

opinion

'The Day After' leaves viewer shaken

I wasn't going to watch it. I didn't want to watch it, but curiosity got the better of me and I had to. "It," of course, is "The Day After," the TV movie that figures are showing about 70 percent of America watched Sunday night.

But what did we watch? Not just the town of Lawrence, Kansas being destroyed. We've seen disaster movies before. But this one was different because we knew it was a disaster that can happen, and it's the worst thing that could happen.

I didn't want to watch it because I wanted to play ostrich and pretend that my safe, secure world can't be ended by a

kathleen hart

bomb, that everything I know can't be completely changed.

It's terrifying, and not terrifying like horror movies, not fun terrifying, but the kind of terrifying that roots you to your seat and won't let you move, that convinces you that it's real.

Ted Koppel on the special ABC Viewpoint after the movie did the right thing.

He told us to go look out our windows, to see that our world still was there. We all feel like Koppel said, like Scrooge after he gets back from seeing the Christmas Yet To Come, asking "Is that the future as it will be, or only as it may be?" And if it's the future only as it may be, what can we do to prevent it?

Secretary of State George Schultz said it's the future as it cannot be, calling it a vivid portrayal of what we cannot let happen, and who won't agree with that?

But we're still scared. There still are nuclear warheads in the world, and our country just shipped even more of them over to Europe.

Are we supposed to pretend nothing will happen, be like two men sitting with

guns to each other's heads, both knowing that if the other shoots first he'll have time to get off a shot so they'll both die? Wonderful. We can wipe out mankind in one easy step.

Are we all supposed to build concrete bunkers in our backyards and stock them with food for a year, and just hope that we're not directly hit?

I don't know. I wish that I did. I wish I could say nothing will happen, we'll all be safe, but the only way to guarantee that is to eliminate the nuclear weapons.

I realize that they're there for deterrence, that we can't get rid of ours unless they get rid of theirs. That seems like an easy enough solution. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union wants to be destroyed, so why don't we both just eli-

minate that possibility?

Well, the diplomats say it's partly because some tiny third world

still may get hold of a nuclear warhead and blow a country off the earth.

Or maybe it has something to do with the Communist Manifesto saying Communism must rule every country in the world.

Or maybe it's just that we like the power to destroy those "awful, awfully pinkos."

So what do we do about it? Well, now we just hope, and pray, and letters to our Senators, Representatives and President, and urge them to save lives, because that's what it all amounts to: saving lives.

Plan for Bronx will hide decay

by Art Buchwald

Well they've finally come up with a solution for the South Bronx. Rather than spend millions and millions of dollars to wipe out the urban decay, New York City will spend a federal grant of \$300,000 on vinyl fronts and cover up the shattered tenements and burned out buildings along the expressways leading from Manhattan to Westchester and Connecticut.

The false fronts will show windows with curtains, shades and flowerpots, and nice varnished doors. According to city officials, the facades will definitely improve the look of the neighborhood.

The idea has already been dubbed by skeptics as "20th Century Bronx."

Anthony Gliedman, the commissioner of Housing and Development, denied he was doing it as a substitute for rehabilitating the blighted area. He was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "We want to brighten up the face of the neighborhood while waiting for new federal programs to rebuild the neighborhood...I recognize this is superficial. We don't want anyone to think we're doing this instead of rebuilding. But that will take years and hundreds of millions of dollars. And while we're waiting we want people to know we care."

Not knowing what to make of the idea, I discussed the proposal with Humberto Cortez, a New York taxi driver, who was trying to take me crosstown on 37th street the other day.

Mr. Cortez said he lived in the South Bronx, and while he thought it might improve the morale of people commuting from Westport and Greenwich every day, he didn't believe it would change the lives of those who lived in the area.

"Every four years all the presidential candidates visit the South Bronx with television crews, and each one announces the first thing he will do if he is elected is rebuild the neighborhood. Then, if he gets in office, he gives the money to El Salvador."

"Do you have a better solution than covering up your blight with vinyl decals?" I asked him.

"Yup. After the next election we should invite Castro to build a 10,000-foot airplane runway in the South Bronx."

"Are you crazy?" I shouted in the middle of a Madison Avenue gridlock. "Castro would send in soldiers disguised as workers to export Marxist revolution. The South Bronx would become a dagger pointed right at Scarsdale. We couldn't stand for that."

"That's the idea. No president could allow it. So he would send in the U.S. marines and the 82nd Airborne to stop the construction."

"But that could mean war."

"The South Bronx looks like a war zone now. How much more damage could the Marines do?"

"All right, so the United States invades the South Bronx. How does that help you?"

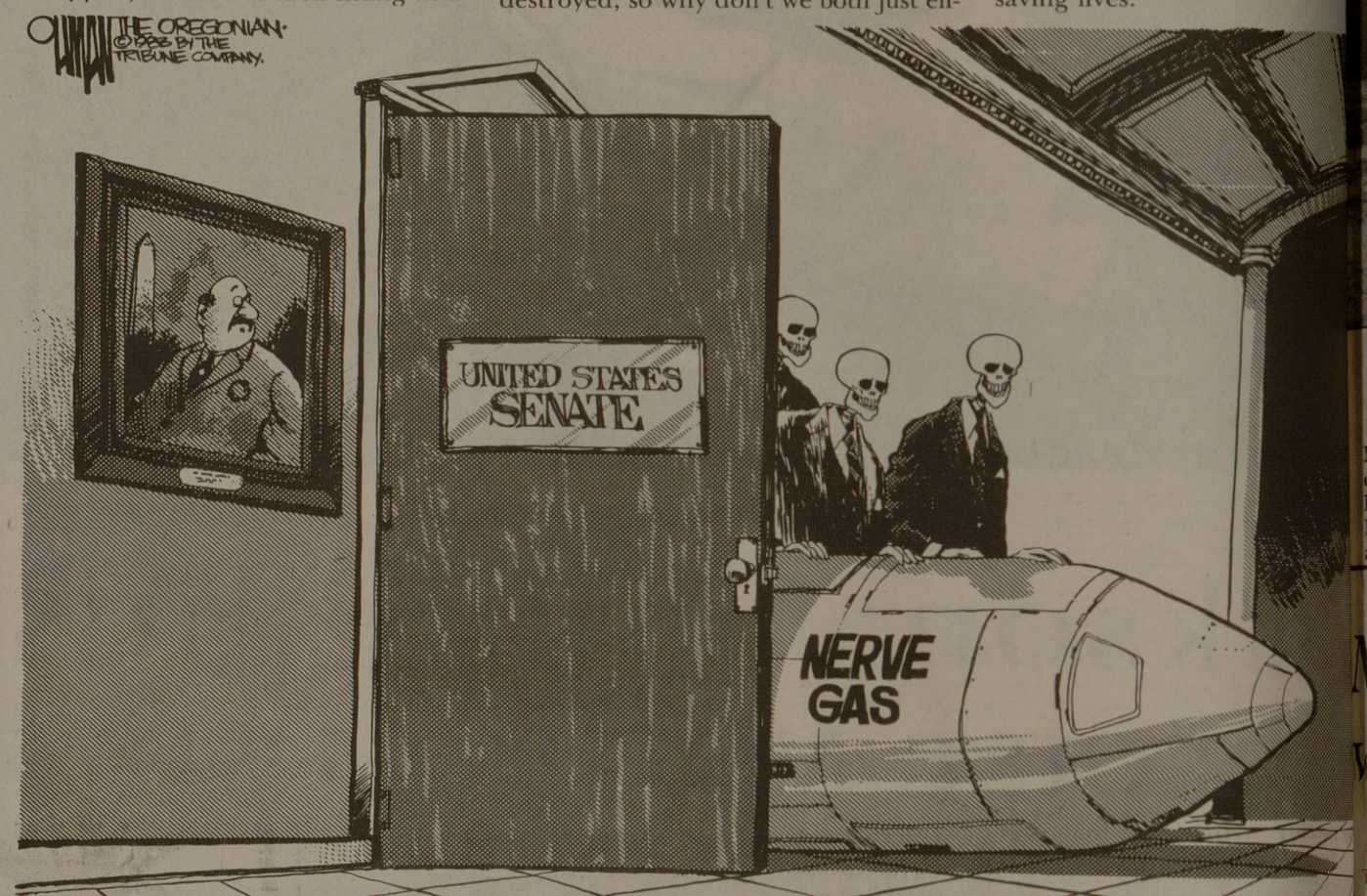
"After the fighting stops, the Americans will have to ship the Cuban workers back to Havana and then the Bronx will become a United States problem. The Americans will have to send in army engineers and AID officials to help us get on our feet. The president will go to Congress and ask for millions of dollars to keep the borough from falling into the communist camp. He could make the Bronx the showcase for the Western Hemisphere, and persuade everyone the United States will really help those who turn their backs on Castro."

We got into another gridlock on Fifth Avenue. "Mr. Cortez, you make a very good case but it's hard to believe that any president would get excited about Castro's plans for the South Bronx. The U.S. government wrote off your borough long ago."

"They might ignore our borough politically, but they can't afford to overlook the 10,000-foot runway. You don't think we're going to build it to attract tourists to the South Bronx do you?"

"It's the wildest idea I've ever heard of," I said.

Mr. Cortez replied, "It isn't half as crazy as covering up a city's urban decay with a bunch of phony vinyl fronts."



ANOTHER CAPITOL BOMB... Democrats are hard pressed

by Arnold Sawisla
United Press International

WASHINGTON — A year ago, it might have seemed to Democrats that just about anyone could retire President Reagan in 1984. Today, they may be wondering if anyone can beat him.

In November, 1982, unemployment had climbed past 10 percent, the economy was still in the doldrums and the Israelis, this country's main client in the Middle East, were occupying Beirut after invading Lebanon, ostensibly to drive the PLO away from their border.

This year, unemployment is down, the economy is up and U.S. troops are in Beirut. That last might be considered a political minus for Reagan except that the polls showed that the country rallied solidly behind the president after more than 239 Marines died in the attack on their headquarters last month.

Furthermore, the polls also show Reagan got a surge of support from the public after he went on television to give his reasons for sending troops into Gre-

nada, and there is every reason to believe that he also will benefit from his recent trip to Japan and Korea.

There are, however, still some small dark clouds threatening the sunny days in Reagan's political weather forecast.

The federal deficit, for one. Some respected economists, including experts who have supported Reagan policies in the past, say the recovery that the president has been so proudly proclaiming in recent months will be choked off by the high interest rates that will result from the government's overwhelming presence in the credit market to finance the deficit. That could happen quickly, perhaps even by mid-year — mid-election year, that is.

Another potential problem is the arms race. Reagan says he will put Cruise and Pershing II missiles into place in Europe if there is no arms limitation agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviets have hinted that they will be deploying some new missiles of their own, perhaps within range of the

United States, if the Cruise and Pershing II missiles go on line.

If those threats and counter-threats were poker players' bluffs, it would look very much as if the hands of the sides are going to be called. And that leads to no more than another increase in the level of nuclear tension, it could be a political problem for the president in 1984.

Still, far fewer knotty political problems face Reagan going into the campaign than seemed likely a year ago. Social Security crisis, for example, politically neutralized early in 1983 by a bipartisan commission came up with a stop gap financing that both Republicans and Democrats publicly endorsed.

There is some talk of trying the commission approach to the deficit problem. Such an arrangement might help get the budget situation under control but if it does, it can only serve to draw another issue away from whatever Reagan draws the straw to run against Reagan next November.

VISTA needs help in aiding the poor

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

WASHINGTON — When Dixie Cassel was a student at the University of Virginia during the 1960's, she thought VISTA was "an interesting way of involving people" and "a good idea." More lately, however, she's been helping to put that good idea to rest.

Volunteers in Service to America, now nearing its third decade of assistance to the nation's poor and disadvantaged, is virtually a shell of the organization that Cassel, 36, found upon becoming its acting director in 1981. The agency's funding has been chopped from \$34 million to \$11.8 million; the number of volunteers has fallen from almost 5,000 to around 1,000.

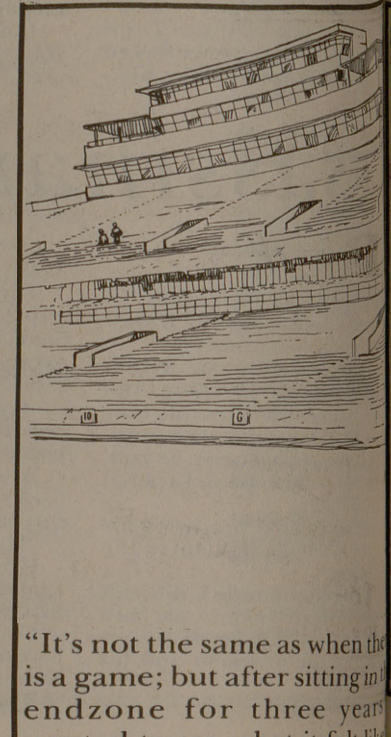
VISTA's troubles reflect two administration assumptions: 1) that much of the

organization's previous budgets went toward liberal political purposes and, 2) that part-time volunteers can do the work of full-time recruits working on federal stipends. "Right now, it's better to cut deficit spending than to put money into VISTA volunteers," said Cassel.

Yet the poverty rate has increased 50 percent since 1969, when VISTA received more than twice what it did this year. Both sides agree that VISTA remains one of government's most cost-effective programs. Despite a virtually non-existent promotional program, volunteer candidates still far outpace available places.

"Those may be the reasons why the House on Oct. 28 voted to give VISTA a \$25 million funding floor in 1984. Those who parade under voluntarism's banner would be counter-productive, let alone hypocritical, to oppose a rescue.

Slouch by Jim E.



"It's not the same as when this is a game; but after sitting in the endzone for three years, I wanted to see what it felt like."

The Battalion
 USPS 045 360
 Member of
 Texas Press Association
 Southwest Journalism Conference

Editor Hope E. Paasch
 Managing Editor Beverly Hamilton
 City Editor Kelley Smith
 Assistant City Editor Karen Schrimsher
 Sports Editor Melissa Adair
 Entertainment Editor Rebeca Zimmermann
 Assistant Entertainment Editor Shelley Hoekstra

News Editors Brian Boyer, Kathy Breard, Kevin Inda, Tracey Taylor, Chris Thayer, Kathy Wiesepape
 Photo Editor Eric Ewan Lee
 Staff Writers Robin Black, Brigid Brockman, Bob Caster, Ronnie Crocker, Elaine Engstrom, Kari Fluegel, Tracie Holub, Bonnie Langford, John Lopez, Kay Denise Mallett, Christine Mallon, Michelle Powe, Stephanie Ross, Angel Stokes, Steve Thomas, John Wagner, Karen Wallace, Wanda Winkler

Copy Editors Kathleen Hart, Susan Talbot
 Cartoonists Paul Dirmeyer, Scott McCullar
 Photographers Michael Davis, John Makely, Dave Scott, Dean Saito, Cindi Tackitt

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M University and Bryan-College Station. Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editor or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M University administrators or faculty members, or of the Board of Regents.

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.

Letters Policy

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

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 Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

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

United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it, Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.