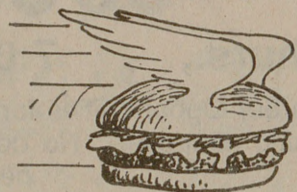
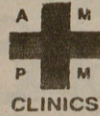


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The Battalion

WORLD & NATION

Thursday, April 13, 1989

12

Firearms bureau reports increase in applications for assault weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — Close to 1 million new semiautomatic assault-style rifles could flood the United States if the Bush administration decides to end its suspension of such imports.

Gun importers have applications to bring in 965,000 of the weapons pending at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, according to spokesman Dick Pedersen.

The import suspension was imposed March 14 after public and police outcries over the increased use of the weapons such as semiautomatic versions of AK-47s and Uzi carbines in drug-related violence, and the January slayings of five schoolchildren in Stockton, Calif.

The suspension covered some 400,000 weap-

ons, including about 300,000 for which import permits already had been approved. Last week, the administration expanded the suspension to cover 240,000 separate weapons.

"We noticed the increase in these showing up in crimes, an increase in demand, and we reacted to it," Pedersen said. "The main thing is that we might be nipping the semiautomatic assault-type rifle in the bud rather than have millions of them flooding in here."

Nevertheless, gun importers are continuing to submit applications, he said Tuesday.

"It appears there have been a lot more applications that came in after the ban," Pedersen said.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is required by law to permit imports only of weapons suitable or adaptable to "sporting purposes," and it is studying the use of the semiautomatic rifles to determine how they are being used. The review should take two to three more months.

Despite the uproar over such weapons, FBI crime statistics reveal that most murders by firearms are still committed by people wielding handguns. Of the 17,859 murders committed nationwide in 1987, 10,556 were committed with firearms of which 7,807 were handguns, according to the FBI.

Editors, artists say comic strips should deal with social issues

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 100 newspaper editors sat down after breakfast Wednesday — about the time millions of their readers were turning to the comic pages — to discuss whether "Cathy" should be political and what to do when the kids grow up in "For Better or Worse."

Serious issues these, so there wasn't a single outburst of laughter when members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors attended a convention workshop on what funnies they print.

Well, the people who draw the comics are referred to as "artists."

Among those who review their works for the syndicates that sell them to newspapers are lawyers, who have a field day with "Doonesbury," and editors, who sometimes must negotiate with an artist to tone down a character's off-color language.

And newspaper editors who decide that a strip has gone too far and yank it from the paper for a day or two had better brace: some readers are sure to hurl the ugly term "censor."

"Pulling a strip draws so much attention to it and to you as a censor, that you're reluctant to do it," reported Marty Claus, managing edi-

tor for features and business at the Detroit Free Press.

In any event, she said, readers are more worldly than editors might think; they often don't care to be protected.

"People will see that Toledo ran it and Detroit didn't and they'll say, 'Let me be the judge (of what's off base),' " Claus said.

She plugged for more blacks and other minorities in the comics, reporting that a month-long census of all the characters on her paper's funny pages revealed that fewer than 1 percent were non-white.

Ray Billingsley, the black artist behind "Curtis," a comic strip about a black kid, said the comics should deal with social issues. He is itching to do a story line on crack, the cocaine derivative, he said, but thinks he'd better let Curtis, who was created last October, get better established first.

"Let these strips be bold," Billingsley advised the editors. "The public is more accepting than many editors think."

Lee Salem, editorial director of Universal Press Syndicate, favors giving artists their freedom, after they've earned it. Artists want to deal with AIDS, animal rights, drugs and shoplifting, and they're bound to do it, he said.

Claus said they should have as much freedom as columnists; after all, she said, their names are on their strips just like a columnist's byline.

Gorbachev asks for calm in Georgia

MOSCOW (AP) — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev today appealed for calm in Soviet Georgia and for an end to nationalist demonstrations that have claimed at least 19 lives in the southern republic, the Tass news agency said.

Also today, the Communist Party chief of Soviet Georgia offered to resign after local leaders met to discuss the violence, the Foreign Ministry said.

The appeal from Gorbachev and the resignation offer came as scattered strikes continued in Georgia and funerals were held for the people who were killed during the suppression of the protests Sunday.

In an address to the Georgian people, which Tass said was published in the republic's capital, Gorbachev said pro-independence demonstrations "damaged the interests of perestroika, democratization and renewal in the country."

Gorbachev said, "The interests of the working people have nothing in common with attempts to sever the existing ties of friendship and cooperation among our peoples, dismantle the socialist system in the republic and push it into the slough of ethnic enmity."

Gorbachev said "actions by irresponsible persons" had to the loss of life in Tbilisi, the republic's capital, and he called on all inhabitants of Georgia to show restraint and common sense.

Diabetes

(Continued from page 1)

Group for Medical Research Funding. She also will ask Congress to support the recommendations for funding by the National Institute for Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases Coalition.

In addition to asking for funding, Brow will ask Congress to support the American Disabilities Act, which protects handicapped individuals from discrimination in employment, housing, transportation and public accommodations. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 protect persons on the basis of race, sex, national origin and religion, but not on the basis of handicap. The new act

ensures similar protection to the disabled.

Brow plans to ask Congress to support a joint resolution of the House and Senate to proclaim November 1989 as National Diabetes Month.

"I hope to bring home funds to help fund research at A&M," she said. "There is not a cure as of yet, but funding will help us find one sooner."

For more information about the A&M awareness group, contact Shannon Brow at 846-2827. The group meets at 7 p.m. every third Tuesday of the month in Rudder Tower.

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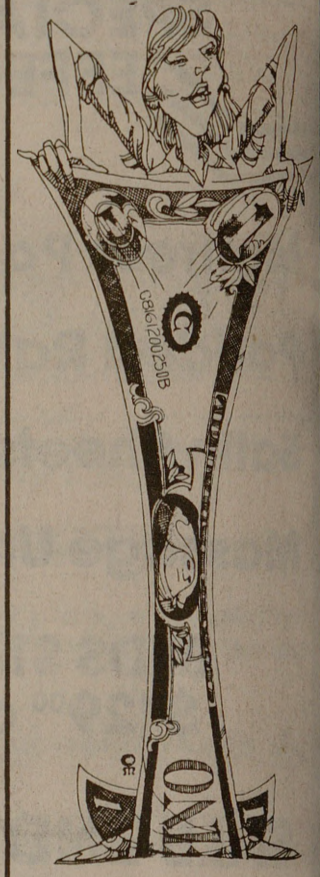
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