



Shouting questions at the President

by Art Buchwald

My wife and I were watching the evening news on television the other night, when she said, "I feel sorry for President Reagan."

"How's that?" I asked. "Every time he leaves the White House to go somewhere the reporters shout questions at him."

"Well, it's their job to ferret out news, and they hope he'll say something earth-shattering as he's leaving for Camp David."

"All he does is shout back one or two words to their questions. How much news can you ferret out of that?"

"It depends on how you phrase the questions. Suppose you shout, 'Mr. President, have you made up your mind about Dense Pack?' and he shouts back, 'No.' — then that's a news story. If he shouts back, 'Yes,' that's also a news story. If he just smiles, shrugs his shoulders, and puts his arms around Nancy, it may not be a news story, but at least it's something to go with the film."

"Why can't he go to Camp David on the weekend without us having to watch it on the evening news?"

"Because the American people should know where their president is at all times. The White House doesn't need the media covering his departure when he is going to Camp David because he's usually in a good mood. He's in an even better mood when he comes back. But you can't expect the press corps to just stand there like dummies when Reagan is getting on and off the helicopter. They owe it to the public to find out what is really on his mind. That's why they shout those questions at him."

"I think it's a very dangerous way to gather news. Half the time, with the helicopter motors whirring, he can't even hear the questions," she said.

"I don't think the president objects. Frankly, I think he prefers that type of questioning to a press conference. I know his staff does."

"But suppose someone yells a question and he says 'Yes' instead of 'No.' Isn't that scary?"

"Not really. Because if he gives the wrong answer, the press secretary can always say he didn't understand the question. What you have to realize is that Ronald Reagan, before he went into politics, attended an awful lot of movie premieres, so he's used to reporters shouting at him. He's an old pro when it comes to running a press gauntlet. Look at the way he waves his arm as he approaches the helicopter. He's a natural when it comes to saying goodbye."

"But the TV networks show the same scene every weekend. They could probably use stock footage from their files and save a lot of money."

"You don't understand how the White House communications people work. This is what is known as a photo opportunity. It shows off the president at his best. He's usually wearing a cowboy outfit and boots and he doesn't look as if he has a care in the world. That's the image of Ronald Reagan they want to project. And frankly I believe that's the image the American people want to see. Would you feel any better if he came out of the White House to board the helicopter scowling and refusing to talk to anyone?"

"I guess not," she admitted. "But I don't know why the networks can't just say he went to Camp David and leave it at that."

"That's okay for the print people. But the electronic media can't just say it. They have to have the pictures to go along with the story. If they showed Sam Donaldson or Leslie Stahl or Chris Wallace standing in front of a darkened White House saying, 'The president is not here tonight,' you'd be worried sick."

"Maybe you're right. What are they yelling at him now?"

"They want to know if he's going to fire Ann Gorsuch of the EPA."

"Does the press really expect him to answer that when he's leaving for Camp David?"

"Not really. But if you have to stand out in the cold for an hour, it's worth a try."

Result of inappropriate behavior

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

One might expect that a discharged government employee, accused of lying to one congressional committee, would at least appear before another. But for Rita M. Lavelle, the matter wasn't so simple.

Risking a contempt-of-Congress charge last Thursday, the 35-year-old former chief of hazardous-waste programs for the Environmental Protection Agency chose to leave empty the witness chair before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Chairman John Dingell (D-Mich.) had subpoenaed Lavelle Feb. 15 to hear her explanation for evidence of conflict-of-interest and spying on co-workers in the routine execution of her duties.

While her absence clearly raised more questions than answers, Lavelle may have had an easy explanation. At the time of the hearing, Lavelle hadn't decided whether to take personal responsibility for EPA miscues or to pass the buck to someone higher in the administration.

Lavelle has spent the last two weeks in seclusion sorting out her options. Under further questioning by Congress, she may find it impossible to preserve her reputation and that of the administration.

"I had a heck of a career ahead of me

and now I have nothing," Lavelle told us by telephone early last week.

Her dilemma has only been complicated by the White House's recent hands-off treatment. After 14 years of living and breathing like a Reaganite, she had never expected to become persona non grata at the White House.

Indeed, Lavelle and presidential counselor Edwin Meese go way back. Upon graduation from Oakland, California's, Holy Name College in 1969, Lavelle landed her first job with then-governor Reagan's research staff (she'd interned there during previous summers). Her boss, Meese, had her prepare briefing papers for the governor and then recommended her for a position with California's Department of Consumer Affairs.

"Rita was a real workaholic and a dedicated Reaganite," said a former colleague in the governor's office. Her after-hours routine included regular commutes to Berkeley for graduate chemistry classes at the University of California. Leaving government with the Reagans in 1974, she remained active in Sacramento Republican circles until entering the private sector in 1976.

Work for various chemical companies kept her happy until February of last year, when Reagan nominated her to fill the empty hazardous-waste job at EPA.

"Ed Meese didn't get me that job," Lavelle insisted. "I was qualified professionally and politically. But obviously my relationship with Meese didn't help."

"Everyone on the political side of the White House knew of me and my record in private industry," she added. So, when word came first that Meese "barely knew her" and then that the president had fired her, Lavelle said, though she added, "he called me afterwards to say he was sorry..."

As for her EPA performance, Lavelle insists that she never was soft on the chemical companies and ever more vehemently denounces those who accused her of taking orders from the White House. "Ed Meese had enough to do worrying about me," she said. "The program, and I made the decision to only spoke to his office when I had to."

But what Lavelle may have considered appropriate behavior at EPA is a serious liability in the eyes of White House operatives. She could damage her reputation and former supervisors with her money. The alternative, however, Lavelle to discount her year at EPA as ineffective.

"It's tough to work very hard for something all of your life and then find it meaningless," she said.



Letters: Parental notification law

Editor:

I am a concerned freshman who would like to respond to the Feb. 10 article on the parental notification law, and in particular, to the letter written by Danette Heren in the Feb. 22 issue of The Battalion.

This young lady has obviously been misinformed about teenage sex. She contends in her article that "countless minors are sexually active only because birth control devices are so easily and secretly available." I find this state highly ignorant for one simple reason. Most teens in high school neglect to use any form of contraception at all because appealing to a parent for it would tend to put them in an embarrassing situation.

Toward the end of Danette's letter she writes, "We need to open our eyes and see that we could actually help many teen-agers of a way out of the peer pressure to have sex." When reading this particular statement, I tend to find her assertions increasingly more humorous. Her obvious inept, naive attitude towards sexual relations is evident.

Granted, there is a considerable amount of peer pressure among teens "to score", but if it wasn't a natural, rewarding experience, I should think it wouldn't be performed again. Referring back to her statement concerning "opening our eyes", I can only say this: If sex wasn't a prevalent part of everyday life, there would be no tight designer jeans or soap operas.

The most important point of my letter is that if teens know their parents will be notified of their obtaining contraception, they would neglect to use it at all and the teenage pregnancy rate will climb dramatically.

This law is not the answer. Perhaps the most humorous comment of all is Danette's claim that "sexually active minors are the exception and not the rule." I'm very sorry Danette, but you've obviously "missed the boat." On the contrary, the majority are those who are sexually active.

And finally she concludes by saying: "Morality has to be enforced for their sakes." This is one of her misconceptions; morality cannot be enforced by anyone, but moreover, has to be taught starting in the home, and then exercised under the free will of the individual. Danette, your argument was obviously hastily written, and therefore lacks logical approach. I agree, teen pregnancy must be curbed, but parental notification will only aggravate, not solve the situation.

Steve Patti
1501 Hwy. 30

Recipes needed

Editor:

The writer Calvin Trillin has described a popular affliction called "Hometown Food Nostalgia" which results in millions of pounds of sausage, cheese, candy and other goodies crisscrossing the country every year in search of desperate expatriates. The theory was developed by a friend of Trillin's as he stood in the post-office line, holding a package of Kansas City's famed Wolferman's English muffins that he was about to send to his son in Virginia.

We are two willing victims of town Food Nostalgia and confess time allegiances to such special foods as the creamy caramels of the nuns of Our Lady of the Abbey in Dubuque, Iowa; the chips to chips fried in pure lard from bach's in Womelsdorf, Pa. and Common Crackers from the Country Store in Rockingham, Va.

We think others would like about America's time-honored made at firms where quality wavered, so we are compiling of America's best-loved foods to be published in 1984 by a publishing house. However, we help to make sure your state is represented.

If you could let us know about duct and the address and number of where it's produced as a few words about why you love it — we would be extremely Please drop a note to either of addresses below.

We thank you and so do our readers who long to know about like Lasser's old-fashioned from Chicago, It's Ice cream San Francisco and Wahoo the OK Market in Wahoo, Neb.

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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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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 and 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, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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