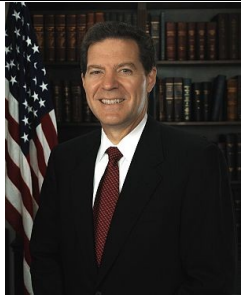




Top Stories



Presidential candidate Sam Brownback talks to Wikinews about God, abortion, gays, the Middle East and energy

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- Burma restores some Internet access but continues to deny access to foreign news services such as the BBC and CNN, blogs and dissident sites.
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- At least eight people including six tourists die when trapped by a flood in the Nam Talu cave in Khao Sok national park in southern Thailand.
- Voters in Togo go to the poll for the Togolese parliamentary election, 2007.
- The Prime Minister of Australia John Howard asks the Governor-General of Australia Michael Jeffery to dissolve the Parliament of Australia and call an election on 24 November.

Wikipedia Current Events

Three million Italians go to the polls to elect the leader of the new Democratic Party. The current Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, wins with about 75% of the votes.

Sam Brownback on running for President, gay rights, the Middle East and religion

Sam Brownback is perplexed. The U.S. Senator from Kansas and Presidential candidate is a Republican Catholic whose politics--he is against marriage for gay people, he is against abortion,

and he has a clean image in a party tainted by scandal--should speak favorably to the party's base. But it has not. "I'm baffled by that myself," Senator Brownback told David Shankbone. "We haven't been able to raise money."

A recent poll in Iowa has put him in eighth place, with 2% supporting his campaign. "If we don't finish fourth or better in Iowa...we'll pull out."

Senator Brownback's relationship with God infuses almost every answer you find below. Although he doesn't feel "competent" to explain why God would dislike gays, he does feel strongly that allowing two men or two women to enter into the union of marriage will destroy it for heterosexuals. Pointing to the research of Stanley Kurtz at The Hoover Institute, Brownback asserts that Northern Europeans have "taken the sacredness out of the institution."

In the interview, Senator Brownback discusses the tug-and-pull that befalls him when his constituents show up at his office and say, "Look, I'm a conservative, but we need this bridge, we need this subsidy, we need this hospital." Brownback feels this spending system needs to be changed; however, when it comes to energy policy, Brownback is there for his constituents. David Shankbone asked the Kansas Senator, a supporter of cellulosic ethanol, why he doesn't support the lowering of tariffs on sugar

since sugar ethanol delivers 8 times the energy output of cellulosic ethanol. Brazil, in particular, has become energy independent because of its sugar ethanol program. It's cheaper to produce, and there is vastly more bang for the buck in sugar fuel than in corn fuel; an entire country no longer needs to import oil because of it. Federal tariffs currently make sugar ethanol too expensive in the United States. "You're going to kill the ethanol industry here just as it gets going," was Senator Brownback's response. However, there is a debate over whether the process to make corn ethanol uses more energy than the ethanol itself produces.

Below is David Shankbone's interview with Senator Sam Brownback.

This exclusive interview features first-hand journalism by a Wikinews member. See the collaboration page for more details.

On running in and possibly leaving the Presidential race

David Shankbone: Senator Brownback, how are you?

Sam Brownback: I'm fine; headed into Iowa. I'm doing a big event with Joe Biden tomorrow on a political solution in Iraq.

DS: I read that.

SB: Yeah, yeah, I'm pretty excited about that. Maybe we can get some attention for a prospect that would really work.

DS: Is it pretty gratifying for you to work with people on the other side of the aisle to try and find solutions?

SB: It is, because I think it defies what the country views Washington as being, which is as

so hopelessly polarized that it can't get anything done. It shows some hope that even on tough issues like Iraq, we can get things done. So I think it gives some hope to the country, too, when we do things like that.

DS: I remember sort of the old days where you'd hear about Ted Kennedy being best friends with Orrin Hatch; do you think that the Tom DeLay period ushered in an era where people were too opposed to each other on the sides of the aisle?

SB: Oh, I think we too often look for ways to fight, rather than ways to get along. And that's been a feature in recent years. Yeah, maybe that time is coming to a bit of an end as people have such low opinions of Congress and of politics, that maybe people will start finding these ways forward, and people will reward folks for doing that. We'll see. I don't know that the divisive period is over, but it does strike some interest in people when you do do it. Maybe we can.

DS: Running for President has to be a grueling experience, and there must be a million things that you see out there when you're on the road that either you had not thought about before or you didn't know existed. Could you tell me about one?

SB: Well, you know, I just heard one. I was doing a big NPR interview with a group out of Boston, doing a call-in, and I had a couple of callers coming from the left in the political spectrum talking about their willingness to more engage in a discussion of faith and cut back on abortion. I thought it was very encouraging--and these are quite sincere people--part of what they're looking for in the Democratic party is more of a way forward on tough

issues that have been divisive. I found that very encouraging.

DS: That's great. Throughout my life, my father, who is an avid lifelong Republican, he used to tell me--this is a question that I'd asked Tom Tancredo as well, but I think it really comes down to one of the central issues in this race--he had said, "All we need is a Republican Congress, a Republican Senate, and a Republican White House to get the country on the right track." And last year, he expressed to me that he was very disappointed with where things have gone with the Republicans running things. He feels let down; he feels like he was lied to by the Party, either through the rationale for the Iraq war, the sex and bribery scandals, the pork barrel projects, and, as Alan Greenspan said, the fiscal irresponsibility. He feels like there have been many broken promises. Why should someone like my father vote Republican today? And I can assure you he will. But why do you think he should?

SB: If he's looking for any of those issues to be addressed by the Democrats, they're not going to be. And I would hope he could also see that we've got two people on the Supreme Court now that are, we hope, pro-life votes to overturn Roe versus Wade, that he will see that pro-life legislation was passed, that taxes were cut. And what I would also say to him is that I think we also have to see that the system is built to spend. I hear from Republicans and Independents alike that the biggest thing they've been upset about, if you set aside opinions on the war, has been spending. And the system's just built to spend. Whether Republicans or Democrats are in control, you just constantly get that. I've said many times--I've represented Kansas since

1995--I have yet to have a single constituent come in my office and say, "Hey, we're getting too much Federal money; would you please cut it?" I get all the time people saying, "Look, I'm a conservative, but we need this bridge, we need this subsidy, we need this hospital." And the system's just built to spend. That's why you've gotta change the system, and I've been pushing aggressively, taking the BRAC military base closing commission process they'll use for military bases and applying it to the rest of government. So you've got an actual culling process that you're regularly requiring Congress to vote on. Because you've just got to change the system of its spending proclivities.

DS: When you think about dropping out of the race, what emotions do you feel?

SB: Well, that presumes I'm taking that step, and what we're--

DS: You've discussed it, and I'm just wondering when it's a thought that occurs to you-- not an inevitability---just when you think about it as a possibility, how do you feel when you reflect upon it?

SB: You know, what I've said is that if we don't finish fourth or better in Iowa that we'll pull out. And I think you just--if you look at it in that context, and I do, and this is a fabulous country, it's a great honor to be running for President, sharing big ideas with the country, and what a great place, that a guy can grow up on a farm in Eastern Kansas and run for President of the United States. I love a country like that.

DS: Do you feel sad when you think about possibly leaving?

SB: No, I feel the great honor of putting ideas out there, and we continue to do it. We're giving a big speech on Sunday in Boston,

and we're going to talk there about the expansion of the pro-life agenda, the need for racial reconciliation and an official apology for slavery and segregation....continuous talk about big ideas.

On the role of religion in the Presidential race

DS: Evangelical candidates haven't fared particularly well in this primary season. What do you think is the reason for that?

SB: I don't know. I'm baffled by that myself. We haven't been able to raise money. But you would think we should be able to do that. If you look at both Mike Huckabee and myself in particular. I've had some difficulty based on the immigration issue, because I've supported a guest worker program. I think it's part of looking at every human as having dignity. We should try to enforce the laws, and we should enforce the laws and build a fence on the border, but at the same time see every person as a beautiful person created in the image of God, and that's been a very tough topic on our side of the aisle. Why we haven't gotten more traction, I don't know.

DS: The Democrats often have concerns about the electability of their candidates; Hillary Clinton, for example. Do you think that it might scare some people that in this point in time that Evangelicals aren't particularly electable?

SB: Oh, I suppose it could be. I suppose it actually applies in reverse more, in that the reason why Rudy Giuliani is getting support is because of 9/11 and he is seen as the most likely person able to beat Hillary. I think it probably applies to that setting more than not seeing an Evangelical as electable, because George Bush I think would

generally be seen in that category and was elected twice.

DS: Do you think Mitt Romney's Mormonism is an issue that people should take into consideration?

SB: I don't. There's no religious test for public office in this country. There shouldn't be. I think people should run on who they are and their record, and there I think he has a challenge, based on his record. But his faith should not be an issue.

DS: What if someone was a Zoroastrian?

SB: Well, let's see what their policies are. Uhh--

DS: Or a Satanist.

SB: Let's see what their policies are.

DS: Really?

SB: There's not a religious test in this country, and let's see what their policies are.

DS: Even though religious beliefs are so fundamental to a person? It's more of a policy issue than it is a faith issue?

SB: I think you'll see a person by what they produce, in their fruit, if you'll let me use that religious phrase. I think you'll know a person by their fruit. And that's what I think you'll see more coming through in people, and that that's what you should look for, and that's, I think, an observable--about how they live their own life, about what policies they advocate, about what are their priorities.

DS: If someone told you that they were scared to vote for someone who doesn't believe in evolution, what would you say to that person?

SB: Well, I'd say to them that, for my part, I think most people agree

that Man is not an accident, and that evolution is something that's taught in science class by state standards, they're not set by the Federal government, really shouldn't be something that would enter into their mind, not a Federal issue, it's one that's set by the states. I think most people that are concerned about evolution from a faith side want to see more taught about the science of how we got here, both at the very start--how did we get the initial cells, the initial biological entities, how did we get this incredible physics set up of this planet, universe that could have a carbon-based system here, all based on science. Just teaching science. And to teach more science, not less, on it. For me personally, I just have no doubt that God created us. How he did it, what mechanisms he used, I don't know. The fact that he did it, I have no doubt.

DS: You don't think that evolution is incompatible with an intelligent design theory? That we could have evolved based upon the evolution idea, but that it could have still been the work of God?

SB: There's some people that look at it that way. I think there's some--I think that's kind of an interesting way of looking at it. I don't--

DS: What's your personal belief on that?

SB: I don't know. Just what I said--that I don't know how God did it. A number of people would in what you're describing a kind of, I don't know what you'd term it, a faith-based evolution or--that's not the term that some would call it.

DS: It works.

SB: A guy at the Human Genome Project, Francis Collins, I've met with several times, I've read his book *The Language of God*, is in

that category. And I find that very interesting. I think there's some rationality, too, when you look at the consistency of the genetic code between species, the different lengths, the different pieces that are in it, but there's a lot of the same genetic language that's there. Where I think we're really lost is we're segregating science and faith. And they ask and answer different questions. Science asks how, and faith asks why. And I think we'd be so much richer, and in societies in the past in Western civilization they did this a lot more, if you had the interaction of the two, of faith and science. Because these don't conflict. If they do, you need to either check your science or check your faith. But they conflict, and for most people's lives in the United States, they want somebody to strongly support science. And whatever we can do to understand better the cosmos and how we work and improve our lives. And yet it's a faith-based country. You have ninety percent of the country that believes in God. Most people, they don't see conflicts in this, and we would be so much richer if we had the discussion, rather than really trying to pit one against the other.

On the culture of life

DS: What do you think is the greatest threat to humanity?

SB: The lack of regard for life as being sacred I think would be my biggest threat to humanity.

DS: What is the culture of life? How would you describe that phrase?

SB: It's seeing all life, at all places, at all stages as beautiful and unique, sacred, a child of a loving God. To me that's what a culture of life is, and us having walked away from that, we've had millions of abortions here, hundreds of

millions around the world, people that should be here but are not.

DS: Bobby Schindler, Terry Schiavo's brother, endorsed your candidacy by saying that "Sam Brownback is the pro-life conservative we can trust to stand for all life, regardless of political calculations." Do you think the death penalty detracts from the culture of life?

SB: I do, and that's why I am not a supporter of a death penalty, other than in cases where we cannot protect the society and have other lives at stake. But again, I understand people who support the death penalty saying, "This is different," whether it's an innocent human life or somebody that's committed a heinous crime. In trying to move forward with a culture of life, I think we need to try to do that in every setting, including the use of the death penalty by the State.

On the Iraq War and the Middle East

DS: A common question I've asked in my interviews is about the Iraq War and how it has affected someone as a person. People often proffer their opinion on the war, but they don't really talk much about how it has affected them personally, perhaps in their world view. The writer Gay Talese insisted the war has not affected him at all. "I wish it had," he said. Talese thinks there's a problem with Americans not sacrificing enough, and he argued that we need conscription. Do you think we need conscription, if not to support the manpower of the war, to make Americans more involved with the wars that we are fighting?

SB: Absolutely not. I'm absolutely opposed to conscription. The military opposes conscription; they want a voluntary force that signs up to be a part of the military, not

people that are forced into it. And I don't think that's a necessarily right way to look at it, as far as that we need to feel more of the pain of the conflict. We're getting close to four thousand young people that we've lost. I think a lot of people know individuals personally that have been touched by this war in that most difficult way. I think it's impacted a lot of people in very strong and profound ways.

DS: What you think the proper role of Congress is in a time of war?

SB: To declare it, which we did in the War Resolution on Iraq, is, I think, a proper role of Congress; to fund it, as we have been, and if people don't like the war, to stop the funding for the war. That's the role. I think there's an oversight role for Congress to play that can be very effective and helpful. I think there are suggestions that we can make, critical or complimentary in fashion, like what Joe Biden and I are doing on suggesting our political setup in Iraq is not working, and we think it should go another route. That ultimately has to be decided by the Iraqis, and not by us, but we can highlight these issues.

DS: Do you feel the American people were misled with the war in Iraq?

SB: Based on the information we had at the time, I do not. On what we have found since, we have not found weapons of mass destruction. But the information we had at the time, from our intelligence service and from intelligence services overseas, was that they had weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological, and they were working on nuclear, and they had used them in the past, which we know they had--used them. There's also,

I think, David, a real tendency, a decision made in 2003 through the eyes of 2007. In 2003, we're within two years of 9/11. The country is still in shock of what had happened at 9/11, and there was no way we were going to let somebody else, if we could stop it, get in a position to be able to use weapons of mass destruction, give them to terrorists, and come after us. And that seemed like an all-too-plausible scenario with Saddam Hussein having had weapons of mass destruction--we thought still had them. And having terrorists operate on this soil. We had a strong thought that he would mix the two against us. And we were not going to let that happen in light of that close proximity to 9/11. Now you go to 2007, you say, "Well, that doesn't seem like a very highly likely scenario, but in 2003, it seemed an all-too-plausible scenario. And the first charge of the Federal government is to protect the people. When a bipartisan majority strongly voted to support the war in Iraq, it was with the thought of protecting the American people.

DS: What do you think is going to happen to Egypt after Mubarak?

SB: It looks like now he's grooming his son, and they may well be able to pull off that succession. I would hope over a certain period of time they would get a more democratic, open economic system and that they would bring in people with the courage for that. I'm fearful of the Muslim Brotherhood taking over if there was an open election today in Egypt. It seems to me they have the upper hand in a general election in Egypt today.

DS: Do you think it's a bad idea to have elections in countries if it's possible that an Islamic extremist group will win, such as happened

in Palestine with Hamas?

SB: No, I don't think it's necessarily a bad idea, but I also don't think elections necessarily mean that you're going to have an open, free society, as we've seen taking place in the Palestinian authority and the activities of Hamas and now them even throwing out Fatah from the Gaza Strip, and this huge conflict that's taking place there. I think we're just gonna have to be a lot more real politic about this in the Middle East and the Muslim region of the world, about how far you can push and how hard you can push the governmental systems without just going into the radical Islamic fascist regime. One of the things I think we've gotta push a lot better, David, is to have the governments there provide services to the people, like health care and education, that are all too often being provided by these radical Islamic groups, so that people look more to the radical elements to meet their daily needs than the role that the government should be playing. I think that's bad for us. I think it's bad for the governments of those countries, and they need to do better about taking care of their own people.

DS: Do you think that things like the Bridge to Nowhere are projects that shouldn't be funded? And I'm using that popular phrase--I realize it's a little emotionally charged--but things such as that.

SB: Yes, I agree that they shouldn't be funded. What I'd like to see is, again, you change the system. You require an authorization before you can get an appropriation, so I think that'll cut down more on those projects more than anything else.

DS: You support the Elon plan that would essentially allow Israel to keep the entire West Bank while

taking little responsibility for its Arab residents. The plan is against U.S., Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian policies. Why do you think that would advance peace in the Middle East?

SB: Well, at first, I didn't endorse the plan. We put out a statement yesterday on this; I think this is an interesting entry into a discussion that we haven't gotten very far at all with, this land-for-peace-type concept. It has not produced peace. I think what you're seeing in the Gaza Strip just further clarifies that. The Palestinian authority was given full control over this--what happened, you had Hamas run Fatah out in a gun battle. That's not a civil society. What I'm saying here is that it seems to me a good idea to look at a different model where you can get settlement of the Palestinian refugees and bring the Jordanians back into the picture on the West Bank, so you're not--you're looking more at a stable country like Jordan being involved, rather than trying to have the Palestinian authority take over when they've just shown no capacity to be able to govern. That's why I think this is an interesting way for us to look forward. I have not and I do not endorse the plan, but I do think we've gotta get different models on the table for discussion.

On gay rights

DS: I interviewed the writer Augusten Burroughs. I would like you to answer a question that he posed. He said that "God does not care that the person I watch TV with also has hairy arms, that the idea that a God would not like homosexuals is patently absurd, that it doesn't even begin to become logical in any way, that the idea that the architect of gravity, the being that created the ability for elemental particles that

are absolutely nothing to come together and create living organisms and bricks and buildings and cars and jets, that the architect of absolutely everything would care about the sex of the person that this little human loves seems ridiculous." Why is that not ridiculous?

SB: I think He cares about everything. I don't know that everybody would take this as authoritative, but the Bible talks about a sparrow not falling without Him knowing that--He's numbered the hairs on your head, so that He cares about everything, and He's certainly a God of love-- He loves us very much. That's one of His central attributes, that He's a God of love, so I think He cares about everything and that there's nothing that would escape His view. We also have absolute free will to do as we see fit; we're not robots by any means. But I think He cares about everything.

DS: Why do you think it would bother God that somebody is gay?

SB: Well, you're asking a theological question on something I'm just really probably not competent to answer. It usually gets asked in a context of the institution of marriage, and there, where I think the great need is for our society, is to uphold the institution as it has been, to recognize its great contribution to the raising of the next generation, and to see that more people, more of our next generation, is raised in a setting where you have a mom and a dad bonded together for life. The reason there is a State interest is that in all the social data--we know from all the social data that the best place to raise a child, is between a mom and a dad bonded together for life, that your highest percentage of children in that setting will get a good education, will generally get a

good working environment, life--they'll perform best. Now you can raise a good child in a single-parent family; you can raise a terrible child in a two-parent, stable setting. So things don't always work that way. But we do know from all the data that the best place for most is in that two-parent setting. When you redefine marriage--the countries that have done this, they've see their marriage rates go down, and the institution be weakened, and fewer children raised in that setting. That's why I think it's important to really stand for marriage being the union of a man and a woman.

DS: In what country that has passed same-sex marriage has traditional marriage declined?

SB: The Netherlands--there's-- Stanley Kurtz is the lead researcher on this. He's out at the Hoover Institute, and you see in-- I've talked about when you pull the sacredness out of marriage, the marriage rates go down, you've seen this probably as pronounced as anywhere in a number of countries of Northern Europe, where you're now getting close to eighty percent out-of-wedlock birth rates on first children in some counties in Northern Europe. They've kind of gone from "Well, we don't really need to be married; anybody, any two people can get married"--you've just, you've taken the sacredness out of the institution. This is the work that I'm citing though, off of that.

DS: Got you.

SB: But it's looking at the totality of--within the last forty years, it's a different societal view of marriage.

DS: Why did you vote against the Federal expansion of hate crimes to include sexual orientation?

SB: Well, for a couple of reasons. One, it was in the defense bill, which I didn't think it was appropriate to be in there. Number two, it's a state issue. I think it's unconstitutional to put this out at the Federal level. For the Federal government to enact a crime, there has to be an interstate commerce nexus to it. Number three, the states are handling this well; the two cases cited--the Shephard case in Wyoming and the case in Texas, you've got the death penalty in one case and life imprisonment in the other. You can't get much harder on somebody there. And the final issue on this is that there's a substantial possibility of a chilling effect on free speech of people of religion--if there are ministers speaking from the pulpit on their view of homosexuality from a spiritual perspective.

DS: Ministers speaking out against homosexuality would come under the province of a hate crime?

SB: A number of people believe strongly that it will. Those are a series of reasons why. See also: Wikinews Interview with gay marriage movement founder Evan Wolfson

Brownback on Brownback

DS: If you could choose your manner of death, how would you die?

SB: I hadn't thought much about that....

DS: It's a Marcel Proust question.

SB: Gosh, I don't know. I more just--I want to be prepared to die, that I would pray at that point in time that I'm ready to meet my Maker, that I have a clean soul, that I've done what the Lord would have required of me and have lived as loving and caring a life as possible.

DS: But you've never thought about how--if you could choose how you'd prefer to die?

SB: No, that's--

DS: It seems like such a basic human thing to contemplate, one's mortality. I mean, I believe you, but--

SB: I've contemplated my mortality a lot. Because I had melanoma eleven years ago, and I thought a long time about my mortality. But what it did to me, it didn't make me think about how I wanted to die; it made me think about how I was living. And I just wasn't happy with how I was living.

DS: What weren't you happy with?

SB: I was too selfish; I was too ambition-driven. I was not paying near the attention to my family that I should have been. I was more interested in climbing the ladder, rather than helping people. And it really came around to me that if I were to die with this, I wouldn't have been happy with how I'd lived my life. And it just--it made my faith much stronger; it radically changed me, in looking at that.

DS: That was your--

SB: I still get it wrong a lot. I am nowhere, anywhere near perfect. I am a sinful, fallen man, but my faith really drives me much more now, and I do a lot of things that before, I wouldn't have done. And I'm much happier with my life now than before that episode.

DS: Was that your impetus to run for the Senate?

SB: No, but it did shape me, because it was just ahead of that run for the Senate that that episode happened.

DS: What trait do you deplore in other people?

SB: I have too many of my own I deplore; it's hard for me to pick on somebody else.

DS: Oh...

SB: I get judgmental quickly. I don't see, as I should, the image of God as much in others as I really want to. There're not traits in others that I deplore; it's ones in myself.

On environmentalism and energy

DS: Do you believe that a good Christian should also be a good environmentalist?

SB: Yes.

DS: How so?

SB: Well, we're given the planet and given dominion over it, and I believe we should be good stewards of that. Now, the question becomes how do you do that, but I think the admonition to do that is God's creation, and we're the stewards of it. I think we clearly should be.

DS: And you don't think that Arctic drilling contradicts that notion?

SB: I don't think the ANWR drilling has been proscribed. We're talking about drilling in an area--I think the size is about ten miles by ten miles in an area that's the size of South Carolina. We do need resources to be able to continue to run--that our dependency on foreign oil generally favors some people who are--who do a lot of pretty bad things, out of Iran, or Venezuela, and that if we were less dependent upon that they would have less chance of doing some of the things they're doing. To me, I think you've got to look at it in a balance...I'd love to see us using a lot more electricity in our car fleet, reduce our dependence on oil drastically.

DS: What about sugar ethanol?

SB: Sure. Sugarcane ethanol?

DS: Do you think we should lower tariffs on sugar in order to be able to import more Brazilian sugar ethanol?

SB: You're gonna kill the ethanol industry here just as it gets going.

DS: But it would reduce our dependency on foreign oil, thus increasing our national security, wouldn't it? Or is the ethanol industry here more important?

SB: Well, I think on the equation you're talking about, I think getting the ethanol industry here going--and particularly on cellulosic ethanol. And that's our big play to make here; we're--

DS: But the energy that you derive from that is so much less than it is in sugar ethanol.

SB: I don't--you may be right on that. I've not looked at that energy ratio, but--it's a sound environmental way to go, on cellulosic ethanol, and that's, I think, the big play we need to be making and pushing aggressively towards in this country for energy independence and good environmentalism. I'm the lead Republican on a bipartisan bill that pushes this concept, and a big piece of it is getting plug-in cars on the marketplace than can do the first twenty or thirty miles off of electricity instead of either gasoline or ethanol, because half of the country doesn't drive over twenty or thirty miles a day. And that way, you can really drop your imported oil use quickly; it's good for the environment, too.

On Wikipedia

DS: Senator, do you think that Wikipedia is important?

SB: Yes, a lot of people use it to get a quick kind of reference point review of a lot of different topics, including politics. And political figures.

DS: Definitely. What do you find important about it?

SB: Just that. I mean, it's an easy access; it can be amended. I've not used it, but I've been with other people that have accessed it and know a lot of people that all say, "Yeah, I looked it up on Wikipedia," so I know it's broadly and widely used.

DS: I tried to get an interview with David Miscavige of the Church of Scientology, and I spoke to their Director of Public Relations; I had about a twenty-minute phone call with him, and he was very hostile to it. One of the things that I'd said to him--because he was saying that a lot of information is incorrect--I made the point to him that, "You know, it may be incorrect, but the idea is that you can have Scientologists go on there to correct it." It's not a one-sided place for information; if you feel that there's inaccuracies, the idea is that you can also have people who know the truth go on there and correct it and debate about it, if that is what is necessary to get an accurate view. Whereas if you say something to Newsweek, and they print something that's incorrect, you're stuck.

SB: You're stuck, because that happened to us in Time magazine, and we got to do a nice letter to the editor that less than probably two percent of the people that read the big article saw. Wasn't fair that way. Hey, good to talk to you, David.

DS: Very good to talk to you. Best of luck, Senator Brownback.

SB: Thank you. Bye.

Report says Israeli air strike targeted Syrian nuclear reactor
Israel's air strike on Syria last month was an attempt to knock out a partially constructed nuclear

reactor, according to officials with access to American and Israeli intelligence reports, the The New York Times reported on Sunday. Syria's President Bashar al-Assad previously said that Israeli jets had dropped bombs on an unused military building.

Although Syria has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has a legal right to build a nuclear reactor for the purposes of generating electricity, and it is not obligated to disclose work on such a reactor during the early stages of construction.

According to The New York Times article's sources, the Bush administration was divided at the time over whether to support the Israeli attack. The article quotes an American official as saying that "[t]here wasn't a lot of debate about the evidence [of the reactor's existence]", but that "[t]here was a lot of debate about how to respond to it."

The attack is reminiscent of a 1981 Israeli raid that destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq shortly before it was scheduled to come online. Bush administration officials have stated that the 1981 attack set back Iraq's nuclear program by many years. The New York Times article quotes an Israeli official as saying that the purpose of the strike was to "re-establish the credibility of our deterrent power."

2007 Rugby World Cup: South Africa 37 - 13 Argentina

South Africa 37 - 13 Argentina

South Africa have beaten Argentina 37 - 13 in the second semi-final of the 2007 Rugby World Cup at the Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France.

The first try of the match came in the seventh minute when Fourie du Preez gave South Africa the lead after a seventy metre run. Percy Montgomery added the conversion and South Africa led 7 - 0. Felipe Contepomi kicked a penalty to score Argentina's first points in the fifteenth minute, but Percy Montgomery restored South Africa's seven point lead with a penalty two minutes later. A second penalty from Felipe Contepomi brought the score to 10 - 6. However tries from Bryan Habana and Danie Rossouw gave South Africa a 24 - 6 lead at half time.

Soon after the interval Manuel Contepomi scored a try for Argentina to reduce the deficit to eleven points. Neither side could find a breakthrough for the next 25 minutes, but two Percy Montgomery penalties and a second try from Bryan Habana secured the match for South Africa.

South Africa, champions in 1995, will face defending champions England in the final, a repeat of an earlier pool match which South Africa won 36 - 0. Meanwhile, Argentina will play hosts France in the third place match. Argentina previously defeated France 17 - 12 in the opening match of the tournament.

More allegations filed against Oral Roberts University

On Friday three fired professors filed more charges in their lawsuit against Oral Roberts University, University president Richard Roberts, and his wife, Lindsay Roberts. In addition to previous allegations of illegal political contributions, financial wrongdoing, and wrongful firings, the plaintiffs also added the ORU Board of Regents (Lindsay and

Richard are both members of the board) to the lawsuit claiming regents did not oversee the university and its president Richard Roberts. One example cited in the lawsuit was that ORU allowed a man with three convictions of sexual abuse, including "exposing himself to a 15-year-old boy in a school locker room," to mentor ORU college students.

Also cited was that three days after the original lawsuit, Richard Roberts fired the ORU financial comptroller who had been the the school for 26 years and then proceeded to shred and destroy "voluminous materials and documents ... constituting spoilation of evidence."

In addition the report attached to the lawsuit contained fresh allegations that Lindsay Roberts, 51, stayed overnight nine times with an "underage male" at a ORU "guest home". This "underage male" moved in with Lindsay and prompted her daughters to have locks added to the doors on the home. The filing also said she was photographed alone with that boy after Tulsa curfew 29 times, and this includes a picture of her and the boy smoking at the ORU guest house.

Friday's updated lawsuit also had an attachment of the document Stephanie Cantees, Lindsay's sister, wrote which contained the original document that the plaintiffs claim spawned their dismissals. This contains more details about the Roberts family than the previous document. Among other charges, Cantees' document says that Mrs. Roberts invites ORU athletes on her Make Your Day Count television show and gives them gifts, which is listed on the document as a "NCAA

violation."

Previously on October 9th, Roberts and his wife appeared on Larry King Live, and denied all the accusations. On Friday ORU released a two sentence statement denying all allegations, and Lindsay released an email that said, "I live my life in a morally upright manner and throughout my marriage have never, ever engaged in any sexual behavior with any man outside of my marriage as the accusations imply." She continued: "Allegations against me in a lawsuit yesterday are not true. They sicken me to my soul."

2007 Taipei Samsung Running Festival: A combination with charity, technology, and sports

With the success of the Samsung Running Festival from 2005 in Taipei, and continued with the image of charity, Samsung Electronics donated 100 PDA phones to Chinese National Association of the Deaf, R.O.C., Taiwan. (CNAD) and CNAD elected "Taiwan Top 10 Outstanding Deaf Occupational Excellence" delegates to receive this donation in the 3rd Taipei Samsung Running Festival.

"Earlier in 2006, Samsung donated lots of funds to help the process of 2009 Summer Deaflympics in Taipei. In this meaningful activity, I'm appreciated with the donation from Samsung who helped lots of deaf people in Taiwan with a good enterprise image. I hope Samsung can still promote the charity in Taiwan." Jiong-huang Yang (Chairman of CNAD) said at the Donation Ceremony.

"Based on a concern with an enterprise of 'What's taken from the people is used for the people', Samsung imported this running activity and donated with charity

activity in Taiwan. I hope this event will close on people in Taiwan." Kuen-Hee Park (Greater China Area Chairman of Samsung Eletronics) remarked at Opening Ceremony.

Nearly the start at 7:00am (Taipei Time), more than 30,000 runners were ready to start. To prevent the starting and route problem, the organizer Chinese Taipei Road Running Association set up the controlling line at the start line and it took a good effect with the start controlling.

After the running activity, Samsung Electronics held lots of performances such as kids' street dancing, taekwondo skills by Taipei Physical Education College, CTITV Live Contest of "Ape Show" Program, and a small concert of CTV "One Million Star" entertainers. And National Palace Museum also invited runners visiting the NPM with dressing official "Taipei Samsung Running Festival" T-shirt after all the programs ended.

2007 Australian MotoGP won by Casey Stoner

Casey Stoner, Australia's new MotoGP world champion, won the Australian Grand Prix on Phillip Island, Victoria, in the afternoon of October 14.

Stoner, 21, started the race in third position behind Dani Pedrosa and five-time world champion Valentino Rossi, but picked up speed quickly and regained first position, finishing the race in 41 minutes, 12.244 seconds.

"It's unbelievable to win in front of my home crowd," Stoner said. "I didn't think the season could get any better but it just has. I really wanted to win this one and it just puts the icing on the cake."

The win at the Prix in front of more than 50,000 fans was Stoner's ninth victory, after claiming the world title last month in Japan.

Australian Prime Minister calls federal election

The Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard has announced that the Australian federal election will be held on November 24, 2007. Howard visited the Governor General of Australia Michael Jeffries earlier today and then announced the news.

Mr Howard, the Prime Minister of Australia for over 10 years now, said that the country's "best years lie ahead", but only if the "right leadership" team is in power.

"Is it a Government that has a proven track record in those areas? Or is it an inexperienced group of men and women, 70 per cent of whom are former trade union officials?", Mr Howard said. "The right leadership has the experience to further expand the the prosperity of the Australian economy."

"I believe very passionately that this country's best years can lie ahead of us in the years immediately ahead," he said. "In order for that to happen this country does not need new leadership, it does not need old leadership, it needs the right leadership."

Mr Howard also stated that if his party, the Liberal Party is elected into government yet again, Peter Costello will hold the place of Treasurer of Australia and Alexander Downer will take the seat of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Prime Minister announced that

the writs will be issued on October 17. Consequently, following recent changes to the electoral act, Australians have until that date to ensure that they are on the electoral rolls and are able to have their vote. Voting is compulsory in Australian Federal elections.

Burma's military rulers arrest leaders of pro-democracy protests

Three of the last remaining leaders of the 88 Generation Students Group, which led the recent pro-democracy rallies in Burma, have been arrested by Burma's military junta.

The wave of protests, which began on August 15, 2007, was triggered by the Burmese government's decision to remove fuel subsidies, leading to dramatic increases in the price of diesel and petrol. The Burmese government's subsequent violent crackdown on the protests was condemned by the United States, Britain, and France, among other nations. On October 12, the U.N. Security Council released a statement saying that it "strongly deplores" Burma's response to the protests.

The three leaders, named Htay Kywe, Mie Mie, and Aung Thu, were arrested on Saturday morning in Rangoon, according to dissident sources. Human rights group Amnesty International expressed extreme concern for the well being of the three activists, saying that they "risk torture and ill treatment."

On Saturday, thousands attended a pro-government rally in Rangoon in which participants denounced Western countries and media. The participants in the rally had allegedly been paid to join the demonstration and were transported to the area by bus.

One of the participants in the rally told AFP news agency that each factory in the city's industrial zone had been obliged to send 50 participants to the rally.

Chris McCormack & Chrissie Wellington Win Ironman

"Normal" in the 2007 Ironman Triathlon Ironman Triathlon World Championship was only the fact the sun rose in the east, as shortly past the swim start the day brought forth a hot and cloudless Hawaiian sky; injuries and illnesses to many; DNFs for two years worth of defending champions; and a first-time winner.

Australian Chris McCormack, placing 2nd in 2006, passed Aussie Craig Alexander in the marathon and further scorched the Queen Kaahumanu Ka'ahumanu Highway with a 2:42:02 run to claim the world title in 8:15:34.

In even more excitement, rookie (her first Ironman length race was 7 weeks ago in Korea) Chrissie Wellington, from Great Britain, claimed the women's title finished in 9:08:45.

The 6:45am Hawaii Standard Time start to the 2.4 mile swim, followed by 112 mile bicycle race, and a 26.2 mile marathon saw defending champions 2006 Normann Stadler and Michellie Jones and 2005 Faris Al-Sultan and Cameron Brown struck down due to stomach ailments; six-time winner Natascha Badmann totaling her bike after crashing into road cone; and the sidelining of Luke Bell due to a leg injury.

But "normal" returned as many of the 1,788 starters completed before the October 14, 2007 12:00am deadline.

US Crude Oil reaches new high
Oil prices in the United States briefly hit a new all-time high at US\$84.05, but later fell to just under that to \$83.69. Brent Crude also rose to \$80.55, up 40 cents in the United Kingdom.

The high prices are amid fears that Turkey is planning to attack Iraqi Kurdish militants that killed 13 Turkish soldiers last Sunday. 60,000 Turkish troops are stationed at the Iraq-Turkey border.

Team New Zealand won double A1GP race at Brno

A1 Team New Zealand won sprint and feature A1GP race at Brno, Czech Republic.

Jonny Reid's Black Beauty stayed in the lead for all 10-laps of the sprint race. Robbie Kerr managed to resist an Irish rookie Adam Carroll, finishing second for Team Great Britain.

In the feature race starting from seventh place Jonny Reid finished on top of the podium. Second place was owned by Jeroen Bleekemolen, competing for Team Netherlands and Neel Jani for Team Switzerland.

Today in History

1582 – Spain, Portugal, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Italy became the first countries to replace the Julian calendar with the Gregorian calendar.

1917 – Dutch exotic dancer Mata Hari was executed by a firing squad for spying for Germany.

1987 – The Great Storm of 1987 hit France and England, killing at least 23 people.

1989 – Playing for the Los Angeles Kings against his old team, the Edmonton Oilers, Canadian professional ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky breaks Gordie

Howe's National Hockey League record of 1,850 career points.
2003 – Chinese space program: Shenzhou 5, China's first manned space mission was launched, carrying astronaut Yang Liwei.
October 15 is White Cane Safety Day in the United States.

Quote of the Day

Without art we would be nothing but foreground and live entirely in the spell of that perspective which makes what is closest at hand and most vulgar appear as if it were vast, and reality itself.
~ Friedrich Nietzsche

Word of the Day

- octothorpe; n
1. A name for the hash or pound sign (#), used mainly in telephony and computing.

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