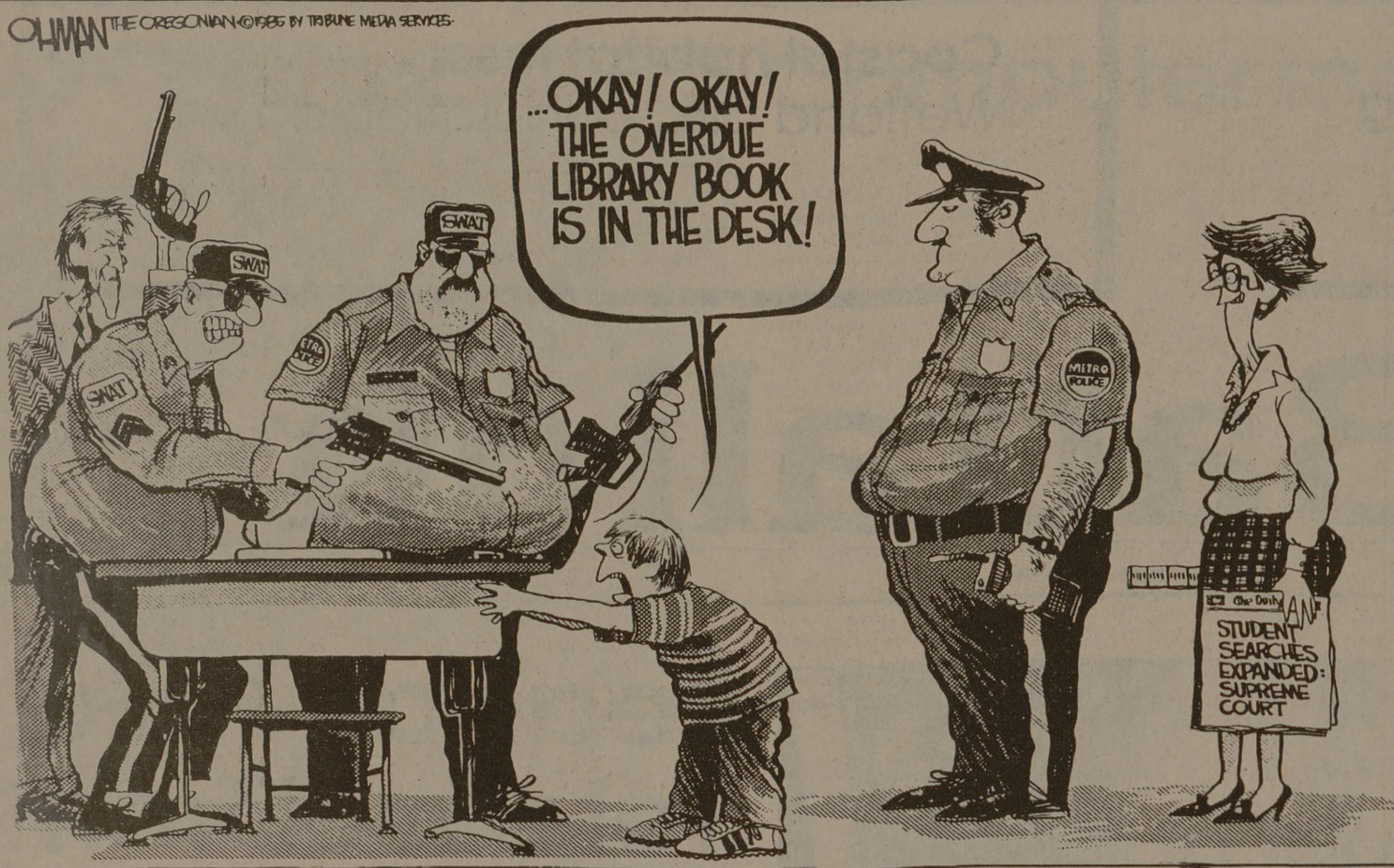
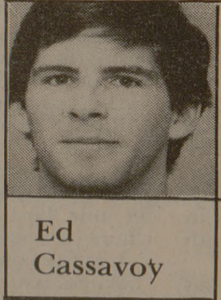


OPINION



Normalcy is a state of mind

Characters. Everyone has that special person from their hometown or neighborhood that everyone knew to be, well you know, a little strange.



Ed Cassavoy

In a world where it is easy to get lost in a maze of black and white images, it always comes as a relief to me catching a character in action.

Some cities remain clearer in my memory not so much for the food, the good parking or the local baseball team, as for that wonderful guy yelling at the top of his lungs in the middle of the main street.

In Toronto, I marvelled at the unusual sights experienced in one brief day of wandering around the downtown core.

Jump on the subway and enter into a tiny planet peopled by a smattering of dreams, experiences and fragments of life. I would usually ride with my Walkman headphones on — sans music — and tune into the subway community.

Sometimes the experience is far from pleasant. Try sharing an empty car with one large dangerous looking individual who is content to sit across from you and stare. And stare. And stare. I decided the guy didn't have eyelids.

Or try and not be touched by the sad-

ness of another wandering soul who shared the seat across from me riding from Bloor Station to Eglinton Station. As I let my eyes jump from one advertisement to the pile of people jammed into the car I happened to see the man. A very ordinary man. One that on any other day you might well miss except for his face. Because placed on the downturned face of this very ordinary man was the most extraordinary thing. His eyes were mismatched. One eye was half an inch above the other. Not the prettiest sight, or even that extraordinary in a huge city harboring more than its fair quota of tragedies.

Nevertheless I found myself fascinated by the way he carried himself in a world where he was an immediate misfit. A tin soldier cast without one leg.

Sadness was the immediate feeling that tugged at my heart. But as the subway car jiggled and screeched to the next stop and I watched this little man so intensely interested in his shoes, I couldn't help feeling proud for this guy who had the guts to prove his existence in a hostile world.

I guess it would be naive for me to believe he doesn't suffer the neverending battle of being "different." It is probably a bittersweet pill to swallow each day. But there is beauty in his imperfection — or should I say surface imperfection.

Skirting the usual route to the downtown core, I stumbled upon a woman having a rather heated argument. Waving a tattered shopping bag at her ad-

versary, I couldn't help but feel sorry for her victim. A snowcovered Volvo was the target of this verbal tussle. Car abuse taken to the extreme.

Or the righteous indignation displayed by a drunk who missed his stop on the streetcar and lushly bawled out the surprised driver, who looked like he probably could use a beer as well.

The performance ended with the drunk standing in front of the streetcar attempting to copy down the car number onto a dirty paper bag. Mumbled promises of lawsuits and protests flew into the air before the icy wind whipped all his alcohol-soaked reasoning down the street.

And I can't help but remember Frank. As a kid, I was the diligent safety patrolter decked out in the standard orange belt. Keeping my corner safe for all the students going to the elementary school.

Everyday I had an extra customer. His name was Frank. He had a 28-year-old's body, but the mind of a small child. And he was one of us.

Frank would head out to the handicap center every morning, decked out in a purple cap and his Sesame Street lunch box, and say hi to me. Just that.

And every morning, as I watched his unique walk-run, I was always happy to see my friend.

Tolerance and normalcy, I guess, are a state of mind.

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

Official rhetoric never changes

GEORGE F. WILL
WASHINGTON POST COLUMNIST

Konstantin Chernenko's strength is reportedly ebbing, and not suprisingly: Building the New Soviet Man and a workers' paradise worthy of him involves long hours and heavy lifting.

So, just to be ready, here is a generic news story to be run whenever a Soviet "leader" (an odd term for the head of a nation where people have no choice but to follow) dies:

WASHINGTON — The death of the Soviet leader is viewed here as a promising "opening" in U.S.-Soviet relations. His successor, Ivan X, is considered a "moderate."

State Department officials warn that it would be "superficial" to draw "premature" conclusions based on the "mere facts" of his life, which "on the surface" follows the traditional career path of the Soviet elite. "True," a U.S. official says, "Mr. X has spent 27 years arresting people, but he probably has got all that out of his system."

As evidence of Mr. X's moderation, State Department analysts note that although no one has actually seen him jog, the consensus in the diplomatic community is that he jogs in New Balance shoes, which are made in Massachusetts. Also, he is said to use a Walkman, on which he listens to Bruce Springsteen tapes.

"He is a high tech, 'new ideas,' Gary Hart-type appealing to Soviet yuppies," said a Yale Kremlinologist. A Harvard professor of Detente Studies, noting that Springsteen's current hit is "Born in the U.S.A.," infers that Mr. X may wish to "normalize" relations with Afghanistan.

It is common knowledge that Mr. X snacks on Twinkies delivered by diplomatic pouch. "Clearly," says a State Department Soviet expert, "he is cosmopolitan, breaking the mold of insularity."

The State Department acknowledges some gaps in its knowledge of Mr. X. For example, equal numbers of experts are certain that he does and that he does not speak English.

Although Mr. X has published many articles, the State Department says little is known about what he "really" thinks. "Did 'Mein Kampf' tell us Hitler's mind?" cautions an official.

Mr. X's writings include attacks on freedom of expression, a defense of the "export of socialist fraternity to Afghanistan," and "Against Bourgeois Sentimentalism: A War-Winning Strategy for Nuclear Weapons."

A State Department official explains, "True, a literal reading of his writings might suggest he is occasionally somewhat muted in his enthusiasm for the

spirits of detente, Geneva, Helsinki, San Clemente. But sophisticated Western observers understand that the distance to traditional rhetorical modes required for advancement in a society "conservative" as the Soviet Union, is utterly unlike our society.

"Furthermore, Americans must understand that in the Soviet system, as in ours, the role of personality is paramount." Asked how U.S. options could rest on the assumption that Soviet society is radically unlike and essentially similar to ours, the official said: "Nevertheless."

The official notes that "seasoned servers" believe Mr. X opposed the viet suppression of East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. "liberalization" of concentration camps and is a middle-of-the-roader regarding the psychiatric "hospitals."

The State Department considers "encouraging" that Mr. X has more power while privately opposing a significant Soviet policy in his lifetime.

At a recent Moscow reception for an American peace group, Clergy and the U.S. Military Concerned, a Soviet official confided that Mr. X, 69, is a "Turk" who wants arms control so that Soviet living standards can rise. The viet official said Mr. X is "pragmatic" sort of a Soviet Howard Baker, but threatened by "hawks" in the Politburo.

State Department officials concede that Mr. X and other "doves in Kremlin closets" need a sign from the United States that it "means no harm." U.S. diplomats are formulating "approaches" that will show U.S. "flexibility" in arms-control negotiations. Soviets made a concession by returning to the talks they had broken off, an official observes, "so a U.S. concession would be symmetrical."

The Commerce Department is organizing trade delegation committed "prophylactic unilateralism," meaning credits to underwrite Soviet purchases of U.S. goods.

A White House official, paraphrasing Churchill, explains that all U.S. rests on the principle, "Jaw-jaw is better than even prime rib."

At the State Department, a report recalled that optimism about the "moderate" Khrushchev died with the Hungarian invasion, the Berlin Wall and Cuban missile crisis, and optimism about the "moderate" Brezhnev died in Prague, Afghanistan, Yemen, Angola, Ethiopia and Poland. A State Department official replied: "Yes, but."

LETTERS:

All journalists are biased and left-wing

I've never watched WDAM and I wouldn't trust a journalist if my life depended on it. With the exception of only a few, no more than I could count on one hand, all journalists I've been exposed to are biased and tend to slant their material to the left. I wonder why there are no more unbiased journalists than there are, then I realize that the truth wouldn't sell as many newspapers, magazines or television shows.

Journalists have been twisting the truth for a long time and I don't see how the situation in Hattiesburg, Mississippi can be any worse, only better. Generally journalists twist the truth for profit, in Mississippi it was done to help capture a would-be killer.

In summation, this incident has not caused me to lose my confidence in journalists, they did it to themselves a long time ago. If they (journalists) were as true to their causes as they would like to be, they would add or detract nothing from the stories they report and report them only when they are truly most beneficial to the United States alone.

Bryan D. Jones
Class of '87

Battalion Ed Board position questioned

In addressing the opinion presented by the Battalion Editorial board on Friday the eighteenth of January, I first feel the need to question the ability of the editorial board to dabble in world affairs. But obviously the Editorial board decided to, somewhat lessening

their already low rapport on campus.

I realize that it is only an opinion that the editorial board expressed, but the purpose of a published opinion is to sway one's views on a subject and therefore the information contained in said opinion should be true and correct.

I believe that the Battalion editorial board fails to remember the philosophy held by the Russian government (not the people) to take over the world for communism. Which the Russians are proving day after day in Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Until the Russians change their basic doctrine, our doctrine should be one of defense.

One might question the reason to have a bomber force at all with the amount of ICBMs that we have. The bombers offer a recallable strike force whereas an ICBM cannot be recalled once launched.

With that in mind I will continue on. To say that the B-1 Bomber is no better than the B-52 is like saying that a Porsche is no better than a Ford Granada. If you wanted an effective bomber which would you take; the B-1 at 1400 mph and a payload of 115,000 pounds or the B-52 at 660 mph and a payload of 28,250 pounds. A plane that has the most up-to-date Electronic Counter Measures or a plane built in 1952. A plane capable of Mach 1.6 at treetop level or one flying at Mach .85 at 30,000 feet in plain sight of the enemy.

Personally I would want the B-1 that is a smaller target flying under the enemy's radar at twice the speed carrying almost three times the payload with the ability to jam the enemy's methods of detection. "No new technology" indeed.

A reason for the Soviets to discuss the Salt II Treaty was because they were scared or the B-1 and its Cruise Missile counterpart. Why were they scared?

They had no way to defend against either one of them.

Stealth technology has not been proven to foolproof. (Newsweek, October 19, 1982, p. 64). If the Stealth proves to be ineffective at least we have to B-1 to fall back on.

I personally would much rather see my tax dollar going to feed a starving human being than to fully integrated, digitized destructive force. The Soviet government wishes to control the world. If they are allowed to see their dream come true then you and I will be too busy trying to feed ourselves to worry about helping to feed others. American arms supplied to rebels in places like Afghanistan and Nicaragua kill people just as dead as the Soviet supplied arms. Is our way right enough to fight for? I do not know, but if it is not, then I'll see you in the food line, comrade.

I do hope in the future, before you all start writing with your whimsical stroke of a pen that the facts that are presented by you are better researched, prepared and thought out.

J. Kelly Stader
Business, non-corp

One former student sides with Jim Mattox

I browse through the Texas Aggie with amusement and usually with some consternation. I try not to let it bother me much, after all I figure the people who run the Association of Former Students are just a bunch of rich old men who like to do fund raising (whoops, excuse me, I see one of the program vice-presidents is female).

But the letter from Charlie Seely, president of the Association, on the in-

side front cover of the January 1985 issue got my goat. Charlie claims Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox has done Texas A&M a "disservice" by attempting to stop A&M from pursuing a couple of court cases, namely the refusal of the school to recognize the GSSO and the refusal of the school to allow women into the Aggie Band and other Corps organizations.

Isn't it funny how there are good court cases and bad court cases? I mean, I didn't see a letter calling for "our day in court" after an Aggie died from what amounted to university-sanctioned hazing. It was much easier to let a couple of students take the rap. And speaking of a day in court, Charlie should hope the Justice Department doesn't start nosing around checking the percentage of minority students or faculty at A&M. Now there's a court case.

Charlie said the letter wasn't a request for action, but just to keep people informed. When the request does come, A&M would be much better off if the action was to recruit gays to attend the school and encourage women to participate in school organizations of all types. The benefits of having a diverse, active student body will far outweigh the dubious benefits of maintaining A&M's redneck image. What I'm trying to say is — it is going to take more than just changing the "C" to "U" to make A&M a university.

I figure they'll probably take away my Association of Former Students bumper sticker and I may never get another calendar from them, but I think the Association is wrong. I'm glad Jim Mattox refused to support the bigotry of A&M's rulers. Jim, I'm proud of you.

Davie Witzel, Class of '82 or '83
Asbury Park, N.J.

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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.

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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