

OPINION



# Baseball is upon us and life is worth living once again

**BALTIMORE** — You know the feeling you get watching the steamier Greek tragedies, when dynasties are falling and sons are marrying their mothers and everyone is behaving badly and you are thinking: Really, things cannot go on like this. That is how March makes proper Americans feel. Life is vain, the world is a moral void, the universe is an empty shell. Then proper Americans look toward April, the horizon where the sun will rise. The sun is baseball.

Baltimore is the best place to watch the sunrise. I will explain why, after dealing with this disagreeable business: Peter Ueberroth must go. His reign as baseball commissioner is already six months old and the wicked Designated Hitter rule has not been repealed. Worse — infinitely so — he is talking about taking an opinion poll on the subject. The mind reels. The thought occurs: Death, where is thy sting?

Who needs polls to discover if Michelangelo is superior to Andy Warhol? Some judgements should be beyond the reach of majorities. Democracy has, I suppose, its place, but in baseball? Perhaps public opinion must influence government, but baseball should not be a plaything of that turbulent, hydra-headed monster: the mob. Do we submit theories of astro physics to referenda? Surely even in an open society there are closed questions, and this is one: Should baseball be desecrated by the DH rule, which allows degenerate, football-esque specialization?



George Will

If Ueberroth's baseball bolshevism is the bad news, the good news is that our can-do country has gone and done it. It has produced a baseball book that almost contains all the information citizens ought to be required to master before being allowed to vote. The book is "The 1985 Elias Baseball Analyst."

Do you have a Gibbousque fascination with declines and falls? The book reveals that the 1984 White Sox were only the eighth team in 50 years to suffer a decline of 150 percentage points in their won-lost record compared with the immediate preceding season. In 1984 Cleveland extended to 24 its record for the most consecutive seasons (excluding the 1981 strike season) finishing more than 14 games behind the league or division leader. Before the 1984 Milwaukee Brewers did it, the last team to go in just two years from the best record in the league to the worst was during the Johnson administration. The time before that, Woodrow Wilson was in his first term.

AccDecSyn (Accelerated Decline Syndrome) exists when three criteria are satisfied: a team wins 10 fewer games in season X than in season X minus 1; it had a losing record in X minus 1; it had a winning record in X minus 2. The 1984 Giants suffered AccDecSyn.

But enough about incompetence. Let's go to Baltimore, where last Monday the Orioles, who will beat the Cubs in a six-game World Series, began what will be their 18th consecutive season over the .500 mark. Only the 1926-64 Yankees have done better, and no team has a better winning percentage (.565) over the last 29 seasons. Why are they so good? Hey, as Ring Lardner, born 100 years ago this spring used to say, you could look it up.

The Elias book says Cal Ripken, the O's shortstop, has baseball's best on-base average (.452) when leading off an inning. With the opening game tied in the eighth inning on Monday, Ripken led off and got on base. Next came Eddie Murray. The book says that last year he batted .459, with a .838 slugging average, in late-inning pressure situations with runners on base. On Monday he drove in Ripken with a home run.

As Murray began his regal, relaxed lope around the bases (Prince Charles could take lessons from Murray about the business of kingly bearing), baseball's magical mix of science and serendipity was on display.

A 162-game season is, like life, in study in cumulations. Things tend to even out, and talent tells. Ripken and Murray are gods, but there are lots of lesser but useful talents, and in a town like Baltimore, where they make good steel and sausage and baseball, they know how to make use of scraps. Who led the American League last year in the percentage of runners driven in from third with fewer than two outs? Elias knows: Jim Dwyer, Baltimore.

Past performances give rise to averages, on which managers calculate probabilities about future performance. The more you study, the less surprised you are. But no matter how hard you study, you still are surprised agreeably often, and the surprises that come to the studios are especially delicious. This is true in baseball and in the lesser stuff that is the rest of life.

George Will is a columnist for the Washington Post.



# 'Liberal' does not mean communist on

I have been called a liberal, a fool, a race traitor, a left-winger, a rabble-rouser, and a multitude of other things, many of which are unprintable. Several "good conservatives" have told me that even though I may agree with them on certain issues, I'm "still a liberal," as if liberalism is akin to leprosy.



Loren Steffy

Liberalism at Texas A&M is about as popular as Patsy Cline's hit single "Never Do a Tango with an Eskimo." Those of us who have fallen victim to the liberal brand are shunned by the conservative majority as if we're radioactive waste. However, people generally slap these labels around without ever knowing what they mean.

So I decided to take a quick flip through Webster's New World Dictionary in search of the true meaning of liberalism. "A political philosophy advocating personal freedom for the individual, democratic forms of government, gradual reform in political and social institutions, etc.," I read. Hmm. Somewhat different from the popular definition of "long-haired commie freak-o pig."

Conservative, on the other hand, is defined as: "tending to preserve established traditions or institutions and to

resist or oppose any changes in these." This definition differs from the "close-minded, self-centered, Bible-toting, conformist" stereotype.

Basically, both groups, as far as Texas A&M is concerned, advocate democratic government and freedom for the individual, but the liberal favors change and the conservative does not.

If our society is a building, conservatism gives the building the rigid strength necessary to withstand the elements. But, just as a skyscraper must be able to bend in a strong wind, society, too, must be flexible when facing potentially hazardous conditions, and that's where liberalism comes in.

Without both viewpoints society would fall apart, so a balance must exist between the right and left wings. Our founding fathers were liberals because they favored democratic reform, but without conservatives to follow them, the United States of America would have been just another revolutionary government which failed.

So, in the definitive sense, I am a liberal, because I favor change, but only when change is necessary to maintain the democratic ideals this country stands for. The liberal label does not include the words "communist," "anarchist," or "race traitor."

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

# U.S. out of line in Central America

Sen. Phil Gramm warned last week that the United States must continue its "program of assistance" to Central America to prevent the spread of communism, and to prevent the resulting swarm of "frantic refugees (who) will begin surging north through Mexico and then into the United States."



Michelle Powe

Gramm told San Antonio's Downtown Rotary Club the Soviets have supplied more to Nicaragua in tanks, planes and other equipment than the United States has provided to all of Central America in medical care and equipment.

"I'm tired of all this 'covert aid' business," Gramm said. "There's nothing covert about it. I want a straight up-and-down vote on providing a small amount of money so these people can preserve their freedom."

The argument put forward by the Reagan administration and supporters is that Nicaragua's communist government presents a threat to other Central American nations, such as El Salvador and Honduras. If Nicaragua overthrew these governments it would be knocking at Mexico's back door, and before we knew it the communists would be threatening the security of the United States. But the likelihood of an unstable Nicaragua pulling off such a task is not great.

The fact is that the United States' interests are not directly threatened by Nicaragua, and the U.S. has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of Nicaragua — or any other sovereign nation. We certainly have no right to criticize the Soviet Union for meddling in other nation's internal affairs, when we are thrusting ourselves into Nicaragua.

The U.S. has long worried about the infiltration of communism into its hemisphere through Latin America. But in its efforts to fight communism south of its border, the U.S. has often alienated Latin Americans even further.

If the U.S. wants to befriend these nations, it should cry being a friend instead of an interfering, domineering uncle, whose presence its neighbors resent. It must not step in to "help" any nation, unless that nation asks for help.

The U.S. might win more friends if it put an end to its constant support of right-wing dictators in Central and South America. By supporting any anti-communist government regardless of its nature, the U.S. has helped put into power, and keep in power, ruthless tyrants who cared not for their people.

Poverty and disarray breed commu-

nism. It's hard for people to worry about being good democrats when they are hungry and miserable.

Instead of supplying covert military aid, the U.S. might try supplying more financial and medical aid to Central American nations.

Maybe bread and butter will reap more benefits than guns.

Michelle Powe is a junior journalism major and the editorial page editor for The Battalion.

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