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JULY 10/25, 2008

## A Dixiecrat's Long Journey

# The Politics Of Race

By Frosty Troy

I hail from Little Dixie – McAlester to be exact – and I never dreamed that one day an African-American would be the Democratic Party's nominee for president.

My daughter reminded me that years ago I said a black man would be elected president before a woman would make it.

Little Dixie was easily the most segregated part of Oklahoma. We had white McAlester and we had "Colored Town."

There was no social intercourse except at the black cab stand by the City Cafe where you could get the best barbecue in the county.

I spent my early years at 618 E. Wyandotte, just a couple of blocks from Colored Town. The dividing line was set in concrete.

I remember bumping into a black kid about my age [11] in Jordan's Junk Yard. We decided to make a hideout in one of the abandoned cars, and we became real pals.

Of course I didn't talk about it at home. I knew I couldn't bring him home. The closest we came to social equality was when we took some window sash weights to the Gladsteins Company.

Metal was scarce due to the war effort, so we ended up getting 15 cents apiece. I mentioned the new Gene Autry movie and off we went to the New Theater in downtown McAlester.

It was the only one of three that would admit blacks, and they had to sit in the balcony.

I got in a row where we could wave at each other, then sit back and enjoy the antics of Autry's sidekick, admire Autry's horse Champion, secure in the knowledge that the bad guys in the movie would be sorry they tangled with the singing cowboy.

With the nickel we each had left, we went to the back door of the Star Drug Store and ordered cherry colas. We sat on the nearby railroad tracks, enjoying our drinks.

I started as a substitute carrier for the McAlester News Capital. When a route opened up I went to Mr. Turner to apply for it. He said I couldn't have it because most of it was in "Colored

Town."

These memories came cascading back when Barack Obama won his bid to be the Democratic nominee for president. I won't lie, I didn't expect it to happen.

My late wife Helen and I were supporters of Hillary Clinton because we were passionate Bill Clinton fans.

For me personally, I lost any lingering hint of racism when serving in Korea. I was 19 and it was my first experience as a young adult to be side by side with blacks. President Truman had ordered the armed forces integrated.

When word came that my older brother Kevin had been killed on nearby Heartbreak Ridge, I fell into the arms of Joseph G. Leplaka from East Chicago, IL.

My friend held me close as I wept.

He must have held me for an hour. Finally a call came through the field phone from a chaplain who wanted to console me.

Color disappears when people get to know each other. You can't believe how proud I was that my Dad's top employee, Sam Tom Alexander, was black. Or that Dad told off a woman who objected to blacks using his Triple Nickel Laundromat.

"Their money is the same color as yours," he told her. We got a kick out of hearing that story at the dinner table.

Imagine my pride when I was notified that my Dad had been given the Martin Luther King Jr. Award posthumously. The head of the local NAACP told the audience that of three dry cleaners in town, only Troy Cleaners would accept black folks' clothes!



We have come a long way in race relations but we still have a way to go. I share Bill Cosby's grief at the collapse of the black family – some young dudes bragging about how many girls they had impregnated.

Obama is speaking directly to the issue of the disintegrating black family. The Census Bureau reports that in 2006, two-thirds of black births were out of wedlock.

For decades after slavery was abolished, it was the strength of the family that held black Americans together.

I saw their decrepit high school in my neighborhood, windows covered with plywood because racists had knocked out all the glass.

I delivered groceries from Gabe's Market to black families every Saturday. I loved Dell Williams, the lady Mom had in every week to help her manage a large house with nine kids.

I love Queenie Jones, the sweet lady my late wife had in twice a month to help her care for our big old house. She still calls me from time to time to make sure I'm OK. One of her sons ended up playing professional football.

I know in a small way how proud black Americans must be at Obama's triumph. I felt a thrill when Jack Kennedy broke the religious barrier because I numbered among the few Catholics in McAlester.

I deplore the nasty lies being told about Obama, his family and his heritage. The Internet trash may be misleading millions of voters. I have been shocked by so-called yellow dog Democrats who question whether he should be president.

Fight him on the issues. Criticize his lack of experience. Scream to the heavens that his opponent is a better candidate. But for God's sake, don't make it a matter of race.

America is imperfect. Significant change often comes at a snail's pace – but it does come.

Name one other country where the clash of freedom occurs continually among all races, religions and political creeds.

Thanks, Barack Obama, we needed you.

# Observations

## Tom Cole Lies

We were startled by GOP Rep. Tom Cole's personal attack on Barack Obama in an op-ed for the Daily Disappointment.

Please read the factual article [Page 14] as to why Obama decided to opt out of public financing.

Cole knew his charge is a lie, but it's not unusual for this George W. Bush clone [95% support] to emit such blather.

It was Cole's Supreme Court majority that destroyed public financing by ruling that shadow entities [known as 527s] could pour millions into the campaign as a matter of "free speech."

So the Swift Boat liars and others spent tens of millions in personal attacks on decorated Vietnam veteran John Kerry, who was unable to answer the ads for lack of funding.

Cole uses an anti-Nixon ploy to attack Obama. Odd, since Cole was a strong Nixon supporter.

When a man lies, he murders some part of the truth.

## Gender Bias

The real victim of the presidential primaries was not John McCain, whose brain is on life support, but the first female who stood a chance of becoming president.

The heightened sexism in the media these days was obvious – especially from the likes of Chris Matthews, Cal Thomas and too many reporters concentrating on her every move as "feminine."

When Nancy Pelosi became first woman Speaker of the House, she was subjected to gender-based jeers and endless comments about her clothes. No woman in the public eye, from Katie Couric to Michelle Obama, is exempt.

Much of the media's misogynist venom was directed at one woman – Sen. Hillary Clinton. For the first time in our nation's history, the idea of a woman president was real.

Barack Obama on several occasions decried the unfair criticism she was taking. He said he was "proud of the fact that I, a black, am competing with the first woman candidate. We're making history."

The press was brutal to Clinton. Whether consciously or not, too many reporters, commentators, pundits and the like were unable to critique Clinton without dusting off sexist clichés, stereotypes and insults.

In a discussion about how Clinton should drop out of the Democratic race, Newsweek's Howard Fineman suggested that someone in the party needed to step in and "stop this thing," to which MSNBC's Keith Olbermann replied, "Right. Somebody who can take her into a room and only he comes out."

CNN's Jack Cafferty said: "Clinton says that she will debate him any place at any time, adding that it could even be done on the back of a flat-bed truck. He would probably prefer to run over her with a flat-bed truck at this point."

An opinion article in the Washington Post about women voters, was headlined: "We Scream, We Swoon. How Dumb Can We Get?" Talk about bias.

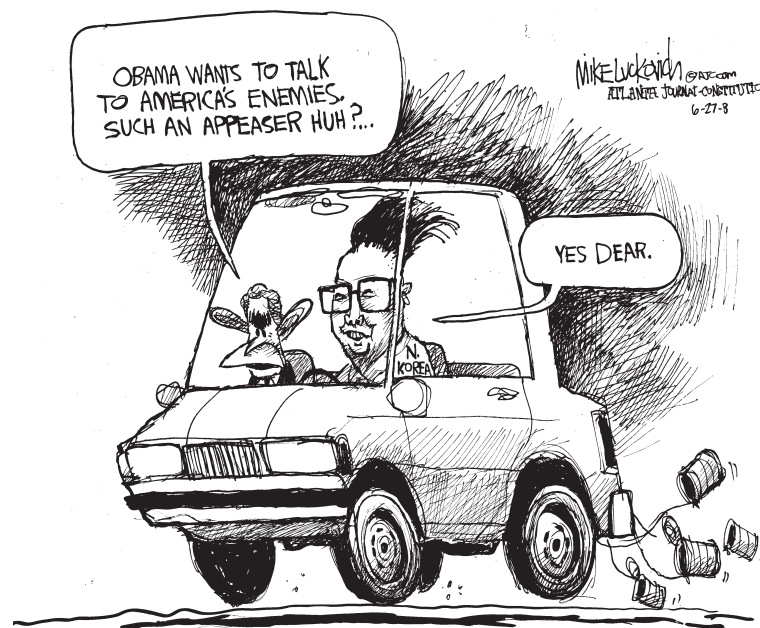
Clinton drew 19 million votes and carried the big states. She proved a woman can do it – if she can get past too many nitwits who constitute the media today.

## Disconnect

The disconnect between citizens and the federal government hasn't been as bad since the 1960s.

An ABC News/Washington Post poll reveals that only 14% of Americans believe the country is heading in the right direction.

George W. Bush is not only a war monger, he has riddled the government with anti-environmentalists, public school detractors and a Justice Department that signed off on repre-



hensible renditions and the torture of prisoners.

The country faces a declining dollar, 47 million with no health insurance, soaring gas prices and a \$10 trillion national debt by the time Bush leaves office.

Even a hefty percentage of Republicans now realize that Bush has injured this country – injuries that will take years to fix.

We feel sorry for the next president and Congress. They will pay a terrible political price for Bush's arrogant reign.

## Flip Flop

The challenges facing Sen. Barack Obama as he tries to woo supporters of former rival Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton pale in comparison with Sen. John McCain's troubles with female voters of his own party.

McCain will say anything, flip on any issue and spin his own position to reach the Republican base. Regardless of your view on abortion, consider this documented account of his stand on abortion.

"I'd love to see a point where [Roe v. Wade] is irrelevant, and could be repealed because abortion is no longer necessary. But certainty in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support repealing Roe v. Wade, which would then force X number of women in America to [undergo] illegal and dangerous operations." McCain said he would support legislation banning abortions in the third trimester. – Interview with the San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 20, 1999

"After a lot of study, a lot of consultation and a lot of prayer, I came up with a position that I believe there should be an exception for rape, incest or the life of a mother ... [the issue] is one of the most difficult and agonizing issues that I think all of us face, because of our belief – yours and mine – that life begins at conception." – Reported in the New York Times, Jan. 22, 2000

"John McCain believes Roe v. Wade is a flawed decision that must be overturned, and as president he will nominate judges who understand that courts should not be in the business of legislating from the bench." – McCain for President web site

## AWOL Board

The key question isn't whether School Superintendent Michael

Zolkoski is fired – he's dead meat. The question is, where has the School Board been?

Tulsa Public Schools have been in trouble for a long time.

Was Dr. Z vetted? Didn't anyone find out he was a top-down know-it-all? Do board members just rubber-stamp an agenda or do they visit the schools, talk to parents and students?

Buying him out at \$200,000 a year for his two remaining years robs schools that are already grossly under-funded.

Complaints have been coming for months about his creation, a boot camp for troubled and special education kids.

How smart is it to put all the troubled young people in one facility? School isn't prison.

Why did he refuse to appear before the state Senate Education Committee to make the case for money specifically earmarked for poor children?

He gives Oklahoma's hard working school chiefs an undeserved black eye.

We're old enough to remember when Tulsa Public Schools were one of the top districts in America.

How sad.

## Garbage

The Internet has become the laughingstock of the news world due to sloping skulls free to distort, lie and defame under the happy rubric of anonymous.

None is worse than ecapitol.net, which pretends to know what is going on at the state Capitol.

It carried criticism of the Observer for reporting that led to the feds threatening to cancel a \$15 million grant to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse for its misuse.

Not only was the grant being used for purposes not specified in the grant, they wanted to buy a \$2.5 million brain scan machine rather than treat the more than 900 seriously mentally ill on a waiting list for treatment.

Know how Terri White got the job heading the department? She was Senate liaison to the agency when Sen. Johnnie Crutchfield asked her if she wanted the post. Duh!

This kind of net garbage is spewed endlessly, never bothering to check sources, always willing to pucker up to power.

We would tell the anonymous creeps to kiss our a-- but we have too much respect for our a--.

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OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO: So then to all their chance, to all their shining golden opportunity. To all the right to love, to live, to work, to be themselves, and to become whatever thing their vision and humanity can combine to make them. This seeker, is the promise of America.  
- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

# Observerscope

Remember, there is no July 25 issue of the Oklahoma Observer. See you Aug. 10 with important news and commentary you can't read anywhere else.

**Laurel:** To Tulsa attorney Doug Dodd, given the inaugural W. Thomas Coffman Community Service Award for two decades working to improve public education.

**Good news!** Oklahoma's 50 state parks are going to get the maintenance and updating they have needed for years. More than \$20 million is on track but the backlog is \$90 million.

**Dart:** To legislative Republicans for belatedly recognizing the needs of families with autistic children. Perhaps an interim study authored by Rep. Wallace Collins, D-Norman, will help, but don't bet on it. Repubs are in the hip pocket of the insurance industry.

"Let us rid ourselves of the fiction that low oil prices are somehow good for the United States." – Then Congressman Dick Cheney in 1968. [Sierra Magazine]

**Laurel:** To Pauline Hodges of Beaver, named to the National Rural Education Association's Hall of Fame. She was an early honoree as Oklahoma Teacher of Excellence.

Those pushing for nuclear energy in Oklahoma should note that clean-up efforts continue at the Gore facility shut down in 1993! Spent uranium has a half life of thousands of years.

**Dart:** To the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association, for giving Rep. Brian Bingman, R-Sapulpa, an honor for authoring the "welfare" bill for the drilling industry when thousands of Oklahoma kids are going to bed hungry.

OKC's Chesapeake boss Aubrey McClendon said he has quit the Republican Party and is Independent. Can a skunk shed his stink? We will keep you informed.

**Laurel:** To Tulsa Edison Prep School nurse Brooke Hargrove and guard Jake Bishop whose quick action with a defibrillator saved the life of a substitute teacher who had a heart attack.

Words cannot express our sorrow at the death of state Rep. Terry Hyman, killed in a freak accident on his Love County farm when a tractor rolled over him. He was 56 and a class act.

**Dart:** To T. Boone Pickens, reneging on his vow to pay \$1 million to anyone who provides proof the Swift Boat Vets were wrong about John Kerry. He plunked down \$1 million to promote the liars. [Newsweek, July 10]

Hoping to reduce the high turnover of prison guards and difficulty in recruiting new ones, the Department of Corrections will pay \$1,250 bonuses twice a year to new officers.

**Laurel:** To Hitch Enterprises for the development of switchgrass in the Oklahoma Panhandle for use as a bio-fuel. It's immoral to use corn when millions across the world are starving.

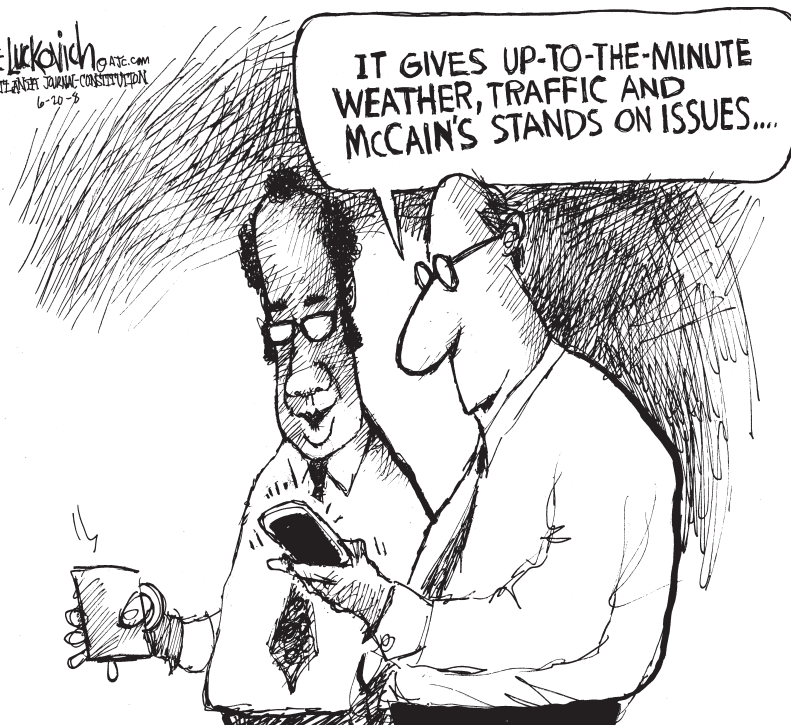
Oklahoma GOP Sen. Tom Coburn has filed his financial statement. "Senator Clean" took \$5,000 in trips from a pair of far right lobby groups in D.C. – the Heritage Foundation and Club for Growth.

**Dart:** To the federal government for continually stonewalling a class action lawsuit involving more than \$58 billion in trust funds stolen from American Indians.

Kitty litter editorials continue to be emitted from the Daily Disappointment, most recently criticizing Gov. Brad Henry for killing sorry GOP wedge issue bills. It was one of his shining moments.

**Laurel:** To the nation's ordinary Americans. Despite a downturn in Bush's economy, Americans donated \$306.3 billion to charity last year. Corporations came up with \$15 billion.

MIKE LUCKAICH  
ARTIST JOURNAL CONSTITUTION  
6-10-8



Oklahoma needs to get back to comprehensive sex education and abandon the failed abstinence-only program. In 2006 Oklahoma births out of wedlock were 46% of all live births.

**Dart:** To the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City for using church money to help fund a so-called poll in an effort to win legislative approval of vouchers for parochial schools. How immoral.

Oklahoma is one of 12 states moving to a Medicare electronic health records system that will reimburse doctors up to \$58,000 and practices up to \$290,000 for switching.

**Laurel:** To Toby Keith whose annual golf fund-raiser for families with children with cancer raised \$709,000. He's a class act. The rest of us ought to take up a collection and buy him a new hat.

More bad news when you didn't think things could get worse. The 2008 State Technology Index ranks Oklahoma a dismal 38th, down from 34th.

**Dart:** To House Republicans for playing politics by moving prematurely to impeachment of Auditor Jeff McMahan before his conviction. That partisanship cost taxpayers \$70,000.

A new national poll of hospitals reveals that mentally ill patients wait up to four hours before being admitted. Ten percent of those polled said they wait up to a full day. [American College of Emergency Physicians]

**Laurel:** To Dr. Susannah Rankin, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation scientist named the state's first ever Pew Scholar – \$240,000 over four years for research on cells.

That armchair hero, Republican Sen. Tom Coburn, voted against funding for the military, including a new GI Bill. He ought to have a pimp for a brother-in-law so he would have someone to look up to.

**Dart:** To the Bush Administration's failure to act on a national health insurance plan as employer health care costs rise another 10% in 2008 and another 10% in 2009.

IT GIVES UP-TO-THE-MINUTE WEATHER, TRAFFIC AND MCCAIN'S STANDS ON ISSUES....

A national poll of over-the-road truck drivers listed Oklahoma among the seven worst states for bad roads. [State Legislatures Magazine]

**Laurel:** To the State Medical Board Oklahoma for nailing errant doctors – 22 cases out of 7,110 doctors.

America has 200 accredited law schools – most of any nation – but 150,000 students will soon learn that jobs are in short supply. Those finishing private law schools owe an average of \$87,906; public students \$57,170.

**Dart:** To OKC Chamber Veep Matt Robison, whining that the Legislature didn't extend the school year or adopt merit pay. They couldn't because the Chamber-backed tax cuts erased any hope of education legislation. Duh!

Gadfly attorney Jerry Fent has filed an Oklahoma Supreme Court lawsuit claiming a tax amnesty law is unconstitutional. It would allegedly bring in \$32 million. What about people who paid their taxes on time – any break for them?

**Laurel:** To the Oklahoman for printing top corporate salaries in Oklahoma. Left off the list was the publisher of the Oklahoman – Christy Gaylord Everest. Oops!

Don't believe the bravado. Doctors have the highest suicide rate of any profession, 300 to 400 a year. PBS is airing a documentary on the subject, Struggling In Silence.

**Dart:** To ex-Republican Rep. J.C. Watts for belatedly discovering that the GOP has neglected the black community for years. He's drumming up black viewers for his proposed cable launch.

The state Capitol press corps is losing one of its finest reporters – and an even better person. The Tulsa World's Angel Riggs starts work late summer on her doctorate at OSU.

**Laurel:** To Oklahoma native Tracy Letts, winner of the 2008 Tony Award for best play, *August: Osage County*. His tale of a dysfunctional Oklahoma family also won a Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.

## THE OKLAHOMA Observer



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# Letters

Editor, The Observer:

In your article "Freedom's Price" [Cover, 6.25.08] you noted Pat Buchanan was draft-deferred because of a bad knee. I would point out under the old draft system we had men who were deferred for nothing more than a "bad attitude." At least one of them recently served as President. President Lincoln's military "career" consisted of a rather brief ride after some Indians who had left the area.

You said, "At least Buchanan has seen the error of his ways and calls for an exit strategy." This infers he advocated this war and nothing could be further from the truth. He spoke and wrote early and often against the war in Iraq. He also wrote many powerful articles against the Gulf war. Let's get it right.

In his "Bush treason" article [Public Forum 6.25.08], Steve Waterman informs us that Thomas Jefferson would have had a duel with George Bush. This writer, while no defender of much this president has done, finds that statement laughable. Mr. Jefferson, no fighter, managed to always keep a safe distance from any violence, once leaving his hallowed "Monticello Plantation" to avoid British troops.

I'm sure he would have toasted, roasted and written scathing words against George Bush. But put up the pistols and swords, because Mr. Jefferson was no George Washington or Alexander Hamilton or Aaron Burr.

Keep it real!

Randall Orr  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Why are you hiding?

Watching the news, I saw a photo featuring John McCain giving President Bush a big hug with his head buried in Bush's shoulder. All the while, Bush was waving at the crowd with his usual smirk.

Shortly thereafter, Cheney's Air Force Two arrival prompted a local TV station to announce he was in Tulsa less than an hour to give a 20-minute speech and for selected neocons to pay \$1,000 each for a photo-op.

Hopefully, those in attendance who wear Cheney's dog collar didn't bury their face in Cheney's shoulder. If so, no doubt years from now, when studying the photo, a grandchild will ask, "Why are you hiding your face in that man's shoulder?"

Perhaps ... just perhaps, the question will be explained, but I doubt it ... pity.

Clint Gold  
Sand Springs

Editor, The Observer:

My response to Carmen Wilkerson [Letters, 6.25.08] and all others who blame Bill Clinton for Hillary's loss: The world is full of women with straying husbands. They make a good life for the jerk and his children. So what is the point? Do you punish the wife for putting up with him?

A TV commentator said that the Eastern Elite were tired of carrying water for the Clintons. So they, the media, punish the wife. That fails common sense to me.

I'm not one of those wives. I had a faithful husband for 52 years. But I had sisters with cheating husbands, and I saw their silent hurt. My sisters tried every day to make a good life for every one around them.

Kate McDaniel  
Crawford

Editor, The Observer:

The Oklahoman editorial staff says "hate crime laws have not been conclusively shown to deter crime," but that "some studies indicate that capital punishment deters murders." They claim that hate crime laws would have been ineffective in stopping the murder of Matthew Shepard.

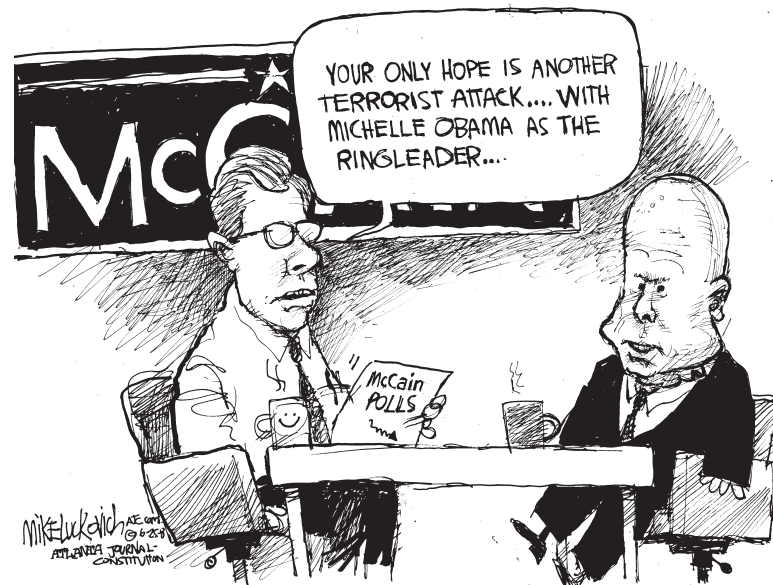
Oklahoma, which holds the record for per capita executions, executed 64 people from 2000-2006 and still had 1,316 homicides. So how does capital punishment deter murders?

In about 1980 I heard an interesting discussion on the radio while traveling through Texas. They were interviewing two men on death row in Texas. One had killed his wife and the other had killed a number of people and was a career type criminal.

The man who killed his wife said they were both drunk and got into a fight and he killed her. He had never killed anyone else. He said the death penalty never entered his mind. The other man said that he never considered the death penalty because he never thought he would be caught. Someone like a hired gun who carefully plans out a murder might consider the punishment, but most murders are between people who know each other and are not planned.

Why did the Oklahoman conclude Judy Shepard is inconsistent? According to them if she is against the death penalty then she doesn't want to punish her son's murderers. Of course she wants them punished she just doesn't want them dead. I'll bet my last nickel that Judy Shepard doesn't want anyone else's child killed even by execution.

Executing her son's killers will not bring her son back. I believe Oklaho-



ma has released 12 people from death row in the past couple of decades. I wonder how many innocent people they have executed?

Karen Webb  
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

In my opinion, Andrew Rice is an honorable gentleman and would make Oklahoma an outstanding U.S. senator - someone we would not have to read in the national media being portrayed as a "laughingstock" around this country.

Frankly, I'm tired - very tired - of having my friends in other states sending me the write-ups regarding the idiocies of Jim Inhofe.

Inhofe is a total embarrassment to our state!

Darla Sparks Reynolds  
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Sadly, Daniel Humphrey is right in his June 25 piece, "Sadly, Bigotry Still Abounds in Oklahoma." Sadly, Barack Obama's chance of carrying this state is about equivalent to Ralph Nader's.

Humphrey is also correct about our state having a "populist, progressive foundation." But I think he's wrong in saying the shift away from it began after the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It seems clear to me it began much earlier, when the Green Corn Rebellion [an uprising against World War I] created a backlash against Oklahoma's strong socialist party, continued when the state outlawed its own [red] first state flag after World War I, continued on through the anti-New Deal era, etc., and THEN on up through the great cultural backlash against the peace and justice movements of the 1960s, INCLUDING the Civil Rights Act.

Some of us, including I would suggest, the recently deceased Alvena Bieri who wrote occasionally for the Observer, think it is important to keep on reminding folks of our "left" traditions!

Keep up the good work, Observer!

Davis D. Joyce  
Spavinaw

Editor, The Observer:

I understand that in the presidential campaign, John McCain and the Republican Party plan to use Barack Obama's "youth and inexperience" as an argument against him.

One might question some of Obama's policies and/or judgment in certain matters. But as to youth and inexperience, I can't help thinking about another politician from Illinois

who ran for president 148 years ago.

Their ages were similar. Abraham Lincoln was 51 years old on election night in 1860; Barack Obama will be 47 this November.

As to experience, both of them got their political start by serving four terms in the Illinois Legislature.

Both of these men went on to serve in the U.S. Congress.

As I understand, Obama has been a U.S. senator for four years and is highly regarded for his service there.

As for Lincoln, he served one two-year term in the House of Representatives. Apparently he managed to antagonize his party and the voters of his district so that he failed to be re-elected. In 1858 he ran for a vacant seat in the U.S. Senate but was defeated in the election.

If a voter based his choice for president only on maturity and experience and would disqualify Obama this fall for his lack of these, he surely would never have voted for Abraham Lincoln had he been around to vote in the presidential election of 1860.

Richard Shifrin  
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Yucca Mountain is the wrong solution for the U.S. nuclear waste problem. The casks of nuclear waste placed in Yucca Mountain were ordered tested by a federal judge - they lasted about five years. Period. But the judge ordered the time period at a million years. What happened?

Bob Nichols of the San Francisco Bay View newspaper reported that the "bugs" and microbes inside Yucca Mountain destroyed the "impenetrable casks" in less than five years. Most, if not all, the professional staff quit and left.

If the nuclear industry wants to build nuclear plants, it should first clean up the mess it has already made, and then we will be able to discuss nuclear plant building.

Frank P. Belcastro  
Dubuque, IA

Editor, The Observer:

When multi-millions of people are starving, it must be morally wrong to convert food products to fuel.

The photograph [National Geographic, October 2007] of a young boy in Africa carrying a dead rat and severed monkey arm to market was gut-wrenching.

Perhaps the high gas prices will deter snot-nosed yuppies from driving 10-mile-per-gallon Humvees.

Tom Birbilis  
Tulsa

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## Frosty's Notebook

### Dads

One of the joys of my youth was getting up at 5 a.m. with my Dad on Saturday, going with him to Troy Cleaners at 9 East Choctaw in McAlester. He started the boiler for the steam lines, then we cut through the alley to the White House Café.

I was one of eight brothers so we took turns going with Dad. It was a really big deal.

He and his fellow businessmen drank coffee and chatted and I got to order pancakes!

I would listen intently to my Dad because he was very witty and usually cracked up the assembled coffee drinkers.

A small thing you say? No it wasn't. The point is that I had a father and he paid attention to his children. Hunting, fishing, boxing and family excursions. And discipline.

One of the great social tragedies of America today is the tens of thousands of young men [and lately young women] who join gangs.

One of the primary reasons is protection. Not being beaten up to or from school. Not being bullied at school. Not being afraid to be on the street alone. There was safety in numbers. No Dad to protect them.

My Dad saw to it that we protected each other.

One of my favorite memories is at supper when my brother Johnny showed up nursing the beginning of a shiner.

"Who did it?" my Dad asked.

Johnny told him.

"He bigger than you?"

"Yes, sir."

"How big?"

"As big as Kevin."

"He still down there on the corner?"

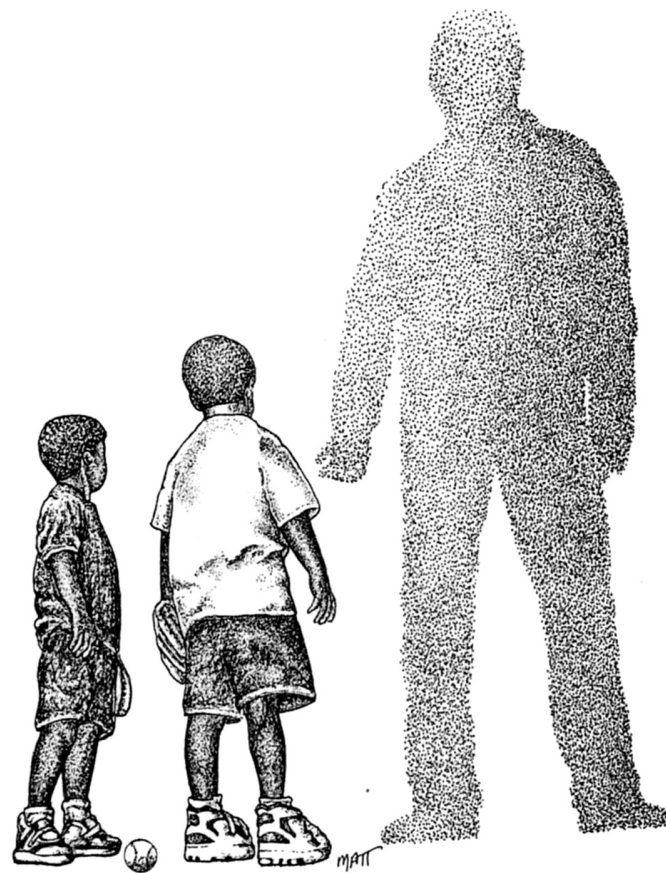
"Yes, sir, he was when I just came home."

My Dad looked at Kevin and barked the order: "Go take care of it."

Fifteen minutes later Kevin was back. He had a sly grin as he slid into his chair. Mom took his plate out of the oven. Not a word was spoken.

One percent of Oklahoma City's population belongs to gangs - 5,000 of them. There are thousands in Tulsa, Lawton, Muskogee and other communities. They are running out of control, with drive-by shootings the order of the day.

Gangs are representative of the decline of the family, especially among the poor. Barack Obama spoke to this tragedy and pledged to work to stop it. After



Harvard he was a community organizer in the toughest neighborhoods in Chicago.

On a recent weekend Chicago had 37 shootings. As of July 1, 19 youth had been killed in gang-related murders.

Youth unemployment stands at 34% this summer, thanks in part to the Bush Administration's slashing of the Summer Teen Employment program.

How do we take back the streets? Law enforcement is hurting badly since George Bush canceled the 100,000 "Cops On The Street" program launched by Bill Clinton.

Cops alone won't solve the problem. We need to restore the highly successful after-school program canceled by Bush. We need early intervention in families in trouble - special help for unwed teen mothers.

I'm not putting down single moms. I know several and their struggle to make ends meet.

Public schools are barely scraping by thanks to unprecedented unfunded mandates such as No Child Left Behind. The NCLB testing mania has driven thousands of kids out of schools and into the streets.

Just remember, good dads make all the difference in the world.

### No Nukes For Oklahoma

Is nuclear energy the clean energy wave of the future? If you listen to the nuclear industry, it sure sounds like a great alternative to dirty, carbon-based energy.

Don't be tricked. Nuclear energy was a terrible energy alternative 30 years ago, and it remains so today.

Corporation Commission Chairman Jeff Cloud, a Republican, wants Oklahoma to finance a study on the feasibility of building a nuclear power plant.

Bad idea. Oklahoma went down that road once and eastern Oklahoma paid a dear price for it. The Sequoyah Fuels uranium conversion plant shut down in 1993 but another \$32.6 million is being spent today to clean up the dangerous mess left behind.

Nuclear power is neither clean nor green. It creates dangerous radioactive waste and produces greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Mining and processing the uranium needed for nuclear energy destroys and contaminates land and groundwater. There is no long-term solution for storing the waste produced by the creation of nuclear power, which stays highly radioactive for thousands of years.

John McCain favors nuclear power while Barack Obama favors alternative power sources such as wind.

Naturally, the nutty Daily Disappointment editorial page endorsed the idea, with no mention of how to fund the tens of millions it would cost. The state is flat broke.

Instead of building new nuclear reactors, time and resources should be devoted to developing environmentally sustainable solutions to our energy needs, such as renewables and conservation.

Relying on nuclear energy will not make the United States more energy independent, just further in debt.

There are currently 13 nuclear reactors on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries - from Pennsylvania to Virginia. Two reactors became operational in the 1970s.

About 50,000 people live within the 10-mile emergency planning zone near the plant and would be harmed most by an incident or accident involving a radiological release.

The revival of nuclear energy is not by accident. The Bush Administration has made it a priority, and Congress is buying into nuclear energy as a viable alternative energy source, sustaining it with huge amounts of taxpaying funding.

In 2005, lawmakers authorized \$13 billion in subsidies and tax breaks for the nuclear industry, and in December 2007, Congress continued propping up the industry, approving \$18.5 billion for nuclear loan guarantees.

The money adds to the national debt Bush will leave - \$10 trillion. Our dismal duo in the U.S. Senate has voted for virtually all of the new debt.

The reality is that the nuclear industry simply isn't economically viable without huge, endless taxpayer handouts. So much for Republican conservatism.

Congress is being misled by industry lobbyists - and the administration - into believing that nuclear power is the way to go to fight global warming.

Nuclear power is a dangerous source of energy, and we have no way of properly storing the long-lasting nuclear waste.

### Last Will & Testament

At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to install artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my "deathbed." Call it my "bed of life" and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to a man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman.

Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain.

Give my blood to the teenager who has been pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play.

Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week.

Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that someday a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her windows.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must bury something let it be my faults, my weaknesses, and all prejudice against my fellow human beings.

Give my soul to God.

If by chance you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you. If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

- Robert N. Test

## CareerTech Campaign

# Students Fill Three Semi Trucks For Poor

By Brooke Marton

Raising enough money to fill two semi-trailers with food for the national Feed the Children Campaign was the Oklahoma goal – \$24,340. But enough food was collected for 1,200 families of four, filling three semi-trailers.

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America [FCCLA] is the career and technology education student organization affiliated with CareerTech's Family and Consumer Sciences Education program sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.

Nationally, the two-year anti-hunger campaign raised more than \$218,000 in the first year. Because of the state's success, Oklahoma will be recognized at the National FCCLA Convention in Orlando, FL, on July 15, where the last of the three trucks will be unloaded.

### ROOKIE MEMBERS PARTNER WITH CHURCHES

On June 19, FCCLA "rookie" members – new to the organization in chapters across the state – partnered with Stillwater's "Christo's Community" to distribute the contents of the second truck at the Oklahoma State University campus.

Rookie Camp is for first-year members to learn more about FCCLA, leadership skills and community service.

Stillwater churches joined Christo's Community to spread the word to local families about the food distribution. Christo's Community Director Scott Shaefer was there to oversee the event with members of the Oklahoma FCCLA organization.

"Each box of food contains non-perishable items that are simple to make," Shaefer said.

### EACH FAMILY RECEIVES MORE THAN FOOD

Feed the Children representative Chelsi Pitman said each family receives a food box, a hygiene box, water and chips.

Sheila White, one of the recipients, was relieved to hear about the truck.

"I was at the First Christian Church and they had informed me about it," White said. "Living at minimum is hard when you have children to feed and you're running a household."

Sara Wion, another recipient, was so grateful that she asked to shake the hands of the people responsible.

"I got a divorce and have three kids. It's hard to pay bills and feed the kids when you only get \$637," Wion said. "We have very little. I think all we have is eggs and a gallon of milk."

### ORLANDO IS THE DESTINATION

In Orlando the last of the three trucks will be unloaded and food given to local families.

"Oklahoma did so well, in part, because Feed the Children is based in Okla-



homa," FCCLA State Adviser Denise Morris said.

"Also, chapters worked behind the scenes to get the job done. Members were loading food and working with people to make sure their goal was met. Advisers and students said it was easy to raise the money and to get volunteers involved."

Oklahoma FCCLA distributed the first truckload of food on April 4 during the organization's spring conference.

"The distribution of food went smoothly," Morris said. "Oklahoma FCCLA members worked with the Salvation Army to provide vouchers for families of four. It took an hour and a half to distribute a semi-load of food."

### OKLAHOMANS THRILLED ABOUT PROJECT

FCCLA President Jackson Alexander said the Oklahoma FCCLA is thrilled about this project.

"We are extremely excited to partner with Feed the Children," Alexander said. "A combination of fundraising, donations from chapter accounts and penny wars at local schools really brought this together."

"We figured out that \$7,200 would fill a truck and that would feed 400 families. We divided it up and with the 431 chapters in Oklahoma we would just need \$16.71 from each to fill a truck. We ended up filling three trucks."

"While Oklahoma was first in the nation for donations [last year], Virginia came from behind to be No. 1 this year."

Alexander sees this not only as a good cause, but a challenge for a good cause.

"We will not settle for second place," Alexander said.

## Little Hope For Oklahoma's Poor

Prior to September 11, the issue of poverty in America was poised to move to the center of the public opinion stage.

The first welfare recipients approached the end of the five-year limit on federal assistance imposed by the welfare reform law of 1996 – resulting from a deal struck between Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich.

That focus of attention shifted, of course, with the terrorist attacks and ensuing war. Like so many other domestic calamities, poverty was, for a time, pushed to the background of the public consciousness.

Yet the poor are still here, as we are told in Matthew 26: 11, among us always.

One in four Oklahoma children is poor. One in five goes to bed hungry. A third of all Oklahoma adults are without health insurance. Minorities are particularly hit hard.

You won't hear this critical issue discussed at Oklahoma civic clubs, chambers of commerce or corporate boardrooms.

The agency most responsible in helping the poor is the Department of Human Services, grossly under-funded, understaffed and with a social worker staff that ranks 50th in pay.

Oklahoma is divided into "haves" and "have-nots," running counter to the vision many hold dear of a land of opportunity and equality for all.

On average, Oklahoma workers earn only 80% of the national average for similar work – a condition that can be laid squarely at the feet of the business world.

Consider Wal-Mart salaries and Tinker Air Force Base salaries. Wal-Mart is the state's largest employer, while Tinker employs 22,000 federal workers. Tinker jobs pay an estimated 40% more.

Polls find a majority denying such a division exists, and Americans don't come close to agreeing on what the meaning of poverty is, at least not in dollar terms.

The polls show us that our perception of economic hardship is, above all else, a relative thing.

How troubled should we be that over a third of Americans consider themselves poor? We would like to think no one has to be poor in America today.

Nearly three-quarters of us believe that "most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to try," and close to half say poverty is due less to unfortunate circumstance than to people simply not doing enough to help themselves out of it.

Few are optimistic that poverty can ever be eliminated. Polls are silent on what

we think about poverty in other parts of the world, where the frame of reference might be defined by the provision of one's daily bread, or the possession of a blanket or a tent.

The saddest note in Oklahoma is how poverty impacts children, both at home and in school.

Thanks to an interim study authored by Rep. Wallace Collins, D-Norman, we may get answers the ruling elite don't want.

## Under-Insured Also In Crisis

Oklahoma now leads the nation in the percentage of the adult population that is uninsured, according to a new national survey.

There is another category that is also hurting. The number of adults nationwide who have health insurance but face financial risk due to high out-of-pocket expenses increased 60% between 2003 and 2007 to more than 25 million.

Middle- and higher-income families, those with annual incomes of at least \$40,000, experienced the sharpest increase among the uninsured, nearly tripling from 4% in 2003 to 11% in 2007, according to the study by the Commonwealth Fund, which was published online in the journal Health Affairs.

An estimated 47 million Americans have no insurance at all. Many others who are required to pay high deductibles and co-payments for limited benefits often go without care due to costs.

"Insurance coverage is the ticket into the health care system, but for too many that ticket does not provide genuine access to care," said Karen Davis, president of the private Commonwealth Fund that supports independent health research.

Those defined as under-insured had health insurance all year but had out-of-pocket medical expenses of at least 10% of their income, or 5% for those with low incomes.

The report's authors said people with individual or small-group coverage, typically those who worked for a small business or were self-employed, were more likely to have insurance that required substantial cost sharing than those with coverage through large employers.

Forty-five percent of the underinsured reported difficulties paying their medical bills, being contacted by collection agencies for unpaid bills or changing their way of life to cover their health expenses.

## Same Old Trick

# Extremists Attacking Public Ed

The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs is up to its usual trick again – defaming the public schools in order to promote vouchers.

This time it was a “poll” by the Friedman Foundation allegedly showing that 83% of Oklahomans would send their kids to private schools if they had a choice.

First, you need to know who the pollster was. The Friedman Foundation was founded by Milton Friedman, a libertarian who spent his life trying to kill off public education.

Second, you need to know who paid for the “poll.” The Department of Catholic Education of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, the National Catholic Educational Association, Americans for Prosperity-Oklahoma, the American Legislative Exchange Council, Hispanic Council for Reform, Black Alliance for Education Options and other lesser known extremist organizations.

Their common denominator? Trying to get public taxpayer dollars to find private and parochial schools.

Only two legislators at the OCPA press conference were the usual suspects, Rep. Jabar Shumate and Sen. Judy Eason-McIntyre, both of Tulsa.

They were the only members of the black caucus to join Republicans this year in trying to pass a voucher bill. It squeaked through the Senate on a near 100% party-line vote but was killed outright in the House.

Why not vouchers? Other than the breach of separation of church and state, Oklahoma is now 48th in what it spends on a public school student's education, 49th in teacher salaries.

Knowledgeable media usually ignore OCPA and their mouthpiece, Brandon Dutcher, a homeschooler. They are known as a wildly rightwing “think tank” that never gets around to thinking.

KWTV [Channel 9] in Oklahoma City, gave its viewers a wholly slanted story, including a sit-down with Dutcher who said parents were trying to rescue their kids from “violence and drugs.”

KWTV's phones weren't working? They couldn't get a scintilla of balance from the School Boards Association, the AFT or the OEA?

In fact, Oklahoma City and Tulsa are the districts dealing with drugs and violence in some schools – nowhere near the majority. Oklahoma is second only to Utah in supporting public schools – 93% of children go there.

Anyone remember when KWTV was a first-rate, award-winning TV station? Those days are long gone.

As one longtime Oklahoma pollster said, if you ask the right questions you can get whatever conclusion the client wants.

Repeated rigged polls have Americans favoring vouchers until they learn the facts – then it's 80% the other way.

# 2008 Distinguished Pulpit Series

Mayflower Congregational Church, UCC

**Rev. Doug Manning**

July 13



Someone has said that communicators are rare, and Manning is well done. A former Baptist minister, he has spent the last 25 years as founder of his own publishing company, author of 25 books and public speaker in the areas of grief and elder care. He has been featured in national conferences and conventions throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Get ready to think until you hurt and laugh until you stop hurting.

**Frosty Troy**

July 20



Forrest J. “Frosty” Troy is editor of the award-winning Oklahoma Observer, an independent journal of politics, government and social issues which has won more than four dozen journalism awards. He was a nominee for the Pulitzer Prize and has headed both state capitol and Washington newspaper bureaus. Frosty is a nationally acclaimed speaker on his three favorite topics: The free enterprise system, education and politics.

**Rev. Bob Gardenhire**

July 27



This minister, therapist, and spiritual director is the Founder and Director of **The HeartPaths Spirituality Centre** which is celebrating its silver anniversary of training spiritual directors in OKC and Dallas. Gardenhire is an ordained United Methodist clergy who served Church of the Servant as its Minister of Care and Counseling for 17 years and St. Luke's UMC as its Minister of Staff and Associate in Pastoral Care for the last 9 years. He is a 1985 graduate of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Guidance and earned his D.Min. in 1995 at Graduate Theological

Foundation. He and Marcy have been married for 39 years and have two married sons and two granddaughters. Gardenhire is an avid golfer and holds a 2nd degree black belt in Aikido.

**Rev. Loyce Newton-Edwards**

August 3



My family is such a blessing in my life: husband, mother of two sons/two daughter-in-laws, and four “angelic” grandchildren. A former United Methodist Sr. Pastor/Ordained Deacon in the Okla. Conference, she was recently ordained as a UCC Minister/Pastor on May 4th at Church of the Open Arms UCC. This social justice minister is passionate about, and loves the challenge of being a “sacred activist, for peace and justice.

Newton-Edwards is a 1997 graduate of the (ITC) Interdenominational Theological Center, Gammon School of Theology, Atlanta, GA., with a focus on womanist theology. B. S. Degree from OSU, and M. Ed. from UCO. She currently serves as president of PFLAG-OKC; Religious Advisory Committee for both the Human Rights Campaign and the National Black Justice Coalition and is a former board member of Cimmaron Alliance Foundation and one of ten National Af-Am Faith Leaders featured in *Roll Call & USA Today*, in support of passage of the 2007 Fed Anti-Hate Crimes Legislation.

**Com. Jim Roth**

August 10



Jim Roth was appointed to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission by Gov. Brad Henry on June 1, 2007, after having served in elective local office the previous 5 years. He was elected Oklahoma County Commissioner for District One in 2002 and was overwhelmingly re-elected with over 63% in 2006.

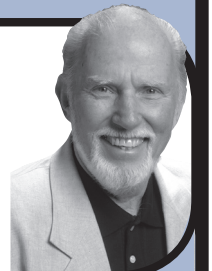
Roth graduated from Kansas State University in 1991 with a BA in Political Science/Pre-Law and OCU School of Law in 1994 with a JD. He holds Graduate certificates from Harvard University's Kennedy School

of Government for state & local government executives and the United States Air War College's National Security Forum at Maxwell Air Force Base.

A believer in community volunteerism, Roth is involved in Rotary International Club 29 (OKC), the Choctaw Kiwanis Club, and the Chambers of Commerce for Midwest City, Choctaw and the OKC Capitol area, the AIDS Support Program, Mayflower Congregational Church, the Greater OKC United Way and Allied Arts, among others. He finds great strength and joy from his family and friends, including his partner of 11 years, Worth Ross and his mother Marie.

**Dr. Tom Boyd**

August 17



Tom W. Boyd is the David Ross Boyd Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Oklahoma. After teaching philosophy of religion and ethics there for 28 years, he retired from full time teaching in 1997. He also retired from the ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church USA in the summer of 1998.

Boyd holds four earned degrees, including a Ph.D. in Religion from Vanderbilt University in 1973. His academic specialization is in philosophical theology, theories of religion, religion and culture and ethics. His current concentration is on the relation among world religions and the relation between religion and culture. He is particularly devoted to issues related to interfaith dialogue. He seeks through his studies and teaching to understand and appreciate religion in its contemporary setting and in light of an emerging planetary culture.

*Dr. Robin Meyers invites you to expand your mind by visiting Mayflower Congregational Church this summer. From July 13 through August 17 where a diverse group of speakers will share their ideas for living faithfully. Mayflower is located at 3901 NW 63rd between Portland and the Northwest Expressway, 842-8897. The service is held at 10:45 am.*

# Sad Decline Of Rural Life And Newspapers

By Terry M. Clark

Unless you live in and around Temple, OK, you probably don't know Harold Powell, but thanks to my column in the Oklahoma Press Association "Publisher," I've met him – via e-mail and telephone, and he has a story to tell that's important to rural Oklahoma newspapers. His story is a metaphor for our declining rural life, and perhaps for newspapers in general.

If I seem obsessed with the future of newspapers, it's because I have this love-hate relationship. They're dear to my heart and I know how important they are to our lives and freedoms.

But almost every day I read about some of the big boys – like the massive Tribune company – planning to cut more than 500 news pages, and continue layoffs so they can sustain huge profit margins for the benefit of stockholders.

And then they wonder why more and more people don't subscribe. They don't get it.

## A TALE OF THE TEMPLE TRIBUNE

This is the story of a much smaller Tribune. After one of my recent screeds on the subject, Mr. Powell wrote me about his experiences with trying to resurrect The Temple Tribune, and it struck a chord with me, because long ago when I was at Waurika, I had friends there, and I was there when the first Temple Tribune died in the 70s, much to the chagrin of its local residents.

It'll also shock most of you to know that I occasionally drove up to Temple to preach in the Church of Christ.

So when I talk about the death of newspapers and the effect on people and towns, I usually have Temple in mind.

The second Temple Tribune died May 1 this year, 36 issues old, after Mr. and Mrs. Powell had exhausted their resources. The rest of this is their story, one that I see as a metaphor of the dwindling populations of most of rural Oklahoma and America.

## JUST WHAT THE TOWN NEEDED

"Temple needs a newspaper," a prominent citizen told Harold one day, asking if he'd look into it. He had retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel and moved with his wife, Lois, back to the hometown to farm and be near their parents.

"I was never a journalism student," Harold wrote. "My Temple school teachers would be surprised that I could later write my name."

But he had a great English teacher: "Tenth grade, Mrs. Kennedy, made us diagram sentences day after day. Credit her with getting me through two college degrees and five Army officer ranks."

Harold wrote me: "Good luck came when a dear lady, San Antonio journalist Grace Vincent, agreed to help me with writing for my Masters Degree program. I dropped my draft on her desk and returned next day. She said, 'Harold, what did you mean by this?' I told her what I meant. She said, 'Why didn't you write that?' She was too kind and smart to say, 'Why did you write this stilted, cold, drawn out bulls---?' She stressed many of the writing terms mentioned in your advice on writing. Active verbs, and short sentences and paragraphs became my goals. Drilled myself to learn to use them."

## 'WE STARTED FROM SCRATCH'

When they moved back to Temple he began writing a column for The Walters Herald about Temple news, but a new editor canceled the column. That's when the idea for resurrecting The Tribune came.

"We started from scratch," Harold wrote. "We incorporated, sold stock, bought equipment, hired a young lady, computer-wise local to be editor. We put out 36



beloved weeklies and attracted 350 subscribers and 100 put outs. We never developed successful marketing of advertising. I still believe it is out there to be had. We were short of expertise."

When the Tribune died, Harold had trimmed the cost of publishing to \$812 per eight-page issue, printing in Bowie, TX. The editor's salary of \$350 was part of that. Temple, a town of about 1,100, no longer has a newspaper, but Harold thinks it's still an opportunity, and it's for sale for a figurative song, if someone wants to undertake a labor of love, hard work, ink and long hours. I told him to look for retired English teachers, or retired couples that want to work.

## MANY SMALLER TOWNS DRYING UP

He and I chatted about how rural life had changed, about how when he was growing up there, there were families on every quarter section. No longer, and many teachers even commute to town.

His lessons?

"You need the right people," he said. "You need an editor who can pull it all together, and someone who can get the advertising."

The need?

"There's a city council meeting coming up with a big agenda. Without a newspaper, people won't know about it and they can't do anything about what happens because they won't know."

Harold sent me two copies of the paper. His front-page column was "What's Up At City Hall."

## WHAT'S LOST IS LOCAL NEWS

The paper was clean and neat, with lots of gray copy blocks that the experts say people won't read – but they did in Temple, because it was local news. Group photos of school groups. Obituaries. School news. Nursing home news. 4-H news. School menus. Very few classifieds. And less than a page of display advertising. No longer.

I told Harold I'd like to eventually come down and meet him. His response told me why I love rural newspapers:

"Come on down to the farm and we'll add some water to the soup and we'll feed you."

– The author is chairman of the Department of Mass Communications at the University of Central Oklahoma. A version of this article appeared in The Oklahoma Press Association's Publisher.

# Native Vote For President Hardly Monolithic

By Dean Rader

For over 200 years now, Native Americans have had little say in presidential and political matters in the United States, but for the first time in two centuries that could change with November's election.

This year, if the Indian community turns out in good numbers [which looks likely] Native Americans could help determine whether states like Oklahoma [and Arizona and Montana] go Democratic or Republican, which could actually help decide if the White House goes Democratic or Republican.

Suddenly, Indians have a great deal of power, and while it may surprise many Americans, a fierce debate is raging in Indian country about whom Indians should support for president.

But you'd never know it from the lack of media coverage.

## OBAMA, MCCAIN BOTH WIN SUPPORT

A few weeks ago, when the Crow Nation, a major Indian tribe located in southern Montana, officially adopted and unofficially endorsed Barack Obama, it was the first time during this campaign that Native political interests were given any real attention.

Indeed, one of the more indelible images in an already iconic campaign is the photo of wheelchair bound Myrtle Strong Enemy, a 101-year old member of the Crow nation, clutching a Barack Obama "Change We Can Believe In" sign.

There is no question this made a great photo op, but it is wrongheaded to assume that American Indians will support Obama because he is the minority candidate or because his message of "hope" resonates with Native cultural values. Indian political affiliations are as diverse as the tribes themselves.

For example, before Obama emerged as the nominee, the tribal leader of the Northern Cheyenne, the Crows' immediate neighbor to the east, endorsed Hillary Clinton for president.

## TRIBAL, PARTY POLITICS NUANCED

Geri Small, the first female to be elected tribal president of the Northern Cheyenne, may not speak for the entire tribe, but her pro-Hillary stance reflects a nuanced understanding of the intersection of tribal and party politics that is becoming de rigueur among Native leaders.

She's not alone. Last year, Arlan Melendez, the chairman of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and vice president of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, not only endorsed Sen. Clinton, he also went to work as a co-chair for her campaign.

Even more interesting is the fact that a large number of Indians are rallying around Republican candidate John McCain, thanks to his years of service on the Senate Indian Affairs committee and his reputation for championing tribal sovereignty.

In 1994, McCain was a major proponent of the Tribal Self-Governance Act, which some Natives believe led to less meddling and decreased bureaucracy from the federal government, especially on reservations.

## MCCAIN LISTENS TO NATIVE AMERICANS

"McCain has been willing to listen to Native Americans that he represents," says Mike Miller, communications officer for the Cherokee Nation. "He forms relationships well and understands the issues of Native Americans."

See NATIVE VOTE Page 13

## BOOKS

# Did You Hear The One About Good Lawyers?

By Mike Nobles

### MIRANDA

*The Story of America's Right to Remain Silent*  
By Gary L. Stuart  
University of Arizona Press  
212 pages, \$17.95

### THE LAWYER MYTH

*A Defense of the American Legal Profession*  
By Rennard Strickland and Frank T. Read  
Swallow Press  
152 pages, \$16.95

A friend of mine is fond of saying he has only been broke twice in his life: Once when he lost a lawsuit and once when he won one.

He also loves to tell the story of the owner of a business that had been sued for knowingly selling defective products to the public. The trial had not gone well. The day the jury returned a verdict he was unable to attend and had given instructions for his lawyer to call him immediately with the verdict.

The jury surprisingly returned a verdict of not guilty and his lawyer dutifully called to give him the news. His lawyer was thrilled with the verdict and his first words to his client were "justice has been served" – whereupon the businessman said, "File an appeal immediately."

Needless to say the jokes, innuendoes, and misconceptions about lawyers and the legal system abound and it is a rare reader who does not know numerous such stories themselves.

#### RECONSIDERING THE STEREOTYPES

So, I must admit, it was with a bit of skepticism that I read these two books. I am glad I took the time because they gave me pause to reconsider the place of lawyers in our society and to be reminded of the efforts of lawyers to protect what we believe to be fundamental values in our society.

*Miranda* is an absolute must read for anyone remotely interested in the much-maligned and misunderstood 1966 Supreme Court decision that reaffirmed an individual's right to remain silent when he/she is most vulnerable in our legal system.

It has been one of the most controversial decisions of the court for over 40 years and is by no means universally accepted today.

The book will appeal to both the layperson and legal scholar alike.

#### MIRANDA'S FASCINATING STORY

The general reader will be fascinated with the story of Ernest Miranda, his arrest and subsequent conviction in 1963 for sexual assault, the conviction being based entirely on his confession.

The book provides details about Miranda's life and subsequent death not generally known, such as the fact that he spent six years in jail after the Supreme Court decision, was killed in a bar fight in 1975, and in spite of numerous witnesses, his killers have never been arrested.

The reader more interested in the legal history of the case will be rewarded with a thorough discussion of the appeals process, the story of the lawyers involved, and the legal aftermath of the case that involves numerous cases clarifying and refining, but not substantively changing, the *Miranda v. Arizona* decision.

This book ultimately made me proud of the work of lawyers and reminded me of the importance of their work given the events that have unfolded in the wake of 9/11.

For those who continue to insist the decision was a travesty of justice, well, let me remind you: "You have the right to remain silent." Highly recommended.

#### FORMER TU LAW PROFESSORS

*The Lawyer Myth* caught my attention because it was written by two lawyers who are former professors at the University of Tulsa School of Law. They have since gone on to distinguished careers as legal educators and between them have held nine deanships, published more than 40 books and taught at some 25 law schools.

The book is an enlightening, convincing, refutation of the myriad myths and misconceptions about lawyers and the legal system that should be required reading for all interested in the current state of our legal system.

The authors use empirical data and an informed historical perspective to discuss some of the most common misconceptions, issues, and outright falsehoods that plague our legal system and threaten to weaken it and the rule of law so necessary for a thriving democracy.

In a highly readable and well-reasoned manner they tackle such charges and questions as:

- Are there too many lawyers?
- Are lawsuits responsible for the so-called medical malpractice crisis?
- Are there too many lawsuits?
- Are media responsible for damaging legal myths?

#### POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS EXPOSED

By examining such cases as the legendary McDonald's coffee spill and the evidence surrounding the rising costs of medical malpractice insurance, the reader is provided a sometimes eye-opening view of the actual facts in the cases and a reasonable explanation of how the law works that is many times the opposite of popular misconceptions perpetrated on the public by media and special interest groups.

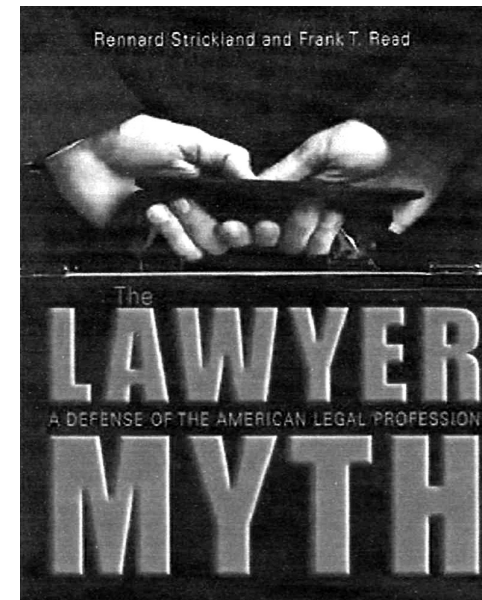
See **LAWYERS** Page 14

# MIRANDA

## THE STORY OF AMERICA'S RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT



GARY L. STUART



### APPRECIATION

## Alvena's Unbounded Love Of The Literary

By Cecil Acuff

*Editor's Note: Our dear friend, Alvena Bieri, whose insightful book reviews graced these pages for a generation, died June 20 in Stillwater at age 75. A Hobart native, she first attended Oklahoma A&M [now OSU] for a year, before transferring to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she graduated with high honors. She returned to her native state, first to teach ninth grade English in Guymon, then to accept a graduate assistantship at OSU. She later taught composition for 14 years at OSU and even served as part-time custodian at Highland Park United Methodist Church, a job she described as "just good clean fun." Memorials may be made to the Peace House, 2912 N. Robinson in Oklahoma City, or Habitat for Humanity in Stillwater.*

This Perkins person, who never met Alvena Bieri, read her book review column whether in the Stillwater News-Press, Perkins Journal, or The Oklahoma Observer. Then, as people do, made presumptive assumptions.

Alvena's writing was *Frhronifugic* [FHRON-ti-FU-gic] – she helped readers escape their thoughts of cares, sorrows, and misfortunes. Everyone is familiar with *Egocentrics* – inner-directed, self-absorbed, their center of reference is of self.

Bieri just had to be an *Alterocentric* [AL-tuh-roh-SEN-trik], one who is wholly focused on others, and whose life revolved around them.

Alvena probably was a *Joviomelancholian* [Joh-vec-MEL-un-kahl-i-an] – one who wears a jovial face to mask the gloom within. She surely could have suffered from *Prosopolethy* [pruh-SOH-puh-LEE-thee] – an inclination to accept people based on their personal appearance, as falling in love at first sight.

#### A CLASSIC BIBLIOMANIAC?

The three types of book nuts, in ascending intensity: the Bibliophile, who loves books; the Bibliomaniac, who is crazy about them; and the Biblioholic, who is consumed by them to the point of self-destruction.

Tom Raabe's book, *Biblioholism: The Literary Addiction*, defines the disease as "the habitual longing to purchase, read, store, admire, and consume books in excess." Raabe chose an epigraph by author John Ferriar, "What wild desires, what restless torments seize, the hapless person, who feels the book-disease."

Alvena was probably a bibliomaniac, and she had to have practiced Winston Churchill's suggestion in the little book, *Book Lover's Quotations*, edited by Helen Exley:

"If you cannot read all your books, at any rate handle, or as it were, fondle them – peer into them, let them fall open where they will, read from the first sentence that arrests your eye, set them back on the shelves with your own hand, arrange them on your own plan so that at least you know where they are. Let them be your friends; let them be your acquaintances."

Gentle newspaper readers may be convinced, at this point, that this Perkins person is one *Pegalgian* [py-GAL-jee-an] – a pain in the butt. Well, all God's chil-luns and most dogs and cats are, at times [some constantly?], a pain-er, or a pain-ee!

As Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said when asked about the 2000 presidential election, "Get over it."

#### ALVENA WAS A CELEBRITY

Alvena Bieri would have loved the little 272-page book by Charles Harrington Elster, *There's A Word For It*. And Alvena's the celebrity here.

See **APPRECIATION** Page 14

# For Smirking Scalia, It's All About Power

By Danny M. Adkison

If you asked constitutional scholars who the most liberal justice on the United States Supreme Court is, you would probably find all of them answering Justice John Paul Stevens. Most non-experts on the court, if they paid any attention at all to the court's decisions, would give the same answer.

How odd, then, that on the court's last day, Justice Stevens, while addressing those sitting in the courtroom, begged his conservative colleagues to exercise judicial restraint.

In 46 pages of dissent [out of a 64-page opinion], Justice Stevens ended with this admonition: "It is, however, clear to me that adherence to a policy of judicial restraint would be far wiser than the bold decision announced today."

Conventional wisdom has it that being a liberal justice means exercising judicial activism; likewise, being a conservative justice means exercising judicial restraint.

## HIGH COURT'S CONSERVATIVE ACTIVISTS

All of that went down the rabbit hole when Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, John Roberts, and Samuel Alito [the court's known conservatives] were joined by Justice Anthony Kennedy [the court's swing vote] in overturning nearly 70 years of precedent concerning the Second Amendment's right to keep and bear arms.

Justice Scalia's majority stated that the Second Amendment didn't mean what the court said it meant in the 1939 Miller decision. That case had, as Justice Stevens noted, been used by "hundreds of judges" to rule that the Second Amendment's right was inextricably tied to a state's need for a well-regulated militia. It did not, according to that interpretation, mean that individuals had a right to own a gun. All of that changed on the court's last day.

## SCALIA WIELDS RAW POWER

Justice Scalia, writing for a majority of five, wrote that the Second Amendment now was being interpreted to "guarantee the individual right to possess and carry weapons."

What had changed? What had produced a new view of the Second Amendment compared with the view given in 1939? That's easy: the justices had changed, and with it their manner of interpreting the Constitution.

In the end, Justice Scalia failed to historically demonstrate that the court got it wrong in 1939.

Justice Scalia has developed a kind of legal rope-a-dope. He is much more comfortable responding to the "blows" of those who disagree with him than he is seeking to persuade them.

That is why he devoted so much of his opinion to attacking the dissenting views of Justices Stevens and Stephen Breyer. Nearly half of the paragraphs found in his majority opinion refer to the dissenters' arguments.

## A TIDAL WAVE OF LAWSUITS?

Scalia did the same thing the day before the Second Amendment case in a Sixth Amendment "right to confront" case. He wrote the opinion in that case and stated that in spite of the fact that a man killed his primary witness [he shot her six times], her incriminating comments could not be used in court against him.

He ruled this way in spite of traditional exceptions to the "right to confront" re-

# Subject: When You Need A Good Lawyer

The following are from a book called *Disorder in the American Courts*, and are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and now published by court reporters who had the torment of staying calm while these exchanges were actually taking place:

ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

ATTORNEY: What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?

WITNESS: He said, "Where am I, Cathy?"

ATTORNEY: And why did that upset you?

WITNESS: My name is Susan!

ATTORNEY: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo?

WITNESS: We both do.

ATTORNEY: Voodoo?

WITNESS: We do.

ATTORNEY: You do?

WITNESS: Yes, voodoo.

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 21-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: Uh, he's 21.

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?

WITNESS: Are you sh----- me?

ATTORNEY: So the date of conception [of the baby] was Aug. 8?

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quirement that allow such testimony [even though the witness cannot be cross-examined]. The Washington Post quoted a distinguished law professor who noted that this case was going to cause a tidal wave of lawsuits [since it is not that uncommon for criminals to want to eliminate evidence of their guilt, including those who can testify against them].

Justice Scalia, himself, all but admitted the same thing would happen with the Second Amendment ruling. He writes, "But since this case represents this court's first in-depth examination of the Second Amendment, one should not expect it to clarify the entire field; there will be time enough to expound upon the historical justifications for those exceptions [which] come before us."

Aren't conservative justices supposed to be seeking to limit litigation instead of encouraging it?

## ROBERTS ABDICATES POWER AS CHIEF

Finally, a personal observation. Sitting in the Supreme Court chamber for the last two days of its 2007 term, I was struck with the degree to which it seemed the court's leader was not Chief Justice Roberts, but Justice Scalia.

Most court analysts know that Scalia wanted to be chief justice. It would appear, for now, that the chief justice is content to let Justice Scalia take the role of the court's leader.

Normally, since Justice Scalia is considered to be ideologically conservative, that would mean the court would exercise restraint in the decisions it faces next term.

Yet, the final days of the court demonstrated that conservative justices can be just as judicially active as liberals.

As the elder Justice Stevens read his dissent in the Second Amendment case to those in the courtroom, Justice Scalia sat quietly with just the chief justice between the two.

While most of the justices sat expressionless or appeared stoic, Justice Scalia sat with a smirk on his face as if to say, "You may have the best argument, but we now have the votes."

- The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University. He was teaching in Washington recently and sat in on the final two days of the court's term.

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And what were you doing at that time?

WITNESS: Uh ... I was gettin' laid!

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Now whose death do you suppose terminated it?

ATTORNEY: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All my autopsies are performed on dead people. Would you like to rephrase that?

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral, OK? What school did you go to?

WITNESS: Oral.

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 p.m.

ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?

WITNESS: No, he was sitting on the table wondering why I was doing an autopsy on him!

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

See DISORDER Page 14

# Impossible To Live As Bible Tells You?

By Anneli Rufus

He didn't want to stone adulterers. But that was part of the deal. That's what A.J. Jacobs was being paid for.

"The Hebrew scriptures prescribe a tremendous amount of capital punishment," Jacobs writes in *The Year of Living Biblically* [Simon & Schuster, 2007], his account of an experiment in which the lifelong agnostic spent 12 months obeying the Old Testament as literally as possible – while living in an Upper West Side apartment and working for Esquire.

"Think Saudi Arabia, multiply by Texas, then triple that," he said. "It wasn't just for murder. You could also be executed for adultery, blasphemy, breaking the Sabbath, perjury, incest, bestiality, and witchcraft, among others."

A rebellious son could be sentenced to death. As could a son who is a persistent drunkard and glutton.

## STONING MOST COMMON PUNISHMENT

"The most commonly mentioned punishment method in the Hebrew Bible is stoning. So I figure, at the very least, I should try to stone. But how?"

He had grown up in a resolutely secular Jewish home – sans bar mitzvah, sans Sabbath candles.

All through school, even at a university "where you were more likely to study the semiotics of Wicca rituals than the Judeo-Christian tradition," the Bible was viewed "as a fusty, ancient book." It had the same truth quotient as *The Faerie Queene*.

He'd been taught that the Bible inspired "many of humankind's greatest achievements: the civil rights movement, charitable giving, the abolition of slavery."

## IT JUSTIFIES WAR, GENOCIDE

And of course, that "it's been used to justify our worst: war, genocide and the subjugation of others."

He blew a ram's horn monthly. He stopped saying the word "Thursday" because its name derives from that of a pagan god, Thor. He refrained from turning doorknobs on Saturdays and from touching his wife for seven days after her periods.

He visited Samaritans in Israel and snake handlers in Tennessee. He grew a chest-length beard that had strangers calling him ZZ Top and Gandalf. And he limited his fruit consumption to cherries – you know, because Leviticus 19:23-25 forbids eating fruit from trees less than five years old.

## BEWARE OF PEACH AND CHERRY TREES

Peach trees start bearing at only two: "Too dangerous," Jacobs notes. "Pear trees in four. Again, too risky. But cherry trees, those are slowpokes. They take at least five to seven from planting to produce."

From the outset, he felt overwhelmed – not just by the 10 familiar commandments about lust and coveting and parents and so on, but also by the 600-plus other rules he discovered in those translucent, densely packed pages.

It includes the prohibition against wearing clothes made of mixed fibers, for instance, and "the command to break a cow's neck at the site of an unsolved murder." That one's in Deuteronomy.

## MILLIONS BELIEVE EVERY WORD IS TRUE

The more rules he discovered, the more alarmed he became that millions of Americans today claim to adhere literally to the Bible's word. Or, as they would



say, its Word.

Gallup polls put that number at 28% last year – almost a third of the country's population. The Pew Research Center put it slightly higher, at 36%, disaggregating the data in one report to note that more women than men take the Bible literally, "but race and education are bigger factors."

A solid majority of African-Americans [61%] take the Bible as the actual word of God, compared to just 34% of whites. Half of those who have not completed high school and nearly as many high school graduates [44%] adhere to the Bible's literal interpretation, compared to just 18% of college graduates," the Pew report reads.

## EVANGELICALS ARE CONFRONTED

He confronted evangelicals about the biblical take on homosexuality, was unsatisfied with their explanations – and then, back in New York, he discovered Evangelicals Concerned, a prayer group whose zealous, fundamentalist members are all openly, proudly gay.

"At first blush, it makes about as much sense as an Association of Vegan Burger King Owners. It's at once inspiring and depressing, because they are part of a movement in which the majority thinks of their sexuality as sinful."

## IT INCLUDES RULES ON SEXUALITY

Jacobs clearly undertook this project aiming to make the smart, secular masses guffaw. And no matter how terrified both he and we are of real-world fundamentalists, we do laugh – such as when, heeding the proclamation in Leviticus that men are "impure" for a day after "emitting seed," he refuses to shake hands with male friends until they tell him how long it has been since they last had sex.

We even snort when, working out how literally to interpret the Scriptural prohibition on creating graven images, "I figure I should take a rigorous approach, somewhere between the Amish and the Taliban."

His quest required becoming "the ultimate fundamentalist" – by any means necessary – in order to "discover what's great and timeless in the Bible and what is outdated."

Well, shouldn't we just act that way spontaneously, anyway? "It's a lot easier to do good if you put your faith in a book that requires you to do good," muses Jacobs, intriguingly linking that faith to the book rather than to its alleged author.

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# It Was Small World In America Of 1950s

By C.F. Sandy Pofahl

When I was a kid, we had all sorts of games that we would play. It was the early 50's and seemingly a world apart from today. No computers, cell phones nor text messaging. Not even any TV nor MTV, ESPN or CNN.

We got our news at the local movie theater with the five-minute Newsreel that came on right before the double feature. We had heard of Germany and World Wars I and II and knew something was happening in Korea, but they weren't real to us. There were no minute-to-minute replays on CNN.

Our world was our town and especially our neighborhood. This was what we knew and knew well. Everything else in the world never came in contact with our little world. But there was one game we played that opened us up to the world "out there."

## THIS IS WHERE THE GAME STARTED

There was no plastic. There were no aluminum cans. Everything was in steel cans that would rust, or in bottles. And, this is where our game started.

Coke bottles were magic. When each bottle was made, in the mold on the bottom of the bottle was imprinted the city in which it was made: San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, Seattle, New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Denver, Memphis, Dallas, Portland, St. Louis, Buffalo, Waterbury and more.

So when a group of us guys would "have a Coke," we would play a game that whoever had the bottle that was furthest away "won."

## NOT CERTAIN OF WHERE AND HOW FAR

This led to some pretty good discussions because none of us really knew anything about Memphis or Dallas and certainly not how far away they were.

We in fact were unsure if Buffalo was a city or something Indians ate or if New Orleans was really in the United States.

But there were a lot of discussions and we tried really hard to figure out who won. We even asked adults [a rare occurrence] and once looked up a city in the Encyclopedia Britannica that one of the parents had bought from a door-to-door salesman. Yup, we learned our geography from Coca-Cola.

Guess is some ways, kids could learn geography the same way today. Girls at the mall could go to Abercrombie and Finch and each grab a piece of clothing. Check the label.

## LEARNING GEOGRAPHY

Whichever one was made furthest away, wins. Mexico, Philippines, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, South Korea, Singapore, China, Germany, England, Brazil, Vietnam; oh yes, and the United States.

Adults can learn geography with a similar game. Have a billing or repair problem with AT&T? The water department? Or Microsoft?

Just ask the operator next time. You could be talking to New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Denver or New Delhi, Mumbai, Karachi, Manila and soon to be added Shanghai, Hong Kong and Beijing.

Big world. Getting smaller. Fast.

– The author is editor of 52Best along with being director and co-founder of Sandy Happy Children's Academy which is a Kenya orphanage giving shelter, food, and education to 282 AIDs and riot-related orphans.

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## Paying More, Getting Less

# Where Do America's Health Dollars Go?

By Joel A. Harrison

By any measure, the United States spends an enormous amount of money on health care. In 2006, U.S. health care spending exceeded 16% of the nation's GDP.

To put U.S. spending into perspective: the United States spent 15.3% of GDP on health care in 2004, while Canada spent 9.9%, France 10.7%, Germany 10.9%, Sweden 9.1%, and the United Kingdom 8.7%.

Or consider per capita spending: the United States spent \$6,037 per person in 2004, compared to Canada at \$3,161, France at \$3,191, Germany at \$3,169, and the U.K. at \$2,560.

By now the high overall cost of health care in the United States is broadly recognized. Many Americans are acutely aware of how much they pay for their own care.

### UNINSURED CAN'T WIN FOR LOSING

Those 37 million without health insurance face sky-high doctor and hospital bills and ever more aggressive collection tactics – when they receive care at all.

Those who are fortunate enough to have insurance experience steep annual premium hikes along with rising deductibles and co-pays, and, all too often, a well-founded fear of losing their coverage should they lose a job or have a serious illness in the family.

Still, Americans may well underestimate the degree to which they subsidize the current U.S. health care system out of their own pockets.

To recognize the advantages of a single-payer system, we have to understand how the United States funds health care and health research and how much it actually costs us today.

### IT IS NOT A PRIVATE SECTOR SYSTEM

The U.S. health care system is typically characterized as a largely private-sector system, so it may come as a surprise that more than 60% of the \$2 trillion annual U.S. health care bill is paid through taxes, according to a 2002 analysis published in Health Affairs by Harvard Medical School associate professors Stefie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein.

Tax dollars pay for Medicare and Medicaid, for the Veterans Administration and the Indian Health Service. Tax dollars pay for health coverage for federal, state, and municipal government employees and their families, as well as for many employees of private companies working on government contracts.

Less visible but no less important, the tax deduction for employer-paid health insurance, along with other health care-related tax deductions, also represents a form of government spending on health care.

### TAX DEDUCTIONS MAKE NO DIFFERENCE

It makes little difference whether the government gives taxpayers [or their employers] a deduction for their health care spending, on the one hand, or collects their taxes then pays for their health care, either directly or via a voucher, on the other.

Moreover, tax dollars also pay for critical elements of the health care system

# The Enron Loophole and Your Gas Prices

By Jim Hightower

In only two years, the price of crude oil – which accounts for 75% of gasoline prices – has more than doubled, from \$60 a barrel to \$140. Why?

The biggest cause is not OPEC, or increased demand from China. Instead, it's that same fun bunch that brought us the collapse in today's housing market: rich speculators, working through global investment banks and hedge funds.

Most Americans who find themselves being robbed at the pump have no idea that faraway commodity traders are manipulating the price of crude using a mischievous mechanism known as the "Enron Loophole."

This creates an electronic casino game, allowing global speculators to bet on the future price of oil, using a few facts, wild guesses and chicken entrails as the basis for their bets, which artificially drive up the price of oil.

### ACCEPTING \$200-A-BARREL BETS

Hedge funds at Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, for example, own huge amounts of these oil futures, and they're already accepting bets as high as \$200 a barrel – a price completely unattached to the real cost of producing oil or to such niceties as supply and demand.

Worse, their gambling on our prices is done with no public oversight. That's because a special loophole says that electronic trading of such commodities as oil is not subject to the normal government rules that prevent price distortions.

This loophole was written by Enron lobbyists, rammed through Congress in 2000 by then-Sen. Phil Gramm and signed by Bill Clinton.

The resulting speculative oil bubble has jacked up our pump prices by a third, costing you and me about \$1,500 each over the past two years – with much more to come out of our pockets as speculators raise their bets.

By the way, John McCain's top economic advisor is Phil Gramm, who recently convinced McCain to oppose efforts to close the Enron Loophole.

### RIGHT-WING WARDROBE SILLINESS

Those goofy right-wing wardrobe police are at it again, getting goofier by the day.

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apart from direct care – Medicare funds much of the expensive equipment hospitals use, for instance, along with all medical residencies.

All told, then, tax dollars already pay for at least \$1.2 trillion in annual U.S. health care expenses.

Since federal, state, and local governments collected approximately \$3.5 trillion in taxes of all kinds – income, sales, property, corporate – in 2006, that means that more than one-third of the aggregate tax revenues collected in the United States that year went to pay for health care.

### WHAT ABOUT OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES?

A family with an annual income of \$50,000 that has no health insurance nonetheless contributes nearly 10% of its income to health care merely by paying typical income, payroll, sales, excise, and other taxes.

A person who earns about \$25,000 a year and has no health coverage already contributes over \$2,400 a year to the system – enough for a healthy young adult to purchase a year's worth of health insurance.

A household at the \$50,000 income level with family health insurance coverage is paying over a quarter of its income into the health care system.

For a family with health insurance earning \$50,000 a year their share of income going into health care would have been 28.7% rather than 26.4%.

For insurance premiums: in 2007, the average annual premiums for health insurance policies offered through employers were \$4,479 for individuals and \$12,106 for families, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation's annual survey of health benefits.

### HALF BANKRUPTCIES HEALTH RELATED

These figures do not include the risk of bankruptcy that health care costs impose: 50% of consumer bankruptcies in the United States stem from medical bills, including a surprising number among households that do have some kind

See HEALTH Page 13

First came the flag pin flap. The wardrobe cops insist that no politician should go out in public without sporting this mandatory piece of bejeweled patriotism.

When Sen. Barack Obama had the integrity to say that his patriotism goes deeper than a flash of bling on his lapel, he was immediately pounced upon by rabid talk-show blathers, bloggers and other mad dogs of the kooky right. It's un-American not to wear flag jewelry, they yapped.

Recently, though, their yapping turned to yips when Karl Rove appeared on Fox TV – gasp! – with a naked lapel.

### RACHEL RAY'S TERRORIST SYMPATHIES

So now the yappers have found another target for their fashion fanaticism: Rachael Ray. Yes, the perky Food Network celebrity is being assailed by the right wing for promoting Muslim extremism and terrorism.

It seems that Ray appeared in a Dunkin' Donuts ad, ostensibly to hype the fast food chain's iced coffee. But the ever-vigilant rightists saw through the coffee, frantically pointing to the scarf that Ray was wearing. It has a black-and-white pattern with long white fringe.

A-ha, shrieked the yappers, that's a kaffiyeh, the kind of Arab headdress worn by the likes of Yasser Arafat and Muslim suicide bombers.

Don't you see, yelped the rightwing chorus, Rachael Ray and Dunkin' Donuts are not selling coffee, their ad is signaling symbolic support for the Islamic fiends who hate America! We must stop anyone from wearing the dreaded scarf, they yelled.

Never mind that Ray's scarf is a paisley design having nothing to do with terrorism.

And never mind that kaffiyehs are worn every day in the Mideast by teachers, workers and others having no connection whatsoever to terrorism – there's no level of silliness too extreme for the right-wing monitors of wardrobe correctness.

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# Middle Class Slips Away In Bush's USA

By Nan Mooney

The following is an excerpt from *Not Keeping Up With Our Parents*, By Nan Mooney [Beacon, 2007].

Since the 1950s, what we've considered the American experience – be it sock-hopping, suburban living, or SUV buying – has been largely dictated by the professional middle class.

In her 1989 social critique, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, Barbara Ehrenreich defined this mainstream population in terms of education, occupation, lifestyle and tastes, but also in terms of income.

"Middle class couples," she wrote, "earn enough for home ownership in a neighborhood inhabited by other members of their class; college educations for the children; and such enriching experiences as vacation trips, psychotherapy, fitness training, summer camp and the consumption of 'culture' in various forms."

This thriving middle class didn't develop by accident. It emerged with the introduction of government and social policies designed to lift the country out of the Great Depression and sustain economic health in the postwar era.

By the 1950s, a combination of social programs including Social Security, unemployment insurance, the GI Bill, and federal housing loans helped middle class salaries stretch. Employers supplied health insurance and pensions.

A surge in suburban building made housing widely accessible. You no longer had to be a doctor or a businessman to afford a two-story Colonial with a dishwasher and a color TV.

## IT WAS FAIRLY COMFORTABLE

For a white male supporting a family – the typical middle class profile at the time – it was possible to work in an array of professions whereby you didn't necessarily get rich, but you could count on it being fairly comfortable.

A house, a job, a car or two in the garage, a fun summer vacation, these were absolute indicators of middle class success.

Economic realities have undergone seismic shifts since our parents' and grandparents' generations. Education and housing cost more. Incomes have leveled off for all but a small minority.

Employers and the government supply few social safety nets, cutting health insurance and pensions and replacing them with new "benefits" like 401(k)s and health savings plans that benefit only those with income to set aside.

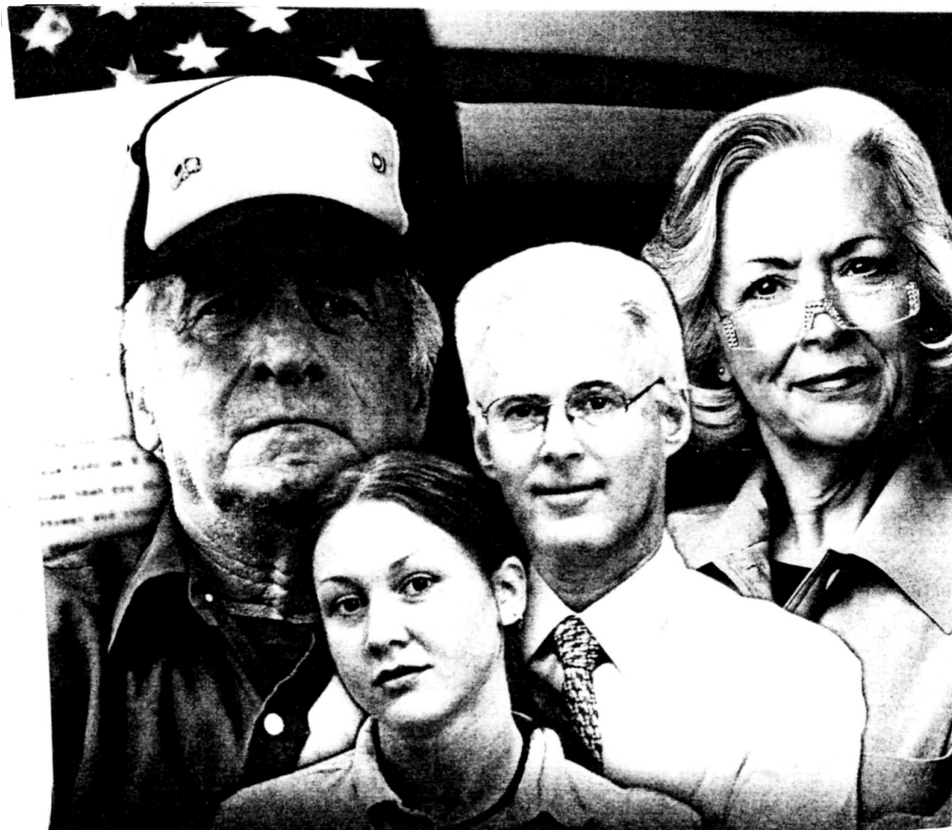
But many of those middle class expectations set in place back in the '50s still hold.

Alongside our schooling in philosophy and economics, today's college-educated professionals have been conditioned to see ourselves as among the financially stable, mainstream haves.

Many of us attended what are considered strong academic institutions. Others come from families with comfortable financial backgrounds.

## \$2 MILLION STARTER HOMES

Our childhood friends, our college roommates, the couple we met at that holi-



day party are those same lawyers and financiers who've hit the financial jackpot, driving multiple Mercedeses and buying \$2 million starter homes.

We know we aren't like them. We've aspired to different career and financial goals, those more rooted in education, the arts or public service.

Given our often-similar backgrounds and educations, it's clear we aren't entirely unlike them either. This rising and dramatic economic inequality among college-educated professionals, leaving so many of us to struggle while a select few enter the strata of the "super rich," was not supposed to be part of the package.

## LOSING CONTROL OF OUR LIVES

When we read about the middle class squeeze, we tend to think blue collar – the machinist who used to make \$25 an hour now making \$15; the vocationally trained worker whose job just got cut.

What about the social worker who makes \$30,000 a year, the environmental scientist who makes \$40,000, the college professor who makes \$50,000?

The rules of the game have changed. The educated professional middle class experience no longer guarantees two cars in every driveway, or even the driveway itself.

Instead we face relatively low-paying jobs in fields requiring a high-cost education, increasing mortgages, student-loan and credit card debt, less employer or government help with health care, retirement, education and child care, and an overall higher cost of living.

As the gap between the rich and the middle class widens, a huge segment of that once-comfortable center section is finding that reality means plummeting financial and emotional security and lack of control over our lives.

# HEALTH

From Page 12

of health coverage.

The United States accounts for 51% of all global spending on medical research, according to a 2006 Global Forum for Health Research report.

The United States has the most bureaucratic health care system in the world, including over 1,500 different companies, each offering multiple plans, each with its own marketing program and enrollment procedures, its own paperwork and policies, its CEO salaries, sales commissions, and other non-clinical costs – and, of course, if it is a for-profit company, its profits.

## WE HAVE A FRAGMENTED SYSTEM

Compared to the overhead costs of the single-payer approach, this fragmented system takes almost 25 cents more out of every health care dollar for expenses other than actually providing care.

Of the additional overhead in the current U.S. system, approximately half is borne by doctors' offices and hospitals, which are forced to maintain large billing and negotiating staffs to deal with all the plans.

Medicare and Medicaid, which serves the elderly and people with disabilities, operates with overhead costs equal to just 3% of total expenditures, compared to 15% to 25% overhead in private health programs.

Americans spend more than anyone else in the world on health care. Each health insurer adds its bureaucracy, profits, high corporate salaries, advertising, and sales commissions to the actual cost of providing care.

## SPENDING ON WRONG THINGS

Not only is this money lost to health care, but it pays for a system that often makes it more difficult and complicated to receive the care we've already paid for.

Shareholders are the primary clients of for-profit insurance companies, not patients.

Moreover, households' actual costs as a percentage of their incomes are far higher today than most imagine.

Even families with no health insurance contribute substantially to our health care system through taxes.

Recognizing these hidden costs that U.S. households pay for health care today makes it far easier to see how a universal single-payer system – with all of its ob-

vious advantages – can cost most Americans less than the one we have today.

– Joel A. Harrison, PhD, MPH, lives in San Diego, where he does consulting in epidemiology and research design.

# NATIVE VOTE

From Page 8

During the primary season, a respected member of the American Indian literary and scholarly community posted a message on the Studies in American Indian Literatures listserv stating that even though he is a lifelong Democrat and a Clinton supporter, if Obama secured the nomination, he would cross party lines to vote for McCain.

In Indian country, as in the rest of the nation, political tensions and political rhetoric seem to ratchet up day by day. Online publications like Reznetsnews and The Native American Times have been covering the campaign closely, publishing both signed and anonymous op-ed pieces both supporting and decrying the various candidates with passion and alacrity.

The Native American Times endorsed Obama, but it is far from clear how "Native America" will vote in November.

What is clear, though, is that America's Indian communities are savvy consumers of political data and increasingly utilitarian in their political support.

The myth of a singular mystical "Native American Culture" and, by extension, a singular Native American politic, is powerful, to be sure, but such easy constructions are as fictional as they are alluring.

The true atlas of Indian country reveals page after page of difference. It's not surprising that pundits, writers, and pollsters tend to avoid American Indian political terrain, but it is arrogant.

In fact, if mainstream political discourse paid more attention to Native American political discourse, there is no question that the map of America's political landscape would be more inclusive and more accurate.

– The author is an Oklahoma native and University of San Francisco professor who teaches classes in American Indian literature and film, as well as courses on visual and popular culture.

# Campaign Finance Reform Has Failed

By Robert Parry

Barack Obama's decision to opt out of federal campaign financing has riled newspaper editorialists, TV pundits and even some progressives who view regulating "money in politics" as the silver bullet to kill the special-interest domination of Washington.

The fury over Obama's choice to rely on his Internet-based small donors – rather than take nearly \$85 million in federal funding – misses a difficult truth that may be especially heretical on the Left: Campaign-finance reform has been, by and large, a failure.

This reality comes clear if one asks the simple question: Is the U.S. government more in the pocket of special interests today than it was in the mid-1970s when this reform movement gained traction after the Watergate scandal?

It's hard to reach an answer other than that today is worse.

## HUGE AMOUNTS FUND RIGHTWING MEDIA

The law ignores the massive infusion of political money that has gone into the rightwing media.

The Right's media powerhouse, in turn, has given conservatives enormous influence over setting the national political agenda, especially since the timid mainstream corporate press tends to follow the themes put in play by Fox and other rightwing outlets.

Think back on Campaign 2000 when Al Gore was pummeled by the rightwing news media with the help of a mainstream press determined to shake its old "liberal bias" label by piling on Gore.

Made-up quotes, like "I invented the Internet," were put into Gore's mouth; fabricated scandals, such as claims that he sold nuclear secrets to China, were thrown against him; ridicule about his clothing and personality were heaped on him.

## BILLIONS IN MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

Conservative foundations, like Olin and Scaife, and wealthy rightwingers, such as Sun Myung Moon and Rupert Murdoch, have poured billions and billions of dollars into this media infrastructure in a conscious strategy to shift American politics rightward.

Meanwhile, American progressives find themselves with almost no media infrastructure to speak of: essentially, a few under-funded magazines, Internet bloggers and some struggling talk radio operations, like Air America.

As this imbalance took shape, progressive foundations and well-heeled liberals set as their priority a disproportionate investment in campaign finance reform.

## THEY BIRTHED THE PERMANENT CAMPAIGN

While the Left spent its money trying to regulate political finances, the Right expanded the political playing field by building an ideological media, a year-in-year-out operation that has given birth to the "permanent campaign" of endless attack politics.

The Democrats and progressives can wring their hands over this development, but it has given the Republicans and conservatives a huge advantage. The Right's only vulnerability has been a tendency to overreach.

Still, even after President Bush's first-term power grabs and deceptions had alarmed many Americans, his supportive right-wing media gave him a big edge over his Democratic rival, Sen. John Kerry, in Campaign 2004.

In summer 2004, while Kerry was hamstrung by campaign spending limits, a pro-Bush attack group, the Swiftboat Veterans for Truth, smeared Kerry over his

## LAWYERS

From Page 9

To their credit the authors acknowledge that the system is not perfect and propose a number of reforms for the lawyers, judiciary, and law schools that are worthy of discussion and implementation.

High among the proposed changes: a strong emphasis on integrity, honesty, and transparency.

These books are both spirited, well-reasoned defenses of lawyers and reminders of the vital role they play in our society.

They are a tribute to members of the legal profession who have often supported unpopular causes that ultimately resulted in the promises of our Constitution becoming a reality for all citizens ... and that's no joke.

– The author, cofounder of *A Gathering of Writers*, lives in Tulsa

## DISORDER

From Page 10

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

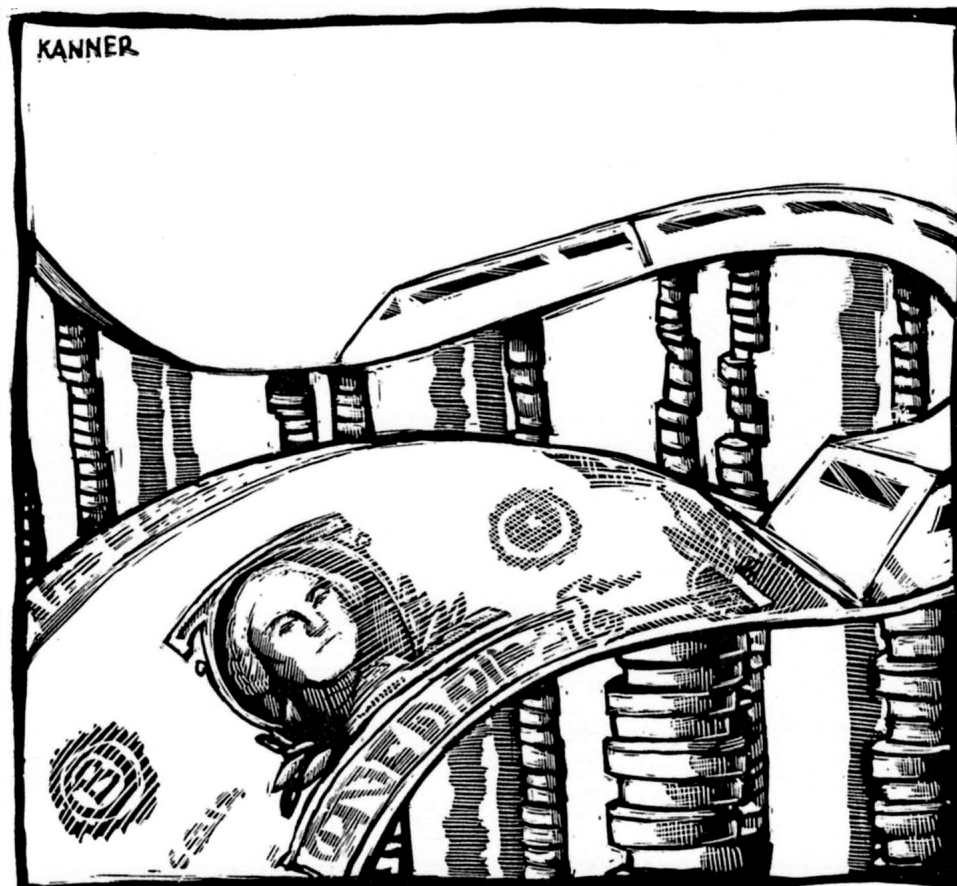
ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law with you.

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Vietnam War record – devastating themes that were amplified not only by Fox News and right-wing talk radio but which echoed through CNN and other mainstream outlets.

## T. BOONE AND MCCLENDON PAID FOR LIES

[Among the funders of the Swift Boat liars were T. Boone Pickens and Chesapeake's Aubrey McClendon, more than \$1 million each. Next time you see them, thank them for continuing George W. Bush in office, the sorriest president in the nation's history.]

In other words, progressive-backed campaign-finance reforms effectively held Kerry down while a pro-Bush attack group and the right-wing media beat him up, aided further by elements of the mainstream media, always trying to shake the "liberal bias" canard.

Another unintended consequence of campaign-finance reform has been the narrowing of the American political battlefield.

## THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDES ONLY 18 STATES

Since campaigns must husband their limited money, they tend to spend it almost exclusively in about 18 "battleground states."

If you live in the other 32 states, you hardly know that a presidential campaign is underway; your vote is essentially ceded to one party or the other.

So, this is the backdrop of Obama's decision to forego federal spending limits and to count instead on his 1.5 million donors, mostly small contributors giving via the Internet.

He hopes to have the money to react against negative assaults, which he has already faced in nearly unprecedented numbers, and to make his case to a broader public.

– The author broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the *Associated Press* and *Newsweek*.

## APPRECIATION

From Page 9

If one cannot please by writing book reviews or giving millions to make people feel good, then give of self.

Robin Meyers, pastor of the Mayflower Congregational Church in Oklahoma City, said, "God so loved the world that he sent not politicians and statesmen, but you, the individual, to serve others. Stop thinking about yourselves."

The premise – use any encounter with neighbor, clerk, waiter, owner, whom-ever, to comment, if time permits, on a trait, physical characteristic, family, work, whatever, to "make that person's day." As everyone has experienced, "a little lovin' [or a word] goes a long way."

Alvena Bieri would be proud that the gauntlet has been picked up!

– The author lives in Perkins

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of national and state political reporting,  
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# Tim Russert Blew It On The War In Iraq

By Alexander Cockburn

The delirium in the press at Tim Russert's death at 58 has been strange. As a broadcaster he was not much better than average, which is saying very little.

He could be a sharp questioner, but not when it really counted and when courage was required. He was tough with George Bush in a February 2004 interview.

He taxed him with faking the reasons to attack Iraq. But in the years before the 2003 attack, I used to hear Russert being merciless to those questioning whether Saddam Hussein had the nukes and bio weapons.

Russert and his staff ignored efforts by watchdogs like Sam Hussein and others to get him to stop telling lies.

## WHO REALLY KICKED OUT UN INSPECTORS

He claimed on Meet the Press that it was Saddam who threw out the UNSCOM weapons inspectors, whereas it was Richard Butler, the head of UNSCOM, who pulled out the inspectors at the instigation of the United States.

As Hussein correctly writes, "This lie, echoed through much of the political-media system around the time Russert told it, helped set the stage for the invasion after 9/11."

If Russert had rocked the boat in any serious way he'd have had more enemies. The rightwingers didn't care for Walter Cronkite, but they had no problem with Russert.

## RUSH LIMBAUGH NUZZLED HIM

Rush Limbaugh nuzzled him respectfully on the air, and so did Don Imus. Russert was always there with his watering can to fertilize myths useful to the system.

On Russert's memorial show Ronald Reagan glowed in memory, up there with FDR as the 20th Century's best-loved and most popular American President.

Not true at all, as Russert – trained to read polls by years of doing PR for Mario Cuomo and Daniel Patrick Moynihan – could have found out in five minutes if he'd wanted to. Reagan had a scrawny 52% average approval rating for his presidency, worse than JFK, LBJ, Eisenhower, Roosevelt and Johnson.

## IT WAS THE RICH WHO LOVED REAGAN

Reagan's supposed "likability" was also hugely exaggerated. The invention of RR as the toast of the ordinary folk was necessary to validate the disgusting pig-out for the very rich he inaugurated, which continues to this day.

Similarly necessary has been the notion that if it means winning the "war on terror," ordinary Americans are OK with the President [along with the U.S. Congress] making a bonfire of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Russert helped spread that lie too, even though polls dissected in numerous accounts by press watchdogs like FAIR have shown that a narrow majority of Americans hold contrary views on the matter.

## RUSSERT POURED IT ON OBAMA

Barack Obama got a dose of Russert's own race-baiting earlier this year, with a ridiculous volley of questions about Farrakhan and Wright in the Feb. 26 debate.

Any white TV pundit can make hay with Farrakhan, but when it came to high gasoline prices Russert was meek as a shoeshine boy on his show, lining up the oil execs and tugging his forelock.

# Russert's Death Reminds Us What's Important

By Susan Estrich

In the outpouring of tributes and anecdotes about the passing of Tim Russert, one item caught my eye.

It was a note that recalled that this was the second tragedy in a matter of months for the Russert family: It was less than three months ago that Tim's sister Betty lost her husband, William Buckenroth; he was 61. Meanwhile, their father, Tim Russert Sr. or "Big Russ," continues to live in Buffalo.

I can't help but think how crazy it is to lose your 61-year-old husband and then your 58-year-old brother, while your father survives them both. What sense does that make?

No sense.

Children are supposed to bury their parents, not the other way around.

## TRYING TO EXPLAIN THE INEXPLICABLE

When someone as young and full of life as Tim dies, we all struggle to make sense of it. I read numerous posts about his medical situation, about his being overweight and even diabetic, about the plaque in his arteries and the size of his heart.

We search for ways to prove that what happened to him somehow made sense in view of his condition, not ours, explanations that will allow us to create a safe distance between ourselves and the prospect of sudden death.

But it doesn't work. There is no sense. Tim Russert was the king of the hill until he wasn't. He was the luckiest guy in town until his luck ran out.

Luck shouldn't count for so much, but it does.

## WHY SOME, NOT OTHERS?

Washington is full of guys with cholesterol plaque in their arteries and too much fat in their middles who don't keel over and die at work at the age of 58. Many of them aren't nearly as good, nearly as generous, nearly as hardworking



After Russert's death the TV played over and over the clip of his interview with Dick Cheney, where the latter said U.S. troops will be greeted as liberators.

Russert didn't say, "What do you mean, Mr. VP? People historically despise occupying armies. Bombing historically does not win people to your side."

## RUSSERT JOINED THE AMEN CHORUS

It was a softball moment for Cheney. Russert was part of the amen chorus.

Now, after his death, in congratulating Russert, his eulogists in the press get to congratulate themselves. On Hardball, Chris Matthews decided to have a show much like the one he always has, stacked with Irish Catholic men.

This time it was more self-conscious, but the self-consciousness of it only underscored the incredible skewed reality that the show presents day in and day out.

Matthews began with a prayer. "Hall Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. [Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.]"

## MATTHEWS AND PALS HOLD AN IRISH WAKE

Then he introduced guys who are on his show all the time, Mike Barnicle and Pat Buchanan. The three of them had a kind of Irish wake on the air, laughing, remembering, talking about the importance of parochial school and the values imbued in Tim and all of them by the nuns.

On and on they went, about Catholicism and the Irish, and the special quality of Irish Catholics as "truth tellers," as people who "get the bad guys" – prosecutors, G-men and journalists.

Russert was put right up there in the pantheon of FBI agents, without irony, people who delve for the truth, for the light, for the greater good against the "bad guys."

Matthews used that phrase, "bad guys," over and over. Then he closed the segment with the other half of the prayer, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

No one at this point is remembering the reporters at Knight-Ridder, who were among the few in the mainstream pre-war to hammer away at the WMD argument. Russert's colleague survivors need him as a saint.

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or honorable as Tim Russert was.

My father died of a heart attack at 54, shortly before I graduated from law school and moved to Washington.

When I got there, I couldn't help but look around and see a town full of people in no better shape than my slightly overweight, workaholic dad, people who got up and went to work every day and kept doing what they were doing, while my father was not so lucky.

At the time, it made me angry and sad. It seemed wrong somehow. My father was a better man than so many of them. Why did his heart give way, while theirs kept beating?

## PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSIES ABOUND

You wouldn't know it from all the tributes that sing his praises without reservation, but Washington is full of people who envied Tim Russert's successes and begrudged him his triumphs.

Schadenfreude is at least as common in Washington as it is in Hollywood, and the business of political journalism is full of people who think they deserve more than they have, or that others deserve less.

No one is ever so celebrated in life as they are in death. None of us ever notices how much luck matters until it runs out.

I don't know Tim's sister Betty, but my heart goes out to her, along with the other members of the Russert family. Too much loss. Lousy luck. No sense.

## LEARNING THE IMPORTANT LESSONS

As for the rest of us, the question is whether we will learn anything from their loss. I don't mean the lessons about good cardiac health, about exercise and arteries and taking and keeping weight off, although those are certainly impor-

See RUSSERT Page 17

# The Tax Debate We Should Be Having

By Geoff Colvin

Here's a cold reality that none of the presidential candidates want to tell you: A shrinking number of Americans are bearing an ever bigger share of the nation's income tax burden.

Is that fair? Is it sticking the rich with what they deserve? Or is it a sign of a growing social problem?

As the candidates cite assorted half-truths about U.S. taxes, those questions are worth our attention as long as we spurn political spin and face the surprising facts.

The first surprise for most people is the large proportion of Americans who don't pay any income tax at all. The number of people who actually get money back – not a refund, but a net payment – through the income tax system is huge.

## **BOTTOM 40% TAX RATE NEGATIVE**

In 2005 [the most recent year for which data are available] the bottom 40% of Americans by income had, in the aggregate, an effective tax rate that's negative.

Their households received more money through the income tax system, largely from the earned income tax credit, than they paid.

That means that the number of people who actually pay America's income taxes – totaling almost \$1 trillion in 2005 – is surprisingly small. Of those who filed returns [themselves a subset of the population], just half accounted for 97% of the Treasury's total income tax revenue.

The top half's share of total payments has been growing steadily for the past 20 years. The top 10% of taxpayers kicked in 70% of total income tax.

## **TOP 1% PAID 40% OF TAXES**

The famous top 1% paid almost 40% of all income tax, a proportion that has jumped dramatically since 1986.

But wait a minute. Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama rail against President Bush's "tax cuts for the rich." How does that square with the growing share of total tax paid by the wealthy?

Are the richest Americans paying so much because they're actually getting clobbered with higher tax rates? No. Their effective tax rate – the total tax they pay as a percentage of their income – has declined substantially, an effective tax rate of 23% in 2005, down from 27.5% in 2001.

## **THEIR INCOMES MUST BE GROWING FASTER**

So if the rich are paying more income tax, yet are being taxed at a lower rate, there can be only one explanation: Their incomes must be growing fast, much faster than the rest of the population's.

That is what's happening. Back in 1986, an income of \$119,000 got you into the top 1%. By 2005 it took \$360,000 to get into the club.

Those numbers are unadjusted for inflation; if you correct them, it turns out the price of admission still rose by a huge 72%. By contrast, the inflation-adjusted definition of a median taxpayer – that is, someone in the 50th percentile – didn't budge.

# Feingold Rewrites Patriot Act Stupidity

By Jim Hightower

Empirical evidence notwithstanding, stupidity is not a requirement for membership in the U.S. Congress. Also, stupid acts by Congress do not have to be forever.

Witness the infamous, freedom-busting, Orwellian piece of legislative stupidity known as the Patriot Act. Passed by a panicked Congress right after 9/11, and reauthorized by a cowed Congress in 2006, this thing empowers the FBI to make wholesale, secret invasions of the American people's privacy – grossly violating one of our country's core values.

As we've learned from investigative reports by the bureau's own inspector general, concerns about intrusive and abusive actions by a bulked-up FBI were not theoretical. This national police agency has been found guilty of "widespread and serious misuse" of the Patriot Act's most invasive provisions.

## **REASONABLE CAUSE ISN'T REQUIRED**

For example, the act opened up our private records to government agents, enabling them to write their own authorizations for poking into our personal business without having to show any reasonable cause for spying on us.

Hundreds of cases of the FBI sweeping up information it has no authority to collect have now been documented.

Did no one foresee the stupidity of granting such broad, unchecked power? Yes. Sen. Russ Feingold did, and he cast the one courageous vote against the Patriot Act in 2001.

Now Feingold is back with S. 2088, a bill to rein in the FBI and restore the people's constitutional rights. As he puts it, we've learned the hard way that "trust us" doesn't cut it when it comes to preventing government snoops from abusing their power.

Congress has the responsibility to put appropriate restraints on government authorities, and that's what Feingold's "National Security Reform Act" does. To help put some real patriotism in the misnamed and misguided Patriot Act, contact Feingold's office at 202.224.5323.

## **OUTSOURCING SAFETY AND JOBS**

Airlines have been cutting everything from pillows to staff – but what about THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, JULY 10/25, 2008, PAGE 16



Now consider some of the heated tax controversies of recent years. Did Bush cut taxes for the rich? Yes. But he cut taxes for the poor even more.

## **BOTTOM 50% GOT THE BIGGEST TAX BREAK**

If we look at the measure that really matters – the change in effective tax rates – the bottom 50% got a much bigger tax cut than the top 1%.

Did the dollar value of Bush's tax cuts go mostly to the wealthy? Absolutely. It could hardly be otherwise. Since the well-off pay the overwhelming majority of taxes, any tax cut with a prayer of influencing the economy would have to go mostly to them.

You could completely eliminate income taxes for the bottom half of the population, and the treasury would hardly notice.

The real issues here are clear. One is having a shrinking minority of citizens pay most of Washington's bills. Social cohesion falls apart.

## **IT IS ALL A GAME OF RESENTMENT**

The majority who pay nothing resent those with higher incomes; the minority who pay heavily resent those who don't pay.

More fundamental is why some people's incomes are growing so much faster than other people's incomes. That, and not taxes, is what the supposed tax debate is really about.

Watch to see if the candidates make substantive proposals for dealing with the issue, including how low-income citizens can get some of the earning power now going heavily to the better educated.

cutting corners on the structural safety of their planes?

Well, fasten your seatbelts. Beneath the radar of the flying public, airlines execs have engaged in a widespread and worrisome cost-cutting move: Outsourcing maintenance of their planes to low-wage countries.

Some airlines send landing gears, engines and other parts out of country for repair, while others send entire planes.

This sets off safety alarms for us passengers.

Not that other countries don't have competent workers, but – get this – the airlines increasingly are using "non-certificated" maintenance shops around the world.

## **REGULATORS AND AIRLINES 'COZY'**

Maybe such places are A-1 repair sites, but we don't know, because our industry-cozy Federal Aviation Administration has not even inspected and certified them.

Bad enough that our government is letting such a basic safety function slip away, but maintenance is also a key industry for middle-class jobs.

As a Machinist Union leader points out, "This is a technological base, an important industry base, for our country, and we're just giving it up."

We know that CEOs are dramatically raising airfares, but they're then quietly using our consumer dollars to undermine America's middle-class future, sending our skilled jobs, technology and maybe our safety to such eager countries as Mexico.

We can't blame Mexicans for that, because their officials are simply on the ball, trying to lift the economic fortunes of their people. Mexico's government, for example, will soon break ground for the National Aerospace University, which will train a sophisticated workforce for building and maintaining aircraft.

Where are our leaders?

Why aren't they doing that?

Why aren't our corporate and governmental officials investing in the American people, rather than aggressively downsizing America's future?

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# The Rare Wisdom Of George Carlin

By George Carlin

*Editor's Note: When the late George Carlin's wife Brenda died in 1997, he did not work for a year. He wrote the following piece in her memory.*

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

## WHERE WE MAKE MISTAKES

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait.

## WE COMMUNICATE LESS

We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one

# Her Crime? Rescuing Sick And Abused Dog

By Joel Freedman

Blair County, PA Judge Elizabeth Doyle sentenced Dogs Deserve Better founder Tammy Grimes, 44, to do 300 hours of community service [in a capacity helping people rather than animals], to spend a year on probation, to pay \$3,900 for the cost of her trial plus supervisory and community service fees.

Grimes' "crime" was to remove an elderly and painfully dying dog from the yard of Steve and Lori Arnold of East Freedom, PA.

Grimes rescued the dog, Doogie, after she unsuccessfully attempted to persuade a local SPCA and district attorney to bring a cruelty prosecution against the Arnolds.

## KEY EVIDENCE WITHHELD FROM JURY

At her trial, Grimes presented photo evidence and veterinarian testimony that Doogie was suffering. A video of Doogie the day he was rescued, as well as a video of him eight days later showing considerable improvement, were withheld from the jury that convicted Grimes of theft and receiving stolen property.

Ten days before the sentencing, Grimes requested jail time instead of the alternative penalties.

"I am morally and ethically unable and unwilling to pay any fine that goes to pay the salaries of those who use power wrongly," she said.

"As founder and director of Dogs Deserve Better, I do community service virtually every day of my life. I was performing community service the day I picked an aged and dying dog out of the mud and got him the veterinary care he was entitled to by law.

# Staying Young By Following The Rules

1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctor worry about them. That is why you pay him/her.
2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.
3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." And the devil's name is Alzheimer's.

## RUSSERT

From Page 15

tant.

I mean about being as generous in life as we are in death, about recognizing the good luck we have when we have it and being grateful for it so that we do not feel ambushed by misfortune when luck runs out.

No one is jealous of Tim anymore. Isn't that always true? So why be jealous in the first instance? Why not just be grateful for what we have?

It is the only sense there is to be made of such a loss.

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night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

## THE GLORY OF TECHNOLOGY

It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember, spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say, "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all, mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again. Give time to love, give time to speak, and give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

"It is incumbent upon Blair County voters to remove from office anyone who by their actions or inactions condones animal cruelty and abuse."

## GRIMES HAS APPEALED THE CONVICTION

An appeal of the conviction and sentence is underway.

Dogs Deserve Better, now in its sixth year of advocating for chained, penned and otherwise neglected or abused dogs, has started planning for a Rescue, Rehabilitation and Training Center for formerly chained and penned dogs.

"In our efforts for these dogs, we are currently fostering and re-homing as many as 700 to 1,000 dogs per year," she said.

"When working with dogs who have spent their lives outside, our biggest task is to train them to live inside the home with the family.

"With that in mind, it is not in the dog's best interest for us to build a typical shelter. We must be working to house-train the dogs and teach them the ways of inside living. So we will build a more advanced facility with living areas, training areas and a humane education room," she said.

Grimes visualizes a center that will house 16-24 dogs at a time, in two to three separate living areas, trained with the other dogs and trainers each day.

[Donations toward this center and toward normal daily operations, which includes veterinary care for rescued dogs and education materials, are welcome. Dogs Deserve Better, P.O. Box 23, Tipton, PA 16684; phone 814.941.7447; www.dogsdeservebetter.org]

- From The Justice Project Newsletter

4. Enjoy the simple things.
5. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.
6. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person who is with us our entire life is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.
7. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it's family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, and hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.
8. Cherish your health. If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it! If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.
9. Don't take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, to the next county, to a foreign country, but NOT to where the guilt is.
10. Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.



# Time To Demand A Stand With Workers

One year ago, a Senate Republican filibuster killed the Employee Free Choice Act, and with it died one of the most important things Congress could have done to repair the economic damage done to working-class families caused by decades of conservative economic policies.

Presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama supports this legislation, Sen. John McCain does not.

This is a good time to ask people running for office whether they stand with workers and their right to form unions or with the corporations and conservative enablers who would block this right.

The rightwing effort to keep that legislation from resurfacing continues in over-the-top fashion.

The claim that union volunteers visiting workers' homes and encouraging them to sign union organizing cards is remotely comparable to the brutality of a totalitarian regime points to the hysterical desperation of the right over this issue.

## THEY DON'T STAND WITH WORKING PEOPLE

The fact is that they have no answer to what workers actually say they want.

According to the latest Making Sense 2008 alert, more than half of all U.S. workers – nearly 60 million – say they would join a union right now if they could.

Their best opportunity to get ahead is by uniting with co-workers to bargain with employers for better wages and benefits. Working people want that opportunity.

Plus, the allegations of abuses of union organizers pale in comparison to the abuses of anti-union employers taking advantage of what is now a broken system.

Corporations routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and illegally fire people who try to organize unions. Workers are fired in a quarter of private sector union organizing campaigns.

## SYSTEM RIGGED IN FAVOR OF EMPLOYERS

Nearly 78% of private employers require supervisors to deliver anti-union messages to their employees. Even after workers successfully form a union, they can't get a contract one-third of the time.

The National Labor Relations Board, once a reliable arbiter of employer-employee disputes, is now so politicized under a Bush Administration that is ideologically opposed to unions that it has issued a torrent of precedent-busting anti-union rulings.



The federal government is blocking the freedom of working people to make their own decisions about joining a union. The current "election" system for union recognition is decidedly undemocratic.

## UNDER BUSH IT IS ONE-SIDED

One side – the corporation side – has all the power, controls the information workers receive, and routinely poisons the process by intimidating, harassing, coercing, and even firing people who try to organize unions.

Enacting the Employee Free Choice Act would do three simple, fair things for workers:

It would make it possible for a majority of employees to sign union authorization cards, validated by the National Labor Relations Board, to have that union recognized by their employer.

It would strengthen penalties for companies that coerce or intimidate employees in an effort to prevent them from forming a union.

It would bring in a neutral third party to settle a contract when a company and a newly-certified union cannot come to an agreement after three months.

# Economic Anxiety Number One Issue

The winner of the McCain vs. Obama match up will be he who speaks best to economic anxiety.

The real cause of this anxiety, which predates the economy's slowdown and high gas prices, is the galloping pace of economic change.

A 2005 McKinsey & Co. study suggested that leading companies – top-quintile performers in their industries as measured by revenue, profit and market share – fall out of leadership at a rate that is three times greater than it was 30 years ago.

Thank [or blame] technology, entrepreneurship, free-flowing capital and globalism. Jobs are more volatile. Careers are more volatile. The half-life of marketable knowledge is shrinking.

## THE ANSWER IS EDUCATION

So unless we want to halt technological progress, pinch off our fiber pipes to the world and freeze capital, the only long-term remedy is education. We must equip our kids to thrive in a world of accelerating change. This will be a huge challenge.

Consider that in 2003 a university in Pennsylvania raised its entrance requirements to its accredited education program – from a 900 SAT to a 950 SAT. In other words, from way below average to merely below average.

Pennsylvania is a microcosm of America. I'd guess that fewer than 10% of American K-12 teachers scored more than 1200 combined on their SATs.

Would you bet my house that fewer than 5% scored more than 600 on the math portion?

## WHERE ARE THE SALARIES FOR TEACHERS?

This brings us to the touchy subjects of talent and compensation. Wouldn't

you like to see good K-12 teachers earn \$75,000 or more [adjusted by region], great K-12 teachers earn \$100,000 or more.

Why not also, some ask, let high achievers from the business world teach classes? Why not let an engineer teach math or an entrepreneur teach how to start a business?

That is happening today in Oklahoma, thanks to a law change that provides entry into the classroom for those bringing special skills and the ability to teach them. It's known as alternative certification,

## WOULD THEY PONY UP THE MONEY?

Would taxpayers be willing to pay higher local taxes for really good teachers? All polling points to that direction.

If the 2008 legislative session is any indication, the people's controlling Republican representatives didn't give a damn about what happens to public education.

If teacher unions are so powerful, why has that sector suffered so much? They get a declining share of the state budget. Oklahoma is 47th in what it spends on a child's education and is in the bottom three in teacher salary.

Not even the pledged word of Republicans to lift teachers to the regional average was kept. Instead, more than \$700 million in tax cuts were passed.

That resulted in a huge revenue shortfall this year, forcing passage of a \$475 million bond issue to bail out one of the sorriest sessions in years.

Not only was education grossly underfunded, CareerTech suffered a similar fate.

Normally you get what you pay for, but in this instance, Oklahomans get a lot more than they pay for.

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# We Need 'A Little Help From Our Friends'

We at The Observer don't believe in sugar-coating the news: These are tough, tough times.

Our state may seem better off than most, but few of our personal budgets have escaped the serious pinch of \$4-a-gallon gas, soaring food prices and near-double-digit tuition increases.

At The Observer, in the last year, we've endured two postal hikes [one of more than 30%], as well as jumps in printing costs and monthly fees for our syndicated features.

All too often, our mailbox has included a letter, in shaky handwriting, that reads like this: "Dear Observer, Macular degeneration is taking its toll on my reading and activities. I will not be renewing. Thanks for your great work. I've enjoyed it."

Or an e-mail like this: "For the first time since the 1970s we are going to have to take a hiatus on subscribing to The Observer. We are barely getting by with the awful economy and inflation."

The truth is, The Observer is hurting, too – and we need your help to make it through the second half of the year.

For 40 years, your generosity and loyalty have sustained our Mom-and-Pop journal aimed at giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power and crusading for the proposition that all Oklahomans deserve to share in the state's bounty – not just the wealthy.

Would you consider giving The Observer as a gift? How about a nearby library or a school not currently receiving it? Or a friend or loved one who needs to know what the corporatist takeover of state government has wrought: Huge tax breaks for the silk-stocking elite, the systematic gutting of critical state programs for the poor and mentally ill, an all-out assault on public education designed to promote vouchers, home-schooling and unregulated

charter schools.

Or may we suggest you become a *Friend Of The Observer* with a financial gift? Your membership in what we affectionately call *Helen's Hall of Fame* – in honor of our beloved founding publisher Helen Troy – ensures that deserving souls who couldn't otherwise afford The Observer will remain on, or be added to, our list. And it helps us reach new readers, many who don't know there is a voice of political reason and sanity amidst the cacophony of unreasonableness and insanity.

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– Arnold Hamilton, Editor

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