

Opinion

Reagan week: Bring your own bottle

The time is the near future. The scene is an office in a huge American firm. An executive secretary announces that an employee is waiting outside. The employee enters and the two men shake hands. "What's up?" the executive asks. "I won't be here next week," the employee says. "I'm taking my Ronald Reagan week."



Richard Cohen

The executive's head slumps. He looks at his schedule. He scans upcoming orders. "I can't stop you, of course," he says. "It's the law. You're entitled. But this is going to be one hell of a week. Can you put it off?" The employee shakes his head. "I've made all the appointments. The room is booked. My wife and son are going with me. It's Ronald Reagan week for her, too."

Here we must pause to explain what Ronald Reagan week is and what the employee is planning to do. He will go to a resort, in this case one in the Catskill Mountains. It offers horseback riding, golf, tennis and entertainment at night. But the real purpose of the week is tests. Under the law, the employee will be tested one day for (1) AIDS, another day for (2) drug usage, (3) instructed in religious values and, sometime later, (4) polygraphed to see if he is lying about (1) AIDS, (2) drugs (3) religious conviction or (4) anything else.

The tradition of granting every American worker a single week in which to be tested for almost every conceivable

thing started soon after Ronald Reagan left the White House. By then, his administration had instituted so many tests for so many things that American employers were complaining about lost time and — that dreaded word — lost productivity. The testing had been haphazard. One day an employee would be tested for drug use, marched to the bathroom and asked to perform. For some people, what should have been a 15-minute procedure took hours. Some insisted on taking magazines with them and, in a test case, this was permitted under the law.

AIDS testing took place on different days. Like drug testing, this, too, took more time than envisioned. Some employees had to be tested again and again. Blood samples were occasionally mixed up in the lab; some were labeled incorrectly and in some cases the tests were just poorly administered. The Government Accounting Office said the economy was losing 1.3 trillion man-hours annually just for AIDS testing, worth 1.8 billion in American dollars or 49.6 trillion Japanese yen. Not only that, housing starts were down.

A Democratic study group came up with the solution. Democratic members of Congress realized they could not buck the tide towards more testing. Some of them noted biting that an administration that had promised to get government off the backs of the people was now marching them by the millions to the bathroom. But polls showed support for the tests. The Democrats decided to condense all the testing into one week — and have the government pay for it under Medicare.

Soon, resorts sprung up just for the purpose of testing. Medicare paid a minimum amount, but with a little extra

contributed by the employee, all the usual resort activities were available. (Fees for corporate executives were paid by their firms.) Some of the really fancy ones had stunning polygraph rooms that were featured in Architectural Digest. There, you could be polygraphed and get a facial at the same time. The best places provided massages and pedicures. One person would work on your toes while, at your head, a government employee would ask you questions.

At that point, President William Bennett stepped in. Since as education secretary he had called for the testing of everyone for everything, he could not oppose the Democratic program. He could insist, though, that Ronald Reagan week not be value-free. For this reason, he insisted that at least one day be devoted to religious instruction. The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, approved, but only on the condition that Medicare not foot the bill. Once again, American free enterprise

responded. Testing resorts for secular humanists sprung up overnight as those for fundamentalist Christians. The latter did not offer pedicures.

This is how Ronald Reagan week became an American institution and why, one day, an employee told his boss that he was taking a week off. "What are you going for your week?" the employee asked his boss. "The new Disney Testing Center," the boss said. "It's all Mickey Mouse anyway."

Copyright 1987, Washington Post Writers Group



"Shall we take the Marine guard on line 1... the TV evangelist on line 2... or Gary Hart on line 3?..."

Friendship doesn't always preclude romance

The old adage "we're just friends" is a misnomer that prevents a lot of relationships from blooming into something wonderful.

Daniel A. La Bry

Guest Columnist

Single people are always looking for that "special" person with an irresistible body, nice car and good personality. Forget the last two — it's usually just an irresistible body. Spontaneous relationships are usually for emotional contact, sexual fulfillment, emotional support, sexual fulfillment and sexual fulfillment. That's why they often last only a few weeks, few days or even one night.

The thought of having a relationship with your friend is crazy. Hey, they're "just a friend," right?

What about these famous last words: "I'll JUST sleep five more minutes." "I'll JUST have one more beer." "I'll JUST stay another 15 minutes." Sound familiar? That same word pops up a lot — JUST.

This word should automatically ring a bell. It hardly ever works.

People always ask, "Why ruin a good friendship by becoming romantically involved?"

Why not develop a great relationship instead of kill a good friendship?

I've been dating my friend for almost three years now. We were "just friends" for more than three years before we started dating. By the time we realized how much we really liked each other, it was too late to try all those little games you would try with a new boyfriend or girlfriend. We didn't have to put on an act to impress each other. We already knew what the other was like. There was

no jealousy when one wanted to be with other friends — we were used to it. We learned to live and let live.

You accept your friends for who they are. That's why you're friends in the first place — you like them. In a romantic relationship, little things drive the two people apart. You don't like the way they dress, their ugly teeth, their big feet and so on. But in a friend, you overlook these things. Besides, they're "just a friend." When there aren't any expectations of romance, their quirks don't really bother you.

Friends are easier to talk to. You've already talked about who you were going out with, what you liked about your dates, what you didn't like about your dates, what you look forward to and what you don't look forward to.

Friends have time to develop a special trust. You've had long, late-night conversations about everything from family problems to school problems to sexual experiences. Romance usually sets up a blockade for free expression. Cultivating romance with friendship destroys that blockade. You've flirted and joked about sex before because there weren't any strings attached; so when a romantic relationship starts, talking about sex comes naturally.

Friendships provide an alternate path without all the obstacles like anticipation, thoughts of rejection or the fear of falling off "cloud nine."

Friends who get romantically involved feel a lot more secure than two people who met at a bar.

Letting friendship develop into a relationship is a long road, but a much smoother ride.

Trust me, I know. I'm marrying my friend of almost seven years on May 23. And engraved on our wedding invitations: "This day I will marry my friend."

Daniel A. La Bry is a senior journalism major.

Mail Call

Student service fees a joke

EDITOR:

I am writing because I am both appalled and angered by the shoddy way in which student services on this campus are run. After hearing many horror stories about the poor quality of the services at the "quack shack" I finally experienced a "horror story" of my own.

After the death of a very dear friend I was in a state of shock, and on the advice of a friend I went to the infirmary. After waiting for nearly two hours, I finally got in to see a doctor whose very first words to me were "I'm not giving you any sedatives!" He treated me as if I were a criminal and talked to me in a nasty, condescending tone of voice. Then he prescribed two weeks of an antidepressant which he said would not even take effect for two weeks. All it did was give me a very dry mouth and severe constipation, and after looking it up in a medical journal that said it was not recommended, I stopped taking it.

After suffering with a continued sense of loss and grief for several weeks I tried making an appointment at the counseling center. I was told that I would have to wait five days for my appointment and that I must come in 30 minutes early in order to fill out some forms and listen to a tape recording. One of the problems I have been experiencing is chronic insomnia, and since I hadn't been able to get to sleep before 6:30 that morning, I overslept and rushed to get to the counseling center just in time for my appointment. Upon arriving I was told that since I hadn't gotten there in time to fill out the forms beforehand I would not be allowed to keep the appointment and would have to reschedule for another day. Even though I was on time for the appointment, I was not allowed to keep it.

It certainly is a good thing that I am not suicidal, because as a student, I cannot afford to pay for professional help. It is obvious to me that the fees I pay for student services here at Texas A&M are a waste of money. The system here is a joke, and I, for one, am not laughing.

I know that I am only one of many students who have experienced this inability of the university to meet the needs of its students. This is a very serious problem and I urge other students to speak out about this issue so that the school is compelled to do something about it.

Dina M. Samfield, graduate student

Wisembaker, not Walker

Editor:

It was an honor to be asked by the Muster committee to speak for the campus Muster on April 21. I would, however, like to clear up one item that appeared in the biographical sketch in the program.

The program stated that I was the founder of the President's Endowed Scholars Program at Texas A&M University. The truth is that one of our regents, Royce Wisembaker, Class of '39, was the founder and the inspiration behind the President's Endowed Scholars Program. I would not want to take any credit away from Mr. Wisembaker for this important program.

Robert L. Walker
Texas A&M vice president for development

Liberals, go home

EDITOR:

I want to echo the letter of Jon Watts in the May 6 *Battalion*. Though our institution is one of the finest in the world, there are many other fine universities. My question is, why do people come to this school if they have the traditions so much? Back in 1976 when I was trying to select a university to attend, I visited A&M for a weekend. I went to midnight yell practice, an Aggie football game, etc. I got a tremendous chill up my spine when the Texas Aggie Band played at halftime. There was a real sense of unity among the students. It was obvious to me that this school was like no other, and I loved it. I decided at that point to attend, and am now a proud former student.

I believe that the Pallmeyers and Sullivans of this school have a childish need for attention and the way they get it is by stirring up controversy. Why don't you people transfer to other more liberal universities that have no traditions? I know why. There are so many of your type running around at those schools that you'd be lost in the shuffle, no one would notice you.

If things keep going the way they have lately, Texas A&M will be just another university.

Fred Wells '81

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Sondra Pickard, Editor
John Jarvis, Managing Editor
Marybeth Rohsner, Opinion Page Editor
Rodney Rafter, City Editor
Robbyn L. Lister, News Editor
Lloyd Brumfield, Sports Editor
Tracy Staton, Photo Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.