

The Daily Tar Heel

91st year of editorial freedom

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Aerial antics

The Reagan administration may claim to be fighting government spending, but it cannot plausibly explain away the recent use of paraquat on domestic marijuana fields. Not only is use of the highly effective weedkiller expensive, it is deadly as well.

In the first-ever aerial use of paraquat three weeks ago in Georgia's White County, Drug Enforcement Administration officials sprayed seven small patches of pot from a helicopter. The seven patches, totaling less than an acre, produced about 60 plants. A disappointing bounty, considering all the time, money and publicity surrounding the spraying.

Making the timing and hype even more ludicrous, the exercise was not conducted mainly to reduce marijuana cultivation but to impress the government of Columbia, where most of the pot used in the United States is grown. It was an expensive impression to make. After the spraying, DEA agents guarded the plots until the plants died in order to prevent any of the treated marijuana from reaching users. Earlier in the operation, a county native had led agents through thick woods to the site. Instead of uprooting or burning the 10-15 plants there, the agents left and later returned in a helicopter to spray the patch with paraquat.

A group of 400 area residents, concerned about possible health effects and the threat to tourism, won a temporary order in U.S. district court barring further paraquat spraying in the county. Citizens in London, Ky., weren't so lucky, however. The DEA began spraying there a couple of weeks ago. The Reagan administration considered the operation so successful it has hinted at similar airborne anti-pot hits this year for as many as 39 other states.

Paraquat first became controversial in the 1970s when it was sprayed on Mexican crops. There was public concern that residue could harm marijuana users, though the U.S. government maintains there are no documented cases of such side effects.

Still, no one argues that paraquat is harmless. It can kill on contact, and a number of deaths have been reported among humans who have inhaled or ingested the weedkiller. In light of this, other, less toxic herbicides should be used to kill marijuana plants. Officials argue that paraquat kills the weeds faster, but that is beside the point. Convenience should not be a factor where human safety is concerned.

Precocious prying

Now that the computer age is fully upon us, kids have turned away from conventional forms of mischief. Gone are the days of breaking into a high school and writing vulgar messages on the ill-favored history teacher's blackboard. Anyone with gumption can do that. The new challenge is cracking a company's computer security system and leaving an electronic calling card. And thousands of teenage and college kids are turning to their Apples and TRS-80s to engage in the more cerebral diversion of cracking the system.

These are the hackers, the so-called computer whiz kids who start by breaking into other users' files and rearranging data. Increasingly, however, the public fears of student computer buffs who have opened personal gateways into the massive computer networks of banks and hospitals, government agencies and universities.

In the summer blockbuster movie *War Games* a high school computer-ophile breaks into the North American Air Defense Command computer and accidentally starts the wheels turning in an unamusing game of "Thermonuclear War," bringing home the fear that hacking could have tragic consequences.

Now those fictional fears are emerge in fact as hacker co-ops are being investigated for some not-so-funny tampering. The most chilling was the July arrest of two members of a group, known as the Cincinnati 414s, for tampering with — among other institutions — the computer information bank of New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Although no medical information was altered, officials at the center fear that similar break-ins could endanger patients' lives. About 80 hospitals access the computer to determine the amount of radiation treatment a cancer patient should receive.

Computer experts maintain that breaking a password code is easier than it seems and that truly sensitive information is under strict lock and key. All it takes is diligence, imagination and the given knowledge that computer users are rarely as clever at protecting their files as hackers are at guessing their methods.

With the increase in tampering, most companies and institutions that use computers to store sensitive information are beefing up security and warning their users about the possibility of break-ins.

Precautions are not enough. The current wave of potentially dangerous break-ins mandates stricter laws addressing computer tampering. Only about half of the states have laws prohibiting unauthorized access to computers. Mischievous hackers who break security for its own sake should be treated lightly, but new laws must be enacted with strict penalties for persons who maliciously tamper with or steal computer-based information. More importantly, law enforcement officials must make it clear that breaking-and-entering is against the law — even from 3,000 miles away. Without this attitude change, the eventual results could be devastating.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Reagan's re-election nemesis

By KEN MINGIS

The gender gap.

Three years ago, before Ronald Reagan entered the White House, it didn't exist. Now, it's one of many phrases used to describe the president's political troubles as he aims for a re-election bid next year. For several reasons, Reagan just isn't as popular with women as he is with men.

Maybe it's the macho image the president projects every time he heads west to his California ranch for a few days of horseback riding and wood chopping. Or maybe it's his opposition to such women's issues as the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion. But the gap — that distaste, disdain and dislike women feel for the president — could make Reagan a one-term president.

There can be little doubt that the president knows he's in trouble. He's been speaking, campaign-style, to almost any women's group that will listen. But considering the actions and comments of his closest aides and advisers, the president must wonder if maybe he's a modern-day Caesar surrounded by members of his Senate. Every time he pulls off a public relations move designed to make him more palatable to women's groups, someone stabs him in the back.

Or maybe he stabs himself. It hasn't been a good summer for Reagan. Trying to prove that he was an all-around good egg, the president invited an international women's group to meet him at the White House in late July. It was a nice thing to do, no doubt, and made for good press coverage. Except that when the group of more than 100 women showed up at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., they were told the Wizard wasn't seeing anyone and were asked to leave. They did — furious. That episode probably cost some unknown appointments secretary his job.

The story was all over the news the next day. Never one to give up, the Great Communicator sought forgiveness and asked to speak before the group. He did, and blew it. In the middle of his little talk, Reagan told the women that if it hadn't been for them, men would still be living in caves and carrying clubs. Not exactly the best thing to say to an already-angry group of women.

The story hit the news, Reagan high-tailed it off to California, and some unknown speechwriter with a penchant for ill-timed jokes probably joined the appointments secretary in a D.C. unemployment line.

And now there's the strange case of Barbara Honegger.

Two weeks ago, she was an unknown, faceless bureaucrat heavily involved with Reagan's alternative to ERA. (All along, the president has deemed ERA unnecessary, adding that stricter enforcement of existing laws would accomplish the same thing.) Honegger's job: to catalogue various state laws that seemed discriminatory and seek revisions.

Imagine the president's surprise two weeks ago when he turned to the editorial section of *The Washington Post* and found his ERA alternative labeled a sham by Honegger. Rather than confront the issue squarely, a Justice Department spokesman labeled Honegger a "low-level munchkin" with little influence. Adding fat to the fire, White House spokesman Larry Speakes wryly observed that the last time he had seen Honegger, she had been dressed up as a bunny at the White House East Egg Roll.

Never mind that Speakes was wrong. The charges leveled by Honegger remain and have gone essentially unanswered. There's a reason for that: Her accusations are all well-documented. The White House strategy seems to be "If you can't deny the charges, discredit the source." Needless to say, the press, not to mention women's groups, is having a field day. Holding up a picture of herself and Reagan, Honegger told reporters last week that if she was a munchkin, then the president was the Wizard of Oz. Not a bad analogy.

The incident, if nothing else, reinforced the importance of women's rights issues and the gender gap in 1984. And it has all too clearly exposed the president's vulnerability. Reagan has little to his credit when it comes to advancing the position of women in America. The administration claims that lowered inflation benefits retired women. Sure it does. And it also benefits retired men, small children and the girl next door.

While the president seems to be doing little to win the hearts of America's female voters, his potential Democratic opponents are practically climbing over themselves for early endorsements by women's groups. In July, five of them, Walter Mondale, John Glenn, Gary Hart, Ernest Hollings and Alan Cranston, swooped into San Antonio, Tex., and spoke before the National Women's Political Caucus. Mondale, however, went off the deep end.

The former vice president, who is rapidly becoming the candidate of the special interests, even made Reagan seem less despicable. Mondale groveled, declaring before the Women's Caucus, "I am a feminist." Mondale begged, telling the group he would force states to ratify the ERA by withholding federal projects and money. And Mondale



DTH/David Washburn

came away from Texas the darling of the group.

The point of all this press coverage, caucus courting and presidential speech-making is the sudden realization that women are an important political force to be reckoned with. They make up 52 percent of America's voters and are becoming increasingly vocal in expressing their political views. For the Democrats, or for anyone running against President Reagan in 1984, that's good news. The president is obviously vulnerable. Unless the Democratic candidates self-destruct with insincere over-attention to women's issues, a lot of votes should end up in the Democratic column next year.

For the president, as he gazes down the yellow brick road of the '84 campaign, the whole issue of women's rights must look like a puzzling mess. But that's simply because deep down, Reagan has no overriding concern for women's issues. He doesn't want to clean up the mess, he only wants to make it look tidy.

Ken Mingis is a senior journalism and political science major from Raleigh.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

But, officer, he was adjusting his stereo

To the editor:

I write in support of John Conway, who is obviously being persecuted by the Commonwealth of Virginia ("No sympathy from Virginia Troopers," *DTH*, Aug. 29). The very idea of a state policeman stopping a driver "cruising down U.S. 29" at 69 mph is contrary to all of the basic principles of justice. Adding insult to injury was the trooper's refusal to consider Conway's urgent reason for traveling at such a speed. How a well-trained officer of the law could fail to take into account the fact that Conway was adjusting his stereo is beyond me.

I must admit that I was somewhat puzzled by Conway's assertion that he was treated like a "robber or rapist." As far as I know, robbers and rapists are not ticketed and fined, but with the continuing efforts of such fine liberal journals as *The Daily Tar Heel*, we can all hope to see that day.

Conway's objection to the language of the summons is more easily understood. Terms such as "innocent until proven guilty" certainly sound unduly severe. Of course, this sort of thing comes as no surprise from Virginia, the state which gave us so many members of the worthless crew

who framed our Constitution. If only some men with that brand of political integrity for which Maryland is known had been in charge during those early years, doubtless we would be living in a far better country today.

I just want Conway to know that my thoughts will go with him as he makes the trip to Nelson County Sept. 14. If there were any justice, Virginia would have to do the only reasonable thing and move Nelson County to a location more convenient to Conway. I am sure that Conway will have the last word, however, and I respect his refusal to sign a waiver of trial

in spite of his admitted guilt. It's about time someone had the guts to go to Nelson County Traffic Court and show those Virginians what's what.

One thing is certain: Conway's article will go a long way toward making Virginians give Maryland the amount of respect it deserves. I am thankful that we can all count on the *DTH* to bring us just this sort of mature and relevant journalism.

How Pat
Chapel Hill

An absurd partyline mentality

didates and the issues.

The absurdity of such a mentality is demonstrated by the fact that Lester Mattox, George Wallace and Ted Kennedy are all Democrats. The fact that Charles Percy is a member of the same party as Jesse Helms and Jack Kemp further testifies to the lack of practical and ideological unity in a party.

It is people of Gilchrist's mentality who locked the South into an unfair one-party

system which elected many a schmock just because of his party affiliation. Furthermore, using this twisted form of reasoning (I prefer not to), the Democrats could be blamed for engaging the United States in every modern war, creating the phenomenon of stagflation, allowing the increased prominence of the Soviets in world affairs and a myriad of other maladies.

The point of this letter is simply that,

although parties are useful, they should not be the determinant of how one's vote is cast. The quality of candidates, and therefore representatives, would improve greatly if people looked past the party and at the candidate.

John Altschuler
Chapel Hill

To the editor:

Not since that offensive little ditty about WQDR have I read anything so bothersome as the column by Winston Gilchrist (*DTH*, Aug. 31) about those saints. You know 'em, you love 'em: the Democrats. The shallowness of the "party-line" mentality is both dangerous and absurd. It is dangerous because millions of people vote simply by party without exercising their faculties by a just comparison of the can-

WEEK IN REVIEW

The woes of the Middle East

By FRANK BRUNI

The world turned its attention this week to the Middle East, where both an international leader's impending resignation and an outbreak of fighting in Lebanon only compounded the turmoil in that region.

Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin wrote his letter of resignation Tuesday, declaring the forthcoming end of his six year government. Begin's Herut party, worried about holding its right-wing coalition together, are scrambling to pick a successor.

Begin's recent years in office have been dominated by the Arab-Israeli conflict centered in Lebanon. U.S. government officials are hopeful that Begin's successor will prove more amenable to peace talks than the dogmatic leader.

In Lebanon, two U.S. Marines were killed Monday when gunfire broke out between the Lebanese army and Shiite Muslim militias occupying West Beirut. The first Marine combat deaths in Lebanon occurred during the hardest fighting in Beirut since the Israeli invasion in June 1983.

The U.S. Marines, killed while serving a four-nation multinational peace-keeping force in the war-torn Lebanese city, were apparently caught in the rebel crossfire. Despite the deaths of these men and a French soldier, President Reagan has said the U.S. forces will continue their passive role in Lebanon. The two deaths wrought by this passive role, however, make Reagan's decision seem a bit short-sighted.

Elusive dreams

Coretta Scott King, the widow of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, set the crowd of 250,000 people on fire when she declared, "We still have a dream."

That dream, however, seemed more than a bit nebulous as the different coalitions gathered Saturday in Washington to celebrate the 1963 march on Washington which inaugurated the Civil Rights movement and spread the word of King throughout the country. Present in Washington were groups representing such diverse concerns as voter registration, greater job opportunities, equal rights for women, world peace and an end to the death penalty. The mood was not a positive one. Criticism abounded, but little of it was constructive.

The thread unifying the thousands of disgruntled demonstrators seemed to be a contempt for the Reagan administration and its policies. Several speakers called for the creation of a grassroots political coalition to defeat President Reagan in next year's election.

While the turnout for this 20th anniversary of the 1963 march was impressive and encouraging, the results were less than spectacular. Unlike the former march, no single goal or course of action emerged from Saturday's gathering. There were too

many different factions, all too self-concerned, for such a unity.

Rain, rain, come our way

North Carolina's hot, rainless summer months left a legacy which may be difficult for Orange County residents to live with — a serious depletion of the area's water supply.

University Lake, the main source of water for Chapel Hill, was 46 inches below full level Thursday and dropping about one inch per day, reported Everett Billingsley, executive director of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority. At 48 inches below full, local ordinances mandate control measures to restrict water usage. Billingsley said he expects to issue such controls over the weekend.

These measures include the banning of car washing, the limitation of lawn and garden watering, and the restriction of air conditioner use. In addition, voluntary restrictions include the shortening of showers and a decrease in the use of dish washers and washing machines.

Orange County residents need not panic if they follow the mandatory restrictions, which may endure for a while. Cooperation — and an occasional rain dance — should get Orange County through the drought.

Back in blue

The University commenced classes Monday, and both the Carolina campus and the town of Chapel Hill underwent a drastic transformation.

For Chapel Hill residents, it meant a farewell to vernal tranquility and a hello to the bustle of student activity. For merchants in the area, it meant the reappearance of money. And for thousands of students and faculty members, it meant work.

The new school year marked the arrival of Carolina's 185th freshman class, who, relocating in Chapel Hill several days before their older classmates, participated in a variety of Orientation activities and placement tests. Some surprises also awaited returning upperclassmen. A tuition increase of 10 percent for N.C. residents and 26 percent for out-of-state students dampened the spirits of many, as did the news of a delay in the opening of the newly constructed Davis Library. With contract disputes over the quality of 40 refinished windows and the difficulty of transferring books from Wilson Library, Davis will remain closed until early February and perhaps longer.

But university life goes on. And with each new day of classes, the hiatus of the summer months seems a more and more distant memory, replaced by a sort of frenetic joy. Everyone seems glad to be back. For now.

Frank Bruni, a sophomore English major from Avon, Conn., is an editorial writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

