

Slouch By Jim Earle



"It's really not that long until next Christmas, can't we just leave them up?"

Cautious speeches at the White House

by Dean Reynolds
United Press International

WASHINGTON — "Oh Lord," said Larry Speakes, "teach me to utter words that are gentle and sweet. For tomorrow, I may have to eat them."

So goes what Speakes says is the "Press Secretary's Prayer." It is one that Speakes, as deputy press secretary and principal White House spokesman, undoubtedly knows by heart.

The art of jousting with White House reporters on a daily basis is still being refined in the second year of Ronald Reagan's presidency.

Speakes is the main conduit for information the administration wants out. It is he who must deal with a sometimes angry group of reporters hungry for information.

And when the top story for 15 months has been the battle of the budget, reporters can get pretty quarrelsome.

Still, Speakes believes the relationship between the president and the press is good. "Not great, but it's good."

Speakes, who worked in the Ford White House and was also a press secretary to Sen. James Eastland, D-Miss., says the current White House press corps is "probably the best I've dealt with. They're generally fair, but they are always tough."

But the president is making Speakes job even more difficult.

Reagan's propensity to answer questions on the run or with information at variance with the facts has forced Speakes and other top White House aides to spend a lot of time thinking about how to get their message across to the public.

The president, well known for his amiability, has long felt that it just "looks bad" to walk away from a reporter who has asked him a question. Other politicians have mastered the dodge, but Reagan has always been a little too straightforward for his own good.

So the White House, in a series of decisions designed to show the president in the best possible light, has reduced access to him while appearing to increase it.

Spontaneity is on the critical list at the White House.

Gone are the days when reporters could ask Reagan a question during an Oval Office picture-taking session with some visitor. Often those exchanges elicited meaningful news that reflected Reagan's true beliefs.

Now there exist what are amusingly referred to as "impromptu" press availabilities, wherein reporters are given short notice that the president will be available to take their questions. These are to occur once a week.

They are not full-blown press conferences. And the reporters are the only ones given short notice.

Reagan gets plenty of notice. In at least two of the three he has held, the president has begun by reading a prepared statement. In one, he precluded questions on two major topics, but then went ahead and commented on the subjects anyway.

And with coaching from his aides, the president now often says one subject or another is too sensitive, or too hypothetical, or too tentative on which to comment.

"We like to set our communications agenda," Speakes acknowledges.

And with the president's popularity on the wane, it is more important than ever to see that news is properly packaged.

Speakes readily admits, "We got away with a lot last year." One legislative victory after another gave Reagan the image of a political juggernaut.

But 1982 is different. "This year legislative victories are not necessarily big news," Speakes says. "But legislative defeats, should they occur, will be big news."

The White House will continue to bank on Reagan's ability to communicate to the public through prepared speeches, Speakes says. That way the miracle of television and radio can largely bypass the reporters, bringing Reagan right into the homes of the public.

"We think there's an adequate flow of information between the president and the press," Speakes contends.

The public can be the judge.

Support your right to arm bear

For several years now, I've had a pet peeve named Spot. Spot is a gun control dog. He's a 6-foot-tall German shepherd who eats National Rifle Association officials for breakfast.

Two days ago Spot was barking at me loudly. He was mad.

"Ruff, Ruff!" Spot said.

"Yes, I saw it," I replied.

"Ruff, Ruff, Ruff!" Spot said.

"Yes, it's a real tragedy," I said.

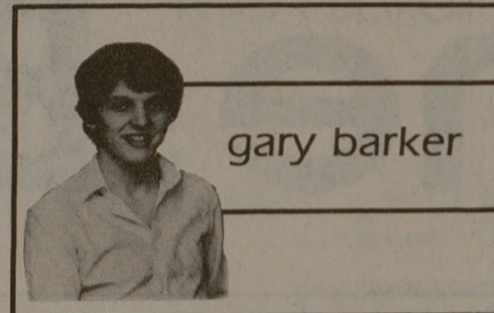
Spot was angry about an article he read in The Houston Chronicle on Tuesday. The story was about a man who shot another man with a pistol in an argument over a pool game in a bar. The killer was sentenced to 10 years in prison for the crime. The murder was one of over 400 that are committed in Houston each year — many with handguns.

"So, what should we do, Spot?" I asked.

Spot told me he wondered how many more senseless killings would occur before some sort of sensible, national gun control legislation would be enacted in this country.

"What about the NRA?" I asked.

Spot replied that they could have their rifles, provided they are strictly registered. He said there is nothing wrong with hunting game for sport if that's what you like to do. But, he said, a handgun is a



gary barker

weapon designed to kill people — it's ineffective for anything else. Some persons like to use them for target practice, but asking them to give up this sport is a small price to pay for human life, Spot said.

Spot told me there were 413 murders in Houston (population approx. 2 million) in 1976. He said although England had about 40 times the population of Houston there are only about 150 murders per year there. The difference, Spot said, is gun control.

"Well, OK," I said. "But why can't the local governments enact the legislation instead?"

Spot replied that many northeastern communities had been doing that lately.

But, in order for gun control to be effective, he said, it must be enacted on a nationwide basis or people can buy guns in Dallas and take them to Houston, D.C.

We need a complete moratorium on handgun production and strict control and registration of those already existing, he said.

"But wouldn't people find other ways to kill each other?" I asked.

Spot told me if I believed that he would use Edsel to sell me. Few people are brave enough or strong enough to person with brute force or with a knife and it's hard to carry a rifle in your car into a bar, Spot said.

"Yes, but wouldn't it be expensive and time-consuming for such a strict law — and wouldn't it put some guns out of business?" I asked.

Spot said around 20,000 persons are murdered in the United States each year — many by handguns. He said that control legislation saved 1000 of those people — or even less — it was worth it. Spot asked me if I was willing to put a price on the human life. He said he thought the family of the man killed in the bar would be willing to pay an extra dollar in taxes to support gun control.

"OK, Spot," I said. "Down boy."



Don't touch my pre-registration

To all those basically moral, All-American, "Good Ags" who can't pre-register and thus avoid the fall rush because they have \$195 in traffic tickets collecting dust at the University Police Department — take heart.

You're not alone.

Just last week I received a traffic violation notice in my P.O. Box threatening me. The notice implied that if I didn't pay up quick, I'd be scarred for life and they would take my car and my first born as payment . . . at the bottom was a small note that said I wouldn't be able to pre-register, either.

I could handle them taking my first born and maybe the car, but DEFINITELY NOT my pre-registration!!!!

(Keep in mind that the University police wait until two weeks before registration to dump tickets. After almost eight months of buying books, paying rent and board and spending \$100 a shot on all those formals, who has money to spend on parking tickets?)

So I crawled on my knees all the way to the police station Friday prepared to beg and plead for one and one half hours in a line, I finally got to see he-who-can-pardon-souls.

I was prepared to beg, equipped with eyes on the verge of tears and a pout. I shuffled in and sat down.

I stated my case, and added in a little pleading for good measure.

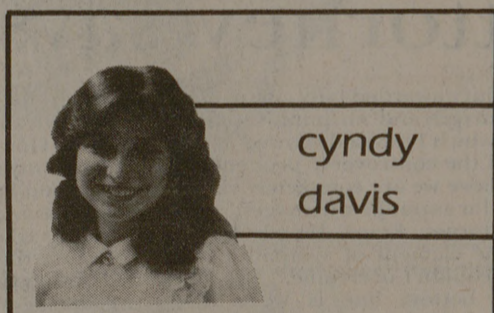
He obviously thought what I said was legitimate, but decided to give me a hard time anyway.

"Why did you let all these tickets pile up like this?" the police major asked.

I wanted to complain that there weren't enough parking spaces to go around and that I didn't feel like parking in the middle of nowhere and get mugged by some fanatic late at night.

Instead, I said: "Well, I don't know."

I guess I looked sad enough and poor enough because he cleared the charges.



cindy davis

So I can keep my baby (if I ever have one).

And I can keep my car. And I can keep my PRE-REGISTRATION!!!!

Phew! What a relief! Some say I wouldn't have had to go through all this if I would have parked where I was supposed to.

BUT — The University Police are so inconsistent in their method of ticket writing that you never know when you can park where and for how long without getting slapped with a ticket. Or three. Or four.

Sure, they have colored maps to coincide with colored parking spaces that are supposed to give you some spaces to go with red stickers, you have park SOMEWHERE!!!!!!

And most people would rather get a \$10 ticket than lose all their money and their life walking back to the Fish Parking Lot.

Or having their car towed after parking somewhere off campus.

Maybe the University Police should have a new parking policy — FREE PARKING!!!!

It would be first come, first served — everyone could park wherever they could get a space — faculty and staff included.

This way, no one would be tempted to grab one of those hundreds of parking spaces that sit so enticingly empty while students have to drive past them to the Fish Lot or somewhere equally remote.

And no one would have to worry about parking tickets . . . or the blocked registration they invoke.

the small society

by Brickman



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The Battalion

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