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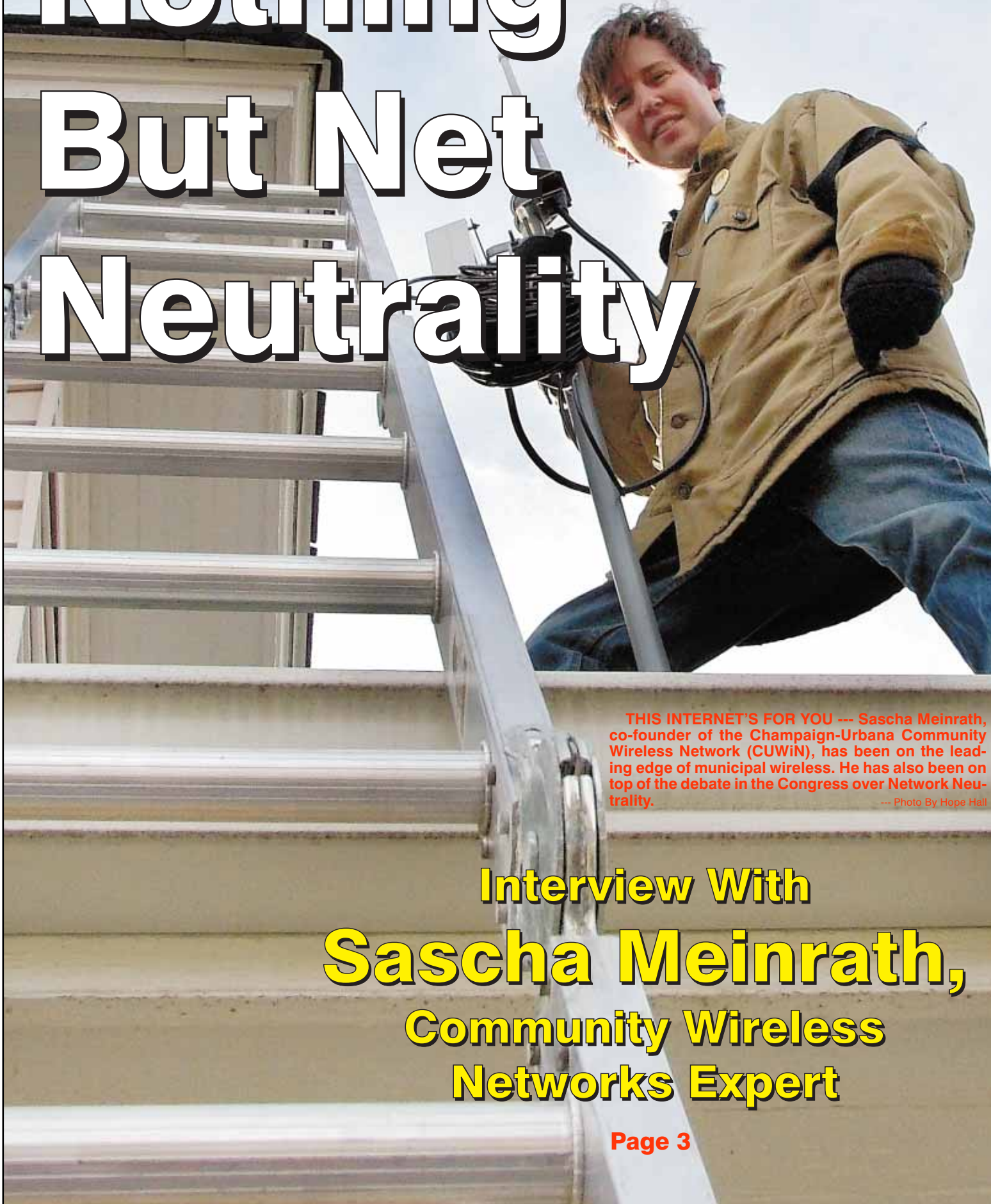
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THIS INTERNET'S FOR YOU --- Sascha Meinrath, co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWiN), has been on the leading edge of municipal wireless. He has also been on top of the debate in the Congress over Network Neutrality. --- Photo By Hope Hall

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Baking Heat Leaves Texas Landscape Burning

COLLEGE STATION — Hot, dry weather continues to bake Texas landscapes, lawns, gardens, fields and forests — and increasing both the number and the risk of wildfires.

An extended weather pattern of hot days relieved by only isolated showers has left grasses and other vegetation much drier than normal. The result: without significant widespread, long-duration rains, Texas firefighters foresee a growing threat of wildfires.

Conditions now are similar to those that occurred in summer 1998, during which Texas experienced one of the worst years on record for wildfires, according to Tom Spencer, wildfire risk assessment coordinator with Texas Forest Service.

“The similarities between weather and vegetation conditions in 1998 and now are very alarming, from a wildfire standpoint,” said Spencer. “Texans could be facing a bad summer fire siege if in-

creased winds should accompany hot, dry weather. Strong, gusty winds contributed greatly to the major wildfires experienced earlier this year.”

What the whole state needs is slow,

steady rainfall spread over many hours so most of the rain will soak into the ground and not run off, Spencer added. Many areas of the state, particularly in far West Texas, haven't received enough

rain to stimulate full spring green-up, and even where green-up has occurred, grasses are wilting and turning brown in the heat.

Regional fire coordinators have also reported that wildfire activity has picked up across the state

“Local fire departments everywhere are making more frequent runs on wildfires, and our own fire crews have battled many wildfires, including several recent fires more than 100 acres in size,” said Bill Rose, Texas Forest Service chief regional forester for resource protection in East Texas.

He noted that accidental fires due to escaped debris burning continue to be the primary cause of wildfires, particularly in the eastern half of the state. Sparks-producing equipment, hot vehicle exhaust systems and careless disposal of smoking materials also cause many wildfires. In addition, Texas Forest Service fire investigators attribute several recent fires, including a 253-acre wildfire in northern Walker County, to the work of arsonists.

Firefighters across the state could also face a seasonal wildfire risk if dry conditions continue.

“Irresponsible fireworks use through the Fourth of July holiday period could spark additional fires, if dry conditions prevail and vegetative fuels, particularly grasses, continue to dry out,” said Rose. “We don't want to put a damper on holiday celebrations, but we do urge folks to use common sense and celebrate safely during the upcoming holiday period.”

U.S. Has Right To Weaponize Space: Official

GENEVA — A senior State Department official last week at a United Nations-backed forum reiterated the United States' right to install weapons in outer space.

John Mohanco, deputy director of the office of multilateral, nuclear, and security affairs, told members of the Conference on Disarmament that the weapons would be used to protect military and commercial satellites. No threats were named.

“As long as the potential for such attacks remains, our government will continue to consider the possible role that space-related weapons may play in protecting our assets,” he said.

Mohanco denied that the U.S. had weapons currently deployed in space nor has any plans to build them. However, he said that no new global treaty is needed to limit such projects.

The Geneva forum is meeting resistance on the part of the U.S. and Britain to enter into such negotiations. Instead, the White House, as do China and Russia, wants a treaty to ban nuclear bomb-making material.

This month, Washington is expected to reveal its new space policy, which experts believe will back the Pentagon's plan for outer space dominance.

NCLB

Lawyer: 'No State Wants to Look Bad'

WASHINGTON — A civil rights lawyer testified last week before a House committee that President George W. Bush's education reform act 'No Child Left Behind' leaves states with a brutal choice: improve education or lower the bar.

State education authorities then choose “to lower the bar or omit data to look good because this choice offers less resistance than improving the product of education in schools,” according to John Brittain, Chief Counsel and Deputy Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Under the act, states have the ability to erase test scores of students if a subgroup is statistically small. As

such, state authorities interpret the No Child Left Behind Act to mean “No State Wants to Look Bad” with regard to annual

yearly progress, according to Brittain's group. Already it is estimated that the scores of two million students have gone uncounted nationwide.

Brittain urged the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to disaggregate student achievement statistics into race, income, and other categories. By doing so, it would be one step in addressing the nation's expansive achievement gaps so that all students learn under the act.

“Predominantly, it is the African American, Latino, and Native American students that are truly being left behind,” said Brittain in a statement.

Father's Day Vigil Held At Crawford Peace House

CRAWFORD — As many American families headed to the lakes, beaches, and parks this past weekend, members of the First Family visited their ranch in Crawford, Texas. It is Father's Day, a time when families of the nation remember and honor Dad.

Members of Friends of Peace, Gold Star Families for Peace, and Veterans for Peace, along with other peace activists, also spent Father's Day weekend in Crawford, near the ranch where Mr. Bush was relaxing with his family.

Those attending the vigil for peace want to remind America that 130,000 families are unable to share the occasion in the traditional manner. “Many Dads could not be with their children as they serve in an ill-conceived conflict in Iraq,” said Kay Lucas, a board member of the Crawford Peace House. “Many fathers wonder when their son or daughter will

return home and if they will return safely.”

The activists asked the same question posed during previous vigils outside the Crawford ranch of President Bush.

“WHY?” Said Hadi Jawad, co-founder of the Crawford Peace House. “Why did 2,500 service members, our nation's sons and daughters, give up their lives for the lie that Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11 and that he was allied with Al Qaeda?”

The Father's Day vigils for peace was held Saturday through Sunday at the original “Camp Casey” site on Prairie Chapel Road where Cindy Sheehan made a stand last August.

On Sunday, a press conference was scheduled at the original Camp Casey location on Prairie Chapel Road.

The Crawford Peace House is located at 9142 E. Fifth Street and can be reached by phone at 254-486-0099.



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Nothing But Net Neutrality

Interview With
Sascha Meinrath,
Community Wireless
Networks Expert

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

URBANA, Ill. — Last week, the Senate heard testimony from various consumer groups and progressive think tanks on “Network Neutrality,” the subject of popular debate as Congress attempts to reform the 1996 Telecommunication Act.

But behind the scenes was Sascha Meinrath, an expert in bridging the digital divide through the use of community wireless networks (CWNs).

With his knowledge of the Internet’s infrastructure, Meinrath has been called upon to be a policy analyst for the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Free Press. He also has regularly briefed the Federal Communications Commission and Congressional staff on issues related to CWNs.

In his native town of Urbana, Ill., Meinrath co-founded the Champaign-Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWiN), one of the world’s leading open-source, ad-hoc mesh wireless projects. There, he serves as project coordinator.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST’S Nathan Diebenow interviewed him in late May to hear his take on the congressional debate on network neutrality, the FCC’s failure to investigate the Bush administration’s domestic spy program, as well as the United States’ place in the global broadband Internet race.

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ICONOCLAST: So what’s your take on network neutrality?

SASCHA MEINRATH: Basically, network neutrality is about preventing corporate greed. I say that in that there’s always been an assumption on the Internet that you can access any information you want and it will be downloaded to your computer as quickly as possible. What corporations who now own the infrastructure want is to privilege certain information, particularly their own information to download faster

than other people’s information.

That’s why you have Ed Whitacre saying, “Oh, AT&T shouldn’t have to allow Google to use its services for free.” That’s why you have now AT&T as well say, “We shouldn’t have to allow free internet telephoning when we can charge you for these things.”

The reason why I say it’s corporate greed is that it’s a way for corporations to leverage their fiber infrastructure, to get more money out of people who want to use specific applications or access specific content. They are trying to commodify new realms, to extract just a little bit more money from customers.

So what you have end up happening is customers being charged once to actually access the Internet and then a second time to actually access content or applications they want to use, which has never been the case previously.

It’s coming to the forefront now because of the lack of structural separation, because of the Brand X Supreme Court case last year, because of the massive conglomerization of such that AT&T now is almost the same size as it was in 1984 when it was broken up because it was doing relatively similar things that it is proposing to do once again in the Internet realm.

It’s a horrible thing for consumers, and it’s relatively an American phenomenon. We see it in the States, and it’s what we’re seeing in other places that have monopolistic powers — telecommunications giants that are overcharging or controlling access to the Internet.

ICONOCLAST: One of the things these corporations are saying is that this money they receive from this new revenue stream will be reinvested in the infrastructure. Do you buy that at all?

MEINRATH: Not at all. Not at all. In fact, you can look at the history of telecommunications and find these sorts of promises are regularly broken. Bruce Kushnik wrote about it in his recent book where he talks about the \$200 billion



WIRELESS TO THE RESCUE --- Project coordinator for the Champaign-Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWiN), Sascha Meinrath told the Iconoclast that municipalities all across the country are building Internet networks that create miles and miles of unused “dark” fiber at the cost of taxpayers. For more information on his work, visit his website <www.saschameinrath.com>.

--- Photo By Hope Hall

telecom scandal of promises that were made for tax breaks and for right-of-way access that have never been delivered. It’s the equivalent of \$200 billion which means that every household in the United States is actually owed \$2,000 by the telecom incumbent for services that were contractually promised and never delivered.

So, I mean, it’s not that I don’t buy it. It’s just that the history of telecommunications demonstrates that time and again, these sorts of promises have never been delivered or rarely have been delivered by the telecom companies.

ICONOCLAST: And the money just goes into their pockets and that’s it.

MEINRATH: Money basically goes to their profit margin, so investors receive the money, but really, it’s a resource extraction out of the pocket books of everyday Americans.

ICONOCLAST: Do you fear with what’s going on between the FCC and the NSA? The FCC isn’t going to investigate the USA Today’s claims that these telecoms have handed over consumers’ information to the NSA.

MEINRATH: The FCC is really ducking its responsibilities in that regard. They’re claiming that state secrets are involved, and therefore, they are not responsible for it, but the state secrets act in fact cannot protect an administration from making blatantly illegal decisions.

It was hilarious to watch as (U.S. Attorney General Alberto) Gonzales was

talking, “Well, there’s this law that was passed that allows us to do this, and it’s actually business data.” People pointed out that there’s a 1978 law that was passed by Congress. Because of that ‘78 law, it says specifically that you can’t do this, so it’s very, very, very clear. You talk to attorneys around the world at this point in time, and they’re saying that this is a level of surveillance that hasn’t been seen since COINTELPRO. And it’s a level of surveillence that is blatantly illegal.

The FCC is supposed to prevent illegal actions via our telecommunications system, but it has ducked and refused to actually take responsibility for enforcing our own laws on telecommunications.

ICONOCLAST: So there is no law that is preventing the FCC from investigating these claims.

MEINRATH: What FCC Chairman (Kevin) Martin said was basically that because the administration has said that the surveillance is a state secret, the FCC is not responsible for investigating it, that this state secret trumps the FCC’s authority. Yet the FCC gets its authority from Congress. It is a different branch of the federal government that is not responsible to the White House for this, and now it is declining to investigate the potential illegality of this surveillance system from the executive branch even though their authority comes from the legislative branch.

ICONOCLAST: I want to ask you about
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Nothing But Net Neutrality

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how other countries have their telecommunication infrastructures set up. For instance, I understand that Mexico's is run by a monopoly.

MEINRATH: I'm not too familiar with Mexico either. Most of my experience has been via LPFM stuff and radio stuff, but I'm assuming that it's probably a large conglomerate that is down there that is dominant in the country just because that's what we see in a lot of economies of that type.

What we do know is that in the highly industrialized nations, the U.S. is falling rapidly behind in terms of the telecommunications.

ICONOCLAST: Like Japan, for example.

MEINRATH: Not just Japan. Canada. Canada with its severely lower population density compared to the United States is kicking our ass in terms of broadband penetration rates, in terms of costs of services, and in terms of applications available for the average consumer.

The EU (European Union) is poised to really jump ahead of us if they haven't already. This includes places like Spain or Italy, which are traditionally seen as sort of second-tier industrialized nations. But, of course, Japan and South Korea kicked us to the curb quite a while ago.

ICONOCLAST: Do you have the numbers in front of you as to how much we're paying for Internet compared to these countries?

MEINRATH: I don't have the numbers in front of me. Look on my blog (<http://www.saschameinrath.com/>) and search for "broadband penetration rates." I did do some comparisons of U.S. price per megabyte versus Japan, for example.

It's hard to get really good estimates because the numbers that are getting collected are ridiculous. By that I mean, the FCC claims there's 99-percent broadband penetration rate in the United States because the way in which they collect numbers is totally screwed up; if there's a single broadband line, which is defined as 200 kilobits per second in a single direction, a single one of those at any price in an area code, (then) they consider the entire area code covered by broadband connectivity.

So you have the problem both of it's insane to say that a single line covers an entire area code and 200 kilobits per second is not really broadband. It's an artificial definition to hide, obviously, a lot of shortcomings in U.S. telecom roll out. And even like OECD data uses 256 kilobits per second as the cut off for broadband.

So they would compare U.S. broadband — which if you're lucky, you're getting a couple of megabytes download and maybe a half a megabyte upload — with Japan which is averaging 42 to 100 megabytes per metric line, and they would call them both the same service — broadband — which obviously they are not. That hiding of just how bad things are in the United States compared with other highly industrialized countries is incredibly problematic.

India has just decided to connect 23,000 rural villages with 100 megabit metric lines, and we can't even manage to get New York City wireless. To me, that is very problematic.

ICONOCLAST: I was reading a story in *The Nation* in March about Google and



SASCHA MEINRATH

--- Photo By Faith Swords

Earthlink bidding for San Francisco's municipal wireless network. What is the status on that?

MEINRATH: Google and Earthlink have received that contract, and they are now in the midst of negotiating with the city exactly what it's going to look like, and there's massive local consternation about the lack of privacy that network provides. In fact, it's sort of a class-based lack of privacy. If you use the free service, then a lot of the information about your usage is collected. But if you pay for the service, then it's not. There's all sorts of different problems with that. There's an article in the Bay State Guardian about some of the shortcomings.

They've created a free service for just 300 kilobits per second, and there's no upgrade capacity for that. So you can imagine, 300 kilobits per second — which is kind of lame even for today — 10 years from now, it'll just be inane. Totally useless. And yet there's no requirement over the course of this 10 year contract or whatever it's going to end up being for them to upgrade that service. In essence, it legalizes the creation of a municipal-wide digital divide.

Again, it comes down to extracting the maximum profit on these systems, and it's one of the many reasons why a lot of municipalities are building the wrong system. I think they're also building the wrong architecture. If you actually look at almost every single municipal system created today, it's about Internet service provision. But if you look at the Pew Center's report on broadband, they're showing that what people use the Internet for is more peer-to-peer applications, whether it's email, voice services, file sharing, etc.

So if you build a network infrastructure that is just providing people connectivity to the Internet and not connecting them directly to each other, I think you're building the wrong system. You're building a system that is incredibly inefficient in directly connecting local residents of that community. I think a lot of municipalities 10 years from now are really going to be kicking themselves.

ICONOCLAST: Repeat what you said. I didn't fully comprehend it.

MEINRATH: Everyone is interested in

connecting people from any point on their network to the Internet as a whole. If you can imagine a tree infrastructure where everyone connects through the trunk to the roots to the outside world.

Yet if you look at how people are using the Internet, they're connecting directly to each other more like a web infrastructure. It's a peer-to-peer infrastructure, yet no one is building these municipal-wide networks in order to facilitate peer-to-peer connectivity.

For example, in Urbana, Illinois, Central Illinois, if I want to connect 50 feet to my neighbor's house, and send him an email, or give him a call on my Internet phone, or swap a file, or send him an MP3, I get routed out through my DSL connection up through Chicago 150 miles north of here and then back down and through their DSL connection to get 50 feet.

You're talking about several hundred miles through maybe 20 hops to get 50 feet, and that is incredibly inefficient because the maximum speed I can send that file is the minimum linkage between them. So if I have an upload speed of 384 K, that's as fast as I can go versus if I was connected directly with a wireless link, I could go at an 11 megabits or 54 megabits rate.

That former part is what people are building. They're building a system that has centralized access points to the Internet that everything has to be routed through, so that if I live in San Francisco, and I want to send a file between my home computer and my work computer which happens to be three blocks away, I get routed out through the gateway, out through the Internet, and back into the system. It's very inefficient and very much slower versus just connecting it directly. We see this with a lot of the mesh systems that are being deployed. It's a mesh system in order for you to go to the Internet but not connect people directly to one another.

In a large municipal system, if people can connect directly to one another, it's faster and more efficient because we're not using these gateway resources, the expensive part which is the outside bandwidth. They are just using the internal resources of the network.

If it sounds a little crazy, think of every single business in the world today that has a local area network. They're going to link their computers together on their own local network, like to your printer, or to send files or back up things or whatever else because everyone understands in business is this idea of huge efficiencies, speeds, and whatever you want to accomplish with your local area network. This is taking that same idea and saying, "We should be building community wide local area networks that directly connect everyone to one another as opposed to going out through the Internet and back into the network somewhere else."

ICONOCLAST: That would solve the problem of communicating between a local community, so you would still have Internet access outside?

MEINRATH: Absolutely. The Internet is meant to be a peer-to-peer system of communication. But what people are doing is trying to lay over a cellular telephone infrastructure where everyone is connected at a central point. The reason why I can't call somebody two feet away from me and connect directly to them has to go through this central tower is because the point of these networks was to create as many billable moments as possible, to charge me on the upside and charge you on the down side.

ICONOCLAST: It's scarcity.

MEINRATH: It's an artificial scarcity. I find it inane that something as simple as how much "dark fiber" the United States is unknown, and that gaining access to that information is considered a trade secret. You know, somebody built the system, and they are charging us supposedly because it is a scarce resource, but we know that in fact it's not. There's huge amounts of dark fiber. Over 90 percent of the fiber is dark in the United States.

ICONOCLAST: Which means that it just goes unused

MEINRATH: That's right. We're being charged an arm and a leg for a resource that is as prevalent as dirt. There is no scarcity of bandwidth, and yet in the United States, we're constantly being told, "There are too many people using the system. We don't have enough for whoever else."

ICONOCLAST: So politically, do you think net neutrality is going to sail through Congress?

MEINRATH: There's been a huge backlash. In fact, I've been blogging about this. Huge amounts of money are being spent on the anti-neutrality side whether it's \$400,000 in a single day for a single print advertising campaign in D.C., or now nationally there's a TV for-us group that's putting out ads on television which costs millions of dollars, or the push-polling where they're doing across the country to convince them that net neutrality is bad. The AT&Ts of this world are spending millions of dollars to fight net neutrality.

On the other side of that you have "Save The Internet" Coalition. I spoke with them, and at last count, they had just finished spending \$6,700 total on the pro-network neutrality side. You're talking about orders of magnitude more money than being spent in insidious ways, creating these so-called "grassroots coalitions" which are in fact lobbying fronts for corporations. Nothing more. To me that's sort of misleading.

But I would say that right now things
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Nothing But Net Neutrality

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are looking good, but this multi-million dollar advertising campaign just was rolled out last week, so what that will do I don't know. What happens when 100,000 or 200,000 or 500,000 sign an anti-network neutrality bill because they're being told that if network neutrality goes through, the prices for their broadband will get more expensive, which is what literally these people are saying now, which is not true at all.

ICONOCLAST: What I find interesting is that you have people who have worked for the Clinton administration but now are working on the telecom side, but then you have Sen. Hilary Clinton coming out and supporting net neutrality. Not too long ago, she was treated to a fundraiser by Rupert Murdoch, the head of NewsCorp, FoxNews, and MySpac.com.

MEINRATH: What you'll find is that the content providers are very much pro-network neutrality. The network owners are against it. The reason why this happens is because there used to be structural separation between the network owners, the infrastructure owners, and the content providers.

We've now dumped that, so now more and more of the content providers are saying, "Wow, we don't own the network. The network providers are now saying that they're going to charge us to use the network." I almost feel like it should be on its head. Google should say, "You know what? Our services make your network useful to people; therefore, AT&T should pay us for providing such useful content so people actually use their broadband."

That would be a very interesting debate to see, but as it is, it's really about the market running things, and that means AT&Ts of this world.

ICONOCLAST: So even with Rupert Murdoch and the wealth of all these content providers, there's still some doubt as to the life of net neutrality?

MEINRATH: More and more of them are (spending money to save net neutrality), but they're sort of doing it independently. I think Google finally has some lobbyists in its corporate offices in D.C. But it's a hodge-podge. Content providers tend to be relatively new firms versus AT&T which has been around for quite a while, so they're just getting off the ground.

I did hear an interesting story which was that when AT&T and SBC merged, although they laid off a lot of people, they didn't lay off a single lobbyist between them, which I think is telling.

ICONOCLAST: So it really is a hodge-podge of effort among these groups. It's not focused together.

MEINRATH: Yeah, because you don't have a trade organization that brings together MoveOn.org and the Christian Coalition. (Laughs) I think that in many ways spells out how diverse this is and how it cuts across traditional political boundaries and differences of opinion, and whatever else. It's an issue that really ties together an entirely new group who in many cases have never worked together and have been opposed to most issues.

But I do know that 750,000 people signed a petition for network neutrality. That was done with \$6,700. This is an issue that resonates with a whole hell of a lot of people. I don't know of any other major industrialized nation — the ones that are kicking our ass in broadband — that is even considering with doing away



Sascha Meinrath

with these structural separation issues.

Network neutrality in many ways has come to the front because there's a new regime in town and they're saying, "We own the network, and therefore, we should be able to control content and access. But again, it was such a fundamental assumption that the Internet would be free information to anyone, that all information would be provided, and you would be allowed equitable access to all information on the Internet. That assumption still holds in the rest of the world. Well, except for China. So it's like the United States and China trying to control content. (Laughs) First through economics and then through governmental reasons.

ICONOCLAST: Getting back to what you do connecting municipalities, how many communities have been wired your way through community wireless?

MEINRATH: It's hard to say because there's no centralized database, but I just gave a presentation two weeks ago on this very issue. In the United States, there's at least 300 municipal broadband networks. Many more small scale community networks across the country, whether it's a couple of people in an apartment building sharing bandwidth or a metro-scale endeavour like in St. Cloud, Fla.

Here in Urbana, it's been doubling every year. Which if you plot it out is phenomenal growth. A coalition of groups — NGOs, individuals, the City of Urbana, the University of Illinois, are all putting up nodes, much like the Internet itself. It's an ownerless network. We're sort of retraining that in a different medium — the wireless medium.

There are hundreds of them in the United States, but the huge community wireless networks are in Europe. I just came back from Europe so I'm utterly familiar with a lot of them. In Vienna, Austria, there are 40 nodes (a wireless routing device). That's going up way past 100 because the city has given funding to community organizations to build a network. That will cover pretty much the entire Vienna metro area and provide free broadband connectivity.

Berlin, Germany has 282 nodes when I was there a week ago, and they are growing astronomically. Again, it completely decentralized and completely free access. Athens, Greece, has over 2,000 nodes in their network. It's a huge metro-

scale network. The Sursland network in Denmark covers over 1,500 square kilometers. I mean, huge networks. We just don't hear about them because no community network has the PR ability or funding that a lot of these proprietary businesses have.

The market reports in this realm of municipal network show an increase of 100 percent each year for the next three or four years globally which is about as how far out as anyone wants to project it thus far. It'll will be a billion dollar industry by 2009.

ICONOCLAST: What about the rest of the electronic spectrum? We've heard reports that the U.S. military wants to use the airwaves and the digital realm for combat operations such as psych-ops.

MEINRATH: The vast majority of completely unused spectrum is owned by the U.S. government to the point that every department in the U.S. government has its own spectrum. There's a nationwide piece of spectrum for the Supreme Court. Now what nine judges are going to do with nationwide spectrum, I have no idea.

But there was a great report at the height of the Republican National Convention in New York City a year or two ago. They did spectrum analysis of usage. This is like when all the public services are on high alert. The Secret Service is there. The NSA is there, and the president is there and all his stuff. They found over the course of the weekend that 19 percent total of the spectrum that they were analyzing was actually being used at any point. That's in New York City at the height of the RNC.

So again what you have is this massive artificial scarcity, the same as with our fiber, but in this case, it's a different medium. It's the airwaves. And this is true throughout the country. Most, a vast ma-

majority, a huge super majority of the spectrum is completely unused, and yet here we are with unlicensed devices stuck in this tiny, tiny, tiny little sliver. I mean, it really retards innovation; it slows down closing the digital divide; it ceases much of the potential economic activity. Any economic analysis of the unlicensed spectrum demonstrates that this is huge economic boom to have this spectrum available. It pretty much in all ways is not very good.

If you look at our spectrum licensor regime, the assumptions on it date back to the 1920s and 1930s technology. This idea of a single user getting a single piece of spectrum for solely their own use is ludicrous. It predates such crazy concepts as computers (laughs) or digital and any of that sort of stuff. It's this massive artificial scarcity that inflates pricing of these technologies greatly and slows our ability to actually use technology that would be available if they would open up, for example, unlicensed spectrum.

Yeah, I mean, I look at what's going on in the United States and it's really a shame. It's a shame because we as residents and customers are really getting the short end of the stick. It's something that could be changed incredibly quickly by the FCC, but instead we're allowing these legacy systems and legacy licensor regimes to control the future of this technology. It's really quite backward. Theoretically, the public airwaves are supposed to serve first and foremost the general public, and yet time and time and time again, we find that they serve corporate interests.

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Firearms Killed More Children In 2003 Than U.S. Soldiers In Iraq War

NEW YORK — More children and teens died in the U.S. as a result of gun violence in 2003 than American soldiers killed in Iraq over the last three years, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Just as gruesome as incoming casualties from a battlefield, the bodies of young gunshot victims stream into urban hospital trauma centers on the frontlines of an undeclared war on America’s children,” said Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF).

In all, 2,827 children and teens — coming from all racial groups and ages — passed away due to incidents involving

firearms in 2003. Ninety percent of these victims were boys.

Texas is one of seven states that recorded the most deaths among children and teens by firearms. The other six are California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida and North Carolina.

The United States itself ranks higher than the 25 other industrialized countries combined on the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15.

“We have many more handguns and much weaker gun laws than any other country,” said Harvard Professor David Hemenway, who has worked to develop strategies to combat illegal firearms.

The CDF cited these figures in its report “Protect Children, Not Guns,” released on the day the 2,500th U.S. soldier died in combat operations in Iraq.

Last Wednesday, a coalition of activist groups marched and rallied on Capitol Hill carrying coffins, banners, and signs to mark the 2,500 troop death in Iraq. The event was endorsed by Gold Star Families for Peace, Progressive Democrats of America, United for Peace and Justice-D.C., National Congress of Black Women, and others.

In a statement released by Military Families Speak Out, Diane Santoriello of Verona, Penn., expressed her pain for the loss of her son, First Lt. Neil Santoriello, 24, who served in the Army and was killed in action near Fallujah on August 13, 2004.

“To lose a loved one to war is painful; but to lose a loved one to a war based on lies is more than unbearable,” stated Santoriello.

After returning from a surprise, five-hour trip to Iraq to meet with its new prime minister, President George W. Bush rejected pressures for U.S. troops to be withdrawn during a news conference in the Rose Garden.

“The policy of the U.S. government is to stand with this (Iraqi) government and help them succeed,” said the president whose job approval ratings remain at the lowest of his two terms.

On the home front, a coalition of 15 U.S. mayors called for more leadership to curb domestic gun violence against children at a summit in April. Since then, another 37 mayors joined the group.

While praising the mayors’ efforts, CDF is still pushing for federal legislation that closes the gun show loophole to criminal background checks on those purchasing guns from unlicensed dealers, as well as the renewal of the ban on assault weapons.

The Fund also suggests that parents

remove guns from their homes; organize nonviolent conflict resolution support groups in their churches and neighborhoods; and refuse to buy products, such as video games, for their children that portray violence as acceptable or fun.

For the full report, visit the CDF website.

INFO Report
http://www.childrensdefense.org/gunrpt_revised06.pdf

Libertarian Party Makes Nominations At State Convention

HOUSTON — At the Libertarian State Convention on June 10, the Libertarian Party of Texas nominated the following candidates for statewide office:

U.S. Senator - Scott Lanier Jameson
Governor - James Werner
Lieutenant Governor - Judy Baker
Attorney General - Jon Roland
Comptroller of Public Accounts - Mike Burris
Land Commissioner - Michael A. French
Agriculture Commissioner - Clay Woolam
Railroad Commissioner - Tabitha Serrano
Chief Justice, Supreme Court - Tom Oxford

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 2 - Wade Wilson

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 4 - Jerry Adkins

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 6 - Todd Phillippi

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 8 - Jay H. Cookingham

Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 7 - Quanah Parker

Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 8 - Dave Howard

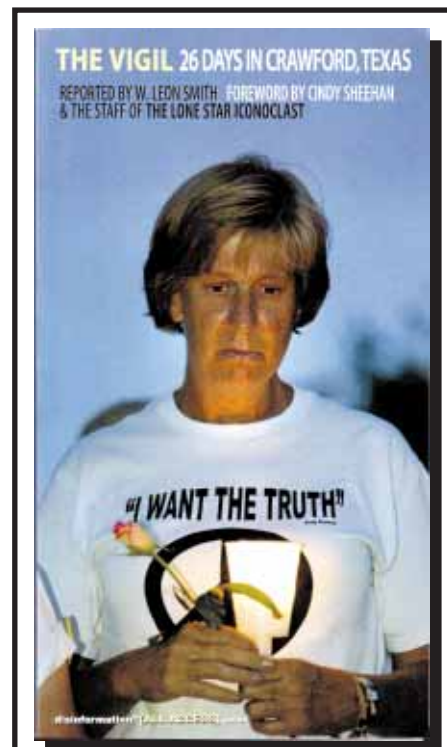
Delegates also elected the following party officers for the 2006-2008 term:

Chair - Patrick Dixon

Vice Chair - Kevin Tunstall

Secretary - Laura Coker-Garcia

Treasurer - Geoffrey Neale



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Fashion Designer Launches Anti-Bush Video Web-Stream

DALLAS — On June 14, outspoken Fashion Designer, Christa Chantal Allen will take on President Bush along with his administration and broadcast her first politically charged video web-stream titled: “Illegal and Unlawful Wire-Tapping.”

As the approval rate for the President continues to plummet — under 29 percent — it seems Allen has a built-in audience. Focusing on current events and drawing from her experience with individuals from Muslim Countries while growing up in Europe, she said, “It is sheer Utopia to believe that Iraq will ever be a Westernized Democracy in our lifetime, as anyone familiar with the country’s xenophobic and theological centered culture can assure you.”

Allen uses a tongue-in-cheek approach to decipher and explain her views of the political issues facing the world today, saying, “Do you honestly believe that this liar (Bush), with an IQ that matches his approval ratings, is seriously capable of protecting anything?”

Numerous journalists and editors have applauded Allen for her 17 page “Open Letter to the Bush Administration” written in 2004 and featured in Counterpunch, “America’s best political Magazine” among many other on-line sites.

In addition, she was the cover story for the Iconoclast in January 2006. Allen also received International attention when she was kicked out of a political chat-room for voicing her opinion on the scandalous management of the American Government.

Allen encourages everyone to visit her web-stream at <www.European-designer-contre-stupide-bush.com> or contact her directly at <Europeandesigner@aol.com>.

Myspace Founder Sues Over ‘Raw’ Deal

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — The founder of the fourth-most-visited website on the planet, Myspace.com, filed a lawsuit against its current operator, saying that the deal was unfair to shareholders.

Intermix Media Inc. founder Brad Greenspan says in court documents that Intermix’s directors broke their legal rights by approving the \$580 million sale to Rupert Murdoch’s media conglomerate News Corp. on the cheap and in doing so acted with conflicts of interest.

By offering \$13.50 a share last September, Greenspan wanted the purchase to News Corp. blocked; however, News Corp. was already to buy the Los Angeles-based Intermix in July for \$12 a share.

The takeover over the global social-networking website along with other Intermix properties was finalized in October.

Intermix executives and directors and a venture-capital firm, Vantage Point Venture Partners, are defendants in the suit, not News Corp.

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Feat Of Clay

By Clay Turner

James Hand, Willie's Real Deal

Last issue the **ICONOCLAST** talked about Willie Nelson and Friends at Carl's Corner on July 3 featuring such stars as Asleep at the Wheel, James Hand, Ray Price and a whole lot more.

July 3 is just the precursor to July 4, hopefully and Willie has quite a show planned at the Stockyards with a total of 26 performers.

Ray Price, Shooter Jennings, James Hand and others return from Carl's Corner while performers like Johnny Bush, Billy Joe Shaver, David Allen Coe, Leon Russell and Kris Kristofferson all perform on the 4. Quite a shindig.

One of the most unusual performers, or usual performers of Willie's crew is James Hand. While garnering little public attention outside of Austin and Tokio, Texas, Hand, after playing for four decades, is poised to strike into our hearts and minds with his new CD, "The Truth Will Wet You Free." With the twelve tracks, one only has to look at the titles to know what era Hand sings from with songs like, "When You Stopped Loving Me, So did I" and "In The Corner, At The Table, By The Jukebox" and "Shadows Where the Magic Was." He wrote all 12 songs about his life and personal happenings and with a little information about him, one could easily believe that.

He's hung around Austin for years playing joints there and trying to eke by; his son is a bull rider, and Hand is a respected horse trainer in that area when he's not on tour. His dad was also a trainer but took sick and died late last year. Hand stopped recording *The Truth* and took to his Dad's bedside for nearly 60 days.

Not really the quintessential rambler, more of just a good country boy, he said that his most joyful years were when he drove a truck from 4 a.m. to 1 p.m. for \$270 a week, and he'd still be working there if they hadn't sold the company. That's James Hand though, his life's luck is reminiscent of Billy Joe Shavers, and while he's had some scrapes with the law and some runs of bad luck, he doesn't mope or complain about it.

He served nine months in prison for possession of amphetamines in 1988, and when asked about it he simply responded, "Now, when I put on my hat and sing, that's the public's business, but when a door closes behind me, that's my business."

So when he does put the hat on and sing, how is he? Willie Nelson often refers to Hand as "The Real Deal," and constant comparisons to childhood friend Lefty Frizzell and ol'Hank don't hurt either. Hand said he considers that the best compliment a man could have and says that's what he listened to growing up and he just learned from being around it. His voice oozes authenticity and torment and much like Roger Miller, even on his upbeat songs, when pulled apart, lyrically are quite devastating and overwhelming. Texas Favorite Ray Benson and established Texas musician Lloyd Maines also helped produce and play on the album.

With his new album and revamped touring schedule, one has no excuse not to be the first one on the block to jump on the James Hand bandwagon.

FARMERS EVICTED

Deputies Arrest 45 Activists At South Central Farm

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — The largest urban farm in the United States stood empty last Tuesday afternoon as dozens of protesters were arrested while preventing the land in South Central Los Angeles from being developed into warehouse space.

The eviction ended a three-week standoff that brought a host of celebrities, musicians, and activists to the aid of the 350 farmers who had been occupying the 14-acres since the 1992 Rodney King riots. About 20 protesters had chained themselves to each other, the tree, or 55-gallon concrete-filled drums inside the garden.

At around 5 a.m., between 65 and 120 sheriff's deputies began arresting about 45 activists there, including actress Daryl Hannah who sat in a large walnut tree. According to the LA Times, roughly 250 LAPD officers in riot gear secured the area.

During the eviction, the owner of the land Ralph Horowitz broke talks with the City of Los Angeles to sell the land for \$16 million. Horowitz said that he refused his own asking price because he wanted the farmers evicted.

The city originally seized the land

using eminent domain to build a trash-to-energy incinerator there, but community activists beat the proposal. In turn, the city leased the property to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. By the early 1990s, the food bank let families with low-income garden there.

To settle a lawsuit filed by Horowitz to regain the land in 2003, the city sold it back for \$5 million. But the farmers refused to leave, and when a community trust for the farmers came up \$10 million short of Horowitz's \$16.3 million price tag for the land on May 22, Horowitz wanted the farmers evicted. He said that the increased activity among celebrities and decreased interest from the community farmers themselves led to his decision.

Among the celebrities that supported the farm included country singer Willie Nelson, actors Danny Glover, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Ed Harris, folk singer Joan Baez, and tree sitter Julia "Butterfly" Hill.

In the meantime, the farmers have moved to a 7.8-acre plot nearby. About 100 other plots elsewhere have been identified as possible locations for urban gardens.

Report Puts Economic Reality Back In Net Neutrality Debate

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the Senate prepares its revision U.S. telecommunications law, a new economic analysis linking "network neutrality" to the growth of the Internet economy was released by Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America, and Free Press.

The report maintains that network neutrality in its current form has provided a level playing field on which Internet-based companies have expanded trade and innovation since the web's existence.

Mark Cooper, director of research for the Consumer Federation of America, went on to say in a statement that those who favor abandoning network neutrality do so with "backward" policy.

"They say we should not risk imposing Network Neutrality for fear of stifling competition and innovation," he said. "Yet it is Network Neutrality that has given us vibrant competition and innovation. The question Congress should be asking is why abandon network neutrality and risk destroying the Internet?"

The report "Economic Analysis and Network Neutrality" attacks anti-net neutrality claims from Vanderbilt University Law Profes-

sor Christopher S. Yoo and the Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal & Economic Public Policy Studies. Their claims, the report argues, come from "biased theoretical and faulty assumptions that do not fit the economic reality of Internet-related markets."

"Since network neutrality has succeeded so dramatically in producing the vibrant Internet economy and sustaining competitive communications services," said Trevor Roycroft, the economist who authored the report, "critics must show very tangible benefits from changing that policy. These analyses do not even come close to meeting that burden."

The report was submitted to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation before a hearing on the Communications, Consumer's Choice, and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006 (S. 2686) last week.

For more information on the report, visit the Free Press website.

INFO

Economic Analysis and Network Neutrality report
http://www.freepress.net/docs/roycroft_study.pdf

Sen. Clinton Ducks Critics As Progressives Push 'Straight Talk'

WASHINGTON — Could it be that Democrats aren't taking their own advice at the annual Take Back America conference in Washington, D.C. last week?

The event is supposed to gather progressives to debate various issues, except for CODEPINK apparently, said one of the founders of the women's peace group.

Activist Medea Benjamin reported that even after negotiations with conference officials, CODEPINK members were denied access to Sen. Hillary Clinton's (D-NY) keynote speech as well as hindered their ability to distribute fliers explaining their take on Clinton's stance on the war in Iraq.

For several months, CODEPINK has staged a campaign called "Birdog Hillary" in order to open a discussion about Iraq with Sen. Clinton herself. The group had also demonstrated inside the Republican National Convention and at President Bush's Inauguration. Although CODEPINK had expected to be stifled in those two instances, they hadn't counted on conference officials preventing them from being heard.

"We were amazed to discover that the organizers of Take Back America treat dissent the same way that the organizers at a Bush rally do," said Gael Murphy, another CODEPINK co-founder. "Most progressives do not support Hillary Clinton, and stifling our legitimate, heartfelt opposition to her pro-war position is an outrage. I guess we have to take back 'Take Back America.'"

Election Manual

At the same time, a manual for candidates and activists that outlines a method by which to argue the progressive's case for the fall elections was released last week. The manual entitled "Straight Talk" explains the progressives' stance on the economy, security, and initiatives such as energy independence and health care.

Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg joined Campaign for America's Future co-director Robert Borosage unveiled these proposals for progressives as a guide to "assert a new politics of the 'common good,' putting government back on the side of the people."

"In area after area, the majority of Americans stand with progressives against the conservative idea," said Borosage. "Similarly, on broad policy initiatives—in area after area, progressive initiatives receive remarkable levels of support—with far more intensity and support than signature conservative policies. Washington has been consumed by scandals and incompetence, but there's a far larger, potentially far more momentous sea change taking place."

"We were asked, with this poll, to find out if the country has reached a tipping point," said Stan Greenberg. "The answer is yes. The conservative world view is in the deepest possible trouble at its very core philosophical underpinnings."

To obtain a copy of the Straight Talk manual, visit the website for Campaign for America's Future.

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Straight Talk manual
<http://www.ourfuture.org/straighttalk.ourfuture.org>

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Unspoken Injustice; Overcoming Tragedy For A Better Future

BY STEPHEN WEBSTER
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series. This story contains some graphic details.

Many young victims of sexual abuse go on to lead lives just as troubled as their lost childhoods. At the core of Building Block, the child safety activist group *The Lone Star Iconoclast* has partnered with for this series of reports, lays a story of abuse, despair, loss and redemption. One of the group's founders, Christopher Largen, endured repeated, horrific childhood abuse at the hands of predators. He went through much of his life carrying the shame of thinking that he alone was made to bear that burden. Until, that is, he met his wife Gynni.

Gynni Largen, a 29 year-old resident of Denton, embodies an uncommon tale of hope for the abused and forgotten. When her mother divorced for the second time, Gynni was six. Living in Kentucky at the time, she and her sister struggled to live with a mother she refers to today as "completely insane." When Gynni was seven, her mother married a Baptist minister who she said used to throw her pets against the walls of their home.

"He was a total monster," she said. "Any time they would have an accident, he'd just chunk our dogs or cats against the walls, or throw them into the yard, or just hurl them into the creek behind our

house. We went through so many pets when I was little. He'd start yelling and cursing and before I knew it the dog was out the window or door. Or I'd come home from school and the puppies would be gone. But I just thought he had a temper. ... I didn't know he was what the State of Texas would later call a 'fixated predator.' But I was just a little kid. How was I supposed to know?"

Gynni laughs with an air of comfort, sharing her harrowing childhood with a practical stranger. "After a few years of mostly mental and verbal abuse, he and my mother came up with this idea for 'family time.' Basically, they would get my sisters and me together and have sexual education and exploration orgy sessions. It started with real light stuff, but it got ... bad ... very quickly. This went on for several weeks, sometimes two or three times a week. ... Then that behavior started to spread to everyday life. My step-father would make me wear my mother's lingerie and walk around the house. And if they thought we were bad for whatever reason, we were whipped on the back with a belt, stripped down and tied to a bed. ... I later found out that my sister got the brunt of it. My step-brother was raping her in addition to everything else. One day my step-father decided I needed to learn how to perform [a sexual act]. But I couldn't do it. I started gagging. So my mother did it, like it was supposed to be a 'learning experience.' But



Gynni and Chris Largen

after that, I don't think she could go through with it any more. It just all stopped then and there."

A couple years later, details of this came out to a family friend. The friend began to pry for more information about what had happened to these girls. When it was all told, Gynni's mother and step-father were arrested and sentenced to 20 years in Texas prison, where the family had relocated just years prior. They remain behind bars today. Gynni was institutionalized, or put in "the system," as she calls it, bound for a teenage of bouncing between foster homes.

"For so long in the system, I was *such a bad kid!*" she claimed. "I was always getting into fights and instigating stuff. I was in this one home when I was 13, and there was one Crip and one Blood living there as well. And we sort-of formed a little power triangle. We were always sneaking out or inciting violence. There were fights all the time. I was close to going to juvenile lockdown at several points because I was so out of control. ... Then there was the date-rape situation."

Gynni recounted how this particular foster home, one of about 10 she saw between the ages of 13 and 18, allowed "host families" to move in to a separate part of the house, but were otherwise off limits to the girls living there.

"Well, this one host family had a 16-year-old boy. He was three years older than me. And he was just as bad as anyone in the foster home. ... One night, when I was sneaking out of my room, going out the window to do who knows what on this huge, 11-acre ranch they kept us on, I thought I'd go around to the other windows to see who else was awake. Well, I tapped on this guy's window thinking it

was his older brother, a friend of mine. But he was the only one awake, so we both snuck out and spent the night out on the ranch. We ended up in the back of a utility van, and before I knew it, he was raping me. When I told the directors of the [foster home], it just made everything worse for me. Everyone liked him, and a few days later he had to move. The issue was never addressed in counseling, nor was the perpetrator charged, nor was any restitution provided."

One problem with foster care, says Gynni, is that when a child is told to relocate, they have hours to days to pack all their belongings that might not reach their next destination with them. On most occasions, there was no time for saying good-byes or collecting information in order to keep in touch. "Every time the state moved me, I lost everything. All my toys, my clothes, my friends ... Over and over I was stripped of everything I had. It just became a way of life. It made me very rebellious and angry. When I was 16, I began to utilize the counseling resources given to me after my repressed memories came back to me. It was like a horrible movie. I just kept seeing flashes of what my mother and step-father did to me, and I didn't know how else to confront it."

However, in this hardship she had an unexpected intervention from two people she insists God put in her path.

"[Names withheld] were so great to me," said Gynni. "My court advocate and lawyer, between the times I was 12 until I got out of the system at almost 17, truly saved me. They were there for me when nobody else was. They were the only real family that I had ever known, and they became lovers after meeting while working on my case."

Gynni insisted that *LSI* not publish their names, due to the fact that her court advocate and lawyer are both women and rather well-known in the Dallas area. "Their presence completely turned my life around," she said. "And when I was 17, they adopted me! I had been thinking about asking them to do it, but I wasn't sure if they would. When I finally asked, the immediate answer was 'No way!' I mean, I didn't realize it at the time, but in order to do that they would have to come out to all their co-workers and bosses. It would have been a lot to ask of anyone. But a couple weeks after I brought it up, I found out that they went ahead and started the legal process. They came out to all of their associates and friends, but most of them knew it anyway. Still, it was a big leap of faith, and they did it all for me."

Continued On Next Page



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'BROKEN INJUSTICE' ...From Previous Page

Within a short amount of time, Gynni's life took its first turn for the better. She spent her senior year in a public high school, living a normal life in the suburbs of Dallas. "It was like a dream come true, and I could never thank them enough," she said. "My behavior improved. My attitude completely changed. Everything was just how I had always dreamed it would be. I had a normal life for once: loving parents, a beautiful house, a great group of friends at school. It was everything that I never got to experience my whole life."

At 19, Gynni got a job at The Nelson Center in Denton, a non-profit treatment center for emotionally disturbed children. She worked in the girls' wing, giving hope to those who were in the same place she had been for so very long. But it was not easy.

"The Nelson Center had its share of problems at the time, though they've since changed administrators and taken steps to reform," she said. "Back when I worked there, some of the staff would mistreat kids and throw them around. They called it 'take downs' and 'required restraint,' but it was really just abuse. There were a lot of fights, sure, but most of the girls looked up to me because I had been through it and done something positive with my life."

Little did she know, she was about to have an encounter with destiny.

"One day, as I was sitting outside of The Nelson Center, a bunch of girls were brushing my hair," said Gynni. "It was strawberry blond at that point. I don't know ... I thought it was kind of cute. But then I saw Chris for the first time, and I just froze."

Chris walked out on the patio where the interview was taking place and sat down on a chair across from Gynni, placing her feet in his lap, massaging her toes between his thumbs and index fingers.

"Yeah, I saw her out of the corner of my eye and we just locked gazes instantly," he said. "I kept walking and she just stared at me. But I had to go back to work. I was just on a cigarette break. So the next time I saw her, I let my hair down and you know, kind of walked back and forth trying to get her attention while not acting like I was, ah, trying to get her attention."

"He was so cute!" said Gynni. "I saw him a couple times after that. Turns out he and I both worked at The Nelson Center; he was in the boys' wing, and I was with the girls'. Finally, I just had to go talk to him, so I made up some excuse to go off the wing when I saw him at the front desk out in the yard. The first thing I said to him was, 'Nice hair, man!'"

"Gynni is such a strong and beautiful person," said Chris. "After she came and talked to me just once, we were instantly drawn together. We spent almost three days just talking and talking. It was amazing."

Then, a strange twist of fate brought them together permanently. Gynni was living in Denton at what she called "a Fry St. flophouse." Her roommate, unbeknownst to her, was selling a variety of hard drugs out of her apartment. Once, when Chris was visiting, her roommate said some things about her that concerned him greatly.

"He was calling her all sorts of things, saying stuff that I knew couldn't be true," said Chris. "So I told her what he'd said, and she was furious." When

Chris and Gynni went to the apartment, they discovered a multitude of college-age druggies strewn about the small living-quarters.

"I went inside and asked Chris to stay in the car," said Gynni. "I confronted my [expletive] of a roommate, and a fight broke out. I ended up having to restrain him, and I was pretty surprised that I could do it. But I took him down, and left the apartment. I haven't looked back since."

Chris offered Gynni a place to stay while she got her living situation back in order. A few weeks later they became romantically involved. Within two months, Gynni discovered she was pregnant with their first-born son. She was 19 years old.

"It was just *crazy!*" she said. "Here I was, in-between apartments, and I had just met this guy. Well, we get to talking over all that time we spent together ..." Gynni looked at Chris and grasped his hand. Chris looked up and smiled. "Turns out we had very similar backgrounds, dealing with childhood sexual abuse," he said. "She and I helped each other to deal with our issues. I felt complete, and for once, I knew I wasn't alone in this."

Nine years later, Chris and Gynni are happily married. They have a boy and a girl, Caleb and Liberty, and live in a cozy enclave in Denton, where together they run Building Block, both working as advocates for abused children.

"It was such a rush, and it hasn't always been easy," said Gynni. "It was instant everything! Instant love. Instant future ... Instant family! When I really sit and think about it, I can't believe that I'm here, now. But that's just one of the funny ways life works out, you know? My experiences made me want to be a good mom, but I had very few examples of healthy functional families as a kid. I spent much of my free time researching this issue as a teenager, in order to break the cycle of abuse, which people in the system had implied I was predisposed to perpetuate. And Chris, being in the same boat, has been figuring it all out right along with me."

Today Gynni is employed at a Montessori school in Denton, working with children. Chris and Gynni serve as two of the founders of Building Block, and Chris has published two highly acclaimed books, making a name for himself as a child safety activist, author and journalist. They serve as amazing examples of people who made it through the pain and despair of childhood sexual abuse, and work to bring that message to others now where they once were.

"Its is just amazing to me today that we can move on and overcome anything, and turn around to help other kids who know all too well the feeling of being abandoned after such terrible abuse," said Gynni.

"You know, every day I'm thankful that Gynni and I met," said Chris. "From the first time I saw her, I knew there was something special about her. ... Not too long thereafter I had delivered my two beautiful children with my own trembling hands. And here we are."

"If we can overcome, anyone can," said Gynni. "We know we love each other, and now we have every reason to bring that message of hope to those forgotten kids who think they'll never make it out of the system. Abuse is not the end of the world, for us or for them."

House, Senate Kill Iraq Pullout Timetable

WASHINGTON — The GOP-led House by a vote of 256-153 killed chances of a timetable for removing troops from Iraq. The debate was mostly along partisan lines as the mid-term election season heated up last Friday.

Democrats called the debate and subsequent vote a political stunt, but several prominent Democrats voted against it as a protest against President George W. Bush's "failed policy" in Iraq, they said.

Still, other Democrats saw the vote as risky as they sought to regain control of Congress next November.

A small group of Republicans denounced the resolution as well, fearing tough challenges from Democrats, though others voted for it anyway as they

admonished their fellow Republicans.

The day prior, the Senate voted down its own bill, 93-6, to withdraw troops within the year.

The votes in both houses come as more and more Americans are becoming frustrated with the war in Iraq and GOP leadership, according to opinion polls.

In related news, the Senate approved an emergency spending bill that continues to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sen. Arlene Specter (R-Penn) was the only senator to vote against the \$94.5 billion bill, about \$66 billion of which goes to the Pentagon for operations overseas.

Sen. Specter's opposition centered on Bush's \$873 billion "cap" on appropriations bills that pass each year.

Editorial

Cut and Run or Pay and Play!

The Republican-dominated U.S. House of Representatives continues to miss the point.

The American people are not only disgusted with the blank-check policy regarding Iraq, they are outraged.

When its members voted 351-67 to authorize another \$66 billion in continued spending for the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan last week, servant Congressmen blatantly defied the desires of their employers.

Boosted by the recent killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, members of Congress were temporarily blinded by a headlight. There's a difference between a candle in the window and fast approaching Mack truck.

Actually, Zarqawi's death is meaningless. Just as the death of Ho Chi Minh meant nothing during the Vietnam War. And Ho Chi Minh was deemed the father of his country, their George Washington, who was admired and respected by both sides.

Zarqawi was no George Washington. He was more Al Capone. He was a comparatively minor player in a multi-faceted resistance to the U.S. occupation, unpopular, although feared, by most Iraqis. Had the U.S. not invaded, he wouldn't have even been in Iraq, and neither would have al-Qaeda.

If Zarqawi is tantamount to a mobster, ill-respected even among his followers, any charisma he placed upon the al-Qaeda mafia will be quickly replaced.

Why is it that one solitary individual such as Zarqawi is being deemed make-it or break-it in Iraq while, as expressed by President Bush, Osama bin Laden doesn't matter anymore?

Because Osama doesn't matter.

Neither does Zarqawi.

The Iraqi resistance is being generated by us, by our presence there.

Yes, it would be nice if other countries would embrace the type of democracy that our founding fathers developed. It would be equally nice if we did.

But this is not the issue.

It is one of patriotism vs. form of government.

— Written By W. Leon Smith and Don M. Fisher

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Where There's A Test, There's A Cheater

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "The most valuable thing you learn in school is how to outwit the guvvamint."

Gee, the Texas Education Agency thinks somebody cheated on the TAKS exam.

Not that every reasoned study conducted about high stakes testing didn't tell Austin's *Ausbildung Geheime Stadts Polizei* that.

So now the education anthill is now holding up thousands of bucks for jumping through the bubble test hoop that was promised teachers at 14 low-income schools.

So much for merit pay.

Not that those sucking Austin's public teat in the name of education actually *KNOW* that more than 600 accused Texas schools cheated.

Faced with the very real and obvious prospect that people *might* cheat when their incomes and futures are at risk from a meaningless, manipulatable examination, the state education officials panicked.

TEA did what any bureaucrat would do when faced with a crisis: hire an outside consultant.

Now, if you were contracted with the state to see if people were cheating, and you didn't find any actual cheating, what would be your chances of being rehired?

Prove the state doesn't need you?

And as much as the state enjoys paying for nothing, it is full of elected officials who get re-elected by ferreting out "guvvamint waste."

No matter how much they have to spend on ferrets.

And contracts to find cheating that don't actually *find* any cheaters look pretty wasteful.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



Now, as any classroom teacher will tell you, it's pretty difficult to find cheaters among 28 kids locked in a 14 by 14 cell.

Finding cheaters among thousands of school districts is like trying to find the meanest fireants in Texas.

And, again, as any classroom teacher will tell you, it's pretty easy to suspect that some students cheated on a test.

All you have to do is give a test.

Some students will to cheat.

Guaranteed.

Some will cheat because they have been told by the state through previous testing that they are no good; worthless dregs of humanity who can't even pass a simple test. They are doomed by the power that god, the Texas Legislature and the United States of America have vested in the holy and infallible Texas Education Agency, (You'd fire a teacher who told a kid that.) so cheating doesn't seem like merely a good option; it's the only option.

Some will cheat just to see if they can.

Some will cheat because they don't think tests are important.

Most of us in the real world don't take them on any regular basis, so how meaningful can they be?

What TEA is now spending your money on is the contractor's opinion that educators who improved their scores *probably* cheated.

As opposed to just teaching their kids how to take a multiple-guess test, which you can teach a chicken to do if you've got enough chicken feed and electricity.

Not that teaching kids to bubble isn't cheating.

It's just cheating that makes TEA and the Legislature look good; that makes it the word and will of god.

So, did people cheat on the TAKS test?

Probably.

People probably cheated on their income taxes, too.

Offer \$2,000 to \$10,000 extra to a teacher trying to feed a family on \$24,000 a year, and you have all the larcenous incentive that most desperate people need.

The point is, outside the state education bureaucracy, the Constitution of the United States provides that you have to prove that people commit crimes before you punish them.

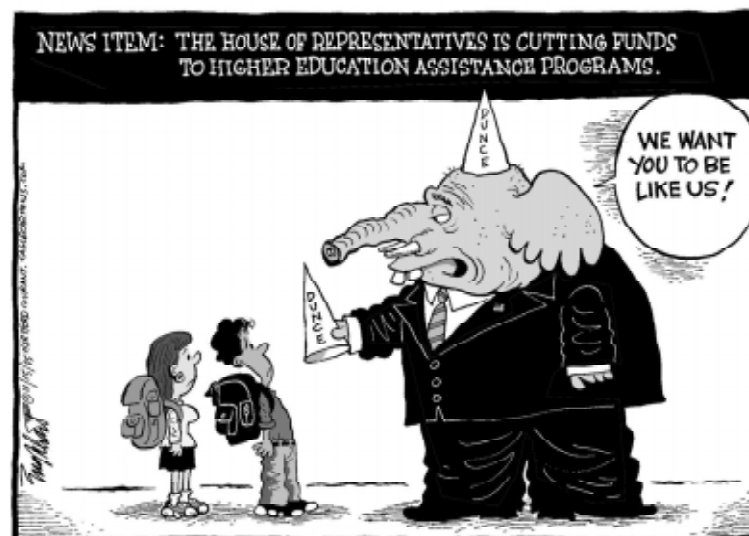
However, the Nazis proved that virtually any bureaucrat will gladly stoke the ovens for a guaranteed salary and an illusion that they are serving the greater good.

I have lived around the state education bureaucracy all my life, and if I have learned one thing from that, it's that the TEA is dominated by potential concentration camp guards, those who couldn't cut it as classroom teachers, who got into education because they crave the power to officiously order others around, but who found that teaching is like democracy; power is derived from the consent of the governed.

Children will love you, they will respect you, but they won't fear you.

Instead, they will merely hold you in contempt.

Accusing people of *probable* cheating, even guilty people, is about as contemptuous as it gets.



How Do You Define Success?

~ The Governor's Tax Plan Fails to Truly Fix School Finance ~

BY JIM DUNNAM
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Ask yourself, how do you define success? Is it enough that the Legislature passed bills that will keep public schools open for one more year? Or should the Legislature have taken the opportunity to craft a truly long-term solution for our broken public school finance system?

Since the end of the last special session of the Texas legislature just three weeks ago, Governor Rick Perry and several other Republican politicians have in one way or another claimed success. For example, Governor Perry is now running television commercials claiming that the average Texas homeowner will receive a \$2,000 cut on their property taxes. But anyone even remotely familiar with our state's property tax system knows that this claim is utterly ridiculous.

Unlike the Governor, I believe that, sadly, the most recent special session of the Legislature achieved little beyond getting us out of court temporarily. Unlike the Governor, I'm not running television commercials that make false claims in order to sell a lemon to the

people of Texas. Unlike the Governor, I don't define success as just doing something—I define it as doing the right thing.

Instead of investing meaningful resources in Texas public schools, Governor Perry pushed a plan through the Legislature that raises taxes on tens of thousands of small businesses and consumers, and uses that money to cut taxes mainly for the insurance, real estate, oil and gas, and finance industries. It's a big tax swap that mainly benefits Perry's biggest contributors—nothing more.

Perry pushed, and the Republicans in charge of the Legislature passed, three tax bills that will increase taxes on over 50,000 small businesses, increase the cigarette and chewing tobacco tax, and raise higher taxes on used car sales. Interestingly, the cigar tax was not raised—I guess the fat cats did not like that one. Perry raised these taxes under the false pretense that they would use the money to create a long-term, stable source of funds to improve Texas public schools.

But what Perry really did was pass another bill to dedicate all of the new taxes so that they can never be used on

public education in the future. That's right, not one penny of Perry's new taxes can ever be used for improving our children's classrooms, hiring teachers or buying up-to-date textbooks.

The property tax cut? If homeowners are lucky, their 11% property tax cut this year will be barely enough to offset appraisal creep (10% in Waco this year) and the \$0.04 tax increase that Perry has forced on local school districts if they want any new money to pay for things like higher electric and gasoline bills. And even if taxpayers receive a real tax cut, that tax relief likely won't last for long. Both the nonpartisan Legislative Budget Board and the Texas Comptroller say that the Governor's legislation creates at least a \$25 billion budget deficit over the next five years.

Because his policies are fiscally unbalanced, the January 2007 Legislature will be forced to either 1) cut billions from the state budget (probably from health care, higher education funding and our public schools), 2) raise taxes again, 3) adopt casino gambling, 4) undo the property tax cut, or 5) all of the above.

So what did our schools receive? Texas schools were given back one-third of the funds that were cut from them in 2003. \$4.3 billion was cut in 2003, and only \$1.4 billion of that was restored this year. Three steps back, and one step forward

leaves our schools two steps behind. And while any teacher pay raise is good, after the new raise Texas teachers will be paid less in today's dollars than they were when my son started kindergarten; he will enter 7th grade this year. Lastly, changes in Robin Hood mean that while McLennan County schools might get \$56 per child extra when they raise local tax rates, Highland Park will get \$376 per student—so much for equity.

As Perry struts around this summer campaigning for governor, he'll be saying, "Mission Accomplished!" But, I don't think so. This is the Governor's re-election bid to benefit his biggest donors—big business and the people who live in very wealthy areas. Despite all Perry's ads, a long-term solution for Texas' school finance system is no closer than it was three years ago.

Governor Perry got something done; but, unfortunately, he did not get the right thing done. How do you define success—doing something or doing the right thing?

State Representative Jim Dunnam (D-Waco) was elected to the Texas House in 1996 and has served as the House Democratic Leader since 2003. Rep. Dunnam represents House District 57, composed of part of McLennan County and all of Falls, Leon, Madison and Robertson Counties.



Rep. Jim Dunnam

I Was Tom DeLay's Surreptitious Suitor

I ... have a confession to make. Everyone, please be calm.

I know this may be a lot to absorb in such a short amount of time but Yes, the Rumors Are True: I was Tom DeLay's surreptitious suitor. You know, "Gentleman Friend"? Cavalier innamorato? Sumptuous steady, innamorata arm piece — en privy, of course. I confess. I was Tom DeLay's ever-faithful Ace in the ... ah, you probably get my point. But that is only the beginning of my morose lament.



Those Godless Democrats! Filthy, immoral, activist judges! How could they steal him away from me?!? I have so many fond memories of our time together. Oh, those years now seem so far away. Back when Tommy and I would casually walk the beaches of Sai Pan, where he and Uncle Jackie had come to work on government things. There were so many native children there, and Tommy was so sweet to them. He would tell me, "I got these kids jobs they could have never had if I didn't accept this money." And he'd whisk me away in a flight of fancy, running through the sand, carried on the strong, capable backs of 12-year-olds.

I never paid much attention to his business, but I read some things in that horrible Liberal Press. Like Tommy always says, Don't Believe Anything in The Liberal Press. They're all liars. Every last one of them. Except Chris Matthews, who used to join us on golfing trysts to Scotland. Oh, I remember it all so clearly! There's Grover, that scoundrel! (He could do the most amazing things with that cute little beard of his) And Scooter, and Dick! Those two are always getting into trouble. The kind of trouble that makes you want to say, "Oooh!" with a Wink.

I was enamored with this tower of a man. While he may be relatively short face to face, Tommy was like a 20-foot tall bronze statue to me. I looked up to him in everything I did. We'd spend long nights in straw huts, lounging in hammocks made of black, beautiful, silky-soft human hair. Bald native women would bring him drinks in cute little coconut cups while he sat and puffed on a Cuban cigar. Sometimes I would oil his soft, warm chest with smashed olives and tears collected from the local children. Oh how he loved those!

He would visit with local dignitaries and let me watch them and they ... ah, worked out a "compromise" over their now-legal sex trades. But Tommy was always so understanding. He brought hope to all those poor prostitutes. And with a little bit of extra man-handling (tee-hee!), he even brought them the clients they needed! By working it out so American Corporations, God bless 'em, could bank offshore and avoid paying



The Webster Retort

By Stephen Webster

taxes altogether, I was always seeing the joy in the eyes of those healthily-rounded CEOs, running off into the jungle with the natives. Little boys, especially. But Tommy was okay with it. After all, it was just another political victory for God's Team! I hear he was recently elected as Chairman of the Texas branch. Good for him. But I wish I were there to have heard his acceptance speech. I was at home, far too broken up over Tommy to care what God had to say.

Ronnie Earl, that yellow-dog coward! He knows nothing of law! I don't care of he's prosecuted more Democrats than Republicans! He should know which side God is on! God is on the side that helps the needy people of wherever. Like those thankless Iraqis we keep helping. When was the last time Ronnie Early ever helped anyone, I ask you? The only person he's helping is Howard Dean! Makes me wonder if there is anything more to them than meets the eye. I hear they both have a taste for sodium pentothal. Those sinners.

I've made some new friends since Tommy told me I had to leave. Our split was a soul-wrenching heartbreak. I have not recovered yet, but he said it was for the best. I'm the new speaker now, but Denny Hastert just doesn't have the same passion. Sure, he runs with some of Tommy's friends and business partners, and he even earned an honorary "Under Investigation" badge from the Department of Justice. But his heart lies with Karl, whose Roving Thunder will darken my horizon for years to come. I think Tommy is going on trial because he is kind and sweet and honest. The Democrats are trying to Destroy the American Dream!

From this day forward, I'll hang Tommy's police mug shot on the wall over my bed. He has such a wonderful smile. His courage and determination know no bounds. He fought the war against the Democrats and won the title he so deserved: The Hammer. And between you and I, that hammer was good for more than just three things. I just hope the bravery I had to muster in order to come forward and reveal the truth brings a smile to his face.

O! Where art thou, Tommy? I know you will meet another, there behind bars. I hear the stories, but I will not dwell on it! Tommy, I beg you; do not DeLay your return! This lonesome soul and the child sex slaves you so valiantly fought to keep legal ... We desperately need you in this, our hour of loss. You might not be number one in Congress any more. But you are still number one in My Heart!

Stephen Webster is an Investigative Reporter with North-Texas weekly THE NEWS CONNECTION, a Staff Writer with PEACE JOURNALISM MAGAZINE and George W. Bush's hometown paper THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, a former contributor to

'Science & Technology section and the former Editor-in-Chief of BINARY CULTURE. He is also eternally heart-broken.

Without Question, I Put The 'A' In 'Jock Strap'

Yesterday I had my first baseball practice in 30 years. It was with a group of guys with names like Chico, Blaze, Rip, and Easton — guys who even *sound* like baseball players. My name is Ned, which is why this morning I am so sore my nostrils are the only part of my body capable of responding — albeit only to simple verbal commands such "Flare" and "Sniff."

For this reason, I'd like to apologize in advance for any typos you may find in this column. Please keep in mind it was typed using only my nostrils, and a dried lima bean that was strategically dropped onto the appropriate keys through a combination of sniffing and flaring.

I should also mention the Spellcheck feature on my computer requires holding down the SHIFT key while simultaneously pushing F-12. Although I tried, I was unable to execute this function successfully before dislocating my tongue — which is actually easier than you might think. Especially if your tongue becomes pinched between two keys and, in an attempt to dislodge it, you begin swinging the keyboard from side to side until you are knocked unconscious.

Let's face it: given my athletic background, I have no illusions about being a great player. I'm almost 40 and have a grand total of one year of organized baseball experience. That experience came when I was 10, while playing on a team called The Giants, which was quite possibly the worst team in the history of little league baseball. We had nicknames like "Squint," "Waterboy," "Strike," and "Phlegm." I remember these names because they were at the top of the rotation. Our only win of the season came by way of forfeit when, after witnessing "Phlegm" blow a large mucus bubble, the other team was too nauseous to continue.

Considering all of this — and taking into account my lack of athletic talent, fundamental skills, conditioning and, according to our coach, a league a rule prohibiting the use of oxygen tanks anywhere on the field — I've tried to set



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

realistic goals for myself this summer.

Here are a few examples:

1) Realistically, I should be able to run all the bases in 15 seconds, as long as it doesn't have to happen in a single game.

2) Realistically, by the end of the season, I should be able to catch a fly ball; next year, I'll try for two.

3) Realistically, I should be able to stop thinking of my athletic cup as a bull's-eye, and therefore overcome my fear of getting hit in the groin on a line drive from someone nicknamed "The Sterilizer."

4) Realistically, number three is never going to happen, but I'll learn to deal with it.

5) Realistically, I will have to stop blaming pretend gophers every time I miss a routine grounder; eventually, I will need to bring in real gophers.

And lastly,

6) Realistically, I should be able to hit a home run if I work on my fundamentals and eventually execute them in a game where, in one unforgettable moment, the entire outfield is swallowed by a giant sinkhole.

By setting achievable goals like these, I can measure my progress and hopefully contribute to our team's success. On the other hand, it doesn't mean I don't have a back-up plan. I'm not going to tip my hand to the opposing teams by getting into the details here.

But "Phlegm," if you're reading this, please give me a call.

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

Al Qaeda Chooses Zargawi Successor

Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir

Draws Short Straw, Demands Recount

By Jeff Carmack
Special to The Iconoclast

Al Qaeda has named Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir as successor to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed in a massive air strike last week.

"Al Qaeda has unanimously agreed on Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, to be a successor to Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi," said a statement posted on MyJihad.com.

Contacted at a safe house near Baghdad, Muhajir, who was found wearing Groucho glasses and an orange fright wig, stopped packing his suitcase long enough to suggest that the vote had been rigged. He also hinted that he might demand a recount.

Muhajir was not among the names that al Qaeda experts had expected to succeed Zarqawi. However, his name was high on the list of those that TV news anchors could actually pronounce, which accounted for the story

GUEST COMMENTARY

being repeated almost hourly through several news cycles.

Al Qaeda, which is Arabic for "over-achiever," makes up about five percent of Iraq's Sunni Arab insurgency but its suicide bombers have been responsible for the most spectacular violence.

Al Qaeda is far more extreme than any other militant or insurgent group. It comprises Iraqis and Arab militants who travel to Iraq to wage what they see as a holy war against U.S. occupation troops. A questionnaire sent to all potential members shows that "being my own boss" and "excellent dental plan" rate highly among those choosing an extremist militant group. "Choosing my own hours/targets" and "prospect of instant martyrdom" were also frequently mentioned.



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Yes, Mr., Mrs. and Ms. American, our Theocracy is alive and doing just fine.

Thus assured Condoleezza Rice recently to the Southern Baptist Convention in Greensboro, N.C.

Somehow I just can't connect all the links between a highly-educated, never-married, African-American Presbyterian woman of power and a gaggle of evangelicals not necessarily known for their open-mindedness regarding minorities or woman.

This scene was indicative of the abomination our government has become, twisted all out of reality by religious fanaticism: Condoleezza Rice speaking in a room with 12,000 members of a denomination that was founded to defend slaveholders in the most strict interpretation of Christian teachings (how backward is that), and it continues to be so draconian as to not allow women positions of power and responsibility.

I could never figure out the Southern Baptist devotion to George W. Bush the Methodist, either.

At any rate, this gathering of hardcore faithful apparently went bonkers for Condi and the message she brought forth.

It was a doozy.

Upon being introduced, Ms. Rice was welcomed with a standing ovation. Before she had uttered even one word a lone man's voice was heard shouting out, "You've got my vote!"

Vote?

Vote for what? Condi's never run for any office; despite persistent efforts by Queen Laura and Dick Morris (likes Bill, hates Hillary) to push her into the 2008 presidential race, she has repeatedly denied any interest in running.

However, Condi's been in league with the Bush family and their cronies for roughly 20 years now, deeply ensconced enough by 2000 to have a Chevron Oil tanker named after her, and through these associations she's learned how to be fluent in balderdash of the highest magnitude.

Despite having nothing in common with the Southern Baptists on any level whatsoever other than Jesus, the audience often burst into applause, gave her some seven or so standing ovations, and (this one cracks me up) an impromptu group sing of "God Bless America."

The sing-along followed a prayer conceived especially for Condi, offered at the end of her talk by SBC President Bobby Welch: "We thank you now for this sweet lady whom you have protected and guided and blessed. You know how we have longed and yearned for such leadership as this, and we are grateful, Lord."

This "sweet lady," a proponent of torture and mayhem, had just delivered a speech advocating total world domination, the Christian takeover of every nation that isn't a "democracy" — with George W. Bush as King of Planet Earth. Something tells me this isn't the kind of "leadership" Jesus Christ advocated during his 33 year visit here on Earth.

The nuns walloped a lot of religion into me but they never mentioned anything about that, and I certainly don't remember the subject ever coming up at Mass — admittedly I am a bit out of touch, having lapsed these past 25 years or so.

It's never been discussed at Temple, either.

With this in mind, could the SBC appearance have been a stump speech?



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

Was that "supporter" actually the voice of a shill? Would it be too far-fetched to presume that Herr Oberst Karl Rove had seeded the audience with a few strategically-placed cheerleaders?

To these three interrogatories I would have to answer yes, most likely and not at all.

The Southern Baptist Convention, or any other ungodly oversized Christian gathering — the diametric antithesis of Christ's teaching to worship in small numbers — seems an inappropriate venue for the secretary of state to mix a policy address with her personal history.

These are supposed to be people who, as a group, believe above all else in the sanctity of family values. Yet, there they were, 12,000 faithful believers slopping down at the trough of a woman whose entire life has been spent pursuing the "Golden Calf" in lieu of raising a family; one who has never for a solitary moment lifted a finger to give aid or comfort to anyone in need.

While thousands lost their homes, struggled to survive, and hundreds died in the aftermath of Katrina, good Christian Sister Condoleezza went to Broadway for some laughs at Monty Python's "SpamAlot" — where other theatre patrons booed the girl in the bubble. She also shopped for shoes at the most elite of Manhattan's upscale stores, and was obstreperously questioned as to her sensitivity toward the disaster victims by another shopper.

Yet, SBC believers don't seem to give a rat's behind about an individual's personal behavior.

Apparently, all one has to do is tell them precisely what they want to hear, and sugar-coat it with a "Glory Hallelujah!" (be it tacit or roaring).

Condi got down home, relating how she had been born on a Sunday, and spent her first three years living in the back of the church where daddy was the preacher.

In a most hypocritical comment, considering what she was doing while New Orleans drowned, Condi heaped thanks upon the audience for their disaster relief and social work, motivated by faith.

Whether or not anyone present had actually helped someone else at any given time, who knows. All I know is that whenever I help somebody it's not motivated by "faith," rather by a sense of human decency. It seems to me that all too often those who are motivated by "faith" to lend assistance only do so lest they are embarrassed within their own church community — or they send their teenaged kids to help.

The balance of her talk was taken up by the basic message of support the U.S. as it spreads freedom around the Earth, Bush-style.

According to the Associated Baptist Press, (www.abpnews.com, June 14, 2006) Rice sees America in a missionary-like position, a liberator spreading freedom and justice worldwide.

Her theocratic message of the continuation of this Fascist oligarchy sent shivers up and down my spine.

"President Bush and I share your conviction that America can, and must, be a force for good in the world. Human dignity is not the grant of governments... It is God's endowment to all humanity."

She went on to say, in patented Condi Rice doublespeak, how denial of dignity through poverty, political and religious repressions, and other forms of enslavement are in our best interests to ameliorate. Resurrecting the 2004 campaign climate of fear, Condi referred to these as "...tragedies, but they are also threats in the making."

My forte' isn't history, but I think I'm on pretty solid ground when stating that the U.S. has never been attacked by a starving band of Ethiopians, or a group of Chinese who weren't allowed to pray in public.

Much of what she said to the crowd could have been understood and bought into by second graders. I guess you have to know your audience.

According to Rice's oversimplification, the U.S. has a keen interest in promoting religious freedom abroad. Thus will AIDS, poverty, human trafficking, the Darfur bloodbath — all the conditions that cause instability — be conquered.

Precisely how many more years does the Bush Fascist regime intend to remain in power? Where are all the military personnel, equipment and money to accomplish these remarkable feats going to come from?

The master plan is to "...rally other nations to fight intolerance and to support peace and to defend freedom..." to keep our world from drifting towards tragedy.

Continued On Next Page

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• TENUTO

From Previous Page

The world has heard this same rhetoric before, sometime around the early 1930s in a quaint middle European country known as Deutschland.

"The strong will do what they please, the weak will suffer most of all. And inevitably — inevitably — sooner or later, the threats of the world..."

Fear! FEAR! FEAR!!

Yes! *These threats will come to U.S. shores as they did on September 11, 2001!*

But, Condi, you had the report right in your hands over a month before the alleged terrorist attacks!

America has both the moral authority and the ability to lead the world, said she.

(Is it acceptable to throw up a "Zieg Heil!" to an Afrikanisch-Amerikanisch woman, because I'm fixin' to start goose-steppin' here right soon?)

Did Nazi Germany not consider it had a "moral authority and ability to lead the world?"

As for the "strong doing what they please and the weak suffering the most," that sounds eerily similar to the same warning Hitler gave his base over 70 years ago.

And isn't it precisely what these Fascists in the White House have done to all America?

The loudest and most joyful responses came when Rice was addressing the war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. With typical Bush regime bluster, she boasted that we are bringing terrorists to justice, and justice to terrorists. How biblical.

Having no children to lose in combat, and tons of money stockpiled somewhere, she could afford to make a statement like "...the goal of democracy in Iraq is worth the cost and worth the sacrifice."

Whenever Condi talks about anything that's devastatingly serious, her lack of ability to feel the depth of that seriousness comes across loud and clear. She speaks in flat commentary, as if it won't affect her if she keeps it simple: "The mission has been extremely difficult. I know it's been far more difficult than many of us imagined it would be. And I realize how hard it can be to remain hopeful when we hear of death squads and beheadings and sectarian strife."

As we Italians say, "blasé" (no feeling, dull).

Regarding sectarian strife, King George XLIII has provided the U.S.A. with more of that than our Nation's known since the days of the Pilgrims. And Condi's appearance at the SBC only fans the polarization flames.

This past May, Rice was the commencement speaker at Boston College. Steve Almond, author of several compilations of short stories, was forced by conscience to write an open letter to its president, Fr. William P. Leahy, SJ, resigning in protest after five years as an adjunct professor.

The choice of Condi was not popular among the faculty and students, mostly based on her propensity for war.

Almond had another area of discontent — Condoleezza Rice, liar.

"She has lied to the American people knowingly, repeated, often extravagantly over the past five years, in an effort to justify a pathologically misguided foreign policy." He mentions 29 false or misleading statements she made regarding WMDs and links to al Qaeda prior to the invasion of Iraq.

Another Fraudulent November Election?

Americans Need To Learn From Haitian Politics — Quickly!

Americans need only look to Haiti to be reminded of what power politics and voter fraud can do to a nation. Voter fraud is an issue that should *not* be taken lightly. Any incidence of fraudulent activity requires firm and swift justice—for *any* individual, up to and including the President of the United States.

Are they isolated incidents throughout the nation, or is voter fraud a way of life in American politics? Currently many Americans may feel that the complaints of voter fraud are the products of "poor loser" democrats and liberals. In year 2000 Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore all but directly accused George W. Bush of perpetrating voter fraud to win the election. What happened to those charges? Abruptly, Gore dropped his charges and slinked out of sight from the

Almond faults Rice for her allegiance to absolute power, rather than the democratic cause of the Nation. In his opinion she is not a person of honor, and as such not an appropriate role model to hold up to the graduates.

He suggested his students exercise their 1st Amendment Rights during Condi's speech.

Back on January 23, 2003 The Black Commentator <www.blackcommentator.com> had some harsh words for then National Security Adviser Rice. It was one week after King George personally declared the University of Michigan School of Law affirmative action program unconstitutional. (It's so wonderful to know a C-average business major knows more about Constitutional Law than a school full of the nation's most brilliant legal minds.) She accompanied His Excellency to a Black church where he tried to make nice by enticing them with faith-based bribes. Black Commentator was appalled at Condi's behavior, blowing kisses to the congregation as they cheered her color.

Without mincing words, Black Commentator stated "...Condoleezza Rice is the purest expression of the race traitor."

The title of the piece? "Condoleezza Rice: The Devil's Handmaiden"...

One more interesting tidbit concerning Condi's appearance at the Southern Baptist Convention: Prior to going on, Rice was interviewed by the GREENSBORO NEWS & RECORD. On the subject of a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, something the Southern Baptists would love to see pass, the secretary of state was non-committal, employing her usual doublespeak.

"When we get into difficult debates about social policy, we get into difficult debates that touch people's lives, the only thing that I ask is that Americans do it with a kind of sensitivity that real individuals and real human beings are involved in."

Now, that's a most curious non-response from the best woman non-responder around.

In case you'd forgotten, Jesus was a Jew.

Shalom, y'all.

(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

political arena — at least for a while. During the 2004 presidential elections, many states may have been directly or indirectly involved in various forms of voter fraud. Voter fraud is a real issue.

Currently many attorney generals of various states — e.g., Texas, Florida, Ohio, New Mexico—are uncovering more than casual and/or accidental oc-

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)

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currences of voter fraud and questionable voting machine integrity. This should be an eye-opener for American voters and a red flag for Congress regarding the integrity of our entire political system. Immense power breeds large scale corruption, which unfortunately appears to be an intrinsic human weakness. In the case of a nation's political agenda, it inevitably could cause the ruination of that country. During the past 200 years the small island nation of Haiti has remained the prime example of political chaos, economic turmoil and residential unrest. Recently it has been besieged by voter fraud in its national elections. According to an February editorial in the Washington Times,

"Yesterday, U.N. officials found hundreds of smashed ballot boxes and empty vote bags in a dumpster outside Port-au-Prince — all but confirming suspicions of fraud in the Feb. 7 presidential election. Rioters are in the streets."

Haiti remains the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere and the primary cause may be traced to it's historically cruel and corrupt politics. The "smashed ballot boxes and empty vote bags" found by UN officials in dumpsters underlines the evidence of fraud running rampant in a nation that is stuck in an ongoing political quagmire. Every 20 years or so the US and other nations reluctantly determine to intervene in Haiti's political mishaps, trying to sort out some semblance of decency and status-quo in an endlessly tyrannical and corroding political, social and economic system. The people of Haiti desperately are in need of real leadership. Generations of poverty and disruptive political influences have left Haiti a nation under perpetual siege. Haiti is the "poster nation" of corrupt political despotism for all other nations in the world to see and learn from.

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

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

Peter Stern of Driftwood, 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 Disabled Vietnam Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees. You may contact Peter Stern at: <pstern@austin.rr.com>.

Publisher Learns Pen Safer Than Sword

His first taste of combat on June 12, 1862, proved fatal for the pugnacious publisher of the TEXAS STATE GAZETTE.

Austin was a wilderness settlement of 600 rugged residents, when the inaugural edition of THE GAZETTE rolled off the presses on Aug. 25, 1849. In 1854, two years after the death of founder William H. Cushney, his hard-strapped successor sold the publication to John Marshall, a 28-year-old newspaperman from Mississippi.

A Latin scholar who was also fluent in Spanish, Marshall already had a reputa-

tion, according to an admiring competitor, as "one of the most talented and industrious editors" in the South. William S. Oldham, destined to represent Texas in the Confederate Senate, had high praise for his father-in-law's intellect. "His mind was a vast magazine perfectly arranged. Everything was in its place."

Though a head shorter than most of the rough-and-ready characters on the Lone Star frontier, the five-foot seven-inch publisher relished a good fight. When a long-standing feud with his rival at the SOUTHERN INTELLIGENCER culmi-

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



nated in a date for a duel, Marshall rode all the way to the Indian Territory for the affair of honor. The authorities, however, prevented probable bloodshed by arresting his opponent for conspiracy to violate the ban against dueling.

Marshall did not hesitate to defy popular opinion and as late as September 1860 sharply criticized the rash and reckless talk of secession. "The cry of disunion has descended from generation to generation... and now we hear it repeated with silly clamor by a few obscure politicians in Texas."

Two months later on the eve of the national elections, Marshall was resigned to a Lincoln victory and the inevitable dissolution of the Union. Posing a rhetorical but prophetic question, he asked his readers, "Shall the day arrive when Southern birth — no longer an honorable inheritance — will become a token of inferiority and a brand of reproach?"

In November 1860, only days after the election of Abraham Lincoln, Marshall rushed back to Mississippi to be at the bedside of his seriously ill wife. He did not allow the distance to interfere with his duties and continued to chart the editorial course of his newspaper.

Reversing its previous position, THE GAZETTE announced in December 1860, "We believe that our safety is in secession. Then the question of an independent Republic or Southern Confederacy will arise, and will be settled by the people." The hundred-gun salute, which a few days later celebrated the pullout of South Carolina, indicated Austinites had made up their minds.

Writing from Mississippi in February 1861, Marshall eloquently described a silver lining in the dark clouds on the Lone Star horizon. "The child of today will live to see the boundaries of a Southern Republic gradually extended over Chihua-

hua, Sonora and Lower California. Our ships will whiten the Gulf of California and the Pacific, as well as of Mexico and the Atlantic."

When Marshall finally returned to Austin in April 1861, Texas had joined the Confederacy and was preparing for war. Refusing to watch the historic conflict from his desk at THE GAZETTE, he relinquished the editorial reins and turned his attention to military matters.

Leaving Austin on May 12, Marshall made the long trek to Richmond for a private meeting with the Confederate president. He urged Jefferson Davis to call for the creation of 20 companies of Lone Star infantry for service in Virginia. Davis agreed and on June 10 issued the order that led to the formation of the Texas Brigade.

From Richmond Marshall reported, "Let me say that on every hand I hear that Texas is wanted here, if but for the moral effect of her fearful name." He would express a curiously contradictory sentiment five months later from the same site. "At least we are certainly not fighting for these worn out towns and bleak barren hills."

Crossing the South again, Marshall stayed in Austin just long enough to help organize the soon-to-be-immortal brigade for which he had lobbied. Then it was off to war for the feisty publisher as a full colonel in the 4th Texas Regiment.

The editor of THE TELEGRAPH in Houston wished his colleague well. "Col. Marshall is a brave and gallant gentleman and will be in the fore front of the battle when there is any fighting to be done."

Eight months later in his combat christening at the Seven Days' Battles in Virginia, the rookie colonel summoned his soldiers for a glorious charge against the Northern enemy. But a bullet suddenly silenced him, and he slumped forward dead in the saddle.

As John Marshall discovered too late, the pen is not only mightier than the sword but a whole lot safer, too.

Barte 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.

I Miss The Pasta, Not The Plumbing

I've just returned from a trip to Italy, and I wanted to share some things with you. This column is for those of you who just dream about Italy, those who may be going there for the first time soon, as well as those veteran travelers who go to Italy whenever they get a taste for pasta with wild boar sauce.



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

ROME:

When seeing the famous sights in Rome, one can't help but be staggered by their age. The Colosseum and other buildings are two thousand years old. And you'll see ruins that are even older than that. It gives you a sense of permanence and of a continuity of humanity. This was especially so for me, because I live in a city where I'm likely to see signs that proudly declare, "Established: 2003."

One of the first things a visitor to Rome notices is that there are elderly, somewhat stooped over men and women standing on almost every street corner. These are not Italian grandmothers and grandfathers. These are tourists who have been standing there for 30 years, waiting for a car to let them cross the street. Things like this give birth to:

TRAVEL MYTH NUMBER ONE: ITALIANS ARE CRAZY DRIVERS

Mistaking Italians for bad drivers is an understandable error. The reality is that they are fantastic drivers. If there is an empty space of a centimeter or two (I have to speak metric if I'm talking about Italy), they'll find a way to drive through it. If you see a parking spot that looks too small for any car except one that might be lowered from a crane, the expert Italian driver will pull right in. Italian drivers are fearless, which is why pedestrians should be fearful.

TRAVEL TIP NUMBER TWO: BEWARE OF THE PLUMBING

Public toilets often require a contortionist's skill. And I was never able to figure out how to use the shower in our hotel room without flooding the bathroom. Also, I have a feeling that the little basin next to our toilet was not really meant for washing out my socks.

TRAVEL MYTH NUMBER TWO: SMALL PORTIONS

We've all heard this one: the reason Europeans can eat so many courses and not be as fat as Americans is because the portions are small. Not in Italy. The smallest portions I saw would even be a challenge for a teenage boy who wasn't paying for them.

TRAVEL TIP NUMBER THREE: LEARN SOME ITALIAN

At least learn a few phrases. Don't be the kind of tourist who thinks that you can translate English into Italian just by adding an "o" to every word. Sure, people speak English at all the tourist spots and

FLORENCE:

Florence is beautiful, and less crowded than Rome. The food there is different from Rome, but equally delicious. It's heavier, and more of it is fried. Their specialty is a steak, the minimum size of which is usually one kilogram (2.2 pounds). See Travel Myth Number Two.

TUSCANY:

We rented a car and drove around Tuscany for a few days. (In case you were in Italy at the time, I was the guy driving the Fiat who wasn't used to a standard shift). This was the most relaxing part of the trip and everywhere we looked, we saw beautiful, colorful rolling hills. We also saw some charming, medieval towns, and were always surprised that so many other tourists were visiting them, too. I guess if I read about a place in a guidebook, a few other people probably have, too. We also visited Pisa where more people were busy posing for that "clever" photo in which the person looks like he or she is holding up the leaning tower than were actually looking at the tower.

I almost forgot TRAVEL TIP NUMBER FOUR — BACK TO ROME

If you want to go the Vatican museums to see, among other things, the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo's ceiling, you won't be able to use your credit card. The Vatican only accepts cash for these visits. And when you think about it, that's pretty consistent with the history of the place. I don't think Michelangelo took MasterCard, either.

It's nice to be home.

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier" to "Home Improvement." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's Opinion page and a weekly column for SportsLine.com. He can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com.

The Da Vinci Code



The best-selling and controversial book by Dan Brown is finally brought to the big screen in all its intricate glory. Tom Hanks plays a writer, professor and expert in the meaning of symbols in our past. While lecturing in Paris, he finds himself being framed for the murders of prominent individuals who also happen to be members of the Priory of Scion, a secret organization over 2000 years old whose purpose is to protect supposed bloodline of Jesus and the location of the Holy Grail.

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Dear Editor,

President Bush is trying when it comes to immigration.

He just appeared in Omaha, Nebraska in front of an invited audience of 400 people to hear him talk about immigration reform.

He is trying but I don't think he has the right ideas to solve the 'problem'.

First of all, I am surprised he found 400 Americans in Nebraska to show up as an audience. Nebraska is one state whose economy that without immigration – illegal or otherwise – would collapse overnight.

I used to be in favor of closing the border but I am not anymore. There is plenty of room in this nation as anyone can tell you.

Mexico and the United States are close. The border is imaginary. Our populations have met in the middle of the continent and we are mixing now. The reality is that rather than a system to integrate these folks it should be admitted they are integrated. Mexico is part of the United States just as the United States is a part of Mexico.

I believe that dual citizenship is the realistic solution to this manufactured problem.

President Fox calling Mexicans that leave Mexico for the U.S. patriots is just as absurd as President Bush calling for immigration reform even though during the time Bush was governor of Texas over 5 million illegal aliens entered Texas.

Anyone in North or South America is an American already. We are living our lives that way and it is about time our governments catch up to reality.

Sincerely,
Alfred Brock, Canton MI

To The Editor:

Vice President Cheney is a very busy man, but considering his weighty responsibilities, one might say that he deserves some outdoor recreation time, however abbreviated.

One solution was found in December 03 at the Rolling Rock Club in Ligonier Township, Pa., where "canned" hunting is a special feature. Pen-reared birds and animals are available to fee-paying guests for ready kill, eliminating the more sportsmanlike and time-consuming inconvenience of tramping, tracking and stalking.

On that occasion, Mr. Cheney was part of a pheasant-shooting party which collectively downed 417 birds; after lunch, hundreds of mallard ducks were also shot.

Says President Wayne Pacelle, Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Mr. Cheney is "apparently obsessed with hunting and is a regular patron of canned hunts."

In the more that 3,000 such operations across America, clipped-wing quail, pheasants, partridge and mallard ducks are dizzied and set down or released from nets by gamekeepers near where the predators lie in wait.

Inside fenced-in areas, captive animals, including exotic specimens such as zebra, await the shooters' bullets. About 2,000 facilities in the US provide such animals, says Time Magazine.

Ted Turner, the top landowner in the US, operates at least 20 ranches where guests pay thousands of dollars to

slaughter turkeys, deer, bison and African antelope.

Mr. Cheney and Dallas Cowboy Roger Staubach, Sen. John Cornyn, George Bush, Sr. and many other high-profile professionals enjoy this pastime en plein air. Even Bill Clinton is said to have participated at least once.

Mr. Cheney's Saturday February 11 accidental shooting of Harry Whittington at the Katharine Armstrong ranch in South Texas may have been the scene of such a hunt, although the ranch denies the use of pen-raised quail. However, the late Tobin Armstrong, Ms. Armstrong's father, said in 1998, that he rented out his ranch, a ranch with high fences, on a "limited basis" (to well-heeled guests like the Bushes). A few journalists from MSNBC and other news outlets believe that it was such an occasion, that the hunters were able to simply walk up to the birds and shoot them. Moreover, Mr. Cheney was armed with a light 28-gauge shotgun suitable for domesticated fowl, not wild, not subject to much of a recoil, normally used by small-stature shooters. Also, the unfolding truth about Mr. Cheney's character and the well-documented history of his hunting preference strongly indicate that the hawkish Mr. Cheney routinely attacks sitting ducks, both in peace and wartime.

Interestingly, Mr. Clinton, quoted in the N.Y. DAILY NEWS, referring to the Armstrong ranch incident, the vice president and the type of hunting site he's known to frequent, commented, "They raise the quail on a farm. It's hardly a sport. The quail are slow. You have to stomp on the ground to get them to get up and fly. And you can't not get your limit. If it was that kind of farm...he was going to get his limit."

President Bush has proposed expanding the present recreational practice of canned hunting to include the shooting of endangered and exotic species in foreign countries, importing both trophies and hides to the US; he says this will generate revenue through hunting license sales.

Trophy hunting quarry, mostly in private game parks, is not quite as accessible as that in the more confined canned hunts.

The world's foremost trophy hunting organization, reports the Humane Society of the United States, Safari Club International, is deeply involved in the exploitation of wildlife and endangered species and is closely linked to the Bush administration. In the past six years, \$600,000 have been contributed to Republican candidates and Bush has appointed a former leading Safari Club lobbyist as deputy director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

One question: Mr. Bush, in spite of your need for revenue, because of your costly wars and generous tax cuts for the wealthy and Mr. Cheney, although your recreation time is severely limited, can you honestly say all that is right?

NOTE: The Endangered Species Act of 1973 has protected flora and fauna near extinction; but now, what is called a "reform" bill is in the works, already passed in the House and if passed by the Senate, will cancel conservation measures over many millions of acres in our country, leaving them open to developers and the oil, mining, logging and other industries.

Congressman Richard Pombo, a former real estate developer and chair of the House Resources Committee, is the chief proponent of this crusade. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid should be immediately contacted and urged to oppose the Pombo Bill, #HR3824, at the US Capitol (202)224-3121 and also for Connecticut voters, Sen. Chris Dodd (1800)334-5341, (202)224-2823 and Sen. Joe Lieberman (1800)225-5605, (202)224-4041.

Elizabeth Gerteiny, Westport, CT
Dear Editors:

We all know we are living in scary times. But its not just the foreign terrorists we should fear, its our own federal government. Who are these people? They smash the Constitution, ignore the rules and then act outraged when they are caught breaking the law. If ever there was a time for the system of checks and balances to be restored, the time is now.

First we are told that we are not being spied upon and the President told us that spying only occurred with a warrant. Then it turns out we were being spied upon without FISA Court oversight or any warrant. Then we learn hundreds of thousands of calls are being "data mined" which means anytime you call someone overseas, your call is tagged. Think no one is interested in your calls? Wrong. Every time you call the AOL help line or need assistance installing a new computer program, your 888 call is connected to the friendly outsourced workers in India. You are now being watched because you made a overseas call and consequently have become a "person of interest."

Mr. Bush's abuse of power is shameful. Any reasonable American knows that rules and laws were meant to be followed not broken at whim or completely disregarded by the addition of a "signing statement". If this country has any hopes of surviving as the one true Democracy in the world, we need to restore the system of checks and balances so no one person and no one political party dictates everything that happens in the world. How close are we to becoming a fascist state? How long will we be the masters of our own lives? How long will America remain free from tyranny?

Concetta Castro Murray, Atlantic Highlands, NJ

To The Editor:

Our national debt is now almost 8.5 trillion dollars and we are spending 2 billion

dollars a week on Afghanistan and Iraq. There is no end in sight.

Twenty-five hundred Americans have died in Iraq and thousands have been maimed or wounded.

None of these casualties are related to any member of this regime.

We can spend all this money on war but cut funding to domestic projects.

We are told that deomcracy is triumphing in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Taliban and the war lords control Afghanistan. Kharzai might as well be the Mayor of Kabul. Iraq is a mess. Sunni, Shiia and Kurds all hate each other. Kurds want to secede from Iraq and unite with Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Syria and form an independent Kurdish republic.

We have outsourced several million manufacturing jobs to countries where workers make less than five percent of what our people do and then we import those goods.

IBM is investing another 6 billion dollars in India and laying off people here.

Go into any retail store and you will have a hard time finding anything manufactured in the U.S.

Wages here are stagnant but the cost of living is increasing daily.

Mr. Bush talks of the great economic recovery and the many new jobs created. Most of them are in the low paying service sector.

Forty million working Americans cannot afford any kind of health care but congress won't consider a single payer system that could be administered through Social Security.

Gasoline prices are high and Exxon Mobil gives its retiring CEO a bonus of 398 million dollars and we are paying for it. That should not surprise anyone. Both Bush and Cheney are oil men.

Bush is pushing for the repeal of the estate tax. That tax only affects one percent of the population; the richest people in the nation.

Seniors now have a prescription drug bill that was written by and for the drug manufacturers. Medicare cannot negotiate prices for any product.

Multi-billion dollar no-bid contracts are given to cronies. Bids are not accepted from anyone else.

New Orleans and the gulf coast are still a mess. Several thousand mobile homes are rotting away in Arkansas and people are homeless.

Greed is not a virtue. It is the worst of all the seven deadly sins.

John Ford, Roswell

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Lawmaker Seeks 'Public Accounting' Of Rove In CIA Leak

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The ranking minority member of the House Committee on Government Reform is calling once again for a congressional investigation into the White House leak of the identity of former CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson.

This time, Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-CA)'s plea to Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) comes as Special Counsel Patrick J. Fitzgerald has reportedly sought to not pursue criminal charges against President George W. Bush's Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove in the case.

Rep. Waxman said in a letter to the chairman that investigating Rove would not compromise Fitzgerald's investigation on account that the president's aide has already been thoroughly questioned by the special prosecutor and the grand jury.

It is important, according to Rep. Waxman, for a public accounting of Rove's actions because Congress has the constitutional obligation to check the executive branch, especially in light of issues relating to regulatory safeguards for classified information as applied to Rove.

"Like other officials with security clearances, Mr. Rove was prohibited from making both intentional and negligent disclosures of classified information, confirming classified information obtained by a reporter, or repeating classified information he heard from a reporter," wrote Rep. Waxman. "Violations of these rules would not necessarily be criminal actions, but they would be reprehensible and should be a matter of great public and congressional concern."

Rove was questioned five times before a grand jury over his involvement in the CIA leak case. However, Rove and Vice President Dick Cheney could still testify next year in the trial of Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby Jr. who is charged with perjury and obstruction of justice.

Willie Nelson Supports Texas Organic Farmers With July 3rd Picnic

HILLSBORO — Willie Nelson and Carl Cornelius of Carl's Corner, owner of the first biodiesel-only truck stop in the country, supports Texas organic farms. Willie and Carl have donated tickets to the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (TOFGA) to sell for the Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic.

The concert is happening on July 3rd at Carl's Corner, Texas just north of Hillsboro on I35 between Dallas and Waco.

From June 30 through July 2, the festivities kick-off with three days featuring multiple bands. Tickets to each day's event are \$10 at the gate.

Then on July 3rd, Willie's Fourth of July Picnic takes the stage. Tickets being sold with 100% of the proceeds going to TOFGA, will be available in Austin at Waterloo Records and at John Dromgoole's THE NATURAL GARDENER or available online at the TOFGA website. Other ticket pickup locations are available on the TOFGA website. All of the ticket sales proceeds from these locations support the work of the Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assoc.

To purchase tickets call (512) 288-6113. Tickets are also available online at <www.tofga.org>.



CONGRESSMAN EDWARDS (center) celebrates the Army's 231st Birthday on the West Lawn of the Capitol June 15th with Army Chief of Staff Pete Schoomaker and Rep. John McHugh. Second photo (from left) Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey, Army Chief of Staff Pete Schoomaker, Edwards, McHugh, and Sgt. Major Kenneth Preston. Edwards is the Co-Chair of the House Army Caucus.

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