

★ The National Page ★

On the National Scene

By Steve Bass

Political families

The 1976 elections may be the first elections of the 1970's featuring candidates whose personalities and political philosophies were not shaped in the traumatic 1960's. In 1972 Richard Nixon represented the reactionary response to the radicalism of the 1960's. George McGovern was the product of the politically active left of the 1960's. This year's election represents a departure from this tradition.

Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford are two candidates whose national images are products of the 1970's post Watergate mentality. Both men seem to be examples of honesty, and each has a strong sense of place. It probably is not merely incidental that the two candidates have strong family backgrounds, featuring colorful, outspoken members. This could be an example of a massive change which has taken place in the American family. Men are no longer judged by the fact that the family defers to the paternal opinion, and the wives and children of American families are now looked upon as unique individuals whose influence and opinion are significant.

The Carter and Ford clans fit into this new tradition. Because of the changes in American social norms regarding the family, the families of the candidates are receiving unprecedented coverage, on occasion to the embarrassment of the campaign staffs. However, even on those occasions when a political faux pas by the clan causes an outrage, the sparkling personalities of the families should insure them the limelight of the political scene. Thus far, neither candidate has complained.

During the Democratic National Convention, Walter Cronkite was heard to say "I think that secretly I'm in love with Miss Lillian." The rest of the nation seems similarly enraptured with the matriarch of the Carter clan of Plains, Georgia. Miss Lillian has played many roles in her life; wife, mother, dorm adviser, Peace Corps volunteer and colorful, outspoken personality. During Miss Lillian's marriage to "Mr. Earl," she stood strong in face of the widespread bigotry and segregation of Plains. She may be the most significant influence in Jimmy Carter's life. Her respect for blacks grew out of widespread reading and her sense of compassion. Both these character traits were passed on to her son. The most famous quip from Miss Lillian was her comment that when "Jimmy told me he was running for President, I asked him President of what?"

The Carter children, led by 8 year old Amy, whose lemonade stand has become a running joke on "Doonesbury," are as colorful and outspoken as their grandmother. Carter's younger brother Billy is a self proclaimed "Redneck." Sister Gloria rides motorcycles throughout Plains. Sister Ruth Stapleton is an authro and faith healing evangelist. The Carter family is important because each represents a conflicting interest in the life of Jimmy Carter. Carter seems to admire the carefree attitudes of Billy and Gloria, attitudes which as a workaholic he finds difficult to accept. However, by enjoying the company of his brother and sister, Carter may find needed rest and relaxation. Ruth Stapleton is, of course, Carter's religious adviser, a highly significant role in Carter's life.

For Gerald Ford, his family is his mainstay of stability and a campaign asset. When Ford assumed the office of President, the nation appeared entranced at seeing a daughter wearing cut-off jeans washing a car, a son riding horses, and a son willing to say he disliked politics. The Ford family seems All American, unique, and independent - important in a campaign.

Standing beside both Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford are strong, independent women of the seventies, Rosalynn Carter and Betty Ford. Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Ford have on several occasions challenged their husband's stands on issues. In many cases, the wives are more publicized than the candidates.

It may not be coincidence that Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Ford are taking such roles. The Women's Movement has created a re-examination of the sex roles in American society. The First Lady image of a Pat Nixon is no longer relevant; hence both Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Ford promise to act as a latter day Eleanor Roosevelt, active and involved.

The family, as a reemerging unit in the seventies, serves many functions: socializer, stabilizer and support unit. It has been stated that one's personality can be judged by relations to his family. Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford seem to be extensions of their families. It is for this reason their families are studied by the press. As the stickers say "Betty Ford's Husband for President;" and "Elect Miss Lillian's Son."

Swine flu shots Risky prevention?

By Steve Bass

The government sponsored swine flu inoculation program has had numerous setbacks since it was announced last spring by President Ford. Many critics contended that the government was incapable of managing such a massive program, that the vaccines could not be manufactured in time, that the risks were too great and even that the program itself was a simple example of over-response to a minor problem.

Last week, as national headlines screamed "24 DIE AFTER TAKING SWINE FLU SHOTS" the expensive program was threatening to collapse, although the National Center for Disease Control in Atlanta made repeated claims that no connection could be made between the deaths and the shots. The CDC also stated that a certain number of deaths could be expected, with or without the vaccinations, in the high risk group of elderly people. Still, most people were taking a personal re-examination of the pluses and minuses involved.

When President Ford announced the swine flu campaign many interests in Congress and government lobbied against government control of the program. Chief among these lobbying campaigns were the efforts of the American Medical Association (AMA), representing the medical profession, and the American Surgical Trade Association (ASTA), representing the vaccine manufacturers and distributors. These organizations questioned the ability of government to successfully implement and execute the program. Normally, the vaccine manufacturers produce the vaccine, and allow private distributors to sell the vaccine to doctors. Doctors, in turn, give the shots to patients who request or have the shots prescribed. According to the AMA and the ASTA, this private business approach to distribution has been successful and should continue.

Early in the program other critics, and industry spokesman stated that the vaccines simply could not be manufactured in time for the late summer deadline. In order to produce the vaccine, cultures are grown in raw egg yolks that have been infected with the flu strain. The question early last spring centered around the availability of enough eggs to produce the millions of doses of vaccine required. Later in the summer when one of the manufacturing firms making the vaccine incorrectly produced several hundred thousand doses of the wrong strain, industry spokesmen again expressed skepticism about meeting the government deadlines.

From the outset, industry spokesmen and doctors alike expressed fear of legal reprisals stemming from administration of the shots. Flu vaccines often cause mild reactions in patients, reactions which can be dangerous to high-risk persons. The manufacturers and doctors wanted the government to make it impossible for patients

to bring legal action against them, or at least insure them against financial loss. Originally, the government refused to underwrite this venture, however, when the Philadelphia Legionnaires Disease broke out en masse this summer, the Congress quickly agreed to the proposal.

The biggest criticism the administration and the HEW faced was from many prominent doctors questioning the need for the program. Thus far only one death in the United States has been attributed to swine flu, a soldier at Fort Dix, New Jersey last winter. The critics point out that there is also no proof that swine flu even presents a health hazard this winter, unlike the Victoria strain which killed 10,000 people last winter. (Many of these doctors contend that this winter will see an outbreak of the Victorian flu.)

The problem when manufacturing flu vaccines centers around this question of

prediction. A vaccine can contain only immunization for one strain or mutation of a strain of influenza. During the spring the federal CDC attempted to predict what strain of flu poses the greatest health hazard for the winter and then instructs the manufacturers to produce that vaccine. If the prediction is correct, patients who receive the injections are comparatively safe; if the prediction is wrong and another strain of flu is prevalent, the vaccine offers no protection. In other words, if critics' predictions are correct, the swine flu vaccines will offer no protection against the prevalent strain.

After closing clinics for a day last week, most states reopened the vaccination program in full force and generally people were responding favorably. Apparently most Americans strongly believe the oldliche, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," even when that prevention is unproven.

Texas airshow Features "grotesque" A-bomb simulation

By Steve Bass

On August 6, 1945 the citizens of Hiroshima, Japan were victims of the first atomic bomb detonated in war history. Since that date, the world has witnessed the massive build-up of nuclear bombs threatening our very existence on Earth. Fortunately, only the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been forced to live through an actual nuclear holocaust. Most people shudder in horror when they think of these victims.

Apparently the promoters of an airshow in Harlingen, Texas and 40,000 spectators at the show, do not share such sentiments. Last weekend retired Air Force Gen. Paul Tibbets directed a B29 Superfortress over the show, dropping a device, supplied by Army engineers, which formed a simulation mushroom shaped cloud typical of atomic blasts.

Reaction to the "show" triggered a harsh response in Japan. Many Japanese, a Tokyo television announcer said, still live with the aftereffects of

genetic mutation. The mayor of Hiroshima called the show a "blasphemy" and "grotesque."

For thirty years the Japanese have been the foremost leader in international nuclear disarmament talks. As the Japanese point out, they are the only people in the world to have endured an atomic attack, and wish to insure that they remain the only people to have been victimized by the Bomb.

The Texas airshow stunt was thus as heartless and cruel as the Japanese said it was. To reenact one of the great tragedies of human history, and to flaunt one of the great guilts America suffers defies human understanding. If the promoters of the airshow had their only motive monetary gain, then the show was a huge success taking in a net of \$200,000, or about \$1.25 for every life lost in Hiroshima. If the spectators had as their goal a cheap thrill, one can only hope they never are forced to see another mushroom clouds.

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