

# Opinion

## Smile, breathe and kick, for the end is near

Isn't it written somewhere that one of the first signs of Armageddon has something to do with aerobics? I wasn't sure either. So I looked in *The Book* to see what I could see. This is what it said:



Mark Nair

"And verily, behold and so forth, there came from a laundry room so clean and tidy, a multitude of effervescent sweaty people clothed in outfits so tight and sparkling; thus then this eternally smiling legion with abundant energy will come forth in the name of health and exercise and levy a black curse upon the world for days to come, and these creatures, by their own will, shall introduce the Apocalyptic of the triumphant sound of the 'Top 40' anti-hymns..."

The reason for my investigation has to do with a certain television special — namely "The National Aerobic Cham-

ampionship" sponsored by Crystal Light, the drink that both tastes like perforated cardboard and leaves that sandy feeling in your mouth while MAKING YOU SLIM DOWN AND FEEL GOOD AT THE SAME TIME. Now, don't get me confused with people who live only to watch programs like this one. The only reason I knew it existed was because the commercial for it interrupted a *real* show — *Star Trek*.

But it looked interesting. And I remembered something about aerobics having something to do with the end of the world, so I decided that it would be in my best interest, not to mention the best interest of the world (seeing as though I have every plan to be Master Of The World one day and should look out for the world's best interests) to see what this championship thing was all about.

*NOTA: The following is an intricate and delicate social commentary. For those of you who do not understand that this is an intricate and delicate social commentary, skip to the sports section where nothing is ever intricate, delicate or, for that matter, interesting.*

Before I begin my analysis, let me say that I only watched about three minutes of *The National Aerobic Championship*. I think this is enough for an adequate analysis. Plus, scientists have documented that any long exposure to such things as aerobics and jazzercise (this includes both observing and participating) leads to an increased desire to watch re-runs of Gilligan's Island and to have hair molded in the style of Greg "Afro Man" Brady. This is something I do not want.

Back to the show. It was something like this:

Here, there is a stage. Around the stage are many clapping people. Sometimes they cheer. More than often, though, they are clapping. Suddenly, three people jump on the stage. They are smiling. They are wearing strange outfits. The outfits look like they have been painted on the bodies of the smiling, jumping people. The socks have sequins on them. They are sequential socks.

Now for the actual aerobics. The three people jump up and down, do pu-

shups and fling their arms about, showing how big their muscles are. They smile. They do more push-ups, and then they jump up and down some more. They jog in place. They gyrate. The music suddenly stops. The aerobic people suddenly stop. They freeze in place, breathe deeply and smile.

Then the announcers. The announcers are also very happy, probably very healthy, people. They smile a lot.

Announcer 1: Did you see how well they did those push-ups?

Announcer 2: I sure did. Those were great. But did you see that jogging-in-place routine?

Announcer 1: How could you miss it? They sure look healthy out there. Look at those smiles!

Announcer 2: And they sure were synchronized!

Announcer 1: They sure were! I love those sequined socks.

Announcer 2: You have good taste.

You see, I don't understand an aerobics competition. I used to think that

people did aerobics just to keep shape, not to compete. I suppose I was wrong (you won't hear me saying so often, seeing as though I want to be Master Of The World and cannot admit error).

So, the conclusion. Aerobic competitions are evil. Men who wear skin leotards and promote health through aerobics are evil. People who can touch their knees to their noses still smile about it are evil.

The end is upon us. There is a where to run. Even Donald Sutherland will turn out to be an aerobic champion. The horror, the horror.

Thus concludes the author's tenure on the opinion page. The author would like to thank his many supporters for their wonderful support through these tenuous times, and he would like to thank all the members of the academy, including Wesley Crusher, who he knows will be accepted into the academy next year.

Mark Nair is a senior political science major and opinion page editor at The Battalion.

## Jackson's economic plan might have some benefits

WASHINGTON — The two leading Democratic presidential contenders, Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson, have borrowed from the Reagan administration the Blondie Bumstead theory of accounting: Money they could spend — but don't — is counted as money saved and available for other purposes.

That is, if Blondie buys a dress for only \$100 of Dagwood's money when she could have spent \$300, she credits herself as having earned \$200 — which she is then free to spend on something else.

Ask Dukakis and Jackson how they will finance such social programs as low-cost housing and they answer: by canceling the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), halting development of the Midgetman missile, canceling the Trident D-5 missile and not building any more MX missiles.

It is true that SDI, if developed according to President Reagan's dream, might cost as much as \$1 trillion — but it is \$1 trillion the country doesn't have. We are already running a federal deficit even without making that expenditure; canceling it doesn't "save" a dime.

The Midgetman is still in a research stage. Canceling it would save maybe \$500 million a year, or enough to buy \$50,000 homes for \$10,000 families.

What the Democrats are locking themselves into, if elected, is a promise that denudes the nation of defenses for the sake of savings that are insufficient to solve the social problems. You wind up with the worst of both worlds: a weakened defense and an inability to make good on your promise of housing the homeless.

Jackson, however, has proposed a housing program that at first sounded inadequate, but now looks better and better. If you take part of the nation's pension funds, he says, and invest them in low-cost housing, retirees will have a safe investment, and affordable housing will be available to low- and moderate-income families.

The argument against this has been that the pension funds would be penalized by being locked into low-yield home mortgages. Pension managers once looked for safe investments like

mortgages, but now they compete for higher profits by playing the stock market.

What seduced them was portfolio insurance — the program trading that promises investors a profit if the market goes up and protects them against a loss if the market goes down. You buy a basket of stocks and a matching basket of futures options for the same stocks. At opportune times, you capitalize on the difference between the price of the stock and the price of the options.

This is so complicated a scheme that it needs computers to make the purchases and the sales. Last Oct. 19, it collapsed. With the market falling, the computers kicked in with massive selling programs aimed at protecting the profits of huge institutional investors — like pension funds. In the free-fall, the market dropped 500 points.

Last week, it happened again. The New York Stock Exchange ordered computer trades to stop, but the market still fell 101 points as brokers executed their program trades. Most people in pension plans don't know which stocks the plans own. The fund managers move in and out of whichever stock seems most likely to make a short-term profit — especially stocks in companies that are likely takeover targets.

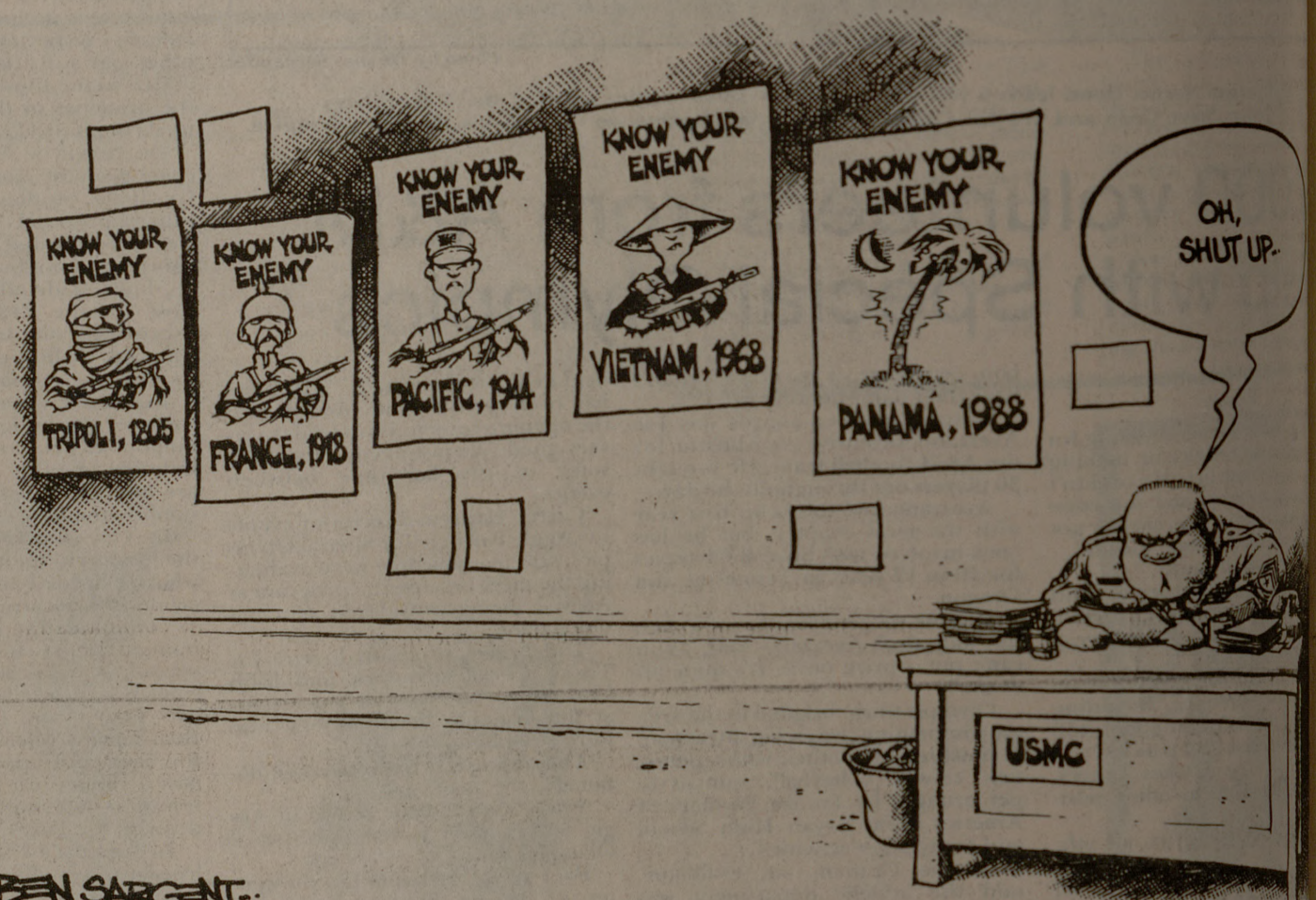
It is ironic: Pension funds are helping to feed the merger mania that draws capital out of the home-mortgage market. When the bubble bursts, and the market falls, working people fear their retirement income is going up in smoke. If the money was invested, instead, in housing, it might fetch a lower but far safer return.

Rather than banking imaginary savings from canceled weapons systems, the Democrats might do better to focus on the Jackson pension-fund plan. It doesn't require an arbitrary, unilateral reduction of U.S. defenses. If we have to cut weapons systems, it is more safely done in negotiations with the Soviets than as a result of a domestic outcry for social spending.

The Jackson plan didn't seem all that attractive when the stock market was soaring. But with its 101-point free-fall, Wall Street has made Jacksonomics look good.

Donald Kaul is on vacation. Lars-Erik Nelson is a syndicated column whose column is distributed by Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Lars-Erik Nelson  
Guest Columnist



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## Mail Call

### Where's the track news?

EDITOR: I would like to voice my disapproval on the lack of coverage for the Aggie Track Team. Through two home meets and half of the track season your paper has failed to cover any aspect of the program. I feel it is an insult to these athletes who bust their butts week after week only to receive little recognition for their performances.

The team has a new track stadium, and there were very impressive crowds at both home meets. Obviously there is much interest for the track team, and I fail to understand why there is no coverage from *The Battalion*. Perhaps in

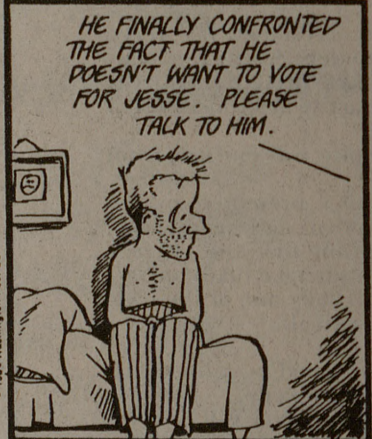
the future your paper could report on the track team's endeavors and on the many fine individual performances this year. By the way, A&M has an excellent chance of knocking off Arkansas and Texas for the conference championship in May.

Brian Smith '90

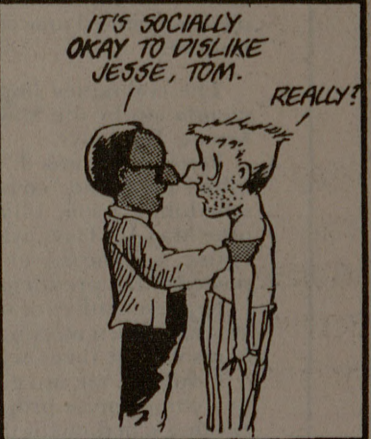
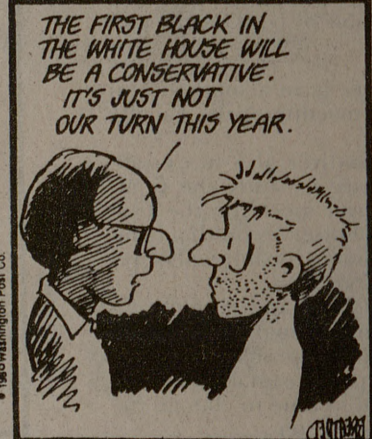
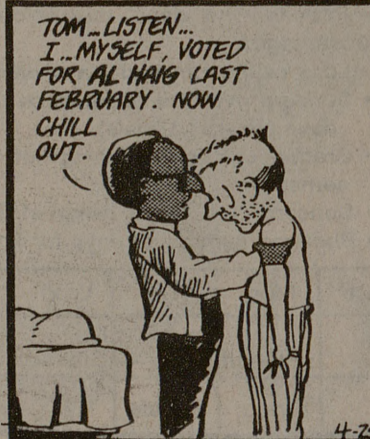
Editor's note: The Battalion did indeed cover both home meets.

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 the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

## BLOOM COUNTY



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