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Henry Bellmon 1921-2009

The Man & The Myths

By Frosty Troy

No sooner than Henry Bellmon died at 88, losing his long battle with Parkinson's disease, than the myths began to fly and political hypocrites crawled out of the woodwork to praise him.

First, let's dispel some of the myths:

Myth: He was a champion of bi-partisanship, reaching across the aisle to pass legislation.

When he was elected the first Republican governor Democrats outnumbered Republicans five to one. Who else was he going to work with?

Myth: He eschewed partisanship.

He was a hard Republican partisan but a crafty public official who could hide it when necessary.

Myth: He faithfully represented the views of the people.

More crap. He initially ran on a "no new taxes" platform, then raised the gas tax six cents per gallon.

He repeated the "no new tax" pledge when he ran a second time, yet proposed a huge tax hike to fund education reform [HB 1017]. It passed but the Daily Oklahoman led the campaign to put it on the ballot. Bellmon won.

When he lectured at OU and later at OSU, he always explained the difference between a democracy and a republic. A republic is when you elect representatives to study the issues, debate the issues, then cast a ballot – regardless of what the folks who elected you feel. In a democracy, a majority rules.

Myth: He represented the views of ordinary Oklahomans.

Hardly. "Ordinary Oklahomans"

were furious when he cast his ballot in the U.S. Senate for integration – requiring crosstown busing. His earlier tour of Oklahoma City inner-city schools had left him sickened.

He wanted to be the first governor to integrate the governor's staff, so he hired Beulah Ponder. She opened many doors for him in the black community. She took him on tour of the

public schools – a tour he never forgot.

The Daily Oklahoman attacked him again when, as a U.S. senator, he proposed eliminating the Electoral College, which he considered grossly unfair. [Al Gore would agree.]

Myth: He loved the media. As governor, he held six press conferences a week and answered any and all questions.

In reality he deplored the media to his last day in office. He said they mainly focus on the negative and seldom on the positive.

He brought a trained media eye to public office – he was a reporter for the A&M O'Collegian in his last three semesters. He learned to manipulate the media – I know, I was one of them.

Myth: Buttermilk Bellmon wore his anti-booze like a badge of honor.

He told a news conference there

would be no liquor served at the Mansion. He kiddingly added that there would be plenty of sweet milk. He was stunned when reporters turned that into "buttermilk" – which he hated.

Forever after wherever he went where food was served, he was presented with a large quantity of buttermilk. He never drank it.

Myth: Democratic Gov. Raymond Gary, defeated by Bill Atkinson, became a key supporter of Bellmon in his victory over Atkinson.

Not once during the campaign did he speak to Gary, but many Gary supporters flocked to him. It was only after his victory that he called Gary and went to his home for a two-hour visit.

Gary's advice: The media will work you over day after day. Don't respond. It will keep the attack alive. When it gets too bad, quit reading the newspapers or watching TV or listening to the radio. Bellmon said he followed that excellent advice.

Myth: Bellmon was the darling of the Oklahoma Education Association.

Wrong! He vetoed a \$1,000 teacher pay raise because there was no money to fund it. OEA boss Furman Phillips went after Bellmon tooth and nail.

Myth: He had the inside track with the Gaylord empire – the state's largest newspaper, plus WKY Radio and WKY-TV.

The Gaylords always were right-wing Republicans – a faction of the party that Bellmon privately disliked. Ed Gaylord called Sen. Bellmon "the senator from Moscow" when he voted for the Panama Canal Treaty.

In his second term as governor Bellmon pushed through HB 1017 – a total revamp of public education, requiring the largest tax hike in state history. The Gaylord empire fought him all the way.

Why then did Bellmon go birdhunting with Ed Gylord?

Therein lies a remarkable tale. When Bellmon was going through Marine Corps basic training he bunked with a person he disliked more than anyone he had ever met.

Then he began thinking – if he made a friend out of this guy who he hated, See MYTHS Page 19



Observations

Born Liars

Is someone you know a born liar? The brains of some people are built to lie, say psychologists at the University of Southern California after screening 108 people, classifying them as either habitual liars or truth-tellers.

Using magnetic resonance imaging [MRI], they scanned subjects' prefrontal cortexes, the area of the brain that controls moral behavior and strategizing. It turned out that liars' brains had 26% more of the white matter that manages complex planning, and 14% less gray matter, the brain tissue that regulates impulse control.

Thus, the liars' brains appear to be wired for deceit: combining a greater capacity for quick thinking with a reduced ability to feel remorse.

"Lying is cognitively complex," chief researcher Adrian Raine told the Los Angeles Times. "It's certainly more difficult than telling the truth. Some people have a biological advantage."

They serve in Congress.

Defrosting

Don't tell Sen. Jim Inhofe, but global warming has arrived. The most powerful sign so far – a Russian transport ship sailed straight from St. Petersburg to the North Pole without assistance from an icebreaker.

Russian scientists said the feat was a first in the history of seafaring. Arthur Chilingarov, a respected polar scientist, said the voyage shows that once-thick ice has melted to a thin coating – proof of a substantial warming of the planet's climate.

The transport ship was carrying researchers to replace the team at a floating polar station. During the trip, scientists also measured the borders of Russia's continental shelf.

Eugenics

Shades of Alfalfa Bill Murray! Are millions of Americans determined to have a boy at any cost? This isn't

good news for little girls.

A private company has developed a product called the Baby Gender Mentor Home DNA Gender Testing Kit, which enables a couple to determine a fetus' sex as early as five weeks into a pregnancy.

Mail a tiny blood sample from Mom to the company, and – presto! – her embryo's sex is e-mailed to her faster than Netflix can send her next video.

The new quickie test raises a troubling prospect: Very early in pregnancy, when abortions may seem less fraught with moral meaning, a couple will have the chance to ask: "Do we really want a child of this sex? Or should we try again?"

In traditional countries such as China and India, where male offspring are preferred, an estimated 100 million girls were never born, due to sex-selection practices and abortion.

In the U.S., you'd think we'd be beyond such immoral thinking. But sex selection has become a million-dollar industry – so clearly, some parents really are determined to have a boy [or, if they already have two or three, a girl this time].

As products like the Gender Mentor Kit become widely available, do we really want to "normalize" sex selection – and make it a valid reason for abortion?

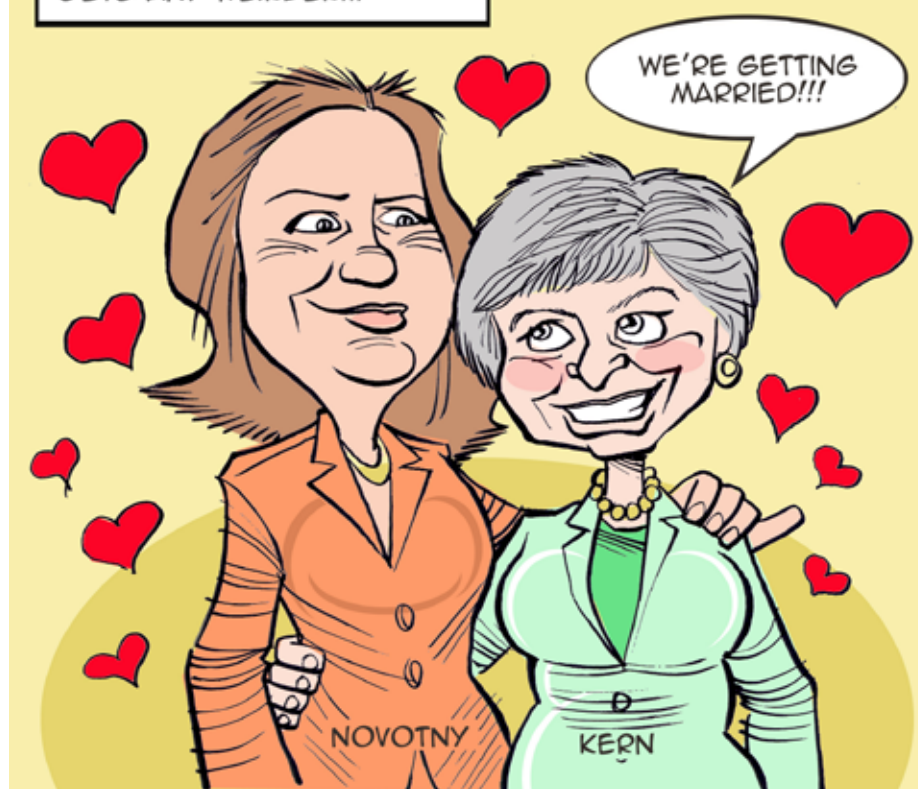
That's a big step toward "a new eugenics," in which we build our babies to suit our tastes and preferences, instead of waiting to see what nature has given us.

Alfalfa Bill made international news by pushing eugenics while serving as governor of Oklahoma. The U.S. Supreme Court told him to take a hike.

Myth Making

The country has found its new "Sputnik moment." A half-century ago, the shock of briefly falling behind in the space race inspired America to launch a massive effort to regain our superiority in science and technol-

THE ONLY WAY THIS STORY GETS ANY WEIRDER...



– Steve Hill

ogy.

President Obama recently called for an American renaissance, a new program designed to meet the growing technological challenges from China, India, and South Korea.

To hear the critics, these emerging Asian empires are rapidly outpacing the U.S. in high school science and math education, new engineering degrees, technology patents, and academic prizes.

Actually, America's decline has been greatly exaggerated. The U.S. economy accounts for the same percentage of the world's gross domestic product as it did 35 years ago, before the rise of China, India, and Japan.

We still spend more on research and development than all other industrialized nations combined. America has 22 of the 30 top universities in the world, and graduates more engineers per capita than India or China.

America's problem over the next 50 years will not be wrestling with decline, it will be dealing with the resentment of African, Arab, and other Third World nations, which will continue to be left "so far behind."

Anti-Smoking

It's a glimmer of good economic news despite historic losses in investment markets throughout the world in the past year – the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Fund Board of Directors certified a 14.5% increase [\$17.8 million] in earnings to combat tobacco addiction and other health issues.

Earnings from the fund are growing due to two changes the board adopted – negotiated new investment contracts to cut the fees paid and redistributed the portfolio to generate additional certified earnings while protecting the principal value of the fund.

Oklahoma is the only state with a constitutionally protected endowment to fund programs that will reduce tobacco use and improve the health of Oklahomans.

Voters approved creation of the endowment in 2000. Since its inception,

more than \$50 million in earnings have been generated by the board of investors.

The endowment today is \$429 million – and it's needed since Oklahoma provides more than its share of smoking and dipping. Investment of the funds is managed by the Board of Investors.

If you know someone who wants to quit, share this number with them: 1.800.QUIT.NOW [1.800.784.8669].

Tort Reform?

Brace yourself: The biggest cost in health care is not malpractice awards, which annually drive up U.S. health care costs by 1% to 2% – \$20 billion to \$40 billion a year – although that's bad enough.

Most costly is the individual doctor's perceived threat of a career-ending malpractice award and his or her incentive, therefore, to practice defensive medicine.

This occurs when a doctor, fearing a lawsuit, orders a battery of costly diagnostic tests to rule out the highly improbable, even when the obvious cause of sickness or injury is staring him in the face.

A Massachusetts Medical Society study discovered that in one year Massachusetts wasted \$1.4 billion on defensive medicine. Prorated for the entire U.S. population, the cost would be about \$66 billion a year.

Another study cited by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons puts the cost of defensive medicine much higher – \$100 billion to \$178 billion per year.

Age, obesity and defensive medicine are the trillion-dollar elephants in the room. Whether your preference for health care reform springs from the political left or right, you have to start with these three facts. Otherwise, you're just a political bloviator.

If you want to learn more about market-based solutions to our health care cost crisis, go to the National Center for Policy Analysis [ncpa.org] and read anything written by John Goodman, PhD.

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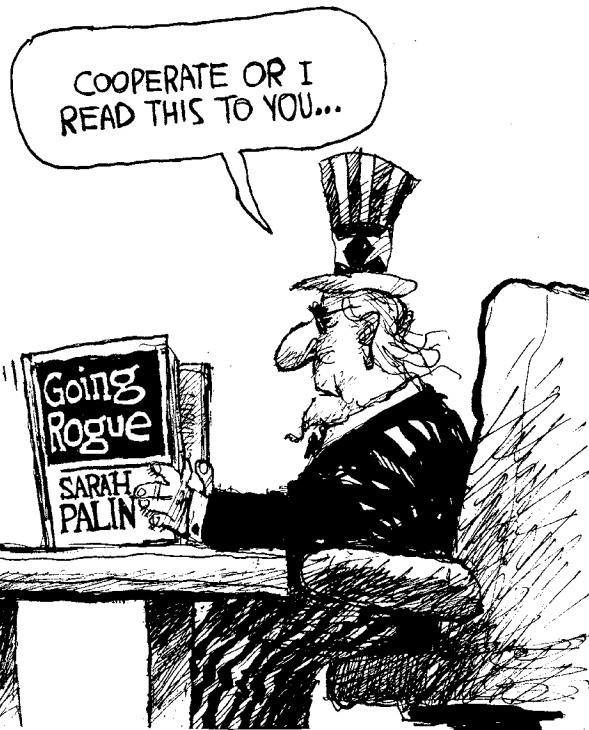
OUR MOTTO: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

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

MIKE LUCKOVICH
ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION
 10-2-09



We mention Tulsa's George Kaiser not because he is the richest Oklahoman [\$9.5 billion] but because he is performing so many good works for the least fortunate Oklahomans.

Laurel: To educators across Oklahoma for exposing that "unscientific" poll by the anti-public education Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs wherein most students couldn't identify the first president. Don't believe anything they publish without fact-checking it.

Last year more than 800,000 children were added to the growing number of children 18 and younger living in poverty. The total today is America's shame: 14.1 million.

Dart: To the Legislature for that fatally-flawed back-door bill to prevent abortions, with a hugely personal questionnaire. Now taxpayers will have to defend a very expensive lawsuit.

Don't hold your breath until Republican leaders call a special session to deal with a welfare budget cut so drastic that senior nutrition centers across the state will be closed - starving some elderly to death.

Laurel: To Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School, Claremore's Stuart A. Roosa Elementary and Miami's Wilson Elementary named 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools - three of only 314 winners.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that there are up to 1.6 million homeless and run-away children, including 20% who are gay.

Dart: To Oklahoma's tax-cutting leadership, agreeing to pay the \$22 million owed the feds for constructing southeastern Oklahoma's Sardis Lake in 1974! The feds sued, and the state coughed up an initial payment of \$2.7 million.

A good news-bad news story: Oklahoma is ninth in the murder of women by men last year - 37 victims. That was one less than the previous year.

Laurel: To Time magazine for reporting that of every dollar spent on malpractice insurance, .40 goes toward awards. Insurers gobble up the rest. Average award \$326,931, with 97% settled out of court.

Former Pittsburg County DA Kalyn Free is being encouraged to run for attorney general. She would be dynamite!

Dart: To the VA for not being proactive in the case of 131,000 homeless veterans, including 13,100 women. The VA retorts that Congress doesn't provide enough funding.

First Lady Kim Henry is publicly battling against smoking and smokeless tobacco, noting 25% of high school students smoke and 25% of boys dip. Cancer strikes 17,000 Oklahomans a year and 7,500 die from the disease.

Laurel: To Air Force Lt. Col. Troy Dunn, 37, honored by the Jaycees for the Outstanding American Award. He commands the 11th Mission Support Squadron at Boiling Air Force Base, Washington, DC.

Oklahoma is one of 14 states that doesn't budget for after-school programs. Estimated lifetime earnings of the 2008 class of dropouts is estimated at \$3.8 billion. Yet our Guv and Legislature cut taxes \$720 million.

Dart To our inferior U.S. House delegation, voting unanimously against extending unemployment benefits but voting unanimously to extend the same benefits for business. [Official roll call]

Surprise! Oklahoma has more than 75,000 gambling addicts and not remotely enough money to treat them. It rips apart families and leads many into crime. That's the downside of the lottery and casinos.

Dart: To Norman's Whittier Middle School for canceling the appearance of author Ellen Hopkins because her books deal with serious themes. Only one parent complained. Thanks to Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College, she appeared and drew a crowd of 150.

Every year 8.8 million children under five die worldwide of treatable illnesses such as pneumonia and diarrhea, with 40% of the deaths occurring in Nigeria, Congo and India. [AP]

Laurel: To Anne Roberts, retiring after 20 years of superb service as executive director at the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy.

We want to attend the first debate when bigoted Rep. Sally Kern, R-OKC, debates her transgender opponent, Brittany Novotny.

Dart: To Rep. Ken Miller, R-Edmond, bemoaning the education initiative on next year's ballot due to the cost of \$850 million. If the GOP had kept its word on a regional average pay scale there would be no vote.

Oklahoma's uninsured rate under 65 is 22.3%; for children under 18, it's 12.9%. Texas leads the nation, 26.5% of adults.

Laurel: To New Mexico's largest public utility, PNM, for opting out of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce because it refuses to support climate change legislation.

Broken Arrow School District has so many lawsuits, legal fees have increased 20-fold in a year - \$163,000. The finger-pointing in that district never stops.

Dart: To new U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, telling Oklahomans on his visit here that he wants to "fix" the No Child Left Behind law. How do you fix something that is an incontrovertible failure?

Oklahoma is one of the least well states in the Union. And it does matter - Oklahomans live an average of 75.5 years, two years less than the national average of 77.7 years. [Oklahoma Health Department]

Laurel: To Media Specialist Tim Ham of Tulsa's Edison Prep School, winner of the Polly Clarke Award for school library professionalism.

Oklahoma ranks 45th in uninsured low-income parents and 44th in employees insured by their employers. And you can bet they all belong to the Chamber of Commerce.

Dart: To hypocritical legislative leaders for blasting the Oklahoma Education Association over State Question 744 to bring teachers to the regional average. It's what they promised and failed to deliver.

Brian Jackson of Muskogee is the world's No. 1 hot air specialist - able to blow up a hot water bottle in 51 seconds. Look out talk radio, here he comes!

Laurel: To Bob Lemon, winner of this year's Angie Debo Civil Libertarian Award from the ACLU of Oklahoma. Few have done more to advance civil rights for all Oklahomans.

Public school graduation rates: Oklahoma 76.6%, Texas 78%, New Mexico 86.6%, Kansas 88.7% and Arkansas 86%. [U.S. Department of Education 2006-07]

Dart: To wingnut Baptist preacher Paul Blair, ejected from a recent Christian Heritage Academy football game for sideline shenanigans. He clearly played too many games without his helmet.

At press time, Gov. Brad Henry was one of only six Democratic governors who hadn't signed a letter urging Congressional leaders to pass a health care reform bill this year. Did his Bic run out of ink?

Laurel: To Phil Frazier for 35 years of faithful service as attorney for Glenpool. At 75 he's not about to quit. He will do the same duty for Bixby and a little private work on the side.

Katherine Bishop of Bethany's Lake Park Elementary is one of five finalists for the NEA Foundation's \$25,000 Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence. The winner will be announced at Feb. 12 gala in Washington, DC.


What's up @ the Capitol?
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Letters

Editor, The Observer:

Boy is my face red! Today I was reading Frosty's article [9.25.09] about St. Tom Coburn and his C Street Cult. When the story first came out about John Ensign's affair and his counseling sessions with Coburn, I remember the mention of doctor/patient privilege being invoked. I naturally assumed that it was the opposite of how Frosty explained it.

After all, John Ensign used to be a veterinarian, and Tom Coburn is, as we all know, a horse's a--. Imagine my surprise when I read Frosty's article and learned Coburn was posing as the doctor in this episode of "Desperate Senators."

I still think I'm right, but I'm not qualified to dispute anything Frosty says. I stand corrected.

Deborah Lewis
Garland, TX

Editor, The Observer:

In reply to Tim Jarvis' article in your Sept. 10 issue, he acknowledges our great doctors and health care system which saved his dad's life before he goes on a tirade attacking it. Jarvis is upset over a pill costing \$1,300 per month which is necessary to maintain his dad's good health. Surely his dad's life is worth some \$43 a day, but Jarvis wants a free ride. He does not identify this pill about which he states "there is no way this little pill costs that much to produce." Can he substantiate this statement with facts? I doubt it.

In my wife's case, after cancer surgery she was required to take Gleevec for a year at a cost of \$100 per day. Medicare Part D paid a portion while we gladly paid the remainder. Medicare recipients are suspicious of any government health care plan resembling that of Canada or Britain. This is a sizeable group of people who will generally oppose any new single payer plan, thus making significant change difficult if not impossible to achieve.

Bobby Dunford
Henryetta

Editor, The Observer:

Got Medicare? I do! It took a serious illness in my 30s to do it, and I can't work, but I've got coverage.

My friend also has a serious illness. There is a treatment that could keep her in the workforce, but her insurance calls her illness a pre-existing condition - so bye-bye treatment.

Her condition continues to dete-

riorate. Maybe soon she can toss her work experience and Masters Degree aside, and finally get coverage, and treatment, by qualifying for federal disability insurance [SSD or SSI].

Why not have a Medicare option for everyone, even if they aren't 65 or too sick to work?

Save the public option! Medicare for anyone who wants it!

Laura K. Rhodes
Norman

Editor, The Observer:

I don't trust the folks in Washington, DC, any further than I can throw the Washington Monument. I recall, back in the '60s, all those rosy predictions about when our soldiers would be coming home from Vietnam. More recently, we were assured that there were WMD in Iraq. History has given us ample lessons about the lamentable tendency of our government either to be wrong or to lie to us.

We need to get out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany, Italy, Japan, and all the countries in which we have military bases. I believe we have over 700 of them worldwide. Ridiculous! Our national infrastructure is falling apart, our corrupt economic system is on life-support, and we can't even provide what all European and some Asian countries provide to their citizens: universal health care.

We are fast approaching a time when we will not be able to maintain our profligate spending and imperial meddling with the rest of the world. As I've said before, all empires have two things in common: they rise and they fall. I believe that the Obama Administration is the last hope we have of averting catastrophe, but I don't think the president has the stomach for the fight to enact meaningful economic and political reforms. Pity. He wants to go down in history as a latter-day FDR, but I fear his real legacy will be that of a latter-day Herbert Hoover.

Larry Forrest
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

Lewis B. Thomas was a newspaperman, teacher, author, stained glass artist, an ardent Democrat, and my uncle. He died this August at age 94. He worked for several newspapers, television stations and universities including San Jose State in California and Colorado State in Ft. Collins. In 1960, when his employer, Colorado State, obtained a contract for the start-up of



President Kennedy's Youth Corps [later to become the Peace Corps] Thomas handled all the press relations. He had a signed photo of JFK above his bed in the nursing home.

During his last years, before his final illnesses, his main pleasure was reading - books and newspapers. I kept his subscription to The Oklahoma Observer current and he always said it was a "good paper." He joked that the only thing he feared about dying was that he might come back as a Republican.

Thank you, Observer, for helping an old newspaperman enjoy his old age.

Judy Havens
Edmond

Editor, The Observer:

With development of passenger rail indisputably a national priority, even Oklahoma City hosted a big rail conference the week of Sept. 21. Ironically, downtown OKC was witnessing simultaneously the determined, methodical crippling of our state's unique railway network.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation representatives attending the conference were no doubt wearing their "pro-rail" faces and speaking with their "pro-rail" tongues. But ODOT is the very perpetrator of the ongoing destruction of the OKC Union Station rail yard at 300 SW 7th St.

In order to comprehend ODOT's two-faced, forked-tongue persona, one needs to understand that ODOT is not really a transportation department, but a highway department occasionally expected to be involved with rail. ODOT's director, Gary Ridley, is a former lobbyist for the Oklahoma Asphalt Paving Association.

The familiar side, the true side, of ODOT has chosen to run a highway unnecessarily through the rail yard, indifferently leaving in rubble a state and regional resource that was intended to serve generations.

Should ODOT succeed in its plan to make the Union Station rail yard unusable, Oklahoma and the nation are going to have to pay twice for a rail hub that will hardly be as good as the one we already have.

What do taxpayers think of this waste?

B.A. Geary
Tulsa

Editor, The Observer:

President Obama has stated there will be no Cost Of Living Adjustments for Social Security recipients in 2010 or 2011.

Will he guarantee that the cost of living, food, rents, transportation, energy, medical care will not increase?

We must assume he needs to send more money to ill-managed corporations that pay executives millions, or reward "pay to play" contributors.

There are some 50 million receiving Social Security. Many are survivors of Omaha Beach, the Bulge, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Iwo Jima, Korea, Vietnam.

There is no record of President Obama serving in the military. One wonders if he enrolled for Selective Service, as required by law.

How many more will be slaughtered or permanently disabled in the Bush wars of Afghanistan and Iraq?

Fifty million, quite a lot of voters. Hopefully, all will remember this action against them.

I voted for him, but no longer trust him.

John C. Candler
Henryetta

Editor's Note: According to the Selective Service, Obama registered at a post office in Hawaii on Sept. 4, 1980. His registration number is 61-1125539-1.

Editor, The Observer:

New York Congressman Jerry Nadler, a senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee and the sharpest legal mind in Congress, believes President Obama would be breaking the law if he decides to oppose launching an investigation into the authorization of torture.

"If they follow the law they have no choice," Nadler said. The logic, for Nadler, is straightforward. As a signatory of the convention against torture, and as a result of the anti-torture act of 1996, the United States government is obligated to investigate accusations of torture when they occur in its jurisdiction. The alternative, Nadler said, "would be violating the law. They would be not upholding the law; they would be violating it."

A special prosecutor should handle the task, because some of the likely subjects of such an investigation worked in the Justice Department. Beyond the legal requirements, there is a moral and political imperative - lest the precedent be set that potential illegalities go un-probed.

From a political point of view it is the last thing you want to do; from a point of view of reestablishing justice in this country, it is essential.

Frank P. Belcastro
Dubuque, IA

EDUCATION

America's Greatest Success Story

Despite an avalanche of social problems - drugs, alcohol, teen pregnancy, dysfunctional families gangs - American education today is more successful than than at any other time in history. If you doubt it, sit back and listen to America's foremost champion of education, Frosty Troy, founding editor of The Oklahoma Observer. He not only tells it like it is, he backs up his words with facts - which is more than the critics do. Everything America is or ever hopes to be depends upon what happens in our classrooms. Call Frosty at 405.760.1843 to book a speech.

The Jesus House



FROSTY TROY
Founding Editor

It was a slow day in the Observer office in 1973 when the phone rang.

"Frosty, take a ride with me. I want you to meet someone."

The voice on the phone was a local Methodist minister. I had no earthly idea what he was talking about but I agreed.

He picked me up and drove straight to a rather shabby building near downtown Oklahoma City.

He introduced me to Ruth Wynne and Betty Adams. Being a cradle Catholic, I thought these were nuns in street garb and this was their mission.

I was partially right – it was a mission but this was a pair of Texas transplants who came to Oklahoma City to minister to street people. Their facility was nicknamed The Jesus House.

Thus was born a true story of a pair of saints on earth and a mission that continues to this day – a shelter for the homeless, the mentally ill, ex-cons with no jobs, anybody.

They were unashamedly Christian, sharing the real gospel of Jesus as well as food and shelter.

I was to learn that Sister Ruth had a fine arts degree from the University of Oklahoma and attended Julliard Music Conservatory in New York.

She never earned, nor sought, an OU honorary doctorate while dozens of rich folk did.

Why the mission? While living in New York City she met Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, still the noblest outreach of Roman Catholicism.

Inspired by what she saw she relocated to San Antonio where she opened her first mission for the most woebegone. The first person through her door was Betty Adams – homeless, seriously ill and suffering from acute alcoholism.

She nursed Betty Adams back to health. Betty then pledged her life to assisting Ruth – but despite her best efforts, continued to drink.

They moved to New Orleans where Ruth Wynne set up her easel and drew quick portraits in Jackson Square to raise money.

Life was too hard in New Orleans so they moved to Oklahoma City and began attending a rosary group led by Glenn Cullen.

It was in this group they made fast friends with Madeline Reed and Frances Jordan. It was Frances who prayed and fasted for three days for alcoholic Betty Adams' recovery. It worked! She never took another drink.

Ruth Wynne set up her easel in Shepherd Mall in 1965 – the year the mall



opened.

When they began to open their small apartment to street kids at the height of the drug-laced hippie movement, they became Sister Ruth and Sister Betty. Both would share scripture readings and the life of Jesus with the hippies.

Students from nearby Oklahoma City University began dropping by nicknaming the apartment The Jesus House. As the need grew, they moved often to take in the increasing number of the needy.

They landed in an old frame house at Ninth & Walker. They, along with volunteers, paid the bills by cleaning office buildings at night.

A truck driver remembers sleeping on the window ledge at the Reno & Walker storefront. Monks from an Oklahoma City Orthodox Monastery provided their baked bread on a daily basis.

Jesus House became a fixture, a tribute to the social ministry of genuine Christianity but wholly unaffiliated with any denomination. Thousands upon thousands of the neediest have passed through their portals.

They receive no local, state or federal funding – they are truly beggars for Christ, especially hurting today during these economic tough times.

Don't get the idea that it is all sweetness and light. They have had their brushes with the lawless, the acute mentally ill and street drunks. A mental health facility has been known to drop off patients at the Jesus House.

Today 75 people live at the shelter at 1335 W. Sheridan Ave. The shelter nearly lost natural gas service but \$2,000 was finally raised to pay the bill.

Today's CEO, Janis Mercer, told a reporter, "If we have to sit in the dark, take cold showers and eat sandwiches, we won't close."

Regardless of your political persuasion – or if you don't have any – I write this as an appeal for your financial help. To donate, send any amount to PO Box 60369, Oklahoma City, OK 73146.

You will be helping people who will probably never know of your generosity. A wise man put it in perspective: You don't get a life by what you get but by what you give.

Unsung Civil Rights Hero

September 23 marked the birth date of one of Oklahoma's unsung heroes, Wade Watts, a gospel preacher who became a civil rights champion.

The self-effacing Watts was one of the powerful individuals working to desegregate public facilities and institutions in Oklahoma of the 1940s and '50s.

He was more than a civil rights activist; he served as the state president of the Oklahoma chapter of the NAACP for 16 years. He invited me to speak at an NAACP state convention in Muskogee – a special honor since I was the first Caucasian to receive that honor.

Watts was all over the state, challenging the Ku Klux Klan through his "Christian love doctrine." He worked with Thurgood Marshall and developed a friendship with Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement.

He mentored his nephew, J.C. Watts, who served on the Corporation Commission and in the U.S. Congress.

One of his proudest accomplishment was working with Thurgood Marshall on the Ada Lois Sipuel challenge to segregation in the University of Oklahoma law school.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1948, in Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, that barring Sipuel from the school was unconstitutional.

Watts as also famed for his humor. In the 1950s, Watts and Oklahoma state Sen. Gene Stipe entered a restaurant. When a waitress stopped them at the door and told them that the restaurant "did not serve Negroes," Watts replied, "I don't eat Negroes. I just came to get some ham and eggs."

Stipe became a fearless civil rights champion in the Oklahoma Legislature, surprising his Little Dixie supporters.

Wade and his brother Buddy made sure J.C. Watts was one of the first black children to attend a newly integrated elementary public school.

In 1976 J.C. Watts fathered a daughter out of wedlock with a white woman. Interracial marriage would be impractical because of contemporary racial attitudes.

Members of the mother's family did not want to raise a black child. It was decided that the pregnancy should be brought to term and that Wade Watts and his wife would adopt and raise the girl.

As the state leader of the NAACP, Wade Watts was a target of the Ku Klux Klan and in 1979 had the opportunity to debate the Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma

KKK, Johnny Lee Clary, on an Oklahoma City radio station.

Clary refused to shake Watts' hand before the broadcast, but Watts reached out and shook his hand anyway, introduced himself by telling the startled Clary that Jesus loved him.

As they were leaving the radio station, Watts introduced Clary to his wife and the niece they were raising and asked Clary how he could hate the little girl.

Watts reminded Clary whenever they spoke that God loved him, even responding to a threatening phone call from Clary [in which he was told that Clary and other Klansmen were coming for him] by telling Clary that it was unnecessary because he would meet Clary and buy him dinner.

Watts' approach was too much for Clary, who renounced the KKK. He and Watts became close friends.

Watts was a lifelong Democrat and took issue with his nephew when J.C. switched to the Republican Party, garnering headlines since he had become a star football player at OU.

Wade Watts did not suffer this in silence, chiding his nephew to the media because, he said, the Republican Party did not stand up for the interests of "poor people, working people, and common people."

His nephew countered by saying his support of the Republican Party stemmed from his belief that the Democrats had let his uncle down, saying that his uncle had "delivered more black votes for the Democratic Party than any black person in the state of Oklahoma."

It was Oklahoma Republican guru Tom Cole who approached J.C. Watts about a GOP race for the Corporation Commission.

Legend has it that Watts had first approached a Democratic leader about a run for public office but was ignored.

J.C. Watts served briefly as a youth minister for a Del City Southern Baptist church.

Wade Watts was pastor of the Jerusalem Baptist Church for many years. He always traded at Troy Cleaners, becoming fast friends with my brother Bernard.

J.C. Watts, now a Republican Party icon, declined to go on record supporting Barack Obama, first black president in American history.

An honest reading of history will show that Wade Watts never became as famous as his nephew, but his life had more lasting impact where it counts.

Righting The Criminal Justice Wrongs



ARNOLD HAMILTON
Editor

From Joyce Gilchrist's shady science to John Grisham's *The Innocent Man*, Oklahoma's criminal justice system often seems better known for its injustice.

Since the mid-1990s, 18 convictions have been overturned in the state, most because DNA evidence proved the wrong person was behind bars.

So far, the efforts to identify and exonerate the innocent have focused primarily on death penalty or life sentence cases. How many others could be wrongfully serving time in lower-profile criminal cases?

It's a question that long nagged students at the Oklahoma City University School of Law. Five years ago, members of the school's Christian legal society approached Dean Lawrence K. Hellman with the idea of creating a clinical program aimed at helping right wrongful convictions in Oklahoma. OCU didn't have the money

to launch such a program then, but the idea wasn't forgotten.

Now, OCU is on the verge of joining more than 30 law schools nationally in establishing such a clinic. On Oct. 13, Grisham will appear at a fund-raiser for the program at OCU's Henry J. Freede Wellness and Activity Center. The 7:30 p.m. event is open to the public, with a minimum suggested contribution of \$25.

"This is a program that I think has such broad appeal," says Hellman. "Everybody can identify with the horror of being the person or related to the person who is absolutely innocent of a crime and here they are in jail."

Further, he says, "When a victim or the family of a victim discovers the wrong person was initially convicted, it does serious psychological damage to them because they thought they had had closure in the matter and thought justice had been done and they have guilt feelings and horrors that the real perpetrators are still at large."

Nationally, 244 convictions have been overturned by DNA evidence, according to the Innocence Project. The state's 18 reversals may seem few in the context of thousands of prosecutions – unless, of course, you're the one wrongfully con-

victed. But the number elevates Oklahoma into the Top 10 nationally in exonerations.

It's also not difficult to imagine that lower-profile criminal cases would be even more ripe for mistakes or misconduct. The state invests less in the prosecutions and defendants often have little money and even fewer legal resources.

The OCU program probably will not be launched officially until the fall of 2011 because of financial constraints and logistics, including hiring necessary faculty. The program won't be limited to DNA cases nor will it pursue cases where procedural errors may be responsible for wrongful convictions. It will focus instead, Hellam says, "on cases of actual innocence."

Oklahoma's criminal justice problems were thrust into the national consciousness after questions were raised about Gilchrist's work as an OKC police chemist and after Ron Williamson and Dennis Fritz were exonerated in the rape-murder of an Ada cocktail waitress. The Williamson-Fritz case was detailed in Grisham's book.

"This story, and the research and writing of it, consumed 18 months," says Grisham. "The journey also exposed me to the world of wrongful convictions, something that I, even as a former lawyer, had never spent much time thinking about. This is not a problem peculiar to Oklahoma, far from it. Wrongful convictions occur every month in every state in this country, and the reasons are all varied and all the same – bad police work, junk science, faulty eyewitness identifications, bad defense lawyers, lazy prosecutors."

The plan, Hellman says, is for OCU students and faculty to work in concert with defense attorneys to "engage in the legal procedures and efforts to get that person exonerated and to then encourage law enforcement authorities to find the true perpetrator."

Hellman says he envisions the OCU program would be analogous to the National Transportation Safety Board and its review of airplane crashes. The NTSB investigates, tries to identify a cause and then works to "make it less likely it will happen again."

"The same thing is true with wrongful convictions. It's like the system had a crash landing and we want to find out why."

Brogdon To Feds: Keep Your Nose Out

Believing the federal government too often oversteps its bounds specifically outlined in the Constitution, several states are looking at "sovereignty" resolutions.

"Congress is supposed to serve the states. Instead, they're telling the states how to conduct their internal business," says Oklahoma Sen. Randy Brogdon, lead sponsor of Oklahoma's sovereignty bill. "We're going to reclaim our rights as a state, and we're going to start governing accordingly."

Brogdon, R-Owasso, says numerous federal laws, including the Patriot Act, No Child Left Behind and federal homeland security requirements, are examples of how the federal government has overstepped its powers. He said the federal stimulus program is a particularly alarming example.

Several states considered memorials or resolutions this year that assert state sovereignty under the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which reads, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

EIGHT STATES PASS SOVEREIGNTY RESOLUTIONS

According to the Tenth Amendment Center, Oklahoma, Alaska, Idaho, Louisiana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Tennessee have passed sovereignty resolutions, and at least 27 other states have considered resolutions. Resolutions have failed to get enough votes in Arkansas, Montana and New Hampshire.

The resolutions are messages to Congress and the president urging them to recognize state sovereignty and telling the federal government to stay out of state business and end certain mandates. The measures assert that the "states are demonstrably treated as agents of the federal government and many federal mandates are directly in violation of the 10th Amendment."

The first Oklahoma resolution was vetoed by Gov. Brad Henry who was concerned about losing federal tax dollars for transportation, education, health care, law enforcement, veterans' programs and many other vital services.

His veto message: "Without question, the state of Oklahoma and its leaders support the U.S. Constitution and the rights it guarantees to the states and their citizens, and there is no need to spend valuable legislative time on a resolution expressing support for any particular amendment or constitutional right ... HJR 1003 could be detrimental to Oklahoma and does not serve the state or its citizens in any positive manner."

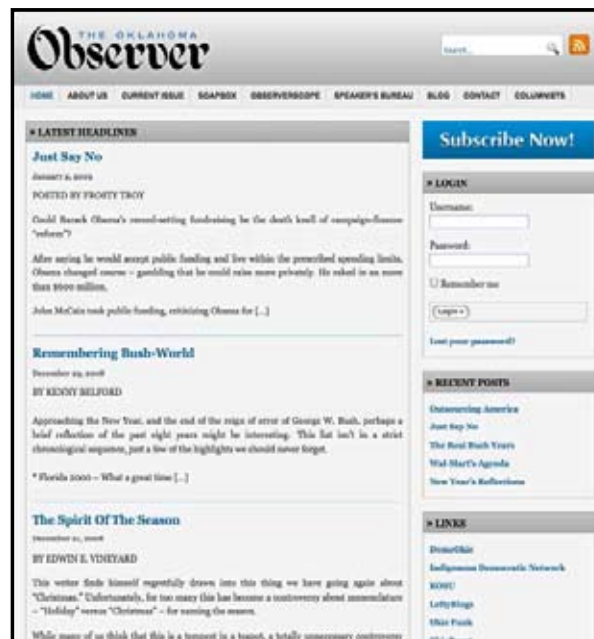
The Legislature re-filed the measure as House Concurrent Resolution 1028. It passed and does not require the governor's signature.

Although there was a flurry of activity on this sovereignty issue this year, only a handful of the measures passed.

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Ten Commandments Showdown Looming

Location of a Ten Commandments monument on the state Capitol grounds is moving forward, with funding coming from the Cecil B. DeMille Foundation which is seeking to fund one on the grounds of every state Capitol.

Oklahoma's Democratic Gov. Brad Henry signed a bill by Republican Rep. Mike Ritz May 18 that cleared the way for the privately-funded monument.

Both houses of the legislature, in Republican hands, approved the bill authorizing a monument recognizing that the Commandments are "an important component of the foundation of the laws and legal system of the United States of America and of the State of Oklahoma."

The law takes effect Nov. 1 and proponents claim that the monument does not "favor any particular religion or denomination." It is to be placed on the north side of the Capitol.

LEGAL FEES WOULD BE COVERED

The Cecil B. DeMille Foundation is prepared to pay any legal fees if the law is challenged in court. It was DeMille who produced the *Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston.

Ritze said initially that his family would pay for construction, placement and upkeep.

The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty [BJC] appealed unsuccessfully to the governor, a member of First Baptist Church in Shawnee, to veto the bill.

BJC general counsel Holly Hollman commented: "We should be more concerned with following the Ten Commandments rather than merely posting them on government property. Religion flourishes best when the separation of church and state is protected."

HASKELL COUNTY LEGAL TIFF

Looming over the project is the Haskell County erection of a Ten Commandments' monument at the courthouse, declared unconstitutional by a federal appeals court on June 8.

The U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the display violated the Establishment Clause "because the reasonable observer would view the Monument as having the impermissible principal or primary effect of endorsing religion."

The case arose in October 2005 when the ACLU and an individual taxpayer, James W. Green, challenged a 2004 decision by the Haskell County Board of Commissioners to build the monument on the front lawn of the county courthouse.

IT WAS A RELIGIOUS DEDICATION

A dedication ceremony was held that included numerous prayers from local pastors. In August 2006 a federal district court upheld the monument's constitutionality, and plaintiffs appealed to the Tenth Circuit, which overruled the lower court.

The case, *Green v. Haskell County Board of Commissioners*, attracted national attention. The ACLU was joined by amicus briefs from the Mainstream Baptist Network and Americans United.

Supporting the monument defendants were Rev. Pat Robertson's American Center for Law & Justice, the American Legion, the rightwing National Legal Foundation, and the Foundation for Moral Law, a Montgomery, AL-based group founded by Roy Moore, former Alabama Supreme Court chief justice who recently announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination for governor.

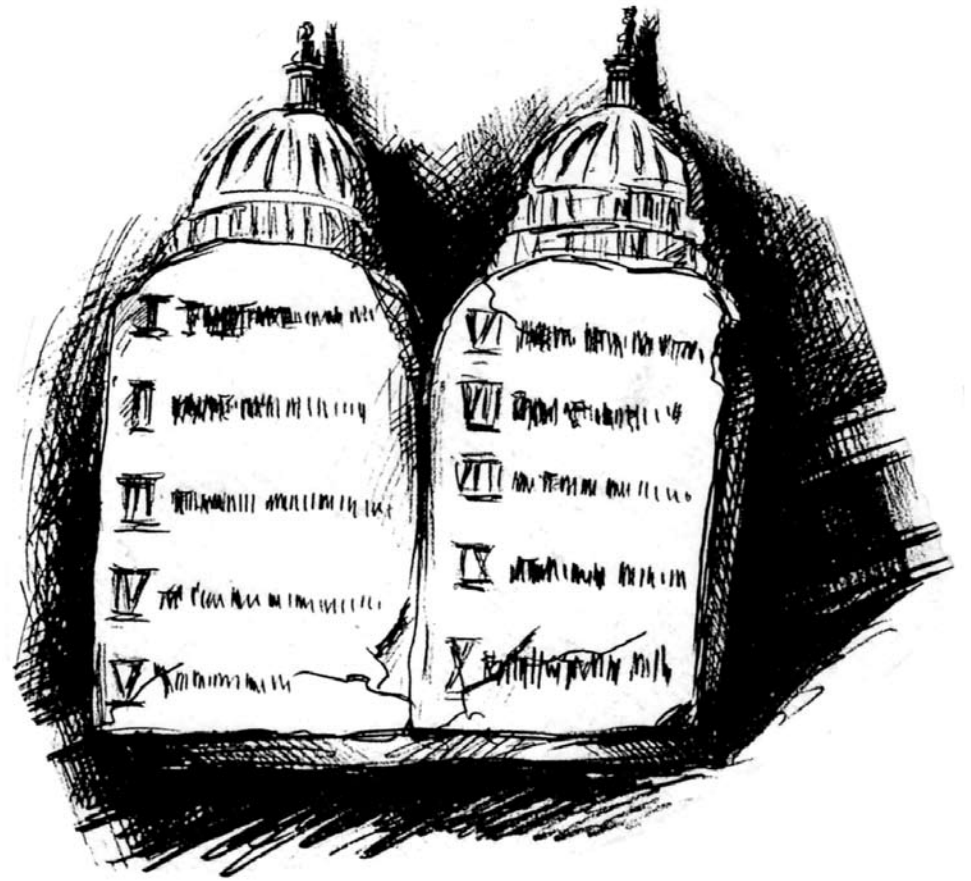
COMPLEX LEGAL QUESTIONS

From the outset the monument presented complex religious questions that were ignored by the county commissioners. Which version would be used? Who would finance it? The primary instigator was Michael Bush, a construction worker and part-time minister who told the board that "the Lord had burdened his heart" to create the monument.

Bush "raised the necessary funds through religious groups in the community" and also "condensed and paraphrased the Commandments from the King James Version of the Bible," according to the decision.

The final product is so short it could be called a Readers Digest Condensed Version. The word "adultery" is misspelled "adultry." The Mayflower Compact was added to the monument.

A dedication ceremony held on Sunday, Nov. 7, 2004 primarily consisted of



members of churches that had participated in the fundraising effort.

The appeals court emphasized the "reasonable observer" rule enunciated by the U.S. Supreme Court in previous Establishment cases:

A RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION

"Thus, the reasonable observer to this case would be aware of the nature and history of the Haskell County community, the circumstances surrounding the Monument's placement on the courthouse lawn, its precise location on the lawn and its spatial relationship to the other courthouse monuments, and also the Haskell County community's response to the Monument.

"In particular, the reasonable observer would be aware of Mr. Bush's religious motivation for seeking the erection of the Monument."

Bush's "unalloyed religious motivation" was evident when he "organized a religiously themed rally to support the Monument," the Court observed, and added, "We conclude, in the unique factual setting of a small community like Haskell County, that the reasonable observer would find that these facts tended to strongly reflect a government endorsement of religion."

The decision was unanimous: "In the context of the small community of Haskell County, we hold that the Board's actions in authorizing and maintaining the Monument – inscribed with the Ten Commandments – on the courthouse lawn had the impermissible principal or primary effect of endorsing religion in violation of the Establishment Clause."

ALL SHOULD BE WELCOME

Joann Bell, executive director of ACLU of Oklahoma, was pleased with the ruling: "This is a significant ruling for the citizens of Oklahoma. Religion should not be something that should be allowed to divide the citizens of this state, which is what happens when the government endorses one particular set of religious beliefs. All Oklahomans, of all creeds – and not just the beliefs of those in power – should feel welcome at the county courthouse."

Haskell County commissioners announced that they would defy the court order. The three-judge panel of the 10th Circuit remanded it to U.S. District Judge Ronald White, who originally upheld it.

Haskell County commissioners have been ordered to pay ACLU attorney and court fees. An appeal of the case is pending.

Commissioner Mitch Worsham said, "I feel sorry for him [10th Circuit judges] on Judgment Day. We're not going to take it down."

Expect a replay in Oklahoma City, with Republicans eager to tear down Thom-

New Tool To Fight Prescription Overdoses

Oklahoma physicians are working to curb the steep rise in unintentional prescription-drug overdose deaths in Oklahoma by using a new tool made available by the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

State Rep. Doug Cox, a Grove Republican who chairs the House Appropriations subcommittee on public health, has seen the prescription-abuse problem firsthand as an emergency room physician at Integris Grove General Hospital.

"Overuse and abuse of prescription drugs occurs in Oklahomans of all ages," Cox said. "Ten percent of Oklahoma adolescents have a substance abuse or addiction problem. Too often this involves prescription medicines. Hydrocodone and Oxycontin are the big offenders, along with other opiates and also Valium-like medications."

To combat the problem, physicians can now use the Oklahoma Prescription Monitoring Program [PMP].

"PMP allows doctors to view a patient's history of narcotic prescriptions," Cox

said.

"This allows us to detect patients that are 'doctor hopping' or visiting multiple ERs to obtain narcotics. The more history we have the better we can make informed decisions about prescribing narcotics to patients.

"In addition, it tips us off as to which patients need counseling or drug rehabilitation."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recognize deaths from prescription-drug overuse as a national problem.

"While it is discouraging that we lose Oklahomans to this problem, it is rewarding to know we are attacking the problem head on with our PMP program," Cox said.

"Drug abuse and addiction issues are a severe burden on the Oklahoma taxpayer as they are a major contributor to our prison population and the number of citizens in our mental health system."

Another Black Eye

School's Book Ban Is Taken To Task

By Connie Schultz

We call them school librarians, but in these contentious times, I'm inclined to call them heroes.

Take Karin Perry, for example. That's "Mrs. Perry" to you middle schoolers. She cast the winning bid in an auction to bring best-selling author Ellen Hopkins to speak to her students at Whittier Middle School in Norman.

This was a big "whoo-hoo!" for Perry's students. Hopkins writes fiction for adolescents, including *Crank*, a heartbreaking tale of a bright 13-year-old girl whose life is derailed by her addiction to methamphetamine.

Hopkins wrote the book after her own gifted daughter went to prison for the same drug addiction.

Hopkins often talks to students about the dangers of drugs, but Mrs. Perry asked her to talk about writing.

STUDENT QUESTIONS GO UNANSWERED

Students were bubbling with questions, but they never were allowed to ask Hopkins any of them on school grounds.

One parent didn't like the content of Hopkins' book. That's all it took for Superintendent Joe Siano to order a committee review of the book and to disinvite the celebrated author.

Now is as good a time as any to mention that this was written during Banned Books Week, sponsored annually by the American Library Association to celebrate the freedom to read.

The ALA says there were at least 513 challenges to books last year but that nearly 80% of such challenges never are reported.

It takes only one parent, one family, one community member to jump-start a crusade to deprive everyone else's children of the right to read.

CHECK THE LIST OF BANNED BOOKS

Here are some of the authors whose books have been challenged across the country in the past two years: Mark Twain, Toni Morrison, John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Julia Alvarez, Ernest Gaines, Kurt Vonnegut, Khaled Hosseini, Bobbie Ann Mason and J.D. Salinger.

Hacks, every last one of them.

The call to ban Hopkins' book was endorsed heartily by local newscaster Kelly Ogle, who hadn't read the whole thing but did count the F-bombs.

In a segment aptly titled "My 2 Cents," Ogle also accused Hopkins of painting "an ugly and graphic picture" of meth addiction. Not sure what Ogle was going for there. Perhaps he thinks fiction means you make up everything, including the real consequences of ravaging one's body with crank.

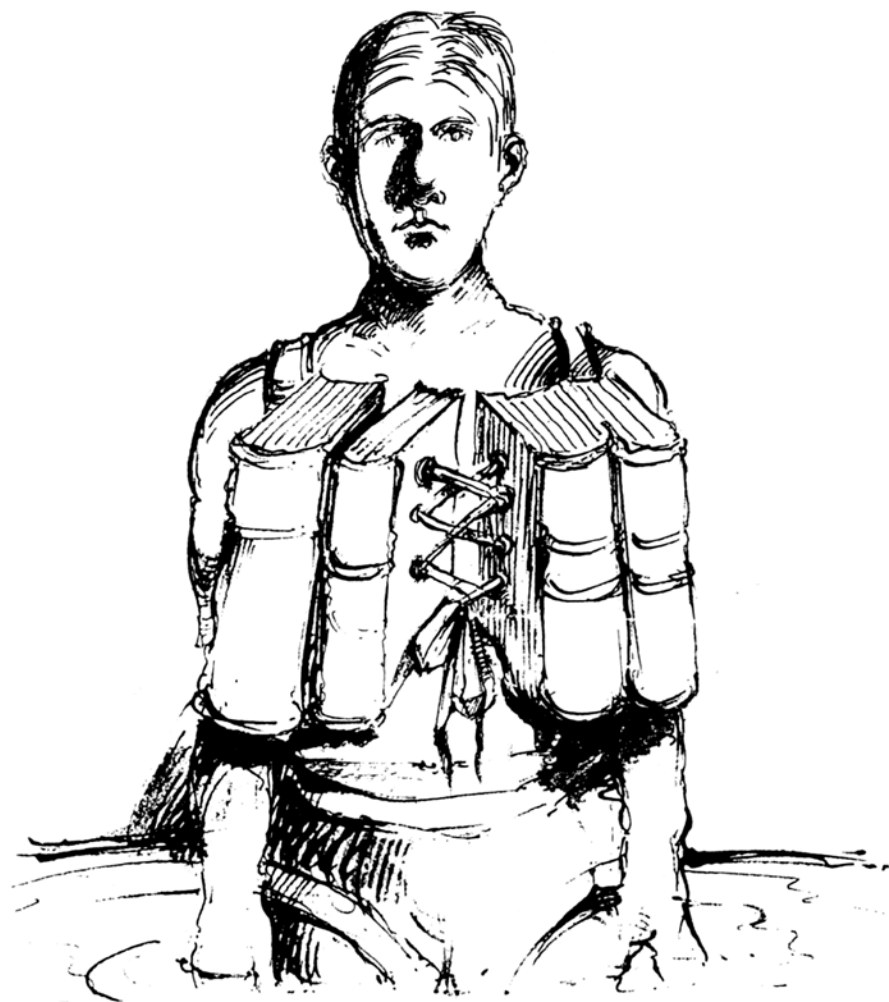
LIVES TURNED AROUND BY HER WORK

Hopkins told me she has received thousands of letters from teenagers who say her books helped them turn their lives around.

She also said she is seeing an uptick in attempts by individual parents to ban books by her and other authors, and she thinks she knows why.

"They're definitely emboldened by what happened with Obama's speech," she said, referring to the president's televised address to students.

His speech was banned in many classrooms across the country after school



districts buckled like brittle knees to conservatives who objected even before knowing its content.

President Obama's speech was praised widely later as positive and inspiring, even by many conservative leaders. But the damage was done, Hopkins said.

"These are scary times for librarians and teachers. All it takes now is for one parent to object. If we let them win, they're just going to keep doing it."

Not in Karin Perry's patch of America, they aren't.

SUPERINTENDENT WON'T RETURN CALLS

Mrs. Perry couldn't speak to me without permission from her superintendent, who never returned my call. Not to worry. Sometimes it's true that actions speak louder than words. Let me tell you what she did.

Mrs. Perry asked Hopkins whether she still would come. The answer was yes. Then she asked Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College – love the name – whether she could move Hopkins' talk to their campus. The college said yes.

About 150 students, parents, teachers and librarians attended the speech. So far, there are no reports of fainting or even frantic fanning of faces.

As we all know, it only takes one person to declare otherwise before you're smack-dab in the middle of a dust storm over the First Amendment.

If that wind kicks up dirt on your corner, may there be a Karin Perry at a library near you.

– The author is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Cleveland Plain Dealer and a published author

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Subversive Libraries Are 'Public Options'

By M.C. Blakeman

Of all the current assaults on our noble Republic, perhaps none is more dangerous than the public option – specifically, the public library option.

For far too long, this menace has undermined the very foundations of our economy. While companies like Amazon and Barnes & Noble struggle valiantly each day to sell books, these communistic cabals known as libraries undercut the hard work of good corporate citizens by letting people read their books for free.

How is the private sector supposed to compete with free? And just what does this public option give us?

People can spend hours and hours in these dens of socialism without having to buy so much as a cappuccino. Furthermore, not only can anyone read books for free in the library, they can take them home, too.

BEWARE THE SIMPLE LIBRARY CARD

They get a simple card that can be used at any library in town. No checking on the previous condition of books they've read. No literacy test. Nothing.

Yet, do these libertines of literature let you choose any book you want, anytime you want it? No. Have you ever tried to get the latest best-seller at a public library?

They put you on a waiting list for that, my friend. And if you do ask these government apparatchiks a question about a book, they start talking your ear off, and pretty soon they're telling you what to read.

Of course, if you break one of their petty rules and return a book late, you have to pay fines that mount grotesquely each day.

THOSE PENNIES KEEP MOUNTING

Even if you die, your overdue fees keep piling up. Is that not a death tax? How long must the elderly live in fear of burdening their children with these unfair sanctions on their estates?

Don't be fooled for a minute. Somebody has to pay for these "free" libraries,

and I'll tell you who it is, pal. Those good ol' suckers, the American taxpayers, that's who.

Have you ever wondered who's really behind this public library option? Don't you think it's fishy that they mask their nefarious activities with benign-sounding names, like Friends of the Library? What's their real agenda – and why do they have so many "volunteer" meetings, anyway?

No, my fellow Americans. We cannot wait until we're all goose-stepped into a massive book checkout line. This assault on capitalism and our very way of life has got to end.

Be subversive ... burn your library card! Go out and buy a book!

– Tongue-in-cheek M.C. Blakeman is the co-author of *Safe Homes, Safe Neighborhoods* [Nolo Press]

Minds Must Be Free

"If the First Amendment means anything, it means that a State has no business telling a man, sitting alone in his own house, what books he may read or what films he may watch. Our whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thought of giving government the power to control men's minds." – Justice Thurgood Marshall, *Stanley v. Georgia*, 1979

It Begins At Home

"Some in America today would limit our freedom of expression and of conscience. In the name of unity, they would impose a narrow conformity of ideas and opinion ... Only a government which fights for civil liberties and equal rights for its own people can stand for freedom in the rest of the world." – Adlai E. Stevenson

Puppy Mills Still Unregulated

Special Interests Killed Animal Welfare Plans

By Ruth Steinberger

Despite overwhelming promise for strides in animal welfare at the beginning of the 2009 legislative session, Oklahomans who care about animals were deeply saddened and shocked by the outcome of the session.

The session started out with two strong measures to address the worst animal issues facing companion animals in Oklahoma, puppy mills and routine abandonment of unwanted pets. However, despite strong grass roots support across the entire state, disappointing outcomes on both bills left animals in the dust one more year.

The Pet Quality Assurance Act, or the "puppy mill bill," House Bill 1332, and House Bill 1045, a bill which would have allowed low-population counties to operate a shelter and pass animal control ordinances, would have combined to help the most voiceless of all companion animals in our state: dogs in unlicensed dog dealing facilities and unwanted animals facing abandonment due to the absence of shelters. Currently, while cities and towns may establish animal shelters and animal control codes, all except for three counties with populations exceeding 200,000 may not. In fact, although Tulsa, Oklahoma and Cleveland counties have populations exceeding 200,000, none of the three have a shelter serving those living in the county.

Citizens have not been offered a clear reason why either bill failed.

ATTEMPT TO CREATE MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Pet Quality Assurance Act, introduced by Rep. Lee Denney, a veterinarian and a Cushing Republican, would have created minimum standards for facilities producing over 35 dogs, cats, kittens or puppies in a year. The bill passed the Oklahoma House by a margin of 74 in favor and 26 opposed. It sailed through the House by nearly two-thirds. And suddenly, in the General Conference Committee on Appropriations, it died in the final week of the session due to a lack of signatures to pass out of that committee.

This final disappointment has never been fully explained. The list of which committee members signed and those that refused to sign has not been released, leaving those who supported the bill unable to even thank those that tried to help the animals.

For those not familiar with the bill, Oklahoma is the only high volume breeder state to lack state regulations of the facilities commonly referred to as "puppy mills." While dog breeders that produce dogs to sell to brokers must be licensed by USDA, those that sell puppies directly to the consumer are not required to hold a federal license; in Oklahoma they are not required to meet any standards at all. As other states have passed regulations of all entities that sell, trade or adopt out a large number of dogs, substandard breeders and rescues that are unable to meet the standards in their home states have flocked here. This has included those who contain breeding animals in tiny cages in filth as well as those who own large scale bully breed kennels with web sites linked to gang activity.

Unlicensed breeders represent a financial challenge to Oklahoma as well. Conservative estimates place their unreported, and therefore, untaxed revenue at over \$40 million in sales. They represent a cost to law enforcement, the courts and public agencies as well. The emotional cost to consumers who buy unvaccinated and diseased puppies from clandestine puppy mills cannot be tabulated.

GOAL: MINIMUM FEDERAL STANDARDS

The regulations under HB 1332 would have mandated only that all breeders meet or exceed the same regulations as those who comply with federal standards. For those not familiar with those standards, they are very, very low. A dog is entitled to a cage size only six inches longer than itself and there are no exercise requirements. When "spent," a dog is likely to be sold at auction for under \$5.

The laundry list of those who felt these meager restrictions would put breeders out of business included the American Kennel Club, the American Canine Association, the American Pet Registry, the Sporting Dog Alliance and Oklahoma Pet Professionals, an organization of federally licensed dog dealers that would seemingly benefit from regulations based on the standards they already meet.

On April 25, 2009, Michael Glass of America's Pet Registry of Bethlehem, PA, sent out an e-mail alert asking members nationwide to try to kill the bill and Bob Yarnall of American Canine Association, also of Pennsylvania, flew to Oklahoma to lobby against passage of the bill. John Yates of Pennsylvania-based Sporting Dog Alliance tried likewise to kill HB 1332 by circulating his own version of the bill which made the bill appear to outlaw pet ownership in Oklahoma. According to a source in the House, one major air carrier traveled to Oklahoma to express their concern over losing shipping business from unregulated breeders, as Tulsa and Oklahoma City are the second and third largest puppy exporting points in the nation, following only Kansas City, MO. In his comments on the House floor, Rep. Brian Renegar, D-McAlester, noted the number of out-of-state interests invested in killing the bill.

BREATHLESS E-MAIL MAKES WILD CLAIMS

Thia King, president of OK Pet Professionals and a federally licensed breeder, claimed in an e-mail that passage of HB 1332 would spell the end of the breeding industry in Oklahoma. Referring to King's opposition Pat Grasse, president of the Oklahoma Humane Federation, said, "It's a mystery why licensed breeders who must comply with USDA standards would oppose having those standards in place for all other breeders in Oklahoma. Maybe this industry is hiding more than is known at this point."



Indeed, closures of unlicensed facilities have revealed that some perform C-sections, tail docking and ear trimming on their own dogs and puppies, practices that require drugs that are not readily obtained. Trafficking in local puppy sales brings in cash income and as breeders are being regulated elsewhere, high volume producers of so-called "bully breeds," now line the I-35 corridor, advertising gang culture and making thinly-veiled references to dog fighting on their websites.

To take action on this issue, first please send a warm thank you to Rep. Denney [leedenney@okhouse.gov], the House sponsor of this bill, and to the Senate sponsor, Sen. Cliff Branam, R-OKC [branam@oksenate.gov] for their unwavering commitment to this issue, and for their compassion for the dogs and cats that languish in tiny cages and covered with filth, waiting for someone to care. Then contact your own representative and senator to express your concern over this issue.

Please look at www.okpuppymilltruth.org for updates on this issue.

SKYROCKETING NUMBER OF ABANDONED PETS

The defeat of HB 1045 was particularly disappointing for animal rescue organizations as the problem of abandoned pets has ballooned across Oklahoma during the economic downturn. Introduced by Rep. Rex Duncan, R-Sand Springs, HB 1045 would have removed the population restriction that prohibits Oklahoma counties with less than a 200,000 population from enacting animal welfare/control codes or operating an animal shelter. Currently, a deputy can charge someone for abandoning an unwanted pet, but the county may not help the abandoned animal itself. As pets have become increasingly at-risk during the economic crisis, local rescue organizations have been overwhelmed by the requests for help from panicked families with no place to turn for their pets.

Deb Stellas, president of Zoi's Rescue of Claremore and clinic manager of SPAY OK, has noted that animal relinquishments by families in crisis have reached shocking numbers, and that these animals become at-risk of abuse, abandonment and starvation when desperate owners have no place to turn.

Currently 60% of Oklahomans have no access to an animal shelter; abandonment and subsequent starvation for unwanted companion animals are the norm in Oklahoma.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PLAYED BOTH SIDES

Despite passage through the House, HB 1045 garnered opposition when the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma (ACCO) took 16 commissioners to the Capitol to express their concern and opposition to the bill. ACCO is an advocacy organization which represents county commissioners, not necessarily their constituents. Once the bill was dead for the session, ACCO no longer opposed the bill, but by then it was dormant, something which had been noted on their website.

Carla Bonner of ACCO said, "I think making the commissioners responsible for it was not something they were ready to take on at this time." Bonner acknowledged that the bill did not mandate the expenditures, but simply allowed the counties to build a shelter if they chose to, but she said that to the public, "May means shall." So shelters will remain prohibited for one more year while abandoned animals suffer and Oklahomans are unable to effectively express the need for shelters.

What you can do to address the animal sheltering language is to let your county commissioners know that the cat is out the bag regarding the reason Oklahomans do not have access to public animal shelters. Watch this issue as an animal advocate, and also as a voter. Communicate to ACCO that you do not want Oklahomans to be faced with committing animal cruelty in order to relinquish a dog or cat. You can find out what your county spends on ACCO membership through your county offices.

Most importantly, remember that the 2010 legislative session is only four months away. As a concerned advocate for animals, this is the time to start to contact legislators, newspapers and even organize a rally at your county offices. Call your county commissioners about the animal sheltering issue immediately. Educate yourself on these issues so you can share with others.

TulsaPets Magazine

BOOKS

Private Insurance, Not Private Docs Must Go

By Meg White

THE HEALING OF AMERICA

A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper and Fairer Health Care

By T.R. Reid

Penguin Group USA

277 pages, \$25.95

In the coming months, we will see the development of a new healthcare system in Washington. Concessions will be made on all sides and everyone is nervous about what those concessions might be.

While many of us hope for single-payer, universal healthcare, the fact is that the political will might not exist for it. However, no matter what the Obama Administration decides to call the final product, private health insurance companies need to disappear from the equation.

It seems the Obama Administration, and most congressional Democrats, are afraid of single-payer's association with socialized medicine. But doctors don't

Graceful Memoir Befits An American Icon

By Tim Rutten

TRUE COMPASS

A Memoir

By Edward M. Kennedy

Grand Central Publishing

532 pages, \$35

"The graveyards of the world," Charles De Gaulle once said, "are filled with indispensable men."

The eloquent shrug of Gallic irony aside, the living do walk away, even from the graves of the great and good, and history – which is life in the aggregate – simply goes on. Yet it does no justice to the living or the dead to pretend that some losses do not diminish us in ways that impoverish our collective experience and strip away a bit of life's savor.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's recent death was such a loss, and *True Compass*, his touchingly candid, big-hearted and altogether superb memoir, demonstrates precisely why. Completed in the shadow of the senator's own mortality, this is a book whose clarity of recollection and expression entitles it to share in the lineage established by America's first great memoir of public life – *The Autobiography of U.S. Grant*, which he wrote while himself dying of cancer.

There are, of course, fundamental differences: The former president and Union commander was a 19th Century man setting down a public life; Kennedy is very much a man of our time, open to exploring the interplay of his inner and outer lives. Grant wrote his autobiography; although Kennedy was a devoted diarist whose natural gifts as a storyteller and as a sharp, painterly observer shine through every page, he was ably assisted not only by the writer – and Twain biographer – Ron Powers, but also by his wife, Vicki Reggie, and a variety of scholars, particularly those associated with the University of Virginia's oral history project.

All the Kennedy brothers were known for their superb staffs – Teddy, most of all.

A CAPACIOUS, GENEROUS SPIRIT

In the weeks leading up to publication of *True Compass*, much of the obvious "news" in this book was leaked to the press, particularly his bitter regrets over his "inexcusable" behavior during the Chappaquiddick tragedy, the night of heavy drinking that resulted in rape allegations against one of his nephews, and the failure of his first marriage. What's far more remarkable about this memoir is its capacious and generous spirit.

In some sense, conscious of the fact that the three older brothers he so deeply admired never lived to set down their own recollections, the youngest Kennedy brother has written a portrait of his extraordinary family, as well as an account of his own eventful life. There's something extraordinary – and deeply affecting – about the affection expressed for Joe and Rose Kennedy, despite a childhood lived under circumstances which, while economically privileged, many today would consider harsh, demanding and, in ways, even abusive. Yet no word of reproach escapes the youngest son, who loved them both to the end.

NONPARTISAN GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT

There's that sort of nonpartisan generosity of spirit in Kennedy's appraisal of the presidents with whom he worked. He esteems Lyndon Johnson as the greatest president since Franklin Roosevelt, while lamenting the indelible stain the Vietnam debacle left on his reputation. He clearly disliked Jimmy Carter, whom he charges with a pettiness and the genuine politician's greatest sin – a failure "to listen." He found Ronald Reagan gracious and charming and remained Nancy's fast friend, admired both Clintons and enjoyed George W. Bush's sense of humor, while finding Laura a first lady of real grace and poise.

There's a wonderful self-appraisal: "I am an enjoyer. I have enjoyed being a

See **KENNEDY** Page 12

have to work for the government for this healthcare reform initiative to be successful.

According to Washington Post correspondent T.R. Reid, private health insurance companies – not private doctors – need to go.

AUTHOR DOES WORLD-WIDE RESEARCH

For his latest book, Reid has been traveling the world learning about other countries' healthcare systems, while keeping in mind the idiosyncrasies of American patients and doctors, to try and figure out what will work best here.

Reid found that, while advances in healthcare are driving up costs all over the world, the astronomically high prices in this country originate with insurance companies.

Not only do insurance companies allow the pharmaceutical industry to charge Americans many times the prices others pay for the same medicine, but also internal costs take a big chunk of change as well.

THE DIFFERENCE IN COSTS STAGGERING

Administrative costs for public insurance systems hover around 3%, while private insurance companies spent 25%-31% on such costs.

Overhead among private insurers in the U.S. is nine times that of Canada's single-payer system.

U.S. health insurance companies have also institutionalized a reduction in quality of care. A lot of the extra administrative costs are spent on hiring people to try and deny coverage and claims.

Even these relatively moderate views on healthcare reform are being pushed aside by the health insurance industry and the media.

Reid, who has done one documentary *Sick Around the World* for PBS' Frontline, accompanying his international reporting on five foreign healthcare regimes, was again commissioned by PBS to do a similar documentary called *Sick Around America*.

But Frontline so skewed Reid's reporting that he refused to appear in the final product and says he won't work with Frontline in the future.

Buzzflash Blog

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Our Way Of Life

Was America Ever Without A War?

By Tom Englehardt

“War is peace” was one of the memorable slogans on the facade of the Ministry of Truth, Minitrue in “Newspeak,” the language invented by George Orwell in 1948 for his dystopian novel 1984.

Some 60 years later, a quarter-century after Orwell’s imagined future bit the dust, the phrase is, in a number of ways, eerily applicable to the United States.

Because the United States does not look like a militarized country, it’s hard for Americans to grasp that Washington is a war capital, that the United States is a war state, that it garrisons much of the planet, and that the norm for us is to be at war somewhere at any moment.

Similarly, we’ve become used to the idea that, when various forms of force [or threats of force] don’t work, our response, as to Afghanistan, is to recalibrate and apply some alternate version of the same under a new or re-branded name – the hot one now being “counterinsurgency” or COIN – in a marginally different manner.

MORE WAR IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY

When it comes to war, as well as preparations for war, more is now generally the order of the day.

This wasn’t always the case. The early Republic that the most hawkish conservatives love to cite was a land whose leaders looked with suspicion on the very idea of a standing army.

They would have viewed our 300 global garrisons, our vast network of spies, agents, special forces teams, surveillance operatives, interrogators, rent-a-guns, and mercenary corporations, as well as our staggering Pentagon budget and the constant future-war gaming and planning that accompanies it, with genuine horror.

The question is: What kind of country do we actually live to when the so-called U.S. Intelligence Community [IC] lists 16 intelligence services ranging from Air Force Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency to the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Security Agency?

AGENCIES COST \$55 BILLION A YEAR

What could “intelligence” mean once spread over 16 sizable, bureaucratic, often competing outfits with a cumulative 2009 budget estimated at more than \$55 billion [a startling percentage of which is controlled by the Pentagon]?

What does it mean when the new Obama Administration, surveying nearly eight years and two wars’ worth of disasters, decides to expand the U.S. Armed Forces rather than shrink the U.S. global mission?

What kind of a world do we inhabit when, with an official unemployment rate of 9.7% and an underemployment rate of 16.8%, the American taxpayer is financing the building of a three-story, exceedingly permanent-looking \$17 million troop barracks at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan?

This, in turn, is part of a taxpayer-funded \$220 million upgrade of the base that includes new “water treatment plants, headquarters buildings, fuel farms, and power generating plants.”

BILLIONS FOR BAGHDAD PROJECTS

And don’t forget about the U.S. air base built at Balad, north of Baghdad, that now has 15 bus routes, two fire stations, two water treatment plants, two sewage treatment plants, two power plants, a water bottling plant, and the requisite set of fast-food outlets, PXes, and so on, as well as air traffic levels sometimes compared to those at Chicago’s O’Hare International?

A plan to withdraw most U.S. troops from Iraq involves the removal of more than 1.5 million pieces of equipment? The possibility of withdrawal leads the Pentagon to issue nearly billion-dollar contracts [new ones!] to increase the number of private security contractors to that country?

KILLING VIA DRONES 24/7

The U.S. has robot assassins in the skies over its war zones, 24/7, and the “pilots” who control them from thousands of miles away are ready on a moment’s notice to launch missiles – “Hellfire” missiles at that – into Pashtun peasant villages in the wild, mountainous borderlands of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

American pilots can be at war “in” Afghanistan, 9 to 5, by remote control, while their bodies remain at a base outside Las Vegas and then can head home past a sign that warns them to drive carefully because this is “the most dangerous part of your day.”

The Pentagon funds the wildest ideas imaginable for developing high-tech weapons systems, many of which sound as if they came straight out of the pages of sci-fi novels.

Take, for example, Boeing’s advanced coordinated system of hand-held drones, robots, sensors, and other battlefield surveillance equipment slated for seven Army brigades within the next two years at a cost of \$2 billion and for the full Army by 2025.

FUTURISTIC BOMBER IN THE WORKS

Consider the Next Generation Bomber, an advanced “platform” slated for 2018; or a truly futuristic bomber, “a suborbital semi-spacecraft able to move at hypersonic speed along the edge of the atmosphere,” for 2035.

What does it mean about our world when those people in our government peering deepest into a blue-skies future are planning ways to send armed “platforms” up into those skies and kill more than a quarter century from now?



“... We must guard against the influence of the military-industrial complex . . . we must never let this combination endanger our liberties or democratic process. We should take nothing for granted.” – General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969) Farewell Address; Jan. 17, 1961

A new congressional study showed the U.S. with \$37.8 billion in arms sales [up \$12.4 billion from 2007], controlling 68.4% of the global arms market to 2008. Italy came in “a distant second” with \$3.7 billion.

In sales to “developing nations,” the U.S. inked \$29.6 billion in weapons agreements or 70.1% of the market. Russia was a vanishingly distant second at \$3.3 billion or 7.8% of the market.

WAR IS THE AMERICAN WAY

Consider this: War is now the American way, even if peace is what most Americans experience while their proxies fight in distant lands. Any serious alternative to war, which means our “security,” is increasingly inconceivable. In Orwellian terms then, war is indeed peace in the United States and peace, war.

When was the last time the U.S. actually won a war [unless you include our “victories” over small countries incapable of defending themselves like the tiny Caribbean Island of Grenada in 1983 or powerless Panama in 1989]?

The smashing “victory” over Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War only led to a stop-and-start conflict now almost two decades old that has proved a catastrophe. Keep heading backward through the Vietnam and Korean Wars and the last time the U.S. military was truly victorious was in 1945.

But achieving victory no longer seems to matter. War American-style is now conceptually unending, as are preparations for it.

A GENERATIONAL STRUGGLE

When George W. Bush proclaimed a Global War on Terror [aka World War IV], conceived as a “generational struggle” like the Cold War, he caught a certain American reality. In a sense, the ongoing war system can’t absorb victory. Any such endpoint might indeed prove to be a kind of defeat.

If we ever decided we were either secure enough, or more willing to live without the unreachable idea of total security, the American way of war and the national security state would lose much of their meaning. In other words, in our world, security is insecurity.

Diplomacy has been militarized and, like our country, is now hidden behind massive fortifications, and has been placed under Lord-of-the-Flies style guard.

The State Department’s embassies are now bunkers and military style headquarters for the prosecution of war policies; its officials, when enough of them can be found, are now sent out into the provinces in war zones to do “civilian” things.

And peace itself? Simply put, there’s no money in it. Of the nearly \$1 trillion the U.S. invests in war and war-related activities, nothing goes to peace.

CONSIDERING A PEACEFUL WORLD

What would our world might be like in which we began not just to withdraw our troops from one war to fight another, but to seriously scale down the American global mission, close those hundreds of bases – recently, there were almost 300 of them, macro to micro, to Iraq alone – and bring our military home is beyond imagining?

To discuss such obviously absurd possibilities makes you an apostate to America’s true religion and addiction, which is force.

However much it might seem that most of us are peaceably watching our TV sets or computer screens or iPhones, we Americans are also – always – marching as to war. We may not all bother to attend the church of our new religion, but we all tithe. We all partake. In this sense, we live peaceably in a state of war.

– The author, co-founder of the American Empire Project, runs The Nation Institute’s TomDispatch.com

Saluting Another Fallen U.S. Soldier

By Gary Sayre

It was somewhere in the middle of August 2009. A quiet gathering, for the funeral of one more American soldier killed in action in Afghanistan.

The somber group of relatives, along with his grieving mother and father gazed upon the flag-draped coffin of their now gone beloved son.

It appeared as though there were no more tears left to shed as they had run out of them since hearing the bad news of their son's untimely demise.

As the Honor Guard fired their respective volley of the 21-gun salute just outside the chapel, his mother just blinked at each report.

Within moments the smartly dressed young soldiers marched in and folded the American flag in precision and dutifully one of the young soldiers politely saluted the grieving mother and presented her the neatly folded flag.

She bowed her head and pressed it firmly to her bosom as if it were her son as an infant.

That same soldier who gave the 21-gun salute and presented that mother the folded flag made a special visit to the family in the chapel vestibule as they were leaving.

The handsome young honor guardsman stopped the mother with a gentle "Pardon me, madam." He spoke softly saying to her, "Your son will never be forgotten."

The dry eyed mother dropped the flag and grabbed that young guardsman in such a tight embrace he felt her tremble and she started crying so hard her knees couldn't hold her up any more.

The young guardsman helped her stand as she vented her grief once more.

Later that day the young honor guardsman called his mother and related this series of events, as this was his first ceremony and meeting the parents of a



fallen comrade.

He told his mother that the mother of the dead son held him so tightly he felt every bit of her pain and loss. Yet he was told by the Army that he was not allowed to show any emotion or tears.

When I heard this sad account I began to weep deeply. For you see, this honor guardsman is my son. I wept for the family. I still weep from time to time.

My honor guardsman is wounded beyond repair in his ankle. I believe his heart is wounded also. He had known the soldier he saluted!

Now, this is just one short story about how America is suffering while involved in such a maniacal war ... Again I still weep from time to time. It truly hurts from within.

- The author lives in Edmond

The Deciders? It's Not The Military

By David Sirota

The war in Afghanistan poses two important questions: What should be done and who should be "the deciders"?

Congressional Republicans say the answer to the first query is military escalation. But according to polls, most Americans disagree. At the same time, many experts wonder "whether or not we know what we're doing," as President George W. Bush's former deputy national security advisor said last week.

One thing's for sure: The U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, says he wants more troops. His new memo calling for a bigger Afghanistan deployment prompted President Obama to begin carefully considering different ways forward - and Washington to hammer the White House for entertaining any alternative to McChrystal's request.

DEMANDING MCCRYSTAL GET HIS WAY

Republicans lambasted Obama for letting "political motivations ... override the needs of our commanders," as Sen. Kit Bond, R-MO, said. Likewise, the Washington Post insisted that Obama's failure to promptly back McChrystal's surge proposal could "dishonor" America, while the New York Times said no matter what the president wants, "It will be very hard to say no to General McChrystal."

The coordinated assault sharpens that question about who "the deciders" should be - elected officials or the military?

The Washington establishment clearly believes the latter, and that's no surprise. The war-mongering political class has called for presidential and congressional deference to military demands since Hollywood movies and anti-communist ideologues began countering the public's "Vietnam Syndrome" by blaming that quagmire in Southeast Asia on elected officials.

VIETNAM LOSS BLAMED ON POLITICIANS

In the purest articulation of the argument, Ronald Reagan asserted in 1980 that Vietnam was lost not because of flaws in mission or strategy, but because politicians allegedly forced soldiers to fight "a war our government [was] afraid to let them win."

Avoiding another Vietnam, says this school of thought, requires a figurehead government - one that delegates all military decision-making power to generals and effectively strips it from elected civilians who will supposedly be too "politically motivated" [read: influenced by voters].

This authoritarian ideology explains not only today's vitriolic reaction to the president's Afghanistan deliberations [including the conservative magazine Newsmax fantasizing about a military "coup" to "resolve the Obama problem"] but also some of the most anti-democratic statements ever uttered by American leaders.

It explains, for instance, Vice President Dick Cheney's assertion that public opinion "doesn't matter" when it comes to military policy, and President Bush saying Iraq "troop levels will be decided by our commanders on the ground, not by political figures in Washington."

THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO WORK

Of course, the Constitution deliberately gives "political figures in Washington" final say: Article I empowers Congress to declare and finance wars; and Article II states that while the White House "may require the opinion" of military officers, ultimately "the President shall be Commander in Chief."

Those provisions were no accident. By separating political from military pow-

er, and vesting our elected representatives with ultimate authority, the Founders purposely constructed a democracy that seeks to prevent the dictatorial juntas that often arise when no such separation exists.

In that way, the Constitution doesn't worry about elected officials' "political motivations" as Bond does, nor does it fret about "a disconnect ... between the military leadership and the White House," as Sen. John McCain, R-AZ, lamented. It views "political motivations" and a "disconnect" as democratic forces guaranteeing that public opinion, via elected "deciders," is somewhat involved in military policy.

Certainly, Obama and Democratic congressional leaders may still end up defying public will by making the lamentable choice to escalate the Afghanistan war. But after recent quagmires justified by knee-jerk subservience to military prerogative, America should at least applaud these lawmakers for refusing to immediately rubber-stamp that course of action.

In exploring all options, they are honoring the Constitution's separation of powers - and our nation's most democratic principles.

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KENNEDY

From Page 10

senator; I've enjoyed my children and my close friends; I've enjoyed books and music and well-prepared food, especially with a generous helping of cream sauce on the top. I have enjoyed the company of women. I have enjoyed a stiff drink or two or three, and I've relished the smooth taste of a good wine. At times, I've enjoyed these pleasures too much."

There's a kind of invocation - a spell, if you will - against melancholy in that summary, for much of this memoir, affectionate though it remains, is haunted by loss: of family, friends, comrades, opportunities. In his life's final chapter, Kennedy seemed to have found the ultimate shield against the darkness in the loving relationship he enjoyed with his second wife, Vicki, a Southern-born lawyer of Lebanese heritage with two young children, whom the much older senator clearly adored.

Ted was, in important ways, like his idolized brother John - of whom he said in a 20th anniversary eulogy: "He was an heir to wealth who felt the anguish of the poor. He was an orator of excellence, who spoke for the voiceless. He was a son of Harvard who reached out to the sons and daughters of Appalachia. He was a man of special grace who had a special care for the retarded and handicapped. . . . He said and proved in word and deed that one man can make a difference."

Yet, as alike as they were, Ted was uniquely his own man. In his 1982 re-election campaign, one of Ted's television commercials featured an 83-year-old senior citizens' advocate, Frank Manning, who said of the senator: "He's not a plaster saint. . . . We want an average human being who has feelings and likes people and who is interested in their welfare."

That, of course, is precisely what the people of Massachusetts got, and - as *True Compass* reminds us - we're all the poorer for his absence.

© Los Angeles Times

Health Care And The Free Market

By Jim Wilson

It defies logic that all the participants in an industry representing one-sixth of our economy are always ethical, honest and above reproach. We know that the volume and quality of our health care products cannot justify the cost because we see other countries with similar systems and better quality which spend a third to a half less while providing health care to all citizens.

Most policymakers, business people and pundits agree. They don't, however, agree on a solution.

Some politicians and business leaders like to throw around the term "free market solution" when talking about health care reform. They even say and may believe that the health care industry can operate as a "free market."

The definition of a "free market" is a market that is free of regulation with the exception of regulation required to prevent force or fraud. There is the underlying inference that supply and demand, quality or outcomes will be sufficient to create an efficient market.

THE DIFFERENCE IN MARKETS

The implication is that free markets and markets are the same. Markets, in fact, can be regulated and in the case of the health care system should be regulated.

Markets require some level of predictable inputs. The health care industry generally obscures pricing as well as quality indicators, both of which are important in markets. Supply and demand are reversed in health care.

Instead of the normal business model where demand creates supply, in health care supply creates demand. For instance, the Dartmouth Atlas Project has consistently shown a positive association between the supply of staffed hospital beds per 1,000 residents and the hospitalization rate for medical non-surgical conditions without improving outcomes. In fact, they have shown an inverse relationship in some cases between the number of hospitalizations and positive outcomes.

France is generally considered to provide the best outcomes and comprehensive



coverage for all of its citizens. The doctors are largely private businesses charging a fee-for-service. The waiting times are similar to the United States.

U.S. RANKS 19TH IN CURING DISEASE

They don't have a gatekeeper system – any citizen can go to any doctor, specialist or hospital in the country. They do the best job of any nation in curing any disease that is curable whereas the U.S. ranks 19th.

The providers by law will get paid for services performed without question – the insurance company may not stand between the doctor and the patient. Their success is directly attributable to a regulated market.

The annual financial savings from administrative overhead alone if Oklahoma used this system would be \$3.5 billion.

It appears that policymakers advocating "free market" solutions for health care delivery are either trying to manipulate the citizens on behalf of the industry or they themselves are naïve and don't understand how markets work.

We have to wonder why it is so important to not even consider a system which delivers better results for 40% fewer dollars – all in the name of "free markets."

– The author is a Tahlequah Democrat representing state Senate District 3

Canadian System Nothing To Sneeze At

By Ron du Bois

Second Of Two Parts

A major problem of the U.S. free market medical system is the stress it creates. Stress contributes to poor health. Dentists know that stress can accelerate tooth decay and is harmful to other organs.

Patients in recovery who concentrate on getting well are better off than patients who are stressed out about how to pay the bills.

There is a close connection between stress, a deeply righteous moralizing approach, punitive attitudes, dislocation, and drug abuse.

These attitudes account for higher abuse of drugs in America than in European nations, where drug abuse and addiction are considered to be health, not criminal, issues.

QUALITY END OF LIFE CARE

Canada's state of the art Personal Care Homes are for all "end of life" Canadians who can no longer take care of themselves, regardless of ability to pay. Ministers of every province end their days in the same long-term facilities as do homeless aboriginals. The costs vary from \$30 CN to \$70 CN per day, but all retirees receive money from two sources:

[1] The Canadian Pension Plan, similar to our Social Security, pays retirees according to what they contribute over a lifetime.

[2] The second source with no counterpart in the U.S. is called the Old Age Pension. Everyone who is 65 or older regardless of income automatically receives a pension of approximately \$500 CN per month. The minister of the province as well as the homeless aboriginal receives the same pension.

Thus everyone can afford to pay the daily costs of Personal Care Homes.

These facilities are state of the art. My brother-in-law's wife is now staying in one. When we visited her she said to me, "I've got a big room with an excellent view." In regards to Canadian healthcare she said, "Overall I wouldn't want to trade it."

Hardly the kind of words heard from the U.S. health insurance industry. I agreed that she couldn't be in a better place.

A PERSONAL STORY

Carleen Lopine, Resident Care Manager, Misericordia Health Centre, Winnipeg, told me she and her husband had a chance for a lucrative job in Minneapolis. They hesitated only because she was pregnant. As fate would have it her baby was born with multiple neurological problems.

Had they taken the job in Minneapolis the medical costs would have left them destitute. In Canada the baby received the medical care it needed and the parents received no bill.

Canadian industry has an advantage because there is no need for employers to worry about health insurance. All employees are covered by the national universal healthcare system. They have been covered since birth.

ARE AMERICANS JUST PLAIN GULLIBLE?

Why do Americans resist a good thing? Why do we feel good about shooting ourselves in the foot? Is it because we believe the gross fabrications of the U.S.

private for-profit health insurance industry?

Are Canadians correct that Americans are in a moral crisis and are "just being infantile" because they continue to reject a national health program in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is less expensive, has better outcomes, covers everybody, and makes a stronger and more competitive nation?

Human beings are programmed to make mistakes. Americans are no exception.

As death threats and paid thuggery to individuals and organizations advocating change continue, our image in the world diminishes as we again muff the chance to adopt a national health care program designed to take care of each other patterned on those of other nations.

– The author lives in Stillwater, but has spent many of his last 27 summers in a cottage he owns on Lake Winnipeg in Canada. The first of his two-part series on the Canadian health care system appeared in the Sept. 25 Observer.

Stay-At-Home Mom

Have you many children? the doctor asked.

"God has not been good to me. Of 16 born, only nine lived," he answered.

Does your wife work?

"No, she stays at home."

I see. How does she spend her day?

"Well, she gets up at four in the morning, fetches water and wood, makes the fire and cooks breakfast. Then she goes to the river and washes clothes. After that she goes to town to get corn ground and buys what we need in the market. Then she cooks the midday meal."

You come home at midday?

"No, no, she brings the meal to me in the fields – about three kilometers from home."

And after that?

"Well, she takes care of the hens and pigs, and of course she looks after the children all day ... then she prepares the supper so it is ready when I come home."

Does she go to bed after supper?

"No, I do. She has things to do around the house until about nine o'clock."

But you say your wife doesn't work?

"Of course she doesn't work, I told you, she stays at home."

– From Barbara Santee of Tulsa, who added this note: Due to "retirement downsizing," I'm cleaning out old files and ran across this item. Before tossing, I thought you'd like to see it. It was written 31 years ago. Funny. Seems like just yesterday ...

Michael Moore Urges A 'Peasant' Revolt

By Wanda Jo Stapleton

Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story* about predatory capitalism is profoundly moving – downright funny in places, too. In explaining the title, Moore says that “the richest 1% have more financial wealth than the 95% under them combined ... The rich love their money, they love ours, too, and they want it all.”

DEAD PEASANT INSURANCE

Some corporations secretly buy insurance worth hundreds of thousands on employees – insurance which they privately call “dead peasant insurance!” An employee, then, becomes more valuable as a corpse. Moore displayed numerous names and logos on the screen of corporations that buy such insurance. Included were WalMart, Bank of America, Citibank, Proctor & Gamble, Southwestern Bell, and others.

One example of a “dead peasant” was Ladonna, a 26-year-old cake decorator for WalMart. She died of asthma, and was worth an additional \$81,000 because she was so young. Husband Paul was left with \$100,000 in medical bills plus a \$6,000 funeral but got not a cent from Walmart, which collected mega bucks.

PILOTS ON FOOD STAMPS

Remember Captain Sully Sullenberger, the pilot who safely landed the U.S. Airways plane in the Hudson River? He recently testified before Congress [to a sparse audience] about how his pay had been cut 40% and his pension plundered. Nevertheless, his love of flying had kept him working. One would think that even our corporate media would report on an important speech by a national hero, but that didn't happen.

Greedy corporations took advantage of this love of flying. As a result, managers at Taco Bell make more than some pilots. For example, Susan a first-year pilot makes \$19,000 per year and has second jobs [walking dogs and distributing juice] because she owes \$100,000 on student loans. Other pilots talked about making ends meet by selling blood plasma, obtaining food stamps, and using credit cards for groceries. One pilot was told not to wear his uniform when applying for food stamps!

JAILING KIDS FOR CASH

The greedy owners of PA Child Care in Wilkes-Barre, PA [a private juvenile facility] bribed two judges with \$2.6 million to unjustly convict 6,500 kids for minor offenses. One threw a steak at dinner, another fought with a friend at a mall, still another made fun of her assistant principal on My Space. This private facility [which replaced a public one] used kids as profit-making commodities to increase the bottom line.

CONDO VULTURES AND OTHER BOTTOM FEEDERS

A grinning real estate agent from an outfit called “Condo Vultures,” exclaimed “God, I love it” when he learned that the Bank of America had recently foreclosed on 2,400 homes. The Condo Vultures admittedly “steal” foreclosed homes for bare-bones prices and happily make a quick profit off of the misery of others.

Moore blamed “Alan Greenspan & Co” for encouraging homeowners to use their homes [even though home values were already inflated] as collateral for loans – in other words turn their homes into ATMs! This phenomenon caused the biggest foreclosure epidemic in our history. There is now a foreclosure filed in the U.S. once every seven-and-half seconds, Moore says.

Finally, Countrywide Financial Corp. became rich by pushing low-interest, sub-prime mortgages onto borrowers who couldn't otherwise afford a home, later raising the interest beyond borrowers' ability to pay, foreclosing, thus acquiring “new” homes to mortgage. This predatory lending also helped contribute to the housing collapse.

For political cover, Countrywide gave VIP loans to “Friends of Angelo [FOA].” These low-interest FOA loans without fees were named for Countrywide's Chairman and CEO Angelo Mozilo. They went mainly to political leaders like Sen. Chris Dodd, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, who got loans totaling \$1,175,133. Then Dodd, whose committee was supposed to regulate Countrywide, spoke passionately against “predatory lending!”

As a result of predatory lending, we saw Randy and Donna Hacker, Peoria, IL, evicted from a farm that had been in the family for four generations. The final humiliation was a \$1,000 check they got from the repossessing company for cleaning their home. Randy said he was thinking of robbing a bank to get his money back and that he could see how people would start shooting at the thieves, but he would do neither.

A CASINO KNOWN AS THE STOCK MARKET

The stock market is a place where people can buy and sell portions of businesses [like those on Wall Street]. These portions are called shares of stock.

Wall Street created complicated betting schemes – legalized gambling with no regulatory control. These numbers games include derivatives and credit default swaps – financial instruments that even authorities in the movie could not explain. Michael Moore called the operation “an insane casino with bets on everything, including our family home.”

When these bad bets snowballed and produced a catastrophe on Wall Street, Congress bailed out these gambling addicts with \$700 billion dollars funded by taxpayers.

PEASANTS, REVOLT!

“There is a tipping point,” Moore says, for the 95% of Americans whose combined share of wealth is less than that of the top 1%. These “peasants” could rise

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Calling Christians: Jesus Vs. Capitalism

By Michael Moore

I'd like to have a word with those of you who call yourselves Christians [Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Bill Maherists, etc., can read along, too, as much of what I have to say, I'm sure, can be applied to your own spiritual/ethical values].

In my new film I speak for the first time in one of my movies about my own spiritual beliefs. I have always believed that one's religious leanings are deeply personal and should be kept private.

After all, we've heard enough yammerin' in the past three decades about how one should “behave,” and I have to say I'm pretty burned out on pieties and platitudes considering we are a violent nation who invades other countries and punishes our own for having the audacity to fall on hard times.

I'm also against any proselytizing; I certainly don't want you to join anything I belong to. Also, as a Catholic, I have much to say about the Church as an institution, but I'll leave that for another day [or movie].

Amidst all the Wall Street bad guys and corrupt members of Congress exposed in *Capitalism: A Love Story*, I pose a simple question in the movie: “Is capitalism a sin?”

I go on to ask, “Would Jesus be a capitalist?” Would he belong to a hedge fund? Would he sell short? Would he approve of a system that has allowed the richest 1% to have more financial wealth than the 95% under them combined?

I have come to believe that there is no getting around the fact that capitalism is opposite of everything that Jesus [and Moses and Mohammed and Buddha] taught. All the great religions are clear about one thing: It is evil to take the majority of the pie and leave what's left for everyone to fight over.

Jesus said that the rich man would have a very hard time getting into heaven. He told us that we had to be our brother's and sister's keepers and that the riches that did exist were to be divided fairly.

He said that if you failed to house the homeless and feed the hungry, you'd have a hard time finding the pin code to the pearly gates.

I guess that's bad news for us Americans. Here's how we define “Blessed Are the Poor”: We now have the highest unemployment rate since 1983. There's a foreclosure filing once every 7.5 seconds. 14,000 people every day lose their health insurance.

At the same time, Wall Street bankers [“Blessed Are the Wealthy”?] are amassing more and more loot – and they do their best to pay little or no income tax [last year Goldman Sachs' tax rate was a mere 1%!].

Would Jesus approve of this? If not, why do we let such an evil system continue?

It doesn't seem you can call yourself a Capitalist AND a Christian – because you cannot love your money AND love your neighbor when you are denying your neighbor the ability to see a doctor just so you can have a better bottom line. That's called “immoral” – and you are committing a sin when you benefit at the expense of others.

When you are in church this morning, please think about this. I am asking you to allow your “better angels” to come forward. If you are among the millions of Americans who are struggling to make it from week to week, please know that I promise to do what I can to stop this evil – and I hope you'll join me in not giving up until everyone has a seat at the table.

Thanks! I'm off to Mass in a few hours. I'll be sure to ask the priest if he thinks J.C. deals in derivatives or credit default swaps.

I mean, after all, he must've been good at math. How else did he divide up two loaves of bread and five pieces of fish equally amongst 5,000 people?

Either he was the first socialist or his disciples were really bad at packing lunch. Or both.

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Agony: Watching Your Kids Watch You Die

By Beth Long

With all of the stories and arguments about health care these days, I have decided to weigh in. I have been asked by many people to do this over the years, and it's just never been the right time, but it is now.

The main reason I want to share my story is that I want people [lawmakers, especially] to realize that the lives of American citizens are at stake.

My story is not unique; it's actually quite common. I am a 34-year-old woman, a college graduate, a mental health professional, an advocate, an active member of my community and local Democratic Party, a volunteer, a disaster responder, a granddaughter, a daughter, a big sister, an aunt, a friend and most importantly, a mother.

MY LATEST TITLE: CARDIAC PATIENT

Although I wear many hats, my primary identity over the past two years has become that of cardiac patient. I have high blood pressure, Cardiomyopathy and Congestive Heart Failure.

My most recent Ejection Fraction, which measures how well the heart pumps with each beat, was 30%. Normal is 55-70%; anything under 40% is severe.

Cardiomyopathy is simply heart damage. Mine is classified as restrictive/hypertrophic. Restrictive means the ventricles in my heart are rigid and don't properly expand when filling with blood. Hypertrophic means there is a thickening in the space between the ventricles, which limits the blood flow. If they become too thick, they will close and blood will not be able to travel to the ventricles at all.

Heart failure means that my heart is weaker than normal and cannot pump the blood through my body at a normal rate. Mine is in Stage III, meaning I am comfortable at rest but minimal physical activity will cause me discomfort, shortness of breath or palpitations. Just walking in from the car results in these symptoms.

I am grateful for a sedentary job, this has allowed me to continue working in spite of my limitations.

MASKING THE SYMPTOMS

I currently take Lisinopril, Carvedilol, and Furosemide. These medications will only do so much for so long. They will mask the symptoms, but not treat the illness.

My cardiologist and my primary care doctor have both said that my heart damage is 100% reversible with gastric banding or gastric bypass, which would also alleviate my severe asthma and other issues.

I have made all of the behavioral changes that have been recommended to me by my team of doctors. Physical activity had to be limited because exercising the heart muscle will cause it to grow, and because it is already enlarged, too much growth will result in the space between the ventricles closing completely, eliminating the blood flow.

My current treatment, rising premiums, ambulance rides and multiple hospitalizations are financially draining us. We've considered filing bankruptcy, and have contacted a lawyer to discuss this matter.

Financing the surgery is not an option as our credit is compromised due to medical bills and we have no collateral, we rent our home and both vehicles are 1998 models with well over 100,000 miles.

A FULL RECOVERY POSSIBLE

My cardiologist assures me that I could expect nothing less than a full recovery from gastric surgery. I have researched the options, discussed them with my family and physicians, and decided on the laparoscopic banding. The complications from this procedure are significantly less than those of the gastric bypass, it is completely reversible and costs about half of the other procedure.

For the past year and a half, I have been able to maintain my weight through diet modifications. As a result, my EF number has increased by 2% and my blood pressure has lowered, but not stabilized. Each of my doctors has reiterated that weight loss is crucial to my recovery, without it, the situation will get worse.

My behavior changes have slowed this process significantly, but the progression cannot be completely stopped, much less reversed until I am not carrying the excess weight that is causing my already overworked heart to work even harder.

At this time, there is no scarring or permanent damage. With the current limitations on my physical activities, my doctors have recommended this surgery as a last resort. I have met with a gastric surgeon and his team, and almost every-



thing is ready to go.

ROADBLOCK: AN 'EXCLUSIONARY CLAUSE'

The only thing stands in my way; an exclusionary clause in my health insurance policy. Because the surgery can in some situations be used for primarily cosmetic reasons, it is considered optional. Because the surgery is sometimes used just to lose weight, the possibility that it might be needed to improve health or to save a life is cast aside, regardless of what my specialist's determination. I have consulted with three doctors about this, and all have made the same recommendation.

One of the arguments against the health care reform plan is that doctors will lose the power to make the best decisions on the behalf of their clients. I have to ask – how is that different from what is happening in my life right now?

An exclusionary clause is different from a procedure that is not covered; a procedure is not covered could be possibly be granted an exception through the appeals process. However, if the phrase "exclusionary clause" is attached, the insurance company does not deny the claim; they simply refuse to take it. No appeals process. No avenue of protest. I have discussed this with both the insurance team at the surgeon's office and the claims department at United Health Care.

CARDIOLOGIST'S HANDS ARE TIED

At my most recent appointment, the cardiologist informed me that there was no reason to see him again until I had the surgery, because without it, there is nothing more he can do.

Without this surgery, my heart failure will continue to progress. I'm now in Stage III. The treatment that is recommended for Stage IV CHF is hospice and end of life care.

With that being said, I can only hope that our lawmakers will take health care reform seriously, lay ideology aside and focus on what will achieve the greater good for every American.

I cannot make anyone understand what it is like to watch your children watch you die. The words do not exist. What I can do is share my story with the hopes that someday, situations like mine will no longer be acceptable in this country.

We cannot wait any longer for health care reform.

As a provider and a patient, I am supportive of a single payer option, in fact, I do not take commercial insurance in my practice, I take Medicaid and private pay at a 50% discount. I am sure that a single payer system is not going to happen at this point, but regardless, changes are necessary.

A public option has to be available, pre-existing conditions must be eliminated and exclusionary clauses need to be barred. Medications have to be covered. Health care has to be affordable and attainable for everyone.

This is not a partisan issue, but it is a human rights issue, and a right to life issue. This is not something that can be taken lightly or compromised. Health care in this country is already compromised enough, and an effective system is long overdue.

– The author lives in Claremore

PEASANTS

From Page 14

up, fight back, and use the power of "one person, one vote" to change the corrupt system run by "vampires." A peasant's revolt is the greatest fear of Citigroup and cronies, Moore says.

For example, the employees of Republic Windows and Doors, Chicago, conducted a six-day sit-in when the company fired them with no back pay. The workers demanded that the Bank [Robbers] of America loan Republic Windows enough of the bank's bailout cash to pay what was owed for their work. The local Catholic bishop said, "It is just and fair to challenge that which is unfair." President Obama said, "They're absolutely right. What's happening to them is happening across the economy." The Bank of America paid up to stop the revolt.

Two other examples of "peasant" revolt include Sheriff Warren Evans, Detroit, who refused to repossess any more foreclosed homes and Carolyn Conley, Miami-Dade County. She and her family moved back into their repossessed home

and refused to leave. This family of 12 members plus chanting neighbors prevailed over the banker and police in nine squad cars who turned tail and left.

In conclusion, Moore thinks that it's too late to fix the system because the greed factor has gone too far. Instead, he advocates democratic principles, with a moral core, which should apply to every aspect of our lives. For a blueprint, he points to FDR's economic bill of rights, proposed a year before President Roosevelt died, therefore, never enacted.

Finally, Moore says, "I refuse to live in a country like this, and I'm not leaving." He invites us to join him in that refusal. This is a "must-see" movie for unforgettable lessons in history and finance and for entertainment as well as inspiration.

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

Obama's Weird Grants

Why Destroy School In Order To Save It?

By Gerald N. Tirozzi

The Department of Education [ED] recently released their draft guidance for the School Improvement Grant program and, while we're certainly grateful that funds are being made available for improvement of middle and high schools, we marvel at the department's naivete in what it takes to turn around a low-performing school.

While ED continually calls for research-based decision making, we are not aware of any mode of school improvement that begins with the required sacking of the principal!

Granted, there are principals that are ineffective and should not be running schools. But some principals have had their reform efforts halted by bureaucratic brick walls; others are committed to improving their schools but are unsure where and how to begin.

PRINCIPALS LACK REAL AUTHORITY

Many have made substantial improvements and need the funding to continue and sustain their efforts. Most have little control over some of the most important elements of school, such as teacher selection and dismissal.

Yet, as a provision of a school's receiving SIG funds, all these principals would be replaced – the only personnel automatically replaced in each of the models.

At a time when retirement numbers are rising and fewer people are entering the principalship, such a provision is unrealistic and will frustrate improvement efforts more than spark them.

The "turnaround model" begins by not only calling for the replacement of the principal but the replacement of 50% of the school's faculty.

WHERE WILL THEY GET NEW TEACHERS

Assume that 1,000 schools receive grants. Each school has 80 teachers. We have a sudden need for 40,000 additional effective teachers nationwide [not to mention 1,000 highly effective principals].

To provide some context, Teach for America, which the department regards as a promising pipeline of new teachers, has produced only 24,000 new teachers in 19 years.

By extension, New Leaders for New Schools, another promising program for principal development that has caught the eye of ED officials, has produced only 600 new leaders since 2002.

Unless someone is holding tens of thousands of freshly minted and highly effective educators in reserve, this provision will result only in shuffling of teachers among schools – ranging anywhere from an administrative nightmare in populous areas to a practical impossibility in more remote, rural areas.

FEDS PROMOTING SILVER BULLET

We further struggle to understand how the same ED that conceded "there is no silver bullet" to school reform continues to promote one in the form of charters, a theme that runs throughout much of the guidance. Indeed, charter schools offer opportunities to experiment on a small scale.

The charter model speaks only to a form of school governance in which school leaders are generally provided resources and the autonomy to use them as they see fit. While charters are often held accountable for student achievement, it's not a recipe for automatic success.

Recent research out of Stanford University, in fact, identified no discernible difference in achievement between charter schools and comprehensive schools. It's not a surprising finding.

PLAN MUST ASSURE ACHIEVEMENT

"Discernible differences" emerge only when the energy inside the building – regardless of the sign that hangs outside – focuses on a plan that increases achievement. We encourage ED to heed the words of their own deputy secretary for innovation and improvement: "When 'rockhard evidence' isn't available, then the rationale behind a proposal must be grounded in strong theories and research." We have many anecdotes, but we have to get beyond the anecdotes. Sadly, in this case evidence is ignored.

We believe the transformational model, although oddly listed almost as an afterthought, provides the greatest hope for promoting genuine school improvement as it is built around the continuous use of data to inform instruction, to develop teacher and leader effectiveness through high-quality professional development to reform instructional strategies, and to extend learning time.

WHY REPLACE THE PRINCIPAL FIRST?

It also contains provisions that give the school flexibility and support to implement reform efforts. But we have a major concern that this model, too, calls for replacing the principal before beginning these efforts. It's hard to dismiss the irony of a data-driven decision-making model that begins with a decision to fire a principal without first looking at the data on the principal's effectiveness.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has learned a thing or two about school improvement. We've spent the past decade identifying and examining schools that succeed despite challenging circumstances and we've condensed the common lessons down to a framework called Breaking Ranks, which includes a set of recommendations to be considered in each school's unique context.

This comprehensive framework for middle and high schools encourages principals to foster collaborative leadership and ongoing professional development that continually improves curriculum, instruction and assessment in an envi-



ronment that is personalized for each student.

A FRAMEWORK THAT IS WORKING

The Breaking Ranks framework has been repeatedly validated by schools designated as MetLife Foundation-NASSP Breakthrough Schools, a set of diverse, high-poverty schools that share a commitment to student achievement and have seen growth over time in such measures as graduation rates and state assessment scores.

Each school that implements the Breaking Ranks framework reminds us of one inescapable reality. Turning around a school is three-to-five years of time-consuming, resource-intensive, and just plain roll-up-your sleeves hard work. You can't innovate your way around it.

While the SIG guidance is still in draft stage and does not [yet] carry the weight of law, it does speak to a wrongheaded, fundamental-commitment to radical change, while we should instead be pursuing responsible change. Radical change measures its success in units of "different." Responsible change measures its success in units of "better."

Radical change prescribes the remedy before identifying the ailment. Responsible change begins with data analysis and a plan for improvement, and those staff members who are not willing or able to participate in the improvement process are replaced by those who are.

SCATTERING SEEDS TO THE WIND

Radical change scatters seeds to the wind, then declares success when some fall randomly on fertile soil. The process of responsible change might induce radical change, but only after careful assessment – never as a presumed starting point.

Successful principals often lament that their school reform efforts have to combat forces of inertia from the central office, unions, and so forth.

ED might be astonished by the results current schools and leaders could achieve if it simply provided resources and lifted restrictions. That would be truly innovative.

Short of that fantasy, however, we fear that several years from now we will have spent billions of dollars, not to improve schools, but to rediscover what we already know: Just because everything is "different." doesn't mean anything is "better."

– The author is executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals

The Economy Is So Bad That ...

- ... I got a pre-declined credit card in the mail.
- ... I ordered a burger at McDonalds and the kid behind the counter asked, "Can you afford fries with that?"
- ... CEOs are now playing miniature golf.
- ... If the bank returns your check marked "Insufficient Funds," you call them and ask if they meant you or them.
- ... McDonalds is selling the 1/4 ounce.
- ... Parents in Beverly Hills fired their nannies and had to learn their children's names.
- ... A truckload of Americans was caught sneaking into Mexico.
- ... Dick Cheney took his stockbroker hunting.
- ... Motel 6 won't leave the light on anymore.
- ... The Mafia is laying off Illinois judges.
- ... ExxonMobil laid off 25 congressmen.
- ... The Oklahoma Legislature is laying off necessary workers.
- ... The Daily Disappointment is printing stuff in Tulsa.
- ... Registered Democrats are voting for their own candidates.
- ... George W. Bush was turned down for a job at Burger King.
- ... Hospitals are charging for hall passes.
- ... Washington lobbyists had to lay off Congress.
- ... The Catholic Church had to start charging for communion wafers.
- ... Southern Baptists bankrupted tribal casinos when they quit going.

High Court Weighing Juvenile Life Terms

By Jerry E. Stephens

Life sentence without parole is a reform alternative punishment to the death penalty. Thirty-five states provide for this sentencing alternative. An additional 14 non-death penalty states provide for life without parole. Only Alaska does not offer the sentencing option.

And there has been a significant increase in the number of life sentences imposed. The use of this sentence may, however, have had a serious impact upon juveniles charged with serious crimes. The Sentencing Project [<http://www.sentencingproject.org>] recently reported on the expanded use of the life sentence and found 6,807 juveniles serving life sentences; 1,755, or 25.8%, of whom are serving sentences of life without parole.

Are life sentences an appropriate response for juvenile criminal offending?

The United States Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in November on two appeals challenging juvenile sentencing policies. Both appeals ask the same question: is the penalty of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole a violation of the U.S. Constitution's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment where the juveniles were sentenced to life without parole for lesser serious felony offenses.

TWO FLORIDA CASES

The court will review the convictions of a 13-year old and a 17-year old in Florida. These were convictions for serious violent crimes. One was charged with having committed an armed robbery while on probation from earlier charges of armed robbery, attempted armed robbery, and assault and battery; the other a home invasion. <http://www.supremecourtus.gov>.

The U.S. Supreme Court banned the application of the death penalty as a cruel and unusual punishment when applied to juveniles in the case of *Roper v. Simmons* in 2005. Is any form of life punishment, when applied to juveniles, the effective equivalent of the death penalty?

The issue of the juvenile life without parole sentence has been addressed in significant recent studies. The two reports from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs [University of Texas] and the Heritage Foundation's Center for Legal and Judicial Studies act almost as book ends dramatically highlighting the issues.

12-YEAR-OLD KILLED GRANDPARENTS

The LBJ study followed from a decision by the University of Texas Law School's Supreme Court Clinic to represent a 12-year boy charged with the killing of his grandparents. The boy had been tried as an adult and had been given a mandatory sentence of 30 years without possibility of parole. The conviction and sentence were upheld by the South Carolina Supreme Court.

Among the report's findings:



- Pre-adolescents – defined as children under the age of 12 – do not belong in the adult criminal justice system, regardless of the seriousness of their offense.
- Young children are still developing their brains and personalities and are capable of rehabilitation, yet they are often denied that redemptive possibility due to the imposition of lengthy mandatory sentences.
- In almost half the country, children as young as age seven can be prosecuted as adults and subjected to lengthy mandatory sentences, including life without parole.

FAVORING LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

The Heritage Foundation report stakes out a dramatically different picture of the appropriateness and reasonableness of the sentencing practice:

“Activists argue that the United States does not need life-without-parole sentences for juvenile offenders because other Western nations, particularly in Europe, do not use it. In fact, the need is real. In one recent year, juveniles committed as many violent crimes in the United States as in the next seven highest countries combined.

“The U.S. ranks third in murders committed by youths and 14th in murders per capita committed ... [T]he Constitution does not forbid use of the sentence. The Eighth Amendment's prohibition on ‘cruel and unusual punishments’ was intended to bar only the most ‘inhuman and barbarous’ punishments, like tor-

See JUVENILES Page 18

Is Your Court Knowledge Supreme?

By Danny M. Adkison

The first Monday in October unofficially marked the beginning of the 2009 term of the U.S. Supreme Court [the court actually began meeting in September to get an early start on a federal campaign finance law case]. In honor of the new term, here is a Supreme Court quiz.

1. What are the constitutional qualifications for serving on the Supreme Court?

Given that we just witnessed the Sonya Sotomayor hearings this should be an easy question. Obviously, one doesn't have to be male. Less obvious is the fact that one need not have any judicial experience [Sotomayor did].

The answer is that the Constitution does not specify any qualifications for any federal judges.

All Supreme Court justices have been lawyers, but that the Constitution does not require this. While there have been rumors in recent decades that some presidents were considering nominating non-lawyers to the court [couldn't a philosopher or a historian be as good as a lawyer?], so far it has never happened.

IS NINE ETCHED IN STONE?

2. According to the Constitution how many justices are there?

Note, the question is not, how many justices are there? The question is, how many justices does the Constitution say there will be? There are currently nine justices on the court, but the Constitution does not specify that number. The number is determined by Congress. It has been nine since 1869 but there have been as few as five and as many as 10.

In every case, Congress decreased or increased the size of the court for political reasons. After his landslide in 1936, President Roosevelt proposed increasing the size of the court as a way of guaranteeing his New Deal policies would withstand constitutional scrutiny.

This so-called “court packing” scheme became unnecessary after Justice Roberts switched his vote to support FDR's policies.

WHERE DID THE SUPREMES OFFICE?

3. Speaking of FDR, in 1933 he was in the White House. That same year Congress was in the Capitol building. Where was the Supreme Court?

“In the Supreme Court building, duh!” Almost. The Supreme Court did not have a building of its own until 1935 [on the east side, across the street from the Capitol]. In 1933 the court was meeting where it had met since the move to

Washington, DC: the Capitol [the Senate side of the building].

4. Does a person involved in a federal lawsuit have a right to appeal his case to the Supreme Court? It is not that uncommon to hear a disgruntled individual on the evening news say, “I'll take my case all the way to the Supreme Court if I have to!”

The answer, today, is “No.” Cases reach the court by writ of certiorari, which is a court order from a higher court to a lower court to send a case up for review. The important point is that it is a discretionary writ [it takes four justices to grant it]. In recent years the court received about 8,000 requests for certiorari each year, but only granted about 65. Thus, most federal lawsuits will be decided by a lower federal court.

A LIFE TERM?

5. According to the Constitution, what is the term of a Supreme Court justice? Take a tour of the Supreme Court building and the guide will tell you it is “life” and although the Constitution actually says “good behavior” that is basically correct.

6. Has there ever been a Supreme Court justice impeached? Just one. Justice Chase was impeached during Thomas Jefferson's administration but he was not removed from office. That hasn't stopped other attempts. In fact, when two of Richard Nixon's nominees to the court were successively rejected by the Senate, Nixon retaliated by getting Gerald Ford, the Republican minority leader, to introduce articles of impeachment against Justice Douglas [the most liberal member of the court]. Nixon rewarded Ford when Vice President Agnew resigned by making Ford the first person ever appointed to the vice presidency. Ford then had to serve as the Nixon Administration's main defender when impeachment was threatened.

Ford asserted that nothing Nixon had been accused of amounted to an impeachable offense. When Democrats pointed out that as minority leader he had argued that Justice Douglas could be impeached for “anything” he sought, disingenuously, to argue that the “anything” argument applied only to justices, not presidents.

Congratulations to those answering all six questions correctly. For those who did not, the answer is no, none of the questions were meant to be tricky.

– The author teaches constitutional law at Oklahoma State University

Maldistribution Led To Collapse

By Charles Reed

America has failed over the last three decades. The economy has failed, government has failed and religion has failed. It's time for us to begin to rebuild our country based on traditional American values of freedom, justice, democracy, and human rights.

By any traditional standard, America is now in an economic depression. The American depression has spread to the rest of the world.

America's classic economist Henry George identified the cause of depressions more than a century ago. His book *Progress and Prosperity* became the best-selling non-fiction book in the history of the world. Both Franklin Roosevelt and Albert Einstein endorsed his ideas.

TOO FEW HAVE TOO MUCH

What causes depressions? The answer is quite simple: depressions are caused when too few have too much, and too many have too little. The maldistribution of wealth causes depressions.

What causes the maldistribution of wealth? Again, the answer is simple: an unfair economy causes the maldistribution of wealth. When an economy places a higher value on greed and exploitation than on work and innovation, it is heading for a crash.

The American economy pays many corporate CEOs, professional athletes, and entertainers tens of millions of dollars per year. Baseball player Alex Rodriguez signed a multiyear contract for \$252 million. Miley Cyrus [Hannah Montana], a teenager, receives over \$20 million annually.

LICENSE TO STEAL

To become a top corporate executive is to be given a license to steal and plunder what belongs to middle-class shareholders. Corporate lobbyists legally bribe politicians to plunder the federal treasury on behalf of the corporate rich.

Meanwhile, American workers are losing ground. They are paid less now than in 1973. Millions of workers receive an annual rate of less than \$14,000 to do the hardest and dirtiest work.

The knee-jerk response from the Rush Limbaugh crowd is that the marketplace decided all this. This, of course, is nonsense.

CORPORATE BOSSES PAID TOO MUCH

In the 1970s, corporate CEOs were paid about 15 times what the average worker was paid. Today, that ratio has mushroomed to more than 400 times what the average worker is paid. You can't blame the market for that.

During the last depression, Franklin Roosevelt said: "We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals; we know now that it is bad economics." Most of organized religion doesn't understand this today.

If Henry George, John Maynard Keynes, and Franklin Roosevelt could speak to us from their graves, they would all cry out in unison, "We told you so!"

OUR GOVERNMENT FAILED

The American economy failed because American government failed. Since the Civil War, American government has struggled unsuccessfully to emerge from the shadow of the corporate corruption of the democratic process and public policy.

Undue corporate influence over public policy again reached the point of no return during the 1980s. Unnecessary wars and military spending, wasteful tax cuts for the corporate rich, and the dismantling of corporate banking and financial regulations have wrecked our economy.

As the Bible says in Hosea, we have sown the wind, and we shall reap the whirlwind [8:7].

When Ronald Reagan took office, the national debt was less than a trillion dollars. Now it is more than ten times that amount and growing exponentially.

NATIONAL DEBT SOARED

George W. Bush increased the national debt in eight years. None of that debt

will benefit future generations.

Ironically, much of organized religion in America played a key role in the corruption of American government by the corporate money interests.

Evangelical Christians in particular have, like Daniel Webster, made a deal with the Devil in exchange for political power. They joined forces with money interests to undermine ethics and justice in government and the economy.

Now, from the ashes of the failed corporate ideology, it's time to begin the process of reclaiming, restoring, and rebuilding America. It's time to restore peace, prosperity, liberty, and justice for all Americans. It's time to restore America's national honor.

We are blessed to have President Obama to lead us on that journey.

- The author is a retired civil servant, a Baptist deacon and former mayor of Waco, TX

Key Salaries [And Surprises]

Since Reporter Vincent Rossmeier took the time to check on important salaries, The Observer thought you might want to check his list.

President Obama disappointed federal employees hoping for a good-sized raise to help them cope with this recession-stricken economy when he announced that he'd cap pay increases at 2% for federal employees.

In justifying his decision to limit the wage hikes, Obama invoked a "national emergency" clause. If Obama had not made the declaration, federal salaries would have risen an average of 18.9%, adding more than \$20 billion to the federal budget.

What does this mean for Obama and his staff? And how do their salaries compare with other figures in the political world? Here's a closer look:

Unofficial head of the Republican Party Rush Limbaugh - more than \$50 million!

Conservative Moron Glenn Beck - \$23 million, including \$2 million from his TV show and \$10 million from his radio show.

Daily Show host Jon Stewart - \$14 million.

Hardball host Chris Matthews - estimated at more than \$2 million.

President Obama - \$400,000.

Vice President Joe Biden - \$221,100.

U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts - \$217,400.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton - \$186,600.

Sen. Al Franken, D-MN - \$174,000.

Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-MN - \$174,000.

Obama Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, Senior Advisor David Axelrod and White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs - all \$172,200.

South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford - \$106,078.

Obama Special Assistant and "Body Man" Reggie Love - \$102,000.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal - \$95,000.

Todd Palin - \$86,000 [Sarah Palin's husband made this figure working in commercial fishing and through a part-time job as a BP oil production operator].

White House Executive Assistant Ian Adams - \$36,000 [the lowest salary in the White House].

Typical U.S. House of Representatives page - \$18,817.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg - \$1. Forbes estimates Bloomberg is worth in excess of \$16 billion.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger - \$0 [The Terminator does not accept the state's \$206,500 salary - nor does he need it].

JUVENILES

From Page 17

ture.

The Heritage Foundation report concluded that "[l]ife without parole for the very worst juvenile offenders is reasonable, constitutional, and [appropriately] rare."

'CRUEL, UNFAIR, AND UNNECESSARY'

Earlier studies from Human Rights Watch [2005] and the Equal Justice Initiative [2007] add weight to the University of Texas study. Human Rights Watch concluded that "a sentence of juvenile life without parole is cruel, unfair, and unnecessary." The Equal Justice Initiative was launched to support its own litigation efforts challenging the death sentence when imposed on young children.

Progressive readers of this newspaper may be conflicted in several ways. The practice of sentencing criminal offenders to life without parole as an alternative to the death penalty has been widely supported. Yet, the imposition of life sentence to at least two groups of criminal offenders - adults committing non-violent or lesser violent offenses and juveniles - is less well supported today.

Tougher sentences imposed on juvenile criminal offenders may be particularly troubling to many. The hope for juvenile rehabilitation remains strong even for juvenile offenders who may have committed serious or violent criminal offenses. Newer medical evidence is finding that the juvenile brain is different from the adult brain.

IMPACT ON STATES

The Supreme Court's decision in the two related appeals will certainly affect

how the states address serious juvenile crime in the future. The impact of the decisions will almost as certainly impact adult sentencing practices if only because the states are now addressing the increased costs for adult incarceration and corrections.

For more information, the five reports mentioned here are available online:

No Exit: The Expanding Use of Life Sentences in America [The Sentencing Project, 2009], http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_noexit.pdf;

From Time Out to Hard Time: Young Children in the Adult Criminal Justice System [Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, 2009], <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/news/images/file/From%20Time%20Out%20to%20Hard%20Time-revised%20final.pdf>;

Adult Time for Adult Crimes: Life Without Parole for Juvenile Killers and Violent Teens [The Heritage Foundation, 2009], <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Crime/sr0065.cfm>;

The Rest of Their Lives: Life Without Parole for Youth Offenders in the United States [Human Rights Watch, 2005], <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/10/11/rest-their-livesexecsum.pdf>; and fi

And finally, *Cruel and Unusual: Sentencing 13- and 14-year-old Children to Die in Prison* [Equal Justice Initiative, 2007], <http://eji.org/eji/files/20071017cruelandunusual.pdf>.

- The author lives in Edmond

MYTHS

From Page One

he could do it from now on with others he disliked. It proved to be his genius during a distinguished 44-year career.

Myth: He didn't have an enemy in the world.

How he would laugh at that. Among others, his sworn enemy was House Speaker J.D. McCarty whom he described as fat, ugly and mean. He had to work with him and kept it cordial but J.D. was a press hog, on the TV news evening after evening.

Bellmon said if he had to have a vicious enemy, J.D. McCarthy was perfect. So perfect, J.D. lost his seat, then the IRS put him in prison. Bellmon, as a U.S. senator, refused twice to recommend him for a full pardon.

Which brings to mind his lifelong personal mantra: "Forgive and remember." More than once he zapped those who crossed him – including some on his own staff.

Myth: He "reached across the aisle" for his appointments to 200 boards, agencies and commissions.

He saw his job as building a Republican Party and, with rare exception, he appointed only Republicans.

Myth: He tolerated no ethical lapses.

To the contrary, the second time he ran for governor, Ed Gaylord "loaned" him reporter Wayne Mackey as campaign manager. Mackey pushed the "no new taxes" theme.

When Bellmon was putting together a TV commercial, a local TV news reporter arranged for Bellmon's private use of the TV studio and helped script

the commercial.

Myth: He exposed waste, graft and corruption.

There is no evidence that he ever received any graft, but he also failed to expose it – including a face-to-face offer of \$325,000 cash if he would oppose a looming liquor franchise bill.

One of his close advisers and supporters came to him after the election with a proposal that he would be Bellmon's "insurance adviser" and he would select the companies doing business with the state, with the understanding that 5% of the premium payment would be put in Bellmon's name in a Dallas bank account. He declined.

There were other Bellmon myths but I leave those for others to sort out. I know for a fact he was bitterly opposed to segregation – a view not shared by leaders in either political party. That made him a rare politician at that time.

When he put together the task force that wrote HB 1017, he was suddenly a hit with the OEA and others in education. He didn't do it for the glory. He details in his autobiography how important education is to America's survival.

He said he fought in the South Pacific as a Marine for the right of the Japanese people to determine their own fate – not leave it up to one or a few individuals.

He admits by the time he closed the chapter on a 44-year career, he was not well regarded by leaders of either party – particularly his own party.

He deplored the ultra-conservatives of his period – he said they were against anything that required funding.

Some Republicans looked askance when he said prayer had no place in a public school classroom. He had taken the family to Hawaii for three months during which the three daughters attended public school.

They featured only daily Catholic prayers. He said the girls felt left out because they were Protestants.

State Republican leaders so disdained his politics that when President Bush came to Oklahoma, Bellmon was not invited to sit on the stage with other dignitaries.

The quick line-up of Republican leaders who fought him every step of the way is, in his words, hypocritical.

U.S. Rep. Tom Cole praised him, although Cole said "we had our differences." He disliked Cole intensely for leading the fight against education reform.

Current Republican legislative leaders praising him, i.e., Glenn Coffee and Chris Benge, are the ones that pushed through the unwarranted tax cuts that left HB 1017 in tatters.

Gov. Brad Henry said Bellmon was his mentor and that he patterned his public life after Bellmon's.

Say what? Henry signed the unwarranted tax cuts for the affluent that wiped out Bellmon's legislative legacy, HB 1017.

After he left office he said nobody ought to go into elective office unless they can afford to lose it by casting a vote they know is contrary to the voters' wishes. Other income is vital.

He knows he helped create a false image of himself in the minds of many – a good ol' Billings wheat farmer who just used country common sense to get things done right. He kept the wheat farm and tried to get there as often as possible. When he closed the door on 44 years of public life, he was still in debt.

His last words: "Would I do it again? Without a moment's hesitation, the answer is unequivocally, yes. It's been a good 42 years. At the same time, I'm glad the phoniness is over for me and my family."

An honest man to the end. He takes his place alongside Oklahoma's greatest in politics – Bob Kerr, Carl Albert and Howard Edmondson.

'Dark And Stormy Night' 2009 Winners

For you lovers of good writing, these are the 10 winners of this year's Bulwer-Lytton contest – aka Dark and Stormy Night Contest – run by the English Department of San Jose State University, wherein one writes only the first line of a bad novel.

10. "As a scientist, Throckmorton knew that if he were ever to break wind in the echo chamber, he would never hear the end of it."

9. "Just beyond the Narrows, the river widens."

8. "With a curvaceous figure that Venus would have envied, a tanned, unblemished oval face framed with lustrous thick brown hair, deep azure-blue eyes fringed with long black lashes, perfect teeth that vied for competition, and a small straight nose, Marilee had a beauty that defied description."

7. "Andre, a simple peasant, had only one thing on his mind as he crept along the East wall: 'Andre creep ... Andre creep ... Andre creep.'"

6. "Stanislaus Smedley, a man always on the cutting edge of narcissism, was about to give his body and soul to a back alley sex-change surgeon to become the woman he loved."

5. "Although Sarah had an abnormal fear of mice, it did not keep her from eeking out a living at a local pet store."

4. "Stanley looked quite bored and somewhat detached, but then penguins often do."

3. "Like an over-ripe beefsteak tomato rimmed with cottage cheese, the corpulent remains of Santa Claus lay dead on the hotel floor."

2. "Mike Hardware was the kind of private eye who didn't know the meaning of the word 'fear,' a man who could laugh in the face of danger and spit in the eye of death – in short, a moron with suicidal tendencies."

And the winner is ...

1. "The sun oozed over the horizon, shoved aside darkness, crept along the greensward and, with sickly fingers, pushed through the castle window, revealing the pillaged princess, hand at throat, crown asunder, gaping in frenzied horror at the sated, sodden amphibian lying beside her, disbelieving the magnitude of the frog's deception, screaming madly, 'You lied!'"

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