

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A personal thank you for a special veterans' event

Editor's Note: This letter was sent to John Alexander, and Jim Wade – author of the letter – was kind enough to allow us to reprint it.

Dear John:

Once again, congratulations on a job well done. Even though I shook your hand after the festivities yesterday on Armed Forces Day.

I wanted to put my feelings in writing. In a very professional way you did all the veterans justice by taking the carnival atmosphere out of our day and made it meaningful.

Normally I do not attend affairs such as this, as our daughter and your friend, Kristen, will tell you.

I hesitated attending this ceremony, as this was a first for me in Bullard; however, I am now very happy that I shared this day with you and everyone who attended and participated.

I can understand the feelings of your friend, the unknown name, who told it like it was.

There is no fun in war. Lives are changed, families are fractured and loved ones hope and pray that their loved ones come home safe and sound. In most wars boys leave and return men.

It is a job that has to be done, and if you are fortunate to return, as I was, you live to forget, and do your best to find your place in society.

Some are more successful than others.

Up until a few years ago, when Tom Brokaw wrote about the Greatest Generation, the vast majority of veterans never spoke about or made mention of their experiences about the wars in which they participated.

The Vietnam wall in

Washington was one of the first steps and many of those veterans had difficulty when seeing it the first time.

Thanks to Bob Dole, the World War II Memorial was created in Washington, D.C., and that was one more step in bring out memories of past history.

At the insistence of my four sons, I was their guest at this dedication three years ago.

One again, I hesitated in going but one there it was probably one of, if not the most, pleasant and cherished two days I will ever spend.

It was a time to remember, to open up and to heal memories that were hidden from long ago. I was a once in a lifetime experience as was yesterday, when my grandson participated in the presentation of the colors.

In your own way, whether you realize it or not, you have set a precedent in Bullard that should be continued for many years to come.

You captured the same feeling that was brought out in Washington in a "down home" sort of way.

With no fanfare, several months ago, you announced what you and Jay wanted to do and you did it.

You planned it well, you carried it out well, and as mentioned, you took the carnival out of the day.

Please convey my personal thanks to all who played a part.

I can only visualize the many hours and planning that made this celebration of our country and the ones who have served, and I give tribute to their dedication for taking their time to make this a special day.

See you next year.

**Jim Wade,
Bullard**

CARTOON



OPINIONS AROUND THE NATION, STATE

Bush's immigration plan needs a chance

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

If only Americans could devise a way to pair willing employers with willing workers, and free up the Border Patrol to go after terrorists and smugglers instead of people who come to do jobs that Americans aren't doing.

In a nutshell, that is the idea that sparked the latest installment of the perennial immigration debate.

It came from President Bush, who early in his presidency seized upon the idea of establishing a new guest-worker program to import temporary workers for industries where employers found it difficult to fill jobs with American workers.

A guest-worker plan is one of the components of the recently unveiled compromise immigration bill, which the Senate began to debate last week.

The plan is to bring in as many as 400,000 guest workers per year for two or three years, and then require those workers to go home for a year before they reapply to reenter the country.

This is a major component of the proposal, and certainly one of the most con-

troversial aspects of the plan.

In fact, one of the few things on which critics on both the right and the left agree is that the guest-worker program is a non-starter, albeit for radically different reasons.

Many conservatives fear that the workers won't leave and that, as former Sen. Alan Simpson likes to say, there is nothing more permanent than a temporary worker. Meanwhile, many liberals are worried employers would exploit the guest workers and bring down wages for U.S. workers.

These are not trivial concerns, but they can be addressed through the amendment process, especially now that the Senate Democratic leadership has wisely abandoned its ill-conceived plan to ram through this important piece of legislation with very little debate.

It now seems clear that senators will be discussing the proposal for at least a

week, and perhaps longer.

That is the best course. Senators need to use the time to address concerns about the guest-worker plan.

This isn't complicated.

There needs to be a series of punishments and incentives created to entice foreign workers to return to their home countries when their time in the United States is up.

And legal safeguards need to be put in place to protect workers from abuse and exploitation while they are here.

As for bringing down wages for U.S. workers, well, that assumes the native born want to do these jobs in the first place - even at the best of wages.

President Bush had the right idea from the beginning.

We need a program that pairs willing workers with willing employers and does so in a manner that is fair, just and humane to all parties.

Who knows? Perhaps this is just such a plan. We'll never know if we don't give it a chance.

VA top among dishonoring veterans

THE SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

If anyone ever needed an advocate, it is a soldier in wartime, risking his or her life thousands of miles from home.

As the death counts climb in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, the scandals are climbing as well.

In February, the Washington Post ran a series of articles that shocked the nation, revealing the deplorable conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"We need to bring the Army people in and say, 'What the hell is going on?'" Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, told his colleagues in the House.

One month later, the Post expanded its probe, uncovering similar conditions at Veterans Administration hospitals throughout the nation.

Both investigations illustrated years of neglect, an outrageous show of disrespect to our men and women who give so much.

Well, the outrage continues.

An investigation by the Associated Press has raised conflict-of-interest questions involving VA officials who received "hefty" performance bonuses while serving on the boards tasked with recommending the payments.

The Associated Press obtained documents showing that 21 officials, all of them members of the VA performance review boards, received more than \$500,000 in payments.

Among these members, according to the wire service, were senior officials who helped craft the VA budget that came up \$1.3 billion short, thus jeopardizing

health care for veterans.

"This is a scandal in the making," Paul Light, a professor of public service at New York University, told the wire service.

These officials are not the first bureaucrats to hold their own pocket-books above the public interest, and they will not be the last.

But if the allegations are correct, these transgressions go beyond mere malfeasance.

They victimize a group that, above all others in America, deserves the best treatment this country can offer.

Rep. John Hall, D-N.Y., has introduced a bill that would freeze VA bonuses for "senior politically appointed officials" until the agency trims its disability claims backlog to below 100,000 cases.

The legislation represents a good start.

Why should veterans be denied payments while officials receive bonuses they do not deserve?

State parks at crucial crossroad

Texas' horribly neglected state parks system is at a crucial crossroads. Its fate now rests in the hands of Texas House and Senate budget writers.

In recent years, that's been a sure-fire recipe for disaster. But this year, it appears that the money-starved parks system might finally get the dramatic funding increase that it so clearly needs.

Recent reports indicated that funding

might rise from a starvation level of less than \$25 million to as much as \$85 million.

That could give the system desperately needed money to replace worn-out equipment and vehicles, hire new staffers to compensate for previous cutbacks, re-establish curtailed programs and perhaps even buy land for additional park space to serve fast-growing urban areas such as Dallas-Fort Worth.

Budget writers also should ensure that the \$9.6 million that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is receiving for selling a 400-acre tract at Eagle Mountain Lake in northwest Tarrant County can go toward acquiring a site for a large regional state park in North Texas, as Gov. Rick Perry and Parks and Wildlife Commission Chairman Joseph Fitzsimons have urged.

That's only fair.

The state is getting the \$9.6 million largely from local government and private donors in Tarrant County, and the lake site initially had been purchased by the state for a state park but never was developed. The Eagle Mountain site is to become a local, nature-oriented park.

Parks lovers raised a public outcry after media reports by the Star-Telegram and others last year of the pathetic deterioration of the parks system.

Texas ranks 49th among the 50 states in parks funding. It's up to the Legislature to ensure that the state once again becomes a responsible steward of the more than 100 parks and natural areas under its jurisdiction.

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Short letters are most likely to be chosen.

Deadlines: Articles, Classified and Display ads: Thursday noon.

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