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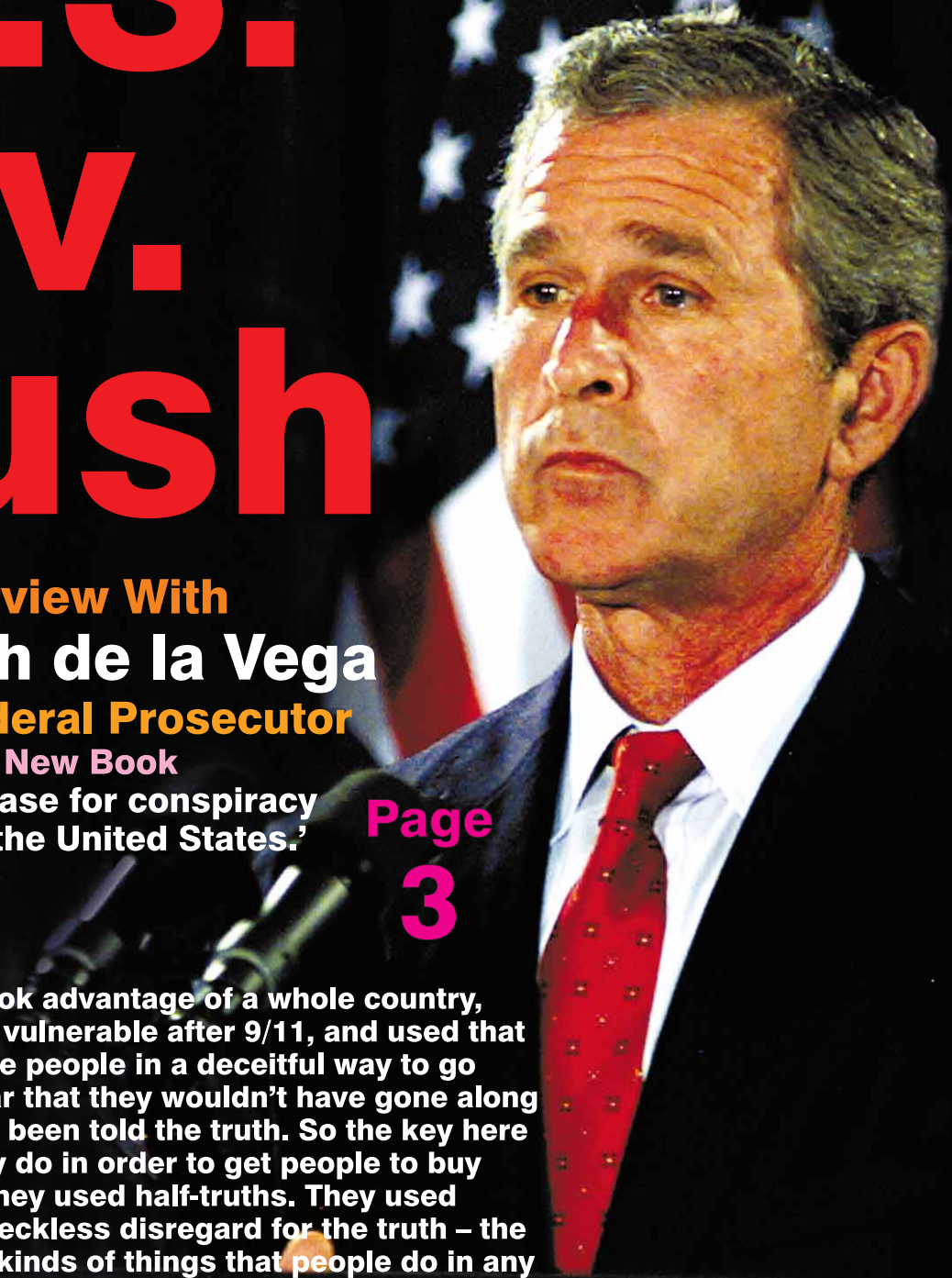
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The president took advantage of a whole country, really, that was vulnerable after 9/11, and used that fear to persuade people in a deceitful way to go along with a war that they wouldn't have gone along with if they had been told the truth. So the key here is what did they do in order to get people to buy into the war? They used half-truths. They used statements of reckless disregard for the truth – the same different kinds of things that people do in any kind of fraud.

— Elizabeth de la Vega



Elderly, Poor To Suffer Under Bush's War Budget

— Showdown Over War Powers Act Likely —

WASHINGTON — The next casualties of the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan could be Americans who are elderly and poor — should Congress approve President Bush's \$2.9 trillion budget.

The president's budget slashes \$66 billion over five years to Medicare for the elderly and \$12 billion from Medicaid for the poor in order to pay for an extra \$100 billion for the two overseas conflicts this year.

The new Democratic-majority in Congress has vowed to provide more oversight on the federal budget and block the proposed cuts to 141 domestic programs; however, its leadership has refused to stop funding the wars outright.

Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), the new chairman of a subcommittee that oversees defense funding, said that he would

disapprove of the president's war funding request without the hearings starting Feb. 17

Murtha, who endorses a "re-deployment" of troops from Iraq, will probably approve the funding pending several conditions including the closure of the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the razing of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

The cost of these two wars is, therefore, expected to exceed the cost of the 13-year war in Vietnam.

Congress has already spent \$500 billion on the Iraq War, according to the Congressional Research Service. Adjusted to today's prices, the Vietnam War cost about \$614 billion.

Last week, Republicans blocked debate over the Iraq war in the Senate. This debate should resume in the House, but a showdown is still likely between the executive and legis-

lative branches over the president's troop surge.

At issue is the War Powers Act of 1973, which grants the president a maximum of 90 days to deploy additional troops overseas. It also mandates that the president tell Congress of the deployment 48 days after he sends the soldiers into combat.

The act was passed as a result of President Lyndon Johnson's

escalation of the Vietnam War without congressional approval.

Bush included \$5.6 billion for his 21,500-troop escalation, yet he has denied setting a timetable to withdrawal of all the troops from Iraq.

The Pentagon had put that the total cost of the Iraq war at \$50 billion before the U.S. invasion in 2003. Bush later fired Lawrence Lindsey, a White House economic advisor, for suggesting that the cost would

run at \$200 billion. The New York Times put the total cost of the Iraq war into perspective last week.

The amount spent on the war thus far could have paid for the healthcare of every U.S. citizen, nursery school for all Americans aged three and four, and immunization from diseases for the world's children, according to the newspaper.

Half of these funds would still remain, it added.

DU Test Explosions To Increase This Year

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — The Livermore National Laboratory recently obtained a new permit to explode more depleted uranium each year at its open air test site 50 miles away from San Francisco.

Citizens living near the test site expressed their frustration at three public hearings last week over the slow efforts of the federal government to clean up the area which the Environmental Protection Agency marked a Superfund site.

Since 1961, scientists have detonated depleted uranium and tritium at Site 300, making it one of the most contaminated places in the United States.

The University of California operates the nuclear weapons lab and its test site for the U.S. Department of Energy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Last November, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued Livermore a new permit to increase the amount of radioactive material they detonate yearly from 1,000 to 8,000 pounds.

Investigative journalist Cathy Garger reported that two appeals to the permit were filed, one by a housing developer and another by a resident who lives within five miles of the test site.

Garger said that the Livermore representatives have kept the residents of the nearby town of Tracy in the dark

as to the number of munitions to be "tested" in a year.

"Tracy Press reports that the only reason given by Lawrence Livermore for the eight-fold annual increase in explosives testing is 'national security,' according to air district spokeswoman Kelly Morphy," wrote Garger.

The blast site manager has shrugged off any potential dangers to the area as a result of the blasts, noting in the site's annual report that DU "contains a trace amount of radioactivity. However, it is less than normal daily exposure to the sun."

However, the purposes of the tests are to create devices that destroy property and kill human beings, according to Marion Fulk, a respected Manhattan Project and Livermore atomic scientist.

At the test site, explosives are used to detonate uranium gas in solid metal form, which burns and produces deadly radioactive gas that can travel long distances.

One atomic particle of this gas is known to inflict diseases such as cancer, diabetes, asthma, birth defects, heart failure, and auto-immune system disease.

British News Website Launches Jewish Debate On Israel

LONDON — The Guardian/UK last week launched a debate on Israel sparked by British Jews, many of whom are scholars and academics.

The group Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) posted an open, online letter to the Jewish establishment, hoping to stir up discussion over Israel's policies toward the Palestinians.

The 130-plus signatories argue in their letter that Jewish leaders in Britain support the state of Israel in defiance of their Jewish values.

In effect, the debate centers around the notion that criticism of Israel is in essence anti-Semitic.

No specific institutions are named in the letter published on the "Comment is Free" website, though one signatory on his own had pointed to one group that self-describes itself as "the voice of British Jewry."

The stage was set for this exchanged within the Jewish academic community in Britain when a board member of a Jewish policy research center resigned in disagreement over his director's support of a joint Israeli/Palestinian state and rejection of Israel's "law of return" policy for Jews.

A similar conflict emerged in the U.S. between the American Jewish Committee and liberal Jews. At issue is whether Jews who question Israel's right to exist are anti-Semitic and therefore fuel anti-Semitism in others.

For more information on IVJ, visit its website.

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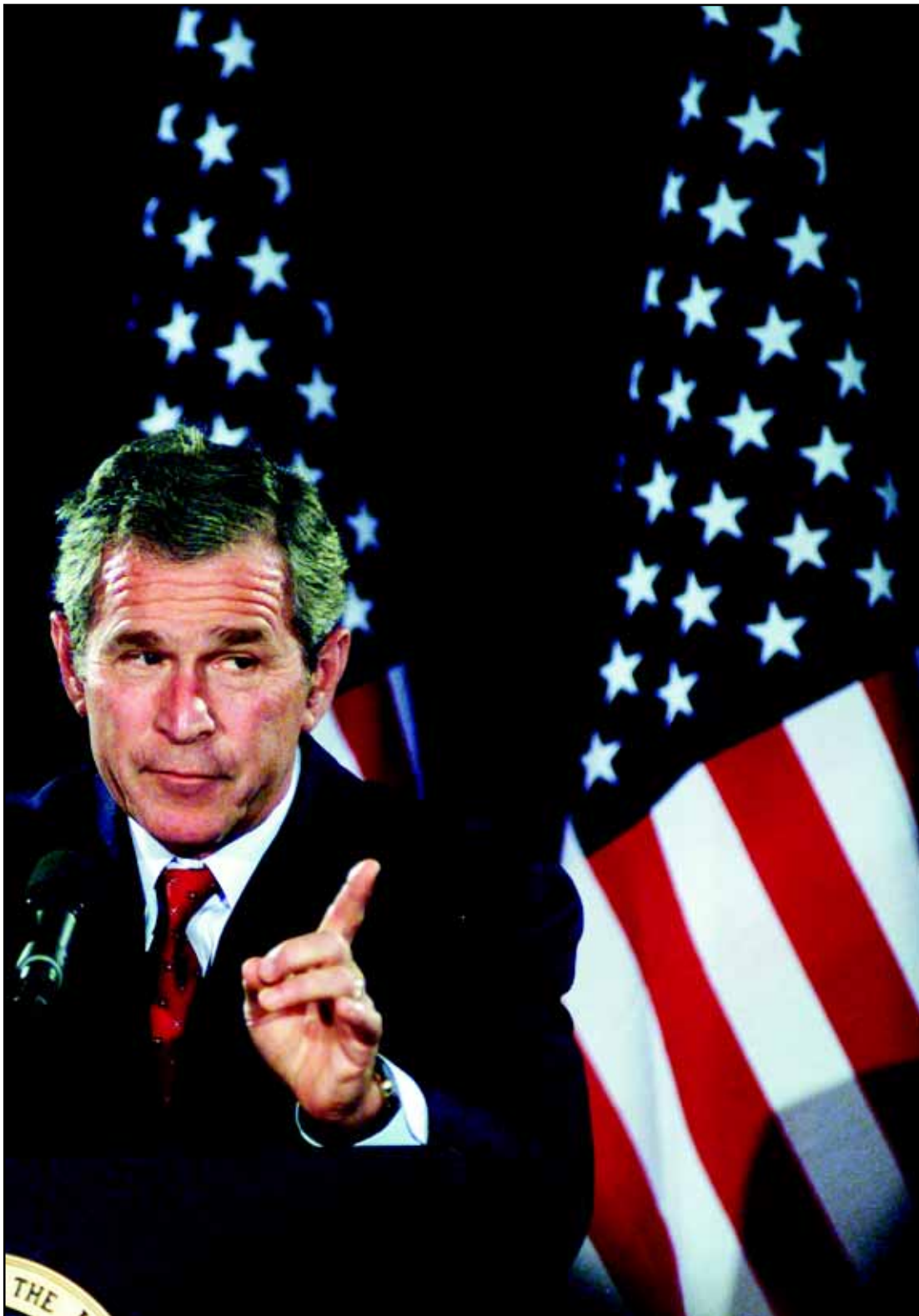


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President George W. Bush

— Lone Star Iconoclast Photo

U.S. V. Bush

Interview With
Elizabeth de la Vega
Former Federal Prosecutor

Her New Book

**'lays out a case for conspiracy
to defraud the United States.'**

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — A lot of folks would probably enjoy watching President George W. Bush stand trial.

And with all the nefarious activities his administration has perpetrated, it would seem to be pretty easy to drum up charges against the commander-in-chief.

The international community, in fact, has a laundry list of war crimes and crimes against humanity it says Bush has committed as a result of his so-called "war on terrorism" policy.

This list points to everything from the authorization of the pre-emptive U.S. invasion of Iraq; and the torture and deaths of prisoners held at Abu Ghraib prison to the moving of untried suspects to other countries for imprisonment or interrogation; and the destruction of Iraqi civilian infrastructure including the entire city of Fallujah.

Don't forget about the administration's refusal to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisoners at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

On the domestic front, there has been a rising cacophony of U.S. citizens calling for the president's impeachment.

Their grounds for impeachment mirror the international

community's list, though, with the addition of key features such as the inept federal response to relieve those affected by the two Gulf Coast hurricanes in 2005, the illegal wiretaps on U.S. citizens, and the purchase of news that cheered for the administration's education policies.

That's all fine and good, but before those calling for impeachment get ahead of themselves, former assistant U.S. attorney Elizabeth de la Vega in her new book suggests that citizens should get back to basics: Bush lied to Congress and the American public.

To make her point, her book *United States v. George W. Bush et al.* frames the evidence and facts in a mock federal indictment as if it were presented to one of the many real federal grand juries she used to prosecute federal crimes from white collar fraud to organized crime.

"The charge is Conspiracy to Defraud the United States. And the defendants are President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, outgoing defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and former secretary of state Colin Powell," she wrote.

De La Vega retired after 21 years of service as a government lawyer. She was an assis

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U.S. V. Bush

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tant U.S. attorney in Minneapolis, and a member of the Organized Crime Strike Force and Branch Chief in San Jose, Calif.

Since her retirement two years ago, De La Vega has been a regular contributor to TomDispatch. Her articles have appeared in THE NATION, the LOS ANGELES TIMES, the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, SALON and MOTHER JONES.

De La Vega was in Ann Arbor, Mich. giving a talk about her new book when the ICONOCLAST's Nathan Diebenow spoke with her by phone about her experience as a federal prosecutor, her expectations for her book, and her confidence that Congress' investigations into the administration would uncover evidence for future impeachment proceedings.

Here is that interview:

.....
ICONOCLAST: How come you retired after 21 years as a federal prosecutor two years ago?

ELIZABETH DE LA VEGA: It was a combination of things. Part of it was that I did feel under the Bush Administration that it was a very different environment in the U.S. attorney's offices and that I didn't feel like I had the discretion that I had had before.

ICONOCLAST: Was that during the time Attorney General John Ashcroft was in the Justice Department?

DE LA VEGA: It was Ashcroft, but it was toward the end of Ashcroft. It was September 2004. He was replaced right after the election.

But when the Bush Administration came in, they really did — and this is getting more extreme now — they did centralized control over the U.S.

attorney's office in a way that was unusual in my past experience.

ICONOCLAST: So that had never happened before?

DE LA VEGA: Well, it was come and go. It was never the way it was when they came in.

I know there is a story going around about the various U.S. attorneys resigning and being replaced, but it's not exactly as it's portrayed because in some instances, the U.S. attorneys who were asked to resign were really not good. That would be true of Kevin Ryan, for example, in the northern district of California.

That's part of the reason I left, too. During his tenure, there were approximately 50 of the most experienced assistant U.S. attorneys left. That's out of not even 100, and so there was such a morale problem that they actually did a really extraordinary kind of investigation where they had first assistants from around the country come and interview those who were left to find out what the morale problems were about.

The fact that he was asked to resign to me is not a bad thing, but now we have an issue of who are we going to put into all of these positions, and they are even more political than before. I mean, everybody is political in the first place, which I think really has not been made part of this story because anybody who is there already had to have been appointed by Bush and approved by a Republican-dominated Congress, so it's not as if they were "independent" in the first place.

There's a U.S. attorneys manual, and there's always been all these different requirements for approval depending



Elizabeth de la Vega

on the kind of case you're doing. So, it's kind of a mess that they're really independent.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think that political-ness is really important? Is there a way to remove the politics from the process? I mean, in England, isn't the judiciary not appointed by the administration?

DE LA VEGA: I know they have barristers. Their prosecutors switch off. Sometimes, they are defense attorneys, so yeah, it's a totally different system. I'm not really familiar enough with it to compare, but it is quite different.

ICONOCLAST: Well, I also wanted to know what have you been doing in retirement? I know you've been writing for all these publications, but what else do you do?

DE LA VEGA: Well, it's only been two years. Since I retired, I started all this writing, and then I wrote a book. As far as work goes, that's been keeping me pretty busy. I do other things, like I have normal life. (laughs) I have five kids for one thing. They're grown, but they still keep you busy. They're be-

tween 20 and 28 years of age. But I'm not practicing law anymore, and I don't intend to.

ICONOCLAST: Okay, then, let me ask you about your book. Your book is not about an impeachment of President Bush. So what is your book about?

ELIZABETH DE LA VEGA: My book is a hypothetical grand jury presentation, and it's done in the same format as any grand jury presentation that's done in any criminal case around the country. It's something I did hundreds of times, literally.

So what I did is I analyzed the evidence of what the president and his top advisors did behind the scenes — you know the information they had available, and that would be based on the Senate report and the Select Committee on Intelligence. Then I compared it to all their public statements — just as you would in any fraud case. So it's a question of "behind the scenes" and the "public faith."

Then I put together all the evidence, and I drew up this hypothetical indictment which lays out a case for conspiracy to defraud the United States. Then, I

did the grand jury presentation in the form of an actual grand jury. The only thing that is fiction is that there is this proceeding. Everything else is based on research and facts. Actually, they're undisputed facts.

ICONOCLAST: So what is the difference between your book and books on impeachment?

DE LA VEGA: In my book I don't actually talk about impeachment at all. The purpose of it is that I wanted to make it very clear to people in a kind of uncharged atmosphere — at least in the written word — that what the president and his administration has done is the equivalent to fraud — the same kind of fraud that is prosecuted everyday and in fact the same kind of fraud that was prosecuted in the Enron case.

The readers can decide for him-or herself, but given the overwhelming evidence of this fraud and the fact that it is so serious and so much more serious than the Enron fraud, my point is that we just can't walk away from it and say, "What's done is done."

I don't call for impeachment. This was written in the summer before the Democrats were in the majority in Congress, but my purpose was to kind of issue a 911 call to say to people, "This is serious. There's really nothing more serious, so we need Congress to start having the hearings, and let the chips fall where they may."

ICONOCLAST: So this book does lay the foundation for congressional hearings for impeachment?

DE LA VEGA: Right, or congressional hearings that could lead to impeachment is how I would put it because in Watergate, there were hearings, and they weren't originally impeachment hearings, but what came out of the hearings led to the articles of impeachment.

And that is important because, well, I'm kind of process oriented. I do think it's really important for all the facts to get out there, actually, for their own sake because the president has been able to get away with this, at least up until now. I think it's really changing now, but today, he'll give the impression that this is all a big mistake, but it was far from it.

ICONOCLAST: It wasn't on accident is what you're saying? (laughs)

DE LA VEGA: No. (laughs)
ICONOCLAST: In terms of the logic of the book, what kind of punishment would be handed down at the conclusion? Or is that even more hypothetical?

DE LA VEGA: Yeah, that's very hypothetical. I mean, I don't even go there. What was important to me is to show based on

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U.S. V. Bush

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my experience how horrifyingly similar this is to the frauds we are outraged about all the time, particularly the Enron fraud.

I don't call for any punishment. I don't think it would be appropriate at this point. I really think the key is to get people to the next hurdle where they really understand the seriousness of it, and the fact that it was an intentional deceit rather than just a series of bad judgments or incompetence even.

ICONOCLAST: Where did you get the idea to construct this book as a grand jury indictment?

DE LA VEGA: It's interesting. I always thought that pre-

senting a criminal case was like presenting a play. You know, you don't make up the lines, but you do kind of have to know what they are based on, what the facts are, and what the evidence has shown all along, so it really wasn't too much of a big step for me to do exactly the same thing, but you're focusing on the evidence that related the president's fraud.

I don't know. I guess I just think about an assembly of facts in that way all the time, just based on 20 years of doing that.

ICONOCLAST: So there weren't any other books in the past that attempted to take an audience through a simulated presentation of an indictment to

a grand jury on this scale?

DE LA VEGA: I don't know of any. Do you?

ICONOCLAST: No, no. I have no idea.

DE LA VEGA: There aren't that many former prosecutors who are in a position to really speak out in the way that I am because most of them either become judges or become defense attorneys, and defense attorneys don't want to be explaining how people are committing crimes. It's not good for your business.

ICONOCLAST: Did you write this book for a specific group of people? In other words, who is your audience?

DE LA VEGA: Well, I wrote it hoping that everyone would read the book. (laughs) But of course, that's not going to happen.

I did hope that it would reach an audience that wasn't just made up of people who believe that the president had committed a fraud. I wanted to reach out to people who might not be sure or might be open to persuasion at least because I think the debate on TV – if you can call it that – is just so hysterical and so superficial, it's down to two or three words being yelled at each other.

I just thought it was really important for people to have a rational approach. I explain all the laws. I lay out the facts, and people can apply the law to those facts, so I'm just hoping lots of people will read it.

ICONOCLAST: With this book, are you trying to persuade people before they get to sit on a real grand jury about their powers to indict President Bush on these charges?

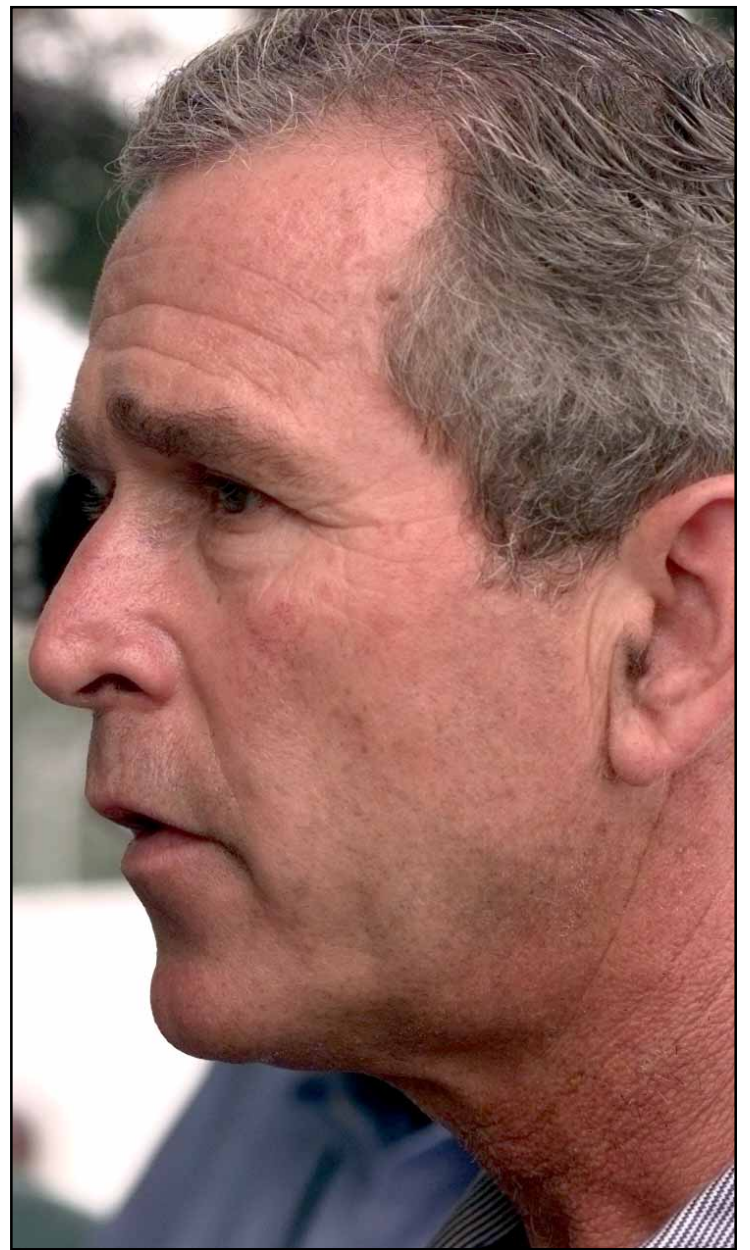
DE LA VEGA: No, no, no. It's more illustrative. My purpose is to just explain and to illustrate, not really try to argue what the outcome should be based on this information. Especially at the time of this writing, it seemed to me that it hadn't even gotten to that point. We're getting closer to the point where they really understand that the president took advantage of a whole country, really, that was vulnerable after 9/11, and used that fear to persuade people in a deceitful way to go along with a war that they wouldn't have gone along with if they had been told the truth.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think someone will write a book in response to yours in defense of the Bush administration?

DE LA VEGA: I don't know. You'll have to ask Ann Coulter or something. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) No, no, I mean, somebody who would take this seriously.

DE LA VEGA: I don't know. You know, obviously, having done all the research and ana-



Bush... Trouble At The White House

— Lone Star Iconoclast Photo

lyzed it, I have come to the conclusion that I've come to. I don't really think there are a lot of defenses to the president's actions in terms of this hypothetical case. But you've got me whether somebody would do something like that or not. I don't know.

ICONOCLAST: So you say there's not that many arguments that would back the administration?

DE LA VEGA: Not really, because I actually address all of them that I could think of in the book, and what's interesting is that fraud cases – no matter what kind of fraud it is, it could be like defrauding somebody in connection with a bogus investment or selling land in a swamp – the topic of the fraud differs, but the way people do it is almost always the same. The defenses to it are so much the same that there are standard jury instructions that set out the law that apply to them.

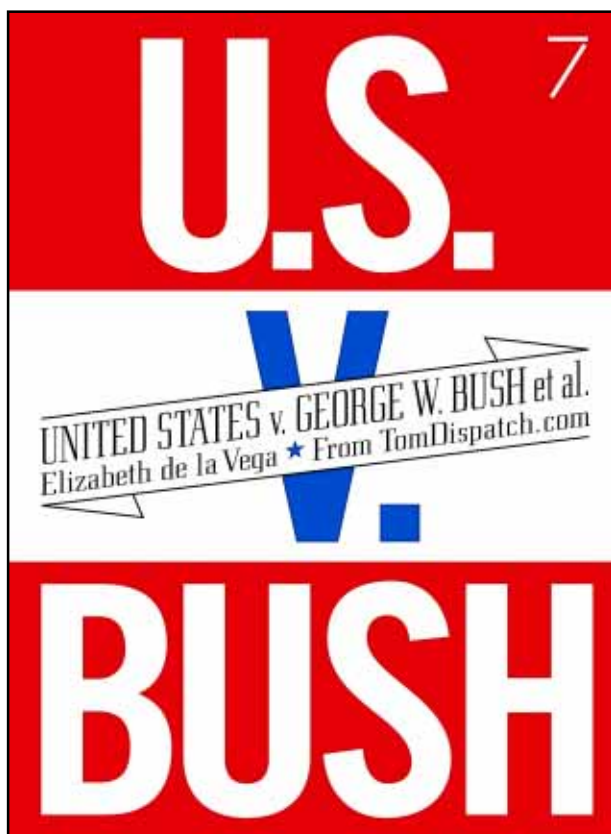
For example, people might say, "Well, Bush personally be-

lieved there were weapons of mass destruction." And it's very common in fraud cases for people to, subjectively in their own mind, believe that the ultimate conclusion they're pushing for is true or everything will work out in the end.

For example, somebody who sold somebody a bogus investment will convince himself that they really will end up making money even though I'm actually using their money to pay off somebody else. There's a lot of self-delusion, but there's a jury instruction that says it's not a defense to fraud that somebody subjectively believes it's all going to turn out okay if along the way they deceive people in order to get them to go along with it.

So the key here is what did they do in order to get people to buy into the war? They used half-truths. They used statements of reckless disregard for the truth – the same different kinds of things that people do in any kind of fraud.

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U.S. V. Bush

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ICONOCLAST: Now, you're an advocate for Bush's impeachment, and you're optimistic that impeachment will happen, right?

DE LA VEGA: I have a nuanced position about it. It's similar to what I said before. I think there are grounds for impeachment, but what I think is most important right now is that we start the process of having serious hearings. I am optimistic that once those happen, and if they're done in a way where the administration really is called to account, and where the Congress doesn't back off, I am optimistic that would lead to information that would make it inevitable that there would have to be a call for impeachment.

But to me, the most important thing is to get this information out, and in a public way that's not shouting at each other on TV, but something that is at least has the formality of a congressional hearing, which isn't as formal as a courtroom, of course, but people have to be sworn and they have to testify under oath which makes a big difference.

ICONOCLAST: Say that Bush doesn't get impeached. If the push for impeachment fails to take shape and Bush leaves office, what is your opinion about someone bringing him before the International Court on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity?

DE LA VEGA: Those are actually quite different than a fraud that I write about in the book. As a practical matter, I don't think it would happen just because the United States is so powerful, and actually, we don't even belong to the International Court. But I think there are grounds for him to be brought

in front of the International Court, and I think it's almost beyond dispute that this war was an unjustified war of aggression. There was no evidence whatsoever that Iraq had ever attacked us or had any inclination or ability to attack us. And even the administration itself called it a "pre-emptive war."

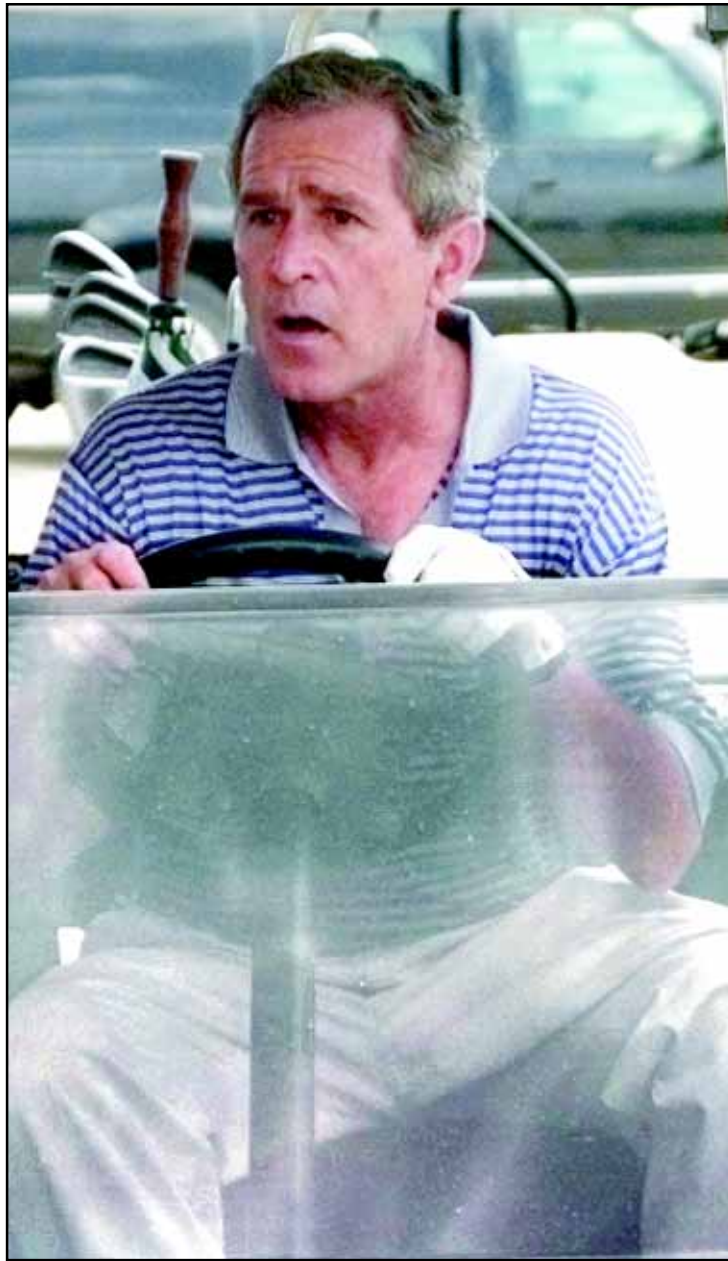
ICONOCLAST: Right, which is a war crime, right?

DE LA VEGA: Right.

ICONOCLAST: I find it interesting that in order to shine light on the fraud the Bush administration committed based on facts, you've used federal case law that convicted the Enron guys of fraud. I mean, I can't tell you how many times I've heard the wish, "Government should be run like a business." Your thoughts?

DE LA VEGA: One of the reasons I did focus on Enron was that President Bush, if you recall, in July 2002 came out and signed the corporate corruption bill, and he talked about the fact that from then on — of course, it was true before but he acted as though as it was new — CEOs would be held accountable for not being forthright and honest and completely truthful with their investors and their employees, and so he himself called for corporate accountability and he made it clear what that meant. He even said tricking investors into making investments is a crime.

I don't know about "running the government like a business," but I think the same standards of honesty and forthrightness have to apply to our government once they take the oath of office, and not only do I think that, but the fact is that that's what the law says.



Trouble Ahead

George W. Bush on one of his extended vacations.

— Lone Star Iconoclast Photo

ICONOCLAST: I've interviewed a number of former government employees critical of the Bush Administration, but I've never asked them this question: How does it feel to turn the tools of your former trade in the direction of your government?

DE LA VEGA: Well, I think a lot of federal prosecutors would say what I'm about to say, which is that when you work for the federal government, one of the things you learn more than anything is that you actually have a higher standard of behavior. You have to avoid the appearance of impropriety. The ideas of fairness and treating people justly are extremely important.

One of the basic principles of our entire government is that no person is above the law. There's a jury instruction that people are given. It's archaic sounding, but it says, "The law

has no respecter of persons." It just means it doesn't matter who you are. If you're the president or a janitor or a CEO or a rock star, the same laws apply to you.

So I don't feel like I'm turning the tools of my trade against my government. I feel like this is actually kind of a fighting for our system of government — the Constitution.

U.S. Refuses To Sign Ban On Secret Detentions

PARIS — The United States government refused to sign a ban on secret detentions last week.

The treaty ratified in Paris by 57 countries came as a result of families of those who were taken into custody by state authorities.

No clear reason was given by U.S. officials for their refusal to adopt the measure.

However, the Bush administration is currently holding suspected terrorists in secret overseas prisons run by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Other European powers such as Germany, Spain, Britain and Italy, also decided against endorsing the French-backed treaty.

Some of the non-endorsing nations that still support the treaty must first enter a constitutional process through their elected bodies before a formal ratification takes place.

A number of the CIA-prisons, though, have been rumored to be located within the borders of some of these non-endorsing nations.

The treaty is "a message to all modern-day authorities committed to the fight against terrorism," said Louise Arbour, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.

U.S. officials declined to explain what sections of the treaty they had disagreed, said Arbour.

She added that the measure closes legal loopholes that had allowed state-sponsored disappearances of people in the form of arrests, detention, or "any other form of deprivation of freedom"

French authorities estimated that over 50,000 people had been taken into secret custody by more than 90 governments since 1980. Eighty percent of those cases are still unsolved.

Disappearances had plagued Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s, and were a regular occurrence in Nazi Germany.

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Army Never Released DU Warning Video: Report

ATLANTA — A CNN special investigation found that the Army had created a video tape informing viewers of the negative effects of exposure to radioactive dust from depleted uranium weapons.

While the Pentagon knew about the potential health risks of these deadly weapons, the government failed to distribute the video to U.S. troops after its creation in 1995, the report said.

The cable network news agency revealed its report last week as a part of an investigative series on depleted uranium (DU), a radioactive waste substance fired in munitions to penetrate tank armor and also forged into vehicle armor because of its superior density.

This DU weaponry was used in the first Gulf War and during the NATO operations in Kosovo.

The Army has denied any connection between the exposure of depleted uranium and serious health risks.

However, since 1991, U.S. veterans and Iraqi civilians have complained of illnesses related to their exposure to DU particles from their discharged munitions.

Some soldiers have attempted to sue the U.S. government because they say their exposure to DU made them ill. They say the Army never showed them any training videos on the potential health hazards of DU.

These soldiers, who say they had no knowledge of DU prior to their service in Iraq, have reported symptoms such as extreme fatigue, harsh headaches, painful urination, and joint discomfort.

CNN reporter Greg Hunter explained that the army's expert on DU admitted that some information on the 1995 tape is accurate, such as the fact that radioactive particles are harmful.

Since 2000, the Army has required new soldiers to learn about DU through training exercises. But Army doctors continue to blame post traumatic stress disorder for these Gulf war veterans' symptoms.

A former U.S. army colonel who has studied DU health effects for the U.S. military in the 1990s said his own urine tests of the suing veterans are at extremely high levels that pose a serious health threat.

Dr. Asaf Durakovic told CNN, "There is genetic change and chromosomal abhorations in the people who have been found positive with depleted uranium."

Despite military law prohibiting soldiers from suing the federal government for redress, a

judge is allowing the soldiers' claims of malpractice to be heard in court.

The Army says that its tests for negative health effects of DU in soldiers have found no evidence.

"If you look at people who had heavy exposure, internalization,

some still having the depleted uranium in their bodies, still excreting very high levels in their urine, their health appears at this point to be normal," said Dr. Michael Kirkpatrick of the Defense Department's Health Affairs in a CNN interview.

Politicians and other scientists doubt the military's DU testing program is sensitive enough to pick up contamination, and legislation has been passed in Connecticut allowing the state to perform DU tests its own national guardsmen.

Soldiers currently serving in Iraq, specifically the southern half, are in danger of DU radiation exposure, according to Dr. Durakovic.

The Army refutes Durakovic's description of this area as a "radiological sewer."

Perry Gambles On State Lottery Privatization

AUSTIN — Texas Gov. Rick Perry stunned lawmakers again last week when he suggested that the state lottery should be privatized.

The money from the sale of a 40-year "concession," he proposed, would go into three trusts: one for education, another for cancer research, and another for health insurance.

Perry's proposals in his State of the State address were immediately questioned by state legislators on both sides of the aisle.

Lawmakers took issue with

not only the idea of legalizing private-run gambling in Texas, but also the math by which supports the governor's price tag for the lottery lease and the clarity of his investment scheme.

The Perry's plan assumes the lottery would be leased to a private company for \$14 billion. That sum would in turn be invested.

Assuming that the state receives a nine percent annual return on investment (or \$1.3 billion a year), the plan is for \$750 million to go to education, \$270 million to cancer research,

and \$243 million to extend health insurance 600,000 uninsured Texans each year.

Yet to be specified in the governor's plan are places in which these investments would be made, a strategy for funding education during bad investment cycles, and a stipulation for action when the lease-holder breaks its agreement.

Perry's office said that lottery revenues have been shaky over the last few years, only to rise recently.

The Texas lottery was initially

created as a funding source of public education. Texas voters approved a constitutional amendment creating the lottery in 1991.

Currently, \$1 billion a year goes to public schools from the Texas lottery. Last fiscal year was a record-breaker for the lottery as it generated over \$3.77 billion in sales.

It is also yet to be seen whether Texans would have to the opportunity to vote on Perry's plan if the Legislature approves it first.

Watada Case Ends In Mistrial

— New Trial In The Works —

FORT LEWIS — A mistrial was declared last Wednesday in the Army court-martial of the first and only officer to refuse to obey an illegal order and be deployed to Iraq.

The military judge ruled a mistrial since 1st Lt. Ehren Watada had not entirely understood the facts as laid out in a plea deal he signed before the trial.

The plea deal stipulated that Watada would have been charged with two counts of conduct unbecoming an officer and one count of missing movement, while two other charges of conduct unbecoming of an officer would be dropped.

In exchange, Watada was to have acknowledged that he failed to deploy with his unit last June.

But the plea deal fell apart when Watada told the judge — Lt. Col. John Head — that he missed movement for no other reason than that he thought the Iraq War was illegal.

Under the plea deal, the prosecution had assumed that the lieutenant's admission to missing movement was an admission of guilt.

The judge — to the chagrin of Watada's lawyer — had earlier restricted the defense from giving testimony explaining the lieutenant's intentions for refusing deployment. This restriction was meant to prevent the legality of the Iraq War from being

brought up in the trial.

Watada's attorney, Eric Seitz, says his client's intention is key to his defense. "There is no way around talking about why he didn't get on that plane," he said.

Now that the plea deal is broken, the prosecution is allowed try Watada under the original charges.

According to Seitz, a retrial on the same charges would violate rules of double jeopardy, a Constitutional prohibition that forbids a person from being tried twice of the same crime.

Seitz added that he opposes the mistrial and would fight a retrial.

Military justice experts say that Watada could still be retried because military courts handle double jeopardy differently than civil courts. If the judge didn't abuse his powers in granting the mistrial, there's no reason not to have a second trial, they said.

These experts also say that should the case be retried, Watada could appeal in the Army Court of Criminal Appeals. This would push his court-martial date back.

If rejected, the lieutenant could appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces in Washington, D.C.

The judge has already set the retrial date for March 19, though the time could change.

If convicted, Watada faces a maximum of four years in prison and dismissal from the service. The government is not expected to offer another plea

deal.

Until the outcome of the next trial, he is still an active-duty soldier, reporting for work every day at Fort Lewis.

Dunnam Again Leads House Democrats In 80th Legislature

AUSTIN — Last week Texas House Democrats conducted their leadership elections for the 80th Legislature, and State Representative Jim Dunnam (D-Waco) was unanimously re-elected to a third term as Chair of the Texas House Democratic Caucus.

"The confidence shown toward me by my House colleagues is indeed an honor. We are stronger now than we have been in a long time and we intend to use our strengthened position to fight for the values and address the priorities of hardworking Texas families," said Rep. Dunnam.

In the current session, Rep. Dunnam has already been instrumental in passing several ethics and open government amendments to the House rules, and also in leading a bipartisan effort to protect the public's ability to have input into the legislative process.

As Chair of the Democratic Caucus, Rep. Dunnam has spearheaded several legislative battles to ensure positive out-

comes for Central Texas, including restoration of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and to increase funding and accountability for public schools.

"I hope that my re-election by my House peers demonstrates to the people of District 57 that I am providing a strong and effective voice for their interests. My re-election as House Democratic Leader provides me a unique opportunity to fight for the issues most crucial to District 57, while at the same time advancing the interests of all Texans," Rep. Dunnam said.

Since 2003 under Rep. Dunnam's leadership, the House Democratic Caucus has increased its numbers in the Texas House from 62 to 69 members; 76 members constitutes a majority.

Rep. Dunnam has represented District 57 in the Texas House since 1997. District 57 includes all of Falls, Leon, Madison and Robertson counties, plus a portion of Waco and McLennan County.



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Miz Lisa Goes To Her Final Reward

As Uncle Hugh Used to say, "They say there ain't no perpetual motion machine; but there's been one around longer than the Bible. We call it money."

As if the debacle of the Texas welfare system and the money-hemorrhaging highway department weren't enough to prove that "privatizing" government services is an idea made in paneled board rooms, now we have the TAKS test to prove that your tax dollars are for sale.

"Privatization" is no more than the old Spoils System with better PR.

The process is inefficient, expensive and rife with abuse.

Just ask anybody in Iraq who ain't drawing a government check.

There is no way it can be otherwise.

If you're going to make money, even from the government, you have to charge more than you spend.

And you have to spend to protect your investment.

Neither of which the government has to do. Not to say it doesn't, but the government doesn't *have* to.

Private enterprise does.

Thus saith the Profit.

Note that last week Lisa Chandler resigned as Texas' director of student assessment to become an executive at NCS Pearson, the edu-cartel caballed together to capture the half-billion dollar contract to create the state's sudden death test.

Pearson Educational Management obviously takes care of its own.

A third tier textbook company swallowed up by the electronic testing megalith NCS solely to snag the not-for-bid \$60 million per year Texas test contract, Pearson not only creates, administers and grades the test, it offers test "study guides," at additional cost, to school districts throughout the state.

Sort of like asking if you'd like fries with that.

Actually, it's more like asking if you'd like hamburger meat with that.

Oh, and guess who was governor when all this went down.

I'll give you a hint: "not-for-bid contract."

This is the same state where, by Pearson's own admission, the majority of students at most schools don't know the difference between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, cannot identify a dependent clause and don't know who James Madison was.

Yet test score totals keep increasing.

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



It all depends on how you define "education," doesn't it?

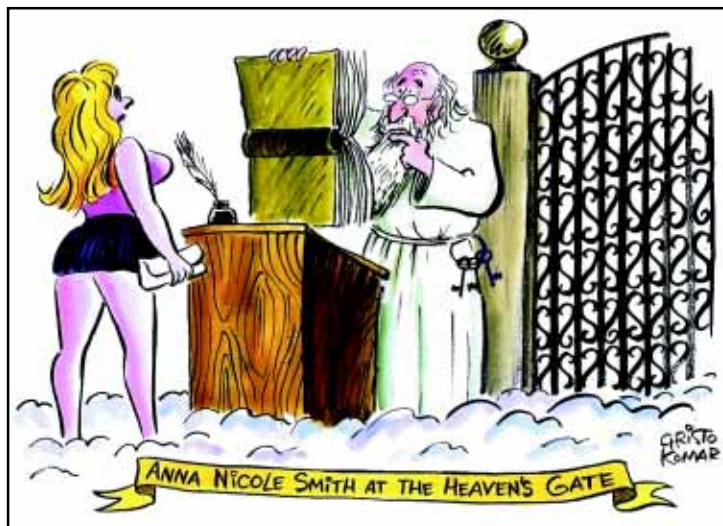
Privatization gives you a whole new perspective.

Here's the deal: If you were charged with providing a test

for Texas school districts, and if you prepared and administered and graded that test, and if your continued \$60 million-plus contract were contingent on continued "improvement" of test scores:

Would you make sure that state employees who oversee your performance could have a lucrative second career waiting once they're well vested in the state retirement system?

Man, it just never stops.



EDITORIAL

Will Skull and Bones Come To SMU?

Southern Methodist University near Dallas is considering a make-over.

In the image of George W. Bush.

In recent years, much hoopla has erupted over where to build the Bush Presidential Library and, now, the Bush Institute, a multi-billion-dollar monument designed to deify the almighty George W. Bush.

The complex will likely be situated at one of Texas' premiere universities. It appears that SMU has just enough elitist flair to quench young Bush's thirst.

If built, people from throughout the world will consider SMU the repository of the Bush legend — where the actions and philosophies of Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, and George W. Bush will become the standard definition of what the university stands for.

The move could provide SMU with a temptation to offer a new curriculum that would set it apart from all other institutions of higher learning — with classes like Abu Ghraib 101, Guantanamo For Beginners, or Voyeurism II, all in keeping with the Bush theme.

Too, it would be hypocritical not to bring forth a replica of Bush's pride and joy, a Texas-styled version of Skull and Bones, making it deliciously practical to mesh religion with the display of sexual "revelations" and sodomy.

And speaking of revelations, since it is known far and near that God speaks to Bush, as He did the many writers of the Bible, and since SMU is a religious school, why not add the Book of Bush smack dab between The General Epistle of Jude and The Revelation of Saint John the Divine?

The library endeavor will, indeed, prove to the world that Methodists far and wide endorse the teachings and philosophies of George W. Bush. They can unabashedly boast that it was from this religion, mixed with considerable booze, that his theories and actions must have erupted, for he is that kind of a Christian.

Methodist congregations from throughout the world will undoubtedly perpetuate all the elements that describe the Bush years as they attempt to get everyone to emulate the persona of their great deliverer. Methodists will be able to glorify his actions, and promote the world as a place that embraces surveillance, pre-emption, economic extravagance, and fields of blood, for these marks are tattoos of the Skull and Bones craft that will also now epitomize SMU.

Bravery will also encompass this region of North Texas. Residents have already indicated the belief that their homes will be clear targets for those who oppose the Bush doctrines. But they also realize that this is but one of many sacrifices that will befall them as they endeavor to prove to the world the righteousness of the Bush brand, which espouses fear as a constant way of life.

It is called preaching by example.

Besides, why worry? The elaborate mazes of checkpoints will keep out any hooligans.

If built, the library at SMU will definitely put the university on the map.

Students from all around the world may want to go there, to become associated with the beliefs of George W. Bush. Only the misinformed will deem it an embarrassment. Only the heathens will say that the escalation of poverty is not to be rewarded. And only those who do not worship oil will be turned away.

SMU and George W. Bush.

Or better yet, George W. Bush's SMU.

This title completes the make-over.

But there are two troubling questions:

"What if they build it and nobody comes?" and

"In the community of churches, why are Methodists so eager to embrace the 21st Century holocaust and wager their integrity on a hand of aces and eights?"

— W. Leon Smith

Salute Hospitalized Veterans This Valentines Day

This Valentine's Day is a great opportunity for area residents to say 'thank you' to military veterans. Since 1978, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has encouraged people to visit hospitalized veterans in VA medical centers, nursing homes and state veterans homes during the week of Valentine's Day as part of a National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. It is a way to express our appreciation and let these veterans know that their service has not been forgotten.

We have hundreds of veterans receiving care at the Waco VA hospital and thousands more visit our VA medical centers throughout our district every year. Many of them have families in the area, but some do not. All of them would be greatly cheered by a short visit from you or your family. It's a great opportunity for kids to talk with these hospitalized veterans and



Washington Report

By Congressman Chet Edwards

learn first hand about American history from people who participated in some of the most significant events of the last half-century. The VA staff at the hospital will furnish you with valentines and balloons to give to the veterans. If you can't make it in person to thank these veterans, please remember them in your prayers.

We must remember not only those who serve today, but those who served in yesterday's Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. America owes its military veterans an immeasurable debt of gratitude for their sacrifice for our country. That's

why I have always fought so hard as a Member of Congress to make sure that America honors that debt; that we keep our promises to those who have protected our country in times of war and peace.

At the end of the day, it is our actions that matter most. If you can spend part of your Valentine's Day at a VA hospital, you will walk away from this rewarding experience having lifted the spirits of veterans who will be reassured that America is a country that respects their service and cares about their future. Every time I visit our troops and veterans in hospitals, I come away humbled and inspired by their spirit and service to country.

In Washington, the Administration's budget recently submitted to Congress unfortunately includes a provision to double the co-payment charged to many veterans for

prescription drugs and requires some veterans to pay a new enrollment fee of \$250 a year to enroll in the VA health care system, even if they don't receive any health care services.

Another proposal would increase health care premiums by up to \$1,000 a year for military retirees, who have served in uniform for 20 years or more. Members of Congress and the President's Cabinet aren't being asked to pay \$1,000 more for their health care premiums, so I find this double standard to be extremely unfair to those who have already sacrificed so much for country.

Doubling prescription drug co-payments, imposing new enrollment fees on veterans, and raising health care premiums on military retirees by up to

\$1,000 a year during a time of war breaks the promise to honor those who have protected America throughout our history. As a member of the Budget Committee and Chairman of the Subcommittee that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs, I intend to fight hard to see that these misguided proposals never see the light of day.

America's veterans have shown their commitment to us. Now it is our turn to affirm our commitment to them with our words and our deeds.

Edwards represents District 17 and is serving his ninth term in Congress. He is Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee and co-chairs the House Army Caucus.

Lawmakers Pressure Perry To Retract Vaccination Order

AUSTIN — Texas state lawmakers mounted more pressure on Gov. Rick Perry last week to retract his executive order mandating that schoolgirls be vaccinated against a cancer-causing sexually-transmitted virus.

In two separate letters, a total of 58 legislators urged him to rescind the order, citing their frustration with the executive branch's overreach of authority.

"While philosophic differences will dictate where our beliefs fall, no Texan would willfully abdicate their voice in the Legislature to a single office of their government," said the letter from 32 representatives sent last Thursday.

A Perry spokesman criticized the lawmakers for sending the governor "angry letters," instead of taking up the new vaccination rules through the legislative process.

However, there are already four bills in the Legislature that would overturn Perry's order.

Perry's critics have asked Attorney General Greg Abbott for a legal opinion into the legality of the governor's order.

The executive order itself mandates that girls entering sixth grade before September 2008 should receive the Merck & Co.'s new Gardasil vaccine.

The vaccine prevents girls from infection of the human papillomavirus, a sexually transmitted disease that causes cervical cancer in most cases.

Women's groups and some Democratic lawmakers came to Perry's defense, saying that

the vaccine will save the lives of many children and prevent the spread of this disease in cases of rape and incest.

A wide range of citizen groups, though, believe that the mandate circumvents parent's responsibility and in effect condones pre-marital sex.

"Hogwash," wrote Chris Bell, former Democratic candidate for Texas governor, in an email response to these claims.

Under the order, parents are allowed to opt out their children from the vaccine administration based on their religious or philosophical beliefs. Critics, on the other hand, would rather parents opt in to a voluntary program.

Bell said he backed Perry's decision to make the HPV vaccination mandatory, noting that the media failed report their agreement on the urgency of the vaccine during their campaigns last year.

Still, other critics, including the spokesperson for the Texas Democratic Party, are suspicious of Perry's connection with the Merck drug company, which contributed to the governor's reelection campaign.

The Texas Medical Association also voiced opposition against the order because the vaccine is too new, expensive to administer, and therefore susceptible to legal headaches.

The price tag for the vaccine is \$360 for a three-shot series. The Food and Drug Administration approved it only nine months ago.

The Tragedy of King George the Second

Act V, Scene IV ...
Condi, Maiden of Hemmings: "Rescue, my Lord of NoFolk! Rescue! Rescue! The king enacts more wonders than a man, daring an opposite to every truth: his course is slain, and all on foot he fights, seeking for Richard in the throat of death. Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!"

Enter King George
King George: "A course! A course! My kingdom for a course!"

Condi, Maiden of Hemmings: "Dare not withdraw, my lord; I'll help you to a course."

King George: "Slave! I have set my life upon a cast, and I will stand the hazard of the die. I think there be six nations in the axis; none have I slain to-day, instead of all. - A course! A course! My kingdom for a course!"

Condi, Maiden of Hemmings, King George exeunt stage right

Enter Prince Richard and Squire Lewis, bearing the crown; accompanied by daily scribes, lesser Lords, and begrudging forces.

Prince Richard: "God and your arms be prais'd, victorious friends; Mission Accomplished, the bloody dictator is dead."

Squire Lewis: "Courageous Richard, Sir Fitzgerald may yet acquit me! Lo! Here, this



The Webster Retort

By Stephen Webster

long-usurped royalty from the dead temples of this bloody Congress, have I pluck'd off, to grace thy brows withal: wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it."

Prince Richard: "Great God of Falwell, say amen to me! But, tell me, is young King George living?"

Squire Lewis: "He is my lord, and safe in Delusion; Whither, if you please, we may withdraw us."

Prince Richard: "What men of name are slain on the side of righteousness?"

Squire Lewis: "Ashcroft of NoFolk, Donald Lord Rumsfeld, Sir Richard of Santorum, and Maid Judith of Miller, among the many."

Prince Richard: "Inter their bodies as becomes their births: Proclaim as traitors, the soldiers fled, that in rebuke will raise voice to defame us; and then, as we have ta'en the sacrament, we will divide the country in hues of rose and ocean blue. Smile, courts, on this fair conjunction, that long hath frown'd upon the union!"

"What traitor hears me, and says not amen? America hath long been mad, and scarr'd herself in peace; What fortune, that we should see the brother

blindly shed the brother's blood, the father rashly slaughter'd his own son, the son, compell'd, been butcher to the sire: All this divided heart and home, much to benefit of our King.

"Divided in their dire division, O! now, let the King and Lady Laura, the true successors and Deciders of our royal white house, by God's fair ordinance conjoin together; and let their heirs, Princess Jenna, Lord Pierce, Lady Barbra, wise Jeb - God, we know they will be so - enrich the generations, and come to power with blood-soak'd peace, in death and smiling plenty, a fair, prosperous day!"

"Hasten the sword to necks of our brotherly traitors, gracious Lord, those whom would subside and speak out, to reduce these bloody days again. Make poor America weep in streams of blood! Let them not live to taste this land's increase that would with treason wound the fair desert's freedom!"

"Now with great civil wounds are incurr'd, our wealth and dictate lives again: that she may long live here, God of Falwell, say amen!"

Prince Richard, Squire Lewis, exeunt stage right

Stephen Webster is a reporter, columnist, and amateur William Shakespeare plagiarist from North Texas.

SMU Petitions: A Referendum On The Bush Presidency?

If the debate on whether or not the Bush Library and Policy Center will be housed at Southern Methodist University in Dallas were a sports event the outcome would already have been decided.

Last night the number of signatures on the petition opposing the Library stood at 10,101; this morning it is 10,124, most of whom identify their denomination as Methodist and include their church.

The on-line petition supporting the inclusion of the Library and Policy Center on the SMU campus stood last night at 107. This morning it is 106, the last two entries had been removed and one more added.

Last night the last two entries were from Dr. Susanne Johnson, the faculty member from the Perkins School of Theology on Campus who cosigned the letter that resulted in the demand from the faculty that the project be subject to a referendum by the same faculty. The two letters were written on the issues that have appeared elsewhere in the media of late. They included the unwillingness of Bush to meet with the Bishops of the Methodist Church for the last six years, the use of torture, a practice that violates the tenets and values of Methodism, according to those same Bishops.

The petitions are different in every imaginable way. The url for the petition opposed is titled, "Protect SM." The petition supporting the Bush Project is titled, "Protect SMU From The 'Leftist Bush-Hate Kooks' Opposing The Bush Presidential Library Being @ SMU!" thus setting the tone for those signing.

The use of vilifying rhetoric is mostly absent on the Protect SMU petition; vitriol is a standard practice on the other. Since it is well known to political activists that NeoCons routinely employ a cadre of mostly young men to surf the web and plant disinformation the similarity in wording and grammatical errors is understandable. There are fed their scripts through the network of political operatives that includes John Fund, Matt Drudge, and David Horowitz.

The Protect SMU Petition focuses on the same issues; the violation of the tenets of Methodism by the Bush Presidency. The other ignores the issues raised, points to the potential for profit, and chooses to characterize those in opposition as, 'effete snobs,' "a few looney lefti-wing creeps," and "left wing, radical socialists." Phrases are slavishly reused.

No one on the Pro Bush

Signatures Supporting Bush Library

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/SupportSMUBushLibrary/signatures.html>

Feb. 2 - 98

Feb. 6 - 9:30 EST 107 10:49 EST 107 11:09 EST 107

Signatures Opposing Bush Library

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/protectsmu/signatures.html>

Feb. 2 - 9,965;

Feb. 6 - 9:30 EST 10,185 10:49 EST 10,198 11:09 EST 10,201

Project Petition addressed the concerns of those opposing the Bush Project or commented on Bush's continued unwillingness to meet with the Bishops of his own church or expressed an opinion on the use of torture by Americans.

The issues raised on the petition supporting the Bush Project go to the potential of the facility to generate income for the area and its utility as a research facility. In the majority of cases the signers ignore the issues, instead demanding unquestioning loyalty either to U.S. policy or to Bush, either personally or as president. Far fewer identify themselves by a church affiliation.

The benefit of the Bush Project for Dallas as a tourist destination is doubtful. Crawford, Texas opened shops featuring novelties and collectibles in the belief tourism would bring in bucks, but their income from these has fallen off significantly as the Bush Presidency used up the good will it stole from the tragedy of Sept. 11, according to the Office of the Comptroller of Texas. There is an upward swing in sales when Cindy Sheehan or other protesters are there, though it is not clear that it is pro-Bush memorabilia that is driving that blip on the local economy.

Since Bush has signed an executive order allowing him and his heirs to block access to documents in virtual perpetuity the usefulness of the Project for research is probably nil. Already funded to the tune of a half a billion dollars, mostly by the Bush core constituency of oil companies and other multinationals who are profiting mightily in Iraq, the Policy Center is expected to justify and promote the policies that Bush has himself followed. Would that mean that techniques in torture would become a subject for research as a useful and approved 'policy tool?' One can imagine the kind of research carried out in the back behind the soundproofed doors. But we are lead to that conclusion and to contemplating the idea that how to lie more effectively and manufacture the needed justifications would also be included. Perhaps that is to be Karl Rove's job as he retires

to a prosperous old age?

Presumably, SMU will be offered an endowed Chair dedicated to the work of Leo Strauss.

The problem is, perhaps, trying to view the Bush Library and Policy Center through the lens of what we have always understood as acceptable. By refusing to be governed by SMU and by massive funding, this facility will be different than any presidential library ever built. Bush is planning to take the power of the presidency with him when he leaves office.

When something is so monumentally outrageous we try to find a way to look at it that makes it comprehensible. It is like America has been invaded by blood sucking aliens dressed with the smiling faces of ordinary humanity but it is not polite to mention it.

Ordinary people continue to sign petitions.

While most of those signing the Protect SMU Petition are still Methodists as of now, both Doctors Susanne Johnson and Andrew Weaver, the Methodist Minister from Brooklyn, a graduate of SMU, are well aware that the petition may well become a national referendum on the Bush presidency. When asked, each admitted that possibility. Dr. Johnson said that the possibility that the dialog would extend beyond the boundaries of the University and of Methodism had recently occurred to her as she saw the media interest increase. She said she and Dr. MacIvaney, the other faculty member who signed the original letter, have been interviewed by a steady stream of media from various parts of the country and overseas.

Dr. Weaver commented that while it had not been his intention to elicit a broader dialog he hoped that the petition and the questions it raised could focus Americans on a consideration of morals, values, and a renewal of faith. Faith and courage are values much needed by Americans today.

A group on the SMU Campus is also collecting signatures in support of the Bush Project. That group, SMU Young Conservatives of Texas, has been active on the Dallas campus of

GUEST COMMENTARY

the University since 2002. Members participated in the Affirmative Action Cookie Sale in 2003, where members sold cookies with different prices listed for men and women and for Black, White and Native American individuals, the order of cost being \$1 per cookie for white men, \$.75 for white women, \$.50 for Hispanics of both genders, and \$.25 for Blacks of both genders. The event was closed down by the administration as disruptive of peace after the sale of \$1.50 worth of cookies. Evidently, none of those offended thought of having a friendly Hispanic buy the supply of cookies at that lowest price and setting up a table to resell these for more money. Developing a sense of humor as we act locally would be a good idea.

There was no report on who had baked the cookies, but I would bet it was a white woman who then had to pay to eat them. Since I am a member of the National Federation of Republican Women I know how it all works.

The NeoCons have done an artful job of positioning themselves and creating icons that attracted young people into the Republican Party who came with far different motivations than was once the case. The idealists who read and believed the words of Barry Goldwater are few now. Goldwater wrote in his book, *Conscience of a Conservative*,

"Throughout history, government has proved to be the chief instrument for thwarting man's liberty. Government represents power in the hands of some men to control and regulate the lives of other men. And

power, as Lord Acton said, corrupts men."

"Absolute power," he added, "corrupts absolutely."

Those same activists, once committed to seeing the Republican Party deliver on the promises of small government, local control, individual rights for all, and simple kindness were displaced by a new breed; young men and women who idolize Anne Coulter because she has glamorized political deception and become wealthy so doing. The young people who flock to see such as Coulter seek icons that say, "wealth and power are the only justifications you need."

Today, America is confronted with a State far more dangerous to us and confiscatory on every level than any imagined by our founders. Today, we see a State that is the property, not of Americans, but of the same corporations who will build the Bush Library.

Southern Methodist University is about to be consumed because it is convenient for Bush to claim membership as a Methodist and he will be able to have a lavish home near his buddies. To that end he is more than willing to sacrifice all the unearned money he can lay hands on. In this we are witnessing the plans he and his buddies have for America. We will not be able to say we were not warned.

Get off the Grids, Organize Locally, Build Coalition.

Melinda Pillsbury-Foster is a prominent activist, author, poet, commentator, and critic. She is founder and president of the Arthur C. Pillsbury Foundation and hosts a radio talk-show program, The Spiritual Politician, at <BBSRadio.com>.

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What Price Impeachment

“Service to Adolf Hitler is Service to Germany –
Service to Germany is Service to God”

— A slogan of the National Socialist Party, Germany, circa 1940

Which act, *verboten* under our Constitution, the laws of all that is natural and holy as members of humanity, basic to the very moral fabric of civilized man, shall be the one that pushes Congress past the edge of the envelope and into impeach mode?

Will it be the sheer incompetence that tossed out the intelligence gathered by previous administrations, completely ignoring all warnings of possible attacks from well-funded terror organizations?

Perhaps it will be the fabrications used to cloak complicity in or responsibility for the 9/11/2001 tragedies. Far too many questions have gone unanswered these five years: Why did all collapsed World Trade Center buildings come down in controlled demolition style? What happened to the rubble, removed from the biggest crime scene in NYC's history before it could be properly inspected?

Why were all of the buildings reduced to dust, as though blown apart by experts? Why has no one investigated the comments on video of the last firefighters out – who heard a series of explosions following them the stairwell?

Where were the bodies of the passengers, their luggage, airplane parts such as wheels, wings and engines of the massive jet that hit the Pentagon? How could it be no airliner is visible on security tapes, nor is the hole in the wall large enough to accommodate a jumbo passenger plane?

What happened to the wreckage of United 93?

What were those explosions at the Capitol?

Where in hell was Dark Lord the Dick Cheney when all this began, and where was he while running the reaction phase for the initial weeks? Why did Cheney take control of our military?

For what reason was Lame Dubya incommunicado for so many hours?

Let me see... maybe putting the blame on Osama bin Laden, mounting a half-assed assault upon his al Qaeda lair in Afghanistan, and then allowing the putz to “escape” just when he's in our sights will be the charge that fuels an impeachment fire.

How about those “weapons of mass destruction” the late

Saddam Hussein was amassing with which to destroy America and our way of life? That entire paranoid scenario was so ludicrous only the most feeble-minded should have bought into it – and, just as Herr Oberst Karl Rove figured, the “Jesus Saves” crowd did precisely that.

This past week yet another intelligence report was released indicating that the Downing Street Memo was falsified.

Should the willfully malicious bouleversement of anyone who might have been taken seriously and spoken out about the White House inventions of “facts” be enough to bring impeachment proceedings forth?

Should these very “inventions” themselves not be enough to bring down this Regime of Fascist thugs?

What about more than five years of illegal wiretaps placed upon American citizens' telephones? Scanning our e-mails? And the latest – going through our mail, as though we were convicts in a high security detention facility?

We might consider the contentious lies, obfuscations, waste of taxpayer dollars and windfalls for cronies and other robber barons.

The very invasion of Iraq should be enough to impeach Li'l Georgie. After all, it was predicated on lies, and we've never attacked another sovereign nation *en masse* without cause; such an act is antithesis to U.S. law as well as U.N. law.

There are the more than 800 “signing statements,” by which the Little Dictator has thumbed his nose with virtually every law passed in Congress to tell its members and we, the People, that he could not care one iota for the rule of law.

Lest we forget 230 years of American history, freedoms and laws that this Regime has sought to dismantle right in front of us and the World.

How can we possibly impeach the entire administration for being so entirely disdainful and disrespectful of the citizens and residents of the greatest Nation on Earth; for taking us down a road that not only has turned us into a barbarous warring faction despised by most of the rest of our neighbors – those whom a scant five years ago were our friends and allies?

It comes down to two names: Ignacio Ramos and Jose'



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

Compean.

This may resemble a Hollywood movie script, or play like an episode of *Law & Order*, but it's a real-life nightmare, and there's no Jack McCoy to provide a conscience.

These are the U.S. Border Patrol agents who currently languish in a Federal Penitentiary for doing their jobs – chasing down a smuggler who crossed over from Mexico with a van filled with marijuana. Even without the reefer he entered the U.S. illegally; as it turned out, this was a regular run for the perpetrator.

Two years ago this month Compean followed a signal indicating a breach at the border near El Paso, Texas. Ramos, although on his lunch break, responded to his partner's call. By the time he arrived the smuggler had driven his van into a ditch and was headed back toward the Rio Grande on foot. The two border agents pursued him.

After a scuffle with Compean, as the suspect neared the river he turned and pointed something that looked like a gun at him; Ramos fired once, hitting the man in the derriere. He then crossed into Mexico where a van was waiting for him to make his getaway.

Right there, with the van waiting at precisely that spot on the Mexican side, this should sound pretty well organized even to somebody with Li'l Georgie's limited intuitive capacity.

Well, it seems there's some sort of cockamamie law that says a U.S. Border Patrol agent is subject to a minimum of 10 years in the pokie just for discharging his or her service weapon.

A caucus of six Republican Congressmen sought review and rewrite of the law, Fed. Statute 924(c), and a Department of Justice investigation into the case.

Therein lies the rub – DOJ and the Department of Homeland Security was behind this entire travesty of justice from the outset.

The Federal Prosecutor who vigorously sought to bring down two “rogue” Border Patrol

agents, Johnny Sutton, is an old friend and appointee of one Inquisitor General Alberto Gonzales, chief enemy of our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The prosecution was ordered from, and directed by, the highest levels of Federal Government; far too much attention for such a seemingly innocuous incident. In a world of acceptable realities, this *hombre* would have fled into Mexico and disappeared until his next pot run.

Which is basically what happened, except that he got his ass with the extra hole caught again. Wouldn't you know, *el bandido supremo* was driving in yet another million-dollar load of herbal delight.

So, Sutton offered *el schmucko* full immunity to testify against these two agents who had impeccable records. The prosecution was so intent on burning Ramos and Compean it kept in touch via mail with the smuggler while he was living free and easy in Mexico.

Meanwhile, back in Texas, our intrepid heroes and their families were living through hell.

A border agent who was not involved in the altercation testified that the perp had no weapon.

In the official DHS report to Congress three operatives swore that Ramos and Compean had stated prior to heading out on the night in question that they were going to shoot up some illegals.

Three of the jurors have publicly stated that they were firmly in favor of voting “not guilty,” but were bamboozled by the foreman who conned them into believing that (presiding) U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone was not going to accept a hung jury.

The trial was held so rapidly that all the investigations were not even complete; the DHS report was just submitted a few days ago, and these poor guys have been incarcerated for several weeks already!

Although a number of Congresspersons had requested Judge Cardone to delay sentencing until the appeals process was exhausted, she rushed to place the two behind bars.

The people in charge of the Federal Penitentiary housing them were asked to treat the men as prisoners who would, because of their profession, be subject to severe abuse by the general population. This went unheeded, and one has already

been viciously beaten.

Republican Congresspersons have sent dozens and dozens of requests to George W. Bush to pardon these two men or dismiss the charges, which he has completely ignored. The Regime's court jester, Tony Snow, has tossed this situation away out-of-hand, himself taking DOJ's side (that of the illegal alien and reefer-runner).

A substantial caucus of Congressional Republicans are launching a full-fledged investigation into this total bastardization of our system of jurisprudence, and the complicity of Gonzo, Cardone, Sutton, DOJ lawyers and staff, DHS, all the way up to and including the White House.

While they're at it, why not take a look at Gonzo's firing spree of prosecutors, and his free-range appointments of U.S. attorneys with no oversight?

All one has to do is look at the dates and it's clear as mud Ramos and Compean had the sad misfortune to come across this smuggler just in time for the RoveBushCheney Fascist anti-democratic voting machinery to put the fix in for Vicente Fox' chosen successor. If these two heroes weren't set up, then the 1969 Moon landing was a fake.

The overall effect has been that U.S. Border Patrol agents will not unholster their weapons for any reason whatsoever. Across the board they are making minimal efforts to engage in contact with illegals coming from Mexico.

This chilling effect on border enforcement is precisely what Li'l Georgie and the conservatives in Mexican government wanted all along. Like everything else Fearless Leader talks about, the rhetoric to tighten up our borders has absolutely nothing to do with what he is actually planning.

Hey, Rovian tactics worked twice in Florida, as well as Ohio. Mexico was a snap after stealing the White House!

Rep. Dana Rohrbacher of California, one of the more levelheaded Republicans in Congress, in this fight since the beginning, has put Lame Dubya on notice that if either Compean or Ramos dies in prison there will be impeachment hearings on Capitol Hill.

Why wait?

I admire the patience of the Dems for keeping their sloop out of this particular regatta. There have been critics around the news and talk shows saying

Continued On Next Page

Joe Biden Does Something Heroic

Senator Joseph Biden was in the news recently for saying some things that he wished he hadn't said. Presumably intending to compliment Barack Obama, Biden made some remarks that were patronizing, at best. I salute him.

Why? Do I approve of making thoughtless remarks about African-Americans? Of course not. Do I think he should have thought before he spoke? You bet. But I admire him for what he didn't do. After saying something stupid and embarrassing and potentially harmful to his career, he didn't run off to a rehab center.

Biden took responsibility for his actions, didn't blame them on anything that happened in his childhood, and apologized. That kind of heroic behavior is very rare today.

I have great respect for alcoholics and other addicts, people with eating disorders, and those with depression and other medical problems who go into



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

rehab or counseling and try to get help. I'm sure it takes great courage to confront these problems. However, in recent years, the "rehab center" has provided a sanctuary for famous people who have messed up. We hear too much about rehab and not enough about responsibility.

Today, people go into rehab or therapy to supposedly help them after they have spewed vile anti-Semitic, racist, or anti-gay remarks. And they go for flirting with minors over the Internet. Then after their 30 days of rehab is up, I guess we're all supposed to forgive them or forget about whatever they did.

This "quick fix" approach is particularly annoying. I'm sure that some of these people could really use psychiatric help. But let them apologize first, take responsibility for what they've done, and then recognize that they may need to be in therapy for a lot longer than a month. When they go into counseling for less time than most of their TV series last, I tend to doubt their sincerity.

Often these stays in rehab or on a psychiatrist's couch are combined with claims of alcoholism or of being mistreated as a child. Again, these are serious things for a person to deal with, but I don't see how, for example, Mel Gibson's being treated for alcoholism could help get rid of his anti-Semitism. The booze didn't put those thoughts in his head. I'm sure we all know people who've gotten drunk who don't suddenly start blaming Jews for all the wars in the world.

In this age of specialization, soon there will probably be separate rehab centers for different "conditions." There will be The Rehab Center for People Who Say Hateful Things, The Rehab Center for People Who Say They Are Addicted To Performing Sexual Acts They Wish They Didn't Do, and, of course, The Rehab Center for Celebrities Who Haven't Had Their Names in the Papers Lately.

As these places proliferate, there will be centers for "regular people," not just celebrities. So, look for people to say

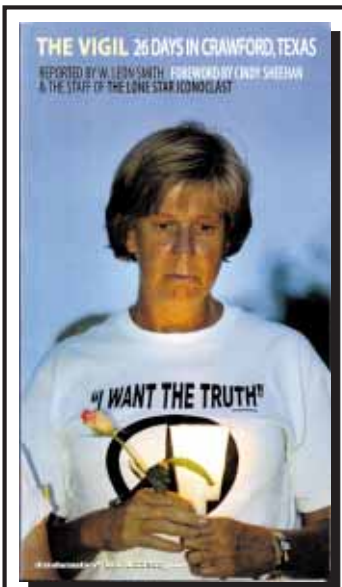
things like, "I know I should rinse off my own dishes, but I have a real problem. So, I'm going into rehab for 30 days." Similarly, we may be asked to forgive people who check themselves into places such as, The Rehab Center for People Who Promise to Call Back But Don't, and The Rehab Center for People Who Never Pick Up The Check.

In other words, I have the feeling that running off to rehab is just going to get worse.

I won't be surprised if President Bush and his buddies end up going the rehab route. It just might be his way out of the Iraq mess. In fact, it's perfect for him. Like so many other people these days, he won't really have to apologize or admit he's been wrong. All he and his colleagues will have to do is say they have a problem. Then they'll check into The Rehab Center for Public Officials Who Are Addicted To Exaggerating Dangers to Convince Us to Go to War.

After 30 days, he'll come out, people will forgive him, and he can start in on Iran.

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



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Health Of Open-Minded Europeans Linked To Meat Fungus

This past New Year's Eve I was not in full control of my faculties. This was the direct result of partial asphyxiation caused from trying to wear my seven-year-old son's party hat. Because of this, I said some things I now deeply regret, such as making a resolution to eat healthier and exercise regularly.

While trying to live up to my promise for the last month I have made a number of realizations, beginning with the fact that I cannot run on the treadmill while simultaneously watching any type of motor sport on TV; not without getting sick or, at the very least, losing my balance and getting thrown head-first into the Stair Master.

I've also learned that people with 10 percent body fat are secretly despised by people with fat bodies 100 percent of the time.

The reason for this dates back to the first vegetarian caveman who, after swearing-off meat in front of his clan and a panel of cave elders, was then eaten. Because of this, mistrust between carnivores and herbivores exists to this day. The best example of this can be seen in the design of modern supermarkets, which strategically puts the meat at the back of the store and fruits and vegetables near the front. That way, should carnivores suddenly riot in the event of a rump roast shortage, herbivores have a head start in getting to the exits.

However, a new "fungus-based" meat substitute called "Quorn" could soon change all of that.

Just what is this new product? And what makes it different from the "fungus-based" meat that already exists somewhere in the back of my refrigerator between the



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

"fungus-based" sour cream and salsa?

Before we get to that, you should know that "Quorn" is the best selling meat-alternative in the United Kingdom. While some say it is because of the product's natural chicken-like flavor, other says it's because of Quorn's advertising slogan:

"You can't get Mad Cow from a mushroom — and we're pretty sure about that."

While Europeans have long been considered more open-minded and progressive when it comes to eating fungus that's shaped like chicken nuggets, the makers of Quorn are hoping that health-conscious Americans, long considered more open-minded and progressive when it comes to avoiding diet and exercise, will be won over by the fact that Quorn has no cholesterol, two-thirds the fat of chicken, and stands a good chance of turning hallucinogenic when spoiled.

The real test, of course, will come when Quorn hits supermarket shelves in the U.S. — and store owners are then faced with the decision of WHERE to put this new product.

Should it be up with the vegetables? Or back with the meats? And if there's a shortage, will someone with 10 percent body fat be able to survive?

Fat chance.

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



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TENUTO

From Previous Page

they're being weak by not getting involved, but this is the best thing Democrats can do.

By staying out of this and letting their GOP compatriots start the wheels turning the dismantling of the tyrannical Fascisti Executive branch will be more equitable. Were Democrats to jump all over the White House, Gonzo's DOJ and the DHS it would surely be taken as pure partisan politics.

Let the Republicans be the iceberg that opens the gaping hole in the hull of the Titanic, thus sinking those criminals who usurped power when the Federalist Supremes, at the behest of a dying William Rehnquist, installed Li'l Georgie as dictatorial figure-head, the Dick Cheney as Dark Lord, and Herr Oberst Karl Rove — overseer of the New World Order.

The Democrats shall inherit the Oval Office.

Shalom.

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

'Old Rough And Ready' Meets Santa Anna At Buena Vista

The deadly game of cat-and-mouse that would culminate in the Battle of Buena Vista began on Feb. 2, 1847, when Gen. Zachary Taylor camped for the night within striking distance of Santa Anna's much larger army.

Divided and demoralized by a series of humiliating defeats, the desperate Mexicans recalled Santa Anna from one of his many exiles. If the charismatic charlatan could not stop the American invasion, then all indeed was lost.

In dire need of money to arm, equip and feed thousands of fresh recruits, Santa Anna appealed to the Catholic Church, the wealthiest institution in the destitute country. The comfortable clergy was willing to give the patriotic endeavor their blessing but drew the line at cash contributions.

Not to be denied, the determined dictator resorted to wholesale seizure and sale of church property to finance the war effort. The priests retaliated by warning the faithful that the real enemy was not the gringos but their own government.

President James K. Polk faced a serious domestic dilemma of his own. Each day the conflict continued, support diminished for his Democratic administration and the Whig opposition grew stronger. The obvious solution was a quick victory but that was sure to catapult Gen. Zachary Taylor, a known Whig, into national prominence if not the White House.

So far Taylor had an unblemished record in the Mexican War, giving Polk no grounds for replacing him as commander. However, the general's strange conduct in September 1846 provided the perfect pretext for presidential intervention.

Taylor had the enemy on the ropes at Monterrey, when he inexplicably consented to a cease-fire and allowed his well-armed adversary to retire from the field of battle. This colossal blunder caused the Texas detachment to go home in disgust and justified Polk's appointment of Winfield Scott as commanding general for the final phase of the Mexican campaign.

Reaching the Rio Grande in December 1846, Scott instructed Taylor to relinquish 9,000 of his top troops and to stay out of the way while he wrapped up the war. "Old Rough and Ready" surrendered the soldiers but ignored the second part of the order.

Captured documents taken from Scott's couriers revealed the entire American strategy to Santa Anna. In strict secrecy he

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



mobilized 20,000 troops and marched on the vulnerable Taylor.

Deprived of his Texas scouts, Taylor was blind to the impending danger. However, at that very moment, an invaluable Ranger kept his promise to return, and the grateful general immediately sent Ben McCulloch to locate the lurking enemy.

The night of Feb. 20-21, 1847, the Texan found the Mexican camp. Realizing an accurate estimate of the size of the enormous force was essential, he slipped past the sentries and hid until daylight.

The count completed, McCulloch rode like the wind back to the American lines and told Taylor that Santa Anna outnumbered him better than four to one. The general merely nodded and said, "Very well, Major. That's all I wanted to know. I am glad they did not catch you."

To trick Santa Anna into thinking he had been caught off guard, Taylor patiently waited until his foe finally showed himself on the morning of Feb. 22. On cue the Americans gave a convincing imitation of a panic-stricken retreat, while deliberately withdrawing into a narrow valley near a hacienda called Buena Vista.

The battle began at the crack of dawn. To lure the Mexicans into artillery range, the tenacious troops endured heavy casualties throughout that terrible morning. But the afternoon was a different story, as the "Napoleon of the West" stumbled into the carefully laid trap that subjected his soldiers to merciless cannon fire.

Terrified by the appalling carnage, the squeamish Mexican officers begged Santa Anna to call off the attack. Realizing his spineless staff was not up to leading the charge the following day, he agreed to an orderly pull-out.

As Polk had feared, the momentous triumph at Buena Vista transformed Zachary Taylor into a first-class folk hero. Though more interested in retirement at age 65 than a political career, he reluctantly accepted the presidential nomination of the Whigs in 1849.

The election of her husband so infuriated Margaret Taylor that she flatly refused to perform the duties of First Lady. A daughter fulfilled the ceremonial role, while she sulked in her

room.

But the presidency soon proved to be the death of her frail husband. Only 16 months into his term, Taylor died after a short illness.

While the lion's share of the

credit for "Old Rough and Ready" winding up in the White House went to Ben McCulloch, he had no hand in picking his mediocre successor. The voters had only themselves to blame for Millard Fillmore.

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

Muddy Two Shoes

After days of freezing rain, ice, sleet, and snow, Central Texas finally began to thaw out today. As early as last night, we heard the telltale, resounding thwack of ice sliding off the steeply pitched, metal roof of the farmhouse. The first time this happened, it was extremely alarming, but after we finally figured out what it was, we managed to ignore it. (I slept on my side with a pillow over my "up" ear.

Besides a few shady spots that never melted and those 12-inch icicles I slipped in the freezer (no, I don't know why), almost all evidence of the recent icy weather has disappeared. The bill for the extra range cubes will come later. (When the temps were too cold for us to start our old tractor, we had

to supplement the herd's menu with "store bought" supplies).

The weather reports say we might be in for more "wintry mix" over the weekend, but somehow I doubt it. I think that might have been our big snow/ice op for the year. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite enough to allow me to use my sled.

Now we're left with a muddy mess. Not that I'm complaining. We're all grateful for the moisture, in whatever form. Not only might grasses, wheat, and oats grow, but also the burn ban has finally been lifted. All us country dwellers can begin to burn the piles of brush that have accumulated over the last two years.

I did have one muddy surprise I could have done without. Zack was busy moving hay into

Rustic Ramblings

By Dr. Gene Ellis



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

various locked portions of the cow lot (for the next cold snap when the tractor might not start). If there's hay locked away, all that's necessary to provide food for the herd each day is to unlock another gate (assuming that Big Bag hasn't already done it for us, as she did last week).

Trying to help, but newly arrived from my errands in town, I was stepping gingerly opening and closing gates, assisting in removing the baling twine from the bales. I didn't have my work boots on, but was wearing some pretty rugged, slip-on shoes. I figured I could clean them well enough if necessary. Plus, they're about five years old and almost ready for the trash.

It was on the last gate that my surprise occurred. I had to cross a particularly bad patch of mud. The tractor had already carved pretty deep tracks, but figured I'd make it. I sort of cringed as the mud, even softer and deeper than I'd imagined, made that sickly, sucking sound, engulfing most of one shoe, trash now, for certain. I closed the gate and started back. Unfortunately my shoe didn't come with me. I almost lost my balance completely, righted myself, and when my foot came back down, my sock hit the muck (not just mud. After all, it's a cow lot).

Zack said I "squealed like a little girl," a humorous description he and our friend Ron usually reserve for making fun of each other when one gets surprised or hurt). I wasn't hurt. I was disgusted and cold. The muck was slimy, and I knew its composition. (Zack's comment later was, "It's just cow poop". Except he didn't say "poop").

I bent over to pick up the shoe and turned to trudge out. That's when I lost the second shoe and got to experience those same original exquisite sensations all over again. I didn't squeal this time, but I did laugh. I laughed a lot. At that point, there didn't seem any other course of action. Sometimes laughing is just the best we can do.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor,

The first introduction of nuclear weapons into the middle east was done on a very large scale and surreptitiously by ourselves and the Israelis. It is a little hard to tell who is directing whom in the matter.

To the extent that real Islamic terrorism does exist in the world or is growing, it would disappear if America were to begin to deal fairly and even handedly with Arab peoples instead of subsidizing Israel, right or wrong, on a massive scale as we do today.

The first and most necessary thing for avoiding nuclear war beginning in the middle east is to demand that Israel hand over to us immediately all of it's secret nuclear arsenal.

Dennis Morrisseau, West Pawlet, VT



There's The State-of-the-State Address And Then There's The State REALITY

Perry's PR people are fond of saying that he frequently deviates from prepared text.

In actuality, Perry deviates frequently from REALITY!

Let's look at a few of his public accolades:

"The economy is growing and government revenues are on the rise. Our state surplus is larger than ever just four years removed from our largest shortfall ever."

Of course government revenues are on the rise. Texas taxpayers overpaid their taxes by \$14 million, while our elected officials have enabled agencies e.g., TxDOT to hold onto tax dollars and collect interest instead of using them to build and maintain quality Texas roadways more quickly.

Instead, our government revenues are increasing more because many tax dollars are diverted from their original intent. **Shouldn't the state return the overpaid taxes instead of diverting them to privatize the Texas Lottery?**

"Frivolous lawsuits are down, as are insurance rates for homeowners."

Yes, "frivolous" lawsuits are down because the governor and officials wanted to protect the medical industry who are wealthy campaign contributors. Insurance rates may be down, but premiums generally are not! Some premiums have decreased slightly but so did coverage. No homeowner received the 12 percent return on their coverage they were promised two years ago by the governor, and Department of Insurance.

"School funding, teacher pay and classroom achievement are all up. More Texans have a job than ever before, and more own a home — a trend that is unlikely to change because you had the wisdom to cut school property taxes by 33 percent last year."

School financing has been diverted slightly from one source to another. Teachers were provided slight salary increases, which return a part of the teacher benefits taken away several years ago by the governor and legislators. Property taxes have not yet been cut, in fact, most property taxes rose by approximately 5 percent last year. The truth about employment is that more Texans had jobs due to seasonal adjustments. Also unemployment sta-



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

istics don't include those unemployed who no longer eligible to collect unemployment insurance because they have been out of work longer than regulations permit.

"Our state is building roads faster than any state in the nation."

The governor neglected to state that these are toll roads collecting toll taxes and that 80-percent off-the-top of toll revenues collected go to CINTRA/Zachry Construction partners who enjoy a 70-year contract with the state to collect revenue, build and operate the toll roads. While it's true toll roads are being built faster than conventional roadways, the long-term costs to Texas taxpayers is overwhelming and will be past on to several generations before they may be paid off — if ever.

"Many live in families without a college education or even a high school degree."

Yes, and this especially is true because of how the governor and state have mandated the education system. Ten years ago the state paid directly 80 percent to financing public education, which is its state constitutional responsibility. Currently the state pays 20 percent, which is the reason that homeowners have been overburdened by astronomical property taxes and yearly home value increases. The state wants teachers to get children to pass TAKS exams to show success; for that effort the state incentive plan will reward the teachers. Children continue to "fall through the cracks" because they are not learning. Also, many must go to work instead to provide income to their families during these difficult times. Gov. Perry and officials fought hard to deregulate higher education, which immediately increased the tuition 3 times since the measure was approved.

All in all, Governor Perry lives in a different Texas than most of us. The cost of living escalates weekly and so many people simply are trying to survive these

Peace Bowl

Molly Ivins pissed me off right before she died.

The instructions she left in her final column "Stand Up Against the Surge" offended me.

She suggested that anti-warriors get in the streets and bang pots and pans to stop the war in Iraq.

Yeah, pots and pans. Pots! And! Flippin' pans!

Can you believe the nerve of this woman? Who does she think she is? Gen. Martha Stewart?

I know pastry chef Duff Goldman likes to blow his cakes up, but this is entirely different.

I mean, who has time to cook with — let alone destroy their precious Williams-Sonoma cookery?

Not me! I work hard to feed my \$100-a-week fast food burrito habit.

You know, I used to worry about who would take the place of Molly Ivins, but if this militarization of kitchenware is her dying wish for us to carry out, then I won't give her successors another thought.

The poor woman was obviously delusional.

Her breast cancer must have gone to her head.

I don't know.

All I know is that anti-warriors can't see the blood and oil for pots and pans that delivered them.

Here, they are freaking out

about President Bush's "surge" in Iraq, and over in Somalia, American gunships stationed at the U.S. base in Djibouti carried out two deadly air strikes last month.

The United States of America is a global empire, people! Remember?

Look up river, and you'll see why dead people are floating downstream.

It's called the military-industrial-congressional complex!

The U.S. military has bases all over the world — troops in every time zone ready for deployment at the drop of a hat.

My, how we seem to also forget that there are dozens and dozens of defense contractors waiting to arm the next conflict when that hat falls.

I swear, anti-warriors can't seem to think outside the '60s — yeah, the 1960s, too.

Am I the only one who sees that they're behaving like Civil War re-enactors?

It's like the anti-war movement operates like ROTE, like muscle memory, like a phantom limb.

I say, relax, America, and throw a super Peace Bowl party.

Invite your friends, neighbors, city council members, city managers, congresspeople, their spouses, their "significant whores," their spouses'

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



whores, and everybody's kids to watch a ball game regularly.

Chat about ways in which to make your own community more peaceful, less militarized, and perhaps petroleum-free.

If anything, keep your pots and pans in the kitchen, and cook up some nachos, some bean dip and salsa, and beer brats for your local police force, firemen, EMS crew, and returning servicemen and their families.

While their mouths are full, tell them about the socio-economic benefits of the proposed U.S. Department of Peace.

If you want to get more fanatical, sure, you can wear peace symbols in place of the numbers on the replica jerseys of your favorite sports teams.

And who says you can't perform some "peace cheers" while you're at it?

Just don't wake the dead. They deserve their rest in peace.

Nathan Diebenow is an Associate Editor of the Lone Star Iconoclast newspaper by day and a political satirist by night, except on Sundays when he is Jesus' homeboy.

times.

For the past five years of his reign, Gov. Perry has been silent watching in the background a Texas Congress that could not work together to pass bills for the community good; however, he did jump into the fray to "twist some arms" when it involved an issue important to Perry's wealthy campaign contributors.

One question:

How many Texas governors were reelected into office with only 39 percent of the total vote?

One answer: NONE!

As our supreme dictator, Perry now is mandating all 6th-grade girls to have vaccinations against HPV. He tries to make it appear that he's concerned about the health and welfare of girls, but in actuality he again is pushing a special interest for his wealthy campaign contributors, Merck, etc.

Honestly speaking, it takes boys AND girls to be involved sexually for HPV to emerge. **Why isn't the governor concerned about the boys?**

It is a medical fact that vacci-

nated girls still need cervical cancer screening.

Three reasons: First, the vaccine will NOT protect against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer, so vaccinated girls will still be at risk for some. Second, some girls may not get all required doses of vaccine or not get them at the right times, so they may not get the vaccine's full benefits. Third, girls may not get the full benefit of the vaccine if they receive it after they've already acquired one of the four HPV types. Lastly, if girls go for PAP-smears and examinations at regular intervals, the possibility of contacting HPV and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections are greatly reduced.

Governor Perry actively is trying to make his mark in the political arena. It may be that he's looking at a 2008 position in Washington D.C. If so, we can wish him luck — but NOT at the expense of Texas taxpayers and our children. Whatever it takes we must fight Perry for what is right in the interests of the whole community.

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas, <pstern@austin.rr.com>, a former Director of Information Services, university professor and public school administrator, is a political writer well-known and published frequently throughout the Texas community and nationwide. He is a Disabled Vietnam Veteran and holds three post-graduate degrees.

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Van Cliburn Finalist To Perform At Tarleton

STEPHENVILLE — Considered “The most prestigious classical piano contest in the world” by THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE, Tarleton State University will host Davide Cabassi, one of the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition’s finalists, in concert Mon., March 19.

The concert, sponsored by CitiBank®, will take place in the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. General admission tickets are \$5.

Cabassi is a phenomenal pianist who made his musical debut at age 13 with the Rai Symphony Orchestra in Milano, Italy. He graduated from Milan’s Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory and spent several years as one of a few select students at the International Piano Foundation in Cadenabbia, Italy.

As a soloist, Cabassi has played with the Munich Philharmonic, Neue Piharmonie Westfalen, Russian Chamber Philharmonic, Fort Worth Symphony, Big Spring Philharmonic, Enid Philharmonic, Orchestra Haydn Bolzano, Orchestra Verdi Milano and many others.

Cabassi has been featured in concerts around the world and has recorded extensively in his home country of Italy. He is also one of four young artists promi-



Van Cliburn

— Iconoclast Photo By W. Leon Smith

nently featured in a film documentary about the Twelfth Van Cliburn Competition.

The Van Cliburn Foundation

organized its first International Piano Competition in 1962. The competition has been held every four years since and is the

most visible expression of the Van Cliburn Foundation’s commitment to the highest standards of musical achievement.

The competition is designed as a method to launch and nurture young artists’ careers as well as helping to promote the winner through ensuing international concert tours.

Tarleton is one of many stops on Cabassi’s 2006-2007 tour, which also includes concerts in Oregon, Texas, Florida, California, Vermont, New Mexico, Indiana, Connecticut and West Virginia. Internationally, Cabassi will also perform in Austria, France, Germany, Malta and Italy.

For more information on Cabassi’s performance at Tarleton, call (254) 968-9291.

‘Urban Cowboy’ Coming To Waco

WACO — The Waco Performing Arts Company will present *Urban Cowboy* on Feb. 25, at the Waco Hippodrome Theatre, at 7:30 p.m. Based on the 1980 movie starring John Travolta and Debra Winger, this Broadway musical is packed with dancing, excitement and unforgettable music.

Urban Cowboy features songs by Toby Keith, Shania Twain and other country artists.

It is one of the five Broadway shows that the Waco Performing Arts Company will be presenting this upcoming season. Tickets range from \$22-\$47 and can be purchased at the Waco Hippodrome box office Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, call 254/752-9797.

Debate On Bush Library, Institute At SMU Continues

— Some Area Residents Fear It Makes Them A Terrorist Target —

DALLAS — The pros and cons related to locating the Bush presidential library at Southern Methodist University are being voiced from multiple corners, but the most recent debate centers around the establishment of The Bush Institute, a think tank designed to further the views of the Bush Administration.

SMU President Gerald Turner has noted that the library, museum, and institute are part of the same package, and that having them at First Lady Laura Bush’s alma mater will benefit the university.

The university became the front-runner for the complex in December after the site-selection committee said it was entering into advanced talks with the 11,000-student university and that SMU was the lone finalist to host the library.

Last week, Park Cities City Council heard arguments on whether the city should sell a small park to SMU to advance the Bush center, but the focus of the debate turned more toward safety than economics.

With both Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney building homes in the upscale area of Highland Park, adjacent to the SMU campus and to the Dallas Country Club, residents are concerned that their safety might be shortchanged.

“Having Bush live here, have his library here, and many of his major donors here makes Dallas an ideal terror target,” said Beth Blankenship, who attended the meeting.

Others say that terrorists will destroy the Bush library and take out most of Park Cities at the same time, the question not being “if” but “when.”



President Bush

— Lone Star Iconoclast Photo

A vote on the land deal is expected on May 12.

A debate over the values expressed by the Bush Administration and what Methodists

preach has also erupted.

William McElvaney, an emeritus professor of preaching and worship at SMU’s Perkins School of Theology was recently quoted in Religious News Service as saying, “Some of us don’t believe that starting a preemptive war against anybody, especially a country that had no role in 9/11, is on our list of religious values.”

One of the school’s graduates, the Rev. Andrew Weaver, said “I think that George Bush has been in his presidency so inconsistent with fundamental Christianity that he should not be associated with a Methodist university.”

“He’s about as far away from the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ as you can get.”

Weaver organized a petition to oppose the inclusion of the library and has attained more than 5,000 signatures.

Genealogical Society To Meet In Waco

WACO — Czech settlement in Texas will be explored by speaker Evelyn Skopik at the Central Texas Genealogical Society general meeting on Monday, Feb. 26, at 7 p.m.

A CTGS Genealogy Beginner’s Class will also be held on Saturday, March 3, 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Both meetings will be held at the Waco-McLennan County Library Meeting Room at 1717 Austin Ave., Waco. All general meetings are held on the 4th Monday of each month (except December unless otherwise announced.) The public is invited to attend.