

# North acquittal caps five years of scandal

After four years of living in the nation's spotlight and being seen as either government lackey or military evil incarnate, Oliver North was cleared last Monday of all charges stemming from the Iran-Contra scandal.

U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell dropped the last remaining charges against the former White House national-security aide. Gesell did this after North's former boss Robert MacFarlane said two weeks ago that the retired Marine lieutenant colonel's Senate testimony four years ago influenced MacFarlane's own testimony at the trial.

Gesell determined that North, who had been granted immunity for the Senate hearings, could not be charged with anything stemming from his testimony.

It's incredibly confusing, but right in line with the rest of the Iran-Contra scandal, a cover-up that featured slick legal maneuvering, disorienting testimony and unbelievable lapses of memory by the main participants. The result of these governmental deceptions was to leave onlookers totally confused about what actually happened — which was probably what the cast behind the scandal was striving for in the first place.

Back in 1987, North went from obscure government aide to, depending on whom you talk to, shining American patriot or disgusting military puppet. Now North, freed from the embarrassing millstone of his convictions, can go back to harping his ultra-conservative views for \$25,000 a pop, which is roughly equivalent to his yearly retirement pension from the Marine Corps. North, who characterized the scandal as "five years of fire," is obviously not entirely distraught over the course his life has taken.



LT. COL. OLIVER NORTH

Iran-Contra is the most embarrassing government scandal since Watergate, and, like Nixon's *faux pas*, the entire truth may never be known. After almost five years, it is unclear whether President Bush knew what was going on. Was Reagan in on it? What the hell actually happened?

Questions, questions, questions — all of which are waiting for answers. And time is running out. The statute of limitations is five years, meaning Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh has only six months to file additional charges. Walsh says more prosecutions are forthcoming, but after four years, it seems unlikely further investigation will turn up anything.

How convenient that the dismissal of charges against North comes on the heels of the confirmation hearings for Robert Gates, Bush's nominee to head the CIA.

Gates, who was deputy director of the CIA when Iran-Contra first surfaced, is described as an organizational maniac by close associates. For a person who supposedly has a head for facts and figures, Gates seems to have selective amnesia when it comes to the scandal.

All in all, Iran-Contra remains a serious blemish on the American government. Very little about it is known, and after five years, public interest has become one of apathy. The truth, whatever it is, will probably never be fully revealed.



"I don't expect an economic recovery soon. The Democrats are so weak, Bush won't need to orchestrate one to get re-elected."

# Council's phone games Springfield's loss

Before killing its Human Rights Commission over legal and ethical clashes, Springfield's City Council should consider a revamped, bandaged version.

The recent council vote to disband the commission stemmed from controversy surrounding Mayor Bill Morrisette's request for the resignation of three City Council members who orchestrated a "coup" to overturn the appointment of Ron Sinacore, a University affirmative-action department employee.

Bruce Berg, Larry Schanz and Ralf Walters used a computerized mail system to cement their vote against Sinacore's appointment because they feared he would be too "radical" for the conservative group.

Publicized E-mail documents also voiced the council members' desire to maintain Christian control of the commission, as well as nominating anti-gay rights advocate Melody Kelsay as Sinacore's replacement.

In an effort to cleanse the commission of evil forces like Sinacore, the squeaky-clean council members came inches from violating Oregon's open meeting laws. Though no official ruling has been made regarding this action, the members' actions are questionable because they conducted council business out of the public — as well as the rest of the Council's — eye.

There are some obvious problems to be dealt with, but any therapist or self-help book will tell you that problems are normal and one doesn't solve them by running away.

Springfield and its surrounding areas need this commission; it's worth the time and effort to salvage it.

Without some sort of mechanism in place to deal with occurrences like the recent WOW Hall cancellation of an anti-racist concert because of skinhead threats, or the

June 25 area assault of a black male, or the fact that Eugene police department records show that several skinhead gangs have moved into the area, these problems will only worsen.

With a few changes here there and everywhere, the much-needed commission could survive. The question rises, however, as to what degree and by whose standards the committee should be rearranged. Here's a few ideas.

First of all, Berg, Schanz and Walters should either learn more about Oregon's meeting laws or sic the moral police on themselves, since they either didn't know what they were doing, or they knew all too well.

Next the council members should check their righteous consciences and memories, as this is not the first time a religious elite tried to control the demoralized masses.

It is not these council members' place to pass judgment on, and subsequently try and reform the moral character of the committee. Each member not only has the right, but the obligation to personify his or her value system. Doing so preserves the diverse quality of the group that is necessary to correctly represent a perhaps more-colorful-than-realized Springfield population.

And of course, the replacement of Sinacore by Kelsay would have to be undone. A liberal view would only balance, and therefore better, the conservative commission's power structure. What is so scary about that? Besides, these guys have God on their side.

No doubt it would take some work to resolve the commission's conflicts, but worse yet, consider the alternative.

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