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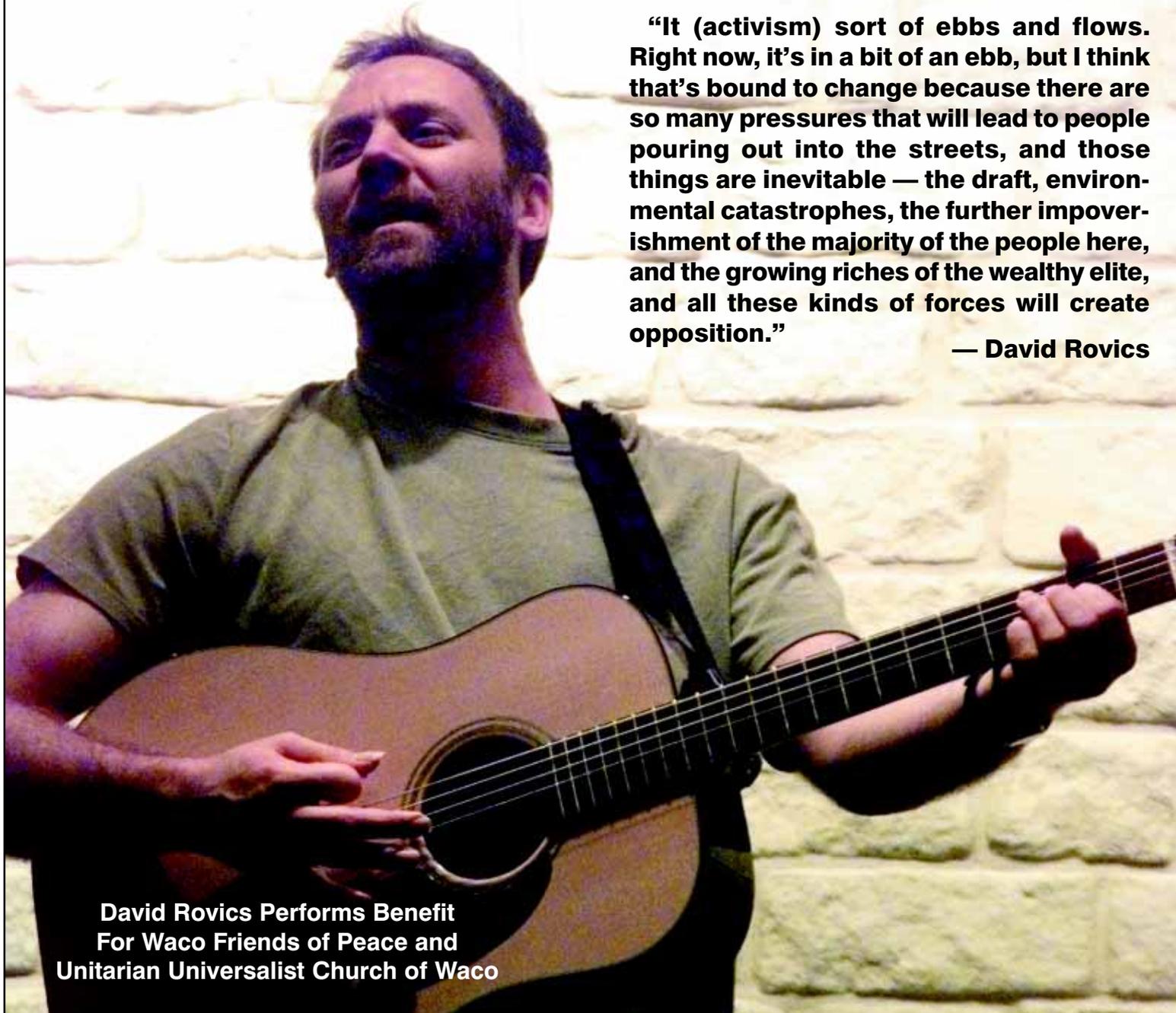
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Beyond The Mall

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“It (activism) sort of ebbs and flows. Right now, it’s in a bit of an ebb, but I think that’s bound to change because there are so many pressures that will lead to people pouring out into the streets, and those things are inevitable — the draft, environmental catastrophes, the further impoverishment of the majority of the people here, and the growing riches of the wealthy elite, and all these kinds of forces will create opposition.”

— David Rovics

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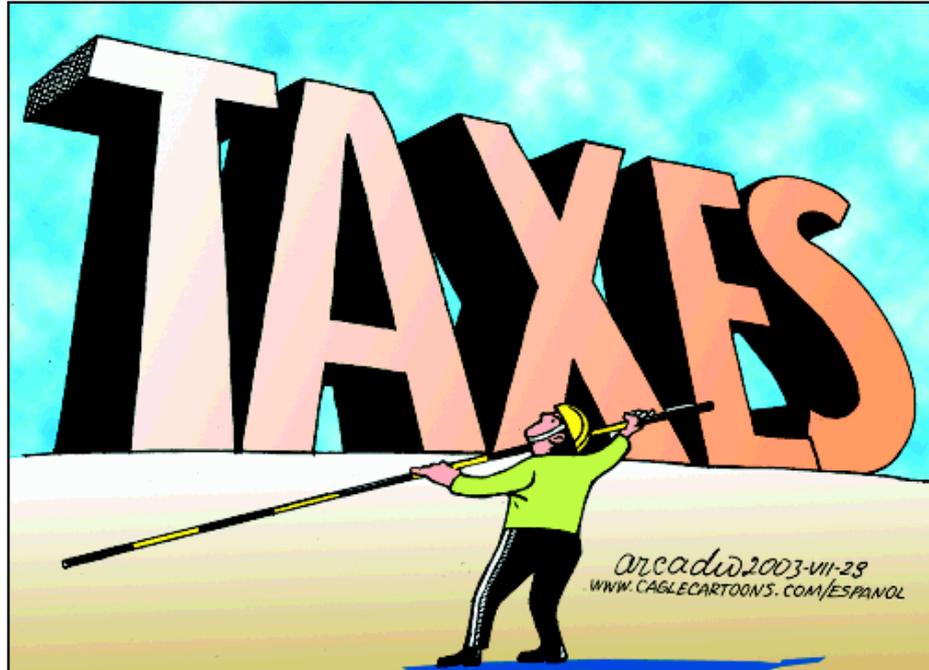
Texas School Finance Bill Stalls During House Debate

AUSTIN — The Texas House adjourned Friday after debating and not coming to consensus over a \$5.4 billion school finance tax plan. The 150-member body was to start from scratch Monday, a move that would allow its members to rethink the plan during the weekend to garner a better understanding of its elements, and for certain leaders to research whether one element would fall under an income tax definition.

The GOP-led plan calls for reduction in property taxes by a third, with this money to be replaced with revenue from other taxes. Included would be a hike in the overall sales tax, plus increases in the cigarette tax, the gasoline tax, and a levy on snackfoods. Also included is implementation of a new payroll tax or a version of the existing corporate franchise tax, whichever a business prefers to pay.

Some members of the House described the proposed bill as complicated, noting that they prefer a solid tax bill that should not be rushed into.

Democrats labeled the proposed bill as unfair and one that will not improve school finance in the long run, instead



simply increasing the wealth of the rich at the cost of the poor.

One point of uncertainty discussed

Friday was the extension of the franchise tax to include not only corporations that currently pay a franchise tax,

but also partnerships that do not. The Republican House bill would give businesses the option of paying a franchise tax of either .25 percent of the value of their net assets or 4.5 percent of their net corporate income, whichever is greater, or instead paying a payroll tax of 1.15 percent on each employee's wages, up to \$90,000 per worker. The question was whether expansion of the franchise tax would count as imposition of an income tax on businesses. The state constitution requires a vote from the populace to create a personal income tax or a tax based on an individual's or association's share of partnership income.

Another loophole of concern was the possibility of a company's inclination to reduce its taxation by dividing into more than one entity and choosing the franchise tax option for the one with most of its employees and payroll tax option for the one with most of its capital.

After the House approves a plan, it will be the Senate's turn. Several senators have expressed interest in extending the franchise tax to partnerships as part of their school finance plan.

Bush Taps 'Armageddon Nominee' To U.N. Post

WASHINGTON — To fill the position of ambassador to the United Nations, President Bush nominated Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, a man who said in a 1994 panel discussion that "if the U.N. (secretariat) building in New York lost 10 stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference."

The Senate confirmation hearing on Bolton is expected to be rough, considering Democrats are said to be stunned by Bush's choice.

"This is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse," said Heather Hamilton, vice president of programs for Citizens for Global Solutions (CGS), formerly the World Federalist Association (WFA).

The WFA has called Bolton the "Ar-

maggeddon nominee" based on Bolton's long-time loyalty to former ultra-right Sen. Jesse Helms who described Bolton as "the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon, if it should be my lot to be on hand for what

is forecast to be the final battle between good and evil in this world."

"His nomination sends the exactly the wrong message to the world about the Bush administration's willingness to work with other countries and in multi-

lateral institutions. There's no one who has a greater track record of offending other countries, including our closest allies," she said.

— *The IPS-Inter Press Service contributed to this report.*

U.S. Could End World Poverty By 2025, Says Economist

WASHINGTON — U.S. economist and a special adviser to the U.N. secretary general Jeffrey Sachs says in his new book, "The End of Poverty," that the United States could eliminate extreme world poverty by 2025 by turning around its priorities.

"Currently, more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive.

Yet our generation, in the U.S. and abroad, can choose to end extreme poverty by the year 2025," he wrote. "The richest and most powerful country, long the leader and inspiration in democratic ideals, is barely participating in global efforts to end poverty and protect the environment, thus undermining its own security."

Sachs said that Americans are paying only a 30th of the "nearly \$500 bil-

lion the U.S. will spend this year on the military," a figure less in foreign aid than promised three years ago.

He said that a good place to start is by giving 0.7 percent of U.S. national income to foreign development goals as promised by George Bush's Monterrey Consensus commitment, made at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development.



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Beyond The Mall

WACO — David Rovics is the musical version of PBS — that is, if PBS had more *cahones!*

For over eight years, Rovics has made his career as a radical troubadour, subverting the U.S. government through story songs that reveal the untold truths about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the effects of depleted uranium on U.S. soldiers, conservative Christians in the produce section of a Houston supermarket, life “beyond the mall,” and romantic moments in hot tubs.

Anything else would be unsatisfying to the 38-year-old from Wilton, Conn.

His show, a benefit for the Waco Friends of Peace at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Waco last Saturday night, was no less unsatisfying. With his acoustic guitar and mike-less vocals, he performed like a camp councillor ready to lead his 22 “campers” out of the dark forest and into base camp.

This stop was one of many on his spring 2005 tour through Texas. He is traveling in support of his new album “Beyond the Mall,” available to download for free at his website (www.davidrovics.com) along with his eight other albums: *Songs For Mahmud*, *Return*, *Living In These Times*, *Hang A Flag In The Window*, *Live At Club Passim*, *We Just Want The World*, and *Behind The Barricades: Best of David Rovics*.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST’S Nathan Diebenow listened to Rovics, who was accompanied by his friend Nathalie Paravicini, after Saturday’s show as the protest singer talked about songwriting after the 2004 presidential election, the differences between rural and urban progressives, and the obstacles of gaining radio airplay in the mad, mad, mad, mad Clear Channel world.

.....
ICONOCLAST: What goes through your mind knowing that you’re this close to the president’s vacation home now after the election?

ROVICS: Well, I don’t really buy the whole red-state/blue-state thing. I think the country is full of progressives from all over the place including Texas. Very much including Texas. Of course, there’s conservative flag-waving, warmongering Republicans everywhere as well. Certainly, Texas has a fairly outspoken. I’d say minority of warmongering, pro-empire, pro-Bush people, but it also has a lot of outright progressives as well as people who are just outright uninformed, and if they just have information on reality that’s provided not by Fox but provided by less partisan sources, then often people’s politics are really a lot more progressive than they might appear, or even how they’d think of themselves. I think actually most of the time I’m playing for an audience — of recent war veterans from Iraq, for ex-

Iconoclast Interview

With Protest Singer

David Rovics

By Nathan Diebenow

ample — it’s very easy to communicate with them.

There may be certain catch words or phrases that they react negatively to, but basically, the idea that they just got done fighting a war for oil that they didn’t understand or believe in and that civilians were the main victims of their actions, then most of them won’t argue with that, most of them understand that’s the case, and most of them are really upset about it.

ICONOCLAST: How do your songs play well to them? I mean, how often do you play to veterans?

ROVICS: I play to a lot of veterans because so many of them are coming back and are getting involved with the anti-war movement, Iraq Veterans Against the War and other organizations. And then others are just friends of people involved with the progressive movement. They drag their friends along who just got back and say, “Hey, check this guy out.” Usually, if they have a friend who’s already sort of progressive, then they may not be the most conservative of the veterans, but I play for a lot of veterans who are in any case very receptive to what I’m saying and are really happy that there are people saying these things that they’re thinking.

ICONOCLAST: They buy the albums and hang out after the show with you?

ROVICS: Yeah. Tell me horror stories.
ICONOCLAST: Is that where you get your material?

ROVICS: A lot of it just comes from talking to people and just reading what people write. Like in the case of the song *The Face of Victory*. I wrote that before most folks started coming back, and that was written from an e-mail list called DI special. And that is a place where a lot of people who were in the field or back on break are just writing about their experiences, and much of the writing is just informative stuff that you don’t get from even the progressive news sources because these are people who have been recently in places where there are no journalists, so it’s really just fascinating.

ICONOCLAST: So they’re their own alternative media? They do their own homework and tell their own stories?



MORE CAHONES THAN PBS, David Rovics performed in Waco last Saturday night to a crowd of 22 people at the Unitarian Universalist Church.

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

ROVICS: They are! It’s kind of like a blog, except it’s not so much the soldiers themselves doing the blogging. It’s more a case of the soldiers submitting stuff which is then turned into a bit of a blog by the people running the site.

ICONOCLAST: What’s the site called?

ROVICS: [Militaryproject.org](http://militaryproject.org).

ICONOCLAST: Has the presidential election changed your approach to activism? I mean, did you walk away thinking, “Maybe I should find some issues that more conservatives agree with me on, so we could work on them together for the common good of the country?”

ROVICS: Well, I was kind of waiting to see who was going to win. Naturally, the person in the White House tends to influence the things I’m writing about. Basically, from my vantage point, neither of the two would have been any good. Kerry would have been the lesser evil, and I emphasize the word *evil* more than the word *lesser*.

Usually, when there’s a Democrat in the White House, I think many progressives get kind of confused and start thinking they have an ally in the White House. I’m not sure when the last time we had an ally in the White House

was, but I’d say in the time I’ve been alive, all of the occupants in the White House have been war criminals and people who are bent on impoverishing the world in order to make the tiny elite that run the country richer. And Kerry would have been one of those people most definitely.

When there’s someone like that in the White House, it’s kind of like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, which is basically what I think most Democratic leadership are. So in that case, you have to change your tactic in order to reach the people who are confused there and in order to try and explain it to them.

ICONOCLAST: When you look at Howard Dean, you would instantly put him in the same category?

ROVICS: I don’t know about Howard Dean. I think there is a definite, significant difference between Kerry and Dean. There’s a much, much vaster difference between them and (Dennis) Kucinich. Kucinich is a real authentic progressive. But it’s a big mistake to say anything is monolithic. I think there are certain ways that our system works that are intrinsically bad. The way Wall Street works and the value system of

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• **ROVICS ... Continued From Page Three**

Wall Street — I think Wall Street largely runs our government.

What's important to Wall Street — and we're talking about the billionaires of both parties who run this country — what's important to Wall Street is making money for their stockholders and the corporations, and this is a value system that is literally destroying the planet. It's a system that says if war is good for profits, it's good, and if war is bad for profits, it's bad. If environmental destruction is good for profits, it's good, and if it's bad for profits, then environmental destruction is bad.

Unfortunately, there are some things that are good for profits that are good for all of us but most things, if they are making money for big corporations, they are probably doing harm to humanity. And that's been the case with environmental and foreign policy.

ICONOCLAST: What I was sort of getting at with my last question is that have you changed your writing style to reach common ground with conservatives, for instance, like how Rev. Jim Wallis of SOJOURNERS magazine is focusing on poverty issues. The mainstream is just eating it up.

ROVICS: It's always important to phrase things in a way that reaches as many people as possible and appeals to the universal things. A lot of times, regardless of who is in the White House, there are certain catch phrases that hit people in a negative way. If you say we need welfare, the people react negatively because the word *welfare* by both Democrats and Republicans has been so maligned; but if you say we believe that in the richest country in the world, there's no need to have people living in the streets of living in poverty, then most people agree. It's really how you phrase things, so I try to tell stories. I do have a fair number of more in-your-face anathemic type songs, but mostly I just try to tell stories that illustrate what I'm trying to say and hopefully lead people to their own conclusions — which hopefully are the ones I'm trying to lead them to. Obviously, there are different points to make with different stories. But essentially, that's what most people are doing whatever form of communication it is. Very little forms of communication are actually objective. We all have some form of perspective, and regardless of whether we are writing a song or doing a radio piece, we are setting a scene, and that is probably going to lead people towards some conclusion or another. And probably, we're doing that on purpose whether or not we're really obvious about it.

ICONOCLAST: Before you complete a song, what does it need to satisfy you?

ROVICS: It has to have good melody. It has to have well-written lyrics that go somewhere. Each line has to belong there; no line should be there just in order to lead you to the next line; crafting it well, and ending the listener up somewhere different from where they started. Something that brings them somewhere. If it's a sad song, it should make them cry; if it's a happy song, it should make them laugh. And if it doesn't do that, it's not a good song.

ICONOCLAST: How long will it take for a song about depleted uranium to hit the top 40? Will you have to sell your soul to Marilyn Manson and have him cover them in order for your songs to hit the mainstream?

ROVICS: I'd love to see Marilyn Manson cover one of my songs. I'd be happy to have him do that. But I think basically one of the major differences between now and the 60s is that ... some of the similarities are that the massive majority of the population is clearly against the war. Millions are pouring into the streets and protesting periodically — they represent tens of millions who aren't in the streets for one reason or another. Any time you have millions of people in the streets, they are never a focus group. They always represent a number of people. You cannot get millions of people into the streets without that being the case. And anybody suggesting that is not the case obviously has an agenda — probably a very conservative one. But we have this going on, not exactly like, but there's a lot of parallels. There's this antiwar majority. For many reasons, it's not reflected in the way people vote because the system is quite blatantly rigged by massive corporations. Obviously, a certain number of people in the population are duped by Bush's rhetoric; that's only natural when you have that much rhetoric and spend billions on creating it, and networks like Fox are just mimicking it without questioning. Of course, you're going to have adherents to it, whether or not they really understand it.

The difference is we have these networks that reach so many people, and Clear Channel, which owns thousands of stations, and the indie stations of the 60s virtually don't exist anymore. So the big hit songs that got so much airplay like *Blowing in the Wind*, or so many different songs that were so popular at the time have virtually no chance of getting popular now.

If somebody like Dylan was starting out, or Phil Ochs, or Tom Paxton, or Buffy St. Marie, they would be — I would guess — probably about as ignored as I am by the corporate media. I think that's the really big difference. There are so many people in so many different genres all over the place — in folk, hip-hop, country — creating great political music that are being ignored.

ICONOCLAST: Where do you guys meet?

ROVICS: I do gigs with different artists, and the places we meet most often are at big protests. Like those organized in New York or D.C.

ICONOCLAST: Give them a shout out!

ROVICS: Some of the great hip-hop bands — the Coup, Dead Prez, the Thought Breakers, Paris, Michael Frenti, the Cyphernauts.

There are other fantastic acoustic musicians out there doing this kind of stuff — Utah Phillips, Jim Paige from Seattle. There's more sort of rock and country-ish types, like Steve Earle and Bruce Springsteen. Obviously, some of these people are really famous. Emma's Revolution is another group.

Unless somebody like Bruce Springsteen or Steve Earle who got famous early, (they aren't going to get much airplay) — in the case of Springsteen before Clear Channel dominated the world, or like Steve Earle — he was famous for doing songs that weren't particularly political, went to prison, and got politicized, and came out, and he's still a famous musician and does some political stuff.

So there's always exceptions, and this



ST. PATRICK'S BATTALION is a song protest singer David Rovics wrote inspired by a real battalion of North American Irish and other Roman Catholic soldiers who fought with the Mexican army against the United States in the Mexican-American War. Rovics performed last Saturday night in Waco. — Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

sort of thing can happen, but basically, if you've come around sometime in the past 10 years, and you're doing political material, you're probably gonna be seriously marginalized.

ICONOCLAST: Are there any progressive death metal bands? Your stuff is kind of graphic in that you talk about amputees, etc.

ROVICS: I'm not really into death metal, so I don't know what's around as far as the death metal crowd goes. I tend to be more into the stuff where the lyrics are easy to understand — hip-hop, folk, rock — the certain kind of genres where you don't have to read the lyric sheet to understand what they're saying.

ICONOCLAST: Good point. I was thinking more in terms of Tenacious D. They love the "hair metal" and all that, but they do it on acoustic guitars. They're a comic duo.

ROVICS: Well, there are these bands that are sort of acoustic sort of folk-punk kind of stuff like Against me and Defiance Ohio, and I think those bands are picking up a pretty good following and doing really great sort of political stuff of a more lifestyle kind of nature. Less analytical about big political stuff and more "this is what it's like to be a radical in our society" kind of stuff.

ICONOCLAST: Any chance you'd write about a small town weekly newspaper that endorsed "the lesser of two evils" candidate for U.S. president, aka THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST?

ROVICS: You know I'd just heard about that today but since I heard about that, that's just a fantastic subject for a song, and I think that one's coming up.

ICONOCLAST: Were you on the road during the elections? Like last fall?

ROVICS: Last October, I was touring on the west coast with Daniel Ellsberg, Media Benjamin, and Norman Solomon on this kind of "get out the vote" tour kind of thing, and they were all pushing hard for people to vote for Kerry. And actually, just a few days before the elec-

tion, I just randomly happened to have a tour scheduled for Britain and Ireland. So I wasn't around for the immediate aftermath of the election, but I was definitely around for the whole fall before it.

ICONOCLAST: You've been doing this for what, seven years?

ROVICS: Full time for about eight years, and before that, I did a lot of music full time but not around the country.

ICONOCLAST: So you traveled quite extensively around the United States. Are Texas progressives any different from the progressives in other states? Like a different feel or different kind of attitude?

ROVICS: It's not so much Texas as opposed to other states. It's more like sort of isolated relatively conservative communities as opposed to big urban areas. Like, in a place like Austin, you have the progressives feel like they're in liberated territory more or less, and they can be out with their views, and they know the people around are probably going to agree with them; whereas in places like Bryan or College Station, it's much different. So in a place like that, the progressives tend to be a lot more fun, and they take things for granted a lot less. So when they come together for something like a concert, it's more like a celebration because they're so glad that someone is coming through that expresses these kinds of views; whereas in Austin, it's like every day you pick the event that you're going to go to — if you're going to bother going to anything. So I'd say Austin has more in common with San Francisco or New York or something, whereas in Bryan or College Station, you could find towns like that anywhere in the country in any state in the country.

ICONOCLAST: So what's the mood of progressives around the country? Do you get the sense of their energy levels are growing since the election?

ROVICS: Well, there's always this sort

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of hardcore activist minority that through good times and bad will keep on plugging away. But then there's everybody else, and I think in the case of the everybody else, you're talking about a sort of relatively quiet majority of progressives who either aren't conscious of that or just don't get out in the streets or organize or whatever, but they come out at different times, so before the protests on Feb 15, 2003 leading up to the war or the most recent chapter of the 15-year war on Iraq that we've been waging, you saw people, perhaps naively pouring out into the streets in their millions in this country and all over the world, thinking that if they got out in the streets in large enough numbers they could stop the

war.
So for most of those people who are more the fickle sorts of activist who got involved because they felt the situation was particularly desperate, there was a real sense of optimism and that sense of optimism was largely shattered by the beginning of the war. And then there was another period where lots of people came out because they thought Bush had to be defeated, and they worked really hard, and after the election, there has definitely been a real palpable sense of discouragement among a lot of people. But still, the same sort of activist core that basically would be fighting regardless of whether there's a Democrat or Republican in of-

"I'd say in the time I've been alive, all of the occupants in the White House have been war criminals and people who are bent on impoverishing the world in order to make the tiny elite that run the country richer." — David Rovics

vice; regardless of whether there's a war going on or not, overt or covert or whatever; there's always that core who would still be plugging away, but for many other people, it sort of ebbs and flows. Right now, it's in a bit of an ebb, but I think that's bound to change because there are so many pressures that will lead to people pouring out into the streets, and those things are inevitable — the draft, environmental catastrophes, the further impoverishment of the majority of the people here, and the growing riches of the wealthy elite, and all these kinds of forces will create opposition.

ICONOCLAST: Do you think this election was kind of like the election in 1964, but instead of Goldwater going down, it was Kerry, which means that you're going to see a big pot brewing, and the progressives are kind of getting more congealed and more organized? Do you think there's going to be more of a long-term effect coming out of this election because of who lost?

ROVICS: Maybe. I don't know how much it'll be coming out of this election as much as coming out of the kinds of things that either of the candidates would have been doing right now. Re

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ardless of whether it was Bush or Kerry in the White House, I think there is going to be a military draft. Either one would have kept troops in Iraq. Maybe they would have dealt with different situations differently, but I think overall they were both supporters of the occupation of Iraq, and perhaps even Kerry more so would have been supporting a draft. I think that's one of many examples of the sort of thing that's going to mobilize people more than who wins the election. I think there's a lot more outrage than optimism.

ICONOCLAST: Willie Nelson and Neil Young use biodiesel in their buses. What's your preferred mode of transportation?

ROVICS: Airplanes and rental cars. I am not at all ecological; the amount of energy I'm using to tour is outrageous and unsustainable. I don't fool myself at all about that, and I admire people who get biodiesel tour vans and do things to save energy or not use energy at all. Tour by bicycle — it's a great idea. But I think that the kind of change we need in this

country and this world is systemic change, and I think it is important to emphasize that this change is that people can set an example of how you can live off the grid, how you can live off solar energy, and not burn fuel and not waste anything. And it's really important to set that example, that you can grow food organically, and it would be better and healthier and productive.

All that is great, but until the government is able to change enough that it can change the way our economy works and the way the money is spent, like on highways ... We need trains instead of highways. We need massive infrastructural investment into things like trains and solar energy and converting our dwellings and workplaces to sustainable energy. This kind of money and this kind of impetus absolutely must come from the establishment, which means that we are going to have to be the establishment. But I don't think we are going to be able to replace the resources that the federal and state governments have with personal volunteer initiatives. Those initiatives are a challenge and must be taken, but I don't think we should fool ourselves into thinking that as long as the government is spending \$25 billion a year on building more highways and virtually nothing on the railways, which are just continuing to fall apart — until we can change those kinds of dynamics, we're not going to be able to change things.

There's a decision that I've made, and I'm not saying it's necessarily the right one, but I am doing more good by doing more shows than by trying to conserve fuel and do less shows. So I have taken the conscious decision that I am being more productive by burning more jet fuel in this case, and I don't take that decision lightly, but I think that if I am doing any good to

change things systemically by doing what I'm doing — and I don't know whether that's the case I'm just hoping it is — then it's worth the jet fuel. But I am striving in my own little way for a world where we don't burn jet fuel. It's definitely contradictory, and I am definitely conscious of it.

ICONOCLAST: So agreed that the master's tools can burn down the master's house?

ROVICS: I think it is absolutely true that the master's tools can burn down the master's house. I don't think it's universally true of all the tools, but I think in the case of the communication and transportation infrastructures that exist, we need to use them because it's all we've got. But for what I do, for what you do, we're dealing with a world where the newspapers come out on paper or on computers that are destroying the Congo and that's the way it is right now. A lot of that infrastructure was made for certain reasons, for exploitation, but they can also be used for good in a sense. The rails were built in order to

export and import products and trade and profit corporations. That's why they were built, but they were also used by union organizers to organize unions around the country. The Internet is a military technology, built to let the military still function after a nuclear war. But it certainly has proven to be the most useful tool for activism perhaps ever.

ICONOCLAST: What's the most important thing for someone who goes to a David Rovics show to know and do after the show?

ROVICS: Hopefully, that the situation on this planet that we're in, which is one of just imminent death, is not abstract. It's real, and we need to feel that and understand that in a visceral enough way that we have no option if we're going to survive emotionally but to dedicate our lives to trying to change the situation. That's what I'm trying to impart to people in different ways.

By trying to humanize people who have been dehumanized and by trying to bring to life realities whether they're about our foreign policy or the ecological situation or whatever, and try to bring these realities to life so that they are real for people and not just statistics. Try to impart some kind of understanding, like what it means to clearcut a forest or massacre the residents of a town in Afghanistan. We're not talking about 115 people or 50,000 acres; we're talking about human beings, about living, breathing, beautiful ecosystems. We're trying to bring those things to life, so that people can't just shove them aside.

If you have people's attention for a few minutes to sing a song to them, then you have the potential of hopefully bringing them to a different emotional space than they were in when the song started.



DAVID ROVICS performed last Saturday night at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Waco as a benefit for the Waco Friends of Peace group. Rovics is currently on a Texas tour promoting his new online album "Beyond the Mall."

— Staff Photo By Nathan Diebenow

Senate Republican Stalls Bush's 'Clear Skies' Bill — For Now

WASHINGTON — Environmental groups hailed a victory last Wednesday when Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.) voted against President Bush's Clear Skies bill in the the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Democrats, with Sen. James Jeffords (Independent-Vt.) and Sen. Chafee, said bad faith ruled the negotiations, that the bill's pollution control targets were too low, and that loopholes in the bill were irresponsible. The committee vote was 9-9.

The bill — originally aimed at reducing sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury pollution — would weaken established environmental protection stipulations, said Democrats on the committee.

The Environmental Protection Agency issued new rules last Thursday

and this week to control the same pollutants targeted by the Bush initiative, but these rules will not change provisions in the 1990 Clean Air Act that would have been revised by Clear Skies.

A main disagreement was whether the bill should address global warming and carbon dioxide emissions. The issue cost the Republican majority the vote of Chafee, said Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio.

Odds are that "Clear Skies" might not return to the agenda due to other bills piling up; however, Democrats said they will continue to press for changes to Clear Skies. Sen. Thomas Carper (D-Del.) suggested that a compromise might happen with less restrictive controls on carbon.

— *The Washington Post* contributed to this report.

U.S. Army Fabricated Story Of Saddam's Capture, Says Ex-Marine

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army version of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's capture was not true, said a former U.S. Marine who participated in his capture.

Ex-Sgt. Nadim Abou Rabeh, of Lebanese descent said that Hussein was captured Friday, Dec. 12, 2003, not the day after. Abou Rabeh was quoted in the Saudi daily AL-MEDINA last Wednesday.

Abou Rabeh said that he was in the 20-man unit, which included eight of Arab descent, who searched for Hussein for three days in the area of Dour near

Tikrit. He said that the unit found Hussein "in a modest home in a small village and not in a hole as announced."

"Fierce resistance" ensued before Hussein's capture which left a Marine of Sudanese origin dead, he said, adding that Hussein had fired at them with a gun from a second floor window.

"Later on, a military production team fabricated the film of Saddam's capture in a hole, which was in fact a deserted well," Abou Rabeh said, during an interview in Lebanon.

— *The United Press International* contributed to this report.

Italy Wants Clarification Into Agent's Death

WASHINGTON — Italy's prime minister Silvio Berlusconi continued late last week to dispute the U.S. version of events that led to an Italian intelligence agent's death by U.S. troops in Baghdad and urged a complete investigation into the matter.

Berlusconi told lawmakers that agent Nicola Calipari informed the authorities he was heading to the airport with a freed hostage, journalist Giuliana Sgrena, and that their car was traveling slowly and stopped immediately when a light was flashed at a checkpoint, before U.S. troops fired on the car.

The top U.S. general in Iraq has said, however, that he had no indication that Italian officials gave advance notice of the route of Calipari's car. The U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division, in a statement released after the shooting, said the car was speeding and refused to stop, and a U.S. patrol tried to warn a driver with hand and arm signals, by flashing white lights, and firing shots in front of the car. U.S. officials have also said American troops fired at the car's engine to stop it.

Portrayed as a national hero in the Italian press for saving Sgrena's life, Calipari was given a state funeral with thousands of

people in attendance.

Targeted?

Sgrena, the freed journalist who writes for the communist daily IL MANIFESTO, suggested that U.S. troops targeted her and her liberators because the United States opposes Italy's practice of negotiating with hostage takers.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan called the allegations absurd, noting that the road to the Baghdad airport where the incident took place "is one of the most dangerous roads in Iraq," a place where suicide bombings and various other attacks have taken place.

Bush called the shooting a "terrible tragedy" and expressed his solidarity to the Italian government.

A joint commission led by a U.S. brigadier general with Italian officials' participation is to release its findings in three to four weeks.

Berlusconi, a supporter of President Bush and the U.S.-led campaign, said he was sure an investigation would clarify the events in the near future.

Berlusconi has been hard pressed to balance his decision to keep 3,000 troops in Iraq against heavy anti-war sentiment in Italy.

— *The Associated Press* and *Reuters* contributed to this report.

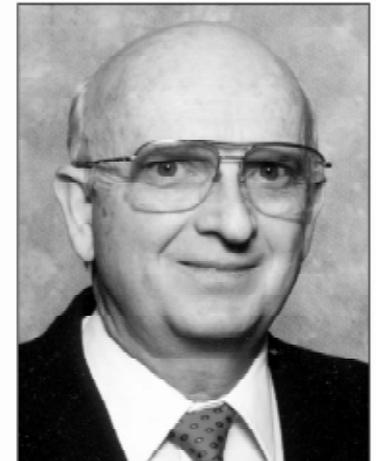
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2005 Levi Baur Archery Benefit Set Saturday, April 9

CRAWFORD — The 2005 Levi Baur Memorial Scholarship Archery Benefit Committee would like to announce that this year's event will be held Saturday, April 9, in Crawford. The 3D archery event will be in Crawford's beautiful Tonkawa Park.

Registration for shooters will begin at 9 a.m., and activities will continue in the park until 3:30 p.m. Cost for adult archers will be \$10 and \$5 for the young archers. Other park activities will include a kid's activity area, balloon release, tee-shirt sales, food and much more. There promises to be lots of fun

DATELINE: Crawford

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for the entire family.

The evening barbecue dinner and auctions will be in the Amsler Building in downtown Crawford on Main Street. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for dinner with the silent and audible auctions beginning at 7 p.m. Dinner tickets for adults will be \$10 (children 5 and under eat free.)

There will also be a raffle drawing for several exciting raffle items again this

year at the evening event. Raffle items this year include a Polaris 4-Wheeler, a spa package from Canyon Oaks, a diamond necklace from Kindler's Jewelers and a rifle. Raffle tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased from Tobacco Island in Gatesville, Keith's Ace Hardware in Hewitt, Lone Star Music in Waco, or from any committee member.

The Baur family and the Levi Baur

Scholarship Committee would like to thank everyone that made the previous three year's events such overwhelming successes. Without all of the businesses, churches, newspapers, radio stations, archery clubs and many friends so generously giving of their donations, time and hard work we may not have been able to continue with this annual event.

It is the Baur family's and friend's belief that through this event we can continue to celebrate Levi's life by bringing friends and families together to share what Levi loved so much — friends, archery, hunting, and the great outdoors.

All proceeds go to the Levi Baur Memorial Scholarship Fund at the Crawford School where a scholarship is given every year. Our hope is to continue this tradition for many years to come.

There are several sponsorship opportunities and we welcome any and all audible and silent auction donations. Volunteers are also needed and appreciated.

For more information, contact Sandra Baur at (254) 749-9557, Charlie Kasparian at (254) 486-2218, Blake Harrell at (254) 716-1366, Jeff Slaughter at (254) 486-2227, or Tate Christensen at 848-4046.

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Free Tire Disposal For All McLennan County Residents Scheduled Saturday, March 26

WACO — Saturday, March 26, is the date for Keep McLennan County Beautiful's Spring Used Tire Amnesty Day in McLennan County, a Great American Cleanup event. On this day, all McLennan County residents are invited to bring used tires to the HOT Fairgrounds for disposal.

Residents of the county can dispose of up to six tires (up to 33" diameter) for free. Tires must be off rims. Additionally, they may dispose of additional tires (up to 33" diameter) for \$2.00 each. Proof of residency will be required. Tires will not be accepted from vendors.

Tires (up to 33" diameter) left on rims will be accepted for \$5.00 each and tires (34" - 50" diameter) will be accepted for \$10 each. No tires over 50" or OTR loader/grader tires will not be accepted.

The Used Tire Amnesty Day event will begin at 9 a.m. and run until 1:30 p.m. or until the trailer is full. No tires will be accepted before 9 a.m. or after 1:30 p.m. There will be volunteers available to help unload tires.

The event site is the HOT Fairgrounds parking lot with entrance to the site from Bosque Blvd. This event is sponsored by Keep McLennan County Beautiful, In Association With Jerry Stevens Firestone, co-sponsored by the City of Waco Solid Waste Services, and

supported by Keep Waco Beautiful.

For more information, please call KMCB, City of Waco Solid Waste Services, or Keep Waco Beautiful.

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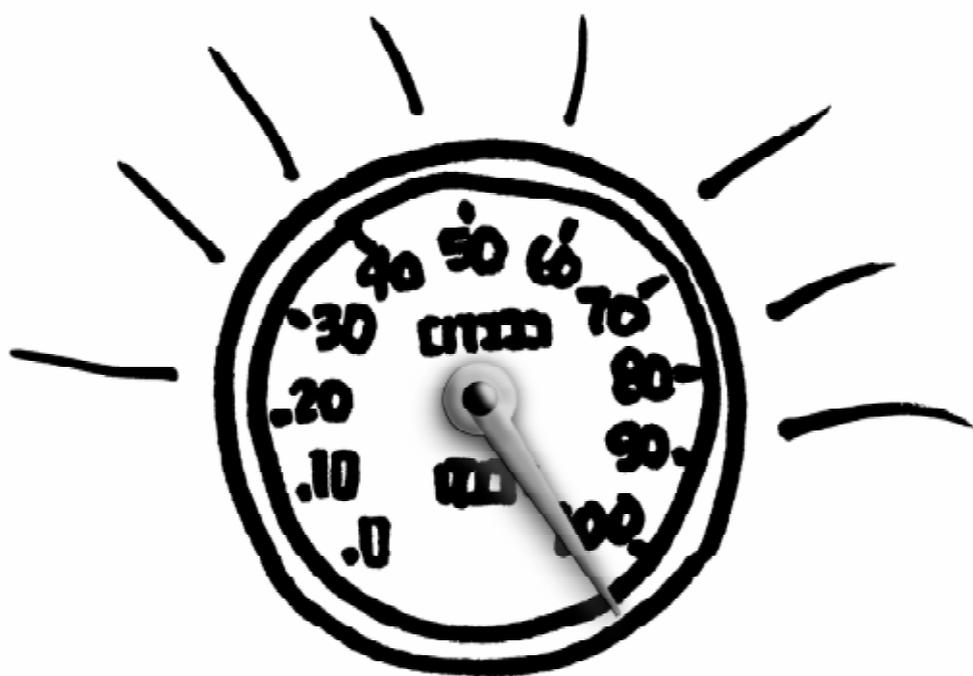
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Baylor ShowTime! Slates Performance On March 22 At Hill College Campus

HILLSBORO — For its final season concert, The Hill College Performing Arts Series will present "Baylor Showtime!" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, in the Vara Martin Daniel's Performing Arts Center on the Hillsboro Campus.

Performed by one of the premier ensembles in the country will be song and dance numbers in the revue style. Featured will be music from Broadway,

along with standard American music. Admission is free.

A reception following the program will be provided by the by Monday Review Club.

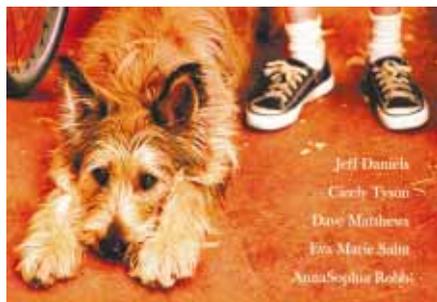
Transportation for senior citizens can be arranged by calling (254) 582-3434.

INFO:

Phillip Lowe, (254) 582-3555 (ext. 270),
Shirley Erickson, (254) 582-3555 (ext. 261),
www.hillcollege.edu/performingarts



BAYLOR SHOWTIME! will perform March 22 on the Hill College campus in Hillsboro during the season finale of the Hill College Performing Arts Series.



Abandoned by her mother when she was just three-years-old, 10-year-old India Opal has been raised primarily by her father (Jeff Daniels), a Baptist preacher. When he relocates the family to a small Florida town, Opal has trouble adjusting, until the day her father sends her to the store to pick up a few necessities--and she comes back with a dog. Inspired by her large, friendly new pet, whom she names Winn-Dixie (after the store), Opal finds the means to reach out and make friends with some of her neighbors--many of whom feel as lost and lonely as Opal herself.

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CITY MEETS COUNTRY in this depiction from the upcoming Tin Building Theatre version of "Grace and Glorie." The studio production is serving as a fundraiser for upcoming restorations of the Conservatory and Theatre located in Clifton. In the picture above, wealthy city gal Glorie, played by Stacey Cockrell, seeks higher ground from the dreaded chickens of county grandmother Grace, played by Jan Derrickson. The play opens with a dinner theatre performance on March 19th and runs for three regular performances. For tickets, please call TBT at (254) 675-2278.

— Photo by Steve Schmidt

Tennis Coach Debunks Conventional Methods

CLEARWATER, Fla. — Oscar Wegner is on a mission. He wants to change the way people learn to play tennis in the U.S. The coach and author of "Play Better Tennis In 2 Hours" (McGraw-Hill, December 2004), says the bulk of beginners in the U.S. are being programmed to adopt unnatural stances and habits that prevent them from getting as much enjoyment from the sport as they could be getting.

Says Wegner, "It's actually very easy to learn to play tennis well. The pros play a totally different game than what is taught by conventional teaching techniques."

Wegner is now making his special techniques available to the masses through his newly released 5-title DVD set and book, which can be found at <<http://www.tennispro101.com>>.

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Liberal Radio 'Air America' Expands In Texas

AUSTIN — Air America Radio, the left-leaning network, is continuing to grow in on Texas with new ventures in Austin and Dallas.

Its talk shows will start airing Monday in Austin on KOKE-AM (1600) and will debut March 21 in the Dallas area on KXEB-AM (910). Corpus Christi already has Air America running on KCCT-AM (1150).

In North Texas, however, Air America's reach is limited by low-wattage, but officials at Border Media Partners, the station's owners, said they are trying to strengthen the signal.

Calling the expansions in Texas the high points for the network, Air America executives said they expect comedian-turned-commentator Al Franken to find

an audience, even in President Bush's home state.

The former Saturday Nigh Live writer and actor provides the star power for the network, which has signed up 51 stations in less than a year. In North Texas, his afternoon show will compete with conservatives Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly.

"We don't lie. Rush lies all the time. ... He's ridiculous on so many levels," said Franken, who was in Austin for his first show.

Air America is broadcast national on XM Satellite Radio (ch. 167) and Sirius Satellite Radio (ch. 144). For more information on the nearest local Air America radio station in your area, visit its website at (airamericaradio.com).

— *The Dallas Morning News contributed to this report.*

Averitt On Technologies, ED Subcommittees

AUSTIN — Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst recently appointed State Senator Kip Averitt (R-McGregor) to the Senate Emerging Technologies and Economic Development Subcommittee.

"Emerging technologies — such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and broadband communications — are driving our economy. If Texas wants to remain economically competitive, it must focus on attracting and maintaining the

industries and markets associated with these technologies," Dewhurst said.

"I am honored to serve on the Emerging Technologies and Economic Development Subcommittee," Averitt said. "New technologies are constantly changing the way Texans live and do business. I look forward to working with Chairman Carona and the members of the committee to attract new business opportunities to Texas."

Mom Has No Will

Dear SOS,

My mom refuses to divide her properties or leave instructions on how she wants it to be shared between me and my 4 brothers and sisters. Some of us have decided we need to get a guardianship of her. One brother is holding out and has tried to get her to sign quit claim deeds and a will that he has written. She says she hasn't signed anything yet. We decided to ask your opinion.

— 5 kids in limbo

Dear 5,

Adult children with an aging parent disagree over various topics. Many of these families file court petitions to settle their disputes. They often have false hope that guardianship will settle their disagreements, when, in reality, the problem is interpersonal conflict, which may go back to childhood.

It's important to be clear about guardianship: the parent is declared by the court to be incompetent and is stripped of her rights to make decisions about her own finances and property, where she will live, and what medical treatments she will accept. A legal guardian is appointed to make these decisions for the person. This should be the last option considered.

It sounds like you might need to hire a family mediator, a care manager or an attorney who will help sort out these issues in your family. See my website for links to these professionals www.sospueblo.com I wish you peace and harmony. SOS

Hospice Is A Good Thing

Dear SOS,

My father's doctor advised us to get



him set up with the hospice program. We already have so much confusion, do we really need one more thing to deal with?

— Family in MO

Dear Family,

Many families delay calling Hospice in because they don't understand the program. After they experience the hospice program, most of them say they wish they had contacted them sooner.

Briefly, hospice care is for those with a terminal illness. It is usually provided in the person's home, but can also be available in a nursing home, hospital or a specially built hospice residence. It provides a team of a doctor, nurse, social worker, clergy, aide, who are available around the clock for support. Volunteers and family members are a part of the team, which keep the person physically comfortable.

Hospice helps the person and the family deal with the emotional aspects of the end of life. Bereavement counseling is available to loved ones for a year after the death. Medicare pays for those programs which are certified. Link to a hospice program in your area from my website: www.dearsos.com

I encourage you to give yourself, your family and your father the gift of hospice. SOS

RV Trip With Dad

Dear SOS,

I think my dad is getting Alzheimer's. But before he gets too bad off, I'm planning for us to take one last trip together around the country in my RV. What special precautions should I set up before we leave?

— The Wanderer

Dear Wander,

That sounds like a wonderful bonding experience that you will remember for life. Of course you will make every attempt to keep your father in line of sight at all times. But, knowing how that can be so difficult, put a few things in place before you get on the road.

Have a packet of information about your dad in the glove box or somewhere handy. include a recent picture, notes of his height, weight and other identifying features such as tattoos, scars, etc. Have his medicare/insurance numbers, a list of the medications he is taking, diagnoses, advance directives.

Know where your vehicle keys are at all times, put an alarm or a bell on the RV door(s) so you will be aware if he leaves while you are resting or busy, and get him in the Alzheimer's Safe Return program. For a reasonable fee he can be enrolled in this 24 hour, 7 day a week, national search program. See my website www.dearsos.com for a link.

Have a safe trip and let me know how it went upon your return. Bon Voyage! SOS

Linda LaPointe is a national columnist and an ElderLifeMatters Coach. Arrange for personal advice over the telephone, call 719.248.8554. Send general questions to www.dearsos.com or to this paper c/o Dear SOS PO Box 740 Rye CO 81069.



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Women Have Helped Make Texas Great

Women's History Month is a perfect time to reflect on those strong women who contributed so much to Texas, starting with the Lone Star Republic's early days.

Mary Austin Holley was Stephen F. Austin's first cousin. She noted that early Texas women were a breed apart. She once observed, "It is not uncommon for ladies to mount their mustangs and hunt with their husbands, to ride long distances on horseback to attend a ball with their silk dresses in their saddlebags. Hardy vigorous constitutions, free spirits and spontaneous gaiety are thus induced and continue a rich legacy to their children who, it is to be hoped, will sufficiently value the blessing not to squander it away in the eager search for the luxury and refinement of polite life."

Thomas Rusk, the first senator to hold my seat, and a close friend of fellow senator Sam Houston, wrote about the women and their contribution during the War for Independence. His wife Mary had helped oversee the calm evacuation of Nacogdoches by the women and children left behind after the men had gone off to war.

They feared the Mexican Army and their Indian allies might be on the way, so the women took their children eastward in an exodus, remembered as the "Run-away Scrape."

Rusk wrote, "The men of Texas deserved much credit, but more was due to women. Armed men facing a foe could not but be brave, but the women with their little children around them without means of defense or power to resist, faced danger and death with unflinching courage."

My great-great-grandmother, Anna Maria Taylor, and four of her children made that arduous escape through harsh weather. Their children perished from illness during the ordeal, but after the Taylors returned to Nacogdoches, they raised nine more.

Since those days, Texan women have continued to display the grit and strength of character those pioneers passed on to their children.

Oveta Culp Hobby, mother of long-serving former Lieutenant Governor Bill Hobby, came up with the plan during World War II to recruit and train women to fill jobs in our military so that men would be freed up for combat.

General George C. Marshall backed the formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, known popularly as the WACs. At first, the list of jobs women were expected to fill was only 54. By war's end, that list had expanded to 239.

Oveta did not want to head the WACs, but was prevailed upon to do her duty. At first, she found herself a one-woman recruiting drive for the organization, traveling from city to city giving speeches urging women to join.

Because she became the first American woman to become a commissioned officer, she had to design her own uniform. She carried an iron with her to press it each night when she made her pitch in various towns and cities throughout the country. She later became the first woman to receive the Distinguished Service Medal, our nation's highest non-combat award.

Her leadership continued after the war. She insisted that Armed Forces Day celebrations in Houston would be open to everyone, regardless of race.

Later, her leadership skills were tapped by President Eisenhower, who named her to head the new Department of Health, Education and Welfare as a cabinet secretary. When she passed away in 1995, she left a media empire, a loving family and a legacy built on hard work.

Washington Report

By Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison



One of those legacies is me. After I graduated from the University of Texas Law School, I could not find a law firm willing to hire me. I decided to try jour-

nalism instead, and applied for a television reporter job with KPRC TV in Houston. There were no women television reporters in Houston at that time, but the

news director and station manager went to Mrs. Hobby, who said it would be a great idea to have a woman with a law degree as one of her reporters. That was my start. I owe her a great deal.

Today Texas women serve in Congress, in the state legislature, as scientists, teachers, business leaders and artists. Even more important, many Texas women have embraced motherhood and have taken on the difficult job of raising the next generation. My only hope is that all of us who are raising children will succeed in instilling the Texas virtues of independence, strength of character and love of our state that we received from our parents.



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Cacophony

My father and I share more than blood.

At an early age, we both knew what we wanted to be when we grew up.

He wanted to be a Lutheran pastor; I, a writer.

Parishioners would always ask me if I wanted to be a Lutheran pastor when I grew up.

Depending on who it was asking, of course, I would either politely tell them "No, I don't want to be a pastor," or I'd lie and say, "Sure, but really, I'd prefer being a rabbi because there's a lot less of the Bible to read and remember. I mean, did Jesus read the New Testament? I don't think so. He was smart!"

At the dinner table on Sunday afternoons, I'd usually ask my dad questions about his sermons — not that I didn't understand them. It's just that I didn't remember them because I had this problem of sleeping through the entire service.

As I learned to actively listen to his sermons, I discovered that my dad was not funny enough for me. One Sunday, I had had enough, and I decided to help liven up church or at least try.

Unfortunately for me, there were more false starts than blue ribbons.

My first plan was to use Olympic-size score cards to rate his sermons from the back pew, but my plan failed when the rain ruined them tucked under my arm as I walked to church.

Then, I attempted to start "The Wave" during the offering. I chickened out though and pretended to stretch.

On a different Sunday, I noticed that the organist had forgotten to play the offertory music, but just as I was going to break into "The Hey Song" by Gary Glitter, the organist found her music.

During another offering, I attempted to release a beach ball, but my mom "liberated" it from me before I could have "set it free."

Another time during the opening hymn, I started to "head bang," but I accidentally fell down after my hair got in my eyes and I bumped into an acolyte. A couple of people laughed, but it wasn't exactly the laugh I was going for.

Then, it dawned on me: I needed to form a team, a posse, if you will, to back up my silly antics. So I tried to persuade my youth group to dress up like Santa Claus one Sunday in June.

One kid immediately chimed in, "No way, P.K.! My little sister believes in Santa Claus. If we did that, it would ruin her."

My reply was like, "Not if we explain to her that Santa Claus is in all of us when we share our God-given gifts with one another."

"Well, it's either that, or we can say that we're on a mission from Santa to take a preliminary census of good and bad kids. What do you think?"

After they were done throwing paper wads at me, I was glad I had hidden the Bibles before class. There's no telling what they would have done — I probably would have been the first P.K. to run so fast that he'd have no other choice but to land on the moon!

There's one thing I never did in church, and that was heckle my dad during his sermons. Even I knew my limits; however, I know other PKs who didn't, and they were last seen on the back of milk cartons.

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



The story goes a little something like this:

In the middle of his father's sermon, the Pastor's Kid says, "We need a pastor, not a belly scratcher! HAHAHAAAAH!!!"

Shaking his head, the frustrated pastor pushes a red button hidden in his pulpit, and then like lightning, four guys wearing black suits and dark sunglasses jump out of nowhere and grab the young boy.

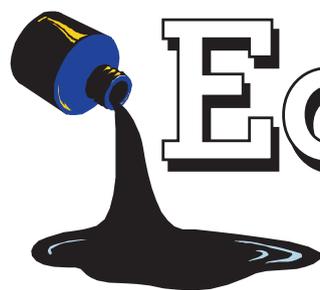
The Pastor's Kid struggles with the well-dressed men and shouts, "Hey, what are you doing? Don't touch me! Where are you taking me? Don't you know who I am? What are you doing with that carton of milk? NOOOOO!!! Mommieeeeeeee!!!"

The cry ends. The sermon resumes. The congregation listens attentively, like nothing had ever happened. And no one ever again speaks about The Pastor's Kid, except his brothers and sisters who keep the carton of milk as a reminder of their fallen sibling.

FIN

Aminals ©

By David Sung



Editorial

OP/ED

Opinion - Columns - Letters

— Editorial —

Republican House School Finance Bill Designed To Make The Rich Richer *Round 1 Fails, Round 2 Begins This Week*

It is appalling that Republicans in the Texas House have stooped to voo-doo economics to line the pockets of their cronies by designing a school finance bill that shoots straight into the heart of poor and middle-class households. It does nothing but make the rich richer and the poor poorer; does little to benefit education, and is an insult to teachers and administrators — not to mention students.

What else can you call it?

If you are a Texan and your household makes more than \$100,000 a year, you would receive a tax cut.

If you are among the 1.7 million Texas households earning less than \$23,000 a year, you could see your tax burden increase more than five percent.

The Republican plan, which stalled amid debate on Friday but is to be taken up anew this week, is a mish-mash of tax trade-offs that embellish regressive elements, such as the sales tax, cigarette tax, and gasoline tax with increases, while rewarding big business with substantial gains.

When it's all said and done, the Republican chant for a "revenue neutral" tax bill does not solve the long-term problems with school finance. It's a Band-aid without any tape, a con against Texas.

Prudence would call for leaving all the sales and "sin" taxes alone. They have been jimmed with enough through previous Legislatures that sought to avoid the real answer, an income tax. Moving money from the pockets of the poor to the

pockets of the rich and calling it education finance reform is a joke. It is not education finance reform and will do more harm than good.

If this passes, small businesses will be devastated as they become forced to either cut employees or benefits, like health insurance, to stay alive. Trade will be cut, as patrons find more and more of their money raided in the store or at the pump.

According to an analysis by the Legislative Budget Board, the Republicans' new payroll tax scheme that businesses would pay on their employees would benefit some upper-end businesses, like finance, insurance, real estate, utilities, and transportation, but others, mostly small businesses, would suffer dramatically, such as services, construction, and trade.

The Legislature is headed down the wrong path for the multitude of Texans. Why? Because the term "income tax" is supposedly off the table, even though it is partially deductible on an individual's Federal income tax.

The Legislature should completely do away with school property taxes, leave the sales taxes alone, and implement an income tax to fix the school finance problem for good, with no caps in place on higher income.

But for that to occur, the Legislature would first have to decide who it, as a governmental body, serves. We know which side of the financial spectrum this contorted Republican plan benefits, and it ain't most Texans.

— Written By W. Leon Smith

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Bootleggers Shoot It Out In Galveston

Rival bootleggers turned downtown Galveston into their own private shooting gallery on March 13, 1931, sending innocent bystanders diving for cover and two wounded gangsters to the hospital.

Lone Star legislators ratified the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on the last day of February 1918. A few weeks later, they made Texas a bone-dry state two years before prohibition became the law of the land.

True to its maverick tradition, Galveston remained a public watering hole where anyone with the price of a drink could wet his whistle. In the early 1920s, the island became "a major point of entry" for illicit liquor.

Regular as clockwork, local smugglers in high-powered speedboats rendezvoused with foreign freighters full of contraband alcohol. Hundreds if not thousands of cases a week were secretly slipped ashore for shipment to speakeasies throughout Texas and as far north as Detroit.

Two criminal organizations fought for control of the profitable pipeline: the so-called "Beach Gang" led by Dutch Voight and the "Downtown Gang" headed by the menacing George Musey and colorful Johnny Jack Nounes. While Voight wisely maintained a low profile which kept him on the streets, Nounes spent almost as much time in jail as the limelight he loved so much.

Johnny Jack's free-spending flamboyance earned him folk-hero status among tolerant Galvestonians but also attracted the attention of federal agents, who succeeded in sending him to Leavenworth in 1924. Less than two years after his triumphant return, Nounes and partner Musey were caught red-handed at Seabrook with a boatload of booze.

"It's in again, out again, caught again," moaned Johnny Jack after being slapped with a long prison sentence. In contrast to Nounes, who was resigned to his fate, Musey jumped bail and fled to Canada to avoid incarceration.

When the fugitive picked Fatty Owens to run the Downtown Gang in his absence, disgruntled lieutenants broke ranks and formed rival factions. A bootlegger war ensued complete with hijackings and occasional bloodshed.

In late February 1931, Owens tried to bring in three trucks of spirits from Beaumont. Despite the presence of armed guards, gun-toting thieves halted the caravan 15 miles east of Houston and made off with the entire shipment.

Two weeks later, Kye Gregory and Mitch Frankovitch, former members of the Nounes-Musey mob and prime suspects in the highway robbery, accepted Owens' invitation to

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



a bury-the-hatchet powwow. The meeting was held in the back room of a downtown Galveston soft drink stand.

At the end of the short and seemingly friendly chat, the two guests shook hands with Owens and his associate Jimmie Crabb. Before they reached the exit, someone suddenly shouted, "Stick 'em up!"

Kye Gregory caught a bullet in the shoulder and a second round in the abdomen. He staggered outside and collapsed on the sidewalk to the horror of lunch-hour pedestrians. Meanwhile, Mitch Frankovitch squeezed between two parked cars and began trading shots with Owens in a nearby alley.

Two foot patrolmen reached the scene in the middle of the gun-battle and shouted at the combatants to cease firing. Both meekly obeyed, as if waiting for someone to tell them to stop.

Fatty Owens surrendered on the spot telling officers as he handed over his smoking pistol, "They tried to get me, but they'll play hell doing it." His sidekick Crabb made a clean getaway but turned himself in at police headquarters later that afternoon.

Bleeding profusely from a chest wound, Frankovitch begged Chief of Police Tony Messina to take him to the hospital. The top cop rushed the bootlegger to the emergency room, where doctors determined the bullet had ricocheted off his breastbone narrowly missing his heart.

Frankovitch would live, but his partner in crime was not so lucky. Gregory was dead on arrival.

At his trial for the murder of Kye Gregory, Fatty Owens took the stand to insist that he abhorred violence. "I don't even like to kill a bird," he swore with a straight face.

The defendant claimed the killing was an accident. When the shooting started, he pointed his gun, closed his eyes and squeezed the trigger.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty, but the testimony of prominent character witnesses resulted in a token prison term of two years. The police chief and a city commissioner went to bat for Owens describing the notorious outlaw as a law-abiding pillar of the community.

Seventy-four years ago in Galveston, that may not have been far from the truth.

"Best of This Week in Texas History" Vol. V available for \$10.95 plus \$3.25 postage and handling from Bartee Haile, 1912 Meadow Creek Dr., Pearland, TX 77581.

Mouse Wars...Part 3

I just found another mouse. I stopped counting weeks ago after about the fifth or sixth one. The trap had thrown this latest offering into the air about four or five inches, just smacked him clear of it altogether, landed him against the floorboard. Something about the scene was a bit reminiscent of Mighty Mouse on a bad day. Yes, I know this is odd.

I didn't know a mousetrap could do that, kill and maim without entrapment. Yet there he lay in a little pool of mouse blood. It was SO GROSS. I felt like I should draw a chalk line around the body. And of course I had to clean it up. Zack muttered some expletive and sort of slunk away like I couldn't possibly expect him to deal with it. (And I let him get away with that. I must be slipping).

I never had a mouse actually bleed before. I've had them do some other pretty unexpected things when stuck in the sticky traps, especially when there are two on one trap. Or maybe they were doing that when they got stuck. Or not. I can't think about it. But the snap traps usually just kill them without any blood and gore involved. It's bad enough that I have to deal with the dead body, but bodily fluids now too? YUCK!

I felt like I should call that guy in the movies. . . What's he called? The Cleaner? —That guy whom they call, never mentioning his real name — who comes in and takes care of the dead body, chops it up and carries it out in a shower curtain or baggies or whatever, and leaves the place spic and span like nothing ever happened. —Sort of a Mafioso Mr. Clean.

—Or perhaps I should call one of those legitimate companies that come in to clean up and make everything smell just fine after a murder has taken place. And let's face it; a mouse murder had indeed taken place. ("I had no choice, your honor. I had warned them numerous times that they couldn't live here").

But there was no one to call. When you live in the country, you have to do almost everything yourself unless you want to wait three weeks or pay a huge service call. So I just donned a couple of plastic bags over one hand and did the deed myself, just as I had disposed of the sticky traps. (The first one was the worst. After that, I sort of got hardened to it. I wonder if criminals start out this way?)

It's amazing the things we can do when we must. I figure after going through childbirth (more than once) and living through motherhood, this was a piece of cake. It was distasteful, but it wasn't like, well, having a root canal or anything. — Must keep it all in perspective.

So how long can this go on, this mouse-murdering spree? How many more can there possibly be? Oh, and yesterday I found the one that died in my closet. I wrote about it in a previous column. He had snapped the trap and then escaped with it. You KNEW that wasn't going to have a happy ending, didn't you?

Well, it didn't. My closet started to have a distinctive odor a couple of days after we heard the trap snap, but I could never find the darned mouse. How can something so tiny smell so awful? I stayed in there searching for as long as I could stand it (which wasn't very long). Then I did the sensible, pragmatic thing: I exited and closed the closet door. I reopened it as little as possible over the next few days. I figured, hey, it couldn't last forever, could it?

(I bet you thought I was going to say I removed everything from the closet until I found the mouse. Well, that was Plan A. Plan A was made before cows started breaking out of fences everywhere, getting into rye grass and wheat fields and onto the road. There was no time for

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.

closet cleaning, so Plan B, closing the door, was employed as a desperation move).

After about a week or so, the odor emanating from my closet dissipated (or perhaps I became used to it, if that is possible. . . Highly doubtful). And of course when it finally stopped smelling, I found the mouse, with trap attached. At least it wasn't deeply imbedded in one of my boots. EWWWWWWWWWWWW.

Yesterday, just when I started to think the ladybug invasion was nearing an end, I was bombarded again, literally buzzed by a couple of low flying LBs. I almost drank one from what I thought was a clean glass of water. Twice. Now I am forced to don my reading glasses and scrutinize the glass before filling it. When I glanced toward the east and south windows of the kitchen, I realized the ladybug war was on again in earnest.

I must have sucked up almost a hundred of the insects into my little hand vac in the kitchen alone yesterday. (And I haven't even begun to deal with all the dead ones upstairs and in my studio). I'm ready for this to be over now, OK? Whoever is in charge of such things, please, can I issue a stop order?

Ladybugs have a very distinctive odor about them. When I use the hand vac now, the aroma of something like cauliflower cooking permeates the entire room. It's quite disturbing. I may never feel quite the same way about cauliflower again.

And it's not just mice and ladybugs either. I found a snake in the front flowerbed, just a little garden variety. So I picked it up, admired it, and deposited it far away from the house, where Zack wouldn't mistake it for something dangerous. Of course, it was probably back here before I was. But this tells me that not only is spring just around the corner with its fruit tree blossoms and bulbs and reawakening perennials, but also that the snakes are beginning to crawl. So be careful what you pick up!

I'm not squeamish around earthworms either. And I have never seen as many as I am seeing now. — Must be all this rain. Every time I dig a hole, there are several earthworms in my shovel (hopefully no "half soldiers"). When I was a child, one of my parents showed me that the little creatures weren't harmful, that I shouldn't be fearful of them. I was allowed to hold one and was told they were fascinating. So I believed it.

I learned that all creatures are fascinating. (Whether we like them or not is another story). Some of these worms are hermaphrodites. Some can regenerate a new half (either the front half or the rear) when severed. I still think they are amazing. I hope I never grow so old or disinterested that the world and its inhabitants stop being simply astonishing to me.

No wonder I was such a little tomboy. Thanks, Mom and Dad. If you hadn't raised me as you did, a little girl who liked to play in the dirt and examine worms, I might not have turned into the kind of woman who could clean up her own murdered mouse. And where would I be then?

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Universe Makes Push-Starting Your Car A Lot Harder

I certainly feel a deep kinship with the surrounding universe. Particularly after reading how, like my own waistline, it is continuing to expand as it gets older. According to a recent article in TIME magazine, there are a number of discoveries that answer fundamental questions about the mysteries of space — beginning with a property called “dark gravity.”

It is something that parents have suspected for eons, and that astrophysicists have only now proven the existence of: An invisible force slightly stronger than normal gravity that pulls in the opposite direction. It is this property that keeps the universe expanding in spite of the pull of planets and constellations.



By
**Ned
Hickson**
Siuslaw News

According to physicists at Princeton University, children naturally possess this gravitational force, which explains their ability to pull their parents in two directions at once.

The other effects of “dark” gravity aren’t as straightforward. In fact, the difference between the two types of

gravity are a little hazy; both are invisible, and both earn their living by pulling things. Here are a few examples to help illustrate their differences:

A baseball landing in your mitt is gravity; a baseball landing on your forehead is “dark gravity.”

Push-starting your car by rolling it down a hill is gravity; if the car doesn’t start before you get to the bottom, that’s “dark gravity.”

Weight-lifting, gravity; weight-gain, “dark gravity.”

Getting sick on the Tilt-a-Whirl, gravity; being strapped *next* to the person getting sick on the Tilt-a-Whirl —

You get the idea.

And the discovery of light and “dark” doesn’t end there.

Apparently, physicists have discovered that matter also has a bright and not-so-bright side.

While regular matter is easy to see, taste, touch and feel, “dark” matter is an invisible substance that, by a ratio of 10 to 1, outweighs all visible particles that stars, planets and people are made of.

This is why eating a three-ounce candy bar means that you will gain —

on average — 26 pounds. It’s all of that invisible “dark” matter surrounding what we eat that’s causing America’s obesity problem, not the calories or lack of exercise. The trick is to find a way to remove the “dark” matter from our food sources — something that is harder than it sounds since scientists have no idea what the stuff is, what it looks like, or where it came from.

The only thing we know for sure is that it was recently approved by the FDA.

Though there were a handful of other revelations, nothing compares with how the universe will eventually collapse. Much like the elastic waistband in my swimming trunks, the universe will continue to stretch until it reaches a point of critical mass known as “The Big Snap.”

What happens after that is anyone’s guess.

As for me, I’d rather not dwell on the gravity of such matters.

Contact Hickson at nhickson@oregonfast.net, or at the Siuslaw News at P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439.)

Is Grandma Unamerican?

When I first heard that friends of the Bush administration were going to start attacking AARP, I didn’t think it could be true. First of all, what could possibly be objectionable about the “seniors lobby,” and secondly, was it really politically wise for anyone to attack an organization of those over fifty? But as is often the case, I was wrong: Bush supporters are actually going after AARP, apparently not worried about getting yelled at by their own mothers and grandmothers.

They aren’t saying they’re against everyone over fifty. They’re just against this organization. But what could they possibly not like about a group that opposes age discrimination, promotes physical and economic health for seniors, and projects an image of vitality for those over fifty? It comes down to two magic words: “social security.” AARP is against sweeping changes in social security, and the Administration is for them. One White House official has said, “The AARP is an ossified bureaucracy that isn’t always responsive to its membership.” You read that correctly. Someone in the federal government actually referred to another organization as “ossified” and “not always responsive.” The Republicans are saying AARP is “too conservative!” What are they going to say next: that some of its spokespeople talk in a folksy way and sound “too Texan?”

Get ready to hear all kinds of charges about AARP’s “secret agendas.” These people can make their anti-AARP charges because they’re pros. They’re political mudslingers. If slingers could smear John McCain about his adopted child, if they could turn a war hero like John Kerry into a near-traitor, they’re certainly not going to have qualms about attacking AARP. One group behind this is USA Next, which has received millions of dollars from pharmaceutical companies. Another contributor is Bob Perry, one of the key people behind the “Swift Boat Veterans” group. So, it should be interesting to watch these guys try to turn the image of AARP from “Mom and apple pie” to “Seniors Without Family Values.”

But don’t underestimate AARP. It’s a well-oiled machine, as anyone who has celebrated a 50th birthday knows. On the very day that you hit the big five-



By
**Lloyd
Garver**

oh, right after you’ve looked in the mirror and told yourself, “I don’t really look fifty,” the AARP magazine arrives in the mail. They don’t even give you a few days to kid yourself. I don’t know how they know everybody’s birthday and everybody’s address, but they do. Does that sound like an organization that’s going to take an attack sitting on its IRAs?

There may be some gray hair in AARP, but there’s also a lot of gray matter. They have 38 million members. That’s a lot of educated, experienced people to tick off. And this isn’t a bloc of people who’s shy about voting or writing to their representatives in Washington. Speaking of Washington, I wonder how many people in the Bush Administration are members of AARP. Can they all honestly say that they’ve never been tempted to take an AARP discount or read about the latest Hollywood celebrity to turn fifty? And now that the President has been telling everyone that he reads before bed, is it really a stretch to picture him in his presidential p.j.’s, reading his personal copy of the AARP Magazine? Maybe he bases some of his diet and exercise program on things suggested by AARP. That’s a lot more likely than his picking up pointers from “The Playboy Advisor.”

So, it should be an interesting, if unfortunate fight. It still amazes me that these guys have chosen AARP as an opponent. Who are they going to pick on next? Poor people who can’t afford prescriptions? The little guy who wants to sue the huge corporation? Silly cartoon characters? Oh, that’s right. They’ve already gone after all of them.

Lloyd Garver has written for many television shows, ranging from “Sesame Street” to “Family Ties” to “Frasier” to “Home Improvement.” He has also read many books, some of them in hardcover. He can be reached at lloydgarver@yahoo.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

Your interview with Karl W. B. Schwarz (2/16) was fascinating and chilling. He'd be easy to dismiss as a conspiracy theorist if his assertions weren't so true. While I'm not yet ready to accept his view on 9-11, there is no doubt that the attack served to advance the Bush-Cheney agenda, The Project for a New American Century.

I wish, however, he'd stop referring to liberals like myself as the "far fringe" and the "wacky secular folks on the far Left." In fact, we are intelligent people of faith, doctors, accountants, teachers, wage earners and business people. While our motivations may differ from those of Mr. Schwarz, our current objectives are very much the same. Insulting like-minded activists is counter-productive. We should be working together to put America back on track.

Daryl Altman, Lynbrook, N.Y.

To The Editor:

Another embarrassment. The World Health Organization proposed legislation which establishes a ban on tobacco company advertising, sponsorship and promotion as well as international standards on labeling, pricing, and taxes.

Tobacco is the second leading cause of death throughout the world, killing an estimated 5 million people a year. Three hundred thousand in the United States alone. Needless to say this treaty will save an untold number of lives.

Bush in his quest to mend public relations with "old Europe," it gives the lie to the posture that he puts forth, because when it comes to humanitarian and environmental agreements, he seems deign to participate. This comes as no surprise because we always knew that he was a dirt bag.

To further prove my point, of the 191 nations that have agreed to this proviso, old schmucko is standing in the rain, finger in his mouth, with that "who me" look all by himself protecting the tobacco lobby by not agreeing to participate. Sort of reminds one of the Clean Air Act and the Kyoto Accord.

Pretty easy to hate this throwback.
Still no Osama

N.M.

To The Editor:

I found what Mr. Schwarz had to say frightening. Although my conscience finds it hard to accept the idea that President Bush was involved in the actual planning of 9/11, this administration has not failed to shock me in their past attempts to line the pockets of their greedy cronies.

What disturbed me is learning that one of those flights that left the U.S. right after 9/11 went to northern Afghanistan. We already knew that Bin Laden family members were on one of those flights.

The pipeline reference had me recalling an article I had read in Newsday in December of 2001 that the Afghanistan pipeline was underway. This was right about the time we lost Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora and at about the same time President Bush said that he doesn't care about Osama bin Laden

anymore. He had already named Iran in his axis of evil. This Newsday article, by the way, has been removed from public access because of national security. I guess they didn't want anyone to connect the dots.

Claudia Borecky, Merrick, N.Y.
Letter to the Editor:

We should congratulate and thank the people of Chile for giving us the greatest hero of the Western Hemisphere during the latter part of the 20th century in the form of General Augusto Pinochet who saved Chile in 1973 by ousting marxist dictator Salvador Allende in the most brilliant military preservation of a nations constitution and freedom in our time during a period of unprecedented communist turmoil and brutality in Chile.

Had General Pinochet not acted when he did to save Chile, the people of Chile today would be languishing in a vast prison state and never again would be heard the muse. It greatly saddens me to see news of the attacks now being heaped on this great warrior and savior of Chile, and benefactor of our hemisphere, by Chilean officials who apparently have no integrity, souls, or morality.

It's obvious that the Communists, the Marxist Left, and the one world internationalists hate Pinochet not only because he led one of the few counter-revolutions that succeeded in ousting a Communist regime, but also because he is a Christian patriot who stands for everything they oppose.

We and the people of Chile should revere and protect General Pinochet as the great hero of our time and hemisphere, and consign his adversaries to the dust bin of history where they can revel in their dimly lit rooms and demented lost dreams of us as slaves in their socialist gulags, and them stepping on a human face forever.

We should see:
www.thenewamerican.com (search: pinochet)-or www.jbs.org and send communications of protest to Chilean leaders and media, and our own leaders and media immediately, and demand they protect our hemisphere by defending Pinochet and his legacy NOW and forever!

Sincerely,

Ed Nemechek, Landers, Calif.

To The Editor:

Change state name?

With all the "noise" from the Capitol about which groups to tax next, it's getting harder for many of us to get a restful night's sleep. In addition, local governments keep on raising taxes. School districts promote bond sales. The governor and special interests are pushing toll roads. Health care and prescription medication costs are "through the roof." Home insurance costs are doubled. Astronomical fuel and energy costs are still escalating. Let's not forget that daily living expenses are skyrocketing.

With the ceiling on expenses nowhere in sight and everything going up except the force of gravity, perhaps it's appropriate to propose a change of our state

name from *Texas* to *Taxes*?

Legislators need to work better for Texas families and their children.

Options for Financing Public Education

a. Eliminate the loopholes in the Business Franchise Tax and/or make businesses pay their fair share towards educating Texas children.

b. Use the State Lottery; it was supposed to be used entirely to finance education — raise the price of one ticket to \$2.00 or \$3.00 and take a larger percentage for public school funding. Also reduce the odds of winning the lottery. This will double the net revenue previously taken from the Lottery to finance schools;

c. Increase the sales tax to finance public schools, no more than one-half cent tax;

d. Consider a school voucher system. Parents should have an option and as homeowners should NOT have to pay double taxation to send their children to private schools.

e. Set up a separate Public Education Fund via sales & service tax, a maximum one-half cent charge to go towards school financing;

f. Apply a small School Finance tax to every business operating in Texas — companies should give back to the community, no exceptions; NOT a payroll tax.

g. Be more practical and reality-based in developing a more specific State Public School Budget with State tax dollars, and strive to maintain the highest quality of education for our children. This includes providing more money to hire the best administrators and teachers, and to research and implement the best programs and materials for our children. Control of the spending must remain within each school district. Our children continue to be the most precious resource of the State of Texas. In addition, children should be evaluated on their total educational development — not on government-dictated test evaluations;

h. Provide schools and/or districts with in-house professional management (Comptroller's Office) to assist in developing reality-based priorities and expenditures;

i. Increase the tax on the purchase of ALL liquor and tobacco products for financing schools;

j. Raise the tax on gasoline a few cents and provide the legislation for this money to go to Public Education;

k. Take a small percentage of monthly charges by rental properties and apartment complexes to go directly to public school financing;

l. Establish a Visitor Education Fund whereby all hotels and rental car companies charge a service fee that goes to finance education;

m. Establish an Airport Education Fund whereby the cost of flight tickets includes a service fee that goes to finance education.

Using all or several of these alternative methods will replace Texas homeowners from being overburdened as the sole source of school financing, and will continue to improve the quality of our children's education. In this way all Texans will share fairly in providing tax dollars to maintain a quality education for our children.

More tuition hikes, broken promises

College students and their parents can thank the governor and legislators

for the latest tuition increases at UT and several other campuses. Seems like the lower cost promises made by officials for deregulating tuition at higher education institutions was another bogus call. It appears that special interests in Texas are continuing their revenue-making "feeding frenzy." Similar broken promises of lower costs and/or prompt resolutions were made for homeowners insurance, toll roads, medical malpractice lawsuits, public education, property taxes — just to name a few. *Sort of makes you wonder how much more voters are willing to take, doesn't it?*

Peter Stern, Driftwood, Texas

Dear Editor,

Most Americans are aware that our health care system is broken. Unfortunately, Congress got some bad advice earlier this week that would make it more difficult to fix what's wrong.

An advisory panel recommended Congress continue its temporary ban on new specialty hospitals. Specialty hospitals focus on a few areas of care, such as heart surgery or women's health. By specializing, they are able to improve the quality of care and lower costs. They also add needed capacity, as the Baby Boomers begin retiring in a few years and start to need more medical care.

Because specialty hospitals can also take away market share from large hospitals and cut into their profits, the large hospitals got Congress to temporarily ban new specialty hospitals in 2003. The ban is supposed to end this June, but the large hospitals have been flexing their political muscles (and \$2 million in contributions in 2004) to try to eliminate the competition, and have asked Congress to extend the ban.

Allowing the ban to expire in June, as Congress originally intended, would allow specialty hospitals to once again inject competition and innovation into the nation's health care system. Patients everywhere would benefit.

Sean Parnell

To The Editor:

All possibilities supposedly "are on the table" when considering Social Security repair - except the things Bush and other ultra-conservatives don't want on the table, like raising the assessed wages cap, formulating a reasonable test to determine actual need for benefits, and so on. And yet Progressives, historically and unarguably the champion of the vast majority of American citizenry, somehow are cast as 'obstructionists' if we say, "Private accounts should not be on the table because they don't address, much less solve, the basic funding issues for Social Security."

We have Bush, speaking of the future massive Social Security borrowing, in Columbus Ohio yesterday, "This is a debt to future generations of Americans and unless we do something about it we're not going to be able to pay for it without wrecking the economy," yet at the same time it seems not to occur to him that the same must be said of the massive deficits generated by his unending string of tax cuts and rebates for the very wealthiest Americans.

When referring to foreign countries we've either invaded or are bullying to conform to U.S. standards, this administration is lock-step in its assertion that 'freedom is on the march'; yet the same administration is absolutely united in its crushing attempts to deny or diminish many of those very same "freedoms" on

Continued On Next Page

We Mediocre Americans

Have you heard about the latest craze? Like a raging tornado it's taken the nation by storm, opening a wide path from one corner of the country to another. Americans can't seem to get enough of it.

They call it *mediocrity*.

One could argue that mediocrity, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. In the spheres of the arts, literature and cuisine, Europeans generally consider Americans to be unsophisticated. The more developed peoples of the East tend to think of us as lacking in work ethic and attention to quality.

It shouldn't come as a shock that our neighbors on this planet don't often view us with the utmost respect. (Oh, it's not just the French — they don't like anyone.)

Our incessant advertisement-driven need for total instant gratification is a big factor, and this is not a new phenomenon.

One of the simplest ways to gauge mediocrity in America is visit a neighborhood built prior to World War II. Chances are every house will be a singular gem of creative design, a testament to each workman's pride. I know this to be fact because my grandfather was a Master Carpenter from Italy.



Out Of The Blue

By
Jerry
Tenuto

But, hey, what's that in the middle of the block? It's a teardown. Some yuppie couple who made far too much money way too fast bought an irreplaceable 1928 masterpiece for \$400,000, demolished it with no respect for the efforts of the builders, then had a diploma mill architect with no artistic genes design a "showplace" home for \$1.75 million.

The Chicago area, for example, is literally dotted with classic gem homes created by famous designers, most notably Frank Lloyd Wright. Teardowns have become so commonplace that neighborhood organizations, and even entire communities, have fought to keep select private residences untouchable.

Now, travel just a few blocks from the older neighborhood to one that was built since WWII. Virtually all the houses on

each block will be of one design, possibly two. All lawns, walks, and driveways are of the same precise dimensions. There is no heart or soul, no art or personality. Just boxes that people reside in.

Then there's popular music. Throughout the 20th Century people like George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Carole King, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, to name but a few, wrote memorable songs. These have been played countless times, added depth to our lives, and will continue to be favorites long after we're gone.

During the same time numerous incredibly talented, unforgettable musical performers left their mark on the world: The Beatles; Johnny Cash; Patsy Cline; Elvis Presley; Frank Sinatra; et al. As long as there are sound recordings these folks will be heard.

In 2004, nine of the 10 most popular concert draws were acts that have been performing more than 20 years, including Bruce Springsteen (#1), Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, and Simon & Garfunkel. The only Country act in the Top 10 was those sweet G.W. Bush-bashing Dixie Chicks.

For the past 20 or so years pop music has been a haven for those who look good but can't sing or play an instrument, manufactured into hot-selling product by greedy record label suits and corporate radio stations. The bogus studio-only rock bands of the 1980s never made it into the '90s. The '90s grunge rock bands have vanished. Today, local bands are more likely to play '60s and '70s music.

The only country with worse taste in music has to be Germany — they buy David Hasselhoff albums by the truckload. It must be his name.

I wonder who, 20 years from now, is going to remember Madonna, Britney Spears, Eminem, any of the boy bands, or any of the "instant" celebrities television shows such as *American Idol* have been using to make us gag?

Speaking of television, *TV Guide* has to take a big hit for aiding and abetting this mediocrity within our borders. Once the champion of quality television, this pioneering magazine has become essentially a semi-sleaze rag. The editors will spend five pages on the latest behind-the-scenes gossip at some phony "reality" show, but only one page on a top-notch production labored over by serious filmmakers.

The cover of *TVG* used to be special, reserved for stars and newsmen who earned it: Groucho; Lucy; Walter Cronkite; Johnny Carson; John Wayne. Now we get the latest hot couple from some reality show or, like with the Fall 2004 Preview Issue, a studio-supplied shot of Heather Locklear, even though by its very premise we all knew her new show was a dud, as the magazine pre-

"Europeans introduced the world to delectable dishes like Veal Scaloppini, Rostbraten, Crepe Suzette, and Suvlaki. What did we give them in return? McDonald's and KFC."
— Jerry Tenuto

dicted.

Reality TV lowers even the concept of mediocrity.

Movies used to be really great, too. I love movies. It used to be there was always a pretty good movie playing somewhere. Now it seems like we have to wait months for even a marginally good movie to come out. When did it become law that 60% of all Hollywood movies had to be based on comic books, and another 35% geared to 12-year-old girls?

How did "Saving Private Ryan" lose the Oscar to "Shakespeare In Love"? I realize that Steven Spielberg, Clint Eastwood, and Ron Howard can't make every film, but it would make sense for the other filmmakers to pay attention to what these guys are doing.

As for food, there are Americans who simply do not know how to eat. I know people who cannot eat anything without drowning it in ketchup. That's almost as disgusting as smoking. I once knew a guy who would eat absolutely nothing for lunch but McDonald's hamburgers — plain.

I come from a community of more than 100,000 without a decent ethnic European restaurant. No French, German, or Greek. The sauces at the few Italian restaurants are so tasteless you'd think they went straight from the can to your plate. However, there are plenty of Mexican and Chinese restaurants. Go figure.

Europeans introduced the world to delectable dishes like Veal Scaloppini, Rostbraten, Crepe Suzette, and Suvlaki. What did we give them in return? McDonald's and KFC. Then take our hot dog, an almost criminally bland imitation of bratwurst.

Then we go to the polls. In our own backyards we usually get it right. When we don't it doesn't take us long to correct the mistake. But whenever we screw up during those leap year votes, we really screw up.

Think about some of the doozies Americans have voted into the White House. Then think about the inadequate excuse for a world statesman who now resides there at your expense. According to my *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1963 Edition (which I have sworn by for over 40 years), one of the definitions of mediocrity is: a mediocre person.

The front page of the Nov. 4, 2004 issue of *The Daily Mirror* (London) was a photograph of George W. Bush, his right hand outstretched, fingers upward and the palm facing forward. The sub-heading, "U.S. Election Disaster," followed the headline which read, "How Can 59,054,087 People Be So Dumb?"

No, not dumb. Just mediocre.

MAILBAG ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued From Previous Page

its own citizens here at home.

A knowledgeable observer would diagnose a little (or a lot of) schizophrenia in behaviors so characterized by saying one thing but doing the complete opposite.

Tim Slack, Newburgh, IN

To The Editor:

In remarks made Tuesday, George W. Bush again demonstrated his astounding ignorance of foreign affairs by declaring that "freedom is on the march" and pointing to anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut as proof his Middle East policies are working. Unfortunately, the only thing these assertions proved was that our president really doesn't understand anything about the internal politics of Lebanon.

Had Bush bothered to ask any representatives of the Shia population there, he would have discovered that these protesters are not at all representative of the Lebanese people and that defining their presence in Martyr's Square as a "movement" is hardly accurate. In fact, by injecting himself into what most Lebanese consider an internal issue, Bush has effectively linked the protesters to the United States and thus, seriously jeopardized any chance they had of achieving their goal. After all, being associated with the Americans isn't too popular in that part of the world these days.

The result of this administration's ill-conceived political grandstanding? Hezbollah mobilizes ten times as many pro-Syria demonstrators in a significantly greater display of strength and allows the Lebanese prime minister (who was on his way out) to reclaim his

leadership position!

Unfortunately this was all completely predictable — except for someone who never understood foreign policy in the first place.

Jeffrey Kyle Hensley, Plainfield, IL
Dear Editor,

The sponsorship scandal and the resultant inquiry are certainly demonstrating the total and complete contempt with which the rest of Canada is regarded by La Belle Province. Chretien and his Quebec Nationalist henchmen are no strangers to the art of lying, as we've known for at least three decades, but to derive amusement from their own blatant hypocrisy is a little too much for my stomach.

Quebec's withdrawal from Confederation is rapidly becoming the only option left to the majority of Canadians. If a national referendum on the subject were held today, Quebec would be gone tomorrow.

This divisiveness is especially frustrating to Canadian patriots in the face of the militant expansionist policy of the Washington war criminals currently being tolerated by our neighbours to the south. In fact, Bush had a bagman parading around Ottawa in recent months extolling the advantages to be gained from sticking our heads into the Star Wars noose. I suppose these discounted American dollars still look attractive to Canadians of treasonous bent.

We have heard the phrase "divide and conquer." We certainly have that divided part down to the point where the conquered part is happening without firing a shot. Is this the end of Canada?

A. Macdonell

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Entertainment



KWBU To Screen 'Border Bandits' March 22

WACO — KWBU will present a special screening of Kirby Warnock's "Border Bandits" on Tuesday, March 22, at 7:30 p.m., in room 101 of the Castellaw Communications Center on the Baylor University Campus. Parking is available in the Dutton Avenue Parking Facility.

From the producer of the award-winning PBS documentary "Return to Giant" comes a new look at a very old incident. In 1915, a group of Mexican banditos raided the McAllen Ranch, one of the largest in the area. The next day a group of Texas Rangers supposedly arrived and eliminated the perpetrators.

However, the real story is not as tidy as it has been portrayed. Roland Warnock, a 19-year-old cowboy working on the Guadalupe Ranch near present-day Edinburg, witnessed two of these killings when he saw Texas Rangers from Company D shoot two unarmed men in the back and leave their bodies by the side of the road. The effects of these killings by the Rangers are being felt in south Texas some 80 years later. This single incident brings into play much of the roots of the

distrust between Mexicans and the Rangers, as well as the continued friction between Hispanics and Anglos in Texas.

An important and moving story, "Border Bandits" was produced, written and directed by Kirby Warnock, the grandson of Roland Warnock, and features the actual voice of Roland Warnock as he describes the events of 1915. In 1974, he sat down with his grandson and dictated the entire story to him on a reel-to-reel tape recorder for Baylor University's oral history program. The younger Warnock kept the tapes, and then 30 years later digitized them and placed them in this documentary, with re-enactors portraying the events described by Roland Warnock.

Unlike other documentaries that rely on voice talent to read letters or journals, "Border Bandits" contains the actual voice of the primary source of information, Roland Warnock, lending it an air of authenticity unmatched in most documentaries.

There is no charge for the event, but reservations are requested. For more information or to make a reservation, call (254) 710-7883.



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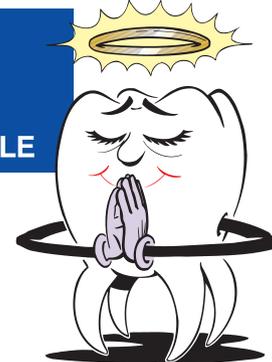
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