



VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Reagan's record, not age, deserves test

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK

WASHINGTON — If Ronald Reagan is elected president in 1980, he would be take office only 18 days before his 70th birthday.

He would be, by two full years, the oldest man ever to assume the presidency. He would be only the third man (joining William Henry Harrison and James Buchanan) to enter the White House aged 65 or older. He would be older at the start of his term than any president except Andrew Jackson or Dwight Eisenhower was at the end of his time in office.

Interesting bits of trivia perhaps, but are they politically relevant? Does Ronald Reagan's age bear on his ability to serve as the president?

In the already septic atmosphere of American political debate, Reagan's age may not be openly discussed on its merits. More likely, it will be the stuff of rumors and whispers about his physical condition or his mental acuity. That is one reason for this effort to ventilate the subject directly.

The question of health is legitimately raised about all prospective presidents. To the untrained eye, the lean and active Reagan appears to be in the pink, with a better health record in his late 60s than either John F. Kennedy or Franklin D. Roosevelt had when they ran for the office as far younger men.



Reagan says he has a yearly physical checkup and is "perfectly willing to make my (medical) records available to anyone who wants to see them." Most candidates do this and it usually takes care of the health issue.

But that will not answer all the questions for Reagan. In a country where many persons are required to retire at age

70, there will be those who question the capacity of any septuagenarian to assume the physical and mental burdens of the presidency.

One response is that the American fixation on youth is ridiculous, especially in the selection of national leaders. David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir in Israel,

Konrad Adenauer in West Germany, Charles DeGaulle in France, Winston Churchill in Great Britain, Josif Tito in Yugoslavia and Mao Tse-tung in China are just a few examples of political leaders of other countries who have functioned capably despite what we regard as advanced age.

Actually, an American presidential campaign is itself a kind of physical and mental test for candidates. Any person who remains healthy after no less than a full year of fast food, motel beds, drafty or overheated meeting rooms and cross country jet jumps surely has demonstrated some kind of fitness.

In a sense, the issue of old age is the flip side of the question raised when Kennedy undertook to become the youngest man to be elected president. Even though the Constitution sets the lower age limit for becoming president at 35, there were those who claimed Kennedy, at 43, was too young for the office. The voters in 1960 decided otherwise.

Given a clean bill of health, Reagan's age is no more relevant to his capacity for presidential service than was Kennedy's. It sometimes seems too much to ask, but it would be nice if Reagan and everyone else who runs for public office were judged on the basis of their records, their ideas and their characters.

Behind the scenes in Washington, Austin

White House readying for Nixon visit

By HELEN THOMAS
UPI White House Reporter

WASHINGTON — Backstairs at the White House:

Former President Richard Nixon's return to the White House is shaping up as a headline event. He has been invited to the state dinner honoring Chinese Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping on Jan. 29.

Insiders say there was no controversy among President Carter's senior advisers when Carter decided to invite Nixon.

Nixon undoubtedly wants what all past presidents have wanted — to be treated as elder statesmen whose advice is sought from time to time on foreign policy. This is a role Nixon denied Lyndon B. Johnson when Johnson retired from the presidency. But it is a role accorded Dwight D. Eisenhower by both John F. Kennedy and Johnson.

Whether Carter will begin consulting Nixon on foreign affairs remains to be seen. White House aides say they do not expect the former president to steal the show but observers do expect Nixon's re-entry into the White House will take some of the spotlight.

The Chinese preparing the way for the visit had asked to see Nixon. Carter's aides said they thought it was better that the meeting take place at the White House rather than at Nixon's home in San Clemente, Calif.

Mrs. Nixon is passing up a chance to return to the White House, apparently not feeling up to it. Since her stroke in July 1977, the former first lady has had to limit her plane travel. There is also a question of whether she is reconciled to facing Washington again at this time.

She will be coming East in March when she goes to New York to spend some time with her eldest daughter Tricia Cox, who is awaiting the birth of her first child.

Here's Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal's prescription for having time to think and not becoming a Cabinet workaholic, as told to Fortune Magazine:

"In both business and government," he said, "it is very important to know how to select the critical issues, to let the others go and to make time to think. In

government, that's very, very difficult because of the ceremonial pressures on you. The only way to do it is to hold rigidly to a certain schedule and to take regular vacations.

"I will not start before 7:30 in the morning and I rarely go past 7:30 in the evening. I do not accept more than one or two social engagements a week, at most, I reserve Sundays strictly for myself, and I take at least four short vacations a year. It's during the evenings, on Sundays and on those vacations I reflect on things."

The president is keeping up his jogging routine, and he is looking much leaner. The White House physician, Dr. William Lukash, thinks it is great for him healthwise, but reporters who see Carter in white shorts and a red sweat shirt wonder if it can be much fun. He runs with such dogged determination, and seems to huff and puff at times.

The 54-year-old president not only appears thinner but older. His hair is noticeably graying now, as is inevitable in the presidency.

Carter rarely has an on-the-record appointment in the afternoon anymore. Most of the appointments list that is put out for the press includes only morning appointments.

In the past, Democratic congressional leaders would talk to the press after breakfast sessions with the president. But the White House apparently has decided it would prefer to have the leaders brief reporters on Capitol Hill. So one more avenue for reporters to talk to presidential visitors has been blocked off.

It is difficult to understand why, since the party leaders have usually emerged from such sessions singing the praises of the president and pledging to work for his programs.

Clayton facing dissidents

By ROLAND LINDSEY
UPI Capitol Reporter

AUSTIN, Texas — A La Grange legislator's decision to campaign for speaker may not be able to derail Speaker Bill Clayton's bid for a fourth term in 1981, but it may make the speaker reluctant to deal harshly with dissidents and more cautious in his leadership policies, some representatives contend.

Rep. John Wilson, D-La Grange, announced last week he would campaign for the speakership in 1981, and Clayton immediately responded by announcing his candidacy for a fourth term and claiming written pledges of support from 90 of the 150 House members.

Clayton, elected Jan. 9 to an unprecedented third consecutive term as speaker, declared the race is over two years before election day — "I don't see that there's a race to it."

But Wilson, who concedes he has no written pledges of support and only a few oral commitments, is not ready to give up.

He says he has no intentions of allowing the speaker race to disrupt this year's session, but obviously would benefit from any troubles Clayton might encounter.

"Pledges a lot of times are conditioned on a series of events happening," Wilson said. "I would assume some of Bill's pledges are that way. I think by the end of the session we'll have an idea whether I am a serious candidate or not, and I may have to re-evaluate my position."

Rep. John Bryant, D-Dallas, perhaps Clayton's most persistent critic during the past four years and a leader in the organization last summer of a group called the Sam Houston Caucus which tried unsuccessfully to dilute the speaker's power, said Wilson's candidacy may influence Clayton's tactics this year.

"I think it would make Clayton a little more cautious perhaps," Bryant said. "It'll be fun to watch. I know if I were him and a guy whose philosophy is not far from mine was out there against me, I'd be more careful. There are a lot of opportunities to make enemies."

Another Sam Houston Caucus member, who asked not to be identified, said he does not think Clayton's support for a fourth term is as solid as the speaker claims.

"I think he's been hurt some by the way he has run the House," the representative said. "They voted down the Sam Houston Caucus, but the discontent is still there and it can grow if the team lets it grow."

Clayton's problem, most House members agree, will be to appease his critics as much as possible to discourage any movement against him, while at the same time keeping members of his "team" in line and in control of the House operations.

Letters to the editor

Women overlooked for Corps units

Editor: To begin with, there will be many readers who will misunderstand what I am about to say. I would urge those such Aggies to reread this letter, and try to be openminded.

This past Tuesday, Jan. 16, A&M was

represented at the governor's inauguration. The Ross Volunteers, the Aggie Band, and the Parson's Mounted Cavalry were all present and representing A&M. These organizations took pride in the fact that not only did they symbolize TAMU, but they represented a special fraction of

the university, the Corps of Cadets.

The only problem I can see with this type of representation is the fact that no women were present among the ranks of any of these three organizations. Women are eligible to apply for these organizations, but their applications are not by any means taken seriously.

I have always been under the impression that women have officially attended this university since 1965. In addition, it is my understanding that women have been members of the Corps since the fall of 1974.

I am sure some will say "if women have to be represented, then so should gays, foreign students, non-regs, etc." Well, I also believe that at a state function more of the student body of Texas A&M should be represented. As far as representing "everyone," I think we have to be realistic!

Yet, the onlooker at the inauguration would not be aware, without prior knowledge of A&M, that women attend this university.

ARE WOMEN AT TAMU GOING TO CONTINUE TO TAKE A BACK SEAT?
—Melanie S. Zentgraf, '80

by courses available in the subject at Texas A&M.

The academic and scholarly credentials of those who have in the past taught such off-campus courses do not compare favorably with the credentials of A&M professors who teach in corresponding areas.

I have nothing but approbation for those who wish to strengthen their faith by greater exposure to its authorized advocates, but such experiences should not be mistakenly considered the equivalent of university courses in which the professor is expected to pay allegiance to the canons of objectivity, neutrality, pursuit of knowledge as such, and the academic standards and values of the community of scholars rather than the sectarian views and values of a particular religious denomination and faith.

—W. David Maxwell, Dean
College of Liberal Arts

Uplifting strength

Editor: We felt that a few words of appreciation were due to 12 special guys from the 2nd Battalion. If it weren't for them, six not very strong females would have remained stuck in the mud at the Quonset huts last Friday night.

We only mentioned our plight to a few guys and at the end of the dance, 12 C.T.s braved the mud and lifted off Thelma Lou (a maverick) out onto the road.

Thanks guys! It was terrific of ya'll to help. And who said chivalry was dead? Certainly not these Aggies!

—Judy Bruce, '81
Margo Giebelstein, '82
Margaret Hennen, '82

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"WHAT A RELIEF! A GUY ACCUSED ME OF COMMITTING POGONOTROPHY!"

TOP OF THE NEWS CAMPUS

Evolution, special creation debate

Dr. Mike Singer, population biologist at the University of Texas at Austin, and Dr. Gary Parker, chairman of the biology department at Christian Heritage College in San Diego, Calif., will debate evolution versus special creation, sponsored by the Great Issues Forum, 7 p.m. Thursday in Rudder Auditorium. Admission is 50 cents for students and \$1 for others.

STATE

Presnal gets top committee spot

State Rep. Bill Presnal, D-Bryan, has been named chairman of the Appropriations Committee by Speaker of the House Bill Clayton. Clayton said Presnal would serve as chairman during the next two years of the 66th Legislature. Presnal is serving his fifth term in the House. He served on the Appropriations Committee last session.

Bullock lawyers seek remedies

Comptroller Bob Bullock said Monday he has asked his attorneys to study what remedies are available to respond to a Travis County Grand Jury report accusing him of hampering its investigation into allegations of misconduct in his office. The grand jury report said Bullock and his staff had refused to make available audit information, had destroyed airplane flight logs needed by the grand jury, and refused to require high level administrators to document travel vouchers to verify expenses for lodging meals and taxis.

NATION

Citizen complaint sessions planned

The chairman of the House Human Services Committee in Washington, Rep. Craig Washington, D-Houston, said Monday he will ask his panel to set aside at least one meeting each month to hear citizen complaints and comments about the performance of state agencies within the committee's jurisdiction. The Department of Human Resources, the Commission for the Blind, the Commission for the Deaf, and the Governor's Commission for the Visually Handicapped are included in the committee's jurisdiction.

Derailment causes evacuation

A Union Pacific freight train carrying flammable phosphorus derailed and burned Monday at 4:15 a.m. about 12 miles southeast of Laramie, Wyo. A cloud of toxic gases caused the evacuation of several area ranchers. The train's four-man crew suffered minor injuries.

Tenement fires may be related

A fire killed seven people in a tenement house Monday two miles from a Hoboken, N.J., dwelling where up to 21 people died in a similar fire Saturday. An investigator said the two fires appeared to be related because both started with flammable liquid being poured on the stairwell of an aging tenement occupied by large Hispanic families.

Fire halts oil pump station in Gulf

A fire Monday injured one man and shut down a Gulf of Mexico offshore oil pumping station off the central Louisiana coast. Shell Oil Co. said the fire occurred on one of its platforms 80 miles south of Morgan City. Crewman L.P. McCaskey of Hammond, La., was flown by helicopter to a Morgan City hospital and listed in satisfactory condition. Two of the four pumps on the platform were damaged beyond repair. There was no indication how soon they could be replaced and the unit returned to service.

WORLD

Beirut bomb kills PLO leader

A large remote-controlled bomb Monday killed Abu Hassan Salameh, one of Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasser Arafat's top lieutenants. Four guards and about six passersby were also killed. Salameh, security chief for Arafat's Al Gatah guerrilla group was high on Israel's most-wanted guerrilla list and was believed by the Israelis to be one of those responsible for the 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli olympic athletes.

Shah goes to Morocco

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran left Egypt Monday at 4:15 a.m. and flew to Morocco as part of an extended vacation from which he may never return to his kingdom. The shah was accompanied by his wife Empress Farah and a 20-member entourage.

WEATHER

Partly cloudy, windy, and cooler with a high today of 58 and a low of 25. Winds will be north westerly at 30 mph and gusty. The temperature at 9:00 was 47. We have a 35% chance of rain.

THE BATTALION

LETTERS POLICY

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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