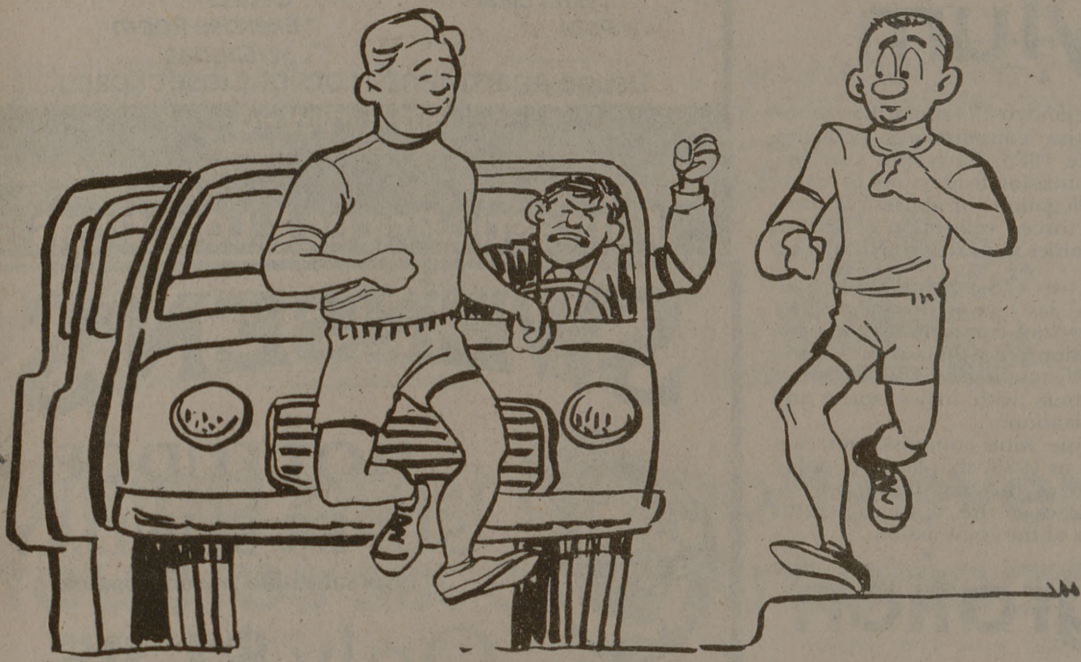


Slouch

By Jim Earle



"You ought to run in the street. That way, everybody gets to suffer along with you."

Instant notoriety puzzling

Ex-hostages look back

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Two Texans who were hijacked in the Middle East last June said Tuesday news coverage of the crisis generally was accurate, but they still are puzzled how people simply caught up in world events become instant celebrities.

"It worries me that a society seems to make celebrities out of people for such unimportant reasons," said Dr. Ben Harris, a University of Texas professor who was a hostage for about 36 hours.

"One of the really amazing things to me as a professional educator for the past 40 years is that I spent my lifetime making a reputation in my field, and I become a celebrity in a few short days," Harris said.

His comments came during a session with members of the Austin chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Harris, 62, of Round Rock, is a professor of education administration. He and his wife, Mary Lee, were aboard the TWA jetliner that

was hijacked in mid-June by Shiite extremists. His wife was released after about 12 hours and Harris the following day.

Mrs. Harris said she shared her husband's feelings about being made an instant celebrity during the crisis. "All in all, I think the press treated us very fairly," she said. "I felt as Ben did that they were making celebrities out of us when we really hadn't done anything, making almost too much out of this."

Harris said news reporters appeared to try to be as unobtrusive as possible in dealing with the ex-hostages. He also said he was satisfied by the newspaper coverage he received, but some television coverage was less complete.

"I was generally very pleased with the way the (written) press did treat the information we gave them and the way they approached us in terms of getting access to us," he said. "They were always courteous, they were always thoughtful, they were always willing to take 'no' or a delay. The coverage I got in the press I

found was almost always accurate, fairly full and not distorted or pulled to pieces. . . I found the TV coverage almost always gives you both too little time and tends to pick out the unimportant elements in an interview."

Harris said the couple made brief statements to reporters in Algiers and Paris on their way home. They also gave an interview to a television reporter who was aboard the final leg of their flight to Austin and held a quick airport news conference once home.

However, they then avoided all contact with the news media for about three days, an action he said he now isn't certain they should have taken.

"I said I felt a little guilty about cutting off the phone for a few days because I really do believe that the public has a right to know what's going on around them," he said. "I also think that it's very important that we have an aggressive free press."

Civil rights leaders will join strikers

Associated Press

BEAUMONT — Nursing home workers striking against proposed wage cuts say they hope to gain national attention by having civil rights leaders participate in a Labor Day rally and march.

Members of the Service Employees International Union Local 706 went on strike against the Schlesinger Geriatric Center on July 1. All of the 150 striking workers are female and most are black.

Negotiations between the union and nursing home administrators are currently stalled.

Attorney John J. Durkey, who is representing the home in the labor dispute, has said Schlesinger Center is not facing financial problems. He said the non-profit home proposed cutting the average pay of \$4.10 an hour because "we just wanted to get more in line with other nursing homes in the area."

The average wage for a nursing home worker is \$3.55 an hour in Texas and \$5.39 in the nation as a whole, according to government statistics.

Texas AFL-CIO president Harry Hubbard has said he believes the proposed wage cuts are racially motivated.

Union officials said the "Justice Comes To Beaumont" rally and march will be attended by the Rev. Joseph Lowery, head of the Atlanta-based Southern Christian Leadership Conference and an associate of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Also scheduled to appear at the march is Ben Chavis, deputy director of the Commission for Racial Justice.

Benjamin Hooks, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said he might participate if a previously scheduled engagement doesn't interfere, union officials said.

John Sweeney, the union's international president and AFL-CIO vice president, also said he would appear at the rally.

Marchers will walk from Beaumont's Central Park to a site near the nursing home, where participants will hold a rally and picnic, union officials said.

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