

Opinion

Leave me alone; I'm trying to be fiscally irresponsible

I bought a T-shirt recently that sums up my financial status. It reads: "I can't be overdrawn, I still have checks left."



Michelle Powe

Actually, I'm not so financially naive that I don't know that the number of checks I have left has nothing to do with the amount of money I have left. I'm just so financially apathetic that I don't care.

I balanced my checkbook this week for the first time in more than a year. It was simple. I threw away my old checkbook register and waited until I got my most recent bank statement. I put a brand new register in my checkbook, wrote in the amount the bank said I had and subtracted all the checks I've written that weren't included in the statement. See, I know the basic steps.

I came up with a negative balance of \$70.68. Now I can relax because I finally know how much money I don't have. Actually, negative \$70 isn't too bad for someone who's had a negative balance of \$600 on more than one occasion.

I have a condition known as fiscal irresponsibility. It's not an uncommon condition. In fact, I'm not to blame for this condition because I'm just following the example set by my country's leaders.

I spend recklessly until I'm deeply in debt and then I make radical cuts to compensate, just like the government does.

President Reagan spends wildly on the military and Star Wars and then cuts deeply into social programs, education and other unimportant things. I spend recklessly on dresses from Bloomingdale's and trips to Mardi Gras and then cut back on food, rent and other unimportant things.

It's the same concept. We're both

dealing in negative numbers, President Reagan and I. Of course, I'm dealing in two-, sometimes three-, digit negative numbers and President Reagan is working with nine- and 10-figure negative numbers. But it's all relative. He's got a much wider range of choices to cut into than I do.

But I don't see anyone threatening to destroy Reagan's credit rating or send him to jail for overspending. I don't think it's fair for creditors to be too hard on me if I'm occasionally in the red. The United States has been in the red for years. And as long as the politicians are allowed to be fiscally irresponsible, I should be too. It's hypocritical for this government to have a different set of rules for the government and for the people.

I'll balance my checkbook when Reagan does. Until then, leave me alone. I still have a couple hundred checks left.

Michelle Powe is a senior journalism major and editor for *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

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.

Cynthia Gay — devil's advocate?

EDITOR:

I was appalled when I read Cynthia Gay's article of Feb. 17. Perhaps she was merely playing devil's advocate to Guest Columnist Lora... preceding article praising the manned space program and its need for continuation in face of the recent shuttle disaster, but I don't think so. The article has that strident tone of protest that only the ignorant and unformed can summon up.

Gay focuses repeatedly on the price the shuttle program itself has cost the American people. She quotes a figure of \$14 billion; accurate, as it goes, but certainly nothing to become overly upset about, especially when viewed in light of the fact that the United States easily spends \$14 billion a year on defense alone.

Bear in mind the fact that aforementioned \$14 billion was spent over a period of 15 years. This averages out to a little less than \$1 billion a year. A lot of money, yes, but we knew that we were in for an expensive undertaking when we began the shuttle program. She also mentions "the unaffordable figure of \$1.2 billion — the price of the Challenger." No matter what figure is too high a price to pay for the profitable advancement of human knowledge — and certainly much more profitable knowledge gained from the reactions of human beings than from the dry calculations of robots and computers. If you must find some overspending, true overspending — to rage about, then direct your attention toward the flagrant overindulgence of the U.S. Department of Defense.

The fact of the matter is, man simply must enter space. It's getting a little crowded at home. And while the loss of life during the endeavor will be regretted, it is also to be expected. Every new frontier is dangerous. Many people have died on the ones that once existed here on Earth — New World, the seas, and the polar ice caps.

Thus far, only 11 people who have participated in the manned space program in the past 25 years — of a cast of hundreds — have died. In this compare, even percentage-wise, to all those who perished on the New Frontiers here on Earth? Is this too high a price to pay? At the time, sounding callous and unsympathetic, I don't think so.

To bring out a hackneyed and perhaps overused argument, if we don't get out there first, then someone else will. They might be German or Asian or Chinese, but someone will go into space and thus rise to ascendancy on Earth. There's a lot of rich, unclaimed real estate out there. The destiny awaits us in space. Robots aren't men, and can never replace them in any extraterrestrial situation.

To paraphrase the Bible, the meek shall inherit the Earth. The rest of us will escape to the stars.

Floyd Largent '88
accompanied by two signatures

Honesty and accuracy essential

EDITOR:

I have a few questions to ask The Battalion opinion writers who have recently equated Reed Irvine's watch dog organization Accuracy in Academia with witch-hunts, McCarthyism, anti-democracy and anti-free speech.

1. Are Truth in Advertising laws examples of McCarthyism?
2. Is the Better Business Bureau involved in witch-hunts?
3. Are consumer advocacy groups anti-democratic because they "tolerate" bad products along with the good? If we were to follow the reasoning (or-should I say unreason) of these writers we could only come to the above conclusions. Once again we have been treated to a lot of rhetoric without supporting evidence. Have these writers done any research on what AIA does or what it stands for? Have they read their reports? Doesn't sound like it. However, we should not be too hard on them — they are only guilty of following in the footsteps of their professional brethren.

According to Reed Irvine in his article "Accuracy in Academia: Myth and Reality" (published in the Feb. 1 issue of *Human Events*) all but one of the reporters he contacted who had written articles about AIA had never read AIA's reports or even contacted anyone in AIA's organization. According to Irvine, "that's how myths about 'thought police,' 'hiring students as stoolies,' and running tests for 'ideological purity' are propagated."

Neither the media nor academia are sacred, holy institutions exempt from criticism. The reactionary and hypocritical response they have given AIA shows they think they are. I can only say I wish AIA had been more open when my economics professor alternately B.S.ed the hours away, skipped walks, instead of teaching. The class had to guess their way through standardized tests and most failed. The crown of it all came when he was an hour late for the final exam. Was anything done when this former student complained to the academic appeals board? No — he was protected by the sacred institution he belonged to.

AIA is not anti-democratic or against free speech — rather they support these freedoms in dealing with academic complaints similar to my personal experience I have related. One such instance, they discussed in the above mentioned article, involved an Arizona State student who was removed from the student newspaper after complaining to the Board of Regents about one of his professors. Whose free speech rights were violated here? I really wonder if you could be "tolerant" in this situation.

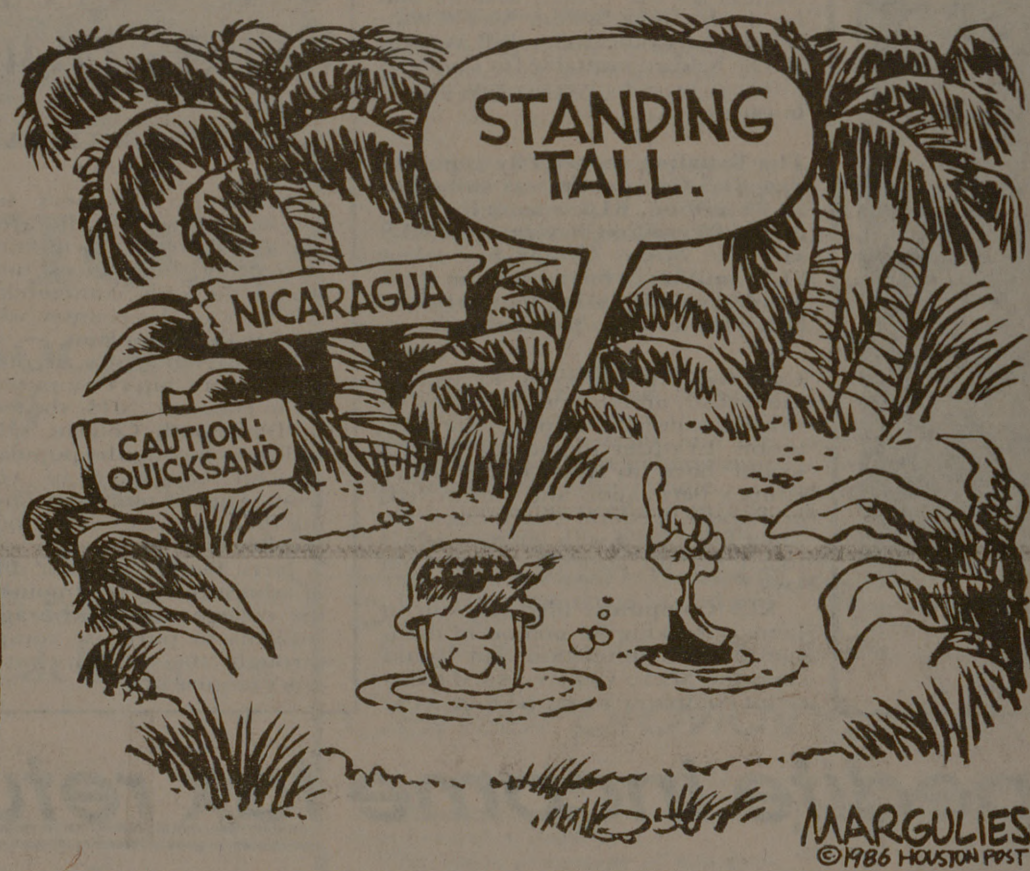
Honesty and accuracy in the Media and Academia are absolutely essential to a free society. These qualities are the least we should expect even demand — from them. In the fairness and free speech I would like to see The Battalion reprint Reed Irvine's article from *Human Events*, or something really radical, interview the man.

Florence Mayes '83

EDITOR'S NOTE: Glenn Murtha's Wednesday column on AIA stated the basic goals of the organization, which came from its newsletter.

The AIA reprinted excerpts of a Battalion article about A&M professor Terry Anderson — without confirming the quotes, or clarifying the context in which they were used. Now that the AIA is having to put its cards on the table, its members are trying to cover their tracks. The executive director of AIA, Les Csorba, is now claiming that the verified quotes taken from the October 1984 issue of *The Battalion* with the name and with the writer of the article. Not true. AIA never received any notification from *The Battalion* about the quotes used. Csorba never even spoke to anyone on this staff about the article until January 1986 — after the AIA article was published and the damage done.

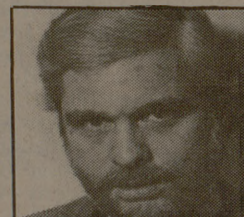
So much for accuracy.



MARGULIES
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No ethics for achieving fame

G. Gordon Liddy's least-favorite airport is Dallas-Fort Worth, he tells *USA Today*. His favorite airport clubs are the ones run by American Airlines. His favorite book on just ordinary crime, he tells *U.S. News & World Report*, is *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* and his recommendation for a book on special-tactics warfare is *Crossfire*. Got any more questions?



Richard Cohen

Yes! Who is G. Gordon Liddy's favorite columnist? It used to be Jack Anderson who, according to witnesses, he once set out to kill. Who is his favorite psychiatrist? It may be the one whose office he was convicted of burglarizing. What is his favorite office building? It just could

be the Watergate where his burglary team was caught.

You get little hint from either *USA Today* or *U.S. News* that Liddy is an adjudicated and unrepentant criminal. Neither publication pauses so much as to say that in furtherance of Richard Nixon's re-election, and using the cover of national security, G. Gordon Liddy did break and enter, burglarize and in other ways besmirch public office. His punishment, though, has not necessarily fit his crime. He was sentenced to 52½ months in prison and signed to appear on "Miami Vice."

What is going on here? It is true, of course, that Liddy has paid his debt to society and that he is free, under the laws he used to flout, to make a living anyway he can. But to *USA Today* and *U.S. News*, he is nothing but a celebrity. When the former published a special section on airports, Liddy was just one of the famous it turned to: O.J. Simpson loathes O'Hare. Ann Landers likes it because it means she's home. That's the way Nancy Kissinger feels about New York's John F. Kennedy. And Dr. Benjamin Spock has a soft spot in what Liddy would say is his bleeding heart for the airport in Kansas City. Each and every one of these people is given a title: sportscaster, columnist, pediatrician, "wife of Henry Kissinger," and, for Liddy, author. Yes, author.

Long ago someone observed that American life is turning into a parody of a television talk show — a chat with a nuclear physicist, and actress, a volunteer at a hospice and a Nazi war criminal. Each gets a mug of coffee and each gets to call one another by his or her first name — "What a nice suit, Fritz." They are all equally famous, and fame after all, is what counts. It hardly matters anymore how you got there. What only matters is that you are famous.

Gordon Liddy is the personification of that ethic — a barometer of the nation's hypocrisy. Mothers rail against obscenity in rock lyrics, but don't even

think about Liddy appearing on "Miami Vice." The president's guardian of morality, Edwin Meese III, deputizes a posse to investigate the effects of pornography on everything from children to green plants, but doesn't ask the same kids what lesson they draw from the life and times of Gordon Liddy. (The only thing sillier than Meese's mission is the press asking a president who once played opposite a monkey what he thinks of his son appearing on television in his underwear.)

If Liddy had stolen cash he would never have been heard of again. We do not forgive crimes against property. But crimes against the Constitution are a different matter. That is politics and politics, we obviously think, is some sort of joke. The real joke, though, is that Liddy himself knew better. For his politics, he was willing to steal, to burglarize, to plant recording devices and, according to witnesses, to kill or be killed — although that may have been nothing but talk. At any rate, Liddy's politics was to rob you of yours.

A nation needs its scoundrels if only to remind it that it stands for something. Scoundrels personify a society's values — what is permissible, what is not and what line can not be crossed. Liddy, who crossed many of them, would be the perfect scoundrel — the lawyer with contempt for the law, the public official who betrays the public trust, the man who, in his own little way, made the world worse for being in it.

But the demand for celebrities trivializes both the good and the bad — the baby doctor and the crook from Watergate. O.J. Simpson hates O'Hare and Tony Randall says he can't tell one airport from another. Singer Dionne Warwick thinks "New Edition" may win a Grammy. Author Gordon Liddy has two crime books to recommend and Idi Amin, we may presume, has an unlisted number. He could be an author too.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for the *Washington Post Writers Group*.

The Battalion

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