

Thursday, February 12, 2004

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### **IT'S TURKEY STRUTTIN' TIME IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

The nation's capitol is the place to be this weekend, if you want to observe Louisiana politicians of all stripes. Democrats and Republicans, the big shots and the wannabes, the Congressional Delegation, from statewide officials all the way down to those representing the smallest districts in the state. The lobby of the Washington Hilton Hotel is definitely the place to be seen for anyone wanting to be a part of the political Mardi Gras scene.

Governor Blanco's official schedule shows that she is to be in attendance. Her secret trip to Iraq this week leaves her presence a little up in the air. She is "officially" scheduled to meet with President Bush on Friday in Washington. It would be an understatement to say that the new Louisiana Governor, just coming back from the war zone, will be the focal point of the four-day affair.

Senator John Breaux and Congressman Billy Tauzin will continue their tradition of being the "top strutters" for all of the festive events. When the Dixieland music strikes up and the band starts meandering through the hotel, one of these two members of Congress are traditionally leading the "second line." They will both be making their swan song, so this will be their final blowout.

Interest in the various congressional races will be at an all time high, with the strong possibility of the biggest turnover in the Louisiana delegation in the past fifty years. Who will replace John Breaux? Is David Vitter merely a "kneejerk Republican" a la Suzie Terrell, who does a little more than dance to the tune of the President? His voting record is 99% pro Bush, yet the President's popularity is falling, and there are a number of Louisiana issues that clash with Republican priorities. (See sugar quotas, funding for the Wetlands, formulas that work against Louisiana on Medicaid, Medicare, nursing home, and highway reimbursements). Does Chris John have a tough enough hide to take on the current administration? Can he relate to Louisiana issues, or is he going to be another "product of Washington, D.C."? Can John Kennedy get any traction, and raise big money outside of the state? And is PSC member Foster Campbell in or out?

Former Congressman John Cooksey will be in attendance checking out the territory to consider taking on his replacement, Congressman Rodney Alexander. Alexander reflects his district, and is a democrat in name only most of the time. So if Cooksey runs, this will come down to a popularity contest with both guys wrapping themselves around the President. Both will be all over the hotel, trolling for support.

Look for Billy Tauzin to be shepherding around former Rep. Hunt Downer; Billy's choice to take his seat. And former Court of Appeals Judge Ned Doucet, from Lafayette, will be shoulder to shoulder with his son, Shane, who is a Washington lobbyist. Ned recently resigned his judgeship, and is campaigning full time for Chris John's 7<sup>th</sup> District seat.

If you an ambitious statewide elected official, you always feel it is necessary to make an appearance at this annual Washington event. With weekend family commitments back home, I always found it difficult to stay for the numerous activities that last three full days and nights. But, at least, a brief appearance lets everyone know you are there and always served my purposes. On a number of occasions, I would take an early morning flight to Washington on Friday, arriving in time for a business luncheon of movers and shakers with several Cabinet officials generally in attendance. An afternoon of "hobnobbing" around the hotel lobby, and a quick change into a tuxedo allowed me to make the Friday evening dinner. Statewide officials are traditionally introduced at the beginning of the evening where you stand up, take a bow, and have the spotlight shown on you. Everybody knows you are there. The minute the spotlight was turned off, I would make a beeline out of the hotel, into a cab, and a dash to Washington National, where, still dressed in my tuxedo, I could make the 8:30 PM non-stop to New Orleans. I was home in Baton Rouge by midnight, could be with my family for the whole weekend, but all in attendance had known I had been to the ball.

With so many contested elections from the President on down in play for the fall, this will no doubt be the largest Louisiana crowd ever to attend this popular event. It is the place to be if you are actively involved in the political scene. As for has beens like me? I'll be curled up with a book or perhaps doing a little fishing at my camp in St. Francisville. As the torch passes, so will a number of others in the months to come.

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If you missed last week's Super Bowl "boobgate" incident, you might have been one of the masses that flocked to the web for a glimpse of Janet Jackson.

The Washington Post reported that the number of searches conducted by Jackson gawkers tied the September 11 terrorist attacks as the most searched-for event on both Yahoo and Lycos.

Hooter Gate ties September 11? Boy do we have our priorities straight!

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## MARTHA STEWART UPDATE

Getting down to what was actually said. That was the focus of the Martha Stewart trial this week. Over strong prosecution objections, the judge in the Stewart case required that e-mails from key witnesses be made available to Stewart's defense team. These e-mails were, obviously, of great importance to see what was actually said. But the prosecutors objected time and time again, saying that the jury should hear only testimony from the witnesses who had been coached at length by the prosecutors before any testimony was given. Forget what actually happened. Don't worry about what was said and written down at the time of the incident. Who cares about the truth or what actually took place.

The judge, rightfully, ruled that everything should be on the table. Let the jury see all of the evidence and not be forced to make a decision with limited knowledge. Whether Martha Stewart is innocent or guilty, she should be entitled to have all key written statements, handwritten notes, and e-mails made available to her. It looks like, in this respect, she is getting a fair shake.

I wish I could have said the same.

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## BOOK REVIEW

Mike Manes is a Baton Rouge business and insurance consultant who has been giving advice to companies throughout the South for years. He has taught insurance at LSU in the past, and I had the pleasure of teaching his class on one occasion. Mike is a bundle of effervescent knowledge on a wide range of business subjects, and has written a new book that is gaining a great deal of popularity and respect throughout the Louisiana business community. It's called *GUMBO – Cooking Up the Organization of the Future..*

In this short but forceful book, Mike lays out a whole recipe of suggestions for being a successful business organization in the coming years. He discusses "the Powership Era" and how "change" is the buzzword of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The book offers commonsense for any growing business, and its humorous tone with many personal antidotes make it an easy and enjoyable read.

You can pick it up at any bookstore, or by going to his website at [www.squareoneconsulting.com](http://www.squareoneconsulting.com).

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*“Too bad all the people who know how to run the country are busy driving taxi cabs and cutting hair.”*

George Burns

*“Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.”*

Malcolm Muggeridge

Peace and justice to you and your family.

Jim Brown