

Texas mesquite chic will be next to strike

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Mesquite smoke, according to Gourmet magazine, imparts epicurean flavor to grilled meat.

Here, if further evidence be needed, is additional proof that my late father, who liked to brag that he was "the world's most humble Texan," was born ahead of his time.

The poor man went to his grave never knowing he had a potential fortune behind his house.

My father had enough mesquite trees in his backyard to provide enough coals to barbecue enough spareribs to satiate a city the size of Hackensack, N.J., with easily enough left over for shish kebab all around.

And he wasn't even trying to grow mesquites.

In fact, my father sent a large part of his life trying not to grow mesquites.

He regarded mesquites as a crying nuisance, as did everyone else in that part of Texas, particularly cattlemen who were trying to keep their pastures clear of the rank growth.

Mesquites in the area where I grew up had three distinguishing characteristics:

(1) Rapid growth that choked out other plant life; (2) thorns guaranteed to rip the fabric of any type of garment you might wear and (3) bean-like seeds that fell in blizzard-like flurries, requiring constant raking of the yard.

Indeed, when the definitive history of the struggle to survive in West Texas is written, it largely will be couched in terms of the struggle against mesquite trees and bushes.

Whether the mesquite is a tree or a bush depends, incidentally, on which reference work you consult. Some authorities say mesquites come in two varieties — bushy and arboreal. Others say a young mesquite may end up as either a tree or a bush, depending on the amount of water it gets.

Either way, it is futile to try to uproot one. Mesquites put down roots as far as 60 feet underground. This means there is more to them than meets the eye. Even the tallest mesquite rarely tops 50 feet above ground.

Mesquite foliage has been described as "lacy and shadeless." Amen. Particularly the latter. Anyone who has ever staggered under a mesquite seeking refuge from the Texas sun will know what I mean.

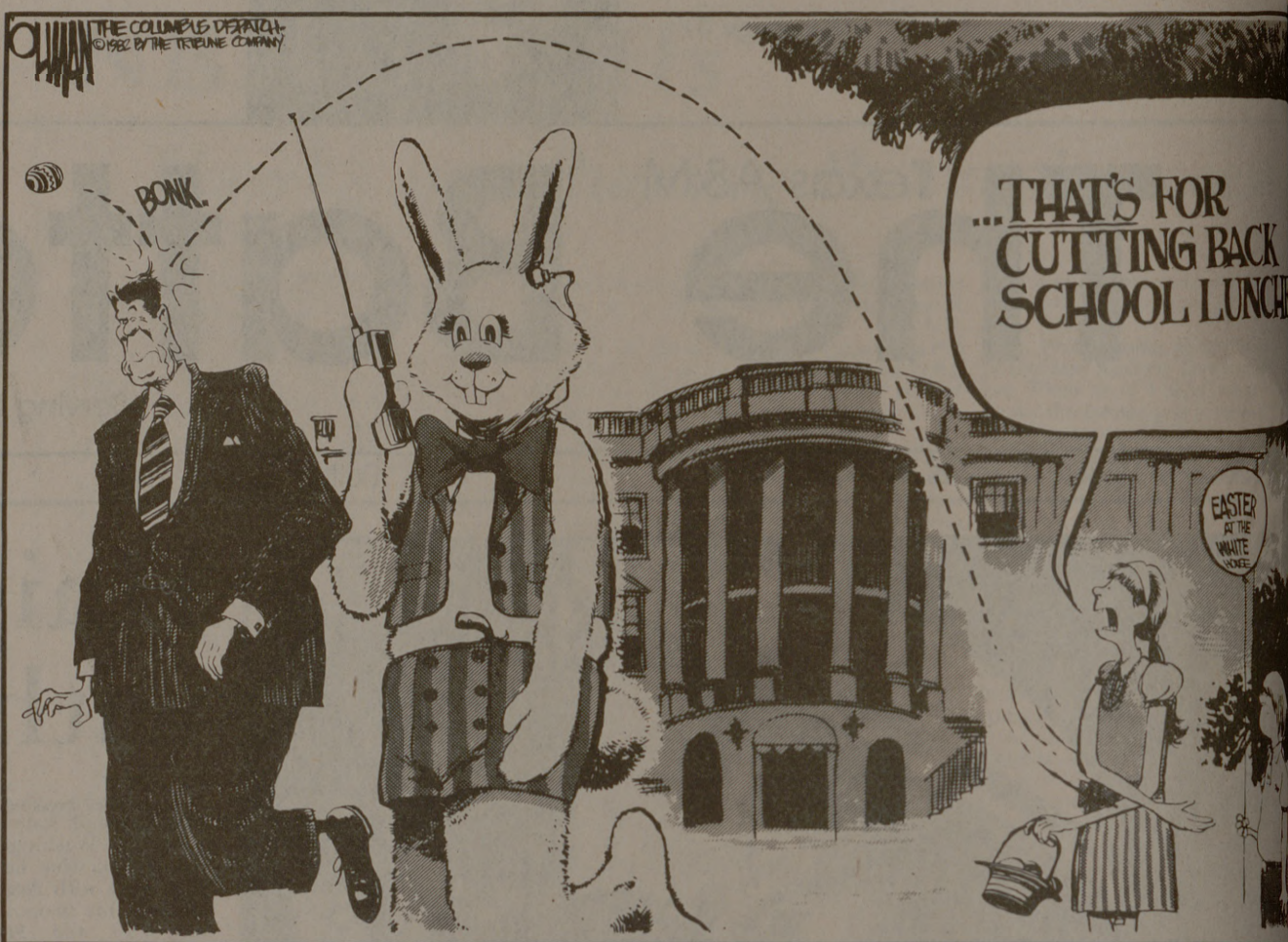
As for the rest of the treebush, mesquites have been classified as "commercially valueless" with wood fit only for "unusual furniture and trinkets."

One redeeming feature is that they will grow in places "too hot and dry for other plants. The trouble is, they also grow in places that aren't too hot and dry for other plants.

They simply crowd out the other plants, meaning that if you turn your back for a moment, only mesquites will be growing on your land.

And now Gourmet magazine tells us mesquite wood is being shipped by the truckload to New York City and other culturally deprived areas.

Too bad that taste thrill was discovered so late. Otherwise, "the world's most humble Texan" might have died a millionaire mesquite magnate.



Tuition tax credit proposal no help

by Don Phillips
United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's proposed tuition tax credit for private and parochial schools won't pass Congress this year.

In fact, his proposal was so poorly timed that he might have set back the whole issue, leaving tuition tax credits further from enactment than ever.

The first problem with the proposal is that the 97th Congress is winding down. That may sound strange on the face of it, because so little legislation has been passed this year, and the budget and all the fiscal 1983 appropriations bills lie ahead.

But mid-April in the second year of a two-year Congress is a little late to begin any new legislation. The system simply does not work that fast on such controversial issues. Hearings must be held, drafting sessions must be scheduled, floor action must take place in both houses.

The session will be shortened because this is a congressional election year, and there will be little time for anything but budget-related matters.

The second problem is that any tuition tax credit will cost a lot of money at a time when almost everyone in the country except the military is being asked to be frugal and do with less. The deficit also is soaring, and any tax credit automatically

would have to be funded from borrowed money, increasing the deficit further.

The greatest problem, of course, is that there are two distinct sides to this issue and have been since it was first brought up many years ago. Both sides have legitimate concerns, and both have substantial arguments in their favor.

President Reagan must have known the bill would have no chance when he proposed it. Its friends on Capitol Hill certainly knew, because they had decided long ago that tuition tax credits were an idea that would have to wait for better times.

They were obviously embarrassed by Reagan's proposal, partly because it forced them to tell their constituents—as gently as possible—not to get their hopes up. The long-time friends of the tuition tax credit were made reluctant villains by a man they consider a "Ronniecome-lately" in the field.

The question then becomes, why did Reagan do it?

The obvious answer is that it sounded good and it scored political points. Even better, Reagan would not have to deal with the increased deficit that his idea would bring because there was no way it would pass.

Sometimes, the obvious answer is not the right one, of course. Reagan has proved time and again that he will stubbornly take action based on principle,

even when the action is doomed to failure.

But if he was acting on principle, it is his own principle that is likely to suffer.

For example, Reagan's proposal polarized the issue in a way that has been polarized before. Although he certainly did not intend to do so, he injected the race issue more strongly into the battle.

In past years, race has been mentioned in debates over tuition tax credits. Proponents always could point to the Internal Revenue Service and say, "Don't worry. The IRS won't let any sectarian schools benefit."

However, the wings of the IRS clipped on racial matters in the Bakke University case when the tax credit was told not to deny tax-exempt status to private schools unless there was an order saying the school was guilty of discrimination.

Although this battle still is being fought out, the certainty of IRS protection is no longer there.

All this debate will take place in the chambers of the House and Senate because the issue won't get that far.

Perhaps Reagan has benefited from his proposal. The issue itself has become a song out of place, out of time.

Slouch By Jim Earle



Letters: Too many low grades for 'quality' teaching

Editor: Something is wrong with the system. According to a recent survey in the Houston Chronicle and reprinted in the Texas Aggie magazine, Texas A&M gets the highest average SAT scores out of the public universities in Texas, but is fourth lowest in average GPA in the freshman class. I believe this apparent discrepancy in ability-performance is not only present in the freshman class, but also is present in the upper levels as well. The administration seems to make too many attempts to equate low grades and quality. In the infamous words of my history professor: "It ain't necessarily so." A 50 percent to 60 percent "D" and "F" rate in classes such as ME 212 and 213, such has recently been brought to light, does not necessarily make them quality classes.

According to the article in Texas Aggie, Dr. Charles E. McCandless, Texas A&M's interim vice president for academic affairs, is not suprised. Dr. McCandless says: "We make no apology for our requirement that our students perform to their ability in keeping with our high standards. We work with the faculty to maintain such standards and I suppose that is related to what some call tough grading." Now, the vice president claims that low grades are a result of high requirements, while at the conference with the engineering deans last week, the general consensus seemed to be that low grades were a result of a high student-teacher ratio; (i.e. too many students, and not enough professors). For instance, Dr. G.R. Hopkins said: "The requirements of this course (M.E. 212) have not

changed, but that it is harder to meet them now because of the increasingly competitive nature of the engineering curriculum." At any rate, I believe that low average grades are not something to be proud of, but rather something to be worried about.

I am not at all sure that the reputation that Texas A&M has can make up for a 0.3-0.4 deficit in average GPA over some other equally reputable institutions. Low grades are just low grades, nothing more. I look at Texas A&M and see an ever increasingly frustrated student body because of the situation that exists here in teaching and grading. I work hard and I believe that I deserve some peace of mind when it comes to grades. I'm not getting it here. MIT of the south?

John R. Turner '82
Hart Hall

No long hair allowed

Editor:

You think you've heard it all, Right? Wrong. Get this: a rock bar that discriminates against long hair. No kidding! To get into the Rox-z in the Skaggs center your hair length may not exceed your collar. Why, you ask, do they have such a rule as this. Upon placing yourself in the club's management shoes you may be able to answer the question. Follow this simple two step procedure: 1) Empty your head of all thought 2) Repeat step 1. In this sublime condition it should be obvious that longhairs spend all their money on drugs therefore they have no

money to spend on booze. On the other hand, all people with short hair are frats and everybody knows frats have lots of money. Astoundingly simple, No?

And some people say business men aren't shrewd!

Jeff Gabelmann

Cycling Team says thanks

Editor:

To everyone at Texas A&M University:

The Texas A&M Cycling Team would like to thank all of the people who were so patient with their help in making the third stage of the Fifth Annual Aggie-Land Bicycle Stage Race a big success this year. We would also like to thank the people who put up with the inconvenience of our rerouting traffic around campus.

John Cotton, Race Promoter
Texas A&M Cycling Team

Who really knows salary?

Editor:

I hope I am one of the first in a probable flurry of responses to Mr. Thomas M. Rossi's letter of April 14. Mr. Rossi, where did you get the values of "\$3 million" for a football coach's salary? It seems like Coach Sherrill's salary started at "\$90,000" then went to "\$1.2 million" then to "\$2 million" and now it's "\$3 million." What causes this, cost of living

raises? Does anyone really know what Coach Sherrill makes? Does Coach Sherrill know what he makes?

Now I would like to mention something about the "cattle trails" around campus. The solution to this problem is

to put a few land mines on these trails won't be used much.

After a few people get "blown up" trails won't be used much.

David Plantation

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

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