

Opinion

Abrams' word games: Americans not playing

On Nov. 1, 1985, President Reagan ordered polygraph tests for government officials with access to secret information. Almost two months later (Dec. 20), Secretary of State George Shultz was asked at a press conference if he would take such a test. He exploded. He would sooner resign, he declared. George Shultz abhors lie-detector tests. He has no problems, however, with liars.



Richard Cohen

he personally responsible for anything he does. Having promised the sultan of Brunei confidentiality and not having permission from Shultz to tell the truth to Congress (even behind closed doors), he lied. Abrams had his priorities on backwards. Ethically dyslexic, he concluded that his covenant with the sultan took precedence over one with Congress and, through it, the American people. Given a choice of breaking one or the other, he chose us. It never occurred to him that there was a third and more honorable option — resignation.

It is apparent to almost everyone that the American value system has been urban-renewed. In so many ways, what was once not permissible is now commonplace — divorce, premarital sex, extramarital affairs, cheating in school and cheating in business. But lying remains the bottom line, the one handhold Americans still cling to. The recent episode regarding Gary Hart is instructive. Commentators and public officials refused to take a position on adultery, but not on the suspicion of lying. It hardly matters that the former is usually not possible without the latter. Lying is where Americans draw the line.

The person in question is his subordinate, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Elliott Abrams. For two days, Abrams sat before Congress' Iran-contra committees and played word games about the word games he had previously played: His earlier assertion that the administration had not solicited private funds for the contras was, well, not precisely true. He himself had put the touch on the sultan of Brunei for \$10 million.

Abrams' equally categorical denial that the United States had anything to do with the contra-resupply effort was, again, not quite on the mark. As coordinator of the anti-Sandinista effort, Abrams had diligently turned himself into two of the three monkeys. Having been asked by Shultz to keep an eye on Lt. Col. Oliver North ("monitor Ollie," Abrams said he wrote in his notebook), Abrams neither saw nor heard any evil. As for speaking it, he took care of that himself. He lied.

Of course, Abrams never used that word — lie. Instead, he employed the all-purpose Washington prefix, "mis," as in "misspoke" or "misinformation." Congress on both counts. He had solicited funds and he had, despite a heroic attempt to remain ignorant, a whiff of what Ollie was up to. To this, he essentially appended the phrase "tough nuggies."

He asserted he had the full faith and confidence of the secretary of state and, in case anyone should doubt that, the next day Shultz himself weighed in. From Venice, he "adamantly" insisted that the White House give Abrams a vote of confidence. For once, the White House did precisely what Shultz asked.

Somewhere on the outskirts of Washington, arriving cars ought to be searched for hidden ethics. Abrams, for sure, came to town with an empty trunk. The word "lie" is not in his lexicon nor is

And for good reason. The unstated assumption of democracy is that the people be told the truth. Without it, neither they nor their representatives can make informed decisions. Americans seem to understand this, just as they understand that lying and government occasionally go hand in hand. Still, they insist on an absolute (and often unattainable) standard because without it there are no standards whatsoever. The Watergate burglary — a crime, after all — seemed secondary to the lying that covered it up. Everything else — obstruction of justice, the burglary, dirty tricks — was subsumed in that one word: lie.

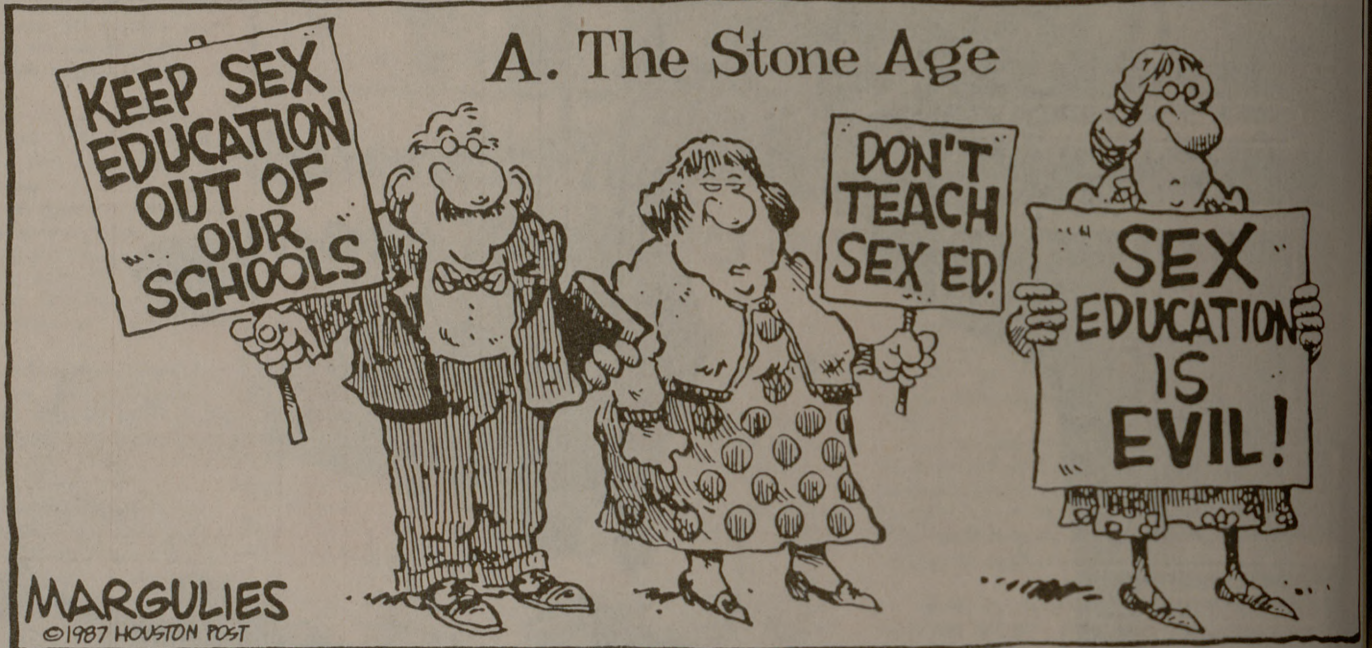
In his own modest way, Abrams (with the support of Shultz) has brought the ethic of the adulterer to government. His defense is predicated on the reasoning that he had no choice but to lie. The lie is inseparable from the act — a Siamese twin of the first deceit.

But now both Congress and the American people are in the position of the cuckolded spouse: how can we ever trust Abrams again? The assurances of Shultz don't count because he's not the one who was lied to. We were.

It hardly matters that Abrams has the confidence of his boss or the White House. He does not have ours. It's time he moved out and took a place of his own.
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Q. At what age should we start teaching about AIDS?

A. The Stone Age



Cocaine and sports don't mix

Winning sports seasons and the related revenues were damned. It is time to clean up the drug problem in college and professional athletics.



D.A. Jensen

I have always believed that all athletes harbored the greatest respect for their bodies and talent. I also believed that coaches were the vehicle used to improve an athlete's performance through training and concern.

I was doubting my beliefs after learning about the cocaine-related death of University of Maryland basketball player Len Bias. Now I know I was right to doubt them with the advent of University of Maryland coach Lefty Driesell's remarks on cocaine use. I am shocked, but by now I should be conditioned to shock.

Driesell said he is a firm believer that if you know how to use cocaine and use it properly, it can make you play better.

I don't know how he can promote that view when medical documentation clearly indicates cocaine is not only addictive, but potentially deadly.

Len Bias was a talented athlete who died a tragic, unnecessary death. I was shocked to see a man who seemed to have so much advantage in life knowingly destroy himself.

I know many teen-agers idolize athletes like Bias. They dream of following their idol's path to personal fame. They are influenced by their idol's actions.

I think in view of these facts athletes have a social responsibility to provide a good role model to the youth who idolize them. They should act in a responsible manner.

The University of Maryland has committed a social injustice by giving Bias an honorary degree.

All the youth who looked up to Bias are getting signals from the actions of the University and the player.

The signal indicates that even if you break the law, fail out of school and ruin your body with drugs you can still be successful. The signal does not indicate that the consequences can be death.

Every youth believes they will have the power to stop the abuse before it meet with the grim end their heroes

I feel sorrow because of Bias' death. I think he was being exploited by his coach. I know he could have been helped if his drug problem was confronted and ignored.

Athletes cannot be expected to stop an illegal drug when their coaches believe it is harmful. In fact, maybe a coach's positive attitude toward drugs is an inducement for an athlete to try to enhance their performance through its use.

It is time to put responsible, ethical people in positions of authority in sports before exploitation of talent and individuals becomes commonplace.

By making Bias a martyr we have taken away the valuable lesson that impressionable youth, athletes and the general population could have learned from his death.

Cocaine is lethal.
D.A. Jensen is a junior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Boy, oh boy, here we are at the advent of vacation time, and am I ever excited.

Carol Rust

Guest Columnist

You see, the advent of summer vacation time brings back lots of childhood memories, which is the primary reason I've started taking vacations in the spring and fall.

There was the one July our family borrowed a large tent from a family and attempted to stuff an even larger crop of squabbling siblings into it, us still clamoring over color books or Dr. Seuss readers when we arrived in the country for our first — and last — Family Tent Camping Trip.

In the car on the way down, my brother kept scribbling on my Dr. Seuss book, "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" until the title should have been "One Fish, Two Fish, Brown Fish, Brown Fish" and I had hell to pay at the school library the following Monday.

But it was nothing like the hell our whole family was fixing to go through, unsuspecting as we were back then. What we didn't know is that we'd just pitched the tent (and not without some aggravation, pine splinters, sweat up our nose and hurt feelings) right over the exact perimeter of a teeming seed tick metropolis. By the time we discovered this, my little brother had already gotten stung on the face by a yellow jacket, shortly after my mother sprayed insect repellent into his eyes by accident.

Actually, she sprayed the spray in another direction altogether at one yellow jacket and my little brother jumped into the line of fire in a desperate attempt to get away from another. It didn't work. He got the double-whammy: insect spray and sting both.

She was feeling so bad about that, she barely had time to sympathize with me



on account of me slamming my pinkie when one of my other little brothers "helped me" close the back of the station wagon. By that time, though, I was fairly well engrossed in the amazing purple colors that spring up underneath fingernails when they're slammed in the backs of station wagons and didn't sulk too much. But I never let my little brother forget about it, at least not until the start of school that fall.

We'd pitched the tent under the shade of a grove of pine trees, not quite out of the olfactory reach of several cow paddies in the pasture. But all in all, it seemed like a perfect site, we kept remarking to each other, after we finally got baking soda on my little brother's yellow jacket sting and got him to stop hollering.

We were feeling kind of earthy, like pioneers in the wilderness, the first folks in a new territory, the Waltons before they built their house.

But all the while, the pepper-sized population was crawling up our legs in black masses. We didn't know this then.

By the time we did, it was almost dark and the little buggers were hard to spot. But luck was on our side, we figured,

since we could apply insect spray on about any part of our body and kill a few. It wasn't long before we quit spraying our arms and ankles and turned in the tent for some real sleep. It was then I learned that seed ticks get VERY PERSONAL. With a flashlight in one hand and spray in the other, we attacked the tribes in our troubled trousers.

This may come as news to some of you, but the venom of 83,496 seed ticks all at once can make you very sick.

I'm not sure when Dad and Mom died of the camp fire had died in our embrace we were almost out of insect spray.

We packed up and headed back to our house and out of the olfactory reach of cow paddies.

It wasn't long before dawn, so we stayed up for cartoons. Mom and Dad were sick in bed.

Sitting in front of the TV, my brothers and I didn't feel earthy, we feel like pioneers in new territory, the Waltons before they built their house.

We felt safe.
Carol Rust works for the Beaumont Enterprise.

Mail Call

Going out on little cat feet

EDITOR:

I hope at least one Aggie out there likes cats enough to help.

I live in Married Student Housing which has an absolute no-pets policy. Sad to say, many student do keep pets. Some people, upon leaving, abandon their animals, thus producing strays.

That is how I came to have two neutered and declawed cats. They required medical care for malnutrition. These cats have lived with me for ten months. My family has grown attached to them.

Aggies believe in an honor code. So do I. Unfortunately, someone interpreted this to mean informing on rule breakers. As they say, "No good deed goes unpunished."

My cats need a temporary home. If you have room for two cats for a semester or two call me at 846-2801. I will pay for food, litter and medical bills. This is your chance to do an Ag a favor.

Alan W. Brooks

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The Battalion

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