

opinion

Dog days of summer everything but boring

by Clay F. Richards
United Press International

WASHINGTON — These are the dog days of summer when politicians are supposed to retire to Martha's Vineyard, reporters to the Delaware beaches and the president to California and nothing is supposed to happen.

The summer before a presidential campaign is traditionally everyone's chance for a final rest before the non-stop grind of caucuses, primaries, conventions and elections.

But the summer of 1983 is breaking tradition.

The closest the Democrats got to Cape Cod was Boston, where the AFL-CIO decided to move its first endorsement of a

presidential candidate up to October instead of December.

The seemingly small change in labor's timetable was a potential \$20 million bonanza for Walter Mondale at a time when he seemed to be slipping just a little from his frontrunner's status.

Labor's endorsement will bring with it hundreds, if not thousands of delegates to the winner. In 1980, the National Education Association had more than 400 delegates who could have swung the nomination to Edward Kennedy if they had not stayed loyal to President Carter because he had created a Department of Education. The AFL-CIO endorsement is more significant than that.

In the dog days of the summer of 1983 the president did not get to California

early enough. He stopped off first at a convention of businesswomen and told them if it weren't for them, men would still be living in caves, wearing skin suits.

The summer before a presidential campaign traditionally is everyone's chance for a final rest before the non-stop grind of caucuses, primaries, conventions and elections.

The working women were not impressed with his compliments about their domestic abilities, and it is likely that the next round of polls will show the presi-

dent's standing among women will slip even farther.

And now Reagan will interrupt his summer vacation at the end of the month to address a Republican women's conference in San Diego, where he will try to repair some of the damage.

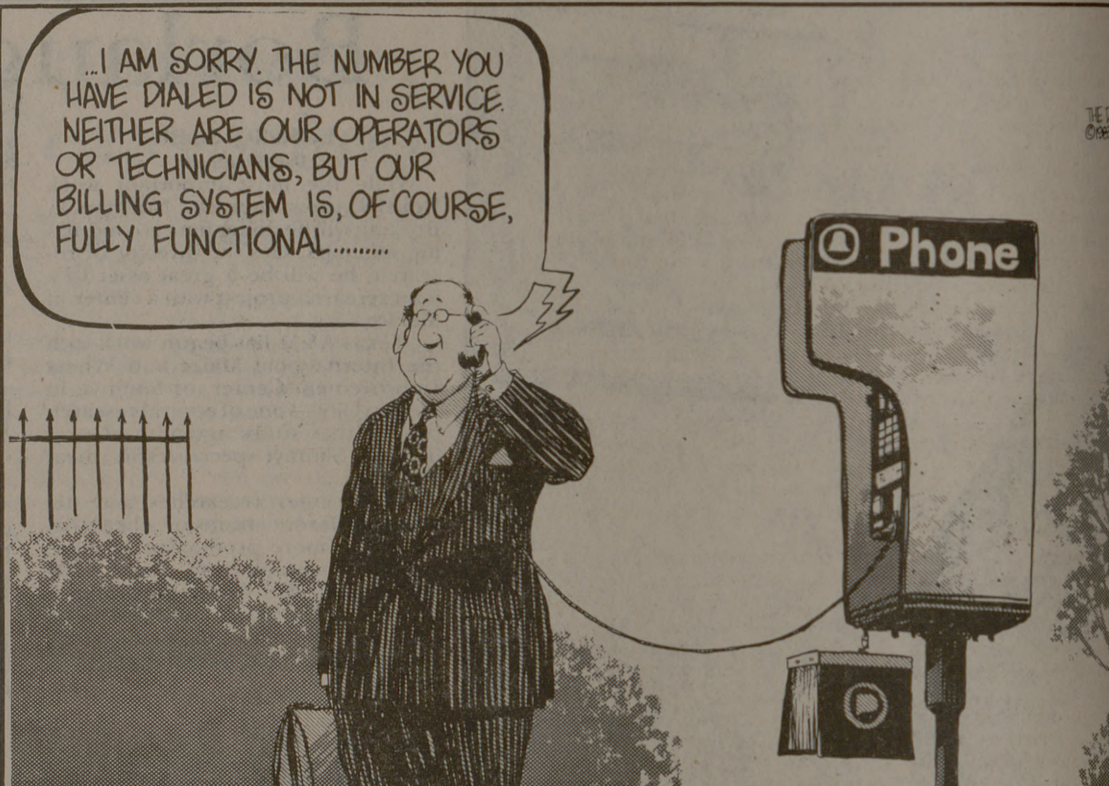
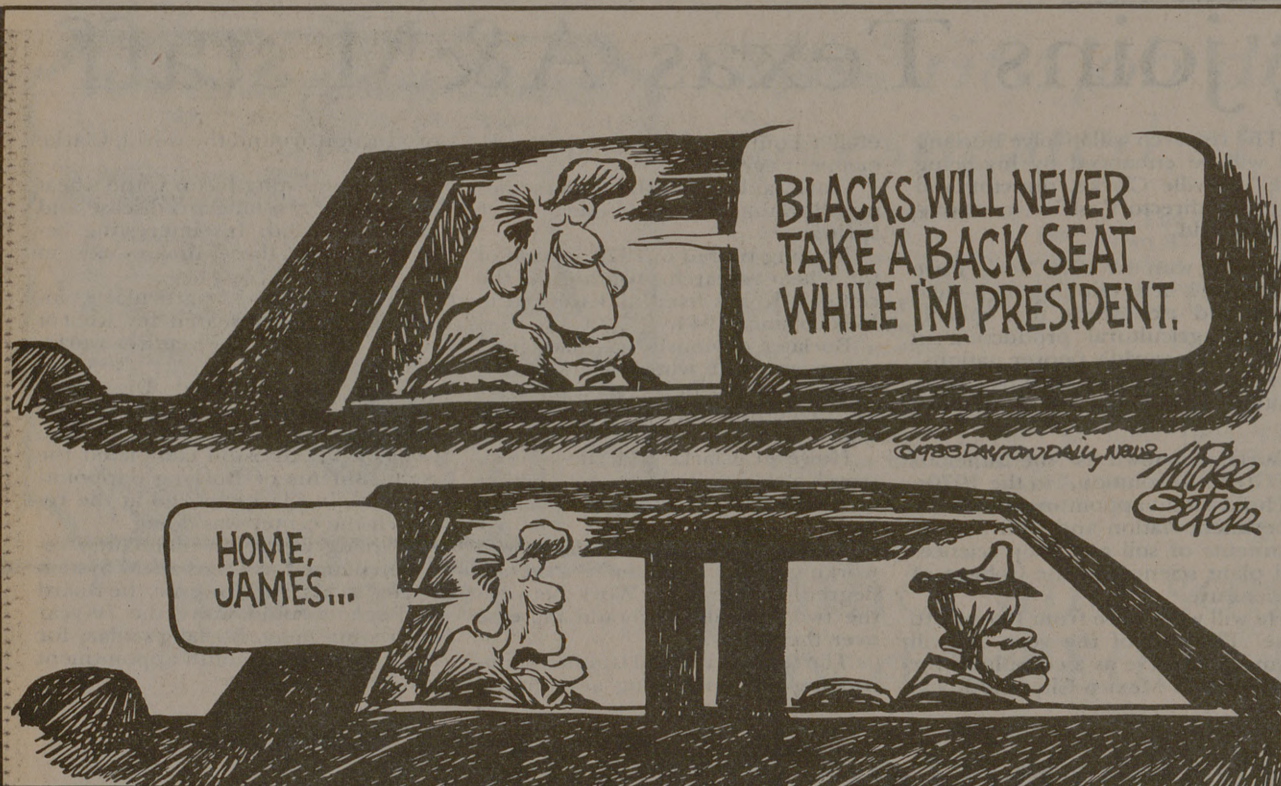
The American military is spending its summer on maneuvers in Central America and Africa. What happens in the summer of 1983 could produce a backlash that is as politically lethal as Vietnam was to Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey. Or it could put out a couple of brushfires, reaffirming America's military superiority and Reagan's strong defense policy.

During the dog days, unemployment dropped from 10 percent to 9.5 percent,

the greatest single month decrease in decades. Somewhere, 500,000 Americans found work during the summer, that trend continues, the greatest blockade to Reagan's reelection removed.

And during the dull days of Alan Cranston, Gary Hart and Hollings probably are coming to a realization that they will be spending more time on the Senate floor and less time campaigning for reelection. Nothing brings home the reality of a reelection campaign than watching a poll rating hover between 2 percent and 3 percent.

Maybe there will be time to relax on vacation after the New Hampshire primary next March.



Congress should try living with merit pay system

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Reports from across the land indicate that education may be replacing the economy as this country's biggest political issue.

There seems to be a consensus of sorts that the federal government has done a pretty fair job of bringing down inflation rates. But the question of how to raise student test scores remains very much unsettled.

It apparently is as hard to answer as the question of how to bring down interest rates and the federal deficit.

All manners of novel suggestions have been advanced, some of which actually

are realistic enough to serve as platform planks.

Merit pay for teachers is one proposal getting weighty consideration. The main bone of contention here is what formula to use to determine which teachers are meritorious.

I just hope the schools don't start looking to Congress for guidance in this matter. Although our lawmakers might get high marks in expressing opinions on such subjects as reducing interest rates and deficits, they almost surely would flunk pay scale fixing.

Allowing schoolteachers to fix their own salaries, the way members of Congress do, might contribute to the uplift-

ing of educational standards. A better plan, however, would be for Congress to emulate the schools and adopt the merit pay system. Already there has been some talk along that line.

But as surely as there is disagreement over the method of determining which teachers deserve bonus pay raises, singling out deserving congressman isn't that easy either.

At a recent Senate subcommittee hearing, a sort of remedial course in pay scale fixing, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, set forth the idea of basing congressional salaries on moves to balance the federal budget.

"Some people have suggested it would be cheap for the taxpayers of America to give each member of Congress a million dollars a year if they'd balance the budget and pay off the deficit," he said.

There are, however, many other facets of the merit pay controversy that also come into play.

It might, for example, be argued that congressmen who go a whole year without being indicted should be entitled to merit pay.

Another possible criterion would link merit pay eligibility to whether a congressman gets through 12 months, or half a term, without being accused of sex-

ually molesting congressional page. A third test could be whether a congressman's name is mentioned in connection with FBI investigations of abuse on Capitol Hill.

Some taxpayers probably would be reluctant to equate rectitude with the budget; still, there's no guarantee that talking the straight and narrow mean accomplishment.

The beauty is that Congress has the nation's schools, already has the mechanism for rewarding meritorious performances. It's only a matter of transferring payroll jurisdiction to the House and Senate Ethics Commi-

Bicyclist defends 'whooshing,' urges fellow bikers to be careful

Editor:

Who are these crazy bike riders who WHOOSH through stop signs and run down coeds? Well, I can answer half the question.

A stop sign in an empty street is a big temptation. To stop or not to stop? If I stop, I lose the time and energy it take to get going again as well as the time spent stopping. It's hot out on that pavement. In motion I get a breeze at least. So with apologies to our valiant campus police, I

mostly treat those signs as yield signs. I don't weave through crowded foot traffic at 20 mph or ram folks just to see the books spill. Most of us don't. It seems a few do.

Fellow bikers: If we don't show the foot and auto traffic a bit more consideration, those always thin-stretched police will have to set so many officers on us that we can't even get away with a little innocent whooshing. It's hot out on that pavement.

Doug Hensley

Backstairs at the White House

O'Neill says Reagan won't run

by Helen Thomas
United Press International

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Thomas O'Neill remains one of a handful of political pros in Washington who still think President Reagan will not seek re-election. He is definitely in the minority but contends Reagan would have a "hard time" winning re-election and that may deter him from becoming a candidate again.

In a recent interview with Cliff Evans, vice president of RKO General Broadcasting, O'Neill said he has had "some very prominent Republicans call me, a Republican columnist, a conservative columnist and say 'Tip, do you know something that we don't know?'"

"No," O'Neill said he replied. "It's only instinct."
"He's got a hard time to win," O'Neill said. He mentioned the age factor — Reagan is 72 — and said "he's going to have to campaign in every state of the union. He's going to have to have open debates."

O'Neill also said the Washington press corps has been "very, very kind to him, extremely kind."

At news conferences, he said reporters "throw up softballs to him. He fouls them and they tell the American public that he's done a pretty good job."

"When he gets head-to-head out there with the candidates and he meets the press around the nation and they start asking him very intimate questions about the government, he hasn't grown that much, to be perfectly truthful. His knowledge of the government, in my opinion, is extremely limited. I think at best, he'll have an awfully hard fight to win."

President Reagan telephoned Al Sulli-

van, a veteran White House reporter for the U.S. Information Agency, on the eve of Sullivan's surgery, and had some encouraging words.

As they bantered back and forth Sullivan, who has covered the White House for years and traveled the world over, told Reagan, "You can see I'll do anything to get out of a trip."

He was referring to a three-week journey Reagan will make from mid-August until after Labor Day, including nearly a dozen speeches and time out for horseback riding and brush clearing at the president's mountaintop ranch near Santa Barbara.

Like a predecessor, Lyndon B. Johnson, Reagan is a telephone man.

He does not hesitate to make calls when the spirit moves him and often they are very appreciated gestures.

He telephoned Peter Jennings immediately after Jennings' broadcast the other night when ABC-TV announced Jennings would be the network's "World News Tonight" anchorman, succeeding the late Frank Reynolds.

Bob Sims, spokesman for the National Security Council, showed up in the press room recently in his white uniform when the administration was flexing its military muscle in Central America.

Sims, a Navy officer, quipped: "It's a show of force in the room."

There was some question whether President Reagan's new commission on hunger in America would be called "Commission on Hunger."

But the powers that be have opted for a less telling title. It will be the "Commission on Food Assistance."

President Reagan's son, Ron, daughter-in-law, Doria, are planning to visit the home of the Reagan family in Ireland.

The president's paternal grandfather, John Michael Reagan, was born in County Cork. His maternal grandfather, James Scott, was born in Essex, England.

Ron, who has forsaken a career in ballet to become a free-lance writer, will be on assignment writing about his ancestors.

Most of his assignments so far have dealt with his father's Hollywood life and subjects that have been close to home.

The president, who used to avoid flying, will have more than 50 hours in the air during his 14-day Asian swing in November.

Whatever his past hangups about flying were, Reagan has managed to overcome them in the luxury of the Air Force One — one of the perks of the job that he misses the most when his House days are over.

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