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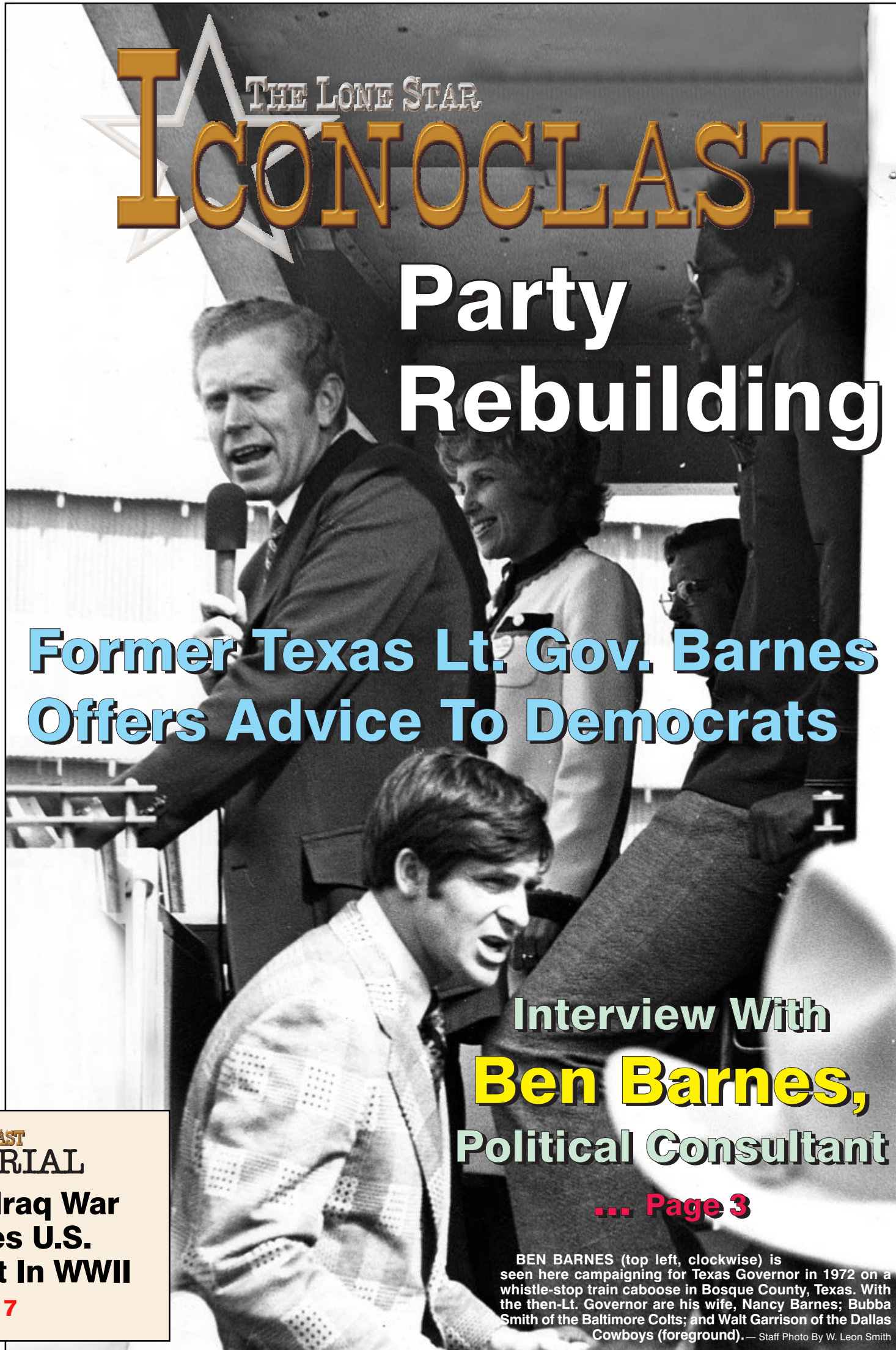
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BEN BARNES (top left, clockwise) is seen here campaigning for Texas Governor in 1972 on a whistle-stop train caboose in Bosque County, Texas. With the then-Lt. Governor are his wife, Nancy Barnes; Bubba Smith of the Baltimore Colts; and Walt Garrison of the Dallas Cowboys (foreground). — Staff Photo By W. Leon Smith

# Oaxacan Schools Open, People's Struggle Continues

OAXACA, Mexico — Mexican government officials declared schools in city of Oaxaca officially open two weeks ago, but the six-month popular social movement sparked by a teacher's strike there is still going strong.

The protesters — consisting of trade unionists, students, teachers, and indigenous groups — are demanding that the state Gov. Ulises Ruiz resign his office immediately for alleged election fraud and political corruption within his administration.

Gov. Ruiz, however, has refused calls to relinquish power from not only the Popular People's Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO) but also from members within his own party, the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI). "The only one who can dismiss and impose governors is God," he told Christian seminararians in Juchitan de Zaragoza on Nov. 18.

Mexican President Vicente Fox, whose term expires on Dec. 1, has turned down opportunities to remove Ruiz on principal, noting that he would not follow the corrupt examples of past PRI presidents that have ousted unpopular governors. Ruiz has until 2010 before his next regular election bid.

The election of President Fox in 2000 put a damper on PRI's

71-year power hold over Mexico, except for the nation's poorest state — Oaxaca — where 3.5 million people have no electricity nor roadways.

Last May, teachers went on strike over salaries and working conditions, but though terms between them and state education officials were made on Oct. 26, only 350 of the 2,500 citywide public schools opened to receive students on Thursday, Nov. 16. Overall, it is estimated that 1.3 million children have lost hundreds of hours of schooling due to the strike.

Teachers refusing to end their strike and parents angry at the dissatisfied educators were reasons the state officials cited for the lack of open schools. The teachers say, though, that they shied away from the schools over fears of pro-government gunmen assaulting them.

The APPO spokespeople and the Mexican League for Human Rights Defense in Oaxaca alleged last week that at least 30 APPO protesters were abducted or went missing in the last two weeks.

"Like torture, disappearances are a part of state terrorism against social movements," said Florentino López, an APPO spokesperson.

In response to the Other Campaigns' call, Americans from San Francisco, Calif., to Milwau-

kee, Wis., to Boston, Mass., to Gainesville, Fla., to El Paso, Texas committed acts of non-violent consciousness raising on Nov. 20. Participants marched, displayed banners over highways, staged mock barricades, and handed out information in solidarity with the people of Oaxaca and in memory of the late New York Indy Media Center journalist Brad Will who was shot dead while working among the Oaxacan resistance last month.

The APPO organizers say that they have created structures with their movement in order to make sure its coalition remains cohesive to move its democratic project forward. By joining the APPO with 50-plus

national organizations, the Popular Assembly of the Mexican People (APPM) intends to fight against the "ultra-right" ruling faction of the country. Earlier this month, APPO went so far as to call a Constitutive Congress to define rules and objectives of its organization.

In a move to show that APPO remains active, a few of its members briefly took over a radio station in the capital city last Wednesday to broadcast information regarding a weekend march on ground the organizers used as a base of operations before Fox's federal police seized it last month.

The Ley 710 radio station is one of 10 private stations in which APPO members had con-

trolled for three months over the summer. The 10 stations were later released, though eight of them have not gone back on the air due to threats APPO would control them again. APPO still retains control of a radio station at a local university which serves as its headquarters. Other broadcasts to APPO supporters are made through make-shift pirate radio station.

APPO said that it would occupy government offices and surround the Oaxaca capital to pressure the federal police from the area over the weekend. The State Forum of the Indigenous People is to occur Nov. 28-29. A national movement against the new Mexican President Felipe Calderon is scheduled for Dec. 1.

## Opposition Grows Against 'Assassination School' — At Least 13 Arrested At Georgia Military Base —

COLUMBUS, Ohio — At least 13 people were arrested and are likely to face six months in federal prison for crossing onto the military base at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The 17th annual protest against the combat-training school for Latin American soldiers known as the "assassination school" gathered a record number of people — 22,000 — from every corner of the United States.

Over the last 16 years, 211 people spent time in jail — some

up to two years — for participating in civil disobedience there. This year, survivors of torture inflicted by the school's graduates in Latin America returned during a symbolic funeral procession outside Fort Benning.

The increase in public participation to close the school has been attributed to the resumption of the activities there and the acceptance of pro-torture legislation by the Bush Administration.

Due to pressure on Congress, the "School of the Americas" almost closed earlier this year, but it reopened and had its name changed to the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation." However, 34 representatives who opposed the closure lost their seats in mid-

term elections earlier this month.

The school has lost support in Latin America. The governments of Argentina, Uruguay, and Venezuela have all recently announced that they would stop sending their soldiers to train there. Protests against the school were held simultaneously in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay and Peru the weekend of Nov. 18.

The popularity of the 60-year-old school dropped significantly in 1996 when training manuals used at the school were released. The manuals gave instructions on who to torture, extort and execute people. No independent investigation into the complex has been performed.

# IFCO/Pastors for Peace Reschedules Caravan

CRAWFORD — The Pastors for Peace ministry of the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) has postponed its November trip to deliver aid to the Mexican state of Chiapas.

The Crawford Peace House will be storing previously donated medical and educational supplies until the caravan resumes in early January.

Pastors for Peace is still requesting monetary donations in a "Campaign for Corn" to help displaced communities in Chiapas.

The donations will aid in the purchase of bulk quantities of corn, beans, rice, and cooking oil from local cooperatives in Chiapas and their delivery them to indigenous communities throughout zones of conflict

where hunger and malnutrition are widespread.

To offer a donation, schedule a drop off, or pick up of supplies, contact the Crawford Peace House by phone at (254) 486-0099 or (254) 853-9388.

For more information on the "Campaign for Corn," visit IFCO/Pastors for Peace website.

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# Party Rebuilding

## Former Texas Lt. Gov. Barnes Offers Advice To Democrats

By NATHAN DIEBENOW  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AUSTIN — Ben Barnes has seen the Texas and national Democratic Parties during the height of political power only to slip away from public favor over the last 33 years.

At one time, the farm boy from Comanche County, Texas was being groomed to be a Democratic contender for President of the United States, but those aspirations were laid to waste in the aftermath of the Sharpstown stock fraud scandal in the early 1970s.

After working his way up through the political ranks to become Lt. Governor — arguably the most powerful position in Texas government next to Speaker of the House — Barnes and every one of the incumbent Democrats holding statewide office felt the political heat of the scandal.

The scandal itself involved state officials who turned a quick buck as a result of a bank-financed stock purchase given in return for legislation passed in favor of Houston businessman Frank W. Sharp.

Though he himself was not indicted nor convicted in the scandal, Barnes's career in electoral politics ended when he lost his bid for Texas governor in 1972.

Barnes blames Republican President Richard Nixon for hastening the demise of his political life since the rising star in the Democratic Party, as Barnes was, made him a prime target.

During his time in public office, Barnes advanced quickly under the political tutelage of Lyndon B. Johnson and John Connally. At 21, with grassroots campaigning, he won his first election to become a state representative. By 1963, he had become chairman of the Rules Committee. In 1965, he was recognized as one of the "Ten Outstanding Young Men in America" by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Also, in 1965, Barnes became the youngest Speaker of the House in Texas, serving in that capacity for four years until he successfully ran for lieutenant

### Interview With Ben Barnes, Political Consultant

governor in 1969.

Since Sharpstown, Barnes has re-emerged in the media spotlight from time to time, and has kept his ties to the Democratic Party establishment. He made and lost money in real estate in the 1970s and '80s. In the 1990s, he became a successful lobbyist, business executive, and civil leader.

His most notable clients, partners, and/or bosses have included SBC Communications, American Airlines, Dallas Bank and Trust, Grumman Systems Support Corporation, Laredo National Bank, the Barnes/Connally Partnership, and GTECH Corporation.

Barnes has also generously donated to Democratic Party causes and, through the Ben Barnes Group, helped companies and special interest groups work with Democratic officeholders.

Prior to then-Gov. George W. Bush's first campaign for U.S. president in 1999, Barnes told reporters that he had helped the rich, 19-year-old congressman's son into the Texas Air National Guard to avoid service in the Vietnam conflict. Barnes confessed the same story while campaigning for fellow Democrat John F. Kerry in the Massachusetts senator's bid for president in 2004.

Earlier this year, Bright Sky Press published Barnes' book *Barn Burning: Building Tales of a Political Life, From LBJ to George W. Bush and Beyond*. The book not only tells of Barnes' trip through Texas politics but also gives advice and perspective to the next generation of politically-minded Texans.

Days before the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the LONE STAR ICONOCLAST'S Nathan

Diebenow spoke with Barnes over the phone about his role in planning the president's ill-fated trip to Dallas in November 1963, the decline of the Texas Democratic Party, and the effects of the 2006 mid-term elections.

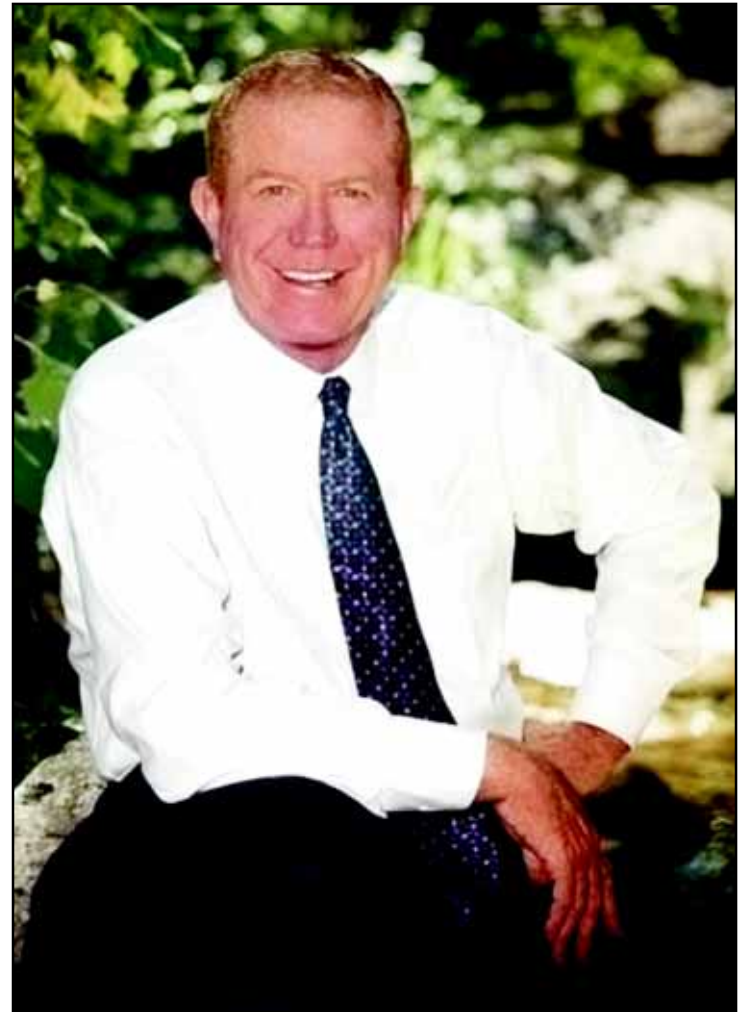
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ICONOCLAST: What was your day like the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated?

BEN BARNES: I had been working on President Kennedy's trip to Texas for some time, probably 60 to 70 days. The day before, Kennedy had been in Houston and San Antonio, then he had spoken in Fort Worth on the morning of the assassination.

My day was very full because I was planning the event. The trip was going to be finished off with a huge gala in Austin, held in Palmer Auditorium preceded by a reception at the governor's mansion. We decided to divide the Legislature because there's 181 members of the House and Senate. We decided to have two receptions, one for one hour and the second one for an hour, and they would go from 5:30 to 6:30 and 6:30 to 7:30. I had planned those.

I was having lunch with Bill Moyers and Frank Irwin at the 40 Acres Club in Austin when Moyers received the call from the Secret Service that Kennedy and Connally had been shot. I — almost simultaneously before Bill Moyers could get back to the table — received a call from the Department of Public Safety telling me exactly the same thing.

Unfortunately, at that time, the Department of Public Safety told me that they thought that President Kennedy was dead and that John Connally was not expected to live, so it was a shat-



Ben Barnes

tering message. It just kind of took the wind out — the air out of my lungs. It was hard to think and hard to realize that something like that had happened and something that I had been a part of planning.

It was so unreal. It was like it was a bad dream, but I immediately got in my car and took Bill Moyers to the airport. I called Col. Garrison's office, the commander of our state troopers, before we left the 40 Acres Club, and asked him if we had an airplane that we could take to Moyers to Love Field where Airforce One was parked. Johnson had told the Secret Service to get Bill Moyers there.

Fortunately, the Department of Public Safety kept their airplane just a few hundred yards at the Austin airport from this flight service. From the time we got to the airport, they had the Sesna airplane that the Department of Public Safety owned with the props turning, and I opened the car door and Moyers made a run to the plane. The plane took off. Moyers actually

got to Dallas, and got there for Johnson's swearing in because it took Johnson some time to go from Parkland Hospital to Love Field and get ready for the swearing in, and we've all seen that famous photograph of Johnson being sworn in on Air Force One with Jacqueline Kennedy in the photograph. They waited for the body from Parkland to be put on Air Force One. Johnson wanted Mrs. Kennedy there when he took the oath of office.

Then of course, the Connally children had to be notified. We had to start — it was so much confusion. Some of it is so vivid to me now, and some of it is still just a blur, but we had all these hundreds of people in town, really thousands of people in town to go to this gala, and so Speaker Brian Tunnel who was devastated — he had been on the airplane with Kennedy the day before — he said, "We should do something. What are we going to do with all these people?"

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So we came up with the idea of having prayer service in the House chamber. We didn't have the computer-era in which we live in today, so I put some programs together. We actually had a mimeograph machine, and we mimeographed those programs for the prayer service, and I called Homer Thornberry and Jay Pickle and asked them both to speak. We filled up the House gallery and the House floor that night with a prayer service and memorialized President Kennedy and prayed for Gov. Connally's health.

ICONOCLAST: Is it still difficult for you to revisit those places where you were that day?

BARNES: Oh, yes, it is, and it's still very difficult to think about the little things that play such a significant role. You know we had a long running argument about whether to have the parade in Dallas. Gov. Connally did not want the parade. Neither did Johnson. We argued a lot with the Kennedy people and with other people that were planning the event. Sen. (Ralph) Yarborough — and this is not criticism of Sen. Yarborough as a senator — but he thought it was a terrible mistake for Kennedy to come to Dallas and not be seen by the public.

Well, it just really didn't work out in the schedule to have the parade in Dallas because Nellie Connally was very, very unhappy about the fact that Jacqueline, if we had the parade, was going to get to the Driscoll Hotel where they were staying that night and have 20 minutes to freshen up after she had been going all day. The parade was something that we had finally agreed to at the last minute, and I think that if we had argued more and said, "No, we're not going to do it." we might not have had the parade, and President Kennedy's life would have been spared.

Also, another interesting thing happened. It was raining in Fort Worth, but it cleared off. Air Force One was going to Dallas, so they took the bubble off the car. If they had not taken the bubble off the car, the bubble would have deflected Oswald's bullets that hit President Kennedy and Gov. Connally.

So so many of the little things. Life is kind of full of experiences like that. Sometimes it's not the big things that have such a big impact on history. It's the little things — the roof on the limosine, and the argument

about the parade, and I will go to my grave wondering and worrying, "What if? What if?"

ICONOCLAST: Well, what do you think of all conspiracy theories and films devoted to the Kennedy assassination?

BARNES: President Johnson was very determined to make certain that every rock was turned over and that everything was looked at that could possibly happen in the conspiracy theories. Earl Warren was certainly no friend of Lyndon Johnson, and he turned down the commission, and Johnson just made him take it.

You know Gerald Ford is the only living member — you know it's amazing. I look back, and I'm the only guy from the Texas standpoint that worked on the planning that is still alive who worked for Kennedy and Johnson, but Gerald Ford is not only the oldest living president, he's the only surviving member of the Warren Commission, and he feels like the Warren Commission was correct in their report.

But there's still something that I will go again to my grave wondering about and that is John Connally, whom I love and respect very much, he always said that he agreed with the Warren Commission report except that there was another bullet. He didn't say that someone else fired it, and he didn't necessarily buy the grassy knoll theory with the puff of smoke on the video we've seen so much, but he said that the Warren Commission determination that the second bullet that hit Kennedy's head was not the bullet that seriously wounded Gov. Connally. He said there was a third bullet.

He has hunted all this life. He knows about gun fire, and he's been in World War II, so I always, always will wonder why that was not explained better. At the time, it didn't mean so much to me, but my curiosity will always be why the Warren Commission and Connally disagreed.

ICONOCLAST: Let me move on to the Texas Democratic Party since Kennedy.

In your book *Barn Burning, Barn Building*, you give a good sketch of the decline of the national and Texas Democratic Parties in the modern era. You note that the support from Texas Democrats in Dwight Eisenhower's presidential campaign began the split within the party which continued on through LBJ's decision to run as JFK's vice president and

then through the Nixon era with the Sharpstown scandal which so happened to mark the end of your political career.

But I want to know as a detail of Sharpstown, now that the Reagan era has passed and with it some reforms, would the stock transaction that sparked the investigations into Sharpstown be legal today?

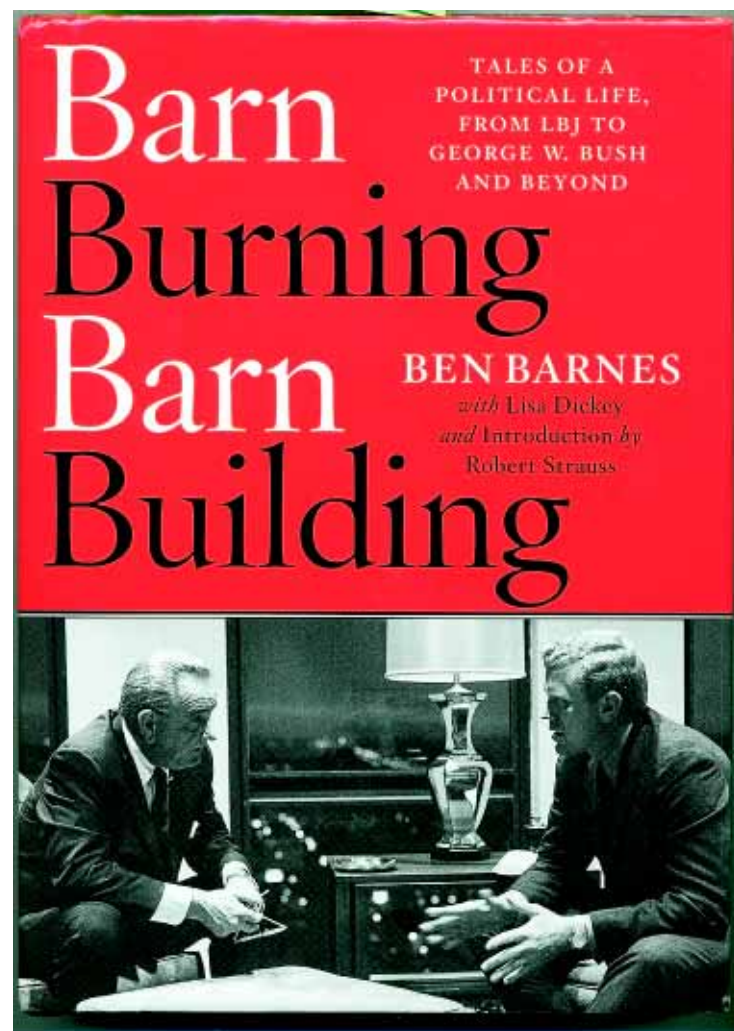
BARNES: Well, I don't think it was legal at that time, and it certainly probably would require a lot more severe punishment than what it did in 1972. Mutscher's sentence that he got in '72 was much lighter than probably what he would have gotten today. The sentences for all crimes, particularly white collar crime has become much more serious with the sentencing of the people in the Enron scandal and others.

It was not at that time a serious crime that he was convicted of because the only thing the jury ever proved was a tacit understanding between (Frank) Sharp and Mutscher, but there's no doubt about it that if it wasn't against the law then, it's against the law now.

But for the governor and the speaker and several members of the Legislature and the chairman of the Democratic Party to buy stock in a Frank Sharp company and be financed by Frank Sharp the purchase, and him arrange the sale, that's wrong. It's just blatantly wrong, and it should not have ever happened. There's no way to explain it. Whether they did anything about the legislation or not, it's wrong for somebody that's got business in the Legislature to be doing that with public officials.

I think as we saw the fallout in Sharpstown the people in Texas became convinced that their state government — and it was the Democratic Party in power then — was corrupt. They took a very broad brush, and they brushed everyone with that brush, and as a result, 65 House members lost, and every statewide candidate that had held office that year was voted out of office. Crawford Martin, Bob Calvert, Jesse James, people that had not really had anything to do with Sharpstown like myself — all their careers ended.

I think you can draw an analogy between 2000 and 2006 and 1972 on what happened nationally. I think Iraq was a very important issue, but NBC's polling showed on election day that more people's vote was influ-



enced by corruption in government than by Iraq, and consider how serious Iraq is. I think Iraq had 43 percent and corruption had 48 percent. That doesn't really surprise me. That's why several weeks before the election, I was predicting that the Democrats were going to take back the House, and the least they were going to do was tie the Senate. I said it was either going to be a tie or they were going to win. I said I think I see a real parallel developing between what happened nationally and in 1972 which I was totally caught by surprise.

ICONOCLAST: I want to move on again. I understand that you were being groomed to become President of the United States. Had Kennedy not been assassinated, had the Sharpstown scandal not happened, had a Nixon administration been averted, what would a Barnes administration have looked like?

BARNES: Oh, well, I think that's dreaming. That's very flattering, but I don't know that that would have ever happened.

But what I was trying to do, and what a lot of my friends were trying to do — a lot of Southern governors, a lot of Southern congressmen and the United States senators — a group of us had kind of banded together as brothers, and we were all working toward electing a Southerner and a Southern

governor as president. And sure enough, our plans happened. You know, Jimmy Carter won.

Jimmy Carter won probably because of Watergate, but if you think about if Kennedy had lived, we don't know what would have happened. I don't think the Civil Rights and Voting Rights (Acts) would have happened, but certainly the Democrats would have not become so unpopular in the South as they did because of Johnson, and rightly so he passed the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Act.

But you know, I think that the Democratic Party would have not lost its foothold in Texas nearly as quickly if at all, and it wouldn't have lost its foothold in the South, but Johnson and Connally both told me not one time but 100 times that you've got to keep a farm system, and after Sharpstown, we had no farm system in Texas for Democrats.

Also we allowed the one thing they said that you can't let happen in that you can't become socially unacceptable to be a Democrat. It became socially unacceptable to become a Democrat, and the Republican Party grew and grew, and you've got to understand that the Republican Party was already strong in Texas despite the fact that it was a total blue state. Texans were used to voting Republican at the national level. They

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voted for Eisenhower. It was over the Tideland issue, but they still voted for Eisenhower, and a Democratic governor left the Democratic Party to lead the state into Eisenhower's column.

John Connally had a difficult race against Jack Cox for governor in 1962, and then again in 1968 Preston Smith only beat Paul Eggers, the Republican, by 50,000 votes. Dolph Briscoe only beat Hank Grover who the Republican Party gave no money, but Briscoe only won by 40,000 or 50,000 votes, so the Republicans were knocking on the door, and John Tower was elected to take Lyndon Johnson's place, and if Lloyd Bentsen had not run in 1970, Ralph Yarborough would have been beaten by George Bush, Sr. Polls clearly showed that Bush was going to beat Yarborough if we had not gotten Bentsen to run.

So the Democratic Party was teetering on losing control of Texas as far as federal offices and as far as some statewide offices as early as 1969, '69, '70, '71, and '72. We had to have new strong leadership, and we had to keep the business community involved in the Democratic Party or Texas was going to become a red state. When that failed, Sharpstown helped speed that up, but when that happened, Texas became a Republican state, and despite the fact that Ann Richards and Mark White were elected governor.

Ann Richards — she's my dear friend — she was elected governor because I think Clayton Williams beat himself, and Mark White had an issue of the cost of natural gas, and Clements was an oil and gas man, so Mark was able to do an upset, but Texas was already rapidly becoming a Republican state, and with the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, with the assassination, with Johnson being gone because of the unpopularity of the Vietnam War, there was a lot of things that contributed to it.

But I believe if Sharpstown had not happened, I believe I would have been elected governor, and I don't know what would have happened after that. But I think the governor's office is a much better place to run for president. We saw this last campaign with John Kerry. I don't think there's any real big secret to anyone that watches politics

that are surprised that senators have a hard time getting elected president. Jack Kennedy is the only senator in modern time in the last hundred years that's got elected to the presidency.

A governor could cease the Republican nomination — i.e. Romney — and Bill Richardson or Tom Billsack — a governor could be nominated, but in all likelihood, there's going to be several United States senators in both parties that are going to be running for the presidency, but it's still difficult and the same thing that is able to happen to John Kerry happens to senators. They vote on issues, and you can prove any senator to be wishy-washy when you take the amendments, the motions to table, and all the different parliamentary events that take place on passing legislation — you can prove a senator or congressman voted for or against any bill you want to.

ICONOCLAST: I want to ask you about President George W. Bush. You claim that you helped get George W. Bush in the Texas Air National Guard, away from the Vietnam conflict. Where do you stand in the debate on impeaching the now President Bush?

BARNES: I'm not for impeaching President Bush. I think that it'd be a terrible mistake for the Democrats. The Democrats need to look at the costs of the war. They need to look at waste and if anybody was dishonest as far as corruption on selling military weapons or on construction in Iraq. There needs to be congressional oversight.

This country has so many problems. It was a serious mistake for the Republicans to try to impeach Bill Clinton. It wasted a year of our time. It didn't accomplish anything. I feel the same thing about President Bush. There shouldn't be impeachment hearings. There shouldn't be any discussion of that whatsoever. This is the most critical time in our history today, and it's absurd, and quite frankly I think it's insane for the Democrats to try to talk about impeachment. As far as I know, George Bush has done no impeachable offense.

ICONOCLAST: You raised a lot of money for Sen. John Kerry's bid for the White House

in 2004, and you served as the regional vice-chair on his campaign. Did you advise Kerry to campaign in Texas during that election cycle?

BARNES: Yes, I did. You know back in the '60s and '70s when I was involved, I always made every Democrat that I was raising money for to agree to campaign in Texas.

If you recall, Bill Clinton in his two bids, Al Gore in his bid, and John Kerry in his bid — the last 16 years that the Democratic candidate for president have raised money in Texas have not campaigned here, and as a result of that, our down-ballot offices have gotten defeated in presidential election years because what happens is when you have those campaigns and

there's not a presidential campaign, there's so many people that'll vote a straight Republican ticket. They'll just pull the lever, and it has a big impact on Democrats way down ballot when there's not a campaign encouraging people to vote for a Democratic candidate for president.

It's really helped to neuter our Democratic Party in Texas because these people have not campaigned. If I had been in charge, I would have said we're going to raise this money in Texas and John Kerry raised over \$15 million, Bill Clinton raised \$12 million to \$15 million as did Al Gore in their presidential campaigns. I'd say, "That's fine. We're going to contribute to the campaign, but there's going to be a clear agreement to have this money. It's going to be spent on your campaign, but you're going to have to run that campaign in Texas."

ICONOCLAST: What started that trend?

BARNES: What happened is this, we became a Red Country and a Blue Country, and I think it's been very unhealthy for the presidential campaign to be running in only 16 or 17 states. Republicans hadn't paid a great deal of attention to Texas because they hadn't had to. It's been a solid Red State. The Democrats hadn't had to because it's a solid Red State. They didn't think they had any reason to do that.

I think that's one of the reasons as I point out in my book that I think the number one

problem in this country is the terrible partisanship. I think what's brought about a lot of the partisanship is that the members of Congress have to keep their party happy as opposed to keep their constituents happy. You know, there's only 10 percent of the congressional districts in the United States that are competitive. Only 10 percent! And that's unbelievable.

The gerrymandering that both the Republicans and Democrats have done have caused these guys and gals to have safe seats and the only way they can get beat is get beat in the primaries. As a result, the Republican Party in particular has given the money and given the nod to the nomination, and I think that's the reason why the Republican Party has moved so far to the right because the Religious Right have provided the votes with which they can win and they've provided a lot of the money.

I think it's a very healthy thing for the Democratic Party to move back to the middle because I think that there were a lot of voters that were alienated by this very strong leaning of the right-wing and the right-wing religious element having such an important role to play in the Republican Party. I think that's the reason why a lot of people moved back and voted Democratic this time, because they didn't want the Religious Right running this country.

ICONOCLAST: I know that there were more evangelicals who voted for Democrats than for Republicans this year.

BARNES: I'll tell you something very interesting. You can answer this question for me better than I can. It was very interesting that in this election of the people between the ages of 19 and 29, about 64 percent voted Democratic this time as opposed to almost the opposite in 2004. Half the people that voted in 2004 that were young people and voted Republican voted Democratic this time. Obviously a lot of those voters were first-time voters.

We don't have a draft, but if we had had a draft, I would have said that it's like Vietnam where everybody voted against anybody that had anything to do with the war. I think that had something to do with it, but people weren't having to go to war. But it's very interesting, and I think it's healthy that the young voters in this country took a long, hard look at both parties because they got the most to gain or lose about the future of this country. You're going to be here for another 60 years, so you've got a big stake in this.

Why do you think so many more young people voted

Democratic this time?

ICONOCLAST: I think there's a little subconscious thing going on in their minds about a draft if the Republicans stay in power. I think the continuation of the Iraq war, but I also think it has to do with the economy. I think there's a lot of kids out there that know how much textbooks are worth and know how much their college tuition is, and at least in Texas, it's not looking good.

BARNES: No, it's not, and I think that's probably the number one problem that we've got in Texas. We need twice as many college graduates 10 years from now, and we're not going to have them because of the cost of education. I really think that it's a national issue. If we're going to be competitive with China, India, and the other foreign countries, our public and higher education ranks about 14th or 15th in the world today. This is just totally not acceptable. The price of college is really getting out of reach of a lot of middle class kids.

ICONOCLAST: I want to shift gears for a second back toward modern Texas politics. You supported Carole Keeton Strayhorn in her run for Texas governor. In your estimation, why did she lose and Rick Perry win?

BARNES: I don't think Carole connected with the voters. I think she had enough money to get her message out there, but it was not enough to just be against Perry. She needed more issues that were Strayhorn issues. (Democratic candidate Chris) Bell got a lot of votes because there was straight Democratic voting this time, but Carole had the money to get the message out there, and she had the experience, and I thought that she was the best alternative to Perry. She ended up not being, but the polls showed that Bell could not have won.

The only person that was in the governor's race that could beat Rick Perry was Carole Strayhorn, and she just didn't run the campaign to catch fire.

ICONOCLAST: Strayhorn and Perry aren't the only Democrats to turn Republican, but they weren't the first. Since you were so close to Gov. John Connally, can you shed some light as to what he was thinking and feeling when he switched from being an LBJ-Democrat to Nixon-Republican?

BARNES: Well, I was very disappointed, and Gov. Connally didn't talk to me about that. You know, it was something that he philosophically felt that the Democratic Party had left him. I happen to disagree with that.

Continued On Next Page

# Former Texas Lt. Gov. Barnes Offers Advice To Democrats

## From Previous Page

I don't think the way to change things is to go switch parties. It's to change your own party's attitude toward the various and sundry issues.

But you look back — Ronald Reagan was at one time a Democrat. I think even John Tower was a Democrat. Phil Gramm was a Democrat. Bill Clements before John Connally was a Democrat for governor, but you look back and see that Clayton Williams voted Democratic. Many years ago the Democrats perhaps had more appeal than the Republicans, particularly in the Southwest.

But as the parties changed, I think Connally basically switched parties because of George McGovern and the McGovern rules, and how the really anti-war people took over the Democratic Party nationally. Also I think President Nixon discussed his ability with him many times and told him he thought he could be president. That may have had a lot to do with it. Connally, and I never really talked specifically about it that was the reason he switched parties, was to be president, but I think Nixon was enamored with Connally and wanted him to be president some day.

ICONOCLAST: Why are you still a Democrat after all these years?

BARNES: Well, I say in my book I became a Democrat when that REA truck brought that electricity to my small

my life, and both my mother and my father worked all their life, and you know, I really think that America is really about opportunity, and I think that the Democratic Party is a lot more interested

your book and during this interview that you learned from LBJ and Connally that the Democratic Party needed the support from businesses to make it socially acceptable to be a Democrat in order to

**‘T**he system needs to be changed. That's why quite frankly I'm going to try to start a national drive this year to take redistricting out of the hands of state legislatures and put it in the hands of independent commissions like Iowa and Indiana have. We've got to go back to what the framers of our Constitution intended — that is, for every member of the Congress to go back every two years and run among the people that elected them and discuss the issues.’

— Ben Barnes

in opportunity for *all* the people than the Republican Party is.

You were talking about college and college costs. I think that the Democratic Party is more interested in keeping the costs down and making sure everybody gets a college education. I think they're more interested in healthcare, particularly healthcare for children. I've always been a fiscal conservative, but I have a lot of passion still in my belly and in my heart for helping people that are not fortunate to help themselves.

I feel government has a role, as FDR and Lyndon Johnson did. If we hadn't got the Civil Rights Act, we'd have more and more people go into the streets and rioting and destroying property and demanding equal opportunity. I really think blacks and browns and other minorities should have an equal opportunity. I think it's absurd that women's pay in this country is half what men's

keep the party strong. So, you spent a lot of time in 1971 fighting the liberal wing of the Texas Democratic Party on the issue of leveling a tax on corporations to shore up a budget shortfall. Why not in place of corporate and labor money from elections — why not push for publically financed elections?

BARNES: I have come to that conclusion. I'm 100-percent for doing that, and we need very bad to limit the amount of money that everyone can contribute. It's unbelievable. Bob Perry in Houston gave \$8 million this year. A person should be limited — I don't care — say a person or family is limited to \$100,000. There's no reason for anybody to give more than \$100,000 in a political campaign. That's absurd.

That money buys influence. I don't care how moral or ethical the people that hand it. There needs to be some public money in the campaigns and some equal time to candidates. It's unbelievable

of independent commissions like Iowa and Indiana have. We've got to go back to what the framers of our Constitution intended — that is, for every member of the Congress to go back every two years and run among the people that elected them and discuss the issues.

I'll tell you what. Crawford is in Chet Edwards' district. Chet Edwards in that district is an exception rather than the rule. You've had two very

rate welfare.

I really think that people like tax cuts, but the majority of the people in this country didn't get a lot of money and the benefit from the tax cuts that Bush gave. I really think that if there's an opportunity for Democrats to be giving some tax relief to middle income people, and they're the people who are going to come back to the Democratic Party. Only 37 percent of organized labor voted Republican this time.

tough closely contested political races. I guarantee people in Crawford had one heck of a lot more opportunity to learn about the issues because of the congressional campaigns that have taken place because it was a district that could either go Republican or Democrat. The candidates had to get out and discuss.

There's 25 districts in Texas that you didn't have to discuss anything. You either had to be a Democrat or Republican to get along with the parties, and go out and shake hands, but there really was no discussion about the issues, and that's unhealthy.

ICONOCLAST: What kinds of inroads are being made to foster the “farm team” you recommended the Democratic Party employ to groom young candidates?

BARNES: We've just got to find young people that believe in the Democratic Party. Look, it's incredible now. It's a great time for the Democrats to come back and to really gain a foothold in Texas again because people are concerned about healthcare for children. There's a huge number of uninsured children. Why, even if you didn't love children and won't take care of sick kids and make sure they have insurance, it's costing so much more money for people to be treated in emergency rooms, then it's causing these hospitals to treat patients. They have to raise the ad valorem taxes.

You can go to the most conservative, moss-back Republican in town and convince him that we need to go cover children with insurance to save them tax dollars. You can talk about the cost of college and that we need to do something about it. That affects everybody, and we can talk about the fiscal responsibility and corpo-

Sixty-three percent voted Democratic.

There are a lot of issues, and I think everybody is ready to do something about the fact that we're importing so much of our oil. I think for the first time, the votes in Congress are to make the automobile manufacturers use synthetic fuels. There's no reason that if Brazil could get 80 percent of their automobiles to run on ethanol in just three years' time, we can't do the same thing in this country. We can make this country less energy dependent.

I think that if Democrats get out there and talk about these issues, then I think there's a great opportunity in Texas, in the South, and in a lot of Red States for the Democrats to come back because we saw it. We elected three Democratic congressmen in Indiana. Iowa only had one Democratic governor in 40 years, and they elected their second one this November. But for the first time in 46 years, the Democrats took back the Iowa legislature. It's because Tom Billsack had done a good job. He held the cap on spending, but he spent money on the great areas.

The University of Iowa now is ranked 3rd among public universities. You know, the University of Texas is ranked 45th and A&M is ranked 53rd or 54th. We've gone in a downhill spiral in higher education and public education in this state, and I just think that if the Democrats get out and talk about the issues and give the business people the facts, I think particularly the small business people would be in the frame of mind to come back to the Democratic Party or not necessarily the Democratic Party but to vote for Democrats. We picked up five or six state representative seats. It's time, and I think a lot more can be picked up.

**‘I** guarantee people in Crawford had one heck of a lot more opportunity to learn about the issues because of the congressional campaigns that have taken place because it was a district that could either go Republican or Democrat. The candidates had to get out and discuss.’

— Ben Barnes

farm house when I was growing up. (chuckles) I know we could have never justified getting electricity if it hadn't been for REA.

But I really think that I'm a Democrat today because I think the Democratic Party really cares more about people. You know, I come from the very low end of the middle class. We had plenty to eat, and I had two pair of blue jeans. My mother washed one everyday, so I cleaned clothes. I worked all

pay is today. There's just a lot of things that government must be involved in to level the playing field.

Government shouldn't own everything. Government shouldn't be in charge of everything. Government shouldn't be big and all encompassing, but government should be continually trying to provide the opportunities in leveling the playing field for all Americans, and that's why I remain a Democrat.

ICONOCLAST: You said in

Tom DeLay came down here and spent \$4.5 million of laundered corporate money on getting 15 state representatives elected where they could redraw district lines to give him six more votes in Congress for majority leader. All that is wrong!

The system needs to be changed. That's why quite frankly I'm going to try to start a national drive this year to take redistricting out of the hands of state legislatures and put it in the hands

# You Gotta Stay Hungry: How To Starve Your Way To Profitability

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "We'll be in a real mess if the government ever figures out how to tax poverty."

Like most scams, this one is a little complex, so try to keep up.

Fred E. Fisher used to warn me about the greatest temptation facing cattlemen.

"You can't starve a profit out of 'em," he used to tell me about a bunch of crossbred mama cows whose feed bill was bigger than our grocery tally.

And we ate pretty well.

Chicken twice a week, hot rolls for dinner every day. (Which you eat at noon, Yankee. One day you folks are just going to have to finish your genteel educations without me, you know.)

However, my father was a New Deal Democrat.

Had he been a Raw Deal Republican, he would have known that starving cattle may not be profitable, but starving people is the only sure bet in the commodities market.

And nowhere is that more evident than here in Texas, where 1.3 million people don't have enough to eat.\*

That is not to say that they are hungry.

Neighbor Bush's USDA has banned the word "hungry" from its Economic Research Service report.

Those suffering from miss-a-meal colic are now experiencing "very low food security."

No, I'm not making a joke.

And neither are they.

They're making money, and they take that very seriously.

Currently Texas is poised to make a multi-billion dollar deal with Texas ACCESS Alliance based on its \$899 million contract to provide Health and Human Services Commission needs in Travis and Hays Counties, Austin and the solid block of suburban development south to San Marcos and about half-way along the I-35 Deathway to San Antonio.

Oops! Check that.

Add an additional \$100 million change order.

So, just before we turn over our poor to their tender mercies, who is Texas ACCESS?

Everybody your mother warned you about.

Mother Jones, that is.

All public health services to the poor, from health care to welfare to child support, is slated to be operated by Texas ACCESS, a cartel of government contract mongers, or "bidding partners" headed by Accenture.

It includes SBC, Dell and several "Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs)" small businesses indentured to Accenture for the sole purpose

## Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



of tailoring government contracts. \*\*

Understand that these are "alliances" like Leopold was allied with Loeb.

Largest partner, next to Accenture is MAXIMUS, a company designed to make money off the government.

As of last year 93 percent of more than a half billion dollars in MAXIMUS' revenue came from government contracts in 50 states. Within a year after its public stock offering in 2002, its share price has doubled.

Its share of the Texas prize is slightly less than \$400 million.

But it's worth every million.

Don't take my word for it.

Take IBM's.

In a lawsuit claiming conflicts of interest, Big Blue asserts that Gary Gumbert, the HHSC's chief information officer, had just left MAXIMUS' employ in January, 2004.

He was still getting a benefits package when the Accenture/Texas Access deal went through.

Two other HHSC executives crucial to the bid process have been linked to Accenture.

As if this deck weren't stacked quite high enough, consider that before the privatization, Texas Republicans boosted the requirements for all forms of public assistance, from the CHIPS child health insurance program to food stamps, to cut the rolls by a third.

The CHIPS program cuts, for example, cost Texas taxpayers an estimated \$50 million, but it saved Texas Access a bundle.

Further, according to the state comptroller's office, the contract has built-in inducement to make applying slow and difficult, with incentives for denying services.

Accenture also gets paid, both profits and expenses, no matter what.

In other words, Accenture has a virtually unlimited, tax-free expense account

So who is Accenture?

Thought you'd never ask.

Remember John DeLorean?

Okay, how about Enron?

Arthur Anderson?

Answer: D, all of the above.

Under the skilled hand of Irving, Texas, Bush supporter Joe W. Forehand, Jr, Accenture grew from a consulting subsidiary of an accounting firm to \$15 billion

control freak cherry picked from the ashes of Arthur Anderson's abortive cookie-jar heist.

Accenture used to be known as Arthur Anderson Consulting before the Enron audit meltdown that left Anderson a quivering puddle of incredibility.

In 2001 Accenture broke away from the sinking USS Arthur Anderson and reinvented itself with the quickest, highest priced name change in American business history.

Hollywood starlets could take lessons from Joe W. Forehand, Jr.

While not specifically linked to the Ken Lay, the Convenient Ghost, Anderson Consulting, according to the WALL STREET JOURNAL, was questioned about its dealings with Enron's "special purpose entities," business alliances like the above-mentioned, that played a major role in Enron's collapse.

Maggie Thatcher's government was so incensed about Anderson's failure to keep track of DeLorean's coke car that Anderson Consulting/Accenture was off the Brit's Christmas Card List; although not specifically prohibited from doing business in Limey Land.

So, guess who Neighbor Bush's pal Tony Blair just hired to handle the England's welfare/health care woes?

"They have a habit of backing everybody in order to have influence with everybody," Conservative MP David Heathcoat-Amory said of Accenture in the GUARDIAN.

Now let's think.

Who else played both political sides against your mid-section?

Oh, yeah, Enron.

Still think the Democrats are going to save your soul?

And the best is yet to come.

Homeland Security awarded Accenture a \$15 billion contract to keep track of everyone entering or leaving the United States through its border checkpoints.

According to the NEW YORK TIMES, Accenture was considered the outsider on the bid with little chance of winning the contract.

Welcome to Texas, boys.

*\*Actually, it's much higher than that. By its own admission, USDA isn't just cooking the books, it's deep frying them. They claim a .9 percent drop in hunger. Looks good on TeeVee. Keeps Diane Sawyer smiling. Actually, it's probably around a 3 to 5 percent increase. They're only counting the numbers on food stamp roles, which have been deliberately purged by the fascist Republican Congress and administration for the last 12 years. First, about 40*

percent of those eligible for food stamps, USDA officials admit, don't get them. The enrollment is difficult, frustrating, humiliating and interminably slow. By the time many people are finally declared eligible, they just give up and find some other way to survive, like prison or Iraq for the young, burdening relatives into poverty for the old. Second, immigrants aren't supposed to get food relief. Applying for food stamps can affect citizenship application status for the legals, and will get anybody else deported. Frankly, immigrants generally don't trust the United

States Government. Can't think why.

\*\*That is, your company offers services required in the bid that no one else can match.

That way, if a state agency wants to deal with a certain company, they can write the bid so no one else can get it.

You want the state to buy you a Ford?

Require in your bid to have "F-o-r-d" written on the hood.

There's really no way to keep that from happening without strict bid reviews, and it's not in anyone's interest to do that.

At least not anyone working for the government.

## ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

### Length Of Iraq War Surpasses U.S. Involvement In WWII

As the bloodbath in Iraq continues, the U.S. involvement in "Bush's War" has reached a timeline milestone — as of Sunday our country has fought there longer than it did in World War II, hitting the 1,347th day.

Here's how the tenure of U.S. involvement in key conflicts over history have stacked up:

- Persian Gulf War, 1½ months
- Spanish American War, 8 months
- World War I, 1 year, 7 months
- U.S.-Mexican War, 1 year, 10 months
- War of 1812, 2 years, 6 months
- Korean War, 3 years, 1 month
- World War II, 3 years, 8 months
- Iraq War, 3 years, 8 months (and counting)
- Civil War, 4 years
- Afghanistan (still under way), 5 years, 1 month.
- Revolutionary War, 6 years, 9 months
- Vietnam War, 8 years, 5 months.

Some might argue that the limited death count of U.S. military personnel in the Iraq war (2,863) compared to other involvements is a better gauge of cost than time spent. But there are other deaths, too, and the numbers are sobering. President Bush says that only 30,000 Iraqis have lost their lives in the war, but the LANCET, published as part of a John Hopkins Medical School study suggests more like 655,000. Who knows for sure?

There are financial costs, too, to the tune of around \$345 billion to the U.S., a number that grows by the second.

Add injuries, livelihoods lost, political standing in the world down the tubes, and costs to other nations in lives and money, not to mention the offshoot of actually feeding terror and destroying the American economy for the middle classes, and you have a substantial mess.

It is imperative that the new Congress get a handle on this, and quickly, by attacking the murky gray areas and devising a solution.

The Administration sees only black and white. Kill, kill, kill, spend, spend, spend or "cut and run."

There is no inclination to diplomacy.

While we wait, the quagmire is spreading and the ship is sinking.

Do the loiterers in the Administration a favor.

Bail them out.

— W. Leon Smith

# THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi again Mr. Smith,

Would you please print this for "All The People."

I feel the miracle of recent history but after tuning into FOX News I'm confirmed again...the same tactics are under way and yet I no longer fear them because they will not work again.

The people have opened their eyes.

I know, I'm a fund raiser and I speak to people in every state of the union, every day of the week and they are jubilant and yet, understandably cautious. After all, we haven't even reached official January yet.

But I've seen Mr. Bush jump (Rumsfeld) when Ms. Pelosi said to, and I've seen the impossible dream come to pass with Conservatives openly seeking a change. It is here, the miracle, the miracle that our founding fathers and mothers created with the Constitution...the bells and whistles of democracy.

We must grasp the chance to be the spiritual creatures we were meant to be...we must discard the anger after we acknowledge it for what it is, passing, and then construct "A COMMON GROUND FOR HEALING."

Thanks and PEACE....

Edward Pitts, Los Angeles, Ca.



At the "World Peace March" in Hollywood Cindy Sheehan is presented a copy of "A Common Ground For Healing."

### "A COMMON GROUND FOR HEALING"

January 17, 2002

To Susan, Justice and Jonathan

For most human beings, "closure" is an all-important concept which is commonly discussed more now than ever before. And though it is difficult to be positive in our common pain, "it is time (as Will Rogers might have said) to commence to begin" a meaningful end to this incredible chapter in the American Saga.

"Closure" is a final destination devoutly to be wished for the entire country and the entire world. Our journey toward closure must have a first step in order for us to ever arrive there together.

Transcendent of differences, most of us believe that we need to somehow say goodbye to those who have left us. Most of us attend a ceremony that includes a grave-side service ending with a handful of soil tossed with thoughtful reflection into the grave.

All of us experience the grieving process in our own way and at our own rate of speed. The majority of us will benefit emotionally if we can feel that our personal grief is included as a substantive part of our nation's official business of healing. Healing which must include all the tragedies which have occurred since Sept. 11, 2001.

Our people require at least an opportunity to gather spiritually at the "grave-side" in reflection for those in Heaven, but also to display to all men and women everywhere our positive resolve for the future. With thoughts of love and unity rather than those of hatred and confusion, each of us might be permitted to tenderly toss our handful of earth and finally begin to accept that together we shall go on with hope.

### IT IS THEREFORE PROPOSED THAT:

Beginning with local communities as organized by each municipal government and continuing on at the direction of the Office of the Governor of each state, and ultimately culminating with executive oversight resting with the Mayor of New York City, one million tons of earth will be gathered locally in every community. Handful-by-handful...earth offered up by millions of Americans from every state in the Union, collected and combined, then transported to New York to mend the "wounded earth."

It is proposed that we use the hands of the nation to heal ourselves and put an end, with God's help, to this nightmare experience. If this is done . . .

In years to come and forever more, generation after generation will return to find that the earth has healed and that our nation remains cleansed with common tears from such horror. Perhaps they will find the presence of the "better Angels of our nature," to quote Mr. Lincoln, evidenced by peace instead of war, quiet instead of a deafening explosion, stability instead of collapse. And perhaps some of us may even return and remember that our own hands held for a moment the very soil that has filled the void.

Whether, as some people propose, this site will in future see even more lofty construction – or, as others may wish, it is transformed into the "little sister" to Central Park, the space is sacred and must in some manner be treated as a consecrated place.

As we know, a million tons of earth were originally excavated for the World Trade Center and went to create "New Real Estate" on the Hudson. We now have the opportunity to be revolutionary with our approach to a healing exercise, which is vital to us all. We have the opportunity to create a "Uniquely New and Real Estate" which we as one people will declare as a legacy to the world as "A Common Ground for Healing."

Dear Editor:

I can understand listening to generals regarding how to conduct military operations. I can't, however, understand making your overall strategy according to "boots on the ground."

This is an occupation of a foreign country we blew up and took over in three months. Nearly four years later, long after military operations to complete the takeover, capture Saddam, set up an American interim government, Iraqi interim government, and now a duly elected Iraqi government with Constitution, and promises to leave when "the mission is accomplished (again)," we have a President still telling us he will change his strategy only according to "boots on the ground."

Then let me suggest that the President put his own boots on the ground in Iraq. He was elected to make the decision what to do, not the military commanders. He sets the policy, not generals. He is our elected commander-in-chief. 'Bout time he started acting the part and taking the responsibility of "the decider."

Who am I kidding? He has made the decision...to stay in Iraq indefinitely. The talk is just talk. W doesn't intend to leave. Maybe he thinks the majority of U.S. citizens are insurgents because we want to get the troops out, too.

Only we want them back alive, Mr. President, not in body bags or filling more veteran hospitals!

Douglas Roy, Lexington, KY

## Saddam Not Given Fair Trial: Group

NEW YORK — A New York-based human rights group in its 97-page report stated that the trial of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was unfair, the guilty verdict "questionable," and had "serious procedural flaws."

Human Rights Watch added the Iraqi High Tribunal was ill-equipped to process the complicated case, based on the group's observations of the herky-jerky trail and talks with key members of the court.

The HRW report criticized the defendant's attorneys, the prosecution, and the judge for "a trial that did not meet key fair trial standards." Specifically, the report stated that the attorneys and judges threw out their credibility by staging walkouts that seemed to prevent a smooth flow for the trial.

One of the defense attorneys responded by saying that the trial was political, not legal, and so his team had to work within those limits. Human Rights Watch added that the defense nor the witnesses weren't given adequate protections either, since three lawyers were killed during the trial time.

The group also condemned the death sentence given to Hussein for okaying the execution of Shiite Muslims in the wake of an assassination attempt on the former Iraqi leader.

The defense team has until Dec. 5 to issue an appeal to a nine-judge panel. The appeals court should give its verdict by mid-January.

Ads In The Iconoclast Pull, Too!

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THE LONE STAR  
ICONOCLAST



# If He Can't Deliver By Sleigh

Should Santa have a reindeer breakdown come Dec. 24, he would be well-advised to not rely on an American born-and-bred automobile to continue on his merry way.

So say the leading purveyors of what is known as "good car buying sense."

Motor Trend has continued its "trend" of dumping on Detroit by once again naming a Japanese automobile the "Car of the Year" — the 2007 Toyota Camry.

Just what in hell is a Camry, anyway?

The Camry did not need any assistance from Motor Trend, as it's been the best-selling family sedan in America for eight of the last nine years. Yet, the top dog among automotive mags decided to not just praise one Camry model but, as it did with last year's Honda, deemed all incarnations of the Camry superior to every one of the 899 other choices available to American consumers.

Personally, I haven't read the report because it really doesn't affect me. No matter what Motor Trend says I cannot see myself ever purchasing an automobile from a Japanese manufacturer, even Mitsubishi which operates a huge factory right here in Normal.

It's not the article but the spirit to which I take umbrage.

Don't get me wrong, I am a hearty supporter of global economy and the one-world concept. Virtually all of our home television and audio equipment came from Japan, or through one of its corporations; we have plenty of other devices, like a Panasonic microwave oven, that added to the trade deficit with Japan.

When the time comes, I will gleefully fork over \$3,000 for an HDTV made in or around the islands known as Japan.

However, there's no way I could ever see myself shelling out 25 to 30 thousand or more in Yankee greenbacks for a piece of machinery built by one of the same companies that manufactured airplanes which took part in the attack Pearl Harbor.

Some things are difficult for me to comprehend, like an 80-year-old couple driving a new Camry sporting an American flag, a USMC sticker, and a VFW license plate; or another new Camry with a "support our troops" ribbon and a bumper sticker declaring "My Son is an Airman Serving in Iraq."

Shouldn't these people be driving Buicks or Mercurys?



## Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

No matter what level of "luxury" and "performance" the Japanese build into their vehicles, between GM and Chrysler there most certainly will always be a model to fit my needs and desires (I never have owned nor do I ever intend to own a Ford of any shape, size or class).

Now, the folks at Motor Trend are ostensibly experts in their various fields. That's why I don't pay attention to what they have to say.

I know that the designers and engineers in Detroit have been shooting themselves in their own feet with alacrity for decades now, but neither are they such dunderheads as referred to by car critics.

Some of the Detroit products suck so badly I wouldn't ship them off to be sold to members of Hezbollah; however, there are any number of finely engineered, quality-built American vehicles.

All one has to do while driving around is take a quick though unscientific survey and observe the number of 10- to 20-

year-old American cars on the road as opposed to similar Japanese cars. The reality of stamina points out that the so-called superior Japanese cars die long before their American counterparts.

One big reason for this is the Japanese car is not designed for the harshness of the United States weather, its extremes of heat and cold.

Then, too, America has far more land to traverse, and considerably more variables in conditions than Japan, with huge open spaces not found on tiny islands.

Add in that, generally speaking, the American driver is much harder on a car than the typical Japanese driver, who most likely treats his vehicle as something to be respected.

Yes, GM and Ford and Chrysler all got too big for their britches. So big that Chrysler sold out to Daimler-Benz in Germany, while GM and Ford have been forced to sell off ill-conceived subsidiaries that didn't bring in the additional revenue as expected.

And, all three have been forced to lay off enough workers to wipe a city the size of Topeka, Kansas off the map.

So, what's on Motor Trend's agenda? Is the Toyota Camry such a great freaking car that the mag couldn't give America a break?

Will it float if forced into a lake? Can it sprout wings and fly? Does the car seat more people more comfortably? Does it get the best gas mileage? Is there room in the trunk for one extra overnight bag?

I sincerely doubt the Camry does none of these.

On precisely what scale do the "experts" at Motor Trend base their findings? It's beginning to seem more and more like the opinions of the people who conduct tests for Motor Trend have a bone to pick with the Detroit automobile establishment.

One of my cars is a 1996 Oldsmobile Aurora. I love to drive this automobile. It has a 4.0 liter V8, a sporty version of the Cadillac NorthStar engine, and even with 167,000 miles still gets 26 mpg on the highway. The car has leather seats and virtually every luxury item one could think of; it weighs 4,400 pounds but handles like a sports car half its size.

I've also owned a 1982 Buick Riviera since 1993. It's my baby, with a mere 137,000 miles. The 305 ci (4.9 liter) V8 engine gets 21 mpg on the highway, and this automobile, too, is sheer pleasure to drive.

We recently sold a 1993 Dodge Intrepid with 332,000 miles, and a 1988 Buick LeSabre that read in excess of 225,000 miles on the odometer.

Over the years, I've sold numerous cars with mileage in the 150,000 to 250,000 range — they've all been American makes, and they've all run.

Take proper care of a car, it will care for you.

"Motor Trend Car of the Year"... Bah, humbug!

Don't let some yuppie writer tell you what kind of vehicle to spend \$25,000 on; buy the car you like the best!

As to the warning at the top for the Jolly Fat Man, forget what Motor Trend has to say about the Toyota Camry. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the "Car of the Year" doesn't even make it into the top of the list. At best, the Camry received a rating of "marginal" in rear-end crashes.

Unfortunately for Detroit, not one American model made the list in any category, even as low as marginal, either. So, the products may hold up for 20 years, with the codicil that the owner should stay out of serious accidents...

Then there was a new ConsumerReports report that surely surprised many in the automotive world. I stopped subscribing to CR some years back when it became apparent that its method of "research" was more the result of complaints from disgruntled fuddy-duddies than positive feedback of happy owners (the "squeaky wheel" concept).

More often than not I read criticisms of a particular automobile being junk because of one loose bolt in the door panel, or a television model was wholly unacceptable due to its inability to pick up a local station's unusually weak signal (never mind the cheap-ass antenna system the reader was using).

This month, CR's elite readers who ponied up \$50,000 or more for those finest-of-the-fine German-engineered Mercedes-Benz automobiles and SUVs are carping like an evangelical couple in a roomful of gay men.

Apparently, the late model editions of Mercedes vehicles are not providing the quality which one expects when one plunks down megabucks. The complaints have run the gamut from engine problems to include non-starting, body integrity, comfort, performance, electrical failures — meanwhile during the same period, the company's Chrysler division has been increasing its fortunes. Go figure.

So, Mr. Claus, should Rudolph  
Continued On Next Page

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# Always Call For Back-up When Talking Turkey

Two years ago this week I was the victim of an unprovoked and extremely frightening turkey attack. In my defense, there were five of them (technically known as a "gang" of turkeys) involved in the assault, which started because of my proximity to a preening female turkey who had apparently snubbed her suitors in favor of me.

Possibly because she was confused by my chicken legs.

Whatever the reason, the male turkeys didn't take well to this and decided the best way to handle the situation was to join forces and, one by one, take turns flapping their giant wings at my [censored]. Before I knew it, I was being circled by an agitated turkey gang and wishing my editor had assigned me to something less dangerous, like covering a Blind Axe Throwers convention.

The reason I was in this situation was because I'm a journalist committed to getting the story. Even if it means risking my own safety by putting myself in harm's way on the front lines.

OK, so it was a turkey farm.

And I was under the watchful eye of a highly ca-

## TENUTO

From Previous Page

and Dancer, Dasher, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen, or any of your back-up reindeer have a burnout come Christmas Eve, you may wish to plan ahead as to what kind of vehicle you'll use to continue on your route.

Whatever you do, please avoid the Hummer — there are certain parties who have a tendency to blow those up.

Oh, yeah, don't forget to inform those idiots at Homeland Security lest they zap you out of the sky!

Shalom, and no matter what you celebrate, Happy Holidays!

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



### Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

pable turkey wrangler named Dirk; a man confi-

dent in his ability to "throw down" against even the largest bird, including, once, a stray ostrich that had gotten confused and wandered over from a nearby farm. As Dirk explained, he knew something was wrong almost immediately when he noticed, "One of the turkeys looked

way too big."

That's when he swung into action and, drawing on years of wrangling experience, diffused the situation by calmly approaching the bird, gaining its trust, then suddenly throwing it into a headlock.

"When I woke up, the ostrich was gone," said Dirk.

Secure in the knowledge that my back was covered by Dirk the Turkey Wrangler, I had entered the large pen of turkeys in hopes of getting firsthand experience, which I could use to enhance my story, or possibly my obituary, depending on how quickly things deteriorated. I should mention that I had been made aware of the potential dangers that arise when turkeys adopt a mob mentality, then signed a waiver releasing the farm of any liability should I be: Injured or otherwise decapitated.

"Don't you mean 'incapacitated'?" I asked.

"Yeah — that, too," said Dirk.

Standing in the middle of the pen a short time later, the turkeys didn't seem to be paying much attention to me. This prompted me to engage them so I could get a better feel for their personalities. I crouched; bobbed my head; gobbled a little.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," said Dirk.

At that very instant one turkey extended its head above the others.

"Yirp. Yirp. Yirp." As I discovered, this is turkey talk for, "Just because we are two completely different species doesn't mean we can't be lovers."

I suddenly realized I had the attention of every turkey in the pen, particularly five who had been strutting around, chests puffed out, trying to win the affections of "Lucy."

"Uhhhm, too late," Dirk said helpfully. "Cover your privates."

"What..?"

Next thing I knew, I was surrounded, dust and feathers flying.

I obviously survived, thanks in part to Dirk's quick thinking, which was to yell "Get out of there — but keep your privates covered!" over and over until I could get back to the gate.

Admittedly, the experience left me shaken but it doesn't keep me from having turkey on Thanksgiving.

Eventually, I hope to do so without wearing an athletic cup.

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

## Which Of The 12 Are You?

One of the "essentials" of moviedom is a picture made in the late 1950s entitled "12 Angry Men," which boasts of a highly talented ensemble cast and is tightly and dramatically written.

It's about a jury deciding the fate of a young man charged with murder. A guilty verdict will result in a date with the "electric chair." One juror votes "not guilty" in the supposed "open and shut" case, and eventually the rest of the jurors are persuaded, as truth evolves, to join him, as they eventually see there was much more to the story than was presented during the days leading to their deliberation.

What is intriguing is to compare the structure of the drama with current-day politics, i.e. the "can do no wrong" Bush Administration bent on dictatorship that is now finally being seen for what it really is.

One by one, members of the public jury are shifting, even among the King's men, such as Kenneth Adelman who had promoted the Iraq war, lies intact, on behalf of Cheney, Bush, and

### The Trenchwalker

By W. Leon Smith



Company. He now calls it "the debacle that was Iraq."

Like the lone juror in the motion picture who stood by the truth and was highly criticized for doing so, there were many just a couple of years ago who faced the same bullets of scorn when they dared to disagree with the President and had the gall to say so.

This newspaper was one, but there were others throughout the country, too.

Like us, many were targeted with retribution.

Some were afraid to voice their opposition publicly, some had bumper stickers destroyed, some were threatened with their lives. And some were actually driven out of the country.

Now, with revelations of corruption being leaked and lies being translated into lives lost

and livelihoods down the drain, the cold hard facts are difficult to deny. The public wants Bush, the architect of deception and greed, out of Dodge. Citizens of America realize they've been had.

The self-described leader is actually no leader at all. He's a pillager, a pirate befitting his attachment to "skull and bones," in keeping with the mascot of his adopted hometown.

Bush has made a mockery of truth, justice, and democracy on behalf of his circle of cronies. It's that simple.

Iraq is more than a quagmire. It is a graveyard.

But for now, the Bush lies no longer have widespread support. The skeletal web of unconditional favor is coming unglued.

Rebuke defined the November elections, and now the task of straightening out a colossal mess is upon us.

It is time to hold every elected official's hands to the proverbial fire.

Better they get burned than our country.

## Military Analysts Agree Bush May Bomb Iran In 2007

WASHINGTON — The director of a military issues think tank told the Agence France Presse last week that he thought U.S. President George W. Bush would okay the bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities next summer.

The Bush administration over this past summer stepped up warnings to Iran to not create nuclear weapons using its Russian-based technology. Iran has denied that its program is for nothing other than peaceful, energy-related purposes.

John Pike, director of Globalsecurity.org, is among other military analysts who agree that President Bush would ignore diplomacy in favor of military force in Iran. Pike, though, discounted the idea that the U.S. military would invade Iran using ground forces.

The White House recently denied the claims of a NEW YORKER article written by U.S. journalist Seymour Hersh. The article stated that

Vice President Dick Cheney and other hawks intended to attack Iran without the blessing from the Democratic-held Congress.

A U.S.-led attack on Iran is possible but not realistic after the Democratic take over of Congress, according to Joseph Cirincione, Senior Vice President for National Security and International Policy at the Center for American Progress.

Such an attack is a little less likely with former Central Intelligence Agency director Robert Gates replacing Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense, since Gates advocates direct talks with Iran, Cirincione added.

Still, neoconservative scholars and Israeli officials are trumpeting the call for military action against Tehran. AFP specifically noted American Enterprise Institute Joshua Muarvchik's op-ed piece in the LOS ANGELES TIMES saying the U.S. should bomb Iran.

# Republican Congressman Survives Longest Vote Count

By Nov. 15, 1928, the ninth day of the recount, the lead of Rep. Harry Wurzbach, the only GOP member of the Texas delegation, had shrunk from 427 votes to 164.

The four-term incumbent was not the victim of a Democratic dirty trick but a rival Republican's election-rigging scheme. Rentfro Banton Creager hated Wurzbach so much that he was willing to sacrifice his party's lone congressional seat in order to sabotage his enemy's political career.

Seventy-eight years ago in the Lone Star State, Republicans were rarer than Democrats are today and they won even fewer elections. Given the choice, the typical Texan in the Twenties would have preferred that his son grow up to be the town drunk rather than a card-carrying member of the Grand Old Party.

Instead of closing ranks and working for better days, Texas Republicans constantly quarreled over the crumbs from the federal table. Vicious free-for-alls over petty patronage took precedence over laying the foundation for an authentic two-party system.

The divisive duel fought in the 1920's by Creager and Wurzbach kept Republicans from gaining any ground. Weakened by the endless bickering, the Texas wing of Lincoln's party was fortunate to escape extinction during the New Deal.

An ambitious Brownsville businessman, R.B. Creager rose to power by betraying benefactors and bribing enemies with government appointments. One of the few figures not for sale was Harry Wurzbach of Seguin, the only Republican Texas voters sent to congress in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

Creager had just become the state vice-chairman in 1920, when Wurzbach upset a Democratic office-holder. As the son of a respected Confederate hero, he enjoyed tremendous popularity in the San Antonio-centered district despite his partisan affiliation.

From the very start, the maverick congressman refused to knuckle under to the dictatorial Creager on patronage matters. When the tyrant ignored Wurzbach's nominees for postmaster and U.S. attorney in the Alamo City, the war was on.

By 1922 the Creager-Wurzbach brawl had the party in such an uproar that the Republican president was forced to intervene. Warren G. Harding personally negotiated a truce that halted Wurzbach's

## This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



denunciations of the newly named state chairman, and Creager returned the compliment by contributing to the congressman's reelection.

But the cease-fire died with Harding the following year. Hostilities resumed when Wurzbach tried unsuccessfully to prevent the promotion of Creager to national committee-man, and Creager countered by opposing his rival's bid for a fourth term in 1926.

Wurzbach retaliated on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, where he charged his foe with demanding cash from federal office-seekers and hoodwinking the national Republican leadership with a "paper organization." Creager did, in fact, sell government jobs to the highest bidder, and the state party apparatus, which he claimed encompassed 240 of Texas' 254 counties, actually included no more than 30.

The struggle took a violent turn in June 1926. Riot police were called to quell a wild melee that erupted at a meeting of the Bexar County executive committee, and the next night masked thugs brutally beat the congressman's campaign manager.

The get-tough tactics worked to Wurzbach's advantage by creating a wave of voter sympathy. He swamped a Creager-sponsored challenger in the Republican primary and drubbed his Democratic opponent in the fall.

Oblivious to the dire consequences for Republicans, the loss of their single representative in Washington, Creager pulled out all the stops to unseat Wurzbach in 1928. The result was the longest count in Texas history.

Initial returns in early November had Wurzbach 427 votes ahead of Democrat August McCloskey. As late tallies from rural boxes and crudely amended counts trickled in, his lead gradually evaporated. When the results were finally certified two months later, McCloskey was declared the winner.

But Boss Creager and his Democratic stooge celebrated their tainted triumph too soon. After a yearlong investigation, a congressional committee awarded the disputed seat to Wurzbach, who won his sixth term nine months later.

Creager was fit to be tied. Conceding the fact that Wurzbach was unbeatable at the polls, he resorted to a smear campaign that accused the congressman of accepting illegal contributions.

Before Harry Wurzbach could clear his name, a ruptured appendix suddenly cut short his

career and his life. Rid at last of his number-one nemesis, R.B. Creager was free to do as he pleased.

How did the Grand Old Party fare during his 30-year regime? Two decades went by before another Republican represented the Lone Star State in congress, while nary a one served in the

state legislature between 1931 and 1961.

Boss Creager was the best Republican friend Texas Democrats ever had.

*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.*

## Your Turn

It's time for me to share some of the e-mails that I have received in response to some of my recent columns. So, enjoy:

In response to my column about Miami Dolphins' coach Nick Saban saying he was too busy to have dinner with the president, readers wrote:

BARRY: "Is this news or more hate and divide from our 'free left wing press?'"

JERRY: "Sabin is a social buffoon! He was disrespectful to the president without a really good reason."

CAROLYN: "Yes, in these times it is very hard to have dinner with the president, as this one is out to lunch!"

XRITISM: "I would have declined the invitation, too — even if on the same evening, I was seen sharing a hotdog with my neighbor's dog. ..."

In response to my column about the wall to be built along our southern border, readers wrote:

RICHARD: "Under the current administration, the country I have loved for so long is changing rapidly and there is not a pretty picture resulting from these changes."

DIAMOND: "True patriotic Americans ... want defense for the entire border, and ... we would be willing to build it ourselves if the government can't get the job done."

ED: "The worst shame of the proposed Mexican border fence is that Bush and Congress came up with the fence in place of a meaningful guest worker policy and program, which might actually have stood a chance of making a dent in the illegal immigration. I hate to imagine what sort of barrier Bush plans to protect us from those horrible Canadians, not to mention its price tag."

CAROLINE: "If I believed you possessed a logical, reasoned and practical mind, I would tell you how the illegal aliens have af-

fecting my neighborhood and community. I won't waste my time."

ROSS: "... the Berlin Wall was there to keep people in a country against their will. Our fence is to stop people from illegally entering our country. There's a big difference, you liberal \*\*\*\*\*."

MYRNA: "To reason things out is not a human quality nowadays here in the U.S.; people are just too mad, and too racist to understand the implications of closed borders. What a shame. Even my ninth grade daughter understands that walls between countries are conducive to hostility."

In response to my column about being tired of the campaign, readers wrote:

MUCHADO: "Actually, I am tired of being constantly lied to by these folks. Could we not, as voters, demand the resignation of candidates who failed to fulfill their campaign promises?"

TOM: "(I can't stand) the little signs over the highways. ... Sometimes I say to myself, 'If I see that guy's name one more time, even though I like him, I am voting for someone else who did not litter the highway.'" ED: "At least we are treated to ads from competing sides in an arena where all sides are free to put their tongues into the debate, however ill-advised they may be in so doing. It may be boring and sometimes downright offensive, but there are nations where only one party is even allowed to advertise."

In response to my column about getting more people to vote, one reader wrote:

GLENDIA: "Why not have a \$10,000 lottery in every state, with the funds coming from a required percentage donation from the campaign funds of all office seekers? At least we would get something out of our elected officials, and \$10,000 is not a bad incentive just for driving down to vote. Having a computer select the winner from



## Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

the voter registration numbers would assure nobody gets paid directly to vote. I'm only half joking."

In response to my column about the recent midterm election, in which I "half-jokingly" said that the Republicans really won, readers wrote:

HARRY: "Is it true that W. told Cheney to take Rummy hunting with him?"

TOM: "When I arrived at work the day after the election, I took a beating from all my Democratic coworkers. ... Seriously, I hope the Democrats have some new ideas and we get our troops home ASAP."

DON: "That's about the stupidest thing I've ever seen on a decisive election that rejected right wing extremists running the Republican Party. And it's typical of the corporate/Republican media that they would even carry your half-baked opinions."

CARMEN: "An ignorant person is one who doesn't know what you have just found out. Outstanding!!!"

Oh, there was one other email in response to my column about the building of the fence along our border with Mexico:

CLINT: "Way to go, Lloyd. You just totally screwed the whole world over!!!"

Who knew I had that kind of power?

*Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes the "Modern Times" column for CBSnews.com's Opinion page and can be reached at [smcp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com](mailto:smcp@lloydgarvermoderntimes.com) and a weekly column for SportsLine.com*

## AIDS Infects 39.5 Million World-Wide: U.N. Report

### Waco Group To Observe World AIDS Day

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations reported last week that about 39.5 million people around the world are infected with the AIDS virus. About 17.7 million women of that estimated total include women.

The deadly virus has already been dubbed the most destructive illness in history, taking 25 million lives since 1981.

While the spread of the disease is stable in Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America, the same can't be said for Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia.

Sub-Saharan Africa still leads the world in the number of AIDS infected people with 24.7 million cases, 59 percent of whom are women.

Cases of HIV in East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia have jumped by 21 percent in the last two years.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia, though, have experienced a 70 percent increase in infections in the same time span.

New infections rose by 15 percent in South and Southeast Asia and by 12 percent in North Africa and the Middle East since 2004.

The U.N.'s AIDS epidemic update report failed to breakdown the estimated AIDS cases by county, but with the 1.2 million people living with HIV last year, the

United States is in the top 10 of countries with the highest number of infected people.

The epidemic in the United States has infected more racial and ethnic minorities than Caucasians. African Americans make up half the AIDS diagnoses from 2001-2004 — Hispanics, 20 percent.

The joint report by UNAIDS and the World Health Organization was released two weeks prior to the World AIDS Day Observance.

The McLennan County World AIDS Day Observance will be held Friday, Dec. 1, at 6 p.m.

World AIDS Day will be observed by in McLennan County on Friday, Dec. 1., at the Eddie and Velma Dwyer Community Center, 507 Jefferson (corner of 5th and Jefferson) in Waco.

This observance — sponsored by McCARES, McLennan County AIDS/HIV Resources and Education Services — will include music and speakers paying tribute to those who are living with or have died from this pandemic and a candle lighting ceremony to end the observance.

The international theme for this year's observance is "Stop AIDS, Keep The Promise."

For more information on the McLennan County observance, contact John Park or Parker Willson.

**INFO**  
Park  
[johnpark@grandecom.net](mailto:johnpark@grandecom.net)  
Willson  
722-2832

## Angry Indonesian Citizens Protest Bush Visit

BOGOR, Indonesia — Muslims in Indonesia protested President George W. Bush during his quick trip there last week.

Reports indicate that the president's seven-hour visit with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono turned the resort area into a "war zone."

About 15,000 heavily-armed soldiers locked down Bogor with roadblocks which were lined with razor wire to prevent people from entering the sum-

mer palace located in the heart of the world's most populous Muslim nation.

The trip was designed to win Indonesia's support on the so-called "war on terrorism" by noting that the conflict was not with Islam. The 2,000 Islamic activists and student protestors, however, made clear their anger toward the U.S. policy on the U.S.-led wars against Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yudhoyono warned the people of Indonesia that exces-

sive protesting could tarnish their country's reputation. There had been an unconfirmed report of a plan for a suicide bomber attack, though no such attack reportedly took place.

Still, leaders of a coalition of groups under name the Alliance of United Muslim Mass Organisations referred to Bush as a "war criminal" and a "terrorist" and called for his death sentence.

"Kill him, kill him," said one protest leader, according to the Associated Press.

## 'Divine Strake' Might Return To Nevada

WASHINGTON — A test explosion of 700 tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil might be returning to the original proposed site in Nevada but not until after Feb. 1, according to a government lawyer.

The Divine Strake test was first scheduled for June 2006 at the Nevada Test Site but postponed indefinitely due to a lawsuit filed in federal court in Las Vegas by Western Shoshone tribe members and other "downwinders" in Utah and Nevada.

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency had considered moving the test to China Lake, Calif.; a gravel quarry in Mitchell, Indiana; then to the White Sands Missile Range,

N.M.; and then to Dugway Proving Ground in western Utah, yet because of questionable geological activity in those areas, the site could come back to the NTS north of Las Vegas, Nev.

However, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) told The Salt Lake Tribune that DTRA had failed to perform any formal studies on the other proposed sites.

"The sites listed were examples used by DTRA to show how moving the site would be overly expensive," Sen. Hatch said.

Sen. Hatch and Rep. Jim Matheson (D-Utah) have both fought against the test, which would likely launch across the U.S. radioactive materials that settled on the desert floor from

the U.S. governments' above-ground nuclear bomb testing programs during the Cold War.

This new test is seen as a work-around of Congress' refusal to allocate funding for further development of nuclear bunker-buster bomb. DTRA has said that it wants to perform the test to simulate the smallest non-nuclear explosion possible that would destroy underground targets.

The Divine Strake blast would be 280 times more powerful than the explosion that decimated the Oklahoma City federal building in the early 1990s and about 50 times stronger than the most powerful known conventional weapon in the U.S. arsenal.

## Houston Janitors Make Deal For Better Wages, Work Time

HOUSTON — The 5,300 striking Latino janitors finally struck a tentative deal with the city's five major cleaning companies last week.

The janitors will receive a boost in pay (from \$5.30 an hour to \$6.25 an hour) and longer working days on the first of the year, plus an increase to \$7.75 an hour at the end of their three year contract.

The companies — Pritchard Industries Southwest, ABM Janitorial Services, Sanitors Services of Texas, OneSource Facility Services, and GCA Services Group — will also cover health insurance costs for individual janitors for \$20 a month starting in 2009. Family cover-

age would cost \$175 a month, according to the present terms issued last Monday.

The janitors who are members of the local Service Employees International Union originally wanted \$8.50 an hour, full-time work, and health insurance benefits extended to their families. Prior to the month-long-plus strike, the workers received no health insurance and four hours of work a night.

Houston Mayor Bill White said that on Monday he was pleased with the outcome but not the union's tactics, and praised building owner Hines Interests for coming to the bargaining table early in favor of the increased benefits for the janitors.

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