

CRAWFORD, TEXAS

Vol. 8, No. 3

MARCH 14, 2007

Internet Update 11

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\$1.50 Per Copy

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Comic Book Publisher Kills Patriotic Character

NEW YORK — Comic book publisher Marvel Entertainment killed one of its longest running and most patriotic characters last week.

In the 25th issue that bears his name, Captain America met his end as a result of three sniper's bullets on his way to a Federal Court.

The last dramatic end of a famous fictional superhero occurred when Marvel's archrival DC Comics killed Superman in 1993.

Noting that the Man of Steel returned a year later, the comic book world expects Captain America to stage a comeback someday.

Marvel Entertainment's editor in chief Joe Quesada has remained mum on the Captain's possible return, though he said he would consider it in the future.

One of Captain America's creators appeared to be shocked that his character's death, according to New York Daily News.

"It's a hell of a time for him to go. We really need him now," said the 93-year-old Joe Simon.

Simon and artist Jack Kirby created this shield-wielding character as an opponent of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler in 1941.

Captain America gained his powers when his alter ego Steve Rogers was voluntarily injected with a "super soldier" serum during World War II.

His death was a part of the 2006 "Civil War" storyline crossover, in which he led an underground resistance movement against the enforcement of a superhero registration law.

In the issue before his demise, Steve Rogers had decided to surrender and order his team to stand down after realizing that their fight was endangering civilians. His arch nemesis the Red Skull is said to have orchestrated the assassination.

Series writer Ed Brubaker,



40, told the Daily News that the Captain's death was intended to stimulate debate on heroism.

"What I found is that all the really hard-core left-wing fans want Cap to be standing out on and giving speeches on the streetcorner against the Bush administration, and all the really right-wing [fans] all want him to be over in the streets of Baghdad, punching out Saddam," Brubaker said.

Military Solution Insufficient To Settle Iraq Conflict: General

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The new U.S. commander in Iraq expressed doubt last Thursday that military force alone would solve the sectarian conflict there.

General David Petraeus told reporters at his first new conference inside Baghdad's Green Zone that he felt "shame, horror, and sadness" at the news of a suicide attack that killed over 100 Shiite pilgrims.

"There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq. Military action is necessary to help improve secu-

African-Americans Hit Hard By Shrinking Manufacturing Sector

WASHINGTON — The ever-shrinking U.S. manufacturing sector has strained African-Americans disproportionately, according to a new study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

The study found that over the last 20 years, the percentage of unionized black workers has fallen only in part to the decline in manufacturing.

"The share of U.S. workers in unions continues to fall, but unionization rates for African-Americans have declined more sharply than for the rest of the workforce," said John Schmitt who worked with researcher Ben Zipperer on the study.

"Black families have been especially hard hit by the loss of jobs in the auto industry," he added, noting that black workers have relied on these specific manufacturing jobs for well-paid employment since World War II.

The study — "The Decline in African-American Representation in Unions and Manufacturing, 1979-2006" — analyzed data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

It found that the share of African-Americans in manufacturing jobs fell from 23.9 percent in 1979 to 10.1 percent last year.

From 1983 to 2006, unionization rates among African-Americans dropped from 31.7 to 16.0 percent, it added.

During the same period, unionization rates also dropped among whites (from 22.2 to 13.3 percent) and Hispanics (24.2 to 11.4 percent).

To view the report, visit the website for Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR).

INFO
CEPR

www.cepr.net/documents/publications/african_americans_manufacturing_2007_03.pdf

Companies Yank Ads On Coulter's Webpage

WASHINGTON — The backlash over a right-wing commentator's comments spilled over into the business community last week.

Three companies — Verizon, Sallie Mae, and NetBank — yanked their advertisements from Ann Coulter's website days after she called Democratic presidential candidate John

Edwards a "faggot."

A significant amount of complaints from customers caused the companies to take action, many of whom were unaware their ads were placed on her personal website.

The companies' contact information was posted by a blogger on the liberal site DailyKos.com last Sunday.

Coulter made her negative comments at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington Friday.

These three companies said separately they had used a third party to handle the placement of their advertising.

They added that their ads are not meant to be featured on websites that harbor such extreme political views.

... but it is not sufficient.

There needs to be a political aspect," said the 54-year-old general who took command of the U.S.-led coalition last month.

Fifty more pilgrims died as a result of attacks by Sunni insurgents last week, according to reports.

Gen. Petraeus said that he believed the warring factions in Iraq could look past their personal and political differences, though it would be difficult in the coming months.

He added that the Bush

administration's escalation of the presence of an additional 21,500 U.S. troops to Baghdad and Anbar province could set the stage for "Iraq's citizens and leaders ... to mend that fabric."

Gen. Petraeus' comments came the day House Democrats made a tentative deal among themselves to advance a bill mandating that troops withdraw from Iraq by fall of 2008.

Should Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki fail to meet certain goals for security, the date for withdrawal

would move forward to the end of this year.

To make these conditions more politically attractive to moderate Democrats, \$100 billion would be added to the legislation thereby extending military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan through the next fiscal cycle.

House Democrats are also proposing to add funds to the president's request for medical facilities for active duty troops.

The vote on the House bill is expected to take place by the end of March.

THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST

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

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

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We the Lawmakers

Dark Horse Presidential Candidate Pushes For 'People's Legislature'

Interview With Mike Gravel, Former Senator From Alaska

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ARLINGTON, Va. — Maurice "Mike" Gravel is running for president.

What? You haven't heard of him?

Gravel represented Alaska in the United States Senate for two terms from 1969-1981.

The bells still aren't ringing, huh?

He launched a global campaign to halt the Pentagon's plans — the Cannikin test — to detonate nuclear bombs under

the seabed of the North Pacific at Amchitka Island, Alaska.

The U.S. military wanted all five tests performed, even though the warheads it was testing was obsolete and would have destroyed the food chain of the North Pacific for generations to come. One test, however, went ahead.

Sen. Gravel was also the first in Congress to oppose the use of nuclear fission as a commercial source of electricity.

Today, nuclear fission is no longer considered an environ-

mentally clean energy alternative to fossil fuels as it once was in the 1950s and 1960s.

Remember him now? No?

Sen. Gravel successfully orchestrated the passing of legislation on a policy to construct the Alaska Pipeline.

The bill passed the Senate by one vote, and now, 20 percent of the oil that powers the continental United States runs through this pipeline.

Did that jog your memory? Still, no?

Well, it could be said that Sen.

Gravel is the reason why President George W. Bush has no more boots on the ground in Iraq than he already has.

In 1973, Gravel mounted a one-man filibuster lasting five months that forced a deal to stop the military draft.

President Richard Nixon — in order to regain political clout — sealed the deal to let the draft expire, thereby ending the defense policy that had been on the books since 1947.

Is he coming back to you now? Perhaps Gravel's most fa-

mous accomplishment is his reading of the "Pentagon Papers" into the congressional record in 1971.

These papers — the collection of a secret government study describing the U.S. military's involvement in the Vietnam War — were originally leaked to the news media by former Defense Department analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

Using his office as senator, Gravel released roughly 4,000 of the 7,000 documents during a

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In The Photo...

EARLY SUPPORT FOR GRAVEL — Sen. Mike Gravel gained the early support of Granny D, the campaign finance reform activist from the state of New Hampshire.

We the Lawmakers

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committee hearing in an effort to inform his constituency about the war's progress.

The senator orchestrated the documents' release the day the Supreme Court was to have handed down its decision to prevent the *NEW YORK TIMES* and *WASHINGTON POST* from publishing more excerpts of the study.

The publishing of the Johnson-era study caused a rift of distrust between the U.S. government and the American people, which inevitably led to the ending of Vietnam War and the resignation of President Nixon.

The next year, Sen. Gravel was unable to solidify enough votes to gain the Democratic nomination for Vice President of the United States during the Democratic National Convention.

He came in third behind Sen. Thomas Eagleton of Missouri and Frances "Sissy" Farenthold, a delegate from Texas.

But that was in 1972.

Thirty-five years later, Sen. Gravel announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in 2008.

Since then, the 70-year-old former lawmaker has caused a ruckus during the Democratic debates by speaking truth to power.

"There was a debate at the DNC," explained Gravel in a recent telephone interview with the *ICONOCLAST*, "and I said very clearly that this war would have not have happened had it not been for the Democrats. Sure it was a Republican war, but we made it possible.

"If you look at the vote in the Senate, it was our Democrats that made the margin for passage of the resolution, and then I had the temerity to tell the Democrats that anybody that voted for the resolution is not qualified to be president. Well, that endeared me to all the Hillary supporters and the Edwards supporters for sure."

And he doesn't stop there.

"I may not have any money, but I have a voice, and I'm not afraid," Gravel added.

THE *ICONOCLAST*'S Nathan Diebenow continued his conversation hitting such topics as the "Iraq War version" of the Pentagon Papers, various reforms to such governmental institutions as the tax and healthcare systems, and his proposed National Initiative for Democracy — the original plank of his presidential campaign.

Here is that interview:

.....
ICONOCLAST: So why hasn't the Iraq version of the Pentagon Papers (showing the Bush administration's intent to manufacture the cause of war in Iraq) been leaked to the public yet?

SEN. MIKE GRAVEL: Because the members of Congress are wimps.

ICONOCLAST: So do you think there's someone actually trying to give information to senators and representatives?

SEN. GRAVEL: I don't know. We know, first off, you don't have to have that. The Congress in its oversight hearings and all of that can take any kind of classified information and release it to the American public without any danger of any prosecution.

That's the court case of *Gravel v. the U.S. government*. We've got a Supreme Court decision on that back in 1972, and nothing has changed since that decision was rendered. It's a tragedy that members of Congress feel they have to honor the secrecy that exists in the Bush administration and in the entire government which is horrendous in the excesses in that regard.

ICONOCLAST: Are senators like Russ Feingold just not aware of this power?

SEN. GRAVEL: They may not be aware of it, but they can do it. I've tried to publicize it, but by the same token, the media has somewhat marginalized me in this regard because the media don't buy into it. I mean, the level of ignorance on this particular subject is appalling.

The media abets the secrecy involved, and of course, the government leaks like a sieve for purposeful things, but not generally for the benefit of the people. You have whistleblowers, and we have a whistleblower law which is supposed to protect whistleblowers, but its impact is exactly the opposite.

ICONOCLAST: They get victimized, right?

SEN. GRAVEL: Let me draw a scenario for you. When I was in office, I was able to stop the Cannikin test, not by my protest but by the fact that somebody in government leaked to me a memo showing that the testing for the Cannikin testing for a nuclear safeguard system was obsolete. It was just going forward on the basis of the profits of the contractors involved. The minute I published that information they had to kill the program.

Now, I don't recall — don't remember who gave me that information and I don't really care. It was classified. I dropped it like

a bomb, and that was the end of that story. Now, Congress can do that any time it wants. The whole release of the Pentagon Papers was that issue.

And in this incident I released, nobody was ever prosecuted. I had a national security memorandum that dealt with (Secretary of State Henry) Kissinger and the bombing of Cambodia. That was released. I gave some to Ron Delum when I couldn't get it in the Senate record. He slipped them into the House record.

Feingold in my mind is the best senator you've got, but it's not enough. He's not prepared to begin a filibuster on the war, and I could give you in detail how we should get to George Bush. I know you interviewed Elizabeth (De La Vega) sometime back when she talks of impeachment. Well, there are two avenues to impeachment. Do you want me to pursue these two areas? Or do you want to ask me other questions?

ICONOCLAST: No, go right on ahead.

SEN. GRAVEL: First off, this area, this 5-4 Supreme Court decision said that I as a senator can release classified information within the confines of the Senate. That was the five. The other four said that I could release information anywhere I chose to by the fact that I was a senator. A congressman has the same power.

This is under the speech and debate clause of the Constitution which members of Congress are sworn to uphold, and they don't. They don't. They just buy into this ridiculous secrecy which is appalling and costing an untold amount of human life.

Now let's go back on how we're going to get George Bush with this wimpy Congress. I say wimpy, but I don't mean to be insulting, but it's a fact. They just don't think properly. They're not providing the leadership, whether it's Hillary Clinton who says she's going to end the war or Barack Obama who thinks we ought to pull the troops out a year from now. Well, what about all the people who are going to die between now and then?

There's no excuse for this. Just no excuse. This war is self-evidently a fraud. It should not continue one more day. We should pull out the troops immediately, and here's the only scenario that is possible to do this task with the greatest amount of speed, and after we'll cover the other modes of impeachment.

The first thing that Congress

has to do is to pass a law that says the war is over and that the troops must be withdrawn with post haste. A law. Now that can pass the House if the Democrats have any sense of leadership — any guts at all. It should pass the House. Now it will be filibustered in the Senate. That means that there'll be six Republican Senators that will oppose this. I do not think they will last very long, and they'll wither — they'll wither on the vine with what the media will do to them with this clear line now.

This means that the law will pass the Senate. Maybe a month later. Now you have the law going to the President of the United States. He has two choices: to obey the law or to veto it. He vetoes it, which would be my prediction, and now this is where the rubber hits the road. You're going to have to override the veto. You need two thirds in the House and two thirds in the Senate.

Here again, we have precipitated with this course of action a Constitutional crisis between the Congress, the people, and the presidency, so if the people put enough pressure, and the media will hold the members of Congress accountable to this override, then they can override the president's veto. If the press and the people do not, then it'll be just stalemated right then and there.

But if they do override it, then the president has only two choices: obey the law or not obey the law. If he chooses not to obey the law, the Congress can immediately proceed with a bill of impeachment for violating that law they just passed.

Now that's one course of action for impeachment. The other course of action for impeachment would be to hold hearings in the judiciary committee of the House and the Senate on how the fraud was committed on the American people.

We're getting enough stuff coming out of the Libby Trial and a whole host of other areas — some hearings that Levin held with the armed services committee — that now they can now build on that body of knowledge and probe more, issue subpoenas all over to hell and get these people to testify or purger themselves. One of the two.

And that will give you obviously enough information to file a bill of impeachment in the House, send it to the Senate, and here, too, you'll have a filibuster problem, but what's more important? What's more important is after it's been sent to the Senate, then the House puts forth a resolution. It could be a joint resolution or single resolution, saying that anybody involved in the elements of the bill of impeachment cannot be pardoned

by George Bush as he leaves his presidency.

Now that leaves a situation that Elizabeth (de la Vega) clearly understands as a prosecutor that now you're going to get people to purger themselves and go to jail or they're going to start telling the truth about how the fraud was committed on the American people — the consequence of which was this terrible loss of life. That is not only necessary for the process of impeachment, it is necessary to proceed with criminal prosecution of the president, the vice president, and all of the members of government inside and out who have been party to this criminal fraud on the American people.

ICONOCLAST: I guess the missing component to this scenario is just political will.

SEN. GRAVEL: That's why I was using the word wimpy. Here all these people want to run for President of the United States, and they don't have the guts to stand up and offer some leadership to prove they're qualified. What's it all about? This is politics as usual. It is pathetic! It is pathetic! Hillary says she's going to end the war when she becomes president. Well, hell, we heard that same thing from Richard Nixon.

The reason for the war is oil. When you hear the leaders in Congress or the leaders in the administration talk about our "vital interests," that's a code word for oil. So what we're doing is spending our treasury and our blood to get control of the Titanic! We should not be fighting for oil. We should be fighting and spending our treasury to have alternate sources of energy and to bring the whole world into that effort — not just the United States with our arrogance. This is a global problem.

As a presidential candidate, I advocate that we should put on a carbon tax and invite any other country to join us in a global effort — and the only quid pro quo is that they put up the carbon tax also in their country. We take all of that money from the tax and use it to integrate a global engineering and scientific effort to get us off carbon within a decade. We can do it.

ICONOCLAST: How would that affect countries that produce oil?

SEN. GRAVEL: They're going to sell the oil. They'll continue in the marketplace. They'll continue to push oil and so will all the oil companies, but we'll have unbelievable resources to go for an alternative. There'll be some chemical uses for oil for centuries to come, but what we have to do is get off the affect of oil polluting the environment. That's the only way you're going

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We the Lawmakers

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to do it.

I think Al Gore's movie is great. The problem is that at the end of the movie, what does it say? "Go to Wal-mart and buy a new lightbulb." So informing the people of a problem is not an answer because all you do is frustrate the people because they don't have the power to act upon it. That's the reason why I'm running for office – to empower the people to make laws. Once the people can make laws, you won't be so dependent on the lack of leadership that exists in the two political parties.

You see, there are only two venues with which to deal with the governance problem. One is the government, but the problem is that it's a representative government. It's a structural problem. The other area is the people. So if you can't solve the problem within the government, then you might as well go to the people.

Now what happens is that elected officials and the elites of our society have no confidence in the people. Well, the people are smarter than they are. They just don't know how to admit it.

They don't understand it. There's not a member of Congress that I would know of that would really stand up and fight to empower the people as lawmakers. They just don't understand that.

You can go to the website and read the law that I've codified – that permits the people to become lawmakers not like the 24 states and the 200 communities that have it. That's not good law. What I've done is taken the procedures of Congress and tweaked them so that they can now be used by the people in every governmental jurisdiction of the United States and the national government. Why can't the people make 100 percent of the policy issues that affect their lives and free up the government to do a better job in a day-to-day operations of the government? That's entirely possible.

That legislation is there. It's been neglected by the media. The media won't even talk about it because they don't even understand it. What happens is that once this legislation is enacted into law – and it won't be by the Congress but by the

people – it dilutes the power of the media and dilutes the power of Congress. They don't want to see that happen.

ICONOCLAST: You're saying that your National Initiative for Democracy dilutes the power of the media? How?

SEN. GRAVEL: If you look at the law, we set up communications procedures that even if the media is on one side of the issue or if Bill Gates spends a billion dollars and Warren Buffet spends another billion dollars, it won't make any difference. When the people learn their enlightened self-interest, it doesn't make any difference what anybody says. They go for their enlightened self-interest.

I can prove that with several instances of initiatives in California. One particularly I call the Philip-Morris law. I could talk to you for hours and days on this subject. I've spent the last 15 years of my life trying to bring this to the attention of the nation without success because the elites do not want to see this happen. Who would you trust? Do you trust a decision of the majority of 535 human beings or

nine people in black robes or the decision of the majority of 125 million people? You'll get a better decision every time by numbers.

It's not you as an individual or me as an individual. When the people legislate, they are legislating as an individual within the context of the constituency. It's a majority decision by the constituency, so fear of the Religious Right, fear of this or fear of that goes by the boards.

This isn't to say that the people won't make mistakes. The difference between people making mistakes in law and representative government making mistakes in law is that the people can change it because they feel the pain. The people in power do not feel the pain, and that's why it took 10 years to end the Vietnam War. We're on a similar path to end George Bush's oil war.

ICONOCLAST: Should the National Initiative prevail, what do you think would be among the first laws that the People's Legislature would put forth?

SEN. GRAVEL: End the war is the first one, and I would help initiate that, and if I were president I would have only one vote. The second thing is that you could do away with the electoral college. You could turn around

and have term limits on the members of Congress – 12 years for a senator, three- or four-year terms for the House, and 12 years for every federal judge including the Supreme Court of the United States. And that's just for openers.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)
SEN. GRAVEL: The reason for term limits is important because power corrupts and power corrupts absolutely. You can add the Gravel codicil – power corrupts everybody from St. Francis of Assisi on down. So if that's the case, the only thing you can do – it's a product of human nature – is turn around and limit the amount of time of any human being with that kind of elected power.

They go back to the private sector, and they take the wisdom and the experience that they have, or they get promoted up, but 12 years is all you need. Boy, I'll tell you, people say that this empowers the lobbyists. God damn, it's just the opposite. (laughs)

ICONOCLAST: How's that?
SEN. GRAVEL: Well, first off, you have to know how the lobbyists work. I was on a finance committee. I was very young, so obviously, the lobbyists paid a great deal of attention to me because they thought that

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We the Lawmakers

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someday I would have become chairman, if I stayed there in Congress. It's not hard to stay in Congress, by the way. It's the chairman that controls the agenda of the committee.

See, what people focus on is what the lobbyists overtly do, but if by having a committee chairman who thinks like a group of lobbyists, hell, they don't have to do anything overt. They just have to keep taking you to dinner. (laughs) He knows what to do.

People in elected office are generally wonderful people. They come there with ideals. They're going to change the world. They get there, and all of a sudden in the first term or even less, it becomes politics as usual.

Look at Obama. Here he stands up and makes statements saying that this war is terrible and that he's against the war. And what is his solution? It's to take the troops out in March 2008. What's that communication all about? It's politics as usual, and yet everybody is going bonkers over his celebrity and vision. Well, the vision has to have details, and it's a little weak on details. Hillary the same way.

But you see, these are the creations of media, and so now, when the people can make decisions directly informed outside the media, stop and think. Here's how an initiative would be informed: by law, the Electoral Trust, which is the agency created to administer the procedures on behalf of the people, has to turn around after a whole process of hearings and publish a booklet on each initiative. If it's a national initiative, it's sent to every single registered voter in the United States.

The booklet that is sent out about the initiative contains the pros and the cons, an objective analysis, an economic analysis, an environmental impact statement, and all of the relative factors so the citizen can read it if he chooses to.

This booklet has to be received by the people via snail mail. We could do it with advanced technology to their various email addresses. But it has to be received no later than 15 days before the election, and no earlier than 30 days before the election because as any politician knows, people focus on an issue on election 10 or 15 days out.

What the Electoral Trust then has to do is produce a television program a la "Frontline" about the initiative. I say this with hu-



Mike Gravel

mor that there'll be a category for Oscars as to who produces the best program to inform the people. These television programs are an hour to half an hour depending on the context. It will be mandatory by law put in front of the people primetime by each one of the networks and cable networks one time during that 15-day period. You'll do the same thing for radio and the same thing for print.

Now, a person would really have to go out of his way to not be informed about what is going on with that specific piece of legislation. They could then have one week, seven 24 hours to vote whether they're on vacation or in town. Then you'd have a pipeline — 52 national issues, 52 state issues, 52 local issues.

Incidentally, the Electoral Trust has to begin right at the beginning when it's formed to register everybody for life, so you don't have this crappy situation that we have now. All the elections for initiatives are conducted by the Electoral Trust, not at the state level.

This is all laid out in a law that has taken me 10 years to write called the National Initiative. It's not so out of the box. I'm sure that at one point in your life, you voted for a bond issue. Well, a bond issue is very serious lawmaking. If you're intelligent enough to vote on a bond issue, you're sure as hell intelligent enough to vote on the factors that effect your life. You're the only authority on your life. I'm not. I'm an authority on my life.

See, the reason why the people cannot make laws is be-

cause of slavery. That's the reason why. If you take the quotes from Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Wilson, James Madison, and others, they all said repeatedly that the people could alter the Constitution at any future time if it suited them. Now, that means lawmaking.

But why did they not put that in the Constitution? Because of slavery. They made a very undemocratic document, and rather than turn it over to the people for ratification, they sent it to conventions. They wanted to keep one step away because they knew eight years before the ratification of the Massachusetts constitution was defeated because it contained slavery. They knew that that could not get the constitution ratified in the Deep South if slavery were a part of it. They made a pact with the devil to satisfy the southern planters, and we have been living with that price ever since.

In the five areas of the constitution that deal with slavery, there's only one that has been repealed. The other four are still there. Let me tick them off for you. The one that has been repealed is the 3/5ths vote. The others there to lock in — that's why it took a Civil War — to lock in slavery: one, the Electoral College; two, the Article 5 way of amending the Constitution; three, the U.S. Senate; four, locally-controlled elections rather than federally-controlled elections. All those four areas totally destabilize any efforts at real democracy in this country.

ICONOCLAST: What you just described was how white elites have perpetuated themselves over the last 200 years.

SEN. GRAVEL: Exactly. That's the elite system that still exists and won't permit any breakthroughs. In fact, it's gotten worse. The media has shrunk down to five corporations. Has it ever occurred to you why the media touts Hillary and Obama so extensively? I mean, it's a given unless we do some stupid things that the next President of the United States could be or should be a Democrat.

I've got to tell you, the way that things are going, we're going to see a revisiting of 2004. Donald Duck could have beaten George Bush in '04.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

SEN. GRAVEL: What happened? Well, I gotta tell you — Donald Duck could beat any Republican in '08, but we're going to see what happens. It's politics as usual. It has de-

stroyed both parties.

You know, politicians love to beat their chests and say what a great country we are. There's no question that we've been a blessed country. We've got a great geographic area. We have great resources with an immigrant population. I want to underscore immigrant population.

Then, of course, we weren't shy about committing a couple of genocides like what we did with the Indians, but other than that, we're a great country. We love to go to war. But now, Dwight Eisenhower as he left office — that should be underscored "as he left office" — announced that the biggest threat we have to democracy is the military-industrial complex. Has anybody done anything about that since? Of course not. In fact it's gotten worse. It's gotten worse.

The military-industrial complex controls our government today. Controls it. Lock, stock, and barrel. With the Republican Party, it's obscene. But with the Democratic Party, it's still there. I was at a conference with Marshall, the head of the Clinton wing of the Democratic Party, and the first thing he said was we needed more money for the military.

We spend more on defense than all the rest of the world put together. We have more operable nukes than everybody else put together, and we're building more. Who the hell are we going to nuke? Then we look at North Korea and we look at Iran, and they were the signators to the non-proliferation agreement and so are we, but we're in violation of that agreement. They at least exercise the right to withdraw from it which you can do under international law, but we haven't withdrawn from it, and we're in violation.

All five members of the U.N. Security Council which is the basic nuclear club are signators of the non-proliferation agreement and are in violation of Article 7 which says that we should be in all haste doing away with nukes. None of them are doing it.

It's easier to point to the spec in the other person's eye rather than the piece of straw in front of our own eye.

ICONOCLAST: Well, we're four years into the U.S. occupation of Iraq. What do you consider we do to remove U.S. troops from there and re-stabilize the Middle East?

SEN. GRAVEL: You just plain take them out. We're in the middle of a civil war, and so what you do is have Congress pass the law saying bring them back post haste, and you take them out. This is a civil war. We started it. This is a fraud. This is a criminality. There's nothing

you can change. Everybody is focusing on the present. The present is dictated by the past, and the past is that we committed a criminal act and destabilized Iraq and the Middle East.

The only way we can handle this is to turn around, withdraw our troops, which from our point of view is the main part of the problem in getting to a solution. Once you withdraw our troops, you just withdraw them. I mean, you just start taking them out and you leave the Iraqis to their own devices which sadly is the only way.

The history of civil wars is that they end with victors. They don't end by negotiation unless there's an outside force that is prepared to assert itself. We are the outside force, and all we did was screwed it up. We initiated it. The only way we can have any influence at all is to pull our troops out and to proceed with aggressive diplomacy by involving the European Union, Iran, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, and anybody else.

That's the first thing you do. The world has a stake in the stability in the Middle East. But they'll continue fighting. It can't get any worse than it already is right now. Of course, what they're doing is taking American treasure, sequestering it to get weapons, so they can fight a civil war. They're fighting a civil war now. They know we're going to leave, and so therefore, they're hoarding their stuff to be able to fight it more aggressively.

Somebody is going to come out on top. I don't know who it is. It could be a religious nut.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs)

SEN. GRAVEL: Of course, that's what we would have brought about. Or it could be a secular person. I don't know. Nobody can predict it.

Now we went into Iraq for oil, and the reason why Democrat and Republicans are hanging around is to hope against hope to control oil. Well, you don't have to control the oil. If oil is in the hands of an enemy — let's look at Venezuela. Classic example. We created the enemy in Hugo Chavez like we created Fidel Castro. So he's a socialist. It's a dumb approach to in economics. I disagree with him, but he's going to do what he's going to do.

You ought to look at the history of Argentina and see what Peron did, but what he's got to do is sell that oil, and we get most of that oil for our needs, so now we have a situation that even an enemy of ours is selling us the oil. So who cares who has the oil of Iraq?

What we need to worry about is to find an alternative to oil and carbon, and we're not. So the juggernaut of global warming is

Continued On Next Page

We the Lawmakers

Continued From Previous Page
coming at us, and everybody is worrying about the Titanic. I mean, does the leadership get any sicker than that? Making a speech is one thing; its exercising your power (that makes the difference). And I say this about my candidacy. I've got a track record where I don't just make speeches. I do.

But that scares the hell out of the media, and that scares the hell out of the establishment. You think the insurance industry is going to donate to my campaign like they are donating to Hillary's and Obama's and the others? No, because they're all politics as usual. But I gotta tell you, I get elected president, and that is going to change.

We're going to have single-payer healthcare, and people are going to have choices, but we're not going to have a subsidy to the pharmaceutical and the insurance industry which is what we presently have.

ICONOCLAST: What about the education system? Are you for scrapping No Child Left Behind?

SEN. GRAVEL: This No Child Left Behind is a sham, and all these other educational proposals aren't going to go anywhere. Education has to be the nation's number one priority. The treasure of the nation lies in its people and that treasure is education.

What we need to do is exactly what Denmark, Finland, and Sweden are doing, which is to have education from childhood to any professional or journeyman status paid for by the government.

When you say where will the money come from for this education I'm talking about, where does it come from in Finland? Sweden? It comes from taxes. But what kind of tax are you going to have? We need a national sales tax.

Now, if a nation with its system of taxation taxes unfairly, then it is instilling the subconscious idea that their government is unfair. I think you'll find that this is the way the American people feel about their government. It's unfair.

Let's look at the system of taxation. You've got two major possibilities. One is the income tax which is a tax on what you earn. The other is the sales tax which is a tax on what you spend.

The difference between the income tax and the sales tax is that the income tax has been corrupted for eons with the unbelievable exceptions that exist in a code that is now four feet

high. Nobody understands all those exceptions.

It costs the American private sector about \$270 billion a year to comport to the tax code. Now that's half the money we've spent thus far in Iraq. This is annually. You begin to feel how much damage is being done by our tax code, so we've got an income tax that is totally regressive because of a simple human nature aspect: wealth can game the system.

When the liberals talk about taxing the wealthy, it's a canard because they're getting campaign contributions from them. The other thing which is really extreme is taxing corporations. But what does a corporation do? The corporation only collects the taxes for governments. That's all it does. It doesn't pay any taxes in a literal sense because it has to take the cost of taxation and add it to their product, so the consumer pays the corporate tax — the same people who are paying the income tax which is already regressive.

Now, let's look at a sales tax. It has total transparency. If you want to go buy a \$2,000 suit of clothes, you're going to pay whatever that rate will be, and it will be somewhere between 20 and 30 percent. Now I go buy a \$200 suit, I'm only going to pay 20 percent on that, so you see the natural progressivity of the sales tax. We can make it even more progressive.

There's a group out of Texas that came up with the Fair Tax. It's better than what I came up with 30 years. I had a guaranteed income separate from my single tax. They came up with a pre-bate to eliminate the exceptions to the cost of taxing the essentials (food, shelter, medicine).

What they do is they multiply the cost of essentials at the level of poverty by the tax rate, then divide that sum of money by 12 and mail that to every single registered taxpayer as a check, so they get the money before the first of the month. Those checks are mailed out by the Social Security office because you don't need the IRS when you wipe out the tax code.

So the way you can make the sales tax even more progressive is take the cost of essentials not at the poverty level but at the level of the average American. Now you're talking about somewhere between \$500 and \$1,000 a month. That is not inconsequential.

John Edwards says he wants to do something about poverty, but our present tax code causes more poverty than anything

else. It's obscene. How do you take care of the poor? You give them a tax credit? What that means is that they have to have income to get credit, so if you're poor and you don't have a job, you've got nothing. You've got a choice: welfare or go sleep under a bridge.

If you really want to help the poor, look at the Fair Tax which recommends that we get a check to the poor for \$1,000 a month, and it's not dependent on income. It's dependent on that we know they have to buy the essentials of life.

If you have a system of fair taxation, your products can also compete in the global marketplace 10 or 20 percent better than they can right now because the cost of our health system and tax code are not incorporated in the cost of your products. You don't think that this will add jobs to this country? You don't think that will add manufacturing to this country?

With a sales tax and a pre-bate — no corporate taxes — the United States will become the largest tax haven in the world. Academics predict a growth factor of 10 percent. That will provide the wealth, if it's not gobbled up by the present stupid leadership and the military industrial complex, to fund the

kind of education that is done in the Scandinavian countries, pay for a healthcare program worthy of its name, and take the entire transportation system of the United States off oil and electrify it all.

These are the things that are possible if we can straighten out some of the generic flaws in our system of government.

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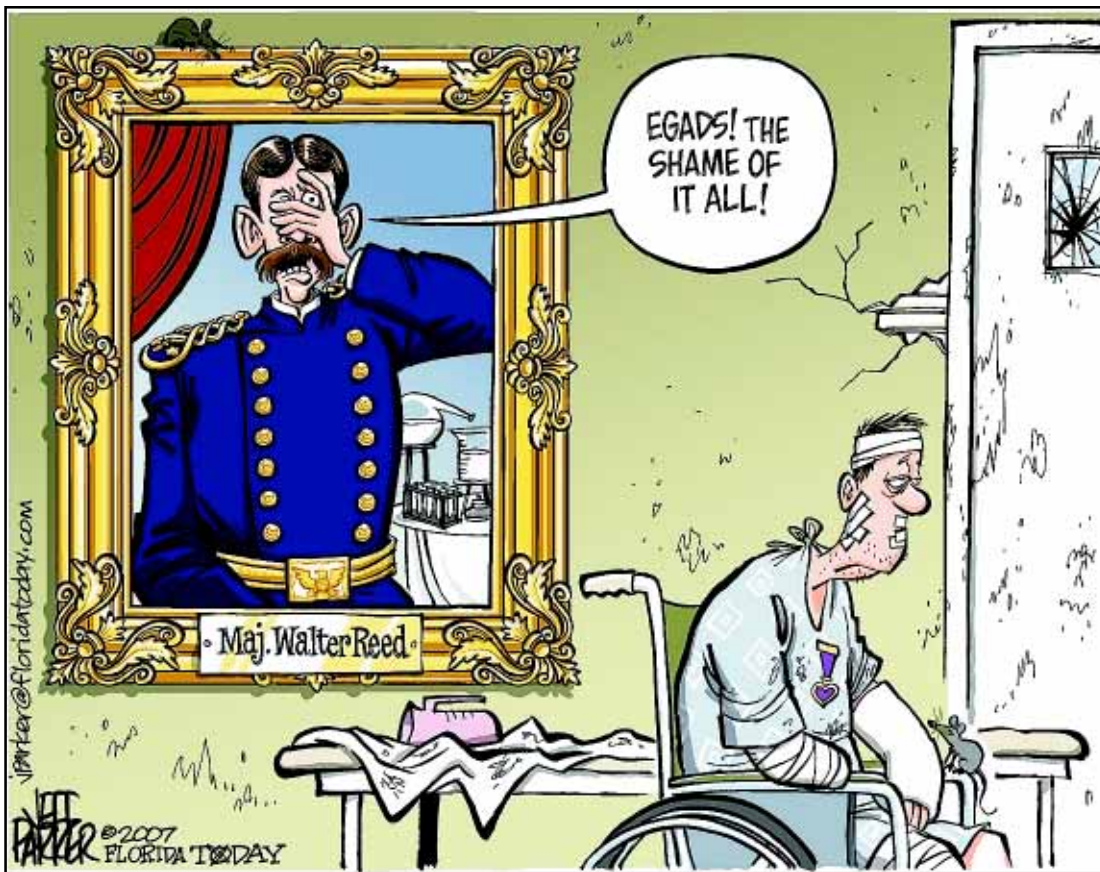
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Experts Warn New H-Bomb Could Spark New Arms Race

NEW YORK — The Bush administration's plan to develop a new hydrogen bomb could start a new nuclear arms race, according to disarmament advocacy groups.

Voices made this warning after the Department of Energy said it would replace the W76 warhead that currently sits atop submarine-launched ballistic missiles two weeks ago.

Nuclear weapons experts dismiss the accuracy of the administration's claims that the warheads in the government's stockpile are unreliable and in need of replacement in the next 20 years.

John Isaacs, Executive Director of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, told OneWorld.net that "the fact is that the U.S. stockpile has been confirmed 'safe and reliable' for at least another half century."

The national nuclear weapon labs scientists and independent experts said last November that

the contents of the stockpile need not be updated.

In fact, the JASON study showed that the triggers for the weapons — known as plutonium pits — would be good for another 90 years.

Leonor Tomero, a non-proliferation policy expert at the Center, noted that there was no question that the weapons would detonate.

"The concern was that the weapons would not detonate at their precise expected yield," he told OneWorld. "Even that is no longer a valid concern now."

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China have over 36,000 nuclear warheads among them.

The United States alone has thousands of nuclear weapons in its arsenal.

India, Pakistan, and Israel have not declared the number of nuclear weapons at their disposal; however, it is believed they have hundreds. None of these nations, unlike Iran, have signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran maintains that its nuclear aspirations only include generating energy for civilian use.

However, a report sponsored by an independent charity based in Britain found that should Iran be attacked, the Islamic Republic would push itself to produce "one or two crude" nuclear weapons faster.

"This realignment of Iran's nuclear program towards a so-called 'crash program' could lead to a nuclear armed Iran within one or two years," concluded Dr. Frank Barry, the author of the Oxford Research Group report.

Most nuclear weapons analysts believe Iran is not capable of producing a nuclear weapon within the next five years.

Dr. Hans Blix — the former UN chief nuclear inspector and head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — backed the report.

In the end, analysts said that more nuclear weapons manufacturing by the United States would hurt its interests worldwide — but especially with regard to non-state aggressors like al-Qaeda who are unresponsive to Cold War-style tactics.

Bush wants over \$118 million to fund development of these new nuclear weapon systems, which is five times greater than he requested last year.

Israeli Forces Abuse Illegal Workers: Human Rights Group

JERUSALEM — An Israeli human rights group reported last week that Israeli security forces abuse their authority in dealing with illegal workers who more often than not are Palestinians.

In many cases, these Palestinian workers are beaten severely and detained without nourishment, according to the

report by B'Tselem.

In response to the report, Israeli officials said that their forces are trained to stop suicide bombers from operating in Israel, but should reports of prisoner abuse be filed, investigations would follow.

Human rights groups note that workers from the West

Bank have grown more desperate for jobs in recent years as unemployment there has risen to 25 percent.

This compounded with Israel's reduction in worker permits for Palestinians has caused these workers to risk their lives by slipping through a portions of an unfinished 400-

mile security fence.

Israel says this fence is needed to protect its citizens against protect against suicide bombers.

B'Tselem researcher Eitan Diamond reported that the Israeli border police hold these illegal laborers longer than required by law. While detained, the workers are often exposed to harsh weather conditions without food, and in many cases, they are beaten, he noted.

"Every worker we talked to told us that at least once they were beaten, and sometimes severely," Diamond told the Associated Press.

B'Tselem has documented several instances of worker abuse that were not reported in the media.

In one case, Israeli police broke the arms of a Palestinian man in three places last November, the group said in its report.

Another time, the report noted, a man was beaten, his face cut, and shoulder stabbed after being fired upon by Israeli soldiers.

Israel's Justice Ministry responded by saying that a lack of evidence is the reason most cases of abuse end. However, several investigations have led to indictments.

For more information on the report, visit B'Tselem's website.

INFO
B'Tselem
www.btselem.org/English/

Cheney's Aide Found Guilty Of Felonies

Speculation Erupts Over Presidential Pardon For Libby

WASHINGTON — Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff was found guilty in federal court last week.

But as the verdict was read, speculation erupted as to whether President George W. Bush would pardon I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

Libby was convicted on four of five counts of obstruction and lying to a federal grand jury.

For four years, the jury had been investigating how a CIA operative's identity was released to the public.

Libby is expected to serve time in prison — up to 25 years — though the president could use his Constitutional powers to pardon him for his crimes.

Democratic leaders in Congress have already ex-

pressed their objections to such a move.

"President Bush must pledge not to pardon Libby for his criminal conduct," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in a statement.

The White House responded by saying that no request for a pardon had been made.

"[A]s is afforded to all Americans, there is a process that is followed in which to apply for a pardon," spokesperson Dana Perino told reporters. "And I don't think that speculating on a wildly hypothetical situation at this time is appropriate."

It is likely though that Bush would wait to pardon Libby at the end of the appeals process or prior to the presidential election in order to reciprocate the loyalty his administrations demands of its members in turn.

Libby is being seen as a patsy

for the vice president because Libby's defense team painted the former chief of staff as the fall guy and failed to call Cheney to the witness stand.

Had Cheney been cross-examined, untold damage and embarrassment could have been dumped on the administration.

The last two presidents have had their share of controversy over pardons.

President Bill Clinton pardoning tax evader Marc Rich, key Whitewater figure Susan McDougal, former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, and his brother Roger Clinton, as well as 136 other people.

President George H. W. Bush pardoned former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and five other officials involved in the Iran-Contra scandal.

And of course, the most famous pardon was given Richard Nixon by President Gerald Ford.

Dogs & Humans Weigh In For Headlines

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Kindness to animals once got me sent to jail. I gave a good home to 137 head of somebody else's cattle."

Kimanie Carter became Americas Most Villainous du jour last week.

He will do nine months in a Minnesota jail for killing 10 puppies by breaking their necks..

He also got two years of probation and is prohibited from owning pets for that same period.

According to testimony, Carter's cruelty was supposed to be some kind of object lesson for his fiancee.

"Okay, cut the catering bill by half, or I kill these puppies!"

Animal rights owners were up in arms.

So is the government of the Sudan, but 10 puppies in Minnesota gets bigger headlines.

That is not to say that Canine Carter ought not to do his time in a pound.

I might even suggest a little sodium pentothal in the scruff

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



of the neck.

Strictly as an object lesson, of course.

But then there's the two Dallas cops in foot pursuit of a carjacker who were attacked by a Rottweiler as they ran through a back yard.

It is possible said pooch just wanted to play trouser tug, but the officer shot it anyway.

This was the second time this year a Dallas policeman has shot an attacking dog, and that has raised the ire of the animal activists.

Okay, blame it on my cowboy upbringing, but if you are about to be bitten, kicked, gored or crushed, the time for gentle words and soft petting is over.

We may have put the golf course in the wrong place, but if the alligator doesn't want you

to play through, I'd suggest a well placed nine-iron shot . . . to the back of the head.

Understand, I'd like to feed the guy who invented the snowmobile into a Fargo wood chipper. Let the French eat their own horses. I don't use mahogany in my workshop unless it's been recycled. I don't shoot predators and I don't wear fur. If it's a choice between sea turtles or my weekly ration of *yucatecas*, I guess I'll just have to go with the eggplant and salsa.

On the other hand, rodeo is a lot more humane than a slaughter house. If we didn't milk them or eat them, cattle wouldn't exist, and if you don't think we need to hunt 'coon, feed 'em *your* chickens.

And yes, I did grow up eating 'coons.

Tastes a little like dog. It is unreasonable to think human beings will stop using animals.

Send Wilbur to Darfur, and they'll eat Charlotte, too.

Would you rather Cambodia smell like carabao or Honda exhaust?

It is equally absurd to think that animals have rights.

If they do, better tear down your backyard fence, because you're violating ol' Shep's civil liberties.

There are worse things than animal cruelty.

Most of them are happening in Iraq.

Animal abuse is horrific.

But it's wa-a-a-a-ay behind the ills that plague us most.

In many cases it is symptomatic of those ills, and cannot be addressed until callous disregard for life and liberty gets more of our attention and our money.

For example, in the same week that puppy killing Kimane was before the bar of justice, elsewhere in Minnesota the handicapped son of a medical marijuana advocate was called in and questioned by his junior high teachers with the idea in mind of calling child protective services and taking the kid away.

Medical marijuana is, incidentally, pretty much in the same category as therapeutic sex, if you ask me, and . . . oh, wow, man, what were we talking about?

Oh yeah!

The threat of a public institution to take away someone's children because of his advocacy is at least as dangerous as invading a sovereign nation because we don't approve of its government.

Maybe the school district could have just threatened to kill some puppies . . .

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Big Trouble In China

The People's Republic of China is expected to take the lead as the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases in the next year.

Until then, the United States remains to be the biggest contributor to global warming.

Still, whomever is the leader makes no difference when we're all burning fossil fuels like there was no tomorrow.

By the way, global warming happens when the sun's energy is trapped inside the earth's atmosphere by gases created by the burning of fossil fuels.

This is no conspiracy theory.

This is no re-election ploy for a wooden politician.

This is science.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) recently confirmed that China's emissions are outpacing those of all industrialized nations combined.

The IEA is no hippie-dippy, tree-hugging activist group. Its member nations import oil.

Now China says its fossil fuel consumption is eight times higher than the United States' and its total greenhouse gas emissions jumped from 42 percent to 97 percent of the American amount since 2001.

Most of China's energy (70 percent) is said to be produced from extremely inefficient coal-burning power plants, while its people consume energy at a 40-percent higher rate than the world's average.

While Beijing is encouraging local officials to enforce its energy efficiency plans through pay incentives, it still refuses to follow international agreements like the Kyoto Protocol before its people rise to a higher standard of living.

But Beijing knows climate change due to global warming is a real threat.

It admitted in a January report that it would be harder to feed its people as wheat, corn, and rice production there would decrease by 37 percent in 50 years due to drought in its northern grainbelt.

But what China wants is for industrialized countries, especially the United States, to take the lead in offering developing countries like itself energy-saving technologies.

"Developed countries bear an unshirkable responsibility," said Jiang Yu, a spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, last month.

Congress should remove some sanctions on China in order to share clean energy technologies and training and step up the U.S. Energy Department's assistance to China on reducing its dependency on coal.

Barbara Finamore, director of the China program of the Natural Resources Defense Council, says that China is "on the brink" of applying California's standards for energy efficient goods, buildings, and manufacturing.

Unfortunately, China will probably remain on the brink for some time since neither Congress nor the president are willing and able to make such a compromise possible.

The new Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming that was approved by the House (269-150) has no law writing ability and has a two-year lifespan.

Existing House committees, such as Commerce and Energy, see the new body as an infringement on their territory.

But the Bush administration is faring far worse on advancing global warming control policy.

It was revealed last week that the Alaskan division of the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service has limited the speech of government scientists in talking about climate change, polar bears, or sea ice.

Only designated officials within the agency are now allowed to discuss these topics.

This new development continues the administration's pattern of suppression.

Last year, reports found that its government appointees re-wrote press releases on global warming and then refused to grant interviews to journalists seeking information from climate scientists at NASA.

The conspiracy of suppression and denial is in full swing.

— Nathan Diebenow

30-Plus Vermont Towns Back Bush's Impeachment

BURLINGTON – The call for the impeachment of President George W. Bush rang louder last week as over 30 towns in Vermont approved resolutions seeking such a measure.

"The president must be held accountable," said state Rep. David Zuckerman of Burlington.

Another 16 towns also called for Congress to remove U.S. troops from Iraq.

"The best way to support them is to bring each and every one of them home now and take good care of them when they get home," stated the troop withdrawal resolution.

Last year, five Vermont towns

approved similar symbolic resolutions against the president on grounds that he misled the country leading up to the invasion of Iraq and approving of illegal wiretapping of U.S. citizens.

While these towns stand at the forefront of the movement advocating Bush's impeachment, their congressional delegation has yet to pursue the subject.

Also on the ballot in Burlington there was a call for a new investigation into the terrorist attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001.

The results of the state-wide meetings will be announced in the coming days.

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Ann Coulter, The Ugliness Behind The Leggy, Blond Facade

BY MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

E-mail received from the Log Cabin Club on Tuesday, March 6:

“(Washington, DC) – Log Cabin Republicans President Patrick Sammon made the following statement about pundit Ann Coulter’s remarks at CPAC:

“Ann Coulter should be embarrassed by her anti-gay remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference. Coulter’s words are not worthy of this event or our nation’s political dialogue. Intelligent people engage in political debates using ideas not insults. Unfortunately, she has made a career out of saying increasingly outrageous things just to garner headlines and sell her books. Ann Coulter is more interested in soundbites than substance and she has become more ridiculous than relevant. She obviously has no shame.”

Log Cabin, the club for gays and gay rights within the Republican Party, came out with the above, sent to its membership this morning. I was slightly bemused because the subject line read, “Ann Coulter - Log Cabin Responds - Inclusion West for Melinda.” I have been writing about Coulter, the CPAC event, and the NeoCon takeover of what was once my home in the Republican Party for the last several years; three articles in the last seven days. But nope, this was just their update with my name inserted for that personal touch.

Some changes are definitely not for the better. Thirty years ago being a Goldwater Conservative was more like being a Christian Liberal today. The change of direction can best be measured by the number of political operatives and think tanks funded by George W’s corporate clientele over the last 30 years. Think large numbers, including Coulter, David Horowitz, John Fund, Robert Novak and so on. They cost a lot but proved to be good investments for their corporate employers.

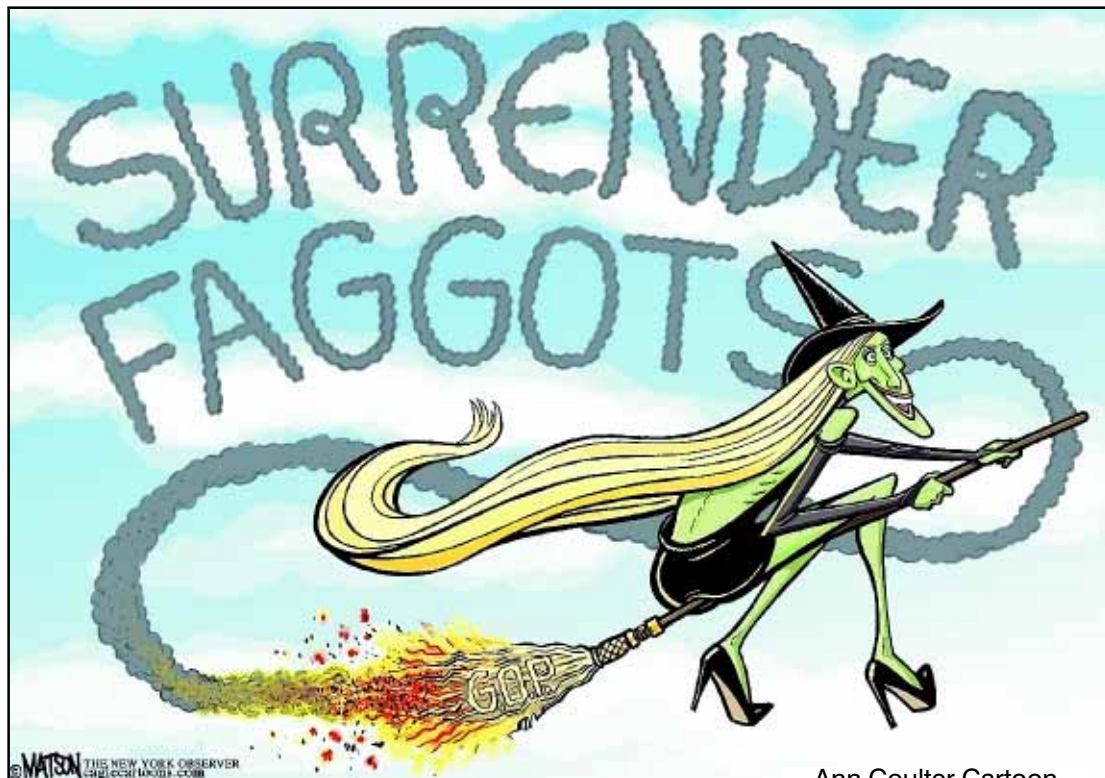
If you celebrate Earth Day in April you were fooled by one of them assigned to suborn the Environmental Movement. The full list of their employees includes George Bush, Senior.

Older people, if not growing

GUEST COMMENTARY

forgetful, will often nod, remembering when the environment and rights for women and peaceful relations were not Liberal Plots but ideas we all agreed needed to be put into action. Howard Baker, Jr. was a Republican from Tennessee who headed the first committee on the Environment. There was no controversy; all Americans wanted a clean environment. Many Veterans of WWII were serving in Congress. Veterans of World War II had no illusions on the romance of war. They came home hungry for peace and wanted that peace for their children. But war is far more profitable for corporations. Slowly, things changed as Maurice Strong worked to change the clear agenda for the environment that brought Americans and the world together at the end of the 60s.

That was when women still had a respected place in the Republican Party and the ERA was still in our platform because equal rights for all Americans



Ann Coulter Cartoon

in putting a higher priority on establishing a government than on preserving the rights with which each of us is born. Schlafly has gotten rich doing

as an oppressed minority among Republicans. (What? A gay Republican? Impossible!) Supporting the right of others to live their lives untrammelled by

nia, serving the 2nd of six terms. In politics, as in all life, you decline when you are not inclined. I am unabashedly and unapologetically heterosexual, myself. Frankly, I could never understand how anyone had the energy to spend so much time thinking about sex. But then again, I had five children.

The Log Cabin Club response to the Coulter comment was not unexpected. They were not alone, thank goodness. Some Conservatives, finally fed up with Coulter and her behavior have launched a petition of Conservatives who attended the conference. Sean Hackbarth, The American Mind wrote an open letter. He has been joined by over 200 others, a good thing and long awaited. A return to civility in politics and all social intercourse is long overdue. Another group, the Conservative Exodus Project, is urging Conservatives to leave the GOP all together.

The Conservative Union came out with its own statement to distance themselves from Coulter today. It is up on their website though their motives are probably more legal than moral or ethical. Coulter has been speaking there for years, after all.

“ACU, the event’s primary
Continued On Next Page



Lydia Cornell

Cornell Harrassed By Ann Coulter

Yesterday on the ‘Spiritual Politician,’ Lydia Cornell, who describes herself as a recovering Republican, went over the months of harassment she and her children have endured, initiated by Coulter and her minions.

was taken as a matter of course. That was before Phyllis Schlafly reared her ugly head as another NeoCon political operative, funded to divide us on the issue of rights for women through a carefully thought-out disinformation campaign. Then, we knew we were finishing the Revolution of 1776, mending the mistakes made by the Founders

that work as those chasms of anger and distrust she dug grew ever deeper. The ERA remains to be ratified and a campaign is active to accomplish that. To find out more contact the ERA Campaign Network.

I received the e-mail from the folks at Log Cabin because I joined the Log Cabin Club in the 90s to show solidarity with them

busy bodies was a common value for Conservatives back when I first read, “Conscience of a Conservative” by Barry Goldwater. Most of the Log Cabin members are nice people although I did not attend the parties. I developed an aversion to hot tubs while I was on the State Executive Committee of the Libertarian Party of Califor-

Ann Coulter, The Ugliness Behind The Leggy, Blond Facade

From Previous Page

sponsor and CPAC strive to provide a platform and forum for a variety of differing views and personalities. ACU and CPAC do not condone or endorse every speaker or their comments at the conference. As such, ACU and CPAC leave it to our audience to determine whether comments are appropriate or not.

“Ann Coulter is known for comments that can be both provocative and outrageous. That was certainly the case in her 2007 CPAC appearance and previous ones as well. But as a point of clarification, let me make it clear that ACU and CPAC do not condone or endorse the use of hate speech,” said David A. Keene, ACU Chairman.”

Of course, David A. Keene, is keenly aware that the conference the Conservative Union puts on every year is attended mostly by the people least likely to be able to judge what is appropriate and the most likely to be influenced by what is probably their first exposure to what is unabashedly presented as the culture and values of Conservatism. Young people are vulnerable to drugs presented by attractive pushers, including snorting NeoConservatism.

Steve Frank, a long time Conservative activist and leader in California who does a daily e-

zine mailed out widely to Republicans, said, “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.”

The faggot remark is not the most egregious act, either on the part of Coulter or by the Conservative Union taking place at the conference. Coulter’s vicious behavior, her flouting of law, and the way she has encouraged violence towards others has been building for a long time now.

Yesterday on the Spiritual Politician Lydia Cornell, who describes herself as a recovering Republican, went over the months of harassment she and her children have endured, initiated by Coulter and her minions. Cornell, an actress, author and comedienne, made the mistake of trying to enter into a dialogue with Coulter after she got to know Dan Borchers over a year ago. The two have been working on a book together tentatively titled, “How to talk to Ann Coulter if you must.” Coulter’s response to Cornell’s request for an interview resulted in Coulter posting her phone number and address on a website at Christmas time and encouraging her followers to pound on Cornell’s door, and call her at all hours. Acts of arson



were also carried out against Cornell, who is the mother of two children still barely into the double digits. She is also a vocal and active Christian.

Cornell reported that her kids were intimidated by the reign of fear they endured but she continues to pray for Coulter and for Bush, asking that God help them see the truth about their own actions.

Violence is evidently something that Coulter finds attractive. Her speeches are larded with such remarks as, “Those few abortionists were shot, or, depending on your point of view, had a procedure with a rifle performed on them. I’m not justifying it, but I do understand how it happened...”

While much of the reaction from Liberals to the remarks made at the CPAC conference about John Edwards have focused on Coulter’s use of the word, “faggot,” the treatment of Dan Borchers meted out by Coulter’s flunkies and CPAC there was far worse. Coulter repeated those remarks the next day to Americans United for Separation of Church and State in a church sanctuary in Fort Lauderdale. The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, vehemently criticized Coulter’s ugly rhetoric and called on Gary Cass, head of the Center for Reclaiming America, repudiate the remarks publicly.

Presenting Coulter to the Conservative Union’s targeted audience of young people smacks of indoctrination. This may be the last time, the Coulter Swan Song, so to speak. Her prominent position in the NeoCon world has been profitable but indications are that presence is heading towards the dustbin as Republicans take

stock across the steady decline of NeoCon power. Some will reject Coulter because they are disgusted; others because she has moved from the column of asset to liability. Markets in icons work that way.

By continuing to feature her for these many years the CU did, in fact, endorse her hate speech and profited from the culture it created, a culture that has as much relationship to Conservatism as I knew it in the 60s as Christianity does to the Inquisition. Republicans, Libertarians, and Conservatives await unfolding events.

Conservatives used to believe that the government that governed least was best, that local

control was the original idea, that accountability was essential to all human action, and that all of us were born possessed of inherent rights. If you think that is still the case tell David Keene. The contact information is:

The American Conservative Union. | .1007 Cameron Street. | .Alexandria, VA 22314. | .Phone: (703) 836-8602

America: The original idea was freedom for all of us. That is still where real Conservatism and our Christianity should have taken us.

Hear Lydia Cornell talk about her traumatic encounter with the ugliness of Ann Coulter on the BBS Radio archive for the Spiritual Politician.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Abandon ship!

Republicans — grab your lifeboats! Captain George W. Bush’s Ship of State is foundering on the rocks and is headed for Davy Jones’ locker. Even bilge rats have the instinct for self-preservation and will abandon a doomed vessel. Those who keep trying to bail Bush out do so at their own peril; they’ll go down with that sinking ship.

Paul G. Jaehnert, Vadnais Hts., MN

To The Editor:

I certainly agree that moving on Impeachment now, before Iran happens could so distract the Bush Administration that they might not be able to organize an attack on Iran.

—Which brings me to this question: Why does the Democratic leadership refuse to bring articles of impeachment against Bush/Cheney while pretending to be anti-war?

I believe form many sources and much study that the Democratic leadership wants Bush to attack Iran, as does Israel, the sponsor of so many so-called Liberal Democrats.

They want it done and want George to take the blame for it also, while they, themselves, soak up all the idiot anti-war votes and money. Thus, everything will continue as now except that Democrats will be in power and getting most of the bribe money.

Dennis Morrisseau, West Pawlet, VT

‘Inherit The Wind’ Performances Begin March 23 In Waco

WACO — The classic American drama, *Inherit The Wind*, is set to run March 23, 24, 30, and 31, at 7:30 p.m. and March 25, at 2:30 p.m., at the Waco Civic Theatre, with ticket prices set at \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors.

This drama is based on the Scopes “Monkey” Trial of 1925, pitting the teachings of Darwinist evolution against Fundamentalist Christianity. The town of Hillsboro, Tenn. is the site of this monumental legal clash between Matthew Harrison Brady, a leading Christian scholar and former Presidential candidate, and opponent for the defense Henry Drummond, a defender of free thought and the leading legal mind of his day.

The whole town watches along with the world as this precedent-setting social battle plays out. *Inherit the Wind* is far more than the story of 12 exciting days in a Tennessee courtroom; it is a narrative of a nation and its people as they struggle to come to grips with the forces of change.

Inherit the Wind is appropriate for PG-13 audiences. All tickets can be reserved by calling the box office at (254) 776-1591.

A Legacy Of Black Mold

So, our dear Little Dictator wannabe has made a trek to visit some South American “friends” in a thinly veiled attempt to upgrade his *legacy*.

Let’s see... Wasn’t it way back in the year 2000 – some seven bygone years, when we lived in a relative state of peace, harmony and comfort, able to fully bask in those freedoms allotted to us all by our Constitution – that George W. Bush made a promise to improve relations with our neighbors south of the Equator?

It was one more of those innumerable, pesky little campaign assurances he tossed out at the masses, folks who were at the time painfully unaware of or willfully blind to Li'l Georgie's unfamiliarity with veracity.

Now that all else has failed, and failed most miserably under his rotten excuse for “leadership,” Lame Dubya figures it's about time he makes an effort by goin' courtin' way down south. (Don't expect any souvenirs from Venezuela, however. Inept is as inept does, and Georgie refuses to confer with anyone whose concepts don't agree with his own, such as Hugo Chavez.)

It's fairly obvious for thinking people around the Planet to see this ploy is an act of arrogant desperation.

When crowds of indigenous locals came to greet Lame Dubya, letting him know just how welcome a guest he was in their countries, riot squads had to be called out to dispel them.

I am never at a lack of amazement to see the intense level of love, joy, and deep regard that follows the members of this White House Fascisti as they hop around from one overseas city to another.

The timing of this little excursion could not have been more appropriately plotted. What better place for Fearless Leader to be at the end of a week that saw “Scooter” convicted; an investigation into the firing of Federal prosecutors for political reasons; as well as a scandal denouncing military hospitals as “snake pits?”

Li'l Georgie most certainly would not want to be anywhere upon U.S. soil, especially the District.

Just who is culpable for the Walter Reed Army Medical Center atrocities?

Well, according to Court Jester and all-around wise-ass Tony Snow-job, the first Press Secretary to actively set policy,



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

it isn't the Commander-In-Chief.

Imagine that! Following five-and-a-half years proclaiming *ad nauseum* that he's “the CIC,” a “War President” – titles by which other officeholders have rarely, if ever, referred to themselves – once more Li'l Georgie refuses to acknowledge his responsibility for a malfunction of colossal breadth and girth.

One would think that by now he'd comprehend the structure of military chain-of-command.

Let us take a trip up that chain:

Until late 2004, the commander of WRAMC was Lt Gen Kevin C. Kiley, M.D. On Sept. 30 of that year he was promoted Surgeon General of the Army and Commander, U.S. Army Medical Command, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Not bad for a guy whose specialty is obstetrics/gynecology, wouldn't you think?

Yes! The Army's top physician is a women and baby doctor!

However, his residence is some 1,500 miles north of Fort Sam, across the street from the crumbling building that he neither inspected nor knew was infested with rats, cockroaches and black mold.

How Kiley could dwell within sight of a building that housed recuperating heroes, pass it on a regular basis, yet claim to not notice its dilapidated condition is so far beyond laughable as to be sorry. The exterior deterioration was more than visible in news footage; of itself that should have been enough to draw him inside for at least an informal look around.

When hauled in before Congress, Kiley gave what amounted to the least minimal apology possible, blaming the already-fired Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey and Maj Gen George W. Weightman, et alia. It was Weightman's bad fortune to have taken command of WRAMC late last August, long after conditions had already become intolerable.

Kiley continued to act as if it were perfectly acceptable to house soldiers who had given parts of themselves – not just time, but limbs and psyches – in

conditions for which any slumlord would be heavily fined or tossed into the pokey.

At some point the dayroom with the ping-pong tables and plasma television was haughtily brought up, as if those balanced out disgraceful living and care conditions.

Harvey was appointed Army secretary about two months after Kiley took over as chief surgeon. With a doctorate in metallurgy and material sciences (nowhere could I find any military experience), he was just perfect for the position. After all, Harvey's previous job was director and vice chairman of Duratek, Inc.

Duratek is the no. 2 ranked firm among All-Environmental Firms. Ostensibly the company has huge government contracts to remove nuclear waste; its 2005 revenue was in the \$300 million range.

Starting in 1995 Duratek's major stockholder was the Carlyle Group... Remember, George H.W. Bush and friends. Once there was a huge profit to be made by Carlyle, concurrent with Li'l Georgie's invasion of Iraq in 2003, Duratek bought them out.

One can enter the Duratek, Inc. website, but clicking a cursor on its “clients” and “investors” boxes leads to dead ends.

While Harvey was at the reins of the Army, and Kiley chief surgeon, IAP Worldwide Services was awarded the contract to handle the services, facilities and administration at WRAMC (Jan. 25, 2006). Of roughly 360 Federal employees, some 290 were replaced within months by untrained, lower-paid IAP hires.

People whose only collective purpose in showing up was to leave with a paycheck.

IAP was given free rein over every aspect of our returning wounded lives save for medical treatment itself.

Did I mention IAP has government contracts all over the World, including several with the UK? You may remember IAP as the good folks who drove ice destined for the Gulf after Katrina everywhere around the contiguous 48 except Louisiana and Mississippi. How many millions did the company get paid for that?

Its news releases announcing hirings and appointments at upper levels read like a Pentagon directory. One of its primary partners is CACI International, long a target of questionable government con-

tract practices.

Both IAP's CEO and president, Al Neffgen and Dave Swindle are “graduates” of Kellogg, Brown and Root, Halliburton's top subsidiary for learning how to make the most from taxpayers while giving us nothing in return.

There is no requirement for a license to perform brain surgery to connect the dots and realize how WRAMC – as well as numerous other military and Veterans' Administration medical facilities – have been turned into dumps.

No one has mentioned Gen Peter J. Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff since August, 2003. He doesn't get a free pass from all of this. Why doesn't somebody ask him what he knows?

Well, it really is a family in the Army; his brother, (Maj Gen) Eric, M.D. was named the new commander at WRAMC.

There is one name that has been kept curiously out of this ugly mess. The White House doesn't want to mention him; for some unknown reason the mainstream media seems to be giving the guy a pass.

Donald Rumsfeld.

That's right, the worthless fossil who would not listen to any of his military leaders, bent upon doing everything his own way – despite his complete lack of military training or expertise.

Why, Dark Lord the Dick Cheney himself said, “As a former secretary of defense, I think Donald Rumsfeld is the best secretary of defense the United States has ever had.”

Coming from Dick this is faint praise, indeed, considering his five deferments during VietNam leading to a complete lack of military experience; his lifelong “stomach for the fight,” as long as someone else is doing the fighting; and the fact that nobody really gives a damn what the schmuck thinks.

Come to think of it, these contracts have Cheney's fingerprints all over them, too.

Of course, as I mentioned at the top, the chain-of-command stops at George W. Bush. Go to any military facility, any Army orderly room (whatever it's called in the other branches), and it will be graced with Fearless Leader's photo.

Whether he or Tony Snow-job cares to admit it, Li'l Georgie's responsible.

There really are no words to aptly describe this shameful and deplorable mistreatment of our combat wounded.

Adding insult to injury, Fear-

less Leader and the GOP Congress have on an annual basis reduced funding for military and veterans' healthcare and services, requiring individuals to pay more of the costs out of pocket.

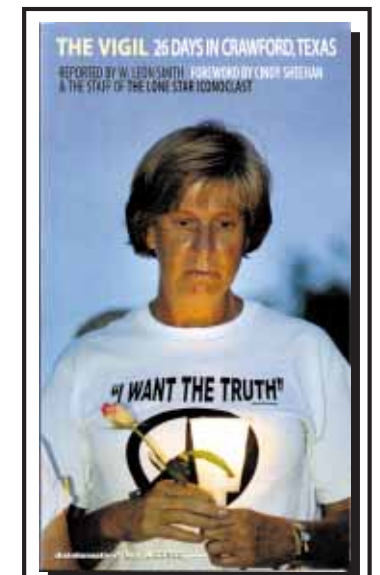
The only person I've mentioned in this column who probably should not be held responsible for the travesty at WRAMC is MG Eric Schoomaker. Yet, is it possible the only doctor/general in the Army qualified to receive that command can be the brother of the chief of staff?

Don't ask, don't tell takes on more meaning than we were aware of previously...

As for George W. Bush's *legacy*, well, that shall never be any better than nor rise above what whales deposit onto the ocean floor.

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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Fighting Boomers

We baby boomers aren't going down without a fight. At least that's the plan. And I tell you, it's darned complicated to try to stay on top of our game.

Remember when most of our parents and family were this age? Didn't they seem OLDER and more sedate than we do? —More accepting of their fate? (Every generation since the beginning of time probably feels the same way about those who came before).

But seriously, didn't they dress old and sit around and talk old and just SEEM old? We loved them (and continue to love and cherish them if we're lucky enough to still have them around), and I don't mean this to sound disrespectful. Truly I don't. But how many of them were out skydiving or floating around in hot air balloons, mountain climbing or mountain biking or whatever at this age? Of course, they probably had fewer knee problems and fewer broken bones.

We Boomers are just different —as the generation X-ers or the Me Generation or any other generation younger than we are will be different from us. If we're lucky enough to be blessed with good health, we're trying to sustain it by any means possible.

We go to the gym and sweat on treadmills (my own personal, most hated category — exercise) or ride bikes or run marathons. Many of our generation quit smoking (or never started), probably the single most important step anyone can take to insure a longer, healthier life. We take supplements and diet aids and Viagra, for heaven's sake, hoping to stave off the ravages of time for just one more day.

I was laughing recently about the things I do in the name of good health and the many vitamins and supplements I take. Recent studies (and our physicians) tell us we must maintain! This is hard work. Not only must we submit to inconvenient and uncomfortable medical testing at various benchmarks in life to assure our continued survival, but we must also consume mass quantities of helpful ingredients. (And stop consuming mass quantities of many of the things we love to eat).

These tests are often lifesavers, and I'm in no way advocating refusing them. I've suffered through all of them that have been required of me. (No one wants to hear all the hideous things I've endured in doctors' offices in my lifetime, in the name of sustaining good health.

We all have these stories, best kept to ourselves. These are listed under the category of "TMI" —Too Much Information). I'm just making fun of it all a little. It helps to endure it. Please bear with me.

The inconvenience involved in making and keeping medical appointments is minor, but it does exist. Getting time off from jobs —and in big cities especially, maneuvering to the medical centers, parking, and waiting are a pain. Sometimes the tests themselves are painful or at least uncomfortable. Often they are stressful.

And for people without insurance, there's the expense. Or for those who just don't pay, the expense falls eventually to us, those who end up paying for everyone else. But that's another column. For those with insurance, there's the high cost of THAT. It seems to keep getting higher while benefits diminish. But again, that's another column as well. My point is that all this maintenance isn't cheap or easy. It's work.

Women are urged to have an annual mammogram after a certain age. I know it's necessary, so I do it. Every time I go in for one, it seems I was just there. This is how I can mark my years now, not with the birthdays I'd often like to forget but with mammograms, it's always a relief when the results are good. The one time the film came back unreadable and I was called in for a second test, it probably took five or 10 years off my life.

Women are urged to have bone density tests, another good idea, very simple and painless. Everyone is told to endure the dreaded colonoscopy early during the fifth decade. This test is always a big favorite with men and women alike. But you know, it saves lives, so we do it, and we're grateful for it. (I personally just hope the medical establishment can improve on the prep before my next one. The procedure itself was a yawn. You go to sleep. You wake up. No biggie). There are other concerns for women, different problems for men. So we all see various specialists and take care of ourselves in different ways.

Most of us need reading glasses now. I'm guessing many have high blood pressure. Most watch their weight and cholesterol. We don't do it because we want to, but because we must. This brings us to the subject of pharmaceuticals, and my handy dandy a.m./p.m./pill dispenser. If I didn't stock this little health aid once a week, I'd never be

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.

able to remember what to take when.

I'm lucky. I take only two prescription drugs. One is for a funny heart valve and one is for high blood pressure. The latter was a nasty little blip that just popped up for no good reason after a lifetime of very low blood pressure. —Ah, the surprises of middle age.

Many blood pressure pills contain a diuretic or "water pill" that helps draw extra water out of your system, somehow making it easier for your heart to do its work.

All the rest of the supplements that fill my pill dispenser are over-the-counter things recommended by my health-care professional. If you're lucky enough to reach the middle years, you can start taking two baby aspirin a day to ward off heart attack. Since aspirin puts me to sleep, I take these at night.

This aspirin therapy thing always confuses me. The recommended dosage is two 81-mg. pills a day, no more. What if you need to take another aspirin for pain or fever at some point? Is it OK once in a while? Should you take a different type of medication? It becomes confusing without a degree in pharmacology or medicine. I keep forgetting to ask about this. No wonder older folks often have adverse drug reactions from mixing the wrong things.

Niacin is often helpful in lowering cholesterol. The hope is that it will be effective enough that one can avoid cholesterol-lowering prescription drugs. I take this supplement twice a day and am still not up to my doctor's recommended dosage.

Ten minutes after ingestion, niacin gives most people a very pronounced, unmistakable, hot flash kind of feeling and often a red face. If you took niacin and didn't know what to expect, you'd probably drive yourself to the emergency room when you experienced the strong "niacin flush". Once you realize what's causing the reaction and understand that it will dissipate in about ten minutes, you don't worry about it.

Men, who won't ever experience the typical female, hormonal hot flash, can take a niacin pill and, in some small way, share the moment with the significant female others in their lives. I recommend it. (But my doctorate isn't in the medi-

cal field, so if you're smart, you won't take medical advice from me. This column is meant to be strictly informative and possibly humorous). Sometimes I ask myself, "Can this voluntarily induced, hot flash reaction possibly be good for me?"

It's recommended that women take calcium daily. Lots of it. So I do that, too, both morning and night. I'm supposed to take more than I do, and I'm working up to the recommended dosage. I finally found a calcium supplement that's delivered via soft gel capsule, because it's hard for me to swallow those big ol' "horse pills."

Vitamin D has been shown to aid the body's absorption of calcium. Add that to my pill dispenser. Calcium can be constipating to some people, another fun, common, middle-aged problem for many Boomers. (Diuretics might have a similar effect on some). So many women might take calcium for strong bones and then resort to laxatives and other products to counteract the effects of the calcium. Sometimes you just can't win.

Fish and flax oil are supposed to be good for heart health. This is a fairly recent finding. Over-the-counter drug manufacturers and others really jumped on this bandwagon. You may notice several new products sprouting from your supermarket shelves promising to deliver the same Omega 3-6-9 benefits found in the fish oil pills. These products include margarine, mayonnaise, oil and peanut butter.

I take a big ol' soft capsule of this fish oil stuff both morning and night. An added benefit is that if you awake with dry eyes (possibly caused by the diuretic you may take for high blood pressure), a fish oil pill the night before might help dry eyes the following morning. Again, it's all about yin and yang).

Folic acid is good for reproductive health, even if you're a

woman past reproducing. What the heck, I take that, too.

Vitamin C is good, so that's another staple of my pill dispenser. —Same with multivitamins (although a recent news item warned about lead, of all things, in some of the cheaper women's multivitamins. That was pretty disturbing).

My father lived to be a hale and hearty 98. He didn't wear glasses of any kind until he reached his 60s. He refused to take aspirin, even if he had bursitis or the flu. He didn't need medication for high blood pressure until his 90s.

Dad was hardly ever sick. If he was, he didn't complain. He never overate, rarely ate between meals, but always enjoyed dessert. He was never overweight and didn't diet. I expect he averaged about two beers a day, sometimes less and sometimes none. He swore by hot lemon water and/or prune juice each morning (yuck), enjoyed my homemade bran muffins, ate a lot of canned and tinned fish, and was active throughout his life. He ate a well-balanced diet and figured that was enough. He never took even a multi-vitamin until I forced them on him during the last five or 10 years of his healthy life. He never thought or acted like an old person.

I never figured out Dad's secret —unless it was his excellent attitude and thirst for knowledge. He didn't have the benefit of all the information, recommendations, supplements —and many of the tests —we have today. Still, he lived a healthy life almost to 100. Maybe it was just dumb luck, good genes —or plain old hard work. Go fig.

Meanwhile, I'll just keep doing what I'm doing, adding whatever the medical establishment recommends next (even though sometimes they change their minds) and hope for the best.

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Sadly, Flatulence No Longer Has A Place At The Airport

As many of you know, I have a fear of flying. What many of you don't know is that I also have a fear of being seen naked. Until now, I had the comfort of knowing there was almost no chance of both happening at once, unless I somehow ended up on one of those nude flights, where I would quickly be arrested for refusing to return my tray to its upright position for take-off.

But now, thanks to the latest development in airport security technology, I no longer have to wait until I'm actually in the air and vomiting into the seat pocket in front of me before I can experience total humiliation. That's right. I can now get things rolling before I even board the plane by stepping into a special X-ray booth and having an airport security professional see me completely naked.

According to the U.S. Transportation Security Administration, the technology has been



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

around for several years but hasn't been introduced as an anti-terrorism tool because of privacy concerns.

"We have now found a way to blur certain areas of the images that would otherwise be too detailed for some people's comfort," said TSA spokesman Alto Leering. "It's a great alternative to a strip search — You know, unless you're into that sort of thing."

The machines are currently being tested in Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport, as well as London's Heathrow Airport, where Prince Charles recently helped demonstrate how areas of concern could be blurred for privacy.

"As you can see, you cannot discern how large my ears are," he said to reporters. "And my shim-shim is completely gone."

The press conference ended soon after, when TSA officials admitted there were no alterations applied below the Prince's ears.

"But when you consider what we were able to do with his ears, you can imagine what we could do with a standard 'shim-shim,'" officials said.

Needless to say, this has not helped ease my fears. In fact, it has made them worse by introducing the word 'shim-shim' into my vocabulary. Regardless, I thought doing some research to get a better understanding of this new technology might help.

Naturally, I was wrong.

We'll begin with the name of

this technology. I was hoping for something either a) extremely technical, suggesting years of exhaustive research and training, or b) something friendly that would make me feel looked upon in my nakedness with compassion. Instead, I ended up with c) "BackScatter," which sounds like what could happen if I forget to remove my cell phone before I step in front of the X-ray.

I should also point out that, in addition to revealing metal objects, the images can also help identify the presence of nitrogen, which appears as a cloudy area on the image; nitrogen is emitted by plastic or liquid explosives.

It is also emitted by humans when they flatulate.

As I already stated, I get nervous when I fly.

It doesn't help knowing I could be tackled by airport security because of a "cloud" on my X-ray that comes as the result of a Taco Bell value meal and my extreme anxiety over flying.

And I don't even want to think of what will happen if bomb-sniffing dogs become part of the scenario.

So, I'd like to thank the TSA for giving me another reason to freak out the next time I have to fly somewhere. I'm already thinking I'll need to take a sedative to help with my nerves.

Unless, of course, it gives me gas.

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

Today's Polling Place: The TV Set

I've got nothing against the David Letterman show. It's a very funny show. In fact, if Dave ever asks me to be a guest, I will probably clear my calendar to accommodate him. However, when John McCain went on Letterman recently to "unofficially" announce his candidacy for the Presidency of the United States, don't you think it was a tad bit undignified? I mean, he made this announcement about the most important job in the world on a comedy-talk show that is best known for its Top 10 List and stupid pet tricks.

Previously, some candidates made their announcements on the Larry King show. Larry would interview the candidate who would talk about why he was the best person to help save the planet, and then Larry's next guest would be somebody like the world record holder for whistling while eating crackers.

Memo to prospective candidates who want to be taken seriously: Instead of announcing your intention to run for President on a commercial TV show, just hold a press conference.

I don't expect any candidate to take my suggestion. That's because they don't really care about dignity. They care about being seen on television by as many people as possible and/or by the demographic groups that their advisors want them to woo.

Television has become increasingly important in terms of how we elect our leaders. Many people don't vote for the person they think would be the best President, but for the



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

person they think looks best on television. To them, Nixon lost because he sweated too much and needed a shave, Reagan was great on TV, Al Gore was too stiff on television, and John Kerry came off as a Frenchman. So is it any surprise that nothing seems more important to candidates than television time?

But I think things have gone too far, which probably means they will go even further. I believe that soon some candidates won't just make their announcements on semi-news or talk shows. If they really want to be seen by the most people, what's to stop them from appearing on regular entertainment shows?

I don't think we're that far away from watching a scene on "CSI" in which a coroner examining a corpse will suddenly turn to the camera, remove his mask, and say, "I'm not really an actor. I'm actually running for President."

Perhaps it's more likely that they will go on "reality" or game shows to do their announcing. The names of some shows would lend themselves perfectly to political appearances. "The Amazing Race" would be a natural for them. Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani might want to show up on "Family Feud." And those who are doing worse in the

polls than "others" can be on "The Biggest Loser."

The next step in this evolution is not just that candidates will appear on these shows to make their announcements. Next they could start participating in them. Every four years, a different "reality/game show" could host the Presidential candidates. If it's "American Idol," all the candidates will sing, and the country can call in their votes for their favorite singer/candidate. The winner becomes President. We wouldn't even have to walk down the block to our polling place.

Come on. Who wouldn't want to see the current crop of candidates competing in "Dancing With The Stars?" And wouldn't you want to watch them eating bugs and crawling through the mud on "Survivor: The Presidential Election?"

Maybe I'm overreacting. Perhaps the stakes are so high that the candidates can't be blamed for wanting to be seen by large television audiences. And maybe they do have more restraint and class than I'm giving them credit for. After all, nobody announced their candidacy during the Anna Nicole Smith legal proceedings -- so far.

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

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Greenbacks Give Democrats A Run For Their Money

Disgruntled Democrats, agrarian rebels and a handful of breakaway Republicans cast their lot with the Greenbacks on Mar. 14, 1876 at the organizing convention of the Texas branch of the new third party.

The devastating depression unleashed by the Panic of 1873 shook American society to the core. Out of this crisis arose the Greenback Labor Party with its catchy slogan "More Money, Cheaper Money." Nothing ailed the crippled economy, the Greenbacks insisted, that a massive influx of paper currency could not cure.

First among blue-collar workers in the industrial Northeast and then in the ranks of impoverished southern farmers, the mighty movement spread like wildfire. Within a matter of months, the upstart party challenged the Democrats and Republicans.

The Greenback panacea for the tight-money curse attracted Texas farmers in droves. Organizers sent to the Lone Star State by national leader Marcus N. Pomeroy found hundreds eager to enlist. Dozens of Greenback clubs sprang up overnight, and by 1879 nearly 500 were in existence.

Most converts came from the Grange, the agricultural association whose conservative leaders were hostile to the third party. They feared the havoc the rambunctious renegades might wreak in state politics and sought to preserve their close ties with the Democrats. But the enthusiasm of the membership could not be contained, and the Greenback Party soon functioned as the political arm of the rural lobby.

The March 1878 assembly of the Grange gave the Greenback platform its unqualified endorsement. In addition to the demand for an inflated currency, the main planks included an income tax, improved public schools, abolition of taxes on farm products and elimination of superfluous government offices. Mild demands by modern standards but downright radical for the 1870's.

"Do not sit weeping at the grave of the dead Democracy!" the Texas Greenbacks defiantly declared in their statement of principles. "Preach the doctrine of Greenback to every living creature!" Theirs was clearly a holy crusade.

The Greenbacks met in Waco in August 1878 to select a full slate for the fall elections. W.H. Hamman of Robertson was nominated for governor and waged an energetic campaign. The Greenback creed of defend-

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



ing the common man against the banks, corporations and railroads struck a chord with many Texans as did the charge that both the Democratic and Republican parties ignored their plight.

Hamman captured nearly a fourth of the gubernatorial vote, carried 12 counties in northeast and central Texas and beat his Republican opponent more than two to one. Ten Greenbacks were elected to the state legislature, and George Washington Jones from Bastrop won a congressional seat. In barely a year and a half, the Greenback Party had replaced the GOP as the number-two party in Texas.

The amateur agitators celebrated their stunning victory and brashly predicted bigger and better things to come. But the hardest part lay ahead — the monumental chore of building a viable political organization. That was a test the Greenbacks were fated to fail as the 1878 elections would turn out to be their high-water mark.

In 1880 they rejected a Republican invitation to unite behind a single candidate for governor. Hamman again headed the statewide ticket but received 21,000 fewer votes and ran a poor third. Although Jones was reelected to congress, the Greenbacks lost seven of their ten seats in the state house of representatives.

Hard-core Greenbacks expected 500 delegates at the June 1882 convention in Fort Worth, but only 140 loyalists from 30 counties showed. The gathering degenerated into petty bickering and adjourned in confusion.

Fifty Greenbacks regrouped in Corsicana later that summer and half-heartedly seconded the Republican-sponsored bid for Congressman Jones for governor. Although he took a remarkable 40 percent of the vote, it was a strictly personal achievement that did nothing to keep the sinking party afloat.

The demise of the Texas wing of the Greenback Party became official in 1884. After a mere 20 activists responded to a call for a state convention, no further attempts were made to resuscitate the corpse.

For six tumultuous years, the Greenbacks blazed a comet-like trail across the Texas political skies before burning out and fading into oblivion. Their ef-

forts, however, were far from futile as they succeeded in putting their most important concerns on the state and national agendas.

The Greenbacks proved that a third party need not become a permanent part of

the political system to change public policy and the course of history. On the other hand, as Ross Perot demonstrated, a pied piper's fan club even with millions of followers can never hope to be anything more than an

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

The Need For Gubernatorial Impeachment Legislation In Texas or Why Gov. Perry Should Teach Political Science 104: "How to Lie to Texas Voters"

From the "git-go" Gov. Rick Perry has lied to Texas voters and has pushed the legislature to approve special interest bills and actions.

Never in the history of Texas politics has a smooth-talking governor "pulled the wool over the eyes" of taxpayers and voters the way Perry has.

Perry provided a sample state budget filled with zero's to help guide legislators; it took 3 tries for the lege to get the budget approved by the Comptroller

He campaigned hard statewide to eliminate "frivolous" medical liability lawsuits

Perry "turned the other cheek" when the home insurance industry doubled premiums overnight; months later he and the Tx Dept. of Insurance promised to return a piddly 10 percent back to customers — that never happened and the premiums remain doubled and the highest in the nation

He wanted to finance public education by charging taxes at Gentlemen Clubs — that didn't catch on even with his party

Perry cut various vital social services including children's health care and one year later returned some of those dollars, all the while crusading that he had championed and financed those needed pro-



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

grams and services

Perry stepped away from the limelight to let D.C. Congressman Tom "the Hammer" DeLay into the state capitol to brandish the sword for redistricting

Perry promised to provide relief to homeowners for 6 years of astronomical property taxes, crusaded for a 13-percent reduction after three years — after which property taxes rose again and canceled out the relief promised

The governor crusaded to deregulate higher education tuition after which UT and other institutions raised costs 3 different times

Perry pushed to deregulate electric companies after which many increased their rates to customers

Perry accepted special interest money and perks, e.g., trips to the Caribbean, which influenced his decision-making

Perry touts he created thousands of new jobs, but the truth remains that millions of Texans are without work

The governor used his Executive Authority to force sixth grade girls to receive vaccinations against cervical cancer even though doing so won't necessarily prevent the disease — the serum manufacturer is Merck, a large contributor to Perry's campaign.

All in all Gov. Perry has been pro his special interest campaign contributors and against Texans and their families. Seldom are the actions of the governor in the best interests of the Texas community at-large.

Currently Texas law does NOT permit voters to impeach the governor. The people must pressure the legislature to provide the legislative means to do so to ensure that the interests of the Texas community prevails against special interest unethical gubernatorial behavior and actions. The legislation is needed to protect Texans from scoundrels like Rick Perry.

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

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Camp Casey To Return Over Easter Weekend

— *Concerts, Actions, Awards Expected* —

ROUND ROCK — Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan and her followers will be returning to Texas over Easter weekend for more political hell-raising, concerts, and thank-yous.

Kicking off the festivities will be the Camp Casey Peace Awards on Thursday, April 5, 6:30 p.m. -10:30 p.m., in Round Rock.

The honorees include those who those who have helped organize and sustain Sheehan's campaign ever since she sought to speak with President George W. Bush outside his Prairie Chapel ranch in August 2005.

Among the honorees are musician Willie Nelson and his wife, Annie, CODEPINK organizer Jodie Evans, ret. Army Col. Ann Wright, the Crawford Peace House organizers Johnny Wolf, Hadi Jawad, and Kay Lucas, and 16-year-old website creator Ava Lowery.

The evening will feature musical entertainment by Carolyn Wonderland, Emma's Revolution, Hank Woji, and Jesse Dyen.



Carolyn Wonderland (by Brio)
© 2005 Brio

The awards presentation will be held at the Wingate Inn & Conference Center, 1209 North Interstate Highway 35, Round Rock, TX 78664. Tickets are \$50 a piece.

The rest of the weekend will include workshops, music, and

actions.

The camp in Crawford officially opens on Thursday, April 5, with orientations.

The following day, workshops are planned though the details of which have not been finalized. The evening program will include a performance by Emma's Revolution.

An Impeachment Festival is scheduled on Saturday, April 7, along with a panel consisting of David Swanson of After Downing Street.org, Ann Wright, Cindy Sheehan, and Debra Sweet, National Director of World Can't Wait.

On the last day of Camp Casey, Rev. Lennox Yearwood will preside over a nondenominational sunrise Easter service. Later in the day, Carolyn Wonderland will performance followed by the "Make HipHop, Not War" concert.

For more information, visit the website for Gold Star Families for Peace (GSFP).

INFO
GSFP
www.gsfp.org/



Cindy Sheehan at Camp Casey III
— Iconoclast Photo



Crosses at Camp Casey — Iconoclast Photo

Crawford Sales Tax Rebates Up Slightly

CRAWFORD — Sales tax rebates to Crawford are currently running 6.92 percent ahead of last year, with \$14,150.91 rebated so far in 2007. The March allocation is down slightly from last year (\$3,436.88, as compared to \$3,462.05 allocated in March last year, down 0.72 percent).

Comptroller Combs said the state collected \$1.65 billion in sales tax revenue in February up 7.0 percent compared to February 2006.

Combs delivered \$396.8 million in March sales tax payments to Texas cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts, a 5.6 percent increase compared to March 2006. So far this calendar year, local sales tax allocations are up 5.5 percent compared to the first three months of 2006.

State sales tax revenue for February, and March payments made to local governments today, represents sales that occurred in January.

The next local sales tax allocation payments are scheduled for Friday, April 13.