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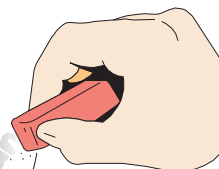


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By Martha Wood
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

ELIZABETH THEISS of Houston participated in the Don't Tag Texas rally and march in Austin last Friday. "I think we need to tag Bush so we can keep track of him," she said.

- Photo By Martha Wood

Borchers Forcibly Expelled From Conference After Objecting To Coulter 'Hate Speech'

By MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Dan Borchers, editor of the website Citizens for a Principled Conservatism, was forceably expelled from the Conservative Political Action Conference Friday after he probed the subject of Ann Coulter and the Paula Jones case during an interview he was conducting.

Borchers, who has since 1999 regularly attended the CPAC which is sponsored annually by the American Conservative Union, told THE ICONOCLAST that he feels he was physically injured and manhandled away from the Omni Shoreham Hotel because of his continued objections to what he and others characterize as the "hate speech" of author and neo-conservative pundit Ann Coulter.

Borchers, a lifelong Republican and conservative who says he takes the Christian faith seriously, has been an outspoken critic of Coulter's verbal tactics. The editor said he had paid for his right to be at the conference and had attended the event a full day when the incident unexpectedly occurred.

On Thursday, the first day of the conference, Borchers said he walked up to the registration desk located outside the event area and "was immediately given a name badge with my name pre-printed on it: 'Dan Borchers, Odenton, MD.'"

He said he had met with friends and attended lectures the first day, but the next day would be different.

Borchers claims that on Friday he was forcibly evicted from the premises around 2 p.m. soon after a meeting with author and attorney Mark W. Smith, who Borchers said, "I had previously interviewed a few years earlier at a different venue."

Borchers says he asked Smith a few questions which Smith readily agreed to answer and characterized Smith's manner as



Dan Borchers

friendly and accommodating.

When the questions turned to the subject of Ann Coulter and the Paula Jones case, "Smith interrupted the interview for about 10 minutes, then returned and we resumed the interview," said Borchers.

The website Smith maintains for his political and writing career, which includes the book, "DISROBED: The New Battle Plan to Break the Left's Stranglehold on the Courts," includes the quote from THE WEEKLY STANDARD, "Mark is a 'right-wing political hit man,' as the subtext on the first page. The same page features a photo of Smith standing with Karl Rove, who is holding the Smith book. The media page of the site includes a quote from Coulter, extolling Smith's law practice.

According to the Borchers' website, Coulter Watch, and those who know and work with Borchers, he is a quiet individual, a conservative Republican, and a Christian who is serious about ensuring that the movement of which he feels he is a part returns to its moral base.

Coulter, Borchers said, violates the tenets of Christianity with her rhetorical attacks.

Borchers added that he is a

former Navy Intelligence Officer who served 12 years in various stations around the world.

On the question of why CPAC would first sell Borchers a package and then evict him from the event, Lydia Cornell, a political writer, novelist, and comedienne, said, "Borchers has raised questions about Coulter's hate speech that are causing ripples in Coulter's world." Cornell and Borchers are writing a book, "How To Talk To Ann Coulter If You Must," on the authors' shared Christian beliefs, Cornell said.

By his own report Borchers spent his time listening to speeches, touring the exhibition hall, taking photographs, speaking with friends and conducting interviews at the event. His site, <www.CoulterWatch.com>, was created for the express pur-

Resnick, director of CPAC security, and three other people. Borchers said he was ordered to identify himself. Then, Borchers said, the man tried to remove his name tag, that had been given to him with his registration the day before. None of the four, Borchers said, would identify themselves.

The man Borchers later learned was Resnick insisted Borchers leave the premises, saying Borchers was not authorized to be there, explained Borchers. Borchers said he showed the man the registration issued the previous day, only to be told by Resnick that his money had been refunded.

Borchers said that Resnick ripped the name tag from his hand, causing a cut, and none of the four responded to his continued requests that he be told why

made during the incident would be made available to him. Borchers reported he was then escorted from the back of the building, past trash cans and parking areas. Borchers said that it seemed they were "carefully avoiding all of the press in the area. Yet, throughout this incident, a third person filmed the entire incident."

Borchers reported that he had checked his coat when he arrived and after being ejected was not allowed to return to get it. The chief of security took his coat check, he said, and retrieved it for him. During this time Resnick finally identified himself, said Borchers.

As Borchers left, walking down the driveway to the street towards the Metro station, he reported that he was stalked by



Being Filmed



Cut On Hand

pose of exposing corruption within the conservative movement "which is exemplified by Ann Coulter and those who embolden, embrace, and emulate her," he said.

Stephen Frank, a long-time Republican activist from California, says that the character of the CPAC conference has changed over the years. Before, it was attended by people of all ages; today attendees tend to be 25 and younger. Coulter has long been popular with college-age Republicans.

Borchers says he was first confronted at about 2 p.m. Friday by a man Borchers was later able to identify as Floyd

he was being forced to leave or what their names were. Borchers said he was also prevented from using his own equipment to make a record of the eviction.

Borchers said one of the men eventually identified himself as the chief of security for the hotel but refused to give his name.

THE ICONOCLAST contacted the hotel and learned that the director of security is Raffaello McKeython, who was not available for comment.

Borchers said that the then-identified chief of security, who was conciliatory, told him he would have to go to CPAC for any necessary redress and assured him that a copy of the video

the same man who had photographed the incident in the hotel. Borchers said this caused people to stare. At the corner, the fourth man, who still refused to identify himself, continued to follow him after the cameraman disappeared. Borchers said that the fourth man told him he had "better get on the train." Borchers says he took this to be a threat and as he was waiting for the train and reached into his pocket, the fourth man told him, "If you take out your camera, I'll smash it into a thousand pieces," reported Borchers.

Borchers has said that he has sought legal counsel and expects to take action as soon as possible.



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Protesters Tell Legislature:

NO TOLL ROADS, NO ANIMAL IDs

MARY BETH WESTCOTT expressed his misgivings over the National Animal Identification System last Friday in Austin. She held a sign of one of her cows named "Bob."

Photo By Martha Wood



By Martha Wood

SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Don't Tag Texas

AUSTIN — Shouts were heard on the steps of the capitol in Austin last Friday to stop a proposal for a statewide network of roads, and protect small farmers from the government attempting to track farm animals.

The Don't Tag Texas protest brought out hundreds of Texans from all over the state protesting the Trans-Texas Corridor and the National Animal Identification System.

Janice Schieberle of Gonzales, a retired school teacher and farmer, said of the TTC, "I think it's a boondoggle. It's a monstrosity of a globalist plan."

The TTC is a proposal for a multi-use statewide network of roads that will include toll roads, separate lanes for cars and trucks, freight railways, high-speed commuter railways, and infrastructure for utilities and telecommunications.

The NAIS is a USDA program

that asks for voluntary registration of animals, in order to track disease quickly.

Speakers who talked about the TTC were most concerned about toll roads.

Gina Parker, the National Issues Chairman of the Eagle Forum, begged the audience to "not just e-mail," but make phone calls to their legislators against the Trans Texas Corridor.

"Stop the highway robbery," she shouted.

The connection between animal tagging and toll roads was pointed out by Judith McGeary, the executive director of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance.

"This project is about dollars. It's about databases," said McGeary.

She encouraged attendees to go inside and talk to their legislators about these two issues.

Two house bills, 461 and 637, will be considered. They would

make the animal identification program voluntary and would provide safeguards to animal owners.

House bill 857 would kill the TTC and HB 719 would restrict TxDot from turning a state highway into a toll road, and would prevent the transference of a state highway to a private entity for the purpose of becoming a toll road.

Co-author of "Spychips: How major corporations and government plan to track your every purchase and watch your every move," Liz McIntyre said, the government has a plan to tag and track everything on earth.

McIntyre said she worries that once the government starts tracking animals with radio frequency identification chips, or RFID, humans will be next.

"If they can track us, they can control us," she said.

Freedom was a hot topic at the rally as well.

Hank Gilbert, the 2006 Demo-

cratic candidate for Texas Agriculture Commissioner and an organizer of the event, said this protest was about independence from government control.

"It's Texas Independence Day, and it's time the people stood up to the government," he said. "Its (the TTC) a revenue generating project for TxDot. It in no way improves the daily lives of the people of the state of Texas."

Gilbert said the TTC is a lynchpin for the North American Union NAFTA superhighway.

"The NAFTA treaty is not worth the paper it's printed on without the TTC," he said. "We have to stop both issues today, in Texas."

Some participants had personal reasons to protest on the capitol steps.

Mary Beth Westcott and her partner Rick Walker have a small ranch in Gonzalez with about 20 cattle and four horses.

They are wholeheartedly against animal tagging.

"We don't see any benefit for the small farmer," said Westcott. "We see a huge expense."

Although the USDA says the NAIS program is voluntary, Westcott and Walker don't believe it.

"So is your income tax," Walker said. "It started out on a voluntary basis too."

The couple has had their farm for about four years and plans to retire there and sell their cattle for slaughter.

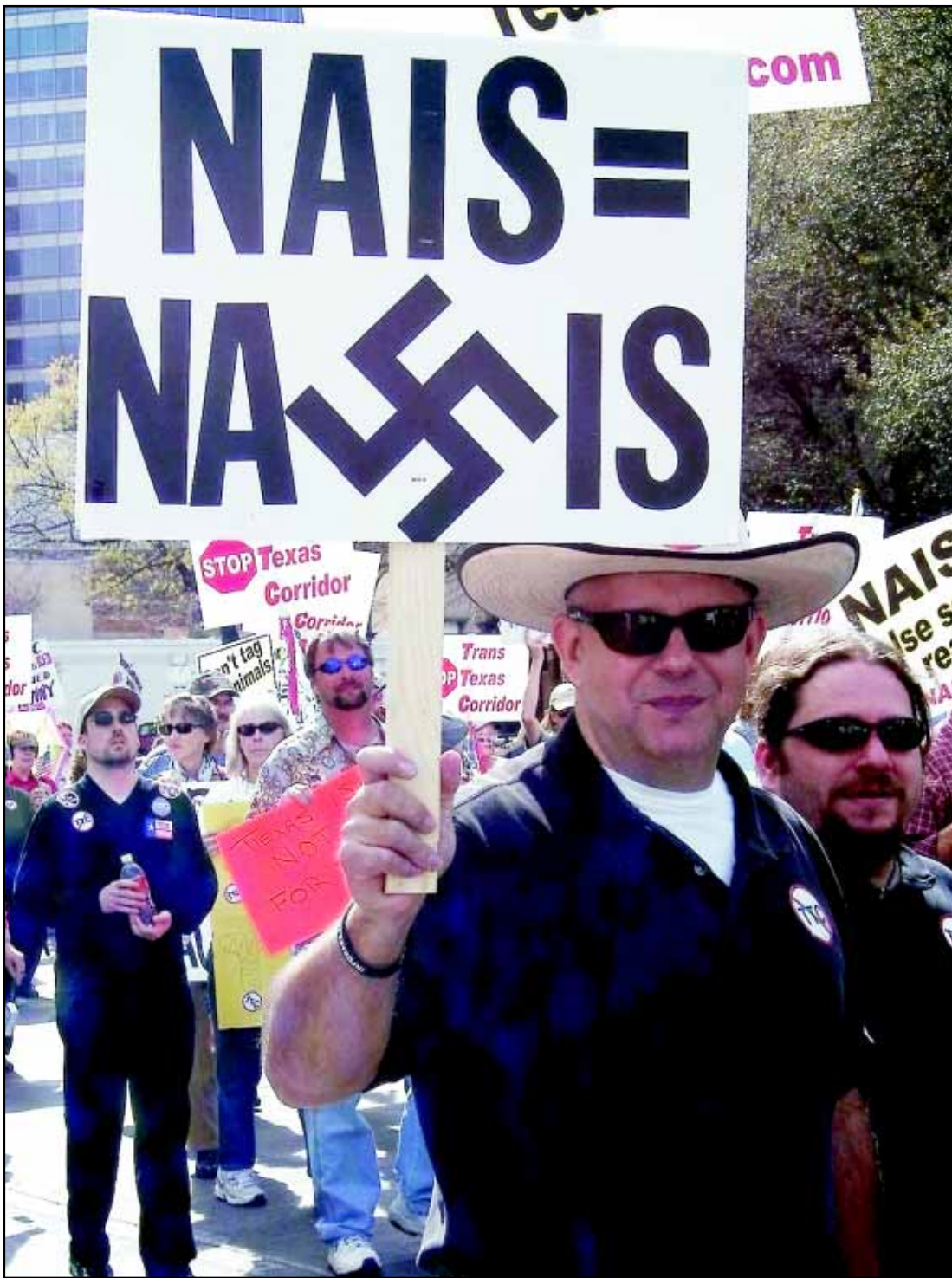
However, they can't start selling for another three years because they plan to use the organic label and their cattle were subjected to dipping tests by the USDA because of an attempt to track a quarantined animal.

Westcott said the experience with government intervention left them feeling violated and

Continued On Next Page

No Toll Roads, No Animal IDs

From Previous Page



SIGN OF THE TIMES - One unidentified protestor at the Don't Tag Texas rally showed his deep displeasure in a government program that tracks farm animals. - Photo By Martha Wood

distrustful.

The USDA contacted them about a calf they had purchased, saying it had been let out of quarantine too early and the agency needed to send out a representative from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"We were willing to cooperate at first," Westcott said. "But I thought they were very heavy-handed."

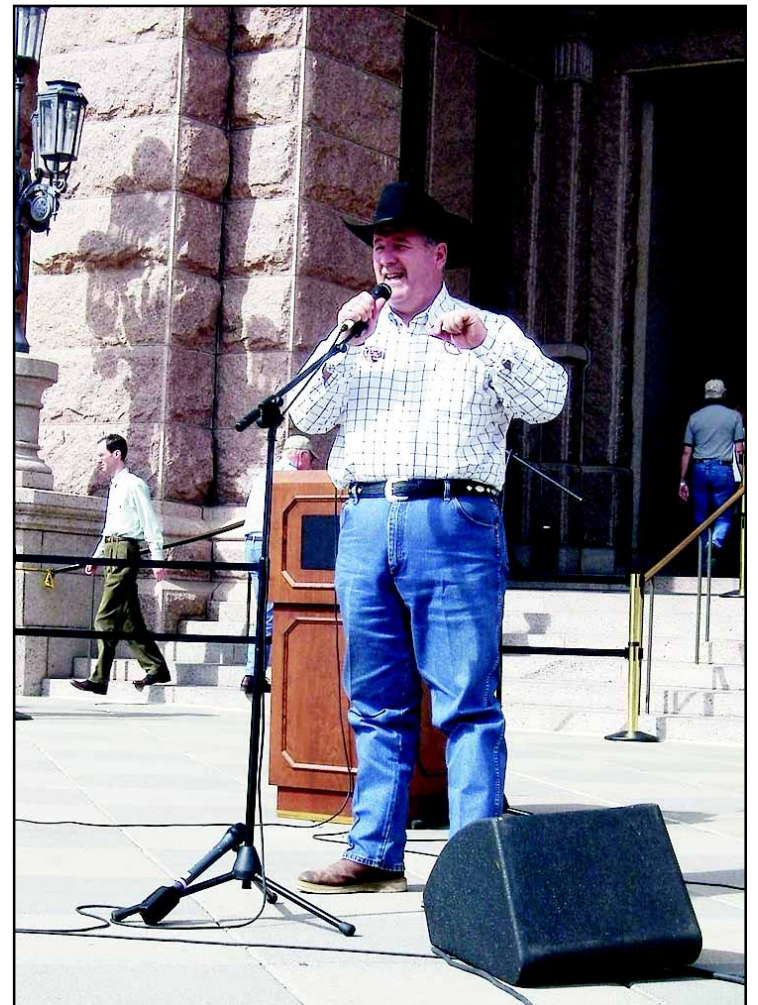
She said they showed up with all their equipment, took scratch tests on all their cattle,

put yellow quarantine paint on them and then insisted on putting every cow in a dip tank.

At one point, Westcott said, their best calf was dangling in the air and they had to get it down themselves. Also, three of their cattle were injured during the process.

When they had finished all of their testing, they checked the tag on the calf that it had when Westcott and Walker purchased it.

"It wasn't even the one they were looking for," Westcott said.



HANK GILBERT, the 2006 Democratic candidate for Texas Agriculture Commissioner and an organizer of the Don't Tag Texas event, said this protest was about independence from government control. - Photo By Martha Wood

Israel Moves Closer To Solar Power

TEL AVIV, Israel - The state of Israel made a move closer to ridding itself of fossil fuels last week.

A tender to build the nation's first solar power plant will be issued this year, according to the Ministry of Infrastructure.

The environmental activist group Greenpeace praised the announcement to finally stop delaying the plant's construc-

tion in Eshalim.

Nili Grossman, Greenpeace Mediterranean Energy Campaigner, said this step would help make Israel a global leader in renewable energy.

"Israel has immense potential to create a lucrative market in the export of renewable energy and free itself from its dependence on oil and coal," Grossman said.

The Israeli cabinet said in

2001 that by this year, 300 megawatts or two percent of the country's energy production would come from non-fossil fuel sources.

So far, the state has seemed to only manage five megawatts from alternatives methods.

The current cabinet has set a higher goal, saying that by 2020, 10 percent of the country's electricity would come via renewable sources.

In 2005, Greenpeace issued a report stating that the construction of solar power stations in Israel would generate NIS 810 million of annual profit and create 5,000 new jobs.

"The decision from the Israeli Government comes as the world is crying out for a plan on how to tackle the dilemma of how to provide the power we need, without fuelling climate change," said Sven Teske, Cli-

mate & Energy Campaigner, Greenpeace International.

Teske also urged all governments of the "sunbelt regions" to invest in solar thermal power stations.

These stations are a part of a blueprint recently released by Greenpeace International and the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC) for future with cheap, secure, and clean energy.



DON'T TAG TEXAS – Hundreds of Texans descended on the state capitol of Texas last Friday to tell the Legislature to stop a proposal for a statewide network of roads, and protect small farmers from the government attempting to track farm animals. — Photo By Martha Wood

Study Touts Clean Energy To Boost Michigan's Economy

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan – A new study released last week is touting clean energy as a way to boost the economy, reduce pollution, and save consumers money in the state of Michigan.

“Now is the time for Michigan to take bold steps towards becoming the epicenter of clean energy development,” said Mike Shriberg, Director of Environment Michigan and co-author of the report.

The study says that should Michigan make strong strides to renewable energy and commit to upgrading efficiency through 2020, the benefits would speak for themselves:

- 6,800 new jobs

- \$3.3 billion in new salaries
- \$2.2 billion in energy bill cost savings

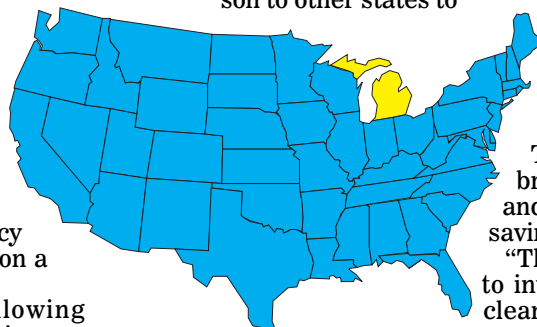
- 30 percent reductions in power plant pollution

To gain these benefits, the study recommends two policy changes: a mandate that 20 percent of the state's electricity come from renewable sources by 2020 and a fund for energy efficiency amounting to \$225 million a year.

As a result of following through with the policies, no new power plants would need to be constructed, and the money currently used to import energy would be redirected back into

the state, a tune of \$20 billion a year.

“Michiganders are sending the equivalent of \$1,700 per person to other states to



meet our energy needs,” said Kim Pargoff, Clean Energy Advocate with Environment Michigan. “With energy efficiency

and renewables, we keep our hard-earned money working for Michigan while reducing pollution.”

David Pettit, Consumer Associate for Public Interest Research Group in Michigan, called for a bolder plan that the one already proposed. The governor's plan would bring in a third of the jobs and about half the consumer savings.

“The first step in that plan is to invest in the cheapest and cleanest resource available – energy efficiency,” said Pettit.

Because of Michigan's industrial base, the state would become a global leader in research and development and

subsequent manufacturing of clean energy solutions, according to the peer-reviewed study – “Energizing Michigan's Economy: Creating Jobs, Reducing Pollution with Energy Efficiency and Renewable Electric Power.”

“Michigan has a once-in-a-generation chance to change course – from old and dirty fossil fuel-based energy to a more efficient economy powered by renewable energy,” concluded Shriberg. “The key is strong, visionary commitments from our leaders.”

Shriberg made his comments alongside Mayor Heartwell of Grand Rapids at Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center.



AARP Members Rally For Lower Electric Rates

1,200 Seniors Rally At Capitol For Lower Electric Rates

AUSTIN — An estimated 1,200 AARP-Texas members from every corner of the state — some boarding their buses as early as 4 a.m. — rallied at the south steps of the Texas Capitol Tuesday, Feb. 27, to demand an end to high electricity rates in Texas and health care reforms.

Seventeen buses, along with vans and personal vehicles, descended upon Austin shortly before noon to kick off three hours of frenzy, led off by a rally attended by several members of

the Legislature and a large press contingency.

Senator Juan Hinojosa of McAllen and Representative Sylvester Turner of Houston lead a group of legislators from both parties in publicly signing an AARP petition calling for the restoration of an electricity fund that protects low-income Texans, the prohibition of electric disconnections during the intense summer heat, and a provision to guarantee a rate based on the cost of providing electricity.

Some of the participants were also recognized in the Senate and a large number of them got

to visit with their legislators and staff. This was generally regarded as AARP's most suc-

cessful rally ever in Texas and the first one of its kind in nearly a decade.

Vikings Are Invading Waco March 24, 25

WACO — The Vikings are invading Waco during Viking Invasion IV, March 24 and 25, at Cameron Park East.

There will be an authentic Viking Village where craftsmen will demonstrate and

sell their wares. Shows and fighting demonstrations will feature the Jomsvikings, as well as North American Viking re-enactors.

While there is no admission charge, donations will be taken at the event with a portion of the

proceeds benefiting Fort Hood's Gold Star Family Support Center.

Tickets are \$30 to the Viking Feast banquet to be held on Saturday evening, March 24.

For information, call 254/366-0822.

U.S. Generals Threaten To Quit Over Iran Attack

WASHINGTON — The Sunday Times recently reported that Pentagon officials are hesitant about any U.S. military strikes against Iran.

As many as five U.S. general and admirals are prepared to resign should the White House order such a “reckless attack,” sources close to the Times said.

The Times quoted two anonymous sources with ties to British intelligence and the Pentagon about their alleged knowledge of the generals’ misgivings.

“All the generals are perfectly clear that they don’t have the military capacity to take Iran on in any meaningful fashion,” said one source. “Nobody wants to do it and it would be a matter of conscience for them.”

“There are enough people who feel this would be an error of judgment too far for there to be resignations,” he added.

There has never been a threat of revolt from U.S. generals on this scale.

The new U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is said to side with his senior commanders.

Vice President Dick Cheney had reiterated the administration’s stance the possibility of a nuclear attack on Iran.

However, many of the most notable presidential candidates in both parties have taken similar positions.

Candidates Sen. John

McCain, Sen. John Edwards, Sen. Hillary Clinton, and Sen. Barack Obama have all noted that “all options are on the table” with regard to handling Iran.

At dispute is Iran’s uranium enrichment program. The Islamic Republic has refused to accept the United Nations’ deadline to halt its program, claiming that it is for civilian energy purposes.

The week prior to the Times report, the second U.S. navy aircraft carrier strike group arrived in the Persian Gulf.

Analysts say that this escalation of ships in the Gulf is the administration’s way of provok-

ing an attack from Iran which the U.S. military would answer with overwhelming force.

Tensions have been mounting inside the U.S. military establishment against an attack on Iran. Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, rebuked U.S. intelligence has claiming that the Iranian government had supplied insurgents in Iraq with munitions.

Still, the U.S. Air Force is planning airstrikes on Iran, as well as a regime change, according to The New Yorker magazine.

Chances are that an attack on Iran would lead to more terrorist attacks and increased oil prices, say army chiefs.



‘Inconvenient Truth’ Wins Two Oscars

LOS ANGELES — The documentary that has transformed a former presidential contender into an international environment advocate won two Academy Awards recently.

“An Inconvenient Truth” took home the Oscar for best documentary feature and best song.

The best documentary award went to director Davis Guggenheim and producers Lawrence Bender and Laurie David.

The best song award went to Melissa Etheridge for the film’s musical theme, “I Need to Wake Up.”

The film is an adaptation of a slide show about the harms of global warming.

The winners shared the stage with the star of the film — former U.S. Vice President Al Gore — who called on all of humanity “to solve the climate crisis.”

“It’s not a political issue, it’s a moral issue. We have everything we need to get started with the possible exception of the will to act. That’s a renewable resource. Let’s renew it,” he said.

Gore lost the presidential election of 2000 to Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Gore has since left politics to advocate for the reduction of greenhouse gases that trap the sun’s heat in the earth’s atmosphere causing the climate to increase in temperature.

Although Gore’s profile has increased due to the film’s success, he has played down speculation that he might run for president in 2008.

Gore’s film is the nation’s third highest growing documentary ever. In the U.S., it sold \$24 million in tickets. Worldwide, it has sold \$45 million tickets and one million DVDs.

Religious Liberty Advocates Slam ‘First Freedom Project’

WASHINGTON — Religious liberty advocates slammed the Justice Department’s so-called “First Freedom Project.”

The project as outlined in a 43-page report is allegedly designed to protect religious liberty in the United States.

However, the head of Americans United for Separation of Church and State said the project reeks of hypocrisy.

“Expecting the Bush administration to defend religious liberty is a little like asking Col. Sanders to babysit your pet chicken,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United.

“This administration has repeatedly worked to destroy true religious freedom by merging church and state,” he added.

The new project was unveiled last Tuesday by U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales at the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee.

Gonzales reported there of

the department’s intervention in cases dealing with religion over the past six years.

Gonzales’ report shows the administration’s distorted view of the Constitution, according to Lynn.

While the report says the department is preventing religious discrimination in American workplaces, it shows otherwise.

In one case, the department has defended the Salvation Army in taking taxpayers’ money to run public social services and then firing staff who disagree with its beliefs.

Noted Lynn, “Thanks to the Justice Department, the Salvation Army could literally place newspaper ads reading, ‘Help Wanted for Government-Funded Jobs: No Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Liberal Christians, Atheists Or Gays Need Apply,’ and this would be perfectly acceptable to Gonzales. This is a perverse way of supposedly defending our religious freedom rights.”

The venues in which Gonzales

has promoted this new project is also troublesome for Lynn.

First, Gonzalez revealed the plan before the Southern Baptist Convention, an ultra-conservative religious denomination aligned with the Bush administration.

Then, the U.S. attorney general gave an exclusive interview to right-wing TV preacher Pat Robertson’s “700 Club.”

“Religious liberty is for everyone,” said Lynn. “but it seems clear this new initiative has more to do with keeping the administration’s Religious Right allies happy than advancing a great constitutional principle.”

Gonzales’ behavior should be too surprising, considering that the man who runs the project, Eric Treene, is an attorney who was formerly employed at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

The Becket Fund is a group that works to undermine the separation of church and state.

TXU Stops Permit Process For Eight Coal Plants

— Corp. Still Wants To Build Three Plants —

DALLAS — The biggest power producer in Texas announced last Thursday that it stopped its move to get permits for eight coal-fueled power plants in Texas.

The change in course was part of TXU Corporation’s \$32 billion buyout deal to private investors Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. and Texas Pacific Group.

Also part of the merger deal is TXU’s promise to cut rates for many of its 2.2 million customers, a majority of whom live in north Texas.

Eight Down

The Dallas-based company requested a stay for permits applying to seven coal-fueled plants under consideration before State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH).

An eighth permit not privy to the contested proceedings was also suspended.

TXU has \$12 billion in debt — the details of its management in the merger are still being worked out.

Three Left

TXU and its buyers, however, are continuing the push for construction of three coal-fire plants.

It remains to be seen whether environmentalist and consumer groups renew their battle to stop the building of these plants.

The groups as well as the city leaders of Dallas and Houston had argued that the carbon emissions from the proposed coal plants would add to global warming.

More Bidders, Dissenters It has been reported that

three other groups of investors were planning to make bids on TXU.

The three groups include The Blackstone Group, The Carlyle Group, and Hellman & Friedman LLC.

But while the business community has remained positive about the tentative merger, state lawmakers have been upset by the lack of government oversight in the sale.

Lawmakers have also questioned the necessity of TXU’s proposed rate cut in light of its last round of price increases.

Barbarians: The Sequel?

The proposed TXU buyout would be the largest of such transactions in history.

Should the buyout go through, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. would once again hold the title for the largest ever private equity deal.

In 1988, it held the position when it spent \$27.5 billion to buy RJR Nabisco.

The deal was the topic of the book “Barbarians at the Gate.”



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Farrakhan Calls For Religious Unity In Final Speech

— Jewish Groups Upset Over His 'Book List' —

DETROIT — People of faith from across the globe must reconcile their differences and work for peace, according to a fiery minister in what is said to be his last major sermon.

"If Jesus and Muhammad were on this stage, they would embrace each other with love. How come we ... can't embrace each other?" asked Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

The 73-year-old minister said that he believed that God is upset with the world's leaders because they would rather serve themselves than serve others less fortunate.

In his speech entitled "One Nation Under God," Farrakhan also called for the impeachment of President George W. Bush for his "wicked policies" and discouraged military service for youths.

Final Call

Farrakhan returned to the city where his sect of Islam was formed in 1930 to speak to thousands of supporters at Detroit's Ford Field at the end of a three-day convention.

The venue — where the National Football League's Detroit

Lions play — was not entirely full, though people packed the seats on the field and in the lower levels.

Farrakhan's sermon was his first public appearance since ceding leadership to a board of advisors before undergoing surgery to treat prostate cancer last fall.

"My time is up," Farrakhan said at the Saviours' Day address. "The Final Call can't last forever."

A national spokesman for the Nation of Islam has clarified that Farrakhan has not yet stepped down from his leadership role, noting that he is in "remarkable health."

"He's announced his intention to function in a different way than he has," said Minister Jamil Muhammad, who also downplayed speculation of the Farrakhan's successor.

Past Functions

Farrakhan has been a polarizing figure over the last three decades he has operated the Nation of Islam.

In one case, he was banned from entering Britain for "anti-Semitic and racially divisive

views," though he has long denied such accusations.

But his views once again infuriated members of the Jewish community in his last public speech.

In it, Farrakhan suggested a reading list of several "anti-Semitic tracts," according to the Anti-Defamation League.

"I am incensed that he would use that forum to refer to books that are of the most venomous anti-Semitic rhetoric and diatribe," said Rabbi Marc Schneier, founder and president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding.

One of the books mentioned was "Palestine Peace, Not Apartheid" by President Jimmy Carter.

Legacy

Despite his harsh rhetoric, historians note that Farrakhan was an important player in American politics and culture.

He not only transformed the Nation of Islam into a more extroverted organization, he also promoted African-American politics, empowered black entrepreneurs and communities, and advocated on behalf of pris-

oners, they say.

Two of his most notable achievements include supporting Jesse Jackson's bid for presidency in 1984 and organizing the Million Man March in 1995.

In 2000, after years of strife, Farrakhan reconciled with W.D. Mohammed, the son of longtime Nation of Islam leader Elijah Mohammed.

The younger Mohammad had disbanded the Nation of Islam

and moved his followers toward mainstream Islam — specifically Sunni Islam — after his father had passed away in the late 1970s.

Farrakhan later revived the Nation of Islam to promote black empowerment and nationalism.

Founded by Wallace D. Fard, the Nation had originally attracted black people in Detroit with calls for self-improvement and separation from whites.

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Virginia Legislature Apologizes For Slavery

RICHMOND, Va. — Though symbolic, the Virginia General Assembly recently passed a resolution apologizing for the state's historic role in the institution of African slavery.

The measure, which fails to carry the weight of law, expressed "profound regret" for slavery as well as for "the exploitation of Native Americans." Both the House and Senate approved the bill unanimously

via a voice vote on the grounds of the former Confederate Capitol.

The vote coincided with the 400th anniversary of Jamestown, Virginia, the location of arrival for the first African slaves in 1619.

Since then, the state of Virginia has struggled with the historical impact of institutionalized slavery.

After the Civil War, the state leaders suppressed black voters

with poll taxes and literacy tests, and in the 1950s and 1960s, they resisted federally-ordered school desegregation.

However, in recent years, Virginia has attempted to reconcile its segregationist past.

In 2004, the legislature creating a scholarship fund for blacks whose schools were closed between 1954 and 1964.

Reconciliation has been rough for Delegate Frank D.

Hargrove who has received criticism for saying that "black citizens should get over" slavery.

The 80-year-old Republican, however, voted for the apology resolution as well as co-sponsored a resolution for his state to honor "Juneteenth," a holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States.

The apology resolution stated that state-sponsored slavery

"ranks as the most horrendous of all depredations of human rights and violations of our founding ideals in our nation's history, and the abolition of slavery was followed by systematic discrimination, enforced segregation, and other insidious institutions and practices toward Americans of African descent that were rooted in racism, racial bias, and racial misunderstanding."

Chamber Seeking Vendors For Upcoming CASI Chili Cookoff

CLIFTON — Clifton Chamber of Commerce is seeking arts and crafts booth vendors for the upcoming first Texas Heritage Festival and CASI-sanctioned Chili Cookoff, slated April 14 and 15, on the end of Ave. D in front of the V.F.W. building.

Arts and crafts will be set up on the south end of North Ave. D. with 10x10-foot spaces rent-

ing for \$35 per day. The arts and crafts event will be held on Saturday, April 14, only while the cookoff will run both Saturday and Sunday.

Planned are food booths, a children's area, and entertainment featuring entertainers who are asked to volunteer. Time slots will be assigned.

Arts and crafts vendors will be responsible for their own tents and chairs.

Twenty-five judges are sought for the chili cookoff. Volunteers may contact Bill Beck of the Clifton Basonic Lodge for more information.

CONTACT: Clifton Chamber of Commerce, 675-3720.

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THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Let Them Have Healthcare

The American people demand healthcare now.

The people want the federal government to be their sole health insurance provider so bad that they are willing to pay higher taxes for the service.

According to the same NEW YORK TIMES/CBS News poll, 46 percent of Republicans said they would pay more taxes for federalized healthcare, too.

Wait, it gets better.

Citizens crossed party lines when it came to extending healthcare to children. The survey found that 84 percent want to government to cover all eight million uninsured children in America.

So give it to them already!

There are more than 46 million uninsured Americans. That's 15 percent of the population. And the ones that do have insurance are seeing their healthcare costs rise and their employers cutting back or dropping health insurance from their plans.

But while 62 percent of those surveyed said that the Democrats would be more likely to change the health system, the unfortunate reality is that none of the front runners for president on the Democratic ticket support the people's wishes.

Neither Sens. Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, nor Barack Obama have backed single-payer national health insurance.

Right now, Dennis Kucinich is the only

Democratic presidential candidate on the level. He recently became one of 53 co-sponsors of legislation (HR 676) that would bring single-payer to every American.

Plans put forth by Clinton, Edwards, and Obama would only serve to strengthen a wasteful healthcare industry whose motive is profit before people.

Single-payer is the only way to go that would work for America, and Kucinich knows it.

The rising costs of America's healthcare system can be attributed in part to the fact that its citizens spend twice as much on healthcare as other industrialized nations.

However, the failure of this system is being cloaked by an inefficient privatized bureaucracy.

Nearly one-third of all healthcare dollars are currently consumed by paperwork, commissions, advertising, and profits.

By having one healthcare insurance provider — namely the federal government — more than \$300 billion per year could be saved on administrative paperwork alone, and Americans would still have comprehensive coverage.

In other words, Americans would have their choice of doctors and hospitals, and physicians would be free to practice medicine and be paid without all the corporate overhead.

In essence, single-payer keeps healthcare simple, and Americans like their healthcare kept simple.

— Nathan Diebenow

Salado To Kick-Off Spring Art Show On March 24, 25

SALADO — The Village of Salado is getting ready for its 7th Annual Wildflower Art Show, March 24-25 (9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday) at the Civic Center, with free admission.

Artists and artisans from Texas and throughout the Southwest will be featured. Works will feature oil, acrylics, watercolors, pastels, and mixed media including woodwork, sculpture, jewelry, glassworks, metal work and handmade clothing. Many favorites such as Guy Morrow's original oil paintings, Bob Wolf Creations, and Pegasus Pottery will be returning to this year's show.

CONTACT: Salado Chamber of Commerce, (254) 947-5040, or <salado.com>.



Jerry Hunsinger Oil Painting

Images From January's 'No To War' March On Washington, D.C.



Photos By
Beth Freed



Terry Levan

Mary Warren

March On D.C. Tells Congress 'No' To War

By BETH FREED

SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Bush has requested an increase of 21,500 soldiers, and while Democrats promise a new direction, activists against the war made their voice heard at the National Capitol in late January. More than 3,000 U.S. casualties in four years and 1,802 Iraqi deaths just in January are much more than too many.

"It's our job to be out here today," said Mary Warren of Dallas. "People in Congress aren't doing their job, so we've got to get out and do ours and make them do theirs."

A contingency of anti-war Texans joined almost 500,000 demonstrators in Washington D.C., according to organizing group United for Peace and Justice. Lone Star flags with "Texans say no to war!" painted on them proved that not all Texans consider war the best path to democracy.

"Who else would know better than Texans?" added Warren. "We were the first place invaded by the Bush regime and we've suffered the longest and we can tell more stories."

The demonstration's agenda called for Congress to stop funding the war. Congress needs to exercise their power to balance the branches of government, according to United for Peace and Justice officials.

"We want to appeal to our congressmen to stop funding this war, to bring our troops home and take care of them when they get here," said Carol Ezell.

Many protestors also called for the impeachment of Bush (or Cheney first, then Bush). However, some of the folks from Texas feared that pursuing impeachment would be a divisive strategy.

In addition to such celeb activists as Rev. Jesse Jackson and good ole actors Susan and Tim, youth activists and Iraq veterans spoke on the National Mall. Garrett Reppenhagen, a sniper who served a year in Iraq with the First Infantry Division, represented Iraq Veterans Against the War.

"When I served in war, I thought I was serving honorably," he said. "I thought I was going because our country needed its defense and because there was an injustice in the world that needed to be stopped.

"Instead, I was sent to war without proper planning, without proper training, without proper equipment and for causes that have proved fraudulent."

After about an hour of inspirational speeches, the people got ready to reclaim the streets. The scene was practically out of a circus, with giant puppets, Lady Liberty on stilts and body paint galore.

Seasoned activists, both the young at heart and the youth, did not seem to have any disillusion that their actions and voices would have a direct effect on the President's policies in Iraq. Of course, there was hope to that Congress could be swayed, but the spectacle seemed to indicate that Bush's shock and awe no longer held the public's gaze and support.

With drums, bells, songs and shouts, the demonstrators faithfully represented the majority of this nation that is against the occupation of Iraq. Their voices joined together to capture Congress's attention, but more importantly, to give each other energy to continue the work at home.



— Photo By Beth Freed

Spanish Firm Inks Deal For Hwy. 121 Toll Operations

ARLINGTON — A private Spanish firm inked a deal last week to operate North Texas' first toll road for the next 50 years.

The almost \$3 billion deal is being touted as the first public-private highway construction agreement in Texas.

The Madrid-based Cintra agreed to pay the state \$2.1 billion and share \$700 million in toll revenue during the time frame of the contract.

In return, the company will design, build, and collect tolls on a large part of State Highway 121 that runs through Collin and Denton counties.

Cintra is the same private company that won a 2004 contract to develop plans for the Trans-Texas Corridor.

Skanska BOT of Sweden and Macquarie Infrastructure Group of Australia lost the 121 contract.

The Texas Transportation Commission has yet to ratify the deal.

'Ejikashun Policy Anal-ists' Wage Fascist Assault On Teachers

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Don't start nothin' you can't finish, unless you've got a good alibi."

As I threatened last week, I'll finish my education ravings with the Republican Fascist assault on teachers.

I should point out that, at least in Texas, very few teachers are left.

Texas teachers are notorious wimps.

When Neighbor Bush's pit bulls started in on the profession, teachers did what all good Texans do in a political pinch: They rolled over and died.

Most of those with any sense either retired or left the profession rather than take on an unpopular fight with a popular demagogue.

The rest turned belly up, barred their throats and taught the state-prescribed propaganda: All that matters is arithmetic and an uninformed opinion.

Cut your hair, pull up your britches and tuck in your shirt-tail.

Of course the entire education reform movement was mounted in support of a basic fascist theme: Anybody can teach. Anybody can write. Just like anybody can memorize formulae and do math.

Of course not everybody can sing or act, but who needs to?

All we need is math and science.

Television will do the rest.

Not so surprising, the Icon guys got an i-mail (that's iconoclast-speak for IDIOT-mail) recently from a fascist Austin (where else?) think-tank (think like us or we send tanks) advocating cheaper, dumber teachers.

If I work on it, do you think I could get a few more parenthetical expressions in that last paragraph?

Never mind.

This one comes from an education policy analyst for the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

What's an "education policy analyst?"

Is somebody stupid enough to pay you to be one?

Is that anything like "pencil-necked desk monkey who couldn't teach hogs to eat slop in a leap year with a hot shot and a box of two-by-fours, but can damned sure sit around drinking four-dollar coffee and tell other people how to make children learn stuff that God gave them sense enough not to want to know?"

This waste of internet space suggests that, rather than trained teachers, we can just hire old, worn-out retired engi-

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



neers and research scientists, give them six weeks of education theory and turn them loose on our children.

Or, more correctly, turn our children lose on them.

So, next time the ejikashun policy anal-ists of the world get sick, maybe they should get the cure from a retired biologist or veterinarian whose had six weeks training.

That would save everybody a lot of time and trouble.

I, for example, have wasted a perfectly good Sunday morning refuting idiocy that anybody with half sense and one eye ought to know makes less sense than cleaning oven parts with gasoline.

Which I would suggest as another alternative to wasting my time suggesting that the ham-handed cretins who designed our freeway interchanges and invented methadone, Vioxx or Firestone SUV tires are somehow capable of teaching now that they're wearing Velcro-fastened shoes.

So I won't even talk about the complexities of brain-based knowledge, accommodating varied learning styles or inclusion of the quarter of our student population who are emotionally disturbed, handicapped, homeless or educationally deprived by parents who couldn't raise a parakeet or pay for simple child nutrition, but damned sure can hire a right-wing lawyer to harass the public school system.

And I won't bother the professional thinkers with the notion that we are dealing with children who have no parents, only advocates.

So I won't bring up the idea that the real educational problem in this country is parents who do not insist that their children behave considerately in polite society, who believe it is an imposition to insist that their little darlings, whom they have actually seen this week for a total of 45 minutes, simply listen to instruction without interrupting to answer their cell phones, talk to their classmates about their social lives or accuse teachers of sexual abuse or racial discrimination if they are forced to do their homework.

I won't warn them that I am talking about 75 percent of today's children who will treat their old-timers like hyenas on a kitten, because anyone who has set foot in a public school

classroom in the last decade would know that.

In the legendary words of Bryan, the dog from Family Guy, it's just easier to call you stupid.

And if you've never watched Family Guy, you're farther out of touch than I thought.

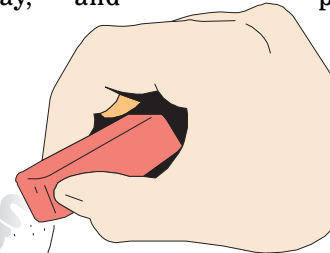
So let me just correct some of the more blatant idiocy in the i-mail:

The piece says 25 percent of Texas teachers, between 2001 and 2004, taught outside their field of study. True, as far as it goes. But Texas law allows school districts to permit any teacher to teach one course outside his field. So that includes things like an English teacher sponsoring the yearbook or a drama class, classroom teachers supervising P.E., chemistry teachers instructing algebra, history teachers in economics, etc. The number of history teachers taking over calculus courses is almost infinitesimal. We have trouble finding math, science and (surprisingly) English teachers because we don't pay them as much as they can earn elsewhere.

The Texas Public Policy Foundation e-mail also blamed the teacher shortage on "powerful teachers' unions." Okay, first, there are no teachers' unions in the State of Texas. Teacher's unions are against the law. So much for credibility. Second, the four faltering incompetent teachers' associations are so powerless that the state spent a billion dollars on a lame-brained series of tests that are now being scrapped because they never worked. Exactly as teachers and their associations said. They were ignored. If Texas teachers are so powerful, why are beginning teachers paid less than Capitol Hill secretaries? Why do they have no state health insurance, unlike trash pickers in state parks? Why do Texas teachers accumulate less retirement than other state employees, even though teachers pay more than 70 percent of the state retirement system costs? The Texas Public Policy Foundation employees obviously can write. Not well, but they can. Can't they read? The elected state school board insists that alternative education plans be rigorous because otherwise, **THEY'RE A STUPID IDEA!**

It is far more important to know how to teach than what to teach. Those who have worked in the private sector are usually the worst prepared to teach any subject. An engineer, for example, is usually interested in and has an aptitude for math. He likes it. Only about 10 per-

cent of his students do. Further, the rest don't. In fact, most of them hate it. They're taking the course because they have to, and, in the case of higher math courses, they will never use the knowledge. Quick, when was the last time you needed to know how to do a quadratic equation? If you are an engineer or statistician, maybe yesterday. If you are, say, and



ejikayshun policy anal-ist, my guess would be, freshman algebra. Teaching children why it is important to understand, even if you do not use, those concepts is what teaching is all about. And the retired engineers and scientists and ejikayshun policy analysts rarely get it. Teachers' stock in trade is learning, not English, math and science. Further, it is important to know how to teach children who cannot learn beyond a certain point.

We are not creatures with interchangeable parts. Some people can't throw a 90 mph fastball, sculpt a Michelangelo, understand logarithms or figure out how quarks work. But there are those who don't understand logarithms who can sculpt, and vice versa. Some can do both, but can't sit in a chair for more than five minutes. Education is about doing what you can and appreciating the rest. Ninety-five percent of Texans will never need to know how to do calculus. Fifty-four percent will, however, need to know how to do basic accounting. Which public schools no longer teach with a handful of exceptions that offer it as an elective. That is the wisdom of education reform. We no longer pattern the public school system after our lives. We pattern it after cheap.

What the Texas Public Policy Foundation propaganda is about is not education.

It is about *paying* for education.

If a company wants better engineers, they offer better salaries and benefits.

Yet the Texas Public Policy Foundation is unwilling to apply the same logic to public education.

Or is it that they oppose public education altogether?

After all, the best people send their children to private schools; it's unfair that they should have

to educate servants.

Educate them, and they just want better pay.

Education has problems for one reason.

We don't put enough money into it.

Teaching is hard.

Teaching 20 people at one time is impossible.

You can teach some of those people some of the time, you can teach some of those people any of the time, but you can't teach all of those people all the time.

The numbers are overwhelming even to the best of teachers.

But the best of teachers can actually teach all of those people something.

It just may not be math or English; it may be a more important lesson, like not stabbing people you don't like.

It takes no less study to become a teacher as a doctor; just fewer classroom hours.

Most people with the talent and intellect to become good teachers simply won't undertake that much work for so little remuneration.

Skimping on the learning curve isn't a solution to anything,

I know.

After 25 years in the newspaper business, I became a teacher.

I have alternative certifications in economics, history, government, English and journalism.

As a teacher, I started out behind, and I've stayed behind.

Alternative teachers, if they are honest, will say the same thing.

The attrition rate for alternative certification teachers is twice that of regular teachers.

The problems of education are the problems of this society multiplied ten-fold.

You think a bunch of gummars looking for a hobby to supplement their fat retirement checks will make up for children without parents who are regularly lied to by their government, told on television that greater consumption of everything from drugs to dry goods will solve all their problems, offered the alternative of learning the "right answer" from the education Gestapo or being branded a failure β and being treated like soulless automatons just to be handed a meaningless piece by a guy in a black dress?

But don't take my word for it. Ask any kid.

Of course he or she could be lying to you.

We've made them very good at it.

Groundwater Conservation Districts: Can They Save Our Water?

By SHARON WILSON
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Tomorrow morning, when you get up, do not turn on the water to make your coffee. Do not brush your teeth or shave. Do not wash your face or shower. Do not wash your clothes, your dishes, or your car. Do not water your plants, your lawn, your crops, or your animals. Do not turn on your water at all.

One may ask why I would suggest doing such a bizarre thing and my answer is that you might need the practice.

Many Texas Counties are facing two critical issues regarding water: contamination and depletion.

As county commissioners work toward establishing the greatly needed Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCD), some important issues about what a GCD can and cannot do for residents desperately need clarification.

A GCD has no control over the main offender in the usage and contamination of our water because the main offender, the oil and gas industry, is exempt from any local control.

A GCD has no jurisdiction and no effect over water usage and contamination by the oil and gas industry. That is why it is crucial that we demand repeal of the exemption so that we all play by the same rules.

Contamination

Injection wells are located in counties throughout the Barnett Shale area and anywhere else where fracing occurs.

In Wise County, we have 27 commercial injection wells and approximately 200 private injection wells that drilling companies use to pump hazardous waste into the ground.

This hazardous waste includes but is not limited to the following:

- fumaric acid
- toluene
- hydrochloric acid
- ethylene glycol (antifreeze)
- aromatic hydrocarbons
- methanol
- benzene (highly carcinogenic)
- salt is the main offending ingredient and renders the



water unusable

The only chemicals not allowed in injection wells are high levels of radioactive materials, medical waste, and high levels of PCBs. Please note the use of the modifier, **high** levels.

Who determines what a high level is? Who monitors these wells to guarantee that they are operated according to regulation?

Unbelievably, the wells are self-monitored by the oil and gas industry!

In addition, the EPA does not regulate the chemicals that are injected by the oil and gas industry into or near our underground water supply.

Drilling in the Barnett Shale area is expected to increase dramatically in the future. The increased drilling significantly elevates the probability of water contamination. A GCD will monitor our water for contamination.

However, the GCD also becomes responsible for any contamination, which translates into taxpayers paying for the results of that contamination.

Since the oil and gas industry is self-monitored or essentially unmonitored, there is no way to prove responsibility. Just ask residents of Panola County or other areas where water contamination by drilling has occurred how they manage having all their water brought in from outside sources. Or ask about the deaths and illnesses due to water contamination.

Lifting the exemptions on oil and gas would allow monitoring and local control, which would create more jobs for county residents and decrease the probability of contamination of our ground water.

Depletion

Barnett Shale wells require fracturing of the limestone formation to release the oil and gas trapped within. Water, sand, and hazardous chemicals are injected under high pressure down the drilling hole to fracture the limestone.

Each fracing uses between 1.5 and six million gallons of fresh water. According to Halliburton at the Petroleum Technology Transfer Council,

each well is fraced an average of 17 times.

During a 17-month period from June 2004 to November 2005, the Railroad Commission issued 421 drilling permits in Wise County. Not every permit resulted in a well.

Since water usage by the oil and gas industry is not monitored, we cannot accurately determine how much Wise County water is used for drilling.

However, using the 421 permits issued figure, we can create estimated, hypothetical best-case and worst-case scenarios. The best-case: 421 wells fraced 17 times each using 1.5 million gallons of water is almost 11 billion gallons of water. The worst-case: 421 wells fraced 17 times each using six million gallons of water is almost 43 billion gallons of water.

After fracing, the water containing hazardous chemicals is pumped into injection wells.

Technology exists to clean up and reuse the frac water, but currently no drilling company is routinely using that technology.

GUEST COMMENTARY

A GCD will monitor our ground water levels, alert the public when the level is low, and enforce water rationing as needed.

Water rationing is necessary to preserve our most precious resource. However, the oil and gas industry is exempt from any local rationing enforcement.

Solution

Lifting the exemptions on oil and gas would allow monitoring and local control of water usage by the oil and gas industry. This will require more labor and will create more jobs for Wise County residents.

Plainly put, county residents will pay for any water contamination and suffer water rationing while the main offender, the oil and gas industry, continues using billions of gallons of water and then pumping the contaminated remains into the ground and all the while making record-breaking profits.

The industry can easily afford to play by the same rules that residents do.

Texas residents are a diverse mixture of ethnicities and political viewpoints but there is one thing we all have in common: 100 percent of us drink water.

Promoting a GCD as a panacea for water issues is misinformed and misleading.

A GCD is a good and necessary start, but we need to demand repeal of oil and gas exemptions before a GCD can fully protect our water.

The Wise County Active Democrats are ready to unite Texans to lobby for the repeal of oil and gas exemptions.

I sincerely thank Phyllis Glazer of Mothers Organized to Stop Environmental Sins for mentored Tracy Smith, Treasurer, Wise County Active Democrats, who in turn mentored me on this important issue.

Sharon Wilson is a single mother, a resident of Decatur, and a member of Wise County Active Democrats, who are seeking to unite Wise County residents to lobby for the repeal of oil and gas exemptions to protect our groundwater. For more information on the issue, visit < www.wisedems.org >.

The Disease That Killed Freedom

BY SAM OSBORNE
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

A new mental health problem has emerged in our land. Its genesis is as old as mankind's first disagreements and the political bickering that eventually ensued. However, a new virulent and potentially freedom killing form of political disagreement came to life during the 2000 election that let George W. Bush into the White House. It then incubated in the neocon hothouse at 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, and has now grown and expanded to pathological proportions in extremist members of the political and religious right.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Bush and Cheney and their fanatical followers are afflicted with a mental malady that might best be termed culturopathic.



Sam Osborne

Though Sidney Blumenthal in his book "How Bush Rules: Chronicles of a Radical Regime," does not use the term, "culturopath," he well reveals the thinking of one so afflicted.

Blumenthal recounts a New York Times Magazine piece in which reporter Ron Suskind describes a conversation he had in which

a senior White House aide describes his "faith-based" school of political thought."

"The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.' I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're

history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'"

The common symptoms exhibited by culturopaths are: a belief that anything that they "say" constitutes a "truer" form of reality that is revealed by the cause-and-effect view that has come to be held by Western Civilization. Thus, that which our culture considers to be a rationally plugged-in view of existence, life, and all of the things that we humans can become aware of, is frequently found to be immaterial to the culturopath.

A culturopath like Bush brings something new into existence by doing no more than saying that it is so (well, for things that do not appear immediately,

like democracy in Iraq or a thriving economy, it needs to be firmly said over and over). If the culturopath proclaims that something exists, but it is not readily apparent and becomes broadly doubted by others, the culturopath disregards what was previously claimed to be true (mission accomplished) and just say it anew in slightly different terms.

If some long establish and respected cultural institution, like science, presents an unacceptably "inconvenient truth," the culturopath discredits the scientific position by proclaiming that there exists an opposing "inconvenient truth" that pooh-poohs the other one (after all, one opinion is as good as another, but none are as true as what the culturopath says is so).

Added to these tactical symptoms is the culturopath's limited capacity for empathy (beyond a wanna-be identification with people perceived to have power, or those considered to be subserviently dependent and of like-mindedness). He also exhibits a disdain for rational thought, and has a self-centered concept of all that is good and permissible. These traits lead to a strategic mode of daily living in which the culturopath constantly devalues differing people, places and things.

Those viewed as bad, foolish or evil are to be attacked and destroyed with a continuous barrage of name-calling that pejoratively brands them as un-American, un-Christian, unfit, unthinkable, or at least disappointing.

Thus, the culturopath looses a constant harangue against liberals, public education, undocumented workers, abortion, Muslims, atheists, homosexuals, global warming, teachers, taxes, the separation of church and state, welfare, labor unions, evolution, Hollywood, universal health care, the UN, Social Security, pacifists, the free press, stem cell research, and anything else that reflects some order that is not of their own god's making—and only they have been blessed with the ability to know what that is.

In the culturopathic thinking of the radical right, politics is just another form of war and they take no prisoners and will not hesitate to destroy anyone or anything that gets in their way.

Sam Osborne is the former editorial page editor of Gannett News's IOWA CITY PRESS CITIZEN and prior to that a college professor and business department chair, Ellsworth Community College

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Deliberate Miscarriage of Justice

Two Border Patrol agents, Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compeon, have been sent to prison for trying to arrest a drug smuggler, Osbaldo Aldrete-Davila. He brought nearly \$1 million of marijuana across our border in his van. After a brief scuffle, he ran back across the border into Mexico. The agents fired at him because he pointed a gun at them several times as he ran. He was shot once in the buttocks.

The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security sent agents to Mexico to find Aldrete-Davila, offer him immunity, free medical care, and bring him back to testify against the two agents. They also helped him file a \$5 million lawsuit against the U.S. Border Patrol.

The agents' trial was a miscarriage of justice in many ways. While Aldrete-Davila was waiting to testify against the two agents, he was arrested for attempting to bring another load of drugs into our country. The prosecutors set him free and suppressed mention of his drug arrest so as not to harm his credibility. Also, during deliberations, three jurors wanted to vote not guilty but the jury foreman claimed the judge said they must vote to convict. Go to <www.thenewamerican.com> for more details.

Many thousands of citizens are in an uproar over this case. Also, at least 75 U.S. Congressmen have introduced legislation to release the two agents from custody. President Bush pardoned four drug smugglers on Dec. 21, 2006. He can easily pardon the two agents. All he needs is to hear from many more citizens.

Sincerely,
Kathie D. Shaffer, Sylmar, CA

To The Editor:

Why didn't the folks responsible for providing for the medical needs of our wounded service men and women tell the White House that things were not going well? Because Bush does not want bad news; he does not know how to get anything done and does not want anyone letting the public know there are problems. Everything is absolutely perfect on the Deciders watch and it is always some else's fault anyway.

A whole bunch of people have learned the hard way that no news is good news. Those that have opened their mouths anyway have been trashed for their candor—smeared have been Paul O'Neill, Richard Clark, General Anthony Zinni, Michael Brown, Hans Blix, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, Joseph Wilson, Colin Powell, and French fries to name but a few.

Like at Abu Ghraib, the usual suspects have been rounded up—

anyone distant from the White House—and offered as sacrificial lambs of blame for not telling Bush what he did not want to hear. After all, he's the Decider and not the Listener.

Hey, we got trouble with a capital 'B' and that rhymes with 'P' and that stands for 'propaganda.' So, business as usual: hear no evil, see no evil, and do no good.

Sam Osborne, West Branch, IA

To The Editor:

Red Chinese and Yellow American Leaders

I wish to speak out against the 'trade' with Red China being promoted in congress and local governments after these public officials have, of course, abandoned their posts and public trusts to be wined and dined on paid junkets to Communist China only to come back extolling the virtues of aid and trade to that evil regime whose government still refers to America as "the main enemy" and whose military continues to threaten us with their missiles built with Western technology supplied by our own treasonous leaders (remember "Chinagate"?).

Red China's products have been shown to be produced extensively by forced labor from death camps, worse than those of NAZI Germany, implementing production through starvation, torture, and execution for failure to meet production quotas, not to mention Red China's reported forced abortions, traffic in human organs from political or religious prisoners killed to order, and the kidnapping of thousands of American prisoners of war from Korea and Vietnam for forced labor and unspeakably inhuman live 'medical' experiments covered up by our leaders.

The truth is that Communist China's so-called industrial boom has been subsidized by our tax dollars through the U.S. Export-Import Bank and other agencies to the tune of untold billions of dollars over the years.

We must stop our treasonous leaders from continuing to finance our deadly enemies and instead get off the backs of American business so we can re-establish American supremacy and force the barbarians of Red China's government into oblivion and China will truly be free.

I wish to urge all concerned citizens to see: <www.JBS.org> (search: china trade) and PROTEST aid or 'trade' with Communist China locally and in congress.

Sincerely,
Ed Nemechek, Landers, CA

DST Begins On Sunday

CRAWFORD — U.S. citizens will have more than a month extra of Daylight Saving Time this year due to a new law that moves the start of DST from the first Sunday in April to the second Sunday in March, running through the first Sunday in November, rather than ending on the last Sunday in October.

This Sunday, March 11, at 2 a.m. residents will "spring forward" by moving the their timepieces forward one hour, effectively moving an hour daylight from the morning to the evening.

Iraq: Massive Hemorrhage

BY SAUL B. WILEN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The Iraq War will go down in history as the "Republican War."

It was initiated by a Republican President in 2003 based on faulty intelligence, unrealistic expectations and false pretenses. The prosecution of the war has been fraught with mistakes, misjudgments and misrepresentations that have led to the mounting deaths, now greater than 3100 Americans, and tens of thousands of Americans with wounds, injuries and disabilities. Many of these disabilities, physical and psychological, are permanent and will require life-long care.

Dire State of Iraq

This war can be characterized as a continuing massive hemorrhage with no end in sight and without any possibility of a positive transfusion. The Republicans in Congress hold on for dear life to the notion that we will win. They facilitated this war over the past four years as the majority party in the last Congress, and now as the minority party, based on rules which have stifled debate in the Senate. Their actions and pro-war zeal have facilitated the worsening of the hemorrhage that is symptomatic of the dire state of Iraq. Republicans in the Congress have played a major role in prolonging the war and escalating the costs to America in lives, resources, potential and deviation from dealing with major needs at home. The massive hemorrhage of resources which continues will never be recouped.

Political Strife

As a result, the United States has entered an era of worsening political strife where both major political parties relate to each other in an atmosphere of mutual mistrust, disdain, efforts to intentionally discredit the other for political purposes and outright misrepresentations of the facts. America's national unity in a time of war is hemorrhaging along with U.S. credibility internationally. The trust for our highest elected officials by the American people has been undermined by the misguided policies instituted in secrecy, without accountability and the required constitutional requirements of checks and balances. This has been perpetuated in the name of progress in developing stability and democracy for Iraq and in the name of security for the United States. The hemorrhage due to blatant fraud and corruption on the part of some American contractors

GUEST COMMENTARY

in Iraq further drains confidence and support.

Demise of the Coalition

The "Coalition of the Willing," touted from the beginning of the war as the bulwark of international support, has been progressively hemorrhaging well over time. The few remaining countries are abandoning the U.S. in the war effort. Only Britain, South Korea, Poland, Australia, Georgia, Rumania and Denmark remain. They represent approximately 15,960 troops, only 11.4 percent of the total coalition troops in Iraq.

The British, with approximately 7100 troops are expected to start withdrawing within the next few weeks decreasing by 1600 and then more by summer. The British state that the Iraqis in Basra and the south can now assume responsibility for their own security. The British and the Americans have declared success in the south. But, the police force is still unable to respond adequately and it is frequently in conflict with British troops. However, experts indicate that Basra and the surrounding provinces are controlled by radical and rival Shiite militias and the British withdrawal essential seeds total control of the south to the Shiites. Ethnic cleansing has already occurred.

The Italians and the Slovaks have already left. The South Koreans and the Danes plan to start withdrawing troops as well.

American Plan

The United States plan is to try to secure Baghdad, a very dangerous and costly process that will certainly continue the massive hemorrhage process. However, there is no known long term plan to do what will be done should Baghdad be secured. U.S. troops are targets

for retaliation, are unable to quell the sectarian violence and are drawing negative outside influences and terrorists such as al Qaeda into Iraq. The Iraqi civil war will continue despite American efforts. The insurgents and terrorists are changing their tactics to target more American troops. The present developing troop surge and changes in U.S. military tactics only serve to put more American troops directly into the line of fire to be killed and maimed in much greater numbers.

Iraqi Dilemma

American troops continue to hemorrhage even when they return home for care of their war wounds. The Department of the Army has turned a blind eye to the patient problems, and the inadequate and poor conditions of the outpatient services available after acute hospitalizations. Veterans' benefits for the troops have been systematically eroded by this administration and the previous Republican controlled Congress. This hemorrhage will continue for many of these injured and disabled troops for the rest of their lives.

Certainly not least, the massive hemorrhage exists and continues for the Iraqi people who suffer, are injured, killed and even murdered every day. Iraqi society and its economy are hemorrhaging daily as their most productive citizens (now approximately two million) leave. The responsibility is in no small part due to the continued presence of American troops. The United States contributes to Iraq's turmoil by the destabilizing factors inherent in occupation.

Perspective

This massive hemorrhage can only continue.

Saul B. Wilen is CEO, International Horizons Unlimited, Terrorism Prevention Initiatives, San Antonio, Texas, <www.intlhorizons.com>.

Prison Legal News & TCRP File Suit Against Dallas County Jail For Violations Of 1st Amendment Rights

BY JIM HARRINGTON
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

DALLAS — PRISON LEGAL NEWS, a non-profit monthly publication, filed suit today in Dallas federal court against Dallas County, Sheriff Lupe Valdez and Deputy Gary Lindsey after the Dallas County Jail banned all newspapers, magazines and other publications from entering the Dallas County Jail.

"If there was ever a jail where prisoners needed to know their legal rights, it's the Dallas County Jail," said PRISON LEGAL NEWS' editor, Paul Wright. "The jail is scheduled to be closed down by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in the next three months, but now the inmates there can't access a legitimate magazine that advises them of their constitutional rights."

"The First Amendment to the Constitution protects publishers' rights to communicate with inmates," explained PRISON LEGAL NEWS' attorney, Scott Medlock of the Texas Civil Rights Project. "Last year, without telling anyone, the jail decided to stop allowing inmates to receive magazines and newspapers. Numerous courts around the country have held these policies are unconstitutional. Dallas County stands alone in violating the First

Amendment."

The jail policy claims inmates do not need access to publications like PRISON LEGAL NEWS because they can watch the televisions available in the cell blocks. "It's been awhile since I've seen an in depth discussion of constitutional rights on any television program," scoffed Medlock. "Inmates in the jail have paid from their own pockets for subscriptions to PRISON LEGAL NEWS. The First Amendment gives them the right to receive it."

PRISON LEGAL NEWS is a monthly 48-page magazine dealing with the rights of incarcerated individuals. It provides information about court access, disciplinary hearings, prison conditions, excessive force, mail censorship, jail litigation, visitation, telephones, religious freedom, prison rape, and the death penalty. It has been published continuously since 1990. PRISON LEGAL NEWS has approximately 5,600 subscribers nationwide, and nine subscribers who are currently incarcerated in the Dallas County Jail.

PRISON LEGAL NEWS is seeking a temporary injunction requiring the jail to deliver its magazine to the inmates who subscribe to it, and stop the county from violating the constitution.



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No Such Thing As 'Minor Surgery'

I had some "minor surgery" recently, and I have to say I was deceived beforehand. No, I wasn't tricked by my doctor. He was great and told me exactly what it would be like. But I guess I didn't believe it would be that bad because it was just "minor surgery."

Years ago, when my wife was pregnant, none of the medical people ever used the word "pain." They would always say, "discomfort." I learned that in medical terminology, discomfort is somebody else's pain. Similarly, "minor surgery" is surgery on somebody other than the doctor talking about it.

I know that the operations erroneously dubbed, "minor sur-



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

gery" should not be put in the same category as brain or heart surgery or anything that's life threatening. On the other hand, they shouldn't be lumped in with skinned knees.

I'm not writing this to get more sympathy for my surgery. I have already milked it for all it's worth with everyone I came into contact with in the past couple of weeks (and plenty of

people on my email list). I'm writing this for all those people who have had or are about to have surgery that the general public just won't take seriously. There's nothing humorous about a broken humerus.

In our culture, we tend to laugh or make light of certain ailments, body parts, and medical procedures. We're taught at a very young age by the movies that any kind of pain involving the rear end, the nose, or the genitals is supposed to be funny. And audiences laugh hysterically when a guy on screen throws out his back or drops a brick on his toe.

Of course, this doesn't make sense. These body parts hurt

just as much as any other parts. Maybe in other cultures, people laugh when people hurt their jaws, knees, or ribs.

And how seriously does the public take procedures like tonsillectomies, fixed broken noses, and wart removals? And if you're unfortunate to have a "double whammy" of a funny body part and a punch-line condition — like a belly-button hernia — people are bound to laugh. With that duo, I might as well have had, uh, I mean, an individual might as well have had simultaneous hiccups and hemorrhoids.

Here's my point: this stuff hurts. For the person having it done, there's no such thing as "minor surgery." So, be nice

when your employee wants an extra day off after having his wisdom teeth removed. Have a little compassion for the woman with the broken toe. Don't laugh at the guy wearing the neck collar even if he looks like he's going to be represented in court by Whiplash Willie.

I'm urging everyone to stop using the term "minor surgery." I want it removed from all dictionaries and medical texts. Let's just call it "surgery" from now on.

You think I'm wrong about this change of wording?

If it's so minor, why did I have to pay for the "facilities" in advance?

If it's so minor, why do they knock you unconscious? (My anesthesiologist felt compelled to tell me a joke before the surgery. Believe me, I laughed. I didn't want him getting mad and giving me too much or too little of something).

If it's so minor, why did I have to fill out more forms than when we bought our house?

If it's so minor, why were there more nurses involved than in a sweeps episode of ER?

If it's so minor, why did I have to sign something saying that I wouldn't sue anybody in case they accidentally killed me? (Note to lawyer: I had my fingers crossed).

If it's so minor, why did they make me wear one of those gowns that you have to be a contortionist to close, and then you've still got stuff hanging out the back?

If it's so minor, why is a sneeze a major event for me?

If it's so minor, why did I watch so much TV while recuperating, that I learned far too much about Anna Nicole Smith, professional bull riding, and this device that costs only \$14.95 that can enable you to hear what your neighbors are talking about hundreds of feet away? (Not available in stores).

So, I hope you'll join me in getting rid of the word "minor" from the medical vocabulary. If you're not convinced by all of the above reasons, I think you'll come aboard when you think about that thing that comes in the mail from the doctor. After all, there's nothing "minor" about the bill.

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

Health Insurance Insanity

Well, gas prices are on the rise again. But I'll complain about that later. Today my tangent will include health care, health insurance costs, and prescription drug prices. All these necessities are on the rise. A recent news item stated that health care costs will double in the next 10 years.

Zack's health insurance was recently changed to a "better" plan. (The question turned out to be "better for whom?") There was no choice in the matter if he wanted to stay with the group.

When he went for a couple of MRIs last month, he had to first meet a BIG deductible (that the old plan didn't have), and after that, pay the 20% not covered by insurance. A couple of weeks after the tests, he received another bill. We're not even sure yet what this is for, but apparently, it's 20% of something. (When he had MRIs last year on the old plan, very little money came out of his own pocket. The health insurance company paid almost everything).

The insurance coverage Zack had previously was definitely a step up from this "better" plan that some "expert" chose for the group this year. The switching of companies affects thousands of people. It makes me wonder if the "expert" got some kind of kickback from the insurance company. Nothing else makes sense except sheer stupidity. Well, actually corruption makes sense as well. It's so rampant in our society that most people simply accept it. Most of our politicians are cor-

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.

rupt, and it filters down from there, permeating our society at all levels. When is this going to stop?

Originally thinking that it would be more affordable for me to use the same plan, I chose to change to Zack's insurance company as well. I mean, if some "expert" was choosing for thousands of people to change to this plan, surely it was a step up from the last insurance (which was actually pretty good. In retrospect, it was great).

I thought my insurance premium was expensive before. I hadn't been able to afford the better plan that included prescription assistance. So I always paid cash for my meds and was fortunate they were either generic or that I rarely needed anything extra. I was delighted to find that prescription assistance was included with Zack's company's policy. Surely switching to the new, "better" plan he had would be a good idea. What a mistake I made.

Not only does his "better" insurance with the group have a big deductible, but get this—The first time I used my brand new, shiny health insurance card to buy a prescription: Instead of handing over the \$5 or \$10 copay I was expecting, the medi-

cations turned out to be MORE EXPENSIVE in several cases with the card than paying cash and NOT using the card. Isn't this outrageous? What's wrong with this picture?

I figured out that this "better" prescription assistance plan apparently "assists" me in paying MORE money, not less, and is putting more of my money into the pockets of the insurance and pharmaceutical companies.

The small pharmacists are getting screwed, too. Not only are they unable to offer prescriptions at the affordable prices they once could, but now a huge percentage of what we pay for our meds (up to 10 or 15 years for new drugs) goes to the government.

On top of that, big insurance companies encourage (practically force) their policyholders to order medications through the mail. Lower prices are available with this option. Gee, I wonder if maybe the insurance companies have some kind of vested financial interest in the mail order drug stores. Do ya think?

Many folks have no choice. The way prices are rising, their monthly med bills are approaching the size of a car or house payment. So they reluctantly close accounts at the local drug stores where they've traded for decades. They order the cheaper drugs through the mail.

If we put our local pharmacists out of business, what will we do, especially in small towns, when we require medications

immediately? (We'll probably have to go to emergency room pharmacies and pay even more).

So we're leaving a very human situation where, if you're kid is really, really sick, the local pharmacist (in many cases a neighbor and friend) can often be reached at home after business hours—and will open up to help you out if you're desperate. You can't call up mail order in the middle of the night to sell you meds, give you a hug, and tell you it'll be all right.

Boy am I disgusted. The only way I can win is to stay completely healthy and avoid anything beyond an annual physical and routine tests for the next year—until I can find another "better" plan for myself. And each time I refill prescriptions, I now ask my pharmacist to please determine if it would be more cost effective NOT to use my health insurance card.

Two Crawford Residents Named To TSTC Honor Roll

WACO — Brian Arnold and Jay Posten of Crawford both earned a place on the Dean's Honor Roll for the fall semester at Texas State Technical College Waco.

Arnold is a student in Computer Networking and Systems Administration and Posten is a student in Welding Technology.

The Dean's Honor Roll recognizes the scholastic achievement of students with a grade point average of 3.5 to 3.9 for the semester.

TTC-35: Gov. Perry And His Puppet, Speaker Craddick, Up To Their Old Tricks

The People Off Texas Still Are Being Flim-Flammed!

When House Speaker Tom Craddick addressed the floor at the TTC-35 meeting in the Capitol, he stated something that involuntarily “made my skin crawl” and caused some great concern.

“Many members have concerns over such issues as the Trans-Texas Corridor, and I welcome any suggestions for improvement,” Craddick said, noting that House Transportation Committee chairman Mike Krusee, R-Austin, and House Appropriations Committee chairman Wayne Chisum, R-Pampa, will study the audit.

Excuse my knowledge base, but aren't Reps. Krusee and Chisum two of the most ardent pro-tollers in the legislature?

By selecting these two Craddick “lieutenants” who are special-interest driven to approve toll projects and to ram TTC-35 “down the throats” of Texans does NOT make any sense for the Texas community.



**Texas
Commentary**

By Peter Stern

Naturally, it DOES make billions of dollars and cents in profiteering to wealthy pro-tollers, who for the past 5 years have pushed through pro-toll legislation — often “piggy-backed” on bills that had nothing to do with toll roads or transportation issues.

Many pro-toll “deals” were made behind closed doors. **Where's the “Open Government” in that?**

So, “Slick Willie” Craddick is

still trying to “put one over” on the people of Texas? Well, let's all hope that Chairman Senator John Carona and Texas taxpayers see through this ploy.

If Craddick wants someone to review whether the TTC-35 and other toll plans are in the best interests of the Texas community, then let's get an INDEPENDENT and unbiased group of ethical folks to do it!

I've been saying and writing this for the past seven years:

Perry and Craddick must go the way of the Woolly Mammoth because they both are equally extinct. They are special interest driven and are NOT what the community needs at the helm of its government. We need to replace them with

statesman who are ethical and true to their employers — the People of Texas — and we need a wide array of plans that benefit the entire community.

Peter Stern of Driftwood, Texas, <psstern@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.

The Bigger Your Lips, The Sexier You'll Be When Dating A Sucker Fish



**Life Is A
Funny Place**

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

Nothing says “sexy” faster than someone with a pair of giant lips, even if that person's collagen injections have made their lips so enormously seductive that they can't actually pronounce the word “sexy,” and must instead settle for calling themselves “shek-shee.” The point is, big lips are no longer just a cosmetic enhancement for people less fortunate than Mick Jagger and Angelina Jolie, whose lips are so large and incredibly sexy that they are prohibited by international law from bearing children together because, quote: “Said children could potentially upset the delicate balance between populations of humans and sucker fish.”

Though we all know that true beauty stems from inside, as any cosmetics surgeon will tell you, no one will notice unless your lips are the size of tractor tires. Which is why a product called City Lips is being heralded as the newest, easiest and safest way to give you the lips you always wanted, but never dreamed you could have. At least not without surgically implanting tire stems in them and inflating your lips to 350 psi. Until now, those of us unable to afford expensive collagen injections were forced to live with the embarrassment of having normal, everyday lips. But thanks to City Lips, you can avoid the hassle and expense of collagen injections by using their patented do-it-yourself lip enlargement process.

That's right! Say goodbye to snobby surgeons telling you how much better you'd look with Julia Roberts lips when their own lips look like Phyllis Diller's. With each purchase of City Lips you'll receive one bottle of specially formulated “lip transformer” solution and a patented dual-action applicator. This applicator is a crucial

part of City Lips' groundbreaking, two-step process — which starts by applying the “lip transformer” with one side of the patented applicator and then, after turning the applicator over, whacking your lips with it as many times as possible for 10 minutes.

Okay, I made that last part up. But according to City Lips, their new product has been named “Best Over-the-Counter Lip Plumper” by Good Housekeeping, which, as you know, recently debunked the common misconception that you could increase the size of your lips by spraying them with Pledge (although it will keep them shiny and smelling lemony fresh).

I'd also like to point out that after three large margaritas, trying to say “Best Over-the-Counter Lip Plumper” will at least make your feel like your lips are really huge.

I bring this up because I'm concerned about the mixed message this sends to young women. On one hand, they're seeing supermodels getting thinner and thinner. On the other hand, they're seeing those same models trip over their own lips on the runway, with nothing to break their fall except for other stumbling models, who then land in a flailing heap of inflated lips and silicone.

No more. It's time to quit pouting, pucker up, and accept each other's lips just the way they are.

Unless pouting makes your lips look fuller, of course.

(You can write to Ned Hickson at <nhickson@oregonfast.net>, or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR. 97439)

Stop The Highway Robbery!

BY GINA PARKER FORD
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

With construction of the first leg of the NAFTA super-highway (the Trans-Texas Corridor) scheduled to begin this year, Texans are in for a shock when they calculate the cost of the toll. The corridor is promoted by bureaucrats and politicians who have lined their pockets with campaign donations. They promote the corridor as an answer to the increased traffic congestion in urban areas. This is intellectually dishonest because the corridor will circumvent the metropolitan traffic areas. Beware! As Ronald Reagan said, “The nine most terrifying words in the English language are ‘I am from the government, and I am here to help.’”

Follow the money trail, and it is easy to see that the corridor is not about transportation. It is all about revenue. It is not about the people, but about politicians who have forgotten the people and whose primary ambition is reelection and not representation.

Texans are victims of not only the largest land grab in Texas history, but are also victims of what will be one of the largest tax increases in Texas history. Yes, it is a tax increase because the tolls are nothing more than a tax!

GUEST COMMENTARY

What will it cost the average Texan to make a daily commute on the new corridor? The contract does not place a cap on the amount of tolls charged. TxDot bureaucrats agreed to “whatever the market will bear.” Based on TxDot estimates, the toll will cost from 12¢ to 24¢ per mile. We all know how the government works, so we can plan on 24¢ per mile. A 5-mile round-trip commute to work



Gina Parker Ford

or school will cost \$12 per day which would be about \$3,000 per year. For a couple, it would cost \$6,000.00 per year, the equivalent of 12 car payments a year. Or another way to look at it - in 10 years a couple would pay \$60,000, a substantial down payment on a home. This is highway robbery!

Some proponents argue that the alternative is to increase the gas tax from 20¢ to \$1.40 per gallon. Well, this is not the truth and nothing but the truth so help me God. It is a white lie. According to Corridor Watch, the leading corridor watch dog group, tolls at just 15¢ per mile will cost Texans more than ten times the present gasoline tax. Moreover, commercial carriers

will pass the toll costs on to consumers - you and me.

Politicians need to stop looting the gasoline tax fund, quit spending on pet projects, balance the budget, and take care of the business of the people. President Ronald Reagan had a heart for the people and despised big government. Reagan said, “We the people tell the government what to do; it does not tell us. We the people are the driver; the government is the car. And we decide where it should go, and by what route, and how fast. Al-

most all the world's constitutions are documents in which governments tell the people what their privileges are. Our Constitution is a document in which we the people tell the government what it is allowed to do. We the people are free.” However, we will not remain free if we sit idly by and fail to speak out against this type of government abuse and fail to vote for statesmen rather than politicians.

Gina Parker Ford -CEO of Dental Creations, Ltd., a dental manufacturing company, and a successful attorney - is the National Eagle Forum Chairman for Judicial Reform.

If We Give Them Enough Rope...

I've made a curious observation about Neo-cons. There's nary anything novel nor conservative to be found in the words they speak or those ideals espoused.

They often speak disingenuously, beginning with the truth then by utilizing language that serves to twist reality, verity becomes hidden under a silky veil or anything vaguely resembling honesty is dismissed altogether.

One of the favorite tools is the smear campaign. This has been a favorite of political hacks and those who would usurp or retain power through any means — no matter how underhanded or vile — possible since the dawn of upright man. The assassination of Julius Caesar, the state-religion conspiracy to murder Jesus Christ, Huey Long and virtually anyone who dared run against him.

The other, and far more powerful of the two major devices is the politics of fear. Scare hell out people until they're continually messing their drawers and you'll wrap the poor saps around your finger. Kind of the Stockholm Syndrome on a titanic scale.

Toss in a little religious perversion and the recipe is irresistible to the masses.

Two of the craftiest individuals at melding smear with fear in order to hoist their parties' unqualified megalomaniacs to ultimate power are Josef Goebbels of the Third Reich and Karl Rove of the Republican Party.

We all know what ensued after Goebbels' propaganda machine had convinced the entire German nation to embrace Adolf Hitler — the perverted fear and hatred of Jews; the concept of a "Master Race" that would conquer and rule the planet for a millennium; nearly seven years of global conflict that affected every human on Earth, continuing on to this day.

Goebbels sold the people of Germany the one, true *Deutscher* leader — a convicted felon who was born and raised an Austrian!

Six decades have passed, yet the cost in human life and personal suffering shall never be fully realized.

So 40-some years after the fall of the Third Reich Karl Rove makes his presence known in the State of Texas. He makes and breaks politicians for money, out-and-out defamation his number one weapon. It matters not if the accusation(s) isn't (or aren't) based in fact, folks somehow always believe Karl's



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

tricksters.

Most of his clients' opponents are ruined politically, some privately, and never heard from publicly again.

After his dismissal for being too slithery for even George H.W. Bush, Karl becomes attached to George the Younger. His first trick is to begin turning Texas into the Neo-con state of which he's always dreamt.

Karl's next feat of legerdemain is the one by which he pulls off a "Goebbels," getting a spoiled rich brat from the Northeast elected governor of the Lone Star State. (In a scenario eerily similar to the rise of Hitler, neither he nor Li'l Georgie was able to get elected into local offices by the folks who knew their reputations best — and both had been in trouble with the law.)

By ramping up the rhetoric Karl is able to maneuver the first contested presidential vote in history. We're all too well aware of the pain, suffering and loss of lives — not to mention demolition of Constitutional liberties — that have followed in the wake of the RoveBushCheney overthrow of our Government.

Yet, certain people still buy it when anyone associated with this Fascist Regime speaks.

For instance, Dr. Condoleezza Rice holds both a Masters and PhD in Political Science. I imagine with all her scholarship she was quite adept within the hallowed walls of academia.

When did she get greedy and decide to become a rich white guy? At just what point in her life did Dr. Rice decide it was better to prevaricate; that the power and gold were vastly more important than principles?

On Feb. 25, 2007, she appeared on Fox News Sunday with Chris Wallace. Fox News is, of course, the approved propaganda wing (with paid advertisers) of the White House Fascisti. Of all else Dr. Rice uttered, the most telling comment follows:

...It would be like saying that that after Adolf Hitler was overthrown, we needed to change then, the resolution that allowed the United States to do that, so that we could deal with creating a stable environment

in Europe after he was overthrown."

(Thanks to Keith Olbermann for bringing this silly statement to my attention.)

She was referring to a Democratic proposal to nullify the 2002 resolution that authorized the invasion of Iraq under the (false) pretense that Saddam Hussein was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, and said weaponry was capable of harming U.S. soil.

They cannot for a moment admit their errors. There was no "resolution" to create a stable environment in Europe after Hitler fell. America was drawn into World War II by a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan; four days later the Nazi Regime in Germany and Italy's Fascisti declared war on us.

Europe was rebuilt under the Marshall Plan, outlined in 1947 by Secretary of State George C. Marshall. This \$20 billion project was not a handout. European nations were required to determine what kind and how much aid they each might need; the goods, shipping and distribution contracts were then apportioned among American farmers, industries, businesses, shippers, etc.

It was properly planned out, with vendors receiving contracts as fairly and equitably as possible. No-bid contracts were non-existent, outsourcing unheard of.

The plan transpired and succeeded because Harry S Truman and his successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, were good, honest, caring leaders. It also worked because Marshall was a true statesman who deserved to be Secretary of State.

Proof positive that it takes far more than political correctness and high academic achieve-

ment to fill such an important office — like the song says, "...ya gotta have heart..."

One may go down in the history books as the first African American secretary of state, but that footnote is rather dubious if the World comes apart on your watch.

The next time Condi mentions Hitler or the Nazi's, somebody might want to remind her where Prescott Bush, George 41's pop, got his money — and why the FDR Justice Department indicted the schmuck.

I have my own theory as to why Condi has never run for public office, and refuses to take up the banner for all those who insist she should run for prez — once the prying begins she would never survive that level of public scrutiny. I, for one, would be most interested to know just how many millions she has stashed away in safe hiding places...

Then Laura Bush, whom we all know has a bully record as a combat veteran and expert on Iraq, put some worthless commentary on her husband's war out for all to hear.

While Larry King was lobbing Wiffle balls at her on his CNN nightly lovefest the evening after Condi's Fox appearance, the Frost Lady came up with one of those insipid comments only she could put forth on global television:

"Many parts of Iraq are stable now. But, uh, of course what we see on television is the one bombing a day that discourages everyone..."

Just one bombing per day? What is that, the official White House daily-recommended dosage of insurgency activity news?

So, it must be the media's fault that the unpleasantness in Iraq has become intolerable to 70%

of Americans. That's what Rummy said as the door hit him in the ass on his way out.

Anyone who thinks Li'l Georgie lives in a bubble has to watch Laura during a few of her rare broadcast appearances. This woman has never left the library where George found her. (Whatever he was doing in a library in the first place is beyond me.)

I do believe she's still living somewhere inside a Laura Ingalls book.

Or maybe not, considering Laura was a Jew...

Of course, Larry inquired about the twins. No, he didn't ask when they'd be suiting up for duty in Iraq or Afghanistan — somebody tell them to Google the British Royal Family. Ol' Lar just wanted to make points with the Bushes and asked how the girls were doing, because the health and welfare of two pampered rich kids is first and foremost on Americans' minds (now that Anna Nicole has permission to be buried and remain dead).

During the last week of February, Dick Cheney was set loose upon several world leaders who are supposed to be our friends and allies.

It was obvious his mission to Pakistan was solely to show Pres. Musharraf the power of "the force" and throw a Dark Lord throat grip on the little guy until he agreed to quell the rebel (Taliban) insurgency.

Let's be brutally honest here — if you're sending an emissary of goodwill to another nation, Dick Cheney should not be the guy at the top of the list. Especially if it's hunting season where you send him.

And certainly don't send him anywhere near combat ops. If VietNam has taught us anything

Continued On Next Page

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Austin Makes Historic Trip To Mexico City

On March 13, 1822, the governor of Texas issued a passport to Stephen F. Austin for the young American's make-or-break trip to the national capital.

Seven months earlier in August 1821, the appointed caretaker of the northernmost province readily recognized the son's right to the *empresario* contract of his dead father. If the energetic idealist was keen on pumping fresh blood into the godforsaken territory, Antonio de Martinez saw no reason to stand in his way.

But in December the embarrassed governor notified the would-be colonizer that his go-ahead had been canceled by capricious higher-ups in Monterrey. Pending a tedious inquiry that could drag on indefinitely, Austin's hands were securely tied with red tape.

The sympathetic Martinez encouraged him to go over the heads of the obstinate officials in Monterrey and straight to the top of the bureaucratic pecking order. Only a direct appeal to Mexico City offered any chance of a timely solution.

The trip south got off to an inauspicious start, when Austin and two traveling companions were taken captive by Comanches. The trio must have caught the Indians in a merciful mood, though, because the white men were allowed to keep their lives and most of their possessions.

Reaching his destination the last week of April 1822, Austin spent the first couple of days wandering the streets of the sprawling Mexican capital. He promised himself a full tour of the magnificent metropolis after taking care of his pressing business. After all, how long could it take to obtain the stamp of approval for his land grant and immigration project?

But the close call with the Comanches proved to be a prophetic omen for Austin's ordeal in Mexico City. He had unknowingly stepped into a tangled web of political intrigue that threatened the very survival of his grand plan for Texas.

Less than a year after throwing off the Spanish yoke, independent Mexico was flirting with disaster. Advocates of a home-grown dictatorship had locked horns with proponents of a democratic republic. While the two factions fought it out, the country was coming apart at the seams.

Austin submitted a detailed history of his claim and a bold blueprint for attracting thousands of productive Anglo-Americans to underpopulated Texas. Impressed by the compelling logic of his argument, Austin predicted in a letter to an acquaintance that the issue would be resolved in ten days at the latest.

However, within the week, the Mexican military, fed up with the politicians' inconclusive jousting, installed Agustín de Iturbide as emperor. As the national drama

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



unfolded, Austin's predicament was lost in the shuffle.

When the situation temporarily stabilized, a congressional committee began a marathon debate of the colonization question. A deep split over slavery stymied the proceedings until August, when a compromise was finally crafted. Slaves could be brought into Texas, but children born into bondage on Mexico soil had to be freed at age 14.

Austin's sagging spirits soared,

and again he forecast an early departure. But a new crisis wrecked his timetable.

On the orders of Iturbide, 15 congressional deputies were arrested for treason. Outraged colleagues demanded their immediate release or trial, but the emperor held all the cards. On Oct. 31, 1822, Iturbide gave congress 30 minutes to adjourn, and cowed legislators meekly met the deadline.

While the triumphant tyrant hand-picked a junta, his jubilant supporters danced in the streets. For a bitterly disappointed Austin, the sudden turn of events was no cause for celebration. After seven months of false hopes, he was right back where he started.

Few would have persevered against such seemingly insur-

mountable odds. Austin could have thrown in the towel and told the immigrants back in Texas that he had done his best. But he refused to quit and with inexhaustible patience resumed his solitary struggle.

Polite and persistent petitioning paid off in January 1823, when Iturbide affixed his imperial signature to a law that satisfied Austin's requirements. As the fine points were being worked out, however, a revolt swept Mexico and threw everything up for grabs.

Iturbide wisely chose abdication over execution in March 1823, and yet another regime came in the revolving door. For days Austin was kept in suspense wondering whether the new government would honor the agreement of its

ousted predecessor.

He at last was dealt a winning hand on April 11, 1823. Almost a year after arriving in Mexico City, his grant and *empresario* contract were approved opening the door to the colonization of Texas.

Stephen F. Austin profited from the experience. He mastered the tongue of his adopted country, earned the respect of many influential Mexicans and learned the bewildering intricacies of the bureaucratic maze. At the tender age of 29, he was well prepared for his historic role as the Father of Texas.

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

TENUTO

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it's that he just has no stomach for a real fight!

The one exception to Dick as emissary might be Australia. Prime Minister John Howard, who could be taken for Cheney's brother, has been in lockstep with the Bushites since the stupidity in Iraq began. John and Dickie seem to get along just swell, but then it is a nation culled from a penal colony.

Completely ignored by the mainstream press, Dick gave an in-depth interview to an Aussie news guy. You think he comes across as vile, crass and nihilistic in the American press? Check out true braggadocio at the Veep's official website.

While away from U.S. soil he also granted an interview to ABC News correspondent Jonathan Karl (Feb. 23). Cheney must have felt it was safe to talk to someone not from Fox since he was on the other side of the Planet.

The interviewer held his ground quite well, fearing not any "force" disciplinary retribution. At one point he asked Cheney about Speaker Pelosi's position that his reference to her policy as unpatriotic only adds to the Nation's divisiveness, her request of the White House for a retraction and an end to such partisan sniping.

Dick replied with typical Cheney intractability: "My statement was that if we adopt the Pelosi policy, is that we will validate the strategy of al Qaeda... The point I made, and I'll make it again, is that al Qaeda functions on the basis that they think they can break our will. That's their fundamental underlying strategy, that if they can kill enough Americans or cause enough havoc, create enough chaos in

Iraq, then we'll quit and go home."

This mantra of fear was tire-some back in 2001... it's beyond lame now.

This is all Dick has. As the interview progressed, he crossed territories and subjects, borders and leaders. Before you knew it, if we pulled out of Iraq, despite building up our presence in Afghanistan and around the Pakistani border, Karzai and Musharraf would be overrun.

This interview, too, can be found on the official VP website. Treat yourself to the ramblings of a man obsessed. It's so blatantly obvious he wants to stay in Iraq to steal oil money - and there are some very smart Iraqis who know exactly what Dick's up to.

Try finding one word of remorse for those poor, unfortunate folks who happened to be "collateral damage" when the truck bomb meant for Dick missed him outside of Baghdad. At last count there were 19 killed and 11 maimed.

There's no room for pity in Dick CheneyWorld.

For some reason, I was a day later than usual writing my column this week. That left me time to see CNN forget we were engaged in several wars and a complete desecration of our Constitution by the Executive branch, dedicating all of its broadcast efforts into the tornadoes that hit Alabama and a college baseball team bus crash in Atlanta.

If you can arrange for your tragedy to occur within driving distance of the CNN complex in downtown Atlanta, you too can maximize coverage. It also helps if your school is predominantly white and Christian.

Please, don't take me wrong.

Between the two events 14 young people tragically left this life - six baseball players on the bus that went off an overpass in Atlanta; eight high school students who were killed when what should have been the safest part of the school building caved in. This is a combined catastrophe that I do not take lightly.

My heart cries out with deepest sympathy for all of their families and friends.

It's CNN and the wall-to-wall coverage where I find fault. These were not the only news happenings on Friday, March 2, 2007. However, for hours on end they were the only stories CNN covered. It's a pattern with this 24-hour news channel that anything occurring in its own backyard gets mega coverage - even minor events such as rainstorms - while other stories are ignored.

There is one CNN daytime anchor who really puts a burr in my shoe. While interviewing a survivor of the high school collapse, out of nowhere she tossed out the question about how he felt knowing eight of his schoolmates had died but he was alive.

The kid was still in shock, for God's sake! I thought he was going to lose it on worldwide television. The poor guy was unable to answer, or speak at all for about a minute.

Had I been her supervisor there's no way she would have remained on air past the next commercial break.

I guarantee, had either incident happened in Chicago or Des Moines it would have topped out at 10-15 minutes per hour.

These provided George W. Bush an opportunity to give the White House Press Corps a sound bite. Delivered in his typically insincere staccato manner on the lawn, devoid of

any emotional connection, because let's face now he's going to have to alter his schedule for Saturday and head for Alabama:

"I go down with a heavy heart. I go down knowing full well that I'll be seeing people whose lives were turned upside-down by the tornadoes. I'll do my very best to comfort them."

Note: Georgie was speaking to an audience, not sharing words of solace with the victims.

Can you say, "Hurricane Katrina?"

With that, Fearless Leader was off on Marine One.

Golly, I hope that if there's ever a tornado or other such disaster in my community George stays in Texas, Dick stays in his bunker, Condi goes to the Middle-East, and Laura reads her "Little House."

I couldn't stand that much comforting...

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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Fiddlin' With Texas Western Swing

Bell County Expo Center To Showcase Fiddle & Western Swing Music Saturday

BELTON, Texas — Fiddle and Western Swing music will be the rule of the day come March 17 at the Bell County Expo Center in Belton. A long list of professional entertainers will be the highlight of the afternoon show, dinner, and night of dancing.

With the doors opening at 11 a.m., the show will start at 11:45 a.m. and continue until 5 p.m., followed by a reserved-seating dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Then the chairs will be moved to make way for a big Western Swing dance which starts at 8 p.m. to 12 midnight. Meals and tables for the dance may be reserved until March 12.

This event is sponsored by the Texas Western Swing Heritage Association of Bell County, a non-profit organization composed of local and area volunteers, with Nan Ray as events

chairman.

This year, the show will be dedicated to the memory of Mitz Ray, co-founder of the event. "The purpose for the event is to promote this 'Texas Born' music and assemble extremely talented musicians on our stage," said Nan Ray. "There will be Grammy award winners, 'Hall of Fame' musicians, 'World Champion' fiddlers and recording artists performing, with people coming from all over Texas and surrounding states to hear the great music."

Featured at the Showcase are six-times Texas State Champion and two-times World Champion fiddler Randy Elmore of Cleburne, who just completed an album with Willie Nelson.

Wes Westmoreland returns to the Showcase this year. Beginning at age 9, Westmoreland learned to play the fiddle from

his grandfather. His professional music tenures have been with Box Car Willie, Red Steagall, and Moe Bandy. He was a member of Mel Tillis and the Statesiders for 13 years.

DATELINE: **Crawford**

Hometown of the President of the United States

Whitakers Graduate From Texas A&M

COLLEGE STATION — Diplomas were awarded to 3,560 Texas A&M University graduates during mid-year commencement ceremonies recently.

Among those recognized were two Crawford residents, Chelsea Lorraine Whitaker (Bachelor of Science, industrial distribution), and Farrah Dawn Whitaker (Bachelor of Business Administration, finance).



Randy Elmore



Westmoreland

Two-time Grammy winner Ricky Turpin of New Braunfels will perform. He was World Series of Fiddling Champion and first runner-up at the Grand Nationals. He has played with Johnny Bush and The Banderlos, Asleep at the Wheel, and Rick Trevino.



Ricky Turpin

Admission for the afternoon is \$15.

CONTACT: Bell County Expo Office, (254) 939-8390, <www.texaswesternswing.com>.

Piecemakers Sending Blankets To Romania

GEORGETOWN, Texas — The Piecemakers of Georgetown will be sending knitted and crocheted baby blankets and children's sweaters with a team of volunteers who will travel to Romania in early May.

The public is asked to participate in this effort.

According to Melissa Leedom, "Please make baby blankets with soft cotton yarn or children's sweaters with wool or wool blend yarn. Donations of cotton or wool yarn for this cause would also be welcome."

CONTACT: <www.forgive490.com> and click on "Blankets for Romania"

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