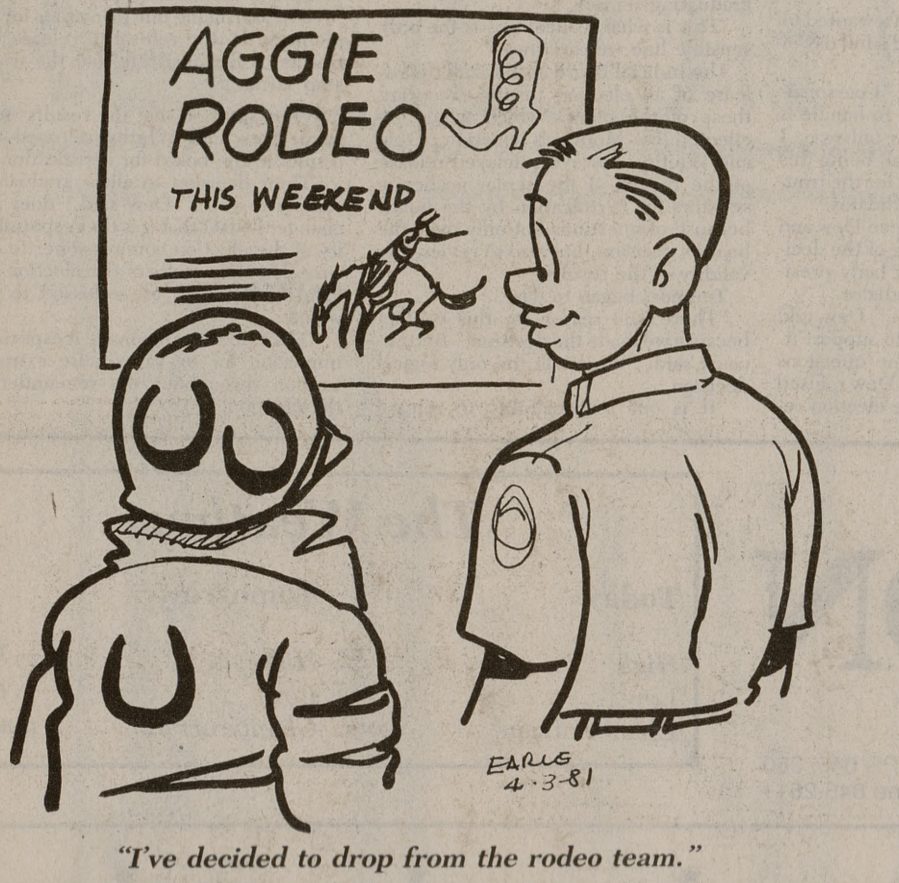


VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY
APRIL 3, 1981

Slouch By Jim Earle



It's time to fish or cut budget

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — If former Rep. Michael Kirwan, D-Ohio, were alive today, he probably would be turning over in his grave.

Kirwan talked a lot like the above sentence reads. His syntax frequently convoluted into Casey Stengel-like metaphor mixtures.

But being chairman of a House appropriations subcommittee, he had no trouble making himself understood. One point that came across loud and clear was his affinity for fish.

Fish swimming around in glass tanks effect people in diverse ways. Basically, you either dig them or you don't.

The Reagan Administration apparently doesn't.

It was revealed last week that the president's budget-cutters had drained off \$250,000 needed to keep the National Aquarium open in the coming fiscal year. In consequence, it now appears that the 108-year-old aquatic life exhibit will be

closed by the end of September.

This is the sort of economizing up with which Mike Kirwan would not have put.

Not for nothing was he known as the fish's best friend in Congress. It was his quixotic dream to adorn the capital with a new \$20 million National Fisheries Center that he envisioned as the Taj Mahal of oceanariums.

Had it ever gotten off the drawingboard, this many-splendored, three-story complex would have made the existing 60-tank facility seem like a guppy bowl by comparison.

Its, ah, high-water mark was reached in 1962. Congress authorized \$10 million for fish edifice work that year. But President Kennedy's desk — he signed the legislation within 10 days of its passage — was as far as the project got.

After a period of backing and filling, hemming and hawing and second thoughts about actually appropriating the money, the aquarium finally fell victim to President Nixon's Vietnam War moratorium on construction in the capital.

Kirwan having died in the interim, the

plans were never revived. But while he was sloshing around in Congress, the moratorium generated some of the 20th Century's most colorful debates.

This was before Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., began handing out "Golden Fleece Awards" for what he regarded as extravagant specimens of federal extravagance. Proxmire merely dubbed Kirwan's proposal the "fish folly of 1962."

The redoubtable Rep. H.R. Gross, D-Iowa, suggested that "members of the tribe might be offered an opportunity to share the swimming pool in the new million House office building."

Some lawmakers ridiculed Kirwan's proposal as a "gold-plated fish hotel" and the necessary vigilant Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., noted that it had "no relationship to national defense."

But Kirwan resisted all efforts to pull the plug.

"The family that fishes together stays together," he philosophized in his inimitable manner.

Honeymoon balloon popped by gunfire

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The Honeymoon has ended and a new legend has been born.

The gunfire that shattered the stillness of a rainy Washington Monday afternoon broke, not just four bodies, but the mood of euphoria that has buoyed the capital since the inauguration of a new president and the return of the hostages from Iran.

But it also created a new hero in Ronald Reagan, the chipper gipper who took a .22-caliber slug in his chest but walked into the emergency room on his own power and joked with anxious doctors on his way into surgery.

But the politicians no sooner learned that the president was out of danger than they started sorting out the political implications of the day's drama.

That is a process that will take some time, but one fact is so obvious it cannot be missed even in a capital that sometimes understands everything but the most important thing. What happened to Reagan on Monday is the stuff of which legends are made.

From primitive days, heroic tales have been fashioned from incidents in which brave men escape danger. That tradition has been carried intact into the presidency — from Andy Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, to Teddy Roosevelt, the hero of San Juan Hill, and Jack Kennedy on PT-109.

was the first to kid his own supposed shortcomings — his age, his hearing, his eyesight, even his grasp of issues — in a way untinged by any sympathy-seeking self-pity.

When he displayed that same wit and grace in the hours after his own life was threatened, he elevated those appealing human qualities to the level of legend. As long as people remember the hospitalized president joshing his doctors and nurses — and they will remember — no critic will be able to portray Reagan as a cruel or callous or heartless man.

Criticism of his policies will be — probably forever — separated from criticism of the man. Reagan now enjoys an aura of good will and a presumption of good motive which no president since war hero Dwight D. Eisenhower has had as a shield in the political arena.

Tragically, that arena is now a far bloodier place than it was in the innocent Eisenhower era. The fragility of our governmental structure to the assassin's bullet has been demonstrated again.

Last Saturday night, at the Gridiron dinner, where Washington correspondents entertain the politicians with satirical songs and skits, Reagan and his press secretary Jim Brady laughed uproariously when a Tip O'Neill character, dressed incongruously as a bulky bride, sang, "Honeymoon, it could last until June."

In these and other cases, the survival of the hero in conditions of imminent danger is taken as a sign of divine favor — a token that he has been saved for a reason. So much more so when the threat strikes at the president in office, from a seemingly deranged assassin, and he survives what the entire television-watching world sees could easily have been a calamity.

Ten weeks earlier, Reagan struck an unusual theme in his inaugural address, when he turned from a recital of the nation's problems to say, "We have every right to dream heroic dreams. Those who say we're in a time when there are no heroes, they just don't know where to look."

In his first weeks in office, Reagan demonstrated repeatedly a kind of personal ease and charm which not only delighted his audiences but disarmed his critics. He

It lated less than 48 hours more. Then Reagan was on his way to the hospital and Brady was lying on the sidewalk in his own blood, a bullet in his brain. The sense that was so strong in January, when the hostages came home and the new administration took office, that perhaps the frustrations and agonies of the '60s and '70s had been put behind us — that dream was over.

"Then one noon," the Tip O'Neill character sang, "I will pop the balloon. And I'll reveal that Tip O'Neill calls the Capitol tune." But in reality, the balloon was popped by the all-too-well-remembered sound of gunfire, and one man came within inches of erasing the voters' mandate.

This society, which stubbornly resists even the most modest effort to discipline its own appetite for handguns, had once again paid the price for its folly.



It's your turn Don't renovate; fix what's wrong

Editor:

As a resident of Hotard Hall, I know you might think this is just another letter complaining about the rent increase for next year. But it has generally been accepted as an eventuality that all the talking, letter writing and sign making in the world cannot change.

I would like to bring up a different aspect that most everyone (including the regents) has seemed to overlook. Right now on my floor, five out of 10 sinks are leaking or broken and have been for at least three months. It seems the only way our oft-resent work orders could do any good would be to wad them up and stuff them up the faucet to stop the drip-drip of the pseudo-Chinese water tortures. One shower head continued to spray scalding hot water to the tune of a gallon every two minutes. Over

the months, despite the many work orders sent in, thousands and thousands of gallons continued to go down the drain. Not until one of our own residents turned the water off was the flow stopped, and still there has been no one sent to make repairs.

The point I am trying to make is that if the Physical Plant personnel can't find time to do a simple job like change washers, how can they be expected to handle the complexities of an air-conditioning system. With the addition of the two new modular dormitories and the pay raise for state employees (read: less hiring of State employees), I'm afraid Hotard will be lost in the shuffle.

With regret, we've accepted the 120% hike for "improvements" that nobody wants. But, when the much hassled over conditioning breaks down in May (the only month when we could use it) and we have to wait 'til December for repairs, that's beyond tolerance.

Thank you for your consideration!

Christopher H. Meakin

PS I feel an interview with someone from the Maintenance Department to see how they are going to handle the new problems would be of interest to your readers.

Christopher H. Meakin
Tom George

Warped



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION
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