

The race continues

Yes Ronnie, there is a Santa Claus — and he's bringing you Christmas in June.

What's more, Mr. President, it was the Democrats, not dear old Santa who dreamed up this new idea.

That's right, the Democratic presidential candidates have decided to give the president the best gift any incumbent could ask for — they've decided to continue their bickering another month.

The issue of the Democratic presidential nomination was supposed to have been decided Tuesday night by the final primaries of the 1984 political season.

But it seems that those primaries did nothing more than give each of the three candidates for the nomination a new reason to continue the quest all the way to the San Francisco convention next month.

Walter Mondale won two primaries Tuesday and has gone to work courting the uncommitted legion of delegates. Mondale says he now has enough delegates to lock up the nomination on the first ballot.

But Gary Hart, who won three primaries including the important California contest, disputes that claim. Hart says the race is just beginning and he will go the distance.

On top of that, Jesse Jackson, backed by strong finishes across-the-board on the final "Super Tuesday," is threatening a floor fight at the convention and a challenge of more than 500 Mondale delegates.

With Hart and Jackson prepared to fight it out with Mondale, whichever candidate does emerge from the fray in San Francisco will be badly bloodied and will bear the scars of a deeply divided party.

Meanwhile, Reagan will have another month to travel the globe presenting a statesmanly image as the leader of the free world — breakfasting on crumpets with the Queen while the Democrats eat crow at the convention.

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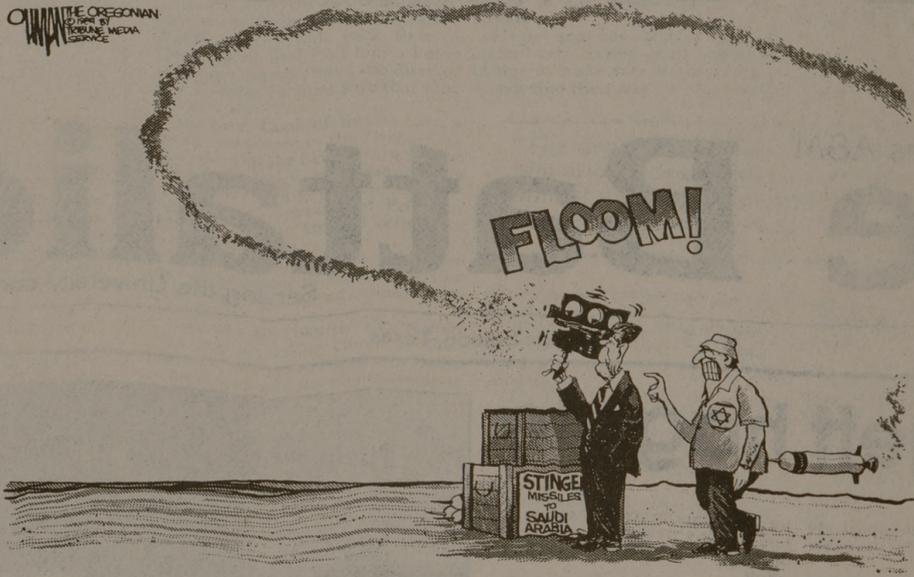
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Bickering killing Democrat's 1984 presidential aspirations

By DAVID S. BRODER

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

BLOOMFIELD, N.J. — The Democrats have finished the marathon of the primaries notably more dispirited than they began them last February. Their hopes of defeating President Reagan have died the death of a thousand cuts, all of them self-inflicted.

Rita Maguire, a shopper in this Newark suburb, knows exactly what has gone wrong. "If the Democrats would only stop bickering and dumping garbage on each other, they might have a chance," she said the other day. "I'm a Democrat, but I'll vote for Ronald Reagan. At least he looks and talks like you expect a President to do — not the junk you hear coming out of the Democrats."

Twenty weeks ago, when eight Democratic presidential candidates gathered at Dartmouth College for the first of the televised 1984 debates, there was no such pervasive pessimism among their followers. But things started out badly that day and have gone generally downhill.

On that Sunday afternoon in mid-January, Walter Mondale out-blustered then-rival John Glenn in a finger-pointing exchange. When Glenn accused Mondale of talking "gobbledygook," Mondale replied that was "baloney." Gary Hart, then just one of the pack, warned that "quarrels between you two are not going to enable this party to lead and govern again." Jesse Jackson, then an untested political novice, chided the front-runners, too, cautioning that "We Democrats have to conduct our affairs in a serious vein."

George McGovern suggested that all of Mondale's rivals resist "the tendency to clobber the front-runner," observing that "sometimes front-runners get nominated."

But all of that common sense and caution has been cast away in the overlong struggle for power that is now blessedly drawing to an end. From Hart's Vrdolyak ad to his New Jersey joke, from Mondale's "Where's the beef?" to "I'll pay back the PAC money," from Jackson's "Hymietown" to his snubbing of McGovern last week, all three of the surviving Democrats have done severe damage to their own reputations — and each other's.

The campaign is ending on a sour note, with the candidates looking wearied, scarred and tarnished. None of them is as formidable a political figure as he was five months ago.

Jackson's idealism did not prevent him from using crude ethnic labels or welcoming the support of a man who uttered threats against Jackson's critics. Hart's energy and self-confidence too often impelled him into verbal and political indiscretions. Mondale's professionalism did not prepare him for, or spare him from, the rude up-

set at Hart's hands in New Hampshire. Even when he battled back with a display of political stubbornness and stamina, he was not able to sustain his own cause except by attacking Hart.

In the end, Mondale has had to exhaust himself, his staff and his financial resources in the struggle for a prize that was supposed to fall into his hands more than two months ago. The Democratic nominating system this year was designed to favor the front-runner and to produce an early consensus nominee. Even in such a system, Mondale will probably limp across the finish line looking more like a battered survivor than a battle-toughened champion.

Some Democrats reading these words will surely object that they draw too harsh a picture of the nomination campaign and portray too bleak an assessment of their party's chances of defeating Reagan. Competition is normal and healthy, they will maintain, and the rhetoric of the primaries is often forgotten when the general-election campaign begins. Just look at the Republicans in 1980.

Look, indeed! In 1980, Ronald Reagan was up against a field of rivals at least as tough as this year's Democratic entrants, and probably a good deal tougher. Remember that it included George Bush, who had been the party chairman and a senior government official; Howard Baker and Bob Dole, two of the Senate heavyweights of the past decade; John Anderson, who developed such a strong personal following that he became an independent candidate for president; and John Connally, a man the Democrats once considered one of their best and brightest.

Reagan so dominated this cast of non-slouches that by the Illinois primary in mid-March his nomination was assured. Not long thereafter, he was left without a challenger. From New Hampshire onward, Reagan did two things with conspicuous success: He displayed a personality that disarmed his critics while continuously sharpening his indictment of the failings of the party in power.

Can anyone seriously maintain that any of the men now remaining in the Democratic race has done either of those things — let alone both? The Democrats have done one thing and one thing alone in this excessively long and frequently trivialized campaign: They have exposed each other's glaring weaknesses.

All that remains to be seen is if the Democratic convention of theoretically free-thinking delegates nominates one of these demonstrably flawed aspirants, or summons the courage to act on its own in the party's and country's interest.

Addressing no one on Capitol Hill

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Everybody is in a snarling mood these days in Washington. The latest hassle seems to be television coverage in the House of Representatives. A group of Republican conservatives using TV as a method of attacking liberal Democrats when they weren't there. While the House was not in session, the conservatives appeared on the podium and launched into vitriol against opposition. Since House rules demanded that cameras stay on the speaker, the C-Span viewer had no idea the Democrats being attacked were absent.

This enraged Speaker Tip O'Neill, who derided the cameras to show that the Republicans were addressing their remarks to an empty House. This, in turn, enraged the conservative who thought they had found a new way of getting a lot of free TV time to sock it to their colleagues.

Since congressmen are now in show business many of them are putting TV scriptwriters on their staff.

I was in Rep. Sadness's office during a "conference" last week.

The head writer said, "Congressman, the think you should attack Rep. Steeple for his position on wanting to ban handguns in elementary schools."

"Is that Steeple's position on handguns?" "We don't know and neither does the press so whatever you say Steeple stands for is what they will believe."

"Suppose Steeple gets up after me to defend himself?"

"You're not going to attack him while Congress is in session. You'll do it after legislative business while no one is there, but the TV cameras are rolling."

"Tip O'Neill is wise to us and has ordered cameras to show an empty House while speaking," Sadness said.

"We think we've solved that problem. For few bucks we persuade one of the night cleaners to sit at a desk and scowl the whole time you're questioning Steeple's patriotism. By pointing your finger at the cleaner as you attack him of every dirty commie trick in the book."

"But how can the cleaning man be Steeple?"

"You're never going to say he is Steeple. But looking at him with contempt while you're speaking, viewers are just going to assume he is. Nobody knows what Steeple looks like except a few voters in his district."

"What happens when I'm finished hitting Steeple below the belt? Does the cleaning man come up and respond?"

"He can't answer you if he isn't Steeple. He'll be arrested for impersonating a congressman. But if he slinks out with his head bowed and broom between his legs, the TV audience will believe everything you said about Steeple was true."

The congressman said, "It's a great idea. I know a cleaning man who looks like an unshaven Attila the Hun. He'd be perfect for the Steeple role. Suppose Tip O'Neill finds out what we've done and he attacks me."

"We're counting on it, because if Tip loses temper, his words can be 'taken down' for violating House rules against personal attacks on members," the chief writer said. "Then we've got ourselves a real TV show."

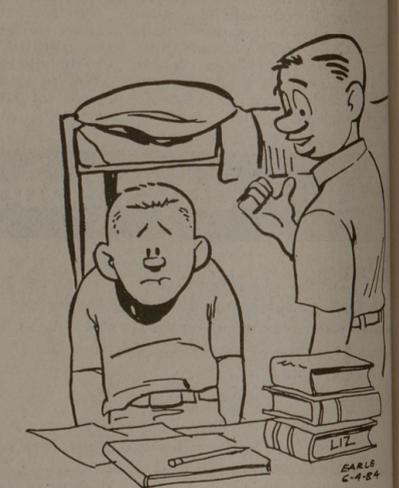
"Let me look at the script."

"Be as mean as you want," the writer said. "When you finish, yield to your pal Vander who will get up and congratulate you on your brilliant analysis of what the Democrats are wittingly doing to help sell out the country."

"After Steeple, can I smear Congress? Rigor for voting against poison gas?"

"That's what the congressional TV cameras are for."

Slouch by Jim Earle



"How was registration? How was... hello! Are you there?"

Letter: Computerization of A&M registration processes

Bravo to your editorial "Registration needs help." If there is one thing at A&M that is old, archaic and a tarnish on the administration's hopes of becoming a "world class" university, it is the registration system.

Arriving at A&M last August to begin my graduate work, I was totally surprised that such a large, not to mention wealthy, school did not have an on-line computerized registration system. The results would be amazing.

For example, Georgia Tech (11,000 students) instituted an on-line system two years ago. The registration process now proceeds like this: enter the registrar building, check the hourly-updated printouts on available courses, take 3 to 5 minutes to bubble in an op-scan form, submit it to the computer window. Within 10 minutes, out comes your schedule and fee assessment.

Excepting computer downtime, this whole system takes 30 to 40 minutes. Entrance to the registration building is based on the percentage of credit hours toward your degree you have, starting with graduate students, then seniors, juniors, ... Registration time cards are issued to every student.

This is just one of many on-line computerized registration schemes being used at universities across the country. Is it not time Texas A&M decided to join the computer age!

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