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Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher

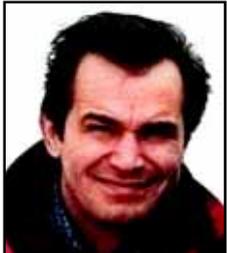


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*'The Gift Of Peace'
To Be Performed
In Dallas
Jan. 29*

BATMAN AND ROBIN AND JUDAISM — Rabbi Simcha Weinstein (center) was the first-ever Rabbi to speak at the San Diego Comic Con last year. The author of "Up Up and Oy Vey" spoke on a panel about the relationship between comic book characters (such as Batman and Robin) and Judaism.

**Touring Play Advocates
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Democrat Introduces Military Draft Bill

WASHINGTON — A Democratic congressman introduced a bill last week that would reinstate a military draft for all legal residents of the United States.

The age of the draftees would be between 18 and 42, according to a press release from Rep. Charles Rangel.

Rep. Rangel said that the draft was needed to prevent the already over-extended U.S. military from shattering due to President Bush's order to increase the U.S. presence in Iraq.

The 21,500 troops for Bush's escalation will come from extending the deployments of U.S. combat troops already in Iraq — some of whom have been deployed up to six times, noted the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"If we're going to challenge Iran and challenge North Korea . . . we can't do that without a draft," he said CBS's "Face the Nation" last November.

Rangel has claimed to be against the war in Iraq and the president's troop escalation.

Unlike his past pleas to reinstate the draft, Rangel failed to suggest in his press release that the forced conscription would make future wars unpopular to the American middle and upper classes when their families would be in harm's way.

Instead, Rangel promoted the draft this way: "[I]f Americans are to be placed in harm's way, all of us, from every income group and position in society, must share the burden of war."

Over 100 million Americans would be eligible for conscription since it calls for participation from not only U.S. citizens — men and women alike — but also immigrants and college students. Non-military forms of service are also included in the bill.

The leaders of newly-elected Democratic majority in Congress are reluctant to support a complete and immediate troop withdrawal, a vote to stop authorizing the war, and a

defunding of combat operations and permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq.

Should they support these measures, these Democrats risk reprisal from not only the Republicans but also the soldiers stationed overseas.

Instead, the congressional Democrats have pushed for a symbolic vote of no confidence in Bush's troops escalation.

Individual members of Congress have rallied ahead with plans for troop withdrawal of their own, most notably Rep.

Lynn Woolsey's Bring Our Troops Home and Sovereignty of Iraq Restoration Act.

Woolsey admitted that a troop withdrawal alone would not please all Iraqis, though it would still "remove the insurgency's very raison d'être and put Iraq

on track toward national healing and reconciliation."

To boost Iraqi sovereignty, Woolsey's proposal offers the Iraqi government concessions to U.S. involvement to its oil production, civil reconstruction, and military capabilities.

Symbolic Clock Signals Five Minutes To 'Doomsday'

CHICAGO — An elite group of scientists signifying their worry over global issues has moved the minute hand of a symbolic clock to five minutes until midnight.

The last time the clock's somber hand shifted forward was five years ago. Last year the hand was at the seven minute mark where it had been originally set in 1947.

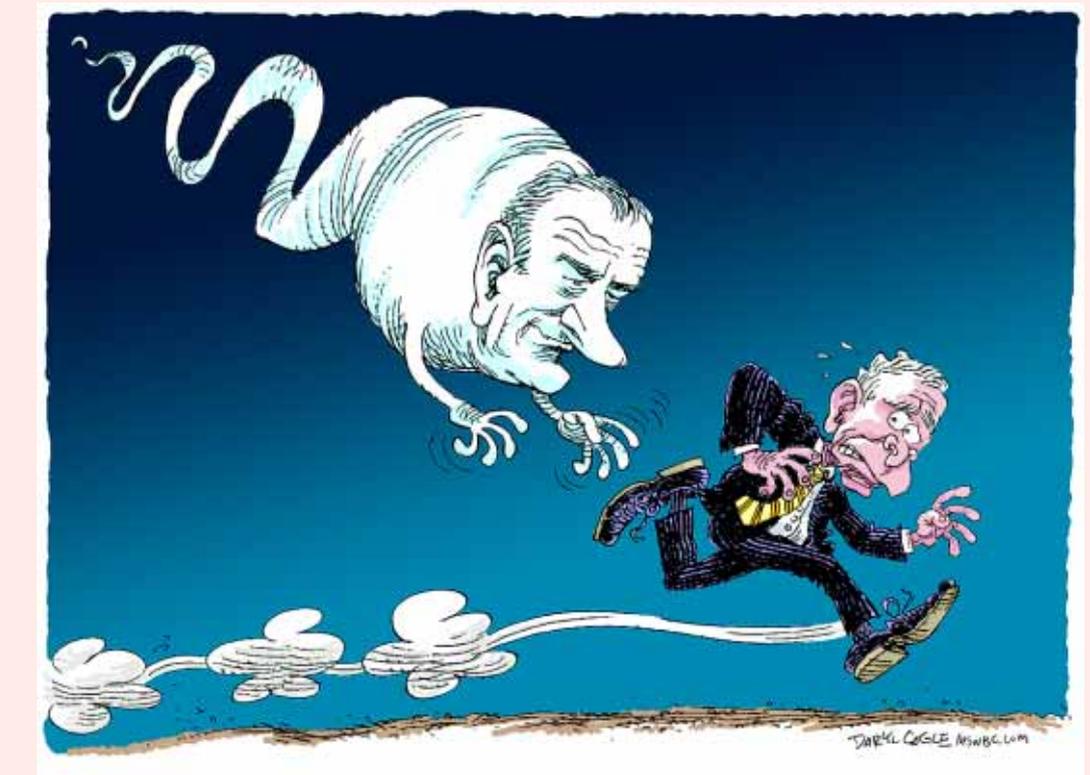
The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists said that it shifted the hand of their "Doomsday Clock" in part because global warming has pressured the creation of new nuclear power plants which could increase weapons proliferation.

A statement prepared by the scientists also expressed fears of a "Second Nuclear Age" — noting Iran and North Korea's nuclear desires, Russia's unsecured nuclear stock, and the 2,000 launch-ready nukes owned by the U.S. and Russia.

The 60-year-old clock that hangs in the University of Chicago was originally created to shed light on the peril of nuclear weapons.

A group of former Manhattan Project scientists formed the Bulletin after the development of the first atomic bomb.

The closest the clock has been set to midnight was in 1953 when hydrogen bombs were tested by the United



States and the Soviet Union. At that time, the minute hand reached two minutes to midnight.

At its furthest distance, the hand was at 17 minutes to midnight in 1991 when the two "Cold War" powers signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Over time, though, the hand has been thrust forward to re-

flect the continued threat imposed by world powers.

For instance, the United States is developing a missile defense program after it opted out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. India, Pakistan, North Korea and perhaps Israel have obtained nuclear weapons capabilities. Scientists say Iran's uranium enrichment program could be used to produce a

nuclear weapon in 10 years. It is said that "terrorists" are seeking nuclear weapons as well.

The threat of nuclear weapons has not been lost on hawks such as Henry Kissinger. The former U.S. secretary of state and three other American former officials called for the United States take the lead to create "a world without nuclear weapons."



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Jewperheroes

Rabbi Reclaims Jewish Roots To Superheroes

Interview With Rabbi Simcha Weinstein

BY NATHAN DIEBENOW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

NEW YORK CITY — All Rabbi Simcha Weinstein wanted to do was some reclaiming.

He wanted to tell folks that the values of their favorite comic book superheroes were based in part by the traditions and culture of Jewish artists, writers, and publishers.

The links between these characters and Judaism is extensive.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the two teenagers from Cleveland who invented Superman, were Jewish.

Bob Kane and Bill Finger, the two guys who created the Batman character, were Jewish.

Jerry Robinson, the inventor of Batman's archenemies the Joker, Catwoman, Two-Face, and the Riddler, was Jewish.

Martin Nodell, the man behind the Green Lantern, was Jewish. (Nodell passed away late last year.)

Julius Schwartz, the man behind the revival of superheroes such as the Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and the Atom, and the superhero team, the Justice League of America, all of which led to the Silver Age of comic books, was Jewish.

Will Eisner, the graphic novel pioneer and creator of *The Spirit*, was Jewish.

Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, the team that developed Captain America, were Jewish. (Simon is still alive and kicking.)

Stan Lee, the creator of Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, the Fantastic Four, and the X-Men, is Jewish.

Max and William Gaines and Harvey Kurtzman, the men responsible for publishing *Detective Comics* (DC Comics) and the satirical *MAD* magazine, were Jewish.

Martin Goodman, the publisher of Marvel Comics, was Jewish, too.

And if I had more time and talent, I would have put the list to music like Adam Sandler's "The Chanukah Song."

But be that as it may, Rabbi Weinstein's book "Up, Up and Oy Vey!: How Jewish History,

Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero" documents how these Eastern European Jewish immigrants expressed their cultural heritage while entertaining American youths through comics starting back in the 1930s.

In an interview with the *ICONOCLAST*, Weinstein, 30, said he could relate to these artists — since he himself is a Jewish immigrant to the United States from Manchester, England with a "vast" comic book collection.

Weinstein also said he wrote his book almost on accident. After a spiritual re-awakening, he quit his job in the film industry to live his life as a rabbi in Brooklyn Heights, N.Y., where he resides with his wife and two children.

Weinstein is the founder of the Jewish Student Foundation of Downtown Brooklyn and serves as the rabbi of Pratt Institute and Long Island College Hospital.

THE *ICONOCLAST* caught up with Weinstein to talk about his trek through pop culture and spirituality.

Here is that interview:

ICONOCLAST: Did the work of the late mythologist Joseph Campbell influence you in writing your book?

RABBI SIMCHA WEINSTEIN: You know, I never intended to write a book about superheroes. I have to make the disclaimer that I'm not the world's biggest superhero expert. I grew up very much influenced by popular culture. I didn't grow up religious. I grew up normal. That's what I always tell people. I went to film school. I used to work in the film industry. I always loved superheroes. I always loved comic books. I was more interested in the movies and TV shows, but I work now in Pratt Institute which is the second best art school in America, the big illustration department.

I always knew there was a Jewish influence on superheroes. I read the book "Kavalier and Clay." Are you familiar with that book?

ICONOCLAST: Yeah, I'm familiar with in from your book, but I haven't read it.

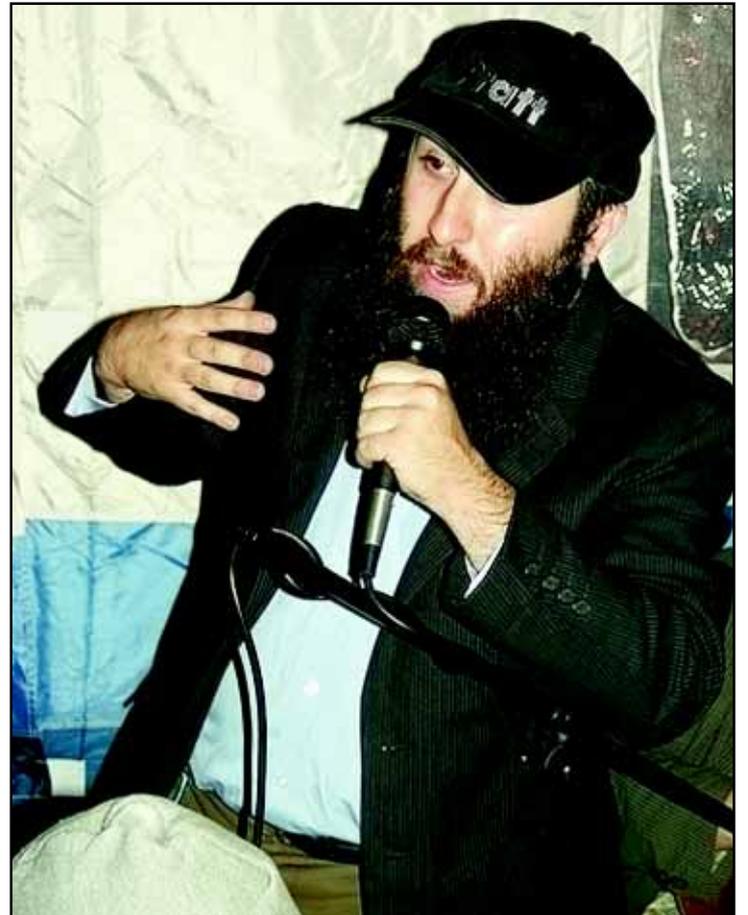
WEINSTEIN: It won the Pulitzer Prize. It's very high profile. "Kavalier and Clay" is a fictional account of Jewish comic book creators. So I knew there was a connection. For me it was a great way to connect to the Jewish students on campus and also non-Jewish students because I talk about religion, which is a little bit dated and boring, but suddenly when I talk about Batman and Judaism, it's much more exciting.

It came out by accident almost. I knew there was a Christian take on the superheroes, and what I tried to do was almost reclaim it because if all their creators were Jewish, I figured there had to be at least some Jewish connection. That was my basis for writing the book.

I definitely looked into archetypes and mythology. I read some of Campbell's stuff. Campbell talks about different archetypal figures and how it's influenced mythology and pop culture, but I also felt that if the creators of the Golden Age comics were Jewish and presumably they had bar mitzvahs and Sunday Schools and they had Passover Seders, so the notions of heroes and archetypes would be somewhat Old Testament related.

What shocked me was I bought all the archival comics — they're so expensive now it's crazy — and I was very surprised to see very overt connections. Superman is compared to Sampson. Captain America fights a pharaoh. The Fantastic Four are enslaved in Egypt.

Jack Kirby had a big Seder. It was one of his big things. He was very into Passover. His father was a devout Jew, so I saw throughout Kirby's work references to the Exodus, which to me was interesting. Here's a guy who was known to have a big Passover Seder, and at the same time, he's referencing biblical Egypt in his comics. Was that conscience of sub-conscience? I don't know. He's not



RABBI SIMCHA WEINSTEIN

around anymore for me to ask him, but I definitely think it was an influence in his work.

ICONOCLAST: So you were more interested in comic books than the Torah growing up. What was the reason for that?

WEINSTEIN: I wasn't religious. I went to secular schools. I think that when you're seven or eight years old, Indiana Jones and James Bond and Spiderman are a heck of a lot more interesting than Moses. Perhaps the question is, why? That's something that I'm trying to address with my book and my speeches.

By saying that the superheroes perhaps have an influence on Jewish biblical archetypes, I'm trying to say to the kids — I know it bothers me in the synagogues for example where we're reading the Torah and the kids will walk right passed with a Spiderman comic. They won't pay any attention to the Torah. And I'm trying to say to the kids,

"Hey, wait a minute! A lot of these stories and these ideas of heroes and villains and good and evil — a lot of these things come from the Torah." So you have all this excitement within the Torah itself.

ICONOCLAST: Before you wrote "Up Up and Oy Vey," you underwent a transformation yourself. Was there one thing that snapped in your head that led you to become a rabbi? Or was it a series of events?

WEINSTEIN: I never expected to. It's really an evolution. You know, you don't realize how far you journeyed until you stop and look back and assess. I started going to classes. I started getting involved with people who were observing the Sabbath. I loved this idea of having this oasis in time, one day a week where we get together, and there's a big meal, and there's prayer and song and family and camaraderie, as op

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Jewperheroes

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posed to what I knew. You know, in my house, everyone had a television, and we sort of plugged into whatever was on television. We ate in separate rooms. It was a whole different reality. For me it was very inviting and very spiritual. I went to Israel. I started learning, and it was never a conscious thing to become a rabbi. It was purely an evolution.

ICONOCLAST: And at the end of this transformation you changed your name from “Simon” to “Simcha.” So do you consider “Simcha” identity as your superhero persona?

WEINSTEIN: I talk about that in my book. It says that a Hebrew person’s Hebrew name is sort of their essence. It’s more than just an arbitrary definition. It really defines who they are as a person. Simcha actually means “joy” and “happiness.” My whole life I’ve tried to be a very positive, happy type of person, so perhaps there’s a connection to that.

I sort of felt that if I had my Hebrew name I was sort of “out of the closet” spiritually. I didn’t have my garb to conceal myself. I was obviously a very openly an Orthodox Jew, an observant Jew, whereas before I could sort of mask myself. I could put on a baseball cap. I wouldn’t have to show my yamaka, but once my name is changed, it’s much more out there. You can make the parallel.

ICONOCLAST: Of the deceased artists whom you weren’t able to interview for your book, which ones did it hurt the most to not talk about their lives and their work?

WEINSTEIN: Uh, (Jerry) Siegel and (Joe) Shuster, obviously. If you look back at their legacy, they never really got the recognition they deserved. I think they are probably two of the most prominent and important personalities to shape American popular culture in the last 100 years. They’re right up there with any famous figure. They’re right up there with Andy Warhol and all these icons of popular culture, and nobody really knows who they are, but things are changing a little bit now.

I would have liked to interview Jack Kirby obviously, but I think above everyone I felt a tremendous connection for Will Eisner’s stuff. I really respected how later on Will Eisner’s career, he got more in touch with his Jewish roots, explored his Jewish background, and explored the plight of the Jew im-

migrating to America — all these powerful themes that he looked at in his work.

Of anyone I would have liked to have spoken to Will Eisner. He passed away as I was starting to research and write the book. I was just finding Will Eisner’s stuff as he passed away and I would say that that hurt the most.

ICONOCLAST: These artists certainly took great pains to create these heroes in order to assimilate into American culture while at the same time convince Americans to enter World War II on the side of Britain and France. So as a British national and a person of Jewish heritage, what was your first reaction to this fact? Were you surprised that comic books were being used as propaganda?

WEINSTEIN: When you’re a kid, you don’t have the sophistication or the depth to really look at popular culture in a political context, so I was very surprised. I also felt a connection because I live in downtown Brooklyn. I’m right by the Brooklyn Bridge. We’re one stop from Manhattan, so I spent quite a lot of time in the Lower East Side. There’s a great park there where I take my kids. There’s kosher food there, and I felt an affinity with these artists who came to America as immigrants with nothing and were able to make a name for themselves and create these icons of popular culture.

I felt a connection myself coming from England. There’s much more anti-Semitism in England than there is in America, certainly in New York. It’s passe to be Jewish in New York. I mean, it’s like, “Who cares?” It’s a non-issue. For me in England, it was always a tremendous issue. It was a big thing. It was a big stumbling block in doing anything, so I felt a tremendous freedom in America, and I got a tremendous solace and satisfaction and motivation knowing that the path had been laid by all these iconic artists and writers before me.

ICONOCLAST: What kind of reaction have you seen of your work in discussing this fact from the non-Jewish audience?

WEINSTEIN: It’s something that I think the Jewish cultural world is taking very seriously. The Jewish connections to film and theater are well known, but this is something that is becoming reexamined. I know the Jewish museum in Manhattan, for example, had a very big comic book exhibit. Obviously it was

connected to Jewish artists, but they didn’t advertise it as a Jewish exhibit in any way. It was taken very seriously.

Many people have gone, for example, to the world’s biggest comic book convention, Comic Con, in San Diego that has 100,000 nerds — I include myself in the nerds — and they had a “Jews and comics” panel in the summer, and I was on the panel. I was probably the first rabbi to ever speak at Comic Con. I know in a couple of months New York is going to have a Comic Con, and we’ll be doing another panel where we’ll be speaking.

I think it’s definitely being taken seriously. In the new movie “Superman Returns” — Bryan Singer spoke about biblical archetypes and about Christianity and Judaism influencing him in his portrayal of Superman. But definitely the non-Jewish world is opening up to these things. They’re very interested in these things.

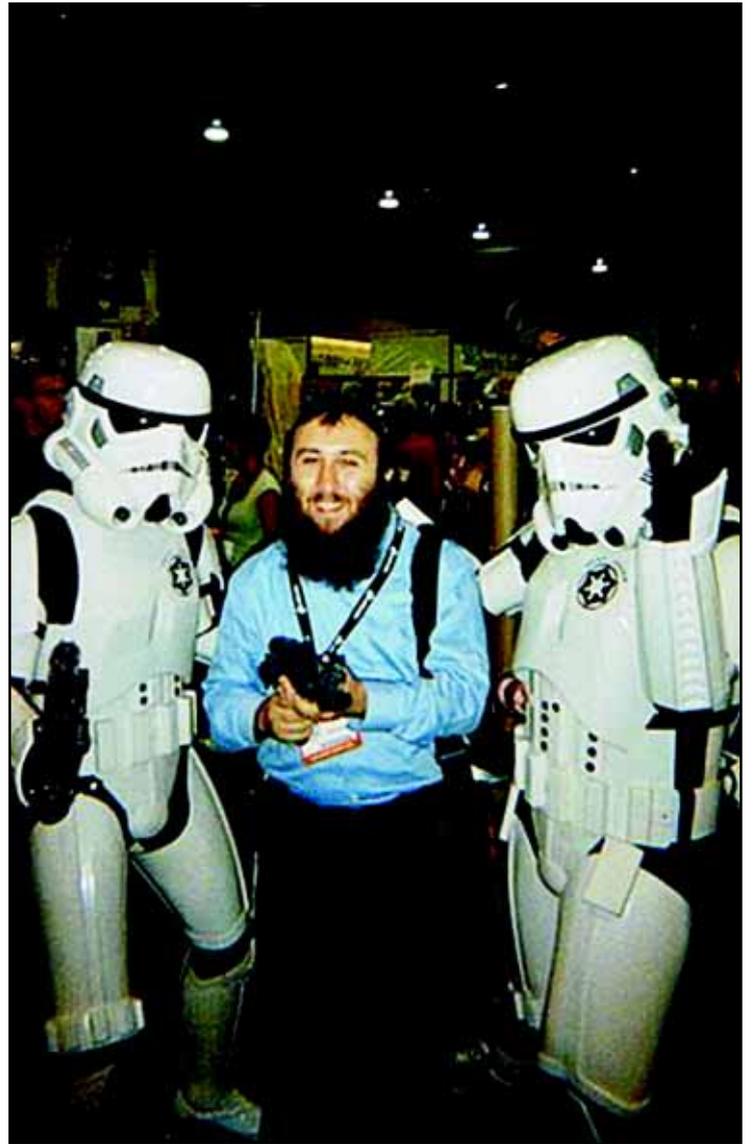
ICONOCLAST: From your research, what, if any, discussion was there among the Jewish writers and artists about whether to focus their storylines more directly to Jewish-centered politics of the day after World War II, namely the creation of the state of Israel?

WEINSTEIN: My feeling was there was little discussion. I think that fits in with my premise that these guys did change their names. These guys did write about characters that assimilated, and I think that it was very subconscious because they themselves were assimilating and their characters had assimilated. I think certainly pre-war and for a while post-war it was very much hidden.

I think only in the later ‘60s and ‘70, themes of religion and identity were explored. I would talk about writers like Chris Clemmons, who is Jewish. I interviewed him. He gave the X-men a very overtly Jewish connection making Magneto a Holocaust survivor and introducing Kitty Pryde who has very obvious Jewish Holocaust stories. I think the Jewish story lines and themes came later on.

ICONOCLAST: So it was still a taboo subject among the publishing world at that time, but topics like the creation of Israel weren’t even hidden behind storylines?

WEINSTEIN: There is definitely talk. You have a character like Sabra, the heroine of Israel, fighting the Hulk. These



JEWS IN SPACE? — The author of “Up, Up, and Oy Vey” Rabbi Simcha Weinstein (center) and two fans of the “Star Wars” movie franchise hang out at the San Diego Comic Con last summer.

concepts were there, but I found that whenever they’re in the comics, it’s very much from a position of not showing favoritism. For example, there’s an issue with Sabra and the Hulk, and the Hulk befriends a Palestinian boy, and it shows his plight and suffering. It really shows all plights with a view to peace and tolerance.

I think that issues like Israel are definitely in the comics, but there are certainly no favoritism or political angle. They kept things very general.

ICONOCLAST: How do you look at that? Do you think that keeping it general is sort of a cop out? Or is that the best that we can do?

WEINSTEIN: I think it’s savvy from a business perspective. I also think that these writers are very liberal. We have a lot to thank America for. They want to keep things general. They don’t want to rock the boat in any way, but if you look at the graphic novel, I think that’s much more subversive. The graphic novel is much more political and sexual, and if you want a more honest portrayal of themes, you can do all these

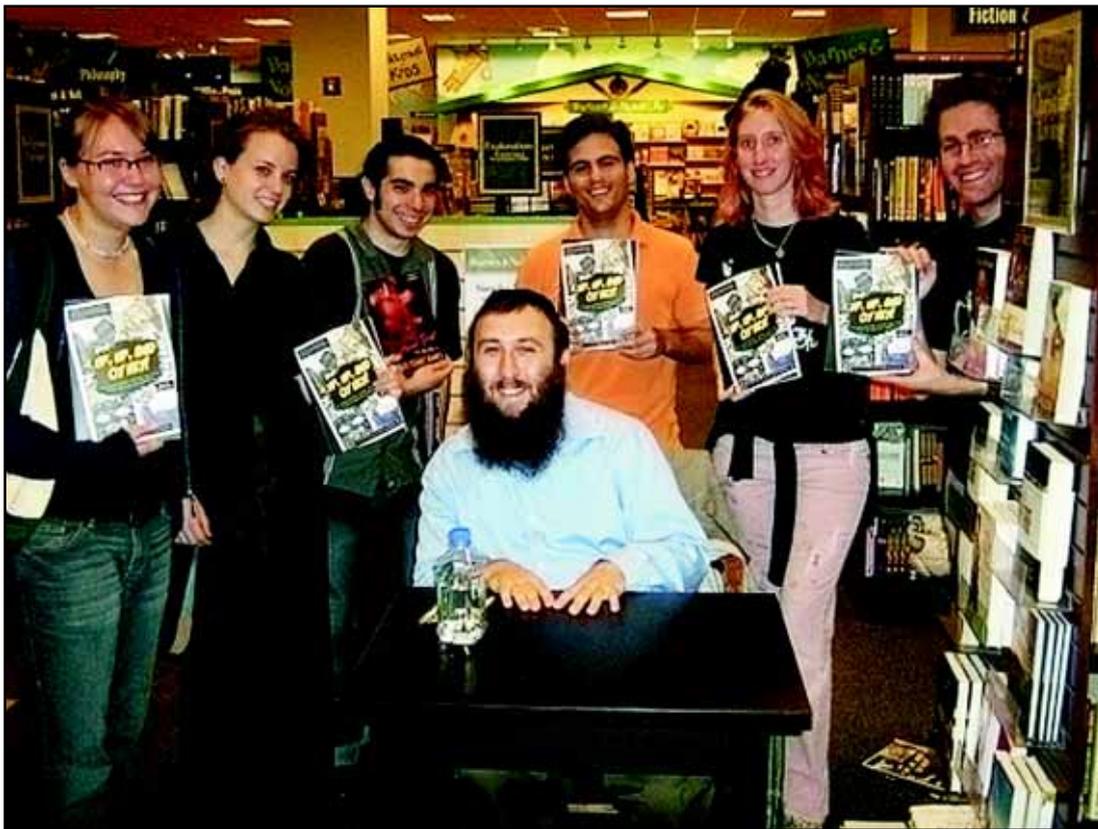
things in a graphic novel.

ICONOCLAST: It seems like Marvel Comics tackles politics more than its rival DC Comics. But what was your take on Frank Miller making Batman hunt for Osama bin Laden last year? For me it was strange to have DC Comics go so political because I can’t think of another instance when they have tackled any such issues before. But what was your take on the Batman hunt?

WEINSTEIN: That’s a good question. I think that Captain America, for example — there was a famous one where they brought him back in a post-9/11 setting. This issue was very controversial because he attacks the government. He’s very much for not going into Iraq and sort of waters down the idea of a war on terrorism. That got a lot of play because Captain America was seen as very patriotic, very supportive of the government.

I think that the climate we’re living in right now, it’s so political, and terrorism is on everyone’s minds that I think it’s natural that it would come into

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UP, UP, AND OY VEY, a book about how Jewish history, culture, and values shaped the comic book superhero, was written by Rabbi Simcha Weinstein (front, center) and released by Levitan Press last summer.

Jewperheroes

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comic books, especially now that comic books are so much more open and political. It sort of makes sense that bin Laden would enter into comic book stories.

ICONOCLAST: I never read it. Did you get around to reading it?

WEINSTEIN: No, I read about it, but I never read it. I don't read as many comics as I'd like to.

ICONOCLAST: (laughs) Me too.

WEINSTEIN: Especially now. There's so many with the Ultimate comics. They smashed it to so many genres that it's hard to follow the story. I don't know who is doing what anymore. I don't know whether they're alive or dead or reincarnated or anything anymore.

ICONOCLAST: I don't really mind like what has happened to the Batman movies where there's five different versions with different directors. I used to take offense to that, but then it's like that guy's take on Batman.

With Spiderman, it's not the same, though, with Sam Raimi doing it all the way through, though I was a little miffed that Bryan Singer didn't direct the last "X-Men" movie, but I understand.

WEINSTEIN: It's the law

of Superman. It's just too big a thing to turn down.

ICONOCLAST: Well, what do you see in comic books and Judaism and beyond Judaism and to address more political stuff like the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? Has that already been done or has it still yet to be tackled?

WEINSTEIN: I think in today's generation, especially with the Web and with the proliferation of information coming so fast and so furious — I mean, people can watch (stuff like) the hanging of Saddam Hussein on YouTube within five minutes of it happening. It's a different world. I think people's brains are fried. I don't have television anymore, and when I go to someone's house and put cable on, there's so much information. It's so fast.

The comic book medium is a great medium for young people and for adults. I think comic books are a great way of exploring things. I don't think we have the capacity to sit and plow through books like maybe we've done in the past which isn't necessarily a good thing, but it's just the way it is. I saw the 9/11 Commission drawn as a graphic novel, and it was done brilliantly. And what a great way

to have this overview!

As a rabbi, I think religions can use this medium as a way to reach out to young adult people, informing them and showing them the beauty and excitement of religion, of bible stories, and of archetypes. I think the Christian world is way-ahead of the Jewish world. I know now we have a company called Fox Faith, where we're putting money in faith-based movies. "The Passion of the Christ," for example, did incredibly well, and there's "The Nativity Story" and "One Night with the Queen."

There is a demand for religious popular culture entertainment, and I think comic books is a great medium for doing that. You know, I'd like to see it used more in curriculums and schools. I think it's only going to grow.

ICONOCLAST: It's kind of interesting that comics aren't so much put into the curriculum in schools. I haven't picked up a high school or college textbook in years, but when I was in school, there still wasn't a lot of pictures.

WEINSTEIN: I don't think people can deal with that anymore. Also, I think we've become so sophisticated that we don't have to deal with

that.

ICONOCLAST: With textbooks?

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, you can plow through Google in seconds. Information has changed. Is it good? Is it bad? That's a whole other topic, but it is what it is.

ICONOCLAST: Talking about medium transformation, how would that effect Orthodox Judaism? I mean, it's so centered around the Torah. It's very word-based. I mean, it's language. Wouldn't that take away part of the experience?

WEINSTEIN: There's different ways to look at it. There's a perspective that it takes away and that it's dangerous and a threat to the religion. And then there's the perception which is like my group. I'm a Chabad-Lubavitch follower. We're a Hassidic group that believes very much in outreach. Our philosophies are very much working with the world, elevating the world. Something my spiritual master the grand Rebbe Lubavitch was very supportive of — for example, I have in front of me my palm cellphone. I have the whole Torah on it, my prayer book, my Songs of David — you know, there's so much stuff that I have just in my phone. I don't need to carry around a prayer book anymore. We're able to put lectures on the Web now. We can collect so much more information. We can sift

through so much more information quickly.

It can be used to good and bad. It's my job as a religious leader is to make sure that it's used for positive things.

ICONOCLAST: I guess maybe six thousand years ago our ancestors were having the same debate over paper — whether to take these oral stories and put it on some papyrus, and they were like, "You know, this isn't right." And someone said, "Well, hey, you know, we've got to keep it going. We've got to keep up with the Egyptians." (laughs)

WEINSTEIN: Good point. That would make a good graphic novel, I'd say.

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Rabbi Simcha Weinstein's website
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Americans Charging Medical Expenses To Credit Cards More: Study

NEW YORK — New research has found that American families are accruing more credit card debt in order to handle their medical care expenses.

The co-authors of the report — Demos and the Access Project — say that this finding is another indication that health care costs are rising faster than incomes.

“We can’t let this happen in America,” said Mark Rukavina, Director of the Access Project.

The report “Borrowing to Stay Healthy” is based on data from a national survey of low- and middle-income households with credit card debt.

It found that those who identified medical expenses as a factor in their credit card balances had much higher credit card debt than those who did not.

One of the key findings from the report said that among the medically indebted, young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 had the highest level of

average credit card debt (\$13,303) of any age group.

Credit card debt levels for non-medically indebted young adults amounted to \$7,450, according to the report.

The financial pitfalls that the medically indebted may encounter in the future include poor credit ratings that harm a family’s prospects for homeownership, small business development, and even employment.

The co-authors of the report said that blending the healthcare and finance indus-

trial is dangerous and should be discouraged because it would only serve the exacerbate the problem. The authors suggested that Congress should increase oversight of medical credit cards and lines of credit attached to health savings accounts.

“As these types of products become more common, the effects on cash-strapped families could be severe,” said the report. “If a patient has a low credit score or is late with a payment, he or she could pay exorbitant interest fees and

penalties for health care services. These new products should be closely monitored.”

The authors also encourage Congress to enact a Borrower’s Security Act in which creditors are limited in changing the terms and fees of their products at a whim.

To view the full report, visit the websites for Demos and Access Project.

INFO

Demos

www.demos.org

Access Project

www.accessproject.org

California Medical Students Demand Single-Payer Healthcare

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Medical students in California rallied at their state capitol last Tuesday to support a single-payer healthcare plan initiative.

The event was billed as the largest demonstration for universal healthcare by future health professionals in the state’s history.

The students, activists, and healthcare professionals back state Sen. Sheila Kuehl’s universal healthcare bill, Senate Bill 840.

The bill calls for the state government to offer one health insurance plan that covers every single Californian without the need for privatization.

A similar piece of legislation was vetoed by Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger during the 2005 state legislative session.

The governor set in motion his own plan for “universal healthcare” that keeps private insurers in the healthcare business.

The medical students, though, doubt his system would prove affordable to the 6.6 million Californians currently priced out of the current system.

“The time has passed for short-term fixes and half measures. California needs broad changes if it is sincerely devoted to fixing this problem,” wrote Mohammad Shahahebi, a student at UC Irvine School of Medicine, in a recent column. “[H]ealthcare is a right, not a privilege reserved for the wealthy. It is our obligation to advocate for our patients.”

Sen. Kuehl said with the help of these medical students, it would only be a matter of time before the single payer system becomes a reality in California.

“In a system faced with growing numbers of uninsured and medical bankruptcies, as well as rapidly deteriorating quality of care, these future doctors are acting to protect not only their future patients, but also their own ability to practice good medicine. We must listen,” she said.

The World Health Organization ranked the U.S. healthcare system at 37th in overall performance in 2000.

Roughly 300 students attended the 2nd Annual Lobby Day and Rally organized by the California Alliance for Legislative Action on Universal HealthCare (CALA) and the American Medical Student Association (AMSA).



Obama Announces Bid For White House Race

WASHINGTON — Sen. Barack Obama last Tuesday widened the field of Democratic candidates racing for the White House in 2008.

A formal announcement from the freshman senator from Illinois will be made in Chicago on Feb. 10.

Obama, 45, formed a campaign fund-raising committee the day after the national observance of the late civil rights leader Dr. Mar-

tin Luther King, Jr.

Should Obama win the U.S. presidency, he would be the first African American to control the executive branch of U.S. government.

Obama is the fifth Democratic candidate who has made moves to seek the high office.

Other candidates from the Democratic Party include 2004 vice presidential nominee John Edwards, former Iowa Gov. Tom

Vilsack, Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich, and Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd.

Democrats Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware and Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico are said to be weighing bids.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York has said she would announce whether or not she would run in the coming weeks.

Sen. Clinton, who is the leading candidate in Democratic polls, is seen as such a polarizing figure in U.S. national politics that she may not have a chance against a Republican candidate.

Obama, though new and inexperienced in Washington, is seen as a rising star within the Democratic Party who draws large crowds.

Obama — the son of a white Kansas-born mother and a black Kenyan father — graduated from Harvard Law School. He won his Senate seat in a landslide against Republican Alan Keyes in 2004.

Diesel Truck Engines Move Closer To Near-Zero Emissions

WASHINGTON — This year marks the first step toward near-zero emissions for diesel truck engines, according to an industry insider.

“New clean diesel trucks sold beginning in 2007 will produce 90 percent fewer emissions of particles and significantly lower emissions of nitrogen oxide [NOx] than trucks built in 2006,” said Allen Schaeffer, the executive director of the Diesel Technology Forum.

Reports indicate that the soot emissions from one truck sold in 1988 are equal to 60 trucks built in 2007.

The 2007 model trucks are expected to cut smog-forming gases by 2.6 million tons each year while reducing soot emissions by 110,000 tons annually once they fully replace the old fleet.

To reduce emissions, this year’s model employs advancements in engine management,

fuel injection, emissions reduction, turbocharging innovations, as well as ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) fuel.

“These trucks are the most tested in history, racking up millions of miles in real-world pre-production fleet-testing programs,” said Schaeffer.

Achieving extremely low emissions means that these engines must meet the low standards for at least 435,000 miles.

The 2010 model year prom-

ises to reduce NOx by a total of 90 percent from 2004 levels.

Schaeffer acknowledged that reducing emissions from diesel engines is important because trucking is “the lifeblood of moving goods in this country, accounting for 94 percent of consumer retail items delivered to store shelves.”

Moreover, these new engines are possible in part to the October 2006 introduction of ULSD fuel.

Sen. Averitt Retains Key Committee Assignments

AUSTIN — Although state Sen. Kip Averitt (R-McGregor) only recently took the reins as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst last week added to Averitt's already heavy workload by permitting him to retain key assignments on the Senate's Finance, Business, and Commerce, Education and Higher Education committees.

Because the Senate has relatively few members, the Lt. Governor must rely on each Senator to tackle a wide spectrum of complex issues. But Averitt's prime committee assignments and recent appointment to serve as chairman of one of the Senate's most powerful committees could be an indication that Averitt's position in a body of talented policy makers continues to grow stronger.

"I am honored by Governor Dewhurst's faith in my abilities," Averitt said, "and I look forward to the hard work ahead. Since I was first elected to the Legislature in 1993, I have had the opportunity to work on many major issues facing the



Sen. Kip Averitt

state, and I am grateful that the Lt. Governor is providing this opportunity to bring all of that experience together and continue shaping state policy for the better."

Since he was elected to the

Senate in 2002, Averitt has fulfilled leadership roles on a wide variety of major legislative efforts, including school finance reform and design of the state's \$140 billion biennial budget.

The Austin American

Statesman's online, interactive 80th Session preview lists Averitt as one of the Senate's eight key members. In May of 2006, Capitol Inside — an online publication that covers the inner-workings of the Texas Leg-

islature — named Averitt one of the Senate's ten most powerful players and listed him among the Legislature's top 10 Special Session All-Stars. Averitt serves in President Bush's district.

'Susan G. Komen for the Cure' Celebrating New Name This Week

WACO — The week of Jan 22 is being heralded as Susan G. Komen for the Cure 2007 Promise Week, recognizing the 25th anniversary with a new brand and a new name by reintroducing the movement, maximizing awareness of breast health issues, and reinforcing the mission of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure, formerly the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, is the world's largest and most progressive grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activists fighting to end breast cancer forever. It all began as a promise between Nancy G. Brinker and her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died from breast cancer at age 36.

Today, this promise has grown to engage more than 100,000 breast cancer survivors

and activists around the world.

By the end of 2007, Komen will have invested nearly \$1 billion in breast cancer research and community outreach programs, becoming the world's largest source of funds, behind the U.S. government, fighting breast cancer.

National Media Message Day was Monday, while Tuesday was 25th Anniversary Day.

Wednesday, Jan. 24, is Promise Ring Day, established for the promotion of the pink Promise Ring from www.25komen.org.

Thursday is Race Day, promoting the race for the cure that is set for March 31.

Friday, Jan. 26, is Race Registration/Volunteer Day. Race registrations are available online at www.komencentraltexas.org. Volunteers are needed.

'Diamonds & Denim' Saturday, May 12

FORT WORTH — The American Diabetes Association's Diamonds & Denim Gala will be held Saturday, May 12, at the exclusive Fort Worth Club on 306 W. 7th St., in downtown Fort Worth.

This year, Cook Children's Medical Center will be the recipient of our 2007 Gary & Sylvia Luskey Award in honor of their support for diabetes camp.

This western chic event is sponsored by Baylor All Saints Medical Center at Fort Worth and Baylor Medical Center at Southwest Fort Worth.

The live and silent auctions will feature handcrafted decorations while patrons boot scoot to the Ray Bans.

Tickets are \$150 for an individual or \$1,500 for a table. All proceeds will benefit the American Diabetes Association.

To RSVP, call Richelle Hicks at (817) 332-7110 ext. 6110 or visit www.diabetes.org/ftworth.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading nonprofit health organization providing diabetes research, information, and advocacy.

The mission of the organization is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabe-

tes. To fulfill this mission, the American Diabetes Association funds research, publishes scientific findings, provides information and education to people with diabetes, their families, health care professionals and the public, and advocates for scientific research and for the rights of people with diabetes.

Engineering Sustainability Conference Slated April 15-18

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — A conference aimed to share techniques involving sustainable building projects will be held at the Sheraton Station Square in Pittsburgh, Pa., April 15-18.

The conference's focus will be on projects that demonstrate cross-disciplinary and/or cross-cultural collaboration.

Topics include green building design and construction; sustainable distributed power for the built environment; design of more sustainable transportation grids; housing and water solutions for megacities; water solutions for the developing world; water intensity in industry; economics of sustainability; toward the "zero operating costs" building; and the inter-

Speaking Two Languages Delays Memory Loss

OTTAWA — Canadian scientists found that people who speak two languages regularly have an increased chance of prolonging their memories by up to four years.

This finding, though preliminary, showed that bilingualism delays symptoms of dementia in senior citizens. The study, however, failed to indicate whether bilingualism prevents dementia.

According to researchers at

Toronto's York University the increased use of language raises the supply of blood to the brain where nerves are stimulated more.

It is thought that blood circulation and nerve activity aid in warding off dementia.

The University team split a group of 184 elderly patients showing signs of dementia into two groups. One group of 91 patients could only speak one language while the group of 93 could speak two.

The researchers discovered that after a period of four years at the memory clinic, the

monolingual group fell into dementia at the mean age of 71.4 years. The mean age for dementia in the bilingual group was 75.5 years.

"This difference remained even after considering the possible effect of cultural differences, immigration, formal education, employment and even gender as (influences) in the results," the report said.

Alzheimer's disease is the top cause of dementia among the elderly. No cure for it has been found.

Treating people with Alzheimer's disease cost Canadians \$4.7 billion in 2000.

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Texas DPS Marks Amber Alert Awareness Anniversary Date

AUSTIN — Officials with the Texas Department of Public Safety announced that Saturday, Jan. 13, was National Amber Alert Awareness Day. The day, named by the U.S. Department of Justice, is meant to remind Americans that Amber Alerts are an important tool in recovering children who have been abducted.

The Amber Alert system was used successfully for several years in the Dallas/Fort Worth area before a state plan went into effect in August 2002. The state plan is meant to complement, not replace, local and regional plans.

Activation of the Texas Amber Alert Network is a massive cooperative effort involving the DPS, several state agencies, local law enforcement, the media, businesses, and other organizations. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children was added as a state partner in 2005, providing notification to the public through wireless carriers, content providers, and major retailers.

Members of the general public

can sign up to receive Amber Alerts via text messages on their wireless telephones by visiting the website www.wirelessamberalerts.org. The wireless industry has partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children www.missingkids.com to provide this service.

Since the Texas Amber Alert Network's creation in 2002, the DPS has issued 26 state-involved Amber Alerts, and 30 children who were featured in Amber Alerts have been safely recovered. The vast majority of requests made by local police

agencies for state-involved Amber Alerts are declined because they do not meet the state criteria.

If your child is missing, immediately call your local law enforcement agency to file a missing persons report. Be prepared to provide law enforcement with the most recent photo of the child, a detailed description of what the child was wearing, and any other information that could help identify the child or the abductor, such as vehicle and license plate information.

Baylor Theatre Will Perform 'Annie Get Your Gun' Soon

WACO — The Baylor University Theatre sings in the New Year with one of musical theatre's spunkiest leading ladies with Irving Berlin's "Annie Get Your Gun," playing Feb. 8-11 and 15-18, in the Jones Theatre.

Tickets are on sale now, as are season tickets. For tickets or more information, call (254) 710-1865 or visit the website www.baylor.edu/Theatre_Arts.

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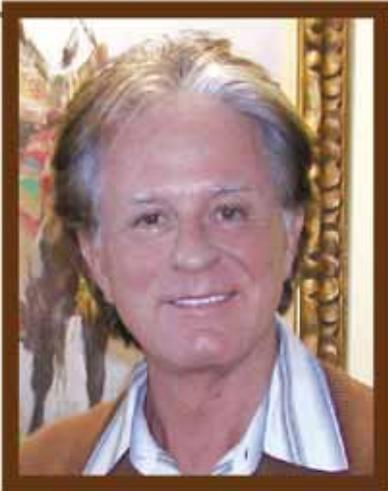
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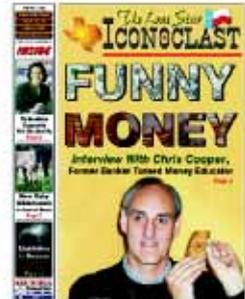
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Road Apples In The Statehouse, At SMU

As Uncle Hugh used to say, "Rich people who claim to have discriminatin' taste seem to think snot is a flavoring."

What do Ted Nugent, Lying Tricky Ricky Perry (the governor Texas didn't want), Virginia statehouse delegate Frank D. Hargrove and the Methodist Church have in common?

They're tackier than a closet full of hand-painted ties.

And they're just about as important.

Or, as Uncle Hugh used to say, "Their privy is just a little too close to the house."

First, there's Tricky.

Who pretends he's not a racist.

He favors a test that discriminates against black and brown high school students, he believes a tax system wherein black and brown people pay more than their share, he opposes the "top ten rule" which allows more black and brown people to attend state universities, he sends troops to the border to keep out the brown folks and he works to make sure black and brown people get less public assistance than political spoils merchants.

But he's not a racist.

You could substitute "poor" for any of the above colors, and be just as accurate.

He's not a racist.

He's a jackass.

Racism is just a natural byproduct of the road apples he leaves behind.

Second, why should anybody be surprised that Tricky's pet performing psychotic, Ted Nugent, performed at the gubernatorial inaugural wearing his anti-Mexican feelings on the sleeve of a battle flag t-shirt?

OK. Ted Nugent claims that he didn't know that the Amboy Dukes' "Journey to the Center of the Mind" was about drugs.

So, assuming that's true, how smart can he be?

IT'S TED NUGENT PLAYING TO A BUNCH OF REPUBLICANS, FOR PITY'S SAKE!

You expected Ravi Shankar on Prozac?

Second, Del. Hargrove said black people should "get over slavery."

Like Stevie Wonder should get over blindness.

So an 82-year-old white Virginia politician would say something like that?

It probably took him 30 years to agree to call them "black."

This is a state where the elected officials are called "delegates."

Like there's a hospitality

Call To Mind

By Don M. Fisher



room on the eighth floor and they all wear little plastic badges that say, "Hi, my name's

... " It's not as though anybody who pays any serious attention to Hargrove is going to change their way of thinking.

Or is it that, on some level, he might have a point?

Nobody is going to apologize to me for fighting the Battle of Pittsburg Landing in my grandfather's back yard, then appropriating our property for a national park.

And moving my DNA to Texas.

And I don't think anybody's going to give Mississippi back to the Choctaw.

As if having one side of the family tree genetically grafted to a Texan weren't bad enough.

It might be nice to get an apology, but if it's all the same, I'd just as soon have the money.

The Virginia resolution at issue, an apology for slavery, is a pretty meaningless gesture without the schools, housing and health care that goes with it.

And I'll bet Col. Hargrove ain't going to vote for those, either.

Actually, I think Tony Brown put it better:

"Whatever you think white people owe, they're not going to pay it."

And finally, the Methodist preachers.

Understand, I'm a Methodist.

And anything I have to say about Neighbor Bush is colored by my opinion that I don't think he's got enough sense to keep out of a big fire.

But if he wants to put his library at SMU, let him.

You're talking about a rich kids' prep school that hasn't fostered a live thought since the Wilson administration.

It's Miz Bush's alma mater, where she spent \$7,000 per semester to become a school librarian.

And we're surprised at the deficit increase?

But the true nature of Methodism is that we believe in the believer.

It's all between you and God.

The Church doesn't referee.

It's sort of like your dad yelling from the stands.

You ought to listen, but you should also do what you need to do to put the big numbers on

your side of the board.

In other words, by the most basic of Methodist doctrines, Neighbor Bush has a right to be as pompous as he wants.

He and God will visit later.

If you're that concerned about bloody-minded policy reflected by public institutions,

you'd have to start with Carnegie Hall and work your way down to Reagan airport.

Who cares where Neighbor Bush builds his library; you don't have to go there and read about that pet goat.

And insofar as whether he'll have influence over academic

freedom, ex-presidents have about as much influence as a tick on a bucking bull.

If you're worried undue influence from a pack of fascist loonies who'd try to milk a profit out of a cerebral palsy ward, you'd better move SMU out of Highland Park, Texas.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL

Alberto In Wonderland

U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez is a criminal, and he all but admitted to it last week.

Gonzalez on Wednesday abruptly lifted the Bush administration's five year ban on requesting warrants for domestic electronic spy program from courts empowered by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

Though this flip-flop seems to restore balance to the executive branch via judicial and congressional oversight, the administration has yet to answer why it broke federal law in the first place and to what extent it spied on Americans.

Despite Gonzalez's insistence to the Senate Judiciary Committee to the contrary, the move was politically motivated since the Democrats took power in Congress two weeks ago, threatening to investigate Bush's illegal, abusive program.

And investigate it, they should by all means.

To restore real credibility to the both branches of government and mend the Constitution, Congress must get to the bottom of this bull-headed administration's lackadaisical romps across the civil rights of everyday Americans.

What Congress will discover should they run down the rabbit hole will be the truth — the president's so-called "war on terrorism" is a mere fantasy.

For evidence of this administration's in-

sanity, all one must do is listen to Gonzalez's logic that the Constitution fails to grant a fair trial to Americans.

"There is no expressed grant of habeas in the Constitution; there's a prohibition against taking it away," he told the Senate Judiciary Committee during its hearing on Jan. 18.

"The Constitution," Gonzales continued, "doesn't say every individual in the United States or citizen is hereby granted or assured the right of habeas corpus. It doesn't say that. It simply says the right shall not be suspended."

Of course, the writ of habeas corpus can't be suspended except in cases of rebellion or invasion, but if the Constitution denies this basic right to U.S. citizens across the board, then what good is the Constitution?

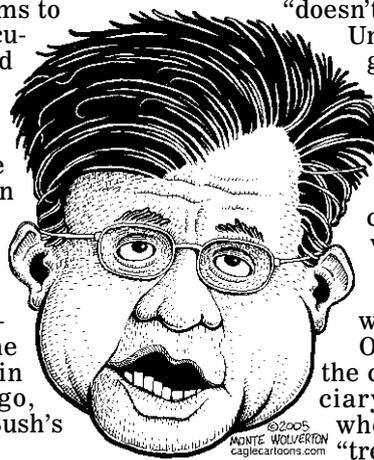
Obviously, Sen. Arlen Specter, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, was correct when he accused Gonzalez of "treading on your interdiction of violating common sense."

Moreover, Gonzalez said his Justice Department would refuse to allow the public to know the FISA court's decision on its only approved domestic spy warrant to date.

"Are you saying that you might object to the court giving us a decision that you publicly announced?" asked Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont. "Are we Alice in Wonderland here?"

Indeed, Mr. Senator. Indeed.

— Nathan Diebenow





Snowy view from the porch.



Snowflakes fall on the ranch.



Cows in the field.



Cardinal appreciates treat during the snowfall.

Snow Days

Since Sunday night/ Monday morning, we've have freezing rain, ice, sleet —and now SNOW!!! Beautiful, large flakes for a while. We didn't get as badly iced in as we've been before —or as badly as many around us. It won't last long, never does here. (And we're very glad we don't have to contend with such weather on a regular basis. Once a year or so is a treat; every day all winter long would be a trial.

Rustic Ramblings

By Dr. Gene Ellis



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

Today the roads aren't so bad as they were yesterday. Our front porch is VERY slippery, and just as Z warned me to be careful on Monday, down he went on the steps. Luckily he's still intact. We were out breaking ice on the troughs at 8 a.m. these last two mornings. At least today the mud was more solidly frozen, so walking was easier in most places.

Where the cows plod around and congregate as a herd— in the rain (near troughs or the molasses lick, near the salt blocks, in the cow lot, etc.), it gets pretty messy —and still is. It's VERY mushy in the cow lot today. Z figures cow poop and uric acid must freeze at even lower temperatures than regular ground, because that stuff in the lot isn't nearly solid as everything else. We ended up walking ankle deep in mud and other, ah, natural substances. (I should smear some of it on our front steps to melt the ice).

We fed the cattle some bags of range cubes and wandered around taking pictures for a while. I guess we've gotten about 3/4 of an inch of snow, and it's stopped coming down now, sorry to say. I was hoping for enough to go sledding or make a snowman (without dirt in it).

We never lost power, and even if we had, we would hope our propane heat would have still been intact, although we've been hemorrhaging propane since the weekend. I don't want to even look at the meters on the tanks to see how much we've used.—Good thing we have a reliable heat source, though, because the temp hasn't gotten above about 30 degrees here in three days. (Of course, there's always the old wood-burning stove should the propane fail and we become desperate. —And an endless supply of firewood (from limbs that fell during the winds earlier this month). We've stayed toasty and kept warm.

Stinky the dog is LOVING this snow (when he isn't hiding in his house—he didn't much care for the ice). He's has been romping around like a puppy today. Someone hit a deer on a road bordering this place last week, and it's been in the bar ditch ever since. This morning, there it was in the middle of the road where a neighbor's dogs had apparently dragged it, trying to take it home (to help feed the family, no doubt). And there the three

dogs were —in the road with the unfortunate deer. Luckily there wasn't too much traffic this morning. We stopped for Zack to drag the poor deer from the road (so the dogs wouldn't end up being road kill as well).

Smokey the cat's been hiding since this weather began. Tiger ran into the little cabin when I went in to turn on a heater. I always let the outside male cats in there when the weather's so cold. Today when I was checking on Tiger in his temporary luxury accommodations, I kept hearing Smokey and figured he was under the structure, one of his favorite spots even in good weather. Every time I went over there, I would call for him so I could bring him in. But he wasn't going to have any part of this ice and sleet, and I wasn't going to crawl under to fetch him.

Zack took a panel off the side of the cabin. I put a bowl of food under, and sure enough, there came Smokey, hungry as a bear. Poor guy probably hadn't had much water since everything froze on Sunday night (even though I kept leaving food and water out for him). He still wouldn't come out into all this white stuff, so I made a split-second executive decision, grabbed him and put him inside with his brother. I'll sleep better now, knowing my daughter's 14-year old "kittens" are safe and warm.

I should be able to evict both Smokey and Tiger by Friday or Saturday, certainly by Sunday, and they certainly will be reluctant to leave. But they're outside cats, and that would be THREE litter boxes in three different areas. Fifi the Maid (my alter ego) is getting a little tired of this nasty little job.

Z just announced that we'll beat the cold in the hot tub later, which should be very interesting. Excruciating getting in. Excruciating getting out. Divine in between. — Also memorable, surrounded by the snowy landscape.



Gene beats the cold in the outdoor hot tub, surrounded by snow.



Photos provided by Dr. Gene Ellis.

Stinky gives an evil look when told to not get on the towels.



Extra food for the livestock, and "star" flakes



Snowy rooster and a rooster-snow-angel.

The British Are Coming!



Modern Times

By Lloyd Garver

Not since the musical "British Invasion" of the Sixties have American media gone so nutsy over the prospect of some Brits coming to the United States. Unless you've been sleeping 24 hours a day, you probably know that soccer star/fashion model/sex symbol David Beckham and his wife, former Spice Girl/skinny person/compulsive shopper Victoria are moving to Los Angeles. He's going to make approximately \$250 million over the next five years while endorsing all kinds of things and attempting to make European football, or soccer as we Americans call it, a major sport in the United States.

It's not an easy task. In America, we love our baseball, football, and basketball, and we think it's cute that our kids play soccer. But very few of us take it seriously. We may watch an important Olympic or World Cup match on television, but very few of us understand the game and actually have paid money to see it played. Those who own and run the Major Soccer League are hoping that Beckham will help change our attitude towards the sport.

And it already seems to be working. In 24 hours, Beckham's new team, the L.A. Galaxy sold over 2,000 season tickets. In Toronto, which will have a new team in the league this year, they sold over 1,000 season tickets after the Beckham announcement, and those folks aren't even guaranteed that they'll see Beckham this year in a game. I understand it. This guy's a legend, the rest of the world loves soccer, so why not check him out?

That's my thinking, and I'll definitely buy a ticket to see Beckham and the L.A. Galaxy play this year.

The question, of course, is will those of us who go to see Beckham play continue to be fans after that match? Will America ever embrace a game where there is so little scoring? Will we ever have the patience to learn the finer points of the game? Will we ever take a sport seriously where it's forbidden to touch the ball with your hands, but you can hit it with your head?

But wait a minute. If Americans don't care about soccer all that much, why was the war in Iraq, the Democratic Congress, and even the new American Idol season pushed off the front pages of America's newspapers by the Beckhams? It's because they are bigger than soccer. In England, this couple has been dubbed the "alternative Royal family."

Beckham and "Posh" are famous in the entire soccer-loving world — in other words, every-

where outside of the United States. What they wear, how their hair looks, and where they hang out is big news internationally. So now they will have a chance to become hugely famous here, too. Or as the Wall Street Journal put it, "Can they replicate their global superstardom in the U.S., where soccer doesn't draw huge crowds?"

My feeling is that if the Wall Street Journal is speculating about this couple, they are on their way.

They also have a good start, since Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes are among their best friends. In fact, Beckham said that he turned to Tom Cruise for advice before signing his new contract. Of Cruise, Beckham said, "He's a very wise man and a very good friend of mine." Yikes.

But Tom and Katie won't be their only competition for the title of, "The Most Glamorous Couple In The World." On a radio sports talk show the day after Beckham signed his contract, the sports experts were not talking about his soccer ability or whether the United States would finally embrace soccer. These guys, who would not have been able to pick out either Beckham from a lineup a week before, were debating whether the Beckhams or Brad and Angelina were the biggest celebrity couple in the world. On a sports show! That's how pervasive the cult of celebrities has become.

I wouldn't be surprised if Brad and Angelina had an emergency meeting with their publicist right after the Beckhams blew them off the front page. Expect some big move from them soon, like maybe they'll announce that they're going to adopt triplets from some unfortunate country. But the Beckhams aren't amateurs in the self-promotion business. It's just possible that they could top this. All they have to do is make an even bolder move: announce that they're adopting someone, too — Jennifer Aniston.

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

Is It High Treason Or Just A Simple Case Of Dereliction Of Duty?

BY MAHER OSSEIRAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

All the available information indicates that at least one of these crimes was committed and the finger points squarely at the Bush administration.

On Dec. 13, 2001, the Pentagon released a tape of Bin Laden in which he confessed to his visitor, Khaled Al-Harbi, of prior knowledge of the 9/11 attacks.

The tape was billed as the smoking gun that proves Bin Laden's guilt and in order to remove all suspicion of fowl play; the Pentagon released the tape in its entirety.

If Bin Laden, through his own words, implicated himself in the planning of the 9/11 operations that took 3,000 innocent lives, the rest of the tape, which is a Bin Laden family home video of a downed Special Forces helicopter, implicates the Bush administration in a premeditated act that resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other corners of the world.

A detailed analysis of the tape, the only one of its kind, was summarized in an article published by *counterpunch.com*, "Osama's Confession; Osama's Reprieve." The article shows that the tape was the result of a two-part sting operation run by U.S. intelligence with the help of Saudi intelligence. The first part of the sting was to tape Bin Laden. The second part of the operation was to capture him.

The Bush administration was the closest ever to Bin Laden and could have captured him on Sept. 26, 2001, the date of the taping; intelligence operatives were feet from him, had four days advance notice of the date of the meeting, 24 hours advance notice of the exact location, and knew that Bin Laden would be there for at least three hours if not longer since his family and his favorite son Hamza lived in that village and Bin Laden was very likely to stay overnight.

This scripted opportunity to capture him, barely two weeks after 9/11 and 10 days prior to invading Afghanistan, was squandered in favor of taping him confessing; that can only be considered dereliction of duty in time of war.

There is no telling how the war on terror would have evolved with Bin Laden in custody, but, if captured on Sept. 26, there would have been no justification to launch military op-

erations against Afghanistan ten days later; the civilians who died in Afghanistan as a result are no longer unfortunate collateral damage, they were murdered.

The article also shows that Bin Laden's capture was deferred to a future unknown date with little or no advance notice and little control over the capture operation parameters.

The technical analysis of the tape places a member of the sting team that did the taping, in the village up until Nov. 5, 2001. Based on events and the variety of U.S. assets that converged on that little village on Nov. 2, 2001, the sting team member's duty was to alert the Special Forces of when Bin Laden returned to visit his family.

On that date, a Special Forces helicopter crashed on a hill near the village. The Pentagon tells us that the helicopter was on a rescue mission to retrieve a wounded soldier and that it crashed in bad weather. A second helicopter on that mission rescued the crew while an F-14 destroyed the disabled helicopter shortly thereafter. The Pentagon gave 1:30 p.m. ET as the time of the helicopter crash, 11 p.m. local.

On that same date, the Pentagon reported that a Predator went missing at 2:15 pm ET, 11:45 p.m. local.

When the counterpunch article was published, I had not made a connection to the Predator. However, there was one loose item in my analysis that I filed away thinking it did not effect my article's conclusions. This item was a four cylinder, air cooled reciprocating engine with a Garrett turbo charger. At the time, I knew it was not large enough to run the main rotor of a military helicopter and assumed it was an auxiliary power unit (APU) that a variety of aircrafts use.

Approximately two weeks ago, I decided to revisit that item. I approached my investigation from a different angle and, after two days of work, was able to identify the engine as a Rotax 914. The only aircraft that uses this engine is a modified Predator of which the Air Force had only two examples on the date of the crash.

The Bin Laden family home video tapes the Predator engine as part of the helicopter wreckage. Further viewing of the video reveals that among other wreckage footage, the camera housing of a Predator was taped and er-

GUEST COMMENTARY

roneously identified as part of the helicopter.

Such intermingling of wreckage parts can only indicate that the helicopter and the Predator collided in midair and crashed.

Bad weather might have been the cause but freezing rain did not cause equipment failure; both the Predator and the helicopter are equipped with sophisticated deicing systems. The Bad weather and low ceiling might have caused the air space to shrink and caused the aircraft to fly in closer proximity. While the helicopter is equipped with a collision avoidance system, the Predator is not.

Predator excluded, a university math professor had put the probability of Bin Laden being in that village at the same time as the helicopter at 5 in 1,000 and much lower on a night with freezing rain. When an intelligence operative was added to his calculations, the probably got closer to a *certainty* that Bin Laden was the target.

Now that a Predator is also placed at the scene, one of only two examples in the Air Force's arsenal, there is no doubt that Bin Laden was the target of either an elimination or capture operation.

One might think that sending those troops on such an operation, in such horrendous weather conditions, was tantamount to sending them on a suicide mission. On its own operational merits it might not have been. The question is whether those sent on the mission were aware of the *taping operation* and the better opportunity to capture Bin Laden?

The "failure of the capture" part, the important and what should have been the primary part of the sting operation, makes the entire operation a failure and the confessional video, a by-product of a failed intelligence operation.

On Dec. 13, 2001, the date the tape was released by the Pentagon with presidential approval, there was no real need to release it. All was going the way the Bush administration wanted except for sentiments in the Muslim world.

Ramadan had started on November 16 that year and Bush and Rumsfeld chose to continue military operations during that holy month regardless of the pleas from Muslim nations in the Middle East and Asia. The images that were reaching Muslim households through Al-



Rotax 914, gray circle under red valve covers is the Garrett turbo charger.

Jazeera during that month infuriated them and was a strong call for proof that Bin Laden was responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

The only item in the possession of the Bush administration that could counterbalance the images of dead civilian Afghanis was the Bin Laden confessional tape.

By releasing the tape, a by-product of a sensitive intelligence operation to justify an illegal policy of aggression at the detriment of national security, the Bush administration committed high treason.

When Bin Laden saw himself on TV confessing his *prior knowledge*, he realized that the taping was done by a covert camera and realized how close *intelligence* was to capturing him; Bin Laden would never let anyone that close again.

The release of the tape undermined all future efforts to capture Bin Laden, whether it is conducted by the Bush administration or any future administration; again, it screams of high treason.

Other than this recent discovery of the predator that strongly supports the original findings, there was another item I was discouraged by veteran journalists from including, and was convinced the story was strong enough without it. Since I have already shared it with Patrick Fitzgerald, I am going to use this opportunity to share it with you as I think the people are the better judge of what is of value.

The item is a memo sent on behalf of Leo Wanta to VP Dick Cheney regarding Khaled Al-Harbi, the visitor to whom Bin Laden confessed.

First, a bit of background on Mr. Al-Harbi. Khaled Al-Harbi is an old acquaintance of Bin

Laden from the early eighties who later lost the use of his legs due to an injury in Bosnia. At one time, he shared with Bin Laden the wrath of the Saudi government who stripped them both of their Saudi nationality.

Late in the nineties, Al-Harbi, without explanation, regained his citizenship and was allowed back in Saudi to teach Islam in his native Makkah. The security services of Saudi Arabia describe him as harmless, a follower, and an Al-Qaida wannabe.

Al-Harbi became famous because of his appearance in the Bin Laden video. Even though shortly after the video was released it became clear that he left Saudi on September 21, 2001, and that he traveled through Iran, there were no attempts made to retrace his movements or to track him down; his handicap would have made him very easy to track.

On Dec.14, 2001, a day after the confession video aired, a memo was faxed by Thomas Henry on behalf of Leo Wanta to VP Dick Cheney. In the memo, Leo Wanta tells Mr. Cheney that Al-Harbi was seen in Manila around October 14, 2001, in the company of one CIA and one FBI agent and provided the names of the agents. The memo goes on to say that there was an exchange of money and financial assets ("u boxes") between the agents and Al-Harbi.

The date of October 14, 2001 fits well with the date of the tape of Sept. 26, 2001. My interpretation of the financial transactions is different from that of Leo Wanta; I see them as payments for a job well done.

Through the individuals running the websites where the memo appeared, Mr. Wanta was

Continued On Next Page

Is It High Treason Or Just A Simple Case Of Dereliction Of Duty?

From Previous Page

made aware of my findings and followed by several requests for comments or discussion. The go-between told me, after several emails and phone calls, which spanned two months, that Mr. Wanta was too afraid to deal with the issue.

In the memo, when associates of Mr. Wanta approached the named federal agents, the agents identified the person in the wheel chair, Khaled Al-Harbi, as Datu Bin Abu, a name that is not Arabic, a name I could not associate with any language or ethnicity, it is simply a fictitious name the agents made up on the fly to conceal his true identity.

A leading investigative reporter for The New Yorker criticized visual identifications as unreliable. I do agree with him if such visual identification is based on a glance by an average person. Wanta, a retired intelligence operative, and his associates, are not average persons. The memo identifies them as *intel op* and indicates that they had close contact with Al-Harbi, observed him over a period of time, and were planning future encounters with him.

After Manila, there were no reports of the whereabouts of Al-Harbi until he arrived in Saudi Arabia in July of 2004. Al-Harbi was one of just a handful of Saudis who took advantage of a failed amnesty program for Al-Qaida members. His surrender and his treatment by Saudi Authorities were highly publicized. The Saudi authorities never questioned him, provided him with the best medical treatment, and immediately awarded his foreign wife who arrived with him, Saudi citizenship and a monthly stipend. The whole affair reeked of propaganda designed to show the magnanimity of the Saudis and to encourage other Al-Qaida members to surrender.

If Mr. Cheney received such memo, it should have been shared with the various law enforcement agencies and the agents named in the memo should have been questioned. Other than its appearance on the various websites associated with Leo Wanta and described as the "explosive memo" there is no mention of it anywhere and certainly not in the 9/11 commission report.

The majority of the information I shared with you has been shared with major mainstream media outlets, selected senators and congressman, and Patrick Fitzgerald through his media contact Randall Samborn.

For good measure they will



Upside down Rotax wreckage. Engine mounts visible. CSPAN



Pale red valve covers. Garrett turbo on top. CSPAN



Predator Wescam camera pod, inverted. CSPAN

all be copied again.

Unlike other crimes that the Bush administration is suspected of, the evidence used to expose these is *still* available to the media, our elected representatives, and law enforcement to probe and independently analyze.

If they choose to investigate using their resources and access that are far superior to mine, they should quickly reach the same conclusions.

Again, they cannot plead ignorance. Their inaction can only be viewed as a failure in performing their primary duty, which is to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. For those sworn to protect the Constitution, their failure to act is more like aiding and abetting.

A closing message to the reader: The material you just read has been shared with Congressmen Conyers, Kucinich, and Paul, and with Senator Finegold. No action has been taken yet. I will be sharing it with Congressman Shays. I encourage all to make your elected representatives aware of this material. In terms of law enforcement, Patrick Fitzgerald and Eliot Spitzer when he was still the NY Attorney General have been provided this information. Regarding the *corporate* media, I am going to give a quick list of those that have been provided this information: WASHINGTON POST, LA TIMES, McClatchy News Organization, several Hearst newspapers, BOSTON GLOBE, Countdown with Keith Olbermann, 60 minutes, AL-JAZEERA, OBSERVER, INDEPENDENT, SCOTSMAN, and GUARDIAN.

Of the independent media: counterpunch, ZMAG, THE NATION, SALON, COMMONDREAMS, ALTERNET, ANTIWAR, ROLLING STONES MAGAZINE, PROJECT CENSORED, VILLAGE VOICE, MOTHER JONES, MUCKRAKER REPORT, THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST, etc. were contacted and provided this information. This is a short list from memory. The point is I knocked on many doors.

When I say these entities were made aware of this infor-

mation, I don't just mean via email. There were several follow up calls to various reporters and editors and often-lengthy conversations. If you think a publication might be interested, please have them either contact myself, or the Muckraker Report directly.

Very few news sources have the courage to publish this sort of information, and special thanks goes to counterpunch for putting all the effort in editing and publishing the first article. I also tip my hat to The Muckraker Report and THE ICONOCLAST for publishing follow up articles.

I was contacted by a producer at AL-JAZEERA and asked to summarize the counterpunch article in 5 to 7 minutes. Unfortunately, it did not happen. If it had, about 50 million Arabic speaking individuals would have been made aware of this information. Follow-up conversations with the producer led

me to believe that AL-JAZEERA headquarters in Doha pulled the plug on my interview.

Recall that it was Al-Jazeera's coverage of Afghanistan that forced out the Bin Laden confession tape.

Thank you for reading this article. Please make the effort to get this information to you Congressman and Senators. Ask your associates and groups to do the same.

Remember, Speaker of the House Palosi took impeachment off the table in order to make Democrats more palatable to those on the political fence in the November 2006 elections. In one sentence she put in the dumpster all the work that John Conyers did. Not that Conyers really did much with the information I sent him; not even a call from a staff member to ask follow-up questions. I can only describe the offices of the officials I contacted as black holes.

Maher Osseiran, born in Beirut in 1956, grew up at a time when Lebanon was evolving then devolving into its civil war. From a very young age, Maher was an observer who needed plausible answers. His early analysis during the Lebanese civil war was discounted by his own parents as too gloomy and earned him a not too pleasant nickname. He was never happy when events proved his analysis correct but satisfied that some started listening and making the right decisions. To know more about Maher and his methodology, visit his website <www.mydemocracy.net> where he posts some of his articles while others can be found on counterpunch and The Lone Star Iconoclast.

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Who's Listening To Whom?

What are Lame Dubya and Albie "Gonzo" Gonzales trying to pull over America's eyes now?

The increasingly *Gestapo*-like Department of Justice, led by possibly the most anti-Constitution and Bill of Rights Attorney General in our Nation's history, has worked out an arrangement it termed as "innovative" with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. This secret court will now be able to utilize "speed and agility" when authorizing the National Security Agency to monitor international communications of people inside U.S. boundaries without jeopardizing national security.

In a nutshell, the secret court would have jurisdiction over the NSA's wiretapping program; the practice of eavesdropping without warrants would allegedly come to a halt.

Remember, Dear Reader, be you fellow American or simply another lover of Liberty, the operative word that refers to the FISA court, ostensibly "independent" yet undeniably under the thumb of the Lame Dubya Fascisti and Gonzo, is "secret."

On Thursday, Jan. 18 Gonzo exuded typical Regime hubris as duly-elected members of the Senate inquired why it took five years for the White House and DOJ to acquire FISA approval of its domestic spying scheme (I love how the Brits refer to Lame Dubya's policies thusly).

Sayeth the Great Gonzo: "I somewhat take issue... with Senator Arlen Specter's innuendo that this is something we could have pulled off the shelf and done in a matter of days or weeks. This is a very complicated application. We worked on it a long time."

Gonzo was responding to Sen. Specter's comment, "I cannot help but conclude that there hasn't been a sufficient sense of urgency on behalf of the Department of Justice to get this job done faster."

Like the arachnid queen who would eat her own young, the AG - voted into office by no one - chose to attempt beheading one of the senior Republican Senators.

This highly suspect White House-approved turnaround rings false; it reeks from a stench not unlike fish left rotting in a dumpster during a 30-day New York City garbage strike as the hottest August in recorded history broils the East Coast. That Gonzo's off-kilter DOJ



Out Of The Blue

By Jerry Tenuto

would come up with such an "innovative" plan just two weeks into the new, Democratic Congressional session is somewhat frightening.

Especially when one considers the new power people have promised investigations into Executive Branch abuses, and subsequent legislation to put an end to same.

As the Regime arrogance became more apparent, and horse manure piled ever higher on the Senate committee floor, Gonzo insisted that following the attacks of 9/11 - which opened wide the floodgates for the GOP Fascisti to trample human rights into powder - Gonzo attempted the same rationale he's brought to earlier hearings: "We all concluded, there's no way we can do what we believe we have to do to protect the country under the strict reading of FISA."

Sounds like old times, when faced with a largely rubber-stamp Republican Congress more interested in lining their pockets with filthy lucre culled from Smiler Tom DeLay's K Street Racketeers than serving the people; there was nobody to ensure the proper checks and balances.

We had no one to protect the country from the slimeballs who slunk around the West Wing.

When the Senate requested details of the agreement from the FISA court, its presiding judge responded the court had no objections to the committee receiving confidential material. The spanner in the works was that such data must come from DOJ.

As the request was put directly to Gonzo, the AG did his usual tap dance around the issue. Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) was not at all impressed, and asked, "Are you saying you might object to the court giving us decisions that you've publicly announced?"

The loathing of the Regime for Congress continued, as Gonzo replied, "There's going to be information about operational details about how we're doing this that we want to keep confidential."

(He could make a fortune by copyrighting and selling his special brand of doublespeak.)

According to Sen. Leahy, DOJ had been "complicit in advancing these government policies which threaten our basic liberties and overstep the bounds of our Constitution..." He went on to indicate that such activities had "undercut" America as leading advocate in the world for human rights.

I cannot take heart in the new and improved NSA wiretapping scheme of Lame Dubya's Fascisti and Gonzo's DOJ.

As usual, Gonzo appeared in front of a Senate committee and said nothing; he iterated mouthfuls of mumbo-jumbo nonsensical gobbledygook. The gentlemen and gentlewomen on the panel would have done just as well to toss questions at a White House janitor.

All this legal whiz kid ever does is run interference for Lame Dubya; at no time has he given the people of our Nation or our elected officials a straight answer.

Never forget, this is the schmo who referred to the Articles of the Geneva Convention as "quaint," then advocated the hiding of prisoners incommunicado, without access to counsel or even actual charges, and the use of torture as a viable interrogation tool.

I'd like to know, just where did he get his military training to make such in-depth command and strategic decisions?

I sincerely doubt that an "innovative" scheme would have been worked out between DOJ and the NSA had elephantiasis remained epidemic on Capitol Hill. It was just too convenient that this plan happened to be finalized so soon after the Democratic Congressional takeover.

The White House has had five years and several months to pinpoint data on virtually every landline and cell tower across the United States, Canada and Mexico. Now, when Gonzo says there's an "innovative" new plot to use the FISA court far more rapidly than in 2001, we have to figure the NSA has direct access to all telephones, fax machines, Internet accounts, and all other electronic communications devices.

It's only logical to assume Li'l Georgie knew this when he amended the 2006 Postal Bill with yet another signing statement on Dec. 20, illegally giving himself free rein to order

anyone's mail opened and read at his pleasure.

The power-hungry authoritarians behind the RoveBushCheney Fascist Regime have shown nothing but contempt for all Americans whom they consider to be beneath their white-tie elite base. They have no intention of ever working together with Congress.

These people who stole our White House have lied consistently about everything to everyone. They are more of an enemy than al Qaeda; they created al Qaeda as an enemy.

Although they never utilized the law for any reason except to twist it out of shape for their own advantage, we need to rid ourselves by legal means of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. These are not people who help the plight of the World; they are major forces contributing to the

problems of the Planet.

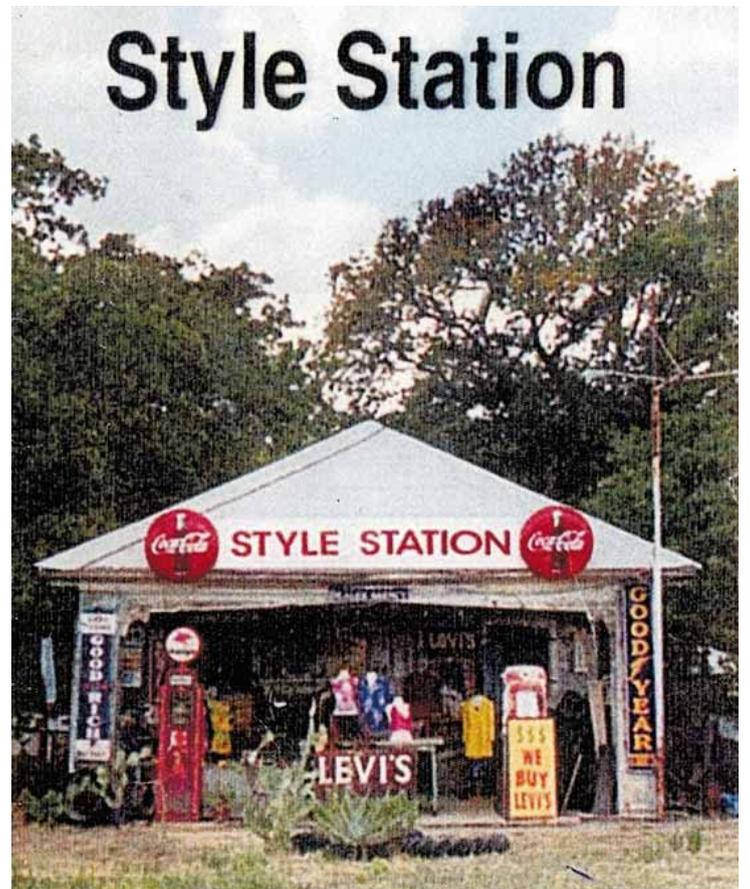
Hopefully, the new leaders on the Hill will not buy Gonzo's bull feces and look most carefully into this "innovative" scheme to safeguard America.

When the Attorney General can't explain to the Senate what DOJ is on about, then he's certainly up to no good.

And if you believe anything that emanates from this White House Regime, shame.

Shalom.

(Jerry Tenuto is an erstwhile Philosopher and sometime Educator. A veteran with seven years of service in the U.S. Army, he holds a BS and MA in Communications from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Depending upon your taste in political stew, you can either blame or thank Jerry for his weekly "Out Of The Blue" feature in THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST. Visit his blog BLUE STATE VIEW at illinoiscentral.blogspot.com)



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LBJ Fills CIA Vacancy With Texas Admiral

The first test-fire of the Polaris missile on Jan. 10, 1960, was a spectacular success that put the low-profile career of a Texas admiral into public orbit.

A native of Decatur and a 1928 graduate of Annapolis, William F. Raborn passed the tests of war and peace with flying colors. But nothing could prepare the can-do sailor for his final assignment as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

During the last days of the war in the Pacific, a kamikaze pilot scored a direct hit on the aircraft carrier "Hancock." Repairing the severely damaged flight deck in an amazing four hours, Executive Officer "Red" Raborn made possible the safe return of a fighter squadron, a remarkable feat rewarded with the Silver Star.

The Texan's post-war duties were no less challenging, and his long list of peacetime accomplishments earned him an enviable reputation as the most able administrator in the navy. In 1955 he took the job of speeding up production of the Polaris, a submarine-launched missile with a 1,500-mile range.

A tough taskmaster who believed in seven-day work weeks for everybody including himself, Raborn regularly revived weary subordinates with rousing pep talks. "I knew that I was ready to die for someone," a former aide later recalled with mixed feelings, "but I didn't know whether it was the admiral, the president, my mother, the head of the Boy Scouts, or who."

Raborn's management magic added the underwater weapon to the US arsenal an incredible three years ahead of schedule. The successful test-firing of the Polaris in 1960 instead of the projected 1963 landed him on the cover of TIME magazine.

Retiring from the navy after his 30-year hitch, Raborn settled into the comfortable life of a civilian executive. He was hired as a vice-president by a California aerospace company and spent his off-hours chasing golf balls in Palm Springs.

However, duty unexpectedly called in April 1965. On his way to the airport for a mysterious trip to Texas, Raborn slyly suggested to the public relations department, "You might want to have some biographical material on me available."

President Lyndon Johnson's announcement of the fellow Texan as his choice for CIA director caught Washington know-it-alls, as well as Raborn's corporate cronies, by complete surprise. Although the admiral had never been mentioned as a prospect for the post, his name

This Week In Texas History

By Bartee Haile



topped the only list that mattered — LBJ's.

Director Raborn hardly had time to find his office in the vast CIA complex in Langley, Virginia before facing his first full-blown crisis. Six hours after the swearing-in ceremony on April 28, 1965, the president decided to dispatch the Marines to a Caribbean hot spot.

From 1916 until 1924, American soldiers kept the peace in the volatile Dominican Republic. Strongman Rafael Trujillo maintained dictatorial order

until his assassination in 1961, which rekindled political strife in the small country. Juan Bosch, a popular writer, was elected president in 1962 but ousted the following year by the military due to his alleged left-wing ties.

The United States feared that riots which erupted in the spring of 1965 would culminate in a pro-communist coup. Rather than risk a replay of the recent revolution in Cuba, Johnson sent in the Marines.

Director Raborn's role in the Dominican affair was restricted to passing along information obtained by CIA spooks behind the stormy scenes. With no background in intelligence, he concentrated on reorganizing the spy agency and wisely avoided the swamp of international in-

trigue.

But there was no way Raborn could steer clear of the escalating crisis in Indochina. In August 1964, North Vietnamese gunboats supposedly took torpedo potshots at a pair of naval destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. CIA specialists analyzed the reports and concluded the sound the Americans had detected with their sonar equipment had not come from torpedo propellers.

But the White House did not bother to check with the CIA. Citing the questionable incident as proof positive of the enemy's hostile intent, President Johnson asked for the authority to use "all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further

aggression."

Within 72 hours, congress approved the historic request by votes of 416-0 in the house and 88-2 in the senate. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution became the blank check for the Vietnam War.

In the midst of the rapid military build-up that would commit more than half a million troops to the Southeast Asia stalemate, "Red" Raborn cut short his stay at the CIA. He had originally agreed to a two-year tenure, but 14 months was long enough under the circumstances.

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

Like Football? Like Super Models? Then I Hope You Like Sleeping On The Couch

Men everywhere are preparing for the Super Bowl. They are finalizing their list of snack foods. They are brushing up on Super Bowl trivia. And, most importantly, they are trying to come up with a reasonable answer to the following question:

Why are there 14 half-naked super models tackling each other on TV?

This question will come up at halftime.

It will be posed by wives everywhere.

And, depending on the answer, it could result in a full-body tackle over the sofa.

I'm talking of course about the Lingerie Bowl, a pay-per-view halftime show being offered by Horizon Entertainment. In the advertising world, this is known as a "high concept" idea, meaning that, thanks to whatever the ad designers were smoking at the time, they came up with an idea that a "target audience" can quickly connect with on a personal level.

To demonstrate, I will now — without warning — grab a fellow journalist who is also a member of the target audience for the Lingerie Bowl.

To be more specific, a living male.

He has no idea what I am about to tell him. In fact, he actually looks a little frightened...

Okay, he is now demanding that I leave his cubicle, meaning it's time to pitch my "high concept" idea, which I will explain as concisely as possible:

Super models playing tackle football in their underwear.



Life Is A Funny Place

By Ned Hickson
Siuslaw News

And voila!

Total elapsed "personal connection" time:

Minus-three seconds.

How is this possible?

Scientifically speaking, we are both males. Therefore, any thought that includes either super models or football is capable of stopping time. Combine the two, and you can actually break the space-

time continuum.

Which is bad.

However, as a responsible journalist, I do feel something needs to be said in defense of these hard-working and incredibly fit female athletes. I'll admit that I've spent a little time researching the two Lingerie Bowl teams.

Fine — a lot of time.

Which is why I can tell you the two teams competing in the Lingerie Bowl are Team Euphoria and Team Dream.

Say what you will about this being just tasteless exploitation; it requires a tremendous amount of athleticism to get into one of those outfits. If NFL play-

ers had to compete in those same outfits the entire game would be shot from the Goodyear blimp. Perhaps more importantly, I seriously doubt anyone would be enthusiastic about playing "behind center."

My point is, regardless of how you feel about scantily clad super models tackling each other on the football field...

I'm sorry.

I think my watch just stopped.

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

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THE LONE STAR
ICONOCLAST

Dump Bush

By MELINDA PILLSBURY-FOSTER
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

The time has come in the Bush Administration when George W. has begun to think about his legacy. Murmurs of that have begun to percolate out through various avenues; the latest Surge of rhetoric from the White House was doubtless energized by what that legacy will be. If Bush were an honorable man that legacy would give him the same nightmares that wake so many of us up at those wee, dark hours, worrying about the future that awaits our children.

All Republicans should be thinking about the Bush Legacy; then they need to confront how Bush and his NeoCon administration has converted the legacy of the Republican Party, the party that championed freedom for Blacks and the vote for women into something closer to fascism.

When I first read, "Conscience of a Conservative," in 1962, being a Republican meant you believed in the right of the people to order their own lives and govern their own communities. Government was to be small; the inherent rights of individuals were sacrosanct, chiseled in stone through the Declaration of Independence. It was not government who was sovereign but each individual living American. My Goldwater button maintained a place of honor at my desk. In losing, Goldwater had still awakened a generation to the ideas of individual rights and freedom.

Many of us still kept the tradition of reading the Declaration in its entirety aloud to our families on the 4th of July. Each of my own children read out those words, standing tall and proud, knowing that the Revolution was fought for them. We knew that understanding the Constitution and the Bill of Rights was the foundation that allowed future generations to keep faith with the past while building a better future for everyone. Our children could recite the Amendments and explain what they meant.

By hard work, honest dealing, and creative insights, we believed we would, together, realize the American dream. It was not making money that mattered but doing right. Integrity came first.

To lie was an act of personal dishonor for any reason. If your child lied any parent taught him that this was unacceptable. If you are a Republican today you know that the sense of honor, personally or in government,

GUEST COMMENTARY

has no meaning. To the NeoCons only winning matters, and winning so you can steal became acceptable.

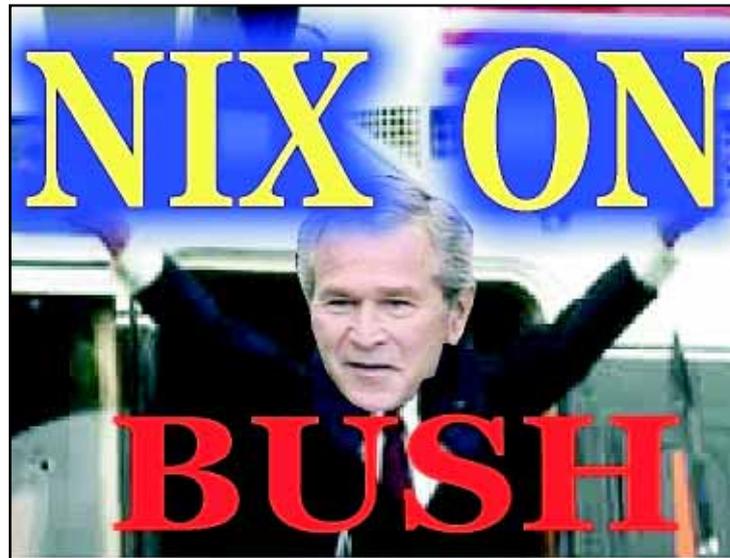
The NeoCons did this to us. If the Republican Party had closed up shop it could not have been used to against its own values. There can be honor in death. There is no honor in the actions taken under color of the Republican Party today.

The NeoCons now in control have been living out their inner most fantasies the last six years at our expense. It is tough to drive a country once as prosperous as America into bankruptcy, but they have managed that, too. Most of us now understand that those in power, the NeoCons, are not Republicans. They are a cadre of greedy who saw the opportunity to use the rhetoric of honor and our vision to steal for themselves and for their corporate employers. While rhetorically cloaking their actions in words like, "Freedom," "America," "Honor," and "Terrorism" Bush, Cheney and their cohort have been busily shoveling the wealth of America into the coffers of such as Halliburton and placing various petroleum companies to convert the reservoirs under Iraq into an asset line for their client companies, all at great cost all Americans and the world at large. Now, they are poised to do it again in Iran. After that, who knows; they may decide to hit Venezuela.

At the same time they have revoked parts of the Constitution in attempts to evade accountability; they have illegally used the force of government to invade our privacy. The information was gathered not to ensure our security but to stifle dissent.

That is where we are today. It is ugly to consider how many Americans and Iraqis have died while the rhetoric of honor still lingered in our hearts and minds, layered in like a cover to arsenic in speeches built to deceive us by prostituting our highest values. But that is what happened. Slowly, as Americans and Iraqis died horribly and our nation hemorrhaged money the stark horror began to sink in. Then, last November America delivered a mandate. That mandate was to get us out of Iraq and to return to the American values that evoke a true loyalty.

For those elected the message has also been delivered.



Deescalate, investigate; end the war, bring our troops home. After the Shout Down that sent the newly elected Democratic Congress scampering like mice for cover we can hope the message has sunk in. Democratic activists are also challenging their leadership, having found them wanting.

We Republicans are not alone. All Americans have been through the same process of belief, doubt, and concern. We have all been paralyzed by fear as all we thought was true turned upside down. But it is the legacy of honor, conserved in the Republican Party, that was used as a weapon against the freedom of all Americans. As Bush considers his legacy, one of deception, greed, and violence, it is our own legacy we must renew.

As Republicans we need to take back our party, thus denying the NeoCons a conduit to power and allowing us to begin the work of rebuilding what was. Communities where people live, deciding for themselves, working at jobs, starting businesses, raising children whose education they control, worshipping and prospering by doing right, these were the goals that made us Republicans.

Barry Goldwater, the grandson of a peddler, understood hard work and doing the right thing. He understood accountability.

Barry Goldwater was a man who understood the need to take action. Never a fence sitter, Barry would have understood the specter we confront today; he would have delivered the word to the White House, Resign. Failing that, he would have himself written the Bill of Impeachment. He knew that the gravest danger to America came from within.

"Our tendency to concentrate power in the hands of a few men deeply concerns me. We can be conquered by bombs or by subversion; but we can also be conquered by neglect—

by ignoring the Constitution and disregarding the principles of limited government. Our defenses against the accumulation of unlimited power in Washington are in poorer shape, I fear, than our defenses against the aggressive designs of Moscow. Like so many other nations before us, we may succumb through internal weakness rather than fall before a foreign foe."

As a Republican, I demand Bush and Cheney resign. I think now is a good time for that.

Republicans and other Americans can register their wishes by writing him letters to be delivered to the White House. If you like, you may send them first to THE ICONOCLAST, where they

will be counted, and then forwarded. Just send to Melinda Pillsbury-Foster, c/o The Lone Star Iconoclast, P.O. Box 569, Crawford, TX 76638. Then we can demand Congress pass a Bill of Impeachment NOW. Since Congress has been confused about what they are supposed to do, we can go to our state legislatures and demand they pass a Bill of Impeachment to be delivered to the Clerk of Congress. With 50 states to work with surely one can be persuaded to do the job.

Since Bush and Cheney have already admitted enough wrongdoing we can skip the investigations and move to the vote right away.

This generation of Republicans can do the job and the right man to sit in the Oval Office is a Republican all Americans can trust and respect. Replace Bush with a Republican Barry Goldwater would have respected, too. I think that individual is Congressman Ron Paul. It is our party, let's do the right thing.

Melinda Pillsbury-Foster is a prominent activist, author, poet, commentator, and critic of Neoconservative theory and policy. A member of the Republican Party, she is founder and president of the Arthur C. Pillsbury Foundation and hosts a radio talk-show program, The Spiritual Politician, at <BBSRadio.com>.

THE LONE STAR ICONOCLAST LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor:

"Fiscal Insanity"

When Congress adjourned on Dec. 9, the nation should have breathed a great sigh of relief. The old saw telling us that "no man's property is safe while the legislature is in session," comes to mind whenever the government officials decide to take a break. One of the last moves of our leaders involved continuing some tax cuts. But spending also needs to be cut! The accumulated national debt now tops \$8 trillion; the current fiscal year will have a red ink total close to \$300 billion; the dollar's value is sinking badly versus the Euro and other currencies; and our nation's trade deficit continues to soar. Every economic indicator practically screams that the nation should cease excessive spending, cut back or cancel many government programs, and cease passing along huge indebtedness to future generations.

Meanwhile, I read in the financial journals that foreign holders of U.S. debt such as Communist China have been given power to dictate U.S. policy. Should China and these other countries decide to sell their U.S. bonds, a worldwide depression felt most intensely right here in the United States would result.

Fiscal sanity hasn't been practiced for decades. And the Bush administration along with a compliant Congress shows no signs whatsoever of restoring fiscal responsibility.

Matt K. Davis, Henderson, NV

To The Editor:

Why have a no-fly list at all? It is supposed to safeguard flyers, but ends up restricting the free movement of people who have

Continued On Next Page

Highway Privatization Needs a Roadblock

BY DANIEL SCHULMAN
SPECIAL TO THE ICONOCLAST

If you've ever traveled cross-country on I-90, you've driven the Indiana Toll Road, a major trucking artery that stretches 157 miles across the length of northern Indiana. What you may not know is that last June, the "Main Street of the Midwest," as it's locally known, was turned over to a foreign consortium — made up of the Spanish construction firm Cintra and Macquarie Infrastructure Group (MIG) of Australia — in exchange for \$3.8 billion.

The privatization of the nation's highways, a trend touched off in 2005 when the City of Chicago sold a 99-year-lease on the Chicago Skyway to the same consortium, has so far received little attention. It is, however, big news in the investment banking world and major firms such as Goldman Sachs and the Carlyle Group have already set up infrastructure funds to invest in what they expect to be a very lucrative market.

Goldman, the primary dealmaker in the toll road market thus far, is pushing privatization aggressively around the country, advising Indiana and other states considering privatization even as it has created a fund whose sole purpose is to maximize returns by picking up infrastructures for the best price possible.

The idea seems to be catching on. States including New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey have recently raised the possibility of leasing major turnpikes, while other states, from Florida to Alaska, are now considering inviting the private sector to build and operate highways and bridges.

In all, more than 20 states have passed legislation allowing so-called public-private partnerships to lease and operate toll roads.

The Indiana deal inked by Governor Mitch Daniels will yield hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks for the consortium, which also receives immunity from most local and state taxes. Under the deal, the consortium collects all the tolls, which it's allowed to raise to levels far beyond what Hoosiers have been used to. In fact, one analysis found that if the toll regime in place in Indiana and Chicago had been applied to New York's Holland Tunnel for the past 70 years, the toll could

stand at \$185 rather than the current \$6. Another analysis found that the value of the road over the 75-year term could be as much as \$11.38 billion — a nice return on MIG-Cintra's investment, but a potential net loss of more than \$7 billion to Indiana taxpayers.

GUEST COMMENTARY

For companies seeking to buy up American infrastructure, the financial stakes in privatizing the nation's transportation arteries are potentially huge. In 1956, a Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower, convinced Congress that an integrated, public highway system was vital to economic development, commerce, and even national security. Today, Ike's legacy is at a crossroads. The federal highway trust fund, financed by the proceeds of the federal gas tax, is running out of money, in part because lawmakers have not dared to raise the tax since the mid-90s. At this rate, the fund will be in the red by 2009. Meanwhile, states and cities desperate for repairs to decaying roads and bridges, not to mention new highways, are struggling to find ways to pay for transportation projects.

Enter privatization, which promises a quick fix — and a means to outsource difficult political decisions, like raising tolls or taxes, to entities that don't have to worry about getting reelected. The notion has the enthusiastic backing of the Bush administration, but some politicians are worried that, as Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) put it during a congressional hearing on highway privatization last May, we are "outsourcing political will to a private entity."

"It's a scam, basically," DeFazio, the incoming chair of the House Subcommittee on Highways, Transit, and Pipelines, later said in an interview. "It just does not make sense for an integrated national transportation system."

With the highway trust fund headed toward running on empty, it's clear that new transportation funding options are needed. But before the nation heads further down the privatization road, there needs to be a national dialogue — and not just among the nation's investment bankers.

Daniel Schulman is Mother Jones' Washington, DC-based Lannan Investigative Fellow. This op-ed was adapted from a longer version in the magazine.

Peace Prone

Americans are war prone, and it's no accident.

So I don't care what the polls say today. Americans will want more troops and violence tomorrow.

But if you thought that President Bush had a taste for blood, well, then check out the anti-war movement.

You poke and prod anti-warriors enough, and they'll admit that we need bigger and better weapons systems because if we don't get them, things will get worse for everyone — especially for our beloved troops.

That kind of fear and intimidation sounds an awful lot like what kidnapers say to their victims, don't it?

You know, a lot of Americans were wondering last week why Shawn Hornbeck failed to escape from his alleged abductor, Michael Devlin, in St. Louis, Mo.

Even though the 41-year-old pizzeria manager had three guns at his disposal, the 15-year-old had plenty of opportunities to leave during the four years he was held captive.

For instance, Hornbeck had a cell phone. He spent weekends at friends' houses. The police even cornered him on at least three evenings out in the open!

Forensic psychologists say Hornbeck's refusal to leave followed a pattern found in those inflicted by the "Stockholm Syndrome." When Hornbeck started to identify with Devlin, the kid went so far as to refer to his captor as his "dad" and used Devlin's last name as his own.

This situation is similar to what Cindy Sheehan endured. At least, that's my theory.

I mean, she may not have changed her last name to "Bush" and referred to the president as her "Peace Daddy," but it still took her over a year to be against the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

I empathize with Sheehan over the death of her soldier-son, but she's not alone.

For the last four years, whole groups of Americans have been abducted and seduced by this administration. The kicker is that they never even left their own homes.

I can't blame any of them for

The Rubber Cement Index

By Nathan Diebenow



enabling the president's crazy delusions.

When an entire socio-economic system constantly forces its victims into survival mode, what do you expect?

Yeah, I know it sounds a little psychedelic, but this system breeds diseases like war.

For proof, check out John Hopkins University's study on the Iraqi civilian death toll.

This scientific study estimated that 650,000 Iraqis had died since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Talk about an "outbreak" of violence!

Yeah, the death toll could be more or could be less, but the results of the study were published in *The Lancet* — a medical journal.

That's right — a medical journal.

Obviously, since the U.S. occupation of Iraq is still raging, the cure for this warmongering has yet to be administered.

But that's what you can expect from those who refuse to practice preventative healing.

Just don't ask the media to perform the necessary "peace checkups" anytime soon because it tends to report war like a sporting event, not a treatable disease.

I mean, name me the last time someone in the media wrote a headline that read, "Bush Deploys More Cancer To Iraq."

But I don't blame the media either. It hasn't had a well-funded peace-industrial complex strong enough to influence public opinion during trying times.

War is a habit that dies hard, but Americans can become more peace prone.

Well, that is, if they make peace with God first.

Nathan Diebenow is an Associate Editor of the Lone Star Iconoclast newspaper by day and a political satirist by night, except on Sundays when he re-reads his "Doom Patrol" comics.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ... From Previous Page

done nothing wrong. And what terrorist would use their own name these days anyway?

What is next? A no-drive list forbidding people driving trucks like those used in the Oklahoma and 1993 World Trade Center bombings? A no-knife list? To what extent

will the police state overtake us?

Many need to fly to keep their jobs — their name on a no-fly list may make them unemployable. Many need to fly to a loved-one's deathbed. Many people fly on vacation. Flying is a right.

A no-fly list violates the

right to movement we all have. It is especially egregious that the list is populated by gossip and innuendo from unreliable informers and torture by secret agencies without the possibility of the passenger confronting his accusers or the secret evidence.

We do need to safeguard flyers, but this can easily and safely be done while respecting human rights better. Change the no-fly list to a special-scrutiny list. Let the listees be carefully examined for possible weapons. Require their luggage to go in the hold. Let the listees be

seated furthest from the cabin. Let all the airplane crew know of them.

This will still be hugely embarrassing to the listees, but at least they will be able to fly, to go on vacation, to keep their jobs, to be with someone close facing death.

Tom Trotter

Western Art Featured At Tarleton State

STEPHENVILLE — The artwork of Laura Butler, Tarleton State University Artist in Residence, will be featured in the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center through Saturday, Feb. 10. The exhibit is titled, "An Eclectic Exhibition - Laura Butler: Selected Works" and is currently displayed in the Center's gallery.

A reception in honor of the artist will be held in the Gallery Alcove of the Fine Arts Center Jan. 31, from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Named Tarleton's first Artist in Residence in 2001, Butler has become renowned for her specialization in depicting horses. The current exhibit includes various oils of horses, cattle and western heritage, as well as a



painting of Tarleton's Fine Arts Center. Butler recently completed the painting of the center and it was unveiled for this exhibit in honor of the Center's 25th anniversary. It will eventually hang permanently in the building.

The Artist in Residence position is awarded to a practicing, professional artist who has achieved a significant state, national, or even international

reputation and is awarded on a three-year renewal basis.

Butler's work is renowned by many across the United States and has been featured in such publications as *Western Horseman* and illustrated in the book *Western Movies*.

The Fine Arts Center gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday or by appointment.



Chance of Showers
By Laura Butler

Touring Play Advocates For U.S. Department of Peace

DALLAS — A one-act play is being toured across the United States in support of a proposed federal department that promotes peace and nonviolent solutions to domestic and foreign conflict.

The play "The Gift of Peace" is scheduled for a performance in Dallas on Monday, Jan. 29, at the Fannin Building, 12800 Abrams Rd., 75243.

The local performance hosted by The Institute For Peace at Richland College will be from 12:20 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.

While the event is free and open to the public, financial donations would be appreciated to pay for biodiesel bus fuel, food and lodging, and the production of a documentary film.

DVD copies of the film are planned to be sent to every member of Congress and screened for the public later in 2007.

The series of monologues that comprise the play grew out of Playwright Stacey Martino's support for the U.S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence, a cabinet-level position in the executive branch of federal government.

"A Department of Peace is exactly what this country needs," she said. "Regardless of one's politics, religion or race we have all experienced a moment when a deeper calling for a more peaceful world arose within us, even if only for a moment."

The subsequent tour for "Gift" is in support non-partisan legislation currently co-sponsored by 75 congressmen to create this new federal department.

The primary functions of the Department of Peace would be to research, articulate, and facilitate proven nonviolent solutions to conflict.

The "Gift" tour starts on Friday, Jan. 26, in Phoenix, Ariz., and ends Friday, Feb. 2, in Arlington, Va. as a part of the Peace Alliance National Conference in Washington, D.C.

Along the way, the play is expected to stop through New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Virginia, Washington,

'The Gift Of Peace'
To Be Performed In Dallas
Jan. 29

D.C., and California.

The touring troupe will be directed by Valentino Ferriera. The tour itself will be documented by Emmy nominated, DGA Award Winning Director, Tasha Oldham.

A group of high-profile performers will perform at the last show in Los Angeles on Feb. 28.

The performers include Frances Fisher, Wendie Malick, Ed Asner, Dan Lauria, Esai Morales, Amy Smart, James Pickens Jr., Shiri Appleby, LaTanya Richardson, Ivan Sergei, George Coe, Kent McCord and Ed Asner, with direction by Tony Award winner John Rubenstein.

For more information on the U.S. Department of Peace and the Dallas performance, visit the website or contact J. Kendel Johnson, Texas co-coordinator, Campaign for a U.S. Department of Peace.

INFO
Johnson
(214) 532-3761
U.S. Department of Peace
www.ThePeaceAlliance.org
The Gift of Peace
www.thegiftofpeace.org

Jail Advocacy Group Protests Deteriorating Jail Conditions In Dallas

DALLAS — On Tuesday, Jan. 23, the Texas Jail Project, an advocacy group consisting of former women inmates and jail advocates, will drive a convoy to Dallas County Commissioners' Court to voice their concerns over the deteriorating situation for women in the Dallas County Jail. Activists from across the state will join them at the Dallas County Administrative Offices, 411 Elm Street, at 9 a.m.

The Texas Jail Project (TJP) will hold a press conference immediately following the commissioners meeting. During the meeting, TJP advocates will make statements to the commissioners regarding personal accounts from former Dallas County Jail (DCJ) inmates as well as a 47-page report issued by the U.S. Justice Department on Dec. 8, 2006.

Margie Snider, incarcerated in the DCJ in 2006, stated that after three weeks of waiting for

medication for depression and anxiety, "the jail put me on meds that weren't even my prescription. Basically I was a guinea pig for the Dallas County Jail."

Snider's story is one of many supported by the federal report on Dallas jail conditions that violate constitutional requirements. The report cites multiple deaths resulting from the terrible conditions, abuse and neglect, including the jail's failure "to provide inmates with: 1) adequate medical care; 2) adequate mental health care; and 3) safe and sanitary environmental conditions."

Diane Wilson, co-founder of Texas Jail Project, said, "We want state and county agencies who have authority over our county jails to uphold the constitutional rights of our sisters, daughters, and mothers on the inside in the same way they should be upheld on the outside."

INFO: www.texasjailproject.org