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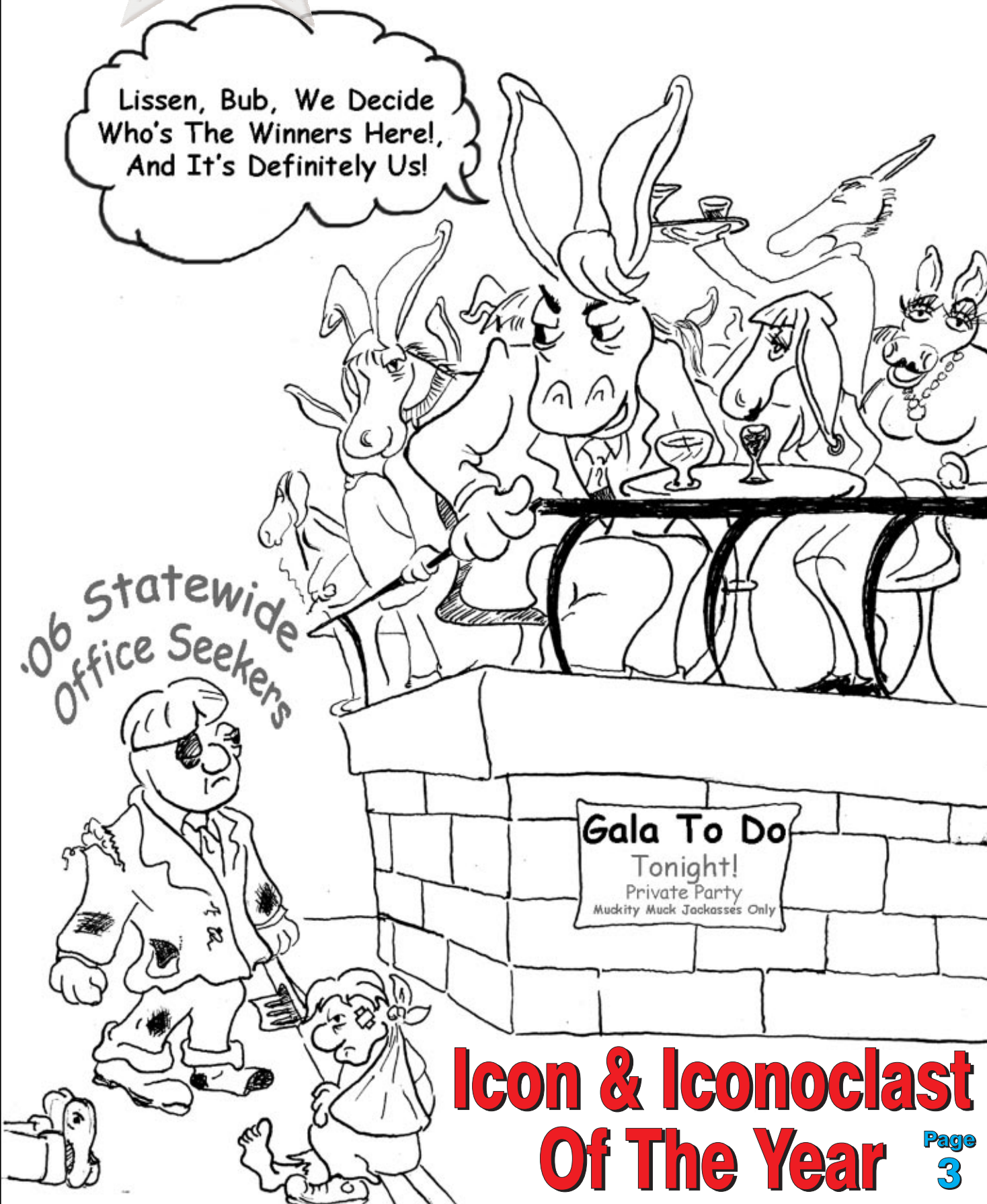
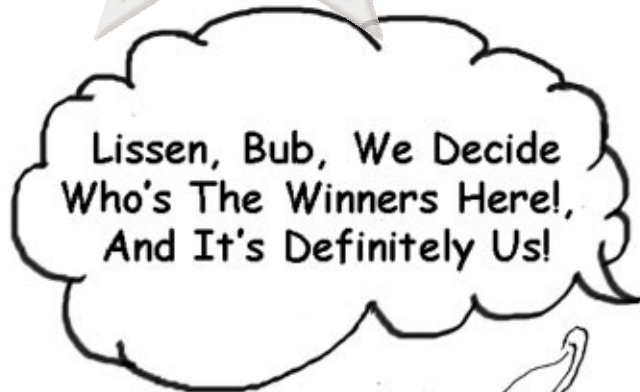
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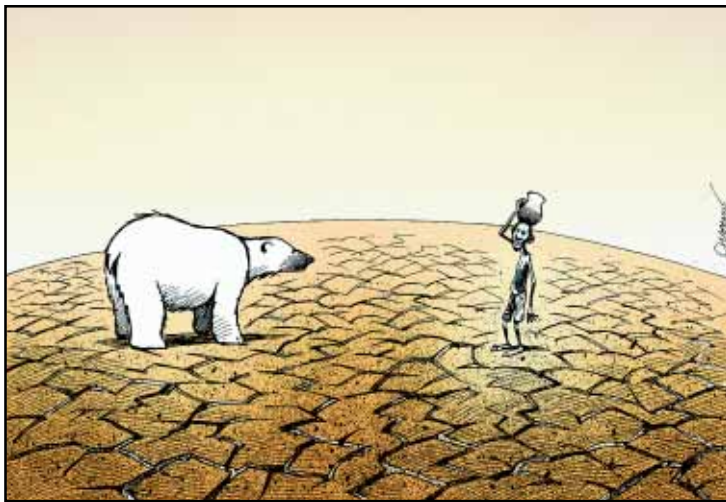
Bush Warms To Global Warming With Polar Bear Policy

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Bush administration's new policy to protect polar bears is thawing its stance on global warming, said environmental groups last week.

A proposal is on the table for the polar bear to be added to the threatened species list with the recommendation of interior secretary Dick Kempthorne.

The announcement came while President George W. Bush was at his vacation ranch in Crawford.

Once the bear is on the list, the U.S. government would not be able to harm it or their habitat. The measure might even mandate that companies restrict their carbon dioxide emis-



sions. Scientists agree that carbon emissions and global warming are inter-related as evident by

the melting of Arctic sea ice.

For the last five years, environmental defense organizations have fought the administration in federal courts to curb the causes of global warming. In one case, they have tried to force the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act.

While these organizations called the polar bear protection a "sea change" for the administration's policies, Kempthorne disagreed, saying it had not recognized the effects of greenhouse gasses on the environment.

The proposal to place the polar bears on the endangered list is open to public comment for 90

days.

The World Conservation Union reported last month that the polar bear population is in decline. Up to 25,000 polar bears have been found in existence in the U.S., Canada, Greenland, Norway, and Russia.

The quickness of the bears' decline is directly related to the melting of sea ice which is estimated to cease to being around 2050.

This ice serves as the bears' habitat from which they hunt seals and store energy supplies in their body fat. The thinner the bears, the more likely they and their cubs will die. At least three instances of cannibalism have been seen among the polar bear population.

Clear Channel Caves In To Keep Air America In Madison

MADISON, Wis. — Clear Channel Radio gave a re-gift of sorts to the City of Madison, Wis. days before Christmas.

The San Antonio-based media giant caved in to intense local pressure to keep its Air America Radio affiliate on the air.

The group had planned to change the liberal talk format to Fox Sports Radio on The Mic 92.1 FM come Jan. 1.

Clear Channel Communications, Inc. is the nation's largest radio station operator with almost 1,200 radio stations.

Through petitions, emails, phone calls, and rallies, thousands of protestors called for the station WXXM-FM to remain the same. One rally featured a mock funeral for the station.

Clear Channel insisted that the two-year-old station was losing money from low advertiser support, though it was earning high ratings.

The Air America Radio group filed for bankruptcy two months ago. The Madison station is one of the most popular of the group's affiliates which was launched to counter right-wing talk shows.

Local business leaders are said to have pledged more advertising to the Madison station.

Pentagon Eyes Recruiting Foreigners

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Pentagon is considering the recruitment of non-citizens to fill the thinning ranks in the U.S. military.

Criticism of the proposal is already bustling inside the armed forces.

One Army official anonymously told the Boston Globe that the move would signal "the decline of the American empire."

Still, the idea is said to be increasingly popular within the military community since the armed forces have not suffered to meet their recruiting goals for months.

The conservative Washington, D.C.-based think tank the American Enterprise Institute supports the idea of foreigners serving in the military as a way to address problems related to immigration and military recruitment.

The Bush administration has admitted that the troop population would have to grow in order to compensate for the stains on soldiers that have served in multiple overseas campaigns.

The incoming Democrats in Congress

have placed top priority on increasing the military's troop levels.

The terms "breaking point" and U.S. military have been circulating around Washington in recent months.

The price tags to recruit, train, and equip 30,000 troops and 5,000 Marines is in the billions.

Specifics on the foreigner recruitment proposal have been kept away from public earshot, though one item on the table calls for citizenship procedures to hasten for noncitizens willing to voluntarily serve in the U.S. military.

Military statistics show that legal immigrants in uniform have jumped from 750 in 2001 to about 4,600 last year. About two percent of the current active-duty force are noncitizens.

Roughly 100 noncitizens U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

President Ford Called Iraq War 'Big Mistake'

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Former President Gerald Ford "very strongly" disagreed to President George W. Bush's insistence to invade Iraq in 2003, calling the decision a "big mistake" based on the facts at the time.

A taped interview released by THE WASHINGTON POST two days after Ford's death found the ex-president also placing blame on Bush's advisors.

"(Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld and (Vice President Dick) Cheney and the president made a big mistake in justifying going into the war in Iraq. They put the emphasis on weapons of mass destruction," Ford said.

"I don't think I would have ordered the Iraq war. I would have maximized our effort through sanctions, through restrictions, whatever, to find another answer," he added, during the four-hour interview.



Ford, who died at his home in California at 93, gave his opinion to journalist Bob Woodward back in July 2004, a year and four months after the invasion of Iraq. Ford instructed Woodward to publish his remarks after his death.

Woodward and his partner Carl Bernstein helped to uncover the Watergate scandal that forced President Richard Nixon

to resign

Ford served out the remain two years of Nixon's term as president.

Ford said he worked well with both Cheney and Rumsfeld, but up until his death disagreed with their policies.

"He (Cheney) was an excellent chief of staff. First class," Ford said. "But I think Cheney has become much more pugnacious" as vice president.



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BEST AND WORST OF 2006

The Iconoclasts of the Year are:

Those lonely souls who never sucked up to Karl Rove's propaganda war.

While we could probably name in this limited space those who did not duck out on their public responsibilities back when the pollsters blessed the administration's Iraqi misadventure, it would serve our readers better to

Iconoclast

name some of those who goose-stepped along with Neighbor Bush in the name of political expediency.

Among those who knew better and still joined the parade: Sens. Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, John Kerry, Tom Daschle, John McCain, Evan Bayh, Joseph Biden, Arlen Specter, Harry M. Reid, Richard A. Gephardt, Charles Rangel and Joe Lieberman, to name far too few.

Of course an anti-war record does not a hero make, but this issue has illustrated how little actual principal lies on the horizon.

There remains an array of issues that the "opposition" has sopped up like spilled gravy from Bush's train:

- Job exports. There is no serious effort to tax companies who counter a living wage for American workers with sweatshops overseas. Yet it costs Americans and America billions annually to retrain. Then tax revenues suffer as these wage earners take lower paying "service sector" jobs.

- Job imports. Fearing a loss of the Spanish surname vote, which Democrats have taken for granted, the party has remained cravenly silent on this issue. No one has suggested a joint minimum wage agreement with Mexico, compulsory imprisonment for exploitive employers, dual citizenship or even more realistic immigration standards that respect brown-and white-skinned families alike.

- Education. There is no real question that learning in America has deteriorated abysmally since the Reagan reform. The right wing's de-educating of America is among the Democrats' worst suck-up. We need to abandon standardized testing and resume the vocational and pragmatic education programs that Reagan destroyed, taking education out of the hands of politicians and enabling, indulgent parents, returning it to professional educators.

- Real tax reform. Triple taxes for those earning more than \$500,000 per year. Base taxation on family income, rather than accounting tricks. Restructure corporate taxation and cut taxes on wages by half. Reduce or eliminate taxes on small business, moving the incentives from megalithic corporations to smaller, more employee-friendly companies.

- Government contracts. Audit all private industry contracts with federal, state and local government. Can-

cel all those that cannot reduce costs by 20 percent or more and return those to civil service. Cancel all non-union privatization.

- Environment. Subsidize efficient, clean energy systems state-by-state as needed. Freeze construction on carbon-creating and nuclear-power systems. Beef up auto fuel economy standards. Enact conservation programs and begin restructuring distribution systems that emphasize local, small business production.

- Healthcare. We need a national health care system free of insurance company control or influence. Institute a federal single-payer health insurance system, like Medicare.

- Electoral independence. The security and even the validity balloting is virtually non-existent. We computerized out electoral procedure to create better television shows, and opened the ballot box to hackers and, subsequently, to the highest bidders. There is no reason to have ballots counted instantaneously.

A return to paper ballots and hand counting will not be fool-proof, but at least it is policable.

America is being reduced to Third World economic status by the fascist model that our elected officials have engineered. Our military is rented, cheaply, to provide security for international business, and we are being taxed to generate propaganda so that we, the people, have no notion whether any threat is real or merely more economic adventurism.

The working class has less access to health care, less job security and less chance to better the lives of their children than at any time in our history.

If the Bush fear-mongering has proved anything, it is how much courage and integrity we have lost on either side of the aisle.

Written By Don M. Fisher, Associate Editor

Icon of the Year:

The Texas Democratic Party Leadership

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST'S "Icon of the Year" for 2006 goes to the Texas Democratic Party and its financiers.

These backroom elitists have let down not only the people of Texas but, incidentally, the world by conceding more power to the Republican culture of corruption this election year.

The state party leadership worked in collaboration to abandon the Democratic candidates running for statewide offices, and, to make matters worse, they gloated about it in the mainstream Texas press right after the election.

Their excuses for doing so are exasperating, if not insane, since the decision was hatched back in 2005, a full year before the state

Trust went to any of the statewide Democratic candidates. The rest of the cash was spent to win seats in the Texas Legislature through the House Democratic Campaign Committee (HDCC).

The Lone Star Project is headed by Matt Angle, a longtime aide to former U.S. Rep. Martin Frost, a conservative Democrat from Dallas. The HDCC is chaired by state Representatives Jim Dunnam, Garnet F. Coleman, and Pete P. Gallegos.

Baron and his vassals — some of whom are a part of the Texas trial lawyer lobby — can do as they want with their money, and this is precisely the point.

According to this cabal's very lips, their plan was executed in the name of "party rebuilding" — to prepare for future Democratic wins. In reality, they left the defeatist atmosphere among the grassroots in place.

For example, the media's chorus, "There were no credible state-wide Democratic candidates!" was left totally unchallenged by the party's publicity machine over the course of the election season.

Even the fund-raising campaign led by state party chairman Boyd Richie, however noble, was too little, too late.

And it's not as though the Texas Democratic Party was unaware of the criminal behavior coming from the top ranks of the Texas GOP through the press. There was no effort to harness it to get the state-wide Democratic candidates elected.

The Texas Democratic Party had plenty of time to take political advantage of President George W. Bush's "war on everything in creation," the campaign finance scandal involving former House Speaker Tom Delay, and the backlash surrounding Gov. Rick Perry's Trans-Texas Corridor project — just to name a few hot buttons.

The consequences of this free pass: Perry and the other Republican state-office holders will have a four-year field day, cutting state government through the bone like good little corporatists as they have since 1994.

Any failure to challenge the fascists in the Texas GOP throws support to the status quo that, among other things, directs more campaign dollars to national politicians than local leaders. Moreover, it desecrates the spirit of party founders Thomas Jefferson and Sam Houston.

In a word, the Texas Democratic Party needs new dancing partners to take the lead. Until then, the heart of the world's corporate power structure remains as strong as ever here in Texas.

Greed marches on.
Written By Nathan Diebenow, Associate Editor



Democratic primaries.

To the candidates and the state Democratic precinct chairs, it was all a matter of turning out the vote to get Democrats elected this past November, but retired Dallas trial lawyer Fred Baron and his cronies had other plans. They left the grassroots out of the loop entirely.

More than \$1.4 million from Baron's two-year-old private political action committee — the Texas Democratic Trust — went to increasing the staffing and overhead costs for the state party's offices, message creation from the Texas Progress Council, and research gathering from the Lone Star Project.

Save \$25,000 for Democratic nominee Chris Bell in a field of five gubernatorial candidates, not a cent from the

CONCRETE & STEEL
DON'T CARE WHETHER THEY MAKE A
SCHOOL or a **PRISON** but...

SHOULDN'T YOU?



THE STATS

There are **2 million people** locked up in federal, state, and county facilities. More than **6 million people** are in parole or probation.

The United States **incarcerates more people** than any other country in the world.

Every day in the United States **200 new jail cells** are constructed.

Black people are **7.8 times more likely to be imprisoned** than whites when convicted of the same crime.

AN EXPENSIVE PRICE TO PAY

Prisons cost taxpayers over **\$32 billion** a year.

Every year that an inmate spends in prison costs \$22,000; **The cost of a full life term averages \$1.5 million.**

Over the course of the last 20 years, the amount of money spent on **prisons increased by 570%** while that spent on elementary and secondary **education increased by only 33%.**

GET INVOLVED! Check out www.adpsr.org for information about how you can join the prison boycott campaign and contribute to social justice in the U.S.

The Marijuana-Marlboro® Paradox

In a landmark drug case decided on March 21, 2000, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not have jurisdiction over tobacco products and, hence, has no authority to regulate cigarettes, including advertising targeted at minors. The Court's opinion shines a light on the dumbfounding contradictions in our national drug policy, which drastically distinguishes (legal) drugs such as nicotine and alcohol, from drugs such as marijuana on which we've declared "war."

The Supreme Court's ruling stemmed from a 1996 FDA rule in which the FDA, for the first time, declared that nicotine is "drug" and that cigarettes and smokeless tobacco are "drug delivery devices," which it has the power to regulate. According to the 1996 FDA rule, nicotine is a "drug" under the agency's purview because it "exerts psychoactive, or mood-altering effects on the brain" and these effects are "intended" by those who manufacture tobacco products. Thus, held the agency, it could regulate tobacco products and would do so immediately by limiting promotion, labeling, and selling of tobacco products to minors. A coalition of tobacco manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers, sued the FDA, asserting that nicotine is not a "drug" and that the FDA, therefore, lacked jurisdiction to regulate tobacco products.

In order to understand the FDA's 1996 rule, it's necessary to know a bit about its tobacco policy up until that time. Prior to 1996, the FDA had consistently held that it lacked jurisdiction over tobacco, an understanding affirmed by Congress, which over the years, rejected several bills that would have explicitly given the FDA jurisdiction over tobacco products. Thus, up until 1996, tobacco products were exclusively regulated by Congress. In 1965, for example, it was Congress, not the FDA, that required all cigarettes packs to carry the warning "Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Dangerous to Your Health." (Pub. L. 89-92, Sec. 4, 79 Stat. 283). Similarly, in 1969 it was Congress, not the FDA, that banned all radio and television advertising of cigarettes.

Indeed, prior to its 1996 about-face, the FDA had long held that cigarettes were not "drugs" within its purview, unless the manufactures made health or therapeutic claims—something that not even the tobacco companies were ready to assert.* In 1996, to the surprise of many, the FDA reversed itself, ruling that nicotine is a "drug." To justify its change of position, the FDA extensively documented the dangers associated with tobacco products, noting that "[m]ore than 400,000 people die each year from tobacco-related illnesses, such as cancer, respiratory illnesses, and heart disease, often suffering long and painful deaths," and that "[t]obacco kills more people each year in the United States than acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), car accidents, alcohol, homicides, illegal drugs, suicides, and fires, combined." (61 Fed. Reg. 44412, 44398 (1996))

The FDA recognized, however, that it was forced into a paradoxical position. The FDA's core objective is to ensure that any product within its regulatory power is "safe and effective." Given that it had just documented the dangers associated with tobacco use, how could it possibly declare cigarettes and other tobacco products safe? It seemed that if the FDA claimed jurisdiction over tobacco products it would have no choice but to ban them altogether. Yet, a little known federal law prevents such a ban, largely for economic reasons:

[t]he marketing of tobacco constitutes one of the greatest basic industries of the United States with ramifying activities which directly affect interstate and foreign commerce at every point, and stable conditions therein are necessary to the general welfare. (7 USC Sec. 1311a)

The only way out of the paradox was for cigarettes to be *both* dangerous "drugs" (thereby giving the FDA jurisdiction over them) yet also "safe" (so that the FDA would not be forced to ban them). The FDA's lawyers rose to the occasion.

The FDA lawyers realized that everything turned on the meaning of "safe." Cigarettes, said the FDA lawyers, were "unsafe, as that term is conventionally understood," but were indeed "safe" when the effects of an outright ban were considered. (61 Fed. Reg. 44412, 1996) According to the FDA, in determining whether a drug delivery device such as a cigarette is "safe" under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act, the agency must consider "not only the risks presented by a product but also any of the countervailing effects of use of the product, including the consequences of not permitting the product to be marketed." (61 Fed. Reg. 44412-44413, 1996)

As summarized by the Supreme Court::

... the FDA found that, because of the high level of addiction among tobacco users, a ban would likely be "dangerous." ...In particular, current tobacco users could suffer from extreme withdrawal, the health care system and available pharmaceuticals might not be able to meet the treatment demands of those suffering from withdrawal, and a black market offering cigarettes even more dangerous than those currently sold legally would likely develop. ...The FDA therefore concluded that, 'while taking cigarettes and smokeless tobacco off the market could prevent some people from becoming addicted and reduce death and disease for others, the record does not establish that such a ban is the appropriate health response under the act.' ... *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.* (98-1152)

Thus, in 1996, the FDA ruled that cigarettes and other tobacco products, despite being addictive and dangerous, were "safe" when compared to the much greater dangers associated with prohibition. Thus, the FDA could have its cake and eat it too; cigarettes were "drugs" within its jurisdiction, yet "safe," so long as they were *not* prohibited.

On March 21, 2000, in an opinion rich with contradictions when tobacco policy is compared with the national War on Drugs, the Supreme Court ruled that the FDA does *not* have jurisdiction over nicotine and tobacco. Congress, not the FDA, said the Court, is in charge of regulating tobacco products. The Supreme Court refused to let the FDA escape the paradox. According to the Supreme Court, either cigarettes were unsafe drugs within the FDA's jurisdiction, in which case they must be *banned*, or they were not "drugs" at all. The Supreme Court chose the latter.

As the Supreme Court explained:

...were the FDA to regulate cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, the [Food, Drug, and Cosmetic] Act would require the agency to ban them. In fact, .the FDA itself has taken the position that if tobacco products were within its jurisdiction, 'they would have to be removed from the market because it would be impossible to prove that they were safe for their intended us[er].' *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.* (98-1152)

As a recent examination of national drug policy, the Supreme Court's opinion strips the emperor of his clothes, and the process as well as the result is embarrassing to look at. On the one hand the federal government permits adults to use nicotine, while on the other hand, it makes them criminals if they smoke marijuana—even for medicinal reasons.

A study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, in 1983 concluded that cigarette smoking is "the most widespread example of drug dependence in our country," and that cigarettes "affect the chemistry of the brain and nervous system."** Five years later the Surgeon General's Report used even harsher language, concluding that tobacco products "are addicting" and that "nicotine is psychoactive" and "causes physical dependence characterized by a withdrawal symptom" in much the same way as heroin and cocaine. (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction* 6-9, 14-15, 145-239, 1988)

Marijuana, in stark contrast, causes no physical dependence. In fact, in 1989 the DEA's own administrative law judge, Francis L. Young, declared that marijuana is "one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man."*** Yet, while any adult can walk down to the corner store and buy a pack of cigarettes, marijuana (even for medical use), remains a Schedule I substance—illegal to possess for any reason under federal law.

Likewise, the cognitive enhancing drug MDMA (ecstasy) is extremely popular right now, yet because the government has declared it illegal, users are forced to purchase it on the black-market. MDMA users never know for sure if the drug they are buying is indeed MDMA, or some other drug or combination of potentially dangerous drugs. Additionally, because MDMA is outlawed, the price of the drug is artificially inflated to the point where (according to the government) organized crime is getting involved in its distribution. Prohibiting MDMA and marijuana produces all the same problems that we saw 70 years ago during alcohol Prohibition—problems that are much greater than the problems caused by the drugs themselves.

As discussed earlier, the FDA in 1996 determined that banning cigarettes would actually increase individual and social harm rather than reducing it. This very same reasoning should be applied to other drugs (such as MDMA and marijuana) that the government has declared full-scale war on.

It's clear to any reasonable person who examines our nation's drug policy, that it is riddled with contradictions and outright hypocrisy. The only way out of the so-called Drug War conundrum is to for our society-at-large, and legislators in particular, to adopt a more mature view of drugs. Going to "war" on drugs is infantile. A national policy of intolerance (i.e., "zero-tolerance") rather than respect, lies at the root of all our drug problems—both legal and illegal. Rather than cower in the shadows of "just say no" propaganda and hypocritically proclaim marijuana a dangerous drug that threatens to destroy our society, while simultaneously employing contortionist reasoning to keep cigarettes on the market, we should acknowledge that people have a natural drive to experience multiple modes of consciousness. The government should accept this as a fact and begin designing drug policy that makes drug use as safe as possible. If (as Justice Brennan wrote in his dissenting opinion filed in the case), tobacco policy should "take into account the realities of human behavior," why should our policy with respect to other drugs be any different?

Adults ought to have the right, after all to control their own bodies and minds – and our national drug policy should respect an adult's autonomy over his or her own body and mind. Some may choose to smoke cigarettes, while others will choose to smoke marijuana. Smoking one plant versus another should not be a crime. No one should be made a criminal just for his or her mind state. All should be permitted, so long as the person does not harm others. Any policy short of this—any policy built on intolerance rather than respect—is destined to lead to a host of absurdities and negative social consequences such as: prison over-crowding, unjust sentences, misdirection of funds away from schools in order to build more prisons, property forfeiture, kids dying of adulterated "black market" drugs, organized crime, sick people denied medicine, helicopters hovering overhead, men in black bashing down the doors of decent people, and corrupt cops. These problems are produced not by drugs themselves, but by our immature drug policy.

Making an adult a felon for taking a hit of marijuana rather than smoking a Marlboro® is irrational. The fact of the matter is that millions of people enjoy using psychoactive drugs such as nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, marijuana and MDMA. The government should not be in the business of telling adults what they can or cannot put in their mouths, or declaring, under threat of imprisonment, loss of property and heavy fines, that its okay to operate your mind with the benefit of one plant but not another. What goes on inside any given person's body and mind ought to be nobody's business but that person's.

Lets replace the value of intolerance with one of respect, and instead of demanding that people "just say no," acknowledge that adults have the basic human right to control their own bodies *and* minds, so long as they do not harm others.

Prohibition is not only passé, it's bad policy.

Notes

*See Cigarette Labeling and Advertising—1965: Hearings on H.R. 2248 before the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., 193; Letter to Directors of Bureaus, Divisions and Directors of Districts, from FDA Bureau of Enforcement (May 24, 1963), in 1972 Hearings 240 ["[T]obacco marketed for chewing or smoking without accompanying therapeutic claims, does not meet the definitions in the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act for food, drug, device, or cosmetic"].

** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, "Why People Smoke Cigarettes" (1983), in Smoking Prevention Education Act, Hearings on H.R. 1824 before the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, 98th Cong., 1st Sess., 32-37 (1983).

*** *In the Matter of Marijuana Rescheduling, Docket 86-22, Opinion, Recommended Ruling, Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Decision of Administrative Law Judge*, Washington, DC: Drug Enforcement Administration (6 September 1988).

Saddam Hanged Under New Iraqi Authority

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Deposed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging on Friday.

Days before his hanging, a former Vatican envoy to the United Nations condemned the death penalty in Hussein's case.

Cardinal Renato Martino in an interview with the daily *La Repubblica* reiterated his denomination's stance that the execution would be against church doctrine.

"The death penalty is not a natural death. And no one can

give death, not even the State," he said.

Hussein's appeal was rejected last Tuesday. On Nov. 5, he was sentenced to death for 148 killings in Dujail, Iraq, in 1982.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said Friday that Saddam's sentence could not be stopped or delayed any longer. The new Iraqi state has 30 days in which to hang the former leader.

Hussein's chief lawyer Khalil

al-Dulaimi has called for the international community to save his client on grounds that he is a prisoner of war that cannot be handed over to his enemies under international law.

Hussein was in the custody of the U.S. military before being handed over to local authorities on the day of his execution, according to reports.

The day after his appeal was rejected, a letter written by Hussein in prison was released

stating that he would gladly die as a martyr for his country. He added that his people should not enter into violence on his behalf.

However, members of his former political party — the Baath Party — gave a warning via the Internet that should Hussein's execution be carried out, they would retaliate against the United States.

The Baath Party was disbanded after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

DATELINE:

Crawford

Hometown of the President of the United States

LeDay Earns BSIS From SFA

NACOGDOCHES — Pamela Denise LeDay of Crawford received a BSIS degree in interdisciplinary studies from

Stephen F. Austin State University during commencement exercises, held Dec. 16, in William R. Johnson Coliseum.

Obituaries

Pete Matlage

A funeral service was held on Friday, Dec. 29, at Grace Community Church, for Pete Matlage, 78, who passed away Dec. 25, at Eastern New Mexico Medical Center. Rick Hale officiated. Private family burial was conducted at South Park Cemetery.

Matlage was born on April 21, 1928 to Henry and Mary Matlage in Crawford. He was the youngest of eleven children. His parents precede him in death as well as five brothers and four sisters.

He married Genevieve Taylor on June 23, 1953 in Quanah. His wife preceded him in death on Thanksgiving Day 1986.

Matlage was a veteran of the United States Army serving during the Korean Conflict and he was proud of being a Charter Member of Grace Community Church.

He was a well respected coach having a great passion for football in Roswell. He transformed losing football programs into city championship titles year after year at Yucca and Mesa Junior High Schools. Those who knew him best said that he touched the lives of young boys as he coached with discipline, love, and care. Many of his former players have achieved successful and rewarding careers because of his influence.

Following his retirement in 1984 he enjoyed his daily outings with his 6 a.m. golfing buddies, listening to country music, playing the stock market, and horse racing. He enjoyed traveling with family and friends and he most loved the times he spent with his children and grandchildren.

Matlage was proud of his German heritage, that he was from Crawford, and that his family's home place is a neighbor to President Bush's residence.

Family members said that Matlage was well loved by all that knew him and always greeted everyone with a smile and a friendly word. On Christmas day he received the greatest gift of all, being in the presence of God and reunited with his sweetheart, Genevieve.

He is survived by his son, Dr. Glenn Matlage and wife Tina of Roswell, N.M.; his daughter, Dr. Carol Herrington and husband Jim of Palestine; his sister, Dorothy Bankston of Lawrenceville, Ga.; his grandchildren, Meredith and Aaron Matlage and Brent Herrington.

In lieu of flowers, the family request that memorial contributions be made to Grace Community Church, 935 W. Mescalero, Roswell, N.M. 88201; or The Cowboy Bell Scholarship Fund of the First United Methodist Church, 200 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Roswell, N.M. 88201.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Ballard Funeral Home and Crematory. An online registry can be accessed at www.ballardfuneralhome.com.



Dollar Losing To Euro In World Circulation

FRANKFURT, Germany — A new report from The Financial Times states that world powers are circulating more euros than U.S. dollars.

At the end of this year, the report says, the dollar will probably lose its value to the euro.

This past October, it was estimated that

roughly \$759 billion in U.S. dollars were circulated. The Times report indicates that the euro will reach \$800 billion by Dec. 31.

Be that as it may, the world's most popular reserve currency is the U.S. dollar.

The euro was launched on Jan. 1, 2002, and has grown in value ever since as Europe's currency.

Getting Smart: The Drama Continues In Ellis County

By MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

WAXAHACHIE — Phil Smart, the CPA whose incarceration during the recent election caused comment, sparking protests and raising questions regarding law enforcement practices in Ellis County, was served by mail with a summons postmarked Dec. 19, it was learned Monday.

The summons, according to Smart, was misaddressed but arrived despite that.

Smart noted that summons was left unsigned, but the name of Patricia Marshall, Court Coordinator, was cited as having issued the document. The cause numbers, listed as 0612708 and 0612709, cited two charges, one for "Possession of Dangerous Drugs" and the other for "Possession of Controlled Substances PG3."

Smart indicated that receipt of the summons was upsetting, since he had hoped that this was now behind him.

The drug charges seemingly refer to earlier events that took place at the time Smart was incarcerated for stopping six inches into an intersection in early October.

Smart says he was pulled over by law enforcement in early October for stopping just inside a crosswalk late one night at a dark and unoccupied intersection. The police car, Smart said, had been following him for some time and was behind him when he came to a full stop.

Smart went on to reiterate that when asked by officer permission to search the car, Smart refused, that being his right under the law. In response the officer placed him under arrest immediately and proceeded to search his car without a warrant.

According to Smart, the search revealed Smart's pill minder, in which he keeps the daily doses of his prescription drugs. Smart, who was

running on the Libertarian ticket for State Senate, 22nd District, at the time, said he was incarcerated for failing to have the pills in the bottles issued by the pharmacy and spent 20 days in solitary confinement. Smart had been incarcerated during a previous candidacy in 2004.

Phil Smart was not charged for the possession of illicit drugs in the October 2006 incident. His mother, Jesse Smart, said that she was informed that the charges were dropped after the faxed prescriptions were received by the District Attorney, Joe Grubbs. This was delayed, she reported, because the probation officer, Jeff Roney, who received the faxed prescriptions from their pharmacist, Rudy Smith, failed to pass these on to the Dis-

trict Attorney when this was done the first time, the day after Smart was incarcerated. According to Mrs. Smart, Rudy Smith faxed the prescriptions again 10 days later directly to the office of the District Attorney Grubbs. She reported that after that she was informed that the charges had been dropped.

While in jail at the Ellis County Correctional Facility Smart reports he was charged with the failure to stop appropriately at the stop sign only; the drug charges were not mentioned.

An official who heard the charges in the hallway at the jail told Smart to pay the \$80 fine for the traffic violation, says Smart, who noted that he paid the fine as soon as he was allowed to do so. Smart reported that he was never given a court date or allowed a trial, which he would have asked for, he said.

Smart said the judge seemed puzzled as to why he would have been jailed for a minor traffic violation.

On Jan. 4 the hearing will be presided over by Judge A. County Court at Law # 2, Gene Calvert, Jr., at 9 a.m. at the Courthouse in Ellis County, according to the summons.



Phil Smart

Corps Releases New Waco Lake Gate Schedules

FORT WORTH — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, will utilize a separate summer and winter gate schedule at Bosque Park and the Waco Dam Hike and

Bike Trail entrances beginning in 2007. These changes will help with management of the parks for the hours when the majority of people like to use the facilities.

Between November and March, the gates will remain open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., while from April through October the

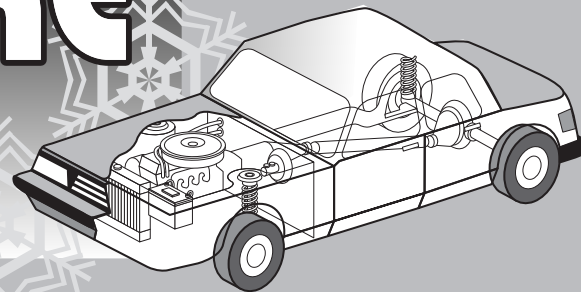
gates will open at 6 a.m. and close at 10 p.m. to accommodate longer summer month daylight hours. Changes go into effect

Jan. 1, 2007.

For more information, contact the Waco Lake office at (254) 756-5359.

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STILL CHANTING, peace activist Cindy Sheehan was escorted away from the barricade outside the Bush Ranch and into a police car and transported to McLennan County Jail. She was arrested for civil disobedience.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



MAKING A PILE — Five protestors were arrested on Thursday for crossing into a restricted area at the barricade outside the Bush Ranch. Handcuffed are Cindy Sheehan, Jerri Reed, Dede Miller, and Carl Rising-Moore.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

'Peace Surge' Ends With Five Arrested

BY DEBORAH MATHEWS
STAFF WRITER

CRAWFORD — Protesting for what Gold Star Families for Peace mom Cindy Sheehan calls a "Peace Surge," she joined a large group of activists outside the Western White House during the President's National Security Council meeting of Dec. 28. Sheehan and four other protestors were arrested for civil disobedience.

While chanting "arrest bloody George!" at the barricade to the Presidential ranch on Prairie Chapel Road, peace activists Carl Rising-Moore, Jerry Fonseca, Jerri Reed, and Dede Miller were arrested with Sheehan.

The demonstrations began after activists shuttled out to the barricade and began displaying their anti-war signs. Most of the protestors chanted and waved the signs at passing cars.



BUSH LIED. THOUSANDS DIED. — Peace activist Jerry Fonseca was joined by fellow protestors at the Prairie Chapel Road barricade on Thursday. He was one of five that were arrested after entering a restricted area.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

Sheehan had announced earlier that she planned to be "not so nice anymore." In what she called a nonviolent protest, she said that protestors needed to be more confrontational.

She reminded those present that the elected leaders are "our employees" and that they need to be held accountable for their actions.

Describing what she hoped would be an effort to "ramp up" protest efforts around the country, Sheehan said that the meetings at the Presidential ranch should have a voice of reason and common sense present.

"Otherwise," she said, "the war mongers and murderers will just rubber stamp something that's already decided."

Among the protestors were Sheehan's son, Andy, and Dr. Allan Northcott of the Waco Friends of Peace.

Fonsecca escalated the protest by using a bull horn to read aloud an open letter to the National Security Council that began:

We the people of Camp Casey together with 88 percent of Americans who are rightfully convinced that an increase of troops in Iraq would be the tragically wrong thing to do and the 70 percent of Americans who believe the troops should be

withdrawn from the Middle East within six months are here to urge you not to put a 'surge' of troops into Iraq.

The letter, signed 'The Camp Casey Peace Institute,' ended with:

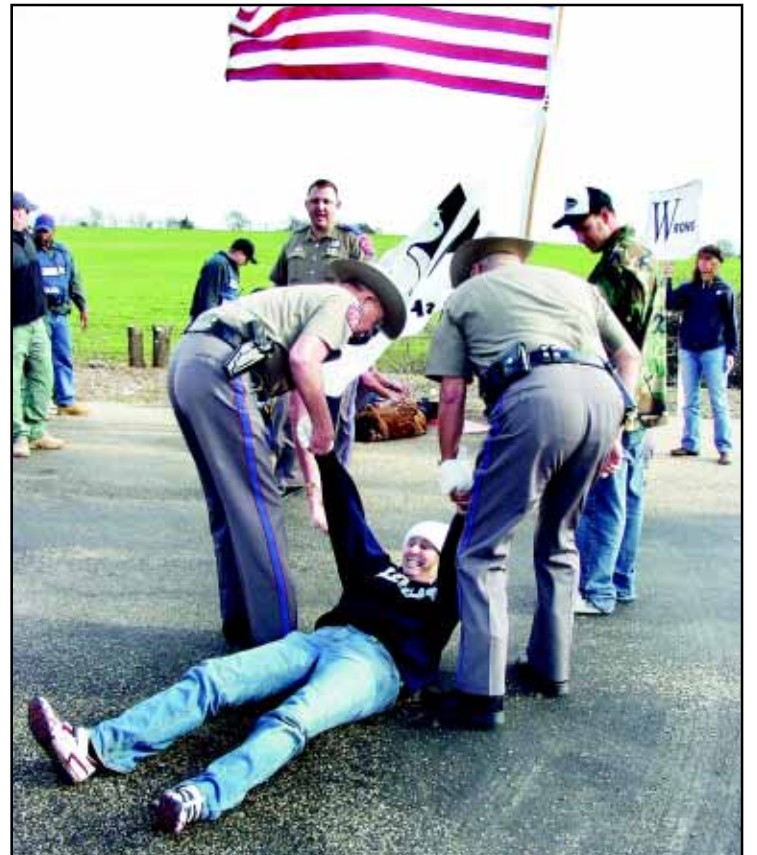
Today, your employers are beginning a 'Peace Surge' and our efforts to end the carnage will intensify if your efforts to increase the carnage continue unabated.

Continued On Next Page



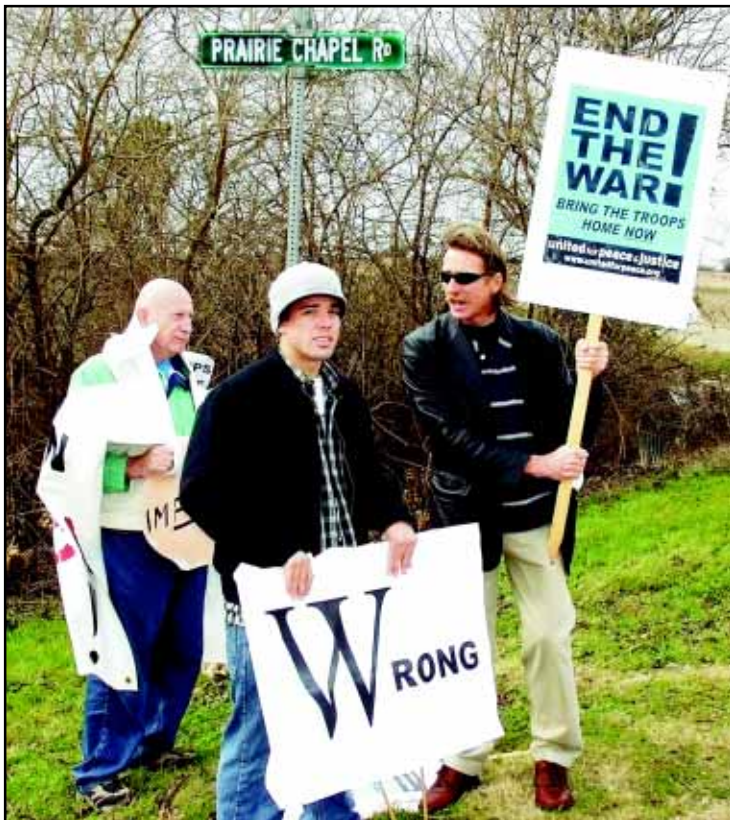
TAKING UP THE FIGHT — Joining his peace activist mom Cindy Sheehan to protest outside the Western White House on Thursday was Andy Sheehan. He carried both the American and Veterans For Peace flags in the strong Texas winds while waving a peace sign to all passing cars.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



TAKE ME AWAY — Cindy Sheehan forced officers to remove her from the restricted area that she and other protestors entered in order to protest the war in Iraq.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



PRAIRIE CHAPEL ROAD was once again the site of anti-war demonstrations. Protestors Chris Kyde (center) and Dr. Allan Northcott (right) joined the protests on Thursday.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



ARMED WITH SIGNS and the determination to be arrested, peace protestors gathered at Camp Casey III before heading out to Prairie Chapel Road.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

FIVE ARRESTED

From Previous Page

Without warning, Fonseca walked into the restricted area inside the barricade and laid on the ground. He was immediately

joined by the other four.

Texas Highway Patrolmen instructed the protestors to move to the outside of the blockade and when they refused, the arrests began. All five protestors that were arrested forced law

enforcement officials to forcibly remove them from the area.

Sitting in handcuffs just inside the barricade, Sheehan said, "They should arrest the serial murderer George Bush instead of us."



BELOW THE AMERICAN FLAG, peace protestor Jerry Fonseca was the second of five arrested on Thursday by McLennan County Sheriff's Deputies for civil disobedience.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



ARRANGING BAIL — With handcuffs preventing her to use the phone, Dede Miller was assisted by Andy Sheehan, the son of peace activist Cindy Sheehan.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews



WITH ABSOLUTE DETERMINATION, peace protestors (from left) Dede Miller, Jerri Reed, Jerry Fonseca (lying), Carl Rising-Moore, and Cindy Sheehan were arrested at the barricade to the Bush Ranch on Thursday while protesting a troop push into Iraq.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

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Wal-Mart Refuses To Drop Religious War Game

BENTONVILLE, Ark. — Retail chain giant Wal-Mart before Christmas refused to pull a video game that promotes religious warfare against non-Christians.

The refusal came after two Christian groups called for the game to be removed from shelves.

The game — *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* — is based on a popular book series that loosely

interprets the Bible's Book of Revelation.

The game's producers argue that its product promotes pacifism since players lose points by not converting them to Christianity.

The leaders of the Campaign to Defend the Constitution (CDC) and the Christian Alliance for Progress (CAP) disagreed, stating that the game's message is one of religious in-

tolerance and violent, though no blood is shed in the game.

A spokesman for Wal-Mart said that the chain had not received any complaints from its consumers. The game can also be purchased at over 10,000 retailers including Best Buy and Target.

Between the CDC and the CAP, they have about 130,000 members who have stood against the political actions of

the religious right since 2005.

The game itself has been described as similar to strategy board games like "Risk." The enemies in the game include fictional musicians and others that have Arab and Muslim-sounding names.

Since they do not believe in Christ, Muslims are not on his winning side, according to the game's spokesperson.

"As you may know, Muslims

do in fact revere Jesus as one of God's prophets," wrote Nihad Awad, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), in a letter to Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott Jr.

"In the post 9-11 climate, when improving interfaith relations should be a priority for all, this type of product only serves to dehumanize others and increase interfaith hostility and mistrust," Awad added.

AT&T Backs Net Neutrality In Merger Deal

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As a part of conditions for an upcoming merger, AT&T vowed to support "network neutrality" and guarantee low-cost DSL access to its customers for 30 months.

"This will be a win for the public. By holding AT&T's feet to the fire and demanding the Internet remain neutral, the FCC can maintain a level playing field for all," said Mark Cooper, director of research, Consumer Federation of America.

By backing network neutrality, the San Antonio-based media giant would be unable to

turn the Internet into a tollway by charging online businesses and consumers higher prices for faster services.

The deal ended a three-month stalemate in negotiations, the turning point of which came when FCC Commissioner Robert McDowell abstained from voting. McDowell once worked for telecom companies as a lobbyist.

The AT&T's agreement came in a letter filed with the Federal Communications Commission last week.

Gene Kimmelman, Vice President of the Consumers Union, noted that while the AT&T/Bell

South merger endangers long-term competition, the FCC might offer consumers protections for low-cost Internet telephone service to broadband. The effect would pressure the market to lower prices for all telecom services.

"And those consumers who cannot afford DSL today, or who cannot afford to pay AT&T's high package fees for combined Internet and phone service, might now be able to get fast connections to the Internet at a reasonable price," said Kimmelman.

In its merger deal, AT&T promised to sell fast Internet

service (DSL) for \$20 a month without mandating that its customers to purchase phone service. It also agreed to repatriate 3,000 jobs BellSouth had shipped overseas and locate at least 500 of these repatriated jobs in New Orleans.

The merger deal itself is expected to top \$85 billion — the largest in telecommunications history.

In effect, AT&T would see its services extended to 22 states, along with Cingular Wireless LLC under its control. The company would also have the ability to compete with cable corporations that sell phone service and

Internet access.

Media watchdog group Free Press praised FCC Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein for sticking to their guns to set this "important precedent" that protects Network Neutrality.

"It will be up to the new Congress to craft a forward-looking broadband policy that will bring the benefits of the Internet to all Americans. For free speech, democratic participation and economic innovation to thrive online, Net Neutrality must be the law," said Ben Scott, Free Press policy director.

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Ford Joins Nixon In Hell

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "It's easy to become the finest feller anybody ever knowed. Just die."

Gerald Ford my ass. Make that my Aunt Rawannie's blind mule.

Which Uncle Hugh sold four times.

Twice to the same guy.

Second time Hugh convinced him the mule wasn't blind at all. It just didn't give a damn.

So let us pay tribute to blind mules.

Of which Gerald R. Ford was the best, when it comes to salesmanship.

Thought I'd gag into my Post Toasties when I read that Old Thumbhead "helped the nation heal after Watergate."

I think the writer misspelled "heel."

Ford didn't heal anybody.

He scratched the scab.

And that sheepdip about our "long national nightmare" being over?

Watergate wasn't a nightmare.

It was one of the few times in the last century when America woke up.

Ford told us to go back to sleep and made the world safe for Ronald Reagan.

Which was like making banks safe for Willie Sutton.

In all this sentimental gush about the guy who broke up the posse, we have ignored a simple truth.

Richard Nixon was a malign thug.

He was a shyster carpetbagger with a cupie doll in one hand and a glob of Vaseline in the other.

He sacrificed the Vietnamese who believed our con and four years of dead Americans on the altar of re-election.

He let the FBI into our bedrooms and the Chinese into

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



your tennis shoes.

And we will never get either out again.

He began a systematic dissolution of the American way of life that has become George Bush's magnum opus.

And Gerald Ford made sure that Nixon got away with it all.

Instead of the Nuremburg example that Tricky Dick should have been, Ford announced to the world that everyone else may commit war crimes, but America doesn't; that capitalism means profiteering on the efforts of the common man and that political expediency justifies criminality.

Ford promised in his confirmation hearing that he would not pardon Nixon.

He lied.

That makes them the same guy.

I'm glad Gerald Ford is gone, and I hope his death was accompanied by all the pain and misery that he so willingly inflicted on his countrymen.

I am NOT a nice guy,

On the other hand, James Brown died last week, and I, once a young, naive white island in a Fort Worth auditorium of wall-to-wall black faces, mourn.

He, too, was a criminal.

He got stoned and mean and sent to prison.

Nobody pardoned him.

But his legacy will always be a few minutes for the American disdained and disenfranchised to simply feel good.

Which brought him closer to heaven than Gerald Ford or Richard Nixon will ever get.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Myth or a Real Threat to Our Sovereignty?

The Security and Prosperity Partnership, an agreement President Bush, Mexico's Vicente Fox, and Canada's Paul Martin have entered, one that some call Super NAFTA, is being quietly instituted without hardly a peep from our mainstream media. It is not being held to oversight by our Congress, but bills are in Congress

now that will establish the legality of this agreement. We, the People of the United States, have not voted on it, nor do we know much about it.

I have established a website, www.theodessapatriot.com, which addresses the establishment of this agreement. You are cordially invited to review it. I think you will find it more than interesting.

Sincerely,
Faye Hall, Odessa, Texas

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Immigration Debate Should Include Infrastructure

A lot was said about amnesty prior to the November 2006 general election when neoconservative Republicans took immigration reform off the table. The focus of the debate was on fence-building, bringing in helpless troops to help guard the border, and whether foreigners here illegally should be allowed to stay or should be fined.

Nary a word was spilled about the impacts of immigration on infrastructure and establishing the number of incoming immigrants to match the capabilities of infrastructure as it stands and as it could be.

Right now, the feds, by deed, are in favor of exploitation of overseas sweat shops and a dramatic influx of cheap labor, i.e. immigrants, to bolster profits. All in the name of corporativism.

But severe damage is being done to an infrastructure not designed to accommodate so many newcomers.

Taxpayers, not the corporate benefactors, bear the brunt as:

- Schools are forced to expand by adding campuses.
- Hospitals must grow in order to see more patients, many low-paid immigrants without a means to pay the true costs.
- Cities must expand water and sewer facilities, not to mention streets.
- And jobs for Americans are lost among the spoils.

NAFTA was a crime. As is the Texas Trans-Texas Corridor, for their design is to increase immigration, provide free trade instead of fair trade, and convert the United States into a third-world country.

The business model of the United States is now one of destruction, war, unbridled poverty, and flagrant waste.

The new Congress will have an opportunity to change this, if it has the guts.

Had the billions of dollars spent on killing people, destroying property, and ruining international relationships been instead spent on harnessing new forms of energy, devising plans to make lives better for those in underdeveloped countries, and structuring immigration to fit pragmatic infrastructural capabilities, the world would be a better place.

Instead, the train wreck is just around the corner.

The Neo-cons have been digging American into a hole. Digging deeper by staying the course will not result in daylight, just a deeper darkness.

Congress must put some things in reverse, even if it means a few pro-Bush Democratic stalwarts will have to eat crow.

Here are some suggestions:

- Kill NAFTA.
- Severely punish corporations that bask in the profits gained by use of sweatshops and make it illegal.
- Develop immigration numbers based upon infrastructure and its planned expansion.
- Turn military weapons into plows and turn them loose on underdeveloped countries to relieve poverty and reduce the desire and the need for immigration.
- Build instead of tear down.
- Get out of Iraq.

The American public is tired of political gamesmanship, the Washington "country club," and the neoconservative forces of evil that have brought unbridled fascism into power.

Let's start 2007 with a new plan.

One that will restore the integrity of the United States.

— W. Leon Smith

To The Editor:

I watched a *48 Hours* program on the murder of Spc. Richard Davis and conviction for his death of three soldiers that had served with him in Iraq. I feel for all who have been so battered to pieces by this ghastly set of events.

It brought home to me anew the horror of George W. Bush's Iraqi misadventure. This slaying and these convictions can be placed at his feet.

Isolating responsibility for Richard Davis's death pretends that these soldiers could shed all scars of this hellhole and easily return to where we live in-

sulted from the violence that has embroiled their young lives.

Rather than providing the rehabilitative care that they are owed, we have instead salvaged our tender feelings in consideration of what might be an acceptably popular version of right over wrong, most protective of the greater whole and expediently necessary for good order.

In communal absolution of the sins of commission of the powers-that-be and omissions of we-the-people, three scapegoats have been easily selected from among the usual suspect and ceremonially expunged—who will miss three that lack power

and influence, have been traumatized by long standing in harms way, and had already been abandoned to the limits of their own devices. End of story.

It should not be. These young men, destined to have their lives totally destroyed, should be taken out of the prisons in which they now rot and placed into a care facility that can help them mend. If we are going to hold anyone accountable, we should start with the incompetent man whose failings have allowed this to happen—the self-proclaimed Decider.

Sam Osborne,
West Branch, IA

New Year's Resolutions

Experts in the New Year's Resolution field estimate that 25% of resolutions don't make it past January 8th. So rather than torturing ourselves by making resolutions that we may or may not be able to stick to, it's a lot easier to suggest resolutions that other people should make. And that's what I've done below:

POLITICS:

President Bush should resolve to apologize and/or admit that he's made a mistake. About anything. It doesn't even have to be in public. It could be in the privacy of his own bedroom, with his wife. Or even by himself. He'll feel better and we'll all feel better.

Nancy Pelosi should resolve that she won't allow a situation to come about in which the American people say, "I don't like this new corruption. I miss the old corruption."

Hillary Clinton should resolve to make no more campaign speeches until she announces that she's running for president.

Virginians should resolve to boot Representative Virgil H. Goode Jr. out of office for not knowing that religious freedom applies to the United States Congress.

Vice President Cheney should resolve to refrain from hunting — if there are any other people present in the same county.

Republicans should resolve not to make fun of an opponent just because he has a funny-sounding name.

Democrats should resolve not to make fun of an opponent just because he's a Republican.

Congress should resolve to not take up two days out of every week complaining about how hard it is to adjust to their new five-day work week.

FASHION:

All adult males should resolve that unless they are in the midst of playing a basketball game, they will not wear a tank top in public.

All adult women should resolve that they will not wear pants and underwear that reveal more than what working plumbers are known for when they bend over.

SPORTS:

Barry Bonds should resolve that if he breaks Henry Aaron's homerun record, in addition to his father and Willie Mays, he will thank the wonderful world of chemistry.

John Madden and other color commentators should resolve to, well, just be quiet once in a



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

while.

The media should resolve to refrain from giving any more publicity to that egomaniacal football player, Terrell... oops, almost slipped.

Those who control college sports — the television networks — should resolve to not add any new bowl games. I don't want to see the "Manny's Grill and Tire Repair Shop Bowl" brought to us in HD by Viagra.

All sports teams should resolve to get rid of any player who goes to strip clubs more often than he goes to practice.

The major sports leagues should resolve that any athlete who possesses or uses a gun illegally shall be punished by being forced to hunt next to Vice President Cheney.

Macho, sweaty athletes should resolve not to have a cologne or perfume named after them.

BROADCASTING

Every television network should resolve to have at least one executive who is old enough to vote.

Every morning news show should resolve to have at least two minutes of news out of every two hours.

SHOW BUSINESS

Donald Trump, Rosie O'Donnell, and Rush Limbaugh should resolve to think before talking — and then not talk.

Hollywood should resolve to refrain from making sequels of movies whose originals

weren't any good.

Mel Gibson should resolve to actually read that "Good Book" he talks about so much.

All female celebrities should resolve to eat at least three healthy meals — during the year.

All male celebrities should resolve not to take romantic roles opposite women young enough to be their granddaughters.

All celebrities should resolve not to give their babies names that nobody's ever heard of before.

The movie industry should resolve to hold off for at least two years before giving us another movie about penguins.

Celebrities should resolve to avoid being in public wearing less underwear than their babies are wearing at home.

Wow, that was so much easier than my resolving to clean up my office or keep my mouth shut when I think my kids are making a mistake.

If you've got some resolutions for other people that you'd like to add to the list, feel free to email me.

More importantly, I'd like us all to resolve to have a happy, healthy, and peaceful year.

Lloyd

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

'Bratz' Makers Earn 17 Cents Per Doll

NEW YORK — A new report found that the popular Bratz dolls are made in a Chinese factory under sweatshop conditions.

Male and female workers alike are paid 17 cents per doll they make, according to the National Labor Committee. The women workers, though, have to be on duty seven days a week.

The dolls are made by about 4,000 workers at the Hua Tai 4K Factory in Guangdong Province — a part of the Hong Kong based Hua Cheng Group.

The California-based MGA Entertainment owns the rights to the dolls which are sold for at least \$15.89 at stores across the U.S. including Wal-Mart and Toys 'R Us.

The Committee also found that the Hau Tai workers must memorize cheat sheets with "correct" answers to questions asked by "gullible" Wal-Mart auditors.

"Many parents are already concerned about the big do-eyed, super-sized lipped, scantily-clad, high-heeled and

anorexic Bratz dolls being marketed to their very young children," said Charles Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee.

"Now we learn that they're made under sweatshop conditions in China. Once again we find that there's a very dark underside to Wal-Mart's 'everyday low prices,'" he concluded.

Among conditions for these Chinese workers are: 10 workers to a small room with metal bunk beds and no showers; the denial of injury and health insurance, which is a crime in China; loss of three days' wage for taking a sick day; a 94-plus hour work week; loss of five hours' wages for one broken doll; and no paid leave time for getting married.

For more information about the report, visit the National Labor Committee's website.

INFO
National Labor Committee
www.nlcnet.org/live/article.php?id=197



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One Year Out, Another One In...

I've been sitting in front of my trusty IBM PC for several hours now, trying to decide if 2006 has been a good year, a bad year, or just kind of mediocre.

During the Holiday, I've tried to avoid as much political garbage as possible. My inalienable right to consternation over the illegal underpinnings behind the trickery of Herr Oberst Karl Rove has swamped my every thought and dragged them down into the muck and mire since he engineered the theft of our White House for Lame Dubya in 2000 and 2004. The more Herr Karl and his West Wing Gang of sorry bast... er, blackguards attempted to disincorporate the Constitution as if it were made of Lincoln Logs, the more my hackles were raised.

Thus, following 20 solid months of columns, mostly focused upon the dire straights Fearless Leader has wreaked havoc upon our Nation and Planet do to a Napoleonic need to prove his faltering manliness — and his dry-drunk inability to cogently conceptualize due to massive brain cell burnout — I really needed a break.

Fortunately, one came my way in the form of a massive Republican meltdown that led to the Great Democratic Victory of Aught-Six.

It was about time the mainstream media finally got its collective ass off its hands and began to point out the insanity of the current White House non-policies, thereby opening the gates for a major Democratic win in November. However, with transfer of power slated to go to the other party, the big guys couldn't stop themselves from nit-picking and bitching at every move the Dems made starting Nov. 8.

So, to keep my sanity, as well as that of my family, I've seriously reduced my regular regimen that includes a deluge of television information and newspapers, keeping my personal exposure to a minimum — except for *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* on Comedy Central, of course.

Until Congress starts up in earnest later this month, I prefer to see things as Clarence the Angel does, and remember that, "It's A Wonderful Life."

With so many career politicians out of work, Mr. Smith truly has gone to Washington — in droves. (Where would we be without Frank Capra?)

My friend Dr. David Gill should have been one of those



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

Mr. Smiths. One of his favorite movies is "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" — he's made his wife, Polly, sit through it uncounted times whenever it plays at the revival theatre in Normal. Besides being one of the most caring doctors I've ever met, far more competent than that Bill Frist character, he is a man who would truly inject change on the Hill.

It's unfortunate that Dr. David ran in a district where his opponent, Tim Johnson, is a career politician; a true grassroots guy up against a party shill backed by a much better financed GOP machine. The biggest problem with Central Illinois, as I've written here before, is that the people read one newspaper per region (all the bigger ones are Rightist rags); there's no diversity on television or radio, as literally zero time is given to politics; plus, most folks drive and vote like lemmings, following each other nose to ass in the right lane with no thought whatsoever for that which may lie ahead.

My son, Pete, is a Theatre Major at Illinois State University. Although a very good actor (and I'm not just saying this from fatherly pride, other people in and out of the theatre community has acknowledged his abilities) who is adept at stepping into almost any dramatic or comedic role, even those involving singing and dancing, he has yet to be selected for a role at auditions.

This has been tough on the lad's ego and self-confidence, because he always was awarded parts for plays he's auditioned for in the past. However, there's a certain political order to being "selected" for plays in college, and at ISU the political structure goes far beyond that of most schools.

Long story short, Spring semester he wound up with a 'B' average; Summer semester he earned an 'A'. However, this past Fall his grades nosedived considerably. I won't say that it was entirely his fault, nor will my finger be pointed at the faculty or student directors. However, as an educator I do know that when you take someone with raw talent and tell them

they're wrong, then insist upon changing what they're doing instead of nurturing that talent, it seems clear who needs to go back to school.

A big flaw in the process of actor selection also indicates that despite auditions being "open" to all department majors, the play directors and certain faculty have already decided beforehand whom they are going to cast — friends, pets, specific types, etc. I've run across these types of egos myself, where the person with the decision-making power is afraid someone else might be smarter or more talented than himself, or he wants to keep everything within an inner circle of privilege, and no one else is allowed to enter.

For the disappointments of being passed over by shortsighted individuals I tell Pete to remember three words: Sinise; Metcalf; Malkovich.

There have been three famous actors who came out of the ISU theatre program. None of these people were ever cast in a play while students at ISU. However, they are the only three to date who have gone on to fame and fortune in television and movies. My guess is that they were so good as actors and unique in stature and persona as their very presence on stage commanded attention, creating an aura of jealousy among others within the theatre department.

If you haven't as yet figured it out, the three actors are: Gary Sinise, co-founder of Chicago's famous Steppenwolf Theatre, star of "Forrest Gump" (Lt. Dan), and CSI: NY; Laurie Metcalf, co-star of *Roseanne* and Oliver Stone's "JFK"; and, John Malkovich,

whose credits include "In The Line Of Fire" with Clint Eastwood, Stephen Spielberg's "Empire Of The Sun," and "Being John Malkovich."

As I like to remind Pete, as long as he doesn't get a role he's in excellent company.

The low point in my year came almost precisely at the halfway mark.

My father was out at his favorite steakhouse, celebrating a good check-up from the doctor at Hines Veterans' Administration Hospital earlier that day. He and my brother were enjoying steak dinners when something didn't go down for Dad the way it should have.

I guess it was over in just a minute, despite the attempts of the trained waitresses and the rapid response of the paramedics. Well, at least Dad got to have a Martini. He liked to have one once in awhile with gin, preferably Beefeater, extra dry, on the rocks with an olive.

That was June 28; Dad was 82 and almost six months. He had told me on several occasions that he was tired of being reduced to moving with a slow shuffle; maybe he wanted to go. It's hard to say, as there were very few times when the Old Man opened up to me.

He almost never wanted to hear it whenever I tried to open up to him. I loved him, and I'm sure he loved me, but the wall never really came down. Every time I knocked off some of the bricks to get to the other side he'd put more right back into their place — or my brother would.

I didn't cry for Dad at his wake or funeral, and I've yet to shed a tear at all. Perhaps that may appear heartless, but tears have never seemed to me a

mandatory requirement for grief over the loss of a loved one. He took this long, strange trip without making any real effort to wonder about the road not traveled, and that was his greatest loss.

I miss Dad at times, of course, but overall his passing doesn't really bother me. He's on the next leg of his journey; maybe now he'll get to know all those things he missed on this part.

Besides, if Heaven really does exist, or there's true goodness in the afterlife, following 12 and-a-half years of forced separation Mom and Dad were reunited this past Summer.

Anyway, ain't it just like a *dago* to go out at his favorite Italian restaurant or steakhouse...

Here we are, sitting in Central Illinois at the end of December without a speck of snow in sight. The forecast for the foreseeable future has no hint of snow, either. It's nowhere near even being cold enough to snow!

I could take this until Spring Training starts up again next month...

GO, CUBS!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Shalom.

(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)

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Gerald Ford: Mourn For America And For Justice

By MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

It contradicts the rules of common usage to point out the failings of those who have taken that last step from human society into death, but reading the many articles on the life of Gerald Ford brought for me, at least, the consciousness of how much he and those in politics have cost all of us; seeing him characterized as 'a man of character,' slapped me into awareness. The rules are wrong when they benefit deceit and injustice, so I am going to ignore them.

As a Republican woman and an American I have something to say about Ford, and politics today. The legacy of Gerald Ford is the destruction the vision of America as a place where our inherent, individual rights, were protected and affirmed through a government which remained in the hands of the people. Those rights depend on justice. Ford destroyed the integrity of our political system. He made a choice and it was wrong.

In saying this I do not forget that he championed the passage of the Alice Paul Amendment to affirm to women their equal rights. He spoke the words, introduced the bill, and failed to see it passed. At death we remember the whole of the life of the deceased, not just those parts that are useful to us politically. All of the acts of Ford's life, the good and the bad together, should be assessed. Death is a summing up of life; a summing up that ignores that whole does a disservice to the deceased and to us as well.

The choice Ford made to pardon Richard M. Nixon set the stage for the excruciating events that put Bush in the White House and have gone so far down the road to destroying America. No matter how affable he was, this cannot be overlooked.

Nixon should have been tried. He was guilty and Americans needed to see their system work as intended. Instead, we have learned not to expect honesty or decency; our system has devolved into a morass that nurtures thieves and scoundrels. We today contend with a political reality that has served to elevate those in positions of 'public service' into a class apart, guaranteeing membership in a club of privilege, an aristocracy without accountability. With those in politics accountability is anathema. Watch how they vote and for whom, it is your rights they are selling piecemeal.

Because of Gerald Ford justice was not done. Everyone in

GUEST COMMENTARY

politics, a young Rove, an older Bush Senior, the clueless W, all who were then moving themselves up in government learned the lesson by example. Bush and the NeoConservatives who have been living out their fantasies at our expense saw the opportunity created by the misuse of presidential power by Gerald Ford. They are relying on that power today. They have enough money stolen from us to buy anyone they make president, with few exceptions. Bush expects to cut a deal, walking away with his profits intact.

What we see today is not the vision of America for which patriots have laid down their lives over the last two centuries. It is a congame with us, the American people, cast as the patsies.

Today, the American people hunger for justice and the likelihood they will get that, accountability from those entrusted with power, recedes into the distant haze because of the actions of Gerald Ford, whose death comes like manna from heaven for the Bush Administration at this point in time.

"CRAWFORD, Texas - President Bush on Wednesday remembered former President Gerald Ford as a "man of complete integrity who led our

country with common sense and kind instincts" and helped restore faith in the presidency after the Watergate scandal." <<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/16327859.htm>>

It is easy to see why someone like George W. Bush would carefully laud the life of a man who took from Americans what was so desperately needed; accountability for the crimes of Richard Nixon translates into accountability for him.

There is no integrity there. No one should have had faith in anyone occupying an office where accountability was sacrificed, thus establishing the precedent that no matter what the president does he will be forgiven. As our children must learn that ac-

tions have consequences so must those who offer themselves for public service learn they will be accountable, liable, and that there are teeth in the oaths they take.

America needs honesty; Americans should demand accountability now as it should have been exacted in 1974. The example that any crime could be overlooked, swept under the carpet, has gone a long ways towards destroying what remained as the integrity of American government and ethics.

George W. Bush is guilty of collusion in deceiving the American people for the purpose of carrying out a war in Iraq and on Americans here at home. He carried out these crimes, for they are felonies, to profit those who put him in office, the major corporations who are profiting every day from the life's blood of honest Americans.

An Eagle Scout, Ford dishonored several oaths by failing to do the right thing. They should rescind his membership in that honorable body. That failure on Ford's part is a wrong that opened the flood gates of deception in politics because those in power know that accountability will not be exacted.

Americans must change their national direction. The first step in that direction is to demand and exact accountability from those in public office. Dishonesty must always result in removal and prosecution; justice must be swift, sure and exacting. The means are at our disposal. All professionals are licensed and most must be bonded. Begin demanding that only bonded candidates be elected. Don't wait for politicians to act; it will never happen. We, the people, can do it ourselves. The Honesty Bond Committee is now organizing.

The legacy of Gerald Ford was to compromise the foundations of American justice; we need to rebuild those foundations, placing them on the firm ground of accountability that ignores considerations of party and profit if America is to recover.

When you see the flag at half staff it is America for which you should grieve today.

Melinda Pillsbury-Foster is a prominent activist, author, poet, commentator, and critic of Neoconservative theory and policy. A member of the Republican Part, she is founder and president of the Arthur C. Pillsbury Foundation and hosts a radio talk-show program, The Spiritual Politician, at <BBSRadio.com>.



NOT MUCH LEFT — A turkey farm east of Clifton off of CR 708 and 3550 was nearly destroyed following Friday afternoon's tornado. The cell ripped through, laying fences down and demolishing barns.

— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

Tornadoes Hit Central Texas

CRAWFORD — Tornadoes, high winds, hail, and torrential rain swept through Central Texas last Friday afternoon, causing damage to fences, powerlines, trees, and structures.

It had rained most of the morning, but with early afternoon came storm cells that radar indicated contained circular motion. At first, tornado watches were broadcast, then warnings.

Local residents monitored news reports as the National Weather Center continued to issue emergency warnings throughout the afternoon and into the evening.

The first of several combustible cells traveled from Coryell County, through western McLennan County where a tornado was reported near Valley Mills High School. The cell crossed Highway 6 between Clifton and Valley Mills, moving northward toward Cayote and Lake Whitney.

It was reported that, due to the intensity of the storms, President and Mrs. Bush and their terriers, in Crawford for the holidays, took temporary refuge in an armored vehicle for safety.

The National Weather Service issued tornado warnings and later reported damage to about a dozen structures in a rural area near the town of Oglesby. Additional tornadoes touched down about two miles south of Stephenville in Erath County and near Clifton in Bosque County around 1:30 p.m.

Initial reports said that one man was killed in Groesbeck after the storm that left nearly a dozen injured. Limestone County

officials set up a command center and began to oversee emergency relief efforts for the area and Highway 164 had to be shut down.

The town of Oglesby suffered damage also. No one was injured.

In Bosque County, a turkey farm off FM 708 and 3550 was hit by tornadic winds which decimated it, leaving behind a field of debris that stretched through field after field.

Beneath the stripped rafters of one of the barns, hundreds of turkeys huddled together where the barn had been torn away from above.

Fences were laid flat as the tornado passed.

Small and large pieces of all sorts of debris littered the area around the farm and nearby home. Live power lines prevented through traffic as Bosque County Sheriff's deputies and Texas DPS officers secured the area.

Initial reports indicated that there were no injuries, but officials worked to confirm the whereabouts of all persons suspected in the area at the time of the touchdown.

Fields of downed power lines prompted officials to blockade traffic and, as cells moved toward Lake Whitney, with tornadoes reported in several locations, a command post was established at the old Cedars Club on Hwy. 56.

Emergency responders were dispatched to hard-hit areas.

By 4 p.m., the major cell blasts had done their damage.

First Free Christmas Not Merry For Ex-Slaves

Visions of free land danced in the heads of Texas' former slaves on Christmas Eve 1865, but no one remembered to tell Santa Claus about the giant giveaway.

The Union spokesmen that made the emancipation announcement on June 19, 1865, also had some sound advice for the liberated chattel of Texas. Encouraging them to stay right where they were and to work for wages, the Yankee officers warned that the idle would not be fed.

But the jubilant blacks would have none of it. As one later explained, "Right off colored folks started on the move. They seemed to want to get closer to freedom, so they'd know what it was."

The thousands sent to Texas during the Civil War by their masters in Louisiana and Arkansas headed home to find their families. The rest took understandable delight in wandering aimlessly about the countryside doing whatever they pleased.

By October the plantation refugees had begun to gather in large groups on the edge of towns surviving on handouts, petty crime, and occasional odd jobs. However, when told that winter was coming and it was time to get on with their lives, they answered in unison, "We'll wait until Christmas."

This response puzzled post-war occupation authorities, who did not understand why the holiday held special significance for the freedmen. To their horror they soon learned that the former slaves firmly believed the government intended to give them land on Dec. 25.

A rumor to that effect had been circulating in the encampments for weeks, and as preposterous as the Christmas bonus sounded to whites, to blacks it made perfect sense. After all, any regime strong enough to set them free obviously had the power to make them the masters of the fields they once toiled.

Where did the kidnapped Africans get such a crazy idea? From Confederate rabble-rousers, who predicted the plantations would be confiscated and divided among the slaves if the North won the war.

Fearing a violent reaction from disappointed freedmen, the provisional governor wrote a special proclamation that was repeatedly read aloud in every county. In his straight-forward address the presidential appointee bluntly informed blacks that Uncle Sam was not Santa Claus.

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



The erstwhile slaves got the message, and Christmas passed without incident. After the bleak holiday season, the vast majority passively returned to work.

The Christmas of 1865 marked the beginning of the demoralizing disillusionment of the freedmen. The high hopes of emancipation were crushed by the bitter reality of bigotry and second-class citizenship.

A legally sanctioned system of racial segregation was taking root not only in the conquered Confederacy, where many blamed the black man for the devastating defeat, but also in the rest of the country, where hypocrisy was the order of the day.

Grant had hardly accepted Lee's sword, when western legislatures instructed former slaves to keep their distance. Laws were quickly passed to ban black immigration.

The same pious demagogues, who demanded the full franchise for freedmen in Dixie, denied them the ballot up North. By 1867 Michigan, New Jersey, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Connecticut had officially declared the vote a whites-only privilege.

The party of Lincoln assured white constituents the following year that their children would never be forced to share a classroom with black students. The GOP kept that campaign promise, and in Texas the Republican state superintendent sacked a local board that tried to open an integrated school.

The segregationist stance of the Republican Party coincided with the views of Abraham Lincoln himself, a fact concealed by some misguided historians. The truth was sacrificed to preserve the saintly image of the Great Emancipator.

Soon after Fort Sumter, President Lincoln clearly defined his goal. "My paramount objective in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery."

In a message to congress in 1862, he suggested allowing the South to come up with a plan for the gradual abolition of slavery. s a reasonable target date for completion of the project, he proposed Jan. 1, 1900.

"You and we are different races," Lincoln told a black delegation during the war. "Your race suffers very greatly from living among us, while ours suffers greatly from your presence.

It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated."

Would the freed slaves have been better off, if John Wilkes Booth's gun had jammed? Not necessarily unless they wanted

to be moved en masse to a foreign land, the drastic solution Lincoln preferred to their remaining in the United States as free and equal citizens.

"Outlaws & Lawmen" - "Best

of This Week in Texas History" Vol. VI is \$10.95 plus \$3.25 postage and handling from Barte Haile, P.O. Box 152, Friendswood, TX 77549 or buy on-line at www.twith.com.

The Cry Trigger

The year 2006 sucked.

What made it suck was that American "political correctness" reached an all-time low.

For the sake of time and space, I'll note only two examples, one domestic and the other foreign.

First, domestic.

The debate over illegal workers really threw me for a loop.

Perhaps the most "politically correct" comment I'd heard about on this issue came from a group of little, old ladies at a Republican function in North Texas.

These women dared to suggest that the Rio Grande should be stocked with alligators and crocodiles to keep Texas' southern border clean and clear.

Talk about a waste of natural resources, huh?

Don't get me wrong — I'm in full support of demilitarizing our border.

A thousand-plus-mile wall is, needless to say, a completely stupid tool to "deter" these supple, illegal workers.

You know, if these women had any sense at all, they would have called for the border to be lined with thousands of drive-thru restaurants that serve all-you-can-eat illegal immigrants.

Yes, this means, of course, that cannibalism would have to be legalized here immediately.

And might as well legalize marijuana, too, since pot is an appetite-enhancer.

The more you eat, the more you protect American jobs because legal workers will no doubt be manning the cash registers, kitchens, and killing fields.

Consider how the job market would be revitalized in the depressed, rural South, especially the Valley area of south Texas.

This plan could include an increase to the minimum wage floor, but with all the millions of illegals running around like free range chickens, no one is going to starve.

I've already got a brand name for my own chain of restaurants — Swift's — named after the 18th century social critic Jonathan Swift.

Isn't that idea succulent, Lou Dobbs?

Okay, now, foreign.

All this talk about what to do with Iraq boiled my blood this past year.

It's "exit strategy" this, and "stay the course" that.

"What about the Sunni insurgency?" "What about Saudi Arabia?" "What about the Shiite militias?" "What about Iran?" "What about the Kurds?" "What about Turkey?" "What about Syria?" "What about Lebanon?" "What about Israel?"

UGH!!!

Shut up, already!
JUST SHUT THE HELL UP!!!!!!

Over the last 15 years, we've found a myriad of ways to beat the Iraqis into submission, using them as an example of U.S. global dominance.

We've bombed the hell out of them with our cancer-causing, depleted uranium munitions. We've starved their children with economic sanctions. We've destroyed their civil infrastructure. And we've tortured them at secret clandestine prisons.

Now, we're playing duck-duck-goose around plans to solve their "security problem."

Talk about a slap in the face!

And to make matters worse, all these new plans are horribly "politically correct." They don't go far enough. They don't address the root cause of this conflict.

So you want a real security plan? I've got a real security plan:

Litter Iraq with hundreds of U.S.-made mini-nukes.

(We can spare a few thousand more, but those darn things are expensive!)

Scatter them everywhere, along her borders, her roads, her rivers, her farms, her apartments, her municipal buildings, her mosques, her oil and gas pipelines, and even her rubble. Everywhere.

Then, the detonator for these nukes should be surgically implanted inside the skull of a baby girl, so if she cries, ka-boom Iraq.

That's right. The name of the game is keep the little girl bathed, fed, clothed, and — by all means necessary — happy.

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



Now, if you're really serious about "security," surgically implant detonators in multiple, anonymous children and sprinkle them across the globe yet linked via satellite to individual nukes with the same cry trigger apparatus.

That way, we must take care of every single child, or Iraq and the rest of the world will suffer an apocalypse worse than the one the dinosaurs felt.

You know what, Glenn Beck? You're so politically correct, your nightmares make me giggle.

Hopefully, 2007 will bring a lot less "political correctness," but I won't hold my breathe.

Nathan Diebenow is an Associate Editor of the Lone Star Iconoclast newspaper by day and a political satirist by night, if you hadn't figured that out by now.



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Get Cracking With Texas Pecans

BY DAVID GLESSNER

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AUSTIN — As any Texan will tell you, it's easy to pick a peck of prized pecans when you live in the Lone Star State.

According to the Texas Department of Agriculture, almost 1 million acres of native pecans are grown here, making the pecan the official state tree of Texas. Texas also ranks as the nation's largest producer of native pecans and the second-largest producer of orchard-grown pecans. Last year, receipts for Texas pecans totaled almost \$96 million and placed the versatile nut at No.15 on the state's list of agricultural commodities.

"This year's pecan harvest is moving along very well," said Cindy Wise, executive director for the Texas Pecan Growers Association. "Pecans are an alternate bearing tree, which means that every other year is a good year for production. The upside of all this is that quality is very good."

Best-known as a snack food and key ingredient in baked goods, the pecan nut is the fruit of the largest of the hickory trees, which also serve as a source for wooden furniture and flooring. Pecan production in Texas has a major economic impact on such cities as Austin, Bastrop, Seguin and San Saba. El Paso is home to a whopping 20 percent of the state's pecan industry.

Texas pecans can be mail-ordered, purchased on the Internet or shipped by such GO TEXAN pecan producers as Berdoll Pecan Farms <www.berdoll.com>, Bragg Pecan Farms <www.texaspecans.com> and Rascoe Organic Pecan Orchard, 254-799-3334.

Thanks to our friends at the Texas Pecan Growers Association, the following pecan recipes can be enjoyed during the holidays and all year 'round.

Mexican Pecan Corn Bread

4 large eggs
16 ounces sour cream
1 cup vegetable oil
16 ounces cream style corn
3 cups yellow cornmeal
2 T. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1/3 cup green bell peppers, chopped
3 jalapeño peppers, seeded and chopped
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 cups Texas pecans, chopped
Beat eggs and mix with sour cream, oil and corn. Combine cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda, salt, bell peppers,



jalapeño peppers, cheese and pecans. Stir to mix. Add to

creamed mixture and blend until well combined. Pour half of batter into each of two 9 X 5-inch loaf pans. Bake in 350 degree F oven about 50 minutes until tested done.

Makes two loaves

Chocolate Pecan Pie

1 package (8 ounces) semi-sweet baking chocolate
1 refrigerated pie crust
2 T. butter or margarine
3 eggs, slightly beaten
1/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1 cup light or dark corn syrup
1 tsp. vanilla
1-1/2 cups pecan halves or large pieces
Heat oven to 350 degrees F.

Coarsely chop 4 squares of the chocolate and set aside. Line 9-inch pie plate as directed on package with pie crust. Microwave remaining 4 squares of chocolate and butter in large microwavable bowl on high 1 to 2 minutes or until butter is melted. Stir until chocolate is completely melted. Brush bottom of pie crust with small amount of beaten egg. Stir sugar, corn syrup, eggs and vanilla into chocolate mixture until well blended. Stir in pecans and chopped chocolate. Pour into pie crust. Bake 55 minutes or until knife inserted 2 inches from edge comes out clean. Cool on wire rack.

Makes 8 servings.

Quality pecans are not only found beneath Texas pecan trees, they also can be found on TDA's GO TEXAN member Website where growers and producers offer a wide array of top-notch pecan products. For a complete listing of Texas pecan producers, visit www.gotexan.org or call (877) 99GO-TEX. You also may visit <www.picktexas.com>.

GO TEXAN is a comprehensive marketing program for Texas-made products. Through GO TEXAN, thousands of member partners along with TDA promote quality Texas-made agricultural products.

'Tea With Leo' Provides Nostalgic Country Blues

By W. LEON SMITH

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

BALTIMORE, Md. — Morphius Records, Inc. and JeeziePeezie Records have a hit on their hands with a new collaboration featuring nostalgic country blues performed by Breadfoot (aka Stephan Meyers) and evocative violin by Anna Phoebe, a String Master of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Organ and percussion by Leo Abrahams, the producer, also enhances the eight-track album called "Tea With Leo."

Celebrating the folk roots of banjo, guitar, and violin virtuosity, the album offers the listener a mixture of sounds that are emotional, traditional, and contagious.

The recordings are light and breezy and bring back memories of yore.

Tracks include: A Hard Day in Manhattan, Hilary Rose,



Polly Loved Me (I Know), International Esther, Kecha, Smoking on the Stoop, On the Day that I Go, and an untitled bonus track.

The blues sounds might fit several categories, urban and rural, but there is a definite Deep South feel about them, conjuring up thoughts of Depression-era workers



Anna Phoebe and Breadfoot

relaxing after a hard day, lonesome nights on the prairie, and a cool breeze during a rest in the cotton fields.

The mixture of the banjo and violin in "Tea With Leo" have a supernatural, haunting quality, but key elements of the album are the quality sounds by highly talented artists and their ability

to transport the listener backwards in time.

For information about the album, contact <www.morphius.com>.



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