



## Editors PLOG

Every now and then I feel I should explain what this column really is. What in the world is a PLOG? Over the last two years, BLOG and BLOGGERS have become television hot button words to describe what some people do on the internet. A BLOG is a web log, or diary that people put up onto the internet for everyone to read. Some very big news stories have been broken by BLOGGERS. They write something, then someone else reads it, investigates it, solves a problem, etc. I have used this column - and called it my PLOG or paper log - as a way of tracking my journey through living in Brackettville, owning a business and, of course, as my soap box.

Owning and operating a newspaper puts you in place that you are subject to public scrutiny - every second of the day. Once the paper hits the printing press, there's no taking it back. It's there. Forever and ever, Amen. When mistakes are made - everyone reads them, everyone passes judgement. I love the newspaper. I hate the newspaper. They're such lovely girls. They're such evil girls. Why does everyone call Ali and me girls? Ali is a young woman, yes, but still a woman. And I am darned near a middle-aged crisis! Any day now I will be losing weight, buying a convertible and scheduling belly dancing lessons.

There are so many jobs just like the one I have. Jobs that put you out there. Jobs that your accomplishments or failures make so many people happy or angry enough to leave messages, camp out in the lobby or chat about you over lunch. You could be the director of operations at Fort Clark Springs. Maybe the superintendent of Brackett ISD. What about the county judge? Or the city mayor? What about our soldiers in the armed forces?

It's funny that every step I take, every word I type, I think about what group of people is going to be the most upset about it on Thursday? Will it be the taxpayers? Will it be government officials? Who will it be? My skin has gone from thick to Kevlar.

I usually can tell if something is good, bad or just unsettling to the public by the comments I get at church on Sunday. That's where the truth is. If you want to know, just ask some of ladies at my church. And I say this because I have come to respect it. Naturally at first I was kinda' shocked, but now I look forward to it. If your moral compass gets out of whack, this paper has the directions at least a half dozen local churches. Honesty is not something most people cherish anymore. When did that happen?

The response we get to the paper usually come within the first couple days after a printing. I get phone calls, emails or sometimes my kids come home from school and tell me things, but my personal favorite is when my husband tells me that he was sitting here or there eating and a group of people just went off on the paper, he usually remains quiet unless of course they start taking digs on me personally. Then big bird gets his feathers ruffled.

I have found that every issue has, at the least, two sides. What's written in the paper and then what people think about what's written in the paper. Keep laughing. You know that was funny.

Leigh V.



## Ostby on Iraq

Dear TBN,

Greetings from Iraq. Just a short note to thank you for all your support and request continued support for all of us here. We do monitor as much as we can with what is going on back home. It appears a quite a debate is going on the political front regarding this war. I encourage you all to set your differences aside and continue to provide a united support for your troops. I sense this is the case for the majority of the American public. I can tell you from a soldier's perspective that without the support of you, our job at hand would be additionally challenging. So, again thank you for your support. I am attaching the last edition of my Newsletter.

Team Speicher  
19 January 2007  
Greetings from COB Speicher, Iraq! Team Speicher thanks all the family and friends for their superb support—you folks just ROCK! We here realize that our family members are the ones making tremendous sacrifices and yet somehow continue to march on in our absence. Know that you all are in our thoughts everyday.

Team Speicher is once again

all together. Yes, SFC Chandler returned to us from the mountains of Afghanistan. As you know from previous newsletter, SFC Chandler has been forward deployed to Afghanistan since November 2006. He returned to COB Speicher last week. We are sensing he misses the mountains as he frequently gazes into the vast flat terrain of COB Speicher since his return. Nevertheless, we are happy to have SFC Chandler back.

After learning from COL Adams and LTC Harwig what a "lovely" place COB Speicher is, MAJ Lueders from Camp Victory decided to see it for himself what all the hype was. Well as you can see, he made himself at home right away. I found him racked out at "Speicher Visiting Quarters." I believe he was expecting quarters similar or better than his at Camp Victory. I had to break the bad news to him that he was not in Camp Victory anymore. I told him this is not like the "Palace" in Baghdad and that we don't have maid service he is used to. I think he took it hard but eventually came around to reality.

We explained to MAJ Lueders that this is the home

town of the former dictator of Iraq and that there's a mural of him on the COB. In order to give MAJ Lueders credit for visiting COB Speicher, we made a stop at a popular spot for a photo opportunity.

MAJ (XP) Bailey continues to do good things for the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade where he serves as a subject matter expert for the unit. Reports from the unit chain of command speak volumes of MAJ Bailey's contributions to the Warfighters and their mission. He continues to be an asset to the Team and the war effort. Keep it up!

Final thought, as we approach the second half of our deployment, operational assessment efforts continue to consume our efforts. However, we all look forward to the coming months and weeks; and the "freedom flight" home to our loved ones. Until then, we request your continued support for all of us here. Cheers!

MAJ Ostby, SFC Chandler, MAJ Bailey  
Team Speicher Out!  
MAJ Christopher C. Ostby  
ATEC FOA VII, Team Speicher, US Army Test and Evaluation Command, COB Speicher, Iraq

## Make it fun and the family will help



The Fly Lady Marla Cilley

As sidetracked people, we are put off by anything that sounds like mundane housework!

We are a fun loving people. Why do we have to be stuck doing jobs that we think will take us forever, when others are out having great time.

I have heard you many times as well as my own voice.

We have a challenge every day to muster up enough gumption to get our frannies moving. This is why I have tried to make it fun.

Timers have added an extra bit of fun and challenge to a project, but they also keep us on track. We all need to be reminded from time to time what we are working on. We can stay focused if all we have to do is 15 minutes. Children love timers too.

House work is such an ugly word. This is why I have tried to help you realize that you are not working when you are blessing your family!

We have been raised to believe that house cleaning is an all day affair.

No one needs to spend that kind of time maintaining your home.

When you establish your routines and start dancing through your day with every move blessing your family, it is not like work at all!

I have always hated to dust. My mother made us remove everything from the tables, then dust and put everything back; it took what seemed hours.

Now all I do is pull out my magic feather dusting wand and buzz around my home while I am on the phone and before I know it, our whole home, every surface has been dusted. No mess or fuss!

It has been done and I felt like a fairy princess gliding and dancing around my home.

When was the last time you had that much fun dusting.

If you take 2 minutes and feather dust every day, you will never have to see dusty finger streaks on your furniture.

You know the ones where someone in the family writes, "DUST ME!" In fact you may never see dirt and dust again.

A real feather duster is a fun tool and mine even has some purple feathers in it.

I feel so special when I use it.

Just let me warn you, they can be addictive.

When your family sees how much fun you are having, they will want to do it for you!

This is kind of like Tom Sawyer whitewashing the fence.

Children love them too; a tool becomes a toy that does a job in the hands of your babies. Of course, you have to set the example and teach them how to use it.

Have you ever wondered how to get your children excited about keeping their rooms clean?

I have a friend who figured it out many years ago and now she is making it available to everyone.

Her creativity has children cleaning their rooms all over the world.

Pam Young created the persona of the House Fairy. Go check out this other great tool for our children; www.House Fairy.org.

Your children will run to clean their rooms.

Housework doesn't have to be dreaded, it can become a fun family game with everyone pitching in.

You just need to make it enjoyable.

For more help getting rid of your CHAOS; check out her website and join her free mentoring group at www.Fly Lady.net or her book, Sink Reflections published by Bantam and her new book, Body Clutter published by Fireside.

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### The Brackett News

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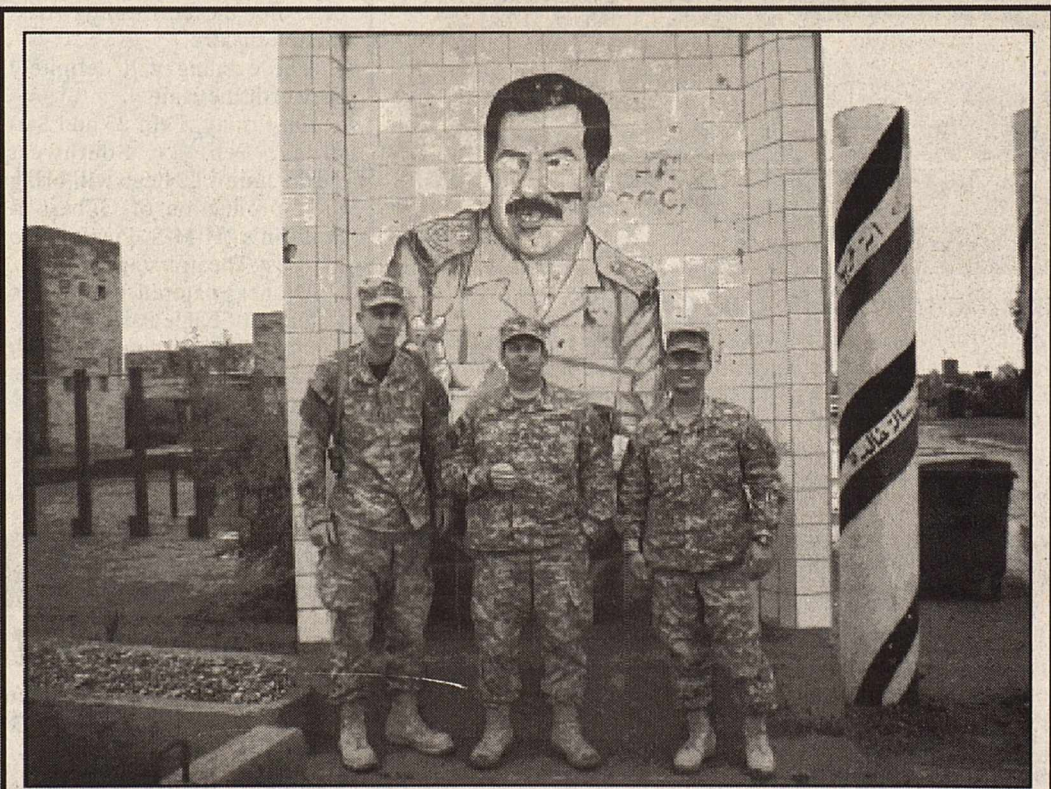
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### Letter To Editor POLICY

The Brackett News welcomes and encourages letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 350 words and be on subjects of interest. The editor reserves the right to refuse or edit all letters submitted for length, potentially libelous statements and accuracy of information. All letters must be signed and include a mailing address and phone number for verification purposes. All writers must provide proof of identity. Letters found or believed to be written by a person other than that of the signed author will be refused. The Brackett News will not publish letters sent via e-mail. Letters published and viewpoints of columnists do not necessarily reflect the editorial beliefs of this newspaper.

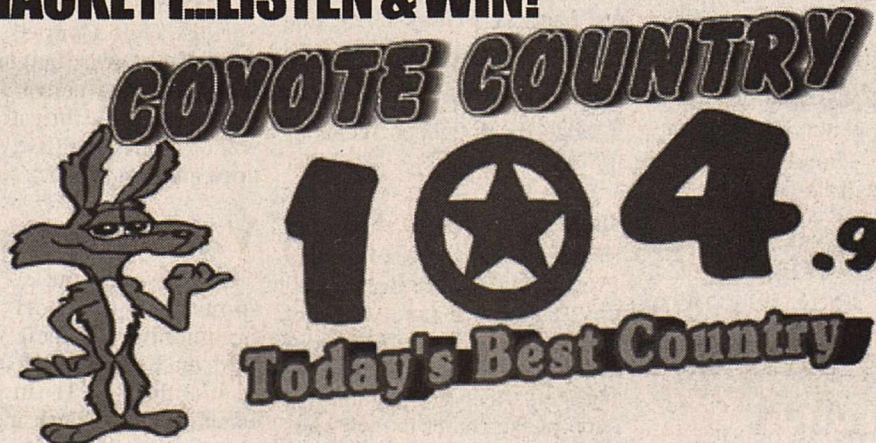


Major Ostby in Iraq

MAJ Lueders, SFC Chandler and MAJ Ostby stand in front of a mural of the former dictator of Iraq, now a popular spot for visitors to take photographs.

Courtesy Photo

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## BHS SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

### Class of 2007



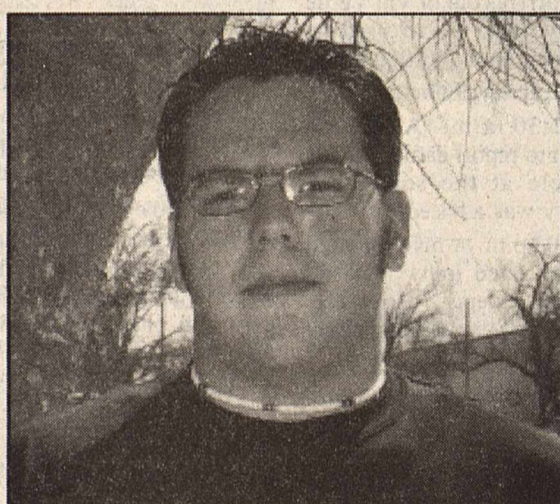
**Laura Meyer**

**Name:** Laura Meyer  
**Mother:** Phyllis Meyer  
**Father:** Les Meyer  
**Siblings:** brother-in-law Cliff Kinnibrugh, Leslie Kinnibrugh, and Sarah Meyer  
**What Are Your Plans After Graduation?:** I am planning on attending Texas A&M where I will major in Biomedical Science. This will be very tough, but after 4 years I will attend another college and study pharmacy.  
**What Teacher Influenced You The Most?** Mrs. Ballew influenced me the most throughout high school. She taught me 5 years in a row and never gave up on me.  
**What do you think you will miss the most after you graduate?** Humm this is a tough one. I'll miss my friends and family the most.



**Emily Valenzuela**

**Name:** Emily Marie Valenzuela  
**Mother:** Mary Campos  
**Father:** David Campos  
**Siblings:** Calli Jo and Stella Campos  
**What are your plans after graduation?** To attend Concordia University  
**What teacher influenced you the most?** Mrs. Curry, she inspired me to go to college. She challenged me everyday in class to make myself a better student. Without her I wouldn't have made the decision to go to college.  
**What do you think you will miss the most after you graduate?** Waking up and not having to worry about anything.



**John Moore**

**Name:** John Travis Moore  
**Mother:** Susan Moore  
**Father:** Rendall Moore  
**Siblings:** Joseph Pitts, Danielle Moore, Samantha Moore  
**What are your plans after graduation?** I have been accepted to UT Tyler, and I plan to get a degree in Mechanical Engineering.  
**What teacher influenced you the most?** Mrs. Norton from Alto has influenced me the most, because she taught in a way that I wanted to know more about Science and Math.  
**What do you think you will miss the most after you graduate?** I will miss sports after I graduate.



**BHS Students Present Program on Dual Credit Classes to Rotary**  
 The Brackett Rotary Club welcomed students from Brackett High School for a program about Dual Credit Classes offered at BHS. Students Justin Calk, Cesar Cantu, Laura Meyer and Gabby Schroeder were accompanied by class monitor, Sherry Hall. The students showed power point presentations and discussed the structure and benefits of the classes. To enroll in classes, students must meet college entrance requirements on the ACCUPLACER test. BHS currently offers opportunities for juniors and seniors to enroll in 18 hours of college classes offered through Southwest Texas Junior College. Parents that have questions about the program can talk with Principal Frank Taylor or Academic Advisory Louisa Stone at the high school.

## 2nd Six Weeks Junior High and High School Honor Roll

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>High School A Honor Roll</b></p> <p><b>Freshmen</b><br/>                 Cheyenne Billings, Victor Cantu, Brooklyn Gose, Jeffrey Sitgreaves and Isaac Talamantes.</p> <p><b>Sophomores</b><br/>                 Samantha Moore and Laura Swinson.</p> <p><b>Juniors</b><br/>                 Lauren Cornelius, Meghann Davis, Gabriella Schroeder and Bianca Stewart.</p> <p><b>Seniors</b><br/>                 Justin Calk, Diana Hernandez, Laura Meyer, Austin Shewbart and Jessica Siegel.</p> <p><b>High School AB Honor Roll</b></p> <p><b>Freshmen</b><br/>                 Adrianna Balderas, John Blake, Cody Clark, Charles Conoly, Shaun Davis, Brianna Escamilla, Ivy Garcia, Elena Molinar, Elidia Molinar, Pablo Novel, Jaleel Proulx and Ashley Shadwick.</p> | <p><b>Sophomores</b><br/>                 Laura Adams, Summer Allen, Amanda Braesicke, Emily Calk, Samuel Childress, Roxane Gomez, Jessica Gonzales, Esna Herrera, Jessica Jones, Samantha Kuhns, Rebecca Mann, Harmony Pettett, Maribel Rivas, Arlene Roth, Jacob Schroeder, Veronica Talamantes, Bianca Terrazas and Edward Travieso.</p> <p><b>Juniors</b><br/>                 Bailee Allen, Travis Bonner, Doolie Fernandez, Daphne Hunt, Joshua Kluzek, Ashley Stephenson and Anolda Watkins.</p> <p><b>Seniors</b><br/>                 Dolores Cano, Alison Carroll, Clint Conrad, Robert Davis, Allison Del Bosque, John Moore, Jaime Muniz, Robin Pevehouse, Amanda Rosas, Natasha Smith, Michael Stephenson, Brenda Tate and Nadine Terrazas.</p> | <p><b>Junior High A Honor Roll</b></p> <p><b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b><br/>                 Brandon Allen, Kelsey Bruce, Bryan Calk, Haley Hale, Sahara Rodriguez and Joshua Smith.</p> <p><b>Junior High AB Honor Roll</b></p> <p><b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b><br/>                 Brittany Hale, Nevada Payne, Yanira Perez, Jared Shirkey and Joel Talamantes.</p> <p><b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b><br/>                 Marisol Aguirre, Sarah Davis, Michael Flores, Stella Guajardo, Ayland Letsinger, Manuel Pena, Janine Rex, Jaime Rodriguez, Steven Rodriguez, Suzanna Seargeant, Erica Villanueva and Olivia Woodes.</p> |
|---|--|--|

## Brackettville native earns academic honors at HPU

Patrick Rose, son of Pat and Sharon Rose was recently named to academic honor lists for the 2006 fall semester at Howard Payne University. Rose was named to the President's List. Students must earn a 4.0 grade point average to be named to the President's List, a 3.65-3.99 grade point average to be named to the Dean's List, and a 3.5-3.64 grade point average to be named to the Honor Roll.

Founded in 1889, HPU is a Christian, coeducational university offering a full array of liberal arts, pre-professional, and honors studies, as well as a graduate program to its students. Located on a residential main campus in Brownwood, Texas, and at seven extension centers across the state, the university is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

HPU received a record number of favorable rankings in "America's Best Colleges 2007," published by U.S. News & World Report.

For the fourth consecutive year, HPU claimed slots in both the "Top Schools" and "Best Value" categories among comprehensive bachelor's degree-granting institutions in the Western region of the United States. The university was also recognized in five other categories including "Highest Proportion of Classes Under 20," "Lowest Acceptance Rate," "Highest Graduation Rate," "Campus Ethnic Diversity," and "Economic Diversity."

### 2007 High School Track Schedule

- |             |                            |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| Feb. 24     | Uvalde                     |
| Mar. 1      | LaPryor                    |
| Mar. 8      | Carrizo Springs            |
| Mar. 15     | LaPryor                    |
| Mar. 22     | Rocksprings                |
| Mar. 29     | Crystal City               |
| Apr. 4      | LaPryor (District)         |
| Apr. 11     | Harper (Area)              |
| Apr. 27, 28 | SHSU Huntsville (Regional) |
| May 11, 12  | Austin (State)             |

### 2007 J.H. Track Schedule

- |          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| March 2  | Del Rio            |
| March 9  | LaPryor            |
| March 21 | Rocksprings        |
| March 26 | LaPryor (District) |

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## MISTAKES



Please remember that we attempt to include something for everyone within the pages of our newspaper. We realize that some folks enjoy finding fault and for those readers we thoughtfully include a socially acceptable number of errors within our publication.



# I'm Sooooo Sorry



Steven LaMascus

Have you noticed all the stuff in the news lately about various celebrities making public statements of apology and contrition because of something they said in anger or just?

It started with Mel Gibson. Then it was Michael Richards, who played Cosmo Kramer on the TV comedy *Seinfeld*. Then it was some actress who's name I forget. Now it's Kevin Federline apologizing to fast food workers because of a super bowl commercial. In between there were several others. Seems to me like nobody can say anything about anybody. If you make a humorous crack about cesspool cleaners being "honey dippers" you end up in a clinic to learn to be more tolerant and understanding.

Most of it is pure horse apples. The celebrity, whoever it might be, meant exactly what he or she said, isn't going to change his opinion, but has learned that if he apologizes profusely, walks around with his head down for a few weeks, and attends a class or two on tolerance, he will be forgiven. Or, perhaps, he said it in a moment

of anger and didn't mean it in the first place. He might even have had a good reason to say it, whatever it was.

I am sick of it! First I'm sick of everybody wearing their feelings on their sleeves. Federline's commercial was supposed to be funny. If you work in a McDonalds and don't understand that there are more glamorous, higher paying jobs out there, you need to attend a clinic on reality. And, if you don't want to be called names — like in the case of Michael Richards — don't heckle him when he is on stage. If you don't like his show, just leave, but don't get upset when he responds to your attack with one of his own. It's human nature. If you haven't fallen pray to the same feelings then you should stay away from wooden crosses.

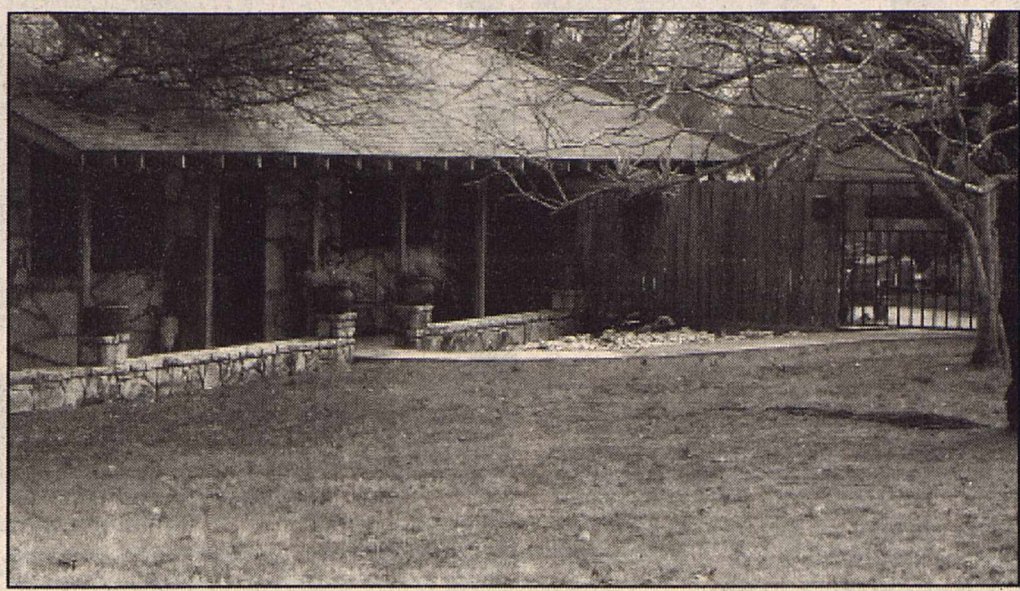
Second, why do we run around looking for something to be angry about? Doesn't life give us enough opportunities to get mad without our searching for more? I don't know about you, but I'm even tired of being angry. I am constantly upset by the stupidity of our elected officials — local, state, and federal. I am upset by our foreign policy; by our national policy towards nature and public lands and waters; by our negative reactions to religion; and a thousand other things. I have almost quit watching the TV news because it has nothing in it but blood, guts,

and controversy. Where is the real news?

If you are a cop, get ready to hear donut jokes. If you are fat, get ready to hear fat jokes. If you are a lawyer, get ready to hear lawyer jokes. If you are an Aggie, get ready to hear Aggie jokes. It is normal, it is natural, and if it bothers you, then you are the one who needs help.

We have become so afraid of insulting someone that we are afraid to talk. We are so afraid of being called intolerant that we are afraid to speak the truth. It is another symptom of the creeping cancer called political correctness and it, along with our loss of faith in God, is going to be the death of this nation. We shouldn't belittle the underprivileged, make fun of the infirm, or just be jerks for no reason. That is the simple truth. Jesus told us that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. If we live by that rule we won't have to apologize. The old saying that it is better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth and prove it, is very true.

I try to live by a simple motto. It is one that I read in a book a long time ago. It doesn't make much sense to some people today, but it means a great deal to me. I might even like to have it engraved on my tombstone just below the verse of Joshua 24:15. It is: "Ride hard, shoot straight, and speak the truth!" Think about it.



**Yard of the Month**

Neal and Barbara Simmons at #11 Bowie St., FCS were chosen as February's Yard of the Month by the Mountain Laurel Garden Club.

Courtesy Photo

## Washers, horseshoes and hole-in-one golf

Festival 2007 at Fort Clark Springs will feature the CAVALRYMAN'S TOURNAMENT — Washers, Horseshoes and a Hole-in-One Golf Competition.

The Festival is scheduled for Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at Fort Clark Springs, Brackettville, Texas.

There is no admission fee. \$1.00 Parking fee for non-members.

Artisans and Vendors will again fill the east end of the old Seminole Hall with Art, Textiles, Jewelry, Gourd creations, T-shirts and Wood crafts.

Craftsmen and vendors from

throughout the area travel to the festival each year.

Vendors can sign up for a booth (booth fee depending on size) by contacting Kellen Hendricks at 563-2391.

Enjoy the Festival in period costume.

The Old Quarry Society has once again made available their selection of dresses, skirts, blouses, vests and accessories appropriate for festival use. A deposit of \$20.00 dollars (twenty) is required for each costume, and will be returned when costume is turned back in to Post Theater in good condition.

The selection can be viewed at the Fort Clark Springs Post Theater, by appointment.

For more information call Mary A. Partlow 563-9178 or

Mary Jane Olson 563-9177.

Come in costume and be a part of the "Parade" scheduled for Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 P.M. in front of the Guardhouse Museum.

The audience will determine one lady, one man, and one youth as "Best in Category".

Winners in the FORT CLARK 'S IDOL Talent Show on March 10<sup>th</sup> will be awarded cash prizes.

First place will take \$100, Second Place \$50 and Third Place will be awarded \$25. Every entrant will be given a Certificate of Participation.

For further information contact Charlene Simmons at 830-563-3070, P. O. Box 1975, Brackettville, TX 78832 or wychar@sbcglobal.net



**New Barbecue Pit at Civic Center**

Photo by Leigh Volcsko

### Lutheran Women's Valentine luncheon

Submitted by Ruth Spencer

The February monthly meeting of the Lutheran women's organization was held on Monday, Feb. 12, 2007, with 32 ladies present. Chairman Natalie Thelen called the meeting to order and Mary Jane Olson gave the opening invocation. Secretary and treasurer's reports were given by Barbara Miller. Chairman Thelen reported on activities the women's organization is involved with, both in the community and church related projects. Some of our on-going community projects include providing school supplies for needy children at Brackettville elementary school and also collecting Betty Crocker education coupons, which the school may use to buy educational materials. We also have a "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree with names of local children to buy presents, hoping to make their Christmas more joyful. This year we are studying women of the bible. Barbara Williams gave an interesting presentation about a Shu'nammitte woman whose faith was tested at different times until she encountered meetings

with Elijah, in regards to her son. Margaret Peiplow entertained the ladies with four love ballads while luncheon was being served. Several ladies related incidents involving their dating or married life which kept the ladies laughing. The gathering closed with the Lord's prayer. The next meeting of Lutheran Women's organization is scheduled for March 12 at 11 a.m. Any person interested in more information about Our Redeemer L.W.O. can contact chairman Natalie Thelen.

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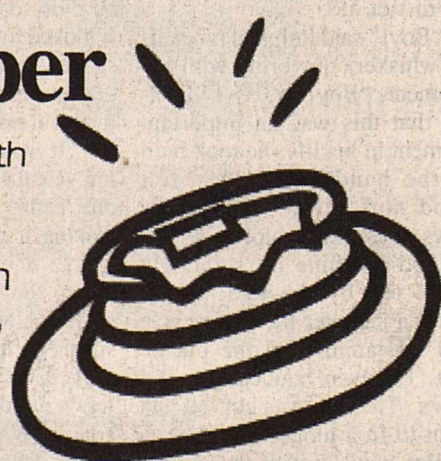
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## Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

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# Blowin in the Wind!

**By Auzzie**  
When you are outside and you feel a movement of air, what do you call it? Wind, right?

You might be interested to know that there are more than 80 names for wind in various countries. I'm not talking about the different languages, but different names for different types of wind.

For example, in California, the gusts of warm, dry air that come blowing through Southern California during autumn and early winter are called the "Santa Ana" winds.

Sometimes winds caused by certain types of geography have different names in different countries. The foehn

(FO-inj) wind occurs when a deep layer of wind blows over a mountain range and down the other side. The wind heats up on the down-side and can raise temperatures as much as 50 degrees or more in a matter of hours.

One term for these winds is "snow-eaters" because of their ability to quickly melt snow.

In other regions of the world, these winds are called:

- \* "Zonda winds" in Argentina,
- \* "Chinook winds" in the Rocky Mountains and the Chugach Mountains of Alaska,
- \* "Diablo winds" in the San Francisco Bay Area,

\* "Santa Ana winds" in Southern California, and  
\* "The Nor'wester" in southern New Zealand.

Another oddly named wind is "The Witch of November." This name is given to the winds that blow across the Great Lakes of the northern United States in November.



## Dust Devil or 'Willy Willy'?

Have you ever seen a "dust devil"? You know — one of those little spinning columns of dust you sometimes see in hot and dry areas of the county?

A dust devil is just a rotating updraft of wind that looks like a small tornado. They are especially common in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, California and Colorado, but can occur just about anywhere if conditions are right.

Did you know that in Australia, dust devils are commonly known as "willy willies"?

# Well. That's Some Nerve: 'Funny Bone' Not a Bone!

**By Professor Forest**

Here's a riddle for you: What "bone" in your body can you never break?

Give up? It's called the "funny bone."

If you have ever hit the inside of your elbow in the soft area between the two bones and felt a tingling or dull pain, then you know what your "funny bone" is.

It's not a bone, but a nerve that causes the pain or weird feeling. It's called the funny bone because it "feels" funny when you bang it on the edge of a table or something. The nerve is called the ulnar nerve and it controls the feeling in your fourth and fifth fingers. The ulnar nerve also controls wrist movement.

The "funny" sensation occurs when the ulnar nerve is knocked against the humerus (HYOO-muh-rus) bone, the one that starts at your elbow and goes up to your shoulder.

When I was a kid I once told my grandfather a joke and he said, "That tickles my funny bone." He laughed then, but now that I know what the funny bone really is.

Maybe my joke was so bad that it "hurt" or "felt funny."

That's a joke. Get it? Did it tickle your funny bone?

## FIND THE ALPHABET!

SEE IF YOU CAN FIND ALL THE HANGING LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET!

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Write in the letters you find

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff

Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll

Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr

Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx

Yy Zz

## Panama Canal: The Big Dig!

**By Crash**

More than 125 years ago — in 1880, to be exact — the largest construction project in history began.

It took 34 years to complete it and it's still being used today. Know what it is?

It's the Panama Canal! The canal is a major ship channel that connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

It was necessary to build the canal because a ship traveling from New York to California had to go more than 14,000 miles (22,500 kilometers) around South America through a dangerous stretch of ocean known as Cape Horn.

The canal passage, cut through rocky land and jungle through the Isthmus of Panama in Central America, cut the trip to less than

6,000 miles (9,500 kilometers). Now that's a big time-saver!

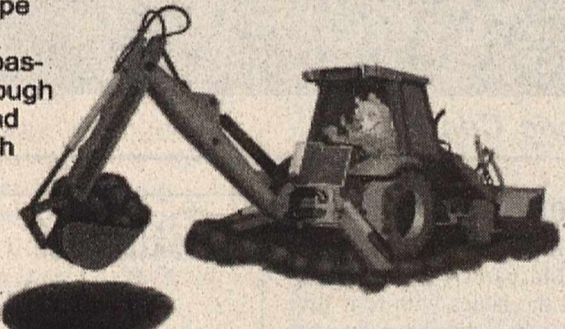
You want to know what an isthmus is? Look it up!

OK, here's a hint: It's a narrow strip of land bordered by at least two bodies of water. Hmmm — that's not really a hint, is it?

The canal is 48 miles (77 kilometers) long.

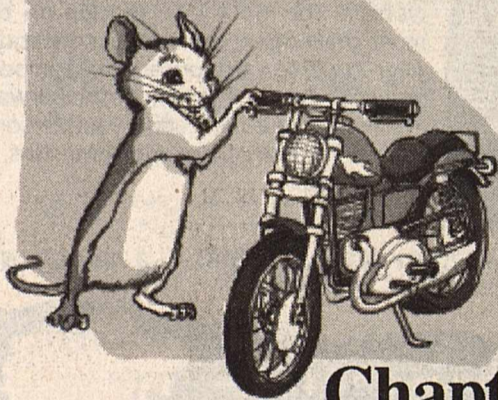
More than 14,000 ships go through the canal each year and more than 800,000 ships have made the passage since the Panama Canal was opened.

It even has a nickname: "The Big Dig."



## The Mouse and the Motorcycle

By Beverly Cleary



### Chapter 2

NiE - Newspapers in Education! Join us as we enjoy this young readers classic...The Mouse and the Motorcycle by Beverly Cleary.

With special permission, each week, one chapter of this book will be printed in The Brackett News.

Did you miss last week's chapter?

Click on "NiE" on www.thebrackettnews.com

Chapter 2

The Motorcycle

Except for one terrifying moment when the boy had poked his finger through the mousehole, a hungry young mouse named Ralph eagerly watched everything that went on in Room 215. At first he was disappointed at the size of the boy who was to occupy the room. A little child, preferably two or even three children, would have been better. Little messy children were always considerate about leaving crumbs on the carpet. Oh well, at least these people did not have a dog. If there was one thing Ralph dis-

liked, it was a snoop dog.

Next Ralph felt hopeful. Medium-sized boys could almost always be counted on to leave a sticky candy bar wrapper on the floor or a bag of peanuts on the bedside table, where Ralph could reach them by climbing up the telephone cord. With a boy this size, the food, though not apt to be plentiful, was almost sure to be of good quality.

The third emotion felt by Ralph was joy when the boy laid the apple core by the telephone. This was followed by despair when the mother dropped the core into the metal wastebasket. Ralph knew that anything at the bottom of a metal wastebasket was lost to a mouse forever.

A mouse lives not by crumbs alone and so Ralph experienced still another emotion; this time food was not the cause of it. Ralph was eager, excited, curious, and impatient all at once. The emotion was so strong it made him forget his empty stomach. It was caused by those little cars, especially that motorcycle

and the pb-pb-b-b sound the boy made. That sound seemed to satisfy something within Ralph, as if he had been waiting all his life to hear it.

Pb-pb-b-b went the boy. To the mouse the sound spoke of highways and speed, of distance and danger, and whiskers blown back by the wind.

The instant the family left the room to go to dinner, Ralph scurried out of the mousehole and across the threadbare carpet to the telephone cord, which came out of a hole in the floor beside the bedside table.

"Ralph!" scolded his mother from the mousehole. "You stay away from that telephone cord!" Ralph's mother was a great worrier. She worried because their hotel was old and run-down and because so many rooms were often empty with no careless guests to leave crumbs behind for mice. She worried about the rumor that their hotel was to be torn down when the new highway came through. She worried about her children finding aspirin tablets. Ralph's father had tried to carry an aspirin tablet in his cheek pouch, the aspirin had dissolved with unexpected suddenness, and Ralph's father had been poisoned. Since then no member of the family would think of touching an aspirin tablet, but this did not prevent Ralph's mother from worrying.

Most of all Ralph's mother worried about Ralph. She worried because he was a reckless mouse, who stayed out late in the daytime when he should have been home safe in bed. She worried when Ralph climbed the curtain to sit on the windowsill to watch the chipmunk in the pine tree outside and the cars

in the parking lot below. She worried because Ralph wanted to go exploring down the hall instead of traveling under the floorboards like a sensible mouse. Heaven only knew what dangers he might meet in the hall—maids, bellboys, perhaps even cats. Or what was worse, vacuum cleaners. Ralph's mother had a horror of vacuum cleaners.

Ralph, who was used to his mother's worries, got a good running start and was already halfway up the telephone cord.

"Remember your Uncle Victor!" his mother called after him.

Ralph seemed not to hear. He climbed the cord up to the telephone, jumped down, and ran around to the row of cars. There it was on the end—the motorcycle! Ralph stared at it and then walked over and kicked a tire. Close up the motorcycle looked even better than he expected. It was new and shiny and had a good set of tires. Ralph walked all the way around it, examining the pair of chromium mufflers and the engine and the hand clutch. It even had a little license plate so it would be legal to ride it.

"Boy!" said Ralph to himself, his whiskers quivering with excitement. "Boy, oh, boy!" Feeling that this was an important moment in his life, he took hold of the handgrips. They felt good and solid beneath his paws. Yes, this motorcycle was a good machine all right. He could tell by the feel. Ralph threw a leg over the motorcycle and sat jauntily on the plastic seat. He even bounced up and down. The seat was curved just right to fit a mouse.

But how to start the motor-

cycle? Ralph did not know. And even if he did know how to start it, he could not do much riding up here on the bedside table. He considered pushing the motorcycle off onto the floor, but he did not want to risk damaging such a valuable machine.

Ralph bounced up and down on the seat a couple more times and looked around for some way to start the motorcycle. He pulled at a lever or two but nothing happened. Then a terrible thought spoiled his pleasure. This was only a toy. It would not run at all.

Ralph, who had watched many children in Room 215, had picked up a lot of information about toys. He had seen a boy from Cedar Rapids throw his model airplane on the floor because he could not make its plastic parts fit properly. A little girl had burst into tears and run sobbing to her mother when her doll's arm had come out of its socket. And then there was that nice boy, the potato chip nibbler, who stamped his foot because the batteries kept falling out of his car.

But this toy could not be like all those other toys he had seen. It looked too perfect with its wire spokes in its wheels and its pair of shiny chromium exhaust pipes. It would not be right if it did not run. It would not be fair. A motorcycle that looked as real as this one had to run. The secret of making it run must be perfectly simple if only Ralph had someone to show him what it was.

Ralph was not satisfied just sitting on the motorcycle. Ralph craved action. After all, what was a motorcycle for if it wasn't action? Who needed motorcycle riding lessons? Not Ralph! He

tried pushing himself along with his feet. This was not nearly fast enough, but it was better than nothing. He moved his feet faster along the tabletop and then lifted them up while he coasted. Feeling braver, he bent low over the handlebars and worked his feet still faster toward the edge of the bedside table. When he worked up a little speed he would coast around the corner. He scabbled his feet on the tabletop to gain momentum. In a split second he would steer to the left—

At that moment the bell on the telephone rang half a ring, so close that it seemed to pierce the middle of Ralph's bones. It rang just that half ring, as if the girl at the switchboard realized she had rung the wrong room and had jerked out the cord before the ring was finished.

That half a ring was enough. It shattered Ralph's nerves and terrified him so that he forgot all about steering. It jumbled his thoughts until he forgot to drag his heels for brakes. He was so terrified he let go of the handgrips. The momentum of the motorcycle carried him forward, over the edge of the table. Down, down through space tumbled Ralph with the motorcycle. He tried to straighten out, to turn the fall into a leap, but the motorcycle got in his way. He grabbed in vain at the air with both paws. There was nothing to clutch, nothing to save him, only the empty air. For a fleeting instant he thought of his poor old Uncle Victor. That was the instant the motorcycle landed with a crash in the metal wastebasket.

Ralph fell in a heap beside the motorcycle and lay still.

# Service Directory

Thursday, February 15, 2007 The Brackett News

7

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## Weekly Business Profile



**Business Name:** The Jug Store  
**Address:** 208 East Military Hwy (Hwy. 90)  
**Phone Number:** 830-563-9030  
**Owners:** Wayne & Lauren Delcour  
**In Business For:** 4 Years

**Type of Business:** Retail package liquor store  
**Products:** liquor, beer, wine, mixes, ice, soda  
**Special Services:** New drive thru window and the Delcour's can place special case orders for your favorite spirits.  
**Something Personal:** In their spare time...Lauren makes custom jewelry and loves crafts and painting, while Wayne enjoys playing golf.

Photo from left: Wayne and Lauren Delcour are ready and waiting serve their customers in their new store on Hwy. 90 East. Their new facility features a convenient drive-thru.

