

THE "BIBLE-THUMPERS"... INFLECTING THEIR VERSION OF RELIGION AGAINST ANYONE DIFFERENT...

© 1987 DON ATKINSON JR.

Mail Call

Learn about your neighbor

EDITOR:

For about 30 seconds, I was imagining everyone living on a large piece of land where people are asking each other, "Who am I?"... "Who are you?"

Believe it or not, this is exactly what's going on in the world today.

I just started realizing this predicament after reading Curtis Franks' article Oct. 17, "Culture has place in history."

The world is made of many different races. Each race has different cultures. The problem is we all live together, but we really don't know each other. The devastating part is that some of us lack knowledge in our own culture. What is there to do about this? There is only one answer to this. Find out more about yourself and find out more about your neighbor. As a black individual, I invite all races to enroll in Black History or Sociology of Black Americans. There are several different cultural organizations on this campus also. Once we are more familiar with our history, more than likely we will understand our culture.

To each individual: Learn more about yourself, your neighbor and mankind. All praises to Curtis Franks for writing this very fine article.

Raquel L. Jarrett '93

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.

Female Guard Room escorts?

EDITOR:

Recently, two girls on their way home late one Saturday night felt uneasy about walking alone and decided to call the Guard Room in hopes of obtaining an escort back to their residence hall. They were shocked to find out that there were only females in the Guard Room who were not only unwilling to provide an escort, but also quite rude when asked why not. The woman who spoke to them on the phone, said they were basically "out of luck" since there were no men there that evening.

This letter was not written to suggest that women should not be in the Guard Room, but only to suggest that an alternate plan be taken. First, it should be said, that we are in no way opposed to women being a part of the Corps. We do believe they are perfectly within their rights to be there. However, if they are unable, or unwilling to provide escorts, then maybe an alternative plan of action should be taken.

Our suggestion is that the women possibly serve their time during the day when escorts are not as pertinent, or serve their time along with the men. We, as those who ask for escorts, do not understand why women would be there in the first place if not to provide escorts since that is the main purpose in having the Guard Room.

As people who depend on the Guard Room for safety reasons, we do feel this issue is quite important and does deserve some attention rather quickly.

Gretchen Thompson '93 accompanied by two signatures

Unnecessary laws restrict freedoms

I support the National Rifle Association and the American Civil Liberties Union, which on its face sounds pretty oxymoronic. The N.R.A. is the supreme bastion of conservatism, situated ideologically just left of Atila the Hun, while the A.C.L.U. is the nation's greatest champion of every bleeding heart liberal cause that comes to mind.

But although their methods are different, the goals of the two groups are not so diametrically opposed as it appears; both groups, in their different ways, are trying to protect the American people from the American government.

The N.R.A. exists primarily to protect what it sees as Americans' right to keep and bear arms, based on its interpretation of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. The N.R.A. keeps a high profile, has a massive advertising budget and contributes millions of dollars to try to swing elections in favor of candidates who agree with its views on why gun control is a bad thing. The N.R.A. fears all forms of gun control, because it sees it as the first step in a chain of events that could lead to a prohibition on any gun ownership by private citizens.

The A.C.L.U. focuses its efforts on the courts, where they come to the rescue of any person or group whose Constitutional rights are being violated. That often means defending groups whose ideas are in direct opposition to



Scot Walker
Editor

the goals of the A.C.L.U., like the Ku Klux Klan or the American Nazis. As the A.C.L.U. sees it, if we start taking away the right of any group (no matter how repulsive), to assemble, speak, worship, etc., then we start the process that leads to the loss of those rights for everyone.

That's where the N.R.A. and the A.C.L.U. meet. The Constitution, in its entirety, with all the good parts and bad parts, is the foundation of our country, and it's mighty dangerous to start mucking around with it. We have to guard our freedoms carefully, because no matter how stable and secure and free our country seems right now, we are always only one or two steps away from living in a police state.

The danger never comes in the form of one horrible law that is designed to take away all our freedoms at once; instead, the problem is with laws that take away our liberties in tiny, little chunks.

The American people would never

allow a law, for instance, that says Congress has the power to stop people from criticizing it, but we almost had (and still might end up with) a law preventing people from burning the flag. We would impeach a president who tried to tell us how or with whom we can or cannot have sex, yet we tolerate laws in various states that prohibit homosexual intercourse or even, in some cases, heterosexual oral sex.

We would revolt if the government, in order to improve our health, forced us to do 100 sit-ups every day, yet we ask for laws to stop people from smoking or drinking or driving without seatbelts, in order to protect our health.

That's why I support the N.R.A. and the A.C.L.U., because they work to stop the "little laws" that are so insidious. And that's why we need to get out of the mentality that all of our ills can be solved by passing laws. Every time we pass another law, we are putting new restrictions on ourselves, removing little bits of our personal liberty, which in the long run undermines the freedoms upon which our country was founded.

Scot Walker is a junior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.

Care program: political disaster

In the shorthand of government, the whole business is called, quite simply, "catastrophic." That turned out to be a good choice of word.

The Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988 has itself proven to be a political catastrophe. The program is a problem for the members of Congress who approved it and now are in the process of undoing their unpopular handiwork; for the administration that first supported it and then fell silent; even for senior citizens' lobbyists who endorsed the plan without anticipating the backlash.

Now Congress is trying to figure out how and what to try to salvage out of catastrophic, the insurance program elderly Americans — at least those who know how to get a message to Washington — apparently did not want and clearly did not want to finance.

While the White House at one point said the program should be preserved, President Bush is offering no further advice. "We are letting the congressional process hash this out," Bush said Friday.

The president said if Congress produced something he deemed unsatisfactory, he would not hesitate to step in. The administration isn't saying what might prompt it to take action, or even a position, on a program Bush endorsed as a candidate.

After the House voted outright repeal, Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan endorsed a Senate measure that would have preserved major features of the law and reduced the controversial surtax on elderly Americans that was to have financed it.

He did so in a letter to the Senate Finance Committee, but the administration quickly and curiously declared that Sullivan was speaking only for himself.

Budget Director Richard G. Darman sent up a letter of his own. "Nothing in this letter should be construed as an expression for or opposition to one catastrophic illness substantive amendment as opposed to another," Darman decreed.

The catastrophic coverage act was supposed to provide insurance to pay for costly hospital and doctor care, to put a cap on out-of-pocket medical costs. It also offered new benefits for prescription drug costs. The benefits were to be phased in gradually.

But the tax to pay for those benefits, which already is in place, produced the backlash. It is a surtax of \$22.50 for every \$150 in federal income taxes paid by the elderly. That spared low-income retirees, imposing the surtax on about 40 percent of the people eligible for the insurance. The maximum tax is \$800 a person, and about six percent of the elderly faced that top levy.

Congress, which had expected grat-

Walter R. Mears

Associated Press

itude and support, reaped outrage from the people paying the tax, many of them already paying for their catastrophic health insurance. People who were paying little or no surtax came to believe that they'd been misled, and joined the opposition. Protection would have been most valuable to lower-income retired people, the least organized and least vocal of the nation's seniors.

President Reagan proposed the program in the first place, but what he recommended in 1987 was a relatively modest plan to protect the elderly against huge medical bills, with an estimated price tag of \$2 billion a year.

Congress added benefits, and cost. When the final measure was enacted 16 months ago, the five-year cost was estimated at \$32 billion. The estimate now is up to \$48 billion.

The Reagan plan was supposed to be financed with a flat, \$4 monthly premium charge. To pay for the expanded program, Congress devised the 15 percent income tax surtax that stirred the senior rebellion.

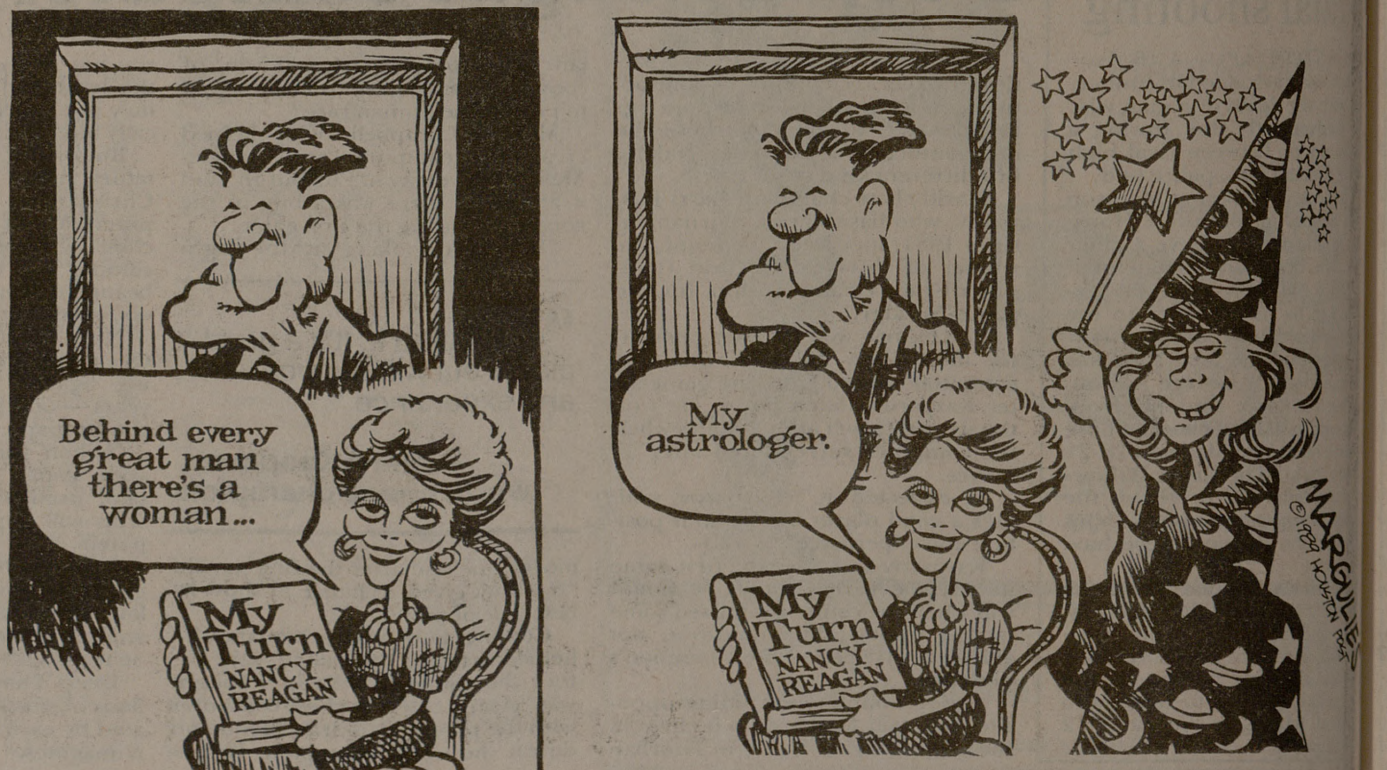
Even the most powerful of the senior lobbies, the American Association of Retired Persons, got tangled in the issue after agreeing to go along with the financing system. The AARP now says, somewhat defensively, that it never advocated "the surtax system." The association wants broader financing, including an increase in the bacco tax. That's not likely.

What is likely is that Congress will be far more wary of such programs, especially of such financing systems, in the future. And what's certain is that the costs the program would have covered will be paid in other ways — out-of-pocket, in higher premiums for private health insurance, and in taxes, state and federal.

In signing the bill he counted a major domestic achievement, Reagan nonetheless offered a warning, and proved too true. He said that without diligent cost controls, the program could be too expensive to afford.

"This could be more than a budget problem," Reagan said. "It could be a tragedy. The program, after all, is to be paid for by the elderly themselves. We must control the costs of these benefits or we'll harm the very people we are trying to help."

Walter R. Mears is vice president and columnist for The Associated Press and has reported on Washington and national politics for more than 25 years.



The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Scot Walker, Editor
Wade See, Managing Editor
Juliette Rizzo, Opinion Page Editor
Fiona Soltes, City Editor
Ellen Hobbs, Chuck Squatriglia, News Editors
Tom Kehoe, Sports Editor
Jay Janner, Art Director
Dean Sueltenfuss, Lifestyles Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.