

# Opinion

## Blame Travolta for Texas' woes

Face it. The 1980s have been the pits for Texas, and John Travolta is largely to blame.

**John Young**  
Guest Columnist

Sure, go ahead and blame our problem on OPEC and the oil profiteers. Blame it on small foreign cars. Blame all the forces that caused the oil economy to come crashing down.

But save some blame for cowboy chic. Because of it we're the laughingstock of the nation.

It is no coincidence that the decade started with the premiere of the movie "Urban Cowboy" and that Texas' economy went downhill from there. "Urban Cowboy" may have been the biggest disgrace ever foisted upon a region.

Some may have seen it as good publicity, bringing attention to good times in the Lone Star State.

In truth, moviegoers across the country were beholding Texans much like one is viewed when one's fly is unzipped.

Let us recall the plot of "Urban Cowboy":

A basically worthless young man with no ambition and no future moves to the big city.

He frequents a bar the size of Rhode Island where people wear cowboy hats, boots and jeans so tight the circulation is cut off. In particular, we wonder if any blood is getting to the brain.

One symptom of this mental asphyxiation is the major pastime at the bar, the riding of a mechanical bull. The barflies spend their nights being thrown off the bull.

The young man meets a basically worthless girl with no ambition and no future.

They are perfect for each other. They marry and move into a house trailer.

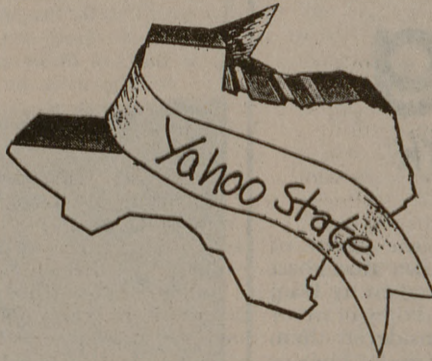
Things get rocky immediately. The two have a falling out. She succumbs to a sleazy pseudo-cowboy. He falls for a sleazy pseudo-cowgirl.

Finally he wins her heart back by outriding old sleazeball on the mechanical bull. The happy couple rides a pickup truck off into the sunset.

Somehow — don't ask me why — this movie became a national phenomenon. The sad result was that millions became

urban cowboys.

Another sad result was that fair-



minded people outside of Texas thought the average Texan had brain damage.

And so while we blame the oil collapse for Texas' economic troubles, we fail to realize that Texas' prestige had taken a royal bucking thanks to cowboy chic. Recruiting new business? What Fortune 500 company wants to deal with a bunch of yahoos like that?

Cowboy chic is a lasso around Texas'

neck. In terms of fashion it looks dumb except on real cowboys, who wear what they wear for a reason. And, might I say, God bless the real cowboys, if you can find one.

Let's face it. Cattle drives just aren't that central to the Texas experience. And yet we have allowed cowboy chic to become a Texas trademark. Then we go around thinking we're going to attract high-tech companies and top-flight professors.

Sell that to the bull.

What Texas needs to do is shake the urban cowboy image. It is an embarrassment. It's not good for business anymore.

Herewith is a three-point plan for doing so:

Cowboy registration — If you're a cowboy, fine. You have the state's permission to dress like one. The state will provide a photo I.D. to real cowboys.

If, however, you've never straddled a horse or soiled your boots, sorry, pardner. No cowboy permit for you.

No more cowboy promos — The state should refrain from advertising trail dust and cattle roundups as the Texas

experience. That is false advertising. Advertise beaches, hills, woods, reservoirs, bluebonnets, pretty woods and chicken-fried steaks.

A new name for the Dallas Cowboys — This is going to be the toughest separation. The most vivid image of cowboy chic is Dallas' football team.

Unfortunately, as Texas' most visible ambassadors, the Cowboys, blame are the most responsible for the impression that Texas is a cowboy state. It isn't. Any suggestions?

How about the Corporate Raiders. The Killer Bees. The Armadillos. The Landrys. The Lillies. The Guys.

What was that? The Bubbas? Go your room.

Hey, this is serious. Until Texas shakes cowboy chic, it is never going to hear the last of it from Massachusetts and the conquering quiche-eaters. Hear so much about.

Otherwise, Texas' only hope is for Travolta to do a degrading movie about Saudi Arabia.

John Young is editorial page editor of the Waco Tribune-Herald.

### Mail Call

Anyone have a question?

I would like to address the issue of dissent recently communicated by Fred Wells in the May 13 issue of *The Battalion*.

When my wife and I chose Texas A&M for graduate school in 1984, our decision was based on A&M's academic reputation in my chosen field. In the past three years I have come to appreciate the educational opportunities available here, in particular, the faculty who have taught me how to learn. In the time I have studied here I have made no attempt to become familiar with the traditions for which the University is generally known. So you see, a person can appreciate Texas A&M independent of the traditions people cherish. I am proud to be a Texas A&M student.

The purpose of a university is to provide an environment for learning. Such an environment must be characterized by questioning, not simply accepting. Without questioning, we are simply memorizing, and in doing so cannot contribute anything new to society. This university cannot be made a better place in which to learn when we ship out our dissenters who make us question the status quo. You who love our traditions should tell us why they are worth cherishing, and you who want change should tell us why we would be better off with change. Those of you who dislike such an open-minded exchange of ideas should question why you are at a university in the first place.

Steven Hackett, graduate student

### Rocking the boat

EDITOR:

We write this letter in response to Brian Frederick's article on Affirmative Action. First a simple analogy. Two people engage in a boat race. One starts in a high-powered motorboat and the other in a canoe. Late in the race, the canoe is replaced with a motorboat to even the odds for each racer. So the problem is now solved, right? Wrong. Although both racers now have motorboats, they began on significantly different terms and one racer has to make up for lost distance. This analogy is a parallel of discrimination in our society and an attempt to correct it.

In light of centuries of discrimination and deprivation, American businesses have the obligation and opportunity to redress past injustices. Reverse discrimination? Is it reverse discrimination when, in fact, Hispanics, Blacks, Orientals, women and others were not educated or hired on the same level as white males? We must measure "reverse discrimination" from a point of equilibrium — a point which has never existed in America.

History has proven that efforts similar to Affirmative Action have failed in the attempt to assure equality in employment. In 1966, the federal government encouraged voluntary efforts, but only some 317 firms and 118 unions complied. Therefore, a more stringent plan was necessary and brought with it the consequence of displacing the ruling majority.

Frederick stated that "they have not yet matured in great numbers." This statement seems strongly akin to what a former major league baseball executive said a few weeks ago. It implies mass inferiority and is based on deep-rooted social racial stereotypes. This is a harsh indictment on the millions of minorities in America.

Frederick's faith in the American way is appreciated, but highly unrealistic. It is true that attitudes and beliefs cannot be changed by law, but legislation can affect change in discriminatory actions and racist behavior in employment practices.

France Brown '89  
Eric Henderson '89

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### The Battalion

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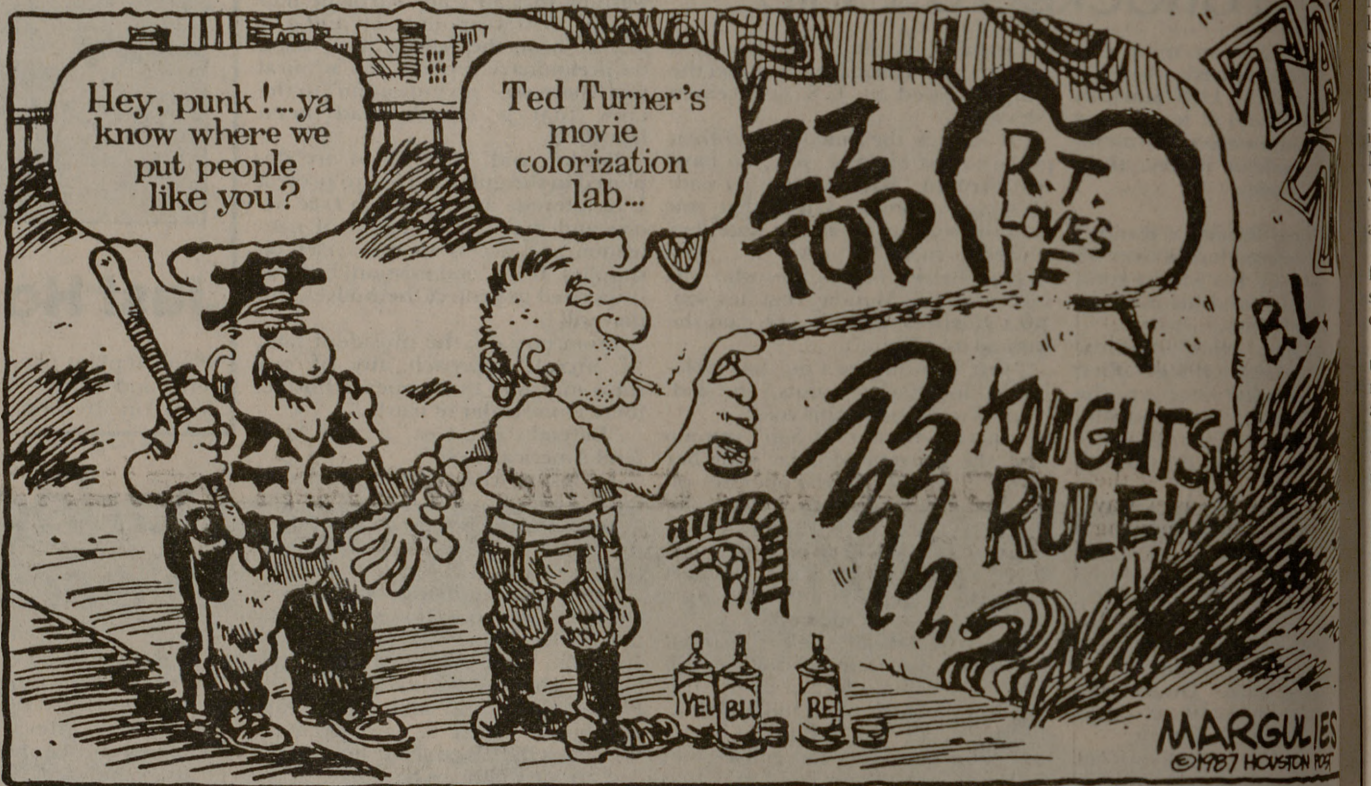
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## Hart learned the hard way: Americans don't like weasels

Gary Hart most likely still would be running for president today if he had remembered one important point: The public, more often than not, will forgive mistakes, but it will not forgive trying to wiggle and weasel out of one.



Lewis Grizzard

Richard Nixon learned that lesson the hard way, too. When the Watergate story first broke, had Nixon told us, "Listen, I'm involved. I made a stupid mistake that I am sorry for and I promise you I'm going to fix it," most would have forgiven him and been impressed by his honesty and he wouldn't have had to leave the White House in disgrace.

Ronald Reagan may very well wind up in the same situation as Nixon. Ronald Reagan is the kind of man for whom most of us will go out of our way to believe and to forgive. If it is discovered he knew all along about the Iran/Contra thing, then we will know that he, too, like Nixon, is a liar, and all respect for him will come tumbling down upon his head.

But if Reagan was directly involved in Iran/Contra and had admitted it in the beginning and said he was sorry in that "gosh, darn," mannerism of his, he could have had the scandal behind him a long time ago. I heard the same reaction to the Gary Hart story over and over. Hart said his involvement with the blonde actress included nothing that was immoral. "What does this guy think, we're a bunch of idiots," a friend of mine asked.

"He goes off on a yacht to Bimini with a beautiful young woman and then she flies to Washington to see him. "And we're supposed to believe nothing was going on between them?" "If he is taking such risks with his public image and his marriage and he's not doing anything immoral then I wouldn't vote for him for being a wimp and a stupid wimp on top of that."

But what if Hart had admitted what we all knew was the truth in the first place? What if he had said: "I'm guilty of adultery. I met her in Aspen and she was very beautiful and charming and I felt I simply had to see her again."

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"My marriage has not been on firm ground for some time and, on top of that, traveling and campaigning can be a very lonely proposition.

"We sailed to Bimini for a few days; then I had her fly to Washington to be with me for weekend.

"Under the strictest moral code, what I did was wrong. But I am a human being and I weakened at a time I needed to be strong.

"But I refuse to lie and I humbly ask you still support me as a candidate for the presidency.

"I am not lying now, and I will not lie to you in the future. I made a mistake, but I will not make it again."

I could go for that, and I could admire a man who would stand up and admit he has been caught with his pants down, even if the location had been aboard a yacht called Monkey Business.

But Hart tried to wiggle and weasel his way out, and now we have cast him overboard and he has returned to his home in Troublesome Gulch, Colo., where he belongs.

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