



Devil is in details, mail, cartoons...

I don't mean to lay the blame on George W. Bush, because it's probably not entirely his fault. But ever since the president with the pro-religion agenda got re-elected, there's been a lot of trouble with people seeing the devil popping up all over the place.

Take, for example, SpongeBob SquarePants, a precociously innocuous cartoon figure who is being fingered by some U.S. religious groups for supposedly hanging out in gay bars.

I'm drooling if I'm fooling. James Dobson, founder of the religious group Focus on the Family, said that a music video in which SpongeBob SquarePants appears with a bunch of other cartoon characters is a "pro-homosexual video."

Now wait just a doggone minute. Obviously, Dobson has his cartoon characters mixed up. He's got the wrong guy. The character Dobson should be blaming for promoting a lifestyle he doesn't approve of isn't SpongeBob SquarePants, but SpongeBob McPants.

I swear. Next thing you know, people are going to be talking trash about Elmer Fudd. "It wasn't me. It was the walrus!"

And how come all these religious right people are sitting at home looking for trouble by watching the Cartoon Network? Does watching Porky Pig 24 hours a day to see if you can catch him up to something really set an example for our youth?

Then you get this deal down in San Marcos where Mayor Susan Narvaiz asked a U.S. Postal Service representative during a City Council meeting if there is any way to change the city's ZIP code, 78666, to something less inflammatory. See, 666 is looked upon by some as being the number of the beast.

So if you're having trouble getting your mail on time down in San Marcos, I guess the implication is that the post office has gone to hell.

My favorite devilish situation occurred when members of the Bush family flashed the Hook 'em sign as the Longhorn Band passed by during the inaugural parade. People in Norway misinterpreted that to be a salute to Satan. Now, there's some people who have never been over to the University of Texas alumni center during the half for a col' beer, huh?

"Shock greeting from Bush daughter," said a headline in the Norwegian Internet newspaper Nettavisen. Hab. A "shock greeting" would require one less finger. See, in Norway, holding up your hand with the middle two fingers down and the pinky and index fingers raised is a sign of the devil. Now, there's a big swinging coincidence. That's the same thing they think about the Hook 'em sign over at Texas A&M.

Hey, until now I hadn't realized how many Norwegians live in Bryan College Station. But after hearing about this misunderstanding, I expect cross-country skiing to break out all over the Brazos River Valley.

It's kinda funny how the Europeans are always on America's case for not understanding other cultures. And here come the Norwegians, who couldn't tell Bevo from a ham sandwich. How could these people not know about the Hook 'em sign? You mean to tell me none of these nincompoops watched the Rose Bowl? Don't these people have any culture?

John Keiso's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Contact him at 445-3606 or jkeiso@statesman.com.

Studio rehab is in Austin's script

\$1.5 million grant sought for soundstage work as part of effort to keep city a filmmaking hub

By Sarah Coppola
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Like a Hollywood movie star prepping for her close-up, Austin Studios, a hub for area

filmmaking, may undergo a makeover soon.

This week, the City of Austin and the Austin Film Society will apply for a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of

Commerce to spruce up one of the five studios at the site of the former Mueller airport.

The improvements are part of a broader strategy, unveiled last year, to keep Austin's film industry thriving. Moviemaker magazine recently named Austin the second-best U.S. city in which to make films, after New

York; filmmaking pumps about \$360 million a year into Austin's economy, a 2004 study showed.

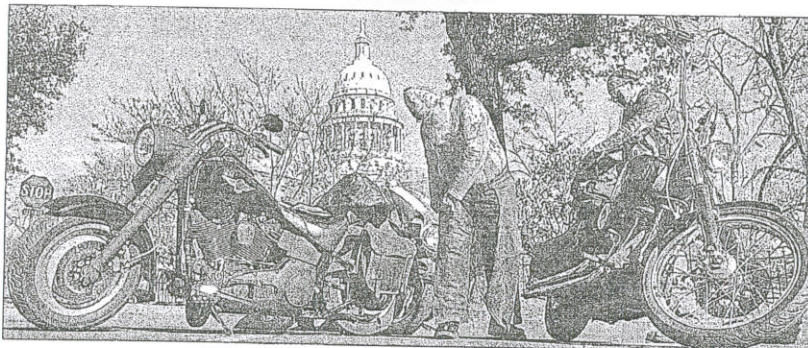
Five years ago, the Austin Film Society began using five hangars at Mueller as soundstages and studios. The space has been used for 18 movies and 30 other productions such as music videos and commercials.

The film society has made small changes to the space, but it needs a more dramatic spiffing-up.

The film society says it would use the grant money to put air conditioning and good soundproofing in one hangar. It would add a fire-suppression sprinkler

See FILM, B5

79TH LEGISLATURE



Matt Rourke AMERICAN-STATESMAN

They've got issues; hear them roar

Snyder Rosenbaum, left, and Andrew Harbour of Denton were among hundreds of motorcyclists who roared to the Capitol to chat up lawmakers about helmet laws and other issues Monday. Helmets are required for bikers under 21. Fellow rider Rep.

Norma Chavez, D-El Paso, presented the bikers in the House. "I'm proud to introduce and acknowledge the presence of a group of freedom fighters, defenders of the Texas Constitution and the U.S. Constitution," she said. **Capitol Roundup, B3.**

On statesman.com: See video of the bikers' helmet rally at statesman.com/multimedia.

Senate to put crime labs under scope



Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst
Senate leaders are contemplating whether a state or regional crime lab network is needed.

Evidence woes in Houston, elsewhere warrant review of system, officials contend

By Mark Lisher
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Spurred by a delay in reforms at the Houston Police Department crime lab, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst on Monday called for a review of crime labs in Texas to determine whether they should be

overseen and regulated by the state.

Speaking at a news conference with Dewhurst at the Capitol, Sen. John Whitmire, D-Houston, said problems at crime labs around the state, particularly in Houston, warrant a review by the Senate's Criminal Justice Committee, of which he is chairman.

Whitmire and Sen. Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, sent a letter to Houston Mayor Bill White urging him to surrender oversight to the Texas Rangers. Should the Houston Police Department decline, Whitmire said, his

committee is prepared to recommend stronger action.

A spokesman for White said city officials want the investigation to be as "open and transparent to the community as possible."

"We welcome people who want to come in and work shoulder to shoulder with us to resolve these issues," Frank Michel told The Associated Press.

Bad DNA tests, missing or tainted evidence and fouled-up documentation in

See EVIDENCE, B3

Ballet to shine a 'Light' on intolerance

Project with UT focuses on Holocaust, aims to teach about hate's effects

By Jaane Claire var Ryzin
AMERICAN-STATESMAN ARTS WRITER

The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks made Stephan Mills think hard about the ethical responsibil-

ities of art. "The intolerance and hatred we felt after the attacks horrified me," said Mills, artistic director of Ballet Austin. "And there's still an underlying current of intolerance today that nobody wants to talk about."

Today at Ballet Austin headquarters on Guadalupe Street—60 years after the Nazi concentration camp liberations—Austin community leaders will pledge publicly to fight

bigotry and hate.

At the same time, representatives from Ballet Austin and the University of Texas will announce "Light: The Holocaust and Humanity Project," a months-long citywide series of lectures, performances and exhibitions. The effort will culminate April 1-3 with "Light," a new work by Mills and one of the first American dances built

See SERIES, B2

Board: State falling short on college enrollment

Because of Hispanic population growth, goals might be too low

By Ralph K.M. Haurwitz
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Texas is falling short of its goals for enrolling more students in higher education. And that matters worse, it now appears that the goals aren't ambitious enough.

Those are among the findings of a draft report on enrollment projections by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Members are scheduled to discuss the findings Thursday in Austin. The report cites as a special challenge the relatively low rate of college attendance by Hispanics, coupled with faster-than-expected growth in their population. Those factors argue for revising the state's higher education plan, which calls for boosting enrollment to 1.6 million students by 2015.

New population projections from the Texas State Data Center show that the state should enroll an additional 100,000 Hispanic students, for a total enrollment of 1.6 million, the report says. But if current trends continue, the state will have just 1.5 million people attending college by 2015. Currently, 1.2 million are enrolled.

"This is a tremendous challenge, but it's something we have to do to have the type of prosperous future we'd like to have in Texas," David Gardner, the board's assistant commissioner for planning and information resources, said Monday. An enrollment of 1.6 million is needed to ensure that 6.7 percent of the state's population in 2015 is attending college. That benchmark was established by the higher education plan, which was

See ENROLL, B2

Journalist: Texas twang on the rise

Students get lesson in how Americans talk from 'NewsHour' ex-anchor

By Katie Humphrey
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

"I'll better get ready because the Texas drawl is the future of American English—at least according to journalist Robert MacNeil, who has spent many years studying and chronicling how Americans talk.

Maybe it's because of country music or migration from north to south, but any way you look at it, the number of people speaking with a Southern dialect—particularly "Texan"—is on the rise. MacNeil told about 270 area high school students who gathered at the campus of Advanced Micro Devices on Monday afternoon.

"Talking Southern may ultimately become the most normal way of talking American," he said, recalling a study from the 1990s that found that 76 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds and 41 percent of people older than 65 in the United States used "y'all" on a regular basis. And that was before



Elizabeth Hernandez AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Robert MacNeil had some wisdom about words for young people Monday. From left are Joseph Hu, Marta Shocket and Lindsey Johns of LBJ High School.

On statesman.com: Ready for some word games? Link to "Do You Speak American?" from this story.

President Bush took office. MacNeil, former executive editor and co-anchor of "The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," used Monday's

discussion as a prequel to his evening speech at the University of Texas' LBJ Library, part of KLRU's Distinguished Speaker Series.

The discussion focused on MacNeil's latest book, "Do You Speak American?" and his Public

See TALK, B5

Ballet to shine a 'Light' on intolerance

Project with UT focuses on Holocaust, aims to teach about hate's effects

By Jeanne Claire van Ryzin

AMERICAN-STATESMAN ARTS WRITER

The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks made Stephen Mills think hard about the ethical responsibil-

ities of art.

"The intolerance and hatred we felt after the attacks horrified me," said Mills, artistic director of Ballet Austin. "And there's still an underlying current of intolerance today that nobody wants to talk about."

Today at Ballet Austin headquarters on Guadalupe Street — 60 years after the Nazi concentration camp liberations — Austin community leaders will pledge publicly to fight

bigotry and hate.

At the same time, representatives from Ballet Austin and the University of Texas will announce "Light: The Holocaust and Humanity Project," a months-long citywide series of lectures, performances and exhibitions. The effort will culminate April 1-3 with "Light," a new work by Mills and one of the first American dances built

See **SERIES**, B2

SERIES: Ballet to honor survivors of Holocaust

Continued from B1

around the themes of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel.

Also part of the project is a Holocaust education conference for high school and middle school teachers with UT's School of Education as host. A large-scale "Coexistence Exhibition" from a Jerusalem museum will go up on Auditorium Shores in March, Nobel Prize-winning writer Elie Wiesel will give a talk March 31, and journalist Linda Ellerbee will lead a town hall meeting on tolerance April 19.

Mills said the ballet and the related programs started as an exploration of the importance of individual responsibility in a tolerant society. He traveled to Israel and Holocaust sites in Europe, interviewing survivors.

"Sadly, we are losing the last generation of Holocaust survivors," he said. "With 'Light' we aim to honor these courageous individuals, their memories and their experiences and learn from them."

Ballet Austin will spend almost \$400,000 on its portion of the project, Executive Director Cookie Ruiz said. Money has come from private and public sources, including a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Jewish Community Association of Austin, the Austin Independent School District and the Holocaust Museum Houston are co-sponsors of the project.

"We want art to engage this community in a dialogue about intolerance," Ruiz said. "We can't take responsibility for the entire world, but we can take responsibility for Austin."

For more information on "Light: The Holocaust and Humanity Project," visit www.balletaustin.org or call 476-2163.

jvanryzin@statesman.com; 445-3699

Elizabeth Christian & Associates Public Relations