rating in AP-Ipsos polling. By contrast, the president’s job approval rating was 47 percent among likely voters just before Election Day 2004 and a whopping 64 percent among registered voters in October 2002.

- Only 40 percent of the public approves of Bush’s performance on foreign policy and the war on terror, another low-water mark for his presidency.

That’s down 9 points from a year ago. Just before the 2002 election, 64 percent of registered voters backed Bush on terror and foreign policy.

- Just 35 percent of the public approves of Bush’s handling of Iraq, his lowest in AP-Ipsos polling.

The Democrats have seen a significant gain in people’s trust to protect the country, now achieving a 41-percent to 41-percent tie with Republicans. According to the poll, the Democrats have a slight edge on what party would best handle Iraq, a reversal since the 2004 election.

In the House, the Democrats would need to pick up 15 seats to gain control, but because of gerrymandering, such as in Texas, some politicians predict that a switch to Democrats would take a miracle. In the Senate, Democrats would need to pick up six seats.

Currently, 69 percent of Americans believe the nation is headed in the wrong direction - the largest percentage during the Bush presidency and up 13 points from a year ago.

Bush’s approval rating is down 12 points among Republicans since a year ago. Six-in-10 Republicans said they disapproved of the GOP-led Congress.

Anti-War Activists Slam Rice In Britain

BLACKBURN, England — Even as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted during a recent visit to Britain that the United States committed “tactical errors” in the Iraq War, anti-war activists there said they weren’t convinced, calling her a war criminal and human rights violator.

Roughly 50 students cut class in protest of Rice’s visit to their high school. Outside, about 200 protesters chanting “Condoleezza Rice, Go Home!” attended a demonstration. Protests also occurred at the Liverpool Philharmonic when a poet/actress decided not to perform a concert in which Rice attended.

Rice’s visit to a mosque in Blackburn — the country’s third most populous Muslim area — was canceled the day prior due to threats of protests during a daily prayer. Her time was also spent meeting with Muslim leaders, such as the town’s mayor. Rice’s host on the two-day tour was British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw.

Kerry Equates Iraq With Hurricane Katrina Response

Proposes Ultimatum For Iraqi Government

NEW YORK — On Saturday, Sen. John Kerry, who ran against President Bush in the 2004 election, compared the Bush administration to the faltering government in Iraq and said that the war strategy has mirrored the administration's planning for Hurricane Katrina.

In an op-ed piece in the NEW YORK TIMES, Massachusetts Sen. Kerry proposed telling Iraqi leaders to form a unity

government by May 15 or the United States military would withdraw.

According to a TIMES transcript of his remarks, the former Democratic candidate for President, who is considered a potential candidate for 2008, said, "The Bush administration is wondering when Iraq will have a functioning government. I want to know when we're going to have a functioning government."

In response to complaints that neither major party has an agenda for the nation, Kerry reportedly offered a 10-point plan: "Tell the truth. Fire the incompetents. Find Osama bin Laden and secure our ports and our homeland. Bring our troops home from Iraq. Obey the law and protect our civil rights," Mr. Kerry said. The list also included supporting health care, education, lobbying reform, and al-

ternatives to oil, as well as reducing the deficit.

He added, "I will tell you, nowhere in there, nowhere, not in one page, not in one phrase uttered and reported by the Lord Jesus Christ, can you find anything that suggests that there is a virtue in cutting children from Medicaid and taking money from the poor and giving it to the rich."

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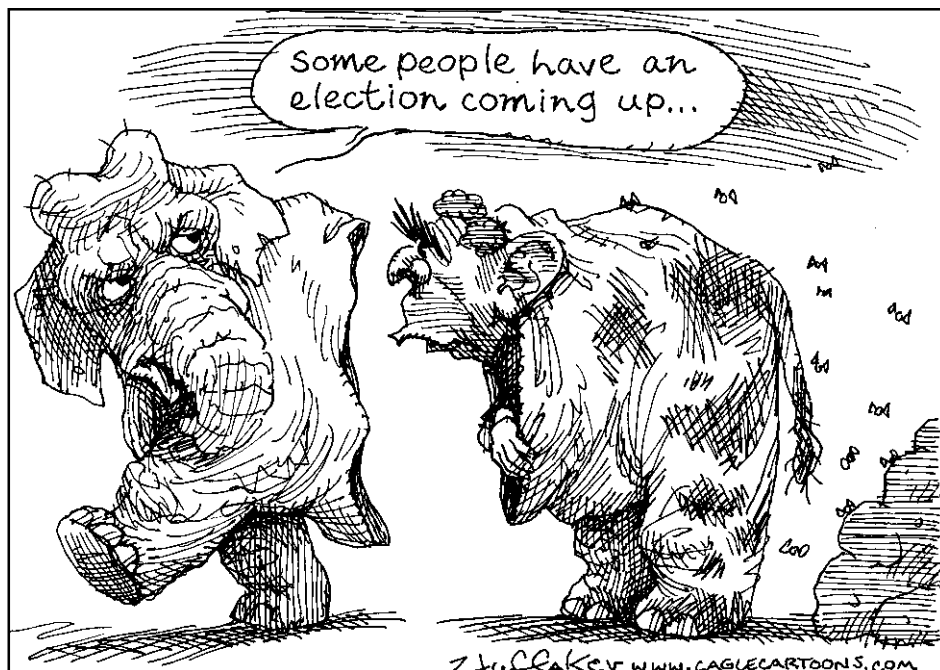
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Bush Okayed CIA Leak: Court Papers

WASHINGTON — The Valerie Plame CIA leak case got a little bit more interesting last week when court papers from the prosecutor revealed that with President Bush's approval, Vice President Dick Cheney told his chief of staff I. Lewis "Scotter" Libby to the leak portions of a classified prewar intelligence report to the press.

The information from the report, the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame, was leaked as a counterattack measure against her husband Joseph Wilson, a former diplomat who criticized the Bush administration's assertion that Iraq was attempting to develop nuclear weapons by obtaining enriched uranium from Niger, Africa.

The White House did not fight the claims of the court papers, but Attorney General Alberto Gonzales did defend the president by stating that Bush has the "inherent authority to decide who should have classified information."

Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald stated in his court papers that "the president was unaware of the role" that Libby "had in fact played in disclosing" Plame's CIA status. Cheney, however, received dissimilar treatment from the prosecutor.

Fitzgerald has charged Libby with five counts of perjury, obstruction and lying to the FBI in the case. Karl Rove, who with Libby the White House was said was not involved in the leak, has not been charged but is still under investigation.

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Vietnam & Iraq: From Quagmire to Quicksand

By PAUL ABRAMS, M.D., J.D.

SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The Bush Administration and some of its critics insist that the Iraq War bears little resemblance to the Vietnam War. Nonetheless, the similarities between Bush's Iraq War and Vietnam are many and granular. The generation that was itself stuck in the quagmire of Vietnam has mired its own children in the quicksand of Iraq.

The contexts were similar. We may not recall today the depth of fear of the "red menace" that pervaded the country in the 1950s/60s. People built bomb shelters. School children ducked under desks in civil defense drills. Television programming was interrupted with testing of an emergency warning system. Civil liberties came under fire as purported "communists" were outed. [Today, substitute terrorism for communism, duct tape for bomb shelters, color-coding for television instructions, destruction of civil liberties for blacklisting, and the differences are small. The communists were described as ruthless, inhumane, unreasonable, and harboring a world view antithetical to democracy and human dignity.]

The pretexts for both wars were false, and the reasons for full-scale war trumped up. The Gulf of Tonkin 'incident' was the pretext for the full-scale invasion of Vietnam. In Iraq we had the pretext of WMD and the Saddam Hussein link to Al-Qaeda. In both cases Congress gave wide swaths of authority to conduct war to the President by lopsided margins. (A critical lesson not learned!)

In both wars we installed regimes of "our" people who had not even been in the country. After walking from the Geneva accords in 1954 because we did not want the likely outcome of the communist Ho Chi Minh winning the national election in 1956, we plucked Ngo Dinh Diem from a Catholic monastery in New Jersey and implanted him in South Vietnam as President. In Iraq we airlifted Chalabi, the scion of a wealthy Iraqi family who had not been to Iraq for 35 years, to lead a popular uprising that never happened.

In Vietnam the ultimate goal was to establish a democracy as a bulwark to Communism. Establishing a democracy in Iraq was supposed to trigger democratic change in other middle eastern countries, reducing the basis for terrorism.

In both wars we accomplished precisely the opposite of what we proclaimed was necessary for our security to prevent. Ho Chi Minh was indeed a communist, but also a nationalist, who fought the French, then the Japanese, the French again, and then the U.S. We ignored the long history of Vietnamese/Chinese enmity, and claimed that there would be a (Red) Chinese domination of Southeast Asia. Indeed, it was our invasion that drove Vietnam into the arms of (Red) China, and, by destabilizing Cambodia by our 'incursions' to fight North Vietnam, we also succeeded in paving the way for the Khmer Rouge and their atrocities, a group that had been fought by Prince Sihanouk for years with (Red) Chinese help. As soon as Vietnam was free of its need to fight the U.S., it began a border war with China.

Similarly, Iraq was an unlikely Al-

GUEST COMMENTARY

Qaeda ally: it was a secular, brutal dictatorship that could not tolerate an uncontrolled power in its midst. In the Gulf War Saddam showed he valued his regime's survival by refraining from using the WMD he *did* have at that time. Instead of reducing the fundamentalist Islamist threat, the Iraq invasion created another font of terrorism where none existed, and raised the status of Islamist fundamentalist terrorism in other parts of world. As with Vietnam, we accomplished precisely the opposite of our supposed intention.

In both wars treatises making the cases for invasion had been developed long before the military actions. For Vietnam it emerged with the publication of the Pentagon Papers. For Iraq it was the Project for a New American Century signed by the radical rightwing group in the Bush Administration (Wolfowitz, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Feith), essentially to free the use of American military power from the 'handcuffs' of the views of allies and obligations to

allied support either—and considerable opposition among our NATO allies.

In both wars generals were called to make public political statements endorsing the strategy, and the Administration attacked the opposition as weak, cowardly, defeatist and unpatriotic. During Vietnam General

Westmoreland endorsed the Administration's military policy, claimed we were making great progress with our strategic hamlets policy, and supported civilian claims that "we have turned the corner and there is light at the end of the tunnel." During Iraq several generals have made the incredible statements that they have enough troops and Vice-President Cheney told us nine months ago that "the insurgency was in its last throes." Other than deposed General Shinseki, no high-ranking military man, it seems, is willing to forego that last star to save the lives and limbs of their troops.

In both wars U.S. complicity with torture severely damaged our international reputation and reduced the chances for ultimate success. During Vietnam it was the tiger

cages and the My Lai Massacre, and, for good measure, the notorious statement that "we had to destroy a village to save it." Although we have not (yet) had the Iraqi My Lai trial, Abu-Ghraib is Iraq's tiger cages. We have nearly destroyed Fallujah, with perhaps other cities to come.

There are also some interesting, but substantively irrelevant, congruencies. A major architect of each war, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara for Vietnam and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz for Iraq, had their failures rewarded by promotion to President of the World Bank. In each war the junior Senator from New York was the prior President's closest advisor, a "carpetbagger," and a major contender for President.

Vietnam had a lot to teach us about what would happen in Iraq, but those lessons were ignored and vehemently denied. Perhaps, just perhaps, we can still learn from the quagmire how to extricate ourselves from the quicksand. The first lesson is to eschew false fears and false hopes. In both

wars the exit strategy was to fashion a Constitution, conduct democratic elections, and train the locals to take over their own security. In Vietnam the latter process (dubbed, "vietnamization") took more than four years, cost tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers' their lives, with many more seriously wounded, plus an untold numbers of non-combatant Vietnamese lives and limbs, and a generation of birth defects from spraying large areas with dangerous plant toxins. The outcome was no different than if we had left several years earlier.

We now face the question we should have addressed before embarking upon this reckless adventure: can we achieve our ultimate goal of a stable, secure, democratic Iraq and then how we extricate ourselves from this quicksand?

If the congruencies between the two wars mean anything, it is that we should be very wary of basing our policy on the assumption that the ultimate outcome for Iraq will be very different whether we remove ourselves now, or another 2,500 lives/12,000 seriously wounded/\$400 billion later. We faced the same claims about emboldening the communists if we withdrew, and the disasters that would befall the free world if we did, as we now hear about emboldening Islamic fundamentalists (i.e., as if they needed emboldening). The burden of proof must be very high to demonstrate that Iraq staying this course in Iraq is worth those risks and sacrifices.

To meet that burden, we must at least demand an immediate formation of a unity government, and a time-limited (say, September) period to resolve critical Constitutional differences over federalism, control over the oil wealth and the application of Sharia law. If either milestone is not met, we should remember the lessons of Vietnam to adopt the Murtha strategy of over-the-horizon redeployment to prevent any more Americans from suffering those fates for which we rightly honor their sacrifice. If those milestones are met, then we can adopt the Murtha strategy because of political progress. Either way, the generation stuck in the Vietnam quagmire needs to extricate its children from the Iraqi quicksand into which George Bush recklessly marched them.

Paul Abrams, who lives in Seattle, Wash., is a consultant in the bio-technology industry.



Dance, Dance, Dance

We went to an old friend's birthday party last weekend. It was a dual celebration with another friend born on the same day 10 years before. The guests were sort of "his, his and ours," friends of either or both, a few of whom we had not had the pleasure of meeting before.

The bash was held at a ranch in a neighboring community, in a large, metal building. There were a LOT of people at the party when we arrived an hour and a half late. Most were friends and acquaintances of the birthday boys from their community, and some were fairly recent imports, having arrived, returned, or retired from one of the larger (or smaller) surrounding cities within the last five years or so.

We ran across four more Ph.D.'s, including two who had also gone to Ol' Miss, like Zach, so they had plenty to talk about. One had attended Tulane for a degree, like me. Several of the men or women at the party were or are CEO's of companies or owners of banks or other businesses. I think there was one dentist, a gallery owner, and a couple in the insurance biz. There was the usual assortment of ranchers, but for once, I believe they might have been outnumbered. The composition of our country neighbors is changing and growing. It was an interesting group. We knew most of them and enjoyed meeting the others.

When the guests who had arrived on time finished eating, wished the birthday boys a happy day and started to clear out, those of us left were perhaps closer friends and a bunch of the ranch hands and their wives. The fact that my old friend always includes his ranch hands at parties tells you a great deal about him. — And it's a darned good thing he did, because with all the formalities and the prim and proper stuff over with, things really began to crank up.

I've worked cattle with several of these gentleman before. I had only spoken to one of the wives. One couple was by far the shining star of the C&W part of the party. Here were some solid,

Rustic Ramblings

By Gene Ellis



Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

country folks, unpretentious, no airs, just good people, nothing fancy, been married for years. Sprinkle a little cornmeal down, put these two on the dance floor, and LOOK OUT! It was WAY better than watching ice dancing at the Olympics. One of the birthday boys and his girlfriend weren't so bad either. The party suddenly became even better. (And it was a shame that the larger crowd left before the dancing began in earnest. They missed a heckuva a good time).

I've worked cattle with the ranch foreman who couldn't dance worth a dang, but we gave it a try anyway. Everyone thought he was three sheets to the wind, but he confided to me it was only a good act he used when things slowed down a bit, said he'd only been trying to shake things up. It worked. — Not sure if I believe him, but he didn't step on my toes once. And I took some good pictures of him in that Mexican straw hat shaking his behind around. One of the host's cousins is dancing-impaired like me, but his wife is good — and the youngest hand didn't dance at all while I was there, but he smiled a lot. Of course, that might have been because he has such a pretty wife.

I was definitely born without the dancing gene, so it won't be easy to learn to dance country. Back in Waco, when we were in high school, none of us would have been caught dead listening to the country western station much less dancing to it. Everything back then was Beatles, the British Invasion, and rock

SCHEDULE:

March to Redeem the Soul of America

April 1 - April 14

The march began on Saturday, April 1, at the ExxonMobil headquarters in Irving and will culminate 120 miles later, on Friday, April 14, in Crawford.

The marchers hope to average seven miles per day, making stops at various locations along the way. Potential marchers are reminded to come prepared to camp and bring whatever supplies they might need.

- Exxon Mobil Headquarters Press Conference — April 1
- Dallas County Jail Press Conference — April 2
- Dallas VA Hospital — April 2
- MLK Memorial Service Straightway Church in Waxahachie — April 4
- Willie Nelson's Biodiesel Truckstop at Carl's Corner — April 6
- Willie Nelson's Biodiesel Truckstop at Carl's Corner - Candle Opera - April 7
- Willie Nelson Biodiesel Truckstop at Carl's Corner - Concert - April 8
- Silent Service Palm Sunday at Carl's Corner — April 9
- Dick Cheney Protest in Waco — April 10
- 3rd Anniversary of Crawford Peace House, Concert — April 15, Camp Casey 2
- Interfaith Easter Service — April 16, Crawford Peace House - Camp Casey 2

and roll. When I returned for my ten-year high school reunion, everyone was suddenly doing the Cotton Eyed Joe! I thought I had flown into an alternate universe. What had happened in my absence? What was this other dimension I had dropped into? Had they all completely lost their minds? I stared in disbelief — and never did learn to do any of that stuff. I returned to New York, and forgot all about this glaring hole in my cultural education. . . . until the next reunion. And, of course, I have been reminded of my astonishing deficiency frequently since my return to Texas.

I finally had my first C&W dancing lesson last summer, administered by my old friend, (one of the birthday boys), next to his pool. I didn't do very well, but I didn't fall into the pool either. One of the women present was trying to teach Zach, and I have to say that at least I did better than he did.

I had my second C&W dance lesson at the birthday party last weekend, and then my third the same night with a different "teacher." (Thank you both for your bravery and patience). It's funny when you observe someone in only one part of his or her life (like working cattle) and then you see the person doing something entirely different, like dancing, and being such an expert at it. One of the couples was incredibly good. They seemed to float.

When you watch two people who've been dancing together for a long time, they anticipate each other's moves, and it begins to resemble well-tuned choreography. Of course, if you want to become expert at this, it helps to have a little rhythm.

I firmly believe that anyone can improve in almost any facet of life, but rhythm is something you're either born with or not. And if you don't have it, you just simply don't have it. Years after I had my first dance recital (at about age 5), my sweet mother (who never said a harsh word about anyone) finally admitted to me that, sadly, I didn't have any rhythm, and it was pretty obvious even then. I'm afraid she was right. Every time I've taken an exercise class, I do OK until they start with the aerobic dance moves. When I'm expected to move both my hands and feet at the same time, I simply lose it. Never an out-and-out quitter, that's often the time I drop out of class due to "other pressing commitments."

So at the birthday party last weekend, I was stiff as a board, but I became a little

better as I had my "lessons." (And that margarita probably helped loosen things up some, too). Zach is even worse than I am when it comes to dancing (forgive me, Z, but it's true and you know it), but he had a lesson from the ranch hand's wife (who moves like a trained dancer) and a couple of the other gals. We managed to dance one or two together (arguing about who got to "lead," because he kept forgetting what to do) without killing each other. I haven't had so much fun in a long, long time. We stayed later than we had planned, way past our bedtimes.

I spoke to my old friend, the birthday boy, today, and he said he finally had to shoo out the last of the dancers about 1:30 a.m., a couple of hours after we had finally left. All involved agreed that this should be a regular event every month or so and we should all get together and do it again soon. It was almost too much fun. It sometimes occurs to us that we have this strangely varied life, with several widely divergent groups of friends. It certainly keeps things interesting.

When my parents and their friends and relatives were this age, they were so ANCIENT. Of course, I was seeing them with young eyes. Everyone knows that young people have very little frame of reference and almost no patience. And boy, are they critical. So it's highly possible that my judgment wasn't the best back then and that my memory plays tricks on me. But it seemed they were decades older at this age than I feel now. Most of them certainly acted older, more sedate and serious. The women even dressed older, as if it would be unseemly to do otherwise. (Of course, there was that one aunt and uncle who got into square dancing. But they were the exception rather than the rule. They seemed to laugh a lot more than the others, too).

Maybe it's something about the Baby Boomers and our determination not to go into "that sweet bye and bye" without a fight. Maybe it's the health consciousness that permeates our generation. Perhaps it has to do with replaceable body parts, new hips and knees, or Viagra. I don't know. What I do believe with all my heart is that it's very important to enjoy one's friends, to laugh and have a good time no matter what one's age, not to be self-conscious about deficiencies or to worry how one might look while trying something new. So please, everyone who is able (unless it's against your religion or moral consciousness or something), please, please, please, do go out and dance!

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To The Editor:
Was anybody else concerned by the editing out of people's voices from the tower tapes of 9-11?

Today, I heard one edited version of a taped call that had been made to a 911 guy, on BBC radio news.

It was a very weird audio — first you heard the emergency worker speaking in response to someone — a conversation clearly took place — but where the other

person's voice should have been, was only silent air.

This isn't just editing; it's censure. Those voices were horrifying, and hearing them changed many of us on 9-11.

Yet the mainstream media, by playing the edited version of the tower tapes, accepted the judge's dictum of censorship. Why wouldn't they play their own versions of those tapes, which they surely must have in their archives?

I recall hearing them in the days after the towers fell...we all heard those emergency calls played on TV, on the local radio stations, quoted in the papers, endlessly.

By stripping the horror out of 9-11 the mainstream media has also stripped the heart out of it. We will lose the truth of our history if we let them get away with censoring those voices.

Donna Knipp

Dear Mr. Smith,

Which thousands of tactical errors...
Listening to inaccurate "intelligence"?
Going to Iraq in the first place?
Sending our sons and daughters off with no or inadequate body armor?

Hummers and jeeps with inadequate armor?
2300+ of our sons and daughters dying?

How many widows/widowers, orphans?

14,000 horribly injured military personnel?

How about the 100,000+ with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome?

The suffering of spouses, family and friends of the dead and injured?

Now, to the number of Iraqi injured and dead, does anyone know the number?

How many Iraqi orphans?
How much human suffering?

The true financial cost?
The damage done to the U.S. globally?

Does the administration care?
Alexis Barlows, Kansas City

Hi Mr. Smith!

While discussing the current hot topic of illegal aliens working in the U.S., a question came up which you could probably answer:

Does the President use day workers on his ranch in Crawford?

One presumes that any such laborers have been closely screened by the Secret Service. Has anyone asked about the works on the farm?

Presumably, the Secret Service does all the necessary brush cutting and probably leave only a small patch for the President to clear while on-camera.

Is the Crawford ranch a working farm? Do they have full time employees to milk the cows or some such thing?

Does the farm actually produce any produce?

If so is it sold as tourist items? A husk of corn from the Presidents farm?

Maybe this inquiry will spark a feature story, or maybe you've already covered that topic.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Yours truly,

Bob Patterson, a contributor for Smirking Chimp web site.

<<http://www.smirkingchimp.com/article.php?sid=25523&mode=nested&order=0>>

Reply: We will try to obtain that information, but they are pretty hush-hush over there. — WLS

To The Editor:

In a recent report for World News Tonight, ABC News' Nancy Weiner showed that the nation's largest tax return

preparers can "actually create more problems with the IRS for their customers."

Her report focused on the lack of training required of most tax return preparers, yet some of the biggest CPA firms in the nation will admit that even they cannot keep up with the constantly morphing tax code.

Government data shows that even IRS agents "give the wrong advice more than a third of the time."

With over 800 changes to the tax code in the average year, the problem lies with the tax code itself and not with the tax return preparers. Congress wants to require more training — a band-aid fix to a Grand Canyon sized problem. Congress needs to abolish the tax code and adopt the FairTax (H.R. 25/S. 25).

Senator John Cornyn has just signed on as a co-sponsor of the FairTax after carefully evaluating every tax reform measure on the table. Everyone should look at the details of the FairTax with an open mind. Every problem people have with a national sales tax has been addressed within the bill. The FairTax is the best solution to all the problems with the tax code and would put an end to tax return preparation.

Steve Harris, Waco, Texas

Letter to the Editor,

The recent push to enact marriage protection laws has me trying to remember where I had left my long-ago misplaced Baltimore Catechism. I think I recall, from my early instruction in my Roman Catholic faith, that marriage was one of the sacraments of the Church instituted by God himself. I just don't remember that its sanctity would one day have to be further established through the good graces of Most Holy Tom DeLay's Republican Party. The idea now has me concerned about protecting all seven of the sacraments.

By the way, does anyone know from whom we will be protecting holy matrimony? I can understand protecting BINGO—if we don't get a little preemptive about it, the next thing you know the Lutherans will be into our game.

Sam Osborne, West Branch, IA

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Failure To Launch

Matthew McConaughey plays a 30-year-old slacker that lives the high life. The only problem, though he doesn't see it, is that he still lives with his parents. When the folks are preparing to enjoy retirement, they decide its time for junior to leave the house. Enter Sarah Jessica Parker, an attractive, single gal whose business is to help parents get their siblings off their duff and find a home of their own. She is hired to give McConaughey a shove out the door by using her female intuition and romantic favors.

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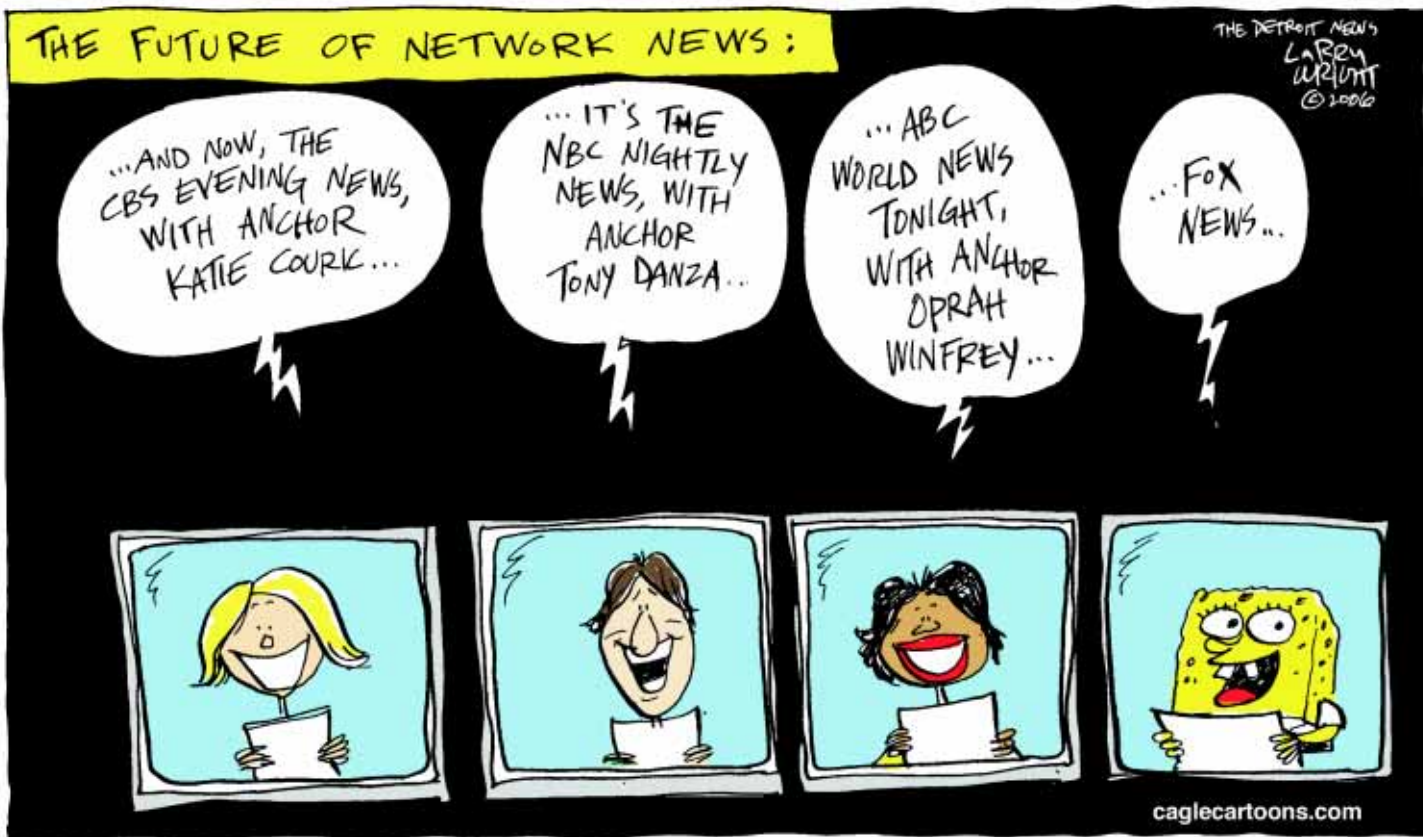
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DoD Plans To Detonate 700 Tons Of Explosives At Nevada Test Site

Scientists Concerned About Nuclear Weapons Proliferation

LAS VEGAS — The controversial plans by the Department of Defense to detonate 700 tons of explosives at the Nevada Test Site on June 2 has evolved into a worry by the Federation of American Scientists that the simulated nuclear blast is part of the Pentagon's research into the development of low-yield nuclear weapons.

Although the Pentagon would neither confirm nor deny the claim, scientists say if it is true, the debate over the detonation will shift beyond environmental effects on Nevada, to international concerns over nuclear weapons proliferation.

According to Hans Kristensen, an analyst for the federation, the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency has carefully ducked the issue of whether the test is nuclear-related.

However, there has been input from conservative groups that new nuclear warheads need to be developed for destroying hardened, deeply buried targets. According to Threat Reduction Agency spokesman David Rigby, "This is a test to have better predictive tools to defeating hardened and underground targets. It is not a precursor to a nuclear test. It is not a nuclear test."

The June blast "has been redefined over the past several years," and the goal now is to provide data on how such massive explosions and their ground shocks affect structures in different geologic situations, he said.

Kristensen said the test "is about fine-tuning tools for fighting nuclear

wars, Kristensen said. The nuclear war fighters are trying to calibrate a low-yield nuclear weapon against a relatively shallow target in limestone."

Kristensen said the goal of the test program was to find the weakest nuclear weapon that would still achieve the goal of knocking out hardened, underground structures. Lower-yield weapons would spread less radiation and fallout that would affect civilians and troops.

According to the LAS VEGAS SUN, last week, James Tegnalia, director of the Threat Reduction Agency, told reporters that the test would send "a mushroom cloud over Las Vegas." Although the agency quickly disavowed the comment and stressed that the test would be non-nuclear, the comment alarmed political leaders and residents who remember decades of atomic bomb tests at the Nevada Test Site, 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

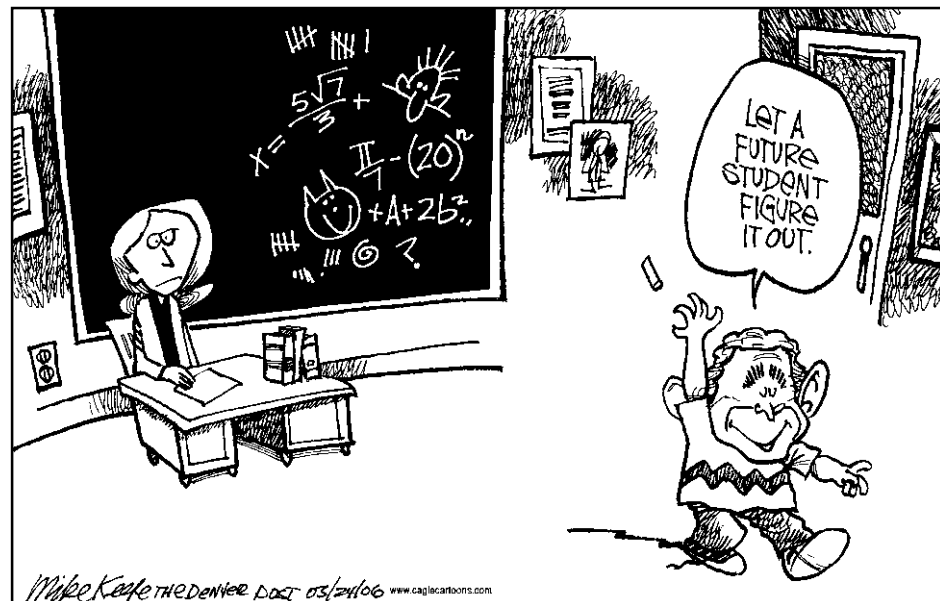
Blix Warns U.S. On Striking Iran Over Nuke Issue

OSLO, Norway — At an energy conference in Norway, former U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix warned the United States last Monday that even striking Iran with bombs, not a ground invasion force, would still be harmful to the West.

"Then, the reactions would be strong, and would contribute to increased terrorism," the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency told Norwegian news agency NTB.

However, Blix was optimistic that Tehran and Washington would settle the issue in time: "We have time on our side in this case. Iran can't have a bomb ready in the next five years."

Washington is worried that Tehran is building a nuclear weapons program in secret, but Tehran insists its ambitions for a nuclear enrichment program is for peaceful, civilian use.



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MADD Mamas Are Fascists: Now, Write Your Nasty Letters

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Volstead done a lot of good for the country. A lot of good outlaws found work."

It is time to reign in the MADD Mamas.

Until we do, stay out of Texas unless you're an Ivory Soap teetotaler.

Let me begin this by admitting that, more than 20 years ago, I got a DWI.

I woke up in a Louisiana jail, and had I been told I was charged with treason and murder, I couldn't have denied my guilt.

So I did what any self-respecting newspaper owner would do.

I put it on the front page.

As I have said in this space before, I need no pardon for anything I've done.

I regret it, but I'm not ashamed of it.

After all, that was more than two decades ago, and I haven't been a drunken threat since.

If it hadn't happened, I might have killed somebody.

Worse, I might have killed somebody who wasn't a Republican.

Plain and simple: I don't like drunks, and I don't like drunk drivers.

I rarely drink, and I am careful not to drive drunk when I do.

It was not the prohibition that changed my behavior, but the awareness that I did something foolish that endangered others and me.

I try to put away foolish things.

If a hot needle won't prevent cold-blooded, plotted and planned murder, a suspended license, a fine and a scarlet "DWI" hung around a drunk's neck won't stop him from drinking.

Or driving.

Prohibition just doesn't work, and it threatens freedom.

And, for a while, I supported the MADD Mamas.

DWI was, for decades, a good ol' boy crime.

It neither punished nor changed the offender.

Now we are punishing him, but not changing much at all.

So, at first glance, the Mamas seem a sincere lot.

Women who have lost their children in ways that somehow involved drinking.

If your heart does not go out to them, you don't have one.

But they have become foils for those who insist on controlling American's behavior through a draconian and repressive criminal justice system, a system that insists that human beings are basically evil, and only fear can dissuade them from exercising their deviant passions.

The MADD Mamas have always insisted that they are not prohibitionists.

They are liars.

They are, in fact, a mob of grief-obsessed hysterics trying through fanatical devotion to a cause to make sense of what is probably a senseless death.

Legislation, like revenge, should be eaten cold.

And the MADD Mamas serve up a big, hot, heaping bowl full of revenge, and the Texas Legislature just eats it up.

After all, we were all taught to eat what Mama puts in front of you.

Lest you get the bloody highway version of the starving children in China lecture.

This guilt assault on the legislatures of this country promoted a basic assault on civil rights.

You have no right against self-incrimination in DWI cases.

If you refuse to submit to an alcohol consumption test, your drivers license is taken away.

Call To Mind



By Don M. Fisher

Your innocence is irrelevant.

You can be convicted of DWI in this state when you are not legally drunk.

If you are arrested for that crime, you are found through Breathalyzer or blood test NOT to be drunk, you can be found guilty if a videotape of police officer's description convinces a judge that you were drunk.

Your innocence is irrelevant.

If you are found with an empty bottle in your automobile, you are automatically

assumed to have consumed the alcohol from it, and you are guilty of a violation of the Texas open container law. You can also be charged with DWI and probably convicted.

Your innocence is irrelevant.

You can be tried, convicted and sentenced for burglary in this state, and, after an "appropriate" time has passed, have your record expunged.

But not DWI.

Not even your arrest can be expunged. Your innocence is irrelevant.

You can die for your country at age 18, but you can't drink until you are 21.

Incidentally, why 21?

Well, when the 20th Amendment proved a bloody failure, the prohibitionists wouldn't give up without a fight, and pressed for a drinking age limit.

The prohibitionists were still a formidable political faction, and lawmakers caved to a segment of their power base.

The "drys" spitefully settled on 21, the

number of the amendment that repealed the repression.

Meanwhile, the Mamas have lobbied the legal blood-alcohol level (.08) to the point that no one can have a drink in the State of Texas without being "legally drunk."

That has led us to the latest assault on the demon rum in Texas.

The Alcoholic Beverage Commission, a state agency and primary enforcement arm of the MADD Mamas, has sent undercover agents into Texas bars to observe and arrest anyone they consider drunk.

The ABC has determined that bars are public places, and Texas law prohibits being drunk in a public place.

The policy, ABC said, is designed to keep people from driving and drinking.

Since, if you have had anything to drink you will blow a .08, it is now against the law to drink in a Texas bar.

There has been uproar over the strategy, especially since some of the first raids were carried out in an Irving hotel bar, where patrons were arrested even though they were out-of-state hotel guests and didn't even have cars to drive, drunk or sober.

ABC said they are investigating the procedure, and will give their agents more training on enforcement.

But they aren't going to stop it.

Welcome to good old-fashioned, blue-nosed prohibition.

In other words, the MADD Mamas have made hash out of the U.S. Constitution.

They claim to have reduced the number of "alcohol-related" deaths in this and other states.

That is not provable true.

Canada, for example, did not enact strict drinking laws or curtail drinking age, and reported virtually identical statistical reductions during the same time period.

In the State of Texas, the availability of alcohol through the more counties voting "wet" and a loosening of "private club" restrictions in dry counties was increased dramatically during the same time as enactment of repressive alcohol laws.

Few people had to drive as far to get drunk.

Fewer miles mean fewer arrests.

Simultaneously, the license driver age was increased, and restrictions placed on young drivers.

Alcohol consumption, statistically, declines with age.

There has been a surge in popularity of vodka and grain alcohol-based drinks that do not give off the stronger breath odor of other alcohol.

The popularity of "Jell-O shots," made with grain alcohol instead of water, can be laid directly at the feet of the MADD Mamas, who have not raised awareness of the danger; just the awareness of getting caught.

The kids didn't get sober; they just got sneakier.

Further, since alcohol involvement in any accident is determined solely by police impressions, any evidence is entirely subjective.

Frankly, many researchers are afraid of the MADD Mama lobby, and warp their statistics to protect their funding from the hysteria of the prohibitionist accusations that anyone would "support drunk driving."

That one would echo from the legislature to the university boardroom.

If you don't believe in the power of the MADD Sanhedrin, stay tuned for the vitriol that will be aimed at this column.

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Poisoning The Watchdog

The Fourth Estate — the news media — will become a collateral casualty if The Information Operations Roadmap, which was commissioned and signed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, is implemented. The 2003 document was recently obtained by the National Security Archives at George Washington University using the Freedom of Information Act.

The Pentagon wants \$383 million to implement the Roadmap's plans by 2009.

But, for all we know, it perhaps has already been launched under the radar of unsuspecting Americans and most of the media.

THE ICONOCLAST has studied the highly redacted, recently unclassified document that suggests propaganda over the Internet, in TV broadcasts, and in newspaper reports will provide a psychological advantage in war, a term the document calls Psyops (psychological operations).

The Department of Defense suggests that the United States should achieve the ability to disrupt and destroy the full spectrum of the entire electromagnetic spectrum — the ability to disable every networked computer, telephone, radio, television, and radar system on planet earth, at its own discretion.

The heart of the proposal is to "control" any media, from newspapers to books, from posters to the Internet, from music to PDAs, to inject self-serving propaganda in order to make the public ignorant of the truth and in favor of the military action of the hour, to quell debate while making questionable the veracity of any news report.

The U.S. military, if it gains control of earth's electromagnetic spectrum, could decide who gets what messages and disrupt freedom of speech as we know it. As a result, the bark of the Fourth Estate would be totally discredited, if not tragically silenced.

The military brass argues that this is but another tool to capture al-Qaeda and win the war on terror.

But, is the spectre of total political neoconservative domination over the world worth it? Does freedom no longer have value? Are principles of progress merely a mirror to the dark ages, where "truth squads" distill away the truth in order to propel disinformation to keep the public sadly unaware of transgressions in government?

The military has already admitted placing pro-U.S. "news" articles in overseas media to achieve "thought control" through psychological interjection.

THE ICONOCLAST has been only one of many news organizations attempting to obtain "real numbers" of American casualties in Iraq. THE ICONOCLAST publishes the death counts as provided by the Pentagon, but several military insiders who refuse to go on record for fear of severe retribution have told us the numbers don't add up, that it is not in the best interests of the war effort for the public to know the truth. THE ICONOCLAST's initiatives to obtain accurate numbers have been extended, without success, directly to the Pentagon and through Congress.

There appears to be a troubling disconnect between the Pentagon and Congress on this issue.

If Americans decide to embrace a militaristic "win at all costs" declaration, especially if that includes forfeiture of checks and balances, destruction of freedom, and desecration of the U.S. Constitution, then the end result will be a military state.

If we leap to a narrow plateau, can we ever get our footing to return home?
— W. Leon Smith



Republican Underdog Wins LBS's Senate Seat

With a record 71 names on the April 4, 1961 ballot, Texans could not complain about a shortage of candidates in the special election to choose a substitute Senator.

After losing the hard-fought battle for the 1960 presidential nomination to John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson stunned supporters by settling for second place on the national Democratic ticket. He shrewdly hedge his bets, however, by simultaneously standing for re-election to the United States Senate.

Even though no Republican had won a statewide contest since 1869, the Texas GOP made the customary human sacrifice, a 36-year-old college professor named John Goodwin Tower. Token opposition was better than letting Lyndon run unopposed.

Benefiting from the backlash against Johnson's attempt to have his cake and eat it too, Tower received an astounding 42 percent of the vote. Anticipating an instant replay in the spring, the pugnacious underdog continued his uphill campaign.

LBJ served only a few minutes of his third Senate term. Shortly after the swearing-in ceremony on Jan. 3, 1961, he gave up the powerful post of majority leader so the governor could select a stand-in.

Price Daniel asked Dallas businessman William Blakley to keep the seat warm until a permanent occupant could be chosen. It was a case of deja vu for the multimillionaire, who just four years earlier performed the same service when Daniel resigned from the Senate to run for governor.

After Blakley politely stepped aside in 1957, Ralph Yarborough became Daniel's surprise successor by capturing 38 percent of a winner-take-all plebiscite. Yarborough went on to earn a full six-year term in 1958 by beating Blakley.

Determined not to repeat the same mistake, "Dollar Bill" wasted no time in announcing his intention to remain in Washington. His unexpected candidacy kept the potentially strongest Democrat out of the race.

"I expected former governor Allen Shivers to run, but he was a good soldier and reluctant to oppose Blakley, who was technically the Democratic Party's standard bearer," Tower revealed years later in his autobiography. "It was a lucky break for me. I probably would have lost if I had gone head-to-head with him."

Other prominent Democrats refused to follow Shivers' chivalrous example, and a senatorial stampede ensued. Congressman Jim Wright, attorney general Will Wilson, state senator Henry B. Gonzalez and state representative Maury Maverick, Jr. all threw their hats in the ring.

When the smoke cleared in early April, John Tower led the pack. Blakley trailed the improbable front-runner by 135,000 votes but squeezed past Wright to qualify for the runoff.

In spite of Tower's impressive showing, Blakley was considered a cinch to put the upstart in his place in the May 27 showdown. When the Democrats closed ranks, no Republican had a prayer.

Tower candidly confessed a couple of decades later that his strategy was "to paint Blakley, who was just as conservative as I was, as an ally of the Kennedys. This forced Blakley to run against his

This Week
In Texas
History



By Barte Haile

own president, and that in turn alienated moderate and liberal Democrats."

Blakley took the bait. His caustic criticisms of the New Frontier infuriated the liberal wing of the Texas Democratic Party and moved its acknowledged spokesman to complain that the two contestants "were in competition as to who could denounce the Democratic administration the hardest."

Sen. Yarborough stopped short of formally canceling his endorsement of Blakley. Nevertheless, his sharp statement was widely interpreted as a signal to fellow liberals to stay home on election day.

Less than half of the two million registered Texans bothered to turn out for the runoff, leaving Tower and Blakley to split the conservative vote. By a razor-thin margin of 10,343 ballots out of more than 800,000, the diminutive educator pulled the political upset of the 20th Century.

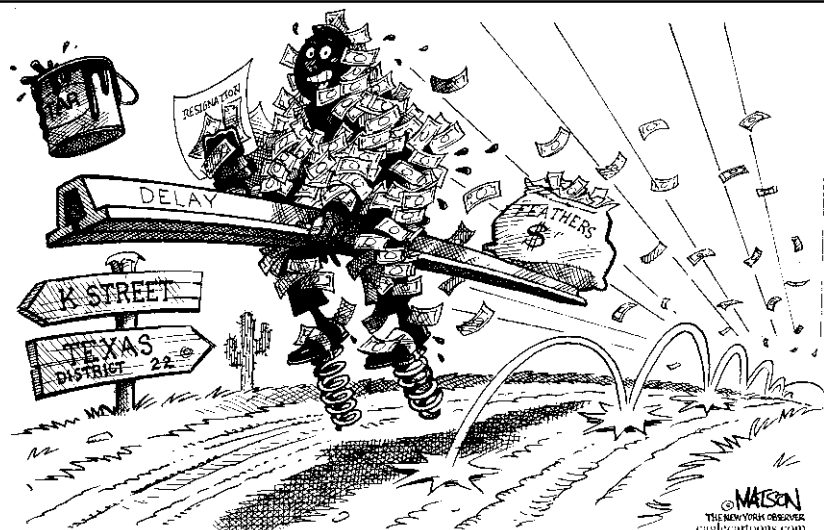
Sam Rayburn laid the blame for the historic humiliation squarely on the loser. Blakley stubbornly rejected the advice of more experienced politicians, explained the Speaker of the House, who noted contemptuously, "He never did say what he was for, only what he was against."

But the Tower triumph was a fluke pure and simple, according to Mr. Sam. He confidently predicted the professor from Wichita Falls would be a one-term Senator and warned the GOP not to make too much of their long-awaited victory.

"If the Republicans think they have achieved a two-party system in Texas," growled Rayburn, "let them try to elect a governor."

Seventeen years later, they did exactly that.

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



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In Response To Perry-Sharp School Finance: Property Tax Cut Plan A Bust — More Smoke & Mirrors?

The great writer and poet William Shakespeare wrote a play whose title aptly mirrors the Perry-Sharp School Finance and Property Tax Cut Plan, "*Much Ado About Nothing*."

One decade ago the state paid 70 percent of the public education budget. Currently it pays approximately 30 percent, while Texas homeowners pay most of the rest via property taxes. In addition, a large chunk of a "wealthy" school district's local collected property taxes must be turned-over to schools of "poorer" districts [Robin Hood clause].

During the past seven years elected officials added to the woes of homeowners by permitting home property taxes to sky-rocket up to 400 percent in some areas. One result has been a record high number of home foreclosures, mostly by young families and those on fixed income.

In addition, previously elected officials had developed and implemented the Texas Business Franchise Tax, which permitted a loop-hole large enough to swallow the state of Alaska. While smaller "mom and pop" businesses were



Commentary

By
Peter
Stern

forced to pay the tax, many larger businesses circumvented the tax completely.

Now, Governor Perry and his right-hand man on the Texas Tax Reform Commission, Chairman Sharp, developed what they refer to as a master plan for school finance and property tax reductions. *How delusional can you get?*

The plan is to increase the sales tax on cigarettes and to apply a small tax on businesses. In doing so, the plan hopes to REPLACE approximately one-third of the property taxes homeowners currently are paying.

This is the glorious plan?

For those of you who can smell a dead skunk one mile away, here are the

glitches in the Perry-Sharp plan:

- All the plan does is to replace some of the current public education budget plan with another source of tax dollars, which by the way was proposed previously by other elected officials during the past several legislative sessions

- After seven years of overburdening homeowners by severe tax increases totaling up to 400 percent, the state is opting to reduce the total by one-third; meanwhile, the Texas Supreme Court has determined that the state-wide system of collecting school property taxes is illegal — *so why are we still keeping most of it?*

- There is no cap included in the plan on property tax increases, so, since there is no new money for schools in the Perry-Sharp plan districts most assuredly will be forced to increase property taxes again and again

- In reality, the proposed new business tax — hailed by many business leaders and groups, including The Greater Houston Partnership — won't be paid directly by business owners; it will be paid by employees and/or consumers

- Taxing cigarettes is another misguided notion, which does NOT ensure a consistent tax collection over time; it also taxes a small group of the community — hence — it is more "safe" politically than other options.

So, while Perry, Sharp and others "slap each other on their backs", in truth the Perry-Sharp School Finance / Property Tax Cut Plan is a bust! It is another Perry special interest notion to manipulate voters into believing that he is the great leader of Texas. Texans who have their eyes open see how the "Governator" shows that he really doesn't care about public education, educators, homeowners, or Texas children.

When you have a rotten apple in the barrel, you throw it out. Voters need to do the same with the governor and special interest legislators. After five years of "smoke & mirrors" Texans need a positive change.

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas, a former University Professor and Public School Administrator, is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He is a Vietnam-era Disabled Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees. You may contact Peter Stern at: <pstern@austin.rr.com>.

April Mailbag

It's that time again for me to shut up and to allow the readers to talk. Below are some of the responses I've gotten to recent columns:

In my column on EAVESDROPPING, I discussed the Administration's policy of wiretapping without getting the proper warrants:

TOM: I think you have the situation all wrong. I realize that many people hate the president, probably you included, but to be against the president who is doing a good job of protecting the people of the United States is ludicrous.... if an attack can be prevented by listening to my phone calls, then so be it."

LINDA: I am troubled by the fact that those who are defending the president's powers ... are okay with the fact of the law against domestic wiretapping without a warrant has been broken.... the US public should not have to pay the price of having their privacy jeopardized or compromised because either the system is flawed or the thinking of those who support the system is flawed. Either way we deserve better than that."

BOB: "Your little make-believe scenario of the President talking to Harriet Miers, and then with Hillary was not all that cute."

In discussing HARRY POTTER, I confessed that I have never read a "Harry Potter" book and could never get into the fantasy genre or even cartoons:

FRANK: "Lloyd, your sentiments are more or less mine. I had the same reaction to cartoons as a kid as well.... at any rate, Harry Potter books have come under some attack from religious groups and that's ridiculous, too."

GORDON: "Okay, Garver, I'm glad to know there are at least two of us heathens that don't give a rat's rump about Harry Potter."

DARON: "I feel sorry for you."

In a column about FAKE NEWS, I talked about the revelation that the Pentagon was feeding Iraqi newspapers erroneous stories:

MALCOM: "Bravo! What a wonderful column, and a wonderful departure from all the mendacity that has been foisted upon our citizens."



Modern Times

By
Lloyd
Garver

RICK AND AMANDA: "We feel as if we are being lied to or told twisted truths all the time by the media and certainly by this government. Are Americans waking up? I would like to think so especially about this war. Especially since our son decided to join the Army."

ROBERT: "Let Uncle Sam spread as much good news propaganda about the US in the Middle East as they want. We have our own propaganda machine running in the US which does the opposite."

I talked about the brouhaha surrounding PRESIDENT BUSH'S CHRISTMAS card omitting the word, "Christmas:"

GLENDIA: "I appreciated the broader perspective you provided on the Christmas card non-issue. Happy new year to you too."

AL: "If you don't think there is a war on Christmas you should talk with the people at the ACLU."

ROBIN: "I will continue to pray for you and all the other secular nonbelievers. I will pray for your deliverance and that one day the veil will be removed from your eyes and you will see what we see!!!"

In a column about KNITTING, I talked about how more and men are getting into knitting.

NICOLE: "It looks like someone has already started knitting in a maximum-security prison.... It would be great if you could publicize it so they could get more yarn."

I discussed the recent MISS AMERICA pageant:

CORAL: "Shame on you and your article. The Miss America pageant means a lot to many young ladies and you should not be the one handling the reporting if you had such feelings about pageantry to begin with."

WILLA: "The pageant is lame because judging a woman by her beauty is at its limit. There is nothing more contestants

can do to their faces or figures to shine above the other contestants, let alone the rest of America. ...I chuckle to think that perhaps you wouldn't be so bored if it were you up there on stage in a scanty swimsuit with pairs of eyes judging your chest to see if you measure up. I wonder if while you are standing there you would wish like many women do, that you could be judged on the internal character you developed yourself over a lifetime."

I came out against the recent proposals to demote PLUTO to a non-planet.

ANDREA: "I loved, loved, loved your column about keeping Pluto in the family. It's just wrong to take away its credentials just because it's made of ice. I mean, it's not Pluto's fault it's made of ice. It's all location, location, location, and Pluto just didn't get the luck of the draw like we did."

I described the difficulties I was hav-

ing with the immersion method of LEARNING ITALIAN:

LUCA: "Don't worry, we are not like the French.... nobody but a small minority will see you as an ugly American, unless you are one."

So, I'm being told my writing isn't "all that cute," I should be ashamed of myself, readers feel sorry for me, and others are praying for me. I guess I must be doing something right.

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

THE UNMISTAKABLE TYRANNY PROJECT

This project aims to reconcile the difference between what our US Congressmen, US Senators, US Presidents, history books, and media commentators over the first 150 years or more of our Nations history have said regarding the meaning of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution versus what U.S. Federal Judges are now claiming. Is this Amendment conferring an Individual Right to the People, or is it granting a "collective right" to the States and NO RIGHTS whatsoever to the People to possess Arms? Please contribute to this project by writing ALL the U.S. Senators and Congressmen from your State and ask them this question:

I need to know if you understand that the Second amendment to the U.S. Constitution confers an Individual Right to the People to possess Arms or firearms as individuals, or do you believe that this Amendment is only about a "collective right" granted to the States?

Please send their replay letter, or a GOOD QUALITY COPY (preferable color) to:

N. David Somerville, C/O P.O. Box 940, Worthington, OH 43085

Your reply will be used as evidence to resolve this question. Anyone who already has a letter from a U.S. Congressman or a U.S. Senator which clearly states that the Second Amendment confers an Individual Right to the People is urgently requested to send a GOOD QUALITY COPY of that letter to the address above. Please do your part to contribute to this project to restore the Rights granted to the People. Your efforts benefit all the People. Thank you for your Patriotism.

Tax Time Means Finding A Way To Claim That Inflatable Whale

Just as we've done for the past 15 years, my wife and I arranged to have some quiet time so that we could go insane doing our taxes together. This process generally requires an entire day because my wife insists on keeping accurate financial records. These records are then piled on the kitchen table next to tax forms, booklets, a calculator, and last year's tax returns, all of which she organizes and obtains weeks in advance — and NONE of which, I remind her, would matter without my own contribution of:

Two sharpened pencils.

After more than a decade of doing taxes together, we have developed a system. Something that utilizes her talent for working with numbers and complicated tax formulas, and my talent for writing legibly in small boxes. It's a combination that, year after year, has never failed to result in — you guessed it:

A big fat argument.

There are several reasons for this.

The first is that, as man of the house, I really have no idea what goes on there.



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

I'm a father of two, which means I'm essentially a pack mule with an ATM card. Most of my time is spent moving things from the car to the house, and then back to the car again. Often for days at a time.

In a lot of cases, decisions are being made while I'm still outside stuffing an inflatable whale into the car.

Even so, it's important for me to at least LOOK like I know what's going on. This requires maintaining a difficult balance between satisfying my natural instincts as a man to be in charge while, at the same time, assuming as little responsibility as possible. After years of prac-

tice, I've learned to strike this balance every day except tax day, when I'm reduced to chewing on a pencil and waiting for my wife to call out sum totals.

With that underlying tension already in place, it doesn't help that most instructions in the federal tax booklet read like this:

In order to determine the amount on line 17, please complete the simple, 37-step tax formula found on page 197 of this handbook which, due to budgetary reasons, ends on page 196. If you have any questions, visit the IRS website and join millions of other Americans who are just as confused as we are.

Because my wife likes to be prepared, she went ahead and grabbed one of every tax form available. This meant we had everything we needed should we decide to file as blind, millionaire yak farmers living as part-year residents with our adopted, 65-year-old child.

As you might've guessed, we met none of those qualifications this year, which meant choosing between taking the Standard Deduction, or filling out the dreaded

Schedule "A" and itemizing our deductions.

I say "dreaded" because, on average, you must complete at least six additional schedules before you can determine, through a progressive series of special tax equations, how much you'll be losing by not taking the Standard Deduction in the first place.

This isn't always the case, however, as any blind, millionaire yak farmer can tell you.

Regardless, we once again itemized our deductions and, for the first time EVER, realized almost immediately that we were definitely going to go with the Standard Deduction.

This not only saved us lot of time, but also allowed us to get back to more important things.

And even though I'm not sure what those things are, I'm pretty sure they include at least one trip to the car.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at nhickson@oregonfast.net, or at the *Siuslaw News* at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439)

An Examination Of The 9/11 Truth Movement, Part Two

It is funny, really, how the collective human consciousness works. As I pecked away at my keyboard last week, ready and willing to discuss a topic that has been neigh-taboo for any American save the president, I had no idea that the forces of Hollywood were marshalling to the same ends. Charlie Sheen, famed star of such classics as, um, *Navy Seals* and *The Arrival*, has gone public with his doubts about the government's version of the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Sheen is just the first. He is the only soul in the government's fifth branch to stand up and express doubt, and he is right to do so. Nevertheless, his presence in the debate is unfortunate. Introducing the ever-growing 9/11 Truth movement to the dollops of brain-washed network newshounds is nearly impossible, but a person like Charlie Sheen is perfect for the task because he is easily discountable. Well known, but not well liked. "Attack the messenger, not the message" really does work, as our recent history has shown. But there are others willing to stand up. And when the networks decide these painfully sober questions *must* be asked and seriously discussed, there are *real* people with *real* science ready to take the case of logic to America.

Paul Craig Roberts is one such person. Roberts, the former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during the Reagan Administration, does not like the state of our nation. Like many conservatives these days, Roberts is angry with the Bushes for completely ignoring Reagan's policies. He argues that "true conservatives" were the "first victims" of Team Bush, and that to continue on our current path will "bring about Armageddon." He raises a serious quandary with statements like, "We know the government lied about Iraqi WMD, but we believe the government told the truth about 9/11." A troubling impasse, indeed.

Another such individual is Morgan Reynolds, former Chief Economist for the United States Department of Labor under Shrub Jr. Reynolds is a professor emeritus at Texas A&M University and the former director of the Criminal Justice Center at the National Center for Policy Analysis in Dallas. "I think it is pretty clear that 9/11 was an inside job," he claims. Since that fateful day, Reynolds has been



The Webster
Retort
By
**Stephen
Webster**

an active in a group called Scholars for 9/11 Truth.

Many of Reynolds' critics point to one of his theories that many members of the truth movement have discredited. Aside from believing that the 9/11 attacks were carried out primarily through controlled demolition methods, Reynolds has claimed that passenger airliners were not used to hit either tower or the Pentagon. He claims that fake planes or military drones were used to distract observers from the previously planted explosives. Many among the Scholars group disagree with the theory, and it has been effectively debunked. Though the idea crops up in several popular 9/11 Truth documentaries, it has been pretty well established that *real* planes with *real* passengers hit those buildings.

These two men bring to the table extensive credentials as members of two Republican administrations. But all the credibility in the world will not make a Nationalist pay attention to a detractor. To the experts we go.

FEMA's official disaster report attributed the collapse of WTC 1 and 2 on "structural damage sustained by each tower from the impact, combined with the ensuing fires." Once the floor-supports liquified, the collapse began from the top with each level "pancaking," eventually bringing the entire structure down. However, Underwriters Laboratory executive Kevin Ryan wrote a letter to the government team studying the physics of the collapses and asked they "eliminate the confusion regarding the ability of jet fuel fires to soften or melt structural steel." Ryan's company certified the WTC steel for its *ability to withstand fire*. According to him, the steel frame had been tested at temperatures over 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. "[T]he buildings should have easily with-

stood the thermal stress caused by pools

of burning jet fuel," concluded Ryan. If the "pancake" report is indeed correct, it would have taken at least 30 seconds or longer for WTC One, Two and Seven to hit the ground. I am no physics expert, but the second law of Thermodynamics is not *that* obscure! Towers One and Two both fell within 10 seconds. WTC 7, which was not hit by an airplane, only suffered minimal damage from debris and fell in just seven seconds — a half second longer than free fall speed.

Frank A. DeMartini, who oversaw the WTC towers' construction, claims the buildings were built to withstand hurricanes, bombs and multiple impacts from a Boeing 707's — the largest jetliner in service at the time. The jets that hit the towers — Boeing 747's — are 10 feet wider and 10 feet longer, and carry 1,000 gallons more fuel, but fly much more slowly. He likened the jet's impact to a pencil poking a hole in a metal screen. It would cause damage, but would not compromise the structure as a

would have been protruding from the wreckage hundreds of feet into the air. Instead, one member of the cleanup crew said that the largest piece of office equipment he found was a fourth of a telephone keypad. All the concrete in the tower was turned into a fine powder. The massive support rods were found snapped into sections of 30-feet or less. FEMA loaded the steel onto trucks and shipped it to Asia to be melted down.

The WTC buildings are the only steel-frame towers to have collapsed because of fire damage in our recorded history. Last year, the Windsor Building in Madrid, Spain burned for almost 20 hours. When the fire was extinguished, the steel core of the building was intact. Everything else burned away. Officials expected the building to fall, just like the WTC towers. But it performed as it was designed. Even in the aftermath of an atomic bomb, steel frame buildings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still standing.



Hiroshima, Japan, the day after it was hit with a nuclear weapon. Notice the steel frame buildings that still stand, dotting the landscape.

whole. But fires caused the collapses? The facts seem to contradict this assertion.

If the floors had "pancaked," there would have been large chunks of concrete and broken office equipment everywhere. Parts of the towers would have toppled over sideways and caused additional damage to other buildings. Enormous steel rods

Interestingly enough, a few days after the attacks, FEMA claimed to have found one of the hijackers passports several blocks away from ground zero. But the plane that this person was on? They never even recovered the black box, let alone parts of its engines or cabin. And the 19 hijackers the FBI named? Six of them are alive and well. More on that next week.

In the mean time, I wholeheartedly recommend reading "The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions" by David Ray Griffin. It'll tighten your wig.

Stephen Webster is an Investigative Reporter and Syndicated Columnist with *The News Connection*, a Staff Columnist with *George W. Bush's hometown weekly The Lone Star Iconoclast*, and a former Contributor to *The Dallas Morning News's Science & Technology* section. For more of Webster's musings, visit [TheGonzoMuckraker](http://TheGonzoMuckraker.com)

Don't 'DeLay' Your Departure, Tom — D.C. Needs Fresh Air

When people ask me why I've rejected my Christian upbringing — and yes, despite what hardcore evangelicals have been brainwashed into thinking, Catholicism is in fact Christianity — my new two-word response is:

Tom DeLay.

DeLay's not my only reason, but he's the most recent and patently offensive example around.

More so than Jerry Falwell or Jim Bakker, beyond the scope of Oral Roberts and James Dobson, predisposed to a level of intolerance that would set fear in Pat Robertson, possessed of less compassion than even George W. Bush. "The Hammer," this turgid little snot of an excuse for a failed Congressional leader, has irreparably damaged the reputation of true Christian believers all over the United States.

Except, for the most part, Catholics, whom he and his ilk most graciously refuse to include as Christians. Ah, yes, one time when exclusion is a good thing.

Unfortunately, his stink has even managed to land on Jews to some extent, as well.

Since being elected to Congress some 20 years ago, "Smiler" DeLay has single-handedly shamed his party, and the House in general by: Becoming unbelievably wealthy off the backs of his blindly faithful Sugar Land constituents, and others across the Country, including several Native American Nations; creating the K Street Project, the bloated mammoth, out-of-balance lobby system, a source of flowing riches for all comers with insider ties to the GOP on Capitol Hill; forcing an illegal, convoluted restructuring of congressional districts across Texas, resulting in minority under-representation combined with an inequitable Republican balance in the U.S. House; taking countless sums in "gifts" from special interests, foreign as well as domestic; setting up family to receive huge paychecks for little work; attacking any Federal judiciary, even threatening to unseat them, whenever he disagreed with their decisions; blaming the "evil" Liberal Democrats for every Republican failure... etc.

While Majority Whip, later as Leader, Tom DeLay laid the groundwork for, then oversaw, the largest, deepest, most widespread and corrosive infestation of corruption to ever wreak havoc upon our Government.

He then has the unmitigated gall to repeatedly tell us, and himself, he's done nothing wrong, and has God on his side as proof!

See, with God on his side, there's no need for personal accountability — it's all good.

Reading through the text of this weasel's address of April 4, announcing to his constituents that he's finally freeing them of his grip, I want to laugh and wretch at the same time.

Early on DeLay crowed about the "liberation" of Europe by Saint Ronnie Reagan. Oh, come on, it was just a matter of time before the Soviets and their arcane system ran out of rubles. That's what happens when governments dedicate sustained spending on military expenditures, putting more tax revenue into the science of killing than governing.

As is the case with George W. Bush's latest budget wishbook. You know, the same budget put together by his newly-promoted Chief of Staff, Josh Bolten. (Yes, he is the same putz who oversaw the turnaround of our national debt from a surplus to a deficit of multi-trillions in

just five years. I thought he deserved a promotion, too.)

Smiler Tom added the liberation of tens of millions of Afghans and Iraqis in his farewell. That's a fine way to be free, with either puppet or squabbling governments, plus guns and bombs going off all around you all day, every day.

"At home, we moved from policies that had long empowered governments to finally empowering citizens, taxpayers, and communities... initiating sweeping and positive change across all facets of American society."

In the event you have not been paying attention lately, our personal freedoms are no longer quite as readily available to us as they once were. Some don't even exist anymore. For example: Local school boards are afraid to make certain decisions on their own, lest they cross the Thought Police who control the purse strings of Most Children Left Behind.

Watch what you say on the telephone; be extra careful about anything you might write in a personal e-mail.

DeLay spoke of a "competitive" two-party system of government, yet since the Right-wing Conservative takeover of 1994 he has led the charge to run roughshod over Democrats on every issue — bar none.

He boasted of reforms in energy, telecommunications and transportation, as well as others, claiming these industries had been "bogged down and blocked by those who ran Congress for the 40 years" before the GOP upswing.

Is he serious? DeLay was so deep in bed with Enron I'd bet even a CSI school dropout could find Ken Lay's epithelial residue still on him.

What did you pay for gas last fill-up? I paid \$2.779 a gallon earlier this week; the next day the sign read \$2.899!

What kind of profits are the oil companies posting? \$10 billion? \$12 billion? More?

How much are you paying for natural gas and electricity this year? A damn sight more than last year. (I was lucky enough to have contracted for a two-year price guarantee with my natural gas supplier in 2004.)

DeLay and his money train pals, such as Rep. Roy Blunt (MO), whom he personally tutored in the art of getting rich while in Congress, have ties to energy companies of various types in numerous states. It's very curious how all of a sudden, just this past year, an energy company from Missouri, Ameren, came into the state of Illinois and bought up a boatload of the existing electric providers.

As for telecommunications, we are perhaps the last industrialized nation to receive high definition television. We were years behind most countries when it came to widespread availability of cell phones — I remember watching the 1994 Olympics from Lillehammer, and the buzz from the CBS commentators was virtually every Norwegian age 10 and up carried a cell phone.

Television and radio, which were mandated in the original Communications Act to provide diversity, have been bastardized by the conservatives into the media outlets of a mere handful of major corporations. These corporations take their marching orders from the GOP-controlled Federal Government. More specifically, the RoveBush Fascist Regime.

As a broadcaster with an advanced degree in the field, I've recognized the major alterations within most news organizations and the festering attitudes among younger news tyros. Week by week these electronic corporate subsid-



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

aries become ever more the Ministry of Propaganda for the White House.

When they do refuse to kowtow, the Federal Communications Commission devises ways to levy ludicrous fines, thus creating a chilling effect across the spectrum. Case in point, CBS was recently bitch-slapped to the tune of \$3.6 million for airing an episode of "Without A Trace" that included a scene suggesting a teen sex party. The episode in question was a rerun, aired on December 31, 2004 that had garnered no complaints during its original broadcast; the complainants were members of Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, virtually none of whom had actually seen the program.

I was working at a newspaper in a known "red zone" when Wildmon's call for a campaign to complain came over the fax machine in January, 2005. He didn't want witnesses, just people to bitch about the show. The lurid fax told concerned, honest Christians all they needed to know and submit to the FCC. The main thrust of the original call to complain was since the episode ran on New Year's Eve children would be up later than usual, and therefore exposed to it.

What utter nonsense! Like an eight-year-old is going to be watching "Without A Trace" instead of the "Shrek" DVD he or she got for Christmas!

The fines just happened to be the first salvo fired by the new FCC chief, Kevin Martin, in what is apparently a power play between Conservatives and programmers over freedoms of expression under the 1st Amendment.

As soon as the fine was announced, The WB Network did some quick editing on one of its new youth-oriented shows about college kids. Other producers have expressed their concern over the outrageous fine and its detrimental abuse of a subjective regulation.

If stifling artistic expression is Tom DeLay's idea of progress, he can't leave soon enough.

Then there was the mention of transportation. I sure as shit wouldn't brag on this one. Since 1994 virtually every American air carrier has entered into some level of bankruptcy proceeding; many have reduced salaries and employee numbers; several have bit the dust.

The U.S. automobile industry, once the world leader, is in a shambles as well.

Ever depended upon Amtrak for timely service? It really sucks.

Then DeLay said something about winning the war on terror... oh, really?

Unemployment near historic lows — bull.

Good Ol' Tom claims to have helped in revitalizing our space program... I don't see it, except where it might have aided some around Houston. OH, yeah, his constituency, right.

Time and technological advancements, plus some long-range co-op programs with the Russians, have gone a long way to give NASA a much-needed jump-start.

Word on the street has always been

that upon their first meeting, DeLay took an instant dislike to young Dubya. They only tolerate each other for the welfare of the GOP. So the following is a particularly specious statement:

"It has also been an honor to work closely with... a president with great moral integrity and leadership, George W. Bush. His administration has done much to restore the type of principled leadership that President Reagan demonstrated..."

Principles like having Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North broker a deal to surreptitiously provide arms to Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua while aiding the Iranians.

How about repeated statements ad nauseum from George W. Bush that the Valerie Plame leak is an ongoing investigation, but when the source is found he'll fire that person. Oh, by gosh, by golly, it was you, in your position as Absolute Ruler Without Answerability to Anyone, who ordered the leak, King George!

So, go ahead, fire yourself! Just as Tom has done.

Principled leadership? *Feh!* The theft of two presidential elections using unproven results that were anything but kosher; secret deals with cronies to create an "energy policy" for the new Millennium; ignored forewarnings about 9/11/2001, then two jumbo jetliners filled with human beings as well as personal belongings which mysteriously vaporized after hitting the Pentagon and crashing into a field near Shanksville, PA; three buildings of the World Trade Center that came down just a bit too symmetrically perfect, almost on cue, with the remains thereof — an unstudied crime scene — shipped all over the world faster than you could say "Osama bin Laden did it"; the aforementioned Osama's lucky escape from the most finely honed fighting men in the world; an invasion of a sovereign nation under the guise of lies about non-existent WMDs plus a fabricated tie-in with the WTC attack; an attorney general who approves of torture, holding humans incommunicado without charges or access to counsel, and invasion of privacy upon Americans at the whim of King George XLIII; and on and on.

There are neither principles nor leadership in the current Fascist Regime, only Herr Oberst Karl Rove.

DeLay railed over and over about the importance of the Conservative Movement.

Don't they get it? The most important thing is that we are all Americans!

But Tom said that he came to this decision "after many weeks of personal prayerful thinking and analysis..."

"Because I care so deeply about this district and the people in it, I refuse to allow Liberal Democrats an opportunity to steal this seat in a negative, personal campaign."

What a schmuck! He's already predicting the focus of the campaign before it transpires. The thing is, he's predicting a Tom DeLay-style campaign.

Who was it that ran personal attack, negative ads denigrating Ronnie Earle, Austin's tough on crime of all types, levels and political stripes District Attorney, simply because he dared to serve Smiler DeLay with an indictment for breaking Texas laws? Funny how Tom doesn't cotton to any officer of any court with whom he disagrees.

If Tom's so worried about having a "Liberal Democrat" steal the seat, God help us all, why did he run in the primary? And with God on his side, there should be no way a Liberal could get in, anyway.

"Steal the seat, steal the seat, steal the seat..."

TENUTO

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will of the voters, the constituents he's been screwing for 20 years... I mean, those for whom he holds so much concern, to elect a Democrat?

As to stealing Congressional seats, let me take a moment here to rest my brain before it explodes from the absurd hubris of that statement...

Stealing Congressional seats is precisely what you've been indicted for, Tom, you idiot!

Oh, but let a Democrat get elected to one, especially yours, and it's stealing? No, I don't think so. That Congressional seat is not your personal property — it belongs first to the people of Sugar Land, second to the citizens of the United States.

Here's the kicker — following paragraph upon paragraph of how much he cares about his constituents in the 22nd District, DeLay dumped on his people, telling them that he won't be back. No, with all the money he accumulated while "laboring" on a Congressional paycheck, he purchased property in Virginia, and that's where they, and Ronnie Earle, can find him.

I'd be happy as a cat with nip if I were a resident of Sugar Land right about now.

However, were I a Conservative Republican from thereabouts who wore my Christianity on my sleeve, I would feel victimized by a horrendous betrayal. Like my money manager ran off to Cancun with all my savings, or a hurricane had decimated our town and neither the Federal Government nor our insurer would give us any rebuilding assistance.

At one point Smiler DeLay gazed into that crystal ball conservatives use to predict what evil the Liberals will hatch in a year or two. Here is his version of the nefarious Democratic plot:

"A democrat Congress in 2007 would, without doubt or remorse, raise hundreds of billions of dollars in taxes, summarily cut and run from the war on terror, and immediately initiate an unconstitutional impeachment of president Bush.

"However certain such antics might make a Republican resurgence in 2008, the times are too grave to waste even two years in the life of this nation... and allow even one more vote for their agenda of pessimism and failure."

Where taxes are concerned, I'm not entirely certain, but it seems like we're going to have to somehow pay back all the money the Republicans have wasted, stolen, and thrown to their cronies. Maybe we should begin by taxing the hell out of Big Biz interests, while regulating prices so they don't screw us regular folks through the back end.

Then we can tax the rich again.

The ersatz "war on terror" doesn't seem to be going all that well, either. Gawd, the more chickenshit the Republican, the more likely he is to accuse any Democrat of being a "cut and run" Liberal. I, for one, would feel a whole lot more secure if more of our troops were positioned to defend the United States from sea to shining sea, Canada to Mexico, healthy and in good spirits, with equipment that wasn't beaten all to hell from continual exposure to battle conditions and desert sandstorms.

The Republicans, from Bush to Cheney to Rummy, right on down to DeLay, keep telling us how high the morale is among our military personnel. Apparently, none of them have seen the polls, wherein 72% of the warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan have had more than their fill. They are completely fed up with Rummy's Neverending War.

Let's face it, if the GOP did not control both the Senate and House, were there reasonable and open debate within those bodies, would that the system of checks and balances had been kept properly in effect, George W. Bush would have been impeached long before becoming King George XLIII.

To suggest bringing impeachment proceedings against King George XLIII as unconstitutional is just ignorant. In the first place, he was never honestly elected. Then at every juncture he tries to (and often gets away with) rule with dictatorial impunity. That statement more than illuminates the arrogant nature of Tom DeLay, the schmuck who led the charge for impeachment against President Bill Clinton, essentially because he was a Democrat.

For 20 years he's been getting by in Congress through trickery and deceit, never once showing any real interest for the good of anyone but Tom DeLay and family. Even in going out he can't be honest.

Tom Delay is a textbook example of Napoleonic complex taken to its highest degree. A man of vertically challenged physical stature, he walks around with a perpetual smile to keep all, friend and foe, off balance. In true Biblical style, DeLay's posse always follows at least two to three steps behind him. Not one to confront someone face-to-face, Smiler DeLay will get you when you're not looking, probably when you least expect it — at a moment that's safest for him.

He's perpetually in complete denial of any wrongdoing on his part; it's always somebody else's fault, be it the media or the Democrats, or a District Attorney. Maybe it's one of his assistants or Scooter Libby. For a while he blamed Michael Schiavo and those infernal Judges in Florida for the political fallout. Over the years it's been a series of Judges whose decisions he didn't like.

But just ask Tom DeLay, and he'll tell you, "I've done nothing wrong."

He'll repeat this over and over, and over again — even when it's not asked.

He says it so much one comes to the realization it's not so the listener buys it, it's so he believes his own horse droppings.

Wolf Blitzer squeezed about 10 minutes or so out of DeLay on Tuesday, April 4, for a live interview in CNN's The Situation Room. Here then are some of DeLay's verbatim comments, smiling all the way (note how often he denies wrongdoing, then remember that these are only the ones I've documented):

On when he made the decision to leave Congress: "I decided before Tony Rudy went down..." (Yep, no question Tom has a good idea what's in store, since he was pretty much the only logical connection between his former aide Tony Rudy and one of his best friends, Jack Abramoff.)

"Democrats have no agenda, no solutions. They've been criminalizing politics and attacking my reputation for 10 years. All they believe in is 'politics of personal destruction'..."

"Nothing connects me to Abramoff... I'm not a target of this investigation..." (According to what he said the Department of Justice has told his attorneys. Yet.)

"I haven't done anything wrong... nothing unethical or illegal..."

"My wife has a right to be paid..." What about your employees who have entered guilty pleas? "...people who work for me, not me..."

"I'm not stupid... Democrats have scrutinized every part of my operation for 20 years... I would be incredibly stupid to do anything illegal because they would find it... I have lawyers check every decision I make... we make sure it's within

the spirit of the law..."

"...trips to England with Abramoff were vital to help Margaret Thatcher build a Conservative Movement in England, and I played golf at St. Andrews. I did nothing wrong... this was an appearance created by the media and my detractors... nothing wrong in taking that trip..."

"...I'm involved all around the world... Christian persecution in China, Jewish persecution in Russia, supporting Israel... and I also play golf..."

"This is trying to create a straw man and trying to demonize me and make me look different than I really am... I've never done anything while I've been in elected office for my own personal gain." (Nothing except become a multi-millionaire.)

"Yes, I have a hobby. It's called golf. It's the only thing I do for myself. And if people wanna criticize me for playing golf after I've worked hard for seven days, then go ahead and criticize me... wherever I go I try to play golf."

"I'm not worried at all."

Despite all of his rhetoric about leaving for the good of his district, the Conservative Movement, the Republican Party, blah, blah, blah, Tom DeLay is quitting because he can't be the Big Guy in Congress anymore. "The Hammer" can no longer pound heads to any effect. It just ain't good enough serving his people and his party and his country — his outrageously gargantuan and uncontrollable ego has a voracious appetite that requires serious feeding.

Merely listening to his increasingly irrational statements on newscasts, interviews and C-Span over the past year or so, while observing aggressive body language, it's been obvious to note this man is not only delusional, combined with overtones of Napoleonic grandeur, but deeply in denial as well. This interview with Wolf Blitzer only served to make those perceptions even more apparent.

However, the once-feared Tom DeLay is now a liability, and despite his denials, it seems quite likely he's going to don the bright orange jumpsuit.

Hell, if Martha Stewart did time, Tom DeLay certainly must!

But then again, Good Ol' Tom has a mandate from God, which means he's got to be right.

Or so he says.
(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service in the U.S.

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Key Questions in Crawford

To the White House Press Corps:

Rather than reporting that clearing brush in Crawford is “news”, consider instead putting these questions to President Bush:

- **Can you look the American people in the eye and tell them that if one of your *own* children lost her limbs in Iraq, you would consider her sacrifice to be worth it?***
- **Why has not a single member of the Bush family (nephews, nieces, daughters) volunteered for Iraq?***

*If, for example, someone were to suggest that you put life savings into a particular investment, one key question is to ask if *he* is making that same investment. If the answer is “no”, are you likely to invest?

**Lyndon Johnson’s sons-in-law *volunteered* for Vietnam (as did John Kerry).