Opinion

Change direction, Mr. Clark

Surprising is the word for President Reagan's appointment of his national security adviser, William Clark, to be secretary of the interior.

Clark is a Californian who has been Mr. Reagan's troubleshooter ever since 1967, when he was appointed to head the staff in the governor's office.

Clark did a good job for Mr. Reagan then and throughout the remaining years of Mr. Reagan's governorship. Mr. Reagan appointed him to the California Supreme Court, where Clark did a better job than many people expected him to do. It has been the same story in Washington. Clark's qualifications to serve as assistant secretary of state under Alexander Haig and as national security adviser in the White House have been questioned. But, in retrospect, his performance has been hard to fault.

As secretary of the interior, he won't be like his predecessor, James Watt, who attracted attention to himself and diverted criticism from the president. Clark is Mr. Reagan's alter ego and his policies will be seen as Mr. Reagan's policies. The change of personalities is a good one, but we hope there is also a change of policy direction.

America wears badge of poverty

What does it mean to be poor?

According to the federal government, it means a family of four trying to live on less than $9,862 a year. For a parent, poverty means you have about $7 a day to pay for clothing, food, shelter and health care for each child — the price of a dinner entree at a businessman's restaurant.

By the official standard, 15 percent of the American people are poor — the highest percentage since 1965. That was the year President Johnson, shocked by America's 17-percent poverty rate, declared the War on Poverty.

The massive federal poverty programs seemed to succeed temporarily. They reduced the percentage of poverty from 17 percent to 11 percent by the mid-1970's. Since then, the poverty rate has moved upward, following the unemployment rate. Cuts in poverty programs made things worse, not better.

Now, President Reagan is shocked to learn that many Americans are going hungry. He wrote adviser Edwin Meese III that he is "perplexed" because he thought government was taking care of the hungry. Mr. Reagan has appointed a task force to study the problem.

The commission might visit the hundreds of voluntary soup kitchens across the country — to see the problem of hunger close up. Hunger is striking not only what Americans used to call barns, but families with small children, elderly people, laid-off workers.

But hunger is only one part of being poor. Violence, ignorance and despair are also part of it. Poverty is a stigma in a rich country. There must be something wrong with you if you're poor, right?

Wrong. Unless it's wrong to be black, or brown or divorced. Thirty-six percent of blacks — three times the percentage of whites — live in poverty in America. Latins and other minorities don't fare much better. And the fastest-growing poverty group in America today is unmarried women with children.

Blue collar is becoming a sign of poverty in some parts of the country, where the recession meant layoffs but the recovery doesn't mean hire-backs. Archie Bunker, meet Sanford and Son.

But what does it really mean to be poor?

Earlier immigrant families will recall that when they first landed in America, they had far less than $7 a day to survive on. They were poor in money but rich in hope. They had opportunity to work and rise the American way.

They also had the luck to come to America when this country was expanding across an unsettled continent. They came when there was more work than workers. They came without chains around their ankles and necks.

The game of making it is the same in America today, but the rules are different for the minorities of 1983 than for the huddled masses reaching our shores in 1883.

Civil rights and women's rights have been more firmly guaranteed. And minorities can vote. If the millions of adult Americans who are poor voted together, they could swing an election. They wouldn't have to depend on the good graces of the middle class or the platitudes of the politicians. They could demand an upgrading of the public services — schools, libraries, mass transit systems — that have been the traditional escalators in our society, but which have been allowed to decay in American cities and towns.

This doesn't mean income redistribution. It doesn't mean voting bigger welfare payments. The burden of maintaining our self-defeating system of public assistance falls hardest on able-bodied citizens of working age who "benefit" from it by losing their self-reliance. These people need jobs. Real jobs. Not well-intentioned but ineffective government programs.

Economic justice means thrusting the issue of poverty before the American people and making it a badge of shame for our entire society. It means clearing away the obstacles blocking the path to opportunity. It means revitalizing the libraries and schools and bus systems and getting the escalator to work again.

It means reforming our welfare system so that people are not penalized for working. It means retraining laid-off workers for new jobs.

It means fighting poverty the American way, by hard work, ingenuity and practicality — not empty promises, worn-out solutions and unworkable utopias.

Letters from our readers

To The Carlisle Mercury:

The need for change to improve our public schools has never been greater. We are most fortunate to have Alice McDonald, a candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is superbly qualified to take charge of that change.

Mrs. McDonald has outlined a plan that goes to the very heart of the problems in education. It calls for better management and a linking of resources to performance. But, most of all, Alice McDonald's plan calls for a new direction — a new set of priorities for our schools.

Mrs. McDonald is a competent public administrator. The record shows that she has made government at all levels — local, state and federal — work for people. We need such a champion working for our children.

Since I serve as chairman of the Committee for Academic Excellence, it is appropriate to note that the opinions I have expressed are my own. But I want to personally urge all Kentuckians to join me in electing Alice McDonald — a proven and committed leader — as Superintendent of Public Instruction on Nov. 8.

Sincerely,
Edward F. Prichard Jr.
Attorney-at-Law
Lexington, Ky. 40507

To The Carlisle Mercury:

I have known Mr. Famularo for some 25 years. He has always been courteous, informative, understanding and fair in all dealings that came to my attention. The most amazing point in his favor is, I believe, his deep knowledge of the law. He has too, what most attorneys lose along their first few years of practice, a deep abiding faith in human nature.

You can respect and put your confidence in this man. Here is a gentleman with class and intelligence who means business. He has no need to offer proposals — he has already proven himself. He knows, (from Barry Commoner):

"Voters are not apathetic; rather, they are too deeply concerned with the nation's serious problems to be interested in the candidates' trivial proposals."

Suzanne Taylor
Route 1, Box 197, Carlisle

* See Letters, page 18

Agree or not

Public interest at low ebb

by S.C. Van Curen

The one great flaw in the present statewide political campaign is the dearth of public interest.

There's a great deal lacking when the principals march across the political stage of Kentucky like wooden soldiers keeping step to the ring of the cash register, computer timed by programmers behind the scenes.

Flip on the television or radio and you get the same non-meaning declaration of promised change day after day with practically nothing committed to print that can be stuck under the nose after the election.

If this campaign is to be awarded a prize in competition with others in the last 40 years, the diadem will be for EVASION in capital letters.

There is no common ground for comparing the candidates for governor. If either had intention of building a platform as a guideline for the next four years, it hasn't progressed beyond the preliminary sketch.

There has been no advancement of ideas or programs on how things will be accomplished, and by things I refer to the vague mention of improving education and paying teachers more money. Money and much more of it is going to be necessary to accomplish this. Creation of a lottery is the only suggestion along this line.

Another promise is, and this must be for the party regulars, feeders at the political trough, and expectant plunderers, a return to the old patronage system.

This promise has produced the largest partisan campaign slush fund in Kentucky's political history. It must have been whispered down the party grapevine long before it was made public during the campaign.

The one public appearance that was billed as a debate on television turned out to be divided time for making statements and answering, attempting to answer or evading questions asked by representatives of the news media.

On the opposing side you have a poorly financed, by comparison, effort of trying to attract public concern or allegiance to a cause by shadow boxing a non-existing difference in ideas or programs. There just hasn't been enough proposed to create a difference.

There is a record lack of enthusiasm, public involvement and absence of true concern in this campaign.

Given this scenario, Kentuckians are going to the polls Nov. 8 to put their faith in a personality, packaged and sold without warranty or guarantee at a cost of more than six million dollars. The final report of finances for both of them can exceed this figure.

The only real problem that has been addressed in the campaign is education. There are others.

Kentucky must build a regional jail system to house the transgressors or turn them lose on society. Kentucky also must enlarge and improve its prison system or turn the criminals out to repeat their crimes.

Not the least of our problems is our highway system, where maintenance has been lax for the past four years and much money must be spent for improvements, not to mention enlargement of some arteries and establishing a new one or two.

It's going to take money, and a lot of it.

This is the quandary the voter faces. Take your pick.

Letters to the editor policy

All readers of The Carlisle Mercury are welcome to submit letters to the editor, and it is asked that the following guidelines be followed when writing to us.

Letters sent for publication should be originals addressed to the Mercury, not copies of letters to some third party. All letters must contain the letter writer's signature, address and telephone number or the phone number at which you can be reached.

Poems and cards of thanks will not be published as letters to the editor.

Brevity will help and we reserve the right to edit or reject any letter we consider libelous or in poor taste.

No fee is charged for publishing a letter to the editor.

If possible letters should be typed and double spaced and if written in longhand, please write as legibly as possible.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to:

Letters to the Editor
The Carlisle Mercury
POB 272
Carlisle, KY 40311

Down Memory Lane

Gov.-elect 'Ned' Breathitt leads

Thursday, November 7, 1963

Roger Womack, Carlisle, won the field trial championship of the 1st annual Central Kentucky Foxhunters Association with his hound, Little Lee, and Chad Whitaker, Stoneville, won in the derby class division with his hound.

Marion Hopkins, 19, Carlisle, held for grand jury action on four charges, escaped from the Nicholas County Jail Thursday night, but surrendered Friday afternoon to Sheriff Bill Dollins. The escape was staged when he enticed the jailer to his cell. As the door was opened Hopkins pushed the jailer and ran into the street.

With 95 precincts still to be counted, Gov.-elect Edward T. "Ned" Breathitt was leading with a majority of 13,404 votes at 12:35 p.m. Wednesday. Harry Lee Waterfield, nominee for lieutenant governor, and other Democrats led in statewide races without question.

Miss Judy Mitchell and James Boyd represented Nicholas County High School at Student Congress of the National Forensic League held Saturday at Bellarmine College in Louisville.

Miss Judy Whitely, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Whitely, and Billy G. Hopkins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hopkins, have enrolled for the fall-winter quarter at Centre College in Danville.

A check in the amount of $1,000 has been received by the Rev. W.R. Raborn, chairman of the Nicholas County Memorial Library Board. The grant, from the University of Kentucky Department of Libraries, was in recognition of the local library's successful vote for the state library tax in November 1961.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Stacy, Ewing, a son, Jon Kent, Oct. 30 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gray, Ewing, a daughter, Paula Jane, Nov. 2 at Nicholas County Hospital.

MARRIED — Miss Lenore Fisher Scott and Turner Allen Moreland, Oct. 19 at the Carlisle Baptist Church.

DIED — William Dave Powell, 60, Paris, Nov. 1 enroute to the St. Joseph Hospital, Lexington. — Fred K. Augsbury, 63, Lexington, Nov. 4 while at work at WLAP radio. — William Thomas Small, 84, Nov. 5 at the Fentress Nursing Home in Nicholasville. — Mrs. Gertrude Campbell Gillispie, 91, Covington, Nov. 5 at the Miller Nursing Home, Lexington.

Thursday, Nov. 11, 1943

W.M. Vice of Bountiful, Utah, was a visitor last week at the Mercury office. He said he enjoyed the paper and never missed getting each issue and that it is a welcome visitor in his home.

G.B. Leonard and four high school agricultural pupils returned Friday night from the annual state Fat Cattle Show in Louisville. The pupils were Steve Atkinson, Eugene Clinkenbeard, Cecil Robinson and Dean Auxier.

The news bureau of Kentucky Wesleyan College reports that at a recent meeting of the International Relations Club of Kentucky Wesleyan College, Winchester, Miss Lucy Fleet Allison, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E.B.D. Allison, was elected to membership. She is also a member of the sophomore class, the Wesleyan Girls, Wesleyan Singers, Life Service Group and the Women's Athletic Association.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. Hampton Faulconer, Lexington, a son, John D., Oct. 29 at home.

DIED — C.G. McAlister, 80, Owingsville, Nov. 3 at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Hugh Williams. — Thomas C. Buckner, Bourbon County, at home. — William Bell Clary, 57, Mason County, Saturday at home.

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Op-Ed page

On a scale of 1-to-10 . . . rate me a .0043, not counting Hudson Terraplanes

Russ Metz

My brother is a mechanic. He can fix anything. I am non-mechanic. I can't even fix things that aren't broken.

And when I watch television and all those commercials about wanting to sell me books that will turn me into an instant repairman and save hundreds of dollars each year on home improvements and building projects, I am tempted, but better judgement prevails.

The announcer is dead wrong. I don't care how many books I read, I still wouldn't understand them or be able to build anything or repair anything. Whatever mechanical ability our family's genes passed out, I was behind the door when it happened.

When I was a child, I got an erector set for Christmas. This was supposed to be the beginning of my mechanical training. I read the instructions and tried to build a simple crane.

"Oh, that's wonderful," my mother said when I had finished, "you have built a 1935 Hudson Terraplane with two of the doors missing."

I was so inept, they wouldn't even allow me to play with the family garden hose.

"Get away from that hose," my mother would say. "You know you don't know anything about machinery."

I carried this lack of knowledge into high school. where I enrolled in shop class in an effort to improve myself. I took as my term project building a magazine rack. That was the stock project for class idiots who could get a hammer tangled up in their fingers.

"What is this?" asked my shop teacher.

"It's a magazine rack," I said.

"Looks more like a model of a 1935 Hudson Terraplane with both doors missing to me," he said.

As an adult, I have the same problem with automobiles. I can't for the life of me figure out how some smelly liquid called gasoline can make a car move down the road at any rate of speed.

"What seems to be the problem with your car?" the auto mechanic will ask when I take it to him.

"It's broken," I tell him. That's the best learned conversation I can come up with.

He opens the hood and looks inside at all that infernal wiring and all those doohickies that move and make noises and make your car run.

"Here's your problem," he says. "Your diddleflunkie has become disconnected from your left commodegelator," he said. This fellow probably never graduated from high school, cannot spell his kids' names and wouldn't know a quadrilateral plane from a hole in the ground and yet he can diagnose the ills of a complicated mechanical marvel without even shifting his tobacco cud.

When we moved into our house, I tried to take a shower and couldn't get any hot water. I called the plumber.

"Here's your problem," he said. "The letters on your shower knobs are wrong. The 'H' is on the cold knob and the 'C' is on the hot knob."

I did think I could at least build a dog house for Boliver, the family watchdog. I bought lumber and nails and bolts and everything I was told I needed.

Now I have the only doghouse in town that looks like a 1935 Hudson Terraplane with two doors missing . . .

—RM—

Now that it has been announced that Ronald Reagan will visit China next year, what is the single most important piece of advice you would give him?

(a) don't take any wooden yuan, (b) don't ask James Watt to go along for some snappy one-liners to deliver on arrival in Peking, (c) Brush up on your ping-pong. (d) If the message in your fortune cookie says, "You will bring something of us back to your home across the sea" accept it as a statement of friendship from the Chinese government and not a sign that you should put in a take-out order.

Who would have been your choice to replace James Watt as secretary of the interior?

(a) Howard Cosell, (b) Red Skelton, (c) The Beach Boys, (d) Wayne Newton, (e) Don Rickles.

The United Nations is:

(a) a hangout for foreigners who don't pay their New York City parking tickets, (b) a tourist attraction, (c) a training ground for Italians and Berlitz teachers, (d) a source of employment for many foreigners who otherwise would be goatherders and bellhops back home.

— RM —

My expertise in devising quizzes and surveys being well documented, I have developed a test that will enable the city to come up with a happy blend of sociologist and police offer, while seeding out the fruitcakes and other politicians who might want to give you a different picture.

You've taken your car in for a tuneup and the bill comes to $742. Perusing the bill, you notice that the mechanic has replaced the brakes installed two months ago and charged you for a catalytic converter that is under warranty. You should:

(a) work him over with a nightstick, (b) report him to the Better Business Bureau, (c) report him to Mr. Goodwrench, (d) sit down with him over coffee and find out what unpleasant happening in his childhood turned him into a thief.

If your kids says "Make me" when you tell him it's time for bed, you should:

(a) work him over with a nightstick, (b) put him in handcuffs but only after frisking him, (c) send him to bed but only after reading him his Miranda rights, (d) calmly discuss the issue of children's rights and their increasing prominence in the post-industrial society.

If you stop somebody for making an illegal turn, you should:

(a) work him over with a nightstick, (b) point out his mistake and let him go with a "Have a nice day," (c) give him a ticket and say, "Have a nice day," (d) make sure he isn't a city councilman before giving him a ticket and saying, "Have a nice day."

If you come upon kids drinking beer in the park and one says, "Hey, pig," you should:

(a) work him over with a nightstick, (b) take the beer from him and tell his parents, (c) point out his behavior will decrease his chance of getting into law school, (d) burn a beer and discuss the impact of unemployment on the crime rate.

— RM —

Ever wonder how the boss thinks about you, what he considers your best qualifications?

The following information comes from personnel efficiency reports made out by managers and supervisors in a large corporation. They were being evaluated by a personnel teach seeking company talent.

"This foreman has talents but has kept them well hidden."

"Can express a sentence in two paragraphs any time."

"A quiet, reticent manager. Industrious, tenacious, careful and neat. I do not wish to have this man as a member of my department under any circumstances."

"Needs careful watching since he borders on the brilliant."

"Open to suggestions but never follows them."

"Is keenly analytical and his highly developed mentality could be utilized in research and development. He lacks common sense."

"Never makes the same mistake twice, but it seems he has made them all at least once."

Up, up and away.

The Snakes and I

by Clyde Kerns

Next to girls, I guess the most exciting creatures on earth are snakes. Running barefoot through the vines that grew midst the ancient graves of the old Bethel cemetery, I stepped on one once. I next touched down some 20 feet beyond, and the image of that fearsome reptile was bedded in my brain forever. After that, I used to have a recurring dream in which I walked up a stair that gradually faded into darkness in which thousands of stars twinkled, and I felt that I was on my way to Heaven or some such place. But then I became aware that what looked like stars were just glimmers of light reflecting from the squirming, slimy bodies of hundreds of snakes on which I was walking.

When I was quite small, we lived in an old log house that had a very large chimney built of limestone rocks with no mortar, and it was full of large, brown, shiny "Deusadogs." Behind the house was an old, long unused cellar walled the same way, and those walls were full of blacksnakes, some of them on the order of six feet long. I got used to the thousand-legs but never the snakes.

At that place, my little brother Bob and I got after a big blacksnake in the orchard one day, striking at him with sticks while he tried to get away. Finally, he had enough of that, and he turned on us, actually turned toward us, coiling and then flinging himself toward us, so we had to keep backing up. Les McFarland happened to be nearby. He came over and, believe it or not, the frightened and excited snake immediately calmed down and lay coiled. Les carefully picked it up by the neck and carried it about, coiled on his arm. That's one reason why Les was a hero to me when I was little, because it seemed to my childish mind an incredibly brave thing to do.

On Easter Sunday in 1930, my brother and I counted 13 large, heavy, brownish snakes lying in the sun on drift among the willows along Jerdan. To be honest, I don't know whether there are water moccasins in Kentucky or not, but we thought that's what these were, as we came near one, he'd slowly and sullenly slide off into the water or hide among the jumbled rocks and drift. And it was right along that same part of Jerdan where, later that year, I was wading just below a little waterfall when a snake bit me. A rock on top made a gap in the smooth sheet of water coming over the fall, and as my foot came out of the water in front of that gap, a snake behind the water struck through the gap and hit my little toe. I got just a quick look as the snake struck and then drew back out of sight, and I thought surely I'd been bitten by a moccasin and was going to die. I hurried straight home to tell Dad and Mom.

It was late afternoon and Dad was milking our Jersey cow. Henry Burgess was squatted down nearby talking with him. There were two marks of the fangs on my toe, and I was disappointed that Dad didn't go into a panic. He just went on milking, and asked where it happened. I told him down by the little waterfall. He said, "Well, it wasn't a moccasin or you'd never have made it home." I felt much better right away, but Henry pulled out a half-pint bottle of moonshine and insisted on pouring some of it over my toe. He said that would fix me up good as new. And I guess it did, but I think the snake helped a lot by being just a common brown water snake and not a deadly moccasin.

My lawn here in Texas is of St. Augustine grass, which builds up a very thick carpet, and it is literally full of garter snakes. The largest one I've seen was about 20 inches, I guess, but most of them are less than a foot long. About the only time we see them is when we're mowing or when one of them happens to crawl out onto the walk when the sun is shining. Being accustomed to the grass, they don't know how to travel on the pavement, so they sometimes die of the heat before they can get back into the cool shade of the lawn. Considering that they eat bugs, I've come to accept them as our cold-blooded friends.

Have to be careful, though, because some lawns have copperheads. When we lived in Killeen, I found myself standing on a tiny copperhead in our yard one day. He was thrashing around and striking at my shoe but couldn't reach above the top of it. Here in Austin, a lady went out for a walk in her yard one day wearing just open sandals. She noticed several prickling, stinging sensations on her feet as she walked around, but she thought it was sandburs or something similar. After she went back into the house she began to feel sick, and her doctor noted symptoms of snakebite. Sure enough, they found that her lawn had scores of tiny copperheads, and she'd been bitten by them a large number of times as she walked about.

Rattlers are something else again. I've been careful to stay out of their way. But there is one good purpose rattlers serve: they make fine playthings for idiots. In Texas and Oklahoma — and, I suppose, some other states, too — rattlesnake hunts are common, with prizes being given for longest, smallest, heaviest, most total pounds of snakes caught, and so on — and rattlesnake snacks are usually served. Maybe there is some justification for that, since it does rid the land of some deadly serpents, but how about the snake sacking contests that they have right here at the Municipal Auditorium in Austin? They put a bunch of rattlers in pit and a couple of sackers — male or female — get in with them, and the sacker that is given they start catching snakes and putting them in a sack. The team that sacks the most snakes within the time limit — I believe it's a minute — is the winner. (Sure, they get bitten, but that doesn't stop this brand of idiot.)

In 1944, Lt. Don Vineyard and I, with two small airplanes and three men, were based on a small airstrip we had built for ourselves near the mouth of the Masaweng River in the Australian part of New Guinea. Vin and I lived in one tent, and the other men lived in a second tent a few yards away. We were well out of the combat zone at the time, so there was no blackout and we usually had the sides of our tents rolled up to admit any breeze that offered to give some relief from the heat.

One night I walked down to the men's tent for some reason or other, and what was not there, but Sgt. Kennis Allen of Massachusetts, Pvt., and Corporal Wendell Young, of Chicago, were sitting on their canvas cots, facing each other and on the middle of the tent. Each was holding a clipboard on his knees and looking down, intent upon writing —

letters to their families, no doubt. A Coleman gasoline lantern hissed on the

"See The Snakes and I, page 4

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