

# opinion

## Victim's rage inspires own 'crimestoppers'

I returned home late one night during the summer after seeing a concert in Houston. I was tired and my head was still ringing with Neil Young songs, but I got the distinct feeling something was wrong as soon as I entered my apartment.

The music buzzing in my head stopped when I noticed that my kitchen window was unlatched. Rage soon took over when I observed that my camera bag and its expensive contents were not sitting on the shelf where they should have been.

A panicked search of my apartment revealed that my guitar, violin and stereo (my only other possessions with any serious rip-off appeal) were undisturbed, but I wasn't feeling lucky.

My state of mind slipped another notch from rage to hatred when, in a moment of borderline psychic inspiration, I realized who was responsible for



brian boyer

this evil deed and exactly how they had done it.

Naturally, I would hesitate to call the persons in question friends, but they were acquaintances who had abused my hospitality a number of times. They had

done so that very afternoon, as a matter of fact, and taken advantage of the situation by unlocking the window they later used to break in.

This is not the sort of thing that nice folks do. It is the sort of thing one might expect from someone with the morals and brainpower of a sewer rat.

My original plan was to form a small posse, find the worthless bums, and string 'em up in the nearest oak. Fortunately, I saw the wisdom of leaving such matters to the law and set about thinking of ways to protect myself from future scroungers.

For the benefit of readers who, like the canine detective on television, want to "take a bite out of crime," here are a few ideal crimestoppers:

**Mace.** Guns are messy at best, and at times can be downright dangerous; particularly when the prowler has a chance to return fire. Mace may not be as efficient as a good handgun, but it will perform well under most circumstances. There is also a certain grim satisfaction in seeing a thief writhe around in serious pain. Mace

cannisters are fairly cheap, and some even come with a handy leather holster. I suggest buying several and placing them in strategic spots throughout the house, so one will always be within reach. Small children are apt to find one and squirt themselves, but they learn very quickly and will not do it more than once.

**Animals**—especially large bloodthirsty ones. Dogs are a popular choice, but security buffs with a little imagination can sometimes come up with something truly original. For example, I have heard of one business that used an ostrich to protect its inventory of junked cars. A jungle anaconda would make a formidable watchman; they can swallow a small deer whole, so the average catburglar would be no problem at all. Anacondas should be used only by people who have a serious crime problem, however, since a full-grown specimen needs to eat at least one thief a week to stay well-fed and happy.

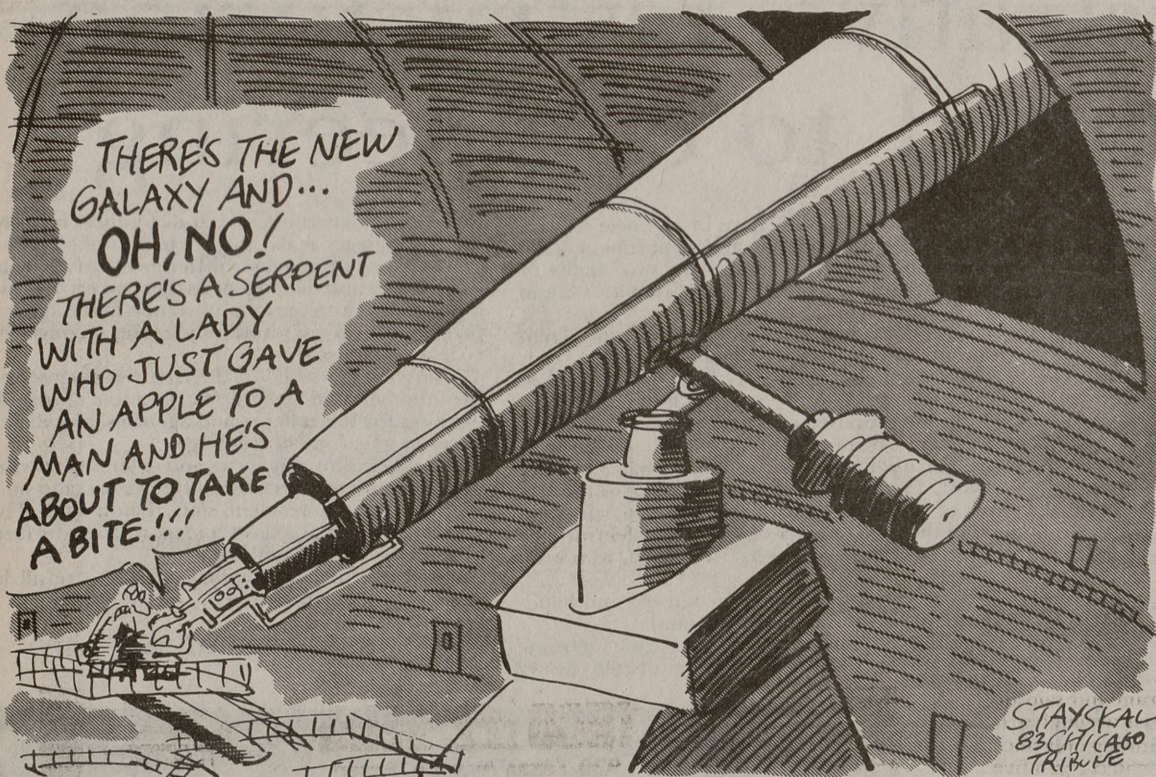
**Martial Arts** are difficult to master, but they work well and tend to catch bandits by surprise. They are also reputed to

teach discipline and are a great way to stay in shape. Unfortunately, fancy work is no match for a well-placed magnum.

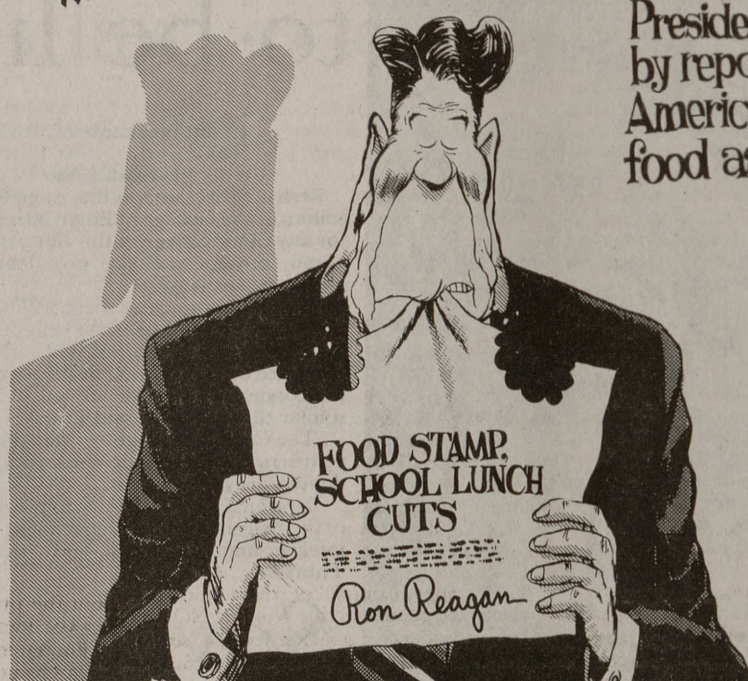
**Mechanical security devices**—from the old-fashioned chain to electronic systems that automatically turn lights on and phone the police. They certainly do the job, but can be expensive. There is also the frightening possibility of accidentally triggering the alarm, waking the entire neighborhood up. Lock or alarm can make a home burglar proof, they just make it more of a hassle.

My apartment posed no challenge at all, which probably did not bother individuals who ripped it off. For this reason, I was especially pleased when it was told that my hunch about who had turned out to be correct. The last I heard one was in jail and another was in Alaska.

Alaska? According to the details of the case, the suspect was fishing. Which comes as no surprise to me. Those klondike lunkers are posed to really be bitin' this time of



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President Reagan, alarmed by reports of hunger in America, re-examines his food assistance programs.

### The Battalion

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## Paraquat: high-priced showmanship

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's decision to enlist the controversial herbicide paraquat in his battle against marijuana may achieve the administration's goal of encouraging Latin American countries to do the same.

Earnest concern about pot, however, is insufficient reason to begin a domestic spraying program. High-priced showmanship might be a suitable description for Washington's most controversial anti-drug effort since Congress briefly suspended overseas use of the U.S.-made chemical in 1979.

To date, only national forest land in Georgia and Kentucky has undergone spraying but federal officials contend as many as 40 states could be involved.

White House drug abuse policy officials, led by former University of Mississippi drug researcher Carlton Turner, openly admit their targets are more political than anything else.

Since 1981, when Congress lifted its ban on subsidies for paraquat export, the U.S. has had more trouble pushing the herbicide on such prominent pot exporters as Colombia and Peru than it did on Mexico during the '70s.

By instituting a domestic program, said Drug Abuse Policy Office spokesman Patrick McKelvey, "We're trying... to show that we're not being hypocritical."

McKelvey insists that paraquat presents no health hazard to residents living near targeted areas. Of the contaminated pot which reaches the marketplace, McKelvey says that its users face only a limited health risk.

He cites a study, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, which found that as much as 99.8 percent of tested paraquat samples decomposed during combustion.

But opposition from governors, members of Congress and private health and environmental groups shows that the

consensus on paraquat's benignancy exist principally as a result of studies done by the federal government itself.

Last month, in the American Journal of Public Health, the CDC's Philip J. Landrigan wrote that as many as 300 U.S. marijuana smokers may have inhaled harmful doses (500 milligrams) of paraquat annually from 1975 to 1979.

Perhaps more importantly, Landrigan added that CDC researchers had not considered the potential pulmonary damages from the inhalation of 4,4'-dipyridyl, a toxic chemical produced by the combustion of paraquat and found in much larger residual quantities.

Though U.S. farmers are said to spray up to 11 million acres of crops with paraquat annually, a June 1983 Science Digest article said that as many as 500 persons may have died as a result of paraquat's agricultural uses.

In that light, the deleterious effects of spraying near national recreational areas and water supplies seem less dismissable.

Meanwhile, the administration's effort to limit paraquat applications to McKelvey's words, "areas that are hard to get to," only exposes its economic inefficiency.

Even those who support marijuana eradication would look skeptically at a program that has as targets patches of 13 plants each, as was the case in Georgia recently.

Such unimpressive statistics would seem sufficient to prod the White House to seek economies of scale, at least.

Yet is the administration prepared to spray the renowned marijuana farms in California, a mecca for environmentalists? Given state and local officials' hostile response to date, will the White House wish to risk alienating more states as November 1984 draws near?

If not, then the latest paraquat program may be short-lived. But the president's have gone to much expense and risk to bluff a few Latin nations and more skeptical Americans.

## Insurance not for paying claims

by Art Buchwald

There has been a rash of automobile insurance cancellations lately by the major companies, and everyone is very nervous about it.

The other day my wife was notified that her auto insurance policy was being canceled. The notification gave no reason for the cancellation, and since my wife had not been in an accident nor had ever made a claim, she was perplexed.

She asked me to get to the root of it, and I took the next plane to visit our insurance company. The company is housed in a 56-story aluminum and tinted-glass skyscraper on a 30-acre shopping plaza overlooking most of the state of Connecticut.

I arrived on the 35th floor where one made inquiries concerning canceled insurance policies. After browsing through the company literature, which told how insurance was making America great, I was ushered into the office of Clyde Featherstone.

I gave Mr. Featherstone the cancellation notice, and he clucked once or twice and then disappeared. He returned in a few moments with the folder.

"What did my wife do wrong?" I demanded.

"Your wife didn't do anything wrong.

Her records are all up to snuff."

"Then why did you cancel her insurance?"

"Because of Trembling and Trembling, her insurance agents."

"Trembling and Trembling?" I said.

"Yes," said Featherstone, going through the folder. "They've been very naughty boys, very naughty indeed."

"Did they steal any money?" I asked.

"Worse!" They've written too many policies this year that people have made claims on. We've had to pay out \$1,897 to Trembling and Trembling clients in the last 12 months."

"But what's that got to do with my wife's insurance policy? She didn't get any of the money."

"Ah, but since you are with Trembling and Trembling, you are now considered a bad risk. Their record is your record."

"That's nonsense. I hardly know Trembling and Trembling," I protested. "I wouldn't recognize them if I saw them on the street. This is guilt by association."

Featherstone smiled. "You came to us through Trembling and Trembling, and you will leave with Trembling and Trembling. This company will not put up with people who make insurance claims against it."

"But that's what you're here for," I

said. "To pay people off when something happens."

"That's a foul lie," said Featherstone, losing his smile. "We're here to build buildings and real-estate developments, and finance ships and airplanes and ball parks. If we keep paying out claims, where would we get the money to construct this 56-story building, with its beautiful shopping plaza and underground computer center?"

"Do you realize," said Featherstone, "that every dollar we pay out in a claim is a dollar we have to take away from our advertising budget, which tells the public what wonderful insurance people we are?"

"I appreciate all that," I said, "but surely you have to pay some claims in order to stay in the insurance business."

"That's what Trembling and Trembling thought," Featherstone said as he tore up my wife's folder.

I thanked Featherstone for his kindness and understanding. He got up to shake my hand.

"If you're staying in town for dinner, we have a great restaurant on the roof garden which is bringing us 15 percent profit a year."

### Slouch

by Jim Earl



"Would you turn down the volume! You've killed my flower!"

Artic

by Melissa A...

Battalion Report... In recent magazi... among the "best"...

In the past three... Caperton, D—Bryan... named as an outstand... by several Texas...

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Texas Monthly... Caperton as a senato... his intelligence as a... than a weapon: does... one down, doesn't... enemies."

In Texas Busines... Caperton was descri... to put in extra... his homework— an... learn to fight and... And, The Texa... even said Caperton... potential lieutenant... Regardless of e... one's particular wo... all agree on one thin... is rising in the w... But in an interview

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