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GRABBING FOR GREED — Using guerrilla theater, Kattie Heim of Houston, David Gravey of Houston, Jessica Maze of Houston, Carolyn Abbey of Oklahoma City, and Erik Fulmer of Austin (from left) participated at the protest of the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla. last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Redford Pushes For Ethanol-Based Fuel

NEW YORK CITY — Academy Award winning filmmaker and environmental activist Robert Redford criticized the White House's energy policy on CNN's Larry King Live last week and promoted a new campaign "Kick the Oil Habit," a project sponsored by the Center for

American Progress Action Fund. "I think it's important to see the true story being told about how we got there, why we've had a lack of political leadership on the issue and what the solutions are and how the American people, by looking at this campaign, can get involved

and push, pressure their elected officials," Redford explained.

The campaign seeks to pressure the oil industry to double the pumps that provide E-85, an alternative ethanol-based fuel, to consumers over the next year. Over the next 10 years, the project calls for E-85 to be sold at half of all gas stations in the U.S.

Currently, 600 of America's 170,000 gas stations offer E-85, according to the campaign's website.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas), a member of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committees, said on the show that it takes time to diversify the nation's energy sources.

"I think the E-85, the ethanol is certainly promising, but you can't transport it in pipelines, so we have to figure a way to get it out. We don't have the refinery capacity to make it as readily available, but we're working on it," she said.

Sir Richard Branson, the founder and chairman of the Virgin Group, noted that ethanol has a limited supply because the more ethanol plants that are built the more the food supply will dwindle.

"[T]herefore people are not going to want to use food for ethanol," he said.

Branson offered an alternative, 100-percent environmentally friendly solution — investment in the production of cellulose ethanol, which are enzymes that break down waste products.

"But what cellulose ethanol needs is government support, because at the mo-

ment it's more expensive to produce, and it needs a lot of investment by government in getting the enzymes right so that it can be produced," he stated.

Branson's business interests in the travel industry have been negatively affected by high fuel prices. He said that his company "is paying something like half a billion dollars more for its fuel."

Also interviewed that same night on King's show was David O'Reilly, the Chairman and CEO of Chevron. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman as well as the CEO's of Exxon, Mobil, Conoco, Phillips, BP, and Shell declined to participate in a roundtable discussion on the show.

O'Reilly defended the his company's soaring first quarter profits (up 49 percent to \$4 billion) by explaining that the average profitability per gallon of its 180-country operation is five cents a gallon "and our refining and marketing business."

When asked if he concerned when the president said the United States is addicted to oil in his last State of the Union speech, O'Reilly responded:

"I think we're addicted to a good quality of life and energy is a very important of our lives, whether it's transportation, whether it's heating, it's the fuel that drives our economy and we are getting more efficient in how we use it as a country. That's a good thing but energy is a part of our life."

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ABOUT 100 PROTESTORS demonstrated last Wednesday outside the Simmons Center in Duncan, Okla. against Halliburton for various reasons including bribery of Nigerian officials, contaminated water given to U.S. troops, and drilling for oil on the sacred lands of indigenous peoples of Peru. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Shareholders Meeting Leaves Activists Cold

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

DUNCAN, Okla. — Robert Guimaraes Vásquez can't seem to get satisfaction from Halliburton.

The vice-president of a group that represents indigenous peoples in Perú had his chance to ask the head of the petroleum industry services company at its annual shareholders meeting last Wednesday why it was drilling on the sacred lands of his constituents, but the answer he received left him uneasy.

"The meeting came off as very cold, and the Halliburton people were very indifferent," Vásquez told the *ICONOCLAST* through a translator after meeting the Halliburton CEO David J. Lesar at the Simmons Center in Duncan, Okla.

For the last year, Vásquez's organization, the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESP), has been holding Halliburton and Hunt Energy accountable for their actions in the Peruvian Amazon, specifically the construction of a natural gas pipeline including the COMARU from lower Urubamba.

"There have been five major gas pipeline eruptions in the past year. The latest one in March created a 200-foot high flame coming out of a pipeline," he said. "With all of this contamination and harm to the environment, there have been 22 deaths."

Vásquez also puts blame on the current Peruvian government for selling out the land of indigenous people for corporate exploitation.

"President (Alejandro) Toledo has been the president that has done the most to take away communal lands from indigenous people without guaranteeing our territorial rights," he said, adding that the group is considering filing a lawsuit in the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

But while he wants world-wide public attention and solidarity directed toward his struggle against Big Oil in the Amazon, Vásquez said that he wants people to know that Halliburton and others "are making money at the cost of other communities."

Much Ado About Halliburton

During the question-and-answer period of the one-hour shareholders meeting, other representatives of those negatively effected by Halliburton's action faced similar treatment. Questions remain unanswered concerning immigration detention centers for which Halliburton has a contract, the treatment of workers from Third World countries who work for Halliburton in Iraq, the botched repairs on Iraq pipelines, and the overcharging of the Nigerian government.

But to Pratap Chatterjee, the executive director of CorpWatch, Oakland, Calif., this is typical Halliburton.

For three years, CorpWatch has eagle-eyed the company Vice President Dick Cheney once headed as chief executive officer, and during that time, Chatterjee worked to get Vásquez and Michael Keania Karikpo — a lawyer that represents Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria where Halliburton has been charged with bribery and corruption — and the new CEO.

"We were actually treated well, to be perfectly honest. I would say they really didn't answer our questions, and that's their style. They don't do that for anybody else," said the 20-year veteran investigative reporter, originally from Birmingham, England. "Did the CEO answer their questions? No. But he doesn't answer anyone else's questions either, so I don't know if he dismissed them any more than he has dismissed anybody else."

Chatterjee told *THE ICONOCLAST* that he feels that he must persuade the Republicans "because I think they hold the key to changing the country because they control the houses of Congress."

"If they understood, things might change," he said. "I really think the company needs to come clean about a lot of things, and we asked questions, and the

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FLOYD DEVORE of Oklahoma City, Okla., said last Wednesday that he was protesting his former employer Halliburton in Duncan, Okla., because the company had attained no bid contracts and over-charged the U.S. government. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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company didn't give satisfactory answers."

The basis for these questions are contained in CorpWatch's annual Halliburton report, "Hurricane Halliburton: Conflict, Climate Change and Catastrophe," which is co-released with Asociacion Civil Labor in Peru, Environmental Rights Action Nigeria (members of the Friends of the Earth International network), Halliburton Watch, and the Oil & Gas Project.

The report documents bribery and waste in Iraq and Kuwait by cheated taxpayers out of millions of dollars; the employment of cheap sweatshop labor in Asia and refusals to pay for injuries; and the misuse of worker's pensions to pay management benefits even though top managers received tens of millions of dollars from the company's soaring stock price.

"They often give stock answers to very specific questions and refuse to acknowledge how things have been," said Chatterjee. "The chief financial officer said our work was innuendo. But our reports are full of facts. Most of them come from the military themselves or from people who work within the company. There are no opinions in these articles. They are facts."

"And I'd like the company to sit down and answer those facts one by one. I would like to see the company stop contaminating water and overcharging taxpayers," he added.

A Former Employee

Outside the meeting, the protest drew about 100 participants from Oklahoma, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Texas. Participants included former Halliburton workers, family members of soldiers serving in Iraq, a veteran of the Iraq war, and other peace and justice activists.

Holding a sign that read "War for Oil is Wrong," Floyd Devore of Oklahoma City, Okla., said he was protesting his former employer Halliburton because the company had attained no bid contracts and over-charged the U.S. government. Devore, 77, added that he retired 10 years ago from the maintenance department at a Halliburton plant in Dallas, Texas, where he worked for 20 years.

Devore said that he is "most definitely" opposed to the war in Iraq, thinks that "Bush ought to be tried for war crimes," and wished more people would have participated "because I think it's needed."

"I think the stockholders need to be — if they're not aware of how the people feel about Halliburton, then it should sure be brought to their attention," he said. "We don't want to threaten the people of Duncan ... putting them out of work. We just want them to be aware of the things Halliburton is doing. As taxpayers, they ought to be as concerned as everybody else."

A Soldier's Mother

Jeri Reed, a mother of a soldier stationed in Iraq, said that the U.S. government has wasted its money on Halliburton because the company's subsidiary Kellogg, Brown, and Root had failed to provide her son, Cody Camacho, with adequate food, water, and mail services during his March 2003 - March 2004 tour.

As a result of this poor food quality and unclean mess halls, her son and other soldiers in Iraq tried not to become ill as other had, she said. Later Camacho went on food and water rations when they were stationed to provide communications support at Abu Ghraib prison for six



JERI REED, a mother of a soldier stationed in Iraq, said that the U.S. government was wasting its money on Halliburton because the company's subsidiary Kellogg, Brown, and Root had failed to provide her son, Cody Camacho, with adequate food, water, and mail services during his March 2003 - March 2004 tour.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

months, a part of which was the hottest time of the year.

"Families all over the country have been shipping food to their soldiers quietly and without question, spending money we don't have so their soldiers can eat while KBR is being paid for this with our money," said Reed, a member of Oklahoma Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out. "This is like double-paying to feed the soldiers, and the soldiers still don't get food."

Because KBR couldn't deliver the food on time or in large enough quantities, her son and his fellow soldiers became demoralized and slid into resenting the Iraqis and his Iraqi prisoners who received better food, such as cooked rice, than he and the rest of his unit, she said.

"Conditions are horrific for both prisoners and soldiers at these places, and the atmosphere is filled with fear," said Reed, who with her son was against the Iraq war since it started.

Reed said that the situation in Iraq has only gotten worse for the troops since her son returned because KBR employees are still unable to deliver supplies in timely fashion due to the escalating violence.

"If U.S. soldiers left Iraq today, Kellogg, Brown, and Root would lose I don't know if its millions or billions but they would lose a lot of money just for the services they actually provide to the soldiers, not for anything else Halliburton is going in Iraq," she said. "To me this is plain old racketeering. If you don't believe it, look it up a definition of the RICO Act."

A Former Soldier

While serving the airborne infantry in Iraq from March 2003 to January 2004, Hart Viges of Austin, Texas, could attest to the poor food and water quality from private contractors in Iraq.

"Their food sucked. I didn't eat it hardly ever, and when I heard about the water over there, you wondered why the coffee tasted like crap because there was crap in it, you know?" said Viges. "It's something that I didn't give too much thought about over there. I was more worried about the roadside bombs, mortar



JIM DONAHUE of Halliburton Watch attended the protest outside the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla last Wednesday. Halliburton Watch helped release CorpWatch's annual Halliburton report, "Hurricane Halliburton: Conflict, Climate Change and Catastrophe," along with Asociacion Civil Labor in Peru, Environmental Rights Action Nigeria (members of the Friends of the Earth International network), and the Oil & Gas Project.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

rounds on my compound, or someone shooting me or my brothers, you know?"

Viges, a former 50-caliber Humvee gunner in an 80-millimeter mortar crew, said he joined the armed forces as a reaction to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and relied upon his own set of creature comforts to keep focused throughout his tour.

"You know, I found what I called my

'happy thoughts' when I was over there," he explained. "My happy thoughts were the chocolate and banana milk that I drank, the dogs that ran around and we adopted, and Italian music videos, and as long as I got my fill of those three every-day I was doing pretty good."

Now, as a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace and a conscientious objector, Viges is determined, he said, to spread the word for alternatives to war, for love and compassion to the next generation of American youths.

"I feel that I lost total faith in my government. They do not serve the people. They serve the interests of companies like Halliburton. We're going to need a major change, a revolution as you would say, in the way we run our government and ourselves personally and nationally or globally," Viges told THE ICONOCLAST.

"We need to start thinking in totally different ways to solve our problems and to learn about who we are and our connection with everybody else in this world because now something happens on the other side of the world, and it does effect us. Jesus said, 'Love you enemy.' But he should have followed it up with, 'If you love your enemy, you won't have any enemies,'" he explained.

A Soldier's Father

Michael McPhearson, a former field officer in the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division during Desert Shield/Desert Storm, also criticized the concept of civilian contacted workers providing soldiers with basic services because these particular workers lack empathy with their clients as well as training to deal with the realities of war.

"If you're a civilian, you're not trained to maneuver under fire, and if you're a soldier, you are," he said, "and also you have a connection mentally with other soldiers. You know that food, water, and mail are really important, so you know that if I don't get that to them, next time it might be me not getting it."

McPhearson of St. Louis, Mo., said that he attended the Halliburton protest as the executive director of Veterans for Peace and as a member of Military Families Speak Out. His 20-year-old son is scheduled to return from his deployment in Iraq later this year.

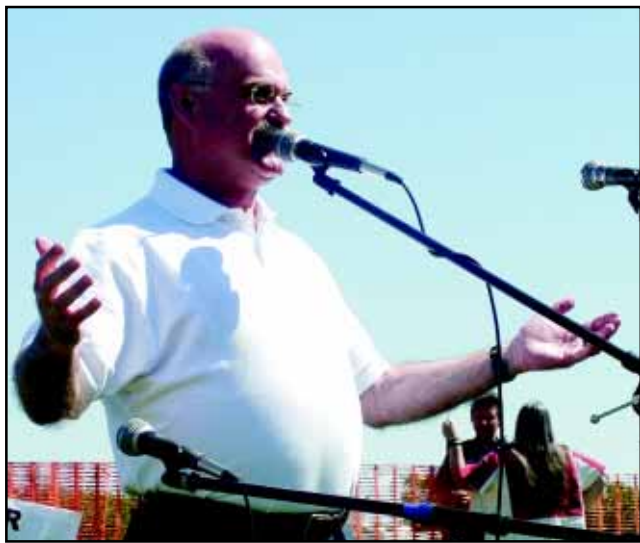
McPhearson said he also takes issue with the civilian leadership for not caring about this flaw which is due in part by Vice President Dick Cheney's "incestuous relationship" with the company providing the services.

"[Cheney's] got this strong relationship with Halliburton, making \$100,000 a year from Halliburton, yet he's the vice president of the United States. That's a conflict of interest," he told THE ICONOCLAST. "There's no way a company is going to — I mean, this is common sense — pay somebody that's not going to work in their interest, and it's not right that government officials aren't free to make decisions — because he's not free if he's making over \$100,000 a year — that are best for this country and for the people, not what's best for a corporation."

"Right now [the vice president] is making money off the death and destruction of Iraqis and American soldiers," he said. "It's outrageous."

McPhearson said he would feel better if Cheney donated his money to veterans organizations that are helping veterans that are returning from Iraq. This sentiment was echoed by Halliburton Watch,

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REV. TRACY WILSON said that he was at first skeptical of the presence of the protestors but soon accepted them as peaceful citizens outside the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla. last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



PHIL WAHL, a retired local pastor and a life-time death penalty abolitionist, also applauded the protestors: "I'm glad you're here. The peace movement I hope will gain momentum, and I'm glad to help it."

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



HANNA JOHNS, a jewelry maker and weaver from Moline, Kansas, said that she found the local police were pleased to discover that protestors like herself are peaceful people outside the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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a military/industrial complex watchdog group that launched a campaign called "Give It Up, Cheney" the same day.

The campaign pressures the vice president, who was Halliburton's CEO from 1995 to 2000, to turn over his remaining Halliburton stock holdings to veterans groups. As of May 15, 2006, he has stock options in Halliburton worth a gross value of \$3.76 million, some of which are already going to charity, according to Halliburton Watch.

Vice President Cheney reported in his 2005 public financial disclosure report to the Office of Government Ethics that he also has thousands of stock options in Lockheed-Martin, Electronic Data Systems, and Proctor and Gamble.

Round Four

Halliburton spokespersons have said that the annual shareholders meeting moved to the hometown of the company's founder, Erle Halliburton, to honor the company's roots, not because the company was avoiding protestors who have bird-dogged the company for the last three years at the Four Seasons Hotel in Houston.

The activists started their demonstration around 7:30 a.m. As shareholders entered and exited the meeting, chants of "Shame! Shame! Shame!" and "How do you sleep at night?" were thrown in their direction. A small group of activists wearing black masks beat drums and waved red and black colored flags, a symbol of anarchism. A plethora of signs held in hands and stuck into the ground read, "No bid contracts are wrong," "Serving our troops contaminated water is wrong," "Meeting for the ethically challenged," "Truth before profits," "Can run to Duncan, but they can't hide," and "Halliburton Pigs At the Trough."

When the entire contingent of activists attempted to deliver a proxy letter by crossing from designated free speech area into the Simmons Center, 16 of them were arrested and charged with criminal trespass by the City of Duncan in a pre-arranged move orchestrated with the Duncan Police Department. Fifteen of the protestors, many of whom were from out of state, later pleaded "no contest" and paid the \$89 fine instead of returning to Duncan to stand trial.

One of the 16 demonstrators, however, posted bond, pleaded not guilty, and will return on May 31 for an arraignment and

a future trial, said Rex Friend, a lawyer working with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Unnecessary Reaction

Aside from an unplanned action from one protestor who was arrested and charged with destruction of private property for clipping down an orange barricade, the protest that brought together people with multiple political and religious views from around the country was otherwise peaceful, well organized, and keenly coordinated, said Friend.

"I felt it was really quite smoothly carried out given the level of diversity," said Friend.

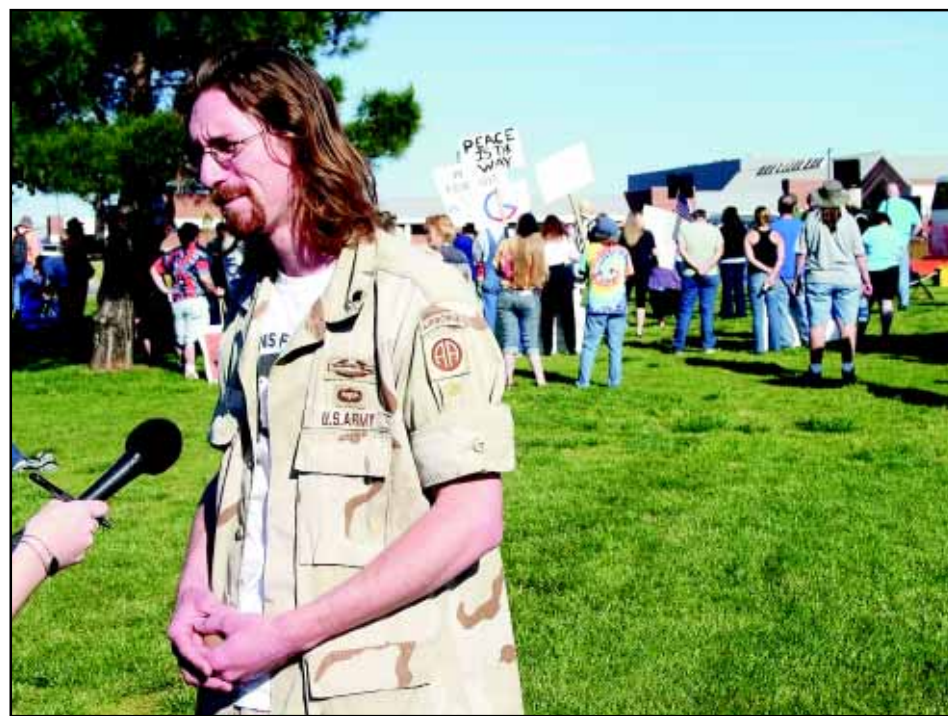
Friend told THE ICONOCLAST that, to his knowledge, this was the first time the current city and county officials had "to consider someone wanting to protest their hometown corporation."

"They prepared for contingencies that were unlikely, and unless they had intelligence beyond us folks, then they way over-reacted because everyone was disciplined, civil, and in compliance, except for the intentional direct action resulting in an arrest that was fully communicated to officials ahead of time, so they didn't have to be concerned that it would get out of hand."

When asked, local policemen said they didn't know what to expect from the protest. The local newspaper THE DUNCAN BANNER reported that Duncan police had monitored the websites of the protest groups ahead of the action. On the day of the protest, a combination of 70-80 Stephens County sheriffs deputies and City of Duncan police officers patrolled the Simmons Center, estimated Sgt. Donny Foraker. This number included a dozen or so police in full riot gear hidden from view behind a fire engine. Helicopters also flew overhead.

Duncan resident Larry Kidd apologized in front of the protest organizers for the heavy police presence at the Simmons Center and told them that there were more citizens of Duncan who supported their stance than they realized.

"I'm just proud to be here today, and I'm so sorry that the Gestapo is here. They've got them on the roof. They took my picture when I got here," said Kidd, comparing the local police force with the secret police used in Nazi Germany. "Don't be fooled just because the Ge-



HART VIGES of Austin, Texas, could attest to the poor food and water quality from private contractors in Iraq while serving the airborne infantry in Iraq from March 2003 to January 2004. He attended the protest of Halliburton in Duncan, Okla last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

stapo is here. They've cowered some of these people here in this town. There's a whole bunch of us are and we're with you. Don't forget it."

Getting To Know You

At the microphone, the Rev. Tracy Wilson said that he was at first skeptical of the presence of the protestors but soon accepted them as peaceful citizens. He said he wanted the protestors to know that the people of Duncan — from the current and former Halliburton employees in his congregation to the local law enforcement officers — are "great folks" and "nice people."

The 15-year resident of Duncan and pastor of First Christian Church also supported the protestors' anti-war sentiments:

"I'm sure against war, and I'm against killing because I think Jesus of Nazareth made that kind of stand. I appreciate you folks being courageous, and you're taking your time and putting your energy and your money to come to Duncan to take a stand, saying 'Enough is enough.'"

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MICHAEL KEANIA KARIKPO, a lawyer who represents Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria where Halliburton has been charged with bribery and corruption, attended the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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Let's bring our young men and women home, and let's not let any more lives destroyed because the war is just increasing the terrorism around the world."

Phil Wahl, a retired local Methodist minister and a lifetime death penalty abolitionist, also applauded the protesters: "I'm glad you're here. The peace movement, I hope, will gain momentum, and I'm glad to help it."

Hanna Johns, a jewelry maker and weaver from Moline, Kansas, said that she found the local police were pleased to discover that protesters like herself are peaceful people.

"You know, we not acting peaceful. We are peaceful," said Johns, who camped at Lake Humphreys Tuesday night and attended the morning protest with her husband and 18-year-old son in support of the Oklahomans who are relatively new at these kinds of protests.

"Oklahoma does not have a strong history of peace protests. They have some strong peace groups, but they haven't had an occasion and here they've had two occasions in a month," said Johns, referring to a previous visit from President Bush in Stillwater, Okla.

Toward the end of the protest after the shareholder meeting let out, a teenager in the passenger's seat of a pickup truck repeatedly passed by holding up a sign that read, "Halliburton puts food on my table."

Johns said that she believed this event sent a good impression to the people of Duncan and removed fears for more Oklahomans to participate in anti-war demonstrations if not in their own hometowns than elsewhere in larger communities where they would feel less threatened for their expressing their beliefs.

"It's all about making the connections for people realizing that each individual person has a stake in and a part of this whole thing," Johns said.

After the demonstration, several protesters participated in a teach-in at Mayflower Congregational Church in Oklahoma City. The demonstration itself was sponsored by 10 organizations including Oklahoma Veterans for Peace, Houston Global Awareness Collective, CorpWatch, Global Exchange, Halliburton Watch, the Crawford Peace House, and a group from New Orleans to represent Katrina victims.



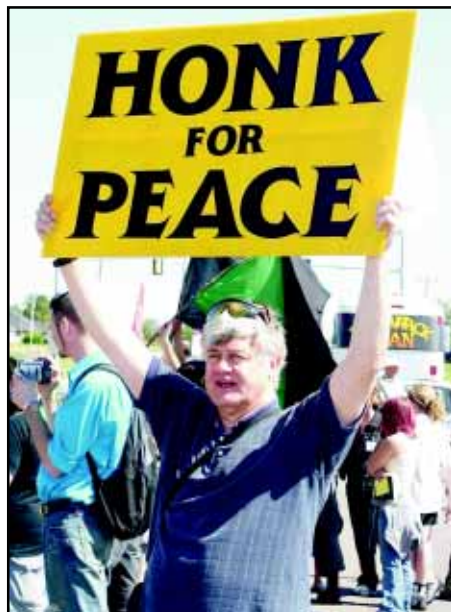
ROBERT GUIMARAES VÁSQUEZ and his Spanish translator (from left) attended the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla. last Wednesday. Vásquez is the vice president of the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSESP), an organization that has been holding Halliburton and Hunt Energy accountable for their actions in the Peruvian Amazon.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



LARRY KIDD, a resident of Duncan, Oklahoma, apologized in front of Halliburton protesters, such as Jim Goodnow (from left), for the heavy police presence at the Simmons Center and told them that there were more citizens of Duncan supported their stance than they realized.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



NATHANIAL BATCHELDER, director of the Oklahoma City Peace House, helped organize a protest outside the annual Halliburton shareholders meeting in Duncan, Okla. last Wednesday.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



ARRESTED OUTSIDE the annual Halliburton shareholder's meeting last Wednesday in Duncan, Okla., were 16 activists including Katie Heim and Jennifer Rooks (from left), both members of the Houston Global Awareness Collective.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

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Texas Legislature Eats Its Children

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "The world's biggest lie is, 'I ain't lyin'!"

The Texas Legislature is, man and woman, a herd of scum sucking-pigs.

They are child abusers, thieves and liars.

In this fifth legislative session, at a cost of a million dollars each, they were given a choice between bankruptcy and deceit.

They chose deceit; they will get bankruptcy.

Financial, moral and generational.

A bipartisan greed sold our children to the likes of Wal-Mart and Exxon while ensuring that for a generation, Texas will continue to provide the absolute worst education in the nation; that the Lone Star will fly over a plantation for the privileged and a slave state for working people.

Hyperbolic vitriol?

God, I hope so.

But with regret I can demonstrate the depths of cynical deception descended to by those we elected to protect our children from the financial and social servitude of ignorance.

First, let's look at the school finance program itself.

By the Legislature's own admission, it's a \$5 billion hot check.

That's what will have to come out of the \$8.2 billion state surplus.

OK.

A little TAKS math problem:

\$8.2 billion - \$5 billion = ?

A) \$600,000,000,000

B) \$2,000,000,000,000,000

C) \$3.2 billion, which is less than \$5 billion, but it will probably be enough because the Tax Cut Fairy is going to make everybody so rich we'll never, ever be hungry again. More turnips, anyone?

D) Another Legislative session to Band-Aid this mess after the election blows over and this Prius-full of clowns brags in the coming election about how they fixed education.

E) The financial equivalent of trading your seed corn for a ticket to the hootchie-kootchie show.

Sorry, but, like the TAKS hijackers, I won't tell you whether you got the right answer.

They just tell you whether you passed.

Regarding this legislative session, they failed.

And so did you.

Don't vote now, but the Legislature just blew all our rainy day money on the opening day of hurricane season.

Remember that 3.2 billion left in the surplus two years from now, assuming we won't need it for anything else, like a hurricane, and that the economy booms like Al Qaeda bomb futures.

Neither the comptroller's office nor the Legislative Budget Board (What kind of

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



idiot ignores his own bookkeeper?) says the entire surplus will be enough to cover next year's costs of education, let alone pay for any new programs.

But this Legislature assumes there will be no new knowledge arising over the next four years.

After all, the Texas Legislature hasn't sponsored a live thought since the War Between the States.

Second, the tax cut.

It is, in fact, a *funding* cut.

However you slice it, Texas schools will get less money from the state and less ability to make up the difference with local taxes.

"Robin Hood" funds have been reduced; Highland Park won't have to give up its polo classes just so kids in West Dallas can learn to read their enlistment contracts before they're sent to Iraq.

Or Laredo.

Of course it's not really a tax cut for most of us.

This year cuts only 12 and one-third cents, or 17 cents per \$100 of valuation, but schools can reduce that by up to four cents. Six if the voters agree to it.

So, if you own a house valued at \$100,000, and you were paying the maximum \$1,500 per year, next year you'll only pay \$1,100. But, if you were paying, say \$1,450, you'll be paying at

least \$1,285. If the district adds on the possible 6 cents, you'll pay even more.

A year from now, that will go up to a third of this year's tax rate, but the six cents will still be part of the deal.

Homestead or ag use exemptions reduce your savings even more.

Wal-Mart and the law firm of Getz, Ali, Conn and Moore, LLP: meanwhile, will make out like they're driving a Corvette convertible on prom night.

So will their stock brokers.

Right now property tax is, for all practical purposes, the only state tax these businesses pay.

For the retail giants, they get a 12 percent property tax cut on buildings and inventory in exchange for .5 percent of gross after deducting either labor or operating costs.

That's an overall tax cut in most cases of at least 10 percent.

Mom and Pop's Mercantile will come out slightly better off tax-wise, because sole proprietorships and those making less than \$300,000 are exempt.

Of course Wal-Mart, flush with their new tax break, can now expand to Lowrent, Texas, and put them out of business.

But then when Pop's '54 Dodge breaks down while moving their stuff out of the last remaining non-vacant building on the town square, he'll have to pay eight percent sales tax to buy that '58 down at Tricky Ricky's Tote-The Note Used . . . uh . . . *Pre-Owned Cars*.

Only \$100 down and \$100 a month for 100 years.

Plus tax.

The people who own the Texas Legislature don't buy used cars.

And Pop will now have a dollar-per-pack tax-paid excuse to quit smoking,

which usually results in just enough people giving up the habit to nullify the increased tax revenue.

But then this tax increase is phased in over two years, so Pop probably won't notice the increase until he starts his chemotherapy treatments.

By then his medical bills will go up because doctors and medical partnerships will also have to pay the business tax.

Third, you thought all this was for education?

You ain't from these parts, are you?

The good news is, there's a \$275 addition to the money coming from the state for students who want to go to college.

The bad news is, state colleges increased tuition again by an average of 10 percent, so most kids can't afford it, and college grants have been turned into college loans so that the average graduate comes out of school owing around \$50,000 before he or she even gets a job.

The worst news is, that's all the good news.

Your children's future is still connected to the phony test.

TAKS results that show improvement every year aren't borne out by any other test, colleges show a steady increase in the number of students who have to take non-credit courses to bring their basic math and reading skills up to higher education standards and every reputable study of high-stakes testing shows that it is bad for children and limits their ability to learn anything except how to take a nonsense test.

Other than that, it's a great experiment.

TAKS is the Dr. Jeckyll formula of public education.

Your children will soon be wearing

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• FISHER

Continued From Previous Page

top hats and opera capes and swinging from the rooftops rather than attending medical school.

It costs \$60 million per year, requires school districts to spend even more on study guides so students can pass the test and gives our slimy legislators and our lying governor something to brag about while our schools remain – and you can't say it often enough – the worst in the nation.

Now, the bloated, over-priced Texas Education Agency (TEA) will set up teams to take over your local school after one year of bad TAKS scores if the bureaucrats think your students MIGHT not live up to their testing expectations next year. These teams will be able to hire and fire teachers, tell them what to teach and close the school if they still don't think you'll measure up.

They can then cut sweetheart deals with private companies to take over. And you'll have to pay for it.

Part of that "bad" school determination has to do with those seniors who do not pass the final TAKS exam.

Under this new law, they are considered drop-outs, even when they aren't.

Theoretically, those who do not pass in their senior year can take the test again in the summer.

Only about 10 percent do.

The rest can either go to community college or tech school at some point and complete an associate degree, or take the GED exam.

The majority chose the latter option.

Researchers think that the number that actually do not get any kind of further training or education at some future point is relatively small; even though TEA, for its own selfish reasons, doesn't keep up with them.

The agency needs a reason to keep its fat budget intact by policing local schools.

No one really knows how many real Texas school dropouts there are; TEA just considers anybody who doesn't follow their phony rules to be a failure, and you pay for it.

Look for your school's educational rating to drop, and TEA's budget to rise.

TEA will also:

- Set an educational plan for each student; that is, the state, not you or his teachers, will now determine what courses your child will take, and decide whether he or she successfully completed them.

- Determine how your school district will budget your money and take over financial management if it doesn't like the way you local folks do business.

- Create a final exam for each course that your child must take and pass to receive credit. Guess who decides the definition of "pass."

- Require school board elections to be scheduled on the same day and at the same polling places as municipal races.

- Decide what TAKS scores will be considered "passing," thus ensuring "improved" phony statistics statewide each.

- Tell your school district when to open school (August 27) and close it. (The second week of June)

Oh, and that much-vaunted teacher raise you've heard so much about?

There's a \$2,500 raise.

And the health insurance supplemental is eliminated.

State insurance cost for a school teacher with a family of four has increased to somewhere between \$550 and \$700 per month, depending on whether you actually want your policy to actually pay for treatment.

Now, the school district has the option of using part of the raise to supplement employee health insurance.

Wanta see the new teacher pay raise?

Wanta see it again?

And if you teach at one of TEA's bad schools, teachers will get a raise for forcing your kids to learn how to take the test, as opposed to teaching actual science, English or history.

If you want a take on all this other than the jaded translation from an aging and angry newsman, go to www.texasisd.com and look at the various analyses.

And I really should apologize to any actual scum-sucking pigs out there for comparing them to the plague rats who created this bill . . . there, I've done it again.

Sorry, all you plague rats.

But it's really not the legislature's fault.

Why are you reading this now, when it's too late?

And what do you plan to do between now and November to defeat those who will call this children's brain feast some kind of reform?

Not teachers.

The average Texas teacher is a 42-year-old woman who considers herself highly religious.

She's waiting for Jesus to deliver her TAKS test scores.

Not parents.

They won't even show up for open house, and won't complain about anything except a losing football season or the arrest of their little darling for setting the school afire while smoking dope during Special Olympics.

But who knows?

Maybe we'll have better school if they're run by those who got a TEA job because they finished an education degree before they found out that they hate kids.

Editorial

Same-Sex Marriage Ban Opens Can Of Worms

Last week, a Senate committee approved a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Before enactment into law, the amendment would require passage by two-thirds of Congress and three-fourths of the states.

The proposed amendment says, "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman."

The key word here is "union."

Setting aside the term "Holy Matrimony," which might go to the heart of traditional "marriage," in an ecclesiastical sense, there is also the secular need for "unions" to be diversified to meet the needs of our current population.

The proposed amendment is nothing but an open door to never-ending Supreme Court debate and a means to divide this nation by targeting individual relationships, terming some as proper and some as improper.

The committee is basically promoting sex between males and females, when instead it should be looking at ways to expand upon contracts that would protect assets and legal rights of those who find themselves outside the traditional realms of matrimony, which is a considerable portion of the population.

Perhaps "marriage," as such, should reside within one's religious background, while measures for child rearing and protection of combined assets, along with other individual and partnership rights, should be secular.

This is a complicated matter. Attempts to simplify it will result in newfound bigotry and unfair generalizations.

For instance, where falls a single parent, due to a tragic death? What is the real substance and outcome of divorce? Where does this leave two males or two females, even absent sex, regarding assets or child-rearing? Children often live with other family members, be they grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, or close friends.

What the committee is trying to do is to injudiciously define families as a man, a woman, and children. Perhaps psychologists would say that in a happy household this is the perfect combination. This, however, does not take into account things such as abuse, infidelity, individual preferences, and financial capabilities, not to mention how one's life plays out in society. What makes one person happy might make another miserable. Families often track according to that scenario, and individual rights is the root.

Even within the "marriage" domain regarding males and females, lines are blurred, since there is a religious aspect (such as getting married by a preacher) and a secular aspect (getting married by a Justice of the Peace). Some are marriages of convenience, some are due to sexual mistakes, and some are results of immaturity or lack of understanding of the responsibilities involved. The oaths are for life but few extend to that timeline.

Politically, the reason for the amendment, which is not expected to pass, is to draw focus away from other pressing issues of national and international importance.

By bringing a divisive initiative such as this down to the personal level so that people can take sides in their coffeshop conversations, the Senators are throwing up a smokescreen.

They are making a mockery of what is real.

— W. Leon Smith

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A Letter To The King

(With Apologies to Elvis)

DEAR GEORGE,

I just wanted to drop a note and get you caught up on how real folks are feeling.

For six years now you've been telling us to "trust" you.

Yet, since being hoisted up onto the Republican banner as its poster boy of "Privileged Illusive Governance" (PIG) in 2000, there's been nary a moment when you weren't in total deception mode.

After failing at virtually every endeavor in your boozy, sheltered life — starting as a kid by blowing up small critters with fireworks; then moving on to barely-passing grades in college (purchased with wealth accumulated from Grandpa Prescott's World War II Nazi bank deals); sloughing through one business disaster after another, again financed by misbegotten family fortunes; inability to get up enough votes in your "home" district even for Karl Rove to "win" you a seat in Congress; until as governor you completely messed up Texas in just five years — Karl Rove was somehow able to maneuver your sorry posterior into the White House.

It's not like you were legally and honestly elected. By 2000 Karl had his subterfuge machine perfected, with ample ability to bury the guy who should have won the primary. Everyone knows how John McCain was smeared with more than enough lies and innuendo to put you in front.

Spurious George, who hid out inside of whisky bottles while Senator-to-be McCain suffered for more than five years in the Hanoi Hilton, had the unmitigated gall to drag this good man, and his family, through the most vile of unsubstantiated accusations.

And in the name of Jesus Christ, no less... Glory Hallelujah!

Your continual iteration of being saved by faith in the Lord has never resonated with any note of genuine sincerity.

Then, I've never observed the least modicum of sincerity in you at any time, no matter what the issue.

Yet, somehow, people buy your down-home, good ol' boy horseshit act.

Why is it that so many otherwise nice folks, millions of whom like you had never ventured beyond U.S. borders yet unlike you could not even begin to imagine your level of wealth and privilege, turned to you as a "leader?"

I can understand the white tie elitists getting behind you. Their interests are pure selfish greed — monetary and power-based — fulfilled by your regime as though those were the only citizens in the Nation.

But your "brain," Herr Oberst Karl Rove, manipulated a massive fixation on your rebirth in Christianity to sucker the homespun types into thinking you were one of them.

George, you wouldn't know how to be a regular guy if somebody gave you a six-week course. For starters, regular guys aren't cheerleaders in college.

Everything about you is an act. You're not a real Texan; you were born in Connecticut.

How come you're the only Bush brother with a pronounced drawl? Hell, yours is so phony you sound like you've spent your entire existence in a trailer park somewhere around Happy.

You never had to apply for a job, then through the interview and selection process — Daddy made sure there were never any obstacles.

What made you think for one second



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

you were presidential material?

Oh, yeah, that gigantic ego of yours, that snotty frat boy attitude wherein you consider yourself better than everyone else.

Your insufferable hubris shows through in every photo, in every meeting with other world leaders, in every speech, in every "edict" you demand from Congress.

This Nation had stood strong and great for 224 years before Herr Rove and Company arranged the election of 2000 be hijacked for you and Dick Cheney. Well, they Shanghaied it for Cheney and the Republican Party; like I said at the top, you were just the poster boy.

When all the chips were on the table, the ace came out of the RNC's sleeve — William Rehnquist paid Ronald Reagan, your Old Man, and the rest of the Republican Good Ol' Boys Club back by illicitly installing you as faux president.

Immediately thereafter you began your stratagem to dismantle the American middle class and our way of life by holding secret meetings with economists, plus your energy and oil cronies.

So sure were your handlers of electoral victory that Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz had cooked up the plot for Total World Domination even before Election Day.

In an early show of who's side the Lord is on, new Attorney General John Ashcroft was allowed to denigrate the labors of man's God-given talents by covering works of art in Federal buildings, paid for with taxpayer dollars, because he did not approve of displaying the human body in public.

During the past five years the Federal Communications Commission has run roughshod over 1st Amendment Rights of Freedom of Expression of Broadcasters; reporters have been subjected to arrests and jailings, forced to provide notes and give up sources; teachers have been fired for merely saying the word "peace"; schoolchildren as young as six-years-old have been handcuffed for minor infractions, older students have been suspended because they spoke out of turn in class.

You were warned of the possibility of a major terrorist incident early into your reign, yet chose to ignore the reports.

Or perhaps there was more to it, something worse.

You used that "attack" to begin a systematic dictatorial rule which appeared security-focused on its face, but in reality comes much nearer a Theocratic, tyrannical oligarchy.

Not once in the entire time since your cabal usurped power have you or anyone in your regime acted at the behest of the majority of the people.

You lied about 9/11, covering up the true facts by allowing the wreckage of the World Trade Center to be packed up and shipped off in record time, for smelting in China and elsewhere. At the biggest damned crime scene in American history every precept of forensic science had been ignored — the evidence was never given proper examination.

And, where in the hell *were* you that day? I mean, after the seven minutes you sat doing nothing with the second graders. How convenient that you were visiting brother Jeb's state of Florida, far from the action and able to skirt any scrutiny.

What happened to Cheney for those three or four days?

You sent the absolute top of the top U.S. Forces to catch Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, blaming him as the person behind the four airliners that were hijacked. Somehow, he was not, and has yet to be, captured.

Our Nation was given a world-class black eye by invading Iraq with unsubstantiated proof of "weapons of mass destruction." Even if Saddam Hussein had been in possession of such armaments, it's laughable to think he would have a missile system capable of reaching the U.S.

You knew that was a crock; so did most of the rest of the World, whose leaders censured the illegal invasion.

Then, you tried to back-end that garbage by concocting a tale of Saddam acting in cahoots with Osama.

When that didn't sprout wings, George, you went for the humanitarian side issue of how horrible Saddam is — he kills his own people and denies them their rights — and it's our place to bring proper democracy to the Middle East.

First, it is not the responsibility of the United States to change regimes, using bombs and bullets as incentives for people to vote. Second, you've murdered far more Iraqis than Saddam ever did, in a mere percentage of the time.

Third, you, yourself, have been responsible for the denial of rights of numerous Americans and people on our soil, as well as the callous disregard for the laws and Constitution of our Nation — which are your sworn duty to uphold.

Need I mention the Geneva Convention; the Military Code of Conduct; and basic attendance toward humanity?

You're perfectly okay with the torture of prisoners, held in captivity and incommunicado for incalculable amounts of time, as outlined by Alberto Gonzales, whom you've promoted to Attorney General, and Brett Kavanaugh, whom you wish to promote to a lifetime appointment on the D.C. Appellate Court.

I wonder, George, WWJD?

But, you're the one who knows better in that regard, considering God told you to invade Iraq when He visited you in the White House Rose Garden. Yeah, I know, as King of Planet Earth, "God talks through you."

Lies, or delusion, George?

When you faced another decorated VietNam war veteran in the 2004 presidential election, Herr Karl dredged up the Swift Boat Prevaricators to cast doubt upon his service record. Roving strategy made it seem like the guy who

went to war was less capable of protecting us from your shadow enemy than you, who hid under the bed rather than face combat.

Most folks doubt the accuracy of the vote counting in that election, too.

As a leader, your sole accomplishment has been scuttling our great Nation into an abyss of wrack and ruin. There is not one single positive accomplishment I can think of to come out of your five wasted years in office.

Meanwhile the economy, despite your rosy depiction, really sucks.

Ask any GM or Ford employee. Ask most factory workers.

Just ask anyone with monthly bills to meet.

Heating fuel and electricity costs are sky high and climbing.

Each trip to the supermarket costs more than the last one.

It should not cost \$50.00 for 15 gallons of gas!

But, as always you'll blame these messes on everyone else, despite having a loyal GOP House.

Still, you and Condoleezza Rice and your other mouthpieces continue to intone the daily mantra of "trust us."

The American people, as well as World leaders and the citizens of the Planet, do not trust you.

We cannot trust you. None of us can afford to trust you.

We all value life too much.

You went AWOL when Kristina hit New Orleans; you have yet to satisfactorily deal with its aftermath.

It caught you off guard when the story surfaced that you had ordered secret intrusions upon Americans' telephone and Internet communications. Your response was a tap dance assuring us it was only traffic between several thousand select U.S.-based lines and suspected al Qaeda numbers overseas.

Only a hardcore Bush Republican would have bought your routine.

Or a complete moron.

Then, we learned that thousands of millions of telephone communications — land lines, cell phones, dial up IPs, fax machines — were being cross-referenced in the biggest compilation of electronic data ever amassed.

You tried to tell us "trust us," we're not trolling for individual calls or listening in on private conversations. We're looking for al Qaeda operatives and cells.

Now, you want the architect of this massive secret project collecting electronic data on as many Americans as possible elevated to head of the CIA.

George, either you're a lunatic, or you think the rest of us are all insane.

There is absolutely no justification for you, as ersatz president, wanna-be King, functioning under the *Fuhrerprinzip* and making up the rules as you go along, to

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• TENUTO

Continued From Previous Page

be compiling this data. If there were, you would not have done an end run around the Court System.

The incalculable plethora of malfeasance you could accomplish with this wellspring of information and the potential effects rise to levels that leave the mind desensitized. The very fact that you have access to such records turns my marrow to ice.

Since you want so badly for us to trust you, why do you repeatedly refuse to operate within the laws? What have you got against working within the framework of the system, including the Legislative and Judicial Branches as governmental partners, not adversaries?

What have you got against the U.S. citizens that you repeatedly equivocate?

You love to invoke the words "Democracy" and "The Constitution," don't you, George. These are sacred in the annals of humankind.

However, when coming from you and your jacks these are code words for the loss of Freedoms, Security, and Lives.

For no reason are you ever to be trusted; time and again your plans have proven to not be plans at all, rather plots of selfish greed — often with nefarious undertones.

The "evildoers," as you choose to call them, are not all around us — they nested deep inside us. The most frightening, dangerous "evildoers" I know about are you and your deceptive, greed-infested, honor-challenged Fascist Regime!

Pity the millions of poor saps who buy your "New Redeemer" crap, and can't admit the error of their ways.

Now that your poll numbers have sunk nearly as low as whale feces, (to which you don't pay attention, because you couldn't care less what the American people think), you send out wife Laura and Herr "Turd Blossom" to lay some groundwork before you interrupt America's evening relaxation.

Both of them, going out and publicly commenting on how the people they meet like you and tell them what a great job you're doing — but the war is bringing him down — is really sad, George. This reeks like two lumps of Limburger: One might just get the impression these are scripted talking points; if not, then they're proof that the only people Bush insiders talk to are Bush supporters.

And, why in the hell is Rove making a policy speech, anyway? Isn't he off the White House staff?

Hello? George? Illegal Mexicans and South Americans are not high on our priority list. One more smoke and mirrors routine isn't going to divert our attention from all the other manure you, Karl, the Dick, Rummy and Condi have been spreading.

You, George W. Bush, are blight upon God's own Earth, a stench upon America.

You have besmirched us, the American people; you are responsible for sullyng our reputation as "good neighbors" toward the rest of the Global Community.

To put it in Texan, you are one nasty polecat.

George, next time you look in the mirror see if you can find the serial killer with the most notches currently on the Planet.

Shalom,
Jerry

PS./ Do y'all think you might consider quitting in the next, say, month or so, you know, like your "buddie" Tom DeLay, and save us the cost and embarrassment of having to impeach your sorry butt?

(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service in the U.S. Army, he holds a BS and MA in Communications from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Depending upon your taste in political stew, you can either blame or thank Jerry for his weekly "Out Of The Blue" feature in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. Visit his blog BLUE STATE VIEW at illinoiscentral.blogspot.com)

Republicans And Democrats Don't Want To Play Ball

Recently, the WALL STREET JOURNAL reported on a possible dictatorial leader, a coup, and a secession. And these things took place in our nation's capital. I haven't heard about this reported elsewhere. This doesn't mean there was a cover-up, but I do think these events warrant more attention.

For years, Republicans and Democrats in Washington have often compromised to get things accomplished. They "played ball" with each other, being aware of the realities of the system of give and take. Now, however, a group of Republicans is no longer willing to play ball with a group of Democrats. And I'm talking about softball.

For 37 years, hundreds of young Congressional aides have put their partisan feelings aside and participated in the Congressional Softball League. But during the off-season, some Republicans objected to the way the playoff system has been run. They felt that the commissioner, Democrat Gary Caruso, was "running a socialist year-end playoff system." Socialism in softball? Was there a collective farm in the outfield?

Instead of the typical playoff system that rewards teams that played well during the regular season, Caruso's system gives every team a good chance to win. So, those who oppose this playoff system asked the same question that NBA fans ask each year, "Why bother playing the regular season?"

Caruso said that the Republican idea of favoring the top teams was part of their plan "to wage class warfare on the more relaxed teams." Right. And umpires are storm troopers?

Do you get the feeling that both sides take this softball league a little too seriously? What's next, are conservatives going to refuse to play Left Field? If a Republican steals a base, are the Democrats going to call for an investi-



Modern Times
By
Lloyd
Garver

gation?

Instead of coming up with a compromise, some Republican teams picked up their balls and bats and bolted to form a new league. Perhaps some of the Congressional aides on both sides are thinking about running for office someday. But if they can't agree on something like a softball league, how are they ever going to agree on things like taxes, social security, and which states get to have the most expensive, unnecessary projects? I have a feeling that both sides could have compromised on a softball playoff format without selling out their basic ideological principles.

Athletes of different political persuasions putting politics aside to participate in sports has always seemed admirable. During the Olympics, we often see good sportsmanship between people who would be enemies away from the playing fields. We always hope that people on both sides see that their opponents are "just regular people like them," not monsters like they may have been told by their political leaders. Then after the games, maybe they'll have a little more tolerance for people with different beliefs from theirs.

And that was a good thing about the Congressional Softball League. Republicans and Democrats could forget their differences for a few hours and just have fun. Maybe after the games, they'd go out for dinner. I'm sure political issues would

come up then. Maybe they'd see there is really more than one side to most things. Maybe the next day, they'd suggest to their bosses that the opposition "wasn't that bad" and could be dealt with.

But that's over. And not just in softball. Positions have hardened so much today, that people believe their side is definitely right and the other side is completely wrong. There's no in-between, there's no desire to listen to people with opposing views. People can't seem to have friendly, rational discussions anymore with those who disagree with them. Are you able to talk about politics with friends who don't agree with you without feeling you have to change the subject to things like "why do red stop lights seem like they're longer than green ones?"

It would be nice if President Bush, who once called himself a "uniter," would walk over to the National Mall and tell the feuding softball players to knock it off. And after talking to them, maybe he'd be motivated to talk to the leaders of both parties and tell them to "play ball with each other." He could even suggest that the American people do the same thing. In other words, stop name-calling, stop blind partisanship, and be more tolerant of each other. It's the best way to work things out. And it's as American as a weekly softball game.

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

Marriage Discrimination Amendment Moves Forward

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Split along party lines, a constitutional amendment that discriminates against same-sex couples who wish their marriage to be recognized by all 50 states passed the Senate Judiciary Committee panel last week.

Tempers flared afterward as Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) stormed out the meeting declaring his opposition to the amendment, which Democrats say is a Republican ploy to garner support in the mid-term elections during a time when President Bush's job approval rating is down over the Iraq war and his domestic wiretapping program.

Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) said while he is "totally opposed" to the amendment, he felt the Senate should still debate it. A vote on the proposed amendment is set for the week of June 5.

The measure moved forward by a vote of 10-8 and will go before the full Senate, where there is no likely it will passing. An amendment to the Constitution needs two-thirds of Congress and three-fourths of the states to be approved.

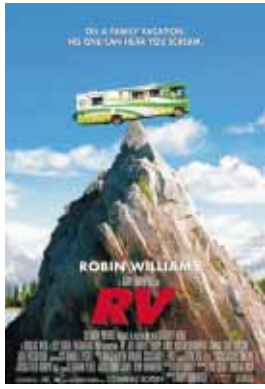
Marijuana Compound Reduces Diabetes Risk: New Study

JERUSALEM — A study published in March 2006 issue of the medical journal Autoimmunity says that a compound found in marijuana plants reduces diabetes risk in mice by over 50 percent.

Scientists at Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem report that injections of the non-psychoactive cannabinoid CBD — a naturally-occurring component of marijuana — significantly reduced the prevalence of diabetes in mice from an incidence of 86 percent in non-treated controls to an incidence of only 30 percent.

Investigators said that in a separate experiment, control mice gained diabetes at a median of 17 weeks while a majority (60 percent) of CBD-treated mice remained diabetes-free at 26 weeks.

RV




Robin Williams plays an overworked executive who ditches a family trip to Hawaii and convinces his wife and kids to rent an RV so they can spend quality time together in the Rocky Mountains. Little do they know, Williams is scheduled to be at a business meeting in Boulder.

PG

Runtime: 1 hour 40 min.

Thurs. May 25 7 p.m.	Friday May 19 GRADUATION NO SHOW	Sat. May 27 7 p.m.	Sun. May 28 7 p.m.
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Bobby Morrow Was Fastest Thing On Two Feet

With the Olympics only six months away, Bobby Joe Morrow ran the 100-meter dash in world-record time on May 16, 1956.

As a boy on the family cotton farm in the Rio Grande Valley, Bobby ran just for the fun of it. His favorite pastime was chasing jack rabbits, which he later claimed with a straight face to have actually caught.

Determined to make the most of his amazing gift, Bobby developed a unique

training program. He never ran more than two hours a day and always tried to get a minimum of 11 hours sleep every night.

After high school at San Benito, Bobby chose Abilene Christian over a multitude of other colleges for religious rather than athletic reasons. The track star soon put the small West Texas campus on the map.

As a freshman, Bobby was rated second and fourth in the world at his short-

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



distance specialties — the 100 and 200-meter dashes. The next year, he equaled the best time ever in the hundred and improved his international ranking to first place in both events.

Bobby was the odds-on favorite to run away with the gold at the 1956 Summer Games, which had been delayed until November due to the southern hemisphere site. Though some sportswriters worried that the Lone Star flash might have peaked too early for the XVI Olympics, he arrived in Melbourne, Australia in top form.

Bobby breezed through the qualifying heats for the hundred, but so did little Ira Murchison of Chicago as each tied the Olympic record in their respective races. With Kansas' Thane Baker expected to give his teammates a run for their money, the U.S. looked forward to a clean sweep.

A so-called "rolling start," a questionable technique Bobby considered poor sportsmanship, gave Australian Hec Hogan the early lead in the 100-meter showdown. But the Texan steadily gained ground with his fluid nine-foot stride and passed Hogan at the halfway point.

Bobby glided toward the gold as Baker and Murchison battled the Aussie for the silver. Baker managed to take second place with a perfectly timed lunge at the tape, and Hogan, who died of leukemia during the 1960 Olympics, beat Murchison by a nose for the bronze.

Through the 200-meter preliminaries, Bobby nursed a groin muscle pulled in his gold-medal performance. A fierce competitor incapable of settling for second best, he would have risked aggravating the injury if contested. Fortunately no one pressed him in the early heats, allowing the muscle to heal completely.

Although Bobby's body was in great shape, his mind had a hard time handling the incredible pressure. All the talk

about his repeating Jesse Owens' 1936 double gold in the dashes had him tied up in knots. The night before the 200-meter finals, he could not sleep a wink.

But the tension and self-doubt melted away at the sound of the starter's pistol. Defending champion Andrew Stanfield of the U.S. led the pack around the curve only to watch helplessly as Bobby flew by on his way to a second gold medal and a new Olympic record.

Four days later, the speed demon savored yet another golden moment. He ran the anchor leg for the victorious 400-meter relay team.

Bobby came home to a hero's welcome. The Texas senate saluted his achievements with a special resolution, and the house of representatives declared a statewide Bobby Morrow Day. Abilene and Beaumont held daylong celebrations, and the gym at San Benito High School was renamed in his honor.

The national recognition was unprecedented. *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* selected Bobby "Sportsman of the Year" for 1956; *SPORT* magazine hailed him as "Athlete of the Year," as did a poll of sportswriters and broadcasters; and he was presented with the coveted Sullivan Award by the Amateur Athletic Union.

When Bobby Morrow retired from competition in the late 1950s, he had collected 14 national sprint championships in addition to the incomparable keepsakes from the Melbourne Olympics. Of the 88 races he ran as a member of the Abilene Christian track team, he lost but eight.

No wonder the kid from the cotton patch was judged the "Greatest Sprinter of All Time" by *TRACK AND FIELD NEWS* in 1958 and inducted into three different halls of fame: Helms Track and Field, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and, of course, the Texas Sports Hall of Fame.

Those embarrassed jack rabbits down in South Texas had no cause to hang their long ears in shame. After all, that was no ordinary mortal that used to run them down. It was Bobby Morrow, the fastest thing on two feet.

Bartee Haile welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at haile@pdq.net or P.O. Box 152, Friendswood, TX 77549. And don't forget to visit www.twith.com.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Since the Republican premise seems to be that Americans won't do certain types of work, I wonder if Halliburton is going to employ illegals to build the border fence.

Daryl Altman, Lynbrook, NY

To The Editor:

The U.S. Department of Defense just released a video purportedly showing a "plane" hitting the Pentagon on 9/11. Some conspiracy theorists claim that a missile hit the Pentagon, not a 757. Based on this "evidence" it's almost impossible to tell, that is, except to those highly skilled in forensic image analysis.

The DOD video (with each frame of the film curiously date stamped Sep 12, 2001) was taken from a gas station opposite the Pentagon. However, The DOD did not release other video evidence taken by security cameras from the rooftop of a nearby hotel, and video footage of the event recorded by the Maryland D.O.T highway surveillance cameras just opposite the cash site? The tapes of these digital video security cameras which have unobstructed views of the area where the "plane" impacted, were confiscated by governmental officials within minutes following the crash. Showing video tapes from all three locations would have possibly revealed what actually happened - and put some of the conspiracy theories to rest.

Did a missile that hit the Pentagon on 9/11? For those who scoff at such a question, consider this: "Once upon a time Conspiracy Theorists insisted the world was round."

Harold S Kramer, Marblehead, MA

To the Editor:

I shudder at the demise of George W. Bush from, and the ascendancy of Hillary Clinton to the Presidency. It seems to be a Hobson's choice, with no clear alternative of returning our nation to the independence it once enjoyed under the Founding Fathers.

At age, 78 I have lived through many presidencies starting with Roosevelt. I could never understand the steady drift away from national independence both during Democrat and Republican administrations over the generations. Then I bought the book by Professor Carroll Quigley, called "Tragedy and Hope: A History of the World in our Time" (<http://aobs-store.com/store/page12-ss6.html#223>), and found out why this is going on.

It is not by happenstance; in fact, it follows a design advocated by Carroll Quigley. The late Georgetown University professor explained: "The argument that the two parties should represent opposed ideals and policies, one, perhaps, of the Right and the other of the Left, is a foolish idea acceptable only to doctrinaire and academic thinkers. Instead, the two parties should be almost identical, so that the American people can 'throw the rascals out' at any election without lead-

ing to any profound or extensive shifts in policy."

In addition to this, Quigley argued, there is one other benefit to having two political parties, each with the same program. Should either party become corrupt or un-enterprising while in office, "Then it should be possible to replace it, every four years if necessary, by the other party, which will be none of these things but will still pursue, with new vigor, approximately the same basic policies."

Now I can understand why Democrat Jimmy Carter gave away our Panama Canal, to be followed by Republican Ronald Reagan, who ran up our national debt. I can understand why Republican George H. W. Bush told us that we are in a New World Order, and why he then ceded his campaign to Democrat Bill Clinton, who then gave away our weapons technology to the Communist Chinese, and gave them the management to the Panama Canal.

Now we have Republican George Bush moving to merge our nation with the North American continent, while Democrat Hillary will pretend to rescue us from this fate. And always there seems to be the same outfit in the background subtly and covertly steering us into less freedom and independence.

I think the solution is to get the American people as a whole to understand this process before anything can be done.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Pelteson, Las Vegas, NV

To The Editor:

I notice the John Birch Society has concentrated their entire focus on their nationwide campaign to secure our borders and oppose ANY open borders legislation in congress, such as amnesty or "guest worker" bills, being promoted by the anti-American leaders we have been cursed with in The White House and congress.

The Birch Society, I also notice, is working with The Minuteman volunteers, now protecting our borders, and through educational efforts is providing back-up public pressure on congress to stop this scandalous open borders sell-out of our Republic by our own leaders who are obviously front men for their New World Order Globalist bosses.

Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado), a hero of the movement to secure our borders (and incidentally no longer welcome by the subversive White House crowd for obvious reasons), has warned that over 51 mid-east terrorist suspects have been arrested crossing our southern borders which I feel indicates the greater clear and present danger.

I wish to absolutely urge ALL concerned citizens to go to The John Birch Society website at www.JBS.org (or call: 1-800-JBS-USA-1 for free petition) and sign, download, or circulate the "Petition to Members of Congress" to secure our borders - Time is short!

Sincerely,

Ed Nemechek, Landers, Calif.

Bush Immigration Plan Upsets All Sides

WASHINGTON — The immigration plan President Bush outlined in his televised speech from the Oval office last Monday night upset every faction within the debate. He called for a "rational middle ground" on immigration — a beefed up border security and a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

Bush's border security plan was aimed to please hardliners for the original House immigration bill passed last December that called for a wall along the 1,950 mile Mexican/U.S. border and criminal penalties enforced on illegal immigrants.

State governors had mixed reviews on the Bush plan to send 6,000 National Guard troops to California, Texas, Ari-

zona, and New Mexico to aid patrols along the Mexican border. Republicans and Democrats also warned that the Iraq war had already burdened to the troops.

The Bush plan also tried to appease Latinos and immigration groups, though many of them saw the troop deployment and the increased security technology on the border as sending the wrong message: "immigrants are the number one enemy of this country."

At the same time, Bush's proposal included portions of the Senate's immigration proposal which offers a route to citizenship for most of the 12 million illegal immigrants in the U.S.

Coulter's War:

Ann Coulter Acknowledges The Covert NeoCon War On Americans

BY MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

What was that sound on the phone just now? A NSA goon slurping his coffee? We are all wondering if that is static we hear on the line today or Big Brother. And we have also learned that Big Brother has a sister, and her name is Ann Coulter.

In her most recent rant Ann Coulter, not satisfied with the blood bath going on in Iraq and the violations of individual rights perpetuated by the Bush Administration, calls for open war between Republicans and, evidently, everyone else on the face of the Earth and questions the masculinity of Republicans who fail to hit the barricades in behalf of the NeoCon agenda. This is ironic since more every day have gender questions about Coulter herself. So in the name of transparency in media I have a proposal to answer those questions for all time. More on that in a moment.

Reading too much Coulter is emotionally debilitating but I hung on long enough to get the real point. Coulter is finally admitting that the NeoCons have long been applying the techniques of war to the political process and, their days numbered, are now frantic to send the Real Republicans, to take up their weapons and throw themselves into the battle against NeoConism's enemies. Ann is trying to counter the hasty retreat of so many who once trusted them by questioning their manhood. This makes her own gender a legitimate question.

Coulter's trembling finger was pointed at the Democrats as she said, "For a political party that grasps the concept of victory against foreign enemies, Republicans can't seem to grasp that concept when it comes to domestic enemies. Instead of taking a page from Sun-tzu's 'Art of War,' when it comes to fighting liberals, American conservatives prefer the Jimmy Carter unconditional-surrender strategy." In her new book she evidently suggests a 12 step program for those Republican Men reluctant to die maintaining her lucrative constituency.

For Coulter if it is not a NeoCon it is a liberal. This does keep things simple for her.

The liberals are never that organized or effective.

Coulter starts her screed with slams, only moderately amusing, against the Kennedys, Patrick and Old Teddy. As she careens on you can almost see the white froth dripping from her lips. She manages to position Rush Limbaugh as a martyr to drug laws, characterizing Rush's prosecution for the illicit use of prescription drugs as political persecution. Who was it who has continued the Drug War Atrocities? Perhaps Ann should check her facts. NeoCons never met a war they didn't love.

We all know that Coulter is very much in favor of the continuing debilitations of the War on Drugs, an activity that lines the pockets of the greedy and grasping all the way from the White House on down.

The leadership in both the Democratic and Republican Parties are all for the largess they realize from that war on us; this is not a partisan issue and far more us, the people, versus all of the leadership from both parties and their corporate cronies.

In a sick way Coulter's rant is actually rather funny. It is as if in 1941 Adolph Hitler, the SS standing firmly behind him, decided to pick a fight with a local Kin-



dergarten class. Nothing the Democratic Party has done has even been an effective

defense for longer than I can remember and Ann herself has apostatized then as too wimpy to be believed. This is not inappropiate.

I once bought the fiction that there was a Vast Left Wing Conspiracy when I was active as a Republican, I was chagrined to discover that the worst I could find were individuals with doubtful ethics, non-existent personal morals, and short range personal agendas that went no further than the next election or even their next lobbyist funded jaunt. If they are larcenous at least they are not efficient about it.

Joe Conason was right. The Democrats steal less.

It was a hard truth to acknowledge but the fact is that the Republican Party was the first fatality in the present War on Americans launched by the NeoCons and supported through the amazing vitriol, lies, and misdirection, of such as Ann Coulter and John Fund. Ann does the screaming, Fund does the scheming.

Real Republicans are still twitching,

but those among them who have kept their ideological grounding intact are now beginning to understand who stole freedom.

Karl Rove perfected his use of the myriad of bureaus and institutions along with his application of policy as a profit center to augment the donations from corporations while still flexing his flabby muscles down in Texas.

The war against Americans has been covert up until now and really, it is nice of Coulter to bring the truth out in the open. That admission is a sign of NeoCon desperation.

Was Clinton a womanizer? Yep. That made him eminently attackable and attack the NeoCons did through such institutions as the Wall Street Journal and the practiced offices of John Fund who has spent the last 30 years grasping for the gold ring of wealth and power, using the weapons of deceit, manipulation, and war to create himself as someone he never was. Coulter has described liberals as 'girly' since 9/11 and has consistently used 'boys' instead of men and 'girls' instead of women. Why is that? Could this focus originate in her own gender confusion?

The gender bent of Coulter's rant also brought to mind another story that is picking up steam through the diligent efforts of Dan Borchers, a Conservative Republican who has voiced many questions about Coulter.

Is Ann Coulter a female? While the answer would appear to be obvious; she is after all, blond, curvy, and attractive, real affirmation is not in evidence. Coulter is a fag hag, her best friends are gay. She has never married or evidently been in a long term relationship and she has had no children and is nearly menopausal.

So is she or isn't she female? Rumors includes the titillating piece of gossip that she might not really know herself. Coulter could have been born with both and had her parents pick wrong. It happens. That would explain the hysterically violent tone in her writing and other signs noted elsewhere. So how can Coulter prove her gender?

I suggest that we turn to the Daughters of the American Revolution. They can oversee a DNA test that will settle the question This is appropriate because Ann is a member of that rectitudinous body and if the lovely Ann is not really female the DAR would certainly want to know that so her membership could be shifted to the Sons of the American Revolution. That would made for interesting meetings.

Inquiring minds want to know and all it takes is a swab from the inside of the mouth, not nearly as intrusive as Ann's rhetoric I might add.

Now, about the balance of Ann's article aimed at selling her book and stoking the fires of Republican Manhood. Perhaps if the test proves what so many believe Ann can be the first to sign up for her own course on Manhood as she leads her own militia of macho renewed Republicans over the top, if any can be enlisted in 'her' campaign.

Historically, real men declared war before the hostilities began. In this, as in so many things, the NeoCons are 'different.' But what can you expect from NeoConning cowards who have never faced the real thing?

If The Jeans Fit, Wear Them. At Least Until Your Legs Go Numb.

I have a favorite pair of jeans I refuse to give up, and which, over the last few years, my wife has attempted to eradicate on six different occasions. She hates these jeans because, according to her, they are "ripped, frayed and embarrassing." Particularly when I forget to change them before going out somewhere in public, such as our front yard. Her attempts to get rid of my jeans have escalated from them being "lost," to an incident last week in which she claimed my jeans "spontaneously combusted," forcing her to put out the flames with the nearest extinguishing device: A meat cleaver.

She later apologized for hacking my jeans, telling me she reacted instinctively to a dangerous situation. I told her I understood, and that, instinctively, I planned to continue wearing my newly perforated jeans, at least until the remaining threads give way to the force of gravity and I am suddenly de-pantsed.

Probably while raking the yard.

There was a time when my wife actually liked seeing me in these jeans. Whenever I wore them I'd get...The Look — an eyebrow raise and quick scan of inventory suggesting the merchandise might be leaving the shelf before I could announce my blue light special. Now when I put them on all I get is a roll of the eyes suggesting I hold a clearance sale to reduce some of my inventory.

Does that mean I'll stop wearing them?

Of course not.

That's because I'm a man. And as a man, looking good isn't nearly as important as proving I can still fit into the jeans I wore eight years ago, even if getting them on requires a case of cooking spray and an electric winch attached to the bumper of a Chevy 4x4. It doesn't matter that the waist is so tight my spleen is temporarily relocated behind my ears. Or that the contents of my pockets look like they've been vacuum packed.

"Is that a 1964 penny?"

"Yeah."



By
Ned
Hickson
Siuslaw News

"How long until the impression on your leg goes away?"

"Depends. One time I had a Susan B. Anthony dollar that lasted a month."

"I hear you. I've still got a bruise from my car key — see?"

"Plymouth Voyager?"

"Wow, you're good."

This illustrates a fundamental difference between how men and women think. Women by their very nature are theoretical thinkers. For example, just because fitting into the same jeans they wore in their early 30s is now like trying to stuff eight pounds of hamburger into an espresso cup, then, "theoretically," those jeans no longer fit. (Naturally, there are women who are exceptions to this rule, as anyone who watches daytime talk shows can tell you.)

Men, on the other hand, think in terms of practicality, i.e., if we can practically button our jeans without losing all feeling in our legs, then they obviously still fit. It doesn't matter that our mid section is hanging over our belt like an overproofed dinner roll. What matters is that we are in our jeans, and therefore "practically" in the same physical shape we were during our early 30s. Assuming, of course, that we were shaped like an inverted milk jug.

So, yes, I will continue to wear my "ripped, frayed, embarrassing" and now recently cleaved jeans. In fact, I may even wear them when I get home tonight.

Unless my wife has hidden the cooking spray again.

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

Who Needs Incentives?

As a retired teacher, school administrator, and university professor, I am insulted by the attempt at the national and state levels to “bribe” teachers to teach our children “better.”

In fact, all teachers should be insulted and outraged by this latest legislative absurdity.

Teaching isn't an industrial assembly-line position in which the more pieces you finish, the more you earn. The whole honorable point of becoming a teacher is that you want to plant a positive educational foundation and a love for learning into each student you teach and then to increase each child's knowledge in ongoing

increments so he or she may move toward a successful future.

Furthermore, if the state would provide professional teachers with a professional salary, there would be no need to complement the salary with incentives for additional teacher income.

The whole idea of incentives for teachers is *ludicrous*.

Legislators and educational administrators had better review their priorities and education reality before giving teachers an incentive program.

It's irresponsible and inappropriate thinking, and it sends a negative message about the honorable field of teaching.

Beware of Special Interest Developing: HB 1772

BY CHARLES O'DELL
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The following issue of special interest developing affects all cities and towns throughout Texas.

Please note that HB 1772, enacted May 24, 2005, includes an amendment by Sen. Wentworth that permits a General Law Municipality (e.g., Dripping Springs) authority to annex property NOT adjacent to the city limits if a development agreement is entered into between the city and the developer.

The initial bill arose from a legitimate request from the Mayor of Hico (pop. 1,341) who had several tracks surrounded by his city limits that he wanted to annex, but under the previous law could only do so one acre at a time. Thus, the request for authority to annex property COMPLETELY surrounded by the municipality was made to the legislature.

The Wentworth amendment extended that authority to ANY track within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) if petitioned or agreed to by the developer through a development agreement. This action sets a dangerous precedence.

Thus, it appears that the City of Dripping Springs can now reach out into its HUGE ETJ and through development agreements pocket annex (as a condition of the agreement) property into the city. This is likely the case for the Scenic Greens subdivision now being negotiated, and a tract miles from the city on FM 150 south of Dripping Springs. Developers will love developing Dripping Springs' large ETJ under the new city development ordinances that can be further modified through a development agreement.

It's important to note that development agreements were illegal for general law cities until Judge Rex Baker persuaded Rep. Mike Krusee (Taylor) to enact a law that retroactively made the Belterra and Cypress development agreements legal, thereby bailing out Baker and the city of Dripping Springs from a pending law suit.

The result of the new law is that all development in this large Dripping Springs ETJ is now solely governed by Dripping Springs Mayor Purcell, who appears determined to grow the population rapidly without much caution. Members of the City Council, with questionable qualifications, agree to support the Mayor's negotiations re: development agreements and determine the future of about one-third of Hays County land area having a population approximately 15 times that of the city, without much caution or planning by or inclusion

GUEST COMMENTARY

of those living within the ETJ.

It should be noted that Rep. Rose was a member of the Conference committee that harmonized the House and Senate versions. What could Mr. Rose possibly have been thinking to permit the Wentworth amendment to be included? Why didn't our representatives consult community leaders in the Dripping Springs ETJ where approximately 20,000+ property owners live? Or did Sen. Wentworth and Rep. Rose only consult with officials in Dripping Springs, where a mere 1,548 citizens live?

In any case, this isn't the proper way to represent voters.

The community needs to address why our Senator and Representative took a simple and legitimate need by the City of Hico, and turned it into a monster development opportunity for small general law cities with a population of 1,500 to 1,599 whereby the legislature originally deemed should have an ETJ of no more than one-quarter mile from its city limits.

We must address the special interest grab amendment currently part of HB 1772 and remove pocket annexation by general law cities — either by those who approved it, or by those who truly represent the best interests of their constituents.

Districts throughout Texas should become aware of the special interest nature of HB 1772 and contact their representatives to request eliminating the special interest clause from the current law.

It is my intention to request a meeting with Sen. Wentworth and Rep. Rose on this matter and I invite anyone interested in joining the meeting to contact the offices of these two gentlemen and express the desire to meet and discuss this matter.

- Senator Jeff Wentworth, District Office, 925 North Frost Street, 1250 N.E. Loop 410, San Antonio, Texas 78209; (210) 826-7800; (210) 826-0571 fax; e-mail: <jeff.wentworth@senate.state.tx.us>.

- Representative Patrick M. Rose, Capitol Office, Room EXT E2.420, P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768; (512) 463-0647; (512) 473-9946 fax; email: <patrick.rose@house.state.tx.us>.

This writer can be reached at: Charles O'Dell, Ph.D., President, HaysCAN; 14034 Robin's Run, Austin, TX 78737; 512-288-4817.

Since When Is It Necessary To Provide Teachers With Incentives To Teach?



Commentary

By
Peter
Stern

If we want to start an incentive program, perhaps we should start one by

giving legislators incentives for each intelligent proposal they come up with.

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas, a former Director of Information Services, 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>.

If We All Just Wore Name Tags

I was thinking the other day that the world would be an easier place if we all just wore name tags. Like at a convention. You see, I started a new job, and suddenly people I have seen and often spoken to for years here in town are popping up in this new situation. They all seem to know who I am, but sometimes I am at a loss to put a name to each face right away. If I saw them in their usual, expected spots, I think I could do fine, but when they're out of place, my brain says, "Well, I know you, but you belong somewhere else, and I am just going to have to reestablish some synapses and make a few different connections to get this right. Please stand by." Then I glaze over momentarily. This is supremely embarrassing. It's even worse when I call out the wrong name. I'm trying to learn to just keep my big mouth shut. You know the old saying, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

The name tag thing has its downside as well, but from my point of view it's better than floundering. Most of us have had the experience at a reunion in which we are forced to glance at the name tag to fish up the name. You try not to be so obvious about it. You sort of glance down for an instant when you think the person isn't looking. But they always notice. Then they say something like, "You have no idea who I am, do you?" And then of course you're busted. I actually had one person hide the nametag and ask me to guess his name. That wasn't playing fair. Not at all.

And it isn't always because the per-

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.

son has aged badly or changed in some hideous way that we can't recall a name. Sometimes we just forget. Never mind that it's been 20 or 30 years since you might have seen someone. Never mind that some folks HAVE changed in substantial ways (men especially after that 20-50 or 30th high school reunion). We women can pull hair color and make-up out of the ol' bag of tricks if we choose. And no matter how much we KNOW we have changed, no one wants to think they are forgettable.

Some of us have sharper memories than others from the get-go. It isn't always a function of age, or so I like to think. I don't believe I'm getting any worse. As far as I REMEMBER, I have always been this way. Zach calls it my Gracie Allen charm.

When I'm speaking to someone I'm certain has no earthly idea who I am, I just stick out my hand to introduce myself and help them avoid any embarrassment. I hate to see anyone squirm over something as unimportant as remembering my name. Now I can only hope folks will do the same for me.

Bush, House Threaten To Cut Aid For Farmers

WASHINGTON — Even in this election year, the U.S. government's aid to reduce the burden of high energy prices to farmers is being threatened by House leaders and the White House.

Their reasons for this cut in spending include the already high costs of the Iraq war and recovery efforts from last hurricane season.

President Bush's agriculture secretary Mike Johanns said recently that farmers not already receiving government subsidies, such as fruit and vegetable growers, would be entirely cut off from help paying for fuel and fertilizers.

Of the \$4 billion in energy-related aid, about \$1.6 billion would go to these current enrollees — growers of corn, wheat, rice, cotton, and soybeans.

Critics of Congress' annual farm subsidies say that farmers should be provided incentives to beef up energy efficiency.

Aside from energy cost relief, another \$2.17 billion is earmarked for farmers or ranchers who lost at least 35 percent last year. This group includes those who lost entire crops from floods and droughts.

The total subsidy for farmers this year is roughly \$17 billion.

Minutemen Speak At Republican Women's Club

By STEPHEN WEBSTER
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER

"We should get some of them crazy Florida 'gaters' an' put 'em in the river," said an old, wrinkled woman. She reached up to her overlaid, curly, gray bowl-cut and goosed it with the base of her right palm. "That way, when them Mexicans come runnin' across the border, they'll git eat'n up. And it'll be good 'cause our boys in the patrol'll be able to see 'em an' hear 'em. Heh-heh. They'll just run up on 'em and put one b'tween they eyes real easy."

"Yeaap," said the old woman's equally old and wrinkled husband, his mostly-hairless chrome dome dotted with liver spots and cancers. "Gett'um," he concluded in a guttural tone. The crowd laughed and clapped and rolled their heads. Women with makeup so thick their faces looked like mannequins heehawed and stomped their feet; elder, burly-looking husbands sitting in the corners of the Republicans Women's Club, snickered and held their heads down slightly, keeping at eye-level with each other. The day's speaker, Brian Burns — a member of the Texas Minuteman Project — smiled and looked down. A much more cordial and well-spoken man, he seemed uneasy with this type of speak, but joined in the chorus of laughter nonetheless.

On Wednesday, May 17, the Denton County Republican Women's Club met at Golden Corral in Denton to hear a guest speaker from the Texas Minuteman Project. Burns, who owns a home inspection company in Dallas, is a member of this group of vigilantes who have taken it upon themselves to patrol the Texas/Mexico border in search of Mexican citizens attempting to cross illegally.

"However, everyone," said Burns. "You should know that Golden Corral is one of the top employers in the U.S. for hiring illegal aliens and Mexicans." Several of the organizers frowned and glanced around the room nervously. "And you can find out the others by going to 'www.wehirealiens.com.' Okay? Everyone get that address?"

Roughly 25 party faithful were in attendance, including Denton County's new District Attorney Paul Johnson. Diane Edmondson, the party's chairwoman for the region, introduced Burns to the group, calling him 'a hero' and 'a brave and honorable man.'

"The President and our Senators are ignoring us, ladies and gentlemen!" said Edmondson. "Bush is a phony and a liar if he thinks he can just send a few National Guard people down there for a year. He's in bed with Vicente Fox. Now look, I don't really think you came to hear me speak, so take a listen to our guest today. He's a Texas Minuteman and has spent lots of time on the border. Please welcome Brian Burns."

The audience applauded. One man whistled.

Burns introduced himself by giving the audience a brief history of his professional career. Though presently the owner of Burns Home Inspections, LLC, he spent six years prior as an Air Medic pilot for Children's Medical Center. "I first got interested in this problem with the Mexicans when I was making flights over El Paso," said Burns. "We started picking up pregnant illegals who had just crossed the border that day and wanted to have their children in the county hospital — which is paid for, for free."

Several present gasped, shaking their heads and covering their mouths in dis-

belief.

"One trip costs us about *five grand* in the aircraft I flew. *Five thousand* going there and *five thousand* going back. So, about ten grand. But that is just for the flight. Then, it is about *seven to ten thousand* for the birth. So, we're talking anywhere between ten, fifteen, *twenty thousand dollars* ... ah, every time they come across. Yeah. Got my interest."

On the tables in the banquet room, the group had laid pamphlets and business cards with contact names and phone numbers for various Texas Minutemen "officers." There were several pamphlets lying around. One, titled "Common Sense on Mass Immigration," depicts the New York City skyline shrouded in clouds, three bright rays of light shining down. Under the rays of light, the clouds are burned away, revealing where the twin towers once stood, remembered in this image draped in American flags.

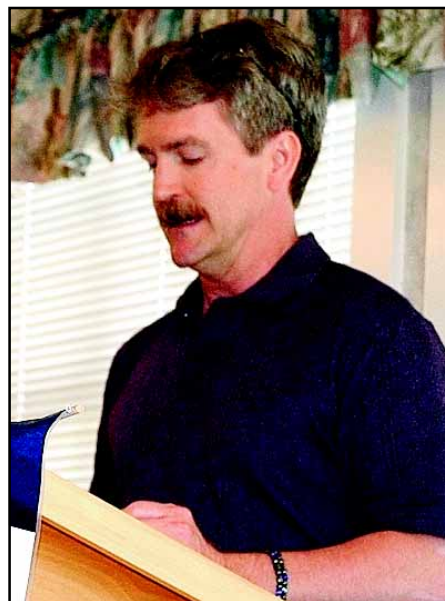
A single-sheet flyer the group was circulating reads, "Don't give up the fight against guest worker/amnesty legislation!" It lists eight bullet points, most one sentence or less, that it calls "strong evidence," but provides no substantiation or reference. Evidence such as, "In a shocking [revelation], the Senate's 'immigration reform plan' would: Let an estimated 103 million immigrants into the U.S. over the next 20 years — that's over one-third of the current population of the United States. Grant immediate amnesty for 10 million illegal aliens ... Open the door for nearly four times as many permanent worker visas as are now issued" ... and "[p]rovide for the largest expansion of the welfare state ever and cost the American taxpayer \$46 billion per year. ... [H]alf of all adult illegal immigrants in the U.S. have less than a high-school education. In addition, recent immigrants have high levels of our-of-wedlock childbearing, which increases welfare costs and poverty."

"You know what," said Burns. "Every single time Bush opens his mouth about immigration, I swear to you, border traffic, people coming in illegally, it increases by about 25 percent." Again, the audience seemed shocked. Riveted, even. Several men stood together, shaking their heads and holding their plates. They walked out and headed back for the buffet. They returned with apple pie and ice cream.

"I am very upset with the fact that he said ... He, he wants to please everybody," continued Burns. "He wants to look at Vicente Fox and say, 'I'm not being bad!' But then he wants to turn to the American people and say, 'Oh, ah, I'm being tough on illegal immigration. Bush can't have it both ways. His plan is completely watered down. If you talk to any military man and you tell him, 'You can't carry any weapons, and you can't enforce the law,' they're gonna be extremely frustrated."

Burns' conclusions? "We need military intervention. They need to go in there and do what they do. They need to be keeping our laws. These are foreign nationals coming in our country ... This has no conflict with Posse Comitatus. Everyone knows that Posse Comitatus says the military cannot act in a role of law enforcement. And they're not. They're not turning around and arresting American citizens. They would be turned around, facing Mexico. Faxing the national border. There should be *no* excuses for this!"

"What we need is a bio-metric social security card," concluded Burns. "We need a national database and a new type



Brian Burns

— Photo By Stephen Webster

of social security card with a finger print, the number, your photograph and a smart chip inside."

This reporter raised his hand, as other had prior, to ask a question.

"Yes sir?" said Burns.

"You're talking about a National I.D. card? That is exactly what Tom Ridge proposed a few years ago. A new type of 'social security.'"

"Ah, no. No it isn't," said Burns. "That's ... That's something totally different. I'm not even gonna touch that one."

I shrugged and Burns continued on.

"Some say we have to deport all of them and raid the workplaces and punish the employers. I don't know that is possible. There are others that actually want to *give American citizenship* to these people for free. Well ... I don't think so. But nobody ever mentions the other solution: attrition. Ya see, if you just cut off our social services to them over night, that would do the trick. If you stopped educating their kids, stopped providing free health care of any kind, if you stopped letting them go to work ... You'd just about solve the problem overnight. If they can't work they can't eat. And if they can't eat, they'll probably just leave."

"Here here!" shouted the old woman with the bowl-cut. "Burns for president!" Several in the audience chuckled.

Walking out of the meeting, a woman named Cindy Lou flagged this reporter down and asked to go on the record. "Hey, you with media? I wanna talk to you. I'm Cindy. Hi. I live in Denton County," she

said. "Sort of between Sanger and Denton. So it's the county. Just say Denton County, okay?"

Cindy Lou boasted that she is one of "the original Minutemen," and explained that she had quit two jobs to join the Arizona Minutemen on the border for 97 days. "I only saw a few of them commin' across, you know? They're sneaky. But I called I.C.E. [Immigrations and Customs Enforcement] on 'em. I love taking credit for that. I call I.C.E. on every illegal 'Messy-can' I can." She laughed, appar-

Continued On Next Page

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Minutemen Speak At Women's Club

Continued From Previous Page

ently amused by her rhyme.

"I think these Mexicans should be considered felons and deported," she insisted. "I think the best way to get the wall built and secure our nation better is to make the deportees, prior to being deported ... they should make them prisoners for a while, and put them in prison labor camps. Put the prisoners in tents, like Sheriff [inaudible] does in, um ... um ... Arizona. Like he does. Put the prisoners in tents, in the desert, and make them work for their food. I think all them Mexicans should be deported, but prior to being deported, they should be put in prison camps in the desert so they can build the wall for us. That way they can pay for their food and their way ... their crimes against OUR Homeland."

A brown-skinned man wearing a Golden Corral apron and torn, dirty, white baseball cap took a seat about five feet behind her, leaning over a plate of food. He glanced up at her several times, paying special attention when she said the words "Mexican" or "illegal." He said nothing, choosing to continue eating instead.

"Yeah, and once we deport them, if they come back they need to be held a lot longer so they get it," continued Cindy Lou. "We'll make 'em clean up the landscape. We have hundreds and hundreds of miles of beautiful desert that has nothing but dirty clothing, trash, toiletries ... I've seen big piles of plastic bottles full of urine. It is disgusting. Make the 'Messy-cans' clean up their piss!"

I chuckled and said, "You know, truckers ... American truckers ... they do that thing with the urine in the bottle, too. They call 'em 'Trucker Bombs.' Ever see that?"

She laughed uncomfortably. "Yeah. It's gross. These Mexi-

cans are everywhere. I can't believe it." She seemed to miss the point.

"It's like a dog that shits on the carpet," she said with a snort. "Before you pick up the shit, you take the dog and put his nose in it and give 'em a few swats on the behind. You gotta tell 'em 'NO!' and stick they nose in it. Look, if they are coming over to love America and be Americans, why would they trash our land? Would I come in to your country and shit on your back porch? No. Why would you do that to us?"

The Golden Corral employee was drinking from a translucent red cup. When Cindy Lou said this he slammed it down on the table, soda splashing out onto his hand and plate. He collected his things hurriedly and stood up. As he walked away, he turned and cast a dagger gaze at her over his right shoulder. She didn't notice.

"You mean an illegal immigrant did that on your back porch?" I asked.

"Well ... no, but you know what I mean," she replied, again laughing. She reached out and touched my right arm with two fingers, as though she had known me for more than a few moments.

"They should be jailed," she said. "They should be kep' in tents, under guard with automatic rifles, they should be used to build the wall and if they come back again, then they need to get out there and clean up their trash. I couldn't be happier that Halliburton is building these camps already. But I don't think they'll enforce it. Bush is strong on talk. He loves to talk like he's a big, strong man and tough on crime, when he's not. He is obviously in bed ... with ... you know, ah, their president. Fox. He's just trying to make Fox happy. He's in bed with Mexico. Bush is selling out America."

Before walking away, she made sure to plug her blog, leaning into this reporter's recorder. "I do the blog regularly," she said. "All the time, actually. There's lots of good information there. I blog at h-t-t-p, um ... forward-slash. Or is it backward? I don't know about these things, uh ... Anyway, its 'goonface.blogspot.com' right? Check it out. I think you'll like it."

On Cindy Lou's blog, titled "Un-American 'Goonage,'" one can find a host of photographs of demonstrators from the last couple months of civil action among the Latino community. Some shots depict protesters, most of them white-skinned Americans, as "people [that] SUPPORT ILLEGAL ALIENS!" Others show convicted criminals of Latino descent. One such post shows a man who killed a police officer. The caption reads, "That's right! Illegals doing the job Americans won't do!" The blog's introductory paragraph claims, "the faces you see on this page, only a mother could love," and goes on to assert that the Mexicans plan to "take over America" and that "using violence isn't a problem with their agendas."

In spite of Cindy Lou's claims, no arrests were made in Dallas on April 9, when over 500,000 people marched. No arrests were made at Dallas city hall on May 1, when 15,000 showed up for the May Day Boycott. And no arrests were made in Washington D.C., when over a million men, women and children of all colors marched in solidarity for Amnesty.

"You better believe I call I.C.E. every time I see one of them. Every time," said Cindy Lou.

"But how can you tell who is a citizen and who isn't?" I asked.

"Well ... I ..." She paused, seemingly frustrated by the question. "I, uh, I have video footage of their arrests from the border and at the Home Depot, you know, where they like, go and get together and look for illegal work. And I've seen it happen when I didn't call I.C.E., but I recorded the arrests anyway. I got it on tape and sent it to Congressman Burgess. At least he says stuff and stands up for us against the 'Messy-cans,' but he sure doesn't do much about it. It's almost like they're just gonna let 'em overrun us. We should just surrender Texas to Mexico today and be done with it. Hell, I won't be here when it happens. Fuck that."

U.S. Government Tracking News Sources, Says Federal Official

NEW YORK CITY — ABC News reported last week that in order to investigate leaks stemming from the CIA, the U.S. government is tracking the phone numbers of the confidential sources of reporters with ABC News, the NEW YORK TIMES, and the WASHINGTON POST.

The ABC News investigation team was told of this latest development by a senior federal law enforcement official as well as from other sources, ABC News said in an online report.

Even though the unidentified official said that the phone lines to ABC News might not be tapped to record conversation, the effect of the government logging its phone records will still prove problematic to the news agency for news gathering purposes.

"Our reports on the CIA's secret prisons in Romania and Poland were known to have upset CIA officials," wrote ABC News reporters Brian Ross and Richard Esposito. "People questioned by the FBI about leaks of intelligence information say the CIA was also disturbed by ABC News reports that revealed the use of CIA predator missiles inside Pakistan."

Ross and Esposito also stated that their news company is clueless as to the method by which the government determines callers's identity. Also in question is whether the National Security Administration collection of the company's phone records through President Bush's domestic spy program.

The U.S. government is legally able to log numbers dialed by phone customers, according to Bush Administration guidelines.

USA TODAY reported on May 11 that the NSA domestic surveillance program includes a database with tens of millions of phone call records.

BellSouth and Verizon have denied giving any information to the agency, though the USA TODAY report identified them as submitting phone records to the NSA as requested. AT&T Corp. was a third company cited in the report.

Fearing Verizon violated privacy laws in connection with the NSA program, two New Jersey public interest lawyers filed a lawsuit against the communications company to stop it from turning over more records without a warrant or subscriber's consent.

A Gallup/USA TODAY survey of 809 American adults, conducted on May 12 and May 13, 2006, found that 51 percent of respondents disapprove of this NSA phone database program.

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Rep. Murtha: Marines Killed Innocent Iraqis

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A U.S. congressman who is a vocal critic of the Iraq war said last week that U.S. Marines deliberately killed 15 unarmed, innocent Iraq civilians, including seven women and three children, last November in the city of Haditha.

Military officials have said that by the evidence provided by the Marine Corps, Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) stands correct in his assessment of the Pentagon probe.

A statement issued by the Marines describing the events was fabricated, they said, and photos taken by Marines showed the victims were executed at close range in the head and chest.

Time magazine acquired a video taken by an Iraqi

that depicted the scene of the attack after the fact on Nov. 19. It showed walls riddled with bullet holes and a bedroom floor covered in blood and human flesh. Fifteen members of two families were shot dead.

"Our troops overreacted because of the pressure on them, and they killed innocent civilians in cold blood," Murtha said at a news conference last Wednesday.

The Marines in question were upset over the death of one of their own, according to an unidentified military official.

About 12 Marines are being investigated and three officers have been relieved of duty in connection with the Nov. 19 attack.