

Opinion

Wishing the Cold War a happy birthday

The party was supposed to have started at 8 p.m., but always being trend-conscious, I decided that I would arrive fashionably late at 8:15.



Mark Nair

The sign on the door said "Come in," so I did. The room was pitch dark, and for a fraction of a second I hoped that I had not committed the world's worst faux pas of missing the party completely. Suddenly though (and relieving me to no great end, I might add), the lights came on and I was fiercely accosted from all sides with shouts of "Surprise!"

"Huh?" I said. Someone handed me a party hat and one of those obnoxious paper horns.

"Oh, forget it," someone by the light switch said, "it's not him." Someone grabbed the hat from my hand, but left me with the horn.

Everyone began to mill around like nothing had happened. I started my search for the food.

"Hey! Hey!" someone shouted slap-

ping me on the back. "Glad you could make it!"

"Sure," I said, a little confused. "I didn't know this was a surprise party. I don't even know who it's for."

"Oh," the man said softly. He smiled, showing a solid wall of white teeth. He easily could have passed for Jimmy Carter's twin. "Well, we couldn't put 'Surprise Party' on the invitations or it wouldn't be a surprise. And it's the element of surprise that makes it so exciting. I can't wait to see his face when he walks through the door."

"Who?" I asked.

"Who what?" he said.

"Who? Who is it? The guest of honor?"

"Oh, the Cold War. It's his birthday, you know."

"No, I didn't know," I said.

"Oh, yeah. He's the big four-oh this year. Except we're only putting twenty candles on the cake. Won't make him feel quite as old." He winked.

"Ah," I said. And I didn't even bring a present.

"Well," he said, patting me on the back again and popping a peanut into his mouth, "have fun. Get a drink, have an hors d'oeuvre, mingle. Meet some

people. Make some friends. This ain't a Cold War party for nothing."

I walked around the place, trying to mingle. But, as my diplomatic skills in such areas were, to say the least, a bit rusty, I had little luck finding new acquaintances. I wandered aimlessly and watched the proceedings.

It looked like everyone was starting the party sans the guest of honor. A group of turbaned diplomats were whooping it up over a game of "Pin the Tail on the U2." Over by the window, a small collection of heads of state were playing "Find the Missiles" on a large gameboard that was shaped like Cuba.

Near the bar, Russian and American leaders were battling it out over a game of "World Trivia": "And for ten points, who can tell me the name of the country where America fought its most embarrassing war to date? Oh, no, I'm sorry Mr. Rusk, the answer is not Canada. Oh, you're wrong too, Mr. Gromyko, Wisconsin is not a country."

I was going to offer some help but decided against it. After all, they knew how to play the game better than I did.

Across from them, a small group of people were playing a variation of horseshoes. In this game, they were throwing size 9½ loafers at a model of the United Nations. Everytime someone would get a ringer, they would all shout, "We will bury you! Your children will live under communism!" Then they would all storm out of the room, only to return a few minutes later in better spirits.

Needless to say, I was having the time of my life.

I was making my way back over to the punch bowl, deciding between the red punch and the white wine, when the man by the lightswitch hushed us. He was peeking through the curtains.

"I think it's him," he said excitedly. "It's him this time!"

The lights were turned off, and I crouched behind the cheese dip, ready

to yell surprise for the birthday boy.

The drama was intense. The door opened, the lights thrown on, and everyone yelled, "It wasn't him."

It was President Reagan on his white horse.

"Am I late?" he asked. "I forgot."

"It's not him," someone said. "Ron."

At that, there was a loud murmur and grumbling that went around the room.

"When's the Cold War gonna retire?" someone else asked. "I've got home early. That girl baby-sitting country is gonna charge me a minimum."

"Oh, the Cold War," the president said, taking off his twenty gallon hat that on hold."

"On hold?" everyone gasped simultaneously, including me.

"Yeah," said the president. "Now, where's the food?"

Reagan should prove his concern about AIDS funds

More than 19,000 Americans have died of AIDS since the deadly disease was discovered about six years ago, and about 1.5 million Americans currently are infected.



Kirsten Dietz
Guest Columnist

No cure has been found for AIDS, but scientists have made remarkable progress in AIDS research. For perhaps the first time in history, an epidemic's cause has been identified, isolated, cloned and its structure mapped — all in a few short years. Thanks in part to this knowledge, methods of blocking and curing the disease now are being developed and tested.

These scientific breakthroughs have been made possible by money appropriated both to AIDS research and to basic biomedical research, not just to AIDS research.

But what this level of funding should be in both areas is a hot issue on Capitol Hill, one that has pitted Congress against President Reagan.

Since 1984, Congress has generously appropriated much more money to fight AIDS than the president has proposed. In 1984, the White House asked for less than \$40 million, and Congress appropriated \$61 million. This year, the president's budget was set at \$213 million. Congress upped AIDS funding to \$413 million. For fiscal year 1988, Reagan has asked for \$534 million. Congress is expected to appropriate about twice that amount — \$1 billion or more.

It took Reagan until April 1 to make a speech on AIDS, which he called "public health enemy No. 1." But he has a funny way of demonstrating his commitment. Next year's budget request is only \$100 million more than was spent this year, despite the growing seriousness of the problem.

Unfortunately, he again has failed to put his money where his mouth is. True, his proposal for next year is an increase, but many people fail to notice

that, at this same time, he has proposed to cut basic biomedical research by more than \$600 million. For all practical purposes, this is the same as cutting AIDS monies.

A report last year by the National Academy of Sciences addressed this need for increased funds in both areas. It said, "The funds (for AIDS) must be newly appropriated, not money taken from other research, because the nation's general health efforts as well as those directed against HIV (the AIDS virus), need continuing progress in basic biomedical science on a broad front."

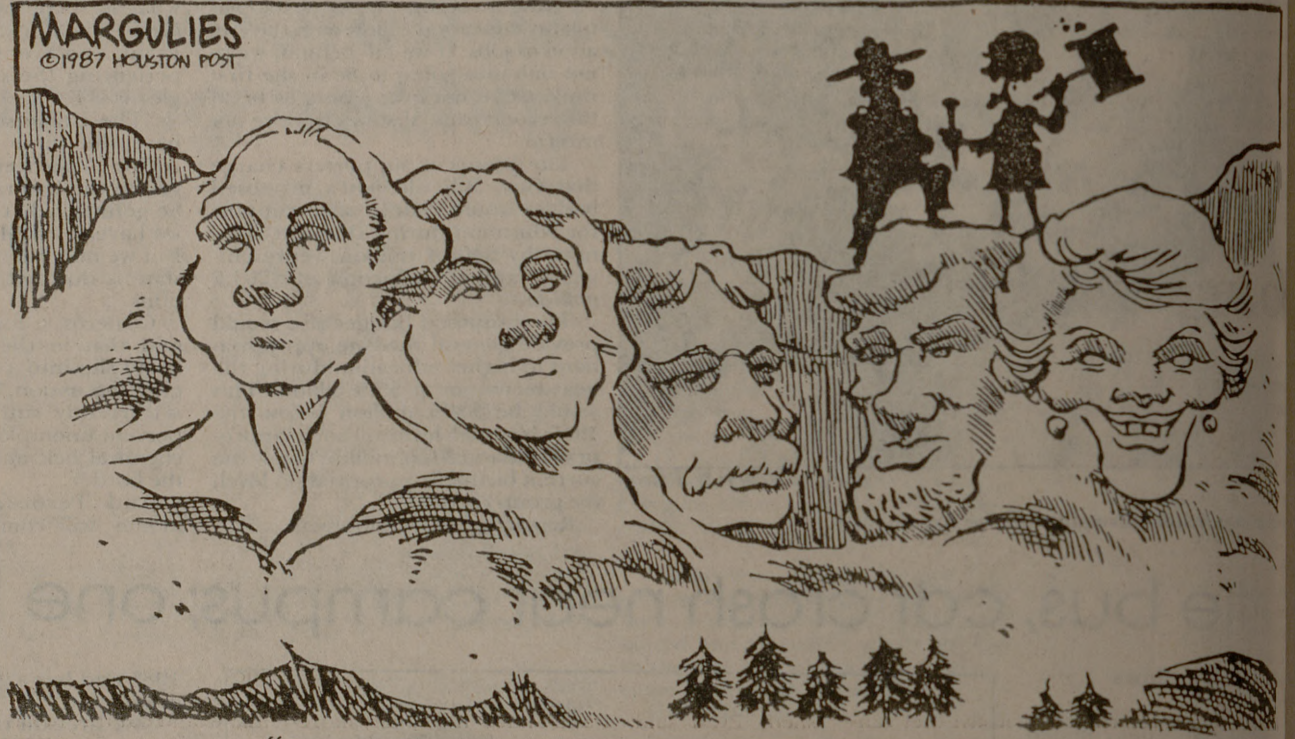
The fact that Congress feels the president is underfunding a program is not new. What has particularly upset some Congressmen in this case is that the president is deceiving the public about his role in fighting AIDS.

In his AIDS speech, the president told his audience that the federal government is spending \$766 million overall to fight the disease this year — quite a difference from the \$213 million he really asked for. The remaining \$353 million Reagan referred to is really the amount spent for AIDS treatment by entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

The American people have enough to worry about when it comes to AIDS, without having to worry about the president telling the truth about the subject. By the time the Class of '91 — next fall's freshman class — graduates, about 179,000 Americans are predicted to have died from AIDS, with about 270,000 full-blown cases expected.

The president needs to wake up and listen to the American people and prove that he really does consider AIDS a top priority. To do this, he should put his money where his mouth is and increase funds for both AIDS and basic biomedical research, while not cutting other related programs such as health professions training and health-education assistance loans.

Kirsten Dietz is a senior journalism major and is currently an intern with the Sears Congressional Intern Program in Washington, D.C.



Mail Call

Tired of whining

EDITOR:
Howdy Ags! I am writing in response to Mike Montgomery and all of the other two-percenters at this University who have written to *The Battalion* complaining about one element of Texas A&M that makes it truly unique and special, our traditions. I am sick of the Pallmeyers and Sullivans of this school who whine and complain because their rights as free-thinking human beings are being suppressed, because they can't walk on the grass or because they have to insult poor t.u. during the War Hymn.

This has all been said before, but why do you bother coming here if you are so dissatisfied with the life that we love? Why can't you accept something that may be trivial or childish, yet bonds people in such a way, that the mere utterance of the word "Aggie" provokes emotion and comment?

I love this school more than anything in the world, and it burns me up when people stab at the very heart of this campus. Sure, we're narrow-minded, and because of it, Aggie Spirit is still going strong and it will be around long after all of you are forgotten.

Jon Watts '89

Equal opportunity for all

EDITOR:
While desperately searching for financial aid in the Pavilion, I came across two forms for aid posted by the scholarship windows. One was for blacks and the other for women. All I could do was walk away confused. Who are the ones discriminating because of skin color or chest size? White males?

A prominent physical therapy school here in Texas that I wanted to go to sent me good news. They were offering grants and scholarships for next fall. It said special consideration would be given to minorities, handicapped people and women. I was ecstatic with the good news.

Both A&M and the other university claim to be equal-opportunity schools. One of us is confused about the term "equal." Two wrongs don't make a right. My Constitution reminds me that "all men (meaning people) are created equal."

An idea for starters: Let's abolish the little boxes on forms that say "sex" or "American Indian" or "black" or "caucasian." Let's also abolish ratios. The best person for the job will benefit all.

Keith Irwin '88

Words to live by

EDITOR:
In response to Brian Frederick's column of May 4: You know Brian, when I first read your column, I tried to blow

it off. Why? Because I tried to tell myself, "This is just another non-informed and non-experienced, opinionated white boy."

I do not know whether it was my feelings of obligation to let the public know how misguided you were in your article, or if it was my own frustration and anger that prompted me to write this letter addressing your unoriginal and unsupported opinion.

So I sat back, and was just about to let your entire article have it with a barrage of "you don't know what you are talking about" sentences, when all of a sudden an idea struck me. Why not let Brian hear my same opinion from someone who was there in the very thick of the Civil Rights movement? I hope, Brian, that you read these next few lines and reassess your blatantly ignorant column.

"We have waited for more than 340 years for our Constitutional and God-given rights. . . . Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say 'Wait.' But, when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers as well as when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters. . . . when you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society. . . . when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro. . . . and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerate sense of "nobodiness" — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runneth over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope. . . . you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. . . . the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action;" who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season."

Martin Luther King Jr.
letter from a Birmingham Jail

Brian, this letter was written a little less than four years before I was born — I'm only 19. If you actually are not old enough to believe that things have gotten drastically better for the black man and woman in this country as far as being hired for our qualifications, and not being turned away because of our color, then you are pathetically wrong.

Without affirmative-action programs, there would be any blacks on this campus — or has everyone so quickly forgotten that less than twenty years ago, blacks, by law were not allowed to attend this University. And I don't want to give a fat rat which way Highway 6 runs!

Wendall Gray '89

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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 a full name, address and telephone number of the writer.

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