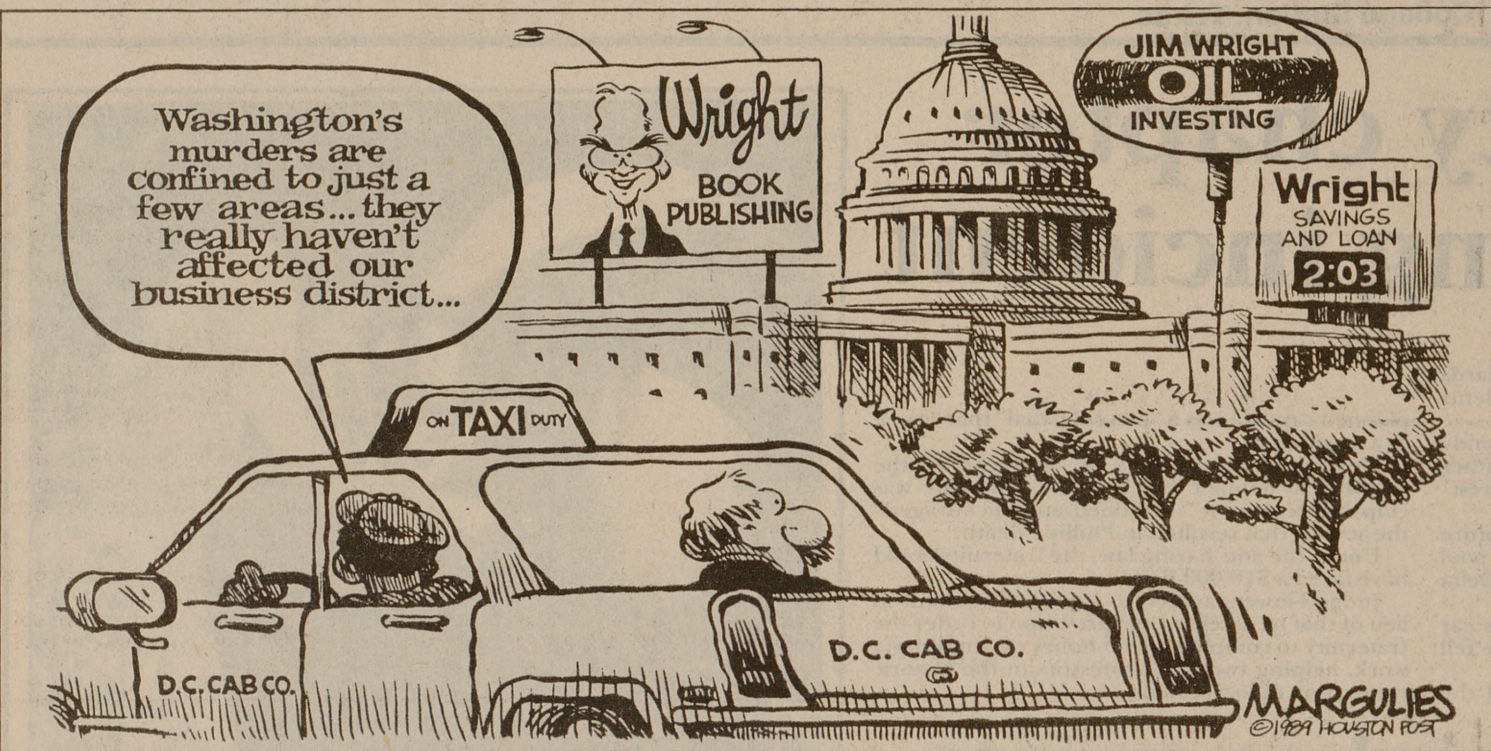


Monday, May 1, 1989



Wright among great salesmen

Mike Royko
Columnist

Initiative is a wonderful quality, part of what made America great.

For example, there used to be a cop on the South Side who made a practice of carrying a couple of dozen wood pencils in his pocket while on duty.

When he stopped a motorist for a traffic violation, he would explain the seriousness of the offense.

Then, in a friendly manner, he would say: "I have three kinds of pencils which I sell — a \$5 pencil, a \$10 pencil and a \$25 pencil."

Depending on the degree of the violation, he would then tell the motorist what kind of pencil was appropriate. A speeder might need a \$25 pencil, while a yellow-light jumper might require only the \$5 model.

That cop sold a lot of pencils, since \$5, \$10 or \$25 was cheaper than taking a day off work and going downtown to Traffic Court.

And years ago we had a Cook County assessor who was talented as an artist.

When a new, tall office building went up in Chicago, the assessor might photograph it, then set up his easel and do the building in watercolor, his specialty.

He or one of his associates would then show the drawing to the building's owner.

Real estate people are aware that the county assessor decides how much their buildings are worth for tax purposes. So most of them would marvel at the beauty of the paintings. And, of course, they would insist on buying the masterpieces.

A real estate executive once showed me his painting. It had been stored for years in a closet in his building.

"What do you think it cost us?" he asked.

I guessed about 50 bucks.

"It was 10 thou," he said, "and worth every penny of it."

These nostalgic memories of initiative came back to me while thinking about House Speaker Jim Wright and his remarkable book deal.

I know that he's accused about a wide variety of hanky-panky, but as a writer myself, I'm most intrigued by his literary career.

If you have followed the Wright case, you know that a few years ago, he tossed together a few of his old speeches, idle thoughts and tidbits of wisdom, and a friend of his in the printing business turned it into a thin book.

It has been hailed by critics as being useless, banal and not worth reading.

Now, this isn't the first book ever published about which these things have been said.

But what made Wright's book un-

usual was the deal he got from his publisher.

A standard book contract gives the author between 10 percent and 15 percent of the retail price of the book, depending on how many copies it sells. For paperbacks, the writer gets as little as 5 percent.

But Speaker Wright received 55 percent of the sales price, which may be the best royalty deal in publishing history.

When this came out last year, I wrote an open letter to Wright's publisher, pleading with him to handle my books.

He never responded, which saddened me. On the other hand, I could understand why he ignored me.

Unlike Wright, I don't have a campaign committee with a big financial war chest. So my non-existent campaign committee couldn't throw \$265,000 in campaign printing business to the man who printed Wright's book.

Another fascinating aspect to Wright's literary career was that he didn't bother with bookstores, where books are usually sold.

His books were sold at political rallies and to people who wanted to be Wright's friend. When you are speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, one of the most powerful jobs in America, boy, are there a lot of folks who want to be your friend.

And it has also turned out that a university in Texas bought a big batch of the books.

That happened after Wright gave a speech at the university. As we all know, congressmen often receive something called an "honorarium" for giving a speech. Or for just having breakfast with rich influence-seekers. Some call it a "fee." Others, less charitable, call it a bribe.

However, there is a legal limit on how much a congressman can receive in a year for blah-blahing an audience. And when Wright made the university speech, he had reached the limit.

But there was nothing to prevent the university from buying a brickload of Wright's dust-covered books.

And as Wright keeps pointing out, there's nothing illegal about selling books.

So what does all this tell us? It tells us what initiative can do.

The pencil-selling cop had it. So did the art-selling assessor. And so has the book-selling speaker of the House.

The same instincts. The only differences are the products and the customers. And the price.

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Mail Call

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EDITOR:
When our son Scott was injured during a Cavalry review for Parents' Weekend, we were naturally quite devastated, especially during the days that followed when he remained unconscious and close to death.
We would like to express our gratitude to the cadets of Squadron 11, especially to the Commanding Officer, Bill Peterson, who stood by through all the days Scott was in St. Joseph Hospital; to Shannon Fairchild, who brought us meals at the hospital three times a day in addition to his own busy class schedule and Cavalry duties; and to the freshmen and sophomores of Squadron 11 who donated their own money to pay for the meals.
Also, to Maj. Gen. Thomas G. Darling, Corps commandant, and the other officers from the Department of Military Sciences; Miss May Dene Walker, for her continued concern and kindness to us and our son; Dr. Sutter, Dr. Edwards, Dr. Milford, and

Dr. Vogelsong from the Animal Science Department, for their individual attention to our son's scholastic needs; Mr. Ken Durham and Ann Lovett from the Texas A&M University Development Foundation, for their kindness and consideration; all the members of the Parsons' Mounted Cavalry, for their constant and continued attention and support; John Hall and the members of Squadron 7; Dr. Karl Schmitt and the outstanding staff at St. Joseph Hospital, who tended and cared for our son so carefully; Dr. Ron Henriksen, Sheryl Fairchild, and Teresa Cimini, who cared for Scott at the scene of the accident; Col. and Mrs. Tom Parsons, for their kindness and devotion; and all friends of ours and Scott's who called, visited and offered us their support, comfort, prayers, food and even their homes.

Bob and Linda Armstrong

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff 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.

Door-lock policy good idea

Even though I've been living away from home for three years now, Mom still calls and tells me to do my homework, go to bed early and lock my door.

I'm continuing to live on campus in the fall, but Mom will not have to worry about my door being locked because the University will do it for me.

In an attempt to guarantee the safety of students residing on campus, the University will lock all residence hall exterior doors 24 hours a day, effective Fall 1989.

I believe the decision is in the best interest of those who live on campus.

We need to realize that although Aggies supposedly do not lie, cheat or steal, the campus is not free from those who do. We cannot walk around believing everyone on this campus is friendly and that everyone lives by the Aggie Code of Honor.

It is to our disadvantage if we let our guard down and fail to protect ourselves or our personal belongings.

The "it will never happen to me" syndrome plagues us all. But it can happen to any one of us. Last summer, a man entered the residence hall I was living in and walked into an upstairs room unannounced. The girl in the room screamed when the attacker entered. Her roommate, who was out of the room at the time, heard her cries and ran in, scaring the attacker away. This hit a little too close to home when I realized that five minutes before the incident I had left my door unlocked to go to the laundry room.

Incidents similar to these definitely sparked Department of Student Affairs' study of locking doors for longer times and initiated the implementation of the door-lock policy. The decision to implement the study previously underway was certainly reaffirmed by the incident involving Harry Lewis Horak.



Juliette Rizzo
Opinion Page Editor

Many of us set foot on campus and tune out the rest of the "real world." What we forget is that the campus is part of this world, and thieves and criminals exist here and prey on the naivety of students. What we need to do to alleviate problems is to become as actively aware of our surroundings on campus as we are when we are off campus.

When we are at home, we are more aware of our surroundings, and whether it be in a big city or a small town, we feel safer when we lock our doors before we go to bed at night. At school, we have the tendency to automatically put ourselves in study mode and become oblivious to what is happening around us. Opportunistic thieves take advantage of such negligence.

A survey published in the Oct. 4, 1988 issue of *USA Today* reported that Texas A&M had the highest rate of reported misdemeanor crimes of all colleges in Texas.

Bob Wiatt, director of security and University Police, said the majority of crimes are caused by victim carelessness in and out of residence halls.

The University has attempted to take on a parental role just as our parents have reprimanded us and even punished us to set us straight in the past. But increased crime rates have led the University to believe that we have ignored their concern. The school has supplied us with inside and outside door

locks, but we have failed to use them. We don't lock our inside doors, because we are too trusting of those who live around us, and we prop open outside doors because we are too lazy to open them when our guests arrive. Wiatt said none of the reported on-campus residence hall burglaries have been caused by forced entry.

Accessibility to the halls by "undesirables" obviously was too easy even though doors were locked from 7 p.m. to 10 a.m.

Students basically have unknowingly set themselves up for crimes and should have seen the door-lock policy approaching. Student Affairs should not be admonished for instigating such a policy. Although students may feel that Big Brother is taking control, they should have realized that he was there all along. Our carelessness has mandated that the University educate us to protect ourselves.

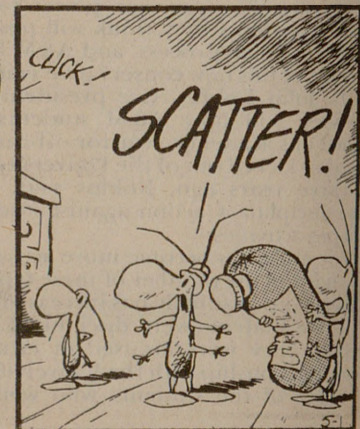
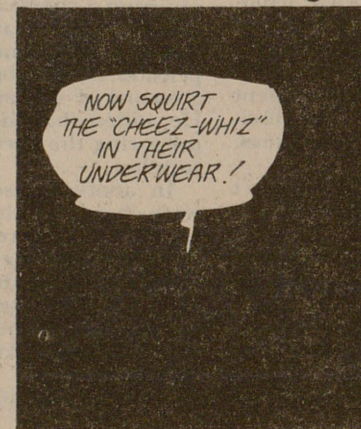
Juliette Rizzo is a junior journalism major and opinion page editor for The Battalion.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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