

# opinion

## Reagan's Asian trip yields gifts galore

by Helen Thomas

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Backstairs at the White House:

It isn't every day that the president of the United States telephones a reporter to answer questions.

But Alfreda Madison of Black Media, representing 31 newspapers, who got a call from President Reagan, says she wanted a face-to-face interview and felt short-changed.

Some time ago, Madison asked for an interview and when told it could be done by telephone, she turned it down.

But the president called the reporter a few days before he took off on his Asian swing and Madison was chagrined. The call came as she was heading out the door of her home, and she said that she was unprepared.

But she did discuss with Reagan his views on affirmative action. She later said Reagan was "highly unprepared."

Madison later brought up the question of her interview at a morning news briefing with deputy press secretary Larry Speakes.

"Why wasn't I notified you set up an interview?" she asked Speakes. "You seem to be operating on a 'plantation mentality.'"

She said, "I think it was insulting and discriminating."

She said she felt she could have covered more ground in a face-to-face interview.

"Thank you for your views," said Speakes.

He later said Reagan was busy preparing for his trip and took time out to make the telephone call. Speakes said that Reagan has called very few reporters on the phone to give interviews.

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The Asian journey is over but the memory lingers on and the jet lag even longer.

Most of the White House aides and members of the press corps were dragging days after they returned from the 16,000-mile trip with more than 30 hours in the air.

They also have a bounty of personal purchases and Christmas gifts accumulated on a quick shopping tour of Seoul's

Itai-wan street where the bargains were plentiful.

Secret Service agents were captivated by the brass beds, buying 15 of them. The beds, plus shipping costs, ran about \$300. In the states, they would cost about \$1,000.

One member of the presidential party bought three brass beds.

Designer polo shirts, selling for \$2, were a big hit. Copies of famous French designer tote bags, suitcases and purses, and porsche sunglasses were other hot sellers.

In Tokyo, the Sony Watchman miniature televisions sold like hotcakes, adding to the trade imbalance.

The pilot of the chartered press plane had to go the full length of the runway to take off, and jokingly told the passengers, "One more polo shirt and we couldn't have made it."

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Nancy Reagan is going to stay in touch with the two Korean youngsters, Ahn Ji Sook and Lee Kil Woo, she brought back home from Seoul with her so that they could have heart surgery.

The children, who are now in St. Francis Hospital in Roslyn, N.Y., were given stuffed animals as a farewell gift. She has had contact with the hospital and wants to see them again after their surgery before they return home.

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Dale Portner is a Fredericksburg, Va., junior high school varsity basketball coach who saw "The Chemical People," a public broadcasting film on teen-age drug abuse featuring Nancy Reagan. He also has the first lady's powerful support in a dispute with school and community officials.

It seems that Portner reportedly said at a group meeting that 70 percent of the varsity team members are regular drinkers. After some of the team members and parents complained, he voluntarily resigned as coach.

Mrs. Reagan wrote a letter to Portner commending him "for his honesty and forthrightness and saying she has been stunned by the magnitude of this epidemic," press secretary Sheila Tate said.

## Letters:

### Give seniors exams

Editor:

The letter by Scott Murray and his 35 co-signers shows a modest amount of imagination, some misinformation and very little logic.

First, with grades of graduating seniors due before exam week (indeed, with graduation scheduled before exam week), I find it difficult to say that exemption is optional. Yes, apparently one can give a "final" exam to a graduating senior prior to final grades, but that disrupts the entire teaching process, especially when over half the class may be graduating seniors.

Second, an entire course must be designed to meet deadlines for senior grades. Basically, I lost two weeks of laboratory because of this. What is two or three weeks you ask, reminding us of the four or five years in a college career? I respond—a lot, when you only are in any one class for 15 weeks!

Third, excusing graduating seniors from final exam means dual standards are used for that course. Is that fair to the other students in the class?

Fourth, traditions have often been set aside or rescinded to the benefit of institutions. I find it difficult to believe that excusing graduating seniors from final exams has contributed much to the greatness of this University.

Fifth, excusing graduating seniors from finals had its beginning in a situation that no longer exists. Take your pick: either the tradition began so that students could volunteer for duty during World War II; or it related to the seniority system of the armed forces where a few days could make a difference.

Sixth, since the Corps constitutes less than 7 percent of the student body, I do not believe their extra activities should dictate the policies for the remainder of the student body.

Finally, consider the graduating seniors, though perhaps few in number, who must earn a certain grade to be eligible for graduation but are a bit below the needed grade(s) when senior grades are due. These students will not graduate with their class because they lack this final opportunity to meet the needed standards.

I am proud of Texas A&M and the 17 years I have taught here. That doesn't mean we can't improve, including dropping

ping some out-dated traditions.

Keith A. Arnold  
College of Agriculture senator

### Barbeque in bad taste

Editor:

We of the Humane Society are concerned about some of the traditions that come and go involving animals in Texas A&M campus life. Usually, the treatment of animals is very kind and thoughtful, but, sometimes, not very thoughtful and definitely not very kind.

The latest tradition that worried us was keeping a bonfire "mascot" and then consuming him as the main course at a bonfire barbeque, after keeping him as a pet and naming him.

After looking into this issue a bit, it was discovered that this was not thought of too highly by school officials, especially in President Vandiver's office, and to our understanding a stop has been put to barbequing "Zippo." We applaud President Vandiver's action and that of the people in his office regarding the humane treatment of all animals concerned in this bonfire and all student activities.

Hopefully, if people learn to treat dumb animals with respect, people will treat animals of a higher intellect, human beings, with respect.

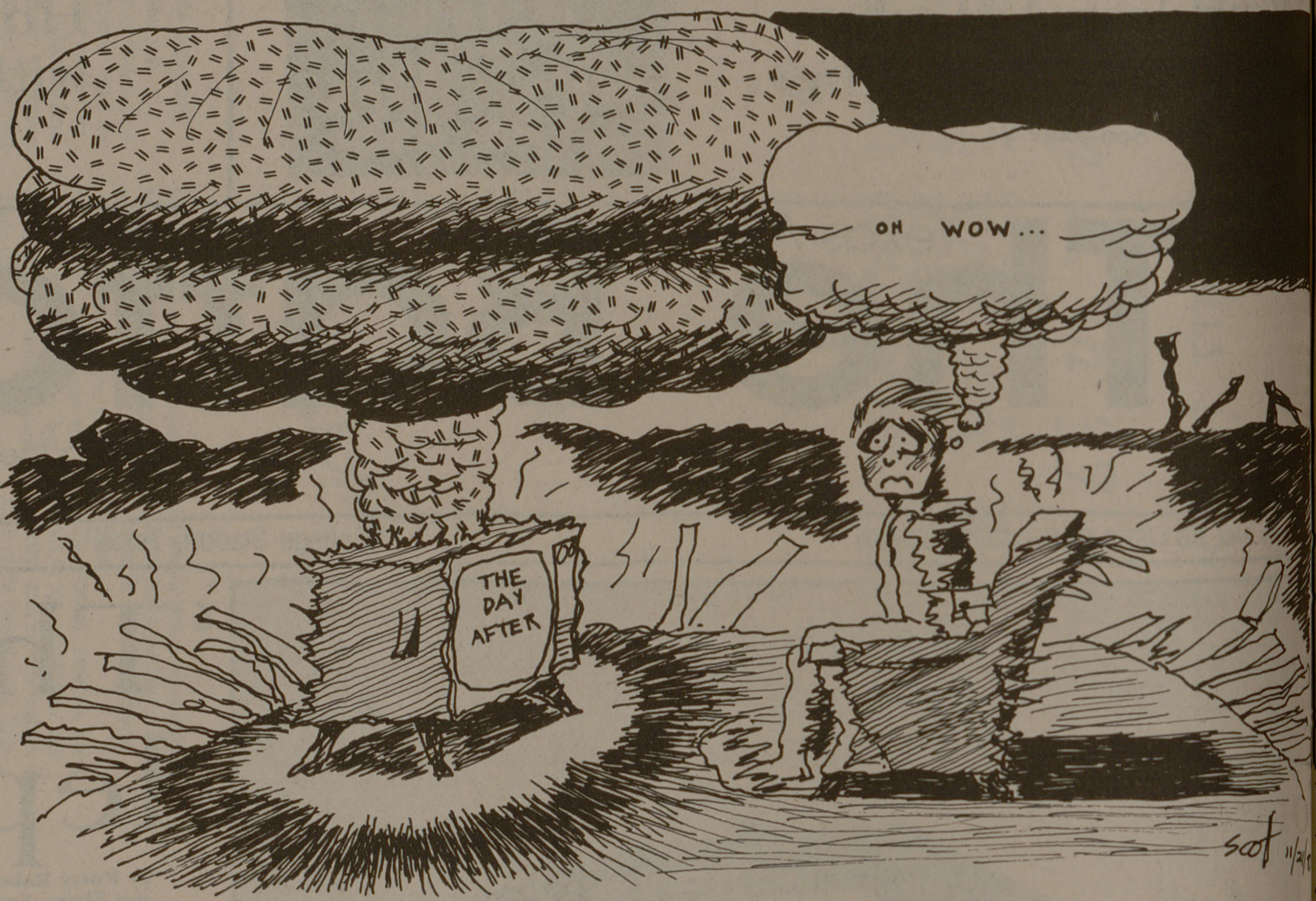
Pam King  
Brazos County Humane Society

### End racist traditions

Editor:

Once again the date of bonfire is approaching. This year seems like it will be a good year for Aggieland. Aggie spirit will be raised at bonfire as they always are. However, this year there are some students who would like to see some changes.

The first change we would like to see is an end to "slave sales" as a form of money raising. Many feel these sales are discriminatory and racist-oriented. It is a discouragement to black and white students



## Guild gives Fritz bad press as officers oppose members

by Art Buchwald

The Newspaper Guild has endorsed Fritz Mondale as its presidential candidate. Actually, the leaders of the Newspaper Guild endorsed him — the membership was not consulted. Many members of the guild are very angry that their leaders took a position in the presidential campaign.

I thought there would be jubilation in the Mondale camp when the Newspaper Guild gave the nod to their man. But it was just the opposite.

"This is an absolute disaster," said one of Mondale's people. "We've been blindsided."

"How can you say that? The Newspaper Guild is a powerful union and its members control much of the news fit to print. You should be thrilled they came out for your boy so early."

"The members didn't come out for our boy — the guild officers came out for him, and the rank and file are mad as hell. Do you know what is going to happen? The members will clobber Mondale just to prove they haven't gone in the tank."

"I didn't think of that. You don't believe they would purposely slant their stories against him just to assert their independence?"

"They could do something worse —

ignore him. And if they do write about him they'll be harder on Mondale than anybody else. If they are not, their editors will think they're following the Newspaper Guild party line."

"I think you're right," I said. "I frankly don't believe a Newspaper Guild should support any presidential candidate. After all, what can a president do for the press, anyway? The worst candidates have given us our best stories, and the best ones haven't given us any stories at all. Why do you think the guild officers stuck their necks out?"

The Mondale man said, "We suspect someone from the other side was behind it."

"When you say the other side are you talking about Mondale's Democratic rivals or the Republicans?"

"In a presidential primary everybody is on the other side."

"Perhaps you're overreacting."

The Mondale aide said, "The last time the Newspaper Guild supported a presidential candidate was in 1972 when they came out for McGovern. Look what happened to him."

"I forgot McGovern. Funny enough

after they endorsed him, McGovern

plained he never got a decent story in the papers again."

"It isn't funny. The same thing happened to Mondale."

I guess your best bet would be to put the guild endorsement after the fact, you don't have to take every political

"It may be too late. We should have turned it down when it was first

to us. Now it's going to be hard to get rank-and-file guild members to lean over backwards to show

don't support Fritz."

"I notice where many guild members have already notified their leaders they don't support Mondale. Isn't that a good sign?" I asked.

"Yeah, but those reporters will go farther out of their way to show mean it."

"There must be some way you can fair shake from the newspaper people, spite of the fact they endorsed you."

"Any ideas?"

"How about this one? Why don't Mondale announce 'If I am elected president, I will let the press go to Green

## British government relaxes restraint for NATO exercises

Follow the leader? While many American reporters cursed the Reagan administration's Grenada gag rule last week, the British government of Margaret Thatcher tried to make amends to Fleet Street for a similar restriction during the Falkland Islands crisis of 1982.

Under new guidelines issued in time for NATO exercises in West Germany last week, 50 journalists were formally "accredited" to an armored division and fitted in full combat dress. Britain's

Ministry of Defense said it intended to find some middle ground between restricted press freedom and total control.

Nonetheless, reporters were allowed neither to approach senior officers nor roam freely about the battlefield. Though free from complete censorship they received a "stop list" of sensitive subject areas. Afterward, the government said it was willing to ease its rules again.

### Slouch by Jim Earle



"...and therefore, I think you can see that if these things happen we could be in the running for the Bluebonnet Bowl."

alike to be taunted with the past and the slavery issue as if it were something to be proud of.

The next change we would like to see is the removal of the confederate flag from Corps marching units. The confederacy only stood for one thing — slavery. This, too, is nothing to be proud of.

In the wake of a changing environment at Aggieland, it would be most appropriate for these changes to be made. Many students see slave sales and the confederate flag as minute details that need not be changed. They are seen as part of tradition. However, there are those of us who feel that this type of tradition should be forgotten. To us, these are reminders of a very tainted past which has become an embarrassment to American History.

We would very much appreciate your help in making these changes and hope you see them as changes for the better.

Stephen Weiss '84

(Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 66 signatures.)

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography courses within the Department of Communications. Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are too long. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to preserve the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and telephone number of the author.

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