

OPINION



Vigilantism requires responsibility

Bernhard Goetz, that gun-slinging hero of victimized Americans everywhere, just can't seem to win. First, four black youths demand five dollars from the "vigilante" and he gives them five pounds of lead instead. Then he's charged with attempted murder and illegal possession of a handgun. He manages to dodge the murder charge and just when things start to look better, he gets slapped with a \$50 million lawsuit by representatives of a paralyzed and comatose victim. Now lawyers are talking civil rights violations.

Darrell Cabey, the would-be mugger turned vegetable, was shot in the spine as he tried to flee Goetz's barrage of self-defense. If Goetz is a hero, why did he shoot a 19-year-old kid in the back? Most people of vigilante ilk are more



Loren Steffy

than happy to let go of bullets, but they are usually selective about it.

Obviously, Goetz was scared. He'd been mugged before, and being of rather scrawny stature, he probably felt particularly vulnerable. So he donned enough guns to make a metal detector go into seizures and boarded the subway. At this point, Goetz became a well-shaken Dr. Pepper waiting for someone stupid enough to pop his top. Enter four youths trying to join the New York Petty Thieves' Union and say hello to disaster.

Instead of firing warning shots or simply pointing his gun at the youths and telling them to back off, Goetz emptied his magazine in their direction. Later, he said he wanted to kill the kids, but that he ran out of bullets. This man is not a hero, this man is sick. As his bloodlust rose, Goetz shot at anything young, black and moving, and it didn't matter in what direction his targets were running.

While Goetz can be admired for defending himself against crime — some-

thing that is out of control in New York — he should be criticized for the lack of responsibility he showed in that defense. If someone attacks you, it's a natural reaction to fight back. But if your assailants run from your act of defense, it is not necessary to sever their spines just for good measure.

Guns can be used for everything from target practice to mass murder. The person who pulls the trigger must decide the purpose. Potential vigilantes should remember they are trying to defend themselves against crime, not eradicate criminals from the face of the earth.

Self preservation is our right. Proclaiming ourselves judge, jury and executioner is not.

If vigilantes are going to be responsible enough to pull the trigger, they must also be responsible enough to know when to stop.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and a weekly columnist for *The Battalion*.

Is first lady next in line for new job?

By ART BUCHWALD
Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The President was adjusting quite well to all the musical chairs in the White House, but even he wasn't prepared for the big one.

One night last week Nancy Reagan said to him, "I'd like to swap jobs with Secretary of Health and Human Services, Margaret Heckler."

"How can you do that? You're the best First Lady a President ever had."

"I'm burned out, Ronnie. After giving all those luncheons and dinners for heads of state, and making all those official appearances, I feel I need a new challenge. At least as a Cabinet officer I won't have to smile all the time. Ronnie, my cheekbones hurt."

"But," the President protested, "I'm losing Deaver, Baker and Meese. You're the only one left from the old gang. With them gone, who can I confide in?"

"Margaret Heckler is well qualified to be the First Lady. She knows the inner workings of government and she's a quick study. Besides, Ronnie, it's not as if I'm leaving Washington. I'll only be a few blocks away, and I'll come over any time you want to talk."

"Gee whiz, Nancy, I just don't think it would work. If you leave me now, with all the other staff changes the American people will get upset. They sleep better knowing that you're in the White House."

"I was afraid you'd try to talk me out of it. But I have to think of my own career. There is no future in being a lame duck First Lady. As Secretary of HHS I'll have a high profile, and I won't have to deal with all the power plays in the White House any more. I'm sick and tired of everyone coming to me and asking me to put in a good word with you for all the silly ideas they have."

"You don't understand, Nancy. I can afford to lose Deaver, Baker and Meese, but who is going to look ad-

dingly at me when I make a speech?"

"I'm sure Margaret Heckler can do that. We've talked it over and I explained what the duties of First Lady entail, and she said as far as she was concerned there wasn't one she couldn't handle."

"You mean you talked it over with her before you talked it over with me?" the President said.

"I knew if I asked you first you might raise an objection. I got the idea when Donald Regan asked Jim Baker if he wanted to swap jobs. If Regan had gone to you first he could have been turned down."

"Suppose I put you on the National Security Council? Would you stay then?"

"I'd rather be in charge of Health and Human Services. I've proved myself as First Lady, and after four years there are no surprises."

"I can't believe anyone who has the ear of the President of the United States would want to throw it all away for a Cabinet position. Do you realize you're the first person who sees me in the morning and the last person who sees me at night?"

"I know that, Ronnie. But as First Lady, I'm still perceived as nothing more than your wife. As a liberated woman, I want to be appreciated for myself."

"But you promised if I were re-elected you'd remain on board as First Lady of the country for the next four years. You're indispensable to me."

"No one is indispensable to the President of the United States. And you can prove that by letting me switch with Margaret Heckler."

"I'm going to have to sleep on this one," the President said.

"Why don't you do that? And while you're at it, remember, it could be worse."

"How's that?"

"I could have offered to swap with Jeane Kirkpatrick."

Senate seating hinders productivity

Many senators are so impatient for the rectification of the world's ills that they have not taken time to notice that the Senate itself needs some attention. However, Dan Quayle has noticed, and has some proposals, to which I add this one: Rearrange the furniture on the Senate floor.



George Will

Quayle is in the fifth year of what will be, if God is willing and Indiana is wise, many terms in the Senate. A lissome young Republican of 37, he looks 27, and during his 1980 campaign he was accused — yes, accused — of looking unfairly like Robert Redford. (When will the Federal Election Commission issue regulations to correct the unfairness of candidates not looking equally splendid?)

Quayle has a number of ideas to improve two things: the conduct of business on the Senate floor, and the committee system in which most Senate business is done. He would reform the rules governing the Senate floor to make it more difficult — it is now simple

— for one member to bring the Senate to a standstill by dilatory devices (frivolous amendments, filibusters, etc.). And he would reduce the size of committees and the number of subcommittees.

If the Senate is to be what it is pleased to be called — "world's greatest deliberative body" — it must be disposed to, and able to, deliberate. But deliberation takes time, and a certain rhythm of institutional life. Deliberative senators can not live like dray horses in harness, driven by staff from one hearing to another. But for 30 years the number of senators has remained constant, as has the number of hours in the day. Neither number is apt to change soon. The number of committees and especially subcommittees has grown rapidly as senators have sought new opportunities to hire staff and make news.

When Jim Buckley left the Senate after one term representing New York (1971-76), he said the work load had doubled during his six years. One reason the load is so heavy is the proliferation of subcommittees. That has multiplied the burdens of the executive branch. When William Rucklshaus first served as head of the Environmental Protection Agency 15 years ago, he had to report to 15 committees and subcommittees. When he returned to that job in 1983, the number was 44.

Quayle's ideas are sound, but not sufficient. The Senate should rearrange its desks and chairs, for Churchillian reasons.

When a German bomb destroyed the House of Commons, the chamber could have been rebuilt along various lines. But Churchill insisted that its traditional physical features be reproduced because they sustain particular political principles.

He wanted the chamber to be oblong, with benches on two sides, facing each other, rather than with individual seats arranged in a semicircle. And he was adamant that the chamber be only big enough to seat about two-thirds of the members. He warned against "semicircular assemblies with buildings that give to every member not only a seat to sit in, but often a desk to write at, with a lid to bang" — a description of the U.S. Senate.

Churchill believed that the oblong shape was "a very potent factor in our political life" because it buttresses the rule of two durable and disciplined parties. Semicircular assemblies, he said, encourage loose assemblages of lesser groups in constantly shifting coalitions of weak principles. He said the semicircular assembly encourages "the group system" because it does nothing to en-

courage party identification, party discipline and clarity of principle. He said, strong two-party system, and a government capable of vigorous action, is nurtured by an oblong chamber. The physical fact of confrontation concentrates minds on the reality to two competing blocs, and the act of voting with the other side becomes more momentous.

Churchill thought a legislative chamber should be so small that it can not contain all its members without overcrowding. Otherwise almost all debate will be conducted in the dispiriting, trivializing atmosphere of an almost empty chamber. He thought good legislative rhetoric should be conversational, not haranguing, and the conversational style requires a small space. Furthermore, on great occasions crowding gives a sense of urgency.

It will be said that Americans should not want the Senate to sit in a smaller chamber (with, say, 50 chairs — 25 to a side) because party cohesion and conversational, cut-and-thrust rhetoric are not important to American goals. But perhaps they should be. And Churchill's theory — call it architectural determinism, or the Seating Arrangement Theory of History — is easier to ridicule than refute.

George Will is a columnist for the *Washington Post*.

LETTERS:

Battalion editors not in step with mainstream

EDITOR:

I for one am getting tired of opening my Battalion everyday to read another very liberal editorial. It would seem to me that a quality campus newspaper would at least attempt to provide editorials from both liberal and conservative viewpoints. I also find some of the editorial cartoons by Mike Love very prejudiced and distasteful. Your staff's support for homosexuals and pro-abortionists is very obvious. I find it ironic (almost humorous, but not quite) that at a university with such a strong conservative and anti-homosexual philosophy that certain members of your editorial staff can be so out of step with mainstream thought.

I would like to explain to you, and any GSS member that will listen, why many of us anti-gay conservatives feel the way we do, in hopes that some of you will better understand us.

I am tired of being called prejudiced and closeminded because I will not view homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Though I am tired of this I have no guilt because I know in my heart that I am not, and have never been prejudiced. I easily accept blacks, Jews and other minority groups as no greater or lesser than myself. I accept gays as people, but their lifestyle I cannot and will not ever condone. I don't need only the Bible to tell me that homosexuality is wrong. Biology tells me that. Any intelligent person can see that no two people of the same sex are anatomically equipped to have intercourse. Of course I realize that homosexuals seem to make

do anyway. But it seems to me that if God had intended for common sex organisms to have sexual relations, then there would be no need for creating more than one sex. It's my opinion that homosexuality is a sickness that can be treated. In the meantime I feel that the editorial staff and the gays should get off of our case and realize that we have rights as well. Do not expect us to accept homosexuality if we are morally opposed to it. For to accept it is to condone it, and this we shall never do!

Brian Bunt
Class of '86

Meeting proposed with calculator thief

EDITOR:

This is directed to the imbecile who

stole my TI-59 Programmable calculator from locker 666 in Sbis Dining Hall on Jan. 28 between 7:30 and 7:50 a.m. Allow me to make my case, imbecile. Since the calculator is useless to you unless you have a recharger (I am assuming that you don't), which are hard to come by these days, I propose that we meet either over the phone or in person to discuss your demands for the return of my calculator. (I am assuming that you know how to use a phone). I need my calculator, and the programs you also stole, very badly. Even though you are a crook, you're also an Aggie, and I hope that being here has made you enough of a man to admit your guilt and return what's mine, rather than carry on as a coward who probably hasn't the fortitude to look at himself in the mirror.

Steve Ginnings

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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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