

Slouch By Jim Earle



"I think our collections for this year's United Way Drive are going to pick up. Brutus has offered his help as a collector."

Luck relied upon too heavily

In the past week, there have been two dormitory fires on the Texas A&M campus. The University was lucky — there were no injuries and damage was limited. This, unfortunately, is the heart of our fire safety problem — luck, rather than careful planning, is relied upon too heavily.

The first fire occurred in a community bathroom in Aston Hall. The room was filled with smoke but the alarms didn't sound because the bathrooms are not connected to the return-air system housing the smoke detectors.

A fire in Keathley Hall occurred Sunday. Hibachi coals were dropped down a trash chute and ignited the trash. Once again, the alarm didn't sound because the trash chute rooms are not connected to the duct alarm system.

As a resident of Keathley, I have a particular interest in Sunday's fire and feel a few questions need to be raised. For example, if the smoke from the trash chute rooms is carried out of the dorm through the roof vent, why was there a strong smell of smoke in my third-floor room?

If the smoke did come through the ducts, why wasn't a fire alarm triggered? How much smoke is needed before the alarm will sound? Do the alarms really work — after living in Keathley for two years and never having a dorm fire drill or fire that would cause the alarm to sound, I'm starting to



Denise Richter

have my doubts.

Obviously, I'm not the only person who is having doubts. Talking to University staff and administrators about fire safety is confusing at best — it's hard to find a general consensus of opinion.

The Aston Hall head resident said he doesn't think the alarm systems in his dorm have been checked. Tom Murray, the central area coordinator, said the alarm-sounding system in Keathley works, but he isn't too sure about the smoke-sensor heads. The word from the University Office of Safety and Health is that alarm systems in all campus dormitories were checked during the summer and all are in working order.

Who are we to believe?

Last spring, the first long-needed fire drills were held at Texas A&M in Davis-

Gary, Mosher and Spence halls. Paul Ry, Commons area coordinator, termed Mosher drill a "success."

But there were some problems. For example, it was discovered during the drill that the alarm bells do not ring loud enough to be heard throughout the University Safety and Health Office. Stiteler said several solutions have been proposed and his office is working on a problem.

The drill was in April — the safety is still working on the problem in September.

Are on-campus students living in fire-proofed dorms or are we living in tragedy waiting to happen?

This question may not be answered, it's too late.

One question that needs to be answered right away is: "Who is heading the campus fire safety program?"

The lack of one specific person in responsibility and answer all the questions that have arisen has caused a mass of led communications and prevented effective action from being taken.

So far, there have been no serious problems. The residents of the campus dormitories have been lucky. But, there have been two fires already this semester. I don't think we should continue to rely heavily on luck in the future.

'84 presidential hopeful earns early recognition

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — Resolutions are made to be broken, and I am about to break my resolution not to write a line about the 1984 presidential race until that calamity is upon me.

The reason is Reubin O'D. Askew, the former two-term governor of Florida and Special Trade Representative in the last 15 months of the Carter administration. Askew is interested in the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination. In the last few weeks, he has done some things that suggest he is going to approach this challenge in a way that may be characteristic for him but is unusual enough among most politicians to warrant comment.

The man is apparently going to say what he thinks and not be coy about what he is doing.

The first indication of this came in a letter Askew's attorney wrote to the Federal Election Commission in July, asking for an advisory opinion on how Askew could best handle the finances of his exploratory effort.

In recent years, the custom has grown up that when the presidential bug bites, a personal political-action committee is created, which lets the hopeful finance his travels and operations on the guise that he is going around the country helping candidates of his party.

Askew apparently disdains such legal subterfuge. In the letter, his lawyer spells out with unusual candor what the ex-governor thinks he needs to do for his own benefit: to travel and speak and meet "opinion makers" to hire polling and public relations consultants; to get briefings on the issues; to expand his correspondence; and to raise funds for these purposes and to reimburse his law firm for the secretarial and support services that have nothing to do with the practice of law.

Although there is no legal requirement that he do so, the letter says Askew "intends to file reports of all contributions and expenditures voluntarily with the commission ... and therefore wishes to insure that the specific activities which he intends to

undertake are permissible in an exploratory effort."

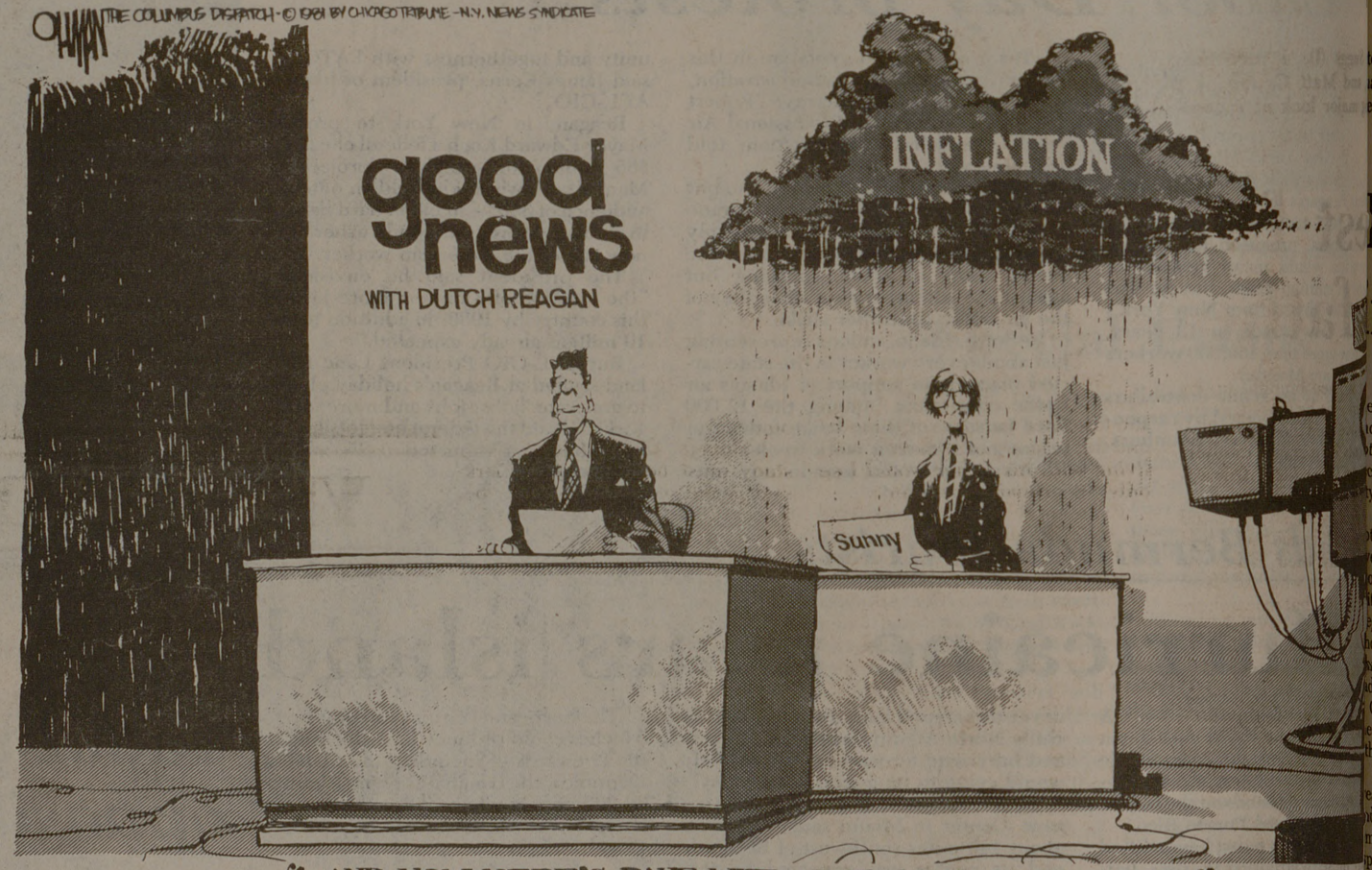
Evidence that he intends to be as candid about his policy views as he is about his activities is found in a speech he gave last month in Atlanta on the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. Time after time in the speech, Askew went out of his way to cite conditions in Florida as proof that the act is still needed.

"In my home state of Florida alone," he said, "blacks, Hispanics and other minorities represent less than 2 percent of all elected officials ... despite the fact that minorities constitute a quarter of the state population. There are no members of minority groups among the statewide elected officials in Florida. And, among the 160 members of the state legislature, there are just five blacks and only one Hispanic."

What is remarkable is that all this is coming from a Florida politician whose hopes for nomination clearly will rest, in the first instance, on his ability to win his own state's presidential primary early in 1984. I have to believe that Askew knew the words of the speech that he gave in Atlanta will undoubtedly be thrown back at him in 1984 in an effort to embarrass him with Florida voters.

But that is not out of character. In 1972, while George Wallace was running his winning campaign in the Florida primary, Askew decided to campaign vigorously against an initiative that had been placed on the Florida ballot calling for a federal anti-busing amendment. It was a cause he knew was foredoomed to failure and the stand he took in the middle of this first term in office was offensive to many of his own constituents.

Neither then nor now has Reubin Askew been much given to fudging his stands to suit the "climate of the times." That is why I decided to break my resolution to say nothing this early about the 1984 hopefuls. I will try to keep my mouth shut from now on, unless, of course, somebody else decides to do something as astonishingly straightforward.



It's your turn

Get more from A&M than a degree

Editor:

Tonight I received word that a friend and squadron mate of mine was killed when his jet exploded over the North Sea. It is a terrible tragedy that one so young should die with his life still so much in front of him. But what a tragedy it would have been for myself and others if we had not had the chance to have known him. Dennis Mason was liked by all who knew him. He was never down, always ready with a joke and a helping hand. He took friendship seriously but not himself. He studied Civil Engineering to be prepared for later life, but knew school was also for learning about people. Dennis was not alone in having some of these traits, nor unique perhaps in the sum of them, but he was as good an Aggie as I know.

Dennis being the first to die of my fish buddies in our squadron, has made me look back on our years in Aggie land. I remember the good and bad times, mostly the good. I

would like to remind each of you, especially freshmen, to make friends. Learn from others about themselves and in doing so learn about yourself. Don't spend four or more years for just a bachelors degree, but take with you a masters in life and a doctorate in being an Aggie.

Dennis would have told you these same things and more while grinning if he had met you, but don't do it for him, do it for yourself. We'll miss you Mase.

Bill Sanders
Animal Eight '75

Spirit misguided

Editor:

I appreciated the enthusiasm expressed by McInnis Hall through the display of a

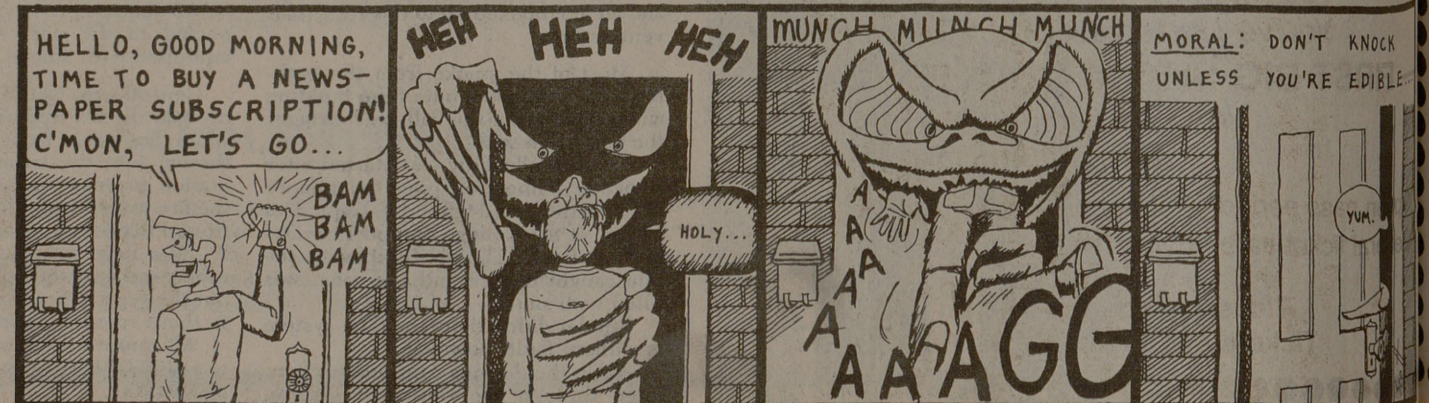
spirit banner wishing our team victory in Cal-Berkeley last Saturday night. The inspiration is needed, in general, in the Campus area where spirit banners either not present or burned where they hang by jealous and sometimes inattentive neighbors.

But, hear, hear ... "Douch the Bear" am certain that I am not the only one offended by the sign's inappropriate reference to feminine hygiene. Besides, I really want to see a "grode war" between halls to see who can create the most diverse spirit banners?

Since the freshmen are responsible for making these signs and the early semester excitement is no doubt responsible for directing their energies from time to time to the upperclassmen in every dorm should be responsible for seeing that propriety is exercised by their freshmen when making spirit banners.

Richard Hudson

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 classes within the Department of Communications.

Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

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