

# Opinion

## Gun law opposition keeps hair-triggers happy

It was happy hour at the OK Corral Saloon on Capitol Hill. The place was jammed with its usual 5 o'clock crowd when the tall lobbyist with the white hat strode to the bar and said, "Drinks on the house for everybody."



Art Buchwald

We filled up and then turned to the stranger. "And what victory might we be toasting?" someone asked.

"Congress just said goodbye to the 1968 Gun Control Act. I'm with the National Hair-Trigger Association, and this is a great day for my people."

"I didn't know the hair-triggers had their own lobby."

"Ah yes. We've always had a strong interest in a weak gun law. The easier it is to sell guns the more hair-triggers we're going to sell. I was given a million dollars to make sure the people's representatives would vote the American way. Fill up, everybody. This is the last of my money."

He started to sing, "A gun for me and a gun for you. And a gun to shoot your neighbor, too."

All of us have seen lobbyists celebrate when they got a bill through, but it was nothing compared to this.

"How come the police departments were against you people weakening the gun bill?" Tom the bartender asked.

The stranger said, "Cops don't know anything about guns. All they run up against are the criminal elements who use weapons to commit crimes. They

never see the law-abiding people who buy their handguns and fish."

"Fish?"

"Don't tell me you never shot a fish with a .38? The important thing to remember is that under the old law you couldn't even bring a gun from one state to another. Dealers were responsible for keeping records of who bought handguns and ammunition. Do you know what this meant for thousands of gun shop owners?"

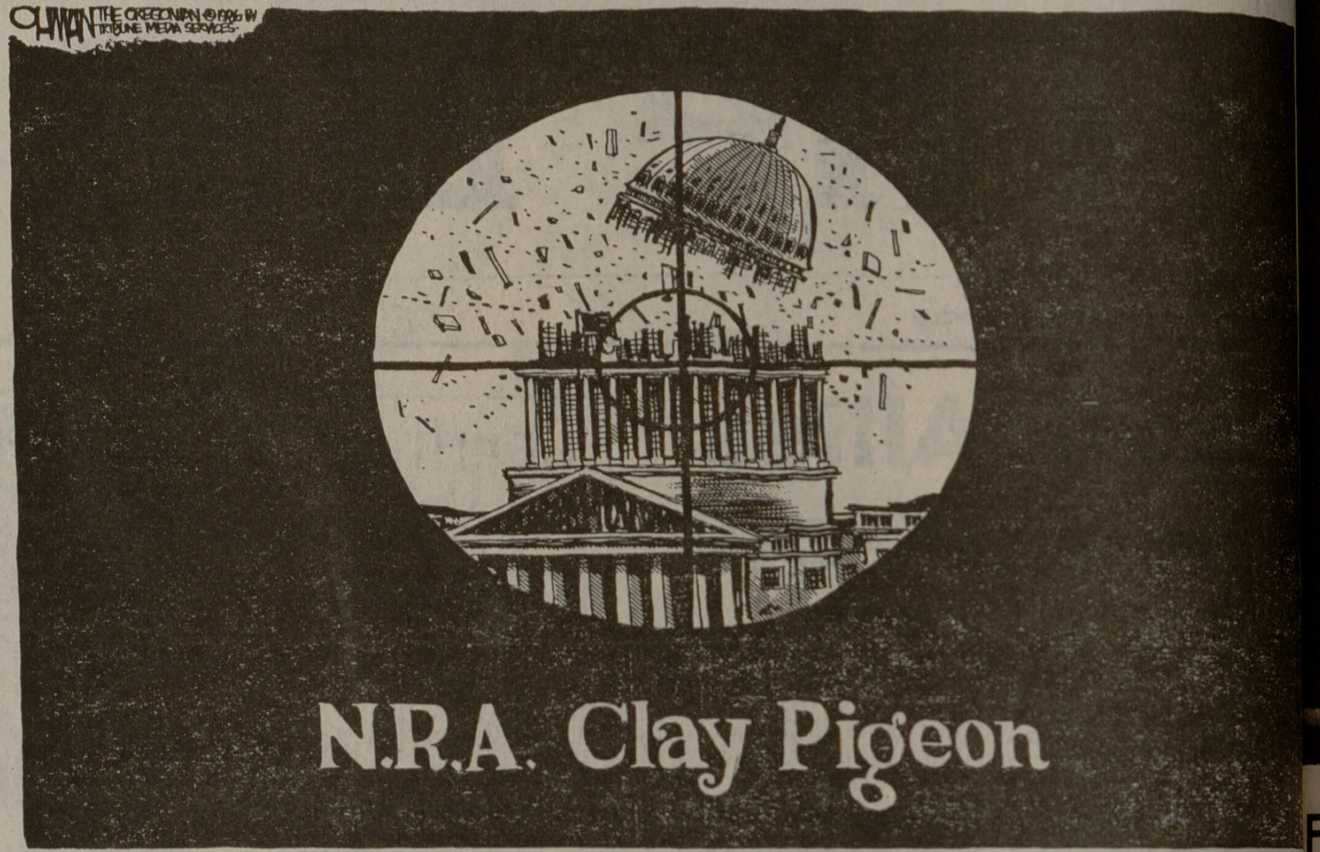
"What?"

"It meant PAPERWORK. These good merchants used to have to stay up all night long trying to remember who bought a gun and who bought ammunition. We got all that red tape eliminated and from here on out you're going to see a boom in the sale of every type of firearm. Drink up, friends, the Constitution is alive and well in the hair-trigger lobby."

"How did you get Congress to knuckle under to a weak gun control law?"

The stranger winked. "Let's say we just sent the legislators a message. If they didn't vote to reform the 1968 act we would send our people into their districts and riddle them with innuendos. On the other hand, if they promised to be good boys and support us we would make a donation to their favorite political charity. One more for the road, men. Then I must make the rounds of the halls of Congress to drop some goodies on those who backed our bill, and mark a red X on the doors of those who lost their nerve."

Then the man plunked \$1,000 on the bar. I raised my glass. "To good sport," I said.



We drank.

Someone shouted, "Death to all gun laws."

The stranger wasn't drinking. He said, "We can't have that. The threat of stronger gun control bills keeps the National Hair-Trigger Association alive. Our members would refuse to provide us with money if they thought the battle

was all over."

"And how do you keep the threat going?" I asked.

"By putting out the word to our members that the law enforcement people are as mad as hell at us and aren't going to take it anymore."

The man exited through the swinging doors.

"Who was that stranger who was here?" someone asked.

"That was no stranger," the tender replied. "That was the PAC."

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

## Our generation must be willing to fight for freedom

Within many college students today lurks a time bomb of fear that the decisions of the bigwigs — such as those made in the Libyan affair — could be personally threatening.



Cynthia Gay

Here we are at the Big U, hoping to make our first million by the time we're 30, and now President Reagan is trying to get us in a war. Our career dreams and our pinings for material success may go up in smoke, and it's all for a few measly, dead American citizens — some women, some children and some servicemen. Nothing more. No great loss. After all, we have three tests next week and a paper due, and we don't have time to think about it. And if we can so easily ignore a few terrorists attacks, why does Reagan have to get trigger happy all of a sudden?

We are a generation unfamiliar with

war, and our reactions to news of fighter planes, bombs and the like are the products of American thought for the last 20 years. If we who have known only peace aren't willing to risk our lives to preserve freedom, then we aren't worthy of this peace — and we're sure to lose it.

What's more, if we as students want to point fingers at Reagan and call him a hawkish warmonger or an ignorant man who's pushing us into disaster, we are out of touch with the America of the '80s.

In a poll by USA Today following the attack, 80 percent of those surveyed solidly cheered our president's action.

The news from Capitol Hill is that Republicans and Democrats finally are united on an issue and enjoying this patriotic camaraderie. Meanwhile, they're taking turns at lambasting the French for their cowardly refusal to allow U.S. fighter planes to fly within 45,000 feet of their country's air space. As a result, our pilots had to fly 2,600 extra miles

round trip, refuel their planes in mid-air and endure unnecessary and risky fatigue.

Not to be outdone in America-bashing, the Soviet Union's ambassador was quick to moly the microphone at the United Nations last week to condemn us for killing civilians. Never mind the fact that they hold second place in the Guinness Book of World Records for mass murder of their own population. (China is first, killing 26.3 million between 1945 and 1965, and the Soviets follow with estimates of 8 million or 10 million victims.) Never mind also that we asked them on March 27 to restrain the Libyans from attacking Americans in West Berlin.

Even more damaging to the Soviet Union is that most of the killing and wounding of civilians in Libya was the result of Libyan response to our planes. Much of their gun fire went up and came down in their own backyard harming their own people.

We had only one true friend and ally

in this affair — Britain. And now British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is taking the rap from her own people. Even in the face of the murder of two kidnapped Britons in Lebanon, Thatcher never wavered. But the frustrating, exasperating fact is that she stood alone — on principle alone, ignoring world opinion's anti-American cries.

The world is telegraphing us a message and we as Americans, and as college students, must realize our NATO alliance and our costly United Nations cannot be relied upon. Like it or not, America is basically alone in the world. Now more than ever, we must determine our fate with courageous decisions based on principle.

Principle means remembering the victims, and that is the heart of our effort to fight terrorism in Libya. From a military standpoint, it appears that infantry maneuvers may be the only way to root out these terrorists. Principle, therefore, may mean sending American troops.

So we come back to us — college stu-

dents who've never fought in a war, but who may soon have to. The idea disheartening, let us remember that Monday we celebrated a victory which the Mexican forces on the one. In 18 minutes, more than 100 Americans and nine Texans were killed in the most decisive battles in our history, the battle of San Jacinto. We won by story-book heroes, but we like you and me who put up the line.

Before the battle, the Texas army was a bridge that would have provided escape from the battleground, both they and the Mexicans were trapped. They would have fought death rather let the lives of the at the Alamo and Goliad be forgotten. Our people remember victims and sacrificed for the freedom. After 150 years of freedom, sooner or many lives later, we'll decide to fight.

Cynthia Gay is a junior journalist and a columnist for The Battalion.

## Mail Call

### A&M funding oppression?

EDITOR:

Please be so kind as to explain to me how Texas A&M funds the killing and oppression of black South Africans. How is "A&M's money being used to oppress and kill people just because they aren't white?" Divestment in international companies in South Africa is a controversial issue, but to say that A&M provides money to kill and oppress anyone is ludicrous. Such protracted logic is unethical journalism.

How sinful Karl Palmeyer must be to attend a University which supports the perpetration of such acts with his money. How can he bear to associate with A&M? I encourage him to please disenroll.

Michael B. Roth '86

### Save it for the Enquirer

EDITOR:

I find unfortunate the placement of the "Jackie Sherrill, liar or truth-teller" story on the front page of Wednesday's Battalion. It would appear that Assistant City Editor Scott Sutherland and Sports Editor Travis Tingle were obsessed to demonstrate that Sherrill is a liar. Why this story would warrant a front page headline, I cannot fathom.

The Battalion editors must have thought that the student body needed to be informed of the events which took place. I would have no disagreement with this, but the manner in which the story was reported was unacceptable. What could have been a simple report of possible NCAA violations by Jackie

Sherrill was turned into an overblown find-the-contradictions-in-the-athletic-department-statements investigation by The Battalion.

While media reports into scandals that could affect many citizens is important to a free society, this story is not so newsworthy. I must ask what constructive ends could possibly result from The Battalion's exploitation of this matter. While The Battalion won't win a Pulitzer Prize with this story, it has gained the recognition of the Dallas Times Herald, which printed a summary of the article Thursday.

Please leave such worthless "investigative reporting" to publications such as the National Enquirer, and remove it from our University's newspaper.

David L. Martin '89

### Contradiction in terms

EDITOR:

Glenn Murtha's comments on the conservative element (April 16) might have been more constructive. When discussing some proposed course of action it is generally more helpful to present the merits and drawbacks of the matter at hand, and thus focus on issues rather than people. Regardless of who tends to promote or resist change, sometimes change is good and sometimes it isn't.

Furthermore, the usual labels are not consistent. When the issue is the development of commercial nuclear power, it is the "conservatives" that are promoting change. Today the country is witnessing a "conservative movement", which seems to be a contradiction in terms.

As academic, local and national issues are openly debated good humor can be very useful (where sensitivities allow). Some of your columnists, however, need to learn the difference between good humor and derision. It is poor behavior to draw a laugh at the expense of someone else, no matter how ludicrous his position appears to be. Ridicule only causes animosity. Besides which, the other guy might just be right.

Paul R. Koch

### Blatant censorship

EDITOR:

I think it is pitiful that the Southland Corporation has finally bowed to a fanatic minority who claim to know what is best for the majority of the population by banning the sale of Playboy and Penthouse. This action does nothing more than encourage other corporations to change their policies in favor of an unrepresentative group of extremists which deems certain institutions unfit for mass exposure.

I am not a regular reader of any pornographic magazine, but I believe that I will think twice before patronizing a corporation which seeks to control the population through such means as blatant censorship.

Brian A. Koontz

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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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M University or the Board of Regents.

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