

Smoke-filled politicians disappear from scene

By DICK WEST
Columnist for
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Probably no smoke-filled rooms will be needed to secure the renomination of President Reagan at the Republican National Convention in Dallas this month.

Which may be just as well. "Do not smoke in a confined space" heads the list of etiquette tips compiled by Norman Sharp, president of the Cigar Association of America, for the 1984 campaign.

The first smoke-filled room to figure in the presidential nomination process actually was an elevator.

Buttonholled by a newspaper reporter in front of an elevator at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York, Harry Daugherty, who later served as Warren Harding's campaign manager, predicted that his tiger would emerge as the GOP nominee from a deadlocked convention.

The decision, Daugherty predicted, would be made by 15 or 20 party leaders, sitting around a big table, "bleary-eyed with loss of sleep, perspiring profusely with the excessive heat."

Sure enough, the first day of balloting passed without any candidate receiving the necessary majority, and Daugherty's prediction came true more or less as forecast but with the smoke-filled room thrown in for good measure.

The year, however, was 1920. The month was June and the convention city was Chicago. Today, hotel rooms generally have better cooling and ventilation.

Moreover, if Harding came back to life in Dallas, GOP king-makers, regardless of what price they paid for their cheroots, probably would be forbidden to sit in the non-smoking section of the room.

Administrative decisions a matter of politics

There's always a lot of talk about the "real world" in universities; how college life differs from the so-called "dog-eat-dog" existence we must enter upon graduation. The campus is viewed as secluded, like a prolonged summer camp.



Steve Thomas

Yet while we hyperbolically speculate about the distant lands of danger, real-world type cannibalism goes on right under our noses, in the Texas A&M University System.

That cannot be construed to mean the system is either bad or good, but only that it is "real"; that the faculty, staff and administrators all work in jobs where they deal with employers and employees. People are hired and fired, mistakes are made, political moves become policy, and jealousy, incompetence and general brown-nosing play a big part in what becomes of the University and its offshoots.

Just like anywhere else. Were students to peer critically at the inner-workings of the University,

they might use it as a crystal ball. It might teach them what to expect. The myth of canine cannibalism, or at least its exaggeration, could be brought into perspective for a student with open eyes.

Dogs don't really eat dogs, but they do fight a lot. Almost as much as people do. And when people work together, ambition often leads to aggression.

Whether the problem of aggression at Texas A&M is worse or better than other places is irrelevant. It exists; studying it can slap reality into even the most idealistic of minds.

And waking up from an idealistic dream can only help.

There are reasons for this aggression; reasons why politics pervade administration. Consciously or unconsciously every administrator eyes his boss's job, waiting for a crucial mistake. He displays himself (or she displays herself) in as favorable a light as possible to the kingpins at the top, taking up the slack in his performance with whatever personal selling he can get in on the side.

And on the while, consciously or unconsciously, he knows some subordinate is salivating for his job.

This is, at best, a simplified general-

ization. Some organizations aren't very political. Some make the Republican Party look like a class exercise for political science. And the workings and underlying psychology, regardless of the scope, are usually exponentially more complex.

Does this sound sinister? If so, don't work for IBM. Or GM. Or Milford's Pet Shop, for that matter.

Try the Peace Corps. At least there when you feel you've been shafted, you'll have the natives to comfort you (if you're not one of their shafts over a fire).

If you're guiding your career toward administration, there are still a few quirks you should know about. People who make big decisions have to answer to big bosses. And everyone has a boss. At Texas A&M the regents pay homage to the former students and the state of Texas. Politicians bow to voters, corporate giants woo customers.

The whims of these overlords—voters, customers, states and students—usually guide the administrators in their decisions. There are times, however, when a decision will be unpopular regardless of its direction. You, the administrator, then have to ride out the storm of criticism with confident

dignity, whether you were wrong or right.

The Albritton Bell Tower is a good example. The press and the public, with some exceptions, were ready to offer the regents up for sacrifice because they thought the money could be more equitably spent. I also thought it was a travesty; a genuine waste of good, American currency, because there were so many other things we needed.

Then a professor reminded me of a similar controversy when, a few years ago, the University decided to spend some big bucks on landscaping, because Texas A&M "resembled a concentration camp."

Everybody and their Scottish grandmother screamed "wasted money!" Now, of course, we all brag and ramble about how pretty the campus is. He said the bell tower will be tradition within a few years, and at no cost to the University.

I awkwardly capitulated. But administrators can't capitulate, and very often can't give rock-hard financial reasons for what they do. A strong-sell political front is sometimes their only salvation, if there is any.

This should not elicit pity, though, because administrators are paid to

take pressure and make tough choices like ditch diggers are paid to work in the hot sun. And will be fired if they don't (or, at least, they should be). Their mistakes can't be excused because of the glitches that go with the job.

Still aspiring to administration? One more little hint. Hard work is not enough, though you'll never get anywhere without it. There are people who work far above their salary's requirements, both in hours and performance, who never advance a step (and though some like it that way, logically some don't). The formula for ascension, caustic as it may sound, boils down to one word:

Politics. The people who know the system and how to maneuver with it, make it, and those who don't, don't. You have to work hard to climb a mountain, but you also have to know how to mountain-climb.

Discouraged? Don't be. Analyze your life and relationships as they are now and I think you'll find the games are similar. Only the stakes are different.

Steve Thomas is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Letters:

Check cashing policy chided by employee

Editor: Thanks for the very informative column written by Kari Fluegel. I agree with her, and wish to let the University know that I am disturbed by the new rule of no payroll check cashing at the Coke Building. I am one of the few who do not use the banks in this area, so every payday I cash my payroll check at the Coke Building.

If check cashing is discontinued at the Coke Building then other arrangements should be made for those of us who need to cash our payroll checks at the University on payday.

Please take into consideration a special cash line for payroll checks for those who need it. I, for one, would greatly appreciate it.

Gladys M. Smith
Secretary, TAMU Biology Dept.

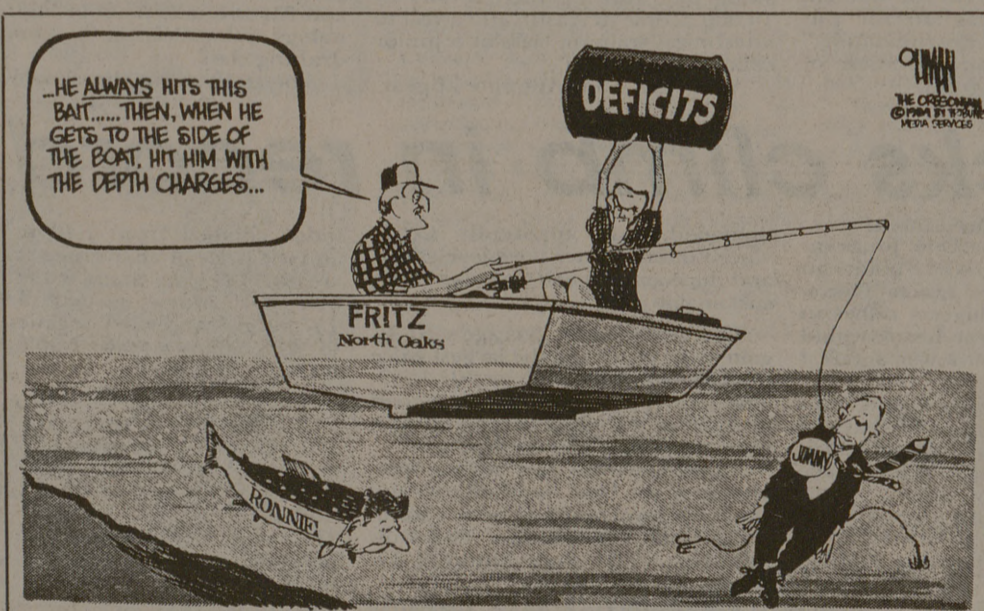
Student disturbed by library noise

Editor: To all students who use the MSC Browning Library:

I go to the Browning Library almost every day. I go there to read. However, many students seem to go there for the express purpose of tapping their pencils against the nearest available solid, resonant object. People listening to the headphones do this a lot. They often drum their fingers and hum along with the rhythm, too. I find this intensely distracting.

Please, if you must fidget, do it at home. After you've got it out of your system, by all means c'mon over and be quiet with the rest of us. We'll all be quiet together. Gosh, what fun.

Ross Miller



The Battalion
USPS 045 360

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Olympics just a job for television scouts

By ART BUCHWALD
Columnist for
The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Not everybody at the Los Angeles Olympics is there for fun. Seated in the bleachers, making notes and rarely smiling, are scouts for almost every advertising agency in the world. Their dream is to find another Bruce Jenner or Mark Spitz to push their products for the next four years.

I asked Morgan Whiteley, who has been scouting every Olympics for the last 20 years, what he looks for in an Olympic star. "I don't care how high he can jump or how fast he can run, he has to have credibility with the public to sell razor blades. Other people may be looking at his legs, but I'm looking at his face. Some athletes never look properly shaved."

"Are you only looking for a gold medal winner who can sell razor blades?"

"No. I've got a list of clients who want to sign up this year's stars. But the competition is rough and amateur athletes are now wise to how much money there is to be made in going for the gold. Every time you approach one on the field he refers you to his agent. Endorsements don't come cheap any more. I could sign up a four-man relay team eight years ago for what it cost me for one lousy amateur boxer this year."

"I assume that you're only interested in gold medal winners."

"That's the ticket. You're not going to get anyone to buy Wheaties from a guy who finished 25th in the marathon."

"Are you out scouting the swimmers as well?"

"Of course. Everyone likes swimmers. I've got a bathing suit client who is willing to pay \$100,000 for an American breast-stroke champion."

"That shouldn't be a problem." "It is if she doesn't look good in a bathing suit. Unlike most people who watch swimmers when they're in the water, I have to look at them when they're walking around the pool. Just because you're a champion breast stroker doesn't mean you have a champion's chest."

"I don't imagine everyone who wins a gold medal is on your shopping list."

"That's true. You can forget scullers, archers and volleyball players. They don't even make goo American Express Card commercials. What you're looking for is a star. Nobody cares if an equestrian rider drinks milk or not, or whether a cyclist uses under-arm deodorant. What I really want is a 4 ft., 6 in. gymnast who can carry a 35-pound computer through an airport terminal."

"Have you ever signed an athlete and been disappointed?"

"I had a case the other day. I signed up a 350-pound weightlifter to kick the hell out of the luggage we represent to show it could take a beating. Then he took a test and they found out he was using hormones."

"What a blow," I said.

"Fortunately it wasn't a total loss. We also handle a large pharmaceutical company which was looking desperately for someone to endorse their steroids."