

opinion

Politics may be in retired general's plans

United Press International

WASHINGTON — It began a year ago when Pete Dawkins, who has excelled at everything he has ever done, was in bed for six weeks because of back surgery.

Now, one of West Point's most luminous graduates, 1957 Heisman trophy winner, Rhodes scholar, musician, Princeton Ph.D. and the Army's youngest retired general is looking to new vistas, and despite abundant speculation, he is not yet willing to commit himself to a political career.

Dawkins, 45, dressed casually but impeccably in a blue shirt open at the neck, tan slacks and loafers, sat on his patio and talked about what led him to retire from a brilliant military career and about whether he may run against Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., in 1984.

"The fact is I have no plans to run for political office. I'm certainly not going to launch off at this point right now into a

political campaign. That's not where I am."

He weighed his words, and his entire manner during several conversations up to and including a 45-minute interview were convincing evidence he would plot his future with consummate care.

His caution was clear even in refusing to rule out a 1984 race. "Again, I'm uneasy in framing my comments that way," Dawkins replied. "Since I haven't decided what I'm going to do, it's very difficult logically to rule out anything. But the fact is, I sure don't plan on it."

When Dawkins was an all-America halfback, enthusiastic supporters predicted that he was a cinch to become Army chief of staff some day. They were underestimating him, in the eyes of Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, who counts Dawkins as his best friend.

"I think he's the quintessential candidate, if he should run," Cohen said. "He's going to make a wonderful president."

But Cohen said Dawkins should not run for office now, but go into business

for four or five years. The two men and their wives, Judy and Diane, just spent a weekend whitewater rafting on the Kennebec River in Maine.

Reflecting on his changed life, Dawkins said, "It was triggered a year ago when I had back surgery. It took me out of action for six weeks. My life has been, particularly the last 10 or 12 years, one of very busy times, each day trying somehow to grapple with the challenges of that day, not really standing back and questioning broadly where it all is fitting."

The surgery followed a tennis injury that left him with excruciating pain.

"Suddenly I began to think about things," Dawkins said. "If you're lucky, at my age, you have 20 or 25 vigorous, active years to invest. And you have an obligation to make that choice consciously, not simply to keep doing what you're doing because you're doing it, but to be convinced that for you that's the most important thing to be doing."

"So Judy and I launched on a kind of 11-month odyssey."

Dawkins said the best counsel he got was from House Chaplain James Ford, who previously was chaplain at West Point.

"As you go about this," the minister told Dawkins, "don't you dare lose the joy and exquisite pleasure of what it is you're going to do. There would be a tendency to get so focused on how to make the right decision. Just continually draw yourself to the wonder of what it is you're able to do."

"I think he's right," Dawkins said.

So he decided to leave the military, which he did in a blaze of glory at the Pentagon Aug. 1.

"I did not leave for the traditional reasons I had not become disenchanted, discouraged, disillusioned about what I was doing, or someone made an offer so incandescent you can't refuse."

"I genuinely loved what I was doing. It was personally rewarding, fulfilling, I

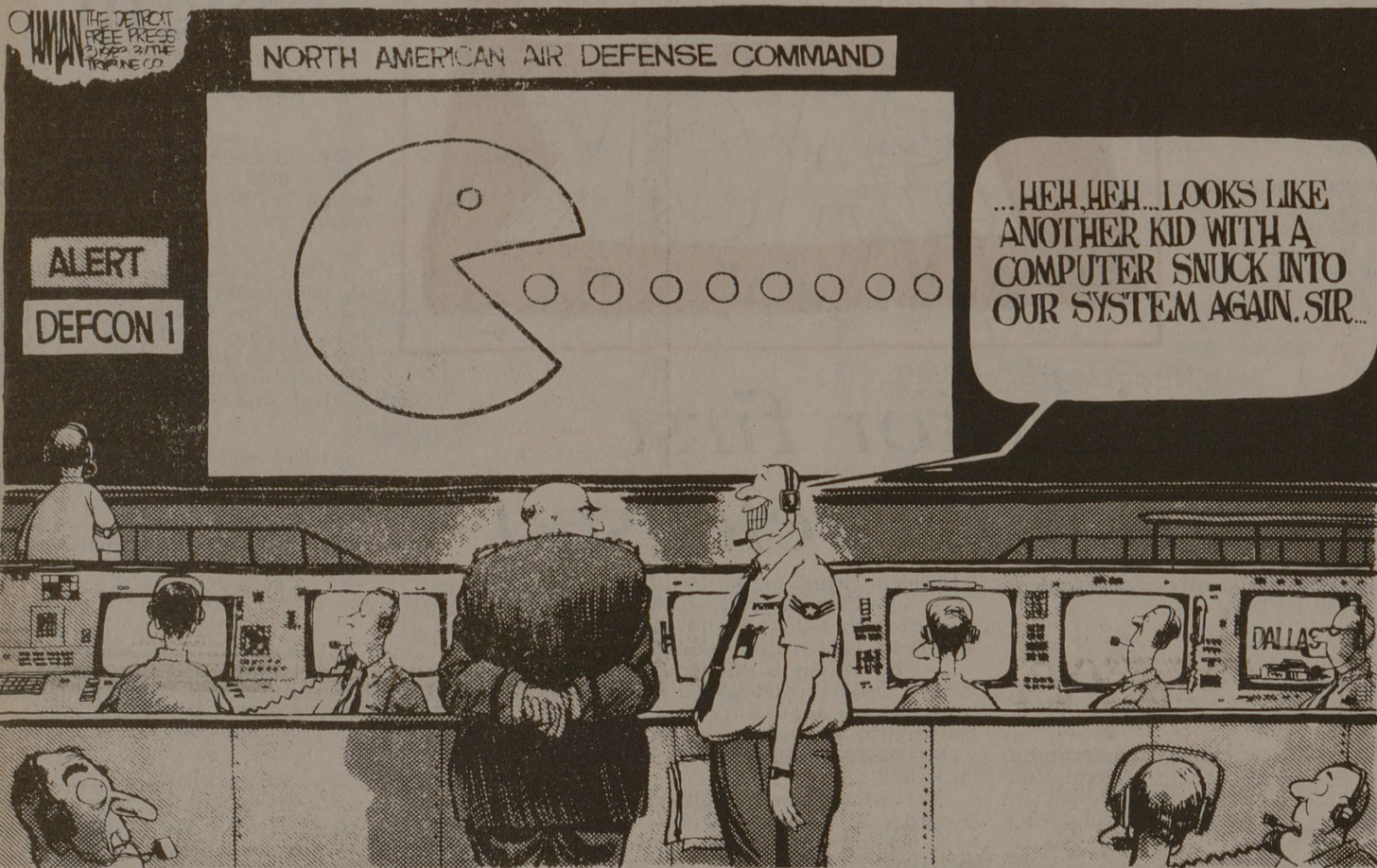
thought it was important. I was looking forward with enthusiasm to what was ahead.

"After a quarter of a century working to help defend this country, I came to very strongly that I wanted the opportunity to be part of facets of American life I hadn't had the opportunity to be a part of, and hopefully, to be as fully engaged and field the challenges and opportunities with as much vigor and enthusiasm as the ones I had dealt with before."

"It's really as simple and complex as that."

The process continues for Dawkins, who says that he has never been in a position and that he never had a job in the "that I didn't feel absorbed every minute of my ability."

"I'm looking at quite a range of things from the business world to government — a pretty broad spectrum — at entrepreneurial things, starting things, business, to more traditional things, joining a very large corporation. It's a number of quite things."



Bureaucratic birthday an uninspiring event

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — From the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies comes a reminder that the federal bureaucracy is now 100 years old.

It was a century ago that President Chester A. Arthur signed legislation creating a professional corps of government workers. That truly is an inspiring milestone, although the Center notes that many Americans aren't exactly in the mood to give our public servants a birthday party.

"Citizens think of bureaucrats as arrogant, lazy, overpaid paper-pushers," it says, and I'll concede the prospect of singing "Happy Birthday" to the Civil Service doesn't really turn me on.

Besides that, government regulations being what they are today, we probably couldn't light that many candles without first filing an Environmental Impact Statement.

If you must do something appropriate, take a bureaucrat to lunch. You can list that expense as a tax deduction.

The Roosevelt Center makes much of the fact that the merit system created in 1883 supplanted the spoils system. By and large, I suppose, the change has worked out for the better — particularly from the workers' standpoint.

It used to be that each time the administration changed hands, the streets of Washington would be lined with patronage job seekers.

That might not sound much worse than rush hour traffic, but at least modern commuters aren't prone to violence.

It was, you'll recall, a disappointed political job seeker, Charles Guiteau, who shot President Garfield in 1881. That assassination, as much an anything, prompted Arthur, Garfield's successor, to press for a hiring system based on merit instead of political loyalty.

Women apathetic to Reagan

by Helen Thomas

United Press International

President Reagan is running into obstacles in his quest for the women's vote.

He and his aides are puzzled at the negative reaction to what they view as generous efforts to increase opportunities for women in the federal government.

Presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said the president's record of female appointees to high-ranking federal jobs is unmatched in history. The administration's showcases are two Cabinet women — Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole and HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler.

He also named Sandra Day O'Connor as the first woman justice of the Supreme Court and Jeanne Kirkpatrick as the first

woman to head the U.S. delegation to the United Nations.

But the White House is learning that the problem is much broader, and that Reagan's opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment hurt his image with the modern-day American woman who be-

The polls show there is a "gender gap" in Reagan's pursuit of the women's vote and 10 percent fewer women approve of his job performance than men.

lieves there is still discrimination in many areas.

More than a year ago, Reagan ordered a review of all federal statutes that might include discriminatory language.

The Justice Department has conducted the intensive search, calling on all agencies to point out laws that discriminate against women. So far, three quarterly reports have been made to the White House, but no action has been taken and the reports have not been made public.

Barbara Honegger, a Justice Department special assistant, delivered a blow to the administration when she described as a "sham" Reagan's efforts to eliminate discrimination in the law.

She wrote in The Washington Post that Reagan had backed off on the Republican Party's 40-year commitment "to the broadest constitutional protection for the civil rights of American women — support of the ERA."

If anything, she said, the administration has narrowed the interpretation of existing statutes forbidding sex discrimination. Moreover, she said no action has been taken to eliminate sex discrimination in federal regulations.

White House officials were stung by her attack, and so were Justice Department officials. At the Justice Department, Ms. Honegger, who has since resigned, was described as a "disgruntled job seeker" and dismissed as a "low-level" staffer who hardly anyone had heard of.

In the conclusion she wrote, "I don't think Ronald Reagan gives a damn."

The president went out of his way two weeks ago to apologize to the Federation of Business and Professional Women after they were turned away from the White House gates when their scheduled tour was abruptly canceled.

Reagan sought to make amends by putting in a personal appearance, but his remarks offended some of the women.

The polls show there is a "gender gap" in Reagan's pursuit of the women's vote and 10 percent fewer women approve of his job performance than men.

His political advisers are aware of the problems. They are soliciting the advice of some prominent women on how to make a better appeal for the women's vote.

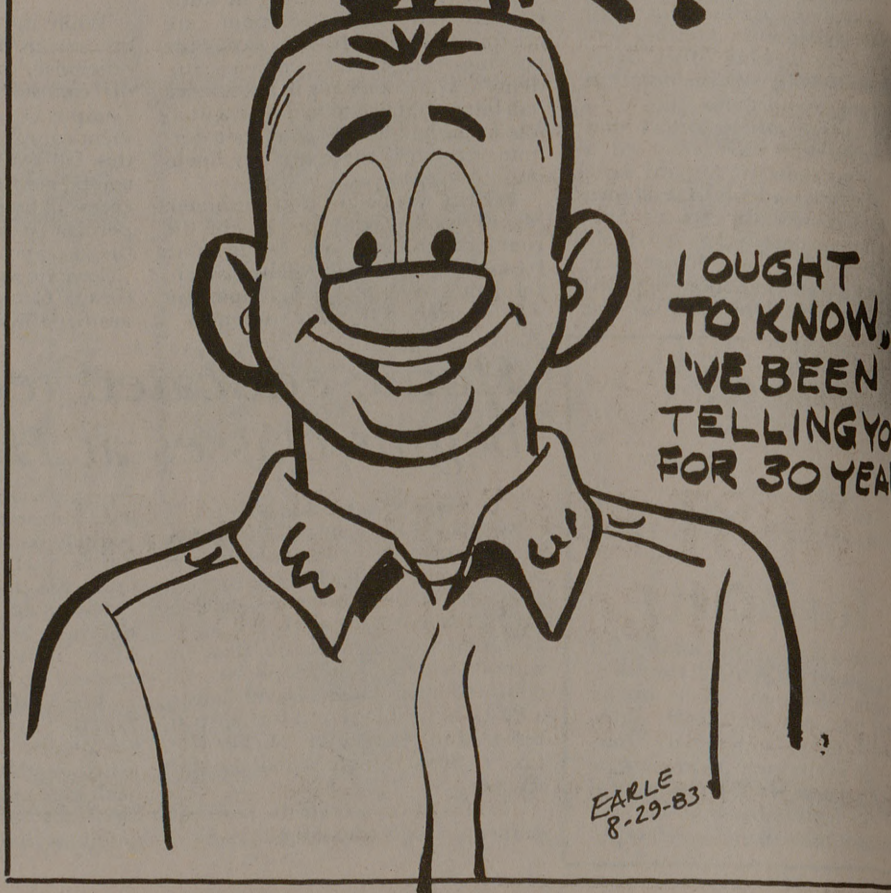
Columnist Ann Landers has been asked for advice. Maureen Reagan, the president's daughter and an ERA activist, also has been recruited.

With the elections more than a year away, Reagan still has a chance to make many affirmative moves to improve his image with women, but it may require a philosophical change of direction.

Slouch

By Jim Earle

WELCOME TO A&M'S BEST YEAR!



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