

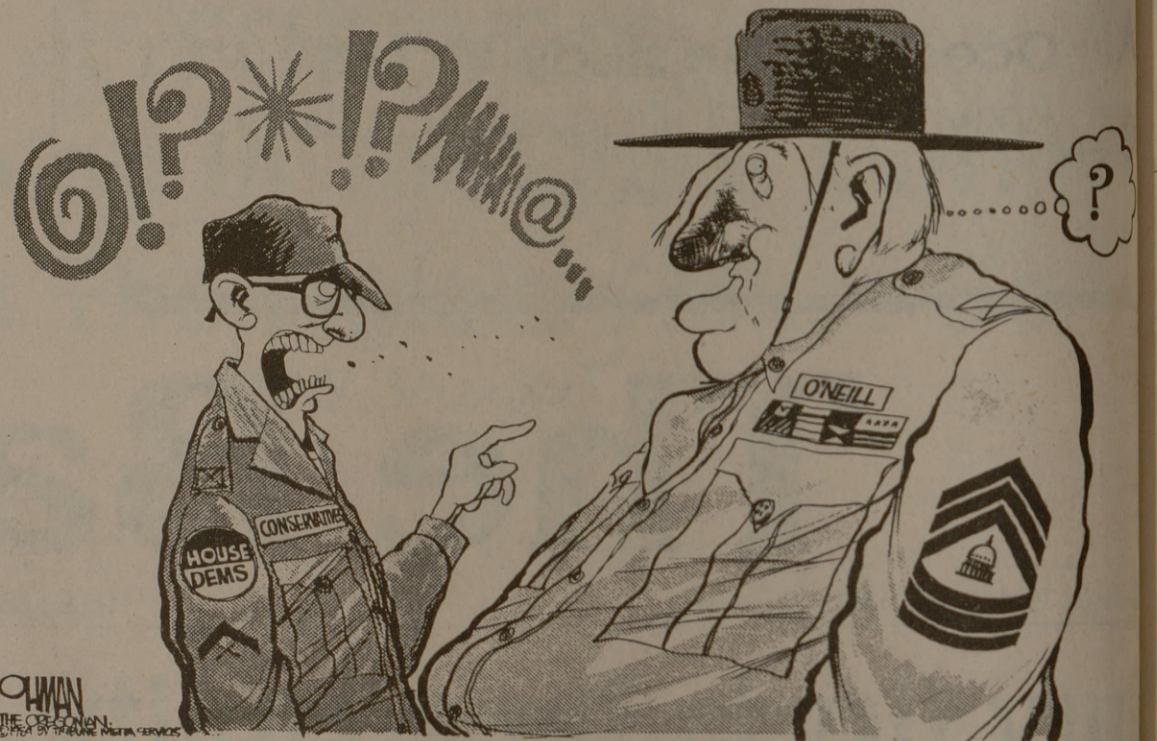
OPINION

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Protecting the environment a no-win battle

Picture this. The slimy surface of a lake scattered with rotting fish. A towering smokestack belching ink black smoke. Passing motorists pitching garbage onto the side of a highway.

Sort of a downer isn't it?

Sadly, protecting the environment and the discussion of pollution problems are victims of a public relations-happy society. Who can give "good press" to such a consistently depressing subject? Imagine trying to wade through the current toxic waste disposal problem without wishing for a strong drink or the next episode of "Leave It To Beaver."

It's hard to deal with such a mind-numbing subject. The world is danger-

Ed Cassavoy

ous enough with MIRVs, ICBMs, SS-20s, F-15s and miscellaneous other nasties floating around, without having to worry about whether your ice tea is full of dioxin.

Scientists had the right idea when they started naming chemicals. Dioxin, chlorine and methane scare the hell out of me just by reading the names out loud.

So I say them to myself and the fear does not subside. It's like being a fly stuck to fly paper — struggle and squirm and you only get mired deeper into the mess.

And a very complicated mess at that. The type of awesome, towering stack of interrelated problems and conflicts that promise to hurt something and injure someone and confuse everyone.

Try to figure out acid rain problems.

Make factories put scrubbers on smoke stacks to reduce acid rain producing chemicals. Save the lakes or lose jobs. Ignore on the short term, pay in the long term. Keep government out of our lives or risk companies destroying our future. Not much to smile about.

So most people look down and shuffle their feet. It's easy and maybe it makes life a little easier. There is not a lot of hope of changing anything.

Then again there is not any hope if you ignore it.

Spaceship Earth is getting tinier by the minute. And more fragile. Like that frayed teddy bear that you dragged around the house as a child, our planet is getting loved to death.

Ours is the first generation of finite dreams. The mind can and will always journey to distant lands regardless of

time and dimension. The rotten part is our bodies are literally stuck to a big hunk of rock whizzing through space.

But earthly dreams are tainted by a world slowly going to pieces. The depletion of fossil fuels looms ahead. Our lakes are suffocating under a deadly acid rain. Animal species are disappearing at an alarming pace. Atomic waste won't disappear.

And the list goes on and on.

Environmentalists are watched suspiciously by the public at large. The survival of the snail darter, the bald eagle or Yellowstone Park does not first appear to be the life or death struggle it is.

But weave each of these separate threads together, and the pattern grows more vivid.

The environmentalists are playing a global game of Russian roulette. Save

this species of whale, watch two more hopelessly depleted. Get regulations to control pollution and watch them be ignored by a sympathetic government.

The human race is beyond the simplistic mentality of Smokey the Bear and "Give a Hoot, Don't Pollute." Like a student leaving college to deal with a strange and violent world, the human race must decide to cast off their environmental blinders.

Now our collective gaze moves to the stars with yearning. Out there, we imagine, is a new and better place to live. Ironically we imagine this ideal world to look like Earth — the Earth we used to have.

Sort of a downer isn't it?

Ed Cassavoy is the city editor and a weekly columnist for *The Battalion*.

Postponing presidential inaugurations until after the Super Bowl is a sacred American tradition

By ART BUCHWALD
Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

If anyone is wondering why the inauguration of the president of the United States was postponed from Sunday, January 20, to Monday the 21st, all they have to do is go back to their history books and read about the creation of the Constitution of the United States.

Fifty-five of the founding fathers met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 to write the greatest document in the history of mankind. It wasn't easy because every paragraph was fought over to protect the interests of the individual states.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks was when to swear in the president of the country. The suggested date for his inauguration was January 20, and there didn't seem to be any argument about it until John Adams of Massachusetts stood up and said, "Suppose January 20th falls on a Sunday, the same day as the Super Bowl is to be played? Do we still hold the president's inauguration on that day?"

The founding father from Rhode Island said, "I say verily the inauguration of the president of the United States must have precedence over the Super Bowl."

A founding father from Pennsylvania, who also owned a piece of the Philadelphia Eagles, jumped up and cried, "The American people will never stand for it. They didn't fight a bloody revolution to see the Super Bowl be moved from Sunday to Monday. I say verily the Super Bowl be played on its traditional Sunday and the president have his inauguration at a less auspicious time."

Another founding father from Pennsylvania, "Speaking for the Pittsburgh Steelers, I fully concur."

The founding father from New Jersey, who never dreamed the New York Giants and the New York Jets would one day move to his state, took the floor. "How can the United States become the most powerful nation in the world, when it would put off the inauguration of its leader to pander to the sports tastes of its countrymen?"

This enraged the representative from Georgia, who had received PAC money from the Atlanta Falcons. "Nobody in my state cares when they inaugurate a president, but everyone knows you only play a Super Bowl on Sunday. I cannot go back home and ask my people to ratify this Constitution if the day of the Super Bowl has to be postponed in the name of political expediency."

The founding father from North Carolina hooted. "What difference does it make to you? The Atlanta Falcons will never get to the Super Bowl anyway."

The house broke into booing and laughter.

George Washington, who was presiding and had no idea that someday an NFL team would be named after him, said, "I think we should table this matter for the moment until we can speak to football commissioner Pete Rozelle, to see if his feet are in cement on the January 20th date."

John Adams rose and said, "I can speak for Commissioner Rozelle, as I represented the New England Patriots

at the last league meeting. He said he would be breaking faith with the millions of people in the 13 states if the game was not held on a Sunday two weeks after the playoffs."

The founding father from Delaware roared, "The president comes first — first in peace, first in war, and first in the heart of his countrymen."

Alexander Hamilton, who had season tickets to all the New York Giants games, said, "The delegate can easily say that since Delaware could never support a NFL franchise if every person in the state came to every game."

The constitutional convention was in shambles and about to disintegrate when James Madison offered his famous compromise. "Gentlemen, in deference to the states that do not have NFL franchises, I propose we do not put it in writing that the Super Bowl have precedence over the inauguration of the president. But let us include in the minutes that it was the will of this body that if the 20th of January falls on a Sunday we wanted the Super Bowl to be played first."

The motion was adopted and the Constitution was saved. That is why this year President Ronald Reagan, a strict constitutionalist, will be sworn in privately on Sunday, but his inauguration, according to the wishes of the founding fathers, will be held Monday.

It's the size of the screen that counts

By ART BUCHWALD
Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

There was a time when the status symbol in our crowd was the swimming pool. Then everyone installed a swimming pool and it almost became chic not to have one.

After swimming pools, the thing to own was a tennis court. The person with the private tennis court had the drop on all of us. Then tennis courts started popping up in the neighborhood, and pretty soon the tennis court owner had as much trouble getting players to come over as the swimming pool proprietor had recruiting sunbathers.

What could possibly replace swimming pools and tennis courts as a social attraction?

We didn't have long to wait. It was the super large TV screen.

I discovered this the hard way. At one time the gang used to come over to my house to watch the football games on my new 25-inch set. My wife provided popcorn, potato chips, beer, assorted

cheeses and pate, and key lime pie. We had a lock on the Redskin games played away from home as well as the NFL playoffs, New Year's Day college bowls, and, of course, the Super Bowl game, which became the most sought-after invitation in Washington.

We thought it would go on forever. But three years ago at Super Bowl time I started to call up the gang to get a head count on who was coming over. I called Phil and he said he was going over to George's.

"Why are you going to George's?" I asked.

"Haven't you heard? He just got a 50-inch TV screen. It will be like seeing the game live."

"How could he do that? The Super Bowl belongs to us."

"I'm sorry," Phil said. "But you can't expect to keep it with a 25-inch screen."

Calls to Jack, Ben, Joe, Harry and Charley all confirmed my worst fears. They were going over to George's to watch the game. Charley said if it were just him, he'd come over to my house, but he had to think of his kids.

When I told my wife that we had lost the Super Bowl to George, she couldn't believe it. "But I've fed those people for 10 years. Why would they leave us now?"

"We're not talking about food. We're talking about 25 inches," I said bitterly. "I never thought George would buy a new house with an extra large living room just to get the crowd away from us."

"What do we do now?"

"I'm going down to the TV store tomorrow and price 50-inch screens."

"Not in my living room," she said. "I'm not going to turn it into a Holiday Inn bar. If George wants the Super Bowl that badly he can have it. Are you going to go over and watch it on his set?"

"What choice do I have? If I don't everyone will call me a sore loser."

I went to George's for the game. The screen was 50 inches as advertised, but the picture was fuzzy and out of shape and you had to sit directly in front of it to see what was going on. Despite all this

everyone kept congratulating George on his set, making nasty remarks about mine. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but typical of the fickle behavior of NFL football fans all over America. One Sunday you're cheered and the next Sunday you're booed.

George didn't hold the crowd for long. He had two years before David installed an entire "entertainment complex" in his basement, including a 60-inch screen that came down electronically from the ceiling and a custom-built TV set superior to any on the market. We all left George for David before the Washington-Dallas game this year.

It cost David \$40,000, but we told him it was worth it.

What David doesn't know is that Jack is planning to turn his garage into a mini-movie theater, with a 7-foot screen which will be completed for the Redskin Monday night game next season. It's too bad David only has the Super Bowl for one year, but when it comes to football watching you're only as good as the size of your last TV set.

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

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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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