

opinion

Leisure time shouldn't be wasted

The crisis of the 80s is not nuclear war, the Carter briefing books, or even Chuck and Di's marital status. No. It's the crisis of leisure time: what to do when there's nothing to do. This condition is even worse when you're broke, which seems to be a perpetual state for college students.

Little money, lots of time and not a thing to do — that's the chorus of the leisure time blues.

Speed up the tempo, change a few words, raise it an octave — it's no longer a dirge. (So we're budding poets. Right. Nip it in the bud.)

Writing poetry was just one suggestion we received when we asked other Battalion staffers for a list of fun, cheap things to do.

The first ideas that came to mind were immediately dismissed as too mundane: reading, sleeping, working crosswords and so on.

One incurable romantic suggested a walk in the park, but we already thought of that. It falls under the walking/jogging category — sort of the parks department of the College of Walking and Jogging.

And suggestions from cartoonist Scott McCullar immediately were dismissed as too bizarre: counting bird droppings,



kathleen hart
bob mcglohon

scraping up dead bugs, reading roommates' diaries, ad nauseum. Scott said the heat of summer has him "listless."

Other ideas included watching members of the opposite sex, talking on the telephone, cleaning closets desks or cars, writing letters (or poems, or stories), playing the guitar and washing the dog/cat/parakeet/gerbil.

But after a hard day of sorting "dirty laundry," journalistic imaginations can go limp.

Persevering, we put on our college-sized thinking caps and came up with

what we think are novel ideas: flying a kite, juggling, dancing to the radio, listening to birds, cutting coupons, reading the comics at 7-11, practicing putting, making paper-clip chains or paper airplanes, et cetera. (So maybe they aren't all that novel. Can you do better? If so, keep it to yourself.)

One favorite activity of ours is people watching. Not the lust inspired guy/girl watching, but plain ol' people watching — an art that's rapidly dying out.

Go down to the mall, the MSC, or some other public herding area, and just

watch — walks, mannerisms, even clothes. See the lady with the orange hair and fake leopard-skin dress that's cut down to here and up to there? Or how about the walking family feud over by the candy store: "Gummy bears, Mommy, Gummy bears." "Daddy, can I have a bunch of those? and those? and those?" "MUTHEER." "Puhleeze?" "NO!"

And then there's thinking. You know, just sitting and exercising the ol' cerebrum — sans calculators, computers or video games. In this age of electronically-fed mush from sources such as your handy-dandy "boob tube," brain exercises have become a challenge, yes, even a rarity. In stretching our imaginations to come up with this list, television was not considered. How could it be, when in today's commercial TV market, "Gilligan's Island" would be considered too intellectual. We can see it now: "Mr. T's Island."

What we can't see is any excuse for being bored. There are as many things to do as there are people to think of them. The list is endless.

However, if you're really desperate for cheap, fun things to do, as a last resort you can sit around and make up lists of cheap, fun things to do.

Then again, maybe not.

Talking trees only first sign of conspiracy

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Scientific information that trees apparently communicate with each other certainly is no surprise to me.

I had suspected as much ever since the 1980 presidential campaign. Ronald Reagan, then a candidate, pointed to trees as a leading cause of pollution. How come you never see trees being charged with violating environmental Protection Agency regulations?

Could it be that Reagan, once in the White House, became less diligent in anti-pollution pursuits? That seems likely. A more probable explanation is that trees are able to pass the word whenever an EPA agent is lurking and thus have time to clean up the mess. "Cheeze it, the feds," the trees whisper to each other. And they rattle their leaves in alarm. Or some signal.

According to two ecologists who've dived arboreal communication, signs of impending danger may be detected by a chemical substance released during an attack by caterpillars, worms and other insect defoliators. Neighboring trees can tell from the airborne alarms that predators are on the prowl. So they bolster their defenses to minimize the damage.

I am convinced that trees are the means the only plants that have the capacity. Further research undoubtedly would show that even common

Further research undoubtedly would show that even common lawn weeds are capable of alerting each other to any threat that may be looming.

weeds are capable of alerting each other to any threat that may be looming, grass, for example.

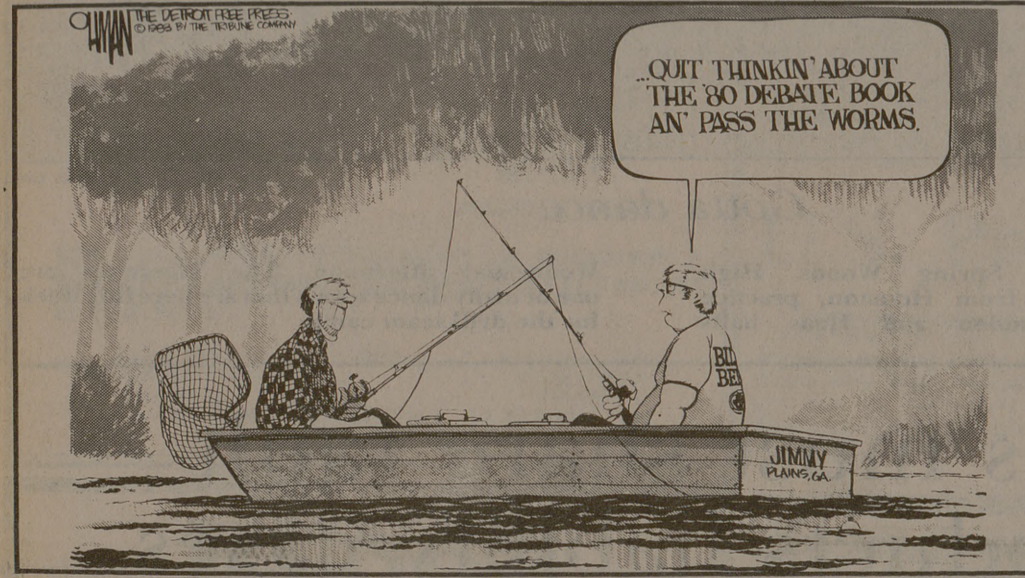
All the evidence I have gathered communicating crabgrass is entirely unsubstantial, I'll concede. I have conducted no scientific experiments whether the crabgrass in my lawn is warned whenever I load up the spreader with an anti-crabgrass formula. Nonetheless, my attempts to rid the lawn of crabgrass have been negative. I suggest that the intended victims of crabgrass were tipped off. It looks like a side job to me.

There just is no other plausible explanation for the way the crabgrass is able to override the element of surprise. By "element of surprise," I mean getting out the lawn spreader in the winter when anti-crabgrass applications are expected.

I'm talking about applying crabgrass killers in the dead of winter when the lawn is covered with snow. The crabgrass couldn't possibly anticipate the spreader when a snow shovel is indicated. But suppose the dandelions that persevere year after year — lions that not even crabgrass can out — saw me coming. I can hear now, "Dandelions to crabgrass. Lions to crabgrass. Now hear this: spreader approaching at 2 o'clock. A Red Alert. Repeat — This is a Red Alert. All hands institute survival immediately."

Whereupon the crabgrass battles hatches, or whatever crabgrass does to make itself impervious.

If, of course, the spreader is with anti-dandelion formula, the grass returns the favor.



The Battalion

USPS 045 360
Member of Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

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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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Columns and guest editorials also are 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 (409) 845-2611.

The Battalion is published Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during both Texas A&M regular summer sessions, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$55 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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Horsehockey to horseshoes

Neighbors' game not a thrill

I used to like playing horseshoes. Not anymore.

Thanks to some wonderful neighbors in our apartment complex who seem to adore the game, I've become an avid hater of the sport and the u-shaped iron "game pieces."

It's not so much that I mind the fact that these guys have totally torn up the grass in front of my window, or that they sit outside until 2 a.m. playing with their radio blaring at 3,000 decibels or even the fact that they drink oodles of beer and become disgustingly obnoxious. (Well, maybe it does bother me.)

My main complaint is that the owner of the apartment complex is considering sanding in the area (in front of my bedroom window) that has already been destroyed to form a permanent horseshoe playing ground.

Does anyone know where I can buy an iron umbrella so I won't be assaulted by flying horseshoes when I walk out my front door?

Another thing that bothers me is that these neighbors don't seem to care that they are tearing up the yard, disturbing



beverly hamilton

the tenants or endangering children who often pass by their playing area.

And to top that off, the management of the apartment complex seem to like the idea of tenants playing horseshoes. By the way, they didn't respond to my roommate's complaint about the noise or the mutilated yard.

Speechwriter, reporter leaving White House

by Helen Thomas

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Backstairs at the White House:

The White House is losing its top speechwriter, Aram Bakshian, in September.

Bakshian will move on to write a column for The Washington Times.

A strong conservative, he was a speechwriter for former President Richard Nixon, and a strong Nixon defender in the past.

He has supervised most of the major speeches Reagan has made in the White House.

His will be an opinion column, following in the footsteps of other conservative speechwriters, including William Safire and Pat Buchanan.

Nothing irritates President Reagan more than to be called "a rich man's president."

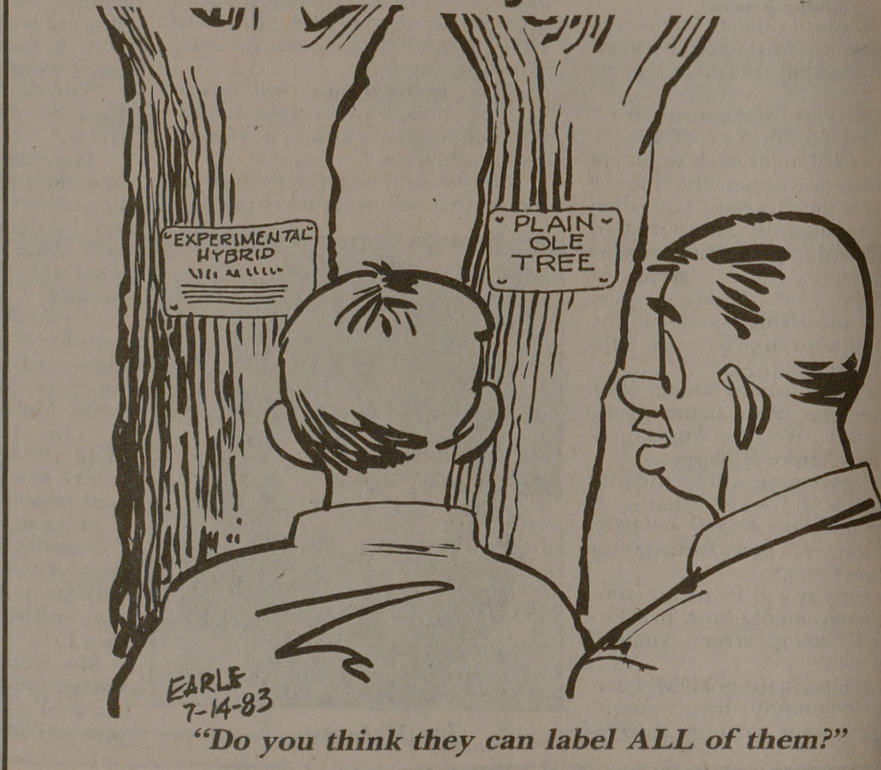
He says he remembers the Great Depression too well for that.

"Someday let me give you my mother's recipe for oatmeal," he said. "I thought it was a luxury."

But there is no question that the "fairness" issue is troubling the White House and the perception in the polls that the president favors the rich over the poor.

UPI White House correspondent Don Davis has left the wire service after 18 years to try his hand at fiction. Davis wrote a farewell column, telling it like it is for reporters. Somehow, his plans to see the president to say goodbye went awry. But Davis is getting bids on the lecture circuit to speak on White House reporting.

Slouch By Jim Earle



EARLE
7-14-83

"Do you think they can label ALL of them?"