

CRAWFORD, TEXAS

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# President Casts Ballot In Crawford

PRESIDENT BUSH leaves the Crawford Fire station after casting his ballot Tuesday Nov. 7, 2006. in Crawford Texas.

— Photo By Rod Aydelotte/  
Waco Tribune Herald, Pool

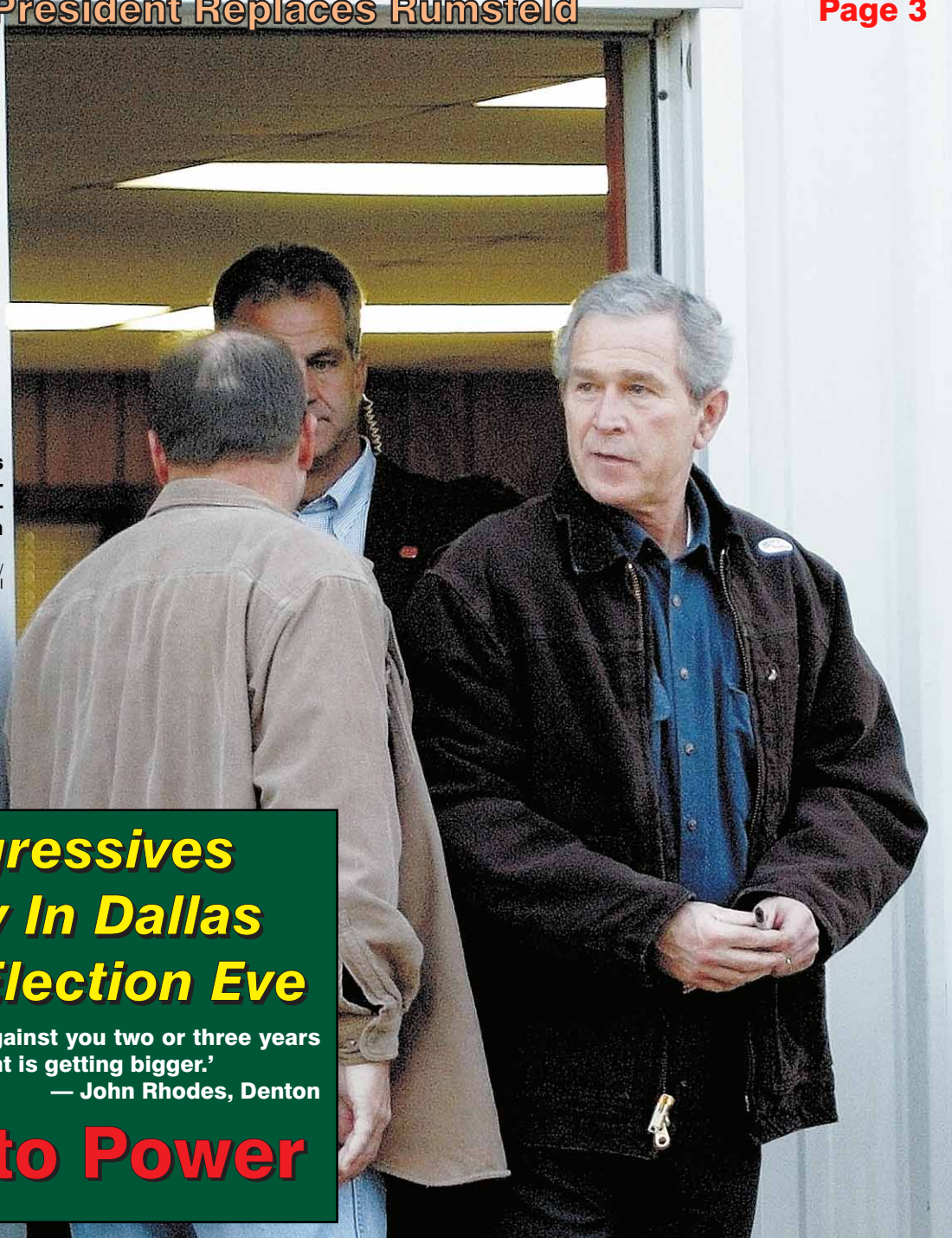


Photo By Beth Freed  
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# Progressives Rally In Dallas On Election Eve

'People would admit to me, "Yeah, I was against you two or three years ago, but now I'm with you." The movement is getting bigger.'

— John Rhodes, Denton

# Speaking Truth to Power



# Unique 'Texas German' Dialect Succumbing To Population Changes

AUSTIN — As the Texas population ages and becomes more ethnically diverse, Texas German, one of the state's early dialects, may become extinct, according to a researcher at The University of Texas at Austin.

Every month, Hans Boas travels to communities throughout Texas—from Crawford to Fredericksburg to Boerne and New Braunfels—to interview speakers of a unique German dialect that blends 19th century German with hearty doses of English.

"As the Texas population changes, some languages will become more widely spoken such as Spanish, while others will move out of the mainstream such as Czech, Swedish and German," Boas, an assistant professor of Germanic studies, said. "Texas German was the first language of many of the state's settlers, so it is important to preserve the dialect."

After visiting Fredericksburg where Texas German is spoken in shops and restaurants, Boas became fascinated with the dialect that features words such as *der Cowboy* (Cowboy spoken with a German accent) and *die Stinkkatze* (skunk, or simply stinky cat).

Boas recruited a small team of students to examine and preserve the language of the Germans who once dominated central Texas' cultural landscape. The Hill Country became known as a part of the "German Belt" in the late 1900s when immigrant schoolchildren and newspaper readers learned about the world in their native language.

During the 1990 U.S. census, almost 3 million Texans claimed some German ancestry. But, during the past four decades, newer generations have not spoken Texas German.

Today, there are fewer than 8,000 speakers of the dialect. Most of these speakers are between 60 and 70 years old. Because the number of native Texas German speakers will shrink drastically during the next two decades, Boas predicts

the dialect will become extinct by 2040.

Boas and the students have recorded almost 200 Texas Ger-

man speakers and preserved more than 350 hours of the interviews in digital format.

As part of the project, Boas

has created a Web-accessible database of audio and textual materials from Texas German. The archive maintains audio

and video recordings of sociolinguistic interviews conducted with native speakers of Texas German. These irreplaceable recordings allow researchers to analyze the linguistic features of the dialect—from grammatical patterns to phonology, the way sounds function in a language.

In addition to completing interviews about Texas Germans' lives, families and local history, the researchers compile translations of English words, phrases and sentences into Texas German. This archive allows users to access the Texas German translations in order to compare how the same words, phrases and sentences are pronounced differently throughout Texas.

"It also is important to create a popular account of Texas German to share with local schools, preservation societies and museums," Boas says. "The dialect is part of the culture's legacy but it is rapidly eroding."

Beyond Texas, the preservation of the dialect is critical to understanding language development in general. Throughout the world, there are 6,000 languages spoken today. But, researchers predict half of these languages will be lost by the end of the century.

"Every time we lose a language, we lose a data set. If researchers have more data, we can create and test theories about how language works more accurately," Boas said.

For more information, visit the Texas German Dialect Project Web site at: <http://www.tgdp.org>.

## Jerry Lewis, MDA Request Postponement Of New Medicare Policy For Power Wheelchairs

TUCSON, Ariz. — Jerry Lewis, national chairman of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), has asked U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt to postpone new Medicare pricing and coverage policies for power wheelchairs, citing the policies' negative impact on people with muscular dystrophy and other severe disabilities.

The new fee schedule, slated to go into effect Nov. 15, reduces Medicare reimbursement rates for power mobility devices by up to 40 percent for some wheelchairs. In addition, new eligibility requirements make it harder for people with severe and progressive disabilities to qualify for more technologically complex power wheelchairs that promote health, safety and independence.

"Although CMS' original intention was to combat fraud, CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) is itself misleading Americans by claiming that these new policies will provide appropriate power wheelchairs for all Medicare beneficiaries," Lewis said in a letter to Leavitt, a copy of which went to President Bush and each member of Congress.

He added, "We're extremely disappointed by this policy change because it's detrimental to people with disabilities. The new eligibility criteria will make it very difficult for those with progressive diseases to receive power wheelchairs equipped for their needs."

Lewis requested that implementation be delayed until the policy could be adjusted to better accommodate the needs of those with severe and progressive disabilities.

He told Leavitt that he'll be willing to travel to Washington to meet with him, the CMS or any other group that could repair the problems with the proposed policies.

"These changes are so drastic and so detrimental to "my kids" and other Americans with progressive diseases that I'm prepared to drop everything and address this issue personally," Lewis said.

Under the new policy, applicants who can transfer from bed to wheelchair by standing and pivoting, with or without assistance, won't be eligible for power wheelchairs with more than basic features. This assessment doesn't account for disease progression and fatigue, crucial factors when determining the wheelchair needs of a person with neuromuscular disease, Lewis said.

More complex features such as tilt, recline, stronger motors, custom headrests, and ability to navigate uneven terrain provide wheelchair users with more independence and safety. For instance, tilt-and-recline features assist users with self-transfers, are safer on steep inclines and help prevent pressure sores.

If chairs have fewer features needed for independence, the result may be to force people out of their homes and into long-term care facilities.

In addition, the new fee schedule places a greater financial burden on low-income people with severe disabilities and the nonprofit organizations that serve them.

Among its services for people registered with MDA, the Association provides financial help toward the purchase and repair of wheelchairs.

MDA is a voluntary health organization working to defeat more than 40 neuromuscular diseases through programs of worldwide research, comprehensive services, and far-reaching professional and public health education. The Association's programs are funded almost entirely by individual private contributors.

## 'Road To Guantanamo' Docudrama Nov. 16 In Waco

WACO — The Waco Friends of Peace will present the Waco premiere of the docudrama "The Road to Guantanamo (2006)," at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 16, at Poppa Rollo's Pizza, 703 N. Valley Mills Drive.

The film is the true story of three British citizens who were imprisoned for two years at Guantanamo Bay, interro-

gated and tortured, and finally released without charges.

The subject is vitally important with the recent passage of the Military Commissions Act and its possible modification by a new Democratic Congress.

The film is free and all are welcome.

"Amazing. A film of stagger-

ing force."- THE NEW YORK Film Festival 2006. Rated R for violence and language.

When Setting Up Your Ad Budget For 2007, 'REMEMBER THE ICONOCLAST'



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# Whupped!!!

## Democrats Take Over Congress

### Texas A&M President Replaces Rumsfeld

WASHINGTON — President George W. Bush called his party's loss of the U.S. Congress last Tuesday as a "thumping."

A "Texas whupping" is how former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) described the Republican Party's defeat in the highly volatile mid-term election.

Either way, the American voters gave the Democrats the seats they needed to regain control of the House and the Senate, the latter of which wasn't expected to be easily accomplished.

The Democratic Party's victory in the Senate came down to extremely close races in Virginia and Montana that featured vote canvassing that lasted until late Wednesday.

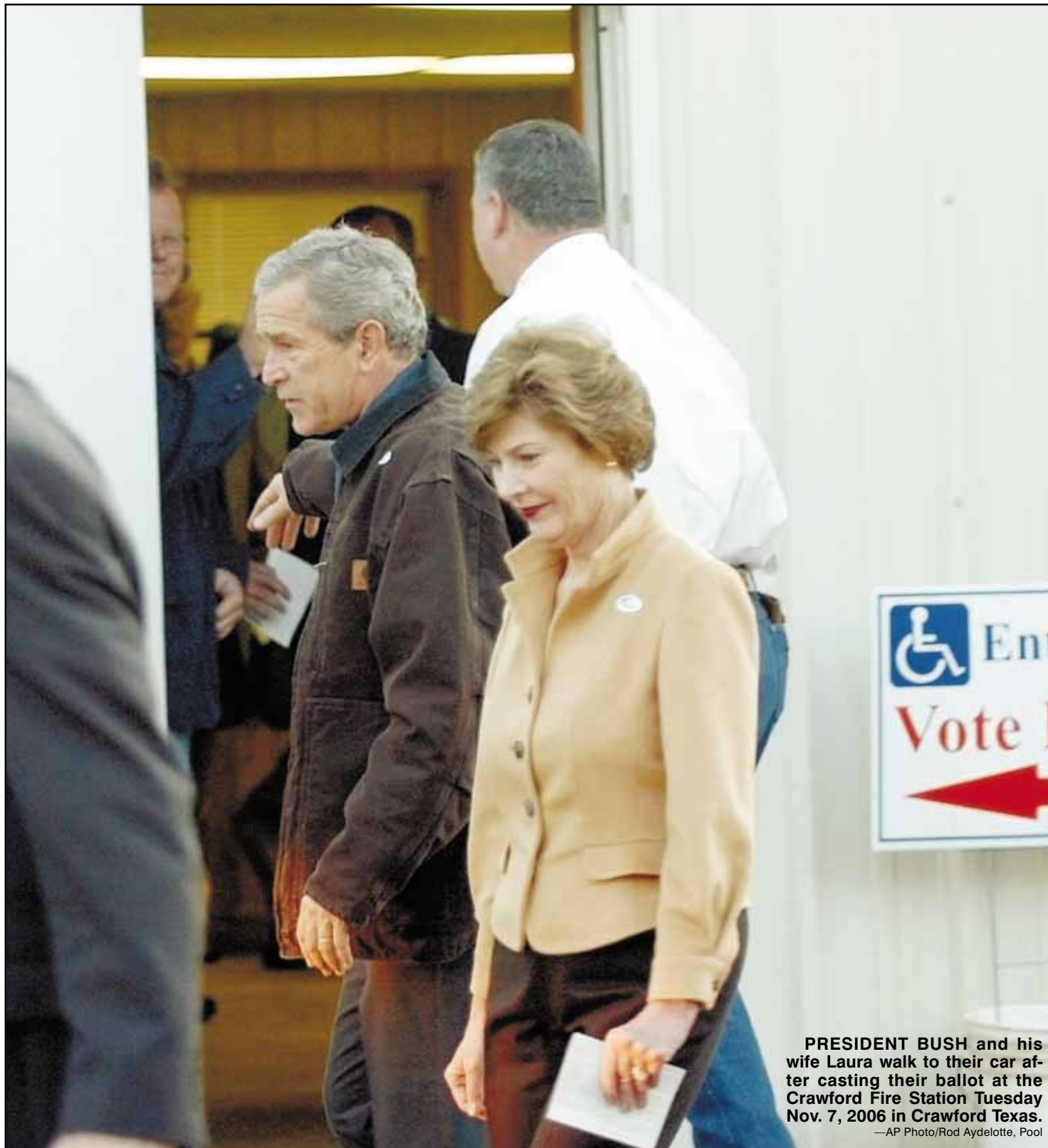
The last time the Democrats held both houses was 12 years ago prior to when the Republicans staged their "Contract with America" campaign during the middle of President Bill Clinton's first term of office.

Since then, the Republican Party attained total control of the legislative and the executive branches of the United States government — in some cases like in Texas tried to seal this grab through mid-decade congressional redistricting initiatives.

With this concentration of power, the GOP-led moves to pass taxes cuts for the wealthy, okay an unfunded mandate that imposed high-stakes testing requirements on public schools, adopt an initiative to partially privatize the government's prescription drug plan for seniors, approve the eradication of citizens' constitutional rights with the Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act of 2006 — not to mention an attempt to privatize Social Security.

But the administration's handling of the war in Iraq and a string of high-profile corruption scandals ultimately caused the GOP's popularity to wane in the eyes of the American public.

Continued On Next Page



PRESIDENT BUSH and his wife Laura walk to their car after casting their ballot at the Crawford Fire Station Tuesday Nov. 7, 2006 in Crawford Texas.

—AP Photo/Rod Aydelotte, Pool



# Democrats Take Over Congress

From Previous Page

## Iraq & GOP Scandals

Last April, former Rep. DeLay resigned from Congress to face campaign finance misdoings in Texas. The Republicans lost his seat Tuesday night when Nick Lampson nudged out Shelley Sekula-Gibbs.

Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) will remain in office after fighting off controversy surrounding his knowledge of a sex scandal that forced Rep. Mark Foley (R-Florida) to resign.

Hastert will not seek to be the leader of House Republicans come January, though.

The Democrats recaptured the Senate with close-margin victories from Jim Webb, a former Navy secretary under Ronald Reagan, and Jon Tester, an organic farmer and state senate president.

By a difference of 7,236 votes, Webb took the Senate seat in Virginia from incumbent George Allen.

By less than 6,000 votes, Tester in Montana bested Republican Sen. Conrad Burns, a three-term incumbent who had ties to Jack Abramoff, the lobbyist under investigation for campaign finance fraud.

Incumbent Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut argued that if this election had been a referendum on the Iraq war, he would have lost his seat to his anti-war challenger, Democrat Ned Lamont. Lieberman supported the administration's so-called "war on terrorism" policy, even as it fell out of favor with the public and forced him away from the Democratic Party to run as an independent candidate.

## Rumsfeld Resigns

However, the most shocking indication of a change in policy on Iraq happened hours after the election wrapped.

During a White House press conference Wednesday, President Bush accepted the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, a move which both Democrats and a few Republicans had welcomed months prior.

In Rumsfeld's place President Bush has nominated Robert Gates, 63, the current president of Texas A&M University and former director of the Central Intelligence Agency under the presidency of George H.W. Bush.

Pending the Senate's confirmation, Gates' appointment is seen as a more pragmatic approach to dealing with the so-called "war on terror" than the

effort put forth by Rumsfeld and the neoconservatives. Gates and several other members of the presidency of George W. Bush's father have in fact criticized the current



administration's war in Iraq and approach to Iran.

Gates is familiar with the Middle East region after having been deputy to CIA director Robert Casey during the Reagan administration. Casey's dealings with Iran led the White House into the Iran-Contra affair, in which the U.S. sold arms to the Islamic regime in Iran to release American hostages in Lebanon.

The money from this exchange was sent to Nicaragua to finance rebels in battle against the leftist Sandinistas. A special prosecutor, though, leveled no charges against Gates for his role in the scandal.

Gates returned to the national security world last April when he became a member of the Iraq Study Group run by Bush family friend and former Secretary of States James A. Baker III and former congressman Lee H. Hamilton. The report is expected to be finished soon.

## Texas Loses Committee Chairs

Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California is set to become the next House Speaker; Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada is in line to become majority leader in the Senate.

While some states may directly benefit from the Democrats' takeover of Congress, Texas probably won't anytime soon since the new congressional Democrats from Texas lack seniority to chair important committees.

This set-up was made possible by the 2003 congressional redistricting plan which was outlined by DeLay and favored the state's Republicans over the Democrats.

Republican operatives say that the plan accurately reflects the state's demographics.

Still, the plan made it easier for Republican voters to oust long-time Democrats from office who would otherwise have been positioned to take chairmanships on important committees that help Texans.

The Democrats' switch will also force out Texas Republicans from chairmanships on important committees, such as Rep. Joe Barton (R-Ennis) on Energy and Commerce and Rep. Ralph Hall (R-Rockwall) on Science.

However, Democrats are in line to take the head of various congressional subcommittees, such as Rep. Solomon Ortiz (D-Corpus Christi) on military base spending, Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-El Paso) on Armed Services or Intelligence, and Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Houston) and Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, (D-Dallas) on Judiciary and Transportation.

Now that the Republicans have lost the Senate, Texas Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn will step down from their chairmanships on Senate subcommittees.

## Other States

Voters also turned out to elect Democrats for governor in their home states. At the end of the night, 20 of 36 races went to Democrats.

For the first time in 12 years, Democrats will hold a majority of governorships with 28 in office next year.

## Earlier Registration For Women's Peace Conference Ends Dec. 31

DALLAS — Earlier registration with a discount for the Peacemakers Inc.'s 3rd International Women's Conference ends on Dec. 31, 2006.

Carol Crabtree Donovan, Peacemakers president and conference chairwoman, said that the conference's goal is to empower women as peacemakers by teaching them skills such as mediation, negotiation, and communication.

"Our mission is to provide a safe haven for women from countries all over the world to meet, confer and formulate an action plan for world peace," said Donovan.

These action plans are to be implemented in the countries of grassroots peacemakers, according to the conference organizers.

With this election also came another "first." Democrat Keith Ellison became the first Muslim elected to Congress. He also is the first nonwhite elected to Congress from Minnesota.

## Other Initiatives

Outside of party politics, voters turned their attention to a number of state-wide ballot initiatives.

Anti-war advocates were pleased when 10 localities in Wisconsin and 11 in Illinois and a handful in Massachusetts approved measures calling for the end of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Also, in Massachusetts, two legislative districts backed non-binding resolutions that impose a \$100 fine on anyone possessing as much as one ounce of pot.

Voters in three Californian cities and two Southern cities approved measures to make marijuana possession the lowest priority for police.

By a 20-percent margin, Colorado voters rejected an initiative to legalize small amounts of marijuana there.

In South Dakota, voters also turned down a medical marijuana initiative, 48 percent to 52 percent.

South Dakotans rejected a ban against virtually all abortions, which the state legislature overwhelmingly approved earlier this year.

Advocates for network neutrality of the Internet rejoiced with the victories of Reps. John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.).

## Venezuela Asks Exxon For Better Stake In Oil Field

CARACAS, Venezuela — A Venezuelan oil minister requested that the world's largest oil company give the South American government a majority stake in the La Ceiba oil field prior to scheduled production in 2007.

Rafael Ramirez told reporters last Wednesday that the ExxonMobil's plan to produce 20,000 barrels a day is contingent upon Venezuelan laws.

The new law mandates that the state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA must have 51 percent in all oil exploration and production projects in the state's 32 oil fields.

The Venezuelan government cancelled its previous contracts with private companies earlier this year.

Under a 1997 contract, ExxonMobil and PetroCanada have a 50 percent stake in the La Ceiba field.

This contract allowed both businesses to explore the region. Should a field go into production, the oil companies agreed to pay the state a bonus and half of the profits.

Both representatives support Internet freedom and could hold chairs on key committees that effect the nation's telecommunication's policy which is set for a revision in the coming year.

The conference will take place July 10-15, 2007, at the Adams Mark Hotel and Conference Center at 400 N. Olive St. in Dallas, Texas.

World-renowned peacemakers, including Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams, Betty Williams, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum, will present daily keynote addresses.

Jody Williams is the founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Betty Williams is the co-founder of the Northern Ireland Peace Movement (later renamed Community of Peace People). Menchú Tum has campaigned for social justice for indigenous people in Guatemala.

Other confirmed speakers include Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (South Africa),

Noeleen Heyzer (Singapore), Jean Shinoda Bolen (USA), Ruth-Gaby Vermet Mangold (Switzerland), Sharon D. Welch (USA), and Merve Kavakci (Turkey).

The conference is sponsored by Peacemakers Incorporated, a nonpartisan, tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation founded in March 1987. Co-sponsors cross a wide-range of religious and secular organizations with chapters in the Dallas area. It is also endorsed by the Texas State American Association of University Women (AAUW) and underwritten by Dedman & Handsuch, Attorneys & Counselors.

For more information, visit the conference website.

**INFO**  
[www.womenspeaceconference.org](http://www.womenspeaceconference.org)

# Texas Remains 'Red' For Now

CRAWFORD — The Republican Party of Texas took every major statewide office in Tuesday's mid-term election.

The Democrats, though, picked up five seats and retained its incumbents in the Texas House.

The Texas Democrats, while still in the minority of the 150-member House, are close to the eight required to regain the 76 majority.

The party may test its new muscle by removing Republican Rep. Tom Craddick from his position as House Speaker with the help of dissident Republicans.

Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus Rep. Jim Dunning has said that Craddick is on the outs with certain members of the state GOP because as speaker, he strong-armed votes against the wishes of his fellow Republicans.

Craddick told reporters last week that he had the votes necessary to remain speaker for another term.

Craddick, however, failed to gain the vocal support of Republican Gov. Rick Perry.

After besting a field of five candidates to return to the governor's mansion, Perry also stirred controversy by not committing to a full term in office.

"I'm not naive enough to take the bait on that," he said when asked a question related to speculation he will seek to run for U.S. vice presidential nominee in 2008.

Perry's victory can also be seen as a victory for supporters of the Trans-Texas Corridor and the state's ability to impose tolls on roads that were already created through public funding. Many of the counties in which the corridor might run through voted for the Republican that hatched the controversial transportation plan.

## Governor's Race

Incumbent Gov. Perry could become the longest serving governor of the state of Texas should he serve out his term. He pulled in 39.02 percent of the vote last Tuesday and will start his second full term of office in January.

Democrat Chris Bell was the runner up for governor with 29.81 percent. He ran as a virtual unknown despite the fact that he gained recognition for filing ethics complaints against the House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. DeLay later resigned his post amid charges of campaign finance corruption related to his congressional redistricting plan in 2003.

The Republican-turned-Independent Carole Keeton Strayhorn placed third for governor with 17.97 percent, having failed to rekindle citizen angst over Gov. Perry's Trans-Texas Corridor project. Strayhorn will step down as the state comptroller of public accounts come January.

Comedian-turned-"anti-politician" Kinky Friedman garnered 12.59 percent of the vote for gov-

ernor, and Libertarian James Werner, who was squeezed out of the only televised gubernatorial debate, came in dead last with .61 percent of the vote.

## Congressional Races

A majority of voters decided to keep Republican Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison for another six years. With 61.68 percent of the vote, she beat Democrat Barbara Ann Radnofsky who garnered 36.06 percent and Libertarian Scott Jameson who had 2.26 percent.

Voters in President George W. Bush's home congressional district returned Democrat Chet Edwards to Washington. To win a ninth term, Edwards defeated Republican Van Taylor with 58.13 percent of the vote in Congressional District 17.

The president's home county — the Republican-leaning McLennan County — gave Edwards 65 percent of the vote.

Edwards will join 11 other Democrats and 19 Republicans from Texas to the U.S. House.

Only one congressional race will see a runoff election in December. Republican Rep. Henry Bonilla and Democrat Ciro Rodriguez, both of San Antonio, will face each other.

## Other State-wide Races

After last Tuesday night, the Texas Democrats remain in an election drought having not won a statewide office since 1994.

The winner in the race for lieutenant governor was incumbent Republican David Dewhurst (58.18 percent). He

defeated Democrat Maria Luisa Alvarado (37.45) and Libertarian Judy Baker (4.38 percent).

Incumbent Republican Greg Abbott gained 59.5 percent of the vote to beat populist Democrat David Van Os (37.25 percent) and Libertarian Jon Roland (3.25 percent) for Attorney General.

The office of comptroller will be filled by Republican Susan Combs (59.44 percent). Democrat Fred Head (37.03 percent) and Libertarian Mike Burris (3.53 percent) lost this race.

The next Agriculture Commissioner of Texas will be the man who co-sponsored legislation that is making the Trans-Texas Corridor happen — Republican Todd Staples. He won this race with 54.75 percent. Democrat Hank Gilbert came in second with 41.80 percent, followed by Libertarian Clay Woolam with 3.44 percent.

Incumbent Republican Jerry Patterson will return to be the office of Land Commissioner, after beating Democrat VaLinda Hathcox and Libertarian Michael French.

Incumbent Republican Elizabeth Jones will also return to her office as Railroad Commissioner. She defeated Democrat Dale Henry and Libertarian Tabitha Serrano.

## Texas House Races

Hopes, however, were high for Democrats to return to power in the next election cycle.

In his editorial on the Burnt Orange Report blog, Phillip

Martin wrote:

"Rural and suburban. North, South, East, and West. Across every demographic, Texas Democrats showed they can win. They won by offering real solutions and real alternatives. They won by running smart, effective campaigns that focused on issues instead of insults. They won by bringing people of all communities together, and they won despite millions of dollars spent against them in dirty attacks by corrupt Republican donors."

Martin pointed to West Texas where Joe Heflin's door-to-door campaigning bested Jim Landtroop — be it by a slim margin less than 200 votes — to win State House District 85.

On the other side of the state, incumbent Rep. Chuck Hopson took back State House District 11 from Larry Durrett in a heavily Republican area, he added.

Texas Democrats also added four seats by knocking out Republicans in the suburbs of Austin, Dallas, and Houston.

Dallas County turned heads itself by going totally "blue" on Election Night. Every single one of the 48 local races was won by Texas Democrats.

The Dallas County sweep stops a two decade domination of the state GOP and is seen as a signal for races yet to come in Bexar and Harris counties — the homes of San Antonio and Houston.

## German Prosecutor To File Charges Against Rumsfeld, Others

BERLIN, Germany — Germany's top prosecutor will be filing criminal charges against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other senior U.S. civilian and military personnel this coming week.

The charges stem from their actions connected to the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Twelve plaintiffs have been identified in the case, 11 of whom were Iraqis imprisoned in Abu Ghraib prison and a Saudi who would have been the 20th participant in the Sept. 11, 2001 hijackings.

Rumsfeld, according to Time magazine, approved a "special interrogation plan" designed for the "20th hijacker" Mohammad al-Qahtani.

The plan consisted of striping Qahtani nude, humiliating him sexually, forcing him to undergo stressful positions and sleep deprivation, among other techniques at the Guantanamo Bay

detention center.

Former Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, a former commander of all U.S. military prisons in Iraq, is expected to testify on behalf of the plaintiffs. She said in a written statement that the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib "goes all the way to the top of the chain of command to the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld."

The day after the Democrats regained control over both houses of Congress, Rumsfeld resigned his position. He served for six years in the Bush administration.

Also facing charges from the German prosecutor are Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, former CIA director George Tenet, and nine other senior military and civilian officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff David Addington and the former top Army official in Iraq Gen. Richardo Sanchez.

The court filing was submitted in Germany due to a law there granting "universal jurisdiction" for war crimes prosecution anywhere across the globe.

The threat of such a filing against Rumsfeld was made in 2004, but the German prosecutor dropped the charges under the assumption that the U.S. government would not abide by them.

The difference between then and now are two-fold according to the plaintiff's lawyers. One, Rumsfeld lost immunity since he resigned from his post, and two, the previous prosecutor was wrong in his reasoning to drop the 2004 case.

The Center for Constitutional Rights, a U.S.-based non-profit, in part brought this new case to the German court.

Right-wing legal scholars and the Bush administration have argued that the International Criminal Court could be used to harm U.S.

officials unjustly accused of war crimes.

The court, though, is the first tribunal to hear charges of crimes against humanity and crimes against peace.

## 'Funeral March' Anti-War Protest Slated Dec. 2

AUSTIN — A handful of anti-war organizations will be holding a silent funeral procession to protest the war against Iraq at the beginning of December in Austin.

CodePink - Austin, Veterans for Peace, Austin Against War, and Women in Black have scheduled the event for Saturday, Dec. 2, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Organizers are asking participants to wear black and use the signs that CodePink will furnish. CodePink will also provide long black veils for women.

Participants will meet at 1 p.m. at City Hall Plaza on the corner of Lavaca and Cesar Chavez.

The silent, single-file procession will pass south on Congress Avenue bridge and then loop back to city hall. Parking available under City Hall.

For more information, visit the CodePink-Austin website.

INFO  
<http://www.codepinkaustin.com/>



# Hamas Ends Truce With Israel

GAZA STRIP — Hamas ended its truce with Israel last week after 18 people were killed in the Gaza Strip from an Israeli shelling.

Prior to the 2005 truce, the militant organization used suicide bombers to kill over 200 Israelis.

The "armed struggle" will start anew, according to Khaled Mashaal, Hamas' Damascus-based leader.

The incident that sparked rage in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank happened last Wednesday.

About 16 family members of Ramez al-Atamna, 30, perished from Israeli artillery fire hitting their building while they slept.

Of his family, only Atamna's seven-year-old son, Abdullah, survived. His left foot was amputated.

The Israeli military claims that its forces had taken shots in an open area where militants had launched rockets the day prior. Israel officials called the incident a "mistake."

At the time of the deaths, the Israeli Army was in the middle of a campaign to stop Palestinian rockets in Beit Hanoun.

This campaign which started Nov. 1 is responsible for the deaths of 57 Palestinians, the destruction of a mosque and shattered shopfronts and houses.

Israel said that it would investigate the Beit Hanoun incident — which is said to be the deadliest strike against civilians in six-year conflict — though it would also continue its four-month offensive in Gaza.

The Israeli strike threatens to further splinter the Palestinian efforts to create a coalition government.

In January's elections, Hamas defeated Fatah to take control of the Palestinian government. The new party's refusal to recognize the existence of Israel sparked an international boycott on the already suffering nation's economy.

# Hussein Sentenced To Hang

BAGHDAD — Deposed Iraq President Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death by hanging earlier last week.

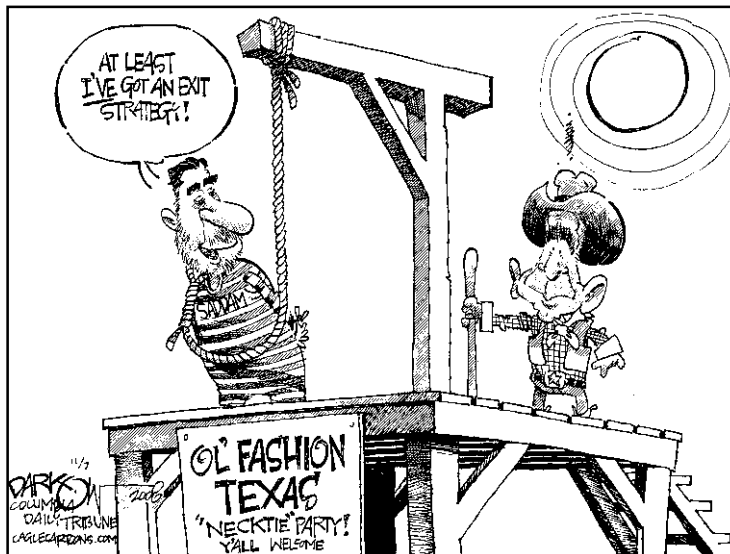
The effect of the sentence seemed to have little effect on the outcome of the mid-term elections in the United States that occurred two days later.

In Iraq, however, the threat of civil war there deepened as Sunnis voiced their outrage over the verdict while Shia and Kurds celebrated.

Hussein, a Sunni Muslim, was convicted on charges of ordering the killing of 148 Shias in 1982.

The Shia dominate Iraq with a 60 percent majority of the 25 million population. The Sunni run a distant second followed by the Kurds.

The international governments were split by the death sentence leveled after the nine-month trial, with U.S. President



George W. Bush praising the decision and the European nations in opposition.

Nine judges will hear the appeal which is automatic due to

the nature of the sentence. The case can be reviewed for an unlimited time, though should the verdict be upheld, the state has 30 days to hang Hussein and the

six other defendants.

This group could be executed despite Hussein's second trial over his role in the alleged deaths of thousands of Kurds.

International law experts and observers say that Hussein's trial has been compromised by the U.S. military's presence in Iraq. The U.S. government has denied such accusations.

## 12 Inmates Stage Hunger Strikes Over Abusive Conditions

HOUSTON — Abusive living conditions is the reason 12 inmates on death row in Texas had given for refusing to eat food.

The first inmate began his hunger strike since the beginning of October in the new Polunsky prison unit in Livingston. Two inmates have continued the protest while the other have abandoned their efforts.

A spokesperson for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice said last week that no one had been force-fed.

The living conditions have grown worse for inmates on death row since the holding area moved in 2000 into a less open facility than the older Ellis Unit, according to Steven Woods, a striker who broke his fast last Sunday.

"We lost all our group recreation, art programs, and supplies" as well as "work programs, televisions and religious services," Woods wrote in an email, adding that the only human contact he receives come from the guards that handle him.

The TDCJ spokesperson said that a 1998 prison escape led to the harsher conditions.

The 26-year-old Woods though, was sent to death row after killing a couple in 2001.

The two remaining strikers last week were William M. Mason, 52, and Larry Estrada, 27.

Mason was convicted of murdering his wife — Estrada for killing a convenience store clerk during a robbery in 1997.

During hunger strike on Oct. 20, 29-year-old convicted killer Michael D. Johnson killed himself with a razor blade hours before his execution. In protest of his innocence, Johnson wrote "I didn't shoot him" on the wall of his cell with his blood.

This year, Texas has executed 23 inmates by lethal injection. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1982, 378 people have been put to death in Texas.

Texas lead the nation in executions followed by Virginia.

## Same-Sex Couples Gain Civil Unions In Mexico City

MEXICO CITY — Same-sex couples will be permitted in Mexico City to have the same rights as married opposite-sex couples once the mayor signs the bill into law.

This extension of such legal rights to homosexuals is the first in the country's history.

Though the Catholic Church, conservative groups, and the National Action Party of President

Vicente Fox and president-elect Felipe Calderon opposed the bill, the city's assembly passed it by an overwhelming majority, 43-17,

last Thursday.

The measure grants same-sex couples the opportunity to legally register their union in order to obtain rights such as inheritance and pension acquisition.

This legislation gives opposite-sex couples the same opportunity to register if they are not legally married.

Residents of Mexico City, a federal district with its own government, are only allowed to obtain such rights.





# Speaking Truth to Power

## Progressives Rally In Dallas On Election Eve

— Photo By Beth Freed

By BETH FREED AND STEPHEN WEBSTER  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

DALLAS — On the eve before the 2006 mid-term elections, most activists found themselves calling for candidates, firing off e-mail volleys a thousand at a time, or just simply glued to their computers, watching as the GOP scandals ticked away, one by one, like seconds on a clock.

In Dallas, the mood was a little bit more rambunctious.

That evening, President Bush visited the “City of Exxon” to take the stage inside Reunion Arena to show his support for the seemingly-down-in-the-polls Republican Governor Rick Perry.

Then, something unusual occurred — at least, unusual for Texas.

When news broke about Bush’s visit, a group of previously unconnected malcontents organized themselves, mad as hell and seeking a space to vent, and they found that space outside the arena in downtown Dallas.

Progressives in the Dallas metro area have been known to behave like a trodden-upon underclass of misanthropes, incapable of stringing together a well-funded campaign, even if their very right to dissent counted upon it. But that night showed some hope, at least for Dallas County.

At its height, the group pushed 250. As the night progressed, and the President’s limo drew nearer, news

outlets around the city picked up on what was happening. And when the demonstrators started chanting, National Public Radio was on the scene.

The rally was organized by a variety of activist groups, but an inordinate number showed up because a friend of a friend heard about it on MySpace. One of the main flash points was the website DallasRally.com, which is becoming a central organizing point for pissed-off progressives in Big D.

The rally began at 4 p.m. About 100 people gathered at Ferris Plaza in front of *The Dallas Morning News* within the first hour. Their numbers spanned the progressive spectrum, from members of the New Black Panther Party to old-timers from the Dallas Peace Center.

“The mere presence of folks like this will show the country that even in Texas, the president will not find the support he thinks he has,” said organizer Hadi Jawad of Dallas. “We were against the war since the very beginning, while most of the country was for the war. Now, the country has turned against the war, and we feel like we have done our job. It’s a very hollow victory, though, because it has come about at the expense of close to 3,000 American lives and more than 600,000 Iraqi civilians.”

“A lot of my family’s in Iraq right now and I’m in ROTC,” said Brittany Stephenson, a DeSoto High School student. “Everybody over there in Iraq is dying for no purpose.” Stephenson turned 18 years of

age on Election Day and had pre-registered to exercise her right the following day.

By nightfall, the energized group made its way to Reunion Arena.

“Before, you could watch people with all their ‘W-04’ stuff, and now I know people who tear their own stickers off,” said John Rhodes, a tattoo artist from Denton. “People would admit to me, ‘Yeah, I was against you two or three years ago, but now I’m with you.’ The movement is getting bigger.”

“BUSH ON TRIAL! BUSH ON TRIAL! BUSH ON TRIAL!” screamed the crowd, holding long banners with slogans, such as “WORST PRESIDENT EVER!” and “W stands for WAR CRIMES!” One chant that drew laughs from the otherwise angry demonstrators was, “Where is the pretzel? Up his ass!”

Although anger towards the president and his administration united the disparate dissenters, hope for change was nestled in each righteous chant. While the bullhorn instructed, “Show me what democracy looks like,” demonstrators returned, “This is what democracy looks like!”

“I just want to be someplace where people are truthful, where there’s people to relate to, and you know, get a change — revolution,” said Johnny Lennix, lead singer of The Kül, a local political rock/funk band. “There’s been more layoffs this year than there have been in the last two — I’m unemployed! I mean, doing

Continued On Next Page





— Photo By Beth Freed

# Speaking Truth to Power

From Previous Page

my music is what I love to do, but I've got to pay bills."

Cassandra Guerra, a member of the Brown Berets — a grassroots organization which advocates on behalf of oppressed people — expressed her displeasure with Bush's policies toward immigrants. She explained she had come to the rally, in-part, to protest the construction of a wall along the Mexican-American border.

"This whole administration has failed," she said. "Nobody but members of the Bush administration profit off the war."

When asked, she could not think of a single positive thing she thought Bush had accomplished in the last six years of his administration.

"All the programs they've started have never worked," she said. "Just look at No Child Left Behind. There are still millions of children in this country who are uneducated and not getting any help."

Lon Burnam, state representative from Fort Worth's 90th district and director of the Dallas Peace Center, was also on-hand for the event. He stood and raised his voice with other progressives opposed to the Bush administration — a now familiar, reflex-like action for him.

"The Dallas Peace Center is an interfaith peace and justice organization, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year," said Burnam. "I've been a long-time peace activist. I was active on campus



Hadi Jawad leads the rally.



during the Vietnam War. That's been more than 30 years of my life dedicated to making peace."

Burnam said he feels the Bush administration poses a more dire threat to the Constitutional government of the United States than the Nixon regime, even though the war in Iraq has claimed a fraction of the lives.

"[This protest] is déjà vu all over again," he said with a laugh. "Well, yes and no. This administration is actually a lot more insidious than what we saw in the 60s. The war in Vietnam was — of course I was against it — it was more structured, so you can recognize, you know, you're defending the government, or you're opposing the government. This war without end concept of fighting terrorism indefinitely is right out of sci-fi stuff like '1984'. It is a lot more dangerous. There has been a lot more intrusion on our basic rights and on the Constitution under Bush than under any other administration, ever."

Burnam said that among all the administration's actions he considers an affront to American principals, launching the Iraq War is the worst.

"The worst thing is he started the war!" he said. "The first principal of leading our government: Never start an unprovoked war. What did Bush do? He started an unprovoked war! They overthrew and occupied Afghanistan [in response to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001], but they didn't have to go to war with another country that had not attacked us."



# Speaking Truth to Power

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Burnam also said that he was not hopeful Texas will elect progressives such as David Van Os or Chris Bell, but accurately predicted a “sea change” in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Many cited the poor Federal aid response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. One man goose-stepped through the crowd wearing a George W. Bush mask and a beanie with a tag reading “The Decider!” He employed a Nazi salute and a sign depicting the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the Writ of Habeas Corpus going up in flames. While a number of other creative forms of dissent were on display, most were there to protest the war.

Many demonstrators predicted the Democrats’ inevitable victory in the mid-term elections. The overall feeling was that when the voters had expressed their displeasure with the GOP, it would be time for the Democrats to prove their loyalty to the constituents who voted them in.

“We are hoping the Democrats will be true to their word and hold the present administration responsible for its attack and invasion of Iraq,” said Mr. Jawad.

The next day, polls opened to a thunderous uproar of voter outrage. Young Americans came to the polls in record-breaking numbers, overwhelmingly voting against Republicans. But youth alone does not a Congress make. Along with it came a towering wave of backlash, and voters of all ages and colors gave nearly absolute control of the House of Representatives and the Senate to the Democratic Party.

One of the most valuable components of the sweep was the Hispanic community, which voted in record numbers; two-thirds of them swinging liberal. Many viewed the Republican Party as hostile toward immigrants — a feeling more than warranted.

Likewise, evangelical Christians were feeling abandoned by the faith and values platform of the Republican Party. Nearly half the demographic voted Democratic.

And even in Dallas County, Republicans forfeited the District Attorney’s office, the



## Full-Force Protest

These images were taken on Monday, Nov. 6, outside Reunion Arena in Dallas. President Bush made his final campaign stop in the city of Exxon to stump for Republican Governor Rick Perry, but the peace-loving opposition did not let the evening pass quietly. About 300 protesters showed up, and no arrests were reported.

— Photos By Stephen Webster



County Judge seat and 42 judgeships. According to an area educator who took his journalism students to the courthouse on Nov. 8, none of the outgoing judges bothered to show up for work.

Many folks said they plan to continue sustainable action to express discontent with the government. Weekly pro-

tests have been held at Dealey Plaza on Thursdays since the October 5th “Day of Action” called for by The World Can’t Wait organization; however, members of DallasRally.com are currently considering schedule revisions and other organizing strategies. Either way, online forums, such as

Meetup and Yahoo! groups have been a principal mode of mass communication for Dallas Rally and other area progressives.

“I think most people do agree with us, they just don’t know how to get active, or don’t want to get active,” said Yvette Richardson, whose daughter accompanies her to

protests. “They don’t believe it’s going to do anything, so you run into a wall every day because you know people feel the same way as you do, they just don’t know what to do about it.”

Several times during the demonstration, activists were pressed up against the metal barriers set up to bar them from crossing Sports Street and onto Reunion Arena’s property. As Republican delegates and admirers filed into and out of the venue, some protestors attempted to reason with them via bullhorn. One such effort resulted in a shouting match that died down after trained peace-makers with the Dallas Peace Center quelled the “negative communication.”

As the night wore on, some demonstrators began to grow coarse in the throat and resorted to conversation, mostly about the latest administration scandals. A number of individuals spread throughout the crowd handing out copied documentary films. *9/11 Mysteries* and *Loose Change Volume 2*, just two of the leading 9/11 conspiracy videos, were the most prominently shared titles.

One might say the election eve protest in Dallas — a city where the smell of sulfur dioxide is thought of as an ever-present security blanket — was an accurate prognostication of things to be. But if the mood of the protesters is in any way reflective of how liberals nationwide feel, Congressional Democrats will be taking an immense amount of heat very soon should they fail to begin the process of holding members of the Bush administration accountable for their deeds.

“More and more young people are getting involved which is always a good sign because that’s the new blood, new energy the movement needs,” said Mr. Jawad.

Twelve years after the “Republican Revolution” and their “Contract with America,” the nation has chosen a massive shift to the Left. It is only a matter of time before the political fireworks kick off. But in the interim, Dallas-area progressives prove that networks are forming, connections are being made and public dissent will continue, even in the heart of Texas.





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**To The Editor:**  
 To those Americans who cherish their Freedoms; 11/11/06  
 I am a 100% Disabled American Veteran. I would like to part from the normal tributes, abide by majority rules, and address the 90+% of you who have never worn the uniform of our Armed Services. I felt on this day there's a few things you might like to think about.

**A SARCASTIC THANKS TO:**  
 To the V.A. (Admin.) for stalling disability claims until the Veteran either gives up or dies.

To pardoned cowardly traitors for running, while scared, brave Vets died.

To the war protestors for using their Rights of Free Speech and Assembly to condemn those out defending those Rights.

To the \$250,000,000 Agent Orange fund for paying Vets from the interest, and profiting millions for themselves.

To Benedict Arnold, Tokyo Rose, and Hanoi Jane Fonda for showing your true colors at our Fighting Forces' expense.

To all persons in government for allowing 93,000,000 acres of War Bounty Land For Veterans to disappear from public lands records.

To Sylvester Stallone for portraying a Viet Nam Veteran who had won The Congressional Medal of Honor, when we heard he spent the War somewhere hiding in Europe.

To realtors for not doing V.A. loans because the house must pass guidelines that make it at least livable for a Vet.

To too many more to list here, for they disgust me.

So I will now address the other 9% of Americans. The ones who really count. The ones who truly believe that Our Country really counts.

**A SINCERE AND HEART-FELT THANKS TO:**  
 To William Hooper, my ancestor;

for signing the Declaration of Independence.

To the a Vet who approached me while I protested the V.A., for giving me a picture he had carried since WWI of him and his buddies in front of their bi-plane , and for saying, "Keep walking. It ain't just Viet Nam Veterans they screw, it's all Veterans."

To David H. for being a sniper and tunnel rat.

To Gary's family for being informed of his death when he was still alive.

To a Vet for being denied his educational benefits.

To George for 40 years service , Al for 30 years service , Mary for 25 years service , Misty for 30+ years service , Chuck for twenty years service, and all other lifers.

To the V.A. (Medical) for caring for us.

To a Vet for losing two children, another Vet for having 22 teeth pulled in one day, others for cysts along their spines, and the V.A.

compensated Veterans for dying .....from Agent Orange.

To the Patriots of Flight Deck (VA Psych Ward) for enduring your wounded minds.

To Kenny — Puff the Magic Dragon, Jerry — chopper pilot, Vince and Ed — supply, HB — combat cop, Oscar — medic, and Brad — Grenada.

To all homeless Veterans for protecting our homes.

To all U.S. Veterans entombed throughout the world for their ultimate sacrifice.

To a Vet for getting disability 28 years after he applied for it.

To all who serve without regard to the popularity of the times for they are Americas finest Patriots.

To all halfway houses and all Veterans organizations for their care and for caring.

To the Vet whose next seizure will be his last.

To Kerry S., to Blair, to Callahan, to Flowers, to Shirley, to Flores, to

Al, to Dave, to Bob, to Janice, to Jim, to Robert, to Mike, to Fred and to each and every other Military Veteran for your sacrifices, for your Love of Country, for your blood, and especially for my Freedoms.

It concerns me some that so few in our Country have felt strongly enough about our Nation's Ideals, to have worn our Military's uniform.

Yet between the three days each year Veterans and their sacrifices are remembered, many Vets struggle to re-enter mainstream America.

We had a saying in combat that went something like this: "When I die, I'm gonna go to Heaven 'cause I spent my time in Hell." To the majority that rules this Country we, The Veteran Minority, ask that you please not place any Vet in purgatory for the rest of his or her life as well. Although most have returned to their lives without major readjustments, there are many others who need care for their service connected problems.

When a Veteran is homeless, has to fight years for a benefits claim, is denied the basic Rights he or she fought for, and the rest of you can ignore the fact, or be ignorant of the fact, then fewer and fewer people will be standing up in the future to defend your Right to not give a damn! And Our American Ideals cannot endure for very long when the majority of the people won't be standing up for them anymore!!!

But at least a few good souls always have and always will.

United States Veteran,  
 You Are Free Because of  
 People Like Me!  
*Veteran X*

(name withheld upon request)

**Dear Editor:**  
**Subject: Texas State Railroad Funding**

Many people have asked me - Did the Fund Raiser to "Save the Texas State Railroad" make enough to help? Perhaps you have the same question.

My answer is NO because the fund raiser on October 21, 2006 was to fund the Preservation Task Force activities to give the

railroad to a private operator along with \$12 to \$20 million of state funds to induce them to take it. The money raised is to be spent by the Task Force for legal expenses, an economic impact study and consultants to aid in the "give away" noted above.

The immediate need is for approval by the Legislative Budget Board of the \$650,000 Supplemental Request by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to keep the trains from becoming a Static Display on December 31, 2006. This amount will allow operation to August 31, 2007.

If the railroad becomes Static the right of way not be mowed or cleaned of debris (tree limbs, etc.) and it will be extremely difficult to resume operation by the state or a private operator.

It should be noted that there may be legal obstacles to operation by a private operator because of long standing right of way agreements and gifts of equipment, etc. to the state from various donors. Some of these gifts have provisions requiring state operation. There should also be large increases in fares if a private operator is in charge.

Visit <[www.savestateparks.com](http://www.savestateparks.com)> to learn more and send a message to your Legislators and State Officials expressing your wishes.

Sincerely,  
*Robert N. Crossman, Jr., P.E.*  
 Jacksonville, Texas

**To The Editor:**

Well, it's about time the voting public got it! All the things the ICONOCLAST has been saying since 2000.

I can't wait to see what you will write in the post election issue. I am a former subscriber who is now retired and can't afford even the low price of the ICONOCLAST these days. However, I continue to keep you and your staff and your mission in prayer and encourage those who can afford to do so to subscribe.

Thanks for all you do!  
*Carolyn Dillon*



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# Sales Tax Rebates In Crawford Drop Drastically

**CRAWFORD** — One indicator of the health of a local economy is the amount of money returned to a governmental district, such as a city or county, in the form of sales tax rebates, which, in Texas, the state comptroller's office tracks continuously.  
 The most recent payment of sales tax rebate funds shows that the City of Crawford is down from last year, so far 14.63 percent.  
 Crawford's November alloca-

tion is down 53.36 percent from the same month a year ago.  
 In 2005, Crawford received \$9,716.46 in sales tax revenue for November. This year, the city received \$4,530.98.  
 The running total for the year, so far, has Crawford at \$46,160.07 this year, compared to \$54,071.88 last year.  
 Statewide, sales tax rebates considering all taxing jurisdictions are up for the year, according to Carole Keeton Strayhorn, Texas Comptroller, by 17.3 per-

cent.  
 "Texas continues to see an increase in sales tax collections, from both consumer and business purchases, as we progress into the final months of the year and the start of the holiday shopping season," Comptroller Strayhorn said.  
 Strayhorn today sent Texas cities \$348.8 million in sales tax allocations, up 12.2 percent compared to November 2005. So far this calendar year, city sales tax allocations are up 14 per-

cent compared to the same time period last year. Texas counties received November sales tax allocations of \$28.5 million, up 13.6 percent compared to one year ago. For the calendar year-to-date, county sales tax allocations are running 16.2 percent ahead of 2005. The 110 special purpose taxing districts around the state received \$14.4 million in sales tax, up 15.8 percent compared to last November. Ten local transit systems received \$113.3 million in November sales

tax rebates, up 10.2 percent compared to a year ago.  
 October state sales tax collections and November sales tax allocations to local governments represent September sales reported to the Comptroller in October by monthly tax filers and July, August and September sales reported to the Comptroller in October by quarterly tax filers.  
 The Comptroller's next local sales tax allocation will be made on Friday, Dec. 8.



The Lone Star **ICONOCLAST** Entertainment

## A Christmas to Remember – Reminiscing About Days Gone By

FAIRFIELD, Texas — With the Christmas season rapidly approaching, many Texans are slipping into a reminiscent frame of mind. Author Eleanor Clark of Fairfield, Texas has capitalized on her holiday memories in a new book for girls titled *Eleanor Jo: A Christmas to Remember*.

In this quintessentially 'Texas' tale set in the 1930s in Mexia, Texas, young Eleanor Jo tells a story of a Christmas like no other.

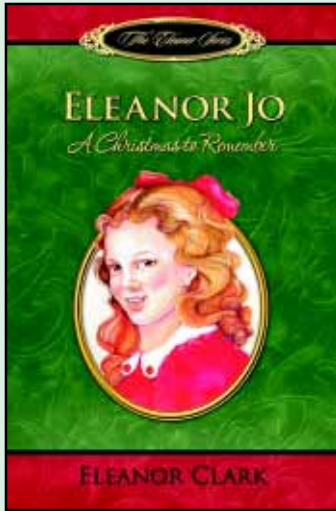
This character-driven book takes readers on a journey to a 1930s Neiman Marcus Christmas window in Dallas, a church Christmas play, and a lavish party at the home of a local well-to-do neighbor.

It details life on a dairy farm during the depression, and reminds the reader of the importance of family, friends, and faith.

According to reviewer Carolyn Williams: *Eleanor Jo: A Christmas to Remember* is a "Must-read holiday book. Delightful reading for young girls to antique girls! Profound message amid wonderful, historic setting...one worth passing down. Must read and share with someone you love for a more meaningful Christmas and New Year. Great stocking idea!"

In the book, little did nine-year-old Holly know that her grandmother would tell a story that would sweep her back in time to a special Christmas during the Great Depression. As a little girl, her grandmother, Eleanor Jo, eagerly awaited her favorite time of year — Christmas! She knew times were financially hard for her family, but she looked forward to all the treats, singing, and yes, the presents! Join Eleanor Jo as she discovers the true meaning of Christmas, and experiences a Christmas family miracle that will impact generations to come.

Author Eleanor Clark, who grew up Mexia during the Depression era, wrote this as the



first in a series of books titled "The Eleanor Series." According to the author, the book carries "an excellent message on the real reason for the Christmas season. And a surprise ending will have readers, young and old, wiping tears from their eyes. Witness a Christmas miracle like no other!"

Clark was born the daughter of a Texas sharecropper and raised during the Great Depression. She became a female pioneer in crossing economic, gender, educational, and corporate barriers. A ministerial executive, she decided to forge her own path and founded her own consulting firm, taking her passion and desire to reach today's children with the timeless truths of patriotism, godly character, miracles of faith, and love of God by creating The Eleanor Series. Her appreciation of her American and Christian



Eleanor Clark

heritage comes to life along with her exciting and colorful family history in this youth fiction series. Eleanor Clark lives in Central Texas with Lee, her husband of over 50 years, and as maternal patriarch of the family, she is devoted to her five children, 17 grandchildren,

and four great-grandchildren. For additional information visit her website at [www.eleanorseries.com](http://www.eleanorseries.com).

# Editorial

## Democrats: 1st Priority, Reinstate The Integrity Of The Constitution

When the Democrats take control of the House and Senate in January 2007, they must multi-task to clean up six years of corruption and to attempt to right the multitude of wrongs thrust upon America by a self-serving cadre of Neo-Cons.

This is no time to stagnate in fear of what the 2008 elections might hold, and posture would-be future political hope into inaction. Americans said it loud and clear on Nov. 7. "We want change."

And they want it now.

Although dealing with the mess in Iraq will take center stage, Democrats must act immediately to heal the Constitution.

This means gutting the Patriot Act.

Retain the directive of forcing intelligence agencies to share information, as they should be doing anyway, but remove any and all verbiage that dilutes the Constitution and the inherent freedoms that it is designed to protect..

Reinstate *habeas corpus*.

Enforce strict adherence to the Geneva Convention, as it was originally intended.

Win the so-called war on terror through diplomacy, first by opening direct talks with leaders, both enemies and allies, of all nations, and divining a method of peaceful coexistence. Force the issue and reinstate the United States as a beacon of maturity. Build a world of construction vs. the past six years of idiotic destruction.

Make haste to convene a summit of all interested parties regarding Iraq and emphasize our unblinking determination to immediately begin a structured withdrawal of troops, along with the return of that country to its people, along with the forfeiture of holdings wrought by illegally positioned corporate raiders.

Reinstate oversight of the Executive Branch, including hearings and corrections regarding no-bid profiteering, surveillance, and homeland security initiatives.

Provide independent investigations into:

- The inconsistencies in the 9/11 "official report."
- The reasons the U.S. opted for war in Iraq.
- Price gouging by Big Oil (and put their bosses under oath this time).
- The use of torture on potential terrorism

detainees.

- The abuse of power by the President and Vice-President.

Eliminate the No Child Left Behind Act.

It is a sick joke.

Period.

Reinstate testing of troops for depleted uranium poisoning and other conditions, and, dammit, pay for their mental and physical treatment and rehabilitation without making them jump through a thousand hoops.

Put into place significant tariffs on goods produced overseas and shift these dollars toward tax cuts for small companies that produce goods and provide jobs in the United States. In tandem, increase the minimum wage while offering incentives for small companies to regrow our economy.

Rather than spending billions more on war, death, and violence, direct that money toward energy independence and tangible research for cleaner, cheaper energy alternatives.

Pass legislation outlawing voting machines that can be tampered with and that do not provide a paper backup, or better yet, outlaw voting machines altogether.

Institute election reform to provide equal forums for all parties' candidates and independents to be heard in such a way as to reduce the possibility of power machines "buying" elections.

Again pass the embryonic stem cell research bill, with stronger attempts to override an embryonic Presidential veto.

Deep-six NAFTA and the superhighway program.

Implement strategies to reverse fascist control of our government by targeting privatization and protecting our public trusts.

Create a national health insurance program that is fair, sustainable, and encompasses all conditions.

Revise the tax code to fairly represent the working middle classes.

Revise laws causing the divestiture of broadcast news media from mega-corporate ownership.

And this is just for starters.

The newly elected Democrats have a golden opportunity to bring dignity back to America.

Don't squander it!

— W. Leon Smith

**If you're not part of the answer, you're part of the problem.**  
— John F. Kennedy



# What's Next for the Peace Movement?

By **BRUCE K. GAGNON**  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The WASHINGTON POST reported this morning that the Democratic Party's "foreign policy establishment sees a precipitous withdrawal [from Iraq] as potentially damaging to both the country's and the party's interests."

The battle is on. The new speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, is saying that the Dems will govern "from the middle." Impeachment is not on the table she recently said.

Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), who led the effort on behalf of Democratic Party House candidates, is saying that they can't allow the party's liberal wing to dominate the agenda.

The changes in Congress are largely due to huge opposition (62%) to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Again, quoting today's Washington Post, "The passion of the antiwar movement helped propel party activists in this election year."

How will the peace movement in America, that just turned itself nearly completely over to the Democratic Party, be re-

## GUEST COMMENTARY

warded for its loyalty?

"Many Democratic lawmakers have signed on to a vague plan for a phased withdrawal from Iraq, but the party remains divided between a base eager to get out soon and a foreign policy establishment that sees a precipitous withdrawal as potentially damaging to both the country's and the party's interests," the Washington Post concludes.

Pelosi is already pointing to a "Bi-partisan study group" on Iraq that is co-chaired by Texas oilman, and former Republican secretary of state, James Baker. Don't expect any surprises here.

Most of the new Democratic Party gains in the House were conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats who do not support immediate withdrawal from Iraq. Instead these new Dems, controlled by Bill Clinton's Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), will steer the country on a basic status quo course. Their excuse will be - - hey we have a

national election in two years and we want to take back the White House. So we have to go slow now so we don't alienate the public.

My translation - the corporations will control the new Democratic Party Congress and we will see no real basic change.

So what does the peace movement do now?

We must continue to call for immediate withdrawal from Iraq. We must call for a 50% cut in military spending and conversion of the military industrial complex. We must call for an end to Star Wars research and development funding which now stands at about \$10 billion a year.

We must also call for investigations of Bush-Cheney for impeachable offenses. We must call for repeal of the Patriot Act and the recent Military Commissions Act - the torture bill.

We have to call out loudly and strongly for universal national health care and for new federal election laws that sets one national standard to ensure fair voting.

There are many more things that must now be advanced by

the peace, justice, environmental, labor, and women's movements. And we must be impatient with the Democrats.

One last word here about liberal activists who supported the Dems fully knowing that many of them have been supporting the funding for the occupation of Iraq. I disagreed with this strategy of knee-bending loyalty to a party that does not deserve such support. But it is done now.

To these liberals peace activists I say this. Don't sell us all out now by going easy on the Dems. Don't tell us to wait, give them a chance, give them two years, let them take back the White House before we demand too much from them.

Don't sell yourself out. You have helped to create this new Democratic Party control of Congress. Get off your knees and now demand that they do something. Force the Dems to respond to you. If you don't you will have let down the long-suffering Iraqi people who are dying at the hands of U.S. military power. Don't let the GI's down who have died or suffered serious injury in Iraq for a war that was illegal in the first place. We

must keep fighting, harder than ever, to bring this mad war to an end.

The battle has just begun. Where will you stand?

Bruce K. Gagnon is the coordinator for Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space (<http://www.space4peace.org>). He can be reached at [globalnet@mindspring.com](mailto:globalnet@mindspring.com).

## WAKE UP



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# Like Springtime In November

Way to go, Howard!  
I like Howard Dean. The regular reader will remember that I was 100% for his 50-State campaign to ring every doorbell or knock on all doors. I thought the idea of leaving a small, short, to-the-point brochure wherever there was no answer was brilliant, if not original.

Taking this grassroots approach was the absolute only way to garner votes where votes had been sorely missed before, and it worked.

Now, I'm trying to decide just how much elation to feel.

Wednesday morning, the sun was shining in Central Illinois. That in itself is kind of unusual for this time of the year. However, the temperature climbed to upwards near 70 degrees — extremely unusual around here. There was a similar weather occurrence in these parts the day after the 1992 Presidential election.

Coincidence... or shifts in the cosmos?

The following day, with Rummy out of the picture, the temp rose even higher. I've been driving around for several days in November with an open

sunroof in Illinois! (In contrast, Tuesday was cloudy and in the low 40s with strong winds.)

Talking with other progressive-thinking people, there's a feeling of ease about the air, one that we felt back on that November day in 1992, as though so many troubles had been lifted off our shoulders; like our heads and wrists were finally removed from a stock.

We listened hard, and there, off in the distance, the Bell resounded with the unmistakable ring of Liberty.

King George XLIII, in his megalomaniac fanaticism to become a dictatorial *Fuhrerprinzip* ruler, had pushed the American people too far. By appealing solely to friendly audiences, he duped himself into believing his own balderdash.

Not one of those fatuous dolts in positions of "leadership" within the GOP had a clue as to what most people in America has been thinking the past several years. Even if they had, as Dark Lord and Venal Lynne Cheney repeatedly point out, they don't give a damn. It's all been for their pleasure, as



## Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

though they're royalty.

Well, Jesus is no longer the factor as in the past three elections. The agnostic Herr Rove managed to sucker the evangelicals with that lie far too long before being found out. Besides, it was just a matter of time before the GOP's and Religious Righties' own hypocritical gays and lesbians started to get caught with their hands in the wrong pants and pill vials.

Issues of personal choice were left where they belong — in people's homes. A stringent South Dakota anti-abortion law, passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor earlier this year, was soundly defeated by vote of the people; an anti-gay marriage proposition in Arizona was voted down; stem cell research got a go-ahead in Missouri.

The shackles of Neo-con, control-over-every-aspect-of-our

lives have begun to be broken. A return to the America of people who think "Freedom" isn't such an awful concept, where "Hope" is a good state to dwell in, common sense assures that "Liberal" and "Liberty" share the same root word and concept, is well on the way.

Should I be, as Dieter, German host of the "Sprockets" talkshow might say, "Happy as a little girl?" (Dieter is, of course, an alter-ego of former Saturday Night Live star and proud Canadian-born Mike Myers.)

I could drive around this "red zone" in which I reside to seek out the goofs who as yet haven't removed the Bush-Cheney 2000 and 2004 stickers from their cars, then point at them and mockingly act out overemphasized laughter.

Or, I might behave as though I were an adult, a real Democrat, a true Liberal, and take the events of Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2006 in stride and not belittle the other side.

Because, let's face it, when all is said and done, the Republican Party in its entirety is not the enemy. They are our fellow Americans, misguided and ill-

informed as they have been for the past 12 to 30 years.

I mean, hey, just because those who prefer to see anti-Constitutionist types in control in Washington, D.C. dismantling even more of our Bill of Rights because they're scared stiff of their own shadows — not to mention freedom of thought, expression, words, and the phantom "enemy" that will attack us from wherever...

To those simple-minded folks who've been mesmerized into voting Herr Oberst Karl Rove's "fear" ticket by the tens of millions via King George XLIII and Dark Lord the Dick Cheney their wives, Condoliar Rice Rummy, Denny Hastert, Rick Santorum, Bill Frist, and the rest, well...

You can now grow up and put your fear away.

There's nothing more to be afraid of; the Democrats have won and look around you — a Qaeda has not taken over your town, city, county or state.

As has not been the case with these Republicans who've lost their seats in the House and Senate, as well as many you've stubbornly and blindly returned

Continued On Next Page

## School Failure May Be Linked To Lack Of Play In Early Childhood, Say Experts

*"In too many schools, play has become a four-letter word."* —Joan Almon

COLLEGE PARK, MD— Too little time for unstructured play leads to increased stress for children and parents, according to a new clinical report issued this week by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Nevertheless, many parents and policy makers continue to believe that pressuring young children to learn earlier and faster will help them succeed in school. In fact, it may have just the opposite effect.

Experts say there is a serious disconnect between scientific knowledge of child development and popular ideas about how and when to introduce formal instruction, according to the nonprofit Alliance for Childhood. Parental pressure combined with flawed policies are among the reasons why creative play, long considered the foundation of the early childhood curriculum, is now disappearing from preschools and kindergartens, says Alliance President Joan Almon.

A recent Public Agenda survey, for example, found a huge divergence of opinion between

teachers and parents about the amount of testing children are subjected to: 71 percent of teachers think there are too many standardized tests, but only 17 percent of parents think so.

"Teachers know that imaginative play is the way young children discover the world for themselves and become lifelong learners," says Almon. "But misguided policies that require increasing amounts of formal instruction—and even scripted teaching—are forcing teachers in kindergartens and preschools to do things that they know are wrong and counterproductive. In too many schools, play has become a four-letter word."

Many experts in child development link the increased pressure on young children and the decline of play to later school failure.

A "Call to Action on the Education of Young Children," issued by the Alliance for Childhood and signed by more than 150 leading educators, physicians, and other experts, calls for a reversal of education policies that cut time for child-

initiated play and emphasize formal instruction.

"We are deeply concerned that current trends in early education, fueled by political pressure, are leading to an emphasis on unproven methods of academic instruction and unreliable standardized testing that can undermine learning and damage young children's healthy development," the Alliance statement says. "Preschool education must not follow the same path that has led kindergartens toward intense academic instruction with little or no time for child-initiated learning. If such practices were effective for five-year-olds, we would have seen better long-term results by now.

"Justified concern for low-income children...has been a powerful force behind the current overemphasis on early instruction in literacy and math," the statement continues. "This well-intentioned but misguided policy may actually put children at increased risk of school failure by denying them positive early learning experiences."

The signers include Harvard professors Howard Gardner

and Kathleen McCartney, pediatricians T. Berry Brazelton and Mel Levine, child psychiatrists Kyle Pruett, Alvin Poussaint, and Stanley Greenspan, MacArthur Award-winning educator Deborah Meier, and authors Jonathan Kozol and Daniel Goleman. They say current early education policies are based on "unproven methods" and are "fueled by political pressure."

"At a meeting last week with the New York City early education department, I heard the cry of professionals who believe that unrealistic new preschool standards and assessments might push children over the edge," says Temple University Professor Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, another signer of the statement. "There was actually an initiative to remove blocks from preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Perhaps policy makers do not know that play with blocks builds the foundation for mathematics, language skills, and spatial development."

Psychologist Jane Healy, also a signer, said that the Alliance's call to action is "important for all children, but especially for those

disadvantaged by inadequate living conditions, stressed parents, too much television, and violent neighborhoods. They, most of all, need a childhood of which they are being deprived."

Alliance president Joan Almon says she hopes that the new report by the Academy of Pediatrics will go a long way toward educating parents and policy makers about the central importance of play in healthy development and dispelling the widespread but false idea that play is a waste of time. "The AAP has done children and families a great service with this report," says Almon. "When children play, family life is enriched and children learn more deeply. Everyone concerned with the well-being of children should read the report and take it to heart."

The Alliance for Childhood Call to Action is appended below and is also posted, with a complete list of signers, at [www.allianceforchildhood.org](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org). The American Academy of Pediatrics report on play is posted at <http://www.aap.org/pressroom/playFINAL.pdf>.



# Bedtime Stories In The Dying Night

*(Editor's note: This column was written almost 20 years ago as a Veterans Day remembrance of a man who had been a soldier. The story is true, as nearly as my imperfect memory can regenerate it. I have tried to recall this tale again in the spirit of a man who fervently believed that we have forgotten too much.)*

I don't think it was November.

It was early fall, a little cooler than usual as the arctic edged south a bit, its first hint of seasonal death hanging in the air like the omnipresent drizzle stripping the hardwoods of their first brown leafy sacrifices to the approaching god of winter.

We sat bored, our mood damp as the wool and the weather, watching our Boy Scout camping trip soak unceasingly into the soggy, slick Oklahoma hills.

While I certainly think of it now, back then no one questioned how Mr. Norwood was able to keep a fire going under the tent fly with no dry wood and no scorched canvas. It was just one of those things you took for granted, like the extra clean socks, underwear and jeans in your pack. You would have known your mother put them there if you'd thought about it, but you didn't. Certainly you didn't talk about it.

Sort of like Mr. Norwood.

He was just the old guy who drove the bus for the Boy Scouts, kind of a sour old guy. Never said too much except to yell at us through the rearview mirror to settle down, sit down and quit all that hollerin'. We just figured he went with the bus, part of the loan to the Scouts like the school gave us the bus and the National Guard let us have the tents and the church let us have the groceries.

Except for the Hershey bars and cupcakes and ginger ale and stuff.

Nobody let us have that but us.

We never figured why old Mr. Norwood gave up his time and his summers to ferry a bunch of howling yard apes to camp. Like all a school bus driver has to do with his summers is haul more kids around.

We never wondered why old Mr. Norwood always slept in the bus instead of in the tents with us.

Until that night.

I guess he figured we were pretty much a mess, all of us

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



running around in the rain, pitching mudball fights and water wars all day, and he took pity on us, starting a fire in one of the few tents still standing despite the weather-bound pranks.

Whoever said it regretted it. But it didn't matter. We all joined in it.

We'd heard that Mr. Norwood was in the war, so we chorused, and repeated the refrain, "Tell us some war stories."

First he ignored us.

But we would not be ignored. Like I said, we had a lot of war surplus equipment given to us.

He reached down and picked up an entrenching tool.

It was the first time I'd seen that look. I've seen it plenty of times since, though I'm not sure I can describe it. It's a hard, brittle look, like glass in a fire; a piercing stare halfway between tears and rage; a maddened searching, demanding look from someplace hidden within the soul, someplace raw, scarred and bloody.

It is the look of a man who sleeps little and dreams much.

"I onct beat a man to death with one of these. He was a mail carrier. Had a picture of his wife and little boys in his boot. I beat him 'til we was both bloody and he just sat right down there in the trench and scratched his moustache with one finger 'til he died."

He fixed us all with that stare, and holding the entrenching tool toward us like a bitter accusation, went on; only now we weren't sure we wanted him to.

"You want to hear a war story? All right, you little snots. Here's a war story.

"They come in about three hours before daylight. Barrages. Tons of it. Hear? Hell, you couldn't even think. Suck th' air right out of you. Couldn't draw a breath. Boys down the line from you just got blowed up. One second they was there and then they wasn't. Sometimes you'd git buried. Shells and bombs would just cover you plumb up with dirt. Two, three foot deep. You'd lie there and pray for it to stop, and when it did, you'd pray some more that it was just a letup. 'Cause when it quit, that meant

they was comin'.

"You'd get up and knock the mud out of the action best you could and lock out the box, git you a handful of rounds and start killin' single-shot at five, six hundred yards. They kept comin', us killin' 'em the whole time. When they hit our wire, you unlocked the box and used them last five rounds fast as you could. Then it got down to whatever was handy.

"They jist kept on 'til there wasn't no more of 'em to keep on. I seen 'em come over them trenches with arms, heads blowed off, jist run over th' top and fall down dead. Shovels was the best. We'd sit around and whet 'em like a knife. Some boys used a pick axe, butcher knife or jist a good stout stick of stovewood. Bayonets wasn't much good when a bunch of 'em got in on you like that.

Sometimes one of us would jist go crazy. Turn to water when they come over the top. Best thing when that happent was just to grab him quick as you could and shove him down in the trench and stand on him. Hope if it ever happent to you — and it happent to everbidy sometime — somebody'd do th' same for you 'cause if they ever seen you wallerin' around like that, cryin', screamin', they'd stick you f'r sure. Like they couldn't stand it. Skeert it would happen to them, I figgered, like it was catchin'.

"Then all of a sudden there

just wouldn' be nobody there. Nobody left to kill. Then you'd git your rifle, or somebody's, and git ready. Whistles would blow most times and we'd go right back at 'em. They'd commence to shellin' us again when we hit no man's land.

"It was like a warshed out cotton patch out there. But it was better for them barrages than in the trenches. They didn't always git your range. 'Course when they used gas it was worse. It run downhill. If you jumped in a shell hole, it was full of gas. If you didn't you got shot or blowed up. Sometimes wind would come up and it blowed back on 'em. We run up on their trenches an' they was jist full of dead men, gassed."

He stretched out a partially clenched, somehow imperfect but not scarred or misshapen hand, over the fire. It quivered slightly, uncontrolled, suspended in the smoky dampness. Then he pronounced like some undeniable horror:

"Gas."

He want on through the night to the soft stacatto on the canvas. He took us from the troopships to death's quagmire, barely trained boys denied knowledge that could have saved them on the theory that, had they known what they faced, they might have deserted. Some units were not even taught how to clean their rifles on that same theory, reasoning that after the first action, only half would need to

know how.

How little the theorists knew who they were.

Together we crawled back through the dark terrors of no man's land after some aborted raid or ill-conceived assault. We learned the feel of fire in our chests, Satan's faith in a mustard seed. We heard a comrade's cough that became constant by nightfall, fatal by morning. We thought how one should word a letter that s son died of a cold in a distant place where colds kill. We ate horses and rats and Christmas candy that tasted of cordite. Our teeth fell out. Our toes rotted. We shot, stabbed, strangled and were done the same. We learned it all.

Except why.

It was a long night.

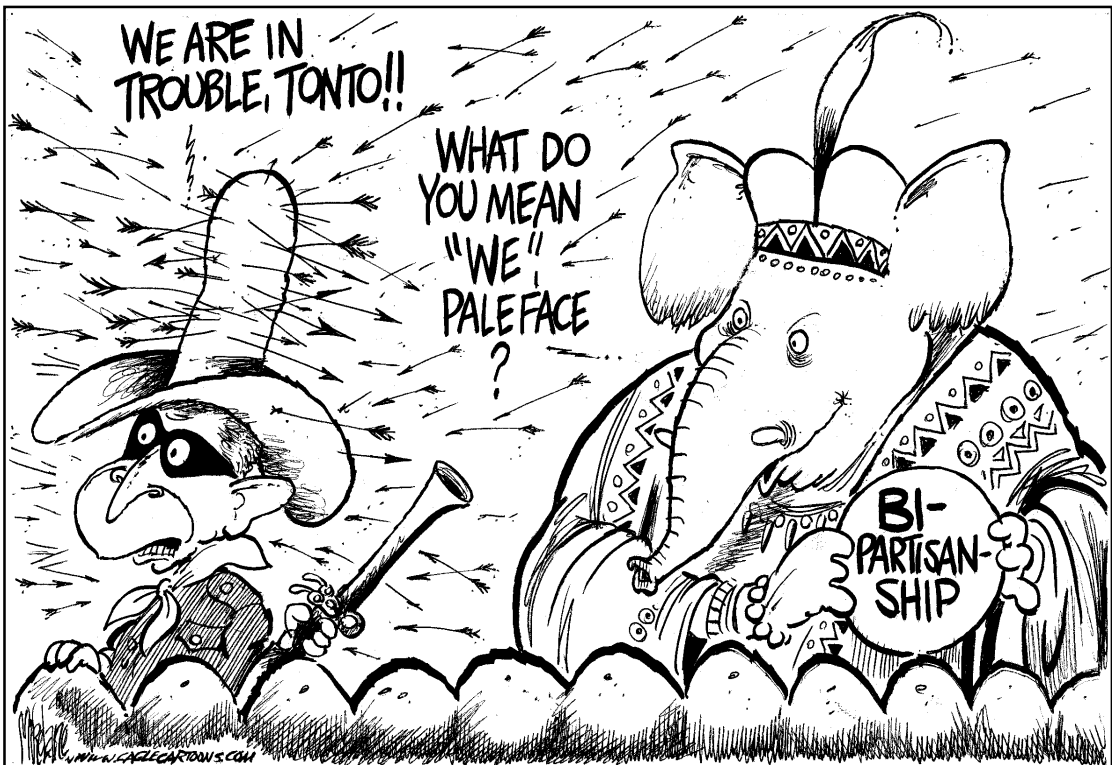
But we had our war story.

None of us went back to our tents that night. We slept where we sat, huddled close in a crowded ten, often awakening to one another's fretful stirrings, and each time, there, tending the fire, a man made old by time and events, sat at the edge of the night holding an entrenching tool like a crucifix.

At 11 a.m. on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of each year, there is a special memorial that I have always recalled, a special tribute I always pay.

Norwood, Owenby  
Sergeant  
American Expeditionary Force.

Who once killed a postman with a shovel, and made sure a troop of would-be warriors never forgot.





# TENUTO

From Previous Page

to the jobs at which they do nothing for you, quite a lot of the new Democrats who will be going to work on the Hill come January are not career politicians.

These are not the sons and daughters of connected families; these are not folks who've been getting fat and sassy off the backs of taxpayers since leaving college.

Many of the new Democratic Representatives are precisely what our Republic was intended to be — citizen representatives, regular people who were elected into office by the people to speak for us.

The regular guys have taken control, and King George XLIII, Dictator of North America, is hereby demoted to Lame Duck W. Henceforth, he shall be referred to within these pages as "Lame Dubya."

As to Dark Lord, well, the Sunday preceding the election he boasted to George Stephanopoulos on ABC-TV's "This Week"

(Nov. 5, 2006) that were a Democratic Congress to subpoena him he would claim executive privilege and refuse to appear.

The arrogance of this guy, this hubris to consider himself above both the will of the people and laws of our Nation and humanity, require no words beyond his own.

Condoliar's been uncharacteristically quiet the past few days. There isn't a whole lot for her to say when it can't be spun for effect.

Rummy's out, and Lame Dubya admitted lying "for political reasons" about his plans to dump the doddering old fool. Not good enough, Lame-o, to pull a stunt like that while young troops ("young" is a misnomer as some of them were as old as me) have been dying and getting mutilated in record numbers in Iraq.

Then, there's Herr Oberst Karl Rove, the "architect," the college drop-out whom all the GOP chickenhawks kept referring to as a "genius." Since when does it take genius to steal ideas from former Nixon dirty tricks attorney Donald Segretti and reconstitute them repeatedly into the most distasteful of backhanded political lies, smear tactics and chicanery?

For his total lack of ethics in political dealings and possessing the moral fiber of a vulture, Herr Rove was fired by George

H.W. Bush more than 30 years ago. Unfortunately, he and Lame Dubya have been joined at the hip ever since.

During that time, Karl has reaped tens of millions in rewards from clients as he: Maneuvered Lame Dubya through a failed Congressional bid, two successful Texas gubernatorial elections, and two illicitly-swung presidential votes; changed the entire face of Texas politics through dubious methods; managed the campaigns of good Re-

publicans such as John Ashcroft, Bill Clements, John Cornyn, Rick Perry, Phil Gramm.

publicans and Republicans feel to

ward each other is kind of like the Cubs-White Sox rivalry in Chicago. Cubs fans are, with few exceptions, neither unkind nor antagonistic toward Sox fans. We love baseball for the beauty of the game — the joy of a grand slam, the thrill of stealing third, the expertise of a complete game shutout.

The White Sox fan, conversely, blames everything since the Great Fire of 1871 on the Cubs and the team's diehards. For instance, ever since the Sox made a truly boneheaded deal in 1992, trading a lackluster young player named Sammy Sosa across town for one George Bell, a has-been slugger on his way down, Sox fans have held a grudge against the Cubs, Cubs' fans, and Sosa — everyone except Sox management and Bell.

The Democrats are willing, I feel, to play nice with the schmoe on the other side of the aisle. They always have been. The problem for the past 12 years has been an inability, or unwillingness, within the ranks of most of the GOP since it took control to work in a non-partisan manner. They seem to have felt an entitlement to control the chambers, and refused to budge for the good of the Nation.

To make matters worse,

throw in Newt Gingrich, DeLay, Duke Cunningham, Curt Weldon, et al, and what America got were any number of Conservatives, and Christians to boot, selling our Congress to the highest bidder for personal gain.

Come January, there's an entirely new Congress on the Hill. Many misogynists of the Neo-con Right who cried and carped about working with Nancy Pelosi as the first woman to hold the position of Speaker of the House in American history, don't have too much to fret about now because they won't be back.

It's not going to be "business as usual." I've been reading the extreme Lefties already bitching that nothing's going to get done, the Dems will be just as bad as the GOP was, nobody but Rep. Henry Waxman will stand up to Lame Dubya... This crap is coming out on Nov. 8 already!

(Actually, Waxman can be as gutsy as he wants to be — he usually runs unopposed over in Hollywood, California.)

As if John Murtha hasn't fought the Regime tooth and nail!

The extremists will never be satisfied. All they do is turn any kind of reasoned, sensible discussion and order into chaos, then complain that there's nothing but chaos!

A couple of questions still bother me. For one, why do so many people vote for the Republican machine candidate against the regular guy or, more importantly, war veteran — often wounded — Democratic candidate who answers to no one but the constituents?

In Illinois, virtually every major intrastate office, from Governor on down, went to a Democrat, yet "machine" GOP candidates took numerous Congressional races. In the "red zone" of Central Illinois, the Republican "Gang of Four" rubber stamp incumbents won all of their races against non-professional politicians:

Ray LaHood, Peoria (an abysmal record of ineffective service) — beat Steve Waterworth;

Denny Hastert, Plano (What Foley scandal?) — won over John Laesch;

Gerry (Abramoff's money is as green as anyone else's) Weller, Joliet — defeated John Pavich, former CIA operative who served in Afghanistan and was disgusted by the bull;

Tim ("No Show") Johnson,

Champaign (runs on his father's legacy, has done nothing for farms which comprise a majority of his district) — outlasted Dr. David Gill, an EF doctor who championed healthcare, environment, Social Security and energy independence.

Each war chest held by these incumbents could choke a horse while the grassroots challenger had to eke by with contributions from individuals. Can you say "corporate interests?"

In the Western Suburbs of Chicago, where the fossilized Henry Hyde is finally giving up his seat, GOP St. Rep. Peter Roskam defeated Iraq war vet Tammy Duckworth. Major Duckworth left both of her legs in Iraq, but that didn't matter to the Conservatives of the area. They'd rather have a professional hack than a true hero represent them in Congress.

Even decorated Vietnam hero John McCain, who makes sure the media knows he visits the vets at Walter Reed Hospital who've lost limbs in the Middle East, was sure to stump for Roskam — against the heroic Maj. Duckworth. She refused to make personal service a campaign issue, despite her complete disagreement with the war.

The upside to these "victories" is that these five dudes can't do much damage, as their votes won't be all that influential.

So for now, let's sit back, take a deep breath, relax and savor the victories.

There's more than enough catching up to do beginning in January.

We've got the Holidays to look forward to between now and then, and for the first time in five years we can actually try to enjoy them — to the point that we don't let Lame Dubya's follies in Iraq and Afghanistan bring distress upon our celebrations.

Now, with some reasonable mess in Government, these too shall pass.

The light is finally visible at the end of the tunnel, and the Bell can be heard.

Let Freedom ring!  
Shalom, my Friend.

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



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THE DETROIT NEWS



# Yellowstone Winter Silence Being Disrupted By Snowmobile Noise

## First Test Seen of Administration's Pledge to Put 'Conservation First' in National Parks

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In what will trigger the first major test of the Bush Administration's recent pledge to put "conservation first" in national parks, new scientific findings of the National Park Service (NPS) show that snowmobile noise has exceeded Yellowstone's standards in three consecutive winters even as the number of snowmobiles entering the park has declined.

For example, snowmobile-dominated vehicle noise was audible at Old Faithful between 60 and 80 percent of the time during the peak hours of 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. for nearly the entire 2005-06 winter season, according to the 118-page National Park Service report now available at [http://www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/upload/final\\_soundscape.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/upload/final_soundscape.pdf).

In response to the new data, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (CNPSR), a watchdog organization of 545 NPS veterans with more than 16,000 years of total NPS management experience, said the chronic snowmobile noise problem at Yellowstone interferes with visitors' opportunities to enjoy natural conditions in Yellowstone and conflicts directly with new Management Policies for the national parks adopted by the Bush administration earlier this year.

The chronic noise at Old Faithful occurred with an average of just 263 snowmobiles present on each of the sampling days. Moreover, the number of snowmobiles park-wide during the past three winters has averaged only 250 per day; and yet the noise standards have been exceeded. Despite this, Senator Conrad Burns of Montana is seeking to authorize 720 snowmobiles per day in Yellowstone through a rider he has placed on the Senate's Interior Appropriations Bill.

"How the administration responds to this conflict between snowmobile noise in Yellowstone and its newly-adopted policies will tell Americans a great deal about the administration's commitment to stewardship in the national parks," said CNPSR Executive Council Chairman Bill Wade, a former superintendent of Shenandoah National Park. "The new Management Policies were adopted with strong bipar-

tisan support and the administration was widely and duly praised for its pledge to put conservation first in the national parks. But that pledge will be seen as a sham, and should be, if the administration fails to adhere to its policies in our first national park."

Finalized in late August by Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, the 2006 Management Policies reaffirmed that the overarching responsibility of NPS is to conserve park resources in an "unimpaired" condition. Beyond this, the policies restored highly specific duties related to maintaining quiet and managing motorized use in the parks. These duties had been stripped in an earlier, highly controversial rewrite of the policies spearheaded by Paul Hoffman, a deputy assistant secretary of Interior at the time and former director of the Cody, Wyoming chamber of commerce.

Famous for natural sounds such as hissing steam, rushing waterfalls and howling wolves, Yellowstone has more recently become known as the national park where rangers working around snowmobiles have suffered partial hearing loss. NPS now advises its employees to wear earplugs when they operate the same models of four-stroke snowmobiles used by visitors.

NPS does not issue a similar warning to visitors. However, last year a nationally recognized expert in noise-induced hearing loss cautioned Yellowstone's superintendent that, based on NPS' data, visitors riding snowmobiles are at risk of damaging their hearing. Dr. Peter Rabinowitz of the Yale Occupational and Environmental Medicine Program urged Yellowstone to caution visitors that even when they are operating the newest models of park-approved snowmobiles that they are safer wearing hearing protection.

NPS recently completed a report on noise monitoring conducted in Yellowstone last winter. Rather than health risks, the monitoring focused on impacts from snowmobile noise to the park's environment and to the opportunities of visitors to enjoy Yellowstone. NPS found:

\* "Major adverse effects" in the Old Faithful Geyser Basin, Yellowstone's most popular des-

ertation, as well as near Madison Junction. The agency says these impacts involve "an easily recognizable adverse effect on the natural soundscape and potential for its enjoyment."

\* Noise problems at Madison Junction reached the "major" adverse effect threshold on 75 percent of days NPS monitored.

\* At Old Faithful, snowmobile noise was "audible more than twice the time of snowcoaches."

Rick Smith, a member of CNPSR's Executive Council and former acting superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, said: "The new findings

underscore very similar monitoring results from the previous two winters in Yellowstone. They have demonstrated conclusively that the noise generated by a relatively small number of snowmobiles is depriving too many visitors of truly experiencing Yellowstone's unique sounds and the park's magnificent quiet. Many visitors will never have a second chance to visit Yellowstone in winter, so if their one visit is dominated by snowmobile noise, they are out of luck. This is not what Americans expect in their national parks. It is not what the new

Management Policies prescribe. And it is not what this administration pledged when it assured Americans that conservation will come first in national treasures such as Yellowstone."

ABOUT CNPSR — The 545 members of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees are all former employees of the National Park Service with a combined 16,000 years of stewardship of America's most precious natural and cultural resources.

For more information, visit the CNPSR Web site at <http://www.npsretirees.org>.

## Depths Of The Unholy And The Monstrous

BY GRAYSON HARPER  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST



Grayson Harper

Just when you think we've gone about as far into the heart of darkness as we can go, somebody manages to find an even darker place. That somebody is General William Caldwell, the chief spokesperson in Iraq. Speaking in Baghdad recently, he compared the ongoing war there to a work of art. He said: "Every great work of art goes through messy phases while it is in transition. A lump of clay can become a sculpture. Blobs of paint become paintings which inspire."

Hm. I'm trying to imagine the response to that bizarre statement by the likes of Vincent Van Gogh, or Claude Monet or Pablo Picasso. I actually know quite a few artists. I'm fairly certain none of them have ever killed anyone in order to complete a painting or a sculpture. I don't recall them dropping bombs on cities or burning people alive with white phosphorous. I never heard of them going into private homes and killing all the family members, while in the act of putting the finishing touches on a canvas or a portrait in clay.

I never knew them to torture anyone, or to leave thousands of unspent cluster bombs lying around in Lebanon or Iraq, waiting to be stepped on by a soldier or a civilian, or most likely picked up by a small child, then watching that child lose an arm or seeing her face blown off.

When we reach the point where we are comparing the

"messiness" of war to the creating of works of art, surely we have descended into the depths of the unholy and the monstrous. But if bodies are lumps of clay and paint is blood then I suppose what we are doing in Iraq and what Israel recently orchestrated in Lebanon might constitute a macabre renaissance of "art."

Perhaps we should get busy and build some nice museums to house our rarefied new "works." But we already have them, don't we? They're called "mortuaries."

Here's how the British journalist Robert Fisk described the mortuary in Hilla, Iraq, after the American massacre there in 2003. He called it "a butcher's shop of chopped-up corpses." The victims were farmers, women and children. We killed around 61, and left more than 450 seriously injured.

Film footage at Hilla the next day, the first shot by Western news agencies of what was then happening on the Iraqi front lines, showed babies cut in half, scattered limbs, kids with deep cuts in their faces caused by American shellfire and cluster bombs. In fact, most of the casualties were children. Remember, the majority of Iraq's 24-million people are children.

I wonder how these wounded would feel about being described as potential works of art.

And what about the four to six-thousand Iraqi civilians killed during the November, 2004 U.S. assault on Fallujah?

### GUEST COMMENTARY

How many Americans even remember Fallujah, let alone care what happened there? Or how about the 20 civilians recently gunned down in Haditha by U.S. Marines? Haditha is now touted as Iraq's "My Lai," even though there are "My Lais" happening in Iraq every day, most of which go unreported in the Western press. Yes, it would appear that we are rather messy artists.

If only we could talk to the young Iraqi girl, Abeer Hamza, 14 years old, citizen of Mahmoudiya, raped, murdered and set on fire in her home by five U.S. Marines. If we could talk to her five-year-old sister, Hadeel, or her mother, Fakhriya, or her father, Qassim, but alas, they, too, were shot dead by those marines.

But if we could talk to them and all the other casualties, the wounded mothers, fathers, children, the dead buried in the rubble of Baghdad and Fallujah, I wonder if it would ease their minds at all to know that they and their families were part of some grand "work in progress" of our American "artists of war"?

And what about our own wounded and dead soldiers, returning day after day to the arms of their mothers and fathers after being thrown into harm's way by the lies of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice and Powell, the architects of war?

Perhaps it would comfort them to know that it was all for the sake of art.



# UFOs Nothing New In Texas

A torpedo-shaped sphere cruised the nighttime sky over Levelland on Nov. 2, 1957, while on the ground mysterious “eggs of light” blocked the roads.

The reexamination of the so-called “Roswell Incident” in the 1990s complete with film footage of an alleged extraterrestrial autopsy renewed interest in Unidentified Flying Objects. Although nothing in the Lone Star past can compete with the controversial claim that a flying saucer crashed in the New Mexico desert 59 years ago, Texas history is full of out-of-this-world sightings.

Farmworkers at Bonham filed one of the earliest reports on record in 1873. The stupefied laborers swore they saw an enormous “serpentine object” float overhead in broad daylight.

This obscure episode preceded by a generation the Great Airship Mystery, the first nationwide commotion concerning UFOs. Starting on the Pacific coast in November 1896 and moving gradually eastward for six sensational months, thousands of Americans insisted they gazed at giant flying machines two decades before the Wright brothers mastered heavier-than-air flight.

An oblong, propeller-powered craft supposedly churned against the wind over Sacramento on Nov. 19, 1896. The next day a similar airship entertained Oakland, where onlookers said they heard voices, laughter, and Christmas carols.

During the wacky weeks that followed, flying cigars and cylinders were spotted over Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, and countless other communities. In April 1897, an entire fleet of UFOs caused a high-altitude traffic jam over metropolitan Chicago.

A former congressman experienced a Kansas encounter of the much-too-close kind. As an airship hovered 30 feet off the ground, six odd-looking creatures were plainly visible inside a transparent undercarriage. The shaken ex-solon said, “I don’t know whether they were angels, devils, or what.”

Popular speculation picked up by the press hinted the astonishing contraptions were the secret creations of Thomas Edison, proof of the public’s boundless confidence in the inventive genius. But Edison indignantly denied any involvement and dismissed the strange phenomena as an elaborate fraud.

Meanwhile, a Dallas daily re-

ported the crash of a spaceship at the Wise County hamlet of Aurora. According to a local correspondent named S.E. Hayden, the craft collided with a windmill and exploded killing the lone alien occupant. The blast “scattered debris over several acres of ground” but enough remained of the intergalactic guest “to show he was not an inhabitant of this world.”

“T.J. Weems, the U.S. Signal Service officer at this place and an authority on astronomy, gave it as his opinion that the pilot was a native of the planet Mars.” The tall tale concluded with the announcement that the deceased would be given a decent burial by the compassionate earthlings of Aurora.

During the flying saucer frenzy after the Second World War, the “Lubbock Lights” focused media attention on the Panhandle. Streaking across the heavens on a crystal clear night in November 1951, the blue lights were observed and photographed by several eyewitnesses with impeccable credentials. Unable to write off four Texas Tech professors and an Atomic Energy Commission representative as crackpots, the

Air Force blamed the light show on migratory birds.

(A close relative of mine had a front-row seat for the “Lubbock Lights.” But fear of ridicule kept her quiet for nearly half a century.)

Never at a loss for down-to-earth explanations, government investigators deduced the glowing “eggs” that materialized on highways outside Levelland in 1957 were simply ball lightning. To motorists, whose engines died when they drove too close to the eerie orbs, the official verdict was more far-fetched than the bizarre incident.

The forgotten story of the Martian mishap in North Texas was revived in 1973 by a bored newspaperman. UFO enthusiasts descended upon tiny Aurora in search of evidence of the ancient accident but failed to find a single fragment of the shattered spacecraft.

The last straw for residents, who had politely put up with the eccentric invasion, was a request from a team of Oklahoma UFO hunters to exhume a body in the cemetery. The grave robbers were sent packing, and a guard was posted at the burial ground.

## This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



In the aftermath of this carnival-like furor, a Wise County writer proved that Hayden, the Gay Nineties chronicler, was just pulling posterity’s leg. The windmill never existed, the astronomy expert was actually a blacksmith and cemetery records showed no alien internment. Elderly Aurorans would

have remembered the crash landing, yet everyone agreed nothing unusual occurred in April 1897.

But hoaxes, birds, and ball lightning do not explain the thousands of sightings in Texas and elsewhere during the past century or more. To paraphrase a popular television show of a decade ago, the truth may still be out there.

*Do your Christmas shopping at [www.twith.com](http://www.twith.com) or request a gift list from P.O. Box 152, Friendswood, TX 77549.*

## Supreme Court Of New Jersey Takes Forward Step Toward Marriage Equality Same-sex Couples Entitled to Equal Protection Under the Law

AUSTIN — The Supreme Court of New Jersey ruled today that committed same-sex couples must be afforded on equal terms the same rights and benefits enjoyed by opposite-sex couples under the civil marriage statutes.

In its ruling, the Court said there was no rational basis for giving gays and lesbians full civil rights as individuals while giving them an incomplete set of rights when they enter into committed same-sex relationships.

“To the extent that families are strengthened by encouraging monogamous relationships, whether heterosexual or homosexual, the Court cannot discern a public need that would justify the legal disabilities that now afflict same-sex domestic partnerships,” wrote Justice Albin in the Court’s majority opinion.

While the Court unanimously determined that same-sex couples have the right to the statutory benefits and privileges conferred on heterosexual married couples, they did not find that committed same-sex partners have a constitutional right to define their relationship by the name of marriage.

The court gave the New Jersey legislature 180 days to either “amend the marriage statutes or enact an appropriate statutory structure.”

“This is a definite step forward in recognizing that same-sex couples and their children are entitled to equal rights and

responsibilities under the law,” said Paul E. Scott, Executive Director of Equality Texas. “We are hopeful that as the New Jersey Legislature moves to implement the Court’s ruling it will determine that the right way to end discrimination in marriage is, indeed, to end discrimination in marriage, not create a separate new system.”

Scott added, “It is important to note that the New Jersey Supreme Court acknowledged that the economic and financial inequities borne by same-sex committed partners are also borne by their children. Equality Texas has worked to defeat measures in the Texas Legislature that would diminish and demean the value of families headed by same-sex committed couples. Equality Texas will continue its work at the Texas Legislature to fight for family equality, including those families headed by same-sex committed couples.”

Equality Texas commends Lambda Legal for all their efforts in arguing the case before the Supreme Court of New Jersey.

*Equality Texas works toward the elimination of social, legal, and economic discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression through lobbying, education, and research directed toward the Texas Legislature and other state governmental agencies.*

## A Salute To The People

By RAY BECKERMAN  
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Nov. 8, 2006

During some dark days in courage and patriotism of the people of Ohio. As the forces of darkness arrayed to deprive them of their right to vote, they fought their best to stand up for their rights. They lost that battle, but never gave up the fight, and resolved to come back even stronger next time.

In these days of 2006 I have seen their quiet courage again, overcoming all of the chicanery and fraud and disenfranchisement levelled against them, and coming back to throw the cheaters out of office.

In 2006, all across the country, people of good conscience came out in droves, and despite thousands and thousands of incidents of disenfranchisement and vote fraud, managed to send a clear message, that we are not taking it any more.

Our leader, Congressman John Conyers, can now lead the House Judiciary Committee, instead of having to run shadow hearings because Republican members failed to honor their oaths.

I salute the people of Ohio and am proud to be your friend.

I salute the voting rights activists of Ohio, who never gave up.

I salute the people of America, for taking us back a step from the brink.

I remind all of us that despite our celebration of this great victory, our next step is to return to the ramparts to resume our watch, for it is only through “eternal vigilance” that we can keep the precious flame of democracy alive.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

GUEST COMMENTARY



# How To Get More People To Vote

One result is clear from the recent mid-term election: More people could have voted. After every election, we are chided for our poor turnout. We're reminded by the scolding pundits that we are supposed to be the greatest democracy in the world, yet so many of us don't bother to exercise democracy's greatest right. You hear various excuses like, "I had too much work to do," "I couldn't find a place to park," or "A year ago, I borrowed a ladder from my neighbor and I didn't want to run into him." While I would never sit in judgment of people who have such legitimate excuses, I do have some suggestions that might help get a bigger voter turnout next time.

**CASH INCENTIVE** — Before getting to my suggestions, I have to mention that a cash incentive to get more voters to vote was actually on the Arizona ballot in the election. A "voters' lottery" was proposed in which one lucky Arizona voter would get a million dollars every time there is a major election. According to the proposal, this money would have come out of leftover cash from the Arizona state lottery. Voters rejected this proposal, but they haven't had a chance to vote on my suggestions yet.

Cash as an incentive bothers me somewhat, but I'm not against offering some non-cash incentives:

**A NATIONAL HOLIDAY** — When I was growing up in Chicago, Election Day was always a school holiday. Students, teachers, and administrators did not have to go to school on that day. Those adults who worked in schools had no excuse for not voting. And making Election Day a holiday made the day feel more special to everyone. So, I propose that all major Election Days be paid national holidays.

Let's treat Election Day with at least the same importance that we treat "President's Day" — an artificial holiday that many people can't tell you what it celebrates or when it is.

**VOTER VIDEOS** — You know those inexpensive video cameras that some people have on top of their



## Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

computers so they can show relatives pictures of their new baby or their new haircut? I propose that one of these cameras be placed in each voting booth. The voter would have the option of turning the camera on or off. Voters who decide to put it on, would have two minutes to express their feelings about the election, the candidates, or anything else they want to talk about. These videos will be shown on public access TV and/or the Internet. So, if some people aren't that excited about voting because of the choices that are being offered, they can go to the polls primarily to express this dissatisfaction, and while they're there, they might as well vote.

**FREE FOOD** — There should be free food at every polling place, paid for by the political parties involved in the election. Music should be played there, too. In other words, why not make voting fun? Once we hear the results of the election, there's a chance we'll be depressed, so why not at least enjoy the voting process?

**LET HARD-WORKING UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS VOTE** — just kidding. I wanted to see if you're still paying attention.

**SPECIAL LANES AND LINES FOR VOTERS** — We could reward those who vote by allowing them to drive in the express or "carpool" lanes on freeways and highways.

The express lane reward can be used in other areas, too. If you vote, you automatically get to be served first in restaurants, you get to go to the front of the line in the grocery store and — here's the big one — you get to be seen before nonvoters at the doctor's office.

**LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN** — Schools could encourage kids to participate in a "Go To The Polls With Your Parents" program. This way, parents would have to explain to their children why they're too busy or

just don't feel like voting. Maybe a disappointed child, a tantrum or two, or cries of, "But then I won't get to wear a sticker at school tomorrow" will shame some people into voting.

Obviously, it's too bad that we even have to talk about ways to get more people to vote — especially when some people consider the solution so simple. They

suggest that there would be a better turnout if Americans simply had better choices to vote for and if we all felt that our vote really mattered in determining what our lives will be like. Unfortunately, that situation is probably less likely to come true than express lanes for voters.

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](mailto:lloydgarver@yahoo.com)

## Prison: The Choice Of New Criminals

Less Costly Alternatives Should Be Used For Effective Punishment

By Marc A. Levin

SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Who would voluntarily choose to go to prison? It turns out quite a few people.

On Oct. 11, a Columbus, Ohio, man robbed a bank for the sole purpose of going to prison. The Associated Press reported that Timothy Bowers entered the bank and handed a teller a note demanding cash in an envelope. The teller gave him four \$20 bills and pushed a silent alarm. Bowers then handed the money to a security guard standing in the lobby and told him it was his day to be a hero.

Bowers asked Judge Angela White for a three-year prison sentence and she obliged. Bowers, who is 63, reasoned that prison was easier than working, claiming, "At my age, the jobs available to me are minimum-wage jobs."

Bowers isn't alone. The Houston Chronicle reported in September that 43 percent of the city's drunk drivers are choosing prison over probation. These offenders attribute their decision to probation terms that are up to 10 years (the longest in the country), onerous probation conditions and fees, and the prospect of being revoked to prison for 2.5 years simply for technical violations of probation, such as missing a meeting.

While drunk drivers and bank robbers may prefer prison, it is a raw deal for taxpayers. Probation costs about \$2 a day, half of which is paid with offender fees. Meanwhile, prison in Texas costs \$40 a day. Moreover, legislators will be asked to appropriate more than \$400 million for three new

prisons when they meet in January. Prisoners are the only Americans with a constitutional right to health care and square meals.



Marc A. Levin

There are several solutions to this quandary. Prison can be toughened, but the Constitution's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment has been broadly interpreted to preclude painful punishments. Intense manual labor programs are constitutional and could make prison more of a deterrent, but with Texas short 2,000 to 3,000 prison guards, supervision resources needed to run work programs are scarce.

Given that Bowers is 63, his case also raises the issue of geriatric prisoners. Inmates over 60 cost Texas more than three times other prisoners for health care, but have a recidivism rate that is less than a third of younger inmates. Prisoners are not eligible for Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security, so state taxpayers bear the full cost of their health care. However, parolees can qualify for such benefits, even if they must live in a residential facility as a condition of parole.

Texas has a special needs program intended to release prisoners who are so old or frail that they pose little danger, but the program's requirements are so strict that less than six percent of eligible offenders — 167 out of 2,821 — are actually released. The Comptroller's office has recommended changing the requirement that inmates must be within six months of death to twelve months. More than 100 inmates die every year during the lengthy special needs application process. There are about 200 physically handicapped pris-

oners alone, mostly paraplegics and multiple-limb amputees.

We must also bolster programs such as probation that provide an alternative to prison for the least serious offenders.

Probation should be reformed so that it is a path to success, not a trap that leads offenders to select prison. House Corrections Chairman Jerry Madden (R-Plano) will reintroduce probation reform legislation next session that would reduce maximum probation terms to five years for most offenders, and increase the use of progressive sanctions. Progressive sanctions minimize prison revocations through measured responses to each technical violation, such as increased reporting, a curfew, drug treatment, or even a night in county jail.

Probation officers should also be empowered to impose these sanctions without going to the judge. Too often, judges are overriding officers' recommendation for a change in conditions, such as treatment for a failed drug test, and simply revoking the probationer to prison.

It is time to reexamine the effectiveness of prison as a deterrent and make better use of alternatives such as probation and parole for nonviolent and infirm offenders. Then we can stop criminals like Bowers from breaking the bank.

Marc A. Levin, Esq. is the director of the Center for Effective Justice at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-profit research institute based in Austin. He can be contacted at [mlevin@texaspolicy.com](mailto:mlevin@texaspolicy.com).

GUEST COMMENTARY



# A Jury Of Your Peers Could Include A Dead Cockapoo

It's time once again for us to answer a nagging question first raised in 1998 by a woman who

sued McDonald's after tragically burning her chin on a hot

pickle slice:

How do we balance the Scales of Justice when one side has more nuts?

I say this because of a lawsuit filed against Burger King, Wendy's, KFC and (of course) McDonald's, on behalf of Mr. Caesar Barber, whose lawyer claims that they unjustly "sold his client food that made him obese." This is a little like Hannibal Lecter giving up meat, then suing the North American Vegetarian Society after choking on a Tofu Burger. It's these kinds of cases that illustrate exactly what our judicial system desperately needs: Man-eating judges.

**Judge:** *I see here that you would like to sue the Dairy Farmers of America for the mental anguish and emotional distress you suffered after accidentally spitting a mouthful of sour milk into a pan of hot bacon grease.*

**Plaintiff:** *Yes, your honor. It was very frightening.*

**Judge:** *Was anyone hurt?*

**Plaintiff:** *No. But I can't even look at buttermilk gravy anymore.*

**Judge:** *I see. You do understand that you could tie up the courts indefinitely.*

**Plaintiff:** *But my lawyer says I could get \$1 million.*

**Judge:** *Let's bring him in; we can discuss the rest over some fava beans and a nice bottle of chi-a-a-anti...*

If there was some type of consequence for people who initiate stupid lawsuits—such as being eaten alive by a maniacal, cannibalistic judge—then we might see a drop in the population of those cases.

Or at least in the population of lawyers—which couldn't hurt.

Let's face it. Stupid lawsuits are the reason a lot of people are becoming less and less willing to serve as jurists. For example, a study conducted in California found that only 9 percent of the



**Life Is A Funny Place**

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

4.4 million people summoned for jury duty in Los Angeles County last year actually elected to become part of the judicial process. This, of course, doesn't include those who became part of the process after fingerprinting.

In all fairness, I should mention that not every potential juror would've qualified for duty anyway. That's because there are very strict guidelines when it comes to the initial phase of the jury selection process—the first of which is that you actually have to be alive in order to render a verdict. It may sound a little nit-picky, but this is a requirement in every state, except South Carolina, where being alive isn't even required of its senators.

In spite of these stringent guidelines, a report commissioned by the American Tort Reform Association discovered that, in its desperation, Los Angeles County not only summoned dead people for jury duty, but also people's pets. As shocking as this sounds, there is some good news in that none of these pets were dead.

The truth is, the only way to increase participation in the jury process is to restore the respectability of the judicial system by eliminating stupid lawsuits that waste everybody's time.

The fastest way to do that, of course, would be to require the people who file them to serve as jurors.

(You can write to Ned Hickson the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439, or visit his website at [www.nedhickson.net](http://www.nedhickson.net))

## Halloween '06

Once again, Halloween has come and gone. Another year, another pumpkin I bought and we never had time to carve into a Jack O' Lantern.

Zack told me a few years ago that he had never carved a pumpkin when he was a kid. I couldn't believe he'd missed out on such an important rite of passage and ritual of American Childhood. So every year since this horrifying discovery, I've dutifully purchased a pumpkin with the optimistic intention of initiating him into the joys of scooping out pumpkin guts and creative feature sculpting. And each year we never get around to it. I'll try again in 2007.

This year, we went to a couple of Halloween parties the weekend before the big day. I've noticed that lately Halloween (for adult partygoers, and I use the term "adult" rather generously) seems to have evolved into an excuse for young women to wear provocative costumes and for some men to get outrageous and imaginative (those that don't opt to go easy in the form of cowboys, hunters in camo, or hobos, stuff they already have in their closets. That's really sort of like cheating). It's all in fun, and even in ancient civilizations, there were many holidays throughout the year when folks could throw caution to the winds with little or no repercussion and let off a little steam. The most outrageous behavior was either forgiven or in some cases encouraged. I doubt it does much harm. Most average weekend college parties are surely a lot wilder than adult Halloween parties.

Somehow when Halloween falls on a weekday evening, it isn't quite as magical. Even if you needn't get up early for school the next day, it isn't the same. (Most of us have to go to work, even worse! And although our parents don't set a bedtime for us now, we're usually grateful to hit those pillows at a reasonable hour on a weeknight). And also, when one's kids are grown and gone, the holiday doesn't hold the same level of excitement. I suppose this is why God invented grandchildren, but I don't have those yet, so I'm sort of betwixt and be-

tween. I went a few times downtown to see all the costumes, but not having my own kids here made me a little sad. And they're all grown up now. They still dress up and have a great time at Halloween, but in Coconut Grove or South Beach where the costumes are more sophisticated like those at Carnivale in Rio, Fantasy Fest in Key West, or Mardi Gras the way it was in New Orleans, definitely not a little kid holiday.

When one lives in the country, far from city lights — even far away from the road (which has no street lights) — it seems a bit silly to decorate. The cows don't appreciate such efforts, although there was that one year when Big Bag broke through a fence to eat my Halloween/ fall vignette. She knocked over the pumpkins and tore into the square bales of hay and decorative corn. I learned my lesson after that.

This year, the one pumpkin that didn't get carved was my only decorating effort. No trick-or-treaters are likely to make the long trek onto a ranch property in search of a few pieces of candy, I figured. I mean, the only way anyone would approach this place or any like it at night would probably be on a dare.

In all the years since I returned, no one has visited here on All Hallows Eve. —Talk about scary. I know I'd never approach an old farmhouse at the end of a long, dark, dusty road with critter eyes shining all around. So after years of buying candy and treating hundreds of little kids in Florida, upon my return to Texas, I sort of retired from Halloween. It's saved me a small fortune.

We had just crossed over to Daylight Savings time a few days earlier, and our internal clocks were somewhat disturbed. It seemed later than it was, and we were fading fast. Halloween or no Halloween, we were heading to bed early. This year, we were surprised about 7:30 p.m. on Halloween night by the dulcet tones of Stinky's unmistakable, high-pitched, Blue Heeler bark, one of the most excruciating, annoying sounds on the planet. You'd think that upon hearing that ear-splitting sound, any

## Rustic Ramblings

By Dr. Gene Ellis



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

would-be intruder would immediately turn tail and run, frightened by the bark instead of worried about the bite.

Stinky's better than a doorbell and provides a lot more time to prepare for visitors. He announces anything that crosses the first cattle guard about an eighth of a mile away! We couldn't believe it. What fool was headed our way unannounced, uninvited, and with two "Posted Keep Out" signs clearly visible at the front gate? We're surprised when this happens in daylight, but after dark, it's almost unheard of.

After all this time, it seemed we were to be visited by a trick-or-treater at last. —And me without a bag of Tootsie Rolls! Would I be forced to relinquish one of my precious Ghiardelli dark chocolate squares? —The same ones I must drive all the way into Waco to purchase? Heaven forbid!

Then it occurred to us that someone might be up to some mischief, and when Zack went to the door, he was prepared. A van pulled up. Certainly this wasn't some church or school group taking kids around the countryside for trick-or-treating! How crazy would that be? —Certainly not a group from one of the retirement facilities reliving their childhoods! Either would be foolhardy. It was so dark we couldn't make out the writing on the side of the van.

Our trick-or-treater turned out to be the Fed Ex man working late. He said he had at least two more hours of deliveries to make. I had to wonder how many times Fed Ex men from Maine to California have been shot by surprised early-to-bed farmers out in the sticks on Halloween night. I think I just might write a note to Fed Ex HQ suggesting that they curtail their Halloween deliveries at sundown from now on, for the safety of their drivers.

So our only trick-or-treater in five years has been the Fed Ex Delivery man. I should have offered him the Ghiardelli, just for his dedication in the face of certain danger. I hope you all had a nice Halloween.

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# Unity of Contradictions

## The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



democracy movement already underway in Iran because the majority of the Iranians there would come together to defend their nation from foreign occupation or economic sanctions — not unlike how Americans rallied after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

This scenario would happen even though Iranians have suffered under the current Islamic regime, Abadi added, noting that a course in which the Iranian people were free to choose their own fate would be a better policy.

If not, a U.S. occupation of Iran would be far worse than what has been seen in Iraq for the last three years since Iran is more populated than Iraq. Before the war, Iraq's population was at 26 million. The last Iranian census found 60 million people living in the republic in 1996.

Cornett, who initially came to the United States in 1975 as a college student, said that it is difficult for foreign forces to split the Iranian people along religious and ethnic lines because the culture as a whole there has valued its diversity for over 2,000 years. She blames the country's current internal conflicts



**FREEDOM FOR IRANIANS** — Hadi Jawad, co-founder of the Crawford Peace House, (from left) and Bijan Abadi and Mehri Cornett, members of Iranians for Peace and Justice, at the Crawford Peace House on Election Day held a press conference on the rising tensions between the U.S. and Iranian government, — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

on a small faction of religious fundamentalists running the Iranian government.

"After the revolution in 1980, I thought everything was going to be fine. I lived in Iran for five years, and things got really bad. It really wasn't what we revolutioned for: It was a very hard time for women, for intellectuals, for anyone who was of different thinking from Islamic Republic," she said.

Cornett said that she participated in the revolution to remove

the Iranian monarchy in the late 1970s, but after her sister was killed in a peaceful demonstration in front of an Iranian university in 1986, she "couldn't take it any more" and returned to America. Most of her immediate relatives live in North America now, and she operates two businesses in Grand Prairie, she said.

Abadi said he came to the United States almost 30 years ago also as a student and decided to become a U.S. citizen after reading the U.S. Constitution.

"The Constitution is something that we really ought to start using again," said the father of two teenagers. "As a citizen of the United States, I have a Constitutional obligation to correct my government."

Abadi said that because of their relative security, the majority of the Iranian-born U.S. citizens residing here have stayed quiet about the tension between the U.S. and Iranian governments. But more of them like him are speaking out since their relatives in Iran are caught in the middle.

Iranians for Peace and Justice is experiencing more growth with chapters opening around the country, Abadi said, but the truth is, organizations like it are at least a decade-behind in their efforts to organize with the peace groups already established in the United States. Drowning out the horns of war beginning to blow through the corporate U.S. media also remains difficult, he said.

As Abadi explained: "Being against the regime in Iran and the current administration in the U.S. really puts us in IPJ in a really hard position because as soon as you start talking about the freedom, then 'Oh, you are pro-Bush.' No, no, no. We're talking about the real freedom. We're talking about the self-determination. We're talking about the freedom of religion. We're talking about the suppression of church in politics. 'Oh, so you're pro-Iranian government.' No, no, no. It's extremely

hard for us to communicate, and we are trying to make people understand that we are independent and we really care about the people."

Cornett added that she believes that sooner or later the people of Iran — most of whom are under the age of 25 and prefer the Western-style culture and beliefs — will remove their leaders from power because they will refuse to abide by the strict Islamic laws imposed on them from the government.

"I don't remember America going to any country and made it good. Iraq neither. Yeah, Islamic Republic is not good, but if you're America going over there, it's going to be much, much worse," she said.

Abadi said that the people of Iran are wise to the myriad of foreign strategies working hand-in-hand to divide their country and dissolve their sovereign government.

No clear plan, such as one for Americans, Israelis, nor other countries and non-governmental organizations. Though one may turn up in the near future, it will be hard to implement since even the ethnic groups such as the Turkish want to remain loyal to the Iranian nation, they noted.

"I don't think any country can do this separation. This policy is dead from the first place," said Cornett. "Maybe there are some people who want separation, but those are in the minority. It's not the majority of the Turkish. With the Kurdish, it's the same thing. When you talk to these people, they say, 'No, we don't want to be separated from Iran. They want to stay in Iran, but they want their own freedom.'"

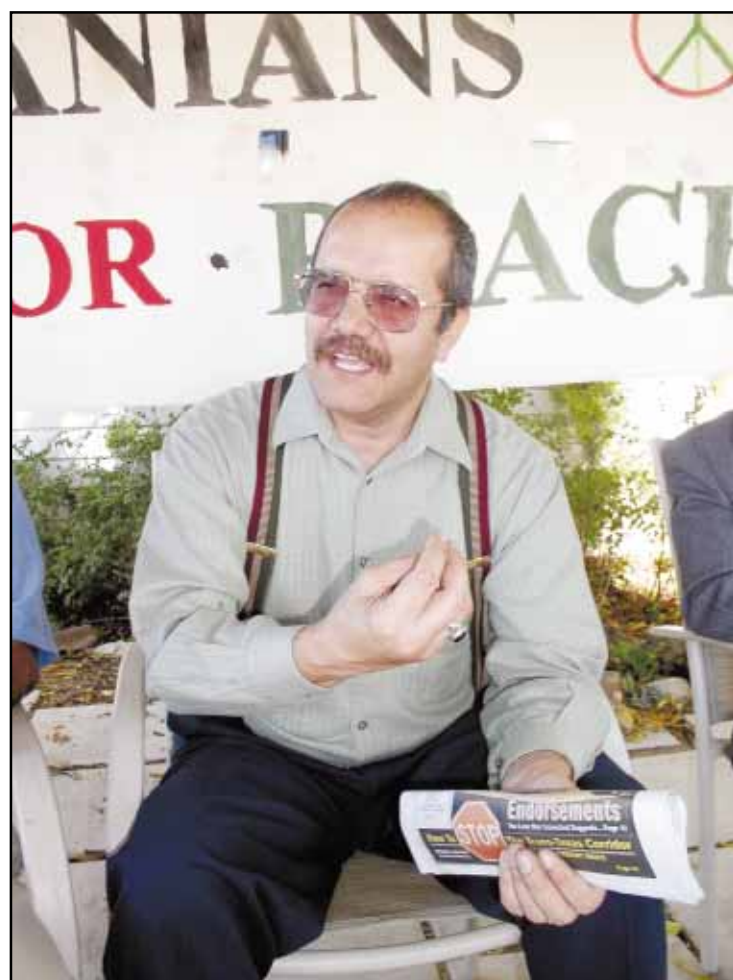
"Iran is the unity of contradictions, which makes it really beautiful, because for more than 2,000 years they stick to each other just because of this contradiction," said Abadi. "We are really proud that our race is not pure, honestly. Everybody who came learned from us and we also learned from them. This is the whole beauty of the society."

### INFO

Iranians For Peace & Justice  
www.iranians4pj.org



**MEHRI CORNETT**, a member of Iranians for Peace and Justice, spoke at the Crawford Peace House on Election Day last week. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow



**BIJAN ABADI**, a member of Iranians for Peace and Justice, spoke at the Crawford Peace House on Election Day last week. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Iranian-Americans that value peace in the Middle East are taking no chances with the Bush administration and its policies toward Iran, even though the Democratic Party took control of Congress last week.

Two members of Iranians for Peace & Justice joined representatives of the Crawford Peace House on Election Day in Crawford to express their alarm at four major U.S. carrier forces playing war games near the Iranian coast line in the Persian Gulf.

For months leading up to the mid-term election, the Bush administration's spin machine went into high gear, painting the Islamic Republic of Iran into a threat to U.S. national security. Though he has tried to backpeddle some, President George W. Bush is still haunted by his inclusion of Iran in the so-called "Axis of Evil" in his State of the Union Address on Jan. 29, 2002.

But while the administration claims that Iran is seeking to create nuclear weapons, Iran has maintained that its nuclear ambitions are centered around civilian use only. At the same time, both Mehri Cornett and Bijan Abadi, members of Iranians for Peace and Justice, said that although the current Iranian regime is awful, they fear that the administration is lying to the American people and the approval of the U.S. media as they had leading up to the Iraq War three years ago.

"It was weapon of mass destruction in Iraq then, and it is the mushroom cloud for Iran now," said Cornett, a small-business owner living in Irving. "No U.N. reports suggest that Iran has weapons of mass destruction, and no U.N. report is suggesting that Iran is in the midst of building an atomic bomb now."

Hadi Jawad, co-founder of the Crawford Peace House, pointed out that the change in U.S. policy toward nuclear weapons, which allows the U.S. military to use so-called "usable nukes" in case a direct threat occurs to U.S. interests in the region, should be the real cause for alarm.

"We are very afraid that this regime will seek to redefine even the term 'lame-duck presidency,'" said Jawad. "We don't take this regime for granted. We think this is a radical regime bent on death and destruction, doing as much damage as they possibly can in the term they have in office."

The use of nuclear weapons on Iran would not only be devastating to Iran but also its neighboring countries, they said.

"We want a nuclear-free planet, especially in the Middle East, and have the same standard in all the countries including the nuclear issue," said Abadi, 48, a computer scientist living in Plano.

The effect of U.S. aggression on Iran, as Cornett explained, would be a setback for the fledgling pro-