

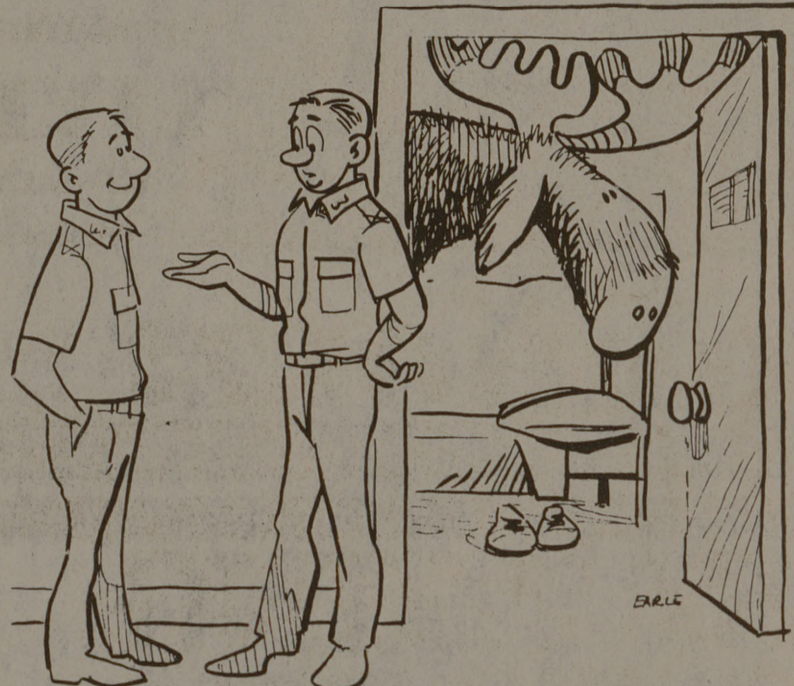
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY
DECEMBER 4, 1980

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"Although I can appreciate your fondness for taxidermy, don't you feel that we might give it a lower priority?"

Upset of Clinton was one of most notable

By DAVID S. BRODER

LITTLE ROCK — A lot of great old Democratic names were erased from the roster of elected officials in the 1980 election, but there was one particularly notable defeat among the younger Democrats. Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, 34, lost his bid for a second two-year term to savings and loan president Frank White, a political newcomer who had reregistered as a Republican just in time to make this race.

By a margin of 37,000 votes, White derailed a career that had seemed one of the most promising in American politics. A graduate of Georgetown University and Yale law school, Clinton came home to teach law, lost the House race in 1974, was elected attorney general in 1976 and two years later became the nation's youngest governor.

Before his first term was over, he was chosen by the other Democratic governors as their chairman for the coming year. And he played an important role as a mediator between the Carter and Kennedy camps at the Democratic convention.

Then, on Nov. 4, to the surprise of most Arkansas observers, Clinton came up on the short end of a 52-to-48 percent upset. As one of many reporters who had been impressed by the rapid ascent of this articulate young Southerner, I was naturally curious to learn on a visit here what lay behind his defeat.

The answers were not different, whether they came from Clinton himself, from other Democrats, from leaders of the White campaign, or from journalists around the state. What emerged is a picture of political misfortune, misjudgment and neglect, blending with a mood of public frustration, to produce an electoral explosion of perhaps unintended dimensions — a kind of parable of what happened to the Democrats nationally.

In 1978, when Clinton was elected governor, his pollster, Peter D. Hart, told him that Arkansas attitudes were among the most optimistic in the nation. But in the last two years, things turned sour in Arkansas. Drought hit the farms, inflation and high interest rates choked off the housing and auto-assembly industries.

Outside forces seemingly took perverse pleasure in targeting Arkansas for punishment. When a Titan missile blew up, it was in Arkansas. When Cuban refugees rioted, it was in Arkansas.

Clinton plowed ahead — as Democrats did everywhere — doing what he thought he had been elected to do: Spread the benefits of government across the landscape. He challenged the medical profession by pushing a rural health program, took on the phone company and the

timber companies on consumer and environmental issues.

To finance the road improvement program he had promised in his first campaign, Clinton pushed through a \$17 increase in the annual auto license fee. "I thought that would be better for rural people who had to drive long distances than adding several cents to the gas tax," Clinton said, "but I was wrong. In a time of inflation, people would rather pay a little bit more each week over a long period of time than a lot extra up-front."

That was not the only sign Clinton was out of touch. Just as Jimmy Carter neglected his political homework, political allies say Clinton let his supporters' list get jumbled and out-of-date, and old workers slip away from him.

The troubles at home did not diminish the favorable national publicity. His thoughtful, effective speech to the Democratic convention led many reporters — me among them — to mention Clinton as a potential presidential candidate in future years.

It went down badly at home. "When things were going well for them," Clinton now says, "my constituents were pleased at the idea I could speak for them, to a growing audience, for long years ahead. But when they were hurt — and they've been hurt bad by the economy and everything this year — they said, 'Why should he have it so good?' They wanted to bring me down a peg or two."

Hart warned the governor that "if you go into the last week with a narrow lead, you are in trouble, because 60 percent of the people want you to win by just one vote."

The polls showed Clinton holding a comfortable lead, however, and not until the final weekend did he recognize he was in trouble.

Now, like dozens of other Democrats, he finds the wounds of defeat too fresh to be entirely detached in his reflections on what happened. Local reporters say they encounter a good many voters who say they only want to humble Clinton, not defeat him. Believing this, some Clinton supporters hope he keeps his political base intact for a possible comeback in two or four years, by staying with his announced intention of practicing law in Little Rock.

His name, however, is discussed in Washington as a possible new Democratic national chairman, and Clinton has at least one qualification for the job. Four years after his first victory — while still in his 30s — he has learned a lesson other Democrats did not learn until they had been in power for decades: Voters have little tolerance for politicians who lose touch. It is a lesson Clinton has time to absorb — and perhaps to help his party understand.

The Great Computer waits to foul up our graduations

I'm a graduating senior. I don't apologize for the fact, either. I worked quite a few years and I deserve it. (The ring says '79, but don't let that fool you. I just didn't realize it was going to be this hard.)

It started at the beginning of this semester. I thought the Great Computer in the Sky reviewed my transcript every semester and when I got enough hours, it would bless me with a wave of its magic wand and I would have a degree.

But no. They expected me to go beg them for a degree. They call it a "formal degree application," but I know what it really is. Begging.

And then there was the \$11 fee associated with making this application. It didn't seem like much money at the time, but it was just the start.

Armed with my checkbook, I sallied forth earlier this week to clear my name and insure my graduation. First stop, the University Police.

I expected some bad news, but this was ridi-

Just desserts

By Scott Haring

culous. They wanted \$40 in parking tickets. I had forgotten about these two-year-old tickets long ago, but the Great Computer hadn't.

There was a loan to pay back. And graduation announcements to buy. And a cap and gown to pay for. Every time I took out my checkbook and spent a little more money, one thought kept going through my mind, an inescapable conclusion.

I am bribing these people to let me out. That's what it boils down to. You do your time, and they still get you in the end.

Oh, but they're so sneaky about it. If these things had been thrown at me ear-

lier, I might have come up with extra alternatives. Appeal the tickets. Write graduation announcements. Rob a liquor store.

But with two weeks (even less now) before stage-crossing time, there is no alternative. I have to pay them.

And they know it. Even now, a persistent nightmare haunts me.

I'm sitting in G. Rollie White Cohen's tenting to the speeches. My family and friends all sit in the stands, waiting to see me receive my degree. My father's most relieved.

Then we're all standing in line to cross stage, and the guy with the list who checks to make sure everyone's in the right order across my name and mysteriously goes away.

He comes back and points me out to the man with a very large hook.

I knew I should have returned that book. The Great Computer never forgets.



It's your turn Bonfire building, burning is wasteful

Editor: As a new arrival in College Station from overseas, I have watched the building of the traditional Aggie bonfire with some amazement. I am impressed with the size of the structure, and the care lavished upon it. I have goggled at its flaming portrait in the Student's Center, and tried to fathom the depth of the attachment at the traditional burning. I have noted with a condescending smile that "girls" are actually allowed to help with its erection — (by serving cookies?). Good Lord, how progressive! Unfortunately, I have realized along with many other people, what a waste it really is.

It might be well for the bonfire fans to consider for a moment the volume of wood that goes into that pyre in terms of how many pots of maize meal it would cook. Imagine what the attitude of people in the Third World who often have to scour the country for miles around to find a scrap of wood to cook or keep warm would be to that venerable tradition? Who cares, you may ask? You won't be hearing from them. Not for now at least.

It seems to me that the bonfire is American wastefulness made into a tradition and glorified. Isn't it time that the tradition and the attitude it embodies were thrown on the fire?

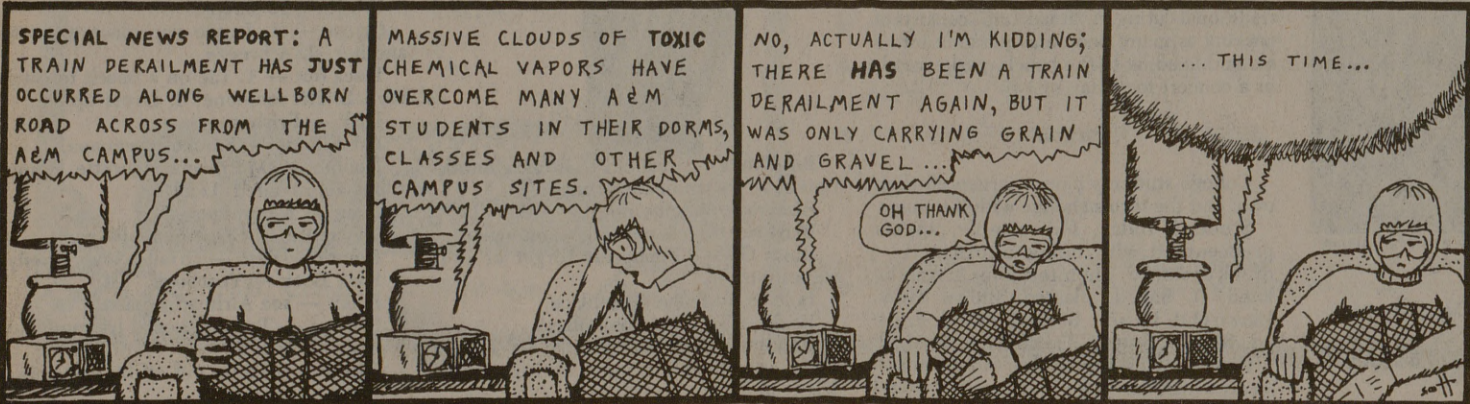
Sam McClatchie

War Hymn inappropriate

Editor: It is almost traditional for a letter to appear

By Scott McCullar

Warped



around this time of year lamenting the sparse attendance at Silver Taps or the behavior of certain individuals there or some other problem related to those who should be observing this as a solemn occasion. Tonight was our last Silver Taps, and we have a complaint, but it is not related to any of the above circumstances. The impropriety which caught our attention was the selection of the music played before the ceremony. "Auld Lang Syne" was very appropriate for the situation, of course, but the two pieces which followed it most certainly were not. We could hardly believe our ears as we listened to the chimes belt out nothing less than a lusty rendition of the Aggie War Hymn, followed by the Spirit. The War Hymn, especially considering the speed and style with which it was played, was grossly inappropriate for setting the mood for Silver Taps. The Spirit would not have been so bad had it been played more slowly, with some dignity, but to have the strains familiarly associated with football scoring (i.e. "Hot Time") applied to our remembrance of two departed Ags is inexcusably tasteless. Shall we saw varsity's horns off and clap

along with "Hot Time" in celebration of untimely deaths? The mere suggestion is revolting. Whoever selected the music on the occasion appears to have been concerned with showing off the new chimes contributing to the meaning of the ceremony is too late to change what happened, but it is too late to ask for a little more foresight time? After 4½ years we are at long last our leave of A&M, and while we recognize some things are always bound to change, would hope that Silver Taps would not be them.

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by three other signatures.

Correction

A cutline in Wednesday's Battalion incorrectly credited MSC Outdoor Recreation Committee with bringing the Pepsi-Cola team to Texas A&M. MSC Recreation Committee sponsored team's visit. The Battalion regrets the error.

THE BATTALION

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