

# Opinion

## He's back, bigger and better than ever



Sue Krenek

The aging politician, jowls sagging and hair graying, sits in a TV studio awaiting the interview. The public could easily be forgiven the impression that it's just awakened from a horrible nightmare, the kind you know will return again and again despite your hopes to the contrary.

Richard Nixon is back. In a queer kind of political redemption, the only president to resign from office has been popping up on "Meet the Press" and "Today" as well as in the pages of Time, Newsweek and The Economist. Once there, he pontificates about foreign policy and the presidential candidates, a group of men who must be salivating over the amount of media attention Nixon can garner at will.

Nixon's comeback is startling — and significant — because political forgiveness is a tricky business. Just ask Gary Hart. Hart's on-again, off-again candidacy is proof positive that Americans aren't quick to set aside moral blunders, no matter how many grand ideas the politician wants to trumpet. Paradoxically, when a job-related goof occurs, we have no qualms about offering absolution — just ask the people who want to pardon Ollie North.

Nixon may sense that the time is ripe for his return, that the statute of limitations has run out on Watergate. More likely, he realizes that he now exists in a strange half-light: Hoping for revelations about the past, we will allow him to make his pronouncements about the future.

In his appearances, he's done a little of both. Where the past is concerned, Nixon remains fiercely unrepentant. During a "Meet the Press" appearance, he conceded that the Watergate break-in was wrong but called it "this small

thing" compared to his accomplishments concerning China and the Soviets. And as for Vietnam? According to Nixon, his worst mistake was not bombing and mining North Vietnam much sooner.

Nixon's predictions for the future have been no less provocative. Although he told the *Wall Street Journal* that George Bush lacked the "independence" and "drive" to be president, he has since gone on to predict that Bush will be the next office-holder. And he seems to be picking up Jesse Jackson's colorful language when he critiques the Democrats: "The best politics is poetry rather than prose. Jesse Jackson is a poet... Dukakis is a word processor."

So why are the pronouncements coming now? Time may have healed many wounds, but if it alone could account for Nixon's rise from the ashes, Ted Kennedy surely would not be far behind. But Kennedy, whose actions at Chappaquiddick preceded Watergate, still finds his presidential aspirations thwarted,

probably permanently. During his 1980 campaign, fundraising efforts went awry when those asked to donate started writing back to say they would never contribute because of Mary Jo Kopechne's death.

Still, time is undoubtedly a factor. Americans simply are not as outraged over Watergate as they once were, a fact that may also be attributable to the scandal-of-the-week character of the Reagan administration. And Nixon's goals are at once more and less ambitious than Kennedy's: He is seeking not to be a once and future president but to be an elder statesman, which could be more dangerous.

The real reason for Nixon's reappearance may be the wavering of the Reagan Revolution's ideals. With the Democrats holding the majority in both houses of Congress, Reagan's efforts at meeting conservative goals have met with mixed success. And the limited response to George Bush demonstrates that charisma, not widespread belief in

conservatism, was probably the key to Reagan's success.

The Republican Party, then, needs of an elder statesman to anchor and refresh its ideals. Nixon is in the post through his endless interviews and appearances. Like Gary Hart, he may find Americans so disconcerted by his sins that they refuse to hear him all. More likely, he will find a way to help himself, especially in foreign policy.

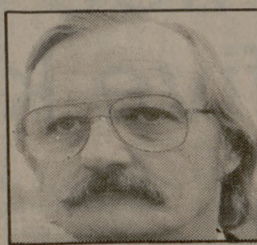
It would be senseless to ignore Nixon's ideas simply because of his past. Long experience gives him insights that may not be available elsewhere. In the same time, we can't ignore the fact that, as president, he demonstrated disdain for the Constitution unbecoming by any before or since.

We must consider his ideas. We must also consider the mind that produced them.

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

## Sometimes it's a problem being a good liberal

When my wife suggested a vacation to Mexico I said no way. "I don't do Third World countries," I said.



Donald Kaul

"Mexico isn't a Third World country. It's an emerging industrial nation."

"That means it's a Third World country with air pollution. I don't want to go someplace where the people are conspicuously poor; I'm a liberal. Even less do I want to go where the most famous cultural reward is diarrhea."

"That is a stupid, insensitive, uninformed thing to say. It may even be racist. The culture of Mexico is considerably older and richer than ours. The Mayans were building temples to shame the pyramids when your ancestors were inventing the lard sandwich."

She had me there. I'd overplayed my hand and I knew it. I fought on for a bit, just to keep up appearances, but before long I was stacking suitcases on the front porch, waiting for our ride to the airport. The phone rang. It was our driver; she'd been taken ill.

"See!" I said. "You can't even help someone go to Mexico without getting sick. It's an omen."

"Right," my wife said. "Come on Marco Polo; we'll go to plan B. Load the luggage in the car. We'll park it at the airport."

I did as I was told. The plane tickets were non-refundable. Soon we were on our way to Cozumel, an island off the coast of the Yucatan peninsula in the Caribbean Sea.

The flight was typical for this day and age, much like what a trans-continental bus ride used to be. It was supposed to take seven hours; it took 12. If you ever want to know anything about the Houston airport, ask me. I've got it memorized.

We finally got to Cozumel. I should have known better than to worry about vacationing in a Third World country. This was not Third World Mexico, it was Tourist Mexico.

Cozumel is one of those apparent paradises that poor countries construct to relieve people from rich countries of superfluous wealth. It is, in most respects, a perfect place. The hotels are modern, the food excellent, the sea superb, the weather irreproachable and even the water is drinkable, a lot of it. If there is crushing poverty in Cozumel, it is doing its crushing well out of sight to the visitors — almost all American and European — who flock to its shores in enriching hordes.

"This isn't bad," I said to my wife over a pina colada after a snorkeling session.

"Bad? It's an MGM musical," she said. "All that's missing is the young Judy Garland."

Which, ultimately, is the problem. If you want a nice place in the sun to recover from winter, you can hardly do better than Cozumel. It's lovely. But it has roughly the same relationship to Mexico as a Chinese restaurant in New York has to China. It offers you the flavor of Mexico — it looks and smells — without requiring you to struggle with the reality of Mexico. You don't have to speak Spanish; people speak English. You don't have to fend off beggars; there are none. You don't have to deal with air pollution; the sky is stunningly blue. The bathrooms are clean, a lot of them.

I began to feel guilty. I'm a liberal. "I never thought we'd wind up as Ugly Americans," I said to my wife on the third day.

"You're going to ruin this for me, aren't you?" she replied.

"We used to sneer at Americans who would go to foreign countries without speaking the language and stay in hotels filled with other Americans and complain about how they couldn't get a decent hamburger. All that's left to us now is the complaint about the hamburger. We've become the jokes of our youth."

"Oh yes, you're going to ruin it, I can tell."

"I watched one of the cruise ships come in yesterday. It was filled with old people, people in their sixties and seventies. They came parading off that white boat, ready to spend an entire day plumb the mysteries of Cozumel. They were loaded onto buses and driven off somewhere. That's us in 10 years; 15 at the outside."

"I'm getting a headache in my left eye."

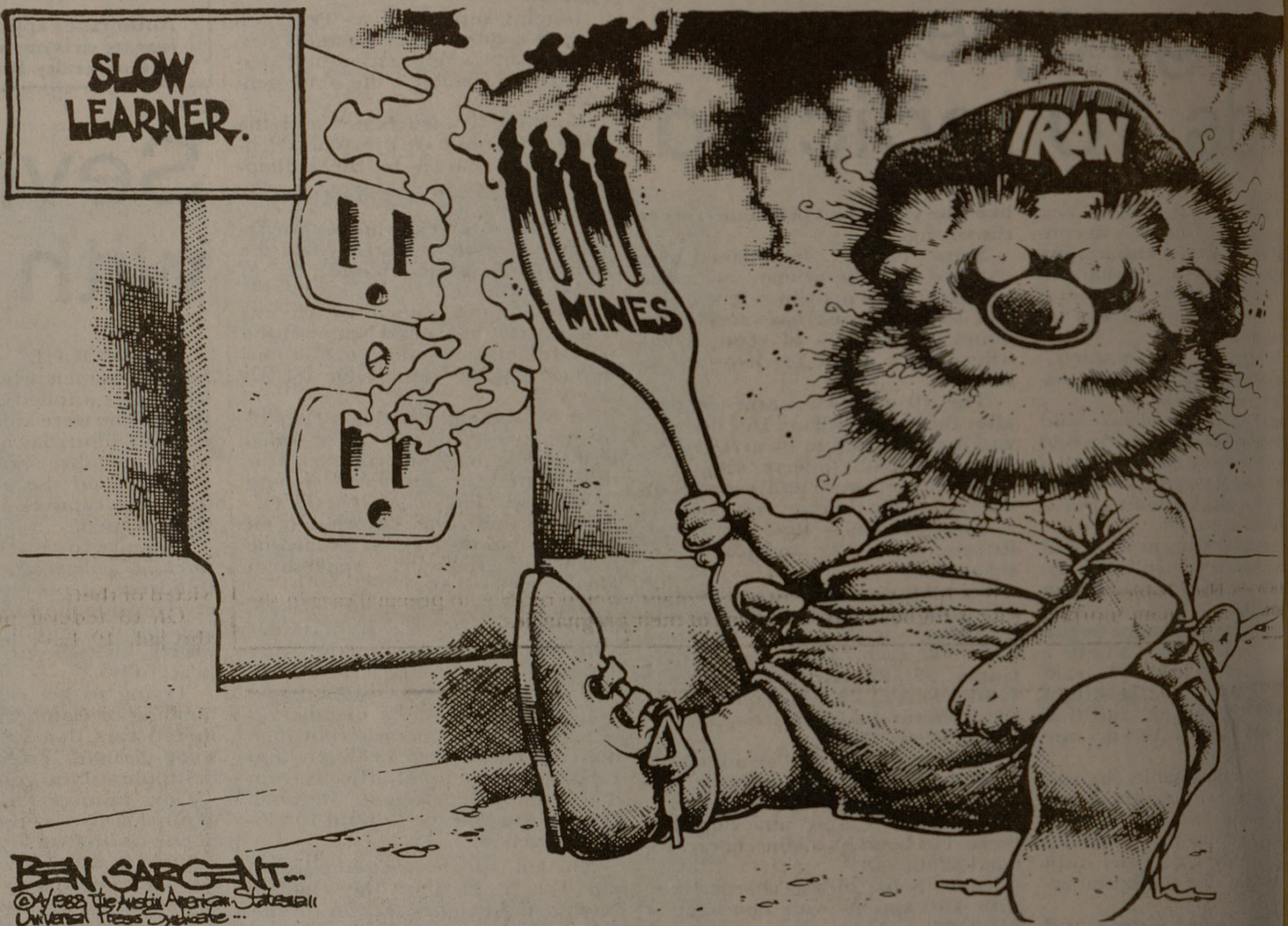
"I can see it now. Nothing is going to be spared us. Pinochle, shuffle-board, charades, bingo, we're in for the whole nine yards. I'll bet that before we leave I'll ask a shopkeeper how much an item costs in real money. I thought it was going to be different, somehow. I thought we were going to be more like William Powell and Myrna Loy."

"I'm going upstairs to the room. When you get this out of your system, you can come up and join me. But not before."

She left and I ordered up a pina colada and contemplated the unfairness of life.

That's the trouble with being a liberal. You realize that if life were fairer, you wouldn't be doing as well as you are.

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## Mail Call

### Something is better than nothing

EDITOR:

In response to the Mail Call in April 14, I merely want to shed some light on faulty accusations directed at the social Greek organizations.

So, what's the problem? I'm NOT in a sorority or service fraternity, and I think you have completely misunderstood the purpose of the social Greek system. It is just that — SOCIAL — which is fine. They don't HAVE to donate ANY money to charity or have any kind of fund drives at all! I personally feel that a net income for the needy of \$316.00 is much better than \$0.00, don't you?!

Sure sororities and fraternities put on fund raisers to have fun, but there's a lot more work involved than you think. They donated long hours to setting up a Haunted House for MDA, Derby Day for the homeless and Songfest for the Brazos County Rehabilitation Center, in addition to many others. Not only do they donate their time, but the expense of materials and advertising often comes out of their own pockets. They don't have fund raisers solely to party, they choose to donate to a charity because they care.

I know all about Alpha Phi Omega and what it stands for as well. Let me inform you that however GREEK their letters may look, they were established and exist solely for the purpose of cleaning up highways, painting houses and other service projects. I think that's fine too, but the fact remains that something is MUCH better than nothing at all. Don't you think?

Nancy Butler '89

### Where's the money go?

EDITOR:

I'm writing this in great concern about my wallet, which has grown thinner than my patience. It has caught my attention that A&M, our great institute of higher learning, has become an institute of higher earning. I've made it through parents' weekend, which I thought was going to be fun and inexpensive.

As it turned out, every time our parents turned around they had to shell out a few more dollars. The variety show (which was free last year), casino night, name it. I'm sure they wondered where that \$900 (and rising) they paid for the closet with desks we live in went. It's going for more dorms due to the huge, money-spending freshman class A&M is letting in. It's going for a football coach who is making more than the President of the U.S. It's sure not going for our convenience (and I wouldn't call a six-level parking garage in Bryan convenient). I also have this dream of forming an armory for forty thousand A&M students to go to Rother's, Louisa the University Bookstore, etc. . . . all the places that sell books to us at a 500 percent markup and buy them back with Mexican pesos, tear their walls to the ground and spoon-feed the scraps to the owner.

Corey Lokey '99

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

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