

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY
JANUARY 23, 1980

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I had a real keen salute to show them our appreciation for releasing our hostages, but I decided that it would be in bad taste."

Crosswalk Fairy not trusted

Notepad

By Tracy Fenton

In the farming community that I grew up in the traffic was usually pretty scarce. 'Bout the only things that ever came by with much frequency were tractors and it was relatively easy to avoid being run over by one.

When we went to town with my parents, crossing the street was a major operation. My little brother and I were gripped by the hand until our fingers turned blue and the fingernails threatened to pop off in the street.

"Look both ways before crossing the street, and then look again."

That warning was so engraved in my mind from childhood, that when I came to Aggieland and saw people just nonchalantly stepping out into the street without even a glance, I cringed.

It took me nearly two and a half years before I could bring myself to step out into the student crosswalk without a two-block survey of the street.

Now, I know that students have right-of-way in the crosswalks. At least that's what everyone keeps telling me. It's sort of like knowing you have some magical power to protect you but you aren't completely convinced.

The first time I decided to trust the Good Crosswalk Fairy there was a car coming at least a block away. It was moving pretty slow and I had decided not to make a fool of myself and run across. I would be calm and I would WALK!

When the first toe touched the little stripy piece of pavement, I waited for the thunder and lightning and flashing neon that said "You Big Dummy" but nothing happened. Hallelujah!!

Besides the fact that my heart rate was out of control and my pupils had dilated, I had made it across the street in one piece.

After that experience I began to build up my courage and became quite an expert in street crossing.

The drivers that don't stop or slow down for you to cross the street are either in a hurry and never saw you in the first place, think pedestrians are mentally deficient, or have a guilty conscience for not letting you across and won't look at you as they drive by.

Then there are the drivers that like to play games with your mind. They stop for you but every time you stick your foot out in the street they rev their motor. These people have a warped sense of humor. Avoid them.

There are also drivers that are basically law abiding citizens and obey the signs that say "Stop for Students in Crosswalk" but don't particularly like to. They are the ones that drive off at the same split second that your foot leaves the pavement.

Since I had gotten pretty confident in street crossing, I suppose I was lulled into a false sense of security. That and the fact that I believe the line about the police being here to

watch over us nearly did me in last semester.

After a long day at school and work, I was walking back to my car in the Zachry parking lot. When I came up to the first part of the crosswalk, I looked to my left because it's a one-way street and I'm still not too sure that the Crosswalk Fairy always pays attention.

Well, there was a College Station police car coming slowly down the street about 100 yards away. Not close enough to worry about starting across the street and kept waiting for him to stop. He never did and went by close enough the ruffle the hair on the back of my head.

That wasn't enough!

He made a U-turn around the boulevard and caught me halfway across the street on the right side of the crosswalk. You've heard about being caught between a rock and a hard place? That was it, gang. I didn't know whether to run across or stop and let him go on his merry way. I finally had to stop because he showed no indication of doing so.

To make matters even worse he never looked at me. It was like being circled by a big snake.

Well, I really don't know what to think. Maybe police are a step above the Good Crosswalk Fairy in the pedestrian mythology.

I just know that I may never be the same. I returned to the sweaty-palm, wide-eyed, heart-beat syndrome every time I cross the street. Crosswalk or not. Cops or no cops.

Tracy Fenton is a journalism student and former Battalion reporter.

Rehashing a year of goofs on a diet of crow

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The hint that this would be a vintage year for political punditry was right there in the first week of 1980. "The safest election bet in America — for the past generation — has been that the Democrats will win Congress," I wrote on Jan. 6. "Chances are, the bet will pay off again in 1980."

While you, dear reader, were savoring the aftermath of your Christmas feast I was on a self-imposed diet of crow: I was rereading the collected wisdom of my favorite prognosticator, myself.

It was not the first time. Three years ago, it struck me that a good year-end device for letting you, the readers, know that I know that you know what a klutz I am would be to rehash some of my own mental boners. You know, a touch of humility to build rapport and trust for the new year.

The trouble was, the first two times I tried it, I was blinded by my own brilliance. Sure, there were a few clinkers; but to fasten on them and ignore the number of times the dash of deadline-wisdom had proved prophetic would have been a terrible distortion of the record. The commitment to journalistic truth prevented me from fulfilling my sincere desire for self-abasement.

This year, happily, there is no conflict between humility and objectivity. You can hardly reach into the file of past columns without finding some howler:

On Jan. 27, the "semi-official White House line" was reported to be that Sen. Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R-Tenn.) would be President Carter's "toughest and worthiest opponent," former President Ford might be "the strongest rival of all," and George Bush is being taken "more seriously." Ronald Reagan? He barely rated a mention.

On Feb. 24, it was said that "while all the press attention has been on New Hampshire, the Bush organization has been hard at work in those Southern states (South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama), giving him a competitive base from which to move on Reagan in Reagan's bedrock territory." That was some move! Reagan beat Bush by margins of 3-to-1 to 5-to-1 in the four states.

On March 23, I tried to change my luck by switching to baseball, complaining in the annual Chicago Cubs' column about the "imminent" trade of super-reliever Bruce Sutter to the Cardinals. That prophecy was only nine months premature — more accurate than most in this year of misjudgment — but an embarrassing slip, whether it concerns the arrival of a trade or of a baby.

On April 2, it was back to politics with the marvelous comment, "There is more issue-content in this campaign than in any other re-

cent election." Rereading the column, I cannot fathom whatever made me say that, but there it is in black-and-white. As Ring Lardner said, "You could look it up."

Speaking of literary allusions, the most embarrassing goof of the year came in a try for lyricism on April 6. Talking about President Carter's habit of timing optimistic announcements for primary election days, I quoted what I said was a lyric from "Showboat" — "Maybe Tuesday will be my good news day."

As several dozen of you were kind enough to point out, that line is from the George and Ira Gershwin classic, "The Man I Love," and not from "Showboat." When I checked with the Ultimate Quotation Authority, George Will, he even played the Ella Fitzgerald recording over the phone to make it perfectly clear I was wrong again.

There was a serious misstep on the trail of error on Aug. 10, when the Devil made me write, "Public disillusionment with the Democratic record is widespread enough to raise the possibility of a big Republican victory at all levels of the ballot." But by Sept. 7, I was back in form, declaring "Michigan is potentially one of (John) Anderson's best states." He got 7 percent there.

On Oct. 22, I credited Vice President Mondale with "swinging Wisconsin from Reagan to Carter." Later, somebody sneakily swung it back to Reagan, without my knowledge, but still that's a nice accolade for Mondale to take with him into retirement.

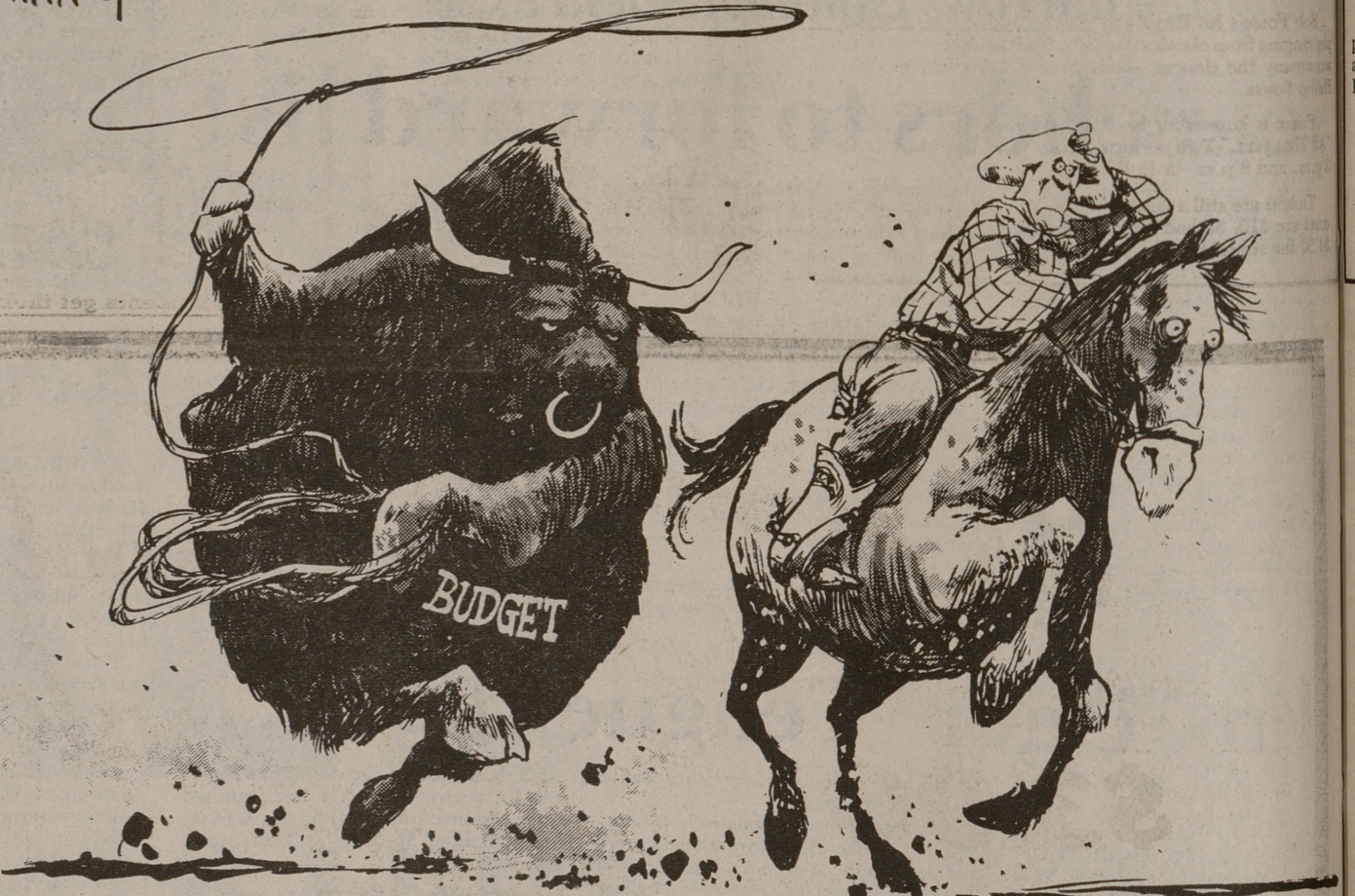
On Dec. 7, just to show my knack had not ended with the election, I wrote a column that was full of praise for Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., and its president, former Gov. Daniel J. Evans. I figured the topic was a bit parochial but would please the Olympia newspaper, which carried my column. Wrong again. It turns out the local editor takes such a dim view of Evans that he cancelled the column outright.

With luck like that, you can guess how sorry I am to see 1980 end. The Reagan Era poses new tests, but I am determined to keep alive the tradition of being first with the wrongest judgment.

And for you good readers who have put up with all this, a bit of reward. Many of you have begged for the identity of the hidden-away-in-the-woods New Hampshire restaurant where the Swiss chef cooks in an 18th century farmhouse kitchen for a tiny clientele — the place I savored as the site of "the best evening" of the whole 1980 campaign.

It is Crystal Quail and Center Barnstead. It is open only certain nights and then by reservation only. Some of you may think a recommendation from me is a guarantee of ptomaine. Not so. Trust me. Have I ever misled you?

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Not what's said, but the way they say it

By LeROY POPE

United Press International

NEW YORK — Understanding language isn't enough to communicate successfully in modern business, says the head of a Los Angeles firm devoted to teaching people how to interpret non-verbal signals.

Michael McMaster and Dr. John Grinder, linguist and psychologist, partners in Precision Model, stage seminars and conferences for the executives and employees of blue chip firms, teaching them to depend not so much upon what people say as on the non-verbal signals they give during negotiations, conferences and ordinary conversation.

For example, if the person you are talking with and seeking something from leans back in his or her chair, gazes at the ceiling from time to time and otherwise seems utterly relaxed, you should match that attitude without obvious mimicry, McMaster said.

If you persist in sitting forward in your chair, staring intently and trying to create a brisk

atmosphere, you're licked, he said.

McMaster and Grinder say the essence of successful oral communication in today's world lies in being aware of the other person's mood, his or her body posture and head position, rate of breathing, repetitive gestures and tone of voice, and adapting to it.

"That's the way to get your message across in a job interview, or in talking to your superiors, your subordinates or in trying to make a sale," McMaster said.

It is not enough simply to listen to what the other person is saying. You must respond.

To improve your abilities as a communicator, he said, you must ask yourself:

— Do I know what I'm after, what I want?

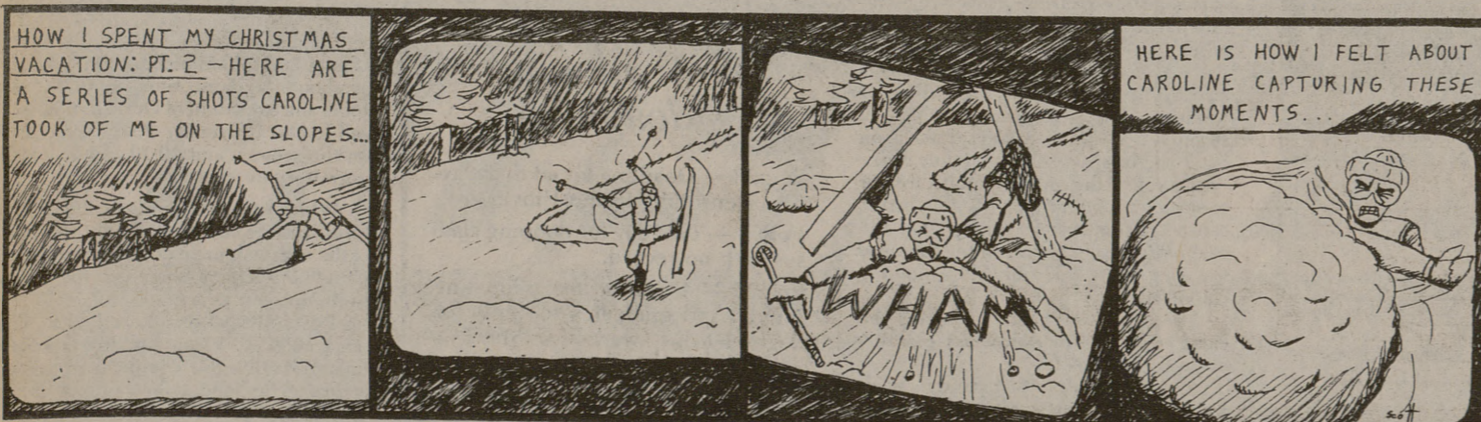
— How much flexibility do I have? How willing am I to change the way I think, talk, move my body in response to the other person? How willing am I to adjust in order to get what I want?

— How aware am I of the effect of what I said or did — the feedback? Have I responded to the other person in the most appropriate way?

It's axiomatic, McMaster said, that the successful managers in modern business are those who can deal with a deluge of information, both written and oral. It's a matter of selection.

Warped

By Scott McCullar



THE BATTALION

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