

## Forget flag-burning law

Flag-burning fever has struck in Austin. Not the kind that destroys national emblems — the kind that clogs legislative agendas.

With all the problems facing the state of Texas these days, you would think the Legislature would find things more worthy of their time than giving their support to a non-existent Constitutional amendment. Nevertheless, our representatives are going great guns to try to prevent a form of expression that is only used because it attracts precisely this kind of attention.

Even worse, it is President Bush who is leading the pack. Bush's call for the flag-burning amendment started the whole mess. It sounded then — and sounds now — like an easy way to attract public sympathy, much like his campaign that focused largely on the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools. After all, who is in favor of burning flags?

Fortunately the president is now in Europe, drawing attention to the recent upsurges against the communist systems in Poland and Hungary. Let's hope our local representatives take Bush's lead again and start paying attention to some real issues.

The Battalion Editorial Board

## Participants in charity chili cookoff left with warm feeling inside

Ah hah! I have found the secret.

Although this discovery ranks somewhere below working out a cure for the common cold or figuring out the meaning of life, I'm proud of the practical knowledge I managed to pick up a couple of weekends ago.

Anyone who has heard the dreaded words, "We'd like you to judge a chili cookoff," can relate to the wisdom acquired through tried and true methods.

Until this very cookoff, the prospect of rating pots of chili made my stomach churn — figuratively at the anticipation and literally after the fact. Plus which, I'd just spent much of the previous weekend on the disabled list with severe tummy unrest.

I've been known to make excuses to escape the curse of the jalapeno. "Sorry, can't judge this time. Have to be in Africa on a safari to study the habits of the gnu." Actually, I have a pretty good reason in that that spicy foods tend to aggravate my gout.

But when Roy Strube phoned well in advance to line me up for the Black Gold Chili Pod's cookoff (all the group's competitions raise money for charity, but this one was for an especially good cause, Special Olympics), I didn't have the heart to beg off.

That was my good fortune. Maybe I'll patent the information. Better yet, I'll share it in hopes of winning a Nobel Prize for saving stomach linings.

First of all, the Chili Appreciation Society International makes it a lot easier by outlawing foreign substances in its competitive chili. If you've never known the pleasure of tasting samples and running across little chunks in a cup that turned out to be raisins, you wouldn't understand why that rule is so important.

Still, the real discovery came by accident. Strube did me a favor by getting me assigned to the final table.

Final table means just what it sounds like. The field of competitors is narrowed by another set of judges, then turned over to the final table.

That means I was able to enjoy the luxury of watching carefully to make sure none of the preliminary judges was carted off in an ambulance or had to be revived.

**Ken Brodnax**  
The Odessa American

Theoretically, the first guinea pigs root out all the worst efforts and leave only the cream of the crop.

This process also leaves a lot of free time for other pursuits. For instance, myself and fellow finals judge Jim Mantel of KNFM Radio put in a little practice time at the horseshoe pit. Never can tell when an invite will arrive from the White House.

Previous to finding the horseshoes, we judges were confined to leaning against pickups and trying to figure out the occupations of various crusty-looking characters who inevitably show up at cookoffs. We were impressed to be in the company of so many investment bankers.

After finding that we were woefully inadequate at pitching (perhaps if we had bothered to turn loose of our beverage of choice, the results would have been better), the time arrived to judge.

And, eureka! Only a dozen cups of chili had survived the discriminating folks. I can taste 12 styles of chili standing on my head. In fact, I've considered that position in hopes of improving the digestive process.

I can honestly say that not one of the samples was inedible or even mildly bad. Several were excellent. I never gagged once. Not only did I not turn green, I never even developed a case of indigestion. What could be better? I did my part for a good cause, and didn't have to bust a gut in the process.

Winners of the Black Gold cookoff earned points toward the Chili Appreciation Society's showcase event in Terlingua. But more importantly, it raised some needed cash for Special Olympics and even presented the opportunity for several of the Special Olympians to cook chili for a competition of their own. Strube said that contest ended in a tie, with all being declared winners.

Not surprisingly, Strube and his fellow club members left with a warm feeling inside — and not just from the chili.

Ken Brodnax is a writer for the *The Odessa American*

## Horse racing legislation in endless final stretch

Remember how the people of Texas were SUPPOSED to get pari-mutuel betting this year? Well, our lawmakers in Austin have been dragging their feet (or should I say hooves) on the issue, and it looks like an October premiere of horse racing in Texas could be postponed. Again.

A spokesperson for Republican Senator O.H. "Ike" Harris of Dallas, the sponsor of many horse and dog racing bills, said that Harris will not file his horse racing "clean-up bill" during the current special session. The bill contains an amendment that would reduce the state's share of wagering takeout on horse races, which Harris adamantly supports.

But Gov. Clements has decided that he wants the state's share to remain the same. So rather than rushing to the governor's mansion to settle this dispute with Clements, Harris has decided to file his bill in November. Without this bill, the racing panel said the horses will probably never leave the gates in October.

So why should Harris press things anyway? There is the ever-so-important worker's compensation bill that the House and Senate have been fighting about during the entire session. And no one is in dire need of all that bother-



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some extra income that racing may immediately bring into state, right?

Who needs it? We do.

Until the tracks are in operation, Texans will never realize the benefits of pari-mutuel horse racing. The Texas Racing Act must therefore be cleaned up in order for the operation of pari-mutuel tracks to occur. Not only are there flaws in the bill, but certain financial loose-ends still haven't been taken care of. Because the racing commission must turn over \$500,000 to the comptroller's office by Sept. 1, a shortage of funds could occur and prevent many track officials from being paid. Financial flaws like these should be taken care of now so that racing can begin in October.

An easy solution to the dispute between Clements and Harris would be to split the current bill in two: one bill con-

taining the "clean-up" amendments and the other containing the controversial takeout structure. Thus, problems with the racing act could be amended during the current session so that racing can begin in October. The current takeout structure could remain in effect until then be amended in the November special session.

The Texas Legislature should take a lesson from the legislatures of other states with legalized pari-mutuel betting. Recently went to Delta Downs in Louisiana and was impressed by the organization of the system they have. It is understandable that the development of state pari-mutuel betting systems has waited far too long for the state.

There is no better time than the present for the Legislature to make recommendations to the racing act. However, possible that changes to the racing act may not be implemented until the next regular session, further prolonging acquisition of "first-class horse racing" in the state. How long will the citizens of Texas have to go to Louisiana to bet on horses? As long as the legislature continues to be horse — oops, I mean headed.

Damon Arhos is a junior journalism major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

## All-Star Ronnie strikes out

He's been everything from Mr. President to the Gipper to the guy next to Bonzo. On Tuesday night, he was Dutch again.

Ronald Reagan, admitting afterward that he was "uptight" and "self-conscious" worked the All-Star Game for one inning Tuesday, mixing humor with an occasional gaffe as a color commentator in the NBC broadcast booth.

At times, he was obviously reading from prepared notes, bandying the statistics of Tony Gwynn and Kevin Mitchell.

When the National League's leadoff hitter Ozzie Smith fouled off an 0-1 pitch, Reagan cut into play-by-play man Vin Scully:

"Whoops. Somebody has a souvenir," he said.

When Wade Boggs followed Bo Jackson for consecutive home runs in the American League's half of the first, Reagan seized the moment:

"That looks like it's going, too. You know, those two homeruns — you didn't have to wait for them. Even the outfielders knew they were home runs."

His most apparent slip was when boothmate Scully noted that San Francisco's Mitchell led the major leagues in home runs and RBIs, and Reagan re-

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peated the information a few seconds later.

Reagan also was unsure about how to pronounce Julio Franco's name, and said so.

"I'm glad you said that first. I didn't know if you call him Joo-lee-oh or Hoo-lee-oh," he said with a chuckle.

Some of his observations:

• On Gwynn: "He played basketball in college and was drafted by the Los Angeles Clippers and the San Diego Padres."

• Will Clark: "He's the only National League player to play every game last year and was a member of the 1984 Olympic team. He's got a batting average of .332; that's pretty good for a young man."

• Howard Johnson: "36 home runs" Johnson has hit 22 homers this season.

• NL pitcher Rick Reuschel: "He's 6-foot-3 and weighs, what, 240 pounds. He's got 12 wins. After the back-to-back homers: 'Big Daddy, that's what the players call him ... a little upset.'"

• Cal Ripken Jr.: "He's played in 1,173 straight games and he's the first

American League shortstop to start six straight All-Star Games."

Mitchell's appearance at the plate, however, prompted a bit more bio-

"He was tied up with the gangs when he was young and in school. His brother was killed in a gang fight. He started for vengeance. But a remarkable person, his grandmother, took charge, understood it, and saw to it that he got good education, and here he is, away from the gangs," he said.

Sports broadcasting is nothing new for the former president.

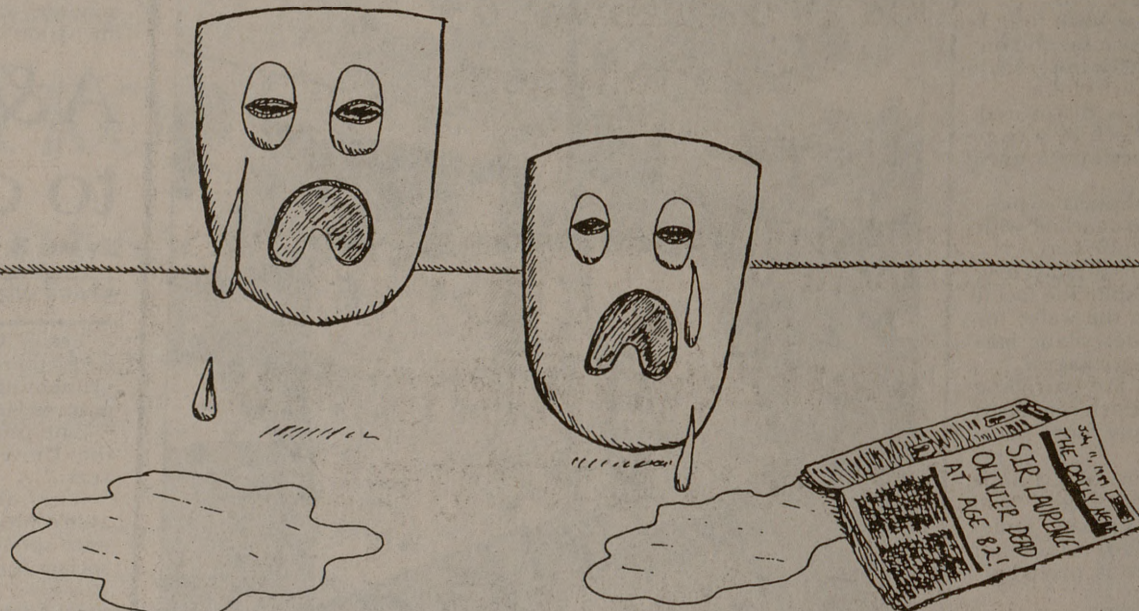
In the 1930s, "Dutch" Reagan, as he was known, recreated major league games from wire service teletype reports on WHO Radio in Des Moines.

He said those reports were much easier than the one he did for the national All-Star audience.

"I can't get used to it this way. I had to say I was a little uptight. When I was sitting up here in a place like this, I had to tell people what was happening when they couldn't see. Now I get a little self-conscious when people can see it," he said.

Still, he added, "This has taken me down a very nostalgic lane."

Ron Blum is a sports writer for the *Associated Press*.



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