

## **Independents' Day: Free Free and yourselves too** **Alan Bisbort, *Hartford Advocate*, July 7, 2005**

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Something is rotten in Washington, D.C. The rot starts at the head, of course, with the Bush-Cheney administration, but the stench from the rot wafts into all corridors of power, both houses of Congress, the U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court, the "think tanks," Farragut West and McPherson Square -- where the lobbyists and "journalists" co-mingle -- across the river at the Pentagon, where defense contractors make national policy, up GW Parkway at the CIA, now a wing of the Oval Office. No one affiliated with any of these entities is free from the stench. Like people who've been stuck inside a tightly packed, smoke-filled nightclub, their clothes reek of corruption and mendacity and it escapes like halitosis every time they open their mouths.

On the Mall this July Fourth, some weird mutant version of the Beach Boys got up and went desultorily through their string of ancient hits (did Bush really sing "Bomb Bomb Iran" instead of "Barbara Ann"?). The fireworks exploded like bombs over Fallujah, the crowds applauded. But the mood was subdued in the nation's capital, now ringed by so much concrete and razor wire that it's begun to resemble its "gulag" at Guantánamo Bay.

This is why it's a waste of time to watch "the Commander in Chief," or his malevolent minions speak, why it's a waste of time to listen to the pundits afterwards deconstruct the words as if there is anything to be found, why it's an exercise in masochism to read the accounts in the newspapers the next day (though I did like the AP's headline: "Bush Says Bloodshed in Iraq 'Worth It'"). Bush's speech last week from Fort Bragg was like O.J. Simpson vowing he'd find his wife's killer. If you're already locked into their lunatic wavelength, you'll be moved by what they say. If not -- and this now means 60 percent of the American people -- the words are like punches to the belly, slaps in the face, kicks in the groin, boots up the ass.

Though all three major networks, plus Fox, let themselves be used as tools by the White House, carrying the speech live, very few Americans watched. Think about that. The four most-watched networks aired the same event at the same time and still it only managed to score a viewership roughly equivalent to a cable network rerun of Sanford & Son. They've lost the heart and soul of America when even the couch potatoes smell the rot and won't watch. It is becoming clear to them that we're losing the war on terror because Bush was never serious about fighting it.

To wit: A helicopter was shot down by al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan last week, killing all 17 Americans aboard, including one soldier from Connecticut. Is it churlish of me, then, to point out the obvious? Had the Washington, D.C., establishment focused our once prodigious military presence on the very breeding grounds of the terrorists that masterminded 9/11 rather than being diverted by Bush's lies and misleading the nation into the quagmire in Iraq, that fight would already be over, and the helicopter that went down would not have been where it was, a sitting duck blasted by our real enemy, which we've heretofore ignored.

The smell of rotting blood is making America sick, as are Republicans, for their lockstep lunacy, and Democrats, for their craven willingness to go along. In the spirit of Independence, then, it's time that all those who really love their country back

away from party affiliations altogether. Just declare yourself independent, pull away from the daily dynamic of he said/she said and say "I said." Put your country ahead of your party.

And speaking of independence, I am reminded of Jeff "Free" Luers who, in 2000, was sentenced to 22 years in prison for burning three SUVs at a car dealership in Eugene, Oregon. His act of arson, in which no one was hurt, was intended, he said, to "call attention to climate change and to protest oil wars and environmental destruction." While I don't dispute that "Free" broke the law -- nor do I encourage others to follow his example -- he has already (as of June 12) served five years for this offense and made restitution to the dealership. The average prison sentence for arson in Oregon is five years. When his sentence is compared to the 10 years given Abu Ghraib Prison torturer Charles Graner or the 18 years the same judge gave another Oregon man for molesting children, Jeff's sentence is excessive. There is no other way to look at this but that Jeff "Free" Luers is, yes, a political prisoner.

Don't take my word for it. Find out for yourself at [www.freefreenow.org](http://www.freefreenow.org); or "meet" him by writing: Jeffrey Luers, # 13797671, Oregon State Prison, 2605 State Street, Salem, OR 97310.