



AT THE MOVIES

Mail Call

Leland deserved more respect

EDITOR:

We are truly appalled!! We arrived at work on the morning of Monday, August 14, 1989, expecting to see our school and work-place paying its last respects to our fallen Congressman (from Houston) George Thomas "Mickey" Leland, by placing the flag at half mast.

After investigating, it was discovered that the police department is responsible for the raising and lowering of the flag when the Corps of Cadets is gone for the summer, and the president's office issues directives concerning honoring diseased dignitaries.

First the police department was called to find what was going to be done about the flags. The police department spokesperson said no word had been received from the president's office regarding lowering the flags. Next the president's office was called. Through them we learned the police department had been issued a notice to lower all the flags to honor Congressman Leland and his party. The police department was recalled and the person that answered the phone notified us all that all police personnel were in a meeting and the task of lowering the flag would have to wait.

What could be so important that a blatant error of this magnitude could not be corrected upon request. And if this had been Reveille would this error have been corrected immediately or postponed until after the meeting? This was a slap in the face! It is absolutely unconceivable that a state

school would pay homage to a dog and not do the same for a man, who not only stood up for the rights of all people in Texas but in many parts of the world.

To find the flag not at half mast was indeed a disappointment after the University so hastily placed it at half mast for a dog. If the University chooses to pay homage to any fallen congressman, senator, governor, president, etc. we feel that everyone should be treated equally.

Jackie Sandles

Accompanied by three signatures

Don't point fingers

EDITOR:

In reference to the "Mail Call" outcry of ethnic betrayal (*The Battalion* 8/10) you should have invoked more humor in your response by saying that hereafter, the new *Battalion* Police Beat will refer to any black male that is caught red-handed with stolen colored television sets as a "person" in order to allay presumed guilt.

Eric T. Clarke

Graduate student

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.

Movie quality has declined

Even as Hollywood this summer celebrates the largest box-office tallies in its history, Americans say the movies just aren't what they used to be.

Associated Press
Gary Langer

Citing a surfeit of sex, violence and profanity, a majority of respondents in a Media General-Associated Press poll said the overall quality of movies has declined over the years — and fewer than two in 10 said the flicks are better.

The reviews were not all bad: Six in 10 of the 1,084 adults in the national poll gave favorable marks to the last movie they had seen. But as many had an unfavorable impression of new movies in general.

Many critics acclaim 1939 as the pinnacle of moviemaking, the year of such classics as "Gone With the Wind," "The Wizard of Oz" and "Wuthering Heights." A half-century later, however, "Batman," "Ghostbusters II" and "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" are smashing box-office records.

Despite such popular new fare, the poll found that Americans watch movies on home videocassette recorders far more often than they go to the theater. And half of VCR owners said they go out to movies less since buying their machines.

Criticism of film content was extraordinarily high: Eight in 10 respondents said most new films have too much violence and too much profanity in them, and seven in 10 said most new movies have too much nudity.

Women were considerably more critical of Hollywood than were men. Strong majorities of women said they would be less likely to attend a film if it contained nudity, violence or profanity; most men, by contrast, said those factors

would not matter in their choice of a movie.

Older respondents also were much more critical of film content, and movie attendance declined with age. Respondents under age 45 were much more frequent moviegoers than those over 45; those 18-29 were the most avid.

Fifty-six percent overall said the quality of movies has been getting worse over the years. That sentiment ranged from 42 percent of the youngest group to 76 percent of the oldest, and from 48 percent of men to 64 percent of women.

Respondents who identified themselves as liberals were more tolerant of profanity and nudity in the movies, although they objected to violence as much as others. Men tended to be more tolerant than women; 77 percent of women said they would be less likely to attend a movie with violence in it, but just 41 percent of men agreed. On profanity the female-male split was 69-44; on nudity, 72-42.

Ticket prices were another cause for complaint. While three-quarters of the respondents paid \$5 or less for their last movie ticket, a sizable 45 percent overall said the price was unreasonable.

Ten percent of all respondents said they had gone out to see a movie in the previous week. But a third of all respondents said they had rented a movie cassette in the previous week to watch on a home VCR.

Gary Langer is a writer for the Associated Press.

Is there a proper place for a toxic waste dump?

By George, the good guys won the other day. The Texas Water Commission voted to deny a permit to some folks (a foreign corporation, no less) who wanted to put the world's largest toxic waste dump down in Wharton County. Their plan was to put millions of barrels of toxic gunk into some salt domes in Wharton, first solidifying the glop by a secret process heretofore seen in action only in a Dixie cup.

This one really was a lulu. Wharton County would have been the first in the world to use this secret process. We all understand that no one wants a toxic waste dump in his backyard, but being a double guinea pig was a bit much for the good citizens of Wharton. Their six-year struggle to kill off this proposal is probably more an instructive political tale than it is an environmental victory.

A couple of hundred head of Whartonites (Whartoners?) had come to Austin for the hearing and they left after the 15-minute meeting with a 2 to 1 in their favor. I heard this exchange:

"For that, I could have stayed home."

"Ain't that the truth."

Bubba, you couldn't be more wrong. Only reason that vote went 2 to 1 against the toxic dump was on account of there were hundreds of Whartonites willing to come to Austin time after time, be-

Syndicated Columnist
Molly Ivins

cause Wharton's Concerned Citizens Against Pollution have been raising hell about this dump for years and because they in turn mobilized their local politicians to fight — Wharton County has spent \$1 million in a court and administrative battle against United Resource Recovery, the French waste disposal company that came up with this scheme.

The company claims the salt domes are geologically stable. The concerned citizens of Wharton triumphantly produced the case of *The Sinkhole That Ate Two PICK-ups*. Truer than a byGod, one day in 1983, a good chunk of PM 442 near Boling flat fell in and took two trucks with it, filled up with water and created a nice-sized reservoir. This apparently happened because 442 rides on a fault line, and so much geological stability, they say in Wharton.

The vote itself was rather interesting, since two of the commissioners had to reverse themselves, rather clearly more because of political pressure than because of the staff's recommendations. At the commission meeting, where Wharton turned out in force, commis-

sioner Buck Wynne announced that he wanted to take the whole matter under advisement and study the record in greater depth and so on, and just generally postpone the sucker for a month. As though six years had not been long enough for the greased lightning to do its work.

Wynne showed up last week with his feelings hurt. He said he had read the remarks of local officials in the Rosenberg newspaper after the last meeting saying he was a cop-out and that he was just dodging the bullet, and, well, they had actually criticized him. And only because he is such a big person was Wynne not going to let the that influence his judgment, he was going to vote against the permit anyway. (Honest to God, he

said all that sounded like a horse's behind.) The one vote in favor of the toxic dump came from John Houchins, a lawyer who professed to be upset at procedural violations the reversal required. Houchins announced during an entertaining peroration: "I don't care if it harlepins the governor and kills every cow in Bell County, I won't do that kind of stuff because of political pressure. This commission can't make decisions based on popular opinion. Otherwise, the Legislature can handle it. If we succumb to write-in campaigns and people walking around with signs that say, 'My child will glow in the dark,' we'll never get rid of the waste." While it may have been noble of Houchins to resist political pressure, in the form of the united sentiment of Wharton County, since the

commission's own technical staff had recommended against the project, it seemed less a matter of integrity than of stubbornness.

Houchins favored the crowd with the NIMBY (not in my backyard) lecture, asking: "What are we going to do with this stuff? Hire someone with a dump truck and a 55-gallon bucket to dump it in a bar ditch? That's why we've got superfund clean-up sights all over this country." Too true. I have an idea: Let's outlaw further production of this toxic garbage right now. It exists because a few people make money off it. There are no cases where manufacturing processes that produce highly toxic wastes are necessary for human survival and few cases where they are necessary for human comfort.

MARGULIES
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A man never stands so tall as when he bends down to help a child

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