

The Behrend Beacon

O'Reilly, Matthews spar at Southern Methodist University

by Ed Bark
The Dallas Morning News

Bill O'Reilly, Chris Matthews and their well-muscled mouths drew a jam-packed house of listeners this week to the Southern Methodist University campus.

Together for the first time onstage, the verbose cable news personalities clearly deserved each other. That's intended as a compliment. Two bright guys who love to hear themselves talk met their matches in SMU's McFarlin Auditorium.

The hosts of Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" and MSNBC's "Hardball With Chris Matthews" otherwise are more accustomed to pummeling a hapless university professor or dominating a think-tank politico on their respective shows. This time, when O'Reilly derisively referred to "Chris' pals" (namely, Democrats), Matthews shot back. "At least I got pals."

Braving snowstorms that nearly left them stranded back East, the combatants exercised decorum, as well. This was, after all, the latest installment in the Willis M. Tate Distinguished Lecture Series, which later this year is scheduled to welcome Vice President Dick Cheney, novelist John Irving and former CIA director Bob Gates, who now is president of Texas A&M University.

The O'Reilly/Matthews appearance, billed as "War of the Words," may have been the comparative equivalent of the circus coming to town. But both men wore suits and ties, and generally stifled themselves while the other talked.

Late in the game, though, Matthews couldn't help himself. This was after O'Reilly said that a high-level intelligence official told him that most of Saddam Hussein's generals already had cut secret "deals" with the Bush administration. If the United States invades Iraq, they've agreed to surrender rather than be hunted down as "war criminals," O'Reilly told an audience that included former Texas Gov. Bill Clements in a front-row seat.

If O'Reilly is a political "independent" as he claims, then why do so many Bush administration officials confide in him, Matthews jabbed.

"You know why they talk to me? Because we've got a lot higher ratings than him," O'Reilly told an approving crowd.

His Factor indeed is the most-watched program on any cable news network. And O'Reilly also has authored two No. 1 bestsellers, "The O'Reilly Factor" and "The No Spin Zone."

Matthews immediately sought to put himself in a lion's den by asking how many Republicans and Democrats were in the crowd. "Three to one" in favor of the Republicans, he deduced before the two adversaries took poles-apart positions on the advisability of war in Iraq.

"I look forward to, in four weeks, celebrating the demise of Saddam Hussein," O'Reilly said.

Matthews said the Bush administration should find Osama bin Laden first.

"The world was behind us on that plan. And we blew that posse. ... We're going to be stuck in Iraq when we should have killed bin Laden," Matthews argued.

President Bush, whom he referred to as "the young kid," instead has fallen under the influence of the "damned ideologues" who also advised his father, Matthews said. "We will be seen as the bloodthirsty people - white guys from the West."

Ideologues in the Middle East will "hate us whether we move him (Saddam Hussein) out or not," O'Reilly countered.

But many in that region view the Iraqi dictator as

"simply bad for business," O'Reilly said, estimating that the United States could prevail in two weeks' time while the Iraqis rally around their liberators.

No one should trust "little Hans Blix," the chief U.N. weapons inspector, to carry the day in Iraq, O'Reilly said. Both men also admitted that the other could be right. "My guess against his guess," said Matthews.

"Of course, you never know what's going to happen,"

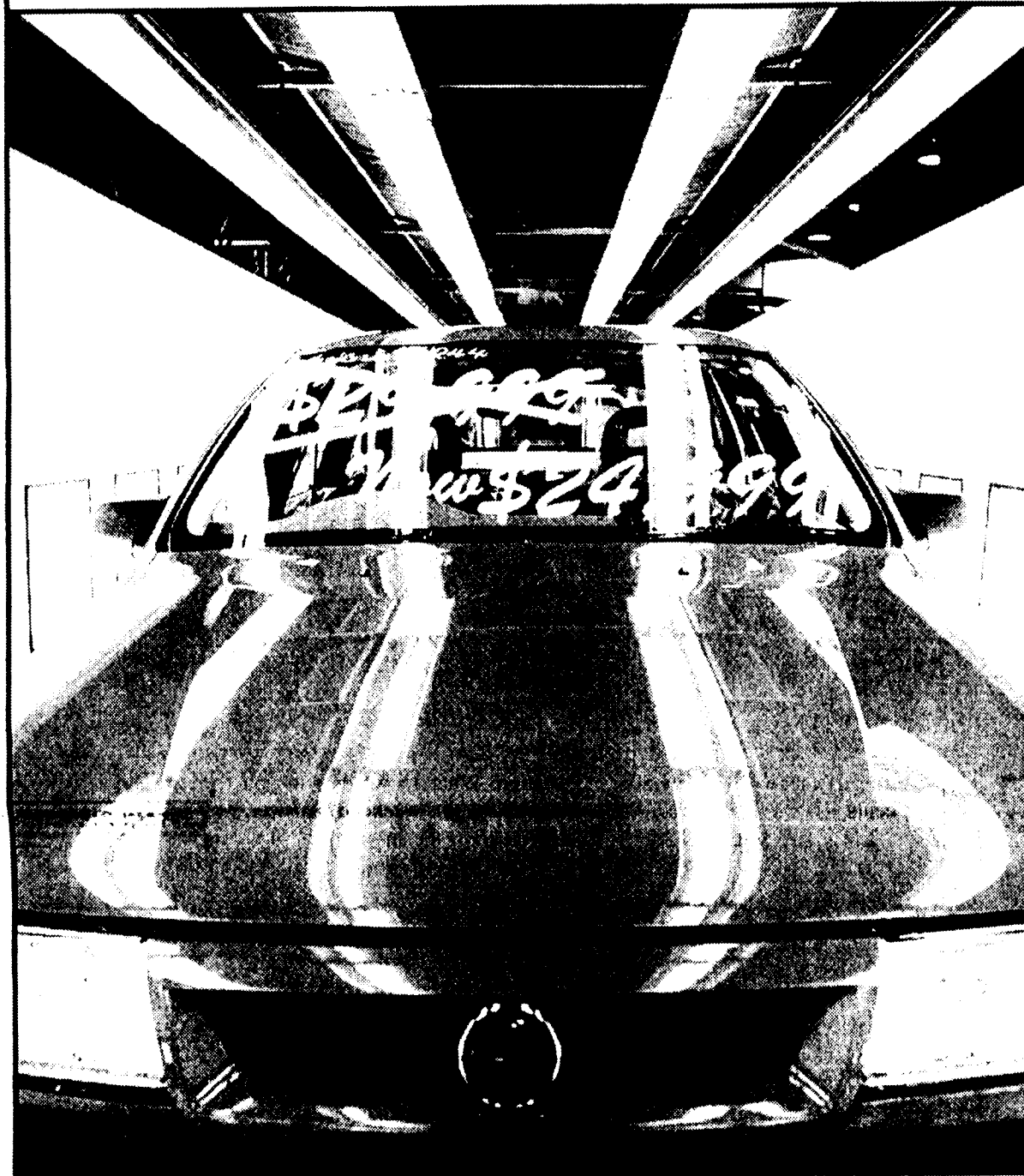
said O'Reilly, who also had the night's last words before waving goodbye.

"These are people who are evil," he said. "We're not. We must defeat them."

Dare it be said that their "War of the Words" resulted in a split decision, with O'Reilly talking longer and Matthews talking faster?

Whatever your verdict, let's have a rematch.

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Through the Looking Glass

by Mike Pingree

HE NEEDED SOME TIME FOR HIMSELF

When the mayor of Ipatinga, Brazil, suddenly disappeared, police feared he was the victim of one of the nation's many political kidnappings and began a frantic search.

It turns out that the man had gone to a brothel, where he engaged the services of two ladies of the evening and then went on a three-day drinking binge. He was finally spotted at the swimming pool of a nearby hotel. Police contacted his wife, who came and took him home.

BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE. OFFICER

The principal of a New York school was arrested for drunken driving while she was supposed to be at work.

Police came upon the woman after she had pulled over to the side of the road and was urinating beside her car.

ANYONE FEEL LIKE SOME LAMB KEBOB?

A shepherd in southern Germany watched in horror as a flock of ravens - frantic from starvation because of an unusually harsh winter - attacked his sheep with such ferocity that they killed 19 of them.

BUT THEY SEEMED MUCH YOUNGER

After schoolgirls in Lanciano, Italy, spotted a rocking car with fogged-up windows, they alerted authorities, who arrested the couple inside for making love in public and charged them with indecency. The man was 85 and the woman, 74.

SHOT? NO, WE DIDN'T HEAR A SHOT

Three young men were about to begin an evening of burglarizing cars in Merced, Calif. To make sure their handgun was in good working order, one of them fired a shot in the air. But that caught the attention of a nearby policeman, who arrested them.

A KIND OF BARNYARD REVENGE

A German circus trapeze artist, jealous that his belly dancer ex-girlfriend was seeing another man, tried to emasculate him with a pair of bull castration tongs. He failed. But he was sent to jail for seven years.

SHE'S IN FOR A MEMORABLE HOMECOMING

A Colorado woman went on vacation to Italy with her boyfriend, leaving her 14-year-old daughter in charge of her other five children. County Social Services found out about this a day after she left, and put the kids in foster homes. The authorities were awaiting the mother's return, expected in about two weeks.

RISE AND SHINE, SLEEPYHEAD

A burglar broke into a shop in Fort Worth, Texas, late at night, and, instead of collecting his loot and leaving, he took a nap.

He was still sleeping when an employee opened for business the next morning. She called the police, who woke him up.

A NATURAL MISUNDERSTANDING

A woman in Niteroi, Brazil, a city notorious for its tough traffic enforcement, appealed her fine for driving without a motorcycle helmet on the grounds that she was in a car, not a motorcycle, when she was stopped. The fine was ultimately overturned.

THE LORD IS MY ATTORNEY, I SHALL NOT WANT

A man on trial in Missouri for making hostile comments to a judge has asked that Jesus Christ be named as his legal counsel. The man believes that lawyers are "devils." Request denied.

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