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'Divine Strake' Cancelled

— Relief Felt Across American West —

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government cancelled a controversial non-nuclear explosion in the Nevada desert late last week.

The "scientific experiment" known as the "Divine Strake" explosion would have kicked up radioactive dust, according to scientists, anti-nuke activists, ordinary citizens and politicians from both parties alike.

"The explosive amount was so large that it was going to lift this huge volume of material in the air off from the test site where a good deal of radio active devices had been exploded," said Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho.

Yet the press release announcing the test's cancellation rebuked claims that the explosion of 700 tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil would have created the type of mushroom anti-test critics claimed.

"This decision was not based

on any technical information that indicates the test would produce harm to workers, the general public, or the environment," said the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's statement.

The test would have provided data for further computer simulations for new bombs that would penetrate deeper below ground to destroy bunkers harboring weapons caches, according to the agency.

Critics said that this test — though still immoral — could be performed solely via computer simulation.

DTRA maintains that no such methods exist to assess capabilities to defeat underground facilities.

"I have become convinced that it's time to look at alternative methods that obviate the

need for this type of large-scale test," said DTRA Director James Tegnella in a statement.

The experiment brought about a lawsuit filed by two American Indian tribes and several Utah downwinders and opposition in Nevada and Idaho, where citizens still remember the government cover-up of Cold War-era nuclear experiments — both above and below ground.

They also remember thousands of the family members suffering from cancer and other illnesses from the radioactive fallout.

Due to such widespread controversy, the proposed test was moved several times before returning back to the Nevada Test Site. It was originally to be detonated last June.

Relief was felt across the American West as news spread over the cancellation.

Sen. Orrin Hatch said that he couldn't be more relieved by the cancellation.

"Everybody in Utah can rest easier tonight knowing that the government listened. No one's going to be harmed by this test," he said. "This decision is a result of so many people standing firm to ensure that we didn't repeat the mistakes of the past. I'm so glad that DTRA did the right thing in the end."

Rep. Jim Matheson, whose father died of cancer as a result of radioactive fallout, declared the cancellation a "victory."

"The prospect of even a non-nuclear 'mushroom cloud' over the Nevada Test Site brings back bitter memories of how the

government lied when it said that there was no danger," he said.

Even as the announcement of cancellation was reported, citizens and politicians continued their opposition.

Gov. Jon Huntsman had just finished signing a resolution opposing the Divine Strake test when he heard the news.

"When issues come up that we together as a state feel strongly about and if we respond as we have to divine strake we get results," Huntsman said.

Outside a Utah daycare, Shelly Anderson told ABC 4 News, "We can't just be told by the government what to accept. We do have a say."

Added mother Holly Horrocks: "This was wrong to me as a parent, as a daycare worker and as a citizen."

Though "Divine Strake" test has been cancelled, the agency will not stop analyzing the effectiveness of weapons systems using smaller scale models.

"DTRA remains committed to help develop non-nuclear means to defeat underground targets," said Tegnella. "I am optimistic that we will succeed."

Larson Bill, Western Shoshone Defense Project Community Organizer, said he felt a different kind of optimism.

"Hopefully this will be a true beginning to an end of this type of testing and nuclear buildups — for the Western Shoshone and all humanity," he said. "The fight still continues for us on other environmental threats to our land and life — we look forward to everyone's continued support."

Western Shoshone Defense Project's mission is to affirm Newe (Western Shoshone) jurisdiction over their homelands by protecting, preserving, and restoring Newe rights and lands for present and future generations based on cultural and spiritual traditions.

INFO
Western Shoshone Defense Project
www.wsdp.org/

British PM Calls For Troop Scale-Back — UK Army Chiefs Advocate Faster Pullout —

LONDON — British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced last week that a number of British troops would be returning home from Iraq soon.

Military chiefs, however, said they had wanted a bigger reduction in troop levels than Blair's current plan permits.

Blair called for 1,600 of the 7,100 UK troops to come back within months and another 500 at the end of the summer from their assignments in southern Iraq.

British defense officials noted anonymously that U.S. government pressure forced their hand in backing a gradual troop reduction. The officials want all their forces out by fall 2008.

UK Army commanders have said British military activities in Basra have

worsened the situation. They have also advocated that the idea that Iraq troops should enforce security measures on their own.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said no one was surprised by Blair's announcement for troop withdrawal. He welcomed it, as did the leaders and residents of Basra.

"The militias and militant groups in these areas only fired their weapons at the occupier and when they go, all of the violence here will end," said Salam al-Maliki, a senior official loyal to the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

U.S. officials played down the British withdrawal, stressing that the military coalition in Iraq is unbroken and that things are going well.

Prime Minister Blair again re-

fused to support a clear timetable for withdrawal, calling

such a one "absolutely disastrous."

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ICONOCLAST**

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

DALLAS – The City of Dallas has gotten a bad rap over the years.

Through no fault of its own, it's known for being the city that killed President John F. Kennedy.

And whether its inhabitants liked it or not, a television show perpetuated the myth that Dallas is full of corrupt oil barons, big-haired beauty queens, and horse fanatics.

The city is also known for being the destination of choice for nymphets in an infamous pornographic film series.

It's known – or will be in the future – as the city that houses the presidential library of the controversial George W. Bush.

But there are bright spots in the history of Dallas.

Among sports fans, it's known for being the home of America's Team – the Dallas Cowboys football team and its cheerleaders – and the Dallas Mavericks basketball franchise.

Among music aficionados, it's known for being the birth place of blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughn

Among political writers, it's also known as one of the towns in which the late columnist Molly Ivins lived and worked during her influential career.

But among members of the peace community, it's known to house the Richland College Institute for Peace.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST'S Nathan Diebenow spoke via email with Lee Paez, Ph.D., a professor in the Peace Study program at Richland College, to talk about the program, the necessity of peace work, and the proposed U.S. Department of Peace.

Here is that interview:

ICONOCLAST: How did you become involved in studying peace and nonviolence to begin with?

DR. LEE PAEZ: I have been interested in the prevention of war since I was a child; my mom's first husband was killed during the Second World War, and many of my classmates went to Vietnam.

I became involved in the Peace Movement during the Vietnam War and became a marriage counselor because of wanting to solve interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict.

For the past 12 years I have been a student of the great Buddhist teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, who has taught many people from all over the world how to find peace and share it with their families, communities, and the world.

ICONOCLAST: How did the Peace Studies program at Richland College evolve?

DR. PAEZ: There really has

Peace In The City

BIG



Professor Highlights Necessity Of Local Peace Work

Interview With Lee Paez, Ph.d, Peace Study Program At Richland College



MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH – Scott Branks del Llano, professor and director of Richland's Institute for Peace, and Lee Paez, Ph.D., a professor in the Peace Study program at Richland College, stand in front of one of 14 peace poles at Richland College in Dallas.

been a process of evolution involved in Richland's development of a Peace Studies Program. The initial genesis of the program was our wonderful college president, Dr. Steve Mittelstet, who attended a conference in Europe about 15 years ago and met with a group of educators from around the world who were interested in Peace Studies education.

When he came back to Richland, he met with a group of interested faculty, and that group developed the Global Studies Program, which was based on solving problems connected to peace and the well being of all peoples on the earth: Social and Economic Justice, Democratic Participation, Concern for the Environment,

Peace, Intercultural Understanding, and the Impact of Technology.

That program is still functioning at Richland. Then about six years ago a group of faculty became interested in developing a Peace Studies program and worked on offering an Associates degree with an emphasis in Peace Studies.

ICONOCLAST: How did you become involved with this program?

DR. PAEZ: Sue Jones, a psychology professor, Scott Branks, an English professor, and I became very interested in developing the program. We applied for grants and eventually were awarded some seed money to develop a new academic program for the DCCCD.

ICONOCLAST: What does this program offer to students?

DR. PAEZ: Well, let me point out that we have the Richland College Institute for Peace, which oversees many peace related programs for students, staff, and the community. The RCIP sponsors speakers and hosts events each semester that relate to peace. The RCIP also coordinates information and classes in the Peace Studies Program, which is the academic degree program.

ICONOCLAST: How do your students use the skills developed under this program? What kinds of jobs to the students take?

DR. PAEZ: Students use the skills of conflict resolution, mediation, nonviolence, ethical and

moral reasoning, intercultural communication, and other peacemaking skills in a variety of ways both in their personal lives and in their professional endeavors.

Many of my students are future educators who become teachers of peace themselves, teaching the skills of nonviolent conflict resolution to their students. Others use the skills in business settings, legal professions, international work, social work, law enforcement, the arts, the helping professions, etc.

In fact, I can't think of a field where students wouldn't apply the skills of nonviolent conflict resolution, mediation, ethics, and intercultural communication.

ICONOCLAST: What all does one need to do to get into this program?

DR. PAEZ: Any student who meets the prerequisites for the courses may take classes that are designated Peace Studies. They do not have to be admitted into the program to take the classes.

In fact, often students sign up for a class because they are interested in the topic (Nonviolence, Intercultural Competence, Ethics, Conflict Resolution, Mediation) and then become interested in focusing their studies in the Peace Studies area.

ICONOCLAST: I know that interest in Islamic studies and Arabic languages rose after Sept. 11, 2001. But since then, has there been an increase in peace studies programs across the nation?

DR. PAEZ: I don't know the statistics and it takes at least several years to develop a new program, but COPRED might have that information. I do know here in Texas that the Students for Nonviolence at UNT are advocating having an undergraduate program and that Incarnate Word is considering reinstating its Peace Studies Program.

ICONOCLAST: The University of North Texas began to offer Peace Studies as its primary concentration in the International Studies Major beginning in the Fall of 2003. What makes North Texas so special?

DR. PAEZ: UNT is the only university in Texas and actually, I believe in the S.W., offering an undergraduate degree in Peace Studies, but nationally there are over 200 colleges and universities who have Peace Studies Programs and internationally there are about 300 Peace Studies Programs. You might want to go to this website to see some of the programs that are offered. <<http://www.crinfo.org/action/search->

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Peace In The City

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In Texas, several colleges and universities like St. Edwards that offer programs in conflict resolution, and I know that there is an organization of students at UT Austin who are pressing the administration for a Peace studies Programs.

But, UNT and Richland are unique in that we offer degrees in Peace Studies. I know that UNT has an endowed chair The Johnnie Christian Peace Studies Professor and that they have several scholarships for students who major in Peace Studies, so my guess is that there was community support for such a program at UNT, but if you want the history of their program and how it came to be, you should contact either David Mason or Steve Poe, who teach in that program.

A bit more I learned from Dave Mason at UNT. A group of UNT professors who were interested in peace, human rights, and social justice issues persuaded Ms. Johnnie Christian, who was a local peace activist to endow the Johnnie Christian Peace Professorship, and Steve Poe was the first Peace Professor.

Then Dave Mason became the Peace Professor and he got a large grant from the US Department of Education to develop the program to include Peace, Democratic and Global Development. So, the reason UNT has a unique program in the SW is that UNT faculty members had the inspiration and went after the funding to develop the program.

ICONOCLAST: Why aren't there any other peace studies programs like these popping up in Texas? Are these programs known by a different name?

DR. PAEZ: There may be other programs that are in the development stage and there are other certificate programs and training programs that teach peacemaking skills but are not academic degree programs.

With regard to names, there are other courses and programs that teach similar skills but are not called "Peace Studies": Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Peace and Conflict Studies, Peace and Justice.

ICONOCLAST: Traditionally, the Democratic Party has been funded by labor unions. In recent years, the Religious Right has been a huge financier of the Republican Party. And over the years, both parties in Congress have increased funding to the military-industrial complex. So this leads me to ask, who is

funding a peace-industrial complex?

DR. PAEZ: I love this question because there is right now the effort to fund the U.S. Department of Peace! You know, Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it." We have worked long and hard to fund the military-industrial complex, and it is time for us to work to fund the development of the Department of Peace.

ICONOCLAST: You were telling me that Sen. Edward Kennedy was going to submit a bill that, if passed, would authorize the creation of the U.S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence. I thought it was interesting that a Kennedy would do such a thing considering that his older brother had such a hard time wrangling in his generals from provoking war with the Soviet Union over the Cuban Missile Crisis. But do you think there would be any dangers in institutionalizing peace in the federal government?

DR. PAEZ: No, I think the current situation of jumping into needless wars is the dangerous situation. I think continuing to believe that the answer to our international and domestic problems is violence and punishment is very dangerous.

The function of the Department of Peace would be to promote nonviolent conflict resolution teaching people how to prevent violence as an answer to our conflicts. It would research, facilitate and articulate peaceful solutions both nationally and internationally, support the military by training in complementary approaches to ending violence, and offer educational programs to address domestic violence, school violence, and law enforcement/community conflict, etc. Does that sound dangerous to you?

In my classes, repeatedly I hear students ask why they had not been taught nonviolent ways to resolve conflict in elementary school, and why they had to wait to get to college to learn about how to handle anger, diffuse potentially violent conflict, and protect themselves and their families from using violence as a way to solve problems.

ICONOCLAST: Well, what does the Peace Institute need right now? What's planned for its future? Does it need financial support to expand its current programs? If so, what programs?

DR. PAEZ: In this time of tight budgets we do not have anyone

who gets time to work on the Institute for Peace. We are just faculty members, but we would love to have a Peace Studies director. Then we could offer more programs for the community and do more projects with other colleges.

We would also like to be able to offer scholarships to Peace Studies Scholars; students who

get the two year degree with an emphasis in Peace Studies.

Several faculty members are involved in projects in different parts of Africa, and we plan to work together in solidarity to involve students and grow our projects which aim at reducing suffering and bringing basic services to African communities.

The Dallas County Commu-

nity College District Foundation accepts contributions from people in the community who might want to support a scholarship or a program. As you know, it was due to the contribution of a community member that the Peace Studies Program at UNT got funded.

The website for the foundation: <www.foundation.dcccd.edu/>

Cheney Receives Cold Greeting In Australia

SYDNEY, Australia – Vice President Dick Cheney received a cold reception by the people of Australia late last week

Cheney's three-day visit was intended to be a tour of thanks to Washington's staunchest ally in the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

His thanks weren't entirely reciprocated, though.

About 10 of the 200 anti-war demonstrators at Sydney's town hall were arrested four hours prior to the arrival of the former CEO of Halliburton.

The police had temporarily prevented the members of the Stop the War Coalition from parading in response to Prime Minister John Howard's refusal to withdraw Aussie troop from Iraq.

Though they had a permit to rally, the protesters had taken action – at times with violence – at the height of Thursday's run-hour traffic in Australia's largest city.

Authorities had already placed tight security precautions ahead of Cheney's the dead-of-night entrance, closing down roads and erecting concrete barricades outside the vice president's hotel.

The war in Iraq is very unpopular in Australia

with 67 percent of citizens wanting their troops home immediately, according to a recent poll.

The Sydney Morning Herald, in fact, plastered the headline "Out of Step" on its front-page in reference to the country's stake in Iraq.

But Howard has refused to take steps like ones taken by Prime Minister Tony Blair to withdraw troops.

As a result, Australia's conservative government faces defeat in elections there later this year.

Polls show that the front runner Kevin Rudd of the Labor Party has an eight-point lead because he plans to return the 520 Australian soldiers currently serving in southern Iraq should he win.

Aussie military operations, however, are expected to double in Afghanistan to quell the al-Qaeda and Taliban spring resurgence.

These operations are seen as legitimate since they originally received bi-partisan support.

At the same time, Howard has sided with his people in calling for the speedy trial of David Hicks, an Australian that has been held at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for the last five years.

European Dissent Increases Over Proposed U.S. Bases

LONDON – A rising chorus of dissent is blanketing Europe over the United States' proposed missile defense program in Eastern Europe.

The U.S. plan includes an anti-missile base for Poland and a radar control center in the Czech Republic.

But while both of these European governments have blessed the project, the majority of their citizens oppose it, according to polls.

Despite the perceived economic benefits of such bases, the Czech and Polish populous fear retaliation from Washington's enemies in its so-called "war on terror" in the Middle East.

The British, Canadian, and German governments have already refused to host any part of the U.S. National Missile Defense (NMD) program.

Washington has attempted to sell Europe on the idea for the bases on account of possible missile threats from North Korea, Iran, and other "rogue

states."

Military experts find this line of reasoning dangerous, noting that none of these "rogue states" are capable of launch such attacks; Russia's technology could work around any missile defense; and any build up of missiles could trigger another international arms race.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has already cautioned to the latter, saying that Moscow would respond "to the highest degree" to such threats.

European supporters of the base accuse citizens critical of the military complex as being "un-American." Anti-base critics, however, argue that base supporters in Eastern Europe are elitists who promote U.S. interests to affiliate themselves with the West.

In one case, an anti-base critic in Poland was fired from his government job for voicing his opinions.

Prof. Roman Kuzniar told the Polish press last week that any report about attacks from rogue

states are "fairy tales because countries are not suicidal."

"Wars are started by hegemonic, stronger countries, not by weak ones," he added.

Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski released Kuzniar from his position as president of the state-supported Polish Institute for International Affairs.

American author Chalmers Johnson noted in his recent column that at the height of the Roman and British empires, there were roughly 36 naval bases and army garrisons scattered across their conquered territories.

"The total of America's military bases in other people's countries in 2005, according to official sources, was 737," Johnson wrote, adding: "If there were an honest count, the actual size of our military empire would probably top 1,000 different bases overseas, but no one – possibly not even the Pentagon – knows the exact number for sure."

Southern Baptists Become New Focus Of Sex Abuse Advocates

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The ministers of America's largest Protestant denomination are now the focus of sex abuse victims' advocates.

The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) began a campaign last week to pressure the Southern Baptists to smoke out alleged molesters hidden by their

churches.

SNAP — based in Chicago — had previously pursued the same standards for the Roman Catholic Church over its clergy.

In a letter, the advocacy group asked the Southern Baptist Convention executive committee to pass a no-tolerance policy on sex abuse and investigate molestation reports with an independent board.

Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page said that each church runs independently from the denomination, and therefore handles investigations and hiring practices on their own.

The denomination has no legal authority to create any independent panels, Page said.

However, it still plans to instruct its members on the process by which they can perform background checks. The church body also plans to mandate letters of recommendation for possible employees, he added.

Southern Baptists have already adopted a resolution encouraging its churches to work with prosecutors in their investigations and to promote disciplinary measures among those found guilty of sexual abuse.

Christa Brown, a SNAP member from Austin, Texas, said that more should still be done, such as keeping a list of SBC ministers accused of abuse so that molesters' whereabouts are tracked.

"I believe kids are not safe in Southern Baptist churches," said Brown, who says that a Southern Baptist minister sexual abused her as a child. She now operates a website called the Voice to Stop Baptist Predators.

SNAP received reports of roughly 40 cases of sexual abuse by Southern Baptist ministers over the last six months, she said.

Reports of sexual abuse are not made normally because victims conceal their pain, said SNAP leaders. Only after many years do victims speak out.

U.S., Israel Skirt New Palestinian Coalition

LONDON — What had been hyped to renew the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis fell by the way side last week.

The talks failed before they began when Israel and the United States governments refused to recognize a new Palestinian coalition government.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the talks were killed because the Palestinian coalition had not agreed to recognize the Israeli state, abandon violence, and pass older peace accords.

All of these terms were conditions set forth by the Middle East negotiators: the U.S., the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia.

The Palestinian coalition was being formed by two rival factions almost near the brink of civil war — Hamas and Fatah.

Palestinians had hoped that the meeting would lay the foundation for a new Palestinian state.

Topics of the meeting would have included the drawing of borders and the lives of Palestinian refugees.

Washington said it would wait five weeks to decide on the new government when it is created.

The last peace negotiations occurred six years ago. This last attempt was announced over a month ago.

While factions like the Palestinian Liberation Authority have already recognized Israel's existence, elements inside Israel have called on the government to set aside its differences with the Palestinians to make way for an agreement.

An editorial in the Ha'aretz newspaper said that blaming Hamas would not stop future attacks.

"It is the responsibility of Israel's leadership to prepare itself and the nation that elected it for a daring and far-reaching political plan, even if the conditions for its implementation have not yet been created," the newspaper editorial staff wrote.



Justice Dept. Fudges 'Terror' Statistics: Audit

WASHINGTON — An independent government audit found that the Justice Department systematically identified criminal cases as terrorism prosecutions when no link was shown between them.

In doing so, the department might have falsely influenced officials' decisions during the war on terrorism, said Inspector General Glenn Fine in the report released last Tuesday.

"These inaccuracies are important because department management and Congress need accurate terrorism-related statistics to make informed . . . decisions," he said.

The report revealed that the vast majority of statistics (24 of 26 total) reviewed from October 2000 through Sep-

tember 2005 were incorrect.

While Fine called the Justice Department's tracking system "decentralized and haphazard," Department spokesman Dean Boyd told McClatchy Newspapers that its "underlying purpose is to prevent and deter terrorist infiltration."

Boyd blames the restructuring of the Justice Department and the FBI after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in part for the inaccuracies. Since 2004, both departments have improved their reporting.

This audit, however, is not the only one that clouds the Department's system with skepticism.

Other critics include the Government Accountability Office (Congress' auditing

arm) and the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, the later of which found that terrorism cases fell to almost the same rates as before the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks

Iowa Sen. Charles Grassley, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said these reports raise more doubts as to the reliability of the Justice Department.

"The question I have now is whether the inaccuracies are an accident or if there was some other motive behind it," said the Republican.

One of the motives might be that the Department has been over-reporting terrorism statistics for its own financial benefit, say other politicians of both parties.

'Sacco and Vanzetti' To Play Alamo Drafthouse March 28

AUSTIN — A film about two Italian immigrant anarchists executed in 1927 after a prejudiced trial will be shown at the Alamo Drafthouse in Austin on Wednesday, March 28.

This film "Sacco and Vanzetti" — the first major documentary about the ordeal of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti — is a part of the Third Coast Film

Night series.

The 1920 trial of the two immigrants brought out millions of people in the U.S. and around the world to the streets in protest.

Nearly 80 years later, their story still resonates as civil liberties and the rights of immigrants are under attack in post-9/11 United States.

Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns echoed these sen-

timents: "A wonderful film, as timeless as the struggle for human justice, as relevant as today's headlines."

The film features actors John Turturro and Tony Shalhoub reading the prison writings of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Propelling the film's narrative are historian Howard Zinn, musician Arlo Guthrie, radio personality Studs

Terkel, and a number of people personally connected to the story.

The Alamo Drafthouse Cinema Downtown is located at 4th and Colorado in downtown Austin.

Tickets — \$7 for general admission and \$5.50 for students and seniors — are available at the event or online.

INFO
www.drafthouse.com



WIETHORN FOOD STORE FRONT was left in the middle of Hwy. 6 on Saturday when high winds ripped the front of the building off. One woman sustained minor injuries in the accident.
— Staff Photo By Deborah Mathews

High Winds Damage Wiethorn Food Store

BY DEBORAH MATHEWS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

VALLEY MILLS — Valley Mills Volunteer Fire Department responded to an unusual call on Saturday, as firefighters had to direct traffic away from the front of Wiethorn Food Store in Valley Mills. The front of the

Hogg Graduates From MCC

WACO — Jennifer M. Hogg of Crawford recently graduated among the Fall 2006 graduating class of McLennan Community College.

More than 200 students received Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.) or Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees or certificates of technical education.

Students with a 4.0 Grade Point Average graduate with highest honors, those with a 3.8 to 3.99 GPA graduate with high honors, and those with a 3.5 to 3.79 GPA graduate with honors.

Amber N. Adler, Russell M. Oehring, and Brian J. Westerfield, all of Crawford, received certificates at the ceremony.

building lay in the middle of Hwy. 6 after being ripped away from the rest of the structure by high winds.

Fire Chief David Fisk reported that while he had been across the street eating lunch, he heard a creaking, popping sound and then the crashing sound of the false front of the grocery store hitting the street.

The damage was caused by a straight wind, reported Fisk, and not a tornado. Only one woman sustained minor injuries in the accident from falling debris.

Fisk immediately began removing the debris of the store-

front from the highway by using a backhoe and pushing it back towards the sidewalk to allow for traffic.

At 2 p.m., Texas Department of Transportation officials were reported to be enroute to the scene, Fisk said.

Fisk also reported that local officials were monitoring an unstable section of what remained of the front of the structure. With what little support was left to hold it in place, if it collapsed, he believed that it would create a "domino effect" that could potentially take down the rest of the buildings to the south.

Volunteers Needed For Lake Clean-up

WACO — Volunteers are needed by two organizations that have events scheduled on the same day, which is Saturday, March 24.

Lake Waco Cleanup is scheduled to have two work sessions: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1p.m. to 4 p.m. Volunteer are to meet at

the Twin Bridges Park off Hwy. 6 at the Group Shelter.

Keep McLennan County Beautiful has also scheduled a Used Tire Collection Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the HOT Coliseum parking lot.

Contact KWB at 254/750-5728 or Parker Wilson at 722-2939.

Texas Western Fiddling Swing Showcase To Come To Belton

BELTON — March 17 marks the 11th Annual Texas Western Fiddling Showcase at the Bell County Expo in Belton. Featured Musicians and Fiddlers will be Randy Elmore, Dave Alexander, Bobby Flores, Ricky Turpin, Wade Stockton, Wes Westmoreland and Robert Weeks.

Doors will open at the Bell Co Expo Assembly Hall at 11a.m. Music will start at

11:45 a.m. and continue thru 5 p.m. Dinner is by reservation only will be served at 5:30 p.m. The dance will be at 8 p.m. and last thru 12 midnight. Tables may be reserved for the afternoon performance is \$15. Dinner tickets, which must be reserved by March 12 are \$8.50. Dance tickets are \$15.

For information, call 254/939-8390.

ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Standardized Tests Produce Nothing

Ever since government hacks began to define education as an assembly line process, filtering out the concept of thinking and throwing it away, students in America have been robbed.

The concept of standardized testing as a necessity was built on a lie as a means to politicize a system that wasn't broken.

Now America is paying for it, as are our children.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued a report that nails the last two decades of education reform as a failure, in which standardized tests ultimately produce nothing in forward motion. But some back-pedaling has occurred.

The report suggests that U.S. high school students are taking tougher classes, receiving better grades, and, stunningly, are learning less than their counterparts of 15 years ago.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress compared standardized tests and an analysis of transcripts of students. The result was something that educators have been saying for a long time but that lawmakers have been ignored. The results of standardized testing vs. what students actually learned don't match up, proving that significant flaws reside with standardized testing.

Standardized tests are narrow in scope and are subject to the whims of the writers of the tests.

They are akin to a CFO adjusting a company's books to look a certain way, at a certain hour, through a specific window in time.

They do not take into account what the individual student actually learned that can be applied to the real world.

The report does reveal that basic high school reading scores are down significantly from 1992, as one example, and now, fewer than one-fourth of the 12th graders tested scored in the proficient range in math.

The politics of questionable and moveable statistics has invaded our public schools.

Students are being fed educational cupcakes instead of meat so that legislators can lie to the public that, statistically, the quality of education is improving. Just look at the results of the standardized tests, they say.

But the sugar high is false nourishment.

It will not sustain our society.

Quality growth of our nation and its citizenry requires that upcoming generations of adults be armed with the ability to think.

Standardized testing — teaching to the test — ignores this concept.

But it does line with riches certain pockets — and it gives lawmakers just one more deception on which to attract votes.

— W. Leon Smith

We Must Reject Ronald Reagan As An Icon

He Destroyed Education In America

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "If you want to be a prophet, all you have to say is, 'Things is gonna git worse.' That guarantees the poor folks will believe you."

We're getting tired of being right.

First, there was the Bush editorial, for which we are still waiting for all those fascist apologies.

I'm also waiting for the Tooth Fairy to trade me a winning lottery ticket for my dentures.

Now it seems we've won the roses on education deform, for which there will be no wrong Right admission of fallacy, or apology, neither to those who opposed it nor to the generations of abused children who suffered under it.

The U.S. Department of education admitted last week that the last two decades of "tougher" courses scourged by threatening high-stakes standardized tests, longer school years, and a return to rigorous traditional curricula have resulted in better grades and less learning.

Students now have less knowledge than those who graduated before the "reform."

As Jim Nabors would say: "SURPRISE! SUR-PRISE!"

We have said the same thing for seven years now in stories, a three-part series and countless columns and editorials.

So have most teachers and anyone with any educational training unless they were looking for a right-wing federal grant.

At the heart of the whole mess that's been made of education in America during the last three decades is a simple statement that, for the fascist right, cannot be allowed to be spoken:

RONALD REAGAN WAS A MORON!

His policies from Brylcreem to wing-tips were disastrous for America. He reduced the earning power of working Americans, put the United States into a debt spiral from which it will likely never recover, de-stabilized half the planet's governments while financing Al-Qaida and the "freedom fighters" that became the current Latin American narco-trafficking paramilitary gangs, dumped 18 million tons of weapons, from thermo-nuclear devices to AK-47's, on the open market and sacrificed our children's futures to his political campaign.

He was a worse president than James Buchanan, who was

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



responsible for the War Between The States!

Before this nation can climb out of the hole that fascism has put us in, we must reject Ronald Reagan as an icon, tear down every monument with his name on it and proclaim him and his whole phony, corrupt political plot an unthinkable pariah.

And we must accept that he knew nothing about education except that it could scare up votes.

Literally.

But why go back to Reagan to figure out why we have, by all admissions, almost two and a half decades of children who actually know less than their pre-reform predecessors?

Reagan created the scheme to use education as a political tool.

Citing a series of largely made-up statistics, a Reagan-appointed commission released in 1983 a fear-mongering propaganda pamphlet entitled "A Nation at Risk," claiming that children were learning less than previous generations and that we were "falling behind" other industrialized nations.

The racist bugaboo *du jour* pushed by the fascists back then was Japan, which utilizes an almost bushido-driven education system: learn or die.

When the Japanese economy collapsed under the weight of its own intellectual rigidity, the propaganda turned on China, creating an educational straw man from a country that can barely feed itself and realistically educates less than a tenth of its population.

He vilified teachers and colleges as responsible for the "problem" and adopted the traditional fascist approach when the evidence is not in your favor.

Lie.

None of "A Nation at Risk" was true.

Standardized test scores were once periodically "dumbed down" statistically because, in the long haul as students and teachers get to know what is likely to be covered by the test and "cheat sheet" publications offer new test-taking tips, scores progressively improve. This across-the-board scoring reduction was going in the early '80s.

Most companies have since

abandoned this score reduction procedure, because the phony "increase" makes the reform system look like students are learning, and the testing firms are making millions administering tests to "successful" students.

Simultaneously, the country was experiencing an unprecedented growth in immigration, both legal and illegal, and public schools were dealing with large numbers of people who had poor language skills — in any language. Without a basic knowledge of structure of the language you speak, you will find learning a second language almost impossible. However, they can learn to take a multiple-choice test.

Finally, the most frequently cited standardized tests, the SAT and ACT, had become much more demanding by the Reagan era, yet more students than ever, encouraged by the company advertising, were taking it. Many of them were poorly prepared for it.

Like any standardized test, successful students have to be trained beyond a general curricula, to pass it

But the Great Fabricator used this propaganda to scare Americans into abandoning their schools.

American education had begun to realize a simple fact: people are not robots. They have different ambitions, abilities and personalities. There are some people who, seemingly incredibly to Fascist Republicans, would rather work on cars than for multinational corporations.

Schools had implemented the world's most ambitious and innovative vocational education system.

Money, the lifeblood of education, went into teaching the majority of students based on their personal dreams and ambitions; generally to work for a living at higher paying careers.

However, it concentrated on specific skills and knowledge at the expense of the college prep courses.

Students, a decided minority, who need prep education don't need much encouragement, and those courses are cheap and easy to teach because those students want to be there. There are comparatively few such students, and in naturally smaller classes, they get the individualized attention that is a must to prepare for the rigors of academia.

It is difficult to prevent that

kind of student from learning.

Yet education reform has managed to do just that.

Meanwhile, the Reagan disaster has steered the majority of students from things they *wanted* to learn into things they *have* to learn.

The result has been that they learn nothing at all.

This pre-fab house of cards was based on one joker: testing.

Here are some basic tenets of testing:

- The creator of the test, not the student, determines who will pass. Any teacher can create a test that god couldn't pass. Or, by varying vocabulary, phraseology or conditioned response, the test maker can not only ensure success, he or she can regulate within a few percentage points what proportion of the population will pass. That's why all the textbook and computer testing companies jumped on this bandwagon with big bribes, oops, *political contributions*, for the testing advocates. The publishers knew they could regulate the market by making the results come out any way they want.

- Tests, particularly standardized tests, prove only one thing. That student can pass that test that day. Given the same test, repackaged, covering the same material, he might fail even 24 hours later. Conversely,

the failures, given the same test presented in a different way, could just as well pass. Tests prove only the students' ability to give specific answers. It does not prove he or she can actually do anything. Real assessment, meaningful grades are based on skills the student can demonstrate through a variety of actions, from generating and answering spontaneous questions to building, designing or proving based on what he or she has learned.

- Standardized tests have traded a want-to-know system based on individual achievement and personal responsibility to a monkey-see, monkey-do system. The system has been turned into a "right answer" drill in which the student's personal curiosity is irrelevant if his questions do not match the test. Further he is forced to accept that his teacher, in fact, his whole school and the community that it serves, are irrelevant to a central authority. His teacher becomes a mindless automaton that serves the state, not the student. Therefore the student simply memorizes answers that he sees as disconnected to his life or any other reality. Education has become as meaningful, and as pleasant, as paying a speeding ticket.

Next week: The continuing attack on America's teachers.



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Greg Abbott, Defender of Holy Faith

BY DAVID VAN OS
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Speaking at a Republican Party dinner Friday night in Lake Jackson, Greg Abbott told Brazoria County Republicans that the national results of the November elections do not represent the dawning of a new age for Democrats in Texas. According to a Feb. 18 story in the *Brazosport Facts*, Abbott urged the group, "All we need to do is stand on our principles."

The *Brazosport Facts* story continues, "During an introduction speech by state Rep. Dennis Bonnen, the Angleton Republican told the audience Abbott stood for those values, as exhibited by his defense before the U.S. Supreme Court of the Ten Commandments statue on the Texas Capitol grounds."

In June 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the statue could remain on the Capitol grounds. In his well-documented typical fashion, Abbott milked the case for all the grandstanding he could squeeze out of it. He made a huge, high-publicity production of flying to Washington, D.C. to argue the case personally at the Supreme Court, then held another grand press conference when the Court later issued its decision.

During his recent re-election campaign, Abbott mailed voters a glossy brochure containing a full-page picture of him at the side of the Ten Commandments statue, exhibiting himself as the defender of holy righteousness. (No doubt the photograph used in the campaign mailer was taken by Abbott's publicly funded Texas Attorney General publicity team, as were video clips he used in his campaign's "protecting children" television spot.)

Referring to the Ten Commandments case in the speech he gave Friday night, Abbott said, "When atheists come to Texas and challenge our values, we will use it as an opportunity to defend them. Not on my watch as attorney general are we going to have that monument taken down," he proclaimed. "That monument will stand on Texas Capitol grounds for the rest of history."

Now dear reader, take note that if you are a Texas citizen who happens as a matter of Constitutionally protected per-

GUEST COMMENTARY

sonal opinion to be a non-believer, you do not qualify to be a part of Greg Abbott's Texas. No matter that you may be a Texas-born lifelong Texan, and no matter that Greg Abbott as the attorney general of our state is supposed to be the lawyer for all the people and the chief defender of our republican Constitutional democracy. Instead, he uses your tax money and mine to set himself up as a medieval defender of the faith; and just like his medieval role models, he puts you on the wrong side of "us and them" if you don't profess the faith.

Dear reader, also please take note that while using ancient time-honored symbols of virtue and ethics as a means to praise and glorify himself, Greg Abbott at the same time does nothing to challenge the rule of greed and the tyranny of robber barons who want middle class Texans to become permanent indentured servants to the banks and insurance companies. A master of hypocrisy just like his medieval role models, while using ancient and noble exhortations for moral living as media for his grandstanding he does nothing to defend the ordinary Texan from the rampant twin corruptions of money and deceit that threaten to overwhelm our precious democracy — how could he; those corruptions are his own path to power.

Dear reader, the current Texas attorney general is a very dangerous man. Mark my words, ambition runs hot in him for political positions at the highest possible levels from which to use the public's tax revenue for the promulgation of Constitution-distorting neoconservative tyranny, all for the true purposes of self-glorification and power. Mark my words, please, and take them seriously.

Dear reader, do you still need to know why I am not satisfied with the Democratic Party's six-seat gain in the Texas House plus winning the local races of Dallas County? Do you still need to know why I am not satisfied with the Democratic Party's 2006 policy of not seriously attempting to win anything except a handful of state legislature

races plus the local races of one county?

I respectfully contend that an election that left this dangerous man in power, to continue using the public's revenues and the public's right of legal prosecution for the private benefit of the few, should not be hailed as a spectacular statewide success. I respectfully contend that a State Democratic Party campaign strategy that did not make this man a serious target for defeat should not be saluted as a role model for political

strategy.

Under the Texas Constitution, so long as Greg Abbott is attorney general he possesses the exclusive power to declare what legal positions and what legal actions will be advanced on behalf of all the people of Texas. So long as Greg Abbott is feeding his ambition and climbing the political ladder, foes of the Constitution will have a powerful ally. Do you wonder why I say the Bushite freeze may be thawing nationally but in Texas we're still iced in?

David Van Os has been a civil rights/labor lawyer for over 29 years. A dedicated Democrat, he is a co-founder of the Texas Progressive Populist Caucus, and receiver of the 2005 Backbone Campaign's "Spine Award". David has proven day-in, day-out, that he stands for the PEOPLE of this great state, not its corporations. For more information contact Rachel Barrios-Van Os at (210) 332-7080 or visit (vanosfortexasag.com).



David Van Os

Cowboys, Sodbusters Fight Over Cheap Land

The Borden County courthouse was the scene of a no-holds-barred wrestling match on Feb. 27, 1904, as cowboys and sodbusters fought over cheap land in a once-in-a-lifetime sale.

A favorite subject of motion pictures and television has long been the "range war," violent clashes between ranchers and homesteaders for the wide-open spaces. While the West Texas real-estate row in the opening decade of the twentieth century featured plenty of bumps, bruises and bloody noses, the fact that fists were the weapon of choice prevented the loss of a single life.

By 1880 Texas had set aside an area the size of North Carolina for public education and given away the equivalent of Maine to the railroads. Ranchers bought up the iron-horse sections that came onto the market and later doubled the grazing range for their huge herds by leasing school land for as little as eight cents an acre.

A farmer friendly legislature tried in April 1901 to loosen the cattlemen's stranglehold on the public domain by authorizing the sale of educational acreage in 21 western counties. As the grazing leases expire, county clerks could sell the land for a dollar an acre on a first-come basis.

Christopher Columbus Slaughter of the Lazy S and Tahoka Lake ranches devised a devious method for circumventing the new law. He retained control of the state-owned pasture by canceling his leases before the expiration date and then immediately obtaining a long-term renewal.

J.E. Ketner, a recently relocated farmer from East Texas, challenged the legality of "lapse leasing." In a landmark ruling on June 9, 1902, the Texas Supreme Court prohibited the practice and removed the last

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Hale



obstacle to a rowdy land rush.

The views of the two sides could not have been more diametrically opposed. Cattlemen contended the region was too arid for agriculture and "about all the nester could do was to starve to death some good woman and her children." Sodbusters countered that ranchers "merely wished to keep the land for their own selfish interests and had thus spread the false doctrine that West Texas would never do for farming."

Since an around-the-clock vigil was the only way to reserve a place at the head of the line, a couple of cowpunchers camped outside the office of the Howard County clerk a week ahead of the September 1902 filing date. Hearing that a band of burly farmers planned to cut in line on the morning of the filing, C.C. Slaughter's son sent reinforcements to Big Spring.

The sheriff met the plowboys at the edge of town, as he had their adversaries, and searched them for weapons. After confiscating their hardware — pistols, knives and iron bolts — he invited them to have at it. A terrific tussle ensued in the courthouse corridor, but the cowboys succeeded in slipping their applications through the slot in the clerk's door.

So many showed up in advance of the second filing in October that the sheriff cleared the congested courthouse. When the clerk announced he would accept applications through his window, the cowboys cleverly constructed a fortified chute. Disarmed by deputized railroad

workers, the farmers stormed the courthouse with sledgehammers but again were beaten to the punch.

Smarting from their Big Spring setback, the settlers swiftly reacted to the news that 5,100 acres in adjoining Border County would go up for grabs in March. They staged a three-month sit-in at the Gail courthouse with volunteers taking turns sleeping in the hallway.

Each side brought in scores of supporters for the inevitable showdown. To identify themselves to friends as well as foes, the cowboys sported blue armbands and the farmers wore red.

Taking advantage of their superior manpower in the early hours of Feb. 27, 1904, the cowhands evicted the aggies from the courthouse. "There went up from the Blues a yell that would have stamped an army of Apaches," reported the local newspaper. But the replenished Reds reoccupied the building two days later "after 20 minutes of rolling and pulling."

The farmers held the courthouse for a week, while the Slaughters marshaled their forces for a massive counterattack. Outnumbering the defenders 175 to 125 on March 9, the wranglers "went in and threw those fellows out," as the plain-spoken wagon boss put it.

The victory was very short-lived. Two hundred nesters returned the rough compliment that afternoon and did not vacate the premises until every last acre was spoken for on March 11.

The farmers won the Borden County battle with the ranchers and their hired hands but ultimately lost the war with the harsh climate. The dream of dryland agriculture turned to dust in the drought of 1916-1918, and the cattlemen reclaimed the range.

Where Will All The Flowers Go?

BY GRAYSON HARPER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Honey bees are disappearing. Nobody seems to know why. Perhaps another casualty of pollution and global warming. With the latest gloomy report of environmental scientists, it appears we humans are short-listed for extinction on our doomed planet along with polar bears, whales, and the already vanquished do-do bird.

No doubt the first to go will be

those who will be unable to afford to get to higher ground or pay what is certain to be a very high premium to live there. In other words, they will look a lot like the thousands left behind after Hurricane Katrina. Only, this time, they will number in the millions.

Already we're finding out who can or cannot afford the basic necessities, not just food and running water, but heat in winter. Forget health care. Here in

Texas, the rich oil man, T. Boone Pickens, is buying up acreage overlying the Ogallala aquifer. Basically, he plans to drain the aquifer needed by West Texas farmers and sell off the water at colossal profits. This will be the sunset of our brief sojourn here. The rich will continue to plunder and profiteer off the rest of us right up to the end – at which point, I suppose, there will be nobody left but them, clutching their purses as they breathe their last in a world that will barely sustain them or their spoiled offspring.

For the present, we are locked in mortal combat over the earth's dwindling oil reserves, all under the guise of making the world – safe for Democracy. And millionaires. The proposed new oil law cooked up between the U.S. and the Iraqi government leaves no doubt what the real objective was for

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the Iraq War. Under the new law, Iraq's oil will be handed over to foreign oil corporations, such as Exxon-Mobil, Shell, and British Petroleum.

Well, if you can't win the war on the ground, at least you can win it on paper. The new definition of Democracy.

Not all that new, I suppose. From the Mexican War to the present day, Americans have always had a soft spot for bringing freedom and religion to backward people neatly packaged in the latest generation of exploding devices.

And make no mistake. Merely because folks are momentarily disheartened by the present disaster in Iraq should in no way be interpreted to

mean they are tired of war, only that they are tired of losing. Give them a new one, such as Iran – looking more imminent by the hour – and once again their optimism will soar.

You would think the announcement of the world's leading scientists that global warming is well-nigh irreversible would render absurd all wars or even the thought of war. Yet, the best thinking of our leaders is not to halt the one in Iraq, but to expand it. And to move aircraft carriers into the Persian Gulf, poised to heap destruction on Iran.

And while bullying other countries (puny enough to be bullied) to divest themselves of their nuclear weapons, we are working night and day on a whole new generation of WMDs for ourselves. To what end? To gain dominion over a world that may not be able to support human life another hundred years? To hand the spoils over to the likes of Halliburton, Exxon-Mobil, and WalMart?

The sad history of our last stand on the planet will not be any noble effort to join hands with our brothers and sisters around the globe to try to halt what is happening to our beleaguered planet, but instead to bring more destruction, more bloodshed, more misery, as we continue our campaign to grab all that remains of the oil, the gas, the gold, the precious minerals, the jewels, the dinars, the shekels, and finally, inevitably, the water, for ourselves.

Our end, I imagine, will not be unlike the end of that great book by William Golding that I read long ago as a freshman in college, *Lord Of The Flies*. The adults finally arrive to rescue the children who have been stranded on an island after a plane crash, only to find a rabble of half-naked and painted savages, stalking each other with sharpened sticks. In a final touch of irony, the adult leading the rescue party is decked out in a crisp white naval uniform with brass buttons and epaulets. Now, the question is who will rescue *him*?

As for those honey bees, once they're gone, I reckon we'll have no more flowers. Which suggests a new line for Pete Seeger's famous song. Well, you'll still be able to get plastic ones – all you want. We'll need oil to make them with, of course. Ah, thus may our wars acquire a whole new relevance – not only to quench the voracious thirst of our cars, but also to maintain a steady crop of flowers – albeit plastic ones – for soldiers' graves.

Get It Right, Mr. Kemp

There continues to be much discussion among Iraq War supporters, most notably the reference of former Congressman and Vice-Presidential candidate Jack Kemp comparing U.S. involvement in Iraq to the events of WWII Europe. Mr. Kemp is correct in his assertions, but has his facts inside out.

Consider the following: Germany, without provocation, invaded the sovereign nation-state of Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, sound familiar?

The following year, they crushed the Maginot line like a Tinker Toy, occupying France from 1940-44 as the Vichy Regime, sound familiar?

The Germans established their own so-called Green Zone in The City of Light along present day Boulevard Hausmann, sound familiar?

They also established state-of-the-art military bases throughout the country. Sound familiar?

The French Nation of which I love dearly was sadly anti-Semitic, sound familiar?

Captains of industry along with German corporate titans including Bayer Pharmaceuticals had aided and abetted the Occupation. Sound familiar?

Banks in neutral Switzerland were busier than a Chinese Laundry. Sound familiar?

To the south, Spains fascist leader Franco, having seen enough of a young Marshal Tito in their 1938 civil war also decided on neutrality. Sound familiar?

In The Fatherland, the so-called man on the street remained indifferent and disengaged from reality. Sound familiar?

German propaganda ruled the day. Sound familiar?

French General Charles De

GUEST COMMENTARY

Gaule took refuge in London where he gave what is arguably the greatest call to arms speech of the 20th Century, sound familiar?



Smiechowski

Many within the French military had collaborated with the German occupying force, sound familiar?

And yes, there were even perceived terrorists, among those my own family, shot and taken prisoner of war while operating as the Free French, sound familiar?

So Mr. Kemp, although the intention may differ in these two wars, the result remains the same. That is, on one hand you have the intent of state-sponsored fascism and the other of democratizing the Middle East.

How can you, sir, justify both your intent and result without respect to the present conditions no less? America has repeated the barbarism of the past disguised as a benevolent intent.

The French have an old saying, "The more things change, the more things stay the same." How pathetic and demeaning of our beloved America, sound familiar?

Daniel J. Smiechowski is a columnist for the Hillcrest News in San Diego, Calif. He is a former public school teacher with a diverse academic background in Sociology, Politics, French, Linguistics and Education. He has traveled abroad 18 times including study at the University of Paris, France, "La Sorbonne." Smiechowski writes primarily on social philosophy and psychology and resides in San Diego. <SmiechowskiD@aol.com>

'Women Confronting Globalization' Lectures Set Friday, March 2

AUSTIN – The Mexico Solidarity Network is sponsoring two lectures on "Women Confronting Globalization: Cultural Resistance, Alternative Economy and Human Rights" on Friday, March 2.

The main guest lecturer – Rosario Aguilar Arguello – is a student of social anthropology at the Autonomous University of Chiapas, Mexico.

The two lectures will be held at Sid Richardson Hall (SRH), Hackett Room on the University of Texas Campus from 12 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., and MonkeyWrench Books, 110 E. North Loop, from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Aguilar Arguello will speak about:

- Threats to indigenous communities and small farmers in Mexico created by the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement;

- Human rights abuses in Mexico, their relationship to neoliberal globalization, and how indigenous communities are working to end the abuses and impunity;

- The importance and political implications of the "Other Campaign," a national campaign of struggle initiated by the Zapatistas.

Aguilar Arguello will be ac-

companied by Rachel Mehl, the Mexico Solidarity Network's Alternative Economy Program Coordinator.

In addition, Mujeres por la Dignidad Rebelde, a Zapatista women's weaving cooperative composed of several hundred weavers in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, will speak via video message.

Their message will cover the role of indigenous women in the struggle for human rights, economic justice, and cultural autonomy.

The tour will also offer for sale a variety of handmade artsanry made by this cooperative. All sales will go directly to the women and are used for democratically decided community projects.

The lecture is sponsored by UT-Austin's Center for Women's and Gender Studies and MonkeyWrench Books.

For more information, contact Kristen Petros, ILASSA Social Committee Chair.

INFO

Kristen Petros
kpetros@mail.utexas.edu

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Give Exactly What A Chance?

"This country is pursuing a new strategy in Iraq, and I ask you to give it a chance to work."
— George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, 23 January 2007

Go ahead and read that quote once again.

Now, read it one more time.

Take a moment and give the two halves of the sentence time to sink in.

Okay, let's give this statement some logical thought.

For starters, this should not be one sentence. These are separate concepts, each at odds with the other.

"This country" is not pursuing a new strategy in Iraq.

Lame Dubya is merely adding fuel to the fires that already rage far too intensely over there in the form of priceless brave American lives. But, hey, who can put a price tag on oil or the glory of a Caesar?

George XLIII and his Puppet Masters have once again dispensed with those senior military commanders who had tired of sending young men and women to be slaughtered and maimed in an ongoing exercise in futility, replacing them with the next line of "leaders" willing to swap the flesh and blood of heroes for promotion to a major theater of operations.

What career officer wouldn't be chompin' at the bit for a shot at combat command?

The "new strategy" this country wants to pursue in Iraq is bring our sons and daughters, husbands and wives back home. We made that abundantly clear on Nov. 7 past.

The only parties interested in pursuing a new strategy in Iraq are Dick Cheney, George W. Bush, Karl Rove, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, and all of their fatcat war-profiteering pals.

Because their way the war goes on and on ad infinitum.

It's one thing for the slithy toads who've desecrated the hallowed halls of our White House these past six years to act disingenuously with regard to the wishes of the American people. It's the nature of those beasts.

However, when a preponderance of Republicans completely silence any chance for debate on the floor of our Senate, the letter "e" must be added to the end of the word "sham."

Republicans in both chambers continue the divisiveness through mindless reverberation of Dark Lord Cheney's venomous epithets, accusing Democrats of being anti-American or "al Qaeda sympathizers" be-



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

cause they want an end to U.S. involvement in a wholly illegal, immoral war. Yet, Democrats have been called upon by the voters to get our troops out of harm's way in a civil war that began over six centuries ago.

But, Dark Lord has gone on record saying he doesn't care what the American people want — he'll do as he damn well pleases.

Can the end of civility, and our Republic, be far behind?

This isn't a new, or even any kind of strategy at all; it's the same old fecal matter that went on two years ago. Only now there's an added danger to our military and civilian personnel — hi-tech surface-to-air-missiles taking out helicopters.

Well, it was but a matter of time. Our involvement had to last long enough to justify a spike in contracts with the helicopter manufacturers.

Curious how this increase in helicopters being "shot down" began just after the Dems took over Congress, with increased budgetary scrutiny, especially military excesses, the new rule. At the very time Li'l George decided it's time to send 21,500 more people into the meat grinder, no less.

Why is it disasters occur (9/11, Katrina) or situations appear to worsen as if on cue for this Regime?

Even more interesting is how all of these machines have been brought down by advanced weaponry conveniently manufactured in Iran...

(If supposedly untrained insurgents can take out our most sophisticated helicopters with shoulder-launched devices, I say we leave Iran be.)

Back to the quote...

Why on this great blue and green Planet Earth should any of us give the Little Dictator any more chances?

He never earned the first one; that was stolen from the electorate.

As was the second.

Virtually everything George touched in his entire dangerous life came apart at the seams or met an untimely death.

To Lame Dubya they're twenty-one thousand, five hundred troops, or five brigades, or a whole lot of military guys under my command. They're nothing more than a "surge."

To most Americans, especially the families and friends of those being sent to Iraq (some for the third and fourth time), they are Bob, Dave, Ari, Hussein, Cindy, Frank; Bea's son; Billy's Mommy; Maria's husband; LeRoy's wife.

Many of these folks are Reservists and National Guard, none of whom signed on for this kind of duty. When they made the commitment it was to protect their homes, towns, counties and states.

The insipid commentary that our White House Fascisti have relied upon these past five years, echoed ad nauseum by their congressional lap dogs, that if we don't fight "them" over there then we'll have to deal with "them" here has no more teeth than a 90-year-old codger sipping pabulum through a straw.

Just who in the hell is "them," anyway?

Anyone with half a modicum (whatever a modicum is) of common sense can tell you if our military is in place here where it belongs then our nation, from sea to shining sea, will be far safer than it is today.

That same person can also tell you that the religious fanatics and insurgents who are killing Americans in Iraq will not be following them to the Pacific coast shores of California, Oregon or Washington.

When a company fires the old sales manager, the new person will have a boatload of ideas and concepts to implement. She may think they're new, but old hands will know instinctively these are primarily little more than reworked methods that have proven to be either time consuming or abject failures — or both.

Nevertheless, the new manager asks that the people give her ideas a chance to work.

The Cubs had a horrid season in 2006, so in comes Lou Piniella, a manager who's known for his fire-spitting technique. Even with this reputation, players love to be on his teams and deem such an opportunity an honor. Along with Piniella, the ownership spent in excess of \$300 million adding field talent.

The front office is saying to the fans give the new look Cubs a chance to work.

In both these scenarios, as well as millions of occurrences throughout life everyday, we give things a second — maybe a third — "chance to work."

However, the two examples above will not result in any hu-

mans dying or being maimed. The worst human suffering might be a loss of job security when asking to give a plan a chance to work.

The monochromatic George W. Bush GOP warmongers consider it perfectly acceptable to give this expansion of the never-ending snafu *a chance to work*, the recompense being real, live humans on both sides (plus those caught in the middle).

A true leader doesn't ask a nation to give a harebrained scheme "a chance to work" wherein lives are at stake, most assuredly when that particular scenario has been played out and fizzled — repeatedly.

The "enemy" is only our enemy as long as we remain in Iraq, just as the British military of King George was only our enemy as long as it remained in the States.

This foolish person, this would-be tyrant on Presidents' Day, at Mount Vernon on the 275th birthday of the Father of Our Country, would have such arrogance and unmitigated gall as to compare himself with George Washington — "the other George W," as he put it in yet another obnoxious attempt at fratboy humor to be cute.

What hubris!

He has compared himself to Kennedy and Lincoln, FDR and Reagan. He has quipped that Truman left office with staggering low poll numbers yet became exceptionally popular as the years passed following his time in office.

(Somebody tell George not to hold his breath, because he ain't gonna pull off a HST. Harry was a good, honest, sincere man — qualities Fearless Leader shall never be accused of possessing.)

The struggle that Washington waged against the real King to free the colonies from tyranny has nothing in common with the trumped up war in Iraq, yet George W. Bush attempted to blur the lines between reality and his own fantasy.

Washington and his Army were the insurgents, somewhat akin to the very people our soldiers are fighting right now. Washington lived and suffered with his men, took the same chances they did.

He did not prosecute a war from the other side of the World, safe, secure and cozy with all the luxury accoutrements.

The Little Dictator com-

mented that all George wanted to do was get home to Martha. How quaint. I'm glad he knew what George the First was thinking.

He also mentioned George's unbreakable will to win the Revolutionary War.

Of course Washington resolved to win the war — it had to be won, else our new Nation would never be shed of the tyrant, King George.

Just as the Iraqi insurgents must force the U.S. out, to rid their home of our tyrant, the wannabe King George.

The insurgents always win.

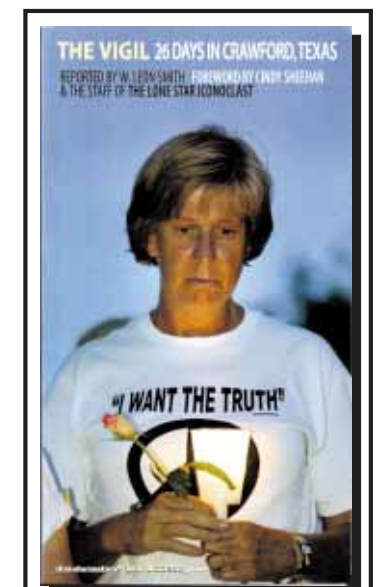
There cannot be a victory for the United States in Iraq, because our entrance into that sovereign nation was morally wrong from the outset — to stay there would be disastrous for us.

Do you want us to give something a chance to work, Li'l George? Then take a suggestion from the great philosopher, John Lennon:

Give peace a chance.

Shalom.

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



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The Long War Of John Kerry

By KAPIL KOMIREDDI
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

GUEST
COMMENTARY
FROM LONDON

An old joke, perhaps apocryphal, goes that an admirer of Adlai Stevenson approached him on a campaign trail in 1956 and said, "Mr. Stevenson, every thinking American will vote for you." Stevenson, with his characteristic wit, replied, "Thank you. But I do require a majority to win this election." That explains John Kerry's failed presidential campaign in 2004 and his decision not to re-seek it in 2008.

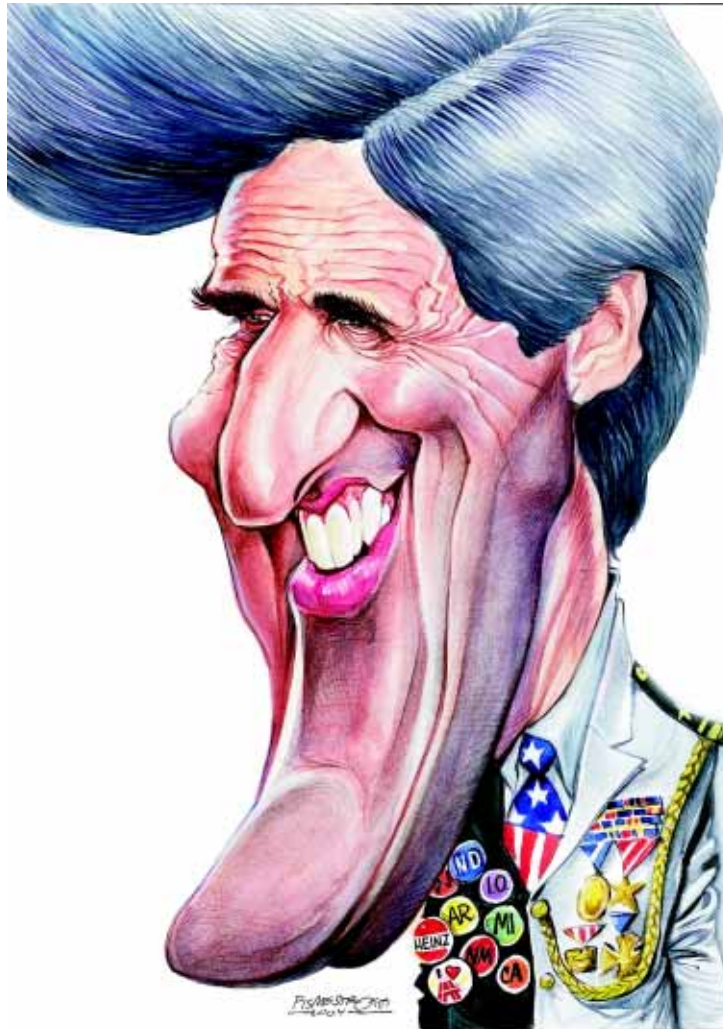
Perhaps no other prominent politician in modern America has been as terribly mauled by propaganda as Kerry. McCain felt the pain of Karl Rove's smearing only in 2000, almost 15 years into his Senate career. *Per contra*, John Kerry became a target of Richard Nixon in 1972, when he was a candidate for Congress. Kerry, a 29-year-old political abecedarian, was making life miserable for Richard Nixon, then the world's most powerful man. Nixon was so disturbed by Kerry and his antiwar campaign that not only did he send his own son-in-law, Ed Cox, to Lowell, MA, to campaign against Kerry but also stayed up on the election night to see Kerry lose.¹

Yet Kerry endured. In 13 years' time, he returned to Washington as a Senator. In 32 years' time, he would come unbelievably close to achieving an unprecedented feat: unseating a wartime president. There is something about John Kerry's enduring, fighting spirit which skips and eludes, and will always elude, the sensationalist headline-seeking punditry. This "elitist" New Englander volunteered to serve in Vietnam when most members in his social circle were using their political connections to evade service. While proving to be an exemplary leader in Vietnam, he also noted, in some of the most hear-wrenching letters to the late Julia Thorne, the futility of the war which had claimed the life of his best friend and was taking the lives of thousands of Vietnamese civilians. The man who volunteered to serve in Vietnam became, upon returning home, the war's most scathing and eloquent critic—to the point that he actually scared Richard Nixon into employing John O'Neill with the sole purpose of smearing Kerry. Many a pundit warned John Kerry that if he wanted a

future in politics, which he so blatantly did, he should distance himself from the protestors. Kerry carried on protesting.

The complexity of John Kerry cannot be simplified in a column. John Kerry is a good man, a great man, perhaps one of the greatest leaders in modern American history. He can dazzle you with his knowledge, but he can also bore you with detail and amaze you with inconsistency. When at a recent Senate hearing, Condoleezza Rice, defending the Bush administration's Iraq policy, smugly told Kerry, "Elections don't mean democracy, but I've never seen one begin without an election," Kerry responded: "Actually, the American democracy began with a revolution, not an election." Rice, a former provost of Stanford, was left speechless. During the 2004 election campaign, as his advisers debated what position Kerry should assume over the war, Kerry, who had been listening silently for a while, interrupted: "It's gut-check time, folks," he said. "This is not about whether it's politically expedient. This is a fucking war. Kids are dying out there, and this president continues not to tell the truth... There was no WMD, no imminent threat, no ties to Al Qaeda. The answer is no. Anything else is crap."² The man who had authorised the president to use force decided, within minutes of self-reflection, that he would be an antiwar candidate. This tendency was best explained by Kerry himself in a recent op-ed in *Washington Post*: "There's something much worse than being accused of 'flip-flopping': refusing to flip when it's obvious that your course of action is a flop... I'd rather explain a change of position any day than look a parent in the eye and tell them that their son or daughter had to die so that a broken policy could live."³

Since conceding his 2004 campaign Kerry, despite all the bad blood, was considered a serious candidate for the 2008 election. He toured the country, campaigning, among other things, for universal healthcare and an end to the war in Iraq; delivered



speeches criticising the President's foreign policy and offering his own, sensible alternatives; aligned himself with the more liberal wing of the party, organising a (failed) filibuster to oppose Justice Alito's appointment; visited Iraq several times, even venturing out of the secure "Green Zone" to assess the situation firsthand. John Kerry became an unlikely combination of a popular politician and a thoughtful statesman. It is depressingly sad that a leader like John Kerry could—and quite possibly will—ultimately be remembered by historians as a politician who scuppered his presidential chances by telling a bad joke badly. A man who should be at the forefront of history might end up as a mere footnote to it. Solecisms have never cost anyone more.

But this is where Kerry, the eternal Comeback Kid, might surprise us all. He re-emerges when you least expect him to. He was written off in 1972, only to stage a comeback. In 1996, learned pundits claimed he was bound to lose his Senate seat to Bill Weld. Bill Weld now

runs a law practice in New York. In 2002, no one in the media even bothered to notice John Kerry. By 2004, they were making desperate calls to the *Boston Globe* to get some information on the Democratic Party's presidential nominee. Those who underestimate John Kerry do so at their own peril. He may not be able to change the course of history as America's president; but he can affect the course of the presidential elections.

Next month, Kerry will tour the country to promote his book, *This Moment on Earth*,⁴ which will bring him in close contact with many Americans. People will see an entirely different Kerry—free from media's distortion, unburdened by the considerations of another presidential bid, speaking his mind, encouraging, endearing and appealing. There will be a sudden surge of media interest in John Kerry; political units will, despite Kerry's recent announcement, try to re-draft him. John Kerry will re-emerge, perhaps not as a serious contender for the nomination but as significant

voice which can have a meaningful impact on who gets the nomination. A Kerry endorsement would come with a solid fundraising network, an existing campaign fund of millions, and a dedicated army of volunteers and grassroots activists who possess a trait not normally seen in today's politics: loyalty. Who will receive Kerry's endorsement? It is, for now, a speculative question. But my guess is that Hillary Clinton and John Edwards can be, for very good reasons, ruled out of the equation.

In the Senate, Kerry's remains an influential voice. On many issues, Kerry has been a solitary soldier, but a soldier who never gives up fighting. Perhaps the country, and the world, will benefit more by having Kerry in the Senate than in a meaningless race for the presidency. His aim, as he put it, is to end poverty globally, strengthen America's global leadership, provide universal healthcare, and protect the environment. But above all, it is to put an end to what he sees as a senseless war in Iraq. He recently re-introduced a private member bill designed to do just that. Over three decades ago, standing next to Coretta Scott-King in Washington, D.C., in a speech which truly scared Richard Nixon, a young John Kerry told a gathering of tens of thousands of antiwar protestors: "This is not the struggle of one day, or of one war. It's a struggle, and an effort, and a sacrifice, and a contribution, which we make for the rest of our lives."⁵ He may have lost the presidency, but the long war of John Kerry goes on.

· Kapil Komireddi, a freelance writer who has contributed to various publications, is presently working on a compendious biography of Sen. John Kerry. He can be reached at: kapskom@gmail.com

¹ See Michael Kranish, p.159, *John F. Kerry: The Complete Biography*, (Public Affairs, New York, 2004) and Brian Williams, *Nixon Targeted Kerry for antiwar views*, NBC News, 16 March 2004

² See p.57, *The Vets Attack*, *Newsweek International*, 15 November 2004 edition

³ See John Kerry, *When Resolve Turns Reckless*, *Washington Post*, 24 December 2006, Page B01

⁴ By John Kerry and Teresa Heinz Kerry, published by Public Affairs

⁵ Quoted from documentary footage by George Butler, released as *Going Upriver*

Phone Rage

Lately I find that I'm often angry when I answer the phone. This is disturbing, because I'm NOT usually an angry person.

The thing is that we've been inundated with telemarketing calls for the last year or so. So when I pick up the phone, I'm on my guard and already annoyed. I was pretty smug for a long time because we seemed to be the only folks we knew who didn't receive these junk calls. That was probably due to the fact that no one really used this number much for the five years or so before I returned to the ranch. There was no credit card linked to this number, no bank account or magazine subscription, no garbage pick up or department store bill.

Every time you apply for anything —any application or paper that contains your phone number — assures that your name and number may either be used for the nefarious purposes of that establishment or company or possibly sold to someone else who will use the information to harass you.

I'm exceedingly good at hanging up on such calls. (Sometimes I let fly with some amount of cursing if the call is a recording and I've had a bad day —it lets off steam and hurts no one). But there are people who are too polite to do this. Portions of our elderly population are at risk of being preyed upon by these unscrupulous telemarketers.

Rules of thumb and words to live by: If you didn't make the call, you don't need whatever they're selling. If it sounds too good to be true, it is. And if they want your money, hang up. In fact, hang

up before they ask you for your money. If they can keep you on the phone for a minute, they usually have you. **HANG UP.** Do not **EVER, EVER** give out your social security number or your credit card number or bank account number to someone who calls you, even if the caller identifies himself as working for the bank or credit card company. It doesn't matter if the person claims to be from the White House. Don't give out your personal information.

You would think this is all obvious, so why am I writing a column about it, taking up valuable space in the paper and wasting your time? People get taken by these scams. If you're smart enough to avoid them, talk to your young, elderly (or naïve) friends and relatives and warn them. Please.

And did you know that many of the calls originate half a world away? This is why it's often impossible to understand the caller. Here we are trying to be polite to someone we don't even want to talk to —because they have the nerve to call us with an accent that is impossible to understand, to sell us something we don't want. I've started just hanging up or saying honestly, "I can't understand you" and THEN hanging up. If it's a call I initiated myself and I reach an operator I can't understand, I ask to speak to another one.

Even reputable companies now employ foreign operators to handle technical and customer service calls. If the person can speak a little English, they get the job. Companies don't have to pay these folks as much as their American counterparts, even though the calls are long, long distance.

Sometimes the person you are speaking with about your product or service —or even travel plans— is in an American prison. Yes, prisoners often "work" for companies —speaking to the unknowing American public. Ain't THAT a kicker? —Sort of makes you wonder to whom you might be giving your credit card number when you order that new blender from the catalogue.

The most ironic one I ever heard was when the Police Benevolent Society employed prisoners to beg donations from the public on behalf of the police.

It's become so bad that whenever the phone rings, I auto-

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.

matically assume it will be a recording or someone who can't pronounce my name —and therefore doesn't know me and has no business bothering me. Sometimes we receive calls for my uncle who has been deceased for over 25 years.

Business phone etiquette has always demanded no calls before 9 a.m. or after 5:30 p.m. (You figure personal calls are safe after 9 a.m. and before 9 p.m. Of course, in the country, you can call just about anyone at 7 or 8 a.m. and be OK. Personally I wouldn't bother any hardworking farmer or rancher after 8:30 or 9 p.m. unless his cows were on the road or his house was on fire. And I have a couple of acquaintances I wouldn't dare call before 11 a.m.)

Telemarketing calls previously came during American business hours. That was before the calling was outsourced all over the world. Wherever there is cheap labor and someone who speaks what passes for English, telemarketers hire. We're lucky they don't call us in the middle of the night, what with the differences in time zones. We've received these calls as early as 8 a.m. and as late as 8:30 p.m. The late ones really torque me off.

So if I'm wearing my reading glasses (atop my head, their usual resting spot when not in use), I try to check the caller ID before I answer. I've just stopped picking up for questionable calls. Some of the "if-y" ones I might answer —and I'm usually sorry. I figure the legitimate calls I miss in this manner will come again if they're important. If not, well, I'll never know. What you don't know can't hurt you.

If I'm not wearing my glasses, am unsure of the source, or forget to look, I usually answer the phone with anger in my voice, expecting a telemarketer. I don't do it on purpose. It's become a Pavlovian response. I had to apologize to a physician's receptionist last week who was politely and helpfully calling to remind us of an appointment. Last month, I barked at Zack's aunt.

At least the telemarketers haven't hit the cell phone markets yet, other than text messages, which I refuse to do. And don't even get me started on pop-ups and spam emails. I'll save that for another column.

Don't Panic!

The IRS Will Let You Depreciate Your Ostrich

It used to be that when the IRS discovered you've been claiming a child who is actually a 50-pound Labrador retriever named Billy, everyone would have a good laugh. Not any more. The Treasury Department says it will be cracking down on "aggressive tax deductions" filed by U.S. taxpayers in order to keep the federal government from being bilked out of hundreds of millions of dollars — money that could otherwise be spent on important federal programs, such as Halliburton's refund.

As a service to our readers, several of whom are actual U.S. taxpayers, we thought we'd contact some of the brightest minds in tax law in order to clarify what we can still get away with. Unfortunately, everyone was too busy working on Willie Nelson's tax returns to help us so, as responsible members of the news media, we were left with only one option:

Forget taxes and talk about Anna Nicole Smith!

Not really. We rolled up our sleeves. Got on the Internet. Made phone calls, and came up with some real-life tax claims you should NOT make unless you want to end up in jail, or worse, on the computer screen of a humor columnist trying to meet a deadline.

Our first example comes from Raleigh, N.C., where a man with an unsuccessful furniture-store business did what any enterprising owner would do — he hired an arsonist to burn it down. After determining that the fire was indeed the result of a three-piece sectional explosion which then spread to a spare gas can kept near the curtains display, the insurance company paid the man \$500,000. He then dutifully reported the amount on his tax return, which also included deductions for the loss of the building, its contents, as well as a "consulting fee" of \$10,000 paid to the arsonist. It's unclear whether the man actually used the term "arson consultant" on his return. What



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

is clear is that if you're going to burn down your business for the insurance money, don't be stupid.

Do it in North Carolina. Our next example involves an ostrich farmer from Louisiana, where apparently, without our knowledge, the state motto has been changed to:

We raise ostriches that could step on your state bird.

In this case, the farmer filed a claim for the depreciation of his ostrich. As it turns out, it's perfectly legal! In fact, you can claim the depreciation of any animal used for breeding. However, it doesn't mean that if "Buster" gets out and fraternizes with the neighbor's cocker spaniel that you can claim him as a deduction.

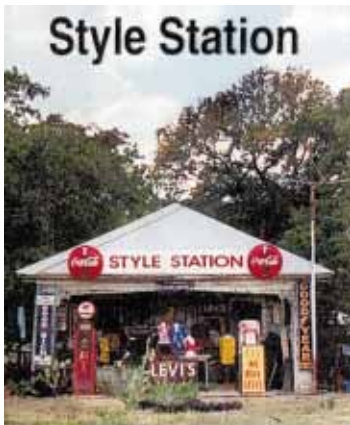
Even if "Buster" happens to be an ostrich.

So what does all this mean to you and me, the average U.S. taxpayers? It means that if we want to claim ourselves as a tax deduction, we need to begin breeding immediately.

No. What it really means is that with tax day getting closer, you really need to get "Billy" a social security card if you want to claim him on your taxes. And if you begin to suspect that the IRS is catching on, do what one Wyoming CPA told his client to do, and simply mark "Billy" as "deceased" on your next tax return.

If they want to know what happened, just tell them the details are still sketchy. All you know is that it involved a freak sofa explosion somewhere in North Carolina.

(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.)



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Free Hugs! (for war supporters)

So, you support peace. Most of us do. But you can't make it to a protest because of your job, kids, and a thousand other things, and the Peace Corps keeps telling you it is too dangerous in Iraq, and you can't sit 'ole Georgie-boy down to talk some of Mamma's good sense into him.

Confronted with such a situation, as many of us are, one begins to wonder how a citizen dissenter could ever start down the path to peace.

Negative tactics and angry protests are satisfying, but not productive. Thirty percent of this country will continue to stand by Bush so long as their perception of the American Peace Movement is -quote- "negative".

Thankfully, unlike Mr. Bush, the American Peace Movement does not have to "stay the course". We can benefit from Mamma's good sense: If a strategy does not work, change it!

Several weeks ago, while working on a report on a dispute over whether to pave over my town's urban forest to make way for a grocery store, I decided to walk among the threatened trees in a futile attempt at research. While there, I took a little time to gain a greater appreciation of one of my favorite books: Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree".

Later that evening, I had a discussion with one of my friends about the impact Shel had on my young mind. She concurred, telling me "The Giving Tree" had shaped her outlook on life more than any other book. So I decided to re-live some of my most fond memories, and found myself in a Borders Books the next day.

Finally, the inspiration came full circle. In his book "Where the Sidewalk Ends", Shel lays bare the key to stopping this war and preventing our leader from launching the next, in a passage that will never again be far from my heart ...

*I will not play at tug o' war.
I'd rather play at hug o' war,
Where everyone hugs
Instead of tugs,
Where everyone giggles
And rolls on the rug,
Where everyone kisses,
And everyone grins,
And everyone cuddles,
And everyone wins.*

In the spirit of Silverstein's classic, I have devised a plan that might otherwise be known as "Where the War Ends". Yes, you've guessed it: "FREE HUGS! (for war supporters)".

Now, don't get me wrong, This is not a campaign of snarkiness, set on making our hawkish friends look bad when they re-



The Webster Retort

By Stephen Webster

act with revulsion, which some certainly will. Do not fault our war supporting friends.

They're our countrymen, not our enemies. Repeat this refrain often; it will disarm their rhetoric. Just because they call you a "traitor" and cry out for a "war" against us, does not mean that we must echo them.

I think the Flower Power of the 60's had the right energy, but the wrong execution. Maybe what they needed was an outreach program of sorts, geared toward making friends with the voters who helped spurn such violent reactions from our government.

This form of protest can be conducted without confrontation, without extensive knowledge of our president's many offenses, and without a group of hundreds at your side. Just go to a public place and hold up a sign bearing a peace symbol and the words "FREE HUGS". As people walk past, motion toward them with your sign and hold your arms open. All it takes is a grin, a tilted head and a friendly shrug.

As artist Walter Anderson once wrote, "If you're angry at a loved one, hug that person. And mean it. You may not want to hug - which is all the more reason to do so. It's hard to stay angry when someone shows they love you, and that's precisely what happens when we hug each other."

The point is, the shrinking minority of war supporters are still our loved ones. They are angry at us because we are angry at them because their guy is angry at his father because his father was angry at this other guy with a funny moustache, who got angry at a guy with a curly, white beard, who was angry about getting gypped on his WMD's by Ronald Reagan ... And on it goes.

This cycle must end, and injecting more anger will not accomplish anything.

The first step is through your front door. Swing it open, smile at the sun, and seriously ask yourself: "How many war supporters will I hug today?"

By the evening hours, your answer to that question should be "at least one."

Stephen Webster is an Investigative Reporter, Staff Writer, Columnist and Photographer from North Texas.

The REAL 'Dirt' On Toll Roads

Why don't they just toll us another story?

Too many elected officials, along with Texas residents, have bought into what the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has told them — among other things — that roads can be built more quickly only if they are toll roads, that there isn't enough taxpayer money to build and maintain roadways, that toll roads will decrease traffic and pollution, etc., etc. Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), cities and legislators were told that if they did not approve the Central Texas Toll Plan, the deadline would be reached that would divert available financing to other areas that approve the plan. These are all bogus "shock and awe" statements that lack credibility because there is no study that proves them. To make matters worse, its an uneducated and facts-less mentality that is shared by too many people.

Here's the real poop on toll roads. The bottom-line is that you can believe what you want to and so can our elected officials. There is no doubt that many special interest individuals and groups will benefit financially from toll roads, from the governor on down-the-line. There are many officials who have conflicts of interest and should NOT be permitted to hold offices that currently they are in and/or have held. Furthermore, foreign companies (e.g., CINTRA) and domestic partners (e.g., Zachry Construction) will snatch up to 80-percent of off-the-top toll road revenues each year for the next 70 to 90 years. Exactly how does THAT benefit Texas families? How is that



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

cost-effective? How does THAT use taxpayer and toll tax dollars in the maximum benefit for the community at-large?

In response to many people's question: If there have been illegal activities by pro-toll advocates then why haven't there been lawsuits? Well, there have been a few, but not enough. However, that question is immaterial to the situation. How many people in big business or political offices do questionable and/or illegal things but do not pay for their actions? Proving things in court takes years; in fact, just getting a case to court takes years. Furthermore, people in "high places" generally are above the law.

The fact that our own legislature has been able to circumvent the decision-making on school financing for the past decade should show you that our system is almost totally corrupt. Texas homeowners have been paying illegal astronomical state property taxes for years. Furthermore, with issues like voting machine integrity and voter fraud emerging more every day, do you really want to go with the pro-toll opinion that toll roads are the ONLY way to go WITHOUT REAL PROOF that toll roads are the only or best way to finance the building and maintenance of Texas roadways? Do you want generations of Texas children and their families to pay an infinite toll tax, paying out millions to private companies for building,

managing and operating toll roads and plazas?

While pro-toll enthusiasts are fond of stating that Texans will have a choice to drive on toll roads or not, that's just another bogus statement. Texas families will pay toll taxes whether or NOT they drive on toll roads. They'll pay toll taxes on goods and services they are charged for when businesses divert their own toll taxes/expenses onto their consumers. No one addresses this issue. An average Texas consumer WHO DOES NOT DRIVE ON TOLL ROADS will pay an estimated yearly toll tax at the register totaling thousands of dollars!!!

Furthermore, gas taxes are supposed to pay for roadways and legislators prompted by the governor have frozen those taxes with no cost of living adjustments and they also have diverted some of the gas tax to other interests; implementing toll taxes will ensure a double tax on Texas roadways.

So, believe what you want to. It's a no-brainer. We need to vote-out lackluster special interest incumbents. Toll taxation is a special interest power-play that honest hard-working individuals and families don't need, and neither do generations of Texas children!

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

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Iconoclast

'Hats Off' To John Wayne's 100th Birthday Celebration

FT. DAVIS, Texas — To commemorate the 100th birthday of the iconic John Wayne, whose masculinity, gentility, and talent shined not only on the big screen but also in people's hearts,

Limpia Creek Hats has created the nostalgic look that "Duke" made famous throughout his lifetime on the silver screen.

Wayne starred in hundreds of movies during his career, many

of them now considered classics, like westerns "Red River," "The Searchers," and "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance."

Limpia Creek Hat Company,

located in Ft. Davis, Texas, is offering replicas of some of the famous hats worn by the late actor. The company has a reputation for high quality, craftsmanship, and elegance in custom-made luxury and western hats. Limpia Creek Hats is operated by true Texas cowboys who create hats by morning and work cattle by evening as they exhibit a passion for the cowboy lifestyle and for the state of Texas.

Working in conjunction with Wayne Enterprises, whose mission is to preserve and protect the name, image, and likeness of John Wayne by associating the John Wayne brand with quality and timeless products and experiences that embody the spirit of John Wayne and give back to the community (<www.johnwayne.com>), Limpia Creek is offering two categories of hats in celebration of the western icon:

The John Wayne® Limited Edition Centennial Hat features two styles; the *Cavalry* and *Cowboy*, both in 100 percent pure beaver and custom made to the purchaser's specific measurements. Only 1,907 hats of each style of the John Wayne® Limited Edition Centennial Hat will be available, each numbered within the collection.

The John Wayne® Commemorative Hat features two styles; the *Texan* and *Classic*, both in 50 percent beaver fur felt. These custom made hats are made to the purchaser's specific measurements.

"We are thrilled to have the



John Wayne

— Photo: © 1978 David Sutton/ MPTV

opportunity to celebrate John Wayne's 100th birthday," said Kelly & Zol Owens of Limpia Creek Hats. "Working with Wayne Enterprises as the official hatter for this year's celebration is an exciting project for us."

For more information about the exclusive John Wayne hat collections, or to order a Limpia Creek custom hat, call 1-888-878-HATS or visit <www.limpiacreekhats.com>.

Limpia Creek Hat Company is located in Fort Davis, Texas. Store hours are 9-5 p.m. Monday – Friday and 10-4 p.m. Saturday or by appointment.

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<www.johnwayne.com>



John Wayne® Limited Edition Centennial Hat

Cowboy ★ 100% Pure Beaver ★ Limited numbered series of 1,907 ★ \$750

Features a 7/8" matching ribbon with a custom braided leather hat band, 4 1/2" brim and natural lambskin leather sweatband. Available in Black or Natural.

Hat specifications and designs may not be changed or altered in any way.



John Wayne® Commemorative Hat

50% Beaver Blend ★ \$350



Texan

Black - 50% Beaver Blend

Features a 7/8" black ribbon with a flat bow hat band, a black bound-edge with a finger rolled 4 1/2" brim and black lambskin leather sweatband. Available in Black only.

Hat specifications and designs may not be changed or altered in any way.



Classic

Sahara - 50% Beaver Blend

Features a 7/8" matching ribbon classic flat bow, 4" brim and black lambskin leather sweatband. Available in Sahara only.



Cavalry



Texan

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