

OPINION

'I have a dream'

A great man would have been 56-years-old today, had it not been for the assassin's bullet that killed him nearly 17 years ago. Martin Luther King, Jr. made giant strides in the civil rights movement in the '60s, stressing peaceful resistance rather than violent rebellion.

In his "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963, he warned blacks not "to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred," but to "conduct our struggle on the highest planes of dignity and discipline."

For his efforts to win equality for all people, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the same year Congress passed the Civil Rights Act which opened public facilities to all Americans.

His dream was that black children and white children would one day grow up as brothers and sisters. Although King's dream has yet to be fulfilled, the fight for equality continues today.

We share in King's dream that some day soon "all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'"

The Battalion Editorial Board

Truth in the media

Last month, a reporter for the newspaper in Hattiesburg, Mississippi — the Hattiesburg American — got an anonymous tip that there was a contract out on the life of Hattiesburg resident Oscar Black. The reporter called the police with the information.

The police then approached the newspaper and the local news station, WDAM, and asked them to cooperate with them in a set-up in which the police faked the death of the targeted man. The police wanted the journalists to report the faked death, so that a police officer, posing as the hit man, could collect the payoff and catch the person who ordered the contract.

WDAM reported the faked death, even going so far as to show the "victim's" truck with the "murder weapon" under the seat. The broadcaster said he felt he had to report the false information in order to save a man's life.

The Hattiesburg American, however, refused to print the story, arguing that the paper would lose all credibility by knowingly printing false information.

There is a significant difference between printing false information and withholding information. The purpose of the press — to report the news accurately and objectively — is defeated when journalists get involved with making the news rather than just reporting it. By actually participating in the set-up, the broadcasters compromised journalistic ethics and the bond of trust that is essential between the public and the press.

A function of the journalist is to be an objective watchdog of government and local agencies, to ensure that the interests of the public are fairly represented by those agencies.

But journalists also have to be objective enough to decide when reporting certain stories would jeopardize the public well-being rather than enhance it.

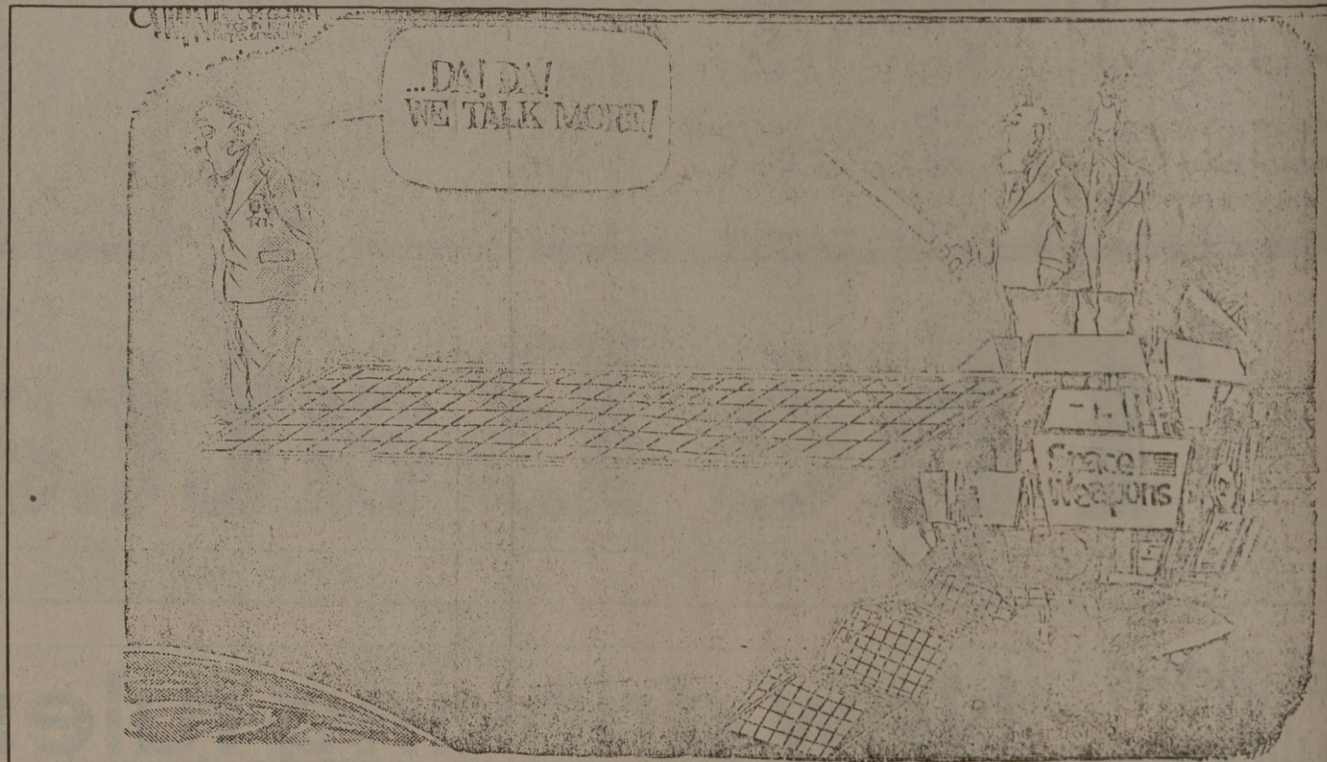
During the Iran hostage crisis, journalists made the crucial decision not to report that Americans were hiding in the Canadian Embassy. If journalists hadn't cooperated with government officials, Iranians surely would have stormed the embassy and endangered the lives of many.

Obviously the reporter for the Hattiesburg American was concerned about Black's life, and the decision not to print the false story was probably a difficult one. But the dilemma she faced went beyond saving one man's life because as a journalist she had to consider the long-term effects her decision would have on journalism's role in society.

The American public demands unbiased, objective reporting from its journalists; it demands — and rightfully so — that the news be accurate and fair.

If people were never sure that what they were reading was truthful or fixed, they would never fully trust journalists and eventually would not believe anything they read in newspapers or heard on the news. And the important purpose of journalism would be destroyed. The public would have no way of ensuring its interests were being represented.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Pentagon officials should not blame anyone but themselves

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The administration is mad at the media for breaking the story on its hush-hush military space shuttle mission which will take place Jan. 23, 1985, between 1:15 and 4:15 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

How did the news people find out the military was launching a top secret "grapefruit" from Discovery on the date in question? The Pentagon held a press conference to announce it.

A brigadier general in full uniform told reporters the mission was so sensitive, that if anything leaked out about it, the national security of the country would be threatened. Anyone who speculated as to what the Air Force was up to was giving aid, comfort and information to the Soviets.

I hope the Pentagon will forgive me for saying this, but it has only itself to blame for the story getting the play it did. When you're in the business of launching a top-secret payload from a NASA shuttle you don't call a televised press conference a month before flight time to announce that you're not going to talk about what you're doing, and the media better not look any further into the story.

This is particularly true during the holiday season. Up until the Air Force alerted the world to its mission, most newspaper and television reporters were sucking their thumbs in Washington, putting out stories about who the next Democratic Party chairman would be, what Nancy Reagan was giving Ronnie for Christmas, and how much voltage it took to light the national Christmas tree on the mall.

NASA officials couldn't sell a story in December on the next shuttle flight if their lives depended on it. As far as the public is concerned, the program has become old hat, and when you've seen one shuttle flight you've seen them all.

I am not against the Air Force secretly launching military hardware into space. I just think there are better ways of doing it than alerting the media to their plans, and then warning them not to "speculate" what the military is up to.

This is how the Defense Department should have handled it.

It has already been announced that an American schoolteacher would be the first "non-astronaut," "non-scientist" to take a ride on the shuttle.

Instead of the Air Force calling a press conference, NASA should have announced they had selected a teacher for the next shuttle mission. Let's say it was Miss Gottleib of Public School 35, in Hollis, N.Y. Miss Gottleib would be flown to Washington with her entire class.

For a month the media would follow every waking moment of Miss Gottleib's training. On January 23 the entire world would be tuned in on this historic flight. Every TV camera would follow the teacher from her dressing room to the launch pad to liftoff.

Houston Control would provide us with hourly reports from Miss Gottleib on how she was enjoying her trip. Now, unbeknownst to anyone, except the captain of the shuttle, the Air Force would have placed its top-secret package in the hatch. When the shuttle passed over the Soviet Union, and with all cameras focused on Miss Gottleib bouncing up and down in the cabin in a weightless condition, the captain would sneak back to

the cargo bay and kick out the satellite into the sky.

After the flight, while Miss Gottleib rode in a ticker-tape parade down E. Avenue, the Air Force's \$300 million gizmo would be safely in stationary orbit, listening to Chernenko snoring Moscow, measuring heat from Siberian outhouses, and photographing Russian generals drinking vodka with their mistresses on the Black Sea. Not one person inside or outside the media would be any the wiser as to what Discovery's mission was.

That's how you conduct a secret satellite operation. If the people in the Pentagon don't know how to do it, let's let somebody in this country who does.

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.
The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography class within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.
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Some of the best lies of 1984 remembered

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

A lot of people lied to all of us in 1984. Here are just a few of the whoppers I remember.

"I'm from the telephone company, and I'm here to save you money."

"The rise in the price of a postage stamp from 20 to 22 cents will speed up the delivery of a first-class letter."

"With the new human services cuts I have recommended, no one truly in need will suffer."

"The CIA has no intention of overthrowing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua."

"Geraldine Ferraro's sex had nothing to do with my voting against her."

"The U.S. budget deficit does not affect the nation's economy."

"Our tobacco company found no supporting evidence that smoking is harmful to your health."

"The Treasury's new tax reform will benefit every man, woman and child in this country."

"It's impossible. Our computer never makes a mistake."

"You will make a fortune if you invest in the New Orleans World's Fair."

"Acid rain is not a problem."

"Just leave your name with the an-

swering service and we'll get back to you right away."

"This university has never offered a high school star football player anything more than room and board to recruit him."

"If you ban bullets that penetrate policeman's armored vests, every hunter and sportsman in America will be penalized."

"This is the last diet you will ever have to go on."

"I only posed for one roll of film for Penthouse magazine."

"If you buy our product and you're not satisfied, you may return it within

30 days and we will cheerfully refund your money."

"God wants you to vote for Ronald Reagan."

"The Soviet Union would never interfere in the domestic affairs of Poland."

"Our latest model will give you 40 miles to the gallon."

"The FBI does not consider blowing up a Planned Parenthood clinic a terrorist act."

"Deregulation of natural gas will lower your heating bills."

"You can move in tomorrow and you won't have to do one thing to fix it up."

"Our delivery man will be at your house before noon."