

Clinton hits softball, not ready for bigs

There was a surprising lack of fanfare to accompany the swearing in of newest Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Tuesday, the first nominee to the nation's highest court made by a Democratic president since 1969.

Surprising because, although she won an apparently ringing endorsement by the Senate last week, which confirmed her with only three dissenting votes, Ginsburg represents one of the few landslide successes so far in the Clinton presidency, a presidency that has had so little to cheer about in recent weeks that it brought out the Marine Corps band to celebrate the narrow passage of Clinton's deficit reduction plan.

Liberals have heralded Ginsburg's nomination as much as conservatives have cringed at it, although neither side is likely to see much significant impact. The Republican presidents that have done all of the nominating during the past 23 years have failed to produce a truly conservative court. Reagan's nominee Sandra Day O'Connor and Bush's David Souter have frequently sided with the more consistently liberal justices John Paul Stevens and Harry Blackmun. Adding another liberal to the mix isn't likely to change anything.

The Clinton administration should rejoice in Ginsburg's easy confirmation.

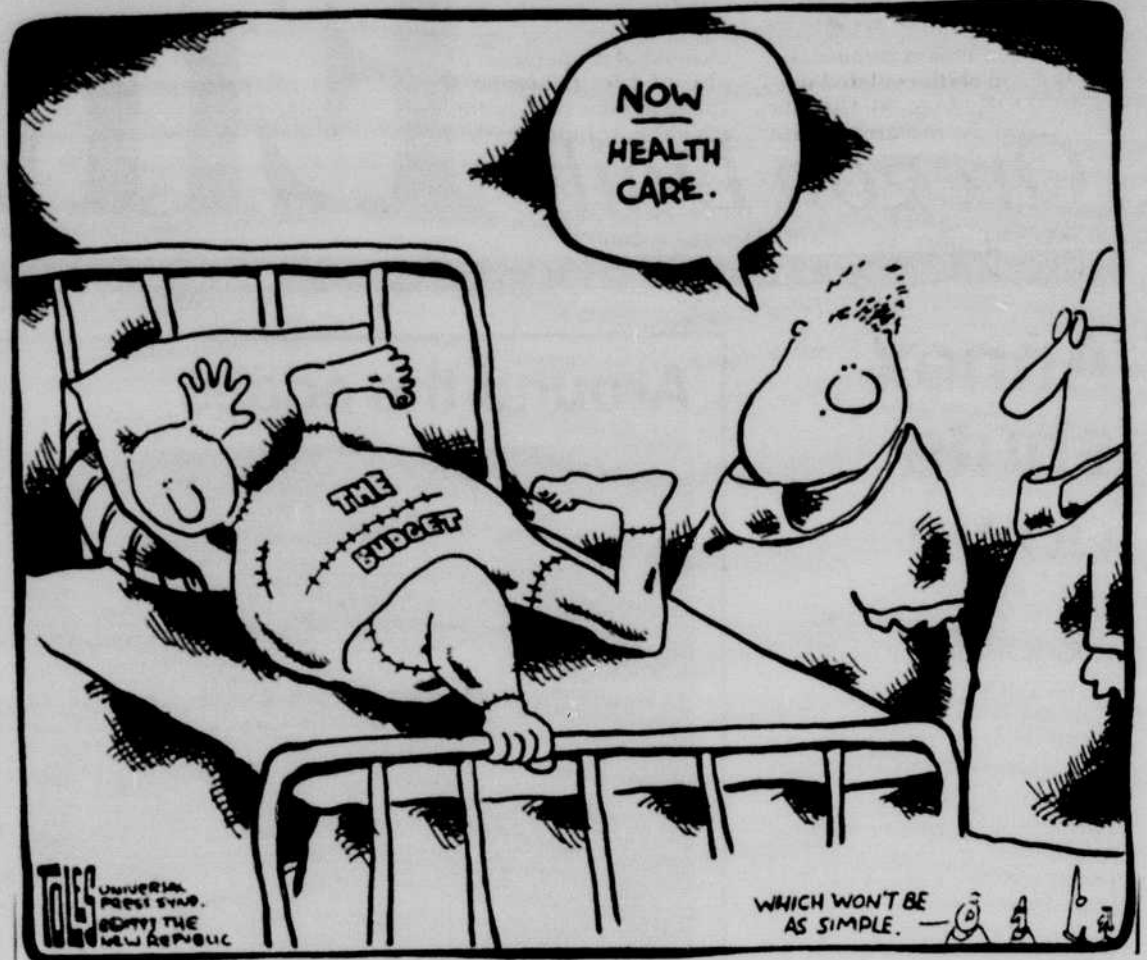
A handful of die-hards have been whooping it up over the nomination anyway, but they seem to be more impressed by the margin of victory than because Ginsburg is such a quality choice. An easy victory usually accompanies weak or disinterested opposition ... another hint that Ginsburg's confirmation won't make much difference.

One element of the nomination that might be worthy of criticism is the possibility that Ginsburg was chosen on the basis of her gender and not her merits as a judge. Such an accusation isn't too hard to believe, considering Clinton's campaign pledge to make his government "look like America."

His nominees for attorney general prove his apparently unwavering dedication to this idea. After public outcry over his first two choices, Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood, his third and final choice was another woman: Janet Reno. Perhaps the top candidate for the job was a woman, but the top three?

The potential dangers of such a nominations process are many, but in Ginsburg's case (and Reno's) it seems that no harm has been done. Both seem to be satisfactorily qualified. It's just that their nominations point to more problems down the road, when the list of competent candidates runs out before the demands of liberals are met.

For now, however, the Clinton administration should rejoice in Ginsburg's easy confirmation, despite the fact that it won't change much, because it indicates that the administration has cleared at least one hurdle without tripping. If the president is going to realize all of the goals he laid out on the campaign trail, he can't be battling for all of them.



OPINION

Hung over ... and happy about it



After learning that I had just turned 21, people have been asking me, "So, do you feel older now?"

"No," I've replied with a tired grin. "I just feel hung over."

That, in and of itself, is a "yes" because I am acting older. After all, last week \$100 couldn't have (legally) bought me a beer, but Tuesday night found me exchanging quarters for cups of Bud at Guido's.

Amazing what a few days can do to a man. And to a man's body.

Happy birthday to me. So here I sit, letting my fingers fumble over the keyboard. Not type. Fumble.

Following five straight days of "It's my birthday!" my fine motor skills seem to be lacking somewhat.

Walking has become a labor — I'm taking that one slow step at a time.

My normal 50-words-a-minute typing has simply become an experience of sitting at the computer terminal, analyzing the color of my cursor. Is it purple or pink or indigo?

Even thinking is a pain. A simple, meaningless diatribe about being hung over would take a normal editor about half of an hour to compose. However, the English language is not coming to me (or my fingers) very easily now.

When you drink, though, words come very easily to mind. And when you're buying quarter beers at Guido's on Tuesday night, talk is therefore cheap and plentiful.

So here are two recommendations I've pulled out of my foggy head to give to those of you

about to celebrate your "21er" (I can't think of anymore. Because, well, I just can't think):

- Watch the clocks in the bars, not your watches. Local hangouts are apparently a little further advanced into the future than the rest of us. About 15 minutes, actually.

- Don't go out the night before the final test in your weight training class. Instead of remembering which is your tricep and which is your bicep, you may find yourself trying to separate the memories of which was Jagermeister and which was a Snakebite.

Oh, well.

Instead of asking me if I feel older now, I hope people will more appropriately ask me, "Do you feel better now?"

"Sure," I'll say. "Now buy me a drink. It's my birthday."

Jake Berg is editor of the Emerald.

Is Shaq an entropic Pepsi drinker?



When I blew open the Shaq-Mongolian connection in Tuesday's column, I thought I had mined that Pepsi commercial dry. However, somebody up there (or down there) apparently likes me, and there's still gold in dem thar soft drinks.

Of course, I'm referring to the backwash or "Shaqwash." Or, rather, the absence of it. When Shaq finishes drinking all of the world's Pepsis in one mighty swallow, the Pepsi bottles should

have had some Shaqwash flow back into the bottle.

Where did this backwash go? Like Pauly Shore and Michael Bolton, it cannot be readily explained by the known laws of physics. As Einstein explained, mass cannot be destroyed (or created), it can only be altered into a different form such as rubber or energy. Perhaps Shaq converted the backwash into energy; however, he has not exhibited any exceptional abilities in this regard.

Or maybe this is an extreme example of entropy, the theoretical phenomenon that some mass-energy loss in the universe is taking place and that eventually the universe will be as cold and dark as Bob Dole's heart. It's terrifying to consider that the Shaq Attack may be accelerating

the entropic process. Or it's possible that drinking Pepsi over such long distances loses backwash in the same power companies lose one-third of their electricity in the power lines.

I asked some of the physics professors who came from all over the world to the University this week for a scientific conference if they could shed some light photons on the subject, but they looked at me in terror and ran for the complimentary doughnuts. Clearly someone high up is keeping these erstwhile investigators of truth silent — and well-fed. (Curiously, no Mongolians attended the conference. The implications are obvious.)

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