

Opinion

What can we expect from the Reagan phenomenon?

I have never been a follower of astrology. When someone asks me what sign I was born under I am likely to answer: "This space for rent." When someone reminds me that the moons of Saturn are in the patio of Jupiter, my eyes glaze over.

Lewis Grizzard

But I'm beginning to have second thoughts.

The revelation that President and Mrs. Reagan are deeply interested in astrology and sometimes consult astrologers before scheduling important events should not be dismissed lightly. It might very well be the key to explaining the Reagan phenomenon; certainly nothing else does.

Mr. Reagan is a creature of exquisite paradox. A divorced man who rarely sees his grandchildren, he has come to

symbolize the reassertion of family values in our society. He has carried the flag for the religious revival in recent years, yet he doesn't attend church. He has become the embodiment of the nation's warlike spirit, this man who spent World War II making training films. He is probably the worst performer at a press conference of any modern president, yet he retains his title of "Great Communicator."

"How does he do it?" I kept asking myself. "What's his secret?"

Now we know. Astrology. He finds himself in a jam and gets Ed Meese on the blower and says: "Ed, take a look at the stars, cut up a frog and tell me what the signs say." A few minutes later Meese calls back with: "They say it's a bad time to fire people." And that's that.

Or he'll call his personal astrologer and say: "Merlin, the leader of Libya is giving me a headache; what should I do?" And Merlin will say: "That bum, Khadafy?" Reagan hangs up and says: "Bomb Khadafy!"

And we thought he was being capricious. He was being scientific; at least as

scientific as a man who believes in Social Darwinism but not in evolution can be. And it works. He seems destined to leave office the most popular president since Eisenhower. He could walk through an "Animal House" food fight in a white suit and never pick up a stain. The Force is with him.

President Reagan doesn't remind me of any single president; he reminds me of two — Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. He combines Harding's intellectual awareness with Coolidge's almost total disinterest in governing.

It's difficult to remember now, but Harding was immensely popular at the time of his death, which occurred shortly before the great scandals of his administration were revealed. William Shirer, the great World War II journalist, in his memoir "20th Century Journey," remembers the Harding funeral train passing through his hometown:

"The scene in Cedar Rapids, where 15,000 citizens, a third of our population, turned out to express their grief as the funeral train passed through, was repeated in scores of towns along the

way from coast to coast. A *New York Times* reporter aboard the train wrote that it was 'the most remarkable demonstration in American history of affection, respect and reverence for the dead.'"

Frederick Lewis Allen in his classic, "Only Yesterday," wrote: "... everywhere people felt that a great-hearted man, bowed down with his labors in their behalf, had died a martyr to the service of his country. The dead president was called 'a majestic figure who stood out like a rock of consistency'; it was said that 'his vision was always on the spiritual...'" This of a man who once wrote his mistress: "I love you garb'd, but naked more!"

Of Coolidge, Shirer wrote: "No doubt, he fitted the times. He still believed, as most of his successors would, in the country's outworn myths... that you got ahead in this world, or at least in America, by hard work, frugal living, impeccable morals and devotion to religion. Coolidge preached that gospel. The success which is made in any walk of life," he would state in his autobiogra-

phy, 'is measured almost exactly by the amount of hard work that is put in.' This seemed strange from a man who was reported to nap at least twice after lunch and to spend much of his rocking chair, apparently not in meditation. It seemed to me... pondered the reason for the mentioned popularity of this anemic man, that it was due mainly to his of keeping the government's business and encouraging the businessman to do his damndest to make money...

"Business... was enthroned... land and businessmen had become arbiters of public opinion and... above the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the pastor, the priest... Coolidge believed in them. 'Business is the business of America,' he told the country on becoming President... that remind you of anyone?"

Harding gave us Teapot Dome, the Great Depression; both they'd left office.

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Mail Call

Listen to a guy who knows

EDITOR:

After the two letters about Mr. Chicken in recent issues, I would like to suggest a difference of opinion. I have been on both sides of the issue, one listening to the speech and crude tactics of Dan Ganter and two, having the police write a ticket for a minor in possession. One must first realize that the people in question were breaking the law. I would much rather listen to the man who calls himself God in his own place than receive a ticket and possibly be arrested.

Paul Threadgill '89

A victim of doublespeak

EDITOR:

The recent article by Timm Doolen concerning Star Wars showed very clearly just how susceptible young minds are to governmental double talk and the "newspeak" that Orwell warned about.

His first problem is thinking "SDI" is somehow a more correct way to refer to the futuristic weapons program than is "Star Wars." But we should remember that the Department of Defense is just as capable of using euphemism as any of us... "Strategic Defence Initiative" sounds very impressive, but if we referred to it as "Laser Beams from Outer Space" we would be describing it much more accurately and suddenly it would sound a lot less peaceful... also less rational and well-thought-out.

The next issue Mr. Doolen mucks about with is the question of bringing the arms race to heaven. He makes the absurd claim that present missiles already fly through the heavens, so the arms race is already there. This is of course ridiculous because there is an enormous difference between weapons systems based on earth and those that orbit it. The latter will require a huge increase in spending to develop the technology for it, and anyone who can't see that this is a huge leap in the arms race is avoiding reality.

In fact, this is the most glaring example of Mr. Doolen's lack of perception because his pet word for something that shoots the arms race to even more insane levels is a "bargaining chip." Talk about newspeak! The Soviets themselves couldn't have come up with a better word to hide behind. And if THEY had by some horrible stroke of luck come up with a weapons system that WE had no defense for, I doubt very much that we would refer to it so calmly as a "bargaining chip."

Now, someone might object that this remark is unfair, because our system would only be for defense against missiles. But will it stop there? Anyone who is naive enough to think so should think about the very title "Department of DEFENSE," and how capable the DOD is for OFFENSIVE measures. Why think that the DOD will stop with defensive capabilities? Who can think of single advance in the arms race which was not used for offensive weapons? It is very hard not to see that Star Wars will open a whole new battle ground for the arms race. As soon as the Soviets develop their own system (on their own or by spying), then both systems will have to protect against each other. They will also have to protect the communication satellites our military relies on, so that inevitably our planet will be surrounded by Star Wars weapons that almost make the "Death Star" sound like a picnic in comparison. Is this the legacy that Mr. Doolen and Mr. Reagan are so blindly inflicting on our children?

Mr. Doolen doesn't even address the issues of how few scientists working on Star Wars believe it will ever work against missiles and how many ways there are to reduce even the low effectiveness it could hope for. He also ignores the fact that massive cuts in basic research have been made to help pay for this fiasco. These are serious flaws with the concept that need to be considered elsewhere because they are vital to the issue.

Do we really want to give Star Wars this chance?

Charles Albert graduate student.

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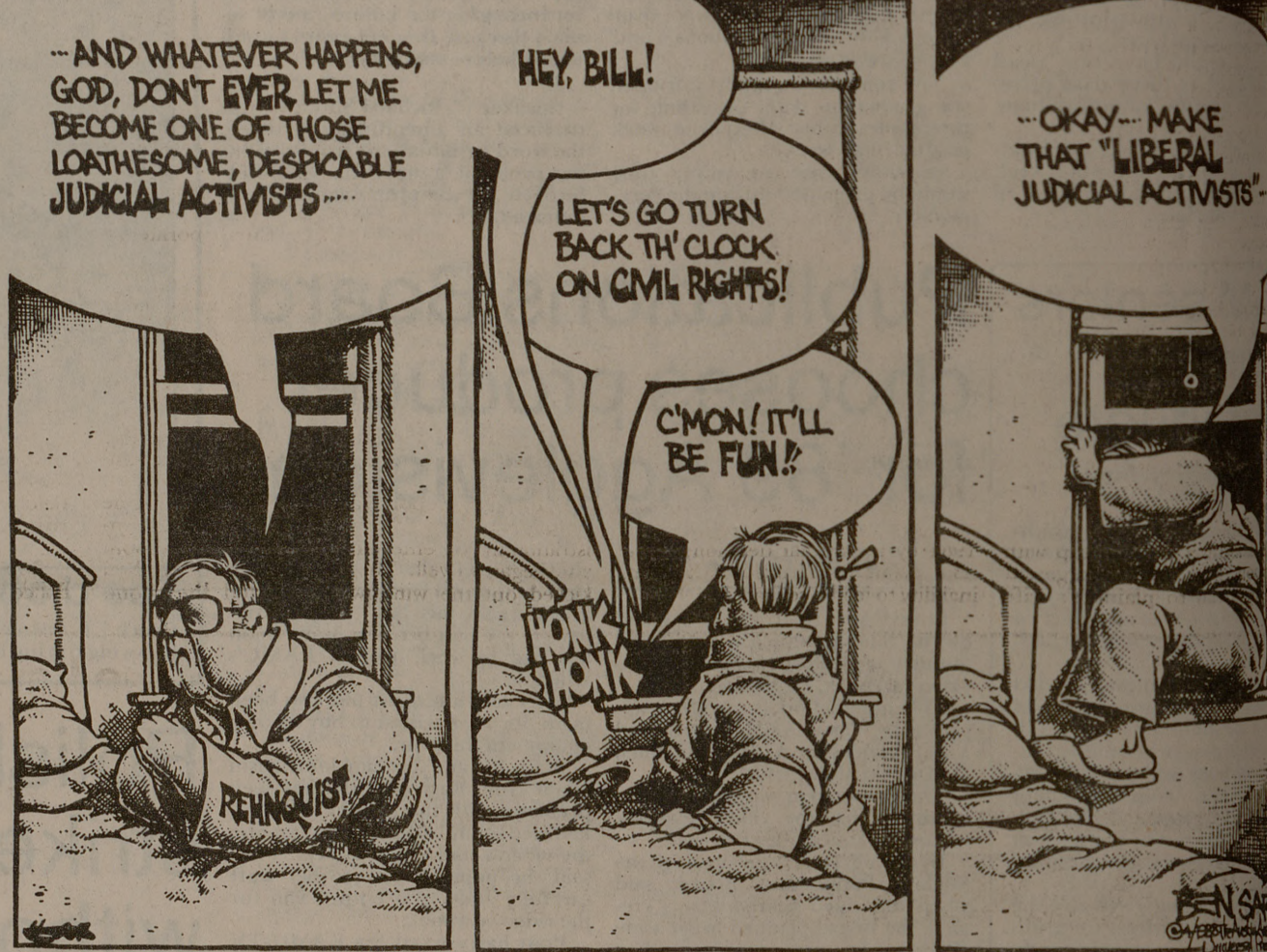
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Redford's newest try is not just a movie, it's a really boffo flick

I rarely recommend movies in this space because I do not consider myself a real critic.

For instance, I call movies "movies."

Real life movie critics refer to movies as "films."

I also rarely pay attention to who the director is in a movie, and I'm still not sure what a "dolly-grip" is, not to mention a "best boy."

(Next time you go to a movie, watch as they roll the credits: Every movie has a dolly-grip and a best boy. You know how strange they are in Hollywood.)

Yet, I think I recommended some movie winners for you over the years.

Recently, I pushed a wonderful sleeper called "Belizaire the Cajun," and it was me, remember, who said to go see "Fatal Attraction" before you fooled

around on your wife or bought a pet rabbit.

I'm here today with a new movie I recommend heartily.

It is "The Milagro Beanfield War," which doesn't have any bigtime stars unless you think Christopher Walken is a bigtime star.

This time, I did notice who the director was. Robert Redford. I'm not sure when he got out of acting, but if this movie is any indication of his directing abilities, we certainly won't miss him in another "Legal Eagles."

"The Milagro Beanfield War" is a movie about Milagro, New Mexico, a little dump of a town whose very existence is being threatened by the bulldozers of a large recreational developer.

Even the water has been cut off to local farmers in an effort to run them out.

But one brave soul decides to irrigate his beanfield with illegal water anyway. From all that comes a classical confrontation between little and good and big and evil.

There's an old man who speaks gibberish in the movie. He has a pet pig who will love the old man and the pig.

I copied what one real critic said about "Milagro":

"I loved this film" — Joel S. "Good Morning America." (See what I mean about real critics saying "film"?)

What I say is we need more movies like "Milagro" that praise old values standing up for what's right, sticking together, and learning to cherish respect babbling old men with pet pigs.

They'll never use any of this "Milagro" ad in the paper, but I did, here's what I would like for the say I said:

"The last time I felt this good about a movie was when me and Kathy Loudermilk went to see 'Francis' (talking mule) in the Navy' and sat back row of the balcony.

"That child flung a dolly-grip over my neck and I never heard a word," cis said."

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by Berke Breathed