

Portrait of an artist



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Junior environmental design major, **Andrew Smith** creates art with oil paints at his painting class on Tuesday. **Smith**, who has only recently begun painting, has been practicing art his whole life.

Three men acquitted in Ireland gun conspiracy

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Three men were convicted Tuesday of shipping weapons to Ireland, but acquitted of the most serious charges against them.

Conor Claxton, Martin Mullan and Anthony Smyth were acquitted on charges of shipping weapons to terrorists and conspiracy to maim or murder persons in a foreign country.

If they had been convicted of the more serious charges, they could have faced up to life in prison.

After the verdict was read, Claxton turned to his family and supporters in the courtroom, smiled and gave a thumbs-up. He then

hugged his attorney, Fred Haddad.

Claxton, a 27-year-old Northern Ireland resident; Mullan, a 30-year-old Philadelphia handyman; and Smyth, a 43-year-old car salesman in Weston, a Fort Lauderdale suburb, were arrested last July. All three are Roman Catholic natives of Northern Ireland.

They were accused of buying guns and ammunition in Florida and then mailing them to Ireland, where they could be used against the British government in Northern Ireland. Police intercepted 23 packages containing 122 guns and other weapons alleged-

ly mailed by the group.

The weapons and ammunition were intercepted by investigators in New York and Ireland. Authorities said they had been purchased in Florida and mailed by Smyth, Claxton and Mullan.

During the monthlong trial, Claxton insisted that only he knew about the gun smuggling and that he didn't know it was illegal. He testified that militant Irish-Americans pushed him to buy weapons because they feared Catholics — few of whom are allowed to own guns in Northern Ireland — could be left at the mercy of the Protestant paramilitary

and police forces under recent peace accords.

The defense maintained that the purchases considered self-defense in the years of bloodshed in Northern Ireland.

The defense also claimed that Mullan didn't know the packages he mailed Claxton during a family vacation contained weapons and that Smyth thought he was acting as a middleman for legitimate gun deals.

Smyth's fiancée, Sarah Brown, was also arrested and pleaded guilty to one of 33 counts against her.

She awaits sentencing this month.

Committee absolves NATO of its war crimes in Kosovo

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal said Tuesday it found no reason to investigate NATO for criminal activity during its 78-day bombing campaign in Kosovo last year that killed nearly 500 civilians.

The committee, appointed 13 months ago by war crimes prosecutor Carla Del Ponte, reviewed complaints by the Yugoslav government and by international human rights bodies that the NATO bombing of civilian convoys and infrastructure amounted to crimes against humanity and genocide.

The campaign by the western military alliance in the spring of 1999 was intended to force Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to rein in Serbian forces trying to evict ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Del Ponte told the United Nations last week that she would not initiate any prosecution for the NATO campaign. Amnesty International has repeatedly charged that NATO "violated the laws of war leading to cases of unlawful killing of civilians."

The report released Tuesday gave a case-by-case justification for declining to pursue the war crimes allegations.

"We will not open a criminal investigation," the prosecutor said.

"We will not open a criminal investigation. [There was] no political motivation, no political reasons, just fact and law."

— Carla Del Ponte
war crimes prosecutor

There was "no political motivation, no political reasons, just fact and law" that led to the committee's conclusion, she said.

NATO pilots and commanders were accused of 21 specific incidents of

crime, including the bombing of a convoy of 1,000 Albanian refugees returning to their homes and the destruction of the Yugoslav television station in Belgrade, the capital.

The prosecutor took the unusual step of publishing the report's findings to avoid any impression it was washing the allegations.

In its report, the committee admitted its findings were based on public statements from NATO and from the Yugoslav government, and that members did not visit Kosovo for firsthand investigation.

When asked for further information, the report said, NATO was evasive and refused to answer specific questions.

The committee said it found no instances in which purely civilian targets were deliberately bombed.

During the campaign, NATO planes flew 38,400 sorties and dropped 23,618 bombs. The committee also found that among those munitions were weapons using depleted uranium and cluster bombs, both denounced by human rights

Italy pardons Turkish gunman

Agca to serve time for killing that took place before pope attack

ROME (AP) — Italy pardoned the Turkish gunman Tuesday who tried to kill Pope John Paul II in 1981, and immediately moved to transfer him to a Turkish prison — taking with him the answers to the mysterious assassination attempt.

Mehmet Ali Agca offered profuse thanks to the pope, who had personally forgiven and comforted his would-be killer in a 1983 visit to Agca's prison cell. The Vatican recently reassured the government that John Paul supported clemency for Agca.

"That the granting of pardon comes during Holy Year celebrations makes the pope's personal satisfaction even more intense," said papal spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

Agca must now serve time in Turkey for a killing that took place

before the attack on the pope.

On May 13, 1981, Agca pulled a trigger twice as John Paul rode smiling and waving in an open car through excited throngs of pilgrims in St. Peter's Square.

One shot hit the pope's abdomen, barely missing vital organs. Doctors say the wound forever weakened the pope, then an athletic hiker and skier, now a frail, stooped 80-year-old suffering from symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

The former Soviet bloc was immediately suspected in the attack — suspicions that lingered over the years despite denials by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the onetime spy chief for the former East Germany.

Soviet spy chiefs were seen as fear-

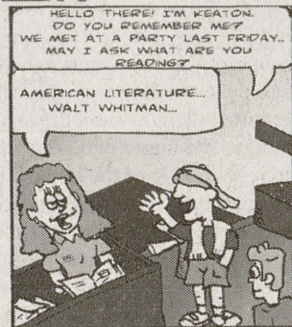
ing the adamantly anti-communist pope would spur popular revolts against the Soviet bloc — as John Paul in fact did, above all in his native Poland.

Agca had told investigators he acted at the instigation of the Bulgarian secret service and the Soviet KGB. But Italian courts ruled there was insufficient evidence to support the accusations, and Agca himself went on to give widely varying accounts over his 19 years and one month behind bars in Italy.

Agca purposefully feigned insanity in court to cast doubt on the credibility of his own stories, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

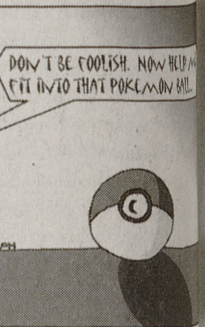
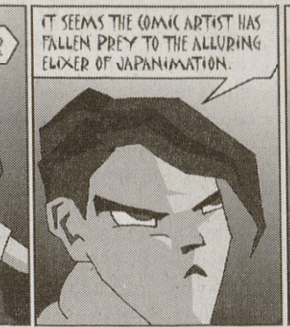
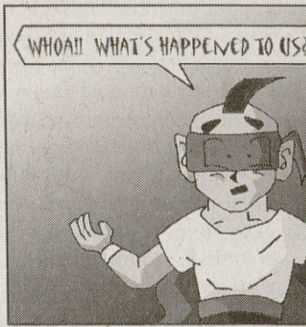
"This extinguishes the last hope of reaching the truth," prosecutor Antonio Marini said of the pardon and extradition.

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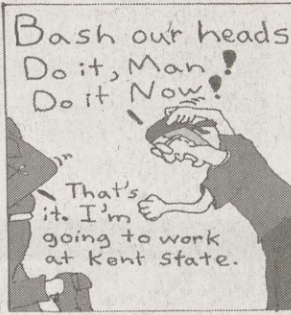
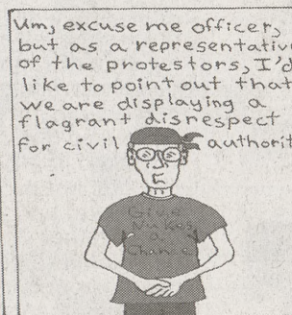
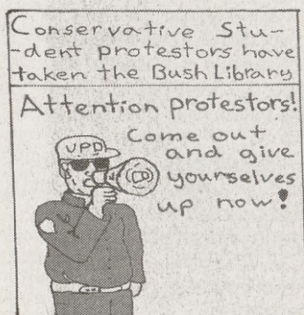
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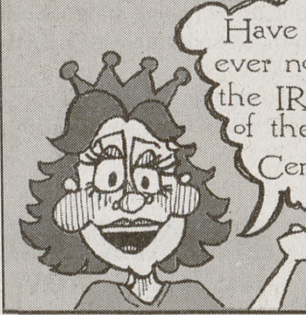
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