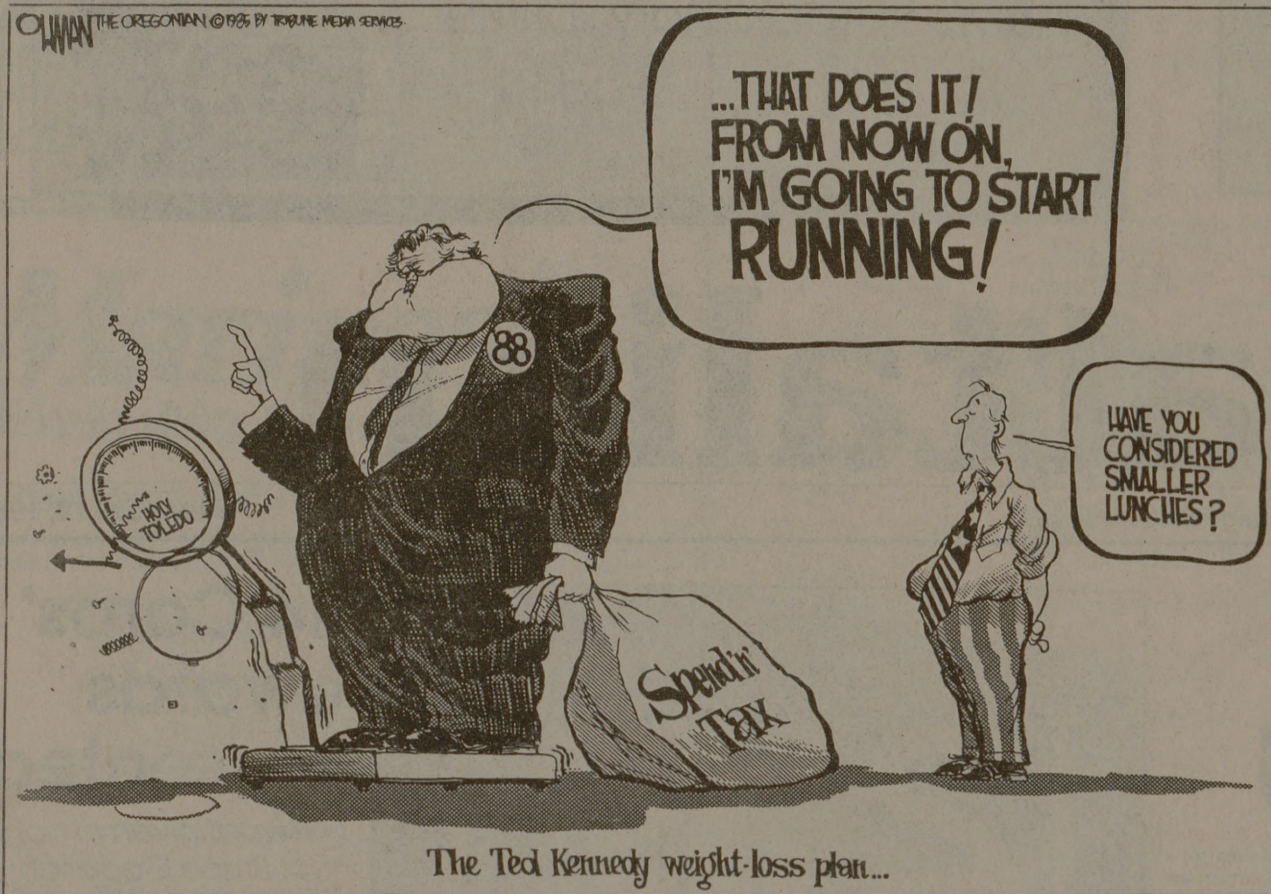


OPINION



Reagan blunder insensitive

Sensitivity has never been the hallmark of the Reagan administration, and foreign policy is a Reagan sore spot. Though I thought I had seen everything, I was wrong.



Ed Cassavoy

Recent events have left me sick at heart.

It involves the controversy over Reagan's planned visit to a German soldiers' cemetery at Bitburg. It was chosen to be a symbol of greater American-German relations. And a sign of forgiveness.

Then it was discovered that there were Nazi SS men buried at Bitburg.

American Jewish groups and the American Legion were understandably outraged.

Only the German soldiers would be honored, including the bloody memory of the SS soldiers who had implemented Hitler's extermination of the Jews. The SS also had a hand in the execution of American POWs.

Earlier Reagan had declined a visit to the Dachau concentration camp because he had deemed it "inappropriate."

And though it appears it was not intentional, the damage has been done.

The gross inhuman stupidity of such an idea, even after the discovery of the SS graves is truly unfortunate.

Now, White House aids are scurrying around Germany searching for a suitable concentration camp to host a Reagan visit. It makes me feel like they're taking a tour of a local craft shop.

I've talked to some students about this, and they shrug their shoulders. Big deal, who cares, it was a mistake.

Well, I counter that that's not the point.

The sheer obscenity of placing a wreath on the tombs of Hitler's butcher boys is a sad statement on society. Honoring war dead is one thing, validating the horrible cancer of Nazism is quite another.

How should the Bergen-Belsen survivor feel when he reads that everything is OK, according to Reagan. The identification number burned into the survivor's arm hasn't disappeared. He remembers.

Or the American and Allied soldiers who fought and died.

Many students will say, "That's not the issue." But I say it is exactly the issue.

How the country's leaders deal with the broad philosophical issues is the true measure of greatness.

Reagan, through his now trademark bumbling, has shown me a very dirty, tarnished view of humanity.

I guess the country has no one to blame except itself. A&M students, the next generation, fell for the pretty Reagan bumper stickers and the shallow view of the world he gave us.

For someone still living in the 1940s, I would think Reagan, more than anyone else, would remember the legacy of Hitler.

This is a harsh attack. But where should we draw the line?

Who is to lead us if our leaders won't, or can't? All we can fall back on are our own consciences.

By not speaking up we are saying, in essence, that it's OK. It's OK to ignore the history of the Holocaust. It's OK to show faulty judgment in honoring only the German war dead, including the SS. It's OK to not understand what people are so mad about.

A&M students must remember.

Each individual must have a strong opinion on the moral and philosophical issues that may not directly touch our lives.

It is part of our obligation as members of the human race to think about the past and how it affects our lives. If we can't do this, we are no better than the Nazis.

Because we then choose to destroy what is right and true. We choose to make our own instant philosophy without heart and substance. We choose to spit on all that has happened before.

Maybe Reagan doesn't understand, but that sure as hell doesn't make it right.

Ed Cassavoy is a senior journalism major and a weekly columnist for The Battalion.

Foreign student faces numerous challenges

June Pang

So far, I have written six articles for The Battalion. Being a staff writer, I know that is not a merit at all.

But I feel I have come a long way.

I was a professional journalist and teacher before, in Taiwan and Hong Kong where Chinese is the common language in both places. My husband and I are both native Chinese. In 1982, we decided to move to the United States. We have started a whole new life since then.

I have always wanted to have a career but my language problem prevented me from having one job that my past experience and knowledge qualified me for. I went to universities in the States before, but years of living back home have caused a serious set back in my English communication ability.

The only solution was going back to school again.

So, at the age of 33, I found I had to learn a different language with people at least ten years younger than I. At the same time, I was still a full time housewife and a mother of two young children, ages four and one-and-a-half.

I took a journalism course in specialized reporting last semester as a starting point. I strived to understand what the teacher taught in the class. If I could go to class a few minutes ahead of time I would select a front seat so I could hear more clearly. I carried a dictionary all the time in case of need. And it turned out I needed it almost every 20 minutes. But I didn't have the time to check it because then I would have missed a lot of the lecture.

I read newspapers and news magazines as much as possible. But with the time I had and my reading speed I seldom finished reading a day's newspaper even by just choosing some interesting news stories.

Every piece of writing for the class, no matter how short it was, meant several nights work after my children's bedtime. That did not include the research and reading work.

Still, I felt I could hardly keep up with other students in the class. I knew the theories of journalistic writing, I just couldn't express myself efficiently. The feeling of being behind others and the fear of being looked down upon bothers me very much.

Frustration, frustration, frustration...

I like writing and studying the language. Learning is not a problem for me; I only wish I were few years younger and had less family commitment so I could learn better.

For me, life has a strange way of revealing itself. My undergraduate was in history, a field I found I was interested in later. Then I traveled, studied abroad, changed jobs, changed majors in graduate school, was half exploring my world and wondering what I would eventually tie down with. By the time I found I really wanted to do, I already had other commitments.

I admire people who have a sense of direction at a very young age. As for myself, well, if that's the way I am, I can't change it. I can only work to improve myself.

I must say that, of course, there is a bright side of the story; that is, when I worked hard on an article I had learned something. And I wanted to have the greatest teacher I've ever had who understands my frustration writing and has never failed to give inspiration and encouragement. The teacher will forever be remembered as a good teacher and a good journalist in my life.

About the middle of the semester applied for a part time reporter job at The Battalion. I got the job and was facing more challenges.

I still don't understand the word that people say. I can't take notes and listen at the same time. After taking care of the house and children my time is very limited. I am not very familiar with the campus to cover campus news. By staying at home most of the time I lack the chance to practice spoken English...

But gradually I find ways to solve those problems. I keep asking questions when I interview people until I get everything straight. If I miss the question, I do much background research before I interview people. And make sure whatever I write is right. I have to be corrected in hard facts, I feel very, very embarrassed. I want to show that just being a foreign student doesn't mean I can't do my job well.

That's how I came up with my stories. It's not many, but it's been a way for me, especially with the time I have had to work outside of the house.

And I know I have a much longer way ahead of me until I reach my goal — to master both the English and Chinese languages and work as a bridge over the two cultures.

Although the road is long, and it's not always easy to live in a foreign culture, I think it's all right as long as it serves a purpose.

June Pang is a staff writer for The Battalion.

Smuggling artifacts unethical practice

I went by the Pavilion yesterday to look at a small display of Greek and Roman artifacts. I thought I smelled something fishy, and it wasn't just my imagination.



Loren Steffy

The collection had to be small — small enough to fit in a suitcase so it could be illegally transported out of Italy and into the United States.

"I actually had to smuggle it twice," Dr. Michele Caputo, the geophysics professor who donated the artifacts to Texas A&M, said in The Battalion April 12. "I bought it first from a fisherman and I had to buy fish to hide it in. This is

probably how the neck of the vase (in the collection) was broken."

Frequently, treasure hunters and other fortune-and-glory seekers have been heralded as heroes when they purloin pieces of the past. Meanwhile the anthropologists and archaeologists who dedicate their lives to preserving ancient artifacts for the benefit of posterity go virtually unnoticed.

The only crime more heinous than sneaking artifacts out of a country for personal gain, is damaging those artifacts in the process. Obviously, Caputo's desire to possess the artifacts for his own glory superseded his concern for the Italian people whose past he was taking.

By donating the collection to the University, Caputo does not free himself from blame, he merely smears the guilt on Texas A&M as well. A week has

passed since Caputo's comments were printed in The Battalion, and the collection is still shamelessly displayed in the Department of Student Activities. The acceptance of the collection not only condones Caputo's actions, it damages the image of the University in the eyes of foreign directors of antiquities, which could have a negative effect on the numerous archaeological and anthropological research projects the University supports around the world.

Ironically, the collection was donated in the name of Caputo's father who was an Italian lawyer.

"My father always thought that culture would make his profession much better," Caputo said. Culture is a wonderful thing, but when it is obtained illegally in the name of law, it becomes a living hypocrisy.

Caputo claims he donated the collec-

tion to enhance the cultural awareness of Texas A&M students, but while he is promoting culture with one hand, he is destroying it with the other.

"They have nothing here of this sort of culture — Roman — and so forth," Caputo said. "I think the young people should know, should see, maybe excite their curiosity, then get interested about other civilizations."

Absolutely. We will learn about Italian history through unethically acquired artifacts, at the same time the Italian students are learning about the American professor who swiped a part of their past and the University that was unscrupulous enough to accept the smuggled antiquities as a gift.

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

Reagan's advisors were too busy buying BMWs

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

President Reagan couldn't understand what all the fuss was about when it was announced he was going to visit a German military cemetery next month and pay tribute to German soldiers killed in World War II.

The White House said the president had decided not to visit the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau or an Allied war cemetery because his trip was being made in the "spirit of reconciliation" and Mr. Reagan did not want to open old wounds.

While no one doubts that the president is a great communicator, every once in awhile he does fall on his face.

How did he make his most recent blunder? One theory, advanced by Bill Greider of Rolling Stone, is that Mr. Reagan's advance team was so busy buying BMW's at half price that they didn't check out the political ramifications of the decision.

"Mr. President, here is the itinerary for your trip to West Germany in May. We've got you down for a trip to West Germany in May. We've got you down for a trip to the Bitburg Military Cemetery. It would show that you are willing to let bygones be bygones."

"I have no objection, but shouldn't I visit Dachau and an Allied cemetery as well?"

"That would be opening up old

wounds, Mr. President. We can't send a wrong message to the Germans at this time."

"How can I send a wrong message to the Germans if I visit Dachau?"

"Because you don't want to remind them of all the bad stuff they did during the war. It would be a mistake to lay a guilt trip on Germany just when we got them to take our Pershing missiles."

"There's something in that. At the same time you are aware there is going to be flack from our veterans and also the victims of the Nazis. How do I handle that?"

"You can say at your press conference we can't hold today's Germans responsi-

ble for things that their ancestors did."

"Ancestors?"

"Of course. All the Germans involved in World War II are dead."

"I thought there were quite a few ex-Nazis alive."

"There are none in Germany. The only ones left are living in Argentina."

"How can you be so sure of this?"

"They told me so at the BMW assembly line."

"What do I say at the Bitburg cemetery?"

"How about just saying 'War is hell?'"

"That's all you want me to say?"

"Well, you have to make it short, because I promised them you would make your major speech at the BMW factory."

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