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State Ag Dept. Retaliates After Students Complain

Letters To Texas Ag Dept. Over Menu Shortages Results In State Inspection At Valley Mills ISD

JONMICHAEL SWETNAM
STAFF WRITER

VALLEY MILLS — The state's struggle with obesity took a new twist when Valley Mills High School seniors complained to the Texas Department of Agriculture about the state's further trimming of an already stretched menu, then got a retaliatory state inspection of the school's lunch room a week later, school officials said.

Various snack foods were removed from the school menu or had the serving sizes reduced to bring the school in line with the Texas Department of Agriculture's Texas Public School Nutrition Policy, issued March 4, 2004. The policy prevents schools from serving Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV) during meal periods, and defines the permitted serving sizes of certain items, like deep-fried foods or cookies. FMNV items include soda, chewing gum,

and certain candies.

"The students came to us concerned over some of the changes in the new nutrition policy, and we thought it would be an excellent educational opportunity to let them write to Susan Combs at the Texas Department of Agriculture," Valley Mills high school teacher Lynn Seawright said.

"There were some letters, and the gist of it was that the students weren't receiving enough food, that the servings were too small," Beverly Boyd, spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture, said.

Uncertainty over which foods were acceptable may have prompted the school to pull too many items from its menu, Boyd said.

"Many schools have gone above and beyond. Austin is a fantastic example. In 2003 we sent out our FMNV policy, and they actually replaced all of the carbonated beverages in their vending machines with water

and juice," Boyd said.

Providing varied menus is generally easier for larger schools, which have more options open to them, said Valley Mills Superintendent Dr. Bill Shepard. Meanwhile, smaller schools generally rely on vending machines to provide some variety, he said.

Most small schools use vending machine revenue to pay for extras like student trips or extracurricular activities. Larger schools have resources to account for these programs, but in 1-A and 2-A districts were lost in the latest round of state funding cuts.

"Basically, the new policy meant the school's snack foods were reduced or cut. Of course, that generated some concern among the students, so some seniors asked if they could write the TDA," Shepard said.

TDA commissioner Susan Combs replied to the students' letters, and sent a nutrition specialist to look at the school, listen to the students and respond to their questions.

The TDA also inspected the school's compliance with the new policy, Shepard said.

"It's the first evaluation we've had in several years," Ferguson said.

"In my six years at Valley Mills, it was the first inspection they've had," Shepard said.

Shepard said that TDA officials told him the inspection had nothing to do with the students' actions, but added that the inspector had copies of the letters. The inspectors only reported minor problems, he said.

Any school that doesn't follow the policy will have its state meal reimbursement dis-



STUDENT ALAN FISHER and teacher Lynn Seawright discuss letters received from the Commissioner of the Texas Department of Agriculture, Susan Combs.

"... the new policy meant the school's snack foods were reduced or cut. Of course, that generated some concern among the students, so some seniors asked if they could write the TDA."

— Valley Mills Supt. Dr. Bill Shepard

lowed for the day, and the school must pay for the loss out of district funds.

"They won't withhold your check, but the school could lose funding," Shepard said.

School officials said the students managed to reap some educational benefits from the experience.

"The students learned, first, that elected officials do re-

spond to those who vote, and that people do have a voice and can be heard. They learned how to handle situations ethically and professionally. I was very proud of them," Seawright said.

"It let the students use something they had learned in government — that you have the right to question policy and that elected officials must respond to you," Ferguson said.

"I felt it was an outstanding way to see how government works," Shepard said.

School officials also said they were pleased at the agriculture department's prompt response.

"I really have to pat the Agriculture Department on the back for those letters. Sometimes when you write your elected officials, you get back a bulk letter that you know everyone else got. But these letters came back and addressed students' individual concerns," Shepard said, adding "It wasn't just a case of 'Oh, hey, some students. Let's send 'em a letter back.' Someone spent a lot of time reading those letters and responding to them."



STUDENTS BEN BOROM (front left) Zak McGehee (front right) Dustin Terrell (rear right) and Travis Smith (rear left) study brochures describing the Texas Public School Nutritional Policy.

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PUBLISHER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

W. Leon Smith

EDITORIAL

Associate Editors:

Don M. Fisher

Nathan Diebenow

CIRCULATION

Charlie Gandy

Jean Harvey

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55th Presidential Inaugural Committee Unveils Inaugural Theme, Schedule of Events

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The 55th Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC) Chairman Jeanne Johnson Phillips and Executive Director Greg Jenkins announced the inaugural theme, “Celebrating Freedom, Honoring Service,” and the schedule of events surrounding the 55th Presidential Inauguration.

“We are a nation at war, and it is fitting that the inaugural events reflect not only the great sacrifices made by our troops everyday to protect our freedom, but also the cherished ideals that make our nation so unique,” said Phillips.

The committee released the schedule of inaugural events beginning with a Military Gala on Tuesday, Jan. 18, and ending with a National Prayer Service on Friday, Jan. 21. There will be a variety of events throughout the four-day span, including a youth entertainment concert and a Commander-in-Chief’s Ball.



The youth entertainment concert will focus on community and public service. It will include musical acts, video clips, and guest speakers.

The Commander-in-Chief Ball will be a special celebration for troops and their families, focusing on those that have recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan or will soon be deployed. This event has been added to the inaugural celebrations to honor our troops and thank them for their service. It will be free of charge.

“The Commander-in-Chief Ball will specifically honor and thank the men and women and their families who are on the front lines of freedom every day. This unique event will celebrate the vital work of our military to protect our nation,” said Jenkins.

There will also be three candle light dinners, nine inaugural balls, the traditional parade, and other activities. Parade participants and entertainment will be announced as appropriate.

The website for the 55th Presidential Inauguration will be live today. It is designed to assist members of the public as they seek tickets and information about President Bush’s second inauguration and learn more about America’s inaugural traditions. New features will be frequently added as inauguration day nears.

The following is a tentative schedule of events:

Tuesday, Jan. 18 — Saluting Those

Who Serve, MCI Center; Chairman’s Reception, Mellon Auditorium; Youth Concert, D.C. Armory.

Wednesday, Jan. 19 — Chairman’s Brunch, Mellon Auditorium; A Celebration of Freedom, the Ellipse; Candlelight dinners at Union Station, the Washington Hilton and the Pension Building for donors who give \$100,000 or more; Black Tie & Boots Ball, Marriott Wardman Hotel.

Thursday, Jan. 20 — St. John’s Episcopal Church service; Swearing-in ceremony, West Front of the Capitol; Inaugural parade, Pennsylvania Avenue; Constitution Ball, Washington Hilton; Freedom Ball, Union Station; Independence Ball, Texas Wyoming Ball, Liberty Ball, Democracy Ball, Patriot Ball, Stars and Stripes Ball at the Convention Center; Commander in chief ball, National Building Museum.

Friday, Jan. 21 — National Prayer Service, National Cathedral.

Inauguration Protests Slated This Thursday In Texas, Country

CRAWFORD — Due to “the President’s destructive actions at home and abroad,” several weeklong demonstrations are planned around the country in protest around the time of President George W. Bush’s inauguration on Thursday, Jan. 20.

Over 50 events have been scheduled over the course of this week, including benefits, fund-raisers, dances, concerts, dinners, and stand-up comedy shows.

The inauguration protests officially started in Austin on Monday, Jan. 17, with activists attending the Martin Luther King Parade.

Demonstrators not able to travel to the large protest in D.C. on Thursday have scheduled a march on the sidewalks of the Congress Avenue Bridge (east and west sidewalks) in Austin “to protest the Bush administration’s unjust and immoral agenda,” from 5 - 7 p.m.

Organizers say that this is a legal demonstration and traffic will not be blocked in solidarity with the Washington D.C. counter-inaugural protests.

Following the Austin demonstration, an Anti-Inaugural Ball will be held at Mother Egan’s, 715 W. 6th Street.

The event is a fundraiser for the Crawford Peace House from 7 - 9:30 p.m. Music will be provided by the Therapy Sisters and more.

The Austin demonstrations are sponsored by Austin Against War, a diverse and inclusive group of individuals united by our opposition to unwarranted military action, the occupation of sovereign nations, and assaults upon civil liberties and human rights worldwide.

Another counter-inaugural protest is scheduled to be held in downtown Houston on Saturday, Jan. 22

Protestors will assemble at 12:30

p.m. in Market Square Park, and then march at 1 p.m., to Herman Square/City Hall where there will be a rally with speakers and music.

The Houston demonstration is sponsored by the Counter-Inaugural Coalition and endorsed by the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee, the Hurricane Collective, International Socialist Organization, and the Houston Global Awareness Collective.

In Dallas, “a mock funeral for two centuries of American freedom” will be staged at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday. The location is on east side of the Old Red Courthouse, at 100 S. Houston Street.

“We’re concerned about what the second term will bring,” said a spokesperson for the event. “If you share these concerns, please join us for an evening of mourning and looking to the future.”

This event will cap off a trio of funeral processions through downtown Dallas. Speakers, music, and a candlelight vigil are planned.

Scheduled speakers include: Rep. Lon Burnam, Rev. Peter Johnson, and Hadi Jawad.

D.C. Protests

Organizers predict there will be thousands of people all along the inaugural route in Washington, D.C. demanding “End the Occupation of Iraq — Bring the Troops Home Now.”

Bleachers for antiwar demonstrators have been allowed by the National Park Service along the inaugural parade route at 4th St. and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, due to the efforts of The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) that applied for permits for antiwar demonstrators.

“Bush and the world will hear this message loud and clear from the people of the U.S.” said a spokesman

for the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, which helped organize the mass demonstrations at the summer’s Republican National Convention in New York.

The D.C. Anti-War Network (DAWN) has called for a permitted anti-war rally and march as its action for the counter-inaugural. DAWN has called separately for nonviolent civil disobedience die-ins to draw attention to the dead at the hands of the Bush Administration. This protest is endorsed by United for Peace and Justice.

DAWN has permits for march and rally locations, and intends for participants to rally at Malcolm X Park (16th and Euclid Sts NW — nearest to U Street and Columbia Heights Metro Stations) at 9 a.m. Following this, a march will begin at 11:15 a.m., toward the White House down 16th Street, and ending at McPherson Square Park (15th & I Sts) about at 12:30 p.m. Feeder marches organized by other groups will join the DAWN march at points along 16th Street.

From McPherson Square, march participants will in several actions. Many are expected to join protests along the inauguration parade route on Pennsylvania Avenue, only a few blocks south of the march’s end point.

One grassroots group, Turn Your Back On Bush, said they will literally will turn their backs on President Bush as his motorcade passes. No violence or conflicts that lead to mass arrests is expected by the groups:

(www.turnyourbackonbush.com).

The Secret Service has prohibited spectators from carrying signs or posters attached to handles, in which might be the most heavily secured and expensive presidential inaugurations in history.

The parade is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. after Bush’s inaugura-

tion ceremony at the Capitol building, leaving plenty of time for participants to find locations on the parade to continue their protest.

DAWN’s non-violent civil disobedience die-in action is separate from DAWN’s march. Die-in participants will join the rally at Malcolm X Park, but will not leave for their action until 30 minutes after the last person on the march has left the park. From Malcolm X Park, participants will march down 16th Street toward the White House and approach H & 16th Sts. where they will lay down in the street at the edge of Lafayette Park and remain there.

Lafayette Park is at the end of the Presidential parade route and right in front of the White House.

A few of the confirmed speakers for the D.C. protest include Amy Goodman (Democracy Now), Stan Goff (Military Families Speak Out), Michael Ratner (International Human Rights lawyer, Center for Constitutional Rights), Zach Lown (International Socialist Organization), Aidan Delgado (Iraqi War Vet), Andy Shallal (Iraqi American Activist), Ellen Thomas (anti-nuclear activist), David Rovics (folk singer), and Karen O’Keefe (DC Anti-War Network).

West Coast Protests

Protests are scheduled in San Francisco, Calif., at the Civic Center at 5 p.m. as well as in Los Angeles at the Westwood Federal Building at 6 p.m.

In Washington State, protestors are to gather in Seattle at the Federal building at 5 p.m.

INFO

www.counter-inaugural.org
www.mlkcelebration.com/marchandrally.php
progressiveaustin.org/events.htm
www.crawfordpeacehouse.org

New Law Encourages Tsunami Relief Spending

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service alerted taxpayers who itemize deductions that they may claim on their 2004 tax returns charitable donations made during

Jan. 2005 for relief of the victims of the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

The new law enacted on Jan. 7 allows these donations to be deducted as if they were made on Dec. 31, 2004.

“There are no extra forms to fill out or any additional burdens for taxpayers,” said IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson. “As long as you send your check by the end of the month, the donation will be treated just like it was still 2004.”

The new law only allows for cash contributions. The contributions must be made specifically for the relief of victims in areas affected by the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The new law gives taxpayers the option of deducting the contributions on either their 2004 or 2005 returns, but not both.

The IRS advises taxpayers to be sure their contributions go to qualified charities. Taxpayers who have a specific

charity in mind can make sure that it is a qualified charity by doing a search on (www.IRS.gov). Some organizations, such as churches or governments, may be qualified even though they are not listed on www.IRS.gov. For information on groups involved in tsunami relief, donors can also look to the USAID site (www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/tsunami/ngolist.html) or USA Freedom Corps at (www.usafreedomcorps.gov).

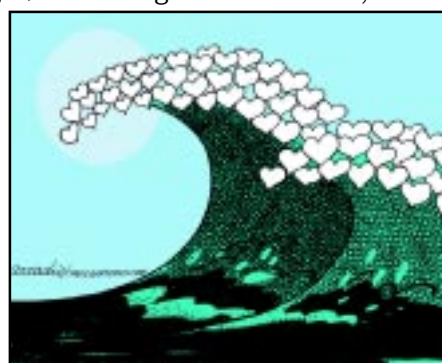
The IRS reminds donors that contributions to foreign organizations generally are not deductible.

IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, provides information on making contributions to charities. Publication 3833, Disaster Relief: Providing Assistance through Charitable Organizations, explains how the public can use charitable organizations to help victims of disasters, and how new organizations can obtain tax-exempt status. Both publications are available on IRS.gov.

When donors make contributions to assist the victims of the tsunami, they should notate their records to that effect. Donors may want to notate the memo field of checks they send that it is a contribution to help tsunami victims.

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Congress Passes ‘Doomsday’ Plan

WASHINGTON — With no fanfare, the U.S. House has passed a controversial doomsday provision that would allow a handful of lawmakers to run Congress if a terrorist attack or major disaster killed or incapacitated large numbers of congressmen.

“I think (the new rule) is terrible in a whole host of ways — first, I think it’s unconstitutional,” said Norm Ornstein, a counselor to the independent Continuity of Government Commission, a bipartisan panel created to study the issue.

GOP House leaders pushed the provision as part of a larger rules package that drew attention instead for its proposed ethics changes, most of which were dropped. Rep. Brian Baird (D-Wash.), one of few lawmakers active on the issue, argued the rule change contradicts the U.S. Constitution, which states that “a majority of each (House) shall constitute a quorum to do business.”

“Changing what constitutes a quorum in this way would allow less than a dozen lawmakers to declare war on another nation,” Baird said.



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President Bush To Be Sworn Into Office This Thursday

CRAWFORD — President George W. Bush will be sworn in to a second term on Thursday, Jan. 20, at noon on the west front of the U.S. Capitol overlooking the National monuments. Joining him will be his family, members of the Cabinet and Administration, members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, U.S. Supreme Court Justices and invited guests.

A minister chosen by the President will deliver an invocation, and U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist is expected to administer the oath. Once the oath is taken, the military will render a 21-gun salute, the Army Herald Trumpets will play "Ruffles and Flourishes" and the U.S. Marine Band will launch "Hail to the Chief." The president will then deliver his inaugural address.

Following the swearing-in ceremony, the President will sign his cabinet nominations and join invited guests in Statuary Hall for the Congressional luncheon. After lunch, the President will be escorted by U.S. Army Major General Galen Jackman to the east side of the U.S. Capitol for the pass in review, then onto the presidential motorcade for the start of the parade.

The language of the presidential oath is specified in the Constitution. The vice-president takes the same oath as other high-ranking federal employees.

The Parade

The parade will begin about 2:30 p.m., Thursday. The parade route starts at the intersection of Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues and continues down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House.

Military and civilian bands, including the Crawford High School band, and other fanfare are expected to march along a 1.7 mile-route from Capitol Hill to the White House and hundreds of thousands of people are able line the route and watch.

Organizing this precisely timed formation of some 11,000 people, floats, vehicles and horses is no small feat. From logistical support, such as buses, warming tents and food, to security and public safety,



President Bush

— Iconoclast Photo

much will be happening behind the scenes to create the flawless event that will be viewed by half-a-million spectators.

Parade preparations begin months in advance when applications are gathered from bands and other marching units from across the country on behalf of the Presidential Inaugural Committee (PIC). As the event gets closer, PIC selects participants for the parade.

Efforts are made to have as many states represented in the parade as possible. The parade normally lasts about two hours.

The parade is open to the general public. Bleacher seats are available from the Presidential Inaugural Committee for \$15, \$60, and \$125, but seats are limited.

Inaugural Balls

Inaugural balls have long been a part of the celebration of the Presidential Inauguration and lend a celebratory flair to the week's events.

The first official Inaugural ball was hosted by President James Madison in 1809, who charged an entrance fee at the door. The President and First Lady watched their guests dance from a platform, then joined them for a formal supper afterward.

Only one president opted to have a low-key inauguration during wartime — Franklin D. Roosevelt at the height of World War II in 1945, started his fourth term, with a simple swearing-in ceremony, a brief speech from the South Portico of the White House to a small crowd and a modest luncheon.

Other president-elects — from Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War to Dwight D. Eisenhower during the Korean conflict to Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War — kept their inaugural events more festive than Roosevelt's.

Other Events

For the first post-Sept. 11 inauguration, there will be nine official balls, a youth concert, a parade, a fireworks display, all of which Planners put the cost at \$30 million to \$40 million.

Other Inaugural events will likely include lectures, seminars, public entertainment, a prayer service and a presidential gala on the eve of the Inauguration. Inaugural festivities also include dozens of unofficial receptions and parties throughout Washington, D.C. The President and First Lady only attend the official balls.

Presidential Inaugurals set the tone for a new administration and reflect a president's personality. From the Inaugural ball themes to the Bible chosen for the swearing-in ceremony, each inauguration develops its own style.

KWBU Invites Children To Enter Writing, Contest

WACO — Local PBS station KWBU-TV invites youngsters to participate in the 11th annual Reading Rainbow Young Writers & Illustrators Contest.

Children from kindergarten to third grade are encouraged to write and illustrate their own stories and enter them in the contest, which is conducted in cooperation with local PBS stations across the country. Applications are available at KWBU and can also be located on the PBS Kids website (www.pbskids.org/readingrainbow).

This is the third year the contest will partner with the new PBS Kids campaign, Share A Story — Give Them Words To Grow By, a national initiative inspiring adults to help children develop language and literacy skills through daily activities.

Entries are judged in local contests, with the local winners advancing to the national competition. Each child who participates in the Contest receives a special Certificate of Achievement signed by Reading Rainbow host LeVar Burton.

All national winners (12 in all) will have their stories featured on pbskids.org, one of the most-used national websites for children. They will also receive a Reading Rainbow library set, comprised of ten DVDs and matching feature books.

In 2004, Reading Rainbow attracted over 45,000 entries, with national recognition and prizes going to children from Kansas, North Dakota, California, Georgia, Indiana, Tennessee, Minnesota, Oregon, Michigan, Virginia and Connecticut. See these stories at pbskids.org/readingrainbow.

For local information about the contest, contact Roxie Collier.

INFO

Collier, (254) 710-7883.
roxie_collier@kwbu.pbs.org

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A Call To A 'Moral' Economy

By NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CRAWFORD — In the last generation, the American middle class has been slowly vanishing and, with it, the so-called "American Dream."

Today's American worker can certainly do his best to make an honest living by playing by the rules, but even his offspring are increasingly involved in their family's survival.

"Over a 30-year time frame, we have certainly seen an erosion of the middle class. There's no doubt about that," said James K. Galbraith, the Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations and Professor of Government. "We're seeing the emergence of a much more powerful class of extremely wealthy people with a near monopoly on political power, and, equally, the softening up of the labor market so that there's a much more competitive, rat-race-like environment for working people."

This trend was caused by many factors, he said, including the declining presence of unions, the demolition of industrial sector in the upper mid-west in the early 1980s, the rise of the technology and information economy in the 1990s, which was a substantially nonunion, speculation-fueled endeavour, the decline of standards over the large majority of Americans who worked in the services sector, and the erosion of the minimum wage for hourly wage workers, not to mention the expanded labor market to include women.

Keith T. Pool, professor of Political Science at the University of Houston, said that legal and illegal immigration has also produced inequality in the bottom quintile over the last 30-40 years, although legal immigrants have achieved a little more prosperity.

"I don't think it's quite right to say the middle class is disappearing. I think the best way to think about it is that the upper class is getting further and further ahead relative to everybody else. It's not a miseration story," said Pool. "In real dollars people have been getting better off."

Galbraith agreed that the purchasing power of middle class workers has increased in



THE VANISHING MIDDLE CLASS

the last few decades. Consumers, due to the low price of imports, have considerable command over commodities, from television sets and radios, to drinking glasses and kitchen ware, for instance; however, he pointed out that labor competition and the erosion of the minimum wage due to inflation has eroding the middle class' purchasing power and lifestyle.

"A middle class existence is one in which it is possible for a family to be supported by the wages of a worker and to be prosperous on the wages of two (workers)," he said. "I would say that has been eroded by competition to the point where it takes two earners with reasonably steady jobs to hold an American family to a typical living standard to which most people tend to aspire, and that's with a lot more hours of work and a lot less time for non-work activity than say 30 years ago."

Lawrence Mishel, vice presi-

dent at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., said more and more American families have entered the work force, a trend caused in part by the increased entry of women in the labor force and the economic squeeze on families that requires more work to be able to get by.

"These include families related by blood who share income and married couples with kids who are working," he said, adding that while productivity has picked up in the U.S., working families aren't reaping the benefits of their sweat.

"Over the last 30 years, our productivity is up over 65 percent. The fact that families are not doing much better than they did 30 years ago despite working more is quite disappointing," he said.

American workers of all income brackets have transformed the so-called

"Protestant work ethic" — working hard and playing by the rules — into a standard of working religiously to exist, according to Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*.

"My overall feeling is that we have a little bit too much work ethic in his country. People are working too hard at all levels, from the low wage person who works two jobs to make ends meet to the corporate lawyer or manager who works 60-80 hours a week," said Ehrenreich. "We just work too much. We accept those demands on our lives. I think it gets internalized. They don't know what to do when they're not working. If they're white collar, they're bringing their work home with them with their laptops and cell phones. There's just no end to it."

Ehrenreich said this hyper-

work ethic is "a real concern," because Americans don't have time for anything, let alone spend time with their families. "Being a good citizen requires the leisure to read up on the issues and chat with your friends and neighbors about them. You can't do that."

In her experience working a number of minimum wage jobs over the course of writing her book, she said she saw a lot of people working two jobs, which she said was a disaster waiting to happen.

"I don't know how you do that on a long-term basis. You can't get sick. You can't miss a day. If you have a child who is sick and you stay home for that, you can lose your job. I think it's an inhuman and punishing environment," she said. "There's a lot of anxiety in that corporate culture in that regard. Anxiety about being laid off. You're afraid. You don't be seen leaving the desk by 6 p.m."

"We just have to say there are some things more important than always being at your cubicle, at your work desk, at your station. We deserve a life outside of work."

The Greedy Oldsters

With a 100-year-old nickname like "The Millionaire's Club," it's not hard to understand that the members of U.S. Senate was almost half full of millionaires during the 108th Congress.

Therefore, it should also be obvious that the public policy written today is shaped for private citizens living and operating at higher income brackets.

A more nuanced analysis of the political process of the United States government can be explained by Pool, coauthor of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America*.

"The people who vote for either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party across the board tend to be of a higher income than nonvoters, so when you actually look at the economic programs of the two political parties, they're not talking about, for example, really large amounts of welfare transfer between high income and low income (citizens)," Pool said. "It's no surprise, then, that (Sen. John F.) Kerry's economic plan was basically 'let's give more money to the greedy oldsters.' There was no real redistribution in there."

Galbraith said that the Democrats certainly do have their own propaganda concerning the state of the economy, but there are still differences between the two parties' actual plans for the direction of the economy.

Continued On Next Page



James K. Galbraith



Keith T. Pool



Lawrence Mishel



Barbara Ehrenreich

THE VANISHING MIDDLE CLASS

Continued From Previous Page



James K. Galbraith

"I think that the problem with the Republicans is the fact that they are such a clientele-based administration with a handful of clients which basically write the legislation on taxes and social security for these very, very narrow constituencies indifferent to the general macroeconomic strategy," he said, adding, "The problem with the Democrats is that they have the macroeconomic strategy that is completely cocked up. It's a pile of nonsense."

Galbraith added that the 2004 Democratic presidential campaign had a program which assumed that things would get better in the economy and just took some small adjustments, little tweaking of the valves, that you could make them better still with a program to improve tax incentives for creating manufacturing jobs, for example.

"It just understated the dimension of the problem facing the America economy, and greatly understated the nature of the solution," he said.

To further his point to show the conspiracy among the wealthy's involvement with government, Pool pointed to the tobacco settlements — won by trial lawyers who typically wield power in the Democratic Party. Instead of heavy regulation, the outcome caused a heavier tax on cigarettes, which in turn are purchased more often than not by people with lower income. He added that sports stadiums are paid for by taxpayers, but their expensive skyboxes are primarily used by law firms and big businesses.

"You know, I suppose it's fair to say that there are honest Democrats who want to do things, but the point is that if you get the trial lawyers in one political party along with some business people in another party, it's not a recipe for (successful low income workers)," said Pool, a self-described Libertarian. "We're not back in the era of Harry Truman, and by that I mean, right now, neither political party really represents the blue collar and lower middle classes."

Galbraith agreed that no modern political figure has made any "incredibly persuasive appeal" to the economic interests of the middle and lower classes in a long time; however, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson made that appeal and delivered Medicare and Medicaid. "And even Nixon — who delivered major increases in social security benefits — in the 1972 election was running a campaign where economic policy really mattered, but it surely hasn't been true since 1980," he added.

Galbraith suggested that, although they're becoming increasingly marginalized in state and national government, everyday citizens could bring about a redistribution of wealth in this country through grassroots endeavors.

"The fact that we are increasingly becoming a plutocratic society means that the middle class has very little it could call a political vehicle for the

expression of its preferences. This means that our politics is increasingly divided between rich people's spokesmen — what the banks want, what the oil companies want, what the pharmaceutical companies want," he said.

Pool noted that based on the median family income of voters (\$45,000), non-voters (\$34,000), and noncitizens (between \$24-26,000), "it's no surprise the voters are interested in Medicare and Social Security and are not interested in Medicaid."

Pool said that nowhere have both parties been so malicious to the lower classes than with the constant erosion of the minimum wage.

"The minimum wage is clearly sinking," said Pool, explaining that the federal minimum wage has never been indexed to rise with inflation or the cost of living, unlike Social Security.

Along with the 40-hour workweek and a ban on child labor in interstate commerce, the federal minimum wage was first established by Congress in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to stop the worst employer abuses during the Great Depression.

When it peaked in 1968, the minimum wage was worth the equivalent of almost \$7 an hour today.

The minimum wage has remained unchanged since Congress raised it seven years ago from \$4.75 to \$5.15 per hour, which is much lower than the official poverty level — \$9.50 an hour — or \$19,000 a year for a full time worker to support for a family of four, no frills.

Kerry's Silence

As for Sen. John F. Kerry, "the most liberal senator in Congress," very little if anything was said during his 2004 presidential campaign about raising the federal wage floor.

To their credit, Kerry and his vice presidential running mate Sen. John Edwards (D - N.C.) last year backed Sen. Edward Kennedy's (D-Mass.) proposed Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004, which would have increased the federal minimum wage to \$7 an hour by 2007.

Political experts agree, though, that had he campaigned for increasing the minimum wage before last November, Kerry might have performed better at the polls in at least two so-called "red states" Florida and Nevada where voters overwhelmingly approved measures to raise the minimum wage by a dollar.

Seventy-one percent of Florida voters approved a state constitutional amendment raising the state minimum wage and tying it to annual increases to inflation. Now, the

"The minimum wage is clearly sinking."

— Keith T. Pool

lowest-paid Floridians will receive automatic increases each year to keep their purchasing power in line with consumer price hikes. In Nevada, 68.3 percent of the electorate (or 293,328 votes) approved the wage lift, this while President George W. Bush earned only 21,500 votes over Kerry.

Even the New York state senate — controlled by Republicans — agreed to raise the state minimum wage for the first time in five years from the current federal minimum to \$7.15 by 2007. Last December, the senators voted down a veto by Gov. George Pataki (R-NY).

While Florida became the 14th state to set its own higher minimum wage, as well as the third, following Washington and Oregon, to index its minimum wage to inflation, there are seven states with no state minimum wage, and two that have minimum wages that are lower than the federal minimum.

As many as 123 cities and counties have already passed "living wage" laws, which set higher minimums for workers in jobs dependent on public funds — including work on government contracts or at companies benefiting from corporate welfare.

The future is looking brighter for America's bottom rung as 77 percent of Americans support an increase in the minimum wage, according to a recent Pew Research Center poll.

Grassroots activism is also taking shape. ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, and its allies are conducting campaigns to boost the minimum wage to a "living wage" in several key states in 2006.

Minimum Wage Benefits

Mishel said he thinks a low income family needs roughly double the poverty line for a minimum standard of living — namely \$35,000 per year.

The benefits to families are obvious: more income, more security, and more incentive to work. However, it would be a tremendous help to children of working women, who need the basic necessities like food, clothing, after school care, etc.

"Minimum wages have always been particularly important to women workers, not terribly important for men, in preventing them from slipping far below the poverty level, in support of their own households," said Galbraith, the author of *Created Unequal: The Crisis in American Pay*.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2003, retail workers made up only 22 percent of the workforce, but 62 percent of those were at or below the minimum wage.

A 2004 Economic Policy Institute briefing titled *No Longer Getting By: An Increase in the Minimum Wage Is Long Overdue* blasted the Corporate America myth about teenagers benefiting the most from the minimum wage. The briefing stated that if the minimum wage was increased to \$7 an hour, 72 percent of those who would be directly affected are over the age of 20. Forty-four percent work full-time

(working at least 35 hours a week), and 36 percent of families with workers who would benefit from an increase rely exclusively on that person's wages.

The logic espoused by Corporate America states that a raised wage will force companies to lay off workers, but this is a myth as well.

According to EPI's 1998 study on the impact of the most recent minimum-wage increase, the low-wage labor market performed better than it had in decades. No evidence of negative employment effects on small businesses was found by a recent study by the Fiscal Policy Institute of state minimum wages.

Most employers gain from raising their workers' pay by absorbing the increase through decreased absenteeism, lower recruiting and training costs, higher productivity and increased worker morale, say economists.

As one expert put it: as prices rise, an indexed minimum wage only keeps low-wage workers from falling further behind bringing up those on the bottom with everyone else. It doesn't improve their working conditions.

Fred Block, professor of Sociology at the University of California — Davis, said that the results are grim for children who fail to achieve upward mobility: "Wal-Mart parents end up with Wal-Mart children. We are back to the old European model in which children end up doing the same work as their parents."

Never before has higher education and technical skills been more important to success among so many jobs. A generation ago, a high school dropout could become an auto mechanic,

but now success in that trade — and many others — requires technological expertise and access to expensive equipment, said Block. Still, the financial barriers to higher education and technical skills have grown more daunting; reports indicate that the children of the poor are less and less likely to get the advanced training that they need.

The wage pit even swallows college graduates, according to Ehrenreich.

"Yes, the gap in earnings between non-college educated and college educated people has increased in recent years," she said, "but I'm also struck by how many of those college educated people are really underpaid. Some of those service types of professions, for example, like librarians, social workers, teachers, and reporters."

Galbraith added that the American Dream can be seen deflating by the quality of public services deteriorating over the last 30 years.

A Moral Economy

In his paper *Is the American Dream Dying?*, Block noted that over the last 25 years, the government's priorities have shifted radically under the influence of "market fundamentalism" — the belief that unregulated markets always work best to organize economic activity. The government's current priority, he said, is to maximize the prof

Continued On Next Page



Fred Block

THE VANISHING MIDDLE CLASS

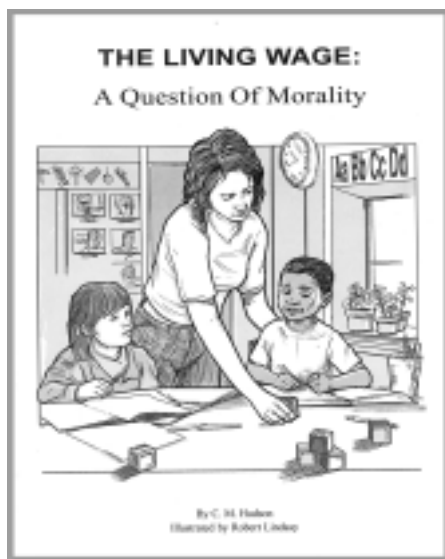
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its earned by private firms and assure that the market sets the price for these services.

“A generation ago, we had public-private partnerships in the provision of these services; government reduced the risk for private firms, and the benefits were shared between the public and the private firms,” he said. Now, the firms take all the benefits and don’t share. For example, public colleges and universities’ tuition and fees have skyrocketed even faster than tuition at private schools, not to mention housing, health care, and high quality child care.

“Market fundamentalism — the extreme belief in unregulated markets — is killing the American Dream,” said Block. “The labor market does not produce fair outcomes because of the huge power differential between those selling labor and those buying labor. Individual employees, struggling to put food on the table, have to ‘negotiate’ wages with giant multinational corporations that can wait for someone desperate enough to take work at the minimum wage,” he said.

Block said that the alternative to market fundamentalism is to create a “moral economy” in which markets are regulated to make the promise of opportunity real. “We need to return to the idea of sharing the benefits of public-private partnerships. We need to restructure the arrangements for producing the 4-H’s — Housing, Health Care, High Quality Child Care, and Higher Education — to increase both



the supply and quality of these services for (middle and lower class families).

In a short, 18-page booklet titled *The Living Wage: A Question of Morality*, C.M. Hudson writes for the increase of the federal minimum wage into a “living wage” to tackle poverty from a Christian moralistic perspective.

“If Jesus Christ walked among us today, what do you think he would say and do about paying poverty wages?” asks Hudson in the introduction of the booklet.

For a copy of the picture booklet that reinterprets the American Dream, visit the People Speak Out website.



INFO

www.peoplespeakout.org
www.livingwagecampaign.org
www.universallivingwage.org
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Comptroller Strayhorn Estimates Budget \$400 Million In The Black

AUSTIN — Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn released the biennial revenue estimate, saying a scant \$400 million extra will be available after meeting current spending levels of state government over the next two years.

Strayhorn reported to the 79th Legislature that the state will have \$64.7 billion in general revenue available for her certification of the budget for the 2006-2007 biennium. Revenue available from all funds of state government, including federal funds, will total \$130.5 billion.

The 79th Legislature will have \$6.4 billion more in general revenue than was appropriated by the 78th Legislature.

However, Strayhorn said \$6 billion of that new money would be needed to maintain today’s spending levels through fiscal year 2007. “Our state’s great economic engine is improving,” Strayhorn said. “We have experienced 16 months of positive sales tax growth. Seven of the 10 economic indicators I watch every day are up.

“I expect to see a continuation of growth trends in 2005 and into the next biennium,” she said.

“Growth in the economy reflected in my estimate will be solid and sustained.

“I am projecting growth in the gross state product of 3.5 percent in fiscal year 2005, and 3.2 percent in both 2006 and 2007.”

Strayhorn warned that while writing a budget is hard work, “The is-

sue that will define this session is school finance.”

“I say no matter how strong our economy is, fixing our broken school finance system cannot be done within our existing revenue estimate,” she said.

“The governor needs to show the people of Texas a real school finance reform plan that will cut skyrocketing local property taxes, have the state pick up more of the tab, and have equity.

“We must drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom with the teachers and the students where it belongs,” Strayhorn said.

“And we need to say out loud: We need more money for education.

“Texas has just enough money to continue following Gov. Perry in doing a poor job for our citizens,” she said.

“It means that we could continue to follow the governor in balancing the budget right on the backs of our school teachers and our most vulnerable Texans with billions and billions of dollars in fees, charges, and out-of-pocket expenses — and avoid hard decisions about the future. That’s the governor’s record, but that’s not what hard-working Texans want. That’s not the Texas way and it cannot continue.

“There is no shortfall when it comes to the budget,” Strayhorn said. “There is a shortfall when it comes to the governor’s leadership.”

‘The Little Prince’ Auditions Set Jan. 21

WACO — The Waco Civic Theatre will be holding auditions for “The Little Prince.” Auditions for the role of the Little Prince only will be held Friday, Jan. 21, from 7-10 p.m. for children ages eight-12 years old.

Auditions for all remaining roles will be held Monday, Feb. 21, from 7-10 p.m. for those ages 15 and older.

All auditions will be held at the Waco Civic Theatre, 1517 Lake Air Drive. Those who wish to audition need to make an appointment by calling (254) 776-1591.

Performances of “The Little Prince” will take place on April 15, 16, 22, and 23, at 7:30 p.m., and Feb. 17, 23, and 24, at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for children 12 and under, and can be reserved by calling the box office at (254) 776-1591.

Bush Picks Judge To Head Homeland Security Dept.



Michael Chertoff

CRAWFORD — President Bush selected Michael Chertoff as his pick as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Chertoff is the president’s secondnd pick after Kerik withdrew his nomination.

Chertoff, lawyer/prosecutor, helped with nation’s ‘legal response’ to 9/11 attacks. He was a chief investigator during the Whitewater investigations into former President Bill Clinton. Chertoff also had a hand in shaping the USA Patriot Act.

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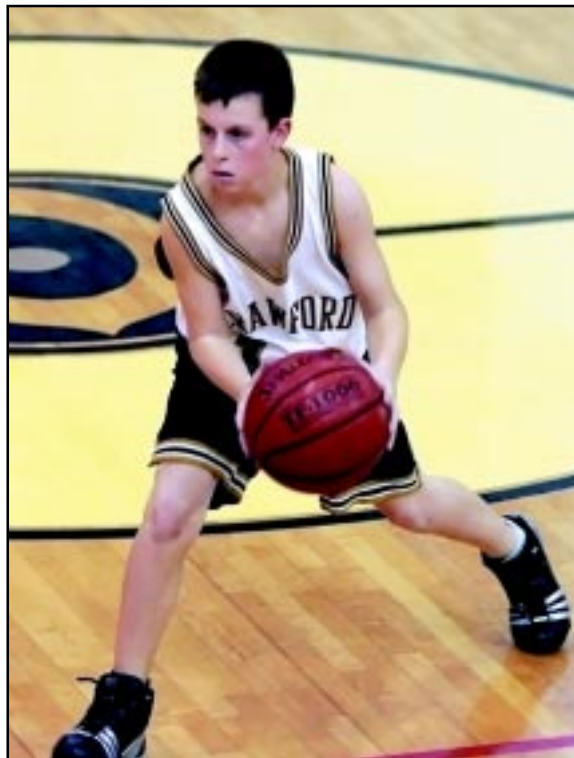
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**Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m.-3 p.m.**



TAKING A RIGHT — Eighth-grade Crawford Pirate Shelton (23) on the "B" team moves past the Clifton Cub last Thursday.
— Photo By Stephen Cook



ACROSS THE LINE — Seventh-grade Crawford Pirate Jacobs (10) looks for the open teammate in the game against the Clifton Cubs "B" team last Thursday.
— Photo By Stephen Cook



PASSING INSIDE — Eighth-grade Crawford Pirate B. Christensen (10) on the "B" team sets to pass to a teammate on the inside against the Clifton Cubs last Thursday.
— Photo By Stephen Cook

Crawford Pirates 8A Beats Clifton, 27-22

CRAWFORD — The Crawford Pirates 8A team last Thursday won over Clifton, 27-22, at home.

Cook (12), Shaw (6), Stanford (3), Tawater (2), and Avellaneda (2) were the leading scorers.

The Crawford Pirates 8B team lost to Clifton, 16-8. Buice (6) and Tanner (2) scored.

The Crawford Pirates 7A team lost to Clifton, 26-25. Blenden (8), Duncan (6), Ellison (3), Lynch (2), and Dunlop (2) scored.

The Crawford Pirates 7B team defeated the Clifton Cubs, 29-14. Christensen (8), Croford (8), Neill (4), Devorsky (2), Lynch (2), Rodriguez (2), and Tate (2) gather points for team.



LOOKING FOR THE OPENING — Eighth-grade Crawford Pirate Shaw (22) attempts to pass against the Clifton Cubs "A" team last Thursday.
— Photo By Stephen Cook



Rough and Tumble

BEFORE THE FALL — Carter Blenden (50) hangs on to the ball for the "A" team as a Clifton losses his footing last Thursday.
— Photo By Stephen Cook

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THE GIMME SHOT — Seventh-grade Crawford Pirate Ellison (15) shoots one of his two free point attempts last Thursday against Clifton's "A" team. — Photo By Stephen Cook



TIGHT GUARDING — Eighth-grade Crawford Pirate Buice (22) guards a Clifton Cub close as his "B" teammates Stevens (40) and an unidentified player gather into position. — Photo By Stephen Cook

Lady Pirates JV Stands Down Clifton, Moody

CRAWFORD — The Crawford Lady Pirate's Junior Varsity beat the Moody Bearcats, 57-23, on Jan. 7. The JV is 2-0 after defeating the Clifton Lady Cubs in the second game of league play last Tuesday.

Prior to league play, the Lady Pirates JV have gone 13-2. The team took Goldthwaite by 20 points, 54-34, at home back on Dec. 14.

The junior varsity played only two games in the China Spring Tournament



BRIANNA MACIEL scored six points against the JV Moody Lady Bearcats to help the Crawford Lady Pirates JV win, 57-23, on Jan. 7. — Photo By Stephen Cook

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due to the CHS football playoff games. In the tournament, the JV girls defeated LaVega by 19 points, 43-24, and squeaked by Robinson with a 14-point comeback win, 44-42.

The Lady Pirates JV outplayed Lorena, 54-31, by staging impressive second and fourth quarters.

Against Robinson in the Gatesville Tourney Championship on Dec. 4, Crawford won 73-52. Carlie Dieterich (18 points), Brittany Dumas (16), and Hope Talbert (18) had outstanding games. On the road to claim the tourney trophy, Crawford lost to Lorena, 78-71, but beat Clifton, 65-

25. During the last weeks of November, the Lady Pirates stood down Lorena, 50-41, and Reicher, 57-25.

Freshmen

The Lady Pirates Freshmen team was 0-7 after narrowly losing to West, 22-18, on Dec. 10, in the China Spring Tourney. In their previous game, the team lost to Whitney, 48-14.

The freshmen nearly defeated Robinson, 32-30, in a dramatic fourth quarter when they scored 16 points to Robinson's six. Shelbi Payne (10) and Shae Knight (9) led the Lady Pirates' offence that game of the Gatesville Tourney.



CALLYE JONES drives to the basket against the **Moody Lady Bearcats JV** on Jan. 7.

— Photo By Stephen Cook

Consumers Reap Success With ‘Subliminal Power’

DURHAM, U.K. — Many people are not aware that in 1974, the U.S. Government actually placed a ban on the use of subliminal messages on television and radio. Reports stated the ban was put in place because using subliminal messages “gave individuals and companies too much of an edge.”

And yet, subliminal messages are still in play today. Large retail stores are using subliminal

messages to reduce theft. Celebrities such as Tiger Woods and Anthony Robbins have claimed that subliminal messages are the key to their success.

Today, websites such as Subliminal-Power.com are showing people how to harness and use the power of subliminal messages through computer software. Subliminal Power software is a fully customizable studio package that will run on any Windows-based computer.

Once installed, it silently boots up when you start your computer, and runs in the background. It constantly flashes subtle random-area, low-contrast, 100-millisecond positive subliminal messages while you work.

The idea is that, although the conscious mind can’t comprehend these messages so quickly, the subconscious instantly understands and acts upon them. Users of the software will find a full message editor, allowing them to create their own subliminal messaging modules. There is also a comprehensive settings screen, enabling users to customize any of the default display options to their exact requirements. There is even a music area, enabling users to choose which music will play in the background.



Dennis Quaid stars as “Shut Down” Towns, the chief pilot of a cargo plane headed to Mongolia’s Gobi Desert to terminate the duties of oil workers and closed a rig that isn’t producing. On the flight back, he attempts to fly over a sandstorm and meets with disastrous results. With his plane stuck in the desert hundreds of miles away from the nearest town, he and the survivors attempt to build a new plane from the parts they find in the wreckage.

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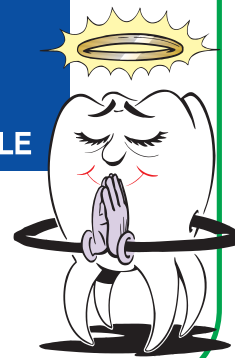
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Neighbor Nuge Rocks

For Crawford Band

LEGENDARY ROCK GUITARIST and Central Texas resident Ted Nugent rocked a packed house last Saturday night at the Crawford High School Gymnasium in a concert to benefit the high school band's trip to the Inaugural Parade in Washington, D.C.

Nugent Rocks Standing-Room-Only Gym Crowd To Help Send Band To Washington

CRAWFORD — Legendary rock guitarist Ted Nugent and his band blasted a sold-out, standing room only crowd at the Crawford High School Gym last Saturday night with well over an hour of full-throttle rock-and-roll. Proceeds from the event are being used to send the Crawford High School Band to Washington, D.C., to march in President Bush's inaugural parade.

"It's an honor for me to do something for my fellow neighbors," Nugent said, who reminded the crowd more than once Saturday night, jokingly, that, "Like it or not, I am your neighbor!"

"The kids in the band deserve this educational opportunity and I am glad to be in a position where my schedule allows me to help out when needed," said Nugent, who multiple times during the concert recognized the band members hanging from the balcony as

well as the State Champion Crawford Pirates Football Team.

The idea for the concert originated with Ted and his wife, Shemane. When they realized last Saturday would be open during Nugent's band's tour with country singer Tobey Keith, the offer was quickly made to perform, and just as quickly accepted.

Tickets were priced at \$20 each, and over 700 tickets were sold for the event. Those who chose to had the opportunity to purchase "backstage passes" for an additional \$80, to be able to participate one-on-one with "The Nuge" in a photo opportunity. Several CHS Pirates Football stadium cushions, autographed by Nugent, were auctioned off, as well as the microphone he used during the concert, a commemorative mike from Lone Star Music in Waco, engraved with the date of President Bush's first inaugu-

ration. All proceeds from the above are benefitting the band, whose trip to the nation's capital began earlier this week.

Nugent and his "blood brother" band mate, bass player Barry Sparks and drummer Tommy Aldridge, put on a show worthy of a much larger venue. Nugent and crew blasted their way through newer tunes like "Craveman," the title song of his late-2002 album, and "Raw Dogs and War Hogs," dedicated to America's "military warriors," the emotional anthem, "Fred Bear, and many of his longtime favorites, wrapping up the show with "Great White Buffalo/Spirit of the Wild," "Cat Scratch Fever," and "Stranglehold."

Nugent was introduced by Crawford ISD Superintendent Kevin Noack, who reminded the crowd to be courteous of their neighbors and remain seated during the show. As Nugent hit the stage,

he quickly circumvented those orders, demanding everyone stand up. He then led the crowd in a boisterous version of the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by his hard-rocking interpretation of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Nugent's humor showed through many times during the night. When telling the crowd he was originally from Michigan, he noted that the reason Detroit is known as the murder capital of the country isn't because there are more guns.

"We're just better shots," he laughed, as the crowd roared. "They've got just as many guns in Houston, they just don't hit nuthin'!"

Nugent and his band were on target last Saturday night, undoubtedly winning over many new fans as well as pleasing those who have followed his rock-and-roll career for many years.



BASS PLAYER BARRY SPARKS took the microphone to belt out the rock classic "Hey Baby" and Ted Nugent and his band played a standing-room-only show in Crawford last Saturday.



CRAWFORD ISD SUPERINTENDENT Kevin Noack had the privilege of introducing Ted Nugent last Saturday night at the high school. Nugent's band played well over an hour during a fundraiser for the Crawford High School Band.



CRAWFORD HIGH SCHOOL BAND members had a bird's-eye view of the Ted Nugent concert last Saturday held for their benefit. Scheduled to march in President Bush's inaugural parade, the concert was held to raise funds to send the school's musicians to Washington, D.C.

Analysis: Corporations, Executives Give 96 Percent Of Inauguration Funds

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Corporations and corporate executives contributed 96 percent of the \$17.8 million collected so far to pay for various inaugural festivities and functions, according to a new analysis by Public Citizen. Of the 127 contributors to Bush's Presidential Inauguration Committee, 121 are either corporations or their chairmen, CEOs, presidents or owners. Together, their donations amount to \$17.1 million, Public Citizen found. The fund has an overall goal of raising \$40 million.

"This inauguration is bought and paid for by corporate America," said Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen. "These businesses consider such gifts to be investments, with payback expected. Not surprisingly, many of the corporate givers received huge legislative and regulatory favors from the first Bush term and are looking for even more over the next four years. They also get invited to events, where they can schmooze with Cabinet members and administration officials and lobby on their issues."

Corporations by law are barred from direct contributions to presidential candidates and campaigns. However, they are under no similar restrictions in attempting to curry favor from the administration by financing the president's inaugural events.

Although the Bush inaugural committee put a cap of \$250,000 on single contributions to its fund, two corporations — Ameriquest and Marriott International — effectively skirted that ceiling by making contributions through their subsidiaries, Public Citizen found. Public Citizen's full report is located on the Internet at <http://www.whitehouseforsale.org/documents/Inauguration.pdf>

Among the report's other findings are:

Eighty-seven corporations account for \$12.7 million, or 71 percent, of the \$17.8 million raised as of Jan. 13.

Thirty-four of 40 total individual contributors are presidents, CEOs, chairmen and owners of corporations.

These industry chiefs account for \$4.4 million, or 25 percent, of the total raised so far.

Almost half (59) of the inaugural contributors are Pioneers, Rangers or Super Rangers, or employers of one of those elite Bush fundraisers. These individuals and their corporate employers have raised more than half (\$9.1 million) of the \$17.8 million raised for the inauguration festivities. Collectively, these contributors raised a minimum of \$15.3 million for Bush's two presidential campaigns.

The finance and investment industry, with \$5 million, was the largest contributor to the fund. That industry bundled more than \$21.7 million for Bush's 2004 campaign and is pushing for new business under Bush's flawed Social Security privatization proposal.

The energy industry, with \$2.3 million, was the second largest contributor to the fund. That industry bundled more than \$5.2 million for Bush's 2004 campaign.

Ameriquest and two of its subsidiaries, Argent Mortgage Co. and Long Beach Acceptance Corp., contributed a total of \$750,000. Ameriquest Chairman Ronald Arnall and his wife, Dawn, contributed at least \$5.5 million to Bush's re-election campaign, having achieved Ranger and Super Ranger status by bundling a combined total of at least \$500,000 for his re-election effort and also having contributed \$5 million to the Progress for America 527 group, which ran ads promoting Bush's re-election.

Marriott International and its subsidiaries (Marriott Vacation Club and Ritz Carlton) contributed a total of \$750,000 to the inaugural fund.

Industries that have already re-

ceived many legislative and regulatory favors from the Bush administration, and that stand to get even more in the second term, had the following number of significant contributors to the inauguration fund:

Finance and investment — 35 corporations and corporate leaders, 28 percent of all contributors.

Energy — 12 corporations and corporate leaders, including nine from the oil and gas sector.

Real estate — 10 corporations and corporate leaders.

Health — five corporations and corporate leaders.

Few of the provisions that restrict large contributions by wealthy individuals and corporations to election campaigns apply to fundraising for presidential inauguration ceremonies.

Federal election law exempts inaugural fundraising from all campaign finance regulations other than a requirement to disclose contributions of \$200 or more and a ban on contributions by foreign nationals.

"The possibility for corruption exists any time a politician accepts a large check from anyone," said Frank Clemente, director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch. "Congress should end the double standard for presidential inauguration fundraising. The celebration of an election victory should be viewed as part and parcel of the process of selecting our president. Funds that support inaugural ceremonies should be subject to the same limits and disclosure requirements that apply to federal campaigns, which means no corporate contributions and a maximum individual contribution of \$2,000."

Group Charges EPA Ignoring Teflon's Health Dangers

CRAWFORD — The release last week of an EPA draft risk assessment on PFOA — a toxic chemical contained in Teflon — has been sharply criticized by a leading environmental group, which charges the agency has ignored its own science panel's guidance and industry research.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) pointed out that last March the EPA's Scientific Advisory Panel directed EPA to consider that several types of cancer are relevant to humans when assessing PFOA. But according to EWG, the EPA ignored the science panel's instructions for its risk assessment.

"There's a big difference between sound science and tilted science, and at every turn in this important process, EPA officials favored DuPont," said Ken Cook, president of EWG. "We don't know if DuPont lobbyists played a role or if these were just agency mistakes. But for those who were expecting a thorough and fair review, this is a huge disappointment."

EWG noted that 24 hours prior to EPA's risk assessment release, a study

by Dupont was released showing no effects associated with Teflon. EWG added that EPA also ignored several studies showing a risk of heart attack and stroke, plus its own guidelines for defining cancer potential, which normally require a chemical be considered carcinogenic when only one of five criteria is met. Teflon meets three of the five criteria.

In past studies of Teflon conducted by both DuPont, Teflon's maker, and by 3M, scientists have uncovered links to cancer, evidence of immune system suppression and risk of heart attack and stroke.

After a year-long investigation by EPA, hearings began last month over allegations that DuPont was suppressing the health effects of Teflon. Teflon is present in the bloodstream of 95 percent of Americans. EPA is investigating how this could happen.

"Compared to where the agency started on this subject, it's hard to see how EPA's new direction will lead it to protect the public from this chemical," Cook said.



Melanie Milbradt and Michael Harvey

Harvey, Milbradt Unite In Marriage

CRAWFORD — Melanie Ann Milbradt and Michael Lee Harvey exchanged wedding vows on Friday, Dec. 31, 2004, at 3 p.m., at the CLIFTEX Theatre in Clifton, with the Rev. Cleon Flanagan officiating.

The bride is the daughter of Carole and Leon Smith of Clifton and Irene and Charles Martin of Eddy, and the granddaughter of Charles Elliott of Brady. Parents of the groom are the late Elizabeth Ruth Harvey and Robin Harvey of Clifton.

The bride's honor attendants were Marlene Kammerdiener, friend of the couple. The flower girl was Molly Brianne Milbradt, daughter of the bride. Serving as best man was Justin David Harvey, brother of the groom. The ring bearer was Zachary Sebastian Harvey, nephew of the groom.

The theatre was decorated with candles and white lights, and the reception was held at the home of Carole and Leon Smith. A New Year's Eve bonfire celebration was held following the reception at the home of the couple.

Both are employed at THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST and will reside in Clifton.

Verizon Wireless To Build Tower In Valley Mills With Council's Blessings

VALLEY MILLS — The Valley Mills City Council during its regular meeting on Dec. 7 approved a contract with Verizon Wireless for the company to build tower to be located near the old landfill.

The contract is for five years with four renewals every five years up to 25 years. The rent for the first five years will be \$8,400 a year. The first renewal rent will be \$9,660 a year, followed by a second renewal for \$11,109 a year, third \$12,775.35, and fourth \$14,691.65.

Mayor Bill Lancaster is still in talks with the Verizon representative about a time table for the construction, he said; however, Verizon will pay \$700 per month if the tower is not started by June. The size of the tower space is 75x75. A road will be built and maintained by Verizon as well.

Miscellany

The council approved amending the city's commercial sewer rates and adjustments to previous bills. The revised rates are now 2,001 gallons and up, \$2 per thousand with a maximum of \$200. Mayor Lancaster took responsibility for figuring the rates incorrectly, noting that some of the sewer charges were higher than the water charges.

The council approved a motion authorizing Mayor Lancaster to get bids for a slab for a building for the council and court meetings before the next council meeting.

The council approved paying Louise McGrath for 20 hours of work per week at the library with Texas Workforce Experience providing someone to work in the city hall 20 hours per week and taking the proposal to the library board.

Responding to Dr. Richard Hansard's question, Mayor Lancaster said Ray Morgan will move his building downtown because he is not able to tear it down. Other properties were mentioned during the meeting, and Mayor Lancaster said a woman who owns a garage apartment has contacted a real estate agent to sell the property.

Responding to Councilman Jackie Dulus' question, Mayor Lancaster said Powers Embroidery accepted an offer of \$150, and he will deliver the check and pick up the banners.

Reports

Police Chief Tommy Roach submitted his written report to the council. He said November was a busy month, with 15 arrests being made.

Great people make all the difference.



Extraco Banks is pleased to announce the promotion of **Gerald Popp** to Regional President of the Community Bank Group, which includes the Gatesville, Hamilton, McGregor, Lorena and Troy financial centers. Mr. Popp has over 20 years experience in the banking industry and holds

a B.S. and M.A. from Texas A&M University. He is actively involved with the Gatesville Lions Club, Coryell County Ag Industries and the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce. He enjoys spending time with his family — wife LaVonda and children Sierra and Jairus. The Poppes attend First Baptist Church Gatesville.



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Translation Is The Inspired Word Of Man

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Did you ever notice you don't see no chickens in church?"

I used to hate preachers. It was traditional that, in our small community each family in turn fed the preacher Sunday dinner.

That meant that he, as a guest, got his fork in my grandmother's fried chicken about once a month.

And since most Protestant preachers had a front tooth pulled in seminary, they could hook a chicken leg through there and strip the meat off clean as a frog on an anthill.

Now, only my father and I ate dark. Everybody else in the family scrapped over the pulley bone. Dad got the thighs and the drumsticks were exclusively mine.

Unless the preacher came.

Then he would pounce on my poultry like a blue darter. Chickens I dutifully fed and watered, called in from the creek at night, turned out in the morning and then killed and picked, were reduced to backs, necks gizzards and wings by the time the greasy china got to the card table, the kid's table.

I was exiled and starved in the name of god.

Even in *The Last Supper*, da Vinci cropped out that corner of the upper room where all the disciples' children were hunkered around a card table with a bedsheet draped over it.

When I asked my grandmother about the preacher's pickings, she told me we were serving the Lord by feeding his servant.

I asked the Lord for a few nightly prayers to ask his help to give me a hand feeding the chickens, or at least help hunt for the setting hens, but the preacher never offered.

Somebody wasn't listening.

I also remember wondering about the families farther out on the prairie who always took their turn on the preacher's circuit, those with a tablefull of mouths they couldn't feed on beans and cornbread, who I was pretty sure ended up short of eggs or biddies in heaven's name.

I asked Uncle Hugh, who glanced around to make sure that neither mama nor Aunt Rawannie were listening, then intoned:

"Preachers don't plow."

And he used to say that two kinds of men never make a living: honest lawyers and good preachers. One kind works for free and the other gives everything away.

I remembered all that this week when Cobb County, Georgia, got stuck with their anti-science happy faces.

The Cobb Crackers put the following sticker in the kids' science books:

"This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered."

Not a bad approach.

To everything.

Especially religion.

Scripture may be the inspired word of God, but translation is the inspired word of man, and throughout history that inspiration has occasionally come

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



from the Sanhedron, the Pope, the King or the last two swigs from the bottom of a \$5 fruit jar.

Judge Clarence Cooper didn't have a problem with the sticker, if only those Cobb County inquisitors who worship Newt Gingrich and Bob Barr had applied an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered every piece of man's knowledge.

Consider Princeton University's definition of "theory:"

"... a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world; an organized system of accepted knowledge that applies in a variety of circumstances to explain a specific set of phenomena; "theories can incorporate facts and laws and tested hypotheses"; "true in fact and theory."

<www.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn>

It does not mean "unproven."

The FACT of evolutionary origin of all living things is beyond argument. It's like two pullets and two hens make four chickens. You may count from back to front, or front to back, but there just ain't never going to be ten drumsticks on the table unless you fry the mites.

We can argue about who wrung their necks and whether they were skinned or picked, but only fools are going to suggest that they weren't once chickens, and before that, were eggs, and before that were a squawking commotion when the rooster walked in the henhouse.

The sad thing about this is, this has

nothing to do with religion.

It's about power.

Can the preacher invite himself to dinner?

Can he order you to believe, or does he still have to climb into the pulpit and PLOW?

He wouldn't have to feed his own chickens if he could just have the sheriff arrest anybody who ain't thinking right.

And if he could get the school board to tell everybody where to go to church, all he'd have to do is pass the plate and say grace.

And if you should choose to believe contrary to his wants and wishes, he could just call on somebody from the Amen Corner to fly an airplane into your building.



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Reclaim The American Dream

The Religious Right is pro-poverty, if not by word, then by deed.

Christian conservatives prefer to ignore the call to economic solidarity from the beloved champion of the poor — Jesus Christ — and in His place, would rather worship at the alter of Corporate America and its doctrine of Market Fundamentalism.

"Do unto others what you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12) has been replaced by "trickle down." "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40) is now "corporate welfare." "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (Timothy 6:10) has been distorted into "Buy Enron."

Those scavengers of the bottomline, those soulless robber baron Pharisees, their hearts are the color of their ledger books — cancer black — when they exploit the middle class, especially working poor, for an ungodly amount of profit and time.

Is it moral for millionaire politicians to care about their campaign finances ahead of their constituents' own basic needs? Is it moral for chemical companies to care about their shareholder's stock moreso than poisoning the environment? Is it moral for multinational corporations to drive the fate of unregulated markets and thereby exploit those less fortunate?

Don't spit on Jesus' name by saying, "We can't help it. We're addicted to cheap labor, cheap energy, and cheap goods." Grow up! Stop pretending to be victims of your lifestyle. Millions of American working families have sacrificed enough for the economic diseases cheap excuses have wrought.

It's time to whip the money changers and their animals out of the temple and restore the soul of the American economy.

Did not Jesus of Nazareth have a tax-collector as a disciple?

It's time to stop humiliating the American worker. The car washer. The retail salesperson. The waitress. The janitor. The nurse's aid. The poultry processor. The receptionist. The garage attendant. The farm worker. The theatre attendant. The bank teller. The administrative assistant. The hotel worker. The security guard. The elder care aide. The caretaker of small children.

Doesn't the super rich — Upper One-Percent — realize what kind of catastrophe approaches when they pay slave wages to people to care for their homes, their parents, and their children?

It's time to exorcize the demons.

Unregulated markets are as natural as old toasters — they burn toast only if left unattended.

It's time to care for workers, for people, and for families.

Instead of asking our neighbors for items to raffle off for that poor working family of six that lost their house to fire, we must call on our congressmen, senators, and president to make the federal minimum wage a "living wage" by tying it to the rising cost of living.

It is more than a question of one American working family's survival; it is a question of reclaiming the American Dream for the spirit of the nation.

Our national product should be prosperity for all, not poverty for even a few.

— Nathan Diebenow

Clarifications, Corrections

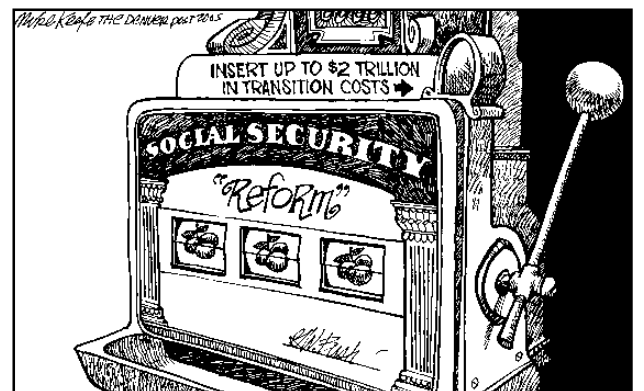
Website Misnamed

CRAWFORD — In last Wednesday's issue of THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, an error was made in the article "Interview With Julia Gerard."

It has been brought to the ICONOCLAST's attention that the web site that provides information on corporations political ties is in fact BuyBlue.org, not BuyBlue.com.

This correction was verified on Saturday, Jan. 17

THE ICONOCLAST apologizes for any confusion or harm this error may have caused.



Bat Masterson's One And Only Gunfight

A young buffalo hunter made a play for the wrong girl in a Texas dancehall on Jan. 24, 1876, and Bat Masterson was lucky to survive his first and last fatal gunfight.

Five years later, a reporter for the NEW YORK SUN went out west in search of vicarious thrills for his eastern audience. In a Colorado hotel, a talkative doctor gave the greenhorn exactly what he wanted.

Pointing out a dapper figure across the lobby, the physician said, "There is a man who has killed 26 men, and he is only 27 years of age." Glad to pull a gullible stranger's leg, he invented a tongue-in-cheek tale that transformed Bat Masterson into a national celebrity.

Widely reprinted as fact, the prize piece of fiction caused a Kansas City journalist to arrange an interview

with the overnight sensation. Masterson went along with the self-serving gag until asked to divulge the details of a shoot-out in the Texas Panhandle.

"I had a little difficulty with some soldiers down there," the dandy admitted, "but never mind. I dislike to talk about it."

The reporter, however, was not reluctant to describe the incident in print. "It is popularly supposed that he annihilated a whole regiment, and this belief is strengthened by the fact that there was an urgent call for recruits about that time. Only West Point graduates escaped."

Born William Bartholomew Masterson in Canada in 1853, Bat changed his middle name to Barclay while in his teens. After the family emigrated to Kansas in 1871, Bat and

older brother Ed left home to test their manhood on the buffalo trail.

That winter the 18 year old skinner met another legend in the making, Wyatt Earp. Their respective paths were destined to cross again and again for the rest of their lives, and the memoirs of each guaranteed his friend a prominent, though not necessarily accurate, place in the annals of the Old West.

After serving as a scout for the U.S. Army in the campaign that pacified the Indian-infested Texas Panhandle, Bat returned to hunting buffalo. For rest and recreation, he regularly visited the new settlement of Sweetwater, later called Mobeetie, that sprang up a few miles from Fort Elliot.

Sweetwater was a brawling oasis, where soldiers and hunters blew off steam and competed for female companionship. Their favorite spot was the Lady Gay, which offered bad whiskey, wild women and an occasional gun battle.

Like a moth to the proverbial flame, young Bat was attracted to the Lady Gay and a not-so-sweet young thing named Mollie Brennan. Mollie neglected to mention that she also was seeing Corporal Melvin King, a jealous cavalryman with a nasty reputation.

An experienced Indian fighter and Civil War veteran, King spent his spare time picking fights in the saloons of Kansas cowtowns. Several trail riders had come out second best in showdowns with the straight-shooting trooper.

Trouble was the last thing on Bat's mind in January 1876, as he looked forward to a romantic evening with Mollie. But the corporal had other plans for the love birds.

According to Tom Masterson, his baby brother, Bat borrowed the keys to the Lady Gay for a private after-hours party with his sweetheart. Answering a knock at the door, he found himself staring down the barrel of an army-issue six-shooter.

As King squeezed the trigger, Mollie jumped between the antagonists and took the slug in the abdomen. The bul-

This Week In Texas History

By Barte Haile



let passed through her body and struck Bat lodging near his pelvis. Reeling from the impact, he drew his weapon and fired once in desperation hitting King squarely in the heart.

When the townspeople reached the scene, the corporal was dead, the dance-hall queen was breathing her last and the buffalo hunter was in bad shape. Friends rushed Bat to Fort Elliot, where the army doctor removed the bullet and nursed him back to health.

But as Wyatt Earp always told it, buddy Bat owed his life to the notorious Texas gunman Ben Thompson. In Earp's version, the Lady Gay was packed with patrons when King spied Mollie dancing with Bat.

After the three sustained their respective wounds, the soldier boys in the crowded saloon wanted to avenge their dead comrade. Thompson saved Bat's life by singlehandedly holding the troopers at gunpoint until he could be carried to the fort.

Although Bat remained in the Southwest for 26 more years, he scrupulously avoided further gunplay. Nevertheless, by the time he moved to New York City to become a sports-writer, he had been credited with no fewer than 38 kills.

This ridiculous claim ranked Bat Masterson among the most efficient triggermen of that violent era right alongside John Wesley Hardin, Bill Longley and his benefactor Ben Thompson. But in truth his rusty pistol rated only a single notch, which by frontier standards was hardly worth mentioning.

Barte Haile welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at haile@pdq.net or 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581

Protesting 101

President Bush's inauguration is slated for this Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C. to the joy of some and to the chagrin of more than a few.

Since we never really know if you anti-Bush folks might be coming to Crawford to stage a protest, I must warn you: Crawfordites have seen a good many protests and a bad many protests.

I've experienced some in between the 2½ years I've worked here, too, so let me tell you what I know to help you through this process to make it less painful for everyone involved:

If you've notified the Crawford Police Department in advance, filled out the proper paperwork as required by the City of Crawford's demonstration ordinance, and you're going to get a good night's rest and eat a hearty, balanced breakfast, packed extra underwear, and have paid the babysitter another \$20 before your trek to the mythological "Bush Country," your preparedness should be commended.

For you over-planners, it ain't a bad idea to also call ahead to the McLennan County jail to secure your space in jail prior to protesting - just to be on the safe side. It wouldn't hurt to contact Jim Harrington, director of the Texas Civil Rights Project, either, now that I think about it.

For those of you who haven't made the necessary preparations, let me offer you a few suggestions before you make your way here.

First off, don't call me up, asking for directions to the Bush Ranch because you won't get to the Bush Ranch. I repeat you will not reach the Bush Ranch. It's impossible. It's harder to get in there than a donut shop on "Bring Your Favorite Cop and Get a Free Donut" Day.

So don't be spontaneous and try to drive out there with your angst either. If you so much as whisper softly "Ann Coulter, I'll treat you like a lady. Let me count the ways..." the Secret Service will be on your derriere like French on fries.

The locals can be split into several categories by degrees of attitude toward protestors: those who tolerate,

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



those who try to ignore, those who hate, and those who shoot. The former and the latter are very rare, contrary to reports on Animal Planet and Air America Radio.

To communicate with said locals by brushing up on Bible verses will do you no good and will not protect you from anyone in Crawford. Just act friendly, share a family story, and don't make any sudden moves. If you want to score some points with the locals, congratulate them and their high school football team on a great year. (The Crawford Pirates went to the 2A District II State Championship this last December.)

There are some words, however, that protesters should not speak while in Crawford. Whatever you do, don't say these names: Susan Sarandon, Dixie Chicks, Whoopi Goldberg, and Al Franken. Don't utter phrases like "Go Yankees!" "You don't read the Lone Star Iconoclast's editorial page? What's wrong with you?" or "That waterfall reminds me of Woodstock. Let's skinny dip!"

Actually, if you say that last one around me, and you're a redheaded hippie love goddess, I'll be forced to join you.

If you have not gotten the proper paperwork filed with the local police department, don't "protest." Shop! It's probably the safest way to avoid arrest, and catch up on purchasing Christmas gifts for your born-again Christian, NRA-loving, Fox News-watching uncle in Orange County, Calif.

In fact, it's a good rule of thumb for any protestor to blend in to the surroundings as much as possible. Try wearing a pro-Bush T-shirt to camouflage yourself from unsuspecting locals and law enforcement between protest events. I know you'd rather burn your flesh off with a hair drier than walk like a Bush advertisement, but that's the price you pay for life, liberty, and Starbucks on demand.



Let's Get Out Of This War!

I'm no political analyst. My columns are often about simple country things. Sometimes they are funny. Sometimes I draw cartoons. A rocket scientist, I am not. I usually refrain from writing of current events, politics, and religion. . . . because I'm probably not knowledgeable enough on these subjects for my comments to make much differ-

ence. And I don't want to embarrass myself with my ignorance. We all know that old saying, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt." I try to live that motto, although I don't always succeed.

One thing I'm an expert on is motherhood and my own personal feelings

that go with it. Therefore, I feel imminently qualified to speak my mind about the war in Iraq. I have children. So I'm entitled. If this seems simplistic, so be it. Maybe it is time for something very simple.

I don't think President Bush is a bad guy. I don't dislike him. I do think he made a mistake, and a big one. A real humdinger. He probably trusted the wrong people, maybe bad people with their own agendas. It happens, and he's not the first. And now it's time to just admit it and get out before any more of our sons and daughters are killed. Do the right thing. Do it on your own without advice of counsel. Do it because you know it is correct. It is as simple as that for me. Why isn't every parent in this country saying the same thing? Why aren't we screaming it? Why aren't we camped out in front of our congressmen's and senator's offices?

Our efforts in Iraq aren't protecting our shores. There is little threat of invasion. We could certainly protect our borders from an obvious attack. I don't think what we have done in Iraq has been worth the effort as far as halting the threat of terrorism. We would do better to simply work harder keeping terrorists from entering our country. We can improve our intelligence. Why do we not direct our efforts there? And if we are unsure of the intentions of citizens of certain Middle Eastern countries who want to enter this country, then I say we tell them "No. Maybe later. Go somewhere else." It is time we started taking care of ourselves over and above everyone else. I'd like, for instance, to see the some of the money going to the war effort go instead into the failing social security system.

We don't need to be fighting this war. We need to get the hell out. Now! What is stopping us? Please, no more excuses that we are needed longer. If that is true, perhaps we will be needed for the next decade. Perhaps we will be needed forever. Are we willing to commit to that? I say no and hell no.

Am I not a team player? Or am I not brainwashed with all this talk of honor and duty, and what is supposedly "right"? Am I a horrible person that I would not gladly give my own life or the lives of my children to protect the rights of people halfway around the world who do not think about most things the way I do? Who gave us this job? Who gave our young adults this job?

The effort in Iraq has not been worth the life of one soldier. We had no business there in the first place. Yes, it's nice that we got Saddam. But 10 more will spring up in his place. Sometimes I still can't believe this whole thing happened / is happening. It is a nightmare, one that our soldiers are living every day.

On a purely selfish lower level, on an everyday scale, the war hasn't done me a damn bit of good. I'm paying more for gasoline (and most everything else) than ever. My health insurance costs have skyrocketed, and the prices of many things are going up in this country, not down. Metal has almost doubled in the last couple of years. — Ask any rancher who has had to put up a metal storage building or buy barbed wire or T-posts lately. The price of food keeps going up. No one even questions it. We don't need to be sending our materials and our kids overseas. We need

Rustic Ramblings

By 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.

our best resources here.

I don't give a hang about lining the pockets of big business. I don't care about hidden agendas. I know BS when I see it.

I don't care a whit about saving face at this juncture of the war . . . or whether anyone thinks of us as the leaders of the free world. As long as they leave us alone, who cares? And if there are more complex issues I am overlooking, well, you know what? I simply don't care. This is MY opinion. And I think we have already established that little thing about First Amendment Rights, free speech, and freedom of the press.

We are spending money we have no business spending on people who don't want us. If they want to kill each other or live under a monarchy or a dictatorship, then I say let them. It goes back to something I finally learned in these most recent years of my life on a personal level. There are some things in this world that one simply cannot fix. At some point, one must accept it and move on.

Frankly, I'm not interested in saving people who don't want to be saved. And I'll be damned if I will send my children to give their lives for that cause.

We have folks in this country who could use the money and the help we are wasting on Iraq. It's time to stop. We have work in our own country that could be done by the military if they need jobs to occupy their time. There are reclamation projects right here to last a lifetime.

My heart goes out to everyone who has lost a loved one in this war. The deaths could have been avoided. It is a tragedy that will follow us for the next 60 or 70 years that so many young men and women have already returned with life-altering injuries and wounds, visible and not, that will never heal.

For me, it's very simple, President Bush. Do the right thing. Listen to ME, not to your high-powered advisors. I speak for a great, silent majority who think they have no choice, no voice. And I'm asking with a respectful, very heartfelt "please." Please just quit. Immediately. Get us out of a war no one wants. Save our children. They are the future of our country. Stop this insanity in Iraq. It is out of control, with a life of its own. It's being driven by a perpetual motion machine that cannot exist on its own but is man made. The whole process is akin to the play of individual egos and forces that seemed to be real because Big Business caused us to perceive them as real. . . . the same kinds of forces that kept us too long in Viet Nam.

I believe in my heart that you would garner more respect from exiting now than from any other act in your presidency. I believe it would change your place in history. I believe it would be the bravest, most courageous thing you have ever done.

—Gene Ellis, Ed.D.

—W. C. (Zack) Zacharias, Ed.D.

'Dear Mr. President:'

An Open Letter

To President George W. Bush:

Dear Mr. President:

Like millions of Americans, I was moved by your appeal to open my heart and wallet at this time and think about the victims of the tsunami in Southeast Asia. Now I'm appealing to you to hold a more modest inauguration celebration so that money can be used for a more appropriate cause.

Currently, the celebration is estimated at a cost of between \$40 and \$50 million. It's scheduled to go on for four days, and will include nine official balls, countless "unofficial parties," and a parade. I know the dollar isn't worth what it once was, and the price of those little hot dogs keeps going up, but a four-day, \$50-million party? Considering what's going on in the world, these plans make Marie Antoinette's "Let them eat cake" attitude seem like the height of sensitivity.

Many of your supporters - some of whom even raised money for you - are complaining that they can't afford to come to the celebration. It could easily cost a couple \$10,000 to go to the festivities, and some are going to spend \$250,000 on the "underwriter package" - which does include a nice lunch. The Republican Party might no longer just be the party of the rich, but with six-figure lunches, this inauguration is definitely a party just for the rich.

I know you're not responsible for planning this overkill. From everything we've been told, you're no longer a party guy, you go to bed early, and you like things simple. No, those who want this elaborate celebration are some of your big big-money supporters. "Only" \$1.25 million plus whatever it costs for the unprecedented amount of security will come from ordinary taxpayers. Wealthy individuals and corporations will contribute the bulk of the money. Contributors of \$250,000 each to the inauguration celebration include Chevron Texaco, Exxon Mobil, and Occidental Petroleum. But these fat cats will listen to you. If you tell them this is not the appropriate time for something like this, they'll dial back the celebration.

And that's all I'm asking. I'm not suggesting that you cancel it. Celebrate. Have a party. Have a big party. Get all dressed up and dance at the elegant ball. Have some ribs at the Texas Black Tie and Boots Ball. But don't have a four-day "coronation" that says to the world, "champagne and caviar are more important to us than human lives." Cut back on the party and ask

those guys to give their big money to something that's really important - just as you asked all Americans.

There is precedent for presidents calling for less elaborate ceremonies. Woodrow Wilson felt the ball was too expensive and unnecessary, and cancelled it. Warren Harding did away with the ball and the parade, hoping to set an example of thrift and simplicity. The inaugurations of Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt featured charity balls.

Charity balls instead of self-indulgent balls seem like a pretty good idea at this time. Think of what could be done with that \$50 million if you convinced those sponsors to spend their money on more meaningful things than paté and limos. How many parentless victims of the tsunami could be saved with that money? How much body armor could be provided for our soldiers with that money? How many soldiers' families who are having a tough time financially could be helped?

Some readers might prefer to give their opinions about all this to you instead of to me. I'm suggesting they either email you at president@whitehouse.gov or call you at 202-456-1111. I'm assuming that now that your daughters are getting a little older, they'll actually give you the message if they happen to answer the phone.

Mr. President, we've all been to great parties and then forgotten about them a few days later. No matter which bands play, no matter what fancy chefs cook, no matter what wines are opened, everybody will forget about these inaugural parties pretty soon. But if you convince these people to give their money to a worthy cause instead of just throwing a gala dedicated to excess, no one will ever forget this inauguration. Wouldn't that be a more appropriate way to celebrate America?

Yours truly,
Lloyd Garver

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from "Sesame Street" to "Family Ties" to "Frasier." He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He writes a weekly column for the Opinion page of cbsnews.com.



By Lloyd Garver

CHIP: A Fiscally Conservative Policy

In 1999, when I co-sponsored the legislation that created the Texas Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), I did so because insuring the children of working Texans, instead of sending those children to the emergency room, is a fiscally conservative policy that benefits all Texans.

Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured children in the nation. Whether we insure those children or not, they will receive medical care somewhere — most likely in an emergency room. When working Texans are forced to take their children to the emergency room because they cannot afford insurance, taxpayers pay the bill.

CHIP provides the type of preventative services that help stop a child's illness early, when it is less expensive and less upsetting for working Texas parents. After the state implemented CHIP, we saw an increase in the number of insured children, our over-burdened health care system enjoyed some relief, and Texas taxpayers were provided a more efficient and effective state government.

During the last legislative session, the Legislature faced a severe budget deficit, and we were forced to make some tough decisions about where to spend the state's tax dollars. Although I worked hard as a member of the Sen-

ate Finance Committee to maximize the CHIP appropriation, cuts had to be made to all programs, at all levels.

As we begin the 79th Legislative Session, the state's economic future looks brighter, and we have an opportunity to restore cuts made to CHIP. In December of 2004, I filed Senate Bill 59, which will fully restore this essential program. By restoring CHIP to its previous levels, we can help working families afford the high cost of insuring their children, and in so doing, we can maximize the federal dollars we receive for CHIP and reduce the indirect costs of providing health care to uninsured children.

For each dollar that the state invests in CHIP, the federal government gives us approximately \$2.60 in matching funds. This federal match is considerably higher than the federal match provided for other programs, such as Medicaid, which only pulls down \$1.56. Unfortunately, because of last session's budget deficit, we were forced to leave a large portion of that CHIP federal match sitting on the table. Those are our tax dollars — hundreds of millions of tax dollars — and now is the time to bring that money home to Texas.

And its not just the loss of federal funds that should motivate us. When

the emergency room is the only option for the children of working families, Texas businesses see a decrease in productivity and the health care industry suffers, both of which we eventually pay for. According to economist Ray Perryman, for

every dollar cut from CHIP, the state loses \$19.14 in business activity, insurance premiums increase by \$1.34 and local taxes increase by \$1.34.

Although the positive fiscal impact of CHIP is clear, an often overlooked cost of uninsured children is the hardship it causes our highly valued public servants. Based on CHIP's income requirements, potential CHIP recipients include the children of preschool teachers, school bus drivers, social workers, probation officers and fire fighters. These working Texas parents serve the state and they serve their communities. When they are out of action because of a child's illness, we all pay.

I have long been an advocate of helping working Texans purchase insurance, because it makes sound fiscal sense for the entire state of Texas. My support of the CHIP Program is just one major step in my efforts towards that end. Last session I passed Senate Bill 10, which allows small businesses to unite when purchasing health insurance. And this session, I am working on a plan that will reward businesses for insuring their employees.

Because it will benefit all Texans, restoring CHIP should be a bipartisan effort. This program fulfills an important need and represents the conservative fiscal goals that we Texans call our own. The way I see it, we cannot afford to pass on this opportunity.

Policy

By State Senator Kip Averitt

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By Kip Averitt,
State Senator

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Proposed New Selenium Standards Jeopardize Nation's Water Quality

CRAWFORD — Selenium gained national attention and federal regulation during the 1980s after causing mass deformities of waterfowl in California's Central Valley. Now it is back in the news, with a report that the Bush administration is planning to relax government regulation of this toxic substance.

Draft criteria for new selenium standards were published last month in the Federal Register, and EPA is currently soliciting scientific data and information on the proposed changes. New stan-



dards could be finalized within a few months, according to a recent article in THE SACRAMENTO BEE.

Selenium is a naturally occurring metal, but is also discharged into waterways by power companies, farms, and mining operations. Health effects for humans, according to the EPA, can include kidney and liver damage, and damage to the circulatory and nervous system.

Environmentalists and government scientists alike are wary of the administration's proposed changes, fearing that they weaken water quality standards, and may have severe health consequences for aquatic life and animals that consume contaminated fish.

"The Bush administration is proposing changes to the selenium stan-

dards that are being promoted by coal mining interests and other industries that want to avoid taking steps to limit this serious form of water pollution," Joan Mulhern, senior legislative counsel to Earthjustice, told BushGreenwatch, a watchdog environmental group.

Various mining industries across the country contribute to selenium levels in U.S. waterways, including phosphate mines in Idaho, copper mines in Utah, mountaintop coal mines in West Virginia, and coal-burning power plants.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE cited several scientists who are troubled by the new levels and how they might weaken water quality standards. EPA plans to switch to a fish-based standard for measuring selenium levels, which in itself is not objectionable. But the EPA is raising the allowable concentration of selenium in fish to 7.91 parts per million, from 5 parts per million that is allowed in water.

Also at issue is the source of research that has influenced the proposed standard changes for selenium. The contractor in charge of research has previously worked for industries supporting weaker selenium standards. The potentially flawed analysis may have overstated survival rates for fish contaminated with selenium by as much as two or three times.

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MAILBAG ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

In order that you may know where I am coming from, I have been to Para mutual racetracks in Omaha, Puerto Rico, New Mexico, and Grand Prairie. At this time I doubt that I will ever go to another racetrack. Please recall that when racetracks came back to Texas, the revenue was going to solve our school revenue problem. Well, lo and behold, the Texas tax take out rate was too high so our Governor and Legislature in all of their knowledge and wisdom saw fit to lower taxpayers' share of the revenue in order to attract better horses. As Dr. Phil might say: Well, how is that working out for us?

Also please recall that when that same bunch brought in the state lottery, we were led to believe what a relief it would be: school taxes would soon be a thing of the past. How much have your taxes gone down? Just how much has the lottery expanded? We can now buy into a multi-state lottery and scratch off tickets in various amounts up to \$30 per scratch.

Now get ready because that same bunch in Austin are about to tell you that we must have slot machines at race tracks! This will be presented as tax relief for school funding. Real simple, if you do not vote for this, it will result in a tax increase.

I strongly urge that you make your feelings known to your state representative and state senator as well as the governor. You need to stay abreast of the workings in Austin and express yourself to them. Either let them know you are for or against this. It is probably going to be presented to you as video type entertainment. Make no mistake about this; it is pure and simple slot machines.

Respectfully yours,
Jerry C. Bradbury
Cleburne

Free Packs of Camels

Dear Editor,
Statistically, 50 percent of smokers in a group will die from their habit, and half of these will die in their productive years losing at least 20 years of their lives. Remember those stats next time you see a group of smokers.

Most Americans have been taught that smoking is just a "freedom of choice" issue. The fact is tobacco is a major burden on the cost of health care in American (\$100 billion per year). Remove the \$100 billion a year cost of tobacco related illnesses from the equation and your health insurance and health care costs would take a nosedive. Do you really enjoy high cost health care and insurance? Additionally, without tobacco about one half of the cancer deaths in America would not occur. We would win half of President Johnson's fabled "War on Cancer."

The primary tobacco problem is not "freedom of choice;" it is because we just can't seem to recognize the enemy. Isn't it ironic that the primary congressional tobacco supporters (Rep. Joe Barton and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison) come from a non-tobacco producing state? They have and will continue to consistently block anti-tobacco legislation.

Because of these bill-blocking congressmen, tobacco continues to kill 400,000 American per year (Drunk driving killed 17,000 in 2003). Worldwide the tobacco use picture is even bleaker. Tobacco is expected to be the largest cause of death worldwide by 2030 (10 million deaths per year).

I witnessed free packs of Camels being handed out on 6th Street in Austin last Saturday night (mostly to UT students). You can bet the same has or will occur in Fort Worth, Dallas, and in your neighborhood. The tobacco industry will stop at nothing to addict the public. You need to stop and think before you vote for Barton or Hutchison.

Leonard Jensen
Fort Worth

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MAILBAG ICONOCLAST

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Imagine you're a 10-year old child. Your father says, "Save 6% of your allowance each week and keep it in a cigar box under your bed. You'll need it some day."

You save up quite a bit. But then your father sneaks in and 'borrows' most of it - "to fix the garage," he says. You start over again and save some more but here he comes again, 'borrowing' your money. This time he says, "My cousin needs a newer car," or "We have to fix the driveway."

You're sad, but you start over each time. He used to promise he'd give it back when you needed it, but he's even stopped saying that now. Besides, he never returned any of it. You put any money you can spare into another piggybank, but father says, "That's alright, but you still must put 6% each week into this box."

Fifty years pass and the same thing happens, over and over again. Father always raids your cigar box, because he can't save his own money. Then comes a day you need your money back, but there's very little left in your cigar box, just a bunch of IOUs from your dad. You go to him, relying on him to keep his promise - but he says, "I cannot. I've given all your money to my friends. They've spent it, and I promised them I wouldn't ask for it back."

He keeps that promise, but breaks the one to you. Now you're really sad, and broke, besides.

Social Security. Think about those two words. The security of our social structure. The fulfillment of a promise made 75 years ago to each and every one of us - that in return for small contributions over our working life, we would receive a living benefit in our retirement.

President Bush wants to break that promise. What kind of father does that?

T.S., Newburgh, IN

To The Editor:

Talk is cheap - especially when it comes from Rove's puppet calling on everyone to help Tsunami survivors by giving cash. Many celebrities are donating very large sums of money to help, and countless numbers of ordinary citizens have shown unstinting generosity to support the Tsunami relief effort. But, I'll bet that Bush hasn't given a dime of his own money, and needs also to be reminded that "charity begins at home."

H.S.K., Marblehead, MA

To The Editor:

This administration attempts to demonize "trial lawyers," blaming this group especially for exorbitant increases in health care costs and malpractice or even family insurance. The watchdog organization Public Citizen examined case filings in two states (Arkansas and Missis-

sippi) and two local jurisdictions (Cook County, IL and Philadelphia, PA) in 2001, and found businesses more than four times as likely to file lawsuits than individuals, and more than twice as likely to be sanctioned for filing frivolous claims. The full report may be located at <<http://www.citizens.org/congress/civjus/tort/myths/articles.cfm?ID=12369>>.

Being apparently the only jurisdictions requiring sufficient detail to distinguish between business-initiated and trial attorney-initiated suits, the courts surveyed represent substantially diverse areas. Cook County, IL and the entire state of Mississippi were the high comparative points wherein businesses were 5.8 times more likely to file lawsuits than individuals, while Philadelphia took the low end with a 3.3 - 1 ratio. There are 281 million individuals and only 7 million businesses in the U.S., casting great doubt on the truth and legitimacy of this administration's accusation.

Tort reform activists like to claim that consumers and patients filing frivolous lawsuits drive up business costs in general and health care costs specifically, and the insurance industry is the most strident voice for federal legislation restricting consumers' rights to file for damages. However in Cook County, IL, insurance companies filed almost 8000 lawsuits in 2002 - 35 times the number of patient-initiated class action lawsuits in that venue that year. In fact, the insurance industry has asked "could it please be exempted?" from a model tort reform law they themselves support.

Since 'patient rights' attorneys only get paid if a suit finds for damages, few attorneys accept or pursue a case lacking significant merit. It would seem this issue, in common with almost every judgment made by this administration, is very much FOR business and decidedly AGAINST the individual.

T.S.

To The Editor:

I realize that Texas newspapers may not print this, since Hispanics are a large part of your customer base, but perhaps you could forward it to all your email contacts. You are welcome to trim it down if you like, but I think its important that the forwarded version remain intact. I have already submitted this letter to almost all the newspapers in the country, and circulated it on the net. You won't be the only one to print it, I can assure you. I was also told that in New England, the atm machines also ask you if you want it in Portuguese, Russian, and Polish. That makes this letter even more relevant as to the problem of unlimited immigration.

Within this past year, Okla-

homa has experienced a spanish language invasion. Our atm machines, tv stations, discount stores, and drivers exams are going bilingual. I'm fairly certain that if we wanted to live in Mexico, then we would all move to Mexico, including the hispanic population. No one has the right to enter our country illegally, and then invade our homes or our businesses with a foreign language. Despite the fact that every poll indicates an overwhelming majority of the population oppose this trend, we have a handful of corporations and politicians that seem intent on forcing us to accept it. We don't have to accept anything! If they thought we didn't like the metric system, they haven't seen anything yet!!

We have already done more for Mexico, than a lesser nation would have done at great expense to our own economy. What the government doesn't tell you about the unemployment figures, is that it doesn't include the thousands of spouses who have lost their factory jobs, and have chosen to stay home, rather than search for a lower paying minimum wage job.

The real danger here goes far beyond the economic realities. If illegal immigration is allowed to go unchecked, then we will have effectively allowed another country to just walk right in, and turn America into what they want it to be. There will be enormous consequences that most people have not even considered.

1) They will eventually want their own spanish speaking schools. We can barely afford to maintain the schools that we already have.

2) Hispanic kids will have a distinct advantage in getting the higher paying bilingual jobs. Already police departments are paying more for bilingual officers, and passing up for promotion nonbilingual officers. Eventually, corporations will do the same thing and it will get so bad that you won't even be able to get a job at a fast food restaurant unless you are bilingual. Our kids should not have to learn another countries language in order to get a job in their own country! The very idea, that we would force 100 million of our kids to learn Spanish, instead of requiring a few million illegal immigrants to learn English, is absurd.

3) There is a real possibility that the border states may try to secede from the union someday, if we don't almost completely stop immigration, and Americanize the ones that are here already.

4) Our highway signs will eventually go bilingual.

5) We have ex convicts and students looking for a decent job all the time, but they aren't going to work if illegal immigrants

drive down wages. Wouldn't it be better to pay our own citizens a good wage, than to pay to incarcerate them or burden them with a college loan that takes forever to pay off?

6) Our kids will begin to grow up thinking that spanish language and culture is the real America, and we all know that it is not.

Every country has mountains, valleys, fields and streams, but what defines a country is language and culture. We all know that spanish language and culture is not American, but they are slowly trying to convince us that it is. Our kids will eventually believe this. We all have our heritage, but most of us have blended in, except for the hispanic population.

Although we have every legal right to deport non citizens, there may be a better way to handle this problem. Every member of Congress and every Governor in the lower 48, now has a plan in their possession to control this problem. This plan does not grant them amnesty, but it does give them an id card with legal status for 3 years, that could double as their own drivers license. It also requires foreign workers to pass a basic English test, provides a way to collect taxes from the employer, and forces the employer to hire our own people first. In my opinion, the only people that should be considered for citizenship are people who already have school age children. This would prevent people from having kids solely so they could stay in the country. You can see this plan at www.politicalforum.com, look at other political issues, click immigration, click illegal immigration, go to the second page, it is the 6th post down. There is also a plan to eliminate bilingualism on the same page, 15th post down. I would urge you to contact your congressmen over the next several months, and let them know that some version of these plans should be implemented. If nothing else, then please urge them to enforce our current immigration laws.

If congress still doesn't get the message, then we should launch a taxpayers revolt. This means that no matter who is elected President, if we don't see a plan to eliminate bilingualism, and crack down on illegal immigration within 60 days of taking office, then everyone who owes federal taxes should file an extension and not pay their taxes until something is done. If the hispanic population decides to try to dissuade Congress by threatening an economic boycott, then we should cancel NAFTA and start massive interior enforcement. We have been far too nice, for far too long, and now look what is happening! We should also automatically vote every member of Congress out of office, regardless of other factors and political affiliation, until they get the message! We should start with the Congressmen who have an espanol link on their website. It seems that they currently care more about the hispanic vote, than they do ours. Congress must listen to the majority. There is no way to make everyone com-

pletely happy. As an absolute last resort, we should avoid any business that uses any language other than English. No one wants to do this, but we will if we have to. Congress should have no illusion, that they will use this plan to gradually make citizenship easier. We can use this tax revolt any time in the future as well, if they don't continually get tougher, and it will work simply because this is the one issue that the vast majority of Americans agree on.

Lastly, it is important to note that this is not a racial issue. African Americans will be at a disadvantage as well, in getting the higher paying bilingual jobs. If Germany was on our border invading our country illegally, and turning America into Germany, then it would be exactly the same problem. World War II veterans didn't die so that German language could invade our homes either. I have also been told that atm machines in New England are in Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Polish. Even more evidence to not only crackdown on illegal immigration, but immigration in general should be brought to a halt. Historically, when you start hearing people speak a different language, that means you have just lost a war. We don't have to lose this one, but we will if we don't take drastic action!!

Thank you.

T.N.

To The Editor:

Yes, the challenge was short lived, but Sen. Barbara Boxer, Rep. John Conyers, Rep. Sharon Tubbs Jones and others presented the first formal challenge of the election since 1877 and caused four hours of debate within the two houses of Congress, delaying the election certification. I say e-mail these people a big old thank you...and then get back to fighting the power-and making sure they do, too.

A.S.

To The Editor:

You can not be a Christian and support torture of any kind in any circumstance.

You can not be a Christian and support treatment of "enemy war combatants" in any way other than the way in which Jeffery Dalmer or Ted Bundy were treated. You can not be a Christian and support the detaining of ghost prisoners without legal recourse under the presumption of guilt - in the absence of evidence. You can not be a Christian and ignore the fact that the practice of rendition, a euphemism for torture by proxy, demonstrates malice aforethought.

Moral clarity on these issues is not debatable.

The country's religious leaders have an obligation to their churches, to their parishioners and to themselves to stand up and clearly state their positions on this subject. Silence relays tacit approval. Not speaking out makes us all accessories to the fact.

Some churches have indeed stood up and found their voices. The Church of Christ is categorically against all forms of torture

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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and the practice of rendition. The United Methodist Church has been outspoken in their belief that America's current policies on the treatment of terrorist prisoners are immoral. The National Council of Churches has issued multiple formal press releases denouncing the "chaos and treatment of prisoners in Iraq".

Where are the formal statements from the religious right on these matters? Where is Pat Robertson's moral indignation on Alberto Gonzales' memos? The fact of the matter is that Pat Robertson has come out in support of the Bush Administrations' policies on the treatment of prisoners and the nomination of Alberto Gonzales.

Where does James Dobson stand on this matter? James Dobson, whose "Focus on the Family" broadcast is heard by 2 million U.S. listeners each day, hasn't come out against torture. Instead he makes statements suggesting that it isn't an issue. Perhaps this is why Adam Kotsko, a Christian writer, has likened him to a fascist.

Why haven't we heard anything from Billy Graham? The man who is credited with turning around the life of George W. Bush surely has influence. The man who for decades now has accepted donations from Christians from around the world surely knows that torture is never acceptable.

Could it be that these moral leaders of the religious right have decided that their secular political loyalty is greater than their love of Christ? Is it possible that these men of God are ignoring the teaching of Jesus because they have embraced the idea that their religious ends justify secular means? Selective promotion of morals isn't good enough.

Government, military and religious leaders must be held accountable. A blind eye can not be turned to the fact that words and actions do not match.

Accepting a denial with a wink and a nod makes us all as guilty as the perpetrators. The ends do not justify the means. As we all know, good intentions pave the road to hell.

If, as Jesus said, a rich man would have an easier time getting through the eye of the needle than into heaven then surely it would be easier for a rich man to get into to heaven than anyone who has supported torture with word, deed or silence.

A.P.

To The Editor:

President Bush expressed optimism Friday about Iraq's upcoming elections, saying they will be "an incredibly hopeful experience," despite rising vio-

lence and doubts that the vote will bring stability and democracy.

What else could he say? Should he refute all the positives he has predicted for this sham election?

"I know it's hard but it's hard for a reason," Bush said, saying that a small number of insurgents are trying to impede the elections because they fear freedom. My question is: why would anyone fear of being free?

"This is a big moment for the Iraqi people," Bush told reporters in the Oval Office. He spoke after a roadside bomb killed seven U.S. soldiers in northwest Baghdad and two Marines were killed in western Iraq on Thursday as insurgents continued their attacks ahead of the Jan. 30 elections. I hope he was at his desk sending fundamentalist sympathy cards to the parents and extended families.

Bush compared Iraqi insurgents with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban in Afghanistan. "These are people who want to try to impose their will on people," the president said. "These are people just like the Taliban, just like Osama bin Laden who have this dim vision of the world that says: if you do not agree with us, then you're of no account. And they're trying to stop people from voting." I guess this pronouncement is further proof that he was a substandard student at Yale.

Bush took issue with a gloomy assessment of Iraq's future by Brent Scowcroft, who was chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Bush and national security adviser under Bush's father. Scowcroft said in a speech Thursday that the Iraqi elections "have the great potential for deepening the conflict" and that divisions between Shiite and Sunni Muslims are likely to be increased.

"Quite the opposite," Bush said. "I think elections will be such an incredibly hopeful experience for the Iraqi people. Remember these are people that live in a society where if they didn't toe the line of the leadership, they would be tortured or killed or maimed. And all of the sudden a new way of life is being introduced into Iraq." Another inane statement by an inane incompetent. I am sure the Iraqis prefer their situation now than before the Bush invasion.

"Terrorists are trying to stop people from voting," he said. "And the reason they're trying to stop people from voting is because they understand that democracies stand in the exact opposite to what they believe." Brilliant. A quote worthy of the ages.

Bush said that some Sunni

Muslim areas, in particular, are being targeted by insurgents. "And their message is, 'If you vote, we'll kill you.' But the real message is, 'We can't stand democracy here, and then 'We can't stand democracy there.' And we'll never address the root causes of terror and hatred, which is frustration caused by tyranny."

Bush said he discussed the elections recently with Iraq's interim president, Ghazi al-Yawer, a Sunni whose post is mostly symbolic. "I said, 'How's your campaign going,' Bush said. "He said, 'It's going fine.' He's out there trying to convince people to vote for him, as any candidate would, qualified or not., as is illustrated by the November elections.

N.M.

Dear Editor,

I urge readers who do not support the current US military action and presence in Iraq to join a nationwide individual action protest. On Thursday, January 20th, please do not spend money by cash, check or credit for 24 hours during "Not One Damn Dime Day." The object of the protest is to voice opposition to US policies that continue US troop and Iraqi suffering in economic terms that politicians and corporate care about: money.

Sincerely,

M.M., Austin, TX

Dear Editor,

Part of your definition of 'iconoclast' is "Fighter for Truth, Justice, and the American Way." It was with great dismay that I read the article on the history behind the name of Fort Worth which demonstrated only "truth" - certainly not justice and I hope not the American Way of 2005.

Granted, the work of General William Worth would have been admired at the time it took place. "Worth performed several thankless tasks in the 1830s including the suppression of a slave revolt in Virginia, a punitive expedition against Indians in Illinois, and the removal of the Cherokees from Georgia... (and) victory over the Seminoles in the swamps of Florida."

I was truly surprised that your progressive weekly would print this bit of history without any mention that, of course, these deeds would not only not be praised today but would be roundly condemned by the progressive community at home and around the world.

I am a minor student of history and appreciate learning about the naming of cities and sites in the United States. But I do expect some

acknowledgement that American history is not all a pretty picture. Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States* gives the other side, the history from the point of view of African Americans, native people, workers on strike, etc.

Keep up the good work of exposing current wrongs of the United States while praising the good.

Sincerely,

J.N., Granada Hills, CA

To the Editor:

Rumblings amongst U.S. senators from both sides of the aisle suggesting a possible withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq at an unspecified time, have made their way into the Jan. 10 edition of the New York Times. The question

George Bush must be asking is: How best to achieve this goal without losing face? The January 30 elections in Iraq which Bush insists will take place, may result in increased Insurgent activity if not outright civil conflict between century old warring factions. But the exterior display of a "democratic" act in progress, (regardless of the fact that the Sunni population may decide not to vote at all and others will stay away from polling places in fear for their lives), is necessary. Once in-stated, the new government may then request that the U.S. withdraw from Iraq. As my old aunt Mabel used to say, this is known as "passing the buck."

Clearly the original Bush plan—to continue occupying Iraq until Iraqis' can be trained to themselves fight the Insurgents, is unreasonable given their inability, or unwillingness thus far to take up arms against their own people. Surely even Bush, with his seemingly limited grasp of history, must sometimes glimpse himself in the same leaky boat occupied by Lyndon Johnson during the VietNam conflict.

America appears to be headed down the same road littered with corpses of young men who truly believe they are fighting for a principle—"democracy"—when in reality they are fighting to insure that companies such as Dick Cheney's Halliburton, continue to reap billions from no-bid contracts for military-related services. These include protecting Iraq's oil fields, which after the war may be parceled out, for a price, to private investors. Meanwhile, beneath the generous cream being skimmed from the top, the blood of our nation's dedicated soldiers continues to flow unabatedly.

Aunt Mabel also used to say, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Iraqis' may speak a foreign language, but they are neither stupid nor naive. Perhaps they are simply not interested in living in a "democracy" where money and greed are the real gods we in America worship. Those who perceive Bush as a "moral" leader fail to grasp that waging "war" based on lies and misinformation, as well as condoning the murder of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, is anything but a "moral" position to assume as leader of a country.

Personally, when it comes to

attempting to make a graceful exit from Iraq, I would rather "lose face" than lose my soul. Would that George Bush would see that the choice is clear.

E.S., Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

To The Editor

I too just wanted to tell you all how proud I am of your courage to speak up and make a stand regardless of whether it is popular with your constituents or not. In this case you are supporting Kerry and as you said, in another scenario it may be a Republican. Regardless, it's all about doing the right thing.

I noted in one of the letters to the editor, the writer talked about the audacity to call your paper The "Lone Star" Iconoclast, because in that writer's opinion Bush stands for everything Texan and your endorsement for Kerry was some sort of sacrilege against the Lone Star.

Well, I take tremendous personal issue with that remark.

Let me say to that reader that George W. Bush stands for nothing noble about the Great State of Texas and if he stands for anything it would be everything ugly about Texans. I get to say that coming from a long line of Texans who came here in 1837, who fought with Terry's Rangers, were Texas Rangers, sheriffs, cowboys, Congressmen, Soldiers, Professors etc. Hey my great grandmother was the last widow to draw a pension for an Indian fighter.

Let me say it again a little louder...

Mr. Bush does NOT stand for anything Texan other than some John Wayne Hollywood bullshit cowboy posturing that HE somehow interprets to be Texan. I do NOT want the world to think of Texas when they think of W. Bush. If Lyndon Johnson was alive right now, who by the way Ladies and Gentlemen was a real Texan, and love him or not he would have kicked W's sorry little Yankee Maine Coon wannabe Texan ass out of this state along time ago.

You have earned every right to call your paper the "Lone Star" because my friends, what you did in the face of overwhelming odds and in the name of personal liberty, like our friends at the Alamo and like the LONE STAR its self, took some real cohunes.

Congratulations to you and the LONE STAR Iconoclast for standing up for what you believe.

You all are my new heroes.

M.H., Austin, Texas

To The Editor:

For all of their piousness, the Right just doesn't get it. Their new tactic for making the prisoner torture scandal go away is to say that it wasn't really torture.

Man on Man. A rose by any name is still a rose. Torture by any other name is still torture.

The Washington Times, Jan. 11, '05, belittles the idea that "prisoners forced to sit for extended periods of time in cramped areas, being draped with an Israeli flag or having a wet blanket wrapped around the head to simulate the sensation of drowning" should be called torture. In the article "The Peter Principles: Torture logic" pub

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lished by the Washington Times, the author, Peter Roff, goes so far as to suggest that the government was right in using such tactics.

Jonah Goldberg in a Tallahassee Democrat article suggests that the things that went on at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib Prison were "something a bit shy of torture."

Specifically, "even being "waterboarded" - where a detainee's face is surrounded with a wet blanket and he's made to feel like he's drowning isn't torture either." To valid his point Mr. Goldberg says "Our own cadets at the Air Force Academy have been water-boarded in training." He obviously forgets the point that the Air Force Academy uses this as an example in an attempt to prepare cadets for torture.

Mr. Goldberg continues his moral pragmatism by justifying this position by saying that al-Qaida are not "signatories" of the Geneva Convention.

The Right Is Wrong Again.

The quibbling over the meaning of torture and the validity of its use is morally reprehensible in and of itself. Torture is wrong.

The Right has lost its moral compass. They have wrapped themselves in the flag and left their conscience in the dirt below it. You can't be a little bit pregnant. Date rape is still rape.

This country is surely on the wrong course when it's leaders and their supporters suggest that torture, in any form, is acceptable.

Allowing this rhetoric to be blathered around as acceptable lowers our resistance to the immorality of the concept. It is an insidious attack on America's values. These fascist ideas have to be stopped dead in their deadly tracks.

It begins with you the reader. The next time you hear someone justifying torture or suggesting that the things that happened at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib Prison were not torture stand up and disagree. Your silence on this matter is deafening.

Next time someone at the water cooler says such things are not torture and that they deserved it anyway, say "you're wrong." That's how we stop this at the grass roots — at the foot of the flag.

A.P.

To The Editor:

It is amazing and incredibly disheartening to learn how many of our servicemen and women are willing to suspend provisions of the First Amendment simply because they don't agree with the media's coverage of the war. According to a recent Military Times poll, almost half of those dedicated to the defense of this nation's Constitution stated that they would prefer the govern-

ment or military leaders, rather than a free press, decide what wartime news gets published — even in a war that will presumably go on forever. I suspect that the Founding Fathers are spinning in their graves right about now.

These service members may not appreciate what they feel is slanted coverage of the war, but a free press is essential to a vibrant democracy. It is not a convenience to be suspended when the opinions expressed happen to differ from the Pentagon's. Those who have chosen to serve would do well to remember this lest they become advocates of the very ideology that they seek to destroy.

J.H., Kingsville, TX

To The Editor:

If Charles Darwin, a naturalist, and author of the theory of evolution were alive today, he would be astonished. Today scientists readily accept Darwinian evolution to explain how a species successful adaptation to it's environment promotes it's further growth and development. But now, they are theorizing that evolution might allow for variations that will have just the opposite effect, namely to reduce in importance a species role and function, ultimately leading to its extinction.

Case in point, the scientists cite the response of media journalists to CBS's coverage of Bush's so-called "service" in the National Guard. The phenomenon as they see it, a spontaneous loss of bone structure and nerve tissue along a journalist's spinal cord.

I don't you think you have to be a scientist, or even familiar with Darwin's brilliant theories to see that many American Journalists have lost both their backbone and their nerve and are de-evolving and becoming increasingly unable to "stand tall" to demand Bush give truthful answers.

For example, who in the media will "stand tall," and come forward to defend Marion Carr Knox, the secretary of Lt. Col. Jerry Killian whose memos where the subject of such harsh scrutiny? Ms. Knox is a bona fide eye witness to the events that occurred, and she appeared before a national prime-time TV audience confirming that the content of the memos did reflect the feelings of Lt. Col. Killian at the time and accurately portrayed events that were taking place in connection with then-Lt. Bush's Texas Air National Guard service. Now she is being both ignored and discredited.

Could the American Journalist, once the bulwark of our Democracy, be heading for extinction, quickly de-evolving, and soon to be replaced entirely

by new species such as Bushus SuckUpiensis, or MotorMouthus ORIellyensusus?

H.K.

To The Editor:

So tell me Mr. Pres. how do you feel about spending so much money on your inauguration (up to \$40million) while so many of your fellow countrymen fall sick from starvation and lack of medical help? Oh that's right, you DON'T give a damn.

Imagine what those Millions of dollars could do to improve the quality of life for so many human beings around the world. No surprise you can't imagine, you can barely speak!

Your slow response to the devastation of the recent tsunami in Asia and lack of support for tragedies suffered by humans around the world, like the horrific effect of AIDS on South Africans, makes It is easy to understand why you don't give a rat's ass what's going on in your own back yard.

Here's to the next 4 years of your ruining the reputation of Americans in the eyes of the world and causing more irreversible damage to the life of decent human beings, God help us all!

Enjoy your party, wear your \$5,000 suit, stuff your face and forget about the rest of the world...OH, silly me...you already have!

Oh so sincerely,

Glenn

PS. With regard to those WMDs that were never found, shall we declare this war "A do over?"

To The Editor

Now they talk about it...

Or at least Chris Matthews is. He's talking about how in 1998, a Neo-Con think tank called The Project for a New America which included members such as Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Bill Kristol and Richard Perle, put together a proposal and sent it off to then President Clinton, offering up a plan to invade Iraq, make it a democracy or monarchy and then start hitting other oil rich/muslim nations such as Iran, then Syria, then Jordan, etc etc etc. I remember my mom telling me about seeing this story on Nightline in 2002 or 2003. It's popped up here and there since the war began but no one has actually discussed it at length or made it the pronounced story that it really is. You think you might want to mention to the rest of the press that they ought to do something serious about this? perhaps?? maybe?? please?? Matthews makes a good point here, relating it to the fact that it was a bunch of "policy wonks" who put this war together, not thinking about the military-many of whom felt sketchy about

this idea from the get go...and it's the soliers who are trapped and dying from their poorly planned delusion of grandeur.

Alex

To The Editor:

For some time now I have been concerned . . . no, bothered . . . no, appalled really by the Republican party's actions and tactics that resemble the characteristics of fascism. Before you get your panties in a wad, let's be clear that I am talking about a political philosophy when I talk of fascism and not a political party. The Nazi's were a political party. Fascism is a political philosophy. It blends business and the military with the state and decisions are made for the good of the state. The state is whoever controls the government. And, we know who that is.

The recent bribes paid by the Bush administration to have a media personality schill for its No Child Left Behind underfunded mandate just adds to the evidence. This is a shameful act of propaganda to promote a government initiative using taxpayer's money by the Bush administration. Worse yet, the Bushites have done it before. And we don't know yet how many times or how deep these criminal acts of manipulation go.

Smarter people than me are writing about this. I read a lot about politics in, books, magazines, newspapers, blogs, PAC's, the Internet, and what I pick up in conversations and Emails with other like-minded friends. Of all my literary and intellectual pursuits I have found none so sound, none so astute, and none so spot-on as George W. Bush's hometown weekly in Crawford, Texas, The Lonestar Iconoclast. Their editors distill to a quintessential essence what is important and worth thinking about and worth acting on. The writing may be a little homespun, with countrified euphemisms and humor, and the print type doesn't always line up, but the insights are crystal clear, pure and honest. I've attached a copy from the December 8, 2004 issue for your reading pleasure. Those of you from Texas, or the South in general, will be especially tickled.

Back to the propaganda. If you play a little "connect the dots" you begin to build an interesting picture of how the Bush administration, radical conservatives (AKA, neocons), right-wingers, and the religious Reich are deeply involved in propaganda. Armstrong Williams, the paid radio and TV mouthpiece mentioned above, was a personal assistant to Strom Thurmond and, later, an aide to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas; who in 2000 had the distinction of being one of five people who voted for George W. Bush, twice. Professor Lawrence Brit, PhD., writes in his The Fourteen Defining Characteristics of Fascism, one characteristic of fascism is that, "the media is indirectly controlled by government regulation, or sympathetic media spokespeople and executives." Let's see, the head of the Federal Communications Commission is Michael Powell, son

of Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Another characteristic of Dr. Brits analysis says, "Fascist regimes almost always are governed by groups of friends and associates who appoint each other to governmental positions . . ." Fascist governments are rife with cronyism and corruption. So, Michael Powell oversees Americas airwaves and what does he concentrate on . . . wardrobe malfunctions. While the head of the FCC is protecting Americans from free floating breasts, Roger Ailes, radical conservative chief executive and Rupert Murdoch's employee, and FOX News pump out hour upon hour of pro-Bush administration "news" stories propaganda with an array of pundits mind-numbingly programmed to push out any resemblance to free thought or dissent. Talking points memos that directly match Bush administration initiatives are distributed daily to the talking heads of FOX News and they are expected to stick to them. Stray from the party line and, well, you know. How much has the Bush administration paid Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly, Ann Coulter (I swear she (?) has an Adams apple), or Alan Colmes for that matter. Public condemner of drug users, the self-confessed drug addicted Rush Limbaugh, has received awards from Newt Gingrich and Co. for "saving" conservatism. How many awards were really rewards?

So, their bases are covered. They've got government regulation sewn up, a plethora of sympathetic talking media who are supported by their executive management, and the audacity to say or do anything that accomplishes their agenda. This really works because of all those red state "sheeple" who watch and listen to these lying, vitriolic, hate-speaking, bloviating, propagandists and pundits; hanging onto their every word as though God himself was delivering the sermon. And speaking of God, let's not overlook Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Robert Jones III, James Dobson or any other of that ilk who prostitute God, and Jesus as well, to make a sale.

And how did they do it, what is their propaganda device du jour? Simple really if you just follow a little history. Listen to Hermann Goering, Hitler's Reich-Marshall at the Nuremberg trials: ". . . it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag people along whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament . . . the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country." Sound familiar? What's the terror alert color today? Noticed any changes lately, since the election? I didn't think so.

Remember, Hitler was

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elected Chancellor of Germany. We still don't know if George Bush was elected President of the United States. I'll save what can be said of Karl Rove for another day.

Happy Trails,
M.S., Phoenix, AZ
To The Editor:

I don't know if you've noticed, but America has morphed into a nation that has dismissed the future. Nowhere is this more apparent and more prevalent than at Bushdom, the new christening for the White House. His policy which is unwavering has determined to ignore the future and to force feed us his Christian Fundamentalism.

Wherever you look the IOUs passed on to future generations in staggering; record federal debt, record foreign debt, record budget deficits, record trade deficits. It's insane, and the in-

sanity continues.

This dismissal of the future is not limited to economics. You can see the same thing when it comes to the energy policy, healthcare, education, Social Security and the environment. The Bushies seem intent on making the world uninhabitable what with their gutting of the clean air act, clean water act, endangered species act and gutting regulations limiting pollution from power plants.

To compound matters, he has gotten us into a war, for some idiotic rationale that he can't even justify at this stage. It's become a situation where the flies are trying to subdue the flypaper.

Why worry about insignificancies like the economy, the environment, the war when we can look to Jesus to give the world a complete makeover.

The pity is that this is not a

fringe belief being espoused by some street corner Jeremiah wearing an "End Is Nigh" sandwich board, when you realize the "Left Behind" series of apocalyptic books are among America's best selling titles. Sixty million sold last year alone.

To say that Bush is delusion driven may not be the case, but how can you think otherwise when he contends that God speaks to and through him and he believes in a divine plan that supersedes all human plans. I was wondering if Laura and the twins don't think that he's in the twinkie zone.

The jaw-dropping federal debt stands at \$4.3 trillion bodes ill for the country and if not addressed soon will cripple the country, if it's not too late already. The pity remains that we let this inadequate the ability

destroy a once great nation, and so quickly.

In light of this impending disaster, what had we heard from Tricky DickHead Cheney; "we need another round of tax cuts to spur on the economy." In other words I'm flipping the bird to the economy.

That said, it's not hard to see why Bush has hopped on the Apocalypse Express. Acting like

there's no tomorrow dovetails neatly with his corporate backers' rapacious desires as it does with his evangelical rapacious desires. It offers him a "twofer," placating his corporate donors while winning the hearts and votes of the superstitious who have helped the president achieve a Second Coming. A greater miracle, given his record.

N.

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CRAWFORD — As part of their print edition subscription to THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, subscribers may download from <www.iconoclast-texas.com> a PDF file containing the contents of the print edition.

Since some readers pay to subscribe to the online edition PDF files only, a username and password are required for access to this special feature..

Throughout January 2005, print edition subscribers may go online and without additional charge enter the necessary information to accomplish this download capability, to extend through the remainder of their subscription..

After clicking on "Create a new account" under the thumbnail front page banner on the front page of the website, subscribers may enter their username (which is their e-mail address) and then choose a unique password to allow them access to the PDF file of the current edition to download onto their own computer.

After the first time, subscribers will then click on "Click here to login to your online subscription account" to access the page, using their newly established username and password.

On Feb. 1, the "Create a new account" feature will no longer appear on the front page of the website, so print subscribers are encouraged to take advantage of this feature as soon as possible. The login prompt will remain on the page.

As an alternative after the Feb. 1 removal of the free create account tool, print subscribers may send an e-mail to <office@iconoclast-texas.com> to have a username and password assigned to them.

"Some of our subscribers have informed us that they prefer the online capability since it allows them to access the newspaper quicker than through the U.S. mail," said publisher W. Leon Smith. "With this in mind, we are also offering them the option of converting their through-the-mail subscription to online only and will upgrade the online subscription to a full year, no matter how much time they have left on their print edition subscription," he said. "Just e-mail us at <office@iconoclast-texas.com> requesting the conversion and we will make it effective as of the date of that dispatch. With this, they would cease receiving the newspaper by mail and instead utilize the website for their copy."

He noted that this conversion option is good through January 2005.

Smith explained that the newest edition of THE ICONOCLAST is usually uploaded on Mondays, but occasionally on Sundays or Tuesdays, depending upon a number of factors.

The publisher noted that PDF stands for Portable Document File. The files are read utilizing Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is a free download.

"These file are versatile," said Smith, "and can be viewed in different sizes with the magnify tool. Also, if a reader wants to print out a page or pages on 8½ x 11 paper, it's easy to do."



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Stephen Cook
Photographer
http://stephencook.us
(254) 717-8931