

THE TEXAS OBSERVER

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A Journal of Free Voices

75c

Re-Examining My Lai

Charles Hutto was there; Jim Lane was his attorney. Fifteen years later they talk about My Lai and its aftermath. — ed.

By Betty Brink

Kountze

"It was a small tragedy in a small place."

— Lt. William L. Calley, Jr., 1970;
convicted of murdering Vietnamese
civilians at My Lai 4, South Vietnam
on March 16, 1968.

TO THE VIETNAMESE families who lived there and to neighboring villagers, My Lai 4 had always been known as Thuan Yen. The hamlet, located in the Son My Village near the South China sea coast, was called My Lai 4 only on the U.S. Army maps. Americans, who had trouble with Vietnamese names, found it simpler to pinpoint one large hamlet and give its name to others nearby, numbering them 1, 2, 3 and so on. In 1968 there were six My Lais in the Son My Village on the American Army maps.

The hamlet was centuries old when the men of Charlie and Bravo companies landed at its northernmost edge on that hot, muggy spring morning in March, 1968. By noon, Thuan Yen, its houses, its temple, its animals, and most of its people, including its future generations, had ceased to exist. It was never rebuilt. The only thing standing there now to mark its place in history is a simple stone monument, erected by the Vietnamese, bearing the names of the dead villagers.

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The Hutto family today at home in Monroe, La.

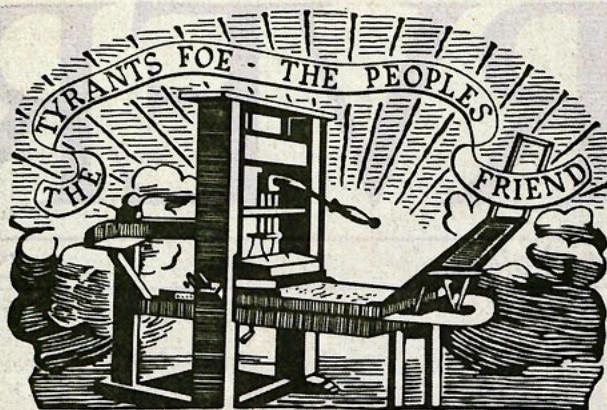
Photo by Eddie Cox/Gamma Liaison

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Bill Owens' *Tell me
a story, sing me a song* ★

College Days
At SMU ★

Scenes from
Kerrville



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• PAGE TWO •

Our readers respond:

The Johnson Biographies

Having already commented publicly and in print on both Dugger (*Journal of Southern History*) and Caro (*Denton Record Chronicle*), I shall refrain from repeating myself on the content of two of the books Stephen Oates reviewed in *The Observer*. Suffice it to say, I agree with his overall judgment. I would like instead to offer a speculation as to why they and Reedy are what they are.

Central to understanding both books is a need to understand what LBJ did to cause the authors to dislike him so. In both cases the easy answer is Vietnam, clearly LBJ's greatest blunder. In neither case is the easy answer, in my opinion, the correct one, although both authors suggest otherwise.

For Dugger and other Texas Liberals the root of the matter is the 1950's. LBJ was not kind to them to say the least. (I should note that I am making a distinction between liberals in Texas and Texas liberals.) I would argue that LBJ, an electoral pragmatist if nothing else, treated them with all the respect that their political power commanded. Such a cavalier, if not in fact contemptuous, attitude left them enraged. They are still working out their revenge both in the literary world and in the Texas political world, the current manifestation being their enthusiastic support of Lloyd Doggett for the U.S. Senate. I suppose the rallying cry will be "better six years of Tower than sixty years of Krueger." Never mind the niggling fact that this re-election will push Tower on to thirty years in the Senate. Small wonder that the Texas liberals have been referred to as the PLO of American politics.

That Caro is a tougher nut to crack is hardly surprising — his book is much more subtle than Dugger's. The Eastern establishment liberals were down on LBJ well before Vietnam. His faults, in their eyes, were several. After November 1963, the court jester or perhaps Richard III ruled in Camelot. That the assassination occurred in Dallas added fuel to the fire. And then he began succeeding where JFK had been deadlocked. Never mind the results; it was the rhetoric that counted. Never mind the legislative substance; the man had no style. The fact is that by 1966 the liberals' entire program was law. This ordinarily should have had them singing hosannah, but who in their right minds could sing praises to the village buffoon?

It is against this background that the strength of Reedy's book becomes obvious. Reedy is carrying another sort of ideological baggage. As Oates notes, Reedy's LBJ is a multi-dimensional figure — part "magnificent, inspiring leader" and part "insufferable bastard." What kept Reedy and others working for LBJ was the former. What drove them away was the latter. After 1966, when the energies of the former were being directed almost exclusively to Vietnam, the two parts began to merge. For people like Reedy, Moyers, and others, an "insufferable bastard" and Vietnam were more than they could suffer.

None of this is to say that LBJ was not flawed. He was. He made grievous errors. Of these perhaps the worst was to keep JFK's amateurs — the Bundys, etc. — as advisors. Perhaps they would have worked had JFK lived. Perhaps had Mr. Sam lived, he could have counterbalanced them. Perhaps not. Neither Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* nor Wills' *The Kennedy Imprisonment* are bullish on this matter.

The late T. Harry Williams supposedly was at work on a biography of LBJ at the time of his death. Both Dugger and Caro give evidence of how great a loss to our understanding of LBJ that death was.

G. L. Seligmann, Jr., Department of History, North Texas State University.

LBJ: The *True* Story

A "New Release" announced by Elroy Bode:

Just Folks: The Early Years

The True Story of Lyndon B. "Bubba" Johnson Written by Stephen Oates and Published by the Norman Vincent Peale Home Enrichment Library.

- ... READ about Lyndon and Penrod and Huck smokin' cornsilk
- ... READ about clever Lyndon outwitting the crawdads
- ... READ about fun-loving Little Lyndon and his Outhouse gang
- ... READ about spunky Lyndon protecting his lemonade stand from neighborhood bullies

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- Vol. II Lyndon Coaches Little League
- Vol. III Lyndon Enters the Ministry
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STILL IN PREPARATION!!!

- Vol. V Lyndon in Lambarene
- Vol. VI Lyndon and Gandhi
- Vol. VII Lyndon on the Cross
- Vol. VIII Lyndon Ascends
- Vol. IX-X The Millennium

LBJ as Rosemary's Baby?

Lyndon Johnson reminds me not so much of Faust as of Rosemary's Baby. It's hard to believe he ever had a free soul to sell.

If Robert Caro abhors his subject, he does so because of what he found in his research. He says he went into the project expecting to like him. Ronnie Dugger, on the other hand, observed Lyndon for over twenty years. If he abhors him also, that gives us abhorrence from two widely different perspectives.

Isn't it much too early to tell whether either of these writers will give Lyndon the credit for good works Stephen Oates thinks he deserves? There are two more volumes to come in each biography, and while it doesn't seem likely that Lyndon will emerge from these volumes as an idealist who shared Martin Luther King's dream, I don't believe Dugger or Caro will try to make him "a scapegoat for our collective guilt over the war, and all our woes and shattered dreams that followed" either. On the contrary, Dugger emphasizes that Lyndon was a *reflec-*

tion of American politics in the years that he had power and a victim of the myths of our society.

Caro does not call Johnson an American Hitler, but there is evidence the Johnson thought of himself as one, and bragged about it. On page 190 of the first edition of *The Path to Power*, Johnson is quoted as saying on a tape recording made in 1970, about something he had done forty years before: "It was my first real big dictat — Hitlerized — operation, and I broke their back good. And it stayed broke for a good long time."

About caricature: Aren't there people who, when seen clearly, look like caricatures of the rest of us? I recognize that a psychopath doesn't have anything I don't have. He just has a lot more of some of it and a lot less of some of it, which is what a caricature is, isn't it? Is there a biographer which the empathy of Francis of Assisi who could draw an accurate word portrait of Hitler or Joe McCarthy that shows the subject's idealism and humanity? Maybe that's the biographer who could give Mr. Oates the picture of Lyndon he wants.

Ann Adams, 4366 N. Diana Ln., Oak Harbor, WA 98277.

LBJ: Man of Action

Biographies are difficult to do under the best of circumstances. Under contemporary circumstances objective biographies are virtually impossible. Author bias, dollar considerations, and fresh emotions tarnish the most honest and sincere efforts to recall a recent, controversial and significant life. Reedy, Dugger, and Caro represent only three of the kinds of writers in the spectrum of biographers. Reedy was there, on the scene, inside the momentous events in LBJ's Presidency. His task as press secretary was to present the events to the world. Dugger was on the outside; an intellect; a liberal. Caro is a competent journalist trying to sell a book and make some money. He is similar to the song writer trying to catch the mood of the time and cash in on what is selling. Reedy and Dugger really care about the impact of LBJ's life on the times. Caro could not possibly be trying to make a historical contribution with his shallow vilifications and contrived psychological analysis of LBJ.

Biographers, just as anyone else who observes and thinks about events, causes and effects, have biases, preconceived notions, rigid philosophies and ideas about the world, their country, the Presidency, how things should have been done or how they should be done. Reedy lived very close to part of the LBJ experience. Dugger and Caro only observed the events from a distance. Dugger did have the opportunity to interview LBJ but he heard as a liberal and he responded as a liberal. These writers all have had a chance to look back at the LBJ Presidency and political career, glean through the files and sift through the facts with the benefit of hindsight. LBJ, as President, had to act on what he was told by his staff, what he saw, his instincts, and what he hoped to accomplish in the vast complexities that no human could hope to cope with, much less master. Moreover, Presidents have egos, biases, personal philosophies, hopes and dreams that co-exist, in the context of the realities and the dynamics of a mad, mad world. LBJ had all of this to contend with, and he had to act without benefit of hindsight. He couldn't sit back and compare this event with that event in history and then make a move. Hesitation was impossible. He had to deal with his *now*, his present; not the yesterdays that writers report or comment about.

(Continued on Page 22)

My Lai

(Continued from Page 1)

It has been more than fifteen years since Lt. Calley led the First Platoon of the Americal Division's Charlie Company into the small, rice-farming hamlet in search of the Vietcong. Calley and his men, all young, inexperienced, scared, entered the village sometime around 7:30 (followed closely by the Second Platoon and members of Bravo Company) anticipating their first change to "close" with the enemy; their first face-to-face combat. They expected to find the VC 48th Battalion; what they found was a village filled with old men, women, children and babies, but no soldiers. They met no resistance, received no hostile fire.

Yet by noon of that day, Calley, the men of Charlie and Bravo companies, and their commanding officers had secured for themselves a dark and troubling place in America's history. Anywhere from 347 to over 500 unresisting Vietnamese civilians of all ages were killed at My Lai 4 and their village burned to the ground, all in a matter of a few hours.

Twenty months later, the news of the massacre and its subsequent cover-up* by the military and the State Department shocked and sobered a nation already torn apart by Vietnam. Not only were we shocked by the vivid, full-page spread of pictures in *Life*, pictures of the blood-spattered bodies of men, women, children, and babies sprawled along dirt paths or stacked grotesquely in drainage ditches, but even more unsettling for Americans were the chillingly dispassionate voices of the foot soldiers who were there, detailing the killings for us each night on the evening news. Foot soldiers not much more than children themselves.

These were after all, *our* sons, not the Japanese at Manila or the Germans at Babi Yar; these were our very own. Who were they? How did they happen to do what they were accused of, indeed what they seemed to be confessing to night after night? Was My Lai an aberration? An "isolated incident" as then President Richard Nixon liked to call it? Or was it in reality the real nature of the war in Vietnam?

Most Americans found the latter hard

*High ranking military and state department officials would stand accused by the Armed Services Investigating Committee in July, 1970 of "a concerted action . . . to suppress all evidence of [the massacre]."



Photo by Ron Haeblerle

"My Lai was a search and destroy mission and that's what it means. . . ." (Charles Hutto)

to accept during those deceptive times, and for those who investigated the massacre it became officially an "aberration." Charges of murder, rape, assault, and maiming were brought against thirteen men, all lower echelon officers or enlisted men from the Americal Division's 20th Infantry, Charlie and Bravo Companies — companies which had been combined in 1967 into one unit called Task Force Barker. (These thirteen were all the Army could find; most of the men who had been at My Lai 4 were discharged by 1969 and could no longer be charged with crimes committed overseas while they were on active duty. Only the government of South Vietnam could legally bring charges against those already discharged, but, even if the South Vietnamese government had wanted to, it couldn't because the United States had no extradition treaty with South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government never admitted that anything unusual happened at My Lai 4 and censored all news reports of the investigation and subsequent trials.)

But for two men, one from Texas, the other from Louisiana, whose paths would probably never have crossed had it not been for My Lai, the massacre was no "aberration." It was the real war, different only, they say, in the number of civilians killed at one time in ground combat assaults; and it was well planned.

CHARLES EDWARD HUTTO, 34, of Monroe, Louisiana, was a 19-year-old sergeant in Charlie Company's Second Platoon in March, 1968, who was charged, tried, and acquitted of crimes committed at My Lai. Jim Lane, of Fort Worth, was Hutto's military defense attorney from late 1969 until 1971. Lane, now 39, was 24 years old when he was detailed to defend Sergeant Hutto. Both men recently talked publicly for the first time since the trial ended about My Lai and its effect on their lives, both then and now.

Lane is angry and bitter, convinced the country has forgotten, not only the tragedy of the Vietnamese villagers who died at My Lai, but the tragic men of Charlie and Bravo companies who killed them, the "walking wounded" of Vietnam.

Hutto is filled with pain and grief, still living with memories he can't escape. He, too, believes the country has forgotten, and there is a tragic irony in that for Charles Hutto — he wants to forget and can't.

"He wasn't shooting babies," Lane said during the interview last summer in the recently restored 100-year-old home on Fort Worth's old North Side where he has lived and practiced law since 1974. "He was shooting 'gooks' and 'chinks' and 'slopes.' We had dehumanized an entire group of people,

and when you dehumanize a group of people, they're no longer entitled to the same privileges that *you* enjoy. That's not exactly a brand new philosophy . . . we massacred Indians all over this country . . . little Indians grow up to be big Indians, so kill 'em. But this country forgets, forgets everything about its history. We've totally forgotten what we did to the Indians, and now Vietnam is blocked out, forgotten, the My Lais, the Huttos, all forgotten."

Lane had grown up in Fort Worth, the first of two sons born to parents he described as "typical middle class, very patriotic; two people who would never have believed back then that our government would spray poisons on its own troops." His father began his work career by teaching school, but after serving in World War II, came home to Fort Worth and went to work at "the Bomber Plant" as folks called General Dynamics in those days, staying there until his retirement last year.

"It was a hell of an experience for a 24-year-old just out of law school," he said, "and, if anything, my outrage has grown, the more I've thought about it."

"We took care of some of our guilt with the trials," he continued, "but that's all. We never answered the obvious questions. Who were those boys and how did they happen to come to kill *hundreds* of unarmed old men, women, and children at that small place fifteen years ago? How did we get them to that state of mind and *why*?"

"The poor old grunts of Charlie Company pulled the triggers, yes, but they weren't the guilty ones. They were only the scapegoats."

Lane served on the Judge Advocate General's staff (JAG Corps) from 1969 until 1973, after graduating from Baylor University Law School, and assisted in the defense of five of the men charged with My Lai crimes. The former captain believes the entire My Lai operation was planned by unknown senior officers in the Americal's chain of command with direct involvement of the CIA and the Saigon National Police, in response to the Vietcong's recent TET offensive victories, which had ended in February, 1968.

During the defense investigations in Vietnam, Lane found evidence of a so-called "Black List," which named Vietnamese civilians targeted for assassination under the CIA's clandestine Operation Phoenix. ("After we 'discovered' Operation Phoenix," Lane said, "the CIA came knocking on my door and said,

'Boy, there ain't no such thing.' ")

But defense investigators in Vietnam were told by Ta Linh Vein, an intelligence gatherer for the Americans in 1968, who said that he reported "directly" to the American Embassy, that a Black List "document" for My Lai 4 *had* existed, but by the time the trials were in progress the "document" had been sent to the American Embassy. Ta Linh also said that he had recommended "to all agencies" to destroy My Lai in 1968, "structures, people, and livestock . . . to destroy the base of the Communists," and that after TET, he knew that the "government" had planned a big operation in the Son My Village.

Also, American intelligence believed that the VC 48th Battalion, a feared and respected fighting force for twenty years, first against the French and then against the Americans, was located at My Lai 4. Because of its location near the South China Sea and the support of the civilian population, the battalion had been an important factor in the TET victories, and so the small hamlet's fate was sealed.

"These kids and Calley couldn't have dreamed up anything of this magnitude and carried it out *alone*," Lane said. "Either we had a well-trained military carrying out orders or we had a bunch of crazed criminals who all just accidentally wound up in Charlie Company. It didn't happen that way. These guys were set up. [My Lai] happened just the way it was supposed to happen, and it accomplished just what it was supposed to

accomplish, because we didn't have any more trouble in that area ever again. We totally broke the whole area's spirit, just as we intended. They knew what this country was willing to do."

"The Vietcong didn't run around saying this was a bunch of crazed criminals. They said, 'This is the way the American government is beginning to operate.'"

Charlie Company, says Lane, was the "perfect company, the perfect set-up of young soldiers, led by a man they all loved and respected, Captain Ernest Medina (charged with overall responsibility for My Lai and acquitted)."

"And another thing," Lane went on, "I can't believe — I'll never believe — that Ernest Medina knew what was going to happen [at My Lai]. I've lived and loved with Hispanics for years [on Fort Worth's predominantly Mexican American North Side, where Lane has been active in the old neighborhood's politics, restoration and cultural preservation], and I know how family-oriented, children-oriented, Mexican Americans are. I'm sure Medina has never been able to accept what happened there that day."

Medina would testify, more than once, that he was ordered by his commanding officer, Colonel Barker, to "burn and destroy the village [of My Lai 4] . . . to destroy water buffalo, pigs, chickens, and to close any wells that we might find . . . I did not receive any instructions what to do with any civilian[s] . . . from what I was told [by Barker] there would be no civilian populace . . . men,



Attorney Jim Lane in his Fort Worth office.

women, and children would be gone to market at 0700 hours . . . [and] we were going in to completely clear the area [of the VC 48th Battalion] so they would not have a base of operations . . ." The operation would begin at 7:30 instead of "first light," Medina was told, in order to give the women and children time to leave.

Medina also testified, and transcripts made that day confirmed his statements, that he was ordered by his battalion headquarters to go "back into My Lai 4" and count the civilian dead, but General Samuel Koster, the Commander of the Americal Division, who was flying over the operation, countermanded the order, saying "Don't send them back . . . into that mess. What does [Medina] say he saw?" Medina answered, "About 20 or 28 dead [civilians]." Koster replied, "That sounds about right."

Koster, who had watched the entire operation from his command and control helicopter, also sent a telegram to the troops the next day which said, "Good work men. Aggressive!" And a few days later, General William Westmoreland, Supreme Commander in Vietnam, sent a telegram congratulating Task Force Barker for a "job well done." "Unbelievable!" Lane said, "This was a war where troops got *telegrams*, for God's sake, from their *commanders*!"

That company [Charlie], that year, Lane believes is a tragic example of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's Project 100,000 (the name given to the late 60's program that allowed certain educational and other requirements for draftees and enlistees to be overlooked). "A great social experiment," Lane said angrily, "which McNamara and [President Lyndon] Johnson dreamed up to gather up more boys for the war so Johnson wouldn't have to fight the folks who would really go vote and start screaming about drafting their children. It would give the Army troops, and in turn the Army would teach 'em how to read and write and brush their teeth. But

they never got around to teaching them anything. They just shipped them out to Vietnam.

"The *real* guilty ones, Johnson, McNamara, Nixon, Westmoreland, they've never had to answer for what they did to the Huttos of this country, but I tried to make Westmoreland answer." Lane and another enlisted man charged with My Lai crimes, whose charges were later dropped, filed murder charges against Westmoreland during Hutto's trial. The charges were dismissed, but the act itself caused Westmoreland to call a press conference denying any responsibility for the massacre. During the trials, Lane continued to hammer away at the fact that the commanders were not being held responsible for the actions of their troops in violation of principles established during World War II. "We *hanged* [Japanese General] Yamashita [for atrocities committed by his troops as the war was ending] even though he proved he was totally cut off from his men and had lost all communication with them.

"But go talk to Hutto. Hutto will tell you, better than I can. Let him tell you how much training he had in the Geneva Conventions Rules of Warfare . . . how it felt to be an 18-year-old drop-out straight from the cotton fields of Louisiana, plopped down in the rice fields of Vietnam, scared, homesick, trapped in the deadliest of deadly wars this country has ever known."

CHARLES HUTTO, who was tried and acquitted of murder and assault in 1971, was one of only five men who ever stood trial for crimes committed at My Lai. Today he lives on two acres of rural land near Monroe, Louisiana, with his second wife Vickie and his two children, one by a former marriage that ended in divorce five years ago.

He is a graduate electronics technician who tinkers with solar development in his spare time. Hutto is a better-educated man than he was fifteen years ago when he joined the Army at 18, but he still talks with the slow, halting speech patterns of rural, northeastern Louisiana, very soft, very thoughtful. He looks closer to 24 than 34 — until you look into his eyes. It is hard to believe he was ever a participant in one of the worst war crimes in America's history.

Vickie Hutto was eight years old when the My Lai massacre happened. She has no memory of it except what Charles has only recently been able to tell her. One of the first things she said when we met

was to express her surprise at finding the My Lai story, along with Charles' name, briefly mentioned in her young son's junior encyclopedia.

"It bothered Charles," she said, "but it bothered me for a different reason. We're too young to be in the history books. It didn't seem right somehow."

Charles' beginnings did seem to make him an unlikely candidate for the history books. He had grown up in Tallulah, La., a small farming community near the Mississippi border, where his father worked for wages on the Scott Plantation, the second in a family of eight children. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade, he says, "because things was hard, real hard, back in '64 or '65, and it's embarrassing to have to go to school without shoes. My feelings was hurt real

"We had a lecture on the Geneva Conventions, about an hour was all."

Charles Hutto

bad. I found that after I started working on the farm, I could enjoy myself better . . . being away from people." He worked on the farm chopping cotton.

"I joined the Army in January of 1967 to get away from the situation. I'd never been out of Tallulah before and I wanted to see what else there was in the world . . . and the servicemen I'd seen in town, they looked real nice in their uniforms and all. I wanted to get into mechanics and the recruiters said if we joined we could get what we wanted. But then they said my aptitude was too low, so they stuck me in the infantry. After I raised my hand, I never got nothin' I wanted. By November of '67 I was in Vietnam, just a few months shy of my 19th birthday."

"We had a lecture on the Geneva Conventions, about an hour was all; they wasn't really stressed. It was mostly jungle training [in Hawaii], and always during the training, the Vietnamese was referred to as 'Gooks' . . . by everybody. We didn't get any training about the Vietnamese people, the war, the politics, nothin' . . . we just had to go fight a war.

"The first mission we went on, we ran into a box ambush. That's when you've got the enemy on three sides and just a narrow path, this time it was a bridge, to get back out. Anybody who tried to go back across the bridge got mowed down. We lost seven or eight men that

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Photo by Ron Haeblerle

Some of the men of Charlie Company in a rice field just outside My Lai.

day; one in my squad got his legs blown off. We had to call in helicopter gunships to cover us while we backed out one at a time.

"That was the first time for most of us, and whenever we first got under fire, we thought we was just playing games, you know, and all of a sudden people started falling, and it makes you mad to see your buddies shot and you've been with 'em for almost a year . . . they come to be like brothers to you. For me, they was closer than my brothers.

"I've seen car wrecks, people battered up and everything, but that's not really . . . that's nothing compared to what I seen in Vietnam. You see a guy get blowed up and you go over to see if he's breathing and all you can find are a few bones and some flesh here and there . . . layin' all over the place . . . and that gets to your mind. There was an individual there just a minute ago and then there ain't nothing' there, blood, fingers, bones all over the place, flesh, pieces of flesh, and this guy used to be a human being just like you and me.

"When a person can see stuff like that and walk out and still have his common sense, he's crazy. Something's wrong with him.

"That's what nobody knows. What we saw.

"I had a good friend, he got hit by a mine. It blowed both his legs off and you know what he was worried about? His testicles, 'cause he said if he didn't have them, he wanted to die. We told him he had 'em, but he didn't. He died in the hospital.

"We'd go win a hill and lose a lot of men doing it and then the next day we'd get off it and go and try and catch another hill, lose a lot more men and the Vietcong'd come and get the hill we just left . . . it didn't mean nothin'. *Nothin'.*

"After a time over there, when we just had three or four months left, we'd stop going out on night patrol, which was just suicide. If you walk into an ambush at night, you just ain't comin' back. So we went against our command. I'd seen enough killin' by then . . . seen enough.

"We never stayed in one place. We were never at the base camp more than a day or two. We were on the move all the time, in the jungles, in the mountains, for as long as a month or more. Out in the field we slept on the good ol' earth. There was leeches crawling all over the ground at night and monsoon rains. If we didn't find a high spot, you'd wake up and be half covered in water. No tents. You moved too much to carry tents. You had to carry too much ammo plus you had to carry your own food. I was a

country boy and sometimes I'd go through a village and get me some vegetables and some peppers, some rice, and fix me up a little stew. Sometimes we'd catch a duck.

"Then there was the bamboo vipers to watch out for, very poisonous. A green snake, looks just like bamboo. We'd wake up with the leeches all over us . . . on our backs and you'd have to burn 'em off, or you woke up and went to check on your buddy and find his throat's been cut or he's hangin' from a tree.

"Sleepin' was hard anyway, but this one night we'd wound up in a certain area where they had us boxed in, we couldn't move, and it just so happened that my position was where a Vietcong had been buried. I had one of his legs stickin' out of the ground, half rotted. I could see the bones stickin' out of his feet. I tell you I had a hard time gettin' to sleep that night . . . the smell . . .

"The best beds we had was at the base camp, the canvas cots, that's what we called heaven. But the whole time I was over there, I might have spent one whole week, all told, in the base camp. I know I'm just 34 years old, but I feel like I'm 50. I must have walked myself to death over there. It was rough walking, most of it in mountains or rice paddies. In the rice paddies, we had to constantly fight the leeches . . . the heat was awful . . . awful . . . then it was bad if the VC caught you in the paddies — and they loved to catch you there cause you were exposed — couldn't run. All you could get behind was a little dike, and by the time you hit the mud, your machine gun was clogged up and the M-16's wasn't worth a flip. They weren't accurate and they'd get jammed up from gettin' too hot.

"Then we had to watch out for the bamboo staked pits and the booby-traps and the mines. Like the "Bouncin' Bettys." They would be OK so long as you had your foot on 'em, but when you stepped off, they'd bounce up and explode right in your gut. So your mind is constantly used, cause if you let down, you're gonna walk into something . . . and it's gonna be over.

"By the time I'd been in Vietnam a little while, I lost all my feelings. Just how to survive and help my buddies. And I didn't trust any Vietnamese whether they was on our side or not.

"And I wanted to go home real bad. But after a while, I just decided I would never see the States again, so I didn't care. Life at that time wasn't worth nothin'.

"I know 18 or 19 is too young to be

drafted, cause a boy's got to grow some on his own . . . without constant influence to drive him to do certain things. I was always told what to do, and then when I joined the service, I did what I was told.

"I know that I'm not ever gonna go fight a war for whenever I come home, everybody puts you down, or prosecutes you. We were fighting a war for no purpose . . . there was no purpose whatsoever.

"A war, before it gets started, should be made straight with everybody. Plus, if you do send men over there, don't let 'em come home and be prosecuted for what everybody did.

"Whenever that CIA investigator started asking me about My Lai, he had to talk to me for three or four hours before I could even remember. I had blanked it out of my mind. I was a human being again and then the CIA man brought it all back and ruined everything." (When I asked Hutto if he didn't mean the CID, Criminal Investigation Division of the Army, he said, "No, I mean CIA.") "He kept me there near all day long and I wanted to go home and he kept on and on and said I should go ahead and talk 'cause it was all gonna

come out anyway . . . so I told him what happened. I was gonna get out in a month's time anyway . . . I thought." (Hutto was charged, on November 17, 1969, shortly after he talked to the investigator, with murder, assault, rape and false swearing. He was exonerated of the rape and false swearing charges, tried and acquitted of murder and assault. The trial extended his time in the Army until January of 1971.)

THE FOLLOWING is an excerpt from Hutto's 1969 statement, introduced as evidence at his trial:

"I remember the unit's combat assault on My Lai 4 . . . the night before the mission, we had a briefing held by Captain Medina . . . he said everything in the village was Communist. [It] was a search-and-destroy mission . . . the first of the unit . . . I remember Capt. Medina said we would have our chance to get even with the VC for some of the casualties the company had had (one-fourth of Charlie Company's men had been killed or wounded by then) . . . the impression I got was that we was to shoot everyone in the village. Then on the outskirts of the village . . . an order came down to destroy all of the food, kill all

the animals, and kill all the people . . . [then] the village was burned. When we entered the village, I saw people running for cover . . . the whole company opened up on the villagers and begun to kill them. It was murder. We continued through the village and shot at everything . . . we didn't collect any people and we didn't try to capture anyone . . . I didn't agree with the killings, but we were ordered to do it. We shot men, women, and children. We were there most of the morning . . . I remember we had lunch on the wood line at [its] edge. . . ."

The investigator asked Hutto about a rape that other eyewitnesses had already testified to. He at first denied seeing a rape, but the next day, he gave the following account: "Sometime during the middle of the village . . . I came upon a hut and went to the doorway to see what was going on. There was a Vietnamese girl in the hut and she was laying on the bed and [a soldier] was having sexual intercourse with her . . . she was crying and resisting . . . [another soldier] was holding her hands . . . after the one finished, the other one took out his penis

"I mean how did we get these boys to this state of mind and why?"

Jim Lane

and got on top of the girl . . . [she] was still crying and fighting . . . at that time I left. I didn't hear about the girl getting killed until you told me yesterday. She was about 20 years old. . . ."

(Hutto's statements were confirmed by at least twenty other enlisted men. All would remember Medina's orders were to "kill everything in the village."

Hutto still believes that, "Medina was the best company commander anybody ever had. I think the orders for My Lai came from higher above Medina, from the Brigade Commander is what I heard.

"Before this operation, we'd lost about twenty of our men killed for no reason whatsoever. It's different to be out there in a firefight, but just to get killed from something somebody's planted out there, to get your legs blown off, the bottom half of your body blown off, see your buddies get their heads blown off. After seeing so much stuff like that, you just build up a hardness inside you . . . you blank out love . . . you just have a non-feeling about everything . . . you do what you have to do to stay alive. . . ."



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THEY CALLED THEM GREASERS Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900 Arnoldo De León

"A splendid book that illuminates our present by shedding light on a dark corner of the Texas past."

—David J. Weber

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For some, this book will make disturbing reading. Among its disquieting arguments is De León's contention that such Texas luminaries as Walter Prescott Webb and Eugene C. Barker wrote of Anglo-Mexican relations with evident bias and deficiencies of research, describing without censure a society that permitted traditional violence against its ethnic minorities as a means of keeping them "in their place."

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TEXAS

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"Now I wouldn't fight a war unless we was fighting for our own country. That's what the Vietnamese was doing. They had something to fight for . . . just a little piece of an acre or something, but it was their country they was fighting for. and the Vietcong would fight anybody . . . sometimes they even fought the North . . . I respected 'em . . . I lost many a night's sleep over 'em. . . ."

"And then I came home and was a scapegoat."

Charles Hutto was wounded in Vietnam shortly before his tour of duty was up. The man who took Hutto's place was killed in a minefield a few weeks after replacing him.

"It was a sneaky wound," Hutto says, because it was minor, "but it got me out of there. And I'm not dead and I'm not crippled like so many of my buddies. I feel real guilty sometimes because I'm alive . . . and whole."

I asked him, then, what he might tell his sons about My Lai, or advise them about the draft or war.

Hutto was silent for awhile, then he spoke slowly. "I was 19 years old that day," he said, "and I'd always been told to do what the grownups told me to do. I didn't see myself as an adult then, and I did what I was ordered to do. But now I'll tell my sons, if the government calls, to go, to serve their country, but to use their own judgment at times . . . to forget about authority . . . to use their own conscience."

"I wish somebody had of told me that before I went to Vietnam. I didn't know. Now I don't think there should be even a thing called war . . . cause it messes up a person's mind."

Vickie Hutto has been listening to her husband talk. She is only 23 years old. Vietnam and My Lai are just now becoming a part of her life.

"I knew things were wrong," she says. "I just didn't know what. I thought it was me. Now I know. We spent most all of last night talking, knowing you would be here today."

"He believes he's going to hell for what he did there that day," she says, very softly.

Charles Hutto leaves the room. When he comes back, we talk of other things.

On July 15, 1970, the House Armed Services Investigating Committee on My Lai, made the following observation:

"At this late date, who can judge the cumulative effects of the horrors, fears and frustrations which the men of 'C' Company had been forced to endure prior to their action at My Lai . . . under

these latter conditions a man could reasonably be expected to place more reliance on his commander than on his conscience. . . ."

DURING THE INTERVIEW last summer, Hutto was asked if he had made any attempt to join a Vietnam veteran's group for support and help. He replied that "there is nothing any other veterans can do for me. What happened to me was different."

But in May, Vickie called. If she could make contact with a veteran in Monroe who was counseling troubled Vietnam veterans, Hutto had agreed to go. He had been, as one of his friends said, a "walking time bomb." And in early May he finally went off. After several days of drinking alone in the woods near his home, "sleeping on the ground, not changing his clothes, living like an animal," Vickie said, (or "like a soldier" his friend said) he came back home and broke down. When his friend went by the school to pick up Hutto's 10-year-old son, explaining to the boy that he would have to stay with his grandmother for a few days because his father was not feeling well, the boy said, "It's because of Vietnam, isn't it?"

Hutto is now seeing a counselor in Louisiana, but fifteen years of living with a nightmare is a long time. He has strong support from his wife, his family, his friend, and the man who knew, after just one interview with him fifteen years ago, that Charles Edward Hutto was not a baby-killer.

"WHEN I FIRST MET with Hutto," Jim Lane said during the interview last summer, "I thought I was gonna meet a guy about six-foot-nine with arms that hang down to the floor — a real gorilla — cause I couldn't believe if he did what he said he'd done that he could have any morals. But he was just this wonderfully warm, quiet, well-mannered young man who had 'followed orders' he said. The perfect soldier, and that was basically his defense."

"I kept thinking, 'he was just this ordinary kid next door and if he did what he's accused of doing, what happened?' I mean, how did we get these boys to this state of mind and why? I guess that's the first day I got mad, and I've been mad ever since."

"The soldiers I was dealing with couldn't explain it, no one could explain it to me. After I got over the shock of what I had seen on TV and the photographs and realized 'this ain't no isolated incident, no, this is basically the

mentality of this Army and this country that I love so well.' . . . this country's taking its young people and putting them in this frame of mind . . . this is the way this war's being fought. Then I knew I was going to have to go to trial and attack the Army and the Government's conduct of this war."

"As a young man with all the ideals I had, with the way I'd been raised, I was having a hard time every night. . . ."

"Going to Vietnam was the eye-opener. When you drive through Saigon on a military bus with mesh on it so tight you can't hang a grenade on it and ask why, and they tell you to keep 'them' from throwing a grenade through the windows, and then you get on a military airlift and you see 18-year-old kids with their dog-tags laced in their boots and they tell you that's because 'when they blow your legs off, sir, they can get your legs with your body,' it doesn't take long to understand."

"We were fighting a war for no purpose . . . there was no purpose whatsoever."

Charles Hutto

"And then we tried to take depositions from some of the survivors of My Lai . . . tried to get a little old lady to identify somebody from the pictures we had. And through the interpreter she said, 'All Americans look alike.' Now you're talking blacks, browns, and whites, but they all looked alike because they were all in uniform and everything was blowing up around her and she knew if you had a uniform on you were one of 'them.' She didn't take time to see what color you were or if your eyes were brown or blue."

"I learned real quick that this war was

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not like any war these kids had ever heard about. It wasn't the *Sands of Iwo Jima* or even *The Green Berets*. Hell, John Wayne didn't know anything about it. Their World War II mamas and daddies didn't know anything about it. The Pentagon didn't know *much* about it and Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson didn't know a *damn thing* about it."

Lane went on to try other Vietnam-era cases: Black Panther military trials, civil rights cases, desertions, drugs, hair, riots; he covered the spectrum of the volatile 60's and early 70's. But My Lai 4 stayed with him, haunted him, changed him.

"For two years I fought that war vicariously," he said. "Every day for those two years and every night, I re-enacted one 24-hour period in its history, My Lai. I tried in desperation to understand what I was doing, what Hutto had done, what my country had done.

"I still don't know how I 'morally' feel about what we did at My Lai that day because I'm not just real 'morally' flattered with what we've been doing for the last 2000 years on this old earth. I have a hard time putting 'degrees' on killing people. We were dropping napalm and bombs on villages all over Vietnam. No one has yet been able to explain to me the difference."

He is looking at a photograph as he talks. One of the famous My Lai photographs. But this one is not of death, it is of the moment before death.

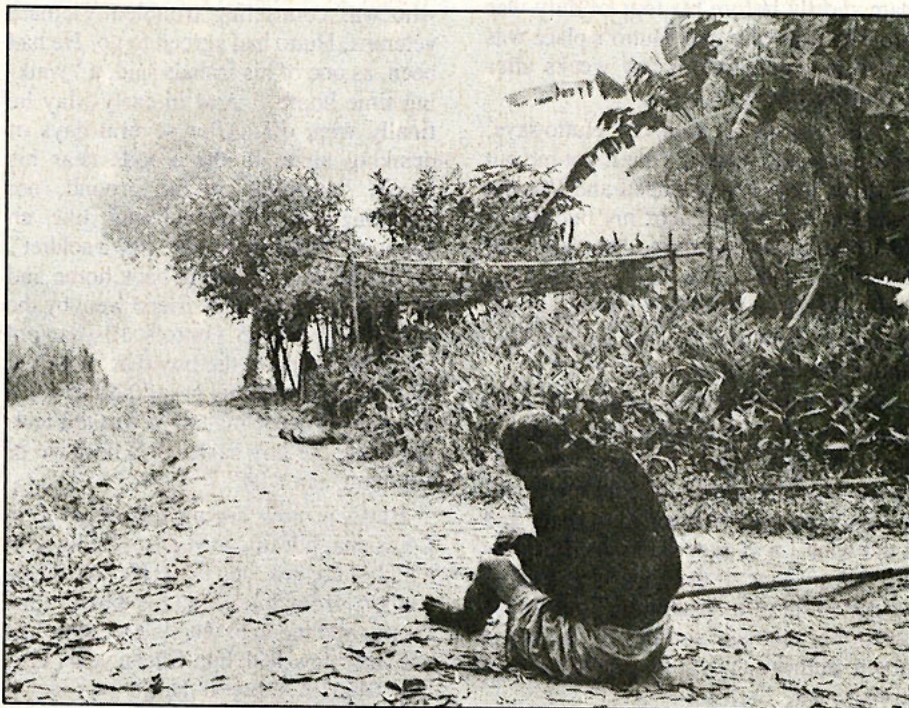
"All I know is," he says, "I could

never get the picture of the women and children lined up around that tree off my mind. The picture of the woman with the baby in her arms just before they shot all of them.

"I see it until this very day. Everytime I see a young mother, a young woman, with a baby in her arms, I have a flashback to that picture. Especially if I'm real tired or have been across the street for a beer. That picture will never go away in my mind . . . so how can I ever get any of it in perspective?"

"People who don't know ask me how I can defend some of the cases I take now. I just tell them, once the looking glass is shattered, you can do anything." □

Betty Brink is a free-lance writer living in Kountze who reported on the Comanche Peak Nuclear Project in the last issue of the Observer. A version of this story appeared in the Boston Globe Sunday magazine.



Pham Mot watches My Lai burn.

Photo by Ron Haeblerle

• POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE •

✓ The Austin Police Department has, since May of this year, been using a cattle-prod-like device in some of its police work. The device, called "The Source," is manufactured by the Universal Safety Corporation of Largo, Florida, and delivers a 3500-volt shock. It is currently being used by police in South Africa and is similar to shock batons used against civil rights activists in the South in the early '60's.

The Austin Police Department is currently studying this use of "the Source" to determine, not its safety, but its effectiveness in police work.

✓ In an attempt to counter citizen concern about the effects of pesticides on workers, consumers, and the environment, the pesticide industry has been attempting to foster its own "citizen groups" in several states to defend the

use of pesticides. Now a nationwide effort seems to be in the making. A July 6, 1983 memo from the International Agricultural and Aviation Consultants, Inc., of Washington, D.C., outlines the "battle plan for our first engagement of 1983," which has been given the code name "ORGAN." The memo reads, in part:

"The response to our call to establish a National Pesticide User Conference has been outstanding and the need for the coalition continues to be demonstrated in the media each passing day. The time has come to organize in such a way that the activities of the anti-pesticide forces can be met with an array of offensive weapons backed by your concern for the protection of the public's health and economic well-being.

"You are receiving this call to action

because you have expressed an interest or because you have been suggested by other coalition members as being the one in your community to be a focal point for coalition activity. Your safe use of effective pesticides or your community's use for public health concerns impacts in some way on every citizen. The Anti-Pesticide extremists have carefully orchestrated an impassioned fear of 'involuntary exposure' to pesticides, not out of concern for their fellow citizen's health or protection of the environment, but for the need to fill their war chests with cash in order to continue to insult the intelligence of man and make a profit from fear-mingering. . . .

"BATTLE PLAN GOAL: 'ORGAN' will be won when we have at least one member in every county or parish in the U.S.

"When we receive your check you will be sent the battle plan for the next engagement which will have the code name 'GUT'."

✓ In response to a writ of certiorari filed with the U.S. Supreme Court by Janet and Stanley Whisenhunt, Amarillo police officers penalized for dating (prior to their marriage), the city of Amarillo has presented an interesting line of reasoning. Police officers Janet Shawgo and Stanley Whisenhunt did not work together or in the same division and maintained separate households prior to their marriage. The Amarillo Chief of Police spent countless police hours keeping the couple under surveillance and went so far as to station police personnel in an apartment across from Whisenhunt's to record comings and goings.

In their response to the writ filed by the Whisenhunts, the representatives of the city stated:

"One of the side effects of young ladies becoming policewomen was that policemen with years of experience and rank, in this case a sergeant, and the female recruits, commenced pairing off, two-by-two, in a manner not grossly unlike what happened to those who occupied Noah's Ark, save and except that here only Homo Sapiens were involved, and they all worked for the Amarillo Police Department. This obviously caused problems affecting the efficiency of the police department, among which are these:

1. Reports had come to the chief from various sources and by rumor that three couples had paired off and were living together.
2. Wives of police officers were calling the chief complaining about the situation.
4. (sic) Dirty messages about the situation were being written on the walls of the restrooms. . . ."

✓ Governor Mark White has appointed Charles Hunter, professor of sociology at Bishop College, and John R. Parten of Madisonville to the Trinity River Authority Board of Directors, adding two voices of reason to an authority long tied to the Trinity River Project boondoggle, which John Henry Faulk once dubbed "the oldest floating crap game in Texas."

✓ Will there be another trial of Eroy Brown? That decision may be made by Governor Mark White some time this fall. When Walker County officials applied for \$150,000 to try Brown for the murder of Ellis Unit farm manager Billy Max Moore, they were denied the funds on a vote by Lieutenant Governor Bill

Hobby and State Comptroller Bob Bullock, who make up two-thirds of the executive funding committee of the Criminal Justice Division. In two previous trials, estimated to have cost the state over \$1 million, the prosecution of Brown for the murder of Ellis Unit Warden Wallace Pack ended in a hung jury and later, in November 1982, in an acquittal. According to defense attorney Craig Washington, the facts in the Billy Max Moore case are the same.

Walker County Judge Ralph Davis has indicated, however, that the county will re-apply for state funds after the authority of the executive funding committee expires on September 1. With no alternative funding-decision mechanism provided by the legislature, the decision for future state funding of an Eroy Brown prosecution will probably rest with Governor White.

✓ Tireless Washington reporter Sarah McClendon, in her biweekly report, offers the latest wrinkle in the Carter briefing papers intrigue. According to McClendon, the Reagan campaign airplane was the location for delivery of the briefing papers. The papers had to be passed on those planes, she reports, and that narrows down considerably the list of people who could have received them.

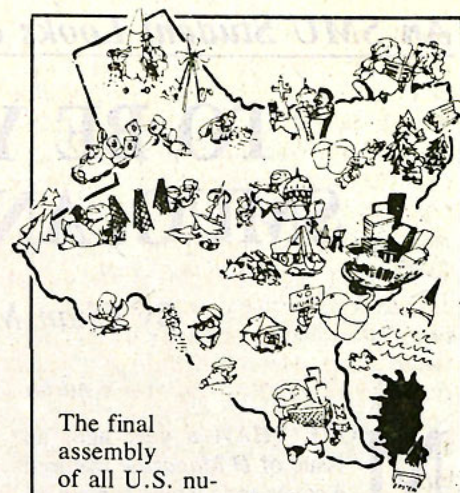
Martin Anderson of California, former director of the domestic policy staff of the Reagan White House, is reported to know where the material came from, but he has not talked publicly. Besides Anderson, others who may have been receiving information include Ken Khachigian, Reagan's chief speech writer during the campaign; James Brady, the press secretary shot during the assassination attempt on Reagan; Lyn Nofziger, campaign press secretary; and Richard Allen, former national security adviser to Reagan.

According to McClendon, the FBI is also investigating three secretaries who worked for the Carter White House and also worked or are now working for the Reagan administration. One is Kathy Reid, the night secretary, whose job it is to finish tasks left over from the day staff and who has the run of the place at night. Another secretary, McClendon reports, is Ann McGlinn. McClendon says she doesn't know who the third one is. □

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TO BE YOUNG, SMUG, AND WHITE

By Chan McDermott

Austin

MORE THAN a year ago, an issue of *D Magazine* featured a cover announcing something like this: So you want to be rich and famous in Dallas? Too bad, you should have gone to SMU.

Well, I go to SMU, and the idea that the future rich and famous Dallasites will all list SMU on their resumes is, to me, a little bit frightening. That is not to say one can't get a good education at SMU — quite the contrary. In the past couple of years, one of the best things I've seen about SMU is the increased emphasis on the "academic atmosphere," a phrase that has become almost a sorority-household term.

What scares me about the idea of many of my peers becoming Dallas leaders, much less Texas or United States leaders, is the attitude of many of my fellow students, an attitude all too often fostered by the administration. It is one of blithe, happy ignorance — an abysmal lack of compassion or concern with anything or anyone not directly affecting them. If a crossword puzzle asked me for a three-letter definition of the word "provincial," I'd say "SMU." At schools throughout the Southwest Conference, the SMU stereotype is well-known: an affluent, stylish, big-drinking, heavily Greek (as in fraternity or sorority) school. But unlike most stereotypes, which work as caricature, this vision of SMU is all too true. The campus is approximately 50% Greek. Black and brown students are decided minorities — about 4% of the student population. The cars in the student parking lot are generally very nice. The students are typically well-dressed, well-coiffed and well-jeweled. And they are generally intelligent.

When I first came to SMU, I fit the stereotype. Well enough off not to feel drastically out of place, naive enough not

to question or judge what went on around me. I can't be sure just when the disillusionment began to set in. Perhaps it began after being disappointed in sorority rush a second time. Perhaps it came when other opportunities didn't go my way. But I'd like to think that my opinion of SMU isn't jaded by sour grapes — that there is evidence to back it up. I think that after a year of watching closely, I can see that, indeed, SMU's provincialism is a reality — and that it shows little signs of diminishing.

The little school with the big football team probably received more negative publicity this past year than good. It all began with the Association of White Students (AWS) controversy — which is also when I began attending the weekly student senate meetings on a regular basis.

In the fall of 1982, a student petitioned to have a group, called the AWS, recognized by the senate. The steps to recognition include a hearing before the senate organizations committee, which then gives the senate a recommendation on the organization. The proposed group, according to the SMU constitution, must do several things in order to get a positive recommendation from the organizations committee: it must not be discriminatory in any way, must not be in conflict with the goals and purposes of the university, and must have a faculty sponsor by the end of its first semester. (The latter rule has since been changed. Groups must now have an advisor when they go up for recognition.) A common practice has also been for groups to present a list of members.

The AWS had a hearing before the organizations committee and was included in a list of organizations to be recommended for recognition. After minimal debate, the group was recognized by the senate. The furor that ensued was slow to begin, but when it finally took hold, it involved everyone from the Dallas press to SMU President L. Donald Shields.

The group was the brainchild of senior Jim Robison, who was concerned about what he called reverse discrimination.

Robison said that if SMU had groups such as the Association of Black Students and Mexican-American students, there should certainly be one for the white students. He also said that no one would be excluded from his group. He said he had a list of 25 members, primarily from his fraternity, but when contacted, many of these people denied ever being members. The group did not have a faculty advisor.

Perhaps the most important thing Robison forgot when he started the group was that SMU is already an Association of White Students, with a few token black and Hispanic members. It was the first relatively big controversy to hit SMU in the time that I have been there. Ostensibly, the group met the regulations: Robison said no one would be excluded, and its purposes, as stated by Robison, did not conflict with the university's goals and purposes. But some people viewed the group as simply a white supremacist movement, however carefully disguised. Heavy pressure was placed on President Shields to disband the group, but because it was in accordance with the constitution, technically there was no reason to make the group disband. The group gave in to pressure and changed the name to Students for Equality; a day after the change was made, however Students for Equality, whatever was left of it, disbanded.

While the student senate and the organizations committee cannot be faulted for the recognition of the AWS, as it met the constitutional requirements, the questions remain: What kind of a mentality comes up with an idea for an organization like this? And what was going through the mind of a senator who, at the time of the initial senate vote, leaned over and told another senator that he thought such a group was a "good thing"?

The AWS issue died slowly as the semester progressed. Although letters still trickled into *The Daily Campus*, SMU's student newspaper, the event was, for all intents and purposes, forgotten. What it really was, though, was a foreshadowing of things to come.

IN EARLY March, a column ran in *The Daily Campus* by a student who had written several columns before. What set this column apart from the others, though, was that the writer identified himself as gay. As with all things at SMU, the reaction was minimal and slow — until a few days later when an ad appeared in the paper announcing a meeting of an organization for gay students. The ad gave several telephone numbers and promised confidentiality. It stated that there would be a meeting at

Chan McDermott is an intern at the Observer this summer and editor of The Daily Campus, SMU's student newspaper.

an economics professor's house for those interested in forming a support group. Security was tight. Students who called the numbers for information were interrogated thoroughly before directions to the house were given out. Paranoia, maybe, but a fear that was probably necessary.

Roughly forty students showed up at the first meeting. Officers were elected and another meeting was planned. Progress from this point was swift. The group, named the Gay/Lesbian Students Support Organization, began its campaign to become a recognized student organization — a privilege which would allow it to use "SMU" in its name, use SMU facilities for meetings, and petition for funds. Backed by a number of faculty members, both gay and straight, the group of students approached the organizations committee. The effect was stunning. In a school known primarily for its apathy, things began to happen. The local chapter of Young Americans for Freedom, ironically chaired by a Syrian student, Saad Chehabi, began setting up tables in the student center to collect signatures against the recognition of the group. Almost simultaneously, the GLSSO set up a table to collect signatures for recognition.

The organizations committee meetings were heated — everyone from Perkins School of Theology professors to SMU alumni to student senator Ted Brabham took a stand on the issue. Brabham, appointed by Bill Clements to the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Advisory Board, made it his purpose to show that the GLSSO did not have a right to exist as a recognized student organization. He dredged up such "evidence" as the idea that such an organization would pose a threat to the safety of the students at SMU, either because of AIDS or simply because of the nature of homosexual practices.

Since the beginning of the year, both the senate and the school newspaper had been encouraging students to attend senate meetings, to see how their "legislation" was being made. Most of the pleas were met with flat-out apathy; students didn't care what happened in the senate. The day of the vote, however, the chambers were packed with more than 300 students, faculty, and administrators to watch the four-hour proceedings. Throughout the debate, the gallery erupted into cheers at odd moments, depending upon which side had scored a point.

The organizations committee opened up the debate with its recommendation —

unanimously in favor of recognition — but the committee might as well have not bothered, for it is doubtful any of the senators ever heard the recommendation. Of the seventeen senators who eventually voted against the recognition of the GLSSO, no one questioned the recommendation or the work put into it.

Several senators had said they would call for a secret ballot vote — an idea that many thought would help pull the recognition of the GLSSO through. In the last seconds before voting, however, a motion was presented instead for a roll call vote — which probably sealed the fate of the GLSSO. Student body president Joe Dooley cast his vote first. Dooley, who, according to many

... students' primary concern seems to be how much money their parents make and how much they will make.

senators, had been supporting recognition before the vote, took just a minute before he set the tone for the rest of the voting. He voted "No." The secretary of the student body followed with another no, and it continued through the senate until only 11 of the 28 senators present had cast a yes vote.

The room erupted with shouts of "Steers and queers, nowhere but UT," applause, and laughter, while in quiet pockets around room some students cried or sat in stunned silence. Reynolds immediately cleared the gallery, but to most of the students, it didn't matter. What so many people cared so passionately about, one way or another, was over, and most of SMU had had its way.

The GLSSO did not die a quiet death; indeed, it may still breathe. The students and faculty filed an appeal with the highest judiciary board at SMU, level three, but first the judicial board held a hearing to determine if it would even hear

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the case. The end of the year was drawing near, and time was growing short. There was another complication: *Daily Campus* Managing Editor Mark Miller discovered that the Monday evening before the senate vote, Paul Cameron, a noted anti-gay speaker, had spoken at a dinner to which ten of the uncommitted senators had been invited. Cameron, on his way to speak in Austin to a House committee hearing testimony on Bill Ceverha's sodomy bill, had called SMU and offered his services. It was never publicly revealed who decided to invite only specific senators or who paid for the meal, but senators who attended were under the impression that the Office of Student Life had arranged for and financed the dinner. To most of them, it didn't matter, for they were so repulsed by Cameron's explicit descriptions of gay relations and bathhouses that they could not eat.

The level three judiciary board finally decided against hearing an appeal on the grounds that the senate vote was not a constitutional violation. The basis of their decision is questionable, since the senate decision seems to be a violation not only of SMU's constitution but of the Bill of Rights. At this point, there is no recognized support organization for gay students at SMU.

Still another senate vote gives credence to the overall provincialism at SMU. Also in the spring, two special interest senators, George White, the black senator, and Arif Virji, the international senator, drafted a bill calling for the divestment of SMU's \$15 million funds in South Africa. In divesting, SMU would have been following in the steps of the university it claims to emulate — Harvard, which divested \$50 million.

Typical of the attitude that prevails, the senate voted not to take any direct action

by amending the bill to the point where the original drafters would not even vote for it. The amended bill simply requested that the board of trustees and the board of governors take a strong stand against apartheid in South Africa.

The senate is not the only example of provincialism and ignorance at SMU. An active member of a women's interest group on campus once told me a story of going before the Panhellenic board to ask for funding for a pamphlet on sexual harassment. The Panhellenic advisor vetoed the idea by saying that, since she had never heard of any cases of harassment at SMU, it must not be a problem.

Even more frightening, SMU is not alone in its attitudes. Of six of the Southwest Conference schools in Texas contacted, only two, Rice and UT, had organizations for homosexual students. Baylor, TCU, and SMU did not, and at Texas A&M a legal suit concerning the presence of such a group has been in court since 1976.

Greg Franzwa, a philosophy professor at TCU, says that he sees a trade school approach to the university at TCU — students' primary concern seems to be how much money their parents make and how much they will make. "My general sense of it is that TCU is not radically different than most places in that regard," Franzwa said. "Far and away, a lot of students would ignore it [issues like homosexuality, white supremacy, and apartheid] and go get their hair done."

I once thought SMU was alone in the void, but the further I look, the worse it seems to be. In a recent "Soap Box" column in *The Daily Texan*, two of the three students interviewed couldn't name the student body president. Granted UT-Austin is a big place, and granted, it's summer, but this pervasive apathy is unbelievable.

More and more it appears that SMU and other universities are becoming cloistered — and cloistering ignorance. They are not given to looking beyond their borders. How closely they look within their borders is suspect. And they persist in making those "outsiders" who venture in feel unwelcome.

To me, this situation is disturbing because there is so much wasted potential around me. I know that many of my classmates will go on to control large companies and hold political offices. And I also know that, unless these students are enlightened somewhere along the line, we will be condemned to the same xenophobic leadership under which we already suffer. □

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Traveling Texas With Bill Owens

William A. Owens, Pin Hook, Texas native and for many years Professor of English at Columbia University, is the author of This Stubborn Soil and A Season of Weathering. Following are excerpts from his third volume of autobiographical writings, Tell me a story, sing me a song, an account of his travels throughout Texas in the 1930s collecting stories and songs.

Becoming a professional collector — if being paid makes one a professional — was for me the result of a series of three accidents, or at least of turnings in directions I had not calculated or envisioned. Without these, what became an enduring need to know more, to understand more, to record more about the folk mind might have developed into nothing more than a pleasant hobby.

The first came in the fall of 1930 when, as an undergraduate at Southern Methodist University, I took a course in writing taught by Henry Nash Smith. Though a year younger than I, he was already established as scholar, critic, and editor. To him, writing was important, the substance of writing more important. He soon knew my poverty of substance in all areas except one: my memory of songs and speech and ways I had known in the country. Slowly he made me see value in what he called my original sources. While I was trying to overcome an embarrassment of ignorance (like calling the University of Bologna "the University of baloney" in class), he had me writing down what I could remember about my people and their ways. I had gone to school determined to rid myself of "country," of being ashamed because I was from the country. Before the year was over I had been brought to a kind of middle ground in myself, where I was ashamed not of being country but of country traces that made me appear crude, ignorant.

At the end of the year, eager to see a way of life he had heard about chiefly from me, he went to the country with me, to Forest Hill, to find, if we could, a play-party, to join boys and girls who had been my pupils in singing and dancing "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and "Lead Her Up and Down Your Little Brass

Wagon"; to stay with the Will Halliburtons, in the room that had been my room. There was no play-party, the Halliburtons told us when we arrived, but there was a close-of-school play at Tigertown, down the road toward Red River. She would have supper ready for us "toreckly," Mrs. Halliburton said, in

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time for us to go. After talk of old times over a country supper, we went.

The play was in the big room and as we went in we could see shadowy shapes of people between us and the reddish glow of coal oil torches on the stage. We found room on a bench at the back and settled down, to wait for the white sheet curtains to open, to listen to the country talk of country people — talk of whose children were in the play, of prices of eggs and butter, of "the droops" in young turkeys.

The play was a comedy with a love interest, the actors the big boys and girls in school. The lights were dim and flickering, but from time to time in their flickering they caught the brown of a country cheek, the flash of an eye. Before the end of the first act I looked at Henry.

"This is good," he said softly.

From then on I was watching him watch the play, pleased with his visible response to young people who, un-

trained, were going through lines memorized by rote, through movements unpolished but convincing. As the play progressed we and the men and women around us allowed ourselves to be led into a reality created for the moment, a reality of time and place in which only the themes of love and laughter had a constant kinship with Tigertown.

Later, toward midnight, we walked a path that wound through hawthorn trees in full bloom. The whiteness of moonlight through the whiteness of flowers cast a pale glow around us. The air was warm, and musty sweet with the scent of hawthorn. Contemplatively, Henry talked about the play and the people we had seen in Tigertown. The play was not much, he admitted, but that was not what mattered. It was the need for a play in a place like Tigertown, the need for people to cast themselves for a time in a world of make-believe, and for other people to join them in it.

The second turning came in the summer of 1937 at the State University of Iowa, in Iowa City, where, after I had failed to qualify at the University of Texas, I had gone in search of a route to the Ph.D.

Again I was directed by a professor of English, Edwin Ford Piper, whose name I had first encountered in Carl Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. He had answered my feeler letter not with questions about my academic qualifications but with suggestions of what I might study in folklore and writing, all in a tone positive and welcoming.

In our first meeting I knew I had made a good choice. He was a Nebraskan but many of the ballads he sang for me in his Philosophy Hall office were Anglo-Saxon ballads I had learned in East Texas, though his words were sometimes widely different and the tunes rarely the same. He sang in a flat nasal Midwestern voice; I sang my versions in what has been called my East Texas whang. There was a meeting of minds if not of sounds.

Henry Nash Smith had urged me to collect play-party games. By the time I

met Piper the collection had been printed as *Swing and Turn Texas Play-Party Games*. Piper thought it was a good beginning, but only a beginning. He had in mind a work of broader scope. He wanted to create a library of folk songs at the University of Iowa, a library the university would finance and I would collect. I was easily convinced; the university was not. At the end of the summer he was able to advance seventy-five dollars out of his own pocket, enough to begin the collection, if I would contribute my time and expenses. I agreed and agreed to track down songs wherever people sang, whether at home or singings, in church or honkytonk, in cotton patch or kitchen. Go after the song, he advised me. To him, not the singer but the song alone mattered.

Back in Texas, I went to a new job, teaching English at the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College. It was a lucky change — much better than the job I left, teaching English in the Robert E. Lee High School in Goose Creek. It was more centrally located for collecting. My Aggie students, many of them farm boys, knew singers, and were eager to send me to them, or to go with me as guide and helper.

With Piper's seventy-five dollars I bought a second-hand Vibromaster recording machine, already an antique. It embossed rather than cut on aluminum discs. The quality of sound was not the best but the records were durable, as long as they were played with a bamboo or cactus needle — a cactus thorn picked beside the road would do. With twenty-five blank discs ordered from New York at thirty-three cents each I started out. In town, where possibly two homes out of three had a radio, the recordings were a novelty; in the country, where there might not be a radio within twenty miles or more, they were often regarded as a miracle.

My trips began at College Station, and extended out farther and farther as I saved up travel time and expense money. Within a year I had recorded in Negro churches in the Brazos River bottoms, Anglo-Texan settlements in the Big Thicket, Cajun French communities in Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana. Folk music had from the beginning of cities been regarded as rural, "country," but it persisted among country people who moved to town in the prosperous Twenties, and went with them again when, to keep from starving, they moved back to the country in the Depression of the Thirties. You can take the boy out of the country but not the country out of the

boy was as true for folk music as for anything else. To me, as a collector, an English ballad was an English ballad whether sung by a Dallas streetcar conductor or a sawmill hand in the piney woods. It was the singer who lent authenticity.

Four years later I came to a third turning. Edwin Ford Piper had been dead two years. The University of Iowa had no interest in adding the three or four hundred

records I had made to their library. The doctorate was almost in my hand; the university wanted no part of the recordings, as I had hoped. On January 1, 1941, I was back in Texas, starting a career as folklorist for the University of Texas. My territory was vast — the whole of Texas; my instructions at times nebulous, at times conflicting. As an employee of the university I was to further the work of the Extension Division by setting up folk

"No Hiding Place Down Here . . ."

On a Saturday afternoon I stopped at a small Negro church in the Trinity River bottoms, a few miles from the town of Trinity, curious to know why it was newly painted and well kept when so many of the churches I went to sagged and slanted and leaked. Finding the door shut but not locked I went in. The altar and bench pews had been cleaned for Sunday. I touched a coal oil torch near the altar. It was filled and ready for lighting. There was a piano but no songbooks.

At a house nearer the river I asked about the pastor.

"He live in town," a woman said. Her husband was a deacon and could tell me about the church but he was working way off somewhere. She did not expect him home till toward sundown or maybe "first dark." "You c'n come back then."

I found the pastor resting on his porch in the Negro section. He was what they called "an ole timey preacher," in the black suit and white shirt he wore, in his servile attitude toward white folks, in his praise for the white man who owned the land where his church stood. Not many landowners left like him, he told me. Not many landowners would give the land, build the church, and give money to the preacher. Not many would take so much interest in a darky preacher's sermons or what he said to the members of his church.

We talked about his religion and what he preached. He could read the Bible all right but he did not understand much about it except the promises. He was certain about the promises.

"If a man be's good and work hard here below," he said, "he guina git his reward in heab'n."

He talked about the rewards. He could just lean back, shut his eyes, and see the gates of gold, the streets of gold, just like the Bible say. This he believed; this he preached. The landlord was partial to his sermons. Some Sundays he sat on his horse outside the church and listened. Sometimes they talked about "uppity niggers." There was no place for them around there.

I asked about the singing.

"They sings good. They sung in town one time. White folks axed them."

I left him and went back to the deacon's house down by the river. It was first dark and he was sitting barefoot on the porch — he called it the gallery. I asked if I could sit with him and talk awhile. He gave me his chair and sat on the floor with his back against a post. The woman stood in the door.

"I ain't lit no lamp," she said, "hit draws too many 'skeetuhs."

There were no screens and I asked about the mosquitoes.

"I don't hardly pay them no mind," the man said.

He was not talkative, either about the church or himself. It was not that he distrusted me or thought I should not be there. His attitude was that white folks has got rights and they could come around when they wanted to. He did let me know that I could not sell him anything. He had to buy all his furnishings at the commissary and pay up at picking time.

festivals wherever communities showed interest. At the same time I was to record for the university a collection of songs and tunes of all the ethnic groups in the state. As to the first, I felt less than competent, and uncertain whether folk songs and folk singers could remain authentic under the artificial circumstances of putting on a show for festival crowds. As to the second, I was a paid amateur. Though I had four years of field record-

ings behind me, I had had no training in either anthropology or sociology, no advice about collecting systematically, no engineering skill in recording sound. I did have the interest and encouragement of Roy Bedichek, to whose office I was assigned, and the resources of the University Interscholastic League, of which he was director.

Quietly, unassumingly, Roy Bedichek moved into my life with his broad

He was not complaining. When he felt like complaining going to church got it off his mind. A man down the road a piece had gone to town to work and was no better off.

The lamp was not lit but the mosquitoes came anyway, faster than I could slap them away. I thanked him for talking to me and went back to town.

The next morning I sat in my car outside the church and watched the people coming across cotton fields, walking, the men in white shirts and dark pants, some of the women — the sanctified — all in white, others in red and yellow and blue dresses with flowered hats or bright bandanas. Some of them glared at me as they passed. To them I was the *man*, the white man, a “peckerwood,” and “oe-fay,” foe in pig Latin. I could see the question in their faces: what’s a peckerwood here for? The law?

When the singing started I sat on a back bench and listened, after a too-friendly welcome from the pastor. At times a woman was the leader, at times the preacher. No one touched the piano. The woman seemed flustered till she started a song to the beat of a jumpup. The people joined her, clapping and stomping:

*Oh, there's no hiding place
down here,
Oh, there's no hiding place
down here.
Oh, I went to the rock to hide
my face,
And the rock said,
“This ain't no hiding place.”
Oh, there's no hiding place
down here.*

Not in the presence of the *man* — the Man up above, the man down below.

While they were singing I watched a white man on horseback turn off the road and stop outside the window. The owner, I thought. He sat patiently through songs and

testimonies and gave something to the man who went out to him during the offering. He seemed to listen intently as the preacher went into a sermon in which he talked about the weariness of this world and the heavenly rest at last. If he saw the man on horseback he gave no sign. He went ahead, lifting their spirits with pictures of the glories of heaven, threatening them with the horrors of hell.

“You want to go to heaven?” he shouted.

“Yas, Lawd.”

He told them how. Be good, humble, peaceful. Work hard. Love the Lord. That was the way to store up treasures in heaven. “Yas, suh, brother, yas, suh, sister.” The *man* had to be obeyed, up there, down here.

The sermon ended, the white man turned his horse back to the road and went on his way. Why he was there was clear. He paid the preacher to tell them “to be good niggers and not stir up no trouble.” The sermon was to a word what he had paid for.

The preacher started another song but I left, with my eyes opened to many things I had passed by, unseeing.

I drove straight to the Brazos bottoms, and to the home of a Negro who worked for the county agricultural agent. It was not the first time I had gone to see him. He was the one who had told me that to a growing number of blacks any white man was a peckerwood. I told him about the black man preaching inside, the white man listening outside. It was nothing new to him. Too many preachers were Uncle Toms or, as he called them, “handkerchief heads.” There was a reason why.

“It’s not easy to be black in America, anywhere in America,” he said, and there was neither rancor nor bitterness in his voice — only sadness.

knowledge of Texas geography and Texas people, his intimate knowledge of Texas bird life and natural history in general, his profound interest in the lore and customs of people wherever he met them. He welcomed me; I gratefully responded. Years before, in his late youth, he had himself been a collector of folk songs. Unable to pursue the interest, he had given what he had to John Avery Lomax and urged him to collect the songs of Texas cowboys. He thought I could do for other kinds of songs what Lomax had done for the cowboy. He talked of introducing me to Lomax, but I had met him several years before in Dallas. As he seemed less interested in me as a collector, more interested in my giving him what I had collected, I declined. Bedichek understood and advised me to make whatever I found my own. He bought recording equipment for me and gave me freedom to roam where I would and record what I would. Whatever was not recorded, he was certain and I believed him, would soon be forgotten and lost. He laid the task on me.

Quietly, unassumingly, Bedichek brought me close to his closest friends: J. Frank Dobie and Walter Prescott Webb. The three were instrumental in creating my job and getting me appointed to it. The three became my unofficial advisers, not only out of their knowledge of Texas and Texans but also out of their own need to shuck academic routines and go to the people. All three were generous with their help, but it was Bedichek that I relied on day by day. In a dozen different ways he let me know his regard for me and the work I had entered upon, often in talk as close as those of teacher to student, closer, I assumed, than that of father to son.

Thus the recordings I had made on my own were added to, under advice from Bedichek to get everything I could from any singer I found, bring the records back for safekeeping, and let what they had to say sink into my mind. He did not say it, nor did anyone else to me, but I eventually came to know that the people had as great, perhaps greater, need to lose themselves in an old ballad as they had in a school play, and that the songs they treasured were as much as anything else a key to understanding who they were and what they were. The realization was slow in coming but it came: if I wanted to know the people I had to work from inside out, beginning with songs and stories deeply embedded in their minds. □

Hiding Out at the Kerrville Festival

By Lyman Grant

Kerrville

WE WERE SOMEWHERE between Fredericksburg and Kerrville whirring past peach stands and clusters of Mexican hat, golden wave, and firewheels. The Hill Country was sucking us in as it did the Johnsons, the Buntons, and everybody since. "You know, white boys can't control it," Boy George and Culture Club crooned on the tape. "You know, white boys never hold it." I thought of settlers bolting into this country across the ninety-eighth meridian. "These were men who fled the furnishing merchant," Robert Caro has written, "who furnished the farmer with supplies and clothing for the year on credit, and the crop lien, which the merchant took on the farmer's cotton to make sure he 'paid out' the debt. And they fled the eroded, gullied, worn-out, used-up land of the Old South." In the Hill Country they found lush meadows of stirrup high grass and low mountains rising into a clear, clean, sapphire blue sky.

*The lies in your eyes,
the depth of your lust
Is more than distraction . . .
You know I'm not crazy.*

We sped through Kerrville, deeper into the seductive hills and valleys. Then the highway narrowed and rolled off one of the hills, flattening out straight as if in a river valley, and we were there. I pulled off onto the dirt road entrance of Quiet Valley Ranch. The 4 o'clock sun still burned high and hot in the cloudless sky. And though the ranch had opened only six hours earlier, already the hills and valley were patched with multi-colored tents of various shapes and thermodynamic theories. I hit the stop button and cut off Boy George mid-sentence:

*How am I supposed to throw
questions I cannot answer?
. . . I'll be gone before you know.
If I cry to be told, give me . . .*

Lyman Grant teaches English at Austin Community College and is editing with William A. Owens the collected letters of Roy Bedichek.

Quiet Valley, a fifty-acre ranch nine miles south of Kerrville on Highway 16, is owned by Rod and Nancylee Kennedy. There each year on the two weekends surrounding Memorial Day, they present the Kerrville Folk Festival, now in its twelfth year as one of the best folk festivals in the United States. Each year Kerrville, as we usually call it, features nationally known folk singers, popular Texas performers, and unknown, fledgling singers and songwriters. This year among over sixty acts, the Kennedys presented Peter Yarrow, Bob Gibson, Utah Phillips, and Rosalie Sorrels along with Texas favorites Alvin Crow, Gary P. Nunn, Marcia Ball, Ray Wylie Hubbard, and Guy Clark. In other years Odetta, Jimmy Driftwood, Mance Lipscomb, Willis Allen Ramsey, Rusty Weir, B. W. Stevenson, Michael Murphey, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Willie Nelson have played.

At the center of the festival is what Rod Kennedy calls his "Kerrville Family." This family of friends has been with Kerrville for most of its twelve years, many of them going back even further. Included in the family are Yarrow, Nunn, Murphey, Stevenson, along with Bobby Bridger, Allen Damron, Bill and Bonnie Hearne, Nanci Griffith, Steve Fromholz, Carolyn Hester, David Amram, and several others with less familiar names. It also includes scores of volunteers, who year after year donate their time to everything from building fences and selling ice to providing and operating the sound system.

However, it is not only for music that people come to Kerrville. They may, having become city dwellers, be trying to return to their roots or simply are searching for peace and quiet and camaraderie. They are probably reaffirming certain neglected values. For instance, Sue Ferguson of Kerrville, a short, gray-haired nurse, comes because the festival is one place that unabashedly proclaims its idealistic view of a world where people can be warm, intimate, and compassionate.

Almost everyone who attends becomes a convert, even Kennedy, who began the

festival to make money. Because of what the festival came to mean to him, in 1974 he cashed in all his assets from his Austin radio and producing businesses and bought the ranch and persevered through the difficulties of 1975-1977, when six of nine concerts received two to ten inches of rain and put him a couple of hundred thousand dollars in debt. In 1972, a month after the first festival, Kennedy was quoted as saying, "I think people need to get the rust out of their pipes. This festival did that for a lot of people. I learned to love and accept people through being with great artists like these who try to express their feelings in their work. . . . The sharing and the love . . . brought about the beginning of some genuine human relationships."

ONCE IN THE GATE I headed straight to last year's campsite, high on the hillside, in the rocks, the mesquite, the blooming Texas thistle, all of which prevent other campers from crowding too close, from crisscrossing tent stakes. It was a choice spot, but two young women from Houston had already claimed it. We reconciled ourselves to a pretty area further up the hill, and, claiming as much ground as possible, we pitched our tent and ten feet away tied our tarp in a cluster of mesquite.

It wasn't long before the music of Catsby Jones, the first performer, began mixing with the rhythm of tent stakes being coerced into the rocky soil. Another two performers would play before we could cook our tacos on the camp stove, clean up, and walk the five or so acres to the stage. This was a practice we would continue for the remaining seven evening concerts, only two of which would I see in their entirety. Most often I would miss the first performer, who began in the blazing six o'clock heat and the seventh and final performer who often walked on stage after one o'clock.

When one praises Kerrville, one might go on about the Hill Country's natural beauty and the pure sensual pleasure of guzzling beer in the ninety-plus sun;

however, Kerrville is really a nocturnal world. It is in the black of night around two sources of light that Kerrville's sense of comradery grows and its belief that, as Kennedy likes to repeat, music "tears down walls and builds bridges."

The first is the loud, amplified stage and its bright flood lights. The stage sits at the bottom of a slightly sloped hill. Rising away from the stage and fanning out to the sides are two rows of lawn chairs, followed by forty or so rows of wooden benches. These benches might accommodate 2,000 people; the remaining members of the audience lie on blankets or sit in lawn chairs further up the hill near the crafts booths that outline the back of the amphitheater.

But the secret to this theater is that this mass of people rolls down this slope and ends, like a wave breaking on a beach, less than eighteen inches from the ground level stage. Several nights I sat in my lawn chair with my feet resting on the stage. This closeness and the energy that grows from this closeness makes for performances that show mere entertainment to be a small thing.

For the performers, on a stage that neither crowds nor dwarfs them, it's like playing for 6,000 friends. On several occasions, standing backstage, I saw performers high-stepping off stage with broad smiles, shyly but ineffectually restrained, turn to the next performer, saying, "They're wonderful. God! They're listening to everything you do." For performers, this is not just another gig. They come here for the same reasons as the audience: to be rejuvenated, refreshed, reenergized; to be decynicalized, de-New Yorked, de-L.A.ed; to remember why they started playing so many years ago.

But there are those who say that the stage is the least important place at Kerrville. Much more important are the numerous circles of Hill Country stone around which each evening campers and performers gather, playing their songs around a large campfire of cedar, oak, and mesquite. "It's the eye contact," says Frank Hill, one of the regulars, who uses his two-week vacation every year to camp and sing at Kerrville. Hill is the writer of one of the most popular campfire songs; "Who's going to pick for the plain folks?" he sings, and everyone always joins in.

On several nights we visited the campfires, but for me the first night was the most memorable. The crowd was small and Mike Williams, a Kerrville regular, seemed to be presiding. Only a handful of people were daring to sing this first

night. Allen Damron appeared and Williams asked him to sing. Damron borrowed a guitar and sang a Mexican song everyone knew. It was a song from his act and he sang it as if he were singing it to thousands, loudly, enthusiastically.

Someone else sang a song with a chorus that everyone soon learned: "I tried and tried to commit suicide by jumping off the Luckenbach bridge last Sunday." Then as the turn moved around again to Williams, someone with a neatly trimmed reddish beard and cowboy hat low on his forehead stepped out of the darkness, barely into the fading reaches of the firelight. He began talking and singing a quiet song about bluebonnets and the Brazos River that no one listened to as they continued laughing and talking about Luckenbach. But slowly the talking stopped and attention turned to the quiet singer. His song was one of those about an old timer talking to a younger man, typical in country music, but his delivery, his lyrics, were sincere and honest. He finished to silence, quiet, as those around the fire kept singing his song to themselves. Finally, the young man beside us asked across the fire, "Who is that? Is that Bill Staines over there? When did you get here?" He turned to no one in particular, "Damn, that guy is good!"

Other nights, we skipped the campfires, preferring to lie in the tent and fall asleep as the songs from their various sources rose and mingled in the cool night air. "Were you at our campfire last night?" Crow Johnson, one of the performers, asked me early one evening, still excited eighteen hours later. "There must have been seventy people there, singing, listening. It took us all night to go around the campfire three times." I told her I wasn't. I had awakened around dawn, however, and her voice alone was rising out of the valley, rich and full. I didn't recognize the song but it may have been her song about the Kerrville campfires, "Ring of Stones":

*Somewhere in the Texas hills
There's a ring of stones
Burn branches of mesquite
Old as some old drifter's bones.*

*Somewhere in the Texas hills
The sun knows the song.
We sang it to each other
To celebrate the dawn.*

bacon, eggs, and coffee cooked on an open fire, there is cool and there is quiet. With over half of the campers staying up past 2, mornings begin slowly and last long. There is music still, but it is quieter and less communal. One morning I listened to a young man teach an older man Towne's Van Zandt's "Pancho and Lefty." Though I tired of the song with the older man endlessly repeating, forgetting, I enjoyed listening from a distance because I realized that this is about all we have left of the "folk tradition." And perhaps this was the only way Kerrville was a folk festival.

Not that anyone pretends this is a folk festival in any academic sense. No one talks of ethnic cuisine or wears native clothing. You see no preservers of material culture, much less a back-stoop whittler. When Guy Clark finished singing his popular "L.A. Freeway," he said in a quiet voice, "Bet you didn't know that was a folk song?" Utah Phillips, a folk singer who once rode the rails, would have caught it. A week later after playing several original tunes, he said, "Now I don't want to scare you, to sit you back, but I'm going to sing a folk song. I've been noticing that the posters advertise this thing in big letters as a folk festival, and I thought I ought to play one out of respect."

Rod Kennedy knows what his festival has become. Noting the difference in this year's lineup and the first year's, which included John Lomax, Jr., Robert Shaw, and Mance Lipscomb, he said, "We started as a folk festival and slowly have become a songwriter's festival." It's not a development that saddens him, however. In 1976 he said, "There are two different types of escapism in music today. One is traditional, and the other is drug-and booze-oriented."

Most of Kennedy's performers would agree. First, most of them play their own compositions. Second, few of those who play folksongs that have been passed down through folk culture feel any duty to preserve the way they once were played. Grimalkin and Eaglebone Whistle, for example, play traditional English and Irish music. The latter also plays bluegrass. Yet Grimalkin uses electric instruments including synthesizer, while Eaglebone Whistle turns even hammered dulcimer tunes into their own blend of rock and roll, jazz, and bluegrass. Jane Gillman, guitarist of Eaglebone Whistle, says that she rarely tries to duplicate tunes she has heard, whether pop or traditional. "You have to let the music grow," she says. "It has to mean something to the performer; then it will mean

WHEN CAMPING OUT, your best meal is breakfast. This is especially true at Kerrville. Aside from the usual joys of eating



Kerrville Folk Scenes



Photos by Lee Hisle

something to the audience." It is her way of redefining folk music as music based on the close relationship of the performer and audience. Many other performers at Kerrville indulge in the same kind of redefining. Lisa Gilkyson, who played her punk-influenced rock on electric guitar backed by the jazz group Passenger, told John T. Davis of the *Austin Statesman* that one could call her music folk music because she considered folk music to be "music that's indigenous to the times."

Yet there are those at Kerrville, though most are not regulars, who look upon themselves as preservers of an old music and who learned many of their songs in the oral (folk) tradition, *sans* radio, *sans* stereo. Roy Bookbinder, for instance, studied under Pink Anderson and Rev. Gary Davis and tries to play their songs in exactly the way they played them. He can't, of course, because his soul and ear have been affected by contemporary, urban music, but he probably comes as close as anyone. Santiago Jimenez of San Antonio and a performer at many other folk festivals deliberately plays *conjunto* in the style of his father and not in the more rock-influenced style of his brother Flaco. And there is Kurt Van Sickle who straddles the fence, trying to remain in both worlds. As the protegee of Navasota blues singer Mance Lipscomb, he is considered the best duplicator of Lipscomb's music, yet he also writes original songs and is making a career for himself with his own music.

In a sense, Kerrville is a protest. It is a protest of the big city way of producing music festivals. Willie Nelson takes full page ads in the Sunday *New York Times* for his Fourth of July concert. The US Festival in California attracts hundreds of thousands and ends in several deaths. But Rod Kennedy is determined to keep the crowds small and the drunks out. He requires a 3-day ticket to camp, and if crowds keep growing, he will require longer stays and raise the price. In a 1976 interview he said, "I think the people who aren't interested in freaking out have got to have some place to go, and this is the only place there is."

In its quiet, unpublicized, non-political way, Kerrville also protests against the cold, insincere, high-tech, urban lifestyle. And it appeals most to the unsettled urbanite — those of us who are always complaining about city life but who haven't and probably never will buy the forty acres we've been talking about for so long. Yet everyone from the last of the Austin hippies to Hill Country businessmen and ranchers finds a home

at Kerrville. Most understand Rod Kennedy when he says, "I resigned from Rotary and threw away my ties." It is a line he likes to repeat, as if to say, "I had the courage. How about you?"

Of course, few of us will have the courage or opportunity to thumb our noses at the current arbiters of culture and finance. For that reason, Kerrville becomes all the more important. It is a place to gather and sing along with those of similar sympathies.

There's Jimmy Gilmore singing his song "Dallas":

*Dallas is a rich man with a
death wish in his eyes.*

And there is the Nigel Russell song, "The White Collar Holler," sung by the Canadian Stan Rogers in a rousing a capella, as if shouted by a chain gang:

*And it's Ho, boys, can't you
code it, and program it right?
Nothing ever happens in this life
of mine.*

*I'm hauling up the data on the
Xerox line.*

And in their turn, nature and things country are praised to kingdom come. Rodney Crowell sings, "On the Banks of the Old Bandera"; Bill Staines sings "Sweet Wyoming Home"; Allen Damron sings Michael Murphey's song, "A Boy From the Country." My favorite is Guy Clark's "Home-Grown Tomatoes," which gets to the point, if a big indirectly:

*Home-grown tomatoes,
home-grown tomatoes,
What would I be without
home-grown tomatoes?
Only two things that money
can't buy,
And that's true love and
home-grown tomatoes.*

Yet even as a protest, Kerrville is an anachronism. Kerrville's roots are in Austin's "cosmic cowboy" movement of the early 70's, which in turn had its roots in the Cambridge folk movement. But now the American counter-culture is very much urban, even sophisticated. As an "in" protest, Kerrville has been passed by. Its innocent belief that people can "come together now" to share love, peace, and goodwill has been replaced by a cynical acceptance that our lives are irrevocably mechanized, computerized.

And Kerrville is a schizophrenic anachronism, for its foundations are also urban and technological while it pretends they are rural. Those performers included in the Kerrville family come from cities, large and small, and learned their "folk music" and folk styles from re-

cordings by Bob Dylan or Pete Seeger or maybe Woody Guthrie, none of whom remained folk in any literal way. In essence, Kerrville is two generations from the folk. As William A. Owens intimates in the "Coda" to his recent *Tell me a story, sing me a song*, World War II marked the end of "the folk" as a sociological or even political entity. Kerrville regular Steve Fromholz notes something similar in his beautiful "Texas Trilogy":

*I wonder why it is you never
see any young folks around
Kopperl? Seems like as soon as
the last day of May rolls
around and all the seniors graduate,
they go runnin' off
to Cleburne and Fort Worth and
get 'em a good job, you know.*

SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT, just as Ray Wylie Hubbard stepped on stage as the last performer at the 1983 Kerrville Folk Festival, we pulled out of Quiet Valley Ranch and headed home. Having to be at work at 8 that morning, we drank cups of coffee and sped our way out of the Hill Country, passing closed-up peach stands and shadowy clumps of wild flowers. For a while we tried to hold on to Kerrville, listening to Allen Damron on the ghetto blaster sing John Ims' "Two of a Kind":

*Another midnight on the highway,
Houston in the distance.
Seems like I'm always leaving
love behind.
Singing along with someone whose
soul is on the radio.
Sounds like me and the good
ol' boy are two of a kind.*

We were leaving Kerrville behind until next year. In the city I wouldn't have time for eight evenings of music, early morning campfires, leisurely breakfasts, afternoons asleep on a river bank. Kerrville is a seductive Hill Country dreamland, but it is also a vacation, a retreat, a temporary hideout from the furnishing merchant. But one can't stay there. So we passed through Johnson City and replaced Allen Damron with the English new-wave band, A Flock of Seagulls, and listened to their electric guitars and synthesizers all the way home:

*She's an automatic
He's a cosmic man . . .
Where young love's forbidden,
You have to keep it hidden.
Modern love is automatic.
Modern love is automatic.
Modern love is automatic.* □

Dialogue

(Continued from page 3)

Lyndon Johnson gave the Democratic Party what it had been dreaming and fighting for, on a silver platter. He made all of those social programs, dreamed about for thirty years, reality. He gave the thoughts of social reform life and possibility. The Democratic Party proceeded to fail LBJ and the programs. The Party failed to nurture those delicate new programs. It should have, instead of looking forward, looked back at what LBJ had done, streamlined the programs, provided good management oversight, made them cost effective (and proved it to the people), and thus permanent (so as not to be vulnerable to the attacks Reagan and his ilk are successfully mounting). The Party did not follow up on LBJ's great work. It just stood there, wringing its hands and wondered what it could do to follow LBJ's act. LBJ had done it all. Incidentally, when is LBJ going to get some credit for, with the help of Mr. Sam, bringing Texas out of the dark ages? Sure, he wheeled and dealt, but Texas and Texans benefited. . . .

Vietnam? Ronnie Dugger gave this relatively fair and insightful coverage. Maybe he provided a little too much unqualified psychoanalysis. Caro hollered and wailed with an unprofessional, emotional vilification. He certainly didn't provide anything of historical significance. Reedy's coverage of the Vietnam chapter was a good bit better than Oates' criticism. It is sad that Presidents have to lie and hide things from the American people, but we have so many professional "consciences" and idealists running around these days, muttering and whining and "exposing". Most of them have never been down in the real trenches. Hell, most of them never go to a real precinct convention, much less participate in one. How can they really understand the realities of the political world? . . .

A President, even a state representative, cannot tell a writer anything in total candor because it will be geared or perverted to the point that it will be unrecognizable (in print or on the air) to the one who said it. Many of the problems of an open society, many of the episodes when politicians lie or hide information, much of the misinformation that finally filters itself to the public can be laid at the hands of the unethical, emotional, biased, and incompetent media

people who tell it the way they think they see it without analyzing themselves first. Granted, much that is bad and evil comes to light because of the efforts of tough and aggressive reporters. Would, however, that the media could put its weakest tendencies in the proper perspective when it makes noises rather than flailing away at politicians who lay their heads on the chopping block of partially informed, misinformed or uninformed public opinion, everytime the poor souls open their mouths.

Back to LBJ. The only biography that will do justice to LBJ will be the one that is a compilation of the theses of all the LBJ biographies. It must include the theses of his loyalists as well as his detractors. Contemporary biographies only seem to give vent to strange, vindictive, protective, and financial motives on the part of the authors. Only a complete compilation will serve the needs of history and subsequent generations when the LBJ period is recalled. Maybe Stephen Oates can handle the task?

Harley Spoon, P.O. Box 2910, Room 407 B, Austin, Texas 78769.

Huzzahs from Reformed Cynic

The mail brought your latest issue, containing the editorial despairing of Gov. Mark White, on the very same day that the Governor's office announced the appointment of Randy Parten to represent Madison County on the Trinity River Authority Board of Directors.

I wired Gov. White that this was the greatest appointment made to a Texas river authority by any governor of Texas since James V. Allred appointed Ralph Yarborough to the original board of directors of the Lower Colorado River Authority in 1935. Parten not only knows how to spell the word environment, he has the competence and the guts to fight for it amongst the Clements' yahoos, land promoters, bankers and assorted utility holding company stooges who will now be his colleagues.

In the very same issue with your editorial announcing, prematurely, in my opinion, that White has reverted to his old ways, Pauline Sullivan (sic) writes that his leadership was essential to the success of the prison reform package which CURE supported in the Legislature.

When was the last governor of Texas who made education his number one priority, who appointed a number of decent people on our side of the political fence to several offices, who doesn't go into ecstasy in praising the stripmining of lignite as the key to Texas energy production in the future, ala Clements, who publicly fought utility companies, advocated an elected PUC, initiated the bill which made Texas the only jurisdiction in the world to lower consumer interest rates, vetoed rank special interest measures such as one which would have turned over millions of municipal tax dollars to billboard operators and another which would have the water hustlers regulating private water utilities, instead of the PUC. The list goes on.

You will pardon this reformed cynic (who has voted for Mark White but one time, in the '82 general election, and who worked in Bob Armstrong's campaign) for arguing that this is a period of hope, not of despair, as far as the White administration is concerned.

The leadership of the black caucus in the Legislature praises him for being instrumental in pushing the Human Relations Commission bill through the special session, and you weigh-in against him for giving up all too easily on a good version of the workers' compensation bill for farmworkers. I have a number of other reservations, also, but, on balance, I think it distorted, inaccurate and far too premature to evaluate his record as you did.

Bearing in mind that Mark White comes out of the Dolph Briscoe camp, got his start as an Assistant Attorney General under Waggoner Carr, and has never been supported by our kind of folks in any primary elections, this guy has, so far, shown himself to be someone with a decent set of priorities, an opponent of the Reagan administration and the Reagan philosophy on education, and someone who plays fair with those who in the past opposed him politically.

Dave Shapiro, 1108 Lavaca, Suite 100, Austin, TX 78701.

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◦ SOCIAL CAUSE CALENDAR ◦

Notices on upcoming events must reach the *Observer* at least three weeks in advance.

HIROSHIMA-NAGASAKI REMEMBERED

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, August 6 and 8, 1945, will be commemorated by Texans at memorial services to express hope for the future and strengthen participants' commitment to peace. Events include:

Houston — Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembrance Peace Rally for Our Future, Hermann Park Pavilion Area, **August 7**, 2-8:30 p.m., music, theatre, new games, art show, and speakers including Sissy Farenthold, Sharon Itaya, M.D., and Rev. Ben Skyles. Call Interfaith Peaceforce of Houston, (713) 524-2682, for more information. A fast preceding the rally will be coordinated by Paul Baer and the Houston Hunger Coalition, (713) 522-3955 ext. 203, or 729-0100.

San Antonio — Peace and justice groups will hold a dinner, film showing, and service on **August 7**. Call Judy Wade, (512) 736-2587, for time and place.

Austin — A Floating Lantern Ceremony, like that held annually in Hiroshima, will be sponsored by peace organizations on **August 6**, 8:15 p.m., Lou Neff Gazebo (where Barton Creek joins Town Lake). The Gagaku Group will play traditional Japanese music; Nina Butts and Roger Duncan will speak. The Austin Peace and Justice Coalition will have a benefit Japanese style picnic before the ceremony, 6 p.m., Zilker Park (signs will direct to place), \$5. APJC request that picnickers fast that day. Letitia Blalock, 479-6258, has details.

Amarillo — The Plowshares Pilgrimage arrives **August 4 or 5** at Pantex. A vigil, fast, and service will be **August 6-9**. Call Steve Schroeder at (806) 373-8668 for more information.

PEACE LIBRARY

Peace groups in San Antonio have announced the arrival of peace education workers John and Sharon Miller, Mennonite Voluntary Services, who will establish a peace resource library and reading room at the St. Paul Community Drug Store, 1156 E. Commerce, (512) 266-0636; free to the public.

PREVENTING EUROSHIMA

An organizer's guide for designing a local campaign against deployment of the cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe is now available from the Mobilization for Survival. \$3 each, \$2.25 each for 10 or more to MFS, 853 Broadway, Suite 2109, N.Y., N.Y. 10003.

SOVIET TALK

Corbin Lyday, Strebe Jesuit High School teacher who lived as an interpreter in the Soviet Union, will speak on "What About the Russians?", **August 14**, 11:15 a.m., First Unitarian Church, 5210 Fannin, Houston.

GAY FIESTA

The 3rd Annual Texas Gay Fiesta will be in San Antonio, **August 21**, noon-8 p.m., La Villita Assembly Hall, with music, dancing, and entertainment. \$2 advance, \$3 at the door. Call: Gay Switchboard (512) 733-7300 for ticket information. The statewide meeting of the Texas Gay-Lesbian Task Force will also be in San Antonio, **August 20**. Call the Gay Switchboard for tickets to a reception honoring Gay-Lesbian leaders; \$5.

BUSES TO D.C.

Texans will be leaving **August 23-24** for the **August 27** Jobs, Peace, and Freedom March to commemorate the march on Washington at which Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. made his "I Have a Dream" speech. For travel information call: Austin, (512) 474-2399; San Antonio, Mario Salas, (512) 737-0195, or 224-2351; Houston, (713) 521-0104; Dallas, (214) 337-5885.

COMING ATTRACTION

A statewide march in Austin on **October 22** will call for a freeze and reduction of nuclear weapons, a stop to interventionist foreign policy, and redirection of military spending to meet human needs. Folks from Texas interested in participating should call (512) 474-2399 or 474-5877.

Progressive Organizations

For some weeks now, the *Observer* has been updating its mailing list of progressive organizations. Those groups that did not respond to our mailing, or could not be reached by phone or mail, were dropped from the list. Please send us the name, address, and phone number of any group we've omitted. The list is available for a \$5 processing fee to any group deemed progressive in purpose. We expect to begin filling orders for the list in June. The *Observer* especial-

ly thanks those friends who helped with the updating task.

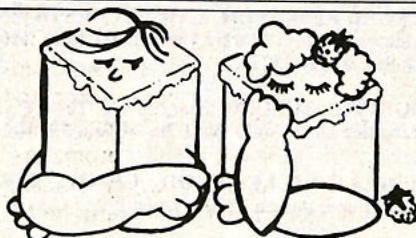
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ACLU, 524-5925; ACORN, 523-6989; Americans for Democratic Action, 669-0880; Amnesty Intl., 626-0625; Casa Juan Diego, 869-7376; Centro Para Inmigrantes de Houston, 228-0091; CISPES, 524-4801; Citizens' Anti-Nuclear Info. Team (CAN IT), 522-3343; Citizens' Environmental Coalition, 523-3431; Citizens' Party, 434-1350; Demo. Socialists of America (DSA), 645-6522; Gay Political Caucus, 521-1000; Harris Co. Concerned Women, 674-0968; Houston Anti-Draft Coalition, 529-4087; Houston Area Women's Center, 528-6798; Houston Nonviolent Action, 661-9889; Houston War Tax Resistance, 661-9889; Interfaith Cmte. on Central America, 526-3276; Interfaith Peaceforce of Houston, 688-3803; Lesbian and Gay Demos. of Texas, 521-1000; Metropolitan Organization, 868-1429; NAACP, 526-3389; NICASOL (Nicaraguan Solidarity), 522-0619; North Harris Co. Demos., Box 90704, 77290; NOW, 522-6673; Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, 522-2422; Park People, Inc., 741-2524; Physicians for Social Responsibility, 669-9075; Pueblo to People, 523-1197; Senate Dist. 15 Demos., 862-8431; Sierra Club, 523-3431; Southern Africa Task Force, 528-1225; Tx. Abortion Rights Action League (TARAL), 520-0850; Tx. Coalition of Black Demos., 674-0968; Tx. Fathers for Equal Rights, 960-0407; Toxic Substances Task Force, 523-3431; Women's Lobby Alliance, 521-0439.



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