

Opinion

The Battalion

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Rules to be broken

Should the cockpit crew members of the Pan Am hijacking in Karachi, Pakistan, have left the plane through an escape hatch, or should they have adhered to the ancient rule that the captain always goes down with the ship? Well, when it comes to saving lives, ancient rules were meant to be broken.

In this case, the crew's secretive departure immobilized the aircraft, making it impossible for the hijackers to transport their hostages to another location.

This had been the hijackers' plan. The four Palestinians had demanded to be flown to Cyprus where they hoped to free jailed Palestinian terrorists. Instead, they were trapped.

The crew was faced with an ethical dilemma: Stay with the aircraft, sticking to the ancient concept of a captain's duties to the passengers, or abandon ship, crippling the terrorists' mobility.

An informal survey of pilots, airline officials and hijack victims, conducted in Europe by The Associated Press, found their opinions over the morality of the crew's actions sharply divided.

By abandoning the plane, the crew left the 400 passengers without an authority figure to deal with the terrorists.

But its actions also kept the plane on the ground, eliminating the potential for additional loss of life by allowing the plane to become airborne with explosives aboard.

Ironically enough, even if the crew acted out of self-interest, its panic foiled the hijackers' plans to use their hostage investment to perpetrate other terrorist activities. The captain made an effective move, allowing negotiators more control of the proceedings.

The Pan Am crew members acted on airline policy. But nevertheless, the choice was clear: Ancient rules can't be sustained at the price of human life.

Remember 1984?

The Democrats apparently don't

Remember 1984? Remember how Gary Hart placed second in the Iowa caucuses, won big in New Hampshire and then took three of the next five primaries? And remember how Hart then went essentially nowhere, the fortunes of Walter Mondale were revived, and he eventually wound up with the Democratic nomination? If you remember all that, call the Democratic Party. It apparently forgot.



Richard Cohen

In 1988, the Democrats will begin the primary season the way it should end — with a grand finale. A minimum of 13 Southern states will hold primaries or caucuses on March 8. At stake will be about one-third of the national convention delegates and, it goes without saying, the political fortunes of the presidential hopefuls. By March 9, the nomination race in both parties might be over.

The inspiration for the humongous Southern primary came from Democrats who want their party's nominee to be more centrist, more conservative. They wanted their influence felt and felt early. In control of Southern legislatures, they had their states fall into line. Now throughout the South, both the Democratic and Republican primaries will be held on a single day. In the fiery Southern imagination, this could be another Bull Run. "If we'd got this much action in the Civil War, we'd have won it," said Texas State Sen. John Traeger.

Alas, Traeger inadvertently put his finger on something. The South lost the Civil War, and it will lose this fight, too — this time not because the South has seceded from the Union, but is a part of it. Like all Americans, Southerners will suffer from a short primary season. The nominees could turn out to be politicians we hardly know.

Let's go back to Hart. After New Hampshire, his campaign was called "a prairie fire" — and so it was. Hart rolled out of New Hampshire and into the South, winning Florida, just missing in Georgia, losing Alabama but winning big in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. But by Illinois (March 20) and New York (April 3), he was in big trouble.

Mondale was back, and one reason was that the voters were starting to learn about Hart. He did not seem to be in control of his campaign. He reversed himself on whether the United States should recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He talked of "new ideas" but couldn't say what they were, and no one, including Hart, was sure of his birthdate. Voters were wary.

But what if Hart had rolled into a superprimary with the head of steam he had in 1984? He might have won — and the nomination contest would have been over.

At the moment, a favorite of some Southern politicians is former Virginia Gov. Charles Robb. Certainly, Robb is an attractive politician, and just as certainly he has handled himself well since leaving Richmond. But what do we know of him? Do we know how he might hold up in a long campaign (the closest approximation to actually governing that we know of)? Do we know if he can control his own campaign organization, if he tends to tire easily, if he really has a grasp of the issues? What's his temper like, and for that matter, does he have a sense of humor? (Has anyone ever seen him laugh?)

There is even good reason to question the conventional wisdom that from out of the South will emerge a moderate Democratic nominee. Some of the region's most conservative voters already have fled to the GOP, and if given the chance to vote for Pat Robertson, even more of them may skedaddle.

And there is even more reason to question the perception that the Democratic nominee is invariably an ardent liberal. In 1976, Jimmy Carter vanquished an array of candidates to his left — Birch Bayh, Edmund (Jerry) Brown Jr., Frank Church, Sargent Shriver and Morris Udall. Here was a son of the South that went on to win both the nomination and the presidency without the advantage of home-base mega-primary. Look it up.

The conventional wisdom is that the Southern superprimary will favor the Republican Pat Robertson and the Democrat Jesse Jackson since Dixie is where their bases are. We'll see. But no matter who the beneficiaries may be, a regional base and oodles of money could commit the nation to a pair of nominees who can pass every test but the one that really matters — the test of time.

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Fine-toothed comb necessary to inform public of dirty deeds

Earlier in the summer, The Associated Press ran a profile of Supreme Court Justice William Brennan. At 80, Brennan is the court's oldest member and one of two remaining liberals. He works out daily, pedaling, as the profile put it, to outlive the Reagan administration.



Loren Steffy

Reagan has had little success in "packing" the Supreme Court the way many supporters hoped — and opponents feared. Although he appointed the first woman to the court, Sandra Day O'Connor has not toed the Reagan line to the extent that the president intended. This summer, of course, Reagan got to play the judicial shuffle once again, nominating one associate justice and elevating another to chief justice.

The controversy has centered around the latter, the notorious William H. Rehnquist. In a desperate attempt to find something wrong with the chief justice-designate, liberal senators have been rifling through old records. They even managed to uncover some of Rehnquist's dirty deeds, but the chief-to-be had a defense. After all, who reads the small type on tenant agreements anyway?

What little the Senate Judiciary Com-

mittee found has done more to harm its image than Rehnquist's.

Rehnquist, meanwhile, remains unscathed by the committee's mudslinging attacks. The chief justice-designate seems to benefit from the same non-stick coating as the president who nominated him.

The senators' most substantial claim was the belief that Rehnquist is insensitive to racial issues. But even most of this "insensitivity" centered around alleged harassment of minority voters in Arizona in 1962.

Prior to 1964, however, poll-goers had to be literate to be able to vote. Despite his questionable tactics, Rehnquist was just doing his job.

But Rehnquist's job changed, as did the times, although his insensitivity did not. Memos released by the AP show that while Rehnquist was working in the Justice Department in 1970 he proposed a constitutional amendment to hamper the government's effort to eliminate school segregation.

Rehnquist advocated permitting parents in the South to choose what schools their children attended, a vital tool in maintaining segregation after the Supreme Court struck down "separate but equal" facilities in 1954. This enabled whites to keep their children in white schools and, through intimidation, keep blacks out. Freedom of choice plans were struck down as unconstitutional two years before the Rehnquist memos,

but the chief justice-designate wanted to overturn the rulings.

In the North, Rehnquist wanted to maintain attendance zones, based on geographical boundaries, that would keep schools predominately white or black. These plans, too, were later found to encourage segregation and subsequently were ruled unconstitutional.

The memo's release is bound to draw criticism from Rehnquist supporters but everything must be taken into consideration. The Senate committee, Rehnquist in 1962, is just doing its job.

When it comes to selecting the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the nation needs to be gone over with the finest-toothed comb the Senate can find. Even Justice Department memos from the past can reveal information about the justice's ideals that the public needs to know.

This country is a nation of minorities and our foremost legal document is designed to preserve the rights of the minorities. If the president nominates and the Senate later confirms a chief justice who was in favor of school segregation 16 years after it was prohibited, we have a right to know. After all, a man will have a vital role in the shaping of legal precedent for years to come. It would be nice to know his feelings about the basic tenets of democracy.

Now, with the Justice Department peddling, Mr. Brennan, we're going to need you.

Mail Call

What about when we win?

EDITOR:

On Aug. 28, the *Dallas Morning News* published an outstanding article on the upcoming Aggie team. In it, Kevin Sherrington captures the qualities that differentiate Texas A&M from other schools — namely, pride, spirit and tradition. At the same time, he posed the following provocative question: "If the Aggies have supported their team even when it loses, what will they do when it wins?"

The unique aspect about an Aggie sports event is that the primary reason for going is not to see the Aggies win. Rather, it is to show the true Aggie Spirit and one's pride in the school and team, as well as to continue the many traditions that set A&M apart from all the rest. In this sense, an Aggie game is little different from, say, bonfire, yell practice or Muster.

Consequently, the paradox Sherrington mentions concerns me. It's only natural for Aggies to want their team to win, but to the extent it does so more frequently, the pressure builds to maintain the Aggie Spirit even when we run out of time. (Remember, the Ags are never defeated.) Alas, it would be sickening were we, upon building a national football dynasty, to end up like the University of Texas, where the fans get excited only by the prospects of a Cotton Bowl victory.

Of course, even as A&M has seen major transformations, it nevertheless has kept its spirit, pride and tradition, so Aggies are good at weathering change. But precisely because the prowess of the football team sets before us a paradox, it demands of us reflection upon that which makes an Aggie game unique. We must not forget that we go to an Aggie game first and foremost to manifest and perpetuate our superior spirit, pride and tradition.

Andrew H. Pendleton
History
Class of '88

Unappreciative attitude

EDITOR:

In response to Karl Pallmeyer's Sept. 4 column, entitled "Registration lines reminiscent of a Kafka Novel", I found the general attitude towards staff to be

patronizing and unappreciative.

I am on staff at this University, and although I do not work in the Pavilion I, too, work very closely with student registration and am well aware of the long lines and difficulties encountered by many students.

Some of these difficulties were brought on by students themselves by not preregistering, not paying fees on time and not paying parking fines promptly.

Some of the difficulties, however, are completely out of the hands of staff. I wonder if Pallmeyer is aware of the hiring freeze which has been in effect since Aug. 1?

I also wonder if he is aware of the ramifications of the current special session of the Texas Legislature on all staff? We have already lost our 3 percent pay increase for the next year, and are waiting to see how many of us will be laid off, in addition to a proposed 3 percent cut in salary which will mean the loss of even more staff.

I would like to ask Pallmeyer if he expressed any appreciation for the long hours and hard work done by many staff employees to enable him to drop-add, much less the staff who enabled him to be accepted into this University and who will also make it possible for him to graduate?

These are not easy times for any of us — faculty, staff or students. A sense of humor and an adult attitude go a long way towards solving problems.

Childish attitudes, griping and bellyaching should have been left in high school. None of us need to blame each other for our difficulties.

Without the staff, none of the classes could operate, none of you would be housed, fed and guided through your collegiate years. We work long hours to make your time here as pleasant and easy as possible, often under trying circumstances.

Next time a staff employee serves you with a smile, cleans up your mess or goes an extra mile for you, just say "thanks."

That's all the reward most of us really want — appreciation for a job well done.

Debbie Waits
Department of Architecture

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