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HOME: JULY 7, 2006: NEWS: NAKED CITY

Naked City



The Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas staged a protest outside of Seton Shoal Creek Hospital on June 28. After falling out of favor, the controversial electroshock therapy has begun making a comeback. "It is a shame and a disgrace that our primary city hospital for mental health care administers this brain-damaging treatment," said CAEST spokesman John Breeding. "The people of Austin are entitled to protection from this harmful procedure." In response, Mary Ann Dale, the manager of Shoal Creek's Electroconvulsive Therapy Department – who has undergone the treatment herself – said, "Seton's approach is that this is a medical procedure approved by the American Psychiatric Association, it has been in practice many years, and it has been proven safe and effective, following the same guidelines that anyone else needs to follow to provide this service to patients. Research has proven that it does not damage the brain."

photo by John Anderson

Quote of the Week

"A State may not trade off the rights of some members of a racial group against the rights of other members of that group." – U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in the majority opinion concluding that Texas' 2003 re-redistricting of CD 23 violated the Voting Rights Act

"By taking an action for the sole purpose of advantaging Republicans and disadvantaging Democrats, the state of Texas violated its constitutional obligation to govern impartially." – Justice John Paul Stevens' dissenting opinion. The majority decided that while race-based gerrymandering is unconstitutional, doing so solely for partisan gain is just peachy.

PRINT THIS STORY

MORE FROM JULY 7, 2006:

- SCREENS
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RECENTLY IN NAKED CITY:

Headlines and happenings from Austin and beyond

Burundian author and runner Gilbert Tuhabonye has check-in trouble at Denver airport

Perry authorizes use of Texas National Guard at border; and El Paso County Sheriff's Office says will temporarily cease holding immigration stops and raids

PROMOTIONS

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Headlines

- Barely a month after being convicted of multiple counts of fraud, Enron founder **Kenneth Lay** died Wednesday morning of a massive heart attack. He was 64. Lay was due to be sentenced on Oct. 23, possibly to decades in federal prison.
- In an abrupt rebuke to the Bush extra-legal war on terror, on June 29 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "special military commissions," created by the administration to try **Guantanamo Bay** prisoners without most defendant protections, violate both the Universal Code of Military Justice and the Geneva Convention, and are illegal.
- In the next step of the **re-redistricting fight**, the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Texas ordered that maps and arguments proposing solutions be submitted within two weeks. Last week the Supreme Court declared the current boundaries of CD 23 violated the Voting Rights Act, and remapping 23 will necessitate changes in other districts, notably Lloyd Doggett's CD 25 (Austin to McAllen). See **Point Austin**.
- The City Council has announced plans to promote more aggressive **water conservation** citywide, in hopes of reducing water usage and delaying the need for additional water-treatment facilities. Residents will be encouraged to water lawns less often, install water-saving devices, and shower with friends as often as possible.
- Visiting a conference of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association Friday, **Rick Perry's** challengers denounced his education policies and called for higher salaries for teachers. **Kinky Friedman** said he would legalize casino gambling to pay for schools, **Chris Bell** said he'd end "high-stakes" testing and raise teacher pay, and **Carole Keeton Strayhorn** called the contest a "two-person" race – or rather, one governor, one grandma.
- Although the state of Texas has shown little interest in life-saving stem cell research, bioterror is another matter. The Department of Homeland Security announced last week that it's considering 29 proposals for a new federal laboratory to study biotoxins and responses to possible **terrorist biological attacks**, including three from San Antonio research groups and one from Texas A&M.

Naked City

- What I did on my summer vacation, **City Council** edition: With Will Wynn and the gang on their annual summer break until July 27, City Hall is emptier than a tube of calamine lotion at Camp Itchydrash. The *Chronicle* was fortunate enough to nab several of their travel itineraries: Jennifer Kim is headed to Mexico, where she'll be "relaxing in the central highlands"; Lee Leffingwell will be traveling down Mexico way – New Mexico, that is – then off to Colorado and Nebraska. Coincidentally, Brewster McCracken is also off to Colorado, where he hopes to get some R&R done after forming a commission on Centennial State design standards (don't they wish!). In more serious news, we wish Betty Dunkerley continued luck in physical therapy as she recovers from knee-replacement surgery. The newly elected Mayor Pro Tem underwent the elective surgery the week before last. – *Wells Dunbar*
- Eighteen-year-old Juan Penado is not ashamed of growing up in the **Booker T. Washington housing project** in East Austin,

but he's not about to feed anyone's stereotypes either. Penado is heading to UT next fall to earn a degree in electrical engineering. "I don't want to live at Booker T. the rest of my life," he says. "Education can bring a better job, more money, and the opportunity to better not only my life, but my family's life, too." Penado's getting a bit of tuition help from the same organization that houses his family, the Housing Authority of the city of Austin. Since 2001, HACA has been awarding \$50,000 in college scholarships to worthy residents, both young and old. Penado is one of 28 scholarship recipients who will receive their awards this Friday. The ceremony takes place 2pm Friday, July 7 at the Booker T. Washington Community Room. – *Michael May*

- In just a few short weeks, **Tamara Hoover** went from esteemed Austin High art teacher to salacious local scandal to national cause célèbre. Now Kansas City artist Harold Smith has placed one of his vibrant abstract-expressionist paintings on eBay and will donate all the proceeds from the auction to Hoover's legal fund. He writes that Hoover's "career is being threatened for being an artist," and urges people to bid for the sake of "good karma." On July 4, the painting was going for \$86. The auction ends on July 12. – *M.M.*

- Austin-based **Dell** computers unveiled a global **electronic-waste recycling** program last week, expanding their existing efforts to now offer no-charge recycling of any Dell-brand computer or printer. Dell's current program accepts discarded products only when new electronics are purchased. The initiative is set to begin in the U.S. by September and worldwide by November. Robin Schneider, executive director of Texas Campaign for the Environment, a nonprofit that for years has urged computer-makers, including Dell, to take responsibility for how their products are disposed, called the announcement a "groundbreaking approach that really goes beyond what any other electronics company has pledged to do." Computers and other electronics contain harmful, toxic heavy metals. In 2002, in conjunction with the Computer Takeback Campaign, TCE called on Dell to institute e-waste reforms when it came to light that the company's discarded products were being processed in unsafe conditions in U.S. prisons and in developing countries. Schneider added that Dell initially appeared to be standing on the sidelines during efforts to enact e-waste legislation, but that she's now very happy with the way Dell responded to the e-waste issue. "We have a responsibility to our customers to recycle the products we make and sell," said Dell Chairman Michael Dell in a statement. For more info, see: www.dell.com/recycling, www.texasenvironment.org, and www.computertakeback.com. – *Daniel Mottola*

Beyond City Limits

- Politicians like to talk about making sure every American student can go to college, but they sure aren't making it any easier. The U.S. Congress stood idly by as the interest rates on **Stafford loans** – the basic federal student loan – rose from 5.3% to 7.14% on Saturday. The nonprofit Campaign for America's Future estimates that Texas students will see their college loans rise by as much as \$2,500. In March, the U.S. House rejected an amendment to the Higher Education Act that would have halved the interest paid on federal student loans. State legislators haven't been any kinder to students. They deregulated college tuition in 2003, and UT-Austin responded by increasing fees by almost \$2,000 a year. Perhaps it's time for students to start scouring the Internet in search of bulk discount Ramen noodles. – *M.M.*

- Governor Rick Perry announced last week that the **Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs** will make \$255 million available to low-income Texas families for low-interest-rate mortgages and mortgage-credit certificates. According

to a press release from the governor's office, "The program is expected to assist 2,300 Texas families." More than 40% of the funds will go toward helping people in the 22 counties directly impacted by Hurricane Rita, said Perry in the press release, calling this "the largest amount of homebuyer funds ever released by the state." Southeast Texans will have a chance to get homebuyer loans at sub-6% interest rates, as well as grants for down payments. Another special consideration for people of the 22-county Rita region: no first-time homebuyer requirements to get a piece of the affordable housing pie. For more info, see www.tdhca.state.tx.us. – *Cheryl Smith*

- In other hurricane evacuee-related news, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission has extended one month – from June 14 to July 14 – the application deadline for One-Time Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds for **Hurricane Katrina evacuees**. According to HHSC's Web site, the federal government provides OTTANF (translation: emergency cash) to "families in crisis" who aren't already getting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, previously called Aid to Families With Dependent Children. For info on TANF eligibility requirements in Texas, go to www.hhsc.state.tx.us/programs/TexasWorks/TANF.html. – *C.S.*

- Also in hurricane aftermath news, the **Federal Emergency Management Agency** announced Friday that it's giving \$2.49 million in Public Assistance disaster aid to the state of Texas to reimburse it for money spent on Katrina and Rita last year. According to a press release, \$1.41 million is going to the Texas Building and Procurement Commission "for emergency procurement and contracting services, including support for shelters, following Hurricane Katrina," and \$1.08 million is going to Jefferson Co. to repair the county jail, which is located in Beaumont and was damaged by Hurricane Rita. – *C.S.*

- The gift that kept on giving in the 2002 legislative races – secret corporate moolah – will likely make a return appearance this election year, thanks to a well-oiled loophole in the Texas Election Code. A Travis Co. judge last week relied on that legal kink in dismissing one of five indictments against the **Texas Association of Business**, which prosecutors accused of illegally using more than \$1 million in corporate cash to finance a mail campaign to attack certain Democratic candidates or praise their Republican opponents. In throwing out the TAB indictment, District Judge Mike Lynch ruled that the ads in question passed the "magic words" test because they did not expressly advocate for or against a particular candidate with words such as "elect," "vote for," or "defeat." Lynch acknowledged, however, that anyone with a lick of sense could deduce that the tone, text, and design of the ads were clearly crafted to favor or denounce specific candidates. Several losing Democratic candidates have since filed two separate civil suits against TAB, which are pending in district court. Travis Co. District Attorney Ronnie Earle is expected to appeal Lynch's ruling. Prosecutors' long-running investigation into the 2002 legislative races also led to indictments against former U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay and two of his associates. – *Amy Smith*



JAMMING OUT JIHAD STYLE:

Our vision inspired by a recent announcement by the Texas A&M Health Science Center Office of Homeland Security and the Sheriffs' Association of Texas that they are co-sponsoring a "Suicide Bomber Road Show" in six Texas cities in July to provide "insight into suicide bombers and corresponding emergency preparedness."

illustration by Doug Potter

• A rabbi, a priest, and two pastors walked into a press conference last week – but this was no joke. Instead, using the pulpit as a bully pit stop, they delivered a message from University United Methodist Church to politicians near and far: **Respect Our Faith**. The ROF campaign, an outgrowth of the Texas Faith Network, developed in response to the radical Christian right's attempts to conflate its spin with scripture. Incidents in the 2004 presidential campaign, like the Republican National Committee's attempted grab of church-membership rolls, garnered headlines, but similar instances are happening today at home. Among the groups Gov. Rick Perry has courted in his re-election bid is the Texas Restoration Project, a shadowy, staunchly conservative gang of evangelicals; as a religious group, however, they aren't subject to campaign-finance disclosure. Respect Our Faith seeks to end this crass co-option by urging clergy to abstain from endorsing or working for specific parties or candidates, distributing partisan election material, and more. "This campaign is not intended to make houses of worship politics-free zones. The goal is to stop politicians from using our sacred spaces to divide people of faith for partisan political gain," said Rabbi Neal Katz in a press release. – *W.D.*

Happenings

• Good food and a good cause are a hard-to-beat combination: On Saturday, July 8, 9am-1pm, the Sunset Valley Farmers Market will hold **Helping Harvest Day**, in which 5% of all vendor proceeds will benefit AIDS Services of Austin. Peaches, melons, and tomatoes are in season, and the market also features specialty foods, local artisans, and live music. The market is located at 3200 Jones Road, on 290 West between Brodie and Westgate.

• Can Taoist monks save Barton Springs? Let's hope so. A **delegation of monks** from the Wudang Monastery in China will bless Barton Springs in a colorful poolside ceremony at 10am Tuesday. City officials will be on hand to witness the historic event. The Texas Legislature, alas, is beyond hope, but the monks will bless the rest of Texas from the Capitol steps at 9:30am Wednesday. From there, the delegation heads to City Hall Plaza for a free noon performance of Chinese martial arts and music as an offering of gratitude to Austinites. On Saturday, July 15, the monks

will appear for two performances at Akins High School at 2pm and 8pm. Their visit is part of a religious and diplomatic mission to share the cultural arts of Taoism with the U.S. During their weeklong visit, they will present lectures and teaching workshops on Taoist music and meditation, and will be available for I-Ching consultations and feng shui readings. For more info, see www.healingtaoinstitute.com. – A.S.

• The ACLU Foundation of Texas, People for the American Way Foundation, Atticus Circle, PFLAG, and Equality Texas present a screening of ***A Blinding Flash of the Obvious: A Film About Fairness and How It Was Won*** on Tuesday, July 11, at Arthouse at the Jones Center, 700 Congress. The film details the campaign to repeal Cincinnati's 11-year-old anti-gay laws, the only pro-gay-rights initiative that passed anywhere in the country in 2004, a year in which measures banning gay marriage in many states (including Ohio) helped propel George W. Bush to re-election. A reception will be held at 5:30pm, with the screening at 6pm, followed by a panel discussion. \$20 suggested donation. RSVP by July 10 to joy@pfaw.org. For info, call 476-7329.

• It's time for aspiring politicians to head off to summer camp. The Texas Democratic Party will host a 21½-day **Campaign Camp** to develop organizers and candidates, July 21-23, in Austin. Work sessions include Campaign Management, Campaign Organizing for Local and County Party Leaders, and How to Be a Better Candidate. Registration fee is \$40 and covers dinner on Friday and lunch on Saturday and Sunday. Registration deadline is Friday, July 14, 5pm. Register online at www.thedatabank.com/dpg/11320733sa. For more info, call 202/419-1040 or e-mail tyler@grassrootsolutions.com.

MORE NAKED CITY IN THIS ISSUE:

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