

**Houston's Presidential Summit
February 28, 2008**

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Introduction of Paul Burka

In 1992, when *Texas Monthly* celebrated its 20th anniversary, Paul Burka was discussing the magazine's shift in editorial emphasis. Here's what he said:

"The Texas myth lost its power during the bust. We looked around in the '80's and said, 'We can't write about barbecue in the middle of all this.' We had to ask, 'What is Texas going to be?'"

My guess is that there are few people who have contributed more to the debate around that question than Paul has.

He joined *Texas Monthly* a year after the magazine was founded. A lifelong Texan, he was born in Galveston, graduated from Rice, and earned his law degree from UT. Then he spent five years as an attorney in the Texas Legislature, serving as counsel to the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

You know the old saying – two things you never want to see being made are sausage and laws? Well, Paul's up-close-and-personal exposure to the law-making process may have been eye-opening, but I'm not sure he was especially fond of the view.

For the sake of those who have felt the sting of his commentary, I won't get into specifics. But Paul's writing on the inner workings of politics and government has sometimes been spiced with terms like "horrid," "dismal," "least trusted," "bizarre" and a "public spectacle."

You get the point.

However, unlike so many journalists in an era where the line between news and entertainment is willingly blurred, Paul is not someone for whom provocation is an end in and of itself.

He's not enraptured by the sound of his own prose. His outrage is no act. He's

less interested in stirring the pot than he is in what's cooking. And he's driven by an absolute passion for what's best for Texas.

Simply stated, he believes that while the voice of indignation does not need to be loud or shrill, it has to be honest and heartfelt. Read anything Paul Burka has ever written, and you'll see exactly what I mean.

He's even-handed, too. His observations on the presidential race have spared neither the Democrat nor the Republican candidates. I must tell you, in a world where the political debate too often drifts to the extremes, it's good to have an equal opportunity critic – someone who's independent rather than indifferent, who sees through the smoke, and who is accountable only to his belief that we can and should be better tomorrow than we are today.

During his career, Paul has won a National Magazine award for reporting excellence and the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award. He is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters and teaches at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also a frequent guest discussing politics on MSNBC, Fox, NBC and CNN.

Today, he is a top editor with *Texas Monthly*, of which Chris Mathews of MSNBC's Hardball program has said – in a way that only Chris Matthews can say it – “What an important magazine that one is.”

It's also one of the most respected publications in the country, earning 52 nominations for the National Magazine Awards – the industry's equivalent of the Pulitzer – and winning nine times.

It is a privilege to introduce the senior executive editor of the national magazine for the State of Texas – Paul Burka.