

Opinion

We need to treat Jackson like a real candidate

Now that Jesse Jackson has the Democrats running scared, maybe the media will take off the kid gloves they've been using on this charismatic candidate.



Sue Krenek

Time magazine said Democrats are "circling the wagons" after Jackson's stunning defeat of Michael Dukakis in Michigan Saturday. The 2-to-1 margin in the popular vote has brought about a sort of belated realization that Jackson is a real candidate and must be taken seriously.

That margin is misleading, though. Michigan selects delegates according to who wins congressional districts, which means Dukakis will get almost as many delegates as Jackson despite the lopsided popular vote.

So the nomination is still far from Jackson's grasp. With the primaries producing little but delegate chaos, the con-

vention is likely to come down to the "superdelegates." Those 645 unpledged delegates are for the most part members of Congress and party officials. They are likely to swing the delegate count in the direction of the candidate they think has the best chance in November.

Jackson is aware that party leaders are nervous about his showing in the primaries and knows the superdelegates pose a threat to his campaign. A Time article reports he's beginning to complain publicly about the party rules, especially the superdelegates.

All of which may make for an interesting convention. But the real question is why the Democrats are so surprised at Jackson's emergence. And the answer is that the press hasn't taken the candidate seriously.

Like Pat Robertson, Jackson is a minister who has never held public office. He's made his share of off-the-wall comments and had some unorthodox political connections. Members of the press — including me — have commented on Robertson's wacky assertions about nuclear weapons in Cuba, etc.

Jackson, though, hasn't come under similar scrutiny. One reason is that, like Robertson, he hasn't been taken seriously. The press tended to ignore Robertson's odd comments until his surprisingly good showing in Iowa. Held to the same standards of accountability as other candidates, he has floundered.

So why has Jackson escaped scrutiny? In large part, it's because of the color of his skin. Reporters have hesitated to ask challenging questions, fearing they'll be accused of racism. Candidates who felt a black man had no chance of winning the nomination didn't seriously attack Jackson's views. Now that timidity is coming back to haunt them.

Newsweek columnist Meg Greenfield calls this politeness an insidious form of racism, and she is right:

"... this well-mannered and impenetrable indifference isolating the black from all others strikes me as simply a new form of segregation. . . . Fellow Democrats, who do each other the courtesy of combat, just smile condescendingly at Jackson, unwilling to argue with him in public."

Greenfield goes on to say that candidates have been afraid that questions about Jackson's platform would be construed as racist attacks. "Too many of Jackson's colleagues," she says, "have worried about his race and not his platform. I think they have got it absolutely backward."

Have they ever. In their scramble to avoid racism, reporters have allowed Jackson to get by with things that would have ended other campaigns.

Whether or not you think the "morality issue" is a valid one, it brought down the campaigns of Gary Hart and Joe Biden. Hart was plagued by rumors of womanizing, as is Jackson. Hart is out of the race. Biden dropped out in part because of a flirtation with plagiarism 20 years ago. But Jackson's one-time association with Louis Farrakhan gets little mention.

Public officials too numerous to mention have been brought down by crude remarks. Who can forget that it was James Watt's description of the members of a committee that led to his resignation as Secretary of the Interior? And

what of Earl Butz, whose off-color remark led to his resignation?

Jackson has hardly showed more sensitivity. But despite his referring to us as "Hymies" and New York as "Hilltown" in 1984, his campaign is running strong. Democratic Rep. Marvin L. Dainoff says Jackson would be a "terrible candidate" because "He's made anti-Semitic remarks. He's hugged Yasser Arafat and Fidel Castro." But the media has bothered to investigate those ties.

This isn't to say that random remarks and ancient history should disqualify any candidate. But if other candidates are questioned about such things, let Jackson off the hook is indeed a perverse form of racism.

Jackson's past remarks and policies should not disqualify him from nomination. But a press that ignores foibles and refuses to question him on the issues does a disservice to the candidate and the country.

Sue Krenek is a senior journalist and editor of The Battalion.

Mail Call

No place like home

EDITOR:

They're telling us that shack is supposed to represent the poor quality of housing in South Africa. Looks an awful lot like some of the housing here in Bryan-College Station, don't it?

Bobby Smith '91

Why don't you leave baseball alone?

EDITOR:

I'd like to know just who in the hell the corps thinks it is. I've been to a good number of A&M's home baseball games and have never seen hide nor hair (what little there is) of the corps, until the Oklahoma game — which just happened to be broadcast nationally on ESPN. They should either show up and support the team all the time or not at all; definitely not just high-profile games.

But what really got me mad was that once the corps members finally came to a game they seemed to decide they were in charge of what was a tradition at the games and what wasn't. Well, I'm sorry, but it doesn't work like that. To be more specific, the corps members decided to start doing yells at the game, and almost anyone who goes to the games regularly knows this isn't done, and lots of people enjoy it that way. In fact, one of the things I like most about our baseball games is that you get to sit back, relax and enjoy the game without having to deal with obnoxiously over-spirited people. I think the corps showed its typical bad taste and egotism by showing up at the game and trying to make things work like they want them to work, ignoring the large number of people who disagree with them.

Some of us like to show our support by showing up regularly at home games and by adhering to the traditions that have slowly grown up at the games as opposed to bringing our own traditions along with us to the few games we attend and attempting to force them on others. The football games belong to the corps — let the baseball games belong to the regulars.

Mike Freeman '91

Leave your pennies, please

EDITOR:

About a week and a half before spring break, someone stole \$280 worth of medical equipment from two offices in the G. Rollie-Read complex. Some of this equipment was ordered by Emergency Care Attendant and Emergency Medical Technician students. University policy states that property in an office is the teacher's, therefore, the teacher must bear the loss.

We all expect first-response personnel to be properly equipped for emergencies. This theft has lengthened the equipping time and financially hurt a teacher.

Since EMS may one day save your life or limbs, I am asking that you leave small change in the five gallon water bottle located at the CHICKEN. The Dixie Chicken's contribution to this fundraiser is providing a collection point. Please leave those pennies you do not want to carry around!

We sincerely appreciate your change! Any surplus will be used to repair/replace teaching aids for the first aid classes.

The HEED 217 class, spring '88
David Opiela '88

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.

BEN SARGENT
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You call that a typewriter? Ha

Soon after I got my first big-time sports department job, back when the Super Bowl was still a novel idea, I noticed the big-time sportswriters all carried the same kind of portable typewriters.



Lewis Grizzard

They were manuals made by Olivetti, and they fit neatly — for travel purposes — into a blue leather case.

So I went out and bought myself a new one in 1968. It served me unfailingly in such places as Dodger Stadium, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the Press Hut at Augusta National Golf Club, and I even carried it to the Republican Convention in Detroit in 1980 long after my sportswriting career had ended.

My first Olivetti slowly began to fall apart, however, and my colleagues all suggested I begin to write on a computer.

I will say it again as I have said it before: God never intended newspapers to be put out by a computer, as most of them are today. God had punished the nation's newspapers for this transgression, by giving them a headache known

as USA Today.

Still, I had a problem replacing my original Olivetti. Manual typewriters are no longer manufactured by any company. What I finally did was ask around and I came up with two used Olivettis like my first one.

They served me gallantly all over the world. I even took one to the Soviet Union.

But one fell apart a year ago in Oklahoma City, and the other's carriage stuck on me as I typed in the Delta Crown Room in New Orleans. It has yet to move again.

"Get the computer," everybody said to me again. "You can't live in the past forever."

I've accepted that now. One occasionally needs to update. I have even stopped wearing Old Spice aftershave for the exotic aroma of Bayou Wind or some such thing.

The day of the portable manual typewriter — the Olivetti, hallowed by its name — is over.

"So you'll get a computer to take on the road?" I was asked.

"No," I answered. "I will buy a portable electric typewriter, my compromise with the information age."

I have never liked electric typewriters. They make that deep humming noise like a 1962 Impala on idle.

And in order to operate an electric typewriter, one must have an electric outlet.

I once had to type a column on the tailgate of a pickup truck that had been knocked out of the tailgate by the mess of Idaho. Where would I plug in my electric? In the rear of a longhorned sheep, the subject of my column?

Something else about electric typewriters is that they type faster than you think. Try to type an "L" on an electric typewriter and no matter how fast you peck the key you're going to get "LLLL" every time.

But, as I said, I have decided to promise. I have purchased a portable electric typewriter to replace my Olivetti manuals.

Upon the occasion of my next assignment, I will be coming to you, Smith-Corona, which has some called a "Coronamatic Cartridge Reaction System" — whatever that is.

While I am home, however, I will continue to use what I am using — a vintage desktop manual Royal, a and a loyal tool, the kind Bogue used in "Deadline USA," when he uttered those immortal words, "The sucks."

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BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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