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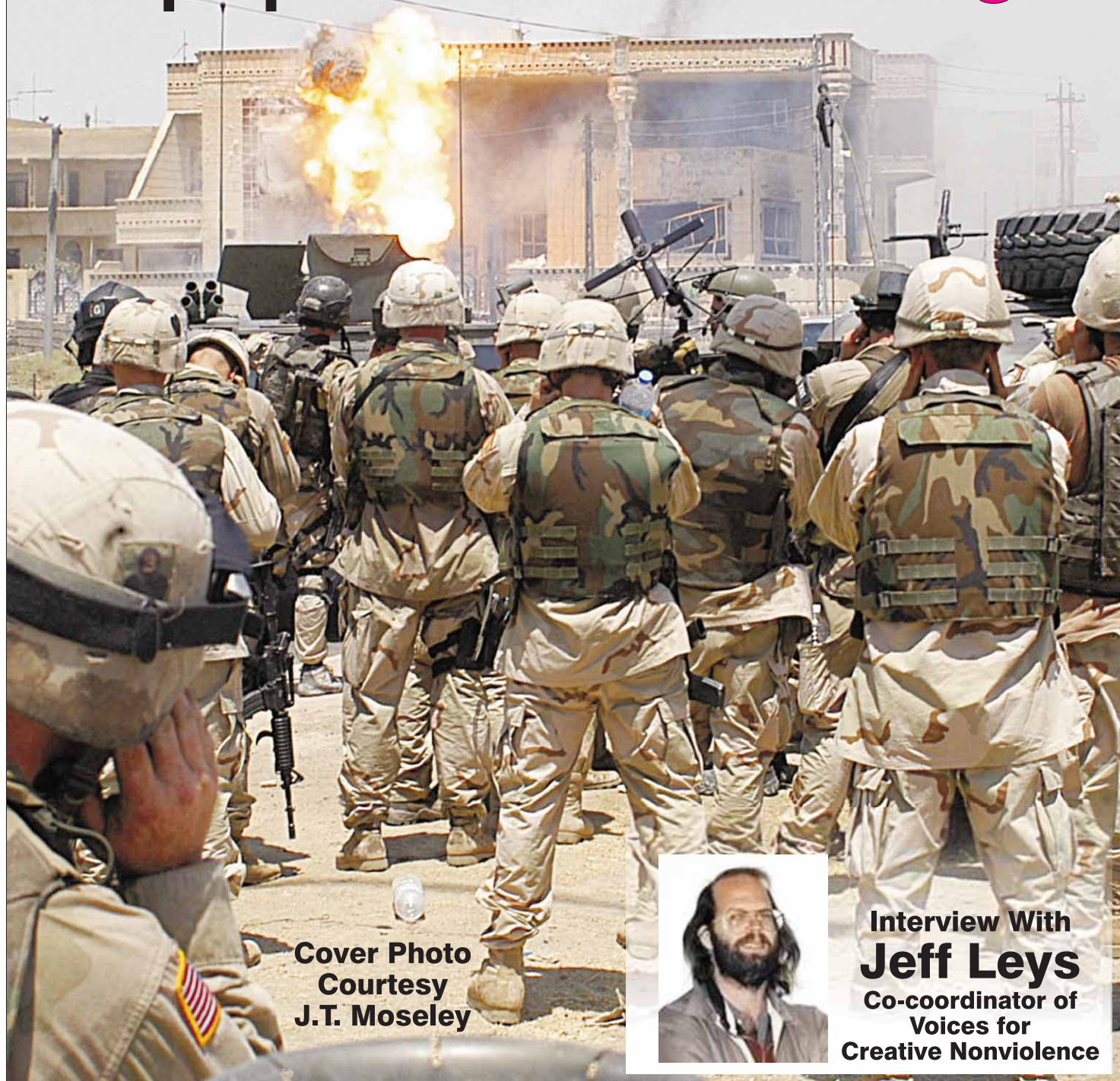
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U.S. Named Second Worst In Children's Well-being

UNITED NATIONS — The United States is nowhere near a number one in child welfare, according to a new report.

Among the top 21 wealthiest nations, the United States ranked second worst in living conditions for children, said UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre in Italy.

Britain came in last of the 21 countries listed in UNICEF's seventh report on the well-being of children.

The report noted that family relations are strained, poverty is rampant, and the rates of hard drinking and unprotected sex are both extremely high among British youth.

The Nordic countries — The Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland — topped the list on the child well-being.

UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre used 40 indicators from information provided by the World Health Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The highest overall ranking the U.S. received was 12th in children's education.

The U.S. also scored low — third worst — in the proliferation of cultural resources. Over 12 percent of children aged 15 reported having less than 10 books in their homes.

The poor grades given to the U.S. can be attributed to child poverty, with regard to the nation's huge gaps in wealth among its citizens.

About 25 percent of American children below the age of 17 are in households earning less than 50 percent the median for the ranked nations.

The U.S. also has the highest proportion of children living in single-family homes.

It ranked second to last in feeding breakfast to children ages 11, 13 and 15 every school day.

The U.S. has the highest number of overweight children for all the countries at about 25 percent in kids aged 13 and 15.

It came in third worst for the percent of 15-year-olds who ate meals with their parents regularly.

On the other end of the scale, Holland had the highest level of child well-being among the ranked industrialized countries.

This ranking is despite the fact that Holland has basically legalized marijuana, easy-to-find hardcore pornography, and regulated red light districts.

Dutch children told the BBC last week that they aren't interested in such things because their availability has de-stigmatized them.

"We look out for each other. If one of our friends was doing something bad, we'd tell them and they'd stop," one Dutch girl said, adding that "everyone is out for themselves" in Britain.

The authors of the UNICEF report admit that the assessment scales are imperfect and is "a work in progress," especially when measuring a family's affluence such as ownership of computers, the number of vehicles, the availability of children's bedrooms, and the quality of family vacations.

However, they say such benchmarks are needed to highlight poor performances in otherwise rich nations.

"A country cannot be said to be doing the best it can for its children if other countries at a similar stage of economic development are doing much better — and that's what the league tables are designed to show," said Marta Santos Pais, director of the UNICEF Innocenti research group.

Families Give Emotional Testimony During Defense Contract Hearing

WASHINGTON — The families of four dead employees of a private security company gave emotional testimony during a House committee investigating U.S. companies with Iraq contracts last week.

A congressional panel heard from the mother of Stephen Helvenston, a former Navy SEAL who was dragged through the streets of Fallujah and de-

capitated as a result of mob violence on March 31, 2004.

Kathryn Helvenston-Wettengel said her son and the four other security guards were not given the proper protections — such as armored vehicles, weapons, and maps before entering a hostile environment.

Even the rear gunners were missing from their vehicle convoys, she told the House Over-

sight and Government Reform Committee.

"Blackwater gets paid for the number of warm bodies it can put on the ground in certain locations throughout the world," said Helvenston-Wettengel. "If some are killed it replaces them at a moment's notice."

Helvenston-Wettengel and the other three families are suing North Carolina-based Blackwater USA in order to learn more about the grizzly deaths of their relatives: Wesley Batalona, a former Army Ranger; Michael Teague, formerly in an Army helicopter unit; and Jerry Zovko, a former Army Ranger.

Blackwater USA general counsel Andrew Howell objected to the proceeding, saying that the testimonies of the families are inappropriate for a congressional hearing since they give an "incomplete and one-sided exploration of a specific battlefield incident."

However, the committee is investigating the contracts of not only Blackwater but other private security and defense contractors paid to provide logistics and support to U.S. troops in Iraq.

The investigation attempts to wade through the swampy, inner workings of military contracting in which companies subcontract their services with numerous other companies who in turn hire more companies to perform the work.

In Blackwater's case, its contract with the Pentagon was part of a larger operation spearheaded by KBR, a subsidiary of Vice President Dick Cheney's former company Halliburton.

The Blackwater contract was temporarily lost, according to the Pentagon, who was repeatedly denied lawmakers knowledge as to the contract's whereabouts last year.

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md) blamed the Pentagon for its "complete failure to safeguard taxpayer dollars" in the Blackwater episode.

Conservation Group Asks Alaska To Keep Bear Hunting Ban

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A proposed expansion of hunting inside a national park in Alaska threatens the declining population of brown bears, according to a conservation group.

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) is asking the State of Alaska and the Alaska Board of Game to keep the 22-year ban on bear hunting in Katmai National Park.

"We are concerned that an increased number of bears will be killed in Katmai if this portion of the park, owned by the State of Alaska, is opened later this year to hunting," said Jim Stratton, NPCA's regional director in Alaska.

In recent years, the decline in the brown bear population has reached levels that violate the Alaska Lands Act of 1980.

The Act instructs the National Park Service to maintain "high concentrations" of brown bears in Katmai National Park and Preserve.

Hunting is legal in the Katmai National Preserve; however, state wildlife biologists say that only eight brown bears can be killed a year or the population will suffer there.

Unfortunately, over the last two hunting seasons, more than

three times as many bears have been killed by trophy hunters.

This number fails to include bears shot in defense of life and property, poached, or taken for subsistence purposes, according to NPCA.

Conservationists also fear that hunters have been hunting unethically since the bears have grown too familiar with tourists paying big money to visit them each summer.

"This is like shooting fish in a barrel," Stratton said. "It's unethical hunting."

And since the bears have no clue of the political boundaries constructed to protect them as they travel from one conservation area to a hunting ground, the conservationists, hunters, and tour guides believe that the Board of Game should reinstate the hunting closure on the Kamishak Special Use Area.

"We'd like to ultimately limit the number of hunters to ensure that only a limited number of bears are harvested," Stratton said. "And that may require closing the area for a season to determine the population and agree upon a harvest level that is sustainable to maintain 'high concentrations'."



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Office Politics

'Occupation Project' To Step Up Anti-War Pressure

Interview With
Jeff Leys

Co-coordinator of
Voices for Creative Nonviolence



Jeff Leys, arrested for civil disobedience

By **NATHAN DIEBENOW**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In Fairbanks, Alaska, they began with a song about peace.

Soon after, one of the 20-or-so citizens read a poem — “Dolche et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen — to be exact.

Then the group started reading the names of the American soldiers who died in the Iraq War.

The participants reportedly made it to the end of the 20-year-old servicepersons when authorities arrested Rob Mulford.

Mulford was the only anti-war demonstrator who had refused to leave Sen. Lisa Murkowski’s office. He was cited with “Failure to Obey a Lawful Order” and released later.

Another group read the Sermon on the Mount and then four letters from Iraqi civilians and U.S. soldiers in the Illinois office of Sen. Barack Obama.

All four citizens — Ross Martini Eiler, Ron Durham, Dan Pearson, and Neil Brideau — were arrested and charged with criminal trespass.

Yet another group of four people were arrested holding a mock funeral service in the Chicago office of Sen. Dick Durbin, the Senate Majority Whip.

Ten other citizens, including Franciscan priest Jerry Zawada, and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Kathy Kelly, were arrested in Sen. John McCain’s Washington, D.C. office.

More activists occupied McCain’s Phoenix office as well as the offices of politicians in 10 other states — including the offices of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Sen. Diane

Feinstein, and Sen. Gordon Smith.

And this was just Feb. 5.

More acts of nonviolent civil disobedience are planned to sweep across the country over the next three months.

Participants of what has been dubbed the Occupation Project will target the offices of federal elected officials who have yet to stop funding the war in Iraq.

Specifically, these citizens demand that their representatives stand against President George W. Bush’s request of \$93 billion in supplemental defense spending.

Since its launch by the Chicago-based group Voices for Creative Nonviolence (VCN), other Project campaigns have kicked off in Iowa, Alabama, Minnesota, Texas, Missouri, and elsewhere.

The Illinois campaign recently hit a snag when Sen. Durbin refused to allow three of the four former arrestees from entering his otherwise public office.

The Illinois senator’s “new policy,” according to his office chief, gives constituents the opportunity to visit with him by appointment only now.

Still, wave after wave of citizen-activists intend to increase pressure on their representatives in the days before and during hearings held by the House Appropriations Committee (Feb. 26 and March 5); the full House vote on war funding (March 12); and on senators (April 2 — 13).

THE ICONOCLAST’S Nathan Diebenow spoke with Jeff Leys, 40, a VCN co-coordinator, on Friday, Feb. 8, to talk about his

involvement in the anti-war movement, the project’s efforts, and the work of labor unions in halting the U.S. war machine.

Here is that interview:

.....
ICONOCLAST: What kicked off your journey with the anti-war movement?

JEFF LEYS: It goes back to 1979-1980 when I was in high school, and President (Jimmy) Carter brought back registration for the draft. I was about 16 years old at the time, and was in that first grouping of people who had to make a decision about whether or not to register for the draft and, if a draft were reinstated, whether or not to refuse induction at that point in time.

So much of my early involvement was focused on registration resistance and also on the war in Central America. When I left for college in ’82, I moved up to the Twin Cities, Minneapolis-St. Paul, where there was a strong campaign going on focused on Honeywell Corporation. At that time, Honeywell was the manufacturer of cluster bombs in the United States. It also manufactured guidance systems for various nuclear missile systems in the U.S. arsenal.

I became heavily involved with civil disobedience at that time to try and end the nuclear arms race that the U.S. was heavily engaged in. Over the years, I’ve been involved in work around the nuclear arms issue, the war in Central America, issues of homelessness — I did labor union organizing for about nine years with Service Employees

International Union.

Then, in February of 2003, I traveled with Voices in the Wilderness to Iraq as a part of the Iraq Peace Team Project. It was an effort to have people living there in solidarity with Iraqi citizens in the days leading up to and during the U.S. invasion of Iraq. I had the opportunity to return to Iraq in November 2003 on a delegation. I was there both immediately prior to the invasion and then a few months after the invasion.

I ended up moving down to the Voices office in May of 2004. I’ve been living and working at that time with Voices in the Wilderness which morphed into Voices for Creative Nonviolence in the summer of 2005.

ICONOCLAST: Since you started in 1980 with the draft resistance issue, let me ask you about the new draft resolution pushed by Rep. Charles Rangle. It extends the service age requirement to 42 years of age, which includes women, and has a provision for domestic service. In your eyes, is there any compromise between the peace movement with some legislation like that or is a state-sponsored military draft just out of the question?

LEYS: I think the bright line is that a state-sponsored military draft would have to be out of the question. As a person who is committed to nonviolence direct action and nonviolent peacemaking efforts, I would oppose a draft in any case.

However, you know, there may be the plausible argument that could be made that in a time of true national emergency — World War II being probably

the example — that conceivably the draft would be needed at such a juncture in history.

Though, I think World War II also illustrated pretty clearly that in times of such true national emergencies that people will be voluntary enlisting in the military if they believe that that’s the extreme circumstance that our country is finding itself in.

ICONOCLAST: And 50 years later, it’s a different world. The United States is the lone superpower. It’s a different ball game.

LEYS: Yeah, the draft just makes it much, much, much too easy for the powers-that-be to get us into war zones like Vietnam and potentially in wars in Central America, which was really the direction our country seemed to be going in the 1980s. The draft right now would make it far too easy for our country to continue to fight the war in Iraq and more significantly expanding the war beyond the borders of Iraq.

I think one of the huge problems with any kind of draft is that the burden will fall on people who are members of the working class and people who are from communities of color because, as the Vietnam War era demonstrated, people who came from more white, middle income, upper income backgrounds had the ability to apply for student deferments, had more access to resources to apply for, document, and conscientious objector status and medical deferments.

The draft is clearly inherently flawed in so, so, so many different ways.

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ICONOCLAST: Or it could be depending on the legislation.

LEYS: Right.

ICONOCLAST: Jumping ahead in time, what was the straw that made you take a job away from union organizing?

LEYS: I think what it was for me was having traveled to Iraq on two occasions in 2003, seeing the death and devastation that our country was wreaking on the people of Iraq, becoming more and more aware of the devastation that U.S. soldiers and their families were experiencing, and a real strong sense that our country was moving towards really the first democracy in the history of the world to initiate another world war.

For myself, it wasn't so much moving away union organizing or disengaging in the union movement as it was realigning my efforts somewhat. I'm still very much supportive and active on a volunteer basis with the labor movement in this country, and a part of what I brought with me from my union work to my work here with Voices an attempt to really try to figure out the economic warfare that's being waged in Iraq, the impact upon workers in Iraq.

I try to figure out what it means when a country has unemployment rates to 60 to 70 percent, try to figure out what it means to act in solidarity with the oil union workers in the south of Iraq who are challenging pretty much the wholesale sell-off of Iraq's oil industry that could well come under the requirements of the International Monetary Fund.

I haven't left the union movement, but I shifted the form of my engagement and activism at least for the time-being.

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, I hear you. It sounds like an expansion of your activism — another application.

LEYS: Yeah, I think that's an apt description or summary of it.

ICONOCLAST: I'm thinking now that I would really like to talk to you about what's going on with the labor movement in Iraq, but I want to save that for

another conversation because I want to talk to you about this Occupation Project. Now, you and other affinity groups are targeting congresspeople who still agree to fund the U.S. occupation of Iraq. What kind of political leverage do you have over these representatives and senators to bring them to your table?

LEYS: I think it's a combination of looking at the campaign of civil disobedience in the context of the overall legislative lobbying effort that is being undertaken now nationally. By no means do we think that civil disobedience in and of itself will bring about a change in a politician's position.

But we see this as an extension of the very, very solid lobbying work that organizations like United for Peace and Justice, Friend's Committee on National Legislation, and other organizations like that that really know the lobbying effort well. We see civil disobedience as augmenting or adding to the political power that those organizations have to bring to the table.

I think maybe the best example I could give by what I mean by that is in the 1980s, I lived up in Minnesota. The issue of Contra Aid into the Contras in Nicaragua was at the front burner. We made a strategic decision to focus on Sen. David Durenberger, who at the time was a moderate to moderately conservative Republican senator, who also sat on a committee that conducted hearings on funds for the Contras.

We knew that lobbying was happening in Washington D.C. of his office, of his staff. We knew that there were others in his office in the Twin Cities — the Minneapolis/St. Paul area — who were doing legal lobbying. But we made the decision that we would have repeat civil disobedience actions at his office.

I think it's really because of the combination of civil disobedience in concert with the legal lobbying that was happening that the critical pressure point was reached with Sen. Durenberger when in April 1985, he finally changed his position to vote against and act against any further funding for the



Jeff Leys (left) outside Dennis Hastert's office

Contras.

ICONOCLAST: So it's a dual process. It's a coordinated effort among pressure groups.

LEYS: Yeah, I think different organizations have different skills and different capabilities. It's definitely not a matter of lobbying is better or more important than civil disobedience — or civil disobedience is better or more important than lobbying. We're at a crisis point where we really need to use every nonviolent means at our disposal to bring about an end to the war.

ICONOCLAST: Well, let me hit you with a contemporary example of this process. Rep. John Murtha is the chairman of a House subcommittee on defense spending who supports a redeployment of U.S. troops in Iraq. I've read that he will probably approve Bush's \$100 billion request but with conditions such as the closing of Gitmo Bay and the demolition of Abu Ghraib prison. What do you think of Murtha's conditions?

LEYS: I think conditions that are added to the bill are good, useful, and productive. Obviously, the closing of Gitmo is a key thing that has to happen. I was disappointed with Murtha and with David Obey, who is chairman of the House appropriations committee, in the hearing that they held today (Feb. 9) which I think was the first hearing of the defense subcommittee of the appropriations. They had a hearing this morning on supplemental spending.

It was very, very abundantly clear from the comments of both Murtha and Obey that at best they were going to nibble on the edges of the funding package that Bush submitted to Congress on Monday of this week. Both of them seemed to go out of their way to emphasize that pretty much every penny

will be approved.

And both of them highlighted the fact that in prior budget years — including the Bridge Fund that was appropriated last fall for the fiscal year we're currently in — both of them emphasized that it was the House Appropriations Committee that added in additional money to the war budget above and beyond what the Bush administration was requesting.

So I think having some of these conditions attached to the appropriations bill and to the supplemental bill is probably a good thing, but unless we figure out a way to truly force the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq which really is the de-funding of the war, all we're doing is we're setting it up that this war is going to go on for at least another year and a half and probably longer with the amount of money that Congress has on the table for this year and the fiscal year that begins on Oct. 1 of this year and runs through the end of September 2008.

ICONOCLAST: I was reading in one of your pieces about how money is appropriated and carried over each year, so technically, there's enough money to run this war this year.

LEYS: Yeah, where I was especially attempting to highlight in some of the analyses I've written is the whole issue of procurement — the buying of new weapons and the buying of new equipment. One of the arguments that is put out there all the time is, "Well, if the supplementals are voted against, then troops won't have bullets. They aren't going to have helicopters. They're not going to have bullets. They're not going to have trucks to drive."

The reality is that the way the procurement process works, it takes a minimum of a year to up

to three years before any of the equipment that is authorized is actually available to troops in the field. I think another thing that's important and that was really highlighted in the hearing this morning is that Peter Schoomaker, who is the Army Chief of Staff, repeatedly stated that there is typically at least an 18-month period minimum before any of that material is available for the troops in the field.

They also laid out pretty concretely in the hearing that the problem they have in fighting the war in Iraq in relation to equipment is not so much they don't have equipment in Iraq. They highlighted as the problem is that Unit A when it deploys has to take equipment from Unit B which remains back in the United States. They take all that equipment over, but then there's a lack of equipment in the United States for Unit B to more effectively train on.

So following that logic, it really cuts away at the whole argument that if the supplemental spending is not approved, then the troops will be left without any equipment out there in the field. Even the Defense Department's main people are saying that they have the trucks; they have the equipment; they have all of that when they go over there, but the more significant problem comes in from a military perspective is not having that equipment available in the United States proper for additional training.

So by continuing to fund this operations and maintenance stuff, essentially all that's happening is that it's setting it up for the war to continue to the war long into the future. It's not a matter of troops won't have equipment when they're over there if the funds are cut off. It's a question of if we continue to

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fund the war, then we enable and make possible the increase of troops over there over time.

ICONOCLAST: This is the real nuts and bolts of war machine you're talking about here. But isn't it also about funding the next war in another country?

LEYS: Yeah, you nailed it on the head right there. It really is a matter of — and they use the term "Reset" which is to bring all of the equipment that has been damaged in Iraq back to the U.S. and then have it upgraded and restored for use or pre-positioning so that the U.S. can attack North Korea, escalate the war into Iran, or go wherever. Yeah, that is pretty much nailing it right on the head.

ICONOCLAST: So in other words, stopping the funding of these budget allocations would prevent the future war wherever that would be?

LEYS: Or at a minimum make it incredibly more difficult for the U.S. to wage another war of aggression against another country.

ICONOCLAST: So your focus is on the congressional side which is what this Occupation Project is all about. But what about on the defense industry side? Are there any groups of people going into offices of defense contractors, and saying, "You know what? Maybe you need to get another job and here are the reasons why?"

LEYS: Yeah, and I myself am more on the periphery of that, but one of the exciting developments was in October of this past year, there was a conference up in Minneapolis to create a network of people engaged in campaigns focused upon defense contractors and companies that profit from war. And there are campaigns that are on-going and focused upon defense contractors that do advocate for peace conversion.

One of them that I'll use as an example is again up in Minneapolis at the company Alliant Tech which produces weapons that use depleted uranium as a component of the weapon. That campaign has been going on

since about 1995.

There's another campaign out in the Philadelphia area that focuses on Lockheed-Martin. That campaign has been going on for probably decades.

I know that there has been work done in the Houston area that has focused upon Halliburton and the role that Halliburton has played largely through its subsidiary KBR over in Iraq, so there's definitely those types of corporate campaigns that are on-going that include both legal vigils as well as civil disobedience as key components of their campaigns.

ICONOCLAST: Are these campaigns telling workers that there are other options — kind of a like a counter-recruitment not unlike the efforts being performed in schools nationwide?

LEYS: Typically, there's an effort made to reach out to the workers, either directly to the workers or sometimes through shop stewards for the union that is connected to the company. I know that was one of the very effective means of organizing in the 1970s — 1980s at Honeywell Corporation when it was producing weapons systems. There was a lot of outreach to the worker.

There was a lot of work done legislatively in Minnesota to advocate for the passage of economic conversion legislation, so a component of the work that's done around defense contractors needs to continue to be advocating for economic conversion packages.

It needs to advocate that once economic conversion starts to happen, that the workers don't suffer a loss in income, that there's a solid job training program in place, and other factors that serve as a safety net for the workers and their families as that economic conversion happens.

When you think of it, that kind of program really isn't all that different — probably isn't any different from programs that are set up when an auto plant closes down in a city, so that type of program is definitely possible and feasible, and can be developed and advanced by a state or federal government. It's done fairly regularly when other



Jeff Leys goes over a barrier

types of companies shut down.

ICONOCLAST: You've named three examples, but is this movement gaining ground? Is that kind of work with unions and company conversions gaining ground?

LEYS: I think it's beginning to. I think we're returning to and learning some of lessons from the late 70s and early 80s when for example William Winpisinger who was president for the International Association of Machinists was one of the leading advocates for economic conversion.

I think that the network that was created this past October is an example of where we're figuring out the lessons of the past once again and working on a go-forward basis.

And I think that the number of labor unions involved in the effort to end the Iraq war — in particular those unions who are members of United States Labor Against the War — is really forming the basis for us to more effectively work with labor unions in those industries that are heavily dependent upon defense contracts.

ICONOCLAST: I guess another indication that this movement is growing are the films *Why We Fight* and *Iraq for Sale*, right?

LEYS: Yeah, I think the key things that the evolution of technology has brought to us is that we've been able to learn how to use more effectively in anti-war work is that it seems to be much easier to get a hold of a well-produced, well-designed DVDs on any number of topics and be able to use those to host house parties.

And really, that's the kind of nuts and bolts organizing that I

think often is overlooked — simply pulling people together from your neighborhood, from your church, from amongst friends and relatives and viewing that type of material so that it's much more accessible, much more digestible, and easier to get out to wider range of audience than otherwise been the case in year's past.

Plus it also adds the dimension of another means by which people can take in information. Some people take in information through reading the newspaper or going online to read media reports. Some people take in information by going to hear someone talk. Others take it in much better being able to view a video.

I think those DVDs, the use of the alterative media, and the use of different sources of media information — the Internet in particular — has really been very helpful in building the grassroots opposition to the war.

ICONOCLAST: When do you think this will all end — not only the Iraq war but this whole deal about militarism in America?

LEYS: I think it's going to be a constant struggle that we're

going to have to continue to wage pretty much everyday because there's always going to be the tension between war fighting capability and the inclination to use diplomatic initiatives to resolve disputes.

I think it's going to be something that going to be struggled with everyday and that it'll have its ebbs and flows in terms of its intensity of the struggle — similar to the labor movement which has definitely had its ebbs and flows and right now is in one of its ebbs.

But when you look at the immigrant rights movement, some of the work that UniteHere and NSIU and some of the other unions are doing to reignite and reorganize the worker movement, I think there are signs of hope that it'll be able to revive and come back stronger.

I think one of the challenges living in a democracy is figuring out how to continue the struggle on a daily basis with all the highs and lows that will come over time.

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California, Iowa Senates Oppose Troop Escalation

DES MOINES, Iowa — The state senates of Iowa and California have joined their counterpart in Vermont in voicing opposition to President Bush's plan to escalate the war in Iraq.

The California Senate approved its resolution last Tuesday — Iowa's Senate did likewise on Thursday — to a chorus of Republicans arguing that such measures serve only to embolden the nation's enemies.

The California resolution calls for no more troops be sent to Iraq and no more taxpayer dollars spent on the war without explicit approval from Congress. It was approved by a 22 to 14 vote.

The Iowa resolution spoke to the war issue with similar language: "an open-ended commitment of United States forces in Iraq is unsustainable and a deterrent to the Iraqis making the political compromises and providing the personnel and resources that are needed for violence to end and for stability and security to be achieved in Iraq..."

It was offered by Senate President Jack Kibbie of Emmetsburg, a Korean War veteran, and sponsored by 28 of 30 Democrats in the chamber.

Lawmakers at least 19 other states are drafting in their own anti-escalation resolutions, all with the intent of supporting Congress' Iraq war dissent.

Many Republicans in both state legislatures have remained silent on the resolutions, though some openly oppose them, saying that they are legally meaningless, politically motivated, bad for troop morale, and in effect supportive of terrorist activities abroad.

"Balderdash," said Sen. Sheila Kuehl, a Santa Monica Democrat. "If anything is supporting and emboldening our enemies, it is this war.... This war was a mistake, and the rest of the world knows it."

Sen. Michael Connolly of Dubuque said that the Iowa resolution could have been tougher.

"This should call for the start of withdrawal from what I consider one of the worst foreign policy mistakes this country has ever made," he said.

The last time the Iowa legislature spoke out about the Iraq war, Republicans in control supported a measure favoring the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

South Dakota House Approves Bill Banning Abortions

WASHINGTON — The South Dakota House of Representatives by a 45 to 25 vote approved legislation aimed at banning almost all abortions there.

The American Civil Liberties Union immediately condemned a vote, saying it was another unconstitutional attack on reproductive health care.

Jennifer Ring, Executive Director of the ACLU of the Dakotas, added that there are better ways to prevent pregnancies.

"The legislature should concentrate its efforts on preventing unintended pregnancies and providing services for women who want to bear their children rather than deciding that women cannot be trusted to make this most intimate of decisions," she said.

Now, this new legislation would yet again force voters to consider a ban on nearly all abortions in the state.

Last November South Dakota citizens voted 56 to 44

percent in favor of repealing the abortion ban.

"South Dakotans made their voices heard last fall — families, not politicians, should make these very personal health care decisions," said Louise Melling, Director of the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project. "What will it take to stop lawmakers from playing politics with women's health?"

A recent study by the Guttmacher Institute found that South Dakota is failing to protect access to reproductive health care.

South Dakota now ranks 44th in the nation in its efforts to help women avoid unintended pregnancy.

For more information visit the ACLU's website.

INFO
Reproductive Freedom Project
www.aclu.org/reproductiverights
ACLU Dakotas
www.acludakotas.org

U.S. House Disapproves Of Bush's Iraq Strategy

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House overwhelmingly passed a non-binding resolution rebuking President George W. Bush's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq.

At the same time, the resolution also voiced support for the troops still cast overseas.

Seventeen Republicans and nearly all the Democrats backed the measure for a 246-182 vote.

According to House Democrats, the resolution is a first step to pressure the administration in changing its war policy.

The White House released a statement noting that his plan to escalate U.S. involvement in

Iraq had the support of the Iraqi government and the commander of the multi-national force.

The statement also pressured Congress to continue funding the occupation as proposed by the president for the sake of the deployed troops.

The president's war strategy for Iraq consists of encouraging Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to increase Iraqi troop levels in Baghdad and shut down the Shiite militias.

So far, this unpopular war has taken the lives of more than 3,100 U.S. troops and almost a million Iraqis.

North Korea Moves To End Nuclear Program

BEIJING, China — North Korea took the first step toward nuclear disarmament last week.

At the six-nation talks in Beijing, China, the communist country agreed to dismantle its main nuclear reactor in 60 days and its nuclear weapons program thereafter.

When its Yongbyon facility is shut down and sealed per international standards, the North will be given 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil.

When the plutonium-producing reactor is irreversibly dis-

abled, the North will receive another 950,000 tons in aid.

The agreement set no deadlines for Washington to normalize diplomatic relations, renew trade, and remove Pyongyang from its terrorism list. Japan and North Korea have also agreed to re-open relations.

Not all were happy with the deal, however.

Ret. U.N. Ambassador John Bolton criticized the move, saying that it gave North Korea too many concessions and sent "the

No Proof Iran Supplying Weapons To Iraqis, Say Bush's Skeptics

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Skeptics questioned the Bush administration's claims last week that the Iranian government is supplying weapons to Shiite Muslim fighters against American troops in Iraq.

Among the unconvinced is the chairman of the Joint Chief's of Staff, Marine Gen. Peter Pace.

"We know that the explosively formed projectiles are manufactured in Iran. What I would not say is that the Iranian government per se knows about this," Pace told reporters in Canberra, Australia.

Pace's comments came a day after the U.S. military briefed the press in Baghdad about weapons shipments of high-grade explosives being smuggled from Iran to Iraq via an elite Iranian paramilitary organization called the al-Quds Force.

State-side skeptics wonder why U.S. and British officials revealed this information after holding on it for over two years.

The White House and the Pentagon have both declined to explain the timing and the real contradiction between Gen. Pace and the military's claims.

Lou Fintor, a spokesman for the US Embassy in Baghdad, told the Boston Globe that the presentation came as a result of more attacks with bombs the Iranian government is sending to aid majority Shiites against minority Sunni Muslims in Iraq.

Statistics have yet to be provided to justify Fintor's claim.

In fact, statistics obtained by a nonprofit group that tracks U.S. casualties indicate that the Sunni insurgency is taking far more American lives than the Shiite militias who more akin to Iran.

The Iraq Coalition Casualty Count (icasualties.org) data shows that Shiite forces have killed four percent of American troops while Sunni-related violence has killed 60 percent.

About a quarter of all U.S.

military deaths have occurred in Baghdad, in the middle of Shiite and Sunni conflict.

Sunni insurgents are thought to be funded and armed by private forces in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, whereas donors from Iran might be supplying the Shi'ites

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denied that his government is provoking violence by aiding majority Shiites against minority Sunni Muslims, as the Bush administration has claimed.

"The U.S. administration and Bush are used to accusing others. The fact that you are showing us some pieces of papers and you call them documents — they do not solve any problem. There should be a court to prove the case and verify the case," Ahmadinejad told ABC's "Good Morning America."

Democrats, such as Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, fear that the Bush administration is trumping charges on Iran as it had done previously against Iraq's former President Saddam Hussein before the U.S. invasion in 2003.

"I am deeply troubled by this administration's escalating rhetoric against Iran, especially intelligence from unnamed officials that is not fully documented," said Sen. Dodd in a statement. "It is frighteningly reminiscent of the pattern we saw in the drumbeat that led to the war with Iraq."

The White House has reiterated denials that the U.S. plans an attack of Iran against the Middle Eastern country's nuclear power plant which is suspected to be developing nuclear weapons.

However, the Bush administration has not ruled out the use of force against Iran. The U.S. military has already detained about seven Iranian operatives in Iraq, and is preparing a third Navy carrier group to the Persian Gulf, according to Newsweek.

wrong signal to would-be proliferators."

"It contradicts fundamental premises of the president's policy he's been following for the past six years, and, second, it makes the administration look very weak at a time in Iraq...when it needs to look strong," Bolton told CNN.

North Korea has pulled out of similar agreements in the past, such as the one brokered during six-nation negotiations during the Clinton administration and

another in 2005.

Details that have yet to be fixed are where Yongbyon's plutonium would be stored and what is to happen with North Korea's advanced missile-development program.

Seeking to assuage criticism, the White House remained optimistic, noting that North Korea would have to take the necessary steps for it to work.

Opinions remained mixed about how Iran would react to the North Korean agreement.

Film Fights Racial Stereotypes On Pop TV

— ‘Turn Off Channel Zero’ Aims At BET, MTV, VH1 Owners —

ATLANTA, Ga. — A new film is taking up the cause against negative portrayals of the African-American community on popular television channels.

At the center of “Turn Off Channel Zero” is media giant Viacom whose VH1, MTV, and BET re-enforces hurtful stereotypes.

This film is premiering at Spelman College in the Cosby

Auditorium in Atlanta, Georgia on Feb. 22, 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Behind this first of its kind film is a group of concerned activists, filmmakers, artists and media personalities.

The film heavily criticizes the popular reality show “Flavor of Love” for broadcasting some of the most negative images on television.

The show’s star Flavor Flav

has received the brunt of controversy from inside his Hip Hop group, the legendary Public Enemy.

“From here on out, we are going to control our own images,” said Professor Griff of Public Enemy.

The film goes on to document a series of artists and activists combating misleading images of their communities in the media.

The participants argue that such portrayals increase violence, buffoonery, and harmful activities—especially among youth.

Among the many participants highlighted in the film are Hip Hop journalist Davey D, Last Poet’s Abiodun Oyewole, and Morgan State University Professor Ray Winbush.

The film’s producers are setting up screenings of “Turn Off

Channel Zero” around the country and overseas – complete with a post-viewing question and answer session immediately following each viewing.

Trailers, screenings and other important information about the film can be located at its site on Myspace.com

INFO

Turn Off Channel Zero
www.myspace.com/turnoffchannelzero

TTC, Animal ID Protestors To Invade Austin March 2

AUSTIN – Activists against two government-sanctioned programs that could harm rural and urban Texans alike are planning to descend on Austin on Texas Independence Day.

Horses, cattle, llamas, and their owners are expected to parade under a banner of “Don’t Tag Texas” through the center of downtown Austin to the Capitol on Friday, March 2.

The two programs in question are the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) and the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC).

NAIS is a corporate-agriculture plan being pushed by the federal government. The Texas Animal Health Commission currently has author-

ity to make it mandatory at any time.

If it does, then anyone who owns even one livestock animal – even just a chicken or a horse – will have to register their premises with the government, individually identify each animal, and report movements to a database.

This massive government program will have an immediate impact on rural Texas and will ultimately raise the cost of food for everyone.

TTC is a plan for a privately-owned toll road, including vehicle lanes, railroad tracks, utilities, and pipelines, to run from Mexico to Oklahoma.

“It’s about revenue, not transportation,” said David Stall, Founder of Corridor

Watch. “Over one million acres of Texas land will be destroyed for the sake of a private company’s profits.”

Hank Gilbert, the 2006 Democratic candidate for Texas Agriculture Commissioner, added, “The TTC stands to be the largest land-grab and eminent domain project in the history of this country.”

Although disparate on the surface, the issues of the NAIS and the TTC share many common themes: the threat to rural Texas, the use of Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFIDs) to track animals and people, the impact of large corporations on government policymaking, and the loss of choices for every person.

These groups hope to raise

the awareness of the rest of the country, noting: “As goes Texas, so goes the rest of the country.”

“The NAIS and the TTC are national issues, with their hearts in Texas,” said Judith McGeary, founder of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance. “We hope that the sight of a veritable Noah’s Ark marching up Congress will re-connect Texas lawmakers to the people whose lives they are affecting, and bring the attention of the entire country to bear.”

After the march up Congress Avenue, reknown guitarist and freedom advocate Jimmie Vaughn will perform a song at the steps of the Capitol.

Marchers will gather at the parking lot at 1st and Red River at 1:30 pm on Friday, March 2.

They will walk and ride the 1½ miles up Congress Avenue to the Capitol.

Animals and tractors will return to the parking lot, and the participants will be provided with shuttle service back to the Capitol. Speakers will start at 2:30 p.m. on the South steps of the Capitol.

For more information, including speakers and logistics, visit the Farm and Ranch Freedom and Don’t Tag Texas websites.

INFO

Farm and Ranch Freedom
farmandranchfreedom.org/content/dont-tag-texas
Don’t Tag Texas
www.dont-tagtexas.com

Real Estate Center Economist Warns of Foreclosure ‘Rescue’ Scam

COLLEGE STATION – Convinced that home foreclosures will rise dramatically in the next two years, the chief economist for the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University warns that a new scam threatens homebuyers desperately looking for a way out of financial stress.

“Predatory lenders now offer what they call ‘rescue loans,’” said Dr. Mark Dotzour, “but homebuyers are neither rescued nor do they actually receive loans.”

Homebuyers who purchased homes with subprime loans are especially vulnerable, he said. Predatory lenders are targeting subprime borrowers who have some equity built up in a home but who are having difficulty meeting monthly mortgage payments.

Homebuyers with impaired or nonexistent credit histories often turn to subprime loans despite the higher interest that comes with them. According to Dotzour, many are about to discover that their “American dream” has

turned into a nightmare.

Here is how the scam works. The homebuyer gets behind on mortgage payments. The predatory lender offers a “loan to get caught up” on the delinquent mortgage payments. In exchange for the rescue, the homeowner signs over the title to the predator, who promises that the homebuyer may remain in the home while paying rent. The predator then sells the house to

someone else, and the original homeowner gets an eviction notice.

About a dozen states have passed laws designed to deter rescue loan fraud, but Texas is not one of them.

“The scam is called a loan, but it is not,” says Dotzour. “It really is a buy-out with a leaseback.”

Dotzour fears the problem is going to get much worse. As of Oct. 31, some four percent of

borrowers who obtained subprime loans in 2006 were 60 days or more behind on payments. He said the delinquency rate is running twice that of a year ago.

“Foreclosures are up 27 percent in the last 12 months,” said the noted economist, “but that’s still low in my books. I’m betting 2007 U.S. foreclosures will double last year’s total.”

Subprime mortgage volume

has increased fivefold in five years. The Mortgage Bankers Association estimates that \$1.1 trillion to \$1.3 trillion in subprime loans are due to adjust to higher interest rates in 2007.

“Obviously there will be a much higher foreclosure rate in the next five years,” said Dotzour, “regardless of whether there is an upswing or downswing in the economy.”

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Art To Play Role In Women's Peace Conference June 10-15

DALLAS — The public is invited to submit artwork to the Third International Women's Peace Conference in Dallas, July 10-15.

The art will be an important part of the conference, serving to express an international energy for peace that inspires and empowers peacemakers. "We hope you are coming to the conference, but if you cannot, please send your art as your proxy," said a conference spokesman.

Theme of the art exhibition is "Vision of Peace."

With simplicity in mind, organizers ask for works on paper approximately 8.5 inch by 11 inch (22 cm by 28 cm). Any type of paper and medium is acceptable as long as the materials used are well fixed to the paper.

"Please affix colorful stamps to your mailings. We plan to display them for all to enjoy," it was noted.

Art pieces may be sent to: Peacemakers Incorporated, 3800 Parry Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75226, Att: Barbara Nehman, Art Coordinator.

The art pieces are considered as sent as love offerings from the heart and will not be returned. With written permission the art pieces will be made available for sale in a silent auction to raise money to support post conference communication.

Go to the conference website to learn more about the conference and to register online. <www.womenspeaceconference.org>.

Deadline for submission is May 1.



Comptroller Distributes \$609 Million In Local Sales Tax In Texas

AUSTIN — Sales tax rebates in Crawford in January are up from the same month last year by 11.57 percent, the allotment being \$7,328.11, compared to \$6,567.81 received last year.

So far, payments to date this year amount to \$11,694.43, up from \$10,688.86 received to-date last year, a 9.4 percent increase.

Texas Comptroller Susan

Combs notes that the state collected \$1.76 billion in sales tax revenue in January, up 12.9 percent compared to January 2006.

January state sales tax collections and February's local sales tax allocations primarily represent sales made in December, but also include earlier sales by businesses that report sales tax to the Comptroller on

a quarterly or annual basis.

The Comptroller sent \$414.5 million in sales tax to Texas cities, up 6.1 percent compared to February 2006 payments. Texas counties received February sales tax payments of \$35.6 million, up 6.9 percent.

The Comptroller's next local sales tax allocation will be made on Friday, March 9.

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Tricky Ricky Does It Again

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Outlaws get the best tax rate."

Cheap Trick

Lying Tricky Ricky Perry, the governor Texans didn't want, continues his sleazy efforts to put potholes in your streets, unify your tap water and sewage, send your kids to school in log cabins and light your streets with coal oil.

The Fascist Republican majority slinked its way toward Boss Tricky's property tax appraisal cap last week, gutting city, county and school resources to give the corporate gentry a never-ending tax break.

Texas' tax system, of the rich, by the lobbyists and for the sleazy politics, for decades has forced local governments to raise property taxes to survive the annual tsunamis of state legislative mandates each biennium.

From Dairy Queen to Smith-Barney, Texas corporations pay no taxes on anything but their real estate, for their cups runneth over into the campaign funds of our legislators.

We reached the point that home owners were squealing like a pig under a gate.

Something had to be done.

God help Austin if Texans actually began thinking when they vote.

Rather than cut homeowners a break, which would mean taxes would increase for big business to the point that they'd have to lay off half their undocumented workers.

And the thought of a corporate income tax starts the Austin lobbyists crying in their top-shelf margaritas.

So Tricky's sycophants stalked the homeowner horse right up the main street of every town in Texas, across the courthouse lawn and through the hallowed halls of the high school.

They lowered the tax rate cap slightly for the little guy, and the bankers and lawyers ordered the new Mercedes catalogues.

Didn't hurt the boys down on Congress Avenue.

Or the guys who own them.

In self defense, the local governments had to increase their appraisals, and Tricky's phony

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



tax cut showed up for what it was, sequined mudflaps covering bald tires.

Before the mortgaged moles open their eyes, he's got to stop down those appraisal rates.

That and Mr. Chase promised the little woman a new Tahoe.

So now Tricky wants to limit the amount local governments can raise appraisals to help the homeowners.

And everyone who believes him will now swallow a live armadillo.

Homes, unless they add major improvements, rarely have appraisal increases unless they're offset by equity enhancements better than the death of a rich uncle.

And you don't even have to buy a new suit.

Industries and commercial property, meanwhile, can easily experience 50 to 100 percent appreciation just by adding inventory or upgrading equipment.

New business can, overnight, turn an abandoned shell that only the homeless could love into upscale office accommodations complete with Starbucks at street level and a tenants-only spa in the penthouse.

Tax free.

So when the mail doesn't get delivered because the mail carrier got lost in the hole in front of your house again, when your kid scores in the 2000 percentile on the TAKS test and misspells "Dad" on your father's day card and when the cockroaches start dying around the fast food joints because the only health inspector the county could afford is the color-blind town drunk who couldn't tell the red meat patties from the gray ones, just remember that Tricky Ricky is maintaining a positive business climate.

And you can forget about global warming.

The rest of us are going to be out in the cold.



THE LONE STAR
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EDITORIAL

Hutchison, Cornyn Choose Death

The showdown is over and death won.

With the assistance of U.S. anti-patriots Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Sen. John Cornyn, their GOP bretheren were able to gridlock a measure that would have provided debate on whether President Bush's deployment of at least 21,500 additional combat troops to Iraq is essential for freedom in America.

The vote was 56-34, falling four short of the 60 needed to move forward on a nonbinding measure like the one approved by the House on Friday.

Seven Republicans in the senate, knowing that the American public is disgusted at Bush's proposal, jumped the USSGOP for a ride in the Democratic-led lifeboat, but it wasn't enough to break the silence. The seven Republicans who voted to advance the measure were Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Susan Collins of Maine, Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, Gordon Smith of Oregon, Olympia Snowe of Maine, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, and John Warner of Virginia.

Hutchison and Cornyn have again defied

their constituents, preferring to rule instead of serve. The Texas senators proved true to the notion that Big Oil and the industrial military complex must be protected, even if it means that genocide is a by-product and innocents will be forced upon the sword.

The next vote, whether to provide the \$93 billion in greenery to further escalate and fuel the war movement, is expected soon.

Whether true patriots still exist in the federal government will be shown when that vote is taken.

It will tell whether they believe in America, or whether they are merely fascists out to make a fast buck by robbing from the taxpayers in order to award preferred corporates.

This is a game they have been playing for far too long.

They have gotten away with it, thanks largely to non-thinking voters who prefer royalty over realism and who don't care who dies, as long as they don't have to go to the funeral.

It's time a dose of reality.

— W. Leon Smith



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

OUR TROOPS IN IRAQ

Relating to the House of Representatives debate of the non-binding resolution against the "troop surge" for the Iraq war and the Bush News Conference of 2/14/07:

We know from history a misrepresentation shouted loud enough and long enough becomes believed by many. This strategy is known as the "Big Lie." The present administration has incorporated this strategic rhetoric of "Support Our Troops," which we must do, in a perverse way to convince and coerce the American People and the U.S. Congress into submission and divert them from understanding the true facts. In-fact, this administration hides behind the slogan "Support Our Troops" while pretending to protect the lives of American troops.

America entered the invasion and war in Iraq under questionable and false pretenses and

this is indisputable. The U.S. invaded with far too few troops to guarantee victory placing our troops, our children, in "harm's way" guaranteeing unnecessary deaths of American service men and women and this is indisputable.

Misguided American policies in Iraq known to this administration have prolonged this war resulting in increased deaths and permanent disabilities and this is indisputable. The highest levels of this administration have known about these consequences for American troops and are therefore responsible. To quote the President at his news conference on 2/14/07 in commenting on the complicity and "certain role" of the Iranian government at the highest levels in the deaths of American troops in Iraq, "It does not matter," they are responsible.

Based on these indisputable facts we can judge the pronouncements of this administration, the President and

Republican Members of Congress as to whether they in-fact "Support Our Troops."

Saul B. Wilen, San Antonio Dear Editor:

For six despotic years, an intimidated Congress kowtowed to the Bush/Cheney Regime and drank the White House's "kool aid" of deception, falsehoods and ruinous policies. Now, after four years of war and opposed occupation by American and other foreign troops in the slaughter house once known as the Republic of Iraq, a newly liberated Congress is finally saying "no more war, no more troops, no more money" for Bush's folly.

The vast majority of Americans oppose further engagements in a lost venture. The thousands of wasted lives on both sides and billions of scarce tax dollars spent to enrich war profiteers and sustain our own regime's hegemonic ambitions must be halted by a unified Congress. Enough is enough! America can no longer permit a "Napoleonic wannabe" to subjectively decide the fate of an unwilling populace, be it Iraqi or our own.

Sincerely,
Gene Muccolini, Mt. Holly, N.J.

Letter To The Editor:
Bush's Iraqi end game is as

rational as the lunacy in Vietnam where a village had to be destroyed to save it. Bush will have his "surge" and thus have more killing and dying to prevent more killing and dying. At least until he can declare "mission accomplished," blame the Iraqis, and hand the lingering mess over to the next administration.

When destruction is salvation, there is little rational need to bother differentiating between failure and success. But the game played by the self-righteous right is to place the

blame for their failures onto unworthy others. This is well reflected by one of Bush's sideline cheerleader in the words that compared the necessity of prevailing in Iraq to the outcome of the conflict in Vietnam.

"Had we never gotten in, and the same sort of thing happened in the end, it would have been all Southeast Asia's problem. However, once we committed ourselves, we had a duty to ourselves and to them to conclude it successfully."

Sam Osborne, West Branch, IA



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Texas Homeowners Still Paying Highest Taxes and Insurance Proportionately in the Nation!

One simple question: Why?

Two years ago with Gov. Perry, then Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) Commissioner Jose Montemayor, and legislators “looking the other way,” lax insurance legislation permitted the industry to double the premiums paid by Texas homeowners.

At that time and during the previous several years the insurance industry had been experiencing a “hard market” and was losing revenue. It had called upon the state informally to help with correcting the market, but few listened to industry pleas.

As in many previous years of “hard markets” the insurance



**Texas
Commentary**

By Peter Stern

industry elected to act on the problem without waiting any longer for government interaction on its behalf. It then “**over-corrected**” the market by the overnight doubling of homeowner insurance premiums.

In some instances, the industry decreased the coverage and still increased the premiums significantly.

The reactions by

homeowners was disbelief and then anger. They contacted the offices of the Governor, TDI, and various legislators. They were told publicly by Gov. Perry and TDI Comm. Montemayor that by the next year the insurance industry would refund up to 14-percent of the increased premiums.

To date, that has NEVER occurred.

I reported the insurance incident/revolution two years ago and stated that homeowners would never see \$1 of that money and that home insurance premiums forever would remain doubled. As the Bible frequently states, “So, it came to pass...”!

Currently we are nearing the end of the 1st business quarter of Year 2007 and are in a “softer market”, and the industry is reaping substantial profits. Still there is no sign of legislators or the insurance industry decreasing the premiums of home insurance to a more reasonable figure.

Periodically Gov. Perry gives the issue some lip service and leaves it up to the Legislature to consider, but no one seriously is acting on behalf of overburdened Texas homeowners.

Unless Texans pound on the gubernatorial and legislative doors and communicate via phone and letters that home insurance relief is needed NOW,

no one will do anything about it and Texas homeowners will continue to pay the highest premium costs anywhere in the nation.

We either can remain the docile sheep officials want us to be, or we can move on correcting this unacceptable series of insurance events.

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.

Flipping The Bird At America's Symbol

The beloved symbol of the United States of America is threatened right now. I'm not talking about the juiced-up baseball player, the dollar sign, or the hamburger that's too big to fit into your mouth. I'm talking about the bald eagle.

Long a member of the endangered species list, our American bird is probably going to be kicked out of that club. Forty years ago, the eagle was listed as endangered, and the proud bird has flourished since then. Some people feel it's flourished too well.

Back in 1963, only 417 bald eagle nesting pairs could be found in the lower 48 states. Today, there are approximately 8,500 mating pairs in the lower 48. But instead of everybody celebrating the success of conservation and the Endangered Species List, some people feel that since protecting them worked, now we can stop protecting them.

Does this make sense? If we stop protecting them, won't their numbers decrease, and then we'll just have to start protecting them again in the future? Should we also conclude that now that fewer and fewer Americans are dying of various diseases, we should stop giving people vaccines and antibiotics, and wait until more people start dying before we resume treating them?

Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service got an extension which will keep the eagle on the endangered list at least until June 29th when a decision



**Modern
Times**

By Lloyd Garver

about its fate will be made. But most people feel it's just a matter of time before the Department of Interior or the anti-conservationist, pro-building lawsuits will force the Bush administration to remove the eagle from the list.

Doesn't President Bush have enough problems? Does he really want to be in the history books as the President who removed the symbol of America from the Endangered Species list?

Just to make things clear, you hunters can stop licking your lips. Even if the bald eagle is removed from the list, this will not allow the killing of our sacred bird. The Bald and Golden Eagle Act of 1940 will still protect them from hunters. Removing the eagles from the list will “merely” allow what conservationists fear will be the disturbing of the eagle's habitat — and therefore forcing eagles to move elsewhere, and possibly suffer a decline in population.

In other words, builders want to put up condominiums and shopping malls where eagles have their nests or hang out, and they feel these birds can just fly somewhere else and make their homes.

The American Bald Eagle has

been our official symbol since 1782. It's been on stamps, government seals, and it's even the logo for the N.R.A. I think we should leave the eagles alone, and find another spot for that proposed high rise or another Chuck E. Cheese.

I'd actually like to add things to the endangered list, not make it shorter. There are many other things in our country that are endangered. A few examples are:

A movie ticket that costs less than \$10.

A television series that's aimed at adults.

Real sugar in the restaurant sugar bowl instead of just artificial sweeteners.

Books that aren't about diets or how to become a billionaire.

Pro football teams that have more players on the field than in court.

Salads that have lettuce in them.

Computer programs that come with a manual you can hold in your hands and read.

Cops that walk the beat.

It's a slippery slope. We have to hold onto things that are important to us. If we stop protecting the eagle today, tomorrow we may be saying goodbye to rain checks at carwashes.

But some people feel that there are just too many eagles now, and that they've become a nuisance for all of us. Maybe it's just my neighborhood, but I can't remember the last time

that a flock of eagles awakened me early in the morning, or messed up my windshield, or that there were so many of them that they blocked out the sun. On the other hand, it's easy for me to remember when I last thought there were too many condos and shopping malls. Just now.

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 loydgarver@yahoo.com



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A Tour of the Bush Library: BushLand

By MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

With a budget of half a billion dollars and little need to provide space for the perusal of documents, the Bush Center has decided on a novel approach to ensure that the work of the Bush Junior Presidency takes its well-earned place in history while also guaranteeing that the public understands the President as a man and policy innovator. Also on the agenda; just a little bit of profit to offset those hefty salaries paid out to Karl Rove and other long time loyalists.

The facility, in partnership with Disney, will provide a walk and drive through environment that links together the high octane points of the Bush years, connecting these to how significant moments then provided the content for policies that make the Bush - Cheney Administration different from any other in American history.

Visitors will queue up for the tours in groups of not more than ten, to keep it personal. As they wait, the group will hear the historic words of the past president as he used a bull horn to address the media and onlookers at Ground Zero in New York. Then the doors, that are designed to look like the Twin Towers as they settle into a pile of dust, will open to reveal a long corridor and the visitor will be greeted by an android that looks exactly like George W. Bush dressed as he was when he landed his Air Force jet and announced the "mission accomplished" moment. The dying sound of the jet engine will fill the background.

The group will follow the President into the corridor, which will light up as the group advances. On both sides they will see jail cells that light up, revealing scenes now familiar to us through the Abu Ghraib photos. These will illustrate the deep trauma experienced by guards doing their duty to their President and their Country as they perform essential pre-interrogation routines. Sound effects are reported to be very realistic and exciting.

The Bush simulation will then wave and shake hands passing the group on to another figure that history will always associate with the Bush Presidency, Lynndie England. Here, the presentation grows more serious as Lynndie explains why Bush was driven to propose essential softening up routines as a

GUEST COMMENTARY

means of ensuring that the suspected terrorists who were incarcerated at Abu Ghraib Prison and elsewhere provided information needed to save American lives.

As we now know, Lynndie, was actually a deep agent who was pardoned by Bush in the final moments of his presidency along with himself and his entire administration and some members of his family. The high volume Xerox machine used for this purpose sits in the small museum near the information desk along with other significant items, for instance, a small wooden box that Karl Rove hid in and around the Oval Office occasionally on which is carved, "Weapon of Mass Destruction." Plans to substitute similar boxes for the traditional Easter Eggs for that Hunt were scotched by Laura Bush but are available in the gift shop at the end of the tour.

Visitors will be able to step across puddles of blood and see how the most ordinary of implements can be adapted to this purpose. This presentation is followed up with the handing out of CDs and DVDs wherein Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld explain the grave necessity that renewed the use of torture as a weapon essential for fighting terror. More such interesting and educational items can be purchased in the Library - Policy Center Store.

Visitors will then understand that this was necessary for the survival of America.

As the group proceeds down the corridor, now riding in golf carts that have been refitted from the Dallas Country Club, the group exchanges Lynndie for another android guide, Jeff Gannon. This portion of the tour will take our visitors to a news conference taking place in the media room of the White House. There, visitors will see another simulation of Gannon asking the hard questions that won him the respect of the President and drew him into a confidential relationship with the most powerful man in the world, George Bush.

This portion of the tour ends at the door of the Lincoln Bedroom, where the wall opens up and visitors find themselves in a room watching the high points from the movie DC 911, the movie produced by Lionel



Chetwin in 2003 to show Americans the real story of how George Bush spent his time from the moment he came out of the slight fog in the school room in Florida, where he confronted subjects too esoteric for ordinary people to consider, until he addressed the American people. At some point in the future, perhaps five generations from now, the documents relating to this will be available.

Visitors will then sit through a presentation on American events by a real child who learned that history in a public school in Texas that ensure that no Child was Left Behind. The presentation will take the visitor through a recitation of how the Bush Walker family saved the United States by ensuring free trade with China during the Opium Wars, did behind the scenes work during the Nazi Regime in Germany, and then with the Soviet Union as they ensured that Americans would have a continuing supply of petroleum. Then, they will hear the story of how Bush Senior worked to make sure that America was not destroyed by women and environmentalists and helped Ronald Reagan end the Cold

War. As proof, they will see Bush Senior and Junior hammering out pieces of the Berlin Wall. These can also be purchased in the Store. Visitors will then understand why and how a faltering Bush Senior handed off this heroic duty to his oldest, beloved, son, George Junior.

The seated visitors now exit the theatre, guided by the android of Karl Rove who leads them into the Bush vision of the future. Here they see a shiny super highway that knits together the whole of North America. The super highway, as wide as two football fields, is a hub of activity and commerce that allows for free and open access to American's heartland. The stream of vehicles are no longer using petroleum. Instead, they are using ethanol which is available at only \$3 a gallon, far less than Americans paid for gasoline in 2008. They see happy people from all across the world working hard at jobs that used to be held by Americans who now have new opportunities for leisure and different job opportunities. They see smiling police and cameras on every corner, reminding them that now they are secured and the lovely rolling

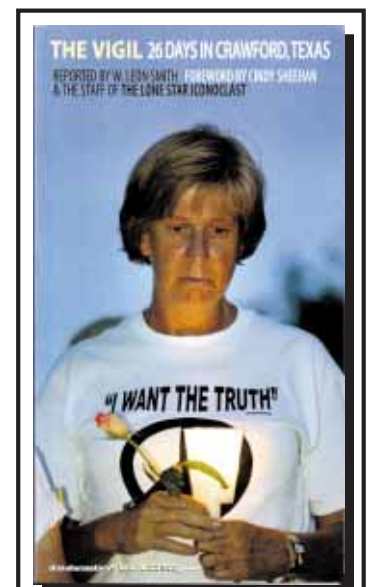
hills of the Dallas Country Club come alive as George Bush drives his own gold golf cart across the verdant scene and waves happily.

As they exit the theater they enter the gift shop that sells Bush Golf Clubs with the Presidential Seal, pens, photos of the Greatest President, simulated exact reproductions of Barbara Bush's two strand pearl neckless and other memorabilia. Also included are DVDs and CDs that teach eager tourists how to train their dogs to intimidate suspected terrorists and special implements to be used only when following the instructions included. They see an American flag that has the names of various corporations printed on the stripes. They can buy one of those, too.

Tickets are only \$200. Call the White House to pre-order today.

This is your opportunity to imagine. Imagine a world where the policies of George Bush receive the respect they deserve.

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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As Far As I Can Tell He's Black...

On Saturday, Feb. 10, 2007, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois officially announced his intention to run as a Democratic candidate for President of the United States.

He chose to make this declaration from the steps of the Old Statehouse in Springfield, the very location where Abraham Lincoln spoke out against slavery and man's inhumanity to man some 147 years previous.

Sen. Obama has a strange sounding name, does he not? It's nowhere near the Anglo-generic monikers U.S. presidents normally carry: Washington; Jefferson; Adams; Ford; Bush; Reagan. Okay, the Germanic Eisenhower slipped in, ironically, because he was the commanding general who defeated the German *Wehrmacht* — go figure.

For anyone who's been living inside of a cave without a laptop these past two years or so, Barack Obama is the junior senator from Illinois. It just so happens that he is black.

Obama made his mark during eight years in the Illinois state Senate, working together in harmony with both Democrats and Republicans to bring results to the people. His programs included a state Earned Income Tax Credit for working families, as well as the expansion of early childhood education.

When it was learned that many inmates on death row were innocent, he drafted legislation to videotape interrogations and confessions in all capitol cases.

The Senator had the advantage of spending several of his formative years living and attending school in Jakarta, thus giving him an insight into that part of the world possessed by virtually no other American political leader. He moved to the south side of Chicago in 1983, working with a church-based group to improve living conditions among the areas plagued by high crime and unemployment.

Prior to graduating from Harvard Law School in 1991, Barack held the prestigious honor of first African American president of the Harvard Law Review.

Sen. Obama had not yet made his intention to run official, yet the Righties were already scared, throwing out ugly, vicious accusations that had absolutely no basis in fact. One was a bald-faced lie, emanating from a scandal sheet tied umbilically to Rev. Sun Myung Moon's WASHINGTON TIMES.

Found on the website of In-



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

SIGHT MAGAZINE, the story claimed "Hillary Rodham Clinton's camp" had discovered that a young Obama studied at a madrasa in Indonesia to be a Muslim cleric. INSIGHT said it was outing Barack's "Muslim past" through a Clinton fact check.

The Clinton people responded by stating: "They made it up."

This didn't matter to FAUXNEWS. The morning show's Steve Doocy turned this into the Senator having been raised as Muslim till he was 10 by his father; an absolute impossibility, as Barack, Sr. left when his son was a toddler. Another FAUXNEWS ersatz "reporter," John Gibson, later repeated the fanciful tale.

CNN took the bull by the horns and sent John Vause, a real reporter, to the school in question, only to discover it was nothing more than a secular public school. The facilities were used one or two days a week for religious classes, but the chances that any religion was taught there 40 years ago were most likely nil.

Armed with the truth, Gibson continued relating the false story, adding that Vause probably attended the same madrasa.

The utter sham of this entire story can be seen in that Barack has worked with Christian groups assisting the needy for more than 20 years, plus he and his family are active members of Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ.

Okay, I can understand the Righties' fear of Barack. From all we know he's a good man who will be difficult to "swift boat." He has freely admitted to smoking pot and doing a bit of coke while in high school and college. So what? Who hasn't? I'd rather have someone who knows his way around the block than the blottohead we're currently stuck with, who never has nor will admit to any shortcomings.

Agreed, he doesn't have eons of foreign policy background, but neither did Bill Clinton — and things went pretty well throughout the last decade of last Millennium. Let's face it, Barack Obama is a damn sight better than the former pinheaded Texas governor, also a "there for show only" position.



Sen. Obama is going to run into a lot of tough competition. At present he's got to leapfrog over Hillary, still significantly ahead in the polls. Many folks, myself included, have the thought in the back of our minds that putting Hillary into the Oval Office means another four to eight years of President Bill. To my mind, either Hillary or Barack is a "win-win."

Sure, other blacks have tossed their hats into the ring as presidential candidates. There have been people as diverse as Rev. Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and Carol Moseley Braun. (Note: Three of the black presidential candidates and two black senators, including the first black woman, have hailed from Illinois, the Land of Lincoln. Coincidence, or are we a *scosh* more progressive here?)

However, Barack Obama is the most electable of any who came before him.

So why are there blacks out to stop him?

I don't mean the Right-wing, run-with-the-rich-white-boys crowd, such as Condi Rice and Ohio's Ken Blackwell.

There is an entire segment of blacks, or African Americans, whatever they want to be called, who refuse to recognize and accept Sen. Obama as a black American.

Why?

Because his parentage is not of slave stock.

This is one of those insufferable idiocies which prompt comedian Lewis Black to wish for his head to blow off the top of his shoulders.

Finally, 230 years after our Forefathers, themselves mostly

slave owners, broke free of the tyranny of King George, and 143 years since the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation thus freeing all people in America (not to mention our bloodiest war of all, the Civil War), there are blacks in the Nation who would denounce a viable presidential candidate simply because he is first generation African American.

Umm... who is truly closer to being African American than Barack Obama? He's not holding out his hand for some bull twaddle sympathetic hand-out just because 200 years ago *maybe* one of his ancestors was brought over here on a slave ship. This man has actually *lived* an African American experience.

I was unaware that when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for the rights of blacks in America he had certain strata of blackness in mind.

Steven Colbert recently interviewed a columnist on his Comedy Central program, *The Colbert Report*, to clarify just what this particular disconnect entailed. Now, anyone who is familiar with a Colbert "interview" knows that he'll come at the subject hard and fast, but it's being done primarily for laughs; nevertheless, if the interviewee makes sense Steven will cut that person some slack.

The guest, Debra Dickerson, was obviously well-read and articulate. Still, she had no really solid logic behind her reasoning of not accepting Barack Obama as a member of the black community or a true African American.

Her argument held no water beyond Barack's father was a student who came here from Kenya, and his mother was white.

The inimitable Mr. Colbert ran logic circles around Ms. Dickerson, tearing her lopsided notion to shreds. At one point she was so flabbergasted as to say, "You've got me so confused..."

And confused Debra should be, because she and those who follow her way of thinking are chopping off their noses to spite their faces.

We are told over and over again about how prejudicial white folks are toward black folks. Nobody ever stops to think that were blacks not so prejudicial toward their own, as well as every other race and nationality, we might get some stuff accomplished in our Country.

There's a chance for the United States to elect our first black President. All indications are Barack Obama would be an excellent choice for the office.

Let's hope these educated yet myopic African Americans with their misguided agenda don't screw this up for everyone.

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)

Fewer Viewers Means Oscars Need To Get More 'Jiggy'

As you've probably discovered, we have entered the annual "awards show" season, which officially began with the Grammy Awards, and is due to wrap up some time in April, when Liza Minelli hosts the coveted *Intoxicated Karaoke Performance Awards* live from Tijuana, Mex.

Every year, I watch at least some of these awards shows because, as a columnist, it's important for me to keep up with cultural trends. I also watch because seeing Prince always makes me feel better about the way I dress. However, according to a recent poll, ratings for awards shows have actually dropped. So much so that programming executives are calling it "an alarming trend."

Personally, I think the word "alarming" is a little strong.

Coolant levels steadily leaking from a nuclear reactor — THAT'S alarming. A decline in the number of people tuning in to see how long it takes for a fight to break out at the Rapp Awards is actually pretty encouraging. The obvious reason ratings are down is because the number of awards shows is up. The entertainment industry must ask itself if it really needs *The Golden Globes*, *The Oscars* and *The Peoples' Choice Awards* in order to single out Hollywood's finest when they could just as easily save time and money by combining all three into, say...

The Peoples' Globes Awards.

Okay, bad example (Although, it does sound like something that's probably available on the Spice Channel.)

The monumental length of these shows is also a problem. When a person can receive "Best New Talent" and the "Lifetime Achievement" award during the same broadcast, it's too long. The fact is, we could actually learn a few things from the Rapp Awards when it comes to cutting the length of these programs — especially when you consider last year's Rapp Awards lasted only 11 minutes (three of which showed an overturned buffet table moving toward the exit under gunfire.)

After approaching several top programming executives about my idea, I was, of course, immediately wrestled to the ground. This led me to organize a brainstorming session with



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson
Siuslaw News

Rapp producers Bigg-E-Mac, Mac Daddy, and Dubl-Bigg-Mac-Combo — with the main goal being to come up with a comprehensive list of ideas aimed at shortening the Oscars.

And the secondary goal being for me to acquire a really cool "aka," which I was given almost immediately:

2-Wite-2-Rapp

What follows is a three-step process that could potentially save the Oscars by making them shorter, more exciting, and, quite possibly, a little more "jiggy."

Step one: Get rid of the red carpet arrival and limit each celebrity to one drive-by. Non-celebrities would also be allowed a drive-by, but only in groups of eight or more, and only from the back of a Lincoln Continental assigned before the show.

Step two: Upon arrival, each celebrity will be issued a posse which, in turn, will spend most of the evening glaring at another posse. This will no doubt speed things up as celebrities, sensing a rising tension between rival posses, cut their acceptance speeches in order to leave before things get "wack."

And finally,

Step three: Move the Oscars from the Kodak Theater in Hollywood to an abandoned warehouse in Culver City. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, there's the obvious cost savings. Why rent a theater when, with a little planning and a phone tree, everyone could just arrive and take over an empty warehouse just long enough to hand out the awards? This would also add a dramatic element to the show as it tries to finish up before the police arrive.

And there you have it: A simple, three-step solution to save the Oscars, compliments of me and my homies.

Now if I could just find my posse...

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

Icy Weather and the Burn Piles

Please don't talk to me about cold. I was out breaking ice on the troughs at 7:30 a.m. today (actually pretty much fun if dressed warmly enough) and calling the cows into the lot for hay. They followed me like I was the Pied Piper. I must say it was invigorating. . . .The temps went down into the teens last night here. This might be our last really cold blast for the season. Or not.

Cats that normally prefer the outdoors were sneaking into the house through our legs when we entered or exited. It was like a pet hotel in here for the last two frigid nights.

Stinky the dog must not feel the cold with that thick coat of his. Up until about midnight, he kept watch on his realm from his "outside bed," face turned into the cold wind, a big smile on his doggy face. Finally he went into his house with its plentiful, old, wool blankets for bedding. When he becomes bored, he chews these up, which is why he isn't allowed in the house, even on the coldest nights. Plus, he isn't to be trusted around cats. I don't want to tempt him. One thing we don't need is cat murder, especially inside.

How do those cats KNOW which is Zack's favorite chair or my preferred corner of the couch? Of course, that's where they take up residence, assuming the humans can be so easily pushed out of their routines. (Think again.) And in the middle of the night, suddenly there's a creature kneading the down comforter over my feet, then another fighting the first for territorial rights. This is but one of many reasons I prefer my animals outside whenever possible.

I can't say I had enough sleep these past two nights, but it was better than waking up to catsicles on the front porch in the morning.

After breaking ice and feeding cows, I ventured out to the front gate early today to take some garbage. At least one neighbor saw me in all my layers of insulated stuff, dressed like the Pillsbury Doughboy or the Sta-Puff Marshmallow Man in fat camouflage! I noticed that he drove away laughing. —So glad I could provide him with some early morning humor on his way to work.

Most evenings lately, Zack and I have burned brush piles until way past dark. The bulldozed cedar and mesquite, fallen limbs and brush have piled up during the drought/burn ban over the last two years. Finally we can transform

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.

it into energy, dispatch it to another realm, and clean up our landscape. Sometimes we displace lizards and bunnies. They go tearing out of the piles in a hurry. (Sorry).

We stay VERY WARM outside on these beautiful nights when most everyone else is holed up inside watching TV or doing whatever people do inside on cold nights. And we accomplish a chore well after most folks have called a halt to the workday. The thing is that for us it isn't work; it's FUN!

No one allowed me to set fires when I was a kid. I was highly over-protected, an only child of older parents, and a girl, to boot! This ban against playing

with fire probably caused some type of arrested development during my childhood. So now I have years of pyromaniacal tendencies to clear out of my system. Burn piles are much cheaper than a shrink. (You see how this rationalization process works?) Besides, we always call the sheriff's department before we begin our controlled burns and keep a cell phone handy in case emergency help is needed. (Heaven forbid).

Our fires are gorgeous, the air is crisp, and the stars have been great. Sometimes the cows come up to see what we're doing, and occasionally one of the cats will join us. Animals are so funny. I don't know if they like the company or the warmth. (The cattle are probably hoping there's hay or range cubes involved. In their minds, "their" humans = food).

This is a far cry from my evenings in big cities. You never know where life will take you (or take you BACK). Variety is most certainly the spice of life!

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The Fightin'est Texan Fights His Last Battle

When the news of Tom Green's pending promotion to major general trickled down through the ranks on Feb. 18, 1864, the men of the Texas Cavalry Brigade gave their popular leader three rousing, heartfelt cheers.

Born in Virginia and raised in Tennessee, Green had every reason to stay close to home. But he could not stand idly by while fellow Americans took on a tyrant in Mexico.

Standing an inch or two above six feet and weighing a rock-hard 200 pounds, his size probably caused Gen. Sam Houston to assign him to the artillery on that historic afternoon in April 1836. It would take a lot of muscle to drag the "Twin Sisters," a pair of six-pound cannons from the people of Cincinnati, around the battlefield at San Jacinto.

Green and his five comrades were not content to fire the first shot and then let the infantry do all the fighting. They pushed and pulled the heavy field pieces to within 70 yards of the Mexican lines and cut loose again.

Green's heroics did not go unnoticed or unrewarded. The 21-year-old private was commissioned a lieutenant soon after the battle and promoted to major two weeks later.

Green was aide-de-camp to Gen. Thomas Rusk, the wounded Houston's replacement, when he resigned from the army at the end of May and went home to Tennessee. He may have been keeping a promise to his parents, but he could not get Texas out of his system.

Green came back to stay in 1837, settled at La Grange in newly organized Fayette County and began a career in public service as Engrossing Clerk of the House of Representatives in the First Congress of the Texas Republic. He gave politics a try but swore off after a single term in the House and got his old job back.

In 1841 Green was chosen clerk of the Supreme Court, a position he held for the next 20 years. In his spare time, and there was plenty of that, he participated in nine different armed expeditions against hostile Indians and Mexican invaders.

In retaliation for President Mirabeau Lamar's botched attempt to annex New Mexico, Santa Anna sent troops into Texas twice in 1842. The second time, the French mercenary Gen. Adrian Woll occupied San Antonio for nine days that September and took several hostages with him back across the Rio Grande.

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



Houston, who had returned to office the previous December, put a trusted ally in charge of 740 volunteers. Tom Green accepted the third link in the chain of command.

Alexander Somervell stalled for time in the hope that the hotter heads would cool off before reaching the river. Two hundred did call it quits on Dec. 11, and another 200 followed Somervell's lead and turned around a week later.

But the remaining 300 or so insisted upon continuing the pursuit and marched on the border town of Mier. Only by blind luck did Green miss the Christmas Day battle with 2,000 Mexican regulars and the surrender that resulted in cruel captivity.

Three years later, Green was back in Mexico as a company captain in the First Texas Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, which was what the U.S. Army called the rowdy Rangers from the newest state in the Union. Mexico had made good on their long-standing threat to go to war if the U.S. annexed their wayward province.

The Texans' finest and most unforgettable hour came in September 1846. Their man-killer of a task was to drive the enemy from two hills guarding the road to Monterrey.

Green led 300 screaming Texans up Federacion Hill. To the dazed defenders, they were invincible demons from the depths of hell. Every able-bodied Mexican abandoned his post in advance of the onslaught leaving the summit to the attackers.

Green's tried-and-true tactic

worked like a charm again the next morning. This time the enemy stood their ground, but the relentless wave swept them from Independence Hill.

Later that day, Green mounted his third and most memorable charge. In the fight for the Bishop's Palace, two Texas companies feigned retreat. The Mexicans threw open the gates of the fortress in triumph only to be surprised and overrun by Green and his men.

When push finally came to shove between the states, the 47-year-old colonel commanded one of the three Confederate cavalry regiments that tried to conquer New Mexico in the first year of the Civil War. Survivors of the doomed invasion credited the famous Texan for getting

them out alive.


Following more daring heroics in the New Year's Day 1863 liberation of Galveston, Green was ordered to Louisiana. Under his leadership, the First Cavalry Brigade won four major engagements at a cost of 600 casualties compared to 3,000 for the enemy.

On Apr. 12, 1864, the recently promoted major general directed an attack on federal gunboats patrolling the Red River. Green was standing beside his horse on the shore, when he was struck in the head and killed by a cannon shell.

The creation of a new western county a decade after his death provided the perfect opportunity to pay permanent tribute to the fightin'est Texan of them all.

Yes, Tom Green County was named for that Tom Green.

"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.



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'Harry & Eddie: The Birth Of Israel' To Feature Edward Asner

HOLLYWOOD — Iconoclastic actor Edward Asner will be starring in "Harry and Eddie: The Birth of Israel," by Mark Weston on Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 8 p.m., at FirstStage at the Hollywood Court Theatre.

Directed by Alexandra More, the play provides the inside story of an unknown haberdasher from Kansas City who helped pressure Harry Truman into acknowledging the State of Israel.

First Stage Presents a Special Fund Raiser

Tickets for the special fundraiser are \$20 (\$16 for seniors). The location is United Methodist Church, 6817 Franklin Ave. (at Highland), with reservations available by calling (323) 850-6271.

All proceeds will go to the nationally renowned non-profit organization which assists writers in developing their work. A

question-and-answer period with New York based playwright Mark Weston will follow the presentation.

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