

# VIEWPOINT

Tuesday, February 20, 1996

page 7

## THE OBSERVER

NOTRE DAME OFFICE: P.O. Box Q, Notre Dame, IN 46556 (219) 631-7471  
 SAINT MARY'S OFFICE: 309 Haggar, Notre Dame, IN 46556 (219) 284-5365

### 1995-96 General Board

Editor-in-Chief  
 John Lucas

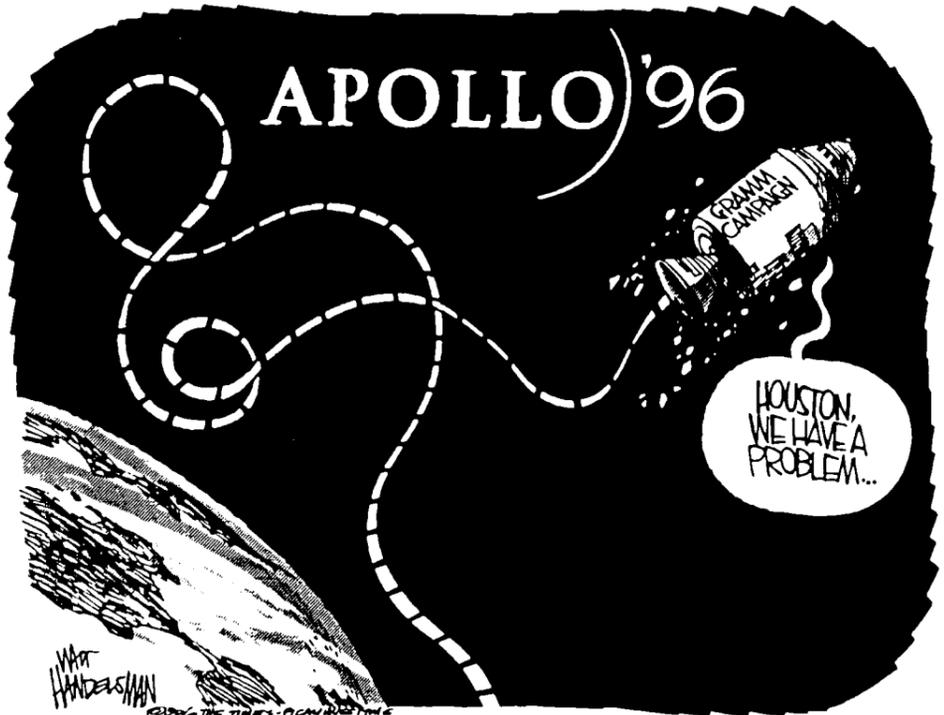
Business Manager  
 Joseph Riley

News Editor.....David Tyler	Advertising Manager.....John Potter
Viewpoint Editor.....Meaghan Smith	Ad Design Manager.....Jen Mackowiak
Sports Editor.....Mike Norbut	Production Manager.....Jacqueline Moser
Accent Editor.....Krista Namery	Systems Manager.....Sean Gallavan
Saint Mary's Editor.....Patti Carson	Observer Marketing Director.....Pete Coleman
	Controller.....Eric Lorge

The Observer is the independent newspaper published by the students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac and Saint Mary's College. It does not necessarily reflect the policies of the administration of either institution. The news is reported as accurately and objectively as possible. Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the majority of the Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, News Editor, Viewpoint Editor, Accent Editor, Photo Editor, Sports Editor, and Saint Mary's Editor. Commentaries, letters and Inside Columns present the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of The Observer. Viewpoint space is available to all members of the Notre Dame/Saint Mary's community and to all readers. The free expression of varying opinions through letters is encouraged.

#### Observer Phone Lines

Editor-in-Chief	631-4542	Business Office	631-5313
Managing Editor/Viewpoint	631-4541	Advertising	631-6900/8840
Sports	631-4543	Systems/Marketing Dept.	631-8839
News/Photo	631-5323	Office Manager	631-7471
Accent/Saint Mary's	631-4540	Fax	631-6927
Day Editor/Production	631-5303	Viewpoint	E-Mail Viewpoint.1@nd.edu
General Information	631-7471	Ad E-Mail	observer@darwin.cc.nd.edu



### ■ AND IN THIS CORNER

## Fat Tuesday and the Fat Heads — Separated at Birth?

I'd like to write about the New Hampshire primary — no, really, I mean it, I do — except for the fact that all of the candidates combined have the same personal appeal as a month-long root canal with no anesthesia.

How sad is the world of politics: Buchanan claims he's the only Republican with "ideas" (the idea of forcing Americans to adhere to his Orwellian concept of "family values," I suppose); Dole says he's tired of "mud-slinging" as he proceeds to dish out some himself; Forbes cracks stupid

supposed to have the public interest in mind, not their party's interests.

Shows what I know about democracy. This November I wonder if I can vote "none of the above."

With all of this political bull, it's really no wonder that "youth" in America are apathetic towards voting. Besides the reality that people under the age of 30 have no power (i.e., no money), the only decision we get to make is whether to vote for the old, rich white guy or the older, rich white guy.

I notice that none of the candidates has bothered to even attempt attracting younger voters, though, excepting Lugar, all of the Republican candidates showed their interest in attracting hate-groups by attending gay-bashing rallies in Iowa. Seems they know exactly who votes in this country.

But, of course, the New Hampshire Nonsense isn't the big event today — that would have to be Mardi Gras, "Fat Tuesday," which, as my neighbors have been reminding me at all hours over the past four days, has in effect been going on all week.

I've never really understood the reason for Mardi Gras — I figure if you really want to party, you don't need a reason. Of course, I've never really understood Lent, either. Lent: fake not enjoying yourself for a few weeks and pretend you actually care that people are starving in Sudan in order to "prepare for the Coming" or similarly ecstatically-worded phrases.

When I was growing up, the rest of the families in our parish usually gave up luxuries such as mixed drinks, late-night pantry raids, going out to eat, or anything else that they could do without most of the time anyway (note that sports activities were generally not considered as Lental sacrifices).

In my family, standard practice was for the kids to give up candy and for my mother to give up cookies. (I'm not positive, but I think my father usually gives up arguing with my mother.) As you might expect, pretending not to eat

candy doesn't make one very penitent.

(That reminds me of a "Catholic" joke: For Lent a young couple decided to give up liquor, and they convinced their eight-year-old son to give up candy. Then on the first weekend of Lent, the boy discovered his parents drinking Brandy cordials. "Well, we only gave up hard liquor," the boy's mother said. "Fine," he responded obstinately, "then I'll only give up hard candy.")

(Okay, dumb joke.)

for the children, my siblings don't own any video game systems, so there's something else they don't have to give up.

Probably the best thing my parents could ask my brothers to give up would be cartoons — and if you've seen the crap that's on TV now, you'd think it'd be easy to give it up. I mean, we had Voltron, the Transformers, GI Joe — now THAT would have been a real sacrifice. My old ploy was to ask if I could give up math homework, but for some reason that never seemed to fly.

Then again, the idea of "giving up X" for an invented six-week period called Lent is silly. The key to most Lenten "sacrifices" is the same key to most supermarket sales: give up something you can do without. Instead of helping the unfortunate and reducing our obsession with the material world, all we have to do is temporarily reduce our luxuries.

A real act of contrition would be to give away something we cherish and fast for a week straight. Not that I myself would go to such an extreme, but by only truly "worshipping" once or twice a year, Christians ultimately forgive themselves for not following their avowed faith. Lent winds up being a ritual of hypocrisy.

Of course, I haven't even touched upon the links between the mid-winter and spring Christian celebrations and the traditional pagan rituals which the Church intentionally duplicated, but I suppose I can leave that to a future column in a more appropriate time and setting.

Don't you just love obscure references and incoherence? You never know — I could be preparing to enter politics. All I have to do now is attack Pat Buchanan a few times and claim I support unity.

Nah. Too easy.

Matthew T. Apple is a creative writing graduate student at Notre Dame who, frankly, was bored to tears by the Campaign '96 media coverage. Talk to him at [matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu](mailto:matthew.t.apple.1@nd.edu) or <http://www.nd.edu/~mapple>.



Actually, there is very little my family can give up for Lent. My mother insists upon forcing the family to uphold the old Church rule of "meatless Fridays or you'll burn in Hell for all Eternity," which now apparently only counts during Lent.

The funny thing is, my family is usually lucky just to have meat once a week. My family's idea of meat is hot-dogs for Sunday lunch. My parents don't drink, so that old reliable is out. Might as well be cookies (and tea; my mother goes through 100 tea bags in one week). As

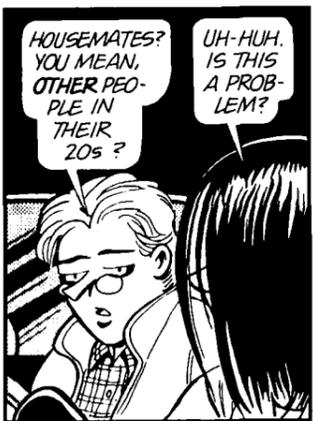
## Matthew Apple

jokes and whines "flat tax, flat tax" until he's blue in the face; Alexander says "Vote for me, because I'm not Dole or Buchanan"; some other Republican no-name says the Declaration of Independence is the "bridge" between "God and the Constitution," as if that means anything of any consequence — and Clinton's speech-writers continue to prove their mastery of the term "vague."

When ex-candidate Phil Gramm announced his support of Dole, one of his given reasons was that he believed Dole had the best chance to "beat Clinton." This appears to be the driving force behind all of the Republican candidates: to "oust" the President and propel the Republican party into power in the White House. Pardon me, but I thought the idea behind the presidential election was to vote for the person best qualified to lead the United States.

These guys who only want to beat someone have pretty much already proven that they could care less how they run the country. Presidents are

### ■ JOLIESBURT



### ■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I stand by all the misstatements."

—Former VP Dan Quayle