

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

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Charming comics, competing comedians

When Charlie Chaplin died Christmas Day, an era died with him. He and Groucho Marx, who died last summer, were the last of their species, the film comic. Oh, I know, I know. There's still Woody Allen. But somehow it's not the same. The great film comics like Chaplin, Marx, W.C. Fields and Harold Lloyd have gone the way of dinosaurs and Edsels. As my little brother used to say, they've gone by-bye. So be it.

Their films seem doomed to wander the Late Show circuit. But their films are classics, if only because they brought sanity to a time filled with insanity. And they did it with chaos.

Groucho was the fire-breathing scoundrel whose spirited monologues started anywhere, got nowhere and were damn proud of it. "Pick a card, any card. You can keep it, I've got fifty-one more."

Chaplin, on the other hand, was a silent imp. Other than background music, and some sound effects, his movies were without sound. Anything he had to say could be gathered with a wink, a frown, or that silly, shuffling walk that became his trademark.

He was the Little Tramp upon whom the world heaved its wrath. Yet he weathered all with a combination of remarkable perseverance and hilarious incompetence.

Groucho was East. Chaplin was West. And ne'er the twain shall meet. For off-screen, their personalities mixed like hot grease and cold water.

Professional jealousy ran amok between the two. Take their tennis match at the 1933 opening of the Beverly Hills Tennis Club for instance.

Chaplin showed up with one racket and a keen sense of competitiveness. Groucho brought twelve rackets, one

suitcase and a keen sense of what would make Chaplin blow his stack.

When Chaplin asked what in God's name was in the suitcase, Groucho replied that tennis players proficient enough to carry a suitcase were rarely foolish enough to divulge its contents.

But after two rounds of solumm tennis, Groucho decided enough was enough. He opened the suitcase, pulled forth a picnic lunch and proceeded to spread it about the playing area, even sharing a sandwich or two with spectators.

Chaplin was incredulous. "I didn't come here to be your straight man," he screamed.

That's what he thought.

In everything, Groucho was the free spirit and Chaplin was the workaholic. Maybe that's why we know Groucho by his first name and Chaplin by his last.

David S. Broder

Congressional 'lions' taming Carter

WASHINGTON—Much has been said, most of it critical, about President Carter's handling of Congress. Less has been said—and more is justified—about Congress' handling of the President.

The end-of-the-session assessments proceed on the assumption that in the circus that is Washington, Congress is the lion act. The President's job, as the lion tamer, is to turn those brawling "cats" into a disciplined troupe of performers. This year, that analogy is doubly in error.

It is in error, first, because these "cats" in Congress have become increasingly immune to whip-cracking. If they heed anyone, it is not the President (who trailed them at the polls on election day), but their own leaders.

Second, the tricks that had to be learned for the show to be a success were not things Carter could teach Congress, but Congress could teach Carter. The members of Congress collectively had thousands more years of working experience in the federal government than did the President.

Of all the congressional leaders, House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, D-Mass., came closest to realizing that the burdens of both discipline and tutelage were his, not Carter's, and he proceeded accordingly.

There were some lapses of leadership even on O'Neill's part, particularly when it comes to issues of acute personal and political sensitivity like abortion and election-law revision.

But, for the most part, O'Neill functioned well both as tutor to the President and disciplinarian for the House "Lions." The record of legislative accomplishment in the House made both the House and the President look good.

Dick West

A mountain by any other name...

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON—Among the prices we pay for longevity is a high degree of vulnerability to attacks of *deja vu*, the feeling of having been there before.

I had such a seizure the other day when the U.S. Board on Geographic Names announced it was postponing action on requests to change the name of Mt. McKinley back to its original Indian name, Denali.

The requests came from Alaska, where the Indians are located. The opposition came mainly from Ohio, President McKinley's home state.

The board has put the matter aside until Congress disposes of a pending resolution to keep the present name.

In 1931, which is where the *deja vu* comes in, a huge dam on the Colorado River was named for President Hoover, during whose term the project was authorized.

But after Hoover left office in 1933, the Interior Department began calling it Boulder Dam.

In 1948, Congress approved legislation renaming it Hoover Dam, and there it stands today. In the interim, however, there have been attempts to name it Boulder Dam again.

It was, I believe, newscaster David Brinkley who suggested a reasonable way to end the dispute - why not ask Hoover to change his name to Herbert Boulder?

Nothing ever came of the proposal and no solution that simple can even be consid-



The same cannot be said for the prideful Senate. Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W. Va., chosen as majority leader not by Jimmy Carter but by the Senate Democrats, earned a reputation at the White House for remarkable constancy. Unfortunately, it was not constancy of support, of advocacy, or even of conciliation for which he was noted. Rather, the White House came to expect from Byrd a one-note warning of dire catastrophe lurking around the legislative bend.

But the blame does not rest on Byrd's shoulders alone. The Senate speaks with many voices. Some of them, sad to say, were tinged with bitterness that Carter, and not one of them, was in the White House in 1977.

Neither by word nor by deed did the Senate lions give the President the cues he needed to have a successful administration.

At the very outset, they indulged their personal pique by rejecting the nomination of Ted Sorensen for CIA director and very nearly sabotaging the choice of Paul Warnke for arms-control negotiator.

While doing this, they smilingly encouraged Carter's penchant for cronyism by approving the choice of Griffin Bell and Pete Flaherty to head the Justice Department and Bert Lance as budget director.

The message that this is a double-standard government was under-lined

when senators reacted like Tammany Hall aldermen when Carter threatened to cut off some of their favorite dam projects, but cheered like school-boys the naive rhetoric of his early "human rights" crusade.

The lesson these actions conveyed was that the Senate would ignore or indulge misjudgments of great magnitude by the novice President, but fight him on every-thing petty and parochial.

It was the Senate which forced Carter's first fateful policy flip-flop: the abandonment of the tax-rebate portion of the economic stimulus package—a step which looks more dubious with each passing month of frozen unemployment statistics.

It was the Senate which screamed—and not without justification—at the administrator's failure to consult its "experts" in framing the energy program.

And it was the Senate which demonstrated, over the last eight months, that it lacked the will, the skill or the "expertise" to compose its own differences on the energy issues. Neither in committee, nor on the Senate floor, nor in the conference with the House was the Senate ever able to face up to the hard choices that must be made to achieve a national energy policy.

If Carter is faulted deservedly for the internal contradictions of his own energy proposal, how much greater fault does the Senate bear for being unable, at any point, to resolve those contradictions into any kind of serious counterproposal?

Carter and his aides bear full responsibility for the many errors of judgement and tactics they made in dealing with Congress. But they were acknowledged novices. The Senate has no such excuse.

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Letters to the editor

Teague bids constituents farewell

Editor's note: Congressman Olin E. "Tiger" Teague of Texas' 6th Congressional District, has announced he will not seek re-election after completing his current term in the House. The following is an open letter from Teague to his constituents in the 6th District.

People of the 6th District: This year I not only want to wish you a wonderful Christmas and New Year, I also want to share my plans with you.

I have been your congressman for 31 years. I cannot conceive of a more rewarding career than that of serving as representative of you, the people of the 6th District of Texas. You have been wonderful to me

and my family and I hope I have deserved the kindness, understanding and support you have given me over the years.

I have given the job of representing you all the energy and ability at my command. However, my health is such that I do not believe I can continue to serve you beyond my present term with the same energy and effort of previous years. I am making this announcement now so that all those who aspire to be your representative will have ample time to prepare their campaigns and you will have ample time to make your decision.

I hope my successor, whoever he or she might be, will inspire the same kind of affectionate cooperation you have given me. The people of the 6th District deserve only the best and this is my wish for you. God bless you all.

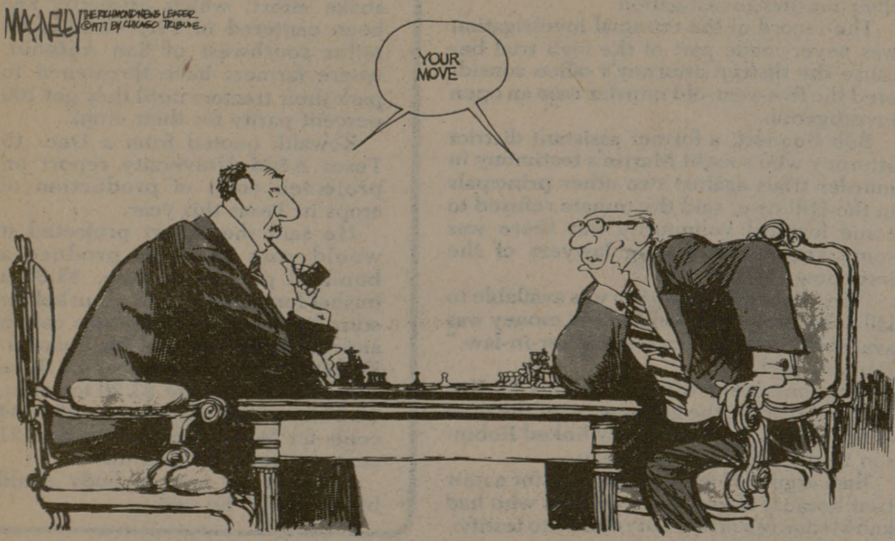
Olin E. Teague
Congressman
6th District of Texas

Inmate wants penpals

Editor: Perhaps my request is unusual but I am a lonely 28-year-old brother who is incarcerated in the Florida penal system.

My request is could you please publish this letter in your editorial section so that the beautiful brothers and sisters of your college that would like could correspond with me, should they desire to do so?

I am free and liberal minded in my patterns of thought, even though I confess to having made an error with choosing the path of my life. I still have creative ideas and would love to share my feelings with



Top of the News

State

Police searching for two abductors

Police are searching for two men who abducted and stabbed nursing assistant Richard Carrera, 22, in a ransom demand from Luther Hospital. Carrera was listed in stable condition Tuesday at the hospital after being found in Northwest Bexar County Monday. A man telephoned the hospital demanding \$1,000 ransom for Carrera and alleged that the hospital "killed my father three months ago and I'm going to get even." Several threatening telephone calls from two men were received during the extortion attempt and police said the abductors never made arrangements for payment of the ransom.

DeBakey recovering from burns

Heart surgeon Michael E. DeBakey remained hospitalized in good condition Tuesday recovering from smoke inhalation and superficial burns suffered during a New Year's Eve fire at his home. Hospital officials said DeBakey would be able to go home in a few days. He was taken to Methodist Hospital about 10 p.m. Saturday following a house fire, attributed to fireplace sparks igniting a rug which in turn ignited a Christmas tree. No one else was injured.

State rests case in Hughes' trial

Assistant Attorney General Rich Harrison, hoping to prove for inheritance tax purposes that the late Howard Hughes was a Texas resident, rested the state's case Tuesday. Harrison told Probate Judge Pat Gregory early in the afternoon the state had concluded its case with the presentation of final documents linking the reclusive tycoon to Texas. Frank Davis, attorney for Hughes' survivors who dispute Texas' claim, began his case shortly after Harrison finished. Davis wants to prove Nevada to be Hughes' residence, but only must prove that Texas was not to win his case.

State officials sworn in Tuesday

Four new Criminal Appeals Court judges and one Railroad Commission member took office Tuesday and officials said the occasion signaled a new day for one of the state's most influential regulatory agencies and a chance to accelerate the process of criminal justice. John Poerner, 44, was sworn in as the newest member of the Railroad Commission. The new judges are Carl E.F. Dally of Houston, Tom G. Davis of Vernon, Jim Vollers of Beaumont and W.C. Davis of Bryan. Briscoe participated in both swearing-in ceremonies.

Nation

Hurricane hearing defies court

A congressional hearing on the status of a hurricane protection project for Lake Ponchartrain will be held Thursday in New Orleans despite a federal court order temporarily halting the project. Chairman Harold T. Johnson, D-Calif., said information gathered at the hearing will be useful to the Army Corps of Engineers in its review of the project and in further work on an environmental impact statement. Last Friday, a federal court in New Orleans issued an injunction restraining the Corps of Engineers from proceeding with the project pending completion of the environmental statement.

Bone picked on meat label

Negotiations reportedly are underway between the meat industry and a consumer organization to find an agreeable name for a food product containing ground bone. Agriculture Department sources report a compromise reached by the industry and the Consumer Federation of America could modify the government's proposal that the product be called Tissue from Ground Bone. The American Meat Institute says a food product containing "tissue from ground bone" on its label wouldn't sell. It likes the name Mechanically Deboned Meat — or better yet — Beef Food Product.

Labor leaders denied appeal

Two Lake Charles, La., labor leaders, convicted of extorting \$5,000 from a businessman to ensure peaceful labor relations, Tuesday lost their appeal. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Oct. 8, 1976, convictions of Donald Lovett and Harlan Duhon on federal extortion statutes. The appeals court said the trial, conducted by District Judge Nauman Scott of Alexandria in Monroe on a change of venue request, was fair.

World

Freak storms hit Britain

Freak storms buffeted Britain Tuesday, blowing roofs off buildings and causing chaos on the roads. A whirlwind ripped through Newmarket, in Suffolk, severely damaging more than 100 houses. Authorities said several elderly people were being treated for shock. Savage gales hit other parts of England.

Weather

Mostly cloudy today, tomorrow and Thursday with east to southeasterly winds at 10-15 mph. High today upper 60's. Low tonight upper 40's. High on Thursday near 70. Chance of rain by Saturday & Sunday.

The Battalion

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Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

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