

Arnold follows Reagan's path

By Erica Werner
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LOS ANGELES — Arnold Schwarzenegger is often compared to Ronald Reagan, another movie star-turned-politician who blazed California's gubernatorial trail decades ago.

But Reagan had more relevant experience than Schwarzenegger, having spent years as head of the Screen Actors Guild and as a corporate spokesman for General Electric. And unlike Schwarzenegger, he also was a social conservative.



SCHWARZENEGGER

"They're both movie actors, and both have experience in front of a camera, and both are comfortable in communicating in the electronic media. And Schwarzenegger, like Reagan, had an interest in politics," said Ken Khachigian, a GOP strategist and former Reagan speechwriter. "After that, there's not very many other comparisons."

While both were products of Hollywood, Reagan and Schwarzenegger had different images on the screen: "The Gipper" played mostly good-guy roles, while "The Terminator" is best known for violent action films.

Reagan was never the mega-star Schwarzenegger is and his career was on a serious downslide by the time he ran for governor in 1966, when he won the first of two terms. He re-emerged on the political landscape when he ran for president in 1980, ending former President Jimmy Carter's hope for a second term.

Reagan's experience in politics included a famous speech in 1964 to promote presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. He told voters

they must decide, "Whether we believe in our capacity for self-government, or whether we abandon the American Revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can."

Schwarzenegger's most famous pronouncement before the gubernatorial campaign was a movie phrase from his "Terminator" role, "Hasta la vista, baby." He did successfully sponsor an after-school initiative last fall, but it has yet to fund any programs because the state's budget deficit has not left the necessary surplus money.

But both men have the ability to connect with a crowd, presence before a microphone and a charismatic, larger-than-life persona.

Schwarzenegger spokesman Sean Walsh said observers have commented on the similarities.

"They just see a similar DNA structure in Arnold — endless optimism, the glass is always three-quarters of a way full, we can always do better things, and

Reagan during his debut last week on conservative talk radio, telling one interviewer, "We have the same philosophy and approach to things," and adding that his agenda of education and low taxes "is exactly what Ronald Reagan stood for."

But there are many differences between them. Reagan's social views were traditionally conservative and more in line with the state's Republican base. Schwarzenegger is a moderate on social issues such as abortion, domestic partnerships and gun control, and seems less committed to core conservative principles.

Some party members said Schwarzenegger's campaign also has been sidetracked by gaffs that Reagan would have avoided.

GOP strategist Arnold Steinberg, who was active in Reagan campaigns that included his 1980 run for president, said Reagan never would have experienced the controversy that hit Schwarzenegger when adviser Warren Buffett, a Democrat,

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criticized Proposition 13, the landmark California voter initiative that rolled back and then capped property taxes.

Reagan would never have had a Buffett, and if a Buffett said let's do away with Prop. 13 and Reagan felt differently, Reagan would have said you're off the commission," Steinberg said.

But former California Secretary of State Bill Jones, a Schwarzenegger supporter who met Reagan in the early days, said the two men share the same core values.

If nothing else, "The Gipper" may have paved the way for "The Terminator" in state politics, said Lyn Nofziger, Reagan's former adviser and political director.



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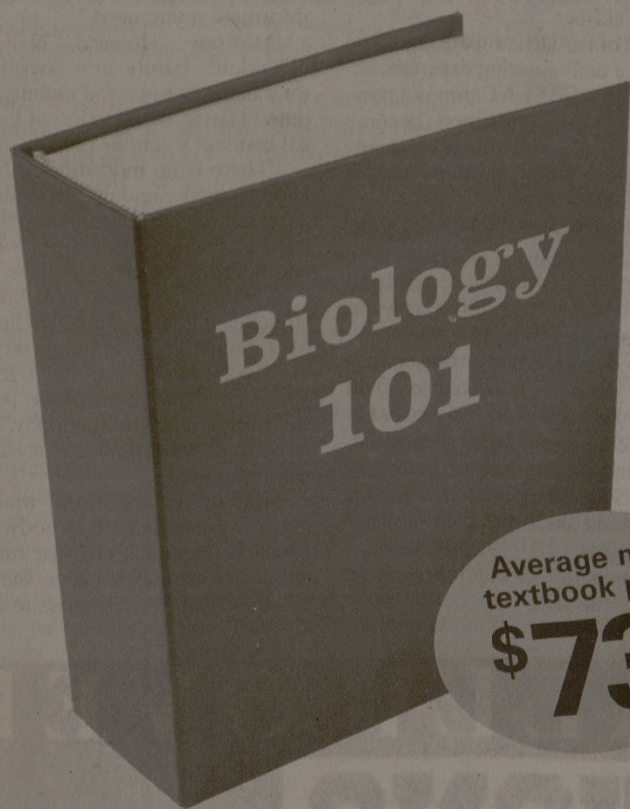
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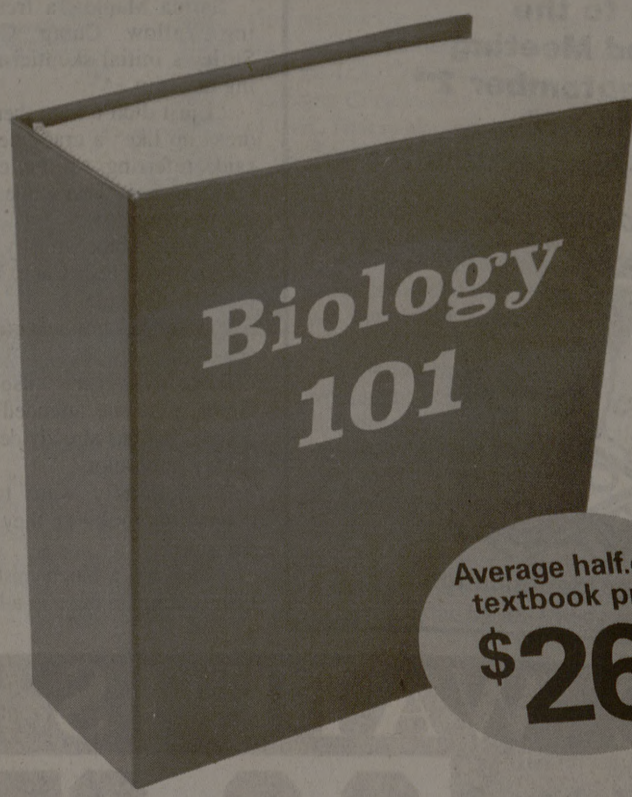
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