

Recognizing Vietnam vets

A decade after the last U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam, veterans from that war finally have received the parades and recognition they deserve.

Monday the remains of a soldier who fought for the United States in Vietnam were buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Throughout the country, Vietnam veterans actively participated in Memorial Day parades and other events honoring the fallen soldiers.

Some people protested that the burial of the unknown soldier implies that recriminations and questions about the Vietnam War will end. 2,489 soldiers are still missing. As the mother of a missing soldier said, no one is naive enough to believe all the missing men can be accounted for, but certainly more can be traced.

Reagan said at the funeral that as long as there are MIAs, the nation cannot "as much as some might want to — close this chapter in our history."

Probably the sordid chapter on Vietnam in U.S. history will never completely close. Hopefully it won't close, because lessons can and must be learned from it. If a lesson isn't learned, those who died defending this country's principles have died in vain.

The burial of the unknown soldier of Vietnam is a much-needed step in the Vietnam veterans' fight for recognition. Controversies over the effects of Agent Orange and psychological problems created by the war will persist for years.

Those who fought and suffered — the known and the unknown — deserve this recognition. They must not be blamed for the demoralizing end to a war they didn't start.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

Senate race mudslinging

Mudslinging is standard practice in most elections; the Democratic runoff for the U.S. Senate seat is no exception. But Lloyd Doggett and Kent Hance have given new definition to the practice in this political season.

Both Doggett and Hance are dredging up questionable statistics on the other's record on the issues and throwing them back in the voters' faces.

Neither candidate is telling out-and-out lies about the other — they just aren't telling the whole truth.

This might serve their purposes for now, but whether the eventual nominee will be able wash the mud off his face in November remains to be seen.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

Slouch by Jim Earle



"How could the campus get so lonesome so fast!"

The Battalion

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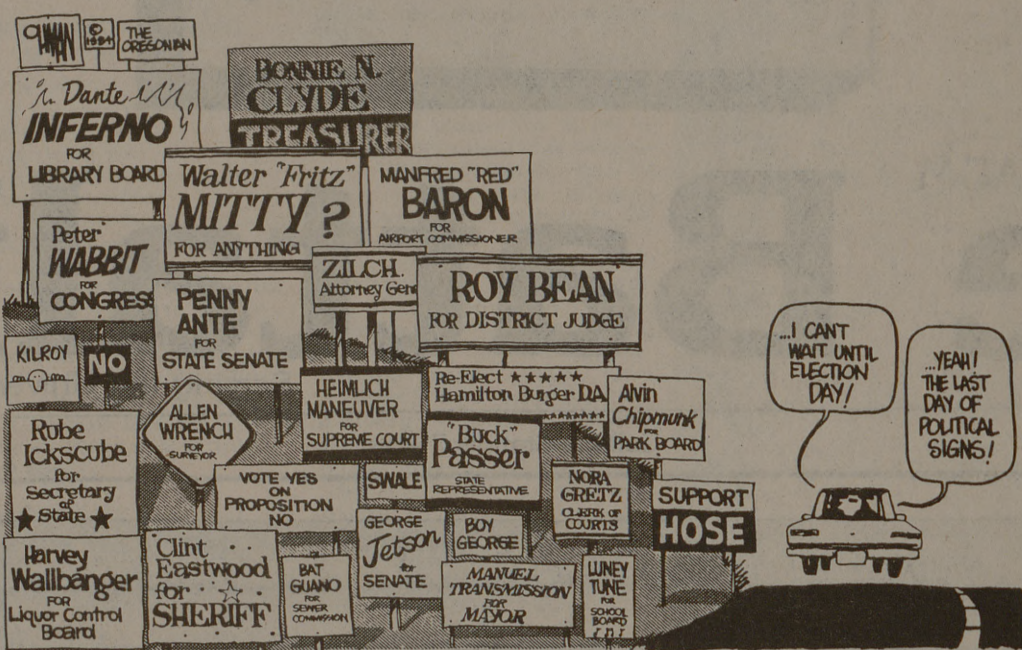
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Making elections more responsive

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — The "Movement for Real Democracy" is a genuine grassroots, or perhaps a crabgrass, political crusade.

One of its pet projects is a "voting alternative" plan that would change the format of many elections, particularly when U.S. presidents are being chosen.

I am indebted to Peter Harrell of Worcester, Mass., for sending me some literature that explains the intricacies of "Yes-No-Maybe" balloting. Generally speaking, I favor its general objective, which is to prevent unintended mandates from arising from election results.

Sponsors of the movement take the position that majority-plurality voting as now practiced in this country "allows the voter little freedom of expression and hardly any real participation in the decision-making process."

This is born "an unresponsive, easily monopolized political party system" that tends to produce "artificial consensus where none exists."

Yea, and verily. Let's hear it for an end to artificial consensus.

The real beauty of the alternative plan is its simplicity. Following the names of all candidates would appear two columns, one headed "Yes," the other "No."

A voter then could check one column or the other. Or both.

Moreover, voters also could check more than one candidate without having their ballots invalidated.

What could be simpler than that?

A simple "Yes" vote would express unqualified approval of a candidate. A simple "No" would amount to rejection. And a sim-

ple "Yes" and "No" would be tantamount to "Maybe."

Let's say, for example, a presidential ballot lists a Republican, a Democrat and four third-party candidates.

It would be possible under the alternative plan to reject the policies of both major parties while giving a firm "Maybe" to one or more of the independents.

As you can see, a preponderance of "Maybe" votes would discourage the winner from interpreting his victory as a signal the voters want him to change the world.

One word of caution, however. There is a distinct possibility none of the candidates on a ballot of this sort would emerge the clear-cut winner.

Under the Constitution, that would leave the selection of a president up to the House of Representatives. Which, according to the movement backers, would be preferable to "the frequently bogus results of coercive unexpressive voting."

If you believe that, go to the foot of the class.

On the other hand, there certainly is something to be said for a system that "gives the voter the capability of distinguishing between the major party candidates without endorsing any of them."

I commend the authors of the alternative plan for striving to make it possible to "choose the best of any number of evils without endorsing any of them." And all I ask in return is the bumper-sticker concession.

There is a fortune to be made from the sale of bumper stickers after a "Real Democracy" election. The gummied paper strips simply would bear the words: "Don't Blame Me — I Voted Maybe."

American politics needs Yogi Berra

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — Yogi Berra of the New York Yankees has spent most of his adulthood in professional baseball as a player, coach and manager.

But now I'm wondering if it isn't about time for him to switch to a career in politics. Berra seems to have talents that would make him a political natural.

This thought was inspired in part by a quotation published in a recent issue of *Omni*. Berra was cited by the magazine as the author of this aphorism: "You can observe a lot just by watching."

That surely is the stuff of which senators, if not presidents, are made. As a pearl of wisdom, the utterance ranks right up there with "You can hear a lot just by listening." Or, "You can smell a lot just by keeping your nose clean."

Consider that entire campaign goes by without producing a single word to live by. And then imagine what it would be like to have Berra on the stump, spouting his brand of enlightenment at every whistlestop.

For all too long, Berra's articulation of the eternal verities has been closely confined to the sports pages. It is time to let the sunshine in throughout the electorate at large.

Take his maxim that "You can observe a lot just by watching." Put those same words in the mouth of a Walter Mondale, a Gary Hart or a Jesse Jackson and the impact simply isn't the same.

Educating the voters to the upshot of enduring principles should be as much a part of running for office as raising funds, making promises, garnering endorsements and kissing babies. Yet this important aspect often is overlooked by the candidates.

Suppose Mondale asserted during a campaign debate that "You can feel a lot just by touching." And suppose Hart rejoined that "You can savor a lot just by tasting."

While these comments might raise the level of political debates as they have unfolded this year, they don't seem to hit home with as much force as Berra might have given them.

"It ain't over 'till it's over," is one of Berra's few famous sayings to lack political authenticity.

Maybe baseball games or seasons are over when they are over, but presidential campaigns seemingly go on forever. Berra will have to come to grips with that reality if ever he tosses his hat in the ring.

Women gaining with small steps

By PAULA SCHWED

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — Last week women made small advances that may best be signified by the fact Gloria Steinem, once a radical young feminist, turned and started saving for her old age.

Talk of female liberty may center on the Equal Amendment and lady vice presidents, but it is the steps that best signify women are improving their lot.

Carol Dinkins, 38, was sworn in as deputy attorney general, in charge of day-to-day operations of the Justice Department's 54,000 employees and a budget of \$3.7 billion. That's power — not just another tiresome tale of the erst ranking woman to do this or that.

Another first that smacks of far more than the news about Kristine Holderied, 21, the first woman to graduate at the top of her class at the U.S. Naval Academy and any American service academy. It doesn't matter that they called her "midshipman." She's been commissioned an ensign in the Navy and is headed for a Spanish assignment.

"I just had an opportunity and made the most of it," said Ensign Holderied, shrugging off the fuss that picture in the paper and landed her an invitation to the White House.

Both are women making their way in the world, along the day-to-day struggles that determine success. No female vice president or constitutional amendments going to fight their battles for them.

Another sign of changing times was Tuesday's passage of a pension reform bill. Most women-orientation Steinem included — never gave pensions a thought, they consider it at all, women count on their husband's retirement benefits to see them through old age.

But that faith is unwarranted. Women make up 35 percent of the nation's elderly poor. Rep. Olympia Snowe of Maine, warns that any woman "selfish enough to take care of her own children had better find a husband who will never leave her, and never get sick — and never die."

The chief force behind the reform is Rep. Gerry Ferraro, D-N.Y., a pragmatic politician being touted for those female vice presidential possibilities. She can't wait five years ago determined to improve the economic plight of elderly women like her mother, widowed at an early age. Thousands of women will have more to spend in their old age because of the congressional bill.

The law will no longer allow survivor's benefits to be paid away without the written consent of both husband and wife. Courts will be given the authority to divide pension money in divorce cases, on the theory that marriage is an economic partnership. And pension plans, which previously credited men for military service, now will allow for women who leave the work force temporarily to rear children.

Neither marriage nor children are part of Steinem's life and she will no doubt reach the age of 65 with more money in the bank than most. But she said in an interview last week, in honor of her turning 50, that she realized she had better set up a retirement fund because no one was going to do it for her.

