

# opinion

## Robots don't wear sneakers

by Art Buchwald

Widget was very excited and told me to come over to his sneaker factory right away. "I just hired my first robot system, and I want you to see it."

The gate to the factory was closed, but when I drove up to it a voice, almost human, said: "Can I help you?"

"I'm here to see Mr. Widget," and I gave my name.

In 10 seconds the voice responded: "You may drive to the main building and park in the visitor's slot number two."

Widget was waiting at the door, all smiles. He put a plastic card into a slot, a door opened, and we walked into his factory. There wasn't a human being in sight, but sneakers were flying off the assembly line and being stuffed into boxes.

"IT'S PRETTY NOISY," I said.

"DOESN'T BOTHER THE ROBOTS," Widget yelled. "THEY DON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MACHINE NOISE AND MUZAK."

We went up some stairs to a glass-enclosed booth.

When Widget shut the door he said, "I want you to meet my Master Robot, Turnbull. He is programmed to program the robots on the floor."

Turnbill gave me a steely look and reluctantly put out his arm which I shook.

"How many sneakers did we make today, Turnbull?" Widget asked.

Turnbill's lights blinked, and deep voice said, "12,890."

Widget rubbed his hands. "I used to make that many in a week. And I had to pay overtime for three shifts. Now I can manufacture the same number in a day, and I don't even have to worry about the robots taking coffee breaks. No social security, no health care payments, no pensions," Widget said, patting Turnbull's back. "And every one of my robots is tax-deductible, which is more than I could say for my ex-workers."

Turnbill started spitting out a readout. "Glitch on shoelace hole maker, third robot malfunctioning on line one."

Widget said: "It would have taken me a month to find out who was screwing up my shoelace holes if I had a human being on the line. Now I know in a matter of seconds."

"What will you do?"

"We'll dump him, and replace him with a robot who can do the job. The sneaker union would never allow me to fire anybody, no matter how bad the person was screwing up my shoes. Nice work, Turnbull. I'm going to make you a vice president."

"Thank you, sir," Turnbull's voice synthesizer said. "Any decision on an assistant microprocessor to help me in packaging?"

"I'm taking it up with the board next week, Turnbull. As I told you, the board has ordered me to put a freeze on buying new microprocessors."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"We're making more sneakers than we ever made before. But we can't seem to sell them."

"Maybe the reason is that robots don't wear sneakers."

"What does that mean?"

"Well, you've laid off your workers and now they don't have money to buy sneakers."

"There are lots of workers in other factories that need sneakers."

"Yes, but they're being replaced by robots as well. Robots are great for what they do, but they're lousy consumers."

Widget looked over at Turnbull nervously. "Don't talk so loud," he whispered to me.

"I don't care," I said.

"This country's success was based on the fact that the people who made our products could afford to buy them. You've replaced your workers with robots and you're saving a fortune in salaries, but you're now up to your ears in sneakers."

"But if I don't have robots making my sneakers, I can't afford to compete with the sneakers that are being imported from abroad," Widget said tearfully. "What should I do?"

"Why don't you ask Turnbull?"

Widget hit several buttons on Turnbull's head.

Turnbill blinked several times and then said, "I'm sorry, I'm in production — not sales."

## Slouch By Jim Earle



"I want to explain why I've been absent the last two weeks, and why I haven't been turning in my work, and why I didn't take two make-up tests; but most of all I want to talk about my chances of making a B this semester if I finish strong."

## Struggling for power at the White House

by Helen Thomas  
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The pulls for the political heart and soul of President Reagan are often highlighted by the feuding among his top aides.

The troika of top aides, including chief of staff James Baker, deputy chief Michael Deaver and counselor Edwin Meese seemed to be content with collective leadership at the outset of the Reagan administration.

But soon the different styles of Baker and Meese came into focus, and speculation centered on who was on top; who had the president's ear.

Baker was in charge of domestic policy and Meese was to oversee foreign policy — with no broad experience in that field.

In places like the White House, jockeying for power and more power is not unusual. Many fall by the wayside in the struggle.

However, one veteran observer said: "I've never seen it this bad before."

The Baker and Meese split became apparent in the summer of 1981 when Meese, who was overseeing foreign policy, did not think it was important to wake up the president when U.S. planes shot down two Libyan jets over Mediterranean waters.

Meese also was away from the White House on speechmaking trips that kept him out of touch. At that time, turf battles began to emerge between Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Richard Allen, the national security affairs adviser. Haig also feuded with Baker, passing the word that he thought Baker was conducting a "guerrilla campaign" against him.

Haig's complaints became too much for Reagan. So he had to go, but he is still smarting from his downfall.

Allen fell by the wayside for other reasons.

The rift between Baker and Meese dramatized when they gave up their breakfast sessions and decided to meet only as needed. They each have access to the Oval Office, and where it counts. But their differences are barely hidden.

Now comes national security adviser William Clark, who is still equal power and equal access to Reagan.

Clark and Baker have split on a number of issues, particularly on how to deal with Congress on controversial administration proposals. Clark, like Deaver, Secretary Caspar Weinberger, went to the mat on the hard-line issues as a 10 percent increase in defense spending.

Baker, who is more of a Washington pro, seeks to moderate and to compromise so that the administration will be able to achieve bipartisan support. Last in the case of the 1984 budget, he has been waging a losing battle.

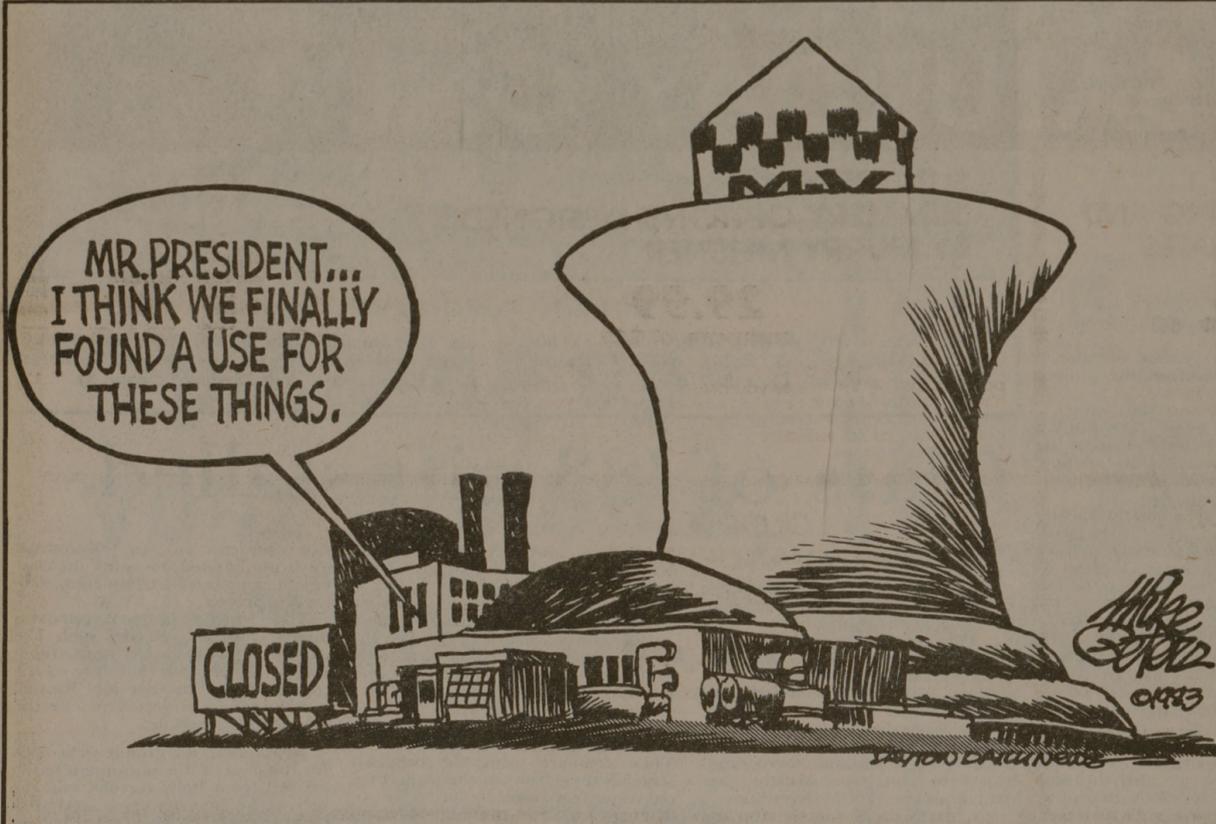
Clark and Meese have been associated with Reagan since his California gubernatorial days. They made the long with the president to the White House and they brought with them the conservative ideology that they believe is representative of Reagan.

They also stay in touch with conservative groups who have been out for the president's scalp since he joined the team. Baker was Vice President George Bush's campaign manager and represents the more middle-of-the-road members of Republicans who annoy the president.

"This too shall pass" is the way Clark feels about being on target.

Reagan remains above the fray, hoping this too will pass.

When asked why he was kept in the dark about intramural feuding among his key aides, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said: "Who said he



## Letters: Central American situation

**Editor:**  
RE: Letter to the Battalion, "Reagan and El Salvador" of April 26:  
The authors of this letter made allusions to the 'domino theory' and the 'red scare' in reference to El Salvador, which demonstrated the authors' 50s mentality. Moreover, such talk in relation to El Salvador shows that the authors of this letter have failed to realize the full scope of the

situation in Central America.  
First, that the Salvadorian guerillas are Soviet-supported is a debatable issue. Not a single photograph exists of a Salvadorian guerilla with a Russian-made gun. Instead, they carry American-made guns captured from government forces. The Reagan administration has failed to support the idea that Salvadorian rebels are Soviet-supported.  
Second, that the 1.5 million people who live in El Salvador are undemocratically and horribly repressed by a fascist, military, American-supported government is undoubtedly by people who have studied the situation. Recent "reforms" are nothing but cosmetic, unreal changes which allow conservative, pro-corporate U.S. interests to continue to exert its influence in banana republics like El Salvador.  
Finally, without going into the detail which this issue deserves, the El Salvadorian regime has a history of immoral, profit-motivated, undemocratic, oppressive and repressive tendencies to such an extent as has never been exceeded. How can Reagan apologists stand aghast at the supposed oppression in Poland while ignoring the atrocities committed in El Salvador, paid for with taxpayer's money. How can socio-politically aware Americans allow more money to be spent in El Salvador while cutting social welfare programs which benefit the American people?

## A&M conservatism

**Editor:**  
In Tuesday's Battalion, Joe Jordan said that conservatism is a weakness of Texas A&M. I wonder Joe if you have seen the report released in Washington yesterday that details what liberalism has done for our public school system? Is that what you want for A&M?  
Texas A&M is a great University because Aggies have historically believed in the principles set down by great men like Jefferson, Franklin and Washington (all conservatives). If we Aggies allow people like Joe Jordan to turn A&M into a "liberal institution" patterned on the beliefs of scum like Teddy Kennedy, then we'll deserve the mediocrity that will ensue.

Richard H. Fosberg '78

**Berry's World**  
**ROCKY XVI**  
"I still like 'Rocky I' best!"  
Gregory A. Graybill  
Graduate Student

## Howdy

**Editor:**  
The "Howdy" tradition is now dead — Shall we hold Silver Taps for it?

Cathy Carswell '83

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