

Opinion

Oh, joy, the search for the perfect auto



Barbara Jones

Over the past weekend several important and newsworthy events happened: A United States warship mistakenly shot down an Iranian jetliner in the Persian Gulf killing all 290 passengers abroad; Attorney General Edwin Meese announced his resignation after being cleared from any wrongdoing while in office by an independent council investigation; and my parents bought me a new car. Well it's not really new, but close enough. This might not seem to some as a monumental event, but then again maybe I should back up a bit and fill you all in on the whole story.

First I must explain a little about my parental unit. My parents firmly believe in two principles that they never stray from: One is that regardless of the amount of money one has, children are not to be spoiled. They must work for things they want and not just be given them. The second principle is that a car is a mode of transportation for transporting one from Point A to Point B, not material possession. As a result our family's driveway resembles a used car lot. In my family you stop driving a car when the car no longer runs. My Dad still speaks proudly of a car we once owned that was appropriately dubbed "the Vomit Commit," which he bought from a friend for \$50 and drove it for two years.

A lot of kids, when embarking on their freshman year of college, are given cars as graduation presents by their parents. Well Bob and Barb Jones were not those parents. It was entirely out of the question. "But all my friends are getting to take cars to school," I pleaded to no avail. My parents were not the type to fall for that sort of logic. However it turned out not to be the tragedy that I was sure it was going to be since I was living on campus and could easily access everything on foot.

My sophomore year I again pleaded for a car. Instead I got a bike. Not a new bike, but a friend of my Mom's Sears Jiffy 3-speed with goober handle bars and a flower basket hanging off the front. I was horrified. I was going to be living off campus with no car. The nearest grocery store was about three-fourths of a mile away. To get my groceries home I would have to steal a grocery cart, cross over a busy four-lane road, and push it all the way back to my apartment — a very humbling experi-

ence. I would always try to look as if I had forgotten where I had parked my car. My friends called me the "bag lady." What are friends for?

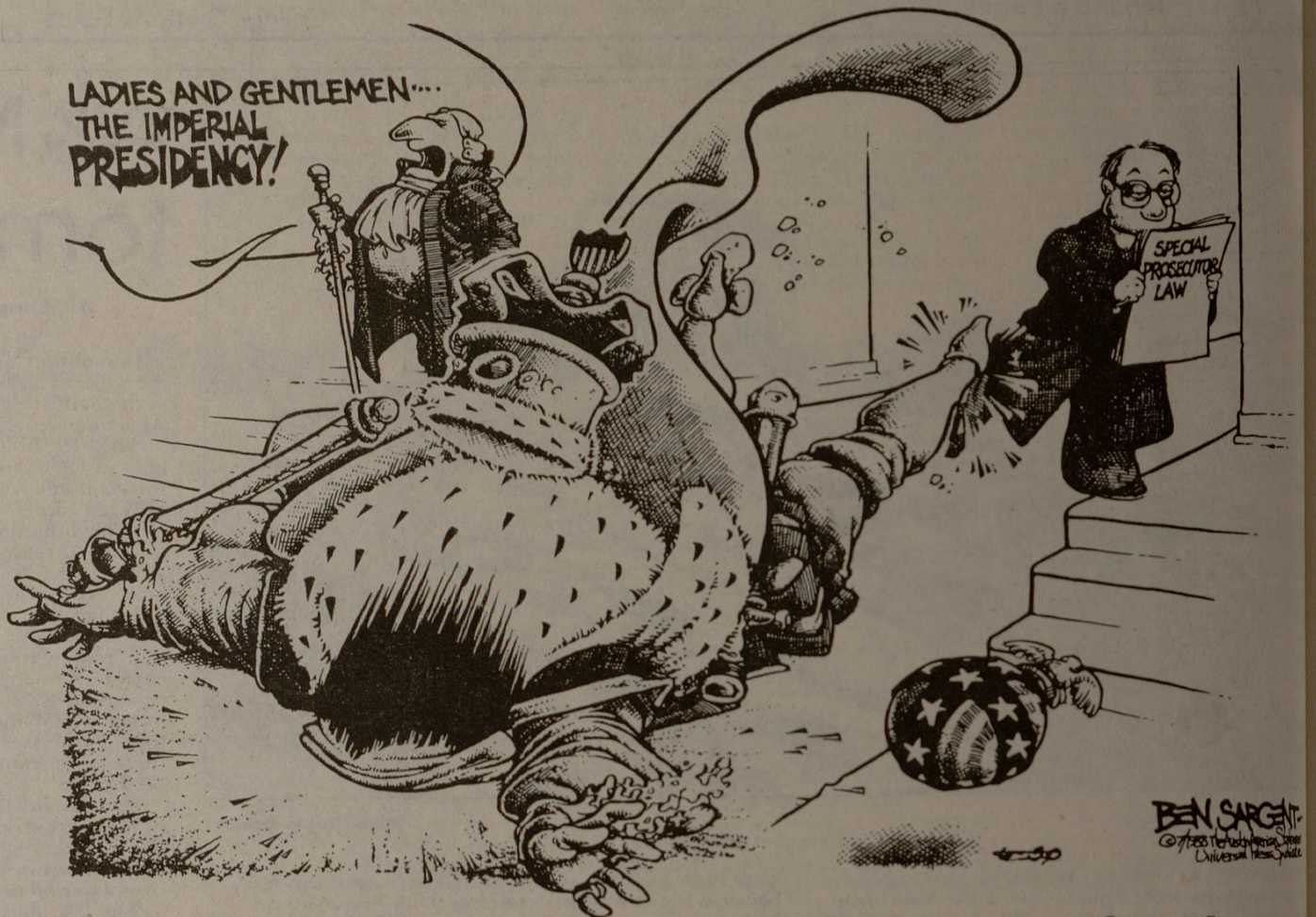
Then came my junior year and I felt assured that it was going to be my lucky year. Well, there was good news and bad news. Yes, I was going to have a car to take to school with me. The bad news was the car that I was to take. Close your eyes and imagine every student's idea of a nightmare car. Yes that's right a station wagon! Not just any station wagon, though. It was the same station wagon that my parents bought when I was 11. It had 130,000 miles on it and definitely looked its age. Now, imagine the worst color imaginable. Right again . . . Yellow! Since the car had been collecting grease in the driveway and had not been driven in months, I felt assured that the old bomb wouldn't start. Well my luck continued and the Banana Mobile (as my friends called it) started on the first try with a sizable cloud of blue smoke billowing from the tailpipe. Lucky me, right?

So off I went cruising in the Banana Mobile. Now logically considering the age and mileage of the car, I knew the humiliation of driving this car would be short lived, and I looked forward with excitement to its dying day. Well it lived and it lived. It is the eternal automobile and I felt sure that this car would see my death before its own ultimate demise. I drove it my entire junior and senior year, and just when I thought I would have to hire a contract killer to get rid of the vessel, it happened. While I was home for the weekend this spring my Dad discovered that the car had some major problems and deemed it unsafe to drive. That was the happiest day of my life. I was finally going to get a car, or so I thought.

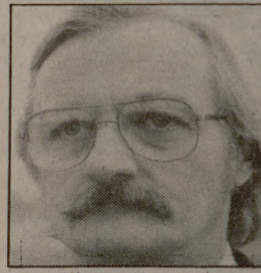
Sunday rolled around and no new car had materialized. My parents handed me the keys to the maxi-van. It is not merely a van, mind you, but a MAXI-van — 3 feet longer than your average van. I stared at them in disbelief. I once thought that you would have to work really hard to find a car that is less cool than the wagon, but let me tell you a white paneled maxi-van is about as close to uncool as one can get. "You will have to drive it for a couple of weeks or so until we find something else." Well the weeks turned to months and I was beginning to think I was cursed. But indeed it happened and the rest is history. I now have my very own car — and it's not yellow!

Barbara Jones is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY!



Some official creative solutions for our inconvenient drought



Donald Kaul

The nation is suffering a drought. You can tell because when you look at the intellectual page of USA Today, the weather map is all red, day after day. It looks like a John Birch map of China during the Korean War.

I must admit, I have trouble fully comprehending a drought. To a city dweller a drought is at worst an inconvenience, at best a mixed blessing. Yes the grass dies and the grocery bill goes up, but the baseball game never gets rained out, picnic weather is plentiful and fleas disappear. For the farmer, however, it is a disaster of biblical proportions.

Which is another reason I don't understand the lure of farming. When the prices are up, the crops are bad and you don't have anything to sell. If the crops and prices both should be good one

year and you do make a little money, you're encouraged to buy more land, going into debt and eventual bankruptcy. Should nothing else go wrong, you get hail. This is a good time?

I don't think they should send white-collar criminals to jail; they should sentence them to farm for a living. It would cut down on embezzling.

But whining about it isn't going to do any good. We need solutions. I called around to some national leaders and, promising them anonymity to protect their innocence, asked them what should be done. Here are their anonymous replies:

A Highly Placed Administration Official: "Well, I'm old enough to remember the last great drought, the one that caused Henry Fonda to move to California in a truck with Jane Darwell — she was his mother, you know — so I know how these things can be.

"But what you have to remember is that when we took office the water table was 15 percent below the Soviet Union's. Three previous administration had allowed a rain gap to develop so a great deal of our early effort was in closing that. If the effort has lagged in recent months it's because of the Democrat-controlled Congress, but I'm here to tell you that I am not going to allow this nation to become a second-class water power.

"Next week my chief of staff, what-zisname, is going to announce a rider to the contra-aid bill that will provide adequate moisture for each and every state in the union, regardless of voting patterns. It is based on a principle we put in effect when I was governor of California: If you're short of water, steal some. We're calling it 'Operation Canada Dry.' Excuse me now, I have to take my nap."

A Lowly Placed Administration Official: "You mean we're in Drought City? Golly. Didn't know. Been in and out of the office a lot lately. Campaigning sort of thing. Have they found out what's causing it? No rain? Congress probably has rainfall tied up in committee.

"The way I see it, it's kind of a leadership sort of thing. Not that the president isn't providing leadership, of course, but I think that with my experience — ambassador to China, director of the CIA, Republican national chairman, Skull and Bones at Yale, business-

man, squash — we can find a way to it.

"Not with massive federal programs but with individual effort, at the expense of the poor. I mean, if you comes to worst, we can leave our sprinklers on all night, see what I mean? Creative solution sort of thing. I hope it won't become a campaign issue."

A Well-Placed Democratic Official: "We had a similar situation in Massachusetts four years ago. It stopped raining in Brockton, threatening the potato crop. We had some hard choices to make, but we didn't flinch. We set up a committee to study the problem and come up with recommendations. Within a month it rained on Brockton and O'Neill's garden. What we did for Massachusetts we can do for the rest of the country."

An Unplaced Democratic Official: "The Bible says seven years of famine. We've had seven years of Reaganomics, now where's the feast? The fields are drying up, the throats of farmers are parched. Blacks and women are being discriminated against. Three hundred thousand people without health insurance. Fifteen percent of the babies born without prenatal care. One in five children don't finish high school. Twenty percent of our children born in poverty.

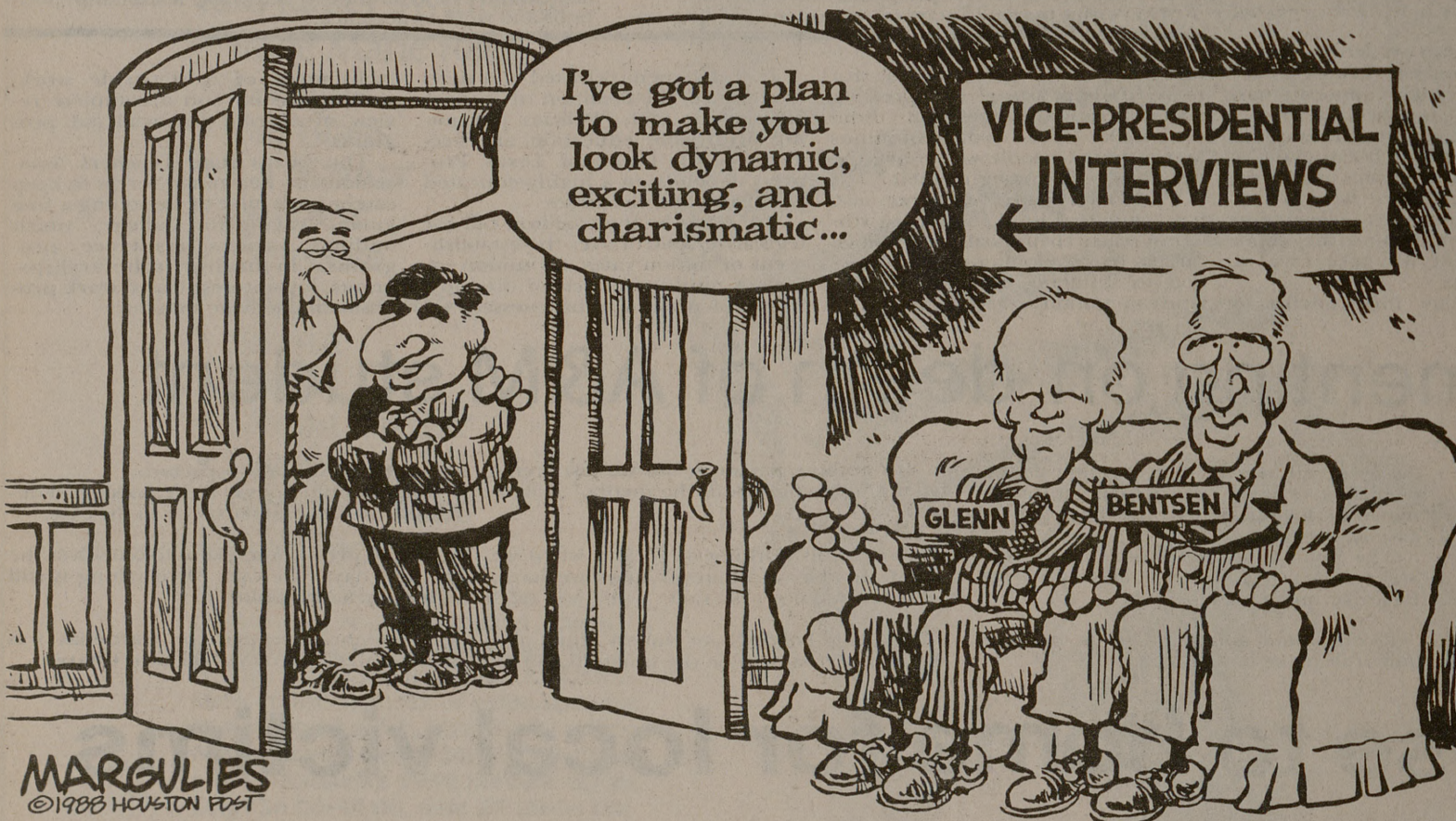
"I say that if we can make it rain the plain we can reduce the pain. We the people who can make a difference. There have been seven years of the Reagan drought, but don't surrender. It is on the way."

Those all seemed like interesting solutions, more or less, but I like better Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng said the other day. Asked at a hearing what government should do about the drought, he said:

"Pray for rain."

Amen.

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

