

It's all about the money

New Mexico's Senate is planning to sue for the return of its land

In 1859, land surveyors were asked to draw the border between present-day New Mexico and Texas at the 103rd meridian. A tiny error was made, and the Texas border ended up being farther west than originally intended. According to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Texas acquired a razor-thin strip all the way down the line to where it breaks hard left toward El Paso, encompassing more than 600,000 acres.

For lack of something better to do, the New Mexico Senate has unanimously passed legisla-

tion that will allow the attorney general \$100,000 of state monies to sue Texas for the contested land, and "is further instructed to seek compensation for subsurface mineral rights, oil and gas royalties and income, and property taxes and grazing privileges that New Mexico has not realized due to the boundary error," as quoted from Senate Bill 815 introduced into the New Mexico Senate by state Sen. Shannon Robinson.

Robinson's call to collect on 144 years worth of lost royalties and taxes makes it incredulously apparent that New Mexicans are only interested in reclaiming the land because it is profitable and the revenue could be used to pay off state debts, as well as to alleviate state operation costs and construction.

New Mexicans, generally, are in favor of regaining the territory that includes such cities as Bledsoe, Bronco, Farwell and

Texline. Robinson believes "it is necessary for the public peace, health and safety that this act take effect immediately." During his Senate debate, Robinson said, "There is no doubt that the people's lives in that strip would be vastly improved because they no longer would be Texans."

Robinson's assumptions that Texans would be better off as New Mexicans is unfounded and ridiculous. There is no record of him even attempting to create a dialogue with the residents within the disputed areas to lead him to such a conclusion. Robinson's endeavor to "liberate" Texans is at best heartbreaking. Residents caught within the contested land strip are not starving, suffering from civil war or being oppressed by the Texas government. They are not living in some anarchical state, or in need of reform.

Most of the residential uproar, and rightly so, has to do with the hassle involved in changing over titles, deeds and taxes. Some elderly resi-



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dents have even bought cemetery lots because they want to be buried in Texas. "Most of the things we need or want to do, we do in New Mexico, (but) we still want to come home to Texas," said Cynthia Thigpen, city secretary in Farwell, which is located a mere nine miles from Clovis, N.M.

What does Robinson have to say about all this? One would think he would offer a referendum that would be put to the people to let them decide if they would rather be New Mexicans than Texans. Instead, his reply has nothing to do with the immediate concerns of the residents of the strip. He went so far as to tell the Albuquerque Tribune that he is serious about pursuing this and that he always wanted a piece of Texas.

What is so important to Robinson about winning back 600,000 acres? Political clout.

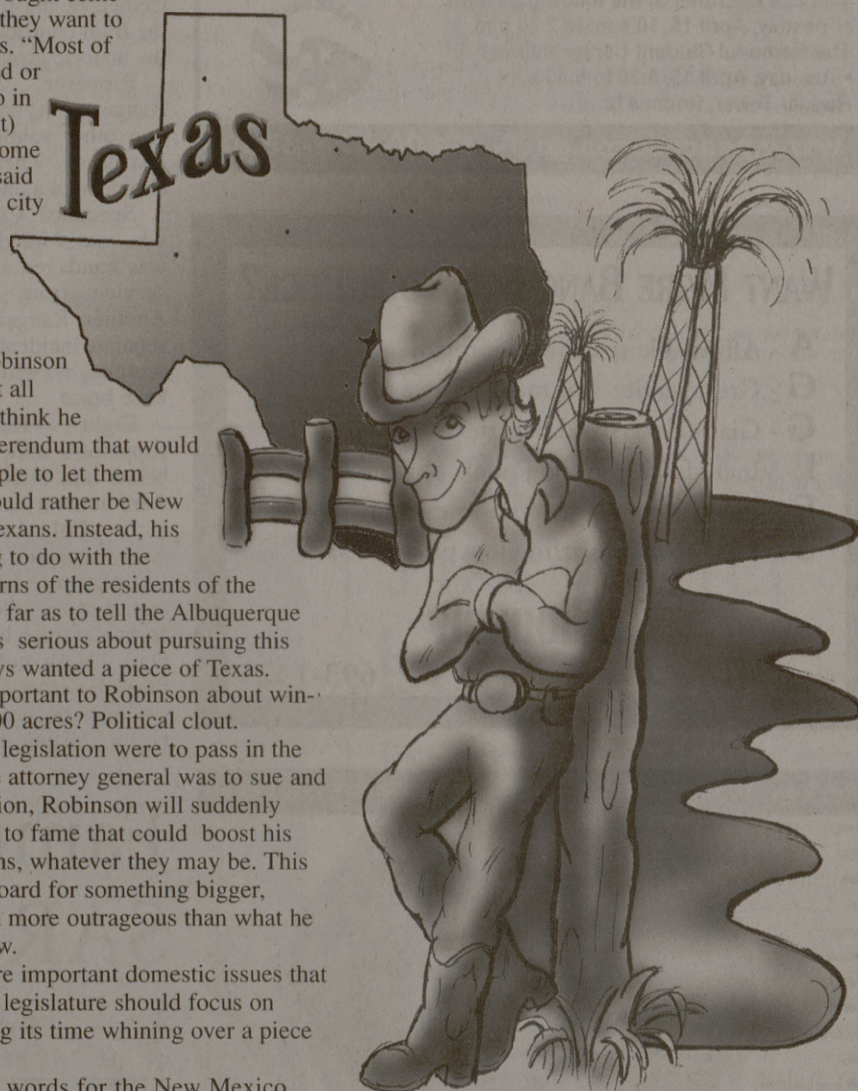
If Robinson's legislation were to pass in the House, and if the attorney general was to sue and win back the region, Robinson will suddenly have some claim to fame that could boost his political ambitions, whatever they may be. This is only a springboard for something bigger, grander and even more outrageous than what he is doing right now.

There are more important domestic issues that the New Mexico legislature should focus on instead of wasting its time whining over a piece of land.

We have four words for the New Mexico legislature:

Don't mess with Texas.

Melissa Fried is a junior international studies major. Graphics by Angelique Ford.



In terms of war, no side is worth rooting for

(U-WIRE) AMHERST, Mass. — War is on television 24 hours a day, and the media is making it seem more like a sports event than a combat situation. There are announcers, instant replays of bombs going off, multiple camera angles and sideline reporters — the similarities go on and on.

In this kind of atmosphere, people choose sides and root for one "team" or the other to win. Here in the United States, the population has rallied behind the troops and it is considered treasonous to wish for an American defeat, but there are other countries that would prefer to see Iraq pull off the upset.

So, the question remains: Who is in the right and who is in the wrong?

Much propaganda has been levied against the Iraqi government for human rights violations, particularly the killing of thousands of Kurds during the Iraq-Iran conflict of the 1980s. However, during that time, Saddam Hussein was an American ally who received hundreds of thousands of dollars in weapons from the United States government, even after it discovered what Hussein was doing to his own people.

Less than two decades have elapsed since that time, but apparently the United States has had a serious change of heart and suddenly cares about the well-being of the Iraqi people. In fact, the United States has never interfered in anything when its own interests weren't at stake, and such events as the Rwandan genocide of 1994 invoked no American response. Though people will die, as

hundreds have already, in the United States-led invasion, the war is even being called "Operation Iraqi Freedom," which is somewhat analogous to Hitler calling World War II, "Operation Save the Jews."

President George W. Bush says this is all being done to bring democracy to Iraq, but the chances of that happening are slim to none. In actuality, the United States has repressed more democracies in its day than it has created, and a puppet government in Iraq would be more beneficial to American interests.

Another justification for war is to stop the threat of weapons of mass destruction, but even if Iraq does have these weapons, it does not have the capabilities to launch them at the United States. Instead, it is the United States that has nearly monopolized the weapons of mass destruction business, as America currently spends about as much money on the military as every other country in the world combined (more than \$100 billion per day, even in times of peace).

When it comes to United States interests, Bush implies in one sentence that the war has nothing to do with oil, but in the next he says that burning Iraqi oil fields is an inexcusable crime. American companies are already receiving contracts to fix the damaged oil fields once the war ends, making this a war that has at least something to do with natural resources.

Though the United States has chastised Saddam for killing his own citizens, it is certainly no stranger to just this act, from the complete annihilation of the American Indians to the more recent

Kent State University and Orangeburg massacres of the 1960s. During countless labor strikes in the late 1800s and early 1900s, U.S. troops were called in to violently suppress numerous protests, killing hundreds in the process. Even naval yard workers suffered from greed and government cruelty, as many lives were shortened when they were never alerted to the dangers of working with asbestos (though these dangers were well known in the military).

However, recent United States history does not contain the types of crimes Saddam perpetuates on a daily basis. These are all well documented in the American press and include the gassing of the Kurds, the donation of money to the families of suicide bombers and the torturing of athletes.

After the first Gulf War, when U.S. bombs decimated the entire country, Hussein decided to rebuild his own palaces (yes, that is plural) at the expense of hospitals and other such necessities. And even though U.S. sanctions are in part responsible for the killing of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Saddam could have saved his own people simply by agreeing to American demands. Without a doubt, this is a man who only cares about himself.

On both the Iraqi and American sides, the greed and irresponsibility is staggering, and the price is being paid in human lives. If war is to be treated like a sports event, then clearly neither side is worth rooting for.

Jesse Greenspan is a columnist for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

MAIL CALL

Liberal Arts should be respected

In response to an April 9 news article:

As a 2002 graduate of journalism, I'm appalled that yet again, the College of Liberal Arts is trying to do away with the program. Yes, there are problems with the program. It's overcrowded with students who choose it as a fourth or fifth major and understaffed by "real" professors.

I am one of the few journalism graduates who actually went on to a career in that field. I appreciate all that members of the faculty, especially Dr. Ed Walraven, did for me during my time there. Thanks to him and the journalism program, I'm a features writer at a daily newspaper.

Why is the College of Liberal Arts so over budget? It's about time the school treats all the colleges equally. Just because liberal arts isn't engineering or business doesn't mean it is less deserving of respect or money. I challenge one of the decision makers

in the University to spend a day or two in the Reed McDonald building and compare it to other buildings on campus, and then wonder why journalism students are treated so poorly.

A&M should change the words to the song, "We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we. True to each other, as long as you're not in the College of Liberal Arts."

*Rachel Mosteller
Class of 2002*

Harassment of student not deserved

In response to Haley Henderson's April 9 mail call:

Ms. Henderson was respectful in her comments and opinions, but that has not been the reaction of literally hundreds of e-mails and harassing phone calls Matt has received. Matt Shomer is a very good friend of mine and he realizes the mistake he made. Matt did not sell his ring but let a friend use his eBay account to sell another ring.

Regardless if we agree or disagree with Matt's actions, Matt attempted to sell a piece of property that the owner had the right to do whatever he wanted with. I am more embarrassed for the craven and fanatical Aggies who have wasted their time sending gutless e-mails, making threatening phone calls and even posting Matt's schedule on Hobbes.

These same pathetic people even went to the extent of finding all of Matt's past eBay transactions and sending e-mails to past sellers and buyers to notify them of Matt's actions. Why would someone in Utah who sold Matt a baseball cap a year ago care? Matt genuinely realized he made a mistake and ended the auction immediately. I earned my ring just like everyone else, but just because I disagree with someone I wouldn't needlessly harass them. Matt made a mistake, we should accept Matt's sincere apologies and forget about it.

*Lyle Varghese
Class of 2003*



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