

## ALMANAC

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Today is the 65th day of 2008 and the 75th day of winter.

## TODAY'S HISTORY

In 1770, in the Boston Massacre, British soldiers fired into a crowd of demonstrators, killing five.

In 1946, Winston Churchill mentioned the "Iron Curtain" in a speech, which is often regarded as the beginning of the Cold War.

## TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

- Rex Harrison (1908-1990), actor.
- James Tobin (1918-2002), economist.
- Felipe Gonzalez Marquez, former Spanish premier, is 66.
- Penn Jillette, comedian/magician, is 53.
- John Frusciante, musician, is 38.

## TODAY'S SPORTS

In 1993, Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson received a lifetime competition ban after testing positive for banned substances a second time.

## TODAY'S QUOTE

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." — Winston Churchill

## TODAY'S NUMBER

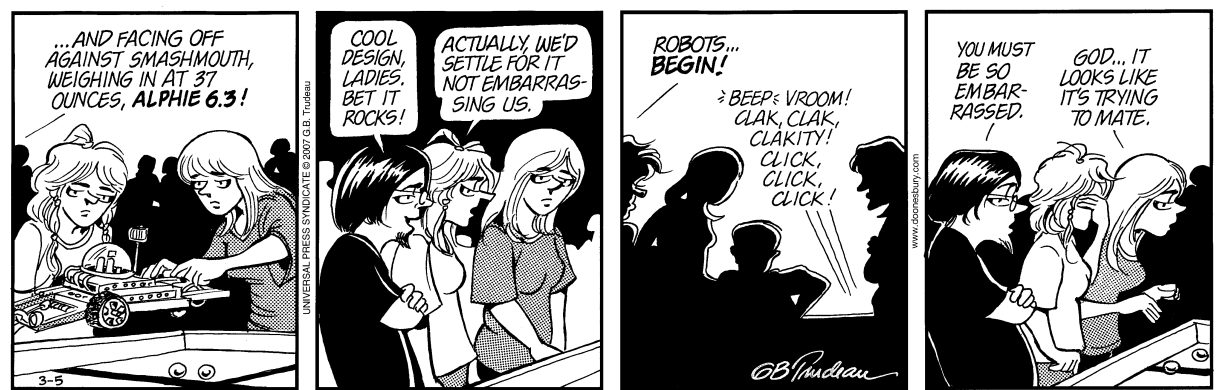
1,219 — number of drug tests conducted by the World Anti-Doping Agency for the 2006 Summer Olympics; one person tested positive and was disqualified.

## TODAY'S MOON

Between last quarter and new moon.

## DOONESBURY

by GARRY TRUDEAU



## Fight for values before it's too late

LOS ANGELES — As one group attempts to use California public schools as laboratories to assist children in "coming out" with their nontraditional sexual orientation, another is urging parents to come out from these schools and educate their children with their values at home or in private schools.

Last Sunday, a group called "Exodus Mandate" ([www.exodus-mandate.org](http://www.exodus-mandate.org)) began placing literature in scores of Southern California church lobbies, urging parents to take charge of their children's education and oppose attempts by activists and politicians to shape the worldview of young people, a worldview that runs counter to what many taxpaying parents believe and teach in their homes and places of worship.

The final straw for some was the decision last fall by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to sign SB 777 — a bill opponents say will have a long and significant effect not only on California public schools, but also on public schools everywhere. That's because California is one of the largest purchasers of school textbooks and publishers tend to shape content to reflect the wishes of the state that buys the most books.

SB 777, or the California Student Civil Rights Act, requires "nondiscrimination" against sexual orientation, as well as other characteristics. Opponents take that to mean favorable teaching about homosexuality, bisexuality, gender identity and any and every other form of sexual expression for which there is an advocate.

Dr. Ron Gleason, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Yorba Linda, Calif., is leading the exodus movement in Southern California. In a telephone interview, Gleason acknowledges it is difficult work because he says there is virtually no leadership at the pastoral level with the "big name Christian celebrity" pastors largely remaining silent. "They prefer to build their empires rather than step out and lead," he says. Gleason says 96 percent of his congregation have their children in private schools or educate them at home.

Gleason says SB 777 has resulted in California schools not being allowed to use the words "mommy" and "daddy" anymore. "Children will be taught that sexual orientation and gender are merely a matter of personal choice," says Gleason, "and they will be taught to find what is 'right' for them."

The Web site for Gleason's group argues SB 777 essentially makes it lawful for public schools to "indoctrinate" children as young as pre-kindergarten to accept as normal and morally acceptable homosexuality and "other sexually deviant lifestyles." In addition,



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says the group, the legislation represents a "complete reversal of 2,000 years of Christian moral teaching on human sexuality, family, and marriage."

Gleason has a response to questions like, "What about the single mother who can't afford tuition for a private school or spare the time to home school her child?" He offers church families who home school their children as places where the single mother can put her child.

Gleason's rationale is simple. "If you're going to send your kids to Caesar, you're going to get Romans back."

He's right. It isn't just the sexual re-programming. That's symbolic of a larger problem. The government schools want to shape a child's mind in ways that reflect a mostly liberal, humanistic worldview. This has implications for a child's understanding of economics, foreign policy, American history and the size and purpose of government, in addition to what once were known as "traditional values." It is about reflecting the worldview of the teachers unions, who are in the pocket of the Democratic Party. In other words, the left uses public schools to produce the next generation of Democrats.

The tragedy is that too many conservative Christian, Republican parents who want their children to have a different worldview — their own — willingly participate in the destruction of their children's minds by turning them over to a way of thinking that is antithetical to their beliefs. Parents who worship at conservative churches on Sunday willingly send their children to schools five days a week where what they are taught undermines what they learned in church and at home. They would never think of taking their kids to a church that teaches doctrines opposed to their beliefs, but they don't give a second thought to doing the same thing by sending them to government schools. It makes no sense.

Gleason has found it difficult to start a fire among conservative Christians because apathy is like wet underbrush, but he is undeterred. He thinks that like those other fires with which California is familiar, the best time to get out is while you still can.

Thomas writes for Tribune Media Services. Send him an e-mail at [tmseditors@tribune.com](mailto:tmseditors@tribune.com).



## On economy, Bush sings but one tune

Of all the reasons to be hopping mad, helplessly shaking your head or hoping beyond reasonable hope that somehow the Bush presidency will get better before it ends, blaming the president for failure to know the price of gas at the pump isn't one of them.

Blaming President Bush for failing to implement anything close to a rational economic policy — dithering as the American economy sinks toward crisis — is.

You have to feel a bit sorry for Bush. At his news conference last week, the president revealed that he had no idea that some analysts are projecting that gas prices will soon hit \$4 a gallon. "That's interesting," the president mused aloud. "I hadn't heard that."

Now, reporters always get excited when a politician doesn't know the price of gas (or milk, or bread, or eggs — you get the picture.) Such lapses inevitably become metaphors for out-of-touch politicians who don't give a hoot for the everyday struggles of average people. But really, on this one, even I'm willing to give Bush a break. He hasn't driven himself around for at least seven years and certainly doesn't frequent the self-serve pumps to fill his own tank.

No, Bush's gas-price gaffe is better seen as a speck on the broader canvas of the president's detached approach to the economy. Generally, he believes that everything is hunky-dory so long as he can point to his tax cuts as an all-purpose panacea. He did it again at the very same news conference where he seemed to be mystified by \$4-a-gallon gas: "If you're out there wondering whether or not — you know, what your life is



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going to be like and you're looking at \$4 a gallon, that's uncertain," Bush said. "And when you couple that with the idea that their taxes may be going up in a couple of years, that's double uncertainty. And therefore, one way to deal with uncertainty is for Congress to make the tax cuts permanent."

Got that? Tax cuts that do not expire for two years, and which overwhelmingly flow toward those who are most able to afford expensive gas, are supposed to provide some kind of economic lift now, if only Bush could win the ideological fight over them with the Democratic Congress.

Meanwhile, the subprime mortgage mess is transforming itself into what amounts to an overall credit crunch; even state and municipal governments are now having more difficulty borrowing. The dollar has fallen so much that at this point, its weakness is contributing in part to the recent run-up on international oil prices as speculators look to oil as a safer place to put their money. Wages, stagnant through nearly all of Bush's tenure, have long since stopped keeping pace with the costs of such necessities as energy, health insurance and food.

The financial pages warn almost daily of an economy that may be downshifting into a real crisis. But if past performance is to be a guide, Bush himself won't go into crisis mode until it is way

too late. His White House all but ignored the threats of a looming terrorist attack in the months before Sept. 11. The president's response to the urgent entreaties from weather forecasters that a killer storm of potentially historic proportion was approaching the Gulf Coast was a shrug — and even after Katrina hit, Bush seemed to be clueless about the depth of devastation and human suffering.

Terrorists and hurricanes strike quickly. Not so economic catastrophes that are months in the making, are foretold with reams of data from private markets and the government, and can even be seen in such prosaic symbols as the proliferation of foreclosure and auction signs along the roadways.

The economic stimulus package the White House and Congress already agreed upon is fine as far as it goes. Millions of Americans who receive quick tax rebates undoubtedly will spend at least some money in ways that prop up the economy. But for at least seven years, the evidence of structural problems in the economy — wage stagnation and the rapid erosion of worker benefits such as health insurance and pension coverage — has been on full view.

I don't really want Bush driving around to gas stations or grocery stores just so that he can always have a ready answer to what-is-the-price-of-questions. I want him to finally show he's ready for the next crisis — the broad economic crisis — that is brewing on his watch.

Cocco writes for the Washington Post Writers Group. Send her an e-mail at [mariecocco@washpost.com](mailto:mariecocco@washpost.com).

## Columnist's attacks on charter schools missed the mark

Richard A. Lukich

When it comes to the topic of charter schools, misinformation and ignorance abound. Harvey Gittler's recent ranting about these alternative public schools is a perfect example of both. Despite his disingenuous claim of no preconceived "slant" for his editorial, his tone and lack of research demonstrate that he had no interest in truth or fact. Fortunately, he was able to rely on his wife's investigatory skills before rendering his thoughtful opinion. However, her observations at Lorain Academy for Gifted Students certainly were not very insightful and didn't require knowledge of pedagogy. I suspect Gittler could have reached the same conclusions had he cared enough to set foot in a charter school himself. Gittler obviously has close ties to the education community. In fact, his whining about charter schools taking money from traditional public schools comes directly from teachers' union anti-charter propaganda. In a recent study, the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools found that,

despite enrollment decreases in Ohio's big eight school districts that averaged 26 percent between 1995 and 2007, spending in these districts increased by an average of 40 percent, and per pupil spending rose by more than 90 percent. I doubt many Chronicle-Telegram readers saw a 90 percent rise in their personal income over the last 12 years. It should be obvious by now that more money alone won't fix what ails public education.

Ohio's charter schools give parents real choice in the education of their children. Many children have been trapped in failing schools for years. Charter schools address this inequity. Although academics and accountability must be the cornerstone of Ohio's charter school program, child safety cannot be discounted. When surveyed, parents respond that the safety of their children is paramount to their selection of a school. Unfortunately, many traditional public schools have been unable to meet this criterion. This is why demand for charter schools has skyrocketed

despite the unions' anti-charter rhetoric.

Funding for Ohio's charter schools is simple: When a parent chooses a charter school, the per pupil foundation money from the state follows the child. The school that educates the child receives the state payment. Charter schools receive no local real estate tax money. Also, studies have determined that Ohio's charter schools operate on about 70 percent of the funding that traditional public schools receive. So, the 80,000 children educated in charter schools actually save Ohio's taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Additionally, charter schools receive no facilities money and cannot ask voters to approve levies or bond issues. So, charter schools must pay for facilities out of their operating funds, which are at least 30 percent less than the amount traditional public schools receive.

Gittler claims that charter schools won't solve the problems of public education. Although charter schools can't, by themselves, fix public edu-

cation, they have demonstrated that they are an important part of the solution.

The mere existence of charter schools has forced traditional public schools to become more responsive to parents and more interested in meeting the needs of the children they are supposed to serve. In Cleveland, Superintendent Eugene Sanders has initiated single-gender schools in direct response to the competition from charters. This year, the Cleveland district also limited class size (in kindergarten to 3rd grade only) to 20, adopted a character education program and required school uniforms. Constellation Schools has utilized all of these practices for eight years to help create educational environments conducive to learning.

Many charter schools educate children who have been ignored or underserved by traditional public schools for years. Dropout recovery schools, gifted schools and schools for children with autism or ADHD are a few examples. And, some char-

ter schools simply provide a choice for parents who lack the financial resources for a private school or to move to a better city. Every child deserves the opportunity to receive a high quality education, and parents deserve educational choices. Competition makes us all better, which is good for Ohio's children.

Why is it that those opposed to charter schools believe that competition is a good thing in all aspects of our economy — except education?

Charter schools must continue to improve. However, many traditional public schools have been failing Ohio's children for much longer than the 10 years that charters have been around. Let's face it. All bad schools should be closed, whether they are charters or traditional public schools. Although I doubt traditional public schools will ever be shuttered because they have habitually failed Ohio's children, isn't that the ultimate in accountability equity?

The writer is chairman of the Constellation Schools board.