Salinas in Dublin · Crisis at Pacifica

THE TEXAS Observer

A JOURNAL OF FREE VOICES

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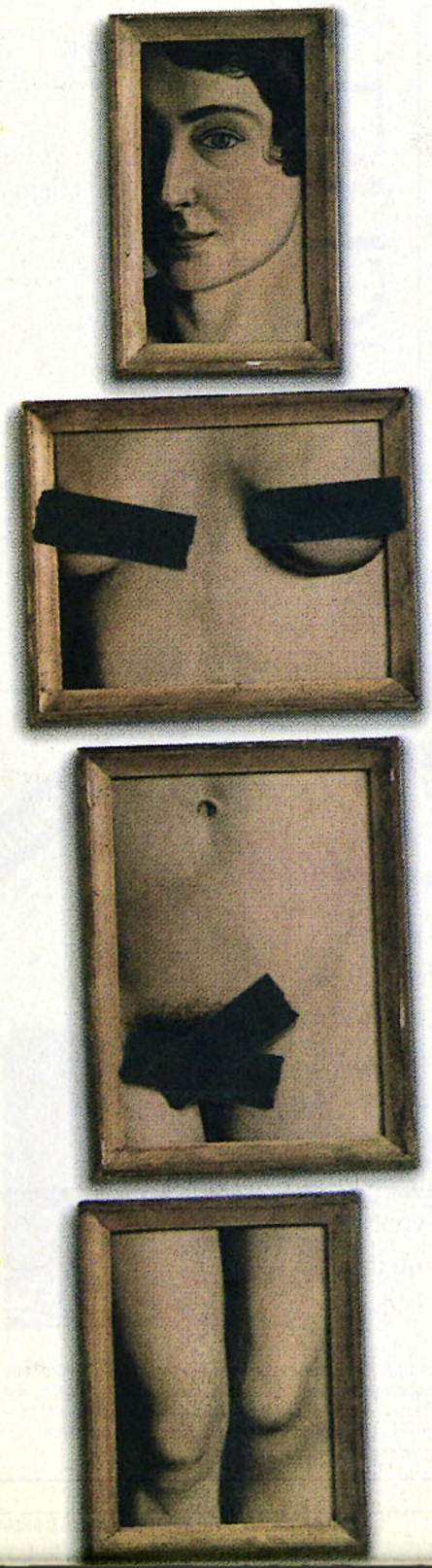

Topless in Odessa

BY KAREN OLSSON

As the owner of Acapulco Fantasies, a small totally-nude strip club just outside of Odessa, Irma Sagrario Zizzo used to show all her girls how she wanted them to do table dances. Zizzo, who would herself strip on nights when few dancers showed up to work, demonstrated this method for me recently, in the small front room of her sister's house in Fort Worth, where she and three of her kids have been living since the club closed down last May. Putting out her Marlboro and hopping off the sofa where we were both sitting, she faced me and lined her feet up with mine. "See, foot to foot. That's how I teach the girls," said Zizzo, a thirty-nine-year-old mother of four who came to the United States from Honduras in 1986. "When I'm dancing," she would tell me a few minutes later, "I feel good because that's the way they're going to learn it, the way I want it run in my club."

See "Topless," page 8

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ONE FOR SCHLITTERBAHN...

Editor's note: Pennsylvania subscriber Ann Murray was the first to fill out the questionnaire/application form for our first annual T.O. Schlitterbahn Seminar Weekend in New Braunfels (see Left Field, "Port Out, Starboard Home," June 11), inspired by similar, if somewhat pricier, seminar cruises being offered by our favorite magazines on the left and right. She adhered to the spirit, if not the format, of our multiple choice test. We await further applicants.

As a new subscriber, I'm really pleased with your work. It's wonderful.

Now that I've said something nice, you owe me. Here's what I want:

1. All the food (Ralph can have the sushi).
2. Ralph the diving pig.
3. D (the Vatican has a great porno library, though).
4. C for observation; D for comfort.
5. The margaritas from No. 1; the altar boy (I might get lucky); the tawny port (to help me get lucky), and the inner tube (which could be fun while I'm lucky).

Ann Murray
Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

...AND ONE AGAINST

According to the *San Antonio Express-News*, on June 28 the fair city of New Braunfels completed its wall against San Antonio growth. A quote from a New Braunfels councilwoman, Juliet Watson: "It just makes good sense as a city to protect our borders." Excuse me lady, but your Freudian slip is showing. Where have we heard the same rhetoric about protecting borders? What exactly are borders being protected against and are the same borders being constructed against Austin? If it's San Antonio and its Hispanic population this councilwoman is concerned about, sorry lady, you have got it all wrong. Hispanics don't look north; they face south, where the future of this world is a reality.

Additionally, the New Braunfels city council vetoed an ordinance to ban gas stations over the Edwards Aquifer. After all, the New Braunfels water in the aquifer flows south down through San Antonio. This action makes good business sense, because if the water parks in San Antonio are polluted only Silly-Baun in New Braunfels would remain uncontaminated. Yet the question remains, would the people of San Antonio be welcome in Fortress Alemania?

Santiago Escobedo
Bejareno de San Antonio

THANKS FOR POGUE

I have just read Alan Pogue's photo essay about Iraq, "Salt on the Wound" (January 22, and on the web at http//:texasobserver.org). I want to thank you most sincerely for publishing this essay. At the time of the bombing, I remember searching the press for a casualty count. The whole thing was presented as if no one had been hurt. And of course, the effect of the sanctions are just never reported. Thank you for publishing this poignant essay and for making a bit of the truth known.

Lisa Majaj
Cambridge, Massachusetts

THANKS FOR NOTHING

Mr. Holland's statement in the *Observer*, that "Texas poetry, like biochemistry or the history of early music, appears to be written for other specialists," is a slip of the tongue that reveals part of the problem (Dick Holland, Dialogue, June 11). Poetry is written for all of humanity, not specialists, anymore than novels are written for English scholars. Mr. Holland's myopia in evaluating the significance of poetry reflects an overvaluation of the scholar, as well as his or her own isolation from the oft-unacknowledged importance of poetry in our society. Its importance is not a numbers game, but one of influence. Any future discussion of Texas literature and culture that excludes poetry will simply be incomplete, and future essayists are on notice. In any case, Mr. Holland is to be complimented for making us aware of Mr. Pilkington and this important work, *State of Mind*, which will surely be, as far as it goes, regarded a classic.

Jim Cody
Lubbock

THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL

Killing Larry Robison

Thus far in 1999, the state of Texas has executed sixteen people. That's a pace likely to exceed the twenty executions of last year, but short of the record thirty-seven in 1997. Another dozen executions are currently scheduled, through November, by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Since resuming in 1982, the executions occur so often now (a grand total of 180) they've become political background noise, failing to generate headlines unless the story carries some particular distinction in perpetrator or victim.

A few weeks ago, for example, Canadian citizen Stanley Faulder was executed, despite protests from the Canadian government and even Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that Faulder had never been accorded the consular rights due him him under international law. The members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Governor who appoints them were unmoved. When asked about the case, George W. Bush responded solemnly, "If you come to Texas, don't kill anybody," later **voluntarily repeating** that lesson after reading aloud to a group of schoolchildren. Neither the children nor the reporters in attendance asked the Governor if he therefore believed the state of Texas is exempt from the rule of law it imposes on its citizens — or whether foreign governments should henceforth feel free to ignore laws which would otherwise protect the rights of American citizens abroad.

The international issue was only one of several troubling in the Faulder case, including purchased testimony and evidence that Faulder perhaps suffered from mental illness or organic brain damage. And as recently reported in the political newsletter *Counterpunch*, during a youthful stint in a Canadian prison, Faulder, having asked for psychiatric help, was instead subjected to experimental drug treatment with doses of LSD, under research funded by the Canadian Defense Department and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. It is worth noting, of course, that even had Faulder's attorneys been able to prove mental illness, it might not have saved his life. Despite popular legend to the contrary, the number of capital defendants who make successful claims of insanity is virtually nil. And this year the Texas Legislature rejected an attempt to ban the execution of the mentally retarded, at least partly because of the resistance of the Governor.

Which brings us to the case of Larry Robison, scheduled to be executed August 17 for the brutal 1982 murder of Bruce Gardner, near Fort Worth. The evidence is abundant that Robison was completely insane at the time of Gardner's murder. He killed four more people the same night, beheading and mutilating his roommate in a manner he believed was being dictated by the voices in his head, the clocks in his room, the apocalyptic stories of the Old Testament. He readily confessed to the killings, and the four prosecutors developing the case were willing to accept a plea of insanity and permanent confinement to a mental institution. They were overruled by the Tarrant County prosecutor, and in court, the evidence of Robison's madness was ruled, for the most part, inadmissible — the jury in both his first and second trials heard almost none of it.

As Robison's family can easily document, the deafness of the state of Texas to Larry Robison's paranoid schizophrenia was nothing new. The Robisons spent the years preceding 1982 fighting for Larry's sanity, and have spent the years since fighting for his life. As a teenager he began acting strangely, hearing voices, believing he had secret paranormal mental powers. He joined the Army but was discharged after only a year — only much later was the family told that he was convinced he could control people and objects with his mind. It was easier for the Army to get rid of him than help him. Larry's condition continued to deteriorate, and for four years his parents attempted to get him medical treatment, to

get him committed for mental care. At one point, Larry spent six months in jail because his parents could not find a hospital to admit him. Larry himself, in his more desperately lucid moments, begged them to help him. Again and again the Robisons were told, "He's not on your insurance ... he doesn't have his own ... we can't commit him for more than thirty days... he's not your problem ... and he's never been violent. Unless he does something violent, there's nothing we can do." On the bloody night of August 10, 1982, Larry Robison finally gave the state of Texas something to do. While in police custody, he tried to help the state along — two serious and almost successful attempts at suicide — but was revived from a coma to begin the death watch that will likely conclude this month.

Even after Larry's conviction, evidence of his insanity continued to accumulate. It was discovered that several of his relatives suffered from similar illnesses — confirming the diagnosis of schizophrenia, a congenital disease — although out of shame, family members had hidden the knowledge. His natural father had died of a brain tumor when Larry was two; a few years after his conviction, Larry's younger sister also became ill, and was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Her prospects are better, says her mother. It took seven years of fighting for treatment, but when mental health administrators tried to turn her away, Lois Robison, would deliver a "three-minute version" of her son's story, and they eventually found a way to place her daughter in a residential program where she receives excellent care.

Lois Robison recites her son's harrowing story quietly, without hesitation, although with the execution date so near, her voice occasionally breaks. She and her husband, both teachers, have made a small crusade of defending their son's life, personally and through their work with Texas CURE, an organization devoted to better treatment for prison inmates. "Texas doesn't take care of its mentally ill," she says. "A lot of states don't, but most all of them in the nation take better care of them than Texas does.... They don't want to put out the money to do preventative treatment. They'd rather spend the money on executions." In Larry's case, that seems quite literally true. One can only imagine what the two million dollars spent on the average capital murder case — times 180 — might have done for the mentally ill in Texas since 1982.

Larry Robison's case is certainly horrible, but is it exceptional? Only in degree. Based on her work with inmates' families, Lois Robison says, "We're not the only ones this has happened to. It's happened to I don't know how many people before." At this writing, in addition to Larry Robison, there are five Texas death row inmates scheduled to die in August (some may be postponed). Of those five cases, three inmates exhibit evidence of severe mental illness and/or retardation.

Recently Lois Robison told a brief version of her son's story to a meeting of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Some members seemed interested, she said, and two even thanked her for her testimony. "It should never have come to this," said Lois. "If we had been able to get him the treatment that we begged for, and he begged for, then these people wouldn't have died. It's basically down to mercy."

In a few days, the board members will be receiving Larry Robison's final petition for clemency, which they can recommend to Governor Bush. Larry's mother says she still has hope. Governor Bush has the authority to order one thirty-day stay of execution. The Board can urge the Governor to grant clemency. One can only hope that Lois Robison is right. Perhaps the Board and the Governor will choose compassion and reason over ideology and political expediency. Based on the record of the Board, this Governor, and the state of Texas, there is little reason to think so.

— M.K.

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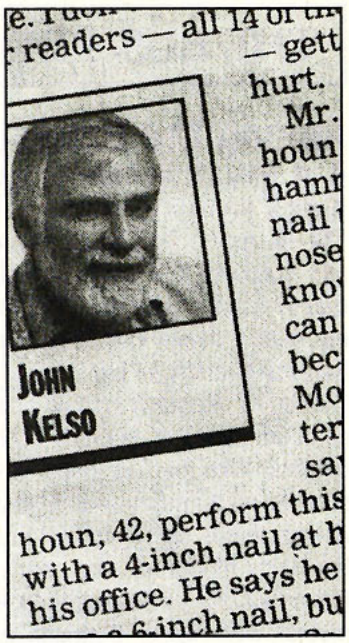
That Pioneer Spirit

On July 14, Texas Railroad Commission Chairman Tony Garza honored veteran Dallas oil investor Louis Beecherl, Jr. with the Commission's Pioneer Award, given annually to a "true leader and pioneer in the Texas oil and gas community." Over the last two decades, Beecherl has also been a pioneer in funding the Republican takeover of Texas — a fact not lost on Garza and his two fellow Republican colleagues at the Railroad Commission, which regulates the oil and gas industry where Beecherl made his fortune. Beecherl underwrote Bill Clements' successful 1978 campaign for governor, and was rewarded with a seat on the University of Texas Board of Regents, where he fulfilled his pledge to help the Governor oust a liberal board chairman from the previous administration. In 1990, he served as Dallas County finance chairman for the short-lived gubernatorial campaign of Kent Hance, a good friend who also happened to be chairman of the Railroad Commission. In 1994, he donated generously to Kay Bailey Hutchison's legal defense fund, when the junior Senator was accused of abuse of office. Beecherl's largesse has been peaking of late. From 1996 to 1998, he dumped $395,000 into the Republican party and its candidates, including large donations to Rick Perry, George W. Bush, and Carole Keeton Rylander, another Railroad Commission buddy. Most recently, Beecherl has been named one of W's presidential campaign "Pioneers," a title bestowed on the short list of elite funders who have raised over $100,000 for his presidential run.

And where did Beecherl, the man Garza called the "spirit of the Texas energy sector," get the dough? Principally by sucking dry other people's oil and gas wells, according to a 1984 *Fortune* magazine profile of Beecherl's company, Texas Oil & Gas Corporation. After Beecherl took over as C.E.O. in the late fifties, TXO began aggressively purchasing land near active wellsites and drilling as close to the other company's property line as possible. The idea was to take advantage of a competitor's expensive exploratory work by sinking a new well into the same reservoir, a practice derisively known in the oil patch as "corner shooting." It was not an uncommon occurrence, particularly among independent drillers, but TXO took corner shooting to a new level. Whereas most independents drill a handful of wells per year, TXO began drilling hundreds, quickly growing into the state's major shallow well producer, and generating numerous lawsuits from competitors in the process. The growing company then took the show on the road, expanding into California, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

"I certainly remember TXO," independent northern California operator Rodney Nahama told Left Field. Nahama says TXO leased a small parcel of land next to his operation and began pumping from his find. "Everything was set up for them," Nahama said, "and it's all legal, there's nothing you can do about it.... They not only did it to us, they did it all over California," he recalled. In one case, "They leased a narrow canal between two [natural gas] leases and sank a directional well in the canal to get a perfect position in the reservoir." With that small lease, Nahama says, TXO managed to pull out forty percent of the gas in the reservoir. "He made his living — he made an awful good living — just doing that," said Nahama. By the mid-eighties, when Beecherl had moved to the company's board of directors, TXO's stock was worth $5 billion, making it one of the most valuable companies in Texas, and Beecherl was worth over $100 million, well on his way to becoming the spirit of the new Texas GOP. ✦



Used Humor For Sale

What do Left Field and the *Austin American-Statesman's* John Kelso have in common? More and more as the year goes on: the *Observer*'s newest department and the *Statesman*'s veteran humor columnist keep hitting on the same subjects, in a convergence of creativity not seen since Newton and Leibniz both came up with calculus.

First, there was political free food. In the January 22 *Observer*, we honored Representative Elliott Naishtat, the Austin Democrat, for his mastery of "one of the more peculiar legislative arts: grazing." Then in the January 29 *Statesman*, Kelso wrote a column on the subject of legislators and free food, calling Naishtat "a known grazer." *This was a complete coincidence!* (An *Observer* editor who mistakenly thought otherwise, and e-mailed Kelso to remind him that proper attribution is something we both enjoy and need, was set straight in a reply from *Statesman* Assistant Managing Editor Fred Zipp: "John got the inspiration for his column before seeing your *Left Field* item on Elliott Naishtat. The coincidence isn't cosmic; as are your reporters, John's smart and well-informed. They all noticed an interesting phenomenon." Yep, and they even used the same word to describe it!)

See "Kelso," page 6

THE BUSH BEAT

Among the Faithful

Why did the Governor appear on a fundamentalist preacher's television program, framed by requests for money and crackpot Y2K ads? So asked *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* columnist Bud Kennedy, following Bush's January appearance on the James Robison Ministry's "Life Today."

Actually, Robison's show is relatively tame: no on-air curing of deafness or healing of spinal injuries. Like the Governor, Reverend Robison stays on message, raising money for the orphanage his son is operating in Romania, defending the rights of the unborn, and tearfully relating the story of his own conception — his biological mother was raped. (Robison is convinced he would have been aborted had *Roe v. Wade* been decided before he was born.)

Kennedy might well have asked the same question about Bush's interview with the publishers of *True Believer* (www.truebeliever.com), an Austin magazine of "Christian art, entertainment and lifestyle," (Like "Life Today," *True Believer* is on the moderate end of the wacky scale; the ads are more fun than the copy. "Shred Doc" does confidential document destruction on your premises, Millennium Associates will find you a place to live, St. Paul Shoes sells Christian footwear, and Church on the Move is, well, a church on the move.) But why is the Governor making eyes at even the milder elements of the Christian fringe?

Candidates use these forums to speak to evangelicals in a language familiar to them, substituting "an evangelical style for a substantive stand," the *Washington Post's* Hanna Rosin has written. According to Rosin, Bush and Elizabeth Dole have mastered the art of the campaign testimonial, in which the candidate confesses how at some crucial moment in their lives a personal religious experience led the future world leader out of a valley of worldly despair.

Bush's salvation testimonial is more dramatic that Dole's because it involves drink, women — and perhaps other "youthful indiscretions." Dole only got to be saved from perfunctory church attendance and a life in which God was "neatly compartmentalized, crammed into a crowded file draw of my life, somewhere between gardening and government." Both candidates regularly tell their stories to Christian congregations and gatherings.

But what is Governor Bush's message to Christian audiences? Bush spoke from several mainstream pulpits in the week before he announced his exploratory committee, and his rhetoric — which included his personal salvation testimonial — was as conventional as the congregations he spoke to. With the wackies, he's not much different. Not even in exchange for a substantial love offering would "Life Today" provide Left Field with copies of Reverend Robison's two-part interview with the Governor, although he reportedly talked about the dangers of teen sex and perils of adult promiscuity. There are no great revelations in his interview with *True Believer*. The Governor told the story of his personal salvation, as he routinely does, which has Billy Graham leading him back to Christ.

Beyond that, there's not much. On Billy Graham: "He's an interesting guy. I mean, he's a wonderful man. He is a hero, and should be for all of us. He's really a decent guy." On his record as Governor: "My proudest achievement so far is that my family has been happy since I have been the Governor." On his legacy to Texas: "That a man came, he had a vision, he worked hard to implement the vision, and he brought honor to the office."

The Governor did discuss policy, arguing against social promotion in the public schools and making the case for that Christian right cure-all for failings in the public schools: phonics. He also discussed welfare reform: "Dependency upon government, as opposed to dependency upon self, saps the soul and drains the spirit.... Now, one of my jobs as the Governor is to help unleash the compassion of our faith-based organizations. So, everywhere I go in the state of Texas, I am reminding people that within our churches and synagogues often times exist the best welfare programs."

All of this seems to support Rosin's analysis. No political capital expended, no risks taken. To wit: no commitment to restrict women's access to abortion, no offer to fight for a voucher program, no mention of the loopier legislative initiatives advocated by the Christian right — such as "covenant marriages" or "creation science" requirements for the public schools. From Bush, the Christian right gets a promise but not a ring. And despite the protestations of Focus on the Family's James Dobson and the tentative candidacy of Gary Bauer, in return for that promise the Governor will get the support of many evangelical Christians.

Reverend Dobson might describe this relationship as political promiscuity. ✦

"Kelso," from page 5

The next interesting phenomenon we all noticed was Talmadge Heflin's hair. *Left Field* called attention to Heflin's "tonsorial excess" in a March 19 item, "House of Bad Hair." In May, Kelso wrote a column about Heflin's "un-GOPish hairdo" — a particularly serendipitous choice of subjects when you consider Kelso doesn't spend a whole lot of time at the Capitol.

Most recently, Kelso wrote a July 4 column about Amarillo impresario Stanley Marsh's whimsical road signs; *Left Field* featured an interview with Marsh about his signs last March. As it appears from the column that Kelso did actually find himself in Amarillo, one can't fault him for seeking out Marsh and writing about the signs, which are prominent and pretty great. And this is not to suggest that he should be faulted for the other columns. *Left Field* would just like to acknowledge Kelso's hard work, and credit him for those concepts of his which we used in advance. ✦

Wichita Falls God Watch

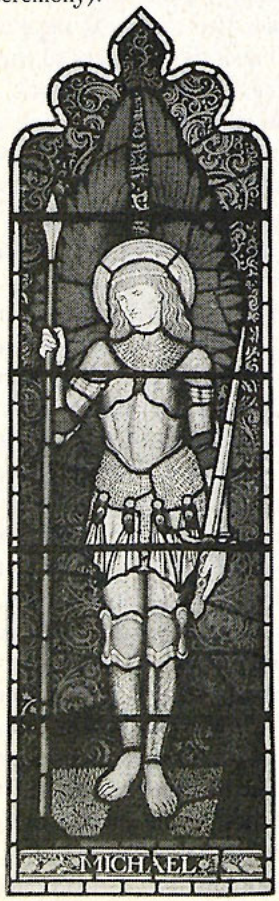
The battle over religious censorship continues in Wichita Falls, where the evangelicals remain determined to sort the sexual wheat from the chaff at the public library. In the wake of a new city ordinance allowing 300 petitioners to bump books from the library's children's section into the adult section (to be shelved with such kiddie fare as *The Kinsey Report*, fundamentalist Christian groups recently submitted petitions to relocate *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*, books about gay parents attacked as "promoting sodomy" (see Left Field, March 5). They've also recruited national allies — including Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, James Dobson's Focus on the Family, and Gary Bauer's Family Research Council — to provide a free "legal umbrella" for their actions, in the form of something called the Free Market Foundation, represented by the Plano-based Liberty Legal Institute. Opponents, led by the Wichita Falls Coalition Against Censorship and including several area churches, promise to continue the fight the ordinance, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Texas Library Association. On July 20, in response to an A.C.L.U. lawsuit, a federal judge had granted a temporary restraining order to prevent the library from moving the books.

Meanwhile, at Wichita Falls' Midwestern State University, controversy continues over the ongoing practice of prayer at commencement ceremonies. It began with an embarrassing episode at the 1998 M.S.U. ceremony, when a student collapsed in — was it anxiety or ecstasy? — while delivering a highly beJesused invocation and benediction (see "Jesus vs. Humanism at M.S.U."). The faculty senate subsequently voted to drop the prayer from the commencement exercises, only to be overruled by M.S.U. President Louis Rodríguez, who commented, "I believe that the culture of this area is such that this needs to be taken into consideration on this issue.... This culture has a strong tradition of religious beliefs." Rodríguez has substituted a "non-sectarian" prayer, which yet thanks the "Lord" for watching over the university and asks for his benevolence. M.S.U. professor and former Methodist minister Gene Newton objected in a letter to President Rodríguez; Texas A.C.L.U. director Jay Jacobson commented, "What they are going to do now is water down a prayer so it is acceptable as the lowest common denominator.... A government should never be involved in editing a prayer."

When Left Field requested a copy of the videotape of the 1998 ceremony, M.S.U. spokeswoman Janice ("Rosemary Woods") Buss said that on the advice of counsel, the prayer episode had been deleted "to protect the privacy of the student." Asked if the university attorney had advised the potentially felonious destruction of a public record, Buss had no response. ✦

Jesus vs. Humanism at M.S.U.

During the May 1998 commencement ceremonies at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, student Mary King gave the following Invocation and Benediction (transcribed from a videotape of the ceremony):



INVOCATION

[*As she approaches the lectern, King is visibly trembling*]

Dear Lord:

Before I ask you to bless myself and my fellow graduates, I repent for myself and my peers for the sin of idolatry. Forgive us Lord, for worshipping the intellectual mind. I repent for the humanism that we have embraced. I repent for our attempt to fill the void in our lives with anything other than you. I repent for impure passions and desires, for our compromise, for our disobedience.

Now Lord, I ask you to just bless this generation. The young and the old. Let us be truly a people branded with the name of Christ, a people of God, a people who will know God intimately.

Now Holy Spirit, I ask you to descend on this place with your presence and prepare our hearts, our souls and our spirits for this day of destiny. This will be a day of death to old habits thoughts and ideas. This will be a day of new life.

We praise you God. We worship and adore you. We stand in awe of the king of the universe who is so passionately in love with his creation. It was because of this love that he sent his son to suffer through all our sins on the cross.

Thank you Jesus for your death. We do not esteem it lightly. You are holy and you alone will be lifted up in this place and in all of our lives. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Peace, hope and love. These three, but the greatest of these is love. Lord have mercy on us this day. We cry out for mercy rather than judgment. Mercy on our country, mercy on our lives. Lord we need your love to make it through this world.

[*Again, King is visibly trembling*]

Father, God, I just ask right now that you just let your glory fall into this place. Lord, Jesus let you pour out your mercy on this place. Lord, I know there are people here who don't know you. People who are making wrong decisions. People who are not living their lives as you've called them to live.

[*King is now struggling to speak, mumbling*]

Have mercy on them, Lord.

[*Vice-president Howard Farrell steps up behind King and whispers "okay" as she continues to tremble*]

Mercy on them, Jesus.

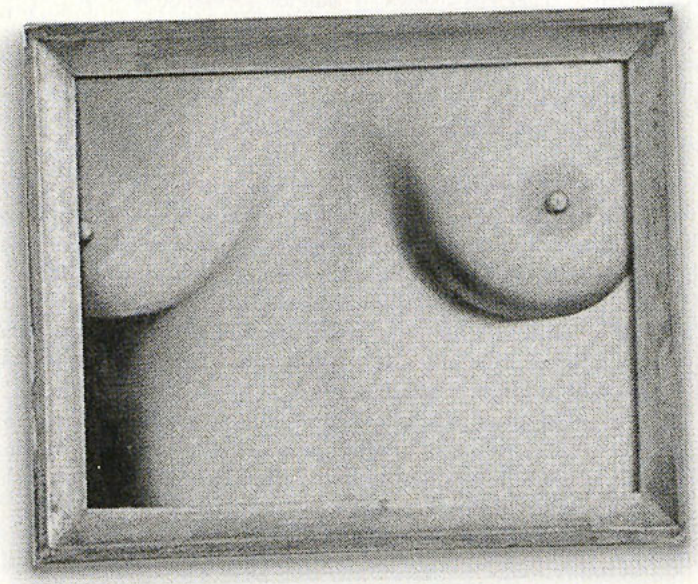
[*Farrell whispers, "It's okay" as he grabs King's notes and holds on to her as she collapses to the floor, shaking, whining and sobbing. Farrell asks President Rodríguez to call for an ambulance; Rodríguez does so, as he dismisses the crowd and cues the band.*]

Lewdness and the Law in Ector County

Continued from the cover

By keeping her feet aligned with the customer's, Zizzo explained, the dancer can guard herself from contact that would violate the public lewdness statute. Texas law forbids "any touching of the anus, breast, or any part of the genitals of another person with the intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person" while in a public place, or a private place if the offender "is reckless about whether another is present who will be offended or alarmed." (Also against the law are public sexual intercourse, "deviate sexual intercourse," and any "contact between the person's mouth or genitals and the anus or genitals of an animal or fowl.")

As her two-year-old son played on the other side of the room, Zizzo proceeded with the dance. She is a small, handsome woman with auburn-tinted hair, dressed on that day in Winnie-the-Pooh shorts, a T-shirt, and a crucifix necklace. Her solemn expression didn't alter as she raised her arms harem-style — elbows loosely bent, wrists crossing in front of her forehead — and calmly began to gyrate her hips. "This is how we do the dance, this is how we do the dance," she said in time with an imaginary beat.



"We stayed like this," she continued. "That's how we do the dance, and if the guy is a gentleman, we have a wall [behind the customer's chair] and we go to the wall." Zizzo indicated how she might place her two hands behind the customer's head. "We go a little bit closer, but as long as he don't touch and we don't touch the customer, I think it was all right."

For all her precautions, Zizzo was arrested for public lewdness last April 28, nabbed in an undercover operation: agents with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission visited three Ector County strip clubs and arrested a total of seven women; in the aftermath, the county revoked the licenses of all three clubs — Acapulco Fantasies, The Forest, and Caesar's Gentlemen's Club — the only clubs under the Board's jurisdiction at the time. (A fourth club, Baby O's, is within the Odessa city limits and so under the city's jurisdiction, while another county club opened shortly after the undercover operation.)

According to the report later filed by T.A.B.C. agent Mark C. Gohlke — a report Zizzo vehemently disputes — the following occurred:

At approximately 11:10 p.m., a female (later identified as Irma Sagrario Zizzo) approached me and sat in a chair next to me.... I told Zizzo that I would like a table dance and she stated that she would give me one at the beginning of the next song. While waiting for the next dance to start, Zizzo stated that she was from the country of Columbia [sic].

...At approximately 11:15 p.m., when the new song began, Zizzo stood in front of me and took all of her clothes off, exposing her breasts and genitalia. During the dance, Zizzo rubbed my clothed penis several times with her hands in an attempt to sexually arouse me. Zizzo also sat in my lap, with her back facing me, and rubbed her genital area against my clothed penis, simulating a sex act. Upon completion of the song, Zizzo put her clothes back on and I paid the $20.00 for the dance.

At a quarter to midnight, Zizzo was dancing for another customer when another T.A.B.C. officer entered the club, took her aside, and told her to get dressed. When she asked him what was the matter, "He said, well, you're under arrest for public lewdness," Zizzo said. "I told him I didn't do nothing. He said, you're under arrest: you want to change, or go like that?" The same scene had played out earlier in the evening at the other two clubs. At the Forest, "One of the girls was screaming because she was in shock. She was screaming and crying, saying 'I didn't do it!'" recalls the club's former owner (who requested anonymity). "They put the handcuffs on her and threw her in the car."

After the arrests, the women from all three clubs were taken to the Ector County Jail south of town, and six of the seven ended up in the same cell. Tearful and angry, they compared notes. Roberta McDavid, one of two dancers from Caesar's arrested that night, recalls, "The girl from Acapulco's, she was there, saying 'What the hell, I did not touch him!' And the girls from the Forest: pissed — they were pissed." (McDavid herself, who pled guilty to the lewdness charges and as a result went to jail for violating parole, insists that "I did not touch that man's genitals," but also argues that regardless, touching a customer shouldn't land a dancer in jail. "If dancing is legal, well then why isn't it legal to touch?... My dancing is for me and my kids," says McDavid, who has a ten-year-old and a ten-month-old. "It's not for sexual pleasure, it's for money, strictly for making-a-living purposes.") McDavid, who is black, also noticed that the racial makeup of the arrested group seemed skewed: "I thought it was really strange that four black girls were there, and one Hispanic," given that most of the dancers in Ector County, like the majority of residents, are white.

Between January 1, 1997, and June of this year, T.A.B.C. agents

have made 694 arrests for public lewdness. One hundred twelve — 16 percent — have been made in Ector County: home to less than one percent of the state's population, and an estimated three percent of its topless clubs. Is Ector County, then, the lewdest county in Texas?

It may just be the complainingest. According to T.A.B.C. enforcement chief Greg Hamilton, agents work topless clubs "in response to complaints" from either individuals or local law enforcement and local officials, and the high percentage of arrests taking place indicates a high number of complaints. In the April sweep, it was the Ector County sheriff's office and the county attorney's office who called upon the T.A.B.C.; this, says Austin attorney Jennifer Riggs, who has represented topless clubs in San Antonio and Austin, is typical: "Usually the T.A.B.C. will work in conjunction with a municipality; the municipalities try to bootstrap their authority with the T.A.B.C.'s authority."

Regardless of who complained, or whether the seven women who were arrested fondled the undercover agents, the result of the topless club sweep was perhaps more noxious than any instance of public sexual contact: hundreds of people lost their livelihoods, in a city already going through hard times. "It seems like the tighter things get, the more businesses they close or the more they try to arrest people," says Rebecca Osborne, one of the arrested dancers, who denies having touched the undercover T.A.B.C. agent who had her arrested. "It's hard enough keeping guys off your lap."

As for what happened that night at Acapulco Fantasies, Zizzo's account differs considerably from the one in Gohlke's report. Running a "clean" establishment had been important to her, she says, ever since she and her husband Jack Zizzo bought the club in 1996. (They were divorced earlier this year.) She'd started stripping a year earlier, in a Killeen club called Dream Street; at first "it was real hard for me.... Especially when your mother raised you differently." Zizzo says that she would "throw up, and cry, and it was real bad" when she started. But Dream Street, at least, "was a nice place, you cannot touch, you cannot do anything. It was very strict. It was something that helped me out, because they cared about the girls."

"So when I got my own club I tried to run it the same way, very clean, have the girls they can talk nice with the customers, not only take off their clothes," says Zizzo. This was particularly difficult in the beginning. The twenty-eight dancers whom she and her husband kept on when they bought the club were used to a looser standard, according to Zizzo. "I thought these girls would dance like me, or like Killeen, but when I came to Odessa it was completely different." Dancers and bouncers were teaming up to scam customers, the dancer offering to have sex in the private dance room, and then, without ever delivering that service, signaling the bouncer to toss the guy out after the money had changed hands. (Zizzo learned of this practice one night when an angry customer held a gun to her head in the parking lot.) "When I found that it was dirty inside, what they do, I decided to keep the good ones, and get rid of the bad ones," says Zizzo.

Business declined after Zizzo cleaned house. Customers told her that she should run it the old way if she wanted to make any money, but "I was afraid," Zizzo says. "$100,000 just for the business.... And we were afraid that if we run it dirty or something, that we was going to lose one day everything, so that's why I tried real hard to run it clean, because it was a lot of money for me, for my husband."

In the end it didn't matter. According to Zizzo, club manager Alejandro Vásquez, and dancer Rebecca Osborne (each interviewed separately for this story), on the night of April 28 a rowdy, bald-headed customer with a goatee — later identified as Gohlke — groped Zizzo and Osborne, then had them arrested.

Zizzo had hoped not to go in at all that night. She'd just returned from a trip to Honduras, where she'd gone to get copies of documents she and her two older, Honduran-born children would need to apply for U.S. citizenship — something she intended to do this year, though she won't be able to if convicted of public lewdness. "I was tired, and taking care of stuff like the bills," she recalls, "but the manager (Vásquez) called at about 9:15. He said, I've got like eleven people, and I've just got two girls." So she told Vásquez she'd be right over.

Acapulco Fantasies was a small place, housed in a plain white building that had been painted, earlier this year, with a mural of a tropical sunset, then partially painted over when anonymous callers objected to the female silhouettes posed among the palm trees. This in spite of the fact that few people had reason to pass the club at all: the building is on Loop 338 to the west of town, out where nothing but a few oilfield businesses, junkyards, and gasping pump jacks speckle the orange-brown desert. As soon as Zizzo arrived there that night, she went to the office and started trying to call other dancers; when the undercover agents came in she was dividing her time between the club floor and the office. According to Osborne and Vásquez, who saw him enter the club, Gohlke was unusually boisterous from the beginning: "He walked up to the D.J. booth and was complaining to the manager how we didn't have enough girls that night," says Osborne. "[He said,] 'If this is an entertainment place then why don't you have more women working?' I walked over to him and asked him if he wanted some company for the evening, like a table dance, and he told me no, but he wanted me to go get Irma. And I said okay. He said, 'No offense, nothing personal, but I just like the dark-haired, dark-eyed girls.'"

Osborne went to fetch Zizzo: "Monica [Zizzo's club name],

there's a customer out there; he wants to talk to you. At least say hello."

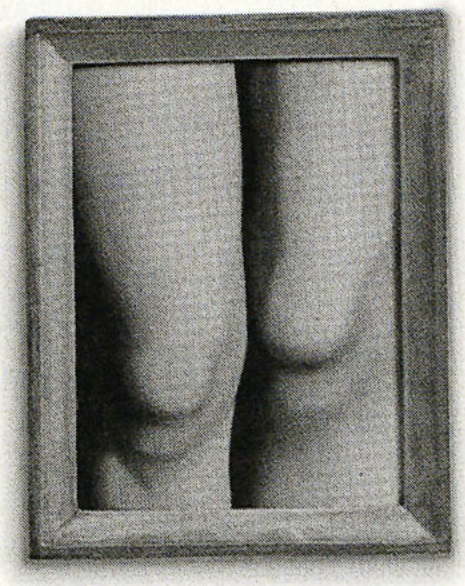
So Zizzo did, and Gohlke asked for a table dance. This is Zizzo's account of what happened next:

He got twenty dollars [to pay up front], but before that ... I said I was from Honduras, and he said, 'I'm from El Paso. I just got divorced,' and he was using real bad words like, 'I'm so fucking horny girl, I came here to this place, maybe I can find some company.'

And I said, 'Well, you can't.'

He said, 'No, in El Paso, in El Paso you can have anything if you want to.'

And I said, 'Not over here. Over here, if you really want to see a naked woman dancing for you it's just to look.' That's how I explain it to my girls when they're dancing, to explain real nice to the people, if they want to see a naked woman it's just to look, not to touch....



He said, 'Come on girl, you don't understand when a man don't have pussy for so many months?'

I said, 'No sir, if that's what you're looking for, uh-uh.'

'Okay, go ahead and dance,' he said, 'That's fine.'

I explained to him, 'I'm going to dance for you, but please don't move, you cannot touch me.'

He said, 'Okay, but I cannot promise you.'

I said, 'I'm just telling you that I can dance, but not to touch.' The first two minutes, I was dancing, and he was just looking, he said 'Uhhh... Ooooh...' He was enjoying, really. With our customers that are not T.A.B.C. they're more gentlemen than these people. Talking with you, they make you think that you're a lady. You're not trash, you're not a prostitute just because you take off your clothes.... But these kind of people like T.A.B.C. come in they make you think that you really are trash, the way they are touching....

So when I was at the wall, that's when he got me like this [with his hands on her lower back] and pulled me over there. So I touched my titties in his face, so then I pushed [off of] him, and I said, sir, remember what I told you....

He says, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'm not going to do it again.'

So okay, the first warning for you. I tell the girls to give a warning. And if they don't behave, quit the dance.... So he said he's going to behave, so when I'm dancing I go this way like this [turning around] and he's got his hands here [on either side of her crotch], and pulled me to him, and when I go up — I tried to fight him — that's when he placed three fingers in the middle of my pussy. This hurt me. I go that's it, I'm not going to dance for you no more.

And he said, 'But look at, look at how — and he grabbed my hand — look at how horny you got me. And he grabbed my hands and put it right there [on his erect penis]. That's why I say, why do they send people, if they cannot handle it, you know?

Questioned about Zizzo's account, Gohlke, who joined the T.A.B.C.'s El Paso office last October after serving for ten years with the University of North Texas police force, said he could not remember such specifics as which dancer approached him first; he recalled little other than what was in his report. "That's like asking me what I ate for breakfast two weeks ago," he said. Gohlke said that he told Zizzo he was from Dallas, and that he did not touch Zizzo or Osborne at any point during the dances.

The county's sexually-oriented business ordinance directs the sheriff to revoke a business's license if any act of public lewdness is "knowingly allowed" by the license-holder or an employee, and all three licenses were revoked in May. Dancers from Caesar's and the Forest pled guilty to the lewdness charges — which they had a strong incentive to do, since two women from Caesar's who'd been arrested previously for public lewdness had, in a non-jury trial in April, been found guilty by the judge, and fined $1,500 apiece plus court costs.

The dancers from Acapulco Fantasies decided to hold out for a trial, but the club's license was revoked anyhow; the arrests for public lewdness, without conviction, sufficed. According to County Attorney Tracey Bright, that's because license revocation is a civil matter: "There's a completely different standard for criminal charges and for civil charges. It's up to the hearing board [the county's Sexually Oriented Business Board, which heard Zizzo's appeal of the license revocation] to decide whether that's been met." Bright's legal theory has been questioned by other lawyers, notably Steve Brannan, who represented Caesar's before it went out of business. "The ordinance is insufficient in that it doesn't place any burden of proof on the county," Brannan says. "It allows revocation for acts without there being a trial to see if in fact the law had been violated."

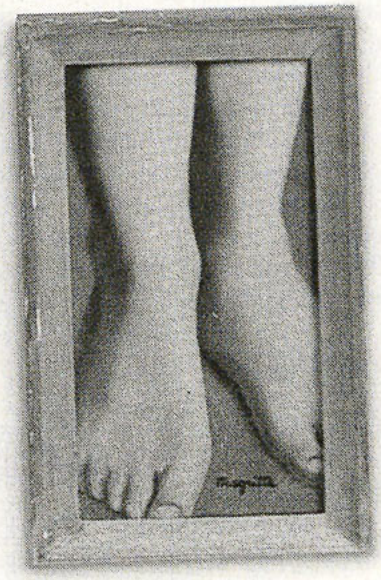
For Caesar's, by far the largest of the clubs, the license revocation was the last straw. Clubowner Jeff Fambro had been butting heads with the county for months, and rather than pursue an appeal he decided to close down Caesar's for good, putting 200 dancers and 50 payroll employees out of work. Zizzo shut down after the Sexually Oriented Business board denied her license, adding fifteen or twenty to the lost-jobs count. The Forest decided it would appeal and stayed open, but according to the owner, business plummeted in the wake of all the publicity over the arrests and license revocations.

When I visited Caesar's a month after it closed, a hailstorm had just hit Odessa, and shards of white neon had been knocked from the club's towering sign down into the empty parking lot. Inside, the 14,000 square-foot club was a gloomy cavern of unoccupied turquoise chairs and purple tables and plastic ivy, its high stages dark, its waterfall broken, abandoned iced tea glasses lined along the bar — the ruin of a faux Roman empire on the edge of a city in decline. No matter how you feel about topless places, says former Caesar's dancer Sandy Rich, the club was one of the city's few tourist draws: "All these customers used to come to Odessa, who're not coming back. This was the only attraction; there's nothing else here."

Leaning back in one of the club chairs, Jeff Fambro, a former realtor who looks to be in his mid-thirties, told me he suspects that the troubles for Ector County topless clubs stem largely from the ongoing antagonism between him and Lieutenant Jess Aguilar of the Ector County sheriff's office. After Fambro refused to turn over a list of his dancers to Aguilar, "that's when [Aguilar] started coming in every night, picking a girl, griping at her, threatening to arrest her, sending her home, that kind of stuff."

Aguilar himself implied that Caesar's had provided the impetus for the undercover operation. "I coordinated it," said Aguilar, when asked who initiated the April sweep. "My office doesn't have the funds" to do such a thing independently, he said, "it was initiated, orchestrated, and directed by myself." Caesar's, he went on to suggest, simply refused to toe the line.

A thirty-year veteran of the sheriff's office and director of its Internal Affairs Department, Aguilar assumed oversight of the county's sexually oriented businesses in January of 1997. At the time, he says, "The sheriff instructed me that we would bring them [the clubs] under control." Controversy over a proposed topless club across the street from the Ector County Coliseum had stirred up anti-adult-entertainment sentiment in Odessa the year before, and the City Council had voted to ban topless and nude dancing within the city limits — although dancing with "pasties" (opaque nipple coverings) was permitted. As a result, Odessa topless clubs were shutting their doors, while others were opening up just beyond the city limits, Caesar's among them.



As soon as he took over supervision of the county clubs, Aguilar requested that each clubowner volunteer a list of all its dancers, their aliases and real names, their driver's license and social security numbers, and their dates of birth. Fambro refused. Apparently, a pissing match ensued. (Fambro on Aguilar: "He was just throwing his weight around — 'You're going to do what I say….' He yelled and screamed and came into my office." Aguilar on Fambro: "He was the one who verbally told me I was a pain in his ass, and that he didn't have to do a damn thing I told him … that he had lawyers.")

According to Aguilar, Caesar's was a den of public lewdness.s "I have visually seen it happen, a dancer performing oral sex on a customer," he said. "I asked [Fambro] to help me, to comply with some of the requests that I asked, voluntarily, but he was very rude, very crude, and told me he wasn't going to do it…. It was more than fifteen separate offenses…. If anything I tried to keep him open, tried to work with him."

If Aguilar had a problem with Caesar's, Tracey Bright, the county attorney, is widely thought to have had it out for all the clubs. "I don't know what it is," said one Odessa lawyer who has represented topless dancers charged with public lewdness. "The only cases she wants to try [personally] are these cases [of public lewdness]," he continued. "She's a hard-core feminist, I guess; she thinks it's degrading." One of the women tried for public lewdness last April, Sandy Rich, recalls Bright saying during the trial, "They [the dancers] need to get respectable jobs." (Calls to Bright's office to confirm this were not returned.) Another lawyer agreed that Bright dislikes the clubs: "I think she's against them…. It's a popular political view to take."

Bright herself insists that her personal views do not influence her work: "I feel like I uphold what the law says I should." Not one to ingratiate herself with reporters, Bright granted one interview and did not return follow-up calls. Tall, slim, and hawk-eyed, she seemed quite tense as we spoke, and her right hand, which for the most part hovered in front of her mouth, would occasionally whip out beside her ear, as if she were preparing either to swear an oath or slap somebody. Early last year, she says, the subject of public lewdness arose at a meeting of the Mayor's Drug and Crime Commission. "It just came up, and I don't think anyone even knew that I went back to my office and did something about it," Bright says. "I felt like we were not having the impact on the people who were committing the crime that we needed to be," and as a result she changed the standard plea-bargain offer for public lewdness charges, from a fine-only plea to thirty days in jail.

To criminal defense lawyer Adrian Chávez, this was an unusual step. "All of a sudden they were wanting thirty days in jail," he says. "Nobody gets jail time on a first offense except for these dancers."

Then last fall, the commissioner's court adopted new regulations for clubs, introduced by Bright, requiring that dancers must remain six feet away from patrons, on a stage at least eighteen inches high. "My office discussed it last year because the public lewdness charges we were seeing were the result of contact between patrons and dancers, and we felt like that would work toward alleviating that type of criminal charge," Bright said. "But quite frankly, we need to have a public hearing on that and introduce the evidence to the Commissioner's Court about all the charges that we've had, and that has not been done yet, so that's why we have not actively enforced that yet." In fact, clubowners did not find out about the new rules for some time; Fambro says he received notice of them with the letter revoking his license. "Now her favorite thing to say is, 'All we do is enforce the law.'" Fambro says of Bright. "Well that's true, but it's also her office that wrote the law."

A curious thing about topless clubs is the way that they both feed on and make a mockery of old-fashioned notions of male and female roles: the men are "gentlemen," the dancers are alternately sluts and virtuous mothers (or college students) trying to make ends meet. Aguilar described the dancers this way: "They come from all over, and … instead of prostituting themselves in the street, they're prostituting in the clubs. Some of them are trying to do it [dance] legitimately, but for others, it's 'I'm going to do whatever I can to make the most money.' A lot of them are mothers, they have a home, they have a husband, to them it's just a job, and those don't allow the guys to stick their fingers where they shouldn't be sticking them and suckle where they

shouldn't be suckling. Then there's others that don't give a hoot."

For a topless dancer, an inch separates doing her job from breaking the law; the same minuscule distance lies between the dancer as strapped mom and the dancer as the dangerous purveyor of lewd acts. The dancer as working woman is not quite an accepted notion, even within the industry — where it is standard practice to employ dancers as independent contractors, without regular wages or benefits. Surely the ambivalent image of the topless dancer facilitated the crackdown in Odessa. Were any other type of work involved, could a few government entities in an economically depressed county arbitrarily wipe out several hundred jobs, without a whisper of protest from anyone but the business owners?

After Caesar's closed, Sandy Rich and her husband Edward, who also used to work at Caesar's as a barback, went down to San Angelo for a couple weeks to work at a club there. But Rich, who used to earn $600 a week working five nights at Caesar's, says there was "definitely no money" in San Angelo. Both she and her husband have since applied for dozens of jobs, with no luck.

Twenty-one-year-old Rich has worked in topless clubs for the past three years, and says her work history is a hindrance: "I applied for front desk clerk at the motel I stayed at in San Angelo, and they looked at that and said, 'We don't hire people like you, you can't even keep your clothes on.'" She has also applied for "waitress, car wash, telemarketing, cleaning service, front desk clerk, twenty to thirty jobs in all. Nobody's called; nobody's called Jeff [Fambro] for a reference."

Of the five dancers interviewed for this story, one had found a job, one was in jail, and three were jobless and applying for government benefits. (On her application for a court-appointed attorney on file with the county clerk, Osborne listed her family's source of income as "picking up cans.") Several others whom I tried to reach had left town. The Riches have lost their house and car; they and their two young children have moved in with Edward's grandmother; they've applied for food stamps and Medicaid. The second time I spoke with them, they were headed into town to donate blood, for fifteen dollars apiece.

Even though it had its license revoked, the Forest never closed. The other clubowners suspect this is because the owner had friends in the sheriff's office; Aguilar says that he never shut the Forest down because the letter officially revoking the license was returned to him undeliverable, and before he could deliver it himself, the club was sold to a new owner who applied for, and received, a new license.

"A lot of girls that are here, these girls don't have nowhere else to go," says the former owner. On a night in late June, business at the Forest had picked back up. Located on the site of an old lumberyard east of town, across from a string of motels with bad reputations, the Forest is a totally nude, bring-your-own-booze club, with a couple dozen tables and two stages. Oilfield workers, frat boys, and Dilbert types sit with twelve-packs of Bud Dry or coolers they've brought in themselves, while the women, most of them young and very attractive, circulate among the tables in tight dresses, or strip down to their high-heeled sandals and garter belts to give table dances.

It is the standard ritual, here as in countless towns. The D.J. plays the bad pop music the women like to dance to, and dancers, in various states of undress, strut out from behind the mirrored archways for their turns on stage. They play at the pole and then take to the floor, lying on their backs and straddling their legs, or kneeling on all fours; one woman I saw dance simply bent over with her back to the audience, sensuously placing one finger in her mouth and then on her genitals, in a slow masturbatory dance routine. The men approach the stages slowly and then stand stone still before the women like rapt anatomists, staring at their genitals and then giving them a dollar or two. The stark contrast between the mobility of the women — as they glide among the tables or dance onstage — and the frozen poses of the men as they sit or stand, would almost seem to justify T.A.B.C.'s policy of pursuing only dancers, and not customers, for public lewdness. ("The dancer's the one that's touching," in most cases, said T.A.B.C. enforcement chief Hamilton, who added that the agency has made it a requirement that arrests for public lewdness always be made by agents posing as customers, so that the agent can testify in court.)

Almost. If you left the Forest and drove north to Graham Central Station, a huge multiplex of different-themed bars and dance floors, "you would have seen more rubbing on breasts than you would ever see at one of these clubs," says attorney Scott Tidwell, who has represented several Caesar's dancers.

"This is a selective law enforcement issue to me," he continued. "'Oh, these girls are just hookers.' I disagree with that. Many of these girls are fairly nice girls. The majority of them lack the skills to make a real good income."

Irma Zizzo is scheduled to stand trial for public lewdness on August 31. □

So Far From God

BY MICHAEL ERARD

On the day I flew into London, the news of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet had been pushed to The Guardian*'s eighth page. Hospitalized with a stomachache while his lawyers appealed a British court's decision, a weakened Pinochet appeared to be stalling his inevitable extradition to Spain, where he would face charges of torture and other violations of human rights. London was a layover on my way to Ireland, where another former Latin American head of state was reported to be hiding out. I was determined to use some of my time there to track down Carlos Salinas de Gortari, president of Mexico from 1988 to 1994.*

After a week of vacation I headed to Dublin, to find out what Salinas had been up to since he left Mexico in early 1995 in a tempest of controversy, as hated for the consequences of the neoliberal economic policies of his presidency as Pinochet is feared in Chile for his fascism. When I arrived, he wasn't in Ireland — he'd moved, for the moment. An *Irish Times* reporter told me that a cell phone number no longer worked, and the Mexican ambassador said Salinas was seldom seen anymore.

So I wouldn't interview Salinas, and I could never ask him the question that had pestered me as I drove around the island: why was he living in Ireland? He could have led a successful self-imposed exile nearly anywhere, and Latin American countries would make far better bases from which to wage a campaign to clear his name and restore his place in Mexican history. So, why Ireland?

A professor of literature at the University College of Dublin, Declan Kiberd, got a clue when Carlos Salinas waited in line with students on a quiet Wednesday in May, 1996.

"It was a strange interlude. Looking back, it seems very Borgesian — to meet someone and later find out who it was," Kiberd remembered. The man came into the office wearing a wool cap, which he never doffed, and a scuffed suede coat. Kiberd described him as "shambling but pleasant," and took him to be a fellow academic — perhaps a Latin American economist, though he told Kiberd he had a background in political science. "I assumed he was someone who had fallen afoul some regime. I've met quite a few of those. Sometimes they will tell you what happened to them, and often it's quite terrible, but this man never did." After forty minutes, Kiberd excused himself — he had students to meet. Could they get together for a pint? the foreigner suggested; sure, Kiberd said. Several weeks later, the professor saw a *Sunday Times* article, with a photograph of Salinas, capless and bald. Only then did Kiberd realize who he'd talked to — and that he was an economist, with a Harvard Ph.D. "In retrospect," he said, with a tinge of regret, "I might have given him more time."

Salinas had called round to talk books (he hasn't rung yet about that pint). "He knew his literature. I was impressed by his arguments," Kiberd told me. The previous fall, Kiberd had published *Inventing Ireland*, an authoritative 700-page volume whose post-colonial bent challenged standard views of the history of Irish literature. Salinas, who'd read the book, was intrigued by Kiberd's implication that in Ireland and Latin America, artists and writers involved in post-colonial struggles for self-determination have been central to the formation of national identities. In this sense, the novel narrative modes of James Joyce resemble the mythical realism of Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, and Jorge Luis Borges, because for each writer, "the shattering of older forms permitted the breakthrough of a new content, a post-imperial writing."

Kiberd observed that "Salinas talked like a man who was trying to root himself here. Like he was trying to transcend his present troubles." Was the ex-president creating a home in Ireland, the land of exile and homecoming? The massive emigration from Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some have argued, created the notion that a person only became fully Irish while abroad, because only far from its reality could he nurture an idea of Ireland. And not only emigration created exiles. Large numbers of rural people headed for the cities, where their children were educated in English, not Irish, and in this way "a life conducted through the medium of English," Kiberd writes, "became itself a sort of exile." Thus, the Irish Renaissance of the early twentieth century was as much about the construction of an idealized cultural "home" as it was a rediscovery of what really had been lost.

Did Salinas believe that artists, not technocrats, had shattered the old Mexican identity? In order to make NAFTA a reality, he had to convince Mexicans that cooperation and free trade, not ideological conflict, were the keys to prosperity; that in such circumstances, a national identity defined against a real or imagined U.S. imperialist threat would be a liability. Salinas was praised in *The Wilson Quarterly* in 1993, for his role in helping Mexico "shed much of the debilitating ideological baggage of the past." And as Mark Falcoff wrote in *American Enterprise*, "Mexico is ceasing to be 'Mexico.' That is, Mexico has begun to discard an entire set of civic values and practices that for more than seventy years defined its national identity." All of this under Salinas' leadership, so when the peso collapsed late in 1994, Mexicans had no one to blame but one of their own.

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From that *Sunday Times* article, Kiberd would have learned that Salinas was now dubbed "the Elvis of former presidents" — sighted at leisure (in shopping malls, at jazz festivals) all over the world. On March 15, 1995, he'd jetted from Mexico, the reputation

of his once-proud presidency ruined, the Mexican peso devalued and the economy in collapse, and his brother, Raúl Salinas, arrested for murder and "illicit enrichment." After a plaintive hunger strike in the home of a working-class Monterrey family failed to gain him the sympathy of the Mexican public, who were by then burning him in effigy, Salinas was welcomed in a number of places — New York, Montreal, Havana, the Bahamas — and from each he was quietly pressured to leave.

Salinas drifted, a man in search of that one place where he could live almost invisibly, in what some said was his part of a secret deal with his successor, Ernesto Zedillo. Meanwhile, in Mexico, mortgage rates reached 85 percent; credit card interest rates were 140 percent, and thousands of cars, homes, and new businesses were repossessed. Investigations into Raúl Salinas' finances showed that he'd socked away $300 million in foreign accounts, and Swiss officials later arrested his wife for trying to withdraw $83 million from accounts. When rumors suggested "drug money," Carlos pleaded ignorance of his brother's "investment fund."

During this period, journalists leaped to interview Salinas. Unable to confirm his physical location, the *Mexico City Times* published an e-mail address, a move which flooded an innocent Amnesty International administrator named Carlos Salinas Córdova with e-mail from around the world. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that he received requests for interviews, invitations to functions, and angry criticism. Salinas Córdova was good-natured about the attention. "But I am not bald," he said.

I showed some photos of Salinas in his wool cap and suede coat disguise to some Irish friends; they remarked how Irish he looked — "like a farmer," someone said. Back when the Irish police first commented on reports that Salinas had found refuge in Dublin, they supposed a "moustachioed Latin American" would blend in with difficulty. As it turned out, he cunningly blended so well that only after a rare August 1996 interview with an *Irish Times* reporter did the Irish police begin "discreet" inquiries into his status. The Irish government, stung by scandals in the nineties in which passports were sold to rich Arabs, denied that Salinas would be given special status, though he'd well overstayed a ninety-day visitor's visa. Salinas applied for a resident's permit, but other events in the spring of 1998 assured his permanence in Ireland: his wife of three years, Ana Paula Gerard Rivero, gave birth to a son, who automatically received Irish citizenship. (Grateful, he named his son Patricio.)

Salinas keeps a low profile but isn't hidden, surrounded by bodyguards and careful with his movements, difficult to reach by phone but not unresponsive. Journalists approach him, but he rarely grants interviews. (When he does, he goes to paranoid lengths to avoid offending the current president — one journalist told me that Salinas had asked him not to include an illustrative Oscar Wilde quote, for fear that Zedillo might link Wilde's criticism with *The Importance of Being Earnest.*) From time to time, he issues press releases that attempt to discredit prosecutors in his brother's case, and he also flies to New York for directors' meetings of the Dow Jones Company. He is also seen in museums, bookstores, and restaurants. The family and its entourage live just south of Dublin, in a house described as "modest but secure" and valued at $1.8 million (a steal compared to the $80 million Salinas family house in Mexico City). Down the street from Sinead O'Connor, Bono, Van Morrison, and

▲ *Salinas de Gortari and Ana Paula Gerard in Dublin* Padraig O'Reilly

other rock star recluses (well, except for Sinead, who recently flung herself at the public by being ordained as a Catholic priest), the house is reportedly owned by Tony Ryan, an airline magnate and Mexican Honorary Consul in Ireland.

As I built a list of Salinas' Irish friends, I began to think he'd chosen Ireland for the company. Not only rich and prominent, some friends were themselves controversial politicians, such as former prime minister Charles Haughey, a charismatic Fianna Fail politician so corrupt he makes the old-school *los dinosauros* of the PRI oligarchy look more like kittens than lizards. (Salinas has claimed that his political reforms angered such "entrenched interests" and "established privileges," and the case against his brother, as well as his own exile, are politically motivated.) A conservative Irish nationalist, over his thirty-year political career Haughey survived accusations and investigations into his gunrunning, suspicious property deals, perjury, and influence peddling, only to fall in 1992 to charges of tapping the phones of his political opposition. Not only does he own a twelve-bedroom Georgian manse located on 300 acres outside Dublin, he also owns a house offshore, as well as helicopters and a yacht, "The Celtic Mist," to get him to the island. Impressively, he also owns the island — all on a prime minister's annual salary of $150,000.

Clearly, Carlos Salinas would feel quite at home.

Perhaps he chose Ireland because its new-found economic prosperity reminded him of that brief period of optimism in Mexico in the early nineties. In the eighties, Ireland had a debt load that was 115 percent of its gross domestic product, and a higher per capita debt than Mexico. In the nineties, after tightened fiscal policy, sub-

sidies from the European Union, and access to European markets to sell beef and other agricultural products, the country has been transformed — its new nickname is "the Celtic Tiger."

Foreign firms, among them Microsoft, Intel, and Dell, have located there, encouraged by a young, highly-educated workforce. While I was in County Donegal, the *Donegal Democrat* reported that a California healthcare company will open a claims processing facility there, creating over 200 jobs. Each day, after offices close in California, claims will be sent electronically and prepared by native English speakers for the start of the next day in California. Salinas would understand the concept of an information-processing *maquiladora*, where value is added to information rather than auto parts and tennis shoes.

The island is awash with money and an optimism about the future. The streets of Dublin are gridlocked with new cars, and young people easily get home mortgages in Dublin's hot real estate market. I asked a bartender at a pub near the American embassy about Salinas. He didn't recognize a photo of Salinas, though he thought Salinas' wife was familiar; he ended up describing how he'd just bought a house himself.

The only dangers seem to be inflation and xenophobia. The most recent unemployment figures, 6.4 percent, are the lowest since such figures have been calculated, down from 20 percent in the late eighties. Many industries complain of labor shortages. For so long, Irish youth had to leave the island to find work. Now Ireland reluctantly admits foreign workers, many of them Romanian and Bosnian refugees. (Welcoming former heads of state is less difficult. Many people didn't know Salinas was there, and those who did seemed pleased.)

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I walked in the rain to the neighborhood where one newspaper report said Salinas lived. The day was, in Irish parlance, "a soft one" — Salinas did not pick damp cold Ireland for its climate, where there is a word for every flavor of rain, including "pelting," "lashing," and "pissing." That morning, the city bustled in mist. Dublin is a city of walkers; people trickled from small neighborhood lanes, joined the streets' streams, down to the rushing thoroughfares which lead to the city centre.

On my way, I passed rumpled schoolboys with novels in their pockets, and a middle-aged man in a three-piece suit came out of a bank and put garbage bags full of shredded paper on the curb. Having heard that Salinas takes walks in parks, I stopped at Herbert Park, and while three tawny pomeranians jousted and tumbled on the verdant lawn, I read the park's fifty rules inscribed on a bronze plate. The twenty-fourth rule demanded that "No person shall in any open space sort rags, bones, refuse, or matter of like nature or mend any chair or other article," and the twenty-sixth required that "No person shall in any open space discharge any gun, syringe, squirt, catapult, or other instrument, or shall wantonly or recklessly throw or discharge any stone or missile or make any bonfire or let off any firework or perform military evolution or practice gymnastics." As I looked up from the sign, a man in a tweed cap approached, making me jump, but I knew it wasn't Carlos.

In another park in another place, a plaza in an elegant, historic Mexico City neighborhood, one of the strongest ties between Mexico and Ireland is memorialized on a small brass plaque that lists the names of the San Patricio Battalion — 200 Irish men who, under the command of John Riley, fought with the Mexican Army against the U.S. from 1845–47. Deserters from an exploitative U.S. Army, they fought under an emerald flag decorated with a shamrock and a harp against a country which they'd found xenophobic and anti-Catholic. They fought bravely until 1847, when they were defeated defending the monastery of Santa Maria de Los Angeles at Churubusco. The surviving two-thirds of the battalion were captured. Fifty men were hung as deserters; fourteen were branded; Riley himself was whipped, branded, then reduced to begging. About him, little more is known.

In this decade, a spate of high-level diplomatic exchanges have strengthened relations between Mexico and Ireland. But for all the trade, investment, and cultural swaps, the two countries lack an extradition treaty — and in the end, this is perhaps the most salient reason for Salinas' stay. Some analysts figured that Zedillo's half of the secret deal was not to investigate Salinas, if the ex-president made himself scarce. But as Raúl Salinas went on trial for the murder of his former brother-in-law, a high-ranking member of the PRI, investigators wanted to question Carlos. Though the former president said publicly that he would answer questions "anywhere, anytime," investigators from the Mexican attorney general's office did the travelling. In 1996, they visited Dublin, and at the Mexican embassy, they grilled Salinas with 300 questions about the 1994 assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta.

Salinas claimed he hadn't chosen Ireland for its lack of an extradition treaty. Instead, he praised the Irish — his official reason for residing in Ireland. Declan Kiberd recalled that he "was very friendly about the Irish," and during their conversation, they discussed what the Mexicans and the Irish have in common: "they're both emotional, they're very traditional, and they're not too materialistic," Kiberd said. In the *Irish Times* interview, Salinas highlighted his fascination with the Irish people, to the point of being "florid in his tributes to Irish hospitality," David Shanks wrote. "They *trust* a lot," Salinas told Shanks. He also compared Irish and Mexican struggles against imperialism. "Both have 'one small stream' — the Irish Sea, the Rio Grande — separating them from powerful neighbors," Shanks reported. In Ireland too, Salinas could say, in homage to Porfirio Díaz, that he was *tan lejos de Diós, tan cerca de los imperialistas*.

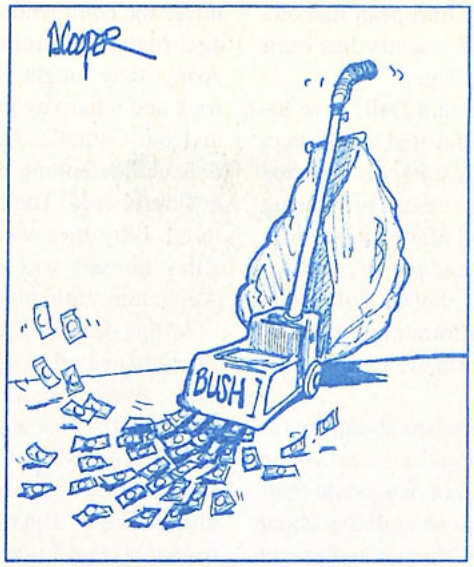
While Salinas was singing the praises of the Irish, his own fortunes took a further turn for the worse. In October, 1998, Swiss officials wondered whether Carlos knew about his brother's links with drug traffickers, including a $500 million bank account. In a November *Newsweek* essay, Salinas defended his brother — and himself — calling the accusations "outrageous, absurd and an affront to all Mexicans," and claimed the four-year investigation into his brother's activities was unjust and politically motivated. This did not stop a Mexican judge from handing down a murder conviction in January of this year, and sentencing Raúl to fifty years in jail.

Carlos Salinas' dissertation is dedicated to his brother: "To Raúl, companion of a hundred battles." They'll soon fight their hundred and first — according to *The New York Times*, Carlos Salinas left Ireland for Cuba, where he was meeting with his brother's lawyers, helping them prepare for an appeal. He then briefly returned to Mexico, for his first public visit since he fled the country, resulting

See "Salinas," page 24

OH, PIONEERS! What's the going rate for a gubernatorial appointment to one of Texas' powerful state boards and commissions? It's never been cheap, but if you hook your wagon to an ambitious up-and-comer like George W. Bush, it may cost you even more. When Bush recently released his much anticipated list of "Pioneers" — fund-raisers who have personally collected at least $100,000 for the governor's presidential campaign — the list contained some familiar names. Ten of the 115 (and counting) Pioneers are current or former Bush appointees to state boards, including the U.T. and Texas A&M Boards of Regents, the Parks and Wildlife Commission, and the Texas Transportation Commission. None of those jobs come cheap: according to numbers collected by Texans for Public Justice, these ten personally donated over $640,000 to W.'s gubernatorial campaigns. That amount does not include corporate donations from the companies these men control, such as Texas A&M Regents Earl Nye and Don Powell, CEOs of Texas Utilities and First National Bank, respectively. Now W. has shaken his appointees down for at least an additional million collectively, with more to come. As a group, the 115 Pioneers have accounted for roughly forty percent of Bush's record $37 million raised thus far, and Pioneer director Jim Francis told reporters that as many as 300 more Pioneers are out drumming up cash as we speak.

TITAN TEETERING? Two years ago, when Titan Tire came to Brownsville, lured by $30 million in tax breaks and incentives and the prospect of a non-union workforce, C.E.O. (and former presidential candidate) Morry "Grizz" Taylor talked a big game, promising hundreds of good jobs and annual sales in the $250 million range. Brownsville delivered on its promises, but the jobs and sales have by and large failed to materialize, with essential equipment yet to be installed and fewer than a quarter of the promised positions filled, mostly at low wages. Now, according to union officials from the United Steelworkers of America, whose members are currently striking Titan plants in Des Moines and Natchez, Mississippi, Titan may be forced to shut down its Brownsville operation, at least



M. Cooper

temporarily. This despite promises to local authorities — and state officials overseeing job-training funds — that the plant would be at or close to full production by last April.

If true, the impending shutdown in Brownsville lends credence to the union's contention that the opening of the Brownsville plant was intended principally to help break the U.S.W.A. local in Iowa, where the National Labor Relations Board has recognized the validity of an unfair labor practices strike that began in May of 1998. Forced overtime and grueling three-weeks-on, two-days-off schedules, imposed after Taylor took over the plant in 1995, prompted the strike. The N.L.R.B. has since cited Titan for moving jobs to Brownsville without bargaining with the union, cutting off medical benefits to ill, disabled, and pregnant workers, and threatening to permanently replace strikers. The union contends that the majority of the tires coming out of the Brownsville plant are scrap quality.

"As far as we are concerned, we are not aware of Titan closing its doors for whatever reason," a company spokesperson told Political Intelligence. But according to U.S.W.A. organizer Oscar Garza, the word is out that the other shoe is about to drop. "As I speak with workers, they are now afraid of lay-offs. The community is upset because taxpayers have poured millions of dollars into this plant with almost nothing to show for it." Meanwhile, company profits have plunged. Pre-tax profits for the first six months of 1999 were off almost $20.5 million when compared with the same period last year. The Grizz promised tires and money when he came to Texas. With scabs at work in Iowa and Mississippi — and ghosts on the line in Brownsville — Titan isn't making much of either.

VALLEY VICTORY. True to form, Valley Interfaith has succeeded where others have failed. Beginning January 1, Hidalgo County will become the first county in the state to enact a "living wage" for its county employees, thanks to a victorious campaign led by the powerful South Texas church-based group. Almost 1,000 government workers of Hidalgo County are looking at a much-deserved raise from the current federal minimum of $5.15 per hour to the newly approved $7.50 per hour. All county workers will benefit from the increase, including 470 in federally-funded (but county-controlled) programs, such as Head Start.

The 1990 U.S. census counted forty-five percent of Valley citizens as living below the poverty line; 450 of these citizens are Hidalgo County employees. According to Valley Interfaith organizer Aaron Peña, Jr., who also served on the Hidalgo County Salary Study that recommended the pay raise, these employees "often become dependent on government assistance," which means taxpayers "are being taxed twice: once to pay poverty wages and then to support impoverished workers through welfare." At a minimum, all county employees will now earn slightly less than the federal poverty level for a family of four, which is set at $7.91.

Commissioner Oscar Garza, who voted in favor of the wage increase, said, "It's the right thing to do. We just changed it to where people can earn a decent wage and they get to self-sufficiency." Valley Interfaith has had previous success in living wage campaigns targeting employees of the McAllen, Mission, and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school districts. Members say they will take the fight to all Valley government employers who pay their workers with tax dollars.

DOZING ON DEATH ROW. The escape of seven inmates from Texas' Death Row last

October provoked an investigation and disciplinary action within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, suggesting that there were more problems at the prison than the authorities want to admit.

To recap, seven inmates who had been left unsupervised in a recreation area used a stolen hacksaw blade, and dummies, to escape from the state prison's Ellis Unit outside Huntsville. The escapees were spotted while still inside the prison perimeter. One guard who was smoking (the prisons are officially no-smoking facilities) stopped to flush his cigarette down a toilet before picking up his rifle to open fire. Six of the inmates gave themselves up; after a long manhunt, a seventh was found drowned in a creek near the prison.

After a lengthy investigation, Senior Warden Bruce Thaler received a pay cut from $61,000 to $54,000 and was transferred to a less demanding desk job. Two assistant wardens have also been transferred. Five lower-level officers were demoted, suspended, fired, or allowed to resign.

But that is apparently not the end of the case. An investigation by the Texas Rangers found that the Department of Criminal Justice had hired two inexperienced young women (reportedly eighteen and nineteen years old) as guards, gave them three weeks' training, and assigned them to Death Row. And although prison director Wayne Scott has assured legislators that there was no inside involvement in the escape, that was not what the Rangers found.

According to a report issued by the Rangers, another guard, suspected in the delivery of the hacksaw blade to the inmates, was scheduled for a lie-detector examination but resigned the morning of the test. The final word is that there is no likelihood of any kind of criminal prosecution over the state's only Death Row escape in more than half a century. □

No Favoritism for Law-Abiders

Here it is, that rare opportunity to be helpful, positive, uplifting and part of the solution in our public life. Follow this sentence closely: "Even before the Clinton administration issued new rules that would bar federal contracts to chronic corporate lawbreakers, the United States Chamber of Commerce was attacking the rules, calling them an arbitrary 'blacklist,' and a sop to organized labor" — New York Times, *July 9, 1999.*

Now take a deep breath. These rules, announced a few weeks ago, recommend that federal procurement officers award no contracts to companies guilty of repeated and substantial violations of law on discrimination, labor, tax, environmental, or antitrust. A daring concept, eh? You might think all we would hear after a proposal not to use tax dollars to pay lawbreakers would be a hearty cheer. But you reckon without the hubris of big business, now so far gone in its own free-market bull it has lost its hold on reality entirely.

"The U.S. Chamber of Commerce will do whatever is necessary to block this politically motivated policy," said Thomas Donohue, the organization's president.

And what makes favoring those who obey the law over those who break the law politically motivated? Ah, Donohue predicts the new rules would be used *principally* to punish companies found to have violated labor laws, like those prohibiting companies from firing workers in unionization drives! How outrageous! That the government would even think of doing anything to enforce labor law — worker safety, hours, overtime, comp time, and not firing workers during unionization drives! Imagine it! It's been the law since the 1930s, but imagine making a company obey the law!

You can see why the Chamber wants to get Dubya Bush in office p.d.q., before any more of this commie bushwa gets handed down. Chamber officials told the *Times* the rules are unclear, asserting that companies *did not know how many violations — two or twenty or two hundred — might bar them from government contracts.*

That's a problem, of course. How many times should a corporation be allowed to violate the law before the government refuses to do business with it? How many workers should they be allowed to fire for being in favor of a union? How many times should they be allowed to endanger the lives of workers by putting padlocks on fire exit doors? How many tons of untreated waste should they be allowed to illegally dump into a lake or river?

Here's my suggestion: three strikes and you're out.

In the famous Texas trio of congressmen, Armey, Archer, and DeLay, our man Bill Archer, chairman of the House Way and Means Committee, is all too often neglected by the public prints. So how happy we are to find him in the headlines again. And with an effort that is enough to make the president of the Chamber of Commerce berserk with bliss. What a tax-cutting plan Archer has offered, what a pluperfect paradigm of everything that is wrong with Republican economic thinking, what dumbfounding chutzpah, what a fantastic proposal to redistribute wealth from the poor to the rich. This is outstanding work. Way to go, Bill!

First of all, he offers a 10 percent across-the-board tax cut to shine on the just and the unjust alike, the rich and the poor, Ross Perot Jr. and the single mother of two making $30,000 a year with overtime on the assembly line, and what could be fairer than that?

If ever there's a group that needs an income-tax cut, it is the richest 1 percent of Americans, because their share of the total wealth is now only 40.1 percent. As of 1997, they only had more wealth than the entire bottom 95 percent. Archer wants to cut the top rate individuals pay on capital gains from 20 percent to 15 percent. That blessing, too, will fall alike on Bill Gates and the single mother supporting two children by working two minimum-wage jobs. What could be fairer than that?

Archer's tax plan would give an additional break to married couples, which does not benefit our single mother with two kids, but hey, she shouldn't have divorced the creep in the first place. But here's a part that's perfectly fair: Donald Trump and the single mom will both enjoy the abolition of inheritance taxes on estates of over $600,000! Isn't that good news? And that's not all — once he got through helping the rich in general, Archer went on to help the rich in specific.

His tax bill is loaded with special-interest goodies. He wants to bring back the three-martini lunch: 80 percent deduction of bidness entertainment. And he put in another special tax break for the oil industry. And another special tax break for the steel industry. All the big Republican contributors get tax breaks! Oh, we haven't had this kind of fun in years.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Archer's bill will cost $2.8 trillion after all the phased-in exemptions go into effect at a time when both Social Security and Medicare will be under massive demands.

In addition to the folly of cutting taxes before you've taken care of Social Security and Medicare, the Archer proposal is economic idiocy on the macro level, as well. Recalling our Econ I class, we remember that we cut taxes to stimulate the economy: The economy is so close to overheating that the Federal Reserve Board just raised interest rates to slow it down.

It took fifteen years of tax increases and spending cuts to get over the tax cuts made by Ronald Reagan in 1981. Why would we do that again?

He's just our Bill, an ordinary guy. □

Molly Ivins is a former Observer *editor and a columnist for the* Fort Worth Star-Telegram. *Her latest book is* You Got to Dance With Them What Brung You. *You may write to her via e-mail at mollyivins@star-telegram.com.*

Clinton's Foreign Jobs Program

The good news is that the United States at long last has a jobs program, creating good-paying jobs in manufacturing! The bad news is that the jobs are in Turkey, South Korea, Poland, and elsewhere — not in the U.S. of A.

The worst news is that these jobs are in the arms industry, manufacturing weapons that ultimately could be used by dictators against their own people, their neighbors, or against us!

A story on the website of *Mother Jones* magazine notes that the same Bill Clinton who campaigned in 1992 on cutting the world trade in arms, has become the Music Man of international arms sales. He has required our embassies to shill for U.S. weapons makers, literally becoming sales agents for Lockheed and the rest. It worked. In his first year alone, U.S. arms sales doubled. Since he's been in office, the U.S. government has sold, arranged the sale, or given away some $200 billion in weapons to nearly every nation on earth.

Also since Clinton has been in office, the U.S. weapons makers have cut some 800,000 American jobs. Odd, huh? More sales, fewer jobs.

What's at work here is that U.S. policy is to promote arm sales by giving what are called "offsets" to the purchasing country. The "offset" is an incentive in the form of agreeing that our corporations will make some or all of the weapons in their country, hiring their people to do the job. Lockheed Martin, for example, in a deal to sell F-16s to Poland, is offering to build an assembly plant there where they would make all future F-16s to be sold in all of central Europe. So, Lockheed shareholders make a bundle, but U.S. workers don't get a dime — indeed, they get the shaft. Of course, they can always join the air force and look forward to the next war when those foreign-made F-16s are shooting at them.

To get this full story, check www.motherjones.com/arms.

CORPORATE CONFESSIONS

Today, Spaceship Hightower takes you on a way out trip to the fringes of career opportunities, to a place you might not want to go. Webster Hubbell is one of the stars out there, as is Mark Morse, Nicholas Wallace, and a few other — how shall I put this — "finaglers." These are all former executives who ended up in the pokey because of assorted white-collar crimes. Hubbell is the former top official at the U.S. Justice Department who had to step down because of publicity about improprieties at his law firm — improprieties that led him to prison for mail fraud and tax evasion. Morse did four years in jail for his role in a carpet-cleaning company that bilked investors for some $100 million. Wallace did seven years for a $350 million fraud with a Florida brokerage house.

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that these fine fellows, having been pros in the field of high finance, then having been cons in various prisons, have now made another career move to go on the lecture circuit with a speakers' bureau called The Pros & The Cons. Headed by former C.P.A. and noncriminal Gary Zeune, Pros & Cons specializes in providing speakers to conventions of accountants, giving talks on how they stole from clients. Hubbell says, "It's kind of like an alcoholic talking about what happened to them when they started drinking. There's something about confession."

Zeune, who has five former convicts in his troupe, says that they're great for the staid and usually boring C.P.A. meetings, because the charm and other qualities that helped these guys hoodwink bankers also help make them good speakers. And, of course, they are experts at fraud, which C.P.A.s are hired to detect — as one said, "you might as well learn from the best."

In the strange world of corporate criminals, they do the crime, do the time, then collect dimes for talking about it.

THE HYPOCRITICAL OATH

The guiding ethic of our medical system goes back nearly 2,500 years to the Hippocratic Oath, which established a standard of behavior and integrity for doctors, including the admonition that, first, they should "do no harm."

But while doctors still swear to this oath, the executives and bean counters of H.M.O.s do not — and they are doing a great deal of harm. It never occurred to Hippocrates that bureaucratic behemoths called H.M.O.s would one day exist, and that they would position themselves between doctors and patients, literally making decisions on what kind of treatment the doctor can give. And Hippocrates would be horrified to learn that these managed-care corporations make their decisions based not so much on the health of the patients as on the health of their bottom lines.

In today's system of corporatized medicine, patients are referred to as "cost units," and the job of the doctor is that of an assembly-line worker who must hold down costs by rushing these "units" through the system, providing only as much care as the corporate manual prescribes. One doctor told *The New York Times* that his H.M.O. expects him to see eight patients an hour — this means he has only seven minutes with each patient before shouting, "Next!"

Another physician, Dr. Thomas Self in San Diego, is proud of his reputation of being a thorough and careful children's doctor. When H.M.O.s took over, however, Mr. Self's thoroughness got him fired — they said he spent too much time per child and did too many tests to find out what ailed them. But, according to Dr. Self, the top H.M.O. executives did make exceptions to their usual rush-rush procedure — when they sent their children to see him. Then they wanted him to focus on the child, not on the profit picture. "In two instances," he said, "I was told to do whatever was necessary, with no thought given to cost, by the executive whose children were being treated." □

Jim Hightower's radio talk show broadcasts daily from Austin on over 100 stations nationwide. His book, There's Nothing in the Middle of the Road but Yellow Stripes and Dead Armadillos *is in paperback. Find him at www.jimhightower.com, or e-mail: info@jimhightower.com.*

Learning Experiences

by Bernard Rapoport

I had two learning experiences on a recent trip to Israel, Egypt, and France. As we were touring in an area in Egypt close to the pyramids, our guide said, "I want to take you to a carpet factory. You are going to see some young children who have great aspirations." I asked, "How young are they?" She said, "nine, ten, and eleven." The hair on the back of my neck bristled, because I have been adamantly opposed to what we now have outlawed in the United States: child labor. I expressed amazement that this was something she wanted me to see. I told her about my prejudice. Piaget sagaciously advised parents that, in order to communicate with children, you must ask for permission to enter their mind. Somehow I gave her permission to enter my mind, and she said, "Remember, we are a Third World country." My abrupt thought was, "So what? We are talking about children."

She quietly added, "We are a very poor country. We have to make accommodations that countries like yours that are wealthy do not have to consider. We let these children work four hours a day and they go to school four hours. They are able to get some education and concomitantly can help their families by contributing income, and learning a trade that will hold them in good stead as they grow older."

We went into the factory. These children were happy, excited, and proud of what they were doing. They let us take pictures. They were anxious because it was nearing the end of the four hours, time to go to school. Here I had a prejudice, a closed mind and all of a sudden, I gave that mind a chance to open a little bit. While I still have the same reservations about child labor, at least I understand that ideal conditions are not always possible. There are situations which require adjustments, tolerance, and a recognition that what is possible may not be absolutely right, but the alternative is worse. At least the working conditions were not terrible, and schooling was a requirement!

On the same trip, I was listening to the London news, and heard an interview between the writer Christian Tyler and Simon Wiesenthal, the unrelenting Nazi hunter. Wiesenthal was asked, "Is it possible that persecutions will ever cease?" He responded, "There is always this illusion that one side only has the truth, and there is no place for the other. So persecution becomes an important component of some people's existence." To the question, "Would it always be like this?" he responded, "I hope for my children, that they will have another life – that they will live in another world."

After my personal experience in Egypt, and hearing the interview with Wiesenthal, I have come to believe more than ever before that there can be no good life for an individual unless his mind is open to understanding. The intransigent mind is perhaps the greatest obstacle to peace. The closed mind is insurance that there cannot be a better world – no, not until the mind is opened. □

The Crisis at Pacifica

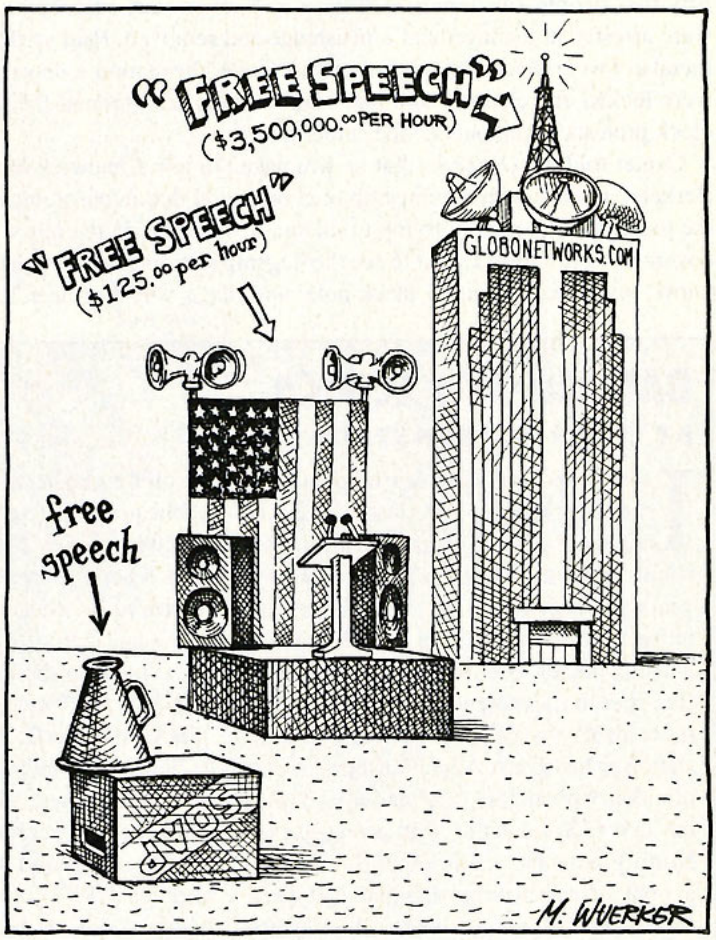
BY JULIE HOLLAR

Pacifica has been less than peaceful lately. The community radio foundation, which owns five stations across the country (including KPFT in Houston), has been embroiled in a lengthy controversy over the mission and future of its radio network. Protests are taking place at all five stations, but currently the most explosive battle zone is Berkeley, California, home to the founding Pacifica station, KPFA.

Since July 14, several hundred protesters have rallied daily outside KPFA in response to a literal lockout of the entire KPFA staff by Pacifica's national management. (Pacifica spokesmen insist that the staff is not locked out but has been placed on "paid administrative leave.") As many as two thousand demonstrators have marched through Berkeley to protest Pacifica's actions, and the ongoing "Camp KPFA" outside the station is generating teach-ins, impromptu concerts, and around-the-clock protests. "I have never seen a movement build this fast," said renowned Pacifica broadcaster Larry Bensky. "All you've got to say is, they shut down free speech radio in the name of *what*?" Bensky, fired earlier this year for discussing the controversy on the air, is now a spokesman for the protest.

The most recent conflict at KPFA began March 31, when the contract of outspoken KPFA program director Nicole Sawaya was not renewed because, according to Pacifica management, she "wasn't a good fit" with the organization. KPFA staff protested, Sawaya sued, and Pacifica took steps to tighten security at the station — including re-programming coded door locks and closely controlling station access. "It's like The Gulag Radio," said Dennis Bernstein, one of the locked-out KPFA staff members (see "Banned by Pacifica," page 21). Pacifica says the security measures were made necessary by threats against administrative personnel, and because shortly after Sawaya's dismissal, shots had been fired into Pacifica's Berkeley offices. (The shooting remains under police investigation.)

The KPFA dispute is the latest chapter in a larger controversy within the national organization, particularly over governance changes (also the subject of current litigation) which have diminished the authority of individual stations' local community boards. But Pacifica also maintains a so-called "non-disclosure policy" (informally known as "the gag rule") forbidding programmers to discuss internal station matters over the air. "This is not a soap box. And for people to misuse it in that way is a terrible travesty. That's not what community radio is about," said ex-Pacifica spokesperson Elan Fabbri (on July 22, Fabbri was replaced by a pricey San Francisco public relations firm specializing in "crisis management"). But correspondent Bensky, who has been with Pacifica radio for more than thirty years, said that the policy now being punitively enforced had been no more than an informal network custom against airing "dirty laundry": that is, personal criticism of colleagues on the air. "You've got to know the difference between dirty laundry and a burning laundromat," said Bensky, "and this is a burning laundromat."



The repeated invocation of the gag rule by Pacifica management triggered the current lockout and protests at KPFA. Following Bensky's April dismissal from the national network, volunteer KPFA programmer Robbie Osman lost his show in June for a similar violation.

On July 13, during the daily "Flashpoints" news discussion program, reporter Dennis Bernstein broadcast a taped portion of a public press conference held earlier by media watchdog group Media Alliance. The pending lawsuit against Pacifica had been discussed, as well as a leaked e-mail memorandum from Houston-based national board member Micheal Palmer to Pacifica board chair Mary Frances Berry, discussing in detail the possible sale of KPFA and New York station WBAI (see The Back Page, "Free-

dom's Just Another Word ...").

Immediately following "Flashpoints," interim station manager Garland Ganter (imported by Pacifica executive director Lynn Chadwick from Pacifica's Houston station, KPFT, where he is station manager) informed Bernstein that he had violated the gag rule and was being placed on administrative leave. When Bernstein refused to leave the station, he was threatened with arrest by Ganter and his armed security guards. But Bernstein was soon joined in his defiance by the rest of the station staff. A portion of the loud argument between Bernstein and Ganter was broadcast live over KPFA, attracting numerous protesters who surrounded the newsroom and the station. After several hours of fruitless negotiations, fifty-two people (including Bernstein and other staff members) were arrested at management's insistence and removed. Paid staff members were placed on administrative leave, the station's doors were locked and chained, and the windows boarded. Around-the-clock protests began outside the station.

Ganter told the *Observer* that he was asked to join Chadwick in Berkeley to help with administrative chores, and that in enforcing the gag rule, he's simply trying to maintain "balance" in the news coverage. "I just didn't want to see the flagship station go dark, you know, to get sucked into a black hole, and that's why I'm here," Ganter said. Since the lockout began, the station, staffed by Ganter, a single engineer (also from Houston), and a few contract staff, has continued to broadcast — but only pre-recorded tapes and recorded music. Ganter dismissed charges by his colleagues that he is acting as a "scab" for Pacifica management. "Nobody's been fired," he said, "so I disagree when people call me a scab."

Last year, ostensibly to bring Pacifica into compliance with long-standing Corporation for Public Broadcasting rules, the national governing board became self-nominating, and prohibited concurrent local-national board membership. Critics accuse Chadwick and her predecessor Pat Scott (both former C.P.B. Task Force members) of using C.P.B. to force the changes by threatening the withholding of C.P.B. funds (about 15 percent of Pacifica's annual funding) if technical governance regulations that had not been enforced for twenty years were not immediately complied with.

If not overturned by the recent lawsuit filed by local station staff, the new national policies could damage community radio in Berkeley and elsewhere. They would leave Pacifica free, for example, to pursue management's apparent project of "shutting down that unit [KPFA] and re-programming immediately." That's a quote from the now notorious Palmer e-mail, which Media Alliance made pub-

BANNED BY PACIFICA

BY DENNIS BERNSTEIN

I never expected to be censored and arrested for reporting the truth at a Pacifica station — even if that truth was about Pacifica. I came to Pacifica twenty years ago because of the network's reputation for having taken on Joe McCarthy, and for having been at the center of the free speech movement; indeed, it was the movement's voice. KPFA was the first station to broadcast Allen Ginsberg's revolutionary poem, "Howl," and it was also the first U.S. media to send a reporter to North Vietnam to get the other side. It was a time of astonishing national and personal transformations: when I first heard Pacifica, I was training to be a cop, hoping to join the C.I.A. and turn the clock back on the communists.

Now, to my shock and profound disappointment, Pacifica, guided by extraordinary amounts of ignorance and arrogance, has been transformed from a network created to "speak truth to power" to one apparently committed to using all power necessary to suppress the truth.

On Tuesday, July 13, my bosses at Pacifica set a new standard for censorship at KPFA in Berkeley when they pulled me off the air for playing a fifteen-minute clip of a public press conference called by the media watchdog group, Media Alliance, and two related commentaries. Media Alliance had discussed the crisis at KPFA, and released an e-mail memo from a Pacifica national board member discussing the potential sale of KPFA and New York's Pacifica station, WBAI (see The Back Page).

Because I later reported this highly newsworthy and widely covered press conference, Pacifica's hit-man from Houston, Garland Ganter (station manager of KPFT) attempted to have me bounced out of the station like a drunk from a bar, calling on Pacifica's new private security force: literally hired guns from IPSA International. IPSA, as their web site helpfully explains, specializes in "hostile terminations," corporate downsizing, and the needs of the new corporate executives, which can no longer be met by "traditional law enforcement" — including even military sharpshooters for particularly difficult situations.

Pacifica insists that the new security measures were for our own safety, and in response to a rumored radical takeover of the station. What they really feared is that the staff might continue to do its job of reporting the news. July 12, national board chair Mary Frances Berry arrived in Oakland and held an invitation-only press conference. I and other uninvited journalists found out about it and arrived to ask questions. Pacifica communications director Elan Fabbri, using hotel security, tried to physically restrain certain reporters from entering the room. She attempted to grab a tape recorder out of my hands and blocked a television camera in an attempt to prevent interviews of journalists who had been forbidden entrance. (Afterwards, the cameraman said Fabbri was acting "more like Goebbels" [Hitler's propaganda chief] than a spokesperson for a community radio network.) To Berry's credit, she allowed everyone into the press conference, even calling on me for a question.

The next day, in a staff meeting called by Lynn Chadwick, I was told explicitly by Garland Ganter that despite Pacifica's "non-disclosure" policy (a.k.a. the gag rule), we would be allowed to cover whatever was being widely reported in the mainstream media. Yet a few hours later he

lic and Pacifica management insists was only Palmer's personal speculation. (Micheal Palmer is a Houston real estate broker and treasurer-elect of the national governing board.) In the e-mail, Palmer details to Berry, "as an update for you and Lynn (Chadwick)," the financial benefits of selling KPFA or WBAI. The two stations are uniquely valuable among national non-profit stations because their signals are "grandfathered" into broad FM frequencies normally reserved for commercial stations.

Fabbri — nicknamed "The Fabricator" by her critics — insisted that Palmer speaks only for himself. "We have absolutely no intention of selling any of our frequencies, including KPFA and WBAI," Fabbri told the *Observer*. "Micheal himself acted of his own volition, out of frustration with what was going on here." Palmer told the *Observer* he has been instructed not to publicly discuss Pacifica issues but released a statement through Pacifica apologizing for his memo. "I'm just sorry that a wrong keystroke on my part has created such an uproar. I still think we should look at selling one of our frequencies," he added, "but it's evident that the board and national organization don't agree with me."

Local dissent within Pacifica has been brewing for several years. During Scott's tenure, station managers were directed to increase fundraising by "broadening the audience." Programming consultants hired by Pacifica advised station managers to diminish the role of what they consider "fringe" political and social affairs programming, in order to increase revenue-generating shows, especially pop music. Nowhere has this trend been more extensive than at KPFT in Houston, where beginning in 1994 and 1995, Ganter replaced most of the local public affairs programs and ethnic music programs with a mixture of folk-rock and world-beat music, under the rubric "The Sounds of Texas and the World" (now reduced to "The Sound of Texas"). Ganter and Pacifica boast that KPFT now has more subscribing members and increased funding. But the station now produces no local news programming. It has retained little programming in the progressive Pacifica tradition: a weekly prison call-in show, some gay and lesbian programming, and the weekly one-hour "Progressive Forum" — on which the program director has forbidden any discussion of the ongoing Pacifica controversy. Ganter told the *Observer* a two-person news department is planned, and he defended the current minimalist state of KPFT informational programming, pointing to daily national broadcasts of "Democracy Now" and the "BBC News Hour." "We have a good amount of daily local public affairs," he said. Incidentally, KPFT is the only Pacifica station not to join the lawsuit against the Pacifica Foundation.

Pacifica defends its changes in the name of fostering "diversity,"

arrived personally to evict me from the station, after I had played the clip from the Media Alliance press conference. Ganter pursued me into the newsroom, where he and two of his IPSA thugs tried to grab me, in the process backing me into a broadcasting tape player — inadvertently throwing us live on the air. The whole world heard the rest. I started shouting at them, "I belong here!" and in the best tradition of Gandhi, Martin Luther King — and KPFA founder, Lewis Hill — I sat down.

Management's censorship and my subsequent arrest by Pacifica violated everything that KPFA free-speech radio stands for. Pacifica management has made a mockery of the First Amendment. They have claimed they want to "enhance diversity" on the network, but the real goal of this hostile takeover crew — led by a white man from Houston, with a top-down plan from Washington, D.C., under the armed protection of a virtually all-white private police force — has nothing to do with diversity. In fact, enhancing diversity at KPFA was precisely the goal of Nicole Sawaya, our fired station manager, herself a Lebanese-American. Sawaya was the first person to unify the contentious KPFA staff, and she had hired KPFA's first African-American program director and diversified KPFA's programming.

In contrast, Pacifica's new executive director, Lynn Chadwick, has been firing or alienating people (including people of color) into quitting since she arrived. The African-American program director quit to protest the summary firing of Pacifica reporter Larry Bensky after more than thirty years at Pacifica. The African-American morning show host quit, saying Chadwick and the new board had created a "toxic atmosphere." The ax continues to fall. This community radio station that has championed free speech is being systematically dismantled by powers-that-be in Washington, who pull the plug on any staffer who dares to question their actions on the air. The dozens of producers of color who work at KPFA strongly believe that Pacifica's justification of its heavy-handed policies is false. African-American producers at KPFA, for example, wrote to Berry, saying they refused to be "complicit in any Pacifica-driven purge of KPFA staffers under the guise of diversity." Other minority producers have delivered similar messages of solidarity.

My years at free speech radio have been dedicated to bringing people an alternative version of the news. Over the years, I have covered church burnings in the South, the savings and loan scandal, and Jean-Paul Aristide's return to Haiti. But my ultimate experience in giving voice to the voiceless came with the story of Eleanor Bumpurs, a sixty-six-year-old grandmother killed because she was late paying her rent. In the course of evicting Bumpurs from her Bronx apartment, police fired two shotgun blasts — one to her hand, the second, fatal, in her chest. I was able to bring to the airwaves young people who had heard the gunfire through the ceiling — to let them report the story the way they saw it, and so make a mark in their own history, in all our history. This is why I have stayed with Pacifica, because it has been a place where the words and actions of the disinherited are heard and taken seriously.

I will not be silenced or gagged. This is not, as Pacifica has claimed, simply a labor/management dispute, or a question of hate speech on the air. At stake at KPFA is the future of community radio and the preservation of a sacred Bay Area institution. KPFA has been invented and nourished by this community for fifty years, and it will continue to provide a strong voice for the voiceless, as well as a platform for activists and progressives to speak truth to power — without fear of reprisal. KPFA will not be silenced. □

accusing opponents of racism. But KPFA protesters respond that in fact national management has undermined diversity throughout the network, and the effective replacement of Sawaya by Ganter symbolizes the overall change. "In the name of diversity," said Bernstein, "they replaced a Lebanese single mother from the Berkeley community with a middle-aged white man from Houston, whose job is to impose a programming plan developed in Washington, D.C." As happened at KPFT, an alarming number of programmers at WBAI, KPFA, and KPFK in Los Angeles, have been removed from their positions over the past few years, sometimes without prior notice by management, while others have resigned in frustration.

Bensky posits two possible reasons why Pacifica is doing what they're doing: "One is that they've blundered from misstep to misstep because they're massively incompetent. The other is that they did have a plan all along, which involved selling either this station or the one in New York, and in order to do that they had to clean house and get all the union people out." Regardless of management's motivation, Bensky sees Pacifica's vision as inherently flawed, dismissing the notion that the way to save Pacifica is by building a huge endowment. "There's only one way that Pacifica's going to be on a firm financial footing for the future," he said. "You put on programming that listeners value enough so that they will share a little bit of their money with you."

In the wake of the KPFA lockout and the mounting nationwide protests, Pacifica management appears increasingly isolated. The Berkeley mayor, city council, and California state legislators have spoken out in favor of the protests and in support of mediation. Even the national board is becoming sharply divided. According to Rabbi Aaron Kreigel, a board member from Los Angeles and vocal opponent of the lockout strategy, each decision Chadwick makes alienates the board further. "There's a strong showing of no-confidence," he said. "People who have been quiet are no longer quiet on the board."

On July 19, the Berkeley community held a benefit concert for Camp KPFA, featuring Joan Baez, Utah Phillips, and a number of local bands. Following the sold-out concert, much of the crowd marched to KPFA, vowing to continue the protests. The following day, Bensky told the *Observer* that Pacifica had finally agreed to meet with a group representing KPFA, whose members include community, staff, union, and volunteer representation. "I don't see any way that we're going to lose this," Bensky said, "because never in my lifetime have I seen a movement build as quickly as this one. This is not only local and national, but it's international now." □

Julie Hollar is an Observer *editorial intern.*

(For current information, consult the rebellion websites at www.savepacifica.net, *and* www.radio4all.org/freepacifica/index.html. *The official Pacifica page is at* www.pacifica.org. *For news on Houston action, contact Edwin Johnston:* edi@iah.com)

"Salinas," from page 15

in protests in the streets of Mexico City. And when he'd made his excuses, he returned to Ireland.

Carlos Salinas chose Ireland because he could stay there — in the sense that it was agreeable to reside there for a while, and also in the sense that he could not be forced to leave. Meanwhile, the Irish seemed happy to let him stay. As a man who had fought his country's fight and was reviled for his heroism, now living as an outlaw, he must have seemed as familiar to them as Ireland felt to him. He's been described as a comet fallen from the sky, compared with a spurned lover, hailed as an economist and a politician, reviled as just another corrupt technocrat, his name occasionally even linked with the hated Pinochet. Perhaps it's simply easier to think of Salinas as an Irishman. He thinks of himself that way: a First World man with Third World memories. □

Michael Erard is an Austin writer in exile from New York.

When I moved

When I moved symmetrically with my partner,
I felt like there was another one of me.
My heart felt like I had another heart.
My body felt like I was looking in the mirror.
My mind felt like there was another mind focusing me.
My soul felt like there was no one to cancel me.

—CHRISTINA GONZALEZ

The Four Cousins

I am air, larger than anything.
I am breeze, tickle on your skin.
I am mist, friend of fog.
I am fog, you can't see.
I am everything that widens out.

—JOE BECK

Oceans

Where the cheek of the sea is smoothest
The sun's eye (Blake's meaningful sun and its rays)
Causes a light blush
Appearing, spreading out of the fog,
Tinting the horizon. But not gold.
The sandpiper has appeared
I am not the only person writing on a surface
Dog prints run at the side of the girl.
With the broken arm.

Something within me is also straited, bound.
A sea world aroma seeps through
Low offshore islands spilled out like still black coffee
Water crests and dies.
Today they bombed bridges, buses and sent fire
And I, of course, cannot see the people
Who hide as flames spread out along the limits of the fog.

—LAMI

Christina González lives in Austin and will be a third-grader next year. She wrote her poem in conjunction with a year of study of modern dance at Austin's Travis Heights Elementary, taught by Michele Owens-Pearce.

Joe Beck is eight years old and lives in Minneapolis with his family and two cats. He enjoys playing the piano, loves ragtime, plays baseball, and has started his own garden and magazine.

Lami is a native Missourian who has been living in Israel for many years. She has published four books, including *Penumbra* and *Falsetto*, and has worked as an editor and a translator.

Viva summer! Viva long days in which to read and write!

—Naomi Shihab Nye

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The Fate Of Poetry

What's at Stake in the Battle of the Books?

BY PAUL CHRISTENSEN

POETRY AFTER MODERNISM.
Revised edition.
Edited by Robert McDowell.
Story Line Press.
388 pages. $17.95 (paper).

AND WHAT ROUGH BEAST:
Poems at the End of the Century.
Edited by Robert McGovern and Stephen Haven.
Ashland Poetry Press.
187 pages. $12.00 (paper).

▲ *From the cover of* Poetry After Modernism

Robert McDowell, publisher of Story Line Press and editor of *Poetry After Modernism,* has long been trying to establish a right-wing takeover of poetry. It isn't the first time someone tried to capture poetry for the conservatives. The nineteenth century was rife with attempts to seize the essentially liberal act of writing and make it orthodox, reactionary, the voice of racial utopianists. In the 1930s, Southern Agrarians replaced the Modernists with a return to formalism and the apolitical New Criticism, forcing poetry into obscure corners during World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Cold War and other social crises, which went largely ignored. But since conservatism is fundamentally opposed to experiment, change, or subjectivity — the roots of the poetic act — all such efforts end in confusion.

Until recently, our general sense of publishers has been that they advocate the liberal view of life. Jewish émigrés coming from central Europe with a long tradition of support for populist causes set up publishing houses to do the same thing in the U.S. Principal among them was the house of Knopf, which gathered up a lot of the first-line talent that was articulate, contentious, and critical of the Protestant ruling class. Assimilation, absorption by the media conglomerates, and the reactionary drift of national politics have all had their influence in changing the ideological character of New York's Fleet Street. Now come the new conservative publishers, led by Rupert Murdoch, pushing the focus of communication well to the right across the entire media spectrum.

Robert McDowell is part of this new conservative push, but his means and his ambitions set him apart from the grubbier struggles of talk radio, Fox News, and Christian evangelical agitprop. McDowell is serious and focused, and his ideological savvy puts Story Line Press in a class with the *Washington Times* and the *National Review.* If you want to know how conservatism tries to be literary and include poetry in its values, read *Poetry After Modernism.* It will inform you what is at stake in the conservative assault on higher culture, and depress you to know how little is actually contained in the right's vision of life.

McDowell's introduction insists his real target is not liberalism but mediocrity, the lazy versification of the self-absorbed who write nothing but free-verse lyrics that all sound the same. I don't quarrel with his prey; I've been saying the same thing for years — and teaching narrative and dramatic poetry in my classes to combat the dismal cloning of the so-called "Iowa style" of lyric, the laundry list of daily trivia by which a kind of psychological glimpse into self is achieved. The University of Iowa is the home of the first creative writing program, organized by Paul Engels back in the fifties. His method of formulaic lyric, with an emphasis on imagery and tonal irony, has become the template by which every other university program teaches the art.

The free-verse poem is in fact cousin to what the psychologists call "talking cures," and suggests that what makes us turn to evil are alienation and poverty, what heals us is self-disclosure. But to orthodox thinkers like McDowell, looking within is anathema; they don't want to know where motives come from, just that action is either good or evil. Behind the conservative distrust of psychology is the notion of Christian determinism: a soul is born and not made. It goeth up or down as God wills, and neither Freud nor Jung can change that. Though it may not

seem so at first glance, the lyric poem is also related to much else in the liberal world view: the rehabilitative obligations of the penal system, the role of environment in nurture, the need to open the poem to all levels of language and experience in order to illuminate the ranges of the soul.

McDowell is challenging all that in *Poetry After Modernism*. The major thrust of the book is to push poetry away from psychology back toward classical mimesis: imitation of the practical world. Two of the more ambitious essays of this book, "Poetry and Religion" by Mark Jarman, and Dana Gioia's "Business and Poetry," argue exactly for a return to the pre-psychological poem. Navel gazing and trances are strictly *verboten*. Jarman would substitute religion for psychology, and Gioia would have us turn to corporate daily life as the source of our most important experience.

In a curious self-contradiction, Meg Shoerke's essay, "The Armor of Outside," attacks earlier male critics for denouncing sentimentalism in women's poetry, only to praise women for now writing dry-eyed realism while male poets openly weep. Her lash is intended for all those Vietnam-era poets crying about the war. Nowhere does a critic praise the psychological poem; even Jonathan Holden, writing intelligently on "American Male Poetry of Sensibility," finds the symbolist tradition awash in tears over lost youth and spent male powers. He quotes from my own 1984 essay ("Malignant Innocence") on Dave Smith to show how the symbolist poem is essentially a dirge over lost innocence, unwittingly supplying McDowell with another brickbat against lyric poetry.

McDowell interprets the term "modernism" to mean an "escape from personality," Eliot's phrase for one of the aims of modernist poetry. Pound and Eliot both were absorbed with how to make a poem be *about* something, hoping to avoid what Pound called the "emotional slither" of the Victorian era. But Eliot's best poetry was about his sexual insecurity; Pound's real concern was to switch the emphasis of subjectivity away from human beings back to nature, where the landscape thought to itself and poets listened in. If anything, Pound and the other Modernists were interested in the *animism* of things — what made them compose complex orders that aroused the imagination. Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens were all involved in "listening," doing Emerson's work in the field. They did not so much eschew psychology as replant it in the woods. Still, McDowell reads modernism as a turning back to Aristotle's world, and he has a point.

Williams' poetic motto, "No ideas but in things" was a rallying call for modernism, as was Marianne Moore's "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Everyone wanted to deal with the world as it was. The thirties invented Objectivism, and the fifties came up with Objectism. But in pushing for an absolute mimesis in poetry, one came back to the question of how the mind works and whether language was a reliable medium for capturing reality. Hence, language poetry and "Deep Image," Frank O'Hara's "personism," and all the other eruptions of the psychological in the very heart of the twentieth century. Iowa was merely the simplification of these trends toward the psychic, and found a simple formula for allowing beginners to hack away at the self in verse.

Iowa is not the problem; it is merely a nuisance, like Wal-Mart and McDonalds. The school found a simple, easily franchised method of writing to peddle, and the more craven universities put together highly marketable writing programs to make a profit. The magazines reflect this franchised mode of poetry, but you don't have to read them, and you can certainly dig a little deeper and find the real poetry where it has always been, at the literary fringes. McDowell is merely using Iowa as a foil for getting his own agenda accepted as the literary mainstream.

The weaker essays of this collection are the more doctrinaire ones — Dana Gioia gets nowhere in his ramblings about the relation of poetry and business. His argument is that since everyone works, why don't more poets write about this common experience? The subtext is the McDowell thesis: get poetry away from self and its psychological depths, the liberal pit. So Gioia harangues us about all the poets who were businessmen, but he can't seem to find anything to measure up to that Victorian slogger, "The Song of the Shirt," or Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children," long verse essays on the toils of the underclass. Gioia wants a poetic vindication of business, but even Wallace Stevens can't help him. Stevens knew the office was not the "palm at the end of the mind." Only Gioia thinks business is wonderful and liberating, a cause for celebration. Would he consider writing an epic on downsizing, the glass ceiling, or carpal-tunnel syndrome?

Michael Lind, the journalist who wrote *Up from Conservatism* and author of the reactionary epic poem, *The Alamo* (1997), wants to restore epic to its roots in physical experience, i.e., the non-psychological. If you've read *The Alamo* (or tried to), you will want to skip over his piece, or risk having to read sentences like, "It simply is not true that moral courage is more important than physical courage." In other words, *Rambo* is a superior piece of telling to, say, *The Red Badge of Courage*.

McDowell's own essay, "Poetry and Audience," reads a bit like Bob Dole trying to set things right for poetry. It is the old grouse that poetry is written for the "pocket audience": the academic and poet-wannabe groupies who don't know a good line from a bad one. The real public could read poems just as well but chooses not to — because poets refuse to tell good stories. Over and over in this book, McDowell as editor and as contributor hammers at the theme that *stories*, plain, easy-access yarns, would solve the problems of elitism and paralysis that characterize poetry after Modernism. Consult the bestseller list to see what the divine average is reading these days, then think how you might turn all those diet and sex manuals into deathless verse.

Frederick Turner, at times a good poet and certainly an intelligent man, closes this collection with "Beauty: The Foundation of Cognition," a tortured defense of Lamarckian evolution, with the past as a kind of mud and muddle from which we arose, guided by our sense of beauty:

...There is a limestone cave near Zhoukoudian in northern China where human beings lived almost continuously for close to a quarter of a million years. It is filled almost to the roof with eighteen feet of compacted human debris — ash, bed places, bones. At the bottom, the oldest layers contain great ham-handed hammerstones, cutting clubs with a shard knocked off for a blade, and the clumsy bones and skulls of

Homo erectus. At the top, there are delicate leaf-shaped flint arrowheads, fine awls and augers, featherlike knives; and human jawbones made elegant by cookery, braincases made ample and capacious by ritual.

Note the *made* here, as opposed to blind chance. A little dining with a fork and spoon, and your brain gets bigger. Onward, at the end of the carriage drive, the Old South awaits.

Beauty takes many forms, and Turner coyly suggests calling them "genres." Okay. So anyone who follows the formalities of Anglo-American poetry will naturally evolve to higher consciousness. Those who drift and explore human nature in disorderly sentences will, we gather, devolve back to those nasty cave-dwelling ancestors of ours.

Turner's evolutionary propaganda inevitably allies literary conservatism with past totalitarian ideologies bent on controlling nature and achieving racial "progress." His veneration of the future is akin to many sordid fantasies in the twentieth century — some of which ended in pogroms and holocausts. What no one trusts in this book is simple human nature; everyone believes chaos starts at the edge of the mind, and unless cold will restrains us, we will leap back to some demonic feral state. There is profound paranoia here, and it begins just where Ginsberg unzipped his syntax and began howling.

McDowell can tolerate gay verse, even black feminist poetry — because he interprets them as aspirations to slough off marginalism and join the Anglo-American hegemony. If you can rhyme, write in the standard forms, and sound grammatical, you're in. If you don't believe in progress, and find Turner's idea of beauty more like a defense of *Birth of a Nation,* you're a liberal dog in the manger.

Countering everything in *Poetry After Modernism* is a new anthology called *And What Rough Beast: Poems at the End of the Century*, edited by Robert McGovern and Stephen Haven. These undaunted soldiers of the poetry wars sifted through twelve thousand poems of the Iowa Age to find the 175 published here. What they came up with is a song cycle on the terrors, set-backs, miseries, and calamities of the bloodiest century on record. It's a collective denunciation of power gone wrong; of militarism turned against the civilian world; assaults against corporate oligarchy and the infinite franchises; it's about the breakdown of the individual, and also about trusting nature as the only sane alternative to the madhouse of corporate civilization.

Everyone's here, it seems: Marvin Bell, Hayden Carruth, Turner Cassity, Philip Dacey, Jane Hirschfield and Carolyn Kizer, Rachel Loden, Mordecai Marcus and Peter Meinke, Pattiann Rogers, Grace Shulman, David Ray and Carol Muske, Alice Fulton and so on, 157 poets. Walt McDonald and I are among the few delegates from Texas to this poetry convention. The poems agree on one thing: the primacy of self and its powers to perceive, discover, and to probe for human feeling in a world gone awry. This book is like reading Paul Auster with a metronome.

If historians of some future time were to have only this one book by which to know the twentieth century, they would conclude we had plunged into another Dark Age, an era of sinister fantasies like the one described in Philip Dacey's "Disney: The Wall."

I'll never forget the way Snow White
stood out so pretty against the polished black
granite and how I jumped when the sniper's shot

stained her gown with fake blood that looked
so real — you can count on the magic of Disney —
I thought I was going to be sick....

Julia Vinograd, the Berkeley street poet, has a fine poem on the century's war mania, called "Peace."

Peace is invisible.
When it happens we don't notice it.
We focus on the wars inside peace
to have something to see:
war with the landlord, war with families,
war with traffic jams, war with work,
war with love.

William Pitt Root has a powerful summary of the century of war in "Writing Late Through the Night of the Tiananmen Square Massacre," which begins:

I'm thinking of Tiananmen Square, of how awkward
Chinese can be on an English tongue, of the tanks,
warhorses of our age, bearing down on the brave who
stood their ground too long, who died under the treads,
their bodies, according to witnesses, popping like melons.
I'm thinking of the language that follows war like hyenas,
disposing of the dead, the mad cackling in the dark
as the powerful jaws of distortion do their work.

There are many poems on the industrialization of food, but among the most vivid is Timothy Liu's "Billions Served," which in its assault upon factory food kills more birds than one:

A cow without an eye? Not an uncommon sight
in stockyards run by the stocks we hold — cancer

eating out her eye, half of her face, and part
of her skull and brain. Better to have died

en route — pig sockets bleeding from electric
shocks that send them squealing down a steel sluice,

the ones not fit for meat left to starve — guts
bursting from the sides of a goat as maggots hatch

in the folds. How far now to the nearest fast-
food joint?

If this is progress, give me a one-way ticket back to the cave dwellers. But I'll take *And What Rough Beast* along to keep me company. It is a great outpouring of the human soul in a time of turmoil and social nausea. Each poem in the book is like a hand going up in a crowd to voice an objection. What one says, many feel. And one by one, as the pages turn, hands keep going up. You get the feeling America is not happy. You also get the feeling the country is a lot smarter than you think — and that poets are doing just fine without Robert McDowell's conservative revolution. □

Paul Christensen is a poet and a professor at Texas A&M. His new book, West of the American Dream, *is forthcoming from Texas A&M University Press.*

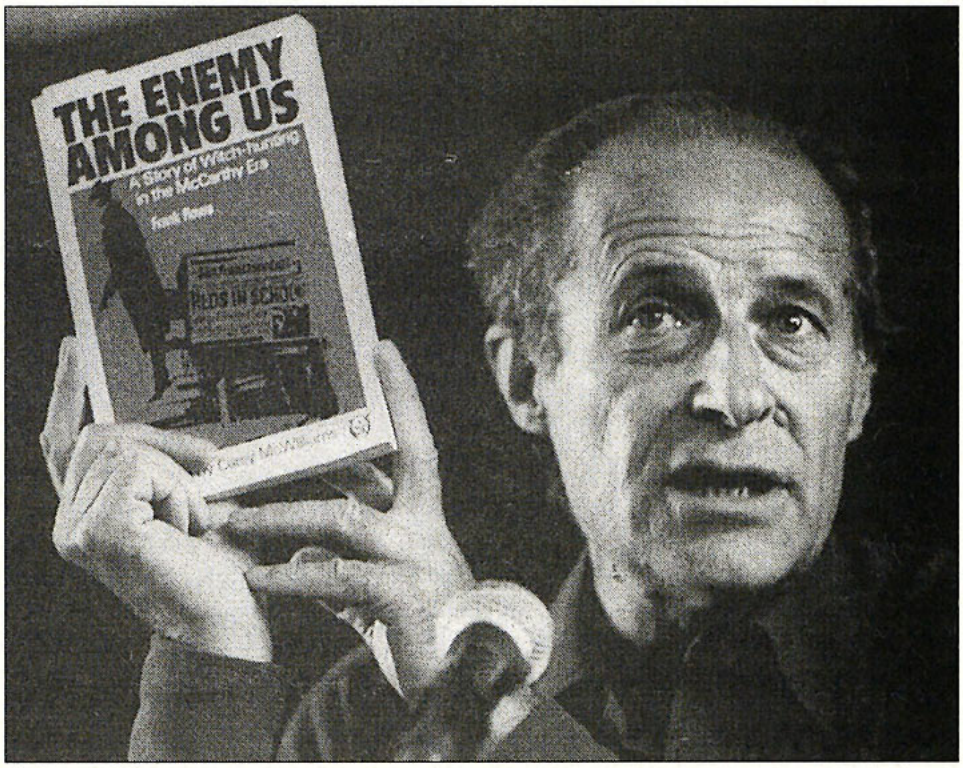
Sound Sensation

Pacifica's Heritage of Community Radio

BY CHRIS GARLOCK

ACTIVE RADIO:
Pacifica's Brash Experiment.
By Jeff Land.
University of Minnesota Press.
179 pages. $16.95 (paper).

PACIFICA RADIO:
The Rise of an Alternative Network.
By Matthew Lasar.
Temple University Press.
320 pages. $34.95.



▲ *Trevor Thomas* — Temple University Press

The New York Times recently called radio "the most ubiquitous consumer electronics device in the nation," reporting that there are eight radios in every house in the land — and if you include car radios, nine or ten.

Lumped in with the rest of our appliances — as if it were a talking toaster — radio has fallen far in the fifty years since Alexander Meiklejohn suggested that radio "opened up before us the possibility that, as a people living a common life under a common agreement, we might communicate with one another freely with regard to the values, the opportunities, the difficulties, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the plans and purposes, of that common life."

By the time Meiklejohn wrote those words, however, radio, barely twenty years old, had already been handed over to commercial interests, who were intent on selling their goods to what the president of the four-year-old National Broadcasting Company extolled as "the most numerous and attentive audience ever assembled." In just two decades, a grassroots mass medium was transformed into a delivery system for consumer ears. It was a process that would be repeated again and again over the years, right up to the recent handover of digital broadcast spectrum to many of the very same companies that reaped huge windfalls seventy years ago. In 1999, as our newest electronic medium, the Internet — perhaps the most democratic mass medium to come along since radio — struggles with efforts to privatize and commercialize it, two new books explore the complex entity that is Pacifica Radio, which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year.

Pacifica has been much in the news lately, as the latest battles rage over the control, content, direction, and philosophy of the network. The strength of these books under review is that, freed of the heat of the moment, they provide not only a fascinating history of one of the most unique media experiments around, but a vivid and compelling reminder of the bright promise, not simply of Pacifica itself, and not just of the medium of radio, but of all of our communication technologies.

Pacifica at the half-century mark is "the story of a small group of people who, possessed of an idealism almost incomprehensible in our time, thought that dialogue could save the world," writes Matthew Lasar in *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network.* As the media monopolies slouch toward Disneyworld, it's useful to learn that Pacifica, the first nonprofit FM radio network in the United States, was explicitly created by pacifists to break down ideological barriers and encourage communication.

And if Pacifica has not wrought world peace, it has nonetheless managed to invent, single-handedly, listener-sponsored radio, community radio, and form a unique noncommercial chain of five stations across the country that, as *Active Radio: Pacifica's Brash Experiment* author Jeff Land puts it, "[has] served as a voice promoting social justice, international solidarity, personal transformation and creative expression for five decades."

Whether you consider radio a "consumer electronics device" or not, it's true that radio is ubiquitous. News, talk, and music is literally in the very air around us constantly, plucked out of the ether on car radios, Walkmans, and home stereo systems.

People who never read a daily newspaper or watch a TV newscast listen to the radio in the shower, on the way to work, in the office, and while they're jogging. Modern technology now enables anyone with a few pieces of relatively inexpensive equipment to broadcast live to millions of people equipped with radios often no larger than a credit card.

To understand what has happened to our mass media, we must turn back almost a hundred years, before the Internet, before television, and before radio.

Modern mass media began as nothing more than the simple dots and dashes of wireless telegraphy in the early years of the century. In 1912, Congress gave control of wireless telegraphy to the secretary of commerce: the Navy claimed thousands of amateur ham radio operators were interfering with their naval exercises. The secretary issued more than 8,000 permits for sending wireless telegraphic signals in the four years before World War I, and during the war, shut down all non-military use of radiotelegraphy.

After the war the government — acting at the behest of the Navy and budding corporate interests — established a national radio corporation (RCA) to challenge the control of the British-based Marconi system in global wireless technology. "It was in this milieu of postwar chauvinism, extensive amateur transmissions, and government-nurtured corporate mergers that the American mass media were born," writes Jeff Land, pointing out, "Daily radio broadcasting was possible only because the vast grassroots network of operators had over time built hundreds of thousands of personal receivers."

Like the Internet in the nineties, radio exploded overnight in the early twenties: while there were just fifty licensed stations in the United States at the end of 1921, within a year there were more than 500. "Almost immediately," Land writes, "the social destiny of radio became the subject of much glorious anticipation. Broadcasting, following electricity, the telegraph, and the telephone in the previous century, was heralded as a technological miracle capable of immense beneficial social transformations. Traveling on etheric channels, invisible electronic waves radiating from the heavens provided a seemingly unlimited

▲ *Lewis Kimball Hill* Temple University Press

bounty of entertainment and education."

RCA President General J.G. Harbord declared radio a boon to democracy, freeing citizens from the "contagion of the crowd." The solitary listener, Harbord said, listening to politicians in the privacy of his or her own living room, need not be a slave to mob enthusiasm but now was free to make political judgments based "solely on the logic of the issue." Preachers would convey the divine message to those who refused to attend church. Instantaneous international communication would end war.

High-minded stuff indeed. Within a few short years, however, it became clear that the most effective messages carried over the etheric channels were those designed to separate listeners from their money. Radio advertising rose from $4 million in 1926 to over $15 million in 1929, and almost $112 million in 1935. The 1927 White-Dill Act, which established the Federal Radio Commission (forerunner of the Federal Communications Commission), suspended every existing license, divided up the radio spectrum into ninety channels, and handed over the choicest channels to commercial stations, crowding everyone else to the margins, where they remain to this day.

"Everyone else" ranged from schools to churches to labor unions. Oregon State Agricultural College's KOAC, for example, broadcast a popular diet of weather reports, football, lectures, agricultural information, household hints, and student orchestra performances. The flood of advertising money after the 1927 Radio Act swept away most of the non-commercial stations, who could not afford the hardware and on-air talent necessary to retain their licenses.

The transformation of a powerful new medium into yet another tool for private profit has occurred so often by now that it's hardly even remarked on anymore. But the thirties and forties were different days, with warfare abroad and class struggle at home. The pacifist movement that began at the turn of the century took root in America, not just among those affected by the economic turbulence of the Great Depression, but at the highest levels of government: a 1933 Senate investigation revealed that arms merchants had fanned the political flames that consumed millions of people worldwide, and Woodrow Wilson himself asked "Is there not a man, woman or child in America ... who does not know [World War I] was an industrial and commercial war?"

By 1937, 95 percent of Americans polled on whether America should take part again if another war like World War I developed said, "No." Of course, we did enter the next war, and thousands of pacifists, sticking to their principles of nonviolence, were sent to Conscientious Objector camps. There, they met like-minded war resisters and, as they dug ditches and built trails, had plenty of time to try to figure out where the movement to end war and violence had gone wrong.

When Lewis Hill was six, his older brother gave him a crystal radio kit, and like many boys in the twenties, Hill became fascinated with radio. Hill studied philosophy at Stanford and "thought that if one could engage in dialogue with others, one could solve any human problem." Hill spent time in Washington as the Director of the A.C.L.U.'s National Committee on Conscientious Objectors, but eventually left D.C. convinced that "the pacifist movement had to find ways to communicate with people on their own terms, not just in the context of what he increasingly saw as an isolated, self-referential community, bent on dramatic but ineffectual forms of resistance," reports Lasar in *Pacifica Radio*.

Hill's two passions fused on April 15,

1949 in Berkeley, California, when KPFA went on the air. Hill's Pacifica Foundation had scraped together $15,000, and just enough surplus parts and donated equipment to begin broadcasting a signal that, on a good day, carried twenty miles — but whose effects would reverberate across an entire nation.

Pacifica's vision was in direct contradiction and opposition to everything commercial radio had become. In the living rooms where broadcasters saw consumers, Hill and his pacifist colleagues intended to reopen the door to the outside world. Instead of the consumerization and suburbanization that isolated listeners, Pacifica's radiowaves would carry "an intruder with a different point of view." Communication with different ideas would be welcomed and explored instead of shunned. "If this is too much to hope for," Hill said, "someone will have to explain to us how we can do with less."

This vision, which carries on today, half a century later, is directly responsible for much of the sound and shape of radio today. It was Pacifica that pioneered the use of the FM band, that invented listener-supported radio and, later, community radio. The hugely popular talk show phenomenon, which has driven the modern revival of radio, began in late-night freeform talkfests on Pacifica's KPFA in San Francisco and WBAI in New York City. At the very dawn of the sixties, Pacifica was there with tape-recorders at the sit-ins and be-ins, long before the mainstream media figured out which way the wind was blowing. It's even rumored that Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" had its radio debut on WBAI's overnight show, where Arlo Guthrie first sang his own anti-war anthem, "Alice's Restaurant."

Abbie Hoffman called in live daily reports during recesses of the Chicago Eight trial, and Seymour Hersh first broke the My Lai story on WBAI in 1969. While mainstream media dutifully regurgitated the U.S. military's daily press briefings, the Pacifica network made extensive use of *Agence Française*, the sole Western news agency with a permanent staff in Hanoi.

Among progressives, Pacifica's story is often cast as an ongoing struggle to protect the purity of the network's original vision and purpose. Matthew Lasar's *Pacifica Radio* delves more deeply into the roots and branches of this struggle, not to resolve the conflicts but to illuminate them. "A wise historian once said that by revealing the socially constructed nature of the past, we free ourselves to think critically and creatively about the present," writes Lasar.

Jeff Land is more interested in the external conflicts, and in exploring how Pacifica has "[used] radio's unique capacity to harness the power of the spoken word — the medium of consciousness itself — [struggling] to repair the damage that war, a culture of consumption, and commercial media have wrought upon our national psyche ... as a witness, commentator, and actor, its overall programming provides an ongoing chorus of voices, calling to mind an ideal of a peaceful, democratic, global community yet to be realized."

Together, they refute forever the distorted view of radio as nothing more than a "ubiquitous consumer electronics device." □

Chris Garlock, former producer of Hightower Radio, now lives and writes in Washington, D.C., where he works for the Metropolitan Washington Labor Council. For a report on the continuing struggle to defend Pacifica Radio, see "The Battle for Free Speech Radio," page 21.

Freedom's Just Another Word ...

Editor's Note: On July 13, Media Alliance of California received a misdirected e-mail memorandum from Micheal Palmer, national board member of the Pacifica Foundation, addressed to Mary Frances Berry, board chairman. Pacifica and Palmer have since described the memo as simply Palmer's personal thoughts, but its broadcast by KPFA–Berkeley reporters became the catalyst for protests at KPFA and other Pacifica stations, including KPFT–Houston.

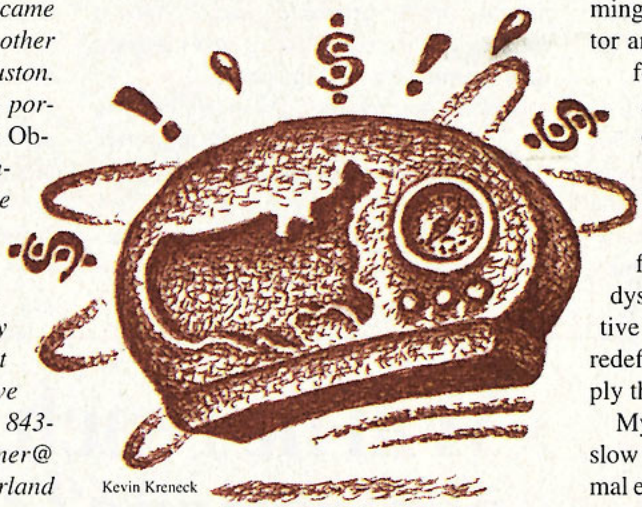
We are reprinting the substantive portions of Palmer's memo here, so that Observer *readers may judge for themselves whether or not it represents the spirit of Pacifica and listener-sponsored free-speech radio. We suggest that readers, especially in Houston, politely transmit any thoughts they may have on the matter to Dr. Berry at (888) 387-8263 or Pacifica Executive Director Lynn Chadwick at (510) 843-0130; you can e-mail Palmer <mpalmer@cbrichardellis.com> or KPFT's Garland Ganter <ganter@kpft.org>.*

From: Palmer, Micheal@Houston Galleria
To: Mary Frances Berry

Hello Dr. Berry,
I salute your fortitude in scheduling a news conference opportunity in the beloved Bay Area regarding one of the most pressing issues of our time.

But seriously, I was under the impression there was support in the proper quarters, and a definite majority, for shutting down that unit and re-programming immediately. Has that changed? Is there consensus among the national staff that anything other than that is acceptable/bearable? I recall Cheryl saying that the national staff wanted to know with certitude that they supported 100% by the Board in whatever direction was taken; what direction is being taken?

As an update for you and Lynn I spoke with the only radio broker I know last week.... The primary signal [KPFA–Berkeley] would lend itself to a quiet marketing scenario of discreet presentation to logical



Kevin Kreneck

and qualified buyers. This is the best radio market in history and while public companies may see a dilutive effect from a sale (due to the approximate 12 month repositioning effort needed), they would still be aggressive for such a signal. Private media companies would be the most aggressive in terms of price, which he thinks could be in the $65-75m range depending on various aspects of a deal. It would be possible to acquire other signals in the area, possibly more than one, to re-establish operations, but it could take a few years to complete if we want to maximize proceeds...

Mary I think any such transfer we would ever consider requires significant analysis, not so much regarding a decision to go forward, but how to best undertake the effort and to deploy the resulting capital with the least amount of tax, legal and social disruption. I believe the Finance Committee will undertake a close review of the Audigraphics data provided recently to determine what it is costing us per listener, per subscriber, per market, per hour of programming ... in order give the Executive Director and the General Managers benchmarks for improvement.... My feeling is that a more beneficial disposition would be of the New York signal [WBAI–New York] as there is a smaller subscriber base without the long and emotional history as the Bay Area, far more associated value, a similarly dysfunctional staff though far less effective and an overall better opportunity to redefine Pacifica going forward. It is simply the more strategic asset....

My feeling is that we are experiencing a slow financial death which is having the normal emotional outbursts commensurate with such a disease. We will continually experience similar events, in fact we have been experiencing similar events over the past several years, primarily because we are not self supporting through subscriber contributions and have a self imposed constraint on asset redeployment that leaves us cash starved at a time when our industry is being propelled in new directions, each requiring capital outlays of consequence. We're boxed in at our own will. This board needs to be educated, quickly, and to take action that will be far more controversial that the KPFA situation. How can we get there?

So, now I've exhaled more than I should, but you know where I'm at. Let's do something.

MDP