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RISKING DEPORTATION, an unidentified male Iraqi refugee (left) recently met with (right) two members of a delegation of Texans sent to Jordan on a fact-finding mission on the status of refugees there.

—Photo By Peggy Kelsey

Study Might Link Behavior Problems To Children's Food

LONDON — The results of a study that might linking food additives to behavior problems in children will be released in several months, according to the Guardian/UK.

In the meantime, food safety experts urge parents to change their family's eating habits to exclude certain food colorings and a preservative used in the United Kingdom.

The new research, conducted by Southampton University for the Food Standards Agency, is said to support the conclusions of a similar study seven years ago for the FSA.

The behavioral problems with additives studied in the older study included temper tantrums,

poor concentration and hyperactivity, and to allergic reactions.

The reason for the delay in the release of the latest study is that they must be published in a scientific journal, a process in which takes months.

Scientists back the conclusions of the first trial known as the Isle of Wight study.

However, the FSA's Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food (CoT) ruled in 2002 that it was inconclusive and opted for a new trail designed and performed by independent experts.

Dr. Alex Richardson, the director of Food and Behavior Research, senior research scientist at Oxford University, and FSA's additives and behav-

ior working group, told that Guardian: "If this new study essentially replicates that, what more evidence do they need to remove these additives from children's food and drink?"

The use of these additives

varies among western countries. The European Union has approved of the listed additives. The United States and Scandinavian countries have banned some of them.

The colors tested in both tri-

als were tartrazine (E102), ponceau 4R (E124), sunset yellow (E110), carmoisine (E122), quinoline yellow (E104) and allura red AC (E129). The preservative tested was sodium benzoate (E211).

Florida Bill Jeopardizes Broadband, Public Access: Groups

TALLAHASSEE — A bill passed by the Florida legislature would destroy consumer protections and local oversight of cable TV providers, according to consumer groups.

The groups are, therefore, urging the governor to veto the "Consumer Choice Act of 2007" because these laws are written to benefit big telecommunication companies like AT&T.

"This bill would make it easy for big telecom companies to ignore Florida's underserved areas and offer their services to only the wealthiest communities," noted Frannie Wellings, associate policy director of Free Press.

"To create a level playing field for all consumers, Florida needs policies that build high-speed broadband and video networks in all communities," she added.

The current system of local accountability gives local governments the ability to negotiate "cable franchises." These contracts enable the public to have standards for customer service, access and funding to

public access channels, and communication between officials and the cable provider.

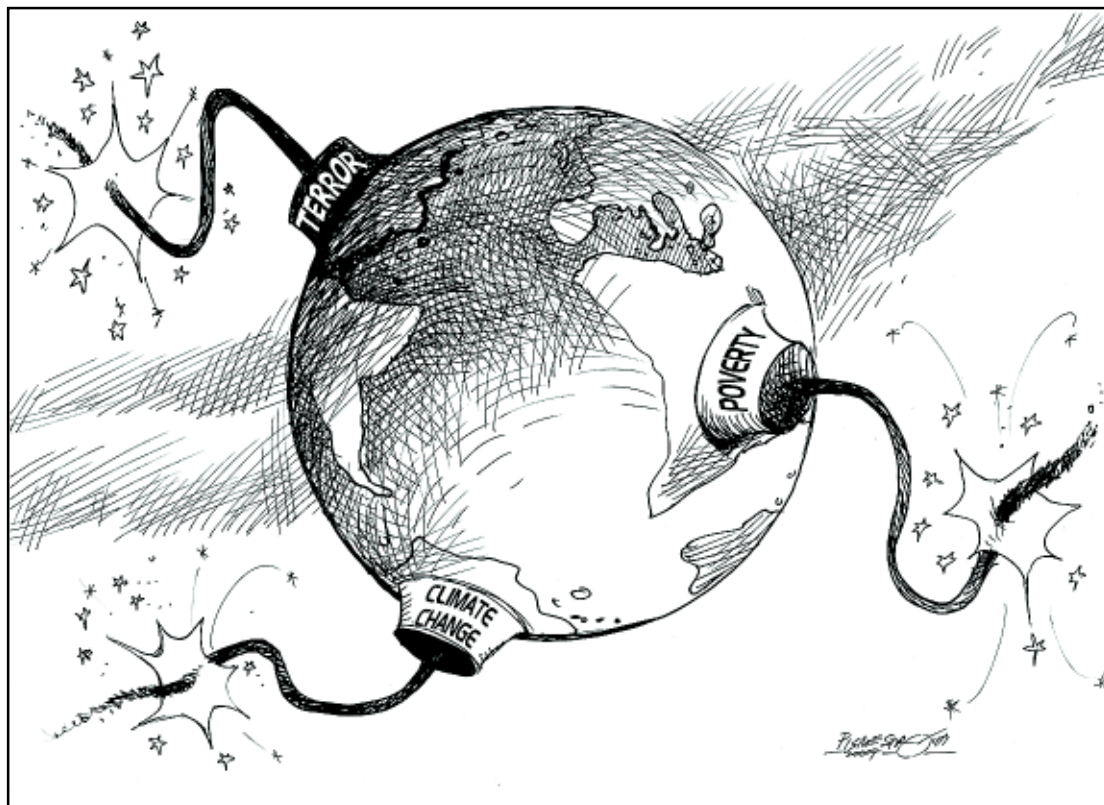
The telecom companies now want to eliminate this localized system with HB 529 after failing to pass national video franchising legislation in years past.

"The bill is the beginning of the end of public access in Florida," said Louise Thompson, executive director of Tampa Bay Community Network, which manages public access TV on behalf of Tampa and Hillsborough County.

By the end of "public access," Thompson meant that Floridians would be unable to watch government meetings, the "Homework Hotline," nor any other locally-driven content affecting their neighborhoods.

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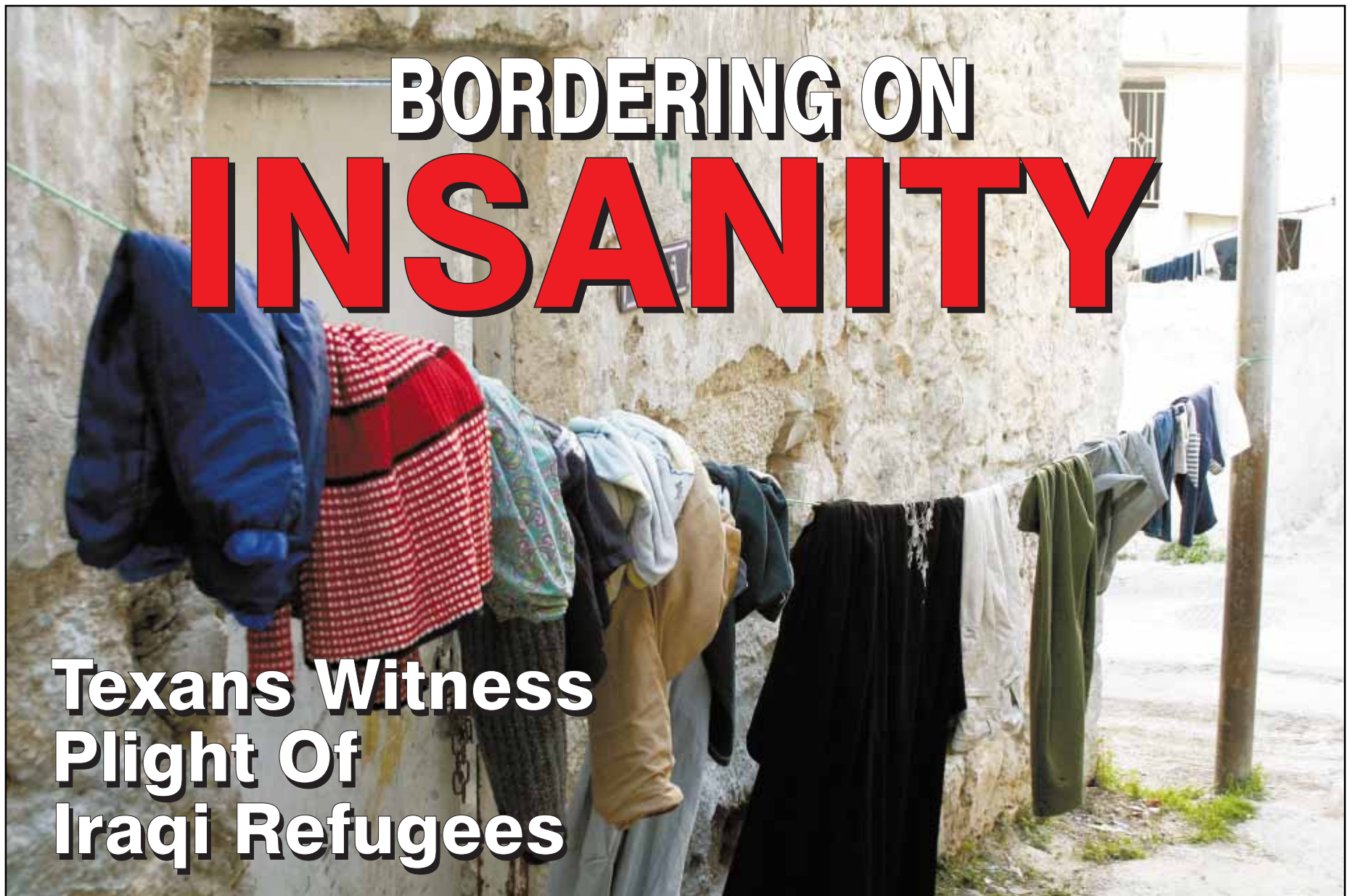
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BORDERING ON INSANITY

Texans Witness Plight Of Iraqi Refugees

Interview With **Carla Mercado** Registered Nurse/Peace Activist

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

SAN ANTONIO — The living conditions of Iraqi refugees in the neighboring country of Jordan are deplorable, according to a delegation of Texans that recently returned from a 10-day fact-finding mission.

This four-person group led by Charlie Jackson, director of Texans for Peace, set forth on a trip designed to identify the needs of Iraq's professional women and business owners.

Specifically, participants in the Baghdad Business Women's Center are given practical business tools and in some cases micro-loans with which to operate their businesses in Jordan until the U.S.

occupation of Iraq ends.

The tour met with officials from schools, hospitals, refugee camps, and non-governmental organizations as well as individual families to assess the situation of refugees.

Still, after five years of continued conflict in the region, the conditions of the refugees are "pretty poor and have gotten worse," Jackson said. Middle class families, having already been uprooted from their homes and livelihoods, are now starting to splinter as their wealth has depleted over the last several years.

In some cases, for example, Iraqi fathers had fled out of fear that their families will suffer any number of dangers because of

them. In other cases, these men, if caught, are deported because they lack the necessary legal permits to work and reside there. In other words, security as these Iraqis sought originally has yet to be fully realized.

This situation, as a result, has left women as the sole means of economic support for their families in a country that has given them limited resources to survive. A majority of the aid given comes from Jordanian and internationally-recognized charities and NGOs such as:

United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR) on Iraq, CARE International, the University of Jordan (British research team on Iraq refu-

REDUCED TO CLOTHESLINES — The middle class of Iraq has taken refuge in Jordan over the last few years as a result of the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Their families are splintering due to the nation's immigration laws as the families' funds have dwindled, making it next to impossible for them to own the basic necessities in life.

— Photo By Peggy Kelsey

gees), MIZAN (the Jordan Women Lawyers' Association), the Jordan Woman's Union, The Iraqi "Informal school," Luzmila Hospital, the Catholic Church of Jordan, and the American Friends Service Committee.

The shock-waves of the U.S.-led war in Iraq have already thinned the resources of the Jordanian government. Close to a million Iraq refugees have received guest status there, though no new paths to citizenship have been issued among any of Iraq's neighbors. The effect is a legal limbo for Iraqi refugees.

"A lot of people have had to go back to Iraq to get the new passports and new visas and then found out that the Jordanians would not allow them to come back," said Jackson, noting that the United Nations estimates that two million Iraqis would leave their nation for Syria or

Jordan if they could.

For the most part, Syria has taken in the poorer of Iraq's refugees while Jordan has harbored more of the upper and middle classes as well as those who had fled under Saddam Hussein's regime.

"Jordan and Syria can't absorb two million more people. It's a much bigger humanitarian crisis that the United Nations has seen a long time," Jackson added. "The United Nations folks we met were estimating that 50,000 new refugees have been created every month."

The Texans for Peace delegation consisted of two registered nurses, Carla Mercado of San Antonio and Belinda Subramanian of El Paso, and photographer Peggy Kelsey of Austin.

The frustration in Mercado's voice of the Iraqis' situation was
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apparent in her recent interview with the **ICONOCLAST**'s Nathan Diebenow. The registered nurse described the living conditions of the Iraqi families she met as well as their needs for the future. She said that after her trip, she felt empowered to speak out about the plight of Iraq refugees.

Here is the interview with Mercado:

.....
ICONOCLAST: What made you become a nurse?

CARLA MERCADO: I did nursing as a change in career. I was almost 40. I had done school-teaching in the past, and I didn't want to go back to teaching. My husband and I had been in business for ourselves, and we sold the business. I needed something else to do, and nursing was something that had always been intriguing and interesting to me, so I went to nursing school. I worked at University Hospital for about 10 years, and then I also worked at Christa Santa Rosa for 11 years. Both are here in San Antonio. When I quit Santa Rosa last year, I had been doing rehab for a couple years. Before that, I was med surg.

ICONOCLAST: Why did you decide to travel to Jordan and check out the Iraqi refugees there?

MERCADO: I was a Vietnam War protester, although that was pretty limited because my husband and I moved to Europe in the early '60s, and then, we didn't come back to the United States until 1970. I actually missed all the good years. (laughs)

I remember writing back to my college roommate and asking, "What's going on over there?" We'd get little snippets here and there of like when Martin Luther King was killed or Malcolm X. Up until we left the United States and went to Germany, my husband and I had both been Vietnam protesters.

I have a cousin who has been on 100 percent psychiatric disability ever since Vietnam. I'm not sure what the difference is between dead and 100 percent psychiatric disability when the things you used to do, you can't do any longer.

But at any rate, when this war started, I had been totally op-

posed to it. I thought George Bush was a very bad governor. I voted against him both times. I didn't believe this stuff about weapons of mass destruction. It didn't make any sense at all, and why we suddenly discovered them. The terrorists were from Afghanistan, not Iraq. There was nothing about this that made good sense to me. I'm still opposed to our administration's direction and to this war as it escalated into the hopelessness it is now.

Now, we're adding on the dimension of these refugees. I just wanted to make the trip partly investigative, and see what I can do and if there's anything else I can do. Obviously, for me, writing letters to my congressman, making telephone calls, working hard in the campaigns of people who are also opposed to the war like (former senate candidate Barbara Ann) Radnofsky hasn't done any good, or at least I'm not seeing any progress. It was another dimension in me trying to get this mess stopped.

ICONOCLAST: What were your impressions of the refugees in Jordan? Is "refugees" the right word?

MERCADO: Yeah, it is the right word. Of the many families we talked to, I believe they were productive, middle class, working people that contributed to their family and to their community. Now, their whole life, their country, their life savings, their valuables have all been destroyed, and most of these refugees are living in just unbelievable conditions.

They're living in one or two rooms with make-shift bathrooms and kitchens. The children aren't going to school because there's not space for them in Jordan. They really don't have a future, and their past is gone. Their lives have become human tragedies.

ICONOCLAST: Can you describe their conditions in more detail?

MERCADO: When they left Iraq, some people had savings and some people didn't. I'm sure it's like it is here. They came to Jordan expecting this war to be over in six months or a year. So they've spent their savings and their valuables or whatever they had, and now they're living in like one room. We saw whole families getting by in one room.

Or maybe they've got two rooms, so they have a living room and a bedroom. All the family sleeps in the same bedroom.

Sometimes the room will be a very nice room. Sometimes, it's pretty run down with cracked plaster, mold, mildew. Generally, they don't have much for furniture if any, so you're sort of sleeping on the pallets on the floor. Clothing is very limited. The bathroom will be very, very small. Sometimes, it's sort of a make-shift bathroom where they'll be a wash-basin, maybe a shower, maybe not. Sometimes, they have a commode. Sometimes they have a squat-ter.

Jordan is a first-world country that has modern facilities, but when you're renting someone's old storeroom or something that is costing \$40, \$60, or \$80 a month, you're not going to get very much. One family we saw had one room, and they were running extension cords for electricity for a light fixture that was outside their apartment, so they were running it through the window above their door. It provided their only light in that room. It was also where they plugged in their television.

The kids had not been in school for two years. That's common because Jordan is just so overcrowded that there isn't space for the kids. When the Palestinian refugees came to Jordan, Jordan had finally offered them citizenship. Some took it. Some didn't. But they're still regarding the Iraqis as guests, so citizenship has still not been extended to guests. Whether it will in the future, who knows? But at least right now, they're still being called guests.

When the Iraqis came, their visas were for six months to a year. Those have expired. Jordan is not renewing them, so that translates into "You can't get a job." Most of the men are very afraid of getting out there to try to work because Jordan will send the men back if they are caught on the job in violation of their visa restrictions. Generally, they don't send the women and the children back, so one lady we met took a class on basket weaving. She was weaving baskets at night, and

selling them on the street the next day while the children were at school. She comes home early before her kids return from school. Her husband disappeared in Iraq.

Another family we met, a lady was selling wares off a blanket downtown near one of the tourist sites. She was selling cigarettes, Kleenex, candy, gum, that sort of stuff, and they were paying the rent off what she was making. The husband was at home baby-sitting the children. In many cases, the husband has become the baby-sitter and the women are doing what they can, tutoring or cleaning house.

We met a lady who had been a high school biology teacher, but when the high school had been destroyed, she left, and she's now cleaning house for one JD an hour which is about a \$1.50. She had been crying because before this war, she was considered a professional person. She worked hard to get through college and has one son who needs to go to college, and here she is without a home working for one JD an hour cleaning house.

ICONOCLAST: So the economic exploitation of these people is rampant?

MERCADO: Yeah.

ICONOCLAST: What about violence targeting them? Are there any higher incidents of violence against them?

MERCADO: No, the Jordanians are regarding them as guests, and they're getting along well inside the Jordanian society. We met people who have had death threats follow them. The one man is pretty much staying inside the house, staying very low key because he has had death threats.

Another family had death threats following them. The wife said she was a part of the decision and she back-tracked on that, saying she wasn't. She said she didn't know he was going to leave and she was surprised, but in the other case, the threats had followed them from Iraq, the man took his passport and disappeared because they felt like the family was safer. Since the threats were being made toward him and since he's been gone, the mom said that the threats had stopped. It's just her and their three girls living together.

The other thing she said was that her husband felt that they would be safer and she could get more assistance from the NGOs without him if she's just a single mother of the three kids. I think that's the ultimate of tragedies, when the man who has been an in-place husband and father feels that he has to leave the whole family and leave for the safety of his family. I think that's just the saddest of tragedies. Not only has this man had to give up his career, his business,

his home, his way of life, his country, but now he's having to walk away from his wife and children that he obviously loves and cares about.

ICONOCLAST: Have you had any experience seeing people living like this?

MERCADO: No, I haven't. I do know, like all of us here in South Texas, Mexicans who are illegal and living and working here. But it's a totally different picture with our Mexican workers who are here. For one thing, if immigration picks them up and dumps them back across the river, their lives are not in danger. They didn't leave Mexico because they were afraid for their lives. If immigration departs them back, it's not a situation where they may be very likely to be killed. It's a matter of time and they can come right back.

I also have never seen or known of any of our Mexican families to be living in one room with no windows and electricity coming through the door from an extension cord or some of the bathroom and kitchen facilities they live with. Their living conditions in the United States are not middle class by any means. Sometimes, there are many family members living in the same apartment or home, but it's not quite the same thing. Children not being able to go to school for two years and limited medical care — no, it's not the same. None of our Mexicans have come up here with children who were bombed.

ICONOCLAST: Talking about medical care, what kind do these people need in Jordan?

MERCADO: The general run of the mill health stuff. We met one family that had been having what appeared to me to be reactions to allergies. The windows of their living room opened out over a street in the direction of the prevailing wind flow, so it's probably allergies. They had gone to the pharmacy and gotten antibiotics and this and that.

But since they're guests and not citizens and they don't have valid visas, they don't fit in the Jordanian medical system, so they have to pay for their own medical care. When you don't have an income and you've spent all of your resources and you're just living on assistance from NGOs, Caritas, or whatever, paying for medical care suddenly becomes very expensive. Meeting medical care is very tough.

One lady who was selling the baskets on the street said her nine-year-old son was not doing well in school — the reason her children were in school was because her husband had disappeared in Iraq and she said she had gone from jail to jail and

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IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE — Belinda Subramanian of El Paso (far left) and Carla Mercado of San Antonio (third from left) spent 10 days in Jordan to meet with individual families, such as the unidentified one in the picture, who have been displaced by the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

— Photo By Peggy Kelsey

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court to court and police station to police station searching for her husband. They couldn't find him.

Finally, the police department had handed her a death certificate and told her not to come back anymore because they don't know where he is. However, as a result of getting the death certificate, when she went to Jordan, she was able to register her children as orphans, so they were automatically put into schools.

ICONOCLAST: Those are some cracks in the law system there. I mean, I don't know if we have laws like that over here. These things I never think about.

MERCADO: No, we don't think about it. But you know,

we've never taken on this many people to know what we would do if our schools were totally overwhelmed. I don't know. It's a country of six or seven million and they've got a million refugees. Geez, they're overwhelmed.

Anyway, back to the lady that was selling the baskets. The teacher had told the mom that her nine-year-old wasn't doing so well in school because he needed glasses, but that was an expense she had not been able to afford yet from her basket sales. There was some talk about whether she would buy the kid the glasses, because when you're living in such a way that rent and food are taking everything you can do, glasses are a luxury item.

With that same lady, her chil-

dren had gone outside to play and one of the kids screamed. You know how kids six, seven, eight or nine do? The panic of this woman was what upset me. When that little boy screamed, it was how fast she jumped. It was how she jumped. It was not a mother who got up and ran outside to look at her kid. It was a mother that jumped straight up and charged out the door. Basket fell. Purse fell. Everything fell. She just flew out the door.

She was so upset about these two kids that she actually within minutes picked up her possessions and went home. She had her purse and her basket and holding the hand of each one of those two kids. She had all that stuff balanced, rushing off down the street to go home with these kids. It was the level of upset that was upsetting to me. It was way beyond what a mother would do. Over here, your kid screams and you see what's going on and you maybe make him sit down, but she had to leave.

ICONOCLAST: How do you interpret her situation?

MERCADO: I interpret that as a level of fear and distress which is part of their lives now. Their lives have been so destroyed that any little thing, in her case, gets blown so out of proportion because of the fear she lives with, also like how you're going to pay the rent and keep food on the table for your kids day-to-day selling baskets on the street.

I'm sure she has long ago given up about the husband because she said she didn't know if this death certificate was valid or not, if he was really dead or not. They couldn't find him, so nobody knew if he was alive or dead somewhere. She's gone from being a housewife to a breadwinner in a situation where she can't get a job. This story just goes on and on.

ICONOCLAST: What are the immediate needs of these people?

MERCADO: Many of these people have applied for visas because they don't feel like they can go home, at least of the ones we met. They've applied for visas in other places, but they are

being denied for whatever reason — because they're starting from an illegal status, they're from Iraq, they don't speak the language, they don't have the job skills necessary to move into that country because the country has already accepted however many they are going to accept. A lot of people would like to go elsewhere and just start over or even get a valid visa in Jordan and start over, but getting legal has been a really serious problem.

The NGOs that are there are really doing a lot for these people. They are really saving their lives. I don't mean any criticism of any of the NGOs that are operating there. I heard a lot of praise for Caritas, Save the Children, Feed the Children, and those, and apparently the Jordanian people and the churches there in Jordan have been very assistive also. But they need more than that.

ICONOCLAST: What? In terms of sustaining these people over a long period of time?

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MERCADO: Well, they need schools. They need directions. They need to feel safe, that somebody is not going to get sent back. Children that haven't been to school in one or two or three years — we're losing a whole generation here. That's inexcusable.

And I don't know what the answer would be. Does Jordan knock itself out finding more teachers to hire? Does Jordan build more schools? You know, finding more teachers to hire and building more schools — that's not something you can do overnight. You're looking at a two- or three-year process with the hope that this is finally someday going to get over.

But if Jordan were to build up their school facilities, for example, and the United States finally gets out and it's over, now what? They've got people hired as teachers. They've built buildings. Now what? That would have been expenditures for nothing. You know, getting these kids into school — I don't know how you do it. Today, you just can't have a one-room school house and have all the kids learn how to read. I mean, school anywhere in the world is more complex than *Little House on the Prairie*.

And we did ask some of the parents, are you doing any things to teach your children here at home? Many of them answered that they were. But again, when you're in a situation with very limited resources, I don't know how you do that. I mean, I think of my own son when he was in high school, and I don't know how I could have home-schooled him with no assistance with curriculum and books.

ICONOCLAST: And expect him to have a pathway to a job when he graduated.

MERCADO: Yeah! I don't know. For me it was really distressing. It still remains very distressing.

ICONOCLAST: What are your plans now?

MERCADO: I've never done speaking engagements. I've never been the activist I need to be. I have written a few letters already since I've been back. One of the things I want to do is some kind of e-mail or letter-writing activity to all of our con-

gressmen. I need to work out a speech. We need to get this war stopped. Don't fund it. Whatever it takes we need to get it stopped. They don't want us there. We need out. All of the families and all of the people we saw said the violence will stop when the U.S. military leaves. I

tend to believe that. I think we created it, and I don't think we can change it.

INFO

Texans for Peace
www.texansforpeace.org
Peggy Kelsey
www.kelseys.net



Joan Baez at Camp Casey

— Iconoclast Photo

Army Left Out Anti-War Singer From Performance

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army left off anti-war singer Joan Baez from a performance for recovering soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The singer wrote a letter to the Washington Post explaining that she accepted the invitation from fellow musician John Mellencamp but failed to understand the reason the Army denied her presence.

"There might have been one, there might have been 50 (soldiers) that thought I was a traitor," said the 66-year-old activist in an interview with the newspaper.

A statement penned by a spokesperson from Walter Reed noted that a contractual dispute among the organizers prohib-

ited Baez from performing at the program.

"Two days prior to the live concert, Hoffman Entertainment suggested Ms. Joan Baez's possible performance coupled with an interview by Mr. Dan Rather to Walter Reed officials," the statement said. "These additional requirements would not be in the agreement/contract and would have necessitated a modification."

Mellencamp told RollingStone.com that the military's organizers failed to give him a straight reason for disapproving Baez.

"We asked why and they said, 'She can't fit here, period,'" he said.

Californians Rally For Single-Payer Healthcare Bill

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California's single-payer healthcare initiative received a boost last week as 2,000 activists staged a rally on the state capitol's steps here.

The activists stand firmly against the governor's proposal to subsidize an insurance industry that still denies patients care.

Instead, they back a senate bill which extends healthcare coverage to every Californian by allowing patients to choose private doctors and hospitals paid from a national, non-profit fund.

"Nurses have fought insurance companies, HMOs, hospital chains, and anyone else who would let our patients suffer from inadequate care," said Deborah Burger, RN, and president of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee.

"Genuine reform, like SB 840, is the only effective way to ensure we achieve the humane healthcare system Americans want and deserve," she added.

Activists at the rally also consisted of school employees, teachers, firefighters, and patients.

Michael Mazzanti, a custodian from a high school in Sonoma County, said that school employees around the state have lost health benefits over the last 20 years.

"Sadly, many of the school

employees I work with never get to see a nurse. That's because they don't have health insurance," said Mazzanti, who sits on the board of directors of the California School Employees Association.

Advocates of state Sen. Sheila Kuehl's SB 840 also back U.S. Rep. John Conyers' national bill H.R. 676.

Among the organizations that sponsored the rally were the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee in conjunction with the California School Employees Association, California Federation of Teachers, California Professional Firefighters, California Faculty Association, California Alliance for Retired American, California Council of Churches Church IMPACT, Consumer Federation of California, Health for All, and the California Physicians Alliance.

The grassroots movement around single-payer healthcare is also promoting an online campaign that allows patients to tell their experiences with private healthcare providers via video.

The website is GuaranteedHealthcare.org.

For more information on single-payer universal healthcare, visit the website.

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The Human Side of Sucking Up To The Education Con

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Government is a lot like outlawin'. The sorrier you git, the more you make."

For those haloed liberals who nodded gravely over the record 40,000-plus kids who won't graduate with their classmates this spring, then turned to the bigger headlines to gloat over Neighbor Bush's latest Iraq idiocy, let me bring you back to the earth you actually live on.

If you're appalled that I just ended a sentence with a preposition, I'm talking to the right person.

I spent the better part of this week counting the tears of just one of that 16 percent. Her name is . . . well, let's call her Joan.

After all, she just got burned at the stake of political hypocrisy.

She's 18, and, so far, nobody's dealt her a lot of high cards.

Right now she's living in the same house with the guy whose orgasm gave her life; you couldn't exactly call him a father if he cares more about his motorcycle than his kid, or his back child support, for that matter.

Especially when he charges her rent.

Mom kicked her out because her new live-in doesn't like kids and threatened to cut off her dope supply.

She doesn't seem like the quickest sand in the swamp, but who could tell?

Most mornings she's so worn out from waiting tables until 2 a.m. at one of the touristy gourmet traps out on the island that she wouldn't know Coleridge from a cold.

But then those from Maggie Spellings to Bimbo Neeley to Ronald Reagan in hell neither know nor care that there are some kids out there who have to decide between learning and eating on a daily basis.

But Joan's not even in the same hometown with stupid, and believe me, after two decades in the intellectual silk purse and hog trough business, I know stupid.

I know, teacher's aren't supposed to believe any kid is stupid.

There are no stupid kids; only stupid people who believe there are no stupid kids.

But Joan isn't stupid. She just didn't pass the state science test.

She passed her required three years of science; again, her teachers said she didn't exactly Oppenheimer pass, but she covered all the bases.

And the acids, too. But then what do her teach-

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



ers know compared to a bunch of bureaucrats in Austin who never met her, but know all the statistics about her that anyone could ever possibly hope for?

In every repeated try she barely missed the state's mark. Last time was by one question.

Now, here's the deal. Joan doesn't plan to work for NASA.

She wants to be a designer. Clothes, she thinks.

She knows her way around a sketchbook.

Maybe she'll end up in retail; maybe at Ferragamo.

It doesn't make any difference.

Wherever she goes, she'll get there on hard work.

That's what she does. And the state's education plan has become nothing but an impediment.

Joan has learned by now that it ain't the cards; it's how she plays them.

But then you don't know any of that unless you know her.

You don't know that if the kids born with the breaks put in the same work, there'd be no global warming, no Middle East war, no poverty, no cancer . . . well, at least no acne nor minor-in-possession.

Know her as a human being, not a score on a chart so you can advance your political agenda and cut costs for the people who buy elections.

She had her cry. She got some kind words and advice from her English teacher.

She won't graduate with the rest of her class, and she feels like the state and the system played her for a sucker.

Stay in school. Get a good education.

Okay, kid, we've got our statistics now, so beat it.

Wal-Mart's hiring.

She could have dropped out two years ago, gotten her GED and been money ahead.

As it stands, she's going to the local community college.

She'll take some courses; get a degree or a certificate.

That is, if lying Tricky Ricky Perry, the governor Texas didn't want, doesn't get his way and shut down a college education to any but those who can afford to graduate in four years; those who don't have to work for a living.

Now, it's easy to blame all this

on the fascist Republicans or the sweatshop profiteers who own them.

But that wouldn't be honest. Who's to blame?

You are. I am.

Every teacher who went to every state testing training session and didn't spit on the state sycophant who told you how to screw up your kid's education.

Every school board that didn't have the guts to stand up to the state and protect the children they are charged with educating.

Every weak-willed suck-up

teacher's organization that wouldn't tell its members to strike until the politicians stopped using their students as a political tool.

Every parent who wouldn't go to a PTO meeting and raise hell, who wouldn't write a letter to a representative, who hadn't the courage to disrupt the feel-good rally of a liberal reconstructionist or right-wing opportunist who inveigled the goal of education from personal responsibility to government brainwashing.

It is our fault because we

refuse to be accountable for our children's educations.

We blame the schools for our parental failures.

We do not turn off the TV. We do not accept that usually educators know more about teaching than we.

We do not back our teachers with love or money.

We care more about our taxes than our children.

We turned public education over to the con men.

And a little girl's tears wrought by an inane, inflexible and inhuman system do not bother us.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

The Reign Of Robots

A growing number of Americans are witnessing, first hand, the faceless ravages of the mega-corporations — entities that steal not only your money and your souls, but also your freedom. The massacre has become epidemic and is the primary destroyer of families all over the world.

When Little Bush let loose his plunderers in the wake of 9/11, nobody was safe. Ever since the un-struck building fell in New York — and no one knows why or how — the Little Bush cabal has feverishly harvested his crops with names like Halliburton, Exxon-Mobil, the Religious Right, CitiCorp, Con-Ed, Merck, and a growing array of near identical symbols of idolatry that have been foisted in front of the naive masses as mafioso.

You see the Great Oz, but not the little men with the strings in the control booth.

Gone are the days when a real human is at the other end of the corporate telephone line. You might get a first name (and first name only), which is actually merely a robot without consequence representing one of Little Bush's favored corporate machines — a robot of the New World Order. A robot without accountability.

Their mission is to dissect families, separate the pieces, and destroy the evidence.

The vermin acting as marks of the Bush beast might be adequately described as "limbo robots," for they take pleasure in summing individuals into personal, keyless prisons by slowly taking away their hopes and dreams while besmirching any remnants of humanity.

To conjure up the words of a presidential ghost: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"

The cover story in this edition of The Iconoclast is about innocent Iraqi refugees who have been forced by Bush antics to flee their country. What the refugees hoped would be but a short-term excursion into debt, poverty, family dissection, and agony has been re-deployed, over and over again — for years — so

that the mega-corporations can steal every penny with thoughts that the rightful owners will simply vanish. Former Iraqi middle-classmen who once had dreams of sending their kids to college are lucky if Johnny makes it to first grade. Daddy's gone — no one knows where. Mama is a sweatshop slave. The visa is running out, but no country wants them. They are afoul of the law and afoul of living.

That's what Little Bush has, without conscience, wrought.

And that doesn't take into account similar problems in other countries, including the United States.

Limbo robots have no emotions, but do crave statistics.

Don Fisher's "Call To Mind" column in this edition of THE ICONOCLAST describes a Texas high school girl he calls Joan, who will not graduate with her class because of the insane, statistics-based TAKS test, which is related to Little Bush's "No Child Left Behind" lie. Numbers again. Forget humanity. The state has decided to push the youngster onto the path of never-ending limbo, to take away her hopes, dreams, and dignity. It is statistically correct to do so, you know.

In an investigative piece, also appearing in this edition, guest writer Maher Osseiran scientifically exposes Little Bush's WMD lies. Osseiran writes, "Powell, Tenet, and the rest of the Bush cabal, 'Slam Dunked' an illegal war down the throat of the American people and a cycle of suffering with no end on Bush's watch."

The mega-corporations and Little Bush did it, knew they were doing it, and in doing it became traitors to their country and traitors to humanity.

But no one is holding them accountable.

Why? It's more convenient to continue to worship false idols than to regain dignity by facing the truth.

Besides, "they" might be watching.

— W. Leon Smith

Chavez Accuses Steel Maker Of Monopolistic Practices

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez recently accused a steel maker of monopolistic practices, threatening to use the government to take the company over. “If the company Sidor ... does not immediately agree to change this process, they will obligate me to nationalize it,” said Chavez. “Sidor has to produce and give priority to our national industries ... and at low cost.”

Chavez said that he preferred not to follow through with this threat on the company Siderurgica del Orinoco owned by the Techint Group of Argentina.

Chavez lobbed a similar threat to nationalize banks operating in his country, though he failed to refer to specific entities both foreign and domestic.

This policy follows Chavez’s doctrine to bring the country under a socialist economic system that promotes worker-led coopera-

tives. He has also made moves to nationalize the country’s largest telephone company, electricity providers, and oil operations.

Chavez also seeks to develop alternatives to the financing institutions of the “Washington Consensus,” namely the International Monetary Fund and the

World Bank.

Chavez, still empowered by a landslide reelection, promised that the government would pay fair market value for the properties should the steel maker refuse to comply.

Chavez’s announcement shocked both the Caracas stock exchange and the value of the

state’s currency to fall almost three percent each, meaning that money was rushed out of the country.

Chavez has taken advantage of high oil prices to finance his government spending initiatives which attempt to restructure the local economy into a self-sustaining system.

Union Organizer’s Murder Remains Unsolved

MONTERREY, Mexico — The grizzly murder of a union organizer working in Mexico remains unsolved a month after his body was found.

The friends of Santiago Cruz believe his death is related to his activism with Mexican farmworkers employed under a legal guest-worker program in

the United States.

Police remain silent about their on-going investigation. Labor groups on both sides of the border and a U.S.

congressperson have complained that crime should have been solved by now.

In neighboring villages around Monterrey, Cruz was in the process of conducting an education campaign to stop the extortion of farmworkers on their way north with U.S. visas.

The day after Easter on April 9, Cruz’s mutilated body was found in his office. His head was smashed through a wooden banister. A beach towel was used to strangle him.

Cruz was affiliated with the Ohio-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee, a branch of the AFL-CIO.

For the last three years, the farm labor committee, which represents about 6,000 seasonal farmworkers, has been the disdain of recruiters backed by U.S. farms seeking labor, say the union leaders there.

These recruiters have been accused of charging farmworkers for their expenses such as paperwork and transportation which the employers of these farmworkers must pay for according to U.S. law.

According to a U.S. federal judge’s ruling, members of the North Carolina Growers Association must cover the \$300 cost of visas and transport for workers hired.

The farm labor committee has praised the growers association’s Mexico recruiter, Manpower of the Americas, for being responsible for the fee payments.

Manpower officials deny claims that recruiters were party to Cruz’s murder.

Conservative Takes French Presidency

PARIS — Conservative Nicolas Sarkozy won the French presidential elections last week after obtaining 53 percent of the vote in a run-off election.

“I want to restore French national identity,” Sarkozy said. “I want the French to be proud again of their nation.”

The Inter Press Service noted that Sarkozy’s social policies could mirror those in Britain during Margaret Thatcher’s reign as prime minister in the 1980s. Such policies include removing portions of the welfare state in favor of free market solutions.

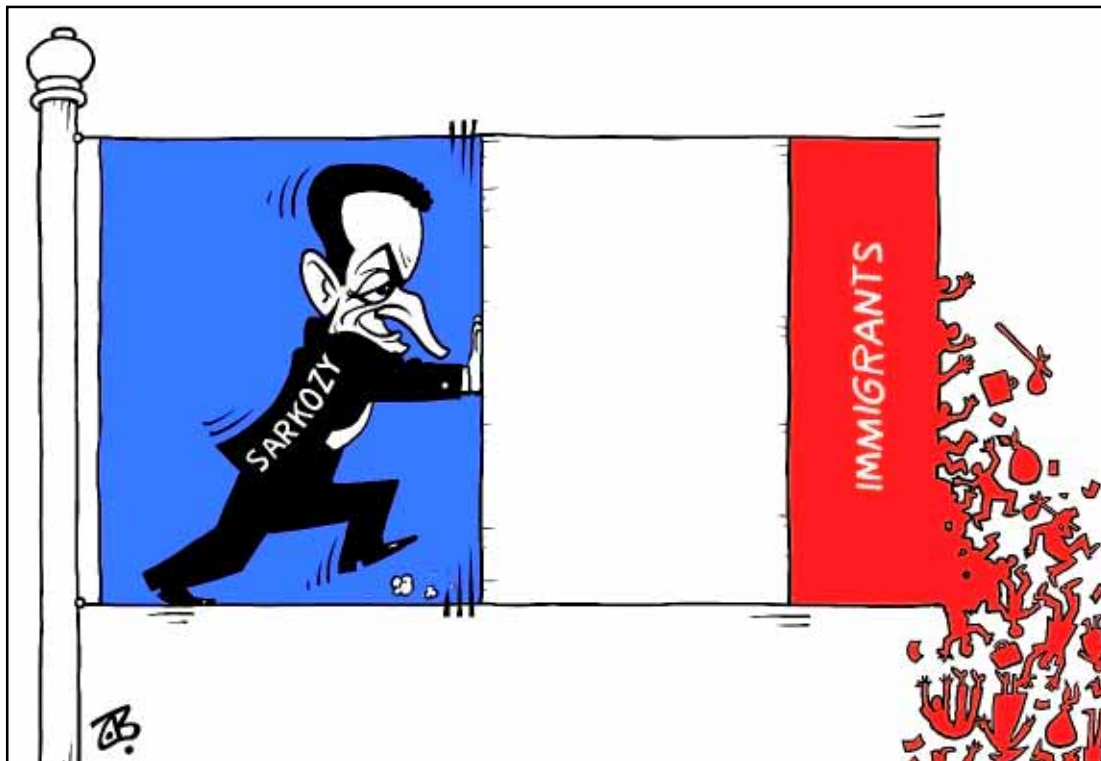
Implementation of his domestic policies, however, might be held in check by parliament depending on the outcome of legislative elections on June 10 and 17.

The French people are known to vote for parliamentarians with different ideologies than the president. But political scientists say that the likelihood of a strong leftist front is low unless it wings favor from fearful moderates.

Sarkozy defeated Ségolène Royal, a Socialist candidate who would have been the first female president of France had she won. She gained 25 percent of the first vote on April 22.

Sarkozy, who will take office by May 16, is expected to develop a warmer relationship with the United States than that of the previous administration, despite his criticism of the U.S.-led Iraq war.

He has said he will make good on his campaign promise to strictly limit immigration, back Israel’s security, and oppose Turkey’s plea to become a member of the European Union, an organization he has called “a Trojan horse.”



Same-Sex Couples Battle Immigration Laws

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. citizens and legal residents in same-sex relationships are currently unable to sponsor their partners for immigration purposes.

But a bill reintroduced in the Senate would change immigration law to allow for the new practice.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said that the current law treats gays and lesbians in committed relationships as “second-class citizens.”

“This injustice needs to change,” said Sen. Leahy, who sponsored the Uniting American Families Act, along with Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.).

Joe Solmonese, president of

the Human Rights Campaign, said that Congress for far too long has ignored the “heart-wrenching real life consequences” that the policy has had on families of same-sex couples.

“Thousands of same-sex couples are separated or live in constant fear of being stopped by officials who demand to see documentation and threaten detention,” said Solmonese.

Under the current U.S. immigration code, same-sex couples are not defined as “families” and therefore are prohibited to sponsor their partners.

About 75 percent of the one million green cards or visas

are issued to family members of U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Family unification is one of the guiding principles of immigration law, though families of same-sex couples remain written out of the equation.

“Dividing loving families, simply because they are gay or lesbian, is un-American,” said Rachel Tiven, executive director of Immigration Equality.

For more information, visit the website for Immigration Equality.

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Elizabeth II and George II

Queen Elizabeth's recent visit to the United States demonstrated that Americans have a huge affection for the British monarchy. We also have conflicted feelings about it. Some people view England's monarchy as antiquated, shockingly costly, silly, or, at best, quaint. We know that Queen Elizabeth doesn't really "rule" Britain, and many see her as just a figurehead. But thousands of Americans lined up just to get a glimpse of the Queen wherever she went. On TV, there were more shots of her at the Kentucky Derby than of the horses. And President and Mrs. Bush threw a white tie and tails state dinner for her. If she's just an irrelevant figurehead, why all the fuss?

Americans are fascinated by the British monarchy. Queen Elizabeth has a higher approval rating among Americans than President Bush. Some Americans know the British order of succession better than they know our own.



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

They can tell you the names of the six wives of Henry VIII, but can't name our last six presidents. Magazines chronicle every move by the Queen's children and grandchildren. And don't say this is just because England is our closest ally. How many of you care about Prime Minister Tony Blair's personal life?

We seem to be attracted to the elaborate trappings of a monarchy, so long as we don't have to have one here. We live in an informal country in an informal era. We don't have a hundreds-year-old tradition of royalty, so in some ways, we enjoy borrowing England's.

Because President Bush is an informal guy, his hosting the very formal dinner at the

White House piqued my interest. 134 people were invited. Surprise, surprise, I didn't make the cut. But I wasn't insulted. After all, I hadn't invited the President to my house the other night to watch the Mayweather-De La Hoya fight.

However, President Bush's mother and father weren't invited to the state dinner, either. (How would you have liked to have made that phone call to Barbara Bush?)

Since it was such an exclusive affair, we can only imagine what went on there, just as we can only imagine what goes on inside Buckingham Palace. Here are my musings on the state dinner:

I'll bet none of the waiters called out, "Okay, who ordered the kosher meal?"

If I had been there, I might have heard the following exchanges:

QUESTION: "Who's that sad-looking woman sitting way over there with the waiters?" ANSWER: "Nancy Pelosi."

QUESTION: "No disrespect, but isn't it strange in this day and age for you to have a position that you think is ordained by God to give you power over your subjects?" ANSWER: "It might be strange, but I love it," the President may have answered.

Maybe I would have overheard the Queen say, "I can get some more emeralds for my crown now. When the Prince wasn't looking, I put a few quid on the 7-8-2 trifecta."

Finally, I'm pretty sure nobody at the dinner said, "Believe it or not, I found this dress at Target."

Some people probably feel it was inappropriate to have such an elaborate dinner during wartime. Should the President even spend one minute worrying about how his fancy pants fit while Americans and others are dying in Iraq? The Queen's grandson, Harry, could be in harm's way any day. Should she be eating a five-course meal in the White House while her "subjects" eat dry rations in the

desert of Iraq?

Maybe I shouldn't be such a "party pooper." Having this dinner probably wasn't such a bad thing. There's nothing wrong with celebrating our relationship with Great Britain. And it's not like they would have come up with a Mideast peace plan that night if they hadn't had a party.

But I can't help thinking about the words of a White House official who described the dinner as "not only the social event of the year, but also of the entire Bush presidency." I wish that hadn't been said with such finality, because there is still a lot of time left in the Bush Administration. And shouldn't we all be hoping that the "social event of the entire Bush Presidency" will be a party to celebrate the end of the war?

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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Veto Of America

On May 1, 2007 our Little Dictator summarily tossed aside the efforts of both Congressional Houses to fulfill the will of the American majority.

In what must have been record-shattering time Lame Dubya flexed his veto muscles, murdering the appropriation bill sent to him by Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

Thus continuing the murderous conflagration he began over four years ago in Iran.

Then, in keeping with his long-proven history of personal confrontation avoidance, Fearless Leader addressed the Nation at 6:10 that same early evening. In Chicago and Houston that was 5:10; Albuquerque, make it 4:10; only 3:10 in Los Angeles and Seattle.

His remarks literally fell upon deaf ears. Folks in the Eastern and Middle American states were either on their way home, preparing or sitting down to dinner. The rest of the country was still engaged in normal daytime business and activities.

Most people probably had no idea their wishes had been callously disregarded and crushed; far fewer knew of or even had an opportunity to witness Li'l Georgie's monologue.

But what the hell? He's "The Decider," right?

And *The Decider* is always correct.

In his own head.

As well as the heads of a majority of Republican lawmakers on The Hill.

What is it with the remaining GOP minority in the House and Senate? Are these clods so out of touch with America that they missed the last national election?

Is this some sort of blind allegiance to a worthless regime that has gotten nothing right in nearly six-and-a-half years?

Apparently the Party means more than the Nation, a recurring theme within dictatorships.

Or, are they all frightened of retribution from Herr Oberst Karl Rove and his top henchman, Dark Lord the Dick Cheney?

George W. Bush along with his gangster handlers dispel, distend, and dispossess the Constitution, laws, and basic American ideals on a daily basis.

He calls any attempt by the new Congress to exert oversight and carry out the business of the people — you and me, my friend — as "political theater" or "political posturing." As if flying onto an aircraft carrier in a



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

fighter jet, posing in a flightsuit, then giving a speech on deck under a banner declaring "mission accomplished" wasn't the most farcically tragic and nauseating political theater ever witnessed on Planet Earth!

That was May 1, 2003, exactly four years to the day, \$500 billion in irretrievable taxpayer losses, countless hundreds of thousands of dead or maimed Iraqis, and in excess of 3,000 additional American deaths with thousands more wounded (about which we've been told) preceding Fearless Leader's refusal to bring his war of personal aggression to a halt.

The latest reasons for his unwillingness to admit utter failure and accept the basic tenet of a democratically-run republic such as ours, wherein majority rule is the law of the land, are not only specious, but also overtly simplistic to the point of matching the comprehension level of a second grade child.

Not at all worthy of the person who controls and "decides" the most powerful Nation in our solar system.

Unless that person happens to be George W. Bush.

The favorite talking point, echoing ad infinitum throughout the ranks of the GOP these days is "a rigid and artificial deadline" for American troop withdrawals from Iraq would signal the "enemy" when to mount a massive attack. The phrase that pays seems to be "all (they) would have to do is mark their calendars and gather their strength" to overthrow the Iraqi government.

It's pretty clear that al Maliki and his fellow countrymen are doing a bang-up job of that on their own already.

Lame Dubya also said he believes our withdrawal would demoralize the Iraqi people. Apparently Georgie hasn't gotten the message that there's a higher percentage of Iraqis who wish we were gone even than Americans who want our troops home.

"Setting a deadline for withdrawal is setting a date for failure — and that would be irresponsible."

George, you've already failed. Your failure began the moment

the first bomb was launched at Baghdad.

As to acting irresponsibly, ain't Li'l Georgie the cattle methane saying that horse dung has an offensive stink? What in his life, especially these past six years, has he ever done that can be mistaken for responsible behavior?

The next objection from Lame Dubya is so imbecilic I am forced to quote in its entirety:

"Second, the bill would impose impossible conditions on our commanders in combat. After forcing most of our troops to withdraw, the bill would dictate the terms on which the remaining commanders and troops could engage the enemy. That means American commanders in the middle of a combat zone would have to take fighting directions from politicians 6,000 miles away in Washington, D.C. This is a prescription for chaos and confusion, and we must not impose it on our troops."

As Homer Simpson, a man of far greater wisdom and insight than G.W. Bush, would respond to the preceding paragraph: "D'oh!"

It seems commanders are already being dictated to by Washington politicians; those who refuse to go along with the Fascisti's Neo-con worldview, same as Federal Prosecutors, get replaced forthwith.

There also appears to be far too much "chaos and confusion" regarding Fearless Leader's methodology in handling this debacle... rather incapability to handle it.

He also rejected the based upon inclusion of "billions of dollars in non-emergency spending." While the GOP ran Congress there was no end to pork being served up in copious portions within virtually every appropriations bill. Yet, Li'l Georgie has the audacity to call this a Democratic ploy.

Most of the "non-emergency" programs are matters this White House has ignored since January, 2001. You know, stuff around America that needs attending to now.

Lame Dubya made statements about progress being made in Baghdad. He cited the shutting down of a car-bombing network; capture of a Shia leader "implicated in the kidnapping and killing of American soldiers; breaking up a terror squad within a Baghdad neighborhood.

As usual, we were provided

no names, details, photos, or any other proof.

We're still expected to take George W. Bush at his word — because he says so.

This delusional man kept up the al Qaeda scare message, trying to backsell the bigger danger in Iraq from secular violence to that fanatical group. It doesn't take a degree in political science or religious history to realize that each of the three Muslim sects will do everything in their power to eliminate, or at least reign over, the remaining two.

There's no doubt al Qaeda is a serious problem, one that grew and multiplied exponentially due almost exclusively to the dictatorial and imperialistic ambitions of George W. Bush.

However, to continue dipping into the manure crock and coming up with the same mouthful of unswallowable crap about how we have to stop them there to keep them from attacking us here is insanity in action.

Li'l Georgie exhibits immeasurable arrogance and hubris laying this at the feet of the Democratic Congressional Leaders. Launching an attack upon Iraq was his most fervent

desire; in doing so the Fascisti Regime of Lame Dubya got us into this mess with no thought for how or when we would extricate our troops.

Because mass quantities of oil were there for the taking.

When spouting off about how we Americans need to bring Democracy to Iraq and the rest of the Middle East — which we all know was just excuse #27 after the WMD and other "threats" to our country were proven not to exist — there's something George really ought to do:

Show other nations how the best blueprint for Democracy truly works, right here in the "Land of the Free" — the U.S.A.

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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Slam Dunk! – Were The Rats Playing Basketball?

BY MAHER OSSEIRAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

Did he say it or didn't he? George Tenet does not deny uttering "Slam Dunk" but tells us that it was taken out of context.

We know that his statement is connected to the Iraq war but there is a need to be fair and determine the exact context. His interviews have not revealed it, as if intentional. If he thinks I am going to rush and buy his book so I could be fair, he is dreaming, the Internet is free.

From "Was Woodward Slam Dunked?" by Robert Parry of CONSORTIUM NEWS, I chose to accept the Tenet cronies' version that the statement was made on Dec. 21, 2002, at "a marketing meeting" at the White House to discuss how Colin Powell would present the WMD issue to the UN and not a meeting to discuss the value of the intelligence. Supposedly, the presentation approach, in Tenet's judgment, was a "Slam Dunk."

I consider this to be a much kinder assessment than Woodward's book and, as such, Mr. Tenet should accept it as fair.

Colin Powell's presentation at the UN was on Feb. 5, 2003, flanked by no other than George Tenet and John Negroponte, the UN ambassador. I can understand why Negroponte was there but Tenet's presence was viewed by most as support for the quality of the intelligence; he was there to put his stamp of approval not on the presentation but to ensure that the content was accepted as fact and ensure the "Slam Dunk."

To the average person, it was a "Slam Dunk" and the audience was not world opinion but the American citizen; the presentation stuck since it drew credibility from two respected individuals, the head of the CIA, George Tenet, and a war hero, Colin Powell.

To the critical listener, Powell had plenty of caveats, as an example, the issue of the aluminum tubes. Al-Baradai, in a report to the UN a week earlier said:

From our analysis to date, it appears that the aluminum tubes would be consistent with the purpose stated by Iraq and unless modified would not be suitable for manufacture centrifuges.

Powell presents the aluminum tube evidence and adds the following:

Most U.S. experts think they are intended to serve as rotors in centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Other experts, and the Iraqis themselves, argue that they are really to produce the



Maher Osseiran

rocket bodies for a conventional weapon, a multiple rocket launcher.

But fails to tell us that some of the – other - experts are U.S. experts.

If the issue of the aluminum tubes was debatable, the issue that Powell stood strongly behind was the issue of Iraq's "mobile production facilities used to make biological agents."

The trucks and train cars are easily moved and are designed to evade detection by inspectors. In a matter of months, they can produce a quantity of biological poison equal to the entire amount that Iraq claimed to have produced in the years prior to the Gulf War.

He goes on to tell us that this information was based on four sources, not the single source, Curveball, as we all now know. He also never told us that a CIA report from the station chief in Germany stated that Curveball was unreliable.

In his UN presentation, Powell tells us that American Scientists evaluated the aluminum tubes; did American scientists have a chance to evaluate the schematics of the mobile biological labs?

As an engineer who spent 15 years in the chemical process industry, allow me to inform you that any decent junior Chemical Process engineer vetting such evidence would within two hours of analysis, recognize two drawbacks:

1. The fermentation tanks are too short.
2. The spray dryers are the bottleneck of the process.

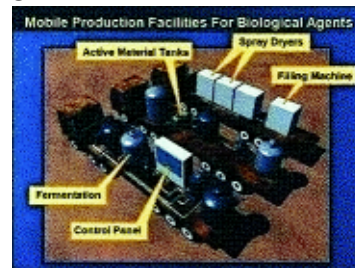
While the fermentation tanks, where biological matter is introduced with nutrients and oxygen continuously metered in for growth, could be pushed beyond their physical shortcomings – lack of height - by running the tanks at higher pressures, the spray dryers allow little or no flexibility and will always remain the bottleneck.

If such junior engineer was in doubt, Niro, the largest supplier

of spray dryers, has their U.S. headquarter within a few miles of the D.C. beltway; a phone call or a morning trip would have been sufficient hand holding by Niro for a solid evaluation.

If we examine Niro's lineup of equipment, the largest spray dryer that would fit in a trailer is model PSD-1 and only two would fit, not three as Powell's diagram showed, and all three trailers would have to be interconnected for 24 days; the duration of a single batch.

Also, because of the way a spray dryer works, any biological matter exiting the spray dryer is sterile. Yes, sterile, since a spray dryer uses gas temperatures in excess of 100 degrees centigrade, the boiling point of water. The shorter the spray dryer is, the higher the minimum operating temperature is. For Niro's PSD-1 the minimum temperature is 150 degrees centigrade with almost zero yield; my calculations were based on 175 degrees centigrade.



Technically, the process is highly flawed. Operationally, parking the trailers and interconnecting them for 24 days negates the need for mobility. This is what the American people accepted as the "Slam Dunk" part of the presentation; never challenged till after the invasion.

It is inconceivable that such an evaluation by The Weapons Intelligence Non Proliferation and Arms Control Center (WINPAC), a program of the CIA, or similarly qualified scientists was not provided between the "Slam Dunk" meeting of Dec. 21, 2002, and the "Slam Dunk" presentation of Feb. 5, 2003.

Could Colin Powell have presented the evidence because he was given assurances that similar trailers would be found?

In May of 2003, within a week of each other, two trailers are found in Iraq and Powell clung to them as the WMD trailers. On May 22, 2003, CNN reports from Washington:

Intelligence analysts have determined that two suspected mobile biological weapons laboratories found in Iraq were "certainly designed and constructed for that purpose," U.S.



Colin Powell

Secretary of State Colin Powell said Wednesday.

Conveniently, both trailers were found in Kurdish controlled territory, recently cleaned, and with a fresh coat of military green paint.

On June 5, 2003, the late Dr. David Kelly, the British biological weapons expert, went to Iraq to inspect and photograph those trailers. Shortly after, on June 15, 2003, THE OBSERVER reports using information later attributed to Dr. Kelly:

British scientist and biological weapons expert, who has examined the trailers in Iraq, told The Observer last week: "They are not mobile germ warfare laboratories. You could not use them for making biological weapons. They do not even look like them. They are exactly what the Iraqis said they were - facilities for the production of hydrogen gas to fill balloons."

THE OBSERVER concludes that report by informing us:

The revelation that the mobile labs were to produce hydrogen for artillery balloons will also cause discomfort for the British authorities because the Iraqi army's original system was sold to it by the British company, Marconi Command & Control.

By July 17, 2003, Dr. David Kelly was found dead in a park, suicide or murder, the jury is still out.

Such specificity was out in the public domain as early as June of 2003, yet, on Oct. 2, 2003, three months into his job, David Kay, the head of the Iraq Survey Group, testified in a Senate hearing:

The mobile lab program, as you'll see when you look at the unclassified summary of the statement, is still something that is very much being examined. It was equally unsuitable for biological weapons, hydrogen, as well as rocket fuel regeneration. That is, it could have done either of those three; it would have done all of them almost equally unsuitable.

We simply are continuing our investigation. We're not yet at a point where we can say what they were for.

What Kay is saying there is they are unsuitable for biological weapons but they are not allowing me to say it. By January of 2004, David Kay resigned his post, stating, "I don't think they existed," about WMDs. It was not until September of 2004 that the Iraq Survey Group produced its final report; basically, no WMDs.

Powell, Tenet, and the rest of the Bush cabal, "Slam Dunked" an illegal war down the throat of the American people and a cycle of suffering with no end on Bush's watch. To the rats that are jumping ship now, that is the proper context for your "Slam Dunk"; war is not a basketball game.

Maher Osseiran, born in Beirut in 1956, grew up at a time when Lebanon was evolving then devolving into its civil war.

From a very young age, Maher was an observer who needed plausible answers. His early analysis during the Lebanese civil war was discounted by his own parents as too gloomy and earned him a not too pleasant nickname. He was never happy when events proved his analysis correct but satisfied that some started listening and making the right decisions.

To know more about Maher and his methodology, visit his website <www.mydemocracy.net> where he posts some of his articles while others can be found on Counterpunch and in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. He can be reached at <maher@mydemocracy.net>.

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No experience necessary. Work involves manufacturing wood mouldings. Duties and pay vary based upon experience and ability to learn. Mechanical ability a plus.

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Clifton Moulding is an equal opportunity employer. Apply at the Heart of Texas Workforce Center or at Clifton Moulding Corp.

Post Sinks Millions Into West Texas Utopia

Months of costly construction went down the drain on May 14, 1907, when C.W. Post picked out a new place for his West Texas dream town and ordered the original site abandoned.

The hired hands shrugged their shoulders. After all, the Battle Creek millionaire had the bucks to build his High Plains utopia many times over. The creator of a popular coffee substitute did not merely find the pot at the end of the rainbow, he owned it.

Financial success came early in life for Charles William Post with farm-implement patents paving the way for a fabulous career in business. But the entrepreneur with the Midas touch pushed himself too hard and suffered a severe nervous breakdown at the age of 32.

Plagued by a series of relapses, Post did not completely recover for five long years. He came to Texas in search of a healthier climate, and the sparkling potential enticed him to stay. Back on his feet at last, he often visited Fort Worth where his elderly parents had retired.

During extensive travels in the Lone Star State during the late 1880s, Post sampled the West Texas beverage of chicory, roasted wheat and other miscellaneous grains. This makeshift mixture inspired his patient effort to create a nutritional alternative to coffee.

While supervising a sanitarium at Battle Creek, Michigan, Post perfected a tasty blend of wheat, bran, and molasses. In five years, the annual sales of Postum surpassed a million dollars.

Cut-rate competitors cashed in on the craze with cheap imitations that sold for 15 cents a package, a dime less than the real thing. Post met the challenge by marketing his product under another label for a nickel and drove the fly-by-nights out of business.

Although opposed to collective bargaining, Post exerted an innovative influence on labor relations. He encouraged his managers to satisfy the workers' needs and always advised, "Let the employer get into the shoes of the working man and see things from his standpoint."

Breakfast cereals were the next profitable addition to the Postum line. Grape Nuts became an overnight favorite, and the sagging sales of a second cereal shot up as soon as the name was changed from Elijah's Manna to Post Toasties.

In 1902 Post entrusted the day-to-day operation of his giant company to a carefully groomed

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



executive "cabinet" and moved to Washington, D.C. He soon tired of the capital carnival and turned his attention to an unusual Texas project.

Post had long admired the hardy breed that beat the West Texas odds and considered them the ideal subjects for a free-enterprise experiment. He also wanted to repay his debt to the housewives, whose chicory brew had made him filthy rich.

Near the famed Cap Rock between Lubbock and Big Spring, Post bought more than 300 square miles of land, a colossal 213,000 acres. Post City began in 1906 as a modest collection of tents with nail and timber hauled 70 miles overland.

Post presumed he had complied with the state law requiring that a county seat be situated within five miles of the geographic center of the county. Learning in May 1907 that a surveying error had put his pet project six miles out of legal bounds, he chose a second site and started all over again.

Tracts in the colony sold for \$20 to \$30 an acre, twice the going rate and infinitely more than the \$3.50 Post had paid. But the twentieth-century pioneers received an interest-free mortgage plus a four-room farmhouse complete with barn, water well, windmill, and other extras.

Prospective buyers had to bring along more than money. Character references were required and rigorously checked to weed out undesirables, speculators, and phony farmers.

The biggest problem was water, the age-old curse of that parched part of the state. An inveterate risk taker, Post resorted to rainmaking on an unprecedented scale. Over three ear-splitting years, he spent \$50,000 on explosives to blast moisture out of the stingy skies and heavy downpours convinced him he was on the right track.

C.W. Post died in May 1914 from complications after an appendectomy, but both his company and infant community survived. Postum became the conglomerate General Foods, and Post City was renamed Post when the population reached a thousand shortly after the founder's death.

When the United States entered the First World War, resi-

dents remembered the dynamite left over from the rainmaking experiment. To keep the dangerous explosives out of the hands of a possible saboteur, concerned citizens put a match to the cache.

Twelve towns of dynamite went up with a deafening roar heard for miles in every direction. The people of Post thanked their lucky stars that their tiny town had not been blown off the map.

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

Attach A Vacuum Nozzle To Your Mammilla To Show Mom You Care

Soon, it will be Mother's Day. For many of you, it means sending a flowery card that says all the wonderful things you'd say if only you had a thesaurus and someone from Hallmark breathing down your neck. The truth is, the true meaning of Mother's Day has been lost over the years thanks to stupid greeting cards filled with heart-felt phrases like:

If your love was an ocean, you would've drowned me as a child.

Or,

When I think of love, I think of you. Because of this, you have no grandchildren.

Or,

With every smile, I remember a special moment that will never ever be forgotten.

Happy belated Mother's Day!

The true meaning of Mother's Day, as any mother will tell you, has absolutely nothing to do with flowery cards or fond memories — and everything to do with sacrifice. That's right. You want to let Mom know you really care? Forget about comparing her to "a beautiful rose laden with thorns of caring," and, instead, remember all the stuff she endured for you even before you HAD a memory. If you're not sure where to begin, I have two words for you:

Breast Pump.

True, not every mother utilized this torture device, but the mere thought that she could have is reason enough to be grateful. If you don't believe me, go right now to the nearest full-service car wash, attach an industrial car vacuum nozzle to one of your mammilla, push the on button, and keep it there until your chest resembles a deflated balloon animal.

Then switch sides.

Repeat this process three times a day for at least six months, WITH-OUT the aid of alcohol.

And remember that breast pumping came after nine months of losing control over most of her bodily functions, including — but not limited to — food cravings. These cravings came as a direct result of your



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson

Siuslaw News

needs inside the womb, even though, in many cases, those needs could gag a contestant on Fear Factor. But she did it anyway, in spite of the fact that, as you were developing and shaping, so was she: Developing swollen feet the size of couch cushions, and taking the shape of a giant Weeble capable of destroying Tokyo. Keep in mind that during this process, she was still merrily preparing for your arrival by hanging borders, assembling mobiles, making trips to the doctor, all while visiting the bathroom once every three minutes.

Then finally, to show your appreciation upon arriving into the world, you treat her to an episiotomy.

Chances are, you won't find any of this in a greeting card. Mainly because there are very few phrases that rhyme with "episiotomy."

Although "The things you taught-a me since your episiotomy" has potential.

That's why I'm mentioning it here, so that hopefully, someone, somewhere, will read this and offer me a job at Hallmark.

Okay, that's only part of the reason.

The main reason is to say "thanks" to all you wonderful mothers out there, especially those who are celebrating their very first Mother's Day this year.

You know who you are.

And if you don't, try turning down that breast pump a notch or two.

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

Clifton Moulding Corp. Now Hiring - Moulder Set-up Person

Clifton Moulding Corp. is a manufacturer of wood mouldings. We have immediate openings for experienced wood moulder set-up people who are willing to work overtime. Openings available for both first and second shift. Applicants must be self-motivated and work well with others.

- We Offer:**
- Shift Differential for second shift
 - Paid Vacation
 - Paid Holidays
 - 401(k) Plan
 - Cafeteria Plan
 - Savings Plan
 - Retention Bonus

Pay is based upon experience with starting pay at \$11.00/hour. Willing to train someone with ability and willingness to learn - starting pay adjusted based on ability. Clifton Moulding Corp. is an equal opportunity employer. Please contact Robbie Allen at (800) 722-5134 or send your resume to Clifton Moulding Corp., P.O. Box 77, Clifton, TX 76634.

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Rep. Patrick Rose: Not Such A Great Guy Or Leader As You First May Think

Question: When is a rose not a rose, not a rose?

Answer: When the rose is Patrick Rose and it sorta stinks. A despicable character.

Recently Rep. Patrick Rose sent out an e-mail to constituents pushing the upcoming Hays County Road Bond Proposition 1 and also advocating toll roads. I am reprinting that e-mail below my article so you may review it.

Initially, Rose comes across as a young, handsome and polite man who gazes at you with endearing and understanding eyes. In reality, the real Patrick Rose is a political predator, out for his own advancement up the legislative ladder; a Rick Perry wannabe, or as playwright Henrik Ibsen might have said, Rose is **"an enemy of the people."**

The following is my letter to Rose, of which I sent copies to my Hays, Blanco, and Caldwell County neighbors and also to local media. It is my response to Rose's e-mail, which should be a signal to all Texans as to Rose's true allegiances. They are for his wealthy special interest campaign and perks contributors and NOT to the majority of community residents.

Again, the following is my opinion based upon the past eight years of my involvement and research into the Texas political system and specifically into Rep. Rose's voting record and list of his campaign contributors, which is part of the public record. You all have to determine your own opinion of Rose's character and legislative intent.

My letter of response to Rose's e-mail:

Re: Your recent pro-road bond e-mail to constituents

Dear Rep. Rose,
As the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, once told American citizens, *"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time."*

You should take heed of that quotation because as you noted in your last election your victory was a narrow margin victory, which translates into that the voters are more aware of your voting history and your lack of credibility as a Democrat. Your voting history shows your allegiance to Gov. Perry, Speaker Craddick, Rep. Krusee and special interests who want endless profiteering at an ongoing cost to taxpayers. If you wanted to be a Republican, you should have run under that party and format.

I am one of a growing number of your constituents who recognize your true motivations, which are NOT for the community at-large.

You want toll roads, road bond packages and other special interest propositions and perks. The people who currently support you are NOT the majority of voters, but more wealthy contributors, e.g., the NRA, toll road enthusiasts and others with similar pri-



Texas Commentary

By Peter Stern

orities.

You have NOT risen as a leader for the majority of your constituents, rather, you are myopic in your quest to rise-up in the political arena and to ensure profits for your wealthy supporters at a cost to the majority of taxpayers. I cannot believe the scholars of Princeton University taught you to do so. This must have been something learned along your way up the legislative ladder.

You cannot hide who you are and what you really stand for.

Why are you not leading the legislature to ensure that ALL gas tax dollars go to build and maintain our roadways, as was the intention of the gas tax. Approximately 50 percent of the gas tax revenue currently is diverted to other interests, e.g., your wealthy higher education campaign contributors.

When you first arrived home from Princeton my family and neighbors supported you because we believed you would lead us intelligently and ethically into the 21st Century; however, during the past 3 terms you have turned your back on the very people in your neighborhood who supported your efforts and ensured your victory.

You are a disappointment to more of your constituents than you may realize. Your smiling face and complimentary style isn't working. Many of us know you, and more will soon enough. You have become more like the man you first defeated to become our representative, Rick Green. You won because we believed you would be different.

Personally, I have no problem with your rich campaign contributors making more profits. But I do have a problem with it if it's at the cost of the taxpayers who can least afford it. Even the wealthy throw a bone or two for their dogs to have. What you are doing to your constituents is unconscionable and one day you will look back at all this and may realize some of your folly in life.

You are a young man and as many do, you are making some grave mistakes. I hope you will learn soon from them before you are out-of-control and many more homeowners go into foreclosure.

You need to look into your inner soul and see who you really are. I see who you really are and it's quite disturbing. I will pray for you, but it's probably too late.

Respectfully yours,
Peter Stern
Driftwood

The email sent by Rose via his office:

From the Desk of State Representative Patrick Rose

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Like many Hays County families, I commute daily to Austin. And like all Hays County families, I believe that our roads have not kept up with our growth over these last few years. Whether you are traveling to Austin on Hwy 290, FM 1826 and FM 1626, or if you are traveling within Hays County on RR 12 and Hwy 21, you know that our roads are not adequate for the amount of traffic that has been generated by the influx of people to our area. It is important for both our safety and our local economies that we alleviate this congestion by improving existing roadways and building new ones.

In 2005, the Legislature granted the

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) the authority to enter into pass-through financing agreements with cities and counties. This new method of funding allows local communities to begin work on projects that otherwise would take years to fund. Our Hays County Commissioners Court voted unanimously to send such an agreement to Hays County voters for our approval or rejection on May 12th. Proposition 1 authorizes \$172 million in projects that include critical infrastructure improvements that have been needed, but unfunded, for far too long. The projects are: improvements to Ranch Road 12 from San Marcos to the FM 32 intersection; the construction of FM 110 in San Marcos from E. McCarty Lane to Hwy. 123; and improvements to FM 1626 from FM 2770 to Bliss Spillar Rd.

Improvements to SH 21, from the Travis County line to Hwy 80 in San Marcos, are not part of the pass-through financing agreement, but are a part of the bond package. The cost of these safety improvements to Hwy 21 will be split 50/50 between the state and the county.

In this pass-through financing agreement, our local government agrees to finance and construct a project on the state highway system. Once the roadways are constructed, TxDOT reimburses the county for 80% (\$133 million) of the total cost through periodic payments based on the number and types of vehicles using the roadways, encouraging the construction of roads that are most critically needed.

I believe that pass-through financing is a useful tool for building infrastructure in a high growth county such as ours. However, this bond package is not without its shortcomings. Concerns have been raised, which I share, about the aesthetic impact of the proposed changes to RR 12 on our beautiful hill country. Fortunately, there is still time for these concerns to be addressed and I am committed to working with local officials to ensure that the state utilizes Context Sensitive Solutions for the design on RR12. I also believe that it was an unfortunate, missed opportunity that essential safety and surface quality improvements to FM 1826 were not included in this bond package.

Other roads in Hays County will benefit from the bonds as well. FM 1626 has always been a two-lane rural roadway, even as it has become a major north-south artery connecting commuters from Hays County to Travis County and Austin. The widening of the road and the addition of shoulders and turn lanes are improvements that are long overdue. Loop 110 in San Marcos will be a vital link to the new high school at McCarty Lane, from I-35 and SH 123.

Proposition 2 authorizes \$30 million of county bond money to parks and open spaces. As our county continues to grow, this is an opportunity to preserve the beauty of our hill country. This money will allow Hays County to invest in parks like Blue Hole in Wimberley and 5 Mile Dam in San Marcos. This money also goes to community projects such as hike and bike trails and recharge zones throughout the area. Maintaining

the allure and beauty of our area is important not only for our families' quality of life, but for our property values and our local economies. This bond money will allow the county to continue to maintain and improve the parks we have and add new ones as our communities grow.

The road bond package is not perfect, but it represents a rare opportunity for Hays County to leverage over \$130 million in state transportation funds for road improvements that we desperately need. Due to recent federal cuts of more than \$600 million to the TxDOT budget, this could be the last opportunity we have in Hays County for such a substantial state investment. I encourage voters to support Proposition 1 and Proposition 2.

Should I be able to be of assistance to you and your family, you can reach me at your Capitol office at (512) 463-0647, by email at <patrick.rose@house.state.tx.us> or by mail at P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768.

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.

Drunk Butterflies

Spring has given us butterflies this week. I try my best to enjoy them and not worry about the larvae they'll leave behind to plague my plants.

Before the butterflies came the mulberries. Hence the butterflies. One thing seems to follow the other around here in logical succession most of the time. Even though we've been removing the cat food from the front porch to dissuade our unwanted resident raccoon (a seeming nonsequitor in this paragraph, but please be patient), we figured the little guy was feasting on mulberries each night when we retired and sleeping under the house during the day.

There are hundreds and hundreds (probably thousands) of mulberries all over the ground under the two trees on either side of the pavilion. This is why most people don't like mulberry trees, but we don't really mind them. It's been like a butterfly ballet there lately. This has been going on for quite some time, as one tree started to bear fruit before the other. When we walk in this area, we must be very careful not to step on the

Rustic Ramblings

By Dr. Gene Ellis



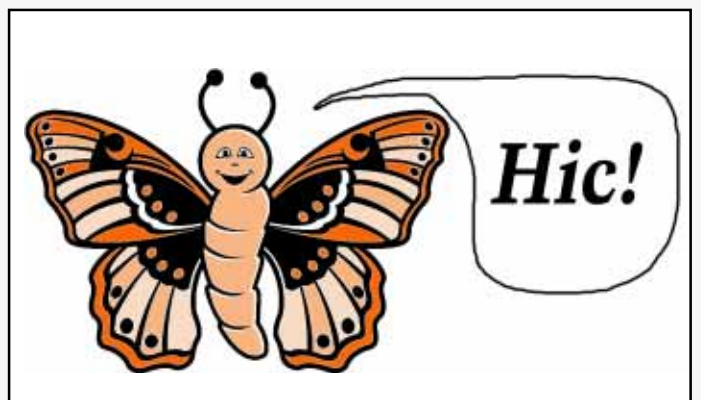
Gene Ellis, Ed.D. is a Bosque County resident who returned to the family farm after years of living in New Orleans, New York and Florida. She is an artist who holds a doctoral degree from New York University and is writing a book about the minor catastrophes of life.

little creatures. If you wave your foot around before you step, they usually make way for you.

After a week or so of seeing hundreds of butterflies feasting on fallen mulberries, we began to notice some rather strange behavior. I thought at first the butterflies were dying. Zack pointed out that they were only drunk. They're becoming inebriated on fermenting fruit.

When the butterflies fell to the ground, they weren't dead at all, not even dying. They could be roused with a nudge of a finger, after which they flew dizzily away, only to land again, shortly, somewhere else.

It occurred to us that perhaps we hadn't seen much of the raccoon lately (the one I caught sleeping in one of the cat's baskets on the front porch a few weeks ago) because he might have suffered the same fate as the butterflies. He probably hasn't gone away as we had hoped he might. I fear we have a very drunk raccoon indulging himself on mulberries by night and sleeping it off under our house every day.



Another Opportunity

BY KAY LUCAS
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

I witnessed a tragedy on April 28 in Waco, Texas. A young soldier, obviously suffering from PTSD, became enraged be-

cause fellow American citizens were exercising their First Amendment rights. Some of us in the Waco area joined in a nationwide exercise to peaceably assemble and speak out about

the current administrations' policies, demanding impeachment, and questioning this administration on reasons given for the Iraq War.

Actually, there were several

tragedies involved in this incident. One tragedy was the soldier's lack of knowledge of what he swore an oath to, when he joined the military. His insistence that he swore an oath to the president only, to the man, George W. Bush, the Commander-in-Chief, is indicative of a failure on the part of our educational system, to teach crucial aspects of our governmental structure. It must not be part of "the TAKS test." We are a government of laws, not men. We do not swear allegiance to a man, be it president, king, or dictator. Our founders fought, and won, a revolutionary war to end that type of tyranny.

GUEST COMMENTARY



Kay Lucas

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

CNN's May 11 broadcast in Europe showed some children in Baghdad gathered around a big pool of water, created by holes punched in one of the makeshift water lines leading into the Green Zone. They weren't frolicking in the water as one might expect; they were washing themselves and collecting water in squalid plastic containers. These kids know the discomfort of being dirty and not having water to clean themselves; they live with the fear of thirst. For them, this pipeline carrying water to the powerful of Baghdad was not a temptation for vandalism; it was a necessity.

This image illustrates the failure of the Bush Administration's great social experiment. Under the guise of "making the Middle-East safe for Democracy," the neocon Republicans' social theory actually intended to provide unfettered privilege to the wealthy, with the afterthought that their improved economy would drip down to the poor people. Drip down economics, indeed. The idea of collective public works for the good of the community is anathema to these Republicans, whose anti-taxation spokesman, George W. Bush, proclaims, "it's your money, don't let the government take it away."

Seductive sentiment if you have money, money enough to buy your own clean-water system and prevent those who don't from taking "your" water. But, as we now see on CNN, this is a formula for incredible personal misery where, ultimately, even the wealthy live in danger. "Mission accomplished", experiment failed.

Yours truly,

Bruce Joffe, Piedmont, CA

Editor,

Use Supertankers to stop the wildfires NOW.

I'm writing this letter to urge citizens to get government agencies such as the Forest Service, FAA, and local and state fire agencies off the backs of the Supertanker water bomber companies that built the DC-10 and Boeing 747 Supertankers privately investing millions of dollars for which they have received almost no returns. This is because the U.S. Forest Service has reportedly refused to use Supertanker aircraft to fight fires on federal land for over 12 years, allowing horrible loss of life and destruction in the meantime.

How long are we going to stand for this deliberate destruction of human life and property by our own public safety officials?

Right now reportedly there are only two Su-

pertankers in our entire country while the Russians, offering us help refused by the Forest Service, are flying at least five IL-76 Supertankers worldwide accident free for over 12 years! They are the DC-10 stationed at SCLA airport in Victorville, Calif. and the Boeing 747 which our so-called public safety and fire officials have never allowed to be used, even when virtually the whole Southwest was burning awhile back.

We must check the websites: DC-10 supertanker—and—evergreen supertanker—and—JBS.org (search: wildfire) on Google and demand our public safety and fire officials be held accountable.

Contact congress, fire season is here, and our fire officials are again putting us in grave danger.

Supertankers can stop uncontrolled wildfires now devastating our country in one day that would otherwise take weeks or months to control and private enterprise will use and build them if given the chance.

Get signatures on this letter and send to your Congressman now!

Sincerely,

John F. Rambousek, Yucca Valley, Calif.

Editor,

The War Czar Fraud

Stephen J. Hadley, National Security Advisor, stated that he does not have the time to oversee the war in Iraq.

The Constitution declares this to be the President's job. Hadley is spending a lot of time recruiting a war czar to obviously replace the President. A war czar would have as much chance at success as an ice cube in Hades.

Hadley is perpetrating another bait-and-switch deception. A recent article on World News Network, 4/20/07, "The War Czar: New Strategy to Keep America in Iraq," tells it all. The only present motive of the Bush administration is to run down the clock to shift blame to the war czar and the new President.

There is no longer any intent to win or even support the troops in Iraq.

Americans must not allow this administration to again fool America. Hadley needs to stop wasting the time he claims not to have on this tactic with its only intent, creating cover for the President's "legacy."

Hadley needs to be accountable, the last thing he and his boss want to be.

Dr. Saul B. Wilen, San Antonio

His military enlistment oath first requires that he support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that he bears true faith and allegiance to the Constitution, and that he obey orders of the president and officers appointed over him, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Let's repeat that. His oath requires faith and allegiance to the Constitution, not the president. Our Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights are what make this country distinctive. Without those documents, we are subject to succumbing to the rule of tyrants.

Another tragedy was this young man's overwhelming sense of hate and intolerance for others who have a different opinion than he has, ultimately leading him to destroy personal property, our signs. His seemingly misconception that our demonstration somehow reflected on him personally was another part of this tragedy.

He kept repeating that what we were doing was an embarrassment to him. The pain he was experiencing was extremely difficult to watch. However, he is unaware that we too are experiencing embarrassment and pain.

We are embarrassed that our country is in the hands of a corrupt, incompetent gang of thugs, who declare themselves above the law and take away our constitutional rights.

We are patriotic citizens who feel compelled to voice dissent about lies that sent this young man to an illegal and immoral war. We feel pain about the systematic disman-

ling of our constitution and the massive mismanagement of this tragic war; about the corruption that is destroying our treasury; about a system that programs our young to hate and destroy; about a system that does not take care of our young after we send them off to hate and destroy.

We all bare the responsibility to help this young man heal. I wanted the opportunity to explain to him that our culture of war programmed him to hate and kill for war profiteers, such as Halliburton, a corporation connected to our Vice President Dick Cheney, who grew their corporate coffers on the blood of his comrades and on the tax dollars of Middle America. The corporation that now plans a move to Dubai in the Middle East, beyond the reach of what is left of the US legal system. See (www.halliburtonwatch.org/).

We were apathetic too long. We allowed ourselves to be bamboozled. We allowed our educational system to decay.

We succumbed to fear. I wanted to sit down with that young man and have a conversation. I wanted to tell him his embarrassment is also ours, but we do not blame him and we do not want him to blame himself. I wanted to tell him that we must correct the dysfunctional system that created his pain.

To do that we must restore and protect our constitutional rights. I wanted to ask for his help.

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