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More Kids Calling Shelters Home Operation Rescue

By Melissa Morgan

Pastel colors of purple, green, pink and blue blanketed an Oklahoma City field, as 340 little fingers clenched various baskets, shopping bags and pillowcases, waiting in nervous anticipation for the "go ahead" signal.

After the eggs were cracked and 34 little stomachs were stuffed with Snickers, Gummy Bears and Tootsie Rolls, the children left to go home.

But their home was no cozy, brick house surrounded by a white picket fence. The children returned with their parents to the City Rescue Mission in downtown Oklahoma City.

Homeless women with children are the fastest-growing demographic group among homeless Americans today.

Tiffany Webb, public relations director for the mission, said in the past, the homeless population tended to consist mainly of single men. But the number of homeless women with children has increased by 51% in the last year.

City Rescue Mission is one of a few central Oklahoma homeless shelters that welcome women with children.

The Mission's family ministries department said it is focused on making sure children have all the services they deserve to stay on track at school and personally.

"We are heartbroken to see this many children need services at the Mission; however, if they come, we want them to receive all the services they can to help them out of the situation without a sense of chaos and worry," Webb said.

It's hard to determine the primary reason why women with children are



the largest growing population segment. There are many factors that lead to these women becoming homeless, Webb said.

Some of those factors are domestic violence, lack of education, lack of affordable housing, insufficient supplemental services, single-parent households and the slowing economy.

"With the large amount of foreclosures and income decreasing in relation to expenses increasing, it is a tough battle to fight for single mothers or single fathers," Webb said.

In March, for example, the mission's resident population averaged 11 families, 34 children, 85 women and 289 men, Webb said.

"It is terrible that any person, man, woman or child, should find him or

herself homeless," she said. "Typically it isn't the child's fault that they find themselves homeless, and they don't have the ability to change their situation, which is heartbreaking."

Kathleen Badgley said she and her four children have been living at the City Rescue Mission for five months.

The family was living in Van Alstyne, TX, when they became homeless.

"With only one income and a large family, times got increasingly harder," Badgley said.

The mission provides her four children - Julia, Hayden, Keiser and Judis - resources such as education, day care, medical care, counseling, spiritual guidance and basic life needs in an attempt to make the children's lives more normal.

But not all homeless children are as fortunate as the Badgleys.

According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, more than 1.5 million of America's children go to sleep without a home each year.

One of every 50 American children experiences homelessness, according to the center's yearly report. It says most states have inadequate plans to address the often-overlooked problem, which is becoming worse.

Elaine Hunter, the city of Norman's consultant on homeless issues, said

the number of people turned away from homeless shelters is dramatically higher now.

"Our local battered women's shelter [Norman's Women's Resource Center] turned away more than 100 homeless in the past year alone," Hunter said.

The National Center on Family Homelessness uses this knowledge to design innovative practices, bring training and technical assistance to community-based shelters and service providers, and improve policy across the nation, according to the state report card on child homelessness.

Whether made homeless by economic hardship, domestic violence, the trauma of war, or physical or emotional challenges, these families have lost more than their homes.

"They've lost their health, safety, and the capacity to support themselves," the report states.

Economic hardship is creeping its way through the states like an epidemic, leaving many people without even the option of a shelter.

California is running out of places to put its homeless population. It is building tent cities, or shantytowns, for them to live in, or simply sending them to parking garages, Webb said.

"Homeless shelters are filling up all across the United States. It is a huge issue that I don't think will go away any time soon," Webb said.

This is especially true for Oklahoma.

Hunter conducted the 2009 State of Oklahoma Annual Continuum of Care Point in Time Homeless Survey for Cleveland County. The results showed that of the 69 family groups who were homeless in Cleveland County, 53 were single mothers with children.

Hunter said she doesn't get any responses from Moore or the smaller surrounding towns, where there is a substantial number of homeless, so the count is primarily Norman.

"There's around 2,000 to 3,000 homeless in the Oklahoma City area," Hunter said. "We'll have an idea about the statewide count in a month or so."

See HOMELESS Page 19

Observations

Not Again!

Here we go again – the Corrections Department is grossly underfunded by a Republican Legislature – and the same was true when Democrats were in charge.

The agency is asking for voluntary retirements and has received 140 – positions that won't be refilled. The agency worked hard to make sure the positions involved are not critical to its mission of running Oklahoma's decrepit prison system.

Under the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System most state employees are eligible to retire if they are 62, or the amount of service plus their age adds up to 80. State employees can receive partial benefits if they retire early at age 55.

Department officials anticipate their budget will swell by nearly \$15 million due to an increase in the cost of employee benefits and unfunded mandates not calculated by the Legislature.

The department employs 4,600 people and has a \$503 million budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. A hiring freeze continues.

Water War

Oklahomans have paid little attention to the fierce water war being waged in federal court over sale of water to Fort Worth.

The legal eagles and lobbyists representing Texas [including J.C. Watts] point out that it's already escaping from Oklahoma – 35 million acre feet a year.

U.S. Geological Survey reports that total water usage in Oklahoma amounts to 1,779 million gallons per day [1,992,413 acre feet]. About 57% of that water came from surface water sources and 43% from groundwater sources.

Total withdrawals increased by about seven million gallons between 2000 and 2005. Public water supply, which accounted for about 36% of total withdrawals in 2005, was the No. 1 use of water. Irrigation uses 28% of

water, second highest.

The importance of irrigated agriculture in western Oklahoma includes Texas County, using far more water than any other county, approximately 194,712 acre-feet. Virtually all – 99.8% – comes from groundwater sources.

Elsewhere, intense use is largely centered around more populated regions in the state. The largest surface water user in 2005 was Mayes County [119,784 acre-feet] followed closely by Muskogee County [118,866 acre-feet].

Data on projected population growth through 2060 for every county in Oklahoma, assembled by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, is a key component in estimating future public water supply needs.

The Legislature produced a law designed to put Oklahoma first, then a series of hoops for other states. The war is far from over, despite attempts to compromise. The ultimate decision will be in court.

Plowed Under

A mere three million farmers are feeding the rest of us, not to mention our huge agricultural exports. As early as 1985 agricultural experts were predicting that the family farm would disappear.

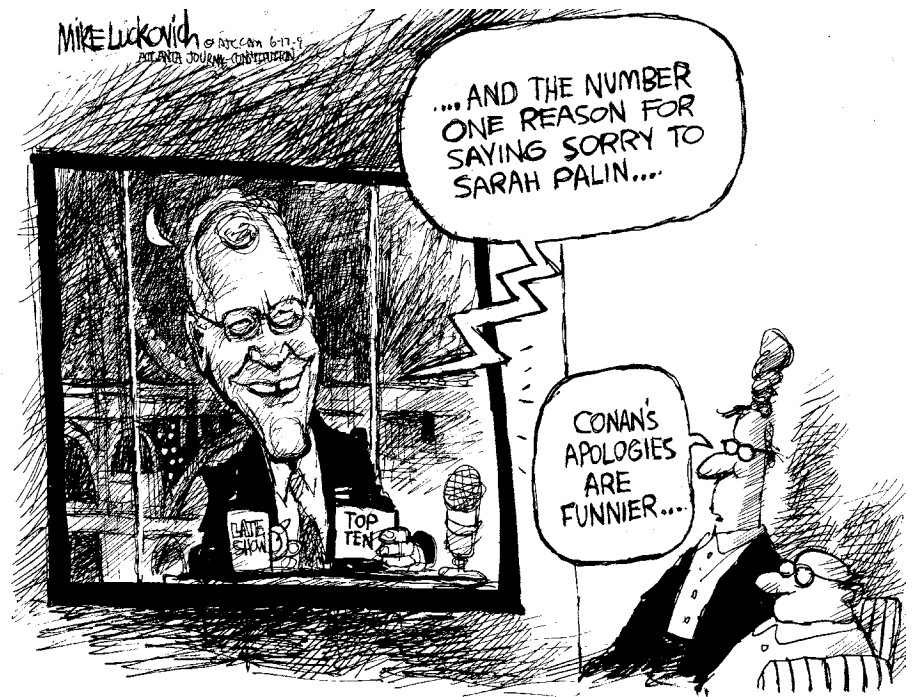
They were right. With slim profits, kids no longer want to take over the family farm. Precious farmland has been converted to housing additions.

The first alarm came from The Brethren, the religious sect that produces generation after generation of high quality family farmers. No one listened.

Farm foreclosures, forced sales, bankruptcies, failing banks and small towns strangled by Wal-Mart are in addition to increasing suicides and divorces.

Add to these woes the huge federal pork going to “gentlemen” farmers – actors, corporate chiefs and other super-wealthy and hobby farms.

We think we can't lose America as



we know it, but if the farm sector of America's troubled economy goes down, it's the beginning of the end of the American dream.

Health Care

A national poll indicates that most Americans are receptive to having more government influence over their health care in return for lower costs and more coverage.

Sixty-three percent questioned in a CNN/Opinion Research Corp. survey said they would favor an increase in the federal government's influence over their own health care plans in an attempt to lower costs and provide coverage to more Americans; 36 percent were opposed.

The poll also suggests that slightly more than six out of 10 think the government should guarantee health care for all Americans, with 38 percent opposed.

Americans are split over raising taxes to increase coverage. Forty-seven percent of those questioned support raising taxes in order to provide health insurance to all Americans.

The reactionary U.S. Chamber plans a \$100 million campaign to stop President Obama's pledge to make medical care available for all Americans.

Voters Spoke

We are having difficulty working up sympathy for California's \$22 billion deficit and possible bankruptcy.

How many remember the so-called Ronald Reagan “Sagebrush Rebellion” culminated in 1978 with the passage of Prop 13, a property tax disaster that started the state's steady decline.

Adding to that was the impact of thousands of immigrants [legal and otherwise] flooding the state but state government lacked funds to meet the demands.

Our founding editor, Frosty Troy, was imported by alarmed educators, making two-dozen speeches across California, warning voters that if they adopted Prop 13 it would be the beginning of the end of quality public education and other social programs.

Only a huge defense build-up kept California safe for a few years – then followed 12 years of Band-Aids.

Just as Oklahoma voters – egged on by the Daily Disappointment – opted for a constitutional amendment making a tax increase virtually impossible, California voters went head over

heels for Prop 13.

For half of Oklahoma, the result is poverty, poor public and mental health and cash-strapped education.

The state ranks in the bottom on virtually every quality of life measure.

You get what you pay for – unless you're among the affluent.

Huge Returns

Here's a statistic to burn in your brain: each state dollar spent at the OU Health Sciences Center creates \$6.60.

Statistics may vary, but the same could be said for investing more in public education, CareerTech and higher education.

Eight of the local biotech firms collaborating with researchers at the Health Sciences Center have net sales in excess of \$1 billion and growing.

A thriving health center provides a tremendous service and cost savings for Oklahoma families.

As part of the OU College of Pharmacy, the Oklahoma Poison Control Center saves the state more than \$12 million annually with averted trips to physicians' offices and emergency rooms, in addition to saving lives.

Researchers at the Health Sciences Center have amassed 48 patents in the past decade, representing innovative tools and discoveries that are changing the biomedical landscape and infusing Oklahoma with federal funding.

The OU College of Public Health has seen a 400% increase in federal funding in five years, with more than \$12 million awarded in 2007.

OU College of Medicine provides more than 120,000 doctors visits for uninsured adults in Oklahoma each year and another 100,000 for patients with Medicaid. That doesn't include the volunteer work of more than 200 students.

OU clinics have been established in area public schools, reducing absentee rates and family mobility by more than 30% while helping to improve standardized test scores. The OU dental school also helps the less fortunate.

In addition, OU College of Nursing students and faculty provide more than 8,000 hours of free clinical service throughout the state, saving millions of dollars in later treatment costs and higher insurance premiums.

If Oklahoma had progressive leadership this state would soar instead of floundering in America's basement.

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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

Who audits the auditor? Roger Melson, who audited the Oklahoma School Land Commission royalty division, faces 174 counts totaling \$1.166 million allegedly embezzled.

Laurel: To Attorney Jerry Fent for once again holding the Legislature's feet to the state Constitution fire. More than \$33 million was collected last year in the name of court fees, without a cent going to the courts.

Surprise! The 12 Oklahoma public schools ranked among the best in the nation are all in upscale neighborhoods. Will we ever address the needs of failing schools other than increasing tests – a guarantee of more failure?

Dart: To Gov. Brad Henry and the Legislature for not providing adequate funding for alcohol and drug abuse treatment and prevention. Six percent of the state's adolescents [323,000] need treatment for one or both. [State Mental Health Department]

A new law will encourage tax-dodging military personnel to list Oklahoma as their home address for purposes of taxation. We're now one of 16 states with an active-duty tax break.

Laurel: To the 10th Circuit for knocking down the Haskell County Ten Commandments monument as a clear violation of the Constitution. Will Oklahoma's dizzy fundamentalists ever read the Oklahoma Constitution?

In the last issue, we edited an error into one of our reader's letters, time-traveling the 1857 Dred Scott case into the 20th Century. Damn reading glasses can't be trusted!

Dart: To President Obama who campaigned vigorously against "don't ask, don't tell" but hasn't raised a finger since taking office. More than 13,000 have been booted, including several hundred linguists.

While you were sleeping the Legislature changed several ways of collecting taxes, producing an extra \$58 million for them to spend.

Laurel: To ex-football coach Barry Switzer, winner of this year's John F. Kennedy Award from the Knights of Columbus for his selfless work on the Special Olympics and other good causes.

State Chamber President Dick Rush's glowing statement on the new tort reform law is laughable. In fact, Rush and his corporate cronies lost their bill that would have locked the courthouse door for ordinary Oklahomans.

Dart: To the Tulsa World for a false report showing 10 votes were cast in the name of persons who were dead. An analysis by the Election Board shows it never happened.

Quick! Find a rubber room for GOP Sen. Todd Lamb, R-Edmond, who would rather run for lieutenant governor than be president pro tem of the Senate. The difference? Being in the audience or directing the play.

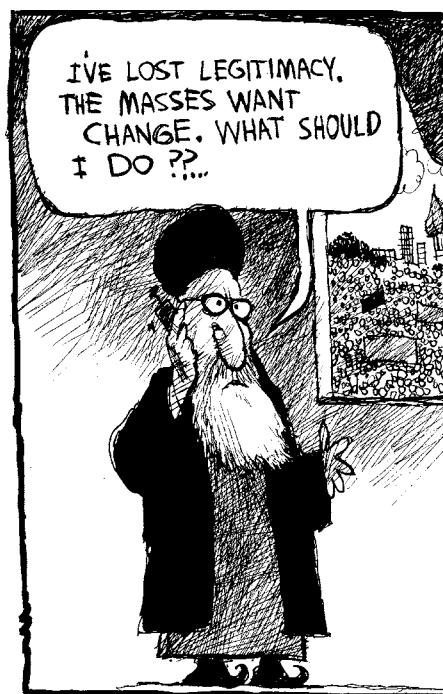
Laurel: To State Superintendent Sandy Garrett, warning parents who permit their kids an average 39 hours a month online. Parents should know how that time is being spent.

First Lady Kim Henry is the new full-time executive director of the Sarkeys Foundation where she served on the board of directors. She said her dual role will not affect her work as First Lady.

Dart: To U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who favors merit pay, charter schools and continuing the No Child Left Behind Act – with a "little tweaking." No doubt he is a George W. Bush clone.

Fewer than 1% percent of Oklahoma college students are without American citizenship or any other documents. A new study shows only 272 students are undocumented. [House Task Force report]

Laurel: To Eddie Story of Sand Springs, named the Oklahoma-Arkansas Salvation Army volunteer of the year. His work has been with Boys and Girls clubs.



More than five million couples cohabitate without benefit of marriage – eight times more than in 1970. A record-breaking 40% of babies born in 2007 were to unmarried parents – up 25% since 2002.

Dart: To U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, R-OK, who has come out swinging against a far-reaching bill to curb greenhouse gas emissions. It's a work in progress and Lucas should work to protect farmers without killing a vital bill.

Would someone explain to TV pollster Bill Shapard that the correct name is the Democratic Party, not the Democrat Party. It is usually used as a slur or shows a person's ignorance.

Laurel: To Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, who has finally authored a bill that deserves praise – Oklahoma taxpayers can save \$4 million a year by deporting non-violent illegal aliens. More than 230 would be eligible, saving taxpayers \$19,789 a year per inmate.

Do you suppose Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor skipped a reelection bid in order to run for Congress as a Republican? The incumbent 1st District Rep. John Sullivan is in alcohol rehab.

Dart: To Rep. Ann Coody, R-Lawton, for a resolution calling on Congress to repeal the federal inheritance tax. Gee, the first \$3.5 million is exempt. How hard did Paris Hilton work for that \$55 million? Elimination would eventually leave most money in the hands of 10% of the population.

That's egg on Sen. Jim Inhofe's face. After raging time and again against congressional pork barrel politics he seeks more than \$500 million, including \$1.6 million for Tulsa public school campus police!

Laurel: To Time magazine for reporting that world governments spent \$1.46 trillion on "defense" in 2008, a new record. America topped the list at \$607 billion – seven times what second-place China spent.

Oklahoma ranks ninth nationally for poor urban roads, according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Tulsa ranks ninth, Oklahoma City 15th. Poor roads costs drivers \$457 per year.



Dart: To the Daily Disappointment for running every high-dollar salary and bonus in Oklahoma but failing to list its publisher, easily earning much more than many on the list of 40.

With 5% of the world's population, America houses 25% of the world's prisoners – 756 inmates per 100,000 population. That's five times the world average. Oklahoma is fourth in men and first in women locked up. [Newsweek, 6.15.09]

Laurel: To the Oklahoma Ethics Commission for refusing to knuckle under to Senate Leader Glenn Coffee and cohorts. A tough new campaign fund reporting rule is in effect July 1.

Ronald Reagan worshippers don't remember or choose not to remember that it was Reagan who sent the national debt soaring from \$750 billion when he took office to \$2 trillion when he left. Bush Jr. left a \$10 trillion debt.

Dart: To Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, nailed by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs for putting out as fact some plain wrong figures in the federal stimulus package. Coburn produces so much corn he ought to take up farming.

If the Obama Administration has its way, zero funding would hit Close Up, Gifted and Talented program, Even Start family literacy program, College Access Challenge Grants, Character education program, Education Technology grants, Abstinence Education grants, Civics Education program, and Mentoring grants.

Laurel: To two judges on the 7th Circuit who said they have had it with female attorneys showing up in skirts that barely hide their rears. Both judges are women.

The Obama Administration has asked Congress for \$517 million to launch a public school merit pay program. The Economic Policy Institute has issued a report detailing the failure of such plans. [Education Week]

Dart: To Gov. Brad Henry for signing the GOP's signature bill creating an information technology czar – a new level of bureaucracy eliminating competitive bidding on computers, etc. Bravo to legislative Democrats, fighting it until their last breath.

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Is there a group of people more arrogant, more intolerant, and more hateful than those who proclaim to have an intimate knowledge of the will of God? And is there any group more zealous in the implementation of said will than these fundamentalists, these pious zombies singing "Onward Christian Soldier" as they bash away at Satan and all his works? Of course, Satan's works include legal abortion, gay marriage, feminism, the teaching of the Theory of Evolution and sex education in public schools, Hollywood, the "liberal" media, and ... well, let's just say ol' Satan has been real busy lately.

But fret not, the saints are on the march and, while stoning people is no longer considered acceptable, there are other forms of intimidation, up to and including blowing an abortion provider's brains out.

Are we liberals too nice? No, I don't advocate murder, but it galls me to think of all the crap the godly wingnuts get away with. They plop themselves down in front of an abortion clinic and hoot and screech like the simians they evolved from [though they deny that, vehemently], and make a difficult situation even more difficult for the women who go there.

Just once I'd love to see a few dozen atheists on the lawn of a fundy church giving them hell about their idiotic religious views. Yeah, that sounds like fun but we all know what would happen: one of the Holy Joes would snap, go out to his pickup, grab a rifle, and open fire - in the name of Jesus, no less.

Oh well, I suppose we heathens will have to be content with the recent best-selling books by Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, and Dennett. The fundies are not only certifiable, they're well armed. And they hear, so very clearly, the voice of GOD.

Larry Forrest
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

An open letter to state Rep. Mike Ritze:

Now that your excellent efforts have resulted in a monument reflecting the Ten Commandments being placed at the state Capitol, I feel very strongly that your next order of business should be to pass a law that any legislator that violates any of those commandments shall be immediately impeached and removed as a representative or senator for the state of Oklahoma.

With the Ten Commandments prom-

inently displayed at the state Capitol, there is no reason for any legislator to not be reminded daily of what is expected of him or her.

Richard M. Healy
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Laurel to Observer: For naming my state Senator, Debbe Leftwich, one of the best senators.

Dart to Observer: Leaving my state representative, Mike Christian, off the worst list. He just got there, I know, but just wait and see - you'll soon agree.

To end on a positive note, my representative is an excellent example of why voters shouldn't just go down a ballot and select good sounding names without knowing what candidates stand for.

Al Engel
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

Oklahoma Disability Agency Tops in USA [5.25.09, page 12] is very interesting in that it caused me to remember that casual observation can often prove erroneous.

No doubt the statistics quoted are correct, but author Harlan doesn't tell us why it takes so long for some applicants to be approved; many waiting for as much as two years or more.

Quite often, a sense of desperation overcomes the applicant and he/she, credit stretched to the limit - or past - engages an attorney. Things then seem to speed up exponentially and that must be why the phone books are so full of lawyers offering "Social Security Disability" services.

The applicant, of course, loses one-fourth of his/her accumulated payments to pay the lawyer for his efforts.

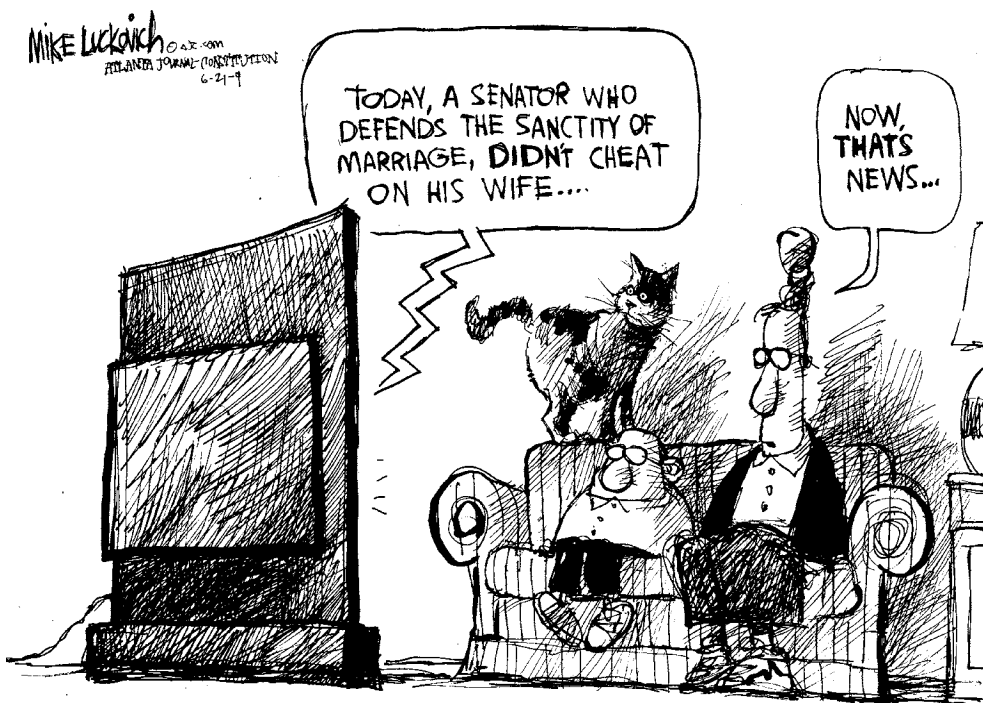
Dick Mayo
Sallisaw

Editor, The Observer:

An open letter to U.S. Rep. Mary Falin regarding her constituent poll on the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention center:

Your message opposing the closing of Guantanamo is shameless fear mongering. As a member of Congress, you well know that no prisoner has ever escaped from any maximum-security prison on our soil. Therefore, if we transferred all of the Guantanamo prisoners to a maximum-security prison, we are guaranteed they will stay there.

In addition, you also know well that there are a number of prisoners who



should be given a fair trial re: the alleged war crimes they have committed and there are a number who could be sent back to countries of their origin to be tried [only countries that are our allies.] Remember that 15 of the 19 Al-Qaeda who committed the 9/11 attack were Saudi Arabians, one of our primary allies in the Arab world.

Your opposition to the closing of Guantanamo is calculated to appeal to the unfounded fears of some Oklahomans while you are insulting the informed among us who understand the true stakes involved. The well informed among us do look forward to your vacating the 5th District office in January 2011.

Frank J. Silovsky
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

The media have become proficient at language manipulation, so much so conveying understanding is no longer a priority. Perhaps it has always been so.

Bernie Madoff's professional status as a Ponzi schemer is now being reviewed. Our federal government now is "first among equals." The bailouts here and there, from GM to Chrysler to banks and AIG, is the colossus of Ponzi schemes. All "front loaded" and pay out promises in a century or so [maybe]. Our elected officials are just "kicking the can down the road."

Larry D. Dobie
Claremore

Editor, The Observer:

Is anyone tiring of arguments as to whether one is a terrorist or a torturist? Just wondering, and also wherein lies the difference.

Stephanie Hershberger
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

We're going through an escalating evolution in our nation and as a society we may not like the outcome. It has become mainstream and common to assign derogatory labels to individuals we disagree with. Daily, the AM radio hate mongers fuel the fire, convincing individuals like Newt Gingrich, who should know better, that it's now publicly acceptable to demean and defame with impunity. On political message board sites it's common to find racial slurs of the most offensive nature and they always attract a "me too" chorus. We have an absolute hunger to bring out the worst in people and give them a forum to spew out

their hate.

Combining that with America's burning quest to arm ourselves with all varieties of weaponry and encourage everyone to bring their weapons to public parks, the malls, even church, doesn't seem like such a good formula.

There are legions that oppose even the most cursory examination of anyone wanting a weapon capable of mass mayhem, preferring to simply allow anyone to go to a flea market and obtain their weapon of choice with no regard for mental stability or rational thought. We're not improving our lives to divide and demean each other. We're not improving our nation to encourage rage and hatred towards each other.

Yet we elect individuals that are defined by just those actions. Here in Oklahoma, Rep. Sally Kern is a textbook example. Her YouTube rants always draw a crowd.

We're now living in a nation where an 88-year-old man could no longer keep his hatred and rage inside and showed up armed, with the intent to kill people at a museum. Absent of a change back towards reasonableness and civility, these acts will not only continue, they're destined to increase.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

An open letter to Bob and Tom, KRXX Radio, Oklahoma City:

I was listening to KRXX this evening when I heard your promo featuring your comments on "lucky" Caroline Kennedy. Do you suppose that it is likely or not that this lucky woman would give up every dime of her fortune, and every dime of her family's fortune, to be able to have her father alive?

I'm afraid that I can detect a couple of things about both you gentleman:

1. It is unlikely that either of you is married.
2. It is impossible that either of your fathers were.

Lynn Green
The Village

The letter refers to a promotional advertisement in which the two radio personalities were playing Neil Diamond's Sweet Caroline, which Diamond described as a tribute to Caroline Kennedy. This led to the broadcasters joking about Caroline Kennedy's teeth and describing her as the "luckiest girl in America."

Frosty Troy's What's Right About Oklahoma

Want a pungent, humorous speech from one of America's best speakers? Frosty covers 50 years of Oklahoma's crazy political scene.

Call 405.525.5582 for modest rates.
Hurry! Frosty's calendar fills fast.

Frosty's Notebook

Flying High

Oklahomans yak endlessly about our oil and gas industry, but seldom is heard a word about the role aerospace plays in the state's economy.

The 8th Annual Oklahoma Aerospace Summit & Expo in Tulsa recently served as a reminder to Oklahomans about this component of our economy.

The industry is in a downward tailspin thanks to the sour economy, yet the state remains one of seven maintenance repair and overhaul hubs in the world.

Four pillars make up Oklahoma's economy: Aerospace, Energy, Agriculture, Healthcare/Biomedicine. Aerospace represents 143,000 jobs in Oklahoma.

Aerospace is Oklahoma's largest industrial sector touching all four industry sectors: Military, Commercial/Air Transport, General Aviation, Space.

Oklahoma has a vast amount of air space that is considered acceptable and suitable where Unmanned Aerial Systems [UAS] can be test flown.

Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force Base has life cycle responsibility for 100% of the U.S. Department of Defense's aircraft engines – \$7 billion annually.

Tinker garners a quarter of the spending for military aircraft maintenance for all of North America and 16% of the total global military spending.

Aerospace accounts for more than \$12 billion of Oklahoma's industrial output.

One of every 13 Oklahoma workers is directly or indirectly involved in the aerospace industry.

Aerospace accounts for nearly \$80 million in income tax revenue to Oklahoma.

Aerospace accounts for more than \$60 million in sales tax revenue to Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's aerospace industry represents a \$4.7 billion annual payroll.

Aerospace jobs currently outpace the state's average annual wage by a staggering 83%.

Aerospace is one of the few industries in the U.S. that actually has a trade surplus. The current U.S. aerospace trade surplus is around \$40 billion.

Oklahoma has one of the highest concentrations of companies and skilled



workers engaged in maintenance repair and overhaul and aircraft modification in the world.

Tinker is the U.S. Department of Defense's largest aircraft maintenance repair and overhaul facility in the country.

American Airlines maintenance repair and overhaul facility in Tulsa is the largest commercial maintenance repair and overhaul facility in the world.

Oklahoma aerospace workers are making the leading edge of the wing for Boeing's new generation 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

Oklahoma aerospace workers perform high-end sophisticated modifications to critical Department of Defense and U.S. State Department aircraft.

Oklahoma's aerospace industry is faced with two critical threats: lack of adequate workforce and lack of adequate facilities in which to grow.

Kansas workers may build aircraft, but Oklahoma's maintenance repair and overhaul workers keep them flying.

Our Kids On Drugs

To say that Oklahoma has a drug problem is the understatement of the decade. The state ranks No. 1 in overall numbers for ages 12 and above abusing prescription drugs.

Oklahoma led the nation in legislation fighting meth – and two dozen states followed our lead. But meth is back big-time.

The federal Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, which conducted the prescription drug survey, divided the results into three age groups.

For ages 12-17, Oklahoma ranks second with 9.7% abusing prescription pain relievers. Arkansas barely led this age group with 9.8%.

Oklahoma took first place with the 26 and older crowd: The survey estimated 14.87% are abusers.

The age group in which Oklahoma ranks lowest is the 18-25 population – an estimated 14.4%, barely keeping the state out of the top 10.

Across the board in all age groups Oklahoma's percentages are above the national average. This in the buckle on the Bible belt – among the worst states when it comes to parenting.

Oklahoma's statistics are also a reflection of a nationwide trend that has law enforcement and medical communities extremely worried. But not the Republican-controlled Oklahoma Legislature, gutting programs that were making a difference.

Based on figures from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the sale of painkillers jumped 90% between 1997 and 2005. During that time period, Oklahoma's usage soared 145%.

The investigation found more than 200,000 pounds of the five most prescribed

painkillers was sold, which is 300 milligrams for each person in the United States.

An increasing number of abusers end up in the state's prison system. Corrections authorities report that half the 26,000 prison population are either mentally ill or have drug and alcohol problems.

Autopsy reports reveal accidental drug overdose deaths are no longer about familiar street drugs such as cocaine. According to the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, last year more than 80% of deaths from overdoses came via prescription pills.

In 2001, 344 Oklahomans died of a drug overdose. In 2007, that number rose to 564, a 64% increase.

Methadone, a treatment for narcotic withdrawal and dependence, surged to the top – a drug to help fight addiction is being abused by addicts! Methadone accounts for one-fourth of all drug overdose deaths.

During the past two years, methadone, followed by pain relievers hydrocodone and oxycodone [Rush Limbaugh's favorite], led the pack, more than doubling the number of deaths from cocaine.

Where are the kids getting their prescription drugs? Most of the pills are coming right out of the family medicine cabinet.

Doctors are prescribing more and higher doses of painkillers, putting more pills in home medicine cabinets.

One mother, called to school in Oklahoma City because of misbehavior of her son, was told he was apparently on drugs. She said it was nonsense – until she checked the family medicine cabinet.

Routinely toss out all old drugs. The child's life you save may be your own.

Explaining God

The following was written by Danny Dutton, age 8, from Chula Vista, CA, for his third grade homework assignment to "Explain God."

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, He doesn't have to take up His valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times besides bedtimes.

God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV on account of this. Since He hears everything, not only prayers, there must be a terrible lot of noise in His ears, unless He has thought of a way to turn it off.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere, which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting His time by going over your parent's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of Him preaching to them and they crucified Him.

But He was good and kind like his Father and He told his Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them, and God said OK. His Dad [God] appreciated everything that He had done and all His hard work on earth so He told Him He didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So He did.

And now He helps his Dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones He can take care of Himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important, of course. You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to hear you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want happy, it's God.

Follow The Money

Election Cash Pays Off For Oil, Gas Firms

By Wanda Jo Stapleton

The 2009 State Legislature lived by the Golden Rule – he who has the gold, makes the rule.

Chesapeake Energy appears to be the company with the most “gold,” and is happy to share it with legislators. This company, since 2002, has given 373 campaign contributions totaling \$660,990 to present members of the state House and Senate.

In turn, these legislators [through SB 313] extended Chesapeake’s tax breaks on gross production of gas and oil for another three years – until July 1, 2012. That three-year extension happens every time it expires. The last three-year extension cost taxpayers \$210,316,758, according to Tax Commission figures.

Of course, other oil and gas companies get some of that money, but Chesapeake gets the lion’s share; and we are expected to continue “paying back” for Chesapeake’s campaign contributions even though the prices of oil and gas are rising steadily.

ONLY ONE LAWMAKER VOTED NO

Congratulations to Rep. Larry Glenn, D-Miami, the only legislator who voted “no” on the final version of SB 313, although eight representatives and one senator failed to vote.

Well-intentioned tax rebates and exemptions got a modest boost in 1994. After the oil bust of the mid-1980s and continuing low prices into 1994, the Legislature passed SB 841. This measure said that major tax breaks for oil and gas producers would occur any time the price of oil fell below \$20 a barrel or gas fell below \$2.50 per million British thermal units – both calculated “on an annual calendar year basis.”

I voted, along with my colleagues in the House, to make that happen.

Those prices triggering tax breaks presently stand at \$30 a barrel for oil and \$5 per 1,000 cubic feet [mcf] for gas.

REGULARLY REWRITING THE LEGISLATION

The problem is, the Legislature has rewritten the 1994 legislation several times. Their present law allows drillers of horizontal wells and deep wells [from 15,000 to 17,499 feet] to ruthlessly pilfer our pockets for four years “from the date of first sales” on each well. Those drilling wells 17,500 feet or lower can collect tax rebates for five years.

The horizontal and deep well producers collected \$159 million [75.6%] of the rebates given during the last three fiscal years.

A popular fallacy is that producers won’t drill deep wells without major tax breaks. Never mind that Mark C. Snead, director for Applied Economic Research, Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University, analyzed deep drilling and published the results in “The Economics of Deep Drilling in Oklahoma, 2005.”

Snead used Chesapeake’s data for his analysis because Chesapeake, he says, “is Oklahoma’s largest natural gas producer, its most active operator, and its most active explorer for Oklahoma deep natural gas reserves.”

DEEP WELLS ALREADY PAYING BIG

Snead concludes “the impact of drilling a deep well provides an estimated economic impact six times that of a typical well drilled less than 15,000 feet deep.

Stiff Penalties For Heinous Crimes

Legislation by Sen. Jonathan Nichols, R-Norman, creating stronger penalties for domestic abuse and for possession of child pornography, is now law.

“Crimes like domestic abuse and child pornography destroy families and shatter lives,” said Nichols. “My legislation creates stronger sentences and closes loopholes so these serious crimes will carry the serious punishments they deserve.”

Under current law, a first offense of domestic abuse is only a misdemeanor. Nichols’ legislation would make that crime a felony when a “prior pattern of conduct” can be established. SB 1020 also closes a loophole in the law.

While most sections of state law list the crime of child porn possession as a felony, a single section listed it as a misdemeanor.

“Defense attorneys were using this outdated section to argue their clients should only be charged with a misdemeanor. My legislation closes that loophole,” Nichols said.

Nichols’ legislation also increases the punishment for aggravated possession of child porn to up to life in prison.

Aggravated possession would apply to a person possessing over 100 pornographic images of children. It also increases possession of child pornography to up to 20 years in prison. If signed into law, the bill would also require anyone convicted of child porn to register as a sex offender.

“The market for child pornography encourages further exploitation of children – that’s why it is so important that we do everything possible to stop this crime and punish those who have created a market for the sexual abuse of children,” Nichols said.



The production impact of deep wells is estimated at 11 times that of the average well less than 15,000 feet deep.”

As I write, oil is \$69.66 per barrel and natural gas is \$4.19 per 1,000 cubic feet. However, Chesapeake’s CEO was quoted in a May 6 Daily Oklahoman article by Randy Ellis as saying “clearly, gas prices were too high one year ago at \$12 to \$13 per thousand cubic feet, and today they are far too low at \$3.50 per thousand cubic feet ... so my guess is the rebound will overshoot on the high side, just as it has overshoot on the low side.”

When calculated “on an annual calendar year basis,” as the law requires, the average price of natural gas exceeds the \$5 trigger for tax breaks.

In conclusion, the conditions no longer exist which prompted the 1994 law, so there’s no rational justification for extending those exorbitant tax rebates. Those rebates exist now mainly as payback for legislators’ campaign contributions.

– The author, a former Democratic state representative, lives in Oklahoma City

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Dr. Terry Cline

OSU Grad Aiding Iraq Reconstruction

A year ago, moving to Iraq was “not even a distant thought” for Oklahoma native Terry Cline, head of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration since 2006.

But his work at the federal level introduced him to Iraq’s Minister of Health, Salih Al-Hasnawi, and others who inspired him with their incredible commitment to improving health care against unbelievable odds.

“Their courage, resiliency, strength and vision led to my decision to volunteer for this post,” says Cline, who was awarded his second presidential appointment as U.S. health attache to Iraq last July.

The Obama Administration asked him to continue in the position until he returns to Oklahoma this summer to become the state’s commissioner of health.

Cline earned master’s and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology from OSU in 1985 and 1992, respectively.

FORMER MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSIONER

From 2001 to 2006 he directed Oklahoma’s Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and concurrently served as secretary of health from 2004 to 2006.

Two basic indicators of Iraq’s health – the infant mortality rate and the country’s infrastructure – deteriorated significantly under Saddam’s regime.

Physicians, who had been regarded as pillars of society, were specifically targeted for assassination and kidnapping – and approximately half fled the country.

“I have talked with many physicians who were either kidnapped themselves or who had family members kidnapped for ransom. One physician actually showed me his bullet wound from an assassination attempt.”

Cline says Iraq’s minister of health is making significant strides now that the country’s health care budget increased from \$16 million several years ago to more than \$4 billion today.

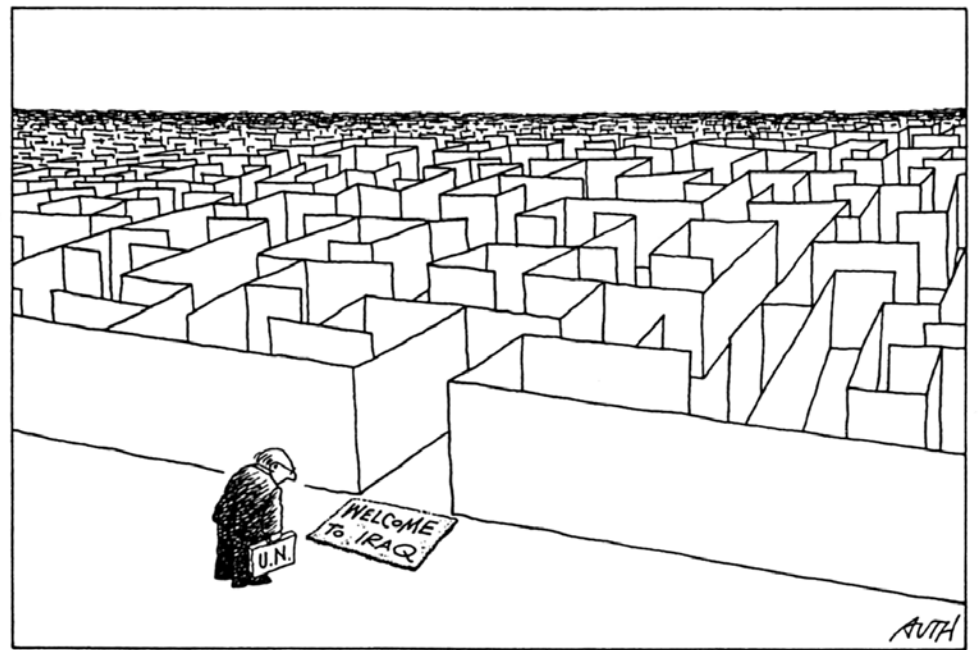
PHYSICIANS ARE COMING BACK

“Physicians are returning to the country at a rate of approximately 25 per week, and that number appears to be increasing,” Cline said.

This is a result of significantly increasing salaries for physicians [from about \$3 per day to approximately \$1,600 per month], as well as increased safety and security.

Another priority for Cline and his staff is restoring reliable electricity and water systems.

“It’s not uncommon to enter a primary health care center that has been ‘pow-



ered down’ to save fuel, so no lights or equipment are running,” he says.

“And because of an inadequate water supply system, diseases such as cholera are endemic.”

In 2008, there were 925 cases of confirmed cholera resulting primarily from an inadequate water system and poor public health awareness, Cline said, but the number of confirmed cases was more than four times higher in 2007, another sign of progress.

THEIR REACTION DEPENDS

Cline says how Iraqi people react to him depends on their previous interactions with Americans.

“Some individuals have clearly articulated their appreciation to us for helping rebuild their health care system, which was once the regional leader in the Middle East.

“Others have talked about their skewed perspective, having only known Americans as individuals who crashed in the doors of their homes and made them get out of their cars for searches at checkpoints.

“All point to the potential that relationships could improve significantly as safety and security stabilize Iraq. The people of Iraq have demonstrated their resiliency and strength to endure under incredible hardships. I feel honored to play a small part in this critical work,” he said.

“This work is not about ‘doing something for someone.’ It is about working hand in hand in partnership with various stakeholders, all of whom are committed to improving the quality of life for all Iraqis. Pretty cool stuff.”

– From State, OSU’s Official Magazine

A New Way Forward For OKC Public Schools

By Wilfredo Santos Rivera

When Angela Monson was elected by the voters of Oklahoma City many were elated, some shocked, others disappointed. The chairmanship of the Oklahoma City School Board traditionally was elected by the OKC School Board itself, until the Oklahoma Legislature took it upon itself to make it an At-Large city elected position.

Some did not agree with this political intervention in the affairs of Independent School District I-89 [OCPS]. Nevertheless, the die was cast and Cliff Hudson became the first At-Large Chairman. Former Mayor Kirk Humphreys then was appointed by the school board after Hudson resigned.

Both men are similar in certain aspects. They are wealthy businessmen who reflect the existing power structure and the values of the dominant culture. They are also similar in their style of governance which is corporate, top-down, follow my directives, I’m the only one that micro-manages around here. I supervise the superintendent and everybody is supposed to rubber-stamp his or her decisions.

NEW CHAIR IS GRASS-ROOTS ORIENTED

Angela Monson, on the other hand, is a grassroots community leader with 15 years experience in the Oklahoma Senate. No one in the Oklahoma House or Senate worked harder than she. She served with honor and will continue to serve with honor in her new leadership role. Her style of leadership is totally different from these two men.

Monson reflects the future working class of America: 75% women and minorities. The present population of Oklahoma City Public Schools reflects that future. She is aware that productive, creative and well-educated labor is and must be the basis of American education. She has a keen sense of fairness.

She knows, and everybody better know that the education of our children is the No. 1 priority and the reason for the existence of Oklahoma City Public Schools and it is our [intention] primary objective to provide the children with whatever is necessary to be No. 1 in all areas of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

SHE HAS A PLAN

Another difference between Monson and previous leaders is that they did not have a plan. They were all talk, no action. Their mantra was, and I still hear some board members repeat it: “We are not supposed to micromanage the superintendent.”

The code word here is “micromanage.” The message in this one word is: don’t get engaged. We must expose it for what it is: a masquerade of falsehoods to keep our children from being No. 1 in all areas.

Let’s be clear: Board members represent the community. The community holds board members accountable and board members must hold the superintendent accountable, and so on down the line.

As elected officials it is not our role to rubberstamp the superintendent’s decisions. When he gets it right, we vote it up. When he gets it wrong, we vote it down.

Case in point: when we hire outside the district, knowing and ignoring the qualified talent within the district, that sends a negative message to our team. I am for going anywhere, if we don’t have the talent here. Our problem is our leaders don’t look hard enough, or refuse to see the talent in front of their noses, or maybe they don’t trust our talent. Whatever the reason that negative attitude must be changed, if our children are to be No. 1 in all areas.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

How are we going to do that? Here is the plan: Children, Community, Administration, Faculty, Parental Empowerment – not lip service. The name of the plan is the Community Engagement Plan. We must trust the community.

Our 86 schools must be an integral part of our neighborhoods. We can’t ignore the people who pay our bills and send their children to our schools. School leaders in the past have worked to keep the community out of the schools. We must now work hard to get the community back into the public schools and engaged in the education of their children as equal partners, at least. Then the team will be poised to help our children be No. 1 in all areas.

This is how we organize: Each school will have a Community Advisory Board [CAB] consisting of 16 members. Half will be parents with children in that school. A District Working Team will be organized and sub-divided into seven focus groups: Academic Excellence; Safety and Security; Attendance; Exceptional/Special Needs Children; English Language Learning; Technology Instruction, and Extra-Curricular Activities.

Some individuals, or groups, may declare war on the plan, or on the chairperson, but they will be held accountable by the community – business as usual is not an option. This plan is policy and our children will be No. 1.

No one can stop that! We will not be hamstrung. We will not be tamed. We will be creative. We will be innovative. We will work hard, with all our heart and soul to provide an open, democratic education, one that would instill in our children a taste for questioning, a passion for knowledge, a healthy curiosity, the joy of creating, and the pleasure of risk without which there can be no creation.

– The author is a member of the Oklahoma City school board

PUBLIC FORUM

Stem Cell Vote Prevents Research

By Robert M. Peters

I am disappointed that each of Bartlesville's representatives in the Oklahoma Legislature – Rep. Steve Martin, Rep. Earl Sears and Sen. John Ford – voted to override Gov. Henry's veto of House Bill 1326 making embryonic stem cells a criminal act.

Although this has long been considered a controversial issue, the facts are simple enough and easy to understand. Please consider the following:

1. Many physicians and medical scientists believe that embryonic stem cells have the potential to someday provide a cure or treatment for Parkinson's, juvenile-onset diabetes, macular degeneration, spinal cord injuries, Alzheimer's and other debilitating diseases.

REMEMBER CHRISTOPHER REEVE?

We all remember the terrible ordeal of actor Christopher Reeve. No one will ever know if such cures are possible unless the research is adequately funded and undertaken.

2. Proponents propose using surplus embryonic stem cells left over from fertility clinics that otherwise would be destroyed or frozen indefinitely.

These blastocysts consist of a few dozen cells too small to be seen without the aid of a microscope.

Since a blastocyst could never develop into a baby without first being placed in a woman's womb, it would never have the opportunity of becoming a human baby.

THE CHOICE SHOULD BE SIMPLE

So the choice is really a simple one: should we destroy these unwanted and unneeded surplus blastocysts, or use them for medical research that has the possibility of conquering dreaded and deadly human diseases?

I am writing not as a Republican or Democrat, nor as a conservative or liberal, but as a concerned senior citizen who is sufficiently advanced in years to be facing the onslaught of one or more of these terrible degenerative diseases in the not-too-distant future.

Making The Case For 'Community' Schools

By Sharon Martin

From sixth grade through my sophomore year, there were 27 students in my class. We took all our classes together, so they were about twice the optimum size. Our school didn't have a football team, although our basketball teams rocked. The curriculum didn't include a foreign language or calculus.

Some of the teachers were pragmatists and some were idealists. A young graduate of East Central University was hired to teach social studies and one hour of art. When he was told that art had to be cut, he taught an extra hour after school to fit it in. He took us to the Philbrook in Tulsa, for most of us our first visit to an art museum. His dedication was life-changing for me.

We may have been poor and rural, but there were plenty of successful graduates – a country music superstar, a state director of a major non-profit, rodeo stars, ranchers, educators, authors, lawyers, and executives. How did a bare-bones education generate such success?

COMMON SENSE CLASSES OFFERED

For starters, the bare-bones education included common sense classes – cooking, nutrition, welding, bookkeeping. In civics, we learned not only the branches of government but also how to fill out a tax return. We were given tools needed in our everyday life.

Physical education was mandatory and every day. We had a music teacher, and we got one day off from classes every year to watch a World Series game on the television in the cafeteria.

These things were important, but nothing was more important than this: our parents expected us to get an education.

Love-Hate Relationship With Life In Oklahoma

By Raymond D. Sewell

I bought a CD of George Strait, and the first song on it is I Hate Everything. I love that song, and actually I love George Strait. The song has a good ending. I was just thinking about the things I hate. Then I remembered, I'm not supposed to hate anything, but I do.

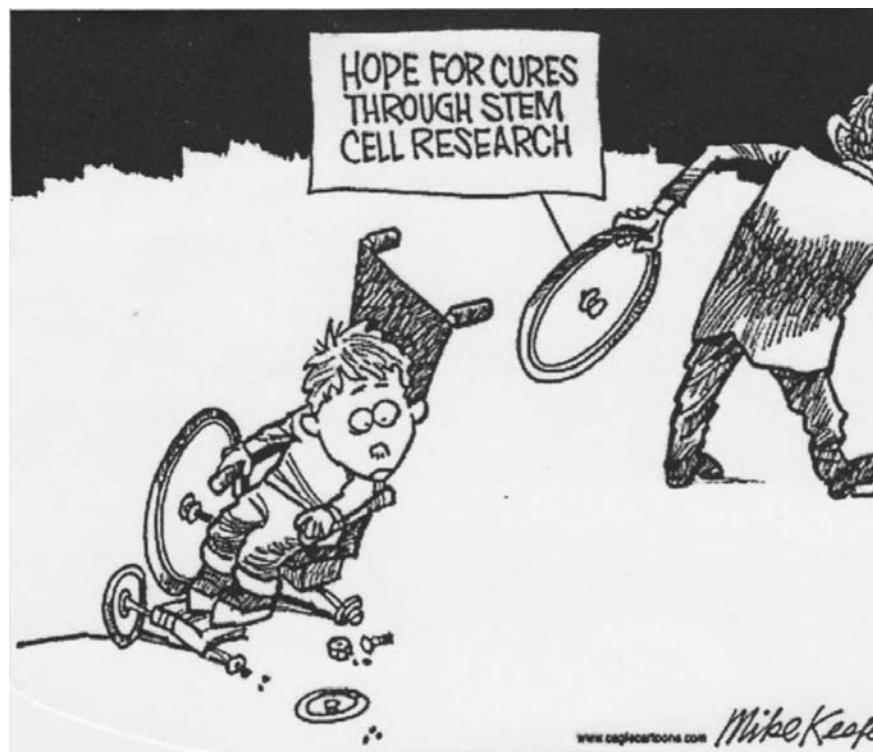
I admit that I do have a love-hate relationship with inanimate objects and concepts.

There are lots of things I love, too. Mike Turpen used to say, "I love a good steak, but I hate what they are doing to the cattle down at the slaughter house." I love that. I love commentaries in the newspapers, those that I don't hate. I love the Sunday morning commentary in the Muskogee Phoenix written by David Gerard. His hilarious satire makes bitterness taste sweet, and I don't even feel pain when he tramples on my prejudices.

HATE POVERTY, CHILD ABUSE

I hate the two roommates "Poverty and Child Abuse." Kids can't do anything about either one. I loved President Franklin D. Roosevelt's stimulus package. He

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Although cures are unlikely in my lifetime, I would like to think that future generations, including our own children and grandchildren, would benefit from such medical research.

HE HAS FELT THE IMPACT

I have lost one good friend to Parkinson's, a son-in-law from juvenile-onset diabetes, and have had some close relatives who suffered during their elderly years from Alzheimer's disease.

It is inexplicable to me why Oklahoma legislators voted against embryonic stem cell research by a mind-boggling 82-6 vote in the House of Representatives.

Although I do not speak for all senior citizens, from my viewpoint they failed to do what was in the best interest of our state and citizens, young and old alike.

I have one question for Reps. Sears and Martin and Sen. Ford: If this vote is representative of your thinking, why should we trust your judgment on such vital legislative matters as the reform of public education?

– The author lives in Bartlesville

We could debate ideas, but we didn't argue with the teacher over whether an assignment was fair. If anyone disrupted class, although my adolescent self doesn't remember anyone doing that, he or she would have been out of there faster than a coyote can nail a chicken. We didn't love every teacher, but we treated them all with respect.

RETURN TO THE BASICS

We need a return to the basics – life skills, art and music, science, language arts, math, and civic participation. Parents, teachers, and students must be on the same page in the music, harmonizing. We must build communities of learners.

What if schools operated like community centers?

In the evenings, at least one night a week, parents could take classes in cooking, English, nutrition, and job skills. Students could gather for chess club, karate classes, piano lessons.

Parents and students could arrive together and leave together. Schools could reach out to the entire family to help us turn around an epidemic of poor parenting that leaves families weakened for generations.

If everyone gets involved in the education of our children, teachers and students and communities flourish. The involvement must extend beyond support of the local sports team, although that is important, too. Success for all members of the community insures that democracy lives and citizens thrive.

This is what education is about.

– The author lives in Oilton

stamped out vitamin deficiencies that caused scurvy and rickets in school children, and he did it with oranges, apples and a school lunch.

I still hate Life Boy soap that some recommended to clear up the dry, cracked skin and sores on kids' hands, arms, faces and necks caused by scurvy.

I loved Roosevelt and the jobs he created. Former President Herbert Hoover missed an opportunity to leave a real legacy of service to his fellow man by not offering a stimulus package to the nation during the Great Depression.

THUMBS DOWN ON HOOVER

But instead, he passed the buck to state governors. He said that Americans can make it. They have ingenuity.

Kids can make it? Hoover shipped tons of food to Europe and Russia after President Wilson appointed him head of the Food Administration in the early 1920s. When we take people out of the equation and replace them with a "for-profits philosophy" we diminish our legacy of serving the people.

See LOVE-HATE Page 10

A Better World

Tiny Faith Petty, 4, Defeats Disability

What if we could live in a world where difference was not important? What if we could live in a world where we were accepted for who we were?

What if we could be free to live life to the maximum of our ability without the least shadow of misunderstanding?

Some people would say we might find that in another life, but many would not recognize this possibility in this life.

A young girl in Watonga had faith in a better world. Her family had faith in a better world for their daughter, and they believed in their little girl. Their belief and the belief of a lot of other people made a real difference.

Let me tell you the story of Faith Petty – a little girl who has been in this world a bare 4½ years. Faith was born with only partially-formed arms and legs. She was born with the mind and curiosity of all children.

FAITH IS ONE OF TRIPLETS

She is one of triplets. Michaela and Harley, her two sisters, were born without disabilities. The three girls play together and fight together like any sisters would do.

Before the girls were born, the doctor told Kim and Michael Petty that one of their daughters would be born with a disability. They wanted all their children.

Kim laughs and says that, "If I believed in reincarnation, I am convinced that Faith was a princess in her other life."

Faith has been raised that she is a person like all the rest of us. Yes, she does have a disability, but sometimes she forgets.

Mackenzie Sturgeon was the Head Start worker from Enid assigned to serve Faith Petty in her home. After working with Faith several months, she noticed she did not see a wheelchair for Faith anywhere around the house.

THE FAMILY CARRIED HER EVERYWHERE

Faith was small, even for her age, and her family carried her where she needed to go in those days.

When Mackenzie found out Faith did not have a wheelchair even though a physical therapist had recommended a motorized chair for her, she took some action with the family's consent.

Mackenzie raised \$1,400 in private contributions to purchase the \$7,000 wheelchair Faith needed.

The Petty family added another \$1,000 to what had already been raised, but they were still far short of their goal. Things didn't look good, but they believed that if it were meant to be, it would happen.

Charles White saw Faith, her siblings and her mother in the Watonga post office. He saw Faith's mother carrying her and decided to get involved in helping Faith get a wheelchair.

WATONGA CHRISTIAN CHURCH RESPONDS

He presented the situation to his church – Watonga Christian Church – and the church agreed to raise funds on two consecutive Sundays.

The church raised \$3,000 one Sunday to help purchase a motorized wheelchair for Faith and \$1,600 the following Sunday. This was sufficient to pay the full



cost.

You can only imagine how proud the Petty family was when the gift of the wheelchair was presented to Faith during a regular Sunday service on Feb. 1.

The chair has been wonderful, and Faith is able to use the joy-stick with the palm of her left hand. This has permitted Faith to be more independent, especially in the pre-kindergarten classes she attends in the Watonga Public Schools.

SHRINERS LEND A HELPING HAND

That is not the end of the story. The Petty family has been involved with Shriners Hospital in Shreveport, LA, to help in some of Faith's medical needs. [A Shriner from Geary sponsored Faith so she could receive services through the Shriners Hospital.]

Faith received a set of prosthetics from Shriners Hospital to help her stand. Because Shriners was so far from home, and the family was asked to come down and stay a week at a time, the family found Limbs for Life Foundation in Oklahoma City that was willing to provide Faith with the prosthetics she needed.

Limbs for Life will follow Faith as she grows up and will exchange her prostheses as her size and weight increases.

SHORT DISTANCE WALKS

Now Faith can walk for short distances on her prostheses, but she still must use her wheelchair because her hip is not properly formed, and it is too much to walk long distances.

Hopefully, when Faith is grown, she may have a surgery that will restore her hip joint where she will not need a wheelchair anymore. She will be able to walk normally on her artificial legs.

In her short walk in life, Faith has found lots of friends and family to help her along the way. With that assistance, she may be able to become a productive member of society.

Thanks to all of you out there who have been so supportive. Your concern has made a difference in one little girl's life.

– From Will's Corner, publication of the Oklahoma Office Of Disability Concerns

Why A California Okie Returned To His Roots

By Bob Axworthy

The American Civil Liberties Union does a creditable job of alienating many of us on occasion.

They also seem to do a pretty good job of protecting our civil liberties from all of the forces continually at work to limit the freedoms which we identify with "being an American," but somehow the ACLU often seems to be on the unpopular side.

I remember when they defended the "civil rights" of a sorry bunch of modern-day Nazis who wanted to enter a parade. At the moment, they are concerned with "the civil liberties" of illegal immigrants.

I guess the ACLU wouldn't be doing its job if it just protected the rights of "popular" folks, however.

PROTECTION FROM ANTI-OKIE LAW

There are only a few of us Oklahoma geezers who were brought up in the Central Valley of California in the 1930's who remember when we needed the help of the ACLU when California passed an "Anti-Okie" law to keep us out of their state.

I was born in Berkeley, CA, where Dad was studying at the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School to be a minister. His first church was in Madera, CA, in the Central Valley, halfway between Sacramento on the north and Bakersfield on the south. This was where I first became aware of "Okies."

Many Oklahomans accuse John Steinbeck of "creating" the image of the "Okie" in his *Grapes of Wrath*, but I grew up at the California end of the Dust Bowl exodus, and I lived with the unfortunates who were looking for The Land of Milk and Honey and found themselves instead in the midst of the worst Depression in our history.

Steinbeck may have over-dramatized the Okie, but he didn't create him.

THE NEED FOR MIGRANT LABOR

California's lush Great Valley, the San Joaquin, has always required a vast migrant labor force and this was especially true in the '30s before the advent

of modern cotton picking machines and agricultural labor-saving devices. The valley would be considered a desert on any topographical map as it gets less than seven inches of rain per year. Fortunately for agriculture, there is a lake of ground water under most of the San Joaquin.

The expense of wells, pumps and irrigation labor is more than offset by the certainty of getting adequate moisture to the crop. There is no gamble on the vagaries of rain and weather. San Joaquin farmers control water, fertilizer, insecticides and weather [the San Joaquin will be hot and dry!] and the crop is so certain that a farmer can borrow a major part of the value of a crop that has just been planted.

Most of the giant cotton ranches on the west side of the valley had their own "transient camps" to house the hundreds of itinerant seasonal laborers they required.

MY CHOICE: OKLAHOMA

So the "Okie" was welcomed by the big ranchers, except, for the first time, there were just too many! It is estimated that over a million refugees from the Dust Bowl descended on the San Joaquin in the '30s. And so the stage was set for California's "anti-Okie" law of 1937. [Section 2615 St. 1937, p.1406] Anyone bringing in an indigent person from outside of California was guilty of a misdemeanor.

When a good ol' boy brought in his cousin from Texas, he was given six months hard time! The ACLU sued and got him out of the slammer. The case confirmed the legal concept that "States don't select citizens; citizens select States!"

I selected Oklahoma.

– The author lives in Oklahoma City

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BOOKS

'Dunce Confederacy' Embraces Ridiculous

By Stephen Amidon

IDIOT AMERICA

How Stupidity Became A Virtue In The Land Of The Free

By Charles P. Pierce

Doubleday

293 pages, \$26

The pastor from Pennsylvania put it best. On the eve of a trial to determine the legality of a local school board's decision to teach intelligent design alongside evolutionary theory, the Rev. Ray Mummert, a leader of the anti-Darwin brigade, made national headlines with a statement that cut straight to the heart of America's culture wars.

"We've been attacked," he protested, "by the intelligent, educated segment of our culture."

In an increasingly divided nation, where one is asked to take sides on every issue from the creation of the universe to the first lady's triceps, it was perhaps inevitable that people should be required to make a stand on the subject of being smart.

ASSAULT ON GRAY MATTER

Charles Pierce's *Idiot America* is a lively and, dare I say, intelligent study of this ongoing assault on gray matter. "We've chosen up sides on everything," he asserts, "fashioning our public lives as though we were making up a fantasy baseball team."

This new civil war almost always boils down to a clash between intellect and feeling, or what Pierce labels the Gut. "The Gut is a moron, as anyone who's ever tossed a golf club, punched a wall, or kicked a lawn mower knows," he writes. "The Gut is the roiling repository of dark and ancient fears."

The problem is, it currently has a stranglehold on a hefty slice of our major media – talk radio – as well as that traveling circus known as the GOP.

People who believe that the educated intellect should guide public policy are liable to rely on facts, science and logic as their weapons of choice.

MADISON VS. BLUSTER, SUPERSTITION

Their general is James Madison, who, according to Pierce, "considered self-government no less a science than botany. It required an informed and educated and enlightened populace, or else all the delicate mechanisms of the system would come apart."

Team Gut, however, relies on bluster, superstition and bullying to wage its campaigns. Its field commanders are broadcasters like Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, who deploy a battle plan Pierce calls the "Three Great Premises of Idiot America."

The first of these states that a theory need only sell books or elevate ratings in order to be deemed valid. The second maintains that "anything can be true if someone says it loudly enough." And finally, a fact is defined as "that which enough people believe. Truth is determined by how fervently they believe it."

CONTEMPT FOR REALITY

Although Ronald Reagan was an important champion of Idiot America, particularly in promoting his loopy "trickle down" theory of economics, the dunce confederacy really came into its own when George W. Bush took the helm. This

LOVE-HATE

From Page 8

I hate Republican philosophies. Whoops, did I say that? Well, I love the Henry Bellmon Republican types.

I love President Obama's stimulus package. It will fix our flooded homes before it fixes our world neighbors' homes, and it will fix our roads and bridges and many, many other things. I love his plan for health care.

Be careful when you travel Interstate 40 from Checotah to Oklahoma City. In the words of Gerard, "Thuds, wap, wap, whump." This drive is hazardous to your health.

HATE PERILS OF AGING, LOVE MY DOCTORS

I love aging and I hate the perils that impale it. I love my cardiologists, urologists and family doctors. I hate the fact that other people don't have health care, as I do, because they don't have health insurance.

I love voters but I hate hearing, "My vote won't count anyway." It will count! Use it to improve our state. Oklahoma is ours and we want it to be a good place in which to live.

In recent years, Oklahomans who do vote have voted against their own best interest. They have elected naysayers to the Legislature who cater to the tax-cut crowd.

HATE TAXES, LOVE GOOD SCHOOLS AND ROADS

Oh, yes, I hate taxes! But I love good schools, good highways, good state, county and city workers. I also love good police protection and good firefighters.

I love teachers and I love the kids who do well in school. These kids generally come from homes where the parents have a positive attitude toward school and teachers. I owe all I am or have ever been to teachers.

I hate the bullies in the school playground and the bullies on Wall Street who take away our 401k retirement savings. I love to have controls for both areas.

Oh, yes, I love the chicken-like Roadrunner that lives in downtown Muskogee.

– The author is a retired educator living in Muskogee

is hardly surprising, given that a senior member of his administration [rumored to be Karl Rove] once famously expressed the Bush White House's contempt for "the reality-based community."

Thus, we were given a chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, Dr. Leon Kass, who "opposed – in no particular order – in vitro fertilization, cosmetic surgery, organ transplants, contraception and the public eating of ice cream cones." Or a head of FEMA, Michael "Brownie" Brown, "who'd been dismissed as an incompetent from his previous job as the director of a luxury show-horse organization."

And then there is the Iraq war, which Pierce deems "Idiot America's purest product." Although the irrationality and fear-mongering that led up to the destruction of Iraq has been widely discussed in other forums, the reader's jaw will still drop as Pierce recalls how applicants for jobs in the agency tasked with rebuilding Iraq were quizzed on their opposition to *Roe v. Wade* before being hired. Or the vital role Fox's torture porn show 24 played in discussions on whether to abuse prisoners.


"Consider the highest level of the U.S. government," Pierce muses, "gathering in the White House in order to set American law back to a point 10 minutes before Magna Carta was signed, and tossing around ideas they'd heard on 24."

OUTLIVING THE BUSH YEARS

Worse still, this legacy of idiocy seems destined to outlive the Bush years – at a Republican primary debate in 2008, three of the nine contenders proudly claimed they did not believe in evolution. As Pierce aptly points out, "it should have given people pause about the entire Republican Party that a third of its presidential field was willing to admit that their view of the life sciences had stalled in the 1840s."

The Republican primary also inspires Pierce's best line, when he recalls how Rudy Giuliani criticized John McCain for decrying torture. This coming from a candidate, Pierce reminds us, whose only expertise on the subject was that he "was once tortured by the thought that his second wife wouldn't move out of the

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4th Of July Messages

U.S. Making World Safe For Mediocrity

By Lori Grof

This July 4th we will celebrate our independence from the tyranny of King George of England. But do we really have much to celebrate?

Seems our leadership, under King George and now under King Hussein, has been somewhat dictatorial. But at least we could criticize Bush; if we attempt to criticize Obama, we are called racists.

If we object to illegal immigration we are racists. If we attend tea parties to object to how the government is handling our tax dollars, we are criticizing Obama, and that means, of course, we are racists.

Because of this trend, the mainstream media are fearful of leftists labeling them racist, so instead of focusing on the economy a couple of months ago, reporters went on ad nauseam about the new dog at the White House.

HEADED TO SOCIALISM?

Our country is sliding down the slippery slope of socialism. What is the moral difference between the politico-economic systems of capitalism vs. socialism. One word: free.

Capitalism is free enterprise; the right of a man to work for his bread without the state grabbing a big chunk of it. Socialism believes the state has the right to distribute wealth however it sees fit. In the U.S. that has meant, especially since the 1930s, that bureaucrats and lobbyists determine who are the haves and who are the have nots.

Statism means the state has greater value than individual rights. Statism has existed under Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, Communist China and North Korea, socialist Europe, South America and Canada.

Our forefathers wrote these sacred words: "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." With rugged individualism and American ingenuity, we had what was called the American dream.

IMPACT OF MARX AND RAND

Two modern era philosophers have had the greatest influence on the shaping of the world: Karl Marx and Ayn Rand. Marx, of course, argued for socialism. Ayn Rand grew up in Stalinist Russia and experienced close-up the horrors of starvation, physical and psychological torture, enslavement of the individual, Siberian prisons that were basically concentration camps.

After she fled Russia to her beloved America, she was amazed to see some of the same propaganda being preached by the leftists; and she could foresee the erosion of principles of the land of the free.

She wrote some great ideas in defense of capitalism and individualism. In the early 1960s she was voted the greatest hero by college students. If you asked most young people today about Ayn Rand, they would probably say they've never heard of her, let alone read her. In our decaying culture, eroded by leftist professors, leftist groups and the media, a poll showed a majority of our youth accepts socialism. I think they have been led to believe that a society must "take care" of others.

By not having read Ayn Rand, they don't see the immorality of a state that uses

Everyday Heroes In U.S. Armed Forces

By Ben Stein

It was a dazzlingly hot day here in Rancho Mirage, CA. I did small errands like going to the bank to pay my mortgage, finding a new bed at a price I can afford, practicing driving with my new five wood, paying bills for about two hours.

I spoke for a long time to a woman who is going through a nasty child custody fight. I got e-mails from a woman who was fired today from her job for not paying attention.

I read about multi-billion-dollar mergers in Europe, Asia, and the Mideast. I noticed how overweight I am, for the millionth time. In other words, I did a lot of nothing.

Like every other American who is not in the armed forces family, I basically just rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic in my trivial, self-important, meaningless way.

MEANDERING THROUGH LIFE

Above all, I talked to a friend of more than 43 years who told me he thought his life had no meaning because all he did was count his money.

And, friends in the armed forces, this is the story of most of America today.

We are doing nothing but trading water while you guys carry on the life or death struggle against worldwide militant Islamic terrorism.

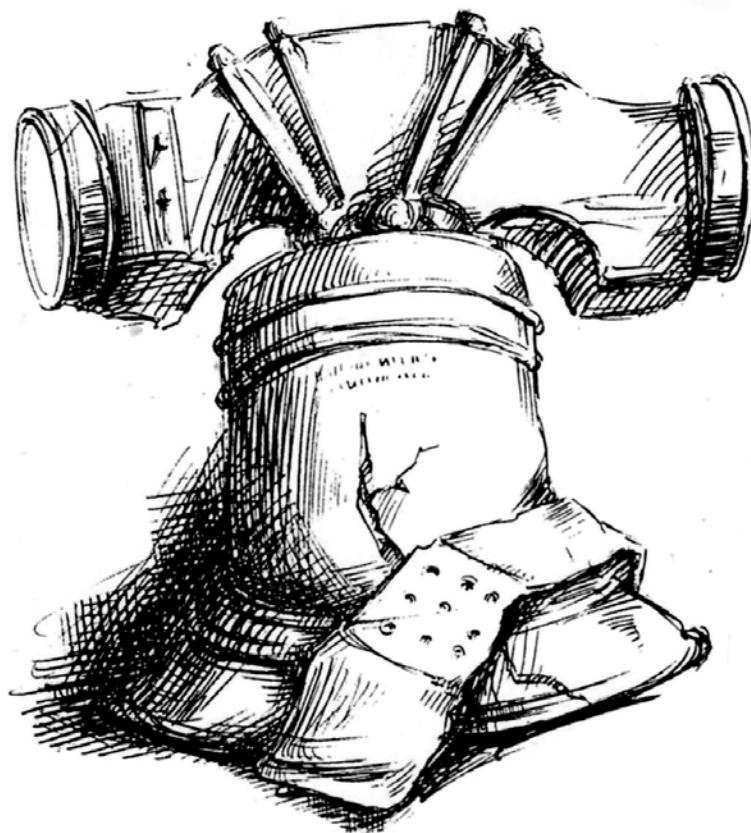
Our lives are about nothing: paying bills, going to humdrum jobs, waiting until we can go to sleep and then do it all again. Our most vivid issues are trivia compared with what you do every day, every minute, every second.

Oprah Winfrey talks a lot about "meaning" in life for her - "meaning" is dieting and having her photo on the cover of her magazine every single month [surely a new world record]. This is not "meaning."

THE REAL DEFINITION OF MEANING

Meaning is doing for others. Meaning is risking your life for hers. Meaning is putting your bodies and families' peace of mind on the line to defeat some of the most evil, sick killers the world has ever known.

Meaning is leaving the comfort of home to fight to make sure that there still



force against an individual to take his property, his earnings, his money, and give to another who does not earn, does not contribute to society, but rather uses his pull with a lobbyist or uses bands of screaming, demonstrating leftists.

WEALTH CREATED IN CAPITALIST ECONOMY

In a capitalist, laissez-faire economy, wealth is created. A man may give freely of his money to help the needy. Charities have received billions voluntarily; to force a man to give to a charity defies reason, yet that is the principle of socialism.

In a statist society, the state may use force to grab an individual's possessions and use them however the state pleases. That usually means the state is a small group of people like Stalin's or Hitler's or Kim Jong-Il's inner circles, who guzzle buckets of caviar and champagne while the people starve.

Following World War II, America was the wealthiest, greatest, most respected country in the world.

U.S. HEADED TOWARD CLIFF?

Now, we're just another socialist state, with an economy that's headed toward a cliff.

We used to be a country of creative geniuses in the arts and sciences and business. The books, the music, the films and the automobiles manifested the uniqueness and the excitement of a man's individual spirit.

Now we've morphed into a gray blob of sameness and lack of originality.

Who would our young people vote as their hero today? Paris Hilton, Perez Hilton? What has happened to the Jack Londons and Edna Ferbers; the Van Cliburns and Bo Diddleys; the Henry Fords and Edisons.

Now the only advances we're making are in technology. Maybe that's a cosmic

See **MEDIOCRITY** Page 13

will be a home for your family and for your nation and for free men and women everywhere.

Look, Soldiers and Marines and Sailors and Airmen and Coast Guardsmen, there are six billion people in this world. The whole fate of this world turns on what you people, 1.4 million, more or less, do every day.

The fate of mankind depends on what about 2/100 of 1% of the people in this world do every day and you are those people. Joining you is every policeman, fireman, and Emergency Medical Technician in the country, also holding back the tide of chaos.

REALIZING WHAT YOU ARE

Do you know how important you are? Do you know how indispensable you are? Do you know how humbly grateful any of us who has a head on his shoulders is to you?

Do you know that if you never do another thing in your lives, you will always still be heroes? That we could live without Hollywood or Wall Street or the NFL, but we cannot live for a week without you?

We are on our knees to you and we bless and pray for you every moment.

And Oprah Winfrey, if she were a size two, would not have one millionth of your importance, and all of the Wall Street billionaires will never mean what the least of you do.

If Barry Bonds hits hundreds of home runs it would not mean as much as you going on one patrol or driving one truck to the Baghdad airport.

You are everything to us, as we go through our little days, and you are in the prayers of the nation and of every decent man and woman on the planet.

That's who you are and what you mean.

I hope you know that.

- The author is a writer, actor, economist and lawyer and an honorary board member of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors which provides services to those who have lost loved ones serving in the Armed Forces

PUBLIC FORUM

What Big Oil Can Do With Soaring Profits

By Jim Wilcox

Dear OPEC,

I couldn't help but notice last month that gas prices went up 60 cents in 30 days. I was wondering if that trend would continue, and if so, for how long. At two cents per day, I think by year's end I will be paying as much for fuel per month as I pay for the vehicle into which I pump that stuff.

Congratulations! My family summer vacation this year is now one afternoon at the mall.

See, here's the deal facing us non-OPEC members. As a NOM, I drive a little Honda scooter, which takes about 3 gallons a month to drive. [I wear a helmet just in case gas prices start falling. Wouldn't want all those pennies to hit my head as I speed 35 mph into Oklahoma southern winds.]

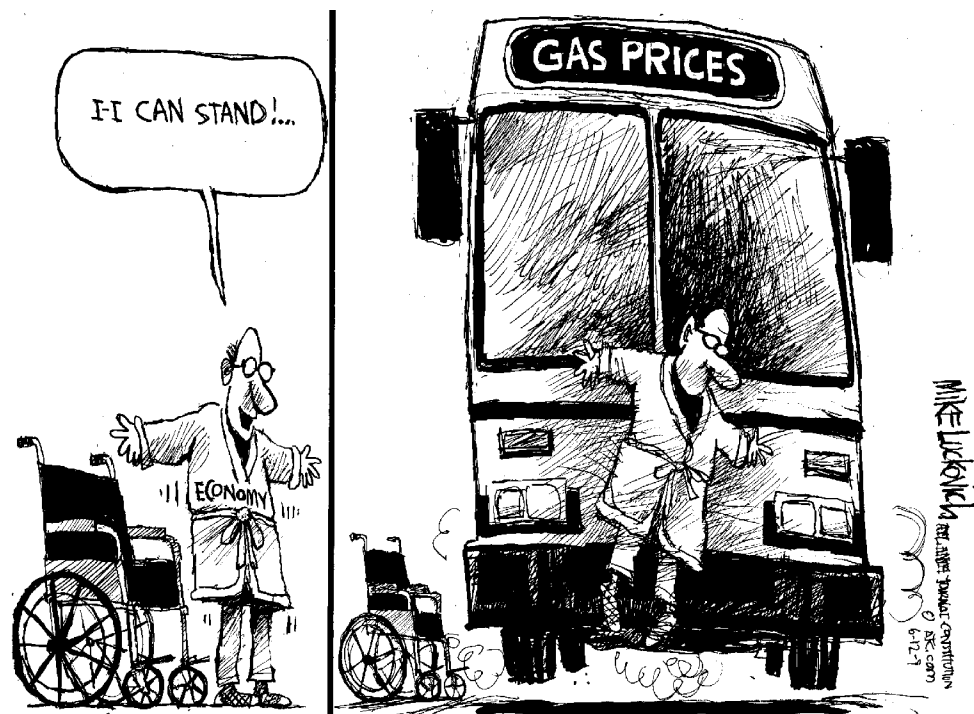
That means I don't feel the pain of your expanding empire as much as my wife, who drives a Honda Civic, which uses about 20-25 gallons a month, depending on how many trips we make to our failing bank for early withdrawals. So for a month of fuel, we consume a maximum of 23-28 gallons.

MILD PINCH TO ... YIKES!

From May 1-31, our wallets went from mild pinches of just over \$50 to just under \$67. Multiply that by 100 million drivers like us - NOM-minimal drivers - and you folks yanked down a whopping \$1.7 billion extra in May alone. And I'm sure most families use a lot more than 23-28 gallons a month. A lot more.

So what do you plan to do with \$1.7 billion-plus? May I offer some suggestions? [Realize, of course, if none of these pan out, you've always got June ... and July ... and ...]

- Put it into an endowment to support a college education for about 42,500 young people at \$10,000 tuition per year.



- Invest it into a plummeting auto industry so we can have cars that get 100 mpg rather than 20.

THINK HOW MANY HUNGRY COULD BE FED

- At a dollar a day, a huge sum of money to workers in most third-world countries, you could feed over 4.6 million families for a year.
- Put a computer into the lap of 1 million school children.
- Build a mass transit system in Oklahoma City so we can sip instead of guzzle.

And if none of that appeals to your benevolence, how about just 1/100 of it to help us get Blake Griffin into a Thunder uniform next year. Then it wouldn't matter to most Oklahomans what you did with the remaining \$1.683 billion.

Until then, I'll be on my scooter, gliding, albeit rigorously, past all your sucking pumps.

- The author lives in Oklahoma City

Hypocritical Oath: GOP's Ten Commandments

By Sandy McKey

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS [of most Republicans]

1. YOU SHOULD WORSHIP NO OTHER GOD

Except George W. Bush and John McCain each had over \$10 million in assets

Except they tend to want churches to receive federal tax dollars

Except they regularly ignore the golden rule

2. YOU SHOULD NOT MAKE YOURSELVES ANY IDOLS

Except they tend to glorify the warlike

Except they want to put a fallible Star Wars system into the heavens

Except they budgeted \$4.2 billion or \$17 per American for bomb shelters in the 1980's

3. YOU SHALL NOT USE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN

Except they regularly rebuke the spirit of Jesus Christ

Except Bush and McCain regularly used profanity throughout their adult life

Except they condoned Reagan making major decisions based on astrology

4. REMEMBER TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH

Except Bush and McCain seldom went to church as adults

Except they approved of President Bush vacationing or campaigning one day in three

Except they do not practice faith, hope, and charity

5. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

Except Bush and McCain were lazy and mediocre students

Except Bush and McCain lived off the name of their fathers

Except they regularly opposed universal health care for families

6. YOU SHALL NOT KILL

Except they condoned 150 million malnutrition deaths per year

Except they do not favor stronger gun control laws

Except they regularly try to weaken the Endangered Species Act

7. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

Except Bush and McCain were womanizers for over a decade

Except McCain filed to marry Cindy while still legally married to his first wife

Except they did nothing about pornography and promiscuity

8. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

Except they eliminated the estate tax for billionaires

Except they gave 43% of the tax cut to the wealthiest 1% of the population

Except they used stealthy tactics to steal the election in Florida in 2000

9. YOU SHALL NOT LIE

Except Bush did not tell the truth about his DWI arrest record

Except they repeatedly misled the public about Iraq

Except they tend not to believe global warming can contribute to droughts and fires

10. YOU SHOULD NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S POSSESSIONS

Except they regularly take from the middle class and give to the wealthy

Except they were in power when the economy started to collapse before the 2008 election

Except they teach apathy [not love] toward three billion poor neighbors

- The author lives in St. George, UT

This Is How We Treat America's Heroes?

By Judy Ramsey

There are very few heroes in my world today, but Reggie Cervantes just moved to the top of the list. We can talk all day long about a post 9/11 world in which we live, but no one puts a better face on it than Reggie.

A native New Yorker, Reggie was a first responder at ground zero on Sept. 11, 2001, who still sheds a lot of tears just talking about that day. Reggie worked as a benefits administrator for a private foster care agency for money, but describes her real job as a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician [EMT], because her parents raised her to believe community service was just what you do.

After years of training, Reggie got the call on 9/11 and was the first woman to set up at Shea Stadium and quickly managed to coordinate medical personnel from that area to the scene shortly before the second tower fell.

SHE BECAME ONE OF THE STATISTICS

With tears in her eyes, insisting this was exactly what she trained for, Reggie described watching fellow volunteers and firefighters go in and not come out. She still feels guilty for not saving more of her fellow citizens, although out of 50,000 possible occupants in those two buildings, only 3,000 were lost.

She insists, if only they could have been more efficient and faster, they could

have saved more lives, although they were ill-equipped with breathing apparatus or radios.

When Reggie Cervantes began to get sick, she lost her job, lost her health care, lost her car and her house and became just another homeless statistic.

Despite what she had done for her fellow Americans, workers compensation for 9/11 responders would not pay for her health care because she was considered a volunteer.

With nothing left, Reggie took her kids and moved to Oklahoma City in September 2002. Because of the OKC bombing in 1995, Reggie believed doctors there knew enough to treat her children who were also suffering, along with their mom, from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD].

DIDN'T RELY TOTALLY ON OTHERS

But Reggie didn't rely completely on others for her therapy, and wrote a book with her children, *My Mommy Has PTSD*, published by Author House and available on line [all proceeds are donated] and has completed a second children's book about 9/11 to be used as a teaching resource.

See HERO Page 18

Liberalism Wins Hearts And Minds

By Joshua Holland

On issue after substantive issue, significant majorities of Americans favor liberal solutions to the nation's problems and reject the right's worldview.

That's true whether the issue at hand is taxes, war and peace, the role of government in the economy, health care, and on and on.

Yet the idea that America is a "center-right" nation persists; Republican and conservative activists repeat the assertion ad nauseum – as it's in their interest to do – and most of the political press corps swallows it whole.

The idea is like a zombie – you can bludgeon it, burn it or get Dick Cheney to shoot it in the face, but it keeps coming – it will not die.

The persistence of the center-right narrative, even in the face of piles of evidence suggesting it's little more than a myth, has very real consequences on our political discourse.

LOOKING FOR BOLD CHANGES

Liberals have long begun the legislative process in the middle and then moved to the center-right, when the reality is that the country is looking for bold changes, not incremental tinkering.

Lately they have called themselves "progressives" to avoid the word "liberal," demonized by rightwing TV and radio talking head attacks.

A new report released by the Campaign for America's Future and the media watchdog group MediaMatters attempts to finally bury the idea that the U.S. leans rightward.

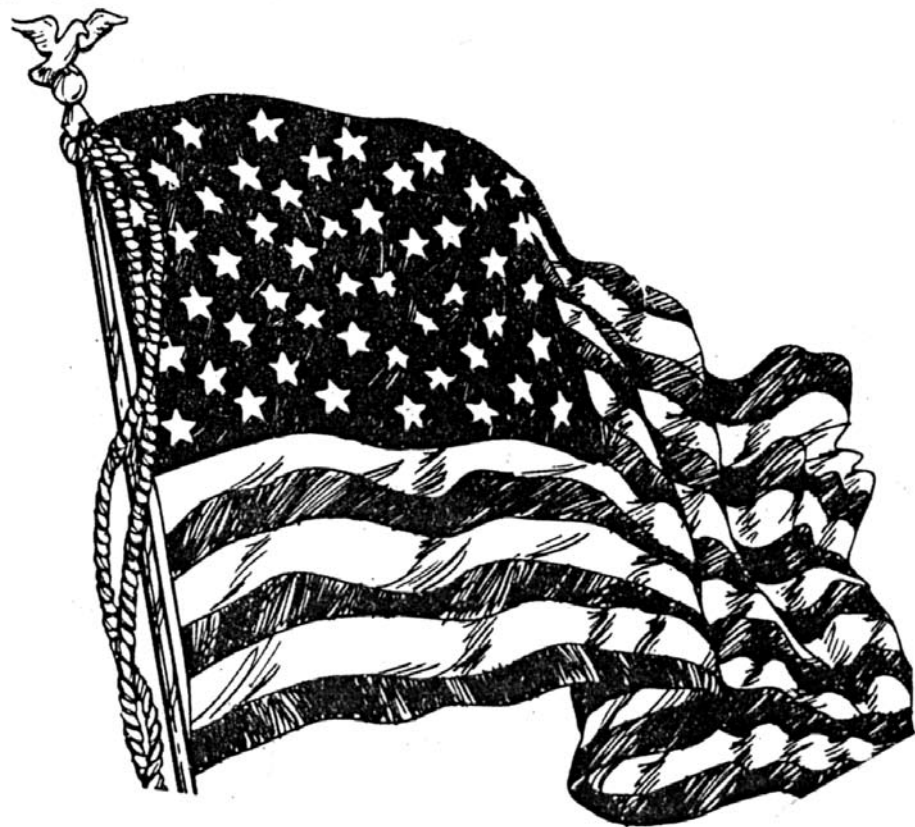
It takes a comprehensive look at the political landscape in which we live and a look forward at America's shifting demographic profile – all of which reveal a citizenry that is anything but center-right. It will only continue to trend in a more progressive direction, leaving modern conservatism increasingly isolated in its ideas.

GOP SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Only 29% of voting-age Americans call themselves Republican.

On what may be the key difference between liberals and conservatives today – the role of government – more than twice as many people agree with the statement, "there are more things government should be doing" than believe the Reaganite adage, "the less government, the better."

In 1994, more than half of Americans said, "government regulation of business usually does more harm than good" and fewer than 4 out of 10 thought "govern-



ment regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest."

That's been flipped on its head during the 15 years since – today, fewer than 4 in 10 believe regulation causes more harm than good.

REGULATION IS NECESSARY

A majority [70%] believes it's the government's responsibility to provide health care to all Americans; fewer than a third of those responding to a CBS/New York Times poll thought health insurance should be "left only to private enterprise."

Almost two out of three Americans believe the taxes they pay are fair, and that the very wealthy pay too little in taxes; almost seven in 10 believe corporations don't pay their fair share of taxes.

Most Americans remain pro-choice [despite one oddly-worded Gallup Poll to the contrary], and while a slim majority opposes full marriage equality for gays and lesbians, the general level of acceptance of gays and lesbians is growing ever greater.

The country's changing demographics suggest that America will continue to be a center-left country in the coming decades.

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Progressives Lack A Limbaugh Voice

By George Lakoff

Do Progressives need their own Rush Limbaugh? You turn the AM on and there's Rush, or Michael Savage, or another of the army of rightwing radio talk show hosts.

You may not be listening hard, just working, driving, doing busywork or the laundry. Yet if you listen day after day, year after year, your brain will begin to change.

Words, even those heard casually and listened to incidentally, activate frames – structures of ideas that are physically realized in the brain.

The more the words are heard, the more the frames are activated in the brain, and stronger their synapses get until the frames are there permanently.

All this is normal. It is how words work. The rightwing message machine has found a way to take advantage of it – activating a conservative system of thought.

AM RADIO IS HATE CITY

The problem is, those thoughts on the radio are hate city. Savage rails against what he calls "the weakening of the military" by "affirmative action," "illegal immigrants," and "Marxist politicians."

What proves it? The submarine accident in the Gulf of Hormuz.

Tune in to Rush. On the one hand he's pitching "rugged individualism," "liberty," and the absolute free market against Barack Obama's call to unity and a sense of national responsibility.

Then he's hammering the AIG bailout and its bonuses, not mentioning that it was Ronald Reagan's destruction of reasonable regulation that lay behind our economic disaster.

One diatribe after another, the crucial facts left out or lied about, day after day, city after city. It has an effect.

LIBERALS LARGELY SILENT

Where are the liberals? Largely absent. Or talking issue by issue, not about general themes. We have some icons: Rachel Maddow, Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert. But they only talk to us. They are not omnipresent.

Can President Obama overcome all this? He is by far the best communicator in politics today. But what we get of him are sound bites, an occasional major address, and a five-minute talk Saturdays on YouTube.

Meanwhile, the reporting in the corporate-controlled media is about positions on issues, not about general principles that get repeated.

The president does, indeed, think and talk using general principles: empathy [caring about others], responsibility for both oneself and others, and the ethic of excellence – working to make yourself, your community, the nation and the world better.

He sees these as the basis of American democracy: Empathy is why we have principles like freedom and fairness, not just for ourselves but for everybody.

RESURRECTING CAMPAIGN GROUND GAME

In the absence of nationwide media cover, the president has to go barnstorming. His former campaign organization has chosen to reactivate its ground game to try to get ordinary people to go door-to-door, speaking in their own words from their own experiences, to gain support for his policies.

The idea is for ordinary people to say what they sincerely believe to their neighbors. Can this strategy counter the right's message machine on the national level?

We shall see.

In California, the absence of articulate Democratic leaders with media presence has been particularly disastrous.

Republican policies led to a \$42 billion shortfall this year alone, and GOP lawmakers held up a state budget for nine months. Yet they did not get blamed for it.

Why? The right-wing message machine is alive and well throughout California. Republicans get media cover. Democrats don't get their message. Ideas matter.

The words that express them matter. Communication matters. The Democrats don't need and shouldn't want their own Rush and Savage. But they could sure use an Obama in this state.

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MEDIOCRITY

From Page 11

joke about the level of robotic fog toward which we've drifted.

There was a time, young people, when we Americans exhibited an honest-to-goodness joie de vivre – a real joy of life – as we danced and sang and laughed. But that was B.C.: Before Cable TV, Before Computers, Before Casino machines, and texting, and Twittering ...

An older African-American economist was on CNN June 3. He had written a book about the housing collapse; and he prophesied doom for the U.S. economy. When he said he was glad he was at an age when he wouldn't live to see it, I was surprised, because that was what I'd been saying for the past year.

But wait, there is something we can celebrate July 4: we can celebrate making the world safe for mediocrity.

– The author lives in Pawhuska

U.S. Is A Nation Of Frightened Wimps

By Steve Franklin

When did America become a nation of frightened wimps? When did we cross the line from courage to cowardice? Was it sometime in the 1990s? After the Oklahoma City bombing? After the Columbine shootings? After 9/11?

When did we decide to allow the police to smash into private homes without knocking and identifying themselves? Recently, in the suburb I live in, a special police force dressed in black Nazi style uniforms busted into a suburban home without warning and dragged a school teacher out of her house with an automatic weapon at the back of her head.

They forced her to the ground, handcuffed her, and hauled her away while her neighbors watched. They did it without a warrant and without consequence.

THE POLICE HAD A GOOD LAUGH

Why? A misunderstanding. That is precisely why we need checks in place, to avoid misunderstandings and abuses. The police chief said, "When we realized it was a mistake, we all had a good laugh."

If a group of unidentified men dragged his wife away at gunpoint, I wonder if he would still think it was funny.

When did we decide it was OK to strip search an old lady at the airport because the pin in her hip set off the metal detector?

When did we decide it was too risky to take a cup of coffee on an airplane?

When did we decide it was reasonable to make a nursing mother drink her own breast milk to prove she wasn't a terrorist?

HAVE THE TERRORISTS ALREADY WON?

When we impose such extreme levels of security, haven't the terrorists already won? Haven't we willingly given our freedom to the government and the terrorists in the name of security?

When did we decide it was OK for policemen in combat boots with German Shepherds to patrol high school hallways?

When did we decide to allow routine police roadblocks? Why weren't we outraged?

When did we decide it was too dangerous for our children to ride their bikes to school?

When did we decide it was OK for the government to seize property without a trial, without due process, at the whim of a government agency?

GOVERNMENT INVADING OUR BODIES

When did we decide that our government had a right to the fluids inside our own bodies? Or a right to the very breath in our lungs?

When did we decide that it was the accused's responsibility to prove they hadn't been breaking the law?

When did we decide that drug testing high school students was reasonable? Hell, why is it reasonable to drug test anyone ever? Why would anybody, for any reason, have the right to invade your body without your permission?



I HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND IT IS US.

When did we decide to give 10-year prison sentences to adolescents for having sex? Was it before or after we decided to put them in jail for smoking cigarettes and drinking beer?

BIOLOGICAL URGE IS CRIMINAL?

If my memory serves me correctly, when I was a teenager, almost everyone I knew either was doing it or wanted to do it. Why did we make what is biological and natural, criminal?

When did we decide it is too risky for 20-year-olds to drink but reasonable for them to kill and die overseas? Does that make sense to anyone?

We've justified every one of these injustices by claiming that it was necessary to preserve health and safety. I say B.S. What is the point in being a safe slave?

I think we crossed the line somewhere between 1984 and 1988, around the time we outlawed lawn darts, and every mini-van in America had a "baby-on-board" sign.

MASS SHIFT IN AMERICAN VALUES

While lawn darts and "baby on board" signs may seem trivial, they were warning signs of a mass shift in American values – a shift away from freedom and liberty as predominant values to health and safety as predominant values.

There will be no end to the loss of freedom if we believe being healthy and safe trumps all else.

I believe there was a day when most Americans accepted that life was risky. They accepted that bad things can happen to good people. They accepted that risk was an inherent part of being free. They didn't need a new law or government program every time something bad happened.

It is sad to watch our freedom slowly disappear in front of our eyes with so few people taking action.

But I have hope. I sense a shift. Something is blowing in the wind. I can smell it. I can feel it. I can see it in young people. A move away from authoritarianism.

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Pockets of Influence in Washington

By Jim Hightower

What do shoplifters and members of Congress have in common? Tailor-made clothing.

Like a shoplifter's long coat, the suits of many lawmakers come with an astonishing array of inside pockets that hold surprising volumes of loot. We already know about various conduits that politicians have crafted to funnel cash into their election campaigns, but USA Today recently reported that our congressional stalwarts have also created a series of less-obvious pockets for stashing special-interest influence money.

The newspaper analyzed some 3,000 donations that lobbyists made in 2008 under an obscure category called "honorary expenses." These are unrestricted contributions that lobbyists make to outside groups in "honor" of top Washington officials. Unsurprisingly, the pockets in which the gifts are tucked are directly connected to the honorees – and usually have been created by them.

THE FOUNDATION POCKET

Take the "foundation pocket." Rep. Joe Barton, a Texas Republican, has sewn one of these into his suit. His Barton Family Foundation has become a handy place for favor-seeking corporate interests to stash cash and earn Joe's gratitude. For example, Exelon, the giant nuclear-powered electric company, has deposited \$75,000 in the foundation – money it could not legally give directly to Barton's campaign fund.

Did I mention that Joe is the top Republican on the House Energy Committee and that he often carries legislative water for the nuclear industry?

Still, Barton sees no ethical lapse in such smelly transactions, cleverly claiming, "The money doesn't go to me." Too clever by half. The Exelon donation came only because the congressman personally wrote to the CEO to solicit it, the check is made out to a foundation bearing the congressman's very own name, and he controls the dispersal of the funds. Indeed, thanks to his corporate donors, Barton's foundation is able to give highly publicized grants to nonprofit groups in his district, thus scoring major political points for Joe.

THE INSTITUTE POCKET

Then there's the "institute pocket" stitched into the garments of a bipartisan collection of lawmakers. One is Ted Kennedy, the Democratic icon who is pres-

ently setting up an Institute for the United States Senate in Boston. It will be named for – guess who? – him.

Amgen, the huge drug corporation, was so moved by the civic nature of the institute that it ponied up \$5 million to help fund it.

Please be assured, however, that Kennedy's prominent role in the current legislative fight to rein in drug company gouging had nothing whatsoever to do with the corporation's decision to donate so generously. As an Amgen spokeswoman explained, the \$5 million merely reflects the drug maker's interest in helping "young people to become engaged in public service and public policy."

Perhaps the institute will offer "The Annual Amgen Lecture Regarding the Ethical Dimensions of Unlimited Corporate Money on U.S. Senate Decisions." Probably not, though.

SKIRTING THE RULES

Lobbyist love this pocket game, for it lets their prospective clients bypass gift ban rules, earn serious congressional brownie points with little public disclosure, and – get this – deduct the cost from their corporate income taxes, since most of the congressional pockets are set up as nonprofit, "charitable" organizations.

Also, the special interests invariably cite these donations as proof of their public-spirited nature.

An example of this assertion of altruism is money that went into a small but influential "portrait pocket" that was sewn into the suit of Rep. Jerry Lewis. This powerful California Republican, a past chairman of the appropriations committee, was given some nice ego strokes by lobbyists who paid to have his portrait painted in oil and ceremoniously hung in the committee's hearing room.

Not that the lobbyists were serving their own interests. No, no – as one donor put it, Lewis's portrait is a gift to you and me, a philanthropic contribution by the lobbying community "to preserve and enhance the Capitol."

I cannot find words that would adequately express my gratitude, can you? Meanwhile, if you notice that your own congressional representatives are looking a bit ruffled and lumpy, you might want to check their pockets.

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

Will Obama Act On History's Lessons?

By Ron du Bois

President Obama has an auspicious historical opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Canada's Premier Tommy Douglas, father of universal health care in Canada, recently voted "the greatest Canadian."

Forty-seven years ago, in the face of intense opposition, the most extreme from the Canadian Medical Association, he successfully steered single payer universal health care through the Saskatchewan legislative process. At that time the province of Saskatchewan had a population of one million, one third that of present day Oklahoma.

In 1962 it was a poor province. Yet its spirit of community and need to help each other led the way to universal public healthcare for the whole nation. Private for-profit healthcare was not ruled out, it simply could not compete.

DOCTORS REALIZED TRUTH

In spite of initial resistance to the law, Saskatchewan doctors eventually saw their opposition as wrong-headed. Suddenly, they were being paid promptly and no longer needed to spend time and effort to collect fees from patients with no money.

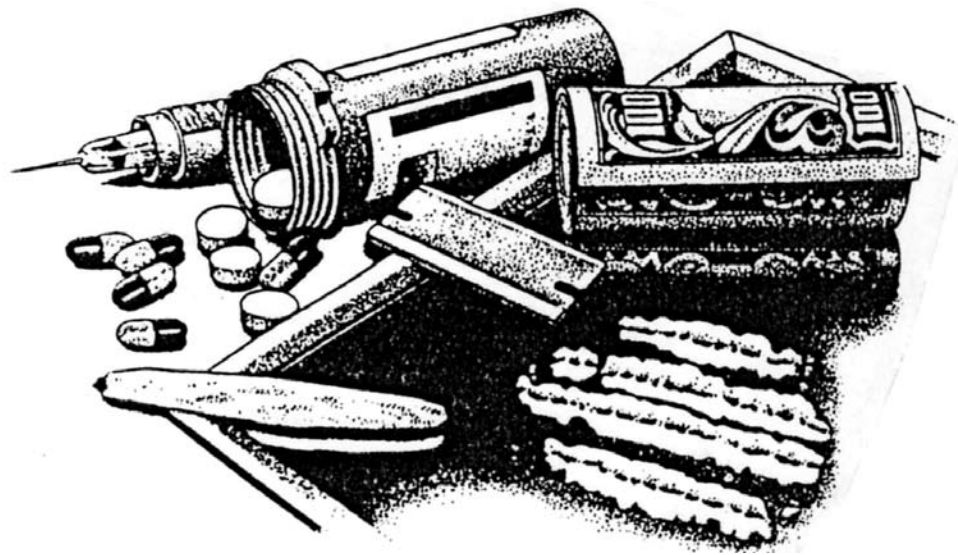
Single payer saved millions. Its simplicity reduced individual as well as national stress and anxiety. No one lost healthcare when they lost their jobs, no one died because they had no medical insurance, no one went bankrupt. People with the disease of addiction got treatment, not prison.

In sum, the human quality of life in Saskatchewan became elevated.

When Canadians became sick they concentrated on getting well, rather than on how to pay medical bills.

LIKE ALL OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

The cruel ethos "if you don't have the money you don't deserve medical care" disappeared from the culture. Healthcare was paid for from birth to death out of public taxation [the U.S. pays for public education, fire and police, the military, Medicare, legislative, postal service, road building, all government agencies, etc., through public funding; it has always steered a course between socialism and



capitalism.]

Single payer was so successful it soon was adopted by all 13 Canadian provinces to become the law of the land called the Canada Health Act.

In a recent poll Canadians displayed gratitude and tribute to Tommy Douglas, father of universal healthcare and the Canada Health Act [Canada's federal legislation for publicly funded health care] by choosing him from a long listing of illustrious Canadians as "the greatest Canadian."

WILL OBAMA LEARN FROM HISTORY?

Most do not learn from history. My hope is that Barack Obama is able to do so. My hope is that he will display the courage, humanistic vision and greatness of Canada's Tommy Douglas 47 years ago by improving and extending healthcare to all regardless of age and ability to pay.

My hope is that he also will be chosen by future Americans as "the greatest American."

To achieve this he must change his present course to give full support to single payer regardless of intense opposition from powerful but corrupt medical insurance companies and their corrupt propaganda.

And I hope my fellow Oklahomans will come to realize that they continue to hurt themselves when they refuse to think "out of their cultural box." As the world's wisdom knows, "The teacher will appear when the student is ready."

- The author, co-founder of Oklahomans for Universal Health Care, lives in Stillwater. His group's web site is <http://oklahomansforuniversalhealth.org>

Why So Scared Of A Public Plan?

By Joe Conason

Within the coming weeks, Americans will begin to consider critical issues concerning the future of health care for themselves and their children, including universal coverage, taxation of benefits, computerized records and the controlling of costs. But before the debate commences in Congress and the media, big insurance and pharmaceutical companies are lobbying frantically [and spending millions of dollars] to foreclose the possibility of the most promising aspect of health care reform: a public insurance option.

After decades of denigrating government - and worshiping corporations - the idea that a public program might work as well or better than a corporate provider may well sound counterintuitive to many Americans. How can government, which is so widely believed to do nothing well while wasting enormous sums, possibly be expected to outperform the highly efficient, supremely managed and profitably motivated corporate sector? Wouldn't we be better off if we simply entrust the provision of health care to the insurance industry? How can we trust those Washington bureaucrats with our health?

Actually, many consumers have learned by now that those questions are misleading at best. They know, for instance, that trusting a health insurance company is likely to be an expensive mistake. They know, too, that corporate bureaucrats can be even more ruthless in denying help to a beleaguered individual or family than those who work in government.

PATIENTS SATISFIED WITH MEDICARE

Studies have repeatedly shown that patient satisfaction with Medicare, the quintessential public insurance plan, is considerably higher than with private insurers among comparable age groups. And consumers understand that the drive for profits often conflicts with patient care, leading them to the conclusion that insurance and pharmaceutical corporations are excessively powerful and socially irresponsible.

According to Republican pollster Frank Luntz, the people who respond to his surveys despise "insurer greed," and are disturbed by their profitability, lack of accessibility, lack of accountability and excess of bureaucracy. There is "no love lost" between Americans and the private health insurers, he warned Republican Congressional leaders as they considered how to oppose reform.

But the same arguments that have distorted the debate over health care will emerge again - especially the claim that private insurance is somehow more efficient than a public program would be, or that we cannot "afford" a public plan.

MEDICARE CONTROLS COSTS BETTER

The opposite is true, as surprising as that may seem. During the decade that ended in 2006, to cite just one set of relevant statistics, the level of health spending per head [for similar benefits] grew 4.6% annually under Medicare, while spending under private health insurance rose by 7.3%. For many years, in fact, Medicare has performed better at controlling costs than private insurance companies.

One reason is simple and obvious: Eliminating profits for shareholders and

management cuts out a major cost factor.

Another is less obvious: Private insurers consistently spend more on overhead and administration than Medicare. To anyone who shares the broad prejudice against government, the difference will be startling, although these numbers are very well known to health experts. The average overhead cost of Medicare is roughly 2% or 3%, far below the administrative costs of private insurers, which range between 27% and 40%.

These basic facts have broad implications for the nation's capacity to ensure quality health coverage for all of its citizens. Private insurance has strengths as well as weaknesses, but there is no doubt that a new public plan, alongside Medicare, would become an essential yardstick - as the old New Dealers used to say - by which to measure the progress and efficiency of the private sector.

The private insurers will complain that this is "unfair" competition, but if the private sector is truly the efficient solution to our costly, wasteful and unfair health care system, then why are they so frightened of a public plan?

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IDIOT

From Page 10

mayor's mansion in favor of his current girlfriend."

Pierce's serious point amid this breezy biography is that a healthy democracy needs cranks; we need gadflies and conspiracy theorists who can probe the limits of our polity by floating theories that every so often stay aloft and change the way we live. The problem is, in a climate where noise and raw feeling are prized above all else, the crank has been mainstreamed. The man standing in front of a small crowd trying to sell snake oil turns into Rush Limbaugh, peddling his poison to millions.

The book's most memorable passage comes when Pierce describes a man who might not have been a full-blown crank, but was certainly a cultural pioneer whose ideas risked mockery, or worse. John Richbourg was a white disk jockey known to the listeners of WLAC radio in 1950s Nashville as "John R." At a time when American radio had all the color and variety of a sponge cake, Richbourg began playing black musicians such as Little Richard and Big Mama Thornton. Eventually, the tunes caught on among white listeners, merging demographics that had formerly been diametrically opposed.

Today, WLAC still exists, though as little more than a computerized way station that channels nationally syndicated talk show hosts such as Sean Hannity. The same airwaves that once helped bring Americans together into a single ecstatic audience are now splitting listeners down the middle. And the dial is cranked all the way up to 10.

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RIGHTWING VIOLENCE

Ceding Power To Militants Not An Option

By Stephen Dick

Conservatives, spewing forth their poison in the media, have set the stage for violent retribution against people they don't like or disagree with. Then, when those acts take place, there is some backpedaling, but deep down right-wing true believers agree with the violence.

A few months ago, conservatives were outraged at a Department of Justice memo advising local law enforcement agencies to keep an eye on right-wing terrorists. The outcry worked. The DOJ backed down and even liberals recoiled that the feds should cast the same eye on rednecks as they do Muslims. Now we see that the hate and bigotry of the right have found their targets.

When George Tiller, an abortion doctor, was gunned down in his church by a pro-lifer, it was a summing up, of sorts, of the hate indoctrination conservative leaders have amped up since the election of Barack Obama.

ENGAGED IN LAWFUL PRACTICE

To many women, Tiller had been a savior. To mental deficients like Bill O'Reilly, he was Tiller the Baby Killer. Whatever your point of view, Tiller was operating under protection of the law. The anti-abortion group Operation Rescue denounced the killing, but for years that group, headed by Randall Terry, laid the groundwork for violence against doctors and women involved in abortions.

Then there was the case of the white Oklahoma City pharmacist, Jerome Ersland, who shot a 16-year-old as the teen and his 14-year-old buddy, both black, tried to rob the drug store. Ersland used a pistol to shoot the boy in the head. The 14-year-old, the one with the gun, escaped.

With the teen lying wounded and unarmed, Ersland turned his back on the boy, grabbed another gun and pumped in five more shots execution style.

ANGER, HATE AT BREAKING POINT

Conservatives were outraged that the pharmacist was arrested for first-degree

murder. But what else do you call it? This was anger and hate reaching a breaking point.

The pharmacist became a "darling of conservative radio," according to the Associated Press. A member of the National Rifle Association said, chillingly, "You shoot more than enough to make sure the threat is removed." But if Ersland turned his back on the boy, there couldn't have been much of a threat.

In Warren, PA, some yahoo took out a classified that read that he hoped Obama followed in the footsteps of past presidents Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy. People at the newspaper apparently didn't realize that these presidents had been assassinated.

In recent e-mails I've been taken to task as hateful and bigoted because of my opposition to militant conservatism. In other words, I'm hateful and bigoted toward the haters and bigots. I apparently fail to see the diversity in conservatism.

AUDIENCE OF STOOGES, IDIOTS

Sorry, there is no diversity. The reactionaries who shout their garbage over the airwaves are reaching the stooges and idiots who already hate abortion, hate blacks, hate Hispanics, hate liberals and on and on. The language of hate that washes over the brainless makes it seem OK to take action.

Reactionaries control the conservative agenda. There are moderates who are stunned at what happened to their political philosophy, but have no say. If we don't prosecute people like Ersland, we run the risk of ceding to militant conservatism by default.

That's a risk we can't afford to take.

- The author is associate editor of the Anderson, IN, Herald Bulletin

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Leave Judgment To Court Of Public Opinion

By Gene Policinski

With all due respect, none of the following people has ever made me do one thing differently in my life, except occasionally change the channel: Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, Rush Limbaugh, Rachel Maddow and dozens of others whose job is to express their opinions via television or radio.

All of them - including Oprah, Rachel, Ellen, Conan, Jay and Dave - do occasionally entertain, intrigue, infuriate and [sorry] sometimes bore me. But they also often make me think. Sometimes I agree with them. Sometimes I don't.

That's the way free speech - and even cable TV - works. They get to talk. You and I get to pick and choose - whether to watch or listen, and certainly whether to believe or reject. And the menu is pretty good and varied, though, admittedly, conservatives seem to have the upper hand on talk radio.

CONFLUENCE OF EVENTS, ANNIVERSARIES

The situation is worth noting because of a confluence of seemingly coincidental events and anniversaries:

- The blogosphere is awash in a debate over assertions that Fox News and more specifically Bill O'Reilly have direct responsibility for the May 31 shooting death of a Kansas doctor, Dr. George Tiller, who performed late-term abortions. Some even suggest criminal culpability.

- A New Jersey blogger agreed to surrender June 8 to Connecticut authorities to face charges of inciting violence against two lawmakers there.

- June 9 was the 40th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court de-

cision *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, reaffirming free-speech and free-press rights even when we are saying or writing things that stop just short of inciting violence.

- June 8 was the 200th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine, the curmudgeon and critic who wrote the 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, which some credit with tipping a majority of delegates to the Continental Congress to declare independence from Great Britain.

O'REILLY'S 'KILLER' RHETORIC

The flap involving O'Reilly stems from stories he has done about Tiller and the abortion battle, along with other coverage by Fox News. Some accounts have him calling Tiller "Dr. Killer," though O'Reilly disputes that. Opponents say his inflammatory language and more than two dozen critical reports mean he should share the blame for Tiller's death. A columnist in Kansas City has written that anyone who called Tiller a "baby killer" was an accomplice to the murder.

The principles upheld in *Brandenburg* ought to deter any prosecutor from considering action against O'Reilly in terms of actual criminal charges. In that historic 1969 decision involving a Ku Klux Klan member, the Supreme Court held that even speech advocating force was protected unless it was a realistic attempt to incite "imminent lawless action."

The Supreme Court set out a two-part test in its decision for advocacy to become "incitement": The potential for lawless action has to be immediate and

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Murder Won't Deter Commitment To Choice

By Rev. Mary McAnally

A startling and despicable crime occurred May 31 in Wichita, KS, which prompts our response. The Oklahoma Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice [OKRCRC] is part of a national coalition of mainstream religious organizations and people of faith who are pro-choice. The crime was the gunning down in his church, where he went Sunday morning to worship, of Dr. George R. Tiller, a physician at the Wichita clinic that provides abortions.

The tragedy that ended Dr. Tiller's life, bringing sorrow and profound loss to his family, friends, and colleagues, as well as the community and nation, follows years of emotional and physical abuse inflicted against Dr. Tiller and other clinic staff by an individual or group of individuals who do not agree with the Supreme Court decision making abortions legal. The suspect, later arrested by Wichita police, is said to consider the act "justifiable homicide."

The OKRCRC denounces with absolute horror this crime. Not only was Dr. Tiller's life brutally taken, but the religious freedom and reproductive choices of all of us are violated by such actions. The Judeo-Christian tradition is very clear on the issue of taking of a person's life.

MONUMENTS NOT NECESSARY

No monuments to the Ten Commandments in public parks or buildings are necessary to remind us that a central command is "you shall not kill."

Though taking a life has different degrees and punishments in our courts, only self-defense has been allowed by courts as "justifiable" or non-criminal.

We affirm that every citizen should have access to reproductive education and family planning programs regardless of religion, race, class, gender, ethnic ori-

gin, or sexual orientation. We also affirm that no government, nor group, nor individual can take away a woman's religious and constitutional right to make reproductive choices. Every woman of every faith must be free to decide whether and when to bring a child into this world on the basis of her own conscience and religious beliefs.

One of the services provided by OKRCRC in Tulsa is our "peaceful presence" escorts to assist women to enter the clinic safely and without fear. Tulsa's Reproductive Services clinic, its staff and its patients, have been the target over the years of verbal and visual assaults by local extremists against reproductive choice.

BOMB THREATS, TAUNTS, INSULTS

There have been bomb threats, taunts and insults leveled against arriving patients, and even attempts to interfere with patient access to the clinic. There are weekly protesters outside the Tulsa clinic that add insult and injury to the women at a time of great personal stress and difficulty.

Dr. Tiller was a man of deep faith and strong commitment to his patients and profession. He provided many other services to his religious and local community.

We grieve with his family and countless others this great loss.

Hopefully this kind of malevolent and unconscionable crime will be seen for what it is, and Tulsa police, elected officials, and other community servants and guardians will help assure it won't happen here or anywhere else in the future.

- The author is co-chair of the OKRCRC board and lives in Tulsa

RIGHTWING VIOLENCE

Personal, Religious Freedoms At Stake

By Edwin E. Vineyard

The murder of Dr. George Tiller, gunned down in his own church by a religious fanatic, has brought the touchy political issue of abortion back to people's attention. Perhaps assisting this focus of attention is the appointment and probable confirmation of a new Supreme Court judge who just might support the legal precedent of a previous high court decision that goes by the title of *Roe v. Wade*.

That prior court decision made abortion legal in the United States on constitutional grounds. The Religious Right has been chipping away in one way or another at that decision ever since. Their political tool has been the Republican Party, aiding and abetting their attack on women's rights in every way possible.

Republicans, in turn, have used the Religious Right by stirring up emotional ballot issues to bring out their votes for the party. How often have we seen one of those issues put on the ballot in critical general elections recently?

FREEDOM IS THE ISSUE

The abortion issue is one of freedom, purely and simply. First, it is an issue of women being free to manage and control their own bodies. We have laws against sex crimes to avoid violation of women's bodily and personal integrity and freedom.

The government does not tell a woman when and how to become pregnant. How outrageous that thought! Then why should the government intervene to tell a woman whether she should stay pregnant and have an unwanted child for which she must be in servitude.

Who are we to interject the government into such a personal matter as a pregnancy or its termination?

CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION

Secondly, the abortion issue is one of freedom of religion and separation of church and state. When the government succumbs to the will of the religious right, and begins to put the tenets of their beliefs into law, then this becomes a violation of the separation of church and state. It is clearly the legal "establishment of religion" as prohibited in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

When the government begins to take the specific beliefs of a religious sect or



group and put these into law for everyone, this brings the First Amendment into consideration. If these tenets come from a radical fanatic group, it may be even more egregious.

It should be clear that putting tenets of religion into law is improper, illegal, and hazardous to personal liberty – even if those tenets are subscribed or voted by a majority of citizens. This infringes on individual rights, nevertheless, and thus is prohibited by the Constitution.

The Constitution is the guarantor of individual liberty.

– The author, AKA *The Militant Moderate* lives in Enid

Violent Rightwing Is Feeding On Hate

By James Ridgeway

The revelation that Scott Roeder, the alleged murderer of Dr. George Tiller, belonged to an anti-government, white separatist group called the Montana Freemen might seem like an unlikely twist.

Such groups are generally thought of as either indifferent to the issue of abortion or actively enthusiastic about its potential for reducing the non-white population.

Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City federal building bomber, was influenced by the anti-government crowd. He had been a Catholic altar boy and decorated Army veteran.

WHY HIS WIFE LEFT HIM

Roeder's connections to the rightwing fringe began well over a decade ago, according to the *Kansas City Star*. His ex-wife, Lindsey, said that after a few years of marriage, Roeder became increasingly involved with the Freemen and its anti-government ideology.

"The anti-tax stuff came first, and then it grew and grew. He became very anti-abortion. That's all he cared about is anti-abortion. 'The church is this. God is this.' Yadda yadda."

Noting that she vehemently disagreed with her ex-husband's views, Lindsey Roeder told the *Star* that he moved out in 1994.

"I thought he was over the edge with that stuff," she said. "He started falling apart. I had to protect myself and my son."

SOVEREIGN LICENSE PLATE

In 1996, Roeder was arrested in Topeka after sheriff deputies stopped his car because it had no license plate. Instead, the *Star* reported, "it bore a tag declaring him a 'sovereign' and immune from state law."

In the trunk, deputies found materials that could be assembled into a bomb. Roeder was convicted, sentenced to two years probation, and told to stay away from far-right groups.

A state appeals court subsequently overturned the conviction.

Roeder and the Freemen belonged to a little-recognized nativist political movement that began in the early 20th Century, flared up periodically, and then ripped through the American heartland during the farm depression of the mid-1980s.

POSSEE COMITATUS GREW DURING RECESSION

This movement was often called "the posse," after a core group named the Posse Comitatus. Like any political movement, it consisted of a myriad of shifting entities that appeared and disappeared.

Even though the names of the groups often changed, they all hold tightly to the notion that the true white sovereigns, who had rightfully been given this land by God, were being threatened by "inferior races" creeping across the borders from Mexico and lands farther south.

A favorite posse image is the drawing of a man hanging by the neck from a tree on a hill. Below in the distance stands a group of armed men. A sign is scrawled on the drawing. It says "The posse."

Over the years, this movement has encompassed various remnants of the Ku

Klux Klan, what was left of Lincoln Rockwell's Nazis, the national socialists of William Pierce, and skinheads.

NICHOLS FLIRTED WITH SOVEREIGNTY

Terry Nichols, who along with McVeigh carried out the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, dabbled with the concept of sovereign citizenship.

The Oklahoma Legislature adopted a "sovereignty" resolution in the session just ended.

The Freemen aimed to rid the nation of "14th Amendment citizens" – anyone who isn't a white Anglo Saxon directly descended from God. Nonwhites, or "mud people," weren't really people at all, but God's failed attempts to create Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. A bad Xerox copy, they used to say.

These beliefs derived from a school of thought known as Christian Identity, which holds that Jews, blacks, and other minorities aren't actually people and therefore don't deserve constitutional rights.

Instead, those rights are reserved for so-called "white sovereigns," who aim to take over government and run it through grand juries of the people, with laws enforced by old-time posses.

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PUNDITS

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realistic. That distinction is more than just rhetorical. When New Jersey blogger and former radio host Harold "Hal" Turner was arrested recently, Connecticut officials said he would be charged with inciting injury to two state lawmakers. According to news reports, police said Turner urged blog readers to "take up arms" against legislators who introduced a controversial bill on Catholic parish finances.

Even Thomas Paine could be seen as having tested today's legal limits. In a recent essay published on the *Cato-at-liberty.org* Web site, writer David Boaz notes that Paine proposed two centuries ago "to execute any legislator who so much as proposed a bill to issue paper money and make it legal tender."

The First Amendment provides that we may freely express our views and ideas without fear of government prosecution. The exception, not the rule, comes only under the very specific, proven circumstances provided for by Brandenburg.

If he survives, the idiot who shot and killed a guard June 10 at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, will be prosecuted in a court of law for his actions – as repellent as his anti-Semitic ideas and bigoted racial rants are.

In the main, judgment on public pundits and broadcast provocateurs is – and should be – rendered in the court of public opinion – by, as Paine and his contemporaries once put it, "We the People."

– The author is vice president and executive director of the *First Amendment Center*

America's Emerging Church Is Different

By Howard Bess

In the last half of the 20th Century, Evangelicalism swept the American religious scene.

This period of American religious history will go down as the age of Billy Graham. He may have been light on theological prowess but he was a spell-binding preacher and an organizational genius.

His call to Christ was supported by the establishment of new colleges, new seminaries, parochial schools, new publishing companies, new magazines, radio and television networks.

This includes new ministries such as Campus Crusade, World Vision, Youth for Christ, and Pioneer Boys and Girls.

Evangelicalism changed the face of America. Predictably the change is not permanent and the next phase is setting in.

THE EMERGING CHURCH DISCUSSED

Church historians and sociologists are talking about post-Evangelicalism. The most popular buzz term is the emerging church. Change is constant and the American religious scene is not static.

Talk about the emerging church is appearing in significant journals and periodicals. To keep up with what is happening, I spend a lot of time reading.

Scot McKnight, Professor of Religious Studies at North Park University, has been studying the phenomenon that is pervasive, but as yet little noticed by the general public. He calls the change ironic.

Dr. McKnight identifies eight characteristics of the emerging church. In condensed form I am sharing his observations:

THEY DOUBT INERRANCY

First, emergents cannot accept the idea of Bible inerrancy. Verbal inerrancy will not stand modern critical examination in the study of languages.

To assign fixed inerrancy to ancient documents written in the Hebrew and Greek used thousands of years ago stretches credibility.

Second, emergents have come to believe that the gospel that they have been taught is a caricature of the message of Jesus, rather than the real thing.

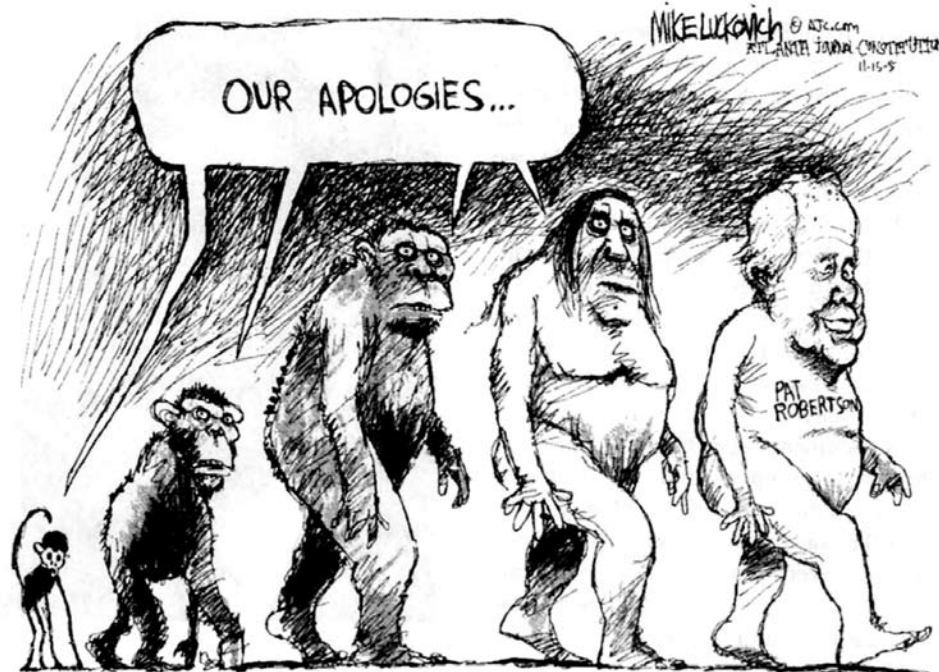
Increasingly they are putting other Biblical writings in the background and have shown increasing interest in what Jesus said and did.

WHY NOT PREACH AND TEACH HIS MESSAGE?

They ask, "If we are followers of Jesus, why do we not live and preach his message?" In short, they are looking for a much more radical Christianity than they have found in the Evangelical [and mainline] churches.

Third, exposure to science in public education, universities and personal studies has led emergents to disown the conclusion that when the Bible and science appear to collide, science must take a back seat to the Bible.

In this conflict, emergents are not abandoning the Bible, but are raising critical questions about the Bible's nature and content.



This new breed of Christian remains quite committed to the Bible but they are very open to new ideas and understandings.

SCANDAL DISILLUSIONS THEM

Fourth, emergents have become disillusioned by the clay feet of church leadership. It is not just the corrupt Jim Bakkers and the whore-mongering Jimmy Swaggarts, but the rank and file of church leadership.

Emergents compare what Jesus had in mind and what is going on in churches, and they see a need to start over. They want a fresh start with serious intent to follow Jesus.

Fifth, our public schools and our nation in general are insisting that we be truly multicultural. The churches' teaching, that people not like us, are doomed, is not acceptable to emergents. They want a much broader definition of what it means to be accepted to the family of God.

Sixth, emergents are insisting that God be understood as totally gracious and loving. The angry, vengeful God that is sometimes presented in both Old and New Testaments is not acceptable.

LIVE AND LET LIVE ON GAY ISSUE

Seventh, acceptance of homosexuals in the family of God is common. Being pro-gay or anti-gay is not the issue. Emergents recognize that sexuality is far more complex than is generally recognized. To live in harmony with gay and lesbian friends and family members is a part of the emergent's perspective.

Eighth, echoing the first named characteristic, emergents recognize the role that language plays in their understanding and practice of the Christian Faith. Theology is language bound. Language is a limited tool of communication.

If theology is language bound, it is also culturally shaped. To be rigidly exclusive does not make sense to emergent Christians.

- The author is a retired American Baptist minister who lives in Alaska

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HERO

From Page 12

Regardless of what our government would have us believe about how everything changed after 9/11, the real tragedy of that day remains mostly ignored by the mainstream media as well as most Americans. Out of 70,000 registered responders in New York City, 30,000 are sick and 10,000 are terminally ill. That's one in seven.

Is this how we treat our heroes?

Reggie and her colleagues are planning to hold signs in front of the White House if necessary to get the president to listen. Even those with worse health care issues. Perhaps, the president might listen, if the sick end up dying in front of the White House. After all of the protesters leave, and no one has listened, what have they got to lose?

With a whole list of disorders, and no means of managing her chronic, terminal illness, Reggie wrote to Michael Moore when he requested stories from the public for his 2007 documentary, Sicko. Moore featured Reggie in his film and took her to Cuba for medical attention.

Doctors there gave Reggie a complete exam, plus follow up, determining illnesses not previously discovered, and sent her on her way with medical records, free of charge.

Upon her return to Oklahoma City, University of Oklahoma medical doctors refused continued treatment and sent Reggie on her way. Their claim? Cuba was not an accepted medical facility.

LOBBYING FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

A former athlete and marathon runner, Reggie refused to give up. She was outraged at the sentiment of some of her fellow Americans - that is, if you don't have the resources, you should just go away and die quietly.

Reggie started getting involved with advocacy groups for single payer health care and has participated in gatherings all over the country to promote complete health care reform in the U.S. She has lobbied Congress, has Rep. John Conyers on speed dial and attended Barack Obama's inauguration, even though he has yet to respond to her more than 30 letters.

Only in Oklahoma has she received death threats for her views, which may explain the lack of response to a press release on her recent appearance in Tulsa.

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Here's a list of Reggie's ailments: pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, COPD, gastric esophageal reflux disease, reactive airway disease, chronic fatigue, chronic kidney disease, enlarged liver and PTSD, yet she is tireless in her pursuit to help others.

RALLYING ON CORNER IN TULSA

As a member of the Tulsa Peace Fellowship, I felt so privileged to have Reggie at our recent monthly rally for "Healthcare Not Warfare" on the corner of 41st and Yale. With more attendance than usual, Reggie not only held signs on the corner, but also talked with people in their cars about the need in this country for universal, single payer health care.

According to Reggie, 68% of Americans support single payer health care, including most doctors and nurses. Yet, our representatives in Congress won't even allow advocates a seat at the table.

That's why Reggie's out there standing on street corners. She believes that "every American has the right to ask questions and get answers. That's constitutionally guaranteed; otherwise, we'd still be British."

- The author lives in Tulsa

Sign Of The Times

Rev. Ole was the pastor of the local Norwegian Lutheran Church and Pastor Sven was the minister of the Swedish Covenant Church across the road. I saw them yesterday standing by the road, pounding a sign into the ground that reads:

"Da End iss Near! Turn Yourself Aroundt Now! Before It's Too Late!"

As a car sped past them, the driver leaned out his window and yelled, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!"

From the curve we heard screeching tires and a big splash ...

Rev. Ole turns to Pastor Sven and asks, "Do ya tink maybe da sign should just say 'Bridge Out'?"

Climate Change Is The Top Challenge

By John Vidal

Climate change is already responsible for 300,000 deaths a year and is affecting 300 million people, according to the first comprehensive study of the human impact of global warming.

It projects that increasingly severe heat waves, floods, storms and forest fires will be responsible for as many as 500,000 deaths a year by 2030, making it the greatest humanitarian challenge the world faces.

Economic losses due to climate change today amount to more than \$125 billion a year – more than the all present world aid. The report comes from former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's think tank, the Global Humanitarian Forum. By 2030, the report says, climate change could cost \$600 billion a year.

CIVIL UNREST IS POSSIBLE

Civil unrest may also increase because of weather-related events, the report says: "Four billion people are vulnerable now and some are now at extreme risk. Weather-related disasters ... bring hunger, disease, poverty and lost livelihoods. They pose a threat to social and political stability."

If emissions are not brought under control within 25 years, the report states:

- 310 million more people will suffer adverse health consequences related to temperature increases.
- 20 million more people will fall into poverty.
- 75 million extra people will be displaced by climate change.

WATER SUPPLIES HIT MOST

Climate change is expected to have the most severe impact on water supplies. Shortages in the future are likely to threaten food production, reduce sanitation, hinder economic development and damage ecosystems.

It causes more violent swings between floods and droughts. Hundreds of millions of people are expected to become water stressed by climate change by the 2030.

The study says it is impossible to be certain who will be displaced by 2030, but that tens of millions of people "will be driven from their homelands by weather disasters or gradual environmental degradation. The problem is most severe in Africa, Bangladesh, Egypt, coastal zones and forest areas."

The study compares for the first time the number of people affected by climate change in rich and poor countries. Nearly 98% of the people seriously affected, 99% of all deaths from weather-related disasters and 90% of the total economic losses are now borne by developing countries.

The populations most at risk, it says, are in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, south Asia and the small island states of the Pacific.

But of the 12 countries considered least at risk, including Britain, all but one are industrially developed. Together they have made nearly \$72 billion available

RIGHTWING

From Page 17

One might think that the divisions between pro-life Christians and far-right racists would preclude any sort of working alliance. Evangelical Christians thought that the creation of Israel was a sign of the Second Coming of Christ and became keen supporters of that country.

In the early and mid-'80s, the racist underground often railed against abortion.

Bob Mathews, leader of a terror gang known as The Order, sees abortion as the suicide of the white race.

Jim Wickstrom, Christian Identity leader of another underground terror group called the Posse Comitatus, rants against Jewish doctors and nurses who engaged in abortion.

OKLAHOMAN HEADED NATIONAL MILITIA

By the 1990s, the far right had started to attack abortion clinics. Ray Lampley, a far right racist in Oklahoma, and two members of a national militia, were convicted in federal court of conspiring to bomb abortion clinics [along with gay bars, welfare offices, an Anti-Defamation League office, and the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, AL].

In Spokane, WA, three men who claimed ties to a group called the Phineas Priesthood were charged with the bombings of a newspaper office and a Planned Parenthood clinic.

They call for killing Jews in order to save the future of white civilization. One of them, Paul Hill, was sentenced to death for the murder of an abortion doctor and his escort.

WHY THEY CAME TO OPPOSE ABORTION

What was the bridge between the posse movement and anti-abortionist fanaticism? The sovereign crowd viewed women as chattel, and the prospect of an independent woman deciding to seek an abortion didn't sit well with them.

I gained some insight into this line of thinking in another piece I once wrote about a young woman in Oklahoma who aspired to join the Christian Identity group, hoping that its followers would teach her to shoot and become a guerilla.

Instead, the men asked her for sex. When the woman replied that she wanted a relationship first, one of them replied, "Women are for breeding."

According to one faction of the group, women who have abortions are race traitors and should be stoned to death. With that in mind, the fact that some members of the far-right became violent anti-abortionists perhaps shouldn't come as such a surprise.

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THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, JUNE 25, 2009, PAGE 19

to adapt themselves to climate change but have pledged only \$400 million to help poor countries.

"This is less than one state in Germany is spending on improving its flood defenses," says the report.

CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE IT

"The world is at a crossroads. We can no longer afford to ignore the human impact of climate change. This is a call to the negotiators to come to the most ambitious agreement ever negotiated or to continue to accept mass starvation, mass sickness and mass migration on an ever growing scale," said Annan, who launched the report in London.

Annan blamed politicians for the current impasse in the negotiations and widespread ignorance in many countries.

Calculations for the report are based on data provided by the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the UN, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, and others, including leading insurance companies and Oxfam.

However, the authors accept that the estimates are uncertain and could be higher or lower. The paper was reviewed by 10 of the world's leading experts including Rajendra Pachauri, head of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University and Margareta Wahlstrom, assistant UN secretary general for disaster risk reduction.

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HOMELESS

From Page One

The results also showed there are 206 homeless children up to the age of 18 living in Cleveland County alone.

The center's report card describes many factors related to child homelessness in each state, and represents four domains: extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk for child homelessness and state policy and planning efforts.

The report ranked Connecticut's plan the best and Texas' the worst. Oklahoma's was ranked in the middle at 31 in terms of state efforts; however, the state was also ranked at a 47 risk factor out of 50.

"Our plan was labeled inadequate by this report," Webb said. "City Rescue Mission believes that providing affordable housing isn't the key to ending homelessness. It is a vital step to helping homeless; however, in most circumstances, there are multiple reasons a person is homeless."

The Homeless Alliance of Oklahoma's Point in Time survey provides a way for Oklahoma to measure its homeless population and identify needs within the population.

The 2007 survey count of the homeless concluded that Oklahoma City had a high rate of chronic homelessness.

Chronic homelessness means being continually homeless for at least

one year, or having had four episodes of homelessness within the last three years. According to the Homeless Alliance, this is often due to mental illness.

Thirty-five percent of the entire population has some form of mental illness that may be as minor as mild depression, or as significant as post-traumatic stress.

"Call the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services about the deplorable lack of funding for mental health services in our state," Hunter said.

Jeffrey Dismukes, director of communications for the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, said the lack of funding for mental health services in Oklahoma is a legislative issue.

"We're a state agency, we have no control over the funding for these issues," Dismukes said. "With the recession, the Legislature has to make some really hard decisions where to place dollars."

Despite the many obstacles, Badgley refuses to give up hope.

"I know times are hard, but God put me here for a reason," Badgley said. "All I can do is pray."

– The author is a University of Oklahoma journalism student from Keller, TX

Outside The Box

"Read, every day, something no one else is reading. Think, every day, something no one else is thinking. Do, every day, something no one else would be silly enough to do. It is bad for the mind to continually be part of unanimity."

– Christopher Morley [1890-1957], author and founding editor of Saturday Review of Literature

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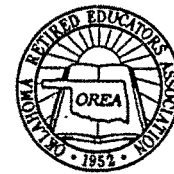
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