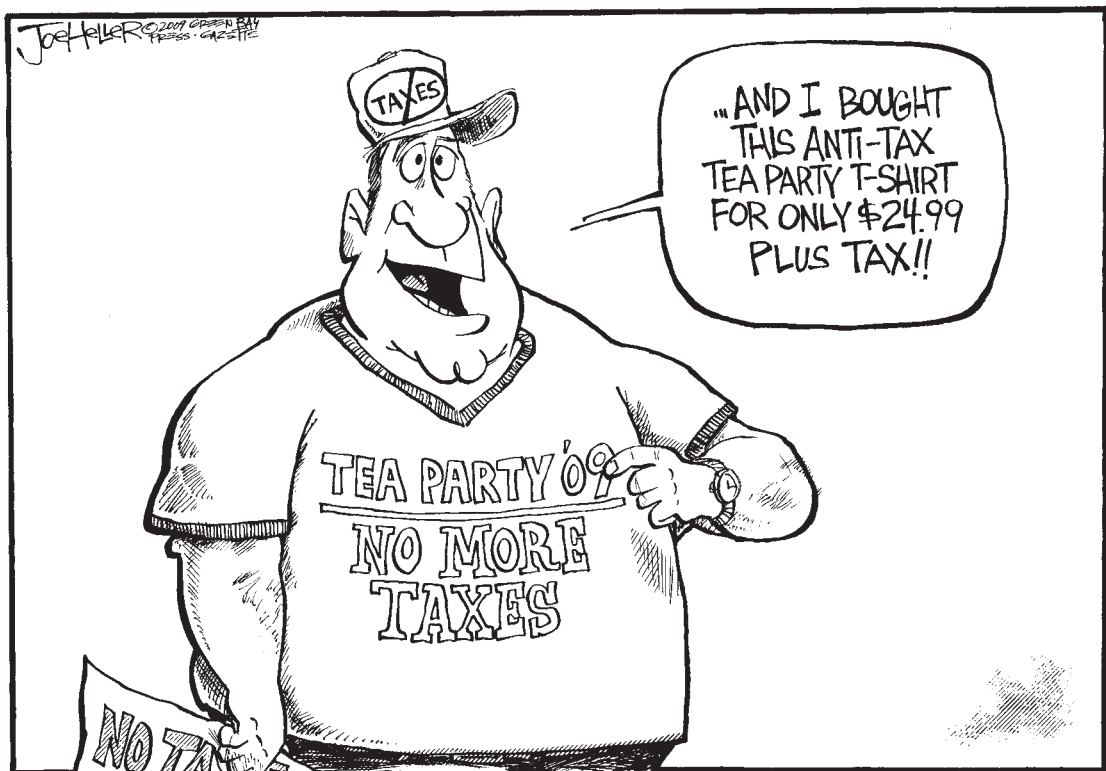


JOE HELLER



Gourmet and...guinea pigs?

When I told him that I was having a Pampered Chef party, the color drained out of his face and he began to stammer.

"Are...you...It's...who...HERE?"

No, honey. At Laura Bush's house. The Pampered Chef Lady.

"Oh."

Pause.

"Well, that sounds like fun!"

Right.

Last time I went to a party where people try to sell you things, I ended up with a huge suitcase-sized make-up bag that I never use but can't bear to throw away and a three-month payment plan.

So when Cindy, the layout wizard at HCN, heard that I loved to cook she suggested that I host a Pampered Chef party.

My mother and grandmother absolutely worship these products and use hushed tones when speaking of them. So I knew these products were golden.

Plus, Cindy said I could get a bunch of free stuff if I went through with it.

I actually felt pretty bad about inviting people. I mean, I know I don't have the extra change to be purchasing cookware, no matter how ingenious and clever. And times like these, how

I'LL SEE YOU AROUND



Courtney Eason
Staff Writer

could I expect it from anyone else?

Nevertheless, I arrived at the home of the Pampered Chef Lady.

I was the first one there. I expected... well, I'm not sure what I was expecting.

The "pastel-sweater-tied-neatly-around-my-neck" lady who uses hushed tones to speak about cookware.

What I got was Laura Bush, and was I ever relieved.

(Yes, her name is familiar. No, she is not related. She told us during the party, hands on hips, cooking utensil in hand, "Would I be working for Pampered Chef if I was?" Round of chuckles ensued.)

Now, it might be difficult for some people to walk, unaccompanied, into some stranger's house who is about to try to sell you something.

I can't find the right words to describe how I felt in the first few minutes.

So I'll tell you about my guinea pigs.

Guinea pigs are skittish by nature and will freeze when

startled. Otherwise, they are very animated creatures.

Whenever my guineas become tense, I just begin talking in my normal, somewhat boisterous voice, maybe even scold them for being wusses, and they continue with whatever they were doing just as happy as before.

Back to Laura Bush's house. I was nervous.

But then she started talking about her family, her business and food, and my blood pressure returned to normal.

Between cooking demonstrations and dazzling kitchen feats, she told us stories about her family, who wandered in and out.

And she had two dogs to whom she spoke and scolded periodically.

It was great.

The meal was perfectly satisfying, both to watch and eat.

The company was in good humor.

I did get caught eating out of the bowl.

It's a habit I've never been able to break.

Anyway, by the time all was said and done, I was convinced that I wanted to be a Pampered Chef Lady.

He's going to be thrilled.

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Long sports seasons taxing on this one fan

I'm trying to decide if there's some correlation between the NCAA Final Four wrapping up and the arrival of Tax Day.

Probably nothing to it. But it seems awfully close for some reason.

Maybe it's conveniently arranged so winners of the office pools will remember to report their prizes to the IRS next year. Yeah, I'm sure that's right. And I'm sure the winners do that, too. Duh.

Well, except for the NBA playoffs, basketball is finally over. It started when the howling winter winds came, and is now finally fading from the spotlight as the bluebonnets bloom.

Too long. All the games seem to take some suspense out of the sport. We're worn out.

I will avoid sounding too critical of another sport that wears us down and is thankfully coming to its finish line for the season. Don't most folks think Yankee ice hockey runs too long?

Boy. Can't wait for those

GARY OFF KILTER



Gary Engel
Staff Writer

broke out."

When I worked in radio, I had a sports guy, in New Mexico, who was compelled to give the hockey scores in his reports.

"Harry," I asked. "Do you think there's really one person, besides yourself, even remotely interested in hockey in Roswell?"

"Sure," he answered. "My wife."

Okay, that explains everything. End of discussion.

I knew there was some-

thrilling 1-0 games, can we? Exciting. Oh, I know why hockey's so popular in Texas. The combat on ice.

Who was it who said: "I went to the fights the other night, and a hockey game

thing twisted about that woman.

When Harry was off one day, I gave the hockey scores. I said it was in the memory of Harry.

So then, everybody in town thought Harry was dead or something.

I had to dispel that rumor right away. Harry was primarily an advertising salesman, and I didn't want people to quit buying advertising because they thought Harry had croaked.

Since the season is so long, I ordered him to give the College World Series scores.

Harry didn't like baseball, so we were even.

His mother-in-law gave him a St. Louis Cardinals jersey that looked virtually identical to a Cards' home uniform top. Absolutely beautiful.

He gave it to me.

I said I was "sorry" that I didn't have a Detroit Red Wings (a hockey team) uniform to give him in return.

Yeah, just heartbroken.

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Already missing Mackenzie

If you read my columns on a regular basis, then you know that it's no secret that I've got the best girlfriends in the entire universe.

I've mentioned them by name as they've made appearances in a column here or there, and I've even written one specifically dedicated to them. Well this column isn't about all of my girlfriends again. This one is about one in particular.

Mackenzie and I have been best friends for the past eight years. We have been there for each other through breakups, new relationships, hospital visits, personal losses, totaling one's car into the other's car (ha!), and we even worked together for five years.

We've been a lot of miles together, including Mexico,

TWENTY-SOMETHING GIRL



Chelsea Roe
Columnist

driving to Colorado, Indiana and endless amounts of road trips here in Texas. Needless to say, we have spent A LOT of time together.

We were together so much, in fact, that on the odd occasion that we WEREN'T, somebody would say, "Where's your other half?" which always irked us, but made us smile at the same time.

Through all of our time together, we've never gotten tired of each other. (And if she did, she never let me know it.)

But this week something's different. This week Mackenzie moves to Missouri. This week we cry. Next week we don't see each other. It's a very hard concept for me to grasp. Someone that I see weekly and talk to daily is not just a couple of miles down the road anymore.

When my fiance leaves town, she can't come spend the night with me to keep me from feeling scared anymore. My "other half" as they say is going to be whole elsewhere.

Sure, time will make it easier, but right now easy is far away. Right now, I'm just Lucy without her Ethel. Thelma without her Louise. Laverne without her Shirley. But most importantly, Chelsea without her Mack.

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A 'two-ply' Easter

It was a beautiful Easter. Prayers for rain were answered with approximately an inch coming in a non-damaging style. Similar to 2,000 years ago, the day got better as it matured.

Am told some 40 people met under the Bluff Dale tabernacle for a non-sunrise service. The clouds and rainfall were a pleasant change from so many bright, dry sunrises.

Our little church was so full the choir, with a singer in every seat, could not make the usual move to the pews for the sermon. They said it was just as good from the backside.

After church enjoyed a great Easter lunch created by the combined family talents of grandma-ma, daughter, son-in-law and grandkids.

It was such an elegant affair, we used the more expensive plastic coated two-ply "paper plates."

Remember that news last week after the fire storm swept from Hood County to the Red River killing some people and destroying homes and structures.

Hood County Firefighters were able fight the fires away

THE TALL TEXAN



Burl McClellan
Staff Writer

from buildings, no homes were lost, and no major injuries or deaths."

No, we did not have less wind, less grass, less places to burn, in fact, there were many more homes in danger. We just had more fire fighters and more equipment.

We have nine organized fire departments in the county and over 200 volunteers ready to fight.

And, thanks to something or someone, our commissioners have spent money to help equip the nine departments.

In several of the rural counties the scarcity of equipment and fighters gave the wind driven fire little to slow its race to the river.

Thanks to all who planned ahead and to those who manned the battle lines What you do is appreciated. Especially from us too old to run, or fight our own battles.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Millions concerned

How many Americans can be ignored?

Answer: Millions.

I wonder how many people of Hood County know that more than 2.25 million Americans took time out of their lives to make a concerted protest of current policies. Without the support of network TV rallying power, 2.25 MILLION Americans found a way to make connection.

The White House admits to more than 2.25 million red envelopes being received but it didn't make prime time news. Each envelope carried a message to protect the unborn. I repeat 2.25 million Americans were not enough to make prime time.

Meanwhile I wonder how many people of Hood County have not heard all the controversy about the president's new puppy. Now that must be important. What is wrong with this picture?

Kathy Hooper
Granbury

Preservation great idea

After reading the article Kathy wrote on the aggravation of some property owners on the North

side and the new historical outlay they are trying to do, I just wanted to say that we are maybe one of the few that are not upset by it.

We live on N Houston and our property is rated a medium risk in this project. We are actually happy something is being looked at, there are several homes in this area that we believe might someday be torn down for bigger construction agendas. Ours could be one at some point.

We have often wondered if and when. So to see the historical district get involved we appreciate. We have gone to the meetings, we don't agree with most of what the ones opposed are saying. We think it is a good thing.

We also have worked very hard on our house and don't want to see a risk of it being torn down due to some construction project that may happen later on with all the growth in this town.

Just thought you should know there are people that are happy with the historical district getting involved with the North side.

Patrick and Debora Donnelly
Granbury

THIS IS HOOD COUNTY



MARY VINSON | HOOD COUNTY NEWS

Hurts so good

Tolar freshman Rachel Williams works the kinks out of the back of her brother Caleb Williams (a senior) after he finished first in the 1600-meter race at the recent District 15-A Track Meet in Tolar.

KUDOS

Kudos recognizes good deeds or special accomplishments. To send a Kudos, e-mail editor@hcnews.com or write "Kudos," Hood County News, P.O. Box 879, Granbury, Texas 76048.

The Rogue Relay Team appreciates all participants and those who attended and helped with the recent Donkey Basketball game in Tolar. The event raised \$3,378 for Relay for Life and American Cancer Society.