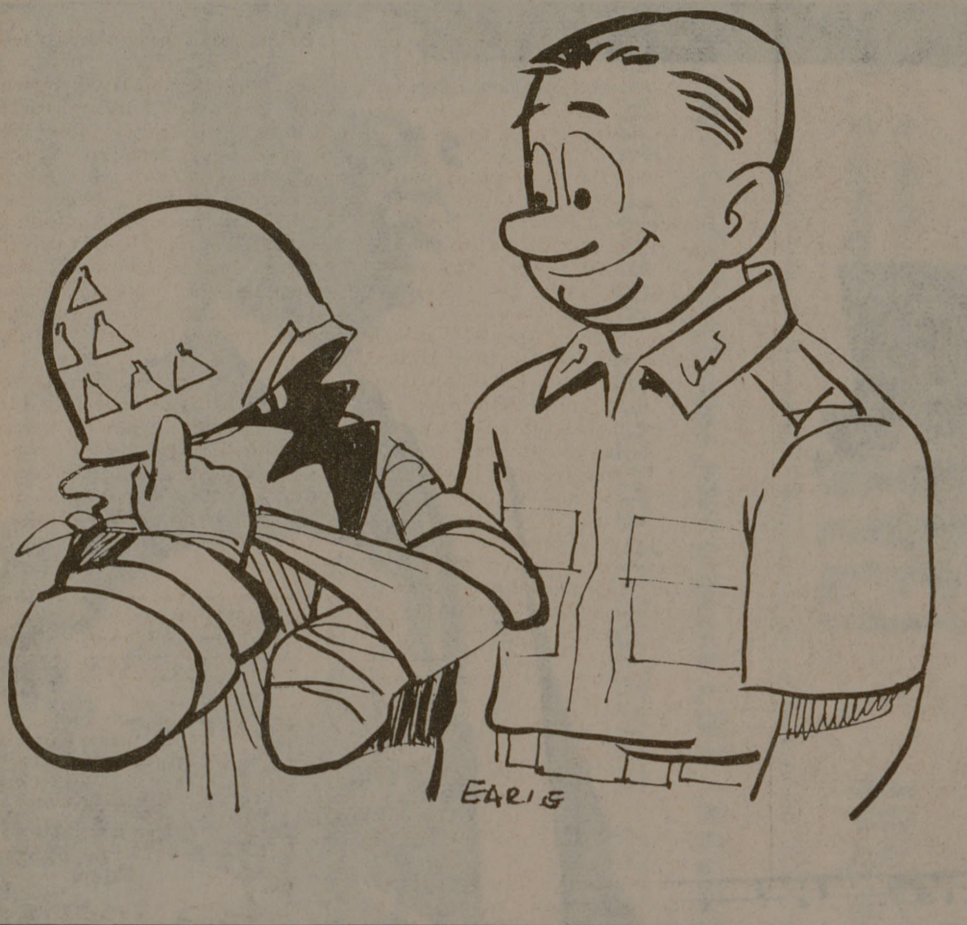


Slouch By Jim Earle



Reagan needs practice for press conferences

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — President Reagan asked reporters at his news conference last week to remember that the words they write are read all around the world and to consider whether the message they send is helpful or destructive to the nation's interests.

Whatever you think of that plea, the fact is that the most important message is the one the President himself conveys by his words and demeanor on public occasions. For the most part, those appearances have been helpful to Reagan in advancing his goals. His wit, his good nature and his rehearsed eloquence stand him in good stead, whether he is delivering a toast at a banquet, a brief political speech or a televised policy address.

But at the last two news conferences, the impression he has created has been one of a man under great strain. The comments on Capitol Hill and in embassies suggest that the tension and anxiety the President displays when answering questions about his policies are beginning to cause concern among those here and abroad who look to the White House for leadership.

That same anxiety is being expressed by members of the White House staff who have come to view each press conference as a hurdle that must be negotiated with care. They have adopted what my colleague Martin Schram accurately describes as a "damage-control" philosophy for dealing with the press conferences: Schedule them infrequently, slow down the pace of questioning by lengthy answers, and hope that Reagan gets out of them without hurting himself.

That is a defensible, if obviously defensive, strategy. The practical problem is that the President is so strained in executing it — that he undercuts the effort to build confidence in his leadership. The relaxed sense of command and self-control that he communicated so advantageously in his 1980 campaign debates and in almost every formal speech he has made as President turns into a very tentative and tense performance in the press conferences.

Explanations abound. Some say the Pres-

ident's hearing impairment forces him to strain to hear the questions and puts him on edge even before he gives his answers. His aides have tried to reduce this problem by installing an amplifier in his podium.

His critics put forward a much harsher theory: Reagan is under strain because he has such a shaky grasp of the policies for which he is formally responsible that he has a Dickens of a time remembering what it is that he is supposed to say about such-and-such a subject.

If that is right, then we are really in trouble — not just this administration but this country and the world. But before accepting that gloomy conclusion, I would like to see how Reagan would do if he were holding a press conference of some kind every week.

He did that when he was governor. But as President, he has held five news conferences in 10 months.

The Reagan we have seen at the last couple of news conferences reminds me of the uptight, unhappy Reagan of the Iowa caucus period early in 1980, when his then-manager, John P. Sears, was trying to shield him from the press and public. When Reagan campaigned infrequently, under Sears' constraints, he was a lousy campaigner — always on the defensive. When he was unleashed in New Hampshire, he was terrific.

So it is, I suspect, with the news conferences. People like my colleague Lou Cannon who covered him in California remember those gubernatorial news conferences, not as ordeals to which Reagan submitted, but as opportunities which he exploited easily to carry his message to the people.

Maybe he's lost the knack, now that he is ten years older. But my guess is that he's just not getting enough practice to feel comfortable in the news conference format. If he had a regular schedule where on alternating weeks he would have big televised news conferences and small Oval Office interviews with some of the White House regulars, my guess is that he would be better briefed by his staff on a wide range of issues, and much better prepared to discuss them.

At these prices, what were you expecting — E.F. Hutton?

By DICK WEST

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Economics is truly a living science, constantly evolving into new theories and enriching our language with new terminology.

We are all indebted to Budget Director David Stockman for pointing out some of the latest trends.

As we learned from an article about Stockman in *The Atlantic Monthly*, economics recently has progressed from the "trickle down" theory to the "supply side" theory and is now entering the "Trojan horse" era.

Sometimes, these theories modulate too fast for me to follow. Head swimming with uncomprehended commentary in the Stockman article, I got in touch with John Kenneth Turnipblood, guru of the voodoo school of economics, and requested elucidation on the Trojan horse concept.

"What sort of gratuities do you proffer to show your appreciation for interviews?" Turnipblood inquired.

"It varies," I replied, "but the going rate

is \$1.79."

Turnipblood said \$1.79 would make him feel appropriately appreciated, so we proceeded to the q. and a.

The Trojan horse theory, as Turnipblood explained it, is based on the premise that if the government increases defense spending while simultaneously cutting taxes, a balanced budget will result.

The name, as you might have surmised, was derived from a new type of weapon system the Pentagon wants to develop.

Everyone, by now, is familiar with the flap over the MX missile program. Deep down, the Pentagon had its heart set on mounting the missiles on tracks and moving them around so the Russians wouldn't know for sure where they were.

The president, however, opted for putting the first MX models in existing missile silos reinforced to make them harder to destroy through the window of vulnerability.

According to Turnipblood, yet another alternative under consideration would base the MX missiles in Trojan horses.

The bases, being mobile, could be led about from one ranch to another. They would have missiles inside, and so would not.

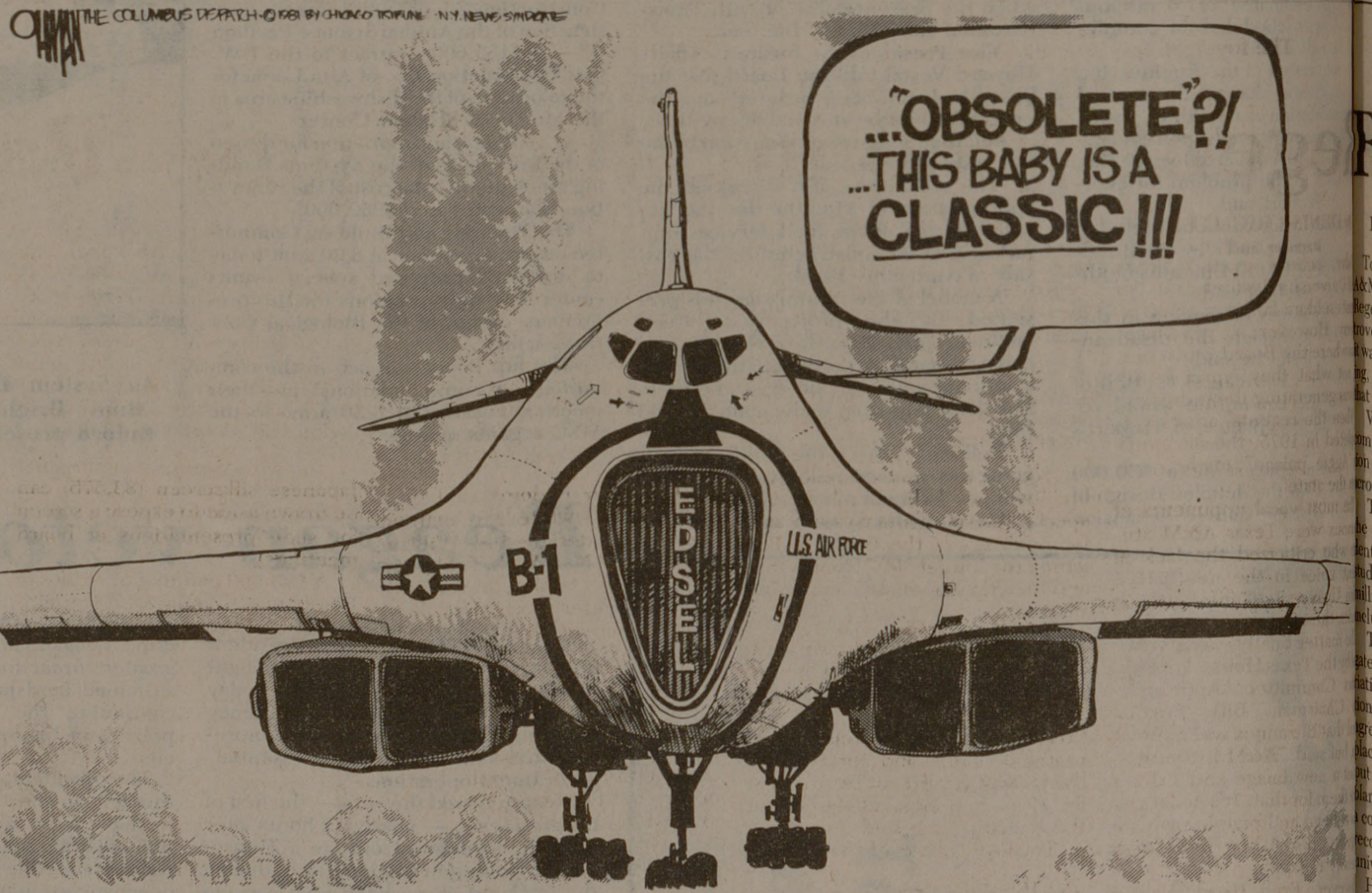
In theory, this system would fool Soviets into aiming their missiles at Trojan horses, thus weakening their "strike" capability.

"It's a beautiful compromise," Turnipblood said. "The equine nature of the system would make them more acceptable to the original states that objected to the original mode."

"How much would this system cost?" asked.

"It depends on the overrun," Turnipblood replied, "but military sources estimate a herd of Trojan horses with the capacity, coupled with tax cuts as scheduled, should be enough to pay for federal budget well in the black by FY 2024, if not sooner."

Other economists, I'm sure, will proffer holes in the Turnipblood interpretation. On balance, though, he gave about as good an interview as you can get these days for \$1.79.



It's your turn

Mail can mean a lot at Christmas

Editor:

As Christmas draws near, I have sad memories of the lonely GI's I used to see in Korea. The look on their faces as they walked away from empty mailboxes is hard to forget. Whether it's their first time away from home or if they've been in the military for a long time it's hard to be in a strange place away from friends and family for Christmas.

In order to help brighten the days of these people, a program called Armed Forces Mail Call was set up. The Battalion ran a story on it a while back. From what I've heard, the response has been small, if non-existent.

Clements Hall is going to send a box of letters to this program. I would like to invite everyone else in joining us in the worthwhile cause. Please take the short amount of time needed to cheer up these people who are serving our country. Please bring the letters and 15 cents per letter for the postage charge to Room 309 or 423 Clements or mail them to:

Armed Forces Mail Call
Box 6210
Fort Bliss, TX
79906-0210

Include your return address inside the letter. Thank you for helping us in this good cause.

Susan Murray
Fish Rep., Clements Hall

Towing unnecessary

Editor:

I would like to express my concern over the fact that the University Police department feels that one unpaid parking ticket is grounds for a car being towed off. Does the

fearless pen-wielding police department of Texas A&M University feel that one unpaid parking ticket is a serious threat to law and order? If the case were for several tickets or for tickets issued to motorists using the handicapped spaces around campus, then a possibly serious attitude might need being used.

However, a single ticket issued at 7:45 a.m. in parking lot 40 near the Duncan Intramural Fields on a Thursday does not pose a major threat to anyone except the ego of the notorious police department. I feel that the campus police often enough over extend their authority and should not be concerned considering their ability to block registration, grades, and in some cases attendance. In my opinion this shows the insecurity of the police department.

Douglas Giraud '84

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

Greeks problem at t.u.

Editor:

We are students at the University of Texas, or t.u. as we are sometimes referred to. Since our enrollment at Texas, we have become aware of a problem that concerns our university and now seems to be a topic of debate on yours. We refer to the growth and recognition of fraternities and sororities.

We have visited the Texas A&M campus and it is apparent that it is a friendly and involved campus. We understand this friendliness is about to be threatened by the addition of fraternities, and we also suggest strongly that you remain firmly against

them. One of the previous letters in Battalion mentioning the Greeks stated the place to be is off campus, but we do off campus and we are still affected by them.

It is obvious to new students at U.T. if they are not members of a fraternity or sorority then they might as well not be there. We recognize the value of organizations that promote brotherhood and involvement, and the Greeks originally meant to do just that, but they have turned out to be one of the biggest symbols of hypocrisy. The Greeks are snobbish, spoiled, over-dressed group that have things better to do than drive their loud cars and look down their noses at others who dare to be different.

We strongly urge to Ags to learn from U.T.'s mistake. Down with Greeks and with unity.

Alicia O'Brien
Melissa Hester
The University of Texas

No cheerleaders

Editor:

We, the undersigned, support the tradition that only the players, officials, and bands be allowed on Kyle Field during ball games. We feel that there should be exceptions to this tradition. The recent decision to allow the Texas cheerleaders on Kyle field this Thanksgiving downgrades the memorial to WWI dead. We do not want the Texas cheerleaders on Kyle Field.

Carl Cook
Mark Anderson

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 1,214 signatures.

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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.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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