

THE GUNTER COMPANY

FAXMAIL

TO: Brian Lamb	FROM: Unsung Hero, Fall Guy
CC:	Date:
RE: Your Bad Reputation	This Page + ____1____ Pages

Message:

I don't even know what they're talking about, but bad press anyhow.

Anyway I can get my \$25,000 back now that you've sunk to such low depths???

OUR TURN

Securing the borders responsibility of U.S.

At their Wednesday summit in Waco, President George W. Bush, President Vicente Fox of Mexico and Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada pledged increased cooperation on economic and security issues.

The leaders also candidly acknowledged their disagreements about issues ranging from missile defense to immigration.

In all, it was a display of the healthy relations among the three North American nations.

The United States must work cooperatively with its neighbors to address common issues of concern. America's borders must be open to trade and legal immigration.

A comprehensive solution to the immigration problem and border security, for instance, will require lessening the economic disparities between the United States and Mexico that draw so many people northward.

National security, however, ultimately is an American responsibility.

A key provision of last year's intelligence overhaul was the addi-

The immigration problem requires the allocation of domestic resources and international cooperation.

tion of 10,000 full-time Border Patrol agents over five years.

In his budget proposal for 2006, Bush only funded 210 new agents. The Senate voted last week to raise that number to 2,000 and follow the previous blueprint. Texas Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn supported the increase.

That decision was made as the Pew Hispanic Center released a report suggesting that the undocumented population of the United States now numbers 11 million people, up from just more than 8 million only five years ago.

If our national leaders are serious about border security, they'll work with our neighbors to the north and south, but they'll also commit the resources necessary in the United States to tackle the problem.

C-SPAN loses its sense of balance and reality

Balance is a watchword in journalism. In reporting the news, the media's goal is to present competing views of contentious issues. In commenting about the news, editorial pages seek diverse viewpoints.

Sometimes, however, the commitment to achieve balance can conflict with an even greater obligation to report truthfully and keep commentary within the bounds of reasonably established facts.

The recent decision of C-SPAN to counterpose a world-renowned Holocaust historian with an internationally discredited crackpot demonstrates how a blind commitment to balance can lead to a gross distortion of reality.

C-SPAN had planned to broadcast on its "Book TV" program a lecture by Deborah Lipstadt at Harvard University. Lipstadt is a scholar at Emory University and the author of the new book "History on Trial."

The book is an account of the legal proceedings surrounding a previous book, "Denying the Holocaust," in which Lipstadt cited David Irving among revisionists who deny the Holocaust or question its severity.

Irving, who lacks a college degree, sued Lipstadt under British libel laws. He said, "More women died

Elevating propaganda to the same level as history lends legitimacy to the purveyors of hate.

on the back seat of Edward Kennedy's car at Chappaquiddick than ever died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz."

The British Royal High Court ruled against Irving. In his verdict, Justice Charles Gray determined Irving had "for his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence."

Nevertheless, C-SPAN — under the premise of presenting balance — decided to pair Lipstadt's Harvard lecture with one by Irving on March 12 at the Landmark Diner in Atlanta.

Lipstadt declined to participate in C-SPAN's balancing act gone mad. Her lecture will not appear on "Book TV."

Propaganda can no more balance history than lies can balance the truth. C-SPAN's mistaken sense of balance represents an outrageous endorsement of hate-filled drivel.

Bunch of sis, boom, baloney!

Give me an F.
Give me an A.
Give me an R.
Give me a C.
Give me an E.

That spells *farce*, an apt term for a bill a state legislator has introduced to penalize cheerleading squads performing what he claims are lewd and vulgar routines.

The bill, filed by Rep. Al Edwards, D-Houston, would cut off state funds and ban performances by the offending group for the rest of the year.

This is what Janet Jackson and her "wardrobe malfunction" have wrought — the long, pious arm of the law extending into areas that should be — and are — the domain of parents.

Cheerleader legislation treads on what should be the realm of parental responsibility.

"I don't think that children should think that they can do these sexually oriented types of marches or dances," Edwards told reporters.

In a state where more monumental problems plague our youth, including child abuse and dismal academic achievements, Edwards should focus on the issues that matter. Gyrate cheerleaders do not make the cut. Except to the Taste Police.



FOCUS: TERRI SCHIAVO

No right for state to kill

The editorial "Congress out of line to 'rescue' Schiavo" (Tuesday) is wrong about the Terri Schiavo case. This is a family matter, but not Michael Schiavo's matter.

He abandoned his wife and has gone on to live with another woman and has a family. If he had a decent bone in his body, he would let Terri's family take care of her instead of playing God and wanting her to die.

Where are Terri's rights? Even death row inmates are given food and liquid before they are executed.

People are so worried about Republican leaders interfering. They should stop and think about what's really happening. I believe in states' rights, but not that a state has the right to kill an innocent, helpless victim based on an oral statement from a husband who has abandoned her.

People had better wake up and see what's really happening here.

— Becky Kelly

Judges, look her in eyes

I found the Terri Schiavo editorial outrageous and light on facts. First, Terri is not on life support. She breathes on her own, responds to those around her and only needs a feeding tube.

Second, Congress and the president are sworn to defend and uphold the Constitution. They've used their constitutional right to legislate and de-



CHRIS O'MEARA/ASSOCIATED PRESS
Terri Schiavo's father, Bob Schindler, gives the thumbs up outside the Florida hospice where Terri receives care.

fend Terri's constitutional right to life. Ask the judges who have ruled against Terri why they didn't go see her. Can any of them look in her eyes and tell her they'll let her die?

Then there's Michael Schiavo. He has a common-law wife and two children by her. Apparently, his marriage to Terri isn't too "sacred" to him. Michael refuses to turn over Terri's care to her family — strange behavior that should be investigated.

Consider also the mysterious illness that caused Terri's condition.

The bottom line is: Terri Schiavo is being starved to death. Do the judges

who have ruled against Terri understand their rulings are a precedent for state-supported murder?

— Steven L. Kennedy

What if parents paid bill?

I wonder who has been paying the bill to keep Terri Schiavo alive for the past 15 years. I'll bet if her parents had to pay that bill, they would change their minds about keeping her alive and let her die in peace.

— Donald Norton

Refuse to die this way

I am so glad the federal government intruded on one of the most private things in life — death. It helped me make up my mind about a living will and a do-not-resuscitate form, both of which have been completed and submitted to my doctor.

If the feds are allowed to complete this bullying, what will they try next? Wake up and think. I have the right to die; I did not have the right to be born.

I refuse to finish out life looking like that woman. I feel sorry for her husband — he loves his wife and wants to give her peace — and her parents — for being so selfish and stupid.

This must stop. I will not go easy. I will slide into my grave, like Sammy Sosa, going into home plate yelling: "That was one helluva ride!"

— Dean Sparkman

FOCUS: TAX BILL

Drink Pepsi, smoke more

The logic behind House Bill 3 boggles my mind. This bill does nothing for funding education, although lawmakers are masquerading it this way.

The bill calls for an increase in the sales tax, a tax on junk food and a \$1.01 tax on cigarettes, while reducing property taxes by the same amount. If we reduce property taxes that raise money for education and introduce new taxes for education that only make up the difference, there is no positive benefit for our education system. I know I'm not the only genius who has figured this out.

I'm not an economics professor, but I've heard that when the price of a good rises, people tend to use less of it. So when Texas residents start smoking less, eating less junk food and buying fewer goods, our education funds will dwindle.

This leaves us one choice: Buy more stuff, drink Pepsi and start smoking. Just what one of the fattest states in America needs to do.

— Hunter Warren

This scam won't work

The latest tax scam is under way: Raise the state sales tax and lower property taxes.

Sounds OK, except it won't happen. All that has to be done is raise the value of your property and you're right back where you started, along with the higher sales tax.

Let's give the governor a hand (or at least part of it).

— Elton I. Lee

Guidelines: Have something to say?

Then write us at Letters, Express-News, P.O. Box 2171, San Antonio, 78297, fax to (210) 250-3465, or e-mail to letters@express-news.net. All letters, including e-mail, should have full name (no initials or pseudonyms, please), address and daytime telephone number. Length? The shorter the better — long enough to make your point. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

Don't mess with gas tax

Are our legislators out of their minds? When average people are having panic attacks as they put gasoline in the family vehicle, our elected officials want to increase the gas tax?

There are better ways to care for streets than to further handicap the citizens and visitors. Why worry about street upkeep? At this rate, our streets will be deserted anyway. Truckers will park their semis, taxis will cease to operate, costs for public transportation will skyrocket, and the family car will become extinct.

"Don't Mess With (Gasoline) Taxes" should become our mantra.

— Judy Page, Universal City

Refuse to make choices

The Texas House wants to lower property taxes by \$5.4 billion and hopes to offset that amount by raising taxes on everything else (almost like a consumption tax).

Instead of making cuts and looking

at various ways to fund schools (hey, how about cutting out some of the red tape and so-called administrators and making districts more accountable for spending and supervisor pay?), they want to tax everything from Ho-Ho's to bottled water. Instead of making hard choices to cut back spending, they want to increase taxes on everyone in one way or another.

And who really believes all the money that might be raised from these taxes will go to school financing? After all, is the Legislature using the money from the tobacco settlement for its intended purpose?

So if these taxes bring in more than the projected \$5.4 billion, can the extra money be expected to be used for schools? I seriously doubt it.

— Royce Schmitz

Rich deserve better?

Re "Tax bill has silver lining for richest" (March 9):

So what is new? The party in control is not called the party of the rich for nothing. In the last legislative session these people mercilessly cut benefits for poor children, the elderly and the mentally afflicted for the sake of their "no new taxes" ideology.

They couldn't stand the Robin Hood school plan because property-rich districts had to give money to poorer districts. This goes against their philosophy that the rich should have a better education. Equity in education will never be achieved unless it is court ordered.

— R.P. Hemby, Stockdale

Nacho Guarache



by Leo Garza

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'Organic San Antonians' return

980th Engineer Combat Battalion ends its yearlong tour of Iraq.

BY SCOTT HUDDLESTON
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

They survived mortar attacks in Iraq, and now some local soldiers are the toast of the town. "Just the overall feeling of love we're getting from San Antonio is unbelievable," Capt. James Waldrop, commander of Bravo Company, 980th Engineer Combat Battalion, said at a welcome home party late Thursday.

Tonight, many of the 81 "organic San Antonians" as the reservists call themselves, will be honored at a Spurs game.

It was very different north of Baghdad, where they laid down 1.5 million square feet of helicopter runway at Camp Taji, to improve aviation attack and transport capabilities. Many of them knew a mortar shell could obliterate the bunkers used as shelter.

"A lot of us would run to a bunker, but a lot of us would keep working," during attacks, said Staff Sgt. James Maddock.

The company's 129 soldiers left for training in Fort Hood in late 2003, and spent most of the past



EDWARD A. ORNELAS/STAFF

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Russell Moore fixes himself a plate during a welcome home party for the 980th Engineer Combat Battalion.

year in Iraq. None were killed or wounded.

Maddock, a police officer, is reconnecting with his wife, 7-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son. When he returned, his daughter "was like the Energizer Bunny," he said. She walked up his body holding his hands, and did a back flip — one of her tricks.

"But now she's heavier, and taller," he said.

Sandra Maddock, his wife, said a student support group at their children's elementary school helped her family cope.

When they deployed, the troops were unfamiliar with one another, and thinking of leaving the reserves. A \$15,000 tax-free combat bonus and bonds that quickly formed changed their attitude, and many re-enlisted, said Sgt. 1st Class James Stoots.

Stoots, 33, returned home to his wife and four children in November, after he was diagnosed with cancer. After radiation, his cancer is in remission. But his cousin, Justin Burgess, 21, an Ohio resident in the 980th Transportation Company, was severely

burned by a roadside explosive, and is recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center.

"It's good to see people who made it back," Burgess said. He noted his facial scars and bandages were testament to "the other side, when you don't make it back safely."

Sgt. Rocky Ventura of San Antonio earned an Army commendation medal with valor device last May for getting a soldier off a front-end loader during an attack. Its bucket kept shrapnel from hitting troops nearby.

Bronze Stars were given to Waldrop and the 980th's 1st Sgt. Eloy Chavarria, for leading the company, and to Staff Sgt. Dale Light, for managing construction. All are from San Antonio.

"One aviation commander told me 'When my choppers can fly soldiers don't die,'" Chavarria said, underscoring the need for the paved landing space.

The company also fortified Iraq's election polling places.

Chavarria, 40, got teary-eyed as he talked about the bonds the soldiers developed.

"It's a lifetime of camaraderie," he said. "Our wives and families can't be thanked enough. This (party) is their thank-you."

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House bill aimed at 'mega-donors'

It would limit person's state election giving to \$100,000 every 2 years.

BY JOHN MACCORMACK
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER



VILLARREAL

Federal law limits individual contributions to all federal candidates and parties to \$95,000.

Fred Lewis, president of the Austin-based

"Campaigns for People," a non-partisan campaign reform group, said HB 1104 has wide support among nonpoliticians, but faces a difficult route to passage.

"It's gonna be tough, but it's the right thing to do, and we're going to have to begin the education process. The Democrats are as dependent on very large donors as the Republicans, so neither party is particularly supportive," he said.

"If you can raise money from a handful of people, who wants to raise money from average folks?" Lewis said.

Another Austin political observer, who asked not to be named, said the bill's chances of passing this session are slim.

"I don't think it's going anywhere. Why would you cut off your own food supply?" he asked of state legislators.

Villarreal said the bill, which would criminalize violations of the donation limit, will go before the House election committee in a couple of weeks. But even if it dies there, both sponsors said, they are in it for the long haul.

"It's a simple incremental measure. If we get a few breaks, we may be able to pass it this session," Strama said. "But realistically, this could be the first step in a journey that we expect could take two or three or four sessions."

Texas is one of 10 states that do not limit how much a person can give.

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BAHRAM MARK SOBHANI/STAFF

Sgt. Kortney R. Clemons is congratulated by Sgt. 1st Class Carl Roesch after being presented with a cavalry Stetson on Thursday.

Wounded soldiers honored at BAMC

CONTINUED FROM 1B

The decision to wage war on poverty in Sadr City, where six of 10 people were jobless, also was crucial, he said, noting that attacks have fallen dramatically since last summer. Chierelli sees the election, which drew millions to voting booths despite insurgent threats, as proof that his troops' sacrifice wasn't in vain.

"They went out to vote because they understood after the work that these great soldiers had done ... that democracy

really will bring a better way of life," he said.

Still, Iraqis may never know Wilson, Clemons or Hornaday, their moments of terror or their new and much different lives.

Wilson, 25, of Los Angeles, is the father of two with a third on the way. He was hit by a bomb planted in a palm tree in Taji, in the violent Sunni Triangle. Three soldiers died and six were wounded. He had returned to his unit from BAMC after being electrocuted in an accident, and was on his last

patrol in Iraq.

Clemons, 24, of Little Rock, Miss., was a medic helping wounded troops when a roadside bomb exploded in Baghdad. Thursday, sitting with his fiancée and parents, Clemons figured it happened for a reason, and added, "I will find my purpose in life."

As the trio was greeted by a long line of soldiers, Hornaday's wife, Sheila, talked of a middle-aged man at the crossroads. His civilian employer, Alltel Communications, wants him back, though it will be in a

new job. He's thinking of maybe retiring.

Sleep is fitful. He wakes up a lot and often talks in his sleep. Overall, his wife said, he's doing well, though once he dove off the bed thinking someone had thrown a satchel bomb at him.

"I believe it's worth it," Hornaday said. "I met so many good Iraqi people over there, and a lot of them would fall to their knees crying, thanking us for being there."

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Price of convention hotel raised to \$227.5 million

CONTINUED FROM 1B

Lower bond ratings increase the amount of interest on the debt, adding to the overall cost of the project.

"Marathon has the wherewithal to put the money there from Day 1," FaulknerUSA President Mark Schultz said. "But they don't want a negative impact on their projected return."

Assistant City Manager Chris Brady said he and Rodriguez are going to New York on Monday to listen to representatives of Marathon and negotiate more.

"Hopefully we will have a strategy next week," Brady said.

The promise of money, but no cash on hand, did not sit well with council members.

"Basically those are just words," Councilman Art Hall said.

Councilman Carroll Schubert said he has seen billion-dollar businesses go bankrupt overnight.

"The numbers frankly don't faze me," he said, referring to Marathon's worth.

City Council roundup

Lobbying duo: The council rescinded a February vote giving Loeffler Tuggey Pauerstein Rosenthal the city's federal lobbying contract and instead awarded it to two firms.

Holland & Knight and Patton Boggs will split lobbying duties in Washington, D.C., according to each's strengths. Each firm will be paid a maximum of \$12,000 a month for 17 months.

Permit replacement: Residents with garage sale permits will be able to get a replacement permit if it rains on the day of their sale.

Current regulations did not allow for such permits to be is-

sued if the sale was rained out, making residents pay an additional \$16 for a new permit. Rained-out residents must request the replacement from Code Compliance within seven days from the initial permit date.

However, if it rains on the second try, an additional replacement will not be issued.

Quote of the day: "Jorge, you've been using this term 'memorialization.' Is that a financial term or a funeral term?" — Councilman Joel Williams, questioning Jorge Rodriguez of Coastal Securities about financing for the Convention Center hotel.

— Laura Jesse

The hotel update also included FaulknerUSA's guaranteed fixed price of \$227.5 million — \$12.5 million more than its original proposal.

Once Hyatt Corp., which would operate the hotel, entered exclusive negotiations with the developer and designers met with other key stakeholders in the project, changes were made,

increasing the cost, Brady said. The price tag includes an additional 73,000 square feet of building space; furniture, fixture and equipment upgrades made by Hyatt; terraces added to the second, third and fourth floors; a bridge spanning the River Walk; and payment to the city for knocking off 500 public parking spaces in the planned

Ex-Webb official guilty in bribe case

Former county commissioner helped secure prison contract.

BY JESSE BOGAN
EXPRESS-NEWS BORDER BUREAU

LAREDO — A third former South Texas county commissioner charged in connection with a bribery scandal surrounding a detention facility in the Rio Grande Valley was convicted Thursday in Brownsville. Authorities said others could be charged.

David Cortez, 70, of Laredo, a former Webb County commissioner, was charged, pleaded guilty and was convicted Thursday of conspiring to "obstruct, delay and affect commerce" for his role in helping secure a contract for the Willacy County Adult Correctional Center in Raymondville.

He waived his right to have a grand jury investigate. The charge accused him of funneling at least \$39,000 to help a consulting firm get part of the job.

Cortez is cooperating with the FBI in an ongoing investigation, authorities said. He was released on a personal recognizance bond and is scheduled to be sentenced June 28. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison.

The name of the consulting company he secured the bids for was not released.

"It's our desire that the others that were involved in this activity would come forward, just as these others have," an investigator familiar with the case said on condition of anonymity.

Two former Willacy County commissioners, Jose Jimenez of Sebastian and Israel Tamez of Raymondville, pleaded guilty Jan. 4 to accepting bribes of \$10,000 or more for their votes awarding contracts to build the 500-bed detention facility used for federal inmates.

Willacy County Sheriff Larry Spence said the Dallas-area firms CorPlan Corrections LTD and Aguirre Inc., along with Management & Training Corp. of Centerville, Utah, and Hale Mills Construction of Houston, were the companies hired to either design, build or manage the Raymondville facility, which opened in 2003.

According to a charging document, "several Willacy County commissioners did solicit and receive things of value" from Cortez "in exchange for providing advantages not available to others interested in and competing for the selection of a consultant" for the facility.

"It was further part of the conspiracy that several Willacy County commissioners did agree to tacitly and implicitly to provide (Cortez) and other corporate representatives with assurances in their capacity" as commissioners, that Cortez and the company he represented "would receive favorable consideration" in exchange for money, the document states.

The commissioners agreed to accept the money in June 2000 and were paid around October 2002, according to court records.

Webb County Judge Louis Bruni said Cortez resigned as the county's Precinct 4 commissioner Jan. 25. His resignation letter said it was "due to health and personal reasons."

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