

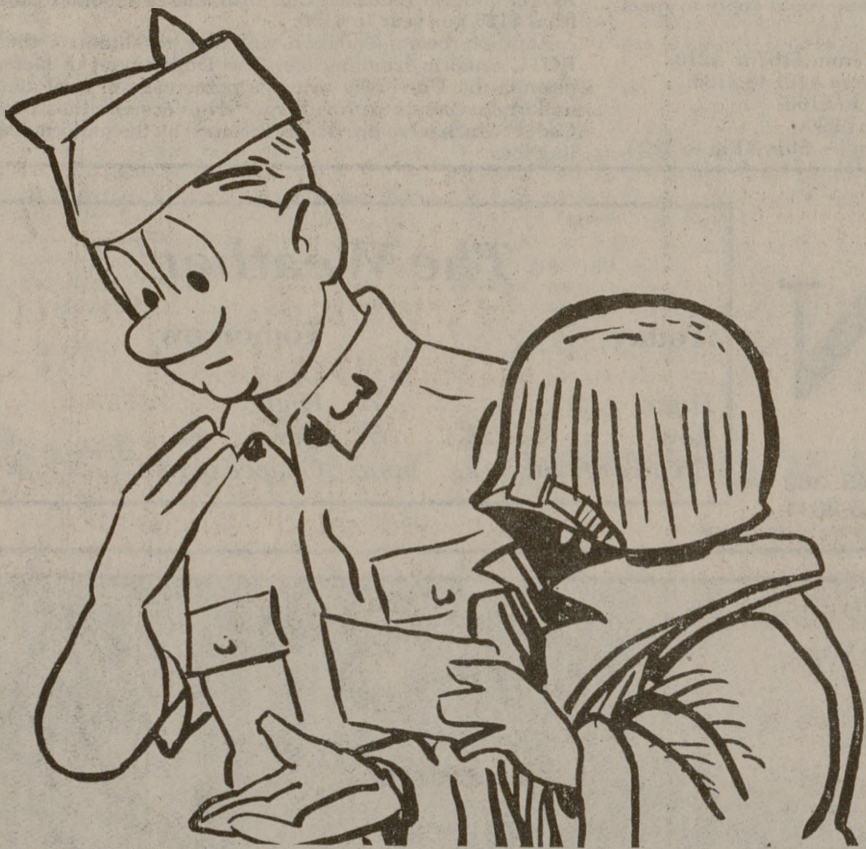
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY
MARCH 24, 1981

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"It's my class schedule. I've forgotten when and where my classes meet."

Baker keeps GOP senators in line

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — A year ago this month, Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. quit the race for the Republican presidential nomination. After four straight third- and fourth-place finishes in caucuses and primaries, the man most feared by many Democrats as a White House challenger shut down his campaign, telling reporters with unpying candor, "It isn't going anywhere."

Today, the 55-year-old Tennessee surveys his domain as the first Republican majority leader of the Senate in 26 years and says, "I really enjoy the hell out of this job. It is pure delight."

There is every reason to believe that Howard Baker is as honest in appraising his present situation as he was a year ago. He has thrown his considerable intellectual and political skills into the task of shepherding the 53-member GOP majority. And, unlike those primary voters, both the senators and the President appear to appreciate the quality of Baker's effort.

"This is probably the most unified majority party in the Senate in decades," said one White House lobbyist. "You don't know what a help it is to us," said another presidential assistant, "to know that Baker's got the Senate in hand."

That was not the general assumption immediately after the November election. There was talk that moderate Republican Baker would have a hard time with the platoon of incoming freshmen GOP senators, many of them conservative ideologues. There were rumors that he might be dumped in favor of Ronald Reagan's friend, Sen. Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.) or upstaged by Laxalt in dealings with the White House.

But Laxalt — far from challenging Baker — nominated him for majority leader in the GOP caucus, and there are fewer and fewer stories suggesting that anyone other than Baker is calling the shots for the Senate GOP.

The rambunctiousness of his flock was tested early. Conservatives despised voting for increases in the national debt limit, but the first request from Reagan was for such an increase. Despite the tooth-gnashing, Baker held all but three of his 53 votes in line for the President.

He is managing to inculcate among his

novice legislators his personal ethic of responsibility in the exercise of power by being very sure that everyone is part of the act.

There are weekly lunches with rotating groups of four freshmen. Often, at the end of the lunch, Baker gets on his "hot line" — a direct tie-line to Max L. Friedersdorf, the head of Reagan's congressional liaison staff — to relay some freshman's request or signal a need for some White House attention.

Once a week, the Republican committee chairmen gather in his office to go over their agendas and vent their problems, with one of the freshmen (from a rotating roster) sitting in to share the learning experience. "It gives me a central role in managing the flow of legislation," Baker says, "and it gives all the committee chairmen an overview of the agenda, too."

The result has been a sense of teamwork among Republican senators of diverse views. When he needed help on the debt-ceiling vote, for example, Baker asked Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina — that symbol of conservatism — to talk to the freshmen. "He told them he'd never voted in his life to lift the debt ceiling, but he was going to do it this year for Ronald Reagan — and they were too," Baker recalled. "It was a damned effective speech."

Beyond such political satisfactions, what Baker enjoys is his growing identification as a Senate man. That does not mean he has ruled out another run for President some day. But it does mean that the view from his office window, looking down the Mall to the monuments and the hills of Arlington, is one he deeply cherishes.

The three-room suite he occupies was, he reminds visitors, the first part of the Capitol put to use. One room was the House of Representatives, one the Senate and one (now his conference room) was the Library of Congress. The 3,000 volumes that were once on its shelves were the books the British set to the torch when they burned the Capitol. But their titles are known from catalogs of the present Library of Congress, and Baker is joyfully engaged in raising \$1 million in private funds to have library copies rebound in 18th century bindings and placed on replicas of the original Latrobe shelves.

Halt planning of new dorms

If there is a single convincing reason why Texas A&M should put a moratorium on new dormitory construction, it's evident in this week's Board of Regents meeting.

The Board was scheduled today to approve a 20 percent across the board increase — the largest ever — in dormitory room rates. The cheapest rooms, in un-air conditioned men's dorms, will go up from \$219 per semester to \$263; the most expensive, the Commons halls, will increase from \$546 to \$655 per semester. The increase will thus range from \$44 per semester to \$109, depending on where a student lives.

Sure, this is the first increase in rates in three years. Sure, there's no way to get the needed money except from raising room rates. Sure, increased utility and labor costs account for a good portion of the needed increase.

But the University also needs the money to pay off the indebtedness incurred by selling construction bonds to finance the new dormitories. That indebtedness has risen by \$760,000 in the last year.

Sidebars

By Dillard Stone

Dorm rates are going to rise periodically, as utility and labor costs go up — there's no way to control these expenses.

But the University can control its bond debts — simply by not building any more dorms or trying to finance their construction.

The demand for on-campus housing now is great, partly because it's more convenient, but mostly because it's cheaper. The students and administrators who encourage freshmen to seek dorm space to "learn all about Aggie Spirit" only exacerbate the problem; witness the 1,500 students who

lined up outside the Housing Office 1, trying to reserve housing space for semester 15 months away.

Add to that the increasing number of entering students, and you get tremendous need for immediate campus housing.

Some regents have been notably favorable toward the mention of yet another new dorm or dorm complex. That's construction bonds to finance the dorms and that means higher dorm rates to those bonds.

But the immediate may not necessarily coincide with the long-term.

A time will soon come — after utility labor costs have risen even more — when living off campus will be cheaper than in a dorm room. The regents and University administrators should view critical proposals for new dorms, before we reach the point where further construction is counter-productive.

Otherwise, the University may just pitch itself out of the housing market.



Beware of the foot faults, though

Variations of 'Stennis, Anyone?'

By DICK WEST

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The big personnel turnover in Congress this year has given new life to the old game of "Stennis, Anyone?"

Veteran players were quick to note the arrival from Pennsylvania of freshmen Reps. James Coyne and William Coyne. Team them up with Rep. L. H. Fountain of North Carolina and you've got a wishing well deregulation bill sponsored by two Coynes and a Fountain.

For better or worse, the new House and Senate rosters are rife with such possibilities. Nevertheless, some of your world class "Stennis, Anyone?" players still mourn the loss of ex-Sens. George Aiken of Vermont and J. Glenn Beall of Maryland.

The former, joining forces with the late Sen. Philip Hart of Michigan, made possible all sorts of Aiken-Hart welfare programs. And the latter was always lumped with Rep. John Dingell of Michigan in belfry noise control bills.

The Senate now has another Hart, Gary of Colorado, and Dingell is still about. Also surviving in the House are the ingredients of the famous Pickle-Pepper bill, Jake of

Texas and Claude of Florida. But without Aiken and Beall, the game just isn't the same.

Some neophyte players have tried to take advantage of the advent of Vice President George Bush. They have linked him with the Senate's two Byrds, Harry of Virginia and Robert of West Virginia, for variations of the old adage about two in the hand being worth ... well, you know.

Under the game's complicated scoring system, this is a technical foul. A vice president's only function is to preside over the Senate and break tie votes. He cannot lend his name to legislation.

Beginners also lose points occasionally by pouncing too heavily on the obvious. For example, a senator from Louisiana and a former House Republican leader may favor raising gasoline taxes to raise funds for the interstate highway system.

But calling this the Long-Rhodes bill is

the "Stennis, Anyone?" equivalent of a foul.

The more subtle players likewise clear of Rep. Joseph Early of Massachusetts. The temptation to put together an Early-Byrd bill is simply too much to have him join a Texas congressman in an Early-Frost bill.

Correction

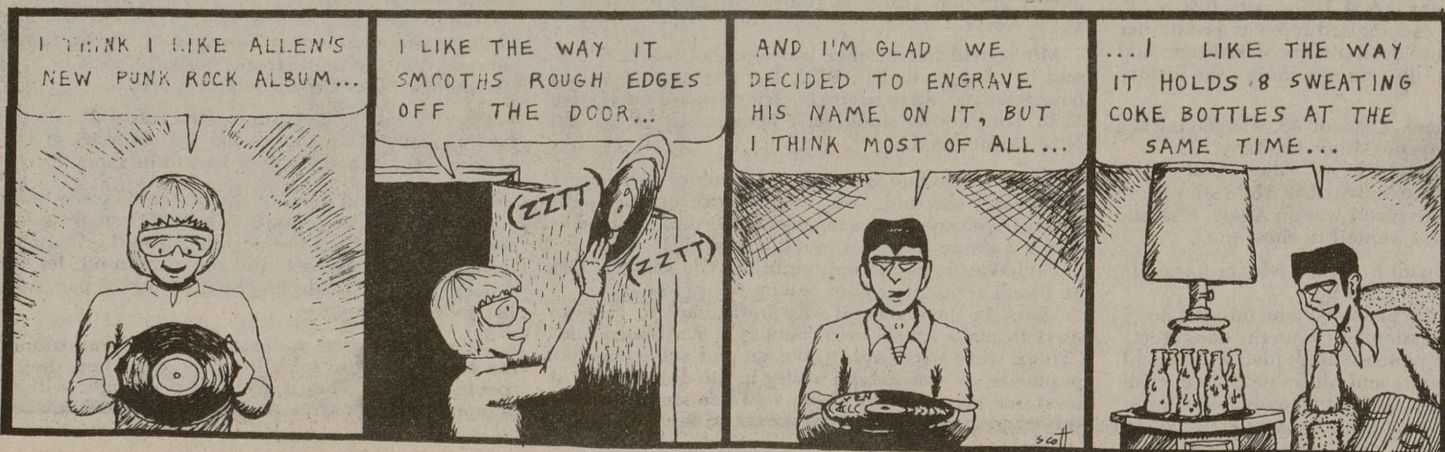
Monday's Battalion incorrectly named deceased Texas A&M student Bob Leslie Boyles as Bob Leslie Boyles.

Boyles died March 19 in a traffic accident in Crosby, and he was buried in White Cemetery in Highland, near Dayton, as the article stated.

Silver Taps for Boyles will be held April 7.

The Battalion regrets the errors.

Warped



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION
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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography within the Department of Communications. Questions or comments concerning any editorial should be directed to the editor.

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