

CRAWFORD, TEXAS

Vol. 8, No. 1

JAN. 10, 2007

Internet Update 02

© 2006, THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST

\$1.50 Per Copy

INSIDE

**Edwards
Questions
Troop Surge**

Page 6



Shani Rigsbee

**Shani Visits
Lone Star State**

Page 7

**ICONOCLAST
EDITORIAL**

*Congress Must
Act Immediately!*

**Bush Claims
Dictatorial**

**Power
Over Sanctity
Of U.S. Mail**

Page 10



**Out Of
The Blue**

By Jerry Tenuto

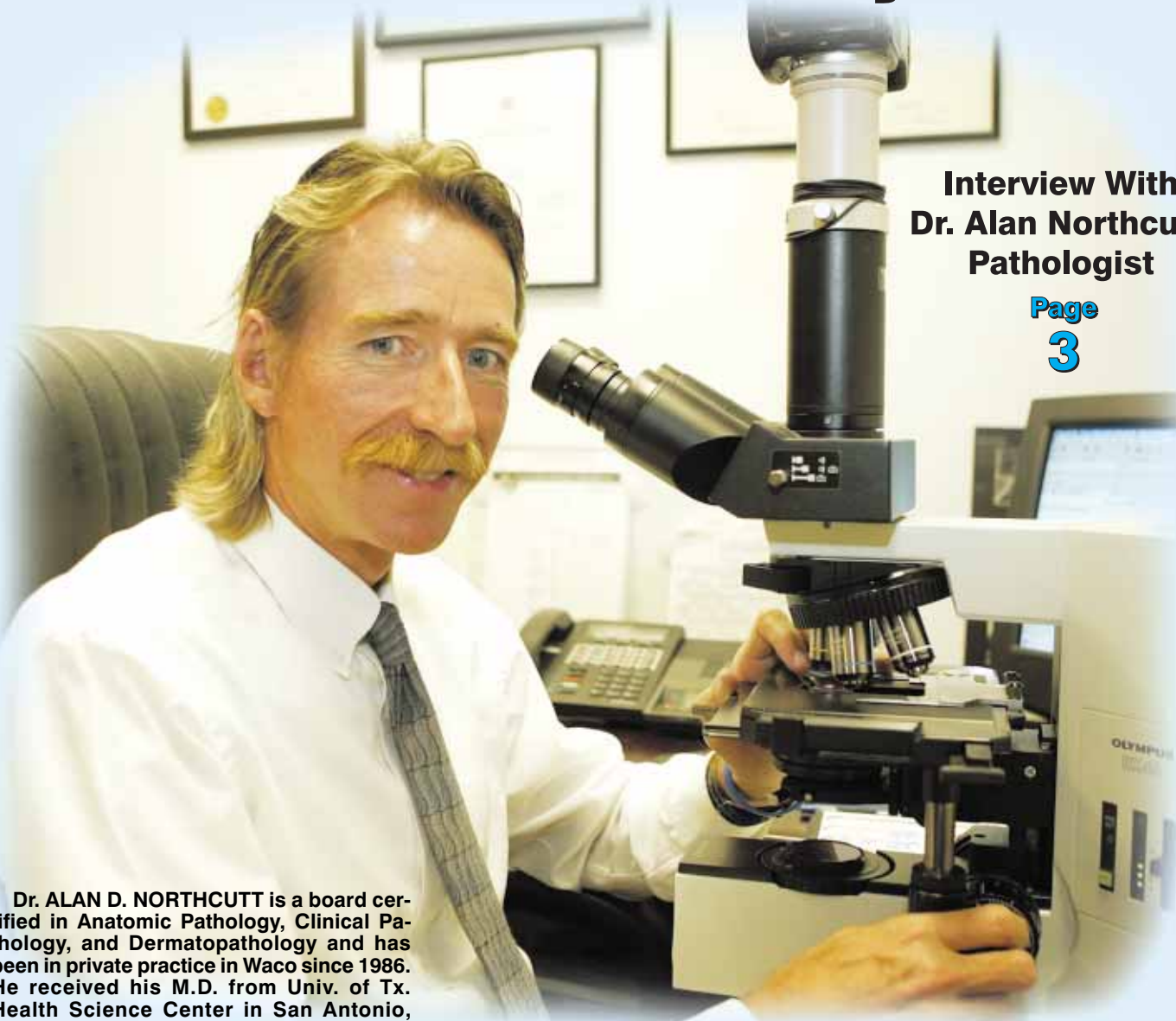
**Stay Outta My Food,
Mr. Guv'Ment Man!**

Page 12

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST

Bloody New Year

Iraqi Civilian Body Count Hits 650,000: Study



**Interview With
Dr. Alan Northcutt,
Pathologist**

**Page
3**

Dr. ALAN D. NORTHUTT is a board certified in Anatomic Pathology, Clinical Pathology, and Dermatopathology and has been in private practice in Waco since 1986. He received his M.D. from Univ. of Tx. Health Science Center in San Antonio, 1982.

Another Carrier Group Gears Up For Persian Gulf

WASHINGTON — A second aircraft carrier group is gearing up for deployment to the Persian Gulf, according to anonymous Pentagon sources.

The Washington-based USS John C. Stennis strike group would ship out later this month, following the footsteps of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier group that entered the region in December.

With its 5,000 U.S. sailors, this new group would bring the total up to 16,000.

The U.S. Central Command requested the second group be deployed to the Gulf instead of the Pacific region where it had been scheduled to go.

The purpose of the group would be to increase the Command's "flexibility" in the region, according to senior defense officials in press reports.

Military analysts say, though, that the group's presence would send a message to Iran and Syria, both of which have been accused of provoking the insurgency and sectarian violence in Iraq.

Washington is also concerned with Tehran's nuclear program, though the program is under the scrutiny of the United Nations.

Iran could be in a position to manufacture the enriched uranium needed to create nuclear weapons in the next 10 years, according to U.N. officials.

It has yet to be seen how long the Bush administration would keep two carrier groups in the Gulf.

However, new Defense Secretary Robert Gates has said that the U.S. intends to make its presence felt in the region as a whole for a "long time."

"We will be here for a long time and everybody needs to remember that — both our friends and those who might consider themselves our adversaries," Gates told reporters in Baghdad last December.

E-Voting Machines Caused Voter Disenfranchisement: Report

HOUSTON — A 23-page report prepared by three e-voting watchdog groups detailed systemic failures in electronic voting machines across the nation in the last election cycle.

These failures caused polls to open late, which led to voters and pollworkers to become disenfranchised and disillusioned, according to the report from Voter Action, VotersUnite.Org, and VoteTrustUSA.

But election officials are brushing off the findings, as one did in Harris County, Texas, who said that "failures will happen."

David Beirne, a spokesman for Harris County Clerk Beverly Kaufman, told the Houston Chronicle, "Critical failures are ones in which voters are turned away. By and large, looking at the last general election, we consider it a success."

State Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) said, however, that

upset voters called his field offices a number of times complaining about being unable to vote on malfunctioning machines.

"I have great concerns about the system and have from Day One," Coleman told the Chronicle.

Harris County was one of four case studies mentioned in the report "E-Voting Failures in the 2006 Mid-Term Elections."

The report pooled data from two voter protection hotlines and reports from pollworkers and the news media. Overall the groups examined 1,022 complaints logged against electronic voting equipment from 314 counties in 36 states.

"The evidence presented indicates that electronic voting in its current form is systematically flawed and will require significant corrective measures to remedy the problems that have been exposed," the report concluded.

Create Independent Redistricting Commission, Says Advocacy Group

WASHINGTON — A public interest advocacy group is calling for the creation of an independent commission to oversee the congressional redistricting process in Texas every 10 years.

"If we can establish a bi-partisan redistricting committee and set common sense criteria for redistricting plans, the Texas congressional delegation will once again be chosen by the people of Texas," said Jeff Brooks of the Texas Public Interest Research Group (TexPIRG).

Brooks said in a press release that redistricting reform should be a top priority in the coming session of the Texas Legislature in order to alleviate "complete legislative paralysis."

Under the current system as ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court, the state legislature is allowed to redraw congressional district maps as it desires.

This means that should a majority of any political party rule the Legislature, a brutal battle over partisan redistricting, known as "gerrymandering,"

would be a greater possibility after each election.

"This problem has been around for a long time," Brooks said. "The Republicans and Democrats have both done it. It's high time for both parties to look to the interests of the people of Texas, rather than their own partisan advantage."

The effects of gerrymandering undermine democratic principles, Brooks added, since it inevitably leads to electoral race being uncompetitive and therefore decided before citizens can vote.

"If you're unlucky enough to be a Republican in a Democratic district or a Democrat in a Republican district, your right to vote has effectively been taken away," Brooks said.

It also leads to policy decisions that destabilize the political power of rural areas in favor of urban centers, as seen for example with rural landowners fighting for their water rights against city brokers.

Instead, TexPIRG points to successful redistricting systems much like those found in

Idaho and New Jersey.

Ahead of this next legislative session in Texas, Rep. Mark Strama (D-Austin) pre-filed a bill meets some of the goals outlined in past legislation introduced by State Senator Jeff Wentworth (R-San Antonio), according to TexPIRG.

Wentworth plans to resubmit his proposal in the 80th Legislature.

The last battle over redistricting in Texas led to House Democrats leaving the state in protest rather than vote on redrawn congressional maps favoring the interests of the Republican majority in 2003.

Green Building Conference Slated March 22-23 In Atlanta

ATLANTA, Ga. — The ninth annual Greenprints Conference is slated for the weekend of March 22-23 at the Westin Peachtree Plaza in downtown Atlanta.

Conference goers will share information on green building, environmental technologies, and sustainable design strategies available for residential and commercial building professionals, decision makers, and practitioners.

Learning opportunities will include hands-on workshops, project site visits, engaging presentations and a green tradeshow featuring innovative environmental products.

For more information, contact Erin Raffield at the Southface Energy Institute.

INFO
Raffield
Southface Energy Institute
(404) 872-3549
info@southface.org



The Lone Star Iconoclast (USPS 022-833) is published monthly by Smith Media, Inc., P.O. Box 420, Crawford, TX 76638, and 310 W. 5th St., P.O. Box 569, Clifton, TX 76634. Subscription rates: \$24/year in the United States and all its possessions; Canada and all other foreign add \$20.00 per year (U.S. currency). Single copies \$2.50 per copy, plus \$1.55 shipping and handling. PERIODICALS POSTAGE IS PAID IN CLIFTON, TX 76634. All editorial and advertising correspondence should be addressed to: The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 569, Clifton, TX 76634 or e-mail: news@lonestaricon.com, or phone (254) 675-3634. Please give old address when requesting change of address. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 569, Clifton, TX 76634. Nothing in this publication may be reproduced in any manner without specific written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States.

Deadline: 5 p.m. First Friday of Month • Online Edition: www.lonestaricon.com • Fax: (254) 675-4090 • E-mail: news@lonestaricon.com • Phone: (254) 675-3634

STAFF: Editorial — W. Leon Smith (publisher, editor-in-chief), Don M. Fisher (associate editor), Nathan Diebenow (associate editor), Deborah Mathews, Advertising — Melanie Harvey, Tammy Shelton, Tiffany Shelton, Business — Kay Ortiz (office), Allison Smith (Internet, web master), Circulation: Charlie Gandy, Pernie Stanford, Wayne Thompson, Bud Shaffer, Wanda Raines, Georgia Bell.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: Any error or erroneous reflection upon the character, standing, or reputation of any person, firm, or corporation which may appear in this newspaper will be gladly corrected upon being brought to the attention of the management. THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST welcomes letters of up to 150 words on any public issue. Any letter that exceeds the word limit may not be considered for publication. We publish only original letters addressed to The Iconoclast. An address and daytime phone number must be included so the author's identity can be verified. No letters will be published until authorship is confirmed. Those who write letters are asked to limit their entries to one per month. All letters are subject to editing. The Iconoclast reserves the right to decline publication of any submission. Letters must be signed. Letters written in the promotion of political candidates or issues to be decided by an election will not be considered for publication unless they are scheduled for publication three weeks or more prior to the election. Individuals may purchase advertising space during the period prior to the election in support of candidates or issues to be voted upon. Letters written as cards of thanks may be charged classified ad rate and be placed in classified section of newspaper, at editors' option.

Bloody New Year

Iraqi Civilian Body Count Hits 650,000: Study

Interview With Dr. Alan Northcutt, Pathologist

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — The year 2007 began where 2006 left off — with confusion, lies, and blood over the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

New Year's Eve, in fact, was treated like any other day around the world by the powers-that-be in that war-torn country.

Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was hanged there in the middle of the night, despite Iraqi law stating that it would be illegal to do so on a high Islamic holy day.

The day also marked the death of the U.S. forces' 3,000th casualty — 22-year-old Specialist Dustin R. Donica of Spring, Texas. He reportedly died after assailants shot him on security duty in Karmah, Iraq. By the end of the next day, four more U.S. soldiers were added to the death toll.

In the United States, groups commemorated the U.S. military death toll with marches and rallies on New Year's Day.

Several events took place in Texas.

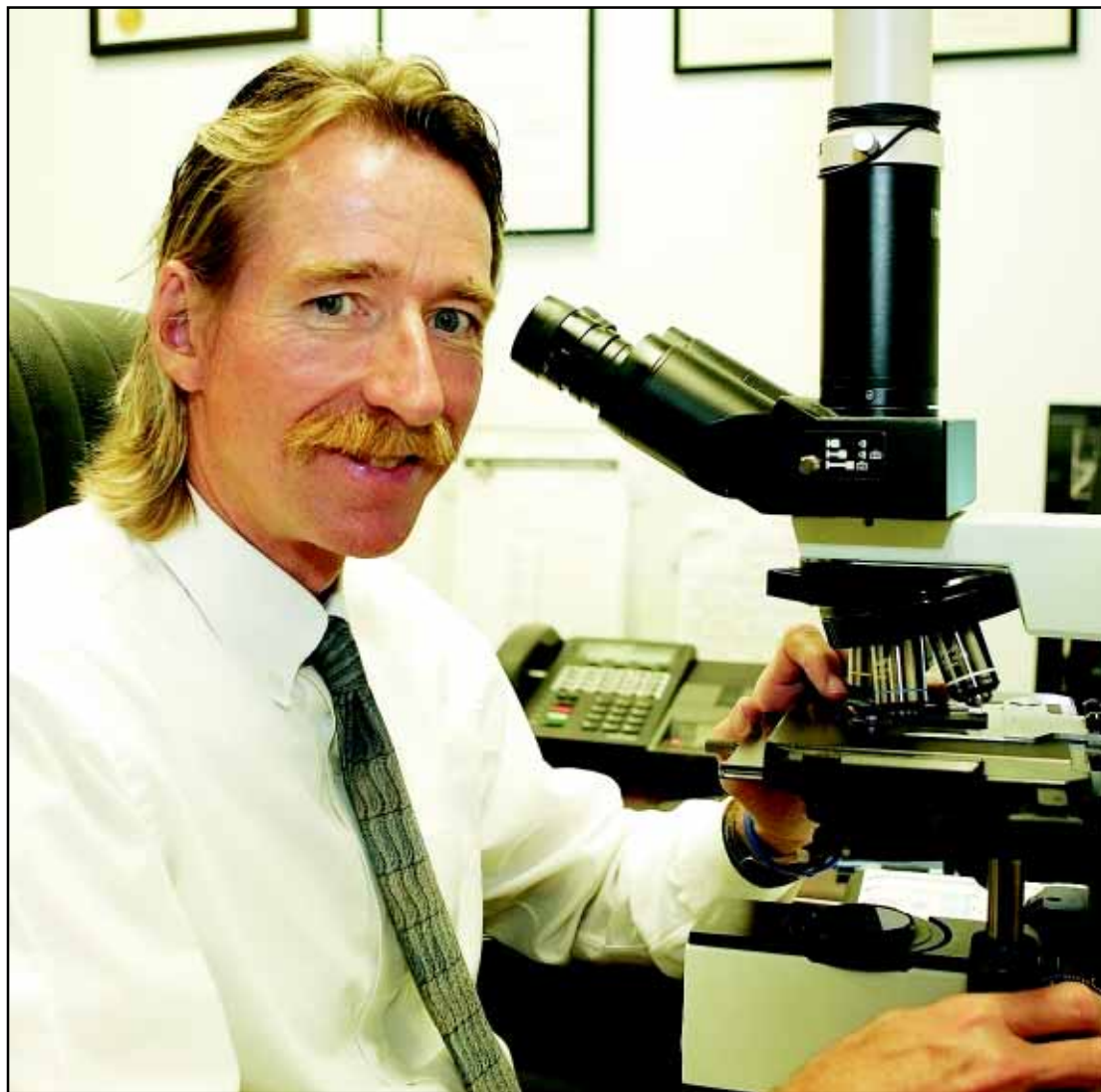
In the Dallas suburb of Arlington, protestors held signs that read "Honk for Peace" and asked neighbors to sign a petition urging Congress to discontinue funding the occupation.

But the mourning didn't stop with the American dead.

Activists also recognized the Iraqi civilian death toll recorded in a recent John Hopkins University study that was published in a prestigious medical journal called *THE LANCET*. An estimated 650,000 Iraqis had died since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, according to the study.

This statistic was not lost during the 4th annual Waco Friends of Peace New Year's Eve candlelight vigil at the Crawford Peace House on New Year's Eve. There, Alan D. Northcutt, M.D., a board certified pathologist in private practice in Waco, gave his thoughts about the study.

Nebeil Al-Oboudi, a U.S.-born Iraqi, said at the press conference that he accepted in the study, noting that conditions had deteriorated greatly there during his visit to Iraq in the past year. While the rich have already left the country, professionals are being targeted by



ALAN D. NORTHCUTT, M.D., a pathologist in private practice in Waco, gave his thoughts about a recent John Hopkins University study on the Iraqi civilian death toll during the annual Waco Friends of Peace Vigil at the Crawford Peace House on New Year's Eve.

militias, causing schools and hospitals to close, he said.

Prior to vigil in Crawford, the *ICONOCLAST*'s Nathan Diebenow spoke to Dr. Northcutt via telephone about the results of the John Hopkins study.

Here is that interview:

.....
ICONOCLAST: What is your connection to the study?

DR. ALAN NORTHCUTT: My connection to it is being a physician and being a pathologist. I'm certainly involved with death evaluation with performing autopsies and that type of thing, so when I heard about this study which was just released in October of this year, I was stunned about it. I was amazed. It was a mortality study that Johns Hopkins University Medical School performed along with a medical school in Baghdad.

As you know the study has been pretty much kept under

the rug. Very little has appeared in the media about it, but what they found — this is most important finding — was that in the period from March 2003, the invasion and occupation, until they did the survey which was July 2006, they determined that there were 650,000 excess Iraqi deaths. That means deaths above what the base line would be in a normal period of time. These were 650,000 deaths related to the war, related to the invasion.

This study is a statistical one where they involve the whole country. They had researchers who went out to all the different portions of the country and surveyed households and did a statistical analysis and came up with 650,000 deaths. That was the mean number, the most likely number. It's an incredible human cost of this war.

ICONOCLAST: What's the

difference between this study and other studies?

DR. NORTHCUTT: The difference is the Iraqi Body Count is probably the most well known study that you hear about. I think they're max number is something like 57,000, the last time I looked.

What they rely on is media reports, and certainly they search for media reports from everywhere, but the media reports are just going to be a fraction of the real total of deaths throughout the country. I mean, most of the media is concentrated in Baghdad for one thing, and it's impossible for all the deaths to get reported by the media. That is a known facet of death during wartime. Almost any conflict that has been studied, they'll find like maybe one-fifth of deaths get reported or morgue counts.

So what they (the Johns

Hopkins researchers) did was they used a method which is called a cluster survey to survey households throughout the country. They asked about who was born and who died, and after they interviewed the household members, they also asked for death certificates, so it wasn't a matter of people making up these deaths. They got death certificates in like 92 percent of the time.

I think the method is very, very valid, and in fact, it is the standard method that is used. The U.S. government used this technique in Afghanistan and in Kosovo. The U.N. uses it. It's really the accepted method for the best method we have for assessing deaths during wartime. That's the difference between it and IBC.

ICONOCLAST: Has this method been fact checked by an independent group?

DR. NORTHCUTT: I don't know if there's a way to fact check it except to repeat the study because it's based on these household interviews by clusters of houses throughout the country. It would involve somebody, another group, repeating the study. I don't think it would be possible to go to the same houses and interview the people.

But let me say this, I'm involved in the field of medicine and the medical literature and so forth. This study appeared in *THE LANCET*, and this is one of the premier medical journals in the world. It's a peer-reviewed journal. What that means is when a paper is sent for publication, it is reviewed and analyzed by experts in that particular field. People who are in epidemiology and statistics reviewed this study before it would be accepted for publication.

I have personal experience in this, and what happens is you send an article in, you send the research in. The experts review it, and they send you back all these criticisms, all these things that need to be fixed, corrected, or outright rejected if they say it's not valid. That's the process this paper went through. In any peer-reviewed journal, that's what happens. Like I said, *THE LANCET* is way up there. It's like the *New England Journal* at that level of quality.

ICONOCLAST: Wasn't there a report done in the last two

Continued On Next Page

Bloody New Year

From Previous Page

months that indicated that media reports of the Iraq conflict were grossly under-reported? I think it was the Iraq Study Group's report.

DR. NORTHCUTT: Yeah, there was something in the ISG report. I can't remember if it was about the media or the military, but they said that on a day when say 10 fatalities reported, there were actually 100 or something like that. I'm pretty sure like you say that was from the Iraq Study Group analysis, and they did mention that the deaths are under-reported.

I think that's why you see such a big difference between the Iraq Body Count and this John Hopkins study. But I believe in this study. For one thing, it's the standard method that's used for wartime calculations of death. It's the best science that we have, and I'm certainly a believer in the scientific method. What happens is with statistical technique, they get validated. They do the statistical method, and then they correlate that with an actual count. They compare a sampling method with an absolute method to prove that the technique is valid, and I believe that this particular method which is called "cluster survey" has been validated and is accepted.

ICONOCLAST: It really hasn't been reported much in the media has it?

DR. NORTHCUTT: No, no, no, it has not. I think in the Waco paper, there was a one-day report about Iraq which is pretty minimal in the Waco paper anyway. There was a line or two about it and what you see now is people will say it's a "controversial report."

It's totally been downplayed, and you probably heard Bush's comments about it. He said, well, it's just not credible. But he doesn't give any basis for that, and he dared to say that the methodology has been pretty much discredited. That's what he said, which is an outright lie, but that's pretty much what we're used to at this point.

You're right. It hasn't been reported much at all.

ICONOCLAST: Compare, though, this body count with previous body counts with Afghanistan and the last few conflicts. Where does this one stand compared with other statistical analyses of conflicts?

DR. NORTHCUTT: I believe it's one of the highest or the highest of conflicts in this cen-

tury. I forgot what the number is for Darfur, but I don't think it's even that high, so I think it's the most civilian deaths so far since 2000. That's my recollection. I'm not certain on that fact, but I believe that's correct.

ICONOCLAST: Being that you are a doctor, have you been in contact with doctors or pathologists in Iraq?

DR. NORTHCUTT: I haven't. I have seen some of the reports about the autopsy findings. You know, some of the cases have been called homicides. Some of that information has been available in the medical literature. I've looked at some of that, but I have not actually talked with anybody first-hand.

ICONOCLAST: Let me back up a second to go back to the actual survey. This number, this half a million people, these are people who have died as a result of conflict in Iraq during those years. Are these civilian deaths caused by the U.S. military or are they general deaths that occurred as a result of the events surrounding the occupation?

DR. NORTHCUTT: From what I can tell looking at this report, I don't see a distinction here to where they were military or not. They interviewed households, and you know, they give information about age and sex and how they died as information received from the family, but I don't see an indication here whether they were military or not. I would suspect that most of them were civilians, but I don't think I could tell that from this report. I don't believe it says.

ICONOCLAST: Looking at the demographics of the dead, what were the age ranges? What kind of people had died?

DR. NORTHCUTT: Of course, it's a broad range from children to old people, but the most predominant group in the study was males 15 to 44 years old. The second largest peak was females under age 15. I'm not sure exactly what that means except that it involves children who are pretty much helpless, I guess, in that kind of situation as far as trying to avoid injury. They don't really offer an explanation, but my guess on it would be that children are more susceptible to injury and less likely to be able to protect themselves or —

ICONOCLAST: — or recover from injury.

DR. NORTHCUTT: Yeah, right, compared to maybe a 25-year-old female.

ICONOCLAST: What about injuries and the causes of spe-

cific deaths?

DR. NORTHCUTT: They talk about the type of injury, and the number one most frequent was gun-shot injuries, and number two was from car bombs.

It's a pretty disturbing report when you see that number 650,000, so I guess for me in medicine, the reason why I give a lot of credence to this is because our field is based on statistical studies. You know everything we do like medication testing, new drugs, data on diseases, you know, it's all subjected to statistical analysis, samplings, and so forth. You can never look at every single disorder. It's based on sampling studies. That's why I have an affinity for this kind of thing, and tend to give it a lot of credence.

ICONOCLAST: Do you characterize war as a disease? I mean, a social disease.

DR. NORTHCUTT: (laughs) Well, you know, I think it seems like the frame of mind that we have where war seems to be the first response almost seems to be a disease. You know, maybe war is the symptom of that disease or the outcome of that mindset.

If you look at our culture, it's war, war, war. If you look at the mainstream media, you know, like the Waco paper, for example, what you see reported is the war, veterans, people who have relatives in Iraq, and the whole glorification of the war. But articles about peace activists or people who oppose the war are almost forbidden and downplayed. Those people are thought of as abnormal somehow, so I think a really abnormal way of thinking in general in the country.

ICONOCLAST: It's almost like the papers are routing for cancer, or the media wants AIDS to win —

DR. NORTHCUTT: (laughs) ICONOCLAST: — or Alzheimer's disease. (laughs)

DR. NORTHCUTT: Yeah, that's a good way to put it, and another thing, if you look, for example, at the entertainment, the video games, you ever notice that they're almost all of them have to do with violence and killing? It's like a sport.

You know, I heard a four-year-old child a week or so ago talking about a "head shot." A four-year-old child. And I thought that was about the sickest thing I had ever heard in my life, so I think we have a quite distorted outlook in the country at this point. I don't know if it's going to change. I don't know if the folly of this war will change or not. We didn't seem to learn from Vietnam, so I'm not really that optimistic, but we can be hopeful, I guess.

Democrats' 100-Hour Agenda Excludes Economic/Race Gap

BOSTON, Mass. — The economic interests of American citizens of color are being left out of the 100-hour agenda pushed by the newly elected House Democrats, according to a new report from a national non-partisan, non-profit organization.

Meizhu Lui, co-author of the report and executive director of United for a Fair Economy, praised the new leadership in Congress for focusing on poverty in the United States, but the racial economic divide still remains wide even 40 years after the civil rights movement.

"African Americans, the Democrats' most loyal supporters, should expect more in hour 101 and beyond," she said in a press release.

For the agenda address this specific economic gap, it must add affirmative action elements that target Blacks and Latinos or there will be no change to the economic inequities among the races, the report said.

The report found that the reason Blacks and Latinos benefit from minimum wage increases and college loan interest rate cuts is that these populations are disproportionately over-represented among those working at or below poverty level and among those with few methods to pay for college.

Reforms to federal programs related to alternative energy, for example, would benefit more whites than non-whites, the report stated, because not as many people of color have received advanced degrees that promise high-wage jobs in the Midwest where ethanol is manufactured.

The full report from United for a Fair Economy entitled "State of the Dream" will be released to the public on its website on Tuesday.

INFO
United for a Fair Economy
"State of the Dream"
www.faireconomy.org/
StateOfTheDream

Biofuels, Cattle Marketing Featured Topics At Blackland Income Growth Conference

WACO — The future of ethanol and biofuel production in the Central Texas Blacklands is one of several featured topics at the 45th Blackland Income Growth Conference scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday, Jan. 16-17, at the Waco Convention Center.

The event is sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and the Waco Chamber of Commerce.

Programs on grain, horticulture, beef, cotton, forage, wild-

life, and equine will be featured Jan. 16, with sessions scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Registration for these sessions is \$12 and includes lunch.

Jan. 17 sessions will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and include workshops on pesticide license recertification, private applicator training and testing, and rural economic opportunities.

For info, <stephenville.tamu.edu/BIG/index.html>.



Lightning Strikes!
when you advertise in
**THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST**
354-675-3634

Bush Feels Heat From Saddam Execution

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Even in death, Saddam Hussein is still causing President George W. Bush trouble.

The American president last week dodged questions in order to distance himself from new controversy surrounding the execution of the deposed Iraqi leader.

This controversy stems from an unauthorized video spread across the Internet showing Hussein in his last moments on earth being verbally assaulted by his executioners. The video was obtained via a camera located on a cell phone.

President Bush said he had not watched gruesome footage because he was too busy finding a “way forward” in Iraq.

In Baghdad, Major General William Caldwell passed the responsibility squarely on the Iraqi government, since the American forces served only to transport Hussein to the site of the execution.

“That’s not our decision. That’s a government of Iraq decision,” said Maj. Gen. Caldwell, after admitting that the U.S. would have performed the execution “differently.”

In Great Brittan, pressure is mounting for Prime Minister Tony Blair who has yet to condemn Hussein’s execution. The British government opposes the death penalty.

Downing Street, however, has backed the Iraqi government’s decision to investigate the incident which occurred last Saturday.

No one has taken credit for shooting and releasing the cell phone video of the former Iraqi dictator being taunted by guards who told him to “go to hell” along with other sectarian jibes.

Iraqi authorities, however, say they have taken a suspect into custody but would not release his name to the public.

This grainy, amateurish foot-

age stands in stark contrast to the official video broadcasted without audio nor the scene of Hussein’s actual death.

THE NEW YORK TIMES reported that a prosecutor in Hussein’s case, Munqith al-Faroon, iden-

tified one of the two men holding camera phones as Mowaffak al-Rubaie, the national security adviser to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Al-Faroon, though, refused to accuse al-Rubaie of any wrongdoing.

Al-Maliki has already stated that he would not run for a second term in office.

Two days after Hussein’s hanging, Italy began a campaign for a global ban on capital punishment through the United Nations.

Politicians from all political parties in Italy united in condemnation against Hussein’s execution, though the Iraq government called this criticism hypocritical since WWII dictator Benito Mussolini was struck down by partisans in 1945.

The backlash of Hussein’s execution caused a delay in the execution of his half brother Barzan Ibrahim, a former intelligence chief, and Awad Hamed al-Bandar, the former chief justice of the Revo-

lutionary Court.

As of deadline, their death was postponed until Sunday, Nov. 7.

Controversy had already surrounded Hussein’s trial, the legitimacy of which was called into question after, among other things, several of his attorneys and a judge were murdered.

The Iraq Centre for Research and Strategic Studies and the Gulf Research Center released a poll that found that 90 percent of Iraqis think their country was in better shape before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The poll was made before the Iraq Study Group’s published its recommendations to President Bush, and the Iraqi government executed Hussein.

Spy Chief To Help Escalate Iraq Occupation

WASHINGTON — John Negroponte, the former U.S. ambassador that helped sell the U.S. invasion of Iraq to the U.N., has a new assignment.

He is leaving his post as Director of National Intelligence for work under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as her deputy.

His new job, though technically a demotion, is to now sell the Bush administration’s call for an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Baghdad, Iraq.

The announcement of the troop escalation to the occupation is expected this week.

Negroponte is a Bush family loyalist who was the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad from June 2004 to April 2005.

It has been speculated that his successor will be a former director of the National Security Agency, Ret. Admiral Mike McConnell.

Resistance To Escalation

In the White House Rose Garden last Wednesday, President Bush appealed for bi-partisanship, hoping to gain momentum to send more troops to Iraq.

And it seems like the new Democratic majority in Congress could give in since moves to withdraw troops from Iraq, repeal the USA Patriot Act, and gut the Military Tribunals Act are not the stated goals of its “100-hour” legislative agenda.

But one top Democrat, Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), said in an interview last week that he will stop funding a new “surge” in troops during the 110th Congress.

“Money is the only way we can stop it for sure,” the chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Committee told political pundit Arianna Huffington.

Senior Republican Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Dick Lugar (R-Ind.) have expressed problems with Bush’s new strategy — as has Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) who went so far as to call the plan “Alice in Wonderland.”

After announcing his second presidential campaign the week prior, former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), described the troop increase as “the McCain doctrine,” named after Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), an early favorite in the race for the 2008 presidential election.

“If the President did what I urged him to do, none of this would have happened,” said Sen. McCain of his recommendation to send more soldiers to Iraq.

Former CIA Official Predicts U.S. Defeat In Afghanistan

WASHINGTON — The United States military will suffer a defeat in Afghanistan, according to a former senior CIA operative who tracked Osama bin Laden for a decade.

Michael Sheuer told the Daily Times that U.S. forces are now in danger of an insurgency likely to be bigger than the U.S. and NATO presence there combined.

The cause for the danger is that Washington has failed in its mission to capture bin Laden.

Sheuer praised Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for promoting “US interests” over his own. By deploying his troops to tribal areas in Pakistan, the former CIA official said, he has “brought his country to the brink of a civil war.”

This continuation of Cold War-style tactics — using the military of foreign states to push an American agenda — comes with tricky assumptions that the interests of Musharraf’s Pakistan

are the same as of the United States, he said.

Think tanks in the U.S., though, have a more critical view of Pakistan President, stating that he is failing to put down the Pakistani Pushtuns who support the Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters.

Pakistani nationals fighting with the Taliban have encountered support from Musharraf after the Taliban regime fell, the think tanks conclude.

Hip Hop Legend To Lecture At Trinity University Jan. 17

SAN ANTONIO — Hip hop music legend Chuck D will give a lecture on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m. in Laurie Auditorium on the Trinity University campus in San Antonio. It is free and open to the public.

The lecture titled “Music Beyond Lyrics: There is More to Rap Than What Sells” and subsequent discussion on the effect of hip-hop and rap music on popular culture is in honor of the late civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Chuck D, the leader and co-founder of the rap group Public Enemy, is expected to speak on his personal connection to Dr. King’s ideas for activism through music and reflect on growing up in the late 1960s and ’70s during a time of social upheaval.

Before the lecture will be a screening of the documentary “Beyond Beats & Rhymes: A Hip-Hop Head Weighs in On Manhood in Hip-Hop Culture” at 5 p.m. in Northrup Hall Room 040. This event is free and open to the public.

The documentary examines representations of gender roles in hip-hop and rap music through the lens of filmmaker Byron Hurt, a former college quarterback turned activist.

The film features interviews with hip hop recording artists Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Fat Joe, Chuck D, Jadakiss, Busta Rhymes, and hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons.

Hip Hop Legend

Chuck D — born Carlton Ridenhouer in Long Island, New York — is known for incorporating political themes about race and inequality into his rap lyrics. For his work with his group Public Enemy, Rolling Stone magazine named him one of the “50 most important performers in rock and roll history.”

As well as an advocate for free music downloads on the Internet, he published a best-selling autobiography, *Fight the Power*; was a commentator on the Fox News Channel; and spoke on behalf of Rock The Vote, the National Urban League, and the National Alliance of African American Athletes.

The 47-year-old artist encourages young people to be politically active, think for themselves, and act with passion and conviction as leaders.

Students affiliated with the Trinity Multi-Cultural Network and members of the Black Student Union, as well as Trinity faculty and staff members, plan to join other residents of San Antonio in the annual MLK March through the community’s East Side on Monday, Jan. 15.

For more information, contact Trinity’s Office of University Communications.

INFO
Office
(210) 999-8406

Edwards Questions U.S. Troop Surge In Iraq

WASHINGTON D.C. — U.S. Representative Chet Edwards recently joined a congressional delegation invited to the White House to meet with President Bush to discuss new initiatives in Iraq. The White House meeting was called by the president to reach out to Democrats and Republicans in Congress for bipartisan ideas on changes in Iraq policy in advance of his Iraq policy speech next week.

"I commend President Bush for recognizing that we must try new approaches to address the complicated and challenging problems in Iraq and that bipartisan solutions, wherever possible, should be pursued," commented Edwards.

Edwards was the senior House Member present, along with six other House Democrats and seven Republicans, at a meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Also in attendance were Vice-President Cheney; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, and presidential advisor Karl Rove.

Edwards stated that he believed "security is a necessary but not sufficient requirement" for a democracy to have a chance of working in Iraq, citing the need to focus on economic reforms and infrastructure improvements as well. He commented, "The Iraqi government, regardless of American action, must do far more to earn the respect of its own people by clamping down on militia and sectarian violence and by improving the economy and quality of life for the Iraqi people."

The president made it clear that his new Iraq policy approach, which he will present to the American people next week, will be broad-based and include military, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

When asked by the president for his ideas, Edwards expressed concerns about a proposed troop surge. "Mr. President, I would hope your new initiatives could be carried out without an increase in U.S. troops in Iraq because of concerns in Congress and across the country about sending more U.S. military personnel there, but if you are going to make that decision, you should send whatever number you believe is right, not a watered down compromise number, because this could be the last real chance to win Americans' support for a strategy to stabilize Iraq."

The president responded by

saying that he had not made a final decision on a temporary troop surge or their mission in Iraq but appreciated Edwards' comment that if additional troops are to be sent, the number should be based on their specific mission and not on political considerations.

The president emphasized that he shared Americans' frustration and was not happy with

the lack of progress in Iraq and that he has made it clear to the Iraqi political leadership that it must do more to shape its own country's future.

In responding to a number of bipartisan concerns raised about the ongoing challenges in Iraq, President Bush said he will forcefully present to the American people next week why he still believes that an

Iraqi government that can "defend, sustain and govern itself" is a vital part of a broader, long-term war against terrorism and extremism and why he still believes the war in Iraq can be won.

Edwards concluded, "I especially respect the president for saying that he will respect those who have honest differences with his new policy proposals,

even though he would like to see broad-based support for them. Whether the country and Congress support the president's new proposals next week or not, I am convinced he is extremely well-informed about the challenges in Iraq and the fact that there must be new military, economic and diplomatic approaches if Iraq is have a chance to gain the stability that would best serve the future for his daughters and my two young sons."

Edwards is the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and is co-chair of the House Army Caucus.

Getting Smart: Charges Dropped Against Libertarian Candidate

BY MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

WAXAHACHIE, Texas — Charges were dropped Thursday, Jan. 4, against Philip Smart, Libertarian candidate for Texas Senatorial District 22, who was defeated in last November's general election by incumbent Kip Averitt, a Republican.

Smart, 49, of Palmer, a CPA who spent 20 days in jail, part of the time in solitary confinement, during the countdown to the 2006 general election, had been arrested and charged with not stopping his vehicle outside a crosswalk.

Smart was arrested in early October 2006 for the purported traffic violation, of which he paid a fine.

He says he received a summons just before Christmas to appear in County Court At Law #2 in relation to two related drug charges of which he says he was unaware had been levied against him. The hearing was set for 9 a.m. in the Ellis County Court, but did not begin until two hours later, according to Joey Dauben, a journalist with the ELLIS COUNTY OBSERVER who was present.

Smart was accompanied at the hearing by his mother, Mrs. Jesse Smart of Dallas, his girl friend, Donna Watson, Justin Randall, chairman of the Libertarian Party of Ellis County, and Jimmy Turner and Mike Treis, local activists.

Smart said that while waiting for his hearing to be called, he watched as other cases went before the bench. He said that most of the defendants were Black or Hispanic and few had independent representation.

Smart explained that the wait for his case to be called was prolonged when Judge Gene Calvert suspended the hearings to meet with newly elected County Commissioner Bill Dobson in his chambers which could be viewed through the glass window behind the bench.

Judge Calvert, Commissioner Dodson, and Judge Chad Adams, who the OBSERVER's Dauben reported was giving Dodson a tour, stood chatting in chambers while 30 people, defendants, family members and friends, and paid employees, waited. Dauben described Calvert as one of the best judges in Ellis County.

According to Smart, it was nearly 11:30 a.m. when the prosecutor finally called his name, and there was some confusion voiced by the court as to who was representing Smart. The defendant explained during an interview that he had dismissed his attorney, Todd

Phillippi, who had been retained during the time Smart was incarcerated. Smart says the attorney did not visit him in jail or follow instructions given to him.

During the interchange with the prosecutor regarding representation, Smart said he could clearly see the file open on the desk that held the court records and that included was a handwritten note that said, "RX - by phone." Smart later told the media that he took this to mean that the court knew that faxes of his prescriptions sent by his pharmacist, Rudy Smith, had been received on or near the time Smart was arrested. The pharmacist had been asked by Smart's mother to send these after the arresting officer had noticed a container used for carrying prescription drugs in Smart's vehicle.

After the short exchange with the prosecutor Smart was called to the bench. Judge Calvert read two charges, Possession of Dangerous Drugs and Possession of Controlled Substances PG3, and proceeded, according to Smart, to say that the State had dropped the charges, dismissing the case. Smart said the matter was over in 10 seconds.

Smart says that he had never been arraigned on either offense nor had either charge been mentioned to him until the receipt of the summons in December. According to John Roland, the 2006 Libertarian Party candidate for Attorney General, this violates due process and also contravenes the mandated practices as cited in the Texas Rules of Judicial Procedure, available online.

Roland added, "These practices were added with the Civil Rights Act of 1868 and were written to deal with abuses of this kind mainly dealing with abuses of Blacks."

A Certified Public Accountant is good standing with the Texas Board of Accountancy, Smart estimates that the cost of his incarceration, just in lost income, was around \$8,000. Asked about his reaction to Thursday's court appearance, Smart said that he will be taking appropriate action and also that he plans to run for office again in the near future.

According to Ellis County information provided by reporter Dauben, the salary for judges in Ellis County is around \$180,000 per year, nearly four times that of the median income of the country. Dauben also mentioned that all elected officials, 22 in Ellis County, received a \$10,000 pay raise in October, and that the median price of a home in Ellis County is between \$150,000 and \$160,000.

Get Ready For Tax Season

COLLEGE STATION — When it comes to getting ready to file your income tax return, remember what the Boy Scouts say: Be prepared.

That's the advice of Dr. Joyce Cavanagh, Texas Cooperative Extension family economics specialist.

Make sure you have all your forms before you do anything else, she said. Have all your W-2 forms and 1099 forms from any employer or financial institution where you have interest-bearing accounts.

"W-2 and 1099s have to be in hand by Jan. 31," she said. "If you're itemizing, you need to keep track of your property tax and interest paid on your home. Don't file too soon — you might not have all your necessary paperwork yet."

This tax season will bring some changes in what can be deducted and what can't, Cavanagh said.

As of Aug. 17, 2006, she said, only charitable contributions of clothing and household goods in very good condition are qualified as deductions. Receipts will be required when claiming any cash contributions made after that date.

Also this year, a credit for the Federal Telephone Excise Tax will be available on a one-time basis, Cavanagh said.

She also advises to keep in mind the Earned Income Credit.

"People who meet the requirements for Earned Income Credit need to file whether or not they owe taxes in order to receive (this credit)." The IRS website can help in determining whether or not you meet those requirements, she added.

All these changes can be extremely confusing but the good news is: You're not in this alone, she said.

THE LONE STAR Iconoclast Entertainment

Top Ten Tips To 'Exercise Without Exercising'



Shani Visits Texas

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC STAR Shani Rigsbee was in Texas this past weekend, performing at a multi-million-dollar three-day wedding event in Houston. The entertainer, who was interviewed last year in a cover story appearing in *The Iconoclast*, has been the focus of a whirlwind of activity. She was chosen as the featured vocalist for the biblical epic *One Night With the King* (Fox Faith) that features her song "Kingdom of Love." Composed by J.A.C. Redford, this magical masterpiece is now vying for an Academy Award nomination in the Best Original Song category alongside some of the year's most moving compositions. With her upcoming release of *At the Casbah* slated for March 2007, Shani will appear as a guest on the CBS show *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* on Feb. 27.

With her new CD/DVD release of *At the Casbah* (CMG / Sony BMG) listeners can expect a stylized direction of songs, and two "re-creations" of Cole Porter classics. Perhaps unprecedented, the album's songs have been featured in a total of six motion pictures. *At the Casbah* creates an "event," evoking an exciting blend of rhythm, sophistication and exoticism, free from labels or borders. One part pop, one part world, one part jazz, Shani has also enlisted some urban flavor from the likes of several Rap Artists on the album, such as Producer and Rap Artist V-Style who is also featured in the "Get Somebody" video. *At the Casbah* successfully strikes a balance between haunting timeless classic sounds evoking images of "old Hollywood" and a refreshingly new sound honed from years of exposure to the world and the exotic. *At the Casbah* features the radio friendly hits "Get Somebody," "Destiny" and "Invasive."

Waco Symphony Will Perform Hollywood's Hits

Thursday, Jan. 18

WACO — The Waco Symphony Orchestra will perform Hollywood's greatest hits in an all-orchestral pops concert on Thursday, Jan. 18.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. in Waco Hall, located on the Baylor University campus.

The orchestra will perform a selection of favorite movie themes from composers such as Henry Mancini, Burt Bacharach, Elmer Bernstein, John Williams, and others.

For more information or to order tickets, call (254) 754-0851 or visit the website <www.wacosymphony.com>.

DALLAS — Gold's Gym and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) have teamed up to fight diabetes with fitness.

The numbers are staggering, with 62 million people affected by diabetes. 1.5 million people diagnosed with diabetes each year, and according to recent statistic, one in three babies born today will develop diabetes in their lifetime. Many people in the U.S. have diabetes right now and don't even know it.

The good news is that according to a recent report released by the ADA, even moderate amounts of exercise can help prevent and manage the disease. That's why the ADA and Gold's Gym have launched a campaign to get America fit and show people that exercise is easy. Surveying its top trainers and experts from the prestigious Gold's Gym Fitness Institute, Gold's Gym has unveiled the following tips:

Top 10 Ways to "Exercise without Exercising"

1. Park your car in a parking space located furthest away

- from the store entry
- 2. Go dancing
- 3. Participate in a charity walk or bike ride
- 4. Play with your kids
- 5. Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- 6. Lift your legs while sitting in your chair at work
- 7. Stretch, do warm-ups, or ride your stationary bike while watching TV
- 8. Walk around your office or outside during lunch and break times
- 9. Do some chores — you will burn calories while cleaning the house
- 10. Choose family activities that DON'T involve the TV or the computers (tennis, hiking, parks, etc.)

In addition to these tips, Gold's Gym has released its list of the *Top 10 Ways to Stay Motivated* and a special "Get Started" *Fitness Guide* which shows consumers exactly how to start an exercise program, now available online at <www.goldsgym.com/diabetes>.

Support the paper that stands alone...

THE LONE STAR Iconoclast

THE ICONOCLAST
IS A NATIONAL
INDEPENDENT
Newspaper
Geared At Marketing Your Products
COAST TO COAST!

Call (254) 675-3634
To Place An
Advertisement
or log on to
www.lonestaricon.com

To Subscribe To The Iconoclast,
Call (254) 675-3634

To Cosign Or Not To Cosign

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Three out of four cosigners are ultimately asked to repay the loan.

That's according to the Federal Trade Commission, which also reports that in most states, if you cosign a loan for someone who misses a payment, the lender can immediately collect from you without first pursuing the borrower.

Mike Sullivan, director of education for Take Charge America, a national non-profit credit counseling agency, says problems often arise when the cosigner and borrower do not have a complete understanding of what cosigning entails.

"We find that families and friends often cosign for their loved ones without reading the fine print," he said. "Cosigning is more than helping someone qualify for a loan. A cosigner is ultimately telling the lender that he or she is responsible for the loan."

Sullivan describes four facts every cosigner needs to know:

• **Once you cosign, there's no going back.** A cosigner cannot change his or her mind midway through the term of the loan. Unexpected events like job loss and divorce need to be taken into consideration before signing on the dotted line.

• **Cosigning a loan may prevent you from obtaining credit for yourself.** If you cosign a loan, the loan amount is counted as one of your obligations. That liability could pre-

vent you from qualifying for another loan or line of credit.

• **A cosigner could be forced to pay more than the loan amount.** If the borrower skips a payment or can't pay the loan, late fees and collection costs can also be forwarded to the cosigner. If legal action is needed to obtain the money, cosigners may also have to pay for attorney fees.

• **A cosigner's wages and property can be garnished if the lender sues and wins.** If you do cosign a loan, be sure that you have the financial backing to pay off the loan without going into debt. Failing to repay the loan or fees will negatively affect your credit score.

"Contracts and other legal documents are referenced when disputes arise, so it's important that both the borrower and cosigner have copies of everything," Sullivan said. "Cosigners can protect themselves further by asking the lender to notify them in writing if the borrower ever misses a payment. That could prevent a trail of extra fees."

Founded in 1987, Take Charge America, Inc. is a non-profit organization headquartered in Phoenix, Ariz. TCA offers a variety of services including financial education, credit counseling, and debt management. To learn more about TCA or its programs, call 1-800-823-7396 or visit <www.takechargeamerica.org>.

House Bill Could Legalize Use Of Deadly Force By Texas Citizens

AUSTIN — District 113 State Rep. Joe Driver (R-Garland) and others have filed House Bill 284 to be considered in the 80th Texas Legislature. The bill, if it becomes law, will give Texans more leeway in the use of deadly force.

The Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate are scheduled to convene on Tuesday, Jan. 9.

The bipartisan bill is joint authored by Dist. 45 Rep. Patrick Rose (D-Dripping Springs) and co-authored by Dist. 55 Rep. Dianne White Delisi (R-Temple), Dist. 2 Rep. Dan Flynn (R-Canton), Dist. 3 Rep. Mark Homer (D-Paris), and Dist. 87 Rep. David Swinford (R-Amarillo).

HB 284 would grant citizens the right to use "force or deadly force in defense of a person" who attempts to illegally enter a vehicle or business. Similar

rights pertaining to home invasion are already in place. If approved, the bill would remove a requirement for an individual to retreat to avoid a confrontation.

Drive, who filed the bill last October, calls the legislation a "self-defense bill." It would allow the use of deadly force if an individual "reasonably believes" such an action is "immediately necessary."

The bill also provides stipulations that would make it more difficult for a criminal or his family to file a lawsuit when deadly force is used against the criminal.

While the bill likely will see support from organizations such as the National Rifle Association and the Texas State Rifle Association, opposition is already being planned by the Brady Campaign Against Gun Violence and others.

The Facts And Fictions About Flu And Colds

NEWSWISE — Considering how common they are, colds and flu are the subject of a great many misconceptions. Dr. Seth Feltheimer, an associate attending physician, and Patricia Ciminera, nurse practitioner at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center, offer their insights and expertise on these sources of misery.

First, the differences: a cold is usually an upper respiratory tract infection with symptoms including a sore throat, head congestion, sinus pain and low-grade fever. On the other hand, the flu is generally marked by a higher fever, a sore throat, a cough and body aches. A common cold usually lasts two to three days while the flu can take as long as a week. Unlike colds, the flu can lead to more serious complications and even hospitalization, especially in high-risk individuals like asthmatics and the elderly.

Now, the facts and fictions:

* "The best way to prevent a cold is to wash your hands."

True. Also, try avoiding people with colds.

* "You can catch a cold by staying outside in the cold too long."

False. Colds are transmitted by touching something that an infected person has touched, or by breathing in moisture that an infected person has coughed out. The reason people get more colds in winter is that they spend more time indoors and have more contact with each other.

* "Antibiotics can cure a cold or the flu."

False. A cold or flu is a virus, and, therefore, cannot be treated with antibiotics. There are medications that can alleviate the symptoms of flu and make you feel better, but the best defense against the flu is to be vaccinated against it. There is no vaccine against the common cold.

* "If you have the flu, you shouldn't go to work."

True. Going to work can expose your colleagues to infection. Sometimes, professional athletes play with the flu, but in those cases it is usually a different virus involved. The best advice is to rest and recover.

* "Flu shots can give you the flu."

False. Flu shots can produce very mild flu-like symptoms for a short period, but this happens very infrequently.

* "If you have a flu shot one year, you don't need it the next."

False. Flu shots do not last for more than a year. And, the vaccine is reformulated each year to target the specific kind of virus, which may change from year to year.

Considering how common they are, colds and flu are the subject of a great many misconceptions. Dr. Seth Feltheimer, an associate attending physician, and Patricia Ciminera, nurse practitioner at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center, offer their insights and expertise on these sources of misery.

Prevention Key To Decreasing Oak Wilt Spread Across Texas

COLLEGE STATION — Texas Forest Service is encouraging Texans to be careful when collecting and purchasing firewood at this time of year. Transporting and storing diseased wood is a known means of spreading the devastating oak wilt fungus to previously uninfected neighborhoods. Utilizing these prevention steps is the key to safeguarding against spreading the disease through the selection and use of firewood:

Select well-seasoned firewood, cut before the summer and typically dry with loose bark and cracked ends. Avoid oak wood that appears unseasoned, as it may have tight bark and cut ends which show no cracks or signs of aging. The extreme heat and drying of a full Texas summer effectively destroys the fungus in cut firewood.

Other tips include:

• Safely store unknown sources of firewood — Cover the woodpile with a clear piece of plastic, and bury the edges of the plastic to prevent the entry or exit of insects that might have been attracted to diseased wood and fungal mats.

• Destroy diseased red oaks — Trees suspected to have died recently from oak wilt should be

destroyed by burning, burying, or chipping. Red oaks that have died from oak wilt should not be stored or used for firewood.

• Avoid wounding oaks during vulnerable seasons — typically from February through June. The best times for pruning of oaks are during the heat of summer (minimal spore production) or the cold of winter (minimal insect activity).

• Paint all oak wounds including pruning cuts — Throughout the year, immediately apply a thin coat of latex or pruning paint to all fresh wounds and other injuries that expose the inner bark or sapwood of oaks.

For more information on oak wilt, visit the website <www.texasoakwilt.org> or contact Jim Houser at (512) 339-4589.

Workshop Helps Ag Producers, Rural Businesses Win USDA Grants, Loans

AUSTIN — Farmers, ranchers, and rural businesses from across Texas are invited to attend a workshop designed to help obtain federal grants and loans to install their own renewable energy projects or make energy efficiency improvements to existing operations.

The Tuesday, Jan. 23, workshop in San Antonio will provide intense, hands-on technical help for potential applicants of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Section 9006 renewable energy and energy efficiency grant and loan programs.

USDA Rural Development awards grants and loan guarantees for renewable energy

projects including utility-scale wind power, smaller wind, biomass, biofuels, and solar activities.

Co-sponsored by the Office of Rural Community Affairs, the free workshop, "How to Win a USDA Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency Grant/Loan," will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 23. It will be held at the U.S.A.F. School of Medicine, 2601 Louis Bauer Road (Building 775, Room 196), at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio.

For more information, call toll-free 800-544-2042. To register on-line, visit the website <www3.cpa.state.tx.us/register.nsf/Registration?OpenForm>.

Golden Alga Back In Texas, Higher Levels Seen At Whitney

AUSTIN — Fish kills caused by naturally-occurring, toxic golden alga are occurring at several lakes and river systems in North and West Texas.

An active fish kill on E.V. Spence Reservoir north of San Angelo has affected largemouth bass, white bass, and other species; however, 99 percent of the estimated 316,500 fishes killed so far are three- to five-inch gizzard shad.

High golden alga concentrations are believed to result from a strong cold front that came down around the first of December, allowing

the golden alga to multiply rapidly while other algal species' growth slowed considerably.

E.V. Spence experienced a similar fish kill immediately following the first major cold front in December 2005 and stayed toxic through May 2006.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Inland Fisheries biologists and outside partners are also monitoring several other water bodies, including Possum Kingdom reservoir, which showed low concentrations of golden alga last week.

The upstream end of Lake Whitney also shows elevated golden alga levels, although no dead or stressed fishes have been seen or reported from there yet.

In early December 2006, water samples were collected and examined at Lake Whitney. Golden alga was present in all six locations sampled (Soldier's Bluff, Walling Bend, Steele Creek, Lakeside/Morgan, Plowman Park, and Kimball Bend). Golden alga was not dominant at any location, although it seems to be increasing. No fish kills have been reported.

Lake Granbury also is reporting increasingly yellow-colored water, and the potential for an alga bloom there appears to be high.

Information about golden alga and fish kills, including the current bloom status for various river systems and reservoirs, is kept updated on the department website <www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/environmentconcerns/hab/ga>.

State's Mitigation Agreement To Benefit Wildlife, Highways

AUSTIN — Transportation and wildlife officials in April announced an agreement to increase large-scale wildlife habitat protection while also facilitating new highway projects.

The written agreement between the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Department of Transportation formalizes and expands the environmental strategy known as mitigation banking.

"Increasingly, wildlife biologists and other environmental scientists realize that to effectively conserve those woods and waters that are the key for wildlife survival and our human quality of life, you really have to work on a landscape scale," said Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, TPW Commission chairman. "With a big mitigation bank, we're talking about the

ability to protect major components of the ecosystem, such as river watersheds or coastal marshes."

Federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act allow compensation for losses of wetlands and endangered species' habitat that result from public works projects. This is known as mitigation, meaning natural resource restoration, creation, enhancement, or preservation to compensate for unavoidable resource losses caused by development projects.

Historically, this could mean many small mitigation sites patch-worked along a new highway. The new interagency agreement focuses mitigation on large acreage sites picked in advance for their ecological value.

Arbor Day Group Offering 10 Free Flowering Trees

NEBRASKA CITY, Neb. — Ten free flowering trees will be given to each person who joins the National Arbor Day Foundation in January. The trees will be shipped postpaid for planting between Feb. 1 and May 31, with complete planting instructions. The six- to 12-inch trees are guaranteed to grow or will be replaced at no charge.

Members also receive a subscription to the Foundation's bimonthly publication, and a copy of "The Tree Book," with information about tree planting and care.

To receive the trees and other items, send a \$10 membership contribution to 10 Free Flowering Trees, National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, NE 68410, or join on-line <www.arborday.org>.

IPC Programs Slowing Housefly's Pesticides Resistance

STEPHENVILLE — Thanks to years of unrestricted spraying, the ordinary housefly is becoming more resistant to commonly used pesticides every year, said a Texas Cooperative Extension entomologist.

"Resistance is widespread, and it's not confined to agricultural operations," said Dr. Jeff Tomberlin, Extension entomologist.

That's the bad news. The good news is that integrated pest management techniques greatly slow the development of resistance to pesticides, said Tomberlin, who is based at the Texas A&M University System Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Stephenville.

In a recent study, Tomberlin and Dr. Greta Schuster, Extension entomologist, looked at

housefly resistance to commonly used chemical controls at restaurants and confined livestock feeding operations. With the livestock operations, they compared resistance between those using integrated pest management methods, and those that did not.

Houseflies, one of the most common insect pests on the planet, are more than just a nuisance. Because they breed in manure and regurgitate food, they spread many human and animal diseases. In restaurants and homes, the primary complaint is their insanitary nature.

For livestock operations, this is also cause for complaint, but in large numbers, houseflies can irritate to the point of reducing

weight gain and milk production of the animals.

And, as urban areas encroach upon farmland, livestock operations are under more scrutiny of their fly control, Tomberlin said.

Most chemical controls used today are pyrethroids, a class of chemicals that are low in toxicity to humans and other mammals and therefore safer to use around livestock, he said.

Though there are newer pesticides in development, such as Spinosad, which was just recently released, Tomberlin noted that unless agricultural producers, restaurant owners, school facility managers, and householders practice IPM, it will only be a matter of time until houseflies develop resistance to the new products, too.

Be Discovered

Call (254) 675-3634 Today



With An Advertisement In
The Internationally Renowned.....

www.lonestaricon.com

THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST

The Non-Column

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If you ain't got nothin' to say, don't let that stop you."

This is not a column. I began a column, but it wasn't very good. It was vitriolic and vicious. Which isn't what you pay me for.

When I began this calling (The difference between a "calling" and a "job" is that you don't get paid as much.) 43 years ago, I determined that people are solely interested in writing that leads them to reflect on their own perceptions and understanding.

Anger accomplishes neither. Glib anger accomplishes the opposite.

Not that I don't from time to time express pure, old-fashioned vitriolic abuse.

But when I do, it's to make a point.

My primary point, however, is this.

I live a pretty comfortable, in fact, downright enjoyable, life.

Most of what Neighbor Bush inflicts upon this country actually benefits me, personally. I've gotten pretty good at working the system.

But much of that which benefits me does irreparable harm to this society and culture.

It's my intention to expose those I see as the enemy.

If an angry insult accomplishes that, I'll use it.

But if that is the only tool I can

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



employ, it does neither of us any good.

More important, to do so is dishonest because nothing is ever all anything.

Anger is an absolute, and all absolutes are false, including that one.

So to just be vitriolic is to lie. And I then become the counterpart to Karl Rove.

I am not a propagandist; I write for consideration, not policy.

And vitriolic diatribe is the stuff of propaganda.

I don't intend to change anybody's mind; at best I might help them to do that on their own.

It is my hope that you will listen to my thoughts, but act out your own.

So I will try again next week. I will try to inspire anger, not voice it.

I will try to keep a smile on your face and retribution in your heart.

I hope, most of all, to remind you that we can be better than we are, and that we certainly can do better than we are doing.



THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Congress Must Act Immediately! Bush Claims Dictatorial Power Over Sanctity Of U.S. Mail

"It's a crime to tamper with the U.S. mail."

But that's a new power that President George W. Bush has given himself — or is trying to — with his Dec. 20, 2006 "signing statement" that declared his right to open people's mail.

Existing law prohibits the government from reading the public's mail without a warrant, and the bill the President signed reiterates this, but while the mice were away for the holidays, the cat attempted to pull a fast one by giving himself sweeping new powers that go against the grain of democracy, against the right to privacy, and against the rights of individuals to communicate with each other without the burden and potential intimidation of Big Brother watching their every move.

The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 clearly states that First Class Mail cannot be opened without a warrant.

Yet when Bush signed the legislation, he added an attachment giving him authority to open mail without a warrant in "exigent circumstances," which can mean virtually anything. The statement says that the Bush Administration "shall construe" a section of that law to allow the opening of sealed mail in order to protect life, guard against hazardous materials, or conduct "physical searches specifically authorized by law for foreign intelligence collection."

The government has long been able to legally open mail believed to contain a bomb or other imminent threat, but authorities have been required to seek a warrant from a criminal or special intelligence court in other cases.

The signing statement comes on the heels of disclosures last year that Bush had authorized a program allowing the National Security Agency to monitor telephone and e-mail communications between the United States and other countries without court oversight. The administration has defended the legality of the NSA spying program, suggesting that Congress had authorized it as part of the war on al-Qaeda.

But who will possess oversight regarding whose mail has been detoured and compromised? Who will regulate the reasons why an individual is targeted? Who will control the leakages of information gleaned from private mail or retributions upon those who might not share the same political ideologies as Bush and Company?

Bush's latest unauthorized attempt at reinterpreting a law could undo some of the restraints put on politicians in the 1970s when a congressional committee investigating abuses found that the CIA and FBI had been illegally opening hundreds of thousands of pieces of U.S. mail, targeting Vietnam War opponents, journalists, lawmakers, businessmen, and candidates for public office.

There is more at stake than might meet the eye.

This isn't simple voyeurism, although that probably played a part.

This goes deeper. Freedom of expression without potential retribution has been dashed.

Although you might consider it flattering that President George W. Bush and his cronies desire to read your mail, information is power; and the information about yourself and the intended recipient of the mail can be surrendered without your knowledge. Every note will be compromised.

President Bush has disenfranchised the U.S. Postal Service as a communication system of honor. Now, everything you write and dispatch could be subject to interpretation. Nothing you write and send will be totally privileged. There will be no guarantees of privacy.

Big Brother George has assumed the power to examine your personal plans — where you are going and who you are seeing, what you are doing and what you might do — your personal records, your bills, your payments, your expressions of love or hate — anything about you that runs through the formerly honorable halls of the U.S. Postal Service.

Politicians will now have secret access to your passwords, your account numbers, your bank accounts, your credit card accounts, your medical records, your business orders, even unsolicited dispatches that might paint you in a different form than you really are. The pathways to potential destruction are endless, especially to your family.

Behind slick Georgie's attempt at displacing the Postal Service is the removal of accountability, perhaps the one thing in which he excels. Before Dec. 20, 2006, if he or anyone else even attempted to tamper with the mail, not only would there likely be severe prosecution, but wronged individuals could sue for damages. Now, these waters are muddied. He has given himself and his buddies the right to ruin you without his facing consequences for error or for intentional dirty tricks.

What was once deemed a public trust has now become a neo-conservative tool to intrude into your life.

The security of our nation rests with adherence to the Bill of Rights and what its articles stand for; not the adolescent whims of a callous thug or pirate who has done more to unseat the dignity of America's democratic infrastructure than anyone in history.

Congress should act hastily to undo this threat against the United States of America, against its people, and against a public trust that was created on the principle of service to our citizens.

To not act is to condone the death of yet another freedom. It is time that Congress held the Executive Branch accountable.

— W. Leon Smith

To Advertise In
THE ICONOCLAST
Call
(254) 675-3634

Blizzard Welcomes 2nd Cavalry To Fort Belknap

On Dec. 27, 1856, a howling blizzard greeted the famed 2nd Cavalry upon its arrival at Fort Belknap, and by morning many of the horse soldiers' mounts had frozen to death in the sub-zero weather.

Fort Belknap was established six summers earlier, as the northern link in the chain of frontier defense extending from the Rio Grande to the Red River. William Goldsmith Belknap, the brevet brigadier general who picked the site at present-day Newcastle in Young County, named the outpost in his own honor.

The commander of Fort Graham questioned Belknap's judgment in a report to their mutual superiors. "I could discover nothing to recommend the place," wrote Capt. H.H. Sibley, future leader of the ill-fated Confederate invasion of New Mexico. "The site selected and the whole region for twelve miles around is most arid and unproductive."

Belknap refused to reconsider his choice, despite the admitted lack of water. However, during his absence in November 1850, Capt. C.L. Stevenson moved the fort two miles to a bluff overlooking the Brazos. Belknap's sudden death on the trail spared the stubborn founder the embarrassment of having been second-guessed by his second-in-command.

Even by the primitive standards of the day, Fort Belknap was an inhospitable eyesore. An officer said flatly he would not leave his horse overnight in the enlisted men's quarters, and the post physician complained the infirmary provided practically no shelter from the wind, rain, and cold.

Drinking, the scourge of lonely soldiers, took the usual toll at Fort Belknap. Besides the two recorded murders resulting from drunken brawls, alcoholism was rampant in the ranks. A proposal to restrict consumption to the post premises brought this criticism from an officer: "I do not believe that increasing the facilities for drunkenness will prove a remedy for it, or that furnishing men with intoxicating beverages or allowing them to get it daily and regularly will induce temperate habits."

The arrival in December 1856 of the elite 2nd Cavalry gave the obscure post much-needed luster. The renown regiment would contribute an astounding 17 generals, including Robert E. Lee, to the Civil War, and the colonel in charge during the detachment's stay was none other than Albert Sidney Johnston, the revered Texan

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



marked for death at the Battle of Shiloh.

In the spring of 1858, the 2nd Cavalry hit the saddle in response to a massacre in Jack County. Ten members of two pioneer families were slain by renegades, who were long gone by the time the blue-coats reached the scene of crime.

From their federally protected sanctuaries in the Indian Territory, raiding parties repeatedly ravaged isolated farms and hamlets in northwestern Texas throughout 1858. Striking with impunity along the sparsely settled frontier, they scampered back across the Red River well ahead of pursuing patrols.

The rules of the game were finally changed in late 1858. Four companies of the 2nd Cavalry from Fort Belknap supported by 125 red allies led by Lawrence Sullivan Ross, future governor and president of Texas A&M, surprised a large band of Comanches deep inside the Indian Territory. The raiders were routed with the loss of 56 warriors and more than 300 ponies.

As the threat from the South Plains tribes diminished, civilization caught up with the western ring of army installations. Roads connected Fort Belknap and the town that shared its name with every point on the compass, and the thriving locale earned a stop on the Southern Overland Mail route.

The War Between the States brought this progress to a screeching halt. In anticipation of the sectional strife, Fort Belknap was shut down in February 1859 and not reactivated until April 1867.

After eight years of neglect, "desolation reigned supreme" according to the poetic impressions of the derelict penned by a trooper. "Sand, sand everywhere. Dead buffalo lying on the parade ground, a few ancient rats and bats looked on us with an evil eye for disturbing their repose, and my first night's rest in the old commissary was broken by visions of old infantry sentinels stalking ghost-like on their beats and the wind howling through the broken roof."

Critical shortages of fresh water and manpower reduced Fort Belknap's new lease on life to a mere five months. The nearby Brazos River had turned salty and "tasted like brine from a pork barrel." The two springs

and a well, which had quenched the thirst of the previous garrisons, had gone almost completely dry.

The unprecedented concentration of hostile Indians, an es-

timated 5,000 on the northwestern frontier, in the end sealed the fort's fate. Belknap closed for good in September 1867, and the barebones complement of 194 officers and men joined their

comrades at Fort Griffin.

Bartee Haile welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at haile@pdq.net or P.O. Box 152, Friendswood, TX 77549.

Don't Forget The Cat When Taking Down The Christmas Tree

For the kids and I, packing up the Christmas decorations is never easy. Not only because it means the official end of the holiday season, but also because it means it's time to pry the cat out of the Christmas tree.

What makes this process especially difficult is sap. You see, it's not until after spending the better part of December attached to the mid-section of our tree that our cat realizes she can no longer retract her claws.

A few years ago, this actually resulted in a front page story in the Weekly World News under the headline:

Holiday tree sprouts cat tumor!

It's not like we haven't tried to keep this tragedy from happening. In fact, we've even taken our cat to a pet psychologist, thinking that maybe she suffers from a traumatic experience that is somehow triggered by the site of Christmas trees — such as an unresolved conflict with a strand of tinsel.

After six weeks of therapy (equal to eight years in cat time), the only thing the doctor was able to tell us for cer-



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

tain was that our cat had been Shirley MacLaine in a previous life, which, according to him, isn't all that unusual.

In short: He had no explanation for her behavior.

This, of course, led to my own — admittedly less scientific — diagnosis, which is that our cat is crazy. This forced us to take drastic measures this year in hopes of avoiding another appearance in the tabloids. To achieve this, we came up with the idea of spraying our entire tree with WD-40. Initially, this seemed to be the answer as we watched our cat slide down the trunk and into the water bowl. But as we soon discovered, while WD-40 kept our cat out of the tree, it also kept any ornaments from staying on for more than six seconds.

This left us with a handful of desperate ideas, such as moving one of our stereo speakers under the tree and playing

"Dogs Barking Jingle Bells" 24 hours a day.

That idea was dropped pretty quickly.

After six barks, to be exact. We also toyed with the idea of decorating a dogwood tree, the logic being that a cat wouldn't go near a tree with the word "dog" in its name. That suggestion was nixed after my daughter pointed out I'd first have to teach our cat to read.

What all of this is leading up to is something you've probably already guessed, which is that, once again, the Christmas tree in our living room will remain there until it is completely brown and withered, and the sap has weakened enough that our cat can safely be detached.

In the meantime, we have already begun planning for next year, when we'll try to coax our cat to move high enough on the tree that we can use her as a top ornament.

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

Ads In The Iconoclast Pull, Too!

GIVE US A TRY!
(254) 675-3634

THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST

Stay Outta My Food, Mr. Guv'Ment Man!

I'm dying to have my food back.

Like, what's up with local governments banning certain cooking ingredients or methodologies? This trend is not only out of control, it's downright un-Constitutional.

If the beautiful people of Los Angeles wish to not indulge in such flavorful delectable treats as fried foods, so be it. However, as a society we've gone seriously out of kilter when cities such as New York and Chicago waste precious time debating and passing ordinances for the express purpose of outlawing the sale and use of trans fats.

Good gawd! Next thing you know the parks and playgrounds will be crawling with greasy cooking fat pushers, and haunted by French fry connoisseurs jonesing for a fat fix. You can tell them by the dried ketchup drips on their jackets, pants with grease smears from wiping off their hands, and deep, black circles around their eyes.

Even with the rapid onset of Global Warming the "City of Big Shoulders" will enjoy plenty of days when *The Hawk* comes blustering across Lake Michigan like a drunk, angry Canadian hockey fan after losing to the Blackhawks. That wind can get so terrifyingly fierce and blisteringly frigid you might brace yourself against it, yet you'd swear *The Hawk* has pierced right through your six layers of clothing and drilled into your bones to whip around within your very soul.

That would, of course, be during an April or late September baseball game at Wrigley Field; trying to describe February's chill factor requires language that my publisher would surely prohibit in a family journal. Let's just say Chicago winters can be brutal.

Having only visited the Big Apple during summer months, it's my assumption that New Yorkers get their fair share of numbingly cold weather, too.

The point is, in northern regions where temperatures are likely to drop to the relative warmth of Fahrenheit -20 (before the wind chill is figured in), the human creature requires a significant layer (or layers) of excess fat. This is nature's way to help us Yankees survive.

Listen, Dr. Skinnyass 110-lb. dietician health fanatic, around these parts we have to carry our own personal insulation with us.

In Southern California the thermometer rarely if ever drops under 55 degrees, so the locals really haven't a large need for body fat.

Some years ago I saw Jim



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

Belushi on one of the late night shows. The conversation turned to his attempt at weight loss and training; he was doing more serious roles that called for a slimmer, more "buff" star.

Belushi said something to the effect that he was only going to get so small, and that was that. I'm paraphrasing, but he remarked, "For Chicago I'm about average size; in L.A. I'm kinda big."

Chicagoans, New Yorkers, Minnesotans, Clevelanders, Milwaukeeans and anyone else from above the Mason-Dixon line should not be as skinny as Los Angelinos. Yet, it's the L.A. all-organic diet health and thin appearance for which we're told to strive.

What ludicrous bull twaddle!

For starters, those of us from up North still have ties to our various European heritages. We enjoy foods that have considerable fat content. Whether one's ancestors came from Italy, Germany, Poland, France, Russia, wherever, nobody ever trimmed the bones, fat or skin off the poultry or meat.

The skin and bones are the parts from whence come the natural flavors. No matter how it's doctored, no lump of boneless-skinless chicken breast will ever taste as good as a chicken breast left intact and prepared in the same manner. In fact, a real piece of chicken doesn't need anywhere near as much preparation prior to cooking as the unnaturally altered kind.

Pork used to have copious amounts of fat on most cuts, especially chops. Back in the day, one could bite in and taste abounded. Now, swine are raised scientifically to keep the animals as lean as possible. A pork roast or chop is still tasty, but I can't for the life of me get one to cook up as juicy and succulent as before the people with no taste buds got involved.

When was the last time you actually heard sizzle while a pork chop or roast was cooking?

Although she grew up in a predominantly Italian community, my Godmother is Slavic. This fact attests to how democratic my mother was in her efforts to include all types of Catholics in our family circle.

Every July we would return to Mom's old homestead of Melrose Park, Ill. for the "Festa



Italiana" (it was like a five mile trip). Since they still lived right near the church, we'd congregate at the home of "Goomah" Irene's parents.

On Sunday, the last and most important day of Festa, there would always be a huge crowd of people at the home of Mr. and Mrs. U, and an endless supply of homemade food and cold drinks. Everything was always delicious - Polish and Italian sausages, fried chicken, potato this and pasta that.

Now, Festa itself was an seemingly endless gauntlet of Italian delights: sausage on long skewers, laid out over open flames across 55-gallon drums cut in half; Italian beef sandwiches; clams on the half shell; crabs of various sorts; Italian lemonade, frozen with pieces of lemon in each scoop; lupini and che-che beans; and more.

With all these fabulous treats, the single, solitary, tastiest food that I looked forward to with anticipation each and every year were the pork chops fried the way only my Godmother's mother made them. Lawdy, those were the absolute *best* chops I've ever had anywhere, bar none! Everyone loved Mrs. U's chops, and she always whipped up enough to feed an army!

They were always thick, and each one had sufficient fat to insure palate-pleasing juiciness. I have no idea what she

coated them with, but it seemed they had been blessed by the priest!

Years later, after the good woman was beyond fixing up any more of those marvelous pork victuals, "Goomah" Irene finally discovered her secret ingredient. It wasn't in the coating or the mix. The secret was that Mrs. U fried her unequalled pork chops in lard. Alas, we may never enjoy the likes of such delectable fare again in this life.

I've got to say, those pork chops were so sinfully delicious they could have sent an Orthodox Jew in search of the nearest baptismal font.

As to how often "Goomah" Irene's family ate food fried in lard your guess is as good as mine. However, Mr. And Mrs. U both lived well into their 80s, possibly even reaching 90 or so; she herself is a robust 83 with a vital 86-year-old husband, "Goombah" Stan.

By the way, Mrs. U was a diminutive woman and Mr. U probably tipped the scales at a max of 150 lbs.; my Godmother is of average size, while "Goombah" Stan, a man of grand physical stature, has never been someone I'd describe as heavy.

So, by what right does any governmental agency have the gall to tell us we are not allowed to engage in the consumption of trans fats in public within its limits?

It's bad enough that smokers have been relegated to less than second-class status in most communities, state and Federal buildings. I'm no fan of tobacco companies; they've gotten away with legalized euthanasia far too long. One way of looking at it, though, is as a form of "thinning of the herd."

It was nine years ago this past Christmas day that I went off the "death sticks" myself without the crutch of a patch, hypnosis, acupuncture, or any other of the accepted methods.

I stopped (unwittingly) the day before entering the hospital for a week - due to an entirely unrelated problem - with help of a self-administered morphine drip.

My belief, nevertheless, is that the "studies" attributing secondhand smoke illnesses among adults are skewed for political gain; there's no real proof that occasional contact, such as in a restaurant, is going to have any real effect on someone who's healthy. Municipalities and other governmental agencies got away with shafting smokers, so now they're going to screw true food lovers, too - for our own good.

I don't stop anyone from smoking in my home. Much to my chagrin my son smokes, although not regularly. We do keep ashtrays of various sizes around for guests.

Back in my smoking days it would really gall me when someone invited me to his or her home, then tell me I had to go outside to light up. (I willingly acceded to the ostracism in the presence of a respiratory ailment or very small children.) To me it's just rude to ask a friend into your home and not allow him to be as comfortable as he would be in his own.

I also find people who go into a restaurant and bitch because there's smoking somewhere in the building to be far too full of themselves. As a former smoker I'm perhaps more sensitive to the presence of smoke and smokers than others, and it has never for one moment bothered me. As a matter of fact, the only thing about smokers that does get to me is walking past someone who just exited a vehicle after putting a cigarette out; I'd really rather that person were carrying a lit one.

Still, smoking remains a legal pastime, and if folks wish to rush the inevitable visit from the Grim Reaper then let 'em nail their own coffins shut. I sincerely doubt that when my buddies come over and have a few cigs and beers in my living room,

Continued On Next Page

TENUTO

From Previous Page

or if I happen to sit at a lunch counter next to a guy who enjoys a Chesterfield with his coffee, polyps are actually going to grow on my lungs.

But, as usual, I digress...

It would appear that all the English-speaking countries have banned fun foods from schools. Now, I've been around schools of one sort or another since 1956.

Good Gawd! This is my Golden Anniversary in Education, and I just realized it!

Yes, they've gone just as bonkers in Great Britain about taking out all the candy, soda and sweets dispensers and options in public schools as we have here in the U.S. of A. Canada doesn't want its children enjoying food, either.

Some schools have developed such a Gestapo mentality toward snacks and desserts they've adopted policies of confiscating certain items from lunchboxes and brown bags packed by mothers! If mom slips in a slice of last night's homemade chocolate cake, or a Snickers bar, perhaps even the wrong kind of chips, the "Speisse Polizei" ("Food Police") will swoop down and snatch it right away from the offending student.

Most likely a stern warning will be sent to the parental units of the youngster, and they will unwittingly be immediately added to a subversives watchlist. Their telephone calls and Internet communications will be closely monitored by the NSA; all surface mail addressed to them both at home and work shall be opened and read by order of Fearless Leader*. Should anyone in the immediate family attempt to book passage on any commercial carrier, he or she will find that all flights, trains and ships are filled to capacity.

As to snack foods in schools, taking out the sweets dispensers is really putting the cart before the horse. There have always been thin kids, athletic kids, and chubby kids (remember Larry Mondello on *Leave It to Beaver?*). Hell, at one time or another I fit into all three categories.

A big part of the problem is that there is not enough time allotted in the school day for physical education. In some schools the children only go for 20-25 minutes a day; in other schools they have P.E. just two or three days a week. The only kids who actually get any exercise are those on sports teams — they who need it the least.

In the '50s and '60s virtually every boy played baseball in Little and Pony Leagues.

Whether organized or not, we also played football, hockey and basketball to some extent. Almost all kids in any given neighborhood were outside doing something that took physical effort; if it wasn't play, we shoveled snow or mowed lawns. Children ran and jumped; we explored the woods, breathed in fresh air and climbed trees.

When was the last time you saw a child climb a tree?

They can't, because if there was a fall somebody would surely sue somebody else's parents — even if nobody was injured.

Today's children climb trees vicariously through The Sims or some other computer-generated program. They don't experience the adrenaline surge when one foot slips, then the ascent becomes a kid's wits, agility and three other limbs against gravity to go higher up those branches.

Nor do enough today's of young people know the smart across one's palms when ash meets cowhide or the rush of sliding into second under the tag; a mouthful of dirt one's reward for being safe, sullied uniform and cheeks the badge of honor for battle well-fought. Nothing on the planet tastes quite the same as proper infield dirt and dust-free mix.

For at least the past two decades it's not the junk food but the lack of exercise that has afflicted so many folks, young and old alike, with, as John Wayne put it in "The Cowboys," "...a tendency to go toward the gut..." And it doesn't appear to be getting any better.

We all spend too much time in front of computers and viewcreens. Yes, I admit to this flaw in my own personal constitution.

Now, with the advent of big screen HDTV the temptation to never roll off the couch or pry one's ass from the recliner has increased exponentially in relation to picture dimension.

The World is made up of myriad variances of individuals. Just as each of us has our own unique personality, body types are non-exclusive. Some of us are short and round, others are tall and thin; many people are what social norms consider "average" build. Then, there are those who come short and thin or tall and fat.

That a chart delineating things such as "a 50-year-old male who is five-feet, six-inches tall should weigh 150-165 lbs." even exists is simply the result of some failed doctors trying desperately to justify their Government paychecks.

Everyone's body structure is different, and to specify one ideal weight range for a certain height and age is neurosis come to life.

To tell you the truth, I've never noted a single ethic name among those who dictate from on high what comprises good diet and height to weight to age ratios.

Have you noticed that the healthy eating standards and ideal ratios change every few years, as well?

My plea remains ever thus — please leave my food alone. I love food. When the basic ingredients are meat or poultry the way Ma Nature intended, the additives are correctly grown, measured with a skillful knowledge and feel, and everything is put together in proper style with love, there's just no substitute for real food.

And, for gawd's sake, send all the children outside more often for longer periods of time to get to increase the exercise levels across the board... then let them eat cake, or cookies, or candy, or other fun stuff with sugar and crap in it!

*Dear Reader, I wasn't going to mention Lame Dubya at all this week. That was my sincere intention, but there's always something new with this irresponsible, irrational, megalomaniac scalawag! It has to end, and the sooner the better...

On Dec. 20, 2006 while no one was looking, and we were all foolishly trying to enjoy the Christmas Season, Lame Dubya took yet another step in his neverending March Toward Dictatorship. Since the old Republican Congress was pretty much history, disbanded and home for the Holiday, with some three weeks before the new Democratic 110th Congress came around to check up on him, Lame Dubya decided it would be a good time to sign into law the new, rather innocuous Postal Bill...

Innocuous until he snuck in a signing statement that nobody would even know about until weeks later — Jan. 4, 2007 to be precise, when the NEW YORK DAILY NEWS found out and publicized the latest abuse of power by this stunted nabob.

George W. Bush had written in an illegal addendum to the 2006 Postal Bill that will allow him to open and read mail addressed to and by citizens and residents of the United States of America at will minus the aegis of a court order. The signing statement countermanded the very bill at the moment he signed it into law.

What else can such an act be called but gross defiance of the will of the People, complete disregard for the Inalienable Rights of Americans, utter dis-

respect for Congressional mandate, and the treasonous act of an intolerable tyrant.

Mr. Guv'ment Man, if ya'll wanna inspect it, fine, but when it comes to tellin' me what to eat for my own good, *stay outta my food!*

Shalom, Y'all.

(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)

Biodiesel Could Add \$24 Billion To Economy: Study

WASHINGTON — America's biodiesel industry could make big money and add jobs to rural areas in the next 10 years.

According to a study from the National Biodiesel Board, the industry could add \$24 billion to the U.S. economy between 2005 and 2015.

By 2015, the annual production of biodiesel could exceed 650 million gallons and keep \$13.6 billion stateside that would otherwise be spent on foreign oil.

Biodiesel production could also create about 39,000 new jobs through the economy, according to the study conducted by John M. Urbanchuk of LECG, the study's conductor.

"You're looking at a fairly substantial employment-generating impact," said Urbanchuk. "Most of these jobs are going to be located in rural communities, and you can't overstate the impact of the biofuels' industry on these rural economies."

The report said that farmer-level soybean prices will increase nearly 10 percent should 498 of the 650 million gallons of estimated biodiesel demand in 2015 is produced from soybean oil.

Average soybean prices could rise to \$0.58 per bushel by 2015 if demand increases based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's forecast for soybean prices.

The costs of the environmental impact of biodiesel manufacturing, such as air pollution, were not calculated in the study.

The study was funded by the soybean checkoff through the United Soybean Board.

In 2006, the nation's 88 biodiesel plants generate between 200 - 250 million gallons of biodiesel fuel — which is triple last year's production of 75 million gallons.

New Publication Available On Converting Manure To Energy

COLLEGE STATION — In the wake of higher gas prices, interest in renewable and green energy has been fueled tremendously. This led to the publication of a Texas Cooperative Extension publication called "Manure to Energy: Understanding Processes, Principles, and Jargon."

The publication gives agricultural producers and the general public information on bio-energy, said Dr. Saqib Mukhtar, Extension agricultural engineer and one of the authors.

The demand for hydrocarbon energy — or energy from crude oil, natural gas, and coal — will continue to rise. However, potential sources of energy include biomass sources, such as trees, agricultural crops, animal manure, and municipal solid waste, he said.

The publication primarily focuses on converting manure to energy on the farm and the

management of co-products resulting from that conversion, Mukhtar said.

Co-author of the publication was Sergio Capareda, assistant professor in the department of biological and agricultural engineering at Texas A&M University.

The free publication (No. 428) may be ordered from the Extension Bookstore website <tebookstore.tamu.edu> and from Texas Animal Manure Management Issues webpage <tammi.tamu.edu>.

**ENTER YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION
TO
THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST
(254) 675-3634**

Fly With A Smile — And Nothing Else

Do you feel that your privacy is invaded when you go through security at the airport? Just wait a little while. Soon, those TSA inspectors may be able to see what you look like naked.

Devices using something called, “backscatter technology,” are able to see what we look like underneath our clothes. They were planning on testing this new technology at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport around Christmas, but postponed it because of “technical difficulties.” They also felt that Christmas wouldn’t be the ideal time of year to introduce people to their Peeping Tom technology.

These \$100,000 machines use x-rays to look under clothing for hidden items. Customs agents looking for drugs at 12 airports are already using them, they are in prisons, and they’re getting a test run at London’s Heathrow Airport. By the way, our government says we shouldn’t worry about those x-rays. That reassurance should be good enough for us, right?

Surprise, surprise, the ACLU feels that this is an invasion of privacy. It’s hard to argue that it’s not. What could be more private than our “privates?” The only question is whether the potential danger outweighs the potential peeking at our naked bodies. It’s like the ban on bottles of liquids. We may wish that the passenger next to us had been allowed to take his bottle of mouthwash with him on the flight, but we’ve been told that carrying liquids on a plane is a potential danger, so we just hold our noses.

The Transportation Security Administration claims that their computerized voyeur can be tweaked so that passengers’ private parts can be blurred out. But that doesn’t make any sense. If the bad guys know what parts of their bodies are going to be obscured, won’t they just hide their contraband in those areas?

Once the system is in use, the TSA will have no problem finding people who want to join their ranks. A machine that can see through people’s clothes is a teenager’s dream come true. We’re going to see long lines of kids going directly from their high school graduation to the TSA employment office.

Physical fitness is another potential that I see here. Men and women will want to get in the best shape possible before flying, just like before the Bathing Suit Season.

Currently, the plan is for these devices to be used only on pas-



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

sengers who “fail” the standard screening process. They will be taken to the x-ray area, and they will be given a choice between the backscatter machine and the more traditional pat-down search. But let’s face it: if this thing is really more effective in detecting bombs and other threatening devices, don’t you think there’s a good chance the TSA will be using it on every-

body before long?

It’s just one more step in the government’s plan – a plan that will culminate in requiring that we all fly in the nude. I know it may sound like a reach at first, but think about it. Isn’t it obvious that they have been gradually preparing us for flying naked by desensitizing us? Their technique reminds me of strip poker. Or dating. In those activities, articles of clothing like a jacket or shoes are innocently removed at first, and then before you know it, everybody’s naked.

Similarly, the TSA has gotten us used to removing our shoes, our jackets, belts, jewelry, etc. If security procedures continue

to escalate as they have been doing, it shouldn’t be long before we’re all required to fly in the nude. And if we’re told that this is for our safety and for the security of our country, we’ll go along with it. (I don’t even want to think about where they’re going to ask us to carry our boarding passes).

We won’t get used to it immediately, but who would’ve ever guessed ten years ago that we would have gotten used to the current security measures? At first, passengers will probably use their tray tables and blankets to cover their shyness. But after a while, people will stop feeling self-conscious.

And I have the feeling the gov-

ernment will do its best to convince us that not only is flying naked the safest way for us to travel, but that it will be fun, too. It’s bound to result in some flirtations and romances, so the TSA will promote the program as giving a whole new meaning to flying “the friendly skies.”

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 can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com

Strayhorn Special Report Reveals State’s Failure To Provide Quality Care For Foster Children

AUSTIN – Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, Chairman, Medicaid and Public Assistance Fraud Oversight Task Force, today released her health care claims study special report on foster children, which made 48 recommendations to the Medicaid Fraud and Public Assistance Task Force to improve the quality of health care for the more than 32,000 Texas foster children.

“This report reveals shocking evidence of the system’s failure regarding the care provided to our foster children,” Strayhorn said. “For example, one foster child who just turned three years old was placed in a private psychiatric hospital for 10 days. Before her hospitalization, she had been prescribed a bundle of psychotropic medications, including antipsychotics, antidepressants, a sedative, stimulant and mood stabilizer.

“An 18-year-old foster child spent 94 percent of one year in three different psychiatric hospitals. She went to the emergency room four times and then had to have her arm amputated because of infection from injuries.

“I found foster children were sometimes dumped in psychiatric hospitals, and were often left by caseworkers for up to three months after they were approved for discharge – that’s absolutely unacceptable and at an unnecessary cost to the state to boot.

“This report raises many red flags pointing to areas of potential fraud and abuse that I am referring to the Office of Inspector General at the Health and Human Services Commission to investigate. In a separate report also released today, *Review and Analysis of the Medicaid and Public Assistance Task Force*, I am recommending the Office of Inspector General report directly to the Governor and become an independent office.

“This report, as the *Forgotten Children* report did, gives these children something they desperately need – a voice.”

The report, *Texas Health Care Claims Study – Special Report on Foster Children*, recommended:

- a full investigation by the Office of Inspector General into potential fraud and abuse identified in the report;
 - hiring a physician at Department of Family of Protective Services as fulltime medical director responsible for health care of Texas’ foster children;
 - creating a “medical passport” for each foster child, which would follow each child as they move from one placement to another;
 - requiring prior authorization for prescriptions to address the dispensing of non-FDA approved psychotropic medications for children;
 - seeking lower-cost, less-restrictive alternatives to psychiatric hospitalization and immediately developing rules for psychiatric hospitalization of foster children;
 - studying complementary treatments to psychotropic medications, such as therapy, diet, exercise, therapeutic activities and mentor programs; and
 - the Office of Inspector General at HHSC and the State Auditor review the quality of the physical environments in which foster children live and make recommendations to improve the standards for living conditions.
- “My first investigation into the Texas foster care system in 2004 – *Forgotten Children* – documented the tragic failure of the system. Part of the report focused on psychotropic medications and care prescribed to our foster children. The findings caused me deep concern and led to my decision to look into this aspect of the system more closely.

“Given the distressing findings contained in this report, I hope the state will not delay in adopting my recommendations, which have been crafted to help mend this broken system. I hope our state’s leadership and the health and human service agencies will work to make things better for our state’s most vulnerable children.”

To view the full report, go to www.window.state.tx.us.

Reservations Available By Phone, On-Line At Lake Waco

FORT WORTH — Beginning Wednesday, Jan. 3, the group facilities at Waco Lake became available by advanced reservation through the National Recreation Reservation Service.

Reservations must be made by calling toll free 1-877-444-6777, by visiting the Reserve America website

<www.reserveamerica.com>, or by visiting the park gatehouse.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Waco Lake offers a camping group shelter and three day-use group facilities.

The day-use group facilities include Airport Beach Group Shelter, Midway Fam-

ily Center, and Twin Bridges Group Shelter. Airport Park Group Camping Shelter, the camping group facility, is located in the Airport Park Campground, said officials with the park.

The facilities can be reserved up to 360 days in advance of the arrival date, said officials.

A Group Shelter Policy Letter must be signed by the customer and mailed to the Waco Lake Office prior to arrival.

A copy of the policy letter can be accessed through the Waco Lake website <www.swfwc.usace.army.mil/waco> or by contacting the Waco Lake Office at (254) 756-5359.

Governor's Business Council Sticks Its Prominent Nose Into Education

Here we go again!

The Governor's Business Council (GBC), a select group of Perry-endorsed business men and women headed by long-time Perry supporter Chairman Charles E. McMahan (appointed to the position by Perry), continues to wedge itself into the main door of the Texas Public Education System.

Is it to provide monetary contributions, mentoring programs, or urgently needed computer equipment and teacher supplies? *No!*

Is it to offer Texas businesses as an available support network? *No!*

The GBC simply wants to dictate what it wants the public school system to do, e.g., to pay "successful" teachers more in salary and to get rid of teachers who continue to be "unsuccessful". By the way, how will success be measured? Passing the TAKS or some other state exam? So then teachers will be paid piecemeal as we pay factory workers?

One may ponder why the GBC hasn't provided and applied the same doctrine for our Texas political system. Certainly the people of Texas would benefit from maintaining only "successful" public officials!

In truth, the business community has had ample time to determine positive changes in public education but have failed miserably. May I remind people that several years ago it was CEO Bill Hammond of the Texas Association of Business (another Perry appointee) who expressed his opinion that class sizes should be increased in public schools to save money on teacher salaries?

Since that time Mr. Hammond also has been appointed by Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner Dr. Shirley J. Neely (another Perry appointee) to the Commissioner's Accountability Advisory Committee. Recently



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

the TEA has been given more responsibility and oversight of public education throughout

Texas, which may only add to education's problems. Having a group of individuals sitting at desks at one end of Texas who determine policy and procedures for all schools in the state doesn't look promising.

Also it is the GBC and business leaders like Mr. Hammond and millionaire activist Jim Leininger, who appear obsessed with a school voucher program.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

While the world is rid of the "Butcher of Baghdad"—Saddam Hussein, the "Warmonger of Washington" still continues in power with the same autocratic arrogance that equated the Iraqi dictator. The "gallows of Congressional impeachment" would help to resolve America's six year political nightmare.

Say, isn't that the sound of laughter coming from "wanted-dead or alive" Osama bin Laden somewhere in the safety of the mountains in western Pakistan?

Sincerely,

Gene Muccolini, Mt. Holly, NJ

Researchers Simulate Potential Pandemic Flu

NEWSWISE — As the flu season nears, an international team of researchers is using computers to prepare for a possible pandemic influenza, a type of flu that could infect millions of people worldwide.

The work is part of an ongoing effort called the Models of Infectious Disease Agent Study (MIDAS) supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, a component of the National Institutes of Health.

Since November 2004, the researchers have been developing computer models that simulate the potential spread of pandemic flu. Many health officials speculate that the next pandemic could emerge if the avian flu currently circulating among

wild birds and poultry becomes easily transmissible between people.

By using computer models, the MIDAS scientists can see how different factors, like the contagiousness of the flu virus, can change how quickly the virus might spread between people in rural and urban regions. They also can introduce intervention strategies to study how measures such as vaccination, quarantine, school closures, and travel restrictions potentially stop or slow that spread.

To date, the researchers have modeled pandemic flu outbreaks in Southeast Asia, the United States, and Great Britain. While the details of each model vary, the general conclusions are similar: Implementing a variety of public health measures soon after the first cases appear can significantly lessen the impact.

In response to a request from the White House National Security Council, the MIDAS researchers are currently evaluating the effectiveness of community containment, a strategy in which a local area implements measures to reduce the transmission of influenza within that community. These measures could include closing schools, requiring sick people and their household members to stay

The premise is that the pilot program is for lower income children. Exactly how this helps the public school system is unclear and has not been clarified. Certainly such a voucher system may be helpful to certain students and parents, but no one can determine how it is helpful to public schools — because it isn't.

Furthermore, why do so many business folks believe they know anything about successfully operating a public school system? For years they have been part of legislative-based committees researching the cures for all of education's ills. Former Rep. Kent Grusendorf inundated his endless stream of unsuccessful education committees with business people who just couldn't formulate a well-organized and intelligent school financing plan. Finally, it was the voters who axed Grusendorf in his last reelection attempt for being "unsuccessful."

Speaking of financing education, why has the GBC enabled businesses to resist paying their fair share of taxes to finance public education? In fact, the

GBC has been instrumental during the past five years in permitting larger businesses to circumvent the Business Franchise Tax and to fight against closing the legislative loophole.

Seems that if the business community really wants to do something positive for public education it should want businesses to help educate our future work force — or at the least, the Governor's Business Council and Texas Association of Business should focus on business matters and leave public education issues to those who have hands-on knowledge.

Apparently resolving the urgent issues of public education and its financing still are NOT a real priority for our state officials and business community.

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He is a Vietnam-era Disabled Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees.

home, telecommuting and videoconferencing, limiting public gatherings, and distributing antiviral drugs to treat infection. The researchers plan to publish the results in the coming months.

For more information about

MIDAS and to view MIDAS simulations, visit <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Initiatives/MIDAS/>. A fact sheet is available at <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Initiatives/MIDAS/Background/Factsheet.htm>.

Research Changing Some Beliefs About Honey Bees

COLLEGE STATION — According to research published recently in SCIENCE, the four most common subspecies of honey bee originated in Africa and entered Europe in two separate migrations, said Dr. Spencer Johnston, entomologist with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and one of the authors of the article.

A large number of different bee species exist in Asia, where it had long been thought the honey bee originated, Johnston said.

The honey bee is not native to North America; it was introduced from Europe for honey production in the early 1600s, Johnston said. Subspecies were introduced from Italy in 1859, and later from Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere.

When honey bees collected in Europe and Africa were studied, they separated genetically into four distinct groups, he said.

However, the genome of U.S. bees "was a complete mix of the three different introduced European subspecies," he said.

That mixture is changing with the introduction of the fourth subspecies from Africa in 1990. The form that was Italian mixed with other strains has been crossbreeding with an Africanized-Spanish strain. In effect, the Italian mix is disappearing. This has not happened to the same extent with the European varieties.

Bell County Road Closed

WACO — The Texas Department of Transportation closed the southbound frontage road south of FM 2115 in Bell County, south of Salado, effective Wednesday, Jan. 3.

The closure will allow construction crews to begin preparation of the new FM 2115 overpass as part of the IH-35 expansion in that area. The \$81.7 million IH-35 expansion, which began in early December 2006, will reconstruct and widen the existing main-lanes from four lanes to six lanes, while providing a concrete traffic barrier between the northbound and

southbound sections.

The northbound frontage road is being relocated, and both frontage roads are being widened between the Bell/Williamson county line and FM 2268, south of Salado. Additionally, the frontage roads will be changed from two-way to one-way operation. The project is estimated for completion in the Fall of 2009, weather permitting.

TxDOT urges the traveling public to be patient, observe all warning and detour signs, and watch for construction personnel and equipment in the work area.

PUT YOUR AD
IN THE
**LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST**
BY CALLING
254-675-3634

Military Academy Holds Holiday Ball

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Clayton Johnson, a Crawford High School graduate who attends the U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., was among the more than 1,000 service academy students honored at the 13th annual Military Service Academies Holiday Ball on Dec. 21, 2006 at the DFW Hyatt Regency.

Ross Perot, founder of EDS and a 1953 Naval Academy graduate, was the guest speaker. The Ross Perot Foundation, EDS, American Airlines, Glazer's Family of Companies, The Staubach Company, Bell Helicopter Textron, and Richardson Bike Mart were among many of the Ball's sponsors.

The Ball was sponsored by a joint committee comprised of representatives from North Texas chapters of the parents' clubs for all five military service academies. This collaborative

DATELINE: Crawford

Hometown of the President of the United States

committee is called the North Texas Coalition of Uniformed Service Academies.

The event was a formal affair with cadets and midshipmen in full dress uniforms. Graduates of 2007 were formally recognized and acknowledged during the dinner, and toasts were presented following the Grand March. Entertainment for the evening included a live band "Ice House", DJ Peter Silander "The Motivator", carolers, caricature artists, and a strolling magician.

Other guests included family and friends of the cadets and midshipmen as well as area congressional representatives, who nominated the majority of the cadets and midshipmen for their appointments to the U. S. service academies.



U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY MIDSHIPMEN for the Class of 2007 attending the Dec. 21 Military Service Academies Holiday Ball include Daniel Conley (Waco), Richard Emison (Arlington), Joseph Gilligan (Flower Mound), Margaret Hollyfield (DeSoto), Clayton Johnson (Crawford), Patrick Lakusta (Flower Mound), guest speaker and 1953 Naval Academy graduate Ross Perot, Byron Meek (North Richland Hills), Eric McBee (Plano), Brandon Murgia (Crowley), Brent Oglesby (Paris), Ben Pimentel (Mesquite), Robert Reagan III (Dallas), Mark Rothschild (Fort Worth), Brian Rutledge (Royse City), Kevin Snodgrass (Arlington), Marcus Walters (Richardson), Mary Wootan (Dallas), and Gary Darby (Dallas).

— Photograph provided by The Portrait Studios.

MCC Fall 2006 Honors, Distinguished Honors Crawford Students Listed

WACO — Many local and area residents were named to the Distinguished Honors and Honors Lists at McLennan Community College for the Fall 2006 semester, including several from Crawford.

The Distinguished Honors List is reserved for students who achieve a 3.8 to 4.0 grade point average for the semester, while students who achieve a 3.5 to 3.79 grade point average

are named to the Honors List. Students must be enrolled full-time during the semester to be eligible for either list.

Distinguished Honors List

Crawford — Sarah B. Garner, Jamie S. Mauerman, and Antonia L. Robbins.

Honors List

Crawford — Mandy L. Gordon, David G. Hodges, and Constance E. Schmalriede.

Foundation Offers Low-Interest Loans For Water Well Projects

WESTERVILLE, Ohio — Certain low- to moderate-income individuals or families may be eligible for money to construct, repair, or improve household water well systems through one-percent interest loans from the Foundation for Affordable Drinking Water.

The Foundation was established through the National Ground Water Association.

Qualified applicants can borrow up to \$8,000 at one-percent interest for a term not to exceed 20 years. To qualify, households must:

- Own the home and use it as the principal residence.

- Have as the primary drinking water source an individual household well system located on the property of the home.

- Must meet income eligibility requirements.

- Be located in a city, town, or unincorporated area with a population of less than 50,000.

Complete information, including application forms, requirements, and income eligibility limits, can be accessed on-line <www.ngwa.org> or by contacting Paul Humes at 800-551-7379 or by e-mail <phumes@fadw.org>.

Edwards To Chair Military Construction, Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee

WASHINGTON — As the new session of the 110th Congress began last Thursday, U.S. Representative Chet Edwards was named the Chairman of the powerful Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.

"As the son of a World War II veteran and as a longtime supporter of our military troops and veterans, I intend to use this chairmanship to fight aggressively for the interests of those who have defended our nation," said Edwards.

"This is great news for Central Texas. Chet has proven his commitment to the welfare of our military

and veterans over his 16 years in Congress, and this new position gives him an even greater opportunity to ensure our nation serves their interests," said Lieutenant General Pete Taylor (Ret.), the former Commanding General of III Corps and Fort Hood.

The subcommittee has jurisdiction over the entire Department of Veterans Affairs, including benefits and healthcare, as well as the Pentagon's military construction projects on all U.S. military installations throughout the world. Together, these budgets represented \$95 billion in the Fiscal Year 2007 budget re-

quest, and will be more than \$100 billion in Fiscal Year 2008, the third-largest jurisdiction out of twelve subcommittees.

The Department of Veterans Affairs employs 235,974 employees and is the second-largest federal government agency. Only the Department of Defense has a larger work force. The VA's health care system now includes 154 medical centers, with at least one in each state, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. More than 5.3 million people received care in VA healthcare facilities in 2005.

"Chet's efforts to keep open the Waco VA hospital and his work to modernize

training at Fort Hood is real life proof of his commitment to veterans and our service men and women," said McLennan County Veterans Service Officer Bill Mahon.

Chairmen of appropriations subcommittees carry significant influence over annual appropriations bills and are often referred to as "cardinals," as a result. As Chairman, Edwards will be able to expand his influence to protect the interests of Central Texas soldiers and institutions such as the Waco and Temple Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, the Bryan-College Station Veterans Clinic, Fort Hood, and the new VA clinic planned for

Southern Tarrant County.

Edwards represented Fort Hood for 14 years and now works closely with Congressman John Carter on projects that support Fort Hood.

As Chairman, Edwards will also play a pivotal role as a member of conference committees that write the final bills that fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Ensuring that our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have the resources necessary to carry out their mission will remain a top priority," said Edwards. "We must never forget the sacrifices they are making on behalf of this country through their dedicated service."