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Bellmon's Legacy: Statesmanship An Oklahoma Treasure

By Janet Varnum

Henry Bellmon's freshman year at Oklahoma A&M College in 1938 differed significantly from student life today.

Few people of the Depression era had any money. Maybe a dozen students owned an automobile. And except for church and occasional theater productions or dances at the girls' dorms, "There wasn't much of a social life," Bellmon says.

Campus also contrasted with the homestead in north-central Oklahoma where his family produced wheat and livestock and where his love of farming began.

Bellmon's father encouraged him to pursue a high-paying profession. "He wanted me to become a lawyer," Bellmon says. But Bellmon wanted to study agriculture and chose Oklahoma A&M because it was close to home. Preferring the outdoors to class work, he took the maximum course load to graduate a semester early in January 1942.

Bellmon worked his way through college with numerous jobs. He picked pears for a woman on Monroe Street, washed windows at the new Stillwater public library, ground samples in the soils lab, cleaned the college poultry barn and wrote agriculture news for the O'Collegian.

In lieu of the monthly \$6 rent at Dickman's boarding house on Knoblock Street, he made beds and did janitorial work. And he washed dishes at the Aggie Co-op in exchange for the \$12-per-month meal plan.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Bellmon was stunned to hear Pearl Harbor had been attacked and ran to the O'Colly to read the Associated Press wire re-



— Photo by Phil Shockley

ports.

He graduated the following month, but unable to find employment, he returned to the farm.

One day he took a load of hogs to Oklahoma City to sell for his father and came back an enlisted Marine. He hoped to be grouped with friends who

had already signed up. "There was a certain feeling that we wanted to be where the action was," he says.

As a college graduate, he was assigned to officer's candidate class the following November. That gave him time to help his family with harvest and hitchhike around the upper Midwest before leaving. To pay his way from state to state, he shoveled wheat in Kansas, skidded logs in Wyoming, cleared weeds from an irrigation canal in Idaho and hauled hay near the Teton Mountains. He toured Yellowstone Park and visited a sister in Texas before heading home in time to help plant the winter wheat.

In November 1942, Bellmon rode his first train to Quantico, VA, for officer's training. From there he spent one final week in Oklahoma before joining

the Fourth Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, CA, en route to the Pacific Theater.

Until World War II, Bellmon's primary interest was to become a successful farmer. But witnessing the "enormous waste of human lives" on both sides of battle would change the course of his life.

"I made up my mind that if I survived the war I would get into government and see if I could improve conditions between governments and races," he says.

Bellmon witnessed friends die in combat in the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. He saw corpses littering battlefields and terrified Japanese families jumping from cliffs rather than surrender.

When anti-tank fire hit his tank on the beach at Iwo Jima, the assistant gunner beside him died instantly, and the gunner was badly injured. Bellmon, who later received a Silver Star for pulling the gunner to safety, was so covered in gore he was mistaken as injured.

More than 20 years later while serving as a U.S. senator, the horrendous realities of war influenced Bellmon's decision to cast one of the deciding – and highly unpopular – votes to ratify the Panama Canal Treaty. After thoroughly studying the issue, he knew he could not in good faith send American troops to protect a commercial interest in the civil war that would likely ensue if the treaty were not ratified.

"It is difficult to develop a rallying cry around the concept of 'Whip the Panamanians and keep cheap freight,'" Bellmon said on the Senate floor.

And despite vociferous opposition from his party, his constituents and the press, which labeled him a traitor, he stood solidly behind his decision and concluded that legislators are obligated to vote for what they believe to be the public's best interest, even if it costs them the next election.

Claudia [Quam] Scribner, a 1973 OSU English graduate who began working in the senator's Oklahoma City office that year, says Bellmon

See STATESMAN Page 16

Observations

Kill Public Ed?

The public education-hating Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs has a stooge. Sen. John Ford, R-Bartlesville, considers introducing a voucher scheme in the next legislative session.

He's the same legislator who authored SB 834 to cripple – if not kill – public education. Thanks to a veto, it didn't survive.

The OCPA scheme by mouthpiece Brandon Dutcher, a homeschooler, hides behind special ed kids for openers.

If there's one thing Oklahomans of all political beliefs come together on it's public education. We're second in the percentage of kids attending public schools, taught by some of the finest educators in America.

When will Bartlesville public educators awaken to the fact that they are represented by a pawn?

It's Your Life

At long last the public is learning that hospitals are one of the most dangerous places in America – last year nearly 100,000 documented deaths were due to hospital mistakes.

If you have to go, be sure and take a written statement of your medical history, including any surgeries and all medications [including over-the-counter stuff].

Be sure trusted family members or friends [no wimps] accompany you and stay with you on a rotating basis.

They must be willing to quiz nurses and doctors on what they are doing and why. You may be groggy or fearful. You need an advocate.

Incredibly, another 90,000 patients die from infections acquired in the hospital, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 18,000 died for want of health insurance.

Check the food. High-salt meals aren't for those on a salt-free diet. Don't be afraid to ask nurses, aides and doctors if they have washed their

hands. It's a serious problem because some don't.

Patient safety is way down on the hospital to-do list. Yes, surgeries in Oklahoma have been performed on the wrong site.

Be sure and ask your druggist about any prescriptions given you upon leaving the hospital.

Get out of there as quickly as you can. Remember, your best advocate is you.

Sex Abuse

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a report showing a 16% increase in allegations of clergy sex abuse between 2007 and 2008.

There were 803 allegations filed by 706 victims against 518 clergy members, 83% of whom are dead or defrocked. The church spent \$436 million in legal settlements, attorney fees and counseling costs.

Only 13 of the 803 cases involved abuse that occurred in 2008. The overall increase was fueled largely by a 93% increase in reported abuse from members of religious orders, rather than parish or diocesan clergy.

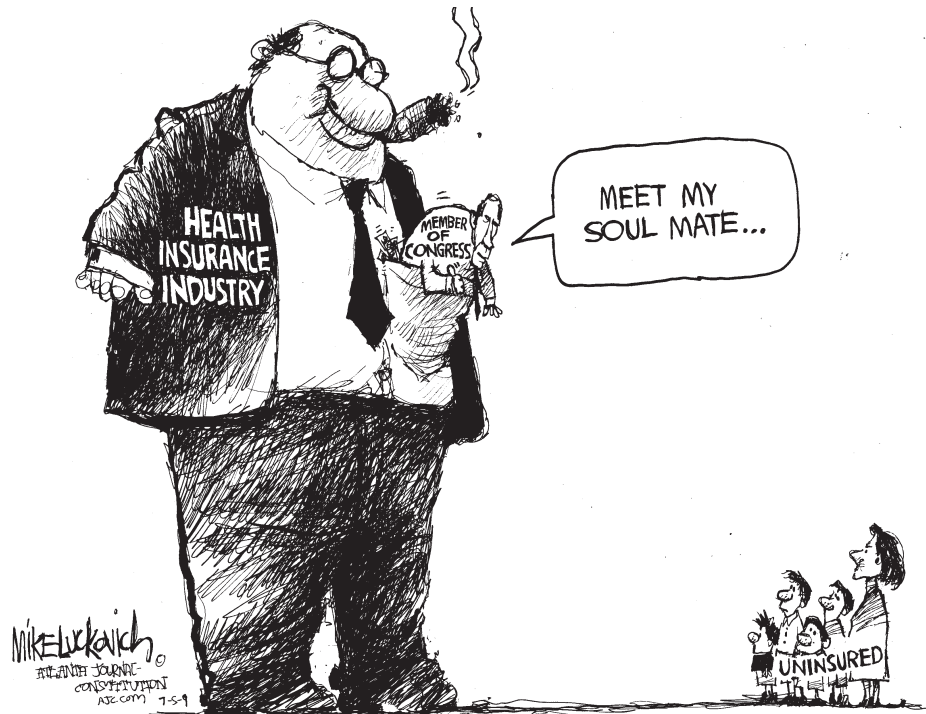
The outrage today centers on Ireland where it is confirmed that decades of sexual and physical abuse came at the hands of the clergy and teaching brothers.

We will never know how many cases in America could have been avoided if truthful sex education had been taught – including the need to instantly report even the slightest suggestion of abuse.

Priorities

Let's quit kidding about the phenomenal big league salaries paid to coaches – both in Oklahoma and across America.

OU President David Boren half apologized that football coach Bob Stoops goes from \$2,925,000 to \$3,675,000



– then on to \$5 million if he sticks around. OU's basketball coach goes from \$1,050,000 to \$1.5 million.

Assistant coaches at OU far exceed what the average college president earns in Oklahoma. Boren says it's simply a matter of market economics. The athletic department, he said, is "giving" OU \$7 million this year.

It doesn't take a course in logic to know that the athletic department exists only because OU exists, not the reverse.

We bow to no one in rooting for Oklahoma teams, but in this critical year when other budgets are cut and thousands of Oklahoma children are going to bed hungry, OU raises are obscene.

Heal It!

Health disparities in America are nothing new, with Oklahoma ranking at the bottom in most every category.

Health care reform is long overdue, especially addressing disparities that exist in our current system.

A new report, Health Disparities: A Case for Closing the Gap, is available at www.HealthReform.gov.

Minorities and low income Oklahomans are more likely to be sick and less likely to get the care they need.

We hope Democrats in control of Congress will not be fooled by the GOP charge that the Obama plan is the high road to socialism.

Look up the word. Read it to your friends who make this false claim. Under socialism doctors, other medical professional and hospitals are government employees. Today that system exists only in the U.S. military.

Call it whatever you like, but the Daily Disappointment and the Tulsa World ought to footnote every "socialism" letter with the definition of socialism.

A Case for Closing the Gap highlights some of the glaring disparities that exist in the current health system. Under the status quo:

- 48% of all African-American adults suffer from a chronic disease compared to 39% of the general population.
- 8% of white Americans develop diabetes while 15% of African-Americans, 14% of Hispanics, and 18% of American Indians develop diabetes.
- Hispanics were one-third less likely to be counseled on obesity than were whites – only 44% of Hispanics received counseling.

• African-Americans are 15% more likely to be obese than whites.

The report also notes that 40% of low-income Americans do not have health insurance.

Let's hope our leaders [excluding the Oklahoma GOP congressional delegation] come together and fix a system costing thousands of lives a year.

Black Hole

America is sinking in a vast corporate welfare black hole with the far right U.S. Chamber of Commerce leading the downward drift.

The Chamber, its pockets overloaded with big business payola, has become a pestilence, operating most state chambers as though they were puppets, including Oklahoma's state chamber.

The U.S. Chamber, which operated George W. Bush by remote control, is now "vigorously opposing" a new consumer protection agency that President Obama proposed as part of his financial regulatory reforms package.

Is there one thinking American with an IQ above a roach who isn't aware that Ronald Reagan's deregulation of business has led us over a cliff?

The Chamber also came out against another aspect of Obama's reform agenda that would allow shareholders to vote on their company's executive compensation practices, known as "Say On Pay."

When you cut through the Chamber propaganda you learn that when Great Britain and Australia adopted the plan CEO pay grew 2.4% and 25.3%, respectively, in 2002 through 2006.

Pay in the United States soared 59.9% in the same period, even as some of those reaping the biggest rewards from subservient boards were presiding over economic disasters.

At the same time, middle class American incomes were stagnant or declining.

Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, explains, "The current rules allow management insiders to make out like bandits at the expense of shareholders and other stakeholders. This is why clowns get paid tens of millions to run their companies into the ground in the U.S."

Ask your members of Congress from Oklahoma where they stand. They're usually kissing up to the U.S. and State Chambers.

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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

Editor's Note: Don't forget, we skip the July 25 issue but we will be back Aug. 10 with the best news and commentary in Oklahoma – and we do it without restaurant reviews.

Laurel: To Sen. Tom Adelson, D-Tulsa, who has announced for mayor of Tulsa. He is one of the brightest and most effective members of the state Senate. If he leaves the Senate IQ will drop 10 points.

If you have a few extra bucks, please donate to OKC's Jesus House, flat broke and seeing more impoverished and mentally afflicted people than ever before. It's P.O. Box 60369, OKC, OK, 73146. Our thanks!

Dart: To TV loudmouth Elizabeth Hasselbeck of *The View*, sued for word-for-word plagiarism in her new book, *The G-Free Diet*. She's a female Rush Limbaugh.

We note the passing of ex-state Treasurer Claudette Henry, 52. Stipe-pounding Republicans are reminded that the largest theft in state history – \$6.7 million – occurred on her watch and two employees went to prison.

Laurel: To Osceola Data Condulle and RayAnn Hasslam, McCloud High School seniors, winning internships with NASA. They were among 10 out of 400 applicants.

The medical/industrial complex is alive and soaking taxpayers. The difference between the Mayo Clinic's average Medicaid treatment [\$53,432] and that at UCLA's Medical Center [\$93,842] – a whopping \$40,410.

Dart: To Oklahoma's junior U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn for voting against HR 2346 that included enhanced support for wounded soldiers and their families. In the House only Rep. Dan Boren, D-OK, voted for it.

OU President David Boren, obviously invigorated by the election of Barack Obama – serving as one of his top intelligence advisors – told OU regents he will stay on another five years. His bonus: \$450,000. He could retire today at \$616,000 a year.

Laurel: To Dr. Carl Rubenstein, cardiologist, lipid specialist and clinical professor of medicine at OU, named a fellow in the elite National Lipids Association – one of only 160.

Latest figures show 4,286 Oklahomans have HIV or AIDS – up 235 from the previous 12 months. Any state health facility will do a test free for those without funds.

Dart: To the Capitol Improvement Authority, approving the sale of \$100 million in revenue bonds to match some of the Oklahoma collegiate endowed chairs. OU and OSU split \$94 million of the total. The backlog is \$228 million.

We note the passing of another Little Dixie giant, Hugo newspaper publisher Jack Stamper, 90. He was the epitome of what it means to be an involved community leader.

Laurel: To state Auditor Steve Borage, who will be watching the \$2.6 billion Oklahoma stimulus money to make certain it is not misappropriated. The number to call to report misappropriations is 1.877.259.7737.

It took gall for Keith Hazelton of the Oklahoma Bankers Association to quote Ronald Reagan in opposing the big bank bailouts. It was Reagan who started the U.S. down the deregulation road to disaster.

Dart: To Brandon Dutcher, mouthpiece for that sorry Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, for a vicious blog attack on new OEA President Becky Felts. He mocked her for being a Sunday School teacher.

Public school teachers are retiring at a record rate, leading to a predicted shortage. Oklahoma teachers average \$39,772 per year compared to the regional average of \$41,613. Why teach here?

Laurel: To Chris Casteel, the Oklahoman's Washington reporter, for his story that ex-Oklahoma politicians can't depart the state fast enough – including Frank Keating, earning \$1.5 million as an insurance lobbyist.



The new State Of the State's Health Report gives Oklahoma an F for adult dental visits, cerebrovascular deaths, current smoking habits, lack of fruit and vegetable consumption, no physical activity and unintentional injury deaths.

Dart: To U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-OK, opposing universal health care. He said, "Some [cancer patients] fall through the cracks, that's true." Yes, such as the 50 Oklahoma families a day losing health insurance for lack of money.

The World Health Organization ranks 191 countries: We're first in cost, 37th in overall performance and 72nd in overall level of health. Nearly 100,000 were killed last year by hospital mistakes. Lack of insurance killed 18,000 Americans.

Laurel: To Oklahoma Emergency Response revolving fund for tapping the Tobacco Trust Fund for \$2.5 million a year to keep ambulance service going in rural Oklahoma.

A new poll shows today's students are worrywarts – stressed by grades, schoolwork, money and relationships. That's news? As for those going to sleep in class, that's a parent problem.

Dart: To the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, for refusing to make OHP dash cams [dashboard-mounted cameras] a public record. It should be the first law passed in the 2010 session.

Think some members of Congress are bought and paid for? You're right. The 17 mostly GOP senators who voted against FDA tobacco regulation raked \$3.5 million from the killers last year. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY, took in \$419,000.

Laurel: To Attorney General Drew Edmondson, for a lawsuit against BP America Inc., and two subsidiaries accused of hoarding motor fuel and crude oil supplies, sending gas pump prices up 18 cents per gallon.

Of course the rightwing government-hating U.S. Term Limits praises the GOP Legislature for putting term limits for statewide officials on the November 2010 elections. If voters fall for it, they deserve the incompetence they will get.

Dart: To Oklahoma's political establishment for tip-toeing around the state's minority problem. This year's Oklahoma graduation rate is 70.6%. For Blacks it was 55%, Indians 64%, Asians 79%, Hispanics 57%. The answer is not in vouchers or charter schools, it's in the home.

PBS's Ken Burns is doing one of his premier documentaries on the Dust Bowl. We hope he paints an honest picture of the "Okies" – unfairly vilified by the likes of Frank Keating.

Laurel: To Del City High School Principal Annette Nantois, retiring after 38 remarkable years as a public educator. She's an everyday hero you seldom read or hear about as they quietly make America a better place.

Tulsa-area Oklahomans who haven't viewed the 100 paintings in the state Capitol please note that the magnificent \$2 million collection is on display at Tulsa's Gilcrease Museum.

Dart: To deadbeat Oklahoma parents owing \$1.7 billion in unpaid child support. The Department of Human Services works tirelessly to track them down but is chronically shorthanded.

Stop the press – if you still have one in your town. Oklahomans give Barack Obama a 38% approval rate. We're surprised it's that high given the racism and "religious" bigotry making this state reddest of the red.

Laurel: To the National Education Association for giving its top award to ex-Oklahoma history teacher Clara Luper, civil rights leader without parallel. Using students, she led the OKC counter sit-in that swept the country.

Marilyn Duck, editor of the Eastern Oklahoma Catholic, charges in the July/August issue that the Tulsa World is guilty of printing false information about the shooting death of a Bishop Kelley senior. Details, please.

Dart: To a Legislature that continually underfunds mental health services. Yet we wonder why 1,700 OKC students are homeless, with 40% needing intervention.

The State Board of Juvenile Affairs is considering a new private youth prison, closing Sand Springs' L.E. Rader Center. You suppose we will eventually outsource the Legislature?

THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

It is a comfort to me to read about Republicans being "caught" with women for a change.

Homer H. Hulme
Chickasha

Editor, The Observer:

Outside Washington, DC, the majority of doctors, nurses, small businesses, health economists, and the majority of the American people – according to spring polls – want a Canadian-style, single payer, everybody in, nobody out, free choice of doctor and hospital, national health insurance system.

Inside Washington, DC [the politicians], the corrupt elite won't even put single payer on the table for discussion. Why not? Because it would bring harsh justice to their buddies in the multi-billion dollar private health insurance industry, which now profits off the suffering of the masses.

Who are literally swarming in the halls of Congress? Lobbyists for the big enemies of single payer. These include:

American Association of Retired Persons [AARP national]. Why? AARP makes about a quarter of its money selling insurance through its affiliate, United Healthcare Group, the nation's largest for-profit insurance company.

American Medical Association, whose membership represents only 25% of doctors nationwide. The majority of doctors, probably even a majority of doctors who belong to the AMA, support single payer.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association of America [PHRMA]. With the government able to negotiate drug prices downward, the drug corporations would lose millions in excess profits.

Your health and your family's health depend on defeating these big organizations and seven more like them. Healthcare is a right, not a privilege to be dispensed at the whim of an obscenely wealthy corporation. Congress must heed the needs of the citizens.

B.A. Geary
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

I was pleased to see the Oklahomans for Universal Care article in the 6.25.09 Oklahoma Observer – and to know that there is such a group in Oklahoma.

As a "Point of Order," the third paragraph is not correct. Tommy Douglass got Universal Health Care through the Saskatchewan Legislature in 1947.

The policy was soon adopted by other provinces. It was finally implemented nationally by the Liberals under Lester B. Pearson in 1966. Single-payer health care was functioning beautifully in Saskatchewan and Alberta when I moved from Houston, TX, to Weyburn, Saskatchewan, in 1957. I lived in Canada for about eight years – my three daughters were born there [two in Grey Nuns Hospital in Regina and the third in Calgary General]. It was the best health care I have ever had.

My Canadian friends and relatives [including several doctors and nurses] are very pleased with it and how it has evolved. The biggest advantage is that it is collected nationally, but privately delivered, and administered provincially – doctors, hospital administrators, providers of supplemental insurance, etc., are on the boards that calculate/evaluate the charges and fees.

The lies and exaggerations currently being spread about a universal, one-payer insurance scheme are infuriating. The present proposal with a public component would be OK as a bridge for a year or even two while the universal scheme is being set up. There is no reason for it to be permanent and no reason for it to take 10 years to "break even." There would be money coming in, savings, reduced paperwork and all would have basic coverage.

Do hope the administration does not cave in to the insurance giants – we need help NOW.

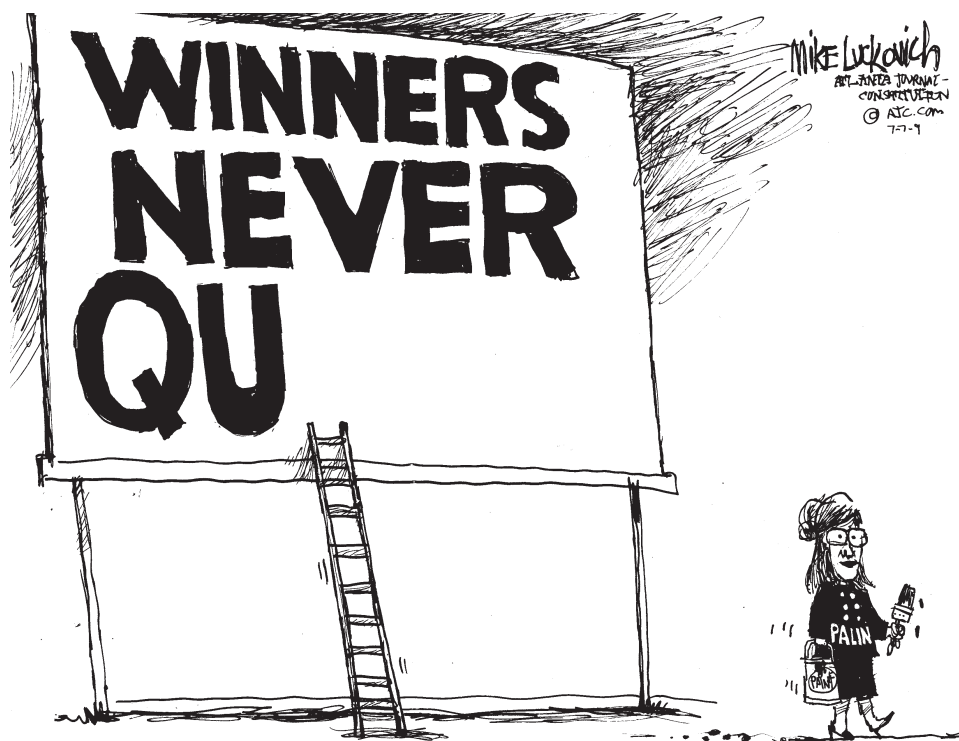
Janis M. Mattinson
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Treatment of our citizens in their times of need is being totally ignored and is a pitiful excuse for a health system. We fall far behind the rest of the civilized world. That is unacceptable! Advocates for a single-payer health system must have a seat at the table.

Arrogant Congress members need to be hauled in and answer to our public. Demand that they do so! Demand until we can no longer be ignored by these jackasses who kowtow for our votes then proceed to ignore the voters who elect them and listen only to their lobbyists and their wallets.

It is time to take back our government and it is past time to let people die while they all sit on their butts! They let millions of poor children go without adequate health care. They mouth such grand words of 9/11 heroes and this article [6.25.09, This Is How We Treat America's Heroes?, pg. 12] proves their mouths lie! It is



disgraceful, shameful and they better hope they don't meet their creator on judgment day!

Darla Reynolds-Sparks
Yukon

Editor, The Observer:

Ron du Bois' 6.25.09 article entitled "Will Obama Act On History's Lessons?" explains single pay medical systems the most clearly that I have seen it. Thank you for the simple blueprint for walking the line between socialism and managed health care. We need more individual stories like yours to help us make informed choices.

The opposition to simple solutions is misleading and full of sleight of hand, making information hard to come by.

Please continue to state the facts as simply and directly as you did in your article.

Nellie Perry
Stillwater

Editor, The Observer:

The Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma, an alliance of the wide range of faith traditions in Oklahoma, Christian and non-Christian, takes exception to the "Morality Proclamation" presented by state Rep. Sally Kern on July 1 at the State Capitol.

Rep. Kern forced a number of issues into a narrow interpretation of the meaning of morality and stripped the meaning of religious liberty of all coherent significance. It would seem, then, that Rep. Kern wishes to rewrite history to suit her own religious purposes.

While the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma supports Rep. Kern's right to express herself, it does seem that she has sought to give tacit support to her views in the name of the state of Oklahoma. That is a serious breach of the very intent of our nation's Founders, whom she claims to have on her side.

The Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma respectfully requests that Rep. Kern withdraw her ill-founded "Proclamation On Morality" in the spirit of morality and integrity.

Jeff Hamilton
Midwest City

Editor's Note: Hamilton is president of The Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma and a former state representative

Editor, The Observer:

Here come da Judge. There goes Bernie.

Assuming he serves out his 150-year sentence, he'll walk out of prison as a 231-year-old crook. To put that in perspective, that's 63 years older than Sookie Stackhouse's boyfriend, and he served in the Civil War.

Kenny Belford
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Re: the demise of the Oklahoma City Blazers hockey team:

Well, all the niceties in the Disappointment aside, the Thunder finally drove in the dagger. The American Hockey League move will be much criticized in the Disappointment, I predict, and eventually fail – provided the City Council vote doesn't kill the move right away.

The ambush was subtle. I don't particularly care for [Blazers' owner] Bob Funk's politics, but he didn't have a free ride at the taxpayers' expense. I hope Wanda Jo Stapleton kicks their collective ass. I also hope anything underhanded doesn't escape scrutiny.

Thanks for letting me vent. Keep up the great work!

Mike Rogers
Moore

Editor, The Observer:

Globally, we feed 756 million tons of grain to farmed animals. As Princeton bioethicist Peter Singer notes in his new book, if we fed that grain to the 1.4 billion people who are living in abject poverty, each of them would be provided more than half a ton of grain, or about three pounds of grain per day – that's twice the grain they would need to survive.

And that doesn't even include the 225 million tons of soy that are produced every year, almost all of which is fed to farmed animals. He writes, "The world is not running out of food. The problem is that we – the relatively affluent – have found a way to consume four or five times as much food as would be possible, if we were to eat the crops we grow directly."

Let us stop eating meat so that the grains can help eradicate hunger among the abject poor.

Frank P. Belcastro
Dubuque, IA

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Frosty's Notebook

Lawyers

I was watching President Obama addressing the American Medical Association, amazed at the warmth the audience reflected given the fact that doctors are universally Republicans.

All went well until he said he would not favor a cap on malpractice awards. That elicited scattered boos and catcalls, reflecting anew that doctors remain the most uninformed profession in America.

First, my conflict of interest – my big brother Leo was an attorney, his son is a Tulsa attorney, and my daughter is an attorney.

That said, why does the medical profession continue to complain about runaway juries and a lawsuit epidemic – neither of which is true. Oklahoma adopted a “reform” statute this year but it wasn’t the result of a lawsuit epidemic or runaway juries.

Too many doctors practice “defensive” medicine, ordering a myriad of tests just in case something is missed resulting in the trial bar thrusting into deep pockets.

American juries have been pounded by the same media propaganda. Juries, the backbone of the legal system, started making awards smaller, leading to a sharp decline of big awards over the past 20 years. Of the 25 jury awards through July 1, only one was a malpractice case. Google it if you doubt it.

Jury awards are a fraction of the \$2.3 trillion spent annually on health care – much of the money going to victims who deserve it, such as the local patient who had the wrong leg amputated.

Over and over the myth is bragged that America has the best medicine in the world. In fact, only the Heart Hospital in the Oklahoma City area has switched to computers to minimize mistakes.

Combine the worst hospitals [nearly 100,000 deaths due to hospital errors last year], defensive medicine, insurance companies and drug-pushing pharmaceutical firms and America ranks 36th out of 200 nations, according to the World Health Organization.

A Dartmouth Medical School national survey estimates that \$700 billion a year is wasted on unnecessary care. How much of that would cover the nearly 47 million Americans without insurance?

The Massachusetts Medical Society’s professional liability committee estimates that 10% of health costs go to defensive medicine.

Obama can’t win – the AMA says he should first fix the malpractice lawsuit epidemic, then the AMA would support universal health care.

Critics claim Obama is pushing socialized medicine. Such ignorance! Under socialism the medical profession and hospitals work for the government. Obama

The Media's Decline

No news is good news? Watch network TV in disgust as the “news” is car chases, grass fires and celebrity breakups, ignoring vital issues at home and abroad.

Listen to an endless stream of AM radio talk show hosts polarizing ordinary Americans who believe if it’s on the radio it must be true.

Pundits shout about political horse races and poll numbers rather than discuss hard facts, especially those that leave listeners feeling uncomfortable. Mental health. Public health. Corrections, etc. Ouch!

There is little doubt the U.S. media is in crisis when a scientific poll commissioned by Time magazine shows journalists at the absolute bottom of the professional totem pole.

Newspapers across America are folding or cutting back on staff and the news hole. Don’t look for TV news to fill the void.

In Oklahoma the best newscast is 6:30 in the evening on OETA. If you’re not watching it, you are missing hard-hitting factual news coverage.

A handful of massive corporations control network TV, radio, and newspapers. They slash newsroom budgets, cozy up to advertisers, cluttering America with cheap, mindless entertainment and faux journalism.

Newspapers are hurting? Just a few years ago the operating profit margin for newspapers averaged 19.3% – exceeded only by commercial banks [32.4%] and pharmaceutical firms [24.2%].

What irony! Newspaper profits and circulation plummet and network viewership is down. The media have left us with an America that is generally misled and misinformed.

Nearly every political problem we face today can be linked to the lack of media coverage – the war in Iraq, eroding environmental protections, soaring budget deficits, disappearing civil liberties, the collapse of urban public education, and an unprecedented health care crisis.

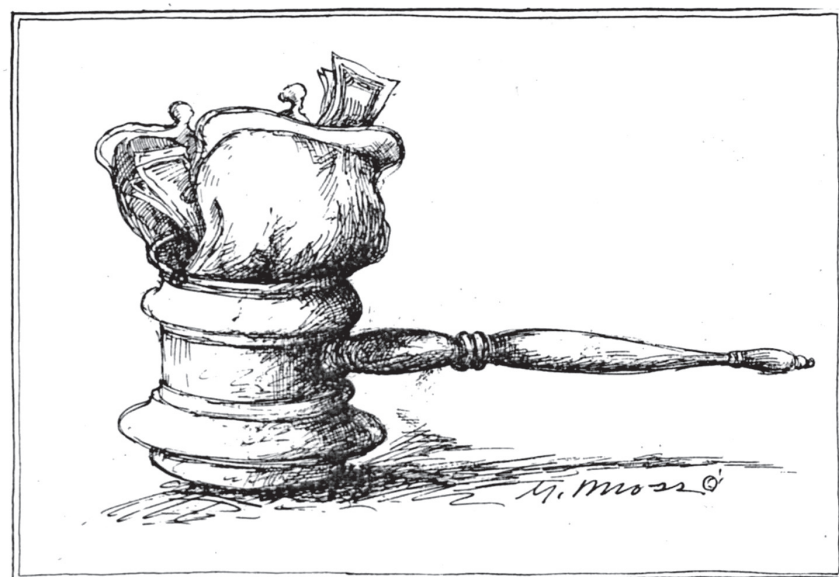
Where are the probing questions? Newspapers have always challenged the status quo. Where is the coverage that the First Amendment was designed to ensure?

Gov. Brad Henry abandoned regularly scheduled news conferences, opting for the occasional dog and pony show. Why aren’t the media protesting?

The mess in the media is partially the fault of government policies – massive tax cuts for the affluent, monopoly broadcast licenses, government subsidies, and lack of regulation. Well-heeled lobbyists fashion legislation behind closed doors.

The media are supposed to be the eyes and ears of ordinary citizens. Who else holds government accountable? Remember the softball questions and cozy relationship of the White House press corps and George W. Bush?

One of the G.W. Bush Administration’s proposed budgets would have slashed



stoutly opposes that.

Look no further for a major culprit in America’s health care disaster – the insurance industry. They exist to collect your premiums and deny your claims. Even Wall Street falls short of their level of greed.

Not unlike street gangs, doctors won’t snitch on malpracticing colleagues, eliminating peer review as a definitive answer.

A University of Michigan study shows that if a doctor makes a mistake, apologizes for it and shows empathy, victims are less likely to sue. In other words they are no longer gods in white coats but ordinary human beings.

Using the sincere apology method, lawsuits dropped from an average of 300 a year to 70 – malpractice insurance premiums have dropped by a third.

As for my relatives practicing law – a McAlester district judge told me my late brother Leo would be tapped as defense counsel for a penniless defendant in a murder case – and the most he ever received was \$500.

His son, Scott Troy, spent years as a public defender – providing a legal defense for those without funds to hire counsel.

As for my daughter Marti – she was a prosecutor in Phoenix for six years, then a public and juvenile public defender in Oklahoma City.

She spent nearly three years teaching criminal justice in the old Soviet bloc countries. She then wound up for nearly three years helping restart the criminal justice system in Liberia. This month she’s off to Iraq doing the same work.

Lawyers are the butt of endless jokes when in fact they have no professional peer when it comes to helping the less fortunate. Can you name any other profession that has a fund to reimburse clients who have been mistreated by an attorney?

Everybody hates lawyers – until they need one. Just remember, even Jesus didn’t pick 12 winners.

\$157 million from public broadcasting over two years – America’s lonely fountain of facts and insight.

Don’t say we weren’t warned. More than three million people spoke out against efforts by the White House and FCC to let Big Media get even bigger in 2003. The courts rejected weaker media ownership rules.

Where were the reporters when Swift Boat liars, funded by the likes of T. Boone Pickens and the brass at Chesapeake Energy, raised millions to buy TV time to spread deliberate lies about John Kerry? They have cranked up again to oppose the Obama health care initiative.

Rush Limbaughs and Glenn Becks are among the talking heads earning millions as faux commentators spreading rightwing propaganda. No equal time, thanks to Ronald Reagan.

Thankfully, millions cherish NPR and Public Television. Time and again a bevy of statehouse Republicans and congressional Republicans have sought to cut or eliminate funding. An anti-OETA bill this year was shelved.

Don’t kid yourself – the switch to digital TV is enriching a handful of broadcasters. More than two million homes in rural America are now without television and face little hope of ever receiving it again.

Most of the dailies in Oklahoma are chain owned, milking the local community but few contribute to the commonweal. Some uncritically publish the bitter anti-Oklahoma propaganda cranked out by the far right Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs.

Only OETA TV staffs the state Capitol. A single commercial radio station, KTOK, and public radio’s KOSU represent radio.

In Oklahoma where there were three Tulsa World statehouse staffers, there is one. Where there were three Oklahoman statehouse reporters, there are two.

Intelligent Oklahomans who bother to track vital issues of the day shake their heads in wonder at some of the rightwing clowns elected to the Legislature and the Seven Dwarfs we call our congressional delegation.

Voters are the ultimate victims. Nearly half have given up on home delivery of a daily newspaper, once a staple in every home – urban or rural.

The cost-cutting Oklahoman summarily cut daily delivery to 7,000 homes in western Oklahoma and booted 152 of its employees, eliminating its pension system.

It’s hard to imagine an America without daily newspapers. The First Amendment is alive and well but folks who want to be informed will have to dig for facts.

The Observer may be small but no daily covers the vital issues of the day better. We encourage all Oklahomans to take a daily newspaper. If the editorial page irks you, skip it.

Follow The Money

Steele Votes, Finances Reek Of Ambition

By Wanda Jo Stapleton

State Rep. Kris Steele, R-Shawnee, appears positioned to run for governor or other statewide office sometime after he's term-limited in 2012. He has allied himself with powerful, nation-wide pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

In addition, Steele, who hopes to become House Speaker in 2011, has formed a political action committee and is busy contributing to campaigns of Republicans who are in a position to help him later.

Big Pharma recognized and rewarded Steele after he, in 2005, killed a bill to re-import lower-cost prescription drugs from Canada.

That year, 2005, began with Gov. Brad Henry, in his State of the State address, declaring: "It is vital that we ensure affordable prescription drugs for all Oklahomans. Growing numbers of states are re-importing such drugs from Canada and other industrialized nations, and for good reason. They are the same medicines, same exact brands, same effectiveness."

STEELE NEUTERED THE MEASURE

When the governor's drug re-importation bill [SB 977] got to Steele's Health and Human Services Committee, Steele amended it to require approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA] for any drug re-imported. Of course, the FDA had recently cracked down on drug re-importation by threatening civil and criminal action for companies daring to get drugs from Canada.

Then, Steele bragged in a press release that his amendment ensured that "Oklahoma citizens would be protected with legal and medical support." Actually, Steele protected the price-gouging pharmaceutical companies by making sure that we would continue to pay the highest prices in the world for medicine.

The monetary reward to Steele was immediate. During his first five years in the House of Representatives, his campaign contributions from "pharmaceuticals" totaled \$3,730, mainly from local pharmacists. However, beginning in 2006 [the year after his "amendment" described above], Steele collected \$12,400, primarily from Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson, SmithKline Beecham, Pfizer, Wyeth, Schering-Plough, Merck, and Medco.

Imagine what these companies would do for Steele should he run for governor. After all, he has already proved his allegiance to Corporate America instead of to his constituents.

ABANDONING SICK KIDS

That allegiance to Corporate America continued during the 2009 legislative session when Steele helped insurance companies put profits ahead of kids' health. He helped kill Nick's Law [HB 1312] which required insurance providers to cover autism treatment for children.

That measure was named for Nick Rohde, an Edmond child whose extended family has struggled to pay Nick's medical bills. Problem is that cherry-picking insurance companies cover only well people, not those with "pre-existing conditions."

In other words, autistic children are "throw away" kids.

Steele wasn't even a member of the House committee which killed Nick's Law; but, as speaker pro tempore, he is next to the House speaker in power and thus has voting rights in all committees.

Therefore, he was present when the Economic Development and Financial Services Committee considered Nick's Law. Regretfully, Steele led his Republican colleagues on that committee in killing the bill.

What else could he do? Insurance interests had contributed \$28,379 to his campaigns since he had been in the House. These contributions came mainly from agents, employees, and political action committees of BlueCross, State Farm, Allstate, Farmers, Farm Bureau, and American Fidelity.

COVERING HIS BUTT

To distract attention from his ties to insurance companies, Steele was the

Oklahoma Health Near The Bottom

Oklahomans know that health care reform is not an option yet the Republican Legislature [aided and abetted by some Democrats] blithely cuts taxes \$720 million despite hurting families.

Many Oklahoma businesses have cut or dropped health benefits straining state budgets. Millions are paying more for less. Families and businesses in Oklahoma deserve better.

Roughly 1.9 million people in Oklahoma get health insurance on the job, where family premiums average \$12,256, about the annual earning of a full-time minimum wage job.

Since 2000 alone, average family premiums have increased by 77% in Oklahoma.

Household budgets are strained by high costs: 29% of middle-income Oklahoma families spend more than 10% of their income on health care.

SKIPPING VISITS TO A DOCTOR

High costs block access to care - 17% of people in Oklahoma report not visiting a doctor due to high costs.

See HEALTH Page 13



House author of a cover-your-butt type bill [SB 135] that became law this year. This new law provides for training more students to treat autism.

Those students can graduate in Oklahoma and then get paid by moving to one of 14 other states which provides insurance coverage for autistic kids - including Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin.

COLLECTING IOUS

Steele has established a political action committee [PAC] called "Oklahomans for a Healthy Future." In all honesty, this PAC should be called "Oklahomans for an Unhealthy Future."

Anyhow, Steele has collected and distributed \$46,500 to 17 Republican candidates for the House and one for lieutenant governor.

Surprisingly, Steele's profession is "minister." That dedication would seem to include an aura of morality.

But I'm still trying to figure out what's moral about abandoning sick kids and forcing Oklahomans to continue paying the highest prescription drug prices in the world.

- The author is a former Democratic state representative living in Oklahoma City

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Just Say No

January 6, 2009

POSTED BY FROSTY TROY

Could Barack Obama's record-setting fundraising be the death knell of campaign-finance "reform"?

After saying he would accept public funding and live within the prescribed spending limits, Obama changed course - gambling that he could raise more privately. He raked in an more than \$600 million.

John McCain took public funding, criticizing Obama for [...]

Remembering Bush-World

December 29, 2008

BY KENNY BELFORD

Approaching the New Year, and the end of the reign of error of George W. Bush, perhaps a brief reflection of the past eight years might be interesting. This list isn't in a strict chronological sequence, just a few of the highlights we should never forget.

* Florida 2000 - What a great time [...]

The Spirit Of The Season

December 21, 2008

BY EDWIN E. VINEYARD

This writer finds himself regrettably drawn into this thing we have going again about "Christmas." Unfortunately, for too many this has become a controversy about nomenclature - "Holiday" versus "Christmas" - for naming the season.

While many of us think that this is a tempest in a teapot, a totally unnecessary controversy

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THE OKLAHOMA Observer

State Oblivious To National Trends

Land Of The Red Voter

By Arnold Heston

10.25

17th, No. 10, 11 An Independent Journal of Commentary OCTOBER 24, 2008

While many of us think that this is a tempest in a teapot, a totally unnecessary controversy

'Experts' Spin Nuke Safety Fairy Tale

By Morton S. Skorodin

The legislative season is over and pro-nuclear bills that were to be a shoo-in instead had to be tabled for next year's session for fear by their sponsors that they would be squashed.

Last February, I availed myself of the opportunity to present brief comments to the Energy and Utility Regulation Committee of the Oklahoma House of Representatives in opposition to bills smoothing the way for nuclear power. I had requested to present my understanding of the facts and their relevance as an expert witness based upon my training and many years experience as a physician with certification in internal medicine, pulmonary medicine, and with special qualification in critical care. This request was denied, without a direct answer, but I was allowed to speak briefly as a member of the public.

The experience was an eye-opener, since I'd never spoken before a legislative entity. There were not enough seats for all the citizens present who wanted to observe. The meeting was organized by the Republican leaders. They had official witnesses on the pro-nuclear side. The people who oppose nuclear power were allowed none.

NUKE OPPONENTS CUT SHORT

During the public comment period both sides were to be allowed 10 minutes. The anti-nuclear people spoke first and were abruptly cut off at 8½ minutes without the courtesy of an explanation or apology. Then the very same witnesses for the pro-nuclear side spoke once again.

One of their witnesses stood out, Associate Professor Raman P. Singh, of the OSU-Tulsa Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering School. He was expressionless and spoke only briefly with vague and offhand comments and yet at the same time came across as authoritative. He acknowledged that he had grants from the Department of Energy [that's the cabinet-level department responsible for nuclear weapons, such as A-Bombs, H-Bombs, radioactive shells, etc.].

Professor Singh went on to state that he designed nuclear plants but also wind-mill blades. He said that he did not care whether we have nuclear energy, but we would have to have energy. In reality, Oklahoma actually exports energy. Another inconvenient reality: Professor Singh has had recent funding of \$418,430 for research projects based upon and requiring nuclear power to perform. He is a member of the American Nuclear Society.

NO SAFE DOSE OF RADIATION

He was on almost everything I said like a turkey on a June bug. [I say almost because he had no reply to the fact that nuclear radiation causes abortion.] For example, I pointed out that the National Academy of Sciences declared that there is no safe dose of radiation no matter how low and this has been verified repeatedly. He claimed, however, that the National Academy of Engineering had a position that low doses are safe. Think about that one. Would you go to an engineer for a hernia repair or high blood pressure treatment? In defense of the National Academy of Engineering, I have not been able to find any statement to that effect on their website.

In speaking to the legislators, I emphasized the role of radiation in causing the cancer epidemic, including the less common but increasingly significant thyroid cancer. Specifically, an epidemic occurred due to the Chernobyl disaster in what was formerly called the Soviet Union. Professor Singh indicated that this was due to political mistakes by the Soviets. That is, there is a simple, safe, and very inexpensive antidote for the airborne poison from nuclear power plants that can cause thyroid cancer. It's known as Iodine-131, and the Soviet government did not provide it.

MAKING ANTIDOTE AVAILABLE

Here poor Professor Singh has unwittingly wandered into a thorny thicket. Though most European countries, capitalist and Stalinist, failed here, one country's government did come through here. In Poland, approximately seven million doses of the antidote, potassium iodide, were administered in time to prevent a thyroid cancer epidemic. Whatever else the Stalinists did in Poland, this has to be counted on the side of the angels.

But this is far away and long ago. What does this have to do with us?

Inhofe, Coburn Star As Dumb And Dumber

By Cecil Acuff

Oklahoma's Tom Coburn – Senator “NO” Hold It – and Jim Inhofe – Senator “KNOW” Hoax It – are in the news, again, in a negative way. Both are “Solivagants” – those who wander alone in Washington, DC.

Sen. Inhofe wants to aid and abet the warming and flooding environmental hoax, Sen. Coburn wants to hold and jinx the governmental pork barrel and stimuli show.

Sen. Inhofe is an “Ultracrepidarian” – someone who goes beyond one's sphere of knowledge or influence in offering an opinion. The long word is a noun for people who talk through their hats. The senator suffers from these fears: Hydrophobia [water], Thalassophobia [sea] and Ancarophobia [wind]. Sen. Jim is a “Mumpsimus” – someone who obstinately clings to an error, bad habit, or prejudice.

MASTER OF 'DOGMATIC ASSERTION'

Sen. Coburn practices medicine in Muskogee and “Ipsedixitism” in Washington, DC.

THE OKLAHOMA OBSERVER, JULY 10/25,2009, PAGE 7



Plenty. Right now, in theory at least, the U.S. government should make this antidote available for people living near nuclear power plants. There is such a program, sort of.

However, it is not publicized, out of fear of panicking the public, and the responsibility is left to the states and Native American governments. See for yourself in that charming official U.S. government bureaucratic style: <http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/emerg-preparedness/protect-public/potassium-iodide.html>.

TECH, NO LOGIC

Specifically: “The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has revised a section of its emergency preparedness regulations. The revised rule requires that States* with a population within the 10-mile emergency planning zone [EPZ] of commercial nuclear power plants consider including potassium iodide as a protective measure for the general public to supplement sheltering and evacuation in the unlikely event of a severe nuclear power plant accident. *When used in this Web site, State includes Native American governments.” This is worth emphasizing, as Native Americans are affected far out of proportion to their current numbers.

Are you getting the idea about Professor Singh's approach? It's technologic, as in: TECH, NO LOGIC.

One final example will do. One of Professor Singh's arguments was that nuclear power is OK because the world's worst industrial disaster was the Bhopal catastrophe, a chemical rather than nuclear event. That is like saying you won't take aspirin on a doctor's advice to prevent a heart attack because you might get cancer instead!

OUTRAGED BY FALSEHOODS

I discussed Professor Singh's comments with noted Indian researcher and writer Arun Shrivastava. He was outraged by Professor Singh's callous and untrue statements and, in particular, criticized the policy of the government of India with regard to its nuclear program.

He quickly outlined six reasons, in addition to the illnesses causing unnecessary suffering and early death, why nuclear power must be rejected: 1] nuclear weapons proliferation [being inseparable from nuclear power]; 2] no reactor is 100% safe and the potential for large-scale accidents can't be ruled out; 3] the nuclear waste problem will never be solved; 4] the financial risks including the requirement for government-provided insurance; 5] degradation of the fresh water by thermal, radioactive and chemical pollution; and 6] cheaper, cleaner and safer options for electricity generation are available and scalable with shorter gestation period.

Professor Singh, you are clearly accomplished and industrious. We like for such people to come to Oklahoma. But don't come here to deceive and abuse us. There is a word for that: carpetbagger. Make it right with a sincere, contrite, and public apology to the people of Oklahoma.

– The author is a physician living in Stillwater

ton – the practice of dogmatic assertion. It's from the Latin, “ipse dixit” – “he himself has said it.”

In the past, Sen. Coburn derailed a congressional plan to vote on the Hunger-Free Communities Act before adjournment. Oklahoma ranked 4th nationally for food-insecure folks.

Sen. Coburn has embarrassed his constituents before; he commented, “Why would you want to be up here ... if you had any kind of life, this is the last place ... senators are in Washington, DC, because they can't make as good a living any place else.”

Historic anti-smoking legislation became law in June 2009, giving regulators new power to limit nicotine in cigarettes that kill a half million each year. No more “light” or candy-flavored smokes – there'll be bigger warning labels and fewer ads featuring sexy young smokers. Sen. Coburn voted “no” – presumably

See SENATORS Page 15

Generation Gap About \$200,000

There are 67 million Americans 55 and older who are so affluent that the gap between them and younger people makes the U.S. a nation of haves and have-much-less.

The rich are getting richer, but what's received little attention is who these rich people are. Overwhelmingly, they're older folks.

Oklahoma started behind, the average income is 20% below the national average. Yes, the cost of living is lower but don't tell that to the checkout clerk the next time you buy groceries.

Oklahoma employers pay some of the nation's lowest wages. Oklahoma's media and so-called leaders funded Right to Work, another nail in the state's economic coffin. The temporary life preserver saving Oklahoma is the fact that it's a Petrostate.

OLDER AMERICANS PROSPER

Nearly all additional wealth created in the U.S. since 1989 has gone to people 55 and older, according to Federal Reserve data. Wealth has doubled since 1989 in households headed by older Americans.

Not so for younger Americans. Households headed by people in their 20s, 30s and 40s have barely kept up with inflation or have fallen behind since 1989.

People 35 to 50 actually have lost wealth since 1989 after adjusting for inflation, Fed data show.

Older people have always been wealthier than younger ones. What's changed is the disparity between the generations.

Older people have raced ahead, helped by government retirement benefits. Young people are running in place, partly because they're delaying careers to get more education.

IS IT A FAIR TAX SYSTEM?

The growing gap between rich and poor has raised concerns about social justice, the fairness of the tax system and other issues.

There is no consensus about what, if anything, should be done. President Bush widened the gap with a huge tax cut for the wealthiest 1% of Americans.

Much attention has focused on the multimillion-dollar paychecks of CEOs and hedge fund managers, who enjoyed windfalls at a time when the wages of ordinary workers stagnated.

Their greed brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy. But the graying of wealth and income may be the most important twist in the new inequality.

The implications are far-reaching and can turn conventional wisdom on its head. Social Security and Medicare increasingly are functioning as a transfer of money from less affluent young people to much wealthier older people. Neither has a means test.

YOUNG STUCK WITH BILL

Because the older generation hasn't set aside enough money to cover

See GAP Page 14

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David Tate

JULY 12

David Tait, Associate Professor at Rogers State University in Claremore, is a theologian and historian. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Seminary of the Southwest and a Ph.D. in history from Oklahoma State University. After 21 years of ordained ministry in the Anglican tradition, David and his wife Laura entered the Orthodox Church in 2005. They worship at St. James Orthodox Christian Church in Stillwater.



Rev. Dr. Lisa Wolfe

August 2

The Rev. Dr. Lisa Wolfe is Associate Professor in the Endowed Chair of Hebrew Bible at Oklahoma City University. She completed her Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and Northwestern University, and her M.Div. from United Theological Seminary. She was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2000. She is currently a member of Church of the Open Arms United Church of Christ. Her current writing project is a commentary on Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs and Judith. Lisa also recently authored several entries for the preacher's commentary Feasting on the Word.



Sr. Ellie Finlay

JULY 19

Sr. Ellie Finlay is a solitary nun in the Anglican tradition. An experienced spiritual director and retreat conductor, Sr. Ellie's background includes traditional convent life as well as training in theology, biblical studies, counseling and spirituality. She has studied with meditation teachers from several major religious traditions and now specializes in practice of meditative practice and theory. Sr. Ellie lived in both Ireland and South Africa before coming to Oklahoma in 1996 at the invitation of Bishop Robert Moody. She is the director of St. John's Center for Spiritual Formation, an interfaith meditation center in Tulsa.



Dr. Imad Enchassi

August 9

Imad S Enchassi, Ph.D. works in Human resources at the University of Phoenix, AZ. He is also the President and CEO of the Independent Management Advisors and Developers consulting firm based in Oklahoma City. In addition, Dr. Enchassi serves as the President and CEO of the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City (ISGOC) and is a regular speaker in several US cities.



Barbara Schwartz Brus

JULY 26

Barbara Schwartz Brus is a seminary student at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa. She holds bachelor's degrees in journalism and religious studies, and spent 15 years as a journalist at various Oklahoma newspapers. She currently works as the editorial director at *The Xenia Institute*, a Norman based organization dedicated to teaching community groups the principles of transformative dialogue. At Phillips, Barbara's studies focus on postcolonial theologies and biblical hermeneutics. She hopes to graduate from Phillips in May 2010 and go on to doctoral studies. Barbara lives with her husband, Brian Brus, and their pets in Oklahoma City.



Dr. Charles Kimball

August 16

Dr. Charles Kimball is Presidential Professor and Director of Religious Studies at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He has served as Chair of the Department of Religion and professor of comparative religion in the Department of Religion and the Divinity School at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. During the 2006 fall term, Dr. Kimball was the Rita and William Bell Visiting Professor at The University of Tulsa. He is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and holds the M.Div. degree from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. An ordained Baptist minister, he received his Th.D. from Harvard University in the comparative religion with specialization in Islamic studies.

Lesson For Today's Baptists?

The Pirate Preacher And 'Amen Charlie'

By Don Wilkey

An older man got up to preach in Pennsylvania in 2002. He was in his 90s and was a shadow of his younger self. A small crowd gathers in his home to hear his sermon. He has trouble, stumbling over words, his memory is not nearly as sharp as it once was. The few who have gathered to hear him have just come from a church split over this pastor.

In stained glass language, the former assembly had declared the pulpit vacant. Which is a euphemistic way of saying they fired the preacher. His age had taken away his energy and sometimes he got confused in his preaching. Before the split, the church had become a mere fraction of what it was under the leadership of this man. The youth director was almost 80.

The small loyal group of followers along with the pastor can still recall the days of huge throngs and a radio ministry that reached millions of listeners. Their pastor had a daily radio broadcast that was carried through the airways to listeners around the nation.

Now he faced the embarrassing legacy of being forced out of a small group barely able to keep the doors open of a church that had once flourished. The preacher was making plans to sue the group for his termination. He had faced many days like this filled with controversy.

This is the year the preacher, Carl McIntire, would die leaving behind a legacy that few American pulpits would ever experience.

RAISED IN OKLAHOMA

McIntire grew up in Durant, OK. He was born the year before Oklahoma was even a state. His mother had separated from his Presbyterian preacher father and raised him in this remote town in the new state.

He grew up meager, and went to school at Southeastern Oklahoma State College. He then attended the Ivy League seminary his father had attended at Princeton University.

While in school at Princeton the student became acquainted with Dr. J. Gresham Machen, an old South segregationist who would be credited with starting the modern fundamentalist movement in the Protestant churches. Machen gave Ivy League scholarly credentials to a movement that is still strong in the nation.

A CATALYST FOR DIVISION

With the influence and help of Machen, McIntire worked as pastor of a Presbyterian congregation and led them to split from the national organization of Presbyterians. The splinter group started the Orthodox Presbyterian Church denomination.

Later on McIntire left this splinter group to start the Bible Presbyterian Church organization.

Along the way he stumbled upon a new medium. He found radio, or it found him. One of the most successful moves he made was to mortgage a seminary he started to buy radio time. The station he purchased was WXUR. This radio ministry launched him into national prominence.

While on the airwaves, McIntire received a national following. He received over 4,000 letters a day from listeners. He was so popular that national politicians shared platforms with him. He was a close acquaintance with Sen. Strom Thurmond, an old Dixiecrat who was a leader in the anti-integration movement.

THUMPING RIGHTWING PARANOIA

While speaking on radio, from the pulpit, or publishing his newspaper, McIntire focused on several rightwing viewpoints. He fought against the United Nations, civil rights, and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. He denounced labor unions, dancing and fluoride in the water.

McIntire struggled against the World Council of Churches and founded another version of the organization. He kept files on preachers. He considered Billy Graham's preaching "a ministry of disobedience."

Area and regional churches had had enough of the preacher and his antics. He was ousted from the Presbyterian denomination for being divisive. He later bragged about this badge of honor. Churches got organized to drive him off the radio, stating he was anti-Semitic, racist and an anti-Catholic bigot.

Later on, Bob Jones University gave him an honorary doctorate and he started two colleges that lost accreditation.

INTEGRATION A 'COMMUNIST PLOT'

McIntire helped jump-start Billy Hargis. The two teamed up to travel the South, telling the audiences that integration was a communist plot. Some suggest it was McIntire's launching of Hargis that made him a national figure.

McIntire endorsed the John Birch Society like Hargis. He used his influence and apparatus to fight the nomination of John Kennedy for president. McIntire, who was no fan of Catholics, was afraid the Vatican would run the U.S. through Kennedy.

In the 1970s McIntire enjoyed having his picture taken with race-baiter Lester Maddox of Georgia. He also worked with Southern Baptist minister Edgar Bundy in a network to spy on people they suspected of being Communists.

Current Biography claims McIntire often held pep rallies for the Vietnam War. The Philadelphia Council of Churches accused him of being anti-Semitic and anti-Negro.

BATTLING THE FCC

What propelled the Calvinist into the national spotlight was an episode that began with a battle with the FCC. The federal agency was alerted to the fact that the rightwing program was entirely slanted. No opposing view was expressed on



the programming.

Churches, ministers and journalists began to complain. McIntire's friend Hargis would face similar charges from the agency.

To deal with the conflict McIntire purchased an older ship and set it up to broadcast his radio programs. The publicity from such an effort made headlines in several major newspapers.

McIntire claimed he was broadcasting to America much like Radio Free Europe programs went behind the Iron Curtain. The accusation was that the federal government would not allow freedom of speech and McIntire had to become a type-of-captain of a pirate ship off the shoreline. The ship almost caught fire on the maiden voyage and transmitted for only 16 hours. Some suggested the ship ought to carry the skull and crossbones flag.

The national attention helped make McIntire famous.

A MINISTRY OF CONFLICT, DIVISION

If one counted the number of schisms and conflicts that sprang from the churches and denominations McIntire founded, you can see the kind of conflict and division that followed his ministry. This type of fundamentalism appears to flourish on conflict and when it has no one close to fight with it turns on itself.

McIntire's story is a parallel many have sought to warn Southern Baptists about.

He once assured his friend Billy Hargis that Southern Baptists were responsible for the recent control of Congress by the Republican Party. He also stated in the same speech that Hargis was the original founder of the new religious right.

In Billy Graham's biography he recalls reading a critical article McIntire wrote about him. Graham took the criticism seriously and was deeply hurt by the comments. He then decided to move on in his ministry and distance himself from this critic much like he did with Bob Jones.

FEARING A ONE-WORLD RELIGION

Though Graham moved on, others have taken McIntire much more seriously. I recently read one of the last articles McIntire wrote before his death. It was a document in which he expressed the belief that the UN was setting up the world to have a one-world religion in which Christianity would be abolished.

A topic that is often voiced through other end-of-times, would-be prophets like John Hagee, Pat Robertson, Jack Van Impe and Hal Lindsey.

One of McIntire's former church members said of the pastor, "You either agree with the devil or McIntire." There was no room aboard the ship for the slightest difference on viewpoints by most accounts. This was one of the fruits of the movement that led to so many divisions.

One popular figure in the story is the famed radio companion of McIntire known as "Amen Charlie." Sitting next to McIntire on his radio broadcasts was this man who claimed to have an earned doctorate. At given moments and at strategic times after a comment by McIntire, the co-host would echo a resounding "amen" or awe at such a profound statement.

McIntire's critics found great humor in such a character. Everyone needs a few "Amen Charlies."

However, to set up a system with no dissent and total control does not model the idea of New Testament freedom. Some modern religious systems in the name of the Christian faith operate like this one. Men surround themselves with a few "Amen Charlies" and take control of churches and denominations.

Eventually these models end up in a sad way much like Carl McIntire's version.

- The author is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Onalaska, TX

How Did He Get Here?

A father was at the beach with his children when the four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore where a seagull lay dead in the sand.

"Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked.

"He died and went to Heaven," the Dad replied.

The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"

BOOKS

The World According To Waxman

By Tim Rutten

THE WAXMAN REPORT

How Congress Really Works
By Henry Waxman with Joshua Green
Grand Central Publishing
256 pages, \$24.99

Pretty faces and promising careers tend to flash across our local political firmament with the frequency of shooting stars – and with about as much effect. But for more than two decades, the most consequential elected official in Southern California has been a short, bald, decidedly mustached congressman from Los Angeles' Westside named Henry Waxman.

In fact, when the history of postwar America is definitively written, it's possible that the record will show that the three California politicians who had the biggest impact on the largest number of American lives were Earl Warren, as chief justice; Ronald Reagan, as president; and Henry Waxman as representative of the 30th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Tens of millions of Americans are healthier, breathe cleaner air and live safer lives because of his legislative efforts. Among living lawmakers, his record of legislative achievement can be compared only to Sen. Ted Kennedy's.

On that basis alone, *The Waxman Report: How Congress Really Works* would merit respectful attention. However, the congressman, now 69, has, along with his collaborator Joshua Green of the Atlantic magazine, produced something unexpected and rather fine. *The Waxman Report* is part compelling memoir, part fascinating, shrewd civics lesson and part bracing statement of practical idealism. It's impossible to put down and a joy to read – a model, in fact, of lucid exposition.

WAXMAN NOW IN CENTER OF EVENTS

The timing is fortuitous, because Waxman is more than ever at the center of events, since the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which he chairs, shares jurisdiction over the energy and healthcare issues key to President Obama's agenda. The Westside Democrat and Rep. George Miller, a longtime friend and Riverside County Democrat who chairs the Education and Labor Committee, and Rep. Charles B. Rangel, the New York Democrat who heads Ways and Means, have agreed to work together – their committees have jurisdiction over healthcare – to produce a single House healthcare measure. [Miller, Waxman and Minnesota's James L. Oberstar are the only surviving Democratic representatives elected as members of 1974's so-called reform class.]

Moreover, Phil Schilliro, who was Waxman's chief of staff for 27 years, now is Obama's congressional liaison. [Read this book and you'll understand the importance of such connections.]

Waxman's tenacity as an investigator and questioner are storied. When he became chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in 2007, a Time magazine profile – while noting that he stands less than 5½ feet tall – called him “the scariest guy in town.” As a result of rule changes pushed through by the Republicans during their futile pursuit of Bill Clinton, the chairman of that committee is the only one in Congress with the unilateral power to issue subpoenas. Waxman, the profile pointed out, assumed the chairmanship noting that while the House compelled 140 hours of sworn testimony over allegations that Clinton had used the White House Christmas-card list for political purposes, it had questioned witnesses for just 12 hours over the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

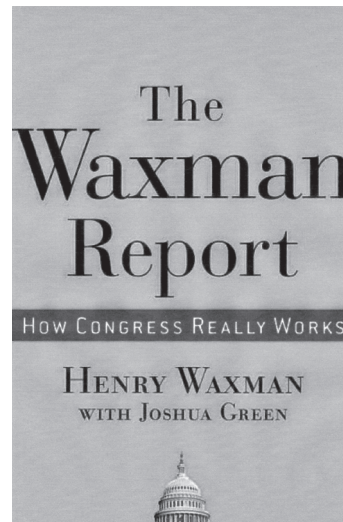
WILLINGNESS TO 'REACH ACROSS THE AISLE'

Though always prepared to reach across the aisle for allies, Waxman is legendarily tough. His friend Miller once said that when he first came to the House, “I thought Henry's first name was ‘sonofabitch.’ Everybody ... kept saying, ‘Do you know what that sonofabitch Waxman wants?’”

One of the pleasures of *The Waxman Report* is tracing the origins of these signature traits to his Los Angeles boyhood. Waxman was born in Boyle Heights. His parents' families had emigrated from Bessarabia [contemporary Moldova] to escape the pogroms. The neighborhood in those days “was a teeming immigrant community with a heavy representation of Russian and Eastern European Jews, along with Mexicans, Japanese and many others.” His father was then a grocery clerk, a proud member of the Retail Clerks Union, Local 770, and – like his mother – a fervent supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal. Waxman's uncle, Al, was the founder and publisher of what was then the city's important liberal newspaper, the East Side Journal, one of the few papers in the country to oppose internment of Japanese-Americans and a voice of sanity during the Zoot Suit riots. Al Waxman also was one of the city's first crusaders against smog.

After the war, LA's Jewish community moved west to the Fairfax district and so did the Waxmans. Al's paper became the LA Reporter [often known in those days as “the Waxman Reporter”] and Henry's father acquired a store in Watts, over which the family lived. Henry graduated from UCLA and UCLA Law School, but his passion was the school's Young Democratic Club, through which he made lifelong friends and comrades like Phil and John Burton, Willie Brown and, most of all, Howard and Michael Berman. Howard, of course, has become his closest legislative colleague and now chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee and watches the back of the Westside's entertainment industry on intellectual property issues.

Waxman's account of his first run for the state Assembly is pivotal to understanding his career because it taught him the value of tireless organizing and



meticulous preparation. Even though his uncle's widow refused him the LA Reporter's endorsement – the paper always had supported his opponent in the Democratic primary, a longtime incumbent – Waxman carried the day, in part, by securing the endorsement of dapper Col. Leon Washington, publisher of the Los Angeles Sentinel, the city's leading African-American weekly.


Waxman's chronicle of his education in LA and Sacramento politics is, if anything, too brief; his account of his congressional career is fascinatingly detailed, filled with blunt behind-the-scenes anecdotes and crisply drawn portraits of allies and opponents.

Most of all, it's a detailed inside account of just how the nation's laws are made. It succeeds as storytelling because Waxman and Green have structured most of the book as a series of narrative examples built around major bills. Thus chapters are titled, for instance, “HIV/AIDS and the Ryan White Act,” “The Orphan Drug Act,” “The Clean Air Act” and “The Tobacco Wars.” There's a fascinating chapter on baseball and steroids as well.

Most of all, there's a persuasive declaration of faith in that particular brand of liberalism that the late Arthur Schlesinger called “the politics of remedy.” As Waxman puts it, “In Boyle Heights, everyone thought of government as an institution that helped people.”

As this heartfelt, important little book will remind its readers, there's a lot to be said for the faith of our fathers.

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Religious Freedom Struggle Continues

By Brent Walker

As Baptist Joint Commission general counsel I spend the vast majority of my time dealing with domestic religious liberty issues. Indeed, there are plenty of controversies arising at the federal and state levels to keep BJC staff busy without reaching beyond our borders.

While our primary focus is on upholding the principles of the First Amendment's Religion Clauses, our reason for doing so connects us to religious freedom struggles across the globe.

The annual report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom [USCIRF], as well as a recent controversy concerning the United Nations Human Rights Council, reminds us that while religious freedom is a fundamental right, it cannot be taken for granted.

UN DECLARATION CITED

International law has long recognized the importance of religious freedom. Many international agreements are based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which the United States signed in 1948. Two sections are particularly relevant to religious freedom.

Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

CHANGING AFFILIATIONS

Recent polls show changes in religious affiliations among Americans, offering strong evidence that we enjoy a great deal of religious freedom in the United States.

Others elsewhere are less fortunate: the USCIRF details religious freedom violations in numerous countries. Even in international forums, such as the United Nations, the commitment to individual religious liberty leaves much to be desired.

For example, the UN Human Rights Council recently passed a resolution that appears to sacrifice the liberty of individuals in a misguided attempt to prevent criticism of organized religion.

The "Combating Defamation of Religion" resolution passed by a vote of 23-11, with 13 abstentions. While it is not binding on UN members and analysts debate its effect, many religious freedom advocates appropriately worry that the council resolution provides international cover for domestic blasphemy laws.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACROSS THE WORLD

At the very least, the subject is worthy of contemplation since it may reflect stark differences about religious freedom in different parts of the world.

Couched in terms of promoting and encouraging "universal respect for and

~~"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES."~~

observance of fundamental freedoms for all," the resolution broadly recognizes positive contributions of religion.

It properly notes instances of intolerance and violence against individuals based upon their faith, particularly Muslim minorities following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, but then calls for action that may threaten the very freedom it purports to protect.

The resolution calls for states to protect against "acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred in general, and to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and beliefs."

FIGHTING WITH CENSORSHIP

In essence, it appears to fight discrimination with censorship. The vote illustrates significant divisions in the international community: support came largely from members of the Organization of Islamic Countries, China, and a few developing countries, while Canada, Chile, and many European countries opposed it. Mexico, Brazil, Japan and India were among those that abstained. Generally, defamation is a legal offense based on the communication of a false statement that casts someone or some group in a negative light.

The notion that a religion can be defamed is controversial. Courts are not competent to decide the truth of religious statements; moreover, punishing those who criticize religion stifles individual liberty.

The resolution raises concerns that religious dissent could be met with repression justified in the name of preventing defamation of religion. For Baptists, a denomination born out of persecution for challenging religious orthodoxy established by the government, religious freedom must insist on the right of individuals to criticize religions.

While it may not be surprising that there are deep divisions in the international community over this issue, I am hopeful that the United States will regain its presence on the council and that as this issue continues to be debated, more countries will recognize the significance of protecting individual religious freedom as a fundamental human right that cannot be compromised in efforts to shield organized religions from criticism or dissent.

From BJC Newsletter

Obama Must Act Fast On Health Care Reform

By Froma Harrop

President Obama has a green light and open eight-lane highway for health-care reform. But somehow the guy can't put his foot on the gas. He hedges in neutral while some fellow Democrats muck up policy and Republicans demagogue them into mush.

A commanding 85% of Americans want "fundamental changes" in American health care, according to a recent New York Times-CBS News poll. On the allegedly controversial "public option" – a government-run plan that would compete with private insurers – 72% are in favor. And that includes half of self-identified Republicans.

What is Obama afraid of? He apparently dreads repeating the mistakes of the Clinton health proposal. One was letting wonks create a mostly finished health-reform product. Neither lawmakers nor health-care interests liked being kept out of the kitchen.

WHY IS OBAMA SO TIMID?

Obama wanted to avoid, as he recently put it, "my way or the highway" on health care. But that needn't mean sitting stalled on the interstate as friends and foes alike run a demolition derby over coherent policy.

Remember how the Clinton plan was ridiculed for being too complicated? Hillary's 1,400 pages became the big ha-ha.

And so what are so-called moderate Democrats, fearful of supporting a public plan, suggesting in its place? Fifty separate cooperatives, each run by a board of directors managing its own risk pool, cutting its own deals with doctors and hospitals. Only 50?

This proposal push by Sen. Kent Conrad, a North Dakota Democrat, has the support of some Democrats from fairly conservative states. Conrad says he wouldn't mind one national cooperative but is concerned it would run into the same opposition as the public-plan idea. [Again, see the poll numbers above.] Does he worry that a Republican will call him a "collectivist" on Fox? That's going to happen anyway. He can bank on it.

By the way, the Clinton plan also envisioned regional cooperatives. They were

panned as "too much government control."

A NATIONAL SODA TAX

Some House Democrats have come up with a plan to pay for health care through a tax on soda. The thinking goes that sugary sodas contribute to obesity, and the tax would make people think twice before popping a can of Coke. Mamma mia – and silence from Obama.

The real worry about Obama's steering ability will come when the discussions grow really hot over paying for the plan. The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated the cost of a Senate health-care draft bill at \$1 trillion over 10 years. South Carolina Republican Lindsey Graham immediately pronounced the number "a death blow to a government-run health plan."

The problem isn't the \$1 trillion. It's that the legislation would leave too many Americans uninsured. Even the \$1.6 trillion earlier estimate is not an outlandish amount to spend on a decade's worth of high-quality health-care for all Americans. The Bush tax cuts will cost \$200 billion more than that.

STOP WORRYING ABOUT GOP SUPPORT

In 2007, the Medicare drug benefit weighed in at an estimated \$964 billion over 10 years. And it covers only one health benefit for one slice of the population. Nonetheless, Republicans congratulated themselves that the number was down from an earlier projection of \$1.08 trillion.

The decline showed that "competition among private plans had effectively held down costs," Bush's secretary of health and human services, Michael Leavitt, announced.

Yet Montana Democrat Max Baucus, who heads the Senate Finance Committee, now insists on getting the 10-year cost of comprehensive health-care under \$1 trillion.

Obama has to pick whom to disappoint and what to fight for. Above all, he should drop the obsession with winning wide Republican support for health reform. Time to stop idling and gun it out on the road.

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PUBLIC FORUM

Like California, Okies Dealt With IOUs, Too

By Edwin E. Vineyard

Headlines in the newspapers read: "California Issues IOU's." We are told that in meeting its obligations in salaries and other bills, California is issuing IOU's because they do not have the money in the treasury to pay checks. Since that cannot be done in state government in Oklahoma and most other states, this becomes a news-making anomaly of our times.

[In the case of an Oklahoma shortfall in revenue, the state agencies are automatically reduced by that percentage unless the Legislature meets and decides otherwise. We cannot run budget debt in Oklahoma; borrowing is only through bonding.]

These "IOU's" are technically called "warrants." That means they may be presented for payment when and if there is money in the treasury to pay them. Warrants usually carry a modest interest rate.

WARRANTS IN OKLAHOMA HISTORY

While warrants may be new to most, they are not beyond the personal experience of some of us who worked in the public schools many years ago. When this writer was employed for the first time in public schools as a junior high principal back in 1949, we received warrants instead of checks.

These warrants were boldly labeled NON-PAYABLE across the top. Of course, this tended to shake up the newcomers a bit.

The superintendent carefully explained to us that these were warrants and not checks, and that meant the school district might not yet have enough anticipated tax collections to pay those. He assured us that there would indeed be enough

money there to pay us. He explained that we could readily cash them at the local bank for the full amount, but that some other businesses might not take them or would charge a discount off their value.

VEHICLE TO FINANCE PUBLIC BUSINESS

These warrants carried a 6% interest rate, and the local bank collected and held them. Eventually the bank was paid the amount plus accumulated interest at a competitive rate. Warrants were a way of financing public business in reasonable expectation that taxes would be coming.

During the Great Depression, warrants were used extensively. Frequently, the taxes coming in were not sufficient to pay the warrants. In those days, banks or well-to-do investors would buy up the warrants at a deep discount to compensate for the risk.

The losers were the salaried people and vendors who served the schools. The discounts were on their salaries and bills. Thus, a teacher with a contract for \$75 per month might actually receive only \$50 with no later recourse. On the other hand, the bank might eventually receive their \$50 plus an amount not exceeding the face value plus interest. It depended on the taxes actually collected that year as a percent of that needed to pay all the bills.

The warrant system may not be the rule now in schools, and warrants are so sound that they have been viewed as checks. But the history is there, right in our own state.

- The author, AKA The Militant Moderate, lives in Enid

GI Bill Created Greatest Generation, Good Life

By Clint C. Gold

Enormous contributions are made by the American Legion to their fallen comrades, with both reverence and humility; however, they seldom mention one of their greatest accomplishments: the passage of the GI Bill, which has had such an enormous impact not only on our veterans, but also in changing the character of our nation.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed a bill for our veterans in January 1942, a month after Pearl Harbor. He badgered Congress with little success until October 1943 when he demanded unanimity for early action between Senate and House members, but failed to receive it as Republicans coalesced with southern Democrats to control this bill.

FDR's influence over Congress was waning in the South, after creating the Committee on Fair Employment Practices in 1941, which included black workers receiving equal pay on federal projects such as the CCC and TVA.

AMERICAN LEGION STEPS IN

Even black voting rights and anti-lynching laws were fiercely blocked by southern Democrats. In 1943, Democrats controlled the Senate, 38-21, but by only 10 in the House.

Into the fray stepped the American Legion, the nation's most powerful lobby. In December 1943 they developed a master plan for the GI Bill, signing it January 9, 1944.

In 1944 with five senators [four of them Democrats] as sponsors, the bill passed with ease in the Senate committee on March 24. In the House, John Rankin's committee received the bill the same day as the Senate, but the Legion's bill bogged down in numerous fierce battles.

The first opposition was state rights, as the states wanted controls - who could be educated, who could receive unemployment money, or who could qualify for home loans. Adding to the confusion, 639 varied amendments were introduced.

Then came the coalition's anguish of paying blacks \$20 for 52 weeks as an unemployment benefit, upsetting the local pay scale, especially in the South. The thought of sending a black to college, of helping him buy a home or paying him medical disability, made many southern whites froth at the mouth, especially Rep. Rankin, D-MS, a strong supporter of the bill, as long as blacks were not treated equally.

Research also reveals a physical brawl in the House between FDR hater Rankin and Rep. Frank E. Hook, D-MI.

ELITE SOUGHT TO RETAIN POWER

The conservatives paraded in all the prestigious private university presidents to fight the bill. Led by Harvard's president, they could see lines of race, religion and class blurred as higher education became attainable for all veterans. They were society's upper crust, and it was their duty to keep out the riffraff. Well, they couldn't.

A Fortune survey of the 1949 class [70% veterans] stated they were "the best, most mature, most responsible, most disciplined college students in history." In addition three million veterans received education below college level and two million on the job training.

After several months of House strife, in June 1944, a joint session was put in place with seven Senate and seven House members. The senators gave quick approval, but on June 8, the House session was hopelessly deadlocked 3-3 with one member missing. As per agreement the bill would die if not signed by 10 a.m. June 9.

It appeared doomed.

Again, the Legion "saved the day," commandeered a plane and on a midnight run to Georgia, found the missing Democrat, Rep. John Gibson, and flew him to

DC to save the bill. Rankin had Gibson's proxy to vote for the GI Bill, but Rankin refused to vote Gibson's proxy.

GI BILL UNOPPOSED

Finally out of joint session on June 13, 1944, the Senate and the House voted for passage unopposed. How could this be with all that conflict? How could all the conservatives, FDR haters and racists give up without a single vote against the GI Bill?

The American Legion, that's how. The Legion scared the hell out of them! The Legion thundered, "In a few months when the war is over, 12 million veterans will be wanting answers if you abandon them as in previous wars; they'll vote all of you out of office."

The "aginners" were like rabbits running for their holes. The president signed the GI Bill June 22, 1944, the only FDR entitlement legislation passed without a single Republican vote against it.

This wonderful, unheralded, almost forgotten GI Bill was to a large degree responsible for creating our "Greatest Generation" and establishing the "Good Life." The GI Bill made today's America because of the ambition, maturity and energy of millions of ordinary Americans who used it to make their dreams come true.

With our World War II victory, GIs were being mustered out at the rate of 100,000 per month. At the end of 1946, only three million of the 12 million who had served were still in uniform.

Many of our citizens feared a new depression with millions out of work. No one dreamed of the GI Bill's success.

WHAT GI BILL HELPED PRODUCE

No depression, the GIs went to college. The education plan resulted in 14 future Nobel Prize winners, three Supreme Court justices, three presidents, a dozen senators, two dozen Pulitzer winners, 238,000 teachers, 91 scientists, 67,000 doctors, 450,000 engineers, 240,000 accountants, 17,000 journalists, 22,000 dentists, plus a million lawyers, nurses and on and on.

Before the war, fewer than nine out of 100 had any college; after the war 7.8 million obtained vocational training or college.

It was estimated that for every dollar spent of \$15 billion for benefits, \$7 was returned to our economy. Before 1942 only 30% of our nation owned their own homes; by 1949 70% owned homes, with five million homes through the VA.

FDR created our "middle class society" starting in 1933 and lasting well into the 1980s with programs such as the GI Bill, Social Security, Medicare-Medicaid, Civil Rights, Fair Labor Standards Act, FDIC, USDA, REA and on and on. FDR, the Legion, unions and Liberals working together accomplished Thomas Jefferson's dream of a yeoman's republic, by becoming an overwhelmingly middle-class nation.

REPUBLICAN SCHEMING IN THE '80S

But in the 1980s we ran afoul of Reagan/Bush/Cheney and their schemes of deregulation, creative financing, war for the profiteers, and outsourcing our companies, employees and their ill-gotten monies to off shore banks. They outsourced everything except their sons to fight in a war created by then-lies.

With all the American Legion has done for their country, it's troubling that any military person can condone the Republican Party.

Our current problems remind me of a line from an old John Cash song, well ... almost.

"We made a good run, but we ran too fast. The greed ran us down and left a different class." Pity.

- The author, a Korean War veteran, lives in Sand Springs

Violence Rife On The Mexican Border

By Maria Miranda Maloney

I am a teacher at a Catholic school, Our Lady of the Valley, in the border city of El Paso, TX. The 16 students in my class – mostly 12- and 13-year-olds – arrive daily from Ciudad Juarez, a dense metropolis of about 1.5 million in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

The sister cities are divided by the Rio Grande River, but bound together by the growing terror of drug cartel violence and daily murder.

This violence has become part and parcel of our school life, most dramatically in my English as a second Language class.

Today, my student Miguel's desk is empty. He is one of some 69 students in our school who are U.S. citizens but reside in Juarez with their Mexican parents.

THEY CROSS OVER EVERYDAY

These are primarily middle-class parents who work hard to send their kids to Catholic school. The youngsters cross the international bridge on foot daily to meet a bus that drops them off at Our Lady of the Valley three miles away.

I scan the classroom. I clear my throat, and ask if anyone has seen or heard from Miguel. Samuel, a tall, 13-year-old, says Miguel is out of town, visiting a relative. I'm relieved – for the moment at least.

As in schools everywhere, absenteeism is cause for concern, but here that concern takes the form of cold fear for the lives of our children – particularly in the case of Miguel.

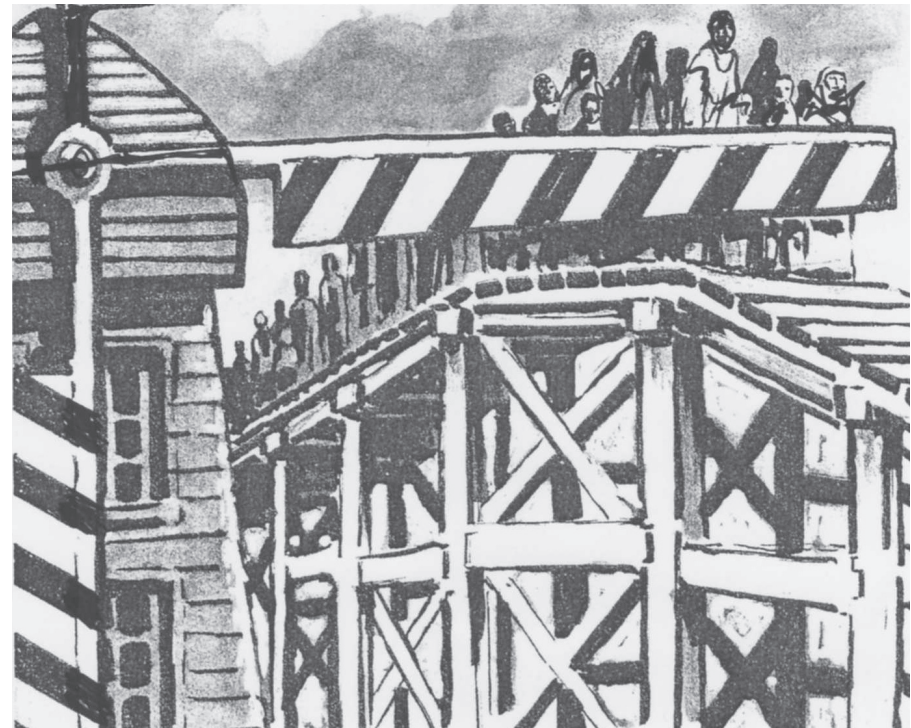
Five months ago, Mexican soldiers, on a tip that Miguel's father was allegedly involved in drug cartel activities, raided Miguel's residence in the middle of the night.

SOLDIERS RANSACKED THE HOUSE

The soldiers broke the door down while the family slept. Once inside they dragged him, his parents, and sister out of the bedrooms into the living room where they forced them face down on the floor as the soldiers ransacked the house.

Miguel was absent for almost a week after the incident. After he returned to school the dark-eyed, 12-year-old recounted the nightmare quietly to me.

The Mexican soldiers had destroyed his home, he said. They hit his ailing, diabetic father several times, shoving Miguel to the floor, while soldiers pointed machine guns at them.



When the soldiers did not find what they were seeking they took his father with them and made away with the family's cell phones, IPod, VCR, and other electronic valuables, according to Miguel.

His father currently sits in jail awaiting the outcome of the investigation. In Mexico, a person is considered guilty until proven innocent.

SOLDIERS DENY STEALING

The family is denying the charges and has hired an attorney. According to Miguel, during the interrogation that ensued after the raid, the Mexican soldiers denied stealing from the family, but the young boy is convinced the soldiers are abusing their powers.

"The soldiers are here to protect us, but they are not. They are hurting and stealing from innocent people," he said.

I thanked him, and looked out the window where a cloud of thick, dark smoke was steadily making its way across the Rio Grande from Juarez.

Last week, the sky on the Mexican side was smoke-filled as several businesses burned to the ground.

My students insist it is the "bad guys" setting the fires. I am not sure who these "bad guys" are: the hundreds of disgruntled police officers hired for corruption and drug activities or the drug cartel members.

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HEALTH

From Page 6

Oklahoma businesses and families shoulder a hidden health tax of roughly \$1,900 per year on premiums as a direct result of subsidizing the costs of the uninsured.

Nineteen percent of people in Oklahoma are uninsured, and 70% of them are in families with at least one full-time worker.

The percent of Oklahomans with employer coverage is declining – only 54% were covered in 2007. That figure doesn't cover the economic collapse of 2008.

While small businesses make up 78% of Oklahoma businesses, only 39% of them offered health coverage benefits in 2006.

DEFINITELY A 'BLUE' STATE

Choice of health insurance is limited in Oklahoma. Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Oklahoma alone constitutes 45% of the health insurance market share in Oklahoma, with the top two insurance providers accounting for 71%.

Choice is even more limited for people with pre-existing conditions. In Oklahoma, premiums can vary based on demographic factors and health status, and coverage can exclude pre-existing conditions or even be denied completely.

The overall quality of care in Oklahoma is rated as "Weak."

Preventative measures that could keep Oklahomans healthier and out of the hospital are deficient, leading to problems across the age spectrum.

- 16% of children in Oklahoma are obese.
- 28% of women over the age of 50 in Oklahoma have not received a mammogram in the past two years.
- 45% of men over the age of 50 in Oklahoma have never had a colorectal cancer screening.
- 76% of adults over the age of 65 in Oklahoma have received a flu vaccine in the past year.

THE PRESIDENT EXPECTS A MIRACLE

The need for reform in Oklahoma and across the country is clear. Oklahoma families simply can't afford the status quo and deserve better.

President Obama is wrangling with Congress to pass some kind of health reform this year that reduces costs for families, businesses and government – without a tax increase. He expects a miracle.

The seemingly impossible task is to protect people's choice of doctors, hospitals and health plans, assuring affordable, quality health care for all Americans. All this without a tax hike.

U.S. Health and Human Services [HHS] Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has released a new report Hidden Costs of Health Care: Why Americans are Paying More but Getting Less.

The report documents the rising cost of deductibles, co-payments and out-of-pocket expenses that are making it more difficult for families with insurance to receive the health care they need.

"It doesn't matter if you have insurance or not: when Americans go to the hospital or the doctor's office, they are paying more and getting less," said Sebelius.

"Every year, co-pays, deductibles and other expenses are taking a bigger bite out of the family budget and the American people are demanding reform."

The report notes:

A person with employer-based coverage paid an average of \$1,522 on health care [not including premiums] in 2006, compared with \$1,260 in 2001. When including the added burden of higher premiums, out-of-pocket costs rose even more sharply, with a 30% increase from an average of \$2,827 in 2001 to \$3,744 in 2006.

Employer-sponsored health insurance premiums have nearly doubled since 2000, a rate three times faster than wages. In 2008, the average premium for a family plan purchased through an employer was \$12,680.

FAMILIES STRUGGLING TO AFFORD CARE

For preferred provider organization [PPO] plans purchased through an employer, the average family deductible increased 30% in just two years, from \$1,034 to \$1,344.

This effect is more pronounced for small firms, where PPO deductibles increased from \$1,439 to \$2,367 – a rise of 64%.

In 2004, only one in five people with health insurance through an employer had a co-payment of more than \$25, but by 2008 the number jumped to one in three.

"Millions of Americans don't have insurance, and millions more are still struggling to afford the care they need," Sebelius said. "We need to pass health reform this year to give these families the relief they need."

Losing And Gaining A Life

The great paradox of life is that those who lose their lives will gain them. This paradox becomes visible in very ordinary situations. If we cling to our friends, we may lose them, but when we are non-possessive in our relationships, we will make many friends.

When fame is what we seek and desire, it often vanishes as soon as we acquire it, but when we have no need to be known, we might be remembered long after our deaths. When we want to be in the center, we easily end up on the margins, but when we are free enough to be wherever we must be, we find ourselves often in the center.

Giving away our lives for others is the greatest of all human arts. This will gain us our lives. – Allison Lynn Weaver

20 Years Of Wild GOP Sex Scandals

By Brad Reed

Give this to Republicans: They know how to conduct sex scandals in style. South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford continues to speak of his paramour as the love of his life!

Oh sure, Democrats have their sex scandals, but they're not nearly as interesting. For one thing, most Democrats busted in sex scandals aren't the same type of overbearing moral scolds as your average GOP politician.

The one recent exception was former New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer, whose work shutting down prostitution rings left him open to charges of bald hypocrisy when he was caught rendezvousing with a prostitute himself.

Additionally, Democratic sex scandals tend to be of the more vanilla nature: affairs with campaign workers and interns are pretty standard fare as far as modern political culture goes, as are visits to high-priced call girls.

The GOP's deviants, on the other hand, have brought a wealth of oddball debaucheries to the table, from failed bathroom-stall hookups to slimy messages sent to underage congressional pages to rumored S&M diaper fantasies.

So let's review the past 20 years of Republican sex scandals, considering such factors as hypocrisy, legal liability, the damage inflicted upon the perpetrators' careers and overall comedy.

2009: GOV. MARK SANFORD

What makes this scandal so bizarre really has nothing to do with the sex itself, but rather that:

[a] South Carolina Gov. Sanford flew all the way down to Argentina to see his mistress and planned to stay there for more than a week;

[b] he didn't tell anyone on his staff, who proceeded to embarrass themselves by claiming that Sanford was "hiking the Appalachian trail;"

[c] he apparently didn't think anyone in the state would notice that their governor had disappeared. If he had just kept his affair closer to home, he might still be on the fast track to the 2012 GOP presidential nomination.

Alas, now it seems the Republicans are going to have to go to their fallback plan of nominating Joe the Plumber.

1991: CLARENCE THOMAS

Anita Hill's cringe-inducing charges that Thomas allegedly talked openly about pornographic films and pubic hair in the workplace captivated the nation. The hearings also marked the first – and hopefully the last – time that Orrin Hatch mentioned "Long Dong Silver" on the floor of the Senate.

Thomas was confirmed as a Supreme Court justice despite the controversy, so it's not like the scandal had any lasting damage on his career.

1993: SEN. BOB PACKWOOD

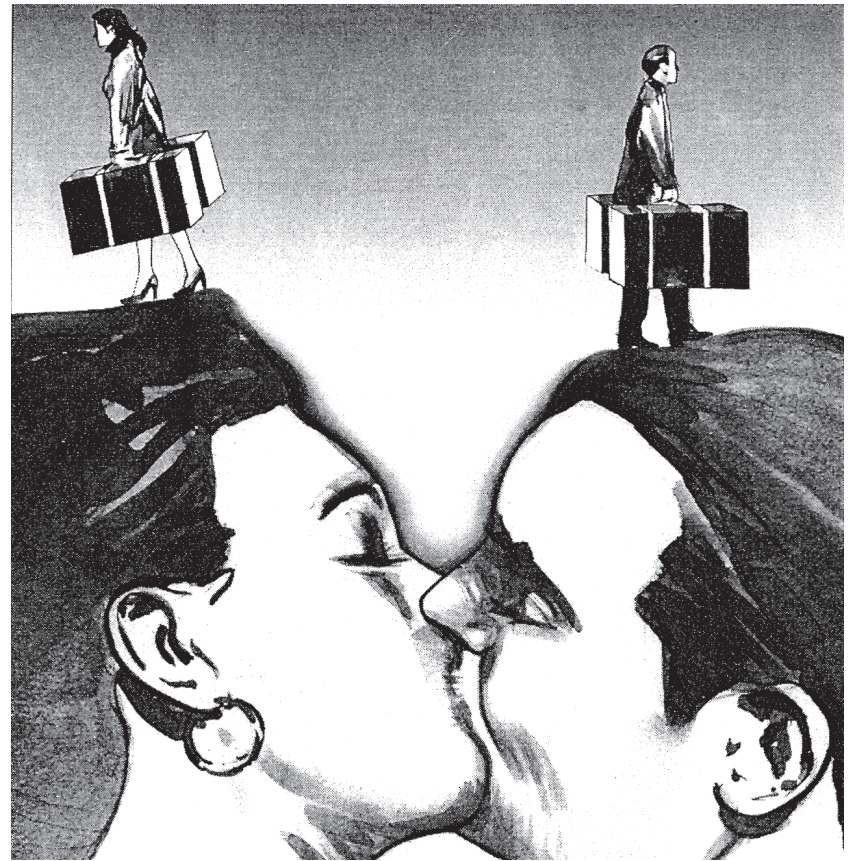
Interestingly, Packwood was a rare Republican who was supportive of abortion rights and was described by Boston Globe columnist Ellen Goodman as a "friend of feminism." That view changed for the worse, however, when 10 women accused him of sexual harassment or misconduct in the pages of the Washington Post.

Packwood's friends tried to come to his defense, but for the most part, they ended up doing more harm than good. Ed Westerdahl, a member of the steering committee for Packwood's first Senate race in 1968, told the New York Times that we should be more forgiving of his old boss' behavior because "20 years ago, at parties, I'd see people doing much more than he's being accused of, and nobody gave it a second thought."

1990s: REP. NEWT GINGRICH

Throughout his career, this Georgia lawmaker has been one of the biggest moral charlatans in American political history.

While he was impeaching President Bill Clinton for lying under oath about his affair with Monica Lewinsky, Gingrich said that Clinton had shown "a level of



disrespect and decadence that should appall every American."

The whole time, of course, Newt was cheating on his second wife with a woman more than 20 years his younger [he put her on the House payroll].

And then there's the matter of his first wife, with whom Gingrich initiated a divorce while she was recovering from cancer surgery.

2006: REP. MARK FOLEY

Just over one month before the 2006 midterm elections, ABC News reported that Florida Republican Foley had sent several sexually explicit e-mails to teenage congressional pages. He referred to one of the pages as "my favorite young stud" and told him that he was "never too busy" to "spank it." Foley abruptly resigned in disgrace.

This scandal rates highly because it not only doomed Foley's career, but it exposed him as an enormous hypocrite. Foley was fond of portraying himself as a defender of children.

2007: SEN. DAVID VITTER

On the surface, Vitter's habit of frequenting the infamous "DC Madam's" alleged den of iniquity doesn't seem so bad. After all, he's just another family-values lovin' pol who cheated on his wife with prostitutes.

However, the rumors flying around that Vitter liked to be dressed up in adult diapers while at the brothel are what catapult this into an "Oh-this-must-be-a-Republican" sex scandal.

The fact that the Louisiana senator would later co-sponsor the so-called "Marriage Protection Amendment" with Sen. Lany Craig, R-ID, [see next entry] makes this all the juicier.

2007: SEN. LARRY CRAIG

This scandal had everything: failed attempts at sex in the seediest location imaginable; fumbling mishaps with law-enforcement agents; and one of the all-time greatest cover-up lies told by any politician.

Admit it: When you heard that Craig had been arrested for allegedly playing footsy with a cop in an airport bathroom stall, you heard a muted trumpet in your head going, "Waaah, waaaah, waaaaah!"

Craig's subsequent denial of the charges was classic as well, as he said he only rubbed the cop's foot for five minutes because he employed a "wide stance" while sitting on the toilet.

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GAP

From Page 8

promised government benefits, young people will have to make up the difference or older people will face benefit cuts.

The financial shortfalls of Social Security and Medicare over the next 75 years are so large – \$340,000 per household – that they dwarf the wealth of every age group.

This hidden debt will make it a challenge for young people to accumulate as much wealth late in life as their parents have.

In the U.S., income typically peaks at age 57 and wealth tops out at 63, according to the Fed's Survey of Consumer Finance. Wealth describes a person's net worth – assets minus debts – and reflects a lifetime's accumulation of income, investments and inheritances. Income measures how much a person earned in a single year.

AGE GROUP INEQUALITY

Inequality within age groups hasn't changed much. People in their 30s or 60s have roughly the same wealth distribution among themselves as in 1989.

What's changed is inequality between age groups.

Older people are thriving in wealth and income. Younger people are not. How wealth and income have changed for two age groups, after adjusting for inflation:

Ages 55-59: Median net worth – the middle point for all households – rose 97% over 15 years to \$249,700 in 2004, the most recent year for which data is available. Median income rose 52%.

Ages 35-39: Median household net worth fell 28% to \$48,940. Median income fell 10%.

The increase in the wealth of older people tracks a sharp reduction in elderly poverty that began in the 1960s, when Medicare was introduced and Social Security benefits were improved.

WAGE GAP TO WIDEN FURTHER

The wealth gap between young and old is on a path to grow even more extreme. Baby boomers – 79 million people born from 1946 to 1964 – are entering their years of greatest wealth and maximum government benefits.

Today, the oldest baby boomer is 63. The youngest is 45. As tens of millions of people head into their years of peak wealth, inequality could soar until baby boomers pass on inheritances to their children or grandchildren.

The inequality debate has focused mostly on the super-rich, who have been getting super-richer. The top-earning 1% of taxpayers – those who make more than \$310,000 annually – collected 17% of total income in 2005, up from 13% in 1989 and 8% in 1975, according to Internal Revenue Service.

If you're looking for the one who threw the off switch on American's economic light, look no further than Ronald Reagan, hero of the average ignorant conservative.

Deregulation of Wall Street will live in infamy.

– Thanks to the IRS and Oklahoma's Office of State Finance for the quoted data

Stealing From Osages

How Big Oil Is Robbing Indians

By Greg Palast

There's an easy way to find oil. Go to some remote and gorgeous natural sanctuary, say Alaska or the Amazon, find some Indians, then drill down under them.

If the indigenous folk complain, well, just shoo them away. Shooing methods include: bulldozers, bullets, crooked politicians and fake land sales.

But be aware. Lately, the natives are shooting back. Recently indigenous Peruvians seized an oil pumping station, grabbed the nine policemen guarding it and, say reports, executed them.

This followed the government's murder of more than a dozen rain forest residents who had protested the seizure of their property for oil drilling.

THE OILY TRAIL OF TEARS

Again and again, I see it in my line of work of investigating fraud. Here are a few pit stops on the oily trail of tears:

In the 1980s, Charles Koch was found to have pilfered about \$3 worth of crude from Stanlee Ann Mattingly's oil tank in Oklahoma.

Here's the weird part. Koch was [and remains] the 14th richest man on the planet, worth about \$14 billion. Stanlee Ann was a dirt-poor Osage Indian.

Stanlee Ann wasn't Koch's only victim. According to secret tape recordings of a former top executive of his company, Koch Industries, the billionaire demanded that oil tanker drivers secretly siphon a few bucks worth of oil from every tank attached to a stripper well on the Osage Reservation where Koch had a contract to retrieve crude.

BROTHER RATS HIM OUT

Koch, according to the tape, would "giggle" with joy over the records of the theft. Koch's own younger brother Bill ratted him out, complaining that, in effect, brothers Charles and David cheated him out of his fair share of the looting, which totaled over three-quarters of a billion dollars from the native lands.

The FBI filmed the siphoning with hidden cameras, but criminal charges were quashed after quiet objections from Republican senators.

Then there are the Chugach natives of Alaska. The Port of Valdez, AK, is arguably one of the most valuable pieces of real estate on earth, the only earthquake-safe, ice-free port in Alaska that could load oil from the giant North Slope field. In 1969, Exxon and British Petroleum companies took the land from the Chugach and paid them one dollar. I kid you not.

NO RESPECT AND NO CASH

Wally Hickel, former Republican governor of Alaska, dismissed my suggestion that the Chugach deserved a bit more respect [and cash] for their property.

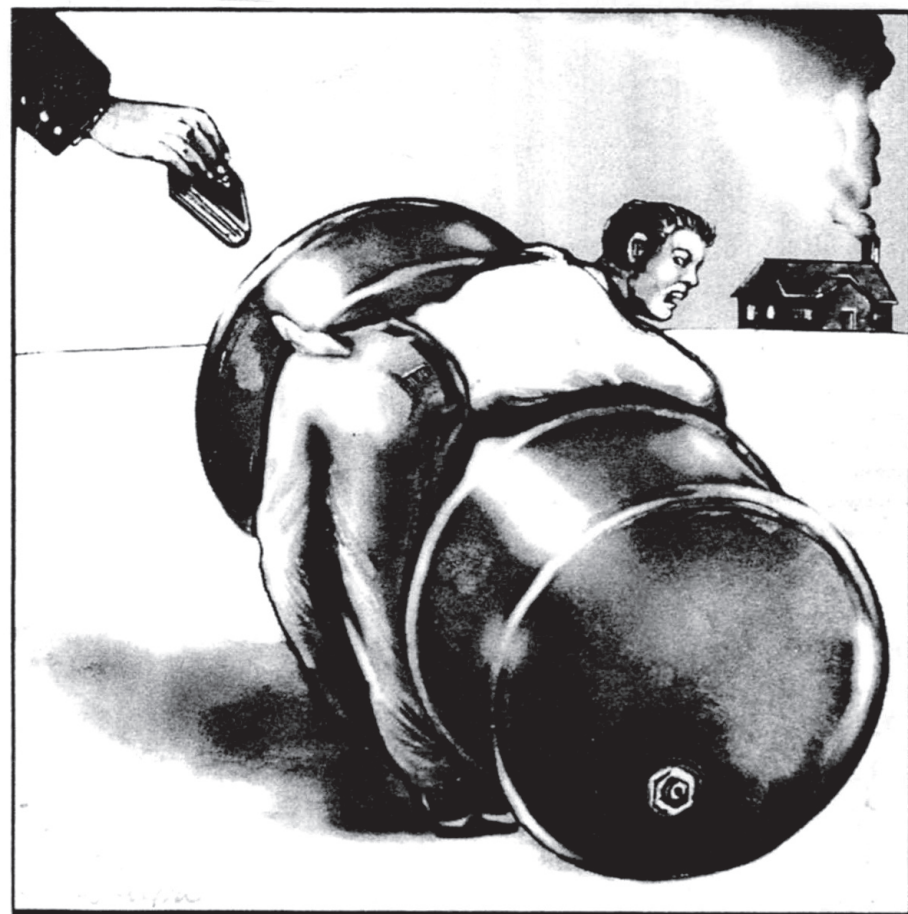
"Land ownership comes in two ways, Mr. Palast," explained the governor and pipeline magnate, "Purchase or conquest. The fact that your granddaddy chased a caribou across the land doesn't make it yours." The Chugach had lived there for 3,000 years.

No oil company would dream of digging on the Bush family properties in Midland, TX, without paying a royalty. Or drilling near Malibu without the latest in environmental protections.

ANOTHER EXCUSE FOR ROBBERY

But when natives are on top of Exxon's or BP's glory hole, suddenly, the great defenders of private property rights turn quite Bolshevik: Lands can be seized for The Public's Need for Oil.

Some natives are "re-located" through legal flim-flam, some at gunpoint. The



less lucky are left to wallow, literally, in the gunk left by the drilling process.

In Ecuador, Cofan Chief Emergildo Criollo told me how oil company executives helicoptered into his remote village and, speaking in Spanish – which the Cofan didn't understand – "purchased" drilling rights with trinkets and cheese. The natives had never seen cheese. ["The cheese smelled funny, so we threw it in the jungle."]

After drilling began, Criollo's son went swimming in his usual watering hole, came up vomiting blood and died.

CHEVRON'S TOXIC DUMPING

I asked Chevron about the wave of poisonings and deaths. According to an independent report, 1,401 deaths, mostly of children, mostly from cancers, can be traced to Chevron's toxic dumping.

Chevron's lawyer told me, "And it's the only case of cancer in the world? How many cases of children with cancer do you have in the states? ... They have to prove that it is our crude," which, he noted with glee, "is absolutely impossible."

Big Oil treats indigenous blood like a cheap gasoline additive. That's why the Peruvians are up in arms. The Cofan of Ecuador, unlike their brothers in Peru, have taken no hostages. Rather, they heavily armed themselves with lawyers.

But Chevron and its Big Oil brethren remain dismissive of the law. Recently Shell Oil got rid of a nasty PR problem by paying \$15 million to the Ogoni people and the family of Ken Saro-Wiwa for the oil giant's alleged role in the killing of Wiwa and his associates, activists who had defended these Nigeria Delta people against drilling contamination.

Shell pocketed \$31 billion last year in profits and hopes the payoff will clear the way for a drilling partnership with Nigeria's government.

Congratulations, Shell. \$15 million: For a license to kill and drill, that's a quite a bargain.

© Truthout

SENATORS

From Page 7

because the bill was less than perfect.

Dr. Coburn voted the death penalty on one-half million of his own people? Will he tell the parents of each Coburn-delivered child, "I'm sorry, I had to do it?" Would the good doctor's favorite song be, "Smoke, smoke, smoke that cigarette ... until you smoke yourself to death. Tell St. Peter at the gate that you hate to make him wait, but you just gotta have another cigarette?"

Sen. Tom voted against the massive \$787 billion stimulus bill this year. He cited 100 worst-example projects of waste in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. His No. 1 – a wastewater treatment plant in Perkins.

After adverse criticism and a phone call by Perkins Journal publisher David Sasser, Coburn came to little ole Perkins to explain his stance. After visiting with the City Commission, the public was given a statement-questions-answers time: not much changed. Perkins City Manager Peter Seikel said, "The only way to fix the problem is to spend the money appropriately."

AND INHOFE CALLS FRANKEN A CLOWN?

Lately, Sen. Inhofe said of Al Franken, who joined the 100-most-powerful-people-in-the world nine months after the 2008 election, "It looks like we're going to get the clown from Minnesota, a clown. Not in a disrespectful way [really?], but ... for a living, he's a clown ... that's what he does for a living." [The redundancy is Inhofe's; he seemed obsessed].

Franken was graduated from Harvard with a BA, cum laude, in political science. He's an Emmy-Awarded comedian, author of five books on the New York Times best-seller list, and has been an Air America radio host. He was one of the first writers on TV's Saturday Night Live show. And he's "only a clown?"

Does Sen. Jim fit the first verse of an Arabian Proverb? "He who knows not and knows not that he knows not, He is a fool – shun him."

Sen. Inhofe reported to his people, in 2008, with a tabloid-type headline, "Inhofe Report Exposes Environmental Group As Massive Democratic Political Machine." Campaigns to save the cuddly animals or protect the ancient forests are really disguised efforts to raise money for Democratic political campaigns. What we find is the fleecing of the American public's pocketbooks by the environmental movement for their political gain. Many scientists say global warming can be disastrous; America should take steps to ensure ...

Sen. Inhofe surely has insured family, homes, and cars, just in case ... So, shouldn't Americans heed environmental issues?

INHOFE WON'T EVEN PARTICIPATE

Sen. Inhofe has said he's already voted against Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor – he won't participate in Senate confirmation hearings. Isn't the Supreme Court different from lower courts? Couldn't he add to the vetting? Won't his vote be needed?

These comments are not meant to denigrate Oklahoma's senators, but to question action and beliefs. Many Oklahomans have developed a severe case of "Erythrophobia" – blushing and embarrassment, when Coburn and Inhofe act and/or speak of others.

If you need ask "why" about the senators or this scribbler, the answer is GORK [God Only Really Knows]. With that, this scribbler becomes an "exoduster" – a person who beats a hasty retreat.

– The author lives in Perkins

STATESMAN

From Page One

impressed staff by remaining calm despite the negativity surrounding controversial issues such as the Panama Canal.

"I don't think he let it get to him," says Scribner, who later worked as Bellmon's executive assistant when he was governor. "He paid attention to the critics, but then he did what he thought was right. He never let the headlines influence him.

"I don't think I could have gotten a better education in government – or in life – than I did by working for him," she says.

Living in Hawaii during the war also opened Bellmon's eyes to segregation that kept the white population in power and relegated Japanese-Americans to field work, another injustice he considered a great waste of human resources.

Later, as Oklahoma's governor, he modeled desegregation for state offices by hiring black employees, including a receptionist, Beulah Ponder, who became a friend and trusted adviser on racial matters.

"I think he's much more of a statesman than a politician," she says. "Many times, he would ask me my thoughts about how to handle issues that were coming up."

When the Bellmons were choosing schools for their daughters, Ponder invited them to tour her children's school near the governor's mansion. "My kids were so delighted to have the governor visit," she says. "They knew him and wanted to show him around just like he was part of the family."

Seeing the schools' rundown conditions intensified Bellmon's support for integration and his later decision as a U.S. senator to support the "imperfect" solution of forced busing.

"I became totally convinced black children in Oklahoma City were not getting a fair or equal education," Bellmon says. "No one liked busing, but it was a means to an end toward moving black children into good schools."

Ponder has no doubts about his sincerity. "He believed people were people," she says. "Everyone knew how Henry Bellmon felt about education. He didn't believe one school should be above another."

Throughout his life, Bellmon earned a reputation as a non-conformist who voted his conscience regardless of party politics or popular opinion.

"My rule is to get your facts, make your decision, and stick with it," says the 87-year-old.

"If I had been a conformist, I sure wouldn't have registered as a Republican," he jokes.

Oklahoma Democrats outnumbered Republicans 5-to-1 when Bellmon's father took the liberty of registering his 21-year-old son as a Republican while Bellmon was overseas.

Within a year of returning home, Bellmon entered politics with the encouragement of fellow Noble County resident and former OSU football player Robert "Bob" McCubbins, who was leaving the Oklahoma House of Representatives and asked Bellmon to consider running for his seat.

Bellmon did run, and within two months of winning the November



1946 election, he married Shirley Osborn, a neighbor six years his junior who had "grown up" while he was away at war.

During his two years as a state representative, he discovered living on \$6 a day when the House was in session would not support a family, which by March 1948 included baby daughter Pat.

When voters did not reelect him in 1948, he learned the painful lesson that politicians must campaign even when they think they've done a good job. He took the opportunity to focus on his family and his livelihood.

He returned to the circa 1895 farmhouse, which lacked indoor plumbing or running water until well after the birth of all three daughters, Pat, Gail and Ann. Bellmon resumed creating ponds and waterways with a military-surplus bulldozer he purchased before entering the Legislature.

The whole family pitched in to raise sheep, poultry and wheat during their 12 years on the farm. Youngest daughter Ann [Bellmon] McFerron remembers climbing inside big burlap bags and stamping down the newly shorn wool. "The natural lanolin in the wool

See TREASURE Page 17

The current photos of Gov. Bellmon were taken by Phil Shockley of OSU's University Marketing Office. Historical photos were provided by the Bellmon family through the University Marketing Office.

In the top right photo, Bellmon and wife Shirley celebrate his 1962 gubernatorial victory with daughters [from left] Pat, Ann and Gail.

The thumbnail photo in the middle is from Henry's and Shirley's 1946 wedding.

In the middle-left photo, Bellmon delivers his inaugural gubernatorial address in 1963 on the south steps of the state Capitol.

The bottom photo, from left, John Happy Camp, then-U.S. Rep. Ed Edmondson [Attorney General Drew Edmondson's father], then-OSU President Robert B. Kamm and Bellmon.

TREASURE

From Page 16

made our skin feel so soft.”

She also remembers her father singing sweet songs about her mother as he drove to Enid to sell eggs.

In the mid-1950s, Bellmon became active in county politics and in 1960 was elected Oklahoma's Republican state chairman. He built a formidable statewide foundation with chapters in each county, but he still couldn't persuade anyone to accept the 1962 gubernatorial challenge.

“We didn't have a candidate, so I ran,” says Bellmon, who was confident his party could elect a candidate it believed in but unsure it would be him.

His political networking paid off, however, and Bellmon became the first Republican governor of a Southern state since Reconstruction. During his term, he reestablished Oklahoma's outstanding vocational education system, a state employees' retirement program and passed legislation to exempt seed and fertilizer from sales tax.

When his first term as governor ended, Bellmon consented to help with Richard Nixon's national campaign committee and was soon designated as national chair.

After Nixon won the New Hampshire primary, Bellmon left the committee to run for U.S. Senate, triumphing over incumbent Mike Monroney, who served 12 years in the House and 18 years in the Senate.

During two terms in the U.S. Senate from 1968 to 1980, Bellmon served on the Senate Agriculture Committee that passed target-price legislation for farmers and authorized farmer-owned reserves. He also served on the Interior Committee and was the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee.

As a politician, Bellmon worked with presidents, national leaders and foreign dignitaries but treasured his friendships with staff and others closest to him.

“I think everyone who worked for Mr. Bellmon felt like part of his family,” says John Baird, a staff researcher for Bellmon in the early 1970s. “He's a man of conviction, and he's not shy about sharing his thoughts when they need to be shared.”

Lee Paden, who worked as a special assistant to Bellmon in Washington, DC, and in Oklahoma, remembers being outraged when a high-ranking Democrat successfully introduced legislation that Paden helped prepare for Bellmon.

“I thought this guy stole our amendment, and I was ranting about it,” Paden says. But Bellmon, who was in his first year in the U.S. Senate, calmed him down and explained recognition wasn't the objective.

“It doesn't matter if my name is on the legislation,” Bellmon told Paden. “What matters is whether it finally becomes a law.” The legislation, still a part of Internal Revenue Service code today, requires the IRS to pay legal fees a taxpayer incurred when successfully defending an IRS investigation.

“Many of the issues he worked on in the Senate, such as water quality

and equal rights, are still relevant today,” Paden says. And his “Bellmon amendments” to the Foreign Aid Bill have prevented wasteful grain exports from going to countries where the influx would hurt local farmers or where storage is inadequate.

Paden, now an energy and environmental consultant, says Bellmon's inherent concern for the long-term interests of the citizenry continues to influence how Paden analyzes information and advises his clients.

“Gov. Bellmon is truly a futurist whose ideas stretch well beyond the present, and I count it a distinct privilege to have learned from him.”

When his second term in the U.S. Senate ended, Bellmon returned to Oklahoma, and like many farmers in the early 1980s, struggled with more than \$700,000 in farm debt. To make ends meet, he sold property and also accepted various jobs, including teaching government classes for OSU and other universities.

For six years, he watched the state's agriculture and banking industries collapse, and decided Oklahoma needed a leader more concerned with problem-solving than reelection.

“We needed someone willing to make tough decisions,” says Bellmon, who won the governor's seat for the second time in 1986.

Making changes wasn't easy, though. Bellmon's attempts to cut costs by eliminating one of the state's three medical schools and \$5 million in incentives for rural physicians were unsuccessful.

But he did corral the state Legislature into passing a public education reform bill [HB 1017] in 1990 to increase teacher salaries and reduce class sizes.

His proudest accomplishment, he says, was creating Oklahoma's endowed chairs program for higher education in which the state matches gifts to college endowments.

“I hope the endowment program has had the effect of keeping talented academicians in Oklahoma and recruiting other top educators to our state,” Bellmon says. “Education is the key to the long-term health of our country.”

Bellmon retired from politics in 1990, and despite Parkinson's disease, open-heart surgery in 2004 and Shirley's death in 2000, he continues to reside on the homestead where he grew up and is married to longtime friend Eloise Bollenbach. Two of his daughters also live on the family farm, now converted into a retreat center called Turtle Rock Farm.

Looking back, Bellmon still marvels that he could win an election.

“I don't know why anyone would vote for me,” he says. “I'm not eloquent. I can hardly get two words to stick together. No money, no fame.”

Yet his honesty and moral virtues have impressed Oklahomans as well as world leaders.

“Henry Bellmon is the quintessential Oklahoma success story,” says OSU President Burns Hargis, who worked on Bellmon's 1974 Senate campaign.

“He's brought great distinction

Bellmon's Dream Lifts OSU Into Truman Elite

He didn't realize it at the time, but Henry Bellmon sowed the seeds that grew into OSU's elite standing as a Truman Honor Institution.

“Little did he know his inspiration would result in a whole generation of outstanding OSU graduates,” says Robert Graalman, director of scholar development.

Graalman remembers the day Bellmon stopped by his office in the Student Union nearly 15 years ago.

“Mr. Bellmon wondered why he hadn't seen many qualified OSU students as Truman finalists since he knew OSU has outstanding students,” Graalman says.

Bellmon had served on the Truman scholar selection committee after leaving the U.S. Senate, and he knew the scholarship criteria correlated with OSU's land-grant mission of public service and outreach.

Through Bellmon, Graalman contacted Louis Blair, executive secretary of the Truman Foundation, and invited Blair to present a seminar on campus about how to prepare winning applications.

The results were instantaneous.

“Bryan Begley, president of the Student Government Association and an outstanding engineering student, attended the seminar and won a Truman Scholarship in 1994,” Graalman says. “Bryan also became a state finalist for a Rhodes scholarship the following year.”

Since then, OSU's Office of Scholar Development has produced more than 50 national and international scholars and is a national model for other universities.

OSU enhances academic experiences for approximately 400 top students annually with additional research opportunities, individual mentoring, travel and special academic classes.

The OSU Henry Bellmon Endowment can help make more of these enrichment opportunities possible.

When Bellmon was a freshman in 1938, his expenses totaled \$225 and were fairly affordable for a young man working his way through college.

“I didn't buy most of my textbooks because I couldn't afford them,” says Bellmon, who earned high grades anyway and was a member of the freshman honorary society Phi Eta Sigma and routinely listed on the Dean's honor roll.

“I learned to be a good listener,” he says.

Today's top students, however, increasingly rely on scholarships to achieve their full potential, which often depends on advanced graduate degrees and international experience.

OSU's latest Truman scholar, Cortney Timmons, implemented a campus-wide recycling program in addition to her research that focuses on converting agricultural waste into renewable energy.

Her commitment to the environment also won the biosystems and agricultural engineering senior a Udall scholarship her sophomore year.

National competition is tough, she says, and students with access to leadership opportunities, research and international study have a distinct advantage.

“OSU is a great place to gain experience with all three,” she says.

Like Bellmon and Timmons, OSU's first Rhodes Scholar, Blaine Greteman, hails from a small, rural Oklahoma community, Hydro, and proved he could succeed at national and international levels.

“I felt really well prepared because of the mentoring I received and the university's general culture that reflects the land-grant ethos,” says Greteman, who studied at Oxford with his 1998 Rhodes scholarship. Today he teaches English and will lead a group of OSU students to Cambridge this summer.

Bellmon says OSU's investment in students like Greteman and Timmons will produce the greatest returns for the state, the nation and the world.

“As world situations become more complex, those who serve best will be the ones who understand the root of problems and can develop solutions,” Bellmon says. “I can't think of anything more important for a university than a reputation for building scholars.”

— For more information about the Bellmon Endowment, contact George Wendt at gwendt@osugiving.com or 405.744.3787

to Oklahoma,” Hargis says. “I can't think of anyone of his era who's accomplished more.”

Bellmon says his own life proves that winning elections doesn't require a person to be a radical or a genius or to be wealthy or have a famous name. “What's required is the ability to instill trust, to get people to believe in you and to work hard at your job.

“I think people see me as someone they can approach if they need help,” Bellmon says. “And someone they can trust.”

— Reprinted by permission from *State, The Official Magazine of Oklahoma State University*. This article includes excerpts from *The Life and Times of Henry Bellmon, an autobiography written with his daughter Pat (Bellmon) Hoerth, as well as interviews of Bellmon by OSU President Burns Hargis and Dick Pryor of Oklahoma Educational Television Authority*. To listen to the public television interview, visit <http://www.oeta.onenet.net> and click on “A Conversation With ...”

Palin Quits: Is She Fleeing Scandal?

By Tana Ganeva



At a news conference on the lawn of her Wasilla home Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin announced that she'll give up her post July 24.

Palin's abrupt and confounding move has left political analysts and the media scrambling for an explanation.

Many observers expected Palin to say that she was not seeking re-election – a prediction driven by speculation that she is preparing for a presidential bid in 2012.

But Palin's shocking announcement seems to belie plans for a presidential run. As Josh Marshall points out at TPM, "Generally, when you run for election to a high office it's understood that you'll stick around to do the job."

Some observers have nevertheless toyed with the idea that Palin is quitting to free up time to campaign. Conservative columnist Bill Kristol wrote that if Palin wants to run in 2012, why not do exactly what she announced?

It's an enormous gamble – but it could be a shrewd one.

After all, she's freeing herself from the duties of the governorship. Now she can do her book, give speeches, travel the country and the world, campaign for others, meet people, get more educated on the issues – and without being criticized for neglecting her duties in Alaska.

Many presidential hopefuls finish up their time in office. Palin's rambling statement did little to lay the groundwork for a future campaign:

she vaguely stated that she would do more good "outside government" and issued some Nixonian grumblings about the press.

Palin did, however, also offer some suspiciously campaign-sounding rhetoric: "I'm not wired to operate under the same old politics as usual."

Analysts point out that Palin's resignation highlights her main weakness in a potential presidential run – many

conservative elites see her as unprepared to seek national office.

John Weaver, a former strategist for the McCain campaign said, "If this is her launching pad for 2012, it's a curious move. Policy is politics, and she has no real accomplishments as governor."

With little information coming from the Palin camp following the announcement, observers speculate that Palin's bizarre decision and rushed press conference point to a brewing scandal.

If it turns out Palin is fleeing of-

fice in the face of some bombshell revelation scandalous enough to kill any chances she might have in 2012, we would be averaging the loss of one GOP presidential hopeful per week over a month.

Even in the absence of a Mark Sanford-style drama, Palin may be resigning to escape ongoing ethics inquiries. The state of Alaska has spent nearly \$300,000 investigating ethics complaints

against her. Palin has said contesting the complaints has cost her family \$500,000.

The widely publicized inquiry into Palin's firing of Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan after he refused to fire the state trooper involved in a divorce with Palin's sister is the most prominent of over a dozen investigations.

Others include allegations that Palin used the governor's office for personal gain by receiving improper gifts, and that she used state time and resources for partisan political

purposes.

Max Blumenthal points to Todd and Sarah Palin's suspicious ties to Spenard Building Supplies [SBS], an Alaskan contractor.

Blumenthal writes that the Feds may be launching an investigation into whether Palin and her husband helped bring lucrative contracts to the company in exchange for gifts.

Though Todd Palin told Fox News he built his Lake Lucille home with the help of a few "buddies," according to Barrett's report, public records revealed that SBS supplied the materials for the house.

While serving as mayor of Wasilla, Sarah Palin blocked an initiative that would have required the public filing of building permits – thus momentarily preventing the revelation of such suspicious information.

Just months before Palin left City Hall to campaign for governor, she awarded a contract to SBS to help build the \$13 million Wasilla Sports Complex.

The most expensive building project in Wasilla history, the complex cost the city an addition \$1.3 million in legal fees and threw it into severe long-term debt.

For Spenard Building Supplies, however, the bloated and bungled project was a cash cow.

Whatever facts emerge, Palin's latest bewildering move has ensured that she will command the public spotlight for a while to come.

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No Minimizing Senate's Supreme Court Duty

By Danny M. Adkison

As we approach the hearings over the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to be an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court there is a question which inevitably will be raised and which needs to be understood. Yet, there is no real answer to this question – or is there?

There are three steps for filling a vacancy on the Supreme Court. First, the president nominates someone. Second, the Senate exercises advice and consent [the media call this confirmation]. Finally, the president appoints the individual. The "advice and consent" of the Senate is done with a simple majority vote.

All of this is specified in the U.S. Constitution. What is the Senate supposed to be doing when it exercises "advice and consent?" Don't turn to the Constitution for the answer. In fact, it would be hard to find a definitive answer to that question.

Historically, there have been two answers to the question: One answer dominated the Senate's approach during most of the 20th Century. This answer made some assumptions. It assumed that since the Framers of the Constitution assigned the nomination and appointment of a justice to the president, the president ought to have "his man" [as it was often put in the pre-O'Connor years]. This meant that the Senate's role was minimal.

What was the Senate doing? They were examining the nominee to determine if there was anything in the nominee's past that would disqualify him from holding office. What the Senate was clearly not doing was determining if the nominee would make a good justice.

You can see how, under this approach, the president gets "his man." The president announced the name of an individual, and unless the Senate could find something wrong with the individual, the individual named by the president would take a seat on the court.

Since the beginning of the republic there had always been another way of viewing what the role of the Senate was. This view was highlighted during the televised hearings of Robert Bork. President Reagan nominated Bork to be a Supreme Court justice. His hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee resulted in a new political term. Most college government textbooks now include a marginal definition for the term "Borked" [as in, to be borked].

Most Senators during the hearings admitted that Bork had the intellect to be a justice [he was a former law professor]. Some sought a "smoking gun" that would disqualify him [using the old meaning of advice and consent], but when that failed they were left with either voting for him or justifying their no vote using a new standard.

The Senate admitted that Bork was qualified to be a justice. So why vote against him? Because they were no longer going to approach the advice and consent process with the assumption that a president should have "his man" unless they could find something terribly wrong with him.

Some senators were audacious enough to want to judge whether Bork would make a good justice. Many concluded that he would not. With this new role highlighted during Bork's hearings, the Senate could not muster a majority vote to consent to his appointment.

Was the Senate acting incorrectly? Let's use Bork's own method of interpreting the Constitution: original intent. A detailed answer would take up many pages in a scholarly journal, so let's focus on the big picture. The most important documents in determining the original intent of the "advice and consent" clause are Madison's Notes and The Federalist Papers.

Neither of those documents has a simple straightforward statement as to what that clause meant. However, a holistic reading of the two documents would lead a fair minded interpreter to conclude that the Framers would not have objected to the Senate making an independent judgment of a Supreme Court nominee [as the Senate did with Bork].

Any doubt about this would be removed by remembering that had the Constitutional Convention adjourned two weeks early, the president would have played no formal role whatsoever in the appointment of Supreme Court justices. This fact demonstrates the implausibility of the argument that the Framers wanted the Senate to have a minimal role in the selection of justices.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

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