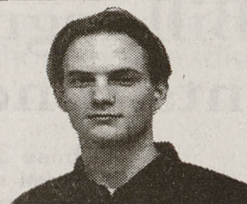


STERLING HAYMAN  
OPINION EDITOR



### 1994 elections gave public taste of Republicans

On Nov. 8, 1994, after the election results were in, I spent much of my time cussing, crying, drinking and throwing as many tantrums as I could. It was a dreary day for yellow-dog Democrats like myself. I kept thinking over and over, "This cannot be happening. How stupid can people be? We lost."

In retrospect, however, by losing, the Democrats actually won.

Sure, Texas lost the most eloquent and charismatic Governor it has ever had — a person who has done more for this state than anyone in recent history. Sure, Democrats lost control of the U.S. Senate. Sure, Democrats even lost control of the U.S. House, which had been in their possession for 40 years.

The Republicans came out of the '94 elections victorious. But their current performance is sealing their fate for the 1996 go-round.

The Contract With America, the election gimmick that was used to lure in swing voters, fared very well in the House. To Speaker Gingrich's credit, the majority of the items of legislation was passed. Woo-hoo, the Republicans fulfilled their promise.

By doing so, however, the American public was better able to analyze what the Republican party is all about. Their conclusion — many of the things that Republicans want appear good on the surface. But when these proposals require that details be revealed, the Republican agenda once again takes on a sour taste.

For once, the Republicans want to halt the growth of social programs in America.

Well, OK. That sounds good. Some programs are growing uncontrollably, and many social problems are not getting any better. So what is the Republican answer?

Cut the federally subsidized school lunch programs, which were created so that no children in public school systems would go undernourished.

Cut the federally subsidized college loan programs — the ones that help a countless number of college students achieve a higher education. The ones that are responsible for creating a more educated society.

Well, the Republicans also want to address the problem of violent crime in America today. Wow. That's a new idea. How creative. How can that be accomplished?

"Simple," replies the Republican party. "We've got lots of ideas."

To solve the crime problem, Republicans want to repeal the assault weapons ban that was passed in the last session of Congress. If you have more guns, there will be less crime. It's that simple.

Oh, and as far as last year's crime bill is concerned, those 100,000 new cops won't be needed either. Instead, states should be given the money in the form of block grants. That way, each state can decide the importance of citizen protection.

Hold on, Republicans also desperately want to change the tax system in America.

Good. We all hate to pay taxes — it's no fun at all. What changes should be made?

First of all, Republicans think that the rich are being taxed way too heavily. The poor wealthy ... we should all feel sorry for them. They pay too much money in taxes ... and they generally vote Republican. Let's give em' a break.

Now, the popular idea within the party is a flat tax — one standard tax rate for all Americans. Remember, this was a bad idea when it was Michael Dukakis' idea. But now with supporters like Dick Army, it can't fail.

Unfortunately, the idea is bad — no matter whose it is. A flat tax does nothing but lower taxes for the upper mucky muck, and increase taxes for the middle- and working-classes.

Besides that, most analysts predict that Republican proposed tax cuts will more than likely increase the federal deficit, which has constantly been decreasing since Clinton took office.

Fortunately, all of these things are becoming clear before the 1996 election. Republicans are defining themselves, and the public is watching.

This is not to say that the Republicans haven't accomplished anything over the past few months; they have. Their new lead in Congress has paved the way for many needed reforms.

However, they now realize that being the majority is a tad harder than being the minority. And the Democrats are now able to sit back and enjoy the show.

And oh, what a show it will be. The Presidential players have already taken the field, and the game is about to start.

It's a different game, though. No longer will Republicans be able to run against the "nasty status-quo establishment." Democrats have that advantage.

And chances are good that, come Nov. 1996, I'll be drinking, laughing and rejoicing in the fact that America is once again in the hands of a better party.

Sterling Hayman is a junior political science major

## Active dialogue crucial for understanding

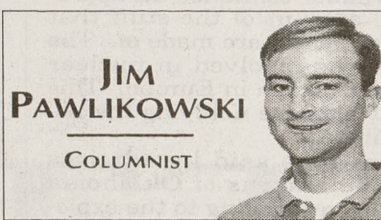
Pluralism. Tolerance. Open mindedness. Contemporary liberal thought espouses these values above all others, including the value of truth.

Liberal thinkers are often very hostile toward anyone who makes an assertion of truth. By claiming a normative standard of truth, a universal statement of what is right and what is wrong, one is supposedly acting in a closed-minded way. Any attempt to convince others of the truth of a particular belief is met with accusations of intolerance.

Moral relativism, the idea that there are no universally true propositions, is dangerous and wrong because it does not allow for any discussion to attempt to discern what is true.

It is true that individuals have different conceptions right and wrong. Everybody develops an individual moral code and applies it to their own life. However, this does not mean that all moral codes are equally valid or equally true.

Societies also develop moral codes and



JIM PAWLIKOWSKI  
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base their civil laws based on what people agree to be true and just. The United States outlaws slavery because all reasonable people agree that humans owning others humans and denying rights based only on skin color is unjust. Many people believe that abortion is immoral and unjust, but it remains legal because there is not widespread agreement that this judgment is true.

However, people who support making abortion illegal are often accused of wanting to impose morality by the force of law. If the basis for outlawing abortion is that it violates a particular religious moral code, then this criticism is valid and abortion should not be made illegal solely for this reason. However, if viewed as a human rights issue that all persons possess the right to life and the freedom from being unjustly harmed, then abortion must be made illegal. If the fetus is a human person, then abortion must be illegal for the same reason that slavery is illegal; it is unjust to deny people their rights.

If we had abandoned the debate over slavery, that injustice may have continued. If relativism had prevailed, we might not even think of slavery as an injustice. If the laws of a society are not guided by transcendent standards of justice, then no society can ever be condemned by another as unjust. We would have no basis for the claim of human rights. We could not condemn Hitler or Stalin. They violated none of their own laws and are accountable to no others.

Hypothetically, say a small band of white men gathered in the forest long ago. Recognizing their existence as nasty, brutish, and short, they formed a contract with each other to create a system of laws to protect their lives and their property and punish those who transgress the law.

These men have never seen a black man but have heard tales of the savagery of the African jungle, so they deem it in their best interest to subjugate and enslave any black which they might encounter. So they make it the law. They think that homosexuals pose a threat to their social order, so they decree that all known gays be put to death.

The cultural relativist has no philo-

sophical means of condemning this nation as unjust. One must posit some standard of justice that transcends individuals and societies, or he is forced to say that there is nothing wrong with the society in our example. Surely this offends our common sense. Yet relativism leads us directly to that conclusion.

By recognizing that normative standards of justice govern our moral code, we must attempt to discern what is right and be intolerant of what is wrong.

It is important to note, however, that such intolerance is strictly a private matter. In the absence of general agreement within a society, opinions about what is true and false must not be enforced by law. False opinions should not be suppressed; people should not be condemned for believing false doctrine.

All that is required is continued discussion. While we should be intolerant of false ideas, people of all opinions should engage in a vigorous, healthy, constructive dialogue in an attempt to understand each other and to understand the truth.

Jim Pawlikowski is a junior chemical engineering major

### Oklahoma tragedy evokes feelings of fear, insecurity

Oklahoma City. The site of the latest tragedy in the United States is not a city that anyone would have picked as a likely target. New York City or Los Angeles it is not.

Somehow, this just makes it that much more tragic. When the World Trade Center was bombed, the nation gasped in fear and shock. However, after the dust had settled, it was easy to dismiss the fear aspect of the reaction.

New York City seems so removed from the rest of the country. Most times, people who aren't from there talk about it as if it were a foreign country.

"I went to New York this week — man, those people are weird." "New York — not even a nice place to visit. What kind of insane people would live there?"

In our middle and southern America suburban comfort, we all sat back and thought about the tragedy in terms of "There" and "Here."

"That is terrible about what happened up There. Thank goodness we live down Here where we are safe."

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Oklahoma City was hit. A car bomb weighing more than 1000 pounds exploded during the peaceful morning in front of the Alfred Murray building, killing children and adults and injuring hundreds of others.

Innocence lost. Suddenly, no place is safe. The pictures of a bombed-out building bore remarkable resemblance to the pictures we have seen of war-torn cities in far away places — Sarajevo and Beirut come to mind.

Federal buildings around the country were quickly evacuated as bomb threats and panic spread like wild fire. Some Dallas and Fort Worth federal buildings were frantically emptied, as were buildings in Portland, Boston and several other cities.

The insanity has reached complacent middle America, and there is no place left to hide.

The tragedy monopolized all of the networks. The story even beat out the O. J. Simpson trial — at least for one day.

The problem with these bombings is that no one can foresee them. There is no way to control or prevent them. Anyone could walk into a building with a homemade bomb, leave one in a car or throw one through a window.

Every teenage kid with a chemistry set can easily discover how to make a



ELIZABETH PRESTON  
COLUMNIST

simple bomb. Put gunpowder in a snuff can, add a wick and cover the whole thing with duct tape. Suddenly you are holding a murder weapon.

The transition to a complex bomb is not that difficult, and too many people know this. There is even an easily found "Anarchist's Cookbook," detailing how to make hundreds of bombs of varying levels of complexity in minute detail.

Obviously, you don't even have to be smart to be a terrorist. In the New York incident, the first terrorist arrested was found when he tried to get his deposit back on the rented van that they had actually carried the bomb in. We are not dealing with rocket scientists.

Even scarier are the connections between yesterday's bombing and the Branch Davidians' fiery ending in Waco. There is too much they have in common to be dismissed entirely.

The Oklahoma City bombing occurred exactly two years to the day later.

The Murray building housed the Oklahoma Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agency whose Texas branch was in charge of the Waco fiasco.

A student at Texas A&M told a frightening story. Her uncle works for the ATF and was involved in the Waco incident. After the tragedy, he was transferred to Oklahoma City and currently works in the Murray building.

The uncle said that many of the agents involved in Waco were transferred out of Texas and to the Murray building in Oklahoma.

Luckily for this student, her uncle was not in the building Wednesday morning and is safe at home. But for most of the hundreds of workers there, the morning was anything but lucky.

These criminals always leave clues at the scenes, so the ever-diligent FBI and CIA will probably discover soon whether there is anything to these rumors. They will probably begin making arrests very shortly.

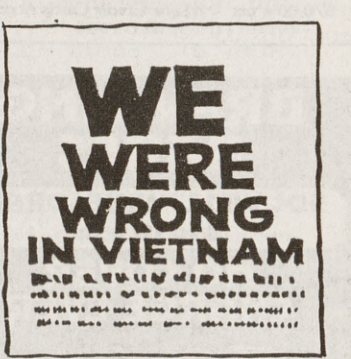
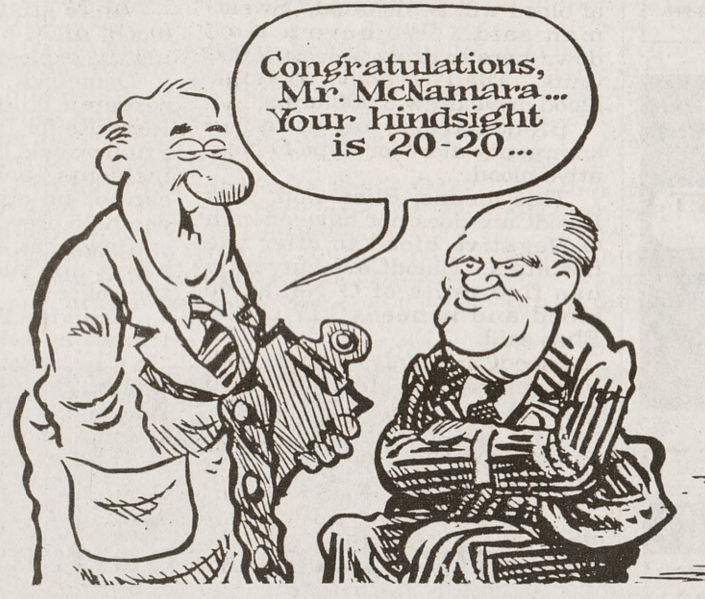
They always do a very good job on this part of tragedies — cleaning up the mess and arresting the bad guys.

Sadly, they have almost no ways to PREVENT these tragedies.

We as American citizens have nothing to learn from the Oklahoma City horror except fear.

No one can pretend that they are safe in their cozy world anymore.

Elizabeth Preston is a junior English major



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### Goodbyes to The Post

Last June, I walked into the huge, sprawling building where The Houston Post is housed. Immediate reaction — total fear.

The newsroom seemed to span for miles, a far cry from the cozy dungeon of The Battalion. I was amazed to see the miles of paper everywhere, fingers flying on the computer keyboards at a furious pace and the general feeling of urgency and importance.

There I was, an intern reporting for my first day. The scene was so intimidating, I almost ran to the parking lot to go back home.

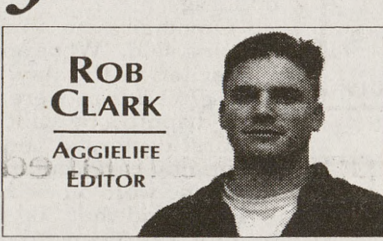
But the Post gave me opportunities that I never thought possible. From writing major stories on AIDS and health care, to rushing out to interview Dan Rather at an Astrohall gala, I often found myself in disbelief of the phenomenal situation I was so lucky to be in.

Perhaps the best part of the job was the interaction between the reporters and the interns. They had been where we were, and had found their way through the insecurities that hounded us each day.

Two reporters became mentors of sorts for me, and showed me the way. When I needed help with a story, or just advice on this journalism career I'm getting myself into, they were always there for some words of wisdom.

They helped instill a sense of pride in what I was doing. To work for The Houston Post, to know that 281,000 people had the opportunity to read something I wrote was simply mind-boggling.

Needless to say, I was horrified Tuesday when the news broke of the Post's



ROB CLARK  
AGGIELIFE EDITOR

abrupt departure from the newspaper world. What disturbed me wasn't the money involved, or that the Chronicle would now control the Houston print media.

I just kept seeing all the people that had helped me during my internship at the Post. Their words, their

guidance, their generosity. All I saw were those people clearing out their desks and saying goodbye.

Careers were suddenly in uncertain waters, economic security was in serious jeopardy and an era was over. The history of 115 years of publication was just that — history.

Considering the San Antonio Light and Dallas Times-Herald suffered similar fates in past years, this doesn't come as a total shock.

But tell that to the 1,900 Post employees who suddenly found themselves unemployed on Tuesday.

This is big business, and money talks. So now Houston finds itself with one newspaper. Perhaps the pain could have been eased by printing a final edition — a goodbye of sorts after 115 years. It would have been a source of dignity and pride for all the years of service to the city.

But the Hearst Corp. cleaned house, and the dignity of the Post employees wasn't high enough on the priority list.

I suppose just having the chance to contribute to the Post is enough for me. It was an amazing experience, one I will never forget.

But now those reporters that helped me need help themselves. What a shame.

Rob Clark is a senior journalism major

## Freeing The Planet. celebrating 25th Earth Day

Love your mother, it says. This particular bumper sticker cleverly states the message that proponents of Earth Day would like to get across.

• Think globally, act locally.  
• Live simply so that others can simply live.  
• Hurt not the earth, nor the trees, nor the sea.

These other slogans, found on bumper stickers, T-shirts and pins are also thoughtful, certainly, but useless unless acted upon. The sentiment behind them must motivate us to solve the problems plaguing our environment. Finding a sustainable way of life is our greatest challenge for the 21st Century.

Not all of us agree on the Environment problem. Some groups feel that the government has no reason to put its nose into protecting the environment, though turn-of-the-century politician Teddy Roosevelt certainly had no problem fitting environmental protection into his moderate, albeit socially conscious, politics.

Some groups, like Greenpeace, will stop at nothing to protect the environment and the creatures therein. Sometimes it feels as though human life is even put on the backburner in the world of Greenpeace.

In any case, whether or not you believe the government has reason to intervene, or believe that Greenpeace members are terrorists, there are problems.

And the problems are bigger and more important than any political ideology or party affiliation. The problems begin at a small level, with things



ERIN HILL  
ASST. OPINION EDITOR

we use every day: paper, cans, glass. "On campus, there are problems with recycling, like in dorms. We've proposed a bill for better recycling, though, and we have Target — a brochure that directs you to the various locations where you can recycle," said Shelly Nash, Earth Day chair for MSC Environmental Issues Committee.

So things are improving somewhat at A&M, but awareness of the issues is still low, and participation is far short of what it ought to be, considering the resources here: the population of the school, the emphasis on the sciences, Aggie enthusiasm.

"We have a special situation at A&M — we want to activate, but right now we are still educating. Ultimately, we want to activate people into the movement towards a cleaner, safer environment," said Carrie Thompson, Earth Day director for TEAC.

Hence the Earth Day celebration and the week of activities designed to raise awareness and motivation levels. The festivities and programs are more extensive than ever before.

"This year, Earth Day is getting bigger," said Nash. "The whole point of this Earth Week is to inform the student body of the issues and problems. People don't know about animals close to extinction, for example. We are trying to get people excited, and hopefully get them acting."

Get them excited, get them acting. Get them educated, get them activated.

It's a tall, but necessary order. We depend on the Earth, obviously, but often behave as if the Earth depends on us. One particularly suitable

saying on the A&M Earth Day T-shirt is "The Earth doesn't belong to us, we belong to the Earth." A subtle difference, perhaps, but a powerful one.

Certainly, we are losing our grip on protecting the environment. Losing it quickly, and fiercely.

Every major piece of environmental protection legislation drafted and passed during the '70s is being challenged in Washington, as we speak.

Without the government to enforce standards, the free market will quickly devour, and destroy.

As a result of the fight against that protective legislation, local groups are placing increased emphasis on the national environmental situation during this week's celebration of the upcoming Earth Day.

"We've decided to take a political stance this year, which we haven't done in the past," said Thompson, "but our concerns aren't being represented by our politicians. Students need to let leaders know that we care about the environment and endangered species."

It's all about calling, writing, making a fuss. It's about doing something in a way in which you feel comfortable. This isn't an issue that affects a special interest group, or alternative lifestyle classification.

We are all leasing a small part of this planet, and rent needs to be paid. No matter what your ideological leanings, you have to live here for the rest of your life, and your children after you, and theirs after them.

Too numerous to list, too frightening to ignore — our environmental concerns will only become more pressing as we continue to populate, harvest and use the Earth.

Erin Hill is a senior English major